

(DRAFT)

BETYE SAAR IN RESIDENCE AT MIT

Los Angeles-based artist Betye Saar will be in residence at MIT's List Visual Arts Center from April 21-May 16. Since the late 60's Betye Saar's work has moved from charged statements about the social and political concerns of blacks to more intimate, internalized exploration of her own heritage and beliefs. Saar's residency will include a wide variety of events and activities, culminating in an exhibition in the List Center's Bakalar Gallery, on view May 16 through June 28. This project is part of an ongoing series of List Arts Center residencies sponsored by the New Works Program of the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities.

Residency events begin with a series of open studios, where the public is invited to meet the artist and view her work in the gallery as it progresses. Inspired by the tradition of African tribal sculpture comprised of diverse decorative elements and power symbols, part of her exhibition will be an "accumulative" work which will incorporate materials and objects found during her residency, as well as items contributed by the visitors. During the open studios, held Monday afternoons April 27, May 4, and May 11, individuals are invited to contribute small mechanical objects or technical materials (as opposed to natural or organic matter) for possible use in her projects.

"Spirit Catcher Meets Big Science", a lecture by the artist, has been scheduled for Wednesday, April 29, at 7 pm. at the List Visual Arts Center

For Sunday, May 10, Saar will create a special Mother's Day celebration at the Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists, 300 Walnut Avenue, Boston, from 3-5 pm. She will plan special works and an event for the whole family. For details and directions, call the Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists at 442-8614.

Saar's exhibition, MojoTech, at the MIT List Arts Center May 16 through June 28, is the first solo presentation of this important black artist in the area. Two major assemblage sculptures represent the artist's earlier work, "Spirit Catcher", 1976-77, an alterlike, basket-like floor piece decorated with objects from Nigeria, Haiti, and Mexico, and "A Version of Survival", 1983, an open box with a tiny black doll, colorful Moroccan leatherwork, keys, jade pieces, and Mexican metal amulets. Saar will also create a special room-size multi-media work which incorporates modern, technological materials such as computer hardware and an 'electronic billboard,' her personal response to the magical side of technology. "Spirit Catcher: The Art of Betye Saar," a 30-minute videotape, will be presented daily in the gallery at 12:30 and 3 PM.

In an artist's statement about her MIT project, she explained, " A mojo is an amulet or charm used in some voodoo-based beliefs (religions). Its power is somewhat ambiguous, as it depends on both the user's strength of belief and his or her motive. As a shaman gleans the environment for special ingredients and objects to fabricate the mojo, I glean the flea markets, estate sales, and thrift shops for special materials for my work. My intuition works like radar in accumulating the found objects

which I then alter, manipulate, and transform. Here at MIT my focus will be on technology as an element of magic and on art as ritual."

Betye Saar will also present a public lecture on her work at the Southeastern Massachusetts University Art Gallery, North Dartmouth, on ~~Wednesday, April 22~~, at 2:30 pm. Call 999-8546 for directions.

Tuesday, April 28

Dana Friis-Hansen, assistant curator at the MIT List Visual Arts Center, commented "In making her art, Betye Saar draws deeply from her experiences, expectations, intuitions, and convictions. Life's pleasures and pains, facts and mysteries are the subjects of the sculptures and environments which she crafts almost entirely from familiar, found materials. She creatively integrates other people's discards to make evocative personal statements on universal themes."

Born in 1926, Betye Saar received a BFA from UCLA, and pursued graduate studies at California State at Long Beach, University of Southern California, and California State at Northridge. She has exhibited widely, including major solo exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, the Studio Museum in Harlem, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Saar has received several public commissions, two grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, and her work is included in major museum collections, including the High Museum, Atlanta, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

MOJOTECH: BETYE SAAR AT MIT at the MIT List Visual Arts Center is made possible with support from the New Works Program of the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities, a state agency.

Gallery Hours: Weekdays 10-4 pm; weekends 1-5 pm. Admission is free.
Gallery phone: 253-4680 The MIT List Visual Arts Center is located in the Wiesner Building, 20 Ames Street, Cambridge, near the Kendall Square subway stop. Parking is available at the Kinney parking lot at Ames Street and Broadway.

For Press information, interviews, or photographs, contact Dana Friis-Hansen at 253-4400.