
ORANGE BABIES

Inspiration usually comes from something that makes us feel good, good to the point of ecstatic. Music that hits a nerve connected to our tailbone chakra ruling our unconscious and sexual desire. A breath taking, time stopping sight of nature that reveals the divine, secret spirit of beauty. An unexpected encounter with a certain someone who grabs us by the balls and rips the glass floor from underneath our secure ego just by being 100% authentic. A free fall into freedom and creativity. Enlightenment. Haleluja. Born again.

But when you dig a bit deeper in the phenomenon of inspiration, you'll find that the most life changing kind often occurs after a rather less pleasant experience. Like after we hit the rock bottom of our hearts, after our hearts feel shattered in a million pieces and we have to somehow put the pieces back together again, determined to fix things for the better while we're at it.

This is more or less the kind of inspiration that Orange Babies originated from. And the result is all the more glorious, life changing indeed, and not just for founders Baba Sylla, John Kattenberg and Stef Bakker. This is the story.

Baba Sylla who was born and raised in Senegal before he ventured out to explore Europe's luring creativity, went to visit his family back home in 1998. Baba's father Bafode Sylla was 91 at the time and needless to say, in the twilight of his life. Bafode Sylla was a very special man. A well to do property owner and a very popular man in his community for his generosity. Bafode not only looked after his 4 wives and 21 children, he also had a flock of adopted children in his care and he was known to relentlessly support family and friends in need.

While Baba was staying with his family a woman came knocking on the door. A pregnant woman, a woman with Aids. She was looking for a safe haven for her child to be born in, and for herself to take her last breath in, eventually. Knowing about Aids from the bigger world he came to live in Baba advised his old father to say no. Facing the unavoidable end of his own life, Bafode was not in the best condition to take on a huge responsibility like this and he had done more than his share already. It may have been a sensible decision, but it kept haunting Baba once he got back home in Amsterdam. Even more so, he started to feel the presence of his mother's spirit, Bassirou Diallo, who had passed away when Baba was only 2 years old. To make up for the guilt he felt for turning this poor sick woman the cold shoulder, and to ultimately follow his father's example to reach out to those in need, Baba decided to dedicate the rest of his life to helping other women like her. On January 25, 1999 Baba Sylla founded Orange Babies together with make-up artist John Kattenberg and creative director Stef Bakker.

Orange Babies raises awareness for the Aids problem in Afrika and funds for special medications for HIV infected pregnant women to increase the chance for their babies to be born free from the virus. The cheapest medication called Névirapine, gives a 50% chance and the HAART (Highly Active Anti Retroviral Therapy) could increase that chance to around 98%. And Orange Babies does even more; they build safe maternities, provide in alternatives for breastfeeding, support Aids orphans and bring people and knowledge together in Afrika to start all kinds of local programmes contributing to their mission to make a lasting difference. And they do all this by involving European fashion circles via the network of House of Orange. Charity fashion shows, auctions, brand collaborations, exhibitions, dinners, music and sports events, the number of activities initiated since the memorable kick off are countless and the circle of Orange Babies friends has spread throughout all layers of the creative industry and beyond.

Orange Babies was destined to be successful in its mission and set an example for many other initiatives addressing the same devastating and immensely seized problem. Orange Babies and House of Orange have become like two sides of a golden coin. Beauty, inspiration and dedication; pure positive power to change our lives into something worth celebrating.

www.orangebabies.nl

TEXT
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