

HAUSER & WIRTH

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Press Release

Bharti Kher inevitable undeniable necessary

Hauser & Wirth London

20 March – 15 May 2010

Opening: Friday 19 March, 6 – 8pm

Hauser & Wirth is pleased to announce Bharti Kher's debut solo exhibition at our London gallery. In her art, Kher gives form to the slightly strange and slightly awkward encounters with the daily rituals of life. Her vision makes the banal wondrous and the quotidian unusual, sometimes even disturbing. Her use of found objects, such as mirrors or furniture, is informed by her own position as an artist located between geographic and social milieus. Her way of working is exploratory: surveying, looking, collecting, and transforming. By bringing to attention the overlooked world with its everyday acts, such as applying the bindi in Indian culture, confessing as a ritual or looking at oneself in a mirror, and then re-assessing their meaning, Kher's work repositions the viewer's relationship with the object.

An arcane symbol of fertility, the contemporary stick-on bindi is a popular cosmetic device available in different shapes and colours and is an integral part of Kher's oeuvre. Exploiting their cultural and aesthetic dualisms, Kher uses bindis as an epidermal filter to transform objects. As shimmering signs in the form of waves, constellations, and spirals, Kher's bindis mediate between codes and symbols and the ritual marking of time.

In the main gallery will be 'confess', a room whose interior surfaces are animated by oculi-like feminine bindis, providing a boisterous, almost pagan, counterpoint to the hushed rituals of the confessional. The single light bulb hanging from the ceiling brings with it images of forced confessions in prison cells. The claustrophobia of the domestic realm, a persistent theme in Kher's work, finds parallels in the staged decorum of the church with cupboards that whisper secrets that oscillate between truth and lies. Upstairs, a motorised rocking horse is transformed into a unicorn, its horn marking the arc of time.

In 'contents', a series of medical charts veiled by a diaphanous skin of bindis, Kher plays with the paradoxical nature of the sperm-shaped bindi, at once masculine and feminine, mainstream and esoteric, enduring and ephemeral. Multitudes of these markers provide a psychic filter to the medical charts by drawing our attention to the often painful and unpredictable realities of birthing and the awkwardness of dealing with abnormality both psychologically and genetically.

Kher's fascination with the interiority of things, from the sanctuary of a private space to cross-sections of a birthing body, brings her unfolding process to the heavily contoured form of a mountain surgically split along a fault line revealing dark, smooth surfaces. Entitled 'inevitable undeniable necessary', the sculpture suggests the impermanence of seemingly immutable objects and the potential of interior rhizomatic space to challenge hierarchic thought.



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The artist's metaphysical explorations are made palpable by 'in the presence of nothing'. A type of standing bell, the singing bowl is used to induce meditation and support chanting in Tantric Buddhism. Replacing the monk, a mechanical rod powered by a visible motor rubs the mallet around the rim of the bowl to produce a continuous 'singing' sound. By placing the bowl in the vault (the gallery is housed in a bank designed by the architect of New Delhi, Edwin Lutyens), Kher initiates a dialogue between metaphysical and material pursuits, absence and presence, while simultaneously marking a specific historical context.



'choleric, phlegmatic, melancholy, sanguine', Kher's new sculpture to be shown in Southwood Garden, St. James's Church, bristles with contorted mask-like faces and tentacles, looming with the spectacle of a woman impaled on one of her arms. In a clever inversion of the creation myth which begins with the churning of a sacred mountain by a serpent, Kher offers a quid pro quo of creation and sacrifice. This new work documents a terminal moment, an infernal grotesque form of a Kali goddess who represents the dissolution of an era where all karma and ego end.



Bharti Kher was born in London, England in 1969 and lives and works in New Delhi, India. Kher's work has been featured in major solo exhibitions such as 'Virus' at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead, England (2008), and numerous group exhibitions including the Serpentine Gallery's travelling exhibition, 'Indian Highway' (2008), London; 'Where in the World' at the Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi (2008); and 'Chalo! India: A New Era of Indian Art' at the Essl Museum, Klosterneuberg, Austria (2009). Forthcoming exhibitions include a three-person show at Kunstmuseum Thun, Switzerland and 'The Empire Strikes Back: Indian Art Today' at The Saatchi Gallery, London.

Forthcoming Exhibitions:

Roni Horn
7 May – 19 June 2010
Hauser & Wirth New York

Josephsohn
Henry Moore
27 March – 29 May 2010
Hauser & Wirth Zurich

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contents (detail)
2010
Bindis on medical charts, 21 parts
99.54 x 64.5 cm / 39 1/4 x 25 3/8 in each
© Bharti Kher
Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth
Photo: John Jones Fine-Art Photography

in the presence of nothing (detail)
2009/2010
Bowl, mechanism, wooden plinth
238 x 45.3 x 45.3 cm / 93 3/4 x 17 7/8 x 17 7/8 in overall (variable)
© Bharti Kher
Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth
Photo: Andy Keate

choleric, phlegmatic, melancholy, sanguine (detail)
2009/2010
Bronze
255 x 230 x 190 cm / 100 3/8 x 90 1/2 x 74 3/4 in
© Bharti Kher
Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth
Photo: Andy Keate