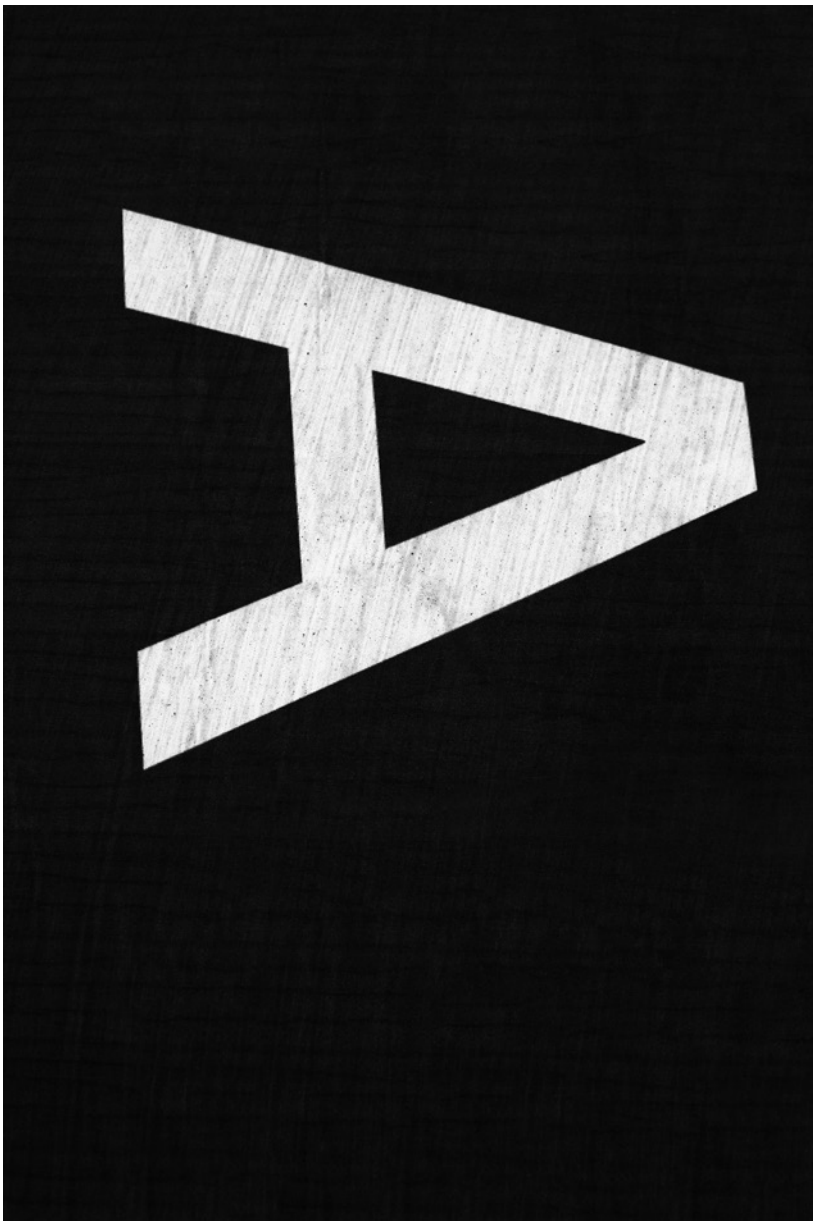
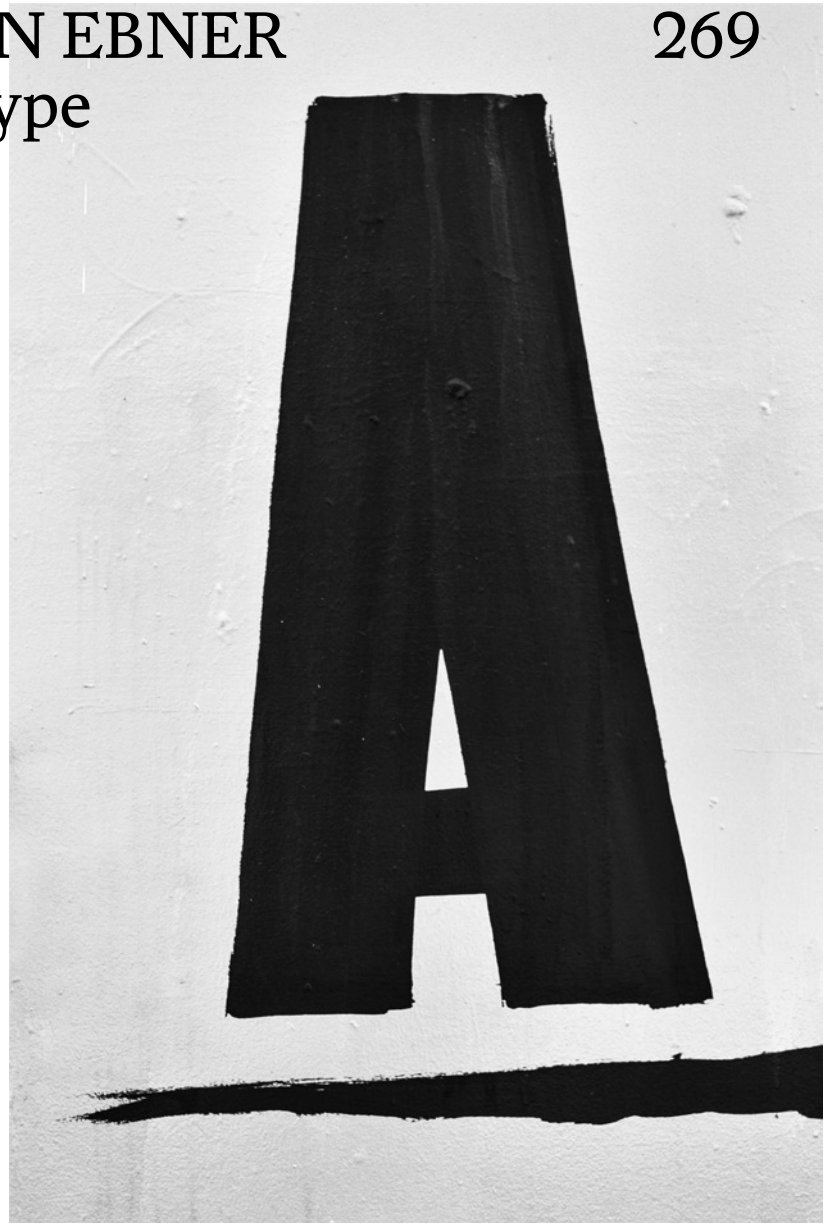


SHANNON EBNER
A Type

269







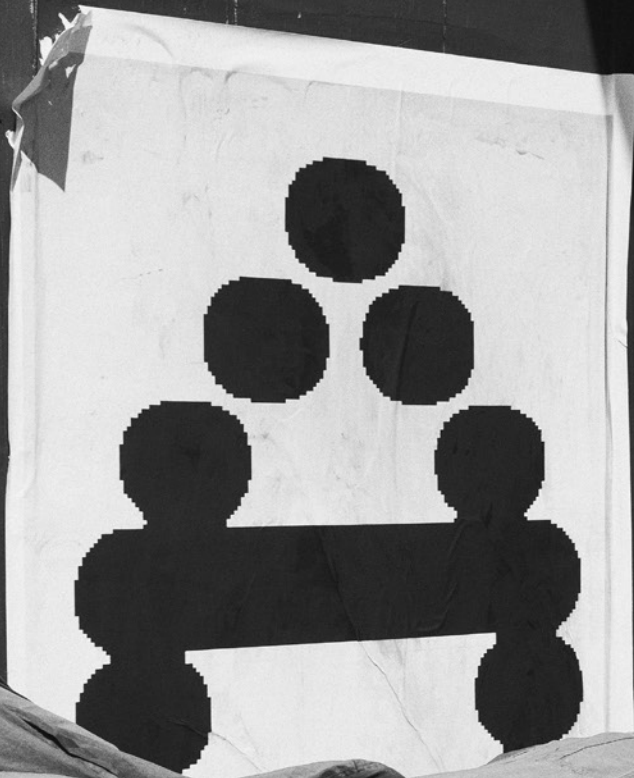
DANGER
NO
TRESPASSING

DANGER
HARD HATS,
EAR AND EYE PROTECTION
REQUIRED BEYOND
THIS POINT

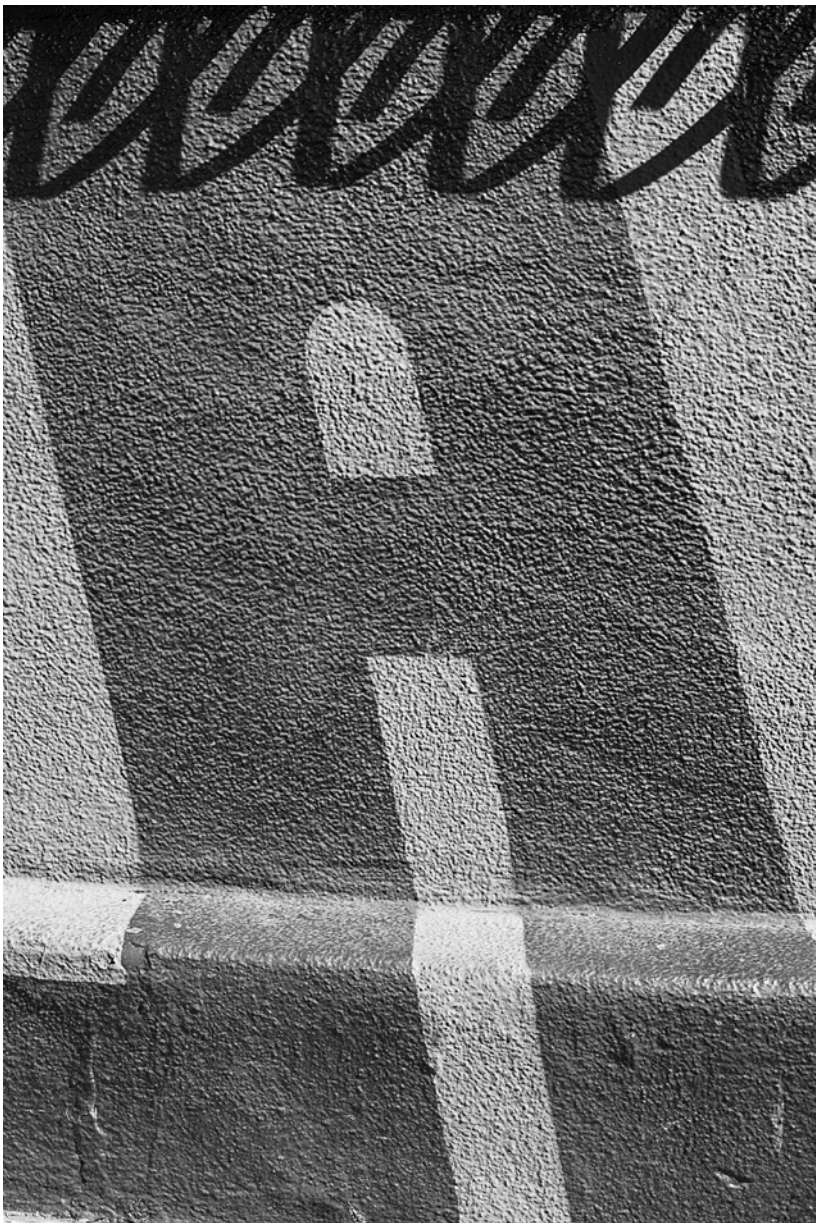
NO
MONI
BY V
CAR

D
SM

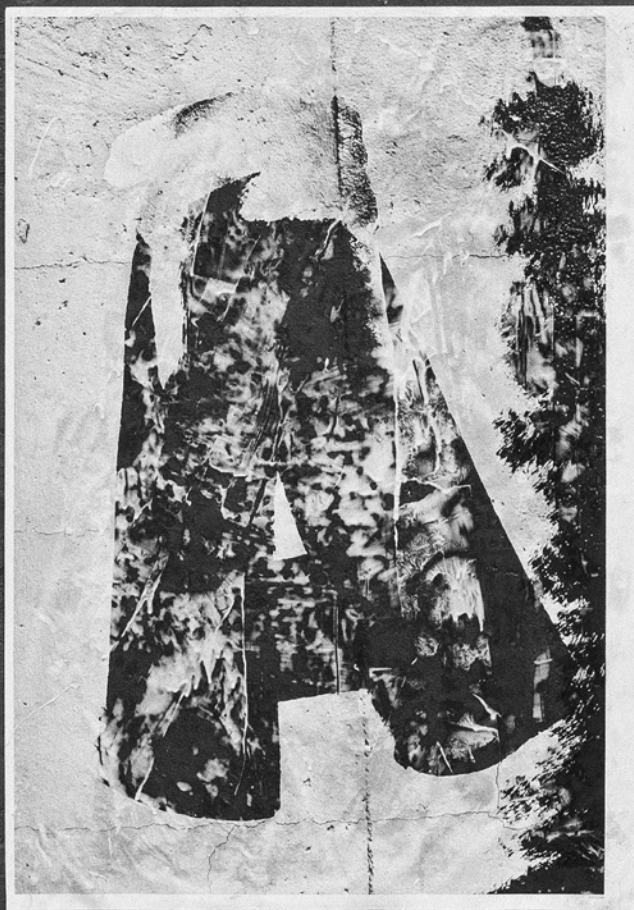
DEWALK
CLOSED ST
PLEASE USE
OTHER SIDE



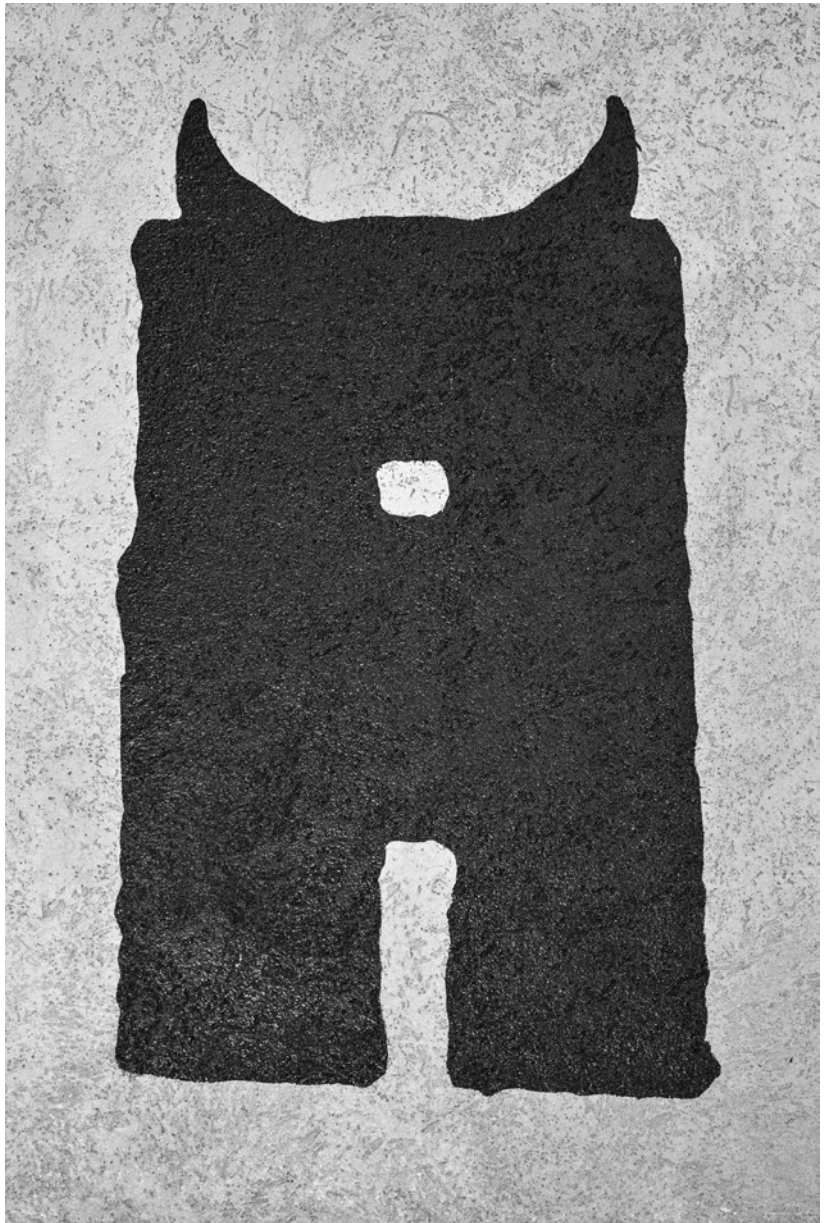












A Type

In Western philosophy, the written word has long been regarded as a secondary form of communication. Unlike the immediacy of spoken language—which emerges from the depths of the body and allegedly guarantees the speaker's intended meaning—written language is prone to shape-shifting, potentially changing its bearing every time it is shared. Where words come from, where they land, how we encounter them... all of this shapes the way that meaning is created and experienced.

Shannon Ebner's practice breaks language down into its component elements, releasing it from its ties to written and spoken discourse. Language, in Ebner's work, is partial and incomplete, with a different kind of presence in time and space. Here, on the previous pages, it takes on a new character and calls for a kind of attention that it's not usually given when

it's embedded in words. The letter A is an indefinite article—a generalisation, used when the identity of the noun that follows it is unknown. Plucked from its context by Ebner's camera, *A* doesn't identify anything in particular. *A... a what? What does A stand for?*

A IS FOR ABSTRACTION...

When a word is spoken again and again, it loses its meaning, its link to reality, shifts itself into a shape made of sounds. Set apart from discourse, individual letters do the same. In Ebner's images, *A* is many things... an arrangement of light on paper, a negative space, the trace of something flickering and ephemeral, a dimensionless pattern of light and dark. *A* fades into fragments, it stands out from its surroundings, or blends, wisp-like, into them, barely recognisable. (*A is for Anarchy... A, conjured out*

of the shaky lines of a spray can. The single letter—minus its surrounding 'O', but still recognisable; perhaps the graffiti writer was interrupted—taking the place of a manifesto.) Here, meaning emerges in a different way—no longer part of a chorus, but a solo act: *A* as the trace of a hand's movement. *A* as a graphic form with its own character and presence. All of these attributes, given to it by its transformation into an image.

A IS FOR ABSTRACTION, AGAIN...

The previous pages contain a selection from Ebner's ongoing series, *Black Box Collision A*. This series formed the basis of Ebner's 2015 exhibition, *A Public Character*. It also appeared, in edited form, in *A HUDSON YARD* (2014–15)—a suite of 12 posters, wheat-pasted at various locations in Manhattan's gentrifying Chelsea district

(*A is for Acquisition, Assets, Appreciation*), and further transformed into documentary images, video work, and a public performance. *A* is abstracted from its original contexts, from written language, sent back out into the respectful silence of the gallery space and later, into the chaos of the built environment, shifting back and forth between two and three dimensions. Here, on these pages, all of this and none of this.

A IS FOR ARCHITECTURE...

A building is a kind of text. It speaks of social values and material culture, but mostly, it speaks the language of power. *A* is for Authority, but also for Actions that unsettle it. *A* as an intervention... standing apart from the urban fabric, *A* takes on the bulk and weight of an object. Letters become strange when they're given three dimensions—louder, more transgressive, more than superficial: 'A SOCIAL INJECTION—A CONDITION—A SELF', as Ebner writes.

A IS FOR ARBITRARY...

We like to think of language as a reliable tool, one that can be trusted to deliver the message we intend. In fact, it is nothing of the kind. Shannon Ebner uses the image to unsettle language, to reveal its opacity, its unstable, mercurial nature. (*A is for Absolute Authorship, but not Always*). *A* is the difference between 'a text' and *text*... the difference between language as an apparatus, and its more free-floating and provocative form as art.

— Text by Eugenie Shinkle

All images from the series *Black Box Collision A* and *A Hudson Yard*, 2014–15 © Shannon Ebner, courtesy of the artist

Images list:

p.269 (top to bottom)
Black Box Collision A (30), 2014
Black Box Collision A (4), 2013

p.273 (top to bottom)
Black Box Collision A (27), 2014
Red A, 2012

p.274 (top to bottom)
Black Box Collision A (14), 2014
Black Box Collision A (23), 2014

p.278 (top to bottom)
Black Box Collision A (19) 2014
Black Box Collision A (28) 2014

p.270, 271, 272, 275, 276, 277:
A HUDSON YARD, 2014 – 15
12 posters, 72 x 48 in. each

In collaboration with with David Reinfurt. Commissioned and produced by High Line Art. Presented by Friends of the High Line and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Photographs by Timothy Schenck

SHANNON EBNER is an artist whose work takes the form of photographs and poems that question the limits and ambiguity of language and investigate the boundary between image and text, as well as seeing and reading. Through sculptural forms and photographic imagery, Shannon's work critiques the ideologically charged language of democracy, freedom and war that has been heightened since the devastating events of 9/11. She deconstructs language and uses it in many different ways—puns, palindromes and borrowed phrases—to emphasise its ambiguity and to make it appear almost unrecognisable. Shannon is based in Los Angeles.

EUGENIE SHINKLE is a photographer and writer based in London, England. Originally trained as a civil engineer, she holds an MA in Photography, Art History and Landscape Anthropology, and a PhD from the Slade School of Fine Art. She writes and lectures widely on a range of topics including architecture, landscape, vision machines and human/technology relations. Eugenie is co-editor of the photobook platform c4journal, and a regular contributor to many online and print publications.