



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

DAVID C. DRISKELL CENTER
FOR THE STUDY OF THE VISUAL ARTS AND CULTURE OF
AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

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NEWS RELEASE

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SIXTY-TWO ARTWORKS BY ESTABLISHED AND EMERGING ARTISTS CAPTURE THE PROMINENCE AND COMPLEXITY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ART

COLLEGE PARK, MD. *African American Art Since 1950: Perspectives from the David C. Driskell Center*, an exhibition in which works by renowned artists such as Romare Bearden, Elizabeth Catlett, and Sam Gilliam are coupled with exciting new visionaries, including Chakaia Booker, Lorna Simpson, and Kara Walker, collectively reflects the growing prominence—and complexity—of the field of African American Art over the last 60 years. The exhibition is organized by 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 and opens on **Thursday, September 20, 2012** with a public reception from 5-7PM. The exhibition will stay open until **December 14, 2012**.

Over thirty-five years ago, when prominent artist, collector, and scholar David C. Driskell developed the 1976 exhibition *Two Centuries of Black American Art: 1750-1950*, organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, he introduced the tremendous depth and breadth of African American art and creativity to an international audience. *African American Art Since 1950: Perspectives from the David C. Driskell Center*, curated by Dr. Robert E. Steele and Dorit Yaron, the David C. Driskell Center's Former Executive Director and current Acting Director, respectively, and Independent Scholar Dr. Adrienne L. Childs, honors the legacy of this landmark exhibition and brings to the nation the next pivotal chapter of African American art.

The exhibition, which is comprised primarily of works from the Driskell Center Permanent Art Collection, showcases the generation of artists who opened up the possibilities for African American art, from pursuing pure abstraction to providing a forum for art as political activism. The exhibition also presents the newest voices in African American art which utilize a variety of media and possess a hybrid approach to cultural and social identity; we highlight artists who are operating in a forum where national

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and racial boundaries are not the primary focus of inspiration; among these are Jefferson Pinder, and Hank Willis Thomas.

Accompanying the exhibition is a catalogue with essays that highlight the relationships among artists in the exhibition and the institutions that have impacted the field. Dr. Julie L. McGee, Curator of African American Art, University Museums, and Associate Professor of Black American Studies, University of Delaware, in her essay, "The Driskell Circle as Centrifuge," discusses how David Driskell's activism in the academic and museum fields was instrumental in the early careers of many artists, such as Bennie Andrews, Felrath Hines, and Jacob Lawrence.

Dr. Adrienne L. Childs, Independent Scholar, in her essay, "Notes on the Politics of Identity in African American Art," explores artists whose work is largely defined by postmodern identity politics, including race, memory, gender and history, as well as the importance of the body as a site of expression. Among these artists are Kevin Cole, Willie Cole, Margo Humphrey, Betye Saar, Kara Walker and Carrie Mae Weems.

The catalogue also includes: an "Acknowledgements" by Dr. Robert E. Steele and a "Foreword" by Prof. David C. Driskell, along with a timeline of major events in African American art since 1950; a checklist; and color reproductions of all the works in the exhibition along with short artist biographies. In addition, in his "Foreword," Driskell writes of the significance of this exhibition to the field of African American Art, "*African American Art Since 1950* brings forth a new insight into the meaning of this aspect of American art as it continues to highlight the social, cultural, and political visions of a growing creative community within Modernism."

About the David C. Driskell Center

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, celebrates 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. Established in 2001, the Center provides an intellectual home for artists, museum professionals, art administrators, and scholars of color, broadening the field of African diasporic studies. The Driskell Center is committed to collecting, documenting, and presenting African American art as well as replenishing and expanding the field. For further information about the David C. Driskell Center, please visit www.driskellcenter.umd.edu.

Gallery Hours: Monday-Friday: 11am - 4pm; Wednesday: 11am - 6pm. The Gallery will be open on the following Saturdays from 11am - 4pm: October 6, November 10 and December 1, 2012, and will be closed for the Thanksgiving holiday, November 22-25, 2012.

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