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How much is the community of Joubert Park involved in the Johannesburg Art Gallery today?

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ABSTRACT

One of the principal purposes of the Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG), one of Johannesburg's public institutions, is to educate the public through the arts. The many changes, including political changes, in South Africa that caused the movement of people from one area to another have affected the audience participation at this museum. The Johannesburg Art Gallery is located in Joubert Park, the southern part of Hillbrow, which has been affected by the changes that have taken place from the time of the museum's inception to the present day, when the area is inhabited by black people from all over Africa. The concern is therefore to understand the relationship between these two. I plan to interrogate the mission of JAG, to find out if it is relevant to the community that it is located in, and if the community is aware and supportive of JAG's activities.

The purpose of this investigation is to challenge the methods that are used by JAG to obtain and maintain visitors to the museum, and to expand the target market group by shifting focus from the people that used to live within this community to the present-day inhabitants. This is done by finding out from the Joubert Park community what is it that they wish to see in this museum. By observing their everyday life and interviewing them, I explore why or how much the people of Joubert Park are involved in the Johannesburg Art Gallery today. To reach the conclusion of this research, observing the area and interviewing the community will be followed by interviewing the co-ordinators of the Joubert Park Project (started in 2000) that was designed for the purpose of involving this community in the public spaces and institutions around them, and finally the employees of the Johannesburg Art Gallery. In addition, studying recent successful exhibitions would possibly reveal the explanation of what people want to see. In this world of ever-changing technology and culture of cyber space, can a museum attract new audiences by using methods that are contemporary and interactive?