

# Art Trunk Making A Marionette

5th Grade–Adult

**Frist Art Museum**  
919 Broadway  
Nashville, TN 37203  
FristArtMuseum.org/art-trunks



Alma W. Thomas (American, 1891–1978). *Clown*, ca. 1935. Fabric, wood, paint, and strings. The Columbus Museum, Gift of Miss John Maurice Thomas in memory of her parents, John H. and Amelia W. Cantey Thomas and her sister Alma Woodsey Thomas,



Alma W. Thomas (American, 1891–1978). Sketch for *Giant*, 1935/1938. Graphite on paper. Alma W. Thomas Papers, The Columbus Museum

This activity is inspired by the exhibition *Alma W. Thomas: Everything Is Beautiful*. This exhibition follows the life of African American artist Alma W. Thomas from her early childhood in semirural Georgia to Washington, DC, where she worked as a teacher. Her abstract and colorful paintings expressed her interests in nature, music, space travel, and spirituality.

Not only did Alma Thomas create beautiful works on canvas, but she also enjoyed designing costumes and furnishings, photography, and sculpture. Her works were distinctive and innovative, and often utilizing many geometric patterns.

As an artist and a teacher, Thomas always fostered a belief in living a creative life through the visual and performing arts. One way she did this was through **marionettes**. A marionette is a puppet with strings attached to its limbs that a puppeteer can move from above using a **control**. Thomas's marionettes demonstrated concepts related to language arts, music, and more through movement and play.

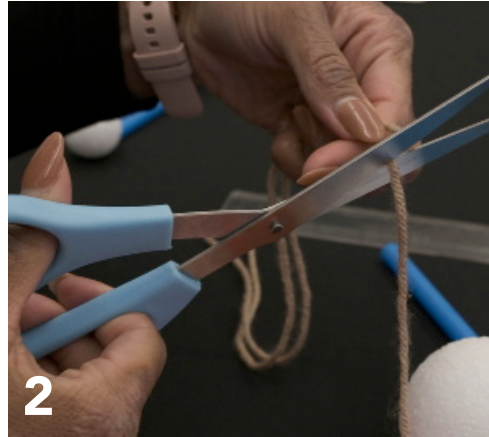
Aflac is proud to sponsor *Alma W. Thomas: Everything Is Beautiful*. The exhibition has also been made possible in part by major support from the Henry Luce Foundation, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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## Objective

Build your own marionette using the materials provided.

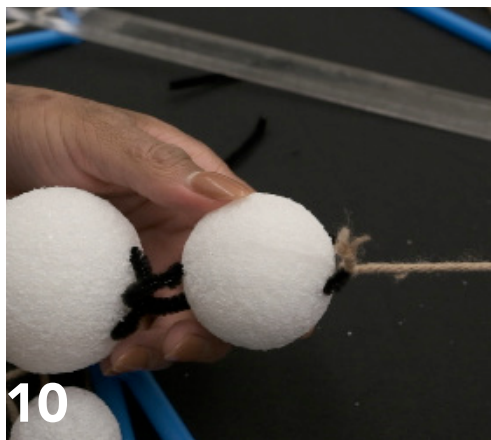
## Materials

- Four 2 1/2 in. pieces of pipe cleaner
- A large foam sphere
- A 12 in. ruler
- Scissors
- Yarn
- Two straws
- Two small foam spheres
- A medium foam sphere
- Several pieces of fabric, googly eyes, markers, or decorative elements
- A bottle of washable multipurpose glue
- A large popsicle stick

## Steps

### Legs

1. Form one piece of pipe cleaner into a *U* shape and stick each end into the large sphere (the puppet's torso), leaving a small space for yarn to be pulled through.
2. Cut a piece of yarn to forty-eight inches and thread half the length through the opening of the *U*-shaped pipe cleaner so that the yarn is the same length on both sides.
3. Cut one straw into four equal pieces and thread each end of the yarn through two pieces of the straw to form each leg.
4. Press the pipe cleaner firmly into the foam to keep the yarn in place at the bottom of your puppet's body.
5. For each foot, form a small piece of pipe cleaner into a *U* shape and stick both ends into a small foam sphere (the foot), leaving enough space for yarn to be pulled through.
6. Thread one end of the yarn all the way through that pipe cleaner, pulling the foot as close as possible to the end of the leg, then knot the yarn around the pipe cleaner. Press the pipe cleaner firmly into the foot. Repeat steps 5 and 6 with the other leg to make the second foot.



## Head and Body

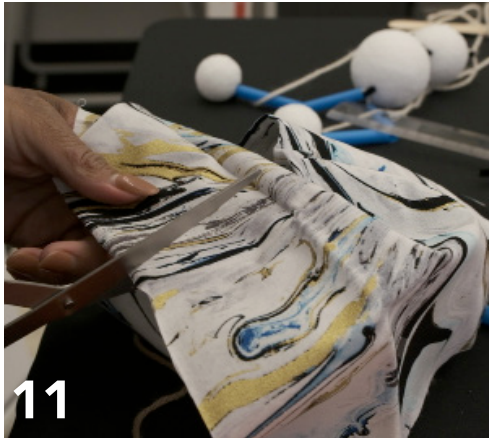
**7.** Form one piece of pipe cleaner into a *U* shape and stick both ends into the top the torso, opposite the legs. Leave enough space for a second piece of pipe cleaner to be pulled through the opening.

**8.** Pull a second piece of pipe cleaner through the piece attached to the torso and press both ends of this pipe cleaner into the medium sphere (the head). Press the first pipe cleaner firmly into the torso and the second into the head.

**9.** Form your last piece of pipe cleaner into a *U* shape to stick into the top of the head, leaving enough space to pull yarn through.

**10.** Cut a ten-inch piece of yarn and tie it to the pipe cleaner on top of the head. Press the pipe cleaner firmly into the top of the head.





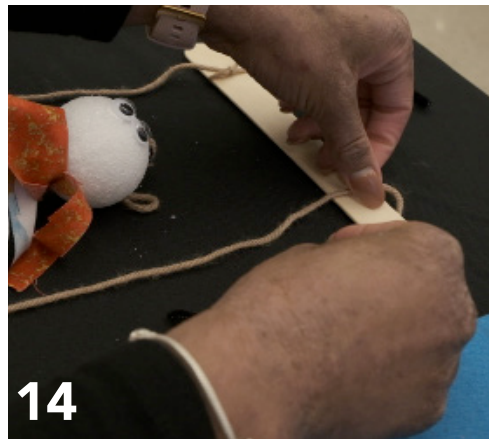
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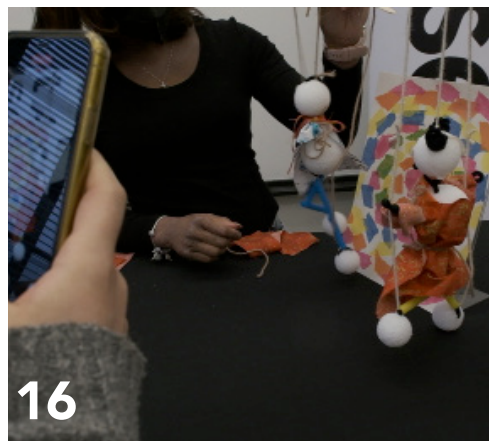
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### Decorate and Connect to Control

**11.** Select fabrics to fashion into pieces of clothing for your marionette.

**12.** Use glue, yarn, or pipe cleaners to attach articles of clothing to your puppet.

**13.** Once you have dressed your puppet, use a marker, googly eyes, or other materials to add other facial features.

**14.** Cut a ten-inch piece of yarn and tie it to the pipe cleaner on top of the head. Press the pipe cleaner firmly into the top of the head.

**15.** Collaborate with other participants or work by yourself to write a story, a script, or a few paragraphs about your puppet, then use the tissue-collage artworks from the first activity as your background for a marionette performance.

**16.** Use a phone or tablet to record your scene.