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Contemporary Art  
Museum St. Louis

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Sanford Biggers exhibits sculpture, paintings, and video at CAM**



Sanford Biggers, *BAM (for Terence)*, 2016. Bronze with black patina 14 1/2 x 4 1/2 x 4 1/2 inches. Edition 1 of 3 + 1 AP, unique. Courtesy the artist; Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago; Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York and Aspen; and Massimo De Carlo, Milan/London/Hong Kong. © Sanford Biggers.

**June 19, 2018 (St. Louis, MO)** - The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis presents the work of Sanford Biggers as part of its 2018 fall exhibitions. Biggers's art encourages meaningful dialogue around narratives in American history through the use of a dynamic range of media including painting, sculpture, video, film, multi-component installations, and performance. At CAM, works from Biggers's *BAM* series as well as paintings will be on view September 7 through December 30, 2018.

Biggers's diverse practice includes working with found objects. For his *BAM* series he draws from his varied collection of wooden African sculptures sourced from around the world. Biggers chooses these figures because they contain a talismanic power and the potential for transcendence through transformation. He coats each found figure with a layer of wax to obscure its individual identity before sculpting it using various caliber firearms.

Although Biggers directs this unsettling process, he does not pull the trigger himself in deference to the social, political, and spiritual gravity of the undertaking. The figures are then cast anew in bronze and he renames each after a victim of brutality, imparting idiosyncrasy into the newly revitalized figures. Each is accompanied by a video documenting their "ballistic" sculpting.

The bronzes not only offer a stark commentary on gun violence against black Americans, but point toward the wider human condition and a desire to transcend trauma. This ongoing *BAM* series includes *Infinite Tabernacle*, a multi-channel video installation. Viewers witness the violent impact of bullets on the original wooden figures, accompanied by the jarring sounds of gunfire as well as the resurrecting effect of seeing the action in reverse. The final presentation tethers between the

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planes of destruction and creation, the physical and the metaphysical. *Infinite Tabernacle* draws on a recurrent method used by Biggers, whereby he reconfigures and reconstitutes his disparate artworks to create site-specific installations. As the title suggests, *Infinite Tabernacle*, a stand-alone work, is recontextualized here to serve as a sanctuary for the reconvened figures.



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Biggers seeks to memorialize and honor black victims of police violence in America, pointing toward recent transgressions and elevating the stories of specific individuals in order to combat historical amnesia. Two sculptures in the exhibition, *BAM (for Sandra)* and *BAM (for Terence)*, are dedicated to Sandra Bland and Terence Crutcher, respectively, whose tragic deaths are among the hundreds of instances of ongoing brutality throughout the nation. *BAM* not only brings to light the pain of these individuals, their families, and of society, but also aims to create a platform within CAM from which knowledge and truth can be shared and discussed.

Biggers's choice to cast the figures in bronze engages an ancient artistic practice that bestows status and nobility and permanence upon the subject as seen in the Greco-Roman tradition. In our contemporary context, Biggers generates symbols of power and a place for remembrance, veneration, and celebration. Biggers also reflects on these representations of misshapen bodies from a Buddhist perspective: the body is a shell for the spirit, and thus by viewing the damaged figure, its spirit is revealed. Although Biggers speaks from his Buddhist understanding, these concepts are echoed throughout the world's spiritual teachings.

CAM will also exhibit Biggers's paintings. By encoding his own symbolism into found antique quilts, Biggers reengages a subversive dialogue with a nod to the secret knowledge encoded into the quilts by the original makers—quilts are historically rumored to contain hidden information pertaining to safe passage north along the Underground Railroad. The past and present commingle in a collaboration between the often unknown quilters and himself. Biggers refers to this practice as the renewing “of an American story on a material level,” which offers a charged platform for discussion among contemporary audiences. The paintings included in the exhibition feature silhouettes akin to the African figures in the *BAM* series, highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of his work. *Seated Warrior*, a six foot-tall *BAM* bronze sculpture that will also be presented at CAM, is visually echoed in the quilts as well, moving the three-dimensional form into a two-dimensional space, a process that mirrors various kinds of transformation and translation seen throughout the exhibition.

*Sanford Biggers* will travel to the Chazen Museum of Art at University of Wisconsin-Madison in the summer of 2019.

**Sanford Biggers** (b. 1970 in Los Angeles; lives and works in New York City) has made installations, videos, and performances that have appeared in venues worldwide including the Tate Britain and Tate Modern in London; the Whitney Museum, the New Museum, the Apollo Theater and The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; and the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art; as well as institutions in China, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Poland, and Russia. A solo exhibition at Monique Meloche Gallery, in Chicago, opens on September 15, 2018. The artist's works have been included in notable exhibitions such as: *Prospect.1 New Orleans* biennial, *Illuminations* at the Tate Modern, *Performa 07* in New York, the Whitney Biennial, and *Freestyle* at The Studio Museum in Harlem. His works are included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, Walker Art Center, Whitney Museum of American Art, Brooklyn Museum, Bronx Museum of the Arts, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, and the new Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama. An outdoor exhibition of his public sculpture continues at Sculpture Milwaukee through October 21, 2018. He has received numerous prestigious awards including the American Academy in Berlin Prize, New York Foundation for the Arts Award, the Lambent Fellowship in the Arts, and the Rome

Prize in Visual Arts at the American Academy in Rome. In 2018 he received the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award in Art. Biggers is an Associate Professor at Columbia University's Visual Arts program.

*Sanford Biggers* is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by Lisa Melandri, Executive Director.



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## Related Events

### Artist Talk: Sanford Biggers

Thursday, September 6, 6:30 pm

### Press & Patron Preview

Friday, September 7, 10:00–11:00 am

Join artists and curators for an exclusive introduction to the exhibitions. *RSVP to Eddie Silva at 314.535.0770 x313 or [esilva@camstl.org](mailto:esilva@camstl.org).*

### Opening Night

Friday, September 7

Member Preview 6:00–7:00 pm

Public Reception 7:00–9:00 pm

### RE: Black Visual Mourning

Wednesday, October 10, 6:30 pm

Rebecca Wanzo of Washington University, Nichole Bridges of the Saint Louis Art Museum, and Michael Gillespie of City College of New York explore how black artists use visual culture to memorialize black bodies.

**All programs, dates, and times are subject to change.**

### About the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis

The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis presents, supports, and celebrates the art of our time. It is the premier museum in St. Louis dedicated to contemporary art. Focused on a dynamic array of changing exhibitions, CAM provides a thought-provoking program that reflects and contributes to the global cultural landscape. Through the diverse perspectives offered in its exhibitions, public programs, and educational initiatives, CAM actively engages a range of audiences to challenge their perceptions. It is a site for discovery, a gathering place in which to experience and enjoy contemporary visual culture. CAM is located in the Grand Center Arts District.

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