

CULTURAL PRECINCT



EDUCATION KIT

BHARTI KHER: IN HER OWN LANGUAGE

18 FEBRUARY - 16 APRIL 2016

EXHIBITION

Extract from the catalogue essay by curator Margaret Moore:

"*Bharti Kher: In Her Own Language* underpins how Kher's art morphs between the real and the abstract, and how in this liminal traversal between forms, she has forged her art language – a language that is highly personalised, aestheticised and narrative, borne of a vigorous pursuit of information and life lived between the pulse of her New Delhi studio and her formative years growing up in the UK.

The works distilled for this exhibition focus upon bindis, bodies and saris. The addition of *Sing to them that will listen*, – a Tibetan singing bowl filled with inscribed rice grains – stands like an offering at the threshold or as a coda for what is perceived.

At its essence the duality of the real and the unreal, the known and the unknown, the dynamic and the static thread through. In this flux this project also celebrates the feminine and the domestic as touchstones for Kher."

EDUCATION

Following The Curriculum Framework Learning Statement for Society and the Environment and Curriculum Framework Learning Statement for The Arts produced by the Government of Western Australia's School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2013 (scsa.wa.edu.au/internet/Years_K10/Curriculum_Framework), a set of questions has been designed for the use of teachers of years K-10.

These will provide a context within which teachers and students might approach the exhibition *Bharti Kher: In her own language* at the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery (lwag.uwa.edu.au).

Questions and artworks can be selected and tailored to suit different ages, the level of students and relevance to particular areas of study including the arts, society and the environment. Themes covered include the social, cultural, philosophical, aesthetic and technical aspects of the exhibition.

KEY THEMES

1. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

In the quiet space of the first display is the Tibetan singing bowl filled with rice grains on which are inscribed text.

The metal bowl is actually a standing bell. Sound is generated by causing the rim to vibrate. Deriving from many Asian nations including India, they are used variously for meditation, music, chanting and relaxation rituals.

The text on the rice grains has been taken from the classified columns of Indian newspapers; they are advertisements for marriage partners. On one hand this carries information about Indian social categories such as caste and wealth, while also it is the means by which people reach out to connect with others.

Discuss with your group what you think the rice might signify and also what might it mean in relation to these inscriptions? Think about what rice is, what is it used for, how widespread is rice, where does it come from, where is it grown?

Consider also how this artwork leads us to consider the poignancy of efforts to connect with others in the world.



2. THE BODY

These dramatic sculptural forms of female figures are both contemporary in their form and also relate to metaphorical figures.

Combining both real items and also imaginative features, these figures lead us to consider ways of being in the world – and transformation.

Consider how these artworks were made. Cast in resin, they have been developed from casting real human models. The artist has commented that surfaces of her cast figures carry the “memory of the skin” of the models. The forms are actually hollow – so they represent both the body and the absent body.

What are some of the attributes that make them contemporary? What elements or features take them into the realm of the metaphorical?



Bharti Kher, *Warrior with cloak and shield*, 2008, resin, steel, banana leaf, thread, fabric, 241 x 170 x 196cm
Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

3. THE SARI

What is a sari? How is it worn? Consider how it is used here.

These artworks feature saris that have been draped and folded and then made solid with resin. These figures are variously wound tightly around concrete blocks or placed atop a block. While abstract in form they also function as portraits. Observe the different forms and discuss with your group the differences in energies that are embodied in them. What do you think are the feelings expressed by different ones?



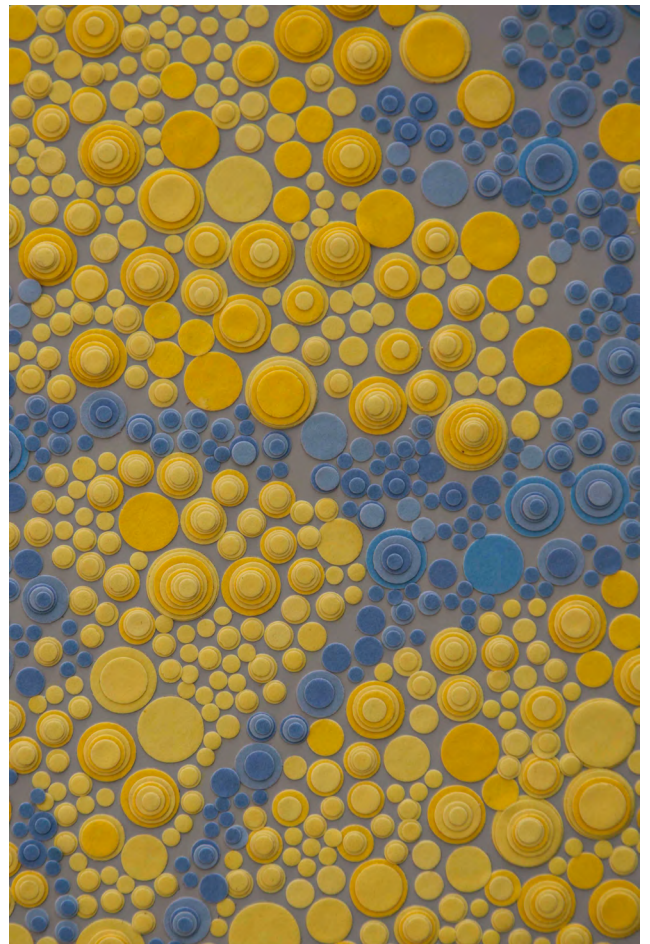
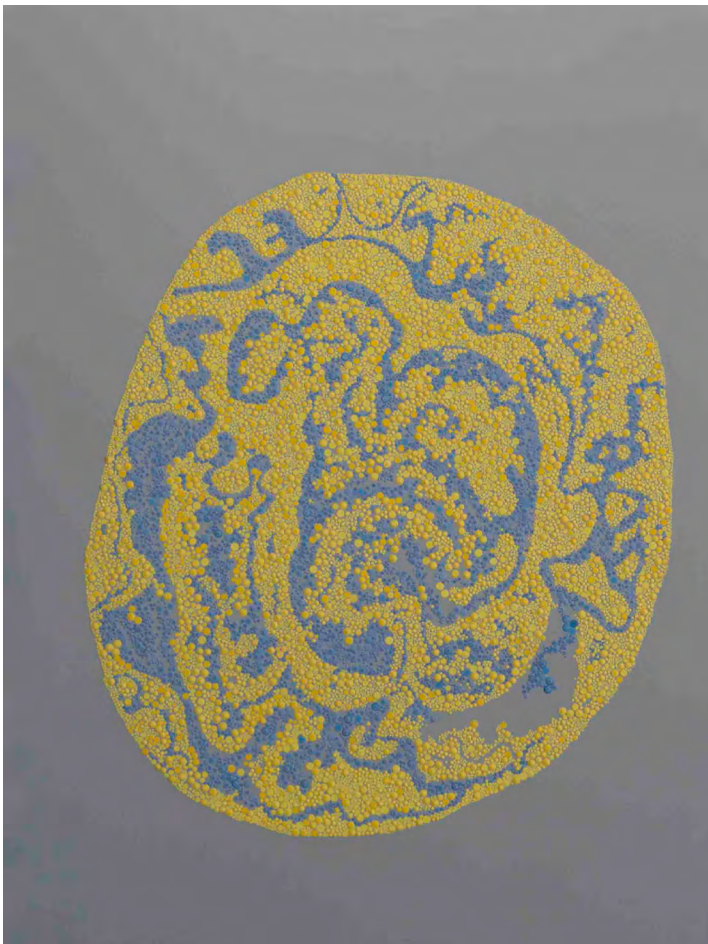
Bharti Kher, *My friend un-named* (detail), 2013, sari, resin, concrete, 41 x 36 x 113cm
Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

4. THE BINDI ARTWORKS

The bindi is traditionally central to social and cultural identity in India. It is usual to consider it in relation to the marital status of a woman and her place in society. Centrally placed on the forehead, above the nose it also traditionally represents a third eye, linking the spiritual and material world. In contemporary life it is now stylised and used as a fashion accessory. Available in different colours and arrayed together in different shapes; bindis are often used decoratively by women for parties and weddings.

In these artworks the bindi is used to build up decorative and colour field like artworks that morph visually between images; these may be of cells viewed under a microscope, or as if one was flying high above the landscape and looking down at rivers and lakes, or even looking at the earth from outer space. Discuss with your group what images you can see. What effect does the rich colour of the bindis have on this image?

VIRUS VI (Blue) consists of a large and dramatic wall work, a spiral of large overlapping blue circle forms and a mahogany box in which the bindis might be stored. The wall piece has a sense of vibration and pulsing movement. The box is formal and well made with a brass panel inscribed with text on the inside lid. Consider how this title and the array of blue bindi forms and the box, communicate notions of both bad and good, things of value and of destruction.



Bharti Kher, *Cell*, 2013, bindis on painted board, 244 x 183 cm
Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth
Bharti Kher, *Cell* (detail), 2013, bindis on painted board, 244 x 183 cm
Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth