

PLATFORM

A CREATIVE PLAYGROUND



Vibhor Sogani

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Vibhor Sogani, the coveted installation artist, is a true visionary at a vast scale. He has mastered the grandiose elements of conceptual art, best seen in his works 'Sprouts' in the heart of New Delhi, 'Kalpavriksha – the wish-fulfilling tree' in Ahmedabad, and 'Joy' in Dubai, among many others. Commanding the medium of metal, known for its unrelenting toughness, into astounding works of detailed textures and techniques is his special prowess that never ceases to inspire awe.

His ambitious and experimental works often feature the element of light, juxtaposing the softness of glow with the ruggedness of metal to birth magnificent works that are entirely innovative and captivating. His achievements have spanned the globe, and his latest adventure takes him to the Amsterdam Light Festival to feature his work 'Pool of Dreams' alongside some of the best artists of the contemporary world. The Amsterdam Light Festival, being held from 30 November 2023 to 21 January 2024, aims to 'illuminate, tell stories and connect people.'

To delving deeper into his creative process, we are in conversation with Vibhor Sogani.

How would you describe your design sensibility?

My works are mostly reactive to the site and the theme. Often, very simple thoughts or ideas become my muse, my inspiration, and draw me into creating a tangible concept or a form. I find 'simple' is often the most effective and beautiful in my perception and articulation, thus being the most powerful. When I am able to achieve highly simple or simplified articulation of thoughts, the outcome normally acquires better longevity and leads to multiple opportunities in times to come.

My primary medium is metal — any kind of metal — stainless steel, brass, copper, MS, Aluminium, Corten steel, etc. They all excite me differently, and I like mixing them, sometimes even in the same artwork. I enjoy mixing and machining these metals, using all kinds of techniques and technologies and juxtaposing them smartly with the hand-crafted metal skills available in abundance in the Indian subcontinent. This kind of amalgamation leads to exciting works with

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Having said that, Stainless Steel is my predominant material. Its reflective quality, strength, and longevity outdoors help in creating large works and are suitable for even tough environmental conditions. Working with SS is more challenging than other metals, but I enjoy these and look forward to crafting difficult forms using SS. Mixing SS with other metals also adds to interesting possibilities.



What's the inspiration and story behind your installation 'Pool of Dreams' being featured at the Amsterdam Light Festival?

I was happy to get this opportunity to participate in the Amsterdam Light Festival. It proved to be an enchanting experience. ALF is vastly different from other art fairs, biennales, and festivals. The theme for the 12th edition of the Amsterdam Light Festival is "Revealing Art, AI, and Tech." Artists were invited to address the emergence of artificial intelligence and

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the 12th edition of the Amsterdam Light Festival is "Revealing Art, AI, and Tech." Artists were invited to address the emergence of artificial intelligence and technology and their roles in daily life and the art world through their works. Much like any new technology, we find ourselves contemplating the unknown future of AI—how it will reshape our lives, careers, environment, and reality. The future remains uncertain, inviting a spectrum of imagination, assumptions, and predictions. Divergent opinions often arise, such as Utopia vs Dystopia, Competition vs Collaboration, and Evolution vs Revolution.

For the festival, I crafted "Pool of Dreams," an ethereal light installation comprised of 100 mirror-finished, stainless steel orbs varying in height from 3.5 to 7 feet and in diameter from 12 to 20 inches. Through this ambitious creation, I aim to unite the realms of art, light, and technology while addressing the festival's theme. In an era marked by increasing apprehension and anxiety about technological advancements, I chose to adopt an optimistic perspective. With the immersive and luminous installation "Pool of Dreams," I subtly engage in envisioning a beautiful tomorrow.

What was your creative process for "Pool of Dreams"?

Well, the theme, and my perception of the theme leads to the concept and the artwork. I was keen to address the subject in my vocabulary, my style. The daylight factor was one of my considerations right from the start. I wanted the artwork to appeal and be interactive for the audience at all times of the day and maybe entice the viewer to revisit the artwork at a different time to experience the change.

The other key influencing factor was the site and the surroundings. The site for the installation was a mix of water (canal) and the adjoining land (park). This part of the canal is very close to the city centre and is the broader one, with boats and cruises moving in both directions. Also, the viewing points are 2 bridges in the vicinity and from across the canal, besides, of course, the opportunity to meander through the artwork from the park side.

This meant that while many people would see them from varying distances, some would come close and even interact with the artwork. Also, the low-style Amsterdam boats and cruises would come really close while passing by. This clarity helped us in defining the sizes, the formation and the density of mirror finished SS spheres. Surreal reflections in water, lights from the neighbourhood architecture, and the tree density on top all helped us define the light play and the colours. In short, the basic thought and concept evolved with the site considerations as the primary influence and guide.



How has your brand transformed over the years?

In terms of the nature of our work, it seems we've undergone constant transformation, though not by intentional design. Rather, we've flowed with our passion and intuition, making the journey notably impromptu. Reflecting on it, I discern a pattern, but that clarity comes with the beauty of hindsight. I can connect the dots, suggesting that some choices were made at a subconscious level, albeit subtly. Our material palette has remained consistently identifiable, playing a crucial role in maintaining brand recognition. People resonate with our style, prompting outreach.

However, the most significant transformation lies in scale and spaces. Initially centred around private projects, the majority now extends into the public realm. This shift naturally brings about larger scales and heightened recognition. Another noteworthy change is the internationalisation of most projects. The canvas has expanded, presenting both opportunities and challenges. While dealing with international commissions introduces a different set of complexities, it also amplifies the fun quotient.

What lies ahead for you?

The more I contemplate the future, the more I become convinced about the potential for involvement in site-specific commissions, especially in public spaces. This particular domain excites me the most. I believe that my artistic style and choice of materials align well with contemporary architectural settings and urban landscapes. Considering the diverse range, scale, and engagement with a broad audience, I envision this as my preferred path forward.
