



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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DAVID C. DRISKELL CENTER TO INTRODUCE ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVE AND SCHOLAR IN RESIDENCE INITIATIVES

COLLEGE PARK, MD. – The David C. Driskell Center, the leading research center for the study of African American art and the art of the Diaspora, is pleased to announce two new initiatives to increase and strengthen its archive records holdings and enhance the scholarly research opportunities at the Center. These initiatives, led by Chief Archivist Stephanie Maxwell, will include the establishment of an Oral History Archive and a new Scholar-in-Residence program.

Black Arts, Bold Worlds: The Driskell Center Oral History Archive will be part of the Driskell Center Archives permanent collection; it will aim to capture the insights and experiences of important, yet not well represented, African American artists in order to fortify our understanding of both their individual lives and the development of the field of African American art. The goals of this ongoing project will be to conduct, collect, archive, and preserve oral histories with African American artists whose stories have not been included in the narrative of American art. Given the status of African American artists in American art and the general lack of representation and accessibility, the voices and contributions of these artists have often been left out or marginalized in official narratives. The oral history interviews will focus on capturing the stories of these artists to shed light on the innovation and resilience they cultivated to nurture their craft even when lacking support from traditional institutions and avenues while also considering the cultural terrain in which they and their artistry were developed and sustained. Collecting their stories will provide insight into a long and complex history of American art. The outcomes of this project will include audio and/or video recordings and transcripts of the interviews which will become part of the David C. Driskell Center Archives to be preserved for current and future generations. Examining the relationships between artists, patrons, curators, and scholars will further allow researchers to understand the networks of the art world and field of African American art in particular.

The second new initiative at the Driskell Center is the establishment of a new **Scholar-in-Residence** program which will support scholars from around the country researching the African

American experience; the project will provide an opportunity to conduct original research using the unique art and archives collections at the Driskell Center. The Center will provide an intellectual and institutional home allowing the Scholar-in-Residence's research and intellectual interests to be supported and thrive. This program will include a range of possibilities for research and development in curation, education, documentation, and programming, including projects that may result in producing new works (art and/or performance); developing an exhibition (including thematic narratives and interpretative material); or organizing a public lecture or another scholarly program that bridges between the arts and other disciplines.

The first scholar to take this position in the Fall of 2015 is Dr. Jovonne J. Bickerstaff. As Scholar-in Residence, Dr. Bickerstaff will draw on her qualitative research expertise to help establish the Oral History Archive: developing guides for the oral history interviews, conducting the initial interviews with local African American artists, and designing a platform for making the archive digitally accessible. In addition to delivering public lectures on her research and establishing the archive, she will lead a mini-workshop on oral history. An alumna of MIT, Dr. Bickerstaff received her Doctorate in Sociology from Harvard University and MPhil in Social Psychology at the University of Cambridge. A scholar of gender, race, and emotions, her research examines African American couples in enduring relationships (10-40 years), probing how the heightened insecurity that accompanies being black in America can shape emotional socialization in ways that foster resilience but undermine intimacy. In addition to her residency at the Center, Dr. Bickerstaff will be teaching First-Year Writing at Howard University for the 2015-2016 academic year.

The Oral History Archive and Scholar-in-Residence program will allow the David C. Driskell Center to continue to honor its mission to act as an intellectual home for artists, museum professionals, art administrators, and scholars, who are interested in broadening the field of African Diasporic studies and to document and expand the field of African American art.

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. 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.