



# Angela Carter: A Radical Prescience? Artist's Statement

Vanessa Marr

Angela Carter's reimagining of some of our best-loved fairy tales sits at the heart of feminist perspectives on her work. From the young bride who is rescued by her mother, therefore thwarting the gruesome Bluebeard, to Beauty's stance against the Beast who wins her in a game of cards, Carter has timelessly reignited the pre-Grimm origins of such tales as stories that empower rather than oppress women. Historically, women told these stories to each other while they worked, often with cloth,<sup>1</sup> and usually in the home surrounded by all things domestic. For this reason, I have embroidered objects for an imagined dinner party upon a vintage tablecloth, featuring a table set for four of the female protagonists in Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* (1979).

The use of this ubiquitous domestic item, embellished with stitch, references the legacy of female disempowerment<sup>2</sup> and, more recently, women's voices of protest through stitch,<sup>3</sup> within a commonplace occasion associated with so-called women's work, and likewise one where stories are often told. The table settings include embroidered drawings of the usual paraphernalia of cutlery, crockery and glasses, as well as bread to be shared. Additionally, each place features name cards and visual clues from the stories they represent, for example Bluebeard's keys or the Tarot cards from 'The Lady of the House of Love'.

This work also sits within the context of Judy Chicago's famous *Dinner Party* (1979), created in the same year that *The Bloody Chamber* was published, within which she sets the table for famous women to highlight their achievements. By seating the female characters alone at my table, I also reflect Carter's legacy and empower each of them, placing them in control of their personal narratives whilst reducing the male characters to mere objects.

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## Notes

1. Elizabeth Barber, *Women's Work: The First 20,000 Years* (Norton, 1995).
2. Roszita Parker, *The Subversive Stitch* (Tauris & Co. Ltd, 1984).
3. Betsy Greer, *Craftivism: The Art and Craft of Activism* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2014).