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## A Halloween Invitation - Let's Rebrand Feminism?



Who said that Halloween was only about masks, trick-or-treating, scar   
costumes or horror films? How about defying subjects such as...   
*rebranding feminism*? In Amsterdam, a large group of women (and some  
men) got together at the Pakhuis de Zwijger last week for a special  
event organised by SheSays AMS. No shocking scenes included.

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“Thank you for coming to our Halloween edition of [SheSays Amsterdam: The Rebranding of Feminism](#),” said Kerrie Finch to a full house, from the stage of the [Pakhuis de Zwijger](#)’s *grote zaal*. Despite the showery weather and the celebration of the day, an overwhelmingly female audience showed no fear and boldly attended the event.



All Images by [Kristen van Santen](#)



Besides running [FinchFactor](#) as founder and CEO, Kerrie is also the power organiser of the Amsterdam branch of the [SheSays](#) network. This was one of the 30 annual events that the organisation stages around the world “to empower and inspire, well... women, basically. Hence, the title SheSays.” However, Kerrie disclosed that the Amsterdam team has its own particular way of holding these public sessions: they only invite female speakers. Nonetheless, everyone is welcome.

Without further ado, the speakers of the evening were introduced. Voices of the Netherlands, Argentina, America, and Ireland, for a global perspective of what feminism and the rebranding of feminism is.



## Feminine & Masculine Energies: A Happy Balance

Representing the Netherlands, Annemarie Renes van Asselen opened her presentation with a confession: “*I never felt attracted to feminism, [and even] felt a strong resistance against it.*” For 13 years, she worked in leadership positions in high-profile companies such as Google and Heineken. Despite seeing herself as “*one of the guys,*” she was confronted by the dominating male energy in the workplace. Motivated by a feeling of unrest, Annemarie decided to start her own project: Women Development Boutique.



For Annemarie, the discussion around feminism should be less about women versus men, and focus more on feminine and masculine energies in all people.

## Toxic Masculinity

Next stop: Laura Visco. The Argentinean and creative director at 72andSunny Amsterdam took the stage to talk about... men. Better yet, the consequences of toxic masculinity. According to the data she showed, 98% of men heard the expression “*man up*” just last year.



*“I didn’t grow up hearing ‘woman up’ or ‘you’re not enough of a woman,’”* said Laura. However, while women hold events to talk about *their* problems, “guys are not even aware they have a problem.” The creative director calls this the other gender gap, “*the one that nobody talks about, the one that we keep ignoring as a society*”: men are being raised as “*emotional rubbers.*” To show how brands can address this issue, Laura gave as an example the AXE campaign she developed: *Is It OK For Guys.*



As to feminism, Laura sees no need for rebranding it: “*Feminism is not about creating new rules. It should be about allowing men and women, for the first time in history, to be whoever the f\*\*\* they want.*”



## The Ballroom Culture: From New York to Amsterdam



Third speaker of the evening: Amber Vineyard, the Mother of the House of Vineyard. Originally from California, Amber brought the ballroom scene to the Netherlands. The latter is a LGBT subculture, created by Latinos and African Americans in New York. Although Madonna helped popularise it with the music video “Vogue,” Amber promptly clarifies that the artist did not invent it.

The ballroom scene is a safe haven, a space where social norms and gender behaviour are challenged. Everything is allowed. It’s about daring to step outside of the comfort zone. It’s about confidence building. A possible challenge for the Dutch, who Amber sees as “*extremely shy*”: “*People are afraid to shine. People are afraid to stand up.*” To be fair, Amber’s level of confidence is at an all-time high: “*I am extremely, extremely extroverted.*” Considering her professional experience, creativity, and

personality, the word “*feminism*” has become too small: “*It’s just not about women anymore. It’s also about transwomen, transmen, the LGBT community in general.*”



## Towards Gender Equity

From *servicing* in the Ballroom scene, the conversation moved on to equity in health treatment of women and men. Sinead Hewson closed the event with a clear and repeated message: “moving forward towards equity.” The board member of the European Institute of Women’s Health (EIWH) discussed the rebranding of feminism from a policy perspective. “*For me, it’s about moving forward and how we grow our society. I believe that if we can get right into the structure the way society develops, and look at that frame from the very beginning, we can influence more things.*”

On the 4th and 5th December, Sinead is holding a conference with the EIWH. Although targeted at European policymakers, Sinead invited the audience to participate: “post one piece of advice of how you would like to see the rebranding of feminism, the rebranding of sex and gender moving forward. *I’m wondering if we do rebrand it, if we do go forward, how we could become more powerful and effective, and actually reach our potential.*”

Will you take on the challenge?



*Written by Carla Vicente*

*Pictures by Kirsten van Santen from SheSays Amsterdam Facebook*

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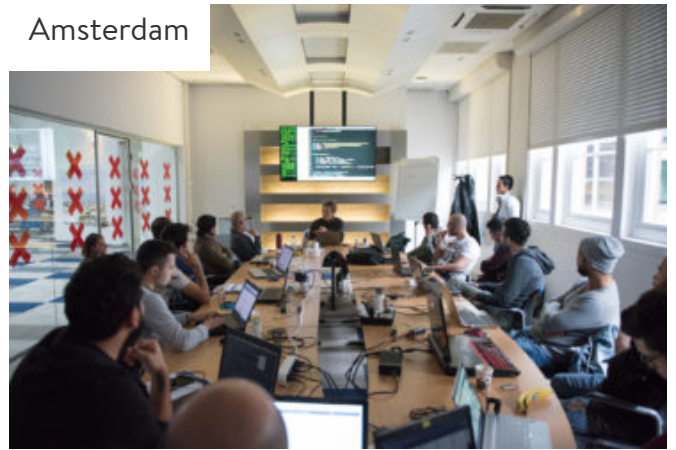
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