

PRESS RELEASE

Fiona Banner aka The Vanity Press 《*Pranayama Typhoon*》

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Pranayama Typhoon

June 16–August 15, 2021

- First solo exhibition in Asia by British artist Fiona Banner aka The Vanity Press
- The premier of a new film, recent paintings, and installation
- *Pranayama Typhoon* focuses on human conflict, desire, communication failures, and destructive relationship between human and nature
- Banner shares romantic yet dystopian mise-en-scène in the new film work *Pranayama Organ*

Barakat Contemporary is proud to present *Pranayama Typhoon*, the first solo exhibition by Fiona Banner aka The Vanity Press in Asia. Banner first gained attention in the mid-1990s for her “wordscapes” and “still films”, which explored the relationships of primitive human desire and violence conveyed by traditional nudes, pornography, and Hollywood war films, relayed as dense verbal descriptions. As her moniker, The Vanity Press suggests, language and publishing are at the heart of Banner’s practice, and her attitude is at once playful and often performative.

Pranayama Typhoon combines the word “pranayama,” a breathing technique that dates back to ancient India, with the word “typhoon,” a catastrophic weather phenomenon, which is also the name of a state-of-the-art fighter plane. The title of the exhibition hints at the collision of human breath with the unpredictable, destructive forces of nature. Banner conceived the work in *Pranayama Typhoon* during the Covid lockdown in the UK.

In Banner’s film *Pranayama Organ* (2021), two decoy military aircraft slowly inflate on a desolate beach; the film transitions into a ritualistic performance acted out by two people, one of which is the artist, both dressed as fighter planes – a Fighting Falcon and a Typhoon. Both human and automaton dance around each other performing a darkly comical ritual of courtship and combat. In *Pranayama Organ*, the regal sound of a pipe organ, the breathing of the two fighter planes and traces of the song “Wild is the Wind” collectively conjure an ominous, unnerving atmosphere. The organ, in this case refers both to the massive wind instrument, and the corporal body. As an instrument that needs air to be blown into, the organ projects the human desire to control nature. *Pranayama Organ* reveals the ambivalent aspects of our attitudes towards nature: nature is both consumed, exploited and revered. The film concludes with the fighter plane’s nose

cone eclipsing the sun, an image accompanied by the lyrics: “For we’re creatures of the wind.”

Falcon (2021), an actual decoy military fighter plane and one of the protagonists of the film, slowly breathes in the same gallery space, with the viewers present, ventilated by a fan, incrementally inflating and deflating its body becomes like a living organism. The decoy plane, named after a bird of prey, exists to create an image of power. In the age of Covid, it represents vulnerability more than force. The psychological tension and ominous pre-human, post-human presence of *Falcon* is heightened by the soundtrack of the film.

Banner’s rear view mirror work *ISBN 978-1-913983-05-5* (2021) is both a publication and a sculpture. Banner registered the work as a publication: ‘ISBN 978-1-913983-05-5’ under the title of *Gods with Anuses*. It refers to the human body and the body of the aircraft. This phrase comments with humor on our vanity - on a human-centered worldview, that sees humans obsessed with existing beyond nature, to resist our entropic selves, though in the end humans and animals will eventually return to nature. The Latin word ‘Annus’, which has a pronunciation similar to ‘Anuses’, means ‘the event of the year’ in which a disease or war occurred. *ISBN 978-1-913983-05-5*, hung like a tombstone between *Falcon* and *Pranayama Organ*, is a marker, in the dystopian contemporary tragic reality of the human world, especially the human view of nature emphasizes that it is time for a comprehensive review.

A group of *Full Stop* (2021) paintings also feature in the exhibition. Banner has punctuated her practice with these physical aspects of language, which denote breaths and pauses, by producing drawings, sculptures, and installations using full stops (periods) in various fonts. In a recent series of found sea-scape paintings, she painted out the ships and added full stops in various fonts – including *Helvetica*, *Peanuts*, *Klang*, *Orator* – over top of the various ships that are the subjects in seascapes. Banner has described the full stop “as a symbol of language without content, representing the emptiness of language, language poised on a precipice, a crisis where fonts, letters, and words no longer function as couriers of meaning.” For the installation, Banner installs the works low so you have to sit in order to view them, taking on the position of a film viewer rather than a traditional standing perspective of the paintings.

The *Full Stop* paintings, the beach of *Pranayama Organ*, and the *Falcon* installation become interconnected in the viewer’s perception to form a single cinematic landscape. The final element in the exhibition leads the viewer to *Bad Review* (2021), a car’s rearview mirror that reflects an image of the gallery. The artist has written the words “bad review” on the mirror and hung it up so that it faces away from *Falcon*. But what is receiving the “bad review”? Is it a question mark, an exclamation, or an ellipsis?

Overview of the Exhibition

1. Date

- Wednesday, June 16 - Sunday, August 15, 2021
- 10:00 - 18:00 | Tuesday - Sunday

2. Address

- 36, Samcheong-ro 7-gil, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea

3. Inquiry

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1. Artist

Fiona Banner aka The Vanity Press (b. 1966)



Fiona Banner aka The Vanity Press was born in Merseyside. Banner studied at Kingston University, London, and Goldsmiths, the University of London. Banner was selected as the finalist for The Turner Prize, the prestigious British art award in 2002. She has also been exhibiting her works in solo and group exhibitions at the world's leading art museums and institutions including Tate Britain, Hayward Gallery, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Whitechapel Gallery, De Pont Museum of Contemporary Art, Walker Art Center, MoMA PS1, MoMA, etc. Banner's work was collected by MoMA, Walker Art Center, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Tate Modern, British Council, The Contemporary Art Society, and the National Gallery of Canada.

2. Major Works



Fiona Banner aka The Vanity Press: *Pranayama Typhoon*, 2021, Installation View, Barakat Contemporary



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<Falcon>, 2021, Inflatable decoy fighter plane, fan, 10m x 3.56m x 6.48m



<Pranayama Organ> Film still, 2021



〈Helvetica〉, 2021, Oil on found painting, 61.8 x 91.5 x 2.5cm



«Bad Reivew», 2021, paint on rear view mirror, steel pole, 18 x 5 x 4 cm