

# AUDIO DESCRIPTION

Parviz Tanavoli, *Standing Heech* 2007

Fibreglass, 94 x 43 x 28cm

Collection: National Museums Scotland



Photo: Rob Harris

## TRANSCRIPT

This is an audio description of the sculpture *Standing Heech* created by Parviz Tanavoli in 2007. It will take about 5 minutes to listen to.

This piece is one of seven artworks situated in the first gallery in *The Weight of Words* exhibition at the Henry Moore Institute. *Standing Heech* is a three-dimensional representation of the word 'Heech' meaning 'nothing' in Farsi. Farsi is the modern Persian language and the official language of Tanavoli's home country of Iran.

The sculpture's initial appearance is of a vertical metal ribbon bent into a series of curves, with the lower arc of the shape larger than the upper. It finishes at the top with a triangular end piece with two eye-like holes in it.

The sculpture is placed on top of a white oblong-shaped plinth that is 70 centimetres high and 65 centimetres wide. *Standing Heech* is made of fibreglass. It is grey-green in colour and has a metallic sheen to its surface. The sculpture itself is long and slim, measuring 94 centimetres high, 43 centimetres wide and 28 centimetres in depth. The sculpture is covered by an acrylic hood and its form consists of three letters from the Persian alphabet: 'he', 'ye' and 'če' combined to depict the word 'Heech'.

We will now explore the sculpture from its base upward. At the base of *Standing Heech*, there is a metallic cube-like plinth supporting the long figure. The sculpture stands in the centre of the cube leaning slightly to one side. On the top face of this cube the artist has signed across the bottom left in white cursive 'Parviz 07.18/25' meaning 2007, edition 18 out of 25.

Moving upward toward the centre, we encounter the first Persian letter 'če' swooping upwards from the base to connect to the other letters. The letter 'Ye' is stacked atop the Persian letters če, sandwiched between če and he.

Finally, at the top of the sculpture, we find the letter 'he' also known as the 'double-eyed H'. It has a rounded, face-like shape and represents the head of the sculpture. Tanavoli often likens this letter to the head of a standing person or even a poet. All three letters are fused together, creating a twisting structure or something out of 'nothing'.

The gallery which the sculpture is in is a white cube exhibition space, with white walls and a grey floor. We enter the gallery through double glass doors which open slowly inwards automatically as we approach. The doors are currently papered neatly from the inside by what appears to be newspaper. They are actually a work by artist Mark Manders, *Window with Notional Newspapers*. Also in the room to the left of the sculpture there are a small number of newspapers on the floor, again Mark Manders. Behind and in front of the sculpture two wooden framed photographs, approximately 2 metres high and 1.5 metres wide, lean against the gallery walls.

To the right fitting within an alcove is an abstract angular sculptural composition made from polished triangular aluminium plates, around 30 metres wide and 50 centimetres high. At the left side of the gallery is a work made up of bright t-shirts hanging from a frame, around 7 feet wide and 5 feet tall.

Whilst stood at this sculpture, you can hear distant sounds from two other artworks. Male and female voices read out a series of various, perhaps unfamiliar words in English and Irish for Caroline Bergvall's sound and video installation *Say Parsley*, which is located in the third gallery, adjacent to Spazgat, but is audible throughout all three gallery spaces. You can also hear a constant ticking of letters on Shilpa Gupta's sculpture *Words Come From Ears*, which is in the second gallery space.

Tanavoli created his first *Heech* in 1965 and has since continued to work with this form, producing artworks ranging from small jewellery, such as pendants and rings, to large-scale sculptures which dominate the landscape. Through his dedication to the Heech form, Tanavoli sees himself more as an artisan than a sculptor. To Tanavoli, the concept of 'nothing' has a wide range of meanings, and is not necessarily an expression of despair and hopelessness. One interpretation relates to Persian Sufism, in which 'nothing' is an aspect of God, who creates everything from nothing.