

Debate and exhibition: 'They do (not) know I am gay'

Wednesday 3 August 2011, 19.00 - 21.00 hrs, Amsterdam City Hall, Amstel 1, Amsterdam.
report by Klaus Bondam. These events are an initiative of the City of Amsterdam, Pro Gay and EUNIC Netherlands.

They do (not) know I'm gay

This was the motto of the debate taking place in the city hall of Amsterdam on the 3rd of august. According to an initiative of the city Amsterdam and EUNIC Netherlands 7 speakers via Skype, all from different countries, and 4 live speakers were supposed to discuss the situation of LGBT in Europe, and the influence of gay arts, and give an input of their own experience and sentiment. The Skype-participants were able to watch the whole debate online and also the audience could see the Skype-participants on a screen. Every participating country, represented by one speaker, was encouraged to show a short clip dealing with LGBT ahead of starting the statement.



Before the discussion started, the exhibition of the artist **Sam Havadtoy**, who also took part at the debate, was opened in the foyer. Maybe art is one of the easiest ways to express ones feelings and concerns about an issue and it makes things visual. This is also the way that **Erwin Olaf**, a Dutch photographer and live-participant, deals with the LGBT dilemma.

Klaus Bondham, taking part as a live-participant of the discussion as well, led through the debate and made sure that also the audience made use of their right to participate in order to create a vivid dialogue.

In the course of the debate it was more than obvious that the progress of the ongoing discussion about the situation of LGBTs is not in every country on the same level. However this made the debate even more suspenseful.

Nevertheless this should let us be aware of the fact that the LGBT-discussion is just in the early stages, and based on the experiences being represented by the participants,

people should get encouraged to stand up for their right and as **Frank van Dalen** expressed it, "be proud of who and what you are".



Live panel:

Frank van Dalen, Erwin Olaf, Sam Havadtoy, Klaus Bondam.

Speakers and artists via Skype from: Romania, Poland, Lithuania, Italy, Czech Republic, Austria and Israel.

The exhibition *The last supper (Nobody knows I'm gay)* by Hungarian artist **Sam Havadtoy** will take place at the foyer of the City hall for 2 weeks.

Guest speakers:

Erwin Olaf (1959) is a Dutch [photographer](#). Olaf recently won the Johannes Vermeer award for his work. He is most famous for his personal and commercial work. He has been commissioned to photograph advertising campaigns for companies such as [Levi's](#), [Microsoft](#) and [Nokia](#). Some of his most famous photographic series include "Grief", "Rain", and "Royal Blood". Never one to shy away from controversy, Olaf's work is often daring and provocative. His work has received many awards and he has held exhibitions around the world.

Sam Havadtoy (1952) is a British born Hungarian-American contemporary painter and owner of Gallery 56. He is well known for being part of the artist circle of New York including [Keith Haring](#), [Andy Warhol](#), [Yoko Ono](#) and Jasper Jones.

Klaus Bondam (1963) is a [Danish](#) actor and politician. Currently he is the director of the Danish Cultural Institute/Benelux. He got his breakthrough in the Dogme-movie "[Festen](#)". He has been manager of two major theaters in Denmark and for five years he was deputy mayor in The City of Copenhagen. He's gay and has for decades been involved in LGBT-issues. He was the co-scriptwriter for the Danish movie block buster - the gay comedy - 'Shake it all about' (2001).

Frank van Dalen (1969) is former chairman of COC Netherlands, former chairman of Amsterdam Gay Pride organization ProGay and an activist for LGBT rights in Europe. In his roles he brought LGBT-themes back on the Dutch agenda of society and politics. Amsterdam Gay Pride was brought to new heights using the pride as a tool for LGBT-culture and emancipation. He visited several countries throughout Europe to support local LGBT-communities, demonstrations and gay prides. In Amsterdam he is also member of town hall council for the liberal party VVD.