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## Anna van Schurman

**Judy Chicago (1980):** The last place setting on this wing is for Anna van Schurman, a woman of extraordinary genius who lived at a time when women's options were increasingly diminished. Her plate rests on a sampler, one of the most prevalent forms of needlework. Originally, samplers developed as sample books of individual women's needle styles. They were a sort of personal dictionary of designs and techniques. But as they became more formalized, they were used to teach little girls, to teach them how to think small, to deal with tedious tasks—they became a real tool of role conditioning. The cross-stitch typical of samplers is used for the quote above Anna van Schurman's plate. It's from a book she wrote, arguing for the right of women to be educated. "In the seventeenth century," she said, "woman has the same wish for self-development as man, the same ideals and yet she is to be imprisoned in an empty soul of which the very windows are shuttered." With the Reformation, we've come to the end of this wing of the table, which marks a low point in women's experience. You can barely see the *M* in this crocheted millennium runner. It is as obscure as the lives of most of the women represented here.