

PRESS RELEASE

**Bridget Baker**

*The Remains of the Father – Fragments of a Trilogy (Transhumance)*

curated by Elisa Del Prete

MAMbo – Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna

28<sup>th</sup> October 2012 – 6<sup>th</sup> January 2013

As part of her first personal show in Italy, promoted by MAMbo – Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna from 28<sup>th</sup> October 2012 to 6<sup>th</sup> January 2013 in the exhibition spaces of the Permanent Collection, the South African artist, **Bridget Baker** presents the first preview of the two-channel video work entitled *The Remains of the Father – Fragments of a Trilogy (Transhumance)* (2012, 24').

The event fits into the Visual Arts programme of the tenth edition of Gender Bender Festival (Bologna, 27 October – 3 November 2012).

Influenced by her biography as a white South African living there during and after Apartheid, Bridget Baker focuses her investigation on subtle dynamics of power and domination between peoples, questioning the legitimacy of official historical reconstruction by calling the codes of their interpretation into question.

*The Remains of the Father – Fragments of a Trilogy (Transhumance)*, from which the exhibition curated by **Elisa Del Prete** takes its name, represents the first part in a trilogy in which the artist undertakes a reflective and imaginative journey through a subject that has still been not received enough investigation, such as the Italian colonial history in Eritrea during the Fascist regime.

The work is the result of a residence programme undertaken by Bridget Baker in Bologna during the course of 2012 on the invitation of **Nosadella.due – Independent Residency for Public Art**. During this period the artist developed her project based through various explorations of Italy's archives and libraries, meetings with historians, cinema experts, psychologists, sociologists, architects and exponents of eritrean community in Italy. Recovering traces recorded in the official history – from propaganda cinema to the official correspondence preserved in the archives of the Foreign Affairs Ministry – together with fragments of the experiences of private individuals – drawn from conversations, literary travel accounts and diaries – the artist has put together a hybrid and discontinuous vision which she considers has “Many voices, but none that could tell the whole story together”.

With the work presented at MAMbo, Baker reveals the complexity of the historic reconstruction, choosing to bring out “missing” memory that always underlies what is officially transmitted. She considers the case of a Bolognese couple **Giovanni Ellero** and **Maria Pia Pezzoli** who lived in Italian Eastern Africa during Ellero's employment as a clerk at the Ministry of Italian Africa between 1936 and 1941. Their personal archives – now conserved at the Department of History, Anthropology and Geography at the University of Bologna and in the Archiginnasio Civic Library – offer significant inroads into historical, anthropological and linguistic research at the time of the Italian African project.

The extraordinary wealth of the materials collected – letters, seals, maps, handwritten notebooks, typed documents, drawings, photographs – and the complexity of the process with which they have been stratified over the years – suggested to the artist the idea of a **visual narrative** in which elements of fiction blend with traces of a real but forgotten history. Allowing to experience the threshold of reality and imagination, document and interpretation, the work questions the observer's gaze concerning the role of **imaginative knowledge** in the perception of facts.

The film is set almost entirely within a fictional reconstruction of Giovanni Ellero's office. The narrative traces the daily action of the protagonist, a young Eritrean researcher consigned to translate from Amharic into Tigrinya an unpublished manuscript written by Giovanni Ellero between 1939 and 1940 titled *A contribution to the birth of the colonial style*. This text proposes a critical interpretation of the government's programme of urban and architectural development in the colonial territories, and the proposal for a non-ideological approach for the definition of a different programmatic language open to dialogue with the local architectural culture. The metaphor of a **process of cultural translation** which was necessary then as now becomes a pretext to question different possibilities in the course of history. What would have happened if the calls for a different vision of colonial architecture described in this text by Ellery had been taken into consideration? An important approach in Bridget Baker's work lies in offering alternate possibilities regarding established reality, in questioning the point of view as to how facts are described, in stimulating everybody's responsibility to acquire a greater awareness of our past and our present.

Bridget Baker always pays close attention to the formal aspects of her work; every detail is examined carefully and realised by her in line with a scenographic study accompanying her video work which is filmed in digital and analogue media. Thus, in *The Remains of the Father – Fragments of a Trilogy (Transhumance)*, Baker recalls a sort of **"neo-naturalist"** and hybrid attitude that permeates, through its various languages within some significant developments in contemporary African art.

Her stylistic language translates fragmented experiences imbued with a complex imaginative vision, creating timeless dimensions with an almost maniacal passion for redundant details. Her voyeuristic gaze on private archives together with a constructed feminised point of view, are just some of the elements that mark out the artist's work within the context of current European production.

Filmed entirely in Bologna in an house that is part of the architectural complex of the Fascist era "Villaggio Bandiea" through the agency of Bologna City Council – Housing Services Sector, the filmic project is realised with the collaboration of Articulture for production and post-production and of MC A-Marco Cucinella Architects, GARBO (Associazione Giovani Architetti di Bologna – Young Architects of Bologna Association) and Delta-bo Project for the scenographic and set design consultancy. In agreement with Ellero's heirs, the Department of History, Anthropology and Geography at the University of Bologna generously loaned part of the original Ellero Archive for the shooting stage and for the show at MAMbo.

*The Remains of the Father – Fragments of a Trilogy (Transhumance)* **will become part of the Permanent Collection of MAMbo** at the end of the exhibition.

The screening of Bridget Baker's video installation in the same Room within the museum's Permanent Collection has in the past hosted video works by Sarah Morris, Francesco Jodice and, recently, Alison Klayman's documentary, *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry*, will further contribute to marking this space as one which reflects on the experimentation with hybrid linguistic registers – between film, work of art and documentary – lying outside the usual visual canons.

On Sunday 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> November and 9<sup>th</sup> December 2012, the MAMbo Education Department will offer **guided visits** to the Permanent Collection with a special focus on Bridget Baker. Entry: € 4 per person plus entry to the Permanent Collection (€ 6 full, € 4 concessionary).  
For information and bookings: tel. +39 051 6496652 (from Monday to Friday, 10 am to 1 pm); tel. +39 051 6496611 (Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am - 5 pm).

Further information about Italian colonialism will be examined in a series of films at the Bologna Cineteca and in a **cycle of meetings about "Post-colonialism"** including a public debate, in a number of town libraries, given by visual artists with experts in both areas.

The exhibition will be **inaugurated at 5 pm on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2012** with **free entry** to the Permanent Collection from 5 pm to 8 pm.

During a **meeting with Bridget Baker** to be held in the MAMbo Conference Room at 6 pm on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> October, other **video works previously unseen in Italy** will be presented, illustrating the complexity of the artist's work on the border between collective legacy and private imagery.

**For further information:**  
[www.mambo-bologna.org](http://www.mambo-bologna.org)

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**Bridget Baker** (East London–South Africa, 1971) is a South African artist who has for years studied historic and historiographical material using sources as the vehicle for value and potential imagination with particular attention to women's views, female experience in history and in those untold stories in which the woman is often the narrator. She lives in London and has participated in major collective exhibitions at the Museum of African Art (NYC), the South African National Gallery (Cape Town), the Centro des Artes Contemporanea (Burgos), the Palazzo delle Papesse (Siena), the Neue Berliner Kunstverein (Germany), The Wapping Project (London), and has also taken part in the second edition of the Johannesburg Biennale (Cape Town) and Oberhausen Film Festival (Germany).

**Nosadella.due – Independent Residency for Public Art** was founded with a desire to create a link between contemporary art and the context from which it draws its origins and in which it expresses itself, the artist and his or her public, the creative process and the mechanisms of production. This vocation has given rise to its status as independent residence for public art. Located with a private house in the centre of Bologna, it combines the private dimension of the creative process with the public side of art as practice, and operating within the recognised international art system, it offers itself as an Italian interlocutor for foreign exchange, making a contribution to the mobility and professional training of artists and curators of the latest generation. In its five years' activity, it has developed national and international contacts, qualifying itself as the first residence programme for public art in Italy, and activating partnerships with national and international public and private bodies. It has participated in the founding of the first national network of residences, [artinresidence.it](http://artinresidence.it). It is also a member of the international ENPAP (European Network Producers for Public Art) network, and is a partner in the Transartist network and of the AIR programme of the African Center.

**Gender Bender** is an international Festival dedicated to introducing the Italian public to the new imagery related to gender identity, sexual orientation and body representation stemming from contemporary culture. Gender bender offers a series of events ranging from film showings, to theatrical productions and dance performances, visual arts exhibitions, installation, round tables and conferences, live concerts and performances by musicians and djs, and clubbing events. The festival takes place annually in Bologna, Italy, since 2003, and is produced by Il Cassero, gay lesbian center, in collaboration with the GAM/Modern Art Gallery of Bologna, the Bologna Film Library, and the Music and Drama Department of Bologna University, whose venues host specific parts of the program.

Gender Bender is produced by Il Cassero, gay lesbian center di Bologna.

The exhibition is promoted in partnership with:



**We wish to thank:**

Anna Amadori  
Ferdinando Briamonte  
Gianni Dore  
Zelege Eresso Goffe  
Giovanni Ellero  
Kidane Gaber  
Stefano Pezzoli  
Poste Italiane  
Elisa Seravalli  
Irma Taddia  
Lula Teclehaimanot

MAMbo is supported by:



*Focus on Contemporary Italian Art* in partnership with:



## TECHINICAL SHEET

Title:	Bridget Baker <i>Remains of the Father – Fragments of a Trilogy (Transhumance)</i>
Exhibition venue:	MAMbo – Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna via Don Minzoni 14 – Bologna
Promoted by:	MAMbo – Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna
In collaboration with:	Nosadella.due - Independent Residency for Public Art
In occasion of:	Gender Bender Festival
Exhibition dates:	28 October 2012 – 6 January 2013
Opening:	Saturday 27 October 2012 5 pm
Opening hours:	Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 12 pm – 6 pm Thursday, Saturday, Sunday, holidays 12 pm – 8 pm closed on Mondays
Admission:	full price € 6; reduced price € 4
Information:	ph. +39 051 6496611 – fax +39 051 6496600 info@mambo-bologna.org www.mambo-bologna.org
Guided Visits Educational Department	for groups booking is obligatory ph. +39 051 6496652 / 611 mamboedu@comune.bologna.it special guided visit € 4,00 per person guided visits for groups (max 30 people) € 80 visits in other languages € 100
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Partnership:	UniCredit