

ARKANSAS BLACK HISTORY



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Jeffrey Richardson Donaldson was a visual artist whose work helped define the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Born in Pine Bluff (Jefferson County), he received the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff's first B.A. in studio art in 1954. Donaldson worked for a year at Lanier High School, establishing an arts program for Black students before being drafted into the U.S. Army. He went on to complete his M.F.A. at Illinois Institute of Technology and received the very first PhD in African American art history in the world, earning the degree from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Donaldson taught at Howard University in Washington, D.C. from 1970-1998, serving as chair of the art department, director of the art gallery and dean of the College of Fine Arts. He used his influence to revolutionize African American art history curricula and broaden the narrowly defined concept of art to include its other, less mainstream facets. Donaldson, co-founder of AfriCOBRA and contributor to the momentous Wall of Respect, is known for creating alternative Black iconography connected to Africa and rooted in struggle, in order to replace the history of demeaning stereotypes.

