

# Strings and Things

**B**orn in Columbus, Ohio, with Down Syndrome, **Judith Scott** (1943– 2005) lost her hearing to Scarlet Fever in infancy. She went undiagnosed as deaf for decades and largely did not speak. In 1987, after living for thirty-five years within an institutional setting for people with disabilities, she was brought by her twin sister, Joyce, to Oakland, California. There she was introduced to the **Creative Growth Art Center**, a visionary studio art program founded to foster and serve a community of artists with developmental and physical disabilities. Her sculptural work started after the fiber artist Sylvia Seventy showed Scott several textile-based processes, including weaving and embroidery with yarn and different types of fabric. For the next seventeen years Scott created **extraordinary sculptures** assembled from found and scavenged materials wrapped and tied in yarn, thread, and other fibers. Scott focused her attention on one sculpture for an extended period of time— weeks to months— continuing to build layer upon layer. Once a work was completed, she signaled to the Creative Growth staff for it to be removed, and she would begin another piece. **She never repeated a found object or color scheme.**



**"Twins" by Judith Scott.** Photo by Dr. John Cooke.  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%27Twins%27.jpg>

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## Materials

- Whatever you can find in your house!



30-40 minutes

Judith Scott used a number of everyday materials that came from a variety of places, including her home, as well as from the Creative Growth Art Center, where she made her art. Materials like these are often called **found objects** because they are items not normally considered art, and often already have a non-art function.

## Instructions

- 1.** Gather materials from your home. Choose items that have different textures, shapes, colors, and sizes. Share your selection with a parent or sibling. Discuss how you might create a sculpture from the objects that uses at least one of the following principles: balance, proportion, repetition, and movement (**see next page for definitions and examples of more art terms**).
- 2.** Use tape, string, or rubber bands to assemble your sculpture. Experiment with stationery supplies that Scott used in her earlier works, such as paper, glue, crayons, and colored pencils, to add further decorative elements.
- 3.** Interview your parent or sibling about his/her artistic process. Use the following questions as a guide: How did you come up with the idea for your artwork? Describe the process you used for creating your sculpture. What was the easiest part? What was the hardest? What do you like most about your artwork? If you could change anything, what would it be? Switch roles and share your answers with your partner. What answers did you have in common? What was different?

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## Art Vocabulary:

**Formalism:** the study of works of art by analyzing and comparing their form and visual style—the way objects are made and their purely material aspects. Sculptures made by Judith Scott are celebrated for being unique and aesthetically pleasing. **Look closely for evidence of these four principles of formalism:**

**Balance:** The way that visual elements—such as line, shape, color, and texture—are organized and arranged. There are three types of balance: symmetrical, asymmetrical, and radial. Symmetrical balance occurs when you divide an artwork in half, and each side mirrors the other. Asymmetrical balance occurs when each side is not the same. Radial balance occurs when various elements form a pattern around one central point.

**Proportion:** The relationship of various elements to one another, such as their relative size or location.

**Repetition:** The use of an element again and again.

**Movement:** How elements are handled to create a sense of motion. Sometimes referred to as rhythm.