

HAYWARD GALLERY

Press Release

Date: 13 September 2024, 10:00am

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Hayward Gallery unveils monumental new outdoor commission from Bharti Kher - *Target Queen*



IMAGE CREDITS IN NOTES TO EDITORS

On Thursday 12 September, the Hayward Gallery unveiled *Target Queen*, a mesmerising and colourful large-scale new commission by British-Indian artist **Bharti Kher**. Marking the first time that Kher's ambitious outdoor work has been presented by a London museum, *Target Queen* is positioned across the Hayward Gallery's eastern and southern facades, celebrating and playfully interacting with the iconic architecture and cultural playground of the Southbank Centre.

Target Queen features supersized bindis, which are used by South Asian women as powerful cultural and spiritual symbols denoting the third eye. With these symbols at the heart of Kher's artistic vision, the target-like motifs in *Target Queen* each measure over three metres in diameter and cover two sides of the Hayward Gallery. Kher's mural transforms the bindi into a powerful emblem of the goddess, embedding both spiritual resonance and a welcoming and compassionate feminine energy into the Brutalist building.

Since the artist first incorporated bindis into her work in 1995, they have evolved into a signature motif, rich in narrative and aesthetic significance. For Kher, bindis embody a deep cultural identity, representing *"a third eye – one that forges a link between the real and the spiritual conceptual worlds"*. The boldly coloured concentric circles reflect Kher's painterly approach and investigate how language and gesture can be communicated through colour.

Target Queen takes inspiration from Kher's 2007 diptych of the same name. In this commission, Kher reimagines the concentric circle, a potent motif that not only reflects a cosmic vision but also explores the cyclical nature of life, capturing the interplay between creation and dissolution.

Kher's practice is renowned for how it explores the boundaries between humanity and nature, ecology and politics. Her sculptures are often crafted from found objects that carry their own histories. These objects are precariously assembled, often hung, propped and suspended, and are stripped of their conventional meanings, leaving them open to misinterpretation and enchantment. The resulting works are alluring, abstract compositions that challenge and captivate, reflecting a world filled with abstract beauty and latent magic.

The commission is viewable from Belvedere Road and Waterloo Bridge as part of the Southbank Centre's commitment to making 40% of its programming free to all.

Bharti Kher says: *"My outdoor work is a key part of my practice, so I couldn't be more delighted to be working with a space as renowned as the Hayward Gallery to present this work for the first time at a London museum. Target Queen is a bold, vibrant and powerful artwork that calls for greater representation of femininity and divinity, also as an exciting exploration of how the two intersect."*

Rachel Thomas, Chief Curator at the Hayward Gallery, says: *"The Hayward Gallery at the Southbank Centre is renowned for staging ambitious and pioneering artworks, both inside and outside gallery walls. We are delighted to be working with visionary artist Bharti Kher whose transformative work, Target Queen, graces our building with profound beauty and imagination. Kher's art recontextualises the traditional target motif into a symbol of the divine feminine, blending cultural narrative with aesthetic innovation. Target Queen will bring enjoyment to all who see it, be it commuters or tourists travelling across Waterloo Bridge, or visitors to an event on our site"*.

Target Queen is generously supported by the Hayward Gallery Commissioning Committee, Kate and Ajay Agarwal and Hauser & Wirth.

Target Queen launches alongside Bharti Kher's solo exhibition *Alchemies* at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (on until Sunday 27 April 2025).

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Image Credits (Left to Right)

- Installation view: Bharti Kher: Target Queen, Hayward Gallery, 2024. Photo: Jo Underhill. Courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth.

About Bharti Kher

Bharti Kher is visual artist living and working in London and New Delhi.

Kher's sculptural works sit at the centre of her practice. Assembled from found objects bearing witness to their own histories, Kher creates mise-en-scenes of dystopia and grand orchestration that often take on an air of magical realism. In her work, Kher blurs the distinctions between humans and nature, ecology and politics, and initiates a dialogue between metaphysical and material pursuits.

Kher's works have been exhibited in major institutions around the world, including most recently: Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield (2024), Arnolfini, Bristol (2022), Public Art Fund, New York (2022), IMMA, Dublin (2020), Kunsthaus Pasquart, Biel (2018), PHI Foundation for Contemporary Art, Montreal (2018), The Grunwald Gallery at Indiana University, Bloomington (2018). Born in London in 1969, Bharti Kher's art reinterprets quotidian life and its daily rituals, transforming their meaning to yield an air of magical realism. Residing between London and New Delhi, her use of found objects is informed by her positioning between geographic and social milieus. Her working method is exploratory: surveying, collecting, and transforming as she repositions the viewer's relationship with the object; initiating a dialogue between metaphysical and material pursuits.

About the Hayward Gallery

The Hayward Gallery, part of the Southbank Centre, has a long history of presenting work by the world's most adventurous and innovative artists including major solo shows by both emerging and established artists and dynamic group exhibitions. They include those by Bridget Riley, Bruce Nauman, Anish Kapoor, Lee Bul, Andreas Gursky, Tracey Emin, Jeremy Deller, Kader Attia and Matthew Barney, as well as influential group exhibitions such as *Africa Remix*, *Light Show*, *Psycho Buildings* and *Space Shifters*. Opened by Queen Elizabeth II in July 1968, the gallery is one of the few remaining buildings of its style. The Brutalist building was designed by a group of young architects, including Dennis Crompton, Warren Chalk and Ron Herron and is named after Sir Isaac Hayward, a former leader of the London County Council.

About the Southbank Centre

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest multi-arts centre and engages the most diverse audiences of any performing arts organisation in the UK. Our biggest venue, the Royal Festival Hall (2,700 seats) is the lasting legacy of the 1951 Festival of Britain and the ambition and values of that project – that arts, ideas, innovation and culture can heal communities and should be available and accessible to everyone – are still our guiding principles today. The Southbank Centre is uniquely able to offer a wide-ranging, inclusive and world-class artistic programme spanning contemporary visual arts, music, dance, performance, literature, comedy and spoken word across the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, the Hayward Gallery and our free spaces. We are also home to the National Poetry Library, the National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP) and six resident orchestras (Aurora Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Philharmonia Orchestra).

www.southbankcentre.co.uk

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