

## Alison Saar's 'Salon' Connects Cultures at 2024 Paris Olympics

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Julien De Rosa/Afp Via Getty Images

[Alison Saar](#), represented by [L.A. Louver](#) in Los Angeles, has unveiled her latest work, *Salon*, as part of the [Olympic Art Visions initiative](#) for the [2024 Paris Olympics](#). Inspired by the original concept of the Olympics as a gathering for athletes to compete and share ideas of excellence and compassion, Saar aimed to create a sculpture that fosters community and interaction. Selected by an advisory board composed of representatives from the International Olympic Committee (IOC), City of Paris officials, and international art

community members, Saar was chosen for her commitment to Olympic values and the vision of Paris 2024.

“I wished to create a sculpture that was less a monument and more about creating a space where visitors could gather, make friends, and share ideas, music, poetry, and art,” Saar explained. “I hope this work helps acknowledge the role of people of color in creating this country and illustrates what a rich and culturally diverse city Paris is today.”

The sculpture, cast in bronze, features a central figure of a Black woman holding a flame in one hand and an olive branch in the other, symbolizing peace and unity. Surrounding her are six chairs, each representing different cultures and regions. These chairs were cast from original found chairs, preserving the details of their use and history.

Saar, known for her focus on issues of justice and compassion, has exhibited her work in prominent venues such as MoMA, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Museum of Fine Arts Houston. Her previous works include the first public monument to Harriet Tubman in New York City. *Salon* marks her first public project outside the United States.

“If ‘Salon’ can become a destination for collaboration and sharing, that would be ideal. But if it also serves as a place for people passing by to take a moment and sit and think about ideas of peace, generosity, and kindness, then that would make me happy too,” Saar expressed.

Altogether, Saar’s *Salon* embodies the Olympic values of unity and peace, offering a space for reflection and connection during the Paris 2024 Games. As the world converges in Paris, Saar’s sculpture will serve as a powerful symbol of diversity and community, reinforcing

the lasting impact of art while celebrating the Olympic spirit. Check out our interview with the artist below to learn more about her Olympic commission.



Credit: loc – Gianluca Cipolat Mis

**What inspired the concept for your Olympics 2024 Paris Sculpture and how did you interpret and incorporate Olympic values in your artwork?**

I was interested in the original concept of the Olympics as a gathering of athletes from all over the world to come together not only to compete but to share in ideas of excellence and compassion.

**Can you describe the materials and techniques you used for this sculpture?**

This sculpture is cast bronze. The central figure, a Black woman holding a flame in the palm of one hand and a bough for an olive tree in the other. She is surrounded by six chairs representing different



cultures and regions from around the world. Each chair was found and the original was cast in bronze, so one can see the wear on use of the original chair in the details.

**What challenges did you face during the creation of this piece?**

I think what was most challenging was getting out of my comfort zone of working in my own studio in Los Angeles. However, creating this work entirely in France gave me the opportunity to meet new craftspersons and learn techniques different from my own. It was also a way to reduce the carbon footprint for the project and to support local artisans.

**How does this project differ from your previous works?**

Generally my work is smaller and more intimate in scale. I think the ideas behind *Salon* reflect much of my practice as an artist hoping to address issues of bigotry and promote compassion



Credit: loc – Storm Studio



**What are some recurring themes or elements in your general artistic practice?**

My work often touches on issues of feminism, racial and gender equity.

**What role does cultural history play in your work?**

Cultural history plays a huge role in my work. I am often looking to historical events to point to the current struggles in today's society.

**Can you describe your creative process from initial idea to final piece?**

When beginning a work I can be inspired by any number of things, the news, events in my personal life, music, nature, sometimes a found object. I will make a few sketches of how I would like to realize an idea and then begin in the process of making a piece. I work in a number of mediums, paint, printmaking and sculpture to name a few. When carving a sculpture in wood I use a chainsaw and finish with carving tools that were given to me by my father on my eighteenth birthday.

**How has your artistic style evolved over time?**

Even though I received a masters degree in art, I never took any sculpture classes, so the early works were very crude. Overtime I have refined my carving skills but I still embrace the raw, more brute aspects of my style.

**What future projects or themes are you excited to explore next?**

I am currently working on a public commission for Destination Crenshaw an outdoor public "museum", so to speak, of works along Crenshaw Boulevard, a historically important African American neighborhood, where I spent a good deal of my time as a child.