

Press Release: September 2022

## **BHARTI KHER : THE BODY IS A PLACE**

Exhibition dates 22 October 2022 to 29 January 2023



Bharti Kher, *Body Incantatory 21*, 2019

Acrylic, pastel, colour pencil, ink on paper 76 x 60 cm / 29 7/8 x 23 5/8 inches

Photo: Dominic Brown Photography

© Bharti Kher Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Autumn 2022 at Arnolfini sees internationally renowned artist Bharti Kher return to the southwest, with a major solo exhibition exploring her alchemical practice through drawing, sculpture and the spaces in between.

*The Body is a Place* follows the unveiling of Kher's 18-foot-tall painted bronze sculpture *Ancestor* in New York in September 2022, and her celebrated installation at this year's Venice Biennale in the lyrical setting of The Conservatorio di Musica Benedetto Marcello.

A collector of material and meaning, Kher gathers words and marks, filling the Arnolfini like the 'clean white page' of one her numerous sketchbooks and diaries, sharing the 'hand-brain-body-art-language' which weaves throughout her two and three-dimensional forms.

Featuring a body of previously unseen drawings, created during residencies in Somerset in 2017 and 2019, *The Body is a Place* reveals the cyclical nature of Kher's work. Looking at drawing as part of a wider practice which gathers 'a world of objects and a world of words', the exhibition furthers our understanding of an artist who simultaneously straddles magical, mythical, and scientific realms.

Kher's intuitive practice also brings into play the bodily senses – 'I hear it, taste it, eat it, write it, draw it' – describing drawing as a means of 'knowing'; an idea that lies at the heart of this exhibition, encouraging audiences to adopt the artist's own curiosity in feeling out narratives amidst her drawings and sculpture.

*The Body is a Place* also features Kher's monumental bindi drawings and the installation *Links in a chain*, which playfully exchanges word and image. There is quiet solitude to her *Chimera* casts, in which the artist buries 'the secrets of the soul' under layers of wax and plaster; and the impossible shapes and forms of her 'balance' sculptures. Alongside is a new, large-scale, site-specific iteration of *Virus*; conceived in 2010 and executed annually as a 30-year project incorporating her bindi drawings and text, it offers an intimate portal into Kher's world.

The exhibition is accompanied by a new publication exploring Kher's visual language, interweaving an introduction and conversation between the artist and curator Gemma Brace. It features essays from art historian Jo Baring, and director of the Drawing Room Kate Macfarlane, alongside over 60 images, with new work and intimate photos of the artist's studio.

The exhibition will be open Tuesday to Sunday each week, 11am to 6pm, entry is free, with bookings available in advance via [arnolfini.org.uk](http://arnolfini.org.uk).

Bharti Kher is represented internationally by Hauser & Wirth, Perrotin, and Nature Morte.

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For further information please contact Sara Blair [sara.blair@arnolfini.org.uk](mailto:sara.blair@arnolfini.org.uk)

Additional images are available at <https://bit.ly/BhartiKherArnolfini>

Twitter / Facebook / Instagram / [www.arnolfini.org.uk](http://www.arnolfini.org.uk)

## LISTING

**Bharti Kher: The Body is a Place | 22 October 2022 to 29 January 2023**

Arnolfini, 16 Narrow Quay, Bristol BS1 4QA

0117 917 2300 [arnolfini.org.uk](http://arnolfini.org.uk) @ArnolfiniArts

Tuesday to Sunday, 11am to 6pm, free entry.

Explore the alchemical practice of internationally renowned artist Bharti Kher, in a major solo exhibition of drawing, sculpture, and the spaces that lie between. Including new and previously unseen works, *The Body is a Place* also features monumental bindi drawings and plaster casts, and a new encounter with the site-specific work *Virus*; part of a 30-year project begun by the artist in 2010.

*The Body is a Place* is accompanied by a programme of film, music, talks and workshops for all ages.

[arnolfini.org.uk/whatson/bhartikher/](http://arnolfini.org.uk/whatson/bhartikher/)

#BhartiKher #Arnolfini

Images at <https://bit.ly/BhartiKherArnolfini>

## NOTES TO EDITORS

### About Bharti Kher

Bharti Kher was born in 1969 in London, UK. She studied painting, graduating in 1991 from Newcastle Polytechnic with a BA Honours, Fine Art, before moving to New Delhi, India, in 1993. Experimentation and alchemy are key to Kher's practice, which explores materiality, religion, secularity, and spirituality, creating new meaning in objects and hybrid narratives that move fluidly between fact and fiction, and certainty and uncertainty. Deeply interested in our experience of an artwork and its relationship to the body, her work often challenges preconceived ideas of gender and femininity, 'tapping into mythologies and the numerous diverse associations a thing or place can bring'.

Kher is recognised as a leading contemporary artist with a career spanning over three decades and has developed a well-earned reputation from a multitude of international exhibitions and installations. Her Public Art Fund commission, *Ancestor*, a bronze universal mother figure, is currently on view in New York and her Intermediaries sculptures are exhibited by Parasol Unit at the Venice Biennale until 27 November. Kher has presented several UK solo exhibitions over the last 20 years, such as *A Wonderful Anarchy*, Hauser & Wirth Somerset, 2019; and gallery and museum presentations: *This Breathing House*, Freud Museum, London; 2017; Parasol Unit Foundation for Contemporary Art, London, 2012; and *Virus*, Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, 2008. Her work has also been shown in numerous international group exhibitions and is held in public and private collections across the world. Significantly she has been recognised elsewhere by awards such as the prestigious Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters), in France, 2015; the ARKEN Art Prize, Denmark, 2010, and the Sanskriti Awards, India, 2003. She is represented internationally by Hauser & Wirth, Perrotin and Nature Morte. [bhartikher.com](http://bhartikher.com) and [www.hauserwirth.com/artists/2793-bharti-kher](http://www.hauserwirth.com/artists/2793-bharti-kher)

## About Arnolfini

Woven into the fabric of Bristol since 1961, Arnolfini is an international centre of interdisciplinary contemporary arts, presenting an ambitious and wide-ranging programme of visual art, performance, dance, film, and music.

Housed in a prominent Grade II listed accessible building (Bush House) on the city's harbourside, Arnolfini is a pioneering, inspiring public space for arts and learning, offering an innovative, inclusive and engaging experience for all. Bush House is also part of the University of the West of England, Bristol's City Campus with over 300 students and tutors onsite.

Arnolfini has welcomed artists from around world throughout its history – sharing works by Paula Rego, Jannis Kounellis, Grayson Perry, Rachel Whiteread, Peter Doig, Richard Long, Chantal Joffe, Sonia Boyce and Frank Bowling, to name just a few - as well as supporting talent from in and around Bristol.

Alongside its exhibition programme, Arnolfini is a centre of everyday creativity and learning, working with a wide range of community and artistic partners, while continuing to explore and develop new opportunities across the city and beyond. Spaces are used regularly by families, schools and colleges, health and wellbeing groups.

Through sharing a 60-year archive of exhibition slides, publications and an extensive artist book collection, Arnolfini celebrates its heritage and the wide-reaching impact the organisation has had since its foundation.

Since 2019, Director Gary Topp and team have sought to honour Arnolfini's founder Jeremy Rees' principle to 'Enjoy Yourself', welcoming everyone into the space, and inviting engagement, in any number of ways.

Arnolfini is an independent charity (CIO) and part of the University of the West of England, Bristol, supported by Arts Council England and the Ashley Clinton Barker-Mills Trust.

## **About UWE**

University of the West of England (UWE Bristol) has a global and inclusive outlook, with approximately 36,000 students and strong industry networks and connections with over 1,000 employers. Research at UWE Bristol focuses on real world problems and the University plays a pivotal role in the regional economy. With over £300 million invested in infrastructure, buildings and facilities across all Campuses, UWE Bristol is creating a place for learning that is innovative, ambitious, connected, enabling and inclusive. UWE Bristol is ranked 36th in the Guardian university league table, as well as 4th in the South West of England for student satisfaction. [www.uwe.ac.uk](http://www.uwe.ac.uk)

## **About Arts Council England**

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. By 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. Between 2018 and 2022, we will invest £1.45 billion of public money from government and an estimated £860 million from the National Lottery to help deliver this vision. [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

## **About Ashley Clinton Barker-Mills Trust**

Arnolfini has been supported by a linked charity, the Ashley Clinton Barker Mills Trust (ACBMT) for almost 60 years.

Arnolfini founders Jeremy and Annabel Rees were first introduced to the artists and benefactors Peter and Caroline Barker-Mill in 1963, by the London gallerist Lesley Waddington. It was a fortuitous meeting that was the catalyst in allowing Arnolfini to develop from a small volunteer-run private gallery into a major international arts centre.

The Ashley Clinton Barker-Mills Trust (ACBMT) principle is to work with Arnolfini, primarily by making annual grants from the income earned on its investments, as well as funding modest, one-off capital grants to help the Arnolfini transition to its current

financial model. In more recent years members of the ACMBT have become more involved working with Arnolfini to help plan its future.

[www.arnolfini.org.uk/about/ashley-clinton-barker-mills-trust](http://www.arnolfini.org.uk/about/ashley-clinton-barker-mills-trust)