

MAXINE

H M Baker

February 21 - March 23, 2025

H M Baker's questioning tone palpates from systematic structures to technological evolutions and gendered stereotypes through a penetrating sociological lens. Reminiscent of an ethnographer, H M Baker questions the frameworks that dictate human behaviour, examining the dynamics of leadership and control played out in performative displays of global power. Her work culminates in long-term research projects catalysing a growing series of performances, films, and writings depicting power's performance and choreography within Western structural narratives.

MAXINE is the artist's first solo exhibition in London since returning from the Jan Van Eyck Academie (2023-24). One of Baker's recent long-term projects involves the fictional character Maxine, a mid-level analyst working in a cutthroat environment at an investment banking firm, attempting to navigate the realms of corporate performance. However, Maxine's sentiments are challenged by an industry complicit in capitalising on the earth's economic frailties.

Situating Baker's practice at Rathbone Institute, we are invited to delve into the fantasies of labour and how Maxine's sexualisation and genderisation find legitimacy through cinema. As Maxine's desires assign value to the objects in space, they activate a self-constructive dynamic, offering an insight into her dreams, nightmares, and ambitions. In this exhibition, the materialisation of power becomes tangible through sculpture and installation, preserving traces of its memories and instigating moments of getting closer to its framework to understand how it operates, feels, and exercises.

H M Baker lives and works in London. Upcoming exhibitions and performances: Galerija Škuc, Ljubljana, 2025. Recent exhibitions and performances include: Ginny on Frederick, London, 2024; Neven Gallery, London, 2025; Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht, 2024; CIRCA Prize 2024, London 2024; SITE Gallery, Sheffield 2022; Roberts Institute of Art, London, 2022; Mimosa House, London, 2019

Appendix

Maxine. Dear Maxine. Of course, it's you. Who else could they send? Who else could be trusted? I... I know it's a long way and you're ready to go to work, but all I'm saying is: wait. Just wait and please just hear me out because this is not an episode, relapse, fuck-up. I'm begging you, Maxine, I'm begging you. Try to make believe this is not just madness, because this is not just madness. Two weeks ago, I came out of the building, OK? I'm running across 6th Avenue— there's a car waiting— I've got exactly 38 minutes to get to the airport, and I'm dictating. There's this panicked associate sprinting along beside me, scribbling in a notepad, and suddenly she starts screaming. And I realize we're standing in the middle of the street, the light's changed, there's this wall of traffic— serious traffic— speeding towards us, and I... I freeze, I-I can't move. And I'm suddenly consumed with the overwhelming sensation that I'm covered in some sort of film. It's in my hair, my face... it's like a glaze— a coating— and at first I thought, "My God. I know what this is, this is some sort of amniotic, embryonic fluid. I'm drenched in afterbirth, I've breached the chrysalis, I've been reborn." But then the traffic, the stampede, the cars, the trucks, the horns, the screaming associate, and I'm thinking, "No, reset, this is not rebirth. This is some kind of giddy illusion of renewal that happens in the final moments before death." And then I realize, "No-no-no, this is completely wrong." Because I looked back at the building, and I had the most stunning moment of clarity. I... I... I realized Maxine, that I had emerged— not from the doors of Kenner, Bach & Ledeen— not through the portals of our vast and powerful law firm, but from the asshole of an organism whose sole function is to excrete the-the-the poison, the ammo, the defoliant necessary for other, larger, more powerful organisms to destroy the miracle of humanity. And that I had been coated in this patina of shit for the best part of my life. The stench of it and the stain of it would in all likelihood take the rest of my life to undue. And do you know what I did? I took a deep, cleansing breath and I put that notion aside. I tabled it. I said to myself, "As clear as this may be, as potent a feeling as this is, as true a thing as I believe I witnessed today, it must wait. It must stand the test of time." And, Maxine, the time is now.

Michael Clayton, Tony Gilroy, 2007 [edited]