

Malleable on display at OSUM

By KURT MOORE
The Marion Star

MARION - Sanford Biggers, a nationally known African-American artist, got the chance to come to Ohio State University at Marion's Kuhn Arts Gallery and curate his own art show. In response, he selected four artists whose work has inspired him and invited them to have a talk.

The talk isn't in words. Instead it's in artwork, specifically the artwork of artists Leslie Hewitt, Kelly Kaczynski, Clifford Owens and Chris Sollars. The result is Malleable, an exhibit that incorporates sculpture, photography and films of performance art in a flexible way that stretches not only each artist's creativity but the viewers' ideas of what exactly the artwork is trying to say.

Biggers, whose own work is influenced by a study of ethnological objects, popular icons and the Dadaist tradition, spoke at an exhibition reception on Thursday attended heavily by Ohio State and Marion Technical College students. The artists he chose all had different things to say, some more-in-the-face than others.

Owens' work included a film in which people grab a leather belt and smack it around a room, approaching a man standing against the wall but never quite reaching him.

"You don't get the satisfaction or resolve of seeing the belt hit the body," he said, calling Owens a "classic tragic artist" with "angst and neurosis written all over him."

Sollars' contribution featured a film in which people dressed totally in garbage bags mimicked piles of garbage along a street, standing and walking to the surprise and occasional laughs of people who suddenly found themselves walking with moving trash heaps.

"I am totally intrigued by these trash people," said Marion Technical College student Tiffany Scott. "I think it's really cool. It's just watching people's reaction, 'What the heck is that?'"

Hewitt's collages of photographs included one piece in which photos of the Watts riots were featured along with football practice likely taking place at the same time in a different state. One photo showed the calm of the practice, while the other photos featured the rebellion and uprising taking place in Watts.

"It sucks the viewer in without giving much information," Biggers said.



The Marion Star/James Miller

An installation and video by Chris Sollars entitled "Pile of Trash" captivated views with its uncomfortable juxtaposition of humorous and disturbing images of human trash bags startling pedestrians in a busy urban setting. The multimedia piece is part of a collection entitled "MALLEABLE," which can be seen in the Wayne & Geraldine Kuhn Fine Arts Gallery at The Ohio State University at Marion.

If you go:

Malleable, an art exhibit curated by nationally known African-American artist Sanford Biggers, will be presented at Ohio State University at Marion's Kuhn Arts Gallery through Feb. 24.

The gallery is located on the first floor of Morrill Hall. Artists featured in the work include Leslie Hewitt, Kelly Kaczynski, Clifford Owens and Chris Sollars. Art includes sculpture, photography and films of three examples of performance art.

Kaczynski's sculpture, made with different mediums including stone and toy cannons, joined with the other exhibits in what Biggers referred to as a "throwaway aesthetic." OSUM arts department director Scot Kaplan said he felt all four artists portrayed a sense of vulnerability.

"In my own work I take objects without much meaning and add meaning, without spoonfeeding," Biggers said. He described the pieces of artwork as sharing the same philosophy.

Kaplan, using a portion of a grant that he received from Ohio State University, scheduled the exhibition to coincide with a class he's teaching on how to curate an art exhibit. Students traveled from both Marion and from Ohio State's main campus in Columbus to attend the reception.

"They really do compliment each other," said Ohio State main campus senior Sara Van DeCarr, complimenting Biggers' vision and the four artists' work.

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