Interview with artist, Pepper of Columbus, OH.  
Daryl Brown, interviewer. 28 February 2018.

(Source of all photographs, Pepper)

“There Is No Such Thing as Can’t”

Pepper is a modest, shy, spiritually-led, creative, individual, who, throughout her life has become a skilled artist in a broad range of materials. She was born and raised in Columbus by her mother, Virginia “Ginger” Milner, an artist, and her father, Emerson Milner. She was taught by her father “There is no such thing as can’t” and she took this to heart. Keeping this saying in mind, she’s pursued her goals and dreams even though the path has been winding and often not easy.
As a child, she set herself the goal of going to college and she succeeded. This success was a challenge as she also was dyslexic. She worked part-time at Lazarus and between working her way through, and scholarships, she graduated in 1971 with a degree in Business Marketing from what is now Central State University, in Wilberforce, Ohio. She continued her education at The Ohio State University studying ceramics and Black Studies and Community Development. In 1979, she also picked up certification as a Commercial Ceramic Artist Educator from Montclair University, in New Jersey.

Also in 1979 she was awarded a Cerex Award and has won several other awards throughout her career, a Ceramic Anonymous Award, a Peggy Award, Best of Show given by Popular Ceramics Magazine, and award from the National Afro-American Museum & Cultural Center, Wilberforce, OH, an artist award for the Olde Town Community Festival, and the National Afro-American Heritage Award.
She is continually learning as she works alongside artists she’s met and worked with over the years, picking up a wide variety of skills she’s used in creating ceramics, jewelry, and more.

Her main medium of choice seems to be ceramics but she always is creatively active and has picked up other arts or crafts to do when she is traveling.

She has been actively working and volunteering in Columbus’s African American community as she uses art as a means to educate others about culture, history, and art history.

She and Kojo Kamau grew up near each other on Grove Street and their lives have intertwined over the years. She had worked as his assistant in the 1970s and in 1999 she returned to
Columbus to assist him and was his companion until his death in December, 2016.

Pepper has donated the piece Social Unity #1 to the Library’s art collection at the urging of Kojo Kamau. It is a piece she made which is composed of a glass bowl seated on a clay base. In discussing the piece, Pepper says “The glass represents to her, the invisible, that which we have no control over, no understanding. The clay, she can manipulate and control. Where these two meet is where she believes all things can happen.”

We are pleased that Pepper decided to donate her piece, Social Unity #1 to Columbus State Community College’s Library. She has opened the door and given us the opportunity to learn
more about the local African American artistic community who have lived and created their art here, and to learn more about those who are currently creatively active in our community.

To place all of this information on our pages, Pepper has requested that I not give her last name, which is why you don’t see it here.