

Othering Exhibition

Calia Haven Kilbo

6/3/2024

Professor Julia Lockheart

Ways Of Perceiving

“The representation of the other is deeply entwined with the representation of self...[O]thering occurs when Self represents Other in terms of what Self is not (and in terms of what self does not want to be) in a way that is "self-aggrandizing". (BISCOMBE, Monique; CONRADIE, Stephané; COSTANDIUS, Elmarie and ALEXANDER, Neeske)

For my imaginary exhibit I have curated three works of art by Sophie Calle and Masahisa Fukase. For my exhibit I have explored the concept of “othering”, and how these artists have reflected that theme. Othering exists only within the boundaries of oneself. Othering can be related to social and personal reasons. These artists may or may not have been aware how their work seems to be about someone or something bigger, but it is a reflection of their desire to relate to someone, create a concept of someone, or take a self portrait but masking it with a more profound reason.

The first artist I have shown in my exhibit is Sophie Calle. There are two art works of hers that I have related to this subject. Sophie Calle is a French photographer and conceptual artist. The first work of hers I will be showcasing is her series “The Hotel”. In 1981 Calle took a job as a chambermaid in Venice. She snuck her camera and recorder into rooms she was instructed to clean. She poked through guests wallets, trash cans, unopened mail, and even their suitcases. She photographed everything she was interested in. The black and white images she released to the public created controversy.

She greatly invaded people's private items, and not just photographed it but let the whole world see. She exposed love affairs, handwritten letters, and contents of people's trash cans. She had an obsession with creating a story about strangers. You can see so many stories concluded about strangers from her photos, but none about her. You see her photography and learn many different stories, but you learn next to nothing about Sophie Calle herself. She seems to be a background character in her own art.

The next work of Calle's I have shown in my exhibit is "The Address Book". The story goes, Calle finds an address book on the side of the street. Before returning the book to its rightful owner she copies the contents of the book. With the information inside she began to show up at the addresses written down to interview the owners of each address. She chose the first address at random. The man of the random address invites her in and offers her whiskey. She asks about the owner of the address book. He says "I'm not an intimate friend of his, and that's what embarrasses me the most. I can tell you about his looks. What's very striking about him is that his eyes are hidden behind his glasses. He looks like he is not looking. He wears very conspicuous glasses. Bad eyesight, definitely. Physically, he looks like he walked out of a Marx Brothers' movie. I see his body, the way he walks—kind of clumsy, nearsighted. These are things I really like. He's warm and shy, an unusual combination. A constant stream of words, and yet total reserve . . . He must be in his forties . . . Has a salt-and-pepper mustache . . . He's a friendly person, intelligent and pretty detached from the world . . . A good sense of humor . . . He would be a cool Marx Brother, a dispassionate clown. I'm sure he is fascinated by Woody Allen. But he would be a flat Woody Allen, with no pizzazz. It's hard to think of what more to say." She eventually goes to even more of the address, and she pieces together an image of who this man is. She was submitting the idea of him she

had built up to the newspaper. The man eventually found out and was furious. He took her to court over the matter. She did not publish it until after he died.

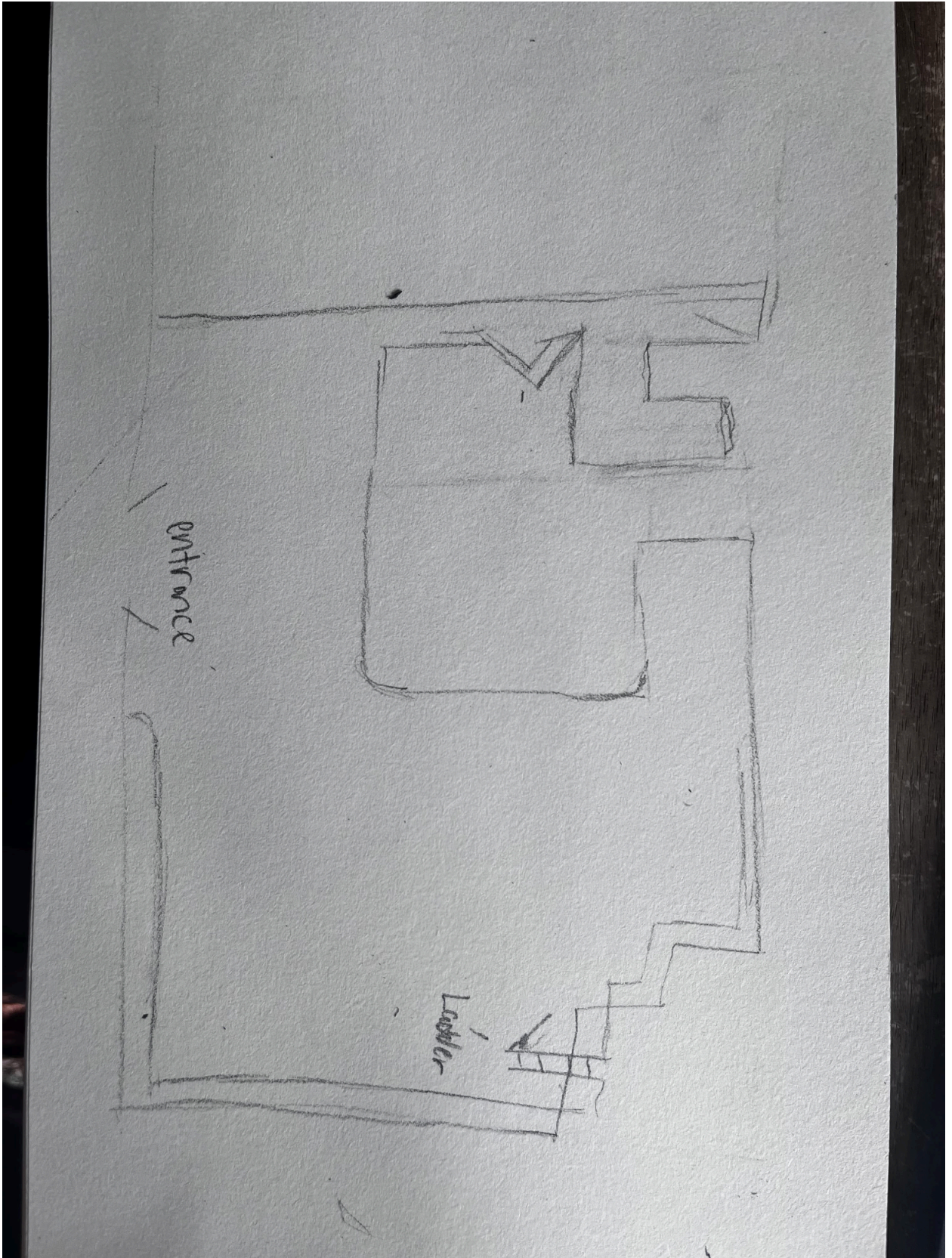
Sophie Calle used *The Address Book* as a use of documenting another human to draw a conclusion about this separate human being. This draws back to her and her desire to make an image or fit someone into a category. Some articles describe “othering” as a social construct. A man is the being/norm and the woman is the “other”. How women are a spinoff of men. Women spend their lives having to please everyone but themselves and stay behind the scenes. Calle’s work reflects this in a way her photography and art was not focused on her or her story. She was behind the scenes, and she was trying to capture stories about others.

The next artist I have shown in my exhibit is Masahisa Fukase. Fukase was a Japanese photographer. Fukase struggled with depression and the fear of death for most of his life. In his early works he published eerie black and white photos of slaughtered pigs. He went to a slaughter house and photographed shocking images. Around the same time he photographed him and his wife (at the time) in shocking intimate moments. He even went as far to photograph and publish a photo of his stillborn baby. Later on in life he and his first wife separated, and he remarried. He was obsessed with taking photos of his second wife. She grew to resent him, because he was so obsessed with capturing her every move on film. She later divorced him for his obsession with taking pictures of her. This caused Fukase to fall into a deeper depression. His grief consumed him. The only way to cope was to find a new muse. His new muse became ravens. Ravens were a reflection of his solitude and intense sadness. He later died from a brain injury at seventy two years old.

Although Masahisa Fukase did not take many pictures of himself, all of his works were a self portrait in a way. The photographs of death reflected his intense fear of it. It was his way of coping and trying to make sense of life. The photos of his wife were his way of trying to keep the moment with him forever, instead of living the moment. Knowing about his internal thoughts you can see his photographs are self portraits, and not about his wife, ravens, or pigs but really all about himself. He used the use of “other” to reflect himself.

In my imaginary exhibit I have these three works showcased in a warehouse in Morganton, North Carolina. This is my hometown, and I had my first pop up art show there. The space has tall ceilings, cement floors, tall windows that let light pour in, skinny halls, and smaller rooms off of the main space. One of the smaller rooms was once an elevator space. Now it is a small room that is a couple feet deeper than surface level. The one thing I made up for the space is the indoor balcony wrapping around the main room. I made a non realistic sketch of how I imagine it. The exhibit will be held at night, and the exhibition will be covered in hanging lights. Not many decorations or special touches will be added, for all the black and white photos are the main thing that will catch people’s eyes. The Address book will be on a circular table in the center, so people can walk around and read it. The Hotel will be on the walls of the smaller rooms and the skinny hallway. Masahisa Fukase’s photographs will be around the walls in the main room. Since there are so many photos some will be hanging from the ceiling from invisible strings. This will create a more immersive experience rather than the feeling of separation that comes with staring at art from the wall. The indoor balcony is to observe the guests and art from above. No refreshments or welcome bags will be given out to guests. The only thing each guest will receive upon entering is a cheap, digital camera.

This is so guests can capture narratives or stories of their own. Maybe they will photograph the hanging photos that speak to them in some way, Maybe they will photograph strangers to make a narrative out of them or put them in some social grouping, or maybe photograph a loved one or friend to hold onto the moment they are living in.



References

BISCOMBE, Monique; CONRADIE, Stephané; COSTANDIUS, Elmarie and ALEXANDER, Neeske. Investigating "othering" in visual arts spaces of learning. *Educ. as change* [online]. 2017, vol.21, n.1 [cited 2024-05-05], pp.137-154. Available from: <http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1947-94172017000100008&lng=en&nrm=iso>. ISSN 1947-9417.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/1947-9417/2017/1070>.

Calle, Sophie, et al. "The Address Book, by Sophie Calle." *Harper's Magazine*, 18 Oct. 2012, harpers.org/archive/2012/10/the-address-book/.

"Masahisa Fukase: The Man Who Photographed Nothing but His Wife." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 13 July 2015, www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/jul/13/masahisa-fukase-photographed-nothing-but-his-wife.

Rowlands, Lili Owen. "Sophie Calle and the Art of Leaving a Trace." *The New Yorker*, 17 Nov. 2021, www.newyorker.com/books/under-review/sophie-calle-and-the-art-of-leaving-a-trace.

"Otherness (Feminism)." *Tutor2u*, www.tutor2u.net/politics/reference/otherness-feminism. Accessed 6 May 2024.