

ARTFORUM

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I N T E R N A T I O N A L

RICHARD TUTTLE
GAYLEN GERBER
DIGITAL CAPITALISM
CAMERON JAMIE



\$10.00



MILAN

Shannon Ebner

KAUFMANN REPETTO

Shannon Ebner's "Black Box Collision A," 2013–, is a series of large-scale photographs, all depicting the letter A. Seventeen of these images

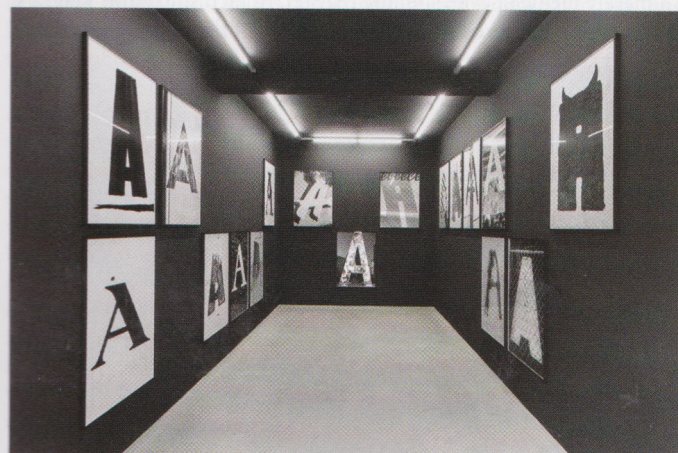
dominated her solo show "Black Box Collision A: Gasoline & Auto Electric." The many reiterations of the same letter constituted a clear invitation to reflect on the language of photography and on the legibility, even authenticity, of its subjects. The framed Epson ink-jet prints, all approximately sixty-four by forty-three inches, seem to find their subject in a wide range of situations, often advertising. They oscillate in their presentation of the letter they depict. Some are emotional, dramatic renderings that turn A into a quasi-totemic image, while others offer an organic presentation, in which the letter seems to form a mass or landscape. Explicating their syntactic, rhythmic, spatial, and plastic qualities, Ebner turns these characters into expanded forms, fragments of an exaggerated reality, superimposed in a pulsating and atmospheric density.

The installation reflects the artist's observation that ordinary life is the result of a jumble of daily epiphanies and encounters. Any one of these particular letters might be encountered, for example, on a city street by a commuter on the way to work or home. "Auto Body Collision," 2014–, which made up the second part of the show, includes a group of cardboard letters covered in gray auto-body paint. The letters compose the words GASOLINE and AUTO, but they were juxtaposed with three photographs of found bits of graffiti and other such spontaneous inscriptions. The latter look almost like ancient hieroglyphics, seeming to come from rupestrian carvings or archaeological digs, although in fact they might be found on walls in the more run-down areas of towns anywhere in the world today. They are simultaneously archaic and modern, sometimes even futuristic, both fragments of a dead language and fossils of a civilization yet to come; they seem to contain both recollection and premonition, memory and mirage.

Soiled yet also aseptic, this show was truly a place where opposites coincided, floating in a precarious but plausible equilibrium, oneiric yet pregnant with meaning. Ebner's work is an exquisite abstraction of wisdom that becomes not only taste, detachment, irony, affection, desecration, but also an awareness of humankind that, in the final analysis, means benevolence and therefore poetry. Indeed, the second part of the show was the continuation—and a significant portion—of an exhibition of the same name, "Auto Body Collision," which was presented this spring at the Fondazione Memmo in Rome. The complete version reveals what the artist refers to as a poem but is in reality a work of prose, one that uses a colorful language we might very likely define as vernacular, to express, in writing that also exploits the word's potential for conveying images, the lexicon and above all the atmosphere of automobile scrapyards. Collecting fragments from the most undervalued semantic and semiological realities, the artist creates her poetry from those quotidian meanderings that are too often overlooked, forgotten, and omitted.

—Marco Tagliaferro

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.



View of "Shannon Ebner," 2014.