

# THE STRANGER

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### MUNGO VERSUS MICHAEL: FARCE WINS

by Jen Graves

You might remember Mungo Thomson's *Skyspace Bouncehouse* from Western Bridge in Sodo, where it was most recently blown up and jumped all over for a few of the months of 2011.

The piece is a lighthearted parody—more loving homage than skewering—of the American Quaker artist James Turrell's "Skyspaces," rooms installed so that they have openings in their ceilings that frame the sky. There's one of these "Skyspaces" at the Henry Art Gallery (titled, a little pompously even given the pun, *Light Reign*). *Light Reign* is an elliptical shape, with a fine wooden bench ringing its walls. Spend too much time contemplating the sky in there, and you will soon find yourself contemplating the relationship between hard surfaces, flesh, and bone. This discomfiting experience never happens in Thomson's celebratory soft-serve version, a bouncy castle defined entirely by its fat, pliant, responsive surfaces, which fling your weight back into thin air if you want to bounce, or hold you afloat on a perfect cushion if you want to rest awhile. In *Skyspace Bouncehouse*, the opening in the ceiling—where the *Light Reigns*, in the Turrell—reveals only the comparatively non-meditation-inducing envelope of the gallery.

But between *Light Reign* and *Skyspace Bouncehouse*, there's a kind of networked camaraderie. They link well. You want both.

A new blow-up version of Michael Heizer's giant rock sculpture *Levitated Mass* by Thomson seems, by contrast, to be a pinprick intended to deflate Heizer's overblown spectacle. The younger artist's plans for the helium balloon piece were reported today in the Los Angeles Times. The piece will be the official float of the Aspen Art Museum during the tony tourist zone's July Fourth parade. In the artist's illustration, the rock balloon appears crudely tethered to an urchin.

Perhaps, in addition to taking on Heizer's latest urban rock installation, Thomson would like to tackle Heizer's earliest? We in Seattle await the funmaking.