



*Kitchen Amazon*, 2019, wood, ceiling tin, barbed wire, tar, found skillets, linoleum, and found chain  
81 x 21 x 20 in. (205.7 x 53.3 x 50.8 cm)

# ALISON SAAR

## CHAOS IN THE KITCHEN



Frieze Los Angeles • Paramount Pictures Studios  
13–16 February 2020 • Stand D14

**Venice, CA** -- L.A. Louver is pleased to participate in *Frieze Los Angeles 2020* with a solo presentation by L.A. artist Alison Saar, titled *Chaos in the Kitchen*. In this new body of work, created specifically for the art fair, Saar celebrates the unsung work of women, who “maintain the world while cooking in the kitchen.”

Through large- and small-scale sculptures, and paintings on found materials, Saar’s emphatic female figures are domestically interpreted, but far from docile. Rather, Saar reveres the kitchen as a powerful realm, where a woman claims her role as mother, caretaker, provider and priestess, to cook, conjure, create, concoct, captivate, command. In *Kitchen Amazon* (2019), a towering female figure stands erect; its subject and title refer to Hercules’ ninth labor to retrieve the girdle from the Amazonian Queen Hippolyta. Carved from wood and clad with found ceiling tile, and girded with a skirt of cast iron skillets like armor, Saar’s Amazon refuses to capitulate so easily. Cookware becomes warfare. With a skillet gripped overhead, the formidable nude holds her ground, steadfast, confident and unmoved.

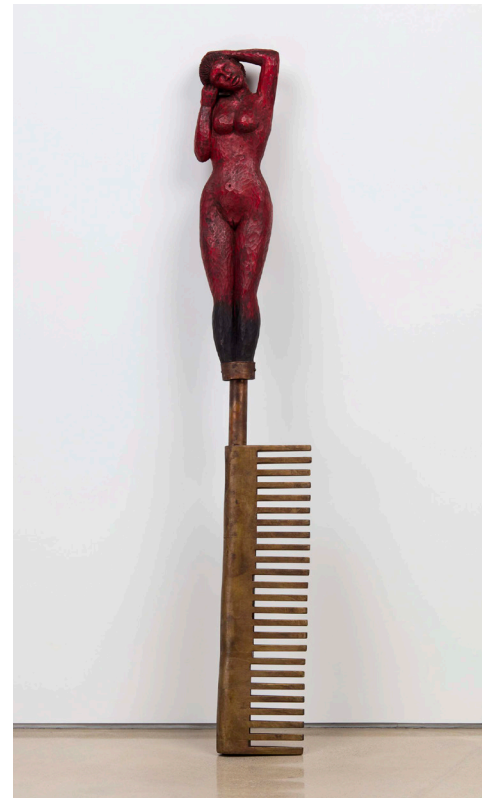
Perhaps more ambiguously postured, *Set to Simmer* (2019) features a nude female figure, made from the same materials, seductively reclining atop a red dining table. A single chair invites the viewer to pull up a seat, only to be confronted by her apparent willingness, as well as her dominance. She allows you to partake, but she sets both the table and the rules. Subverting the classic odalisque, as understood within an art historical context, the reposing figure clasps a frying pan in place of a handheld mirror. While vanity is hinted at – her sensuality is more than just a physical trait, but a bodily manifestation of life’s driving force. As articulated by poet and activist Audre Lorde, “The very word erotic comes from the Greek word *eros*, the personification of love in all its aspects – born of Chaos, and personifying creative power and harmony. When I speak of the erotic, then, I speak of it as an assertion of the life force of women; of that creative energy empowered, the knowledge and use of which we are now reclaiming in our language, our history, our dancing, our loving, our work, our lives.”

The title for this body of new work, *Chaos in the Kitchen*, points to the origin story in Greek mythology where all was born from Chaos, “the vast immeasurable abyss, outrageous as a sea, dark, wasteful, wild” (John Milton, *Paradise Lost*), thereby casting the kitchen as the site where creation takes place – the nucleus of the home that generates sustenance. It also embraces the idea of chaos as an unpredictable energy that breeds disruption, upending the kitchen as a domain in which order must be maintained, particularly a woman’s role therein.



*Congolene Resistance*, 2020, enamel on found tin  
18 in. (45.7 cm) diameter

Beyond challenging a woman's place in the kitchen, Saar considers the idea of "beauty" and the untenable heights to which women are often measured – face, physique and hair – the last being a recurring motif in the artist's work. Saar commonly coifs her figures with hair made from barbed wire, its sharply cut edges left intact – *look but don't touch*. However, Saar indirectly touches on hair and the implements meant to mane tame in *Hot Comb Haint, Caldonia* (2020). Using a found hot comb, Saar carved its wooden handle into a blue female form, a genie-like figure made in reference to haints, ghostly spirits of American Southern lore. Measuring over 7 ft. (2 m) tall, an outsized version of a hot comb titled *The Big Singe* (2020), looms large. Carved from wood, a red female figure plumes from its handle like a smoky apparition rising from the burning singe. Saar has also produced a number of paintings on found materials that recapitulate the subjects addressed in the sculptures, including *Congolene Resistance* (2020), an enamel painting on found tin. Upon its rounded surface meant to approximate an enlarged pomade lid, Saar painted a portrait of a woman with a hot comb clenched between her teeth, her hair in a wild, natural state, "stubborn and kinky," as the text flanking her implies.



*The Big Singe*, 2020, wood, metal, enamel paint, spray tar  
86 x 13 x 7 in. (218.4 x 33 x 17.8 cm)

In conceiving these works, Saar cited the words of Zora Neale Hurston: "I have been in Sorrow's kitchen and licked out all the pots. Then I have stood on the peaky mountain wrapped in rainbows, with a harp and a sword in my hands." Sourcing literature and poetry, African American folklore, Grecian epics, historical occurrences and personal experience, Saar's sculptures are steeped with the mythic truths of our lives, becoming vessels that bridge the spiritual with the physical, calling forward stories of the past to contemplate the present.

*Alison Saar: Recipes for Trouble*, a recipe book with illustrations of Saar's sculpture and paintings, will be published on the occasion of L.A. Louver's presentation at *Frieze Los Angeles 2020*.

**Alison Saar** was born and raised in Los Angeles, California. Saar received her B.A. in studio art and art history in 1978 from Scripps College, Claremont, California. She went on to earn her MFA from Otis-Parsons Institute (now Otis College of Art and Design). She has received three fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts (1984, 1985 and 1988), and was awarded the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship in 1989, the Flintridge Foundation Award for Visual Artists in 2000, the Joan Mitchell Foundation Award in 1998 and the Joan Mitchell Artist in Residence in 2013. In 2012, the United States Artists Program named Saar one of 50 USA fellows. Select public works include *Monument to the Great Northern Migration* (Chicago, Illinois), *Swing Low: Harriet Tubman Memorial* (Harlem, New York) and *Embodied* (Los Angeles, California). In 2020, Armory Center for the Arts and the Benton Museum of Art at Pomona College will jointly present *Alison Saar: Of Aether and Earthe*, an exhibition of the artist's sculptures and installations at both locations. Also forthcoming, *Mirror, Mirror: The Prints of Alison Saar*, an extensive traveling exhibition dedicated to her prints, will be on view at the Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio.

Concurrently on view at L.A. Louver

*Alison Saar: Syncopation* / A mini-survey of the artist's prints, alongside related sculptures / 29 January – 29 February 2020  
*Edward and Nancy Kienholz: The Merry-Go-World or Begat By Chance and The Wonder Horse Trigger* / A large-scale tableau that examines "the random accident of birth, the mystery involved, and the importance of all life." / Through 22 February 2020

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