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MUNGO THOMSON RIFFS ON MICHAEL HEIZER'S 'LEVITATED MASS'

by Jori Finkel

What is half the size of the 340-ton rock at the heart of Michael Heizer's sculpture "Levitated Mass," with almost none of the mass? L.A. artist Mungo Thomson has created a helium balloon version of the soon-to-open LACMA attraction, which will drift over Aspen's Main Street this Fourth of July as the official float of the Aspen Art Museum.

Heizer's rock traveled this past March on a custom-designed transporter at speeds up to eight miles an hour to complete its 11-night, 105-mile journey to the L.A. museum. Thomson's balloon-rock, attached to ropes held by parade participants, is expected to travel at speeds of about two miles an hour to complete its journey in an hour or so the afternoon of July 4.

Both works are designed for visitors to walk below and view from underneath.

Thomson has riffed on popular examples of art and entertainment before, creating, for example, his own version of the Looney Tunes' "Road Runner" cartoons -- featuring the backdrops minus the characters. He has also made "skyspace bounce-houses" that refer to James Turrell's semi-sacred architectural structures as well as the popular party fixture for kids.

The balloon's destination is the Aspen Art Museum, where it will be tethered to the grounds through the summer.