

4-2006

Program Booklet: 17th Annual James Porter Colloquium

Department of Art

Art, Artists, and Activism: The Black Arts Movement Revisited, Recontextualized

**Honoring Faith Ringgold
scholar, artist, poet, activist**

April 20-22, 2006
Howard University
Washington, DC

This year's presentation of the Howard University Department of Art's James A. Porter Colloquium is presented in conjunction with the David C. Driskell Center for the Study of the African Diaspora and the Howard University Gallery of Art.

All Colloquium events will be held at the Armour J. Blackburn Center on the campus of Howard University, with the exception of the Thursday evening's Annual David C. Driskell Lecture to be held on the campus of the University of Maryland, College Park.

Armour J. Blackburn Center
Ballroom and Hilltop Lounge
Howard University Campus
202.806.7047 tel

Driskell Center at the University of Maryland, College Park
301.314.2615 tel

5th Annual Driskell Lecture to be held at the Gildenhorn Hall, Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, University of Maryland, College Park. Transportation from Colloquium available. Reception to precede the lecture. Seating is limited.

Admission to all Colloquium sessions and lectures is free and open to the public

Hotel Information
Holiday Inn Central
1501 Rhode Island Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20005
202.483.2000 tel.

Transportation
TRAIN: Amtrak 1.800.USA.RAIL
Union Station, Washington, DC
AIR: Reagan National and Baltimore
Washington International Airports

Taxi Service
Yellow Cab of Washington, DC
202.544.1212 tel.

Metro
Shaw-Howard University Station on Metro's Green Line

17TH ANNUAL JAMES A. PORTER COLLOQUIUM ON AFRICAN AMERICAN ART

Art, Artists, and Activism: The Black Arts Movement Revisited, Recontextualized

Forged out of a sense of connectedness to revolutionary struggles in Africa and elsewhere, the 1960's witnessed the exponential growth of radical thought among Black Americans, an unbridled quest for creative and intellectual freedom. This quest became known as The Black Arts Movement.

Through this era, The Black Arts Movement brought together artists, activists, scholars, and cultural workers to produce works and engage in political actions that influenced others throughout the Black Atlantic and around the world. The power of expression, the innovative creations, the unique aesthetic sensibilities, the cultural kinship to community and to Africa, gave this work, and attendant activities, a distinct presence and authority that, at least for the moment that could not be ignored.

In the decades since, the art and the significance of the artists and actions of that era have often been omitted from critical study and scholarly dialogue.

The 17th Annual James A. Porter Colloquium seeks to re-examine and re-contextualize The Black Arts Movement by bringing to this forum many of the artists, activists, scholars and cultural workers who were actual participants in the movement, as well as younger scholars who have been seriously engaged in researching the art of this period and young artists who are indebted to the groundbreaking work of artists who defined the Black Arts Movement.

On behalf of the Howard University Department of Art and the Colloquium Executive Committee we welcome you and your colleagues to this year's Colloquium.

Floyd Coleman
Colloquium Coordinator

Bennie F. Johnson
Assistant Colloquium Coordinator

Art, Artists, and Activism: The Black Arts Movement Revisited, Recontextualized

Thursday, April 20, 2006

Howard University Blackburn Center

- 9:30 am REGISTRATION
- MODERATOR: **Gwendolyn Everett**, Howard University, Colloquium
- 10:00 OPENING REMARKS
James Donaldson, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Coni Porter Uzelac, Wesport Foundation
- 10:30 **PANEL**
REMEMBERING THE 1960S THINKING: INSTITUTIONALIZING THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT
MODERATOR: **David Taft Terry**, Reginald F. Lewis Museum
PANELISTS: **Kinshasha Holman Conwill**, National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution
Akua McDaniel, Spelman College
Ethelbert Miller, Howard University
Murry Depillars, Virginia Commonwealth University, Retired
- 12:00–1:30 pm LUNCH
- 1:30–3:40 **PANEL**
VISUALIZING THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT: ARTISTS' PERSPECTIVES I
MODERATOR: **Carol R. Dyson**, Howard University
PANELISTS: **Valerie Maynard**, Independent Artist
Kay Brown, Medgar Evers University, NY
Frank Smith, Howard University, Emeritus
Nelson Stevens, University of Massachusetts
- 4:00–5:00 Travel to Opening Reception & Driskell Center Lecture
- 5:00 OPENING RECEPTION
- 6:00 5TH ANNUAL DAVID C. DRISKELL LECTURE
KEYNOTE: **David C. Driskell**, Distinguished University Professor Emeritus, University of Maryland at College Park

Friday, April 21, 2006

Howard University Blackburn Center

- 9:00 am REGISTRATION
- 9:30 OPENING REMARKS
Tritobia Hayes Benjamin, Associate Dean, Division of Fine Arts, College of Arts and Sciences
- 9:40 **PANEL**
ART, ARTISTS & ACTIVISM OF THE 1960s: ART HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES
MODERATOR: **Jeffreen Hayes**, Curator
PANELISTS: **Ruth Fine**, National Gallery of Art
Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins, Museum of the African Diaspora
Kymerly Pinder, School of The Art Institute of Chicago
- 11:00 **PANEL**
THE ART AND LIFE OF FAITH RINGGOLD
MODERATOR: **Gina Maria Lewis**, Bowie State University
PANELISTS: **Lisa Farrington**, Parsons School of Design/ New School
Curlee Holton, Lafayette College
Betty Blayton-Taylor, Artist and Arts Administrator
- 12:20–1:20 pm LUNCH
- 1:30–2:30 KEYNOTE
Lowery Stokes Sims, Studio Museum In Harlem
- 2:40–3:50 **PANEL**
THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT:
FEMINIST, WOMANIST, RACE-GENDER-CLASS PERSPECTIVES
MODERATOR: **Sandra Davis**, Howard University
PANELISTS: **Freida High Tesfagiorgis**, University of Wisconsin
Eleanor Traylor, Howard University
Haki Madhubuti, Third World Press
Roy Lewis, Photographer
- 4:00–5:20 **PANEL**
NEW SCHOLARS, NEW TALENTS IN THE ROOM: 'POST-BLACK', 'POST SOUL' AND OTHER CONCEITS
MODERATOR: **Bennie F. Johnson**, Scholar and Collector
PANELISTS: **Lisa Gail Collins**, Vassar College
Margo Crawford, Indiana University
Cherise Smith, University Of Texas
- 5:25–6:40 **PANEL**
VISUALIZING THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT: ARTISTS' PERSPECTIVES II
MODERATOR: **Aziza Claudia Gibson Hunter**, DC Black Artists
PANELISTS: **E. J. Montgomery**, US Department of State
Margo Humphrey, University of Maryland
Akili Ron Anderson, Howard University
James Phillips, Howard University

Saturday, April 22, 2006

Howard University Blackburn Center

- 9:00 am REGISTRATION
- 9:30–10:40 **PANEL**
ART AND POLITICS: BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE
BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT
MODERATOR: **Chandra Cox**, North Carolina State University
PANELISTS: **Kirsten P. Buick**, University of New Mexico
Gregory Carr, Howard University
A.B. Spellman, National Endowment for the Arts, Retired
- 10:45–12:10 pm **PANEL**
THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT: PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVES
MODERATOR: **Sandra Epps**, Art Educator/Artist
PANELISTS: **Allison Bolah**, Language Arts Department, Deerfield Beach
High School, Florida
Grace Hampton, Pennsylvania State University
Adrienne Hoard, University of Missouri
- 12:15–1:25 LUNCH
- 1:30–2:40 **PANEL**
PUBLISHING THE WORD: TEXTS ABOUT TEXTS II
MODERATOR: **Bennie F. Johnson**, Scholar and Collector
PANELISTS: **Cheryl Finley**, Cornell University
Rebekkah Mosby, National Public Radio
Juliette Harris, Hampton University
Camille Billops, Hatch-Billops Collection
- 2:45–4:15 **PANEL**
THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT IN RETROSPECT
MODERATOR: **Marta Reid Stewart**, Duke Ellington School for the Arts
PANELISTS: **Jefferson Pinder**, University of Maryland
Winston Kennedy, Howard University, Emeritus
Babatunde Lawal, Harvard University and Virginia
Commonwealth University
- 4:30–6:00 EXHIBITION, HOWARD UNIVERSITY GALLERY OF ART
- 5:45–8:00 COCKTAILS
Hilltop Lounge, Blackburn Center
- 8:00–11:00 BENEFIT GALA
Award Presentation And Tributes
Faith Ringgold, Honoree
Music



James A. Porter (1905 -1970)

A pioneer in establishing the field of African American art history, James A. Porter was instrumental as the first scholar to provide a systematic, critical analysis of African American artists and their works of art. An artist himself, he provided a unique and critical approach to the analysis of the work. Dedicated to educating and writing about African American artists, Porter set the foundation for artists and art historians to probe and unearth the necessary skills essential to their artistic and scholarly endeavors. The canon is borne from Porter's determination to document and view African American art in the context of American art.

Born December 22, 1905 in Baltimore, MD, Porter had a long, illustrious career in the visual arts, as an artist and historian. Under the direction and encouragement from James V. Herring, head of the Art Department at Howard University, Porter studied painting, drawing, and art history. Upon graduating with a bachelor of science in 1927, he accepted a position as instructor of painting and drawing at Howard. Being an educator did not keep Porter from honing his artistic skill and creating art. Throughout his academic professional career, Porter painted and exhibited nationally and internationally. This dedication was acknowledged in 1933 when he received the Schomburg Portrait Prize, from the Harmon Foundation, for the painting entitled, *Woman Holding a Jug* (1930). Porter was highly regarded for his finely rendered portraits, as exemplified in his award.

While Porter never stopped nurturing his artistic ability, he also did not stop educating himself. After he completed undergraduate work, Porter attended the Arts Student's League in New York. He also studied in Paris at the Institute of Art and Archeology at the Sorbonne, in which he received a Certificat de Presence in 1935. When Porter returned to the United States, he pursued a master of arts in art history from New York University in 1937. Porter's thesis, which would later become the foundation for *Modern Negro Art*, focused on African American artists and artisans.

During his educational pursuits, Porter met Dorothy Burnett, a librarian at the Harlem branch, where he researched neglected black artists. On December 27, 1929, Porter and Dorothy were married. They had a one daughter, Constance Porter. This union would prove to be important, not only personally but also professionally. Dorothy worked with Porter, as she provided bibliographic information critical to his investigations. Dorothy, along with Porter, has a rich relationship with Howard University. She was the director of Moorland Spingarn Research Center where she catalogued information about African and African American history and culture.

Porter's interest in nearly forgotten and often ignored artists of African descent came from reading a brief article on African American landscape artist Robert Scott Duncanson. Due to the brevity of the account, Porter was inspired to research Duncanson and other artists of African descent. Were it not for this article, *Modern Negro Art* may have not come to be.

Modern Negro Art, published in 1943, was the first comprehensive study of African American art. It is in this examination that Porter placed African American artists within the framework of American art. He was the first to recognize and document the significant contributions these artists made to the history of American art. With Porter's systematic approach, *Modern Negro Art* became and still is the grounding for African American art history and for texts to come later.

Porter, a devout educator, taught at Howard for more than forty years, heading the Art Department and the Art Gallery. Because of his dedication, the National Gallery of Art selected him as one of America's Outstanding Men of the Arts. An honor he received with twenty-four others, he was presented the award by Lady Bird Johnson in 1965.

James A. Porter left a cultural and educational legacy to those passionately involved in the area of African American art. The drive to explore and firmly document artists of the Diaspora continues today. Porter's artistic and historical work provides a solid foundation in which current and future scholars can build upon. Many scholars owe Porter for the inspiration to probe the depths of African American visual culture and attest to its significance to American culture.



Faith Ringgold

2006 Honoree

Distinguished artist Faith Ringgold is a pace setter in the visual and literary arts as well as civil and social activism. Using her voice, figuratively and literally, Ringgold puts her creative stamp on issues that concern women and artists of color. At the forefront of civil, social, and artistic change, in the visual arts, she is truly an icon in the world of art and art history.

Born in Harlem, New York in 1930, Faith Ringgold was raised in Harlem, considered the center of black art creativity. Feeding off the flow of artistic energy in New York City, Ringgold enrolled at City College of New York and graduated with a bachelor of science in fine art and education in 1955. After finishing undergraduate studies, she taught art in the public schools of New York city while simultaneously pursuing a graduate degree—a master of arts—in art from City College. Ringgold received her MA degree in 1959.

The 1960s proved to be the beginning of Ringgold's artistic shaping, due to the social and civil activities, in and out of the arts. It is during this time Ringgold began her maturation as a painter and along the way, met influential figures of the time. She began her first political paintings, entitled *The American People Series* (1963-1967) which includes works featuring the American flag, like *The Flag is Bleeding* (1967) and *Flag for the Moon: Die Nigger* (1967). Much of the content for her painting at this moment were influenced by writers James Baldwin and Leroi Jones (now known as Amiri Baraka). Ringgold had the good fortune to meet Jones in 1965 at his Black Arts Repertory Theatre and School. Another person she met and who in return supported her was James Porter. He bought a painting from Ringgold's *The American People Series*.

While Ringgold was actively engaging social strife in her works of art, she was also actively engaging the visual arts institutions for their lack of attention and inclusion of artists of color and women. In 1968, Ringgold held a demonstration against the Whitney Museum of American Art for black artists to be included in exhibitions at the institution. She also protested against the Museum of Modern Art to have a black artist wing dedicated to Martin Luther King, Jr. With Ringgold's steadfast determination

and opponent of exclusion in major art museums, the Whitney Museum of American Art included two black women artists—Betye Saar and Barbara Chase-Riboud—in their sculpture biennial three years later.

As Ringgold was engaged and on the front lines, she continued to develop as an artist, expanding her portfolio to include dolls, costumes, masks, soft sculptures, performance, printmaking, and quilts. 1973 was a pivotal year for Ringgold as she celebrated a ten-year retrospective, organized by the Voorhees Gallery at Rutgers University, and she resigns from teaching public school, after eighteen years in the New York City school system. At this time, Ringgold works as a full-time artist.

In 1977, Ringgold participated in FESTAC 77, the second Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, held in Lagos, Nigeria and hosted by the Nigerian government. This international, month-long festival of music, literary, theatrical, and visual arts brought together artists of African descent to express and explore the cultural legacy of Black and African heritage. This visit was Ringgold's second visit to Africa. She visited the previous year and toured Ghana and Nigeria.

From 1977 to 1983, the artist continued to fine tune her art and push the boundaries. Ringgold created her first freestanding soft sculpture, began and finished her autobiography, *Being My Own Woman*, won a National Endowment for the Arts Award for sculpture, collaborates with her mother on a quilt project, *Echoes of Harlem*, and curates an exhibition at PS 1. Ringgold also performs an artist piece, *No Name Performance #1* with her daughter, Michelle Wallace.

Highly regarded for her story quilts, Ringgold creates her first one, entitled *Mother's Quilt* in 1983. This begins Ringgold's incorporation of storytelling through quilts and text into her vast chest of media. Over the next decade, Ringgold creates story quilts chronicling her life experiences as well as the African American experience. Some of the quilts are *Change: Over 100 Pounds Weight Loss Performance Story Quilt*, *Tar Beach*, and *The Dinner Quilt*.

Bringing her gift of storytelling to younger audiences, Ringgold wrote *Tar Beach*, the first of many children's book. It was published in 1991, and tells the story of Ringgold as a child growing up in the city. In 1992, the book received many honors: The New York Times Best Children's Book Award, Caldecott

Honor for best illustrated children's book of 1991, and The Coretta Scott King Award for best illustrated book by an African American. With all these accolades, Ringgold published her second book in 1992, *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky*.

An artist whose accomplishments are plenty, Faith Ringgold has made the art world take notice of her talent and contributions. She has received numerous commissions, awards and honors, and honorary doctorates. Ringgold's art can be found in public collections such as the Solomon Guggenheim Museum, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, to name a few. If Ringgold's contributions are not enough, she has founded The Anyone Can Fly Foundation, a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to expand the canon to include artists working and creating in the tradition of the African Diaspora and to introduce artists and traditions to youth and adult audiences, in 1999. After teaching at the University of California at San Diego since 1984, she retired in 2002. After a long and exemplary career in the visual arts in the form of artist, curator, activist, writer, and educator, Ringgold has and continues to bring dynamism to the field of African American art.

Lowery Stokes Sims

Keynote Speaker

Dr. Lowery Stokes Sims, art historian extraordinaire, has solidified her place in the canon of art history. With stellar contributions on the visual arts, particularly of artists of color, Dr. Sims continues a tradition forged by art historians before her. Her scholarship has been demonstrated through numerous exhibitions, lectures, articles, exhibition catalog essays, and books.

Currently the President of The Studio Museum in Harlem, Dr. Sims earned her doctoral degree in art history from The Graduate School and University Center of City University of New York. She holds a master of arts from John Hopkins University and a bachelor of arts from Queens College, both in art history, respectively.

During Dr. Sims's extensive career, she has held tenure at The Studio Museum in Harlem as the Executive Director (2000-2005) and Associate Curator of Modern Art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art (1975-2000). In addition to her current position with the Studio Museum in Harlem, she is a visiting professor in the Department of Art at Hunter College.

Ongoing exhibitions of various themes, subjects, and artists, Dr. Sims has illuminated many in the arts. A Hans Hoffman retrospective, "Hans Hoffman in the Met," "Next Generation: Southern Black Aesthetic," and "Wifredo Lam and His Contemporaries, 1938-1952" are just a few of the exhibitions Sims has organized, and each has an accompanying catalog. Among the many exhibition catalogs Dr. Sims has written and contributed to, she has published *Wifredo Lam and the International Avant-Garde, 1923-1982*. A significant contribution of the Afro-Cuban influences, the text investigates Lam's art in relation to his multicultural heritage and its international impact on the different cultures.

A formidable expert on the visual arts, especially art of the Diaspora, Dr. Lowery Stokes Sims continues pushing the standard of excellence higher and higher. Her dedication to cultural expressions of the Diaspora is exemplified not only in her research and investigations, but also with the many honors she has received, most recently an honorary doctorate from Brown University in 2003. Dr. Sims has created a path for many to follow, excel, and expand the canon.

Lisa Farrington

Lecture on Faith Ringgold

A leading scholar on women artists of the Diaspora, Dr. Lisa Farrington wears many hats: historian, curator, author, and educator. As a multifaceted scholar, Farrington's extensive research and documentation has contributed to the canon of art history with her enlightenment. Providing missing pieces to the story of African American art history, Farrington continues upon a tradition forged by her predecessors in the field.

Dr. Farrington received her doctorate in art history from the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York. Prior to her doctoral work, she attended American University, earning a master of arts, and Howard University, where she received a bachelor of fine arts. Farrington is a Ford Foundation Fellow as well as an Andrew W. Mellon Fellow.

While she is currently senior art historian at Parson School of Design, teaching there since 1993, Farrington has worked for the Museum of Modern Art and The National Gallery of Art. Along with professorial duties, Farrington has curated exhibitions and written extensively on art of the Diaspora. The exhibitions she has curated are as follows: "The Language of Color: Women's Voice," "Art and Identity: The African American Aesthetics," "Textiles Transformed: The New American Fine Art Quilt," and "Creating Their Own Image: The History of African American Women Artists."

"Creating Their Own Image" celebrates the book of the same title. The publication, thought to be the first to provide an extensive account of women artist's contributions to the visual arts, was published in 2005. Receiving critical acclaim, the text was awarded the 2005 Letitia Woods Brown Memorial Prize from the Association of Black Women Historians and Outstanding Contribution to Publishing Citation by the BCALA Literary Award Committee. Dr. Farrington has written a monograph on Faith Ringgold for the David C. Driskell Series of African American Art, published in 2004. She has contributed to many other publications in the form of essays and articles.

Lisa Farrington continues the legacy of James Porter while expanding the bounds placed on African American art history, through her roles as scholar, curator, author, historian, and educator.

David C. Driskell

5th Annual David C. Driskell Lecture

Dr. David C. Driskell has elevated African American art and art history to a level his mentor, James A. Porter envisioned for the field. A visionary, Driskell is a formidable presence in the visual arts. Driskell has distinguished himself as a curator, collector, artist, and a pioneer in the history of African American art. Expanding the canon set forth by Porter, Driskell has accelerated the exploration and appreciation of art of the Diaspora through his active participation in assembling exhibitions and publishing on the area. With Driskell's warrior mentality and extending the path paved by his mentor, art by African and African Americans is continually receiving critical attention.

As an artist, Driskell has been exhibited nationally and internationally, and is included in public and private collections, such as the Baltimore Museum of Art and the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Although his primary media are painting and collage, Driskell works in various media—sculpture, printmaking, and drawing. Driskell's art incorporates his connections to the South and comments on racial and social issues. Depicting diverse subjects, which include portraiture and landscapes, Driskell's artistic techniques are representative of formal aspects of art, the essence of art—color, shape, and texture.

Like his predecessor and mentor, James A. Porter, Dr. David C. Driskell has greatly impacted the field of African American art and art history. Driskell has picked up where Porter's legacy left off. With his diligence, the field has expanded from writing and teaching about the artistic merits of African Americans to collecting the works and organizing insightful exhibitions. Driskell serves as a model for artists, collectors, and scholars in the area. His passion and understanding of the art and the value of the art are clearly evident in all of his accomplishments. A true champion for African American visual activity, Driskell further sets the standard for in-depth, profound scholarship and artistic production in African American visual arts.

Acknowledgments

As of April, 2006

The Porter Colloquium wishes to express our sincere gratitude for the generous efforts and contributions of the following individuals and organizations to this year's Colloquium:

Jeremy Austin
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Center

"...Hard-won and very substantial progress...studded with original and enduring achievement."

– James A. Porter, *Modern Negro Art*, 1943

Credits

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The James A. Porter Colloquium is the leading forum for scholars, artists, curators and others in the field of African American Art and Visual Culture. Established at Howard University in 1990, the annual Colloquium is named in honor of James A. Porter, the pioneering Art Historian and Professor, whose 1943 publication *Modern Negro Art* laid the foundation for the field of study. The Colloquium continues his legacy through dynamic programming, scholarly research and artistic leadership. Past Colloquium presenters have included such leading scholars and artists as David Driskell, Edmund Gaither, Ann Gibson, Leslie King Hammond, Patricia Hills, Samella Lewis, Richard Long, E.J. Montgomery, John Scott, Lowery Stokes Sims, Deborah Willis and Judith Wilson.

2006 Porter Colloquium

Executive Committee

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Porter Colloquium Endowment Fund

We sincerely thank you for and encourage you to continue your generous support of the colloquium, your contributions help to ensure the Colloquium's scholarship, program, and activities for years to come. Contributions may be made throughout the year to Porter Colloquium, Howard University Department of Art, 2455 Sixth Street, NW Washington, DC 20059. ATTN: Floyd Coleman. Contributions are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowable by law.

18th Annual Porter Colloquium

Join us next year for the 18th Annual Porter Colloquium, April, 2007
Howard University, Washington, DC
Visit us at Portercolloquium.org