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David Driskell's "Resonance, Paintings 1965-2002" at DC Moore Gallery, New York

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"Ancient Alphabets" David Driskell
(Courtesy of the artist and DC Moore Gallery, New York)

DC Moore Gallery, New York, is exhibiting [David Driskell](/artists/53183-david-driskell/)'s "Resonance, Paintings 1965-2002" through June 8, 2019.

The artist soon to be 88, is a legendary African-American artist and art historian. As an artist, scholar, and curator, he has made substantial contributions to these fields that have changed the way we think about American art. His paintings and collages unite a strong modernist impulse with his personal

vision and memory. Marked by the artist's abiding color sensibilities, his work bears the imprint of a turbulent era, a return to nature, and Driskell's synthesis of the European, American, and African art forms he knew firsthand.

“The years between the March on Washington in 1963 and the end of the Vietnam War in 1973, galvanized by the Civil Rights Movement and often called the ‘turbulent decade,’ represent a lived experience for Driskell. Many of Driskell's works of the late 1960s through the 1970s clearly reflect the era of the Black Arts Movement and the Afrocentric impulses it advanced. But they are first and foremost individualized, personal responses by an artist of the era, not one constrained by it,” says the gallery.

In 1966, James Porter described Driskell's aesthetic responses as having the effect “of prayer and of emotional release instead of despair,” noting that, “such paintings are directional signals to action for those who...understand their symbolic language.”

Driskell was influenced by natural landscapes as well as urban landscapes. It was in 1980 that Driskell completed a Yaddo residency that was particularly regenerative as it afforded him a chance to now harness the expressive, enduring spirituality that could be found in abstraction. These later works reveal Driskell's longtime affinity to textured collage elements and calligraphic mark making. Now, through layered cloth or torn paper strips and vibrant colors, he conveys multiple cultural and natural allusions, such as Bahian masking traditions. Bahian performers wear layers of colored cloth strips to convey prestige, wealth, and power as they dramatically oscillate along with the dancer's dramatic movements.

The bold, frenetic brushwork and dynamic color in “Bahian Ribbons” (1987) is a prime example of his later work echoing that tradition. The cloth strips are also meant to emulate the verticality of trees, which he views as symbols of shared histories. In the artist's words, “Trees by their very nature connect past with present and bear witness to multiple histories and generations.”

The exhibition is on view through June 8, 2019, at DC Moore Gallery, 535 West 22nd Street New York, NY 10011.

For details, visit: <https://www.blouinartinfo.com/galleryguide/dc-moore-gallery/overview>
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Click on the slideshow for a sneak peek at the exhibition.

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