

# 70 floating *diyas* in Amsterdam

The city's annual light festival has a Diwali-inspired installation by Delhi-based artist and designer Vibhor Sogani

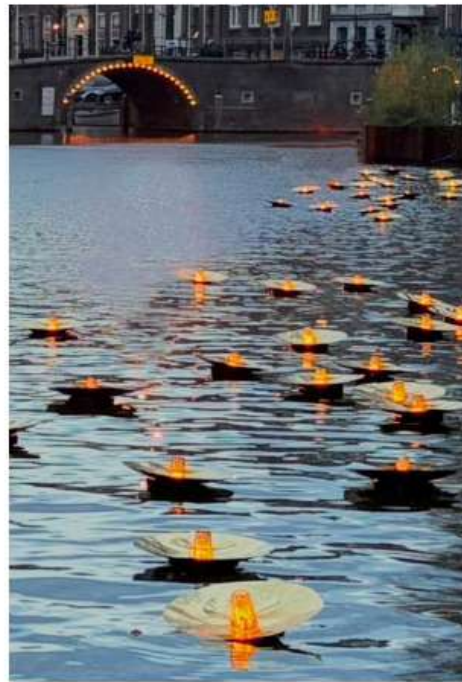
## Team PropertyPlus

In 2023, Vibhor Sogani introduced Amsterdam to his *Pool of Dreams*, featuring 100 mirror-finished stainless steel orbs. The installation was an instant hit at the Amsterdam Light Festival (ALF), which featured 20 diverse light artworks, both from renowned and emerging artists. The theme then was 'Revealing Art, AI and Tech' and Sogani said he chose to embrace an optimistic perspective over the fears surrounding technology.

When ALF 2024 opened last November, Sogani was once again on the list of 27 artists. This time the brief was 'Rituals', and he chose to channel Diwali, India's festival of lights, and memories of his mother lighting her *diyas*. Sogani transformed the Herengracht canal with his *Deepam* installation – 70 handcrafted lanterns in polished brass. At the festival that ends on January 19, artists present diverse styles and experimental approaches, some of them large projections on historic buildings, some 3-D forms, where light plays gracefully across their surfaces. Sogani's lamps glow along in harmony. More from the award-winning artist and designer who is remembered in Delhi for his stainless steel *Sprouts* installation (on the AIIMS flyover):

## [With Diwali celebrations going mainstream around the world last year, was your \*diya\* inspiration a foregone conclusion?](#)

The brief from ALF 2024 revolved around creating an immersive artwork. They were particularly interested in works that reflect cultural heritage while incorporating innovation in design and materials. I saw this as an opportunity to pay homage to the ancient Indian ritual of lighting *diyas*, while also showcasing the universal nature of this prac-



(Clockwise from left) The *Deepam* installation; a close up of the *diyas*; and Vibhor Sogani.

tice. The inspiration for this piece blossomed from a memory of my mother, gently lighting a *diya* each evening. A simple act, yet filled with profound meaning. As a child, I didn't fully grasp the depth of this ritual, but with time, I began to see how it quietly threaded itself into the fabric of my life. This deep connection to such a humble, yet powerful ritual, ultimately became the soul of the installation.

## [The lanterns are spread across 100 meters of the canal. Tell us about the hidden challenges?](#)

The entire process took close to a year. The floating mechanism and the flame-like lighting effect took six to seven months to perfect. One of the main challenges was ensuring the lanterns remained stable despite fluctuations in the canal's water level. To solve this, the ALF team created a sophisticated underwater framework similar to a buoyancy system to accommodate the rise and fall of the water. It was a demanding yet incredibly fulfilling journey that blended technical inge-

nuity with artistic expression.

## [How have audiences been reacting to this installation? Is it visible during daylight?](#)

People seem to connect deeply with the work because it isn't abstract. It is a tangible, relatable piece that evokes memories of Indian river *ghats* and rituals like Diwali. I recall a brief meeting with a local visitor who had recently visited the *ghats* in Varanasi. He stood in quiet awe by the Herengracht canal. What amazed me was how the installation remains captivating even during the day. Despite the bright sunlight, the lanterns continue to glow gently, adding a quiet, almost ethereal quality to the space.

## [Where can we see some of your impressive new installations this year?](#)

In India, I'll be exhibiting in Mumbai and Kolkata, and I'm also working on a large permanent installation for a public space in Gujarat. Internationally, I have an event in London and two major public art projects in the UAE.

*ALF has commissioned Sogani to create 75 more lanterns, which are for sale in Amsterdam.*