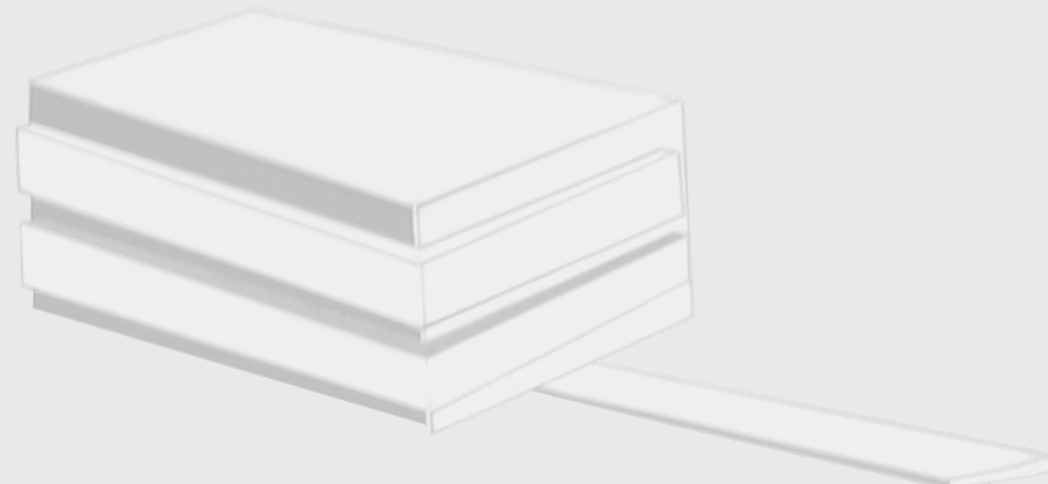


*Mathesis: dub, dub, dub*, addresses the architecture of the gallery, its history as a warehouse and the geography of its surrounding areas. Using simple design principles and approaches; crates, bricks, debris, blue prints and projections are recontextualized in this unfamiliar territory, creating in the process a transformed experience of the gallery space. In this construction, the flawed is perfected and the familiar obscured, rendering an emergent and difficult communication to be examined and relearned.

My work as such, explores combinations of order and anti-monumentality, wholeness and fragmentation, containment and dispersal to create experiential spaces and interventions. This emerges, due in part, to my relationship to the legacy of Minimalism and its emphasis on reductive form, modularity and literal scale. These pieces reflect the regional, cultural and geographic influences of the time and space in which I am working. I define a new territory that allows for subtlety, anti-monumentality and unexpected levels of candor. Perhaps this comes from my ability to navigate the borders between sculpture and painting, reticence and ambition, Punjabi and English.



GALLERY MASKARA

## **Mathesis: dub, dub, dub**

Avantika Bawa

November 3-December 3, 2009

Artist Talk: Thursday November 5, 2009 at 7pm

'Warehouse on 3rd Pasta'  
6/7, 3rd Pasta Lane,  
Colaba, Mumbai 400 005, India  
*Tuesday to Sunday 11 am to 7 pm*

www.gallerymaskara.com  
+91 22 2202 3056

## **Mathesis: dub, dub, dub**

*New work by Avantika Bawa*

Nov 3-Dec 3, 2009



## Interview with Avantika Bawa by Craig Drennen

### **Craig Drennen: How did this exhibition at Gallery Maskara come about?**

Avantika Bawa: I have wanted to work with fresh alternative spaces in India where the architecture was unique, yet conducive to my site-specific sensibility. Gallery Maskara’s mission, architecture, and location were perfect for what I wanted to do. This prompted my initial contact with Abhay Maskara, the gallery director. We had a series of discussions earlier this year followed by a site visit and then this show.

### **CD: What is the relevance of the exhibition title?**

AB: The title suggests a sense of incidental logic, “Mathesis” meaning the science of calculable order and the repetition of “dub, dub, dub” alluding to randomness and movement. Formally, the 1:3 ratio of the words is interesting, since it mirrors the stacking action of the crates used in the show. This combination works well and I also like the sound it creates.

### **CD: Why did you want to use boxes for this show?**

AB: The modular quality of boxes and their literal scale fits my aesthetic sensibility. Often I see boxes that need no alteration. They are perfect. The fact that they are containers for something else is also appealing. They imply movement while also being rather static and cold. I like this contrast. The boxes used in this show come from different sources, but are painted chromatic gray to give them a sense of uniformity.

### **CD: You have called your artistic practice “intervention.” Could you explain what you mean, and how you considered this for the Maskara show?**

AB: Lately I have been interested in how minor interruptions break the surface flow of a situation. One odd tile in a pattern, a weed in a manicured patch of lawn, an obsolete fixture in a ceiling are all accidentals that draw attention to what they intervene. In my work, I first find situations—mostly architectural, that seem a little too slick and then proceed to make a polite intervention to disrupt this ‘perfection’. Often, the work adapts itself to the space, and has such a deliberate presence that it ceases to be an intervention at all. In some of these situations, the work is in dialogue with the architecture and, hence non-invasive. In other situations it becomes self-contained and the site, although important, is now part of its past. In all these cases, the action essentially proceeds from an intuitive response, much like a sketch, to one that is bold and deliberate, yet simple. Retaining the freshness of this intuitive gesture is very important, especially as the scale increases.

*Mathesis: dub, dub, dub* began as a conceptual intervention but has now grown beyond that. I am bringing construction and packaging materials back into the gallery--which used to be a warehouse--in a way that invades the space with authority and elegance. Some of the packaging comes from neighboring galleries and businesses and will be returned once the show is over. So in some sense the work will have an afterlife as it gets repurposed for travel again when the exhibition is over. The literal scale of these boxes begins to compete with the vastness of the space as they are stacked and piled,

creating in the process a formal tension that changes as one walks around the space due to the variables in the stacking. My colour palette has been informed to an extent by water, shipping materials, and naval bases. These formal choices attempt to draw attention to the dynamics and history of the gallery and its surroundings. Eventually, I hope to create an experience that is both immersive and fragmented.

### **CD: So you consider the entire exhibition to be one piece?**

AB: Yes and no. The wall drawing, 3D and 4D components are a singular piece. The works on paper serve as blueprints for the installation, and were made while I was planning the show but before I began the physical installation. Eventually these drawings become a form of documentation, since the installation itself will likely be destroyed.

### **CD: The installation will be destroyed? Many artists who’ve built careers by making wall-based work—like Sol Lewitt or Lawrence Weiner--have as part of their practice a set of formal instructions that allow works to be remade at any time. Can your pieces be recreated or do they exist only for the duration of your exhibitions?**

AB: None of my work has ever been perfectly recreated. In the two instances where I did recreate a wall work, a lot of it was altered in the process of reinstalling because of prompts triggered by the new site. I now consider those works variations of the original. I believe my work can be truly recreated only if my hand is removed from the process. This kills any temptation I may have to alter, add to, or expand the work. For this, I would need to compile a set of formal instructions that would also include restrictions. It’s a system that I am interested in and, as you mention, has an important history with artists that I respect. So yes, some of my works can be recreated and have a set of formal instructions, but until now this has not been realized.

### **CD: Is this piece at Maskara one that could be re-created elsewhere?**

AB: I do not know yet.

### **CD: You’ve had a decade of activity in both India and the U.S. Are there any interesting differences in the art worlds of the two countries?**

AB: On the surface yes, but not when it come down to it. The recent explosion of alternative spaces in India, the presence of Indian artists in biennials, and international art fairs are tied to India’s art market boom. Some of the work coming out has been cutting edge, but a lot of it has also been thematic, content driven, and narrative. I may be wrong, but it is my observation that there is still a lack of contemporary non-objective works coming out of India. I see that in the U.S. as well. In Europe however, there exists a strong audience for this kind of practice. Belgium has a full museum devoted to it—the Center for Contemporary Non-objective Art. One may argue and say that content driven work is truer to an Indian aesthetic and comes from a rich history. While I agree, I also realize that Indian inventions like the number zero may appear simple

on the outside, but are powerful and complex on the inside--and this informs my work to a greater degree. It would be nice to see more work in India that explores these types of ideas.

### **CD: Do you have any final thoughts on the continued relevancy of the monochrome in the art world of 2009?**

AB: Now more than ever it has potential. It’s potent, beautiful, and extremely complex, yet simple. That is why I work with it.

**Avantika Bawa** ([avantikabawa.com](http://avantikabawa.com)) is an artist and curator, based in Atlanta, Georgia and New Delhi India. She has an MFA in Painting from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (1998) and a BFA in the same from the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, India (1995) and was a participant at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (2008). She is represented by Saltworks Gallery in Atlanta, GA.

Bawa has exhibited nationally and internationally in exhibitions such as the South by East Biennial in Boca Raton, FL; solos at Nature Morte and Lalit Kala Academy in New Delhi, India; Saltworks gallery and the Atlanta Contemporary Arts Center, Atlanta, GA; Portland State University, Portland, OR; and juried group shows at the Drawing Center and Smack Mellon, NY and SAVAC, Canada. In April 2004 she was part of a team that launched *Drain - Journal for Contemporary Art and Culture*, [www.drainmag.com](http://www.drainmag.com).

**Craig Drennen** is an artist living in Atlanta, GA. He has a BA in Interdisciplinary Studies and MFA’s in Painting and Art History and was a 2006 participant at the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture. He is represented by Samson Projects in Boston, MA. He has written art criticism for New York Arts, Dialogue, and Drain magazines, and has written catalog essays for Tony Wight Gallery in Chicago, and the Contemporary Art Center in Virginia Beach, VA.