



The Haas Brothers, *The Strawberry Tree*, 2023.
Photo credit: Courtesy of the Artists

NASHER SCULPTURE CENTER EXHIBITION: HAAS BROTHERS ILLUMINATIONS

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Born in Austin, Texas in 1984, the Haas Brothers—twins, Nicolai and Simon—started their career as an artistic duo in 2010. Their practice merges the worlds of fine art and functional design, though some of that function still falls within an artistic license, like that of their lamps whose bulbs are meant to dim. For their exhibition, running from May 11th through August 25th at the [Nasher Sculpture Center](#), *Moonlight* visitors will be greeted with two *Moon Towers*—sculptures inspired by lamps meant to emulate the light of the moon.

These lamps will remain on view even after the exhibition closes, changing the landscape of the museum exterior and leaving an esoteric touch to the evenings as the seasons change. The structural forms reference lamps of the brothers' youth in Texas and aesthetically channel Antoni Gaudí's biomorphic forms and art nouveau, specifically French designer Hector Guimard. As an exhibition, *Moonlight* captures and shares the artists' relationships with flora and fauna, but as with most of their work, the fauna are less like animals and closer to friendly monsters.

Upon entering the museum, the focus on shimmery light continues. *The Strawberry Tree* (2023) is a fete that has come to fruition after years of conceptualization. It consists of a cast bronze patinated trunk, laden with hand-beaded leaves and

branches dripping with blown glass glowing strawberries. This piece is one of the brothers' first to be intended only to exist in sculptural form.



Simon and Nikolas Haas

Photo credit: Ian Flanigan, Courtesy of the Artists

In a recent conversation, Simon Haas quipped that the tree is reminiscent of the flavored, lickable wallpaper in the original *Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory* (1971), not edible, but theoretically delicious. A certain generation might recall the film, *The Hugga Bunch*, where a witch ingests glowing berries from a “youngberry” tree that, in turn, provides beauty and youth. The Strawberry Tree, and many other Haas Brothers' works, bring sophistication to forms of child-like fancy. Visible through the window facing the street, the gallery functions as a jewel box, lustrous and evident to all who walk by.

Popular with collectors and press alike, this Haas Brothers exhibition at the Nasher Sculpture Center coincides with a solo exhibition at Marianne Boesky Gallery in New York City. While the New York show, *Inner Visions*, focuses more on a conglomerate of sculptures without attention to light, it teeters between natural forms reminiscent of pineapple and alien-like bodies.

These aliens, specifically one that stands 8-feet tall and has been designed for the Nasher Sculpture Garden, have found their way to Dallas in *Emergent Zoids*. The *Emergent Zoids* are new bodies of work shown in Dallas as *Cyberzoids 1 & 4*, 3D printed resin forms that start out as animated digital renderings, become stills, then transform into sculptural objects. They are colored with a highly luminescent, turquoise automotive paint and are sure to shimmer under the heat of the Dallas sun.

In the process of creation and aggregation of materials, specifically for the tree, the Haas Brothers were inspired by “Interspace Caverns,” a series of caves that they visited as children. The formation of stalagmites and the slow drip that forms dimensional objects gave them the inclination that small actions can lead to larger forms.

The brothers were fortunate enough to gain access to rare Murano glass beads, which they now have as part of their arsenal, and it is these beads that wrap around the trunk of *The Strawberry Tree*. The process of beading took place in Seattle with a select group of 20 women, and the stone base of the tree was made in Portugal. “We are obsessed with

craft in a way that also comes from [having] a design background. The process of making the leaves [of the tree] is very intense and all of our references are really ornate design objects,” added Simon Haas.



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That said, the title *Moonlight* stems from the poem "*Clair de lune*" (French for "Moonlight") written by French poet Paul Verlaine in 1869. The poem resulted in Claude Debussy composing *Suite Bergamasque* (L. 75) in 1890, whose third movement is titled, *Clair de lune*. Simon and Nikolai first heard Debussy's composition translated and played on a synthesizer. They see their work as being part of the fourth dimension: poem, classical composition, synthesizer, sculpture. In an excerpt from Verlaine's epic words stemming from the Romantic and Impressionist periods:

*Singing all the while, in the minor mode,
Of all-conquering love and life so kind to them
They do not seem to believe in their good fortune,
And their song mingles with the moonlight,*

*With the calm moonlight, sad and lovely,
Which makes the birds dream in the trees,
And the plumes of the fountains weep in ecstasy,
The tall, slender plumes of the fountains among the marble sculptures. (1869)*

For artists looking to form their own lineage in time, their own branches from a historic trunk, what better way to do so than to rocket through the fourth dimension all while carving a path of their own.

