



Shorn, 2013
wood, wire and glass
32 x 11 x 11 in. (81.3 x 27.9 x 27.9 cm)

ALISON SAAR

Slough 3 September - 5 October 2013
Reception for the artist: **Saturday, 7 September, 6-8 pm**

Venice, CA -- L.A. Louver is pleased to present an exhibition of new sculptures and drawings by Los Angeles-based artist Alison Saar. Through a complex and masterful use of evocative materials, themes of racial struggle, cultural identity and the changing roles of motherhood converge in this new body of work, all of which was created in 2013.

The title for the exhibition *Slough*, is defined as “a situation characterized by lack of progress,” or “to cast off or shed dead skin.” It is this duality of meaning, and a sense of both impasse and renewal, that pervades the 15 new works in the exhibition. In *Shorn*, a female figure carved from wood and painted red shaves her hair using a shard of glass, leaving behind a bare trace of stubble. The cut hair cascades from the figure’s hand, entwining her legs and feet. This dramatic removal can be interpreted as a rite of passage, or a cathartic act of mourning. In *Pret-a-Porter*, two found suitcases rest on the floor; one is left slightly ajar to reveal the uninhabited skin of a female figure, formed from translucent paper. Folded and loosely packed, it’s unclear whether the skin has recently been shed or is waiting to be donned.

Pearly pays homage to Mademoiselle LaLa, the Black Victorian acrobat made famous for her extraordinary athleticism. In a death-defying act, the dark pearlescent figure (made from paper and foam and burnished with graphite) hangs by her teeth tightly clenched to fabric suspended from the gallery ceiling. The sculpture celebrates her strength, while placing her vulnerability on display. The largest work in the exhibition, *Thistle and Twitch (Mombie)*, depicts a larger-than-life female figure towering nearly 8 feet (2.4 m) tall, formed by built-up layers of thin paper, with painted barren briars veining beneath the skin’s surface. Massive in scale, yet delicately constructed, the viewer is invited to peer inside her navel to find the hollow form filled with a thicket of brambles. Captured in a transitory state, the figure appears to be exiting a stage of fertility, or rather, experiencing a rejuvenation of new growth following a period of dormancy. The title of this work borrows from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and the mythological tale of Demeter (the goddess of harvest) who is overcome with grief when her daughter Persephone (the goddess of spring) was abducted by Hades and held captive in the underworld.

“The stars and the winds assailed them; hungry birds gobbled the scattered seeds; thistles and twitch, unconquerable twitch, wore down the wheat.” – Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*

Greek mythology is also referenced in *Cotton Eater*, which alludes to the lotus-eaters, characterized in Homer’s *Odyssey* as a race of people entranced in a perpetual state of apathy from the consumption of lotus fruit. The sculpture portrays a small wooden figure set atop a pedestal, feeding on cotton balls; its rounded belly visually full. An elongated cotton picking sack, filled to the brim from harvest, is slung over her shoulder and extends beyond her small frame and down to the floor. The piece relates to the history of slavery, and the continued government practice of appeasing the poor with insidious gifts. The imagery in this sculpture

was first realized in *Cotton Eater Study (sugar sack shroud series)*, a large drawing measuring 81 x 37 in. (205.7 x 94 cm) rendered with charcoal and graphite on found cotton sugar sacks. This and other drawings on cotton panels from the *sugar sack shroud series* are on view in the exhibition, including *Backwater Blues* – which Saar created in New Orleans during her fellowship at the Joan Mitchell Foundation in April 2013. Dismayed by the lack of progress following the tragedy of 2005's Hurricane Katrina, *Backwater Blues* illustrates a woman clothed in a sheer slip gazing back as water rises above her ankles. Framed by a found screen door, the drawing sheds light on the media's voyeuristic coverage of the devastation following the hurricane, where footage of victims often disheveled and undressed, were broadcast without any regard for their dignity. In another work created in New Orleans, *Morass*, a severed head formed from molded glass lays on its side soiled and lifeless, bearing the watermark of floodwaters.

The exhibition will also feature an installation of Saar's sculptures *Summer* and *Spring* (both commissioned by the Madison Square Park Conservancy in 2011) in the gallery's open-air Skyroom, including a garden installation courtesy of Rolling Greens Nursery, Los Angeles.

Alison Saar was born and raised in Laurel Canyon, California. Growing up the daughter of renowned artist Betye Saar and painter/conservator Richard Saar, played a crucial role informing her formative years, as well as the development of her artistic career. Saar received her B.A. in studio art and art history in 1978 from Scripps College, Claremont, California. She went on to earn her MFA from Otis-Parsons Institute (now Otis College of Art and Design). 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, the Flintridge Foundation Award for Visual Artists in 2000, and the Joan Mitchell Foundation Artist Fellowship in 2013. In 2012, the United States Artists Program named Saar one of 50 USA fellows.

Simultaneous to the artist's exhibition at L.A. Louver, Alison Saar: *STILL...* is on view at the David C. Driskell Centre, University of Maryland, 12 September – 13 December 2013 (travelled from the Ben Maltz Gallery, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, August – October 2012; and the Figge Art Museum, Davenport, Iowa, February – April 2013).

Alison Saar will be in conversation with Polly Nooter Roberts (Consulting Curator for African Art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art), as part of the Library Foundation of Los Angeles' *ALOUD* series: *Body as Politics: Art, Identity and Memory*, on Tuesday, 24 September 2013, 7:15pm at the Mark Taper Auditorium - Central Library, (reservations are recommended). More info at www.lfla.org/aloud.

Concurrently on view in L.A. Louver's second floor gallery, September 3 – October 5, 2013:

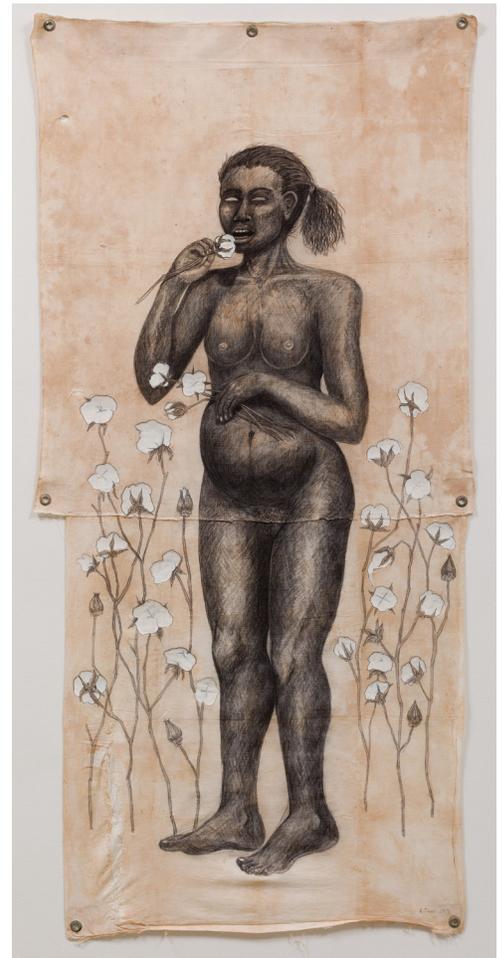
Tom Wudl: *Reflections of the Flowerbank World*

New paintings on linen and vellum.

Next on view at L.A. Louver, October 10 through November 9, 2013:

R. B. Kitaj: Paintings, 1992-2007

Jason Martin: New works



Cotton Eater Study (sugar sack shroud series), 2013
found sugar sacks, gesso, charcoal and graphite
81 x 37 in. (205.7 x 94 cm)

For more information and visuals, please contact Christina Carlos, L.A. Louver, 45 North Venice Boulevard, Venice, CA, USA, www.lalouver.com
tel: 310-822-4955; fax: 310-821-7529; e-mail: Christina@lalouver.com Gallery Hours: Tues - Sat, 10 - 6 PM; Validated parking available

FOLLOW US ON:  BLOG.LALOUVER.COM     /LALOUVER