



VIOLA WOOD teaches ceramics and art theory. She has taken a long and serious look at our ancestral arts from Africa and what emerges from the clay her hands so preciously shape is a new world from Africa. She has been able to synthesize the formal qualities of African art and make the clay with which she works breathe a new life of forms, one reflective of the ancient art from Nok and the contemporary pottery of Afro-American artists. She is a native of Nashville, Tennessee and joined the faculty of the Department of Art in 1974.

Artist's Statement

I am an African woman possessing the ancestral spirits of those Africans before me, feeling the rhythms, colors, and sensitivities of my people past and present. Our people have been dispersed to other lands, yet we are one people, bound by our common ancestry and cultural traditions.

My images are in response to the traditional African religious and life ceremonies. The ceremonies and the life phases which they accompany are as follows: birth naming ceremony; the transition from childhood to adulthood initiation rites, marriage and procreation wedding; death the funeral and feast. Clay forms were used in many of these ceremonies as symbols of spiritualism therein and as functional objects.

My images are translations of traditional forms into modern functional items to be used in our homes as a merging of traditional and contemporary settings. It is hoped that in reflecting our culture these forms provide a deeper consciousness and momentum for growth.