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Sacred Geometry: Cultural Semiotics in the work of Sanford Biggers



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A DAY AGO

Multimedia artist [Sanford Biggers](#) is an ardent storyteller. While spoken word is not his medium of choice, his artworks communicate histories, allegories, and rituals through surfaces laden with semiotics. In his [current show](#) at [David Castillo Gallery](#), Biggers continues his tale of the transformative power of the object and its ability to effect cultural and spiritual change.

Inspired by America's history of craft and conflict, Biggers uses quilts from the antebellum South as backdrops for paintings that cover the gallery's walls. Similar blankets were used as tools on the Underground Railroad, their carefully chosen geometries and color schemes indicating whether a home doubled as a safe haven. Biggers layers his timeworn canvases with paint, embroidery, and found textiles to emphasize the object's cultural importance and to inject contemporary perspectives.

In *The Pasts They Brought With Them* and *Incognito*, fabric fragments are sutured together or spill from the rectangular limits of the blanket, and ghostly painted figures push against the pieced-together patterns, suggesting invisible histories. In *Cheshire (Guapa)*, Biggers reconstitutes two textiles in the form of a wide, toothy grin that simultaneously alludes to the clever Lewis Carroll character and African American stereotypes propagated in 19th-century minstrel shows. Biggers's alterations reveal the object as reliquary: a place where stories and perceptions amass and interact beyond the limitations of linear time.

In a similar way, the artist uses the motif of a mandala, a circular Buddhist symbol that acts as a gateway between heaven and earth, as a jumping-off point for *Mandala of the B-Bodhisattva II*. The patterned floor installation fuses the visual language of the sacred sign with the size and surface of a dance floor that might be found in a hip-hop club. The result is a layering of performative rituals that envelop past and present, physical and spiritual. Here, the sublime and the everyday meld, inviting a synchronicity between disparate identities, cultures, and religions.

"Sanford Biggers: 3 Dollars & 6 Dimes" is on view at David Castillo Gallery, Miami, May 15th–July 5th, 2014.

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Sanford Biggers
The Pasts They Brought With Them, 2014
David Castillo Gallery

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Sanford Biggers
Incognito, 2014
David Castillo Gallery

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Sanford Biggers
Cheshire (Guapa), 2014
David Castillo Gallery

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Sanford Biggers
Mandala of the B-Bodhisattva II, 2000
David Castillo Gallery

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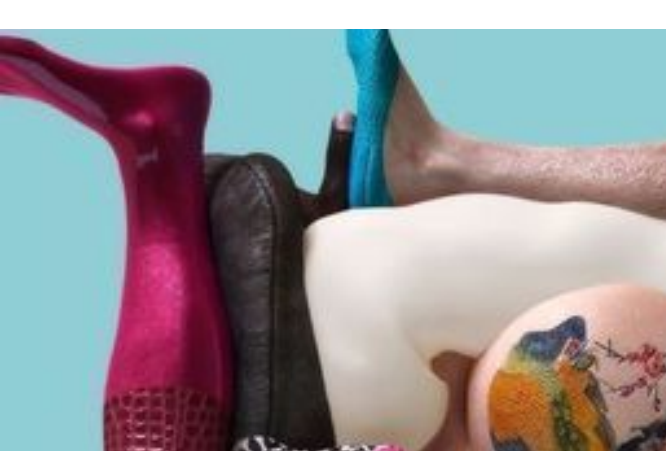
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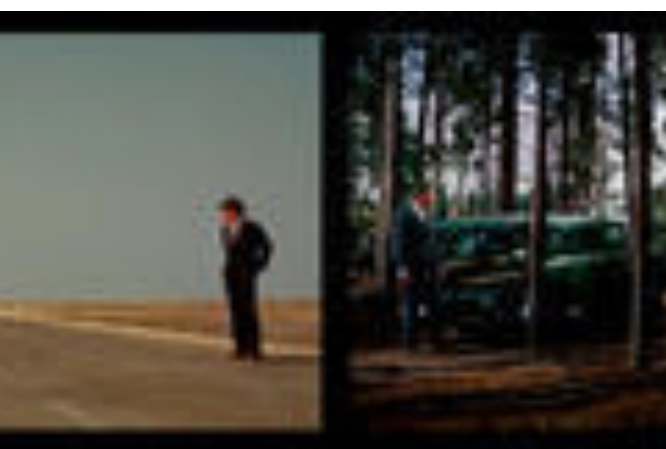
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