

P D F I - C // C O N C E P T S T A T E M E N T

The Common Ascent.

Artistic intent, relationship to score and site, intended audience experience. For BLINK
2026, Cincinnati Music Hall.

S T R A N G E L O O P S T U D I O S // C I N C I N N A T I , O C T O B E R 2 0 2 6

A Fanfare, Re-Examined for the Networked Era.

The Common Ascent is a large-scale projection mapping work created for Cincinnati Music Hall and inspired by Aaron Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man*. The piece reflects on how the American idea of the frontier has changed across time, from land, to industry, to technology, to today's networked world, and asks who the "common American" is in 2026.

Originally composed during World War II, Copland's work honors the dignity and importance of ordinary people. Its bold brass language, spacious drama, and emotional clarity continue to resonate because it elevates collective human effort rather than individual power. This project extends that spirit into the present moment.

Throughout American history, progress has often been imagined through movement toward new frontiers. First came geographic expansion and the mythology of open land. Later came vertical growth through steel, infrastructure, and industrial cities. In the late twentieth century, innovation turned inward toward microelectronics, communication systems, and digital networks. Today, the frontier is increasingly invisible, shaped by information, connection, and the daily participation of millions of people.

The Common Ascent visualizes this evolution in five chapters: Prairie, Steel, Silicon, Present, and Future. Each chapter transforms the façade of Music Hall into a living symbol of its era. Landscape becomes architecture. Architecture becomes machine. Machine becomes network. Network becomes human light.

Ordinary People Remain the Constant Engine.

The central idea of the work is that ordinary people remain the constant engine of progress across every era. Farmers, builders, workers, artists, coders, families, neighbors, and communities have always generated the energy behind cultural and technological advancement. In the present chapter, streams of light gathering across the building reveal that modern systems are sustained by collective human presence. The "common man" celebrated by Copland becomes, in contemporary terms, the connected citizen whose actions shape the future.

The final chapter turns toward hope. Rather than presenting technology as alienating or deterministic, the work proposes that the next frontier is collaborative and human-centered. Thousands of individual points of light rise together into a shared constellation, transforming Music Hall into a beacon of possibility.

Cincinnati Music Hall is an ideal site for this story. Built in 1878 and long associated with music, civic gathering, and cultural continuity, the building itself bridges many American eras. Its historic façade carries the memory of the industrial age while serving contemporary audiences today. Projection mapping allows the architecture to become an active participant in the narrative, revealing new identities without erasing its historic character.

For audiences at BLINK, the intended experience is immediate wonder followed by reflection. The piece is designed to be visually legible at large scale, emotionally accessible to multigenerational viewers, and rewarding across repeated viewings. It combines spectacle with meaning: a shared public moment that honors the past while imagining the future.

At 250 years, America's story remains unfinished. The next chapter belongs not to distant myths of conquest, but to the people already shaping it together.