

ESSENCE



Sanford Biggers' 'Oracle' (2021) at The Donum Estate.
Photo by Adam Potts Photography.

SANFORD BIGGERS' MONUMENTAL 'ORACLE' FINDS A NEW HOME IN SONOMA COUNTY

BY OKLA JONES
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Cradled by the gentle hills of Sonoma County, **Sanford Biggers' *Oracle*** has found a new home at **The Donum Estate**—a sanctuary of art and nature. At 25 feet tall and weighing over 15,000 pounds, the piece—an iconic work from Biggers' *Chimera* series—joins The Donum Collection, one of the world's largest accessible private sculpture collections. But this isn't just another installation for the acclaimed artist; it marks a homecoming of sorts, both for the artwork and Biggers himself.

"It's really fulfilling its destiny," Biggers shared during our conversation about *Oracle's* evolution. "In the truest tradition of an oracle, it's an object that you would have to make a pilgrimage to—a place where you journey to consult it to get whatever answers or responses that you were looking for." Originally commissioned by Art Production Fund in partnership with Marianne Boesky Gallery, the sculpture debuted at New York's Rockefeller Center in 2021, then made its way to Los Angeles' Hammer Museum in 2023. Now, it stands proudly amid The Donum Estate's vineyards, surrounded by more than 60 large-scale works from artists around the globe.



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The artist's work—rich with references and layered symbolism—merges African and Greco-Roman influences to address historical revisionism and the “whitewashing” of classical sculpture. The seated figure of *Oracle* evokes the Zeus at Olympia, while its head draws from African masks and busts, challenging traditional narratives and revealing complex cultural histories. The throne, adorned with lotus blossom silhouettes, nods to Biggers' 2007 work *Lotus*, itself a meditation on the slave trade and its enduring legacies.

But *Oracle*'s transition from bustling urban centers to the tranquil Donum Estate introduces a new dimension. “It's a place that's more contemplative and meditative,” Biggers explained. “People have to go off the beaten path to find it, but once there, they're rewarded with the serenity around the piece and the ability to engage with their thoughts and themselves.”

For Biggers, this setting isn't coincidental. A longtime Buddhist practitioner, he has deep ties to Northern California's spiritual landscape, where he once attended meditation retreats and workshops. “The Donum Estate offers *Oracle* a space where it's unobstructed by any other artwork, but also in proximity to some of my favorite artists' works,” he said. “For me, it's a perfect home for the piece—and for me as an artist—to contribute to that experience with such caliber of company.”



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This journey—from public plazas to meditative vineyard hills—also mirrors Biggers' own path. Born in Los Angeles and now based in New York, he noted how *Oracle's* movement between coasts felt like retracing his own steps. "It's coincidence, but I've been cycling through both coasts for most of my life," he reflected.

The choice of material was equally intentional. Unlike other works in his *Chimera* series, often rendered in marble or wood, *Oracle* is cast in bronze. "As a sculptor working in the public realm, you have to consider logistics—weather, transportation, installation, engineering," Biggers said. "Bronze made the most sense for this piece. Doing it in stone would've been even heavier and more complicated, and it's already close to seven tons."

As for the purchase itself, it began unexpectedly. "I think it started in Hong Kong at an art fair," Biggers recalled. "They'd seen the work in New York and heard about it. My New York dealer was there, and the conversation carried on. They visited the piece when it was in LA, and that's when the acquisition happened."



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Set to be unveiled at The Donum Estate on June 11, *Oracle* doesn't stand alone, though it commands its own space. Surrounded by monumental works from celebrated contemporary artists like Ai Weiwei and Jaume Plensa, Biggers' piece contributes to The Donum Collection's vision: a harmonious blend of fine wine, sustainable farming, and transformative art. The estate, renowned for its single-vineyard Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, has achieved both organic and regenerative certification, underscoring its commitment to sustainability.

Speaking on his legacy, Biggers mused, "I'd like the viewer to look at the totality of my career and then go on their own journey through that work. Each series—whether quilts, the BAM series, or *Chimera*—opens up its own conversation. The idea is to create a body of work that can't be fully understood by any one piece but invites ongoing engagement and discovery."

At The Donum Estate, *Oracle* has found not just a physical home, but a spiritual one—a place where Biggers' layered histories, material choices, and contemplative intentions converge into a singular, powerful experience.