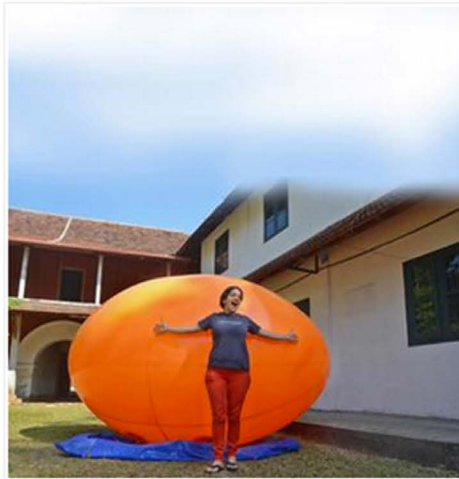


## The dot that connects

PRIYADERSHINI S

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Creatively Buoyed: Avantika Bawa. Photo: Thulasi Kakkat The Hindu

*Avantika Bawa's art project, Aqua Mapping, yokes together various media of art*

A striking incongruity — a gigantic inflated orange ball among hurrying daily commuters on the Vypeen ferry — is leaving onlookers baffled. The enormity is then seen moving across choppy waters tugged by a rice boat. By evening it is gently bobbing up and down against a tired setting sun. This curiosity is impelling onlookers to begin a conversation, something that post-modern art practitioner Avantika Bawa is aiming to set off. And she's got it bang on.

In her current project, Aqua Mapping, the US-based artist is unravelling the first part of a three series art intervention that yokes together drawing, painting, sculpture, photography and installation. The two other coastal cities that are part of this project are Baltimore and Portland in the United States

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Travel and drawing are interchangeable, and almost synonymous, for the artist who is hesitant about defining her art practice. "The lack of definition, pretty much defines me and my art practice," says the spirited artist who loves to travel and gathers inspiration from that. Drawing is her other love and she combines the two in great measure to come up with expressions that challenge the strait jacketed. Avantika's naval background, (she's a naval officer's daughter), too has been a strong influence in her works and especially in this seed project for which she has received a grant from the Washington State University, Vancouver. Water has had a magnificent presence in her itinerant life and water routes seminal in determining the histories of the world. "What if the dotted line actually existed on the landscape?" she asks fervently. "It's a bit whimsical but hopefully poetic."

Her water maps derived from the route the orange buoy takes will be contrasted with the existing routes the spice trade took, the ferry takes, the rice boat makes. Simultaneously drawings will emerge, architectural graphs will take form, photos and video recordings will reconstruct a new expression from the mosaic of stories. Conversations ensued earlier will be reheard and Avantika's art will take form and shape at her studio in Portland.

Earlier the artist had visited Kochi "to get a feel" and now as she attempts to deconstruct existing routes with the eye-catching orange balls she finds herself closer to her art ideal, Paul Klee who she quotes - "he said, 'a line is a dot out on a walk.' There is the element of the bizarre. If I can explain everything that I am doing then it is mundane. I am interested in new ways."

And new ways indeed are her forte. In Aqua Mapping she yokes land art and performance as curious groups gather around the neon buoys questioning and dissecting the rationality of the moving dot.

Collaborating with city-based performance artist V.M. Sajan and a young team comprising Fahad T.E., Vipin Dhanudharan, Anupama and Abhayan Avantika will be presenting her project at an **Open Studio in Pepper House, Calvathy, Fort Kochi at 6 p.m. today.**