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Sanford Biggers photographed by Clifford Prince King, 2025.

STUDIO VISIT: SANFORD BIGGERS

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With a career spanning more than 20 years, Sanford Biggers is best known for his mandala series exploring the geometric symbol's impact and his quilted works that blend traditional patterns with sculptural elements. Those pieces and his more recent site-specific installations of whimsical, sequined cloud sculptures evoke feelings of childlike wonder. Biggers admits he's always been a silly guy, and becoming a parent has only amplified this quality. He's finding he wants to play as much as possible in his artistic life. As I remark on the amount of sparkling and shining objects strewn about the work tables, he discloses, "When I was in grad school, they said, 'Never use glitter,' so the first thing I did was go, 'I'm getting some glitter right now.'"

On this visit to his studio, nestled on a quiet street in the Bronx, I learn more about the ways Biggers keeps play at the forefront of his practice. It's his largest studio to date, and with a staff of eight, sometimes nine, people, he's able to experiment with new formats and mediums of expression, including music. Within the industrial building housing his larger studio exists a white-walled room adorned by projects in various stages of completion and piles of material waiting to find homes in his art. He calls this space his brain. Further inside is a homey office he calls his heart, which contains keyboards, an audio mixing station, and speakers. This expanded multidisciplinary practice already bears new accolades for the artist; last year he won a Grammy for his contributions to Meshell Ndegeocello's 2023 album *The Omnichord Real Book*.

Biggers describes drifting between music and visual art as part of his artistic rhythm, because it enables him to keep creating even when one medium isn't necessarily ready to be worked on: "If I'm working on one of the quilt pieces and I get stuck—which happens all the time—instead of just hammering on and going in until I just destroy the piece,

I sometimes have to distract myself with something else that is also generative and creative.” His work can also be painstakingly slow. As an example, he details the five years of research and development he spent settling on a design for the massive sequins that adorn his recent installation at Desert X 2025. Regardless, his overall vision is crystal clear: “I want the work to have strong formal compositional qualities, but at the same time, I want it to feel fast. I want it to feel spontaneous, and I want to not get stuck on merely the strokes and the minutiae, but more the overall tone and feel.”



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1. Tell us about your studio. Where are we? Where is it located, and how long have you been here?

We’re located in the South Bronx, in Mott Haven. I’ve been here about three years and I can’t keep count, but this is probably somewhere around my 20th studio. I decided to do it a little differently this time and actually get a lot of space and try to move my storage in here and have different rooms where I can work on different projects or at different stages of projects, so this is sort of my dream studio scenario.

2. How’d you find this place?

I went on a search with my studio director and project manager at the time, and we whittled all the options down to two or three spots, mostly in Harlem and the South Bronx. Previous to this, most of my New York studios were in Harlem, but there’s basically no more studio stock there. We found a few places, and this one sort of fit all my needs—had the right type of light, type of size, had an elevator.

3. Do you feel that working in this place, in this space, has changed your practice in any significant way?

I think it has, largely because of the size of this space and, at present, the size of my staff. I usually keep it very, very, very streamlined, so this has had to change the way I work a bit. That’s been difficult, but at the same time, it’s also allowed me to put all my different works, different series, up at the same time, so now I can see how the work talks to each other and moves each project forward.

4. Where in your studio do you most enjoy working?

You’re in it [his personal workrooms].

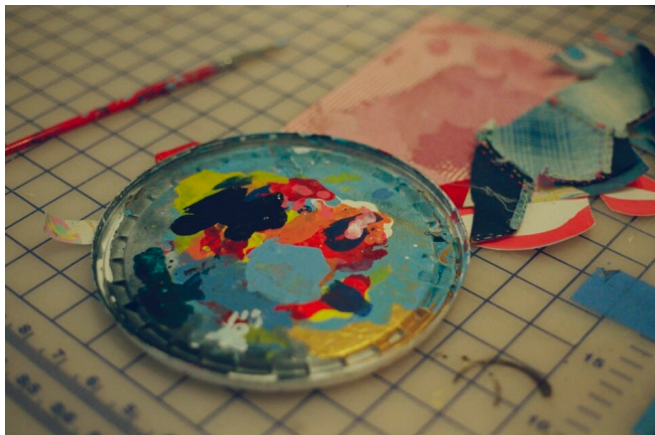
5. Do you have a uniform while you’re working?

I always put on clothes that I can just get as dirty as I want to, so when I’m working with paints, I don’t mind wiping off on my clothes, or if I’m working with wood or metal or any of that, the clothes I have on don’t have to change.

6. Can you describe your studio schedule or artistic rhythm?

I usually get to the studio around 11 a.m. or so. It just depends on how much time I’m hanging out with the kids in the morning. I try to start very slow, to be honest with you—maybe check some emails, take a nap, or meditate for a little while. Then I often start making music. I sometimes do that as an exercise just to learn the technology, so I can be faster when I’m with my band. It’s risky because I can get stuck in that, and it could be the end of the day. In a time like this, when my next show opening is maybe months away, it’s fine. I can get lost in music one day and then come back and get lost in painting another day and lost in collage or sculpture the next day. Some people call it

procrastination, but I think there's a thing called productive or generative distraction. Typically I get in [the larger studio] later in the afternoon, when things are more settled, and then I just spend hours in here.



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7. What's the first step in your creative process, and where do you begin?

I try to find a way to just have uninterrupted time, at least six to seven hours of just trying to figure out what all this work is trying to do and what moves need to happen. I try to wait until the right gesture or action comes to mind to minimize my actual moves so that I'm not having to cover up mistakes. For example, I've been working on making these one- or two-stroke flowers better, so that it becomes muscle memory and I can do it on a larger scale.

8. If you had to describe your ideal creative conditions in three words or phrases, what would you choose?

Uninterrupted time, space to experiment and display, a place that has music and sound.



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9. Outside of the studio, what's something that you enjoy doing?

I love going to the movies. I love going to a matinee and sneaking into a second or even third film afterwards, just bopping around to the theaters. I recently saw *Nosferatu* and *Sinners*.

10. What are you currently working on?

There are several art projects that I'm working on, but what I'm thinking about right now is the music that I'm doing with my band, *Moon Medicin*. I'm currently working on pre-production for some songs that I'm bouncing back and forth with a few of my musical collaborators.