



First Museum Survey of Betye Saar's Rarely Seen Installations Opens at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami in October 2021

Serious Moonlight Spans Nearly Twenty Years of Underexplored Aspects of Saar's Practice

Miami, FL – December 7, 2020 – Rarely-seen installation works by pioneering artist **Betye Saar** (b. 1926) will receive their first dedicated exhibition in more than three decades at ICA Miami next October. *Serious Moonlight* spans significant installations created from 1980 to 1998, including *Oasis* (1984), a work that will be reconfigured for the first time in more than 30 years. Showcasing this lesser-known aspect of the artist's practice, the survey provides new insights into Saar's explorations of ritual, spirituality, and cosmologies, as well as themes of the African diaspora. Curated by **ICA Miami Curator Stephanie Seidel**, *Serious Moonlight* is on view at ICA Miami from October 29, 2021 through April 17, 2022.

"Betye Saar's impact on art history is undeniable, yet important aspects of her innovative body of work have yet to be fully explored," said **ICA Miami Artistic Director Alex Gartenfeld**. "*Serious Moonlight* gives audiences the first opportunity to view many works of large scale sculpture and installation together that have not been seen in a museum context for decades. ICA Miami is committed to exploring under-recognized aspects of significant artists' practices in order to enable deeper understanding of their work and its impact."

"Saar's radical immersive installations are incredibly rich with narrative," said **ICA Miami Curator Stephanie Seidel**. "Connecting the political and the spiritual from a feminist point of view is an enduring aspect of Saar's practice, and her groundbreaking work continues to spur important dialogues about gender and race. Through these rarely-seen installations, made nearly three decades ago, the exhibition illustrates her bold and pioneering approach as an artist, storyteller, and mythmaker, and the ongoing significance and relevance of her work to the most pressing issues in America today."

Recognized for her visionary artistic practice, Saar has been a pioneer of assemblage art on the West Coast and Black feminist art in the United States since the 1960s. Her dense, complexly referential assemblages, sculptures, and collages reflect changing cultural and political contexts—generating and influencing dialogues and artistic practice related to race and gender. Rich with familiar symbols, a number of the works in the exhibition highlight Saar's interest in spirituality and cosmology. *Serious Moonlight* brings together a series of her lesser-known installations to demonstrate the artist's critical focus on Black identity and Black feminism throughout her practice, as well as her explorations of myth and spirituality in relation to the African diaspora and the African American experience.

Influenced by Saar's lifelong home of Los Angeles and research trips to Haiti, Mexico, and Nigeria in the 1970s, the installations seen in the exhibition explore concepts of ritual and community through both cultural symbols and autobiographical references. Reconfigured in close collaboration with the artist, each installation is exhibited in a dedicated architectural pavilion, enabling each work to be showcased

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individually and supporting the artists' intentions to create immersive, dynamic viewer experiences with each installation.

Among the significant works on view is *Oasis* (1984), the exhibition's earliest installation, which will be reconfigured for the first time since 1988. Featuring meticulously blown glass spheres around a children's rocking chair embedded in sand, *Oasis* evokes a utopic space where life and death merge and coexist.

Serious Moonlight additionally features *House of Fortune* (1988), an ominous scene of a card table, tarot cards, and Vodou flags as a meditation on spirituality. *Limbo* (1994) and *Wings of Morning* (1992), both address death and mourning, and draw from the history and experience of African American communities to create tangible and powerful monuments consecrating collective memories. Saar's reflections on the African diaspora are also illustrated through the installations *Mojotech* (1987), *Secrets and Shadows* (1989), *A Woman's Boat: Voyages* (1998), and *Gliding into Midnight* (2019)—the latter with fragments of the 1993 installation *In Troubled Waters*—which touch upon this history of the aftereffects of the transatlantic slave trade.

Serious Moonlight

ICA Miami

October 29, 2021 – April 17, 2022

2nd Floor, Special Exhibitions Gallery

Exhibition Support

Exhibitions at ICA Miami are generously supported by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional support at ICA Miami is provided by the Funding Arts Network.

Exhibition Catalogue

Serious Moonlight will be accompanied by a richly illustrated scholarly catalogue edited by Stephanie Seidel. The catalogue will feature contributions by Sampada Aranke, Edwidge Danticat, Leah Ollman, and Stephanie Seidel that consider Saar's work in the contemporary context.

About Betye Saar

Boldly addressing questions of race and gender in her art and activism, Betye Saar (b. 1926, Los Angeles) has been a pioneer of readymade art on the West Coast and Black feminist art in the United States since the 1960s. Her revolutionary work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions throughout the United States and around the world, including, most recently, the exhibition "Betye Saar: The Legends of Black Girl's Window" at Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, dedicated to her prints; the retrospective "Betye Saar: Still Tickin'" at the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, Arizona, and Het Domein, Sittard, The Netherlands; the group show "We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85" at the Brooklyn Museum, New York; and the monumental traveling group show "Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power" at the Tate Modern, London; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas; Brooklyn Museum; The Broad, Los Angeles; and the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, Fine

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Arts Museums of San Francisco. Current exhibitions include solo presentations “Betye Saar: Call and Response” at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and The Morgan Library & Museum, traveling to the Mississippi Museum of Art in Jackson, MS (Summer 2021) and Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, TX (Fall 2021), focused on her sketchbooks and related works. Saar’s works are held in more than sixty museum collections, including the Detroit Institute of Arts; MoMA; LACMA; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among many others.

About the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami

The Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami (ICA Miami) is dedicated to promoting continuous experimentation in contemporary art, advancing new scholarship, and fostering the exchange of art and ideas throughout the Miami region and internationally. Through an energetic calendar of exhibitions and programs, and its collection, the ICA Miami provides an important international platform for the work of local, emerging, and under-recognized artists, and advances the public appreciation and understanding of the most innovative art of our time.

Launched in 2014, ICA Miami opened its new permanent home in Miami’s Design District on December 1, 2017. The museum’s central location positions it as a cultural anchor within the community and enhances its role in developing cultural literacy throughout the Miami region. The museum offers free admission, providing audiences with open, public access to artistic excellence year-round. www.icamiami.org

The Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami is located at 61 NE 41st Street, Miami, Florida 33137.

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