

Doing Time...
Essays on...
Using People

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Kristian...
Vistrup...
Madsen.....

To write about someone else means both to expose and transform them. This is the dilemma of writing that Janet Malcolm describes as “morally indefensible.” In *Doing Time: Essays on Using People*, Kristian Vistrup Madsen deliberates on his correspondence with an inmate in a California prison named Michael. Over several years, this spawns a series of reflections about the politics of solidarity and appropriation, but also about writing itself and what happens when life is turned into art. This book is a portrait of a friendship interpolated by great difference, and of a fearful time in which experience and identity are everything, and thinking not enough.

“The first few letters on my part were punctuated by hesitancy, a dutiful respect for the difference between us: that I couldn’t possibly understand, or even with the moral implication that I oughtn’t. Heavy with sarcasm, I wrote to Michael in prison: ‘Meanwhile, I am working in an art gallery. We sit in a room full of MacBook Airs in minimalist outfits and talk about the migrant crisis.’ But he had written nothing to warrant such pleas for reassurance. My respect for difference, then, was not the same as respect for Michael, but rather a way of excusing my own position, working through my own guilt.”

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ART THEORY

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by Kristian Vistrup Madsen

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