

Jane Benson: Half-Truths

July 15 through October 22, 2017

Curated by Steven Matijcio; Organized by the Contemporary Arts Center

ARTIST(S) Jane Benson

The story of two Iraqi brothers who escaped from Baghdad in early 2002 becomes a vehicle for British-born, NY-based artist Jane Benson to explore the social reverberations caused by geo-cultural separation. The artist uses music to tell the story in a dual-channel video entitled *Finding Baghdad (Part A)* which serves as the show's centerpiece. The video begins with two instruments as they are perfectly split in two, then proceeds to a virtual duet played by the brothers on these half instruments, each on their own screen, from their respective new homes in Germany and Bahrain. In the process the brothers momentarily bridge the distance through an emotional ballad that marries technology and tradition. *Half-Truths* also includes sculpture, drawing and weaving to expand upon the themes of division and connection. Precariously balanced on tables and mirrors, Benson's hybrid instruments stir uneasiness in the viewer as their off-kilter nature suggests perpetual turmoil. In a sister work shredded flags combine all the emblems of the countries where the brothers' immediate family live. Along with drawings made by repeated turns of her half-instruments, charcoal self-portraits made by blindly rubbing her own body and a series of incised texts that transform book pages into musical scales, Benson cobbles fertile new forms from the fractures of old.