

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

R & Company Presents

Afreaks

A new series of works by
The Haas Brothers and The Haas
Sisters



R & Company is thrilled to announce the arrival of *Afreaks*, a series of sculptural furniture and objects designed and produced by **The Haas Brothers** and **The Haas Sisters**, in South Africa and Los Angeles, 2014-2015.



The *Afreaks* series is comprised of fantastical beaded works co-created by Niki and Simon Haas, known as The Haas Brothers, with The Haas Sisters, a group of women from South African townships. Each design is a collaborative effort between the Brothers and Sisters, from sketching to sculpting to stitching. The resulting design objects are extraordinarily expressive forms that embody the history of indigenous beading cultures as well as the Haas' unique design aesthetic.

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The *Afreaks* project started out as a kind of design pen-pal exchange. In 2014, The Haas Brothers saw the work that the beaders had made for Monkeybiz (a nonprofit organization that employs South African women as beadwork artisans) at Design Indaba while in Cape Town to exhibit with R & Company for the World Design Capital events. Niki and Simon were in awe of the beaders' artistry, the incredible forms and colors of their beaded objects. They found echoes of the same anthropomorphic playfulness they had explored in their own *Beast* series. Monkeybiz proposed a collaborative project with the women artists, and Trevyn and Julian McGowan from Southern Guild Gallery helped coordinate the details on the ground in Cape Town. Sketches were emailed, a trip to work with the women was booked and an extraordinary relationship developed. As the work progressed, the group of beaders began to refer to themselves as The Haas Sisters, a name that reflects the spirit of joy and genuine connection felt on both sides.

The Haas Brothers and The Haas Sisters project is a natural extension of Simon and Niki Haas' commitment to open a dialogue about social concerns through art and design. While past projects have focused on gender and sexuality, this new venture illuminates issues of creativity and authorship as they relate to privilege. Additionally, the project furthers the



deep spirit of collaboration that is a vital part of twins Simon and Niki's work. The Haas Sisters collaborated not only with The Haas Brothers, but also with one another, working on large pieces in a communal studio — a departure from their solo work on the small-scale beaded toys typical of Monkeybiz. The studio is a locus of community, joy, and mutual support, and both The Haas Brothers and The Haas Sisters have called the experience life-changing.

Of the project, Simon Haas says, "South Africa showed us that beauty comes in many forms, and the beauty we witnessed from The Haas Sisters of Khayelitsha has impacted our view of the world more deeply than anything else we've experienced. We embarked on this project understanding it as a journey rather than a means to produce a product, so these objects serve as records of the most beautiful meeting of minds we could have asked for than as objects with any concrete function. We present the beauty that is the spirit of joy that humans, no matter their circumstance, are capable of producing. We are designing a new vernacular for this classic craft with the understanding that a person's creativity is their most valuable resource."

The experiences that Niki and Simon Haas had in their travels to South Africa to create the works alongside the beaders were profoundly moving for them. They were exposed to the reality that limited access to basic needs makes it harder for artists to express themselves freely, unafraid of the financial ramifications of their self-expression. In response, The Haas Brothers' continued dialogue with The Haas Sisters will be further developed by sustainable philanthropic efforts coordinated through R & Company and a partner 501(c)(3). By giving back financially and responding to their needs, the gallery and The Haas Brothers hope to create a conduit for their collaborators that will promote their creative freedom and the realization of goals. The publication that accompanies the project, *The Haas Volume 2: Afreaks*—co-published by R & Company and Damiani—contains extraordinarily moving and personal texts and images that articulate the project's message of hope about the power of design as an agent for change and a tool to promote greater social equality.

The works were previewed at the 2015 Guild Fair in Cape Town and will make their North American debut in R & Company's booth at this year's Design Miami. Shortly thereafter they will be included in the exhibition, *Beauty—Cooper Hewitt Design Triennial*, curated by Andrea Lipps and Ellen Lupton. The exhibition opens in New York at the Cooper Hewitt on February 12, 2016 and closes on August 21, 2016.

About The Haas Brothers

The Haas Brothers, twins Nikolai and Simon (b. 1984 Los Angeles), had a creative upbringing in Austin, Texas where their opera singer mother, actor brother, and sculptor father taught them to play music, write, sing and paint. Starting in their early teens, they studied stone carving under their father, mastering the craft before leaving home. The twins parted ways in 2003 to pursue their artistic goals individually. Simon studied painting at RISD while Nikolai toured as a musician with artists like Vincent Gallo, Sean Lennon and Jim O'Rourke through his early 20s. In 2007, the two reconvened in Los Angeles to tour with the band RRIICCEE, then founded the HAAS BROTHERS there in 2010 when L.A.



architects Johnston Marklee offered a chance to collaborate on a friend's project. The brothers received attention right away for their nimble craftsmanship and clever use of materials, and the few years since have seen them evolve from fabricators and collaborators to studio art innovators.

In their current works, The Haas Brothers explore aesthetic and formal themes related to nature, science fiction, sexuality, psychedelia and color theory. Their mastery and unique use of materials ranging from brass, bronze, porcelain and fur to highly technical resins and polyurethane, matched with their insatiable curiosity and remarkable visual intelligence, sets them apart as artists.

The Haas Brothers currently live and work in Los Angeles, California.

<http://www.thehaasbrothers.com>

About R & Company

R & Company is a gallery committed to historic and contemporary design exhibition and education. Founded by Zesty Meyers and Evan Snyderman in 1997, it presents groundbreaking exhibitions and publications of both historic significance and emerging talent. R & Company represents a diverse program of international design from North America, South America, Europe, and Asia, produced between 1945 and today. R & Company has an extensive archive, library, and collection that chronicle the rapid ascent of the design market. In addition to the exhibition program, gallery, and publications, Meyers and Snyderman contribute widely to publications and lecture frequently about design.

www.r-and-company.com

Images:

Top: The Haas Sisters, Cape Town, South Africa, 2015. Photo: Joe Kramm/R & Company.

Bottom: Rip horn chair from the *Afreaks* series. Designed and made by The Haas Brothers with The Haas Sisters, 2014-2015; Glass beads, wire, wood, mixed fiber stuffing, and cast bronze. Photo: Joe Kramm/R & Company.

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