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Hrosvitha

Judy Chicago (1980): The next place setting honors Hrosvitha, a German nun who was the first female playwright in Europe. She wrote a series of plays in which she asserted the purity and the value of women. Her runner is done in a very homely embroidery technique, called *opus teutonicum*, which is associated with German convents of that time. You can see its characteristics in the drawn threadwork and complex patterning used in the runner. On the front of Hrosvitha's runner, there are four padded circular disks, derived from abbesses' seals. During the Middle Ages, ruling abbesses had the right of coinage, like that of kings and rulers. The four seals on the front of the runner represent scenes from Teutonic tales, and on the back of the runner there are scenes of Hrosvitha's life in the convent. The plate itself combines a gesture of prayer with a nun's cap; its center is closed, a reference to her chaste life. The two place settings for Theodora and Hrosvitha provide a contrast that I deliberately designed into *The Dinner Party*, in order to emphasize the differences between the women at the table and to counteract the idea that all women are alike. Here, the majesty of Theodora's setting contrasts with the simplicity of Hrosvitha's and thereby represents the differences between these two women.