

DOUG AITKEN

ASSOCIATIONS



Flesh, 2012

Doug Aitken is among those leading contemporary artists who have sustainably enriched the area of media art. He has provided new insight into its materials, conceptual, aesthetic, and historical processes. His oeuvre hereby ranges from photography and sculpture through architectural interventions to film, video, sound installations, and performances. Aitken's artistic claim consists of allowing communication to arise at multilayered audiovisual levels, on themes revolving around the landscape and ways of living, as well as ideas of space and time.

Among his most recent creations are *Last Blast* and *Flesh*, in the Nicola Erni Collection: light boxes made of aluminum in which landscape details are placed behind a kind of word architecture. Text-sculptures that become complex experiences when the typographical elements are illuminated, when the photographic word sculpture documents a theme, thus allowing time, space, and memory to flow together into an associative layer.

In *Last Blast* and *Flesh* Aitken connects the view of nature, in this case of ocean and sky landscapes, with phenomena from urban life, such as the electricity-fed light boxes, and modern architecture, a certain mechanical angularity, with smooth and perfect surfaces. Our trained eye and structured seeing let us recognize the artist's intention, his aim of drawing attention to an electrified environment transformed by human hands. The meanings of the words "last blast" and "flesh" further underpin these associations.

His visual stagings use the commercial vocabulary of advertisements, as well as the easily understood language of Hollywood, which he knows well from his background in the U.S., in California, and music video productions he made early on. The complex, cross-genre installations

inevitably pose the questions of where art begins and where it ends, and where the roots of creative ideas might possibly lie.¹ What does creativity mean in the twenty-first century? The search for an answer and the conviction that things created as art, music, film, and architecture often can be depicted only in a limited way through the systems surrounding them, have led Aitken together with a group of international artists from various genres to a common platform—the project "station to station":² a train designed as a mobile, kinetic light sculpture that travels through countries, radiating unique content and artists' personal experiences to a global audience. Aitken consistently pursues the demand of sharing the information that he has been able to produce through new visual spaces. With associative images that appeal to our collective memory and popular culture, he discloses basic patterns of perception.

Doug Aitken's art has been shown internationally in numerous solo and group shows, and has been honored with a number of international prizes. The Nam June Paik Art Center Prize, however, which Aitken received in 2012 at the age of forty-four, is currently his most significant award. Paik is considered the father and founder of video art; this prize thus signifies a considerable ennoblement of Aitken's oeuvre.

Florentine Rosemeyer

¹ *Sky Arts Ignition: Doug Aitken – The Source*, exhibition Tate Liverpool, September 5, 2012–January 13, 2013.

² stationtostation.com, with, among others, greats such as William Eggleston, Jacques Herzog, Mike Kelley, Erbesto Neto, Carsten Höller, Lawrence Weiner, Urs Fischer, James Turrell, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, Karen Kilimnik, Thomas Demand, Olafur Eliasson, Ed Ruscha, and Yto Barrada, to name but a few.

Last Bast, 2008



