

Monumental art - in the image of 'Fat Albert'



[Elizabeth Kramer](#), @arts_bureau 8:17 a.m. EDT May 18, 2016



(Photo: Photo by Alex Freundt. Courtesy Columbia University School of the Arts.)

The giant and deflated vinyl statue of the Fat Albert - the character made famous by Bill Cosby - first caught Chris Reitz's eye when he saw it last year in Miami at the David Castillo Gallery. Now this massive sculpture by African-American artist Sanford Biggers is on exhibit at the University of Louisville's Cressman Center. After seeing Biggers' work, Reitz thought about how this fictional do-gooder with the orange sweater was a lovable character for many children in the 1970s and 80s and how the country is now watching the downfall of Fat Albert's creator amid rape allegations.

"What happens to Fat Albert in light of Bill Cosby's predicament and the scenarios of him as a monster? And what does it mean to look for tragic figures in African-American life?" Reitz asked.

Biggers - whose works have been at the Whitney Biennial, the Brooklyn Museum of Art and London's Tate Modern - names his piece "Laocoon."

Laocoon was the priest in the story by ancient Roman poet Virgil, "The Aeneid" who reveals the Greeks are using the Trojan horse to deceive and conquer his people. For that act, the Greek gods send serpents to attack him and his two sons as revenge. Today, a Roman statue of Laocoon's end is part of the Vatican's collection.

This exhibit marks the first in a series called "New Monuments," where Reitz delves into the meaning of monuments and shows historically significant artwork produced or finished in the past year.

"This is just the kind of art we should be looking closely at," Reitz said.

WHEN: Through July 2.

WHERE: Cressman Center for Visual Arts, 100 E. Main St. Hours are 11 a.m.-6 p.m., Wednesday through Friday; 11 a.m.-3 p.m., Saturday.

COST: Free admission.

INFORMATION: 502-852-6794; louisville.edu/art, sanfordbiggers.com.