

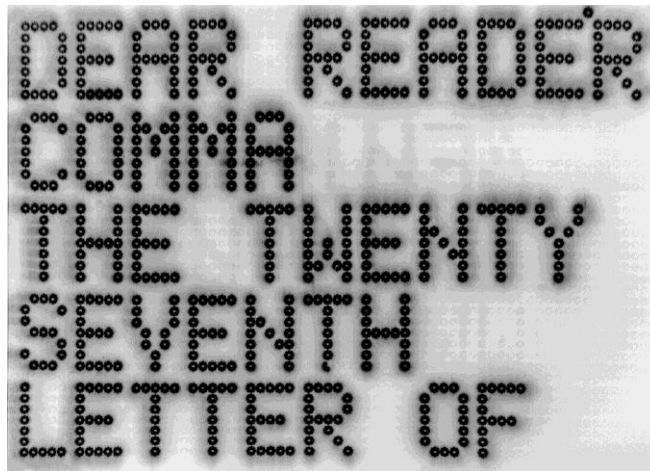
Shannon Ebner
The Electric Comma

05 September – 02 November 2013
 69 South Audley St London W1
 9 Balfour Mews London W1
 Tuesday – Saturday, 11 – 6pm

Shannon Ebner's first exhibition at Sadie Coles HQ, *The Electric Comma*, marks the culmination of a three-year project. *Black Box Collision A*, a parallel project to *The Electric Comma*, is simultaneously on view at 9 Balfour Mews.

The Electric Comma first began as a thirteen-line poem written in 2011. The writing of the poem was the first step towards its final realisation in visual form through the act of photographing. For this reason, the language of the poem served as a series of directives, and provided a set of circumstances, that informed the making of the project. "Dear Reader Comma" the poem begins, in a direct address to

the reader, and concludes by telling the reader to "go outside this time and plug in some really long chord / this will make your photographic dance the electric comma / and promptly disarrange the photographic universe / I state this comma / turn it around / turn it around." Last autumn, Ebner rented a Portable Changeable Message Sign, typically used to announce roadside emergency information such as changing traffic patterns or accidents, detours and other unforeseen delays. She programmed the sign with the Electric Comma text, an act which served as the basis for the exhibition.



Upstairs at South Audley Street, six black-and-white photographs depict portions of the original poem in varying degrees of legibility. The comma, as a means of simultaneously revealing and restricting meaning, is the leitmotif of this series. The photographs play out the mutable nature of language, according with curator Laura Hoptman's observation that "[Language] can be unreadable, although it can also be apprehended and even pronounced. It subverts conventional modes of interpretation. It is not text, it is form, and that can have an infinite number of variations. In some cases form is its content. In some cases it resists form altogether."¹ Downstairs is a single-channel video work that animates photographs of the sign taken in fifteen different positions over the course of one day. As the sign rotates its screen hydraulically, the camera also moves around the sign. Even though the sign's base is fixed, the movement of the photographer around the reflected surface of the sign depicts a continually shifting landscape recorded on the surface of the image.

Black Box Collision A is comprised of thirteen large-scale photographs of the letter 'A'. Found on walls, vehicles, electronic surfaces and the tops of building façades, each photograph is the result of close observation of a redundant vestige of sign, advertisement, message, or other mode of visual communication. Devoid of their original context and printed to human scale, Ebner's A's in the black box of the gallery collide like bodies in space, bodies in camera, and bodies in the black box of the eye's mind. Alongside these images is one final long and narrow work called *Public Surface Pattern* – a remnant from a bridge overpass found along a highway in the artist's home state of California, and rotated on end to underscore a pattern of human made marks. *Public Surface Pattern* signals to high-speed motorists travelling past its noisy yet distant message, pointing to a place where language is the vehicle – both real and imagined - and the electronic image writes itself into binary form.

Shannon Ebner (b. 1971, New Jersey) lives and works in Los Angeles. Recent solo exhibitions include those at the Hammer Museum (2011), MoMA PS1 (2007), and group exhibitions such as *Ecstatic Alphabets/Heaps of Language*, MoMA, New York (2012), *ILLUMInations*, 54th Venice Biennale, Venice (2011), *The Spectacular of Vernacular*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2011), 6th Berlin Biennale of contemporary Art, Berlin (2010), and the Whitney Biennial, New York (2008). In April 2012, Ebner was commissioned by Dia Art Foundation to produce an artist website project entitled *Language is Wild*. In 2009, Ebner's book *The Sun as Error*, was published by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in co-operation with Dexter Sinister. On Friday 18 October 2013, Ebner will be in conversation with Stuart Comer (Curator, Media and Performance Art, MoMA) at the Institute of Contemporary Art, London.

¹ Laura Hoptman, 'THIS LANGUAGE IS ECSTATIC BECAUSE' in *Ecstatic Alphabets* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2012).

For further information please contact the gallery at +44 (0)20 7493 8611 or press@sadiecoles.com