

# [Future Lite \(newindianexpress.com\)](http://newindianexpress.com)

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The 'Pool of Dreams' installation

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**Riya Yadav**

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Each time one crosses Delhi's AIIMs flyover, the 40-foot-high installations standing over the green patch of land in the centre enrapture the eye. The artwork, made of stainless steel, looks like giant sprouts emerging from the ground. Its mirror-like orbs stand tall and reflect the passing vehicles.

In a juxtaposition with Delhi's brick-and-mortar infrastructure, its modern build gives it a futuristic bearing, a symbol, as it were, of the city's ambitions.

Its creator is Delhi's acclaimed installation artist Vibhor Sogani. Sogani delves into a similar display of futuristic art at the 12th edition of the prestigious Amsterdam Light Festival (on till January 21) in the Netherlands. Riding on the theme 'Revealing Art, AI, and Tech', Sogani is the only Indian among 24 artists adorning Amsterdam with their luminous work. The artist creates 'Pool of Dreams', a light installation composed of 100 mirror-finished stainless-steel orbs in varied sizes.

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Vibhor Sogani

## **Light and Dutch**

He blends the sprouting artwork into the city's colourful canvas. Installed at the river canal running in the middle of the city, it is a cluster of lustrous orbs emerging from the ground and slowly descending into the water. The spheres, recessed with blue lights underneath, reflect on the water surface. The appearance of the artwork comes across as a stark reminiscence of a sci-fi film, almost like glowing flora from another world.

“The artwork is a reflection of my thoughts, my imaginary perception of a beautiful tomorrow. A dream of utopia where knowledge, technological advancement, and evolved intelligence will make the world beautiful,” says Sogani.

The perception of technology and AI, the artist believes, comes from a place of fear. “We are in a constant dilemma. We are uncertain about how AI is going to unfold. The questions often perturb us, ‘Will it be a collaboration or will it become a competition? Is it an evolution or a revolution?’ But I wanted to have a positive perspective,” he adds.

## **Art central**

Sogani, a former architect, demonstrates a similar sentiment for light work and the role of light in art. He draws a parallel with architecture, and regards light as the fourth dimension of art that completes his artistic expression. “Light cannot be an external illumination; it is central to an artwork. No matter how grand an architecture is, absence of light will steal its depth.

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For instance, the blue light in the orbs is integral to the artwork. If I switch it off, it will remain incomplete,” he says. The artist plays around with light and the choice of medium to drive his narrative home. In public spaces especially, steel has often been an incontestable choice. From Delhi to Dubai and now in Amsterdam, he brings his vision to reality with the steel as a medium.

“In the light exhibition, I didn’t want artificial light or electricity to be consumed during the day. I wanted to use the daylight and steel was the perfect material for my work. Whether it was capturing the natural hues of the sky in the day or twinkling lights in the night, it became an excellent narrative throughout its display,” he adds.

However, it isn’t always the light that helps artists make their works stand out. The artist believes that there is always a reason, a logic, that collectively drives him or her to create something specific—a site. “In this case, the site was a very important factor for me because the installation is half in water and half on land. I knew there would be people of all age groups viewing it and I wanted them to engage with the work. Therefore, I made it look dreamy. A world of AI and technology that wasn’t scary, but beautiful,” he says.

## **Public art**

With the orbs placed at a canal surrounded by an adjoining park, roads and buildings on either side, the lustrous ‘Pool of Dreams’ can be directly engaged with. The rippling waters of the canal have frequent boat rides and cruises passing by the installation, enabling an intimacy with the work and even determining the sizes and arrangements of the spheres.

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Public installations are, however, different from the private ones. “When we do projects in private spaces, we know the client, we know the kind of audience that is going to see it. But when they are out in the public realm, it is a different ball game altogether. You cannot really do something, which doesn’t engage the cross section,” he says.

Standing along the canal bank, the blue-lit steel orbs inspire a universal vision of what lies in the future and its relationship with technology. Sogani’s work, especially in public places, spurs one to imagine, think and question. Its immersive experience gives a glimpse of what ‘modernity’ could mean for the future.

**Steel orbs or glowing flora from another world? Delhi artist Vibhor Sogani’s striking light installation at the 12th edition of the ongoing Amsterdam Light Festival continues his play with art, technology and AI. It is how he imagines a beautiful tomorrow.**

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"The artwork is a reflection of my thoughts, my imaginary perception of a beautiful tomorrow. A dream of utopia



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