Fiona Banner \ Ann-Sofi Sidén

video - sculptures

14th of February - 14th of March 2015
private view: Friday 13th of February, 7-9 pm
Installation views of the exhibition at Galerie Barbara Thumm, 2015
Windsocks are used to indicate wind direction and wind speed. They are generally found at airports, landing pads and oil rigs. When the wind is strong enough (15 knots) the sock is fully inflated and points in the opposite direction to the wind :) In mild conditions the sock hangs downwards, deflated :( Commonly fluorescent orange in colour, windsocks often appear in bizarre contrast to their natural surroundings. Banner has configured two mechanically operated windsocks that are no longer beholden to Nature’s whim. Rising and falling, to various apparently random degrees, they perform a new language. In motion the Windsocks become expressive characters, no longer just machine but rather a snout, a limb, a cartoon.

In Tête à Tête (2014) the two windsocks become the main protagonists in a Bonnet drama set in the grounds around Longside Gallery, in Yorkshire Sculpture Park. The two windsocks participate in a kind of dialogue, based on a scene from a period drama. This fitful semaphore, where head tilts and nods, chin tucks, lowered gazes, are played out mutely and mechanically, reference Banner’s concern with the power and limitations of language and our (her) own struggle to communicate.

The related sculpture Windsock (2012) can be shown outside, standing alone, with no mate with whom to converse.
Intermission is a 16mm film transferred to digital. It shows the word Intermission flickering gently in an orb of light, referencing the slide used in the change over of film reels at cinemas. Banner started this work back when she was in College, but never finished it.

Banner says „I didn’t finish any work when I was a college. I guess ‘intermission’ was somewhat of an understatement! ‘Intermission’ suggests some form of break or pause, whereas the word ‘intermission’ in this film is a looped projection and so is infinite. But to answer the question, why did I only finish this piece now, or rather to re ask the question, why did I finish it? – I suppose it is because I think it has become more relevant to me than before. Like over the last 30 years, since I started the film. The full stop sculptures are intermissions, but also the helicopter blade installation, is an intermission. A duration without content... in some ways.
Filmed in 2010, and completed in 2013 the film documents the construction of a four-metre stack of Jane’s All the World’s Aircraft books, the iconic compendium for the aeronautical industry. Collecting is a recurrent theme in Banner’s work, and she has compiled this collection of books over a period of twenty years.

Jane’s All the World’s Aircraft represents a shared knowledge, beyond political and national boundaries. As a collection it embodies the history of manned flight and the development of an unwieldy military industry.

The film explores our relationship with performance, and it’s documentation. Here, the impossibility of monuments, the absurdity of the sculptural endeavour or the irony inherent in our desire to monumentalise, is made strikingly apparent.

Banner, through The Vanity Press has also reissued three largely forgotten science fiction novels written by the founder of Jane’s All the World’s Aircraft, Fred T. Jane. Written in the 1890s, The Violet Flame, The Incubated Girl and To Venus in Five Seconds had been out of print for nearly a century. These absurdist fantasies represent an endlessly deferred future and reveal a complex relationship with the contents of the annual compendium to which Jane later dedicated his life.
Every summer, at military air shows in the UK, the Chinook helicopter performs an aerial ballet, carefully choreographed to push the craft to its limit for the purpose of display. In recent years this has become a hugely popular event. Banner’s film focuses on this absurdist spectacle and exaggerates the pathos of the attempted elegance and the domestic event of the air show versus the brutal industry of the Chinook helicopter.

Banner has long been interested in this strangely anthropomorphic Pushme-pullu beast, and over the years has revisited it through various works. The double-bladed Chinook helicopter is an engineering phenomenon. It is visually a contradiction; it looks clumsy and prehistoric, and yet is able to perform the most extraordinary aerodynamic function. When in motion the rotor blades at the front and back of the aircraft spin in opposite directions, often appearing to collide and pull the vast craft in opposite directions. For Banner, this parodies the contradictory relationship she has with the military and its hardware.

Military aircraft often take their names from nature. Here the reference is to a Chinook wind or weather system and an American Indian tribe.
In 2007 the actress Samantha Morton came to Banner’s studio to pose for a nude portrait. Banner wrote a description of her, which Morton did not read.

The next day, still having never read the text, the actress read out the portrait in front of a large audience, performing a kind of striptease in words.

It was agreed at the time that the performance would not be filmed. But several months later someone made contact to say that he had caught the performance on camera whilst warming up to film another event. Subsequently, Mirror was made from this footage.

Banner comments that “because the description was of her - a sort of portrait, or a striptease in words - it was hard for her to act it, and that’s what made it interesting. The piece is really a reflection on the struggle for control over language and image.”
Sticky Floors (Lunch to Last Call) 2015, is a new work by Ann-Sofi Sidén that takes place in Limerick, Ireland, but more specifically, in one of the community’s staple institutions, a pub known as Sticky Floors. Covering an entire day, from when the bar opens, is prepared and cleaned, through lunch for a few regulars, to the evening carouse that attracts hundreds of thirsty patrons, we follow staff, the proprietor Costello, and clients by way of surveillance cameras. On nine flat screens mounted in a square grid amid stacks of faux wood Formica trays and pint glasses, the kind one finds in this bar, the 1 hour and 55 minute black and white silent film offers a fly-on-the-wall view of the interior and exterior, and thus all the bar’s inner and outer workings. It is a portrait of sorts, refracted, one that offers a picture of bewildering, unfathomable life. Joyce’s Ulysses comes to mind. But so too does Beckett, as it’s said, in Waiting for Godot nothing happens, twice. Because everything and nothing takes place in this bar. It is a stream of momentously important events yet, at the same time, an insignificant void where nothing really occurs. A mystifying universe of its own.
The proprietor, Mr. Costello, a former stockbroker in New York, won money one lucky evening in the 70’s playing poker and decided to open a bar in his hometown. He’s been running it ever since, with his wife, daughter who tends the bar, and son who stands in as DJ. Every night, Mr. Costello sits at the entrance levying the five euro cover charge, deciding who gets in and not. The patrons seesaw between a downstairs pub and an upstairs bar and dance floor, and the piece brings in to view a particular social context where narrative threads crisscross endlessly.

It isn’t the first time Sidén makes use of surveillance monitoring and Sticky Floors (Lunch to Last Call) becomes one in a series of site-specific investigations that makes use of this particular medium. Like in the work Prop for world picture II, filmed in a Korean grocery store in New York 1996, or Station 10 and back again from 2000, depicting a fire station in Norrköping, Sweden, the collection of hours and hours of surveillance material to edit has become a method of working, “like letting a tree grow until it’s the right shape to build a boat out of”, as Sidén relates. It is what Tarkovsky called “sculpting in time”, editing that allows rhythm to be at the heart of times passing.

So is it also in Sticky Floors (Lunch to Last Call). The rhythm of time makes up the rhythm of people, a rhythm they at the end of the night dance to. But before all that, a whole day goes by, and one comes to be familiar and associate with people that come and go. The staff cleans. The cook prepares lunch. The barmaid chats with an elderly regular over coffee. It’s painful to watch old people move so slowly. The pub’s generational shift, a daily metamorphosis comes in the evening when a group of kids arrive early to play drinking games and a lonely young man takes his first sip of beer. The line outside gets longer. A couple dance, then fight, but leave holding hands. A man is denied entrance. A bachelorette party enters. People smoke and drink. Courtship, of all sorts, is rampant. And it, in the end, is like getting up close and personal with Bosh’s Garden of Earthly Delights, endlessly detailed, serious and funny and at times absurd. A theatre of laughter, struggle, celebration and forgetting, all mirrored through the cyclical life at an Irish pub in Limerick.

Theodor Ringborg
Eva x 2
2001
2-teilige Serie / 2 part series
C-Print
je / each 150 x 78 cm
Edition 1/3 + 2 AP
Winter Girl
1999
C-Print
Unikat / Unique
Panel 1: 148,5 x 155 cm, Panel 2: 148,5 x 167 cm
Panel 3: 148,5 x 201 cm, Total: ca. 148,5 x 523 cm
**Ann-Sofi Sidén**

**Untitled (Babyklappe)**

2007
Monitor, Regal, Lampe und Bücher / Monitor, racks, lamps and books
43 x 45 x 37 cm
Edition of 5 + 2 AP