

David C. Driskell & Friends:

Creativity, Collaboration & Friendship



A Teacher's Guide for Middle and High School



Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum
Saginaw Valley State University
7400 Bay Rd.
University Center, MI 48710
marshallfredericks.org
989-964-7125

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October 12, 2024 to February 22, 2025

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Photography and Content Credits

The Driskell Center Archives, University of Maryland, College Park

About the Exhibition

David C. Driskell & Friends: Creativity, Collaboration, and Friendship

The creative legacy of David C. Driskell (1931—2020), a renowned artist, educator, curator, scholar and historian, takes center stage in the compelling exhibition *David C. Driskell & Friends: Creativity, Collaboration, and Friendship* which will be hosted by the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum from October 12, 2024 to February 22, 2025. Featuring more than 70 artworks by 35 prominent African American artists and original archival materials, *Driskell & Friends* brings to life Driskell's profound commitment to interpersonal connections as a driving force in the visual arts.

Driskell's creative practice was deeply rooted in the collaborative, with friendships serving as conduits for support, influence, and inspiration. As both a personal and professional collaborator, Driskell championed and canonized the work of fellow African American artists, including Romare Bearden, Elizabeth Catlett, Aaron Douglas, Lois Mailou Jones, Jacob Lawrence, Alma Thomas, Kara Walker, and many more featured in this exhibition. Breaking away from traditional notions of the solitary artist, the exhibition sheds light on the pivotal role such collaborations played in Driskell's journey, from coordinating in printmaking workshops to engaging in formal and informal dialogues with fellow artists. It is a testament to the enduring power of collaboration and the profound impact of David C. Driskell on the world of art.

Originally conceived and organized by Dr. Sheila Bergman (University of California, Riverside), Curlee Raven Holton (The Driskell Center), and Heather Sincavage (Wilkes University), the exhibition's presentation at the University of Maryland was co-curated by The Driskell Center's Assistant Director of Exhibitions & Programs, Dr. Abby R. Eron, and Director, Dr. Jordana Moore Saggese. The collaborative effort behind this showcase mirrors the ethos it seeks to celebrate—emphasizing the interconnectedness that defined Driskell's artistic journey.

All works featured in the exhibition are from the permanent collection of The David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland, College Park, MD. *Driskell & Friends* has been previously presented at Wilkes University Sordoni Art Gallery, Wilkes-Barre, PA.

Sponsor

This exhibition is sponsored in part by the Michigan Arts and Culture Council.



How To Use This Guide

Designed for educators to use as a resource in the classroom before, after, or in lieu of a visit to the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum, this teacher's guide provides information about selected artworks, topics for classroom discussion, writing activities, and art projects that introduce key ideas of the exhibition *David C. Driskell and Friends*. The guide is designed for those teaching at the middle and high school levels. While classroom teachers across the city, state, and nation often cover similar content, each educator has a distinct approach to engaging their learners in the material. In response, the Museum's education team has created a guide to borrow from and build on to meet the needs of your specific classroom environment and teaching style.

There are multiple objectives for using this guide. One goal is to empower educators working with students of varying abilities to teach from the images presented here, and to promote teaching through an exploration of art by the self-taught. Another goal is to encourage students to ask critical questions when investigating visual art as a primary source. We hope this material will support dynamic learning in your classroom and help your students draw parallels with subjects they are already studying.

For the artwork featured in this teacher guide, you will find accompanying background information and a list of resources. In addition, each lesson plan contains questions to spark discussion as well as suggestions for related activities and projects for students meant to extend their learning even further. The questions section is separated into three categories:

Questions for Careful Looking ask students to observe each object in great detail and then work together to decode what they see.

Questions for Further Discussion tie in threads of background information on the objects to further the looking process,

Questions for Context help students identify and understand the cultural climate in which the object was created.

Questions for Context encourage students to consider their responses independent of the artwork. Depending on the contextual information your students already have about the originating time and place of the object, you might want to ask these questions before or after students discuss what they see in the image.

Whether you are in the Museum or your classroom, we are certain that you will discover new and inspiring ways to integrate work by self-taught artists into your teaching to make history and culture come alive for your students!

Teaching From Images and Objects

Object-based learning, particularly from museum collections, activates students' powers of observation, interpretation, and analysis. At the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum, our teaching methodology is inquiry-based and discussion-driven. Through facilitated conversation about objects, students construct their own interpretations of the works, thus, establishing ownership of their ideas and cultivating confidence and pride in learning. As students link their observations and interpretations to those of their peers and bring their prior knowledge into the conversation, the class develops a collective body of knowledge, while individuals hone their critical thinking skills.

We recommend a few techniques that will help you guide students through the meaning-making process as you facilitate discussions about works of art:

Invite students to look carefully.

Start by asking students to take a minute to look silently at the work of art. At first, this process might be uncomfortable for students who are not accustomed to silent looking, but it will become easier with each new image. This invitation to look is essential; we are rarely encouraged to slow down to make observations. By spending a few moments together examining the image, students will start the lesson with a shared experience.

Use repetition in your Questions for Careful Looking.

Repeat questions you have posed to your students with different objects so they can anticipate the questions and feel comfortable responding. Repetition will help students better understand questions they might not have understood the first time, and it will provide them with a series of useful starting-point questions for when they approach an image on their own.

Engage students through open-ended questions.

Open-ended questions create space for multiple viewpoints and more than one "right" answer. In addition, these types of questions encourage discussion as opposed to single-word answers. When asked to respond to an open-ended question, students are invited to participate and share their ideas without fear of giving the "wrong" answer.

Paraphrase all students' comments.

As students offer their ideas and interpretations, paraphrase their comments to ensure that the whole group has heard each student's ideas. In addition, by voicing a student's comment in different words, you validate that comment and let the student know that you have heard the idea and understood it. Be sure to paraphrase all comments in a way that does not suggest that one comment is more valuable than another.

Introduce new vocabulary in authentic ways.

As you paraphrase students' comments, attempt to balance the vocabulary that students already have with new words. Vocabulary is best acquired when presented in context, and a discussion about a work of art in which everyone is focused on a shared stationary image provides a perfect opportunity for this experience.

Ask students to support all observations and interpretations.

Ask students to back up their inferences and ideas with evidence from the work of art to legitimize their interpretations. Ask for visual evidence even when an interpretation seems obvious.

Point to elements of the image to which students refer.

If you have the opportunity to project an image of a work of art, point to areas of the picture or object that students address in their comments. This helps ground each comment and ensures that all students can see the element being discussed.

Weave background information into the discussion in appropriate and authentic ways.

As students develop their interpretations of the work of art, you may want to share threads of background information with the group. Information about the object should further the looking process, contextualize the artwork for students, or appropriately challenge the group to push the limits of their thinking.

At the beginning of each lesson, you will find Questions for Careful Looking. At times these questions relate specifically to details in the work of art, while in other instances they have a more general scope, and they may appear in multiple lessons in this Curriculum Guide. Both types of questions are equally important in the discussion, but the latter—the more general question—is critical in order for all possible observations to be heard. However, if a general discussion seems to have tapered off, simply asking for further detailed observations can revitalize conversation and allow students who haven't yet shared ideas to find new layers and meaning in the object and lead the group in new directions.

By beginning your discussion of an artwork with concrete observations, you ensure that all students have the same starting point. As the discussion progresses, students will naturally apply a historical context to the work; with markedly increasing ease, they will piece together what they see with what they know. At the same time, they will gain confidence in asking questions about what they see and seeking the information to answer them. As a result, students will use what they have taken from the conversation and apply it to the ensuing project. In the process, students will also gain experience scrutinizing primary sources and works of art in general, while at the same time cultivating their visual literacy and critical-thinking skills.

Michigan Visual Arts State Standards

The lessons in this teacher's guide address a variety of Michigan State Standards for teaching and learning in the Arts. Because lesson plans are designed to be adapted and tailored by educators, they are not accompanied by individual lists of standards addressed. The standards listed below reflect those inherent in many of the lessons and programs in the Museum.

Middle School, Grades 6-8

Standard 1: Apply skills and knowledge to perform in the arts.

Standard 2: Apply skills and knowledge to create in the arts.

Standard 3: Analyze, describe, and evaluate works of art.

Standard 4: Understand, analyze, and describe the arts in their historical, social, and cultural contexts.

Standard 5: Recognize, analyze, and describe connections among the arts; between the arts and other disciplines; between the arts and everyday life.

High School, Grades 9-12

Standard 1: Apply skills and knowledge to perform in the arts.

Standard 2: Apply skills and knowledge to create in the arts.

Standard 3: Analyze, describe, and evaluate works of art.

Standard 4: Understand, analyze, and describe the arts in their historical, social, and cultural contexts.

Standard 5: Recognize, analyze, and describe connections among the arts; between the arts and other disciplines; between the arts and everyday life.

Michigan Social Studies State Standards, 7th grade

G1.2 Geographical Inquiry and Analysis

Use geographical inquiry and analysis to answer questions about relationships between peoples, cultures, and their environments, and interaction among places and cultures within the era under study.

Michigan Social Studies State Standards, Grades 9-12

6.1.4 Growth and Change – explain the social, political, economic, and cultural shifts taking place in the United States at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century.

Michigan Science State Standards, Middle School

Structure and Properties of Matter

MS-PS1-4 Develop a model that predicts and describes changes in particle motion, temperature, and state of a pure substance when thermal energy is added or removed.

Michigan Science State Standards, High School

Structure and Properties of Matter

HS-PS2-6 Communicate scientific and technical information about why the molecular level structure is important in the functioning of designed materials.

David C. Driskell & Friends: Creativity, Collaboration & Friendship honors the legacy of artist and scholar David C. Driskell and his contributions to the art world through an exhibition that brings together over 30 prominent African American artists, showcasing their works through sculptures and paintings, many of which are drawn from Driskell's personal collection. From Alma Thomas to Jacob Lawrence, the show highlights the connections between Professor Driskell and his peers along with his influential legacy on Black artists in the US.

The exhibit explores the work of, and Driskell's relationships with, such figures as Hale Woodruff, James Porter, Elizabeth Catlett, Kara Walker, Romare Bearden, Keith Morrison, Jacob Lawrence, and many more. Original works of art created by Driskell are also featured, as well as ephemera from the Driskell Papers that exemplify the artists' unique friendships.

This exhibition highlights the artistic legacy of David C. Driskell and the importance of his personal relationships with fellow artists – many of whom have a significant place of their own within the American art canon. One of the exhibition's primary roles is to serve as a building block for audiences to discuss the often hidden dimensions of creative process. By emphasizing a generational understanding of relationship building and creative practice, the exhibition expands the audience's appreciation of the role of collaboration in African American art.

The exhibition was organized by Sheila Bergman, PhD, University of California, Riverside; Curlee Raven Holton, David C. Driskell Center, University of Maryland; and Heather Sincavage, Wilkes University.

Creativity, Collaboration and Friendship

Interpersonal connection was a central feature of David C. Driskell's creative practice in the visual arts. His friendships were conduits for support, influence, and inspiration flowing in mutual and multiple directions. As an educator, curator, scholar, and historian, Driskell championed and helped to canonize the work of fellow African American artists, many of whom were both personal and professional collaborators. Whether coordinating with others in a printmaking workshop, dialoguing with fellow artists in settings both formal and informal, or contributing to the achievement of a shared goal, these collaborations proved fundamental to Driskell's creative work.

While certain visions of the modern artist promote an individual working alone in the studio, this exhibition presents an alternate reality. In fact, this exhibition itself embodies collaboration through its interinstitutional co-curation and multi-venue itinerary. It also expresses a shared joy in highlighting Driskell's generosity of spirit as part of his enduring legacy.

David C. Driskell (1931-2020)

Born in 1931 in Eatonton, Georgia, David C. Driskell grew up in North Carolina and completed the art program at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine in 1953. He received an undergraduate degree in art from Howard University in 1955 and an M.F.A. from The Catholic University of America in 1962. He then explored postgraduate study in art history at The Netherlands Institute for the History of Art in The Hague. Trained as a painter and art historian, Driskell worked primarily in collage and mixed media and printmaking.

Driskell began his teaching career at Talladega College in 1955. He taught at Howard University and Fisk University and served as visiting professor of art at several universities, including Bowdoin College, the

University of Michigan, and Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria. He joined the faculty of the department of art at the University of Maryland, College Park, in 1977 and served as its chairperson from 1978–1983, named Distinguished University Professor of Art in 1995. In 2001, three years after his retirement, the University of Maryland established the David C. Driskell Center to honor his contributions as an artist, art historian, collector, curator and scholar. The center honors Driskell by preserving the rich heritage of African American visual art and culture.

The recipient of numerous fellowships, awards and prizes, including three Rockefeller Foundation Fellowships and a Harmon Foundation Fellowship, Driskell also received 13 honorary doctoral degrees in art. While teaching at the University of Maryland, Driskell maintained an active career as a practicing artist, teacher, curator, collector, art administrator and art consultant. He lectured across the globe and his works are included in major collections of art museums throughout the world. Driskell authored five books on the subject of African American art, co-authored four others and published more than 40 catalogues from exhibitions he curated. Driskell's groundbreaking exhibition *Two Centuries of Black American Art* will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2026.



David C. Driskell

Driskell and Friends

The exhibiting artists appear in many of America's leading museum collections, and this exhibition provides a rare opportunity to admire so many significant artists within one exhibition. "Driskell and Friends" provides viewers with a comprehensive and dynamic overview of Black creative practice in the twentieth century with a range of media, styles, and subjects. Artists represented are united by their friendships and collaborations with Driskell from his studies at Howard University in Washington DC through his appointments to the faculty at Fisk University in Nashville and later at the University of Maryland, where he taught for 22 years before his retirement in 1998. The show examines Driskell's artistic legacy and his role in the establishment of a community for African American artists from the 1950s onward. The exhibition regroups thirty-one total artists, many of whom have never been exhibited together before.

Charles Alston
Romare Bearden
John Biggers
Elizabeth Catlett
Claude Clark
Eldizer Cortor
Aaron Douglas
David C. Driskell
Mel Edwards
James V. Herring
Felrath Hines
Earl Hooks
Margo Humphrey
Lois Mailou Jones
Jacob Lawrence
Hughie Lee Smith
Norman Lewis
Richard Mayhew
Sam Middleton
Keith Morrison
Mary Lovelace O'Neal
Stephanie Pogue
Betye Saar
Alma W. Thomas
Kara Walker
James Lesesne Wells
Charles White
Walter Williams
William T. Williams
Ellis Wilson
Hale Woodruff

David C. Driskell (1931-2020)

Mask Series II

2019

Relief Woodcut

14 ½ x 11 inches

Photograph by Greg Staley

“Driskell had a deep understanding of West African Art as he had sojourned in Africa in 1969-70 and 1972 after being introduced to African Art at Howard University by James Porter. He said ‘I have turned my attention to images that reflect the exciting expression that is based in the iconography of African Art. In so doing, I am not attempting to create African Art. Instead, I am interested in keeping alive some of the potent symbols that have significant meaning for me as a person of African descent.’”

From Heather Sincavage essay: *A Gift of Time and Friendship* and quote from: McGee, Julie L., and David Driskell, *David C. Driskell: Artist and Scholar*. San Francisco, CA Pomegranate, 2006



Questions for Careful Looking

Look carefully at this relief woodcut print and list 10 things you can notice about it.

Questions for further discussion

Why do you think the artist chose to create a mask in this print?

Why do you think humans make masks?

The artist seems to make multiple masks overlaying on each other, why?

Why do you think the artist chose red, yellow and blues for the dominant colors? What is the name of this color scheme?

What is a relief print?

What is the process of making a relief print with wood?

Questions for Context

Find pictures of masks from different cultures and compare and contrast them.

Is the meaning of a mask the same or different for different cultures?

What are some ways we use masks?

Suggested activity

Make a small relief print using balsa wood. Draw an image with a pencil or stylus making an indentation into the wood. Then apply ink or acrylic paint on the surface and offset it onto a sheet of paper. Scan the QR code to the right or visit: <https://thelongthread.com/2009/07/14/balsa-wood-prints/>



Alma W. Thomas

(1891-1978)

Untitled

1966

Acrylic on paper

9 x 35 ½ inches

Photo by Greg Staley



Alma Thomas didn't fully focus on painting until she retired in 1960. Her painting style changed and evolved multiple times from cubism to abstract expressionism. Her painting process began by sketching faint shapes in pencil and then painting over the marks. Many of these pencil marks are visible in her paintings as she did not erase them. She is considered a color field painter, which brought her criticism for not creating works depicting racial themes and issues as many younger artists did. Thomas said she wanted to paint beauty and happiness. David Driskell would describe her work as a display of her "love of life."

Her work has been commemorated as a stamp in 2005. She was the first Black woman to have a work of art acquired by the White House Collection in 2015. One of her paintings sold for 2.8 million dollars in 2021.

Questions for Careful Looking

- Look carefully at the painting and list 10 things you can notice about it.

Questions for Further Discussion

- Do a search on this artist and look at a few of her artworks. Do they look similar? Are the colors similar?
- Can you recognize anything in this artwork?
- Thomas's art is often called cubist or abstract expressionist. Can you look up those art movements and find out what they mean?
- Explain how Thomas uses colors to create balance in her compositions.
- Thomas's art has a strong linear composition. What does that mean?

Questions for Context

- Thomas's work didn't depict racial themes and issues. She wanted to create beauty and happiness. When you look at her painting, what about it says happiness and beauty?

Suggested Activities

- Create an artwork like Thomas. Have students select 4-6 colors to use. Have them make light pencil drawings on the paper or canvas. Using a flat brush, show the student how to make similar painting marks in linear way. Show students how to alternate colors so dark and light colors balance compositionally and visually across the surface.

Elizabeth Catlett (1915-1912)

1982

Seated Mother and Child

Cast bronze on wood

16 x 7 x 7 ½ inches

Photograph by Greg Staley

After graduating from Howard University in 1937, Catlett attended the University of Iowa for her MFA in painting, drawing and sculpting. After college she began making sculptures of African American women and children. In 1946 she was the recipient of a Rosenwald Fund Fellowship to travel to Mexico to work and then became head of the sculpture department for the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas. She became a Mexican citizen. She was influenced by African and Mexican art techniques. She did not aim to explore individual personalities but abstract ideas and feelings. The themes of her work were social injustice, the human condition, historical figures, women and the relationship between mother and child all tied to African Americans and their experiences in the 20th Century.



Questions for Careful Looking

- Look carefully at this sculpture and describe 10 things you can notice about this sculpture.
- What is the media?

Questions for Further Discussion

- Catlett sculpted a seated mother and child. Why do you think she did that?
- Catlett stylized the sculpting of a mother and child. What does that mean?
- What is the process of making a cast bronze sculpture?
- Catlett combined media by using a wood base under the bronze. Do many artists combine media like wood and metal?

Questions for Context

- Catlett's art was influenced by African and Mexican techniques. She produced artworks that didn't explore individual personalities, but rather abstract ideas and feelings. When you look at her work can you see how she creates flat plane surface areas on the figures in a geometrical way. Yet she also has some rounded areas too. Research African and Mexican figurative art and styles to see if they relate. Contrast and compare them to this sculpture.

Suggested Activities

- Using waterbase air dry clay, have students create a figurative artwork and stylize it like this sculpture. Explain what "style" means. Have them develop their own unique style.

Romare Bearden (1911-1988)

Family

1970

Collage on wood

8.88 x 12 inches

Photograph by Greg Staley

Bearden was very young when his family moved to New York City from North Carolina. While working as a cartoonist for New York University's humor magazine he decided to pursue an art career. He met a group of African American artists that later became the Harlem Arts Guild. Then in 1936 he joined a collective of black artists called the 306 group named after their studio loft. He studied under George Grosz at the Art Students League and worked as a political cartoonist for several African American newspapers. After playing semi-professional baseball he began painting and was inspired by Mexican Muralists and early Cubism. He used clippings to infuse modernity into his work. His work is meant to spark conversation on human emotions, actions, myths and spirituality.



Questions for Careful Looking

Look carefully at this collage and list 10 things you can notice about it.

Questions for further discussion

How is a collage made?

What are the people doing in this artwork?

What room of a house do you think they are in and why?

Are the people all the same size and/or age? If not, why?

Questions for Context

The name of this artwork is "Family". Why would the artist make an artwork about "Family"?

Suggested activity

Using magazines, scissors and glue sticks, have students cut out pictures and combine them into interesting compositions like Bearden's artwork. Discuss scale size differences in Bearden's work and encourage them to do this technique. Add color to them with clippings, crayons or paint for color balance.

Glossary

Abstract Expressionist: A post WWII movement that is characterized by gestural brush strokes, mark-making, spontaneity, non-objective and express artists emotion and subconscious. It can be painting, drawing, prints and sculpture.

Art style: The distinct characteristics and techniques used by artists to create their works. Each artist possesses unique features when creating their artworks.

Balsa Wood: Native to the Americas, it is fast growing and the softest commercial hardwood tree. It has a spongy texture and its light weight.

Bronze: An alloy composed of about 85% copper and 15% tin.

Collage: An artwork made from assemblage of various materials (paper, cloth, photographs, etc.) adhered to a surface.

Color balance: Use of similar color hues, values, intensity, etc. that balance within the entire composition creating color harmony.

Cubism: Invented in around 1907–08 by artists Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, they brought different views of subjects (usually objects or figures) together in the same picture, resulting in paintings and sculptures that appear fragmented, geometric and abstracted.

Linear composition: The use of line in the composition of an artwork. It can be actual or implied. It can be geometric or organic.

Metal casting: The process of making a model, making molds of it and then using the molds to make a metal (or other material) cast.

Relief Print: The process in which areas that are cut away or lower from the plate surface don't print when inked. The higher areas are inked and printed onto paper, fabric or other substrate. Some examples include woodcut and linoleum cut.

Scale: The relationship between the size of an object to another object.

Resources

Digital

Wikipedia

Google resources

Print

David C. Driskell & Friends: Creativity, Collaboration & Friendship catalog, The Driskell Center, University of Maryland, College Park.

Photographs:

Photographs in this Teacher's Guide cannot be reproduced or used.

Links:

African art: <https://africa.si.edu/>

Mexican art: <https://nationalmuseumofmexicanart.org/artists>

David Driskell and Friends, Driskell Center

<https://driskellcenter.umd.edu/events/david-c-driskell-friends-creativity-collaboration-and-friendship>

Alma Thomas

<https://americanart.si.edu/artist/alma-thomas-4778>

Romare Bearden

<https://beardenfoundation.org/>

Elizabeth Catlett

<https://www.moma.org/artists/1037>

Exhibition Development

Organized by The Driskell Center, University of Maryland, College Park

Conceived by Dr. Sheila Bergman (University of California, Riverside), Curlee Raven Holton (The Driskell Center, University of Maryland, College Park), and Heather Sincavage (Wilkes University, Wilkes-Barre, PA).



MARSHALL M. FREDERICKS SCULPTURE MUSEUM

Visiting the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum

The Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum is located on the campus of Saginaw Valley State University in the Arbury Fine Arts Center. The Museum is open from Monday to Saturday, 11:00am to 5:00pm and has no admission charge.

Phone: 989-964-7125

Email: mfsm@svsu.edu

Visit the Museum's website at marshallfredericks.org or scan the QR code to the right.

We look forward to your upcoming visit!

