



Left: at the Cranbrook Art Museum in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., the Haas Brothers' regal "King Dong" (2016) presides over selections from their "Beasts" series. Right: the mushroom "Mary Tyler Spore" (2015).
Courtesy of the Cranbrook Art Museum. Photos: Sarah C. Blanchette

SURREAL CREATURES GATHER AT MICHIGAN'S CRANBROOK ART MUSEUM

BY JAMES DRANEY

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"The uncanny valley," a term coined by the roboticist Masahiro Mori in 1970, names the point at which a lifelike robot or doll crosses the threshold from cute to creepy and back again. The artists Simon and Nikolai Haas, twin brothers, have spent the past 15 years making a career in that space between the delightful and the eerie. In their world, a table raises its leg like a dog; a vessel comes with horns. Their aim, though, is neither to disturb nor repulse, but to seduce — to draw their audience into an intimate relationship with the surreal. "We're essentially trying to get someone to feel empathy with an inanimate object," says Simon. That playful seductiveness is on full display in their first major survey, "Haas Brothers: Uncanny Valley," opening on Nov. 2 at Cranbrook Art Museum outside Detroit. In Cranbrook's midcentury galleries, visitors will find Haas classics, like a mushroom whose cap is awash in violet and pink, alongside new "Accretion Paintings" (2024-25), in which layers of acrylic build on each other until the canvas seems to reach out into the room.

"Haas Brothers: Uncanny Valley" will be on view at the Cranbrook Art Museum from Nov. 2, 2025, through Feb. 22, 2026, cranbrookartmuseum.org; travels to New York; Austin, Texas; and Charlotte, N.C.