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Capturing and Conveying Sincerity *808 Gallery show examines its meaning to emerging artists*

What is sincerity, and what role does it play in contemporary art? A new exhibition at the 808 Gallery titled *On Sincerity* attempts to address these knotty questions in the work of more than 20 artists working in a range of mediums.

Lynne Cooney (GRS'08,'15), College of Fine Arts School of Visual Arts exhibition manager, partnered with Liz Munsell, assistant curator of contemporary art and MFA programs at the Museum of Fine Arts, to find emerging artists whose work explores the subject in some way. "Our process was a little organic," Cooney acknowledges. "We were looking at artists and thinking about different artists' work and whether or not they seemed sincere or could fall into notions of sincerity." But Cooney says she and Munsell knew the show couldn't be a broad exploration about sincerity, but had to be more contained.

The exhibition is loosely divided into four categories, or "narratives," says Cooney: "Artists who describe their collaborative processes and interactions with materials as both the means and content of their work; artists whose work serves to build relationships and community through generosity and exchange; artists who employ their own bodies as expressions of intimacy, vulnerability, or the complexity of human relations; and artists who appropriate the manipulative visual languages of mass media to create self-reflexive forms of communication."

The show includes paintings, installations, multimedia, video, and photography. The sheer diversity in medium, form, and content suggests myriad interpretations of sincerity. Much of the work has an emotional resonance to it. In the series of small graphite drawings by Rob Matthews, the viewer's eye is drawn to the artist's deeply felt and intimate portraits of his immediate family and close friends. The faces of his subjects are expressive, and each holds a meaningful, talisman-like object, including a starfish, rosary beads, a Bible, and a photograph. With these shadowy, soft, detailed drawings, Matthews invites the viewer to share in his most intimate relationships. In Charles Gute's amusing and intriguing series *Random Tweets Reformatted as Telegrams*, the artist has pasted typewritten tweets onto old Western Union telegrams. Encompassing the banal and trivial, the tweets take on new meaning when juxtaposed with the iconic telegrams. Modern communication overlays the historical, illustrating both the curious ways language has evolved over time and the influential role of social media in conveying everyday details, whereas telegrams were reserved largely for conveying news of events of great importance.

Douglas Weatherby's *808 Gallery Storage Project* is a large and imposing jumble of artifacts (paintings and other work from visual arts students from the 1960s and '70s that he unearthed in a storage room at CFA). His company, Environmental Services, performs contracted cleaning and repairs for individuals and institutions, transforming the space and objects found into sculptural installations. Here, building materials, wall panels, and the long forgotten student paintings come together in one installation. The artist combines functional labor services and artistic creation in a visually arresting work.

Cooney sees *On Sincerity* as a reaction against the often-alienating, disengaged nature of the art world. "We're looking at practices that are speaking against that," she says. She hopes viewers will draw personal connections to the highly interpretative works in the show. "There's no coded language that is impenetrable. It is more genuine in terms of its message. We hope this exhibition creates a community."

On Sincerity runs through December 17 at the 808 Gallery, 808 Commonwealth Ave. Admission and gallery events are free and open to the public. The 808 Gallery is open Tuesday to Friday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 1 to 5 p.m. Find more information here.

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Douglas Weatherby, *808 Gallery Storage Project* 2012