

PATRICK MIKHAIL GALLERY

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# VERA GREENWOOD

## ARTIST STATEMENT

### ■ L'HÔTEL SOFICALLE

Much of my recent work has been influenced by the invasive methods of Parisian artist, Sophie Calle. Her early projects included following strangers in the streets of Paris, as well as secretly photographing hotel room contents in Venice while employed as a chamber maid. For her remarkable 1981 study of the self-conscious position, *La Filature* (The Shadow), Sophie Calle was followed through the streets of Paris by a private investigator. Her installation consisted of the photos the private investigator took, his notes as well as hers regarding her movements, or more precisely, where she led him, for she knew she was being followed. In 1998, I completed a three-month residency at the Canada Council Paris Studio; I went to Paris to follow Sophie Calle. The purpose of this project was to position myself as the detective and Sophie Calle as the unsuspecting object of my surveillance.

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In preparation for this project I read part of a series of Sue Grafton detective novels. There is a pervasive attitude in crime-fiction that rarely reflects the tedious nature of detective work, something I am aware of now from first-hand experience. Despite my wish to perform well in the pursuit and documentation of Sophie Calle, a certain ineptitude characterizes this project. My intention was to never make contact with Ms. Calle but, due primarily to the fact that I have no formal espionage training, she caught me the first time I photographed her. This accidental encounter (although I considered it disastrous at the time) worked in my favour because it prompted the necessity for disguise if surveillance was to continue, and it did. I purchased several items including a wig and dark glasses and documented various disguises in the Paris métro photo-booths after, on several occasions, staking out Sophie Calle's residence/studio in Malakoff. Heightening the themes running through my work, this project deals with role playing, disguise, guilt, and the fear of discovery, issues that have emerged in many of my previous projects.

Reflecting my ongoing interest in museological display techniques, ***L'hôtel SofiCalle*** is comprised of various displays illustrating my pursuit of the French artist Sophie Calle in Paris in the winter of 1997/1998. I deployed a variety of means to document this investigation: in addition to photographic "proof", I also collected assorted souvenirs and detritus to record the study while also maintaining a detailed written diary of my activities. It is the combination of the objects I collected along with the narrative strand of the diary that forms the foundation for this exhibition.