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# openmuseum

Re-imagining museums as safe spaces

Meet our speakers



## Anne Wetsi Mpoma

Anne Wetsi Mpoma is an art historian, curator, author and gallery owner.

She proposes solutions to deconstruct and reinvent the arts and the imaginary for a more inclusive society. Director and founder of the Wetsi Art Gallery (2019, asbl Nouveau Système Artistique), an independent space that builds bridges with diverse audiences, also institutional ones, by showing the work of artists marginalized because of their «race», gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin and/or «disability».

In her essay *Resisting in the arts and culture in a postcolonial context* (in *Being imposed upon*, 2020), she analyzes the power relations between Belgian Afrodescendent women artists evolving on the margins and the holders of dominant power on the contemporary art scene. The exhibition project *Through her (True her)* addresses the same theme by bringing the works of these marginalized artists into dialogue with those that have joined the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art of the City of Ghent (S.M.A.K.), following research carried out by the co-curator of the project, Pascale Obolo.

She is currently participating in the work of the experts appointed to draft a first report to guide the members of the House of Representatives participating in the commission charged with analyzing Belgium's colonial past and its current consequences.

## Jessica Gysel

Jessica Gysel is an editor and consultant living in Brussels. She's the founder and publisher of Girls Like Us magazine, a queer and feminist arts publication. Next to the magazine, Girls Like Us hosts a plethora of events, ranging from film screenings, exhibitions, talks, workshops, presentations, temporary shops and parties.

Jessica is also the founder and programmer of Girls Heart Brussels, a platform to discover a hand-picked selection of the best things that lesbia\*n and feminist Brussels has to offer.

Finally she's one of the people behind Mothers & Daughters, a Lesbian\* and Trans\* Bar, the first ephemeral queer bar in Brussels since 2005.

With a background as a marketing consultant specialized in scenes and communities, Jessica knows the whole spectrum – from corporate hell to DIY utopia and everything inbetween.

[www.girlslikeusmagazine.com](http://www.girlslikeusmagazine.com)  
[www.girlsheartbrussels.be](http://www.girlsheartbrussels.be)  
[www.mothersanddaughters.be](http://www.mothersanddaughters.be)





## Grace Ndiritu

Grace Ndiritu is a British–Kenyan artist whose artworks are connected with the transformation of the contemporary world, through film, photography, paintings and social practice projects with refugees, migrants and indigenous groups.

Works like *The Ark: Center for Interdisciplinary Experimentation*; *COVERSLUT©* fashion and economic project; and shamanic performance art series *Healing The Museum* have been shown all around the world including Africa Museum, Tervuren.

Recent exhibitions include Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool (2019), S.M.A.K. & M.S.K., Belgium (2019), Eastside Projects, Birmingham (2018), CAG Vancouver (2018), Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona (2017), Museum Modern of Art, Warsaw (2014), Musée Chasse & Nature and Centre Pompidou, Paris (2013).

## Pascale Obolo

Independent filmmaker and curator, editor of the magazine Afrikadaa.

Born in Yaoundé, Cameroon, Pascale Obolo studied at the Conservatoire Libre du Cinéma Français in the directing section, then obtained a master's degree in cinema at the University of Paris VIII, experimental cinema section. A feminist filmmaker, the director of "Calypso Rose: The lioness of the jungle" looks at the place women take up in artistic circles. Many of her films have been shown and awarded in several international festivals.

As an activist, her work questions memory, identity, exile, invisibility. Her research focuses on the different practices of knowledge transmission and decolonial education in art and in militant circles. Through the construction of historical narratives in a post-colonial perspective, she questions archives and visual and cultural representations of political and economic history.

Pascale Obolo is also at the origin of Afrikadaa, a review of contemporary African art that makes space for new institutional and non-institutional artistic practices. She also runs the African Art Book Fair (AABF), an independent publishing fair that focuses on qualitative editorial practices. Pascale Obolo is also a member of the Scientific Council of the School of Fine Arts of Reunion Island.

Finally, she is currently preparing a publication on counter-narratives following her research on the question whether the S.M.A.K.'s collection can be feminised.





## Claire Mead

Claire Mead is a Franco-British independent curator focusing on feminist and LGBTQI art history and its representation in museums, helping them make their collections and programming more inclusive.

Her practice includes consulting, curating exhibitions, in-person and online workshops, talks and tours and drag performance.

Claire has collaborated with a range of British cultural institutions including the British Museum, National Gallery, Museum of London and National Archives.

She has also delivered several events for Visites Particulières in Brussels, including a guided tour of the Keith Haring exhibition at BOZAR.

Website: <https://clairemead.com/>  
Twitter: @carmineclaire

## Aminata Ndow

Aminata Ndow (born in 1995) is a historian of Belgian and Gambian origin. In 2017, she founded the student association AYO with Mohamed Barrie and Emmanuel Iyamu and since March 2018, she coordinates Black History Month in Belgium with Mohamed Barrie.

Black History Month (BHM) is an annual celebration (during the month of March) of the resilience of the Black community in the present and the past. It is an attempt to transform the way in which we represent the past and the present through conversations, exchange moments, lectures, film, debate, performances and exhibitions.

Through a people's history/history from below (the past told from the perspective of everyday people instead of leaders) they strive to make history more honest/ truthful and inclusive, so more about all of us, regardless of our socio-economic, ethnic or cultural backgrounds.

The ultimate motivation is to demonstrate the importance of conserving and promoting cultural diversity and the right to culture for everyone in our society.





## Olga Briard

Olga Briard (1993), a Brussels native with Belgian and Rwandan roots, studied African foreign affairs and now works as a production assistant at Bozar Agora. In September 2020, she started working for Black History Month Belgium as the person responsible for community work with Dutch-speaking organisations in Brussels.

## Aspha Bijnaar

Dr. Aspha Bijnaar is an independent researcher and consultant, writer, concept developer and director of the EducatieStudio Foundation. She studied sociology. In 2002 she obtained her PhD at the University of Amsterdam.

Bijnaar has worked as a researcher on several scientific publications, exhibitions and educational cases in the field of (heritage) slavery, the legacy of slavery and the Second World War. In this respect, she published the first Dutch comic book on slavery based on a real-life story, *Jacquelina. Slavin op plantage Driesveld* (KIT Publishers 2010). In 2013, she launched the educational website [www.slavernijenjjj.nl](http://www.slavernijenjjj.nl). She also toured her theatre production *Rebelse Vrouwen. Een voorstelling over verzet van vrouwen in de slavernij* (Rebellious women. A performance about the resistance of women in slavery).

For this, Bijnaar helped research the history of women's resistance in slavery and developed the basic idea for the play. In 2018, the international publication on this research was published by Routledge Publishers, *Reframing criminalized resistance strategies of female slaves in the Dutch Caribbean and Suriname during the era of colonialism* (Bijnaar, A., Lurvink, K., Joosen, K.J.).

Bijnaar is also general coordinator, concept developer and spokesperson of the Dutch national cooperation project *Musea Bekennen Kleur*, which gathers more than 31 museums working together to increase the sustainability of diversity and inclusion in the Dutch heritage sector.

[www.educatiestudio.com](http://www.educatiestudio.com)  
[www.museabekennenkleur.nl](http://www.museabekennenkleur.nl)





## Hester Dibbits

Hester Dibbits is lecturer in Cultural Heritage at the Reinwardt Academy (Amsterdam School of the Arts). She approaches heritage through a network theory; today's society and also heritage cannot be divided into fixed groups but is a capricious, fluid structure that is constantly changing.

Throughout the years heritage has often been used to create a national identity. This implies a connecting role for heritage, while heritage can also be cause friction.

Operating from this field of tension Dibbits proposes to look at relationships, associations and connections between people, heritage items and each other. In this way, one can look at emotionally charged heritage with an inquiring mind.