

Exhibition Information

Fiona Banner your plinth is my lap

20 April – 9 June 2002

Over the past decade, Fiona Banner has produced a highly acclaimed and extraordinary body of work that has been exhibited in many galleries and museums world-wide, including a solo project at the Tate Gallery, London in 1997. Generally her works could be characterised as investing minimal forms with excessive meaning – many works have the initial appearance of all-over abstract paintings or simple geometric forms.

Banner is perhaps best known for a series of written 'accounts' of epic war films such as 'Lawrence of Arabia' and 'Apocalypse Now'. In recent years she has realised a number of works, some of which are exhibited here, that take porn films as their starting point. Her use of this material has grown from her on-going interest in how we communicate the extremes of human experience – sex, violence, love and hate - and our cultural fascination with those extremes, evident, for example, in the sheer volume of films that deal with such subjects.

Alongside these works, she has developed an on-going range of sculptures and drawings, some of which are included in this exhibition, that are hand-made, large-scale versions of various types of full stop. Both series are indicative of Banner's fascination with language and its deficiencies. Her drawings, prints and sculptures make language almost abstract, highlighting the very strangeness of words.

While her previous works based on, for example, Vietnam war movies (see her book '**The Nam**' in the Information Room) dealt with violence, her new works based on porn films expose the dearth of language in describing sex.

Banner's work as a whole offers an interesting take on how language appears around us in the urban environment, from

posters to neon signs (the vast screenprint '**Arsewoman in Wonderland**' for example and the neon '**Spell**'), for example, intentionally implies public space, while the content of the works presented in these forms seems intensely private, particularly in those works which deal with sexual fantasy. Banner's focus is the space between personal, private thoughts or memories and how they are translated into the public realm.

The newest work in the exhibition, '**Concrete Poetry**', takes a number of familiar and not so familiar insults and makes them literally concrete, real things.

Banner's works also tend to contrast scale with material fragility, such as the vast unique screen-print of punctuation marks '**Forever**' – a story from which the words have been removed – the full stop drawings or the '**Black Blind**', each of which is comprised of hand-made marks on paper. The blinds in the exhibition, both black and coloured, offer tentative boundaries between spaces, simultaneously revealing and concealing what lies beyond them.

One of the newest works in this exhibition '**Spell**' is comprised of several parts of broken neon signs, found by the artist and brought together to create a strange new form, with no indication of their original purpose or the letters or symbols from which they came. As with so many of Banner's works, it resists definition as either wholly abstract or symbolic, but almost defines a moment when a thought begins to take shape.

Fiona Banner (b. 1966) grew up in Merseyside and studied at Kingston Polytechnic and then Goldsmiths College, London, where she continues to live.

A book about Fiona Banner's work will be published in May in collaboration with the Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Germany. Fully illustrated and

including texts by Michael Archer and Patricia Ellis, it can be ordered from DCA shop, price **£14.95**.