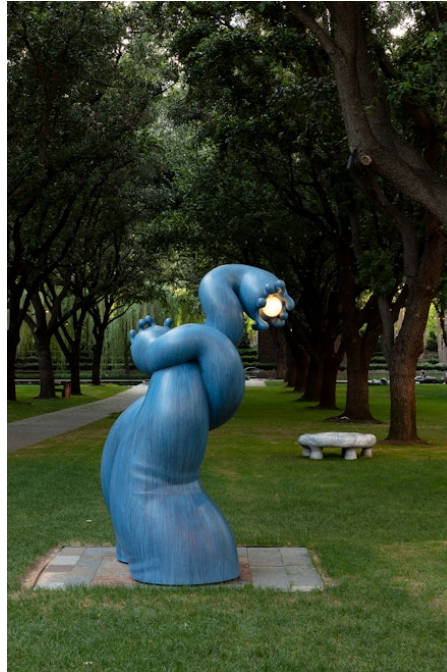


# BROOKLYN RAIL



Haas Brothers, *Emergent Zoidberg*, 2024. Cast bronze and light  
Photo: Kevin Todora

## HAAS BROTHERS: MOONLIGHT BY MADISON FORD JULY 01, 2024

As night falls on Dallas, the works installed in the Nasher Sculpture Center are cast in shifting light and deepening shadows. The permanent collection of the downtown oasis—a towering Mark di Suvero and cavernous Richard Serra, among others—seem to emit the sort of ancient power of centuries-old oaks in a darkened wood. In this garden’s newfound darkness, a visiting form of less imposing stature beckons the viewer into its field. *Emergent Zoidberg* (2024) emanates an orbed glow from its twisted limbs. This work, as well as two others in the Haas Brothers’ new exhibition, *Moonlight*, not only succeed in their daring whimsy, but they also challenge long-entrenched standards for how we present and process art.

*Moonlight* begins on Flora Street, where two vibrant, cerulean street lamps have been installed, buttressing Nasher’s city block. The lamps seem of another time, another world: they evoke *Singin’ in the Rain* and alien slime, a materiality that seems gooey and dripping, until stepping closer reveals a metal construction. Immediately, we are introduced to the magic of the Haas Brothers’ works. The warping of our perceptions as we process material and content is palpable throughout the exhibition. These *Moon Towers* (2023), formed of cast bronze, extend and bend like taffy, seemingly gummy and pliable in the Texas summer heat. The bronze has achieved frozen movement. Given their hanging lanterns and placement at intersections, they are immediately contextualized as street lamps (an acknowledged inspiration for the brothers), but the longer one stands before a tower, the more its shape shifts to something of a foot, a limb, a creature that shifts between wilting flora and a sentient lifeform of another world.

*Moonlight*’s central work, *The Strawberry Tree* (2023), stands in Nasher’s front-facing entrance gallery. Branches of glowing star leaves and berries permeate the space. Here, the only Haas sculpture indoors evokes captivity, as a work so evocative of nature, sea, and space fights against fluorescents and imposing walls. Once again, materials camouflage themselves: cast bronze serves as warping wood trunk and branches, beaded rope as draped vines. The

sculpture is drenched in blue, accented by pink blown-glass strawberries and orange bulbs emerging from starfish-like fronds. The strawberries appear attached to the vines that twist and tangle around branches, suggesting a species of invasion despite the tree's namesake.



Haas Brothers, *A Light in the Streets and a Freak in the Sheets*, 2024. Cast bronze and light

The exhibition sees its finale in *Emergent Zoidberg*, stationed at the start of Nasher's sprawling back garden. The *Zoidberg* is the most hypnotic of the works. It is sexy and silly and calming, its two twisting limbs mimicking legs and ass, perhaps of one body or two joining together. Its cartoonish toes grasp orbs of light, transfixing the viewer as the sun goes down.

And that is the beauty and the power and the aching frustration of Nasher's *Moonlight*: to experience it as time and light shifts feels disarmingly significant, and yet only occasionally accessible. We come up against the administrative realities of public art, not unique to the Nasher. Standard operating hours of 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. don't leave much room to revisit a sculpture and consider it, as the atmosphere slips from the tightening brightness of daylight and into the shadowed looseness of night, or in the dewy silence of early morning.

Nasher is not obtuse about the impact of outside-hour programming, both for community building as well as outside-hours access to their collection. Their calendar is sprinkled with evening events for the public to sprawl on the lawn, listen to music, bend their bodies in group yoga classes. It was at one of these events that I first took in the Haas Brothers' exhibition, determined to see *Moonlight* beneath the moonlight. My body was in corpse pose and a sound bath hymned through the garden. I let my head rest on its side, aligning my gaze with *Emergent Zoidberg*; every time I opened my eyes the light had transformed, offering up the garden and its *Zoidberg* anew. Perhaps this is why a "night at the museum" has always held a certain naughtiness and mystique: a promise of beholding artifacts imbued with unknown energy.

*Moonlight* speaks to the parts of ourselves still ringing with imagination and myth. Its works suggest there are coexisting realities on street corners and in nature and our bodies, and that uncovering these realities can be a matter of play or observing from a different side or at a new time of day. See *Moonlight* in daylight if those are your confines, but should the darkness beckon, there are two *Moon Towers* leaving the light on along Flora Street.



Haas Brothers, *The Strawberry Tree*, 2024. Cast bronze, blown glass, glass beads