

# Wallpaper\*

## Artist Doug Aitken's 'Altered Earth' exhibition in Arles, France

By Ellen Himelfarb

Few artists have done as much as [Doug Aitken](#) to take contemporary art out of the gallery and into your back yard - quite literally in some cases. The Californian multimedia artist is best known for his video projections onto surfaces as varied as a forest pavilion and a New York City block. 'Almost anything' he says, can be used 'as a projection surface'.

Aitken's latest focus is the Camargue region of southern France, where he's spent months capturing the reedy lagoons, splendid fauna and empty panoramas of a geography that's been settled since Roman times yet scarcely developed since. The snippets of life are being shown for a month this autumn as '[Altered Earth: Arles, city of moving images](#)', an exhibition at the Parc des Ateliers in historic Arles.

In the park's hangar-like Grande Halle, Aitken's enormous cinematic screens create what he calls 'an almost holographic view of the physical landscape'. They dangle from the vaulted ceiling like fantastical backdrops in a Hollywood sound studio, drawing the viewer into the landscape.

He calls the effect 'liquid architecture', though it's unclear whether he's referring to the venue, which seems to melt away in the background, or the labyrinthine arrangement of screens, which guide visitors like the current of a winding stream.

The awesome projections give vivid new life to details in the Provençal terrain - an arid, uneven, dramatic topography even seasoned trekkers would struggle to conquer in a week. In the darkness of the Grande Halle, the works are all the more transporting.

This exhibition is a lead-in to the redevelopment of Parc des Ateliers. The Arles-based arts foundation [LUMA](#) has enlisted architect Frank Gehry to design a series of interdisciplinary centres for the park to help transform it into a destination for contemporary art installation, education and research.