

WHITE CUBE

Darren Almond

Time Will Tell

28 November 2018 – 20 January 2019

South Gallery I, North Galleries and 9 × 9 × 9

White Cube Bermondsey

'What we have here is an orchestration of thematics, such that everywhere one looks, a poetics of the systematic reappears, rephrased – and the viewer is emphatically within it; it's an environment.' – Martin Herbert, Hetzler/Holzwarth, 2013

White Cube is pleased to present an exhibition of new painting and sculpture by Darren Almond at Bermondsey. Focusing on the idea of time and how it is articulated through the language of numbers, he draws attention to the way time can frame, structure and inform our understanding of the world.

While time is a theoretical abstraction it is also a concrete reality within human culture, one that is always rooted in relativity. Almond's new series of paintings respond to this notion and to the idea that numbers are the only 'true common language'. The basis of most organising systems, numbers are a primary determinant of human experience. Used to visualise the invisible, they not only quantify time, but enable scaling and mapping, are the language of economics, the tools of computer coding and the way to describe galactic schema too large for words alone.

Consisting of a grid formed from rectangular panels, the paintings depict fragmented digits in a utilitarian font, such as are found in the urban landscape – typically in and around transport hubs, in their signage, timetables and clocks. The compositions become a field of partial forms that appear to float across the surface of the paintings, emerging and disappearing, allowing the viewer's awareness to drift between the figurative presence of the numbers and a space which opens onto the unconscious. In some, two halves of a single number are split across panels, in others, a complete zero is depicted either as a defined shape or as a barely visible trace, acting as the painting's fulcrum and off-setting the works formal geometry. For Almond, the zero represents the 'nothing that holds everything together': a visual aperture and a focal point that unites a progressive structure.

The paintings are executed using varied media and techniques, including a concrete based-mineral paint, acrylic gel on mirror, or multiple layers of conductive metal leaf, such as copper, silver or palladium. The fissured appearance of the metal leaf paintings create their own changing topography: a delicate, physical surface that seems to absorb and reflect light in equal measure.

This revealing and disappearing of forms serves to remind us of the continual depletion of these natural resources.

Similar concepts are present in Almond's new, large-scale sculptural relief, presented in 9 × 9 × 9: a large grid composed of cast aluminium panels which orchestrate the surrounding light. The panels are left deliberately raw from casting, freezing the moment they were made, thereby attesting to their once liquid state when first poured into the mould. It has two layers of partial numbers arranged across its surface – the first, unpolished and the uppermost, polished to a mirrored finish. With its multi-layered planar depth and different levels of finish, the relief creates a highly active interplay of light and form embedded within a complex and tactile structure. In this way, it remains open, pointing to limitless possibilities and positions in space – a topography of the language of time and a cartography of relativity, concepts that underpin Almond's work as a whole.

For a new sound piece, Almond was granted access to the Royal Observatory Greenwich, London, to record the working mechanics of the three 18th-century marine timekeepers, designed and built by John Harrison (c.1693-1776). These fully functioning prototypes proved that timekeepers could help mariners determine their longitude at sea and inspired the subsequent development of the marine chronometer. In an ode to John Cage, the recordings are played simultaneously for 4 minutes 33 seconds throughout all the galleries, followed by a period of silence of the same duration, creating a melodic, circadian soundtrack that echoes the overlapping visual iconography explored in the paintings. The exhibition also includes 'Train Plates', an ongoing series which expands the tradition of metal and alloy naming plaques that are assigned to British locomotives. These plates spell out open-ended phrases including, in one, the Latin phrase 'Noli timere' (Do not be afraid) which were the last words of the Irish poet Seamus Heaney. In this work, certain letters have been highly polished, drawing out a further poetic and philosophical sub-phrase 'no time', concealed within.

BIOGRAPHY

Darren Almond was born in 1971 in Wigan, UK and lives and works in London. Solo exhibitions include Villa Pignatelli-Casa della Fotografia, Naples, Italy (2018); Mudam, Luxembourg (2017); Museum Sinclair Haus, Bad Homburg, Germany (2016); Scai the Bathhouse, Tokyo (2016); New Art Centre, Salisbury, UK (2016); Neue Galerie, Graz, Austria (2015); Dirimart, Istanbul (2015); Bloomberg Space, London (2014); Art Tower Mito, Japan (2013); Sala Alcalá 31, Madrid (2013); Château Gallery, Domaine Régional de Chaumont-sur-Loire, France (2012); The High Line, New York (2011); Villa Merkel, Esslingen am Neckar, Germany (2011); L'Abbaye de la Chaise Dieu, France (2011); Frac Normandie, Rouen, France (2011); FRAC Auvergne, Clermont Ferrand, France (2011); and Parasol Unit, London (2008). He has participated in numerous group exhibitions including Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark (2018); Whitechapel Gallery, London (2018); Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna (2017); Centre Pompidou-Metz, Metz, France (2016); Royal Academy of Arts, London (2015); Nottingham Contemporary, UK (2015); Helmhaus, Zurich, Switzerland (2011); 6th Biennale de Curitiba, Brazil (2011); Miami Art Museum (2011); Musée d'Art Contemporain du Val-de-Marne, Vitry-sûr-Seine, France (2010); Tate Triennial, Tate Britain, London (2009); Frac Lorraine, Metz, France (2009); 2nd Moscow Biennale (2007); and The Turner Prize, Tate Britain, London (2005).

White Cube Bermondsey is open
Tuesday–Saturday, 10am – 6pm and Sunday, 12 – 6pm.
Admission is free.

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