

MUMBLIN'S



Flocking: Exile

Mumblin's is an installation that includes six bird formations, several large female portraits and a soundtrack of African Americans recalling personal stories of migration and life during the civil rights movement, as well as their perspective of what social justice means to them.

Ms. Bonnie Newman Davis, Journalist and Co-Collaborator, conducted interviews with seven individuals and Mr. Ajani Winston, Sound Engineer and Graphic Designer, took excerpts from these recorded conversations and added bird chattering and music to create a soundtrack as a backdrop for the bird formation sculptures. The overlay of birds chirping is a metaphor for human communications, perhaps to break down walls to sensitize people to listen to stories from marginalized communities.

In Thompson's titled works, *Flocking* and *Bird Formation* series, several of the works are displayed on side tables from the turn of the 20th century to reflect beauty, peace, a harmony of being, and home. In bell hooks's book titled, *belonging!*, she refers to a visit to an art gallery in San Francisco, where she saw rooms arranged by Buddhist monk Chögyam Trungpa. He reminded hooks to look carefully at the objects in the gallery. Trungpa states, "Objects are not without spirits. As living things, they touch us in unimagined ways." Thompson installs her work on

repurposed tables specifically for this reason, in that they recall memories of home, whether that be her mother's, grandmother's or a close auntie's house. Thompson's bird formations symbolize and carry messages of intimacy, liberation, resilience, loss, restorative, transcendental, and rebalancing the world. Birds migrate to places searching for greater resources for food, warmer climates, and breeding to populate their species. The great migration of African Americans moved from the deep south to northern cities for better resources, such as job opportunities, education, and home security. However, for Black people were pushed to leave their homes because of the constant threat of Jim Crow Laws³ pulled to seek better living conditions in northern cities. The excerpts from the interviewees' personal stories serve as examples to these migration patterns.



Flocking: Compulsion



Flocking: Resilient

Many people enjoy bird watching as it can tell us the changing of seasons and climate change. People also bird watch for the simple pleasure of watching their behavior in the environment and landscape. Even Black people can't enjoy something as ordinary as bird watching and escape being racially profiled by individuals from majority communities. For example, in the case of Christian Cooper, the Black man who is an ordinary person interested in bird watching, was racially profiled by a white woman in Central Park. Even though the US has made great progress with race relations, Thompson hopes this installation will continue to heighten awareness and sensitize the audience as Dr. Martin Luther King said "to not judge people by the color of their skin but by the content of the character" and that we must work diligently to uphold our civil rights and human rights.



Bird Formation #2



Bird Formation #1

MORE ABOUT THE ARTIST

Lydia Thompson is a mixed media artist and received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from The Ohio State University and her Master of Fine Arts degree from the New York College of Ceramics at Alfred University. Her awards include a Fulbright Hays grant to conduct research on traditional architecture in Nigeria, a Windgate Distinguished Fellow for Innovation in Craft. She was an artist-in-resident at the Medalta Ceramic Center in Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada, the Guldagergaard International Ceramic Research Center in Denmark and at the Hambidge Center for the Creative Arts & Sciences.



Her work has been included in galleries, art centers, and museums such as the Mindy Solomon Gallery, the Society for Contemporary Crafts, the Baltimore Clayworks, the Ohr O’Keefe Museum, the Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft, James A. Michener Art Museum, the Crocker Art Museum, the Mint Museum, and the Northern Clay Center. She has completed public commissions for businesses and her work is in private and public collections in the US, New Zealand, Austria, Switzerland, and Italy. She has conducted workshops for youths and adults, given public lectures and served as a juror and curator for national and regional exhibitions. Currently she resides and maintains her studio in Charlotte, NC and is a Professor of Ceramics in the Department of Art & Art History at UNC Charlotte.



Bird Formation #3

My current research investigates the ideas of migration and residual ancestral memories that examine space and place that reference human existence. Through continuous mobility and the physical process of reduction made by nature, human beings create pathways that explore physical space that may produce visual silence, evoke the imagination, offer notions of commodities and value, and illustrate a sense of desperation that provides insights to various cultural practices and traditions. My work are reminders of the past and current lessons that we need to learn about the persistence and preservation of one’s own culture.



Ms. Bonnie Newman Davis

Collaborator, Journalist, Author, Media Consultant
Richmond, VA
<https://www.bonniemewmandavis.com>

Bonnie Newman Davis' extensive experience in print and digital journalism as a reporter, copy editor and editor spans four decades. She is a former managing editor of the Richmond Free Press, a Black-owned weekly newspaper in Richmond, Virginia, and was a reporter and an editor at the Richmond Times-Dispatch and Richmond News Leader. A graduate of North Carolina A&T State University (B.A. English) and The University of Michigan-Ann Arbor (M.A. Journalism), Davis has served as a journalism professor at several colleges and universities, including N.C. A&T, Virginia Commonwealth University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Washington and Lee. In November 2022, Davis' award-winning book, "Truth Tellers: The Power and Presence of Black Women Journalists Since 1960," was published. Davis is the recipient of numerous other awards, and is a member of the Hall of Fame for the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at North Carolina A&T State University. More recently, Davis was named an honoree of the 2024 YWCA Richmond Outstanding Women Award in Media and Marketing.



Mr. Ajani Winston

Graphic Designer Audio Engineer
Charlotte, NC
<https://www.ajaniwinston.com/about.html>

With over two decades of experience in design, I have provided branding, graphic and web design, as well as illustration services to a diverse array of sectors including federal agencies, non-profits, news agencies, advocacy groups, large corporations and political campaigns. My creative journey began at Morgan State University, followed by graduate studies in the design program at the Savannah College of Art and Design. I eventually returned to my hometown of Washington, D.C., where I could leverage design as a tool for positive change in the world. Throughout my career, I have tackled a wide range of issues such as environmental conservation, energy efficiency, sustainable technologies, international security, political finance reform, and combating corruption. In 2021, I relocated to North Carolina seeking a change of pace from the intensity of D.C.'s politics.



Ms. Teriyana Wright

Studio Assistant

High Point, NC

<https://teriyanawrightconnect.carrd.com>

Teriy Wright is from High Point, NC and received her Associates of Applied Science in Advertising and Graphic Design from Guilford Technical Community College. Currently Teriy is a senior majoring in the 3D Interdisciplinary Studies with an emphasis in Ceramics. at UNC Charlotte. She received a full scholarship to attend the Women Working in Clay Symposium at Hollins University and a full scholarship from Penland School of Craft to attend a 2023 summer ceramic session. She has exhibited her work in the region and was featured on the segment titled, "Good for Her" on Fox8 News broadcast. She received a NCECA Multicultural Fellowship to attend the 2024 National Council on Education for the Ceramic Art conference and completed a internship for the *Taking Up Space: A Seat At The Table* sponsored by She Built This City in Charlotte. Her work has also been included in several local and regional exhibitions and recently her work was accepted into the Student Art & Art History Juried Exhibition. She will receive her Bachelor of Fine Arts in May 2025.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE INTERVIEWEES:

Brenda Delilah Jackson Webb, Farmville, VA to Richmond, VA

Dr. Dennis Parker, Richmond, VA

Donna Lenell Fambro, Cleveland, OH to Cincinnati, OH

Lemar Milner, Cairo, GA to Carson, CA

Bessie Mae Milner Craig, Zeppelin, GA to Columbus, OH

Dr. James H. Harris, Chesterfield Matoaca, VA to NYC, NY

Cyril F. Coombs, NYC, NY to Richmond, VA

Daniel Oscar McCall Sr. Clinchco, VA to Rhode Island

Footnote:

- 1 <https://bellhooksbooks.com/product/belonging/>
- 2 <https://chogyamtrungpa.com/about/chogyam-trungpa-biography/>
- 3 <https://www.history.com/topics/early-20th-century-us/jim-crow-laws>

Sponsors:

UNC Charlotte College of Arts & Architecture,

<https://coaa.charlotte.edu/>

Arts & Science Council Artist Support Grant,

<https://artsandscience.org/>

South Arts Individual Grant,

<https://www.southarts.org/grants-opportunities/individual-artist-career-opportunity-grants/individual-artist-career>

Hambidge Arts & Sciences Center,

<https://www.hambidge.org/>

