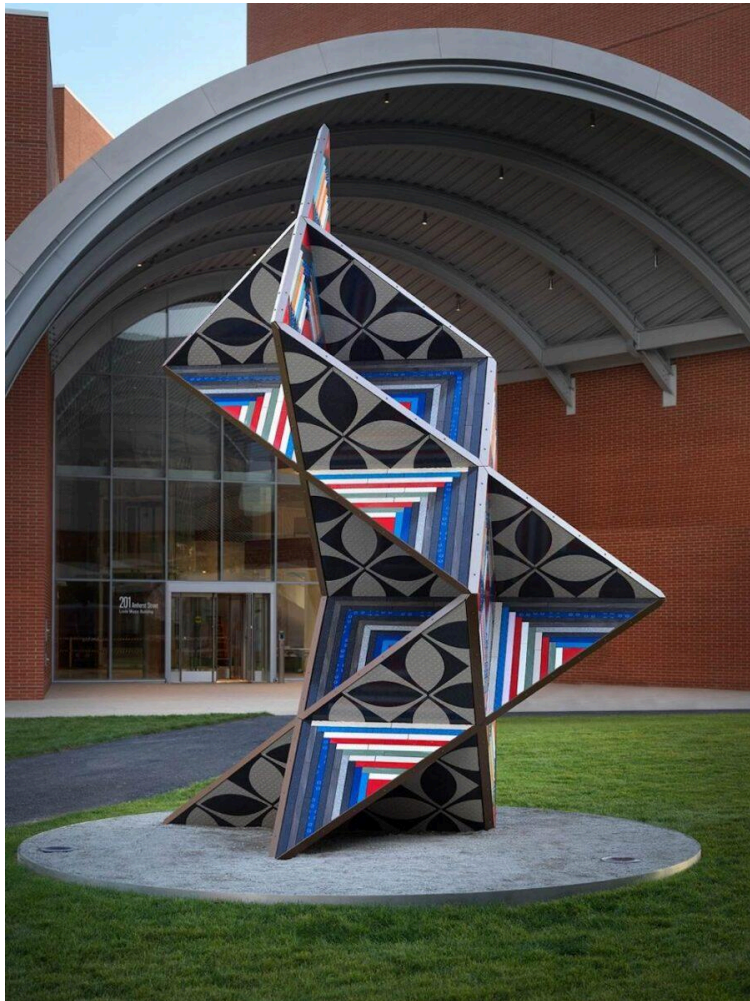


# MIT UNVEILS NEW SCULPTURE BY SANFORD BIGGERS

By Mark Westall • 7 February 2025

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*Sanford Biggers, Madrigal, 2024. Commissioned with MIT Percent-for-Art funds and a generous gift from Robert Sanders ('64) & Sara-Ann Sanders.  
Photo: Dario Lasagni*

The List Visual Arts Center, MIT's contemporary art museum and creative laboratory has announced the unveiling of *Madrigal* (2024), a vibrantly patterned outdoor sculpture by artist Sanford Biggers.

The sculpture is a commission from MIT's Percent-for-Art program and a generous gift from Robert Sanders ('64) and Sara-Ann Sanders. *Madrigal* stands at the main entrance of the newly constructed Edward and Joyce Linde Music Building, designed by Pritzker Prize winning architects Sejima and Nishizawa and Associates (SANAA)

*"Madrigal is simultaneously a visual interpretation and metaphor of the infinite potential of many voices in dissonance and harmony,"*  
states artist Sanford Biggers.



*Sanford Biggers, Madrigal, 2024. Commissioned with MIT Percent-for-Art funds and a generous gift from Robert Sanders ('64) & Sara-Ann Sanders. Photo: Dario Lasagni*

*"Sanford Biggers' remarkable sculpture enhances the new Edward and Joyce Linde Music Building while deeply engaging with the rich tapestry of history and cultural narratives that Biggers intricately integrates into his art, Madrigal serves as a dynamic tribute to the power of music, tradition, and the timeless spirit of collaboration, bridging the past and future. The piece truly adds vibrancy to our campus collection."*

*states The MIT List Visual Arts Center Director Paul Ha.*

Drawing from Biggers's *Codex* series (2009–ongoing), *Madrigal* is rooted in the artist's ongoing exploration of cultural histories and identity through the lens of antique American quilts, which he transforms into mixed-media paintings and sculptural compositions. By reinterpreting six distinct quilt patterns, *Madrigal* creates a complex geometric enfolding that dynamically interplays visual harmony with discordance. Standing more than eighteen feet tall at the main entrance of the Edward and Joyce Linde Music Building, the sculpture reflects the artist's deep

connection to music, with its title referencing a type of song composed for multiple voices singing in counterpoint. This metaphor of polyphony resonates with the building's role as a hub for musical study and performance, underscoring the sculpture's symbolic significance.

The work's tessellation reflects Biggers's reverence for the vernacular of American quilts, while its use of milled tiles sourced from architectural remnants connects it visually and thematically to the surrounding MIT campus, including the Kresge Auditorium and Eero Saarinen's iconic MIT Chapel. The sculpture's origami-like forms also echo Biggers's years spent in Japan, adding another layer of influence to the work. As a member of the band Moonmedicin, Biggers has likened his art-making process to that of a DJ, sampling diverse influences to create something new and compelling.

*"We are honored that Sanford Biggers has been selected for the Edward and Joyce Linde Music Building Percent-for-Art Commission, as a multi-talented artist excelling in both the visual arts and music, Sanford perfectly embodies the multifaceted nature of our MIT community. The integration of public art across our campus enriches our environment, fostering inspiration and creativity among our students."*  
*states MIT Chancellor Melissa Nobles.*

The sculpture is part of MIT's Public Art Collection, which spans the Institute's campus, engaging students, faculty and the public at large. Like many artworks in the Permanent and Public Art collections, *Madrigal* is the latest commission of MIT's Percent-for-Art Program. Administered by the List Visual Arts Center, MIT's Percent-for-Art Program allocates up to \$500,000 to commission art for each new major renovation or campus construction project. While the policy was formally instituted in 1968, earlier collaborations between artists and architects can be found throughout the campus. When architect Eero Saarinen designed the MIT Chapel in 1955, sculptor Theodore Roszak designed the bell tower and sculptor Harry Bertoia designed the altar screen. In 1985, architect I.M. Pei and artists Scott Burton, Kenneth Noland, and Richard Fleischner collaborated on Percent-for-Art projects for the Wiesner building and plaza, home to the MIT List Visual Arts Center and the Media Laboratory.

## **About the artist**

**Sanford Biggers** (b. 1970) was raised in Los Angeles and currently lives and works in New York City. His work has been presented in solo exhibitions at the Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York (2021); Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, MO (2018); the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, MI (2016); MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA (2012); and the Brooklyn Museum, New York (2011); among others. Additionally, his work has been presented in group exhibitions at the Menil Collection, Houston, TX (2008), the Tate Modern, London (2007), and, more recently, at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC (2024), the Barbican Center, London (2024), Centre Pompidou-Metz, France (2023), the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2017), and the Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia, PA (2017).

Biggers is the recipient of numerous awards, including "2024 Best Alternative Jazz Album" at the Grammy Awards for his contribution to Meshell Ndegeocello's *The Omnichord Real Book*.

He received an honoree doctorate from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2024; he was also an honoree at the Bronx Museum Gala and Art Auction, New York, in 2024. The artist is a National Academician in the Class of 2023, National Academy of Design, New York. He also received a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship (2023–24); a Bennie Trailblazer Award, Morehouse College, GA (2024); the Savannah College of Art and Design's deFINE Art Award (2021); a 2020 Guggenheim Fellowship; an American Academy of Arts and Letters Award (2018); and the Rome Prize in Visual Arts in 2017. Biggers was additionally the 2021–22 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Visiting Professor and Scholar in the MIT Department of Architecture.

**The List Visual Arts Center** is a creative laboratory that provides artists with a space to freely experiment and push existing boundaries. As the contemporary art museum at MIT, the List Center collects, commissions, and presents rigorous, provocative, and artist-centric projects that engage MIT and the global art community. Exhibitions are accompanied by a broad range of educational programs for the public and the MIT community, special events, and scholarly publications.

The galleries and all programs are free and open to the public.