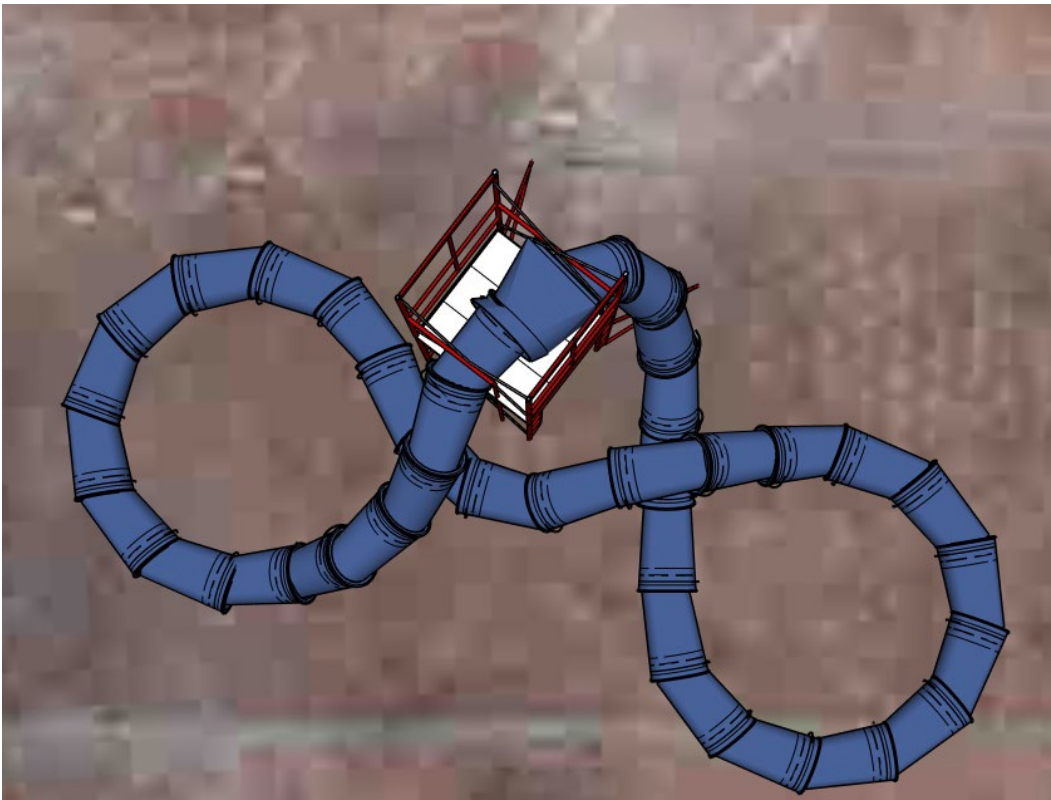


[EN]

Monument of Oblivion: River of Lethe Neda Saeedi

Exhibition:
7 June 2025 – 26 April 2026

Opening:
Friday, 6 June 2025, 18:00



Neda Saeedi, *Monument of Oblivion: River of Lethe*, 2025, Courtesy the artist

Editorial

Since 2016, the monastery ruins have been brought to life through a multi-faceted artistic and curatorial programme that regularly invites artists and curators to engage with the history and architecture of the site. For the 2025/26 programme year, artist Neda Saeedi has been selected by a jury to create a site-specific work.

klosterruine berlin

On the recommendation of the selection committee, consisting of Kate Brehme (curator and co-founder, Berlinklusion), Julia Grosse (co-founder and artistic director, Contemporary And), Rike Frank (management, artistic research, Berlin funding program), Sabine Maria Schmidt (collection and exhibition curator, Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz) and Nina Tabassomi (director, artistic director and management, TAXISPALAIS Kunsthalle Tirol), five artists were invited to submit an artistic concept. During the jury meeting, the artistic concept of Neda Saeedi was selected. The jury consisted of Kaya Behkalam (director, Künstlerhof Frohnau), Lea Schleiffenbaum (mediator, Neue Auftraggeber), Elke Falat (freelance curator) and Renan Laru-an (former artistic director, SAVVY Contemporary).

In her sound installation created for the monastery ruins, Neda Saeedi deals with the question of how historical places are remembered. “Who is remembered, who is excluded, and how do we deal with violent histories or missing monuments? Are we dealing with the past in a way that allows us to shape the future?” *Monument of Oblivion: River of Lethe* explores these tensions in a place that, as a church ruin, exudes both permanence and absence. With its nearly 800-year history, it invites reflection on remembering and forgetting and functions as a living, constantly evolving monument. The sound installation offers a haunting experience of collapse and new beginnings.

An accompanying programme of film screenings, sound performances and readings will in part engage in an artistic dialogue with the site-specific work. This year’s educational programme invites the audience to explore the different facets of the site — from its deep-rooted history and architectural features to its current and future significance in the urban context. The Berlin monastery ruins are currently receiving renewed attention due to debates about Berlin’s historic centre and urban development plans for the Klosterviertel and the Molkenmarkt.

Monument of Oblivion: River of Lethe

The monastery ruins were deliberately preserved as ruins after their destruction in the Second World War and were intended as a memorial to the horrors of war. However, it is perceived more as a testimony of medieval Berlin. Such ambivalences of memory culture are the reference points of the artistic work. Neda Saeedi writes in her artistic statement: “In an era of contested monuments, unresolved histories, and resurgent fascisms, *Monument of Oblivion: River of Lethe* confronts the paradox of remembrance. Klosterruine, its site, is a wound in the city’s skin. A ruin that is both presence and void. Like all monuments, it pretends to fix memory in place, yet its very form admits decay. Beneath its stones lie the silenced histories. I thought I understood this tension the first time I faced Mutter Heimat at Treptower Park. Her empty hands, her bowed head, a staged lesson in shame. The Red Army soldier at the memorial’s apex cradles a child, a forced symbol of futures reclaimed. But the child never grows. The soldier never ages. The mother never unclenches her fists. The memorial’s choreography loops endlessly, a closed circuit of guilt and absolution. Yet its foundation is violence: the land cleared, the narratives erased, the victor’s story cast in immutable material. Klosterruine refuses such neat arcs. *Monument of Oblivion* materialises this refusal: blue construction chutes coil into an ouroboros, swallowing their own rubble. The debris falls and falls, never landing, a soundscape of perpetual collapse, each fragment a whisper of what was broken to build, and broken again to unbuild. It mimics history’s absurd rhythm — how we dismantle empires only to build new ones, how we mourn wars while waging them. The installation’s title invokes Lethe, the river of forgetting, yet its form is a torrent without end. No drink from these waters grants oblivion; the cycle spins on.

klosterruine berlin

The Pietà in Neue Wache understands this. Kollwitz's bronze mother grieves without script. Rain streaks her face; light etches fresh anguish into her features. She is not a lesson but a mirror. Her sorrow is not a monument but a current, one that rewrites its own banks with each visitor. And yet, even her grief is framed by violence: the hollowed-out space of the guardhouse, the weight of history pressing down.

Here lies the failure of stones and steel: Mutter Heimat and the Pietà, for all their power, cannot halt time. Wars relapse. Grief outlives its memorials. We build monuments to end cycles, yet they become cycles themselves. The ouroboros of Treptower Park, the rubble-loop of Klosterruine, the mothers who have wept in stone and bronze for centuries.

Monument of Oblivion does not pretend to break the loop. It is a monster-monument, hissing that oblivion is not passive. To forget is an act. To remember is an act. The river churns; the snake eats its tail; the debris never hits the ground, because the violence of construction and deconstruction is endless."

A multi-channel soundscape amplifies this tension, immersing the audience in the vibrations of ceaseless collapse. The work draws on the etymological kinship between 'monument' and 'monster.' One stabilises memory, the other disrupts it. *Monument of Oblivion* operates at this intersection: a monstrous, temporary counter-monument that refuses resolution. It does not commemorate but confronts — forcing us to reckon with the active, cyclical nature of remembering and forgetting.

In the end, oblivion is not a river we drink from but one we drown in."

klosterruine berlin



Neda Saeedi, photo: Stefanie Neumann

Biography

Neda Saeedi (b. Tehran, Iran) is a Berlin-based artist whose work explores the interplay between memory, materiality, and the narratives embedded in objects. Fascinated by how materials carry histories—both fragile and enduring—she uses sculpture and installation to create immersive environments where industrial and organic elements interact with light and space. Glass, with its tension between vulnerability and resilience, and steel, evoking the weight of oppressive structures, are central to her practice, forming metaphors for remembering and forgetting, preservation and erasure. Through her work, Saeedi investigates historical and cultural contexts, constructing spaces where objects are not merely static but active participants in unfolding narratives. Her material choices become carriers of meaning, challenging viewers to reconsider the stories we inherit and those yet to be written. She studied classical sculpture under Raffie Davtian in Tehran before earning her Fine Arts degree at the Lens-Based Class of Prof. Hito Steyerl at the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK). Saeedi has received numerous accolades, including the Villa Romana Prize (2022), a fellowship at the Max Planck Institute in Florence, the Kunstfonds Scholarship (2020), and The Elsa Neumann Emerging Artist Prize (2019). She is also an alumna of the Delfina Foundation Artist Residency in London. Her publications include *Return to Neverland – A Dialogue Between Neda Saeedi & Homayoun Sirizi* (Pejman Foundation, 2021), *Only Birds Who Fly the Highest Can Shatter the Windows* (Archives Book, 2024), and *Neda Saeedi: Whispers* (Mousse Publishing, 2024). Saeedi has exhibited internationally at institutions such as KINDL – Centre for Contemporary Art (Berlin), Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, Taxipalais Kunsthalle Tirol (Innsbruck, solo), Extra City (Antwerp), Luleå Biennial (2018), Ludlow 38 (New York), Bonner Bundeskunsthalle, Folkwang Museum (Essen), SAVVY Contemporary (Berlin), Künstlerhaus Bethanien (Berlin), Dastan Gallery (Tehran, solo), and Argo Factory (Tehran, solo).

klosterruine berlin

About Klosterruine Berlin

As one of the last remaining witnesses to Berlin's founding history, the ruins of the former Franciscan monastery church reflect the city's multi-layered past. In the past 700 years, the monastery has served as a school, as well as housing one of the first printing presses and botanical gardens in Berlin. Since its destruction in the Second World War, the monastery building remained a ruin. It is publicly accessible as a memorial to medieval architecture and a communal gallery, and it is also used for cultural purposes. Since 2016 works of contemporary art have been presented at Klosterruine Berlin that respond to the history as well as to the contemporary moment of the place and its architecture.

Klosterstrasse 73a
10179 Berlin
U2 Klosterstraße

Opening hours
Mo – So 11:00–19:00
April–September
Admission free

info@klosterruine.berlin

The Klosterruine is accessible via the side entrance. Further information on accessibility and barriers can be found online in the Access Rider of the Klosterruine.

www.klosterruine.berlin

The Klosterruine Berlin is an institution of the Department of Art, Culture and History in the Mitte district office.

Head of Department: Dr. Ute Müller-Tischler

Leading Curator, Division Contemporary Art: Eylem Sengezer

Exhibition Management and Infrastructure: Katrin Winkler

Programme Coordination and Curatorial Assistance: Alin Daghestani



**Kommunale
Galerien
Berlin**