



Powerful Artworks by Alison Saar in Dialogue with the Toni Morrison Papers at the Princeton University Art Museum

originally published: 01/11/2023

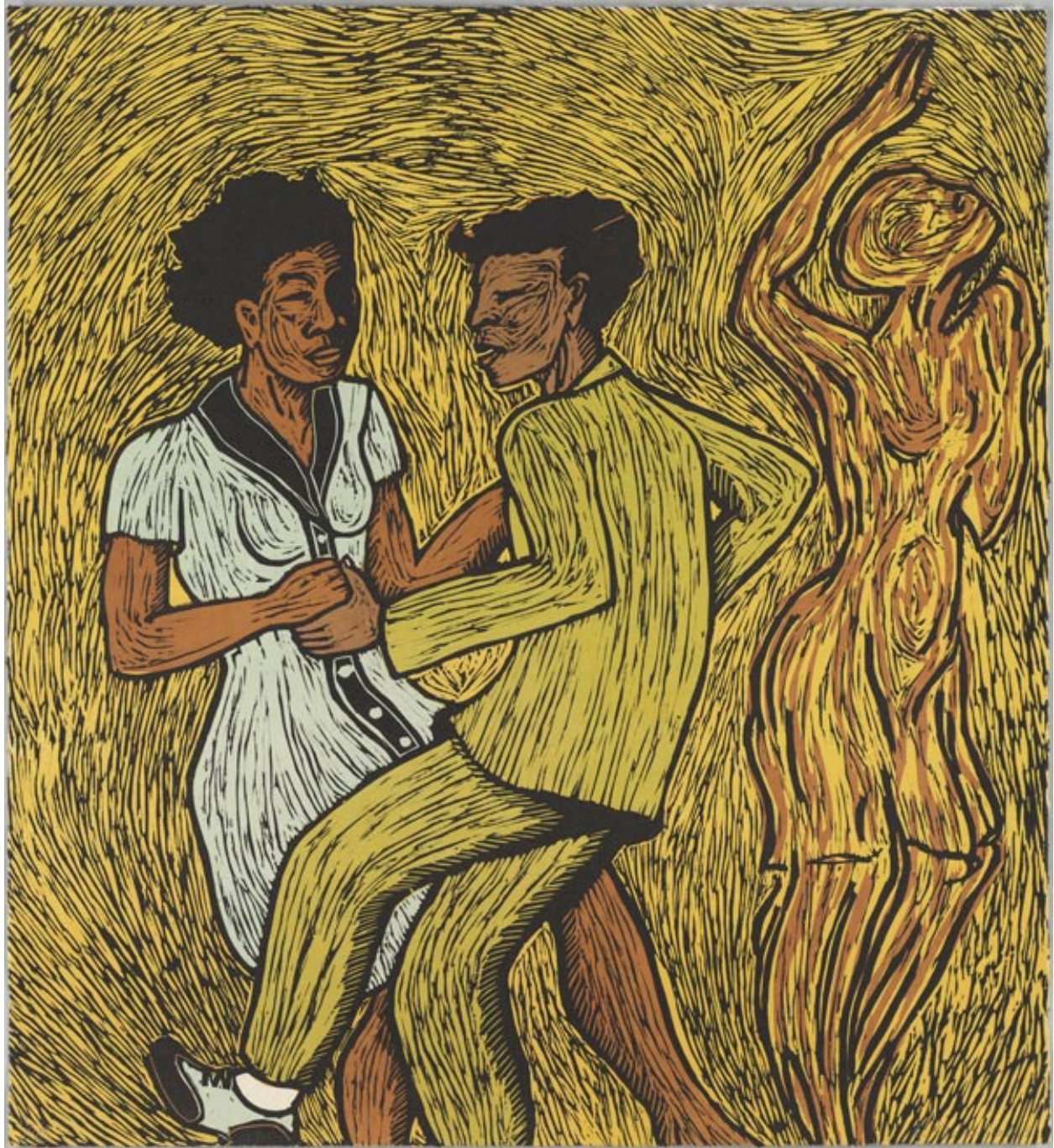


Alison Saar (born 1956, Los Angeles, CA; active Los Angeles), Syncopatin', 2019. Multi-block linocut; 49.5 × 45.7 cm, 58.4 × 54.6 cm (frame). Museum purchase, Kathleen Compton Sherrerd Fund for Acquisitions in American Art (2022-30.6) © Alison Saar / courtesy of L.A. Louver, Venice, CA

(PRINCETON, NJ) -- As part of a campus-wide celebration of the life's work of Toni Morrison (1931–2019)—acclaimed author, essayist, Nobel Laureate, and Princeton professor—the **Princeton University Art Museum** will present an exhibition bringing together selections from the Toni Morrison Papers with sculptures, prints, and textiles by the artist Alison Saar (born 1956).

Morrison and Saar both draw inspiration from artistic techniques, cultural beliefs, and historical truths of the African American experience for their work, and both speak about the importance of using their work to foster the creativity of future generations of Black artists. This exhibition takes its title from Saar's term "cycle of creativity," used to describe the process of intergenerational exchange; *Cycle of Creativity: Alison Saar and the Toni Morrison Papers*, will be on view at the Museum's Art@Bainbridge gallery from February 25 through July 9, 2023.

"Toni Morrison and her legacy are inseparable from Princeton University, and her work, in its extraordinary fecundity and breadth, resonates far beyond our institution," said James Steward, Nancy A. Nasher–David J. Haemisegger, Class of 1976, Director of the Museum. "By placing selections from Morrison's papers alongside Saar's potent artworks in various media, we will have the rare opportunity to see the overlaps between two brilliant minds at work."



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Jitterbug, 2019. Multi-block linocut; 49.5 × 45.7 cm, 58.4 × 54.6 cm
(frame). Museum purchase, Kathleen Compton Sherrerd Fund for
Acquisitions in American Art (2022-30.3) © Alison Saar / courtesy
of L.A. Louver, Venice, CA**

Organized around themes of musicality, labor, and ancestors, the exhibition underscores how those ideas are woven into the work of both Saar and Morrison—in their subject matter and in their working processes through composition, voice, and audience. Saar is well represented in the Princeton University Art Museum’s collections, and the exhibition brings a selection of her prints—on paper and textile—into conversation with selections from the vast trove of Morrison’s papers held in the Princeton University Library. The Princeton University Art Museum owns 13 works by Saar, 11 of which will be included in the exhibition.

Alongside these works drawn from across the University’s collections, important loans from Saar and from private collections expand and enrich our understanding of the artist’s practice. Among the loans is *Torch Song* (2020), a six-foot-tall sculpture of a jazz singer enrobed in a necklace of piano keys and holding a burning flame. The sculpture is made of tin ceiling tiles, which have been a signature of Saar’s practice since she began collecting them around Harlem during her residency at the Studio Museum in the early 1980s. Additional significant loans include a bronze study for the full-scale sculpture of Harriet Tubman that was permanently installed in Harlem in 2008, at which time it was the first public memorial to an African American woman in the city; and the striking sculpture *Cotton*, whose subject finds echoes in the Museum’s textile work *Reapers* and the large-scale print *White Guise*, each invoking the historical intertwining of cotton picking and identity in the American South.

“In shaping her papers, Morrison saw the collection not only as an archive of documents from the past but also as a springboard for future creative possibilities. In accepting our invitation to join the campus-wide conversations about Toni Morrison’s practice, Alison Saar has embraced the opportunity for her works to remain open-ended, accruing additional meanings in relationship to Morrison’s writings,” said Mitra Abbaspour, the Museum’s Haskell Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art. “Through their practices which span materials, media, and forms of engagement, Saar and Morrison reveal the ways in which they have each innovated and explored; now with this exhibition, we invite the wider public into this conversation.”



Alison Saar (born 1956, Los Angeles, CA; active Los Angeles), Torch Song, 2020. Wood, copper, ceiling tin, enamel paint, leather belts and vintage piano keys; 182.9 × 55.9 × 66 cm. Tia Collection, Santa Fe, NM (AB-2023-1) ©Alison Saar; Courtesy of Tia Collection, Santa Fe, NM. Photographed by Jeff McLane, courtesy of L.A. Louver, Venice, CA

Cycle of Creativity: Alison Saar and the Toni Morrison Papers accompanies a series of related initiatives, including Sites of Memory: The Archival World of Toni Morrison, an exhibition of the author's papers at the University's Milberg Gallery at Firestone Library, opening on February 22, 2023; "Sites of Memory: Practice, Performance, Perception," a landmark symposium taking place from March 23 to 25, 2023; and a suite of new performance commissions at the McCarter Theatre Center, also scheduled for spring 2023. Altogether, the project aims to assert the vital legacy of Morrison's work and explore the ways in which it continues to ground American culture.

Art@Bainbridge is a gallery project of the Princeton University Art Museum. It is housed in the carefully restored colonial-era Bainbridge House at 158 Nassau Street in downtown Princeton. Admission is free. Art@Bainbridge is made possible through the generous support of Virginia and Bagley Wright, Class of 1946, Program Fund for Modern and Contemporary Art; the Kathleen C. Sherrerd Program Fund for American Art; Joshua R. Slocum, Class of 1998, and Sara Slocum; Rachelle Belfer Malkin, Class of 1986, and Anthony E. Malkin; Barbara and Gerald Essig; Gene Locks, Class of 1959, and Sueyun Locks; and Ivy Beth Lewis.

With a collecting history that extends back to 1755, the **Princeton University Art Museum** is one of the leading university art museums in the country, with collections that have grown to include more than 113,000 works of art ranging from ancient to contemporary art and spanning the globe. Committed to advancing Princeton's teaching and research missions, the Art Museum serves as a gateway to the University for visitors from around the world.

The main Museum building is currently closed for the construction of a bold and welcoming new building, designed by Sir David Adjaye in collaboration with executive architects Cooper Robertson and slated to open in late 2024.

Art on Hulfish is open daily in downtown Princeton at 11 Hulfish Street. Art@Bainbridge is open Tuesday through Sunday at 158 Nassau Street in downtown Princeton. Admission to both galleries is free. Please visit the Museum's website for digital access to the collections, a diverse portfolio of programs, and details on visiting our downtown galleries. The Museum Store in Palmer Square, located at 56 Nassau Street in downtown Princeton, is open daily—or shop online at www.princetonmuseumstore.org

<https://www.newjerseystage.com/articles/getarticle2.php?titlelink=powerful-artworks-by-alison-saar-in-dialogue-with-the-toni-morrison-papers-at-the-princeton-university-art-museum>