

BATES COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS



April 7 - May 27, 2017
Senior Thesis Exhibition 2017

June 9 - October 7, 2017

Kate Gilmore: In Your Way



Kate Gilmore, *Sudden as a Massacre*, 2011, video,
Time Based Art Festival, Portland Museum of Art,
Portland, Oregon



At Home and Abroad:
Works from the
Marsden Hartley
Memorial Collection

From Hartley's
'Cezanne series',
ca. 1927

October 27, 2017 - March 23, 2018

Rona Pondick and Robert Feintuch: Head, Hands, Feet; Sleeping, Holding, Dreaming, Dying



Rona Pondick, *Wallaby*,
2007-12, stainless steel,
edition 2/3, 24 x 44
3/8 x 10 7/8 inches.
Courtesy of Galerie
Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris
Pantin/Salzburg, Son-
nabend Gallery, New
York and the artist.



Robert Feintuch, *Legs
Up*, 2013, 28 x 36
inches, polymer emul-
sion on honeycomb
panel. Courtesy Sonna-
abend Gallery, New York,
Miller Yezerski Gallery,
Boston, and the artist

Bates | Museum of Art

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during the academic year)



Old Sofa by David Driskell, 2015.
On sale at Greenhut Galleries for \$12,000.

David Driskell:

Portrait of the Artist

With work on show this month at Greenhut Galleries and the Center for Maine Contemporary Art, David Driskell's creativity knows no bounds.

BY DANIEL KANY

ARTIST, SCHOLAR, and curator **David C. Driskell** (born in 1931 in Eatonton, Georgia) is such a fascinating

and accomplished person that we're more likely to read about him than about his art.

What brought Driskell to Maine in 1953, however, was his painting, not his celebrity. And it's been his art which has connected him to Maine ever since. Driskell has a well-earned international reputation as the

leading scholar of American art of the African diaspora. But, at his core, Driskell is an artist whose works overflow with painterly energy, intelligent forms, spiritual presence, and effervescent content.

After visiting his exhibition "Renewal and Form" at the **Center for Maine Contemporary Art (CMCA)** in Rockland, I talked with Driskell—not about him, but about his art.

What's the role of diasporic content in your work?
Diaspora is the open question in my work,



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and it represents the broader picture of American culture in general—how do we navigate something made of so many different parts and currents? We're informed by so many different things and places rolled together. It's what makes us Americans. It's like we have lived many different lives. This sense of perspective helps us grow—positive change—but it creates conflict as well.



Your print of *Jacob Wrestling the Angel* (in the CMCA show) is a clear image of conflict, but it directly references Delacroix's version of the subject in the Saint-Sulpice in Paris. What is the balance, at least in this case, of your content between theme, subject, and art history?

This is based on my own fundamentalist upbringing—my father was a Baptist minister—which is why I have always been drawn to Jonah and The Whale, Gabriel, and so on. The Delacroix is really a landscape, an old forest—the struggle is earthly. It's a story from Genesis, which is important across many cultures. I don't make work to try to define my identity. Instead, I use imagery to which I have cultural connections.

Delacroix's landscape dominates that painting: Why didn't you include it?

That's how I saw it, too. When I was in Paris with my wife, I made a little sketch of the figures struggling in the corner of the forest scene, but I was more interested in the landscape and the trees. I didn't include that, but it's what drew me to the mural.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: "JACOB WRESTLING THE ANGEL", PRINT ON SHOW AT CENTER FOR MAINE CONTEMPORARY ART; "PINES" - GREENHUT GALLERIES; "DISTANT PAST" - D.C. MOORE GALLERY; RODNEY D. MOORE



Clockwise from left: *Jacob Wrestling the Angel*, print on show at **Center for Maine Contemporary Art**; *Pines*, 1973, **Greenhut Galleries**, \$60,000; *Memories of a Distant Past*, 1975, **D.C. Moore Gallery**, New York; the artist at home in Falmouth.

This goes back to my love of nature. It goes back to my practice and my connection to Maine since the 1950s. I believe it's part of our romantic narrative: We're still out in the forest—still in the jungle. Those two struggling, they're still in the forest. That's a part of our complex situation in life. How do we do it—with other people, alone?

So, your dense imagery of African jungle, and, say, Maine forest, are related?

Absolutely. Even now, I'm still in the wilderness, trying to find my way.

How do these come together through an Old Testament scene?

I'm trying to make sense of the world around me and trying to see how I fit in. I have accepted the precepts of Christianity as part of my sense of self as an American. In the forest, there's always a danger out there. There's no obvious path. You have free will to make choices. That is the struggle.

You bring up identities here, but in a fluid way. How does identity relate to your art?

I am not trying to make Black art. I am trying to make *my* art. I make cultural connections in my work through imagery that is meaningful to me, but it's not about my identity.

How much do you intentionally think about content when you work? Where's your head while you're making art? It's almost like I am praying my way along



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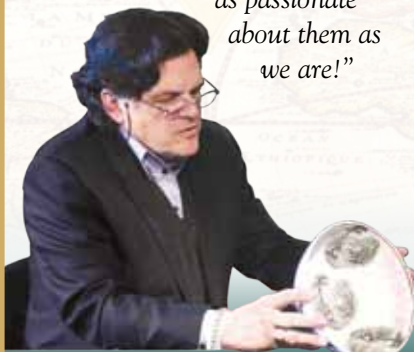
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when I work. It's a free-flowing presence that's not always bound by convention and laws. Of course, it's always informed by what I've done and seen in the past, but I want it to be spiritual. I know the physical part of it—skill and technique—but there's something beyond that. Everybody's sensibility is so different. That's what gives us our individuality.

The CMCA show features all prints rather than paintings. Why is that?

Suzette McAvoy (Director of the CMCA) saw my prints at Greenhut Galleries and asked me to do a show.

You have single, carved wood matrices on display in a case at CMCA, but your works use many colors. Can you tell us about your process?

I work with Curlee Holton of the Experimental Print Center. He's head of the Driskell Center and a master printer. I'll carve the block by hand and then hand-color it so that I make a single-pull print. I send that to Curlee with notes, and we'll begin a conversation. It's a process because we have to work out what I want and how to achieve it. Our conversations are no less about content than technical issues. *The Dancing Angel* (at the Smithsonian American Art Museum), for example, had 52 screens. Typically it's closer to 12, and I supervise the overlay.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: "DANCING ANGEL" - SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM; "BRANCHES FOREST" - GREENHUT GALLERIES; "STUDY FOR SPIRITS WATCHING" - GREENHUT GALLERIES



Clockwise from right: *Branches Forest*, 2015, Greenhut Galleries, \$25,000; *Study For Spirits Watching*, Greenhut Galleries; *Dancing Angel*, 1974, Smithsonian American Art Museum.



Jacob Wrestling with the Angel is about conflict, so it's been one of the most difficult for me to be satisfied with.

How do you relate your concern with technical precision to your bold and loose mark-making?

I am drawn to saturated colors and gestures that suit them. For me, technique and boldness go hand-in-hand. I studied painting at the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture in the 1950s. Maybe it's a Maine thing. It has always suited me.

Do you have any advice for Maine painters?

I like the advice my old friend Will Barnet gave me when he turned 101: "Take care of yourself—I want you to be around as long as I am." ■

Driskell features in "Maine: The Way Life Is" at Greenhut Galleries through April 29. His print exhibition "Renewal and Form" will be on show at the CMCA through June 4. David and his wife, Thelma, have homes in New York City, Maryland, and Falmouth, Maine.

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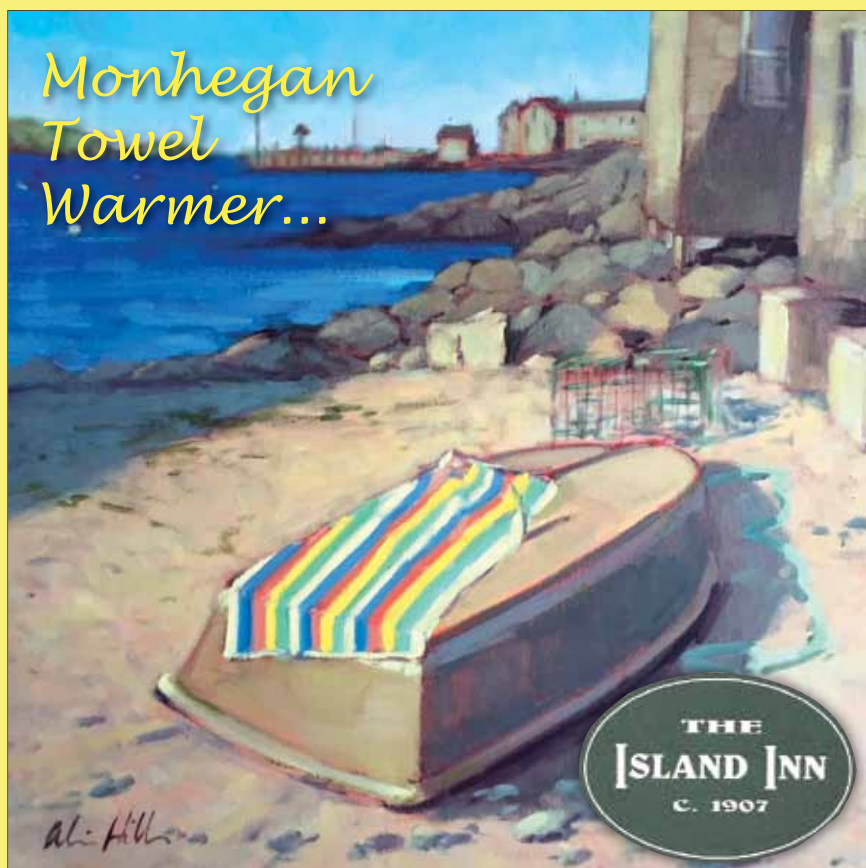
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