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# Truth-Makers - Worcester Mag

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Photographs of instruments from the Harvard Museum of Historical Scientific Instruments adorn the walls of artist Carrie Crane's Boylston studio. Across her workbench, a visitor might see boxes of found objects, metal pieces, acrylic paints, colored pencils, and vintage flashcards. These are the materials she uses to manufacture her sculptural "instruments of measure" and craft their corresponding diagrams.

In her series "Becoming Truth," currently on view at the Aurora Gallery at ArtsWorcester, 660 Main St., one such instrument has a large glass chamber situated on a flat base with a meter. Inside the chamber, metal rods poke out from the base, and the chamber is connected to a thin metal tube. A graph depicting mountainous shapes that dissipate from left to right

accompanies it, and records the imagined measurements received from the instrument.

What could it document? Perhaps it measures the aftermath of injuries as outrage and activism following an event dissolve. Alternatively, you might believe it measures life expectancy based on air breathed into the metal tube. Either of these truths, Crane might say, is as true as her own description of the instrument's function.

With a bachelor's in geography from UMass, a master's in fine arts from Lesley University and time observing in the Physics laboratories of Clark University, it is no wonder Crane's work blurs science and art.

Crane describes herself as "post-media," existing without an artistic period or movement. She crafts her instruments of measure from found objects and hardware, and works with acrylic paint and graphite on paper and Plexiglas to create the layered images of her diagrams. She begins each new work by examining images of scientific instruments and allowing the pieces of found material to come together without specific pre-planning. The results are striking: her instruments closely mimic real scientific devices.

Her diagrams are inspired by 19th-century social scientist Benjamin Betts, who wrote a psychology textbook diagramming human consciousness and feelings. Like Crane's works, Betts's diagrams claim to present scientific and mathematic truths while representing emotions such as love, which cannot actually be measured. Rather than use science

for art, Crane uses art as a parallel form of science.

Crane's artistic method also draws on that of artists past. The use of found objects and collaged images inspired by scientific methods grows from a tradition that started in the early 20th century. Artist Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) created "Three Standard Stoppages" in 1913, using a meter-long string dropped from one meter high to create new standards of measurement. His work teases the scientific reverence of the meter. Another early-20th-century artist, Jean (Hans) Arp (1886-1966), created collages by dropping ripped pieces of paper and gluing them to the canvas where they had fallen. Arp claims the laws of physics and randomness for his art. Much like Duchamp's recreation of the meter or Arp's physics, Crane uses found objects to play with scientific truths. She appropriates perceived scientific fact in works that act like they could measure truth, but don't. In this way, she places her authority as artist on the same level as scientist. Who is allowed to make truth? The power of truth, Crane might argue, lies in the hands of those with the authority to define it.

Much like a scientist, Crane has power: her interpretation and intention of a work overrides others. She hopes to disrupt some of this in "Becoming Truth" by prompting viewers to approach her works with their own desire to question truth. Rather than imposing her own authority, she expects her viewers to develop their own theories of her instruments. Further, Crane's works are unburdened by the scientific method. They document truth differently than a scientific report, and her constructions might even be more believable

because they do not claim to define scientific fact. Rather, Crane presents a visual vocabulary and leaves it to the viewer to make sense of it.

The series is aesthetically pleasing to look at, and perhaps represents a more joyful kind of truth. No explanation is needed for her viewers to enjoy the investigation of looking. Each of Crane's instruments is her challenge: What truth do you make of it?

