

*Storeys End* seems a culmination of Sreshta Rit Premnath's engagement with the Viennese philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein, who undoubtedly acts as a kind of muse for the artist. Like Wittgenstein, Premnath relishes philosophical, linguistic, and cultural aporia. In *Storeys End*, named after the address where Wittgenstein composed his posthumous text, *On Certainty*, and died shortly thereafter, the viewer is presented with a detective plot redolent with post-modernist obsessions.

Minimalism, Pop, and Conceptual Art offer Premnath an art historical language game, like so many of his generation who have returned to the "scene of the crime" of their parent and grandparent generations. But this game cum crime story also takes place between multiple media, which include photography, sculpture (the partial reconstruction of a kite designed by Wittgenstein in 1909), and painting.

Visual puns occur between objects, such as the five inkjet prints of detective fiction writer Norbert Davis firing a gun at a target out-of-frame (*Toners, Dyes*). The bullet hole seems to appear on an adjacent wall, as a hole cut-out of canvas (*Eclipse*). Similarly, the titles of many of the works play on the relationship between death and narrative (*Storeys End; Toners, Dyes; Doyen's Rest*), a relationship defining of modern philosophy, art, and literature (think of Gertrude Stein's comments about the structural importance of the corpse in her *Everybody's Autobiography*; think also of Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow-Up* and *L'Aventura*, in which the plots revolve around a corpse or missing person). The corpse of *Storeys End*, as in the detective novel, provides a pivot or absent center around which individual works interact, becoming visually and linguistically slippery—polysemous and indeterminate.

Premnath's works allegorize the indeterminacy of cognitive-perceptive processes wherein, following Wittgenstein well-known quip, the ethical becomes embodied by the aesthetic. The process of bleaching and scraping off photographic emulsion in *EX / X* represents a non-site (or non-sight?) where the viewer's perception becomes negated (X-ed out). Likewise, the greenscreen to bluescreen gradient of *Toners, Dyes* indicates an absent presence, while the Ellsworth Kelly-like blue canvas of *Eclipse* evokes the nowhere of Bluescreen video technology (wherein one's image can become superimposed upon any place whatsoever). As in many of his works, in *Storeys End* Premnath develops a language of displacement and difficulty in relation to existing cultural materials—detective novels, philosophical treatises, historically significant photo-documents, and art historical precedents.

Premnath's installation pushes against the limits of a particular universe of meaning, the work of art measuring the limits of a world—the personal and collective capability to understand in situ through

a set of linguistic and visual propositions. By entering into the work, the viewer encounters the artifacts of the artist's research practice, which move seamlessly between philosophical speculation and humor. In the narrative tension of these objects, stories actually begin rather than end. Objects mark the mobile traces of our compulsion to make meaning faced with negation, absence, aporia, and gaps within signifying processes. (Text by Thom Donovan)

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