

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Betye Saar to receive  
2014 Edward MacDowell Medal;  
exhibition at the Sharon Arts Center  
Peterborough, New Hampshire**

"I am a mixed media collage, assemblage and installation artist. The concepts of passage, crossroads, death and rebirth have been underlying elements in much of my work.

My art continues to move in a creative spiral. Much of my current work is about issues of race and gender. Mystery and beauty remain constant force behind my creative energy.

This is the energy that spins the spiral."

—Betye Saar

(New York—July 23, 2014) **Michael Rosenfeld Gallery** is thrilled to announce that **The MacDowell Colony** has chosen **Betye Saar** to be the 2014 recipient of its prestigious **Edward MacDowell Medal**. The ceremony will take place on Sunday, **August 10 at 12:15 PM**. The first artist residency program in the United States, **The MacDowell Colony** was founded in 1907 by composer Edward MacDowell and his wife Marian. Since 1960, the Colony has awarded the **Edward MacDowell Medal** annually to individual artists making outstanding contributions to their fields. Past recipients in the visual arts have included Edward Hopper, Louise Nevelson, Willem de Kooning, and Louise Bourgeois.

In celebration of this honor, **Michael Rosenfeld Gallery** and the **Sharon Arts Center** of the **New Hampshire Institute of Art** have collaborated on an exhibition of Saar's work to be on view in the arts center window from **August 1 to August 25**. Comprised of approximately seven mixed-media assemblages and collages, the window-space exhibition focuses on Saar's most recent body of work, her *Cage* series. Throughout her career, Saar has been collecting ordinary household



*Domestic Life*, 2007, mixed media assemblage, 34 1/2" x 17 1/8" x 20 1/2", signed and dated

items, including various types of cages, from flea markets, yard sales, and antique shops. Recently, these cages became the basis for a series in which Saar uses them to represent physical and metaphorical incarceration as well as resilience and survival. The works in this exhibition share with Saar's overall body of work a global perspective interlaced with the artist's personal interest in metaphysics, magic, mystery, legends, and superstitions. In Saar's assemblages, repression and resistance are fused with lessons from history, African spiritualism, and the rich visual traditions of Afro-diasporic art.

A native Californian, **Betye Saar** (American, b.1926) grew up in Pasadena during the Great Depression. As a child, Saar would often visit her grandmother in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles. These trips strengthened her connection to her family history, and they enabled her to witness Simon Rodia constructing his famous towers. Saar would watch, fascinated, as Rodia sorted through piles of debris, selecting discarded objects to embed into cement over the towers' steel frames. Three decades later, Watts again had an impact on her artistic development. Observing LA-based



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*Flutter*, 2012, mixed media collage in window, 13" x 28" x 1", signed and dated

artists like John Outterbridge, Noah Purifoy, and John Scott recycle wreckage from the 1965 riots as material for assemblages, Saar realized the power artists had to transform negative events and objects into creative acts of resistance.

In the late 1960s, Saar began to acquire “black collectibles”—everyday objects that featured racist caricatures of African Americans and were found in homes throughout the United States. After the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., she began to recycle this cultural debris into art. In 1972, she created her iconic assemblage, *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima*. In it, a “mammy” figure stands on a field of cotton in front of a series of images of Aunt Jemima. In the center of her body is an image of another “mammy” standing in front of a picket fence and holding a white baby. As Saar explains, “the ‘mammy’ knew and stayed in her place. . . . I attempted to change that ‘place’ . . . [by turning] a negative, demeaning figure into a positive, empowered woman who stands confrontationally with one hand holding a broom and the other armed for battle. A warrior ready to combat servitude and racism.” She returned to this notion of resisting racism

and servitude in such subsequent series as *Workers and Warriors* and *In Service*. In her artwork, Saar voices her political, racial, religious, and gender concerns so that she may “reach across the barriers of art and life, to bridge cultural diversities, and forge new understandings.” Her works have examined Asian and African diasporic religions in relation to personal spirituality, the construction of racial hierarchies based on skin tone within black communities, and the ways that objects retain the memories and histories of their owners.

Saar has received numerous awards, including fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts (1974, 1984) and the Getty Foundation (1990). Her work is represented in the collections of (among others) the Detroit Institute of the Arts, High Museum of Art in Atlanta, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Studio Museum in Harlem, and Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. At age 88, Betye Saar resides and continues to make work in Los Angeles.

**Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, has represented Betye Saar since 1996.**

**For more information or high-res images, please contact Marjorie Van Cura at 212.247.0082 or [mv@michaelrosenfeldart.com](mailto:mv@michaelrosenfeldart.com).**