

Alison Saar

American, b. 1956

***Inheritance*, 2009**

Number five of an edition of nine with one artist's proof

Bronze, cotton, wood

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Sarah Jane Lind in honor of Atkinson Gallery, Santa Barbara City College, 2010.2

Alison Saar often draws upon personal history to fashion dream-like images probing larger cultural phenomena. In this figure, Saar melds two stories about children and their welfare: one from her mother's early life and another from the artist's trip to Senegal. As a young girl, Saar's mother promised her dying father—Alison's grandfather—that she would care for her two siblings and his soon-to-be widow. On a visit to Senegal, Alison saw children carrying bundles on their heads while also caring for other children. These two stories come together in the form of a young woman, who, despite bearing an enormous burden, does not stoop. Alison Saar comes from a famous family of African-American artists. Her mother Betye is an esteemed assemblage artist, and her sister Lezley works across mediums, including painting, textiles, and photocollages. All three of the Saars are represented in the museum's collection.

Frederic Leighton

English, 1830–1896

An Athlete Wrestling with a Python, modeled in 1877,
cast in 1903

Bronze

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Museum purchase with funds provided by
Lord and Lady Ridley-Tree, 1997.45

Leighton, a painter, cast only three bronzes over his long career but regularly made rough clay models, called *esquisses*, as preparation for his paintings. A French sculptor, perhaps Alphonse Legros or Aimé-Jules Dalou, while visiting Leighton's home-studio, encouraged him to enlarge and cast a version of the athlete in bronze. The life-size bronze premiered at London's Royal Academy in 1877 and met with instant critical acclaim, sparking the art movement called New Sculpture. Collectors clamored for examples, commissioning pieces in bronze and marble. Because of the reusability of molds, reproductions could be made. Tools like proportional calipers or a pointing machine enabled studio assistants to enlarge or reduce pieces with considerable precision, long before the magic of lasers or 3D printing. In the 1890s, Leicester Galleries of London commissioned Leighton to make this table-top-sized edition.



Frederic Leighton, *Athlete*, sketch-model, c. 1874. From "Artists as Craftsmen, No. 1, Sir Frederic Leighton, Bart., P.R.A., as a Modeller in Clay," *Studio Magazine* 1 (1893).

Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux

French, 1827–1875

Bust of Jean-Léon Gérôme, ca. 1871

Bronze

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert J. Emmons, 1997.47

This portrait bust comes out of the friendship between two Parisian artworld luminaries in the 1870s: Carpeaux, a sculptor, who had public commissions dotting the city, including the façade of the Paris Opéra and a fountain in the Luxembourg Gardens; and Gérôme, a painter famous for his detailed scenes from ancient Roman history. The wild hair, torqued shoulders, and worked surface teems with life. One senses the energetic hands of the sculptor smoothing the skin's surface, finessing the flair of the mustache or an unruly lock of hair.

Willem de Kooning

American, b. Netherlands, 1904–1997

Head #4, modeled in 1973, cast in 1981

Number two of an edition of seven

Bronze

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Howard and Gwen Laurie Smits,
2000.34.2

De Kooning called his sculptures “paintings in three dimensions,” and this piece resembles one of his slashing Abstract Expressionist paintings. After a visit to Rome in 1969 to see the bronze foundry of Herzi Emanuel, de Kooning began working in clay. He said, “If I don’t like what I did, I changed my mind, I can break it down and start over. It’s always fresh.” Wet clay registers all the nuances of the artist’s touch. Once dry, those details remain, but the brittle surface is fragile. With its strength, bronze can preserve all the details and dynamism of the clay model.

Stupa (Chorten) of the Kadam Order

Tibet, 13th century

Bronze

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Purchase made possible
by the John and Peggy Maximus Fund, 2013.19

In Tibetan Buddhism, stupas serve as containers for relics, their form symbolizing the monumental funerary mounds in ancient India considered depositories for the remains of the Buddha. They can be immense stone structures many stories tall or diminutive. This stupa is hollow and cast through the lost-wax method. Inside the stupa and accessible through its removable bottom, there are hidden relics, perhaps objects touched by Lamas, or tiny scrolls inscribed with Tantric prayers. Though not a representation of the Buddha's bodily likeness, the stupa reminds the viewer of him and his teachings.

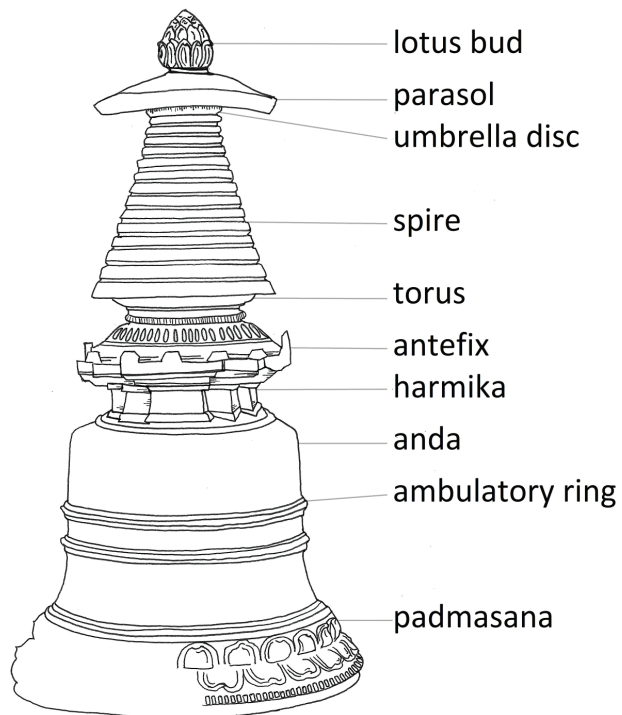


Illustration of *Stupa (Chorten)*
of the *Kadam Order*, Tibet,
13th century.

Vajrabhairava Embracing Consort

Tibet, late 17th century

Gilded bronze with traces of paint

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Purchase made possible
by the John and Peggy Maximus Fund, 2007.73

A tornado of hands and heads conveys Vajrabhairava's superpowers and destructive fury. His hands once held weapons, and his name means "unbridled wrath." On the surface, this is wholly contrary to Buddha's teaching of the Eight-fold Path (Way), which stresses non-violence, sexual abstinence, and respect for other beings. This manifestation of the Bodhisattva of Wisdom uses sensuality, violence, and lust to instruct the faithful on another path to attain awakening, thus conquering death and achieving enlightenment. When visualizing and meditating on this deity, an advanced practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism would learn to harness the evils within us—ignorance, greed, lust, anger, and attachment to ego—to channel them towards enlightenment. The embracing couple further serves as a metaphor for enlightenment, which may only be achieved when the female (wisdom) is united with the male (method). This artwork is made from multiple bronze pieces cast through the lost-wax method that were then soldered together.