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April 02, 2015 12:01AM

Ashwini Bhat's sculptures, at Newport Art Museum, show a dancer's poise

One of the first things you see as you enter Ashwini Bhat's solo show at the [Newport Art Museum](#) is a group of three charcoal-hued ceramic sculptures. Though all three sculptures are about the same size, each has its own distinctive array of curves, bumps and hollows. Where one sculpture zigs, the other zags, while the third veers off in another direction entirely.

Look long enough and you can easily imagine these elegantly off-kilter forms as a troupe of dancers whose movements, though seemingly unrelated, are actually carefully choreographed.

As it happens, dance and movement are important concerns for Bhat, a contemporary sculptor and ceramics artist who was born in India but spends part of each year living and working in the Newport area. Before studying ceramics with the India-based American artist Ray Meeker, Bhat spent 10 years performing as part of a traditional Indian dance company.

It's an experience that now shapes her own ceramic work, which neatly blends a dancer's sense of poise and balance with the rough-hewn shapes and textures of contemporary sculpture.

In all, the show, which was mounted as part of last week's NCECA ceramics conference, features about a dozen pieces, ranging from relatively modest table-top-size sculptures to larger installation-style works. Of special note: "Earth Took of Earth," a group of floor-standing sculptures that looks a bit like a mini-Stonehenge (and which gives the show its title, "Ashwini Bhat: Earth Took of Earth"), and "Compass Rose," a kind of deconstructed ceramic mural that includes bits of poetry by the Rhode Island poet Forrest Gander. (Through May 10.)



Ashwini Bhat sits beside "Earth Took of Earth." Her work neatly blends a dancer's sense of poise and balance with the rough-hewn shapes and textures of contemporary sculpture. The India-based artist, who spends part of the year in the Newport area, has a solo show at the Newport Art Museum. Courtesy of the Newport Art Museum.

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