

dispatches

NOTES FROM ALL OVER

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NEW YORK In the Sticks

THE ULTIMATE ROOFTOP PARTY
ILLUSTRATIONS BY GRAHAM ROUMIEU



ON A WARM MANHATTAN MORNING, visitors to the Metropolitan Museum of Art seek shade in an unlikely place: the roof. There, thousands of 30- to 40-foot bamboo poles have been lashed together to create a monstrous, 50-foot-tall wave cresting toward the lush canopy of Central Park. Inside, visitors wander tentatively through a shaded network of ramps that wind, rise and fall through the piece. At the northern edge of the roof, the wave opens suddenly outward, surprising explorers with a commanding view of the George Washington Bridge in the distance.

Named for the 1972 Cheech & Chong album *Big Bambú*, this is the Met's latest roof installation. Like an actual forest, it will be in constant flux until it is dismantled in late October, with close to a dozen rock climbers brought in from New York's Shawangunk Mountains adding new growth to it daily. This morning, only one climber is clipped in, lashing poles together with nylon climbing rope, using a combination of clove hitches and square knots.

The artists behind *Big Bambú*, identical twins Doug and Mike Starn, have a knack for bringing the great outdoors into unnatural environments. Their last New York installation, *See it split, see it change*, transformed Manhattan's South Ferry subway station into a late fall scene of bald tree branches and dead leaves. But nothing they've done previously has been on the scale of the 5,000-square-foot *Bambú*.

Near the exit, visitors sit propped against some of the installation's 5,000 poles. The Starns, who are wearing matching shorts, are finishing each other's sentences. "We never dreamed how joyful it would be to work on it," says Doug. "...when you're up there really high, working on the edge," continues Mike. En route to the exit with her family, a nature-starved New Yorker approaches the brothers. "Thank you," she says, placing a hand on Doug's shoulder. And then again, in great earnest, "Thank you."—SHONQUIS MORENO