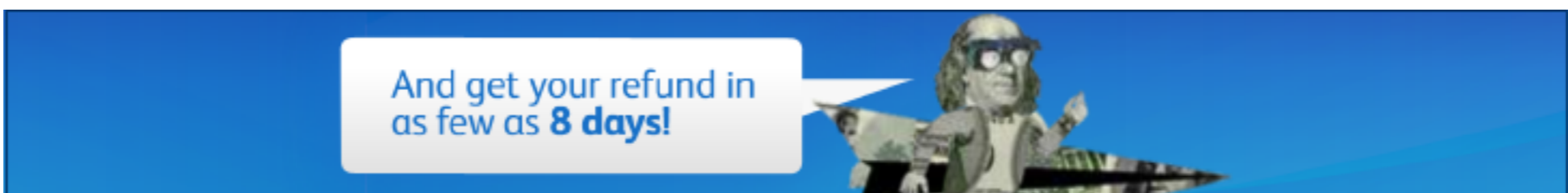


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THE ARTS
This year's Greenfield Prize winner melds a variety of talents and thoughts



"Blossom," top, references "Strange Fruit," Billie Holiday's song about the lynchings of blacks in the South. "Lotus," above, is hand-etched glass derived from the drawings of the cargo hold of an 18th-century slave vessel. COURTESY PHOTOS

By **Susan L. Rife**

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A interdisciplinary visual artist from New York who makes "amazing and mysterious things" has been named as the recipient of the 2010 Greenfield Prize.



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Sanford Biggers, who has been called an "idea man," will receive the \$30,000 prize at a dinner April 15 at Michael's On East, where pop artist James Rosenquist will be keynote speaker.

The prize is administered by the Hermitage Artist Retreat on Manasota Key and the Greenfield Foundation. Each year it is given to a mid-career artist to create a new work.

In 2009, the first year of the prize, two were given, one to playwright Craig Lucas, the other to composer Eve Beglarian. Lucas' play will be given a staged reading by the **Asolo Repertory Theatre** this spring, while Beglarian's chamber music work will be presented by the Sarasota Orchestra in 2011.

Biggers, the first visual artist to receive the prize, "is not your basic landscape painter," said Bruce Rodgers, executive director of the Hermitage. "His work really bridges among a variety of fields, which is not an uncommon thing. He's an accomplished musician and performer as well as sculptor and painter. His work tends to be somewhat political, somewhat performative."

Biggers will have two years to create his work. Part of that time will be spent in residence at the Hermitage.

"I think it comes at a good time," he said in a telephone interview last week. "I'm about to embark on a fairly large project I hope to complete in 2012. It's a little too early to go into details, but part of it involves a video piece that I started in Germany and want to continue in Brazil. The other part is a performance that will take place on an ocean. It's pretty nebulous."

Biggers, whose work has been at the Tate Britain and Tate Modern in London, the Whitney Museum of Art and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, was chosen from six finalists by a panel that included Dan Cameron, founder and curator of Prospect New Orleans; Heidi Zuckerman Jacobson, director and chief curator of the Aspen Art Museum; Franklin Sirmans, curator and department head of contemporary art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and Joni Greenfield from the Greenfield Foundation.

"We had several telephone meetings that start out with a big list of who could meet the mission of the prize," said Rodgers. "Everything begins with the mission, to bring into the world works of art which will have a significant effect on the broad as well as the artistic culture of our society. We keep going back to that thing: who would have the opportunity of best achieving this."

The six finalists were asked to submit samples of their work. "It came down to a very difficult decision ultimately among three finalists," said Rodgers.

Cameron, who will speak at the April 15 dinner, said that Biggers' name was on the list each panelist brought into the decision-making process.

"The thing most outstanding about Sanford's work is the way it seems to seamlessly combine all these different media and touch on all these different subjects and remain graceful and beautiful and evocative," said Cameron.

Biggers said the invitation to submit work for the prize came "totally out of the blue, and the process was very quick. There was no lead-up for me."

The artist said his artistic process starts "with some phrase or some inspirational note of some type that gets my mind going. As I start to draw sketches or think about it a little bit more and try to hunt down materials, then the idea starts to take a more physical form. Sometimes the end result is very different from what I started with."

The words or images percolating in his head for this project are "Chinese lanterns, cannibalism and syncretism," he said. "The three things I just mentioned seem like totally different universes. Through the process they start to congeal and come a lot closer."

Biggers and the other finalists all will be offered residencies at the Hermitage. Biggers said he will bring "a bunch of my materials, some books and some laptops, and start to put the thing together."

Each winner of the prize is paired with an arts organization for presentation of the finished work; Rodgers said no determination of Biggers' partnership has been made.

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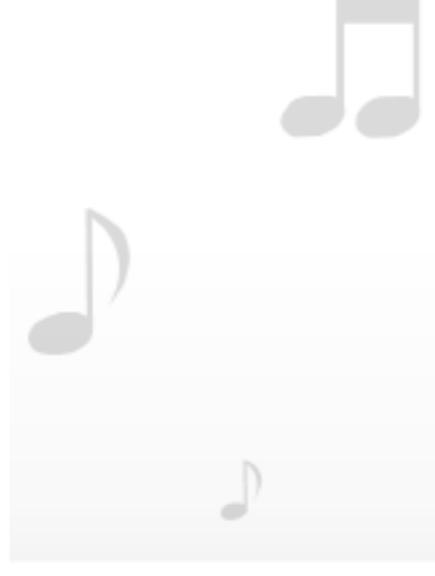
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