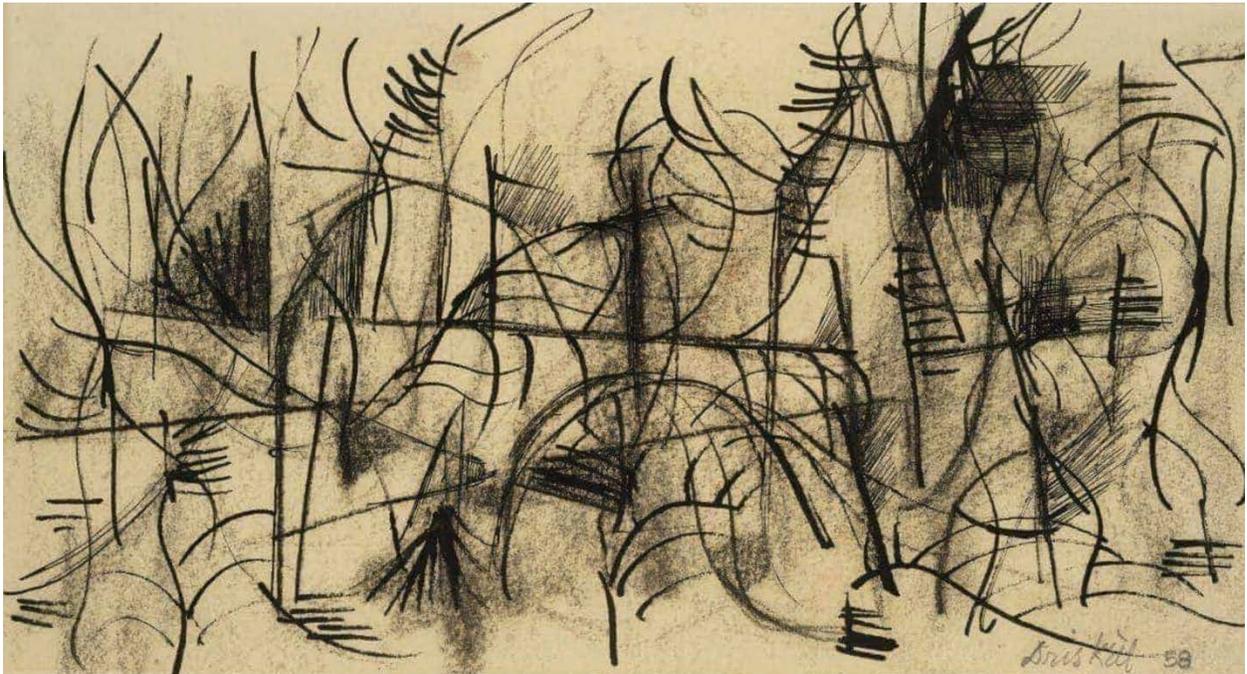


WIDEWALLS

Seven Decades of David Driskell's Art Soon in a Traveling Exhibition



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Balasz Takac

Despite the omnipresent suppression and violence the Black community in America was (and still is) exposed to, Black art had continuity in its development largely thanks to the bold individuals who risked a lot to express themselves regardless of social or political consequences.

One of the most important Black art figures to emerge during the early postwar period was the recently deceased artist **David C. Driskell** (1931-2020). His entire body of work shows a **fascinating stylistic corpus** fused with the everyday Black American experience, the American landscape, and the cultural legacies of the African diaspora. Alongside his artistic contributions, Driskell is widely recognized as a **leading mediator, curator, and educator in the context of the history of African American art**.

To honor his significance, **the High Museum of Art** and **the Portland Museum of Art** decided to team up and organize **the first posthumous survey of Driskell's oeuvre**. Under the title *Icons of Nature and History*, the show will be bringing approximately 60 artworks to underline his efforts, ingenuity, and vigor.



David C. Driskell - City Quartet, 1953, oil on canvas, University of Maryland. © The Estate of David C. Driskell

The Lasting Collaboration

The High Museum is not organizing Driskell's retrospective by chance - **their collaboration dates from the late 1970s** when the institution hosted the milestone exhibition *Two Centuries of Black American Art* which the artist curated. Moreover, the Museum **established the David C. Driskell Prize in 2005** as the first national award honoring different initiatives in the field of African American art.

The exhibition's guest curator Julie McGee, associate professor of Africana studies and art history at the University of Delaware, briefly summarized Driskell's legacy in the following statement:

What remains steadfast in Driskell's work is a commitment to his 'icons,' which elevate the mind and the spirit above that which exists in the physical world. Among the many gifts, Driskell bequeaths to us is the delight of seeing the world through his eyes, and it is a journey of immeasurable beauty and grace.



Left: David C. Driskell - Young Pines Growing, 1959. Oil on canvas. Clark Atlanta University Art Museum, John Hope Franklin Purchase Award. © Estate of David C. Driskell / **Right:** David C. Driskell - Self-Portrait as Nkisi Nkondi Figure, 2010. Graphite, charcoal and mixed media, collection of the artist. © Estate of David C. Driskell

A Long-Expected Survey

For this occasion, numerous works are gathered from museums, private collections, and Driskell's estate to provide **the full overview of his practice from the 1950s to the 2000s**. The visitors will have a chance to see some of his key works that are part of the High's collection, including one of Driskell's self-portraits.

The full trajectory of his artistic development from Howard University and the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture to Talladega College and his studio in Falmouth, Maine, will be examined **along with the dominant motifs** such as pine trees and other aspects of the natural world, the Black experience and African masks, as well as cultural traditions related to his Christian and Southern roots.



David C. Driskell - *Flowing Like a River*, 1996–97 Collage and gouache on paper. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. Caroline Thomas Fund and Harold A. and Ann R. Sorgenti Fund for African-American Art, 2005.20 © Estate of David C. Driskell, courtesy of DC Moore Gallery, New York

David Driskell at the High Museum of Art

An expansive illustrated catalog published by Rizzoli Electa will accompany the exhibition with essays of the leading scholars in the field, as well as a selection of Driskell's writings .

David Driskell: Icons of Nature and History will be presented on the second level of the High Museum of Art in Atlanta **from 6 February until 9 May 2021**. The exhibition will then travel to the Portland Museum of Art (19 June – 12 September 2021) and The Phillips Collection (6 October 2021 – 9 January 2022).

Featured image: David C. Driskell - *Untitled*, 1958 Ink and charcoal on paper. Purchased by the David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland, College Park, from the David C. Driskell Collection. Image courtesy of the David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland, College Park. Photography by Gregory R. Staley. Photograph © David C. Driskell Center, 2017. © Estate of David C. Driskell, courtesy of DC Moore Gallery, New York.