



video stills

Sisters!

Sisters! is a collaboration between Petra Bauer and the Southall Black Sisters—the radical, pioneering London-based feminist organisation, who since 1979 have politically engaged in the contemporary social and political conditions of black and minority women.

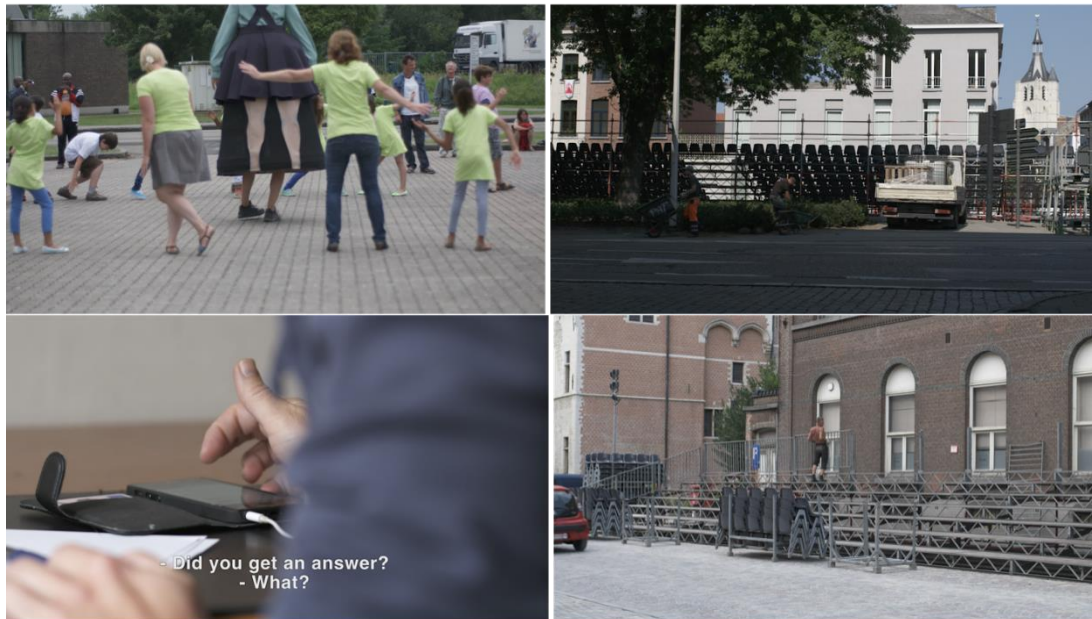
Sisters! is not a film about the Southall Black Sisters, but is a two-way project between Bauer and the staff at the organisation. Documenting one week in the life of the organisation, the film takes their daily activities as a springboard for a visual discussion on feminism, politics and aesthetics in today's society.

The film departs from questions posed in the 1970s Women's Liberation Movement (particularly those explored by feminist film collectives from the time); and consequently focus on important feminist issues for today's black and minority women, according to Southall Black Sisters.



Der Fall Joseph

Petra Bauer's video "Der Fall Joseph" starts at the point where the German media gave up the story. The video deals with a tragedy that took place in the summer of 1997. A six year-old boy was found dead at a public swimming pool in eastern Germany. The boy's German mother and his Iraqi father suspected that their son did not drown but that a gang of neo-Nazis murdered him. As no one would believe them they started their own inquiry using standard legal parlance and methodology in order to gain credence. Their inquiry was still in progress three years later when, in November 2000, the "Joseph case" became the subject of enormous publicity in the German media. There was speculation as to whether the family had, in fact, invented the murder theory themselves. The public prosecutor finally concluded that the boy had died of a latent heart disease and thus was not the victim of a neo-Nazi gang. The local officials could relax and claim that the prosecutor's conclusions showed that there were no neo-Nazi gangs in their town. "Der Fall Joseph" is constructed from ten different narratives: the family's, the prosecutor's, testimony from a witness, a police cross-questioning, excerpts from reports in the media and others. All of the narratives seem coherent, logical and credible but they all differ markedly from each other. The only thing that everyone can agree on is that on the 13th of June 1997 at ten to three in the afternoon a six year-old boy was found dead on the bottom of a swimming pool in a little town in eastern Germany. The complexity of the event becomes evident in the sense of frustration that grips one as one views the video. With each narrative one has a feeling of getting closer to the truth but at the end of each narrative one is just as confused as ever. Whose are the motives and aims that influence our own attitude to the case and how is the law to treat the matter objectively? With her video "Der Fall Joseph" Petra Bauer has chosen to emphasize the fact that subjective motives can contribute to creating an event and that an individual interpretation can become the accepted truth. Instead of blindly trying to establish the truth, her video discusses the entire process of looking back on a series of events and seeing how the choices made at the time underlie and influence the final result. For whose opinion is it that finally wins the preferential right of interpretation?



Choreography for the Giants

Petra Bauer & Marius Dybwad Brandrud

In *Choreography for the Giants*, which consists of a book and a film, Petra Bauer and Marius Dybwad Brandrud looks at the procession known as the Mechelen Ommegang (or Cavalcade), a world heritage event which only takes place every twenty-five years. The last time was in 1988, since then society has undergone many changes. The artists concentrate on the production process of this edition of the Ommegang. They pay critical attention to the claim to represent the whole of Mechelen society through the parade, particularly to the production of three new giant figures; an Arab, an African and an Asian. Who is being represented, by whom and on what conditions?

Choreography for the Giants was produced by Contour 2013, curated by Jacob Fabricius, as part of the cooperation project with the biennials of Göteborg, Liverpool and Ljubljana (within the framework of the European Culture Programme 2007-2013).

Marius Dybwad Brandrud: Filmmaker, based in Stockholm. Has made a couple of shorts and several collaborations both within the field of art and film. Premiered with the full-length feature "After You" in 2013.



Read The Masks. Tradition Is Not Given.

On the 30th of August 2008 we had decided, as a part of the project to organise a protest march and a performance which aim was to publicly give voice to a long marginalised and suppressed critique against the phenomenon of Zwarte Piet.

The protest march and the performance took place in collaboration between Petra Bauer, Annette Krauss, *Doorbraak* and *Untold*. *Doorbraak* is a group that work with issues on racism and colonialism within Dutch Society, and *Untold* is an organization that works with the history and the present situation of black people in The Netherlands. Their main target group are young people.

Together with these groups we had decided to address the issue of the Zwarte Piet during the whole autumn of 2008. We planned to create several events that would criticize and discuss the phenomenon and it's underlying history and structure. The event on the 30th of August would be the starting point for the whole project.

However, a few days before the protest march was about to take place the project received extensive media reporting. The articles triggered hundreds, if not thousands, of comments. Some of them were extremely negative reactions and some even included threats of violence against people who were involved in the project. Due to these threats The Van Abbemuseum found itself forced to cancel the march.

However, the simplistic and spectacular media attention not only revealed the unwillingness to discuss Zwarte Piet, but at the same time triggered the very complex discussion that came afterwards which touched upon questions such as national identity, racism, who has the right to speak, freedom of speech etc. The events also triggered a discussion about whether the art institution is a place for reflection or action, and if we with our project are making art or politics.

On 11 November 2008, the Van Abbemuseum organised a debate on the phenomenon of Zwarte Piet in cooperation with the Netherlands Foundation for Visual Arts, Design and Architecture (BKVB) and the artists Petra Bauer and Annette Krauss. The debate was a response to the commotion that arose in late August 2008 around the project *Read the Masks. Tradition is not Given*.

In August 2009 we finished our film "Read The Masks. Tradition Is Not Given." in which we place the phenomenon of Zwarte Piet in a broader context and address the reactions we got when we tried to reopen a discussion around this tradition.

Conversations: Stina Lundberg Dabrowski meets Petra Bauer'

In the videowork 'Conversations: Stina Lundberg Dabrowski meets Petra Bauer' we see the artist Petra Bauer being interviewed by a famous Swedish reporter. Stina Lundberg Dabrowski is otherwise well known for her personal interviews with cultural celebrities and heads of state, like Margaret Thatcher and Muammar Gaddafi, for Swedish television.

