



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

**A Finding Aid to the Hayes-Benjamin Papers on African
American Art and Artists, 1928-2011 (bulk dates 1960-2000)**

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Collection Overview

Repository: David C. Driskell Center Archives

Creator: Tritobia Hayes Benjamin

Title: Hayes-Benjamin Papers on African American Art and Artists

Dates: 1928-2011 (bulk dates 1960-2000)

Accession No. MS2017.01

Quantity: 75 linear feet

Abstract: The Hayes-Benjamin Papers on African American Art and Artists were compiled and organized by Dr. Tritobia Hayes Benjamin over the course of her career and document African American art history in the latter half of the twentieth century as well as Dr. Hayes Benjamin's personal life. The papers of scholar, educator, curator, and arts community member Tritobia Hayes Benjamin measures 75 linear feet and dates from 1928 to 2011. Most of the materials come from the years 1960-2000 and focus on Benjamin's relationship to African American Art. A large portion of the collection focuses on her research on African American artists, specifically Lois Mailou Jones, African American sculptors, and African American women artists, as well as her relationship with different professional art organizations such as the National Conference of Artists, and her interactions and collecting related to the African American art scene in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area. Also found in the collection are interview transcriptions, memos, meeting agendas, curatorial notes and documents, correspondence, writings, ephemera, newspaper clippings, academic lecture materials and notes, and exhibition catalogues, as well as audio, film, and photographic materials.

Language: Most of the collection is in English.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information:

The Hayes-Benjamin Papers on African American Art and Artists were donated to the David C. Driskell Center Archives by Dr. Tritobia Hayes Benjamin as a bequest. Materials were received by the Driskell Center Archives in two batches: the first transfer (in 2017) contained correspondence, ephemera, slides, photographs, clippings, and film materials. The second (in 2018) included audio materials, as well as several more boxes of files, papers, and books. The deed of gift was signed in November of 2021. Once the materials had been inventoried, they were organized into nine series.

Separated Materials:

The Hayes-Benjamin Papers on African American Art and Artists are 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 2020 and is ongoing. During the first two and a half years, the collection was inventoried to the folder level, and arranged into series. Arrangement into sub-series, and cataloguing has begun. Folder titles and other identifying information is now being added to the Driskell Center's PastPerfect database. This work is being done by the Center's Archivists and Graduate Assistants from the University of Maryland's College of Information Studies.

During the initial inventory of the Hayes-Benjamin Papers on African American Art and Artists, paper materials were rehoused in acid-free folders and rusty staples and paperclips were removed if deemed necessary. Completed folders were placed in acid-free Hollinger boxes.

Preferred Citation:

Hayes-Benjamin Papers on African American Art and Artists, Subseries__, Box__, Folder__. Gift of the Estate of Tritobia Hayes Benjamin. 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 Hayes-Benjamin Papers on African American Art and Artists records 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

Tritobia Hayes Benjamin was a historian and professor of African American art. As a scholar, curator, and arts community member, her contributions to the field and influence on artists and the art scene, especially in the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area were numerous.

Tritobia Hayes Benjamin was born on October 22, 1944 in Brinkley, Arkansas, to mother Addie and father Wesley E. Hayes, Sr. She graduated with honors from Horace Mann High School in Little Rock, Ark., in 1962, and moved to Washington, D.C., to continue her education at Howard University. Initially a zoology major, she soon changed her concentration to art history. There, under the teaching of James A. Porter, Benjamin received both her B.A. in 1968 and her M.A. in 1970. Her Master's dissertation was entitled "Black Female Sculptors: 1850-1970" and was indicative of her later primary scholarly focuses, that of African American sculptors and African American female artists. During her time as a student at Howard University, she also met her eventual husband, Donald S. Benjamin, a graphic artist and community activist.

Benjamin taught briefly at Georgetown University in 1970, and was also made an instructor at Howard University that same year. At Howard University, she was made assistant professor in 1973 and associate professor in 1977. In 1993, Benjamin was made full professor and later became Associate Dean of the College of Fine Arts and Director of the Howard University Gallery of Art. Benjamin eventually returned to the classroom as a student as well, earning her Ph.D. in American art history with a concentration in African American Art from the University of Maryland in 1991, where David C. Driskell was her dissertation advisor. Her dissertation, entitled "The Life and Art of Lois Mailou Jones, American Artist" was the basis for "The Life and Art of Lois Mailou Jones," now considered the definitive monograph of the artist.

Benjamin curated numerous exhibitions at the Howard University Gallery of Art, as well as other institutions. In 1978, she was a guest curator at the Afro-American Institute, where she curated "African Artists in America". She also served as a cultural consultant for a Moscow-Washington cultural exchange in 1989. Benjamin was also a committed arts community member, involved with several organizations such as the National Conference of Artists, the College Art Association, and the D.C. Art Association.

Professor Tritobia Hayes Benjamin's contributions to the field were acknowledged over the years through numerous fellowships, awards, and prizes, including the National Endowment of the Humanities Fellowship-in-Residence for College Teachers and the Fellowship for Faculty of Historically Black Colleges from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Howard University

School of Education, Spencer Foundation Research Award, 1975-77; Eta Phi Sigma, honorary member, 1986; United Negro College Fund, PEW Humanities Fellowship Grant, 1986-87; Howard University, Office of the VP for Academic Affairs, Faculty Research Grant in the Social Sciences, Humanities, and Education, 1988-89. In addition, in 2010, the College Art Association of America, Inc.'s Women's Caucus for Art awarded Prof. Tritobia Hayes Benjamin the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of scholar, curator, and arts community member Tritobia Hayes Benjamin measure 75 linear feet and date from 1928-2011 (bulk dates 1960-2000). The content of this collection documents her relationship with African American art and artists. A large portion of the collection focuses on Prof. Benjamin's academic research on African American sculptors and African American female artists such as Lois Mailou Jones. This academic research includes correspondence, artist files, interview transcriptions, exhibition catalogues, and writings. Also found in the collection are memorabilia, ephemera, other exhibition promotional materials, journal publications, greeting cards, newspaper clippings, as well as audio, film, and photographic materials. The Hayes-Benjamin Papers on African American Art and Artists has been arranged into nine series to aid the researcher.

The following paragraphs give short descriptions of the types of materials found within each series. The nine series in order of their arrangement are: Tritobia Hayes Benjamin: The Scholar and Arts Community Member; Tritobia Hayes Benjamin: The Educator and Art Director; Tritobia Hayes Benjamin: The Student; Correspondence; African American Art and Diaspora; African American Visual Arts in the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area; Lois Mailou Jones; Photographic Materials; Audio and Video Materials. For additional detailed description of the series and sub-series, see section titled "Series Description/Container Listing."

The Tritobia Hayes Benjamin: Scholar and Arts Community Member series includes biographical information, research notes, personal writings, lecture materials, newspaper articles, interview transcriptions, professional correspondence, artists files, work for Benjamin's Afro-American Sculptors Questionnaire and Newsletter, and materials that document her relationship with professional organizations such as the National Conference of Artists.

Materials included in the Tritobia Hayes Benjamin: Educator and Art Director series document Benjamin's life as a professor. Memos, notes, agendas, correspondence, and course materials are included for the institutions where Prof. Benjamin taught long term (Howard University and University of Maryland). Materials that document her work as the Director of the Howard University Gallery of Art are also included here.

The third series, Tritobia-Hayes Benjamin: Student documents Benjamin's time as a student at both Howard University and University of Maryland. This series contains program-specific correspondence and notices, course materials, event materials, personal class notebooks, and academic papers.

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

The African American Art and Diaspora series focuses on materials that Benjamin collected about the art world and African American art history. The most prominent materials are ephemera and exhibition catalogues that focus mainly on African American art. Benjamin also kept files on artists and topics in the field of African American and African art that she was interested in, keeping track of, and/or studying. Types of materials included in this series include exhibition catalogues, exhibition and event promotional materials, artist files, newspaper clippings, and publications.

Included in the African American Visual Arts in the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area series are materials Benjamin collected and wrote about the African American art scene around the city. In this series, are writings, exhibition and event materials, newspaper clippings, organizational information, publications, correspondence, and artist files.

The Lois Mailou Jones series documents Tritobia Hayes Benjamin's long-term scholarship and research on the artist. This series contains exhibition materials, publications, notes, event materials, book drafts, dissertation drafts and materials, lecture and presentation notes, interview transcriptions, newspaper clippings, and other writings including drafts for "The Life and Art of Lois Mailou Jones".

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 are organized chronologically and separated by folders indicating their years. Note: photographs and slides that were found 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 audiotapes, compact discs, VHS tapes, films, and DVDs. The content of these materials varies from footage of interviews conducted by Tritobia Hayes Benjamin to recorded lectures, panels, and art events. All materials in this series have been digitized.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into 9 series, many of which are currently being further arranged into subseries. The first seven series are all paper-based and the final two series are devoted to photographic (Series 8) and audio and video materials (Series 9).

Series 1: Tritobia Hayes Benjamin: Scholar and Arts Community Member, 1968-2000 (18 boxes)

Series 2: Tritobia Hayes Benjamin: Educator and Art Director, 1963-2009 (18 boxes)

Subseries 1: Academic Materials

Subseries 2: Howard University Faculty Material

Subseries 3: Howard University Gallery of Art

Subseries 4: Howard University Events and Publications

Subseries 5: Other Educational Publications and Institutions

Series 3: Tritobia Hayes Benjamin: Student, 1966-1991 (11 boxes)

Subseries 1: Howard University

Subseries 2: University of Maryland

Subseries 3: Other Institutions

Series 4: Correspondence, 1975-1998 (3 boxes)

Series 5: African American Art and Diaspora, 1936-2003 (33 boxes)

Series 6: African American Visual Arts in the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area, 1969-1994 (12 boxes)

Series 7: Lois Mailou Jones, 1928-2011 (11 boxes)

Subseries 1: Writings

Subseries 2: Exhibitions and Events

Subseries 3: Research Materials

Subseries 4: Correspondence and Greeting Cards

Series 8: Photographic Materials, 1971-2000 (20 boxes)

Subseries 1: Photographs and Negatives

Subseries 2: Slides and Transparencies

Series 9: Audio and Video Materials, 1971-1997 (15 boxes)

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:

Correspondence

Memorabilia

Ephemera

Exhibition catalogues

Exhibition promotional material

Journal publications

Sound recording

Video recording

Photographs

Greeting cards

Writings

Clippings

Slides

Names:

Bearden, Romare

Burke, Selma

Catlett, Elizabeth

Chandler, Dana

Hayes Benjamin, Tritobia

Lawrence, Jacob

Jones, Lois Mailou

Montgomery, Evangeline Juliet

Prince, Arnold

Pryce, Edward

Purifoy, Noah

Thomas, Alma

Walker, Annie

Agricore

Corcoran Gallery

Howard University

National Conference of Artists

University of Maryland, College Park