



presents

Battle of Wills

A Film by Anne Henderson
Produced by Nathalie Barton



Part historical mystery, part sci-fi thriller, **Battle of Wills** tells the compelling story of the Sanders portrait, a painting with a controversial claim to be the only image of Shakespeare taken from life.

PRESS KIT

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Battle of Wills

A Film by Anne Henderson
Produced by InformAction

Credits

Quebec, Canada, 2008, HD Digital Video, Color, 52'

Researched, Written and Directed by
Photography

Anne Henderson
Andreï Khabad
Philippe Lavalette

Sound Recording

Olivier Léger

Edited by

Barbara Brown

Sound Editing

Benoît Dame

Sound Mix

Jean-Pierre Bissonnette

Music

Robert Marcel Lepage

Production Manager

Ian Quenneville

Produced by

Nathalie Barton

Produced by
InformAction

with the participation of

Canadian Television Fund
created by the Government of Canada
and the Canadian Cable Industry

SODEC

Société de développement des entreprises culturelles – Québec

Government of Québec
(Film and Television Tax Credit - Gestion SODEC)

Government of Canada
(The Canadian Film or Video Production Tax Credit)

With the collaboration of

Bravo

Knowledge

and

Access (Canadian Learning Television)

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Summary

Battle of Wills tells a story of obsession and intrigue in the art world. Lloyd Sullivan believes he owns the only portrait of Shakespeare done from life, created in 1603 by an ancestor who was a bit actor in Shakespeare's troupe. Thirteen scientific tests have proven that the Sanders portrait is an unaltered painting from the early 17th century. But is it Shakespeare? Lloyd Sullivan is risking his lifetime's savings to prove that it is. *Battle of Wills* travels from the high tech labs of North America, to the art galleries of Bond Street and the wind-swept castles of the English Midlands to unravel the mystery behind a painting that shook the art world.

**With the participation of
and**

Lloyd Sullivan
Pam Hinks, Tim Hinks, Daniel Fischlin
Joseph Fiennes, Lilly Koltun,
Marie-Claude Corbeil, Anne Trudel,
Angus Neill, Michael Pennington,
Jenny Tiramani, David Loch, Philip Mould,
Michel Fournier, Gregory Doran,
Simon Callow, Tarnya Cooper,
Stephanie Nolen, Joe Barabé,
Jeremy Powell, Michael Hodgetts,
Theresa Fairbanks Harris, Greg Shea,
Ben Kelly

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Promotional Photographs



- 01: The Sanders portrait – A portrait of William Shakespeare?

(reproduced with the permission of the Canadian Conservation Institute of the Department of Canadian Heritage 2008)



- 02: Hanging x-ray of the Sanders portrait

(photo: Olivier Léger © InformAction Films inc.)



- 03: Unveiling the Sanders portrait at the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre

(photo: Darren Calabrese ©)



- 04: The Sanders portrait at the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre

(photo: Andrei Khabad © InformAction Films inc.)



- 05: Lloyd Sullivan

(photo: Olivier Léger © InformAction Films inc.)

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Director's Statement

To be or not to be...

From the moment I saw the Sanders portrait in Vanity Fair, I was instantly captivated by this radically different image of Shakespeare. Unlike the expressionless face traditionally associated with the poet, the Sanders portrait is brimming with life, mischief, and wit. The painting portrays how I *imagine*, or *want*, Shakespeare to be.

My visceral response to the image drew me into the multi-layered world of the portrait, where I found a story that is rich in drama, politics, characters, and visual possibilities. I envisioned *Battle of Wills* as a documentary thriller which would slowly decode the identity of the enigmatic sitter in the painting. In the process, the portrait would take on a life of its own.

Shakespeare is still the sphinx of English literature, the most universally-loved of artists, as well as the least known. What type of man was he? The Sanders portrait opens a door onto the mysteries that lie beyond the canvas.

I was lucky that my central character Lloyd Sullivan is a man of passion and indefatigable willpower. His mission to authenticate his family heirloom drives the story, on a journey that takes us from the high tech labs of North America, to the art galleries and theatres of London, to the windswept castles of the English Midlands. I wanted the film to include not only curators and art dealers, but actors, such as Joseph Fiennes who has played Shakespeare, and knows the writer intuitively from the inside.

I discovered that there is a huge cultural industry, as well as nationalist sentiments, built upon existing images of Shakespeare. Shakespeare's iconic status has ensured that debates over authenticity are full of hidden agendas and economic self-interest.

Finally, the fascination with this 400 year old portrait is very modern. Because we live in the age of photography, we want to stare at the faces of our greatest artists, to learn the secrets of their inner life. We imagine a connection with the human being in the portrait, as if the person gazes back at us too. *Battle of Wills* allows me to tap into this modern sensibility in pursuit of the true face of Will Shakespeare.

Anne Henderson
Writer/Director

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The Production Company

InformAction, founded in Montreal in 1971, produces single documentaries and mini-series on social issues, international affairs, art, world cultures and human rights. Many have won awards and all are distributed internationally.

InformAction produces on a regular basis for Canadian prime-time television (Radio-Canada, CBC, Télé-Québec, Canal D, TV5, Artv, Bravo) and has done several successful international coproductions, in particular with France. Several projects are currently in development with La compagnie des taxi-brousse.

Latest titles include **Shock Waves** by Pierre Mignault & Hélène Magny (*Film Most Likely to Change the World Award @ Detroit Docs 2007, CIDA Award for best Canadian documentary on international development @ Hot Docs 2008*), **A Dream for Kabul** by Philippe Baylaucq and **Afghan Chronicles** by Dominic Morissette, both coproduced with the National Film Board of Canada, **American Fugitive: The Truth about Hassan** by Jean-Daniel Lafond (Hot Docs 2006, Marseille 2006, FNC Montreal 2006, Dubai 2006, DocuDays - Beirut 2006), **The Magic Touch** (3 *Gémeaux Awards* 2005, including *Best Cultural Documentary*), **Lifelike** by Tally Abecassis (3 nominations at the *Gemini Awards* including *Best Science/Nature Documentary*, Vancouver VIFF 2005, Hot Docs 2005, SXSW 2006), **The Genocide in Me** (*Best International Feature @ Staten Island 2006*; Finalist for the *Pierre and Yolande Perrault Award 2005 – Best emerging documentary director – and for the Ruth and Alex Dworkin Award for Tolerance 2005*, Finalist for the *Golden Sheaf Award for Best Point of View Documentary 2006*).

InformAction was founded by Alain d'Aix, Jean-Claude Bürger and Nathalie Barton, who still run the company. Nathalie Barton, producer, was documentary representative and member of the Executive of the Association des producteurs de films et de télévision du Québec from 1994 to 2002.