



«The man I live with is the most beautiful thing I know. Even though he could be a few inches taller. I've never come across absolute perfection. I prefer well-built men. It's a question of size and shape. Facial features don't mean much to me. What pleases me aesthetically is a man's body, slim and muscular.»



I spent one year with blind people who were born blind, who had never seen, and I asked them what their image of beauty was. Each work is composed of a portrait of the blind man or woman, and color photography trying to represent what beauty is to their eyes.

SOPHIE CALLE

Sophie Calle

The Blind #19, 1986

**Color photograph, black-and-white photograph,
text, and wooden shelf**

Overall 47 1/4 x 51 3/4 inches

Collection of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth,

Museum purchase made possible by a grant from The Burnett Foundation

Acquired in 1995

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Sophie Calle is known for documenting activities that raise questions about voyeurism, privacy, love, and authorship. Her first well-known project took place in 1979, when she documented a series of strangers whom she followed around Paris as they went about the business of their daily lives. In her series *The Blind*, she documents another odd, yet controlled, interaction she has created. Calle asked a series of people blind since birth to describe beauty. She then set out to photograph what they had described. The final piece consists of a photograph of the blind person interviewed by Calle, a framed image of his or her response to Calle's question, and Calle's photographic interpretation of his or her response, which rests on a shelf. The piece brings up many questions for the viewer. First, how accurate is Calle's interpretation of the woman's description? Second, since these people have never experienced the world with sight, is it even possible to translate their idea of beauty into a photograph, which uses only our vision to communicate? Also, we experience the work visually, in the precise way the subject of the work – the blind – can never experience it. The piece shows, among other things, that ideas of beauty vary greatly, and that for a large group of people, the experience excludes sight. In displaying these different descriptions of beauty, Calle shows that our ways of communicating these ideas are imperfect, fluid, and unique to the person using them.