

UOVO

OPEN

OFFICE

June 2008 — Basel



Title:

SCENARIO FOR A CONVERSATION

Artist:

MARCELLINE DELBECQ

Interviewer:

SIMON CASTETS

Location:

UOVO OPEN OFFICE — BASEL

Date:

06.06.2008



Brooklyn, lunch-time at Café 1980 between Berry and Wythe, key lime pies, then walk to the river nearby. Chilly March wind. The café closed down on April 7, 2008.

Simon Castets: America is a strong fixture in your work. How do you explain this attraction to the English language and the American landscape?

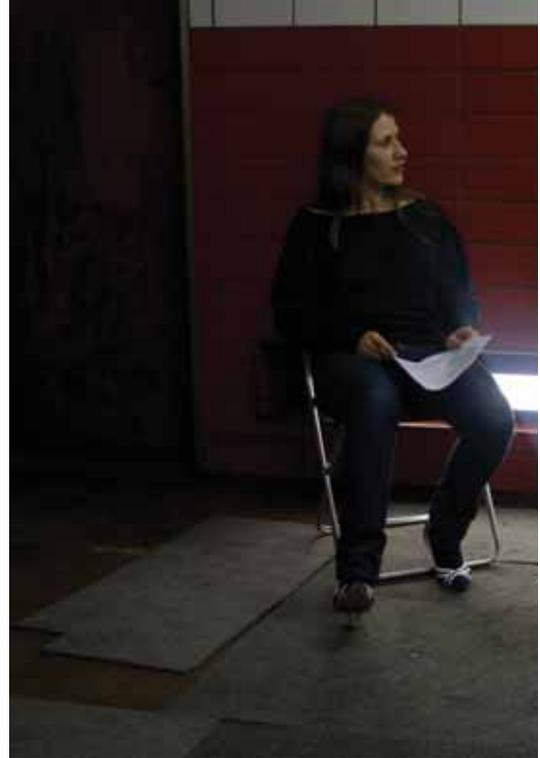
Marcelline Delbecq: I discovered photography through Diane Arbus's work in my early teenage years. Her work made such a big impression on me that I decided to become a photographer almost right away, and to move to America as soon as I reached the age of 18. I grew up in a small town in Normandy that was not necessarily a stimulating place, so I kind of forged my own imagery and culture through Anglo-Saxon music and magazines. I guess learning English was a way to escape and music was a very good way to do it. I spent a lot of time in England as a teenager, special ordered NME and Melody Maker from the news agent in my town. I was a huge Velvet Underground fan although I wasn't mature enough to understand what their lyrics were about ... I suppose the Velvet led me to Warhol and along came my discovery of art, mostly through American culture. When I turned 18, I actually moved to America for real, to study photography. I first moved to Chicago, then to New York, and wanted to either become a film still photographer or take pictures of bands and create record covers. I was in complete bewilderment: I realized how French I was, that no place I knew resembled Warhol's factory, that America in literature and films is 'same same but very different' from America for real, that the Rock 'n' Roll world is a victim of its own imagery. I became very close friends with a famous singer and realized I didn't fantasize about the music world enough to go any further. But from that time on, and even though it seemed like an attractive/repulsive relationship, America became an inherent part of my life. I studied photography through the angle of the history of American photography, so that probably contributed very much in the imagery I've forged in my own head. I pretty much stopped taking pictures when I moved back to France. Although I spent a year in New York last year and had a great and creative time, I believe it's time for me to move away from American references a little bit, but somehow they always come back into the picture. Right now I'm working on a sound piece about a Russian river. It's part of my origins, but it's a complete discovery because I've never been to Russia and don't even speak the language.



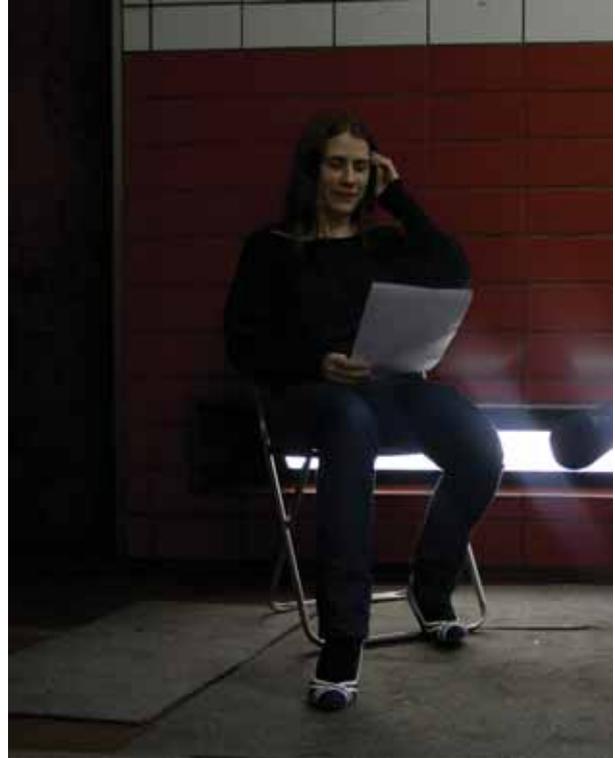
Artist's Studio, 20th arrondissement, adjacent to rue Vilin, Perec's childhood address now turned into housing projects. Large window looking onto a small but wild garden.

SC: The tension between the ability to memorize a film still and the desire to capture a flux of images informs several of your works, including *Glimpses*.

MD: *Glimpses*, which I'm going to read live tonight for Uovo Open Office, is a project that took its origin in my interest in cinematic writing. It's a series of portraits of personalities I've run into but never met, read aloud during a projection of fade-outs (from black to white to black) that reveals the name of the person and the place where I've encountered him (they're all men). I wasn't so much interested in the fame of their names as in my position as a 'regardeuse', an observer that would recognize and not be recognized.



All the portraits were written from the camera's perspective, recording all these very furtive moments and releasing them with words, but no image. Those figures are like ghosts, stuck in some kind of memory, waiting for a voice to talk aloud so they can be activated and sent back into real life for a very short moment, before they disappear again until the next reading. So yes, *Glimpses* is a very good example of that still vs. flux aspect of my work: the texts and voice enable images to take shape in the listeners' minds, but no one can tell whether they are frozen or flowing. Actually, it's the very essence of the memory of a film: the brain can't retain a flux of images even though sometimes we feel it does. It only remembers stills, as in a reel.



Eighth floor, bright white apartment with a view on the Eiffel Tower standing right across the street. Leather sofas, two identical armchairs with feet that are almost too short. Rounded seat-backs. Terrace with wrought iron balustrade.

SC: Your take on the cinematographic realm triggers an experience of a lack: either the image is missing, or the movement is absent. How does your work relate to films that have taken steps toward similar directions, disrupting diegetic expectations with image and dialogue, or lack thereof, from *Hurléments en faveur de Sade* (Guy Debord, 1952) to *La Jetée* (Chris Marker, 1962) or *Beau Travail* (Claire Denis, 1999)?

MD: I guess there's lots of movies we could talk about as well, that all have been influential in some kind of way, from Marguerite Duras' *India Song* (that was first initiated as a radio piece), to Alain Resnais' *L'année dernière à Marienbad* adapted from Robbe-Grillet's eponymous ciné-roman. I think my propensity for 'dismantling' the basics of



moviemaking (sound/image/dialogue/voice-over/voice-off) probably comes from my lack of cinematic culture. I was very interested in cinema when I was younger, even had a subscription to *Les Cahiers du Cinéma* while in high school, but I would rarely go and see movies and probably didn't know myself what I was really interested in within this big word of Cinema. Strangely enough, as I've mentioned before, I first projected myself as a film-still photographer. But I guess I just forgot about this idea as time went by, also because I had no connection whatsoever in the movie industry. When I was in art school, I almost gave up photography and started focusing on writing because I felt I was more inspired by a blank page than by anything else. I first wrote about images, then I read a lot of scripts, from all types of movies I still haven't seen. Scripting-writing – especially stage instructions – became a way for me to mix description, fiction, action and stillness within a combination of words. From there, I started analyzing all the layers of a movie and separating them instead of combining them. I am still discovering new layers. I've recently been working with an amazing foley artist, Nicolas Becker, whose world of sounds opens a brand new territory for my work. To go back to your question, I saw *La Jetée* when I was studying photography at ICP in New York.



I had never heard of this French filmmaker with an American name! It sure completely changed my way of seeing film, because it told a story through the medium I was studying with great interest (photography) but that I had never envisioned as a film tool, and the voice was the conveyer of the story, on top of the images. From then on, I always thought that if I were to do a movie, I couldn't do anything but film photographs or use steady shots. It changed a little but bit when I saw *L'année dernière à Marienbad* on a summer night at the former Cinemathèque in Paris. Resnais uses a lot of track shots and I just visually love track shots, because the image flows like words do, sometimes.

As for Claire Denis, I haven't seen *Beau Travail*, but I like her work. It's funny that you mention one of her films, because I've been thinking about her lately. I read an article, years ago, in which she said that as a child, her mother didn't tell her stories, but told her movies. I had even looked her up in the white pages to write to her, but never did. Recently, a friend of mine told me that the scriptwriter she works with,

Jean-Pol Fargeau, doesn't write dialogues, but images. That's my own approach to writing: I am incapable of writing dialogues, I can only write images, be they made up or extracted from reality. So I thought I should definitely see all her movies at once. And read her scripts.

There are also two other connections: the *Tindersticks* and *Nenette et Boni*. I've been listening to the *Tinderticks* for at least fifteen years, and have pretty much all their records on my iTunes library. So I've listened to *Trouble Everyday's* soundtrack a lot without even seeing the movie ... As for *Nenette et Boni*, it was the starting point of a text I am reading in *Glimpses*. I was living in New York at the time, missing France very much. I had seen posters all over the place advertising the *Tindersticks'* soundtrack for a movie that had a great French title. So I went to Virgin Megastore on Time Square to listen to the record, and ran into Iggy Pop yelling at a salesperson. This encounter turned into a text, but I ended up not buying the record. I saw the movie a few years later. Vincent Gallo as a French baker is an unforgettable image.



Late night, Casino hall: Woman picking up *confetti* from the ground to bring them back to her hotel room. Morning: Beige hotel room, close to the sea. View on a parking lot. Seagulls laughing. The hotel is part of a provincial Casino mimicking the Golden Nugget, French style. Acrobats and clowns celebrated its birthday until dawn.

SC: What is keeping you from directing a feature film?

MD: I have a feeling it will happen someday, but I don't know when or how. It's what I kept saying about writing a book and I'm currently working on one, so there's hope. I probably have to learn how to work with film first, at least how to manipulate it the way I want it to look. I have a few vague ideas, mostly steady and track

shots of characters in places, like my friend Elina Löwensohn seen from behind walking towards a river or Kim Gordon dressed in a fake fur coat hanging up a receiver in a suburban house ... I don't know where these images come from but I know they have to be filmed. But it will take time and there is no rush.

There is one documentary project that will probably see light before a fiction film, though. I'm currently gathering funds and writing the project and it is already helping me figuring out the reality of such an object (film). It's all about getting real, not only fantasizing some kind of dismantlement anymore. All the ingredients have to come together and I don't know yet if I'm a good enough cook to handle them all, but I'm trying.



Pitch black Black Florest, early hours of the night. Ses souliers en daim neufs s'abîment peu à peu sur les pédales de son break scandinave de location lancé à vive allure sur une route sinueuse. Au restaurant chinois sur le Rhin, la femme du directeur n'avait pas dit un mot.

SC: You described your work *ONE* (a book which story will only be known to the person who wrote the most enticing end) as a 'unique book for a unique spectator'. Was this purely serendipitous or does your cinematographic interpretation of texts systematically occur?

MD: *ONE* is still in its glass window and has not been acquired by anyone yet. It's missing an owner, really, because no one has read the text except for me. Writing *ONE* was an extraordinary experience because I literally didn't know where I was going and this led me to write three possible itineraries for the reader to

choose his / her own path to an unknown destination. I travelled to this amazing place called Portmeirion on the far west coast of Wales, an architect's life work used as a décor for *The Prisoner*. Portmeirion is a difficult place for an artist I think, because it is so amazing that you can't really add anything to it. You just have to go there, spend at least a night in 'The Village' and wake up in another world. All the pictures taken by amateur or professional photographers look exactly the same. So I figured that the only point was to take notes while on the premises and to try to write something that would enable not only to 'read', but also to 'watch', using a mix of factual details and distorted memories. So yes, I probably thought of my reader as a spectator, not only of the object in a window that prevents access to the text, but also because *ONE* takes the reader / spectator to a realm that goes beyond words and makes one visually travel to an unexpected destination.

Title:

MARCELLINE DELBECQU

Description:

Selected Works

Years:

2004-2006



Title: Daleko

Year: 2008

Description: Piece sonore (5'58), impression pigmentaire sur papier archival (110 x 65 cm), casques, banc/coffre en bois

Size: dimensions variables



Title: SILVER & DUST (Charlotte Spaulding)

Year: 2008

Description: Film noir et blanc (HD), tirage numérique sur papier archival, bois laqué, plexiglas

Size: adimensions variables



Title: WEST - Chapitre 1 / Beverly Hills, CA, 2007

Year: 2007-2009

Description: WEST Portfolio de 12 impressions numériques pigmentaires sur papier archival mat, 28 x 50 chaque
Roman en cours de rédaction, également présenté sous forme de lectures en public avec vidéo-projection
des images



Title: ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE LAKE

Year: 2008

Description: Pièce sonore (Swirl, 3'51), impression texte sur papier, lettres vinyliques, accrochage sélectif de la collection du Hessel Museum.

Size: Dimensions variables.



Title: ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE LAKE
Year: 2008
Description: plexiglas noir brillant
Size: dimensions variables



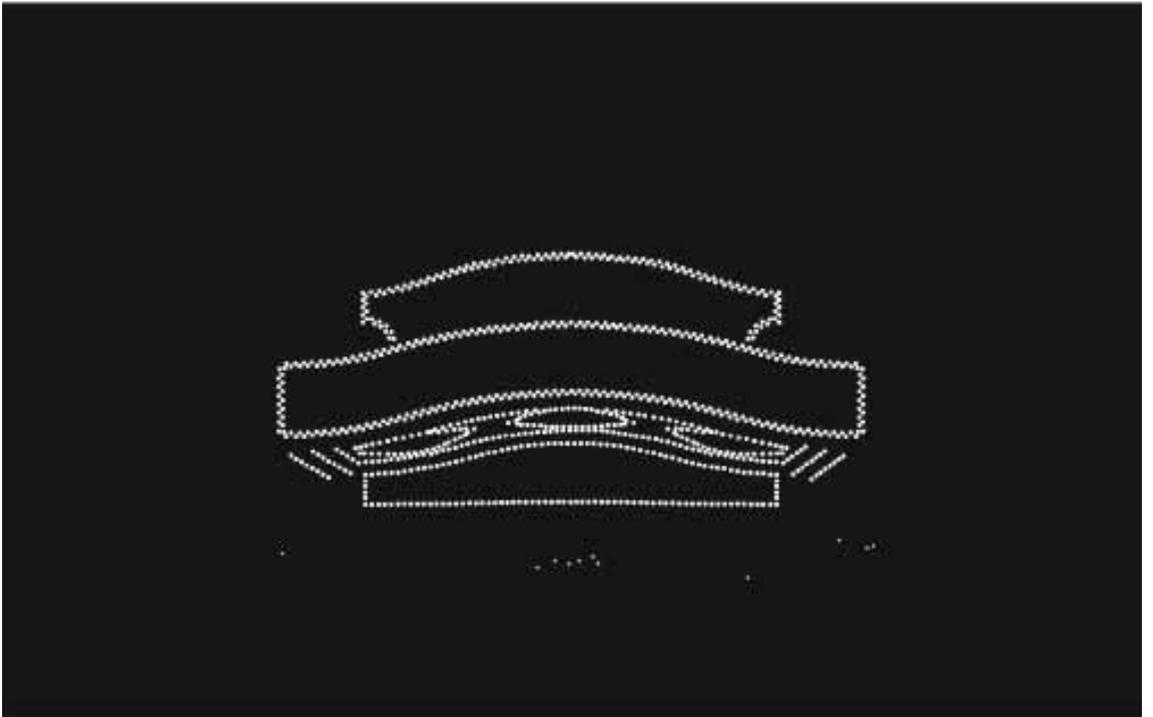
Title: RAPTURE

Year: 2007

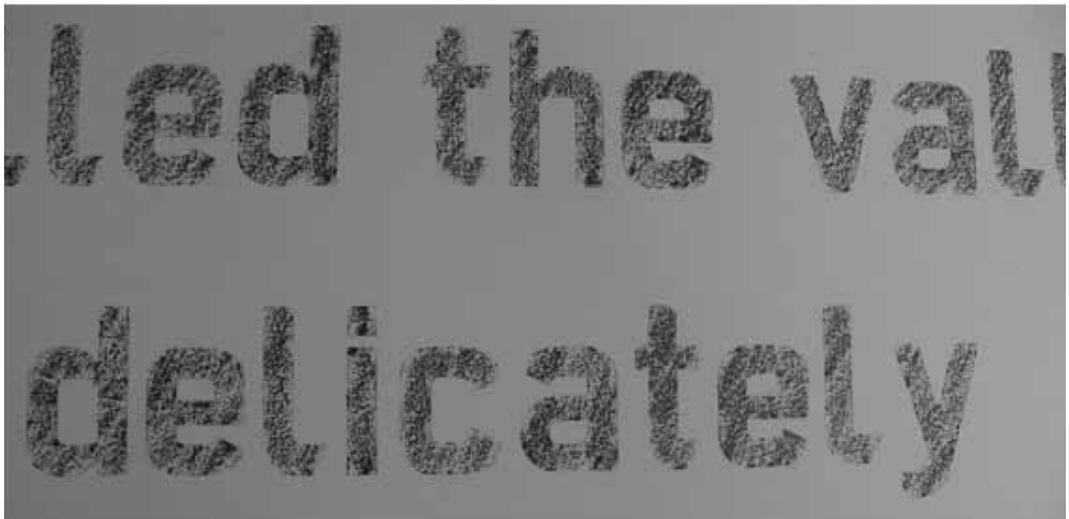
Description: Impression numérique sur transparent dans un caisson lumineux (30,5x63,5 cm),
peinture noire, pièce sonore (4'11'')

Voice : Kim Gordon

Size: Dimensions variables



Title: SHOWTIME
Year: 2007
Description: Impression numerique sur papier archival
Size: 100 x 106 cm



Title: GHOST
Dessin mural (mine de plomb)
Year: 2005-2007
Description: sculpture, wood and pneumatic
Size: 250 cm x 337 cm

The picture holds.



Title: In Camera (The picture holds. The action and the sound stop)

Year: 2006-2007

Description: Lettres en inox poli miroir (extrait) et affiche pour billboard

Size: Dimensions variables



WAITING FOR THE RAIN



WAITING FOR THE NIGHT

Title: WAITING FOR THE MOON
WAITING FOR THE RAIN
WAITING FOR THE NIGHT

Year: 2006-2007

Description: Impressions numériques sur papier Archival mat
Size: 21,6x30 cm



Title: RECOLLECTION

Year: 2006

Description: Impression numérique sur papier archival mat

Size: 110 x 70 cm



SILENCE PLATEAU

Title: SILENCE PLATEAU

Year: 2005

Description: Néon teinté, peinture noire

Size: 70 x 100 cm



Title: SHOOT THE FREAK

Year: 2005

Description: Impression numérique pigmentaire sur papier archival mat,

Size: 30 x 40 cm



Title: (UNE FIN)

Year: 2005

Description: Installation sonore pour voix, 4'18, 2005

Platine CD, trois casques, CD numéroté, lettres vinyliques dorées

Size: Dimensions variables, pièce unique

Notes: Vue de l'exposition Air Cambodia Palais de Tokyo, 2005



Title: SOLO
Year: 2005
Description: Installation sonore pour voix, 1'49P
latine vinyle, ampli, enceintes et disque vinyle numéroté.
Size: Dimensions variables