

FAMILY ART ACTIVITY – Using Found Fabric

Sanford Biggers is a Harlem-based interdisciplinary artist who works in film/video, sculpture, and performance art. In his artwork pictured below, *Quilt #15, Harmonics 2*, which is in the permanent collection of the Nasher Museum of Art, he painted directly onto a fabric quilt from the mid-1800's.



Sanford Biggers, *Quilt #15, Harmonics 2*, 2012

Fabric-treated acrylic, spray paint, and cotton on repurposed quilt, 79 ½ x 80 ¾ inches (201.93 x 205.11 cm). Collection of the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. Gift of Paula Cooper in honor of Patsy R. and Raymond D. Nasher. 2015.1.1
© Sanford Biggers

Activity:

Ask an adult to help you find a piece of fabric that could be repurposed for creating a work of art – this could be old clothing, a pillowcase, fabric napkin, blanket, etc.

Experiment with creating a new work of art incorporating this found piece of fabric. Incorporate patterns, textures, or existing designs on the piece of fabric to create something new! Markers and paint both work well on fabric. Try adding some color to otherwise monochrome fabric or use black and white on brightly colored fabrics to add contrast.

Sanford Biggers incorporated a lot of symbols from cultures all over the world and from throughout history (read more in the label text on the next page), what symbols will you include?

Share a photo of your finished artwork online and tag #nashermuseum!

Biography:

Sanford Biggers' work is an interplay of narrative, perspective and history that speaks to current social, political and economic happenings while also examining the contexts that bore them. Working with antique quilts that echo rumors of their use as signposts on the Underground Railroad, he engages these legends and contributes to this narrative by drawing and painting directly onto them

Sanford Biggers (b. 1970) was raised in Los Angeles and currently lives and works in New York City. He was awarded the 2017 Rome Prize in Visual Arts. He has had solo exhibitions at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (2018), the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (2016), the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (2012) and the Brooklyn Museum (2011), among others. His work has been shown in several group exhibitions including at the Menil Collection (2008), Tate Modern (2007), Metropolitan Museum of Art (2017) and the Barnes Foundation (2017). Biggers' work is held in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York;

the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Walker Center, Minneapolis; the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington D.C.; the Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas; The Nasher Museum of Art, Durham; and the Legacy Museum, Montgomery, among others.

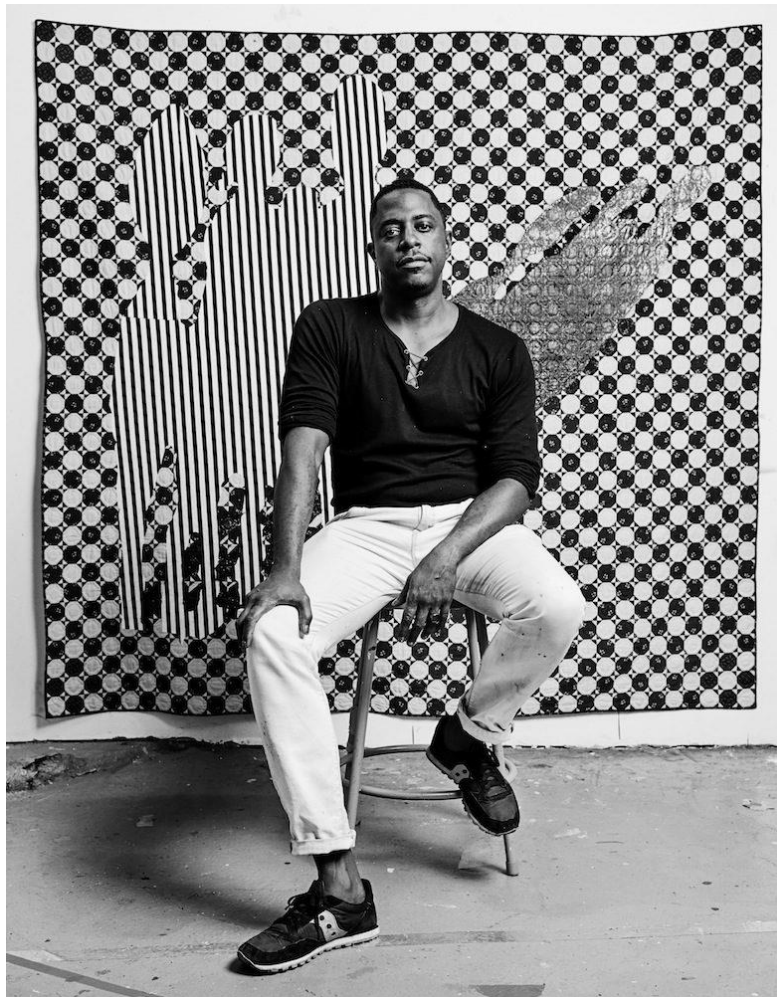


Image by Christian Hogstedt for Interview Magazine, 2016 © Christian Hogstedt

Label Text:

For this work, Sanford Biggers painted organic designs on a quilt from the mid-1800s. Biggers relates *Quilt #15, Harmonics 2* to astronomy, music, and the role such textiles played on the Underground Railroad. Some quilts were used as signposts for safe houses along the secret network of routes from southern slave states to northern free states and Canada. Biggers has referred to renowned African American abolitionist Harriet Tubman as an “astronaut” who used the North Star as a guide while leading slaves to freedom.

Astronomers often use grids to identify and locate stars, constellations, and galaxies. In this work, the quilt itself provides a grid upon which Biggers has drawn his star chart or map. The central design on this work, a five-pointed star, is derived from Johannes Kepler’s astrological theories of the harmonies of the universe, but also references harmonic fifths in music and the five-pointed star used in quilt patterns.

The clouds beneath Biggers’s golden star allude to the Promised Land, and the form is derived from Tibetan Tangka representations of the heavens. The layered imagery draws connections between African American history and symbols of the universe, mathematics, music, and spirituality, illustrating the artist’s ability to create complex works that visualize human experiences and the interconnectedness of all things, from the Southern U.S. to East Asia.