PRESS RELEASE

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Fellows of Contemporary Art Bestows
2020 Curators Award and $80,000 Grant
to the Curators at
Pomona College Museum of Art
and Armory Center for the Arts

Los Angeles, CA: The Fellows of Contemporary Art (FOCA) has awarded the 2020 Curator’s Award to Rebecca McGrew at the Pomona College Museum of Art and Irene Tsatsos at the Armory Center for the Arts for an exhibition of work of Los-Angeles based artist Alison Saar. The exhibition will be on view at both venues September 1 to December 19, 2020. The $80,000 grant supports the catalog accompanying the exhibition, published by the Pomona College Museum of Art and co-edited by McGrew and Tsatsos.

ABOUT THE AWARD
Since 1975, FOCA has been active in funding and promoting contemporary artists, exhibitions, and publications by emerging and mid-career California artists, and has established an impressive historical record of supporting the work of California artists and curators. FOCA’s Curators Award underwrites the cost of the exhibitions and scholarly catalogs of California artists developed by California curators for major museums and other art venues. In a highly competitive process, every two years FOCA invites selected curators to submit exhibition proposals. Of the several dozen proposals submitted, only a handful are selected to make onsite presentations to FOCA’s esteemed Curators Award Committee. One proposal receives the Curators Award to realize and present the exhibition and accompanying publication.
“The proposal written by McGrew and Tsatsos and submitted by the museum at Pomona College, for a two-venue exhibition and publication on the work of Alison Saar, stood out among the many accomplished proposals,” notes FOCA chair Donna Gottlieb.

“This is a great honor for us,” said McGrew, with Tsatsos adding: “This exhibition exemplifies the ongoing commitment of both institutions to curatorial excellence and engaging our communities with extraordinary art and creative programs.”

ABOUT THE ARTIST AND THE PROJECT

Los Angeles-based artist Alison Saar has a transformative sculpture and painting practice. Inspired by her mother, artist Betye Saar, and her father, ceramist and art restorer Richard Saar, Alison grew up surrounded by creativity. In her artwork, Saar tells stories through figurative forms that focus on personal and cultural narratives. With her use of distinctive lines and materials, she creates powerful figurative sculptures, paintings, and prints that activate histories and legacies of survival. Saar transforms her figures by giving them agency and strength, often arming them with personal belongings or tools to center their tenacity, resilience, and communal significance. Saar graduated from Scripps College in 1978, and received her M.F.A. from Otis Art Institute in 1981.

The Pomona College Museum of Art in Claremont and the Armory Center for the Arts in Pasadena are partnering to present an exhibition that will explore Saar’s site-specific and installation-oriented work around themes connected to myths and archetypes, invisible bodies and hidden histories, and timeless paradigms of grounding and transformation. The missions of Pomona College and the Armory—art institutions rooted in education—reinforce Saar’s vision of providing critical insight into history and contemporary narratives. The focus at Pomona on Saar’s research practice, artistic process, and her public art works, connects with the Armory Center’s interest in inclusive dialogue through community exploration of contemporary art production and practices. In Claremont, Saar will create a public artwork to commemorate the opening of the new museum at Pomona College in Fall 2020. The Armory will focus on new iterations of Saar’s site-responsive installations.

Pomona College will publish the monographic catalog that will accompany the Armory and Pomona exhibition. Supported by FOCA’s Curators Award, the book will be a rich survey of Saar’s work, with several essays that situate her work within art history and a global contemporary focus. Rebecca
McGrew, Irene Tsatsos, and Pomona College Professor of Art History Phyllis Jackson will contribute essays to the book; additional authors are under consideration. Kimberly Varella of Content Object, Los Angeles, will design the 192-page book.

Concurrently, the Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery at Scripps College will host a traveling exhibition of Saar’s prints from the Jordan Schnitzer Collection in Portland, Oregon, curated by Saar and Kimberly Davis of LA Louver Gallery in Venice, California. “Mirror Mirror: The Prints and Sculpture of Alison Saar from the Jordan Schnitzer Family Foundation” will be on view from September 1 to December 19, 2020.

ABOUT THE PARTNERS

FOCA is a non-profit, independent, and membership-based organization that supports contemporary art in California. For more information on FOCA, call (213) 808-1008 or visit http://focala.org.

The Pomona College Museum of Art, in Claremont, California, is the primary visual art facility of Pomona College. For more information, call (909) 621-8283 or visit www.pomona.edu/museum.

The Armory Center for the Arts, in Pasadena, California, is one of the Los Angeles region’s leading independent institutions for contemporary art and community arts education. For more information on the Armory Center for the Arts, call (626) 792-5101 or visit https://www.armoryarts.org.