

NEWS



Artist Betye Saar. Photo: Jason Schmidt.
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GETTY ESTABLISHES AFRICAN AMERICAN ART INITIATIVE, ACQUIRES BETYE SAAR ARCHIVES

The Getty Research Institute (GRI) announced today the establishment of the African American Art History Initiative. With an initial allocation of \$5 million, the Getty will create two positions—curatorial and bibliographic—dedicated to African American art history, establish annual graduate and post-graduate research fellowships, launch a program dedicated to oral history projects to preserve notable voices in African American art, fund the acquisition of archives and collections, and organize programming such as conferences and publications.

The institute has also acquired artist Betye Saar's complete archives. Though the GRI's holdings already include the works of African American artists such as Adrian Piper, Lorna Simpson, Kara Walker, and Mark Bradford, among others, Saar's archives represents the first acquisition on part of the new initiative. The artist's archives include prints and drawings, documentation of her assemblage works, sketchbooks of her travels and concepts, and book illustrations and commercial work from 1926 to the present.

"Betye Saar is one of the most innovative and visionary artists of our era," Andrew Perchuk, acting director of the Getty Research Institute, said in statement. "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. 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."

As part of the project, the GRI is also initiating collaborations with partner institutions and scholars, including Kellie Jones (Columbia University), Mark Godfrey (Tate Modern), Erin Christovale (Hammer Museum), Bridget Cooks (University of California, Irvine), Andrianna Campbell (CUNY Graduate Center, New York), and the Studio Museum in Harlem.

"The Getty is telling the world, through its actions, that American art has many facets," Jones, a professor in art history and archaeology at Columbia University's Institute for Research in African American Studies, said in a statement. "This initiative and its focus on archives is another approach to embracing a bigger idea of what art history is, by creating an important repository that will greatly impact the field and peer institutions."

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