

Craft Contemporary

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Linda Sibio: Economics of Suffering, Part 4

October 1, 2023 – January 7, 2024



Image: Linda Sibio, *Wall Graphics for Wealth Disparity*, 2019-23. Acrylic paint, digital paintings on paper, paint pencils, bungy cords, Site-specific installation, Courtesy of the artist.

Los Angeles – *Economics of Suffering: Part IV* is the final installment in artist Linda Sibio's interdisciplinary series exploring the psychological effects of wealth disparity, extreme poverty, and class suppression within contemporary society. Combining visual art, installation, and performance, Sibio explores the psychological toll of rampant capitalism and diminishing resources on those most vulnerable – the mentally disabled, the elderly, people living in poverty, and other disenfranchised populations suffering from homelessness, hunger, racism, and violence. As the artist describes, "I am interested in how money controls the masses, and forces poverty on people. In this series of works I look at the psychological effects of forced poverty that causes people to age prematurely, have heart attacks at a younger age, and die early; and how low wages cause depression, suicide, and post-traumatic stress syndrome."

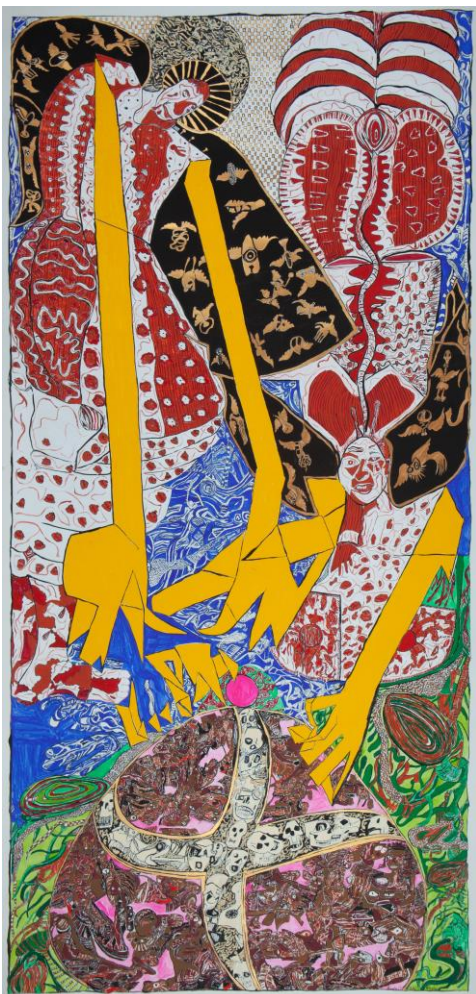
The exhibition includes a range of works: large paintings, multimedia installations and interactive works, and many of Sibio's ink drawings which embody the conceptual development of her ideas and document the system of "glyphs" Sibio has constructed to form her own, unique visual vocabulary. Having been diagnosed with schizophrenia at the age of eighteen, Sibio has developed her design process from research into the perceptions of the insane, a philosophy she has termed "The Insanity Principle." Sibio transforms what are considered symptoms of insanity – such as fragmented thinking, non-linear time sequencing, dismemberment, delusions, and hallucinations – into a method for enhancing her creative process and making experimental art. This results in Sibio channeling her thoughts and emotions into highly intricate, saturated works with a distinct mode of narrative construction and visual overlaying.

A core component of the exhibition are five incredibly detailed and labor-intensive paintings that Sibio developed over the past four years. Sibio renders these works with a fine brush, creating hundreds of minute images and patterns that congeal into complex, layered stories. The paintings include a triptych exploring the economic motivations for genocide and how world powers often turn a blind eye to, or even sanction, war and mass murder for access to land, resource extraction, and wealth generation. In the triptych, Sibio depicts leaders from former G8 countries as monsters scavenging the remains of people murdered in several genocides throughout human history. In *Genocide Rwanda* (2021-22), Sibio depicts Vladimir Putin and Jacques Chirac as hybrid creatures – part side of beef, part digging machine – tearing into a human breast filled with the victims of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide. The breast, a source of sustenance, is stripped of its life-giving abilities and becomes a graveyard. The UN and international community did nothing to stop the violence in Rwanda and up to one million ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus were murdered by their fellow citizens.

Another large painting, *Busboy* (2019-20), depicts Sibio's brother, who worked as a busboy for decades and also had schizophrenia. His image is cut and multiplied into smaller and smaller bodies which transition into large legs and feet, representing the millions of restaurant, factory, and other laborers who sustain the nutritional needs of this country with minimal pay or security. As the figures fracture, they peer into a full stomach, not able to access the nourishment it contains. The bottom border of the image is composed of souvenir plates from the poorest states in the U.S.

The exhibition will also include several interactive pieces including Sibio's installation, *Wealth Disparity*. Composed of digital and hand-painted wall graphics and rope, the piece investigates the shrinking of the American middle class and redlining, the systematic practice in which financial lenders deny services to entire communities based on the race or national origin of their residents. Sibio will provide markers so visitors can mark their own economic status within her graphics. Additionally, Sibio will incorporate lyrical poems, a soundtrack, and paintings on straightjackets enclosed in moveable structures that can be pulled by visitors around the gallery space.

Sibio blows apart the American myth of "pulling yourself up by your bootstraps" and its implications that people live in poverty because of laziness or personal choice. Her work dissects the complex web of government and corporate policies that ensures wealth stays concentrated with those that hold power. Simultaneously, she offers tools and ways of thinking so the most vulnerable in society can navigate and survive these systems. As Sibio notes in her artist statement, "The fragmented thinking of the schizophrenic is actually a window into the placement of our culture. We are living in a deconstructed world no longer thinking linear thoughts. Our perceptions are continually interrupted by television, Internet, video surveillance, the media – we no longer have a single thought. We think in a multi-layered complex pattern. In order for our culture to go forward the darkness of the dismembered body needs to come into the light. We need to fragment in order to become whole again."



Far Left:

Linda Sibio, *Genocide Rwanda*, 2021-22. Gouache on Arches watercolor paper, 8 x 4 feet. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Steve Lester.

Immediate Left: Linda Sibio, *Bus Boy*, 2019-2020. Gouache on Arches watercolor paper, 8 x 4 feet. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Steve Lester.

ABOUT THE ARTIST:

Linda Carmella Sibio was born in 1953 in Montgomery, West Virginia, and currently lives and works in Joshua Tree, CA. Sibio was diagnosed with schizophrenia while studying painting at Ohio University where she got her BFA in 1977. In the 1980s, she studied acting in Hollywood with Eric Morris and performance with Rachel Rosenthal. She has received numerous grants and awards including a Lannan Foundation Grant, Rockefeller MAP Fund Award, Wynn Newhouse Award, and the Tree of Life Award. She has performed at numerous venues including the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Franklin Furnace in New York, and Highways Performance Space in Los Angeles. Solo exhibitions of her work have been held at Track 16 Gallery in Los Angeles and Andrew Edlin Gallery in New York. In 2001, Sibio founded Bezerk Productions, a non-profit organization where she developed Cracked Eggs, a series of art workshops for neurodiverse individuals, and educates the public on the interdisciplinary work of these artists. Sibio is currently working with the San Bernardino County Department of Mental Health and Innovation Division on a pilot program of Cracked Eggs within the County's program.

RELATED PROGRAMS:

For a full list of exhibition programs, visit <https://www.craftcontemporary.org/programs/>

Exhibition Opening:**Press Preview Hour**

Sat, Sep 30 | 10 – 11 am | *press only* / *free*

Press is invited for a private gathering with refreshments and a casual gallery walkthrough with exhibiting artists and curators of our new exhibitions, *Economics of Suffering: Part IV*, *Cumanday: Beautiful Mountain*, and *Margaret Griffith: Chirk*. This is an intimate opportunity to view the exhibitions and meet the artists and curators. Interested press, please RSVP to prima@craftcontemporary.org

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Exhibition Opening Reception

Sat, Sep 30 | 11 am - 5 pm

Museum admission / *members free*

Join us for a full day opening celebration of three very special exhibitions: *Economics of Suffering: Part IV*, *Cumanday: Beautiful Mountain*, and *Margaret Griffith: Chirk*. The day will be highlighted by floral crown making, a Cali salsa dance lesson, Latinx DJ, Elenora, exclusive exhibition merchandise, yummy bites by Sus Arepas, an adults-only bar, and of course, the galleries to explore. Guests of all ages are invited.

In partnership with Sonido del Colibrí, Bridging Latin American traditional musicians & US artist communities through performances, educational & cultural exchanges.

Gallery Walkthrough:**Economics of Suffering, Part IV**

Sun, Oct 29 | 11:30 am – 1 pm | *free*

Join a public walkthrough with exhibiting artist Linda Sibio and guest curator Holly Jerger. Delve deeper into this interdisciplinary exhibition that combines intensely intricate drawings, performance, and installation to explore the devastating effects caused by the ongoing worldwide financial and mental health crises.

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Gallery Performance

Linda Sibio: *Wall Street Guillotine*

Sun, Jan 7 | 3 pm | *free*

Artist Linda Sibio premieres her solo performance piece *Wall Street Guillotine*. This special performance will further investigate themes in her solo exhibition *Economics of Suffering, Part IV*, drawing parallels between forms of torture from the Middle Ages and Holy Wars with our current wealth disparity.

CREDITS:

Linda Sibio: Economics of Suffering, Part IV has been organized for Craft Contemporary by Holly Jerger, Director of the Art Galleries at California State University, Northridge.

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The artist would also like to thank the following people for their assistance with the project: Blake Brousseau, Annette Johnson, Melissa Sabol, Tess Jenkins, Alan Pulner, Samantha Fine, Fox McBride, and Sean Meredith.

Craft Contemporary is an art museum whose purpose is to reveal the potential of craft to educate, captivate, provoke, and empower. Craft Contemporary achieves its mission by exhibiting the artists of our time who favor craft materials and processes. Giving voice to local artists, emerging artists, and often under-recognized mid-career artists is a museum priority that works to ensure the recognition of various voices not always heard in larger institutions. The museum strives to achieve equitable access through free and low-cost programs, and the

inclusion of multiple teaching artists from communities throughout Los Angeles who offer unique art making workshops, 3-12 school programs, senior adult workshops, and art talks. For more information, visit www.craftcontemporary.org.

LOCATION: 5814 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036

ADMISSION: FREE every Sunday

REGULARLY: \$9 for adults; \$7 for students, teachers, seniors; Free for Craft Contemporary members

HOURS: Tuesday - Sunday, 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM