

Parasol unit

PRESS RELEASE

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Bharti Kher

14 September – 11 November 2012

(Preview: 13 September 2012, 6.30–9 p.m.)



The skin speaks a language not its own, 2006, bindis on fibreglass, life size, 142 x 456.2 x 195 cm Private Collection, Switzerland. Photo: Bartholomew/Netphotograph; *Home maker*, 2011, glass cabinets, porcelain teacups and saucers, ceramic samosas, rice, granite blocks, Each of 2 parts: 162 x 45.5 x 45.5 cm, Courtesy the artist and Galerie Perrotin. Photo: Guillaume Ziccarelli; *Solarum Series I*, 2007–2010, fibreglass, metal, 274 x 335 x 304 cm, Ursula Hauser Collection, Switzerland. Photo: Stefan Altenburger Photography Zurich. Unless otherwise stated all images are copyright © Bharti Kher

Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art is delighted to present works by **Bharti Kher** in her first solo exhibition held in a public art institution in London. The exhibition is composed of a selection of works from the recent past, with an emphasis on the artist's sculptural works.

Known for her extensive use of everyday, found objects and imaginatively transforming their identity, Kher empowers her often otherworldly creations to present themselves unabashedly as if they were a natural part of our culture and environment. Kher's work often explores the notion of the self as a multiple, open to interpretation and shape-shifting. Her art practice is intimately intertwined with her life, not only because she borrows motifs and artefacts for her work, but also because she has an inquisitive mind and a strong desire to understand sociological issues. Such characteristics endow Kher's work with a narrative quality and fascinating interiority of things that frequently contradict her practice of addressing more global and collective concerns. This tension is precisely what leads us more deeply into Kher's work and world and prompts us to reposition our own relationship to her individual pieces.

Kher is perhaps best known for her elaborate and stunning bindi dot paintings: abstract, swirling constellations of colourful bindis glued to flat surfaces that create unique imagery somewhere between being illusory and hyper-realistic. But in recent years her artistic creations have become increasingly bold and unrestrained, several examples of which are on show in the exhibition. The phenomenal, life-size elephant that is *The skin speaks a language not its own*, 2006, made of fibreglass and covered with serpent- or sperm-shaped white bindis, bears a symbolism that leaves viewers uncertain about the

animal's condition. The title of the work, always an important component of Kher's works, suggests that physical appearance and inner values are often in conflict.

Another prominent sculpture in the exhibition, *Solarum Series I*, 2007–2010, is a 9-foot-tall fibreglass tree, its branches covered with hundreds of what seem, at a distance, to be golden autumnal leaves of extreme delicacy. On closer inspection, one sees that these leaves are actually miniature, waxy-looking heads of various fantastical creatures. Also on show is Kher's *The deaf room*, 2002–2011 a sculpture made of dark glass bricks. It is seemingly a strictly aesthetic minimalist work, but when one learns the origin of its bricks it begins to reveal its feminine bias and a wealth of symbolism. The barely translucent dark bricks are made from melted glass bangles, those that Indian women traditionally wear in multiples on their wrists. The merest hint of the radiant glow of bangles only becomes apparent when the bricks are exposed to light behind the gestural clay build of the work. *The deaf room*, 2002–2011 stands for the absence and memory of a woman, in an emptied room. Finally, *Warrior with Cloak and Shield*, 2008, a life-size fibreglass figure of a woman adorned with exaggeratedly huge stag's antlers, is part of a series of hybrid half-human, half-animal figures, which again testifies to Kher's non-abidance mind and unflinching imagination.

Bharti Kher's exhibition at Parasol unit is accompanied by a **comprehensive publication** that includes several insightful essays by Parasol unit Director/Curator **Ziba Ardalan**, art critic and curator **Gayatri Sinha**, and **Tom Morton**, curator, writer and contributing editor for Frieze, alongside an interview with the artist by curator and writer **Aveek Sen**. It will be distributed internationally.

The exhibition is generously supported by Priya & Cyrus Vandrevala and Jolana & Petri Vainio

Bharti Kher, born 1969 in London, UK, now lives and works in New Delhi, India. She has shown internationally in numerous solo and group exhibitions. Most recently, Kher featured in the First International Biennale of Contemporary Art, 2012, at Mystetskyi Arsenal in Kiev, Ukraine; in Paris-Delhi-Bombay at Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2011; in 21st Century: Art in the First Decade, Queensland Art Gallery, Australia, 2010; Tokyo Art Meeting: Transformation, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, 2010; and in Susan Hefuna – Bharti Kher – Fred Tomaselli: Between the Worlds, Kunstmuseum Thun, Switzerland, 2010.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Admission to all Parasol unit exhibitions is free

Gallery opening hours: Monday by prior arrangement. Tuesday–Saturday, 10 a.m.–6 p.m. Sunday, 12–5 p.m.

Extended hours during Frieze Art Fair: Monday 10 October, 10 a.m.–6 p.m. & Saturday 13 October, 10 a.m.–9 p.m.

Directions

Tube: Old Street and Angel

Buses: 43, 205 and 214 via City Road

Note to editors

Founded in December 2004, Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art is an educational charity registered in England and Wales and operates purely for the benefit of the public. Every year the foundation organises four exhibitions in a variety of media and also sets up other artistic projects. Each gallery exhibition is accompanied by a publication and a related educational events programme. The foundation does not bear the founder's name, and its exhibitions are not derived from the founder's own collection. Parasol unit is thus a new model of collaboration between private funding and public support.

For more information, please contact Nicola Pomery on 020 7490 7373, at nicola@parasol-unit.org, or go to www.parasol-unit.org

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