

Alyson Moore  
Full Statement  
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### Artist Statement

Where we are standing is not new, but it is not old. It is always moving and forever fixed, ever expanding and ever collapsing, the rise and fall of a thousand lifetimes at once. I'm interested in the places where we overlap: where the past and the present become looped in the future - where strangers meet without knowing - and coincide without intention.

We are walking Venn diagrams, thousands of millions of moments overlapping in the places we go and objects we touch. Have you ever stood at a gas pump and wondered who the last person to fill their tank was? Where were they going? Where were they leaving? What car were they driving, and why? Or picked up a used book, and noticed the notes scrawled in the corner, tiny underlines mapping back a moment? Fingerprints pressed to the pages, only to be picked up by another.

I remember being five years old and finding a bullet shell inside a desk from a thrift store. My mind marveled at the fact that someone else had owned this desk, that my hands were not the first to run alongside the sandy oak at the back of the drawer. In another time and place this scene had played out before, it had a history before me and it would have one after me. This desk had accumulated experiences, and it had absorbed moments. I breathed in deep, letting all the places my hands had touched enter my lungs.

I let the wood of the desk rise and fall with the coming and going of the present, my lungs absorbing the details, then sending them back into the World. I stood there and wondered at where that air would go next. I stand here, eighteen years later, still wondering.

My work is about that wonder. It is about unpacking these overlaps and standing amongst the vibrating layers. My work creates a dialogue between people and moments that are forever intertwined, though rarely acknowledged. Breathe it in.

## Historical Artist

Robert Rauschenberg is an artist whom my work shares many formal similarities with. Both in the choice of materials we use and the ways in which we both employ the materials - our work confronts and at times confounds the traditional ideas attributed to painting.

Historically, Robert Rauschenberg began working in the 1950's transition from abstract expressionism to pop art. His work considers the multiplicity of the relationship between art and non-art through the role of non-traditional materials in collage. Rauschenberg utilizes both found objects and images to achieve a blurring of the constructed space of the "art" world, and the seemingly natural "real" world. This is perhaps the first thing that drew me to Rauschenberg's work. He is concerned both conceptually and visually with working in an in between place, a place that is neither here nor there. I am also interested in creating visually a space that explores the complications of being neither here nor there. The use of eclectic materials in his work adds a powerful visual add to depict this. Working from materials in unexpected ways is something I have always been interested in.

In Rauschenberg's work he utilizes materials that are found in the everyday, materials that are often seen and overlooked. I like working with these same materials. Rauschenberg once said in an interview, "a painting is more like the real world, if it is made of the real world". In my own work I like taking the materials discarded by the real world, and taking/transforming them in similar ways as Rauschenberg. Rauschenberg

said of the objects he used, "So the object itself was changed by its context and therefore it became a new thing." Similar to Duchamp and the "ready made", these objects are re seen from their original purpose and role.

I'm drawn to use materials often overlooked or thought of as "trash", found objects that are worn in, handled. These objects have a history, it is a material covered in finger prints. Each object holding a piece of a story, an imprint of an existence that it has encountered. These objects, touched by another, are layered, physically overlapping and bringing together a new moment or point of connection, emerging from the old.

Another commonality between our work and a mutual goal is how we both seek to break away from the canvas and into the space surrounding it. In his groundbreaking work that he termed "combines", he works in a multitude of directions. The combines (1954-1962) utilize objects coming both on and off the canvas. These works blurred the line between sculpture and two-dimensional work. In what is considered one of his first combines, "Bed", Rauschenberg utilized dragged a quilt in paint. In "Monogram" he utilized both a found tire, and stuffed ram. The diversity of materials is then mirrored by the variety of ways in which the materials are used. While some materials are mounted on the wall, with aspects drawing onto the floor, some are primarily floor based, with raised portions scaling upward. Rauschenberg didn't just move in a singular direction, but moved both forward and backward, right and left.

This spatial variety is something I attempt to utilize within my own work. In the past my work has also attempted to blur the line of traditional mediums by breaking away from the frame and into the space surrounding the canvas, moving the image outside of

confined space and into the realm of the viewer. In my most recent work I attempt to take this spatial variety even further.

I'm interested in layering moments, collapsing and expanding the places where we overlap in our everyday lives, the places our fingerprints press against, leaving imprints only to be picked up by another. These moments exist simultaneously alone, and together. I'm interested in unpacking these layers, being able to see each encounter by itself, while also through the lens of the next. There is a free form of directionality in my work, the viewer is able to walk freely among each layer, sometimes from right to left, sometimes beginning from the side, sometimes from the front. There is no forward and backward within this space, and yet there is only forward and backward. While time limits the way we experience instances, in art, we are able to choose the path of each moment, perhaps seeing them one at a time, perhaps seeing three or four at once, or maybe seeing them all at a glance. The viewer is able to choose their path, keep moving, or simply stand amongst the layers

This is not unlike Rauschenberg's 1964 work, *Shades*. *Shades* consists of six lithographs on Plexiglass sheets. one sheet permanently mounted while the other five are able to be interchangeably placed in slots. Rauschenberg is once again rethinking an art form, the book, and breaking out of the traditional mold. The viewer is able to rework the order to create their own pathway of reading the work, to become an active participant in how they view the material

## Contemporary Artist

Sophie Calle is a contemporary French artist. While our work varies stylistically, (Calle's work is mainly documentation whereas my own is creative visual interpretation) conceptually we are interested in many of the same themes. Calle explores human vulnerability and intimacy while interacting with strangers. One example in which Calle explores this intimacy with strangers is in her work entitled, "L'hotel". In "L'hotel" Calle spent three weeks working as a maid within a Venice hotel. She photographed the guests' items around the room: the contents of their suit cases, letters left open, unmade beds, and sometimes even the guests themselves from a far. She created a picture of the people through the impressions they left on their environment, a story of who they are. In a sense she is creating nontraditional portraits of strangers. While her work in "L'hotel" is much more voyeuristic than my own work, we retain many of the same underlying characteristics.

Calle is documenting the everyday, drawing and making connections to people who would otherwise merely remain anonymous. She explores aspects of human vulnerability much more directly in another project, entitled, "Take Care of Yourself". In "Take Care of Yourself" Calle utilized her own personal experience to make connections with other people. She sent a break up letter she received from an ex-lover to 107 women. She had them each respond to the letter, and documented their responses in photographs and text. In the same way that I am interested in breaking through barriers of anonymity, Calle brings together a disparate group of people that respond to a singular object, thus creating a "community" of sorts that reacts to the same place, to the

same thing, but in different and revealing ways. It's something I explore within my own work: the collective and communal being very much the same while very different at the same time. I enjoy looking at this collectivism through public places and spaces frequented by the multitudes, especially the spaces that are used for the same reason, but for different purposes. This is an idea Calle has also explored in her own work. In "Unfinished" Calle was commissioned by an American bank to create a piece for them. She utilized ATM surveillance videos, and watched/studied strangers faces as they went to take money out, observing them while they were unguarded, unaware of being watched. She then interviewed people asking them about their relationship and feelings regarding money. Calle worked on the project for many years, but never felt comfortable with its results and thus entitled it "Unfinished".

Like Calle, I'm interested in looking at shared experiences and commonality within our everyday lives. Throughout the past few months I have been interviewing customers at a gas station in Lexington park. I watch as strangers pull into the same pump unaware of the people that were there before, quickly hurrying along without a second thought to the hundreds of times this scene had already been enacted that day. Each person responding to an identical object in the same way, yet very differently

Sophie Calle explores the idea of strangers and human intimacy through a variety of approaches and techniques. Both Calle's work and my own look at how people interact in many of the same places and in many of the same ways. While her work is much more voyeuristic than my own, we both look at objects and spaces to examine the communal aspects people encounter whether in abstract places such as relationships (such as Take Care of yourself) or physical ones (as in Unfinished).





## Outside Discipline

Visual art and writing share a lot of the same qualities. Both are mediums used to convey a wide variety of information. This information can range from feelings and emotions to stories, or political statements. In the same way that a piece of writing can be interpreted and analyzed by different viewers, a work of art can be interpreted and analyzed based on the experiences of the viewer. I have always been connected to writing, it's how I sort information, and process experiences. Whether it is in my everyday life, trying to sort through emotions and memories, or in my process of creating art, words and writing help me organize what it is I am thinking. When I talk to strangers, I write down the words they say that stick out to me. I do it to remember the moment more vividly, often in rereading conversations I have had with these people I am reminded of the underlying feeling they exude.

A poet whom I feel my work relates to is E. E. Cummings. Cummings was born in 1894 and worked throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His work was unique in its avant-garde style and development of interacting with the viewer. At it's very basic, Cummings's poetry is not passive, but active in how it engages the reader, forcing the viewer to participate in the poetry. Utilizing stylistic fragmentation and breaking up words, Cummings causes the reader to search for words and meaning both conceptually and physically. For example, in the poem *grasshopper*, Cummings rearranges the word *grasshopper*, mimicking the way a grasshopper jumps from here to there, the letters

seemingly rearranging themselves throughout the poem. The reader cannot merely glance at the poem to take in its meaning, but has to delve into the lines, rearranging and searching for similarities. He pushes against the boundaries of the page, allowing movement to come from both within it, but also from outside it. The viewer has to constantly keep moving their eyes across the poem to scan for the meaning. Both the viewer and the words on the page are constantly moving, creating a flow throughout. While my work is visual, and not written, the same idea of movement and pushing on, and rewriting the boundaries, remains. While Cumming's movement is in the rearranging of letters and the wandering of the eye of the viewer, mine is in the physical travel of objects on to and off the canvas.

e.e. Cummings, *grasshopper*

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