

TANG AT HOME STUDIO: LIVING LANDFORMS

Featuring artist Syd Carpenter from the Tang exhibition
[*Never Done: 100 Years of Women in Politics and Beyond*](#)



Syd Carpenter, *Ellis and Anna Mae Thomas*, 2009–2010,
from the series *Places of Our Own*, earthenware, acrylic, and graphite, 26 x 20 x 8 inches,
Tang Teaching Museum collection, gift of the artist, 2017.30

LOOK AND DISCUSS



Syd Carpenter, *Ellis and Anna Mae Thomas*, 2009–10

1. **Look closely** at *Ellis and Anna Mae Thomas* by Syd Carpenter.
2. **What do you notice?** Discuss with a partner: What stands out to you? What do you see in this object? Thinking of the shapes and structures, what materials could this artwork be made of?
3. **Reflect:** Syd Carpenter calls this sculpture a portrait and named it after two people, Ellis and Anna Mae Thomas. Portraits usually show faces. Why do you think the artist calls this work a portrait?

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Syd Carpenter was born in 1954 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She now works as a professor at Swarthmore College in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. She gets inspiration for her sculptures from ideas of family, things formed from the earth (like beans and seeds), and maps of African American farms.



Photo by the Center for Emerging Visual Artists, Courtesy of the Artist and Black Art in America

MAKE

Suggested Materials: duct tape or aluminum foil, glue, acrylic paint, cardboard, magazines, recyclable objects (paper towel rolls, plastic bottles, paper bags, newspapers), model magic (or playdough)—use whatever you have available!

Sculpture: Places of Our Own

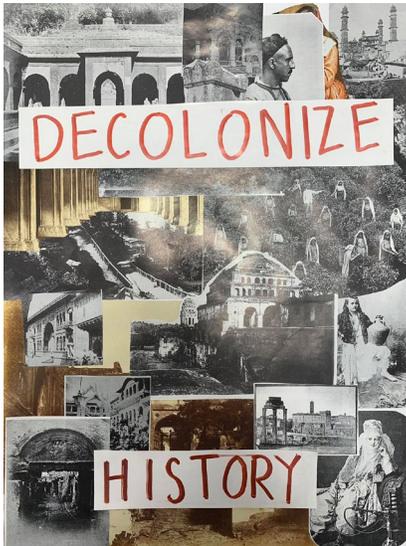
Create your own 3-D portrait of a farm or garden in the style of Syd Carpenter's *Ellis and Anna Mae Thomas*!

1. Think about a garden you wish you had! What would it look like? What types of things would you have in your garden? Gather objects from around the house.
2. Assemble and glue down your objects in a layout or design of your choice on a sturdy surface like cardboard. Be creative with textures and shapes!
3. Cover your topographical, or realistic-looking, map with duct tape or aluminum foil to imitate the shiny surface of Carpenter's sculpture. You can use metallic acrylic paint as an alternative.



Artwork by Geraldine Santoso '22

Suggested Materials: construction paper, markers, glue, magazines, scissors—use whatever you have available!



Artwork by Geraldine Santoso '22

Collage: Untold Stories

Create your own collaged story!

What are the stories that you wish people knew about you and your history?

1. Find images from the internet, online, or pictures from family albums.
2. Think and reflect about a time in your life that you want to share. Who are the people you want to represent and what would you want to say about them? What parts of your story are unknown to most people? Collage these images on a piece of paper.
3. Share your artwork and your untold story!

LEARN MORE



Syd Carpenter, *Mother Pin Afire*, Graphite over Clay, Photo courtesy of the Artist and Clay Art Centre

Ellis and Anna Mae Thomas is what Carpenter calls a portrait of a farm. She celebrates these farmers and their narratives through art by telling their stories, which have often been ignored or unknown. She emphasizes the memory and impact of African American farmers in US history and explores the issues of identity, race, land ownership, and how the US government has systemically oppressed African American farmers.

Carpenter is an African American gardener herself and drew inspiration from her grandmother who had a victory garden during World War II and Richard Westmacott's book, *African-American Gardens and Yards in the Rural South*. Through her work, Carpenter honors the work and legacy of African American farmers in the United States.



Syd Carpenter, *Marylou Furcron*, 2009, Earthenware and graphite, Photo Courtesy of the Artist and Swarthmore College

SHARE

Take a photo of your work and post it on social media with the hashtag **#TangAtHome** **#ArtWithTheTang!**

Sunny Ra
The Laurie M. Tisch Educator for
K-12 and Community Programs
sra@skidmore.edu

For more art-making activities, check out:
<https://tang.skidmore.edu/education/tang-at-home>