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Exploratory Essay

The research process thus far has proved to be more enlightening than I originally thought it would. While I am generally still on the same route with regards to my research question, I have quickly discovered that I will have to continue this assignment with an open mind, as it is highly likely that my opinion and argument may have to be adapted with any additional sources. Although I only have six sources as of now, a few of them have already altered the path that I was expecting my research essay to follow.

I will continue to focus on the main question as to how large of a role repression against women, specifically within the art industry, affected the willingness of Margaret Keane to allow her husband to take credit for her paintings for twenty years. While this will be the main focus of my essay, I also plan on examining the character of Walter Keane and how this may have also impacted the success of the ‘Big Eyes’ hoax.

While attempting to find different sources for this essay, I have found it particularly hard to find good evidence backing up the claim that repression of women throughout the art industry could have helped aid Margaret Keane’s decision to allow a man to represent her work, with the idea in mind that this would lead to higher popularity and sales. I have used many different search words, yet have had little luck with finding articles or books that support exactly what I will be discussing. I hope to make another trip to the library within the next few days and speak with a librarian in order to potentially find more concrete evidence, or even to help brain storm different keywords that may have the potential of yielding more results Although I do not have as much evidence currently as I would like, I am off to a good start, currently working with one source that focuses specifically on the progress of women throughout the art industry.

I have had great success with finding general background information and also direct interviews with Margaret Keane herself. I think both of these will help to build a strong foundation for my research essay, allowing my audience to get both a very good understanding of what my hoax was and how it was achieved, and also the direct repercussions of it. I have found that many of the direct quotes from Margaret Keane help to represent the significance of this hoax and how it stripped one artist of twenty years worth of recognition, something she will never be able to recover. From here on out, I would like to look for more specific pieces of evidence, as I have a good amount of very generalized information.

My next step in the research process will be to find a way to incorporate all of evidence into a fluent outline. As of now, I have most of the pieces, yet I still must work towards finding a way to make them all work well with one another. I hope that the outline with help to establish whether or not I have found an efficient way of incorporating everything without it feeling ‘forced.’ Looking at all of the evidence I have thus far, I believe that my final essay may be multiple points that help towards one larger thesis about the relevance between repression of women in the art industry and the successful manipulation of Margaret Keane by her husband, Walter.

Bibliography

*Big Eyes*. Dir. Tim Burton. Perf. Amy Adams, Christoph Waltz. The Weinstein

Company, 2014. Film.

This source will most likely be my primary source for background and general information about the Big Eyes hoax. However, I also think it will be quite beneficial to take into account some of the different film techniques that Tim Burton used in order to draw attention to certain aspects of the hoax. Considering that Burton worked with Margaret Keane directly in order to correctly portray her story, the moments that have a greater emphasis in the movie correlate to the moments that were significant to Margaret herself. I believe that using a film medium as one of my main sources will bring something new to my research essay that many articles and books cannot.

Edgers, Geoff. “Artist Margaret Keane finally gets her big break; Tim Burton’s Big Eyes

set record straight about art fraud involving popular paintings of children.” *The Vancouver Sun* 26 Dec. 2014. *ProQuest*. Web. 11 Nov. 2015.

Although a short article, I still find it to be quite useful for my research essay. It includes an interview with Margaret Keane. It talks about current price that some of her paintings go for, something I will include when discussing the difference in popularity when Margaret was the artist as opposed to Walter. However, something I will have to keep in mind is whether the scandal added significant value to the art, which may take away from the unapparent difference between the paintings’ success when comparing the two artists.

Gelt, Jessica. “A Pop-art portrait; Margaret Keane reflects on her life, played out in ‘Big

Eyes.’” *Los Angeles Times* 22 Dec. 2014. *ProQuest*. Web. 11 Nov. 2015.

Again, this article includes another interview with Margaret Keane. I have found that although many of my sources include interviews, I made the decision to keep them all due to the fact that they each added something new to the table. They discuss the importance of the paintings when a new face was put behind them, and how it supposedly adds more integrity to them when it is an elegant woman, instead of a masculine guy. However, it also discusses how, before these paintings got their original recognition from Walter, they were criticized and went by seemingly unnoticed, only to do a complete reversal once represented by Walter. This difference can certainly be used to argue that repression of women in the art industry helped with the success of Walter Keane’s twenty-year fraud.

Preston, John. “Big Eyes: the true story of Margaret and Walter Keane.” *The Telegraph*.

The telegraph, 08 Jan. 2015. Web. 11 Nov. 2015.

This article focuses primarily on the movie ‘Big Eyes,’ examining some of Tim Burton’s motives, as well as also exploring some first-hand information from Margaret Keane. I think this article will be useful in explaining some of Burton’s different techniques when using film as the medium. However, this article also includes a tidbit where Margaret Keane explains the character of Walter, and how it helped aid the success of her paintings. Could his natural skill at promoting and charming have kept Margaret silent for a longer period of time? If he had not possessed these skills, would she have spoken up much sooner? Would the paintings have even been as successful?

Stallings, Tyler. “Melancholy-Pop: ‘Big Eyes’ Screenwriters Discuss

Art,  Commerce, and Margaret Keane.” *KCETlink.*KCETlink, 26 Jan. 2015. Web. 8 Nov. 2015.

This article gives an overview of the lives of Margaret and Walter Keane, and a brief summary of the hoax itself. It also incorporates elements from the film that I will be using as one of my main sources, Tim Burton’s Big Eyes.

However, one of the main reasons this article proved to be important to my research question was due to the fact that it addressed the question of whether or not Margaret’s reveal as the true artist hindered the success of her paintings. The answer to this question, that her paintings actually became more valuable and coveted by current owners, will adapt my argument.The fact that Margaret was a woman as opposed to a man seemed to have no effect on art lovers, despite what her husband had told her. So I now will ask the question, did Margaret’s perception of the world’s feelings towards woman have an effect on how she perceived herself as an artist? Did this help aid Walter Keane in manipulating his wife to allowing him to take the credit for her paintings? **NOTE**: **This was taken from my blog post about one of the first secondary sources that we had found.**

Swinth, Kirsten. *Painting Professionals: Women Artists and the Development of a*

*Professional Ideal in American Art, 1870-1920*. Diss. Yale University, 1995. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1995. AAT 9537769. *ProQuest*. Web. 11 Nov. 2015.

This dissertation, written by a student at Yale University, explores the role of women in the art industry during the mid to late 20th century. It also examines how gender played a large part in their journey to become success during this time period. Margaret Keane was an aspiring artist during this time, so this will help to aid my argument that gender certainly was a large aspect in the ‘Big Eyes’ hoax, and how Walter Keane manipulated this unfair advantage in order to keep Margaret quiet. If women were struggling to become successful artists around her, and her paintings were doing extremely well under a different persona, wouldn’t this have pushed her more towards keeping quiet?