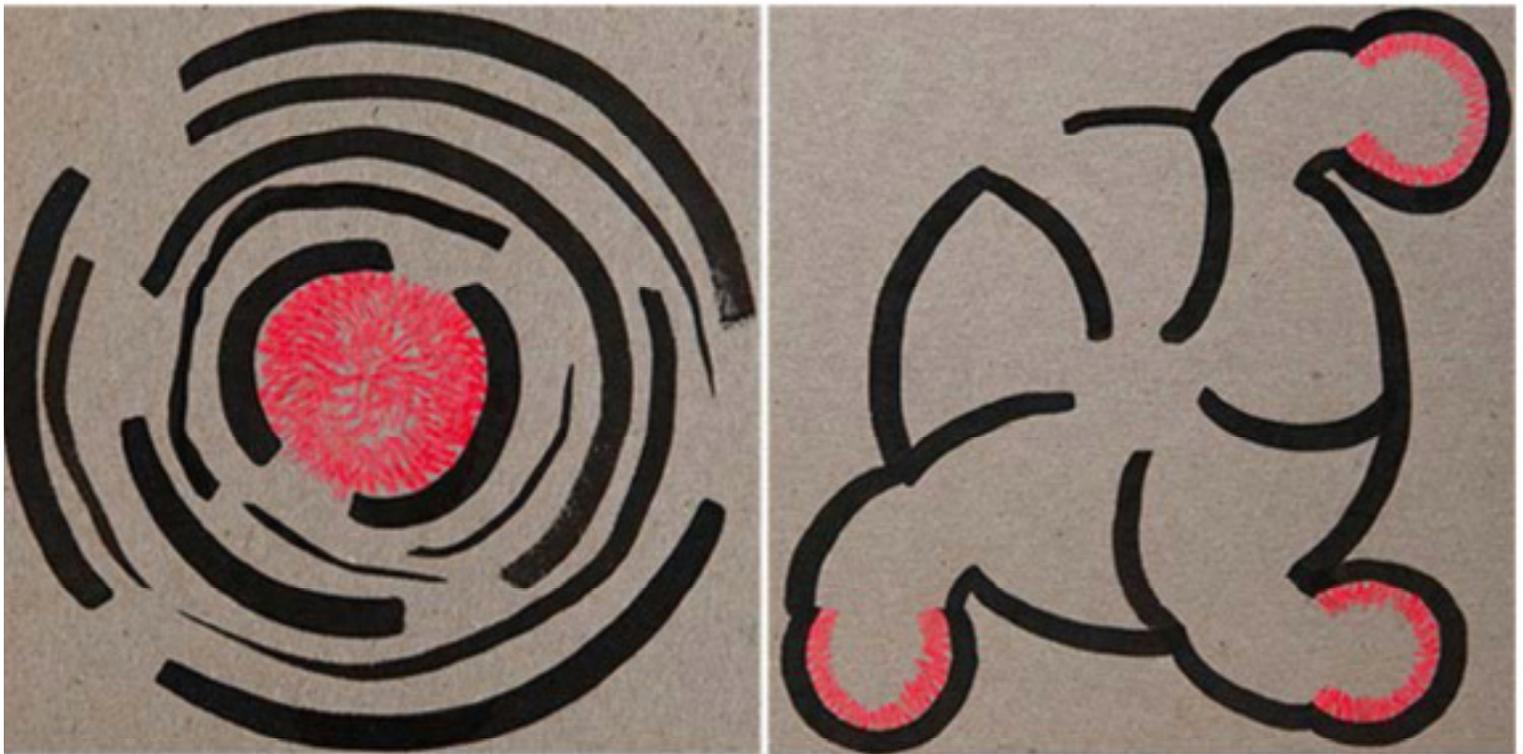


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Liz Glynn on Building a Cosmological Yurt for Doug Aitken's Art Train



Courtesy Redling Fine Art, Los Angeles Liz Glynn, "Maze Studies after Theoretical Physics," 2013 (Left: The Big Bang Theory / Right: Hubble's Law); by Rozalia Jovanovic Published: September 6, 2013

Like the universe 13 billion years ago, **Doug Aitken's** roving festival **Station to Station** will start with a big bang. But rather than a dense, hot, expanding cosmos, this one is a small dark hut-like structure, where visitors will feel their way through a labyrinth, pushing aside heavy curtains made of industrial salt. If they're bored, they can leave. But as their headlamps will be the only source of light in the space, if

they did, it would become completely dark.

"Model Universe," the maze thematically designed to evoke the Big Bang theory of the Universe, is an installation by artist **Liz Glynn**, one of five artists chosen by Aitken to design a yurt, a portable dwelling structure used by nomads in central Asia. The festival, which kicks off with a party in New York on Friday evening, will head cross-country via train to Oakland, CA making stops in numerous cities along the way including Pittsburgh, Santa Fe, and Los Angeles. At each stop as musicians, artists, and writers decamp for concerts and festivities, so too will the five yurts, each designed by a visual artist—Glynn, **Carsten Höller**, **Ernesto Neto**, **Kenneth Anger**, and **Urs Fischer**. Höller's "Ball-and-Frisbee House" is a yellow donut-like fabric construction with holes through which guests can throw balls and Frisbees. Neto's will furnish an "atmospheric space," according to a statement, where light will flow through colored fabrics and the senses of smell and touch will be "reawakened." Anger's glowing red tent will showcase three of his most cherished films and arrange visitors in pentagonal seating, and Fischer's explores the concept of "indoor and outdoor space" to create an "unexpected encounter."

While each of the yurts will make it to every city (with the exception of Barstow), Glynn is the only one of the five artists who will be making the entire journey from start to finish. And hers will also be the only yurt that will evolve over the course of the festival beginning with the big bang theory in New York (where the "idea was that the universe was tight and hot and loud in the center, that everything was compressed"), but moving on to illustrate other cosmological concepts as the train traverses the country.

"From there," Glynn told **ARTINFO** during a phone call, "the theories will unfold chronologically. Einstein is next, and Hubble's expanding universe follows." It all concludes in Oakland: "The last one is black holes," she said, "and the possible end of the world. Metaphorically."



(Left: time as a set of moments encountered in no particular order / Right: Einstein's Theory of General Relativity)

The physical design of the interior of the yurt will likewise change in each city, and each formation will be a different kind of maze. This perpetual adaptation and amendment of the yurt mirrors the spirit of the nomadic festival, which in each city will feature a different configuration of a long list of notable musicians, artists, and filmmakers including **Beck, Patti Smith, Cat Power, and Jackson Browne**, as well as a smattering of art, food, and wares by local artists and vendors at each stop. But for Glynn, it's also a matter of artistic necessity. "I'm never comfortable with things that are just the same regardless of where they are." Her sculptural work, likewise, sometimes evolves through interaction.

One of her most recent evolving installations, a speakeasy at this year's **Frieze New York**, offered visitors old-timey cocktails and story-telling bartenders, and had hopeful visitors angling for one of the limited, entry-granting "keys." In contrast, the installation at Station to Station in New York, will be open to everyone. But space will be tight and only three to five people at a time will be privy to a small-scale performance by Glynn that will last roughly five to ten minutes. All this will happen beginning at the time doors open, 6:30 pm, until the first musical act of the festival begins.

Though Glynn will be operating in this tightly confined space ("The yurt was a little challenging to be honest," she says) while the concert and other events of Station to

Station will happen over three acres of waterfront property at Williamsburg's **Riverfront Studios**, her performances and exploration of "time an spectatorship" are meant to resonate with the individual acts of endurance being enacted by audience-members at the main stage.

In and of itself, the entire journey will be something of an endurance performance, which, for Glynn, will entail exploring notions of time and space via interviews with the musicians, filmmakers, and other fellow train travelers making the cross-country trip, Skype chats with leading theoretical physicists (or at least some post-doc students if the big wigs don't pan out). Glynn also gets her own sidecar studio, which she will outfit with smaller models of the yurts.

About that yurt. Though the dark space of the yurt echoes the dark environment she created at her Frieze speakeasy, Glynn has no particular affinity for the nomadic structure that will house her piece. "The yurts were definitely all Doug," she said. And in other ways during the planning, she played yin to his yang.

"I tend toward chaos," said Glynn explaining her collaborative energy with Aitken who, she said, "tends toward a little more control." After many conversations about the degree of entropy entailed in the project, they settled on "a controlled collapse."

[Contemporary Arts, Liz Glynn, Doug Aitken](#)