

Sreshta Rit Premnath (b. 1979, Bangalore, India) lives and works in New York City. A recipient of an Art Matters Foundation grant in 2011, he has also participated in several residencies through the Civetella Ranieri Foundation, Umbria (2011); Skowhegan School of Sculpture and Painting (2009); and Whitney Independent Study Program (2008). Premnath has had solo exhibitions at Tony Wight Gallery, Chicago (2012); Galerie Nordenhake, Berlin (2011); Wave Hill, New York (2011); Gallery SKE, Bangalore (2010); Art Statements, Art|41|Basel (2010); among others. His work has also been presented in numerous group exhibitions, including at Michele Didier, Paris (2012); Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco (2011); Galerie Balice Hertling, Paris (2010); 1A Space, Hong Kong (2010); and Friedman Benda Gallery, New York (2010). Premnath is the founder and co-editor of *Shifter Magazine*. He received his MFA from Bard College (2006). He teaches in the MFA program at Parsons College, New York and is the 2012 Arthur Levitt Fellow at Williams College, Williamstown, MA.

Sreshta Rit Premnath: Folding Rulers is organized by the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis and curated by Kelly Shindler, Assistant Curator.

The Front Room is generously supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and Charter.

Support for CAM's exhibition program is provided by Jeanne and Rex Sinquefield; Nancy Reynolds and Dwyer P. Brown; William E. Weiss Foundation; and the Crawford Taylor Foundation. General operating support is provided by Whitaker Foundation; Regional Arts Commission; Missouri Arts Council, a state agency; Arts and Education Council; The Trio Foundation of St. Louis; Bank of America Charitable Foundation; Wells Fargo Advisors; and members of the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis.

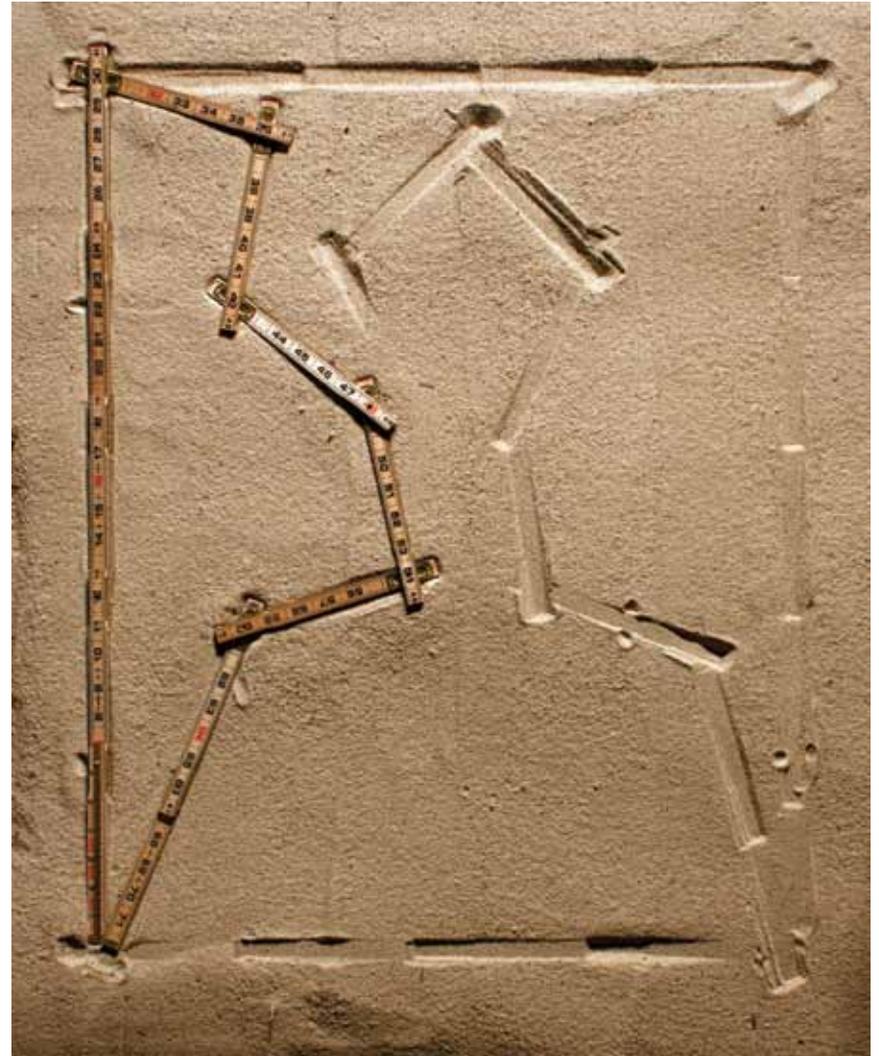


Image: Sreshta Rit Premnath, *Folding Ruler #4*, UV print on vinyl, 30 x 45 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Sreshta Rit Premnath: Folding Rulers

November 29-December 30, 2012t

Sreshta Rit Premnath investigates systems of representation to understand and challenge the process by which images become icons or events become history. He rigorously explores the backgrounds of subjects as varied as the MGM lion, urban development in the city of Bangalore, India, and the Viennese philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, through different mediums including photography, video, and sculpture. By granting these subjects renewed consideration, often in altogether new forms, he also establishes the possibility for alternative interpretations.

For his Front Room exhibition, Premnath has created several new works that reflect his ongoing interest in the visual representations of power. The exhibition's title, *Folding Rulers*, is also the name given to a series of eight printed vinyl banners featuring silhouettes of a human figure. He created the images by placing folding rulers—a construction tool used for measuring angles and distance—in a sandbox and photographing the resulting composition. The individual prints depict both the implements and the imprints they left behind in the sand. Despite their resemblance to commemorative portraits or busts found in private homes and public spaces, the content of the works remains abstract and unresolved. Premnath's invocation of the "sandbox" is motivated by an interest both in the American military's use of the word to refer to the Middle East and in the use of the actual object as constructive psychotherapeutic tool to reveal an individual's memory or past trauma. This association is established in the *Folding Rulers* portraits and in *Sandbox* (2012), which features several pairs of used combat boots filled with sand spilling onto the gallery floor. Ostensibly once used for active military service, these boots have since been discarded and put up for auction on eBay, where they were purchased by the artist. Installed in the gallery, they become stand-ins for soldiers themselves, confronting anonymous portraits of power drawn in the sand. Installed alongside these works is a large piece of fabric, *Untitled*. Its surface is covered in horizontal stripes, which Premnath created by applying bleach to black cotton. In its pattern and drapery, the piece resembles the American flag, though notably without any stars.

The works in *Folding Rulers* thus play with the notions of power and authority, presenting them as ephemeral and contingent phenomena. This is most evident in the exhibition's title, a verbal pun on the word 'ruler.' As an object, a folding ruler is a tool of measurement; as an idea, it suggests the collapse or at least shifting terms of a political regime. The theme is further underscored by Premnath's use of sand—a substance that cannot be fixed—and bleach—a chemical used to remove color or to disinfect something. We may not know who wore the boots, whose portraits these are, or what nation might be symbolized by the banner or flag. Yet the non-specificity of these objects, while perhaps initially bewildering, can in fact be viewed, as in sandplay therapy, as a constructive gesture. Premnath's removal of markers of individual and place are precisely what allow him to pose broader questions of how power is depicted and symbolized. Together, the works in not only point to the seismic shifts currently underway in our contemporary geopolitical landscape but also actively imagine a future yet to be written.