

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with David Driskell

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Driskell, David C.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with David Driskell,
Dates:	June 23, 2001
Bulk Dates:	2001
Physical Description:	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:47:40).
Abstract:	Art professor, curator, and fine artist David Driskell (1931 - 2020) was one of the world's leading authorities on African American art. He wrote five exhibition books, co-authored four others, and published more than forty catalogues from exhibitions he curated. In 1998, the University of Maryland established the David C. Driskell Center for the Study of the African Diaspora, which honored Driskell's career as artist, educator, philanthropist, collector, and art historian. Driskell was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 23, 2001, in Hyattsville, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2001_022
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Artist and scholar David Driskell is regarded as one of the world's leading authorities on African American art. Driskell was born on June 7, 1931 in Eatonton, Georgia. Educated in North Carolina's public schools, he earned his undergraduate degree at Howard University and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Catholic University in Washington, D.C. Driskell also pursued post-graduate studies in Art History at the Netherlands Institute for the History of Art in the Hague and studied African and African American cultures independently in Europe, Africa, and South America.

In 1976, Driskell opened his groundbreaking exhibition, "Two Centuries of Black American Art", at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The show prompted the creation of similar shows around the country. Driskell also penned the show's catalogue, an invaluable text to art scholars who previously had very little information available on African American artists.

Since 1977, Driskell has served as cultural advisor to Camille and Bill Cosby and curator of the Cosby Collection of Fine Arts. He placed works of African American artists on the set of "The Cosby Show". This is credited with creating a new class of African American art collectors.

Driskell has contributed significantly to the study of the role of African American artists in society. He has written five exhibition books, co-authored four others, and published more than forty catalogues from exhibitions he has curated. Driskell has lectured extensively in North America, Europe, Africa, and South America and has taught at numerous universities.

In 1998, the University of Maryland established the David C. Driskell Center for the Study of the African

Diaspora. The Center honors Driskell's career as artist, educator, philanthropist, collector and art historian.

Driskell passed away on April 1, 2020.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with David Driskell was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on June 23, 2001, in Hyattsville, Maryland, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. Art professor, curator, and fine artist David Driskell (1931 - 2020) was one of the world's leading authorities on African American art. He wrote five exhibition books, co-authored four others, and published more than forty catalogues from exhibitions he curated. In 1998, the University of Maryland established the David C. Driskell Center for the Study of the African Diaspora, which honored Driskell's career as artist, educator, philanthropist, collector, and art historian.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Driskell, David C.

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Driskell, David C.--Interviews

African American art museum curators--United States--Interviews.

Art historians--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Curator

Visual Arts Collector

HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with David Driskell, June 23, 2001. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

- Video Oral History Interview with David Driskell, Section A2001_022_001_001, TRT: 0:30:24 ?
Artist, art historian and curator, David C.Driskell richly details his family background in Eatonton, Georgia where he grew up as the only boy in a family of girls. He also discusses his parents backgrounds as the children/grandchildren of slaves and Native Americans. Driskell describes the pressures of being the offspring of a minister and how it shaped his worldview.
African American families--Georgia--Eatonton.
African American parents--Genealogy.
African American ministers.
- Video Oral History Interview with David Driskell, Section A2001_022_001_002, TRT: 0:30:10 ?
Artist, art historian and curator, David C.Driskell, details his childhood and his family connection to African traditions. He recalls his grandfathers Gullah traditions and craftmaking. Driskell discusses his academic performance in high school and his desire to attend Howard University, which led him to pass up a scholarship at Shaw University. He caught a train to Howard, despite the fact he never submitted an application. Driskell shares a delightful anecdote about that adventure.
African American families--Manners and customs.
African Americans--Education (Secondary)--Georgia.
Shaw University.
Howard University.
Gullahs.
- Video Oral History Interview with David Driskell, Section A2001_022_001_003, TRT: 0:29:25 ?
Artist, art historian and curator, David C.Driskell, details his postgraduate training in art. He also discusses the artist salons held by notables like Alain Locke, and other Harlem Renaissance figures and its effect on his life. Driskell also recalls his coup at winning a scholarship to the prestigious Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine.
Mentoring in education.
Art--Studying and teaching.
Locke, Alain, 1885-1954.
Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture.
- Video Oral History Interview with David Driskell, Section A2001_022_001_004, TRT: 0:30:50 ?
Artist and art curator David C.Driskell details his life after graduating from Howard University. He landed his first teaching job at Talladega, and completed his masters degree while there. Driskell later returned to his alma mater for four years. but the chance to head Fisk's art department and curate their collection led him to move to the university in the 1960s.
Art--Studying and teaching.
Talladega College.
Fisk University.
Howard University.
- Video Oral History Interview with David Driskell, Section A2001_022_001_005, TRT: 0:31:18 ?
Artist and art curator David C.Driskell, delineates his curatorial career at Fisk

University and the University of Maryland. He also discusses the role of white patrons to black artists and building collections at historically black colleges and other institutions. Driskell also opines on several notable black artists like Martin Puryear, Sam Gilliam and their contributions to the black arts canon and the University of Maryland African American collection.

Fisk University.

University of Maryland (College Park, Md.).

African American art museum curators.

African American universities and colleges--Art.

Puryear, Martin, 1941-

Gilliam, Sam, 1933-

University of Maryland, College Park. Art Gallery.

Video Oral History Interview with David Driskell, Section A2001_022_001_006, TRT: 0:29:51 ?

Artist, art historian and curator, David C. Driskell, details his move into curating art collections, particularly for Bill Cosby. He also discusses the development of black art collectors and collections. Driskell notes the lack of education in the wider arts world on the contribution of black artists to the American art experience.

African American art museum curators.

Cosby, Bill, 1937---Art collections.

African American artists--History.

African American art--Collectors and collecting.

Video Oral History Interview with David Driskell, Section A2001_022_001_007, TRT: 0:31:13 ?

Artist, curator and art historian David C. Driskell discusses the retrospective of his collection held in honor of his retirement. He also details his curatorial and personal relationship with the Cosby family. He shares some great anecdotes about building their extensive collection of African American art. He also gives thanks to black artists who've inspired him throughout his career.

Cosby family--Art--Collection and preservation.

African Americans--Mentoring in the arts.

Video Oral History Interview with David Driskell, Section A2001_022_001_008, TRT: 0:14:29 ?

David C. Driskell narrates his photographs.

Photographs.