

Tide

An Iranian artist asks philosophical questions by placing distorted mirrors in landscapes around the world

In the middle of Currumbin Beach in Queensland, Australia, is a door, standing ajar. As you approach it, you realize that it is impossible to walk through this door. A mirror casts your reflection back to you, with the waves of the ocean leaving a residue of sea foam in the background, creating a conundrum for anyone who interacts with it. This visual riddle is a sculpture called *Tide*, the work of Iranian artist Shirin Abedinirad.

This is not the first time Abedinirad has played with the image-warping effects of reflective surfaces. She has spent the last 10 years travelling the world placing mirrors in landscapes including Istanbul and Iran to highlight what she perceives as the agony of being alive. “The land on which I realize my dreams is replete with hope and despair for me,” Abedinirad says. “On this land on stony paths and vast deserts, I am seeking a place that would be a window of life full of hope and delight.” *Tide*, with its open door reflecting the viewer back to themselves, highlights this tension between hope and despair as visitors experience the optimism then disappointment of

attempting to walk through an impossible doorway.

There is a philosophical bent to this work. Planted in the middle of this golden expanse of beach, *Tide* begs the question of what we understand as reality, and how those truths change depending on our location. Abedinirad travels the world posing this question. She has built an engaged social media following, posting her optical illusion artworks alongside poetry. For *Tide*, she draws a link between the artwork and the Iranian poet Rumi. “Where I am let it be / the sky is mine,” is a quote she posts alongside her image.

Literature such as Rumi’s was a crucial means of education for Abedinirad. Growing up in 1980s Iran, she was unable to freely come and go from the country due to government sanctions. Instead, she traveled the world through literature, which explains why the artist has created her shimmering, inconclusive artworks in over 50 countries. A recent poem posted by Rumi only highlights this desire to perplex: “Hidden beyond the universe would appear on the mirror of your perception.”

