

ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

First Look: Doug Aitken's *Song 1* at the Hirshhorn

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Photo © Frederick Charles

The National Mall's tree-lined strip of monuments, which teems with tourists during the day, usually empties out just after sunset, creating a strangely depopulated blank space in the center of Washington, D.C. But just before 11pm on Saturday night, clusters of people gathered around the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden to see a new installation by Doug Aitken. Projected on the continuous facade of Gordon Bunshaft's cylindrical 1974 museum, the video work wraps 360-degrees around the precast concrete surface. An array of 11 high-definition projectors covers the museum with a series of music video-inspired vignettes. Titled *Song 1*, the work, on view through May 13, sets the actions of ghostly figures—the cast includes actress Tilda Swinton and musician John Doe of the early Los Angeles punk band X—to 40 newly recorded versions of the 1934 song "I Only Have Eyes for You."

The eerie, somnambulant atmosphere of the work echoes Aitken's 2007 installation, *Sleepwalkers*, similarly projected on the exterior of New York's Museum of Modern Art. But unlike the earlier work, shown in an area of Midtown bustling at most hours, *Song 1* brings a quiet stirring to a section of Washington, D.C. that has otherwise gone to bed for the evening. Silhouetted by streetlights and the projection itself, viewers who have made their way to the Mall after hours look as surprising and ethereal as the figures on screen.

