

REGEN PROJECTS

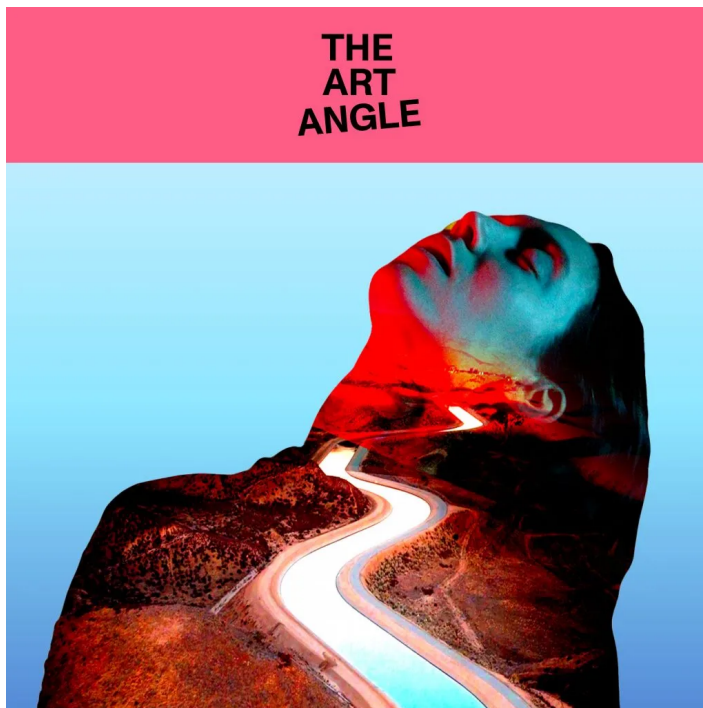
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The Art Angle

How Doug Aitken Thinks in Music

The artist's new work, 'Lightscape' has just landed at The Shed in New York.



Still from Doug Aitken's *Lightscape*. © Doug Aitken.

[Podcast recording linked here](#)

Doug Aitken's new installation *Lightscape* has just landed at the Shed in New York. It is many things at once: a seven-screen film, an immersive environment, and a stage for live performances. But at its heart is music.

The work unfolds across multiple screens, following different characters as they move through desert scenes, freeways, and other landscapes in flux. What binds those worlds and narratives together is sound.

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Aitken built *Lightscape* around an original song cycle he wrote. The soundtrack also incorporates compositions by Minimalist pioneers like **Philip Glass**, **Steve Reich**, and **Meredith Monk**, performed by the **Los Angeles Philharmonic**.

Last week, the work opened with a live performance by **Los Angeles Master Chorale**—but they won't be the only musicians activating the installation. Upcoming performances will feature **William Basinski**, **Suzanne Ciani**, and the **Sun Ra Arkestra**.

In that sense, *Lightscape* picks up on a thread that has long run through Aitken's practice.

One of his earliest works, *Diamond Sea*, was set against an ambient soundtrack featuring **Aphex Twin** and **Nine Inch Nails**, among other musicians. His 2012 project *SONG 1*, a moving-image work projected onto the facade of the **Hirshhorn Museum**, was built around the song "I Only Have Eyes for You." And in 2013, for *Station to Station*, he staged a series of art happenings by transporting artists and musicians by train across America.

In an art world that often prefers tidy categories and boundaries, Aitken has built a career out of collapsing them. His works have moved between film, sculpture, performance, and sound, asking viewers to not just look, but to listen, move, and gather. So the ambitious *Lightscape* felt like the perfect opportunity to speak with Aitken. In our conversation, he opened up about working across disciplines, the communal power of live performance, and the role music has played in his life and practice.

—Min Chen