



ARTISTIC INVESTIGATOR

ROBERT DRUMMOND

Los Angeles video artist Robert Drummond is a scientist but not in the traditional sense. "Scientists are so bent on classification," says the artist, who is hardly a stalwart enforcer of theorems. He is instead bent on exploring memory, as well as nature's inherent mystery, not just through analysis, but through experience. Some of his most fascinating work to date has focused on creating holograms using video projected on three-dimensional glass sculpture. Drummond's latest video project, still a work-in-progress, is *Northern Nights*, which he describes as "a journeyman-style piece wrapped around my personal experience."

Drummond spent 90 days alone on a rocket base in Churchill, Canada, in the middle of winter investigating the Aurora Borealis. The Aurora Borealis is – technically speaking – when charged solar particles are guided by the Earth's magnetic lines of force, materializing as bands of light. Drummond, who strongly feels that "artists and scientists need to get together," employed Infrared Thermography for his task. He even approached NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, hoping to use state-of-the-art equipment (but the US government agency could not permit its wares to be taken out of the country). Audio is, of course, also a vital component of Drummond's work. In *Northern Nights*, swatches of ethereal electronic music form an aural collage alongside the simple sound of footsteps trudging through the snow. The artist took electronic music courses at Vassar College. Later, while at USC, he studied sound under Tom Holman, who pioneered the THX system for LucasFilm. Knowing all this, it is not surprising when Drummond proclaims with an expression of childlike fascination that one of his early inspirations was a scene in the epic space odyssey, *Star Wars*, "when they were moving the holograms around the chessboard."

– Shana Ting Lipton, photo: Autumn de Wilde → www.robertdrummond.com