

ISSN 0972-2947

Rs 150 • US\$ 10 • £6

Volume XIV

Issue III

Quarter III

2009

# ART *India*

THE ART NEWS MAGAZINE OF INDIA



India in Asia

## CITY OF BOXES

FROM THE 3<sup>rd</sup> OF NOVEMBER TO THE 3<sup>rd</sup> OF DECEMBER, GALLERY MASKARA, MUMBAI, exhibited Avantika Bawa's work in a show titled *Mathesis: Dub, Dub, Dub*. The central work had random boxes and crates of various shapes and sizes, piled on top of each other and painted in a standard matte gray, at the far end of the spacious gallery. Resembling a kind of mini-township, the exhibit referred to the urban geography of Colaba (where the gallery stands) and Navy Nagar areas (where Bawa spent her childhood) and was constructed out of material found, collected and borrowed from various sources. The boxes also referred to the space of the gallery, which was used as a warehouse in its earlier avatar.

The layout of the exhibit allowed the viewer entry into narrow lanes and dead-ends not unlike the crowded by-lanes of Colaba. Bricks arranged in a line reminded the viewer of the boundary between the regimented Navy Nagar and the hotchpotch settlements of Colaba. Formally, the bricks led the viewer to the installation and a half-hidden video, as did the orange band on the wall opposite the installation.

*Mathesis: Dub, Dub, Dub* seemed randomly installed but the meticulous thought with which Bawa reconfigured the various elements of the cityscape in the work helped create a controlled chaos that is Mumbai's signature feature. The show's title provided a leading clue: Bawa created a tightly organised installation and chose to challenge its structure by a number of slights, which broke its stoic formality.

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Avantika Bawa. *Mathesis: Dub, Dub, Dub*. Installation. Size variable. 2009. PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID DE SOUZA.

