



A&E: Speakeasy with ...

## Avantika Bawa

By Cinque Hicks

Published 12.03.08

Relocated in fresh digs, Saltworks Gallery opened its new Westside space last month with *Perfect Distortions*, a solo installation show by Atlanta art world fixture Avantika Bawa. Bawa mines the territories of architecture and abstract sculpture. The current exhibit takes on a pair of Atlanta's Midtown icons: Ikea and Home Depot. Bawa is a professor in SCAD's School of Fine Arts and is based in both Atlanta and New Delhi, India.

**Describe the work that's at Saltworks right now.**

What we have at Saltworks is a combination of installations, drawings [and] sculptures that seem functional but push the boundary of functionality. A lot of this comes from my previous work, which was kind of interested in modular structures, minimalism, and the intersection of architecture, furniture, sculpture and dysfunction. And, being that this new gallery is very close to Ikea ... I thought it would be interesting to bite the bullet and address Ikea as fodder. And that's what I did. Ikea and Home Depot play a major role in this.



enlarge

Courtesy Avantika Bawa

**Does this come through in particular visual elements?**

I think it's obvious in some of the pieces that I literally use Ikea furniture and claim that it is Ikea furniture. But in other works it's an indirect design influence, where I'm looking at [the influence of] modernity and modernism at Ikea. With the tables, they're straightforward Ikea pieces, but I wanted to make them dysfunctional in this case and do something to the space around them that's never used, and that's the space underneath the tables.

**Do you think that Modernism is in a dysfunctional state right now?**

It's been appropriated a lot, first by artists, then by designers, then by the Internet. And now what artists are doing is re-appropriating that. ... So, yeah, in that sense I would say modernism is pretty messed up. It's like the grandchild of a grandchild of modernism that I'm working with and trying to remind that grandchild of who that grandchild's great-grandfather was.

**Are you a minimalist, a post-minimalist, a post-post-minimalist or a pre-post-post-minimalist?**

I would certainly not say I'm purely a minimalist because there's more going on besides the purity and the formalism. So maybe between a post and post-post – an altered post.

**What do you think is the future of sculptural installation in Atlanta?**

I think it has a future but we need to create more of an audience for it, and more of a niche, and more spaces showing stuff that isn't so easily digestible. But there also need to be a lot of risks taken by artists and the audience members to get into it. The artists are very driven. The audience is very driven. But what we give them is a little too packaged. So, it's time for a fresh market.