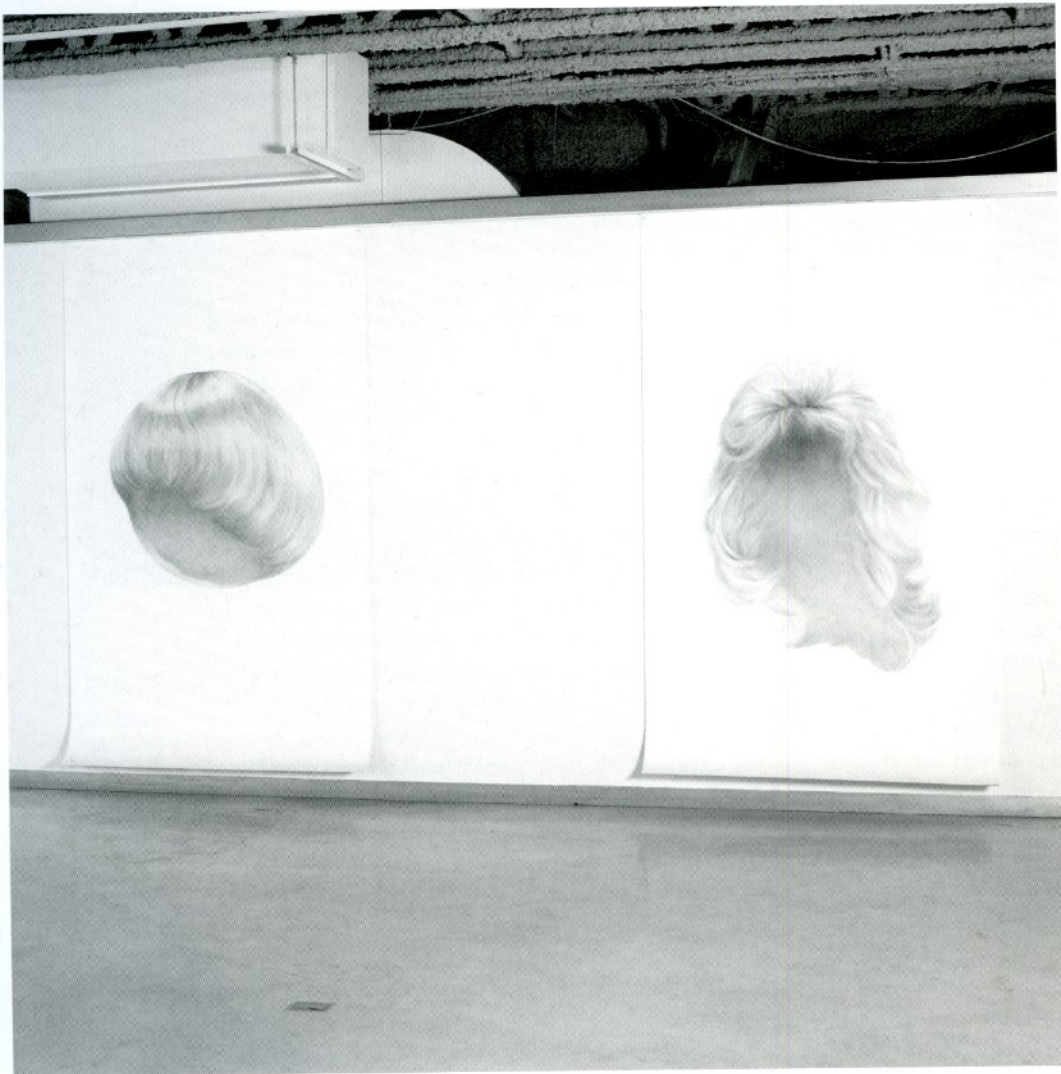


# Margarita Gluzberg Interview by Milly Thompson

MT Dear Margy, here are some questions, disregard any you are not interested in: For some reason I have an idea that you read a lot of brainy books. Yes/no? Don't be coy. How do they influence your work? Or do you prefer to see your work existing in some more sort of ethereal space that exists outside of language? You always seem to be cheerful and I don't associate you with dried-up academicism. I have sent you a picture of a lake. I like nature, do you? Or do you like the SUPA natural? love from Milly

MG Dear Milly, I want to reply to all your questions, that is surely your prerogative as interviewer to ask me questions I don't want to answer – you know, about my sordid personal life, etc. Anyway, let's start with question one – on the subject of brainy books. Yes, I guess I have read quite a few in my day. Coming from a nice Russian intellectual family, I was encouraged to read *Crime and Punishment* at the age of eleven, which was almost certainly completely wasted on me. However, in terms of now, I did go through a phase – well, a number of years – when I felt that I needed to read a lot of philosophy. So I read Kierkegaard, Bataille, Blanchot, Nietzsche, Frankfurt School, which was very educational, but I entered a very strange stage in my life when I thought it was necessary to explain the meaning of everything and it really wasn't at all beneficial for my own work. And then I realised that the discipline of philosophical enquiry wasn't mine and that I wasn't a writer, and that essentially I was a looker-oner, and so now I mainly read fiction. I'm not so interested in the abstract – the existential "who am I?" business, but more in the machinations of life. So the only philosophy I find myself reading is Deleuze and Guattari, because they are so much about matter and specificity. Actually, I'm obsessed with the superficial (because I am superficial, myself). I think my drawings are so much about the perceived appearance of things, sometimes false appearance. So recently I've been reading Balzac, Thackeray and Brett Easton-Ellis, because they all write about the surface. There's a recurring line in *Glamorama*: "We'll slip down the surface of things." In other words, what figures foremost in their writing is the exterior construction of life – like clothes, physiognomy, hairstyles, cars, houses – while the effect produced is profound, grotesque and incredibly witty. Oh yes, I'm also half-way through Tom Wolfe's, *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, which is even better twenty years later. More on this subject?

I asked you the other day about nature and also about books. You talked about books a lot, but what about nature? If you're obsessed with the superficial then does nature have a part to play in that? Can nature be superficial? I keep harping on about this because of your drawings: spiders, wigs, butterflies (all with eyes), earlier works like the ghost at a bus stop and newer works that no-one else has seen. Do you see a connection between nature and the superficial, or is it something you're just not interested in at all?



left: *Wig*, 1997, pencil on paper, 250 x 150 cm; right: *Wig*, 1997, pencil on paper, 250 x 150 cm

*Wig* (detail), 1997, pencil on paper, 250 x 150 cm

