



FIONA BANNER, PARADE, 2004, assembled kit model planes, nylon thread, detail / diverse Modellbauflugzeuge, Nylonfaden, Aussenhit.

and makes everything hazy. Hexagons of sunlight pass across the screen. Trees seen from below fringe in at the side, moving slowly along. Light comes through in shards, and the top of the trees look miles away. You can hear the sound of a stream, frothing white in the middle, spindling through the mammoth trees. Everything else is damp green, and murky.¹¹

Here, Banner refers to a strange moment where stillness is found in the midst of wild movement. Sim-

ilarly, the tableau of model planes in *Parade* functions as a photographic still, calling to mind Susan Stewart's comment that "the reduction in scale which the miniature presents skews the time and space relations of the everyday life-world, and as an object consumed, the miniature finds its 'use value' transformed into the infinite time of reverie."¹²

Banner's new work reveals connections to earlier pieces in other ways too. The unadorned objects

bear some relation to the rough plaster finish of *CONCRETE POETRY* (2002); and an even more complex link can be made to her raw, handwritten account of *APOCALYPSE NOW* (1997), and to her later series, *Arsewoman in Wonderland* (2001). The most obvious link is that the model aircraft are "homemade," a word Banner uses to describe her original Tiffany Mynx film called *Asswoman in Wonderland*. The *Arsewoman* series turned a pornographic image into words, giving a detailed account of the film's action in the artist's own words, clarifying what Michael Archer has described as "the unbreakable link between bodily existence and the language by means of which we vainly and unceasingly attempt to infuse it with significance."¹³ In parallel works which were made at this time, such as *FOREVER AND EVER* (2002), Banner also grapples with the slippery inexactness of our vocabularies. In this work, she uses an immense field of punctuation marks to describe a story from which the words have been removed; *FOREVER* documents a breakdown, or crisis, in language.

Banner's new work simply gives us objects instead of words; the objects evoke a visceral and physical response through their lines and form. Fighter planes, like many modern weapons, are fetishized; in military magazines there is normally a centerfold image of a jet, a feature which echoes the layout of pornography publications. Such images of aircraft are viewed with an awareness of their destructive capabilities, providing, like pornography, an almost guilty, erotic pleasure.

Seemingly beyond words, Banner's objects constitute their own language. It is tempting to view the tail fin and nose cone in the gallery as a form of punctuation. Like Banner's earlier *Full Stops*, both sets of words demand that we address a crisis in communication on a physical level. It may be even more compelling to construct a Lacanian approach to analyzing these works, and to see them as things in themselves—beyond the shifting world of signifiers (especially in the case of *EYE*). But the works have their own complex inner dynamics. While some of the airplane parts are found objects, others have been cast; as Banner's hand-written guide to viewing the work points back towards "signifying language," it reminds us that the models are themselves "signifiers"

of the larger planes. At the same time, her guide is so densely rendered that it is impossible to match a name to a model.

Appearances though are deceptive. The wing, nose, and tail fin have an epic scale about them in comparison to the models. As Vietnam pilot Mark E. Berent points out, the machine is designed for a snug fit; "We don't actually get into the thing," he explains, "we put it on." (Banner's titles for these works make this same point.)¹⁴ While the larger airplane parts spawn heroic narratives, the kit-sized helicopters and fighters lose none of their fecundity. Such model airplanes, after all, were designed as props for a child's daydreams of imagined battles taking place in the high altitude of his/her bedroom ceiling.

Banner's delicate, hand-written guide to viewing the aircraft also points to, and questions, the macho nature of these machines by such fictional names as Superstallion, Havoc, Tiger, Persuader, Cobra, Haze, Hormone, Hokum, Gazelle, Bronco, Lancer, Tornado, and Fagot. She seems to pump testosterone through each one in a way which brings to mind Carole Cohn's 1980s study of subliminal sexual imagery found in the language of nuclear weaponry. In this study, Cohn argued that, while there was a thrill in learning this coded language, what was more important was one's "sense of control," and "feeling of mastery over technology."¹⁵

Despite its innate muteness, contemporary weaponry seems to breed myths, images, languages, and narratives. Fighter aircraft are known to have spawned other names as well, such as bumblebees, nightmares, tomcats, bulldogs, jaguars, bats, hawks, black sheep, black hawks, panthers, marlins, cheetahs, and vampires. The association with animals is ubiquitous, acknowledging the bestial dimensions of war, and claiming the most extreme attributes of each creature. Behind Banner's new works, there is the formidable energy of nature to metamorphosize planes into hurricanes, helicopters into hawks, and jet sections into limbs.

All of this turbulent power is then stripped and crushed into the confines of a gallery space. The Harrier wing and tail fin could inspire visions of high altitude dogfights, explosive velocity, and unbridled kinetics beyond the reach of the human senses, but

