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Artist Sanford Biggers, left, greets attendees during an Art of Black Miami event inside the Brightline Central Station in Overtown on Nov. 8. Art of Black Miami is organized by the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau. Carl Juste cjuste@miamiherald.com

Art of Black Miami to celebrate with neighborhood fairs, festivals

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Art of Black Miami is an annual marketing platform and destination driver that showcases the diversity of the visual arts celebrating the black diaspora locally, nationally and internationally.

An initiative of the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau, Art of Black Miami presents art fairs and festivals throughout Miami-Dade County during an extended Art Basel week.

This year, from Saturday, Dec. 1, through Sunday, Dec. 9, visitors and residents are encouraged to visit neighborhood art fairs, purchase art and enjoy the festivals.

“In celebration of the fifth year anniversary of this program spearheaded by our Multicultural Tourism & Development Department, we have committed more resources and will engage in strategic planning to ensure Art of Black Miami continues to grow in depth and reach to attract visitors seeking art and cultural experiences,” GMCVB President & CEO William D. Talbert III said.



From left: Connie W. Kinnard, the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau vice president of Multicultural Tourism & Development; Graylyn Swilley-Woods, Overtown Children & Youth Coalition director; William D. Talbert III, GMCVB president & CEO; featured artist Sanford Biggers; Carole Ann Taylor, GMCVB Multicultural Tourism Committee chairwoman; Petra Brennan, GMCVB, director of Tourism Business Enhancement; and Rosie Gordon-Wallace, GMCVB, art consultant, Art of Black Miami.

“The GMCVB is committed to the Art of Black Miami marketing platform because it promotes the

creative influences of the African Diaspora, Caribbean influences, Latin Americans and global artists who contribute to the fabric of Miami’s diverse artistic community,” Talbert said.

To celebrate five successful years of growth and to kick off the week of activities, a reception was held Nov. 8 in Overtown at the new Brightline FEC railroad station on Northwest Sixth Street and First Avenue.

The reception featured [New York-based artist Sanford Biggers](#), who gave a soulful slide presentation of his works showing signs and symbols from history.



Artist Sanford Biggers, center, breaks into laughter as he shares his thoughts with gallerist Rosie Gordon-Wallace, right, during an Art of Black Miami event inside the Brightline Central Station in Overtown on Nov. 8. Art of Black Miami is organized by the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau.

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Multifaceted, Biggers uses sculpture, painting, photography, textiles, film, installation and performance to create works that collaborate with the past to help us understand our present. He sees himself as a collaborator to the African and African-American artists and artisans who came before him, borrowing, enhancing and memorializing their work and struggles through his own object-making.

A compelling example: Adding his set of abstract codes creates new meaning to quilts that may have been used to help slaves escape north along the Underground Railroad. Biggers is also inspired by cultures from around the globe, from Rastafarianism and Zen Buddhism to ancient Egypt and 19th and 20th century African sculpture.

An award winning multi-disciplinary artist, musician and global instigator, Biggers is an associate professor and director of sculpture at Columbia University in New York City. A Los Angeles native, he received his MFA at the Art Institute of Chicago and BA at Morehouse College, Atlanta.

Some of his work is shown locally at the Miami Beach David Castillo Gallery, as well as at 2018 Art Basel Miami Beach.



Saxophonist Kirk Whalum attended an Art of Black Miami event inside the Brightline Central Station in Overtown on Nov. 8. Art of Black Miami is organized by the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau.

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There is great excitement as neighborhood art organizations and galleries prepare for visitors and residents. Participating neighborhoods include Historic Overtown, Little Haiti, Little Havana, downtown Miami and Miami Beach. As a result of the success of the GMCVB's campaign in providing a unique cultural experience, the 2018 initiatives have expanded to new neighborhoods including North Miami and the Miami River area.

"The Art of Black Miami collaborative involving Miami's diverse community shines a spotlight on aspiring and renowned artists, exhibits and activations found throughout

Greater Miami's diverse, mosaic communities that sometimes may not get elevated exposure," said Connie W. Kinnard, the bureau's vice president of Multicultural Tourism & Development. "With hundreds of artworks including original paintings, limited editions, sculptures, photography and performers presenting their work, it is the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau's mission through Art of Black Miami to showcase these multicultural jewels during Arts & Heritage Month and also year round."

Dorothy Jenkins Fields, Ph.D., is a historian and founder of the Black Archives, History & Research Foundation of South Florida. Send feedback to djf@bellsouth.net.