

November 2014

## A Special Guest Of Text Matters. Mieke Bal: “Writing With Images”

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### Recommended Citation

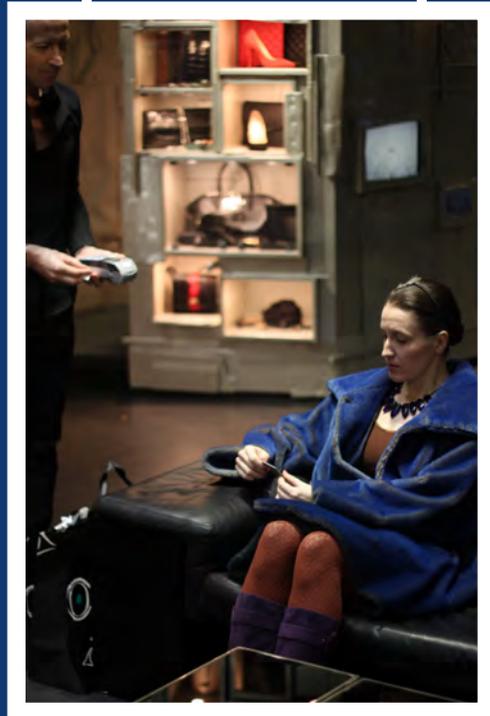
Bal, Mieke and Filipczak, Dorota. "A Special Guest Of Text Matters. Mieke Bal: “Writing With Images”." *Text Matters: A Journal of Literature, Theory and Culture*, no.4, 2020, pp. 15-27, doi:10.2478/texmat-2014-0002

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Mieke Bal

A Photograph by Bas Uterwijk



Mieke Bal & Michelle Williams Gamaker: *Madame B*

Photographs by Thijs Vissia and Helinä Hukkataival

## A SPECIAL GUEST OF TEXT MATTERS

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### Mieke Bal: “Writing with Images”

#### A Conversation—Dorota Filipczak

(University of Łódź)

**Dorota Filipczak:** Professor Bal, we are meeting primarily because of your video installation *Madame B*, which is being premiered in Muzeum Sztuki (the Museum of Modern Art) in Łódź.<sup>1</sup> Was there a special reason why you and Michelle Williams Gamaker decided to choose this particular location apart from the fact that this is one of the oldest museums of modern art?

**Mieke Bal:** Yes, I really like the idea that it is actually the oldest museum of modern art (I’ve been told), so this “old” and “modern” tension is relevant for our project. The novel I have worked with responds to and takes us back to the 1850s, which is the beginning of modern art, and we are now in this sort of postmodern moment or even post-postmodern, so Łódź seems to be a lovely place to have this exhibition. It’s a video exhibition from 2013/14, it’s completely new and fresh from the press. It responds to a novel that in its time was already cinematic although cinema wasn’t there yet. If you read the novel, you see, it’s a cinematic novel, of its time and ahead of it. This is such a strong anachronism that when the director of Muzeum Sztuki suggested we should have our exhibition there, we were just in heaven. We said, “This is ideal. This is the very best place for it!” And there is a secondary reason that also makes sense, which is the former communist and now capitalist society. It is also a historically “thick” place, again anachronistically, to propose a work that is very much about the abuses of capitalism and the sentimentalizing of the allure

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Mr Jarosław Suchan (director of the Museum of Modern Art in Łódź), Ms Katarzyna Słoboda (curator of the exhibition) and Mr Przemysław Purtak (coordinator) for making it possible for me to interview Professor Mieke Bal while she was staying in Łódź as their guest.

of the accumulation of goods that you don't need, which is what caused the current crisis. Again, there is an economic anachronism involved. So I couldn't wish for a better place to have this exhibition.

**DF:** Well, I'm delighted to hear that. I must say we feel privileged that you and Michelle Williams Gamaker are premiering this exhibition in Łódź. Coincidentally, you are going to have a lecture in MS2, which (I'm sure you've been told) is located in the flourishing area of Manufaktura, the most fashionable shopping centre in Łódź, where women are seductively marketed with *Madame B* syndrome recycled.

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**MB:** Yes. I think we are all vulnerable to that attraction; that's why capitalism has been able to sustain itself. We are all vulnerable to the desire to own, to have, to buy. But what came to our attention while we were rereading this novel (after I had an intuitive interest in doing a project on this novel) and made us so excited about doing the project was the incredible intertwining of capitalism and its seductions, and patriarchy and its seductions, and its ongoing presence in our societies. These men, who will get all they want, have sex with Emma, and in the end she completely falls for the seduction whatever the seduction is. She confuses the two domains. She is a very confused woman, but we could all be in that position, so we don't want to say this is individual, or this is hysterical. It is a socially produced syndrome that I think is at the root of the current economic crisis, but also at the root of a lot of unhappiness in private lives.

**DF:** By all means. I'm not sure if you've been told that there was a film in Poland called *Pani Bovary to ja* (*I am Madame Bovary*), which translated Flaubert into the reality of the seventies here.<sup>2</sup>

**MB:** Oh, really? I didn't know that one. I must see it.

**DF:** It was actually released in 1977, and it referred to the so-called "prosperous decade" in the communist era, because Edward Gierek (the man in charge of Poland at that time) incurred debts abroad in order to give an impression of stability and glitz in this communist country. The film started in a very suggestive way; it showed women behind a barred window. You could hear them, but you couldn't see them. You could only see their hands. They were involved in some sort of domestic activity.

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<sup>2</sup> The film was directed by Zbigniew Kamiński in 1977.

**MB:** How profoundly intelligent! Is it available on DVD?

**DF:** It is available on the internet, but I must find out if it is available with subtitles. It won a prize in Locarno.

**MB:** If it went to Locarno, there must be a version with subtitles.

**DF:** The passages from Flaubert are superimposed on the film narrative. The main character keeps thinking through the book.

**MB:** But it's a different woman, not Emma.

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**DF:** It is the Emma of those days, a socialist version of Emma, who takes part in a fashion show, buys expensive clothes, fantasizes about a love affair, but eventually resists having sex with a stranger and comes home.

**MB:** So it's a moralistic version.

**DF:** Not necessarily. She comes home because she is bored and frustrated. She comes back disillusioned.

**MB:** Oh, that's brilliant! I want to know everything about this film. This is so exciting. We didn't know that, but with sex and love affairs, it's not only sex, it's also a craving for admiration. The link between sex and capitalism is the lie, the promise that things can be permanently exciting. But by definition excitement doesn't last. Emma is somehow (and this is romantic education) raised with the idea that you can actually be constantly excited. You can't. Nobody can. So if the love and the sex get boring, then you go and buy things, but that also gets boring, because after buying a new dress, the next day the dress is already boring, so you need another one, and another one. So it's that contradiction of boredom and excitement.

**DF:** Let me switch to the mode you have chosen, because you use a video installation to connect with Flaubert. Was there any special reason behind this?

**MB:** Well, it's the only medium I can be an artist in. I cannot draw, I cannot paint, I cannot write fiction. I can write essays and scholarly things, but video is the only medium that I can work with in art making. And I think it's also like writing, it's writing with images. There is movement and time. The challenge for us (I am saying "us" because I do this always with a partner) was to make the installations before film (we also made a film), which

is the continuous story. The challenge was to make it what we call an “immersive” exhibition, which doesn’t mean that you get sucked in and are passive, but on the contrary that you are so involved that you keep wondering: “Could this be me? Could I do this?” And you do that in each piece. There are eight installations with a different number of screens, and each piece has a different question to ask the audience, such as: “Would I be on this side or that side?” For example, in the first installation we have voyeurism and flirtation in the looks on the two screens that are opposite each other. The man looks at the woman but he doesn’t want to be seen. And she, the young girl, looks up and sees a man who has a nice house and she is flirting. And both looks, the flirt and the voyeurism, have a bit of a social stigma. We think they are rather dubious. And, of course, they are mild forms of prostitution and violence. But in a mild form we all do it. So people come in between two screens opposed to each other; in one they see a man who is voyeuristic, and in the other—a woman who is flirting, and you cannot see both at the same time. We made sure that the distance is such that you are caught between them, and you look and look and look. So with whom would you go? That was an appeal to think about the act of looking, its genres and their consequences. Each installation challenges the viewer in a different way to consider their own position in visual culture today. So back to the relation between capitalism and patriarchy, and the power relations between men and women. Sexism is a harsh word that I don’t use very often but what I mean is the relations in which it seems natural that men have initiative, power and money, and women are just there. We think this is over today, but it isn’t. So this is another thing that we are trying to show. It’s a temptation for all of us, men and women, to fall back into those roles. Even for men who don’t like to be bossy it’s sometimes the easier way, and for women who like to be independent it’s also very appealing to be taken care of. So as soon as you lose your alertness, you fall back into those roles. The same goes for capitalism. We know that we cannot spend money endlessly, we all have our wisdom about it, but when we see a beautiful dress, we just say, “Why don’t I just indulge myself once?” The exhibition is designed to make people really aware of their own position in relation to these temptations. The beautiful images are a part of that temptation.

**DF:** Absolutely. What strikes me immediately is the relevance of what you’ve written in the book devoted to Louise Bourgeois: “So little is said about what we see and what seeing is involved.” So it’s not only *Madame B*. It’s the *seeing*.

**MB:** Yes. At the heart of this process is seeing what modes of *seeing* we bring to what we see. Because there are different ways of *seeing*. It’s not

just one thing, like: “I see this so that’s the truth.” There is deceptive seeing, there is sexual seeing, a feeling seeing, the desiring (to own) seeing. There is also cruel seeing: seeing something that you shouldn’t see. In the last installation with five screens we have three different endings. The first ending is about the man who lets Emma down when she comes for money; the second is connected with economic ruin, when they make an inventory of the house, and the pharmacist who always meddles gets hysterical. Then there is suicide, that is, the actual ending of the poison, which is in the book. The ending that we could imagine in the 1950s would be: “She’s crazy. Put her in a hospital. Confine her to a psychiatric ward.” And the ending that today seems the most normal one would be divorce: “I don’t love this man. Why don’t I just divorce?” Then you have to go on welfare. You have no money. No love, no money. How do you deal with that? So we have these three endings in the installation. In the second one, the 1950s ending, the little girl, Emma’s daughter, stays behind and sees her mother being taken away. To a child, the image of a mother being taken away on a stretcher is sadistic. You don’t do that, and yet they did, and they do. It still happens, so this is also a very stark confrontation. What is there to see for the child who doesn’t know what is happening to her mother, and remains completely powerless? It’s yet another form of seeing.

**DF:** Quite. Is this explored so thoroughly because this is the video installation, or is it the advantage of your particular approach, or is it both?

**MB:** I think it is both. Video installation is a good medium to do this, to make these distinct forms of *seeing* visible. As a second person in contact with this image you are solicited to witness these forms of seeing, but, of course, it is also because I’ve been working for over twenty years in visual art, and my interest has not always been how great this art is but how it interacts with desires, fears, modes of seeing. Even in my earlier work on literature, or on biblical narrative, I was interested in what happens when people see something. And I don’t know why this is so. I wasn’t raised in art or anything, but I see the importance of the visual precisely because it is not linguistic, because you are not aware of this. It’s not unconscious but unreflective. If you see a puddle in the street, you don’t step in it, you step around it, but you don’t realize that you do it because you are talking to a friend next to you, and you just go around the puddle. Now, if somebody asks you why you did not step in the puddle, of course, you know why, but at the moment you do it, you don’t realize it. And that’s the level of cultural agency I explore: where you don’t talk about it, and still things happen on that basis.

**DF:** Right, so coming back to the whole issue connected with the video installation, McLuhan says the medium is the message.

**MB:** Yes, this would fit here really well. The medium is the message in the sense that we don't distinguish between the two. It's not that the medium gives you a message. It is itself the message. In other words, there is no message. There is just cultural agency and cultural interaction.

**DF:** Could you say more about the overlap between the visual and the textual in your own work? Video is a twentieth-century genre. It is still a new genre. Could you comment on that as one of the first theorists, and now also an artist?

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**MB:** Well, it has been around for decades, so I am not a pioneer in that in this sense at all. What I may be innovating is the relation between the image and the text in the sense that our starting point was: "Flaubert's novel is contemporary." It was contemporary then, so to be loyal to it you have to make it contemporary now. So I wrote the script on the basis of quotations from the novel, practically a few little scenes that had to be updated. Basically, it's all quotations from the novel but with a completely contemporary setting. Maybe the innovation in this project is that it's a complete endorsement of anachronism as a way of being loyal to the contemporaneity of art. In my view, all art is contemporary. It always stands in, emerges from and responds to a moment in culture, and in that sense it's always contemporary. Now, our favourite example that we mentioned in the seminar (in the Museum of Modern Art in Łódź) is the opera, you know, when Emma meets Léon at the opera. Well, in Flaubert it's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, a contemporary opera at the time. It came from the 1830s, and it was very much performed, and everybody was singing songs from it. And all the films (I don't know about the Polish one) about *Madame Bovary* use *Lucia di Lammermoor*, because that's the one in the book. It's mentioned, so you cannot change that. Well, you have to change it, because Flaubert chose a contemporary opera, so we had to choose a contemporary opera. And we chose William Kentridge, not only because we had access to him already, but basically because his work is a critique of colonialism in relation to the time. It talks about the clocks and how to adjust the clocks in terms of the colonial endeavour. In our work, the relentless ticking of the clock in the B house, stronger when Emma is bored, resonates with the opera's topic. You would actually betray the novel by making it a historical drama, which is most often done (costumes show it well). *Lucia di Lammermoor* was a critique of romanticism at the time, when capitalism started to be devastating. Romanticism was the other devastating thing. Flaubert

completely mocked it, so *Lucia di Lammermoor* would be his ideal case to make something ridiculous. So, we think, today colonialism is what we want to make ridiculous, because we are at a moment when we finally have to get rid of it.

**DF:** The way you talk brings to my mind the cultural turn in translation studies, especially Gideon Toury, who says that no translation should be analyzed out of context. And the context for translation naturally explains it, so when the context changes, a new translation can be born. So the utmost literality would be a betrayal of the text.

**MB:** Absolutely. It's what Walter Benjamin also said.

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**DF:** So utmost fidelity can be total infidelity.

**MB:** All the films, some better than others (the famous one is by Claude Chabrol) make that mistake. The only one from Eastern Europe is by Alexander Sokurov, who made *Save and Protect*. He doesn't so much make it a historical drama, but rather sets it in a class (peasant) environment that seems out of time. Flaubert is in the middle of his time.

**DF:** Your project is also a very interesting case of intersemiotic translation.

**MB:** Absolutely, that's what we consider it to be. You know, I wonder about one thing. I knew this novel very well. My very first article forty years ago was about *Madame Bovary*. But filming as a group, collective endeavour is a different thing. Filming means working with actors and amateurs (we had a few professional actors, but most of them were amateurs). They all had a say; it was an open process. We didn't come to the set with a totally clear idea—"You do this, you stand there." We are always open to interventions. The actors taught me so much about this novel. They had read it in school, or read it for the occasion, but they had their own interpretation, and it gained so much from their input.

**DF:** I am intrigued by what you call "an endorsement of anachronism." I've been writing a book on Brian Moore, one of whose novels, *The Doctor's Wife*, could also be described in this way. The heroine is a Madame Bovary updated and translated into the reality of Belfast, her husband treating the casualties of bomb attacks. When he fails to accompany her to Paris and the south of France because he has to attend to his patients, she has a fling with a student who is ten years her junior, but a graduate of the same university (Queen's). Sheila (Moore's version of Madame Bovary) fits in

with the early 1970s despite obvious allusions to Flaubert's novel. In your video installation I was able to hear dialogues from the novel superimposed on contemporary settings, played out against the details in the setting or costumes that gestured towards previous epochs, and this was fascinating.

**MB:** Yes, in the exhibition you would have a country gentleman in a top hat, not necessarily from Flaubert's times, maybe from the 1920s, but you would also see clothes from fashion designers such as Yohji Yamamoto with the anachronism showing that this applies to all times. In order to feel it and experience it, you have to translate it into contemporary reality.

**DF:** Exactly. I've wanted to ask you about the way the video installation can deconstruct and subvert our ways of seeing. We become aware of them; for example, we become aware of our judgemental attitudes, the fact that we want to take sides. So there is huge potential for indeterminacy in the way the screens are set. My impression was that of a visual stream of consciousness. My experience was continually disrupted and fragmented. I had come over to reread Flaubert, but I could not go from one page to the other. It is not like moving on with the direction of the exhibition. It was disorientating, but also strangely liberating. Also, when I went there again, it was a different experience. My perception of it was different. I am intrigued by the fact that we participate in what you call "an immersive exhibition."

**MB:** Yes, you're not going to choose the button. That so-called interactivity is deceptive, suggesting freedom while only offering limited, mostly binary choices. Instead, when you are looking, you are asked to be active, when you enter the space, you are asked from the beginning to look at particular things, but then you'll be hooked to this or that, and your attention will be attracted to something else. It's based on activity, and not on linearity.

**DF:** There are so many conflicting attitudes, so many angles from which to see that you end up confused. You are not supposed to make judgements, or are you?

**MB:** Well, you always make judgements, but it's also good to know that you are doing it. So this sort of righteousness of people who always know what is ethical, and what isn't—that's going to be made difficult. We also exhibit photographs, and there is one set of photographs of portraits of the characters. We decided to put the portraits in a way that suggests intimacy, like being at somebody's home a long time ago. We do that on purpose to make people a little confused, to make them say: "What is this?" We are in

the museum and yet now it feels like a living room; and that's quite challenging, because the private/public opposition doesn't exist either. The political is inside the home; you always think when you lock your door that this is a private space, but your home is full of ideology. So we want people to be a bit "unsettled." As Dominick LaCapra puts it, it's *empathic unsettlement*. Isn't that beautiful?

DF: It is indeed.

MB: You don't want to identify, but you feel for Emma, because she's trying, and she's miserable; she doesn't do much harm, so you are empathic, but you are unsettled about your own empathy, because you want to judge her. You know, I read a book about Emma in the 1990s (written by a psychoanalyst) that was so moralistic. She deceives her husband; she spends his money. How ridiculous! Everybody is at fault there. Everybody in the novel is complicitous with her demise. They all make mistakes that cause her to go further down the hill. So there is no way to blame her. Instead of moralism we want to offer a different perspective, without giving up a critical stance.

DF: Yes, it makes me angry when I read Flaubert criticism that insists on woman's timeless nature.

MB: Yes, it's ridiculous. There is no timelessness. We are here and now. There is no placelessness, and there is no timelessness. Flaubert criticism is not up to Flaubert in the first place, although there are some attempts to do justice to his novel, for example, the criticism of Jonathan Culler, which is very good. Nobody has written extensively about the cinematic quality of the writing. It's very striking. And there is also this capitalist issue. Emma gets into that buying hysteria, but when Charles goes for the first time to the farm of Rouault he's already thinking that they have a lot of money. And his mother pushes him into this marriage, because they are supposed to be rich. Nobody is innocent.

DF: Let me make a connection between *Madame B* and your other interests. Through your writing I came across Ann Veronica Janssens, an artist who destabilizes perception. Are you drawn to such artists because of your interest in the use of video installation and its potential connected with ways of seeing, or is your particular approach a product of interaction with such artists? Or both?

MB: Again, I think it's both. I've always been attracted to ambiguity, also in my literary analysis. That's what attracted me to Flaubert. He's

completely ambiguous. But I'm also always attracted to artists who experiment. And it can be Rembrandt or Caravaggio, or it can be a contemporary artist. Ann Veronica Janssens is a great experimental artist who tries out things. She's a very serious physicist in a sense, interested in light. I'm going to talk about her work during the lecture as a retrospective revisioning of Strzemiński. Strzemiński was very worried about lines and didn't like lines. And Strzemiński said, "Colour implies lines, because when one colour changes into another, there's a line." And she says, "No!", because you don't even know the place where you go from one colour to another in her mist installations. And it's quite stunning. You do see things have changed, but you cannot say the colour changes here. It's fluid. So she is radicalizing Strzemiński's concern. And I think that makes it very relevant to put the two together in dialogue. Yes, I am attracted to work that makes me ask the question, "What's happening here?" If I immediately understand it, it doesn't interest me. I am a thinker; now I think I'm also an artist, and I think I want to be excited about someone smarter than me. So I always choose an artist from whom I can learn something new. I'm addicted to learning. It's very strange, but I think I'd die if I stopped learning.

**DF:** You've also written about Dutch art. To what extent was it important for you in the experience of the visual?

**MB:** Well, I've written about Rembrandt, but I've also written about Caravaggio. So I have written about the Italian, as well as the Dutch legacy, and maybe it will mean something if I tell you how I started to work on Rembrandt. I've never thought about it as a connection but I had to move out of the country, shake it off in order to look at it. I'm more interested in contemporary art. I actually got interested in Rembrandt for a very anecdotal reason. I was still working on the Bible, and I was invited to give a lecture in Jerusalem, not in the biblical context, but in the context of psychoanalysis and discourse. The only thing I was doing at the time was biblical stuff. I thought: "I cannot go to Jerusalem and talk about the Hebrew Bible, that's impolite and arrogant, because I don't have the knowledge of Hebrew, so what the hell can I do?" Then my partner came up with that Rembrandt etching book and said, "Look at this! Have you ever seen this image?" It was an etching of Potiphar's wife.

**DF:** So this explains your interest in Joseph's story!

**MB:** Yes, that is how it started. And I thought, "Aha! I cannot give a lecture on the Bible. I'll give a lecture on Rembrandt and the Bible. So I came up with that etching and I gave it a really harsh critical reading, and people

came to thank me afterwards, saying, “Thank you for not talking on the Bible.” And I did talk on the Bible! But not just on the Bible!

**DF:** You’ve mentioned psychoanalysis, and I’m aware of that from your work. Where do you stand on psychoanalysis, which is such a tangled thing for feminists?

**MB:** I take it seriously as one of the discourses of the early twentieth century that shaped our thinking. Also, before *Madame B* we did a project on madness, and there we were fiercely on the side of psychoanalysis even against Freud, but more against the pharmaceutical industry, and hospitals that would confine people for life. I was working with a psychoanalyst who had a very different approach from both Lacan and Freud, so if Freud says: “psychosis can’t be helped by psychoanalysis,” he must be wrong, because that’s an unacceptable answer. Society—its violence—drives people mad, psychotic; hence, society must help them, not push them away. The psychoanalyst I know was militantly against this verdict, but even more against the pharmaceutical industry. And so this was the moment when I was on the side of psychoanalysis, but against Freud, siding with Françoise Davoine whose book, a “theoretical fiction,” *Mère Folle*, makes a smashing case for this opinion. At some point the exhibition was held in the Freud museum, where we installed one video at the foot of the famous couch with a Persian rug, near the figurines. On the screen you see a “mad” woman, a schizophrenic patient with her analyst sitting on the couch together. This was a visual critique of Freud’s analytical set-up. I’m not against psychoanalysis as an idea, a project, but in *Madame B* I am not into the “Emma is mad” or “Emma is neurotic or hysterical” interpretation, because I think it’s really important to acknowledge the strength of the social discourse. So psychoanalysis must be held at bay as soon as you begin to claim that problems come because someone was abused in childhood. I do take abuse very seriously, but you cannot fall back on childhood to explain everything you do wrong. There is a social aspect to consider. So in the current project we look more to sociology than to psychoanalysis. We did work with two psychoanalysts as consultants, though, to come up with a plausible depiction of character.

**DF:** This brings me to yet another issue connected with your research. What matters is not only what we see but also how we see it. Your concept of framing makes me think that we should not rely on things uncritically. There is a frame or hyperframe, something we have to reckon with.

**MB:** Right.

**DF:** I'd like you to comment on this, because this is a critical statement that is also overtly political.

**MB:** Absolutely, everything is political without being stated in socialist realist terms. I'm sure you understand what I mean.

**DF:** I do.

**MB:** There is always a frame, and that frame is a bunch of choices, which is why I prefer the term "framing" to "context." The context seems to be just there to be made of anything and then given authority as facts. Everything is framed. That's almost a universalistic statement, but then what kind of frame is it? We cannot escape ideology. The question is: "Would it be better to escape ideology?" No, this is impossible. The question is: for whom is it beneficial; for whom is it damaging? In other words, who frames it? So it's within the frame that the question of the political comes up.

**DF:** Yes, I haven't thought about that, but context is such a neutral word.

**MB:** Yes, while frame is not.

**DF:** The context sounds innocent.

**MB:** It sounds innocent, and that's why I don't use it. It is deceptive. It's as deceptive as internet claims about freedom and choice. We cannot be impartial, and there is nothing wrong with having an authority to regulate things. I mean it's naive to think we don't do that. But when I wrote the chapter on framing in *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities*, my emphasis was on how central the frame or the act of framing is. Another thing that is crucial is the difference between guilt and responsibility. And this is what I want to achieve with this exhibition. You can be responsible without feeling guilty. In a colonial situation, for example, we are not guilty of colonialism, as it happened before our time, but we are responsible for the consequences, as they are still in this world. And these consequences should make us do something about migration policy, for example.

**DF:** Yes, to connect with this, I want to use the phrase you use in your book on Louise Bourgeois: "close engagement." Is this connected with responsibility?

**MB:** Yes, brilliant, I was not expecting that you would be so knowledgeable about my work. Thank you! So “close engagement” is a variation on close reading. Reading is engaged closely, so you cannot escape that.

**DF:** The fourth issue of *Text Matters* is devoted to Ricoeur and Kristeva. You refer to Ricoeur occasionally; you’ve worked with a narrative and memory. Could you comment on the way you see Ricoeur’s contribution? And how do you relate to his work?

**MB:** He’s not a primary source for me, but we have had similar interests—I mean, his volume on *Temps et Récit*. He’s more into the hermeneutical tradition. I see that he is a very important philosopher of the twentieth century. As for Kristeva, it is the same case. I can see her importance, of course. She has done some things that are really crucial, especially that essay “Women’s Time.” It’s a very important essay. So I think both philosophers made me aware of some issues, but then I go on, on my own and with others. That’s how it worked. But I’m totally happy to be in the volume devoted to those two.

**DF:** What about your future projects? Your primary concern seems to be interdisciplinary.

**MB:** I can never talk about future projects because I don’t have them. My work will always be interdisciplinary and in the present. That’s inevitable, but I’d like to write a book with *Madame B* as a central thing around which to discuss my own film work. I think I am one of the few people who can write about films they make, because I don’t start writing about them before I make them. I discover things in the process that I later want to be spelled out in a way that is relevant for scholarship in the humanities. I would like to do that, but I don’t know if I will. First of all, I would like to make another film. I would like to include the wonderful people I’ve been working with. My last corner of interdisciplinarity is the interface between making a film and analyzing it. I would like to develop this into a book; maybe I will now that I’ve told you about it. Maybe I’ll feel obliged to do it now.

**DF:** Thank you very much for this wonderful conversation. And thank you for *Madame B*.

**MB:** My pleasure!