

**BOWDOIN COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART CREATES A
NEW PROGRAMS FUND IN MEMORY OF
ARTIST, EDUCATOR, AND CURATOR DAVID C. DRISKELL**

BRUNSWICK, ME—April 7, 2022—The Bowdoin College Museum of Art (BCMA) has secured financial contributions to establish the David C. Driskell H’89 Fund, honoring the memory of the distinguished artist, educator, and curator, who passed away in April 2020. The new fund was initiated with a founding gift from Dr. Julie L. McGee ‘82, an associate professor of Africana studies and art history at the University of Delaware. This fund will provide annual support for exhibitions and public programs focused on African American art, and will support the BCMA’s overall work towards its diversity, equity, and inclusion goals.

Born in 1931 in rural Georgia, Dr. Driskell led a remarkable life. Having learned to draw in his youth, he studied art and art history at Howard University, where he earned his B.A., and Catholic University, where he received his M.F.A. In 1953, Driskell attended the Skowhegan School of Art and Design, which began his long relationship with Maine. He subsequently purchased a home in Falmouth, and in the spring of 1973, he taught at Bowdoin. That fall the BCMA featured his work in a solo exhibition. The Museum’s collection includes many works by Driskell covering a wide arc of his career, such as his 1968 woodcut *Mountain and Tile*, his 1972 self-portrait drawing *Masking Myself*, and his 2006 lithograph *The Bassist*. The BCMA also recently acquired a photograph by Frank Stewart that shows Driskell at his home in 1975.

Driskell’s 1976 exhibition and book, *Two Centuries of Black American Art, 1750-1950*, established him as one of the leading authorities in the field of African American art. Over his lifetime, he taught generations of students at Talladega College, Howard University, Fisk University, and the University of Maryland, College Park. In 2001, the University of Maryland honored him with the establishment of the David C. Driskell Center for the Study of Visual Arts and Culture of African Americans and the African Diaspora. He also returned to Skowhegan as a faculty member over several years and supported the organization’s work as a trustee and member of its advisory board.

“David C. Driskell was an audacious educator, curator, and artist,” said Dr. Julie L. McGee. “He had an expansive understanding of the history of visual art and believed that the creative impulse connected all artists. Driskell affirmed the rightful place of African American art in this ancient and venerable history. This fund honors this legacy and the capacity for Bowdoin to expand upon its significance. It acknowledges that diversity, equity, and inclusion are practices that serve the visual arts and vice versa. Most importantly, we hope that this fund inspires audacity in measures that continue to inform a more just and equitable society. For me, this is about foregrounding Driskell’s legacy in the context of Bowdoin’s commitment to a liberal arts education in service of the common good, and the importance of the visual arts to this work.”

Dr. McGee is an important scholar of African American art and contemporary African art. Among her many publications, she has authored the biography *David C. Driskell: Artist and Scholar* (2006). In 2021 she co-curated *David Driskell: Icons of Nature and History*, a major traveling exhibition of Dr. Driskell’s

art. In addition to her teaching and research, McGee directs the Interdisciplinary Humanities Research Center and the Paul R. Jones Initiative, an endeavor to foster critical thinking with and through African American art, at the University of Delaware.

“David Driskell made a significant, lasting impact on the Bowdoin community and on the arts as a whole, both as a maker and as a historian. We appreciate greatly Dr. McGee’s generosity in helping us to launch this fund in his honor, and to the other donors who have contributed to making it a reality,” said Anne Collins Goodyear, Co-Director of the BCMA. “We also want to thank the other donors whose support has been crucial, including James A. Ellis ’82, Barbara E. Futter ’84, Mark Wethli, and an anonymous donor. We can think of no better way to recognize his contributions and accomplishments—and his career-long commitment to inspiring and educating students—than through a fund dedicated to him that will help us in our ongoing work to create exhibitions and programs that explore African American art and art history,” continued Co-Director Frank Goodyear.

Bowdoin College Museum of Art

The Bowdoin College Museum of Art is the cornerstone of the arts and culture at Bowdoin. One of the earliest collegiate art collections in the nation, it came into being through the 1811 bequest of James Bowdoin III of 79 European paintings and a portfolio of 140 master drawings. The collection has been expanded through the generosity of the Bowdoin family, alumni and friends, and now numbers more than 20,000 objects, including paintings, sculpture, works on paper, decorative arts and artifacts from prehistory to the present from civilizations around the world. www.bowdoin.edu

In 2020, BCMA released its new 2020-2025 strategic priorities, including a commitment to “Enhance the opportunities for intellectual engagement and professional development to serve a diverse community and to promote inclusivity.” This plan recognizes that museums are sites of knowledge, of cultural memory and heritage, and they must be harnessed to serve as an instrument for positive change. Additional information about the BCMA’s Anti-Racism Action Plan can be found on its website at:

<https://www.bowdoin.edu/art-museum/about/anti-racism-plan.html>

###

For more information, please contact:

Suzanne Bergeron
Bowdoin College Museum of Art
207-725-3124
sbergero@bowdoin.edu

Sascha Freudenheim
PAVE Communications & Consulting
917-544-6057
sascha@paveconsult.com