

Redefining Textile Art

There is a growing body of textile artists whose work is difficult to categorize. Their creations frequently expand the boundaries of the traditional crafts that have been described and discussed above and often use their medium to address a range of topics. These are just a couple of examples.

Judith Scott (1943 - 2005) is known for complex sculptural works that, using intricate weaving and wrapping techniques, bind together disparate materials including yarn fabric and plastic found objects. She used discarded materials as a base (bamboo slats, wooden chairs, bicycle wheels, baskets) and wrapped cloth or thread around them, creating entirely new objects.

Scott was born with Down syndrome and was also largely deaf, which caused her to not speak. For the first 35 years of her life, Scott lived in an institution for people with disabilities. In 1987 she was enrolled in a studio art program for artists with physical and developmental disabilities. According to the program, in the eighteen years that Scott was creating her pieces of fiber art, she never repeated a form or color scheme.



Sheila Hicks (1934-present) was one of the first artists to create large-scale textile works in which the boundaries sculpture and painting are blurred. Hicks has created a body of work that ranges from wall hangings to floor-to-ceiling woven columns to piles of plush, abstract forms that she calls "masses of color." The photo below is of Hicks's work, *Pillar of Inquiry/Supple Column*, a 17-foot conglomeration of richly pigmented threads hanging from ceiling to floor at the 2014 [Whitney](#) Museum Biennial.



Nick Cave (1959-present) is a textile artist whose work blurs the distinction between sculpture and fashion. He is most known for his *Soundsuits*: wearable sculptural costumes which fully conceal the body, masking racial, class, and gender-based stereotypes. Cave's multimedia costumes incorporate found materials with traditional craftwork, such as crochet, beading and sequinining. The photo below is of one of his Soundsuits.

For a live performance of his Soundsuits, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_PD0pOHkDk8



Sarah Zapata (1988 –present) is a Peruvian American textile artist who explores themes such as identity, masculinity, femininity and sexuality through the medium of textiles. She uses traditional techniques including knitting and carpet weaving in non-traditional ways. The bright colors she incorporates into her work are reminiscent of traditional Peruvian textiles, but the fuzzy shag look of her creations reflects her American side.



Zapata, *If I Could*, 2017