

**Related Events:**

The Tetley Weekender
29 & 30 June, 10am–5pm, free, donations welcome.

Director's Tour
24 July, 6pm, free, donations welcome, book online.

Nika Neelova & Holly Hendry In Conversation with Helen Pheby
21 August, 6–8pm, pay as you feel, booking essential.

The Tetley is a charity, with your support we create a platform for amazing emerging artists, present breathtaking free exhibitions and help communities and young people in Leeds find their creative voice. Please consider making a donation in one of our donation boxes or to find out more about getting involved, please contact supportus@thetetley.org.

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THE TETLEY

Nika Neelova: EVER

21 June – 8 September 2019

EVER is Nika Neelova's first solo exhibition in a public gallery in the UK, presenting new and existing work by the Russian-born artist. This ambitious sculptural exhibition responds to, and is in dialogue with, the building's unique art deco architecture.

Often utilising reclaimed architectural materials, Neelova is interested in the way materials and architecture influence our sense of time and place. Her sculptures are created by employing tactics of 'reverse archaeology' - considering an alternative reading of human history by examining found objects and architectural debris, and transforming them beyond functionality. In these works the human body and touch remains as a vestigial memory.

EVER brings together many of Nika Neelova's sculptures for the first time. At the centre of the exhibition is a new large-scale sculptural installation in The Tetley's atrium. Connecting with the building's past, it recalls the restoration and transformation of the atrium into a gallery space and incorporates original materials such as parquet floor tiles and oak panelling salvaged from The Tetley building. Featuring these discarded architectural fragments, the installation creates a transitional space depicting, and derived from, places that once existed. For Neelova, it takes the form of a 'landscape in ruin', presenting different layers of reworked and reimagined architectural, sculptural and geological artefacts.

In addition to this ambitious new installation, *EVER* also features a number of existing geological and architectural sculptures, including Neelova's *Lemniscate* sculpture series made from wooden bannisters reclaimed from old English houses awaiting demolition. The bannisters, which once acted as the meeting point between human body and architecture are repurposed and fitted together so that they each form an infinite loop. Also presented are Neelova's *Folded Room* sculptures, foldable steel structures that replicate the perimeter of the artist's studio, and *Stratigraphies*, a series of works that replicate the geological process of sedimentation with layers of studio residue and dust fixed in jesmonite.

EVER is supported by Arts Council England. With special thanks to David Roberts Art Foundation and Robert Govearts.

EVER

at any time; at all times; always

The exhibition *EVER* is conceived as a loop. A loop in space and in time. It follows several cycles of repetition; the human life span and that of a building; the duration of a sound and that of an object. The end of each cycle marks the return of the previous cycle, a continuous return, stuck in a loop. Each object in the exhibition has its double, and each sculpture is encountered at least twice. The recurring sight of the same, or similar objects creates a sense of disorientation, suggesting that we have been going round in circles.

Displacing existing boundaries in architecture the sculptures reimagine the relationship between the human body and the space it occupies. They appear to have their own individual agency, to have evolved, or be calcified remains of our current architecture, suggesting an alternative future, or evoking a world that might precede, include and exceed our current one.

The sculptures are created employing the tactics of what Neelova refers to as 'reverse archaeology', in which an alternative human history is suggested by transforming found functional objects and architectural debris. Recognisable everyday objects move past the functionality once imposed upon them and become something new and different; abstract and seemingly evolved over countless generations from their ancestors. Neelova removes the function from the object in order to initiate a different type of relationship with the object, the sculptures suggesting a subtle subversion or interruption to what we know. Her sculptures seem to 'exhibit the perfect uselessness of knowing the answer to the wrong question', (The Left Hand of Darkness, Ursula LeGuin).

OMEN, 2019

6-channel sound installation
by Dylan Spencer-Davidson

A sound echoes throughout the exhibition that ebbs and flows at an irregular, tectonic pace. From the sculptures' silence come eruptions of echoes, thrumming harmonics, eerie traces of human activity from eras past and future. The sound, as though embedded and resonating from the building itself is reminiscent of an industrial process, or a distant activity. The sound is made from recordings of the vibrations and harmonics of a single metal string.

Leeds Beckett Atrium

APART, 2019

Mixed media Installation

This new large-scale and site-specific sculptural installation takes the form of a landscape in ruin, presenting different architectural layers that have been pulled apart, exposing surfaces usually hidden. Connecting with the building's past the installation incorporates original materials salvaged from The Tetley building alongside other imagined architectural fragments. It creates a transitional space depicting, and derived from, places that once, or never existed.

In the centre of the space, a collection of parquet floor tiles from the building appear to have been lifted and rolled up, exposing their bitumen covered undersides. A section of original oak panelling is also present but has been reversed and compacted together, turning the building inside out.

Across the wall and pillars, are a series of works entitled *Lateral Cuts* based on computer generated images of architectural cross-sections, making a straight cut through walls and foundations. They transect the architectural 'body' in order to uncover its internal layers, reducing entire structures to minimal units while revealing the hidden geology of buildings and tracing lines of continuity between the human body, architecture and geology.

Galleries 1, 3, 5, 7 & 9

Lemniscates, 2013-2019

Reassembled bannister handrails
Courtesy of David Roberts Art Foundation, Robert Govearts and private collections.

The *Lemniscate* series are sculptures made from wooden bannisters each from two flights of stairs, reclaimed from houses awaiting demolition, repurposed and fitted together so that each forms an infinite loop. A lemniscate, in mathematics, is a curved line or plane with a distinct 8-shape, consisting of two loops that meet at a central point.

A handrail is moulded specifically to fit in the palm of the hand. It is the meeting point of human body and architecture. It acts as a mediator between space and the body and guides the hand into three-dimensional space. Its wooden surface, altered by prolonged exposure to touch, also collects microscopic bits of skin. So, each sculpture carries the DNA of hundreds of people, and is a collective portrait of the absent human bodies who have come through the now demolished houses. Closely connected to human touch and presence, the sculptures seem to choreograph the absent human body through space.

Galleries 1, 3 & 4

Commemorate, 2013

Coal hole covers cast in compressed charcoal dust

The *Commemorate* series feature various coal hole covers cast in compressed charcoal dust, encompassing the very material they were meant to contain. Having been made redundant by the enforcement of the Clean Air Act, the covers are hatches buried in the pavements, 'doors leading directly to the underworld', covering up a chute that was used to drop coal into the cellars.

Gallery 2

Fragments Shored Against the Ruins, 2013

Mixed media
Courtesy private collection

Fragments Shored Against the Ruins is a collapsing parquet floor cast in cement and marble dust, at the same time woven and unraveled. The piece is held in a state of arrested physical change, susceptible to the forces of gravity, entropy and decay. The rendering of the floor is no longer horizontal, shattering the coherence of architectural surfaces. This fragment of the traditional 'herringbone' parquet flooring at the same time collapses and rises upwards, alluding to a suspended architectural skin.

Galleries 4 & 8

Folded Rooms, 2015-2019

Welded steel, hinges
Courtesy of Modern Forms

'A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction'

In her essay 'A Room of One's Own' Virginia Woolf suggests that having a private space is one of the basic requirements for creativity and freedom of expression that were historically denied to women. A room of one's own is the metaphorical space separated from the rest of the world assuring the possibility of female empowerment.

Folded Rooms retrace the perimeter of two of Neelova's studios replicated in steel. Mounted on hinges, the structures can adopt various configurations adapting to their surrounding space. When fully unfolded the structure takes the shape of a room, which can also be flat-packed and stored away.

Gallery 6

STACK (faults/folds/falls), 2015-2018

Cast jesmonite and fibreglass, ashes

Here, a stackable chair seat originally moulded to human proportions, has been repeated and extruded to resemble a geological fault, scaled down monument, or a fossilised plane.

STRATIGRAPHY, 2019

Studio dust suspended in jesmonite

Sedimentary rocks are formed through the layering and cementation of geological and biological detritus. *STRATIGRAPHY* replicates this process of sedimentation by hand through daily applications of dust and residues from the artists studio suspended in jesmonite. The resulting three dimensional images creates a map of time and work undertaken at the studio.

'as all historians know, the past is a great darkness, and filled with echoes. Voices may reach us from it; but what they say to us is imbued with the obscurity of the matrix out of which they come; and try as we may, we cannot always decipher them precisely in the clearer light of our own day.' The Handmaid's Tale, Margaret Atwood

Untitled (folding chairs), 2015

Steel, copper, aluminium

This piece traces the outlines of plastic folding chairs replicated in copper and steel, combined and blended with one another. The folds conceal the chair's formerly recognisable shape reducing it to its margins, its borders. Originally developed for its suitability and convenience, the chair is transformed into an abstract configuration and withdraws from the human domain in an attempt to find and expose other overlooked properties.

Shirley Cooper

Burning Meteors Leave No Dust, 2013

Cast concrete
Courtesy private collection

The repeated casts of *Burning Meteors Leave No Dust* are derived from aircraft propellers. Orville Wright defined his first efficient airfoil as a spiralling bird's wing. The sculptural elements attempt to return this industrially developed form to its natural origin - the shape of a twisted bird's wing - by reduction to a smooth, slanted helix curve. Neelova also alludes to the form of Constantin Brancusi's Bird in Space, but retreats from his stated intent to capture the essence of flight, grounding these sculptures through heavy concrete casting.