

# NUMA AMUN



## Absoluité

20.03.2025 — 18.05.2025

Fonderie Darling  
745 Place du Sable-Gris  
MTL (QC) H3C 1R8  
[fonderiedarling.org](http://fonderiedarling.org)

Opening hours  
Wednesday: 12pm-7pm  
Thursday : 12pm-10pm  
Fri.-Sun. : 12pm-7pm



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Writing about Numa Amun's work means recognizing, first and foremost, a painter's remarkable labour. Standing in front of one of his paintings means contemplating the precision of the gesture, marvelling at the manic meticulousness of the work, and letting oneself be guided by the artist's obsession with line and colour. It means admiring his infinite patience, so antithetical to our era, through which Amun develops a rigorous plan that leaves nothing to chance. It takes the artist more than one year to paint a single work. It is hard to believe that these paintings, mysteriously recessed into the walls, were created using entirely analogue methods, without resorting to any digital tools, by perfecting a squaring technique that could have existed two thousand years ago.

The exhibition *Absoluité* presents Amun's most recent work. Three hyperrealist paintings attempt to represent something that is not usually visible: three characters caught in the middle of the mysterious, subjective experience of astral projection.

Also referred to as an out-of-body experience, this state occurs when a person has the sensation that their consciousness separates from their physical body. Surprisingly, accounts of such experiences are found in various eras and cultures, possibly indicating a universal phenomenon deeply rooted in the human condition. The subject has been explored in art and literature, notably in ancient Egypt and Christian mysticism in the Middle Ages, but also in the surrealist movement and esoteric circles active in the second half of the 20th century, which had a great influence on abstract art. The possibility of astral projection is based on the belief that the mind can travel outside the body, into unknown spaces or parallel worlds. The language of neuroscience describes these experiences as altered states of consciousness or episodes of cognitive dissociation. The latter can be intentionally induced, particularly by taking psychotropic drugs, or can occur involuntarily. For example, in a sudden, graceful moment of deep relaxation, the body can give itself this permission. The separation can also happen in a moment of extreme shock.

The exhibition's title, *Absoluité*, sublimates the limitless and unrestricted that encompasses and exceeds us. In Amun's paintings, the absolute becomes manifest at the very moment when the mind transcends the physical laws controlling

the body, as though disembodiment can help one reach more subtle planes of reality beyond the world perceived by the senses. The painting *Paliers* offers a red and green dichromatic vision of such a projection outside the self. The separation begins at the feet, which usually keep us well rooted to the ground. By looking closely at the image, we can observe that the optical vibration of the line evokes the energy vibration of the body, in a dynamic in which the painted image and the brush gesture are ultra-synchronized. Associated with invisible energies, the colours of the chromatic circle are opposed; warm and cold colours merge in some areas or cancel each other out in a grey hue. The tones clashing with natural skin colours, the visible hatching brushstrokes, and the complex optical grid create distance between the characters' disturbing realism and the viewers. As we stand before these human-scale bodies, Amun's artistic transfigurations transform a potentially disconcerting experience into a more acceptable moment of contemplation.

“How many times do we live? How many times do we die? They say we all lose 21 grams at the exact moment of our death. Everyone. 21 grams ... The weight of a stack of five nickels. The weight of a chocolate bar. The weight of a hummingbird.”

These powerful phrases taken from the film *21 Grams*<sup>1</sup> describe a theory often used to attempt to prove scientifically the existence of the human soul, namely that the soul has a calculable mass that disappears at the moment of death. Painted in yellow and violet, *Réveil dans la mort* represents a man apparently at rest and his astral double, who has just woken up and is shouting at the top of his voice. In reality, the tense feet and closed fists of the supine man reflect a state of tension—the body is ready to fight but the consciousness is vulnerable and terrified. The most commonly described experiences of astral projection come from those who have had near-death experiences. For this man, the portent of what exists before and after our time on earth is alarming. This relationship of reversed masculinity, particularly the facial expression, is reminiscent of Edvard Munch's *The Scream*, often invoked to illustrate the angst of existence. In a physical world that exceeds it, the mind sometimes seems resigned to a chronic dissociation. This absence to oneself is experienced as an emptiness, a phantom presence.

On the astral plane, thought possesses absolute power. In a manner that is both fascinating and paradoxical, Amun has chosen to represent this displacement of consciousness outside of the bodily shell by trying to represent the body in all its exactness. The colours and textures evoke muscles, unwittingly reminding us that the heart, lungs, intestines also exist under the skin. The third painting in the exhibition, *Filiation*, shows a woman painted in blue and orange whose astral body is bound to her physical body at the level of the head, left in grey, the place that filters and reasons everything. From an anatomical perspective, the head is not the centre of the body; instead it is the chest, stomach, or pelvis, which are often ignored in favour of the brain, even though they assure much of our instinct, vital energy, and creative force. In the exhibition, the characters and their astral doubles seem to reveal the contrast between what the head perceives and what the body intuitively feels. A persistent sense of unfulfilled desire, of a disjunction between body and soul, and of a disconnection from oneself and others is omnipresent for many individuals.

Beyond the experiences of some people who possess extraordinary parapsychic abilities, it appears that widespread dissociation is palpable every day. In all his work, Numa Amun approaches contemplative experience as a meditation on feeling, this time pushing reflection until it becomes disconnected from the body and mind. With *Absoluité*, he summons the invisible through a fragmentation of colour, like a fragmentation of reality.

Milly A. Dery

<sup>1</sup> Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu, this 2003 film addresses existential questions about destiny, coincidence, life, and death.