



David C. Driskell Center Archives  
David C. Driskell Center  
University of Maryland, College Park

**A Finding Aid to the Alonzo Davis Collection, 1960-2019  
(bulk dates 1975-2010)**

By Karina Nelson, Assistant Archivist

Assisted by: Archivist David Conway, Archives Intern Alison Brodbeck

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**Contact Information**

David C. Driskell Center Archives  
David C. Driskell Center  
University of Maryland, College Park  
[www.driskellcenter.umd.edu](http://www.driskellcenter.umd.edu)

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## Collection Overview

**Repository:** David C. Driskell Center Archives

**Creator:** Alonzo Davis

**Title:** Alonzo Davis Collection

**Dates:** 1960-2019 (bulk dates 1975-2010)

**Accession No.** MS2022.01

**Quantity:** 55 linear feet

**Abstract:** The Alonzo Davis Collection was compiled and organized by Alonzo Davis over the course of his career and documents his contributions to African American art history as an artist, gallerist, arts administrator, and educator. The papers of artist Alonzo Davis measure approximately 55 linear feet and date from 1960 to 2019, with the majority of the materials coming from the years 1975-2010. A large portion of the collection focuses on Davis' personal art career, specifically on his public art commissions, such as the 1984 Olympic Mural Project, as well as his work as a gallerist and administrator for the Brockman Gallery, Brockman Gallery Productions, Sacramento Metropolitan Art Commission, and A.I.R. Studio Paducah. Also found in the collection are newspaper clippings, course materials, ephemera, exhibition catalogues, memorabilia, newsletters, sketchbooks, and writings, as well as audio, film, and photographic materials.

**Language:** Most of the collection is in English.

## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information:

The Alonzo Davis Collection was donated to the David C. Driskell Center Archives by Alonzo Davis. Materials were received by the Driskell Center Archives in batches during the fall of 2022 and spring of 2023 from his studios and residences in Brentwood, Maryland and Hyattsville, Maryland.

The deed of gift was signed in September of 2022. Now that the materials have been inventoried, they are being arranged into eight series.

### **Separated Materials:**

The Alonzo Davis Collection is kept in the Archives of the David C. Driskell Center. Materials that are oversized or restricted for any reason have been separated from the collection and housed in boxes adjacent to the main collection.

### **Processing Information:**

The collection has been inventoried to the folder level. The processing for this collection began in 2022 and is ongoing. The collection is currently being arranged into series. This work is being done by the Center's Archivists and archives interns at the David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland, College Park.

During the initial inventory of the Alonzo Davis Collection, paper materials were rehoused in acid-free folders and rusty staples and paperclips were removed as necessary. Completed folders were placed in acid-free Hollinger boxes.

### **Preferred Citation:**

Alonzo Davis Collection, Series\_\_\_, Subseries\_\_\_, Box\_\_\_, Folder\_\_\_. Gift of the Artist. Courtesy of the David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland, College Park.

### **Restrictions**

Most material is available for research by scheduling an appointment with the David C. Driskell Center Archives team. Some materials have been restricted following the donor's request due to their contents. These materials have been separated into "restricted boxes" and labeled accordingly.

### **Ownership & Literary Rights:**

The records in the Alonzo Davis Collection are owned by the David C. Driskell Center. Literary rights as possessed by the donor have been dedicated to public use for research, study, and scholarship. The collection is subject to all copyright laws.

### **Biographical Note**

Alonzo Davis is an artist, gallerist, art administrator, and educator with a long and illustrious career. His six-decade long career has spanned numerous parts of the world and numerous mediums such as mural; print; painting; sculpture; performance; and installation, and his impact on African American art both nationally and internationally is significant.

Alonzo Davis is a native of Tuskegee, Alabama, but moved to Los Angeles, California, in his early teens with his family. Davis received his undergraduate degree from Pepperdine University in 1964, and went on to earn an M.F.A. in Printmaking and Design from the Otis Art Institute in 1973. At the Otis Art Institute, Davis studied under Charles White, who encouraged him to work in series in order to “exhaust a creative thought”. This decision to work in series has continued throughout Davis’ artistic career.

From the 1960s through the 1980s, Davis was heavily involved in the art scene in Los Angeles. In 1967, Alonzo Davis and his brother Dale Brockman Davis opened the Brockman Gallery, the first Los Angeles gallery dedicated to the exhibition and sale of African American art. In 1973, they also founded Brockman Gallery Productions, a nonprofit organization dedicated to community-based activities and public art projects. At this time, Davis was also an active participant in the California mural movement, culminating in his participation in the 1984 Olympic Mural Project and the creation of the *Eye on '84* mural, still visible today on the Harbor Freeway.

In 1987, Davis moved to Sacramento in order to serve as the Interim Director of the Public Art Program for the Sacramento Metropolitan Art Commission, and then to Hawaii for a residency in 1988. Davis has a long history as an educator. During his time in Los Angeles, he taught at a series of schools such as Crenshaw High School, Manual Arts High School, Mount Saint Antonio College, Pasadena City College, and University of California, Los Angeles. In 1991, Davis moved again to teach at the San Antonio Art Institute. Next, he served as Dean of the Memphis College of Art from 1993 to 2002. After leaving Memphis, Davis eventually settled on the east coast in Maryland, making art in four different creative communities in the state: Baltimore (Ivy Parsons Studio), Laurel (Montpelier Arts Center), Mount Rainier (Blue Door Studios) and currently, Brentwood (39th Street Gallery). After moving to the area, he also became a member of the Washington Sculptors Group and Black Artists of DC.

Travel and cultural exchange has always been a deeply integral part of Alonzo Davis’ art practice. He has spent time through residencies, fellowships, and travel in Hawaii, Malaysia, Beijing, Ghana, Mexico, the Caribbean, and the American Southwest, and the influence of these cultures is evident in his artwork.

In 2004, Davis was inspired by working retreat experiences in California, Costa Rica, Connecticut, Wyoming, Colorado and Virginia to establish an artist residency program in Paducah, Kentucky, named A.I.R. Studio Paducah. Artists such as June Edmonds and Kim Kissinger Marino have completed residencies there. Also in 2004, Alonzo Davis joined the Board of Directors of the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and in 2007 created a permanent, fully-funded, two-week residency for outstanding American writers, visual artists, and composers of African or Latin American descent: the Alonzo Davis Fellowship.

Alonzo Davis' contributions to African American art have been acknowledged over the years through various solo exhibitions, group exhibitions, public installations, fellowships, awards, and prizes. Examples of significant solo exhibitions include Just Above Midtown Gallery, New York (1975); Separatutstallning, Modern Nordisk Knost, Goteberg, Sweden (1979); Watts Towers Art Center, Los Angeles, California (1981); Alonzo Davis, Lagerquist Gallery, Atlanta, Georgia (2001); 20 Years in Maryland, BlackRock Arts Center, Germantown, MD (2022); and Alonzo Davis: Blanket Series, parrash heijnen gallery, Los Angeles, California (2022). Significant group exhibitions include: Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles, 1960–1980, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA, MoMA PS1, New York, NY, and Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, MA (2012 - 2013); Eleven from California, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (1972); Synthesis, JAM (Just Above Midtown), New York, NY (1974); Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (1994); L.A. Object and David Hammons Body Prints, Tilton Gallery, New York, NY, Roberts & Tilton Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2006), and What a Relief, Washington Sculpture Group, Philips@The Arc, Washington D.C. (2022). Examples of important public installations include *Homage to John Outterbridge*, Mural, The Watts Towers Art Center, Los Angeles, CA (1976); *Eye on LA*, Mural, 1984 Olympic Mural Series, Harbor Freeway @ 3rd St, Los Angeles, CA (1984); *Micro Seconds and Shelter*, Tile Murals, Revere Station, Boston Subway Blue Line, Massachusetts (1995); and *Come This Way*, Power Pole Installation, U.S. Embassy, Lome, Togo, West Africa (2006). Significant fellowships, awards, and residencies include but are not limited to: Fellow, East West Center, Institute of Communication and Culture, Manoa, Hawaii (1988-89); Knight Foundation Fellow, Brandywine Workshop, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1999), Fellow, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, Mt. San Angelo, Amherst, Virginia (2000-03); The Julia & Davis White Artists's Colony, Ciudad de Colon, Costa Rica (2006); Excellence in Using Bamboo (Award), American Bamboo Society (2006); Tong Xian Residency, Beijing, China (2008); and the Lifetime Achievement Award, James A. Porter Colloquium, Howard University, Washington D.C. (2016).

## Scope and Content Note

The papers of artist, gallerist, arts administrator, and educator Alonzo Davis measure 55 linear feet and date from 1960-2019 (bulk dates 1975-2010). The content of this collection documents his contribution to African American art. A large portion of the collection focuses on Davis' personal art career, specifically on his public art commissions, such as the 1984 Olympic Mural Project, as well as his work as a gallerist and administrator for the Brockman Gallery, Brockman Gallery Productions, Sacramento Metropolitan Art Commission, and A.I.R. Studio Paducah. Also found in the collection are newspaper clippings, course materials, ephemera, exhibition catalogues, memorabilia, newsletters, sketchbooks, and writings, as well as audio, film, and photographic materials. The Alonzo Davis Collection has been arranged into eight series to aid the researcher.

The following paragraphs give short descriptions of the types of materials found within each series. The eight series in order of their arrangement are: Alonzo Davis: The Artist, Alonzo Davis: The Gallerist, Alonzo Davis: The Arts Administrator, Alonzo Davis: The Educator, Correspondence,

African American Art and Diaspora, Photographic Materials, and Audio and Video Materials. For additional detailed description of the series and sub-series, see section titled “Series Description/Container Listing.”

The Alonzo Davis: The Artist series includes exhibition and event materials, biographical information, personal writings, newspaper articles, professional correspondence, residency and fellowship records, journals, and sketchbooks that document Davis’ artistic career.

The Alonzo Davis: The Gallerist series documents Davis’ role as co-founder of the Brockman Gallery and Brockman Gallery Productions, the first Black art gallery in Los Angeles, CA. Types of materials within this series include exhibition and event materials, correspondence, newspaper clippings, institutional records, publications, and other writings.

The third series, Alonzo Davis: The Arts Administrator documents Davis’ time as the Interim Director of the Public Art Program for the Sacramento Metropolitan Art Commission and as the founder of A.I.R. Studio Paducah. This series contains correspondence, institutional records, publications, newspaper clippings, and commission records.

Materials included in the Alonzo Davis: The Educator series document Davis’ role as an educator in various institutions in California, Texas, and Tennessee. Within this series, researchers can find correspondence, exhibition and event materials, transcripts, and institutional records.

The Correspondence series includes correspondence Davis saved between himself and friends, family, artists, colleagues, and professional art institutions and organizations.

The African American Art and Diaspora series focuses on materials that Davis collected about the African American art world. The most prominent materials are ephemera and exhibition catalogues that focus mainly on African American art. Types of materials included in this series include artist files, exhibition catalogues, exhibition and event promotional materials, newspaper clippings, and publications.

The second-to last series in this collection is the Photographic Materials series. This includes print photographs, transparencies, and slides. The print photographs and transparencies will be organized chronologically and separated by folders indicating their years. Note: photographs and slides that Alonzo Davis stored within existing artist and subject files remained in those folders and can be found throughout the collection.

The last series, Audio and Video materials, include materials such as cassette tapes, open reel audio tapes, compact discs, VHS tapes, films, and DVDs. The content of these materials varies from footage of interviews to recorded lectures, panels, and art events.

## Arrangement

The collection is arranged into eight series, many of which are currently being further arranged into subseries. The first six series are all paper-based and the final two series are devoted to photographic (Series 7) and audio and video materials (Series 8).

Series 1: Alonzo Davis: The Artist

*Subseries 1: Artwork*

*Subseries 2: Public Art Commissions*

*Subseries 3: Biographical Materials*

*Subseries 4: Exhibitions and Events*

*Subseries 5: Residencies and Fellowships*

*Subseries 6: Ephemera*

Series 2: Alonzo Davis: The Gallerist

Series 3: Alonzo Davis: The Arts Administrator

*Subseries 1: Sacramento Metropolitan Art Commission*

*Subseries 2: A.I.R. Studio Paducah*

Series 4: Alonzo Davis: The Educator

Series 5: Correspondence

Series 6: African American Art and Diaspora

*Subseries 1: Artists and Individuals*

*Subseries 2: Exhibitions and Events*

*Subseries 3: Publications*

Series 7: Photographic Materials

*Subseries 1: Photographs and Negatives*

*Subseries 2: Slides and Transparencies*

Series 8: Audio and Video Materials

*Subseries 1: Audio Recordings*

*Subseries 2: Moving Image Recordings*

## Names and Subject Terms

### Subjects:

African American art



African American folk art

African American painting

African American prints

African American ceramic sculpture

African American sculpture

African American art--20th century--Exhibitions

African American art--21st century--Exhibitions

African American artists

Art, American

Art museum curators, African American

Canon (Art)

Art criticism

Black Arts Movement

**Types of Materials:**

Clippings

Correspondence

Course Materials

Ephemera

Exhibition catalogues

Exhibition promotional material

Memorabilia

Newsletters

Photographs

Slides

Sketchbooks

Sound recording

Video recording

Writings

**Names:**

A.I.R. Studio Paducah

Brockman Gallery

Brockman Gallery Productions

Cole, Kevin

Lindsay, Kay

National Conference of Artists

Outterbridge, John