

sentinel

work by
Tyler Jackson

text by
Angel C. Fitzgerald

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Absolutely Positively
Wellington City Council
Me Heke Ki Pōneke

I've opened up my notes app on the day of my birthday. I'm sitting in a karaoke room surrounded by the ones I love. I just sang Summertime Sadness by Lana Del Rey and now I'm listening to the whole group sing.

As I'm sitting here I'm scanning the room and it's bathed in light. The brightly coloured LED lights that line where the wall meets the ceiling change from red, green to blue over and over.

I'm capturing this with my phone camera. I took a panorama photo. It cuts up the light. I capture it in slow motion. Suddenly this fast paced changing of light is drawn out, letting the light linger. The pink and beige fabric padding on the wall has lost its colour. It's now completely transformed and consumed by LED light.



Image by Angel C. Fitzgerald, 2023

A bridge formed. A portal opened.

I think I felt something similar a year ago on the ferry from Auckland to Waiheke Island. I was on the ferry with who I suspect were commuters going to or from work. I was looking around, I stood up, I felt nervous. I wasn't sure if I was allowed to stand on the boat when it was moving but I did anyway. I filmed, took photos and listened to music. It was fun. I loved watching the water and feeling the harsh wind against my skin.

As we were reaching closer and closer to the island, I could see this pillar. I knew it was Tyler's work as I saw Moya post her arrival on her instagram story the day before. I was excited to experience what she did. I took a picture and posted it on my instagram. I got off the boat and found them by spotting the distinctive red ute.

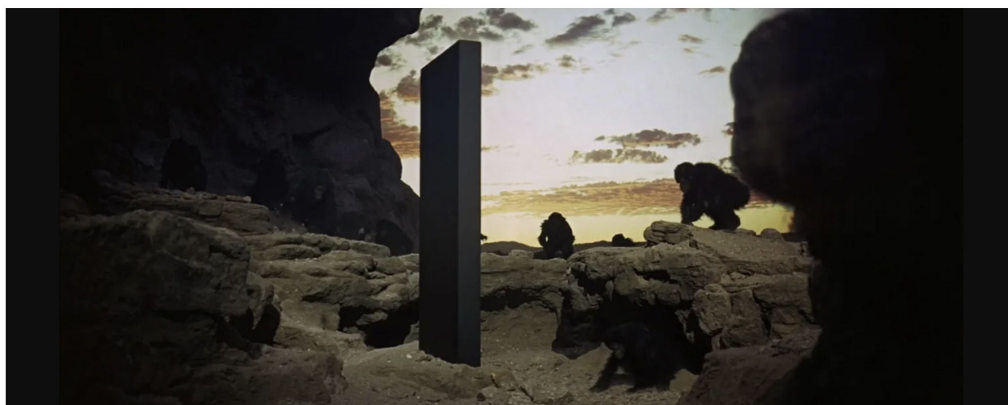


Image by Angel C. Fitzgerald, 2022



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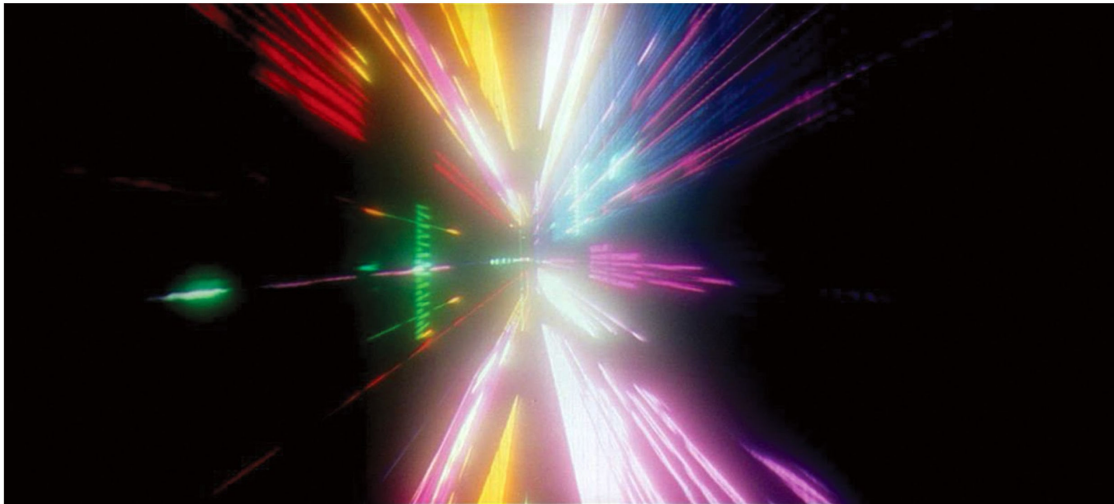
2001: A Space Odyssey opens with a group of monkeys dancing and examining a monolith in the desert. They're jumping around, observing, screaming at and touching this tall, shiny object that's risen there seemingly overnight. Tyler had talked about *2001* being one of his favourite films, he told me once I watched it i'd understand his practise better, he was right.

Still from *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Stanley Kubrick, 1968

I've always kind of detested sci-fi films, for no particular reason. There was a reshooting of *2001* at the cinemas and Tyler and I went to go see it together. I loved not really knowing what was going on. I remember when I left the cinema, with slightly ringing ears, I was skipping and jumping down the road from how amazing that experience was. I almost felt drunk. And I can't even really tell you what that film was about.

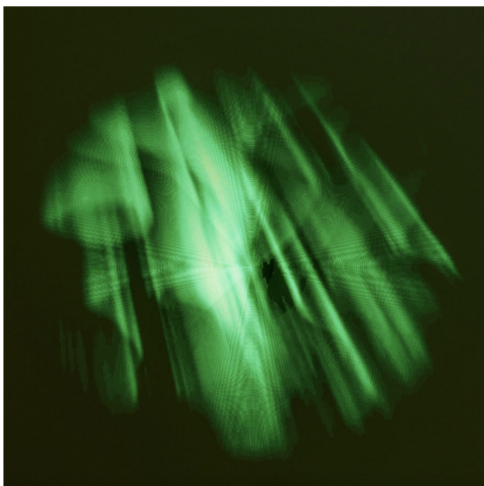
I felt a similar feeling seeing Sentinel lit up at night for the first time—borderline insane.

Tyler loves outer space. He told me about a documentary where there were miniscule meteorites found on a roof somewhere which they found with metal detectors—something I usually wouldn't care about. As Tyler was talking about these billion year old rocks, it suddenly became the most fascinating story I'd ever heard, and I think that's one of the magic things about art. You get to step inside someone else's brain, obsessions, feelings, universes for a second.

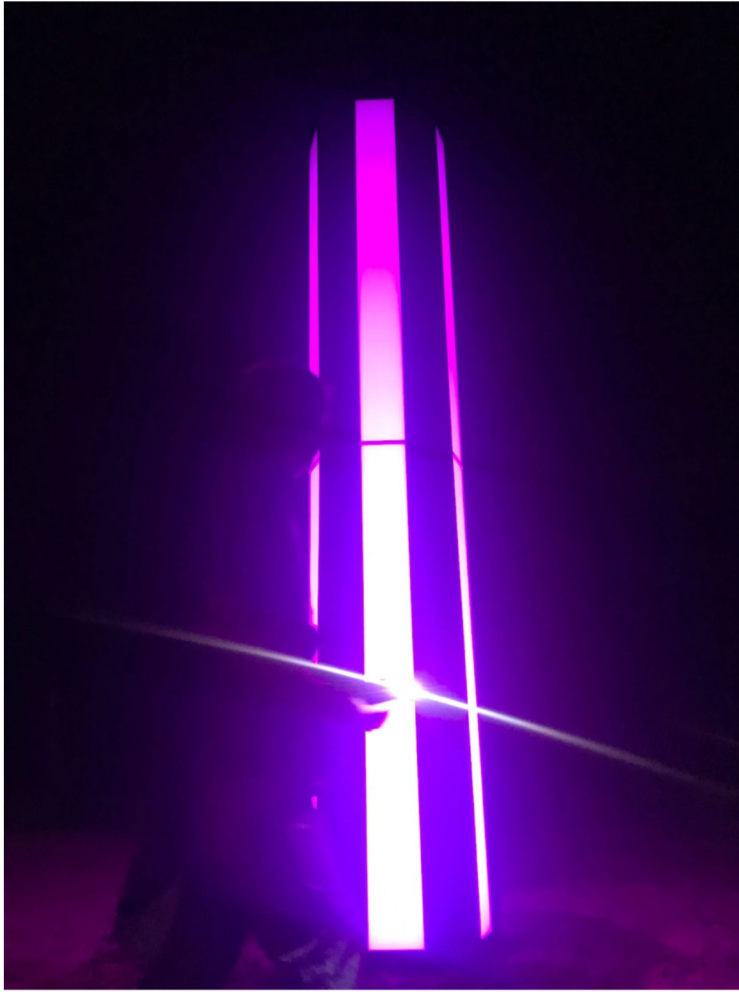


Still from *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Stanley Kubrick, 1968

I see his work as almost a form of communication—he evokes how natural phenomena can communicate in so many ways. Northern lights, space, a sunset, the way your body feels listening to birdsong. Like I can't really explain in words now, why I started crying when I saw his work turn on for the first time. Was I just extremely proud of my friend? Or was I experiencing something that was truly beautiful? I think both.



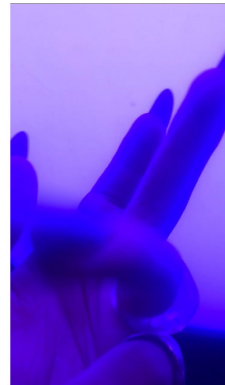
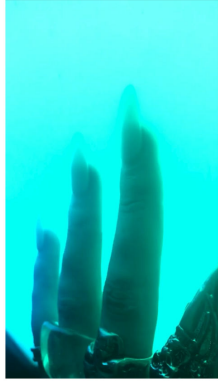
Tyler Jackson. *Aurora*, 2022, digital animation, 5min



Sentinel, Tyler Jackson, Image by Angel C. Fitzgerald, 2022

On the day I arrived at Waiheke and after I'd seen the work me and Moya left Tyler to finish the work and went off to go for a swim. It was a beautiful day. Early March. The ocean was as warm as a bath. My eyeliner ran down my face and I took a photo.

The next 24 hours consisted of seeing the rest of the work included in Sculpture on the Gulf, drinking expensive wine, eating gorgeous oysters, a \$300 dinner, vineyard, Tyler wearing hoop earrings, Moya rolling down a hill while the sun sets, a phone call from my Nana singing me happy birthday, sunbathing, rolling a suitcase down the street for an hour while drinking Asahi beer heading towards the wharf to see Sentinel at night for the first time.

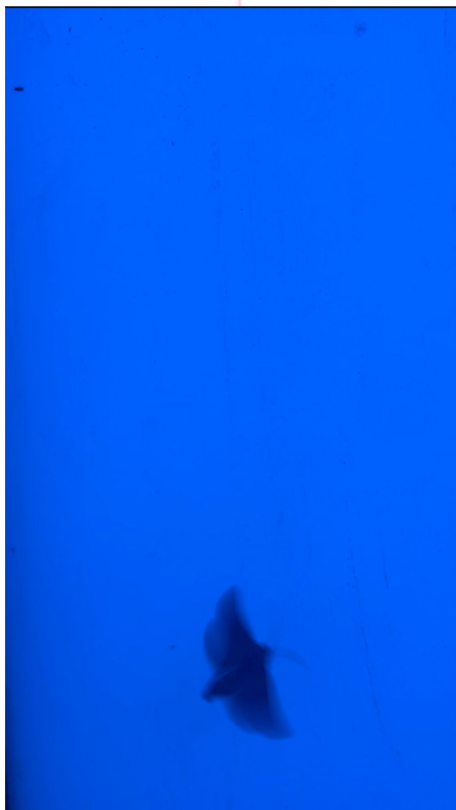


Images by Angel C. Fitzgerald, 2022

I think the first colour I remember was blue.

I felt like Sentinel was talking to me. My body was experiencing the work, its changing colours, its size, being observed as you observe it. It demanded attention. I think it was similar to things that Tyler had talked to me about in the past which didn't make total sense at first but started to click once I was seeing it through his lens.

We decided to catch the last ferry home that night so we could experience the work for as long as possible. I got to experience Sentinel for maybe an hour or so.

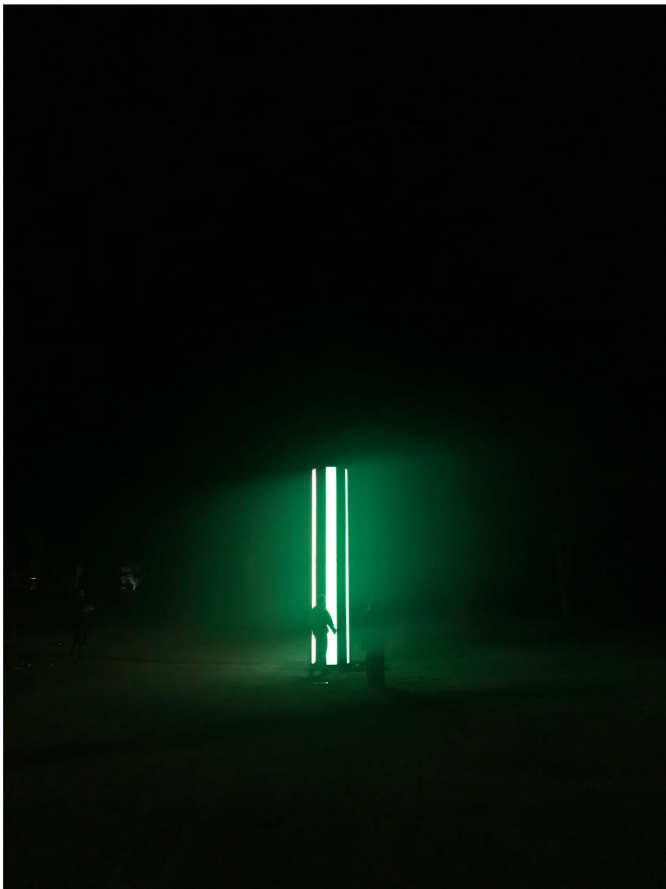


Images by Angel C. Fitzgerald, 2022

There are sensors on the sculpture which reads the environment around it. It reads the humidity and temperature. Two of the five panels have been programmed to send out certain light sequences for what the temperature is and three of the panels are for the current humidity. I mean I almost feel like I'm revealing a deep secret by writing about the functions of this sculpture openly. I think the unanswered questions are something I like. I love art which leaves room for interpretation.

I think it's exciting that you can experience something completely unexpected and not the same experience as someone who saw it an hour earlier, a day earlier, who will see it tomorrow. I love how it almost feels like an organism. Reading its surroundings and adapting to it.

Seeing it from a distance, completely alone, it is interacting with its surroundings. As you come up to it, it senses your motion, your body, playing a unique sequence of light to play out just for you.



Sentinel, Tyler Jackson, Image by Angel C. Fitzgerald, 2022

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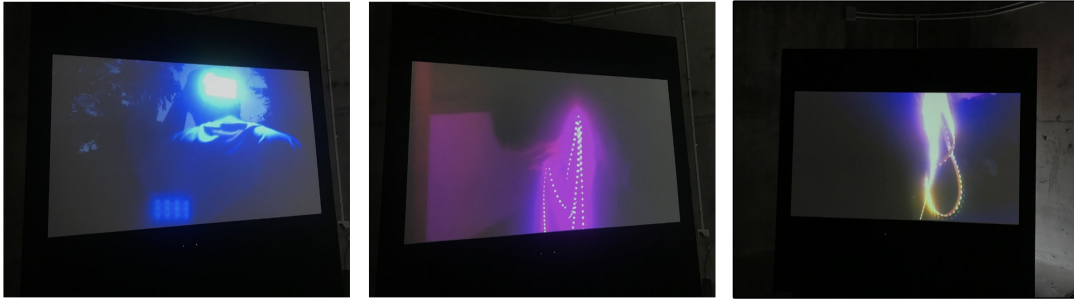
Images by Angel C. Fitzgerald, 2022

The hour we had with the work passed and I have the photographs, videos and memories to prove it. We got on the boat and went back to Auckland. It was so cool watching Sentinel get smaller and smaller as we rode away. I stood and watched it until it was just a dot of changing light in the distance. All of these occurrences, the opening of my show, my birthday, Auckland (also peaking in Omicron numbers) and seeing Sentinel all combined made for one of the best, dream-like weeks of my life.



Images by Angel C. Fitzgerald, 2022

The next day after seeing Sentinel, Tyler, Moya and myself went to see my film Love Letter at Silo 6 which I was showing with Te Tuhi, as both of them are featured in the film. In Love Letter I created moving image video portraits of my friends. By combining the score, sounds, conversations being had and the imagery I attempted to reflect on how I personally see my friends.



Images by Angel C. Fitzgerald, 2022

In Tyler's chapter of the film, there are shots of him holding a changing light behind his head as we walk down a path at night. There are shots of his hands in a spa pool playing with the light, and there are shots of him dancing in slow motion with the same LED strips used inside his sculpture Sentinel. I think the fact that both this film and his sculpture were shown at the same time, with the bridge of an ocean between them made some sort of spiritual sense in my mind.

Tyler's section in the film is the finale and it ends with a back and forth between changing brightly coloured lights, water and him letting off fireworks.

I love fireworks and have featured them in a lot of my work. I think there was a special kind of conversation being had between Love Letter and Sentinel, or maybe nobody saw it, but my own personal connection with Tyler made the connections happen.



Still image from Love Letter, 2022 by Angel C. Fitzgerald. Commissioned by Te Tuhi

Once again, the special kind of journey is starting again. I get to imagine the creation of one of my friends' works. I get to write, think and analyse one of my favourite artworks. It's to be shown again in Wairepo Lagoon. I will probably be able to see it from my studio.

Love, Angel.

