

# PEOPLE ARE TALKING ABOUT

ART

**WHITE PAGES**  
AN IMAGE FROM  
SOPHIE CALLE'S  
*TAKE CARE OF  
YOURSELF*, 2007.

## the comfort of strangers

*Sophie Calle and  
Tracey Emin go to Venice.*

Art lovers flocking to the **Venice Biennale** this month will find feminine preoccupations reigning supreme in the British and French pavilions. In one corner, works by the British art world's notorious bad girl, Tracey Emin; in the other, wry French Conceptualist Sophie Calle's *Take Care of Yourself*, an installation of videos, texts, and photographs, inspired by a breakup letter the artist received from a boyfriend.

"I gave it to 104 different women to interpret," Calle, a serial mingler of art and life, recalls by phone from her home near Paris, "a psychoanalyst, an opera singer, an Indian dancer, a moral philosopher, Jeanne Moreau, and Laurie Anderson. A riflery champion shoots at the word LOVE. A physicist compares the rupture of the atom to the falling apart of a relationship."

Her trip to Venice represents a return of sorts to her artistic roots. For one of her earliest works, she got herself hired as a chambermaid

in a luxurious Venetian hotel, where she secretly photographed the personal effects of the guests. What will she be bringing this time? "My friends," she says. "They're my good-luck charms."

Meanwhile, in the nearby British pavilion, Emin will be showing a series of paintings, drawings, and her signature works in neon. "It's about ideas of intimacy and sensuality," the artist explains on the phone from her London studio.

How does Emin, who became a *succès de scandale* with her 1998 installation *My Bed*, feel about representing Great Britain? "Well, I'm half-Turkish and half-English, which makes me exceptionally British," she says. Amid the frenetic crush, Emin is looking forward to attending a "very glamorous" party in her honor and to dipping her toe into the scene at the Lido. "I'll be packing a photograph of my cat," the artist says, "a rather large amount of swimsuits, a pair of flippers, a float, and some goggles."

—LESLIE CAMHI *pata* > 128