

Art & Design

David Bowie and Other Artists Lead Children on a Galactic Adventure



David Bowie in his Ziggy Stardust persona, photographed by Masayoshi Sukita. Portraits of Bowie and his “Space Oddity” video are part of the exhibition.

MASAYOSHI SUKITA

By LAUREL GRAEBER
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'Mission to Space'

Ground Control to Major Tom: Hordes of children are invading your space.

Not to mention galactic space, at least as it's represented at the [Children's Museum of the Arts](#). This downtown institution, dedicated to helping young visitors experience artwork as well as create it, has devoted its latest exhibition to interstellar travel. The show, "[Mission to Space](#)," displays pieces by contemporary artists, including [David Bowie](#). He appears as the alien [Ziggy Stardust](#) in 1972 photographs by [Masayoshi Sukita](#) and as both the hapless astronaut Major Tom and his Ground Control handler in the earliest incarnation of the 1969 music video "[Space Oddity](#)."

"He used to bring his daughter, Lexi, to the museum when it was on Lafayette Street," Barbara Hunt McLanahan, the museum's executive director, said, referring to its original SoHo location. (Lexi, more formally known as Alexandria Zahra Jones, is now 16.) "It looks homemade, as if kids could have made it," Ms. McLanahan said of the video, noting that it is not the official version. "I like that this is here as a tribute to Bowie, with very homespun special effects."

Other pieces are just as fanciful, like [E. V. Day](#)'s "Bridal Supernova," which uses fishing tackle and hardware to transform a Barbie doll wedding dress into an exploding star. [Nina Katchadourian](#)'s photographs seem to show real space rocks, but their title, "Popcorn Asteroids," gives them away: They're enlarged images of popped kernels.

Other photographic subjects couldn't be more genuine. [Andrew Zuckerman](#) contributed not only his portraits of objects used in space travel and his prints derived from previously undeveloped film from Apollo missions, but also his space memorabilia: a Russian astronaut's glove and a mock-up of a lunar rake.

Some artists have added playful twists to the idea of space exploration. [Tom Sachs](#) made his own astronaut's glove, and [Penelope Umbrico](#) called up [Google Moon](#) images on her computer, then shot them with her iPhone. Paintings capture the adventure, too, like [Thomas Broadbent](#)'s eerily floating "[Spaceman](#)," and [Michael Kagan](#)'s "[Rattle Them Bones](#)," an exuberant, wildly colorful shuttle liftoff.



Thomas Broadbent's 2016 watercolor on paper "Spaceman" at the Children's Museum of the Arts.
THOMAS BROADBENT AND THE FRONT ROOM GALLERY

"It's hard not to get your imagination fired up by space," Ms. McLanahan said.

The museum gives visitors additional ways to fire theirs, with related art projects and "Crazy Space," a play installation in its tube-shaped bridge area. Here, they can look out on stars and friendly extraterrestrials and push a small comet around a model galaxy. At the end is a bench for listening to numbers that always rock: a taped countdown to liftoff.

(Through Jan. 15 at 103 Charlton Street, near Greenwich Street, South Village; 212-274-0986, cmany.org.)