

# ARTFORUM

## Fiona Banner

1301PE

6150 Wilshire Blvd.

February 11–April 9

An unflattering view of a power suit's trousers greets visitors to Fiona Banner's exhibition: aqueous gray lines diverge down a big Day-Glo orange sheet to form *Pinstripe Bum Face*, 2015. If the intrepid financiers who steered the 2008 banking crisis sought unregulated waters, Banner finds premonitions of our recessional present in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899). The novel opens on a dusky River Thames; Orson Welles set his unrealized screen adaptation on the Hudson—both waterways opened the world's oceans to the West's colonizing, commercial capitals. It is not lost on Banner that these waters now conceal the gangly fiber optics that keep both cities at the mouths of more ephemeral trade.

Upstairs is a salon hang of posters and prints incorporating Conrad quotes and ISBN numbers, as if posing the shadowy Company that sends Marlow after Kurtz as a venerable publisher of art books. Among them are a graphite rubbing of a brass placard that reads *Power*, 2016, and *Thames and Hudson Nude*, 2012, a silk screen of a woman's silhouette beside a page of Welles's script. On a nearby plinth sits a copy of Banner's own *Heart of Darkness*, 2015, a September issue—size magazine lavishly illustrated with glossy shots of London's financial district taken by Paolo Pellegrin, a conflict photographer. In the HD video *Phantom*, 2015, a drone tracks a copy of Banner's book as strong winds push it across a parking lot. Its pages—flapping to shreds—flash a colonnade, a revolving door, and a spread of waves.

For Conrad, madness follows mere corruption. For Banner, this holds true. In *Mistah Bag*, 2015, the phrase "Mistah Kurtz he not dead"—the artist's revision of Conrad's famous line—appears in gold serif on a black plastic shopping bag. The body may be buried, but the spirit still sails.

— Travis Diehl



View of "Fiona Banner," 2016.