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Nikolai (left) and Simon Haas in their North Hollywood studio, working on a massive *Moontower* streetlamp that winks at the public works of Antoni Gaudí and Hector Guimard.

THE HAAS BROTHERS PUT THEIR DELIGHTFUL MADNESS ON DISPLAY IN A NEW LOS ANGELES STUDIO

By Mayer Rus
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Simon and [Nikolai Haas](#) discovered two favorable auguries when they first explored the site for their new studio in North Hollywood. Built in the late 1940s and early '50s during the nascent days of the aerospace boom in the San Fernando Valley, the industrial warehouse had more recently been home to a company that manufactured neon signs. "We knew we had to have it when we found out this was where they made the Circus Liquor sign from *Clueless*," Simon recalls, referring to the creepy 1960s neon clown that presides over the parking lot where Alicia Silverstone's indelible Cher gets mugged. "Inside, there was a big cardboard cutout of Patsy Stone smoking a cigarette with a bottle of Stoli," he adds, referencing Joanna Lumley's beloved character on *Absolutely Fabulous*. "That was another good omen."

Pop culture levity aside, the [Haas brothers](#) were serious about the multifaceted program they envisioned for the studio and the mood they wanted to conjure. They required dedicated spaces for the various mediums and techniques they employ in their work, including wood, metal, clay, beadwork, wax, 3D printing, sewing, drawing, and painting. ("Haas Brothers: Uncanny Valley," a mid-

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career survey of their wide-ranging practice, is currently on view at the Museum of Arts and Design in New York City through August 16.) Beyond production capabilities, the duo needed a gallery to exhibit their own creations as well those of their friends and collaborators; proper office space for their team; room to host a planned residency for young artists; and an extensive art-and-design library. “The studio visit is a big part of our practice and who we are as people,” Nikolai states. “This is where we interact with collectors, museum folks, friends, and other designers and artists. We love hosting, bringing people together.”



Architect Chet Callahan strikes a pose on the studio's ubiquitous sage-green shelving.

To translate their conceptual and pragmatic imperatives into three-dimensional reality, the Haases turned to [Chet Callahan](#) of LA-based Chet Architecture, whose forte—as evidenced by his own [family homes](#)—rests in projects that nurture community and collaboration. “Simon and Niki asked for a new typology, a space flexible enough for exhibitions, classes, offices, dinners, dance parties, and, of course, production,” Callahan explains. “It had to accommodate a lot of different experiences.”

The architect consolidated most back-of-house functions (kitchen, baths, administrative, etc.) into an existing office building of roughly the same vintage adjoining the warehouse, allowing maximum openness for the space devoted to courting the muse and conjuring art. In the lofty studio zone, Callahan designed a series of wood-framed sheds with walls of translucent cellular polycarbonate, which offer varying degrees of enclosure keyed to the types of production they contain. They look like greenhouses with a jaunty, modern spin. “So much of our work is about stripping away extraneous elements and revealing the beauty of the original structure,” the architect says, citing the studio's exposed metal beams and trusses, which are painted in sage green to match the frames of the new workshop sheds. Peachy-pink [concrete](#) floors and safety-yellow window frames complete the sprightly chromatic composition.

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Like so much of the brothers' creative output, the fanciful quality of the architecture masks a deep conceptual rigor—there is a method to the delightful madness. "Film plays a huge part in our aesthetic. The studio feels beautiful and cinematic but at the same time clean and organized," Nikolai notes, reeling off a list of auteur inspirations that includes Pier Paolo Pasolini, Dario Argento, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, and [Pedro Almodóvar](#). "From our roof you can see the water tower on the Warner Bros. lot and the roller coasters at Universal. Disney is right down the street. This is our own dream factory," Simon affirms. "You feel like you could not be anywhere else but in LA, in our studio, in our world."