

## **Halima Cassell, Music of the Spheres (Series 1) (2001)**

### **A talk by Angie Thompson, Youth Engagement Officer**

Halima creates a mood and feeling of dynamic tension in her work by playfully manipulating the planes and facets of repeating patterns against one another. The stresses that this creates help her achieve the maximum impact within the overall design and the ability to push the boundaries of material to its limits.

I would like to introduce Halima Cassell, Music of the Spheres (Series 1).

Take a look at your screen. Trace the symmetrical lines with your eyes. Notice the light and shadows created by the spheres. Moving from left to right, you will notice three set pieces cast in black, terracotta and white clay brick found in the north of England. Halima rarely uses vibrant colours, preferring the materials to reflect their natural earthy tones. A beautiful colour spectrum of dark to light sculptural objects are an important element of Halima's work reflecting people's skin tones and textures.

According to the Syrian Mathematician, Nicomachus of Gerasa, the Philosopher, Pythagoras of Samos, discovered the various harmonies of sound by playing and tapping metal hammers in a Blacksmith's workshop. Pythagoras believed if objects such as string and metal created sound, surely the Sun, Moon and Planets, would produce celestial sound as they orbit the Earth in order. The Music of the Spheres theory still influences culture today. Musicians including Bjork, Ian Brown, Coldplay, Mike Oldfield and Paul McCartney have all written tracks referring to this concept.

Born in Kashmir, Pakistan in 1975, Halima moved to Lancashire in the north of England. She studied a BTEC National Diploma in Art and Design at Blackburn College followed by a BA Honours degree in 3D Design then a MA in Design graduating from the University of Central Lancashire in 2002. Halima settled in Shropshire where she lives with her partner, children and numerous pets. Based in her home studio, Halima works with a variety of materials including bronze, glass, marble, stone and wood. However, her favourite material is clay. To quote Halima, 'we're all made from clay and we'll all return to clay when we die'.

Halima's greatest influence is her multicultural heritage and her sense of identity. Growing up with the Quran, speaking Urdu and visiting countless galleries and museums with Islamic Art on display, world cultures influence Halima as she collects clay from around the world including Africa, Europe, Israel, Pakistan and even the Mississippi river bed in North America.

Inspired by architecture, mathematics, and botanical forms of plants, Halima takes her inspiration. So next time you are out and about take a look at a Dandelion or a Snowdrop. In the summer, notice the perfect symmetry and repeating patterns of the bright yellow Dandelion, or within the winter months, the soft white hues and the perfect arch of the delicate Snowdrop as it dances in the chilly wind. Repeating patterns heavily influence Halima's work. Artist, Bridget Riley, who playfully constructs lines of repeating patterns to create the optical illusion of movement and

Sculptor Barbara Hepworth who never used moulds, like Halima, preferred to carve directly into her natural materials also found inspiration within nature. Mapping, repeating patterns, learning to use both her left and right hand to carve, Halima takes her time to build a relationship with the material she is working with, to understand its texture, form and finish.

My name is Angie Thompson and I work at Leeds Art Gallery. Thank you for listening.