

MAGNETS

Sophie Bates | Cheryl Dunye | Julika Rudelius

13th April - 6th May

It's 1991, you're a 29-year-old black lesbian living in New York City. You recently broke up with your lover; you started your own vending business selling goods on the sidewalk, which is going well. Acid house is five years old; Voodoo Ray by A Guy Called Gerald is on rotation at the clubs you go to. The first Gulf War is coming to an end and the Yugoslav wars are beginning. David Norman Dinkins is the first African American Mayor of New York. Twin Peaks season two is concluding. The US economy is coming out of a recession whose roots lie in the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and the subsequent oil price shock, but it is a jobless recovery; the New York you inhabit is rude, eccentricity is paramount. The average monthly rent for a studio apartment is \$1,025; a one-bedroom is \$1,475. You have a new approach to romance, after several long-term relationships. You have faith in yourself. *Torn between two lovers, feeling like a fool, loving you is breaking all the rules.*

Netherlands, 2005, you're a middle-aged white man. You always wanted to be a millionaire. Money doesn't make you powerful, but you do think that you have more freedom than other people. You earn 8000, 9000 euros per month before tax, with which you buy stuff, invest, and earn even more. The shareholders of Koninklijke Olie and Shell agree to a merger, creating a new company called Royal Dutch Shell, with headquarters in The Hague. You're pragmatic. You take your kids to Egypt. You walk around the souks, teaching them how to bargain: it's really fun, your daughter is a good haggler. She's 13, you tell her *calculate the price in euros, offer them a third, and only go ten percent higher, no more!* That's how you get respect; if you walk away they don't respect you, another dumb western tourist. But if you really bargain, and in the end you say "look me in the eyes, aren't you still earning something?" then they are honest, and say yes.

1993, New York. You're a white woman in your twenties. Friends are having a potluck dinner for their anniversary. You think you're on a date with Tracy, a black woman, also in her twenties. You think you're in control of the situation - you think you know more about where she's coming from than she does. You get dumped. The AIDS crisis is a decade old. *There we are, thousands of people screaming Act Up, Fight Back, Fight AIDS, just as his limousine was going by.* You made ambrosia; it feels like somebody died. You met through a friend of a friend, and at first you seemed to click, but this clearly isn't happening. You apply for the Peace Corps in Ethiopia.

It's 2003, you're 19, from Amsterdam. Your parents are Moroccan, with a traditional outlook; you have to lie to them about how much money you spend on t-shirts. Pim Fortuyn is recently dead; the Dutch economy is stagnant. You prefer Italian brands: Prada, Versace, Dolce & Gabbana. You like to express yourself with colour, if you dressed in black people would think you were a *crimineel*. Aged 15, you started doing a paper round, now you earn €300 per month working part time. All your money goes on clothes. You want to be seen as a normal guy; you respect other people and you ask for them to respect you in return. You have faith in yourself.

It's 2019, you're a white woman in your twenties living in Rotterdam, an artist; you move into a shared studio space. Almost immediately it's broken into: they steal your computer and cover the rest of your belongings in paint. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, you form strong friendships with your new studio mates. When the pandemic hits, studio and friendships are a refuge. The Eurovision Song Contest, which is due to be held in Rotterdam, is cancelled. Filming is a way of being present differently. The group friendship forms around a routine of making cocktails together; you film each other sober and wasted. Not everyone is happy to be the subject of your film, but you continue anyway. You go camping, finding a small patch of campsite to call your own, together. The pandemic comes to an end, some relationships also end. The footage becomes a record, becomes an artwork. Some people still aren't happy, but you persevere. You have faith in yourself.

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ONLINE SCREENING

Quirine Racké & Helena Muskens - The Tower (2001), 15mins, two-channel video

14th April - 6th May

www.wetfilm.org

In tandem with the exhibition Magnets, we are excited to present an online screening of The Tower, a work by Quirine Racké & Helena Muskens, accompanied by a conversation between the artists and WET members Sophie Bates and Anna Łuczak. For more information go to wetfilm.org.

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WET is Sophie Bates, Erika Roux, Marta Hryniuk, Anna Łuczak and Nick Thomas. We are a Rotterdam-based collective and project space for artists' moving image, providing a platform for exhibitions, screenings and workshops. We also host online screenings, accompanied by a podcast. WET acts as a support structure for both its members and the artists with whom we work, assisting in the production of works through the exchange of labour, equipment and expertise.

Text by Nick Thomas, with excerpts from the work of Sophie Bates, Cheryl Dunye and Julika Rudelius.