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No Sex Last Night: The Look of the Other

Cybelle McFadden Wilkens

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Article abstract

In 1992, Calle departed briefly from still photography and experimented with video to create another version of herself as artist in *No Sex Last Night* (made in collaboration with Greg Shepard). Video is another way to construct herself for others and through others as she wants to be seen. *No Sex Last Night* differs from Calle's other projects due to her loss of artistic control, since Shepard also holds a video camera. Each camera reveals not only the perspective of the person shooting, but also shows the reactions and feelings of the other person being recorded. The interplay between the two cameras suggests that ways of looking at others and one's daily life are shaped by a need to be affirmed by the other. Calle affirms herself both as an artist and as a woman in this confrontation with the other, in this case, Shephard.

No Sex Last Night: The Look of the Other

Cybelle McFadden Wilkens

The present collection devoted to the work of Sophie Calle indicates her important place in several fields, including visual arts, literature, and video. World-wide exhibits throughout her career, especially the 2003-2004 retrospective exhibit at the Centre Pompidou that combined old work and new projects, also affirm her status as a noteworthy contemporary artist. The visual element in Calle's work is fundamentally significant, since she photographs her action or the object of study and then explains her perception of it in narrative form. She does not rely on one technique to the exclusion of the other, but uses both to create a unique point of view and narrative fabrication through visual and textual means. In 1992, Calle departed briefly from still photography and experimented with video to create another version of herself as artist in *No Sex Last Night*, made in collaboration with Greg Shephard.[1] The creation of the video is another way for Calle to construct herself *for* others through the use of the other—she thus controls the manner in which she is seen.[2] What distinguishes *No Sex Last Night* from

1. Sophie Calle and Greg Shephard, *No Sex Last Night*, New York, Electronic Arts Intermix, 1992 (35mm format, Gemini Films, 1995). The video version is entitled *Double Blind*, New York, Electronic Arts Intermix, 1992. In this video, a significant portion incorporates still images due to poor videotaping technique, which left much of the source material unusable. Since the hand-held cameras produced very bouncy images, freeze frames were used for the sequences shot outside of the car. In the car, regular video images were used, since they were more stable. The juxtaposition of moving images and still images creates a separation between life inside and outside the car. The latter images are also reminiscent of Chris Marker's *La jetée* (1963) and rely on the style of photographic presentation used in Calle's other work.

2. This formulation could be considered a passive construction *à la* Laura Mulvey, but in Calle's case, it is an active construction of her image. See Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema," [1975] in Constance Penley (ed.), *Feminism and Film*

her other projects or actions is the loss of full artistic authority and control, since Shephard also has a camera. The key to the video lies exactly in the dependence on the other, both in visual and existential terms. Calle affirms herself both as an artist and as a woman in this confrontation with the other, in this case, Shephard.

Calle's first video revisits familiar themes in her work—for example, the game, the ritual, and an idea that organizes her life for a given moment, such as the trip with Shephard.[3] His presence and his lack of desire influences the final product of the video and gives the spectator a particular point of view concerning Calle. She thus depends on the other for her daily and cinematographic existence. I will argue that this loss of artistic control is not an exception in Calle's work, but actually clarifies the process of artistic construction through others that runs through her art. A feminist analysis of the existence of the second camera and the stakes in her project will help us theorize the complex process by which a female artist lays claim to authority.

A long literary tradition exists in which the author relies on her or his own life and self for artistic inspiration and creation. Christine de Pizan, Montaigne, Marguerite de Navarre, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Marcel Proust, Michel Leiris, and Annie Ernaux are only a few of the most exemplary authors. Using visual means, filmmakers Agnès Varda and Dominique Cabrera have incorporated their bodies and hands in their video work to link themselves with their art.[4] Likewise, in contemporary art, Carolee Schneemann, Valie Export, Annie Sprinkle and Orlan use their own bodies in their art.

Calle's narrative hijinks, however, distinguish her from the trend of blending art and life. She wants the spectator to believe that her art is her life and vice versa, but this result is precisely the goal of her convoluted narrative practices. By considering her art as art and her attempt to pass off her life as art (this strategy is only one among many in her repertoire), we will understand the process by

Theory, New York, Routledge Press, 1988, p. 57-68. Mulvey explained that cinema offers pleasure in looking—scopophilia—and in its opposite formulation, "there is pleasure in being looked at" (p. 59). For Mulvey, subjectivity is aligned on the side of the active/male, and the image is associated with the passive/female side of the split. Her argument does not allow for agency on the part of the female participant, who is merely a passive image and not an actor in this scenario. Calle's active participation in the construction of her image alters this formulation.

3. Calle has made a second video, *Unfinished* (Sophie Calle in collaboration with Fabio Balducci, 2003), which was first shown at the Pompidou exhibit in 2003-2004.

4. Agnès Varda, *Les glaneurs et la glaneuse* (2000) and Dominique Cabrera, *Demain et encore demain : journal 1995* (1997).

which Calle fabricates herself as an artist. Calle goes to great *narrative* lengths to convince the spectator that what she presents is her life and her stories are indeed seductive; however, ordinary activities of sleeping, eating, and sex are presented in extraordinary circumstances.

Critical treatment of Calle's work invariably mentions the tension between art and life in her work. In reference to Calle's *Des histoires vraies*, critic Johnnie Gratton argues that "fact and fiction clearly 'mingle.'"[5] Nicolas Fève, on the other hand, has been seduced by her unreliable narrator and artist and insists on the autobiography of Calle's text and photos in *Des histoires vraies*.[6] He puts too much stock in the title that Calle provides and seems to miss the point of her work. Calle first includes these stories, later published in 1994 and again in 2002 (with ten additional ones), in *No Sex Last Night* as part of the narrative backdrop to her video. Calle weaves these stories as part of her narrative tapestry presented in voiceover in the video and later repackages them and recycles them in printed form. Gratton suspects that Calle is quoting from Serge Doubrovsky, who coined the term "*autofiction*," and cites the reference:

> *Quand on se raconte, ce sont toujours des racontars. On parle d'histoires vraies. Comme s'il pouvait y avoir des histoires vraies; les événements se produisent dans un sens et nous les racontons en sens inverse. Autobiographie, roman, pareil. Le même truc, le même trucage.*[7]

Calle's rigging is evident as she embeds her stories in the voiceover to give the impression of divulging past events to her video camera and in turn to the spectator for the first time. This is not the case, however, since some stories first appeared in 1988 in installation form under the title *Récits autobiographiques*, and later as *Autobiographies* for the Pompidou exhibit, which chronicles the various permutations of these stories from 1988 to 2003.

The distinction between narrative, tales, and ostensibly real events is not always easy to make in Calle's work. In an interview, Bice Curiger asks about her relationship to the false and the real. Calle replies:

5. Johnnie Gratton, "Sophie Calle's *Des histoires vraies*: Irony and Beyond," in Alex Hughes and Andrea Noble (eds.), *Phototextualities: Intersections of Photography and Narrative*, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 2003, p. 185. Sophie Calle, *Des histoires vraies + dix*, Arles, Actes Sud, 2002.

6. Nicolas Fève, "Rhétorique de la photographie dans l'autobiographie contemporaine: *Des histoires vraies* de Sophie Calle," Alan English and Rosalind Silvester (eds.), *Reading Images, Seeing Words*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2004, p. 157-170.

7. Johnnie Gratton, "Sophie Calle's *Des histoires vraies*: Irony and Beyond," p. 184.

> Everything is real, everything is true in the works, there is just generally one lie included, but the lie is related to a frustration. For example, in the hotel rooms everything is true. […] There was a room I would have liked to find, and this room never appeared. So […] I took an empty room and I filled it with what I would have wished to find.[8]

Calle is referring to her *L'hôtel* project (1984), for which she took a job as a maid in a hotel in Venice.[9] Cleaning the rooms gave her access to the guestrooms that she then photographed. The published text consisted of both photographs and descriptions of the objects in the room, a catalogue of the occupants' possessions.[10] The claim that all is true in her work except for a particular aspect that she fabricates raises questions about the construction of the entire project. If the spectator cannot distinguish which element is found or fabricated, then her claim to truth points to the ambiguity of this discernment.

Whitney Chadwick makes an important parallel between Calle's projects and the Surrealists, since both operate "in the gap between art and life."[11] What is important to note in both these cases is that life is used as material of art, but in the end, it is still *art*. I would like to suggest that the space between art and life actually collapses, leaving only art as its product. Gratton makes a similar claim: "And this sense of a self coming into view as other, at a remove from what it was, is easily […] construed as a process of generating a fictional character out of autobiographical material."[12] The key here is the narrative at work that produces the artist. Indeed Gratton and Chadwick cite Calle along with French contemporary artists Annette Messager and Orlan, both of whom also implicate

8. "Sophie Calle in conversation with Bice Curiger," in Adrian Searle (ed.), *Talking Art 1*, London, Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1993, p. 37.

9. Sophie Calle, *L'hôtel. Doubles-jeux (Livre V)*, Arles, Actes Sud, 1998.

10. *"Le lundi 16 février 1981, je réussis, après une année de démarches et d'attente, à me faire engager comme femme de chambre pour un remplacement de trois semaines dans un hôtel vénitien. On me confia douze chambres du quatrième étage. Au cours de mes heures de ménage, j'examinai les effets personnels des voyageurs, les signes de l'installation provisoire de certains clients, leur succession dans une même chambre. J'observai par le détail des vies qui me restaient étrangères."* (Sophie Calle, *L'hôtel*, p. 9)

11. Whitney Chadwick, "Three Artists/Three Women: Orlan, Annette Messager, and Sophie Calle," *Sites*, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 116.

12. Johnnie Gratton, "Experiment and Experience in the Phototextual Projects of Sophie Calle," in Gill Rye, Michael Worton (eds.), *Women's Writing in Contemporary France*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2002, p. 159.

themselves in their work, although in very different ways.[13] I assert that Calle's work is less about blurring the lines between art and life, as most critics claim, than about using elements of daily life for the sake of art, with the goal of self-production of the artist.

Even though the recording of daily life gives shape to *No Sex Last Night*, the narrative structure of the video is clear from the opening voiceover. Calle establishes that the video project was a pretext to spend more time with Shephard—the final product is a result of her initial manipulation. In voiceover, Calle weaves the narrative background of the project:

> *L'envie de faire du cinéma, c'est Greg. Mais l'idée de ce film, c'est moi. À cette époque, nous vivions ensemble depuis un an et nous avions prévu de traverser l'Amérique. Notre relation s'était tellement dégradée que je savais qu'il refuserait, et je me suis dit que si je lui proposais de réaliser un film, ce qui était son rêve, j'avais une chance qu'il accepte. À New York, comme nous ne nous parlions vraiment plus du tout, j'ai eu l'idée d'utiliser deux caméras au lieu d'une.*[14]

The choice to use two cameras arose from a practical consideration, but its aesthetic consequences are important, since each camera simultaneously presents the point of view of the videographer and the image of the other being filmed. Both capture their perspective and their way of seeing, but more importantly they record how the other person is seen.

In the tape, Calle uses video as a means of capturing her body, the quotidian, and her life on a road trip as the object of the video project. Calle and Shephard, using two video cameras, recorded their trip from New York to the West Coast. They videotape each other, the landscape, daily occurrences, and their conversations. Each morning Calle reports, with a corresponding shot of an empty bed, "no sex last night." The form of the *journal intime* for Calle and Shephard creates ample opportunity for narrative commentary to emerge throughout the video,

13. Orlan uses her body as the raw material of her surgical performances, while Messager foregrounds the female body in general in her work and emphasizes "the multiplicity of identities that [she] established for herself at the onset of her career; among them, Annette Message Collectionneuse, Annette Messager Artiste, and Annette Messager Truqueuse" (Whitney Chadwick, "Three Artists/Three Women: Orlan, Annette Messager, and Sophie Calle," p. 112). Gratton also references the intentional ambiguity that author Christine Angot maintains between the character Christine and the author persona Angot in her texts (Johnnie Gratton, "Experiment and Experience in the Phototextual Projects of Sophie Calle," p. 169).

14. Pascal Mérigeau, "Au départ, ce n'était pas un film, mais un piège d'amour," *Le Monde*, 18 January 1996, p. 24.

since it is ideal for both the revelation of intimate thoughts and daily encounters. The spectator is left wondering whom to believe, since their perspectives often contradict one another.

In all of Calle's actions, the other is integral to the work: the detective, Henri B., the absent hotel guests, the sleepers, and later Bénédicte Vincens.[15] The unknowing or reluctant participation of others is indispensable for her projects, since she interacts with this absent or removed other. She photographs, for example, the belongings of the hotel guests when they are not in the room, she tails Henri B. without his knowledge (when he discovers her and confronts her, the game stops), she interviews the friends of the address book holder to get an impression of him in *Le carnet d'adresses*, she photographs the traces left by Bénédicte, who is missing, while the detective follows her at a distance, and she sends her bed to Josh Greene in California.[16] Calle's projects depend on the presence of the absent others for these actions to occur. Shephard's interactive presence, however, underscores the importance of the other, albeit reluctant or unknowing, in her entire work. It is usually Calle who imposes her artistic will on others, but Shephard's active participation changes the rules of her game. What are the implications of Calle's artistic production always already inflected through others? If the dependence on the other is something she sets up through a convoluted orchestration of events, circumstances, and rules of the game, why does she need this as an integral part of her self-presentation as an artist?

The major difference in *No Sex Last Night* (and a key in analyzing the complex phenomenon of self-representation in Calle's work), however, is that her image and in turn her artistic existence depend on Greg's camera and consequently on his perception of her. This phenomenon could be interpreted as an anomaly in Calle's work, since her art mainly consists of permutations of herself as an artist through her interactions with others. This dependence on Greg is a result in part of the form of the video, since two cameras are used. The gap between the image and voice track and the editing also create ample

15. These are, respectively, the detective in *La filature* (Sophie Calle, *Doubles-jeux (Livre IV)*, Arles, Actes Sud, 1998, p. 110-149), Henri B. in *Suite vénitienne* (Sophie Calle, Paris, Éditions de l'Étoile, 1983), the absent hotel guests in *L'hôtel* (Sophie Calle, *Doubles-jeux (Livre V)*, Arles, Actes Sud, 1998), the sleepers in *Les dormeurs* (Sophie Calle, Arles, Actes Sud, 2000), and Bénédicte Vincens in *Une jeune femme disparaît* (Sophie Calle, *M'as-tu vue*, catalogue de l'exposition, Christine Macel (éd.), Paris, Éditions du Centre Pompidou, Éditions Xavier Barral, 2003, p. 125-136).

16. Sophie Calle, "Le carnet d'adresses", in *Doubles-jeux (Livre VI)*, Arles, Actes Sud, 1998 and "Voyage en Californie" (in collaboration with Josh Greene), in *M'as-tu vue*, p. 197-208.

opportunities for Shephard to insert his perception of Calle. In Calle's entire corpus, her image is always already filtered through her artistic lens or more accurately one that she carefully sets up—Calle circulates in this filtered or processed image of herself, which the spectator is tempted by Calle herself to accept as the definitive version of her. In *No Sex Last Night*, however, her image is filtered by Greg's camera—the very one that she bought for the project.

In the video, Greg comments that he was first attracted to Sophie because she constantly reinvents herself.[17] He explains: "Being with Sophie means being willing to become subject matter because there is no separation between her work and her life. *Her art is how she invents her life*."[18] He too highlights her art as a mode through which she lives, which suggests a perspective on subjectivity: through her art, her life takes form.[19] The act of making a video actually produces the self according to activist media writer Alexandra Juhasz:

> You've made something there. If what you've shot is a person, perhaps yourself, then you know, no *naïveté* here, that the act of making a video is a work of self-production. By working with and through forms of representation like video, we make identity and meaning. […] But how could one not recognize that it is the self-conscious telling of oneself and one's ideas, to a camera and through an editing machine, that makes the self that one becomes on video?[20]

Juhasz asserts that the act of making a video is the means by which the filmmaker can construct herself for others as she wants to be seen.

The notion of the processed self highlights the layer of mediation present in Calle's persona of herself as artist. In the case of *No Sex Last Night*, her image is filtered both by Greg's lens and by the action that she has set in motion. Moreover, through the editing and voiceover track of the video, Calle shapes

17. I will use "Sophie" to denote the person in the tape and "Calle" as the videographer. This distinction, however, is difficult to maintain, and is clearly one of the main tensions in her work.

18. Ginger Danto, "Sophie the Spy," *Artnews*, May 1993, p. 103. My emphasis.

19. The title of Nina Felshin's book on social activist art, *But is it Art?* (Seattle, Bay Press, 1995), raises an important question for Calle's work. Since her art and life are linked, how do we know that it is art? Calle's orchestration of her projects forces the spectator to consider familiar activities in a new light. The bracketing of the event or activity makes one pause; perhaps it is this beat that makes the spectator recognize that there is an artistic *mise en scène* to the particular scenario.

20. Alexandra Juhasz, "They Said we were Trying to Show Reality—All I Want to Show is My Video: The Politics of the Realist Feminist Documentary," in Jane M. Gaines, Michael Renov (eds.), *Collecting Visible Evidence*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1999, p. 208.

how her image is shown. The very premise of the project is perhaps her greatest mark in the video even though it does appear at first that she relinquishes some control to Greg. In Calle's work in general, she exercises great control over how her images and projects are circulated by recycling them, reusing them, and reformatting them.[21]

The notion of the processed self holds important feminist consequences by revealing the control of the artist, the mediated image, and many selves that she creates. Calle's persona as artist is controlled every step of the way. In *No Sex Last Night*, Calle depends both on the other and on the mediation of the video camera. The lived experience of the road trip needs the presence of both cameras to occur, since their interaction depends on this mediation. The mediation of the experience in turn produces Calle's processed self, her filtered image. The processed self that is the product of the video project is the only one available to the spectator in Calle's art and world.

While the video camera is key to Calle's self-production in this case, the cameras also serve a dual function in this video. They are not only journals to which each confides, but also a means by which the two are able to talk to one other. The mode of art, in this case video, facilitates communication. In the car, Sophie confronts Greg about making a phone call to a woman in New York and immediately picks up her camera (he highlights the fact that when she asked him to talk about it, she picked up her camera). The sequence is in shot-reverse-shot form with both having turns to speak. After Sophie explains that she felt bad waiting in the cold parking lot while Greg ostensibly went to the bathroom, she lowers the camera from her eye and Greg asks if he may respond. His explanation of what happened corresponds to a shot of him cut off at the eyes; the point of view is consistent with the position of Sophie's camera on her lap. An interesting juxtaposition arises: the image of the other and the corresponding revelation of feelings depend on the other's point of view. Greg captures Sophie's image and vice versa. The use of the two cameras reveals a dependence on the other for existence. Sophie videotapes what she sees, even her image in the mirror, but the majority of the images of her come from Greg's camera.[22] Likewise, the images of

21. See Johnnie Gratton, "Experiment and Experience in the Phototextual Projects of Sophie Calle," p. 161, for an explanation of certain reformatting in permutations of Calle's projects.

22. One may be tempted to use the term self-portrait to describe Calle's self-representation, but since she offers several versions of herself, this term is not sufficiently precise. Calle's self-portrait is an impression of herself that she creates through stories and not just through images, indeed the images depend on the stories.

Greg originate from the way in which she sees and considers him. The interplay between the two cameras suggests that ways of looking at others and one's daily life are shaped by a need to be affirmed by the other. Once again, Calle needs the affirmation of the other to confirm her existence, her visual existence in this case. The scrutiny under which the two place themselves and their surroundings illustrates a way of looking that seeks out the location of both the self and the other.[23]

Through editing and the mediation of the cameras, the representation of both the self and daily life is the transformation of lived experience. Calle's projects are not mere reproductions of sleeping or eating, for example, but a transformation of this daily gesture, an amplification of it. The act of reproduction creates distance between the gesture in the "real world" and the representation of it. Juhasz argues that "to see a representation of something that occurred in the real world is not necessarily to confuse that image with reality."[24] Even though Juhasz analyzes formal feminist documentaries, her notion of mediation of the camera is extremely important for our discussion of Calle as a female artist:

> Even as a woman speaks as herself on camera, or even as a viewer identifies with her, these makers, subjects, and spectators are perfectly aware of the videotape mediating between the women watching in the world and the women represented to them through discourse. If you've ever shot a video or been interviewed, you know that using a camera is not an innocent act. You become aware of the power there; you become aware of how the camera affects the interaction.[25]

Although Juhasz is referring to feminist documentaries, for example, AIDS awareness videos, she underscores a useful concept for our discussion—the presence of the camera as mediator. In *No Sex Last Night*, the presence of two cameras is very significant, since both Calle and Shephard use their cameras to talk to each other—they need the mediation of the camera to communicate during their road trip. The two cameras act as a double mediation, which in turn reveal double subjectivities. Each camera reveals not only the perspective of the person

23. There is an uncomfortable element of prostitution or financial bargaining in *No Sex Last Night*. Sophie supports Greg financially on this trip and knows that he needs the money and cannot afford to leave. Calle also paid a professional writer one hundred francs for her first love letter. See Sophie Calle, *Des histoires vraies + dix*, Arles, Actes Sud, 1998, p. 23. Calle buys what should be given freely—in these cases, company and expression of love.

24. Alexandra Juhasz, "They Said we were Trying to Show Reality," p. 195.

25. Alexandra Juhasz, "They Said we were Trying to Show Reality," p. 207.

shooting, but also shows the reactions and feelings of the other person being recorded. The way in which the person chooses to film is just as revealing as what the other person divulges in front of the camera.

The video form permits Calle to represent her subjectivity and desire through both images and voiceover in an unplanned way. Jane Gaines, in her article "Feminist Heterosexuality and its Politically Incorrect Pleasures," briefly discusses the sexual identity subgenre of avant-garde film and video, which discloses unconventional desires. She argues that some expressions of desire *need* video:

> Video as form works to the advantage of representation of illicit desires because of its special relation to the "real" and "true" [...]. The graininess of video always reminds us that it is a processed real [...] Thus, as an aesthetic, its logic would seem to aid the representation of the discrepancy between fantasy life and daily life; that is, it aids the representation of desire frustrated.[26]

Even though Calle's desire for Greg is not particularly illicit in and of itself, it takes on strange characteristics as it is frustrated through most of the video and is not reciprocated. The notion of the processed real is very helpful in thinking about how Calle films what she sees and feels within the frame of frustrated desire. The repeated shots of the empty motel beds, coupled with unflattering shots of both of them in the morning, remind the spectator of their mundane travels and the lack of desire between Calle and Shephard. The representation of daily life replaces the possibility of fantasy for Calle; Shephard, however, claims to have had a dream where he sleeps with three different women. She asserted that the edited version of the video did not present the other material that they taped and that the final product highlights Sophie's obsession with sex to the exclusion of other issues that came up during their travels.[27] The editing created a narrative and thematic form—the emphasis on sex is in fact a product of the refusal of desire throughout the trip.

Despite the fact that Greg seems to be having a long-distance relationship with a woman in New York and shows no desire for Sophie, she proposes that they get married in Las Vegas and insists until Greg gives her an answer. Apparently, she had the idea even before the trip started and Greg anxiously wonders on the road: "When is she going to bring up the whole Vegas wedding idea that she's had since before the trip?" Sophie likewise thinks about when she should bring it up, considers not pursuing the idea, and finally asks him whether or not they are going to get married in Las Vegas. In order to force Greg to give her a

26. Jane Gaines, "Feminist Heterosexuality and its Politically Incorrect Pleasures," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 21, No. 2, Winter 1995, p. 406.

27. Pascal Mérigeau. "Au départ, ce n'était pas un film, mais un piège d'amour," p. 24.

response, she gives him a two-hour deadline. Then she says that the hotel they choose would depend on whether or not they marry. A practical decision, where to sleep, depends on this more serious life choice.

The video is the mode by which they live during their trip. Calle explains: "*No Sex Last Night* n'est pas le constat de ce qui nous est arrivé dans la vie, mais l'élément qui nous a permis de vivre ensemble encore quelques semaines, de nous marier, et de nous quitter."[28] During the editing of the film, the two learn the private thoughts of the other spoken to the camera. In Las Vegas, she wonders what made Greg change his mind about marrying her; later she learns that he did it to add dramatic interest to the video (another example of an added narrative layer). Greg's voiceover in the video explains that he woke up and told Sophie that he wanted to get married: he told her first thing in the morning, so that he would not change his mind. Her motivations to get married are never clearly expressed either; she does mention that now she can tell her mother she will not be an old maid. Perhaps her reasons were similar to Greg's desire to make the video more interesting. In any case, the video both produces and reflects their life. The artistic decision involved in this case produced a life event: the two were legally married in a wedding drive-thru in Las Vegas. This is one of the most striking examples in Calle's work of art producing life. Greg even muses that if he had known that the person issuing the marriage license would not check his identification, he would have used a false name. Legal marriage is only one effect of the video; after the completion of the video, Calle engages in a couple of artistic projects based on her marriage, including agreeing to a divorce.[29]

Henri Lefebvre highlights the importance of image creation as action, which has significant implications for communication with the other, especially in artistic production:

> *L'image est acte. En tant qu'acte, elle implique l'intention ou la volonté d'un effet : tantôt de contribuer à la réalisation du possible ou à la figuration de l'impossible, tantôt de séduire et de toucher un autre être humain. L'image, en tant qu'acte social, est l'image d'un acte. Elle le projette intentionnellement vers le « sujet » à atteindre, l'être humain à qui elle s'adresse. Celui-ci, touché, ému, subit l'efficacité de l'image qu'il projette à son tour vers l'acteur initial. De cette double projection résulte un rapport qui n'est plus une projection mais une présence réciproque et même une identification émotionnelle. Toute communication implique des images et les plus profondes communications s'accomplissent par les images.*[30]

28. Pascal Mérigeau. "Au départ, ce n'était pas un film, mais un piège d'amour," p. 24.

29. Sophie Calle, *Des histoires vraies + dix*, p. 68-69 and 72-73.

30. Henri Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne*, Vol. II, Paris, L'Arche Éditeur, 1961, p. 290.

Lefebvre's argument that the image is an act in and of itself is a powerful assertion, since he suggests that the will to present, communicate, or address another can achieve an effect, including representing the impossible. The back-and-forth between image and communication is at the heart of *No Sex Last Night*, since it is impossible to escape the other in the artistic act.

The video emerged as the product of Sophie and Greg's interaction and gave form to their expression: their travels shaped the rhythm of daily life and in turn their video took the form of a road movie. Having the car repaired, making roadside stops, and deciding what to do next punctuated their driving routine. The gestures of daily existence—motels, sleeping, no sex, eating in diners—coupled with the revelation of intimate thoughts, love intrigues, and reflections about the other, the trip, and the future illustrate the important relationship between text and image in Calle's work. The voiceover does not explain the image, but rather exposes the perspective and emotional state of both Sophie and Greg. Each moment, each image is contextualized by their individual subjectivity and thoughts about what they were experiencing. Their activities take on significance when they are repeated and edited together in the context of the video; they fit into a larger narrative that both Calle and Shephard create separately and simultaneously. Both participate in a narrative of seduction, refusal of desire, manipulation, and dependency.

Art, specifically videotaping and writing, is also a way for them to pass time and to relieve boredom. In New Orleans, they spend the day inside their hotel room to escape the rain. Greg explains that they spent the day talking into their cameras and writing in their diaries. Both the video camera and the written journal are devices they use to reflect on their daily activities and feelings. The shots corresponding to Greg's description do not document the creative process, but rather show both of them lounging around the hotel room naked. In this particular scene, for example, their boredom motivates them to concentrate on their creative acts.

Documenting their inactivity and boredom means, in turn, that the video becomes the event or action in their life and a way to process what they live. A cut reveals Sophie lying naked on her bed with only her bottom half visible to the spectator. Calle's shot of Greg naked follows and an alternation between their perspectives continues. Greg's voiceover explains their inactivity: "The next day it rained and we didn't leave the room. Each in our own bed, we privately spoke to our cameras and wrote in our diaries. We said little to each other." Sophie links daily life to personal creation: "I asked Greg if he was including our sex life in his diary, he responded that, no, he wasn't, that it would be no more interesting

than saying we had lunch. I said that the difference was that we had lunch everyday. He didn't laugh." A corresponding shot reveals dirty dishes on a table. Sophie concludes the sequence with a brief variation in her mantra: "No sex both nights." Greg's comments are ironically poignant since it is the very point of the film that they recount their daily activities. The video *is* the accumulation of daily gestures and observations. It is also a reflection of a woman, age thirty-nine at the time, who has never been married and who is not able to attain any sex or desire from Greg; it is another seduction project based on absence. The mantra, "no sex last night," punctuates her frustration and makes her marriage proposal to Greg seem even more far-fetched.

Philippe Lejeune explains the importance of the image as a new form of the *journal intime* and cites Calle's video:

> *Photographie, cinéma, puis vidéo ont été progressivement mis à la portée des amateurs. N'importe qui peut aujourd'hui enregistrer sa vie familiale ou personnelle, ses voyages, son témoignage historique. C'est la matière d'un nouveau type de journal.*
>
> *L'image remplit de manière privilégiée l'une des fonctions du journal écrit : garder trace ; moins nettement les autres fonctions : s'exprimer, délibérer. […] Elle fait souvent l'objet d'un travail ultérieur, qui la situe entre journal et autobiographie. Constitution de l'album photo, parfois accompagné de légendes ou d'un texte. Montage d'un témoignage vidéo (cf. Christophe Auguin) ou construction d'un film accompagné d'une voix off* (Sophie Calle, *No Sex Last Night*).[31]

The diary or *journal intime* by nature of its form combines life (lived experience, daily occurrences) and art (reflection, structure, and trace). The video camera compared to the film camera is cheaper to buy and to process, and thus is more accessible to a greater number of people and allows an individual videographer to create many images. These differences between video and film make the video camera the pen of filmmaking. Just as one may pick up a pen and write, it is easier to pick up a video camera and shoot than it is to film with a camera. Moreover, video has a spontaneous dimension, requiring less setup and planning. This is a clear departure from Calle's other projects with defined rules of creation and more elaborate orchestration.

The layers of narration and observation are fascinating in this video and expose the process of creating a fiction. Both Calle and Shephard weave stories for the other—anecdotes, lies, and tales. The moments when they talk into the camera are moments of ostensible authenticity that break through the narrative

31. Philippe Lejeune, *Un journal à soi*, Ambérieu-en-Bugey, France, Association pour l'autobiographie et le patrimoine autobiographique, 1997, p. 36.

fabrication. However, even these moments raise doubt or at least further questions, for example: was this indeed recorded at the time of the shooting or afterwards? The spectator gets glimpses of what each is feeling and thinking, but their personal thoughts do not evoke confidence.[32] Their video journal seems to be another narrative form as each justifies behavior and lies to the other. Greg, for example, talks to his camera for at least a few minutes when Sophie asks him about what he is thinking. He tersely replies: "Nothing." Both a technical and narrative question is raised during analysis of this video. When were the voiceovers recorded? During the wedding scene, for example, the internal thoughts of Calle and Shephard are heard in voiceover in between the saying of the vows; that is, they could not have been recorded simultaneously with the actual filmed sequence. Did they record later what they thought at the time? Were some thoughts added during the editing of the film? If passages were added during the editing process, by nature of the time delay, the thoughts would become "narrativized," since Calle and Shephard would have had time to think about their feelings and reactions. Their comments would tell a story, rather than being a spontaneous transcription of thoughts and emotions. If the two recorded their reflections shortly after the wedding, in a hotel room, for example, their comments would be still somewhat spontaneous; however, the fact that they could not have been recorded at the wedding, but are presented as simultaneous in the final edited version of the film, is part of the storytelling process and narrative fabrication.

Daily gestures are amplified in the video to the point where they occupy the significant visual portion of the tape and become integral to the storytelling mode. Calle organizes her perception of daily events into rituals: she videotapes the made bed upon arrival at the motel room and then the disheveled bed in the morning, for example. The report of the health of the car and visit to the mechanic also become habitual. The effect of the ritual is significant because it codifies the habit and makes it special. The repetition of daily events gives structure to the driving routine, but the perspectives change as each day becomes a permutation of the preceding one. The gestures of daily life are the point of departure for the amplification of thoughts, hopes, and fears; the form of the *journal intime* depends on both. The creation of the video, an opportunity for Calle and Shephard to pass time together, depends on the lack of a script.[33] Without a formal narrative structure, videotaping daily gestures becomes the material for

32. One of Greg's New Year's resolutions was to stop lying.
33. Greg ironically is writing a script throughout the trip.

their project; however, a narrative emerges out of the video through editing and voiceover during postproduction. The video camera captures images that filming in 16 mm or 35 mm would not have allowed. The spontaneous comments of people in the diners and bars, for example, are captured easily by the video camera.

That which at first appears as an exception in Calle's work in fact reveals both her *modus operandi* and the importance of the other in her entire body of work, since it is through the other that she fashions herself. She also needs the participation, albeit unknowing or reluctant, of another person to tell her stories. The case of *No Sex Last Night* is significant, since the alternation of images of Calle by Shephard and vice versa illustrates the need both to be seen and to see oneself through another's point of view. The narrative, the processed self, and the cameras suggest that mediation is necessary for the self-construction of the female artist in Calle's case. While Calle is not a feminist artist *per* se, her work is an important case study for a feminist analysis of female self-production of the artist, since in *No Sex Last Night*, mediation of the cameras and the other result in the processed self. Laying claim to artistic authority for Calle depends on the other, the double mediation of the video cameras, and her own intervention through videotaping, voiceover, and editing. Self-representation inflected by the other suggests a dependence on the other, but one whose intervention Calle controls or manipulates. This narrative and visual reliance on the other may at first glance appear problematic, but through her crafty narrative meddling and use of Shephard, Calle produces a version of herself as an artist. The complex dependence on the other that emerges from Calle's self-representation suggests that this process is related to self-formulation, or in her case, to the creation of many selves.