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Met Roof Goes Tiki Tiki



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Big Bambú: You Can't, You Don't, and You Won't Stop
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
1000 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10028-0918
April 27, 2010 - October 31, 2010

Mike and Doug Starn's organic site-specific installation on the roof of the Met is ambitious in scale and refreshingly interactive. Mobbed on Friday evenings by local art enthusiasts and international tourists who huddle under the bamboo for cocktails, Big Bambú provides a lofty counterpart to the Starns' South Ferry subway station with its intricate leaf mosaics and glass etchings of trees. Loosely inspired by a 1970s article on the Pentacost Islands in National Geographic about a group of natives who construct and jump off towering bamboo structures, the Starns' rooftop installation feels half Tiki Hut bar and half serious artwork. The interplay between functional and conceptual, urban and wild and its evolution throughout the summer give it life. Its ongoing construction by the Starns and a group of rock climbers to a final projected height of 50 feet is being documented on video, adding elements of performance to this vibrant mixed media installation.

Best known for their torn and stained mixed media photo collages during the 1990s, the identical twins have found their 21st century niche creating works of public art. Their vision was to create something that while "complete in one sense, is in a constant state of flux, that would represent the interconnections and growth inherent both in society and in all life forms." Comprised of over 3000 pieces of bamboo and miles of nylon rope, the piece can either be passively viewed from the garden or led by guided tours twice daily through walkways serving as arteries through the maze. According to the Starns, the process of rope-tying is both meditative and enlivening. Big Bambú's connection to earlier primitive structures gives it a Zen-like feel while exuding a playful sense of chaos.

The contrast between the Met's imposing Greek and Roman sculptures and the Starn's ethereal construction creates an interesting dialogue between past and present, permanence and temporality. Documentation of this project was recently displayed in the New York Photography Festival last May in Dumbo. Like Olafur Eliason with his waterfalls, the Starns have made their distinctive temporary mark on the city.

Tickets for guided tours of Big Bambú, the thirteenth-consecutive single-artist installation on the Roof Garden can be obtained at the Big Bambú registration desk in the Uris Center for Education at the 81st Street ground-level entrance and should be worth the wait.



Images: Mike and Doug Starn, Big Bambú, 2010 / Artists Rights Society (ARS).

Website: <http://www.artslant.com/ny/articles/show/17495>