



# UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

DAVID C. DRISKELL CENTER  
FOR THE STUDY OF THE VISUAL ARTS AND CULTURE OF  
AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **A SPIRITUAL AND SYMBOLIC DISPLAY THROUGH SCULPTURE WITH ALISON SAAR: STILL... PRESENTED BY THE DAVID C. DRISKELL CENTER**

COLLEGE PARK, Md.— **ALISON SAAR: STILL...**, a collection of 11 sculptures created by artist Alison Saar, includes works from 2010 to 2012 and combines the ruggedness of nature with solid structure; the exhibition includes four never-exhibited works and six new pieces. The exhibition will open at the Driskell Center on **Thursday, September 12, 2013** with an opening reception, featuring a gallery tour by the artist, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. and will stay on display through **Friday, December 13, 2013**.

Alison Saar's work is deeply tied to her multiracial heritage, and it is through this lens which she so strikingly captures the human spirit. Through her sculptures, she displays the primal intensity of people underlying the civility of everyday life. Saar scrutinizes bigotry and historical burdens and portrays these concepts through a visual and kinesthetic tension, common in many of her pieces. One such powerful piece titled *Weight* shows a young black girl on a swing, weighed down with shackles, a lock and key, boxing gloves and other assorted items on a cotton scale. In his May, 1993 art review, *Alison Saar: Big Ideas and Considerable Skill*, LA Times art critic Christopher Knight likened the originality of her work to Michelangelo.

Saar's use of commonplace and specialized materials in her works make them highly unique. When interviewed for the opening *Alison Saar: Still*, Saar noted her use of diverse materials, "My studio is floor-to-ceiling with materials like that, and when I start cleaning up and going through them, ideas start coming. Like, 'Oh, yeah! This could be something!' So I try to keep stuff around. It's the new little things that can take you to different places." Saar's philosophy for understanding her art is to "Just look at it." She refuses to explicitly define her pieces, instead wishing that people use their own experiences to draw meaning from them, rather than being told what they mean.

Combining African art and ritual, Greek mythology, and German aspects of expressionism, Saar challenges stereotypes and offers an indictment of human discrimination. This exhibition, organized by the Ben Maltz Gallery, Otis College of Art and Design, funded in part by the Contemporary

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Collectors—Orange County, has traveled to the Figge Art Museum, and later it will travel to Bakalar & Paine Galleries, MassArt in Massachusetts.

## **ABOUT ALISON SAAR**

Saar, born February 5, 1956, is one of three daughters of artist Betye Saar and was encouraged from an early age to explore and engage with art. She completed her BFA in studio art and art history at Scripps College in Claremont, CA, in 1978, and received her MFA from the Otis Art Institution in Los Angeles, CA, in 1981. Saar studied Afro-Caribbean, Haitian, African, and Afro-Cuban art with Samella Lewis and became interested in African American folk art which has heavily influenced her own art.

In 1982, at the age of twenty-six, her work was presented in her first solo exhibition at the Jan Baum Gallery in Los Angeles, CA. She has since exhibited at many venues across the United States including the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA, 1993; the Phyllis Kind Gallery, NY, 2001; and the LUX Art Institute, Encinitas, CA, 2011, where she also currently serves as an artist in residence. Saar has received numerous awards and fellowships, including the New York City Art Commission's Excellence in Design Award, 2005; the 2004 Anonymous Was a Woman Award; and fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, 1989; and the National Endowment for the Arts, 1988, among others.

## **ABOUT THE CENTER**

The David C. Driskell Center honors the legacy of David C. Driskell, Distinguished University Professor Emeritus of Art, Artist, Art Historian, Collector and Curator, by preserving the rich heritage of African American visual art and culture. The Driskell Center is committed to preserving, documenting, and presenting African American art, as well as replenishing and expanding the field of African American art.

The David C. Driskell facility is wheelchair accessible. The Driskell Center Gallery hours are Monday through Friday from 11a.m. to 4p.m. with extended hours on Wednesday until 6p.m. The Driskell Center Gallery will additionally be open on Saturday, September 28, October 19, November 16, and December 7, from 11a.m. to 4p.m. The Driskell Center observes all University of Maryland closings due to inclement weather and holidays, including the Thanksgiving holiday November 28-29, 2013. For further information regarding this exhibition and future activities at the Driskell Center, please call **301.314.2615** or visit [www.driskellcenter.umd.edu](http://www.driskellcenter.umd.edu). All exhibitions and events at the David C. Driskell Center are free and open to the public. The David C. Driskell Center's Exhibition Program is supported, in part, by a grant from the Maryland State Arts Council.