

Alison Saar

Hither

8 March through 5 April 2008

Opening reception for the artist: Saturday, 8 March 2008, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Hither (adv.) 1. To or towards this place; 2. Up to this point, thus far.

– Oxford English Dictionary

Venice, CA - L.A. Louver is pleased to present a solo exhibition of new sculpture and works on paper by Los Angeles-based artist Alison Saar.

Entitled *Hither*, the exhibition embraces the artist's abiding interest in addressing the human condition, specifically that of women. Saar explores issues surrounding identity, fertility and aging, in her life-size free-standing forms, wall sculptures and works on paper. The artist uses a variety of materials to make the work, including those with which she has long been identified: wood, reclaimed ceiling tile and tar. Saar also incorporates a greater use of bronze in several sculptures, and for the first time, has cast a form in fiberglass.

The title piece of the exhibition, *Hither*, 2008, is a life-size sculpture of a standing woman. The exhibition visitor is led to the sculpture by scores of light blue, painted and gessoed copper moths that adorn the gallery walls and seem to mass towards the female form. The moths also cover the woman: their pale, seemingly fragile and ethereal bodies acting in marked contrast to the solid, dark mass of the figure. The woman's eyes are blank, and moths spew from her mouth -- the moths are both drawn to, and emanate from, her form.

Equinox, 2008, is comprised of two small figures: one light and one dark in color, of equal scale, joined at the soles of the feet and attached to the wall. The bottom figure eats pomegranates. The juice of the fruit flows upwards to connect with a milky stream that pours from the breasts of the top figure. The sculpture references the myth of Persephone, daughter of Demeter and Zeus, who embodied the earth's fertility. Abducted by Hades and forced to live in the underworld, Demeter's mourning of her daughter's loss turned the earth fallow. In response, Zeus granted Persephone's release from her destiny on the condition that no food had passed her lips. However, in a ruse to seal her fate in the land of the dead, Persephone was tricked by Hades to eat pomegranate seeds. A compromise between father and captor was wrought, and Persephone was permitted to live on earth for six months, and in the underworld for six months, thereby giving rise to the origination of the seasons.



Hither, 2008, wood, copper, tar & paint,
64 x 16 x 14 in. (162.6 x 40.6 x 35.6 cm)

In *Brood*, 2008, a number of children's chairs are stacked on high. Atop this tall, seemingly rickety tower a young woman (cast in fiberglass) eats a pomegranate. Pomegranates (cast in bronze) are also attached to the chairs, as if tossed down by the figure that eats with rapacious appetite. The casting away of the fruit contrasts the accretion of the diminutive chairs.

(continued)

Four bronze wall sculptures refer to the free-standing sculptures and are titled after the lunar seas named by Galileo: *Sea of Serenity*, *Sea of Nectar*, *Sea of Moisture* and *Sea of Fecundity* (all 2008). Each piece focuses on a part of the body: *Sea of Serenity* – a face covered in moths; *Sea of Nectar* – breasts from which streams of milk emanate; *Sea of Moisture* – a torso covered in droplets that might be blood or sweat or tears, and *Sea of Fecundity* – an abdomen from which branches sprout pomegranates. *Sea of Nectar* is also the title of a life-size female figure that stands tall; skeins of milky roots (painted bronze) cascade from her breasts to the floor. Saar also uses bronze to create the roots that emanate from the reposing figure entitled *Bareroot*, 2007.



Bareroot, 2008, wood, bronze, ceiling tin and tar
17 x 81 x 48 in. (43.2 x 205.7 x 121.9 cm)

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 and writer Tracey) 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 spectrum 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 and 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 (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.; and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art (where it was included in the 1993 Biennial), New York.

Saar was recently commissioned by the City of New York to create a sculpture of abolitionist Harriet Tubman. Standing 13 feet high, the sculpture was installed in September 2007 at the crossroads of St. Nicholas Avenue, Frederick Douglass Boulevard and 123rd street in Harlem.

L.A. Louver is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Validated parking available.



For further information and visuals, please contact:
Elizabeth East, L.A. Louver, 45 North Venice Boulevard
Venice, CA 90291, USA
telephone 310-822-4955; fax: 310-821-7529
e-mail: Elizabeth@lalouver.com; website: www.lalouver.com