

NIKA NEELOVA

drifts (there is always ground, even at night)

September 7– October 18, 2018

MLF | Marie-Laure Fleisch is pleased to announce Nika Neelova's first solo exhibition in a Belgian gallery, *drifts (there is always ground, even at night)*. The word 'drifts' is essential to the comprehension of Neelova's oeuvre, as her works are located in a space in which time is ambiguous and formal aspects of the work are displaced from our current points of reference. *Drift* references a continuous slow movement, or the motion of being carried along by a natural force such as wind or water. It alludes to both the passage of time and the power of the elements to sweep up and transform that which is in their path. The second part of the exhibition's title, *there is always ground, even at night*, is a phrase from Max Frisch's 1979 novel *Man in the Holocene*, in which the protagonist attempts to regain lost memories and interpret the world around him with the help of encyclopedia entries. The novel does not adhere to traditional plot progressions, preferring to represent a continuous flow of thought and the description of various strategies the protagonist uses to place himself in a larger, planetary context.

Interested in the function of architecture and manmade objects in an imagined post-human future, Neelova works at the interstice of objects and their ruins, of the concrete and the imagined. Her works place the viewer in a position where they are grasping for meaning. Recognizable aspects of the everyday objects which surround us are combined with abstract structures which are both reminiscent of real forms and yet impossible to place. Real life objects are replicated in materials which render them useless, creating both a synthetic and handmade feel to the artworks. Starting from a human scale, Neelova expands her works to reflect architectural and even geological extensions of the bodily form.

For her first exhibition with MLF | Marie-Laure Fleisch, the artist has created a narrative in which the gallery is host to ruins which have been exposed to the natural elements. Architectural structures are imagined in a possible future form, however their decay, as well as the imagined technological advances incorporated in the works, removes them from the temporal sphere. Upon arriving in the gallery, the viewer is confronted with a monumental sculpture composed of layers of compressed landscape forms, stacked one on top of another and held together by metal brackets. In another sculpture, the spectator is confronted with shapes which are reminiscent of a warped radiator, yet its delicate jesmonite forms and its lack of relationship to any known human population remove it from the human sphere. The process of casting elements in jesmonite also plays on the fragility of the object, depriving it of its structural integrity and rendering strong, industrial objects made for human use into purely decorative beings, devoid of any utility.

This exhibition explores an expansion of the artist's research into questions of sustainability and geological references and offers a possible view of the future. One has the impression of nature taking over a built environment, with the help of new sculptures made with unfired clay and silicone which evoke both slimy organic elements and alien or animal skins. These works emphasize the lack of human presence in Neelova's world. This is a universe in which the natural forces take over with no regard to the original purpose of the structures it is invading, and where objects created for human use and proportions become obsolete.

Nika Neelova (1987, Moscow, Russia) lives and works in London. Her solo exhibitions include: Vigo Gallery, London, UK (Upcoming); *Lemniscates*, Independent Art Fair, Brussels, Belgium (2017); *FAULTS FOLDS FALLS*, Vigo Gallery, London, England (2015); *I lean to you numb as a fossil. Tell me I'm here*, Ron Mandos, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (2014) and *Northern Taurids*, Royal British Society of Sculptors, London, England (2013). Her group exhibitions include: *She sees the shadows*, Mostyn, Llandudno, Wales (2018); *XVII. The Age of Nymphs*, Mimosa House, London, England (2017); *Tell me net*, Osnova, VinZavod Centre for Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia (2017); *Antislip*, Royal British Society of Sculptors, London, England (2016); *Archeologia e Architecture*, by Institute for Emerging Art, New York, USA; Fondazione 107, Turin, Italy (2015); *Lichtspiele*, Museum Biedermann, Donaueschingen, Germany (2014); *Gaiety is most outstanding feature of the Soviet Union*, Saatchi Gallery, London, England (2013); *White Nights*, PERMM Museum of Contemporary Art, Perm, Russia (2013) and *The Crisis Commission*, Somerset House & Christie's London, England (2012).