About David C. Driskell (b. 1931)

David C. Driskell is a renowned painter and collector of art, and one of the leading authorities on the subject of African American art in American society. In 1976, Prof. Driskell curated the groundbreaking exhibit Two Centuries of Black American Art: 1750-1950 organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), which laid the foundation for the field of African American Art History.

David C. Driskell studied at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine and received his undergraduate degree in art at Howard University (1955) and a Masters in Fine Arts degree from Catholic University (1962). He joined the faculty of the Department of Art at the University of Maryland in 1977, served as its Chair from 1978-1983, and retired in 1998 as a Distinguished University Professor of Art. He has been a practicing artist since the 1950s and his works are in major museums throughout the world, including the National Gallery of Art, the High Museum of Art, and Yale University Art Gallery. In 2000, in a White House Ceremony, Prof. Driskell received the National Humanities Medal from President Bill Clinton. In 2007, he was elected as a National Academician by the National Academy.

David C. Driskell Center Mission Statement

The David C. Driskell Center for the Study of the Visual Arts and Culture of African Americans and the African Diaspora at the University of Maryland, College Park, honors the legacy of David C. Driskell — Distinguished University Professor Emeritus of Art, Artist, Art Historian, Collector, and Curator — by preserving the rich heritage of African American visual art and culture. The Driskell Center is committed to collecting, documenting, and presenting African American art as well as replenishing and expanding the field.

General Information

As the Driskell Center continues to increase accessibility to this important resource to the world, for scholars, researchers, students, and the general public, the Center invites you to visit the David C. Driskell Center Archives.

Visit Us:
The David C. Driskell Center
1214 Cole Student Activities Building
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742
Website: www.driskellcenter.umd.edu

Contact the Archives Staff:
Phone: 301-314-2615
Fax: 301-314-2679
Email: driskellcenter@umd.edu

Research Hours:
By Appointment Only
Tuesday through Friday
10:00AM-4:00PM

Please contact the Archives at least five (5) days prior to your planned visit.

Stay up-to-date with the David C. Driskell Center Archives by following us on Facebook and visiting our blog at driskellcenterarchives.wordpress.com!

facebook.com/TheDCDC

The David C. Driskell Papers

The David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland
About the David C. Driskell Papers

As a pioneer in the study and practice of African American art and an avid collector, David C. Driskell’s collection of correspondence, articles, ephemera, and both personal and professional writings is a necessary and vital resource for the holistic study of African American and African art and culture. Since Prof. Driskell donated his one-of-a-kind collection to the David C. Driskell Center in 2011, the Center’s Archives staff have been working to process and preserve Prof. Driskell’s archive in our PastPerfect database, which is accessible to the public online.

The David C. Driskell Papers contain material about David C. Driskell as an artist, educator, and philanthropist, including many unique items important to gaining a complete understanding of the history of African American and African diasporic art and culture. Ranging from Prof. Driskell’s correspondence with such artists as Romare Bearden, Elizabeth Catlett, and Georgia O’Keeffe, to his personal notes on exhibitions and events in the art world, to records detailing his time as a professor and member of various important committees, each item in the collection allows us to better understand American art through the individual, inspiring lens of David C. Driskell.

The Archives Collections

The David C. Driskell Archives include the David C. Driskell Papers and the David C. Driskell Center Institutional Records. The Archives continues to grow and evolve, seeking to obtain and preserve more archival collections from African American artists and collectors and those relating to African American art and the diaspora.

The Driskell Center Archives’ mission is to organize, preserve, and make accessible records of enduring historical value for research, instructional, and administrative use.

The processing of the David C. Driskell Papers has been supported by the University of Maryland and by grants from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (2011-2012), and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, through the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives program (2013-2014).

The David C. Driskell Papers

Spanning six decades, the David C. Driskell Papers include correspondences, essays, articles, exhibition catalogues, and unique items documenting African American and African art and culture, focusing heavily on Prof. Driskell’s role in the development of those fields. This unique collection has been organized into “series” which reflect the many interests and roles Prof. Driskell has held in his professional and personal life. The series include the following categories:

- Personal
- Educator
- Exhibitions
- African American Art and Diaspora
- Artists & Individuals
- Colleges & Universities
- Museums & Galleries
- Organizations
- Audio/Visual
- Photographs

Following a visit to the Driskell Center Archives, Dr. Shawnya Harris, Assistant Professor of Art History at Elizabeth City State University, Elizabeth City, NC, commented on the collection stating, “The personal correspondence with artists are an exceptional resource to researchers and scholars.”

A Glimpse into the Driskell Papers

1. Letter from Alain Locke to Mary Brady, Harmon Foundation, dated May 12, 1945 discussing the work of several artists and the South Side Community Art Center, Chicago, IL.
2. Handwritten letter from Romare Bearden to David C. Driskell ca. 1970s about a visit and slides to be sent to Prof. Driskell.