

Bharti kher piece: solarium series essay



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Solarium Series explores the biological advances in animal cloning represented by a tree, referenced from the speaking tree in mythology that spoke of warnings, but it also looks at rejection personified by the fallen tree.

This, perhaps, is Kher's way of showing her opinion of animal cloning, and that she feels she needs to "warn" people about this advance in science, with her feeling of rejection as cloning is still happening today. Or, Kher could be trying to voice the opinion of the animals represented by the animal heads on the trees as they may not wish to have tests done on them and to be cloned, but are rejected as they cannot voice this opinion. The piece looks at many kinds of issues, issues in politics and morality as to whether cloning is the right or wrong thing to do, but also looks at religious issues, as many people may see cloning as "playing god". These different issues will create different opinions for different people making it a very interesting piece of work. The subject matter of the work is being observed directly, as animal cloning is very much a contemporary issue; however the trees themselves are remembered as they are based on a mythological tree.

There are deliberate abstractions within the work, as instead of leaves or fruit on the branches of the tree, there are small animal heads attached to represent this issue of animal cloning and to give the tree the voice to speak as it does in mythology. Animals, a recurring theme in Kher's sculpture, serve as a metaphor for transformation and as warnings of cloning and other biological advances, but also our growing disconnect with nature and our lack of respect and care for it. I feel these factors make the subject matter hidden and perhaps difficult to understand at first, as the animals on the branches could represent anything, and when I first viewed the work I was

confused as to whether the fallen tree had fallen accidentally or if that was the purpose of the work. I think by Kher doing this, I was my intrigued to look at the work as I was curious as to what had happened to the work, whether it was meant to be that way or not. The two trees had been placed at two ends of the room with one tree stood normal, made to look like it is growing from the floor of the gallery, and the other fallen over laying on its side, however it was not placed on its side; the tree had obviously been knocked over there were many crumbs across the floor from the smashing of the animal heads on the floor of the room and the snapping of some of the branches. This fallen tree is to represent rejection, and the other tree acting as a warning.

It is almost like the warning tree is saying this is what could happen, referring to the fallen dead tree, affirming the works message more so. The colour scheme used is quite pale, with pastel colours. The animal heads on the tree are a light pink flesh colour, attached to a light beige tree. These colours together are quite harmonious and work well together, with the fleshy colour being the most predominate with approximately 500 heads attached to the tree. The main shape is that of the tree, as even though there are no leaves on the tree the final piece is still in the shape of a tree; however there are smaller recurring shapes, mainly in the 500 round shapes heads, but there are also recurring lines and shapes in the branches of the trees. There isn't a variety of textures in the work, the wood and soil feeling quite soft and smooth, with the heads also being quite smooth with slight bumps in the detail of the heads.

I find the work quite satisfactory as a whole, but I feel the most pleasing parts of the work is in the detail of the small heads, yet I do not like the

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copper coloured metal used to attach the heads to the tree. I feel using the same kind of braches on the tree would have been a lot more satisfactory. Solarium Series was made using fibreglass and resin, so Kher may have taken a mould from parts of the tree to give her something to work with and then added the smaller branches using her own imagination and logic. Insert processes and tools making work here]. The work will most likely have begun in Kher's studio where she will have made the small heads to be later attached to the trees which may have been made or finished in the gallery.

Kher will have produced smaller studies before commencing work on the final piece, studies like drawings of what the final work would look like, and sketches of what the animal heads would look like. She may also have produced a smaller model of the tree to get an idea as to what the bigger version would look like. I feel the work will have evolved quite slowly as there will have been different stages to its completion, starting with making casts from trees, to producing the heads, to attaching the heads, to setting it up in the gallery to knocking one of the trees over. Kher will have needed skills in working with fibreglass and resin and skills in attaching the metal to the tree. My first feelings when viewing this piece is confusion, as at first I initially thought the fleshy coloured heads on the trees were flesh coloured leaves.

It wasn't until I moved closer and around the piece that I realised they were heads of different animals. These feelings are similar to those when walking towards anything where the detail isn't noticeable until viewed up close, except I felt more intrigued by the piece. Kher may have felt feelings of anger or sadness based on the issue behind the work, but she may also have been questioning the work she was producing and whether it represents

what she wants, whether the viewer will enjoy to view it. The piece is quite noisy and disturbing when looking at the fallen tree that will have crashed against the floor, but other parts of the tree are quiet looking at the silent heads of the tree. For me the work evoked a mood of the moment; however I feel the work could directly affect viewers who have their own issues on animal testing and cloning, or may see the work and have feelings evoked linked to the environment and the cutting down of trees.

Either way, I feel the emotions evoked from this piece are mainly sad, serious feelings making the work intriguing to view.