

MEDIA RELEASE



University Galleries of Illinois State University is pleased to present *simplenothingsimplesomething*, a solo exhibition by [Avantika Bawa](#), from January 17 through March 3, 2023. All events are free and open to the public.

simplenothingsimplesomething comprises several new works on paper and a large-scale installation. This exhibition is the most recent iteration of Bawa's experiments with construction scaffolds, which began in 2012 and have spanned several formats. Compelled equally by their geometrical elegance and their passive ubiquity in daily life, Bawa has revealed scaffolds to be a surprisingly rich sculptural medium. She has eked novel designs out of their crossbars and rectangles on salt flats in India and fields in Oregon, as well as in gallery interiors across the United States. She has also miniaturized her scaffolds using 3D printers, and used them as matrices to create embossed prints, demonstrating how slight adjustments to a consistent form's scale, color, surroundings, and means of presentation can beget a large range of visual effects. This exhibition, which presents both a new series of relief prints and a network of jet-black scaffolding, shows a progression in Bawa's approach to her signature material.

The relief prints in *simplenothingsimplesomething* are continuations of a series of embossings that Bawa included in a 2021 exhibition at the University of Kentucky Art Museum. Like those, these are nearly colorless, the plain white of their paper decorated by faint impressions from a scaffold-derived matrix. In each case, the smooth surface of the paper hums with the textures pressed into it. These prints, however, are both bigger and quieter than the Kentucky embossings: the sheets stand almost ten feet tall and, on each, just a few impressions combine to form commanding images. The prints in this exhibition have turned their predecessors' rhythmic energy into a quiet grace.

The title for this exhibition was adapted from a 2011 [interview](#) of the sculptor [John McCracken](#) (whose [brightly colored leaning planks](#) Bawa cites as an enduring influence). "With many Minimalist [artworks]," he said, "one could be tempted to think [that the work is] merely a simple nothing, but it's really a simple *something*." A push and pull between "something" and "nothing" — always executed through the simplest of means — is consistently the source of meaning and power in Bawa's art.

simplenothingsimplesomething is curated by Troy Sherman, Curator at University Galleries. This exhibition is supported by University Galleries' grants from the Illinois Arts Council Agency, Harold K. Sage Foundation, and the Illinois State University Foundation Fund.

Biography

Avantika Bawa is an artist, curator, and educator based in Portland, Oregon. She often resides in her hometown of New Delhi, India. Bawa has an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a BFA from the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, India. She has participated in the Skowhegan, MacDowell, Kochi Biennial Foundation, and Djerassi residencies, among others. Her work has been exhibited in solo exhibitions at Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon; Schneider Museum of Art, Ashland, Oregon; and The Columbus Museum, Columbus, Georgia; Atlanta Contemporary Arts Center, Georgia.

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Atlanta, Georgia; and Disjecta, Portland, Oregon. In April 2004, Bawa was part of a team that launched [*Drain: Journal for Contemporary Art and Culture*](#). In 2014, she was appointed to the board of the [Oregon Arts Commission](#). Bawa is currently Associate Professor of Fine Arts at [Washington State University](#) in Vancouver, Washington.

Events and programming

All events are free and open to the public.

- Saturday, January 28 and February 4 at 1:00 p.m.: Tour and Workshop: Art Around You. Co-presented with the Children's Discovery Museum. Register at childrensdiscoverymuseum.net
- Saturday, February 11, from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m.
Drop-in artmaking workshop
- Thursday, March 2, from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m.
Artist lecture by Avantika Bawa
- Thursday, March 2, from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m.
Artist reception with Avantika Bawa
- Field trip program, curator-led tours, and workshops available by appointment throughout the exhibition. Reimbursements are available for K-12 schools or community organizations to offset the costs of transportation. Please contact University Galleries at gallery@ilstu.edu or (309) 438-5487 to schedule an appointment.

University Galleries, a unit in the Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts, is located at 11 Uptown Circle, Suite 103, at the corner of Beaufort and Broadway streets. Parking is available in the Uptown Station parking deck located directly above University Galleries—the first hour is free, as well as any time after 5:01 p.m.

You can find [University Galleries](#) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#), and sign up to receive email updates through the [newsletter](#). Please contact gallery@illinoisstate.edu or call (309) 438-5487 if you need to arrange an accommodation to participate in any events related to these exhibitions.