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Bon Voyage: A Review of Sanford Biggers at moniquemeloche

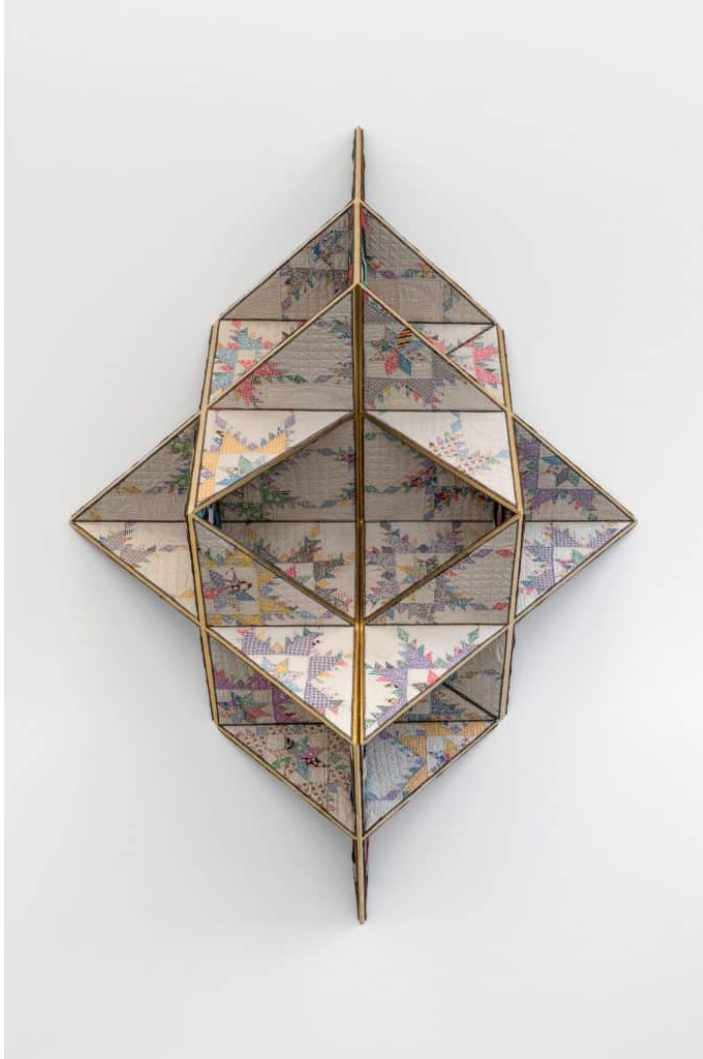
BY ALLY FOUTS | OCTOBER 19, 2023



Sanford Biggers, installation view of "Back to the Stars" / Photo: Courtesy of moniquemeloche

Sanford Biggers' exhibition "Back to the Stars," currently on view at moniquemeloche, is an opportunity to relish in the unwavering longevity, challenging interrogation, and persevering inspiration of the artist's career. Biggers' fourth solo exhibition at the gallery includes eight new works that further represent his skillful ability to marry sublime craftsmanship, an undeniable eye for composition, and energizing probes of social and cultural conversations.

Made of antique quilts, birch plywood and gold leaf, "Venus Sutra" inhales the viewer in a single breath as a three-dimensional quilted structure blossoms outward from the wall. The work takes shape as a contorted minuscule detail from a honeycomb that is extracted, stretched and pinned for dissection. Each plane within the piece is wallpapered with taut quilted fabric. The pattern of the quilt takes on its own dimensional dance as the triangular shapes intermingle both seamlessly and disjointedly with one another, depending on the positioning of the viewer. The prismatic cubbies



become rooms to navigate as the plywood lays as a blueprint. The familiar and comforting quilted fabric is underscored and mocked by the sharp corners stabbing the space enveloping the piece. "Venus Sutra" welcomes the viewer with a cup of tea, but not without the buzzing anxiety that it can snap shut in an instant.

In the next room of the gallery hangs "Voyage to Atlantis." This collage made with antique quilt, assorted textiles and mixed media mounted on felt, wrangles the shoulders of a blue trifacta of cobalt, azure and indigo, shaking these hues loose across its plane. Biggers treats the rule of thirds as a spiritual guide, ensuring each third offers the viewer a different reality to live in. The bottom third is a disturbed oceanic abyss, knocking with swells of waves. The middle third is a hopeful horizon speckled with stars as we knew them to be as children, all corners, perfect and tangible. The top third is a looming galaxy, realistic in depth and hue,

hovering above the remaining contents of the piece and consequently the viewer. "Voyage to Atlantis" is staring at the night sky, watching as each constellation slowly emerges one by one. The details of each strip of textile, painted or patterned, pepper out from the frame and reveal themselves like hidden constellations.

In the middle of the gallery across from one another are two dominating sculptures made of cast marble, assorted textiles and mixed media on a custom cedar plinth. Both offer a marble head upside down and draped in textiles resting on top of the plinth. "Oneroi (Relic 1)" covers the head in a lustrous gold leaf, mimicking added preciousness, whereas "Oneroi (Relic 2)" covers the head in a matte brick red and clay-like texture, creating the impression of added lifespan and suggesting discovery.

The heads are treated like bodies, cloaked in quilted fabric, and garmented strategically to obscure the details of the marble faces.

Sanford Biggers, "Venus Sutra," 2023, antique quilts, birch plywood, gold leaf, 73" x 51 1/2" x 18"/Photo: Courtesy of moniquemeloche



Sanford Biggers, "Voyage to Atlantis," 2023, antique quilt, assorted textiles, mixed media mounted on felt, 42" x 41 3/4" x 1 3/8"/Photo: Courtesy of moniquemeloche

The two sculptures are positioned to face each other, offering a camaraderie and perhaps a state of co-conspiracy, one that the viewer may witness but not dare interrupt.

"Back to the Stars" is an unmissable opportunity to stand in the wake of Biggers' sprawling and fertile career thus far, while serving as a prologue of the compelling direction he is heading.

"Sanford Biggers: Back to the Stars" is on view at moniquemeloche, 451 North Paulina through October 28.

