

FOTOFOCUS

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Doug + Mike Starn: Gravity of Light

Through December 30, 2012

Holy Cross Church at the Mount Adams Monastery

Cincinnati, OH – Through December 30, 2012 FOTOFOCUS and the Cincinnati Art Museum present *Gravity of Light*, a pivotal and immersive installation by

acclaimed contemporary artists Doug and Mike Starn on view in the abandoned deconsecrated 19th century Holy Cross Church. On the National Register of Historic Places and located in the Mount Adams Monastery, Holy Cross Church is imbued with cultural significance for Cincinnatians. This unique architectural ruin exists out of time and presented the artists with an unprecedented opportunity to work with a historic space. *Gravity of Light* is on view Wednesdays through Sundays, 12:00 noon to 5:00 pm.

“For more than two decades, the Starns have deftly explored what for many remain ineffable subjects,” said James Crump, Organizer and Chief Curator for the Cincinnati Art Museum. “The divinity of human existence and the phenomenology of light, perception, and enlightenment scratch only the surface of these artists’ aesthetic investigations. The Starns’ best works are concerned with earthly realities that suggest the impermanence of beauty.”

The church nave, stripped to the ribs of its vaulting with the decorative plaster of its walls crumbling, presents an extraordinary opportunity to create an elemental installation that accentuates the intrinsic power of the space. “Seeing beneath the skin as the plaster has fallen away,” said Doug and Mike Starn, “you can see the floor boards the joists holding you up, the lathing on the walls, it’s like holding your hand up to the Sun, and seeing what’s inside.”

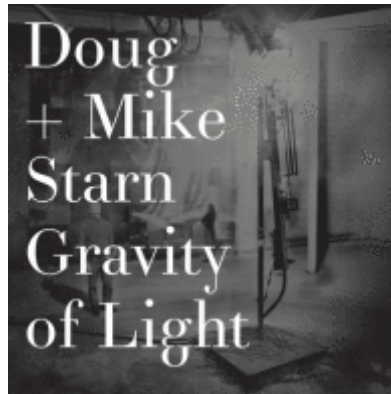
Central to this off-site installation is an open carbon arc lamp, an adaptation of an 1804 model by British physicist Humphry Davy, which burns with an intensity and brilliance emulating the experience of the sun that is too dazzling for the naked eye. Surrounding the arc light and illuminated by it are artworks from five intertwined photographic bodies of work in monumental scale whose subjects both emblemize and give witness to the dual character of light, namely its power to both give life and to destroy it. In one series, the silhouetted gnarled branches of a tree evoke the rhizomatic neuronal network of the mind. In another, desiccated leaves, recorded in filigreed detail, signal both decay and renewal. In

yet another series, ill-fated moths are shown drawn to the light that will destroy them, their images pinned, momentarily, on photographic paper.

Towering over *Gravity of Light* is an image of the eighth-century Buddhist monk Ganjin who, though blind, saw that black is filled with light: illumination comes from within. A portrait of an 18th-century alchemist's experiment reveals the abstraction of the human body's system of networks. Equal parts sculpture, scientific experiment, and photography, *Gravity of Light* suspends the viewer in a chamber of sensorial and experiential discovery. The installation shows us we are all conductors: absorbers and emitters of the universe's energy.

Identical twins Doug and Mike Starn grew up in New Jersey and attended School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Today, their work is widely exhibited and represented in major museum collections. Concerned largely with chaos, interconnection and interdependence, time, and physics they defy categorization as artists, effectively combining traditionally separate disciplines such as photography, sculpture, architecture, and site-specific projects. Their sculptural installation *Big Bambú* created a sensation when it was mounted on the roof of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2010 and later by the Peggy Guggenheim Museum during the 2011 Venice Biennale. *Gravity of Light* is among the best examples that show the Starns' hybrid and interdisciplinary approach to art making that cuts across media.

Just published by Rizzoli, *Doug + Mike Starn: Gravity of Light*, with text by Jan Aman, Doug Starn and Mike Starn, and edited by James Crump celebrates the full breadth of the Starn twins' innovative photographic career.



FOTOFOCUS, a nonprofit arts organization, champions the ubiquity of photography and its important role in contemporary culture. **FOTOFOCUS** recaptures the spirit of Cincinnati's legacy as an epicenter of art production and creative exchange, and seeks to revitalize that spirit for the 21st century. Acting as a catalyst for institutional collaboration and community engagement, **FOTOFOCUS** organizes a month-long biennial celebration spotlighting independently programmed exhibitions of historical and contemporary photography and lens-based art. For more information visit www.FOTOFOCUScincinnati.org

The **Cincinnati Art Museum** is supported by the generosity of individuals and businesses that give annually to the Arts Wave. The Ohio Arts Council helped fund the Cincinnati Art Museum with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. The Cincinnati Art Museum gratefully acknowledges operating support from the City of Cincinnati, as well as our members. Hours of operation are Tuesday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Art Museum is closed on Mondays. The Art Museum is FREE, EVERYDAY! The Art Museum is located at 953 Eden Park Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45202. For general information, call (513) 639-2995 or visit www.cincinnatiartmuseum.org.

