

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**PUBLIC ART FUND TO UNVEIL
BHARTI KHER: ANCESTOR
A TOWERING, MYTHICAL MOTHER SCULPTURE
AT THE SOUTHEAST ENTRANCE TO CENTRAL PARK**



Bharti Kher: Ancestor
Doris C. Freedman Plaza, Central Park
(60th Street and 5th Avenue)
New York City
September 8, 2022–August 27, 2023

August 18, 2022, NEW YORK, NY—Public Art Fund is pleased to present ***Ancestor*, an 18-foot-tall patinated bronze sculpture by New Delhi and London-based artist Bharti Kher.** The powerful new work will grace Doris C. Freedman Plaza at the southeast entrance to Central Park beginning September 8. Depicting a universal mother figure linking our cultural and personal pasts and futures, *Ancestor* is Kher’s most ambitious work to date. The sculpture stems from the artist’s ongoing “Intermediaries” series in which Kher reassembles small, broken clay figurines of humans, animals, and mythical beings into hybrid figures that defy a fixed identity. Brought to life at a monumental scale, *Ancestor* embodies the complexity and potential of the “Intermediaries”, and of Indic and global traditions of creator deities that challenge identities by bringing together male and female into a single philosophical form. *Ancestor*, however, is a resolutely feminine figure. Adorned with the heads of her 23 children that extend from her body, she embodies multiculturalism, pluralism, and interconnectedness. They manifest a sense of belonging and celebrate the mother as a keeper of wisdom and the eternal source of creation and refuge.

***Bharti Kher: Ancestor* is on view from September 8, 2022 through August 27, 2023 at Doris C. Freedman Plaza, Central Park.**

"Bharti Kher's impressive new sculpture, *Ancestor*, is exactly the kind of monument we need in the 21st century," **says Public Art Fund Adjunct Curator Daniel S. Palmer.** "It is a deeply personal expression of hybridity and global identity that invites dialogue about the importance of honoring our ancestors and fostering cultural exchange."

Connecting New Delhi and New York City, *Ancestor* reflects Kher's cross-cultural identity and her appreciation for India's rich material culture. The sculpture proposes a genealogical, spiritual, and metaphysical inquiry into the meaning of society and is a sensitive investigation into our relationship with progeny, self, and memory. *Ancestor* articulates the artist's ongoing consideration of the female body in history and the nature of corporeality as it moves between the sacred and profane. The artist's unique approach to materiality in her choice to hand paint and patina bronze to look and feel like time-worn clay reflects the unresolved state between permanence and fragility. Draped in a sari, with a small child hiding behind its folds, and her fantastical hairstyle of a multi-lobed bun with braid, the mother stands tall at the entrance to Central Park. In contrast to monuments that glorify historical figures and commemorate traditional symbols of authority, *Ancestor* enters the public space as a powerful female force paying homage to the generations before and after her.

"I invite viewers to leave their wishes, dreams and prayers with *Ancestor*; and to pass on their wisdom of living and love to the next generation," **says artist Bharti Kher.** "She is the keeper of all memories and time. A vessel for you to travel into the future, a guide to search and honor our past histories, and a companion—right here, right now—in New York City."

Bharti Kher: Ancestor is curated by Public Art Fund Adjunct Curator Daniel S. Palmer.

Ancestor is commissioned by Public Art Fund, NY, and is in the collection of the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi.

@PublicArtFund #BhartiKher

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in London in 1969, Bharti Kher has worked across painting, sculpture, and installation for more than two decades, transforming a range of everyday materials from the bindi to furniture, saris and clay figurines, into new states of being and forms that are entirely her own. Led by her personal experience of double displacement, Kher weaves together the daily rituals of everyday life drawn from multiple places with a kind of magical realism and created mythology. Highly attuned to the complexities of class, race, and gender, her artworks are multifaceted and un-fixed. Kher navigates this and her own position as a woman, creator, and artist traversing different geographic, cultural, and social environments. Her work encompasses an expansive range from figuration to abstraction, spanning the detailed cast bodies of sex workers to the adjacency of precariously balanced geometric and organic shapes and forms. Kher's engagement with Indian visual and material culture informs both the subject and material of many of her works. Kher has exhibited in museums around the world, including solo exhibitions at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland; DHC/Art, Montreal, Canada; Museum Frieder Burda / Salon Berlin, Berlin, Germany; Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, MA; Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada; Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai, China; and Baltic

Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, United Kingdom. Her work is held in the collections of Tate, London, United Kingdom; Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art, Queensland, Australia; Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi, India; The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; Leeum Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea; Ishara Art Foundation, Dubai, UAE; and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi, UAE; among others. The artist presently lives and works between London and New Delhi.

VISITING THE EXHIBITION

Named for the founder of Public Art Fund and New York City's first Director of Cultural Affairs, Doris C. Freedman Plaza was home to one of the organization's first exhibitions and has been the site of more than 60 installations since Public Art Fund's founding in 1977.

Location: Southeast entrance to Central Park at the corner of 60th Street and 5th Avenue

Dates: October 20, 2021–August 14, 2022

Hours: dawn to dusk, daily

Subways: N, R, W to 5th Avenue; 4, 5, 6 to 59th Street/Lexington Avenue

Public Art Fund exhibitions are always free and open to the public.

To learn more about the exhibition, visit PublicArtFund.org/exhibitions/

SUPPORT

Bloomberg Philanthropies is the presenting sponsor of *Bharti Kher: Ancestor*.

Leadership support for *Ancestor* is provided by Ellen & Andrew Celli; Jennifer Sykes Harris; Andrea Krantz & Harvey Sawikin; Holly & Jonathan Lipton; Elizabeth Fearon Pepperman & Richard C. Pepperman III; Rasika & Girish Reddy; Allison & Paul Russo; and Charles B. Short & Chet Krayewski; Hauser & Wirth; Nature Morte; and Perrotin.

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Ancestor is commissioned by Public Art Fund, New York, and is in the collection of the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi.

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ABOUT PUBLIC ART FUND

As the leader in its field, Public Art Fund brings dynamic contemporary art to a broad audience in New York City and beyond by mounting ambitious free exhibitions of international scope and impact that offer the public powerful experiences with art and the urban environment.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

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Image Credit

In-process image of *Ancestor* by Bharti Kher, 2022

Photo by Chris Roque

Courtesy of the artist, UAP, Chris Roque, Public Art Fund, NY.