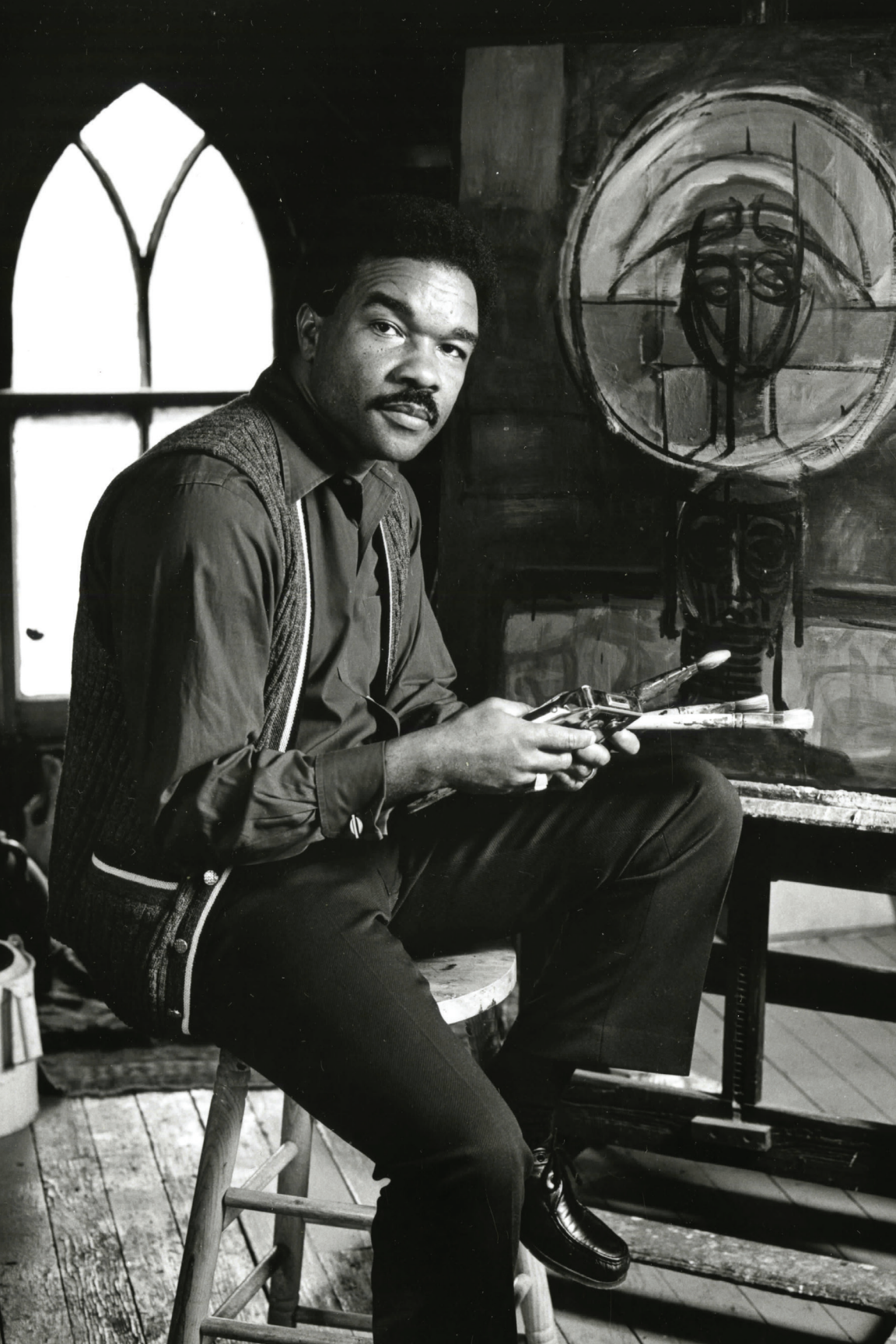




DAVID C.
DRISKELL
CREATIVITY,
COLLABORATION
AND FRIENDSHIP

& FRIENDS



A LETTER TO PROFESSOR DRISKELL:

It is difficult to find words that fully capture the magnitude of the mark you left during your lifetime as an artist, curator, scholar, and steward of the visual arts of the African diaspora. Your dedication to what you described as your “priestly calling” shaped generations of artists, students, and scholars who continue to draw from your wellspring. There is a thread that weaves together the lineage of Black artists, and your life’s work made more visible and strengthened that thread—centering their contributions, curating their narratives, and preserving their heritage.

I thank institutions like Howard University and mentors like Romare Bearden, Lois Mailou Jones, and James A. Porter, who helped cultivate and elevate your unique voice, enabling you to illuminate paths for others. I also offer heartfelt appreciation to your loving wife, Thelma, and your two daughters, Daphne and Davirnye, for their understanding and unwavering support as you pursued your life’s work.

Nashville remains deeply grateful for the expansive vision you brought to this city when you arrived in 1966. You committed yourself not only to enriching the field of visual arts but also to empowering the human potential of others. You inspired student artists and colleagues to, in your words, “see beyond the contour of time... beyond the context of the ordinary.” Reading your words and listening to interviews where you held space for the preservation of not only artistic contributions but also the humanity of the artists themselves continues to inspire. Countless individuals testify to the profound influence you had on their lives and continue to feel your presence in their motivation and confidence to pursue their work.

As an alumnus of Fisk University’s art department and a cultural worker in this incredible city of Nashville, I join the Frist Art Museum and many others in honoring you and your legacy. I hope this exhibition—and its companion exhibition *Kindred Spirits: Intergenerational Forms of Expression, 1966–1999*—serves as a testament to your enduring legacy of creating community, fostering kinship, and elevating the contributions of artists, academics, and the development of new generations.

Sending you love and admiration beyond the veil of this earthly plane, with gratitude and reverence,

MICHAEL J. EWING

Associate Curator, Frist Art Museum
Fisk University Alumnus

While some visions of the modern artist emphasize solitude in the studio, David C. Driskell’s legacy embodies a different reality—one of collaboration and community. This exhibition celebrates Driskell’s generosity of spirit and the mutual support, inspiration, and influence he shared with his friends through over sixty works by some of the most prominent African American artists.

This exhibition invites audiences to discuss the significance of collaboration in the creative process, broadening appreciation for African American art and fostering intergenerational awareness of the value of building connections. Collaboration was also essential to the creation of the exhibition itself, and we are thrilled to be able to work with exhibition co-curators Dr. Sheila Bergman, Curlee Hulton, and Heather Sincavage and the team at The Driskell Center to bring this show to Nashville, where Driskell spent a decade of his life and career.

March 14–June 1, 2025
Upper-Level Galleries

Organized by The Driskell Center, University of Maryland,
with support from the Teiger Foundation

Supported in part by the **Sandra Schatten Foundation** and
Joanne W. Payson and family in memory of John Whitney Payson

The Frist Art Museum is supported in part by



Cover: David C. Driskell. *Mask Series II* (detail), 2019. Relief woodcut; 14 1/2 x 11 in. The David C. Driskell Center, University of Maryland, College Park. Gift of Raven Fine Art Editions, 2019.10.002.

Interior: J. Clark Thomas. *David Driskell in his Ballentine Hall studio, Fisk University, Nashville, ca. 1966.* Photograph. Fisk University Galleries, Nashville, TN

Frist Art
Museum



Connect with us @FristArtMuseum
#TheFrist #FristDriskellAndFriends