

303 GALLERY

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Now Showing | Doug Aitken

[Culture](#)

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"Sunset (black)" greatly resembles a solar eclipse.

Chloë Sevigny and Tilda Swinton, but he is less known for what is in his films than for what they appear *on*: recently, the exteriors of New York's [Museum of Modern Art](#) and the [Hirshhorn Museum](#) in Washington, D.C.

Aitken's unique talent lies in his ability to project a state of poetic attentiveness onto the cityscape, translating mindfulness and wonder into imaginative architectural interventions. For "100 YRS," the artist, who lives in Los Angeles and New York, has converted Chelsea's [303 Gallery](#) into a kind of cave. A jagged crater has been dug into the floor, and water drips from pipes and valves into a milky pool, echoing loudly in the room. Underwater microphones amplify the water drops, which plop, dribble and drill in a mesmerizing percussive loop.

Dismantling the white cube of the gallery space, Aitken has carved circles out of adjacent walls, through which LED-lit light boxes appear from the back of bare corridors. In one hole, a foam-covered box spells the word "sunset" in pockmarked black acrylic; backlit with neon white, its peripheral glow conjures a solar eclipse. Another light box uses a black-and-white palette to evoke vintage rock 'n' roll, stretching an image of a leather-clad guitarist and an enraptured audience across a sign that reads "100 YRS."

Elegiac and spare, Aitken's show suggests a desire to slow down and recapture a fading past. (One light box gradually illuminates its plaintive title, "Not Enough Time in the Day.") The show may hint at a desire to escape from contemporary information networks and the hustle of city life, but its message is far from straightforward: it offers respite in engineered environments with only the occasional earthy element. Atop a pedestal, "Fountain (earth fountain)" pumps mud from the word "ART" into a plexiglass-bordered pool. Aitken does not return Chelsea to an unblemished state of nature with his cavelike installation — something Hurricane Sandy did, to much more ruinous effect. Instead, he skillfully programs an ecosystem of signs that sully the boundaries between art and earth.

"Doug Aitken: 100 YRS" is on view at 303 Gallery, 547 West 21st Street, New York, through March 23.