

BRÖTZMANN

GRAPHIC WORKS 1959-2016

BROETZMANN
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The public presentation of the book will take place September 23rd 2016 at the BIM HUIS, Amsterdam in connection with an exhibition BROETZMANN GRAPHICS and 2 duo concerts with Han Bennink and Heather Leigh.

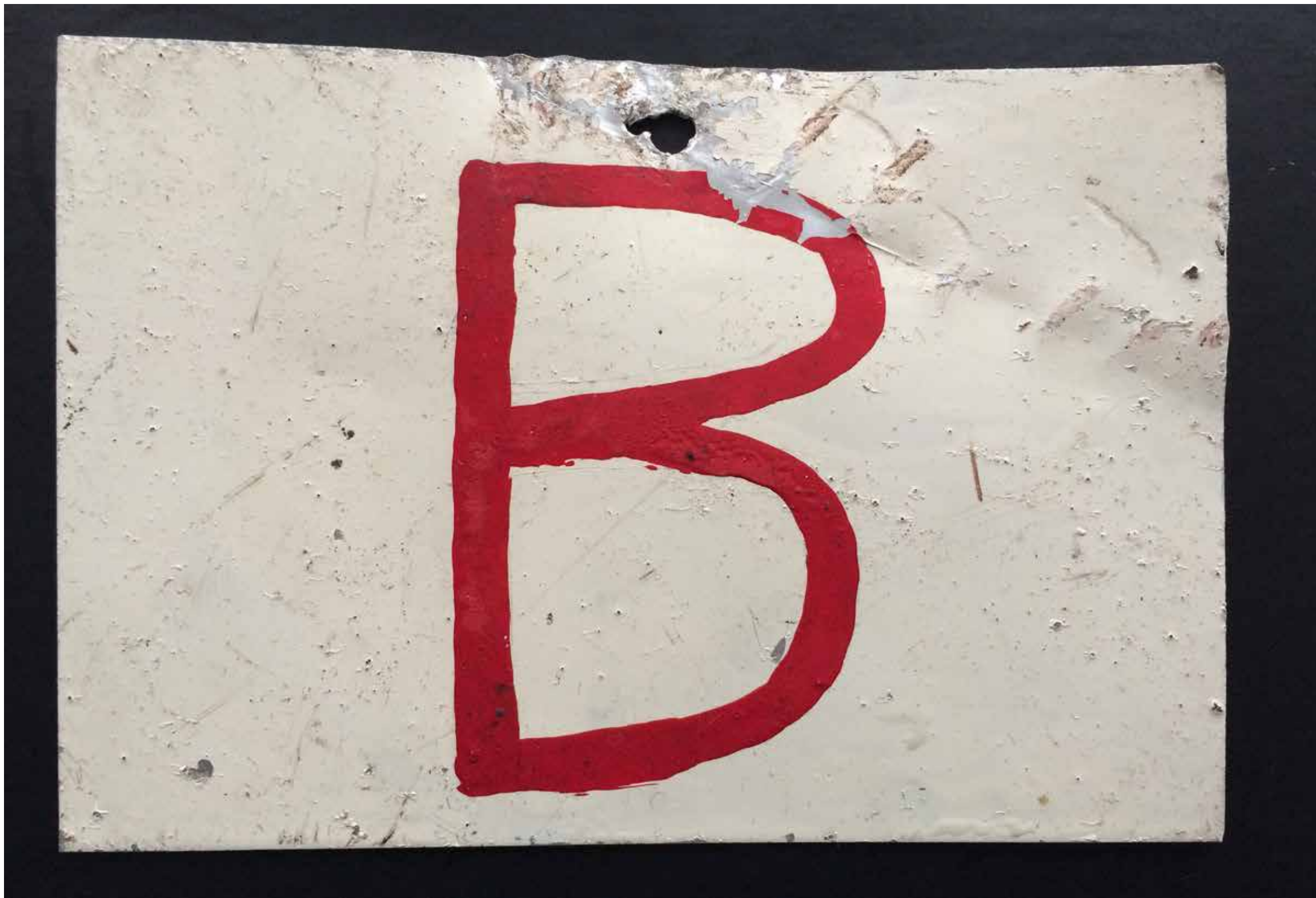
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The visual aesthetic pioneered by Peter Brötzmann across his sleeve designs and poster work did as much to define the parameters of European free improvisation as the music of his key ensembles. Perhaps more so: in the UK, certainly, FMP releases were hard to come by back in the day and I, for one, spent hours poring over catalogues and magazines that featured tantalising reproductions of these uniquely attractive and challenging artworks, formulating the kind of music in my head that would match the radical iconoclasm of the hard-stamped typography, the lighting flashes of black/white/red.

In Brötzmann's hands typography has teeth: crude, often hand-drawn, folk-brutalist and with an austere sonorous quality that is as auraless as the sucker punch of his surname. The text based posters are monolithic; towers of precarious black text that seem set in order to contain a ferocious energy. He often appears in his own designs, just as often as a shadow or the outline of himself, making play of the exaggerated jaw, the slouch, the walrus moustache, reconstructing himself in a series of gestures that have come to imply the kind of steely determination to burn a hole through goddamn jazz that the whole team brought to the German free jazz project, a goad that he seems to wear on his face and in his stance on some of the great FMP sides. Elsewhere his own art reappears in the design, affording another confrontation, another collaboration with himself and a further unfolding of the life of his artworks, most of which plays out in a silent communion between Brötzmann and his works in his home studio/gallery. But here the process introduces a further strata of improvisation, a collaboration or reckoning with himself over time, an attempt to find just the right gestural response to bring, say, the figure of a feather mounted on a rough pyramid of wood, to some kind of new life, the visual gestures that would make it vibrate or that would contain its intent, which is one of mute expression, and the text too, the precise placement of it that would make of it a whole, a single gesture, and a response to a form of life that might talk a little differently from Ken Vandermark but that still presents itself as a formidable collaborator.

Of course Brötzmann shies away from explicating any kind of common aesthetic that might run through his visual designs, his paintings and sculptures and his music but it isn't hard to unfurl; the love of a certain fugitive texture; of the exaggerated patina of time (which he heard in the music of Lionel Hampton and saw in the décollage of Wolf Vostell); of tactile detail; of unequivocal force.

This collection of Brötzmann's design work establishes no form of development in any kind of traditional way. If what you're looking for is an arc, a sort of melodious career denouement, then clearly you are in the wrong place. Rather it demonstrates a monomania, an alchemy of form, a high modernist hermeticism that obsesses over the possibilities of the presentation and reproduction of art in a semi-mechanical age; the teeth of a typewriter; the keys on a saxophone; the repeat action of a machine gun.

St Andrews, July 2016



THESE LITTLE
ACCOMPANIED ME
THROUGH MORE THAN 5
DECADES / NEVER LEFT
ME ALONE / NO STUPID
QUESTIONS I LIKE A
GOOD FRIEND

MYRA

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