Mary Sibande is a visual artist from South Africa who uses her artwork to look at the stereotypes and intersections of race, gender, and labor in the wake of Apartheid.

“IF OUR MOTHERS QUESTIONED THINGS, THEY WERE THROWN IN JAIL. BUT SUDDENLY WE WERE ABLE TO QUESTION THINGS. PART OF WHAT I’M DOING IS CELEBRATING QUESTIONING.”

▲ Sophie/Elsie, 2009, lifesize fiberglass mannequin and textile. © Mary Sibande
BIOGRAPHY

• Born in 1982 in Barberton, South Africa

• Earned Diploma of Fine Arts in 2004 at the Witwatersrand Technikon and Honours Degree in 2007 from the University of Johannesburg

• Represented South Africa in 2011 at the Venice Biennale

• Won the 2017 Smithsonian National Museum of African Arts Award

• Currently lives and works in Johannesburg

A Terrible Beauty, 2013, archival digital print. © Mary Sibande

The Reign, 2010, lifesize fiberglass mannequin, lifesize fiberglass stallion, steel, cotton. © Mary Sibande

• Aims to rewrite her family’s legacy of forced domestic labor as a result of Apartheid

• Uses an alter ego, “Sophie,” to create a fantasy counter-history of her family’s life

• Uses blue, purple, and red as symbols for different facets of her characters; red for anger, blue for servitude, and purple for power, wealth, and protest