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Gender at the Museum: An overview and discussion of gender diversity representation in museums

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Gender at the Museum

An overview and discussion of gender diversity representation in museums



Tom Alex Steenkist

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Gender at the Museum

An overview and discussion of gender diversity representation in museums

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Contents

List of tables & figures 5
List of appendixes..... 5
1. Introduction 6
1.1. Research problem 7
1.2. Research questions..... 7
1.3. Approach 7
1.4. Thesis structure 8
1.5. Terminology..... 8
2. Background 10
2.1. Queer theory 10
2.2. Queering the museum..... 12
3. Methodology..... 15
3.1. Web-based and literature research 15
3.2. Survey 16
3.2.1. Structure of the survey..... 16
3.2.2. Survey questions 17
4. Results 19
4.1. Web-based research results..... 19
4.2. Survey results 24
5. Discussion 28
5.1. Assessment of individual exhibitions 28
5.2. Comparing exhibitions..... 37
5.3. Gender and feminism in museums 40
5.3. Is it enough? 40
6. Conclusion..... 42
6.1. Answering research questions 42
6.2. Further recommendations 43
Abstract 45
Literature..... 46
Appendix 51

List of tables & figures

| | |
|--|-------|
| Table 1. <i>Overview of gender focused exhibitions.</i> | p. 19 |
| Figure 1. Results question 1 - <i>Do you identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community?</i> | p. 25 |
| Figure 2. Results question 2 - <i>Do you identify as transgender, non-binary or any other gender-nonconforming identity?</i> | p. 25 |
| Figure 3. Results question 3 - <i>Do you have any transgender, non-binary or otherwise gender-nonconforming relatives/friends/colleagues?</i> | p. 25 |
| Figure 4. Results question 6 - <i>Do you think there is enough positive representation of gender diversity in museums?</i> | p. 26 |

List of appendixes

| | |
|--|-------|
| Appendix i. <i>Survey preview.</i> | p. 51 |
| Appendix ii. <i>Survey results.</i> | p. 56 |

1. Introduction

Intolerance and hate towards transgender people, including non-binary and other gender-nonconforming identities, in (western) society has increased significantly in recent years and sadly this is not a case where it only seems this way because of negativity bias in the news and other forms of media. In recent years, transphobia is reported to have increased in the US (Carlisle, 2021), the UK (Brighty-Potts, 2023) and even here in the Netherlands (Transgender Netwerk, 2022). Diving into a detailed explanation as to why this is right away would derail this thesis before it even starts, but when following the news and online discussions on transgender rights it quickly becomes clear that the spread of misinformation and hate by far-right politicians and media figures play a significant role. For example, the 2023 election plan of Forum voor Democratie (a Dutch far-right political party) states that puberty blockers have irreversible, negative effects on transgender youth and they use that statement to argue against providing them with gender affirming care (Forum voor Democratie, 2023, p. 33). This 'fact' is used many times across far-right media for the same purpose, but a source is rarely provided and a simple Google search quickly reveals it to be untrue (Mayo Clinic staff, 2023; Transvisie, 2023).

Another example is how the far-right often labels any discussion of LGBTQIA+ topics in schools as a form of indoctrination and in the US we see this sentiment effecting public education in the form of book bans and censorship in schools (Mizelle, 2023). The state of Florida has received much attention in this regard, but it is far from the only example as Texas, Missouri, Utah and South Carolina have been banning significant amounts of books from school libraries as well (Meehan & Friedman, 2023).

Misinformation and censorship are just two of the many things that the transgender community, and LGBTQIA+ community as a whole, are facing in our fight for acceptance and understanding. While these examples may be depressing, they are exactly the type of things where museums have the potential to make a significant positive impact and they serve as the necessary context to show why it is so important that museums make use of that potential. Museums play a pivotal role in the construction of our culture and thus have considerable societal influence (Wallis, 1995, p. 39). The aim of this thesis then, is to provide an overview of the ways in which museums engage with the public on the topic of gender diversity through their exhibitions, compare these exhibitions and discuss if they are doing enough to promote more acceptance and understanding towards the transgender community.

1.1. Research problem

Museums, as a form of public education, provide a great opportunity to help reduce the spread of misinformation about transgender people and possibly even circumvent censorship of LGBTQIA+ topics in other educational platforms by providing an alternate educational medium. Exhibitions are arguably the main way for museums to communicate large themes like transgender rights to the public and there are already examples of exhibitions which covered the topic of gender and gender diversity, but they all do so in different ways and might have different target audiences as well. How does a more science focused exhibition like *Phallus: Norm & Vorm* at the Universiteitsmuseum Groningen compare to one that is more culturally focused like *What a Genderful World* in the Wereldmuseum Amsterdam (formerly known as the Tropenmuseum)? And what about art exhibitions like *Kiss My Genders* at the Hayward Gallery in London? To understand the societal impact museums can have on this specific topic, and to make effective use of it, it is important to compare the different approaches of these various exhibitions from the perspective of the needs and wishes of the LGBTQIA+ community.

1.2. Research questions

Main question;

- Are museums doing enough to engage with the public on the topic of gender diversity?

Sub questions;

1. How do museums currently approach the topic of gender diversity?
2. How does the LGBTQIA+ community view the ways in which museums approach the topic of gender diversity?
3. How would the LGBTQIA+ community like to see museums approach the topic of gender diversity?

1.3. Approach

The research questions will be answered primarily through literature and web-based research. For sub questions 2 and 3 a survey was distributed through social media, in this survey members of the

LGBTQIA+ community and its allies were asked about their experiences in museums with regards to the representation of gender diversity and what they would like to see in an ideal museum exhibition on this subject. While the focus of this thesis is on gender diversity specifically, the LGBTQIA+ community as a whole is generally more accepting and aware of issues surrounding gender diversity and transgender rights. By distributing the survey to the wider community it could reach the friends and relatives of transgender people as well, who may provide additional insight or serve as a voice to transgender people who may not be in a position to fill in the survey themselves.

An understanding of the theoretical discussions around gender and the way that these are applied in museums to be more inclusive and to engage with the public on this topic is necessary as context to the discussion within this thesis. To that end, the background chapter provides a general overview of queer theory and of what queering entails within the context of a museum.

1.4. Thesis structure

In chapter 2 I present a general history of queer theory and its current political opposition, with a specific focus on ideas about gender, and I also go into detail about queering as a museum practice to provide the context needed for this thesis. Following this I go over the methodology used in the web-based research and the design of the survey in chapter 3. The results of this research is then presented in chapter 4 and subsequently further discussed in chapter 5. Finally, in chapter 6 I present the conclusions of this thesis by answering the research questions and I also provide recommendations for further research in this chapter as well.

1.5. Terminology

I will briefly clarify the ways 'gender', 'transgender' and 'queer' are understood and used throughout this thesis as these terms may not be familiar or well understood by everyone. The following definitions are adapted and expanded from the LGBTQIA+ terminology resource *homosaurus.org* on the basis of my own experience and understanding as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community. I also recommend *homosaurus.org* as a starting point if you encounter any other LGBTQIA+ terminology in this thesis or elsewhere that you are unfamiliar with.

Gender is a label or social role which is constructed from the cultural interpretation of physical characteristics of the human body. Specific gender labels and their social implications vary from culture to culture and even from person to person as the way in which an individual's appearance

and behavior are interpreted by others may not reflect how that individual experiences their own gender identity (Homosaurus.org, 2022a).

Transgender is used as an umbrella term to describe someone who does not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth (Homosaurus.org, 2022b). This includes; binary trans people (i.e., people who identify as the gender opposite of the one they were assigned at birth) and non-binary people (i.e., people who identify as somewhere in between or outside of the male-female binary, or who's gender identity is not fixed). The term used to describe people who do identify with the gender they were assigned at birth is **cisgender** (Homosaurus.org, 2022c).

Queer is contemporarily used as an umbrella term for identities which fall outside of heterosexual and cis-gendered societal norms (Homosaurus.org, 2021). It is often used as a quicker and simpler alternative to using the entire LGBTQIA+ acronym. For example, using 'queer people' instead of 'members of the LGBTQIA+ community'. An individual can also label themselves as queer, either in general or specifically in their gender or sexual identity, to avoid the use of any specific labels for various reasons.

2. Background

In order to make this thesis accessible and understandable for a wide variety of scholars I will use this background chapter to provide the basic context that everyone should be aware of when reading this thesis. In addition to the situation described in the introduction I believe that it is important to have a general understanding of queer theory, its history, its political oppositions and of the ways in which museums apply queer theory to introduce queer topics and perspectives to both themselves and their visitors.

2.1. Queer theory

Queer theory, as the name implies, is a field of critical theory that has a strong focus on queer identities and experiences, i.e., identities and experiences which fall outside of the heterosexual and cisgender norm (Buchanan, 2018). The Oxford Dictionary of Critical Theory (second edition) describes queer theory as “*A post-structuralist approach to the analysis, documenting, history, and understanding of human sexuality.*” (Buchanan, 2018, Queer Theory). I would expand this description to explicitly mention gender alongside sexuality as they are two separate aspects of identity whose relationship and construction are primary interests of queer theory (Watson, 2005, pp. 67-68). At the very core of queer theory and its questions regarding identity, however, is the question of why some identities, and differences in identity, seem to matter more than others (Turner, 2000, pp. 1-3). In the 1940’s and 1950s critical theorists were asking questions about normality and identity, by the 90s these questions were deeply entrenched in academia and it was during this time that queer theory made its first appearance with an article by Teresa de Lauretis (Watson, 2005, p. 69). Queer theory was built largely on the framework provided by French philosopher Michel Foucault and her work on how identity is culturally constructed rather than a of part of an ahistorical human nature (Watson, 2005, pp. 69-70). However, equally important to the emergence of queer theory as these theoretical ideas by Foucault and others are their contemporary liberal political movements, particularly feminism. In turn, queer theory also started to greatly influence political activism around LGBTQIA+ rights during the 80s and 90s, especially through the constructionist vs essentialist debate about identity either being culturally constructed, as Foucault argued, or part of human nature (Watson, 2005, pp. 69 and 71). This constructionist vs essentialist debate was further problematized by Eve Sedgwick, who found the debate to be too focused on questions of identity itself and emphasized the variability of human experiences (Watson, 2005, pp. 72-73).

Queer theory and feminism are closely intertwined, especially when it comes to gender. Feminist scholars revealed the variability of women's lives, and thus also of the label 'woman' itself, as they studied historically significant women to bolster their claims of equality (Turner, 2000, pp. 83-84). Three notable feminists, Lauretis, Foucault and Sedgwick, who have been essential in pioneering queer theory have already been mentioned. However, there is one more who simply cannot go unmentioned when discussing queer theory, especially when focusing on the subject of gender, and that is Judith Butler. In one of their first published works Butler (1988) argues that gender is indeed culturally constructed through performative acts. Butler even goes on to state in their famous (or infamous, depending on who you ask) book *Gender Trouble* that 'sex' too is socially constructed, arguing that sex is a political category rather than a natural one (Butler, 2002/1999, p. 161). In the boldly titled video essay *I Read The Most Misunderstood Philosopher in the World*, Philosophy Tube (2024) producer Abigail Thorn notes how Butler's work is often misunderstood and that one aspect of this is a misunderstanding of how Butler uses the word 'performative'. People tend to think that Butler means that gender is a performance where you can just choose to be anything you like. But Butler uses the word 'performative' as a technical philosophy term to describe something that is constructed by doing it, and in this way they mean that a gender is something you 'do' to become it rather than a performance which you act out (Philosophy Tube, 2024, 00:06:56-00:08:55). Another important misunderstanding of Butler's work is that 'biological sex' does not exist if sex and gender are both culturally constructed, but that is not what Butler meant. Instead, what they meant is that biological sex can only be studied and discussed through the cultural lens of gender and that, for example, the assignment of biological sex at birth is not merely a factual description of human anatomy (Butler, 2024, *Introduction*, para. 50; Philosophy Tube, 2024, 00:18:03-00:20:33).

Of course, all this critical theory does not exist in a vacuum and queer theory itself is far from a monolithic academic field. And yet, it is treated as such by those who are politically opposed to it (Butler, 2024, *Introduction*, para. 1-2). This opposition takes the form of the 'anti-gender' movement and it provokes exactly the kind of attitude against transgender people which sparked the writing of this thesis. Thus, for the purpose of providing context, I want to extend this chapter into a brief explanation of what makes this anti-gender movement perceive queer theory as a threat by summarizing a few key points from Butler's new book *Who's Afraid of Gender*, which covers this topic in great detail.

The anti-gender movement often labels the ideas about gender in queer theory as 'gender ideology' and the exact way this gender ideology is framed as a threat is highly variable, from concerns of national security to an attack on traditional family values and heterosexuality which would open the floodgates to all kinds of sexual perversions (Butler, 2024, *Introduction*, para. 2-3). Even some (self-

proclaimed) feminists rally behind the anti-gender movement and ally themselves with the political far-right (who are not exactly known for their support of women's rights) because they believe that gender ideology denies the existence of biological sex (Butler, 2024, *Introduction*, para. 35 and ch. 5, para. 1-2). All of these fears that various far-right political groups have, however contradicting some of them may be, are contained within what Butler (2024) calls the 'gender phantasm'. The gender phantasm demonizes 'gender' as the cause of these various fears and turns it into a variable phantom threat that, through the phantasm, is perceived as a real attack on how the far-right believes the world should be and which justifies their own attacks on minority groups as a form of self-defense (Butler, 2024, *Introduction*, para. 5-17, 26 and 46).

What makes this situation especially tricky is the fact that people who are stuck in the gender phantasm will not listen to reason or think critically. Because these people view questioning traditional notions of gender, sex and sexuality as an ideology they will not engage in any meaningful way with queer theory for fear of being indoctrinated or out of pure principle (Butler, 2024, *Introduction*, para, 30-33). This even applies to the anti-gender feminists who label themselves as 'gender critical', they misunderstand what it actually means to think critically in academia (Butler, 2024, *Introduction*, para. 35). So, what can be done against this willful ignorance? How do we put queer theory into practice in a way that will foster a more understanding and accepting society? There is likely no singular answer to those questions, but making use of the influential position museums have within society might be a step in the right direction.

2.2. Queering the museum

While I will not delve into the deeper discussion about the definition of 'museum' as this is something that goes beyond the scope of this thesis, I will briefly explain what is meant with 'queering' a museum. In a museum context, queering refers to applying queer theory to museum practices and collections in order to challenge the established heterosexual and cis-gendered norms within museums (Barendregt, 2017, pp. 3-4; Van den Berg, 2022, pp. 178-179). Traditionally museums have held a position of superiority over the public, they were created by the higher social classes with the idea to uplift the lower social classes and in turn to elevate the average level of sophistication in society (Weil, 1997, p. 257). Of course, this was not the only motivation behind the inception of 'the museum'. Along with uplifting the lower classes, art museums were also meant to keep them away from less desirable forms of entertainment and natural history museums served to perpetuate the superiority complex of western society (Weil, 1997, pp. 258-259). However, a deeper discussion of the role museums played in colonial history and the formation of national identities

goes beyond the scope of this thesis. Nonetheless, the important takeaway is that the history of museums has placed them in a position where they are perceived as authority figures which present objective truths, but the actual truth is that our understanding of the objects on display is shaped by subjective decisions of museum staff (Marstine, 2006, p. 2). Museum official Stephen E. Weil (1997) envisioned a complete reversal of this top-down approach where museums, instead of being a figure of authority, would play a supportive role to their respective communities, and queering is one way museums are making that vision a reality (Barendregt, 2017, p. 23).

Naturally there are certain guidelines and laws when it comes to diversity and inclusion in museums (here in the Netherlands we have the *Diversity & Inclusion Code* and IHLIA's *Queering the Collection* initiative), but I cannot provide a clear-cut guide on how to queer a museum because queering is more of a collection of tools than of a single strategy, and there is no consensus yet on the best way for a museum to use those tools (Van den Berg, 2022, pp. 181 and 184). Instead, I will highlight some examples of strategies and approaches to queering in the context of museums.

In their book chapter on queering the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden in Leiden, Suus van den Berg (2022) suggests an approach to queering which recognizes that issues surrounding gender and sexuality do not exist in a vacuum. When queering is applied incorrectly it could lead to the shallow and performative inclusion of queer identities, the othering of queer people and it can even undermine queering's own goals of disrupting heteronormativity (Van den Berg, 2022, pp. 182-183). Queering can thus be an imposing task for museums which also comes with its own issues and concerns, but the more intersectional approach Van den Berg suggests could help alleviate this by approaching queering from a broad and carefully considered angle (Van den Berg, 2022, pp. 181 and 183-184).

The exhibition *Transmission* in the Amsterdam Museum will be discussed in more detail in later chapters of this thesis, but I want to quickly highlight it here as it is a great example of community engagement as a strategy for queer exhibition making. The close involvement of people from the transgender community in the making of *Transmission* empowered them to share their experiences in a way that gave them full control over how they were represented in the exhibition (Barendregt, 2017, p. 23). This community focused approach also falls in line with the reversal of the power balance between museums and the public which Weil (1997) envisioned.

The exhibition *Homosexualität_en* (which will also be discussed in later chapters) had a very different approach to queering where an established heteronormative narrative is challenged by means of a counter-narrative. The Schwules Museum (a queer community-based museum) and the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin worked together to queer the Deutsches Historisches Museum through the counter-narratives presented in queer collections, a different use of the exhibition space

and even the promotional material for the exhibition itself (Yu, 2018, p. 20).

Queering is not limited to exhibition making either, entire museum collections can be reinterpreted from a queer perspective. For example, the queering efforts of the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden have (so far) been somewhat limited despite the many objects in the museum's collection which are already inherently queer or have the potential to be the starting point for discussions about queerness in antiquity (Van den Berg, 2022, p. 187). As noted before, queerness does not exist in a vacuum, so discussing queerness within the 'regular' context of a museum is of vital importance. Queering objects which are already on display in a museum or included in a museum catalogue can be an effective way to challenge the heteronormativity of both the museum itself as well as its visitors without decontextualizing or othering the queer aspects of those objects. However, the primary focus of this thesis will be on creating an overview of exhibitions about gender and discussing them from a queering perspective, as a more complete comparative study of queering strategies does not fit within the limitations of a master's thesis.

3. Methodology

In this chapter I go into detail on how I performed my web-based and literature research to compile an overview of exhibitions which cover the topic of gender diversity, and to learn how they approached this topic. After this I present the survey questions and describe how the survey was constructed for this thesis.

3.1. Web-based and literature research

In order to compile an overview of gender focused exhibitions I have used Google to search on the internet for such exhibitions through general search terms like 'gender exhibition'. Additionally, I have visited the websites of well-known museums, like the Rijksmuseum or the British museum, and used their own search tool when available or browsed their list of exhibitions. The primary areas of interest were Europe and North America as I am most familiar with these regions and how transphobia is expressed and experienced there. Specifically feminist exhibitions and exhibitions from queer focused museums like IHLIA in Amsterdam and the Museum of Trans History & Art in the US were excluded from the overview. These exclusion criteria may seem counterintuitive as I previously discussed how feminism is deeply intertwined with queer topics in **chapter 2.1** and queer museums are bound to have exhibitions which engage with the topic of gender diversity. However, for the purpose of discussing how museums engage with the public on the topic of gender diversity and how that may reduce hate towards transgender people, it was deemed more important to focus on exhibitions which challenge traditional notions of gender in non-queer specific spaces which may attract a more general audience to engage with these topics.

During my research for chapter 2 there were 3 exhibitions which came to my attention that fit these criteria as well. These exhibitions are; *Transmission, Homosexualität_en* and *How Dare You Make Me Feel This Way*. *Transmission* and *Homosexualität_en* have already been mentioned in chapter 2.1, but *How Dare You Make Me Feel This Way* was brought to my attention by an article which was left unused in the writing of that chapter. These 3 exhibitions were included in the compiled overview of exhibitions as they fit the criteria and would make the overview more extensive.

I have used literature research to gain a better understanding of how museums approach gender diversity as a topic and how this is presented to the public in their exhibitions. This consists of the literature used in chapter 2 on queer theory and queering museums, as well as additional literature used in chapter 5 to further add to the discussion of specific exhibitions and survey results.

3.2. Survey

The aim of the survey was to gather data on the experiences and opinions of the LGBTQIA+ community and its allies with regards to gender diversity representation in museums. It was designed in Qualtrics, which is an online survey making program and was chosen over other survey making programs as it is a professional tool freely accessible to Leiden University students. Qualtrics also provides ample options to protect the privacy and ensure the anonymity of respondents, and it comes with built in tools for data analysis.

The survey was published on the 17th of April 2024, it was distributed over social media and responses were gathered over the course of a month. As the survey is not a crucial aspect of this thesis the minimum number of respondents was not a significant concern. However, the desired minimum of 25 respondents was exceeded and a total of 30 responses were gathered when the survey was closed on the 20th of May. Respondents were able to pause and come back to the survey at a later time but unfinished surveys that were left inactive for 24 hours were automatically deleted. The survey was only available in English and Dutch as my knowledge of any other languages was too limited and automatic translation services were too unreliable for an interpretation sensitive survey such as this one.

3.2.1. Structure of the survey

The survey was designed to take around 10 minutes and opened by informing the respondent of the purpose of the survey, the estimated time to complete the survey, that they may choose to end or resume their participation at any time and that data from unfinished surveys would be deleted after 24 hours of inactivity. This introduction was followed up by 3 demographic questions focusing on whether they are transgender, are otherwise part of the LGBTQIA+ community and/or know someone who is transgender. Standard demographic questions such as age range or country of origin were omitted to keep the survey short and focused, and because such questions would not add any additional value to the gathered data for the purpose of this thesis.

Next were 3 questions about the respondent's experience and motivation with regards exhibitions focusing on the topic of gender diversity. Each of these questions had a follow-up open question asking the respondent to describe their experience or motivate their answer to get complimentary qualitative data.

The last 3 questions were focused on how the respondent would like to see museums approach the topic of gender diversity. After these last questions the respondents were given the chance to leave

any further remarks before closing the survey.

Only the multiple-choice questions were set up to require an answer before moving on to the next section to ensure there are no gaps in the data set, and for all the demographic questions respondents had a 'prefer not to say' option for if they wish to keep this information private. Open questions were not mandatory, but respondents were encouraged to fill them in if they were left blank when moving on to the next section of the survey.

Each section of the survey was presented in Qualtrics as a separate page with a progress bar and arrows to move between sections at the bottom of the page. For a full preview of the survey, see **appendix i**.

3.2.2. Survey questions

Demographic:

1. *Do you identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community?*
2. *Do you identify as transgender, non-binary or any other gender-nonconforming identity?*
3. *Do you have any transgender, non-binary or otherwise gender-nonconforming relatives/friends/colleagues?*

General demographic data like age or specific gender identity was not important as it would add to the overall length of the survey without adding any value to the gathered data. However, establishing the respondent's familiarity with transgender issues was important for the context of the gathered data. While the first question is not specifically about gender-nonconformity, experience tells me that members of the LGBTQIA+ community in general often have a better understanding than non-members on queer topics that go beyond their own specific identity. To reduce risk of misinterpretation, and to accommodate non-binary or otherwise gender non-conforming people who may not feel comfortable using the label 'transgender', I have chosen to formulate the questions in this and other sections of the survey in a way that does not rely on the use of 'transgender' as an umbrella term.

Experience:

4. *Have you recently visited a museum/exhibition which covered the topic of gender diversity in any capacity and if so, was this a positive or negative experience for you?*
5. *Would you like to visit a museum/exhibition dedicated to the topic of gender diversity?*
6. *Do you think there is enough positive representation of gender diversity in museums?*

The aim of these questions was to gather data on respondents their experience visiting, or desire to visit, an exhibition about gender diversity, as well as their opinion on gender diversity representation in museums in general. The main purpose of the second question was to still generate data even if most respondents had no experience with museums or exhibitions about gender diversity. Leaving this section at simple 'yes' or 'no' answers was not desirable as this would result in little substance for further discussion, this is why respondents were encouraged to briefly motivate their answers in a text box below each question (for question 4 respondents were asked to briefly describe their experience only if they answered 'yes').

Wants and needs:

7. *Would you visit an exhibition about gender diversity to (further) educate yourself or someone you bring along?*
8. *Which do you think is more important for a museum to focus on with regards to gender diversity?*
9. *What topics would you like to see covered in an exhibition about gender diversity?*

These questions are meant to expand on the previous section so that comparisons can be made between the actual experiences of respondents and what they would like to experience or find important with regards to audience engagement on the topic of gender diversity in museums. The first question aims to establish how many of the respondents would actually visit an exhibition for the purpose of public education. The second question aims to establish what respondents find more important, representation and validation, educating the wider public or something else which respondents could specify below the question. With the answers to the last question I would be able to compare what respondents would want from an exhibition about gender diversity with what is offered in actual exhibitions.

4. Results

In this chapter I present the results of the web-based research and survey. For the web-based research I provide an overview of the exhibitions that were found which meet the criteria outlined in the previous chapter. For the survey I present the results for each section in a combination of figures and text dependent on which is most suitable for the data being presented.

4.1. Web-based research results

A total of 14 exhibitions were found which meet the criteria outlined in the previous chapter (see **chapter 3.1**), including the 3 exhibitions which came to my attention during the writing of chapter 2. These 14 exhibitions are presented in **Table 1** where they are sorted from most recent to least recent by closing date. A more detailed overview of each exhibition is provided below in the same order.

Table 1

Overview of gender focused exhibition

| Name: | Country: | Date: |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Gender Blender | Denmark | Permanent |
| Unnamed photography exhibition | The Netherlands | Opens July 2024 |
| Love Me Gender | Canada | Closed April 14, 2024 |
| PHALLUS. Norm & Vorm | The Netherlands | Closed February 25, 2024 |
| This Will Not End Well | The Netherlands | Closed January 28, 2024 |
| In Our Eyes | Canada | Closed August 27, 2023 |
| How Dare You Make Me Feel This Way | The Netherlands | Closed May 14, 2023 |
| Seeing Gender | United States | Closed September 5, 2022 |
| What A Genderful World | The Netherlands | Closed January 3, 2021 |
| The Other Side | France | Closed September 12, 2020 |
| Transamerica/n | United States | Closed September 15, 2019 |
| Kiss My Gender | United Kingdom | Closed September 8, 2019 |
| Transmission | The Netherlands | Closed September 18, 2016 |
| Homosexualität_en | Germany | Closed December 1, 2015 |

Gender Blender:

Museum; KØN Gender Museum Denmark, Aarhus

Date; Permanent exhibition

Description; *Gender Blender* aims to make its visitors reflect on what gender means for them as well as society as a whole by presenting them with a wide range of information pertaining to the ongoing gender debate (KØN Gender Museum Denmark, n.d.).

Unnamed photography exhibition about gender expression:

Museum; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Date; Opens July 2024

Description; This exhibition will be part of a larger project at the Rijksmuseum where the topic of gender expression will be explored in the museum collection. MBO (Secondary vocational education) students were asked to send in applications to participate in creating a photography exhibition about gender expressing. The 10 chosen applicants will create the entire exhibition together under the guidance of photographer Bete van Meeuwen and experts from the museum (Brugman, 2023).

Love Me Gender:

Museum; Musée de la Civilisation, Québec

Date; Closed April 14, 2024

Description; *Love Me Gender* aimed to provide its visitors with a perspective of how gender identity changed and evolved across cultures. The Musée de la Civilisation placed heavy emphasis on the current struggles of transgender, non-binary and two-spirited people and the desire of the museum to play a positive role in these ongoing discussions (Musée de la Civilisation, 2023).

PHALLUS. Norm & Vorm:

Museum; Universiteitsmuseum Groningen, Groningen

Date; Closed February 25, 2024

Description; The central theme of *PHALLUS. Norm & Vorm* is an exploration of how societal norms about sex and gender have shaped the biases in scientific research on these topics. The exhibition was designed by the Gents Universiteitsmuseum and moved in its entirety to Groningen shortly after the original exhibition had ended (Universiteitsmuseum Groningen, 2023). I have chosen to highlight the Groningen version of the exhibition as I visited this version myself and I can thus discuss it in more detail in the next chapter.

This Will Not End Well:

Museum; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

Date; Closed January 28, 2024

Description; *This Will Not End Well* is the first solo exhibition of film maker and photographer Nan Goldin. The exhibition features many of Goldin's slideshows, most notable in the context of this thesis is *The Other Side* which is described as a tribute to gender diversity. Goldin uses her work to make taboo subjects, like LGBTQIA+ rights, open to discussion and uses the slideshow medium to constantly edit her works to reflect her changing worldview. *This Will Not End Well* is Goldin's most recent exhibition and it is currently on an international tour organized by Moderna Museet in Stockholm. Stedelijk Museum was the first stop on this tour and the exhibition will move on to the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin from October 2024 to March 2025, Pirelli HangarBicocca in Milan from October 2025 to February 2026, and the Grand Palais in Paris from Mach 2026 to September 2026 (Stedelijk Museum, 2023a).

In Our Eyes:

Museum; Rollins Museum of Art, Orlando

Date; Closed August 27, 2023

Description; *In Our Eyes* approached issues of violence and discrimination based on sexuality, gender and racial identity from the perspective of various contemporary artists. The exhibition aimed to encourage reflection in its visitors on current and historical events while viewing them from the perspective of the featured artists and their work (Rollins Museum of Art, 2023). At the time of writing it is still possible to visit

this exhibition virtually through a 360-degree virtual view available on the exhibition webpage.

How Dare You Make Me Feel This Way:

Museum; Museum Arnhem, Arnhem

Date; Closed May 14, 2023

Description; *How Dare You Make Me Feel This Way* was the second exhibition of the representation project *Ontgrenzen*. Transgender and queer experiences were the central theme to this exhibition and they were presented from the perspective of transgender and queer people themselves (Museum Arnhem, 2022).

Seeing Gender:

Museum; Asian Art Museum, San Francisco

Date; Closed September 5, 2022

Description; *Seeing Gender* explored the Asian Art Museum's collection from a gender perspective and was put together by four emerging curators. The exhibition consisted of artworks from various cultures and periods that exemplify how gender is constructed and depicted in Asian art (Asian Art Museum, 2021). A digital tour of this exhibition is still available through Google Arts & Culture at the time of writing.

What A Genderful World:

Museum; Wereld Museum Amsterdam (formerly known as Tropenmuseum), Amsterdam

Date; Closed January 3, 2021

Description; *What a Genderful World* explored how gender is expressed and experienced across the world in a very playful way. The exhibition took place during a time where gender inclusivity changes were being made in the Netherlands, for example in the way people are addressed in announcements at the train station or inside the train, and thus functioned as a place for the public to educate themselves on gender diversity while also having a bit of fun (Tropenmuseum, 2019).

The Other Side:

Museum; Marian Goodman Gallery, Paris

Date; Closed September 12, 2020

Description; This version of *The Other Side* is different from the version mentioned above in that it is a photography exhibition instead of a slideshow. This version of the exhibition exclusively features black and white photographs of Nan Goldin's friends. In the 1970s Goldin used photography as a way to pay homage to her drag queen friends with whom she frequented the drag queen bar, named The Other Side, in Boston (Marian Goodman Gallery, 2020).

Transamerica/n:

Museum; theMcNay, San Antonio

Date; Closed September 15, 2019

Description; *Transamerica/n* was a contemporary art exhibition of North American art which explores gender expression. It coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, a pivotal moment in the history of LGBTQIA+ rights, and it aimed to be an inclusive experience where people could see themselves represented in the artworks and their stories. theMcNay also claims this exhibition to be the first of its kind in the US (theMcNay, 2019a).

Kiss My Genders:

Museum; Hayward Gallery, London

Date; Closed September 8, 2019

Description; *Kiss My Genders* featured works by artists from across the world who explore gender diversity in various ways. The exhibition was also said to have a sense of activism to it (Hayward Gallery, 2019).

Transmission:

Museum; Amsterdam Museum, Amsterdam

Date; Closed September 18, 2016

Description; *Transmission* was a photography exhibition centered around portraits of a transgender woman called Miep, who named the exhibition. The exhibition was also used as a platform for other transgender people to tell their personal stories through the objects that they themselves chose to be put on display alongside the photography exhibition (Hart Amsterdam, 2016).

Homosexualität_en:

Museum; Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin

Date; Closed December 1, 2015

Description; *Homosexualität_en* was a two part exhibition between the Deutsches Historisches Museum and the Schwules Museum. The exhibition in the Deutsches Historisches Museum focused on the historical aspects of the criminalization of gay, lesbian and gender non-conforming people in Germany, while the exhibition at the Schwules Museum had a focus on contemporary art (Deutsches Historisches Museum, 2015).

4.2. Survey results

Demographic:

The vast majority of respondents (90%) reported to have transgender relatives, friends or colleagues while a minority (23%) identified as transgender themselves. Only a slight majority (53%) identified as part of the LGBTQIA+ community. **Figures 1, 2 and 3** show the full results of each of the demographic questions. The 'prefer not to say' option was not chosen by any of the respondents and is thus not included in the figures for better legibility.

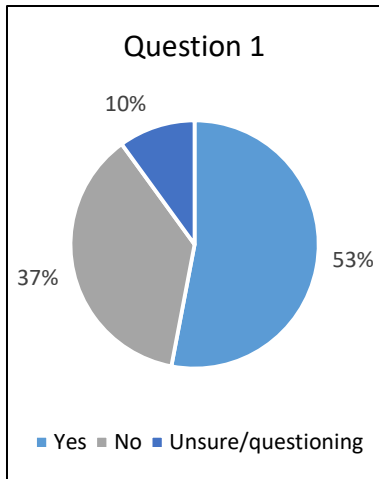


Figure 1. Results question 1 - *Do you identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community?*

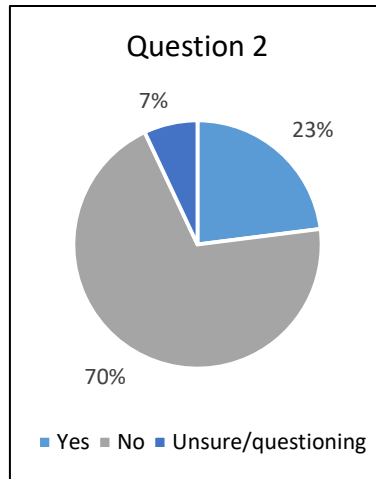


Figure 2. Results question 2 - *Do you identify as transgender, non-binary or any other gender-nonconforming identity?*

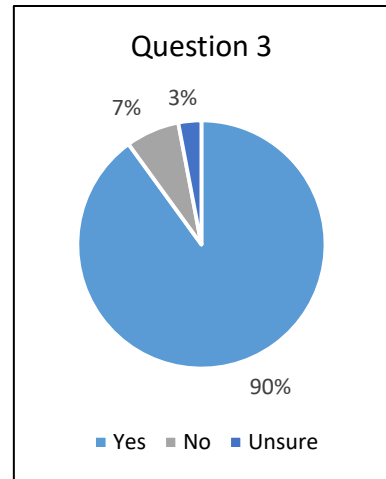


Figure 3. Results question 3 - *Do you have any transgender, non-binary or otherwise gender-nonconforming relatives/friends/colleagues?*

Experience:

Results from question 4 show that only 4 of the 30 of respondents had recently visited an exhibition on the topic of gender diversity, all 4 of these respondents had a positive experience and provided a brief description. 1 respondent simply stated how the experience they had was informative, 1 only stated that they had visited an exhibition of Nan Goldin's ode to her transgender friends in the Stedelijk Museum (most likely *This Will Not End Well*), 1 stated how they were glad to see acknowledgement and representation in the British Museum, and 1 respondent explained how a queer related sculpture was highlighted in a very positive light as part of a queering initiative in Cambridge.

For question 5 the majority of respondents (67%) answered that they would be interested in seeing an exhibition or museum dedicated to the topic of gender diversity and, apart from a single respondent, the remaining respondents (30%) answered that they might want to see such an exhibition or museum.

Every respondent provided a brief motivation to their answer and in these motivations there are 2 returning themes, general or specific interest and the importance of representation. 47% of respondents express a general or specific interest in seeing the topic of gender covered in a museum and 37% of respondents noted the importance of representation for gender diverse people, for discussing the topic of gender within society, or simply because they currently do not see enough of it. Of the respondents who mentioned representation there were 2 who also specifically mentioned the importance of representation being handled in a way that does not result in the 'othering' of queer people. There was a single respondent who mentioned both themes and they have been

counted twice in calculating the percentages, once for each theme. The remaining 20% of respondents had diverging motivations for their answers, ranging from a 'why not' attitude to varying levels of disinterest and a single respondent who did not fully understand the question.

Question 6 shows that half of the respondents believes there is not enough positive representation of gender diversity in museums, and of the other half most respondents were unsure. 2 of the 4 respondents who did believe there is enough positive representation did see room for improvement.

Figure 4 shows the percentages for each response to question 6 separately.

Here too there are 2 recurring themes in the motivations which the respondents provided to their answers, dissatisfaction with the amount and/or quality of representation and an inability to provide a well-considered answer. However, there were 2 non-answers in the motivation section which have been excluded from the total when calculating the percentages of the recurring themes. 61% of respondents who did provide a motivation to their answer noted either a distinct lack of representation or how the representation that is present is unsatisfactory in one way or another. 1 respondent referred back to their motivation for question 5, which fell in line with this theme of unsatisfactory representation and was thus included in calculating the percentage. 2 of the respondents in this theme also mention how specifically cultural museums do not cover the topic of gender enough (yet) and another mentions how art museums appear to be slightly ahead of the curve in this regard. 25% of respondents who provided a motivation to their answer noted how they are too unfamiliar with the topic, do not visit museums often enough or that they simply do not know. In the remaining 14% there were 3 respondents who expressed varying levels of trust in museums to represent gender diversity, and again there was 1 respondent who did not fully understand the question.

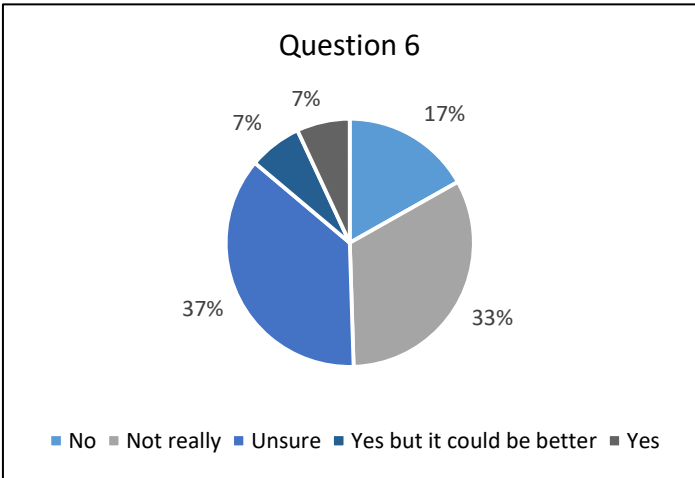


Figure 4. Results question 6 - *Do you think there is enough positive representation of gender diversity in museums?*

Wants and needs:

When asked if they would visit an exhibition about gender for the purpose of education in question 7 the majority of respondents (70%) answered that they would. Only a single respondent answered that they would not and the remaining 27% answered that they might. Respondents were then asked in question 8 if they find it more important for a museum to focus on representation and validation or educating the wider public with regards to gender diversity. The majority of respondents (73%) answered that they find a balance of both more important, with only a single respondent finding representation and validation more important and the remaining 23% found educating the wider public more important.

Question 9 was answered by 24 of the 30 respondents, 1 of whom answered that they were unsure what they would like to see covered in an exhibition about gender diversity. Thus, a total of 23 is used for calculating the percentages of recurring themes in the answers.

Many of the respondents gave fairly extensive answers, but again there are 2 general recurring themes which can be identified in what respondents would like to see covered in an exhibition about gender diversity, these themes are; education about or the highlighting of specific gender identities and queer experiences, and the coverage of various aspects of the history of gender and queer history in general (both in the recent and deep past). Given the degree of overlap between the responses in both of the recurring themes and the detailed nature of many of the answers, I believe that attaching a percentage to these themes or further dividing the answers would be somewhat arbitrary and require more interpretation than what is appropriate for this chapter.

Further remarks:

There were 3 respondents who left a remark after having answered all the questions of the survey. One of them mentioned how the survey made them aware of a gap in their knowledge on the survey subject, another mentioned how they meant all transgender people when they used various terms interchangeably throughout the survey and the last of these respondents noted how they found 'gender diversity' to be a rather non-specific term.

See **appendix ii** for the full, unedited results of the survey as presented by Qualtrics.

5. Discussion

In this chapter I will first discuss each individual exhibition before comparing and discussing them more generally, referring back to the survey results where appropriate. After this I briefly discuss the connections between these gender exhibitions and feminist exhibitions separately, followed by a discussion which works towards answering the main question of this thesis by looking back at the discussed exhibitions from the perspective of the survey results and literature.

5.1. Assessment of individual exhibitions

The overview of exhibitions in the previous chapter consists of information gathered exclusively from the exhibition's own web-pages on their respective museums websites, this was done to refrain from any sort of exhibition analysis or discussion and plainly present all the exhibitions I was able to find as research results. To better compare and discuss these exhibitions I will first briefly discuss each individual exhibition on the basis of any additional information I was able to find on them, presented in the same order as the previous chapter.

Gender Blender:

This exhibition may initially appear to fall under the exclusion criteria listed in **chapter 3.1**, as it is hosted by a museum dedicated to gender. However, KØN Gender Museum Denmark was originally known as the Kvinde Museet I Danmark (Women's Museum in Denmark) and many of the exhibitions listed on the museum's website still are primarily focused on feminist themes (KØN Gender Museum Denmark, n.d.; The Women's Museum in Denmark, 2017, p. 1). Because transgender history is explicitly included in the historical timeline of gender presented in the exhibition and there are feminists who support the anti-gender movement, I believe that this could provide a much needed confrontation for those feminist with information which they would otherwise deliberately choose to ignore (The Women's Museum in Denmark, 2017). With this potential challenging of anti-gender feminist views, the inclusion criteria of challenging traditional notions of gender in non-queer specific spaces was stretched to include this specific exhibition as well. The degree to which transgender history is included in the exhibition is not known to me as I have not had the opportunity to visit this exhibition myself and no virtual tour is available. However, the apparent dedication to contributing to the current gender debate and inclusion of what appears to be a black and white photograph of a

drag queen in the press release, as well as a list of symbols of various gender identities in the exhibition poster, would suggest decent level of representation of gender diversity (The Women's Museum in Denmark, 2017, pp. 1-3).

In terms of community engagement this exhibition does appear to use a relatively top-down approach when it comes to presenting its information on the history of gender, but there is some level of community interaction and contribution within the exhibition in the form of polls, archives and artistic expression (The Women's Museum in Denmark, 2017, p. 2).

Unnamed photography exhibition about gender expression:

As this exhibition is still in production there is not much I can discuss about its contents. None the less, a deep level of community engagement and even empowerment is apparent from the call for students to participate in the making of the exhibition. Other than being a student in one of the lower levels of the Dutch education system, there were no requirements to the participation and the students would receive lessons on everything they need to know for the making of the exhibition (Brugman, 2023). This way the Rijksmuseum actively empowers the 10 students that were chosen by not only providing a platform for them to express their gender experience but also giving them the tools and knowledge on how to do so regardless of their level of experience with photography or exhibition making. This kind of active empowerment falls very much in line with the vision Weil (1997) had of museums fulfilling a more supportive role within their community.

Love Me Gender:

With this exhibition the Musée de la Civilisation appears to have taken it onto themselves to educate the public on the great variety of gender identities in response to the persistence of gender-based violence. *Love Me Gender* eased its visitors into the complexity and diversity of gender by beginning with familiar concepts after which visitors were invited to learn more about the diversity of gender identities and their history, resilience and contributions to society (Cision, 2023). The museum also provided a guide, which is still available on the exhibition web-page, with a list of terminology and resources primarily aimed at people who want to be a good ally to the transgender community (Musée de la Civilisation, 2023).

Love Me Gender is an excellent example of a respectful and informative way to educate the public through the means of an exhibition. Especially the fact that it did not throw its visitors in the deep end, so to speak, helped to keep the exhibition approachable. While I imagine this exhibition primarily attracting visitors who seek to educate themselves and not those who are stuck in the

phantasm of the anti-gender movement, I believe that this is still a worthwhile target audience which is reached very effectively by this exhibition. I do have some concerns about how this approach to an exhibition about gender might have the unintended effect of othering transgender people, but those concerns are mitigated by the apparent emphasis at the end of the exhibition on the cultural contributions of transgender people in a shared society (Cision, 2023).

PHALLUS. Norm & Vorm:

Since I had the chance to visit this exhibition myself I will be discussing it on the basis of first-hand experience.

PHALLUS. Norm & Vorm consists of 5 different sections which were clearly defined within the exhibition by numbered wall texts that introduced each section. As the title of the exhibition already suggests, the penis and the disproportional attention it has received in multiple fields of scientific research was a recurring theme in the exhibition. This strong focus on the penis in research on sex and gender was challenged in the first 2 sections (titled *Key* and *Man*) by showcasing the complex reality of biology and how unremarkable the human penis actually is. The 3rd section, *Pleasure*, challenged the focus on penises in research on sexual pleasure by highlighting how much research has already been done on the penis while research on the clitoris is still in its infancy. Section 4, *Benchmark*, did not directly challenge any specific focus on the penis but instead challenged the objectivity of scientific observation and measurement by highlighting social influences in the measurement of average and ideal penis sizes. The 5th and final section, *Desire*, had a more cultural focus than the other sections as it explored how people tend to see penises in almost anything by showcasing cultural and natural objects with intentional and unintentional phallic shapes.

While the opinions of the museum and exhibition curators did shine through in the tone of the exhibition (the general message being that sex and gender are complex things and that research on them has been rather one-sided), it was presented in such a way that the museum does not come across as an authority figure which lectures its visitors on an objective truth. Instead, the exhibition served more as a stage for many scientific voices which the visitor could listen to so they may come to their own conclusions. This approach, and the strong scientific focus of the exhibition, gives it the potential to actively change the minds of people who do not support the transgender community through a kind of guided self-reflection. Popular far-right media figures like to emphasize the importance of facts, and *PHALLUS. Norm & Vorm* was full of them. The exhibition itself held up a mirror to the visitor which showed them the fallacy of traditional ideas about sex and gender and the visitor's own assumptions may even be challenged if they decided to visit the gender-swapped restroom. The fact that the restrooms are gender-swapped was not immediately apparent, there

simply was a door with a giant vulva painted on it and another door with a giant penis, but the presence of a urinal behind the vulva door made it clear which was supposed to be which. Given the intensity of public debate on who should be allowed to visit which restroom, this was bound to make some people stop and think. Additionally, there was also a prototype of a diagnostic tool designed by medical students for medical professionals to better understand the sexual and gender identity of their patients. This tool consisted of a self-test in which visitors were asked to reflect on various aspects of their sexual and gender identity, with many of the questions being answerable on the basis of a slider rather than boxes to be checked. For straight and/or cisgender people these questions could provide some self-reflection on aspects of their identity which they might not give much active thought. And if visitors are left with questions about terms or subjects discussed in the exhibition, or even about themselves, the exhibition booklet (which could be kept after the exhibition for a small fee) features a terminology list and links to other helpful resources.

This Will Not End Well:

This exhibition is difficult to discuss within the context of this thesis because it is an art exhibition from a single artist. In that sense, the museum itself plays a less active role in shaping the narrative of the exhibition and instead functioned more as a messenger of the visions and intentions of the artist. However, the Stedelijkmuseum does give Goldin a lot of praise for her work, not only for its artistic value but also for how it makes heavy social issues (such as those faced by the transgender community) more approachable and the exhibition includes Goldin's series *The Other Side*, which is an homage to her transgender and drag queen friends (Stedelijk Museum, 2023a, 2023b). This specific series, combined with the humanizing character of Goldin's work and the context of her other works, has the potential to show visitors an angle to the transgender experience which they might not have considered before.

In Our Eyes:

I interpret the decision of the Rollins Museum of Art to display artworks from its collection which cover topics of gender, race and sexuality, as well as the discrimination and violence that comes along with those topics, all together in a single exhibition as an awareness of the museum that these topics are often more deeply interconnected than they may seem at first glance. As stated on the exhibition page, the exhibition aimed to start a dialogue between the various artworks and have the visitor reflect on their contemporary and historical context (Rollins Museum of Art, 2023). While most of the labels of the artworks are unintelligible in the 360 degree virtual view due to the limited

resolution, I was able to discern from the ones that I could read that the museum indeed lets the artworks and their artists speak for themselves. With this approach the museum became more of a medium for these stories to be presented to and reflected upon by the visitor. Thus, this exhibition is a great example of how a museum could queer its existing collection through the queer nature and context of various works in that collection.

Through a QR-Code below the introduction wall text and link on the exhibition web-page the museum also provides a list of support resources for those who need them or may have been triggered by the subjects on display.

How Dare You Make Me Feel This Way:

This exhibition is an excellent example of community engagement as the Museum Arnhem invited a group of people from the transgender and queer community to come together to discuss the various aspects of the transgender and queer experience (Museum Arnhem, 2022). The group selected artworks from the museum collection and outside of it which they found important as transgender and queer individuals and which related to the topics they discussed together with the project lead. Central to *How Dare You Make Me Feel This Way* was the representation of transgender and queer people, but instead of a focus on the hardships many of us face the exhibition focused on a celebration of the joyous aspects of the transgender and queer experience (Museum Arnhem, 2023). This gave transgender and queer visitors an experience of representation and validation, and showed cisgender and straight visitors that being transgender or queer is not defined by hardship.

Seeing Gender:

The aim of this exhibition was to contribute to the contemporary debate around gender by showing the variability of gender expression across time and cultures through the Asian Art Museum's collection. Community engagement for *Seeing Gender* takes the form of an advisory committee of local artists and academic professionals on the topic of gender (Asian Art Museum Press Office, 2021).

I was able to get a good sense of the exhibition through the virtual tour on Google Arts & Culture as well as the extensive documentation in the digital press kit, which is publicly available via a link in the above cited article on the Asian Art Museum's own website. While the exhibition itself did not go as far beyond the male-female binary as I had initially expected from the promotional material, the ways in which it did are interesting from a representation and education perspective. *Seeing Gender* approached gender as a more nebulous concept than specific gender labels or categories, it did use

gendered language but in my experience it did so to explain the dynamic forms of gender in contemporary terms and not to impose those contemporary terms onto the artworks which feature them. When artworks feature gender expression which does step outside of the boundaries of a binary gender system this was explicitly mentioned and explained, but in a similar way and within the same cross-cultural context as all the other forms of gender expression featured in the exhibition. This way *Seeing Gender* avoided othering non-binary forms of gender expression by treating all forms of gender expression as part of the same fluid concept. I believe that the exhibition achieved its goal of contributing to the ongoing gender debates in society and that it did so in a non-confrontational way. As discussed in **chapter 2.1**, people within the anti-gender movement often feel as though their worldviews are under attack, but *Seeing Gender* did not directly deconstruct or 'attack' more traditional forms of gender expression. Instead, it showed that various forms of gender expression can, and do, coexist and that a more fluid, general concept of gender is not something new or exclusively western. In this sense, the exhibition is a strong example of queering a museum collection in a way that implements queer identities into the museum's narrative in a non-superficial way and which is made permanent through the extensive digital documentation of the entire exhibition.

What A Genderful World:

A recent article in the *Journal of Material Culture* by the curator of this exhibition, Fanny Wonu Veys, goes into great detail on the structure of the exhibition and how it came to be. Veys (2023) demonstrates a deep understanding of the themes discussed in **chapter 2** as well as the discussions around gender in the Netherlands specifically. Hence, in my discussion of *What A Genderful World* I will not rehash these points of Veys' article and I will instead focus on the curatorial decisions and the exhibition structure.

The original proposal was for an exhibition about women which would coincide with the 100 year anniversary of Dutch universal suffrage (Veys, 2023, pp. 609-610). However, while considering this proposal the exhibition team's line of thinking soon followed parallel to that of the feminist scholars which had gone before them and which would pave the way towards queer theory, leading to the decision to shift the exhibition focus from women to gender as a whole (Veys, 2023, p. 611). Before this decision was reached it was clear that the Wereldmuseum's (then still called the Tropenmuseum) management team was aiming for an exhibition specifically about women, but the exhibition team ran into questions of what defines a 'woman' and who that should include or exclude (Veys, 2023, p. 611). Moreover, the past feminist exhibitions which the women's exhibition was to build on top of had a very traditional and western focus that excluded transgender women (Veys, 2023, pp. 610-611). To keep the exhibition team on track with this new complex topic they

decided to utilize community engagement in the form of an advisory board with a varied array of expertise and personal experience (Veys, 2023, p. 612).

The structure of *What A Genderful World* was initially conceptualized to divide the museum space into 3 gender categories; masculine, feminine and non-binary. A more flexible approach was ultimately chosen because of the interpretation of objects and their meanings not always fitting neatly into such restrictive categories, the importance of the other intersectional aspects of gender and because of how othering these 3 categories could be, with the advisory board playing an important role in motivating the final decision for the more flexible approach (Veys, 2023, p. 613). The final structure of the exhibition was divided into 7 sections centered around asking the visitor questions through interactive elements and the objects displayed so they could explore gendered issues themselves, rather than the museum functioning as an authority figure who tells them what to think (Veys, 2023, p. 613). These 7 sections consisted of questions to the visitor about; what they think on a personal level, whether their body determines their gender, how you become a gender, gendered behavior, gender beyond cultural borders, the relationship between power and gender and finally the playfulness of gender (Veys, 2023, pp. 613-619).

Veys (2023) goes on to note the success of *What A Genderful World*, both in making its visitors rethink the topic of gender and in how the exhibition “*contributed to a gendered approach to material culture, enabling to ask different questions to the objects in the collection*” (Veys, 2023, p. 619).

The Other Side:

This rendition of Goldin’s work *The Other Side*, where she documents and celebrates her drag queen and transgender friends, is in the form of a photography exhibition consisting of black and white photographs displayed in a featureless white room (Marian Goodman Gallery, 2020). The queerness of the works barely receives any mention on the exhibition web-page or the press release and the Marian Goodman Gallery appears to be more concerned with the artistic value and reputation of the artist (Coutant, 2020; Marian Goodman Gallery, 2020). Judging by this exhibition, as well as from browsing through the rest of the gallery website, I find the level of queer inclusion at the Marian Goodman Gallery to be superficial at best.

Transamerica/n:

This exhibition was focused on contemporary North American artists and the varied ways in which they express their gender identity, not only going beyond a tradition gender binary but even

specifically celebrating underrepresented social groups both in North American society as well as within theMcNay itself (theMcNay, 2019b). While there does not appear to have been any kind of direct community engagement in the making of *Transamerica/n*, theMcNay does make its political stance clear in that it explicitly supports the LGBTQIA+ community (theMcNay, 2019a, 2019b).

The exhibition was divided into 6 sections but the overarching theme was self-expression, with many of the works being made by artists who are themselves transgender and which challenge the traditional notion of gender being fixed or binary (Burton, 2019, para. 2-3). Even as an art exhibition, *Transamerica/n* had an educational element to it through both the art itself as well as the efforts of theMcNay to be inclusive in its wall texts, and by providing visitors with a glossary of queer terminology (Burton, 2019, para. 5-10). In this sense, theMcNay engaged in a form of queering by means of being inclusive towards its visitors and in the artists it features.

Kiss My Genders:

The central theme of this exhibition was the celebration of the multiplicity of gender in a playful and fluid manner, and it is that playfulness which also makes the heavier themes of LGBTQIA+ struggles explored in the artworks more approachable for visitors. *Kiss My Genders* intentionally had no clearly defined structure or order to the exhibition as part of the message that people can define themselves, regardless of what genitals they have, and that all these different definitions can coexist (Southbank Centre, 2019). A message that appears to have come across well as reviewer Jonathan Jones concludes his review by saying; “*You can’t fail to be seduced by this show’s glorious assault on all of our assumptions. It shows that gender is mobile because we live in our heads, not our biology*” (Jones, 2019, para. 9).

While I cannot find much more information on the making of this exhibition or the motivation behind the curatorial decisions, it is clear from their YouTube video about *Kiss My Genders* that the curators have a deep understanding and appreciation of the themes covered in the exhibition, and the commissioning of artworks for this exhibition could also be read as a form of community engagement (Southbank Centre, 2019). In this sense, *Kiss My Genders* can be seen as queering the Hayward Gallery by actively immersing the gallery and its visitors in queer culture.

Transmission:

As already briefly mentioned in **chapter 2.2**, this exhibition had a deep level of community engagement through the active empowerment of members of the transgender community.

Transmission was the first exhibition in the *Ontmoet Amsterdam* (Meet Amsterdam) project where

the Amsterdam Museum wants to provide a platform for citizens of Amsterdam who are underrepresented in museums by working closely together with them and letting them tell their own stories (Hart Amsterdam, 2015). These stories are largely represented in the exhibition through the objects which transgender people themselves made or chose to represent their stories or stories which are important to them, accompanied by an extensive audio tour which goes into more detail. Another form of representation used in the exhibition is portraits like those of Miep, the transgender woman who gave the exhibition its name and who was the starting point for the entire exhibition (Barendregt, 2017, pp. 21-22). This kind of empowerment allows transgender people to take control of how they are represented and show people who are unfamiliar with the issues that the transgender community faces, both on a personal as well as community wide level, what being trans actually means. While an exhibition like this may not attract visitors with an outright transphobic mindset for them to learn to be more accepting and understanding, it is sure to be an effective method of dispelling common misconceptions and stereotypes about transgender people which the general public may have as a result of misrepresentation in popular media.

Transmission was a strong example of queering through community engagement and empowerment, and it being part of a larger project that seeks to give a voice to underrepresented communities shows a promising level of commitment of the Amsterdam Museum to becoming a museum in service of its local community rather than sticking to the traditional top-down approach.

Homosexualität_en:

The original proposal for this exhibition by the Schwules Museum to the Deutsches Historisches Museum was an exhibition focused on the history of lesbian feminism in Germany, but a broader queer history was ultimately chosen as the subject after conversations between the two museums. This is reflected in the exhibition's title, *Homosexualität_en*, which is a play on words suggestive of the variability and history of the term 'homosexual' (Rottmann and Hacke, 2017, p. 59). The exhibition poster emphasizes the gendered aspect of this further by featuring the androgynous body of performance artist Heather Cassils (Rottmann and Hacke, 2017, p. 57; Yu, 2018, p. 31). There was deliberately no chronological order to the exhibition structure as part of its counter-narrative to the unified national narrative of the Deutsches Historisches Museum, the exhibition was instead divided into 10 sections with different central themes. 9 of these were at the Deutsches Historisches Museum and focused primarily on aspects of queer history in Germany, and 1 additional section was located at the Schwules Museum which focused on contemporary queer issues (Yu, 2018, p. 24). The section at the Schwules museum will not be discussed as it is an explicitly queer museum and thus falls under the exclusion criteria outlined in **chapter 3.1**.

The theme of the 1st section at the Deutsches Historisches Museum centered around queer coming out stories told through the personal objects displayed and videos of interviews, which was followed by a section with a feminist focus (Yu, 2018, pp. 25-26). The 3rd section centered around the queer reinterpretation of artworks whose queerness may have been neglected by historically heteronormative interpretations. Following this was the central section of the exhibition where a vast archive of queer movements in Germany draws attention to the enormous gap in institutional knowledge with regards to queer history (Yu, 2018, pp. 26-28; Rottmann and Hacke, 2017, p. 62). In section 5 visitors were exposed to some of the hatred the queer community has to deal with, followed by a map showcasing the criminalization of queer people worldwide and an area to mourn queer people killed by the Nazis during World War II. And the final two sections covered the gender discourse and the way it affects queer people by showcasing many personal stories in a similar manner to the first section (Yu, 2018, pp. 28-29).

Homosexualität_en is thus a prime example of queering a museum as the Schwules Museum used it to destabilize the established cisgender and heterosexual norms of the Deutsches Historisches Museum through every aspect of the exhibition, from the structure and narrative to its title and exhibition poster. The distinct lack of subtlety and often personal nature of the exhibition would surely have left a strong impact on anyone who visited. Additionally, the exhibition also aimed “to create further dialogue between different museums across various departments (education, collections, and exhibitions) on these topics” (Rottmann and Hacke, 2017, p. 64), indicating a willingness to commit to deeper institutional change beyond a single, temporary exhibition.

While I have attempted to refrain from letting my personal involvement with this thesis topic influence my research to greatly, I do want to add a more personal note to this exhibition specifically. It may be an educational experience for non-queer people to be confronted with the hardship queer people have faced in the past and continue to face today, but for queer people a confrontational approach like *Homosexualität_en* sounds like a possibly triggering experience which requires ample warning beforehand. I did not visit this exhibition, but as a queer person myself I would certainly have wanted the possibility to skip certain parts of the exhibition, especially the hate speech section.

5.2. Comparing exhibitions

The great diversity in gender identities and expressions is reflected in the great variety of ways in which museums engage with this topic. Nevertheless, there are comparisons to be made in, and patterns which emerge from, the overview that I have compiled.

Most obvious is that nearly all of the exhibitions discussed are temporary exhibitions, with the only exception being *Gender Blender*. This may be because temporary exhibitions are a more accessible way for most museums to queer themselves or, in the case of the Deutsches Historisches Museum, be queered by a third-party. Many of the museums discussed do indeed use the temporary exhibition format as an opportunity to explore their own collection from a queer perspective and to contribute to ongoing debates about gender in society. But the relative 'newness' of queering as a museum practice may also play a role, with some of the discussed exhibitions being part of a larger, ongoing project or a way to pioneer these queer museum practices so they can be applied on a deeper, institutional level.

Another clear pattern is that most of the exhibitions were by art museums. The survey results showed that most of the queer community and our allies express the need for a balance between education and positive representation in exhibitions about gender, with perhaps a slightly stronger emphasis on education. While the art exhibitions did tend to lean more into the aspect of representation and activism or validation through art, most also added an educational element to the exhibition by going into detail about the cultural context of both contemporary as well as historic art. There was also some variability between the art exhibitions themselves in how they balanced celebrating gender diversity versus a representation of the hardships the transgender community faces. Compare for example *How Dare You Make Me Feel This Way* with *Transmission*, both center around representation and employ a deep level of community engagement but do so in very different ways. *How Dare You Make Me Feel This Way* is a celebration of diverse transgender identities and there is a sense of pride in it, but *Transmission* lays more emphasis on conveying the hardships the transgender community faces through personal stories. While most exhibitions tend to have a strong emphasis on the hardships rather than the celebration of transgender identities or the playful aspects of gender, I would argue that both of these approaches are equally important as the survey results clearly indicate a dissatisfaction with the level of positive representation and validation of transgender identities and experiences. It is essential in the current political climate to show everyone that there is more to being transgender than hardship.

The cultural and historical exhibitions on the other hand mostly went for a more educational approach and less direct community engagement, but there were far fewer of them. The educational focus and top-down approach are somewhat expected, given the history of cultural and historical museums like the Wereldmuseum Amsterdam and Deutsches Historisches Museum, but why have there been so few exhibitions covering gender diversity in this way? Perhaps the performative nature of gender lends itself more to representation through artistic expression. However, the survey results clearly show a desire of the queer community (and allies) for the coverage of cultural and historical

aspects of gender, and the exhibitions that did engage with these topics showed us how much there is to cover and how little queer history in general is documented in museums. In terms of the ways in which these museums can engage with gender diversity, at least in the form of temporary exhibitions, a kind of triangular spectrum can be observed in the discussed exhibitions. In one corner there is *Love Me Gender*, an exhibition which had a strong top-down approach to educating its visitors about gender diversity but did so in a way which did not immediately overwhelm the visitor. Directly opposite to this was *Homosexualität_en* which, even when only reading about it, was rather overwhelming and confrontational. *Homosexualität_en* also had a less top-down approach and was more keen to present its visitors with many personal stories, which would have added to the confrontational element of the exhibition. Lastly there are *Phallus: Norm & Vorm* and *What A Genderful World* which avoid a top-down approach by inviting their visitors to think for themselves through posing questions and presenting thought provoking information. The actual effectiveness of these exhibitions is sadly something I was not able to test directly in this thesis, but I can make an educated guess on the strengths and weaknesses of each end of this spectrum. As already mentioned when discussing it individually, *Love Me Gender* could have been very effective in reaching those who were already seeking to educate themselves, but the fact that people in the anti-gender movement avoid learning anything about gender diversity like the plague means that they will likely avoid this type of exhibition as well. Of course, this is an audience that would be difficult to reach for most of these exhibitions, but exhibitions like *Phallus: Norm & Vorm* and *What A Genderful World* could serve as a catalyst for conversation between, for example, a transgender person and an unsupportive relative. *Homosexualität_en* on the other hand may be too confrontational for this, as people in the anti-gender movement would likely feel 'attacked' by the exhibition poster alone. However, for people who are simply unaware of the hardships the queer community faces this directness could be very effective in waking them up to it.

The last thing I want to touch on in this section of the discussion is the way community engagement is implemented as a queering strategy. Many of the discussed exhibitions have some level of community engagement, ranging from an advisory board or the commissioning of artists to direct contributions to the exhibition by community members. With how much the transgender community tends to be misrepresented in popular media it is reassuring to see this strategy being implemented so widely and at a seemingly deeper level over time. *Transmission* was the forerunner in this regard as it was the earliest exhibition in the overview where the community had direct control over how they were being represented, with *How Dare You Make Me Feel This Way* and the unnamed photography exhibition at the Rijksmuseum being more recent examples. It is also clear that art exhibitions are more keen on this deeper level of community engagement than cultural or historical

exhibitions, which rely more on advisory boards than direct community contributions to the exhibition itself. Perhaps art museums are more progressive in this sense, or perhaps artistic expression again lends itself more to this deeper community engagement.

5.3. Gender and feminism in museums

Many feminist exhibitions came up in the search results when looking for exhibitions about gender on the internet. Seeing as feminism and queer theory are deeply intertwined, especially when it comes to our modern understanding of gender, this is not entirely surprising. Indeed, some of the discussed exhibitions were originally even proposed as feminist exhibitions which were subsequently broadened to encompass a wider gender diversity in recognition of the intersectionality of these subjects. To this end, KØN Gender Museum Denmark even changed itself from being a women's museum to a more general gender museum. KØN Gender Museum Denmark is one of few to change its name in this way, however, as most women's museums feel the need to keep using the category of 'woman' and keep women as their target audience. Gender museums, on the other hand, cater more towards a wider audience and are less focused on a traditional binary distinction of gender (Clover, 2022, pp. 98-99). For other museums, 'gender' and 'women' may often be grouped together or treated as a single category because of a lack of clarity on (or understanding of) what 'gender' actually entails (Sørensen, *Visibility of women in representations*, para. 2).

My proposal, then, is not for all women's museums to make a similar change as KØN Gender Museum Denmark but for them to at least not be exclusionary to transgender women, and for all museums to approach gender and feminism with an intersectional approach as many of the above discussed exhibitions have done.

5.3. Is it enough?

The effectiveness of exhibitions in changing people's minds on political topics can be put into question by recent research which shows how most museum visitors tend to reaffirm their beliefs on the basis of what they see in a museum (Smith, 2011, pp. 50-52). However, I remain optimistic that engaging with the topic of gender diversity in museums can have a positive societal impact on the public's understanding and acceptance of transgender people. The aforementioned research was done in the context of cultural heritage, and while there is indeed an intersectionality between this and the topic of gender diversity, what makes gender diversity distinct in how the public interacts

with it is that people in the anti-gender movement do not use education or critical thinking to reinforce their traditional views on sex and gender. As discussed earlier, they instead avoid any form of critical thinking which opposes their views, so this means that most people visiting exhibitions which explicitly engage with the topic of gender diversity are people who are already at least somewhat open-minded. Not only could these exhibitions raise awareness in those who were previously less politically concerned with transgender issues, but the effect of museum visitors reaffirming their beliefs could also be taken advantage of to motivate those who already support transgender rights to be more vocal about it as well as arm them with more knowledge and understanding of the subject. The question then remains, are museums doing enough to make that societal impact?

Judging by the survey results, most members of the queer community (and allies) are dissatisfied with the amount of positive representation of transgender identities in museums. They desire to see more representation and validation of specific gender identities as well as historical aspects of gender diversity, with a fairly even balance between education and representation as goal for an exhibition covering these topics. I am pleased to say that of the exhibitions I was able to find which cover the topic of gender diversity, most go a long way to meet these desires. Particularly noteworthy in this regard are the upcoming photography exhibition at the Rijksmuseum, *How Dare You Make Me Feel This Way, What A Genderful World and Transmission*. However, even when accounting for the fact that I likely missed some exhibitions which fit my search criteria, 14 exhibitions spanning 8 years across Europe and North America combined does indeed seem somewhat lacking. Especially when considering that most of these were only temporary exhibitions and that one of them was hosted at a museum with rather lackluster efforts towards queer inclusion. That being said, there does seem to be an increasing awareness of museum officials of the need to queer their collections and with these temporary exhibitions we could be seeing the start of a deeper level of queering in the near future. Some of the exhibitions were indeed part of larger projects or efforts to introduce representation and inclusion of the queer community and other minority groups into their respective museums.

My proposal is for museums to continue these efforts and to start implementing the lessons learned from these temporary exhibitions into the permanent exhibitions and wider museum collections as well.

6. Conclusion

To conclude this thesis I will summarize my findings by answering the research questions, beginning with the sub-questions. On the basis of these answers and my general findings I will provide my hopes for how museums will continue engaging with the topic of gender diversity as well as recommendations for further research.

6.1. Answering research questions

Sub-questions:

1. How do museums currently approach the topic of gender diversity?

Over the past 8 years there have been at least 14 exhibitions across Europe and North America which cover the topic of gender diversity, with the diversity of approaches to this topic only outdone by the diversity of gender expression itself. However, a clear consistency is that nearly all of them were temporary exhibitions, with only 1 of them being a permanent exhibition. Queer (temporary) exhibition making and varying levels of community engagement are the most commonly used strategies to challenge the cis-gendered heteronormativity deeply engrained in museums in a process known as queering. The level of community engagement also appears to be increasing over time, with more recent exhibitions getting the transgender and general queer communities more deeply involved in the exhibition making process.

Transgender issues and gender diversity in (western) society have significant overlap with other subjects such as feminism, sexuality and race. Many museums seem to recognize this, opting for a more intersectional approach to their exhibitions covering the topic of gender diversity.

Lastly, most of the exhibitions were by art museums who tended to approach gender diversity more from an angle of representation and activism, whereas the few cultural/historical museums approached their gender exhibitions from a more educational angle.

2. How does the LGBTQIA+ community view the ways in which museums approach the topic of gender diversity?

The results of the survey set up for this thesis shows that the LGBTQIA+ community and its allies are dissatisfied with the amount and quality of positive representation of diverse transgender identities

in museums, with some individuals specifically pointing out cultural museums and their lack of engagement with the topic of gender diversity in general.

3. How would the LGBTQIA+ community like to see museums approach the topic of gender diversity?

The survey results show that the LGBTQIA+ community and its allies have a clear interest in seeing museums engage with the topic of gender diversity in recognition of the importance of doing so as well as from a perspective of personal interests. The community finds it important for museums to balance educating the wider public with providing a sense of representation and validation for transgender people. In terms of subject matter the community wants to see the representation of specific gender identities and transgender experiences, as well as aspects of gender diversity throughout history and prehistory.

Main question:

- Are museums doing enough to engage with the public on the topic of gender diversity?

There are some exhibitions that did meet the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community and its allies which they identified in the survey results, most notably being the upcoming photography exhibition at the Rijksmuseum, *How Dare You Make Me Feel This Way* at the Museum Arnhem, *What A Genderful World* at the Wereldmuseum Amsterdam and *Transmission* at the Amsterdam Museum. While there is much room for improvement, the overview of gender exhibitions compiled and discussed in this thesis does show that the awareness of and engagement with the topic of gender diversity in museums is improving. These temporary exhibitions could provide the first steps to queering museums at a deeper level, but the lessons learned from those first steps have yet to be applied to permanent exhibitions and museum collections on a larger scale.

6.2. Further recommendations

It is my hope to see museums continue being queered, not only through temporary exhibitions but by applying these practices to permanent exhibitions and museum collections as well. Women's museums ought to include transgender women in their narratives as well and more general museums should follow in the footsteps of temporary exhibitions about gender diversity by

continuing their queering efforts. However, to truly find the most effective ways of fostering more understanding and acceptance of transgender people through the societal impact of museums, more research needs to be done on how people's views and opinions are affected by exhibitions such as the ones discussed in this thesis.

Abstract

Intolerance and hate towards transgender, non-binary and otherwise gender-nonconforming people in (western) society has increased in recent years. The spread of misinformation about the transgender community and censorship of LGBTQIA+ topics in schools are two examples of how the political far-right promotes this trend, but they are also examples of things where museums can have a positive societal impact by engaging with the public about gender diversity. The aim of this thesis is to compile an overview of exhibitions which engage with the topic of gender diversity and discuss if museums are contributing enough to the ongoing societal debates about gender and transgender rights from the perspective of the wishes and needs of the LGBTQIA+ community.

To compile the overview and to learn about how museums approach the topic of gender diversity web-based and literature research was used. To compare the findings of this research to how the LGBTQIA+ community actually wants to see museums engage with gender diversity a survey was constructed in Qualtrics and distributed through social media.

The theoretical study of sexuality and gender (queer theory) is applied in a museum context to challenge established cis-gendered and heterosexual norms in a process known as queering. This queering can be performed in various ways, but the favored strategy in the exhibitions compiled and discussed in this thesis is temporary queer exhibition making with varying degrees of community engagement. The degree of community engagement seemed to be increasing over time, especially in art exhibitions, and there was also a difference between art and cultural/historical exhibitions in how they balance the representation/validation of transgender identities with educating the wider public on gender diversity, with art exhibitions focusing more on representation and cultural/historical exhibitions on education. However, there were few examples of cultural/historical exhibitions which engaged with the topic of gender diversity.

The LGBTQIA+ community and its allies are clearly dissatisfied with the amount and quality of positive representation of transgender identities and experiences in museum, but there is a significant interest in seeing representation of diverse gender identities and historical aspects of gender covered in museums. While there are indeed examples of exhibitions which meet the needs and wishes of the LGBTQIA+ community, they are still relatively few and most of them are only temporary exhibitions. However, there does appear to be an increasing awareness among museum professionals of the need for the queering of museums at a fundamental level and these temporary exhibitions could be the start of this.

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Appendix i – Survey preview

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English

Hello and thank you for taking the time to fill in this survey!
My name is Tom, I am a queer student at Leiden University and I am writing a master's thesis on the topic of gender diversity representation in museums.

The purpose of this survey is to gain insight into how the LGBTQIA+ community and its allies experience, or would like to experience, the representation of gender diversity in museums.

The survey takes about 10 minutes and is entirely anonymous.

You may close the survey at any point if you no longer wish to participate, in doing so your answers will be discarded after 24 hours. Data from completed surveys will be saved and used for research purposes only.

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Firstly a few demographic questions:

Do you identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure/questioning
- Prefer not to say

Do you identify as transgender, non-binary or any other gender-nonconforming identity?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure/questioning
- Prefer not to say

Do you have any transgender, non-binary or otherwise gender-nonconforming relatives/friends/colleagues?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure
- Prefer not to say



English ▼

Next are some questions about your experience with museums:

Have you recently visited a museum/exhibition which covered the topic of gender diversity in any capacity and if so, was this a positive or negative experience for you?

- No
- Yes and it was a positive experience
- Yes and it was a negative experience

If you answered yes, could you briefly describe your experience?

Would you like to visit a museum/exhibition dedicated to the topic of gender diversity?

- No
- Maybe
- Yes

Could you briefly motivate your answer?

Do you think there is enough positive representation of gender diversity in museums?

- No
- Not really
- Unsure
- Yes but it could be better
- Yes

Could you briefly motivate your answer?



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English ▾

These last questions are about how you would like to see museums approach the topic of gender diversity:

Would you visit an exhibition about gender diversity to (further) educate yourself or someone you bring along?

- No
- Maybe
- Yes

Which do you think is more important for a museum to focus on with regards to gender diversity?

- Representation and validation
- Educating the wider public
- A balance of both
- Other (please specify below)

(Other)

What topics would you like to see covered in an exhibition about gender diversity?

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If you have any further comments you can leave them here, if not then you click on the arrow in the bottom right corner to close the survey.

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Appendix ii – Survey results

Q1 30 ⓘ

| Q1 - Do you identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community? | Percentage | Count |
|---|------------|-------|
| Yes | 53% | 16 |
| No | 37% | 11 |
| Unsure/questioning | 10% | 3 |
| Prefer not to say | 0% | 0 |

Q2 30 ⓘ

| Q2 - Do you identify as transgender, non-binary or any other gender-nonconforming identity? | Percentage | Count |
|---|------------|-------|
| Yes | 23% | 7 |
| No | 70% | 21 |
| Unsure/questioning | 7% | 2 |
| Prefer not to say | 0% | 0 |

Q3 30 ⓘ

| Q3 - Do you have any transgender, non-binary or otherwise gender-nonconforming relatives/friends/colleagues? | Percentage | Count |
|--|------------|-------|
| Yes | 90% | 27 |
| No | 7% | 2 |
| Unsure | 3% | 1 |
| Prefer not to say | 0% | 0 |

Q4 30 ⓘ

| Q4 - Have you recently visited a museum/exhibition which covered the topic of gender diversity in any capacity and if so, was this a positive or negative experience for you? | Percentage | Count |
|---|------------|-------|
| No | 87% | 26 |
| Yes and it was a positive experience | 13% | 4 |
| Yes and it was a negative experience | 0% | 0 |

Q4 open 4 ①

If you answered yes, could you briefly describe your experience?

It was informative for me

Glad to see some acknowledgment and representation in the archaeological community. This was at the British Museum in London.

It was the Classical Museum in Cambridge (UK) and queer-related sculpture was signposted with very positive labelling as part of a Queer Cambridge Museum initiative (or something similar). It highlighted how common queerness is in the past, if only we are made aware of it.

Het was een tentoonstelling van Nan Goldin in het stedelijk museum Amsterdam met een ode aan haar transgender vrienden.

Q5 30 ①

Q5 - Would you like to see a museum/exhibition dedicated to the topic of gender diversity?

Percentage

Count

No

3%

1

Maybe

30%

9

Yes

67%

20

Could you briefly motivate your answer?

im interested in learning about people that are different to me.

It would be interesting to learn more

It depends on the type of art and museum presented! For example, I'd be interested in LGBT classical art, highlighting queer people across history. I would not be interested in modern art

I want to know more in terms of scientific knowledge

I think it is an interesting topic and I would like to learn more about it.

I think this problem should get more attention

visibility is important

I feel this is an issue that needs to be discussed more in our society.

I probably wouldn't seek it out, but I'd pay to see it if I was already there.

Waarom niet!

I wrote "maybe" because I'm unsure whether the question refers to a museum that is solely about gender diversity.

Could you briefly motivate your answer?

I would definitely like to see how museums would incorporate this aspect of life.

I think it would be interesting because it is not very common and lies in my interest area as a queer person. Also something about queer history would be fun.

I'd love to visit an exhibition dedicated to gender diversity because I think it's a really interesting subject.

I would prefer such an exhibition to be exhibited alongside rather than separately with more "hetero-normative" themes. I think, outside of specific policy pertaining to LGBTQIA+, portray the community as less separate from other aspects of our lives.

Sounds cool.

Ik zou naar zo goed als alle tentoonstellingen gaan, dus waarschijnlijk wel. Maar het concept van gender in het verleden is niet mijn grootste interesse, dus een museum of tentoonstelling die puur daarover gaat weet ik niet zeker.

It's an interesting topic that is tied up in art and history, seeing that presented sounds nice.

I too am an archaeologist interested in gender studies. I have both non binary and trans friends and family most of whom enjoy discussing my studies and have admitted they appreciate the representation. I believe having more exhibits discussing gender will bring visibility to the queer community by making people feel seen as well as educating others.

It's not something I'm personally super interested in/pay attention to, but I understand the need for it.

I haven't been to a museum dedicated to gender diversity so I would like to see what that would be like.

There are numerous examples of gender-nonconformity throughout history, although I'm not sure whether curators could add representation of these examples in a respectful manner, making sure not to 'other' these peoples while also maybe finding a way to relate it to trans people in the present.

It brings me comfort to see that there are other people like me, both nowadays and in the past.

Ik hou niet altijd van het bezoeken van tentoonstellingen in het algemeen. Ik geloof dat elk onderwerp boeiend kan zijn als het juist wordt benaderd, maar in de basis zijn musea niet mijn favoriete medium om te leren over een onderwerp.

In mijn beleving is dit onderwerp nog te weinig in musea aan bod geweest tot nu toe.

Het zou interessant zijn om te zien hoe andere culturen de rolverdelingen tussen mannen en vrouwen beschouwen. Alleen zou ik dan graag ook naast alleen culture normen en waarden, biologische/wetenschappelijke redenen gepresenteerd willen krijgen. (Niet alleen: mannen zijn jagers.)

Interessant en belangrijk om aan de bredere gemeenschap te laten zien.

Geen behoefte in.

It could provide representation about the past not limited to 'man the active participant' and 'woman the passive receiver of culture'.

Bij Key developments in European Prehistory hadden we het kort over de representatie van gender roles in musea, hoe kleding wordt afgebeeld in bepaalde posters/tentoonstellingen. Zoiets zou wellicht interessant zijn!

Q6 30 ⓘ

Q6 - Do you think there is enough positive representation of gender diversity in museums?

| | Percentage | Count |
|----------------------------|------------|-------|
| No | 17% | 5 |
| Not really | 33% | 10 |
| Unsure | 37% | 11 |
| Yes but it could be better | 7% | 2 |
| Yes | 7% | 2 |

Q6 open - Could you briefly motivate your answer?

dont go to museums often so would lack knowledge to adequately answer the question

I don't see it often

I rarely go to museums

There are not a lot of museums with this topic

Well I just don't know

There are a lot of positive representation, but is not enough

there is a lack of any representation

/

I'm not familiar enough with the topic to say one way or another.

Voor mij is het ietwat onduidelijk wat er precies bedoeld wordt met genderdiversiteit?

In some museums, it exists but still remains rather obscure. In other places around the world, it's completely ignored since it is a heavily debated political issue. I would say that most museums tend to stray away from the topic.

There doesn't need to be an exhibition focused solely on gender to touch on the subject, and I can't say I've noticed much acknowledgement of gender at all.

We have gotten to a place where women are equally represented and queer history is more talked about but not enough still.

I think a lot of museums don't represent enough gender diversity

In the Netherlands, I have not seen much labelling touching upon the topic of gender beyond sometimes highlighting the role of women in the past.

Q6 open - Could you briefly motivate your answer?

I'm not certain that all museums have the material to display evidence of gender diversity, generally I think if they did then they would.

Zoals gezegd weet en doe ik er niet superveel mee, en ik let er ook niet echt op

It's a topic that is generally avoided, so it's not present and if it is, it's brief.

In my experience exhibits when they do discuss the topic of gender it is gender as a binary. The man the hunter, the woman the gatherer. I have yet to see different gender roles represented in a museum. In my personal experience.

I haven't been visiting museums that often recently

I honestly haven't seen any museums dedicated to this topic

From what I have seen at the RMO, wereldmuseum etc., mentions of gender-nonconformity are restricted to singular offhand mentions, or artifacts with barely any context.

I generally don't see a lot of trans people and/or genderqueer/non-binary people. More so than five years ago, but still not a lot.

Ik heb nooit op genderdiversiteit gelet bij het bezoeken van musea. Hierdoor ben ik onzeker over de manier waarop dit vaak wordt weergegeven.

Zie reden hierboven

Ik heb het nooit gemist dus het zal wel goed zitten

Werd vrij weinig benoemd tot heden en nu word er op sommige plekken een switch gemaakt, kunstmusea zijn vaak wel net een stapje voor maar staan op niet echt

Voor de tentoonstellingen waar het nodig voor is, daar wordt het in gebruikt

There's still a lot of focus on their binary gender, or gender is omitted mostly (especially in archaeological museums). But, there are still implicit biases

nee

Q7 30

Q7 - Would you visit an exhibition about gender diversity to (further) educate yourself or someone you bring along?

| | Count | Count |
|-------|-------|-------|
| No | 3% | 1 |
| Maybe | 27% | 8 |
| Yes | 70% | 21 |

Q8 30 ⓘ

Q8 - Which do you think is more important for a museum to focus on with regards to gender diversity?

| | Count | Count |
|-------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Representation and validation | 3% | 1 |
| Educating the wider public | 23% | 7 |
| A balance of both | 73% | 22 |
| Other (please specify below) | 0% | 0 |

Q9 - What topics would you like to see covered in an exhibition about gender diversity?

The history of people being discriminated on the basis of not conforming to traditional gender norms.

Unsure

How to explicitly distinguish between different genders and how should people outside the LGBTQ+ be educated about the community

We should not shame about it. We should respect it

struggles, pride, shame

equality, right to choose

How the institute that studied transsexuality was burned down by the nazis. The medical condition gender dysphoria (the cause of transsexuality) should be discussed as well.

Regarding archaeology, I think it is important to address how these recent political "hot-button issues" are not concepts that are new to history. Gender fluidity is still present in many cultures today and is heavily rooted in tradition, yet mainstream media fails to recognize this.

Overall range of human expression. Expressly stating a sexed skeleton does not correspond to gender (this one feels understood within the community but less so by general public)

Queer history, (ancient or modern), diversity around the world, queer people in the Holocaust or other world events

Non binary gender

To counteract the negatives of being a non-normative gender or orientation, to highlight the positives or at least neutrals of life as someone queer in the past. Also, would love to see perspectives that do not pathologize gender and/or sexual orientation.

This is a broad question to be honest. I think I would like to see some examples e.g. artifacts pertaining to an example of gender diversity. As well as this, something about the position/role of these people within their attributed society.

Ik denk dat transgender in het verleden bijna onmogelijk te onderzoeken is, aangezien er amper over werd gepraat tot deze generatie. Misschien is de het kleine beetje discourse over transgenderisme een leuk uitgangspunt

It's past, specifically it's cultural and historical placement, as well as the colonial roots of our modern gender system and the gender specific violence/oppression there is.

Q9 - What topics would you like to see covered in an exhibition about gender diversity?

How gender identity is a cultural experience and that the concept of what makes man and women is not so easily defined and has in the past and still does vary culture to culture.

Different gender expressions in non-western parts of the world, and in the pre-colonial past, as well as the influence colonialism and the west has had in suppressing gender diversity

I would like to see more attention brought to the 'personal lives' of gender diverse people - not just what social roles they had (or more accurately, were forced into), but exhibits into making them feel human, rather than objects of exoticism or fetishization

Examples of trans binary people and people outside the binary in the past, to 'prove' that it isn't a new thing or a trend, but that genderqueer people have always existed. I feel like this could help make people who are sceptic about non-binary and trans people believe that it's a real thing instead of something young people have made up on the internet. Additionally, I'd like to see people of all ages, ethnicities, and social groups. Both to have all genderqueer people see themselves represented and to show them and cis people that there isn't one way to be non-binary/trans/genderqueer. Wanting to see people of all ages is, like past genderqueer people, to show that it isn't a trend among kids.

Non conforme gender identiteiten/realiteiten

Bij genderdiversiteit denk ik direct aan het verschil tussen mannen en vrouwen aanduiden. En het is een zijde draad waarop je loopt om dat goed te doen, ivm dat die verschillen benadrukken een aferechts effect kan creëren. Desalniettemin, denk ik dat het toch interessant is om juist die verschillen te benadrukken en hoe we in een maatschappij rekening kunnen houden met mannelijkheid en vrouwelijkheid

Basis informatie over trans/nonbinair etc en het effect van dit niet accepteren op kinderen

De historie van gender diversiteit

Beyond the binary, and more focus on what women are doing

Remarks - If you have any further comments you can leave them here, if not then you click on the arrow in the bottom right corner to close the survey.

Geweldig dat je zo'n onderzoek doet! Ik ben er achter gekomen dat ik hier een gat in mijn kennis heb

Wherever I said trans or non-binary or genderqueer people instead of all of them, it is because I didn't feel like typing them all out each time. In this survey, every time I said one of them I meant all of them. And good luck with your thesis :)

Genderdiversiteit vind ik niet specifiek, daarom heb ik de vragen beantwoord op de manier waarop ik het interpreteer