

Nabilah Nordin
Deadweight

06.04 - 08.15.2026

If you pick up an unconscious body, the limbs will dangle unhelpfully like tubular sandbags. The body bends at every joint, pulling away from the center of gravity. The neck offers no assistance. The core is loose. The stomach flops. Congratulations! You have picked up a deadweight. It is hard to carry. Harder than a conscious body, which helps by bracing muscles and stabilizing the mass. Firefighters know this and use techniques to assist, such as the Over-Shoulder Carry, the Shoulder Pull, and the Blanket Pull.



In other news, there has been a Victory! You are invited to celebrate in discrete but meaningful ways. You may raise a small flag. You may bury your favorite object. There is a new headline:

Pneumatic Drill Discovers Deadweight Underground

It is hauled up and presented on an operating table. It is vertical. It is hard to carry. It is ready for inspection. It is a horse's leg. "It is a trunk," says a member of the academy, formally trained at the Institution, "The deadweight is re-distributed, stacked on top of its own catastrophically thin neck."

This is met, generally, with disagreement. Errors have been made. On closer examination, the Victory is actually a crushing defeat. The Institution thrives, while a spear passes gently through its head. There is talk of "animating the inanimate", but the Deadweight is very much dead.

Text by Nick Modrzewski

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island is pleased to present *Deadweight*, a solo exhibition by New York-based artist Nabilah Nordin. Nordin's sculptures are characterized by their formal and material breadth. She builds, demolishes and reconfigures her forms so that they appear to teeter on the edge of collapse. Often working at scale, her distinct language has developed over the last decade in Australia, Asia, and most recently the United States.

For *Deadweight*, Nordin works in the guise of classical sculpture, adopting the appearance of excavated or preserved historical objects. The authoritative association of this trope is undercut by industrial interventions – a galvanized bolt protrudes from a bust; a dilapidated relic rests on a laminated stage. Each work contains a contradictory logic, traversing historical time, material life cycles, and its own physicality. *Institution*, for instance, appears to be a statuesque tower of bulky marble forms, stacked upon one another and connected by improbably delicate necks. After welding a steel armature, Nordin coated the work in scagliola, a 17th century technique combining gypsum, hide glue and pigment to imitate the grandeur of marble and precious stone. In the titular work, *Deadweight*, a calcified, earthen object is propped up vertically in front of a reflective yellow structure and held in place by exposed steel rods. The laboratory-clean yellow acts as a backdrop, framing the encrusted object and producing an artificial gravitas that mimics an archaeological site or museological display. The weight of art history is repeatedly cast as a 'deadweight' – both a burden and an opportunity for expanding the parameters of artistic production today.

Nabilah Nordin (b. 1991, Singapore) lives and works in New York. She has exhibited at museums, biennales and galleries across Australia, Asia and the USA. Recent solo exhibitions include Parrasch Heijnen, Los Angeles; Neon Parc, Melbourne; the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; Changwon Sculpture Biennale, South Korea; the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne; the Singapore Biennale; and the Australian Embassy, Washington DC. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at Ryan Lee, New York; the Potter Museum, Melbourne; La Loma, Los Angeles; Make Room, Los Angeles; Parrasch Heijnen, Los Angeles; Bundanon Art Museum, Illaroo; McClelland Sculpture Park and Gallery, Melbourne; and Murray Art Museum, Albury. Nordin's work is held in public collections including the Art Gallery of New South Wales; Monash University Museum of Art; National Gallery of Victoria; and MIIA Collection.