

Betye Saar Archive Acquired by Getty Research Institute

Getty Research Institute (GRI) announced the establishment of the African American Art History Initiative with the acquisition of the archive of world-renowned artist Betye Saar.

Image: Betye Saar in her Laurel Canyon studio, Los Angeles, ca. 1976, courtesy of the artist and Roberts Projects, Los Angeles, California, photo Richard Saar.

Wednesday September 26th, 2018

The archive, *The Betye Saar Papers*, ranges from 1926 to the present covering her entire career and her life as an artist.

The archive includes documentation of Saar's prolific artistic production and her notable works in diverse media: sketchbooks of ideas, concepts, and Saar's travels; prints and drawings; book illustrations and commercial graphics, as well as profuse documentation of her assemblages and installations. The archive features annual files on all aspects of Saar's projects: exhibitions, catalogues, brochures and posters; ledgers of works created with records of exhibitions, galleries, museums, and collectors; letters, artist's statements, and documentation on the circle of artists with whom Saar worked and collaborated.

While Betye Saar is not the first African American artist represented in the GRI's holdings – others include Adrian Piper, Kara Walker, Ed Bernal, Benjamin Patterson, Melvin Edwards, Lorna Simpson, Harry Drinkwater, and Mark Bradford – the purchase of her complete archive represents the first major acquisition related to the African American Art History initiative.

"Betye Saar is one of the most innovative and visionary artists of our era. She has also, in many ways, been the conscience of the art world for over fifty years and we are so honored that she has trusted us to preserve her powerful legacy," said Andrew Perchuk, acting director of the Getty Research Institute. "She played a large role in our exploration of postwar Los Angeles art that became *Pacific Standard Time: Art in LA 1945-1980*, and this acquisition is a particularly meaningful way for us to launch the African American Art History Initiative."

Betye Saar's pioneering assemblages and large-scale installations, grounded in unique materials and African American history, have had a profound and positive impact on artists and audiences nationally and internationally.

The **African American Art History Initiative** is an ambitious program to establish the Getty Research Institute as a major center for the study of African American art history. In addition to acquiring archives and related original sources, the initiative will establish a dedicated curatorship in African American Art History, a bibliographer with a specialty in the subject, annual research graduate and post-graduate fellowships, a program to conduct oral histories of notable African American artists, scholars, critics, collectors and art dealers, and partnerships with other institutions to digitize existing archival collections and collaborate on joint conferences, publications, and research projects.

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