

Carola Jones ~ Artist Statement 2015

“What do I want to make today?” and “What if?” are the essential questions that I ask myself every morning and reflect on each evening. This daily inquiry is a way of life for me rooted in faith, art and culture. I have been making art and fine crafts all my life as taught to me by my parents, grandparents and great-grand parents. Storytelling is at the heart of it all. Beginning with the stories told to me as a child, to the story I tell myself to begin a new work. Continuing to the story that emerges during the creative process of making art, and the stories viewers bring to interpret finished projects. I am trying to tell a story by manipulating surface design through texture and color.

My current body of work explores the concept of convergence. The coordinated movement and union of two distinct technologies towards a new unified whole. In my case the two substrates are clay and dyed fabric brought together in mixed media installation art as sculpture to change the perception of a space. Clay and textiles are metaphors for place and memory. I try to create forms with my hands that possess beauty to give myself hope, which are authentic representations of my faith and culture. All of my artwork is created in a series and consists of multiples to give voice to different design solutions.

In March of 2013, I witnessed and participated in the historical return of the Tuscarora (Skaru':re) Nation to our ancestral homeland in Eastern North Carolina. I am Native American (Skaru':re and Seminole) but growing up during segregation in Wilson all people of color were expected to be African American. My Tuscarora ancestors were Gate Keepers, who remained behind on ancestral land and hid out in plain sight for 300 years. The events in March 2013 on the 300th anniversary of Fort Neyuherú:kę in Snow Hill, not only freed the land but me as well. I no longer have to hide who I am born to be. I am free and I can tell my own Coastal Plains history in my own voice. Hence, the concept of convergence of place and memory told through the stories of clay and textiles. My story is a universal story of faith, art, suffering and survival which gives voice to the fact that a remnant of the Tuscarora Nation remained in and continues to live in Eastern North Carolina.

My BFA degree was earned in ceramic sculpture and painting from UNC-Chapel Hill. I studied in Helsinki, Finland, and have been a frequent summer scholarship student at Penland School of Crafts. A Phillips International Travel Grant, while a student at UNC, provided me the opportunity to live in Paris and to travel extensively in Europe and Scandinavia. I have also made art treks to the Baltic's and St. Petersburg, Russia. After teaching for ten years in the North Carolina Community College System, I am currently completing an alternative K-12 art education teaching license at East Carolina University with a concentration in textiles.