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Voyeurism.

The Not So Innocent Act of Viewing:

The effects of voyeurism on the representation of the female form, and the artists that have used a voyeuristic lens to address the power of the act of viewing.

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Introduction

In this dissertation, I will present my findings and research on the topic of casual voyeurism, how instant access to social media has made us all casual voyeurs, and how social media is playing a large role in how voyeurism evolves online; and the negative effects this could have on women in their daily life. Throughout this dissertation, I plan to also explore the art in which voyeurism is presented or exposed for its negative aspects. I also plan to show my research into the art protesting female-based voyeurism, as the latter often divorces the female subject from any visible autonomy or power that they may possess outside of the image.

Although my research spans visual, digital, literary media and statistics, real life cases of violence against women, and the inclusion of voyeurism in Fine Art; it all touches on the many moving parts of the ever evolving need to view others, which I argue is being exacerbated by daily use of social media, making this topic the most prevalent it has been in recent years. As presented in my research, women seem to be the most vocal about voyeurism, as they are often on the receiving end of the act.

Like most people in their twenties, I use *TikTok*, the social media platform which has boomed in its quantity of current users, with a predicted estimate of user numbers rising to *16.8 million* in the UK alone (Ceci, 2022). As the content on this app averages a run-time duration of *35 seconds* (Ceci, 2024), the impact on a surface level seems to be innocuous,

quantified to be so by its short video time span; whereas the actual possible damaging impact could be how many *TikTok*'s one is consuming in that time period, and what exactly *is* being consumed. In the United Kingdom, for the past three years, the average amount of time spent on the app is forty-nine minutes per day (Fisher, 2022). For perspective, the total amount of thirty-five second videos one could watch in forty-nine minutes would be eighty-four. This is eighty-four separate videos, each one a different piece of audio and visual information.

Looking at this mechanism of the platform cannot be done without also enquiring into the algorithm of this specific platform, and the certainty that anyone engaging with videos, such as liking, reposting and sharing a video, the algorithm then feeds more of the same to the viewer, creating what is called a 'filter bubble'. A filter bubble is officially described as

'a situation in which someone only hears or sees news and information that supports what they already believe and like, especially a situation created on the internet as a result of algorithms that choose the results of someone's searches'
(Cambridge Dictionary, 2019).

This is dangerous, in my opinion, as developing a filter bubble could encourage ignorance into an array of topics, as only hearing one perspective on a situation keeps differing or even opposing views and information out of reach.

In a report on radical filter bubbles issued by RUSI (Royal United Services Institute), they observed three different social media platforms; YouTube, Reddit and Gab, to see which, if any, of the site's recommendation algorithms promoted extremist right-wing media to its

users. The report's findings showed that YouTube was the only social media site that actively promoted extreme right-wing content to its users, whereas Reddit and Gab did not. The report (Reed,2021) also states that this finding was surprising as Reddit and Gab have become notorious for such behavior. Of course, extreme right-wing content definitely exists on both Reddit and Gab, it is mentioned in this report that it exists solely down to the people who want to engage in such extremist views. This report illuminated that even our perceptions of certain social media sites are not accurate, as YouTube is mainly an entertainment site, yet hosts the biggest opportunity for communal beliefs to be shared. This shows that visual media is most susceptible to being a complicit actor in personalised algorithms, becoming itself a crucial part of our own information bubbles. The visual media we look at and how we perceive it is thus becoming immensely important. With this put into perspective, radicalisation into these negative groups seems to happen in a way in which the participant gets to a point in which their information bubble is so tuned to what they like, the opinions and facts that may counter a specific belief is not shown or shown in such a negative way that one becomes superior over the others. Whilst this isn't obviously related to voyeurism, it certainly shows the magnitude of power in which casual viewing online can be influenced by these algorithms, and if concepts of voyeurism are a part of the media one is consuming, it could warp their personal viewpoint and encourage behaviors that align with a voyeuristic perspective.

It begs the question; do we all have a desire to watch? And if so, who is being watched the most? Throughout this dissertation, I will explore these very questions, and how gender politics could be at the core of this observed imbalance of voyeuristic behaviors across

visual platforms, such as art and social media; and how both these visual platforms are being used by artists to play with perceptions of women.

Voyeurism, by definition (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023), is often described as a type of sexual disorder or perversion which, in the clinical sense, it is. However, throughout this dissertation I plan to prove through my findings and research on this topic, that due to the advent of social media, we are all voyeurs in one sense of the word or another. I will also present the instances in which artists have used conventions of voyeurism or a voyeuristic point of view to tackle issues that are often symptoms of a voyeuristic point of view such as isolation, female representation and an instance in which an artwork became the very thing it was meant to critique.

CHAPTER ONE: VOYERISM AND IT'S DANGERS

The urgency with which I felt this topic should be explored could be credited to my concern of what tangible consequences could materialise through a voyeuristic society, and who will carry the weight of those consequences. In 2020, on the 12th of September, Dominique Pelicot was arrested after multiple women reported him to a nearby security guard for taking voyeuristic *upskirting* photos at a supermarket in Carpentras, Vaucluse, France (Wikipedia Contributors, 2024). This one incident not only unraveled decades of sadistic sexual abuse perpetrated by Dominique on his wife Gisèle Pélicot, but it also informed the victim of the abuse, as Gisèle did not know she was being sexually assaulted and raped.

This arrest led to the seizing of multiple electrical devices such as computers and laptops, where on Dominique's USB stick, a folder titled *ABUS*, (*later discovered to mean 'abuse'*) held 20,000 images and videos of rapes committed on Gisèle Pélicot (Ségolène Le Stradic and Porter, 2024). As shown in the series of articles covering the trial from the court in Avignon in November of this year (Gozzi, 2024), it is revealed to the court that Dominique was using sleeping pills disguised in her food to render her unconscious before inviting random men, who Mr. Pélicot contacted through secret voyeuristic online platforms and chatrooms, to come to their family home and rape her. The previous investigation uncovered that Gisèle Pélicot had been raped 92 times by 72 men, in which only fifty of the rapists were identified and charged, now placed on trial at the same time as Dominique Pélicot (Clarke-Billings, 2024).

Gisèle Pélicot, now a woman in her seventies, was being used in such a de-humanising, abusive manner by her husband without her knowledge, for his own extreme voyeuristic desires. The fact Pélicot documented the crimes shows he must have felt, in the most twisted way, he needed to, like an urge as demented as his urge to rape and be a voyeur to the rape of his wife. The documentation and rewatching seems to be an integral part of this series of crimes, and inherently it is a crime itself, in which he has created thousands of pieces of evidence. If the videos and photos of the crime are the *smoking gun* (*Cambridge Dictionary, 2024*), why not throw the gun in the river? Why keep it at all? This presents that the urge to watch (*tied of course with sadistic perversion and extreme physical abuse in this case*), should be considered as a larger part of the conversation on women's safety,

and how voyeurism can be utilised on the internet, making the internet the most effective tool to those who use it for deviance, voyeuristic purposes, and to harm others.

In my own practice, I have found myself in recent years, pulled as if by a magnetic force to what I would describe as a desire to articulate how it feels to be watched. As the Péllicot case was ongoing at the time I was developing my own work as an artist, I set myself the task to relate the panic and fear one feels the moment they realise they are being observed, immediately making one feel unsafe. I cannot ignore that this objective is linked to a large number of women's experiences, including my own. According to the research (Office for National Statistics, 2022), women felt far more unsafe walking home alone than men during both the day and the night, with '82% of women reported feeling very or fairly unsafe, compared with 42% of men.' This research shows that women in Wales and England, are more worried about possible sexual attacks and assaults than men, exposing that women may feel like they must be more perceptive of their surrounding than others, who is watching them and who could attack them. In delving into the concept of voyeurism, and where this topic intersects art and artistic expression, many artists use the inclusion of a voyeuristic scene or composition to address the inherent power dynamics at play when one is observing another.

CHAPTER TWO: VOYUERISM REPRESENTED IN ART AND THEIR DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES



(Figure 1)

Nighthawks, an oil painting measuring at 84.1 cm by 152.4 cm (Art Institute Chicago, 2009) by American artist and painter Edward Hopper, one of Hopper's most recognizable works, places the viewer in the role of the voyeur, watching four figures through a classic American diner. However, there is a distance between the viewer and the subjects in this painting, which adds a quiet yet sinister feeling to this piece.

Hopper is one of the most recognisable American painters of the 20th century due to his use of perspective and representation of artificial light in his oil paintings, however he also captures the act of watching, often using a first-person perspective in his compositions to place the viewer in the position of the voyeur observing the scene and the figures inhabiting it.

The composition is of a metropolitan street at night, with a road running through the space between a strip of shops and across the road is a diner, its pale-yellow light illuminating the quiet pavement before it. The shops in the background, when inspected closer, are closed and perhaps closed permanently due to the lack of merchandise in the window fronts. In the middle-left corner of the composition, a bright grey green triangular strip of light illuminates the empty window display of the shop opposite the diner. There are four figures in the composition, three of them men and one woman, however each seems divorced from each other, even when in close proximity.

According to the online article (Rhodes, 2020), *Nighthawks* is often perceived as an expression of human existentialism and the loneliness that inhabits the modern age, in which to some extent I do concur. However, our perspective as a viewer in this painting is purposely as a watcher, a voyeur, and is made more realistic with the distance of the position from the subjects. As a viewer, the pavement is before us on the bottom portion of the composition, cementing ourselves in the painting as a voyeur.

The street is empty, as there are no figures outside of the diner, except for the viewer, placing us as a physical part of the piece. Hopper is known for his continued infatuation with realistic interpretations of light, more specifically artificial lighting, which would have been an obvious inspiration as Hopper was living in New York City while he painted *Nighthawks*. The use of artificial light in this specific piece acts as a spotlight into the isolation of each figure in the composition, it even adds a further degree of distance and separation to the viewer. The main light source in this scene comes from light in the diner which spills out onto the street that surrounds it, the viewer being further away from the

light expresses that there is an isolation that comes from watching from a distance. You may observe the scene, but in doing so you will not be a true part of the scene, acknowledged by the other figures, just an onlooker.

This also adds another element of possible danger to the piece as there is power in being the one observing. The figure near the middle of the composition has his back to the viewer, while the male and female figure slightly to the right of the first figure, are sitting next to each other yet not engaging with one another at all. The male figure's gaze is fixed on the waiter in the diner, and the female figure is staring at something she is holding in her hand, with an empty expression. The waiter is busy at work, hunched over yet looking straight ahead of him, alert to all his customers but unaware, like the rest of the figures, that they are all being observed. The unsettling nature of this painting is not just possible due to the muted saturation of the empty American urban landscape, or the evident disconnections the figures have with each other and the setting around them, but that we, the viewer are being placed into the metaphorical shoes of the voyeur, transforming the passive art viewer into an active part of the composition. Although creating a scene in which the viewer is a voyeur may not have been Hopper's main motivation, it has been an outcome that delivers the uncomfortable feeling of being watched without one's knowledge, while also making the viewer the perpetrator of voyeuristic watching.



(Figure 2)

In Hopper's etching *Night Shadows*, made in 1921, almost twenty years before *Nighthawks* was created, we are confronted with a slightly slanted birds eye view of what is reminiscent of the diner featured in the *Nighthawks* painting. The etching, which was gifted by Abby Aldrich Rockefeller to the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, is not on view at the current time of writing (Museum of Modern Art, 2018), measures at 24 by 28.6 cm and is another instance of voyeurism being the lens in which we view this piece of art.

One male figure is walking down the large American pavement, in front of the figure a shadow is cast across the floor and onto the diner to the right of the figure. The object casting the shadow is out of view, yet the viewer can assume the object is a lamppost, as there is a bright spotlight glowing in the lower left of the print, which is expressed through

the finest, lightest etched lines, increasing in intensity the further away from the light source. This instance of not etching the lamp post invites the viewer to scrutinise the rest of the scene unfolding below them, including the singular, anonymous male figure. Hopper places the viewer yet again, as a witness to a private moment, peering into a person's life without their knowledge.

Another feature of Hopper's work is the contrast between light and darkness. In *Night Shadows*, the difference between light and dark is akin to the difference between safety and exposure. As mentioned previously in my research (Office for National Statistics, 2022), both men and women feel less safe walking home at night, due to lack of light making it difficult to be fully aware of your surroundings, and the areas of darkness in which someone could be watching you. The light in this piece is focused, leading to both the right and left of the composition to be shrouded in shadows, thus the only area of safety being the concentrated area of the lamp post. Once again Hopper is elevating the sense of danger with the expression of artificial light in his works.

Although Hopper created both works during the 20th century, they speak to something that has evolved overtime and has perhaps been exacerbated by the advent of the internet and adaptation of social media; they are not just commentary on the act of looking, the pieces illuminate the issue of disconnection in a modern age. They make one sit in the private act of voyeurism, further forcing the viewer to question their role and perhaps even motives in their own observations and possible voyeuristic tendencies.



(Figure 3)

Cindy Sherman, an American artist and photographer, whose use of self portrait photography is based in narrative and storytelling through still images. Sherman, using her body as almost part sculpture, depicting herself as a different person or stereotype in each photograph. In her photographic series '*Untitled Film Stills* (1975-1980), Sherman sets up her camera, uses cosmetics and costumes to transform herself into multiple generic and stereotypical female representations, often found in cinema at that time. The tropes include, but are not limited to, archetypes such as 'working girl', 'ingenue' and 'lonely housewife'. This is Sherman's way of placing herself into the roles that are perpetuated in the media of the time, she becomes the subject of a voyeur in every single image in this series, and the result tends to give the viewer a plethora of clues into how the female

subject feels about their role in each photograph. This differs from Hoppers *Nighthawks*, as the scene we are met with presents more the feeling of isolation that is a facet of voyeurism, whereas in Sherman's use of a voyeuristic lens, we are confronted with a female artist's perspective on the subject.

In *Untitled Film Still 10* (1978), the viewer is confronted with a composition that is familiar yet full of ambiguity that we, as the viewer, are invited to inspect. The female figure is kneeling on the floor of a kitchen, her form taking up most of the frame in the center of the image. The figure is dressed in fashionable attire from the 1970s, in a light scoop neck top, patterned mini skirt, knee high boots and a jacket draped and resting over her shoulders. The figure's hair in this image is a very dark colour, the exact pigment indistinguishable due to the film of the photograph being in black and white, with a heavy fringe and the hair cut to chin length. Around the figure's eyes, dark makeup surrounds the upper and lower eyelids, sweeping slightly up into the temples of the skull.

A knotted wood floor lays beneath her, a refrigerator and oven stand behind her, grounding the figure in a suburban domestic composition. In the bottom right corner of the image, sprawled atop a bathmat is a ripped paper bag filled with groceries. The figure's right hand grasps a carton of eggs, while her face stays center to the top of the composition, and her gaze is tilted up slightly towards the left of the room, looking off in the distance. The figure's facial expression shows contempt and vulnerability, and the figure's body language and posture hold a subtle defiance at the situation unfolding before it. These visual signifiers portray that the figure has dropped her groceries and is visibly frustrated by this. However,

a viewer could perceive this photograph as a portrayal of a woman's struggle with domestic life in the 1960's.

In this photograph, we are presented with many of the varying complexities of voyeurism.

The narrative presented in *Untitled Film Still 10* is that the viewer is peering into a moment in a female figures' life and raises questions about her awareness of being observed.

Sherman is placing the viewer (much like Hopper) as the voyeur yet is using this visual device to highlight how women have been portrayed in media and film at that time. In the mainstream media of the 1970s, representation was not yet inclusive or complex, meaning women were often presented as visual accessories on screen and viewed as a passive object in which the *Male Gaze* (Mulvey, 1975, p.808-809) can be projected on to. This ultimately transforms the act of looking into dual narratives as instead of the figure conforming as an object of the gaze, the figure is confronting the viewer silently, again encouraging conscience consideration of who the viewer is watching, not just what they could present as.

In an interview for Apollo magazine, Cindy Sherman is questioned about her artistic process, in which she answers, 'It's just me, and a mirror and a camera and a backdrop, and that's about it' (Wetzler, 2019). This makes evident that the images Sherman creates flips the power imbalance of voyeurism on its head, as these photographs are not actually taken by a voyeur. As Sherman poses for the photograph, even if it is in a vulnerable manner, the subject has all the power, due to the planned nature of the scene. The concept of this photograph and the rest of the series is based on visual artifice, she is assimilating the role of these figures; she does not become them. In posing as these

characters, she is in control of the image, therefore in control of the perception, ultimately taking back any power that first may have been lost due to the voyeuristic mode in which we view the image. *Untitled film still 10* is an example of a voyeuristic lens taken over by the subject it would focus on, the subject even if not obvious without research, holds power as there is no one else there to wield it, just the subject.



(Figure 4)

There is one obvious and quite controversial sculpture that comes to mind when contemplating voyeurism and its intersection of how women are represented or included visually in art, and that is *Chair* (1969) by artist Allen Jones. This sculpture comprises of materials such as glass fiber, resin, a Perspex plate and leather, with acrylic paint used on

the body of the sculpture and a synthetic cropped blonde wig is placed atop the figures head. The piece is placed on top of a small, faux fur rug in which female figure made of glass fiber is laying on her back, both arms at her sides, firmly gripping the rug beneath her. The figures legs are pulled up to the bare chest, knees almost touching the figures décollete. The only clothes the figure is wearing are long leather gloves, small leather shorts and leather high-heeled boots, all of which are coloured black. On top of the figure's thighs, a perplex plate is strapped to her, with a black leather cushion resting on the plate. This sculpture plays on its dual identities, one as a piece of furniture and one as a representation of a woman, ultimately inviting the viewer to focus on the blurring of the lines between both concepts. The crossing of the form of a woman and a piece of furniture, and our position as the viewer transformed to be that of a voyeur, dehumanises the female figure, bringing forth the societal issue of the objectification of women in visual representation during the late 1960s. The controversial nature of this piece lies in how the artist, Jones, is seemingly critiquing the dialogue around female representation in media and other visual platforms, however, he is also participating in the issue he set out to critique.

Chair was first shown in 1970, and was met with public outrage, which led to 'a letter to the gallery described the sculpture as "deeply offensive", before two women arrived on International Woman's Day and poured paint stripper over it' (Boldrick, Morgan and Woodward, 2014). In an online article for *The Royal Academy*, art historian Alison Bracker interviews the conservator of the RA, Lyndsey Morgan, about her experience restoring the sculpture after it had been vandalised by viewers while it was on shown at the exhibition

Forty Years of Modern Art, 1945-85 in 1986. The two female viewers had used paint stripper to damage the sculpture. Morgan is asked whether she had been faced with controversy in the conservation field due to her agreement to restore the piece, to which Morgan replied, 'Others have said, 'How could you work on this piece?' because they feel that it's *degrading in some way*' (Bracker, 2014).

In my opinion, this piece is understandably controversial as it puts the viewer in the position of essentially 'gawking' at the female figure depicted. With the element of the visually metaphorical morphing of the woman and the chair, it seems we are almost encouraged to see the female form as perhaps the artist does; a visual commodity in which again, as mentioned previously in this dissertation, the *Male Gaze* can be projected in such an effortless way. The female form has already been objectified in this piece by the artist; we are simply invited to 'enjoy' it.

In a YouTube video for *Tate*, Allen Jones sits down to discuss his work for a studio visit. In this video, he talks about how his body of work progressed from drawings and painting of the female form to sculptural interpretations, as he was '*desperately wanting to make the figures real*' [1] (Jones, 2013). Jones goes on to explain in this video, how pieces like *Chair* came to be. Jones had the sculptural figure of a shop mannequin made, and in observing the figure it, he began to contemplate whether the figures would be interpreted as a found object that he had then worked upon.

'Although the figure was rather well endowed it, [sic] very pneumatic breasts, that it still could be construed as a sort of surrealist idea that it was a maybe a found object that I doctored and so on, and so, I realized [sic] that I, to avoid confusion I had to present the figure uh, in a way which removed it from that fine art connotation and so the idea of the figure is a table or a chair came to me and um uh and that's how I made the furniture' [2] (Jones, 2013).

This provides insight to not only how the concept of this sculptural piece came to fruition, but also the language in which Jones used to describe the figure possibly illuminates his own objectification of the female form. Even though the figure is emulating the female form, Jones never mentions (in the video) the idea of how women are perceived, or frankly anything concerning a female experience, which makes me wonder why the figure is of the female form if not to simply objectify it. From my perspective, Jones' sculptural piece *Chair* depicts the topic of voyeurism, yet uses the female form *not* to show how women are objectified through a voyeuristic lens but instead uses that voyeuristic lens to simply express his assumed obsession with the female form, and in doing so objectifying it.



(Figure 5)

In my series of drawings, *Red Sofa* (2024), I used these drawings as a visual mode of transport into the topic of female focused voyeurism and the emotional response one

could have to the topic. While creating this drawing, *Red Sofa (3) 2024*, translating this specific feeling of panic was integral to the message of the piece. I used my hands quickly, with a panicked sense of urgency, drawing male figures upon a red sofa, all looking at something not depicted on paper, all conveying something in their eyes that makes one nervous once in their presence.

There are three figures representing watching eyes, one perched on the left of the sofa, one standing behind the sofa, leaning forward, gripping the back of the sofa with an indecipherable intensity. The last figure sits on the right side of the sofa, in a relaxed manner with right arm draped over the back of the sofa. The materials used were charcoal and oil pastels in the colours cadmium deep red and violet based grey on white paper. The piece is measured at 60 by 85 cm. The figures are an amalgamation of many figures drawn before, using creative license to not present a person as I would if this was a portrait of someone, as in doing so, the viewer can focus on what the figures represent to themselves only. This prohibits the complication of likeness getting in the way of the emotional reaction to the piece.

The red sofa became not just an object to ground the figures in a place and time, but was inspired by the BBC One talk show, *The Graham Norton Show*, with one episode giving a greater meaning to the red sofa. On the 25th of October of this year, actors joined Graham Norton for an interview, in which a conversation about action scenes developed into actor Eddie Redmayne, sharing a self-defense tip in which a mobile phone can be used as a weapon of self-defense in emergency situations. To which actors Paul Mescal, Denzel Washington, Eddie Redmayne, and presenter Norton all joked about the suggestion, to

which Mescal added ‘Who's actually going to think about that? If someone attacks me, I'm not going to go “Phone!”’ The Irish actress Saoirse Ronan, interjected over the group to say ‘Thats what girls have to think about all the time. Am I right ladies?’ (The Graham Norton Show, 2024). There were a few seconds of silence after this comment, then nodding and applause from guests and audience.

This innocuous comment sparked public discourse across social media and news outlets. Multiple articles were written, linking this interview moment to a bigger issue of women's safety and the perception of how women's safety is not even considered by those who are not affected directly by it. In one article issued on the BBC news website, Saoirse Ronan is reported to have found the response to her comment on *The Graham Norton Show* ‘wild’ (Rufo, 2024) and how other women have since told her about the importance and visibility it gave to a universal experience for many women. This is not only further proof of women being hyper aware of who is observing them, but as mentioned previously, I as an artist, was conscience of this interview moment while creating *Red Sofa 3 2024*. The image of the red sofa in this piece grounds the figures yet also is an unassuming nod to the discourse on women's safety and how it should always be considered when the topic of voyeurism is discussed, grounding the topic in a sense of urgency when the issue of safety is added to it. The image of the red sofa is a reference to the talk show, as the guests are sat on a red sofa while being asked questions by the host, for the Great British public to watch. It subtly hints at how the viewer of this piece is also the voyeur, and like the guest of The Graham Norton Show, the male figures are there for us to observe, as the artist, I am inviting you to

be the voyeur. Without this visual reference, the piece would be unbalanced, visually and intellectually.

In this piece, I also decided not to depict the subject of the male figures' gaze, as I didn't want to perpetuate the image of a woman being watched and instead put the viewer regardless of gender, in dual positions of feeling watched and gazing back at the voyeurs. By depicting the female subject of the male figures' gaze, I would simply be illustrating voyeurism, feeding into what artists such as Allen Jones have done many times before, and this would further divorce the female subject from any position of power. The purpose of this drawing is to place the viewer, whoever that may be, in the position of the imperceptible female subject, and how the watched can also gaze back. Regardless of gender or gender expression, the suggestion is that the viewer visually and emotionally absorbs the chaos of the mark making, creating an atmosphere of uneasiness in the scene. As one cannot control how a piece of art is perceived by the viewer, I can only assume that the stern expression on the figures faces, and their imposing posture they hold upon and around the red sofa, will culminate to create a sense of foreboding and uneasiness for the viewer. If this is the case, then there is a bigger possibility for understanding between all genders, as empathy for one's situation is how understanding on certain topics can be cultivated, specifically on the concern of voyeurism and its effects on women, especially in this modern age of social media.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has been written with the aim to explore the intersection of voyeurism and Fine Art, exploring how the implement of social media use in our daily lives has made us all voyeurs to some extent, also to explore the implications of voyeurism on women in their personal lives, and also how the representation of women and the female form can often be effected negatively by the implement of a voyeuristic perspective. In looking closer at works such as *Nighthawks* and *Night Shadows* by American realist Edward Hopper, I have displayed in this writing how Hoppers expert expression of artificial light in his pieces, combined with the voyeuristic perspective he makes the viewer observe the scene from, creates an emotional reaction of fear and foreboding danger; a feeling associated with the feeling of being watched, familiar with women around the world.

However, I have also presented my findings into artists that use voyeuristic conventions to critique and even confront the idea of voyeurism and its dehumanisation of the female

form, such as artist and photographer Cindy Sherman. Sherman's practice of setting up the scene and becoming the subject that she wants to photograph, she manages to keep her power and humanity in the still image, as we know there is a layer of artifice to the image and not a real snapshot capturing a voyeuristic moment. In Allen Jones' sculpture *Chair*, the conventions of voyeurism and objectification are both present, and I have explored how the visual combination of furniture and the female form perhaps perpetuates or even encourages the concept and act of female based voyeurism, which is something myself as an artist wanted to avoid in my drawing *Red Sofa (3)*. During this dissertation, I used my own piece as an example of artworks based on the concept of voyeurism, as the research presented throughout consciously and sometimes unconsciously informed my own practice and visual language.

Overall, in my writing I have presented voyeurism, its complications on everyday life, with a special focus on women as the main victim of voyeuristic acts and the importance in which this topic needed to be explored further with criminal cases such as the *Marzan Rapes*. The effects of a voyeuristic lens used in art were also explored, with artists either expressing, perpetuating or confronting voyeurism, further addressing the power of the act of viewing.

In my opinion, voyeurism is an ongoing and increasing issue in contemporary society, and I believe that if not addressed will continue to negatively affect the representation of women, and that when carefully considered, art can be a valuable weapon in the battle against this.

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Further reading

(The literature and articles listed below are not directly referenced in the body of the dissertation, however informed my avenue of research.)

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List of Illustrations

Figure One - Hopper, E. (1942). *Nighthawks*. [Oil on Canvas] Available at: <https://www.artic.edu/artworks/111628/nighthawks> [Accessed 6 Dec. 2024].

Figure Two- Hopper, E. (1921-23) *Night Shadows* [Etching]. Museum of Modern Art. Available at <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/74938> [accessed 6 Dec. 2024]

Figure Three- Sherman, C. (1978). *Untitled Film Still #10*. [Photography] The Museum of Modern Art. Available at: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/56555> [Accessed 6 Dec. 2024].

Figure Four- Tate Images (2014). *Chair*, Allen Jones, 1969 [sculpture] Tate Images. [online] Available at: <https://www.tate-images.com/preview.asp?image=T03244> [Accessed 10 Dec. 2024].

Figure Five- Williams, C (2024) *Red Sofa (3)* 2024 [Drawing on paper] Created and photographed by author.

