Adrienne Childs, Graduate Fellow, Driskell Center
Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Art and Archaeology

The Black Exotic:
Representing Africans in French Orientalist Art

Africans have been represented in European art since antiquity. After the rise of Islam in Mediterranean North Africa, Africans in European art were often characterized as exotic or “oriental”, conflating ideas about the Orient and Africa into a complex trope of exoticism. At once compelling and repulsive the figure of the black oriental represented the ultimate exotic other, the categorical inverse of the European. The figure of the black Oriental reached its apogee in nineteenth-century Orientalist art. My research focuses on the way that Africans and African-ness operated in the popular genre of Orientalism in nineteenth-century France. This presentation will focus on the figure of the exotic black female servant and the historical lineage in European art that leads up to the flourishing of this figure in nineteenth-century France.

Tuesday, April 13, 4:00-6:00pm
Driskell Center Multipurpose Room, Tawes 2102

The colloquium will conclude with a brief reception and light refreshments.

Adrienne Childs is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Art History and Archaeology at the University of Maryland. She obtained her BA from Georgetown University in 1982 and an MBA from Howard University in 1985 and MA in Art History from Maryland in 2000. Her research centers on the intersection of race and exoticism in nineteenth-century European art as well as African American art. Adrienne has worked as a museum administrator and independent curator. Recent exhibitions curated by Ms. Childs include Echoes: The Art of David C. Driskell and Successions: Prints by African American Artists in the Jean and Robert Steele Collection.

The David C. Driskell Center Colloquium Series features innovative research on Africa and the African diaspora by scholars and practitioners of distinction. When possible, the speaker's paper or other relevant work will be available through the Driskell Center website <http://www.driskellcenter.umd.edu/programs/2002-2003/colloq> three days prior to the colloquium.

For further information, please call (301) 314-2615 or email <driskellcenter@umail.umd.edu>. 