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Shannon Ebner: Critics' Picks

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The Grande Raccordo Anulare (Great Ring Junction) has surrounded Rome's urban area since 1979. Despite being a crucial roadway to the city, it has never attracted attention for its aesthetics or sociological function. Recently, not only did the motorway become the protagonist of *Sacro GRA* (2013), winner of the Golden Lion at the Seventieth Venice International Film Festival, but it is also the center of Shannon Ebner's solo exhibition "Auto Body Collision." The artist closely explored the junkyards around the city's orbital highway, developing a discourse that focuses on the notion of ruin. Disrupting a stereotypical representation of Rome's ancient past, the show recuperates an alternative notion of the abandoned, shedding new light on the discarded.

The contrast between the opulent venue and the minimal forms used by Ebner is evident throughout the exhibition, and is especially pronounced when one enters the room where the work *Auto Body Center*, 2014, a black-and-white geometric ink-jet print, rests on two cinder blocks under a grandiose frescoed ceiling. In one of the subsequent spaces, photographic images of crushed cars and mechanical pieces present in the junkyards (*Auto Body Collision Roma Series I-VIII*, 2014) portray a striking and apocalyptic landscape, where the mechanical ruin seems to claim life back. Ink-jet prints of various tools (*Instrumentals*, 2013), cinder blocks,

and elements of language and design (*Alignment, Suspension, and Speed*, 2014), along with cardboard cutouts resembling car parts (*Counter Forms I-V*, 2014), follow in the subsequent rooms. Two large-scale text pieces interrupt the flow of images and investigate the relationship between photography and language. Cardboard gray letters positioned on the floor against the wall of the central gallery spell CLASS AUTO CENTER, calling attention to the anthropomorphic nature of the mechanically discharged and to the potential life of the defunctionalized objects. The exhibition ends in a mesmerizing hallway, where a second text work composes the phrase FIRST COLLISION, reflecting itself in the mirrored walls. A collision has certainly occurred: The works perform a new representation of the magniloquent history of the city, reinterpreted through its disavowed. Recuperated into novel constellations, the inanimate inhabitants of the junkyards turn from static to active once again.

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