



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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**THE DAVID C. DRISKELL CENTER PRESENTS AN EXHIBITION EXPLORING BLACK IDENTITIES IN
AMERICAN ART FROM THE YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY'S COLLECTIONS**

COLLEGE PARK, Md. – Organized by a student curatorial team, the David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland in collaboration with the Yale University Art Gallery, presents an exhibition that probes the notion of African American art. *Embodied: Black Identities in American Art from the Yale University Art Gallery* features more than 50 works that engage with the issue of race and call into question the meanings that have been mapped onto African American bodies throughout history. *Embodied* will be on view from September 16 through October 29, 2010, at the David C. Driskell Center for the Study of Visual Arts and Culture of African Americans and the African Diaspora at the University of Maryland. The public opening reception will take place on September 16, 2010 from 5:00–7:00 PM at the Driskell Center's gallery, located at 1207 Cole Student Activities Building, at the College Park campus. The exhibition will be on display at the Yale University Art Gallery from February 18 through June 26, 2011.

The artworks chosen by the student curators prompt the viewer to question the categories of “African American” and “Black.” By asking whether “Black art” is recognizable or even exists in any coherent sense, this exhibition encourages the audience to reexamine some basic assumptions about race. The artworks are grouped into three sections, each with a specific focus: the performative dimension of racial identity; the ways the absence of a body can reveal assumptions about physical and ethnic identity; and national identity—how geographical origin and displacement affects identity. Each of the three sections highlights one work—respectively, Kerry James Marshall's *Untitled*, Lorna Simpson's *Wigs*, and Barkley L. Hendricks's *APBs/Afro Parisian Brothers*.—that serves as a point of departure for understanding the concept in question.

Embodied features works from the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery in a rich variety of media, including paintings and sculpture; decorative arts; and prints, drawings, and photographs. The number of artworks by African American artists within the permanent collection of the Yale University Art Gallery has increased multifold over the past decade. The exhibition both celebrates this rapidly growing area of the collection and highlights the contribution of African American artists to the canon of American art.

Robert E. Steele, Executive Director, David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland states, “What distinguishes African American art as a body of work in and of itself? How do ideas about content,

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authorship, or ethnicity help us form such distinctions? It is my hope that *Embodied* will answer these questions, but more so, that it will initiate a dialogue that is well worth having.”

Embodied: Black Identities in American Art from the Yale University Art Gallery is the latest in an ongoing series of exhibitions collaboratively curated by students and presented by the Yale University Art Gallery, but as Pamela Franks, Deputy Director of Collections and Education, notes, “The collaboration is unique in that it is the first time that a Yale student-curated exhibition has been organized by two institutions of higher education. By having the student curators come from different educational entities, our work has been strengthened by the multiplicity of viewpoints brought to the curatorial process.”

The exhibition and its publication were organized by Yale University and University of Maryland students, under the direction of Pamela Franks, Deputy Director for Collections and Education, Yale University Art Gallery, and Robert E. Steele, M.P.H. 1971, M.S. 1974, Ph.D. 1975, Executive Director, David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland. Made possible by Lois Chazen; Laura M. and James A. Duncan, B.A. 1975; Mr. and Mrs. Elliot L. Schlang, B.A. 1956; Francis H. Williams; the Jane and Gerald Katcher Fund for Education; the Nolen-Bradley Family Fund; the Florence B. Selden Fund; and the John F. Wieland, Jr., B.A. 1988, Fund for Student Exhibitions.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the David C. Driskell Center has organized a symposium, co-sponsored by the Driskell Center and the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. *Performing Race in African American Visual Culture* will be held on Wednesday and Thursday, September 15–16, 2010. The keynote speaker is Professor Richard J. Powell, John Spencer Bassett Professor of Art and Art History at Duke University, Durham, NC; the event takes place on Sept. 15 at 6PM at the Phillips Collection. The symposium will continue the following day at the Adele H. Stamp Student Union at the University of Maryland College Park campus from 9 AM–5 PM. Registration is required; call 301.314.2615 or email driskellcenter@umd.edu. The symposium is supported by a grant from the Maryland Humanities Council, the office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities and the Office of the Provost at the University of Maryland.

The David C. Driskell Center 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. 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. This exhibition is supported, in part, by a special fund from the Office of the President at the University of Maryland, and a grant from the Maryland State Arts Council.

The Driskell Center Exhibition Program is supported 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. The Driskell Center Gallery hours are Monday through Friday from 11AM to 4:00PM with extended hours on Wednesday until 6PM. For further information regarding this exhibition and future activities at the Driskell Center, please call 301.314.2615 or visit www.driskellcenter.umd.edu.