

# The Creators Project

## [Exclusive] Fat Albert: A Modern Trojan Horse?

*Antwaun Sargent – Aug 16 2016*



*Sanford Biggers, Laocoön, 2015, Vinyl and electric air pump, 72h x 60w x 120d inches, Courtesy the artist and David Castillo Gallery, Miami, FL*

“As a conceptual artist I’m constantly looking for creative ways to spark challenging conversations,” explains artist and 2016 TED Fellow Sanford Biggers in [a talk](#) at TED2016. “I do this through painting, video, and performance. Regardless of the format, two of my favorite materials are history and dialogue.” Both will be on display at his upcoming exhibition, *Subjective Cosmology*, at [Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit](#). An examination of race, sex, and identity, Biggers’ solo show mixes mythology, cultural iconography, and recent events surrounding police and Bill Cosby’s alleged sexual violence into new iterations of older works spanning text, performance, video, and sculpture.



*Sanford Biggers, Just Us, 2016, Vinyl, 12 x 24', Courtesy the artist*

“The inspiration for the show is largely, going back to the name, *Subjective Cosmology*,” explains Biggers to the Creators Project. “I’m trying to process a constellation of ideas. The through line of the show is the series of videos I’ve been working on for the last seven years, called *Shuffle*, *Shake*, and *Shatter*. *Shatter*, the third, will be screened at MOCAD. They follow an unnamed protagonist that confronts his identity in the first episode. In the second, he walks through a city and is given clothes with different messages that help him liberate himself from his assigned identity. *Shatter* takes place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where he transcends his body all together and turns into a spirit.” He adds, “This work is about understanding your place in the multiverse.” The exhibition will also include billboard-sized stills created from past video works. One, formed out of a cloudy blue sky, reads, “Just us.” Below, you can check out an exclusive trailer for *Shatter*.

Biggers will also display *Laocoön*, a sculptural installation that resembles Fat Albert, the main character from Bill Cosby’s 1970s cartoon series, *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*. The 30-foot-long inflatable breathes face down in the gallery, a scene that evokes Eric Garner, the Staten Island man who fought to breathe while a police officer choked him to death. Because Cosby created and voiced Fat Albert, the installation implicitly alludes to Cosby’s complicated legacy as America’s disgraced dad. Biggers, by evoking both Cosby’s rape allegations and the death of Eric Garner—one of many incidents that fueled the Black Lives Matter Movement—raises questions about the value of black bodies in interior and exterior spaces in *Laocoön*. These questions are implicit in the titling of the work, which takes its name from a Trojan priest murdered by his sons after attempting to expose the Trojan Horse scheme. The sculpture is also informed by Virgil’s *Aeneid*. In the 19 BC epic, Laocoön proclaims, “Beware of Greeks bearing gifts,” which evolved into a modern proverb meaning, “be weary of the generosity of enemies.”



*Sanford Biggers, Shatter, 2015, Production Still, Courtesy the artist*

“I often say, I don’t think I create work that provides the answers,” says Biggers, whose band, *Moon Medicin*, will also perform in the museum’s galleries. “I want the work to inspire viewers to ask better challenging questions. I think what this show does is complicate what kind of expression can come out at this time. It’s not so much about it being a black thing—this is an artist working out ideas.” He adds, “I am taking the liberty to conflate many different things, ideas and techniques, to create some type of vibe so that there’s an energy in the show that inspires, confuses, and upsets the viewer.”



[Shatter](#) from [noshun/sanford biggers](#) on [Vimeo](#).

*Subjective Cosmology* opens September 9 through January 1 at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit.