

Miami

Shannon Ebner

ICA - INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART, MIAMI

4040 NE 2nd Avenue

October 8–January 17

One way of thinking about photography is to see it as an art of accumulation, a medium that defies the very notion of autonomy. Any single image depends on others for its logic, and meaning necessarily accrues across series. Shannon Ebner's syntactical artwork embodies this notion of cumulative consequence and engages the momentum inherent in the photograph's serial capacity. "A Public Character," Ebner's latest museum exhibition, comprises works across a variety of media, including sculpture, installation, and video. The peculiar semantic space of the photograph reveals itself to be the formative structure, however.

Thirty-one examples from "Black Box Collision A," 2013–, an ongoing series of large-scale black-and-white photographs featuring the letter "A," line the walls of the first room that visitors encounter. Each piece possesses a distinct personality—some hard and steadfast, others floating and flat. With traces of advertisements and public signage, these works are easily read as kinds of "public characters" coming together in a protean play of discursivity.

A perennial pairing of photography and language marks Ebner's poetic practice and her conceptual roots. Not only is the photograph evoked as akin to language, as a shifting signifier, but, moreover, language parallels photography here as a system of meaning. See, for instance, *Auto Body Collision*, 2014–, which portrays details from car-repair shops and connects notions of linguistic and visual transmission with automotive analogies—the "generator" and the "alternator." Throughout, the show suggests collisions of denotation, encounters between literal and figurative vehicles of sense, allowing a moment within the space of art to at once speed up and brake against the imagistic conventions that crowd everyday life.



View of "Shannon Ebner: A Public Character," 2015–16.

— Heather Diack