

Anish Kapoor, Kensington Gardens

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Although the Victorians erected some ambitious and elaborate sculpture in Kensington Gardens, nothing new has been installed here for several decades. But now, only a brief stroll from the gilded splendour of the Albert Memorial, Anish Kapoor is enlivening this seductive parkland with four large-scale pieces. All made of stainless steel, they rely on mirrored surfaces. Yet there is nothing repetitive or predictable about these extraordinary presences. Kapoor makes arresting use of the different sites they occupy, and every shift in London's climate engenders an unexpected change in their identity.

As I walk along a grand avenue from the Serpentine Gallery, which organised this exemplary show with the Royal Parks, a distant sculpture called "C-Curve" looks like a solid, tanklike machine. But then, getting nearer, I discover that it is an intensely reflective, panoramic mirror undulating in front of me. Wide and tall enough to embrace generous reflections of grass, trees and sky, it prompts an awareness of the restless vitality quickening the natural world around us. Kapoor refreshes our vision even more by presenting an inverted mirror-image. Everything is turned upside-down, and when I move closer to "C-Curve" my reflection grows so large that my head is suddenly sliced off.

Even so, this visual decapitation does not feel at all violent. It is part of a far more complex experience, making us realise just how much we have to learn about the dynamics of perception. Walking on towards the Round Pond, I discover "Sky Mirror, Red" installed in the water. A circular sculpture, it is tipped up towards the clouds. So the swans who swim round it with proprietorial dignity are not reflected. Instead, "Sky Mirror, Red" lives up to its title by offering a sensuous, glowing vision of the mysterious region far above our heads. Kapoor invites us to view its unknowable immensity as if for the very first time. And he bathes this reflection in blood-red washes of colour, thereby revealing how painterly his sculptural vision really is.

Moving eastward, I soon find myself alerted by a far more blanched form surging up from the grass. "Non-Object (Spire)" might be emerging from an invisible, earth-covered and ancient building lurking far below us. Intact and gleaming, this sculpture surprises me from a distance by providing a miniature reflection of itself. But the image vanishes when I get nearer, and it is now replaced by my own reflection. I look impossibly elongated, like a Giacometti figure. When other viewers crowd around the sculpture, their bodies become even more attenuated and the whole rain-spattered work also resembles a tent.

No wonder the heavily muscled rider in G.F. Watts's "Physical Energy", a mighty Victorian bronze rearing nearby, seems to be falling backwards in shock. Kapoor has upstaged this horseman by installing beyond him the most spectacular of the four works. "Sky Mirror", a colossal piece placed near the edge of the Long Water, is a shining white image of epic cloud clusters suspended in a void – enormous yet weightless. Reflected in the water below, "Sky Mirror" will transform itself all the time. The seasonal changes between now and March 13 next year, when the show finishes, guarantee that Kapoor's work will repay countless visits. And at least one of these mesmerising pieces surely deserves a permanent place here, becoming an irresistible landmark in everyone's exploration of London. *Open daily, 6am to dusk.*