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The 400 Meows: Searching for a Cat Named Truffaut
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The Visual Arts Center's "Inquiry" exhibit, featuring artwork from more than 50 UT professors and lecturers, is mostly housed inside the building. Except for one piece.

At first glance, it looks like an ordinary, nondescript light pole. There is nothing particularly striking about the size, shape, or color of the pole. A "missing cat" flyer stapled near the bottom only makes it more inconspicuous. Pictured on the flyer is an adorable tuxedo cat, ostensibly named Truffaut after the French New Wave auteur; there are instructions to call the number at the bottom if he is spotted.

Unfortunately, visitors to the VAC cannot find Truffaut—at least not in the literal sense—and voicemails left will be heard, but calls not returned. Professor Teresa Hubbard and longtime collaborator Alexander Birchler came across the original flyer for the missing cat in East Austin more than a year ago. They kept a copy, changed the phone number, and constructed the light pole to create *Missing Truffaut*, an homage to both the deceased filmmaker and the missing cat bearing his name.

lora reynolds gallery



"We thought it was amazing—sad that Truffaut was missing—but that someone would name their cat after a very famous, but in the U.S. less-known, French New Wave film director," Hubbard says. "We also loved the image of Truffaut that appeared on the poster. It reminded us of images of how [François Truffaut] looked in his tuxedo at the Academy Awards in 1973 when he won an Oscar for Day for Night."

If you call the number, a woman on the outgoing message gives a loving tribute to François Truffaut. At the end, she instructs callers to leave a message if they've found the cat. Ever since the piece has been up—first at Ballroom Marfa—the pair of artists have made a point to periodically check the messages that people leave.

"We've gotten numerous voicemails," Hubbard says. "Everything from someone reading a scene out of a film script to people sighting Truffaut: 'Oh, there he is, he just walked around the corner!'"

Truffaut the cat may be lost forever, or he may have been found a day after the flyers hit the streets—we'll never know. But for the last month, his image has been hidden in plain sight smack dab in the middle of campus.