THIS SKOWHEGAN JOURNAL IS DEDICATED TO
Dr. David C. Driskell
(1931–2020)

Alumnus: 1953
Board of Governors: 1975–1989
Board of Trustees: 1989–2002
Advisory Committee: 2003–2020
Lifetime Legacy Award Recipient, 2016
“The achievements of David C. Driskell are as grand as Mount Everest,” wrote Keith Morrison in the foreword to Julie McGee’s David C. Driskell: Artist and Scholar. Summarizing his life in this moment, it words that seem too small, too mundane is trying to squeeze Mt. Everest into a snow globe. The thing about Mt. Everest is that, for most of us, it exists in the imaginary. And David, in his life and in his practice, is also something of a legend. Until you met him, you could only imagine him. You’d hear stories—you’d see the pictures—but you, yourself, aren’t ever close enough to touch.

Like all great legends, David forever changed the lives of so many. The common ground between his work as an artist, teacher and art historian was his ability to propose an alternative to our understood realities. He was a dissector and a re-builder, who trained his keen eye on the nature of humans, the environment, on political bodies. His approach recalls the ethos articulated by Senegalese poet, politician, and cultural theorist, Leopold Senghor, who addressed the nature of vision, and then a reconstruction of that vision. He sought not to portray the reality of any given object or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infuse it: through collage, or event, but instead to infer --
I have always referred to David C. Driskell, respectfully and affectionately, as Mister Driskell. He was a person who influenced my painting with knowledge, understanding, and an eye on growth from the early 60s to 2020s. Last week while painting, I recalled a factor which he was aware of, prominent in my work (placement of certain colors next to each other). That represents the impact Mister Driskell has and will continue to have on my work. The renaissance man in the sense that he knew through his personal experience art from ceramic glaze to fresco, he had an encyclopedic knowledge of art, past and present, produced by African Americans. Even that which history ignored. Mister Driskell used creativity in all aspects of his life which illustrated his wide range of understanding art—intellectually and emotionally. Mister Driskell used creativity in all aspects of his life which illustrated his wide range of understanding art—intellectually and emotionally.

—Sylvia Snowden (A '64)

The passing of David Driskell has without a doubt had a profound effect on me the past couple of days. As someone who has lost seven family members over the past 15 months, I can only feel for his family at this time. Death within the black family is something that is both challenging and complicated. I hope that the cultural bond that prevails will make his family stronger as it has mine. David Driskell's legacy on Skowhegan is one that can only be revered. Without Driskell's trailblazing endeavors, I couldn't do what I do and love (and also develop a love for Maine). African American art history wouldn't exist. I am forever grateful for the conversation we had about Tennessee and our humble love for HBCUs on the patio of the Red Farm at Skowhegan in 2018. David Driskell gave me hope that no matter the challenges we face as artists, just keep going and continue grinding and everything will be alright.

—Desmond Lewis (A '18)

I have known Mr. Driskell most of my adult life. He was my mentor and dear friend. I met him in my late teens at Howard University. He arrived in it in a white lab coat for my fall or perhaps it was the spring semester painting class. I thought he was a graduate student.

With Mr. Driskell, on this rainy night (April 4) which has quietly closed in on me, I am pretty much speechless, except perhaps to say, he taught me and shared with me so many really, really sustaining and profoundly important pieces in this puzzle of life. And that was not an easy thing for him to deal with considering my dyslexic ass, but he taught me how to research and respect my own thoughts and my own work as I looked into and examined the lives and the work of others.

—Mary Lovelace O'Neal (A '63)

At the start of one of my first artist lectures, this time at my alma mater Bowdoin College, I looked out at the audience to see Dr. David Driskell. (If I am recalling correctly, it was 2005.) Just a few months earlier, I had met David at the Skowhegan School for Painting & Sculpture. At the time, the experience still seemed so surreal to me. Admitted to the residency at the age of 23 and being wholly unprepared for the level of critique that would surround my work, David, as he did during our encounters in the Maine woods, just looked on from his chair with a nod, offering a calm sense of encouragement. That moment would be just one of many periodic check-ins—often presented as an invitation to a meal, a studio visit, or more grand events like his receiving an honorary doctorate. Rather than ask me what was happening in my practice, it was if he was saying to me, "Just come around. I want to be sure you are good." And every time I saw David, he was sure to mark the moment with a photo. His quiet assurance that derived from such wisdom, it would be all the validation I would ever need.

—Shaun Leonardo (A ’04)

The above were contributed to the online publication, Culture Type (culturetype.com), where it first appeared on April 8, 2020 in memoriam of David C. Driskell. A warm thank you to Victoria L. Valentine and the artists for their permission to reprint this selection of tributes.