

Spike Island

PRESS RELEASE

DANIELLE DEAN
THIS COULD ALL BE YOURS!
8 February to 11 May 2025



Danielle Dean's work spans video, painting, installation, social practice and performance. 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. Her projects are often developed collaboratively with community members, whose experiences bring essential perspectives to the work.

Dean's exhibition at Spike Island centres around *Hemel*, a new film that serves both as a personal essay and a portrait of Hemel Hempstead, where she grew up. The film explores the town's history as a planned community established under the New Towns Act of 1946. Archive footage and images of the town today interweave with references to *Quatermass II*, a 1957 sci-fi horror B-movie shot there about the arrival of a non-human entity that infiltrates the minds of residents and endangers life with a toxic black slime. In the film, Dean takes on a composite role inspired by both herself and the movie's detective protagonist, blending real and imagined worlds to examine the town's past and present.

Shot on 16mm film with a cast of non-actors and family, *Hemel* blurs fiction and documentary to expand a critical reading of the colonial overtones in the original film, while recasting its visual language to consider the race, class and labour dynamics of a small English town in today's post-Brexit context.

Accompanying *Hemel* is a series of drawings that capture the dystopian atmosphere that permeates the film and its characters, further immersing viewers in the unsettling world Dean constructs.

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.

Image credit: Danielle Dean, *Hemel* (2024). Production still. Courtesy the artist and 47 Canal

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For press enquiries please contact Isabel Davies at isabel@sam-talbot.com

NOTES FOR EDITORS

- The exhibition preview takes place on Friday 7 February 2025

ABOUT THE ARTIST

- **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).
- **ABOUT SPIKE ISLAND**
Spike Island supports, produces and presents contemporary art and culture across an 80,000 square foot former industrial building in Bristol. Its diverse artistic programme includes free major exhibitions, events and engagement activities taking place on-site and online. Championing outstanding work by emerging and underrepresented local, national and international artists, the programme enhances access to contemporary art for audiences from all backgrounds. Alongside its public offer, Spike Island directly supports artists through new commissions, over 70 subsidised studios, and sector-leading artist development opportunities that

widen access to its programme and facilities. Its Exhibition Services business supports the bespoke production and installation of artists' film and video throughout the UK and internationally. Spike Island is home to a dynamic community of hundreds of artists and creative businesses, working in flexible, affordable workspaces, alongside UWE Bristol's Fine Art department, Spike Print Studio, and café bar Emmeline.
www.spikeisland.org.uk