

## 5 minutes with

### Craig Minowa

#### Green rocker

Craig Minowa, the environmental-science degree–holding lead singer of the indie-rock band Cloud Cult, is looking to minimize the impact the band has when it tours—on the environment, that is.

#### What's the music industry's biggest environmental abuse?

The vast majority [of major labels] use...PVC plastic, which creates carcinogens when you produce and dispose of the plastic. [CDs] could easily be wrapped in something environmentally benign. [The American Society of Composers Authors and Publishers] and Universal have contacted me; they're curious about other possibilities, like biodegradable shrink wrap. We used that at Earthology [Records]...It tended to yellow over a couple of years.

#### How are your tours green?

We figure out how much gas is consumed, how much electricity is used on the stage and in hotel rooms. We add that up and figure



**SAY IT, DON'T SPRAY IT** Judy Chicago did both for her "Holocaust Project" exhibition which included *Cartoon for The Fall* and *Trying to Crawl Out of the Primal Ooze*, below.

## Native rants

A biographer reveals the inspiration behind artist Judy Chicago's "Holocaust Project."

By Leah Pietrusiak Photograph by Donald Woodman

Artist Judy Chicago attended Lakeview High in the early 1950s, when Chicago schools were being desegregated. But attitudes were slow to change. One of her classmates, interviewed by Gail Levin, author of *Becoming Judy Chicago: A Biography of the Artist*, recalled a teacher who would point to New York on a map and say "Most Jews live in New York. I hate New York."

Levin says it was instances like this that inspired Chicago (born Judith Syliva Cohen), now 67, to create one of her best-known works, "The Holocaust Project: From Darkness Into Light," which debuted at the Spertus Museum in 1993, eight years after Chicago and her husband, photographer Donald Woodman, began work on it. The exhibit toured the country and parts of it are now on view through July 6 at the Hebrew Union College in New York.

On Holocaust Remembrance Day, Sunday 15, Levin will share insights from her research, which included interviews with the artist, her family, friends and classmates, at the Spertus. This illustrated talk will survey the artist's youth in Chicago, delve into her early work in the civil rights movement at UCLA, and explore how Chicago embraced the lessons of her father, a rabbi, to fight injustices against all people; it also will address the controversies associated with trying to

depict the Holocaust and its relevance in the contemporary world.

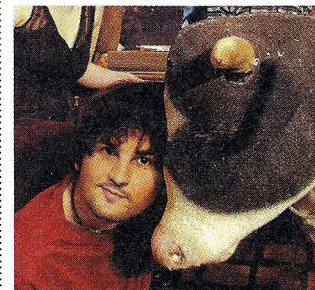
"The Holocaust Project" was often misunderstood—[people thought] that it was a quiet memorial—but it was to get people to talk...it addresses many victims of the Holocaust, like Gypsies, homosexuals, lesbians," Levin says. "She asks her audience to think of the ways we treat other people around the world—like in Darfur today...it's about the inhumanity of humankind."

In *Becoming Judy Chicago*, Levin tells how the artist's father, Arthur Cohen, worked at the post office at Canal and Van Buren Streets along with novelist Richard Wright. Levin cites Wright's descriptions of racism there, explaining how this experience motivated Cohen—and later, his daughter—to become involved in civil rights efforts. In her monumental work, "The Dinner Party" (1979), a reinterpretation of the Last Supper from the point of view of the women who prepared it, Chicago focused on women's "erased" history; the piece is now on permanent display at the Brooklyn Museum. Levin notes that the similarly controversial "Holocaust Project"

concluded on a "very hopeful note"—with people from all cultures sitting around the table and a woman giving a blessing.

While Chicago, now a resident of New Mexico, had attended classes at the Art Institute since she was five years old, she did not receive a scholarship to the college and moved out of town in 1958 to attend UCLA. It was in Los Angeles that she received the name Judy Chicago, bestowed on her by her gallery rep for her heavy Chicago accent, which, Levin says, she still has today.

Gail Levin presents an illustrated talk on *Becoming Judy Chicago: A Biography of the Artist at the Spertus Museum Sunday 15. See Around Town. Books are available at the museum and at <http://faculty.baruch.cuny.edu/glevin/index.html>.*



out how much carbon dioxide was put out into the atmosphere. Then we buy green energy credits from NativeEnergy ([nativeenergy.com](http://nativeenergy.com)) to compensate...buying wind energy from reservations. To absorb what we put out, we plant enough trees to absorb the pollutants. In 2006 we planted 500. We'll probably do twice that in 2007; we go through American Forests ([americanforests.org](http://americanforests.org)). We [also] mounted solar panels on top of the van to power battery packs for our laptops and cell phones.

#### Are other bands following suit?

We get calls from bands wanting to do the best thing with their [CDs], like Willie Nelson, Andrew Bird. It's becoming easier and more affordable to do. —Jake Malooley

Cloud Cult plays Wednesday 18. See Music.