

# ALIGNMENT

## A Holographic Light Sculpture by Sally Weber

D. Tulla Lightfoot

In her sculpture *Alignment*, artist Sally Weber splits white light into its three component colors of red, green and blue. Each is projected in a thin, vertical line out and away from the others, and away from the curved surface of the seven-foot structure that houses the hologram.

From the sides, the different colors are pure and slightly curved, as if they were skinny parts of a rainbow. From the front and from a distance, the strips of light combine to form only one line. This, the artist writes, is conceived to be an "axis mundi . . . the symbolic, vertical connection between heaven, earth, and the underworld; life and death; or the realms of consciousness." Graphically, in this piece, it is a thin line indeed, perhaps as thin as the one we humans find (when we have found, or take the time to find) ourselves traveling on in our lives. Some of us consciously seek a balance and practice being centered. Others without any practice at all know how to walk the "straight and narrow." Many times it is for our own protection. And from a distance the line is straight. Up and down are clearly identified. The slope is steep, but it goes somewhere and is not impossible to climb. It is only as we near the structure that we run into problems.

As we approach, the single line first widens and then mockingly breaks up—the primary colors blend into all colors, and these shower down wildly upon us. The artist is aware of this phenomenon and writes that "the lines of color break into swirling, multi-colored forms." These forms encircle and engulf the viewer as she or he changes position.

It is at this point that our viewing becomes subjective. The artist created and now offers the piece, but it is then up to the viewer to deal with it, to interact with it and to interpret it. It's a kiss. A vision of the gods. A bad trip.

*"It's a big, tall boyfriend with strong arms that loves me."*

*"A beautiful dancer whose slender limbs move gracefully, and beckon me to join her in the movements."*

*"I'd sure like to have that in my living room."*

*"It's a representation of how it feels when I feel that I've lost my mind."*

Ecstasy can lead to misery, tears to laughter, love to hate, ignorance to enlightenment. Why is the line so hard to see when we're involved in the involvement of living? It's an illusion. The forms appear symmetrical, yet when I blinked I found that each eye's view was quite different. The mind sorts things out and needs to discover order and logic in the tumultuous information.

Weber writes that "the sculpture, *Alignment*, is minimal, reducing the elements of holography and light to barest form." Yet at this point of viewing it is anything but minimal, and the viewer is reminded of the colorist painters (Morris Louis, Helen Frankenthaler), who swirled, poured and stained their paint on canvas. It is lyrical, abstract and expressionistic. It is meaningful in the myriad meanings we choose to attach to it.

As the viewer continues to approach the sculpture the tumult dies down. The crash of colors abates, and the light innocently realigns itself, appearing only meek and passive.

*Alignment* is a wonderful piece. The artist uses the medium to accomplish something that nothing else could accomplish. The reminiscence of the sculptured form to the crystalline monolith of Kubrick and Clarke's movie *2001* cannot be denied. The holography even fulfills Clarke's vision when he wrote that "tantalizing, ill-defined phantoms moved across its surface and in its depths." One is as surprised to find it in a gallery nestled in a sleepy little New England town as the humanoids supposedly were to see a giant rectangle outside their caves. The form is masculine, while the axis mundi needn't be. Yet it is powerful without being solid.

In the fiction, the monolith was created by aliens and placed on earth to encourage the humanlike animals to become true *Homo sapiens*. In nonfiction, true *Homo sapiens* create their own monoliths to explore and wonder at what it means to be human.

*Sally Weber is a Boston-based artist. Alignment was on exhibit in Southbridge, Massachusetts, through the Arts Center, from July 4 to July 31. Suzanne St. Cyr acted as consultant on the project. The hologram was produced at Advanced Dimensional Displays Inc. with fabrication assistance from Reynolds Polymer Technology. The work was funded in part by a grant from the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities.*