

(Images are procured from the internet)

on evolution(izing)

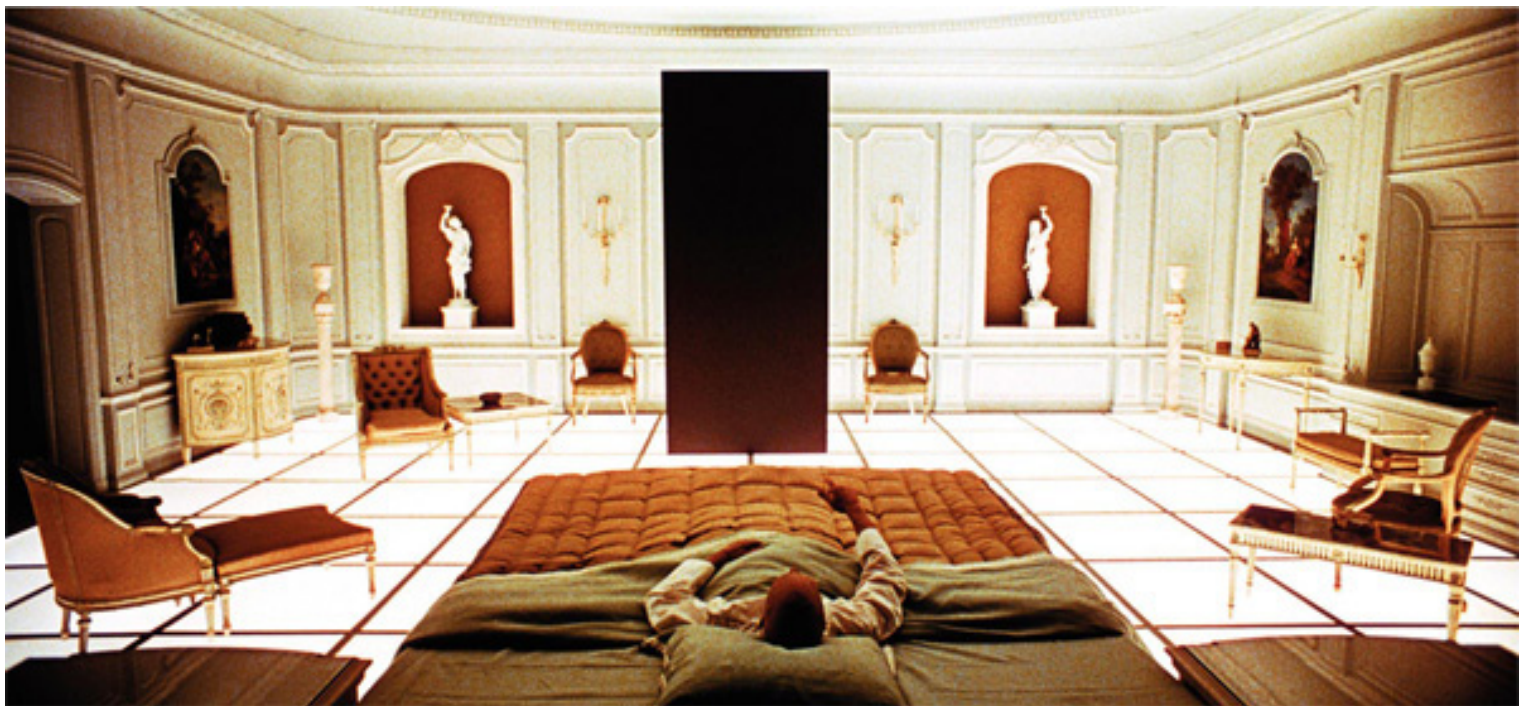
Artworks are strange objects. No, not strange like the embarrassing uncle at family gatherings (although that could also be the case), but rather their mode of existence. They come to be because we (artists) need to make them, but not necessarily because the world needs them. Not most of the world anyway. And no, I did not mean that in a churlish kind of way.

Beautiful as they may sometimes be, they don't have the excuse of a real purpose, not like that Swiss-made watch on your wrist or that lilac-coloured dress draping over your body. They come into our world precarious, riding the tension of being a part of our utilitarian world and not. But it is at the same time where their magic lies. With their curious status in our world, theirs is a presence that attracts and repel.

We are often told that art is a source of *enlightenment*, but lets shift our focus away from that very contentious word and instead put it in relation to its sibling *evolution*. While art is often touted as being enlightening, it is probably never spoken about as being evolutionising. Partly down to the fact that evolutionising isn't an actual word, but let's not dwell on such details. It has never caused us to shed our most innate primitive instincts, nor excessive body hair, change our dental arcade or help us develop a chin.

Or has it?

Cue Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, perhaps the only instance where art somehow married enlightenment with evolution. We're talking about the monolith, no sorry, *THE* Monolith to be exact. The one that help our chums, the apes evolve into the hair-reduced human beings that we are today in the film. Of course, Kubrick never meant for it to be an artwork, but an alien artifact right?



Wrong, you see that? How the marble Greco-Roman sculptures flank the Monolith centerpiece in that tacky penthouse suite with Hugh Hefner still in bed? Sure the Monolith is alien, but it sure as hell is an alien artwork at that. *2001* was made in 1968 (yes, I just said *2001* was made in 1968) and guess what else was happening in 1968?

MINIMALISM.

You see Donald Judd got that one right when he said that the Monolith spelled the subsequent death of minimalism. Good old Donald Judd and Stanley Kubrick, who as Willem Sandberg would say of artists, had especially long and sensitive feelers that could sense before most mere mortals the changes that were already in the air. Judd sensed in the air something that would later become minimalism and Kubrick sensed Judd's bullshit and then Judd sensed that Kubrick sensed his bullshit.

Now guess who told me this? My tutor, Jason Dodge. And don't even get me started on Sandberg, the father of the white cube. Who legends has it came up with the white cube influenced by his time in Zurich where he joined a cult whose principal doctrine was for man to return to nature, fast, be vegetarian and wear white. And guess who told me this? My lovely vice-dean, Marjo van Baar. Tangible proof that you need people to tell you things about art that art itself cannot tell you.

So where am I going with this? Simply put, artworks are uncanny objects that are borne from an uncannier place. A place that is evidently alien to the world that we inhabit everyday. In *2001*, despite the spaceships, the celestial bodies, the murderous talking computer, that abhorrent black metal slab was by far the strangest thing the characters encountered in the desert, on the moon and in their bedrooms. While to me the Monolith was the strangest thing that I encountered within a piece of fiction. Now few things are truly stranger than fiction, but I'd like to put a case in for artworks.