

# Craft Contemporary

## In-person Lesson Plan Craft To Change The World

**Essential Question:** How can artists use materials with different shapes, lines, colors, and textures to communicate and speak out about issues and ideas that are important to them or that they want to change in the world?

**Grade** 3rd - 5th (*\*scalable to grades 6th-12th. California art standards not listed for these age groups.*)

**Time** 2 hours

*Please note: Groups larger than 25 students may be divided into two. One group will start with the workshop and the other will start in the galleries. After 1 hour the groups will switch for the remaining hour.*

**Art Concepts** Symbolism, appliqué, sculpture, painting

**Materials** Base fabric (cotton/canvas), assorted patterned fabrics, felt, scissors, fabric glue, (optional) needles and thread, trim, tassels, beads, buttons, ribbons

**Artworks/Exhibition in Focus** [Carolyn Castaño: Cumanday—Beautiful Mountain](#), [Linda Sibio: Economics of Suffering. Part IV](#)

### Vocabulary

**Symbol** - A symbol is an image or object that is used to represent something else. For example the American flag has stars and stripes, which represent the entire United States of America. The color red can also represent anger, love, or a warning. Artists often use colors and shapes to symbolize different ideas and feelings.

**Appliqué** - is a sewing or attaching technique that involves stitching or gluing a small piece of fabric onto a larger one to make a pattern or design.

**Collage** - a work of art made by gluing pieces of different materials to a flat surface. Collages can be made out of paper, fabric, and other materials.

**Indigenous/Native** - Indigenous means originating or occurring naturally in a particular place. Indigenous people are the first people to live in a place. Similarly, native means that a person is born in a particular place. This is where the term Native Americans comes from — they lived in this land before European settlers came over from Europe starting in the 1500s, before we called this place America.

**Climate Change** - Climate change refers to the long-term changes in global temperatures and other characteristics of the atmosphere. Climate has changed throughout Earth's long history, but this time it's different. Human activity is causing worldwide temperatures to rise higher and faster than any time we know of in the past.

**Mental Health** - Just like we try to keep our bodies healthy (through diet, exercise, etc.), mental health is about the health of our minds, which includes our thoughts and emotions. Mental

health affects how we think, feel, and act as well as how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. We will all be affected by mental health in our lives. Some people struggle more than others and those struggles can often include experiencing overwhelming thoughts and emotions that can make someone very sad, angry, excited, worried, or other strong emotions.

## VISITING THE GALLERIES

### Introduction

Who has been to a museum before? What are some of the do's and don'ts while we are in the galleries?

- **No touching artworks:** please help us to protect you (the students) and the artwork on view by not touching artworks, or leaning against walls when visiting the galleries.
- **Look and be aware of the space around you:** we have artworks everywhere, on the walls, floor and ceiling so make sure you don't step on or bump into objects.
- **Listen to educators and each other:** we will be discussing our opinions and ideas about artworks and we want to make sure everyone's opinion is heard and respected.
- **No food and drink in the galleries:** students must leave lunches, snacks and drinks in their bags which can be stored at the front desk on arrival.

### What is Craft?

Craft has been described as the skilled creation of objects, installations and other artworks using metal, fiber (thread, fabric, etc.), glass, clay and wood. The artists we will look at today, use some of these different materials in their art to create meaning. Craft is often collaborative and involves techniques, colors, patterns and ideas passed on between people in different cultures and communities.

Craft and art can also be used to communicate ideas using shapes, lines, and colors. The artists we will see today use their art to express ideas about things that are important to them, things that they want to call attention to or change in the world.

### **Artwork 1 : Carolyn Castaño, *Cumanday* (*Beautiful Mountain*) (Nevado del Ruiz), 2023**

This artwork was made by artist Carolyn Castaño. What do you notice about this artwork? What type of place is this? Does it remind you of anything you have seen before? What materials do you see?



This artwork is inspired by a place known as Nevada del Ruiz or Cumanday which is one of six remaining tropical mountain glaciers (which is like a mountain made of ice) in Colombia, where

the artist's family is from. To make this artwork Carolyn layered watercolor paint, printed fabrics, sequins, and embroidered appliques.

Does anyone know where Colombia is? Colombia is a country in the North West of South America. It is home to more species of birds, amphibians, and butterflies than any other place in the world! This landscape is where many of these animals live, but the mountain glaciers in this artwork are melting and disappearing due to global warming and climate change.



[Partner/small group talk] Carolyn Castaño was inspired by this place but has added different shapes and colors. Look at this picture of Cumanday. What is similar/different between this photograph and Carolyn's artwork?

[Gold, grid of colored squares, animals and colors, tassels]

The grid of colored squares is inspired by an ancient pre-Columbian patterned fabric and the Wiphala peoples flag. Can you see the similarities in the colors and shapes? [Show image]

The Wiphala flag represents people who are indigenous or native to this area of Colombia. Does anyone know what indigenous or native means?

Indigenous or native means that you were born in or are originally from a particular place. For example Native American peoples are indigenous to parts of America and the Wiphala people are indigenous to this area in Colombia.

So why did Carolyn include their flag here? Indigenous people were living in this land before other people came over on ships from Europe hundreds of years ago. Those Europeans used force to take land and resources. Carolyn Castaño used these shapes and colors to represent the indigenous people in this artwork.



### **Tocapu Tunic**

A Pre-Columbian textile pattern, similar to a woolen poncho worn by both country and city folk, but more specifically in the mountainous regions of Colombia.



### **Wiphala Flag**

Red: The Earth and the Andean man.  
Orange: Society and culture. Yellow: Energy and strength.  
White: Time and change. Green: Natural resources and wealth.

In Colombian culture gold often represents something special, important or even supernatural. The gold in this artwork also represents the gold that can be found in the earth. This landscape is rich in gold and European settlers came and set up mines, tearing up the natural landscape and taking the gold for themselves.

[Partner talk] Why do you think that the artist, Carolyn Castaño, chose to represent this place in this way and add these colors, shapes, and details? What might she be trying to communicate?

**Artwork 2: Carolyn Castaño, *Madre Monte-Reina de los Jardines*, 2023**

How would you describe this figure? Look at her facial expression and pose? What word would you use to describe her mood? What can we tell about this character from the details around her?



This sculpture is called *Madre Monte*, also known as Mother Mountain. She is a goddess in Colombian culture and a protector of the natural world. She is surrounded by animals and wears moss and leaves. She lives in the dense jungle and supposedly bathes in rivers, causing flooding and heavy storms. She might appear to be gentle, calm, kind, and nurturing, but she will rise up in anger against anyone who harms animals or the earth and she haunts those who steal other people's land.

**Activity - Draw Your Own Guardian or Protector!**

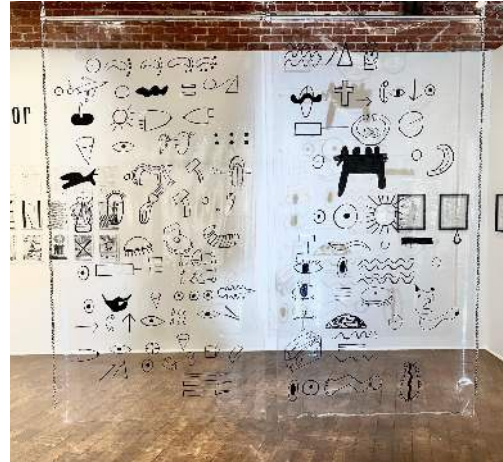
Think of something you want to protect in the world. Sketch your own protector or guardian. Include details that tell us who they are and what they protect!

[Transition] Carolyn Castaño uses her art to bring attention to the importance of protecting our environment and representing indigenous peoples in Colombia. Now we are going to go upstairs and see another artist who uses their art to speak out and stand up for people who are often overlooked or treated unfairly.

**Artwork 3: Linda Sibio, *Fossilized Footprints*, 2023**

This artwork was made by an artist called Linda Sibio. What do you notice? What do these shapes and lines remind you of? What do you think they mean?

Linda Sibio calls these 'glyphs'. Does anyone know what that word means? You might be familiar with the term "hieroglyphics," early writings using pictures. Basically, a glyph is a picture that represents something. It is a symbol.



What you are looking at is Linda Sibio's very own language in pictures. The black frames on the wall to the right tell us what each glyph means. The drawings on the left use all of these glyphs to create artworks with messages and meanings.

But how and why did she come up with these shapes and lines? Linda's art is connected to her experiences with mental health. Does anyone know what mental health is?

Mental health is similar to the health of our body, but involves our thoughts, emotions, and the way that we act. We will all experience struggles with our mental health in our lives, when we might feel very sad, angry, or have a combination of other strong emotions. Some people struggle more than others and Linda has struggled with mental health all of her life. She frequently experiences overwhelming thoughts and emotions.

As a form of relaxation and healing Linda did something called free association drawing. Has anyone done a doodle before? When you just let your hand move on the paper and scribble, or make random shapes and lines without thinking about it too much? When you relax and just put whatever is in your head onto the paper. That's similar to what Linda did. She drew images as fast as they came into her head. Her ideas came from dreams, personal stories, places she visited, and feelings. The result was a series of 'glyphs' or symbols, each with its own meaning. Let's try it!

**Activity - Free Association Drawings!**

I am going to give you a series of prompts to inspire a drawing. We will draw a series of shapes on your paper, the only rule is you can't think about what you draw too much. You must draw whatever comes into your head first. Keep your shapes simple, because I will go fast so you can't think too much. There is no right or wrong way to draw!

1. Just to loosen us up a bit, let's start by closing your eyes. Draw one shape on your paper with your eyes closed. It can be any simple shape!

2. Place your pencil in the opposite hand. Draw another shape, anywhere else on the page (you can look this time).
3. Draw a shape or a line (using either hand) that represents a feeling or emotion.
4. Draw a shape or line that reminds you of something you dreamed about.
5. Draw a shape or line that reminds you of your favorite place or activity.
6. Draw a shape or line that reminds you of your favorite person.

Now look at your drawing and add shapes and lines to connect everything together. Again, don't think too much, just let your hand move freely. When you are finished, share your drawing with a neighbor and discuss; what it felt like to make a drawing this way, what your different shapes mean.

Linda Sibio has struggled in her life and often has felt that she doesn't fit in or has been misunderstood. People who struggle with mental health are often overlooked, or misunderstood because they might behave differently than other people. Has anyone here ever felt like they didn't fit in somewhere or that you aren't being understood or listened to? Well, that's why Linda makes work to raise awareness about mental health.

## VISITING THE WORKSHOP



Inspired by the artists in our galleries who use their art to speak out about things that are important to them, we are going to create a collaged fabric banner that represents something that we want to change in the world. We can use different shapes and colors to communicate our ideas.

1. What is an issue that is important to you that you would like to communicate through your art? Something that feels unfair or that you disagree with that you would like other people to know about. If you're having trouble coming up with an idea, talk to your neighbor and see what they are thinking about, maybe it will inspire or remind you of something!
2. Take some time to browse the fabric bin and brainstorm what shapes, colors and patterns you will use to help communicate your important message. You can take inspiration from the fabric to create your own symbols. They might communicate a feeling, emotion, people, place, or time.
3. Think of the different layers that will make up your banner such as the background, middle ground and foreground. Start cutting shapes out of fabric or felt and slowly layer your shapes on your base to build up your picture, starting with your background.

4. Before gluing down your fabric pieces, make sure you are satisfied with your composition. Rearrange shapes or cut more if needed.
5. When you're happy with the banner, glue down fabric pieces starting with the background and moving forward from there.
6. [If time permits] Add trim or patches to decorate the border or surface of your banner. You could also add safety pins to the corners to loop ribbon through to hang up on a wall or pin it to a fabric surface.

### **Reflection**

What issue or idea did you choose to represent and why? What colors and shapes did you use to represent your ideas?

### **BEFORE/AFTER YOUR VISIT**

#### **Suggested Pre-visit / Post-visit Activity**

##### *Pre-visit*

Review vocabulary words listed in this lesson plan with students.

Ask students to brainstorm ideas for something they want to change in the world or something that they want to speak out about. They could do a writing exercise describing their chosen idea and explaining why it is important to them, or do a pencil sketch of a poster or protest sign using simple words, colors, and symbols.

Alternatively, you could do an exercise to introduce symbolism to students by asking them to design an original symbol to represent themselves. They could combine shapes and colors to represent their feelings, personality, and interests. For example they could include colors that represent the school team, the colors of the country's flag(s) that their family is from, or colors that represent their emotions.

##### *Post-visit*

Students could write a reflection on the visit and the artwork they created. You could ask them to come up with a title and description for their fabric banner and have a mini classroom exhibition.

This lesson plan could also tie into and expand upon History and Social Studies and Climate Literacy lessons.

## **Curriculum Connections**

### California Arts Standards for Public Schools—Visual Arts

3.VA:Cr1.2: Apply knowledge of available resources, tools, and technologies to investigate personal ideas through the art-making process. 3.VA:Cr2.1: Create personally satisfying artwork using a variety of artistic processes and materials. 3.VA:Re7.2: Determine messages communicated by an image.

4.VA:Cr2.1 Explore and invent art-making techniques and approaches. 4.VA: Re7.2: Analyze components in visual imagery that convey messages. 4.VA:Re9 Apply one set of criteria to evaluate more than one work of art.

5.VA:Cr2.1: Experiment and develop skills in multiple art-making techniques and approaches through practice. 5.VA:Re7.2: Identify and analyze cultural associations suggested by visual imagery.

NOTE: If you choose to do the suggested pre/post-visit writing activities, English Language Arts standards can also be incorporated.

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## EXHIBITION/ARTWORK INFORMATION

### **EXHIBITION: Carolyn Castaño: *Cumanday – Beautiful Mountain***

*Cumanday- Beautiful Mountain* is an ode to the tradition of landscape representation and the disappearing glaciers in Colombia. This new body of work from the Colombian American artist, Carolyn Castaño, blends her mixed media watercolor and hard-edge painting techniques with her study of colonialist 19th-century painted travelogs and map-making. The resulting artworks show layered landscape compositions of the impact of climate change on the Andean tropical glacier chains. By including printed fabrics and appliques with tropical motifs, the artist links colonialism and its ongoing destructive effects on the environment due to resource exploitation and post industrial manufacturing.

### **ARTWORK: *Cumanday (Beautiful Mountain) (Nevado del Ruiz), 2023***

Watercolor, gouache, appliques, fabric, sequins, on watercolor paper on canvas, 144 x 78 inches

Commonly known as Nevada del Ruiz, Cumanday is one of six remaining tropical glaciers in Colombia that are disappearing due to global warming. The name comes from the indigenous group, Quimbaya and translates to “beautiful mountain” or “white mountain.” The eponymous painting shows its white immaculate surface against the backdrop of free-flowing grid patterns. The grid pattern is inspired by Pre-Columbian textile patterns, such as Tocapu tunic, which were predecessor to the modern-day ruana, a woolen poncho worn by both country and city folk, but more specifically in the mountainous regions of Colombia. The colors in the grid are in the color scale from light blue to red and reference the color graph used in the COP climate conference. In a nod of solidarity with environmental and land rights activists, the grid also recalls the Wiphala, the flag of Andean peoples.

While the landscape appears uninhabited, according to the tradition of colonialist landscape painting, which promoted European expansion in the Americas, the layering of traditional and prefabricated pre-Columbian and indigenous textile motifs stand in for the hands that made them: from Amazonian indigenous groups to textile workers in maquiladoras- survival in a transnational capitalist system often involves being collaborators in the destruction of the environment while actively engaging in the lineage of stewardship of the land.

### **Artwork 2 : Carolyn Castaño, *Madre Monte*, 2023**

Glazed Terracotta Clay

*Madre Monte*, also known as Mother Mountain or Mother of the Forest, is a prominent goddess within Colombian folklore. She is the protector of the forest and is known to punish anyone who causes harm to the environment. Madre Monte is depicted as a beautiful woman adorned with plants and accompanied by animals as she roams swamps and jungles around Caldas and Antioquia. Along with her appearance, she exudes a gentle disposition of kindness, nurturing tendencies, and a forgiving nature. However, her wrath remains reserved for those who intend to inflict harm upon the animals or the land.

Madre Monte represents our relationship and bond with the Earth. When we embrace the perspective of the land as close kin, rather than an object to possess or exploit, we open ourselves to an empathetic relationship that transcends transactional perspectives. By embracing the concept of the land as family, we recognize the symbiotic relationship we share with it. This awareness can fuel our commitment to sustainable practices and responsible stewardship. We become advocates for conservation, standing against activities that exploit or degrade the land, much like a family member would protect their kin from harm.

**EXHIBITION: *Linda Sibio – Economics of Suffering, Part IV***

*Linda Sibio – Economics of Suffering, Part IV* is an interdisciplinary project that combines intensely intricate drawings, performance, and installation to explore devastating effects and emotional scarring caused by the ongoing worldwide financial crisis that peaked in the period from 2007-2010 and continues to affect 99 percent of the population.

*Reflections in a Broken Mirror, 2008-16*, Rapidograph ink on paper

In 1997, Sibio moved to Joshua Tree to make a fresh start and recover from a mental breakdown. She began to practice meditation, which triggered an outpouring of images or “glyphs” which Sibio has shaped into her “own personal mythology and corresponding original visual vocabulary.” Her artist book, *Reflections in a Broken Mirror*, chronicles her visual system and how she has developed her philosophy, “The Insanity Principle.”

*Fossilized Footprints, 2023*, Sharpie Pro marker, marine vinyl

*Original glyphs for Fossilized Footprints, 2023*, Rapidograph ink on paper