

Abbas Zahedi

EX:IT / LIFT

3 April - 14 June 2026

The Douglas Hyde is delighted to present the first solo exhibition in Ireland by artist Abbas Zahedi. Working across sculpture, installation, sound, performance and text, the exhibition builds on Zahedi's long-term engagement with social connectivity and renewal.

For the exhibition, Zahedi presents a newly commissioned body of work that interrogates bureaucratic systems – administrative, religious, institutional, and militaristic. Through a series of sound sculptures – some of which sound alarms, whilst others reflect rhythms of manual labour or ritual practice – Zahedi explores the capacity of the gallery space to challenge dominant systems of power through dialogue and collective action.

As a starting point for his exhibition, Zahedi drew connections between two pre-modern horns – the Celtic Carnyx and the Persian Karnay – both of which functioned as instruments of gathering, warning and orientation. Presented in Gallery 1, a new work *LIFT* (2026) takes the shape of these horns, with elongated stems for them to be held overhead, and inverts it. Here, nine chrome plated trombone horns are arranged in a large circle pointing to the floor. As an instrument, it remains inert until several people gather and lift it. In lifting and holding a note together, participants in the work transform an act of solidarity into physical vibrational force.

Nearby, *EX/IT* (2026) is a sculpture fabricated from a salvaged foghorn and gas-powered exit sign. On activation, the work emits a short, sharp alarm signalling an alert to others in the gallery space. Combined with *LIFT* (2026), these two works form the exhibition's title and the basis for its framework – a routine of simple actions that shift the logic of the exhibition into a system of alarm, collective momentum, and lift. In titling the exhibition *EX/IT: LIFT*, Zahedi considers how entering a gallery constitutes an exit – from the noise, acceleration, violence and saturation of everyday life.

Other works in this exhibition include *deadBOXswitch* (2026), which features an extended audio recording of shift work Zahedi did in a drinks' bottling factory before he became an artist. Housed in a defunct switch box, the sounds of mechanics and industrialisation filter into the gallery through an endless rhythm. As a form of dissociation, Zahedi reflects on the repetition of manual labour as a site for escape, or exit, into an imaginal space, wherein the seeds and materials of his artworks and concepts take shape.

tank-gong-bell (2025) combines industrial salvage and devotional artefacts. Sound is used here to blur references to rituals of release and mechanical alarm. The handle of the sculpture comes from a zanjir - a self-flagellation device used in South-West Asian rituals of mourning. In the work it becomes part of the mechanism that chimes an adapted boxing bell. In another work, the dislocated chains of the zanjir strike an empty filing cabinet in *drum-kick-dissociate* (2026). The sound produced is akin to a heartbeat or marching drum. Echoes of ritual and devotion imbued in the objects, when repurposed, carry other logics or systemic order.

Across the exhibition Zahedi proposes another system or logic; a rehearsal for new infrastructures informed by collective actions and the sharing of embodied experiences. A programme of events runs throughout the exhibition where these works are activated in sequence by participants. The programme is grounded by a simple but demanding question: what are you trying to exit? And what would it take to lift us out of it?

Abbas Zahedi

EX/IT: LIFT forms part of Zahedi's practice framework which he terms dissociative realism. First used by writer Asalan Isa, in a 2021 essay of the same title, the term names an approach which sees Zahedi transform spaces of art into sites for processing the embodied dimension of post-traumatic states – most persistently grief, but also displacement, exhaustion, ideological collapse, and forms of social and political overwhelm that exceed individual coping mechanisms.

In *EX/IT: LIFT*, and the associated programme of events, Zahedi invites us to question the thresholds of dominant institutions and bureaucracies that often fail. In proposing new systems, we can move towards how to reimagine and how to rebuild.

EX/IT: LIFT is curated by Emma Moore, Engagement & Projects Curator at The Douglas Hyde.

List of Works

Upper Level

1. *serpent-horn-on-serpentine-wall*, 2025.
nickel-plated brass serpent horn (found object), powder-coated steel, mechanical fixings, and original Serpentine Gallery wall section (plasterboard, wood and paint composite)*

2. *how can otherness be different*, 2026.
Repurposed bankers box, postcard, double-bound thesis

Main Level (clockwise, from left)

3. *EX/IT*, 2026. Repurposed exit sign, nautical foghorn*

4. *deadBOXswitch*, 2026.
Repurposed industrial switch box, vinyl print, audio hardware, looping sound

5. *LIFT*, 2026.

Chrome coated horns, air compressor, rubber tubes, custom metal components*

6. *tank-gong-bell*, 2025.

Modified steel gas tank, vintage boxing bell mechanism, zinc-plated steel chain, salvaged wooden handle (from zanjir), raw metals, specialist bolts, coatings, and fixings*

Lower Level

7. *drum-kick-dissociate*, 2026.

Repurposed filing cabinet, self-flagellation chains, metal hardware and extended kick-drum pedal

8. *studio-practice*, 2025.

Digital C type print, Persian Khatam-kari frame with painted Qajar-era miniature panels, Iran, c.1890-1930

*Technical design and fabrication of selected works in collaboration with Saul Eisenberg.

Artist Biography

Abbas Zahedi is an artist who engages with systems of care, thresholds of experience, and the creation of communal spaces for dialogue through his work. A former medic with training in psychiatry, Zahedi holds an MA in Contemporary Photography and Philosophy from Central Saint Martins. He is an Associate Lecturer at the Royal College of Art, London, and has taught widely in the UK and internationally. Recent solo exhibitions and commissioned work include *Holding a Heart in Artifice*, Nottingham Contemporary (2023); and Mahler-LeWitt Studios, Spoleto, Italy (2023). Recent awards include Stanley Picker Fellowship (2024), Artangel: Making Time (2023), Frieze Artist Award (2022), Paul Hamlyn Foundation Award (2021), and the Khadijah Saye Memorial Scholarship (2017). His commissioned work *Begin Again* was included in *Gathering Ground* at Tate Modern (2025), and included monthly Support Sessions open to the public as a support group for the collective processing of ecological grief.

The Artist's Eye: Bushra Mustafa Dunne

Acknowledging the crucial role artists play in influencing and shaping other artistic practices, The Artist's Eye series asks those exhibiting in Gallery 1 to invite an artist of influence to present work in Gallery 2. In this instalment Abbas Zahedi has invited poet Bushra Mustafa Dunne to write and record a new poem. To host Dunne's work, Zahedi has sourced an LRAD, a long-range acoustic device, which is installed in Gallery 2.

Often referred to as a 'sound cannon', the LRAD has increasingly been used as a sonic weapon in military and civil settings, including against anti-ICE protests in America, and was first 'tested' by the American army during the 2003 invasion of Iraq, where Dunne's mother was born.

Evoking the Irish mourning tradition of keening, the poem weaves together personal narratives and reflections on militarism, memory, and grief, to imagine shared histories of sonic rituals and communal grieving.

The voice in Dunne's text attempts to subvert or hack the device, interspersing language from the LRAD user manual with reappropriations of the postcolonial Iraqi epic poem, Rain Hymn.

Dunne's new poem, *Keening with rain* / نواح المطر, is read over an ambient composition by Dunne's father, the composer John Dunne.

List of Works

1. *Keening with rain*, 2026 / نواح المطر. Looping sound, 16mins. Poetry by Bushra Mustafa Dunne. Composition by John Dunne. Played through a long range acoustic device (LRAD) sourced by Abbas Zahedi.

Artist Biography

Bushra Mustafa Dunne is a poet and writer of mixed Iraqi and Irish heritage. Her writing practice explores exile, resistant ecologies, and is inspired by the Islamic tradition and her community organising, in both the Palestine and the climate movement. She completed her MA in Comparative Literature at UCL in 2024.

Acknowledgements

Research & Development: Yasiin Zahedi

With special thanks to Proyecto Ultravioleta for their support of the exhibition. The artist would also like to thank Abbas Akhavan, Amir Hanjani, Arsalan Isa, Aura Satz, Ayo Shonibare, Bas Ibellini, Bianca Chu, Camila Charask, Oswaldo Nicoletti, Camille Houzé, Eomac, Niamh Darling, Rachel McIntyre, Georgina Jackson, Joshua Leon, Kasia Kuzka, Emma Moore, Bill Harris, Matthew Coll, Stéphane Béna Hanley, Matthew Greenburgh, Mohammad Mehrabani, The New Centre for Research and Practice, Nocturn, Sally Davies, Sami Damoussi, Saul Eisenberg, Stefan Benchoam, Steve Goodman, Toby Upson, The Dunnes, Zaida Violan, 17LPS, and his own late family; the absences and losses that continue to shape him. RIP Khadija.

Events

A series of events runs throughout the exhibition where works are activated in sequence by participants, including a collective lifting of *LIFT*. Events are grounded by a simple but demanding question: *what are you trying to exit? And what would it take to lift us out of it?*

Thursday 2 April, 6.30pm

Abbas Zahedi and Bushra Mustafa Dunne, with dancer Kasia Kuzka, open the exhibition and lead the first lift.

Wednesday 15 April, 6.30pm

The 2026 Student Forum host their first public event, leading a discussion and lift.

Tuesday 28 April, 6.30pm

Abbas Zahedi is joined by Eomac, Irish composer, DJ and producer Ian McDonnell.

Thursday 14 May, 5pm

The Talk About Youth Collective from St Andrew's Resource Centre host a session.

Saturday 30 May, 2pm

Palestinian Culture Days (PCD), host a discussion and lift.

Open Sessions

We are interested to hear from individuals or collectives who would like to host a session. If you would like to take part, please email gallery@tcd.ie and tell us a little bit about yourself or your collective.

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