

Quinsy Gario

Zwarte Piet is Racisme (2011-)

The figure of Zwarte Piet (Black Peter) visits the Netherlands every year in November, and has done since time immemorial—at least in the public imagination.

In summer 2011, the artist Quinsy Gario became fed up with the fact that the majority of the Dutch population simply repeats this tradition without consideration of its racist implications, so he initiated the *Zwarte Piet is Racisme* (Black Pete is Racism) performance project by producing t-shirts with this statement stenciled on to them. They are both for sale or for people to bring their own t-shirts for stenciling.

In 2011 Gario and his companions hung out at markets and other crowded public places dressed in white T-shirts with the text 'Zwarte Piet is Racisme' printed on it in black letters. His performance found many critics, but also supporters, some of whom joined the artists in wearing the T-shirts during the festive arrival of Saint Nicholas at a parade in Dordrecht in November 2011.

Even though Gario and the other people were performing peacefully, the Dordrecht police arrested the artist and some of his supporters for disturbance of the public order.

In August 2013, Gario submitted an application to the European Court of Human Rights, pressing charges against the Dutch state on the grounds of police violence. The case is ongoing.