



Michael Dean
They Early Doors

Aug 24 - Nov 9, 2024

Mendes Wood DM São Paulo

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Michael Dean presents *They Early Doors*, a solo show in São Paulo exhibited across Mendes Wood DM and Casa Iramaia.

Can the experience of a scene be described as an account of syntax? For artist Michael Dean, the possibilities within such a question drive his ongoing investigation on the transmutation of language – a task he undertakes through overlapping practices of sculpture, writing, and typography. Often employing three-dimensional structures to publish his ideas, Dean exercises a need to set words onto symbols, activating each space to relentlessly create new experiences. For the occasion of *They Early Doors*, the artist returns to enduring reflections on nature and the posthuman condition, presenting a new body of work in the form of self-fired and hand-molded concrete sculptures.

The starting point for *They Early Doors* was an unassuming photograph of a familiar football pitch captured by the artist on an early spring morning. A banal scene shot at a local park in England, it depicts a netless goalpost on an apparently deserted green field. Present at the scene, a few resting birds serve as the only other living observers. Staging this photograph, or this experience, pushed Dean to identify the syntax of the elements present: Three singular goalposts, the potential of the moment punctuated by the birds or the glimpse of human presence on the fresh-trimmed grass.

Using this model of putting text into an environment, the artist sets the words that resonate with the vocabulary present at sight. Transcribing feelings into concrete

sculptures, Dean makes powerful use of ceramics technique, treating concrete, instead of clay, to fire, manipulating the material entirely by hand. Through press molds and hand forms, he creates concrete shapes that bear witness to the surroundings captured on camera. Translating the physicality of the goalposts into textured concrete ware or clocking the images of birds as currency symbols. Placing emphasis on the ceramics-based nature of his work, Dean molds the hand-thrown concrete, self-firing it with a cast glaze and often holding evidence from nature. Working with concrete is a choice that the artist describes as democratic, a marker of a fluid language to be modified according to need.

For Roland Barthes,¹ this evolving nature of meaning constitutes the essential difference between a work that is to be interpreted and a work to be experienced. For Dean, this is a constant that has always driven him to challenge the notions of authorship within an exhibition. Inviting viewers to become the protagonists as much as the artist behind the work, a process of manifestation by way of writing himself out of the experience. Not focused on trying to discern, *They Early Doors* invites viewers to embrace the unexpected, contributing to the inscription of new meanings.

[1] Roland Barthes, *From Work to Text*, 1971



Michael Dean

unfuckintitled

2024

goal net and reinforced concrete

190 x 80 x 50 cm

74 3/4 x 31 1/2 x 19 3/4 in

MW.MDN.266









Michael Dean

unfuckingtitled

2024

screen tape, cement and thermostatic adhesive

33 x 13 x 8 cm

13 x 5 1/8 x 3 1/8 in

MW.MDN.295





Michael Dean

unfuckingtitled (not dead yet XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX)

2024

reinforced concrete

193 x 110 x 70 cm

76 x 43 1/4 x 27 1/2 in

MW.MDN.268





Michael Dean

unfuckingtitled (not dead yet not yet X)

2024

reinforced concrete

167 x 66 x 100 cm

65 3/4 x 26 x 39 3/8 in

MW.MDN.269





Michael Dean

unfuckingtitled (notkilldeadmeyetnowkillnotme)

2024

reinforced concrete

91 x 80 x 46 cm

35 7/8 x 31 1/2 x 18 1/8 in

MW.MDN.291





Michael Dean

unfuckingtitled (killnotmedeadnowyetnotkill)

2024

reinforced concrete

174 x 86 x 88 cm

68 1/2 x 33 7/8 x 34 5/8 in

MW.MDN.292



Michael Dean

unfuckingtitled

2024

reinforced concrete

186 x 54 x 50 cm

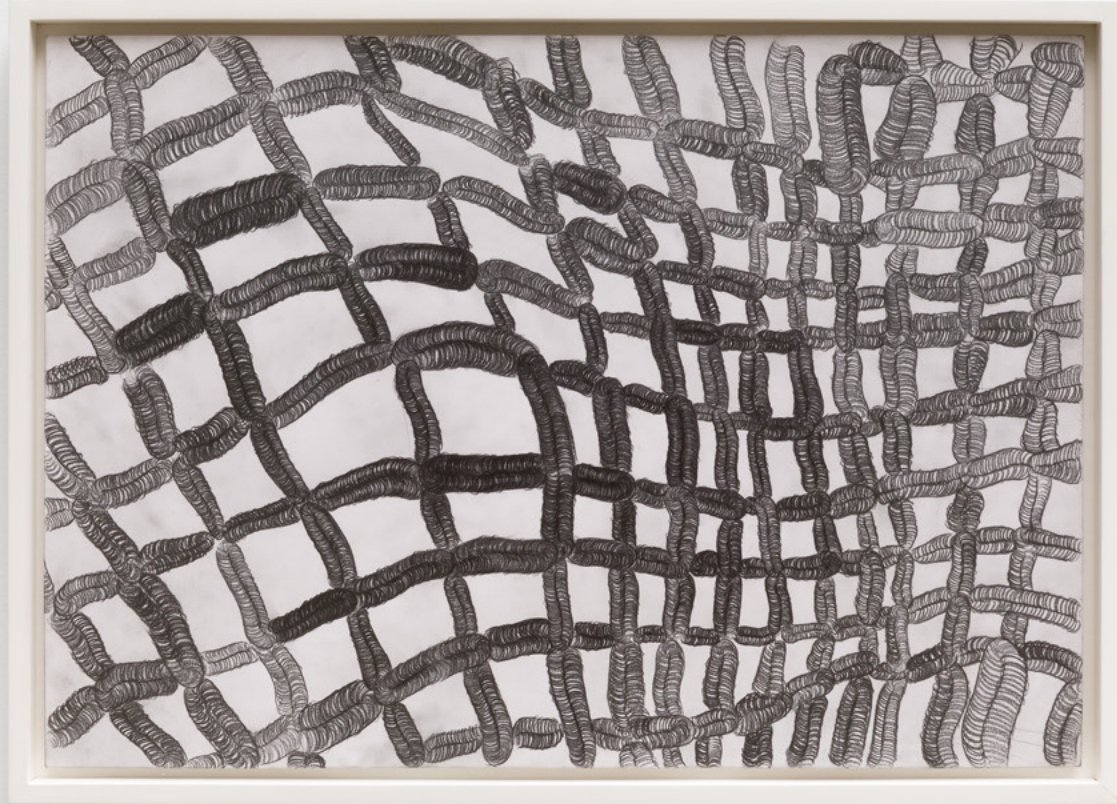
73 1/4 x 21 1/4 x 19 3/4 in

MW.MDN.290

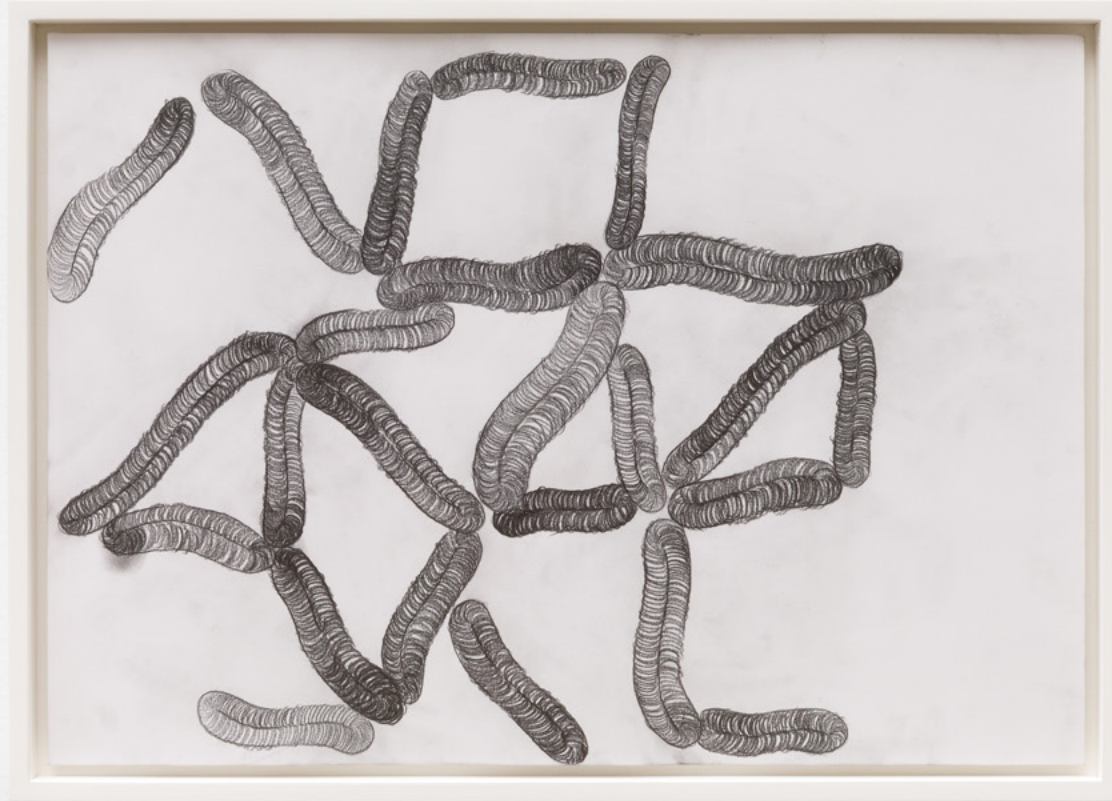




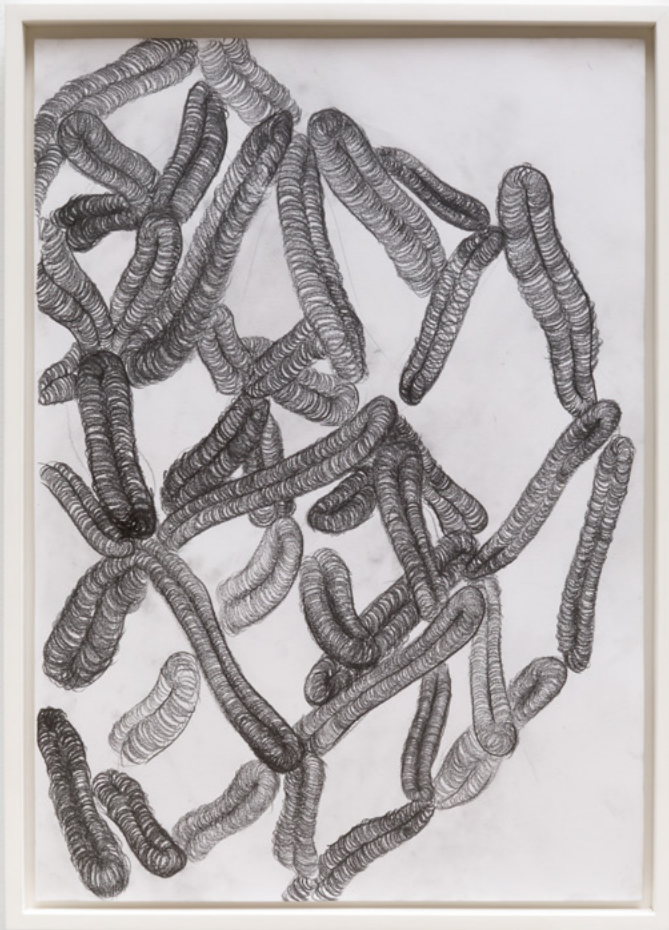




Michael Dean, *Net depression sketch (Unfuckingtitled)*, 2024, graphite on paper, 42 x 59.5 cm | 16 1/2 x 23 3/8 in, MW.MDN.271



Michael Dean, *Net depression sketch (Unfuckingtitled)*, 2024, graphite on paper, 42 x 59.5 cm | 16 1/2 x 23 3/8 in, MW.MDN.272



Michael Dean

Net impression sketch (Unfuckingtitled)

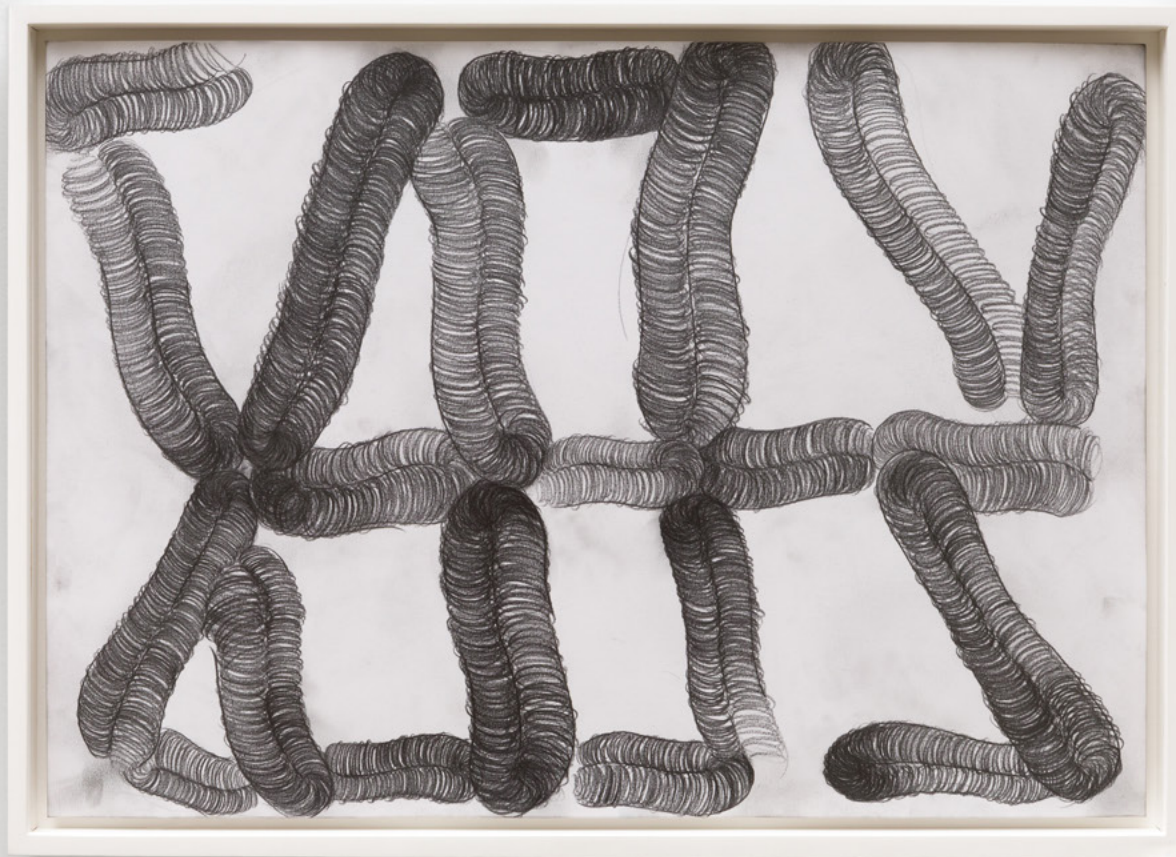
2024

graphite on paper

59.5 x 42 cm

23 3/8 x 16 1/2 in

MW.MDN.273



Michael Dean, *Unfuckingtitled (early doors)*, 2024, graphite on paper, 42 x 59.5 cm | 16 1/2 x 23 3/8 in, MW.MDN.274





Michael Dean, *unfuckingtitled (\$\$\$)*, 2024, reinforced concrete, 39 x 30 x 13 cm | 15 3/8 x 11 3/4 x 5 1/8 in, MW.MDN.288





Michael Dean, *unfuckingtitled (€)*, 2024, reinforced concrete, 35 x 34 x 13 cm | 13 3/4 x 13 3/8 x 5 1/8 in, MW.MDN.279





Michael Dean, *unfuckingtitled (less)*, 2024, reinforced concrete, 37 x 35 x 12 cm | 14 5/8 x 13 3/4 x 4 3/4 in, MW.MDN.280



Michael Dean, *unfuckingtitled (more)*, 2024, reinforced concrete, 40 x 34 x 10 cm | 15 3/4 x 13 3/8 x 4 in, MW.MDN.275



Michael Dean, *unfuckingtitled (£ £)*, 2024, reinforced concrete, 37 x 18 x 12 cm | 14 5/8 x 7 1/8 x 4 3/4 in, MW.MDN.276



Michael Dean, *unfuckingtitled (x)*, 2024, reinforced concrete, 21 x 12 x 10 cm | 8 1/4 x 4 3/4 x 4 in, MW.MDN.277



Michael Dean, *unfuckingtitled (Y)*, 2024, reinforced concrete, 37 x 28 x 12 cm | 14 5/8 x 11 x 4 3/4 in, MW.MDN.278



Michael Dean, *unfuckingtitled (x)*, 2024, reinforced concrete, 17 x 13 x 6 cm | 6 3/4 x 5 1/8 x 2 3/8 in, MW.MDN.281



Michael Dean, *unfuckingtitled (P)*, 2024, reinforced concrete, 39 x 30 x 10 cm | 15 3/8 x 11 3/4 x 4 in, MW.MDN.282



Michael Dean, *unfuckingtitled (€)*, 2024, reinforced concrete, 38 x 20 x 11 cm | 15 x 7 7/8 x 4 3/8 in, MW.MDN.283





Michael Dean, *unfuckingtitled (\$x\$)*, 2024, reinforced concrete, 20 x 12 x 10 cm | 7 7/8 x 4 3/4 x 4 in, MW.MDN.284





Michael Dean, *unfuckingtitled (\$)*, 2024, reinforced concrete, 35 x 36 x 14 cm | 13 3/4 x 14 1/8 x 5 1/2 in, MW.MDN.285



Michael Dean, *unfuckintitled (\$\$\$)*, 2024, reinforced concrete, 39 x 30 x 12 cm | 15 3/8 x 11 3/4 x 4 3/4 in, MW.MDN.286



Michael Dean, *unfuckingtitled (\$)*, 2024, reinforced concrete, 36 x 30 x 13 cm | 14 1/8 x 11 3/4 x 5 1/8 in, MW.MDN.287



Michael Dean, *unfuckingtitled (feel)*, 2024, reinforced concrete, 35 x 19 x 9 cm | 13 3/4 x 7 1/2 x 3 1/2 in, MW.MDN.265







Michael Dean
unfuckingtitled (killmenownotyetnotdeadyet)
2024
reinforced concrete
180 x 90 x 82 cm
70 7/8 x 35 3/8 x 32 1/4 in
MW.MDN.294



Michael Dean
unfuckingtitled (yetnotnotdeaddeadyetyet)
2024
reinforced concrete
179 x 51 x 44 cm
70 1/2 x 20 1/8 x 17 3/8 in
MW.MDN.293



Michael Dean

unfuckintitled (not dead yet)

2024

reinforced concrete

246 x 118 x 17 cm

96 7/8 x 46 1/2 x 6 3/4 in

MW.MDN.267



Michael Dean

unfuckingtitled (not dead yet)

2024

reinforced concrete

168 x 70 x 18 cm

66 1/8 x 27 1/2 x 7 1/8 in

MW.MDN.270





Michael Dean, *unfuckingtitled (kill me now)*, 2024, reinforced concrete, 198 x 182 x 18 cm | 78 x 71 5/8 x 7 1/8 in, MW.MDN.289





Borrowing instruments and strategies from the practices of the sculptor, the writer and the typographer, British artist Michael Dean investigates the relationship between text and physicality. Exploring the three-dimensional possibilities of language, Dean often 'spells out' his words through an alphabet of human-scale shapes, employing industrial and everyday materials such as concrete, steel, MDF, padlocks and dyed books of his writings.

While the transmutation of language is particularly important to Dean's practice, his sculptures are not intended to be read as words, but rather to be identified as an element of language in their own form and imagined as a word or idea. He attributes a physical form to a personally developed language, based on a series of typographic alphabets, which he designs himself.

Addressing the timeless subject of human intimacy, references to the human body are recurrent throughout Dean's works. Casts of his and his children's fists, limbs and fingers with drilled out eye holes and tongue muscles appear among the forms. The latter of these is particularly emblematic of Dean's overlapping interest in touch and language, since it is the part of the body which can feel, as well as taste, and which also molds words before they leave our mouths.

Michael Dean (b. 1977, Newcastle Upon Tyne, United Kingdom) lives and works in London.

