

Neilson, Laura. "A mobile Platform for Art". The Wall Street Journal (9/5/13)

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

A Mobile Platform for Art

Doug Aitken's Nomadic Group Exhibition, Opens Friday in Brooklyn

By LAURA NEILSON

The Brooklyn waterfront has its share of smorgasbords, flea markets and outdoor movie screenings, but the artist Doug Aitken plans to show its residents something altogether different in "Station to Station," a nomadic group exhibition that opens Friday along a rail line and then heads west.

"I was interested in having something that was constantly changing and evolving," Mr. Aitken said from his studio in Los Angeles. "The project is like an exquisite corpse. As it goes, new people join, other people step off."

"Station to Station" starts at Riverfront Studios in Williamsburg and will make its way to California via Pennsylvania, Illinois, Minnesota, New Mexico and Arizona. Its featured artists include Olafur Eliasson, Catherine Opie, Yayoi Kusama, James Turrell and Ed Ruscha, and musicians such as Beck, Thurston Moore, Cat Power and Jackson Browne will perform at different stops.

Friday's inaugural show, with musical sets by Ariel Pink's Haunted Graffiti and experimental-punk duo No Age, along with site-specific works by Olaf Breuning, Rirkrit Tiravanija and Brooklyn-based choreographer Jonah Bokaer, will barely resemble the project's Sept. 28 finale at Oakland, Calif.'s historic 16th Street station.

The lineup for that night's exhibition currently boasts musicians Dan Deacon, Lia Ices, Twin Shadow and the local artist Evan Holm.

Mr. Aitken, 45 years old, is perhaps best known for large-scale multimedia works such as his 2007 "Sleepwalkers" exhibition at MoMA, a cinematic display projected onto the museum's exterior. Building on the urge to deliver art in unconventional formats, he hatched "Station to Station" as a way of reconsidering art spaces, both for viewers and creators.

"Society created these containers for a lot of our culture. This is a way for

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Enlarge Image

Friday's inaugural show will feature works by Brazilian artist Ernesto Neto, Olaf Breuning, Rirkrit Tiravanija and choreography from Jonah Bokaer.

someone, whether it's a filmmaker, artist or musician, to do something more unique or site-specific," he said.

While Mr. Aitken created a short performance piece for Friday, he said his primary contribution is as the show's curator and ringleader. "My role is much more trying to create this canvas for other people's voices to come together," he said.

He enlisted a sponsor, Levi's, and won support from mainstream institutions along his route, including MoMA PS1, Walker Arts Center and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

"Within the larger happening, there's a lot of happenings," he noted, adding that Friday's one-night exhibition will have a rhythmic feel. "I almost think of this drum roll, or one thing blending into another."



Enlarge Image

Getty Images for LACMA

Doug Aitken

There will indeed be percussion: The Kansas City Marching Cobras, a marching band that incorporates dance and blues, will perform in New York and at the next stop in Pittsburgh, two nights later.

Friday's audience will also be able to experience a Technicolor smoke-bomb installation courtesy of Mr. Breuning, a psychedelic yurt-like structure by the Brazilian artist Ernesto Neto, and a performance choreographed by Mr. Bokaer, inspired by Robert Rauschenberg's 1963 dance work "Pelican," taking place on an inordinately petite 8-foot by 8-foot performance space.

And there will be other surprises, Mr. Aitken said. "I think Doug is keeping us in the dark a bit," said Ariel Pink, a

musician who likened his willingness to participate with the idea of gamely throwing paint on a wall to see how it turns out.

In a throwback to the days of traveling carnivals, the nine-car train is equipped with a studio for artists to work together and record soundscapes along the journey. Mr. Pink said he looked forward to a possible session with dance-music godfather Giorgio Moroder, another passenger, while Mr. Aitken plans to use the train as an itinerant broadcast tower, streaming footage onto [the project's website](#).

Mr. Aitken will also display images on LED panels affixed to the outside of the cars, adding another layer to the notion of the exhibition as a mobile platform for art.

"It's a perfect storm, in a certain sense," he said.