

EVENTS

EXHIBITION-RELATED EVENTS

PANEL DISCUSSION: EXHIBITING THE ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIES OF COLONIALISM TODAY with Aamna Muzaffar, Danielle Dean and Manuel Shvartzberg Carrió Saturday 8 February, 3–4.30pm

FILM SCREENING: *QUATERMASS II* Saturday 8 March, 6–8pm

I AM MAKING ART: WON'T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOUR? with Yuko Edwards Saturday 22 March, 11am–1pm

BSL TOUR: DAN GUTHRIE AND DANIELLE DEAN with Martin Glover Saturday 5 April, 2–3pm

FAMILY-FRIENDLY EVENTS

DREAM AND MAKE: POP-UP STORIES with Laura Phillimore Thursday 20 February, 10am–12pm

BABY ART HOUR with Éilis Kirby Friday 21 February and Friday 21 March, 10–11am

BRING YOUR BABY TOUR: DANIELLE DEAN AND DAN GUTHRIE with Jane Porter Wednesday 12 March, 11am–12pm

OTHER EVENTS

BEHIND THE SCENES: BUILDING TOUR AND STUDIO ARTIST VISITS with Iris Thorsteinsdottir and Jo Lathwood Saturday 15 March, 11am–12.30pm

PANEL DISCUSSION: FROM PUBLIC(S) TO CIVIC(S) with Polly Brannan, Marley Starskey Butler, Natasha Kidd and Marianne Mulvey Thursday 13 March, 5.45–7.30pm

SPIKE ISLAND OPEN STUDIOS 2025 Opening Night, Friday 2 May, 6–9pm Saturday 3 and Sunday 4 May, 11am–5pm

Visit our website for more information on the events programme

INFORMATION

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OPENING HOURS
Gallery: Wednesday to Sunday, 12–5pm
Café: Tuesday to Saturday, 10am–5pm
Sunday, 10am–4pm

Spike Island

DANIELLE DEAN *This Could All Be Yours!* 8 February to 11 May 2025



Image Caption: Danielle Dean, production still from *Hemel*, (2024). Courtesy the artist and 47 Canal, New York.

Spike Island presents a new moving image commission and exhibition by Danielle Dean. Drawing on archival records, film and advertising, Dean's practice interrogates how individuals are shaped by commercial narratives and explores historical and contemporary representations of labour, racialised identity and popular culture.

The exhibition centres around *Hemel* (2024), a new film that serves as both a personal essay and a portrait of Hemel Hempstead, where Dean grew up. The film explores the town's history, blending archival footage and contemporary images with references to the sci-fi horror B-movie *Quatermass II* (1957). Shot on 16mm film with a cast of non-professional actors and family members, *Hemel* blurs the line between fiction and documentary, offering a critical reimagining of *Quatermass II*'s colonial undertones. An installation inspired by the *Hemel*

Hempstead Community Centre, alongside a selection of archive material, new works on silk, watercolours and soap sculptures, further immerse viewers in the unsettling world Dean has constructed.

Hemel (2024) is co-commissioned by Mercer Union, Toronto; Spike Island, Bristol; and The Vega Foundation. The film is produced by LONO Studio and made possible with the generous support of Patrick Collins, Jill and Peter Kraus, Patrick and Daniela Schmitz-Morkramer, and an anonymous donor.

All works courtesy the artist and 47 Canal except otherwise indicated.

The Historical Entanglements of Hemel (2024)

Yaniya Lee

The plot of the 1957 science-fiction film *Quatermass II* revolves around an alien life form discovered by scientists working on a lunar colonisation programme. Small meteorites falling to Earth from outer space are found to be high-tech alien vessels: when picked up, the rock-like objects burst and parasitic gaseous substance takes over the handler's body. The threat of this sentient alien life form derails the lunar exploration plans and sends the scientists into a frenzied effort to stop the coming invasion.

In the 50s, anxieties about impending alien invasions were a literary trope. The work of Anglo-American science-fiction writer H. P. Lovecraft, for instance, is emblematic of a certain xenophobic terror that had overcome white Americans: he fabricated spectacular visceral stories about strange creatures. Science-fiction writer N. K. Jemisin points out, "[Lovecraft's] biases were the basis of his horror. The monsters came from his own fears of brown people, of immigrants, of Jewish people, of whatever."¹

Not dissimilarly, the narrative in *Quatermass II* thinly veils the paranoia of post-war Britain at the decline of the British Empire. This fear of invasion in Europe and North America was at the time relatively new. At the height of the British Empire, Europeans had set sail to see what lay across the seas. In the course of their devastating exploits, they found sugar, tea, fruit, furs, tobacco, and cocoa, among other things. At the time, rather than being overtaken with fear, as in *Quatermass II*, British imperialists were brazen with acquisitive swagger.

In her memoir *Imperial Intimacies*, Hazel V. Carby traces her family lineage prior to her birth in England in 1949 to and fro across the Atlantic. She finds her family's complex history, from her poor, Welsh civil servant mother and her Jamaican RAF Airman father, entwined with the intimacies of empire. "One of the problems in contemporary Britain is that people imagine that the slave trade is a history only meaningful to aristocratic history – the big country houses built from its profits. But beneath the everyday soil, the everyday appearances, these entanglements of colonialism and imperialism are everywhere,"² she writes.

Eventually, British Imperialism's expansion sputtered and stalled. Labour elsewhere, the source of goods and wealth, had previously remained unseen or abstract. This shifted when developments in local industry precipitated the arrival of a labour force from outside the Britain. Aggressive colonial expansion was replaced with fearful hostility.

Attuning to this shift, British-American artist Danielle Dean's film *Hemel* (2024) reimagines and reenacts the premise of *Quatermass II*, which was originally produced in the town of Hemel Hempstead, where the artist was born and raised. The town, nestled in the English midlands, existed as far back as the 8th century. It underwent a radical transformation in the 1940s when the government moved in people displaced by the Blitz bombings of World War II. Despite local opposition, factories, education and leisure facilities, and new housing stock were constructed, guided by the ideals of the New Towns Act of 1946. Cul-de-sacs linked to other identical clusters mimicked the

designs of urban planner Ebenezer Howard's visionary garden cities.

Hemel maps the town's current social and economic developments onto the science-fiction premise of the 1957 film. A local corporation haunts the town with an unidentifiable strangeness that reflects the atomised condition of the community. Workers move in slow choreographies, their bodies and minds mechanised by the mysterious force of the meteorites they handle. The alien inhabits *Hemel* in many ways, not just as meteorites. There is a natural distance between the townspeople along racial lines, even while they are all connected as locals and labourers. At one point, a group of Black students talk about their experiences of living in Hemel Hempstead, and expose the stupidity and simplicity of the racism they regularly face.

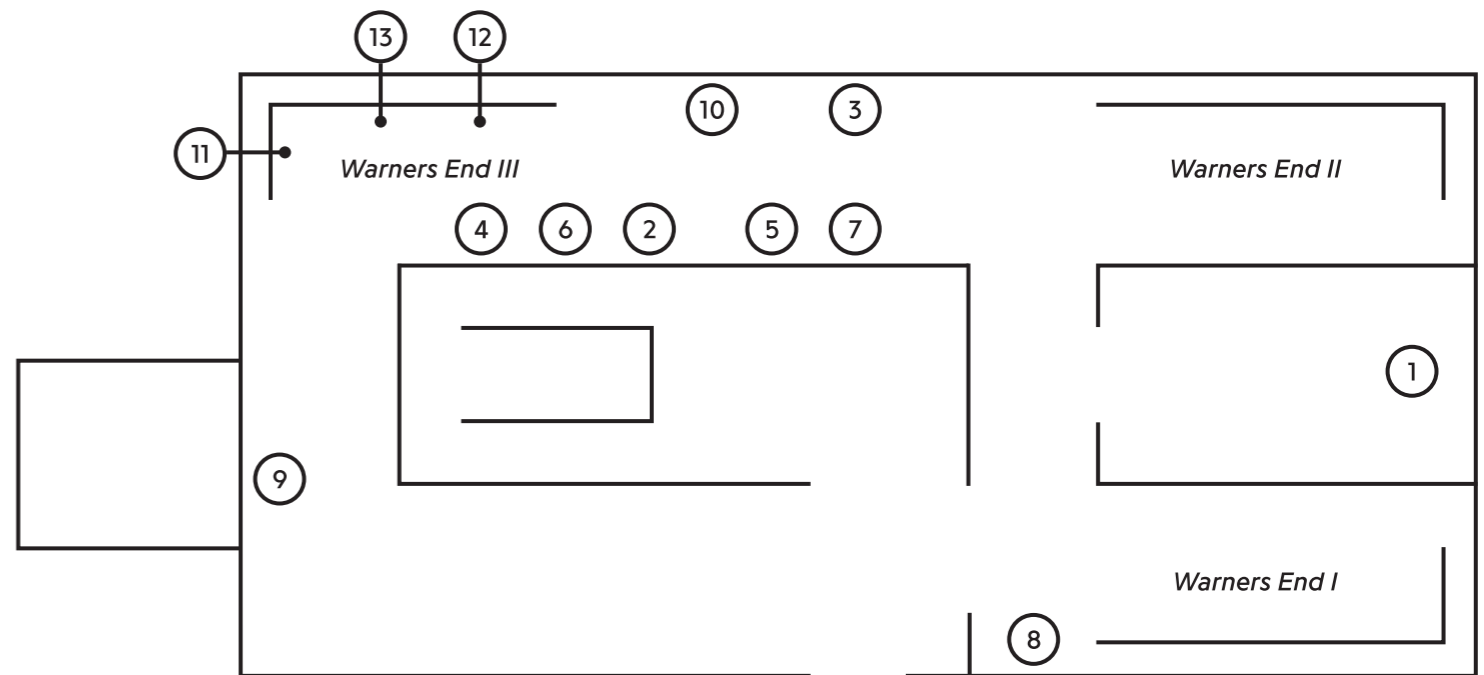
Over the decades the town has continued to undergo significant change. In 2005, 273 million litres of oil at a storage terminal on the edge of Hemel Hempstead burst into flames. The explosion, later dubbed the Buncefield fire, let out billowing black smoke that could be seen for miles around. It took several days for the flames to die out and the fire severely damaged one of the biggest industrial warehouses in the country, built nearby. Named Mammoth by its developers, this warehouse has since attracted businesses like Amazon.com, Inc., which operated there for nearly a decade, steadily bringing in new workers from all over the world to Hemel Hempstead. Sysco Corporation now plans to establish one of the largest food depots in all of Europe there. These developments are accompanied by an ongoing influx of people, triggering a palpable anxiety and fear of invasion.

At the end of *Quatermass II*, tensions escalate into a face-off between the angry, out of work locals and the zombified aliens in host human bodies. The scientists launch a rocket (originally intended for space) towards the occupied factory to destroy the alien. The final explosion scene of *Quatermass II* eerily foretells the Buncefield fire. Through Dean's reference to each in *Hemel*, fiction and reality are interwoven. As in early science fiction tropes and modern migration movements, our sense of self and other are linked to labour, race, and the history of capital and empire. While it was once easy, as Lovecraft did, to abstract the Other and their origins, new encounters have forced intimacies that were previously unthought of, or safely hidden out of sight. Fear of the Other is a red herring that masks real connections. We are bound by our historical entanglements, especially when we feel most alien to one another. What at first seems foreign and dangerous can prove to be just a part of who we are.

¹ Caroline Lester, "N. K. Jemisin on H. P. Lovecraft", January 31, 2020 in *The New Yorker Radio Hour*, produced by The New Yorker and WNYC Studios, podcast, MP3 audio, 14:54, <https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/tnyradiohour/segments/n-k-jemisin-h-p-lovecraft>.

² Sabrina Allii, "Hazel Carby: 'If It Can't Actually Cope with the Entanglement of All These Histories, Then to Me, It's Useless.'" *Guernica*, April 21, 2021. <https://www.guernicamag.com/miscellaneous-files-hazel-carby>.

FLOORPLAN



LIST OF WORKS

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| 1 <i>Hemel</i> (2024)
16 mm film transferred to digital video, colour, sound
29 minutes 44 seconds | 4 <i>Hemel Hempstead</i> (2024)
Watercolour on paper | 8 <i>Market House Hemel Hempstead</i> (2024)
Watercolour on paper | 11 <i>Map</i> (2024)
Watercolour on silk and silk embroidery |
| 2 <i>The Hanging Wood Near Tring Park</i> (2024)
Watercolour on paper | 5 <i>Hemel Hempstead from the South</i> (2024)
Watercolour on paper | 9 <i>Self Portrait, Hemel Hempstead</i> (2024)
Watercolour on paper
Collection of Gudrun Steele and Paul Rolles | 12 <i>Stan</i> (2024)
Watercolour on silk and silk embroidery |
| 3 <i>West Doorway of Hemel Hempstead Church</i> (2024)
Watercolour on paper | 6 <i>Martindale</i> (2024)
Watercolour on paper | 10 <i>Reclining figures, Hemel Hempstead (soap collection)</i> (2024)
Soap | 13 <i>School</i> (2024)
Watercolour on silk and silk embroidery |
| | 7 <i>Give it a rest II</i> (2024)
Watercolour on paper | | |

BIOGRAPHIES

DANIELLE DEAN

Danielle Dean is an artist based in Los Angeles. Dean received her MFA from the California Institute of the Arts and her BFA from Central St Martins in London. She is also an alumna of the Whitney Independent Study Program. She has recently produced *Amazon (Proxy)*, a performance for Performa New York, (2021), *Amazon*, a new commission and solo exhibition at Tate Britain, London, as part of the *Art Now* series (2022). Other solo shows include: *Long Low Line*, Time Square Arts, New York (2023); *Bazar* at the ICA San Diego (2023); and *True Red Ruin* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (2018). Dean participated in the 2022 Whitney Biennale in New York. Other group exhibitions include: *This is Land*, Contemporary Austin (2023); *Freedom of Movement*, Stedelijk Museum,

Amsterdam (2018); *The Centre Cannot Hold*, Lafayette Anticipations, Paris (2018); and *Made in L.A.*, The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2014).

YANIYA LEE

Yaniya Lee is the author of *Selected Writing on Black Canadian Art* (figure ground, 2024) and the Black art history project *Buseje Bailey: reasons why we have to disappear every once in a while* (Artexte, 2014).

She has written about art for museums and galleries across Canada, as well as *Vogue*, *Flash*, *Fader*, *Art in America*, *Vulture*, *Racar: Canadian Art Review*, *Chatelaine*, *Canadian Art*, *C Magazine*, *Montez Press* and *Asia Art Archive*.