

MIT List Visual Arts Center

Sreshta Rit Premnath: *Grave/Grove*

October 22, 2021—February 13, 2022

Press Event: October 21, 2021

***Grave/Grove*, an exhibition of new sculptural works by Sreshta Rit Premnath that incorporate live plants, examines the ways in which natural, political, and human time are interconnected.**



Cambridge, MA, July 13, 2021—This fall, MIT List Visual Arts Center presents an exhibition of new sculptures by multimedia artist Sreshta Rit Premnath, organized in partnership with the Contemporary Arts Center (CAC) in Cincinnati. Premnath’s List Center presentation, which runs from October 22, 2021 to February 13, 2022 will be presented concurrently with an exhibition of the same title at Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati, on view from September 17, 2021 to February 6, 2022.

Premnath creates works in sculpture, video, photography, and installation that draw on the formal legacies of minimalism and conceptualism to think through the politics of boundaries, bodies, and labor in contemporary life. The corrugated panels, cardboard, metal fencing, or cargo and freight materials that he employs are not merely convenient modular readymades, but the raw material that visibly indexes economic “development” and the consolidation of wealth that often results from it. Recently, questions of space—who can own or occupy it—have guided Premnath’s work, as have the artist’s investigations of visibility, invisibility, and misrecognition as part of the everyday experiences of those who are marginalized.

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The body of work Premnath presents in *Grave/Grove* examines the ways in which natural, political, and human time are interconnected. The exhibition reflects the artist's interest in how shared spaces of growth and care, such as community gardens or nurseries, can be embedded within dehumanizing spaces of collective discipline and confinement, such as detention centers or refugee camps. Inspired by the role of gardening in the lives of incarcerated people or refugees, Premnath presents a material exploration of life that exists in otherwise inhospitable spaces. In his new works, plant species that are considered to be weeds sprout up from the gaps between aluminum panels cut to the scale and shape of unfurled cardboard boxes. Within some of these sculptural assemblages, plaster-coated foam figures slump and lie together, their "bodies" merging with the ground as they too become sites for growth. The box-like metal planes allude to the discarded commercial packaging often repurposed by those who lack permanent housing to create temporary places of rest. Premnath's use of plants that are typically identified as "weeds" calls attention to the correspondence between horticultural and social systems, and what, or who, is deemed undesirable, or subject to removal. As the artist observes, "Although humans categorize and ostracize some beings, nature proliferates without judgement."

Premnath's exhibition is organized by Natalie Bell, Curator, MIT List Visual Arts Center, in partnership with Amara Antilla, Senior Curator, Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati.

This pair of exhibitions is accompanied by a special edition of the artist's journal, *Shifter*, which is co-edited by Avi Alpert and Premnath. *Shifter 25: Waiting* results from a series of eight virtual dialogues between artists, architects, historians, and theorists addressing the theme of waiting, that were convened by *Shifter* and co-hosted by the List Center and CAC in fall 2020 and spring 2021.

Sreshtha Rit Premnath (b. 1979, Bangalore, India; lives in Brooklyn, NY) is an artist and the founding editor of *Shifter*, an issue-based journal featuring contemporary art, creative writing, and critical theory. Premnath also directs the Fine Arts (BFA) program at Parsons School of Design in New York. His work has been the focus of solo exhibitions at Spaces, Cleveland (2007); Wave Hill, New York (2011); Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (2012); Nomas Foundation, Rome (2017); and The Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver (2019) among others. He has participated in group exhibitions including *The Matter Within: New Contemporary Art of India*, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco (2011); *The Hollow Center*, Smack Mellon, New York (2013); *Common Space*, The Kitchen, New York (2014); *After Midnight*, Queens Museum, New York; *So-Called Utopias*, Logan Center for the Arts, Chicago (both 2015); *Cartography of Ghosts*, The Drawing Center, New York (2016); *The Socrates Annual*; Socrates Sculpture Park, New York (2017); and *L'Intrus Redux*, Westfälischer Kunstverein, Münster (2019), among others. He holds a BFA from The Cleveland Institute of Art (2003) and an MFA from Bard College (2006).



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For a full list of events and programs, please visit: <https://listart.mit.edu/events-programs>

Image: Sreshta Rit Premnath, *Falling*, installation view, Ace Gallery, Los Angeles, 2017. Image courtesy the artist and Ace Gallery, Los Angeles. Photo: Jacob Wilson

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