



PRESS RELEASE WOW Amsterdam

7 June 2017

WOW PRESENTS GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER TOO? PATRICIA KAERSENHOUT

Community art project, exhibition and performance | 29 June to 30 September 2017 | WOW Amsterdam | Opening: Thursday 29 June 5pm

'Guess Who's Coming to Dinner Too?' is a community art project by visual artist and activist Patricia Kaersenhout, in cooperation with the Amsterdams Grafisch Atelier (AGA LAB), Het GildeLab, BYBROWN and WOW Amsterdam. With this project, Kaersenhout (1966) delivers an artistic critique of Judy Chicago's 'The Dinner Party' (1979), which celebrates strong women but denies women of colour their sexuality. Inspired by this work, Kaersenhout builds an installation consisting of a large triangular dining table, full of symbolism, where she honours 36 Black women, 'heroines of resistance'.

Black is here written with a capital 'B', as it's not the colour of skin but the political meaning that matters. Black feminists in the eighties came up with the term to refer to all non-white women. Later 'BMR women' came about; defined as Black, Migrant and Refugee women.

The exhibition will be opened by a performance on Thursday 29 June, during which 36 men will perform a 'haka' (Maori ceremonial war dance) in honour of these 36 women, while wearing robes specially designed for the exhibition. The linings are printed with images and texts about the heroines, all from non-western cultures. They resisted their oppressors and advocated equal rights and are thus represented on the table. During the performance their stories are borne literally and figuratively by the men.

Kaersenhout researched hidden and forgotten stories over the past months, like she did before in a body of work that unfolds as an artistic search for the meaning of invisibility as a result of the African diaspora and colonialism. Her work embodies the paradox of wanting to visualise the unseen and to allow the undefinable.

Black women and acts of resistance

The subjects Kaersenhout researches and broaches deal with the position of Black women in relation to sexuality, slavery, colonialism and racism. Her mode of working is often thoroughly sourced and aims to entwine lost histories and a personal quest for equal rights for Black girls and women.

In 2015 Kaersenhout opened her previous exhibition 'Rebelse Trots' (Rebellious Pride) at CKB Zuidoost, Amsterdam; a project about the important Black feminist movement of the 1980s. The artist got the women back together. This resulted in two short films, a portraiture series and a large group portrait that also honours two women posthumously. This work was hung in the portrait gallery at the Amsterdam Museum.

The social aspect plays an increasingly dominant role in Kaersenhout's professional practice. While working on 'Rebelse Trots' she travelled to Senegal, by invitation of the Dutch Embassy. There she developed a preventive project around female trafficking and forced prostitution – forms of modern slavery, often a consequence of a weak economic position. Kaersenhout had local girls embroider the portraits of the feminists, by which she supported them, while it added to the power of the pictures portraying women who until this day fight for equal rights for Black girls and women.

Community art project

'Guess Who's Coming to Dinner Too?' is firmly rooted in Amsterdam West through a unique, intensive collaboration between three cultural institutions: AGA LAB, GildeLab, WOW Amsterdam and local creatives, such as the emerging fashion label BYBROWN.

The project has come about thanks to working closely with mainly non-Western women from WOW's immediate surroundings. Kaersenhout spoke with them and heard stories about their heroines and role models. Moreover, Het GildeLab's trainee seamstresses, who are part of a work-study programme, sewed the robes. Finally, women at AGA LAB printed the tablecloth with graphic patterns showing each heroine's strength and napkins with their names.

Dinners, lectures and talks

Together with the exhibition, a handout and a podcast is available with the biographies of the 36 heroines. During its running time, 'Guess Who's Coming to Dinner Too?' is activated by dinners, talks, lectures and film screenings about the various themes recurring in Patricia Kaersenhout's work. Kaersenhout's ultimate goal is to have the installation travel around the globe and find its final resting place at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in New York, where Judy Chicago's work is also on show.

Partners

This project was made possible thanks to the generous financial support of Mondriaan Fonds, Gemeente Amsterdam, Stadsdeel Amsterdam West and Amsterdams Fonds voor de Kunst.

Read more at

<http://www.wow-amsterdam.nl/#/event/guess-whos-coming-to-dinner-too/>

Notes for the editor

The installation will be opened on Thursday 29 June at 5pm and will be on show until 30 September 2017 at WOW Amsterdam. Entry is free.

We appreciate previews and we invite the press to the opening. For interviews with Patricia Kaersenhout, high-res imagery and further information please contact the Head of Programming Marlies Buurman at marlies@wow-amsterdam.nl or Michela Trovato Giancardillo at michela@wow-amsterdam.nl.

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The project is financially supported by:



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