

GALLERY GUIDE

BHARTI KHER: THE BODY IS A PLACE

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This Body is a Place

An invitation to explore by Raquel Meseguer Zafe

What does 'the body is a place' mean to you? This title has intrigued me from the start. It reminds me that the body is a place where things happen. In the time it has taken you to read this sentence, thousands of changes and minute movements will have already occurred in each and every one of us.

It reminds me that the body is both a familiar and unknown place. A place of refuge and of questioning, taking us beyond the known. *My body is a place that completes the links in the chain between artist, artwork, and experience. It senses the fertile spaces that lie between each work, feeling out the in-between. My body is a place where the intentions and possible meanings of the work can land and shift things; move me.*

Kher suggests that we are not tied to a particular place. Instead, we take our deepest belongings and places with us. There is an old law to do with common land that says if you set up camp and light a fire by nightfall, you can stay. *The Body is a Place* might be read as an invitation to belong, to light a fire by nightfall and to stay as long as you need.

This encounter might be playful, curious, or one of contemplation – see if you can surprise yourself. Notice how quickly or slowly you move through the gallery, whether your body is animated or still. Notice how close or far you sit or stand, how much curiosity or certainty you bring to each work. This is an invitation to bring your whole body and to find your own place.

Raquel Meseguer Zafe is a Bristol based dance theatre practitioner who has collaborated with Arnolfini since 2020.

As you walk around the gallery, we invite you to think about the journey you are about to make. Take time to pause with Bharti's words upon the wall and the space around you. Think about your body, creating space to see, read, feel, and sense.

The prompts below are designed to help you map your own journey. If you'd like to record your responses through drawing, writing, or other forms of language, please help yourself to the blank sheets of paper next to these guides.



BODY INCANTATORY DRAWINGS

Are you drawn to a particular work? Can you imagine what inspired it? If the drawing was a spell, what magic do you think it is conjuring up?



LINKS IN A CHAIN

Can you imagine your own version of the story in *Links in a chain*? Would you use words or pictures? What story would you tell?



CHIMERAS

Have you ever broken something open? What did you discover? Whose faces might be hidden beneath the layers in each of the *Chimeras*? What memories or stories would they share with you?

'BALANCE' SCULPTURES

What shapes are you drawn to? Circles, triangles, squares? Can you imagine how your own body might make these shapes? How would you find balance?



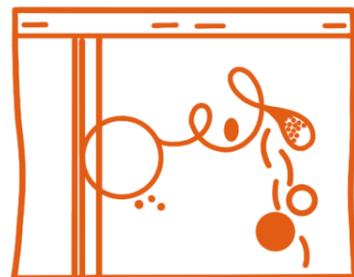
BINDIS

Can you feel the rhythm in *Lenticularis over mountain*? Could you draw this rhythm on the palm of your hand? What does it sound like?



VIRUS XIII

Where do your eyes take you when you look at the *Virus*? Do you want to move forwards or backwards to be closer or further away? What is in your future?



ALCHEMY DRAWINGS

Can you imagine what materials you could use to transform a blank page or an empty space? Would you use words, shapes, sounds or movement?

Which artwork are you most drawn to? How long can you rest with the work (you might take a seat or a yoga mat)? Where does your body take you next? Can you create your own map linking works together?

ABOUT BHARTI KHER AND THE BODY IS A PLACE

The Body is a Place is a collaboration between Bharti Kher and Arnolfini. The exhibition was inspired by a series of drawings made by the artist between 2017 and 2019 at Hauser & Wirth Somerset. They embody Kher's cyclical nature of working, revealing traces and the beginnings of works created both before and after.

These drawings are shown alongside sculpture, installation, bindi paintings, and a site-specific work (*Virus XIII*), which is part of an ongoing series begun in 2010. Each of the works suggest a relationship with the body and explore the alchemical and transformational power of materials to change the way we look at an object and the place in which we are looking. Kher's work creates hybrid narratives that move fluidly between fact and fiction, certainty and uncertainty, tapping into 'mythologies and the

numerous diverse associations a thing or place can bring'.

Kher was born in 1969 in London and studied painting at Newcastle Polytechnic before moving to New Delhi, India, in 1993. Her career has spanned three decades, with recent exhibitions including *Ancestor*, a 5 and a half metre high bronze sculpture, situated in Central Park, New York (commissioned by Public Art Fund and unveiled in September 2022), and her *Intermediaries* sculptures exhibited in *Uncombed, Unforeseen, Unconstrained* at the 2022 Venice Biennale. Her work can be seen in international collections, including Tate, the British Museum, and the Saatchi Collection in the UK. Kher is represented by Hauser & Wirth, Perrotin, and Nature Morte.

<https://bhartikher.com>

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