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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Artist Sanford Biggers's sculpture honoring Michael Brown added to CAM exhibition**



Sanford Biggers, *BAM (for Michael)*, 2016. Bronze with black patina, 19 x 6 x 4 inches. Collection of Dr. Daniel Berger, Chicago. Courtesy the artist; Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago; Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York and Aspen; and Massimo De Carlo, Milan/London/Hong Kong. © Sanford Biggers.

**October 19, 2018** (St. Louis, MO) - The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (CAM) announces the inclusion of Sanford Biggers's sculpture *BAM (for Michael)*, dedicated to Michael Brown, as part of the artist's current exhibition, on view at the museum through December 30, 2018. CAM is presenting the first exhibition to focus on Biggers's *BAM* series, which includes sculptures, video installation, and painted quilts. 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.

*BAM (for Michael)* joins three other sculptures in the exhibition—*BAM (for Sandra)*, *BAM (for Terence)*, *BAM (for Jordan)*—dedicated to Sandra Bland, Terence Crutcher, and Jordan Edwards, 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 for national introspection and dialogue.

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Sanford Biggers chose to include *BAM (for Michael)* after speaking with Lezley McSpadden, Michael Brown's mother, when he met with her in St. Louis during the opening week of the exhibition in early September. "Meeting and having Lezley present during the opening week was a very important and emotional moment," Biggers says. "I have the deepest respect and deference for her and her openness throughout this tragedy. When she said 'thank you for thinking about my son,' my honest response was that I have never stopped." McSpadden says of the work, "I'm very appreciative of Sanford Biggers and his artistic vision of pain, oppression, and unjust brutality. This *BAM* sculpture, dedicated to my son Michael Brown, is an example of our millennial generation's expression of history, a true testament of our days, our lives, and our country." (Her full statement is included below.) Lisa Melandri, CAM executive director and the exhibition curator says, "We're honored to make this work a part of the Sanford Biggers exhibition. We are extraordinarily grateful to Lezley McSpadden for her encouragement and grace. This is a work that deserves to be seen in St. Louis."

To create his *BAM* sculptures, the artist begins with an African figurative sculpture—whether of authentic or dubious origin—acquired during his travels. The figure is dipped in wax and taken to a shooting range, where Biggers directs the re-sculpting of each with gunshots. The artist then casts the re-sculpted figure in bronze—a historically noble and weighty medium. For Biggers, this process bestows honor to the damaged figure, allowing it to become a "power object" that along with the memory of each victim, is worthy of veneration and a stark reminder of the work that needs to be done to fight injustice.

A work commissioned by Bryan Stevenson and the Equal Justice Initiative, the artist's largest bronze to date, is also titled and dedicated *BAM (for Michael)*, and is featured in the newly opened *Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration*, in Montgomery, Alabama.

Michael Brown was shot and killed by Darren Wilson, a policeman in Ferguson, Missouri, on August 9, 2014. Brown was 18-years old and unarmed. In late November of that same year, a St. Louis County grand jury voted not to indict Wilson. The shooting and grand jury verdict incited weeks of protest throughout St. Louis and across the nation.

**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; the Whitney Museum, the New Museum, the Apollo Theater, and The Studio Museum in Harlem; 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, opened on September 15, 2018. Biggers's participation as co-scenic designer for the operetta *PLACE* premiered on October 11, 2018, at the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Harvey Theater. 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* will travel to the Chazen Museum of Art at University of Wisconsin-Madison in the summer of 2019.

The exhibition and catalog are generously supported by the Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation, Dr. Daniel S. Berger, Hedy Fischer and Randy Shull, and Christy and Bill Gautreaux.

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



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**\*Lezley McSpadden's full statement:**

"I'm very appreciative of Sanford Biggers and his artistic vision of pain, oppression and unjust brutality. This *BAM* sculpture, dedicated to my son Michael Brown, is an example of our millennial generation's expression of history, a true testament of our days, our lives, and our country. A history not taught, but experienced, through hearts and eyes filled with tears and hate.

"A sculpture that captures such a significant moment and individual in time should really be called a monument, as Sanford's work certainly serves to remind us of what we should never forget and commemorates the moment in time when we decided enough is enough. His work bears witness to what happens when the hate you give becomes the catalyst for change that still stands, still speaks, and still lives.

"Thank you Sanford Biggers for yet another demonstration of the great words of Frederick Douglass: 'If there is no struggle, there is no progress.' Or perhaps I might add, there's no peace without first understanding the pain. There is no way to look upon this monument and walk away unchanged. You came here to look, to listen, and to learn. Now leave here with the understanding that this precious life was not in vain. Instead, you have an opportunity, dare I say an obligation, to repurpose the pain and replace the hate with the hope that still stands, still speaks, and still lives."

**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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