



# DARREN ALMOND

## In the Between

### May 30 – July 8, 2007

**MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL**  
Québec #3

**In the Between, 2006**

Three high-definition video projections, 14 minutes  
Collection of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal

Departing from Xining, China, there is a train that runs all the way to Lhasa, Tibet. Dubbed the "Celestial Road" during its construction, this rail link went into operation barely a year ago, on July 1, 2006. With close to 1,000 kilometres of track at altitudes of 4,000 metres or more, the line crosses the Kunlun Shan mountain range, the "Roof of the World," which forms a natural boundary along the northern edge of the Tibetan plateau. It is the highest railway line in the world.< < Darren Almond has created a work revolving around this train. The British artist finds himself drawn to subjects that examine questions of place, time and memory, and often takes his inspiration from "transportation and the means to get there, the ways of getting there, arrival and departure." Entitled *In the Between*, this piece is part of a cycle begun in 1995 on the subject of "mythical" trains. To begin with, Almond looked at the *Schwebebahn*, the world's first monorail, inaugurated in 1904 in Wuppertal, Germany. It was still running in 1995, when Almond filmed the train along its entire route, from the first station to the last. He then reversed the movement, rewinding his film, so that we no longer know whether our eye is focused on the place we are moving away from or the station at the end of the line. The film encapsulates the time and space between arrival and departure. < <

In 1999, Almond turned his attention to the Geisterbahn, the first "ghost train," a ride built in 1895 at the Prater amusement park in Vienna. Shivers, vertigo and the thrills that come from a haunted-house ride are all a game designed to give ourselves a fright. Well before Freud and his investigation of the unconscious, the Geisterbahn explored the chimerical fears of its passengers. The fairground was razed by the bombing in World War II, and the ghost train ride was reduced to ashes. Then, one day, after the war, both





the amusement park and the ride were rebuilt. For his *Geisterbahn*, Almond set his camera up at the front of the train and shot the journey through the haunted house, with its tricks and naive illusions, simply, in black and white. < <

On the high plateaux of Tibet, in 2006, Almond explored a different facet of train travel, that of the long journey, the sense of being in strange surroundings, and the hypnotic effect of the length of the trip itself and the time spent watching the countryside fly by. "Following the line of a train—if you sit back and have time on your side to travel this way—the geography of the landscape, the continuous horizontal line you maintain leads directly to the political landscape. ... The history of the railway is directly linked to modernisation and also it has its part in collectivisation." < <

The project to build the Xining-Lhasa railway line aroused concern among Western intellectuals. Many spoke out against its construction, which they saw as a threat to Tibetan culture and identity. The train is already carrying as many as 3,000 tourists a day to Lhasa. A disaster to some, the train is instrumental in bringing Tibet out of its isolation, according to Chinese authorities, and in encouraging its "scientific and harmonious" development. < <

In his work *In the Between*, Almond juxtaposes images of the train and the landscapes it crosses with sequences shot at the Samye monastery, the oldest and one of the most important in Tibet, on the banks of the Yarlung Tsangpo, southwest of Lhasa. Founded in the late eighth century by Padmasambhava, an Indian Buddhist who is credited with authorship of the *Bardo Thodol*, commonly called *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* in the West, the monastery is built in the form of a giant mandala. The Utse—the main temple—houses the prayer hall, where the monks gather several times a day. There they recite the sacred



texts, to the sound of Tibetan horns, drums and bells. Almond filmed the Buddhist monks at their morning prayers, giving the work a remarkable acoustic dimension. < <

The title *In the Between* is an allusion to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. This major text in Tibetan Buddhism describes the successive intermediary states of consciousness and perception between death and rebirth: the *chikhai bardo* at the moment of death, the *chonyid bardo* or experiencing of reality, and the *sidpa bardo*, the stage of being reborn. Almond has presented his piece as a three-screen projection, playing on the dominant colours of each frame: the blue shades of the landscapes, the dominant dark red of the monastery, and the bright, sunny yellows, blues, greens and reds of the prayer flags. The film's triptych composition thus forms a kind of echo to the three intermediary states described in the *Bardo Thodol*. < <

Almond visited the monastery in the morning. In the afternoon, the place is overrun with foreign travellers in search of spirituality. <

LOUISE SIMARD-ISMERT

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Note: The words of Darren Almond are quoted from a conversation with Julian Heynen, "A glance is accustomed to no glance back," published in the catalogue for the exhibition *Isolation*, February-May 2005.

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Born in Wigan, England, October 30, 1971  
Lives and works in London

## Biobibliography

\* Exhibition accompanied by a publication.

## Main solo exhibitions

- 2007 \* *In the Between*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal  
*Darren Almond*, Matthew Marks Gallery, New York  
*Darren Almond*, SITE Santa Fe
- 2005 *Darren Almond*, K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf \*  
*Darren Almond*, Matthew Marks Gallery, New York
- 2004 *Darren Almond: Live Sentence*, Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz, Linz
- 2003 *If I Had You*, Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, Milan  
*Darren Almond: Mine, A*, Galleri K, Oslo  
*Darren Almond: Full Moon*, Sommer Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv  
*11 Miles... ...from Safety*, Jay Jopling/White Cube, London \*
- 2002 *A*, National Theatre, London  
*At Speed*, Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin
- 2001 *Coming Up For Air*, Matthew Marks Gallery, New York  
*Darren Almond*, Kunsthalle, Zurich \*  
*Darren Almond: Night as Day*, Tate Britain, London \*  
*Darren Almond*, De Appel Foundation, Amsterdam  
*Darren Almond*, Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin
- 2000 *Darren Almond: Mean Time*, Matthew Marks Gallery, New York  
*Darren Almond*, The Approach, London  
*Darren Almond: Traction*, Chisenhale Gallery, London
- 1999 *Darren Almond*, Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin  
*Darren Almond*, The Renaissance Society, University of Chicago, Chicago
- 1997 *Darren Almond*, Institute of Contemporary Arts (commissioned by Toshiba Art & Innovation Commission), London  
*Darren Almond*, Jay Jopling/White Cube, London



## Main group exhibitions

- 2007 *Moscow Biennale*, Former Lenin Museum, Moscow  
*Closed Circuit: Video and New Media at the Metropolitan*,  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
- 2006 *Shoot the Family*, Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan  
*Caspar David Friedrich*, Museum Folkwang, Essen  
*The Impossible Landscape*, The Horticultural Society of New York
- 2005 *Turner Prize 2005*, Tate Britain, London  
*Getting Emotional*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston  
*Universal Experience: Art, Life and the Tourist's Eye*,  
Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago
- 2004 *Eclipse: Towards the Edge of the Visible*, White Cube, London
- 2003 *Video Acts: Single Channel Video Works from the Collections  
of Pamela and Richard Kramlich and the New Art Trust*,  
P. S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, New York  
*Venice Biennale*, Venice

## Main texts in periodicals and catalogues

- 2006 Darren Almond: *Journey time*. – [With an essay by Martin Herbert].  
– Essen: Museum Folkwang; Göttingen: Steidl, 2006. – 64 p.
- 2005 Heynen, Julian; Almond, Darren. – “A glance is accustomed to no glance back.”  
– *Isolation*. – (February-May 2005). – [Insert]  
Kastner, Jeffrey. – “Darren Almond.” – *Artforum*. – (October 2005). – P. 272
- 2002 Slyce, John. – “Darren Almond: transport medium.” – *Flash art*.  
– Vol. 34, no. 222 (January-February 2002). – P. 70-74
- 2000 Birnbaum, Daniel. – “Openings: Darren Almond.” – *Artforum*  
(January 2000). – P. 102-103.
- 1998 Bush, Kate. – “Doing Time.” – *Frieze* (September-October 1998).  
– P. 72-75