Bridget Baker
But being a sensible woman, she subdued her terrors and turned over and went to sleep again.
Grass Grows From The Middle

I will always be concerned about wanting an experience to be intriguing enough for me to come back for more. It seems as if I assume that that is the function of the art process.

Bridget Baker

Since her debut solo exhibition *The shrill sound of a telephone at 3am* ten years ago, Bridget Baker has been quietly forging creative strategies and visual iconographies that, every so often, really make you sit up and pay attention. Not as a result of public media blitzes, or harnessing the circuitous networks of the art world to publish her work to a select few; Baker uses her performative projects and campaigns to transmit small messages of enormous potential consequence to an unsuspecting society.

Baker is an artist whose vision and methods have managed to remain – frustratingly for some, yet appropriate to her mythopoetic desires – just beyond the reach of complete cognitive comprehension. Her idiosyncratic microtopia, shot through as it is with rollerskating super-heroines, workers dealing with urban detritus both natural and economic, invisible manicurists, beauty queens falling overboard, and glamorous blue-coated figures involved in mysterious but determined actions against various urban skylines, is also one of rules, processes and belief-systems; some universal, some invented. Labour and play, document and myth, gender and avatar are Baker’s currencies of exchange, and coupled with her infectious wit and colloquial wisdom make for irresistible propositions for participation.
It is the relay between the contingencies of the everyday, and the means by which we creatively assert our agency as individuals onto social experience, that seems to drive Baker’s praxis. In turn, as Sue Williamson has suggested, this enables the artist to introduce “her audience to the idea of art as an enjoyable, if unforeseeable, part of everyday life”.

The work presented on this exhibition has been produced over the last three years, with Baker’s parallel activities as a stylist in the film industry introducing a strong cinematic quality to her current photographic projects that centre on the activities of The Sunday Morning Wonder Woman (SMWW), The Blue Collar Girl and The Maiden.

Marking a shift from her earlier explorations of personal biography in which she interpreted her young life experiences in evocative materials (embroidery, found photographs, objects, trophies and palliative ointments), more recent projects and opportunities have conspired to encourage Baker to adopt a position commensurate with that of the multi-tasking ‘global nomad’ contemporary artist, with no fixed studio, and for whom travel and interaction with strangers and colleagues across geographical and virtual space provides the environment for meaningful production. Her Blue Collar Girl series typifies her itinerant methods: working with the character’s signature accoutrements and props, only a nominal amount of pre-production is possible in that each location is approached site-specifically. Baker’s choice to source her models, photographers and supporting materials within each particular environment limits the risk of exoticising unfamiliar territories.

2 Official BB Project, Stellenbosch, 2001. An aide guides participants through the process of punching, dating, stamping, signing and tagging their own Official BB Project ATM leaves. Image by Jean Brundet
Now, still demonstrating a sure, self-reflexive articulation of personal (even idiosyncratic) desires and iconographies, interpersonal interaction and collaboration are central. Public space has become a site for action, and provides the architecture for her episodic photographic narratives. Baker’s avatars make impossible actions possible, unmasking the alpha-female from the banality of her working/middle class routines.

The fluid, dialectical processes evident in so much contemporary production, often by artists who position their practice outside traditional Western art institutions – Baker cites artists like Pawel Althamer, Francis Alÿs and Walid Ra’ad/The Atlas Group as artists with whom she feels an affinity⁶ – have been loosely theorised in Nicholas Bourriaud’s work on relational aesthetics, in which he suggests critical terms for art practices in which the sphere of human relations constitutes the site of the artwork’s meaning, and where works must in essence be critiqued on the basis of the inter-human relations which they “represent, produce or prompt”.⁷

Not dissimilar in spirit to Joseph Beuys’s notion of social sculpture⁸, or the development of art practices in the 1960s and 1970s that pulled focus away from the object towards process (Fluxus, The Situationist International, Happenings and so on), the burgeoning of ‘relational’ strategies in contemporary art can be tracked back to the student revolutions of May 1968 and philosophical thought that ensued, particularly Baudrillard’s influential critique of Marxist dialectical materialism which ushered in his theories of the destabilisation

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⁵ Still from Extra Soles filmed by Ed Young of temporary print left by “businessman”, Civic Centre, Cape Town, 2003.
of the ‘real’ in favour of hyperrealism and simulacra*. The rise of a
global urban culture (with the attendant residency and biennale-type
systems) in which certain artists are peripatetic by nature, has set the
tone for a turn-of-the millennium generation of socially responsive (if
not ultimately politically motivated) art practices.

The fundamentals of relational aesthetics can be précis’d thus: “Art is a
state of encounter”; “Producing a form is to invent possible encounters:
receiving a form is to create the conditions for an exchange”; “Each
particular artwork is a proposal to live in a shared world, and the
work of every artist is a bundle of relations with the world, giving
rise to other relations, and so on and so forth, ad infinitum”; and with
particular reference to Baker’s work: “...the role of artworks is no
longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways
of living and models of action within the existing real, whatever the
scale chosen by the artist”.10

Baker cites Francis Alÿs’ epic work When Faith Moves Mountains
(2002) as a project to which she instinctively responds. Alÿs mobilized
500 volunteers, mostly students, to rake a 16000-ft Peruvian sand
dune, shifting it some 4 inches in the process. Alÿs’ account of the
project, which he describes as a social allegory “at once futile and
heroic, absurd and urgent”, attempts “to translate social tensions
into narratives”. This action, he says, “is meant to infiltrate the local
history and mythology to insert another rumour into its narratives.” If
successful, “it may become a story that survives the event itself [...] 
a fable or an urban myth”.11

6 1 out of 1000 personalised Bridget says® invitations to As if you’ve never seen it before, Bielefeld, 2000. Invitation now faded.
7 So I become small and active (detail), installation consisting of 40 polaroids and 1 trophy at As if you’ve never seen it before, Bielefeld, 2000. Left Polaroid with chef. Right Polaroid with policeman.
Expressed here is a powerful parallel to two critical aspects of Baker’s performative and photographic work: the varying scale of the gesture or action; and the narrative impetus that such work invokes. Within relational praxis, gestures can be grand, or near-invisible, and as such works are often determined spatio-temporally (they are frequently impermanent or transient), their visibility — and their subsequent mythologizing through retelling of the event — depends on the nature of the ‘witness’ (passer-by, participant, photograph and so on). In this spirit, Baker speaks enthusiastically of the aspects of teamwork and collaboration that have found their way from her experiences in the film industry into her photographic stills, particularly The Botched Epic Attempt to Escape the Maiden, in which a team of ten people worked together to create the shot in studio. In contrast, the intimate Official BB Mittens Project (2003, 2005) treats individual exhibition visitors to free therapeutic hot wax hand treatments by an anonymous person (Baker herself) if they trust enough to put their hands through a hole in a wall.12

In 2000, Baker attended a residency in Bielefeld, Germany, which culminated in the exhibition As if you’ve never seen it before©. According to the artist, this experience set the scene for work she has produced subsequently, including the continued use of her ‘copyrighted’ phrases.13

“I was experiencing the usual artistic dilemma of “who is my audience, do I care for the art audience, and who am I making work for, and what community do I feel comfortable with?” The mobilisation away from the gallery or exhibition space into actual locations where the democracy of the process can breathe is what is exciting for me.”14

The Bielefeld installation comprised four areas titled respectively You leave me with this/so I become small and active/sometimes wondering/whether I’m stuck. The second part, so I become small and active, was the result of a two-month performative interaction in which Baker approached workers in the town (including the mayor) and offered them the opportunity of having a Polaroid taken with her, exchanging a trophy. This small interaction embodies Baker’s interest in monumentalising transitory moments: “To intersect for this moment with strangers who would remain as foreigners was energising, because it is a true projection of a reality state ... but the presence of the trophy assumes a momentous moment ... this motivates the moment of myth creation.”15

The copyrighted phrases mark a connection to the persistent emblem of the ‘official’ in Baker’s lexicon, conveyed through objects and processes by which events become authorised, legitimated, historicised, mythologized. In early work, this was present in representations of certificates of achievement, bestowed upon her by external authorities. These endorsements have now become declarative and affirmative statements from Baker (or her avatars), assuming the authority to say: Bridget Says©...Only You Can©.

Baker’s use of language immediately invokes narrative. In this exhibition, as in the Bielefeld show, individual works act as ‘episodes’ within a larger narrative program — a kind of ‘days in the life of...’. And because myth-creation has a spatio-temporal dimension (these stories develop and change over time and according to context)16, it seems almost logical that the title of this show ostensibly offers the next stage in the narrative so dramatically proposed by the title of her debut exhibition. At the sound of a telephone at 3am, would a sensible woman turn over and go back to sleep?
Bridget Baker has always demonstrated more than a passing interest in the notion of labour and hard work; the ethics of it, its practices and processes, its modes of exchange; and of course, those who labour.\textsuperscript{17} The worker is a recurring emblem, whether it's Baker herself (The Official BB Projects), actual workers who remain anonymous (Extra Soles, 2003), or Baker's avatars, in the form of The SMWW, The Blue Collar Girl and The Maiden.

Baker's presentation of labour is clearly gendered. Her avatars are identified as female, yet the work they carry out, particularly in the case of the Blue Collar Girl series, is physical, demanding and even potentially dangerous.

The works featuring The Blue Collar Girl and The SMWW are presented as triptychs; episodic moments that carry the sense of a fuller story beyond the frame of the image. In The Blue Collar Girl's Cape Town sequence, a glamorous woman in a brilliant blue coat readies herself for an outing in front of an antique, gilded mirror. Her gesture is mannered within a carefully constructed space.\textsuperscript{18} Creamy textured wallpaper acts as a neutral field against which various objects are sparsely arranged. Their deliberate placement and lack of extraneous details invokes a sense of gravitas.

Two objects vie for our focus. A bronze statuette of a girl holding a mask stands on the dressing table; a 19th century French interpretation of the Greek muses of comedy and tragedy, Thalia and Melpomene.\textsuperscript{19} A framed black and white portrait photograph, shot in classic

\textsuperscript{8} Black and white photograph by Pieter Hugo and inscription by Lesley Goddard, 2004
\textsuperscript{9} Lynda Carter appeared as Wonder Woman/Diana Prince in the TV series Wonder Woman from 1976 – 1979. This image has been sourced from the website: http://www.amazing-amazon.com/index1.htm
mid-century Hollywood soft-focus, signed ‘Break a leg, xxx, gp’, suggests a muse of another sort – the film idol. The woman partially reflected in the mirror closely resembles the woman in the photograph, who in turn closely resembles Elizabeth Taylor or Ava Gardner. The shadow play tricks the chair she’s sitting in to look like wings.

The middle panel depicts a city skyline, a De Stijl-esque field of grey concrete and windows that offsets a seated worker in orange overalls against The Blue Collar Girl, busy cleaning windows, suspended – we assume – from a safety harness. The final panel depicts a ghostly phrase etched into a window pane, casting its shadow like a photographic negative onto the windowsill – Only you can®.

Baker then takes her avatar north to Belgium, where in the city of Gent she is seen entering the Vooruit Art Centre, a building where Baker was doing a brief residency, and which was built by the local workers' union as a multidisciplinary centre for education through the arts in the early 20th century. The Blue Collar Girl’s co-ordinated outfit affords her a strange kind of camouflage as she goes unnoticed up the stairs. She emerges against the skyline, a tiny form straddling a bell tower, in yet another gravity-defying pose. Despite her James Bond-daring and super-hero dexterity, we know she did not complete this task entirely unscathed – a frayed swatch of electric blue cloth imprinted with her maxim is caught on a pigeon spike.

Back down south in Maputo, The Blue Collar Girl sits at a bar penning a letter – or writing her quietly forceful manifesto? Her black and white portrait blends seamlessly with the bar’s collection of jazz-era images. A waiter stands near, perhaps intrigued by the mysterious, anachronistic woman, but ignored nonetheless. The ‘step-out-of-time’ ambience of the series continues in the next scene, where she is barely perceptible aboard a sunken ship, welding furiously, and obviously futilely. Her message is traced in the rust.

And finally (for now), to Delhi, where The Blue Collar Girl is measured by a local tailor in his store. She stands amidst bolts of bright cloth between the two outfitters with hennaed hair. They go about their work diligently and professionally, yet we must believe they are aware of her status and powers: her portrait hangs alongside a small, wall-mounted shrine to Ganesh and a necklace of dried marigolds and above cut-out reference images of fashion shoots. Perhaps they were expecting her? Then, from an elevated vantage point, we can just make her out winding her way through the crowded Chawri Bazaar amidst fellow workers favouring the vibrant colours of the tailor, her cycle cart carrying a load of two oversized boxes under a tarpaulin printed with her ethos.

The Blue Collar Girl series is an impeccably observed group of images that speaks of liberating oneself from the complex terrain of social, economic, class and gender politics through public gesture, and the myth-making language of cinema. In her observations of the visual politics of Hollywood film, which generally privileges the male gaze (“men act, women appear”22), Laura Mulvey makes the connection between labour and subjectivity: labour “controls the narrative structure because it is the man who makes the story happen at every textual level”.23 Extending the labour metaphor, we recall the emblem of the worker, their agency constrained by social ‘invisibility’. By using the vibrant blue associated with film chroma-key24 for The Blue Collar Girl’s clothing, Baker sets up “a cinematic narrative of a fantastical environment of ‘no constraints’ for the blue collar worker from the city to operate in.”25
As she says in the statement for this exhibition: "Currently the “sensible woman” is my subject. I entice her into leading a double-life of invisibility. You may say that this type of life is characteristic of a “sensible woman” anyway... but wait, those invisible tasks she undertakes could make her invincible.” Baker asserts that The SMWW is in fact the progenitor of The Blue Collar Girl. Both have gender-busting comic strip characters from the 1940s as conceptual references – Wonder Woman and the Invisible Girl.26 These über-females made an appearance at a time when women were an integral part of the war effort, assuming jobs typically reserved for men, and as Baker comments, “it was certainly a time where women could find expression and vent personal frustration by re-inventing themselves outside of their assumed societal roles.”27 In The Return of the SMWW (2003), a lithe young woman in 1970s-style green towelling leotard roller-skates leisurely down a promenade, as if transported directly from the Lynda Carter-era manifestation of the super heroine. Passers-by look bemused as The SMWW’s customised skates leave a watery stain on the sidewalk – Only You Can®. As Baker comments, “she might be taking a break from the Justice League but she can’t help herself, she has to leave the message that prefixes a liberated ethos.”28

The high ideals and socio-political turmoil of the mid-twentieth century is recalled again, albeit subtly in The Maiden Perfect, a rather ironic title for an image of a bathing-suited young woman wearing a beauty queen’s sash, clinging to the railing of a ship as a giant wave threatens to take her under. The nostalgic tone is

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10 This black and white image was photographed by Howard R. Hollem for the Office of War Information in 1943 in Milwaukee, Wis. It presents a woman welding at the Heil Company, making gasoline trailer tanks for the US Army Corps. The inscription reads: “Enola O’Connell, age 32, widow and mother of one child, welding part of a trailer. She is the only woman welder in the plant.” This image has been sourced from the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Reading Room. The website address is http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/126_rosi.html

11 8mm film still. Baker’s mother wins the Castle Line Beauty Queen contest on board the Castle Line in 1958. Footage by Graham Baker
perfectly set with a reference to the deck-game of shuffleboard in the lower section of the frame. Unlike the Blue Collar Girl series, which relies on the reality of urban space, this work – along with The Botched Epic Attempt to Escape the Maiden – embraces the simulacral environment of the film set, with backdrops and lighting creating an artificial, yet illusionistic space in which the scene plays out.  

In both these images, Baker introduces large-scale reproductions of embroidered surfaces (the wave in The Maiden and the cave-like vault in The Botched Epic Attempt), making a connection with her early works, with the embroidery now serving as “a signifier of the elaborate fiction of the event.” Essential to Baker’s mythopoetic strategies, this “elaborate fiction” is elaborated further through a complex set of signifiers.

Images of The Blue Collar Girl and The Maiden are juxtaposed in the license-disc holders of the motorcycle, and Baker notes how this heightens the narrative potential: “The Maiden and BCG have never before been seen together. So suddenly time and mythical constructs enter the surreal. Are they the same person? And are their powers more than what we could ever have imagined?”

And where the unhinged glamour of The Maiden Perfect has a biographical reference (her mother won the Miss Castle Line pageant on board the ship during her honeymoon), the desperate episode in this young beauty’s life is mirrored by the visual source for The Botched Epic Attempt; the Ten of Swords in the Tarot deck, a card whose visual impact (a prone figure impaled by swords) belies its rather trite message of finding solace in low moments as things can only get better.

And of course the “elaborate fiction” is only as fictional as photography will allow, as events depicted photographically will always have some connection, however tenuous, to the ‘real’. The fuzzing of the boundary between real and not-real arguably happens most powerfully in ‘staged’ photography, invoking Baudrillard’s “possible definition of the real” as “that for which it is possible to provide an equivalent representation”. In her combination of environments both real and imagined, documented and ‘produced’, Baker authors a vigorous amalgamation of Baudrillard’s “cool universe of digitality” with “the worlds of metonymy and metaphor” – “the ‘hot’ and phantasmatic”.

Despite a time gap of some 143 years, it might be appropriate here to invoke Charles Baudelaire’s observations on modernity, triggered as they were “by the emergent power of presentation in everyday life” (he was looking at illustrations in a fashion catalogue). His description of modernity appearing “in a play of difference between the ‘ephemeral, fugitive, the contingent, ” the modern “half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable””, appositely echoes the relationship Baker devises between temporary public actions and myth-creation.

Roland Barthes has commented that mythology participates in “the making of the world”, harmonizing with the world “not as it is, but as it wants to create itself.” In addition to echoing Bourriaud’s observation of relational art’s tendency to attempt to do precisely that, it may also be reasonable to suggest that a desire to create myth might be commensurate with a drive to reconstruct that which is absent or lost either physically or through faulty remembering; or to image that which one senses is present, but remains unseen and unappreciated.
“Althusser said that one always catches the world’s train on the move: Deleuze, that “grass grows from the middle” and not the bottom or the top. The artist dwells in the circumstances the present offers him [sic], so as to turn the setting of his life (his links with the physical and conceptual world) into a lasting world.”36

This deceptively simple observation echoes not only those moments in an artist’s life recognised as art, but everything else in-between as part of an ongoing system of interaction and exchange, capitalising on whatever means are at our immediate disposal. This was certainly a feature of Baker’s early works, and continues to be so in these “risky take-overs”, especially now that she’s upped the ante.

Kathryn Smith
Cape Town, January 2006

Kathryn Smith is a practising artist and critic, and holds a senior lectureship in Fine Arts at the University of Stellenbosch.

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2 Presented at The Planet Contemporary Art Site, Observatory, Cape Town, 1996.

3 A neologism that connects to Bourriaud’s discussion of micro-utopias (Bourriaud, op.cit.) I have omitted the ‘u’ to refer simply to a mini-world, a localised world vision where things can and definitely do go wrong, and into which Baker releases avatars to ‘furiously fix the unfixable’. (artist’s notes to author, January 8, 2006)

4 As Sue Williamson has suggested, Baker’s work often demonstrates “an attempt to impose a kind of wacky order through a strict set of rules, and on the other to induce a large number of people to play along”. In Williamson, Sue. ‘Bridget Baker’s ‘Official BB Project’ at the US Art Gallery’, http://www.artthrob.co.za/01sept/reviews/usag.html.

5 Williamson, op.cit.

6 Artist’s notes to author, December 22, 2005.


8 Social sculpture refers to creative acts from which social relations and formations emerge – “an anthropological definition of art”. The formation of society is understood as “a never-ending process in which every single individual takes part by acting like an artist”. The term assumes an intermingling of the spheres of art, politics and economy, which in turn problematises the traditional conceptions of the term ‘art’. See Schmidt, Enno. ‘Social Sculpture’, in a·r·c, issue 3, November 2000. See http://aarc.gold.ac.uk/a__rc_Three/printtexts/print_enno.html.


10 Bourriaud, op.cit.


12 According to Baker, this leads to “unexpected interactions between participants.” (Baker, Bridget. Press release for The Official BB Mitten Project, 2005). See also Williamson, op.cit.

13 Interview with the author, January 8, 2006. Baker comments that the copyright became a means of subverting her dealings with prescriptive authority, citing the origins of the device as a piece she produced for a club event, in which she “hijacked” from some [phrases] that Jesus had ‘supposedly’ said (in the King James version of the Bible, when Jesus speaks the words are red).
Instead of Jesus saying the phrases, I did. So the Bridge says works developed, and furthermore I copyrighted these Jesus phrases [...] And so I put myself in the role of parodying authority by assuming authorship of an empowering cultural ethos such as Only you can.

Artist’s notes to author, December 22, 2005. See also Murnik, Tracy. ‘Bridget Baker’ in Perryer, S. (ed.) (2004) 10 Years, 100 Artists. Cape Town: Bell-Roberts/Struijk: p.38. As Murnik notes, a public graffiti wall on the exhibition’s opening night included Baker’s copyrighted phrase Bridge Says®, with the addition of Whose life are you repeating? and inviting the audience to respond. According to Murnik, this exhibition hailed the birth of Official BB Projects, “declarations on life according to official BB wisdom”, and are taken a step further with the Only You Can’t campaigns.

Artist’s notes to author, December 22, 2005.

As Barthes writes, “a whole book may be the signifier of a single concept; and conversely, a minute form (a word, gesture, even incidental, so long as it is noticed) can serve as signifier to a concept filled with a very rich history.” In Barthes, Roland. (1972) Mythologies. Translated by Annette Lavers. London: Jonathan Cape: p.120.

Terry Smith has noted how the relatively few images of work and workers in Western art history are highly prized by Marxist-oriented critics, because these images, mostly painted in a ‘realist’ mode, “punctured the work of mystification which art mostly does in capitalist societies.”

In a nutshell, images of people at work disallowed the economically privileged from indulging in allegorical musings, pleasure and fantasy that the classical genres inspired. See Smith, Terry. Modes of Production’ in Nelson, R. S. and Shiff, R. (eds.) (1996) Critical Terms for Art History. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press: p. 243. Baker images workers in such a way as to introduce the imaginary into the realm of labour, suggesting, as Francis Ališ does, the possibility of social allegory. Bourriaud offers a complementary observation that “[p]resent-day art does not present the outcome of a labour, it is the labour itself, or the labour to-be.” (http://www.gairspace.org.uk/htm/bourr.htm)

Baker notes the pose is based on a scene from Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (dir. Richard Brooks, 1958), featuring Elizabeth Taylor. Interview with artist, January 8, 2006

Interview with artist, January 8, 2006. Baker thought it “positively fortuitous that the [Blue Girl] project should be associated with such a constractive cultural ethos”.

In Hinduism, garlands of marigolds are associated with celebration. They are traditionally given to visitors and are considered sacred.

See Smith in Nelson and Shiff, op.cit., p.244


A technique whereby areas of a particular blue or green tone can be ‘keyed out’ and digitally replaced with other imagery.

See ‘Bridget Baker’ catalogue entry in Barritt, Lesley (ed.) (2004) The Brett Keble Art Awards. Cape Town: Marulelo Communications; p. 48. Baker aligns The Blue Collar Girl’s independent spirit with her own drive to self-fund projects, as it allows for “greater risk-taking and immediate control” over the project, as opposed to working with funders. It also reflects a “culture of self-determination, of staking one’s claim of self-rule or immunity, of actively changing one’s own position as an art practitioner and worker, and not relying on curatorial decision makers […] to define the process as significant.” (Artist's notes to author, January 22, 2006)

Myth and gender references abound in this particular selection of sources. SMWW was based on DC Comics’ Wonder Woman (1941) whose character is adapted from the Greek mythical Princess Diana of the Amazon tribe of female warriors, “so she possesses numerous superhuman abilities and represents the quintessential liberated woman”. The Blue Collar Girl references the super-heroine Sue Reed or the ‘Invisible Girl’ from Marvel Comics’ Fantastic Four. (Artist's notes to author, December 22, 2005)

Email correspondence from artist, January 3, 2006

Interview with artist, January 8, 2006

Baker notes the influence of 1940s and 1950s film stills and lighting, such as The Red Shoes (dir. Michael Powell/Emeric Pressburger, 1948) and Wild Strawberries (dir. Ingmar Bergman, 1957), “before on-location shooting was in its prime. With the use of back-projection as backdrops there was a theatrical aspect to production of a shot (film speeds being to slow, so key lighting had to be quite harsh to compensate).” (Artist’s notes to author, December 22, 2005)

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Baudrillard in Harrison and Wood, op.cit., p.1050

Cited in Smith, in Nelson and Shiff, op.cit., p.251

Barthes, op.cit., p.156

Barthes, op.cit.
Production stills from projects developed in Maputo, Delhi and Gent
I am involved in risky “take-overs”. Currently the “sensible woman” is my subject. I entice her into leading a double-life of invisibility. You may say that this type of life is characteristic of a “sensible woman” anyway ... but wait, those invisible tasks she undertakes could make her invincible.

Bridget Baker, 2005

Bridget Baker’s conceptual artmaking practise diversely spans participatory performance, crafting intricate objects, through to producing extensive photographic stills and installation projects. Baker remains concerned with observing public and private methods of surviving the mundanity of adult responsibility, especially hard work. She works with characters that are iconic, regardless of whether they are working to prove their invincibility or at the point of their death and struggling to stay alive.

Bridget Baker was born in East London, South Africa. She is based in Cape Town and works as a visual artist and clothes stylist. She has exhibited extensively nationally and internationally.
I am grateful to everyone who was spontaneously supportive of – and who offered their expertise to – these on-going projects. They may not have been directly involved with the shoots but their quiet involvement is appreciated.

Bridget Baker
January 2006

catalogue published on the occasion of But being a sensible woman, she subdued her terrors and turned over and went to sleep again, photographic stills projects developed by Bridget Baker presented at João Ferreira Gallery, Cape Town, 8 – 25 February 2006.

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back cover image production still from The Blue Collar Girl (Delhi) project. Image by Abrie Fourie