

A plunge into Vibhor Sogani's 'Pool of Dreams' at Amsterdam Light Festival 2023

The acclaimed Indian installation artist partakes in the 12th edition of the light festival with a shimmering installation composed of 100 mirror-finished stainless steel orbs.

by Anushka Sharma | Published on : Dec 19, 2023



The presence of technology and **artificial intelligence** in day-to-day lives escalates one day at a time and trickles into a multitude of aspects—from mundane devices to advanced technologies such as facial recognition and motion capture. As this infiltration redefines how we communicate, engage and create, it also poses questions and concerns. How will it impact society and human wellness—and where must it be stopped? These questions drive the perspectives taking the stage at the 12th edition of Amsterdam Light Festival, its theme being *LOADING... Revealing Art, AI and Tech*.



Pool of Dreams by Vibhor Sogani is an installation encompassing a section of a canal and the adjacent park.

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– Vibhor Sogani

Twenty diverse light artworks embellish the city of **Amsterdam** in **the Netherlands**, including contributions from renowned names alongside emerging talents. What ties the **art installations** together is an exploration of the human relationship with technology—the

November 11, 2023, to January 21, 2024, is a whimsical installation by acclaimed **Indian artist** Vibhor Sogani, the only Indian to be displaying at the **art event**. Reiterating his affinity for steel and its captivating lustre, Sogani conceives *Pool of Dreams*, a **lighting installation** composed of a staggering 100 mirror-finished stainless-steel orbs. The artwork, sprouting gracefully on land, partly ascends into the water—its luminescence multiplied on the rippling water surface. "In an age marked by rising distrust and fear of the new dawn in the world of technology, I preferred to take on an optimist's approach. With this inviting and light-filled installation, *Pool of Dreams*, I am happily indulging in an imagination of a beautiful tomorrow," Sogani tells STIR.



The installation can be viewed from boats or interacted with on land
Image: Courtesy of Janus van den Eijnden

Sogani, a passionate creative, has dabbled with a variety of materials, **stainless steel** being one of his most consistent choices for his installations. He also expresses a similar fondness for **light art** and the role of light in art. The illuminating energy, when it engages with his sculptural compositions, defines them and adds a final layer to their perception—a fourth dimension of art, much like it is for **architecture**. His renowned work titled *Sprouts* is one of the largest **public art** installations in **India**—40 feet high and spread across six acres of greens. *Joy*, another prominent work of his in **Dubai, UAE**, stands tall at a height of 30 feet. *Pool of Dreams*, the latest addition to his body of work, takes cues from the material palette and artistic vocabulary of Sogani's previous projects.

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Recalling his riveting experience at the previous edition of the Amsterdam Light Festival, Sogani notes, "The canals, reflecting the vibrant lights, created a surreal and mesmerising atmosphere, especially in the chilly night. The lasting impact of the festival lingered in my thoughts, enticing me to consider a return visit, perhaps experiencing it in a different way or during another time. The combination of art, cityscape, and the immersive setting created a truly memorable and magical experience that will remain etched in my memory for a long time." This time around, being a participant rather than a spectator comes with a fresh set of thrills and challenges for the Indian artist. Showcasing in open **public spaces** brought obstacles and excitement, with everyone—whether on foot or in boats—becoming part of the audience. "The instant gratification and reactions from people, who paused to reflect, talk, and express themselves, made the experience hugely rewarding and satisfying," Sogani comments. "Amsterdam's ambience and the festival's ability to transform public spaces added an extra layer of excitement to the entire endeavour," he adds.



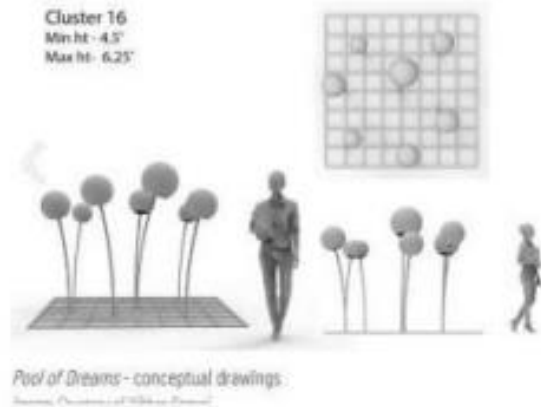
The reflections on the steel orbs keep evolving throughout the day

Image: Courtesy of Janus van den Eijnden

In view of the partly-contemplative and partly-speculative theme, *Revealing Art, AI and Tech*, the artist encountered two contrasting visions of the future to choose from: collaboration versus competition, evolution versus revolution, utopia versus dystopia.

Sogani, in the midst of raging scepticism, doubt and distrust, resorts to the former—as much a reverie as it is a plausible reality of a beautiful tomorrow. “The artwork, a collective of multitudes of images, is a reflection of my thoughts, my imaginary perception of a beautiful tomorrow,” shares Sogani. “A dream of utopia where knowledge, technological advancement, and the evolved intelligence will make the world dramatically beautiful and beautifully imagined,” he adds.

With careful thought and a distinctive creative spirit, Sogani conceives *Pool of Dreams*, an ethereal light installation made up of over 100 mirror-finished, stainless steel orbs, ranging from 3.5 to 7 feet in height and 12 to 20 inches in diameter. “With this ambitious work, I am attempting to bring together the worlds of art, light and technology to address the theme of the festival,” he tells STIR. The artist’s imagination of a light installation which takes into consideration the daylight—its allure lasting throughout the day—while maintaining an interactive quality, is realised through his beloved material, stainless steel.



The **public art**, however, is equally guided by the site. The chosen location for the installation, near the city centre, encompasses a section of a water canal and the adjacent land (park). This broad section of the canal accommodates boats and cruises moving in both directions. Two nearby bridges and points across the canal serve as key vantage points, offering various perspectives. Additionally, the lustrous clusters can be experienced intimately, and even interacted with, by strolling through it via the park side. The proximity of low-style Amsterdam boats and cruises passing by aided in the determination of the sizes, arrangement, and density of the mirror-finished stainless-steel 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 essence, the core idea and concept evolved organically, with site considerations acting as the primary influence and guide throughout the creative process,” the artist explains.



Initial renders of *Pool of Dreams*

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The gently moving bubble forms in mirror-finished stainless steel, represent the relationship between technology and the future—the material and the forms evoking a futuristic feel. The dynamic reflections, the blue lights recessed below, engage incessantly in a spirited dance—a dance that evolves with the transforming skyline and hues of the sky. As the 53-day art exhibition seamlessly integrates a few creative manifestations into the canvas of the city, the artists are spurred to contemplate, question and imagine. “As with any new technology, we cannot help but ponder what the future with AI will hold. How will it change our lives, our careers, our environment and our reality?” questions Sogani. In his *Pool of Dreams*, he seeks, finds and shares a utopian future; he contrives an immersive experience that invites curiosity and fosters imagination—of technology, and of an evolved tomorrow.