



INTO THE WILD

Brothers David and Ari Wiseman are creating their own version of Eden in the heart of Frogtown.

BY **MACKENZIE WAGONER**
PORTRAIT BY **MARK HANAUER**

Ari (left) and David Wiseman at their studio—prior to renovations.

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—Ari Wiseman

LOS ANGELES IS GOING BACK INTO the wild. While the city continues its billion-dollar effort to transform the cement banks abutting the L.A. River into lush parkland, Pasadena-born brothers Ari and David Wiseman are following suit. The two are replacing a riverfront cement mixing plant in Frogtown with an Eden of their own, an ambitious space that is set to open early next year.

The duo will surround the 30,000-square-foot compound with verdant gardens featuring sycamores and London planes. The earthly delights will continue inside the property's two refurbished buildings, where behind mystical-looking bronze gates will lie a wonderland of porcelain and bronze works. Ceramic cherry blossoms, pomegranates, rabbits and monkeys are poised to propagate on the studio's shelves, just overlooking the foundry, where David—a celebrated designer, known for transforming flora and fauna subject matter into ceiling installations and elaborate chandeliers for clients such as Christian Dior, Commune and Michael Smith—creates them.

After David parted ways with the Manhattan gallery R & Company last November, the Rhode Island School of Design graduate decided to expand his practice from a neighboring industrial building just two miles away. The new space, refurbished by Ryall Porter Sheridan, a New York-based architectural firm, will allow for larger commissions to be drawn on the expansive floor and realized in one go—thus allowing for faster turnaround times for his growing list of clientele. And no one is better to guide his booming career than his greatest supporter and most reliable critic, his older brother Ari, who just stepped down as deputy director at the Guggenheim Museum

in New York, a position he held since 2010.

"I wanted to make a change," says Ari. "David and I have been discussing his work and artistic interests since he was in art school. The time was right for both of us. All signs pointed to it." The sprawling riverfront property certainly didn't hurt. For David, its vista includes places he has enjoyed going to with his family growing up. "The view of Elysian Park and Dodger Stadium really made it the perfect spot," says David, who finds inspiration in his environment above anything else.

As for his bronzed pieces, David says he is encouraged to give immortality to temporal pleasures. "You know when you look at a cherry blossom tree?" David asks. "My goal is to capture that fleeting sense of beauty and to try to preserve it into something more permanent in the materials I know how to manipulate." Those materials will be in abundance in the compound's sun-soaked Butler building, where Wiseman can cast his growing library of cacti, stone fruit and more than 90 oak branches. "The branches have this calligraphy to them—gestures I love," he says of the twisting arms, which he likens to pieces in a railroad set. Across a small garden, another building will showcase the resulting art.

"As David makes something in the studio and wants to imagine how it relates to other works, he can have that experience," says Ari of the decision to utilize one building as a gallery space, which will display his brother's creations as well as those of other designers and galleries that they are interested in collaborating with. There, David can "fully realize his vision and present the range of works in an ongoing way." Because, much like the species the young artist casts, the work is always evolving.



A detail from *Ginkgo Canopy*, a ceiling installation for a private residence in New York.



ART, CULTURE AND THE CITY

"Given the iconic and exotic landscape paired with the opulent lifestyle that Hollywood exudes, I was thinking 'How could I make the haze in the air a little more mystical?'"
—David Benjamin Sherry



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