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The **Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD)** is pleased to present two new exhibitions, both opening September 9th: **Sanford Biggers:** *Subjective Cosmology* and *Detroit City/Detroit Affinities: Matthew Angelo Harrison.* Please view the below press releases for more information on the two shows:

SANFORD BIGGERS - SUBJECTIVE COSMOLOGY

Sanford Biggers, *Shatter*, 2015 production still. Courtesy of the artist.

For his solo exhibition *Subjective Cosmology*, Sanford Biggers will create an immersive interactive experience throughout **MOCAD**, incorporating video installation, visual art objects, and new media. Imagined as an unseen world made visible, the exhibition gives physical form to hidden landscapes where the past, present, and future synergized into an atemporal experience. Subjective Cosmology can be seen as the link between his three—part film suite *Shuffle, Shake, Shatter*.

Shuffle, Shake, Shatter is an ambitious three-part film/video suite that explores the formation and dissolution of identity through the journey and actions of an un-named main character. With the completion of his journey, he will have also retraced the North Atlantic Slave Trade route, albeit abstractly, from Europe to the Americas and finally Africa. Throughout his journey he grapples with his identity to the point of crisis, or enlightenment, where he then transcends his notions of male and female, life and death and the corporeal versus the auratic. In *Shatter*, the protagonist transcends his corporeal existence, shape shifting into an auratic entity.

The installation will provide the backdrop for an exclusive new **Moon Medicin** performance. Moon Medicin is a multimedia concept band performing original compositions interspersed with re-imagined covers. The

collective performs against a backdrop of curated sound effects and images of sci-fi, punk, sacred geometry, coded symbology, film noir, minstrels, world politics, and ceremonial dance. For this iteration of Moon Medicin, Biggers, the creative director, will collaborate with a rotating cast of musicians, designers, and performance artists based in Detroit.

Laocoön, is a rendition of a previously exhibited figurative work. For his exhibition at MOCAD, Biggers created a site specific Laocoön measuring 30 feet in-length, the largest version the artist has created. Occupying over a quarter of the gallery space, the work is named after a famous Roman sculpture, Laocoön and His Sons, depicting a priest struck down by the gods Athena as he warned the Greeks about the Trojan horse. Biggers created the work in reaction to recent events, including the killing of unarmed black civilians by the police and the allegations of sexual assault leveled against Bill Cosby. The piece uses the Fat Albert figure to allude to these victims of police violence while also representing the loss of faith in authority and the father figure. Bill Cosby created Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids in the 1970's as a vehicle to explore the problems affecting primarily African-American and urban youth, and offer advice on how to avoid the pitfalls specific to their environment.

Watch Sanford Biggers a TED Talk here.

Artist Talk: Saturday, September 10 at 1-2pm with Sanford Biggers.

About: *Sanford Biggers* is a visual artist producing paintings, sculptures, immersive installations and video. Biggers also creates multimedia musical performances with his collective Moon Medicin. He combines each of these media into compelling, sensual and witty works that are platforms from which to discuss challenging and far-ranging topics such as hip hop, Buddhism, politics, identity, pop culture, and American and art history while offering new perspectives and associations for established symbols.

*This exhibition has been organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit and is curated by MOCAD's **Executive Director Elysia Borowy-Reeder.** Born out of experimentation and a desire to create a new platform for engagement, this project and exhibition is supported by the Joyce Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, Massimo De Carlo and Monique Meloche.*

MATTHEW ANGELO HARRISON - DETROIT CITY/DETROIT AFFINITIES

Matthew Angelo Harrison, *The Consequence of Platforms*, 2016, Aluminum, stainless steel, ceramic, marble,

75 x 33.5 x 33.5 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Jessica Silverman Gallery.

Nelson Goodman's theories on human cognition and practice, which touch on everything from logic to epistemology, science to aesthetics, are considered some of the most complex yet coherent ideas in postwar American philosophy. Particularly influential was his book *The Structure of Appearance* (1951), which offers an intricate analysis of the conditions behind systems of societal and scientific concern and introduces the concept of irrealism: the simultaneous existence of various realities within one another. It asserts that the world is, in itself, no more one way than another, and that neither is humanity.

This book was of great importance to the Detroit-based artist **Matthew Angelo Harrison** (b. 1989), who in his late teens took a deep interest in philosophy through Goodman's writings and in particular his work on art. Harrison was inspired to delve into contemporary art and eventually to study at the **School of the Art Institute of Chicago.**

Harrison is interested in the construction of systems and the possible relativity of the world around us. He does not think in closed and resolved terms but embraces open-endedness in a way that is perhaps typical for artists of his generation; his outlook combines a strong sense of community, both local and global, with the systems of the digital world. He is interested in aspects of manufacturing, in particular its often-hidden performative aspect. The artist closely studies the aesthetics of prototypes and carries over into his own practice the anticipatory feeling of the unfinished object.

Three-dimensional printing, also known as additive manufacturing, has been around for almost four decades, but only in the last ten years has it become practical and affordable for individuals outside industry. The printers use a series of coordinated stepper motors to distribute material in specific places so as to build objects in many layers, in a time-consuming and often-monotonous process. It has in many ways revolutionized thinking around the production of art (if not yet the making of art); very interesting in the context of Detroit, the birthplace of assembly line, is the idea that **3D printing might signal the beginning of a third industrial revolution succeeding the Fordist production process** introduced in that city at the outset of the twentieth century.

Harrison's 3D printers are not the sophisticated high-tech equipment typically found in industrial production facilities. All of his devices are homemade constructions, DIY gadgets with low-tech parts put together by the artist himself, suggesting more kinship with abstract sculpture than with anything state-of-the-art. They combine minimalist aesthetics with the industrial look of open-source hardware. And not only are the machines homemade, but so is most of their software. Harrison's printers use clay rather than the more common plastics. This gives the artist the ability to build large volumes rapidly and to change at any moment the form of a sculpture being produced.

Harrison's 3D printers on view at MOCAD use computer aided design (CAD) files, created via a 3D scanner, to print replicas of traditional African masks. Harrison is less interested in the masks as ceremonial or aesthetic objects and more into drastically changing our perception of something by replicating it in unlikely materials. A historical African mask is re-created by using a FaceGen process in which CAD files are specifically used to sculpt human faces, connecting the tribal and seemingly exotic world of Africa with the DYI sphere of the digital age.

The tension between authentic and inauthentic, organic and nonorganic, and the pull among repetition and difference, original and clone, nature and culture, all play a major part in Harrison's artistic considerations. Another series of works consists of transparent, highly polished acrylic boxes and benches and large bones of African animals. While the boxes and benches might recall the work of J**ohn McCracken**, **Larry Bell**, and other fetish finish Minimalists of the 1960s and 1970s, the idea of " (hand)crafted to perfection" so important to those sculptors has been entirely replaced in the popular imagination by the kind of surface perfection possible thanks to automation and precision machinery. Indeed, it seems perhaps more difficult today, given the tools at one's disposal, to make something imperfect than something flawless. Here we encounter interesting questions of the position of the artist in

the production process: Should an artist let the tools finish the work, or get in between the tool and the work? Harrison seems to be doing both.

Forcing the organic and the nonorganic to work together creates a tension of not only materials but also sense and experience. When a bone breaks, it produces a visceral response because of the bone's direct relationship to the body. When clear acrylic breaks, the response is purely visual, pictorial: the only thing ruined is a perfect image. The bone of a dead animal speaks as well of lifelessness and possibility; it is essential material that can be reused for completely different purposes (such as an elephant bone as part of a sculptural installation). The exotic animal bones are part of a visual vocabulary, an iconography, that Harrison is slowly developing. It is a landscape of visual tropes, some familiar and some unfamiliar, some exotic and others common, and all mysterious yet literal and quotidian at the same time. Integrating the bones within acrylic boxes and benches prevents the production of a likeness of nature and points instead to architectural boundaries: cages, walls, fences.

Harrison is a native Detroiter. He grew up Grosse Pointe and is no stranger to the complicated discussions around class and race that are pertinent to the city's history and current realities. While he sees his work as firmly part of conversations around African and African American experience, the work simultaneously has qualities that are universal, and that have the potential to creep into many other cultural spaces. Harrison sees race as peripheral to human experience and is interested in finding a way to make art that can transcend it. Yet he has also stated unequivocally that to avoid discussing racial issues in his work would be to dismiss some of his central concerns.

Harrison is part of a generation of sculptors born in the 1980s who are socially astute and politically engaged (for instance **Cameron Rowland**), who are interested in the digital world and DIY technology, and their particular aesthetics (such as **Josh Kline**), who focus on materiality and objecthood (such as**Michael E. Smith**), and who bring identity politics and personal histories together with highly formal and abstracted explorations of found materials (as in the work of Kevin Beasley). He cites artists such as**Cosima von Bonin, Rachel Harrison**, and **Trisha Donnelly** as influences, less for the actual forms they create than for the ingenious ways they discuss their own female identities in a mostly male-dominated world without ever being overtly direct with their critiques. He credits M**ichelangelo Pistoletto** and**Joseph Kosuth** as well, for their use of materials and the intellectual rigor of their practices. Yet it is**David Hammons** who comes to mind most when thinking about the often-humorous side of Harrison's work: his Duchampian readymade gestures, his concerns around commodification, his fusion of objects associated with African American history and heritage with post minimal aesthetics.

As his 3D printers produce the new works in the gallery we will not fully know what the final exhibition will look like and feel. We are left with the anticipation of the realization of his unique concept and that anticipation that builds up when the an artwork created in front of our own eyes.

Curated by MOCAD's Susanne Feld Hilberry Senior Curator at Large Jens Hoffmann
As Part Of:

MOCAD

DETROIT CITY is comprised of three concurrent series: Detroit Affinities (exhibition), Detroit Speaks (education), and Detroit Stages (performance). This multi-year research program is one of the most ambitious undertakings to date at MOCAD.

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The Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD) is an innovative addition to Detroit's vibrant Midtown neighborhood, and functions as a hub for the exploration of emerging ideas in the contemporary arts. As a non-collecting institution, MOCAD is responsive to the cultural content of our time, fueling crucial dialogue, collaboration, and public engagement. The Museum is located between the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and the Detroit Institute of the Arts, Wayne State University, and the College for Creative Studies. The cavernous 22,000 square foot building, a former auto dealership, has been simply renovated to maintain its raw historic character. MOCAD's ambitious series of public programs includes lectures, musical performances, films, literary readings and educational activities for area youth. Mobile Homestead, by late artist Mike Kelley, is a permanent art work located on the grounds of the museum. It is both a public sculpture and a private, personal construction – based on the artist's childhood home on Palmer Road in Westland. The ground floor serves as a community event space by and for a diverse public, as Kelley intended. MOCAD is generously supported by individual members, private and corporate foundations, and government agencies. More information can be found at mocadetroit.org.