



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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**THE DAVID C. DRISKELL CENTER AWARDED PRESTIGIOUS GRANT
FROM THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION**

COLLEGE PARK, MD. – The David C. Driskell Center for the Study of the Visual Arts and Culture of African Americans and the African Diaspora was recently awarded a \$251,700 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, through the Council on Library and Information Resources [CLIR], Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives program. The grant will provide support for documenting the Professor David C. Driskell Archive of African American Art, a task central to the Center’s mission to expand and replenish the field of African American art.

The Professor Driskell archive was assembled over more than six decades and consists of an estimated 50,000 objects. The project’s goals include, a) documenting Professor Driskell’s one-of-a-kind archive; b) increasing accessibility to the collection through an on-line presence; c) developing procedures for managing the still-growing archive; d) increasing the knowledge and skills of current staff and professionals to further strengthen African American museums; and e) providing educational work experience for graduate students who are interested in professional careers in museums of African American art and culture.

Among the unique objects in the Driskell Archive are: lecture notes; students’ dissertations; slides; magazines; and, most importantly, correspondence with such nationally known artists as Romare Bearden, Elizabeth Catlett, Aaron Douglas, Jacob Lawrence, Georgia O’Keefe, and James Porter. About 30% of the archive has been documented through a two year grant awarded to the Center in 2011 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services [IMLS], an achievement the Center was able to reach by hiring an archivist and several graduate students from the University’s College of Information Studies. Most of the material included in the archive has yet to be explored; however, the contribution of Prof. Driskell to the field of African American art is unquestionable. Using the words of Professor Keith Morrison, retired Dean of the Tyler School of Art at Temple University, PA, and a Driskell Center Advisory Board Member, “the framework of African American art and its relationship to people of African descent was set forth by three people: Alain L. Locke, James A. Porter, and David C. Driskell...he established African American art as a legitimate and distinct field of study.”¹

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Prof. Curlee R. Holton, Interim Executive Director of the Driskell Center, says: “The Driskell Center is one of the most unique arts institutions in the United States. It was established to celebrate the life and legacy of Prof. David C. Driskell --America’s premier authority on African American art-- as well as a national treasure as a practicing visual artist. Along with that legacy comes the personal papers of Prof. Driskell, over 60 years of research and resource material critical to a comprehensive study of African American art and the African Diaspora. The CLIR grant will ensure that the Prof. David C. Driskell archive will be maintained and protected as a cultural asset for future generations of students and scholars from the world over.”

The Council on Library and Information Resources is an independent, nonprofit organization that forges strategies to enhance research, teaching, and learning environments in collaboration with libraries, cultural institutions, and communities of higher learning. CLIR aspires to transform the information landscape to support the advancement of knowledge, and promotes forward-looking collaborative solutions that transcend disciplinary, institutional, professional, and geographic boundaries in support of the public good.

The David C. Driskell Center 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 preserving, documenting and presenting African American art, as well as replenishing and expanding the field of African American art. The Center exhibition program is supported, in part, by a grant from the Maryland State Arts Council. All programs at the David C. Driskell Center are free and open to the public. The facility is wheelchair accessible. For further information regarding exhibitions and activities at the Driskell Center, please call 301.314.2615 or visit www.driskellcenter.umd.edu.

ⁱ David C. Driskell. Artist and Scholar. Julie L. McGee. Pomegranate Communication Inc., Petaluma, CA. p. 9-10. 2006.