

**ACTIVIST ART VS. PUBLIC PERFORMANCES AS SOURCES OF ACTIVISM FOR BLACK
SOUTH AFRICAN LESBIANS**

A RESEARCH REPORT
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Luke David Hackney 0003140Y

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Supervised by
Dr Nicola Cloete

Declaration

I, Luke David Hackney, declare that this research report is my own work. It is being submitted in partial fulfillment for a degree of Master of Arts in History of Art at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. I further declare that neither this report, nor any part of it, has been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

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Abstract

Statistics indicate that over the past 16 years (since the year 2000), there have been over 30 black lesbians in South Africa, who have been victims of rape (and in some cases, brutal murder as well) as a result of homophobic violence, which is aimed at “curing” lesbians of their homosexuality. The aim of this research report is to examine how activist methods, such as art exhibitions and public performances, are challenging homophobic violence. The report explores the effectiveness of activist artworks (which include public performances and works by South African artists Zanele Mutholi and Gabrielle Le Roux) in raising awareness and educating South Africans about homophobic violence, which is a daily reality for many members of the South African LGBTQ community. For the purpose of this report, the *Queer and Trans Art-iculations* exhibition, which was held at the Wits Art Museum (WAM) in 2014, is compared to the annual Johannesburg Pride parade of 2012. These events are analysed in terms of their effectiveness in creating awareness about homophobic violence and how they can improve on being more informative and effective in the future. The importance of this research is to add to the existing body of work around art activism as it explores the ways in which activist artists attempt to make social and political change regarding the South African LGBTQ community.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aim

The aim of this research report is to explore the relationship that exists between works of art displayed in gallery/ museum spaces and public performances, such as Pride parades and activist marches, which occur outside of gallery spaces in South Africa. The purpose of this comparison is to examine the need for locally situated knowledge and action around issues of sexual orientation and gender identity within South African society (Haysom, 2015). Although museum spaces and public performances are used (in different modes) for educational purposes, the aim of this report is to scrutinise these sites as places where issues of homophobic violence directed explicitly at lesbians can be brought to the fore and discussed. In this sense, both platforms (museum spaces with activist works and public performances, like parades) are attempting to educate the South African public about “corrective” rape and combat the heterosexist society that has allowed such an abhorrent practice to develop. While the methods and spaces used to address the issue of “corrective” rape may differ, the end result of educating and exposing the public to homophobic violence remains the same.

According to Judith Butler (2011), when bodies gather in the streets as mass crowds for the purpose of political protest, the bodies lay claim to the public space. When Pride parades occur, members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) communities are thus claiming ownership of the relevant public space and are allowing their bodies to be seen by others in the name of political protest and activism. As Butler (2011) asserts, the bodies of these individuals must be present within the space, as a body needs to be present in order for politics to take place. Thus, in protesting in a public space, the bodies of the collective LGBTQ individuals at Pride parades carry out performances, which shift perspectives for political gains.

This notion of bodies being seen by others and occupying space for the purpose of shifting perspectives is one that can be applied to bodies of works of art that exist

and claim space within both galleries and museums. Bodies of artworks occupy space and are intended to be seen by the visitors who enter into the spaces. This process of making artworks visible and displaying them to the public serves to change perspective and dispel any preconceived ideas one may have about the issue/ topic on display.

Similarly, Pride parades put members of the LGBTQ community on display. Their bodies, like works of art in museum and gallery spaces, are intended to occupy and own space. Their bodies are essentially on display for people to see. This viewing, in both cases, is intended to shift perspectives and hopefully elicit some sort of change.

For the purpose of this research report, it is important to understand the definitions of two important concepts. Sexual identity is defined as the label people adopt to signify to others who they are as sexual beings, particularly regarding sexual orientation (Grollman, 2010). The term gender identity, however, is distinct from the term “sexual identity” and refers to a person’s innate, deeply felt psychological identification as a man, woman or another gender, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned to them at birth (The Human Rights Campaign, 2015).

In his write-up for British newspaper *The Independent* titled *Crisis in South Africa: The Shocking Practice of 'Corrective Rape' - aimed at 'curing' Lesbians*, Patrick Strudwick (2014) states that South Africa should be a country that is least tarnished by homophobic hate crimes. Unfortunately, as this research report will highlight, this is not the case. By bringing attention to the issue of “corrective” rape, this report will emphasise the need for continued activist activities, such as art exhibitions, Pride marches and activist marches, to challenge not only the practice of “corrective” rape, but to educate communities about this and other homophobic practices. The purpose of challenging these homophobic practices is to create a society where all people are secure, protected and free to express themselves in any way they choose, without the fear of being violently, and in some cases, sexually assaulted in attempts to “fix” or “cure” them.

The 1997 Constitution of South Africa was the first in the world to secure equal rights for LGBTQ individuals. While the South African Constitution exists and promises a safe society for LGBTQ individuals, many LGBTQ people, myself included, believe that the Constitution does not achieve this goal. According to a 2014 news report published on the *News24* website, since the year 2000, over 30 lesbians have not only been raped, but sometimes murdered too, as a result of their sexuality. This number, however, is only an estimate, as many victims do not report their homophobic attacks. As recently as 11 January 2016, *MambaOnline*, a gay news and lifestyle website, reported the rape and murder of Motshidisi Pascalina on the 18th December 2015. Pascalina's story is one of many, highlighting how lesbians in South Africa have become victims of homophobic violence. These stories stress the need for activist activities that help combat homophobic violence and sexual assault. South Africa's Constitution ensures safety for all citizens, including LGBTQ individuals, yet violent rapes, attacks and murders of black lesbians continue to occur throughout communities.

There is an urgent need within South African communities to address the issue of homophobic violence and the rape of lesbians that occur at the hands of men who want to "cure" them of their homosexuality, which is seen as unnatural and is perceived as being a threat to traditional patriarchal society. This research report examines and offers an analyses of some of the methods that both visual arts and activist methods use in an attempt to combat and raise awareness of the rape, abuse and murder of lesbian women. The number of lesbians, who have been and who continue to be raped in an attempt to "cure" them of their homosexuality, however, brings into question the effectiveness of activist methods that are currently being employed. It is for this reason that this report will explore three different forms of activism. Each form of activism, be it in a gallery space or a parade in the city streets, employs its own method of activism and is designed to cater for certain sectors of South African society. This report will also examine how some of these methods, which are intended to function as forms of protest and activism, may not be as effective as the organisers of these differing events intended and therefore

need to be carefully scrutinized. This includes exploring art galleries and museums where activism may take place.

As part of this exploration, the works of South African visual artists Zanele Muholi and Gabrielle Le Roux, along with the ways in which they attempt to raise awareness regarding issues affecting the black LGBTQ communities in South Africa, are considered. Muholi's works from her *Faces and Phases*, *Being* and *Mo(u)rning* series will be examined along with the works of Le Roux. Both artists featured at the *Queer and Trans Art-iculations* exhibition. The purpose for selecting both Muholi and Le Roux for this research report is based on how their works deal with and explore areas of concern that the LGBTQ community face on a daily basis within South African society. The selection of their works has been further influenced by the ways in which they enter into the realm of art activism for the purpose of promoting both social and political change.

Performance theories of Richard Schechner will also be discussed within this report. Schechner's (2013) seminal work, *Performance Theory*, which formulates the underlying theoretical framework of this report regarding performance theory, challenges conventional definitions of performances and is revolutionary in the way it suggests that performances are not restricted to drama and the stage, but occur in everyday life. His theories of performance, taken from *Performance Theory* and the articles *Approaches*, *From Ritual to Theatre and Back: The Efficacy-Entertainment Braid* and *Towards a Poetics of Performance*, are examined in an attempt to create an understanding of what performances are and how performances carried out in public spaces can raise awareness of and educate people about homophobic violence aimed at black lesbians. Along with Schechner, the performance theories of Erving Goffman are included within this report. Goffman was a pioneer in the study of micro-sociology and his theories were made famous in his 1959 book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. In this book, Goffman uses theatrical imagery to explore both human and social actions and argues that all actions maintain and give off impressions of the self to other individuals and that humans are actors who are constantly performing for society (or as he explains, the audience). Both Goffman

and Schechner are used to formulate a theoretical framework of what performances are and how they are expressed and carried out in public spaces. This theoretical framework will be applied to an examination of the annual Johannesburg Pride parade.

Goffman and Schechner, along with Elin Diamond's (2006) notion that political demonstrations are performances, Muholi's representation of everyday life and actions, and Le Roux's drawn portraits and personally written accounts of LGBTQ individuals are used to examine whether art as a form of activism or civil, public performances within South African communities are a more effective means of raising awareness for issues faced by the LGBTQ community.

Ultimately, the aim of this research report is to add to the existing body of work surrounding theories of art created for activism, which is aimed at raising awareness concerning issues such as the rape and murder of lesbians in South African communities. It is hoped that this research report will add insight into the approaches of which activists make use when attempting to educate communities about issues that are faced by members of the LGBTQ community in South Africa.

1.2 Rationale

Consulting editor for the journal *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equality*, Lou Haysom (2015), states that there is violence directed at people, who transgress gender and sexual normativities throughout the world. She argues that the (South) African context is no exception in this regard. As a homosexual, I am concerned with the violence that is inflicted on members of the gay community on a daily basis. It is for this reason that I deem it necessary to explore methods of activism that are carried out in an attempt to raise awareness of homophobic violence, in order to combat the rise and existence of such violence.

Human Rights Watch released a publication in 2011 entitled, *"We'll Show You You're a Woman" Violence and Discrimination Against Black Lesbians and Transgender Men*

in South Africa, in which the issue of “corrective” rape is examined. In addition to examining the issue of “corrective” rape, the publication proposes recommendations that can be used in order to both combat and raise awareness of this issue within South Africa. These recommendations include the President publically condemning gender-based violence, including homophobic and transphobic violence. This recommendation highlights one form of activism, which is the speaking out against something in a public sphere. This is, however, merely one form of activism that can be used to combat this issue. Another method of activism would be the use of art, created by activist artists as a means to educate and raise awareness of social issues.

Given its past, South Africa has a history of using art as a tool for activism and protest. In an interview conducted by Lydia Chaves (2014) on visual artist Gabrielle Le Roux’s transgender art, Le Roux states that the role of art of all sorts in the anti-Apartheid struggle was central to communicating the message for every protest and campaign. Anti-apartheid or protest art has been used in South Africa to raise awareness of issues and to rally people around particular political and social issues in an attempt to bring about changes and have justice carried out. Taking this notion provided by Le Roux into account, the works of activist artists such as Muholi and Le Roux continue to add to this ever-expanding realm of activist/protest art that has come to underpin much of the contemporary art created by South African artists. The works of Muholi and Le Roux highlight issues that LGBTQ individuals face in South African society and are created to bring about both social and political change. This research report, however, examines whether or not the works of these artists are an effective form of activism when compared to public performances that are carried out for the same reasons of raising awareness for LGBTQ issues.

I share the opinion of British artist Mackenzie Thorpe, who, in his 2014 opinion piece *Is Art Still Elitist* published on *The Times* web site, argues that the people who surround art, such as curators and critics, create the impression that art is elitist and in doing so, may discourage certain groups of people from viewing art that has been created for the purpose of activism. By examining the exhibition *Queer and Trans*

Art-iculations, which took place in 2014 at the Wits Art Museum (WAM) and featured the photographic works of Muholi and Le Roux's painted and drawn portraits, the effectiveness of these works and the exhibition as a form of activism within the museum and gallery space is explored.

As a gay man, I support activist campaigns that are aimed at raising awareness of issues such as, but not limited to, "corrective" rape and the education of communities on issues that affect LGBTQ individuals. By observing the selected works of Muholi, Le Roux and the *Queer and Trans Art-iculations* exhibition as well as discussing the effectiveness of public performances, I scrutinize what each method of activism can offer in terms of raising awareness for LGBTQ issues in South Africa. For the purpose of this report, public performances are defined by both Schechner (2003) and Diamond (2006) as referring to popular entertainment, speech acts, political demonstrations, rituals and aspects of everyday life. This definition of civil performances is expanded by Madison D. Soyini (Professor of Performance and African Studies at Northwestern University), who describes performances as using whatever elements or resources are available for the purpose of subverting the strategies of dominating ideologies.

This report will further examine the function of art as a form of activism and a tool of education. This will be explored in greater detail in the literature review. Central to this report is the assessment of the works of Muholi and Le Roux, which will be juxtaposed with the notion of public performances as sources of activism in terms of the Johannesburg Pride parade.

1.3 Research Methodology

Research for this essay was gathered from secondary data in the form of desk-based research methods. This form of research helps with the formulation of meaning and is used in order to look at, describe and understand ideas, beliefs and experiences. Devon Kowalczyk (2014), Professor of Psychology at Fresno City College, defines secondary research as an analysis and interpretation of primary research. He further

explains that the method of writing secondary research is to collect primary research that is relevant to a writing topic, and interpret what the primary research found. In other words, desk-based research refers to the collection, examination and use of data that has already been produced in order to formulate a solid argument and a sound understanding of the material at hand. The use of this method is favourable, as data from secondary sources is easily accessible and helps to formulate an understanding of the research questions posed in this essay. Books, journal articles and online sources were used for the collection of secondary information.

It is important to note that this report does not solely rely on desk-based research, but also draws on primary research in the form of interviews. The interviews carried out for this study allowed me to have face-to-face discussions with the individuals, who were involved with the *Queer and Trans Art-iculations* exhibition. By conducting these interviews, I was able to receive first-hand accounts of the process the curators undertook when putting the exhibition together. These interviews furthermore afforded me the opportunity to clarify any questions I had relating to the exhibition. The individuals interviewed included Leigh Blankenberg, the Education Curator at the Wits Art Museum, and Haley McEwen, lecturer of Diversity Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. Both Blankenberg and McEwen worked together on the *Queer and Trans Art-iculations* exhibition. Interview questions were drawn up, which were used for the specific task of receiving information related to the study. Some of these took the form of closed questions, which were designed to receive information about facts, figures and the numbers of people who attended the exhibition. Other questions were open-ended and allowed for a variety of ideas, which enabled the participants to think and talk for longer about their views of the exhibition. This allowed them to elaborate on their opinions and views. The interview structure, however, remained unstructured with the interview being free flowing and shifting easily from subject to subject. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in order to categorise, make particular statements clear and select the information that was relevant to the area of study¹.

¹ The complete transcription of the interview is included in the appendix section of this research report.

The interviews conducted with McEwen and Blankenberg contributed not only to an understanding of the exhibition, but also to the formation of an understanding of the outcomes of the exhibition in terms of the number of people who attended the exhibition and the types of education tools that were used in order to educate the visitors about the issues explored within the exhibition. This is a critical exploration to make as it is used to formulate the argument that museum and gallery spaces, with specific reference to the *Queer and Trans Art-iculations* exhibition, may not be effective in acting as sites of activism when compared to activist activities, such as protest marches and public performances, which take place outside of traditional gallery and museum spaces. The questions for the interviews did not only focus on the exhibition; but were designed to explore the notions that WAM museum staff have a hold on how an exhibition housed in a museum space can have an impact on society and members of the public who may not necessarily enter into museum spaces. This was important information to gather and understand, as part of this study is an attempt to comprehend if museums and galleries, such as WAM, can function as a site for activism.

Furthermore, the selection of the Johannesburg Pride parade 2012 is a worthwhile point of study for this report. During the 2012 parade, the One in Nine group, a network of organizations and individuals who are driven by feminist principles, with the desire that that women can live in a society where they are agents of their own bodies, staged a performance intervention for the purpose of drawing attention to homophobic violence faced by black lesbians. The negative reactions of the organisers of the Pride parade and those in attendance add to the discussion regarding public performances and their effectiveness in functioning as activist tools.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Curator, writer, activist and editor of *But is it Art?: The Spirit of Art as Activism*, Nina Felshin (1995: p.9), defines art activism as a hybrid cultural form of the art world and political activism. This means that artists, who create work to be viewed through the lens of activism, are straddling two worlds: art and activism. Activist artists, according to art critic and media theorist Boris Groys (2014), want to change social and political conditions through the use of their art outside of the art system.. In other words, activist artists want to create works of art that influence and have an impact on communities and societies, who may not be a part of the art world. The focus of this discussion is on art as a form of activism and scrutinizes whether or not this is an effective method of activism. This discussion is an important one, as it probes the use of art as a tool for activism and the ways in which it can impact societies for the purpose of educating individuals on issues such as homophobic violence in an effort to promote the safety and Constitutional rights of black lesbians to be free from violence and discrimination.

The *Queer and Trans Art-iculations: Collaborative Art for Social Change* exhibition, which featured selected works by South African activist artists Zanele Muholi and Gabrielle Le Roux, is compared to public performances, such as Pride marches and protest marches, like the one held on 12 January 2016 in Evaton North to protest the murder of a lesbian matriculant. This comparison is carried out for the purpose of examining the effectiveness of various forms of activist activities. Marches and protests can be defined by Felshin (1995) as the use of public spaces to address issues of sociopolitical significance as a means of effecting social change as a form of activism. . This comparison of art activism, which is art that is created to raise awareness of social issues and injustices, to public performances is intended to substantiate the argument that art activism may not be as effective as public performances when it comes to raising awareness of issues such as homophobia and hate crimes faced by LGBTQ individuals in South Africa.

Mexican Ethnologist Abeyami Ortega in the journal article *Looking into the eye of the process*, affirms that art activism can bring articulations of lived experiences regarding processes of oppression and empowerment in contemporary societies to organise action towards social change (2014: p. 88). This notion is as an important trait of art activism to understand at this point, as it may be used to lay the foundation for the work of artists such as Muholi and Le Roux in terms of articulating the lives and experiences of LGBTQ individuals, who are depicted in their works. Le Roux, for example, draws portraits from the lives of LGBTQ individuals. These individuals hand write their experiences of hate crimes and discrimination onto their portraits for the purpose of exposing viewers of the work to the reality of the issues faced by members of the LGBTQ community.



Image1: Gabrielle Le Roux, *Bongi Louw Mphisholo*, South Africa, 2008
Portrait drawn from life

Image 1, *Bongi Louw Mphisholo, South Africa* (2008), is an example of a portrait drawn from life by Gabrielle Le Roux, in which she depicts a South African transgendered man, Bongi Louw Mphisholo. Bongai has been an activist within the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) sector for the past decade and a half, and has worked with numerous NGOs, including: Coalition of African Lesbians, Joint Working Group, Behind the Mask, SOHACA, an organisation in Soweto working with LGBTI individuals, the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, and Gender Dynamix (Le Roux, 2014: p. 30).

In the article *Proudly African and Transgender and Proudly Trans in Turkey* by Gabrielle Le Roux (2014), Bongi states that he does not want to raise a baby in a world where discrimination, prejudice and violence exist. This work could therefore be seen as one which is attempting to promote the equality of LGBTQ individuals and the ideals of a society that is free from discrimination, prejudice and violence not only towards LGBTQ individuals, but other minority groups which face these issues as well. The image acts as a form of activism that is intended to raise awareness of LGBTQ issues and promote the idea that people are the same, even if their gender and sexuality may differ, and that if the South African Constitution can recognise this fact, then people within South African society need to recognise that fact (Le Roux, 2014: p.30). This method employed by Le Roux, in the words of Blankenberg (pers.comm: 2015), gives a face to these personal stories and, in some cases, has a greater impact on viewers of Le Roux's works than those of Muholi's photographs. I will return to this issue in the discussion chapter of this research report.

Antje Schuhmann (2014: p. 95) in *How to be Political? Art Activism, Queer Practices and Temporary Autonomous Zones* explores how artistic practices that are used as sources of activism transgress, in many cases, the normative perspective that is placed on those individuals who are seen as the "other". This is an important point to consider when dealing with both Muholi's and Le Roux's work. The photographs that Muholi takes of black lesbians document and show them first and foremost as black women living within South African Society. They are depicted as, for lack of a

better word, “normal” people. Both Muholi and Le Roux are attempting to question the normalization of heteronormative patriarchal sexuality. They are both transgressing the perspectives a patriarchal society has of LGBTQ individuals. In other words, Muholi and Le Roux are confusing dominant assumptions of an individual’s single stories, as well as the static identities of gender and sexuality. This is seen as an attempt to challenge the preconceived ideas that a heteronormative society has of the LGBTQ community and the treatment of LGBTQ individuals, who exist within the realm of heteronormative ideas and practices that dictate gender construction.

An important point that both Butler and Schuhmann make about gender construction, and one that is explored in the works of both Muholi and Le Roux, is that gender is performed constantly. Butler believes that women are not born, but are created within the society that they find themselves (2014: p. 96). Explained another way by Butler, gender, and the creation of what it means to be a woman, is constructed by society and by the “I” and “we”, who enact and perform specific gender roles on a daily basis (2014: p. 95). Unfortunately, this creation of female and male bodies is not a matter of biological fact as Schuhmann explains. Bodies are created and ordered by colonial and western dualisms, which have led to the construction of the racialisation and “order” of the colonial world (2014: p. 95). The implication of this created order is that the white, middle class, heterosexual point of reference is the one that is most common, and the one that erases the experiences and existence of black, queer women (2014: p. 96).

In her book *Rape: A South African Nightmare*, Associate Professor of African Literature at the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS), Pumla Dineo Gqola (2015), explains how lesbians in South Africa grow up in a society where their roles and ideas about what it means to be a woman are constructed by the society into which they are born. . Within South African society, women are viewed as being available to heterosexual men to please them physically. The implication of this view is that these women are living under patriarchal power and are, in many cases, forced to conform to the roles they are “supposed” to be fulfilling within society. A problem

arises when women do not conform to these roles dictated by society. . In stepping outside of these stereotypical roles, the women essentially become “othered” by the society in which they are living. In stepping outside of their prescribed roles, women face the threat of being “punished” in an attempt to remind them of and keep them in their prescribed positions, which is often an inferior one. This assumption that women should remain in their prescribed, inferior positions or face the risk of “punishment” should they not adhere to their constructed gender roles leads to some men raping lesbian women in an attempt to punish them for their noncompliance to their gender roles.

2.1 “Corrective” Rape

While the purpose of this research report is to explore whether or not activist artists dealing with LGBTQ issues, both politically and socially, are impacting society at large by displaying their works in gallery and museum spaces, I deem it important to unpack the circumstances surrounding the issue of “corrective” rape that Muholi explores in her activist works in order to understand the circumstances that exist in many South African communities. This unpacking is pivotal in understanding the circumstances in which many black lesbians find themselves , and will help further the comprehension of what “corrective” rape is and what its consequences entail. Once an understanding of “corrective” rape in terms of the underlying causes has been gained, the need for activist works that tackle the issue of “corrective” rape and intolerance towards the LGBTQ community will be seen as being of paramount importance. This discussion, while lengthy, is a crucial one that needs to take place for the purpose of understanding the issues that surround the rape of LGBTQ individuals within South African society. Before education and awareness of the issue of rape of LGBTQ individuals can be dealt with, there needs to be an understanding of the underlying causes, which can then be challenged by artists in order to effect social and political change.

On the point of “corrective” rape, Mary Hames, Head of the Gender Equity Unit at the University of the Western Cape, in *Violence against Black Lesbians: Minding our*

Language (2011: p. 89), clarifies that the term “corrective” rape evokes the idea that there is something to cure and erases lesbian dignity and humanness. This notion presented by Homes highlights the belief that there is something inherently wrong with being lesbian and that lesbian women need to be cured in order to be made “normal”. This idea of normality is defined by the heteronormative gender roles that society creates for both men and women. Homes both asks and answers the question, “What is there to correct?” Her answer is that there is nothing that needs to be corrected or cured in lesbian women. What needs to be corrected is the reproduction of oppressive language (used when dealing with the issue of lesbian women being raped) that dehumanises black lesbian women (2011: p. 90). By stating that a lesbian was “correctively” raped, Homes suggests that that society is not realising that lesbians are women, who do not want to take part in heteronormative patriarchy and that there is nothing that needs to be cured or fixed. For the purpose of this study, I will therefore not refer to the rape of lesbian women as “corrective”.

Since there is nothing that needs to be cured or fixed concerning lesbian women, the issue of the rape of lesbian women is still a reality for many individuals within South Africa. The rape of lesbians occurs due to the stereotypical ideas that exist within heterosexist society relating to the gender roles that men and women perform. Funeka Soldoat and Mikki Van Zyl, in the journal article *Makhulu Feminist Lesbians in Conversation* propose that both males and females have a unique box into which they are expected to fit (2014: p. 83). This view of Soldoat and Van Zyl ties in with the notion that there are certain roles that men and women are meant to fulfill and certain ways of behavior to which men and woman must adhere. I share the view of Mariel Turner (2015), who opines that South Africa is a deeply patriarchal society where men believe that they are superior to women and that the role of women is to serve men. Ogana and Ojong (2013) in the journal article *The Thin/Thick Body Ideal: Zulu Women's Body as a Site of Cultural and Postcolonial Feminist Struggle*, argue that in many cultures, women are encouraged to be subservient to men, and in cases where women demand to be treated as equal, this is seen as challenging the status quo of the patriarchal traditions that exist within South African society. When

these traditional roles are challenged by women, Bhana and Mthethwa-Sommers (2011: p. 6), propose that sexual and gender violence is then used as a tool to control the women who attempt to subvert traditional male roles.

Activist artists may focus on any number of social and political issues. These may include but are not limited to issues around poverty, homelessness, gender inequality, sexual identities, racism and the persecution of minority groups. This study focuses explicitly on the issue of sexual and gender identity, homophobia and homophobic attacks, specifically relating to the rape of lesbian women in the belief that it can make them straight (Mabuse, 2011). This idea of raping homosexuals in order to make them straight is one that needs to be urgently challenged.

Rape, as explained by Pumla Dineo Gqola (2015), is a desire to control, monitor and police all aspects of women's lives. When a lesbian is raped for the purpose of "curing" her of her homosexuality, the message communicated is that being homosexual in South African society is something that is unnatural and something that needs to be fixed. The act of raping lesbians is nothing more than a punishment due to the fact that lesbian women have made themselves unavailable to heterosexual men. Women, according to patriarchal society, exist to pleasure men sexually. Lesbians lie within the sexual eligibility window for heterosexual male consumption, but are not available for this consumption (Gqola: 2015, p. 9). Patriarchy is kept firmly in its place when men rape women, who fall outside of what is "normally" expected of them in a patriarchal society. Rape is used as a tool of punishment and control that limits the freedom of lesbians to exist in a society where they are not facing the threat of homophobic violence. If South Africa is to challenge patriarchy and create a society where women of all sexualities feel safe and free to express their sexualities, then the issues that make rape possible need to be vehemently challenged and attacked. It is for this reason that this research is necessary as it not only unpacks the issue of lesbians being raped, but is attempting to investigate activist methods that may be used to challenge these acts of rape.

The online article *An Overview of Rape in South Africa* by Mary Roberts (1998) suggests that the roots of rape in South Africa stem from the male/female roles that

exist within society. One such relationship that exists within the prevailing patriarchal ideologies in South Africa that maintains the oppression and rape of women is the idea that because of some traditional practices such as *Lobola*, which is the practice of paying a bride price especially using cattle, many men therefore assume that they own women and are entitled to sex (Turner, 2015). This notion of ownership of women and men being in control of women creates the traditional idea that if one is born female, then one must be in relationships with males (Soldoat & Van Zyl, 2014: p. 83). This heteronormative traditional idea of male and female relations is one that black lesbian women are, in the eyes of traditional African cultures, subverting. Women, who subvert ideas that men are superior or that women exist to serve men, may be forced to accept their perceived substandard place in South African society through sexual violence and rape. Black lesbians are not only subverting the traditional idea that women are meant to serve men, but are also destroying the notion that women must be in relationships with men. Lesbians are therefore overturning heterosexist ideologies that are embedded in cultural norms and religious values where men are expected to play dominant roles, and are seen as a threat to traditional heterosexist culture. Lesbians threaten not only the idea that women are meant to be procreators, but male virility as well.

As has already been stated, the challenging of heterosexist ideologies by black lesbians puts them in the perilous position of being subjected to violent and sexual attacks by men, who are attempting to assert their authority. These attacks are intended to keep lesbians in the subjugated and oppressed positions that are traditionally reserved for women. This leads to the next point that black lesbians are oppressed and it is this very oppression and abuse that is being challenged through the creation of activist art works such as Muholi's. It is also this oppression that needs to end if lesbians and other members of the LGBTQ community are to live in a society that is free from violent homophobic attacks.

Political theorist Iris Young (1992: p. 42), who focuses on the nature of justice and social difference in *Five Faces of Oppression*, illustrates that oppression is a structural phenomenon that immobilises or diminishes a group, and that a group is a collective

of persons differentiated from at least one other group by cultural forms, practices or way of life. It is important to note that groups exist in relation to other groups and that a group (black lesbians) exists because one group excludes and labels a category of persons (1992: p. 43). Young explores various categories of oppression that exist, and it is necessary to clarify some of these categories in order to demonstrate that black lesbians are indeed oppressed within a heteronormative patriarchal society such as South Africa. This discussion further builds on the argument that there needs to be an understanding of the issue of rape and how it affects lesbians in South Africa. This discussion shows that there is a need for activist works to exist in South Africa that deal with and raise awareness of the rape and sexual abuse of lesbians in order to combat and attempt to end it.

The first category of oppression that Young discusses is marginalisation. She refers to marginals as people in society, who systems will not or cannot use. This category, according to Young, is the most dangerous, as an entire category of people is expelled from participation in social life. As has been previously shown, black women are a marginalised group of people due to oppressive cultural practices and lesbians belonging to this group are thus further marginalised. Young argues that in order not to be part of a marginalised group, a person must be autonomous and independent.

Secondly, Young examines the category of cultural imperialism. This, according to Young (1992: p. 54), is the universalisation of a dominant group's experience and culture, which is established as the norm. This then negates the experiences and existence of black lesbians within such communities. When dealing with cultural imperialism, it is worthwhile to note that when a dominant group, which claims universality, encounters other groups, who challenge the dominant group's claims, these "othered" groups are then reconstructed as deviant and inferior (Young, 1992: p. 55). This is the case with groups of black lesbians, who exist within traditional African cultures, when they are labeled as being inferior and deviant by dominant groups. Cultural imperialism further leads to "othered" groups being rendered invisible due to the fact that dominant groups fail to recognise their perspective.

The oppressed group's own experiences of social life find little expression within the dominant culture (Young, 1992: p. 56).

The third category of oppression that Young discusses is that of violence. This occurs when members of a group live with the knowledge that they must fear random, unprovoked attacks, which are meant to damage, humiliate, or destroy a person. In the case of this report, it is black lesbians who live with the fear of being raped and sexually abused in order to be destroyed and reminded of their inferior role in patriarchal society. Violence, according to Young, is directed at members of a group simply because they are members of that group. The violence inflicted on a member of a group shows a desire to maintain group privilege or domination and is motivated by fear or hatred of specific oppressed groups (Young: 1992, p. 57).

While these categories are by no means an exploration of a full theory of oppression, they may be used to determine if a group is oppressed or not. Young declares that the presence of any of the five conditions is sufficient for calling a group oppressed (1992: p. 59). While cultural imperialism oppresses all groups, this report has shown that black lesbians in South Africa are faced with both violence and marginalisation, and can therefore be considered as an oppressed group. Artists, such as Muholi, who create works that highlight the issues faced by black lesbians, are giving a face to this invisible group and function as activists, who are creating activist works of art in an attempt to bring about a political and social change. It is important to unpack what art activism is in order to gain an understanding of the processes and purpose of works of art that are created for the purpose of being activist in nature. This highlights the need for spaces that facilitate social and political changes within South African society for the purpose of addressing homophobic violence aimed at the LGBTQ community.

2.2 Art Activism

Felshin (1995) elucidates that art activism is a hybrid of cultural forms from both the art world and political activism. This indicates that when producing activist art,

artists are creating work that is composed of different elements that possess mixed characteristics. These differing characteristics suggest that activist art is therefore the combination of art that is produced for the purpose of presentation to the public in order to generate an income for the artist, and in the case of activist works, the art is combined with political activism, which acts on behalf of a cause or action that goes beyond what is conventional or routine for a varying number of causes (Martin, 2007). . The implication of this is that art that is created for the purpose of being activist in nature functions differently from a non-activist work. The function of activist artists and their art is to challenge policies and practices for the purpose of achieving goals (Martin, 2007). In other words, art activists seek to confuse the dominant thinking and static ideas regarding thinking and practices, such as those linked to issues affecting the LGBTQ community. In the case of this research report, the issues that activist artists are attempting to raise awareness about and change is the practice of not only the rape of black lesbians, but also the recognition of LGBTQ individuals within South African society.

Martins (2007), however, makes an interesting point when he states that activists attempt to raise awareness of issues and challenge policies without wanting to obtain power and recognition for themselves. This idea, along with the need for works of art to be displayed for the purpose of raising awareness of issues and for artists to generate an income from their work,, may pose a problem for activist artists. This problem exists as a conflict of interest that could undermine the activist nature of art created by activist artists.

In the online journal article *On Art Activism*, art critic, media theorist and philosopher Boris Groys (2014) highlights that activist artists may face a conflict of interests when producing activist work. The conflict is caused by the need for the created works to function as pieces of activism, which are still commercially viable. In other words, artists must create art that is appealing not only to the public, but also private collectors, museums and galleries as well. Work that is not appealing, according to Groys (2014), will not be collected and will not be displayed in traditional gallery spaces. If this happens, the created work will not generate an

income for the artist and will furthermore not be viewed by the public. A gallery is a space where works of art are displayed and viewed for the purpose of being bought by the viewer. This means that artists, whose works of art feature in gallery spaces, are intended to be sold. Works that are not collected and displayed will not be able to function as a piece of activism unless they are displayed in public spaces (and therefore become public art). This could mean that artists may not be able to create art for the purpose of activism in the manner that they intend for fear of their works not being collected by galleries and museums. This also means that artists may not be able to be too outspoken through their art when dealing with issues perceived as being controversial. These issues would include the rape of black lesbians and the desire for artists to display works of art that depict individuals who do not fit in with traditional heterosexual ideas and practices. Artists may therefore have to censor themselves and their ideas to have their works collected and displayed in order to generate an income for themselves.

Groys (2014) does however states that many artists do not want to be part of the traditional art world. These artists do not want to be associated with the art world for the reasons I have previously discussed. The solution, then, is for these artists to display their work in spaces outside of traditional art spaces and instead showcase their work in public spaces. This method of display may in fact be a far more effective form of activism, as the work may then directly influence members of the public.

Art that is created and displayed in public spaces becomes known as Public Art. Public art is that that is often site specific and created in response to the community in which it is displayed. Public art may address social, political and even environmental issues, and being “public”, it is accessible to everyone, and not just people who enter gallery/museum spaces.

For further elucidation, this means that activist art displayed in public spaces may directly influence citizens for social change without the public having to enter into gallery spaces, which, according to art critic Brian O’Doherty (1986), do not invite

people in. If O'Doherty is correct that gallery spaces do not invite people in, then activist artists may be able to reach a greater number of people and share their views on specific issues with a greater number of individuals in a public space. Muholi and Le Roux are artists, whose artworks exist not only in gallery and museum spaces, but also in public spaces. In the case of Le Roux, her work has been used as part of protests that fall into the public performance category, where her works function as activist art.

2.3 Activist Artists

Contemporary And describes Muholi as an artist who employs art activism as a tool for the purpose of raising awareness of the issue of not only “corrective” rape, but also the documentation of the lives of black lesbians in southern Africa through her photographic series *Faces and Phases* (Muholi, 2013: p. 90), *Being* and *Mo(u)rning*. Muholi’s photographic series are designed to denounce and record hate crimes and atrocities.

A selection of Muholi’s work from her series *Mo(u)rning* was displayed in the *Queer and Trans Art-iculations: Collaborative Art for Social Change* exhibition presented at the Wits Art Museum (McEwen & Milani, 2015: p. 3).. It is of value to examine this exhibition for the purpose of viewing art as a form of activism within gallery spaces and not as a form of public art. This examination is useful in order to unpack the effectiveness of gallery spaces to function as a site for activism.

The exhibition, according to Lou Haysom (2015), explored questions of how sexual and gender categories operate in relation to other socially constructed axes (such as class, race and citizen status) and served as a method to engage the South African public in ways that challenge dominant binary thinking about gender and heteronormativity. I would argue that heteronormativity is one of the causes of “corrective” rape and that Muholi may not only be protesting against “corrective” rape, but also against heteronormativity. The online journal article *Queer and Trans Art-iculations: Decolonizing Gender and Sexuality in the Global South* by Haley

McEwen and Tommaso Milani (2015) describes heteronormativity as a complex set of structures, institutions, relations and actions that promote heterosexuality as being natural, self-evident, desirable, privileged and necessary. McEwen and Milani (2015) present the argument that the promotion of heteronormativity causes same-sex desires to be seen as 'deviant' and 'unwanted' and could be used to justify inequalities along gender lines.

Having said this, I am reminded of writer, curator and Dean of Graduate Studies at the Rhode Island School of Design Patricia Phillips (1995), who argues that public art is activist art. If works of art do not exist within the public space, as is the case with Muholi's work, they run the risk of not being able to have an impact on the individuals who exist within said public spaces and may not be generating the type of social change that is hoped for by the artist and gallery spaces in which the works are displayed. Works of art that do not exist within the public space may not encourage the development of active, engaged and participatory citizens for the purpose of social and political change.

In Muholi's artist statement for her *Faces and Phases* series, which features in the 55th *La Biennale di Venezia* 2013 catalogue, Muholi explains that her series is a documentation of the lives of black LGBTQ individuals in order to contribute to a more representative and democratic South African homosexual history. The photographs from this series (as well as her *Being* and *Mo(u)rning* series) furthermore serve as a way to raise awareness of the hate crimes experienced by black and white members of the LGBTQ community. Muholi calls this method "visual activism" and she uses it to mark the resistance and existence of black queers and non-gender conforming individuals in South Africa.

Muholi is described as being an artist who employs art activism as a resistance tool that focuses on and raises awareness of the "other" (Schuhmann, 2014). Muholi's works both document and highlight ways of living that are contradictory to the white, middle class, heteronormative life styles. The "other" in Muholi's works is the face of the black lesbian, transgender and intersex individual from southern Africa.

Although I make use of the term “other” in relation to Muholi’s subjects, it must be noted that Muholi is not depicting her subjects as “othered”. She is explicitly trying to normalise her subjects by expressing the normality of lesbians and certain experiences, such as same-sex marriages. It is the heterosexist, patriarchal society that views her subjects as the “other” – not Muholi.



Image 2: Zanele Muholi, *Lerato Marumolwa*, 2009, photographic print on paper, 25.5 X 38.5 cm. *Faces and Phases*. Photo image Stevenson Gallery, Johannesburg and Cape Town

Image 2, *Lerato Marumolwa* (2009), is a photograph taken by Muholi as part of her ongoing *Faces and Phases* series, in which she photographs black lesbians from southern Africa in an attempt to present their existence and resistance through positive imagery (Muholi, 2010). Image 2 shows the subject, Lerato Marumolwa, bravely confronting the viewer. Lerato stares out from the photographs, inviting the viewer to see her, take note of her and, to some extent, examine her. The photographs from the *Faces and Phases* series depict LGBTQ individuals, such as Lerato, boldly claiming their space in a society that ignores them and renders them

invisible. In this sense, the photographs of Muholi are serving the same purpose as the LGBTQ individuals, who attend Pride parades. They, like the women in her photographs, are owning and claiming their space for the purpose of eliciting a sociopolitical change.

In her series, Muholi is attempting to show the aesthetics of black lesbians through portraiture, as historically, portraits serve as memorable records for lovers, family and friends (Muholi, 2010). Muholi (2010) explains that the name of the *Faces and Phases* series represents the way in which faces represent people and the phases of gender expression and transition that they go through. The title also represents the collective pain that the LGBTQ community experiences due to the loss of friends from disease and hate crimes. The purpose of the *Faces and Phases* series is to afford the viewer a perspective into the lives of black lesbians where their identities are celebrated. Muholi is documenting black lesbians in an attempt to create a visual record of the history of black lesbians and the struggles that they continue to face.

Muholi's portraits of black lesbians in the *Faces and Phases* series and photographs of black lesbian couples in her *Being and Mo(u)rning* collection function not only to document and recognise an "othered" group existing within South African society, but also to denounce and record the hate crimes and violence that members of this "othered" group face on a daily basis. By both documenting and highlighting the issues that black lesbians are facing in South African society, Muholi is attempting to elicit a change in people's perceptions of members of the LGBTQ community. Muholi's work is a form of visual activism that marks the resistance and existence of black queers and non-gender conforming individuals in South Africa (Muholi, 2013).

The process of documenting the lives of LGBTQ individuals in Muholi's photographic works helps to organise action that will effect change. . Muholi's *Faces and Phases* series is attempting to give a face to a group of women who were, and in some cases remain, invisible during the Apartheid years. By photographing black lesbians, Muholi is creating a photographic record and is, in a sense, confirming the existence

of lesbian women in South African society. By doing so, Muholi is asserting that the women in her photographs are deserving of the Constitutional rights of safety and dignity and that they have a right to exist within South African society.

Blankenberg (pers.comm. 2015) states that Muholi's works exist within the gallery world. In other words, the majority of Muholi's works are displayed in gallery and museum spaces and they exist as sources of activism within these spaces. This notion of Muholi's work existing within gallery spaces may, however, be problematic in the sense that as O'Doherty (1986), Sheikh (2009) and Thorpe (2014) argue, gallery and museum spaces create an impression of inaccessibility to members of the public: they do not create an inclusive experience for people and they do not invite people to enter into their spaces to view the art that is on display. If this is the case, I argue that the work of Muholi may not be reaching as many people as it could by being placed and exhibited within galleries and museums.

Along with Muholi, artist Gabrielle Le Roux, whose works were also featured in the *Queer and Trans Art-iculations* exhibition, is described as being both an artist and an activist for social justice. She has worked in a variety of non-governmental organisations that deal with feminist organisations and gay rights groups. Le Roux uses portraiture and story methodology when creating her works, where she draws or paints portraits of the individuals to whom she talks and includes their recorded stories, which take on the form of written records in her works. These written narrations are of the lived experiences of LGBTQ individuals and are personally written by the subjects in the portraits onto the images. These narrations, according to Audre Lorde in the article *A Tribute to Sally Gross*, are rooted in the conviction that humans change other lives with their individual stories (2014). The narrations are included on individual artworks due to the idea that people who speak first-hand about an issue do so with authority and are the ones who should be listened to most closely (Lorde, 2014). These works, according to Blankenberg (pers.comm. 2015), have on numerous occasions entered the realm of public art, as the images have been used in both protests and rallies that have taken place outside of gallery

spaces. The works, in other words, straddle the two worlds of performance and art activism.

Le Roux's portraits are also accompanied by an 18-part video installation in which the activists represented in the portraits answer questions about their lives (Le Roux, 2014: p. 20). The video component of the exhibition is presented on YouTube and has been viewed over 300 000 times (Blankenberg, 2015. Pers.comm). Blankenberg believes that this makes the work of Le Roux more activist in nature than that of Muholi as the works have left the gallery spaces and are used in public performances, which are designed to raise awareness of LGBTQ issues. Le Roux's works do not exist exclusively within gallery and museum spaces – they exist in spaces that are easily accessible to the public in online public forums, and have entered into the realm of public performance by being used as activist posters and placards in protests that are aimed at promoting LGBTQ equality.

When Muholi and Le Roux create activist pieces that focus on the "other", they are creating art that is an escape from patriarchal heteronormativities (Schuhmann, 2014: p. 97). By this, Schuhmann means that the works of Muholi and Le Roux are creating a discourse, which highlights a way of life that is contradictory to the heteronormative one. By creating this discourse, Muholi and Le Roux are raising awareness and giving recognition to communities that are seen as "othered" or not normal in terms of fitting in with a heterosexual society and its created "norms" and standards. These heterosexual "norms" create a society, which views LGBTQ individuals as being unnatural and needing to be "cured". People who are "othered" oftentimes do not fit into traditional heteronormative society and are often the victims of abuse at the hands of individuals who want to fix them. It is this notion of "curing" an LGBTQ individual that leads to lesbians being raped in an attempt to make them straight or "normal" and remind them of their role and place within a heterosexist society. It is these heterosexist "norms" that the works of Muholi and Le Roux are challenging.

However, while Muholi and Le Roux may be confronting these societal “norms”, I argue that their work is not as impactful on South African society as public protests and activist marches in public spaces, due to the fact that they exist within gallery and museum spaces. Groys (2014), in his article *On Art Activism*, explores the notion that art functions as a source of activism and that it has the ability to function as an arena and medium for political protest and social activism. This has implications for the work of Muholi and Le Roux as their work can and does function as political and social activism. Their works are intended to elicit a change in the perceptions heteronormative societies have of LGBTQ individuals in order to promote equality and a society where LGBTQ individuals are not fearful of homophobic violence and attacks. However, the ability of Muholi’s and Le Roux’s work to function as a solid source of activism is brought into question by examining how artists attempt to bring about changes in society outside of the art world. According to Groys (2011), the art scene has become a territory in which political ideas and projects that are difficult to situate in the contemporary political reality can be formulated and presented. The implication of this statement is that the art world and traditional gallery and museum spaces provide areas where controversial issues that may not be discussed or explored easily in public spaces can be aired and examined. This is problematic as this could mean that controversial issues that need to be discussed and explored in public spaces are now removed from the public eye and discussed and explored in institutions such as museums, which may be actively keeping the public out of these spaces and therefore not exposing people to important societal issues, such as homophobic violence. If heterosexual societies are uncomfortable with issues relating to homosexuality or see LGBTQ individuals as needing to be “cured” through violence, then art projects that deal with homophobia may not be taken seriously and may be overlooked altogether. Artists such as Muholi and Le Roux may find that their work has no place in the public arena due to the content and the message it explores. This means that artists may only be able to exhibit their activist artworks in gallery and museum spaces, removed from public view. This is, however, only one aspect that could affect the display of activist artworks by such artists.

Groys (2014) proposes that activist artists may face a conflict of interests in producing work that is commercially viable for them but can still function as works of activism designed to bring about a social transformation. This statement implies that artists are faced with the complication of having to create works of art that are commercially viable and will help bring them an income, but which still function as works of activist art for the purpose of effecting social change. This then raises the issue of artists having to make their work appealing to the art market, whilst still trying to retain their political and activist messages in their work. Phrased differently, artists may not be able to create works that are overtly activist for fear of the works not being appealing to the art world. This problem, according to Groys (2011), is compounded by the fact that the art market is distorted by the private taste of wealthy collectors.

If Groys' opinion is assumed as correct, then the art market, along with the works that are selected to be displayed in gallery and museum spaces, is dominated by private taste. Activist artists such as Muholi and Le Roux may therefore be forced to create works of art that will appeal to both the private taste of collectors and society at large. Activist artists want to impact society with their art and bring about sociopolitical change. In the case of Muholi and Le Roux, they want to raise awareness of homophobic violence. Activist art needs to be sold to galleries and museums in order for the artists to make a living from their art. If their works are not appealing, then, consequently, their work will not be sold and they will have no income on which they can survive. If, however, galleries buy their works, they must still be appealing to the visitors who enter into these spaces. Visitors into gallery and museum spaces need to pay attention to the works of art on display so that their message can be communicated to the viewer. If the viewer does not find the work of art appealing, he/she may not look at it or attempt to understand its message. The issue of personal taste is compounded when private collectors, museums and galleries collect art that appeals to and attracts the masses. In other words, if the art will not attract visitors into gallery and museum spaces, it runs the risk of not being collected and displayed (Groys, 2011).

Artists, who wish to have their work displayed in gallery and museum spaces, may in fact be forced to create work that is both appealing and collectible. Artists, who do not create works with the intention of them being appealing, risk having their works not being displayed. If artworks are not displayed in museum and gallery spaces then the art, according to Groys (2011), is not allowed to come into being. The works that are not displayed therefore fail to impact society and cannot function as activist pieces of art. It is important to note that gallery spaces may control the works of art that are placed within the space in order to generate profit. This notion has implications for artists who wish to have their works exhibited within these spaces. If the work is not appealing and will not generate a sale, then it will not be displayed.

Fortunately, the works of Muholi and Le Roux have been displayed in gallery spaces and, in the case of the *Queer and Trans Art-iculations* exhibition, have existed side by side. Their work was afforded a place where their activist message could be expressed. A problem arises, however, for un-established artists who may want to exhibit their pieces of activist art but are not offered the opportunity to exhibit in traditional gallery or museum spaces. There are, however, alternative display spaces that many activist artists can use if their works are not collected and displayed by traditional spaces.

Groys (2014) and Felshin (1995) agree that many activist artists display their works publically and outside of spaces that are traditionally used for the display of art, such as art galleries and museums. This therefore means that many forms of activist art, which are not collected by gallery and museum spaces, become public art. Expressed another way by Patricia C. Phillips (1995: p. 286), public art is activist art. This statement by Phillips implies that art that exists within a gallery or museum space cannot be activist in nature because it does not exist in the public realm. If this is the case, then the works of Muholi may run the risk of not being activist because they exist in gallery and museum spaces. While gallery and museum spaces are public ones, there remains the notion that they are inaccessible due to their perceived elitism. It is this perceived elitism and inaccessibility which may keep

members of the public from entering into these exhibition spaces. When speaking about a public space, I am referring to those spaces outside of gallery and museum spaces that are easily accessible to members of the public where there are no perceived notions of elitism. .

It must be noted that some of Le Roux's works have been used in marches and public demonstrations that are carried out in public spaces (Blankenberg, 2015, pers.comm). These works used in public demonstrations, if one is to pay attention to Phillips, are activist and can be called activist art because they have been given the chance to exist in the public realm and have become public art. If activist art has entered the realm of the public outside of gallery spaces, then, according to Phillips, it becomes public art and subsequently encourages the development of active, engaged and participatory citizens (Phillips, 1995: p. 286) for the purpose of social and political change.

Selected works of Le Roux have been used and displayed in public spaces and have become public art. Le Roux's art can therefore be referred to as activist art. Much of Muholi's work, by contrast, exists almost exclusively within gallery and museum spaces (Blankenberg, 2015). This has the implication, according to Phillips, that her work may not be activist because it does not exist in the public realm and has not become public art.

According to Felshin (1995: p.10), activist artists are guided by personal expression when they create art to raise awareness of social and political injustices. They depict the stance they are taking regarding the issues they are addressing in their works. For Muholi and Le Roux, these injustices are the mistreatment of LGBTQ individuals at the hands of men, who wish to assert their dominance over them in a patriarchal heteronormative society. The artworks serve as the voices of the artists, expressing their views of social and political issues and can include, according to author Eleanor Heartney (1995), members of the public in the form of artists' interaction with community members. Muholi photographs black lesbians for the purpose of documenting their existence; while Le Roux draws portraits of members from the

LGBTQ community, which include the personalised stories of the subjects handwritten onto the portraits. Many forms of activist art, such as those of Le Roux, have entered into the public realm and have thus become public art. Activist artists may make use of mass media interventions, television commercials and other domains that are dominant in the public life in order to express themselves (Heartney, 1995). Le Roux has created a YouTube space where the subjects that she draws are videoed, and these videos are uploaded onto the Internet. This video aspect of Le Roux's work has been viewed over three hundred thousand times (Blankenberg, 2015, pers.comm). As such, this aspect of her work functions as a form of activism that may be far more reaching than the photographs of Muholi, which are hung up in gallery spaces and viewed by select people who enter into the spaces.

In terms of people entering into gallery and museum spaces, McEwen and Milani (2015: p. 3) state that the *Queer and Trans Art-iculations* exhibition was attended by over 3 500 visitors. This number was reached by counting the individual people who entered the gallery space, where the numbers were recorded in a logbook (pers.comm. 2015). These statistics are valuable to this study as they potentially indicate the number of people who attended the exhibition and who were exposed to the activist works of Muholi and Le Roux. The number of those who were in attendance, and therefore exposed to Muholi's and Le Roux's work, is a crucial aspect to consider, as this number indicates how many people potentially could have been affected and inspired by these works. Yet having said this, it is worthwhile to note that even though people are exposed to activist artworks, this does not necessarily mean that the works on display will affect them. This was evident on the exhibition's comments wall, where certain visitors left comments that aligned with negative views of homosexuality.

McEwen and Milani further mention that the exhibition was visited by 14 groups of learners from the University of the Witwatersrand and other educational institutions. McEwen and Milani state that adult and family walkabouts were offered free of charge as part of the educational program that WAM offered to the public.

Due to the number of people who were in attendance, McEwen and Milani emphatically state that *Queer and Trans Art-iculations* was a successful intervention. However, while McEwen and Milani may call this exhibition a success, Brian O'Doherty (1986), Mackenzie Thorpe (2014) and Simon Sheikh (2009) argue that traditional gallery spaces are not effective sites for activism to take place.

In his essay *Inside the White Cube*, Brian O'Doherty (1986) suggests that gallery spaces do not invite the outside world in. If this is the case, then traditional gallery and museum spaces may not be the best sites for activism. Although O'Doherty's essay was written 30 years ago, it has been used to lay the groundwork for Simon Sheikh's (2009) online journal article, *Positively White Cube Revisited*. In this article, Sheikh discusses the validity of the arguments that O'Doherty presents in his *Inside the White Cube*. Sheikh shares many of O'Doherty's view points and agrees that most galleries and museums still employ the white cube as the favoured *modus operandi* for exhibition-making. In the white cube space of galleries and museums, windows are usually sealed off, walls are painted white and the ceiling is often the only source of light.

Furthermore, Sheikh argues that the bodies of visitors seem to be an intrusion into the clinical-like space that is created when the white cube is employed. By this he means that while thoughts and minds are welcome in the space, bodies are not. . If this is the case, and if gallery and museum spaces are still employing the white cube method of display that O'Doherty discussed some thirty years ago and which Sheikh argues is still in existence, then members of the public may not be enthusiastic about entering into the white cube space. Due to the sealed off windows, the outside world is thus prevented from seeing into these gallery spaces. The clinical feel of the space may make people feel unwelcome and intrusive, which is essentially keeping people out of the space.

Consequently, if people are not encouraged to enter into museum and gallery spaces, then the art that is displayed on the walls inside of these spaces does not get the chance to challenge perceptions in an attempt to elicit political and social

changes in society. This notion holds serious consequences for the activist works of both Muholi and Le Roux when they are displayed in traditional white cube spaces. Both artists are dealing explicitly with the homophobic violence that members of the LGBTQ community in South Africa face on a daily basis and they want to “normalise” what heterosexist society perceives as “abnormal”. If people are not being encouraged to enter into the white cube spaces where their works are being displayed, this then brings into question the ability of these works to elicit a social and political change.

If potential visitors are being kept out of gallery and museum spaces by their preconceived notions of these perceived elitist and un-inclusive spaces, this raises doubts concerning the ability of gallery and museum spaces to function as sites where activism takes place. In order to scrutinize the effectiveness of museum and gallery spaces to function as a site of activism and whether or not public performances are a more effective way for activism to take place, a study of performance and its effectiveness as a form of activism needs to be carried out.

2.4 Performance

Diamond’s (2006) impressions of performances are supported by elements of Richard Schechner’s (2003: p. 136) performance theory, which states that performances can take place anywhere, under a wide variety of circumstances and in the service of an incredibly diverse panoply of objectives. The theory further highlights how performances can mediate political relations, group hierarchy and economics. Schechner elucidates that the boundary between performance and everyday life is both an arbitrary one and one that is constantly shifting and changing from situation to situation. Each situation, including protests and Pride parades, makes use of differing performances that are intended to have an impact on the everyday lives of those who take part in the performances and those who witness the performances.

While discussing performances in terms of theatre and drama, Schechner (2013: p. 71) expounds that performances are comprised of the constellation of events that take place during theatrical events and occur from the time the first spectator enters into the designated performance space to the time when the last spectator leaves. While this explanation is used in the context of drama and theatre, it can be applied to any situation where there are spectators observing performers within a designated performance space. While not a set piece of theatre in terms of a type of performance, Pride parades and protest marches, upon examination, bear similarities to theatrical ones. Both theatre performances and Pride parades make use of writers who write a script, which is the inner map of a particular production, a specified set of gestures performed by the performers, and the performance in its entirety including both audience and performers (Schechner, 2013: p. 87).

In the case of Pride parades, the writers are the organisers of each event who are responsible for creating the script, which is the complete inner working of the parade. The script includes vendors, who operate stalls and the proceedings of the day, which include the march and the route it takes through the public space. The performers are members of the LGBTQ community, who assemble and enter into a designated, public space (such as city streets) for the purpose of owning and taking up the space in order to raise awareness of the issues faced by the LGBTQ community by being seen and claiming the public space. Lastly, the spectators are members of the public who gather along the route of the march observing the events that unfold and “read meaning into whatever they witness” (Schechner: 2013, p. 10). Pride parades, to use Schechner’s theories, are placed firmly into the arena of performances for the purpose of “mobilizing people either to maintain or change a given social order” (2003: p. 287).

For the rationale of this study, public performances (and the recording of the performances of the daily lives of the LGBTQ individuals photographed in Muholi’s works) can be seen as individuals who are attempting to change a social order through the recorded performances. The recording of performances carried out by lesbian women in Muholi’s *Being* series (2007) is an exploration of the existence and

the resistance of black lesbians living their intersecting identities in a country that claims equality for all and is aimed at erasing the stigmatisation of lesbian sexualities as being 'unAfrican' (Muholi, 2007). The photographic series captures the visual pleasures and erotica of the black lesbian community, which therefore brings their being and existence into focus. Muholi photographs the performances of intimacy between black lesbians in an attempt to bring their existence to the attention of a heterosexist society, which tries to ignore, stigmatise and actively destroy their existences. These performances, returning to Schechner, are also written, scripted, performed and carried out in designated spaces. The performances, recorded by Muholi, are then put on display and are observed by members of the public.

More recently, Muholi's *Of Love and Loss* (2014) photographic series documents marriage and funeral performances, which is also written and performed in designated spaces belonging to members of the black LGBTQ community in South Africa. Concerning Muholi's *Of Love and Loss* series, the *Stevenson Gallery's* web page states that the series features photographs, video works and an installation highlighting how manifestations of sorrow and celebration bear similarities and are occasions to underline the need for a safe space to express individual identities. In other words, the series is a photographic record of the marriages and funerals of black LGBTQ individuals from South Africa and is an attempt to raise awareness, once again, of the issue of LGBTQ hate crimes. The series exists as a voice that speaks out against the discriminations against the LGBTQ community within South African society. This specific series of work by Muholi is a photographic record of the performances of LGBTQ South Africans, which functions as a tool of activism.

While Diamond and Schechner may be used to claim that all human behaviour is performance, such as the funeral and wedding performances of the LGBTQ individuals in Muholi's photographs, D. Soyini Madison (2010) quotes Della Pollock in the Introduction of the book *Acts of Activism: Human Rights as Radical Performance*, who says that the purpose of performance is not to claim all human behaviour as performance but to illuminate what new insights can be gained from a performance analytic. In other words, the lesson, information or change that the performance is

attempting to bring about is an important point to consider. The outcome of the performance needs to be predetermined and even if that outcome is not reached, it should still be the aim of the performance to evoke a social change. In terms of the performances recorded in Muholi's works and public performances such as protests, the main objective remains as one that is designed to bring about social and political changes. By carrying out public protests and performances and recording the performances of LGBTQ individuals, the aim is to teach the public that LGBTQ individuals within South Africa deserve the same rights and respect as any other South African. However, the question that needs to be discussed, according to Madison (2010), is how do activists utilise performances as a tactic in their work for human rights and social justice?

Madison (2010) states that public performance as a source of activism creates a space and a means, from whatever elements of resources are available, to resist or subvert the strategies of more powerful institutions and ideologies. Brian Goldfarb (1998: p. 150) mentions that homosexuality may be seen as abnormal when viewed through the lens of a powerful ideology, such as heteronormativity. The resources used by activists in public performances are an attempt to subvert this ideology by using their own bodies. Their bodies are presented to the spectators in public spaces where they claim their space and right to exist within a heterosexist society. This notion is supported by Madison (2010: p. 7), who states that performance makes use of full body engagement, where people's bodies are put on the line to create a changing script envisioning another way of being by challenging threatening traditions (Madison, 2010: p. 10), such as heteronormativity and the negative view that it may have on homosexuals.

This notion of performance as presented by Madison may be supported by Judith Butler (2009), who explains that gender is a performance that relies on the enactment of acts on a repeated basis. Butler continues to spell out that these acts of gender are negotiations of power in which one is forced to perform as one gender or the other. When failure to align with one gender or the other occurs, it poses difficulties to individuals who do not fit neatly into one or the other opposing poles

of gender binaries. Butler argues that the performance of gender is tied to the differential ways in which subjects become eligible for recognition. This stance taken by Butler signifies that if an individual performs his/her gender differently to what is expected of him/her by heterosexist society, then he/she may not be recognised as “normal” by the heteronormative society. In other words, non-compliance with one’s gender calls into question the very nature of one’s life. Butler further clarifies that the performativity of gender has everything to do with who counts as a life, who can be read or understood as a living being and who lives.

While discussing Butler’s notion of who is able to be understood as a living being and who is allowed to live, I am reminded of Achille Mbembe’s 2003 essay entitled *Necropolitics* in which he explores the notion of who may live and who is sentenced to death within society. Mbembe explains that the ultimate act of power of any sovereignty is the power and capacity to decide who may live and who may die. In terms of this essay, the sovereign state is a heteronormative one where only those individuals who conform to stipulated performances of their gender are accepted. Any individual, who does not conform, is therefore ignored and put to a metaphorical death by heteronormative society.

By deciding who may live and die, heteronormative society maintains its control by distributing humans into separate species and groups, into the “us” and “them” category, the “ones” and the “others” (Mbembe, 2003). In the case of heteronormative ideals and society, the groups can be seen as the heterosexual group and the LGBTQ group. The heterosexual group becomes the “us” or “the one” group; while the LGBTQ group becomes the “them” or the “other” group. By being placed into the “other” group, LGBTQ groups are in essence being sentenced to death. The death of groups and groups being ignored and rendered invisible by heteronormative groups is an attempt to strengthen the heteronormative position.

In further explanation, the norms of a society act on people and make their way into their actions. People then act on and replicate these norms in their performances and actions in every-day life. I argue that individuals, such as members of the LGBTQ

community, are constantly negotiating the performance that they enact on a daily basis and in so doing, are trying to become eligible for recognition.

In an attempt to clarify how bodies of activists are used in public performances as a source of activism I have explored select theories of both Schechner (2003) and Diamond (2006), who state that the daily activities of individuals can be performance acts. Using Madison's (2010) and Butler's (2009) explanation that performances make use of full body engagement as means of activism, I propose the argument that the lesbian woman, who feature in the photographs of Muholi, and Muholi herself, are activists by simply existing when using their bodies through their daily performances within heteronormative communities. This means that lesbian women living in South African societies are challenging both the heterosexual and patriarchal views that exist within South African society regarding both gender performances and sexual orientation. These women are opposing and threatening heteronormative traditions, which view them as being unnatural and needing to be "cured" through "corrective" rape.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 The *Queer and Trans Art-iculations* Exhibition

In an attempt to unpack the argument that museum and gallery spaces may not be effective sites for activism, a study of an exhibition that was aimed at promoting social and political change pertaining to LGBTQ issues is needed. I have selected to unpack and explore the *Queer and Trans Art-iculations* exhibition for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was an exhibition where the works of both Muholi and Le Roux featured prominently. Secondly, the exhibition was conceived and put together by Le Roux who, according to Blankenberg (pers.comm 2015), contacted Muholi, created the collaboration between them and made sure that the exhibition happened. In other words, this exhibition was a form of activism that took on the shape of an art exhibition that was conceived of and created by Le Roux. Thirdly, this discussion explores both the pros and the cons of the exhibition, which attempted, in its activist nature, to bring about a social and political change. This discussion focuses on how the public engaged with the exhibition, what the visitors' responses were and how the exhibition made use of both artworks and performances by the tour guides as tools of activism.

The Wits Centre for Diversity Studies, along with WAM, held the *Queer and Trans Art-iculations* exhibition over the course of two months in 2014. The exhibition was curated for the purpose of generating social change for the LGBTQ community in South Africa. The exhibition opened on the 29th January 2014 and closed on 30th March 2014 and was, according to Blankenberg and McEwen (pers. comm, 2015), attended by 3500 visitors over the course of its two-month run. 1000 people attended the opening of the exhibition on the 29th January and this number, according to Blankenberg and McEwen, was the largest number of individuals to attend an opening of an exhibition at WAM and was described as being an anomaly for an exhibition opening at the museum. It is interesting to note that those who attended the opening of the exhibition comprised just under one third of the total number of visitors. One has to wonder about the attraction of wanting to be seen at

the opening, along with the obligation to attend due to invitation, and how this could have led to the large number of visitors at the opening. Interestingly, if the number of individuals who attended the opening of the exhibition is not included, a very different picture of attendance is painted. It must be noted that Educational Curator at WAM, Leigh Blankenberg, was concerned with how the public would engage with the exhibition and whether or not the exhibition would elicit a change in people's perceptions.

In order to deal with how the public would engage with the exhibition, Blankenberg stated that the tour guides for the exhibition were activists and members of the LGBTQ community. The activists, by simply being present and acting as tour guides, were presenting performances to the public who entered into the exhibition space. Performances were used to help visitors in the exhibition connect to the art works that were on display. Along with having activists acting as tour guides, WAM offered both adult and family walkabouts on Saturdays for viewers to explore the exhibit with the assistance of a LGBTQ activist tour guide. There were also 14 groups of learners, both school and university students, who attended the exhibition and Muholi brought a group of 500 people from townships around Johannesburg to view the exhibition. All of these educational activities highlight that there was a focus on public engagement and educational programs offered on the part of WAM.

One of the forms of public engagement that was offered was the inclusion of a comment wall. Blankenberg (2015) states that out of the 3500 individuals who attended the exhibition, 20% of the visitors left comments on the comment wall. This percentage means that 1 in 5 people wrote a comment and placed it on the comment wall. The response wall was not, however, part of the exhibition and functioned as a separately curated space created by Blankenberg. Blankenberg, in consultation with McEwen, devised open-ended questions that were designed to obtain both responses and feedback from the visitors. An important point that Blankenberg raised during the interview process was that even though people did respond on the comment wall, there was much that was not said. By this she means that there were numerous visitors who did not respond to the questions that were

presented to them and even if they did respond, they may have responded in a way that they believed was appropriate or “politically correct”. Furthermore, Blankenberg states that the only negative comments that were left on the wall towards LGBTQ individuals were those that were justified through religious teachings and ideologies. The justification of negativity aimed at the LGBTQ community under the guise of religious ideologies is one of the ways in which many members of heterosexual society keep intolerance of LGBTQ individuals in place. The negative comments left on the wall are an indication that the artworks on display in the exhibition may not have had the desired effect of transforming people’s perceptions of the LGBTQ community.

In terms of this research report, religious intolerance is one of the forms of homophobia that needs to be combated in order to create a society in which LGBTQ people feel safe and secure. An exhibition such as *Queer and Trans Art-iculations* challenges both religious and cultural ideologies that support the discrimination of LGBTQ individuals. This being said, the effectiveness of WAM to act as a site for activism is brought into question when considering the comments of Groys (2014), Phillips (1995) and Thorpe (2014) that art galleries and museum spaces do not actively invite members of the public into their spaces. However, this idea is challenged by the number of people who attended the opening of the *Queer and Trans-iculations* exhibition, which was something of an anomaly with over 900 people in attendance. The amount of people who attended the opening, according to both Blankenberg and McEwen (2015), was a very positive outcome for an exhibition dealing with LGBTQ discrimination and therefore challenged the idea that gallery and museum spaces are uninviting and elitist.

The positivity expressed by McEwen and Blankenberg is highlighted and supported by the lack of negative comments left on the response wall. This lack could be due to the fact that a safe space was created inside the confines of the museum where intolerance would not be tolerated (McEwen, pers.comm, 2015). By this, McEwen means that individuals, who may have held negative opinions towards the LGBTQ community, were a minority at the exhibition and were themselves now “othered”

in the way that LGBTQ individuals are “othered” in a heterosexually dominated society.

In order to unpack whether or not gallery and museum spaces are effective sites for activism with a focus on the issues faced by the LGBTQ community, I deem it necessary to evaluate WAM as a museum space along with the ways in which it attempts to attract visitors into the exhibition space. During the course of the interview with Blankenberg and McEwen, Blankenberg mentioned the success of the 2015 exhibition *Beadwork, Art and Body* (2015). While the beadwork exhibition was not an activist one and did not attempt to raise awareness of issues such as homophobic violence and the rape of lesbians in South African communities, it may be beneficial to unpack the strategies that were employed in order to facilitate a connection between the visitors in the exhibition space and the works on display. These strategies are beneficial so that these and similar ones may be employed when exhibitions are curated for the purpose of being activist.

The first initiative under discussion is that of the response wall that was present at the *Queer and Trans Art-iculations* and the *Beadwork, Art and Body* exhibitions. While Blankenberg did not have the figures for the number of visitors who had viewed the Beadwork exhibition, as it was still ongoing at the time of the interview, she did mention the success of the response wall. The response wall for *Queer and Trans Art-iculations* was set up and remained in place until the end of the exhibition, at which point the comments were removed and the responses were then looked at, studied and analysed. In contrast, however, the responses that were left on the response wall for the *Beadwork, Art and Body* exhibition had to be taken down at the end of every weekend so that space could be created for new responses to be placed on the wall during the week (Blankenberg, pers. comm, 2015). This was happening despite the fact that unlike the *Queer and Trans Art-iculations* response wall, viewers were not forced into the space and were not instructed to respond. The numerous comments left on the response wall for the Beadwork exhibition in comparison to the *Queer and Trans Art-iculations* exhibit could suggest that more people were willing to enter the museum space, as the works on display were not

activist in nature and did not deal with issues deemed as controversial by heterosexual society. Yet having said this, it is important to mention that WAM makes use of various activities that are designed to attract visitors into the space, which is important in dispelling the idea that museum and gallery spaces are elitist and unwelcoming.

The activities that were on offer, and which are still on offer during exhibitions at WAM, are discussed on the website *jozilife*. The website highlights that while the Beadwork exhibition was running, viewers could attend talk-a-bouts and walkabouts during the weekends of the performance. The website further mentions that there were panel discussions and bead-making workshops, which were essentially “magnets” to attract interested visitors. The mention of these activities on websites such as *Jozilife* is a way of reaching people who may not be in the area of WAM on a regular basis. In doing so, the activities that are on offer could potentially attract people from a wide audience. Further activities and WAM itself are discussed on the website *southafrica.net*. The website describes the Wits Arts Museum as having huge glass windows, which show off the changing displays in the museum space. . This puts WAM in opposition to the notions of Groys (2014), Phillips (1995), Thorpe (2014) and even O’Doherty (1982), who argue that museums and galleries are often windowless spaces that do not invite people in. However, WAM, with its large windows, affords passers-by the opportunity to gaze into the space and glimpse the works that are on display, thereby drawing them into the space. . In addition to discussing the specialised activities that WAM offers for its various exhibitions, *southafrica.net* further mentions that WAM offers ‘drop-in drawing classes’ on Saturdays, where visitors are able to attend drawing classes.

The above discussion emphasises the extent to which WAM is going in order to attract visitors into the space. Specialised activities, which accompany varying exhibitions, include guided tours, walkabouts, and classes that teach visitors the skills that are used when creating some of the works on display. These activities are designed to lure visitors into the space and once inside; they will hopefully view and engage with the works of art that are on display. If the exhibition on display is an activist one, such as the *Queer and Trans Art-iculations*, then once inside WAM,

visitors will be exposed to the issues, such as homophobic violence, dealt within the exhibition.

Following on from this discussion, it is crucial to understand that there is no way of knowing whether or not viewing an exhibition such as *Queer and Trans Art-iculations* changes people's perceptions. This issue was one that was discussed with McEwen and Blankenberg, who both stated that while the comments wall at the *Queer and Trans Art-iculations* exhibition did show some changes in people's perceptions, there was no way to measure that change or to gauge whether or not individuals took that change of perception with them once they had left the space.

To justify whether or not exhibitions that are activist in nature impact on a viewer's ideas and opinions, McEwen (pers.comm 2015) states that once individuals have seen an exhibition, they have presumably been conscientised to the issues dealt within the exhibition. In other words, once they have seen something they cannot un-see it and once they have learned something they cannot unlearn it. This, however, does not necessarily mean that this will lead to any kind of activist action on the part of the viewer. By having activist guides prescribing how works of art are to be seen and interpreted, visitors are learning about social and political issues through first-hand experiences and social interactions, which will then (hopefully) educate them about the issues being explored in the exhibitions.

According to post-revolutionary Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978), knowledge is constructed in response to interactions with environmental stimuli and that cognitive structures are essentially social phenomena. When applied to the art works on display during the WAM exhibition, the activists who were guiding, explaining the works and providing viewers with personal experiences hoped to make the experience intimate. This means that the exhibition existed within the world of the viewers, who were therefore learning through their social interactions with other viewers and the tour guides. When arguing that gallery and museum spaces may not be effective sites for activism, one needs to consider the way in which the artworks are presented to, viewed and understood by the visitors. It is

hoped that when visitors to exhibitions view the activist works on display, they will be conscientised to the issues being dealt with and will then take the newly acquired information with them when they leave the exhibition space. This does not mean that the visitors will turn the newly acquired information into action, which is carried out as performances outside of gallery and museum spaces as activist performances for the purpose of effecting social and political change. The issue under investigation in this report is the impact of public performances to act as forms of activism when compared to activist artworks displayed in museum and gallery spaces. Having explored and discussed art works and the *Queer and Trans Articulations* exhibition for the purpose of understanding the nature and impact of activist art, a discussion of performance in terms of public performance is needed in order to explore whether or not public performances are more impactful than works of art in gallery and museum spaces.

3.2 Johannesburg Pride: Performances as Activism

As has been previously stated, Diamond and Schechner explain that performances are speech acts, popular entertainment, demonstrations and aspects of everyday life. This definition indicates that interactions with people, speech acts and actions are all performances. Performances, in terms of everyday life, would therefore include how one deals with people in terms of one's treatment of them, the conversations one has with other people, social structures and social orders, and perceived racial and gender hierarchies. According to Diamond, performances may cement social orders. An example of this kind of performance would be the performances that create women in heterosexist societies (Butler, 2009). This notion points to the idea that women are created by society's enactment and performance of specific gender roles. This suggests that there exists certain ways that men and women in a heterosexist society should perform. There are specific ways that men and women should act according to society. Men and women need to perform their gender roles "correctly" in order to be integrated into a society that is dominated by heterosexual, white middle class, male thought. This dominant way of thinking and performing erases the existence of not only black women, but also black queer

women (Schuhmann, 2014). In saying this, however, I am not suggesting that black and queer women do not exist anymore. I am simply stating that they are overlooked and rendered invisible by a patriarchal, heterosexist society that decides who may live and be seen and who will die and be ignored.

While some performances cement social orders, others are used as forms of activism that confront these orders. When discussing performances that function as a form of activism, it is important to understand the lessons and changes that the performance is attempting to bring about and teach. Performances that function as sources of activism may take on many forms, which may include: theatre performances, performance art (which is art where the artist uses his or her own body as the medium and where actions, performances and gestures become the artwork), demonstrations, and even the performers' own bodies in the form of full body engagement (Goldferb, 1998). For this essay, however, the performance in question is that of protest marches and Pride parades as previously discussed in the performance section of this essay.

If one is to apply Butler (2009) to the South African context, it can be asserted that LGBTQ individuals make use of full-bodied performances that subvert and challenge accepted heterosexist ideologies. In other words, in South African society, members of the LGBTQ community perform their gender and sexuality differently from what is prescribed by dominant cultural practices. This means that when they perform their daily activities, they are performing their gender differently. This performance is then seen as abnormal by the heteronormative societies in which they live. The implications of this performance mean that LGBTQ individuals are not reproducing the norms of heterosexist society. By performing their gender roles differently, lesbians in general are subverting the accepted gender role "norms" that society constructs. By simply existing within societies, I argue that LGBTQ individuals are carrying out acts of activism due to the fact that they are subverting the dominant constructs of heterosexual society. The performances of LGBTQ individuals highlight a different way of performing gender roles and by highlighting this

difference; they are subverting heteronormative societies' understanding of gender performances.

LGBTQ individuals in South Africa form a part of a larger group of performances such as demonstrations, which are carried out in the form of protests that are designed to promoting social and political change. In the article *The Onion Theory of Nonviolent Protest* by Bruce Hartford, protests and demonstrations serve the purpose of challenging people's thinking and building political movements for social change (2011). Protests are therefore concepts that encompass education, organising, alternative social structures, personal witness, noncooperation, and direct action protests (Hartford, 2011). The point of a demonstration is to influence people towards enacting some kind of social or political change. For the purpose of this study, the change needed is for the equal and fair treatment of not only black lesbians, but all members of the LGBTQ community in South African society and to raise awareness about "corrective" rape and homophobic violence.

To understand and unpack the ways in which public performances can function as tools of activism, a study of such a performance is needed. One type of public performance that is designed to be activist in nature and to raise awareness of LGBTQ issues within South African society is the annual Pride marches that are held in major cities across South Africa. An examination of Johannesburg Pride marches provides insight into the functionality of these marches to serve as a form of activism that is intended to elicit social and political changes.

The official website of the city of Johannesburg, *joburg.org.za*, explains that Pride parades or marches are celebrated in most cities around the world and that they aim to raise awareness of LGBTQ issues and the visibility of LGBTQ individuals. Both Muholi and Le Roux, who, in creating their activist art works, are attempting to raise awareness of LGBTQ issues and the visibility of LGBTQ individuals. In the case of Pride marches, however, the act of activism is taken outside of gallery and museum spaces and enters into the realm of public spaces. In so doing, Pride marches and parades become public performances. This attempt to raise awareness is achieved

through public marches as well as social and educational events that are aimed at effecting changes in perceptions towards the LGBTQ community. *Joburg.org.za* further elucidates that Pride marches are designed to promote and raise awareness of LGBTQ issues and serve as a celebration for the LGBTQ community. This celebration forms part of the program of activism that Pride marches are intended to possess.

Pride parades can be examined in terms of Schechner's performance theory and scrutinized for the way in which they follow basic principles of performances. According to Schechner (2013: p. 176-178), performances (and in this case Pride parades and activist marches) follow certain rhythms. These rhythms include gathering, playing out actions, and dispersing. In terms of Pride parades, this would include people coming together in a specified place/area, carrying out actions such as celebrating, marching, drinking, eating, and eventually returning home once the event has been completed. An important point raised by Schechner is that while this rhythm may seem simple, it becomes complicated when two or more different groups approach each other. In relation to this essay, some of the groups are comprised of heterosexuals, who are showing their support for the LGBTQ community, heterosexuals, who oppose the LGBTQ community, and the LGBTQ community itself. These groups, according to Schechner, could potentially meet in combat, avoid each other or pass by each other. In terms of Pride parades, the parade is designed to raise the visibility of LGBTQ individuals in public spaces for the purpose of both claiming the space as well as attempting to educate and illicit a change within society.

Pride parades are comprised of a distinct pattern described by Schechner (2013, p. 178) as a procession. A procession is when an event, in this instance a Pride parade, moves along a prescribed path, where spectators gather along the route to observe, while the procession moves towards a goal where an event will be performed. The event performed at the goal is a well planned for, ritualised, rehearsed one, and in the case of Pride parades, the goal of the procession is a designated area where a

celebration by the LGBTQ community is carried out. This celebration may involve live music, drinking, dancing and socialising.

In South Africa, the first gay and lesbian Pride parade took place in Johannesburg in 1990 and was attended by fewer than one thousand individuals. The parade has grown considerably over the years since its inception. Gillian Schutte, an award-winning independent filmmaker, writer and social justice activist elucidates in her 2012 report *Johannesburg's Gay Pride Parade: Not Much to Be Proud Of* that Pride parades are a way of destabilising draconian laws and social intolerance. This destabilisation is achieved by combining both celebration and political agendas that seek to change societal views. Having said this, however, Schutte (2012) mentions that if there exists only a celebration with no political agenda, then the celebration by itself holds no sway over achieving social and political change. Schutte's concept means that when public performances, such as Pride parades, are carried out for the purpose of effecting change, they cannot exist solely as an event of celebration. The celebratory performances must be carried out along-side a political agenda that is aimed at promoting social change.

The issue of Pride parades and public performances achieving their political aims is explored by Rebecca Davis in her 2012 online feature for *Daily Maverick* titled *Joburg Pride: A Tale of Two Cities*, in which she unpacks the 2012 Johannesburg Pride parade. Firstly, it is valuable to note that over 22,000 people attended the Pride parade that year. This number demonstrates how the Pride parade has grown in numbers since its inception in 1990. Returning to my argument that gallery and museum spaces may not be the most effective sites for activism, the number of people who attended the 2012 Johannesburg pride when compared to the number of people who attended the *Queer and Trans Art-iculations* exhibition is vastly greater. If one were to rely on the number of visitors and protestors to measure the impact of an act of activism, then Johannesburg Pride is far more effective than an exhibition that is held in a gallery or museum space. However, it must be considered that numbers alone do not equal success and the effectiveness of an act of activism is far more nuanced than simply looking at the number of people involved.

The 2012 Johannesburg Pride parade is a unique one to explore as it was marred with controversy and was accused of not achieving the aims and goals of what a Pride march is intended to achieve. Members from the One In Nine campaign, a group started in 2006 that offers solidarity with women who speak out about rape and sexual violence in an attempt to create a society where women are agents of their own lives, staged a protest act in front of Pride participants. The protest act took on the form of a “die-in”, in which 20 black, lesbian activists (along with a number of mannequins) from the One In Nine group wearing purple shirts emblazoned with slogans such as “Stop the War on Women’s Bodies” lay on the road in front of the Pride march. The “die-in” was accompanied by banners which read, “Dying for Justice” and “No cause for Celebration” (Davis, 2012). The purpose of the protest, according to Davis, was to secure a minute’s silence in order to commemorate the members of the South African LGBTQ community who have been raped and/or murdered because of their sexual orientation. One would think that an event like a Pride parade that is intended to raise awareness of the social and political issues that are affecting the lives of LGBTQ individuals would be an ideal place for such a protest to occur. However, according to Davis, the activists did not find a receptive audience in the Pride participants who were leading the parade. The activists were pushed, sworn at, threatened with being driven over and told to go back to their townships by Pride organisers. They were eventually removed by the police. Johannesburg Pride organisers were accused by the One In Nine group of being a depoliticised, elitist, commercialised event totally divorced from what the real function of Pride should be (Davis, 2012), while the organisers of Johannesburg Pride accused the One in Nine group of ambushing a well-run event, behaving deliberately provocatively in order to create a stir.

It can be argued that the purpose of Pride events is to promote a political agenda that aims at improving the lives of LGBTQ individuals, along with a party atmosphere that is meant to attract people to the event. What has been argued by Davis and gay activist Emily Craven in her 2010 paper *Racial Identity and Racism in the Gay and Lesbian Community in Post-Apartheid South Africa* is that Johannesburg Pride has

done away with its political agenda in favour of attracting larger numbers of people to the parades. What the reactions to the staged “die-in” reveal is that what the organisers of the Pride event failed to realise, according to Davis (2012), is that just because two people are gay (in a country as divided as South Africa), it does not mean there will be any meaningful similarities between their lifestyles. Davis and Craven accuse the organisers of Johannesburg Pride of depoliticising the event and in so doing, have stripped the event of its activist nature. The organisers of the 2012 Johannesburg Pride parade stepped down and new organisers have since taken over. However, the new organisers also have the notion that the Johannesburg Pride parade should be depoliticised.

In his opinion piece *Finding a Platform for Johannesburg Pride*, Dustin August (2016) questions the use of Melrose Arch, in the affluent suburb of Melrose in Johannesburg, as a suitable area for the 2016 Johannesburg Pride Parade. . As part of the piece, organiser of the 2016 parade, Kaye Allye, states that Johannesburg Pride needs to be trendy if it wants to attract the “Alphas” or “Generation Zers, while co-organizer, Nolene du Preez, in the response section of the article, comments that there is no need to relive the struggle of previous LGBTQ generations as times have changed and people want to party. Looking at these comments by the organisers, it would appear that a public performance, such as Johannesburg Pride, has lost its activist, political agenda and in so doing, has lost its ability to function as a protest aimed at effecting any political change.

It is not just the removal of a political agenda that affects the impact of Pride events - the space in which the performances are staged is a crucial factor to take into consideration. Pride parades and marches take place in public spaces, which consequently become public performances. However, the site in which the performances take place is just as important as the political agenda of the event. Since its inception in 1990 and up until 2001, the Johannesburg Pride parade was staged in Johannesburg’s inner city. From 2001 up until 2013, Johannesburg pride was carried out at Johannesburg’s Zoo Lake in the suburb of Rosebank. Rosebank, according to *MambaOnline* journalist Luiz De Barros (2013), is a predominately

white, wealthy suburb, which is seen as being predominately gay-friendly and non-threatening to the individuals taking part in the march.

The problem with using the Rosebank area as a space for Johannesburg Pride, according to Davis (2012), is that Rosebank is largely a liberal area with lots of gay residents. What this means is that the people, who live within the Rosebank area, are accustomed to seeing members of the LGBTQ community. If one of the purposes of Pride is to increase the visibility of the LGBTQ community, then I agree with Davis, who argues that the parade should take place in areas where the inhabitants are less accustomed to seeing and less tolerant of LGBTQ individuals. This, however, is not the case with the Johannesburg Pride. In 2014, the event was moved to the affluent area of Sandton in Johannesburg, and in 2015, it was held at the Wanderers' rugby field in the prestigious suburb of Illovo, Johannesburg. Here again, one sees how the Johannesburg Pride event is held in largely liberal, affluent areas where the inhabitants of the area are more accustomed to the visibility of LGBTQ individuals. The choice of these venues calls into question the impact of the Johannesburg Pride parade to effect social and political change vis-a-vis the issues of rape and sexual violence faced by members of the LGBTQ community and maybe, to use the words of Davis (2012), "preach to the converted". Johannesburg Pride 2016 will take place in the affluent area of Melrose in Melrose Arch, and the same arguments against this choice of venue can be put forward as those used against the Johannesburg Pride in Rosebank. August (2016) opines that Melrose Arch is a contemporary village that makes an unapologetic statement about money and resources and is designed around the idea of exclusivity. This idea, according to August, contradicts the very nature of Johannesburg Pride and what it stands for. The same argument could be made for the way in which art museums and galleries attract liberal individuals who are accustomed to the LGBTQ community. If the majority of visitors entering into these spaces do not need to be conscientised to the issues faced by members of the LGBTQ community in a heterosexist, patriarchal society such as South Africa, then galleries and museums could also be seen as "preaching to the converted".

The choice of area, as discussed, has an impact on the activist nature of public performances. However, if the intention of the performance is simply to be recreational in nature, then the choice of venue may be of little importance to the Pride parades. Previous organiser of the Johannesburg Pride parade, Tanya Harford, has been quoted by Davis (2012) as saying that the job of Pride, in order to be attractive to as many members of the LGBTQ community as possible, is not to be political, but rather to put on an event that can then function as a platform. My concern with this statement is that if the nature of Johannesburg Pride is not to be political, then there is no need for a platform to be created. Johannesburg Pride has simply become a space for celebration and partying and has left the actual purpose of Pride, which should be an attempt to effect social and political issues of the LGBTQ community, at the wayside. As has been previously stated, if there is no political agenda, then the protest or parade can effect very little, if not any, social change. Pride parades must navigate a way to be both appealing to people, through the use of celebratory tactics, and creating an environment of political activism where the corner stone for social change can be laid.

I have spent some time explaining the “die-in” and the effects it had on the 2012 Johannesburg Pride parade and the reactions to it in order to explore whether or not the Johannesburg Pride parade is a place where activism takes place.. By exploring the removal of a political agenda from Johannesburg Pride in favour of creating a space for celebration has had, in my opinion, a detrimental impact on the parade’s ability to function as a site of activism. While it is true that the event attracts in excess of 20,000 participants, it is lacking the ability to make use of those numbers to elicit social and political change that will have positive consequences on the lives of those members of the LGBTQ community, who remain under threat of becoming victims of rape and sexual violence that are carried out along with other forms of homophobic violence. While Johannesburg Pride is just one of many public performances that are carried out in an attempt to be activist in nature, the main focus of the event is one that promotes celebration.

In January 2016, the gay and lesbian lifestyle website *MambaOnline* reported in the article *Community to March Over Horror Murder of Lesbian Matriculant* that members of the Young Communist's League (YCL) and activists from the Vaal LGBTI were holding a march to the Mafatsana police station in the Vaal Triangle region of South Africa to protest against the crimes against LGBTQ individuals and the perceived inaction by local authorities to tackle the violence. This march was sparked by the brutal murder of a young lesbian woman, who had just passed matric and who was, according to the article, tied up, had her eyes, breasts and vagina removed and was then set alight. This march was a performance that functioned as a protest aimed at the promotion of LGBTQ rights and was fiercely political in nature. According to Cedric Davids (pers.comm., 2016), a member of the YCL, about 500 people attended the march, even though there was no actual head count carried out. This march, while being much smaller than Johannesburg Pride, had a strong political agenda. The march aimed to educate community members about the issue of the alleged rape and murder of Motshidisi Melannu. According to Davids (pers. comm., 2016), it encouraged members of the community to take part when they saw the march being carried out. Davids opines that the march further educated people by conscientising them to the issue of the sexual violence and murder that LGBTQ individuals face in the Vaal Triangle area of Gauteng. Due to the fact that the march started dialogues about the issue of homophobic crimes aimed at LGBTQ individuals, Davids believes that the march was a success. He further states that the march has encouraged the formation of workshops in schools and has made the ANC party create a position in the area where there is a dedicated person who deals exclusively with LGBTQ issues. While Davids admits that there is still much work that needs to be done in the area, he sees the march as being overall successful. The march educated members of the public about the issue of homophobic violence faced by lesbians and encouraged the formation of dialogues that are aimed at addressing such an issue. The march had a political focus that, as this report has previously shown, is needed in order to create a protest that is effective in nature.

A key question, however, is how do the activists, performers, and visitors to the performances and exhibitions remain engaged and integrated in the political agenda

of the marches and exhibitions? Moises Naim (2014), a contributing editor for *The Atlantic* online magazine, postulates that in many cases, the organisers of public performances do not plan ahead as to what will happen once the protest has been carried out. Naim (2014) argues that behind the street demonstrations that are organised, there is very rarely a more-permanent organisation that follows up on the protestors' demands. In terms of the argument I am presenting in this research report, the implication of Naim's postulation is that performances, such as Pride parades and marches like the one organised by Davids in January 2016, may achieve very little in terms of effecting social and political change once the marches are over and the participants have dispersed and left the protest. The same can be said of the visitors who enter into gallery and museum spaces when viewing art that has been created to be activist in nature. Once individuals have viewed the art and left the exhibition space, there remains no physical way of tracking changes in attitudes and whether or not the changes in perceptions will affect any behavioral changes on the part of the viewer.

4. CONCLUSION

A change in people's perception concerning the rape of lesbians in an attempt to evoke a social and political change has been one of the key issues that this research report has addressed. In order to evoke a social and political change, artists, such as Zanele Muholi and Gabrielle Le Roux, create art that is intended to be activist in nature and educate people about homophobic violence and the daily routines and lives of LGBTQ individuals within South African society. The key issue addressed in this research report was whether or not art that is displayed in traditional gallery and museum spaces adds to the voice of activism when compared to public performances, such as Johannesburg Pride parades.

This research report has explored the means of action that activist artists take regarding homophobic violence that exists around issues of sexual orientation and gender identity by examining the relationship that occurs between activist art that may be displayed in gallery/museum spaces and public performances in South African society. I have carried out this research in an attempt to highlight the need that exists for activist activities to both challenge and educate society at large about homophobic hate crimes and violence, such as the rape of lesbians in attempts to "cure" or "fix" them. In terms of activist art and artists, the works of South African artists Zanele Muholi and Gabrielle Le Roux were juxtaposed with performances that are carried out in public spaces, such as Johannesburg Pride parades, as a method to evaluate these two forms of activism.

Firstly, the works of both artists are attempts to bring about articulations of lived experiences of LGBTQ individuals to a public awareness in order to effect social and political change. Le Roux achieves this by creating hand-drawn portraits of LGBTQ individuals, drawn from life, which include written experiences of the individual portrayed in the portrait. Muholi, however, photographs black LGBTQ individuals, thereby documenting their lives and experiences. Muholi does this for the purpose of contributing to a more representative and homosexual history and to raise awareness of hate crimes, such as "corrective" rape, and to organise action towards

social change. I have discussed how the works of both artists were displayed in the 2014 exhibition *Queer and Trans Art-iculations*, held at Wits Art Museum (WAM), for the purpose of effecting social and political change along with the activist methods that were employed within the museum space. The creation of activist art is, however, problematic when the artist has to create work that is both commercially viable and activist in nature (Groys, 2014). The complication that arises when discussing art exhibitions that function as sources of activism is that activist artists face the challenge of having to sell and have their works collected in order to sustain themselves. If, however, works of art are too outspoken about issues of homophobic hate crimes, or do not appeal to collectors, buyers and viewers, then the artist runs the risk of not having his/her works collected with the consequence of not being able to sustain his/her income. This could result in artists creating work that is not as activist in nature as they would have hoped and producing work, which appeals to a large audience without being overtly activist in favour of a sustainable income.

Along with the complication of creating work that is commercially viable and still activist, traditional gallery and museum spaces, as I have discussed, may not be the best sites for activism. This is due to the notion, as discussed by Thorpe (2014) and Sheikh (2009), that gallery and museum spaces are elitist in nature and the spaces themselves are not inviting to outsiders and may actually be keeping people out of the space. This problem, however, has been challenged by WAM. WAM employs various methods, which are intended to attract visitors into the space. These include drop-in drawing classes, guided tours, walk-a-bouts and practical activities that teach visitors the methods and techniques used by the artists who have their works displayed in various exhibitions. By actively attempting to attract visitors into the space, I have argued that there exists a greater chance of artworks within the space being viewed by the public. In terms of exhibitions which are activist in nature this is an important initiative as the more people who are attracted to enter the museum space, the greater chance there is of them being conscientised to the issues that are being dealt with.

However, it must be noted that even if people are entering into museum and gallery spaces and viewing the activist works on display, I maintain that there is no way to measure changes in perceptions once visitors have left the gallery or museum space. This issue is one that further exists when dealing with public performances such as the annual Johannesburg Pride parade.

While this does not necessarily undermine my research, it adds to the complex nuances that I have noted and underscores the value of this type of research and the need for it. I considered a further complication that arose when discussing Johannesburg Pride according to Davis (2012) and Craven (2010). Johannesburg Pride has done away with a political agenda in favour of a party atmosphere in order to attract more people to the event. I have argued that this is a problematic move on the part of the Pride organisers, because when one removes the political agenda from a protest, parade or march, it ceases to be activist in nature (Schutte, 2012). The implication of this is that if the march or parade is no longer activist in nature, then it fails to raise awareness of homophobic violence and could therefore fail to influence a political or societal change.

This research has highlighted that there exist three areas that need to be addressed and explored if artists are to attempt to raise awareness of homophobic violence in the form of sexual assaults on LGBTQ individuals. The first area of concern is that any form of activism, aimed at promoting a social or political change, should have a political agenda. An activist event that has no political agenda, as was shown by Schutte (2012), cannot be seen to be an activist one.

A point identified as important in this research report, and one that I suggest be explored further, is that the site of activism is important. This is a valid point for both art exhibitions and public performances. As De Barros (2013), Craven (2010) and Davis (2012) explain, it is not effective to organise activist events that are aimed at raising awareness of homophobic hate crimes in areas where the community is largely accepting of and used to seeing LGBTQ individuals. If activist art works and activist performances are intended to educate people and bring about social and

political change, then they should be carried out in places where people are less tolerant of and less accustomed to seeing LGBTQ individuals. .

It is simply not enough to create an art exhibition or stage a protest or Pride parade to combat issues such as the rape of lesbians. There is a need to address and create planning for more permanent organisations to be put in place once the event, be it an art exhibition or a public performance, is over. Once an activist event is over, there exists a need for organisations to follow up with the demands or issues that were raised during the event. This is the type of work, according to Naim (2014), which requires the most effort, but it is also this part of activism that achieves the greatest results. Simply put, an event by itself, even if it has a political agenda and is staged at an appropriate site, may achieve very little if there is no follow-up once said event is over.

What this research has revealed is that there exists very few, if any, means to track the changes in people's perceptions once they have left an event. Even though events such as the *Queer and Trans Art-iculations* exhibition and Johannesburg Pride parades are hailed as successes due the numbers of people who attend and participate, this research has revealed that if activist events are to be successful, then it is not enough to hail the events themselves as successes. There is a need for further work to be done regarding sustaining the intention of interventions once they are over.

5. APPENDICES

5.1 Appendix 1:

Transcription of the interview with Haley McEwen, Luke Hackney and Leigh

Blankenberg

Held on 21 August 2015 at 14:00 at the Wits Art Museum (WAM)

Leigh: Gabrielle and Zanele actually curated their sections and worked with the diversity studies team to get things going on a long-term project, but they self curated the spaces and collaborated with each other.

Luke: So they worked together in collaboration with WAM.

Leigh: Yeah, I think it was primarily picked up by Gabrielle. Haley's going to be able to talk to you about the reasons why the Diversity Studies wanted to do a project like that, but the journal she sent to you actually has it all in it.

Luke: I've a read through some of the articles and they are informative, so that's actually quite good to use for references and resources and background information.

Leigh: Exactly! So around the time I was doing a lot of research on, obviously education programming, because I'm the education curator but I was looking

at public engagement and history of responding in the space and there is a reality that museums in this county exist within a context and in an historical context, which, we actually don't fit into because we never existed in that time, but there is a veil that I wanted to sort of ... a lot of people say we had these exhibitions because there's no place to or platforms to have conversations about them, and I did research on responses spaces in museums, as being very positively ... positively engaged with and people really feel that the museum is for them when you give them the platform to respond in that way. So that was the theory.

Luke: Yeah.

Leigh: So I thought I would try it out, and I worked with Haley on the open-ended that we proposed in the space, because we didn't want just, sort of like, "WAM is cool!" Like, sort of like superficial comments and we also didn't want any hate crime in that space.

Luke: Of course not no! So it's good to direct people's comments with those open-ended ...

Leigh: Yeah so there were no "Yes" or "No" answer questions there so in that article in the exhibition book, you can see how we sort of structured it, so those questions are very much a brainstorm between me and Haley, because Haley's got that Diversities Studies background there whereas I'm an Art History background, so it was an important collaboration between two departments and we didn't expect the kind of response that we got.

Luke: I think it's also good to have that response wall because now it also helps me in my research to try and track down some of the responses, because I'm focusing on looking at art and public performances as sources of activism, and the effectiveness of those two ...

Leigh: So you're looking more at the exhibition itself, and the response wall.

Luke: Yes at the exhibition but ...

Leigh: Because I think you need to be careful as the response wall was not seen as part of the exhibition. It was an externally curated section that I made.

Luke: But that's why I want to look at that, because part of my questioning is, do exhibitions that are aimed at being activist ... do they actually do anything?

Leigh: Yes.

Luke: Do they actually bring about a change? Do they actually change people's thought perceptions, which is then good to look at the comment cards.

Leigh: That was literally my question.

Luke: Yeah.

Leigh: And my concern as well because they really wanted it to be an activist space. We even had guides that were activists, activating and instead of a normal exhibition space where you don't prescribe people's opinions on the wall there was a prescription on the exhibition. There was a way that you should see these people and a way that you shouldn't as far as the curators and organisers were concerned and they were trying to show people how you should, SHOULD see it, which is very different to how exhibitions work.

Luke: Yes, no, absolutely.

Leigh: So that's why a response wall I thought was a way in which at least people could then respond to that kind of spoon-feeding, I suppose.

Luke: And you can gauge their responses and the effectiveness so to speak of the exhibition.

Leigh: There was one flaw that you must acknowledge, that I have acknowledged in the article, that I wrote with Haley, and that I feel is an important one to unpack, is that I got the sense that, and I have to assume, that a lot wasn't said. We know that there is intolerance towards the LGBTI community and that people feel a certain way about homosexuals, for example, they are often referred to with discriminatory understandings of it, um ... what was only argued in ... the only negative thing that was argued in a negative way, about the exhibition and about the subject of the exhibition, was when people felt that they could justifiably argue against, not even transgender or even intersex or transsexuals or any of that. The one thing that they argued for was that same sex relationships and that was wrong because the Bible said so. So if they could justify that God says it's ok.

Hayley arrived late for the interview. This included some hellos

Leigh: So how do you measure change?

Haley: Exactly.

Luke: That's the big question that I had and was trying to figure out.

Leigh: We had that one too.

Luke: How do you measure change? Because I mean, I was looking, for example, at your article, with the comments wall. I think you mentioned there were about 3500 people who came through, and of that only 20% commented. But then how do you ...

Leigh: That's like one of five, that's really high, we don't ...

Luke: Yeah, but the thing is how do you then gauge a change once they've left the gallery space? That's the big thing. How do you know if it's effective?

Leigh: You can't.

Haley: Only if you tracked people, like, got their details, and called them up.

Luke: That's what I'm interested in, the whole thing of, we say, you know, we create activist art to bring about a change and bring about public awareness, but then the big thing is ... does it? How do you measure that success? Or the failure of it and that's the big thing I want to look at in terms of also the museum space itself. Does it invite people in? Does it make people want to enter the space? Does it attempt to be inclusive? And in lots of the research I have found, a lot of people see galleries as being cold, uninviting, very middle class, white, gallery spaces, spaces people don't want to go to and spaces that people don't want to come into because they see them as being boring, and elitist, and so ...

Leigh: That exhibition was a bit of an anomaly for us because it was the biggest attendance at an opening we have ever seen, like there were 900 people there?

Haley: Something like that.

Leigh: It was crazy. You were unable to move in the space, during speeches, Um ... and it was also a very high access ... daily entrance, 3000 in one month. It's a lot.

Luke: How did you actually track the numbers of people?

Leigh: We count them.

Luke: Is there the log book?

Leigh: We count them. And we've got demographics.

Luke: Ok.

Haley: I'm also just thinking in terms of your question, how do you measure ... I think it's also what is it you're measuring?

Luke: That's the thing.

Haley: And I think that there might be, I mean, we drew it in our article, but like Freire, pedagogy of the oppressed and that stuff, theory around, conscientisation and what it means to actually be conscientised. Because there's also the ...

Leigh: Which is a word I had never heard of before Diversity Studies came into my life.

Luke: I was reading the article and I was like, hold on, Google dictionary.

Haley: But yeah, so it's kind of like, and I mean it might be worthwhile you looking at some theory around that and, and like, because I ... My hunch is that, I mean I've never investigated it specifically for this purpose but, my hunch is that it's kind of like, once you see you can't unsee.

Leigh: Yes.

Haley: Right?

Leigh: That's what I was going to say, you can't, you look at some of the comments that were made. (Talking to Haley) But you've still got the box hey? Or do I still have the box?

Haley: You've got it.

Leigh: Ok cool, I'll give it to you if you want me to.

Luke: That would be great.

Leigh: It's nice and heavy.

Haley: But at the same time, let me just say, if you take them you have to make sure you give them all back because we also still want to ... we never scanned them, partially my fault because we were supposed to get a student to do it.

Leigh: We were going to get a student to scan ...

Haley: Which I still can, maybe.

Leigh: Maybe you could do it.

Luke: Scan them quickly, on my lap top?

Leigh: They haven't been digitalised so, they are the only record, so um ... I think it might even be better that you put it in our WAM library and then you come and do research, just until we've done that. Um ... but ... What was I going to say? Oh you cannot deny a comment, so many comments actually said things like, "I did not know these people even existed".

Haley: Yeah.

Leigh: In the world before this exhibition. They can't go away saying I now un-know that, that fact. They didn't know that there were 36 different types of intersex or whatever the stats are, I don't know, I'm not clear on it, now they do.

Luke: Yeah.

Leigh: So that kind of stuff you can measure, but whether somebody is going to take that information and evoke social change was something that I battled with and I chatted a lot to Haley about it. We know people can be more aware, and perhaps through understanding, more tolerant. But we can't ...

Luke: You can't measure that.

Leigh: You can't measure that.

Haley: And like, are people going for example, if they see some kind of trans-phobic incident, are they going to intervene?

Luke: Yeah.

Haley: You know.

Luke: Are they going to go and stop it?

Haley: Right!

Leigh: When their friends make a joke are they going to say, "Well actually, that's a really ignorant thing to say?" You can't monitor people in that way.

Luke: Yeah.

Leigh: Um, but you can't deny, looking even at a history of activism in art that's evoked social change. I'm sure Nicky will make you go and look at the history of social activism through art in the history of the 1980s.

Luke: That's actually what I've started to do now.

Leigh: Those incited social change on an international level. It created people, at Wits, people studying at Wits, who their entire lives were told that black people were communists, the enemy, all of a sudden going, well that doesn't make any sense if you see this picture. Who's the communist here? And changing their minds and marching in marches because of a picture.

Luke: Yeah.

Leigh: A picture of Hector Pieterse, Those things are real, so ... hopefully... an exhibition like the one we did has created some sort of ... I don't think that we've solved ...

Luke: Yeah, I know.

Leigh: All of the world's problems but, there is more understanding, to the 3000 people that came ...

Hailey: And I think ...

Leigh: They talked to people, because there were people there to talk to as well. It wasn't just an exhibition.

Hailey: Yeah, I'm also thinking just in terms of your project, like I'm just thinking if you're going to compare it to performance art, and I'm just thinking, sorry it's like a whole bunch of thoughts, but on the one hand so like the exhibition we had this mechanism of the comments wall to like collect people's feedback,

questions, comments right? But I'm wondering about what performance, like what kind of mechanism a performance could use , and then, and then at the same time, in the same breath like, I think there is something important in looking at what kind of social change art can effect ... that there have to be like ways of monitoring? Like in a way?

Luke: What I'm doing with the performance section ... I'm actually using Schechner and those people and looking at it in terms of a performance is anything you enact in your daily life, so , so in a sense , my way of thinking is that, um, the lesbian ladies who are featured in Zanele Muholi's photographs, they in a sense are performing and are being agents of activism just by being themselves in their community, um, even though it's extremely dangerous and it could be, so, is THAT more effective than say, an exhibition in a gallery space, and that's what I'm trying to gauge.

Haley: Oh so you're using like a very broad definition of performance, not like a performance piece.

Luke: No, so it's going to be the case of performance in the sense of them being themselves, even a performance in the sense of say a president getting up on TV and saying this issue of hate crime is wrong, we need to change it by... that is a public performance. So is that then more effective than, say a once-off exhibition? So that's what I'm playing with in my mind and trying to wrap my head around...

Leigh: I really, I'm doing a lot of research at the moment on how... so one of the things as an education curator, in the field of education, my role is to create an experience in the museum ... that ... you know has an effect that causes X... so I'm trying to teach someone ... whatever it is. One of the theories in the research I'm looking at is called social construction, constructionism, social constructionist theory, and what it is, is, um, the belief that you will be able to create learning in a person or someone will retain what you have said

better if you relate it to their personal experience. And I think that's one advantage the museum has, because you go in and experience something, and some of those pictures for example, the portraits on the wall, the activists guiding people through, were also in those photographs, and then that person was there, talking to you about their personal experiences, and that resonated with individuals, and they could go home, and that personal experience that you have had is something you'll never forget. As long as you relate it to the personal so that it actually exists within your world. Like you cannot ignore this because it's happening to your neighbour... is much more powerful than... this is something which happens to other people, which is a lot of, how people feel about HIV aids.

Haley: Or if like the president were to get up and say, "Oh, this is very wrong" and it's like, "Oh well..."

Luke: People will be like, "Oh well".

Haley: Oh the president ... (all laugh)

Haley: I'm also just thinking to add onto what you're saying, like, I mean you said it's a once-off exhibition, however ...

Luke: Yeah?

Haley: I mean both of the collections in that exhibition have complete lives of their own.

Luke: Yes.

Haley: You know and like Gabrielle Le Roux, her collections have gone all over the place, but then the YouTube video component of the exhibition, I mean that's been viewed like 300 and something thousand times on YouTube.

Luke: Yeah.

Leigh: And also her works actually have been incorporated into marches.

Haley: Yeah!

Leigh: It's more, more activist.

Haley: That's right.

Leigh: Than Zanele's. Zanele's exists with a gallery world and therefore has travelled the world in an active way, but Gabrielle's is very well recognised within the LGBTI community and like on picket posters and has been moved through a different space entirely. So that is why the exhibition seems so interesting to take on for WAM because you had two different ways and spaces that art could be talking about the same thing and actually activating conversations.

Luke: Because then Gabrielle's art then enters into the public space in a much bigger way than Zanele's does.

Leigh: People at the exhibition found her portraits much more accessible and informative than Zanele's. I mean we had those opinions.

Haley: And that's surprising because the voices element, the voices of Gabrielle's and the participatory nature of those.

Leigh: And then talking on, there was a point I was trying to make before Haley arrived. Just to remember that what was said on the wall, is what I feel people were comfortable enough to express, and I think a lot of the intolerance wasn't mentioned. People chose to avoid running their opinion unless they could justify it through God.

Luke: Yeah of course.

Leigh: And then again, we mustn't think that's how everyone feels. It can't be a blanket understanding of the 3000 people there. I think a lot of people may have walked through there and not been influenced, that doesn't mean we can't see them, however many that there are, we can't see them because they didn't make a comment. And that ... that... what was the other thing I was going to say OH ... How much response we got, because I know Diversity Studies got this as well as WAM. You should speak to Vyiswa who sits at our front desk, she experienced a lot of people's first response and last response as they came in and out, she will talk to you about it and I think she will give very valuable input. She was there every day that it was open, talking to ... and her opinion of it was from complete ignorance of a transformative understanding, so she could be an individual case study there.

Haley: She had an intensive immersion.

Leigh: She is actually friends with many of the activists now.

Haley: Is she?

Leigh: Yeah.

Haley: Awesome!

Leigh: Yeah they come and visit her.

Haley: Really? Oh sweet. That's so cool.

Leigh: Yeah so I think she is an important person to speak to. But what she said was phenomenal to her is, and this reflects on your , you know the idea that

museum is a particular space for, I can't talk for all museums, but talking in the context of the Wits Art Museum ... we were concerned when we first opened, with how and would we be able to get people in of diversity, and audiences from diverse spaces in the world and in Johannesburg and it hasn't been as hard as it's been assumed, and that, perhaps it comes in a new context and it's creating its own identity , that one of the biggest feedbacks we got from LGBT community members was, and comments on the wall were there, "Thank you so much for giving us a space where we feel accepted, and we belong, and we walked through and were proud of ourselves". And that we can talk to people. There was a safe space of understanding and conversation happening where you usually exist in an environment where you are unsafe the entire time.

Hailey: Like the second you walk out onto the street basically,

Leigh: You are in danger.

Luke: And you don't exist beyond the wall type thing.

Leigh: You are in danger, the violence here is real!

Luke: Yeah...

Leigh: So um, people hide who they are because of that and because of fear and that's understandable and they can then walk in there and be like, because for example, there's some intersex men that came in and were open enough to tell these people I was born in a female's body and now I am a man, but I never tell anybody that. It's completely private outside of the space. She was literally engaging with and acting as a psychology space. It sort of should be seen, has been seen, this museum is breaking the boundaries of that idea, but we are brand new so, I think when you argue about us existing within a context where we never existed before. You must be careful.

Luke: Ok.

Leigh: Because we didn't exist in that context, we were in a storeroom, so we are trying to create a new identity and we did call ourselves a museum. So we teeter on these boundaries of what that means. That's my only input then.

Haley: It's an interesting ... it's not a contradiction, it's like also an interesting piece in relation to what you had said earlier, I mean just how we know that, a lot of the probably intolerant opinions didn't make it onto the wall, like things people didn't say, and like of course people have a million thoughts that they write everything on there, but just how ...

Leigh: They didn't feel safe in that space.

Haley: Exactly. But who did feel safe in that space?

Leigh: It reversed the roles,

Haley: Exactly!

Leigh: It's actually quite a good point. It's a whole study! Another paper!

Haley: Yeah!

Luke: Doctorate here we go!

Leigh: The other thing is that this response wall was so successful that I've done it again for beadwork and I've already had 3000 responses.

Luke and Haley: Wow!

Leigh: I don't even know how. It could be people putting more than one response up, because we haven't even had that number yet.

Hailey: Wow, that's awesome.

Leigh: We've had to take them down. So it's going to be a huge project.

Hailey: Nice paper for you and another paper for Luke.

Luke: Then it also shows that people are engaging with it and they are not just, you know, let's have a quick browse around and leave.

Leigh: The question is what is your, what are your, how do you feel about beadwork being in an exhibition, in a space like this, and us calling it fine art. And it's just caused this, like, I wanted to explore people's reactions, I didn't think I would get this many responses. Because with the Zanele and Gabrielle exhibition, people get forced into this space and are told by facilitators to make a comment. It's too full for my schools, I have to take down everyday because people on the weekends are going berserk. They have so much to say about it, so cool, so I have like two different papers to do public and school.

Hailey: And it's also really cool too because it's obvious, but it gives a space where people are able to say things. Because often when you go to an exhibition or something then you can't really ... it's hard to even process it sometimes, I find personally, like I always feel amateur in art spaces. But I mean I find it difficult to process, like on my own. Like I need to like be in conversation with people and so it also helps as a learning process the comments wall.

Leigh: Yeah, it's amazing, so you must go have a look. It's set up in the same structure, minus the questions that we asked, which you can find in the

journal. But um I think in terms of understanding what went, I mean, do you want to know things like the seminar that went on that Haley set up?

Haley: Oh yeah, we had a whole colloquium as well linked with the exhibition but we, so that, the special edition of agenda thesis papers in there came out of that colloquium.

Leigh: But there were more people that presented than were in the journal.

Haley: There were. But none of them really, I mean yours really engaged with the exhibition, your presentation. Um, but a lot of the papers, it was just about queer, art activism. Like you know ...

Leigh: Anything to do with the field.

Haley: I can't even remember that actual title of the colloquium. We have like all these titles for all these different things, but it was like, a collaborative art for social change, art activism in the global south, like what can it do.

Leigh: It was something about the global south.

Haley: Yeah, that was the kind of focus of it, so people's papers looked at a range of things. There was a whole range of, so it wasn't actually specific about ...

Leigh: It was really interesting, I enjoyed it.

Haley: I also say that Gabrielle had something come out recently. I'm trying to remember.... Have you seen the *Queer African Reader*?

Luke: I haven't.

Haley: She's got a thing in there definitely, Gabrielle does.

Leigh: Gabrielle contacted Zanele., This exhibition was her baby, she created the collaboration, she made sure it happened.

Haley: Yeah, she was really like ...

Leigh: The person holding it together like glue.

Haley: Because I didn't know what was going on.

Leigh: Yeah, so thank goodness for Gabrielle.

Haley: But it's really cool that someone is doing a paper on the exhibition.

Leigh: Yeah, maybe something more can ...

Haley: It's exciting.

Luke: And scary and stressful (all laugh).

Haley: So, yeah, that's about it from my side, I don't know if any of this has been helpful or ...

Luke: Yes, no, it's been great, thank you so much for meeting up with me.

Leigh: And if you think of anything else or need help you have our emails.

Luke: Yes, no I will, thank you again very much. I really appreciate the help and the questions I was going to ask, Haley actually answered during the chats so if I think of anything else ...

Haley: Of course.

There was a general goodbye said and the meeting ended at 14:45.

5.2 Appendix 2:

This appendix is a transcript from a telephone conversation with Cedric Davids, a member of the Young Communist League (YCL). Cedric Davids organised a demonstration march in response to the brutal murder of a lesbian women in December 2015 in the Vaal Triangle area of Gauteng.

Luke: Hello, Cedric?

Cedric: Yes.

Luke: My name is Luke Hackney and I am currently completing my Master's Degree at WITS. I am looking at the effectiveness of art and protests to impact social change with regards to the LGBTQ community. Do you mind if I ask you some questions about the march you organised on 12 January 2016 in order to protest against the murder and rape of lesbians?

Cedric: Yes, of course.

Luke: Thank you. Ok firstly, how many people would you say attended the march?

Cedric: That's interesting and it's an issue you have just brought to my attention, but to my naked eyes, we didn't do a head count. That's an issue you have just brought to my attention, but to my naked eye there were about 500 people.

Luke: How would you say the march was received by the community and the police at the police station that you marched to?

Cedric: I would say that the march didn't do much, but during the march, while we were marching people joined the march and became aware of the issues and became excited and educated about the issue. People saw the march and came from street corners and asked what was happening. They thought it was a political march and joined in and then asked questions and when finding out about the issue they said they had heard about the murder and didn't know that a march was happening. The march was joined by and had high school pupils, young people, members of the ANC Youth League. People were shocked to find out that the march

was happening. They had heard about the murder and joined the march when they saw it. This was overwhelming. It was good that people became conscientised to the issues about hate to the LGBTI people. No one is born hating and the people became educated about the murder and were excited to join in the march and protest the murder.

Luke: What platforms did you use to talk about and, for lack of a better word, “promote” the march?

Cedric : I was initially contacted by *MambaOnline* who ran with the story initially. I was then contacted by another social website but can’t remember the name of that one just now. I had interviews with ENCA, with Power FM, local newspapers like the Citizen and even had an interview with the BBC in London. So we are still in contact to find out about the outcomes of the murder and the march. So there were lots of local platforms that I spoke with.

Luke: Do you think that the march had a positive impact?

Cedric: Yes. For me it was a success. It reached people. And it was easy for us to organise the march. In the YCL, lots of the leaders are themselves LGBTI and it was easy that way. There are also the ANC Youth League. And many people didn’t know that the YCL is anti this kind of hatred. The march conscientised people and made people start speaking about and learning about it. There have been workshops organised for schools and the conscientising of learners. No one is born hating and that message is reaching young people at school and encouraging them to take part. We have reached the ANC, who has created a position in the area with a dedicated person, who deals with LGBTI issues in the areas, so it has been good to reach these people. And also people didn’t now that the YCL was involved in protests like this. The YCL has no place for hatred and has LGBTQ people as its members. It is promoting diversity.

Luke: Thank you very much. I really appreciate you taking the time to talk with me.

Cedric: Of course, my pleasure.

LIST OF IMAGES:

IMAGE 1:

Gabrielle Le Roux, *Bongi Louw Mphisholo, South Africa*, 2008, coloured pencils on paper

IMAGE 2:

Zanele Muholi, *Lerato Marumolwa*, 2009, photographic print on paper, 25.5 X 38.5 cm. Faces and Phases. Photo image Stevenson Gallery, Johannesburg and Cape Town

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