

# Press Release

**EMBARGOED UNTIL MAY 9, 2025, AT 7 P.M. EASTERN**

## HIGH MUSEUM OF ART NAMES ALISON SAAR RECIPIENT OF 2025 DAVID C. DRISKELL PRIZE

*Saar to be honored at 20th annual Driskell Prize Gala on Sept. 20, 2025,  
with John Legend set to perform*

**ATLANTA, May 9, 2025** — The High Museum of Art today announced artist Alison Saar as the 2025 recipient of the [David C. Driskell Prize](#) in recognition of her contributions to the field of African American art. Saar will be honored at the 20th annual [Driskell Prize Gala](#) at the High on Saturday, Sept. 20, at 6:30 p.m., featuring a performance by EGOT-winning, critically acclaimed, multiplatinum musician John Legend. Celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, the \$50,000 prize demonstrates the High’s ongoing dedication to furthering artistic innovation and promoting research of African American artists and scholars.

Saar, based in Los Angeles, is widely celebrated for her sculpture, installation and mixed-media works, which tell stories about the African American experience through references to American history, literature and mythology. Her works have been featured in hundreds of solo and group exhibitions worldwide, including at the High, which presented one of her first solo museum exhibitions, “Fertile Ground,” in 1993. She has work in collections at renowned institutions including the High, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and the Whitney Museum of American Art, among many others. In 2024, she was selected by the International Olympic Committee and the city of Paris to create “Salon,” a sculpture commissioned in honor of the 2024 Olympic Games, which is now permanently displayed in the Charles Aznavour Garden on the Champs-Élysées. Her installation “Soul Service Station” was featured as part of Desert X 2025 in Coachella Valley, California.

“Saar’s work delves deeply into the histories of the African diaspora and its artistic traditions, exploring how they influence and connect to cultural identity today. Her sculpture ‘Tobacco Demon’ has been a fixture in our galleries for decades,” said High Museum of Art Director Rand Suffolk. “We are honored to recognize her distinguished practice and myriad contributions to African American art with the 2025 Driskell Prize.”

Established by the High in 2005, the Driskell Prize is the first national award to celebrate a scholar or artist whose work makes an original and significant contribution to the field of African American art or art history. It was named for the renowned African American artist and scholar David C. Driskell, whose work on the African diaspora spanned more than four decades. Over its 20-year history, the Driskell Prize has recognized artists including Ebony G. Patterson (2023), Amy Sherald (2018), Mark Bradford (2016) and Rashid Johnson (2012). Proceeds from the Driskell Gala support the David C. Driskell African American Art Acquisition Restricted and Endowment funds, which have supported the acquisition of 52 works by African American artists for the High’s collection since the prize’s inception.

The selection process for the 2025 recipient of the Driskell Prize began with a call for nominations from a national pool of artists, curators, teachers, collectors and art historians. Saar was chosen from among these nominations by review committee members assembled by the High: artist and 2006 Driskell Prize recipient Willie Cole; Dr. Kellie Jones (2005 Driskell Prize recipient and professor in art history and archaeology and the Institute for Research in African American Studies at Columbia University); and two High Museum of Art curators, Kevin W. Tucker (chief curator) and Maria L. Kelly (assistant curator of photography).

“I am honored to have been chosen as the 2025 recipient of the David C. Driskell Prize,” said Saar. “At a time when many of the civil rights milestones achieved by previous generations—by our mothers and grandmothers—are being threatened or dismantled, the Driskell Prize empowers Black artists and art historians to push back. When our art is removed from museum exhibitions or our shows are canceled, this prize offers not only validation, but also the support to continue making work that is courageous and truthful work that is often stifled by the limitations of mainstream institutions.”

In addition to the Driskell Prize, Saar has received many other grants and awards, including an American Academy of Arts and Letters Award in Art (2018), an Excellence in Design Award from the New York City Art Commission (2005) and numerous art fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, among others. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Scripps College (Claremont, California) and her Master of Fine Arts degree from the Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles.

The 2025 Driskell Prize Gala Chair is Charlene Crusoe-Ingram. Those interested in tickets for the formal gala may email [driskellprize@high.org](mailto:driskellprize@high.org).

### **About the David C. Driskell Prize**

Established by the High in 2005, the David C. Driskell Prize is the first national award to honor and celebrate contributions to the field of African American art and art history. Past recipients include [Naomi Beckwith](#) (2024), [Ebony G. Patterson](#) (2023), [Adrienne L. Childs](#) (2022), [Jamal D. Cyrus](#) (2020), [Dr. Huey Copeland](#) (2019), [Amy Sherald](#) (2018), [Naima J. Keith](#) (2017), [Mark Bradford](#) (2016), [Kirsten Pai Buick](#) (2015), [Lyle Ashton Harris](#) (2014), [Andrea Barnwell Brownlee](#)

(2013), [Rashid Johnson](#) (2012), [Valerie Cassel Oliver](#) (2011), [Renee Stout](#) (2010), [Krista A. Thompson](#) (2009), [Xaviera Simmons](#) (2008), [Franklin Sirmans](#) (2007), [Willie Cole](#) (2006) and [Dr. Kellie Jones](#) (2005). A cash award of \$50,000 accompanies the prize. Proceeds from the High's annual Driskell Prize Gala support the David C. Driskell African American Art Acquisition Restricted and Endowment funds and other ongoing African American initiatives and expenses associated with the David C. Driskell Gala. The current balance of the David C. Driskell African American Art Acquisition Endowment Fund is \$2 million. Through the David C. Driskell African American Art Acquisition Restricted Fund, the High has acquired works by artists including Radcliffe Bailey, Romare Bearden, Mark Bradford, Nick Cave, Willie Cole, William Downs, Rashid Johnson, Kerry James Marshall, John T. Scott and Renee Stout.

### **About David Driskell**

[David Driskell](#) (American, 1931-2020) was an artist and scholar whose work on the African diaspora spanned more than four decades. The High's relationship with Driskell began in 2000 when the museum presented the concurrent exhibitions "To Conserve a Legacy: American Art from Historically Black Colleges and Universities" and "Narratives of African American Art and Identity: The David C. Driskell Collection," which examined African American art in the broad historical context of modern and contemporary art. In 2021, the High organized the survey exhibition "[David Driskell: Icons of Nature and History](#)," which traveled to the Portland Museum of Art and The Phillips Collection after its presentation at the High. Born in Eatonton, Georgia, Driskell became a distinguished professor emeritus at the University of Maryland, College Park, where he established [The David C. Driskell Center for the Study of the Visual Arts and Culture of African Americans and the African Diaspora](#). He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Howard University in 1955 and his Master of Fine Arts degree from the Catholic University of America in 1962. He also attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine in 1953 and studied art history at the Netherlands Institute for Art History in The Hague, Netherlands, in 1964. More information about Driskell is available at [www.driskellcenter.umd.edu](http://www.driskellcenter.umd.edu).

### **About the High Museum of Art**

Located in the heart of Atlanta, the High Museum of Art connects with audiences from across the Southeast and around the world through its distinguished collection, dynamic schedule of special exhibitions and engaging community-focused programs. Housed within facilities designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architects Richard Meier and Renzo Piano, the High features a collection of more than 20,000 works of art, including an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American fine and decorative arts; major holdings of photography and folk and self-taught work, especially that of artists from the American South; burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, including paintings, sculpture, new media and design; a growing collection of African art, with work dating from prehistory through the present; and significant holdings of European paintings and works on paper. The High is dedicated to reflecting the diversity of its communities and offering a variety of exhibitions and educational programs that engage visitors with the world of art, the lives of artists and the creative process. For more

information about the High, visit [www.high.org](http://www.high.org).

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