

WORKSPACE



**EVERY SNOWFLAKE** Along a wall, leading to the patchwork Ganjin, are a series of snowflake pictures, from “allevythingthatisy.” Taken with a microscope lens in northern Vermont and upstate New York, the photographs record the flakes in the few seconds between landing and melting.

In the Garage, With Heat, Light and Snowflakes

Photographs by Fred Conrad / The New York Times

It is not the kind of place you expect to find art, across the street from a sanitation depot and a firehouse at the dead end of Union Street in Red Hook, Brooklyn. But the cavernous studio of the artists Doug and Mike Starn has been their sanctuary and source of inspiration since they began working there in 1989.

A former ice-cream-truck garage, it is now 10,000 feet of space, where the Starns and as many as 15 full-time employees work on photographic projects and other pieces that focus on the Starns' fascination with the passage of time and with perception and illusion in nature. On a recent afternoon one wall was dominated by a huge patchwork picture, printed on pieces of Thai mulberry paper. It shows a statue of Jianzhen, a blind eighth-century Chi-

nese monk known as Ganjin in Japan, where he helped to propagate Buddhism. “He represents for us the ability to see the light in the dark,” Doug said. The work is also reminiscent of the Scotch-taped and pinned-up torn photographs that first brought the Starns, who are identical twins, to prominence in the mid-1980s.

Sometimes they power up the studio's most dramatic tool, a towering carbon-arc lamp — like something out of James Whale's “Frankenstein” — that uses two electrified black carbon rods to produce plasma emitting a blinding white light.

“Some day we hope to make it talk,” Doug said. “Plasma makes a great speaker.”

Mike added, “It will be like the great and powerful Oz.”

RANDY KENNEDY



**MELTING LIGHT** Right, the skeletal carbon-arc lamp. Below, a hot plate used to warm plain and encaustic wax that is layered over the tree images.



**CALLIGRAPHY OF THE SUN** The Starns have long taken pictures of leaves and trees, whose light-dependent growth makes their form, as one curator has written, like “the calligraphy of the sun.” Above left, on an adjacent wall are framed images of Manjushri, the bodhisattva of wisdom. Above right, the studio walls are covered in tacked-up images, including, under the clock, a small photograph of the dealer Leo Castelli (in suit and tie), who represented the Starns.



**THE ARTISTS IN SITU** Above: The twins Mike (on the left) and Doug Starn. Above left, a print of a doge's portrait by Giovanni Bellini.



**ONLINE: SLIDE SHOW**  
Additional images of Doug and Mike Starn's studio:  
[nytimes.com/design](http://nytimes.com/design)