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Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

## Poetic Metabolism of Time and Material

Museum der Moderne Salzburg, 11.08.2025 [ENA]

Nika Neelova's *Cascade*, currently on view at the Museum der Moderne Salzburg's Mönchsberg location through April 12, 2026, unfolds as a deeply poetic and sensorial reconfiguration of time, material, and narrative. Curated by Christina Penetsdorfer, the exhibition invites us into a fluid temporal realm where past, present, and future collapse into a single, immersive experience.

Neelova, born in Moscow (1987) and based in London, conducts an understated yet profound excavation of found objects, repurposing them into sculptural forms that pulse with significance. In her own framing, this act functions like a "metabolism"—a cyclical interplay of decay, collapse, and renewal. Her works are neither relics nor mere sculptures; they are arresting artifacts, drawing the viewer into a "tide of time" with their magnetic stillness and resonance. Neelova's talent is evident in how she re-imagines the everyday: abandoned architectural fragments, industrial detritus, or minute organic details are subtly transformed, coaxed to reveal latent histories and textures.

These sculptures aren't dramatic gestures; they act like archaeological prompts, encouraging contemplation and curiosity through their tacit material poetics. "*Cascade*" is not just a solo showcase: Neelova's objects interact with a constellation of works by Isa Genzken, Maria Bartuszová, Marisa Merz, Hans Haacke, Heinz Frank, among others, as well as archaeological and ritual objects from the Museo Salzburg and the Mining and Gothic Museum Leogang. Together, they weave a loosely-connected matrix—one that constructs a speculative utopian world, rooted in both local cultural heritage and broader dialogues of form.

Central to the exhibition's conceptual architecture is Neelova's insistence on experiencing time in non-linear ways—through "poetic and playful" means. These works, modest in material expression, evoke a deep curiosity about human interdependence, materiality, and the fragmentary narratives that shape our understanding of history. Walking through *Cascade* feels less like viewing and more like entering a suspended temporality. The exhibition's dramaturgy unfolds in thematic arches—"Foundations," "Appearance," and "Prophecy"—each inviting its own mode of interpretation and engagement.

A public "Artist Talk" held in April 2025 further illuminated these conceptual strata, allowing audience immersion within the artist's creative process and the curatorial vision that frames it. Neelova's work takes on regional resonance as it dialogues with Salzburg's salt-mining history and cultural artifacts. Her approach summons the material memory of place—mineral histories, ritual forms, regional narratives—and

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reanimates them through sensitive reconfiguration. This is not nostalgia but rather speculative re-creation, a blending of protagonist, place, and object into an ontological meditation.

Press commentary recognizes Cascade as a sculpturally rich and ambitious exhibition, noting Neelova's first institutional showing in Austria and her compelling reconfiguration of found forms. One review observes her ability to create "endless loops" from handrails, chair seat casts, and fossil-like forms emerging from pipe casts—each resonating with layered histories and formal abstraction. While some critique points to the weight of conceptual framing, the overall response positions Cascade as a courageous and poetic venture—one that challenges our expectations of sculptural form and curatorial narrative. For the viewer willing to embrace its open temporality, the exhibition offers ample reward.

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