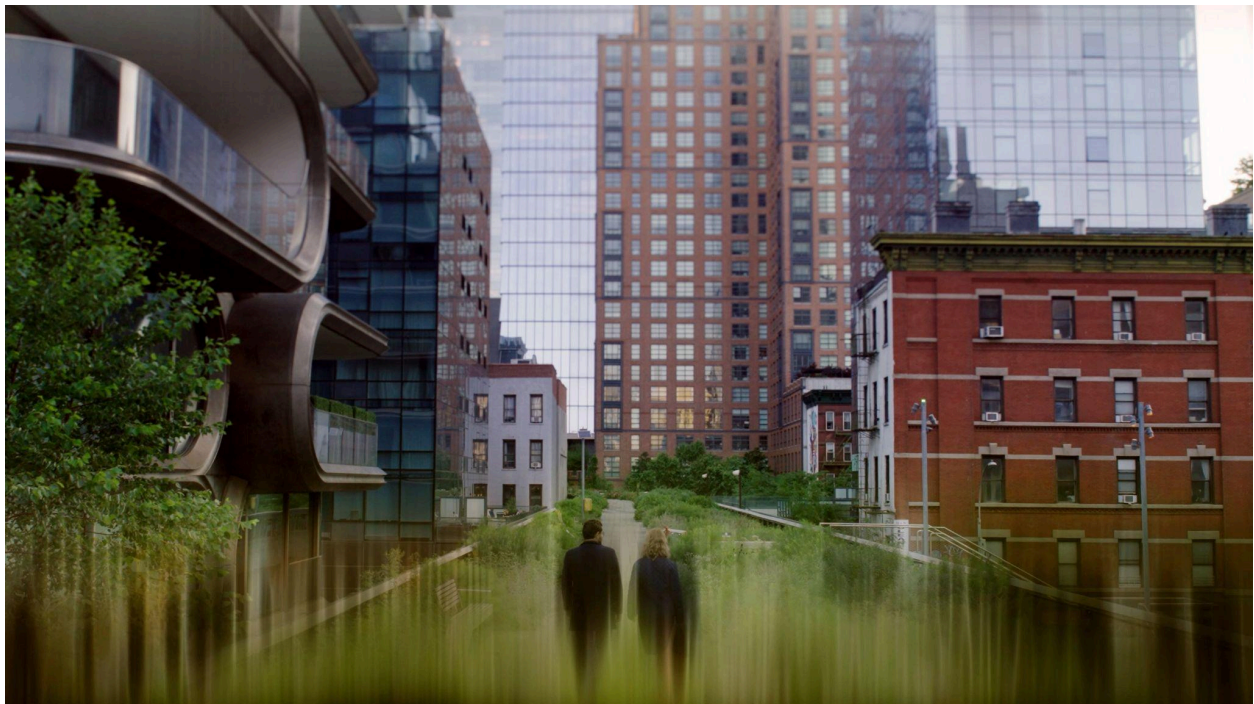


HIGH LINE ART

CHANEL
CULTURE FUND

**HIGH LINE AND CHANEL CULTURE FUND CO-COMMISSION ALISON
NGUYEN FOR FIFTH HIGH LINE ORIGINALS FILM**

**Nguyen's *Prior Occupants* Unearths the Industrial and Cultural
Histories of the High Line and Westbeth's Past**



Alison Nguyen, *Prior Occupants*, 2026 (still). Courtesy of the artist.

NEW YORK, NY (AUGUST 13, 2026) — The High Line and CHANEL Culture Fund today announced the upcoming world premiere of *Prior Occupants*, a new film by Alison Nguyen commissioned by the High Line as the fifth High Line Originals film, and the second High Line Originals co-commissioned with CHANEL Culture Fund.

Prior Occupants explores the obscure nuclear history of Westbeth Artist Housing's building—the former headquarters for Bell Laboratories, a research facility tied to the development of communication technologies and, later, the atomic bomb. Inspired by a severed fragment of the original High Line freight rail left embedded in Westbeth's facade, and the High Line's own history of transformation, Nguyen reflects on the historical narratives that persist—and those quietly erased—within sites of adaptive reuse.

The High Line Channel, located in the High Line's covered passage at 14th Street, will screen *Prior Occupants* daily from 10am to 10pm on a loop from September 8 through November 16, 2026. To celebrate the world premiere of *Prior Occupants*, High Line Art will host a special screening and public artist talk with Nguyen and High Line Art Associate Curator Taylor Zakarin on September 8 at 7pm.

"Through extensive research, ongoing conversations and relationship-building with Westbeth residents past and present, and highly crafted visual choreography, Alison Nguyen's *Prior Occupants* sheds vital light on the industrial and scientific legacies built into our surroundings," said Taylor Zakarin, associate curator of High Line Art. "I'm thrilled the High Line and CHANEL Culture Fund could collaborate with Alison to bring this compelling work to life, and to present it outdoors by the very spaces she investigates."

"Great artists enter into a dialogue with history, revealing new ways to understand the present. Through her new commission, Alison Nguyen excavates the layered histories surrounding the High Line, uncovering a legacy of innovation and human experimentation—and raising questions about technology, memory, and our shared future that feel more urgent than ever," said Yana Peel, President of Arts, Culture & Heritage, CHANEL. "CHANEL Culture Fund is proud to continue our partnership with the High Line in support of artists whose original ideas celebrate the singular power of human imagination. By bringing ambitious moving-image commissions into public space, we hope to spark curiosity and reflection for the millions of people who encounter them amid the extraordinary urban landscape of the High Line."

"I'm grateful for the support of the High Line and CHANEL Culture Fund which gave me the resources to create a work that examines the invisible structures of power embedded in a site," said artist Alison Nguyen. "As the filmmaking process unfolded, relationships I formed with past and present Westbeth artists along with architectural archives opened up directions for the film which I had not anticipated, and was thrilled by."

Long before Westbeth's conversion into a historic public housing community for artists in 1970, the site was occupied by Western Electric and later Bell Labs—a crucible of innovation where critical cinema, telecommunications, and military technologies were researched, including components later used in the development of the atomic bomb. Both Bell Labs and Westbeth Artist Housing are places created to pursue large, even utopian ideals. In the case of the former, technological innovation; in the case of the latter government-funded artist housing. *Prior Occupants* explores what remains of the pursuit of these ideals, how the surrounding architecture has shaped its inhabitants, and the contradictions of present-day Westbeth in the context of the High Line's surrounding neighborhood.

Prior Occupants is an assemblage of audiovisual material including sculpturally re-filmed archival documents, choreographed performance sequences, and layered fragments of audio interviews with the very residents and architects who have shaped Westbeth and the High Line. Through this collage of voices and textures, the artist explores individual and collective relationships to place, technological acceleration, and mortality, and foregrounds the ways in which the structures of the past quietly haunt our future-present. Questioning the relationship between ruination and cultural production, the work asks: What does it mean to stage the decay of an industrial past within public environments and within public artist housing? What role does nature play in these acts of preservation? Nguyen's film weaves together infrastructure, memory, and technology to consider how the legacy of the nuclear age continues to shape our collective experiences, and positions the High Line not just as a space for leisure, but as an active conduit of our historical consciousness.

Alison Nguyen is a visual artist working across video, installation, performance and painting. Using approaches of speculative fiction, documentary research and embodied performance, Nguyen creates works that reconsider how narratives operate within the individual, the institution, the archive, and within the politics of cultural memory.

In addition to *Prior Occupants*, CHANEL Culture Fund and High Line Art will present a special two-day screening, on September 6 and 7, of two prior commissions from The Window, CHANEL Culture Fund's site-specific public art program in Central London for cutting-edge works exploring the breadth of today's digital technologies. The screening will feature *Our Bodies* (2024-2025), by Cecilia Bengolea, and *Inhale/Exhale* (2021) by Noémie Goudal.

Another work from The Window, *The Last Post* (2010) by Shahzia Sikander, will be included in a forthcoming High Line Channel exhibition alongside *The Hedge of Halomancy* (2025) by the artist duo Hylozoic/Desires (artist Himali Singh Soin and musician David Soin Tappeser) in November 2026. Following its exhibition on the High Line, *Prior Occupants* will screen at The Window in London.

Part of High Line Channel, High Line Originals is High Line Art's commissioning program for artists working in time-based media. This initiative invites emerging or underrecognized US-based artists, nominated by a trusted group of contemporary curators, to submit a proposal for a new video work that considers the context of the park in a meaningful way and will resonate with our diverse audience.

High Line Originals launched in 2019 with Tourmaline's *Salacia*, which is now held in the Museum of Modern Art's permanent collection. Other past commissions include Onyeka Igwe's *The Miracle on George Green* (2021) and Alicia Mersy's *NYC Wisdom* (2024). In 2025, High Line Art partnered with CHANEL Culture Fund, and together co-commissioned Frank WANG Yefeng's *Groundless Flower – ʘʘ* (2025).

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Alison Nguyen (b. 1986, Wilmington, Delaware) lives and works in New York, New York. Solo screenings and exhibitions of Nguyen's work have been presented at Storefront for Art and Architecture, New York, New York (2026); Art Basel Hong Kong Encounters, Hong Kong (2025); Murmurs, Los Angeles (2024); Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York (2023); MIT List Center for Visual Arts, Cambridge, Massachusetts (2023); and e-flux, Brooklyn, New York (2023). Nguyen has participated in group exhibitions and screenings at the Busan Biennial, Busan, South Korea (2026); Kunsthalle Mechelen, Mechelen, Belgium (2026); Vienna Secession, Vienna, Austria (2024); EMAP x Frieze Seoul Film, Seoul, South Korea (2024); National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Korea, Seoul, South Korea (2023); The Everson Museum, Syracuse, New York (2022); The Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt, New Zealand (2021); The International Studio & Curatorial Program, Brooklyn, New York (2019 & 2020); KAJE, Brooklyn, New York (2020); and Microscope Gallery, Brooklyn, New York (2017).

She has participated in film festivals around the world, including Oberhausen International Film Festival, International Shorts Online (2021); CPH:DOX, Copenhagen, Denmark (2021); Edinburgh International Film Festival, Edinburgh, United Kingdom (2021); Ann Arbor Film Festival, Ann Arbor, Michigan (2020); Open City Documentary Festival, London, United Kingdom (2019); Channels Festival International Biennial of Video Art, Melbourne, Australia (2019), and True/False Film Festival, Columbia, Missouri (2018); among others.

Nguyen has received residencies and fellowships from Pioneer Works, New York Foundation for the Arts Artist Fellowship in Film/Video, International Studio & Curatorial Program, The Institute of Electronic Arts, BRIC, and Squeaky Wheel Film and Media Art Center. She was a 2023-2024 Studio Fellow at the Whitney Independent Study Program.

ABOUT HIGH LINE ART

Founded in 2009, High Line Art commissions and produces a wide array of artworks on the High Line, including site-specific commissions, exhibitions, performances, video programs, and a series of billboard interventions. Led by Cecilia Alemani, the Donald R. Mullen, Jr. Director & Chief Curator of High Line Art, and presented by the High Line, the art program invites artists to think of creative ways to engage with the unique architecture, history, and design of the park, and to foster a productive dialogue with the surrounding neighborhood and urban landscape.

For more information on High Line Art, please visit thehighline.org/art.

ABOUT THE HIGH LINE

The High Line is a public park on the West Side of Manhattan operated, maintained, and funded by the nonprofit conservancy Friends of the High Line. Through our work with communities on and off the High Line, Friends of the High Line is devoted to reimagining public spaces to create connected, healthy neighborhoods and cities.

Built on a historic, elevated rail line, the High Line was always intended to be more than a park. You can walk through the gardens, view art, experience a performance, enjoy food or beverage, or connect with friends and neighbors—all while enjoying a unique perspective of New York City.

Nearly 100% of our annual budget comes through donations. The High Line is owned by the City of New York, and we operate the park under a license agreement with NYC Parks.

For more information, visit thehighline.org and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Tiktok](#).

ABOUT CHANEL CULTURE FUND

CHANEL Culture Fund fosters a vibrant network of creators and innovators to advance the ideas that shape culture worldwide. Core programs include CHANEL's Art Partners, nearly fifty international institutions whose leaders are supported in the development of ground-breaking, long-term initiatives that bring innovation to the cultural landscape. The [CHANEL Next Prize](#) celebrates artists and accelerates their future successes through access to resources and mentorship. And the podcast [CHANEL Connects](#) amplifies the voices of thought-leaders across disciplines, generations, and geographies—tackling the defining issues of our time.

From driving artistic innovation with technology at [CalArts](#) in Southern California to catalyzing creative freedom at scale at [Hamburger Bahnhof](#) in Berlin, from championing game-changing artists at the [Venice Biennale](#) to celebrating the brightest directors at the [British Film Institute](#) and opening China's first public contemporary art library at the [Power Station of Art](#) in Shanghai, CHANEL Culture Fund extends a century of commitment to the arts and champions creative audacity for a better future.

SUPPORT

Lead support for High Line Art comes from Amanda and Don Mullen. Major support is provided by The Brown Foundation, Inc. of Houston, Charina Endowment Fund, and Shelley Fox Aarons and Philip E. Aarons.

Major support of High Line Art's digital infrastructure is provided by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Program support for High Line Art is provided by Sarah Arison, Suzanne Deal Booth, Charlotte Ford, Molly Gochman, and Joyce F. Menschel.

Additional support is provided by Agnes Gund and Shane Akeroyd.

High Line Art is supported, in part, with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the New York City Council, under the leadership of Speaker Julie Menin.

Major support for High Line Originals is provided by CHANEL Culture Fund.

@HighLineArtNYC @alison.c.nguyen

MEDIA CONTACT

Janelle Grace | PR & Communications Manager | the High Line
646.774.2536 | janelle.grace@thehighline.org