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**Special Report**  
Typography  
**Profile**  
Ich&Kar  
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Giving a different perspective on typography to what we're used to seeing from graphic designers and typographers, artist Fiona Banner kindly gave us the run of her studio for this month's cover. It features the boxes for her ongoing series of Full Stop sculptures. **Angharad Lewis** met the artist to find out more...

In order to create her large-scale Full Stop structures, Fiona Banner magnifies the full stops from various typefaces and then recreates them in three dimensions using polystyrene and bronze. In its quest to explore that most unscrutinised, taken-for-granted, yet utterly crucial little element of printed language, Banner's work makes a monument to the silent full stop. Unlike its letter-shaped cousins, the full stop doesn't indicate a sound. On the contrary, it wields power in its silent autonomy—it is self-reliant, not needing to form part of a word in collusion with other letters to get its meaning across. In its power to mark the beginning and ending of sentences, the simple full stop is a kingpin with both procreative and fatalistic tendencies.

For Banner, her obsession with the punctuation mark came after she'd completed her book project *The Nam*, an epic 1,000-page written account of six Vietnam films, a blow-by-blow description of every moment with no separation between the films. She describes it as "a portrait in words or a verbal super-movie". Needless to say, full stops began to take on a new significance for the artist after the gruelling writing process involved in the creation of this work. "I started thinking about the nature of full stops," she says. "For example, this final full stop, is it more significant than the others?" It became a project about exploring the flip-side, or negative space, of language and the writing process—its inadequacies, silences and the breath or pause between words. "This led on to thoughts about how sculpture operates," she continues, "and that sculpture is like punctuation in space."

Banner uses words, letters and punctuation as visual components in her work—but they also enact a sort of quantum leap between the normally discrete worlds of the verbal and the visual, simultaneously enacting both content and meaning. This is perhaps most clear in the artist's ongoing *Nude* series, where she stands before a nude model and creates a word-portrait, observing and recording every detail in words, employing an instinctive, intuitive impulse of mark-making closer to the process of painting or drawing than to the process of writing (where what happens in the brain and what appears on the page are filtered through a self-consciousness that Banner's process swerves around).

While some characteristics of Banner's work seem, on one level, to have much in common with the way graphic design functions—with words and images working in tandem—her processes overlay the two elements of verbal and visual in a much more absolute way. Her motivation as an artist also offers a very different perspective on the tools used by graphic designers. While a typographer is absorbed in perfecting the visual details and functionality of letterforms, for Banner they are a conduit to exploring self-expression: the failures and inadequacies of language, how they affect our perceptions and betray our humanness, are her pursuit.

Banner's interest in words extends to publishing, with her project *The Vanity Press* producing books and poster works. As large editions, *The Vanity Press* publications are an affordable and accessible way to collect the artist's work. Last year Banner published her newspaper-format publication *The Bastard Word* in an edition of 5,000, at £5.00 per copy. Look out for more publications during 2008. Meanwhile, at the other end of the spectrum, her 1,800pt three-dimensional full stops are monumental one-offs, perverting the convention for bronzes (usually cast as editions), and inverting the scale of the little, overlooked full stop to one commensurate with its true significance in language.

