

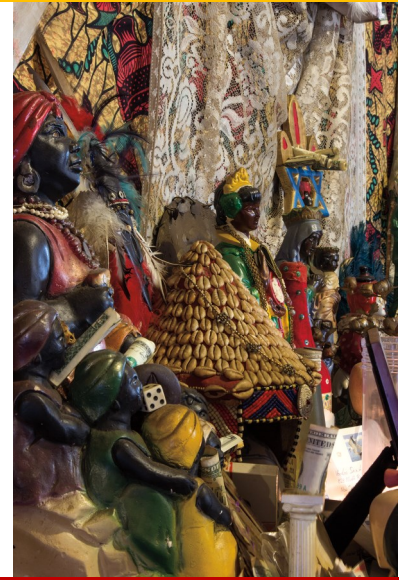
HUMANITIES CENTER FACULTY GRANT PRESENTATION



The Royal Path of the Mystical Serpent:

An Autobiography of
Priestess Miriam Williams
as Told to Anna Chupa

with an Introduction by Susan Kart



Friday, December 5 at 12 noon—Humanities Center

The Royal Path is a book in process, a collaboration with Mary Robin Williams, known as Priestess Miriam of the New Orleans Voodoo Spiritual Temple (NOVST) with a photographic catalog of the Temple altars she constructs. It contains an oral history detailing the life story of Priestess Miriam, testimony from her spouse, Allen Villeneuve and from musician and Voodoo spiritual doctor Louis Martinié, writings from temple co-founder and late husband Priest Oswan Chamani (Richard Williams) and an overview of the philosophical base from which the Priestess performs her readings/divinations or prepares herbal remedies for psychological or physical distress. This philosophical base is grounded in a Baptist upbringing followed by sixteen years in the Spiritual Church, thirteen of which she served as a Bishop, and twenty-four years as a Priestess of the New Orleans Voodoo Spiritual Temple. Priestess Miriam received her training in Vodun from Priest Daagbo Hounon Houna of Ouidah from the Republic of Benin, from immersion in the New Orleans milieu, and from her late husband, Oswan, who was trained and initiated in Belizean obeah. Collectively, the altar photography, philosophy, anecdotes and life story of Priestess Miriam will show how these traditions blend in the NOVST. As a focused work on a single priestess and temple, The Royal Path will nevertheless create a broader picture of how New Orleans Voodoo is distinct from yet similar to Haitian Vodou and will therefore create interest in future work to investigate the life stories, aesthetics and philosophies of other New Orleanian priestesses and spiritual doctors.