

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Alison Saar: *Coup*
23 February – 25 March 2006
Opening reception:
Saturday, 25 February, 4:00-8:00 p.m.



Cache, 2006, mixed media (wood, ceiling tin & wire)
28 x 26 x 90 in. (71.1 x 66 x 228.6 cm)

L.A. Louver is pleased to announce the gallery's first solo exhibition of the work of Alison Saar. Entitled *Coup* (derived from the French *couper*, "to cut" as well as meaning an aggressive blow or rifle shot), the exhibition will include both large and small-scale sculpture, as well as a series of drawings.

Alison Saar's art is a personal form of visual narrative, which combines her skills in wood carving with a sophisticated understanding of assemblage and folk art techniques. In Saar's work, spirituality and politics converge, to reflect the artist's exploration of the role of women, in particular African-American women.

Coup, 2006, the title piece of the exhibition, is a sculpture of a woman sitting on a small chair with a pair of scissors balancing on her lap. The woman's hair cascades down her back and is entwined in ropes, which in turn encircle a pile of old suitcases. The narrative alludes to the action that the figure is poised to make: to cut away her past. The female form is carved from wood that Saar enrobes with ceiling tin; the hair is made of wire, while the ropes, suitcases and scissors are all found materials. The salvaged ceiling tin and found objects are favorite materials for Saar, who states "I think of the materials I work with as artifacts: they have spirit and wisdom."

A second life-size sculpture is *Cache*, 2006 -- the French word for hiding place. Here too Saar gives hair (an important aspect of African and African-American female identity) a dominant role in the narrative. *Cache* depicts a woman in repose with hair stretched out on the floor above her head, and bound into a huge ball. The massive quantity of hair depicted alludes to the accumulation of experience, to the passage of time, and to all that time holds and keeps.

Mirror, Mirror, 2006, a sculpture of a pre-adolescent girl who stands erect and holds a skillet like a mirror to her face, addresses the questioning of identity. For over six years, Saar has worked with used skillets, which symbolize the role of women in the home. Saar's multicultural heritage has led her to examine her own racial and cultural identity, as well as her role as women in contemporary society. Because Saar is a mother of a twelve-year old daughter (as well as a 16-year old son), *Mirror, Mirror*, 2006 has added personal resonance for the artist.

Other sculptures in the exhibition include a series of skillet forms cast from bronze that incorporate faces and breast reliefs, and a twenty-foot long braid cast in bronze. A selection of drawings that relate in subject to the sculptures are included in the exhibition.

Continued

The Artist

Alison Saar was born in 1956 and grew up in Laurel Canyon, California. The daughter of renowned artist Betye Saar and painter/conservator Richard Saar, Alison and her sisters (the artist Lezley Saar and writer Tracye Saar) were encouraged to pursue their love of art through books and family museum visits. During high school, Saar assisted her father with his restoration work and came into close contact with a wide range of cultural artifacts. Through her handling of work that ranged from Chinese frescoes and Egyptians mummies, to Pre-Columbian and African art, Saar gained an insight into, and an appreciation of, a rich diversity of materials, techniques, and cultural aesthetics.

Saar received her B.A. degree in studio art and art history in 1978 from Scripps College, Claremont, California, where she studied with noted art historian Dr. Samuella Lewis. She went on to earn her MFA from Otis-Parsons Institute (now Otis College of Art + Design).

Saar has been artist-in-residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York City, in 1983; Roswell Museum of Art, New Mexico, in 1985; Washington Project for the Arts, Washington, D.C., in 1986 and Hopkins Center, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire in 2003. She has received three fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts (in 1984, 1985 and 1988), and was awarded the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship in 1989, and Flintridge Foundation Award for Visual Artists in 2000. Saar's work may be found in many public collections, including the High Museum, Atlanta; Walker Institute, Minneapolis; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art (where it was include in the 1993 Biennial), New York.

Alison Saar's work is currently on view in the touring exhibition *Family Legacies: The Art of Betye, Lezley and Alison Saar*, organized by Jessica Dallow and Barbara C. Matilsky for the Ackland Art Museum, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The exhibition is at the Ackland Art Museum through 26 March 2006 and thereafter will travel to the Pasadena Museum of California Art, Pasadena, California, 30 April through 24 September 2006.



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