

Mysterious Monolith,
By Ahmet Öğüt
2022

Mixed Media
30 cm × 120 cm × 270 cm (1 ft × 4 ft × 9 ft)
First Edition of 5+2 AP

Produced by Team Eight Arms
Curated by Farah Piriye

A site-specific research-based installation by Ahmet Öğüt, commissioned by Coil Partners to interact with the local community and reflect on the company's history, identity and demographics.

The *Mysterious Monolith* created by Berlin-based artist Ahmet Öğüt, whose work is characterised by a playfulness that questions the reasons behind, and consequences of socio-political and economic imbalances of our era, was commissioned by Coil Partners to address the themes of renewable energy and environmental sustainability, invisible labour and collective memory, as well as the relationship between humans and technology.

The minimalist conceptual installation takes its origin from the 1968 Stanley Kubrick cult film *2001: Space Odyssey*. Adapted from Arthur C. Clarke's eponymous novel, the awe-inspiring sci-fi is a visionary journey through the timeline of humanity that explores such concepts as existentialism, human evolution, technology, and artificial and extraterrestrial intelligence. Kubrick's monolith is a towering black column, rudimental in its design but groundbreaking in its symbolic connotations. It appears first in prehistoric times, generating enough power to enable our human-like ancestors to first use tools. Millions of years later, it reemerges below the lunar surface, reflecting signals toward Jupiter's moons, transcending time and space, where past, present and future appear as one. A science fiction icon in its own right, Kubrick's monolith has continuously inspired modern pop culture, including the mysterious appearance of a series of metal columns internationally reported in 2016 and 2022.

Öğüt's take on this advanced fictional artefact built by an unseen extraterrestrial species has been installed on the premises of a fully operational coil plant, reflecting the company's ideology and serving as a symbol of a single unified powerful force— an energy generator, akin to an enormous battery powering an entire plant. Resembling in its size, form and colour that of Kubrick, Öğüt's version of the monolith is coated in thermochromic paint, reacting to body heat, creating an interactive experience that transcends aesthetics; and underscoring the too often invisible labour behind heavy industries. The Monolith also reacts to sunlight, reflecting on the looming threat of environmental disaster and the company's commitment to invest in solar energy.

A site visit and comprehensive research into Coil Partners served as Öğüt's full introduction to this privately owned Belgian-Turkish joint venture claiming to be the largest coil shop outside of China, producing motors and generators and focusing on transitioning into hydropower and wind turbine engines. "The company's product can be seen as the backbone of our current energy generation technology without which our growth economies couldn't survive", says Michael Coene, Coil Partners. The company hasn't only been focusing on expansion but on improved labour conditions with their CSR efforts directed at gender equality and honouring local culture and tradition. Their new facility is located just beyond the Istanbul border in Kocaeli, where the overwhelming industrial landscape knows nothing else. The new plant envisions a cradle-to-cradle concept and is continuously undergoing numerous renovations, such as opening up walls to allow for natural light

and greenery, and installing enough solar panels to cover 100% of the plant's electricity use by the end of 2022.

Complementing the company's present efforts and future ambitions, Ögüt's Mysterious Monolith reuses industrial materials such as metal sheets, reimagining the industrial scenes of the Kocaeli zone. Sourcing materials on-site and utilising the plant's workforce, Ögüt has constructed his extraterrestrial sculpture to silently tower over the newly built garden and come to life with just one temperature-laden touch. Once in contact, the black colour of the installation changes to various copper tints, a nod to the copper dunes dominating the coil production site. By encouraging community engagement, this project establishes a novel art experience accessible for the local community, introducing art to their everyday working environment and contributing to Istanbul's cultural scene by bringing art outside the city capital and into the factory district.

The repetitive manual labour of plant employees, using a specific technique that no device can perform, accompanied by powerful machines operating in a rhythmic hypnotising manner harken back to Kubrick's meditative portrayal of the universe with Strauss' Blue Danube waltz in the background. Ögüt's monolith functions as a symbolic container, creating a charged space through individual engagement, highlighting the transformation of boundaries between bodies and objects and insisting on the connection between human and non-human. The sculpture hints at an energy portal, with its mesmerising mystery offering a glimpse of what it might hold.

Farah Piriye