

REWORKING MEMORIES

NIKA NEELOVA

COMMEMORATING HISTORY: RELICS

"For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably..."
Walter Benjamin, 'Theses of the Philosophy of History'

In his analysis on the development of canons of perspective in Greek art, E.H. Gombrich argues that the techniques were developed under the pressure of the "eyewitness principle" - the demand to illustrate cultural history. Art was set against forgetting, as an artificial replacement to memory, its function was to transmit historical content through generations.

Nika Neelova's interest in this work was to address memory through a historical rather than personal perspective, by taking subjects and events resurrected from the distant past and charged with meaning that is evading a full comprehension. By deliberately choosing the history of the past that has not made it into the present, the work is imagining what this history would look like had it survived until now.

History finds the manifestation of its 'memory' shaped through the notion of the ruin. Ruins represent simultaneously an absence and a presence, they are the intersection of the visible and the invisible. As fragmented structures, they point to a lost and invisible whole, whilst their still visible presence also references durability and perseverance. This work in a way is unearthing the past and revealing fragments of a larger history, which equally belongs to legend and reality.

The installation introduces the idea of historical remembrance by approaching its subject not only through chronicles and legends but also through interpretation that forgets everything about the later course of events. Making the connection between past and present, fact and fiction it features the scenes of origins and endings at the same time.

The pieces are shown in the state when the absence they embody is more seductive than the memory of presence. The objects are choreographed into the space, featuring the circular composition, the asymmetrical structure, the repetitive spiral movement, various broken elements as to reference a desolate landscape, or the ruins of another world.

Looking at this recognizable yet unknown world, it is aiming to obscure the boundaries and remove the 'relics' from the original. By being brought into the light of the wrong day they become the expression of a sense of loss and a defeat of commemoration.

Nika Neelova was born in Moscow, Russia in 1987. She lives and works in London, UK. Education: 2008-2010: MA in Fine Art Sculpture, Slade School of Fine Art; 2004-2008: BA (Hons) in Fine Art Sculpture, Royal Academy of Fine Art (The Hague).

Selected exhibitions in 2011, *The Saatchi Gallery & Channel 4's New Sensations and THE FUTURE CAN WAIT*, BI, Victoria House, London, UK; *Involuntary Fractions* (solo show), Jarmuschek + Partner, Berlin, Germany; *3 Worlds in 1*, London International, Klaipeda, Lithuania; *Monuments* (solo show), Charlie Smith, London, UK. In 2010, *The Saatchi Gallery and Channel 4's New Sensations*, Boswall House, London, UK; *The Future Can Wait*, Shoreditch Town Hall, London, UK; *Young Gods*, Charlie Smith, London, UK; *The Grove*, Public Art Commission, Keukenhof, Lisse, NL. In 2009, *Carpet IV* (solo show), Scheltema Center, Leiden, NL; *The Tree*, Residency at the Merzbar Foundation, Lake District, UK; *Attitudes to a Miss* (solo show), Christus Triumfontorke, The Hague, NL. In 2008, *Paraat #4* (Best of Graduates 2008), RonMandos Gallery, Amsterdam, NL. Selected Awards: The Land Securities Prize Award 2011; The Saatchi Gallery and Channel 4 New Sensations Prize 2010; Kenneth Armitage Foundation, The Fifth Annual Armitage Young Sculptor Prize 2010.