

Press Release

30 November 2007

Tate Britain Christmas tree by Fiona Banner

Peace on Earth 2007

Tate Britain, Rotunda, Level 2

30 November 2007 – 1 January 2008

Open 10.00-17.50 every day except 24, 25 and 26 December

Admission free

Tate Britain has commissioned Fiona Banner to create its Christmas tree for 2007, which is on display from 30 November 2007 until 1 January 2008.

At around 30 feet high this traditional Nordic tree is the largest to be installed at Tate Britain. Banner has decorated the tree with 123 handmade kit models of all the world's fighter planes that are currently in service, anywhere in the world. This collection of diminutive models forms an 'A to Z' of military airplanes, yet bears no markings of nationality.

Banner explains: "It was a major research job to establish exactly what planes are in military service worldwide. It took a long time to collect the models from all over the world. Some models didn't exist and I had to construct them from scratch."

Evoking a sense of childlike wonderment, obsession and menace these intriguing objects are at once seductive and unsettling. While the planes have been eroticised and celebrated – as technological marvels, symbols of power, and childhood toys – they also allude to the brutality of war. The names of the planes are taken from nature and often adopt the names of birds such as "Harrier", "Albatross", "Hawk", "Falcon", and "Eagle". Roosting here in the tree, the relationship between mankind and nature seems to be under interrogation.

Fiona Banner was born in Liverpool in 1966. Banner works with sculpture, installation, film and drawing to explore the problems and possibilities of language. She first became known for her text scapes, vast unedited verbal descriptions of war films Banner has participated in numerous exhibitions worldwide and she was also nominated for the Turner Prize in 2002.

This is the twentieth year that Tate has invited a leading contemporary artist to create a Christmas tree for the gallery. Previously commissioned artists are: Sarah Lucas (2006), Gary Hume (2005), Richard Wentworth (2004), Mark Wallinger (2003), Tracey Emin (2002), Yinka Shonibare (2001), Catherine Yass (2000), Mat Collishaw (1999), Richard Wilson (1998), Michael Landy (1997), Julian Opie (1996), Cornelia Parker (1995), Cathy de Monchaux (1994), Shirazeh Houshiary (1993), Craigie Aitchison (1992), Boyd Webb (1991), Lisa Milroy (1990), Tim Head (1989) and Bill Woodrow (1988).

Fiona Banner talks about *Peace on Earth* in an interview for TateShots, available on Tate Online: www.tate.org.uk/tateshots

Banner has also published a book "All the World's Fighter Planes" under her own imprint The Vanity Press. www.fionabanner.com

Images and information about all Tate's artist Christmas trees since 1988 and the Fiona Banner-designed Tate Director's Christmas cards can be viewed on Tate's website at www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/christmastree.