

SONIC YOUTH: ALEXANDER CALDER'S GREAT-GRANDSON GRYPHON RUE ORGANISES SOUND ART SHOW IN MARFA

The exhibition includes the mobile sculpture Clangors that has never left the family's collection

By Gabriela Angeleti – March 9, 2017



Haroon Mirza
Cosmos
2016

Image: Courtesy hrm199,
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Photographer: Dave Morgan

Alexander Calder's great-grandson, the artist and musician Gryphon Rue, has organised a group exhibition at Ballroom Marfa in Texas where "sound, or a sonic hint or potential, is the common fiber of each work", Rue told *The Art Newspaper*. The show *Strange Attractor* (10 March-6 August) includes *Clangors* (1942), a mobile sculpture by Calder that has never left the family's private collection.

The work, made from three rods that are repurposed from former sculptures, is a sister work to *The Clangor* (1941) mobile, which got its name from Calder's description of "three heavy plates that gave off quite a clangor". It isn't widely known that Calder was close friends with the French-born composer Edgard Varèse—known as the "godfather of electronic music and one of the first to produce noise music", Rue says. "They were like brothers." Varèse's *Ionisation* (1929-31), a six-minute composition that was one of the first pieces to be performed in a concert hall by percussionists alone, and Calder's first hanging mobiles were produced around the same time, Rue notes. Including *Clangors* in the show "summons a delightful history of blurred ideas exchanged between visual artists and composers", he says.

The seeds for the exhibition came from a catalogue essay that Rue wrote to accompany an exhibition of Calder's work at the *Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen* in Düsseldorf in 2013, titled *Calder and Sound*. This idea was then expanded to look at the use of sound in other artists' work, including Lawrence

Abu Hamdan, Thomas Ashcraft, Robert Buck, Beatrice Gibson, Phillipa Horan, Channa Horwitz, Haroon Mirza, Douglas Ross and Lucky Dragons.

Three galleries at Ballroom Marfa will be filled with mostly new commissions of sculptures, tapestries, photographs, films, drawings, prints and other media. In the courtyard, the duo Lucky Dragons—a collaboration between the artists Sarah Rara and Luke Fishbeck—will install tuning forks that visitors can strike on concrete to create "continuously evolving sonic sculptures", Rue says. There will be two transmitter towers in the courtyard and various towers throughout the town of Marfa, which will allow the sounds to be broadcast and listened to via the local radio station.

Other notable commissions include *Cosmos* and *Supernova* by Haroon Mirza, a series of "electro-etchings" made by placing a peyote cactus on blank circuit board material and running an electrical current through it. As the alkaloid-rich juices of the cactus oxidise the copper in the circuit board, it leaves an etched print that "graphically resembles the cosmological clusters that are not too dissimilar to the kinds of visions these plants produce in humans, if consumed", Rue says.