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Enough is enough

FRANCIS E PARKER visits with Barbara Kruger.



THE AUSTRALIAN CENTRE for Contemporary Art has been transformed by the American artist Barbara Kruger. Kruger is recognised as one of the most important practitioners on the international contemporary art scene. With an evident background in graphic design, her text-based work operates like a sophisticated form of culture jamming.

At ACCA, the visitor is lured through the first two galleries on a video-projected carpet of scrolling text, a jumble of phrases lifted from popular film and TV. The floor addresses the viewer directly, rolling on like the screensaver of a vacant mind.

This leads past a wall bearing a list of desirable commodities and into a room overwhelmed

by the dictum PLENTY OUGHT TO BE ENOUGH at full height around the wall in bold white on black. On the floor are various quotes and slogans which critique or imitate the consumerist mindset.

Finally the viewer is pitched into *Twelve* (pictured), a multi-screen installation mimicking the language and style of American television with scrolling subtitles à la CNN. Some of the earlier text reappears as the private thoughts or subtexts to scenes in which talking heads bicker and bitch across at each other from the gallery's walls.

Effectively, we are on the table around which the actors eat or drink, watching them consume with the uneasy sense that it is we who are being spoken to. They vent their frustration – the

ugly phenomenon of conflict as entertainment – which is born of dissatisfaction from not being able to attain everything which the media tells them they must buy or feel.

The bad acting reminds us that we too are actors in our own day-time dramas, using the lines we are fed to attain the image we are supposed to project. The work's power is that it subverts the idioms of a media which is constructed to manipulate us in order to break the spell of apathy. The system which Kruger's installation mimics wants to keep us in its belly; "Stay scared. Stay stupid. Stay tuned."

The exhibition runs until February 26 at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art.