

Exhibition Checklist

Works are courtesy the artist unless otherwise noted.

Fiona Banner

Smoky Nude, 2006

Graphite on paper

89 1/4 x 67 1/4 inches

Courtesy of 1301PE, Los Angeles

Photography by Josh White

Hollis Frampton

Poetic Justice, 1972

16mm, b/w, silent, 31:00

Courtesy of Anthology Film Archives, New York

Melinda McDaniel

Movie Lines, 2007

Dimensions variable, each sheet 11 x 8 1/2 in.

Archival paper, foam board, and pins

Courtesy of the artist

Klub Zwei

Black and White: The Back of the Images, 2003

DVD, 5:00

Courtesy of the artist and Sixpackfilm, Vienna

Emily Berçir Zimmerman is a recipient of the Lori Ledis Emerging Curator Fellowship, a program to foster curatorial talent in contemporary art.

BRIC Arts | Media | Bklyn presents contemporary art, performing arts, and community media programs that reflect Brooklyn's creativity and diversity. BRIC also provides resources to launch, nurture, and showcase artists and media makers. We advance access to and understanding of arts and media by presenting free and low cost programming, and by offering education and public programs to people of all ages. Learn more at bricartsmedia.org.

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So to Speak

Fiona Banner
Hollis Frampton
Melinda McDaniel
Klub Zwei

Curated by
Emily Berçir Zimmerman
at BRIC Rotunda Gallery,
the contemporary art space of
BRIC Arts | Media | Bklyn

March 22 to April 28, 2012



BRIC Rotunda Gallery
the contemporary art space of BRIC Arts | Media | Bklyn
33 Clinton Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201
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So to Speak

In his film The Blind Director, Alexander Kluge asks, “Should cinemas be abolished and the images explained via phone?”

What, precisely, does it mean to say a picture is worth a thousand words? A truism often reiterated in our image-saturated culture, the idea that images outpace words in their communicative potential and economy of expression drives the logic behind much contemporary cultural production. What assumptions are encapsulated within that cliché? And when that weary saying is mobilized, what is left out of the picture, so to speak?

An exhibition that creates an encounter between visual and verbal forms of representation, *So to Speak* brings together artists' work that weighs the difference between these two forms of expression, reflecting on the faults, slippages, and tensions that arise when representing images with words. *So to Speak* presents artworks that question the status of the photographic image as a purveyor of truth, and the pervasiveness of still and moving images within the current visual regime.

The exhibition's title itself points to the act of rephrasing, “so to speak” having originated in the early 1800s as an apology for the use of the vernacular to reiterate an idea. In each of the works by Fiona Banner, Hollis Frampton, Melinda McDaniel, and Klub Zwei, verbal accounts unfold to transmit imagery. This scenario is not unlike our own sensorial development where we come to know the world first through sight, and only learn to speak long after we have had a visual understanding of our environment.¹

In each of the pieces included in *So to Speak*, text is mobilized for its semiotic imprecision, to conjure images in mind of the viewer, often co-opting the media of image production. Hollis Frampton's 1972 *Poetic Justice* is a 31-minute film narrated by a series of sheets of written text describing each scene, divided into four tableaux. In the film, Frampton wished to create a “cinema of the mind,” in order to sustain an imprecision that allows the viewer to render

their own imagery from the calmly sequenced and handwritten sheets of paper. Shot from above, the 240 papers arrive on a table bearing a coffee cup and a cactus. Photographs appear frequently in the scenes described. Melinda McDaniel's *Movie Lines* uses the short, one-line descriptions for movies found in television programming menus to deal with issues of present day attention spans, and the absurdist economies of paraphrasing. Each phrase is a distillation of a full-length film into less than 15 words. The piece often becomes a frustrated exercise in remembering as the viewer attempts to recall a particular movie based on terse yet vague descriptions. *Movie Lines* points to their invisible and anonymous authors, whose role it is to create these incredibly brief synopses.

The politics of the image are engaged in both the work of Young British Artist Fiona Banner and the Austrian collective Klub Zwei. Banner's *Smoky Nude*, 2006, plays off of traditional academic nude portraiture by creating a verbal portrait of the unseen nude model, occluded by a veil of words. Part of Banner's *Performance Nude Series*, *Smoky Nude* finds its genesis from pieces in which the artist described in detail the action taking place in war films such as *Apocalypse Now*. Klub Zwei's film *Black and White: The Back of the Images* presents a discussion by archivist Rosemarie Nief on documentation from the Holocaust to open up a larger conversation on the problematic use of photographs as unbiased historic documents. The five-minute film is presented in both

English and Polish on separate monitors, and is accompanied by text panels that question the use of photographs as tools for cultural memory. Throughout the film (in which the image had critically been blacked out) statements such as “The image is silenced” appear onscreen, reminding us of the extent to which images are given voice in contemporary cultural practices. Each of the pieces in the exhibition is composed of sentences and phrases that are given a physical reality, creating a dialogue with form that deeply impacts the way works are ultimately read. It is this activity of formal reading that *So to Speak* seeks to articulate, critically engaging its contextual materials to refrain from speaking for the works on view.

— Emily Berçir Zimmerman

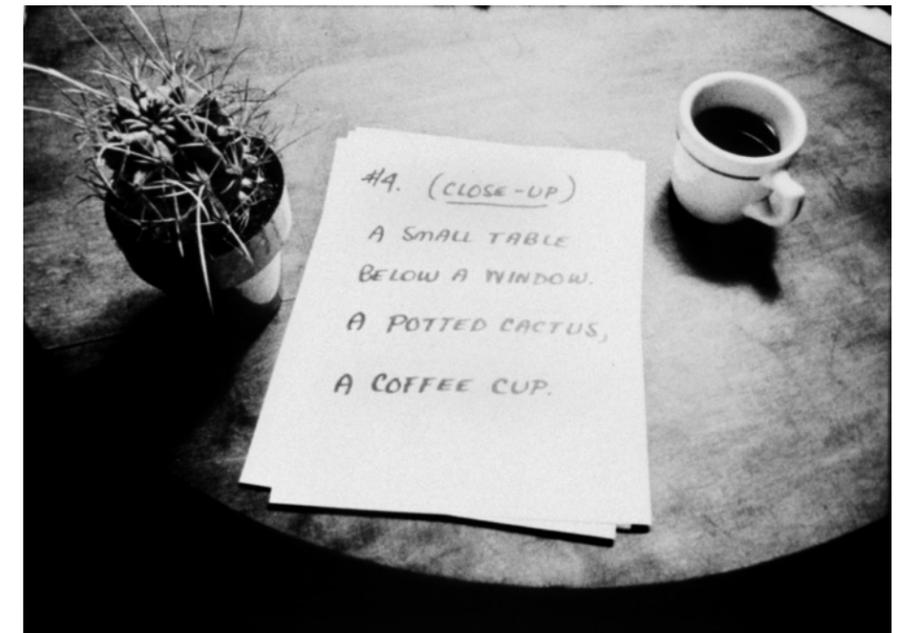
¹ John Berger succinctly opens the first chapter of *Ways of Seeing* with the following sentences: “Seeing comes before words. A child looks and recognizes before it can speak.”

Cover image
Fiona Banner, *Smoky Nude*, 2006.
Photography by Josh White.

FIVE CHILDREN
TOUR THE
WONDEROUS
FACTORY
OF AN ODD
CANDY-MAKER.

A DISGRACED
MALE MODEL
IS BRAIN-
WASHED
TO BECOME
AN ASSASSIN.

Melinda McDaniel, *Movie Lines*, 2007.



Hollis Frampton, *Poetic Justice*, 1972.

Obraz
wycisza się.

The
image is
“silenced”.

Klub Zwei, *Black and White: The Back of the Images*, 2003.