

## **ALISON SAAR Sculpture and Works on Paper**

Rochester Contemporary Art Center **May 2 - June 1**

Opening Reception: **May 2, 6-10pm**

Artist Talk at The Memorial Art Gallery auditorium **May 3, 2pm**

The exhibition will focus on Alison Saar's continuing 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 found and recycled materials including wood, reclaimed ceiling tile and tar. Four bronze wall sculptures 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. Saar also uses bronze to create the roots that emanate from the reposing figure entitled *Bareroot*, 2007. Several large works on paper offer evocative images addressing issues of identity and gender.

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 numerous 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. This 13ft sculpture is installed at the crossroads of St. Nicholas Avenue, Frederick Douglass Boulevard and 123rd street in Harlem. A maquette of this sculpture will be included in the exhibition.

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 Tracye) 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 and her MFA from Otis-Parsons Institute (now Otis College of Art and Design).

**This exhibition @ Rochester Contemporary Art Center is curated by Deborah Ronnen and runs from May 2- June 1, 2008. Alison Saar will give an artist talk titled *Hither, Whither and Yon* at the Memorial Art Gallery auditorium on Saturday, May 3 at 2pm, free to members of MAG and Rochester Contemporary Art Center. RoCo member admission underwritten by an anonymous donor.**