

PARTIES

## Everyone Reunited at the Art Production Fund Gala Honoring Sanford Biggers

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Matteo Prandoni/BFA.com

It was more than just a reunion at the Art Production Fund’s 11th annual gala, it was a night to remember. In honor of Harlem-based artist Sanford Biggers, APF’s Casey Fremont and Kathleen Lynch teamed up with Saks to bring the community together for the first time in two years.

“It’s such a joy to celebrate Sanford,” Fremont began, “Working with him on our *Oracle* project was such a moving experience because of who he is. He is an incredibly graceful, obviously brilliant, and very special artist. It was a

challenging project in so many different ways but Sanford's exceptional navigation through the journey was both instrumental and rare."

Guests including Amy Astley, Aurora James, Derrick Adams, Dustin Yellin, Francisco Costa, Gabriella Karefa- Johnson, Huma Abedin, Jessica Joffe, *Vogue's* Lilah Ramzi, Maxwell Osborne, Wes Gordon, Prabal Gurung, Sheree Hovsepian, Rashid Johnson, Tyler Mitchell, Waris Ahluwalia, Inez van Lamsweerde, and Vinoodh Matadin gathered at The Grill to toast APF with a glass of Ruinart Champagne. The celebrations didn't stop there. A show-stopping ice sculpture serving lychee martinis chilled to perfection kept the cocktail hour alive before a surprise performance from Cheer New York ushered guests into the main event with enthusiasm. Upon entry to The Pool for the seated dinner, an immersive performance led by Biggers concept band Moon Medicin welcomed attendees with unparalleled energy.

The "tight-knit" dress code for the evening was creatively interpreted in many ways. Alice & Olivia's Stacey Bendet outfitted her entourage in bold, spring-forward ensembles that threaded together swimmingly. The Gucci guests flocked together in colorful feathered numbers, Chanel's party aligned on all things tweed, and Burberry's table was all about statement sequins while others opted for more sophisticated knit silhouettes. Fashion aside, the evening's overarching theme was unmistakably celebrating the close-knit APF community full of friends, family, and inspiring artists.

The idea of a traditional and perhaps high school reunion was cleverly woven into every aspect of the evening. A pink composition notebook complete with playful annotations and doodles served as the program for the night. As for the place settings, personalized APF varsity jackets adorned each chair and quickly became the look of the evening.

While guests enjoyed the delightful (and delicious!) menu crafted by board member Sarah Hoover, Fremont and Lynch took to the stage to thank APF's co-founders Doreen Remen and Yvonne Force Villareal for building such an impressive organization. And for the highly anticipated moment of the night, long-time friend chef Marcus Samuelsson shared a heartfelt speech to honor Biggers' achievements. A man of many talents and accolades, Biggers has most recently been appointed the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. visiting professor and scholar at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, honored by the Savannah College of Art & Design with the deFINE Art Award, and received a Guggenheim Fellowship, to name a few.

Biggers is not only a celebrated legend in the art world but is also an inspiration to the next generation of artists. "Embrace the mania that is art," Biggers explained of learnings over the years. "Stay disciplined, stay weird, and, most of all, stay strong."

Including the animated auction hosted by Christie's Sara Friedlander, which presented works by Derrek Adams, Jeff Koons, LaKela Brown, and Hiba

Schahbaz, the evening raised over \$700,000 in support of APF's passionate mission to produce ambitious public art projects.

To round out the spectacular evening, the cult-favorite Oishii strawberries paired with a decadent cream were placed in front of guests for dessert. Of course, trays of espresso martinis closely followed for attendees eager to take their celebrations late into the night. From the emotive performances to every on-theme detail, it will be hard to top this APF reunion.