
Fiona Banner

Au Cœur des Ténèbres

Opening on Thursday November 17, 2016 from 6 pm to 9 pm

Exhibition from November 18, 2016 to January 7, 2017



mfc-michèle didier

66 rue Notre-Dame de Nazareth, 75003 Paris, France

T + 33 (0)1 71 27 34 41 - P + 33 (0)6 09 94 13 46

info@micheledidier.com - www.micheledidier.com

ABOUT *Au Cœur des Ténèbres*

The exhibition to be held at mfc-michèle didier gallery will be a presentation of works by British artist Fiona Banner.

On this occasion, Banner – who continuously investigates the slippage between object, image and text through the prism of graphic and editorial works – has hinged the exhibition on her adaptation of Joseph Conrad's novella *Heart Of Darkness*.

Conrad's tale, published in 1899, relates a slow voyage up the Congo River through the eyes of a young British officer named Marlow who sets out to find Kurtz, an ivory trader reported missing. The narrative acts as a pretext, allowing Conrad to denunciate the horror and hostility of colonialism. It is this idea of a narrative structure as space for criticism that also appealed to later generations of film directors.

Thus, when Orson Welles penned a script adapting Conrad's novella, it was not to decry the violent conflict wreaking havoc in the colonial Empires, but to signal the rise of fascism at the time in Europe. However, the film never made it to the screen after its producers took the decision to pull out, not backing the financial costs for political reasons. In 2012, Banner directed what was to be the world premier of Welles's Script.

In 1970, with the production of *Apocalypse Now*, Francis Ford Coppola took on Conrad's narrative, this time updating its historical setting to the mess of the Vietnam War. Banner references this film in her first publication *The Nam*, 1997. Here she presents the book blown up in the form of a coffee table, humorously recalling the words of one critic when referring to the over blown scale of her book, "Fiona Banner's *The Nam* is not so much a coffee table book as a coffee table."

Having continuously triggered multiple contributions, each inherent to a specific context or generation of conflict, *Heart of Darkness* was appropriated again in 2015 by Banner. A body of works has stemmed from her adaptation of the tale, spanning a variety of media and commenting on a political reality – the violent nature of economics in today's society.

In what constitutes the centrepiece of the exhibition – *Heart of Darkness*, an illustrated reprint of Conrad's original novella – Banner juxtaposes her own drawings representing swathes of magnified pinstripe fabric, the Square Mile trader's uniform de *rigueur* with images she commissioned from Magnum conflict photographer Paolo Pellegrin, giving him the instruction to photograph the financial district of London as a conflict zone. The publication takes the form of a luxury magazine.

ABOUT *Au Cœur des Ténèbres*

We encounter the publication *Heart of Darkness* for a second time in Banner's film *Phantom* (2015). A drone camera banks and hovers, attempting to focus on the magazine's image spreads; the downdraft from the spinning rotors simultaneously causes the pages to turn and chases the magazine across the ground.

In addition to the film, mfc-michèle didier is also pleased to present a series of five movie posters entitled *The Greatest Film Never Made*. Destined to act as genuine promotional tools, these posters (commissioned by Banner from three industry movie poster design studios) echo the narrative's dramatic intensity through the use of radical contrasts in black and white.

With Banner's work *Breathing Bag*, Conrad's words see a new life breathed into them: A plastic bag fixed to the wall bearing an inscription seems to inhale and exhale air, deforming the sentence in turns between the original "Mistah Kurtz – He dead" and the deceptive "Mistah Kurtz – He not dead".

These four works will be accompanied by Banner's *Full Stop Bean Bags*, quite literally soft bean bags which take on the shape of full stops in different typefaces, including "Font" – The artist's typographical chimera which crossbreeds typefaces previously used in her work. In the past Banner has rendered these bean bags in Polystyrene and Bronze, here they are playfully blown up to human proportions and provide a moment to sit, to pause for thought.

Newly produced pieces will also join the body of existing works: Taking on the aspect of wallpaper, a large drawing covers an entire side of the gallery, presenting us with a close-up view of a suit-wearing man's crotch. The black and white lines, here blown up to extreme proportions reference the pinstripe pattern so prevalent in the Financial Industry.

Lastly, no exhibition dedicated to Fiona Banner could omit her practice of publishing and so a selection of publications from the artist's own imprint, *The Vanity Press* (created in 1997) will be on view and available for consultation.

facebook
twitter
instagram
pinterest

