

**BETYE SAAR – ART ICON AWARD**  
**WACO THEATER CENTER, WEARABLE ART GALA - 2019**

On Saturday, June 1, 2019, artist Betye Saar will receive the Art Icon Award at WACO Theater Center's Wearable Art Gala in Los Angeles.

As one of the artists who ushered in the development of Assemblage art, Betye Saar's practice reflects on African American identity, spirituality and the connectedness between different cultures. Her symbolically rich body of work has evolved over time to succinctly reflect the environmental, cultural, political, racial, technological, economic, and historical context in which it exists.

Saar was born Betye Irene Brown on July 30, 1926 to Jefferson Maze Brown and Beatrice Lillian Parson in Los Angeles, California. Both parents attended the University of California, Los Angeles, where they met. After her father's death in 1931, Saar and her mother, brother, and sister moved in with her paternal grandmother, Irene Hannah Maze in the Watts neighborhood in Los Angeles. As a child, Saar witnessed Simon Rhodia's construction of the Watts Towers in Los Angeles, which introduced ideas of creating art from found objects to embody both the spiritual and the technological. This early influence, combined with her interest in metaphysics, magic, and the occult formed the basis of Saar's early assemblage work. With assemblages such as the iconic *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima* (1972), Saar sought to reveal marginalized and hidden histories. Her work has examined social invisibility of black Americans in service jobs, colorism, and the ways objects can retain memories and histories of their owners.

Saar's work can be found in the permanent collections of more than 60 museums, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and LACMA, among others.

In September 2018, the Getty Research Institute announced the creation of an African American History Initiative with the acquisition of Saar's archives. The Betye Saar Papers range from 1926 to the present and span her entire career and life as an artist. The archive includes sketchbooks, prints and drawings, book illustrations and commercial graphics, as well as documentation of her assemblages and installations.

Upcoming exhibitions include "Betye Saar: Call and Response" at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; "By Any Means: Modern and Contemporary Drawings from the Morgan," at the Morgan Library and Museum in New York; and "Betye Saar: The Legends of Black Girl's Window" at the Museum of Modern Art. "Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power" is currently on view at the Broad Museum in Los Angeles.

Saar received her Bachelor of Arts from UCLA in 1949, with graduate studies at California State University, Long Beach, USC, and California State University Northridge. She has been awarded honorary degrees by California College of Arts and Crafts, California Institute of the Arts, Massachusetts College of Art, Otis College of Art and Design, and San Francisco Art Institute. Saar is also the recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts Artist Fellowship, J. Paul Getty Fund for the Visual Arts Fellowship and was awarded by the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.

**WACO Theater Center is proud to present Betye Saar with the Art Icon Award at the 2019 Wearable Art Gala on Saturday, June 1 in Los Angeles. For more information, visit [www.wacothatercenter.com](http://www.wacothatercenter.com).**