

Frieze Sculpture

London 2025

Abdollah Nafisi

17 September – 2 November 2025

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PRESS RELEASE

Conceptual Overview

At its core, Neighbours is a sculptural inquiry into the tension between presence and absence, materiality and the immaterial, movement and stillness. The work invites us to reflect on the paradox of self-perception, the way we seek to define ourselves through the tangible world, yet remain in pursuit of something always just beyond reach. The structure is divided between two forces. On one side, a triangular weighted form is anchored firmly to the ground, symbolizing the physical body, the realm of weight, stability, and material existence. Attached to it, a small treasure bottle evokes the investments we make in the material world, our possessions, ambitions, and the structures we build. Opposite, the sculpture extends outward into an open form, balanced yet untethered, representing the lightness of the immaterial, the space of breath, air, and the unseen. Two horns extend in opposite directions, channeling these forces. One hums with the density

of structure and accumulation, while the other carries wind, movement, and the fleeting nature of presence. Between them, a small suspended yellow vessel remains poised at the threshold, a fragment of clarity in constant motion, existing between weight and release. Yet, the sculpture is not only seen, it is felt. As viewers step into the space between the horns, they do not simply observe the work; they experience it. The air moves differently here. The sound of rustling leaves and shifting wind is funneled through the structure, making the unseen perceptible. This moment, where what is usually unnoticed becomes amplified, is where the work truly exists. This is the paradox of Chasing the Self, to stand still, yet feel movement; to listen, yet hear silence; to reach, yet understand that what we seek is already passing through us.

Philosophical Inquiry

The sculpture engages with ancient and contemporary

ideas of selfhood, perception, and balance. Philosophers from Heraclitus to Maurice Merleau-Ponty have questioned the fluid nature of identity, how we exist as both fixed and changing, formed by both presence and absence. This work reflects that paradox: we are always in pursuit of the self, yet the self is always in motion. Much like the wind that moves through the horns, shaping our awareness of space and sound, our understanding of self is formed in the gaps, between what is held and what is released. The open steel framework resists closure, allowing air and light to pass through. Just as in life, the solid and the void exist together, reinforcing the idea that absence is just as meaningful as presence. The composition echoes Rumi's parable of misplaced investment, the idea that we spend our lives building in one place, only to realize too late that our true foundations were elsewhere. Neighbours makes this question physical: Do we place our weight in the material world, or do we find balance in the unseen?

Interaction with Environment

Set within Regent's Park, Neighbours is shaped by its surroundings. Throughout the day, the sculpture casts shifting patterns of light and shadow, altering how weight and space are perceived. But beyond its visual impact, it functions as an instrument of air, amplifying sound and silence gently and making the invisible tangible. Standing between the two horns, visitors

experience a moment of attunement. The sculpture becomes a portal for listening, an interface between the external world and the internal self and perhaps the viewer experience's becoming part of this narrative, filling the negative space in between the sculptures.

Artist Statement

My practice explores the relationship between form, perception, and experience- how materiality and the unseen interact in shaping human awareness. In Neighbours, I investigate the paradox of pursuit, the way we seek definition in the physical world while also yearning for something beyond it. This work is not a static object; it is a space of transition, a moment of resonance. It asks:

- * How do we perceive what cannot be held?
- * Where does the self exist: inside, outside, or somewhere in between? Or the other?
- * Can we find stillness in movement, clarity in uncertainty, presence in the unseen?

Conclusion

By engaging with absence, movement, and the search for balance, Neighbours offers a meditation on the unfolding nature of perception. It reflects the struggle to remain present, to hold onto clarity in an ever-shifting world. But it also suggests something else: that perhaps, in this pursuit, the self is not something to be captured.....but something to be felt in passing, like the wind moving through steel.



ABDOLLAH NAFISI

Abdollah Nafisi (b. 1982, Tehran; lives and works in the UK) creates sculptures from fallen trees and waste industrial steel, exploring the fluid boundaries of identity and space. His practice emphasises the dialogue between works, where each piece engages with another to create and define the negative space in between, turning these relational and spatial dynamics into central elements of his practice. From a background in furniture making, Nafisi transitioned to sculpture, bringing a deep understanding of craft and materiality into his artistic process. Inspired by his experiences with nomadic tribes in Iran, he imagines how movement and connection shape our sense of belonging.

His sculptures serve as meeting points where material, memory and the interplay of forms converge, inviting viewers to contemplate the evolving nature of self within the spaces in between.



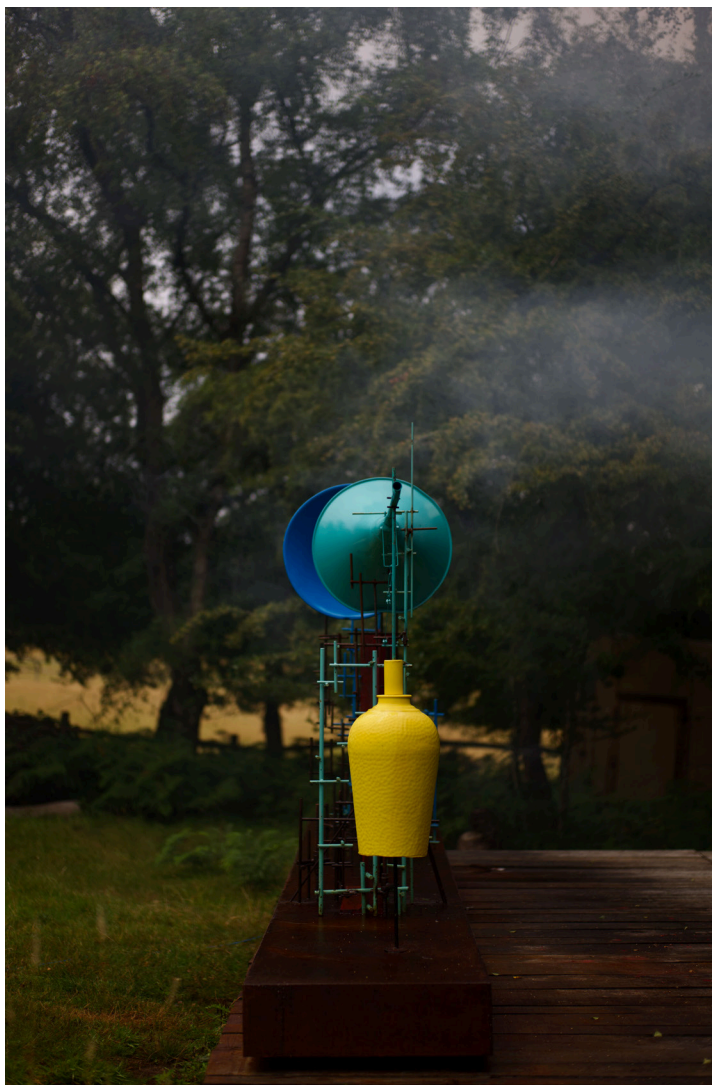
Abdollah Nafisi. *Neighbours*. 2025
Steel and acrylic polyurethane paint. Overall: 170 x 440 cm. image 1/5





Abdollah Nafisi. *Neighbours*. 2025
image 2/5





Abdollah Nafisi. *Neighbours*. 2025
image 3/5





Abdollah Nafisi. *Neighbours*. 2025
image 4/5





Abdollah Nafisi. *Neighbours*. 2025
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