

Linda Khachadurian

***The Cost of Greed II***

2022

Mixed media: isomalt, edible spray paint, edible ink, and potato starch paper.

This piece is available for purchase, and five percent of proceeds will go to my partners at Pure Water for the World. For information, please contact [info@charitableconfections.org](mailto:info@charitableconfections.org).

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**Cause/topic of show:** The importance of responsible purchasing to offset slavery.

The United Nations' International Labor Organization estimates that there are currently over 40 million modern day slaves world-wide; other organizations place the count as high as 46 million. The bi-partisan Harkin-Engel Protocol, aimed at ending child slavery on cacao plantations in West Africa was signed in 2001; nevertheless, slavery remains rampant in this industry.

While doing research on cacao plantations in Ghana in the late 2000s, I had conversations with farmers working on fair trade plantations, who told me that many Western corporations had no qualms about using slave-harvested beans in order to save mere pennies per 16 kilo sacks. I don't know how accurate their estimate was, and given that large corporations buy hundreds of thousands of pounds of beans every year, the amount saved would, of course, add up to large amounts of money (in 2019, world production of cacao beans was 5.6 tonnes).

In June of 2021, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of two American corporations -- Nestle USA and Cargill – who were accused of complicity in child slavery on cocoa farms in Cote d'Ivoire. The plaintiffs were six citizens of Mali, who were trafficked into slavery as children, and who claimed that the companies “knew or should have known” that the farms were using enslaved children and that they did not use their economic power to stop the practice. The Court wrote that the corporations did not own or operate farms in that country and were not sufficiently tied to the asserted abuses.

I thought about the dollar amount that would represent what it would take for a person of poor character to succumb to greed, ignoring the ethics involved in harvesting their cacao beans. For the original *The Cost of Greed*, which was exhibited (and sold) at the Beacon Gallery in 2019, I crafted a \$100 bill out of potato starch paper. I have since become a bit more cynical, so for this second iteration, I opted for a \$50 bill that is being consumed by a larger, more voracious mouth.



The original *Cost of Greed* at the Beacon Gallery in Boston, December 2019.