





WILDNESS

Good design requires wildness. Wild things trouble the dividing line that keeps the untamed out and the orderly in. Thoreau—perhaps not an obvious entry point when thinking about the Haas Brothers and their expressive, intuitive work—once called wildness a “tonic,” an invigorating effect on organized systems (nature, communities, rooms) that keeps them compelling in light of the overriding desire within all of us to cultivate a sterile tidiness. But it is exactly this tonic of wildness—of the animal within and without us—that characterizes Simon and Nikolai Haas’ work, which challenges the binary that splits the inside from the out. And with their recent, sex-themed series, *Feinstein* at Galerie Gmurzynska, this wildness takes the form of an exploration of the soft, malleable contours of sexuality when it is subjected to essential elements: fur, bodies, stone, ceramics. Also: light and space, two mostly intangible dimensions of how we understand where, and what, we are. In their “Manifesto Volume 1,” the Haas Brothers write that their work is, ambitiously, part of a “journey to extinguish shame.” Which means it’s about being comfortable naked. And nudity is an essential component of the new work in *Feinstein*, which traverses the differences between body and object, revelation and obscurity.

Their exploration of sexuality is often playful. Many pieces have punny titles and are invested with a sense of humor about how and what we desire (one piece has balls you can only reach if you get on your hands and knees, part the fur rear, and cup

them). Their work also echoes rigorous reconsiderations of sexuality in other fields of inquiry. They respond indirectly to Michel Foucault’s famous “repressive hypothesis,” which argues that the proliferation of discourses around sex are illusory in their liberating appearance and in fact represent strategies of repression by essentially boxing desires into categories of containment (“coercive transpositions”). The Haas Brothers offer a sexuality embedded in unboxed curiosity, in unexpected form. Two massive cocks slide through a table. A vase opens with a distinctly vaginal ripple. (Sexuality revealed for what it is: everywhere, in everything.) Their work also investigates other updated notions of sexuality, from Guy Hocquenghem’s revolutionary assholes to Judith Butler’s troubled gender roles, by reinforcing not only the multiplicity of the forms of desire but also their mutability too, offering up shapely, creaturely objects that suggest living things and their attendant, sloppy, gorgeous sex: limp flutes droop, balls hid under fur, cocks impale rears.

Despite the philosophical breadth of their work, it is essentially—crucially—accessible and graspable, situating at the center of its spatial poetics (literally: a making) our bodies, our sex lives, and the taboos that regulate both. They consider the felt, sensual elements of this discourse: the fact of bodies, the fact of those bodies’ desire. Their work retools what it means to be (or to make) a body and for it to be gendered, sexual, human. It is sex by other means. The Haas Brothers have written that they “try to

understand WHY anything we experience or feel IS AS IT IS" (*italics mine*). It is as it is: a perfectly balanced, ouroboros-like simile that their work intentionally unbalances. They upset its simple configuration to transcend the formal and visual certainties (of form and objectivity) that it implies. For the Haas Brothers, things are seldom as they are—and Feinstein takes this as its basic starting principle, continuously revising our expectations of an object's representational and functional possibilities by integrating multifarious visual references that critique received notions of a thing's possible meanings. Is it object or animal? (In what ways does the difference matter?) "Hairy Belafonte Dromedary" is a double-hump bench from their creaturely Beast series. Unlike most benches, this one has legs—and fur and ears. In its animal-like form, it is uniquely present, almost living. Things are never as they are. Rather, they are also something else, doubled or tripled or quadrupled into visual locutions couched within other doublings. Their various titles nod to this doubled presence: "Stoney Bologna," "Large from the Back," "Donut Table." They fold references to celebrities, food, and sex, into objects that are, in turn, folded into other ideas of objectivity—and wildness. Wildness, like sexuality, transcends our binaries: seriousness and humor, inside and outside, human and un-human. It upsets received distinctions and widens toward larger experiences and notions of environment—and our selves in an environment.

The pieces in Feinstein—as well as in their other works—are frequently named af-

ter a celebrity, conferring a certain familiarity to an object that may, at first glance, seem somewhat obscure in its use and shape. A day bed is named "Notorious B.E.D." A large dining table is "Augustus Gloop's Golden Ticket"—a particularly funny and salient reference redolent in its sonic quality—I keep thinking about language when I think about the Haas Brothers—with some of the trademark qualities of their work, from the occasionally august aura of their gloopy work (by which I mean their sometimes fluid, organic look) to the golden flicker of their gorgeous and spare use of color. Perhaps I think about language with regard to their work because, like spoken and written language, with its rules to be bent, broken, and rethought in order to not only communicate, but to obscure too, the Haas Brothers' work argues for a design that is a distinctly linguistic tool, one in service of ideas that modify, open, and reimagine our spatial and visual sensibilities. They have written several manifestos about their work, though conceptual openness of their writing reads less rigid than typical, proscriptive manifestos and more like loose, roving poetics of space and design.

In this sense, the Haas Brothers operate with a sixth, proprioceptive sense of design, making objects that shape space in order to make us aware of our place within it. Most of us are rarely surprised by design, especially good design, which too often merely manages our expectations of a given space, embellishing rooms and corners and ceilings and windows and walls without ever inviting us to question what domesticated space—and

our occupation of that space—means in the first place. (And, conversely, what undomesticated, wild space means.) The poet Charles Olson wrote in his essay "Proprioception," a manifesto the Brothers' own writing somewhat echoes, perhaps the most well-known and articulate discussions of this sixth sense:

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the data of depth sensibility/the 'body of us as object which spontaneously or of its own order produces experience, of 'depth' VIZ SENSIBILITY WITH THE ORGANISM BY MOVEMENT OF ITS OWN TISSUES

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It is subjective experience, activating (and validating) the non-objective self's perception of space, objects. The Haas Brothers incorporate this idea in their own manifesto, updating it for a moment in which that organism, even in the movement of its own tissues, has been infiltrated and augmented by technological advances. They declare: "Our perception is a half-truth, but it is perfectly suited to us."

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Maybe this is why the uncanny valley exists: when looking at a humanoid robot, we notice too many details... we see some human qualities, but we understand that humanity is lacking, so we are forced to consider all these eerie bits of information and are left only with a feeling of what made it un-human.

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In Feinstein, the Haas Brothers sexualize (even transgender) objects, giving them male and female genitalia, folds, flaccidity, and erectness, in order to call into question what it means to occupy space as a body

that desires. Coupled with desire, their work also reminds us that we are bodies that fantasize—both publicly and in private. Feinstein marks the difference by erasing them. Double Penetration—a table impaled by two large cocks—skirts both the pornographic and the mundane by formally integrating the private realm of desire and fantasy into the public realm of dining at a table large enough for multiple people. While Double Penetration requires three bodies, the table offers a place for more, even though its surface is uneven, entirely upending the notion of a public by converting those who sit at it into voyeurs of uneasy circumstance. This uneasiness is energetic, expansive. It makes you think. The Haas Brothers dynamically reposition you—the you that sees, but also the you that sits, lies down, walks around, lives a life—and your relation to space. And like in sex, sometimes the work of Feinstein requires you to get down on your hands and knees to see some of its detail. Sometimes you have to angle your head under. Sometimes you have to reach around and touch.

- Andrew Durbin



CONVERSATION WITH SIMON
AND NICOLAI HAAS

I have been a fan of your work for a while. Last year during Basel a mutual friend introduced us. Now a year later, we are organizing this great exhibit. This exhibition in the gallery, as well as the gold reserve, is super exciting. What were some of your ideas and your inspirations?

N — Just the idea of showing in this historical gold vault is super inspiring. We came up with an extra special piece called “Augustus Gloop’s Golden Ticket” because it just made sense to put something like that in there. It’s our biggest Hex tile object yet. This show also became a lot about returning to our roots. Our father is from Rottweil in Southern Germany, so showing in Zurich so close-by to where our father was raised inspired us to give homage to the motherland. “FeinStein” felt appropriate and this was a good way to poke a little fun at our roots. This was a big return to stone for us. Our father was a stone mason and carver since we were very young. We grew up carving all the time. It was our first medium in which we could be considered masters. Stone is fantastic but so dang brutal on our bodies that it really led us to not work in it for about ten years. This is our first collection in stone and I think that’s a very big deal for us. It’s like reuniting with an old friend.

S — We really understand stone because we grew up carving it with our dad. Our dad had learned sculpting from his father, Siegfried Haas, in Rottweil, Germany—very close to Switzerland. Niki and I spent lots of time there when we were young. Zurich and Basel exposed us to a level of high culture we had

never seen in Austin. We are honored to be showing in such a great Swiss gallery and in such an historic room. We felt that since we were returning to our cultural motherland, we should return to our roots with stone and adopt some dry Germanic rhyme-humor by naming it “FeinStein” (Fine Stone). We decided to make a collection of stone pieces that attempt to amplify the softness and fleshiness that beautifully honed, Portuguese marble can possess. The centerpiece is our largest hex-tiled piece yet, a dining table named “Augustus Gloop’s Golden Ticket,” another humorously Swiss title which is a nod to the fact that this show is taking place in a former gold vault.

What do you love about the color gold?

N — My favorite thing about gold is that it has instant admiration from almost everyone. It is very fine, luxurious, and coveted. We often create forms that are intended to inspire emotional response from the viewer. These forms are often humorous in nature because a joke can be the quickest way to get someone to open up—to emote—to feel empathy towards an object. If you cover a joke in the form of a sculpture in gold, it just hits it home all the more strongly. If something is humorous, charismatic, AND beautiful all at the same time, it can really carry your message effectively. Gold is a really great way to do this. Whether someone understands the deeper message or not they will relate to the material if it is gold in color because the attraction is universal. Gold is our foot in the door before the deal is closed.

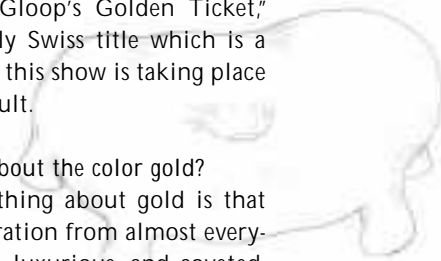
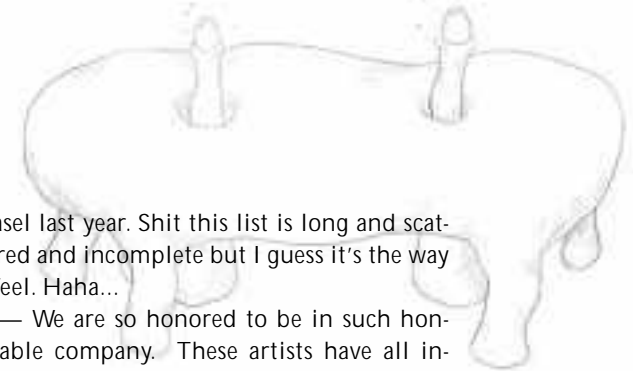
S — I am obsessed with gold. It has the richest glow of any other material. I love the way metal reflects light, and gold has a particularly deep-feeling reflection, and it is so purely saturated at the same time—very beautiful. Gold is also so soft—you can bend and pull it apart with your hands, like an extremely hard taffy. I think we’re just hard-wired to love it. There hasn’t been a civilization that didn’t lust after it.

The gallery has a history of working with multi-talented artists such as Zaha Hadid, Richard Meier and Karl Lagerfeld, among others. Who are some of the artists that you admire?

N — I admire these three for sure! My earliest memories of interacting with and absorbing art come from visiting the Menil Museum in Houston, TX. My family would drive from Austin just to see the exhibits. The Rothko temple blew my mind. The Cy Twombly building there is beyond words and the work there is stunning. I really admire lots of film makers too—Pasolini, Visconti, Antonioni, Cronenberg, Fassbinder, Kubrick, Hopper. And music—I think music has been inspiring throughout my life more than anything else. King Crimson, Yes, Genesis, Kanye West, Procol Harum, This Heat, Jay Z, NWA, Paul McCartney, Billy Joel, Frank Ocean, Tame Impala. I think Howard Stern is a genius. And Los Angeles has had a bunch of great museum shows recently—Turrell and Burden at the LACMA, and Kelley at the MOCA, were fantastic. The Max Ernst show was next level at the Beyeler in

Basel last year. Shit this list is long and scattered and incomplete but I guess it’s the way I feel. Haha...

S — We are so honored to be in such honorable company. These artists have all inspired us and taught us more about thinking on a high level. I feel like the artists I’ve resonated with most investigate and experiment constantly. David Hockney has influenced me the most of any artist. I think his use of color hits me in a way that I can relate to. His sweetness and wryness are evident in his depictions of people and things, and he relentlessly pursues a deeper understanding of the world he has opened through his art. His work stamped me with a desire to investigate and innovate and to show my best emotions in my work as he has. Rainer Fassbinder showed me high level, theatrical, and unashamedly sexual representations, and helped me investigate dark irony and hugely exciting representations of realistic gay affairs. His aesthetic and his demeanor became a sort of model for me in my twenties. I admired his unflinching vision and his ability to immerse me in his world. Andy Warhol’s movies, especially Bike Boy, showed me how fascinating it can be to watch emotions get deconstructed on camera. It started my interest in investigating psychology in artwork. Douglas Hofstadter’s writings changed my whole life. He gave me my passion for investigating reality and understanding myself fully. Lucian Freud showed me how physical paintings could be, and informed much of what I know about how full paint can feel.



Candy Darling inspired me to be unashamedly myself, Klaus Nomi taught me not to be afraid of pursuing an unorthodox style, and Warren Beatty's charming nonchalance is the essence of how I want to behave as a businessman.

Some of the world's most important artists such as Pablo Picasso or Yves Klein were born into artists' families. How important to your work was your creative upbringing?

N — Hugely important. My family instilled in me that I could be confident in the arts in whatever medium I chose. I was adamant that I was going to be a professional hockey player when I was younger. If it were not for my upbringing I may never have moved into the arts or even felt compelled to do so. A lot of how we got here was the fact that we knew we could carve stone, work wood, weld and blacksmith, paint, sculpt, play music, etc. Artistic expression (practically and conceptually) was such a familiar language for us that returning to it after childhood was nearly unavoidable.

S — Our parents had a huge impact on us, as did our brother. We're all very close and very creative. We had a bubble of beauty surrounding us as kids. Our mom sang opera and taught us to write and sing and see beauty in everything. Our dad taught us to be curious, kind, and steady, and he encouraged our artistic growth from the time we were very young. Lukas, our older brother, taught us to be unafraid of the world. He taught us our charm, and he taught us to express ourselves physically and verbally.

Their influences were a strong foundation which almost made our path seem like an inevitability. Artists like Picasso must have had similar experiences of the world as children—learning to investigate and express themselves freely, and to honor curiosity above conformity.

I think your design creations bridge the humane together with nature. What would you see as your main inspiration?

N — Human interaction. The whole point of everything we make is to integrate socially using our objects to do so. The objects are products of the larger idea of wanting to speak to people on a deeper level than just verbal communication. Nature, Animalia, Psychedelia are all inherent in our work, but really just as a means to get our message across.

S — I am the most driven by an impulse to understand what makes certain things so beautiful. I look at nature a lot and wonder about the ways that things form on earth. I think a lot about emotion, why we feel it, how certain objects can impact it. I think I am essentially just devoted to curiosity, and I want to express myself as freely and honestly as possible.

Having been to your studio and having witnessed how intricate the creation of each work is amazed me. Anything you would like to share about the process?

N — Haha... yes... all our processes take FOREVER! But with good reason. I take joy in every moment I am working on a piece.

There is a real satisfaction in locking into a groove with an art piece and sticking with it for hours, days, weeks, months, years! I am so lucky to get to do this with my twin brother, and I'm so lucky I get to futz around and explore all day long. Generally, Simon invents new material applications and scientific/philosophical theory to support our work, while I sculpt and sketch. He loves to paint and I love drawing cartoons. A lot of what we do is cultivating feelings. Trying to catch the humor of a cartoon in a couch for instance—a seemingly odd endeavor. But trust me, the result is really satisfying. Our growing knowledge of material and the physics behind them is all manipulated in support of giving us a louder voice in which to speak with.

S — Niki and I have really developed a fluid way to work together. Each of us constantly teaches the other in surprising and inspiring ways. Niki has an ability to put life into objects that I've never seen before—something I am totally incapable of. I tend to lose myself in thinking into. Niki has a freedom of spirit and a curiosity that breathe life into my creative process, and I have a philosophical and scientific approach to material that helps realize his expressions as beautifully as possible. We are always just playing around—we're like kids who work really hard instead of playing with toys.

Do you have a favorite piece in the show?

N — Yes... I really like, "Double Penetration." It's the largest single stone piece we've ever done, and I love that it incorporates bronze

and glass, all such fine materials. I really love the fact that something that has taken this much effort, time, and money to produce, is depicting a lewd sex act.

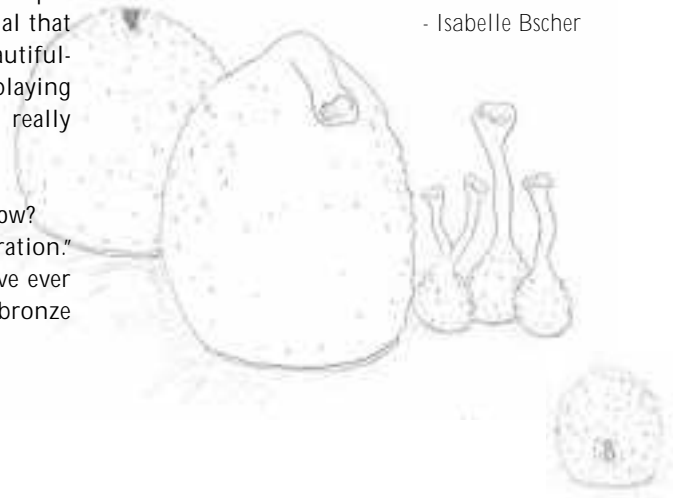
S — I am pretty fond of, "Augustus Gloop's Golden Ticket." It has some of the waviest edges of any hex tile piece we've done, something I'm obsessed with and that the hex tile does really beautifully.

Any plans for any road trips?

N — Yes! Always! I used to drive across country several times a year. LA to NYC and back, and would tour playing drums all over the USA. Maybe soon I'll do it again. For now I've just been driving all over California. It's one of the most beautiful places in the world. This summer I definitely plan on trips to Joshua Tree, Big Sur, the Sequoias, and Yosemite.

S — The Redwoods for our birthday this September. California has the most magnificent giant forest—it's thousands of years old and the trees are unimaginably big. We like to camp and go on day hikes through the forest.

- Isabelle Bscher



THE MULTI-TALENTED HAAS FAMILY DOES TO ART WHAT THE BACH FAMILY DID TO MUSIC;
ONE IS TRANSPORTED TO ANOTHER REALM THROUGH THE EYE RATHER THAN THE EAR.
NIKI AND SIMON HAVE COME OF AGE AND WILL SOAR WITH THE GREAT ONES.

TERRENCE MALICK

HAIRY BELAFONTE
2014





HAIRY BELAFONTE
2013





HAIRY BELAFONTE
2013

DOUBLE-HUMP BENCH FROM THE BEAST SERIES, WITH
ICELANDIC SHEEPSKIN, CAST BRONZE DONG AND
CAST BRONZE CHESTER CHEETAH FEET





NOTORIOUS B.E.D.
2014

BLACK ICELANDIC SHEEPSKIN, WITH CARVED EBONY HORNS
AND CAST BRONZE COYOTE FEET



BEAST CLUB CHAIR AND BEAST FOOT STOOL
2013

ICELANDIC SHEEPSKIN,
CAST BRONZE





BEAST FOOT STOOL
2013

ICELANDIC SHEEPSKIN,
CAST BRONZE



AUGUSTUS GLOOP'S GOLDEN TICKET
2014

HEX DINING TABLE,
BRASS HEX TILE, STEEL
AND RESIN





HEX LAMP
2013

BRASS TILE WITH BLOWN
GLASS SHADE

SMALL FROM THE BACK
2014

SIDE TABLE IN STONE WITH PENETRATING DONG LAMP IN
BRONZE WITH GLASS SHADE



LARGE FROM THE BACK
2014

SIDE TABLE IN STONE WITH PENETRATING DONG LAMP IN
BRONZE WITH GLASS SHADE



STONEY BOLOGNA

2014

LARGE BENCH IN STONE



RETOUCHING NOT READY!!

STONEY BOLOGNA
2014

LARGE BENCH IN STONE



RETOUCHING NOT READY!!

DONUT TABLE
2014

LARGE COFFE TABLE IN STONE WITH
HOLE IN THE MIDDLE



RETOUCHING NOT READY!!

DOUBLE PENETRATION

2014

DINING TABLE IN STONE WITH TWO PENETRATING
DONG LAMPS WITH GLASS SHADES



RETOUCHING NOT READY!!

IT TAKES GUTS TO SUGGEST SOMETHING AS RADICAL AS
THE HAAS BROTHERS CREATIONS.

DONATELLA VERSACE



ACCRETION VASES
2014

CERAMIC





ACCRETION VASE
2014
CERAMIC





FURRY VAGINA
ACCRETION VASE
2014

CERAMIC





ACCRETION VASE
2014

CERAMIC





ACCRETION VASES

2014

CERAMIC





ACCRETION VASE

2014

CERAMIC





GORDIE HOWE AND LARGE MARGE
ACCRETION VASES
2014



LARGE MARGE ACCRETION VASE
2014

CERAMIC





LARGE MARGE
ACCRETION VASE
2014

CERAMIC





ACCRETION VASES

2013

CERAMIC



ACCRETION VASE

2013

CERAMIC





ACCRETION VASES

2013

CERAMIC



ACCRETION VASES
2014

CERAMIC



ACCRETION VASES
2014
CERAMIC





ACCRETION VASES

2014

CERAMIC



ACCRETION VASES
2014

CERAMIC





ACCRETION VASE
2014

CERAMIC



ACCRETION VASE
2014

CERAMIC





ABOUT THE HAAS BROTHERS

The Haas Brothers (b. 1984), Nikolai and Simon, studied stone carving and construction under their father in their hometown of Austin, TX for many years. After being approached by friends who had heard they were adept Designers, Nikolai and Simon began working together on small design and construction projects. In September of 2010 they were asked to design materials for and construct a small Johnston Marklee project at Sony Studios in Los Angeles and 'The Haas Brothers' was born. In the four years since, the brothers have continued to grow their design studio and spend their time pro-

totyping forms and experimenting with materials, surface textures and processes. Their company evolved into a multifaceted operation and has garnered international accolades for set design and props for print and video, one of a kind fashion works and their highly original furniture and object designs and art. Former projects and collaborations included the Louis Vuitton store in Shanghai, the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, the Guerlain flagship in Paris as well as the new Ace hotel in downtown Los Angeles among many others. The Haas Brothers live and work in Los Angeles, California.

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HAAS BROTHERS
FEINSTEIN

JUNE TO AUGUST 2014

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