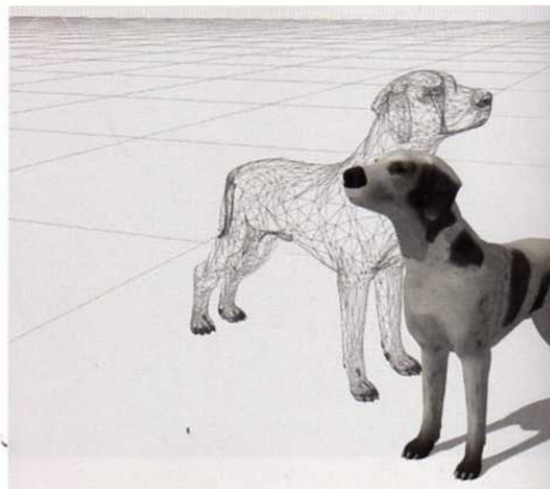




AVANTIKA BAWA
COLUMBUS, GA

In the installation *RE: RE: RE.*, Avantika Bawa pursues her exploration of the specificity of the institutional site as a nexus of internal and external negotiation, that is, as the representation of that specific institution's history and actualization in relation to the broader local culture [The Columbus Museum; August 12–December 12, 2010]. Here, Bawa's interventions—two- and three-dimensional wall, ceiling, and floor paintings and drawings—unfold in and beyond the museum's formal galleries, connecting minimalism, architecture, and institutional structure to tackle conceptual and visual notions of containment and dispersal. Bawa enlists a sparse vocabulary of form, modularity, and scale as well as a visual economy of means to produce works that are notably and enticingly elusive. She approaches the museum as a site that is both a repository of objects and a disseminator of ideas. Long interested in organizing principles, strategic structure, geometric modularity, and sequencing, she responds first to the physical building: specifically the museum's omnipresent rounded Neoclassical arches. The rhythmic formula of the arch—an oblong lozenge shape—becomes the dominant motif for her inquiry. Bawa subverts the triumphant iconic structure, turns it on its side, and renders it anew as both portal and container.

The notions of passage and container distill a paradoxical interplay between absence and presence, empty and full, and perfection and imperfection. With a nod to minimalism, Bawa uses basic materials such as latex paint, graphite, wood molding, wood, and gold enamel, along with repurposed objects from the museum's work spaces, to create optical re-articulations of clear geometric forms within the grid as construct. From this visual hierarchal position, determined line and insistent ovoids—whole, fragmented or truncated—follow a lateral line of continuity that suggests space between and beyond what we experience immediately. She inflects invisible terrain with dynamics that impart a dialogue about interstitial space, while also subtly heightening our perceptual awareness of our immediate environment—in this instance, the Columbus Museum and its local community.



TUOMO KANGASMAA
HELSINKI

Bawa layers formalist acts with historical and cultural significance in subtle, not immediately evident ways. Here, she cogently incorporates two distinguishing characteristics of the city: Columbus owes its prosperity to the presence of a major U.S. Army training facility, Fort Benning Military Reservation, and to the natural abundance of Georgia red clay. The river port city's red brick mills, warehouses, and downtown streets also speak to its former status as a hub for textiles and iron industries, military manufacturing, shipping, and transportation. At the Columbus Museum, Bawa's super flat, deep orange-red, clay-colored oblongs, painted directly on the wall, hover on a horizontal axis with vertical stoppages, creating three-dimensional modulated vessels that conjure bricks, barracks, pull-out art racks, crates, and flat files. Additionally, the clean lines and exquisitely smooth surfaces reference the modernist sensibility of Fort Benning's highly ordered architectural simplicity and strategic containment. Emphasizing the intersection of form and function in both public and private realms, Bawa's work conflates a community's past and present while also alluding to museum stewardship.

The title *RE: RE: RE.* suggests movement. It is vectorial. It speaks to mobility as a negotiation and to corporeal experience as a crossfire of fluid visualization and spatial positioning. Her reductionist installation relies on our excursion to less-traveled spaces of the museum. Intentionally or not, this underscores the artist's fascination with marginality, passage, and transitional space. The installation succeeds as both a site-responsive gesture and an act of institutional infiltration. Bawa's deceptively simple visual inquiry into observation and perception thoughtfully challenges both the museum experience and our sense of place.

—Shannon Fitzgerald

In Helsinki, summer is often taken over by a stillness. As a stifling, immobile mass of laden air settles over the city, the debilitating climactic turn can seem to persist into winter. The weather not only settled upon the city for more than the hottest Finnish summers on record, but also featured in the city's August art calendar. Luckily, I had the opportunity to visit the city's latest exhibition. Tuomo Kangasmaa's studio space, Kangasmaa's latest video installation *Super Fun* desperately needed rejuvenating blast [August 8–29, 2010]. His work also underwent a sense of anxiousness induced by the sadistic melancholia, and pedantic abstraction by some of the city's other galleries.

The buoyant—even amateurish—quality of the work proved so dissimilar from what was being shown elsewhere that it caught me off guard. I even found myself wondering how a gallery devoted to serious art could present something seemingly so frivolous. Initially failed to respond to the work's content, I eventually found the incorporation of a range of time-based media to capture my attention. The exhibition revolves around a contrasting pair of perpendicularly oriented digital image series. *Super Fun*, 2010, a digitized version of an earlier work, plays continuously, and *Super-8*, 2010, a loop that requires viewer activation. In the space, *Blonde*, 2010, rounds out the presence of a succession of digital images of dogs produced by software.

From a technical perspective, these digital image series propose an idiosyncratic mini-history of image technologies, which ultimately led to the digital image and its potential meaning. The work of *Super-8's* loop, for example, primarily serves to highlight the inherent fragility and raised questions of time: the projector is activated, the brief clip of a boy running in the snow fades a little more, the projector's loud motor, he gains momentum, scratches. By contrast, the DVD format extends the film's lifespan and juxtaposes the digital image with the casually romantic pleasures of

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: Avantika Bawa, detail of *RE: RE: RE.*, 2010, mixed media installation, dimensions variable [courtesy of the artist and The Columbus Museum, Columbus, GA]; Tuomo Kangasmaa, installation view of *Blonde*, 2010, digital image series [courtesy of the artist and MUU Gallery, Helsinki; photo: Keijo Sundvall]