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Spike Island

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Maeve Brennan *The Drift*

8 July to 17 September 2017

Preview: Friday 7 July, 6–9pm



Spike Island presents a major new film commission, *The Drift*, by London and Beirut based artist Maeve Brennan. The film is produced by Spike Island, Bristol and Chisenhale Gallery, London, and commissioned by Spike Island; Chisenhale Gallery; The Whitworth, The University of Manchester; and Lismore Castle Arts, Lismore.

In *The Drift*, Brennan traces the shifting economies of objects in contemporary Lebanon. The film moves between three main characters: the gatekeeper of the Roman temples of Niha in the Beqaa Valley; a young mechanic from Britel, a village known for trading automobile parts; and an archaeological conservator working at the American University of Beirut.

Combining documentary footage, gathered through fieldwork, with staged scenes, the work depicts layered histories and communities. *The Drift* follows Brennan's encounters with the gatekeeper as he recounts his life's work restoring and guarding the temple ruins, while the mechanic crosses the Beqaa landscape, searching scrap yards for used automobile parts to transform his BMW car. Inside his workshop, the conservator slowly pieces together fragments of clay artefacts.

Forms of maintenance and repair are central to *The Drift* – with a focus on the desire to reassemble and rebuild. Quietly underpinning the film is the urgency of archaeology

in the Middle East today, particularly with reference to the destruction and preservation of heritage sites across Syria and Lebanon. Brennan's film maps converging lines between the protected relics of ancient temples, smuggled antiquities and exchanged car parts, exploring the care, circulation and shifting value of objects.

Informed by long term investigative research, Brennan's practice examines the historical and political resonance of materials and places. Creating intimacy through proximity with her subjects, she gathers anecdotal evidence to animate sites and narratives. *The Drift* builds on Brennan's previous works, such as *Jerusalem Pink* (2015), which looks at the role of stone in Palestine in relation to her great-grandfather's work on the architectural restoration of the *Dome of the Rock* (1917-37), and *Core Sample* (2012), which surveys the political and geological strata latent within contested materials.

Through observing the intertwined identities, unregulated economies and shared resistance felt across the densely layered archaeological and urban sites of Lebanon, *The Drift* explores the politics of conflict through its material – and immaterial – residue.

The film is presented at Chisenhale Gallery from 31 March to 4 June 2017, The Whitworth, The University of Manchester from 29 September 2017 to 18 February 2018, and Lismore Castle Arts in 2018.

Image credit: Maeve Brennan *The Drift* (2017) HD video with sound, 51min (still). Produced by Spike Island, Bristol and Chisenhale Gallery, London. Commissioned by Chisenhale Gallery; Spike Island; The Whitworth, The University of Manchester; and Lismore Castle Arts, Lismore. Courtesy of the artist.

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For further information and high resolution images please contact Jane Faram, Communications Manager on 0117 929 2266 or jane.faram@spikeisland.org.uk

Notes for editors:

- *The Drift* is produced by Spike Island, Bristol and Chisenhale Gallery, London and commissioned by Chisenhale Gallery; Spike Island; The Whitworth, The University of Manchester; and Lismore Castle Arts, Lismore.
- *The Drift* is supported by The Arab Fund For Arts and Culture – AFAC and Arts Council England Grants for the Arts.
- Maeve Brennan (b.1990, London) lives and works in London and Beirut. Recent exhibitions include: *Jerusalem Pink*, OUTPOST, Norwich; *Rough House*, The Glue Factory, Glasgow; *At the Seams: A Political History of Palestinian Embroidery*, Dar el Nimer, Beirut (all 2016); *KURZ / DUST*, Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw; *Video Works*, Metropolis Empire Sofil, Beirut (both 2015); and *A Museum of Immortality*, Ashkal Alwan, Beirut (2014). Brennan was a fellow of the arts study programme Home Workspace Program at Ashkal Alwan in Beirut (2013-14).

- Details of exhibition related events and ticket booking can be found at www.spikeisland.org.uk.
- Spike Island is an international centre for the development of contemporary art and design. It is a place where artists and the public can meet, enabling audiences to engage with artists' research and production. Within the 80,000 square foot building, Spike Island offers visitors a year-round programme of exhibitions, events and activities in the central gallery spaces, as well as providing working space for artists, designers and creative businesses.
- Spike Island is a partner of Tate as part of the Plus Tate network.
- The gallery is open Tuesday to Sunday, 12–5pm. Entrance is free.

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