

Rebecca Carter
The Reading Room, Dallas
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In the intimate space of The Reading Room, Rebecca Carter thoughtfully offers up linguistic works that reveal how intention and medium simultaneously fail and profit one another. Her show, “Re: Reading the Love Letter,” intimates how this is particularly true for personal correspondence, a form of communication certainly not immune to the vicissitudes of translation. And it is only made more perplexing when the word becomes art.

Recall how some have believed that virtuous sentiments stir within all of us, sentiments thought to be the essence a nobler humanity, of a true religion. Here, language becomes something of a Socratic adumbration conveying truth when it touches the soul. And consider how words now mainly slip. We find disjointure in every text, in every passage of every text, and there is no longer a pure relation of intention to meaning. The world over now stands as a text awaiting its interpretative deconstruction. The former, much older view provokes us to write meaningful letters to friends and loved ones, while the latter incites our playful reception and appropriation of them.

Carter’s work — mostly fragile thread compositions of words — seems inspired by both semiotic conceptions. She draws upon both without naiveté or heavy irony. The personal correspondence from which most of the pieces derive suggests intimacy, sincerity, and affection. The words and phrases extracted from the letter (or from other exchanges) seem to disclose this genuine sentimentality by being works that are delicately thread-wrought, suspended, and exposed. And, like living language, their fibrous roots seek the surrounding air. This nod towards communicable intention, however, is concurrently challenged by the very act of excerpting those words and phrases from their context. The medium, craft, and presentation of the art plays upon itself so well that it elicits an interpretive challenge: How do we read

art — especially when it uses, or is, language — that alludes to some original sincerity after it has been elegantly dissimulated into art?

Thankfully, such questions don’t actually require answers. Still, it is terribly enjoyable to experience works that provoke them. And Carter’s do just this. They belie all myths of perfect communication, but not to the point of disappointment, rather towards the experience of unending exchange.

Rebecca Carter’s work was also recently shown at the DMA as part of their Late Nights, and in a group exhibition at the Free Museum of Dallas, with a closing reception December 2.

— ANDY AMATO

Andy Amato is an artist, writer and teacher