

# Doug & Mike Starn

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## Carrer Narrative

Doug and Mike Starn, American artists, identical twins, born 1961. First having received international attention at the 1987 Whitney Biennial, for more than 20 years the Starns were primarily known for working conceptually with photography, and are concerned largely with chaos, interconnection and interdependence. Over the past two and half decades, they have continued to defy categorization, effectively combining traditionally separate disciplines such as photography, sculpture, architecture-most notably their series *Big Bambú*.

Curated by Francesco Bonami, the first semi-permanent *Big Bambú* installation opened in late 2012, and is in the collection of the Museo MACRO Testaccio, Rome. Over 40 meters tall, a habitable sculpture enveloping up to 60 people within an elevated performance space, double helix stair and labyrinth paths leading up to over 20 meters high to multiple lounging spaces giving views over the banks of the Tiber and Trastevere to Monte Testaccio. In 2011 at the 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale *Big Bambú* spiraled over 22 meters high behind the Peggy Guggenheim Collection on the Grand Canal. The acclaimed institutional premiere *Big Bambú: You Can't, You Don't, and You Won't Stop*, at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2010 was the 9th most attended exhibition in the museum's history with 3,913 visitors per day- with a total of 631,000. Throughout the 6-month exhibit, the Starns and their crew of 12 rock climbers continuously lashed together over 7,000 bamboo poles, a performative architecture of randomly interconnected vectors forming a section of a seascape with a 20-meter cresting wave above Central Park. *Big Bambú* suggests the complexity and energy of an ever-growing and changing living organism. Several new iterations of the series are being developed internationally.

*Gravity of Light*, a solo exhibition by the Starn brothers featuring eight monumental photographs illuminated by a single, blindingly bright carbon arc lamp, originally commissioned by the Färgfabriken Kunsthalle, Stockholm, Sweden, took its third incarnation with the Cincinnati Art Museum in the fall of 2012 at a cavernous deconsecrated church and was dovetailed by an eponymous monograph, which offers a comprehensive approach on the artists' *Absorption of Light* concept, published by Rizzoli, 2012.

In the spring of 2009, the Starns completed their first permanently installed public commission for the New York City Metropolitan Transit Authority. *See it split, see it change*, a 250-foot long artwork, up to 14 feet in height, presents the artists' iconic tree photographs and a leaf transposed into fused glass, marble mosaics and a water jet cut stainless steel fence punctuate the South Ferry subway terminal. It is the recipient of the 2009 Brendan Gill Prize.

At their mammoth laboratory studio in Beacon, New York, the former Tallix foundry, the Starns continue to build the first *Big Bambú*, a constantly evolving construction, formed by a network of more than 2,500 bamboo poles lashed together. This enormous studio allows Doug and Mike to work in dialogue between *Big Bambú* and their many concurrent series: most recently *The No Mind Not Thinks No Things* and other Buddhist explorations- the *Absorption of Light* concept, *allevythingthat is you*- their photomicrographs of snow crystals, and their re-exploration of the late 19th century color carbon printing process. Through their carbon-prints, the Starns mingle gilding techniques to the painterly photo-process, and further advance their metaphorical lexicon on light with photographs of Buddhist statuary.

*Attracted to Light, To Find God, not the Devil's Insides* and *alleverythingthat is you* are some of the Starns' monographic publications. The brothers are currently preparing a new artist book based on their iconic photograph of *Ganjin* and *Big Bambú*.

The Starns were represented by Leo Castelli from 1989 until his death in 1999. Their art has been the object of numerous solo and group exhibitions in museums and galleries worldwide. The Starns have received many honors including two National Endowment for the Arts Grants in 1987 and 1995; The International Center for Photography's Infinity Award for Fine Art Photography in 1992; and, artists in residency at NASA in the mid-nineties. They have received critical acclaim in *The New York Times*, *Dagens Nyheter*, *Corriere della Sera*, *Le Figaro*, *The Times (London)*, *Art in America*, and *Artforum* amongst many other notable media. Major artworks by the Starns are represented in public and private collections including: The Museum of Modern Art (NYC); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SF); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, (NYC); The Jewish Museum, (NYC); The Metropolitan Museum of Art (NYC); Moderna Museet (Stockholm); The National Gallery of Victoria (Melbourne); Whitney Museum of American Art (NYC); Yokohama Museum of Art (Japan); La Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris); La Maison Européenne de la Photographie (Paris); Los Angeles County Museum of Art, amongst many others.