



The Driskell Center Archives
The Driskell Center
University of Maryland, College Park

**A Provisional Finding Aid to the robin holder collection,
1970s-2020s**

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Funding for the processing of this collection was provided by the Mellon Foundation, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and The Driskell Center.

May 2, 2025

Contact Information

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University of Maryland, College Park

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I. Collection Overview

Repository: The Driskell Center Archives

Creator: [holder, robin, 1952-](#)

Title: the robin holder collection

Dates: 1970s-2020s

Accession #: 2023.01

Extent: Approximately 14 linear feet

Description rules: Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Abstract: The robin holder collection documents robin holder's career as an artist and educator and her contributions to Black art. The collection particularly highlights holder's artistic work in series and her many public art commissions, her time as Assistant Director of the Robert Blackburn Printmaking Studio, and her decades-long career as an Artist Instructor with the nonprofit organization Studio in a School. Material formats include sketchbooks, exhibition catalogs, lesson plans, photographs, slides, and audiovisual items. The robin holder collection is arranged into 7 series, each with constituent subseries.

Language: English, Spanish

II. Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The robin holder collection was donated to The Driskell Center Archives by the artist robin holder. Materials were transferred to the Center in 2023, and the Deed of Gift was finalized in October 2024.

Separated Materials

The robin holder collection is housed in the Archives of The Driskell Center at the University of Maryland, College Park. Materials that are oversized or restricted for any reason have been separated and housed adjacent to the main collection.

Processing Information

This collection is currently in process. Materials are arranged into 7 series. The majority of the materials are paper-based, but series 6 and 7 are dedicated to photographic (series 6) and audiovisual (series 7) formats. Series 5 is restricted, as it contains contracts and commission agreement documents. Please contact archives-driskellcenter@umd.edu with any questions.

Preferred Citation

robin holder collection, MS09. The Driskell Center at the University of Maryland, College Park. Gift of the artist robin holder.

Collection Use and Access

Most material is available for research by appointment. Some items, including a series of contracts and commission agreements, have been restricted due to sensitive information or following the donor's request.

Ownership & Rights

The Driskell Center retains property rights for the records of the robin holder collection. Literary rights, including copyright, remain with the donor and other record creators. All material is subject to copyright laws.

Harmful Language Statement

The Driskell Center Archives collects materials from across the 20th and 21st centuries as a part of its mission to comprehensively document the lives, works, and histories of Black artists. Therefore, we must make accessible materials spanning a range of perspectives, including those created with racist, xenophobic, or otherwise prejudiced intentions, as well as works that critique or respond to such biases. These items may have been collected by record creators and/or represent deliberate artistic choices by the documented artists to address, reclaim, or subvert offensive language and/or depictions.

The Driskell Center acknowledges that some of its collection information may contain language that researchers find harmful, offensive, or otherwise challenging to encounter. This could include finding aids, digital item descriptions, and catalog records. We strive to present all archival material in language that respects record creators, the individuals and communities documented within the collection, and researchers. If you find outdated or harmful language in our descriptive information, please contact us at archives-driskellcenter@umd.edu.

III. Biographical Information

robin holder is an artist, educator, and activist born in Chicago and raised in New York City. She is best known for her printmaking, painting, and public art installations. holder graduated from LaGuardia High School of Music and Arts in 1969 and received a scholarship to attend the Arts Students League of New York from 1969 to 1971. There, she studied under Marshall Glasier, Vaclav Vytlačil, Morris Kantor, and Rudolf Baranik. Throughout the 1970s, she spent time in Mexico working on her art and at the Amsterdam Grafisch Atelier, where she studied lithography.

Education and instruction have formed a cornerstone of robin holder's career. She has held artist residencies through Studio in a School, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and various other organizations. She also served as the Assistant Director of the Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop from 1977-1986.

Much of robin holder's artwork focuses on themes relating to race, religion, gender, class, and social justice. Growing up as an African American Jewish woman placed robin at an intersection of marginalized communities in New York City that has inspired her artwork and fueled her social justice work. She was raised in activist communities and her brothers Kim and Mark both eventually joined the Black Panthers. holder decided at a young age that art could be her outlet, that art could be "creative" rather than "reactive".

Exhibition highlights

- *Art in Print*, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, NY (1984)
- "Warrior Women", ACBAW Center for the Arts, Mount Vernon, NY (1991)
- *African American Printmakers: The Legacy Continues*, Aljira Center for

- Contemporary Art, Newark, NJ (2005)
- *Robin Holder: Rhythm, Movement, and Change*, Parish Gallery, Washington, DC (2009)
- *An American Consciousness: Robin Holder's Mid-Career Retrospective*, The David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland, College Park (2009)

IV. Scope and Contents

The robin holder collection documents the artist robin holder's career as a printmaker, painter, and art instructor. It contains material showing the process and exhibition of her works in series, as well as planning documents for her myriad public art commissions. One series is dedicated to her instruction, primarily through the nonprofit organization Studio in a School and the Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop. The collection is documented at the folder level and arranged into 7 series, including one restricted series of contracts and commission agreements, as well as constituent subseries.

V. Arrangement

Series 1: Works in Series

- Subseries 1: Process pieces
- Subseries 2: Solo exhibitions
- Subseries 3: Group exhibitions

Series 2: Public Art

- Subseries 1: Camino de Animales, 1992-96
- Subseries 2: Rites of Passage, 1993
- Subseries 3: Portraits + Patterns, 1994-96
- Subseries 4: Migration, 2001-07
- Subseries 5: Other commissions

Series 3: Teaching & Instruction

- Subseries 1: Artist in Residence
- Subseries 2: Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop

Subseries 3: Individual guest lectures, curated exhibitions, and consultancies

Series 4: Biographical Materials

Subseries 1: Resumes and Artist Statements

Subseries 2: Correspondence

Subseries 3: Publicity

Subseries 4: Personal ephemera

Series 5: Contracts and Commissions (RESTRICTED)

Series 6: Photographs

Subseries 1: Printed photographs

Subseries 2: Negatives and transparencies

Subseries 3: Slides

Series 7: Audiovisual Materials

Subseries 1: Cassettes

Subseries 2: Optical disks

Subseries 3: VHS

VI. Series Descriptions

Series 1: Works in Series

This series documents robin holder's work in series, from process to exhibition. Notable series include *Warrior Woman Wizards*, *Outsourced!* (formerly titled *My Beautiful Red Dress*), and *Our Social Skin*.

Series 2: Public Art Commissions

As one of the first Black women to earn a public art commission in New York City, this series collects the mark robin holder's art has made in public spaces. Her largest projects and thus most heavily documented are *Camino de Animales*, completed for New York City Public School 5 on Staten Island; *Rites of Passage*, completed for High School Redirection in Brooklyn; *Portraits + Patterns*, completed in partnership with Studio in a School; and

Migration, completed for the Manhattan Transit Authority in the Flushing, Queens subway station.

Series 3: Teaching & Instruction

After returning from Amsterdam in 1977, robin holder joined the Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop as the Assistant Director, where she worked until 1986. She has held various teaching artist residencies, including at the Children's Museum of Manhattan, sponsored by Manhattan Graphics Center; El Museo del Barrio, sponsored by the New York State Council on the Arts; and at the Experimental Printmaking Institute at Lafayette College. The majority of this series' material relates to holder's decades of teaching with the nonprofit organization Studio in a School, where she was placed as an artist in residence at K-12 schools across New York City.

Series 4: Biographical Materials

This series includes resumes, artist statements, correspondence, published profiles, and various personal ephemera that give insight into robin holder's life. Much of this series is digital.

Series 5: Contracts and Commissions (RESTRICTED)

This series contains contracts and commission agreements between robin holder and galleries, institutions, and dealers. It is restricted to protect Personally Identifiable Information and other sensitive details. Researchers hoping to consult specific material can contact archives-driskellcenter@umd.edu for more information.

Series 6: Photographs

This series contains photographs of artwork, exhibitions, and other events.

Series 7: Audiovisual Material

This series contains materials in audiovisual formats, including cassette tapes, optical disks, and VHS.