

of monsters, aliens



Margarita Gluzberg
in conversation
with Clare Manchester

and wigs



Clare Manchester The technique that you use seems integral to the images you make. Pencil, line and lack of colour somehow in themselves seem suggestive of hairiness.

Margarita Gluzberg Yes, with the initial wigs series I came up with the idea of a line for each hair, which works simply as a formal device. I made an almost arbitrary choice with the wigs. But I suppose that the strange and intriguing thing about wigs is that they're intrinsically artificial, they pretend they're something else, posing as organic objects when in fact they're not. They're fundamentally theatrical.

CM Putting on a wig can be to do with adopting an incongruous hairstyle or a

transient identity. Does this have anything to do with what wigs signify for you?

MG They're confusing objects generally which I quite like because they are linked to people's notions of deviancy – transvestites, prostitutes.

CM They hide reality. The wigs are images on their own without a face or head, in a sense the image is very alienating because there's nothing there besides emptiness.

MG Yes, but then cancer victims sometimes wear wigs, so they also suggest a sense of being outside society while at the same time trying to conform to it. By wearing a wig you are both conforming and becoming somebody else.

I like the fact that they're confusing objects because I don't want identity to be the only thing that comes out of my work. In fact, when I began the *Wigs* series, I homed in on their confusing qualities, interested in the way that they never seem to signify one thing or another. Whenever I picked a wig up in Brick Lane or in a second-hand shop, I was seized by revulsion. You can't ever quite get away from that feeling of dead animals that they have about them. I've definitely got an obsession with hair and also for that matter with missing heads and missing faces. It must be a horror film thing!?

CM Yes, the monster drawing looks a bit like the beast in *La Belle et la Bête*. How do monsters and horror films feed into your work?

MG The more I drew wigs, the more monstrous they became. Ultimately, they were transformed from representations of wigs, from what wigs are, into something quite different. I began to treat them more abstractly, aligning the drawing process with this notion of growing something. I also started thinking about Frankenstein's monster, and specimens in a jar. It's only a small thing, but it interested me that if you change even the proportions of one thing within a drawing, that it could potentially become a depiction of something else. It's like a kind of scientific experiment where the wigs turn into horrible mutated animals. For me the wig becomes like a starting point for fiction, a lead back to the source of mysterious creatures that otherwise seem to appear from nowhere. I am interested in the horror film and the B movie, especially when the monster figure is represented as something curiously flawed or impotent; the dysfunctional almost pathetic monster. Monsters in these movies are also not very well made. I'm interested in the relationship between horror and impotence. I want to talk about a failure to frighten.

CM Films are often more frightening when you never quite see the thing that you are afraid of.

MG Yes, never seeing the monster. Once your fears are made visual they aren't that scary anymore. So, really I'm making images that I know aren't that scary. But unlike the way these monsters are made, my drawings aren't badly made, they're actually very intricate. I even sometimes worry about making something that's too aesthetic.

