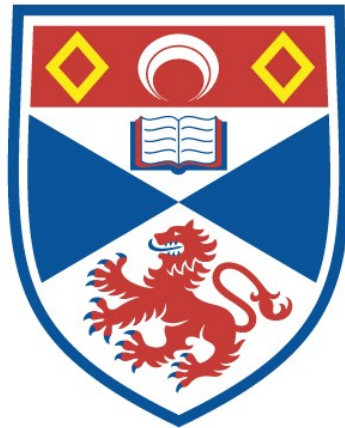


**The rainbow cube:  
a survey of lesbian, gay, and bisexual art  
in contemporary art museums in the  
United Kingdom and United States of America**

Christina M. Conte

A thesis submitted for the degree of MPhil  
at the  
University of St Andrews



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## Abstract

This paper researches the current state of lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists in contemporary art collections. The purpose was to discover if museums collect based on sexuality, and if they change displays in exhibitions to be more open about an artists' sexuality. Gay liberation and homophile movements of the 20th century and queer politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have pushed minority sexualities to the fore of public consciousness, but it is important to define which practices are effective in bringing about meaningful change, and which ones are paying lip service to the politics.

Through a survey sent to institutions in the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, respondents were asked for demographic information about themselves and their institutions, and then longer questions about their opinions on collecting lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists, displaying them, and any feedback they may have gotten from visitors, activist groups, or their peers regarding these works. I had anticipated that opinions would differ based on location, sexual orientation, age, and institutional funding source. In fact, age and location played a larger role than sexual orientation and funding sources. Age groups were important in relation to generational curatorial practices, and location played a role in political and social considerations.

Overall, museums were more likely to take on explicit collection and display of lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists if they had the resources to research their own collections more in-depth or if they could accession newer works to reflect the needs of their communities. Museums are interested in doing the important work of research and exhibition of minority sexualities but find it difficult to devote the time and funding to the massive task. Museums that do not have their own collections, or do not have the resources to update their collections, succeed through programming and events.

## Acknowledgements

I am indebted to the endless support and encouragement of Ann Gunn, Dr. Catherine Spencer, and the School of Art History who believed in this dissertation and me, especially when I did not. Thank you to the museum professionals who took time to speak with me and answer all my questions.

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## Research Data

Research data underpinning this thesis are available at [DOI to be added later]

# Table of Contents

Abstract .....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Why LGBT+ Artists Matter in Museums & Galleries.....	1
Telling LGBT+ Stories in Museums and Galleries .....	2
Terminology and a Brief History of LGBT+ Criminalisation .....	5
Contemporary Literature.....	10
History Museums and Queer Collection.....	10
Censorship and the Museum Stores as Closet.....	14
Methodology .....	26
The Survey.....	26
The Interviews .....	32
The United Kingdom by Nation .....	34
The United States of America by Region .....	39
Re-Thinking Acquisitions at The Gallery of Modern Art.....	46
The First Insight Café .....	47
The Second Insight Café .....	52
The Exhibitions.....	56
Conclusion .....	60
Collections Data at the National Portrait Gallery .....	61
Gay Icons.....	62
LGBTQI Artists in the Collections Database.....	67
Conclusion .....	78
The University Audience at Thorne-Sagendorph Art Gallery.....	79
Thorne-Sagendorph Art Gallery and Keene State College.....	79

Ryan White & Andy Warhol .....	80
Public Institutions and Audience Building .....	83
Conclusion .....	93
Regional Exhibition in Four American Museums .....	94
Queer Abstraction: Groundbreaking Exhibitions .....	95
BRIC: Consistent Public Programming.....	98
Bellevue Arts Museum: Temporary Displays.....	101
Coutts Memorial Museum: Challenges.....	105
The Final Survey.....	107
Conclusion .....	113
Final Thoughts .....	114
The Success of Open Conversation .....	114
Community is Key .....	116
Bibliography.....	120
Images Used .....	133
Appendix A.....	135
The Survey.....	135
You .....	136
Your institution.....	139
Your professional opinions .....	152
Cross-Tabulated Responses .....	166
Responses by Age .....	166
Responses by Gender .....	174
Responses by Sexuality .....	180
Appendix B .....	188
Appendix C .....	194



## Why LGBT+ Artists Matter in Museums & Galleries

In a visit to Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow in the summer of 2017, I happened upon their copy of the statue *Memorial to a Marriage* by Patricia Cronin.<sup>1</sup> The sculpture is of two women (the artist and her partner, artist Deborah Kass) reclined in an embrace. The original is permanently installed in Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx NY, specifically the Cronin-Kass plot. At the time, same-sex marriage was not legal in the United States and would not be legalised nationwide for another 14 years through the landmark Supreme Court case *Obergefell v. Hodges*.<sup>2</sup> Cronin created the sculpture as a reflection on traditional representations of love and the female form in historical sculpture, as well as a commentary on how their love will outlast their lives in a homophobic society. I had not seen it except in a photograph in one of my textbooks, and it brought me joy to see it on public display with the other sculptures, outside of an LGBT-focused exhibition and given as much cultural weight as all the other sculptures.

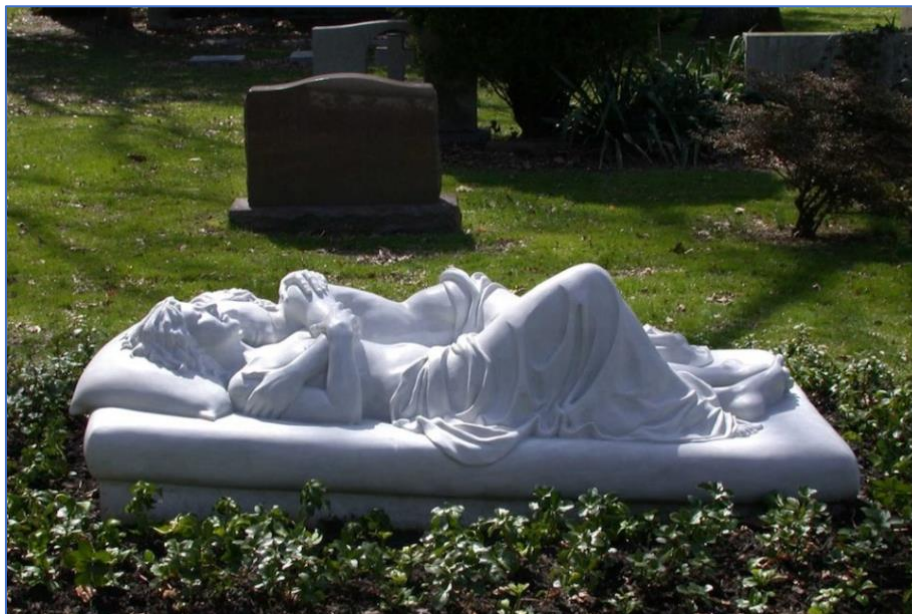


Figure 1-1: Patricia Cronin, *Memorial to a Marriage*, Carrara marble. 2002.  
Cronin-Kass Plot, Woodlawn Cemetery, New York.

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<sup>1</sup> Cronin, Patricia, *Memorial to a Marriage*, 2002. Bronze, 17 x 26.5 x 52 inches. Collection of Glasgow City Council.

<sup>2</sup> *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 576 U.S. \_\_\_\_ (2015).

Shortly after my visit, I went online to the Glasgow Life Museums Collections Navigator to see if I could find this work in their database. I first used the search term 'lesbian,' which yielded three results but none of them *Memorial*.<sup>3</sup> 'Gay' gave 18 results (mostly surnames) and 'homosexual' led to one result. 'LGBT+' showed no results. Not one of these results shown were *Memorial*. I finally used 'Cronin,' which did indeed lead to the sculpture I was looking for. It seemed that search results are returned through the object's description or wall text. This means that of the works and objects available to search through the Glasgow Life Museums Collections Navigator, very few explicitly detail an object as belonging to or having been created by a member of the LGBT+ community. Anyone using the service would have to know exactly what they were looking for if they were searching for an object in the collection. But what if the person searching for these works is someone that doesn't have the words to make that search successful? What is to be gained from collecting art from a lesbian artist, depicting lesbian love, if it is not even a tagged search term in the Collections Navigator? This experience was the catalyst for this dissertation.

## Telling LGBT+ Stories in Museums and Galleries

I am not ashamed to admit this line of enquiry is personal. I came out as lesbian less than six months prior to this visit. I documented the coming-out process as part of my MFA course writing about it and working through it as part of my artistic practice.<sup>4</sup> I live as, and therefore make artwork as, a member of the LGBT+ community. I had done my level best to avoid confronting this part of myself for so long, and this new part of my life raised important questions for me as an artist: would I be satisfied with my work being collected or displayed because I fill a demographic? Did I think it is important for artwork by LGBT+ artists to be on gallery walls with the general population, labelled as such? Would it be important for any viewer to know my work as 'lesbian art' when it is not imperative to understanding my work? Most of my artwork is autobiographical; even so, the small

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<sup>3</sup> At the time of editing and submitting this dissertation, May 2020, the count under 'lesbian' is at sixteen. The bulk of these search results comes from a collection of 'Gay Scotland' magazines that were accessioned into the collection in 2018. Still, *Memorial to a Marriage* is nowhere to be found.

<sup>4</sup> *Art, Society & Publics*, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design at the University of Dundee, 2016-2017. The work featured reflections on my childhood and early 20s in the closet, sexual traumas related to compulsory heterosexuality, and visits to my therapist. This particular body of work culminated in 2 small books including one self-help pamphlet about coming out titled, 'The Young Female Invert's Guide to Discovering Women.'

amount of work that is held in collections has nothing to do with me as a person, lesbian or otherwise. What would I get from a viewer knowing I am a lesbian? More importantly, what would the *viewer* get from knowing it? Would it enhance my work, creating different levels of interpretation, or would it feel hack? My newfound membership within the community I don't have the answers to these questions; the answers just lead to more questions.

Researching gay or queer art is an exercise in frustration. It seems that every week I must add a new artist to my list titled, *Why Didn't I Know They Were Gay?* A better title might be *Why Wasn't I Told They Were Gay?* One of the key functions of a museum or gallery is to educate the population and to contextualise the work of artists within a society or history. I grew up in New York City, where we often take this history for granted. The lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists that worked in New York City are some of the city's worst kept secrets. This doesn't keep larger institutions from leaving pertinent information out in their exhibitions, but this information is particularly important to communities whose histories have been erased from mainstream societal narratives. Sharing the stories in artworks, objects, and artifacts hidden in collections is part of a museum's purpose, so why are we (accidentally or otherwise) obfuscating them?

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore that very obfuscation of the stories of lesbian, gay and bisexual artists. This will be done through surveys, interviews, and historical analysis of prior museum practices. I look to establish that contemporary museum practices are rooted in the prejudices of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This includes criminal prosecution of homosexuality in both the United States and the United Kingdom, reactionary policies from the AIDS crisis of the 80s and 90s, and the pervasive attitude of 'what does this matter?' Reflecting an era where we push for inclusivity and diversity, I argue that knowing the sexuality of an artist matters to a visitor's understanding the work, particularly in a post-modernist method of understanding art history. I also suggest that as museums move away from functioning as a mere collecting body and towards becoming a community space, reflecting the demographics and needs of a community will become more important. Those of a sexual minority are an important and vibrant facet of a community. It is important for lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals to see themselves represented on a wall in a positive way, and it is important to tell their stories and histories to the wider heterosexual community.

I also posit that the responses will vary heavily by certain demographics: age, gender, and sexuality are all major factors in how lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists will be received, but these are not the only important factors.<sup>5</sup> Just as important in informing a curatorial or exhibitions practice is location of the institution, type of institution, and manner of funding. In the United States of America, institutions that are on the East and West Coasts are lauded as more liberal or progressive, whereas their Midwestern counterparts are stereotyped as conservative or regressive. Institutions that have more reliable funding sources (such as a government body in the case of institutions in the United Kingdom) might be more willing to take risks with their exhibitions and collections, whereas a more precariously (or even privately) funded institution may tread more lightly with their exhibition or collection goals.

In my literature review, I will discuss such topics as censorship, highlighting Jonathan Katz's views on 'covert censorship,' which occurs in the archives and collections before the work ever makes it to the wall, and Susan Ferentinos' experiences in historic sites and LGBT collections. I turn to Gavin Butt and his work on American pop artists and their experience of closeting and re-closeting, and Michal Petry's experiences of curating a male same-sex exhibition with an English local council authority. I will then discuss the methodology of my research, including the challenges faced in the survey I conducted: which questions were successful and led to productive conversations, and which accidentally drew ire from my respondents. I also include data analysis for geographic regions of the United States and United Kingdom, as I believe they are incredibly important to go through but cannot find a place for them neatly in a case study.

In my case studies, I address four categories of institutional response in my case studies: databases and networks, acquisition, exhibitions & display, and finally audience.

Databases and networks will focus on the efforts of the National Portrait Gallery in London: how the search engine and database create pathways to discover lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists and portrait sitters, how programming and exhibition of LGB artists can be a regular event without making too much of a fuss, and how a dedicated LGBTQI+

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<sup>5</sup> Race was not considered a factor in this research, as I wanted to avoid potentially stereotyping a respondent and be mindful of my institutional power as a white woman.

staff network helped to drive the programming and database efforts of the National Portrait Gallery. Acquisitions will discuss the collection and public outreach efforts of Glasgow Life, in particular the roundtables and hosted by the Gallery of Modern Art. The chances that Glasgow Life took in their exhibitions, as well as their willingness to grow and learn from their mistakes rather than push back in defensiveness, set an example for the rest of the museum world. Audience focuses on the university gallery, Thorne-Sagendorph, at Keene State College in New Hampshire and their exhibition and events programming for different groups in their local community. Finally, we turn to four American museums and their different community types: the Des Moines Art Center in Des Moines, Iowa and BRIC Arts Media in Brooklyn, New York, both urban; the Bellevue Art Museum in suburban Bellevue, Washington; and the small but mighty Coutts Memorial Museum of Art in rural El Dorado, Kansas.

## Terminology and a Brief History of LGBT+ Criminalisation

To contextualise the case studies, during the second part of this introduction, I will briefly touch the criminalisation of homosexuality. I feel it is a particularly important underpinning to understanding the LGBT+ community and the need to create works coded with same-sex desire. The relatively recent decriminalisation of homosexuality has opened artistic expression of same-sex relationships to the mainstream, but there is still a stigma attached to disclosing such relationships in an institutional sense. When referring to the community at large, I will use the term 'LGBT+.' However, when referring to artists and works in the survey data and institutions, I will use the term 'LGB,' or 'lesbian, gay, and bisexual' as these artists are my focus.

The field of 'queer' theory and academia is still relatively new, and there are many words and definitions that are difficult for theorists to come to a consensus about. This is especially true of the term 'queer' itself, which many members of the LGBT+ community (particularly earlier generations) feel is still a slur and should not be used to refer to a branch of academia. On the other hand, younger generations do not appreciate being called 'homosexual' as it was used to pathologise lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals; currently, the word might be considered too exclusionary. Queer academics do not necessarily reflect the experiences and opinions of non-academic members of the LGBT+

community, and there are many generational, class, and race issues that further influence how an individual within the community will relate to the terminology I've selected.<sup>6</sup> The history of homosexuality and bisexuality predates the 20<sup>th</sup> century by thousands of years. Many historians and scholars warn that viewing historical figures with a contemporary lens is fruitless, as social standards and mores are vastly different.

Despite cultural similarities, the United Kingdom and the United States do not necessarily have a shared history of art, sexuality, or politics. Furthermore, much of the history is difficult to find due to the persecution of LGBT+ people. The culture has been underground for centuries and it has only recently been accepted in the mainstream. In the Western hemisphere, it is not until the rise of the Abrahamic religions, particularly within Christianity, that same-sex relationships are vilified and punished, often through torture and execution. The name for acts of sex between two men, sodomy (routinely criminalised through 'sodomy laws') has clear ties to the biblical tale of Sodom and Gomorrah, in which two cities were so wicked they were destroyed by fire. Despite this, artists within the western canon of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, when much of the art made in Europe was commissioned by the Catholic Church, are now viewed as same-sex icons, among them Leonardo.<sup>7</sup>

In the Great Britain, homosexuality was effectively illegal from 1533 beginning with King Henry VIII's 'An Acte for the punysshement of the vice of Buggerie' (an act that conflated homosexuality with bestiality and made it punishable by death)<sup>8</sup> until 1967, when the Sexual Offences Act partially decriminalised sex between two men aged 21 and over.<sup>9</sup> <sup>10</sup>Despite the decriminalisation of gay sex acts, Section 28 of the Local Government Act stated that a local authority "shall not intentionally promote homosexuality or publish

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<sup>6</sup> Getsy, David, editor. *Queer (Documents of Contemporary Art)*. Whitechapel Gallery, 2016, p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> Judah, Hettie. "The Men Who Leonardo Da Vinci Loved." *BBC Culture*, BBC, 7 Nov. 2019, [www.bbc.com/culture/article/20191107-the-men-who-leonardo-da-vinci-loved](http://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20191107-the-men-who-leonardo-da-vinci-loved).

<sup>8</sup> Johnson, Paul. "Buggery and Parliament, 1533-2017." 3 Apr. 2018, [papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3155522](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3155522). pp. 2-3.

<sup>9</sup> "Sexual Offences Act 1967." *Legislation.co.uk*, Queen's Printer of Acts of Parliament, 27 July 1967, [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1967/60](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1967/60).

<sup>10</sup> Sex between two women was not truly ever illegal. This is usually due to two factors. One, sexual offenses involved penetration with a penis, which are not typically a part of traditional lesbian sex. Two, relationships between women are often not taken as seriously as relationships between men are.

material with the intention of promoting homosexuality" or "promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship".<sup>11</sup> Enacted by the Conservative Party in 1988, amid the HIV/AIDS crisis, this specifically affected galleries and museums with government funding. This censorship prevented curators and other museum professionals from presenting any LGBT+ content, and reinvigorated homophobic attitudes toward the LGBT+ community. In the United States of America, same-sex relationships had been criminalised since the start of the nation. While the United States has decriminalised homosexuality in 2003 through the Supreme Court ruling *Lawrence v. Texas*<sup>12</sup> and legalised same-sex marriage nationwide in 2015 through *Obergefell v. Hodges*,<sup>13</sup> each state has its own regulations regarding hate crimes, employment protections, and adoption rights for lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals. I discuss these at more length in my case studies.

There are a few key concepts to consider when researching same-sex attraction and artists. The use of the word 'homosexual' is controversial within the community, as it was a way to pathologise and demonise same-sex relationships. It was permanently removed from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in 1973. GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) states 'it is aggressively used by anti-gay extremists to suggest that gay people are somehow diseased or psychologically/emotionally disordered.'<sup>14</sup> Sexologists have pathologised same-sex attractions since their study began. The word 'homosexual' was first seen in print in 1869 in a German pamphlet about sexuality, and in 1897 English physician Havelock Ellis coined the term 'sexual inversion' to refer to lesbians and gay men.

There is good reason to avoid the contemporary use of the word 'homosexual,' and it has not seen the reclamation attempt that words like 'queer' or 'dyke' might have seen in

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<sup>11</sup> "Local Government Act 1988." *Legislation.gov.uk*, Queen's Printer of Acts of Parliament, [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/9/section/28/enacted](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/9/section/28/enacted).

<sup>12</sup> Supreme Court of the United States. *John Geddes Lawrence and Tyron Garner, Petitioners v. Texas*. no. 02-102, 26 Mar 2003. [https://www.supremecourt.gov/oral\\_arguments/argument\\_transcripts/2002/02-102.pdf](https://www.supremecourt.gov/oral_arguments/argument_transcripts/2002/02-102.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 576 U.S. \_\_\_\_ (2015). [https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/14pdf/14-556\\_3204.pdf](https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/14pdf/14-556_3204.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> "GLAAD Media Reference Guide - Terms To Avoid." *GLAAD*, 25 Oct. 2016, [www.glaad.org/reference/offensive](http://www.glaad.org/reference/offensive).

recent memory. 'Queer' has been reappropriated in certain circles, particularly by young people that may see themselves as outside of the norm. The reclamation of this word is seen as a radical political action, and as many radical political actions are, it is controversial. It formerly was only used in reference to lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals. Some people in the LGBT community feel that a slur can only be reclaimed by someone that the word was used to oppress, but contemporary use of the word 'queer' has expanded and can be used to describe or self-identify any person that finds themselves outside of the norm. It should be remembered, however, that reclaiming the word 'queer' through academic theory can be seen as an extension of educational and class privilege. Reclamation of 'queer' began in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, often seen in protests and marches, but some people that are part of the older who were called 'queer' as a slur in those decades not have the fondness for the word that younger generations might.<sup>15</sup>

Another key concept I believe will help contextualise some work is 'compulsory heterosexuality,' a term created by Adrienne Rich in her essay *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*, 1980.<sup>16</sup> Written exclusively for lesbians, is the theory that since heterosexuality is viewed as the default sexuality, it is viewed more positively in society. It has since been used more broadly to critique the 'othering' of same-sex attracted people. It is what keeps many lesbians, gay men, or bisexuals from living their lives 'out of the closet' (the very notion that there is a closet to come out of being an extension of compulsory heterosexuality). This extends to every part of society, but specifically within the artistic and museum community it can be seen as a reason for viewers to assume that every artist on the wall is heterosexual and that same-sex attraction is not an important part of an artists' identity or body of work.

Every institution needs to think about how they use the words in contemporary vernacular that describe the experiences and identities of the LGBT+ community. It is important for them to remember that the community is not a monolith, nor should we expect it to be. There are theorists that consider 'queer' to be beyond biology, still others will posit that

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<sup>15</sup> Getsy, p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> Rich, Adrienne. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." *Women: Sex and Sexuality*, 4th ed., vol. 5, The University of Chicago Press, 1980, pp. 631–660.



homosexuality, attraction to the same sex, is based in biology and therefore will always remain important within curation and other forms of LGBT+ activism. This is where a major contemporary divide between those that identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, may find themselves at odds with those that identify as queer. There may never be any consensus between these communities, and institutions are walking a very fine line that many do not necessarily have the training or nuance for.

Contemporary art museums were an integral part of my early lesbian identity – finally recognising my own same-sex desire in a very private way while still being in public, smiling quietly to myself, and being excited to share the work with others. The 20<sup>th</sup> century was filled fear from both the public of the ‘deviant homosexual,’ and from the LGBT+ community of violence and reprisal. There is a shadow of homophobia hanging over the exhibition of these artists. Still, the community perseveres. Thanks to the institutions and staff I have spoken with for this dissertation, I am confident the work is coming to the light more and more each day.

## Contemporary Literature

There has been a substantial amount of writing regarding the LGBT+ community in the last decades. The ubiquity of social media means that all manner of queer theory is generated and consumed by the LGBT+ community at all levels, within and outwith academia. This is a double-edged sword: while it is not necessarily a bad thing to have an endless stream of discourse regarding the community, there is an increased opportunity for misinformation and ahistorical or simplified retellings. The majority of research about the LGBT+ community in museums has been done through exhibition review with historical context provided and does not necessarily provide a comprehensive study of LGBT+ artists in collections of art institutions. There are many writings about the efforts of curators in history or social museums, and about LGBT+ artists and art, but less so about art museums.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the literature review features writings about history museums, as well as some history of LGBT+ art exhibitions. I will discuss works by key authors Susan Ferentinos, Jonathan Katz, Gavin Butt, and Michael Petry.

### History Museums and Queer Collection

In 'Trends in LGBT+ Historical Interpretation,' a chapter in *Interpreting LGBT+ History at Museums and Historic Sites*,<sup>18 19</sup> Ferentinos states that same-sex love and desire are relatively new topics for history museums, and there is not yet a large body of industry-specific literature to learn from.<sup>20</sup> In her research, Ferentinos focused on organisations out of the 'gay meccas' of New York City, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, opting for organisations with broader missions than LGBT+ history interpretation, with the intent to provide more representative examples. Due to the propensity of artists to interpret

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<sup>17</sup> Or at least, what I was looking for.

<sup>18</sup> "Trends in LGBT+ Historical Interpretation." *Interpreting LGBT+ History at Museums and Historic Sites*, by Susan Ferentinos, AltaMira Press, 2015, p. 109-118.

<sup>19</sup> I found this book to be an excellent resource despite its focus on historic sites and museums. However, Ferentinos does posit that art criticism has the reputation of being more 'speculative,' though I argue this is up for debate. History is just as speculative, as it is 'written by the winners,' and depending on the age and provenance of an object we might speculate more than we would with a work of art, especially if there were no extant writings or artist statements.

<sup>20</sup> Archives seem to have the most significant amount of LGBT+ writings and history, presenting them more commonly than museums or historic sites.

sexuality through their art, many history museums interpret LGBT+ history the same way: through explicitly LGBT+ objects. Oral history is also extremely important in LGBT+ history, due to the lack of material evidence kept, or even written, by individuals trying to survive a homophobic society.

Another issue that presents itself is that, similarly to artworks, if an object is collected and the historical significance of that object is overlooked or lost during cataloguing, the object is now lost in the context of LGBT+ history and exhibitions. If the object is not something obviously LGBT+ (like a pin, protest banner, or maybe some leather gear), then what makes it part of LGBT+ history? Does the object need to have been owned by someone in the LGBT+ community; is a teacup part of LGBT+ history just because it belonged to a lesbian? Extrapolating this, is art inherently LGBT+ art if it was made by someone in the LGBT+ community? If objects are only seen as 'queer' when they are explicitly connected with LGBT+ life, and if what sets LGBT+ people apart from their heterosexual counterparts is sexuality, does that make those objects inherently sexual?<sup>21</sup> And if so, does that mean that under-18s/minors are not allowed to see their sexuality represented in art until they are of age? Conversely, are displays of nudity or eroticism only acceptable when the artist or subjects are heterosexual?

Historically, many LGBT+ communities did not (and do not) trust public or mainstream collecting institutions, which creates problems when curating exhibitions. Without specific outreach to communities and demonstrable commitment to respect and care for stories and artefacts, LGBT+ individuals are unlikely to donate objects.<sup>22</sup> With many

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<sup>21</sup> Probably not, but it's a fun experiment in drawing something to its logical conclusions.

<sup>22</sup> One example from Ferentinos' book I'd like to draw attention here to is that of the Alice Austen House in my hometown of Staten Island, New York. Alice Austen was one of the earliest female American documentary photographers, and she would already have been bold for her time, as a Victorian woman taking her camera out in New York City and photographing the immigrant population and farm colonies of the day. She was also a lesbian, and was with her partner, Gertrude Tate, for over 50 years. She died in the 1950s, and her request to be buried next to Tate was denied. Alice Austen's home became the 'Alice Austen House Museum' and is also a nationally recognised place of LGBT+ Historical Significance. Staten Island, despite being one of the five boroughs of New York City, is an extraordinarily conservative county, overwhelmingly supporting Donald Trump in 2016 and 2020. Activists in the city wanted to publicly label Austen as a lesbian, and board members opposed it. Currently, the activists have won out and the museum explores Austen's relationship with Tate as part of the visitor experience. I can say, anecdotally and since the publication of Ferentinos' work, that the museum is very much a vibrant part of the community and celebrates LGBT+ history. Currently on view is *Powerful and Dangerous: The Words and Images of Audre Lorde*, an American poet and practising lesbian who lived on Staten Island for a period of time, and coming up is *Radical Tenderness: Trans for Trans Portraiture*.

institutions (such as Glasgow Museums, subject of my first case study), a lot of LGBT+ history collection is rapid response collection, with institutions reaching out as soon as possible after an event of historical significance to acquire objects. Rapid response collection accomplishes a few things: first, it is easiest to get objects in good condition the sooner they are collected. Second, it offers the best chance to get accurate information into a database, and as much information as possible. Finally, it can alleviate some helplessness (or even antsy-ness) in the face of major events.

Further on in Ferentino's work<sup>23</sup>, she writes about *Out in Chicago*, an exhibition at the Chicago History Museum (CHM) in 2012 which explored the history of the LGBT+ community of Chicago from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. In the context of the exhibition, the word 'queer' serves as shorthand for the LGBT+ community but it also signifies a rejection of the normative in relation to sexuality and gender. The curators of the exhibition were drawn from different areas of expertise and each reached out to different organisations, for example getting event save-the-dates from the Leather Archives & Museum, which cares for the history of the International Mr. Leather Competition, based in Chicago.<sup>24</sup> The museum actively tried to make it possible for heterosexual people to see their stake in LGBT+ history: this story is important for everyone, and it's a shared social history and part of the fabric of Chicagoan communities. This may seem like an obvious statement to those of us that love museums or history, but it might be less obvious for a casual museum visitor. This is not to say that heterosexual voices were prioritised over 'queer' ones – when asked what the heterosexual audience wanted to see, they said they wanted stories of families of origin welcoming LGBT+ people with open arms, and diminished homophobia.<sup>25</sup> LGBT+ people wanted those stories housed within the larger themes of homelessness, violence, and rejection.

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<sup>23</sup> "Displaying Queer History at the Chicago History Museum: Lessons from the Curators of Out in Chicago." *Interpreting LGBT+ History at Museums and Historic Sites*, by Susan Ferentinos, Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, pp. 119–130.

<sup>24</sup> This is one of the times I might ask, 'is this age appropriate?'

<sup>25</sup> This is the concern held by many about 'queer assimilation.' Some fear the narrative will be warped by well-meaning progressives who do not want to accept the realities of homophobia, and the important topics would be glossed over by people who are made uncomfortable. It is a difficult history to grapple with, and heterosexual visitors did not want to be confronted with something that LGBT+ people deal with on a regular basis. Feel-good stories would've made those visitors happy, but then *Out in Chicago* would not have been entirely accurate.



Figure 2-1: *Leather United Chicago* patch, 1989,  
Courtesy of *Leather Archives & Museum*.

The impulse to research the museum's collection to find 'queer' materials would not work in this situation – it would have perpetuated a system that only saw LGBT+ culture as a relic of the past, as if we lived in a post-homophobia society. The exhibition sought to make all these stories visible and an active part of the present and future. 'Queerness' became an interpretive strategy, valuing practices over identities and signifying anyone acting outside the norm. Research was done with primary source databases rather than collections, making it easier to find rarer objects and fit them into larger themes.<sup>26</sup> The Chicago History Museum learned an important lesson: be aware of, but don't cling to, the well-known narrative. Dig deep into your collections but cut anything out that does not support the argument. But where does an institution go from there? CHM, at the time of Ferentinos' publication, did not have a permanent LGBT-history exhibition. Does this mean they are back to where they began? Where can visitors go to learn their history if they missed the exhibition? A significant amount of a 'queer' curation requires not necessarily acquiring new works for a collection, but rather going back into a collection to see what is already there, and what information is missing. It's about revealing what has been purposefully or accidentally hidden from the public, and telling the stories that should have been told from the outset.

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<sup>26</sup> Anecdotally, I cannot remember a single museum professional I spoke to mentioning that they reached out to archives or libraries for primary sources or oral histories.

Ferentinos has some suggestions.<sup>27</sup> Museums should consider their stakeholders – will the board support their venture, and will funding be pulled? However, the LGBT community in all social strata should be considered stakeholders and should not be overlooked. Staffing should be done conscientiously – LGBT people might be vocal in their support of exhibitions, and may even help with source material, but they might not be academically or professionally qualified for such an undertaking. Choose people that understand the process of exhibition and curation. Next, consider terminology and identity politics, self-definition, and slur reclamation,<sup>28</sup> taking care to respect generational differences in the community. Be mindful of the ethics of posthumously outing someone that cannot speak for themselves, and be aware of the merits of both assimilation and maintaining a distinct subculture. Most of all, consider the role that all sexuality has played in history, and decide where homosexuality fits. A significant amount of a ‘queer’ curation requires not necessarily acquiring new works for a collection, but rather going back into a collection to see what is already there, and what information is missing. It’s about revealing what has been purposefully or accidentally hidden from the public, and telling the stories that should have been told from the outset.

## Censorship and the Museum Stores as Closet

Moving on from Ferentinos and history museums, we turn to collection censorship. Jonathan Katz <sup>29</sup> states that censorship happens ‘covertly’ within the museum; that is, most information about a work or artist is curated and hidden from the public before a work even makes it to the wall. The quiet censorship relieves museum professionals: it allows other, more obvious institutions to be the scapegoat, drawing attention away from everyone else.

‘The fact is that only reckless museums censor. Savvy ones, and they are in the vast majority, censor art vastly more often, but they do so long *before* that art ever gets mounted onto walls, made into shows, given an institutional life...but because this covert censorship occurs in boardrooms, Director’s offices and other sites

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<sup>27</sup> “Conclusion: Some Suggestions.” *Interpreting LGBT+ History at Museums and Historic Sites*, by Susan Ferentinos, Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, pp. 161–170.

<sup>28</sup> This includes ‘queer.’

<sup>29</sup> Associate Professor of Global Gender and Sexuality Studies, University of Buffalo College of Art and Sciences, specialising in queer history, art history, and Cold War era art.

shielded from public view, we never hear about it, and can pretend it simply doesn't exist.'<sup>30</sup>

He notes that in large American museums, queer works are more likely to be in the collections, and the information can be made public quickly through simply editing wall labels. In addition, queerness sells. After all, it's not necessarily missing from TV/film and music. The larger an institution, the more likely covert censorship is to happen. In 2013, New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) curated a small exhibition titled *Johns and Rauschenberg*. It showed works that were made by Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg in the 1950s, to present the dialogue between the two artists, and to contextualise the shift of their practices from abstract expressionism to Pop Art. The show neglected to inform viewers that they were not just 'friends' or 'colleagues,' but were in fact in a romantic and sexual relationship. MoMA recloseted two of the most significant artists of the 20th century, yet it did not have to.



Figure 2-2: *Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, Pearl Street.*  
New York, 1954. Photograph by Rachel Rosenthal<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Katz, Jonathan D. "Queer Curating and Covert Censorship." *ONCURATING*, no. 37, May 2018, p. 33, [www.on-curating.org/issue-37-reader/editorial-queer-exhibitions-queer-curating.html#.XNmKno5KiUk](http://www.on-curating.org/issue-37-reader/editorial-queer-exhibitions-queer-curating.html#.XNmKno5KiUk).

<sup>31</sup> Farago, Jason. "A Flag Is a Flag Is a Flag." *The New York Review of Books*, 3 July 2020, [www.nybooks.com/articles/2018/03/22/jasper-johns-flag-is-a-flag/](http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2018/03/22/jasper-johns-flag-is-a-flag/).

*Johns and Rauschenberg* came on the heels of *Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture* (2010), co-curated by Jonathan Katz and David West and advertised as the 'first major museum exhibition to focus on sexual difference in the making of modern American portraiture, on view at the National Portrait Gallery at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C.<sup>32</sup> This show was attacked by Republicans in Congress at the time, who were hoping to perpetuate the culture wars, which have paid as handsomely as any other war in American history. The curators were prepared for the inevitable backlash, making sure all of the nudes were by heterosexual artists. The Smithsonian even went so far as to tape mock interviews, asking Katz and West homophobic questions and train them to respond to traps. Instead, the conservative right came from a different angle, accusing the exhibition of being an attack on Christianity. Rather than attacking the exhibition, which included a film by every Christian's favourite David Wojnarowicz, the right accused the curators of attacking *them*.<sup>33</sup> The Secretary of the Smithsonian crumbled under the critique, removing Wojnarowicz's works without consulting the curators or the director. This, of course, created a backlash in the American museum world. However, Katz is quick to point out the hypocrisy of other museums, however – MoMA and other large private institutions had refused loan requests during initial exhibition planning. The hammer came down on the Smithsonian, but they are no more guilty than any other institution that did not want their works aligned with this exhibition. No large museum wanted to touch a queer show after seeing that someone could protest an exhibition and win.

Katz presents a few contemporary workarounds. Some museums might present an artist's sexuality as a plain fact – he was left-handed, blue-eyed, and a flaming homosexual. This lacks substance, but allows a museum to hide behind facts, rather than obligate it to discourse. Another tactic is to cultivate a 'queer audience' by actively courting the LGBT community through programming and events.<sup>34</sup> The newest tactic he mentions is to choose to exhibit a contemporary artists who is unabashedly, unapologetically queer: this allows the institution to call itself progressive. This,

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<sup>32</sup> National Portrait Gallery | *Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture*, [npg.si.edu/exhibit/hideseek/](http://npg.si.edu/exhibit/hideseek/).

<sup>33</sup> Katz was subjected to anti-Semitic hate mail as well, which really makes you feel for the poor and downtrodden religious right in America, doesn't it?

<sup>34</sup> He also highlights the hypocrisy of the Met in New York hosting queer receptions in the Great Hall but avoid sexuality in the Classical Halls, arguably the gayest of the Met's Halls. These days the Met is trying to be super-gay anyway, did we all forget about their 'camp' gala? Pink dollars are everywhere at the Met Galas.



according to Katz, is disingenuous because it does not engage with the material history that is already on display. It isolates queerness in one gallery, not challenging the work or the institution in any way and not engaging the visitors.

Closeting Jasper Johns is further discussed in Gavin Butt's *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948-1963*.<sup>35</sup> In January of 1958, the Museum of Modern Arts Director of Collections, Alfred H. Barr began collecting Johns' work after his one-person show at Leo Castelli Gallery – Barr had originally wanted to purchase *Flag and Target with Plaster Casts*. *Target* was not acquired because Johns refused Barr's purchase conditions – the green plaster cast of his penis was to remain permanently closed. MoMA deemed the work unacceptable because certain 'graphic' details would prevent its exhibition. The work became a source of tension between the artist and the institution, asking who has the authority over the work.<sup>36</sup> The penis cast (and not the vaginal bone) was singled out as an item of censorship. In celebrating male desire, the penis was now objectified. The female body was more accepted as an object of the male gaze. The transgression of objectification was amplified and made more dangerous when considered to be homoerotic. Johns was aware of the censorship of his work and it truly annoyed him. He was (and still is) sensitive to the public reaction of his painting.

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<sup>35</sup> "Bodies of Evidence: Queering Disclosure in the Art of Jasper Johns." *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948-1963*, by Gavin Butt, Duke University Press, 2006, pp. 136–162.

<sup>36</sup> Art historians believe that this tension was due to McCarthyism, referring to a period in American history called 'the Red Scare.' During the Cold War, socialists and communists (or those baselessly accused of leftist-leanings) were ostracised from jobs and society. According to Lilian Faderman, author of 'The Gay Revolution,' gay men and lesbians were rejected from socialist and communist parties – they were too deviant, too high risk.

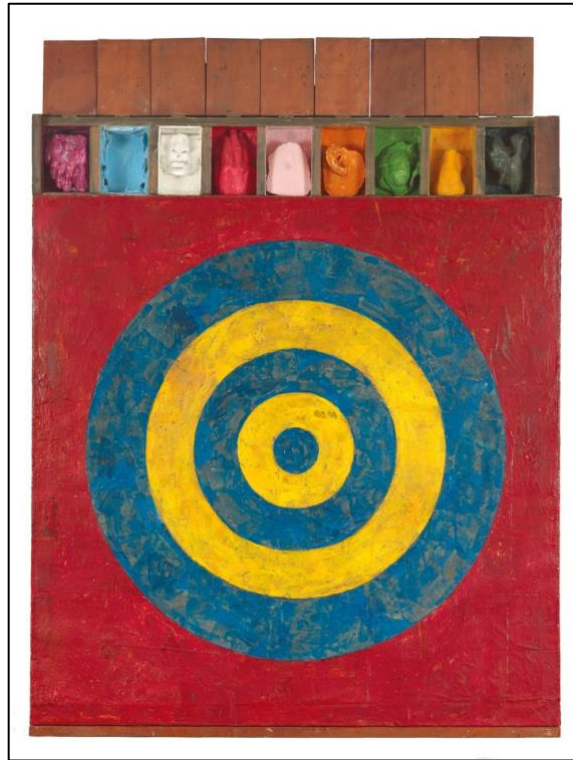


Figure 2-3: Johns, Jasper. *Target with Plaster Casts*, 1955, shown open.

Butt continues his discussion of the mid-century New York art scene with Andy Warhol.<sup>37</sup> A contemporary of Johns, Andy Warhol, also experienced homophobic backlash in his early career as an artist. He was known as a fierce gossip in the art world, partially due to his groundbreaking use of pop culture in art. He was viewed as a master of social manipulation, but had been subjected to it himself by his peers, when he had been outed as a potential homosexual. This influenced his personality in the mid-60s, causing him to become less 'gay' or 'sissy.' He recloseted himself and reinvented himself as a dandy, reinforcing the idea that gay men are safe and acceptable, even in the art world, as long as they are not actively sexual. The criticism he faced pushed him back into the closet, but it legitimised his career.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> "Dishing on the Swish, or, the 'Inning' of Andy Warhol." *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948-1963*, by Gavin Butt, Duke University Press, 2006, pp. 106–135.

<sup>38</sup> Warhol, pre-dandying, in particular faced bullying from Johns and Rauschenberg. They would blank him at art events and in restaurants for being too gay, and Warhol would often ask his friends why they hated him – he was just too effeminate for Bob and Jasper.

From 'Hidden Histories: The Experience of Curating a Male Same-Sex Exhibition and the Problems Encountered,' featured in *Gender, Sexuality, and Museums*,<sup>39</sup> Michael Petry discusses the New Art Gallery Walsall in Walsall, England and his exhibition, *Hidden Histories*, about 20<sup>th</sup> century male same-sex lovers in contemporary art. It was multi-disciplinary and included works from public and private collections in Britain and abroad open from May through July 2004. Petry posits that by same-sex lovers from the Renaissance to just before Stonewall was made with the intention of denying to authority but declaring it to those that know. The impetus for looking at 20<sup>th</sup> century art was because for the first time in history, 'homosexuality' was conceptualised<sup>40</sup> and there was an increase in available materials. Without the defined notion of homosexual identity, it was not possible to look at the work of same-sex lovers before this period – defining our terms helps define the time period for the exhibition. He reiterates the double-standard that heterosexual artists have included their families in their works and biographies, but information for homosexual artists is actively withheld. Some have argued that sexuality is irrelevant to the artists' work – why then do we know, and even celebrate, the many lovers and muses of someone like Picasso? Why tell us that Rauschenberg was married and had a child, but not that he pursued relationships with men? Sexuality is an easy way of humanising an artist, and *Hidden Histories* sought to do that. It intended to document as much material possible on artists that had same-sex lovers without outing them.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Petry, Michael. "Hidden Histories: The Experience of Curating a Male Same-Sex Exhibition and the Problems Encountered." *Gender, Sexuality, and Museums: a Routledge Reader*, by Amy K. Levin, Routledge, 2010, pp. 151–162.

<sup>40</sup> Then medicalized, then criminalized.

<sup>41</sup> The exhibit included our favourites Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, and Cy Twombly.



Figure 2-4: González-Torres, Felix. "Untitled" (*Portrait of Ross in L.A.*).  
1991, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL.

The curators believed that were able to assess the importance of each artist's sexuality regarding their work once the information was made available to them. Local politics made the exhibition contentious: the council required advance presentation of all the materials and exhibits and retained the right to censor the exhibition, denouncing in particular the work *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)* by Felix González-Torres.<sup>42</sup> The council felt that while no images of children would be in the exhibition, they might still be damaged – this led to the creation of 15+ and 18+ rooms. The council had no appreciation or understanding of the massive undertaking an exhibition. They wanted to vet artworks, which meant that the final list could not be approved until a few weeks before the opening and advance publicity couldn't be done properly. The obviously created tensions between the gallery and council.<sup>43</sup> The council demanded all labels be edited before installation, allowing only title, date, and medium. No other insights into the work were allowed,

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<sup>42</sup> This work was singled out for 'paedophilia' because it included candy, and that means the Big Bad Homo Paedos would lure innocent children into the exhibition using candy, as all paedophiles do. In reality, the work was about the artist's partner, Ross Laycock, who died of AIDS-related illness in 1991. The installation is 175 pounds of candy, Ross' ideal body weight: viewers are encouraged to take a piece of candy, symbolizing Ross wasting away. According to the artist, curatorial staff were meant to replenish the candy to give Ross everlasting-life.

<sup>43</sup> This was not the only exhibition the council interfered with at the gallery: 2003's *Veil*, a group exhibition of works exploring the use of the veil in contemporary society. They demanded two works be removed – curators obliged, but placed large black rectangles where the works should've hung along with a statement describing council censorship.

contradicting the extra biographical information we give to heterosexual artists. Councillors 'corrected' labels were illegible and installed minutes before the opening; laughably, they somehow thought that they could write better wall text than gallery professionals. Still, curators and artists put up with all of these slights, feeling they should do whatever was necessary to get the show up and open to the public. In the end, the show lacked information that would've helped viewers gain a deeper understanding of the works and artists, and the incumbent Labour Party council lost their majority in the next election.

This is expanded upon by Frank Holliday in '*A Conversation with Artists Carrie Moyer, Sheila Pepe, Stephen Mueller, Andrew Robinson, and Frank Holliday*' from the same book.<sup>44</sup> Holliday suggests that the majority of queer-coded works are queer at their moment of creation and they lose their queer moment the farther away the work gets from that moment. Here, queer is as political as it is an identifier.<sup>45</sup> The act of queerness in 'Conversation' is transgressive, and asks what is left for queer artists? He also suggests that the 'work in storage is truly the queer museum.' The second a work is accessioned into a collection, or put on display, it is no longer 'transgressive,' it is now socially acceptable.<sup>46</sup> He posits that a museum cannot inherently be queer. However, not every act needs to be politically motivated: sometimes it can just exist to fix a broken system. There is a difference between reading a museum as queer, and having a museum explicitly state they are seeking a queer collection. The former can almost never happen: even if tomorrow, every person in the museum world turned entirely queer, the collections, the

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<sup>44</sup> Holliday, Frank. "A Conversation with Artists Carrie Moyer, Sheila Pepe, Stephen Mueller, Andrew Robinson, and Frank Holliday." *Gender, Sexuality, and Museums: a Routledge Reader*, edited by Amy K. Levin, Routledge, 2010, pp. 229–234.

<sup>45</sup> 'The gay issue is obsessed with being accepted and the queer issue is, "We don't give a fuck if you accept us or not. We're here, we're queer, and we're not here for shopping!"' This statement is somewhat disingenuous. The fight for gay liberation wasn't necessarily about 'acceptance' insofar it was about getting people to like us. In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, during the height of McCarthyism, gay men and lesbians were even rejected by the Communist parties of America, as they were too much of a risk in the party. Gay liberation was a fight for marriage and job protections, which only in the latter years of queer activism seem like a frivolous fight. It might have been hyperbole on the part of Robinson, but it's also extremely reductive and patronising to view gay liberation as just assimilation. I'm also hoping that 'we're not here for shopping' is a comment on how the heterosexual community views gay men in pop culture, and not a queer of gay liberation.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 229-232.

organization, and the world it operates in would still remain overwhelmingly heterosexual. The latter, while not a perfect solution, begins to make reparations.<sup>47</sup>

There are, of course, those members of the community who do not wish to be brought into mainstream culture at all, and would bristle at the idea of a major institution hosting queer art.<sup>48</sup> The 'queer separatist' movement seeks to create and maintain a subculture that does not answer to the mores of heteronormative society. As gay culture becomes more accepted and commodified, it is more difficult for some younger members of the community (or indeed, queer individuals that never found themselves aligned with the gay community) to remember the centuries of oppression and bigotry.<sup>49</sup> Separatists do not want to share the hard-earned community that has been built with the same group of people who vilified them in previous years and created the need for a distinct community in the first place. Taking on the identity of 'queer' or naming yourself a member of the LGBT+ community is still a political act and therefore any assimilation dilutes this form of activism.

Even within the LGBT community, social biases cannot be avoided. In her essay *How Could This Have Happened?*<sup>50</sup> Birgit Bosold discusses the *Homosexuality\_ies* exhibit at the Schwules Museum in Berlin, which she curated along with Dorothee Brill and Detlef Weitz and in collaboration with the Deutsches Historisches Museum. The museum

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<sup>47</sup> Anecdotally, this discussion is well out of the range of what younger queer artists are interested in. My friends that are making queer art are not necessarily interested in gallery representation or being collected. They are interested in uplifting their local community. In following the work and politics of my peers, they are much more invested in the work that's going to be painted on a community fridge in a food desert. Social media allows these artists to make work (and make somewhat of a living) without caring one bit about if they will ever be represented by a gallery or major institution – they represent themselves.

<sup>48</sup> This is not without merit. As with other contemporary modes of discourse, intersectionality has an important place in the LGB community. If you'll indulge me in more anecdotal data, in the New York City art world there is a disproportionate number of contemporary artists coming out of the 'right' graduate programme (more often than not, Yale and Columbia), which will close off many artists who may have otherwise been able to hack it in the institutional art world. A booming class consciousness on social media coupled with Instagram accounts 'outing' unethical museum practices has soured the relationship between institutions and their artists and patrons.

<sup>49</sup> A common complaint among my millennial-aged LGB friends is, 'why don't the younger generation have any respect for their elders?' The truth is that many of our elders were lost during the AIDS crisis. There is an incredible cultural and political gap between the generations in the community that has not necessarily been truly academically studied, but still can be intuited.

<sup>50</sup> Bosold, Birgit. "How Could This Have Happened? Reflexions on Current Programming Strategies of Schwules Museum Berlin." *ONCURATING*, vol. 37, May 2018, pp. 5–12., [on-curating.org/issue-37-reader/a-special-place-in-hell-reflections-on-current-programming-strategies-of-schwules-museum-berlin.html](http://on-curating.org/issue-37-reader/a-special-place-in-hell-reflections-on-current-programming-strategies-of-schwules-museum-berlin.html).

attempted to undermine the usual perception of homosexuality, but also give equal weight between lesbian and gay male artists. In turn, gay men had judged the show to be too lesbian. This reflects a commonly held belief among men that about 15-30% involvement from women is an even split, but that actual 50% involvement is monopolisation.<sup>51</sup> <sup>52</sup>The findings in the Schwules Museum remind us that 'queer' and 'LGBT+' spaces are not inherently feminist or radical and can often reinforce stereotypes for fear of diverting too much from societal trends. Critics of the *Homosexuality\_ies* exhibition accused it of abandoning the fundamentals of what it set out to do – it weakened a community by creating an exhibition where everyone competed for who is more discriminated against. Gay men still benefit the most from 'rainbow capitalism.'<sup>53</sup> Dyke issues are still very uncool, and queer doesn't necessarily equal feminist. Critics of the show suggested that the museum abandoned its fundamentals and created an 'Olympics of Discrimination,' which weakened the community in the face of the rise of right-wing populist movements.<sup>54</sup> The author posits that AIDS crisis changed the way that homosexuality was navigated – queer activists were inspired by their feminist predecessors.<sup>55</sup>

To go back to Warhol, he gets to be a pop-artist first and a 'queer icon' second.<sup>56</sup> What does gay art look like? Does it have a unifying aesthetic? Of course not, if it all looked the same and explored the same themes, there would be no reason to show diverse works. In *Curatorial Activism: Towards an Ethics of Curating*, Maura Reilly states that sexuality isn't necessarily clear to onlookers and often requires one to 'come out.' Lesbian, gay,

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<sup>51</sup> Cutler, Anne, and Donia R. Scott. "Speaker Sex and Perceived Apportionment of Talk." *Applied Psycholinguistics*, vol. 11, pp. 253–272., [pure.mpg.de/rest/items/item\\_68785\\_7/component/file\\_506904/content?fbclid=IwAR2xuRbtYbg4AEeizor6oAGDxWxHbldDTIoR2sDv\\_uhVJdMZfP53tdl0l4g](http://pure.mpg.de/rest/items/item_68785_7/component/file_506904/content?fbclid=IwAR2xuRbtYbg4AEeizor6oAGDxWxHbldDTIoR2sDv_uhVJdMZfP53tdl0l4g).

<sup>52</sup> In Bosold's essay she also discussed The Guerilla Girls and their interventions, which provide us with the following statistics: only 11% of the artists in the collection by the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Museum Ludwig in Cologne, Germany in 2015 were female, and just 3% were women of color. Of solo shows since 1989, 20% were female and 1% were non-white. Picasso and Warhol sales outstrip combined revenues of all female artists. This is not the sole fault of the collectors and museums; it mirrors social norms.

<sup>53</sup> Also known as the 'pink dollar,' this is the purchasing power of the LGBT+ community. This is about \$790 billion in the United States, and £6 billion in the United Kingdom.

<sup>54</sup> I believe this is very heavy accusation to levy at a museum.

<sup>55</sup> Bosold argues that the AIDS crisis caused gay male advocacy to take over queer movements and push through 'bourgeois civil rights projects.' I view this as incredibly ahistorical – marriage rights are not bourgeois when your partner's family will not allow you in their hospital room as they lay dying of AIDS, and when the life you built together will be taken away from you upon their death. While there is much work to be done addressing the racism and sexism of the gay male community, but looking back at their struggles in the 80s and 90s as bourgeois is a privileged position and does nothing to address the immediacy of the crisis.

<sup>56</sup> Anecdotally, when I was in undergrad art history courses in 2008-2012, there was no mention of Warhol's, in addition to Jasper Johns' and Robert Rauschenberg's, sexualities and relationships. Their works were taught to us without the context of their relationships and rivalries, on a state university liberal arts campus known particularly for being progressive.

and bisexual artists might be used to hiding their identity within the work as a strange way to protect themselves. It is debatable, but some would argue that being able to hide themselves or 'pass' is a form of privilege: there are also those that would disagree, positing that any person that needs to hide a part of themselves does not experience privilege.<sup>57 58</sup> When addressing 1980's GALAS Invitational (Great American Lesbian Art Show), which was initially dismissed as merely 'special interest,' critics highlighted the manner of selecting works, i.e. that it was just filled with lesbians, over the quality of the work. Accusatory critics did the same things they assumed a museum or gallery would do. However, this is part of the reason that when a museum professional says, 'we only look at the quality of the work,' that I am sceptical. Too often, they may not look beyond this statement and realise that they have been working in a climate that has prejudiced them against so-called 'special interest' works.

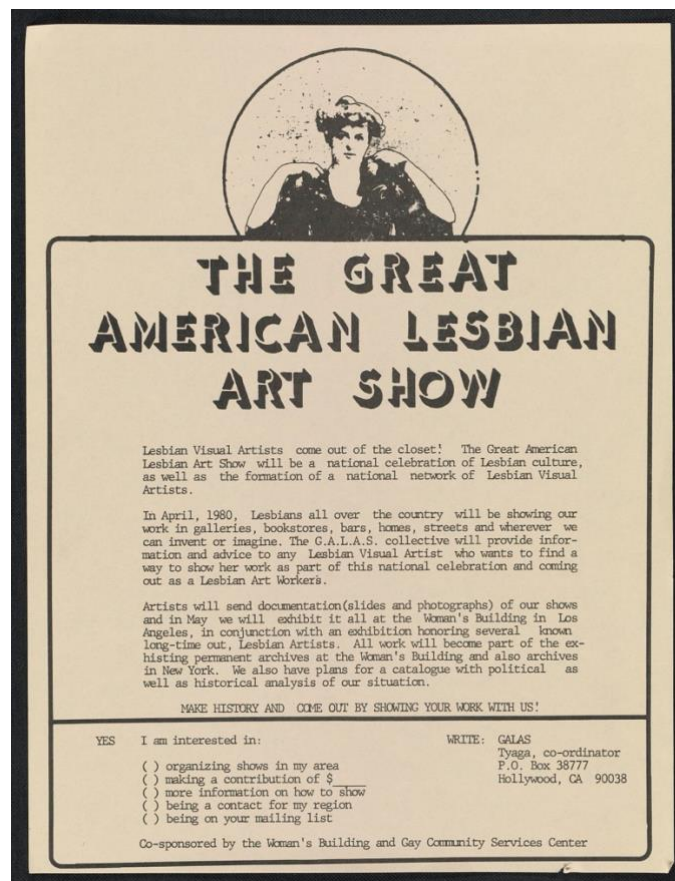


Figure 2-5: The Great American Lesbian Art Show flyer, 1980.

<sup>57</sup> Lippard, Lucy, and Maura Reilly. Curatorial Activism. Towards an Ethic of Curation. Thames & Hudson, 2018, p. 161.

<sup>58</sup> This is evidenced by Andy Warhol recloseting himself to legitimise his work, as referenced earlier.



To a growing number of people,<sup>59</sup> homosexuals are considered deviants. Mainstream society has accepted a narrative that goes along with an art canon, and museums (knowingly or otherwise) perpetuate said narrative. It is not always appropriate or necessary to 'separate the art from the artist,' particularly with a post-modern telling of art history. We accept that knowing intimate details of an artist's life is appropriate when we consider potential muses or partners, but only when they are heterosexual. To direct ourselves back to the initial question – what is the role of the museum? If we view 'queer' as a political act of transgression, where is the transgression in the act of accepting working to a collection and legitimising it? What is the purpose, if not to be transgressive? I would argue that not every act needs to be politically motivated – some can just be ameliorative or reparative. Sometimes it's very simple: I want to see more lesbians, dammit.

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<sup>59</sup> Yes, growing. More on this later.

# Methodology

## The Survey

The primary method of data collection was through a survey of 32 questions hosted on Qualtrics, roughly 10 minutes in length. The survey included both qualitative and quantitative questions. I chose to use a survey for several reasons. The survey would provide an accurate way of collecting and analysing data. It was designed to be as easy as possible for museum professionals to respond to, thereby potentially increasing the number of responses I would receive. The survey was anonymous, with options for respondents to provide contact details in case they would be willing to follow up with me. None of the questions required answers to proceed, in the event the respondent did not want to answer a question for any reason. On 25 February 2019, the survey was closed. Of the 721 institutions that surveys were sent to, 263 recorded responses. This is a response rate of slightly over 36%, which is higher than I anticipated at the start of this process. Unfortunately, only 186 respondents fully completed the survey, resulting in a drop-off rate of approximately 30%. The survey was good for a broad overview of opinions and information, but the survey was designed to be as short and straightforward as possible to hold the respondent's attention. Therefore, a survey that would hold attention left little room for nuanced discussion. The most valuable information came from respondents who left contact details for extended interviews. This will be expanded upon in later paragraphs.

The survey asked for information about the respondent, including age, gender, sexuality, and position within the museum, to establish the demographics of my respondents and to see if there would be any correlation in the types of responses received to those demographics. The next section asked questions about the museum or institution itself, asking for location, source of funding and size of budget, annual number of visitors, and size of collection. This was to provide insight about an institution's resources and where it was going, and again for a broader view of its demographics. After these broader questions were asked, more specific questions were asked regarding the contents of the collection itself. This included questions about collection/acquisition policies, exhibition history, display text, and collection databases. It is where I introduced questions

regarding artists' sexualities, by first asking if the institution holds any exhibitions dealing specifically with minority demographics, including race, sexuality, and disability. Two important questions that I ask are 'does your institution acquire works from temporary exhibitions for the permanent collection' and 'is your institution's collection digitised and available online through a database search?' These questions were asked to find specifically if institutions are looking to expand a collection for inclusivity or diversity, and if the public has access to collections information.

The most important section asks questions regarding professional opinions, and these were presented in the form of statements. For example:

In your professional opinion, which statement do you feel is most accurate?

- Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is a good way to promote diversity and inclusivity. (1)
- Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is a form of discrimination; collecting should be based on whether the work reflects the values of the institution. (2)
- Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is detrimental to a collection and should be avoided. (3)
- Unsure (4)
- Prefer not to say (5)
- Other: (6) \_\_\_\_\_

The statements prompted responses regarding diversity and inclusivity, art censorship among under-18s/minors, attitude shifts, and pressures from museum peers and visitors. There was space for extended answers from professionals; many respondents took advantage of the text fields to provide their opinions. The last two questions of the survey prompted the respondent to provide any additional comments and, should they wish, provide contact information for follow-up interviews.

The survey was sent to art museums across the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. I chose these countries for the simple reason that I am most familiar with the museum practices, art canon, and LGBT culture of both. At first, I wanted to keep the sample size rather low by sending my survey to larger institutions in metropolitan areas, thereby avoiding rural or suburban communities. This was originally due to concerns I had over homophobic prejudices within those communities. I realised that despite wanting to protect my research from potential

homophobia, continuing in that direction would skew my data, would be unfair to museum professionals and artists in more stereotypically conservative areas, and would prevent me from getting accurate data from which to work. Professionals in rural or suburban areas provided insight on working within institutions that need to balance tensions in the communities that they served.

No particular demographic or title was sought while distributing the survey. A wide variety of museum professionals answered the survey, and this was potentially due to a few factors. Some websites did not have direct contact information and provided a generic email address or web form through which to send survey requests. Others had too much contact information, and I had to decide between sending the survey to the director, the curator, and the registrar. In addition, respondents identify as a member of the LGBT community in larger amounts than the general population. According to the Office for National Statistic in 2017, 4% of the population of the United Kingdom identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual<sup>60</sup>. In the same year in the United States, a Gallup poll concluded that 4.5% of the population identify as LGB.<sup>61</sup> In my survey, 19.7% of respondents identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or other. There is no way to account for this, however, it is possible that when reading the topic of the survey that it was passed along to someone within the community on purpose, assuming they would have more insight on the topic.

The respondents were found by searching each state or region for contemporary or fine art institutions that held a collection. This method did not result in precise results, given the nature of collecting bodies. Some institutions did not have collection information available, and therefore surveys were sent to institutions that were non-collecting, or collected art but not contemporary art. It also presented opportunities to send surveys to institutions that could be considered outside of the traditional contemporary art canon, such as the *Museum of Western Art* in Texas or the *American Sport Art Museum* in Alabama. Institutions like this may have particular goals for the works in their collection, therefore their collections policy do not specify lesbian, gay, or bisexual artists; this does not mean that those collections do not have a place within LGBT culture. Certainly,

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<sup>60</sup> "Sexual Orientation, UK: 2017." *Office for National Statistics*.

<sup>61</sup> Gallup, Inc. "In U.S., Estimate of LGBT Population Rises to 4.5%." *Gallup.com*, 22 May 2018.

cowboys are a large part of gay male history, and many lesbians founded softball teams in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to build their communities. It is unreasonable to assume that no artist in those collections would identify as a member of the LGBT community. For this reason, I was compelled to broaden my parameters and send the survey to institutions with a breadth of themes, demographics, and media. Some institutions responded to the survey with answers such as, 'we only collect [x-type of art]' without knowing or considering that the artists in their collections might fit within more than one community. In the end, the respondents varied greatly, with larger institutions being less responsive. This is understandable as they tend to have larger collections that are harder to quantify, or they have less resources to deal with the volume of research requests they receive.

If I were to conduct this survey again, I would make two surveys: one for the United States, and one for the United Kingdom. I believe some respondents found the format confusing. I received surveys that marked institutions as located in both the United States and the United Kingdom. I neglected to list non-profit and 501(c)(3) charities for American institutions as an option in question 5:

5. Is your institution:

- Privately owned and/or funded
- Publicly owned and/or funded
- Part of a university or college
- Unsure
- Prefer not to say
- Other

This resulted in at least 8 respondents selecting 'other' to specify their institution's funding sources. I would have made this option multiple answer to account for institutions with multiple sources of funding. In addition, I am concerned that some results would've been skewed due to any confusion between locations. Two surveys would have allowed me to ask more specific questions to account for differences between nations, and I might have received more in-depth results.

I also would have changed the wording of some questions that may be considered loaded or leading, such as question 24:

24. In your professional opinion, which statement do you feel is most accurate?
- a. Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is a good way to promote diversity and inclusivity.
  - b. Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is a form of discrimination; collecting should be based on whether the work reflects the values of the institution.
  - c. Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is detrimental+ to a collection and should be avoided.

Upon review, answer *b*: 'collecting based on an artists' membership within a minority group is a form of discrimination; collection should be based on whether the work reflects the values of the institution' combines two different thoughts. This is not what I had intended. Because the first clause implies that the respondent would be discriminatory in their collection methods, selecting this answer results in discomfort for the respondent; no one wants to select an answer that implies bigoted collecting. Most respondents stated they prioritised the needs of the collection over the demographic of the artist, but do not discriminate against any artists based on their identity. The way I worded the survey left little room for nuance.

Lastly (and potentially most importantly), I would have provided a working definition for 'contemporary art' for respondents. There was more than one respondent who asked how I defined 'contemporary art.' It was an important parameter to set, yet I had assumed that all respondents would have the same benchmark for this term. Contemporary art is generally accepted to be art made in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>62</sup> It includes a variety of movements, among them pop art, fluxus, and digital art. Significantly, contemporary art is art that is being made, exhibited, and collected now. The reason I chose contemporary art specifically is because it is being made in the same cultural framework in which contemporary discussions on sexuality are held.

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<sup>62</sup> It is very often confused with 'Modern art' as there is some overlap thematically and temporarily. However, Modernism is a specific movement that lasted from the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Certain questions elicited interesting responses. Questions 25 and 26 in particular were particularly controversial to respondents. Some responses to those questions implied that my wording was problematic, or indeed offensive:

25. In your professional opinion, which statement do you feel is most accurate?

- a. Due to the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists (sex and sexualities), these works should be censored or kept away from minors.
- b. Despite to the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists, these works don't need to be censored. Visitors should be warned about potential explicit conflict.
- c. Despite the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists, these works should hang on the wall next to artists in a similar genre or movement. However, no mention of their sexuality should be made.
- d. Despite the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists, these works should hang on the wall next to artists in a similar genre or movement. Furthermore, their sexuality should be alluded to in the same manner that heterosexual artists are alluded to.

26. In your professional opinion, which statement do you feel is most accurate?

- a. Due to the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists (sex and sexualities), these works should be censored or kept away from minors.
- b. Despite the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists, these works don't need to be censored. Visitors should be warned about potential explicit [conflict].<sup>63</sup>
- c. Despite the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists, these works should hang on the wall next to artists in a similar genre or movement. However, no mention of their sexuality should be made.
- d. Despite the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists, these works should hang on the wall next to artists in a similar genre or movement. Furthermore, their sexuality should be alluded to in the same matter that heterosexual artists are alluded to.

These statements regarding censorship use the verbiage typical of attitudes towards lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals. The nature of homosexuality and bisexuality, and what has historically separated them from heterosexuality, is based in romantic and sexual desire. Because of this key difference and history of oppression, much of the art created by lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists is viewed as inherently sexual. It is only within the last century that attitudes toward minority sexualities have shifted and many members of the

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<sup>63</sup> This should have read in the survey as 'Visitors should be warned about potential explicit content.'

community are still grappling with conservative attitudes. I suggest that my wording, rather than problematic, is well within the realm of what lesbian, gay, and bisexual people historically and contemporarily experience and is appropriate to use within this context. Occasionally, these responses would border on personal attacks, which I found both amusing and disappointing.<sup>64</sup> The less professional responses, however, speak to how emotional and personal this topic can be for people. Some questions I posed could've been a reminder of any prejudice or bigotry that respondents might've faced in the workplace. There were many times in my research that I myself was frustrated by the contents of a paper or book I was reading, despite the author self-identifying as a member of the LGBT community. It is important to remember that the LGBT community, like any community, is not a monolith.

## The Interviews

Interviews with museum professionals were based on the answers they provided in the survey. A pro forma<sup>65</sup> was created specific to each respondent through my research into their institution (including temporary and permanent exhibitions, collections, and events) prior to our phone call. This allowed me to ask specific questions directly related to their profession and institution, but still let conversation develop naturally. It also allowed respondents to expand on their answers and provide more nuanced responses that the survey could not. Prior to each interview, I would go to the website for the respondent's institution. I would use the site's search function first, using 'lesbian,' 'gay,' 'lgbt,' and 'queer' as these tend to be the most popular terms within community lexicon. I would search for tagged works in the collection, exhibitions, and events. If 'queer' themed materials or pages were returned, I would discuss these directly with the respondent. Generally, large institutions in urban areas had more accessible and successful search engines. This is potentially due to larger budgets and more personnel to digitise collections and devote time to events and exhibition pages. In addition, I had searched for

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<sup>64</sup> "The wording for this question is deeply wrong. The phrasing 'despite the nature' suggests there is something wrong with being LGB which I take offensively. Please educate yourself on this - even if you yourself are LGB and are okay with this phrasing, I and many others would not be. I would expect more from an MA student. I think it is valid for an artist's work to be considered in the context of their period and their sexuality - it is not an either-or situation."

<sup>65</sup> The preparatory notes I made before my interviews can be found in Appendix B.



the respondent's professional details, and to see if they had written any relevant articles or essays.

I took notes during each interview to define key themes, and to choose institutions for my case studies. The notes and interviews took on a more conclusive and precise tone by the end of the process. In the beginning, it felt as though I had not defined what I was looking for before jumping into these conversations and allowing each conversation to flow into different tangents. It was difficult to decide which tangents would have presented important trains of thought, and which ones were important to reel in. For the most part, I had allowed the interviewee to conclude their thoughts, and then brought the conversation back to the centre by referencing their survey answers or something relevant within their institution. Conversations ranged from a minimum of approximately 25 minutes in length to a maximum of 55 minutes; the average conversation was 35 minutes long. Fifteen interviews were conducted in total. More respondents provided contact information than followed up or confirmed an interview.

Some respondents requested complete anonymity in the process or that everything be done over email, which made delving into the heart of certain topics difficult. The respondents that asked for anonymity did so on the basis of geographic location and museum size – they were concerned about the backlash their museums might experience in their communities. However, they still provided valuable insight into the issues I am addressing and helped to remind me of why I chose to pursue this topic. Interviews with working and collected artists were considered and will not be pursued. I had intended to conduct them if the conversations are insightful or relevant to arguments made by curators and other museum staff, however this would have created more problems with parameters regarding medium, sexuality, location, and notoriety.

There are four case study chapters. The first case study focuses on Glasgow Life and the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA) and 'acquisitions,' that is, how GoMA relates to its community and how it acquires stories and objects. It will also touch their programming and response to criticism. The second case study will discuss the National Portrait Gallery in London, and their use of staff networks and their collections database software, which is among the most impressive of the museums I have spoken with. The third case

study discusses the Thorne-Sagendorph Gallery at Keene State College, a liberal arts university in New Hampshire and their varied audiences. The fourth and final case study is slightly different and discusses four American museums as examples of differences in exhibition across the country by community type: the BRIC Arts Media in Brooklyn, New York (large urban centre), the Des Moines Art Center in Des Moines, Iowa (small urban centre), Bellevue Arts Museum in Bellevue, Washington (suburban), and finally the Coutts Museum of Art in El Dorado, Kansas (rural). This last case study has four institutions to illustrate and compare the varied approaches to exhibition in these community type. The United States is so vast that discussing exhibitions in one community type would be wholly different from another, and therefore this chapter features more institutions to account for that.

I have the opportunity to discuss the survey results for funding and governance, as well as urban centres in United States, but at no point in the first two case studies do I have this chance for the United Kingdom. I also do not have the opportunity to differentiate between geographical regions of the United States.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, I will take this time to discuss those survey results. The case studies will begin after this small data analysis. When asking for demographic by nationality, the survey required respondents from the United States for their location based on broad geographical regions. For the United Kingdom respondents, the survey asked for their location based on country. From the information gleaned from the recorded responses, 75% of survey respondents are from the United States and 25% are from the United Kingdom. Survey responses cross-tabulated by age, gender, and sexuality can be found in Appendix A.

## The United Kingdom by Nation

In the United Kingdom, the majority of respondents were located in England (75%), followed by Scotland (13%) and Wales (10%), and Northern Ireland (2%). There were less respondents from the United Kingdom, resulting a much smaller sample size of data. The analysis might be incomplete but I will attempt it nonetheless. Only one respondent selected 'Northern Ireland,' which is entirely too small of a sample size to draw any

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<sup>66</sup> There would be too many institutions for a comparative case study such as Chapter 10.

meaningful conclusions about LGB collecting practices in Northern Ireland. I will be using their statements as anecdotal data, if necessary. Cross-tabulated data from questions 24, 25, and 28 are discussed in the first case study, following this chapter.

Question 26 asks respondents about censorship within exhibitions. The majority of respondents (50.0%) selected ‘Despite the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists, these works should hang on the wall next to artists in a similar genre or movement.’ This was the response from (53.30%) of English responders, (50.0%) of Welsh, and (40.0%) of Scottish. The next-most selected response was ‘Other’ at (25.0%), then ‘...these works don’t need to be censored. Visitors should be warned about potential explicit [content].’ at (17.5%). This response was by (20.0%) of English respondents and (20.0%) of Scottish. The response ‘... these works should hang on the wall next to artists in a similar genre or movement. However, no mention of their sexuality should be made.’ was selected by only (5.0%) of the total amount of respondents, but this was by (50.0%) of Welsh respondents.

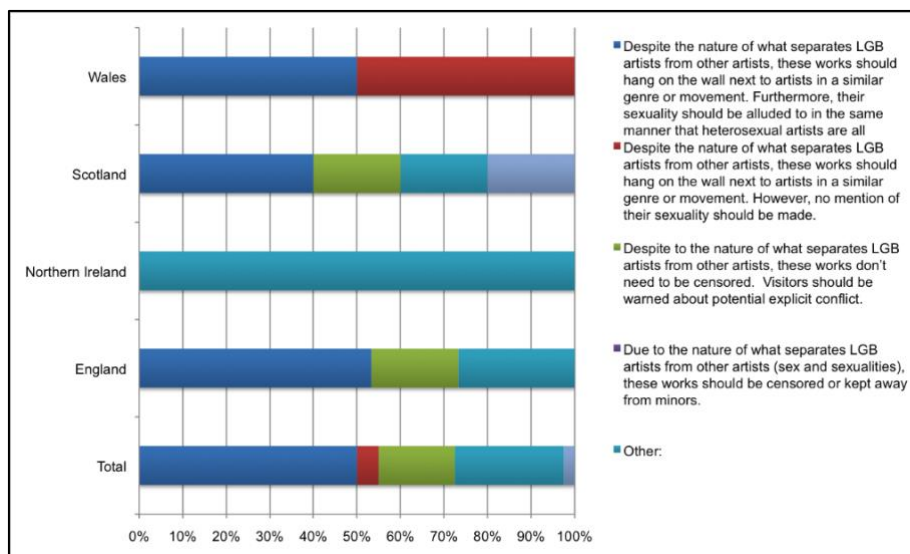


Table 3-1 Results of Question 26: In your professional opinion, which statement do you feel is most accurate? cross-tabulated for responses from the United Kingdom.

Among the long-form responses provided in ‘Other,’ general statements state not to censor for the sake of censorship, and to take each artwork in context. There is also the feeling that sexuality should only be mentioned if it’s relevant. One statement I would like to call attention to is an English respondent:

I think we need to show the work, be open about the artists' sexualities, and show it together with peers or on its own, where apt: each example is different. I'm very excited about the acquisitions the museum I work in is making and I hope we'll be able to use them as a platform to discuss lgbtq issues, but equally, some artists may not see their practice as about their sexuality and that's ok too. Context is important.

I appreciate this response for two reasons: First, for mentioning specifically that the work acquired would be used to educate the public on LGBTQ issues. This responsibility of a museum. Second, that this response is one of the few to refer to the artists' wishes for their work. Thus far, this survey had proceeded under the assumption that an artist would want their body of work discussed in the context of sexuality. This may not necessarily be the case.

Question 27 asks respondents if their institution takes positions on social, cultural, or political movements. The majority of respondents (37.5%) said 'Yes, and it has been positive for our institution;' this was selected by (43.3%) of English respondents, (25.0%) of Welsh respondents, and (20.0%) of Scottish respondents. The second most-selected response was 'Other' (22.5%) and 'Unsure' (17.5%). (10.0%) of respondents selected 'No, and it would be negative for our institution;' selected by (20.0%) of Scottish respondents and (10.0%) of English respondents. This might have more to do with where funding comes from, rather than community reaction. If the funding comes from local council authorities, there is far less room to take a political position than there would be if funding was private or independent. Responses for 'Other' were limited to English respondents, and our lone Northern Irish respondent. Among these responses, there were mentions of limitations by local governments. The general approach is that the artists that are hosted might be able to take on public positions, but it is not up to the museum to agree or disagree; they just need to provide a platform.

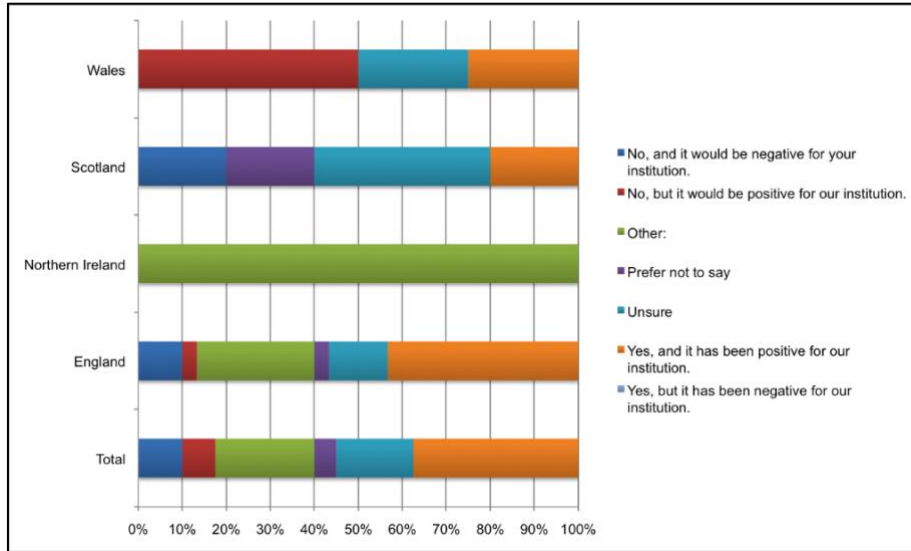


Table 3-2: Results of Question 27: Does your institution take public positions on social, cultural, or political movements? cross-tabulated for responses from the United Kingdom.

Question 29 asks respondents for information about public feedback regarding exhibitions and artists' sexualities. Most respondents (37.5%) said they had not hosted such an exhibition, with a significant amount of those respondents being Welsh (75.0%) or Scottish (60.0%). Of those who have hosted such an exhibition, the feedback was still 'positive' at a rate of (55.0%).<sup>67</sup> There was no long-form option for this question.

<sup>67</sup> This includes 'slightly,' 'moderately,' and 'extremely' positive. Incidentally, our lone Northern Irish respondent said that the feedback was (100.0%) extremely positive.

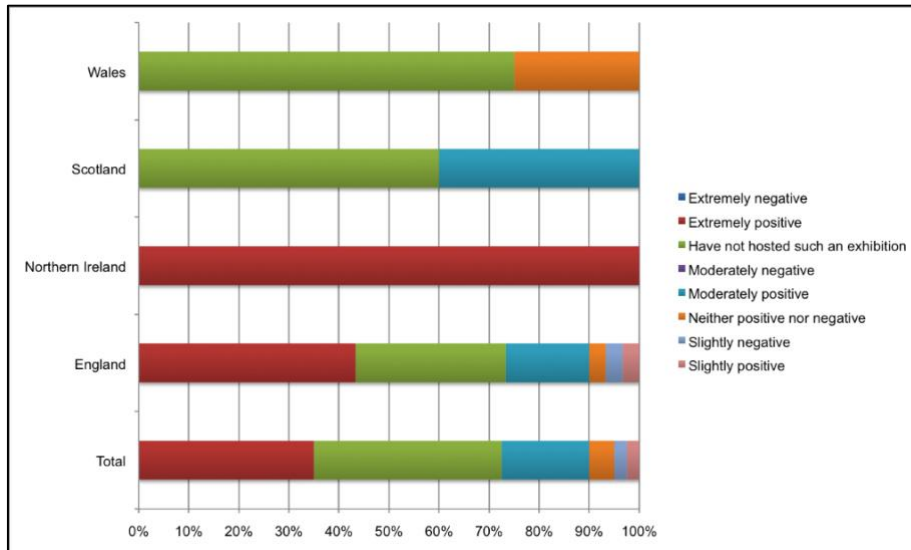


Table 3-3: Results of Question 29: If you have hosted exhibitions with reference to artists' sexualities, what feedback from the public did you receive? cross-tabulated for responses from the United Kingdom.

This final question asks respondents if they have felt pressure to make changed regarding LGB artists' collection and display. (53.1%) of all respondents selected 'No,' including (66.7%) of Scottish respondents and (51.4%) of English ones. (20.0%) of Welsh and (10.8%) English respondents selected 'Yes, from visitors.' In addition, (20.0%) of Welsh and (5.4%) of English respondents stated they received pressure from activist groups. The few long-form responses stated that they received pressure from society and from peers within their museum.

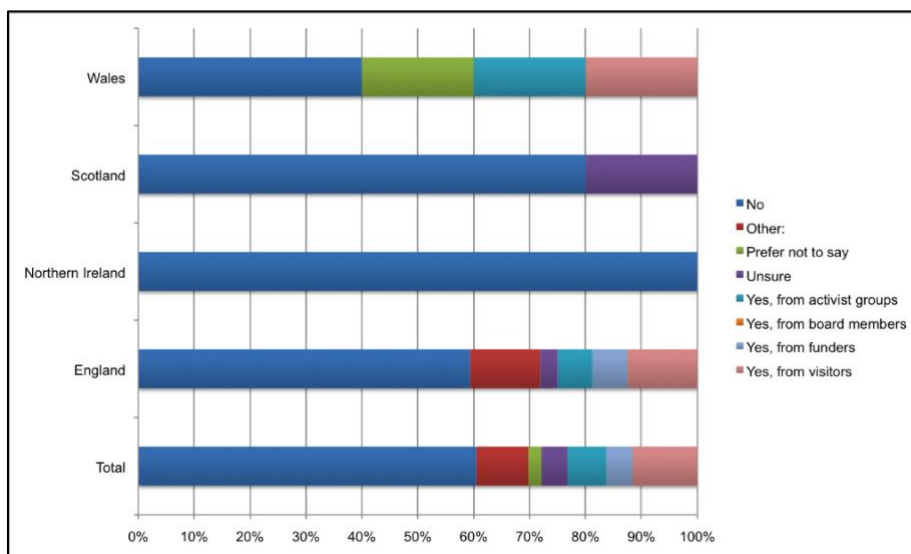


Table 3-4: Results of Question 30: Have you felt pressure to make changes regarding LGB artists' collection and/or display? Check/tick all that apply. cross-tabulated for responses from the United Kingdom.

## The United States of America by Region

The majority of respondents (52.0%) selected ‘Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is a good way to promote diversity and inclusivity.’ Broken down by region, this opinion was held primarily by the ‘Northwest’ (70.0%); ‘Southwest’ (63.6%); ‘Southeast’ (59.1%); ‘Northeast’ and ‘South’ (50.0%) each; ‘Midwest’ (45.7%); and ‘West’ (38.5%). The second-most selected response was ‘Other,’ and then third-most selected was ‘Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is a form of discrimination...’ at (13.4%). Across regions, this breaks down to ‘Northeast’ (17.9%); ‘Midwest’ (17.1%); ‘West’ (15.4%); ‘Southeast’ (13.6%); ‘Southwest’ (9.1%); ‘South’ and ‘Northwest’ (0.0%). Among the answers in ‘Other,’ there was no truly discernable difference between opinions by geographic location within the United States.

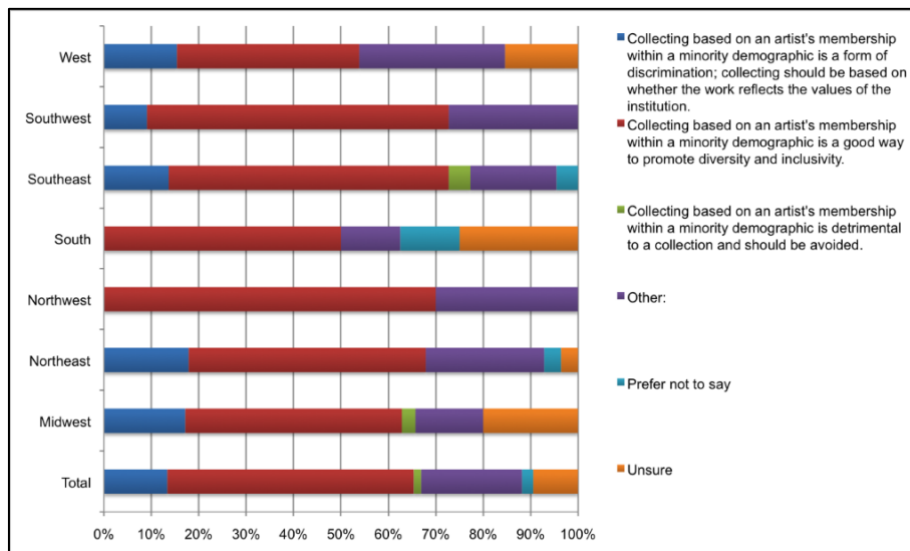


Table 3-5: Results of Question 24: In your professional opinion, which statement do you feel is most accurate? cross-tabulated for responses from the United States of America.

Question 25 asks respondents if museums are doing ‘enough,’ ‘too much,’ or ‘too little’ to address diversity and inclusivity in their collections and displays. The majority of respondents (65.9%) selected ‘Museums are not doing enough,’ and this is true across all regions: ‘Northwest’ (90.0%); ‘Southeast’ (77.3%); ‘West’ (69.2%); ‘Midwest’ (62.9%); ‘South’ (62.5%); ‘Northeast’ (55.6%); ‘Southwest’ (54.5%). ‘Museums are collecting and displaying enough...’ was selected at a rate of (9.5%): ‘Southwest’ (18.2%); ‘West’ (15.4%); ‘South’ (12.5%); ‘Midwest’ (11.4%); ‘Northeast’ (7.4%); ‘Southeast’ (4.5%); ‘Northwest’

(0.0%). The selection 'Museums and galleries are doing too much...' was selected at a rate of just (.79%). It was selected by (3.7%) of self-identified 'Northeast' respondents. This is a surprising result: generally, the northeastern states are considered more progressive or liberal. For the only respondents to select this option to be from the northeast, and for the rate of respondents to say 'museums are not doing enough' to be the second lowest is uncharacteristic of the region's perceived culture.

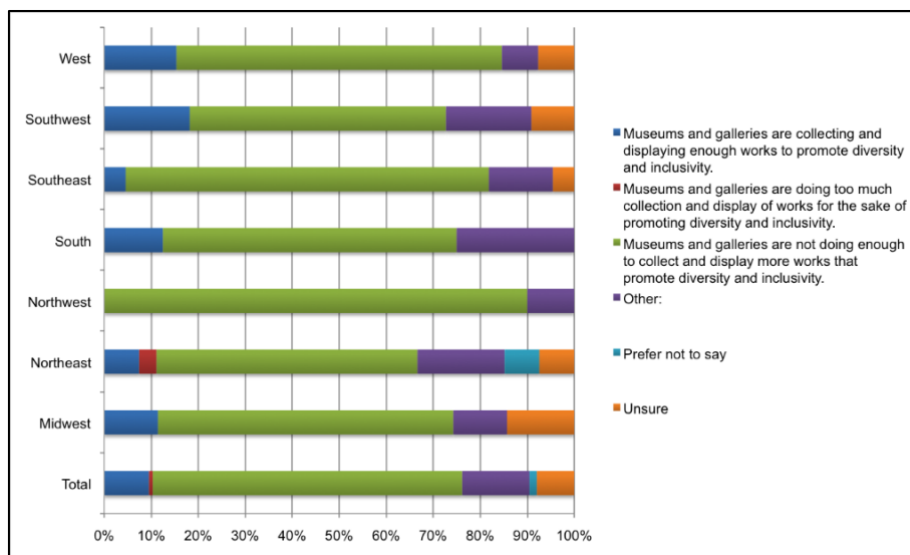


Table 3-6: Results of Question 25: In your professional opinion, which statement do you feel is most accurate? cross-tabulated for responses from the United States of America.

'Other' was selected at a rate of (14.3%) among all respondents and was the second-most selected response across all regions. Here, responses vary even with in the same region. One 'Midwest' respondent suggested that 'I believe that in most cases, museum and gallery professionals are some of the best at actively promoting diversity with their collections and keeping an open mind to diverse subject matter,' and a second one stated that this should not be a concern of museums and galleries. Among the respondents from the 'Northeast,' the long-form responses state that most museums understand that representing diverse audiences is important and are improving their practices.

Question 26 asks respondents for their opinions regarding censorship. Most respondents (58.3%) selected 'Despite the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists, these works should hang on the wall next to artists in a similar genre or movement...' This was the most popular response across all regions except for the 'Southwest' (27.3%). One



of the least popular responses was 'Despite the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists, these works should hang on the wall next to artists in a similar genre or movement. However, no mention of their sexuality should be made,' selected at a rate of just (6.3%). This rate is more than doubled when isolating two regions: 'West' (15.4%) and 'Southeast' (13.6%), compared to 'Midwest' (5.7%) and '' (0.0%) These areas do tend to be more conservative than the northeast, but no more than the rest of the regions listed.

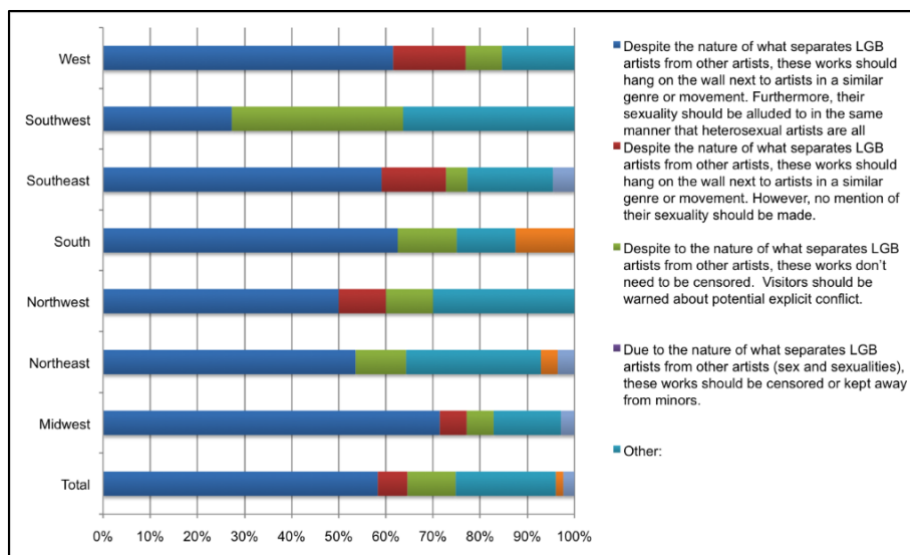


Table 3-7: Results of Question 26: In your professional opinion, which statement do you feel is most accurate? cross-tabulated for responses from the United States of America.

The majority of 'Other' respondents, when broken down across region, feel that sexuality should be referred to when it is relevant. Opinions do not necessarily seem to be broken down along regions. I hesitate to refer to a statement already discussed, but one stands out especially in this context. The respondent that commented, 'sexuality is less divisive in the art world...' self-identified as northeastern. The American Northeast is often referring to as a 'liberal bubble,' and this statement does represent that feeling. Within this same survey, a respondent located in a Midwestern offered to speak to me but on the sole condition that they remain completely anonymous, for fear of backlash from their community. This is an unfortunate reality for many individuals and institutions out with coastal liberal bubbles. A respondent from the southeast stated, 'inclusion of LGBT allusions included if pertinent to working premises.' It is difficult when to identify when this information becomes relevant. As a lesbian and an artist, information like this is already relevant to me, and to many visitors like me. Wall space and visitor attention

spans are as limited resources as funding, and information must always be prioritised, but those priorities are different when you are looking for representation.

Question 27 asks respondents if their institution takes public positions on social, cultural, and political movements. The majority of respondents responded 'Other;' among those that did not, the most popular answer was 'Yes, and it has been positive for our institution' (24.4%).<sup>51</sup> This was not true across all regions: while 'Northwest' responded at a rate of (40.0%), 'West' (38.5%), and 'Northeast' (35.7%), the 'South' selected this at a rate of (22.7%), 'Midwest' (14.3%), 'South' (12.5%), and 'Southwest' (9.1%). For respondents that selected, 'No, and it would be bad for our institution,' (16.5%) overall, the breakdown by region is as follows: 'Southeast' (31.8%); 'Southwest' (18.2%); 'Midwest' (17.1%); and 'North' (14.3%), South (12.5%), and 'West' (7.7%). Respondents that selected 'No, but it would be positive for our institution' (11.0%), are broken down as follows: 'West' (23.1%); 'Southwest' (18.2%); 'Midwest' (14.3%); 'South' (12.5%); 'Northwest' (10.0%); 'Southeast' (4.5%); 'Northeast' (3.6%). According to this data, most institutions in a more traditionally conservative area were less likely to take public positions on social, cultural, or political movements. They were also more likely to believe that it would be detrimental for their institutions to do so.

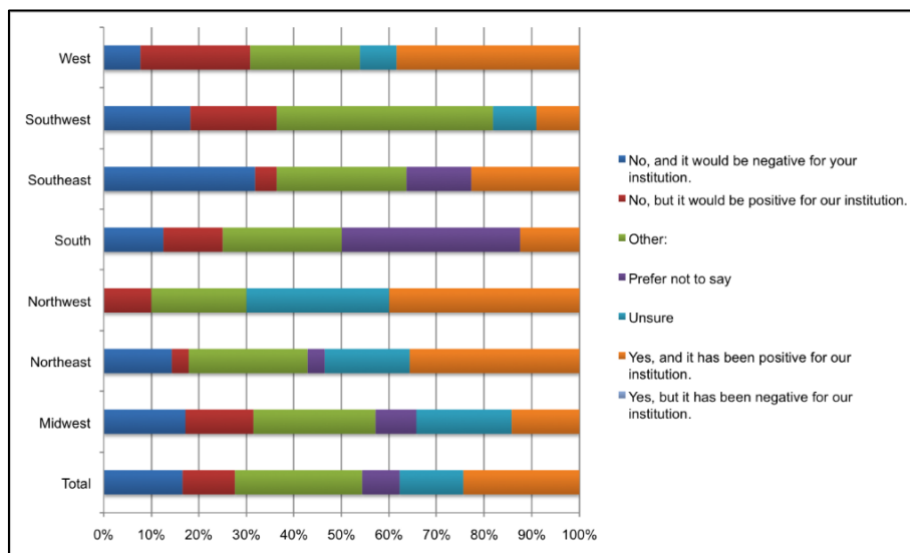


Table 3-8: Results of Question 27: Does your institution take public positions on social, cultural, or political movements? cross-tabulated for responses from the United States of America.

For respondents that selected 'Other,' the majority referenced the structure of their museum and funding bodies as a roadblock to these efforts; many organisational structures would not allow institutions to take on public positions. One respondent from the south stated, 'Yes, with positive results, but we do it with a more subtle approach because we are in the South (USA);' whereas a respondent in the north states 'not officially; but in practice, yes.' Institutions in conservative areas are treading a fine line, while institutions in more liberal areas are able to push their boundaries and (most likely) see very little pushback.

This question asked respondents if they have seen a shift in the attitudes towards collecting LGB artists. The majority of respondents (49.6%) selected 'Yes; museum professionals and visitors feel more positively about collecting LGB artists.' This is true across all regions.<sup>52</sup> The only respondents to select 'Yes; museums professionals and visitors feel less positively about collecting LGB artists' were located in the 'Northwest' (11.1%). At a rate of (17.4%), respondents selected 'No; attitudes among museum professionals and visitors regarding LGB artists remain the same.' However, the responses by region vary: 'Southwest' (45.5%) and 'South' (28.6%) compared to 'Midwest' (15.2%), 'Northeast' (14.9%), 'Southeast' (13.6%), 'Northwest' (11.1%), and 'West' (8.3%). There were few 'Other' responses, but one of note remains '...though some preexisting and simmering negativity has also increased,' which I have referred to before. This respondent located themselves in the Midwest, which leans conservative outside of larger cities. Overall, respondents still feel that both visitors and professionals feel more positively about LGB collections.

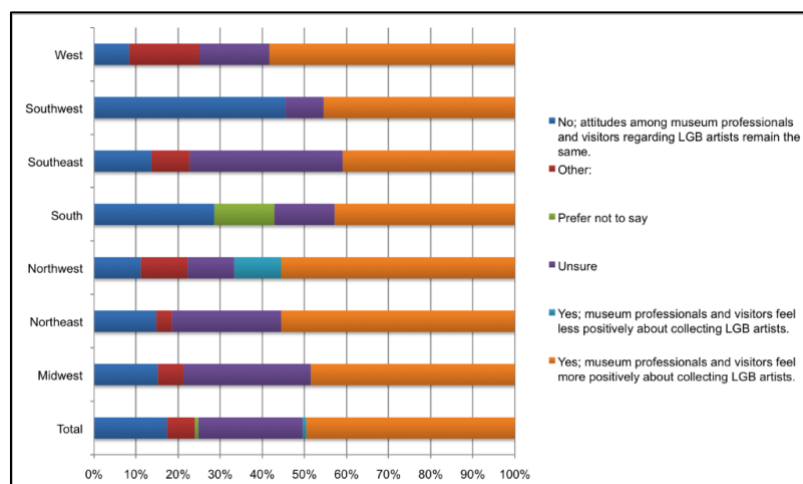


Table 3-9: Results of Question 28: In your professional opinion, have you noticed a shift over the last decade in attitudes about collecting LGB artists? cross-tabulated for responses from the United States of America.

Question 29 asks respondents if they have hosted exhibitions with reference to artists' sexualities and what feedback they received from the public. The most-selected response was (43.6%) 'Have not hosted such an exhibition.' Across regions, this breaks down as follows: 'South' (57.1%); 'Midwest' (51.4%); 'Southeast' (50.0%); 'Southwest' (45.5%); 'West' (41.7%); 'Northeast' (34.6%); 'Northwest' (12.5%). The majority of institutions that have not hosted such an exhibition are located in more traditionally conservative areas; the more traditionally liberal areas were more likely to see exhibitions regarding the LGB community. Of the institutions that have hosted these exhibitions, the 'positive' feedback (38.0% total) breaks down as follows: 'Northwest' (87.5%); 'West' (50.0%); 'Southwest' (45.5%); 'South' (42.9%); 'Southeast' (31.8%); 'Northeast' (30.8%).<sup>53</sup> Very few institutions that hosted this type of exhibition saw 'negative' feedback of any kind: 'Southeast' (4.5%); 'Midwest' (2.9%).<sup>54</sup> For 'Neither positive nor negative' (16.5% total), the responses are as follows: 'Northeast' (34.6%); then a sharp drop to 'Midwest' and 'South' (14.3% each); 'Southeast' (13.6%); 'Southwest' (9.1%); 'West' (8.3%); 'Northwest' (0.0%). This question did not have 'Other' as an option.

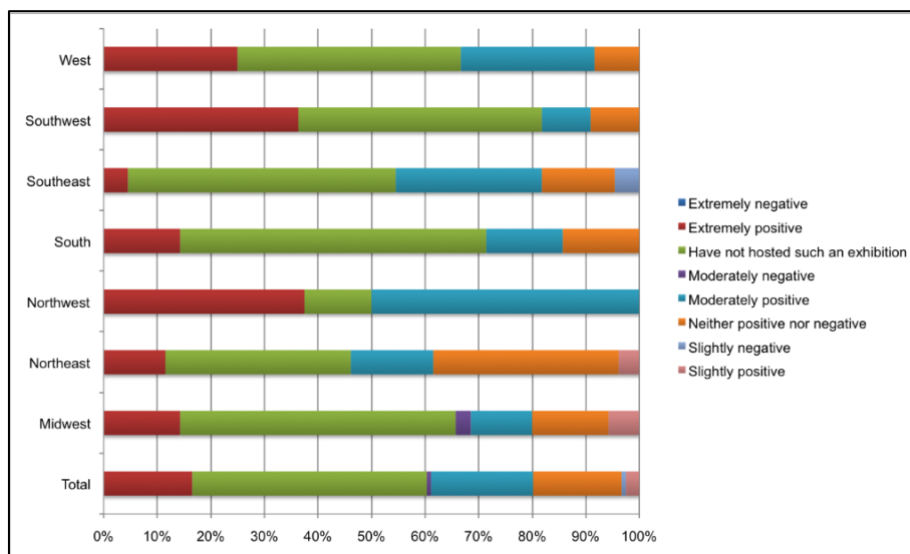


Table 3-10: Results of Question 29: If you have hosted exhibitions with reference to artists' sexualities, what feedback from the public did you receive? cross-tabulated for responses from the United States of America.

Question 30 asks respondents if they felt pressure to make changes to their collections and displays. The majority of respondents said 'No' (57.4%). Broken down by region, this is: 'South' (87.5%); 'Midwest' (68.4%); 'Southeast' (65.2%); 'Northeast' and 'West' (50.0%) each; 'Southwest' (46.2%); 'Northwest' (30.0%). This could mean two things: that these

respondents don't receive feedback as part of their roles, or that more traditionally conservative areas are not asking for this sort of exhibition or work to be shown. However, the highest percentage of respondents who selected 'Yes, from [group]' was 'Southwest' (15.4%) and 'Midwest' (7.9%) from activist groups, followed by 'Yes, from funders' (10.0%) from 'Northwest' respondents. It is worth nothing that this was the only region to say that they have received this request from funders.

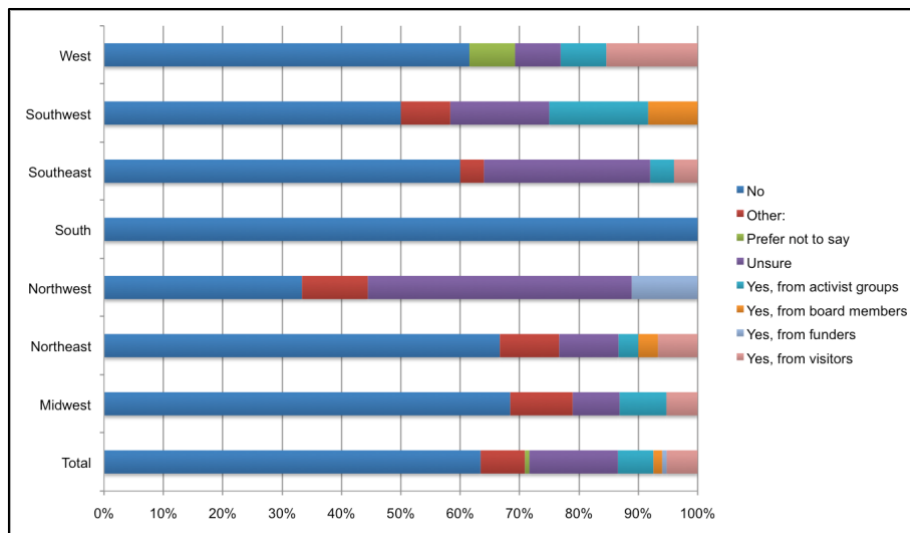


Table 3-11: Results of Question 30: Have you felt pressure to make changes regarding LGB artists' collection and/or display? Check/tick all that apply. cross-tabulated for responses from the United States of America.

I cannot say if the survey was entirely successful. While I did have some wonderful conversations with my respondents and received some interesting data, I feel that the breadth of it meant some information and nuances fell through the cracks. I also cannot account for the drop-off rate, which is significant. I should've accounted for the minor cultural and institutional differences between the United Kingdom and United States. In addition, I had offended some respondents with my wording which was never my intent. I do believe a survey was still the best way to collect the information I did, and I am grateful for those that participated.

## Re-Thinking Acquisitions at The Gallery of Modern Art

In this first case study, I will look at the importance of acquisitions, with a specific focus on the Gallery of Modern Art in Glasgow. I will weave my study of the GoMA's work around its acquisitions policy with responses to the survey on these questions. I focus on two Insight Cafés, open to museum professionals and members of the public and used specifically to address gaps in their acquisitions policy and collections. I then will contextualise GoMA's efforts in wider debates, using data collected from my survey. The issues that emerge are funding and resources, community response, and changing practices.

Many survey respondents highlighted the need for a robust collection from which to draw narratives. To those respondents, it is much more cost-effective (and exciting) to mine what you already have than to piece exhibitions together from loaned works.

Unfortunately, acquisitions are expensive. The money may not be there to collect exactly what you want, and when money is freed up for collection it is rarely *carte blanche*.

Careful and deliberate acquisitions are important for telling lesbian, gay, and bisexual narratives. Glasgow Life has been one of the more-forward thinking and proactive organisations when it comes to the collection and display of lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists. Glasgow Life was established in 2007 by Glasgow City Council to provide culture, arts, and leisure for the city of Glasgow. They manage sports and events, museums and collections, communities and libraries, music and performing arts venues, and other services on behalf of Glasgow City Council.

Glasgow Life has actively worked towards inclusion in all the facets of their operation, not just within their collections. This is key to their success, as it is not just up to select members of staff to carry this goal out. It would be difficult for any organisation to meet those goals for its guests if they were not an inclusive employer within themselves.

Glasgow Museums is the part of the organisation directly responsible for collections, as well as museums such as Kelvingrove, the Peoples' Palace, the Gallery of Modern Art, and Riverside Museum. The Glasgow Museum Collections Navigator is also under their purview. Promoting museum diversity should not and does not just apply to the

collections, it applies to the staff as well. It is the responsibility of every person that works for Glasgow Life (and by extension, Glasgow Museums) to make sure they are meeting inclusivity and targets. To their LGBTI+<sup>68</sup> staff specifically, it makes the following promise:

Glasgow Life, as an ALEO of Glasgow City Council, offers its LGBTI+ employees, or indeed anyone with an interest in supporting LGBTI+ colleagues, regular network opportunities to get together and to discuss relevant topics, share their ideas, insights and experiences.<sup>69</sup>

This understanding that diversity needs to encompass both staff and collections means that GoMA offers a particularly illuminating case study for how museums might think creatively about acquisition.

## The First Insight Café

A proactive step that Glasgow Life has taken is the use of collections roundtables, called 'Insight Cafés,' to discuss the nature and future of their LGBTI+ collections and audiences. I attended two of these cafés. These were vibrant discussions that were hosted at Glasgow Life sites in early 2019. The first café took place at the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA) on 22 February 2019. This was where we discussed the current problems facing the collection. This session was open to any members of the public that wanted to join, though admittedly the members of the public that were in attendance were people that were already invested in these discussions – LGBTI+ members of the public and museum staff. The second café took place at St. Mungo's Museum of Religious Life and Art on 16 May 2019.<sup>70</sup> This was attended by more staff members of Glasgow Life, as this was the meeting after the information gleaned at the first café was presented.

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<sup>68</sup> Please note that this is how Glasgow Life refers to the LGBT+ community, and for this chapter I will be using their terms.

<sup>69</sup> "Work With Us." Glasgow Life, 2018.

<sup>70</sup> A venue I found ironic yet apropos given the traditional role religions have played in the oppression of people of a sexual minority. I am sure this unbiased venue was chosen in good faith by staff, but I did chuckle when I received the invitation.

The first Insight Café began with introductions: in attendance were the Producer Curator at GoMA, Project Curator at the Burrell Collection, Social History Curator from Glasgow Museums, the Creative Skills Curatorial Trainee (working on the *queer times school prints* project/exhibition), and 8 members of the public including myself. The stated purpose of the session was to 'look at new ways of contemporary collecting around LGBT histories, lives and stories.' The participants may have put focus on the arts due to the location of the discussion, but Glasgow Life's remit and responsibility is to the entire city of Glasgow, and therefore discussion about objects of historical and social value to the LGBTI+ community was appropriate. This highlights a previous argument I make where, by their very nature, all an object needs to hold more intrinsic value to a collection is to have been owned by a member of the LGBTI+ community. There is no drive to 'separate the art from the artist' with historical objects, the associations that the object has what gives it its context and importance.

Early on in our discussion, I had introduced the issues I had while searching for Memorial to a Marriage on the Glasgow Life Collections Navigator, an experience that I highlighted in the introduction to this paper. I gave a bit of my background, and explained that in my experience using the Collections Navigator, you'd need to know the specific terms or collection protocol to find exactly what object or artwork a user was looking for. I was informed that this is due to the collections management system that Glasgow Life uses, MIMSY.<sup>71</sup> This presents a number of problems. First, it means that curatorial decisions must be made regarding a work/object at a very basic level. Due to budget, staffing, or time constraints, most of the initial research on an object must be done before or at its accession into the database. It is very rare that someone will have the opportunity to go back and revise their database entries. The decision on what to put into an initial database entry will most likely carry through until that work/object is deaccessioned. Any institution could face high staff turnaround and information about a work/object can easily be lost if it's not in the entry already.

Second, the decisions made regarding what to include in a work/object entry are made with the knowledge that the most important information is made readily available. If a

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<sup>71</sup> In my fact-checking, Axiell says there are two database services they provide to Glasgow: CALM for archival purposes, and MIMSY XG for collections management.



curator or registrar does not deem sexuality an important information set, if they are unaware of the sexuality of an artist, if the work/object donated or loaned to the museum comes with limitations on biographical information, or even if there is no space for the information, then any of this information could be left out. Potentially, one of the largest hurdles to identifying an artist of a minority sexuality is that (since the nature of language is always shifting), the words we use to describe sexuality in this decade are completely different from the words we used to describe sexuality in the last decade, let alone the last century. The LGBTI+ community is by no means a monolith, and any decision a curator or registrar makes regarding terminology will carry over for the future of that institution's collection.

Our conversation did shift this way, into a frank discussion about what tensions might arise between the community and museums regarding terminology. The following points were raised: First, reaching out or referring to other institutions in the UK about how they grapple with outdated terms like 'hermaphrodite' or charged terms like 'queer' would be beneficial to create accountability among museum staff peers. Next, ignoring or outright erasing of certain terminologies, even if they are politically incorrect, could cause problems in terms of education. Is it showing we have progressed beyond bigotry or is it 'whitewashing' uncomfortable histories we have yet to come to terms with?<sup>72</sup> There is opportunity for the words historically used to be 'reframed' as part of a social context. Museum staff should be mindful that there is a privilege in understanding these discussions, and to not lose sight of the fact that one of the primary goals is public education: therefore, the terms used should not be inaccessible to the average patron. There needs to be a way to make meaningful connections between the information and the visitor. In a perfect world, labels and interpretation would be revised to reflect the efforts of collection management teams.

The Producer Curator of GoMA asked the question 'how brave are museums' in the context of rethinking their collections. There is an unconscious bias, of course, but there are challenges with a museum taking what is still seen as a political stance. Within the collection, there is a lack of artists that visibly identify as LGBTI+, or artists that do

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<sup>72</sup> One might think of the Statens Museum for Kunst in Denmark or the Rijksmuseum the Netherlands removing bigoted and racially charged words from the titles of over 200,000 works as part of the industry's contemporary efforts to decolonise the museum.

identify as LGBTI+ but it is not a key theme in their work. The conversation briefly moved to what exhibitions Glasgow Life has hosted and curated, which I will discuss further on in this chapter.

Specifically within the United Kingdom, (47.5%) of respondents in the UK responded ‘Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is a good way to promote diversity and inclusivity;’ with Scotland selecting at a rate of (60.0%) and England at a rate of (53.0%). While only (12.5%) of respondents selected ‘Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is a form of discrimination...,’ (20.0%) of Scottish respondents and (25.0%) of Welsh respondents selected this option. The majority of respondents who selected ‘Other’ were located in England and have mostly suggested that this should not be the only consideration of institutions: the work needs to be strong before considering any ‘tick-box’ approaches to acquisition. However, it is here that a response I have highlighted previously is located as ‘English:’

‘In order to promote diversity and inclusivity, historical imbalance in collecting requires this active redress. With limited [resource] it is necessary to focus those resources and use of demographics is a way of doing this...so I wouldn't collect based on an artist's demographic but their demographic might prioritise collecting their work over other artists.’ For most institutions in the United Kingdom, this is a form of collection that is not prioritised but is used to ‘fill gaps.’

This mode of collection requires resources that many institutions simply do not have.

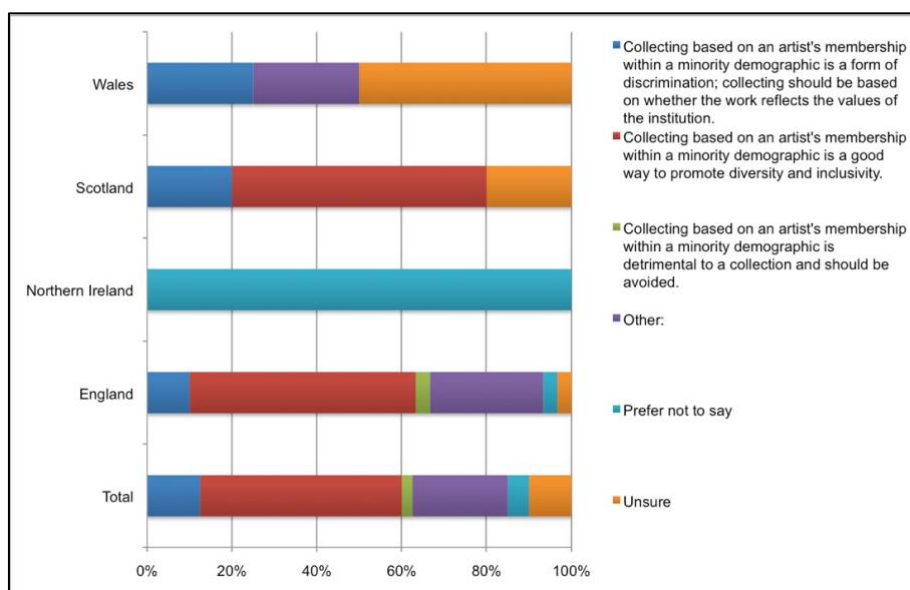


Table 4-1: Results of Question 24: In your professional opinion, which statement do you feel is most accurate? cross-tabulated for responses from the United Kingdom.

The majority of respondents selected 'Museums and galleries are not doing enough to collect and display more works that promote diversity and inclusivity (66%); (14%) of respondents selected 'Other.' 21 (9%) of respondents selected 'Museums and galleries are collecting and displaying enough works to promote diversity and inclusivity;' (8%) of respondents are 'Unsure.' (2%) of respondents 'Prefer not to say' and (1%) of respondents selected 'Museums and galleries are doing too much collection and display of works for the sake of promoting diversity and inclusivity.'

Among the respondents who selected 'Other,' many were keen to mention that the problem in many institutions lies in funding. One respondent stated that their institution has '...identified gaps which need to be filled and are working on doing this; however, resources are impacting our ability to do this.' While 'Museums and galleries are not doing enough to...promote diversity and inclusivity' was the most popular response, only the respondents that responded 'Other' were actually afforded an opportunity to provide suggestions within the long-form answer field. Among the suggestions were that the collection doesn't necessarily need to be updated or added to; rather, institutions can do more research within their collections and find new narratives. There are obviously conflicting ideas about the role of a museum in the responses to this question. One respondent suggested that 'many [museum] are now [realizing] the importance and urgency of representing greater diversity and inclusivity in their collections and exhibitions' and yet another suggested 'museums and galleries should not concern themselves with this issue.'

Question 25 asks for respondents to select the response that most closely matches their opinions on current institutional efforts to collect and display works to promote inclusivity and diversity. In the United Kingdom, respondents selected 'Museums and galleries are not doing enough...' (65.0%), with (75.0%) identifying as Welsh, (63.3%) as English, and (60.0%) as Scottish. The lone respondent who selected 'Museums and galleries are doing too much...' is located in England. Among 'Other' respondents, (20%) in Scotland and (13.3%) in England, the statements overwhelmingly refer to funding difficulties. Museums and galleries know that this is an important mode of collecting, but do not have the resources to do it should they want to.

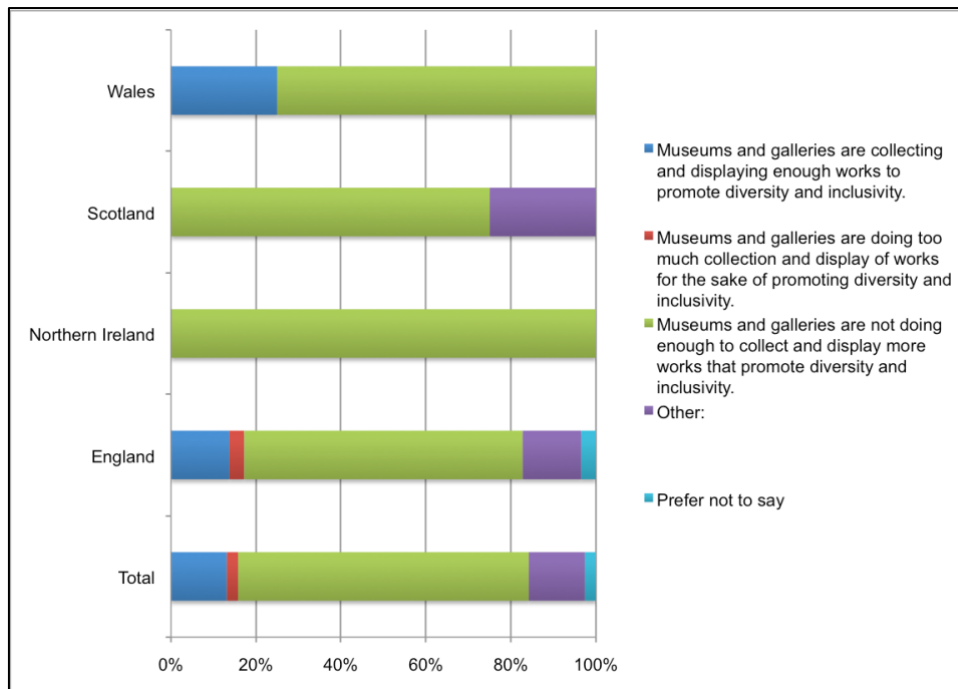


Table 4-2: Results of Question 25: In your professional opinion, which statement do you feel is most accurate? cross-tabulated for responses from the United Kingdom.

Referring back to the GoMA roundtable, I will shift to what suggestions were made by participants for future collection strategies. These included: rapid collecting to respond to important historical events (flyers, badges, ephemera), an awareness of ‘tokenism’ to avoid just ‘checking boxes,’ and reflections on how internal discussions between Glasgow Museums and Collections Management teams can increase visibility or LGBTI+ content within the collections. The Social History Curator at Glasgow Museums, in particular, provided valuable insight to the difficulties of collecting policies related to LGBTI+ objects: the collecting has been generally passive, with people sending Glasgow Museums objects rather than Glasgow Museums proactively seeking out objects.

## The Second Insight Café

The second Insight Café at St. Mungo’s was much more dynamic in nature. It asked the question, ‘how do we become a good ally to LGBTI+ members of the community?’ Again,

the participants included individuals, members of the LGBTI+ community or organisations, and various members of staff from Glasgow Museums, Glasgow Life, and Glasgow City Council. The Producer Curator of GoMA, Project Curator for the Burrell Collection, and the Creative Skills Curatorial Trainee were again our facilitators, and they had synthesised what was discussed at the first café and brought it to the second one. It was at this meeting that we learned that of the one million objects stored in MIMSY, 52 were identified as LGBTI+ adjacent in some way. This practice is reflected in Ferentinos' study of history museums and how they work with other institutions to add context to collections, particularly with *Out in Chicago*, hosted at Chicago History Museum with objects and histories from the Leather Museum & Archives.<sup>73</sup>

We first listened to presentations from Glasgow Museums staff about their efforts to promote LGBTI+ inclusivity with programming and exhibitions. The first project discussed was the *queer times school prints* show at GoMA,<sup>74</sup> and the second project was working with LGBT Age (a project run by LGBT Health and Wellbeing for LGBT people aged 50 and over in Greater Glasgow, Edinburgh, and the Lothians).<sup>75</sup> I will begin with the LGBT Age collaboration, and will describe this project in detail, as even though it is not an exhibition, it is still a brilliant example of how Glasgow Life and Glasgow Museums are tackling the question of contemporary curation and display. The LGBT Age collaboration with Glasgow Museums was regarding a 16<sup>th</sup> century Germanic brass dish depicting the Catholic martyr, St. Sebastian, who is considered by many in the LGBTI+ community (in addition to art historians) to be a 'queer icon.' From the Glasgow Museums Collection Database itself:

Saint Sebastian served under the Roman Emperor Diocletian (244-312 AD) as a member of his personal guard. After confessing to be Christian, Diocletian had Sebastian arrested and sentenced to death. Sebastian survived his ordered execution by arrows...Renaissance artists often depicted Saint Sebastian at the moment of his first execution by arrows as a handsome, youthful man. These images of Saint Sebastian could be considered to be homoerotic as well as religious. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, attracted to the homoerotic qualities of the saint, gay communities came to symbolically associate with Sebastian, transforming him into a 'gay icon'. The suffering Sebastian underwent for 'coming out' as Christian

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<sup>73</sup> "Displaying Queer History at the Chicago History Museum: Lessons from the Curators of Out in Chicago." *Interpreting LGBT History at Museums and Historic Sites*, by Susan Ferentinos, Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, pp. 119–130.

<sup>74</sup> I discuss this show in-depth further on in this chapter.

<sup>75</sup> "LGBT Age – LGBT Health and Wellbeing." *Go to LGBT Health and Wellbeing.*, [www.lgbthealth.org.uk/services-support/lgbt-age](http://www.lgbthealth.org.uk/services-support/lgbt-age).

was also seen as reflection of the [persecution] the gay community endured at the time.<sup>76</sup>

The object discussion at the programme moved the plate from a religious object to 'queer' object. The importance here is not the object itself, but more of what it meant to the community to see themselves within an historical object and within a collection – it suggests, 'yes, we have always been here, but we've had to be silent about it. Now you know we are here.' The focus of this exercise was on display of the dish and the text was done with input from members of LGBT Age and the Glasgow Museums Learning & Access team. This personal curation helped to contextualise the work, but it also made it accessible to non-museum staff and helped this group of LGBT elders stamp their identity onto the object. As one participant said, 'museums used to be windows; now they must be mirrors.' Visitors, particularly in universal museums, may feel that they are outsiders looking into the institution, and they may never have had a chance to see themselves reflected in the collection.

The next part of the Insight Café involved group discussion and crowd-sourced solutions to problems highlighted at the first café in February. The activity required us, collaboratively, to write down what we thought would be appropriate or productive steps moving forward with LGBTI+ collections. There were four A2 sheets of paper, one at a table. We were asked to move around the tables and write down our ideas while highlighting already-written ideas that we agreed with. There were four categories: learning & engagement, objects & displays, venues & facilities, and events. I will not list every suggestion, as there were hundreds. The point of this exercise was to activate this type of thinking in the minds of the staff and the public, and therefore I will highlight some: First, normalise LGBTI+ references in tombstones and other wall text, and do not make a big deal out of their presence; alternatively, made displays permanent to avoid tokenisation. Next, schedule exhibitions and events every month, not just during Pride months – people are gay year-round. Consider the museum as a community space, rather than just a place for object storage or education. In addition, employ 'queer' people and

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<sup>76</sup> *St. Sebastian Dish*. 16AD, Glasgow Museums, Glasgow, [collections.glasgowmuseums.com/mwebcgi/mweb?request=record;id=33089;type=101](https://collections.glasgowmuseums.com/mwebcgi/mweb?request=record;id=33089;type=101) .

Incidentally, when searching for this object, I could not access it using 'gay,' I needed to use St. Sebastian's name.

make that visible to patrons and visitors, and host tours by LGBTI+ groups and laypeople, not just museum staff. Finally, be open with the ethics of agency and ‘revealing’ identities that were deliberately hidden while an artist was alive. These ideas were collaborative efforts, and I feel they are important to share as it shows that there are many museum professionals who are thinking progressively and proactively – the importance is having an institution that supports the efforts especially over a longer period.

In the survey, I asked respondents how their communities have responded to the display and collection of LGB artists. Question 28 asks respondents if they have noticed a shift over the last decade in attitudes toward LGB artists. The majority of respondents (66.7%) selected ‘Yes, museum professionals and visitors feel more positively.’ and this is true across all nations within the United Kingdom. (7.7%) of respondents selected ‘No; attitudes remain the same.’ The one respondent who selected ‘Yes, museum professionals and visitors feel more negatively’ was located in England. In the long-form responses to ‘Other,’ a respondent referenced Arts Council England’s ‘Protected Characteristics’ and how it is ‘strategic to announce purchase on the basis of difference.’ I still believe this is a bit cynical, collection based on diversity should be celebrated if it is not performative for the institution.

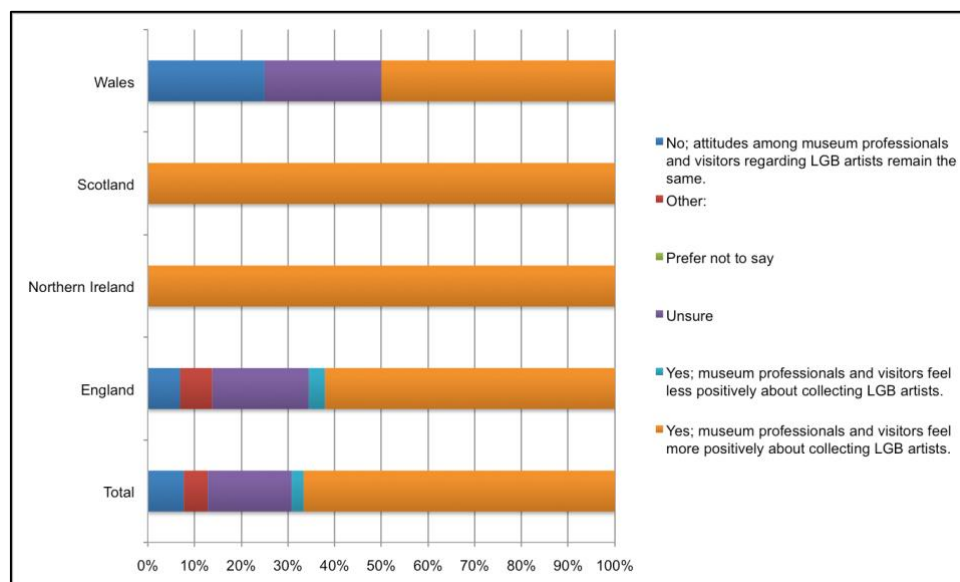


Table 4-3: Results of Question 28: In your professional opinion, have you noticed a shift over the last decade in attitudes about collecting LGB artists? cross-tabulated for responses from the United Kingdom.

## The Exhibitions

Glasgow Museums has taken groundbreaking steps in the last decade with their exhibitions. It is important to highlight that their efforts are not necessarily new to this decade, rather, it's that the LGBTI+ community has become a lot more vocal, has demanded more out of institutions, and is much more present in the public eye. Indeed, Glasgow Museums seems to have spearheaded these efforts. Notable exhibitions I will discuss are 2009's *sh[OUT]: Contemporary art and human rights*; 2018's *queer timēs school prints*; and 2019's *Domestic Bliss*.



Figure 4-1: *sh[OUT]: Contemporary art and human rights*, installation photograph<sup>77</sup>

*sh[OUT]* was the first major exhibition in a British museum to show 'queer' art (*Gay Icons* at the National Portrait Gallery in London would open two months after). It included works from artists such as Catherine Opie, Patricia Cronin,<sup>78</sup> Robert Mapplethorpe, David Hockney, and Nan Goldin. The works featured highlighted the way portraiture is used to

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<sup>77</sup> "Gallery Of Modern Art (GoMA) Glasgow: "sh[OUT]: Contemporary Art and Human Rights." *Gallery Of Modern Art (GoMA) Glasgow Blog*, 14 Apr. 2018, [galleryofmodernart.blog/portfolio/shout-contemporary-art-and-human-rights/](https://galleryofmodernart.blog/portfolio/shout-contemporary-art-and-human-rights/).

<sup>78</sup> The 2/3 scale bronze cast of Patricia Cronin's *Memorial to a Marriage* (2004) that I reference in my introduction was shown in *sh[OUT]* and acquired by Glasgow Museums after the exhibition closed.



reflect the 'queer' experience of bodies, the home, love, and exclusion of LGBTI+ people in contemporary art. *sh[OUT]* also included community outreach, arts workshops, and other public-facing events. It faced a lot of media backlash at the time and the response from Glasgow Museums and GoMA was weak, thereby creating tension between the institution and the community it had hoped to serve. Christian groups attacked some of the included works. For example, Dani Marti's more 'controversial' films were therefore moved to the less-accessible Tramway Gallery, much farther away from the city centre.<sup>79</sup> In addition, some planned education programmes for secondary schools were cancelled, particularly because of the inclusion of Mapplethorpe's works.<sup>80</sup> This reduced the visibility of the works and of the community and thereby reduced confidence in the ability of Glasgow City Council and affiliated museums to properly represent the LGBTI+ community.<sup>81</sup>



Figure 4-2: *queer times school prints*, exhibition photograph<sup>82</sup>

<sup>79</sup> In the end, Marti withdrew his works from the exhibition, citing censorship. At the time, the spokesman for Culture and Sport Glasgow denied it.

Higgins, Charlotte. "Glasgow's Sex and Drugs Row Rumbles on | Arts Diary." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 22 Sept. 2009, [www.theguardian.com/culture/2009/sep/22/goma-censorship-row](http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2009/sep/22/goma-censorship-row).

<sup>80</sup> Sandell, Richard, et al. Culture and Sport Glasgow / RCMG 2010, 2010, *An Evaluation of Sh[OUT] - The Social Justice Programme of the Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow 2009-2010*, [le.ac.uk/rcmg/research-archive/shout](http://le.ac.uk/rcmg/research-archive/shout), p. 13

<sup>81</sup> Similarly experienced by Jonathan Katz and David West when they curated *Hide/Seek* at the National Portrait Gallery at the Smithsonian in Washington D.C., as referenced in my literature review.

<sup>82</sup> GoMA Glasgow, (@GlasgowGoMA), "📣📣📣 Last chance to see queer times school prints in Gallery 3 as it closes 11 March. Over 25,000 visitors so far to this @HeritageFundSCO exhibition and programme,

2018's *queer timēs school prints*, opened on 1 December (World AIDS Day), was the culmination of a year of community outreach and artmaking by curatorial artist Jason E. Bowman. The work began with the commission of 10 educational prints celebrating 50 years of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Polysexual, Queer, Intersex + Allies (LGBTPQI+A) history in Scotland, and shifted to community artmaking, with workshops and assemblies held in schools and libraries across Scotland,<sup>83</sup> with the goal of residents talking about their experiences of queer history and culture in society.<sup>84</sup> Participants decided the criteria for the artists (gender non-conforming, minority sexuality, and strong ties to Scotland). Jade Mulholland, Museums Galleries Scotland Intern and participant, stated 'the idea is that...we take all the power away from Glasgow Museums.'<sup>85</sup> This shift from the way of making decisions that they had in place for *sh[OUT]* was very successful – the exhibition was very well received both by critics and the community, drawing nearly 30,000 visitors in three months. The exhibition itself explored the relationship between the community, the institution, and the works and included murals, prints, and *queer timēs* owed its success to the inclusion of the community.

Finally, we turn to 2019's *Domestic Bliss*. *Domestic Bliss* was inspired by 'Untitled (Yellow Foot Sofa)' by Nicola L., and exhibits works from the Glasgow Museums' permanent collection.<sup>86</sup> The works selected highlight the political and social facets of domesticity, including class, and intimacy. At times the show parodies and criticises domesticity, but there is a tenderness and appreciation for the mundane despite that. Among the works are a few images by Jane Evelyn Atwood from her 1987 photo essay Jean-Louis,<sup>87</sup> which document the last four months of French AIDS patient Jean-Louis. The images were groundbreaking at the time, as AIDS was still misunderstood in France. The images

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commissioned from the artist and curator Jason E Bowman! <https://bit.ly/2BMQMRJ>." Mar 6, 2019, 11:08am. Tweet.

<sup>83</sup> Lorang, Ana. "GoMA's Queer Timēs School Prints Showcases Decades of LGBT+ History and Community." *The Glasgow Sloth*, 12 Nov. 2019, [theglasgowloth.com/gomas-queer-times-school-prints-showcases-decades-of-lgbt-history-and-community/](http://theglasgowloth.com/gomas-queer-times-school-prints-showcases-decades-of-lgbt-history-and-community/).

<sup>84</sup> These experiences included the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Scotland in 1980, opposition to Section 28, LGBT+ people in the BAME community, and the AIDS crisis.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> "Gallery Of Modern Art (GoMA) Glasgow DOMESTIC BLISS." Gallery Of Modern Art (GoMA) Glasgow, 23 Nov. 2020, [galleryofmodernart.blog/portfolio/domestic-bliss/](http://galleryofmodernart.blog/portfolio/domestic-bliss/).

<sup>87</sup> Atwood, Jane Evelyn. "1988 Jane Evelyn Atwood DLS3-AJ: World Press Photo." *1988 Jane Evelyn Atwood DLS3-AJ | World Press Photo*, [www.worldpressphoto.org/collection/photo/1988/33934/1/1988-Jane-Evelyn-Atwood-DLS3-AJ](http://www.worldpressphoto.org/collection/photo/1988/33934/1/1988-Jane-Evelyn-Atwood-DLS3-AJ). This photo essay came in 3<sup>rd</sup> place in 1988.

selected are of Jean-Louis shaving and kissing a friend, and are poignant on their own, but their inclusion in the exhibition as an example of how ordinary and extraordinary queer life can be – in the face of an earth-shattering epidemic, life goes on. This exhibition is noteworthy in that the home life of LGBTI+ people was included along the more 'mainstream' depictions of home life. There is no separation from the more acceptable works; no curtain that the queers must hide behind. AIDS is certainly among the worst parts of LGBTI+ history, but it is still happened in a home, and it is nothing to be ashamed of.



Figure 4-3: *Domestic Bliss* installation photograph <sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Benmakhoulouf, Adam. "Domestic Bliss @ Gallery of Modern Art." *The Skinny*, 13 May 2019, [www.theskinny.co.uk/art/reviews/domestic-bliss-gallery-of-modern-art-glasgow](http://www.theskinny.co.uk/art/reviews/domestic-bliss-gallery-of-modern-art-glasgow).

## Conclusion

The Gallery of Modern Art, and by extension Glasgow Museums, are truly unique among the institutions I have reached out to and researched. Their commitment to marginalised communities is incredibly admirable and their outreach programmes are clearly successful, but their willingness to learn from their mistakes is what sets them apart from institutions. Their community-driven approach assures visitors that their stories are heard and respected and that they are worth sharing with the public. There are much larger institutions with much less to lose that do not take the same chances that Glasgow Museums takes, and it is the trust<sup>89</sup> that they place in their community (which is reciprocated) that makes them so successful.

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<sup>89</sup> I am incredibly peeved when an institution chooses to patronise their visitors, placing no trust in their intelligence and values. There is no cynicism in Glasgow Museums' relationship with their visitors.

## Collections Data at the National Portrait Gallery

We turn to the National Portrait Gallery in London. I chose to highlight this institution specifically because of the breadth of their database, which I had quite serendipitously discussed with their Collections Database Manager. This institution has some advantages that Glasgow Life does not – it's a National Museum and therefore not bound by the constraints of a Local Authority. The size of the museum affords them the robust database that a Local Authority may not have the means to create. Databases are necessary for research, but they are great for representation and an easy way for LGBTQ<sup>90</sup> people to learn about their community, particularly with regard to our place in wider culture. However, the size of the audience means it might not have the same obligation or relationship to a small community that Glasgow Life does.

The National Portrait Gallery (NPG) was founded in 1856 with the aim to:

promote through the medium of portraits the appreciation and understanding of the men and women who have made and are making British history and culture, and...to promote the appreciation and understanding of portraiture in all media.<sup>91</sup>

It has the largest collection of portraits in the world (around 11,100) with a reference collection of over 320,000 images. Notably, their efforts to digitise the collection for public use have been resoundingly successful, and over 215,000 works are available online through their collections database. It sees over 1.5 million visitors each year. I will begin by discussing major exhibitions that the National Portrait Gallery (NPG) has hosted, and then discuss their other inclusive efforts within the gallery. I will again draw comparisons to the survey results. A significant amount of NPG's success comes from their funding and budget. They've been able to create one of the most user-friendly and in-depth search engines that I used during my research.

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<sup>90</sup> This is how the National Portrait Gallery refers to the LGBT+ community within their institution and I will use this terminology for the remainder of this chapter.

<sup>91</sup> "About Us." National Portrait Gallery, [www.npg.org.uk/about/](http://www.npg.org.uk/about/).

In 2009 (the same year that Glasgow's Gallery of Modern Art exhibited *sh[OUT]*), the National Portrait Gallery hosted *Gay Icons*. This highly successful exhibition was the first portrait exhibition in a national museum to focus on the contributions made by gay people and gay icons to history and culture and lasted from 2 July – 18 October 2009.<sup>92</sup> According to the site, 48,216 people attended the exhibition. There were 60 portraits, which were selected by Baron Alli, Alan Hollinghurst, Sir Elton John, Jackie Kay, Billie Jean King, Sir Ian McKellen, Lord Chris Smith, Ben Summerskill, Sandi Toksvig and Sarah Waters.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> 'Gay icons' are individuals who are not necessarily members of the gay community, but they make significant contributions to gay culture. They are usually vocal in their support of the community, make charitable donations to gay causes, and tend to be within the performing arts. They are usually women. Commonly considered 'gay icons' are Judy Garland, Cher, and Lady Gaga. Lesbian icons (dykons, a portmanteau of dyke and icon) could be Marlon Brando, James Dean, and (inexplicably) Hozier but male icons for lesbians tend to be rarer.

<sup>93</sup> Waheed Alli, Baron Alli: An entrepreneur and Labour Party MP, he was the first openly gay peer in Parliament and remains one of the few openly gay Muslim politicians in the world. He led the campaign against Section 28 and helped lower the age of consent for homosexuality from 18 to 16, which is equal to heterosexual relationships.

Alan Hollinghurst FRSL: Novelist, poet, and short story writer. He is known for the novels *The Swimming Pool Library* and *The Folding Star* and is considered a 'gay novelist' though he seemingly does not appreciate the title.

Sir Elton John CH CBE: English recording artist, composer, and pianist. He was open about his bisexuality in 1976 then came out as gay in 1992 in *Rolling Stone*. Also in 1992, he founded the 'Elton John AIDS Foundation' which seeks to provide funding for HIV/AIDS education and support.

Jackie Kay CBE FRSE: Scottish poet and novelist, the third modern Makar. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and a Member of the Order of the British Empire.

Billie Jean King: American tennis player and open lesbian. She has won 39 Grand Slam Titles and at 29 won the 'Battle of the Sexes' against Bobby Riggs in 1973.

Sir Ian McKellen CH CBE: A highly acclaimed actor with credits ranging from Shakespearean to science fiction, he came out in 1988 and has campaigned for LGBT rights across the globe since then. About the Stonewall Riots, he said to BOMB Magazine, 'I have many regrets about not having come out earlier, but one of them might be that I didn't engage myself in the politicking' (1998).

Lord Chris Smith: a Labour Party MP (he is currently an Independent). In 2005, he became the first MP to disclose that he is HIV positive.

Ben Summerskill OBE: Chief Executive of the UK's LGBT equality organisation *Stonewall* from 2003-2014. He is notable for his successful campaigns to repeal Section 28 and for the introduction of criminal offenses for homophobic hate crimes.

Sandi Toksvig OBE: An open lesbian since 1994. In addition to her work as a writer and broadcaster, she co-founded the Women's Equality Party.

Each individual selector was selected due to their distinctions within their own fields, in addition to being gay.<sup>94</sup> This reflects a common consideration that curators take when selecting works: the contributions of the selectors were what set these individuals apart, their 'queerness' was important but not definitive. The exhibition was timed to coincide with the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Stonewall Riots.<sup>95</sup>

Each selector could choose six icons, but the choices were limited to photographs.<sup>96</sup> They did not need to be British; they could be living or dead but must have lived within the last 150 years to maintain relevance to contemporary culture. Furthermore, the portraits didn't explicitly need to contain gay people but must have been regarded by the selectors as a personal icon (notable non-gay sitters were Nelson Mandela and Diana, Princess of Wales, both of whom championed equality). Just as with the selector panel, the sitters were diverse and included artists, musicians, athletes, and other notable pioneers. The portrait-makers themselves were not exclusively gay, either. True, there are names like Andy Warhol, but also Linda McCartney. The parameters set reflects another one of the unique considerations of portrait galleries – that the sitter's identity is more important than the artist's.

The exhibition included an interactive where visitors were encouraged to consider their own icons and fill in cards telling the NPG who the inspirations in their lives were. Much of the comments that were selected for the website were also about gay icons. At the very least, the exhibition accomplished the goal of getting visitors to think of the gay people that have made a difference in individual's lives. It was important that while this exhibition was created with a very specific theme, this was an exhibition for the broader public. At a press breakfast, NPG's director Sandy Nairne stated, 'We're very clear that this is an exhibition for everybody. We want to get out to people who didn't think they'd want to see

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Sarah Waters OBE: A Welsh lesbian writer. she is known for her novels about Victorian society with lesbian protagonists.

<sup>94</sup> You can still read selected comments on the NPG website. They are quite moving and a snapshot of how far we have come within the last decade, let alone the last century.

<sup>95</sup> In contemporary culture, the Stonewall Riots have been viewed as the catalyst for much of LGBT rights activism, and while I often think of it as a small part of my hometown's history, it is important that we realise how important this event has been for international LGBT rights movements.

<sup>96</sup> I could not find any reason for this in my own research, I would hazard a guess that it is because it makes the exhibition more contemporary and sets display parameters.

it.<sup>97</sup> The exhibition was well-received by the public and was said by critics to 'offer a more personal and far-reaching examination of contrasting gay experiences.'<sup>98</sup> The wall labels did name sitter and artists, but also listed why selectors chose the icons that they did. The exhibition was described by Culture24 as 'life-affirming' and 'noble.'<sup>99</sup> The Times noted that it was 'colourful, intimate, and moving.'<sup>100</sup> *Gay Icons* accomplished precisely what it set out to do in a culture that was still unsure of its relationship to the gay community.

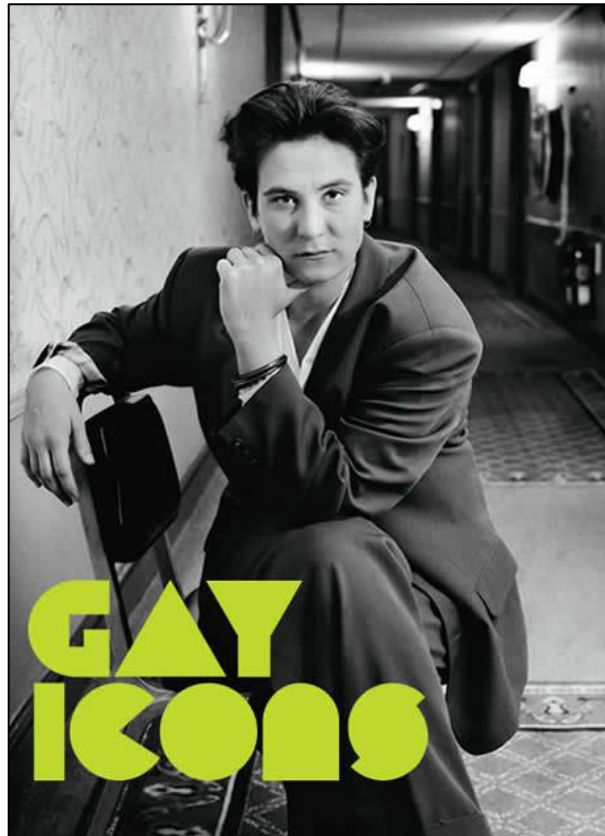


Figure 5-1: *k.d. lang, Le Meridien Hotel, London*, Jill Furmanovsky, 1992<sup>101</sup>

*Gay Icons* was groundbreaking in that it was the first of its kind, and it remains the only large-scale LGBTQI exhibition hosted by NPG. That is not to say that NPG is leaving

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<sup>97</sup> "Princess Diana, Mandela Labeled 'Gay Icons' in London Exhibit." Independent, Independent.ie, 3 Dec. 2012.

<sup>98</sup> Hopkins, Alex. "A Fresh Twist on Gay Icons at the National Portrait Gallery." Culture24, 03 July 2009.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Teeman, Tim. "Gay Icons at the National Portrait Gallery." *The Times*, The Times, 30 June 2009.

<sup>101</sup> *National Portrait Gallery - Gay Icons*, National Portrait Gallery, [www.npg.org.uk/gayicons/exhib.htm](http://www.npg.org.uk/gayicons/exhib.htm).



behind the LGBTQI community by any means. 2017's *Speak its Name!*<sup>102</sup> was a small display of seven photographs that opened alongside the publication of a book, *Speak its Name!*,<sup>103</sup> both of which were released to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the partial decriminalisation of male homosexuality in England and Wales.<sup>104</sup> The publication had more than 150 portraits and quotes from LGBTQI people, both modern and historic. According to the NPG's website, the sitters in the display focus specifically on their 'coming out' stories, while the publication focusses on a breadth of topics related to the LGBTQI community. The title comes from the last line of Lord Alfred Douglas' 1892 poem 'Two Loves,' read at Oscar Wilde's gross indecency trial in 1895: 'I am the Love that dare not speak its name.'



Figure 5-2: *Speak its Name!* Installation photograph<sup>105</sup>

The sitters featured in the display were LGBTQI individuals that are more contemporary (Ben Whishaw and Tom Daley), and potentially those that are less obvious (Angela Eagle and Saffron Burrows). The display was up from 22 November 2016 – 6 August 2017. The decision to focus the display on 'coming out' is not so much an obvious one. There are a

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<sup>102</sup> "Speak Its Name!" *National Portrait Gallery*, [www.npg.org.uk/whatson/display/2016/speak-its-name](http://www.npg.org.uk/whatson/display/2016/speak-its-name).

<sup>103</sup> "Speak Its Name!" *National Portrait Gallery*, [www.npg.org.uk/business/publications/speak-its-name-quotations-by-and-about-gay-men-and-women](http://www.npg.org.uk/business/publications/speak-its-name-quotations-by-and-about-gay-men-and-women).

<sup>104</sup> Scotland would not decriminalise homosexuality until 1980.

<sup>105</sup> "Speak Its Name!" *National Portrait Gallery*, [www.npg.org.uk/whatson/display/2016/speak-its-name](http://www.npg.org.uk/whatson/display/2016/speak-its-name).

number of LGBTQI-specific issues that could be chosen but 'coming out' stories are a unique facet of the community. There are not many hurdles in a minority identity that require such rigorous preparation or that can have such potential fallout, or resounding success. Sharing a coming-out story is something that out individuals do as a matter of routine, and to those that may still be in the closet, it is uplifting to hear about the joy of life after coming out, or seeing that if coming out does not go as planned, there is still a long and fruitful life ahead.

There were other exhibitions that the NPG has hosted that featured LGBTQI artists or sitters, but an individual's sexuality was not the main narrative of the exhibition. Before *Gay Icons*, in 2006-07 they exhibited *David Hockney Portraits*; in 2007-08 they hosted *Pop Art Portraits* (including the work of gay artist icons such as Andy Warhol, Jaster Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, and again David Hockney). In 2008-09, they exhibited *Annie Leibovitz*.<sup>106</sup> After *Gay Icons*, the celebrated exhibition *Virginia Woolf: Art, Life and Vision* in 2014 explored portraits of her by her friends, peers, and family.<sup>107</sup> To enhance these exhibitions (and many more that I have not listed), quarterly tours called 'Queer Perspectives' have been created, which are hosted by curators, artists, and other individuals in-residency as a part of their larger 'Friday Lates' after-hours programme. 'Queer Perspectives' has been running ever since.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Annie Leibovitz has never officially come out but is still considered a lesbian icon, particularly due to her 15-year relationship with Susan Sontag. My choice to include her in this list of NPG's LGBT-adjacent exhibitions may not be purely academic, but she is very notable in the community.

<sup>107</sup> Similarly to Annie Leibovitz, Virginia Woolf has never officially 'come out as lesbian,' nor do we know if she would have, had she been given the opportunity. However, her love affair with Vita Sackville-West is no secret. My choice to include Woolf in this list of LGBT-adjacent exhibitions is a small example of the problems any one faces when choosing which LGBT or 'queer' artists or sitters to include in exhibitions: is it hubristic for me to include her in this list because the community feels an affinity for her, or is it appropriate given how she was a product of her time and worked within societal constraints?

<sup>108</sup> "In Conversation: Queer Perspectives." *National Portrait Gallery*, [www.npg.org.uk/whatson/friday-lates/queer-perspectives-01052020](http://www.npg.org.uk/whatson/friday-lates/queer-perspectives-01052020).

## LGBTQI Artists in the Collections Database

In addition to their programming, the National Portrait Gallery has many other LGBTQI-positive attributes. They have an LGBTQI Staff Network, which has pushed for many of these changes and which I will discuss below. Much of what they have been able to accomplish is due to their funding and budget. Their collections search engine is one of the most user-friendly and successful engines I have come across while conducting this research. The search terms I use as a barometer for the usefulness of a search engine are usually 'gay,' 'lesbian,' 'LGBT,' and 'queer.' They are the most popular words used when referring to the LGBTQI community, and in theory they should return the most results.

With NPG's search engine, every term searched returned results that were relevant to the content I was looking for, returning no insignificant amount of actual lesbians when I use the search term 'lesbian.'<sup>109</sup> Of note is the '*I am me*' image gallery, which was part of an exploration of art, gender, and identity in 2017. The image gallery has portraits of LGBTQI sitters.<sup>110</sup> When the images are clicked on, you are led to the sitter's page, where you can read their biography but almost more importantly, you can access other works they are in, other LGBTQI sitters they might be associated with, and other categories they might fit in. This helps to contextualise the presence of LGBTQI individuals -- we truly are everywhere. In addition to these groupings, there are search results for previous events, exhibitions, lectures, and sitters. The search engine, under 'Explore further,' is detailed in its categorisation by movement and well as time period, family tree, interviews, and 3D collections. NPG's efforts in creating and maintaining the database underscores the importance of investing in a foundation for your collections infrastructure to develop inclusive exhibitions and events.

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<sup>109</sup> There is a dedicated 'LGBTQI' page which seems to be a broken link right now, but I imagine that with a pandemic currently ravaging the sector, we should be willing to cut the staff some slack – there is plenty of time to fix broken links. What matters is that this resource *has* existed, and will continue to do so.

<sup>110</sup> Some are obvious, like Oscar Wilde, and some are not, like Dusty Springfield. She may actually only be not obvious to Americans, truthfully. But the joy in this type of collection and exhibition is in the discovery.

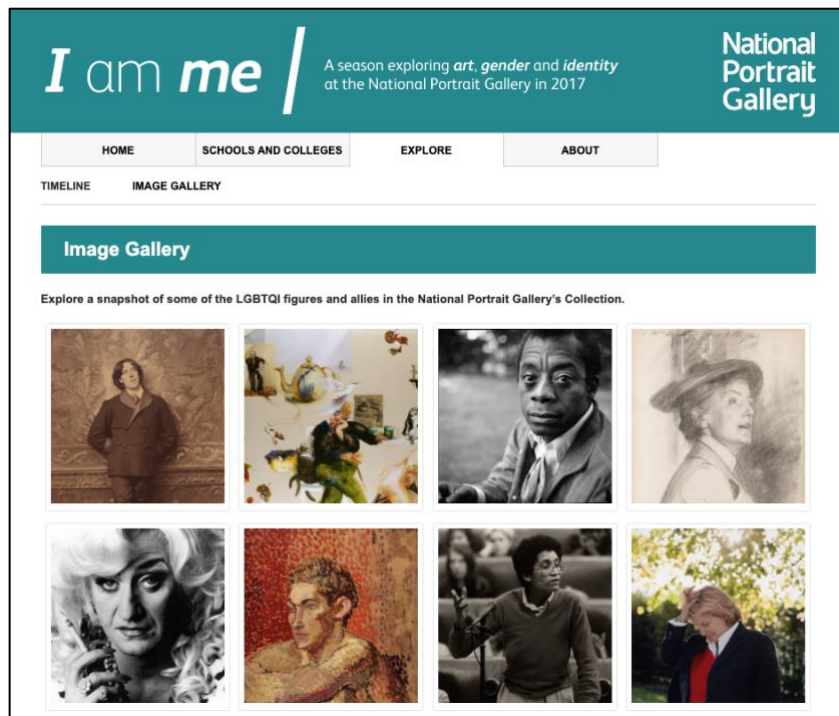


Figure 5-3: *I am me* exhibition site landing page, screenshot by author.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>111</sup> "Image Gallery." *I Am Me - Image Gallery*, [www.npg.org.uk/whatson/i-am-me/explore/image-gallery/](http://www.npg.org.uk/whatson/i-am-me/explore/image-gallery/).

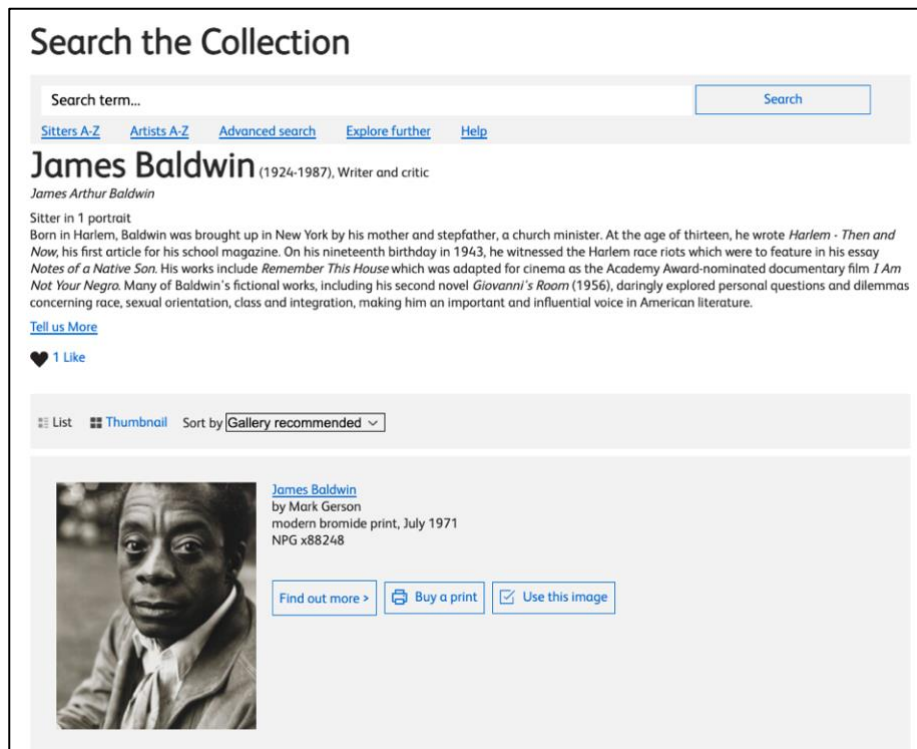


Figure 5-4: James Baldwin sitter page, accessed by clicking on his portrait as seen in Figure 5-3, screenshot by author. <sup>112</sup>

As my dissertation started with a database search, I thought it important to ask about them in my survey. In the survey, I asked respondents “is your institution’s collection [digitized] and available online through a database search?”<sup>113</sup> Most respondents selected ‘the collection is digitised and available online’ (34%); the next most selected answer was ‘Other’ (22%) and again, the majority of respondents who selected ‘Other’ used the write-in fields to expand their answer. (21%) of respondents selected ‘the collection is not currently digitised or available online, but will be at some point in the future;’ (18%) selected ‘the collection is digitised but not available online;’ (4%) selected ‘the collection is neither digitised nor available online;’ (1%) were ‘Unsure.’

<sup>112</sup> “James Baldwin.” *National Portrait Gallery*, [www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp10901/james-arthur-baldwin](http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp10901/james-arthur-baldwin).

<sup>113</sup> This question would have benefited from the addition of ‘The collection is partially digitised and available online’ and ‘We do not have a collection’ as selections.

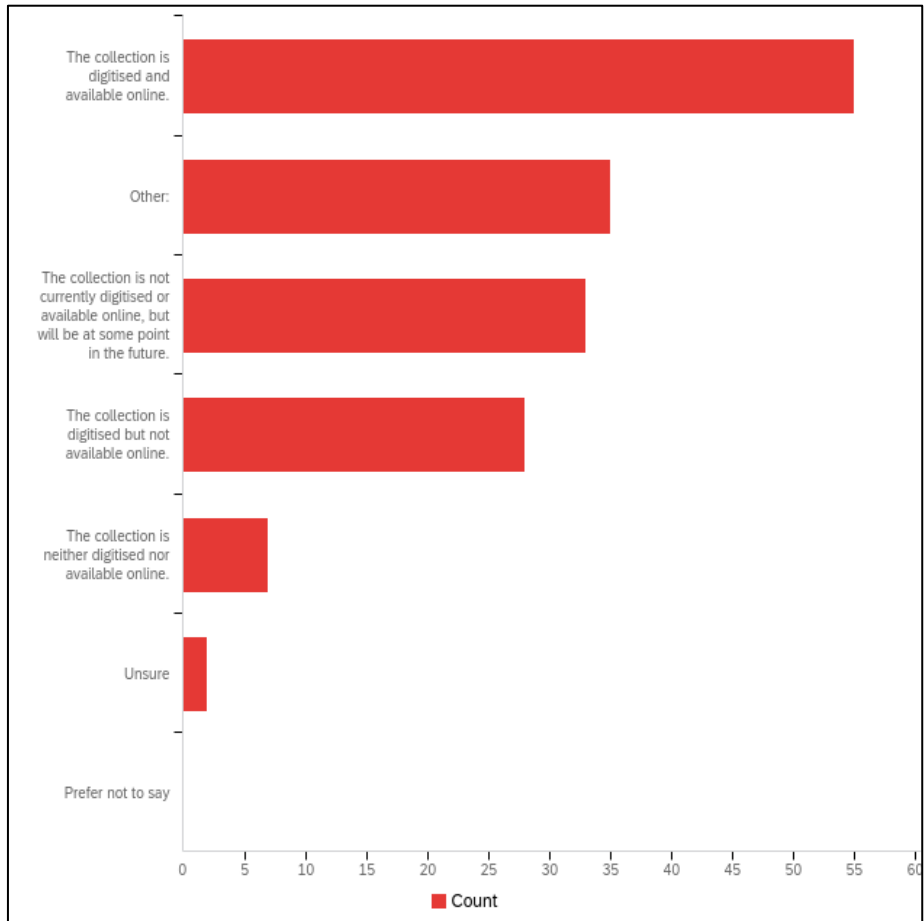


Table 5-1: Results of Question 20: Is your institution's collection digitized and available online through a database search? with no cross-tabulation.

Among the respondents who selected 'Other,' there three types of answers: 'Not applicable,' i.e. no collection, 'available upon request,' and 'partially available'. In fact, enough respondents indicated in some way or another that their works are partially available on a digital platform that it is enough to skew the data in the table. Therefore, 'partially available' were its own selection the data would looks like this:

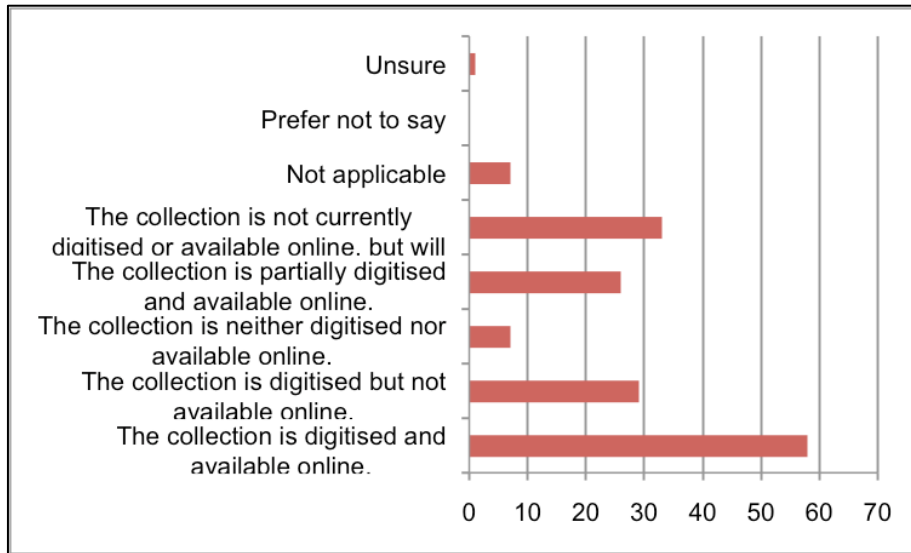


Table 5-2: Results of Question 20: Is your institution's collection digitized and available online through a database search? with answers from the longform response box found under 'Other' categorised and included in visual analysis, with no cross-tabulation.

In this scenario, updated to reflect the skewed data, 'The collection is digitised and available online' increases slightly to (36%), but is bolstered by the addition of 'The collection is partially digitised and available online,' which (16%) of question respondents indicated in some way. Therefore, the total percentage of respondents that said their institution has some form of digitised collection which is available to the public is (52%). This is considerably more than the original (34%). The figures remain similar for 'the collection is not currently digitised or available online, but will be at some point in the future' (21%); 'the collection is digitised but not available online' (18%); 'the collection is neither digitised nor available online' (4%). The addition of 'Not applicable' changes the respondent rate to (4%); (1%) of respondents selected 'Unsure.'

In a conversation with the National Portrait Gallery's Collections Database Manager, we discussed the efforts made by the NPG, in particular the LGBTQI staff network.<sup>114</sup> The

<sup>114</sup> LGBT Staff networks are much rarer in the United States; in fact, an earlier version of this footnote noted how excited I was by such a novel concept as a dedicated staff network.

In the United States, DEAI (Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion) committees are more common. These are usually part of a museum's strategic plan to move forward with inclusive programming, advocacy, and professional development. In a nod to intersectionality, they combine the needs of people of color, LGBT+ people, and disabled people. Individuals are not usually welcome to join as they would a network – at my employer at the time of this writing, staff were invited to apply to join the DEAI, with an emphasis placed

efforts to add this information to the digital collections were spearheaded by this staff network, who obviously have a vested interest in promoting the LGBTQI works in their institution. Without a doubt, the concept of tagging works with sitters or artists that are LGBTQI comes with many decisions to make. The first major decision was how would the gallery approach historical figures. There are many historical figures within the collection that are thought or known to be LGBTQI according to a contemporary reading of their biographies, but the words we use now are not what those individuals would've used to describe themselves, particularly within societies where criminal or capital offenses were brought against homosexual practices.

The second major decision faced is which words to use when labelling artists or sitters within the collections database.<sup>115</sup> The curatorial team had to work with the collections management team in deciding these terms – there was a system of checks and balances between the groups for rigour. It was important to consider any alternatives to the labelling: some individuals are out and proud, some had evidence on the public record of being LGBTQI. People that were alive may not want to be on the list: this was particularly important in maintaining relationships between the gallery and the individual. The decision was made to tag the person and create an individual sitter record for them and link it to the portrait record. This made tagging group portrait records easier and did not require multiple explanations within a record. This project did not involve going through each individual record and making a major decision about the sitter or artist, but rather going through the records of who is known to be a member of the LGBTQI community.

NPG's efforts in creating their database are important because they allow even the staff to understand the breadth of the collection. Further to the survey, one question asks 'to the best of your knowledge, do you have any works by artists who are openly gay, lesbian, or bisexual (LGB) in the collection?' Overwhelmingly, respondents selected 'Yes' (73%); followed by 'Unsure' (17%); 'Other' (7%); 'No' (3%). No respondents selected 'Prefer not

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staff of color to help raise their voices. Committees meet and decide steps forward, which are brought to the rest of the museum. They might host diversity training or similar workshops, and the work they do is in addition to their other job responsibilities. There are many ethical issues that come along with DEI committees as opposed to an open network, including the undue burden of minority demographics being charged with fixing their oppression.

<sup>115</sup> Interestingly, the National Portrait Gallery uses two Axiell databases: Calm and MIMSY XG (the same as Glasgow Museums). This indicates that once Glasgow Museums decides what terminology to use in their Collections Navigator, the database is more than capable of handling the transition.



to say.’ Again, a majority of respondents who selected ‘Other’ used the write-in field to expand on their answers. Of those, (100%) indicated that their institution has no collection to quantify.

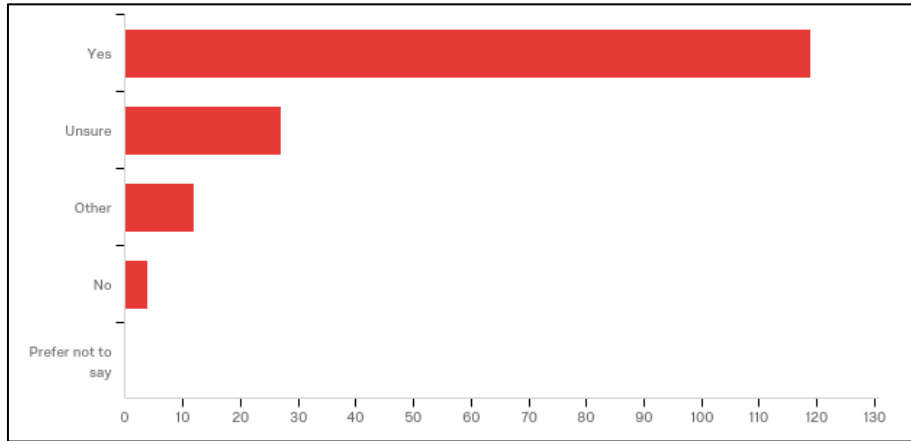


Table 5-3: Results of Question 21: To the best of your knowledge, do you have any works by artists who are openly gay, lesbian, or bisexual (LGB) in the collection? with no cross-tabulation.

The following question was conditional to the question discussed previously, and read ‘if you have works by artists who are [open] LGB, is this information made known to visitors? Check/tick all that apply.’<sup>17</sup> Survey participants had the option to select multiple answers in response to question 22. The majority of respondents selected ‘Other’ (28%). Additionally, every respondent who selected ‘Other’ used the write-in fields to expand on their answer. The second-most chosen response was ‘No,’ (16%); followed by ‘Yes, via wall text’ (13%); ‘Yes, via tour guides or gallery attendants’ (12%); ‘Yes, via object descriptions’ (11%); ‘Yes, via publications’ (10%); ‘Unsure’ (9%); ‘Prefer not to say’ (1%).

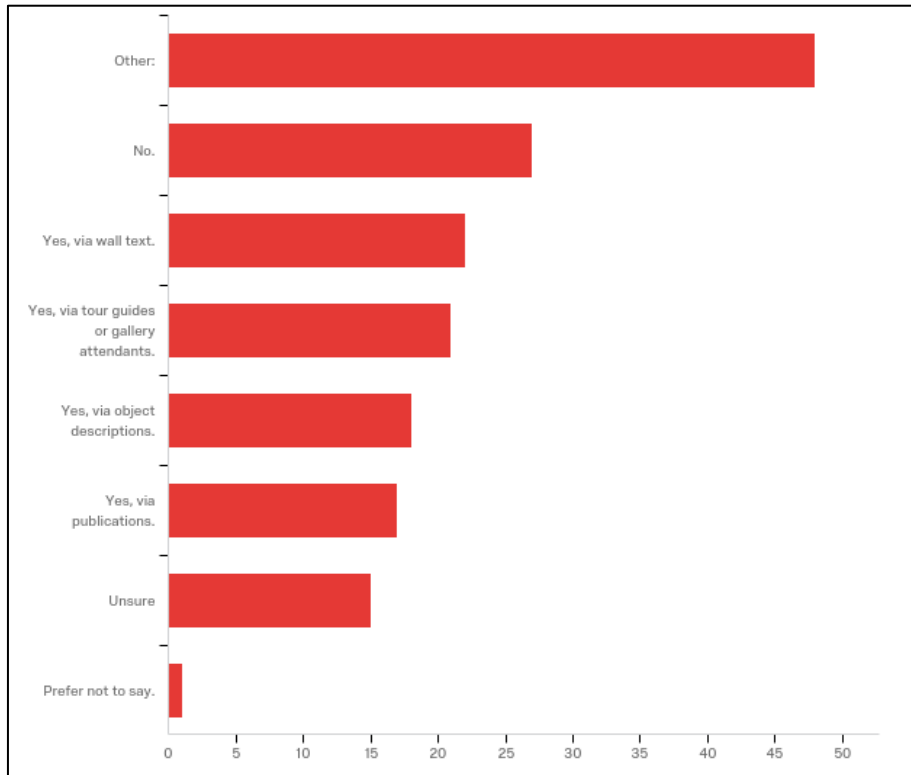


Table 5-4: Results of Question 22: If you have works by artists who are open[ly] LGB, is this information made known to visitors? Check/tick all that apply. with no cross-tabulation.

After organising the responses to ‘Other’ into broad categories, the majority of respondents that used the write-in fields indicated that their institution makes the information known when relevant to the exhibition or would help the context of the work (73%). Less popular, but still very relevant, responses to ‘Other’ indicated the following: that this sort of disclosure was in future plans (8%),<sup>18</sup> that the methods they used weren’t listed (8%),<sup>19</sup> that there would be no need to disclose this information (7%), and that this disclosure would be up to the artist or their family (4%). Indeed, some form ‘when relevant’ was written in so often that if it were its own option, it would slightly skew the data again:

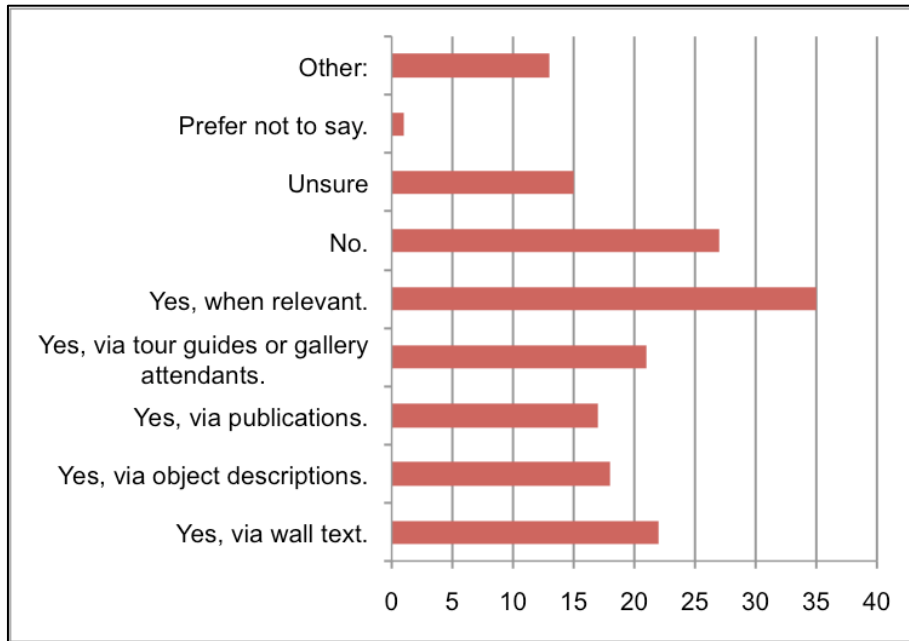


Table 5-5: Results of Question 22: If you have works by artists who are open[ly] LGB, is this information made known to visitors? Check/tick all that apply. with answers from the longform response box found under 'Other' categorised and included in visual analysis, with no cross-tabulation.

In this scenario, where 'Yes, when relevant' is an option in the survey, the selection rate is (21%), making it the most popular response. The second-most popular response remains 'No,' (16%); followed by 'Yes, via wall text' (13%); 'Yes, via tour guides or gallery attendants' (12%); 'Yes, via object descriptions' (11%); 'Yes, via publications' (10%); 'Unsure' (9%); 'Prefer not to say' (1%). 'Other' drops down from (28%) to (7%). NPG's efforts with their after-hours programme, 'Queer Perspectives,' is one of the ways they've brought attention to the LGBTQI collections that don't require replacing the tombstones in an entire gallery.

As previously stated, the National Portrait Gallery acquires works prioritising the cultural or historical importance of the sitter, not the artist. This is particularly important when asking the question of representation in museums. It is more likely that the average visitor will recognise the sitter rather than the artist; this creates an opportunity with visitors seeing a more immediate reflection of themselves on a gallery wall. Currently, any funding for acquiring works prioritises individuals from certain demographics: women, BAME,

and LGBTQI sitters.<sup>116</sup> Many projects were undertaken to celebrate the anniversary of the Wolfenden Report,<sup>117</sup> and the reports were scoured for more information about 20<sup>th</sup> century members of the LGBTQI community that might've been in the collection.

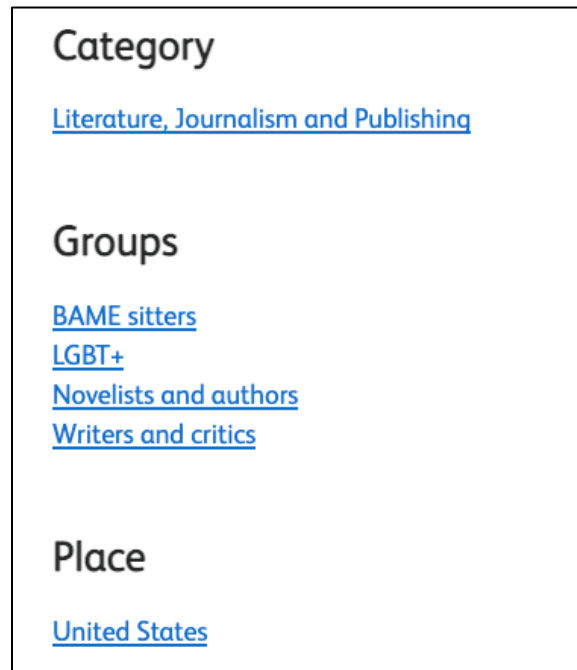


Figure 5-5: Database/collection networks for James Baldwin from his sitter page, screenshot by author, as seen in Figure 5-4.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Recent acquisitions that fit this criteria (that were on exhibition before the COVID-19 pandemic shut down museums shut) include Lin-Manuel Miranda, Michael Bennett, Anna Wintour (photographed by Annie Leibovitz), and Cindy Sherman (photographed by Robert Mapplethorpe).

<sup>117</sup> 1957's *Report of the Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution*, commonly known as the Wolfenden Report, stated that 'homosexual behaviour between consenting adults in private should no longer be a criminal offence...homosexuality cannot legitimately be regarded as a disease, because in many cases it is the only symptom and is compatible with full mental health in other respects.' It was the beginning of British acceptance of homosexuality in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and led to a wider interest in the LGBTQI community.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

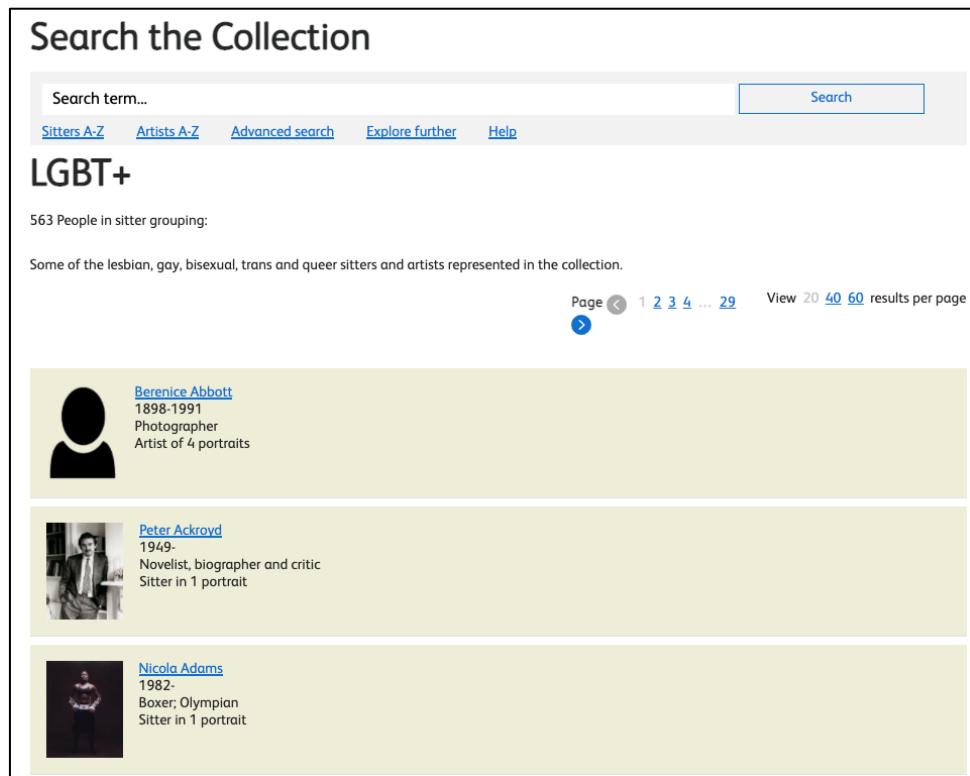


Figure 5-6: *LGBT+ sitter group landing page from Collection Search*, screenshot by author, as accessed by clicking 'LGBT+' from the links seen in Figure 5-5.<sup>119</sup>

To the National Portrait Gallery, these changes are not necessarily about making a fuss of the truly monumental task itself. It is more important to hang certain artists and sitters next to similar works. Again, what is included in wall labels is the more difficult question. *Gay Icons* solved this by stating why sitters were chosen and what their influence was, but this might not be appropriate for every tombstone. Often, wall labels will be written for a particular temporary display, therefore it must be relevant to the display, and can afford to be more detailed. Alternatively, the 'permanent hang' caption needs to include much broader information, and decisions need to be made about what's important or relevant to the work. There is a balance between finding consistency in content and not shying away from 'queer' sitters, just as there is a balance between the limited space<sup>120</sup> and the broad audience. Because of the nature of the research and the project, there is a possibility that a sitter already in the permanent hang is a member of the LGBTQI community, but this information is not known. Even with efforts to reorganise the permanent galleries with

<sup>119</sup> "LGBT+." *National Portrait Gallery*, [www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/group/1342/LGBT+](http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/group/1342/LGBT+).

<sup>120</sup> It is important to note that the National Portrait Gallery is closed until 2023 for building works supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The museum was open at the start of my research and writing.

diversity and inclusivity at the heart of the work, it is estimated that less than 10% of the permanent hang is identifiable as LGBTQI or 'queer.'<sup>121</sup>

## Conclusion

The National Portrait Gallery is an institution that has seen many successes with LGBTQI representation on the wall and within their staff. These successes come with a larger budget and a truly dedicated staff that is willing to take on the massive task of referring back to a collection and reflecting on the works. Not every institution has the means to take on a task of this magnitude, but even institutions with the funding and staff at their disposal must make the choice to initiate this type of work. The networks created within the search results are particularly meaningful. The database is simple, effective, and robust thanks to the efforts of the staff. With an almost endless rabbit hole to fall into, I like to imagine a young lesbian tucked away in her room searching for women and men that resemble her.<sup>122</sup> That is the power that this type of institutional change can have in someone's life.

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<sup>121</sup> While this might seem like a small amount (and the staff member I interviewed expressed their dismay at this statistic during our conversation), this figure would reflect the percentage of LGBTQI-identified people in both the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

<sup>122</sup> I feel as though I aged myself with this comment. Before TikTok and Instagram, you would have to find an 'am I gay?' quiz on a Geocities page through Google and lie to it so you could stay in the closet a little bit longer. Kids these days have it so easy.

# The University Audience at Thorne-Sagendorph Art Gallery

When researching the United States, the sheer vastness of the country must be acknowledged. I am beginning this chapter with the size of the United States for the simple fact that oftentimes, particularly outside of major cities, museums and galleries are few and far between. Many times, small museums and galleries may be the first exposure some Americans have to fine and contemporary art, and these institutions may be part of a university or college campus. This in turn means that the values of the university or college and the community may not always align.<sup>123</sup> There are also potential limitations on the museum that the university itself might set, which might not align with the director's or curator's wishes.

## Thorne-Sagendorph Art Gallery and Keene State College

The relationship between university museum, university, and city was the foundation for a few of my interviews, including a conversation with the then-director of the Thorne-Sagendorph Gallery, which is part of Keene State College<sup>124</sup> in New Hampshire.<sup>125</sup> According to the director, they population of the town of Keene skews older, and there is an extensive list of continuing education programming. From their website:

For more than 50 years, the Thorne-Sagendorph Art Gallery at Keene State College has been a gathering place for artists, students, patrons, educators, scholars, and friends. The gallery has hosted excellent exhibitions of work by local, national, and international artists and designers, originated a broad range of innovative education and public programs, and fostered diverse connections

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<sup>123</sup> In my own American collegiate experience, my undergraduate university and student body were occasionally at odds with the local population, who at the time we derided as 'townies.' The university is progressive, the town is progressive, and my state is progressive. Yet, there were still tensions between the locals (who saw us as an imposition as best and gentrifiers at worst) and the students (who saw locals as barefoot backwoods hippies to be avoided).

<sup>124</sup> In the United States, 'college' and 'university' are often interchangeable terms. Broadly speaking, universities might have many different schools or departments within them, offering a wide range of courses and degrees. They also might offer postgraduate programmes in addition to undergraduate programmes, while colleges only offer undergraduate programmes. In the US, 'going to college' always refers to a four-year school with the intention of obtaining a Bachelor's degree.

<sup>125</sup> Keene State College is a public liberal arts college, with a student body of about 3,500 students. It is a part of the University System of New Hampshire. It, as well as the city of Keene in which it is located, is heavily leans liberal and has a population of around 23,000. The state of New Hampshire has a population of nearly 1.4 million, making it one of the smallest states in the union. Statewide, the politics are slightly more moderate. Joe Biden won the state in 2020 over Donald Trump, by just over 7%, and their governor is a Republican.

across disciplines, communities, and generations. All exhibitions, receptions, and programs are free and open to the public.<sup>126</sup>

Their collection (as well as the collection policy) is neither available to the public digitally nor digitised but has a coherent policy with a focus on time and place, which is early 20<sup>th</sup> century art regional colonies, with collections prioritising the artists who were associated with those colonies.<sup>127</sup> The challenge is that by the time the focus was developed, much of the related art had been collected by other institutions. We discussed a partnership with the New York Public Library that was unrelated to the collection and problematic, but eventually successful.

## Ryan White & Andy Warhol

In 2016, gallery had been approached by people who wanted to talk host *The Power of Children*,<sup>128</sup> which included a section about Ryan White, who was often used as an example of a 'good' person with AIDS.<sup>129</sup> Ryan White was a young boy with hemophilia who was accidentally given AIDS via a blood transfusion in December 1984 – only 3 years after the virus was first described in 1981. He was one of the first hemophiliac children to

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<sup>126</sup> "Thorne-Sagendorph Art Gallery Kicks Off Its Fall Exhibitions." Keene State College, [www.keene.edu/news/stories/detail/1537216181787/](http://www.keene.edu/news/stories/detail/1537216181787/).

<sup>127</sup> The related colonies are the Cornish Art Colony and the Dublin Art Colony. The Cornish Art Colony was started by August Saint-Gauden's in Cornish, New Hampshire, about an hour from Keene. Both art colonies focused on landscapes, with the Cornish colony producing slightly softer art, reminiscent of early impressionism. The director I spoke with admitted that the work is a mixed bag that doesn't contain outstanding pieces, stating 'it's a swirl of all cultures but not in any systematic way.'

"Cornish Arts Colony in Cornish and Plainfield, NH 1885-1930." *Cornish Arts Colony in Cornish and Plainfield, NH 1885-1930*, National Register Nomination Information, [www.crjc.org/heritage/N08-16.htm](http://www.crjc.org/heritage/N08-16.htm).

Clark, Edie. "History of Art of the Dublin Colony." *Monadnock Art – About Us*, [monadnockart.org/history-of-art-of-the-dublin-colony/](http://monadnockart.org/history-of-art-of-the-dublin-colony/).

<sup>128</sup> Gnade, Bill. "City Host to Powerful Exhibit." *SentinelSource.com*, 5 Oct. 2016, [www.sentinelsource.com/news/local/city-host-to-powerful-exhibit/image\\_ebfa0f87-dee2-5c50-93f5-310e3614ec81.html](http://www.sentinelsource.com/news/local/city-host-to-powerful-exhibit/image_ebfa0f87-dee2-5c50-93f5-310e3614ec81.html).

<sup>129</sup> In 2020, the Ryan White CARE (Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency) Act was funded for 2.39 billion USD. I read the book, *Ryan White: My Own Story* in intermediate school and was deeply traumatised by it.

"Who Was Ryan White?" HIV/AIDS Bureau, United States Health Resources & Services Administration, 14 Nov. 2017, [hab.hrsa.gov/about-ryan-white-hiv-aids-program/who-was-ryan-white](http://hab.hrsa.gov/about-ryan-white-hiv-aids-program/who-was-ryan-white).



be diagnosed with AIDS, at the age of thirteen, as was given only 6 months to live. He died in April 1980, shortly before his high school graduation. He was used as an example of an innocent person who got AIDS – not a dirty homosexual or junkie, but an All-American boy. This was still early on in the AIDS crisis, and so much was still unknown about the disease. Congress passed legislation that would provide federal funding for HIV care, support, and medication for low-income individuals.

New York Public Library (NYPL) had recently acquired the archives of ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), which would've provided the relevant exhibition materials.<sup>130</sup> The director was initially concerned about an apologist-framed approach to the issue of Ryan White, his diagnosis, and the AIDS crisis for people who seemed to deserve it, but the project was coming regardless of reservations. Thorne-Sagendorph was able to create a travelling show which supplemented *The Power of Children*, and included much more information about the 80s, activism, art, and politics related to the AIDS crisis. Indeed, it was more information than most students and many faculty and staff had known about. The gallery was able to put Ryan White's life into dialogue with the activism of ACT UP. This approach succeeded because it turned what could've been a public relations nightmare into a safe way to engage with multiple and complicated issues. In an institution where there's little to no progressive audience or radical agenda, it was necessary to create an entry point – the politics of Ryan White and the 'innocent AIDS victim' were problematic, but they were used as a bridge to get to this more challenging material. In addition Thorne-Sagendorph partnered with the Cheshire Children's Museum<sup>131</sup> in Keene and social service organisations to host the exhibition and build programmes and audiences for that project, as well for their own undergraduate students who had never been exposed to this material before. The polite yet unfortunate politics of

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<sup>130</sup> AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, or ACT UP, was a political action group formed in 1987 by Larry Kramer in New York City to force politicians to take the AIDS crisis seriously. Among their actions was a march on Wall St., a protest in front of the Center for Disease Control, and quite famously, the 'Ashes Action of 1992,' in which a funeral procession started at the United States Capitol in Washington D.C. and ended at the White House, where ashes of individuals who died of AIDS were scattered on the lawn.

"ACT UP NY | End AIDS!" *ACT UP NY*, 5 June 2020, [actupny.com/contact/](http://actupny.com/contact/).

<sup>131</sup> Ginter, Callie. "Special Exhibit Coming to Local Children's Museum." *SentinelSource.com*, Sentinel Source, 21 Aug. 2016, [www.sentinelsource.com/news/local/special-exhibit-coming-to-local-childrens-museum/article\\_f72abe70-5d0f-53e3-8b0c-51d5859d5730.html](http://www.sentinelsource.com/news/local/special-exhibit-coming-to-local-childrens-museum/article_f72abe70-5d0f-53e3-8b0c-51d5859d5730.html).

a young boy who met a tragic end was used as a gateway to open a wider community discussion.

The experience with *The Power of Children* was bolstering to the director, and gave the gallery the confidence to try something new. At the time of the interview, the gallery just wrapped up the *cLick\ CliQue: A Warhol Experience*. This show featured 150 Polaroids taken by Andy Warhol which were gifted to the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art at the State University of New York at New Paltz, New York (SUNY New Paltz) and first shown in 2010. This was considered forward at the time, almost a taboo, even for what is considered a very liberal campus. Warhol photographed his friends and lovers, as well as pop culture figures such as designer Diana Vreeland and artist Jean-Michel Basquiat.<sup>132</sup> The catalog *Andy Warhol: Private and Public in 151 Photographs*, published by SUNY New Paltz, was a collaboration between the students in the SUNY New Paltz Art History Department and the curators of the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art. The students designed the catalogue and wrote essays for it as part of their coursework.<sup>133</sup> The catalogue was supervised by Reva Wolf, a Warhol scholar, and the director (then Dorsky curator) I spoke with at Thorne-Sagendorph Art Gallery.



Figure 6-1: Andy Warhol. Self-Portrait (in Drag). 1981. Polaroid photograph.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Warhol, Andy, et al. *Andy Warhol: Polaroids 1958-1987*. Taschen, 2017.

<sup>133</sup> Schwartz, Anna, et al. *Andy Warhol: Private and Public in 151 Photographs*. Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, State University of New York at New Paltz, 2010.

<sup>134</sup> Warhol, Andy. *Self-Portrait (in Drag)*. New York, library.artstor.org/#/asset/AGUGGENHEIMIG\_10313464050.

The show at SUNY New Paltz was successful enough that once that curator moved to Thorne-Sagendorph at Keene State College, he wanted to reattempt it with a new audience in 2018. The demographics in Keene skew much older, and therefore the university has a large continuing education programme. The goal was to work with that particular population in a once-a-week course over a few semesters. There were some individuals that did not want to stay once they realised they would be discussing Warhol's sexuality, indeed quite frankly. Their disinterest may be for a number of reasons, which we did not discuss in the interview. According to a 2010 report from the Pew Research Center titled 'MILLENNIALS: Confident. Connected. Open to Change,' which studied the general cultural identifiers of Millennials, Gen X, Boomers, and the Silent Generation. Millennials and Gen X were more likely than their Boomer and Silent Generation counterparts to be comfortable with gay couples raising children and with legalising gay marriage. At the time of the study, twice as many Millennials and Gen Xers responded that they believe that homosexuality should be more socially accepted than by their older counterparts. Of course, generational homophobia might only be one of the reasons a participant might drop out. Some participants may be uncomfortable with any discussion of sex, with the Silent Generation and Boomers having a more conservative view of sex and sexuality overall.<sup>135</sup> <sup>136</sup> Those that did stay, however, were fully invested in the work and spent one semester delving into his sexuality and the second semester developing the *cLick/CliQue* exhibition in partnership with the museum's former educator. At both the Samuel Dorsky Museum and the Thorne-Sagendorph Gallery, all of the Polaroids were exhibited, and at Thorne-Sagendorph the show was so popular that it was extended twice and had been partnered with other campus entities.

## Public Institutions and Audience Building

The museum 'profession' has always been a strange business where the people who are involved in this sort of work tend to believe passionately in what they're doing and put a lot of themselves into it, despite the challenges of even sometimes putting food on the

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<sup>135</sup> Keeter, Scott, et al. Edited by Morin Rich, Pew Research Center, 2010, MILLENNIALS: Confident. Connected. Open to Change., [www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2010/10/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change.pdf](http://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2010/10/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change.pdf).

<sup>136</sup> Please see Appendix A, 'Responses by Age' for a more detailed breakdown of survey responses cross-tabulated by respondent age.

table. A challenge that the director faced and highlighted in our discussion whether you want to commit to every project with an activist bent: do you tease out the latent content or go full-bore in the most 'political' way possible? When asked how collecting based on minority demographic would work, and if it could be easily changed through collections policies (and most importantly, if it would have support), the director felt the university would be supportive, but they still wouldn't know how to go about it. This is for a few reasons, including the trend of academic disciplines (whichever department or social movement is most popular in a given decade) and the university's interests (which are always trying to respond to student demographics.) Academic development could really help support those focused initiatives, including the beginnings of research and establishment of new temporary or permanent programmes and courses that focus on gender and sexuality, as those lead toward more scholarly activity. Collecting is usually behind academic and theoretical development, therefore it is the departments that need to drive the collection, and not the other way around.

Regarding the survey, I cross-tabulated for audience and sources of funding. When asked for the sources of funding and types of governance, responses were almost evenly split between: 'Publicly owned and/or funded' (32%), 'Privately owned and/or funded' (29%) or 'Part of a university or college,' like Thorne-Sagendorph, (28%).<sup>137</sup> 'Unsure' and 'Prefer not to say' came in last (1%). Question 18 asks respondents 'does your institution host temporary exhibitions featuring the works of minority demographics?' An overwhelming majority of respondents (87%) selected 'Yes.' The next most selected option was 'Other' (7%) and most of those respondents again used the write-in option to be more specific. Only (4%) of respondents selected 'No,' and an equal number of respondents (1% each) selected 'Unsure' or 'Prefer not to say.'

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<sup>137</sup> Many respondents selected 'Other' and used the write-in space to respond with 'a combination of public and private' and 'non-profit/501(c)(3).'

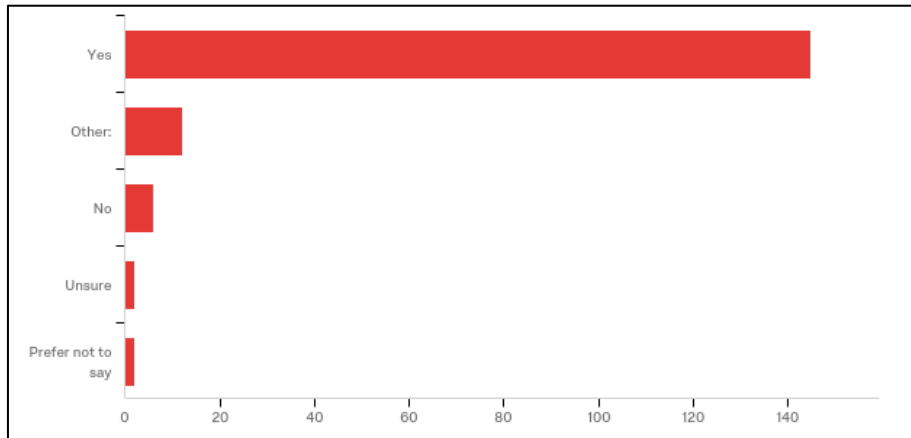


Table 6-1: Results of Question 18: Does your institution host temporary exhibitions featuring the works of minority demographics? with no cross-tabulation.

Of respondents that selected ‘Other’ and used space to provide a longer answer, the majority of them implied that they do host exhibitions with minority demographics, but the focus of the works and artists are not based on demographics. For those institutions, the selections for those exhibitions is based on a number of factors: thematic, based on merit, related to the institution’s mission statement, or financial. Exhibitions, juried and non-juried, were stated to have been ‘non-discriminatory’ in nature and selected artists on the basis of their work, and not their demographic. It is unclear from the responses if these were from blind juries, who looked at the work without statements or resumes.

One respondent stated ‘Yes, we, do, and we review all uses of the Collection [through] an inclusive excellence lens.’ I highlight this survey question and response in particular because this far into the survey, it is the first response to provide information about their institution’s plans for inclusivity. ‘Inclusive Excellence’ refers to the Association of American Colleges & Universities’ (AAC&U) initiative for promoting diversity, inclusivity, and equity in academia.<sup>138</sup> It is up to each individual college or university to apply this particular framework for engaging with minority demographics in the student body, administration, and wider community.<sup>139</sup> Inclusive excellence must happen at each institutional level and includes a toolkit that is designed by the university itself. AAC&U’s

<sup>138</sup> “Diversity, Equity, & Inclusive Excellence.” *Association of American Colleges & Universities*, 10 Apr. 2018, [www.aacu.org/resources/diversity-equity-and-inclusive-excellence](http://www.aacu.org/resources/diversity-equity-and-inclusive-excellence).

<sup>139</sup> Notable universities who participate in the Inclusive Excellence initiative are Clemson State University, University of Missouri (Mizzou), and University of Virginia (UVA).

definition of 'inclusive' is broad and includes race, disability, gender, gender expression/identity, and sexuality.

Question 24 asks respondents for opinions on collecting and display methods promoting diversity and inclusivity. The majority of respondents (41%) selected 'Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is a good way to promote diversity and inclusivity:' across governance. Across funding bodies, this breaks down to 'Publicly owned/funded' (63.3%); 'Privately owned/funded' (57.8%); 'Part of a university/college' (46.3%). 'Other' was selected at a rate of (20.9%). 'Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is a form of discrimination...' was selected by (13.7%), this broken down along 'Privately owned/funded' (15.6%); 'Part of a university' (9.8%); 'Publicly owned/funded' (8.2%).

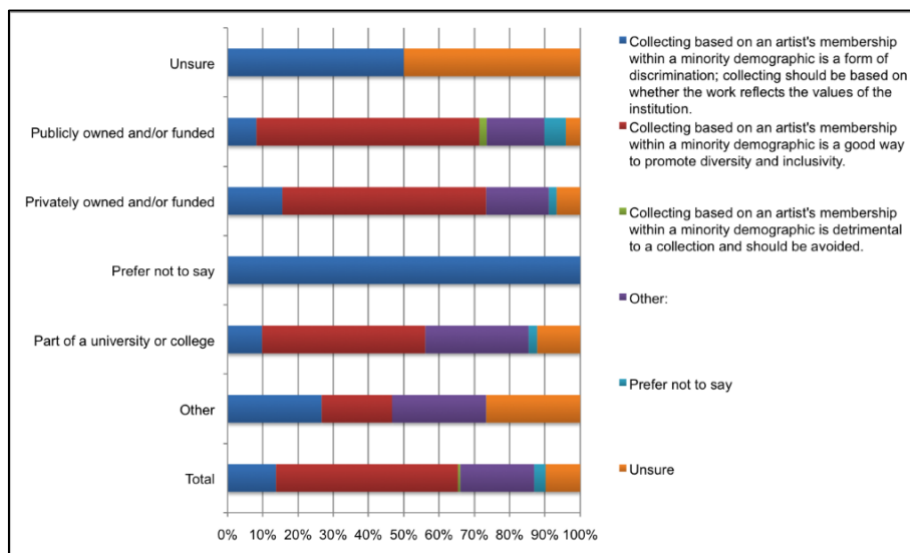


Table 6-2: Results of Question 24: In your professional opinion, which statement do you feel is most accurate? cross-tabulated by governance & funding structure.

When looking at long-form responses from 'Other' respondents, there was no real difference between governance and funding structure. One respondent that worked in a public institution stated,

...A work of art should not be collected purely because the artist's identity ticks a box in terms of minority [identities]. Equally, curators and [institutions] have a duty to look beyond the white, middle and upper class artists almost exclusively represented by commercial galleries. I would never acquire a work for my collection exclusively based on the sexuality of the artist but I would acquire

artwork that dealt exclusively with themes of sexuality and identity in order to give visibility to those themes within the collection.

I highlight this response because it was only of the one responses that discussed the responsibility of the museum compared with the private gallery system, which has far less responsibility to its community and to ethics boards.

Question 25 asks respondents for their professional opinions on whether museums are doing 'too much,' 'too little,' or 'enough' to address diversity and inclusivity. Most respondents (65.8%) selected 'Museums are not collecting and displaying enough...;' this breaks down to 'Privately owned' (73.3%); 'Publicly owned' (65.3%); 'Part of a university' (65.0%). The next most selected option was 'Other' (13.8%); then 'Museums and galleries are collecting and displaying enough...' at (9.2%). This was selected by (12.2%) of 'Publicly owned' museums, (11.1%) of 'Privately owned,' and (2.5%) 'Part of a university.' 'Museums and galleries are doing too much...' was selected at a rate of (1.3%); (2.2%) by 'Privately owned' and (2.0%) 'Publicly owned.' (0.0%) of respondents who are part of a university selected this option. Among the respondents who selected 'Other,' there is no discernable difference between types of funding and governance. The respondents who said they were part of a 'publicly owned and/or funded' museum cited a lack of resources as the biggest obstacle to this form of collection and display.<sup>140</sup> I think this could be amended with some creative thinking on the part of those institutions. I will expand on this in my last case study, but there are many institutions that do not have collections are seeking out travelling exhibitions and artists. Despite the Thorne-Sagendorph's collection from the historic local art schools, the director still takes the opportunity to exhibit challenging material.

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<sup>140</sup> The respondent who suggested 'museums and galleries not concern themselves with this issue' self-identified as being part of a 'publicly owned/and or funded' institution.

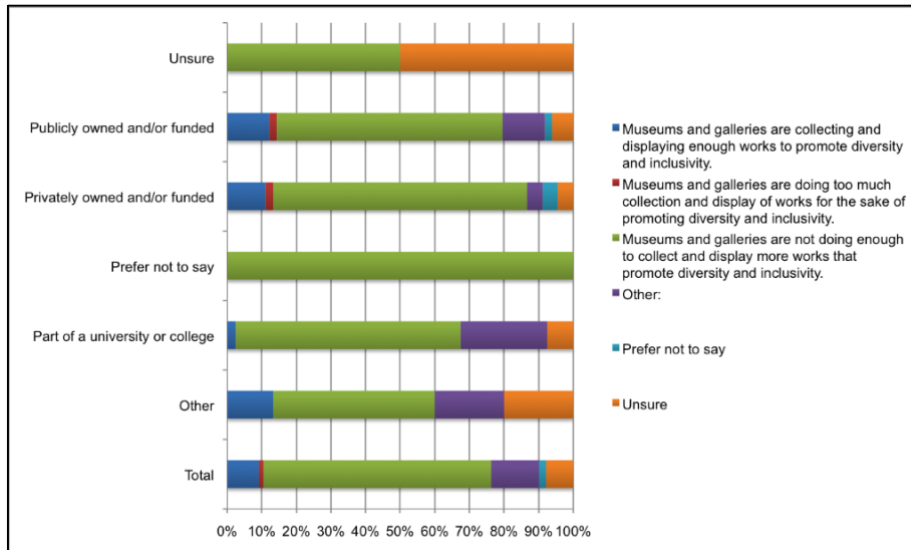


Table 6-3: Results of Question 25: In your professional opinion, which statement do you feel is most accurate? cross-tabulated by governance & funding structure.

Question 26 asks respondents for opinions regarding censorship and artists' sexualities. The majority of respondents (58.2%) selected 'Despite the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists, these works should hang on the wall next to artists in a similar genre or movement.' Across type of museum, this breaks down to 'Privately owned' (66.7%); 'Part of a university' (63.4%); 'Publicly owned' (57.1%). The next most-selected option was 'Other,' selected by (20.3%) of participants. '...these works don't need to be censored. Visitors should be warned about potential explicit [content].' was selected (11.8%.) This breaks down to 'Publicly owned' (20.5%); 'Part of a university' (7.3%); 'Privately owned' (4.40%). The selection, 'these works should hang on the wall next to artists in a similar genre or movement. However, no mention of their sexuality should be made' was selected by (5.9%) of participants: (8.9%) of 'Privately owned;' (2.4%) of 'Part of a University.' (0.0%).

The response 'sexuality is less divisive in the art world than in most other spheres of society' was submitted by a respondent who is 'part of a university or college' which furthers the stereotype of the 'liberal bubble' of academia.<sup>141</sup> Most respondents working in a 'Privately owned' institution felt that this depends on the relevance to the work.

<sup>141</sup> I refer again to the midwestern institution that asked for complete anonymity in this discussion.



University museums, like the Thorne-Sagendorph, often use these exhibitions as a learning-tool and will have larger discussions surrounding these works.

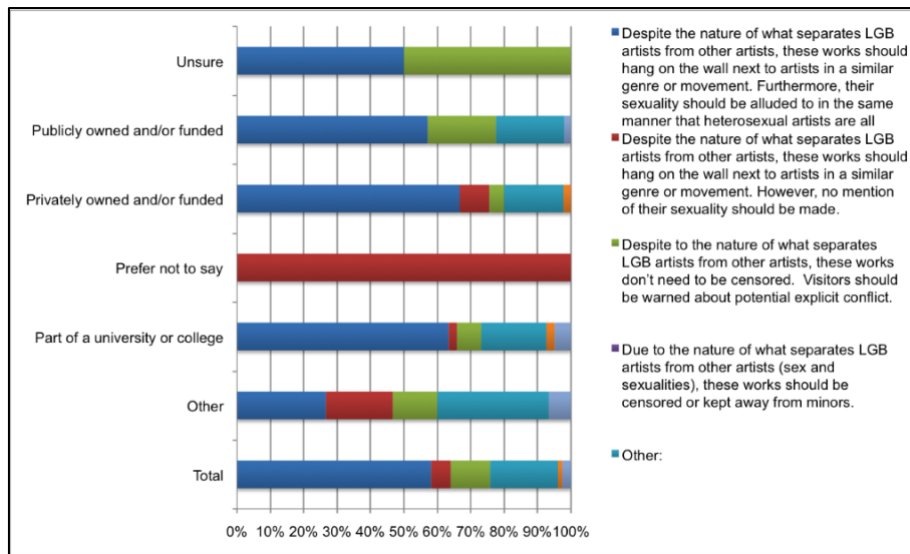


Table 6-4: Results of Question 26: In your professional opinion, which statement do you feel is most accurate? cross-tabulated by governance & funding structure.

Question 27 asked respondents if their institution takes public positions on social, cultural, or social movements. Most respondents (26.8%) selected 'Yes, and it has been positive for our institution.' The breakdown according to governance is as follows: 'Publicly owned' (34.7%); 'Privately owned' (24.4%); 'Part of a university' (19.5%). This is followed by 'Other' at (24.2%) and 'No, and it would be negative for your institution' with (17.0%) of the total. This is broken down to: (20.0%) 'Privately owned;' (16.3%) 'Publicly owned;' (12.2%) 'Part of a university.' 'No, but it would be bad for your institution' was selected at a rate of (9.8%); broken down this is reflected as (15.6%) for 'Privately owned;' (6.1%) 'Publicly owned;' (4.9%) 'Part of a university.' University/college museums were less likely to believe that their institution taking a public position would be negative for the institution; in addition, privately owned museums were most likely to believe it would be negative. Among responses to 'Other,' 'Publicly owned' museums were cognizant of their funding structure and knew they needed 'tread carefully' to avoid political bias, seeking neutrality in their ethos. Those who work at both 'Privately owned and/or funded' and 'Part of a university or college' provided a long-form response stated that they have taken public positions, with a mix of positive and negative results.

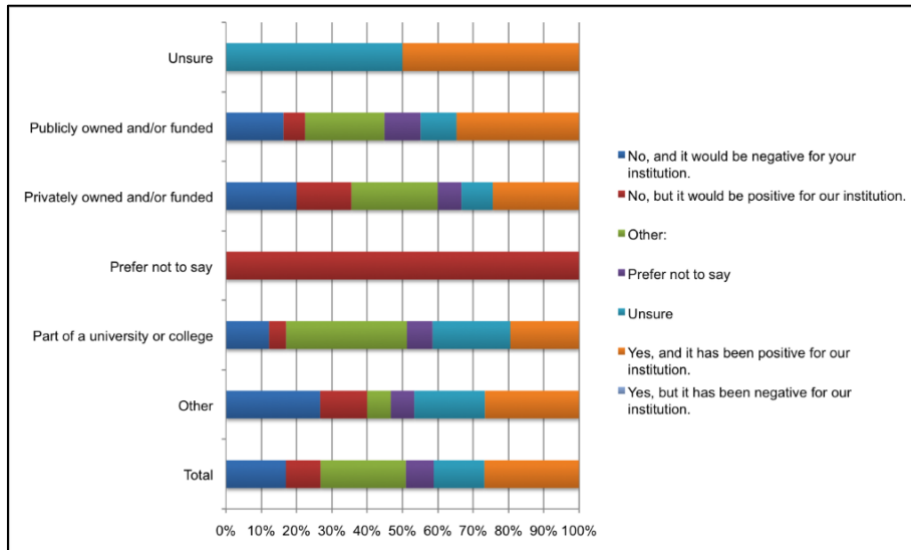


Table 6-5: Results of Question 27: Does your institution take public positions on social, cultural, or political movements? cross-tabulated by governance & funding structure.

Question 28 asks respondents if they have noticed a shift in the last decade in attitudes about collecting LGB artists. Most respondents (53.8%) selected 'Yes; museum professionals and visitors feel more positively about collecting LGB artists;' felt by (64.6%) of respondents in a 'Publicly owned' museum, (52.6%) of those 'Part of a university,' and (48.9%) in a 'Privately owned' museum. Of those who felt that '...attitudes remain the same...' (16.2%): 'Privately owned' (24.4%); 'Part of a university' (21.1%); 'Publicly owned' (6.3%). The only respondent to select 'Yes; museum professionals and visitors feel less positively...' was from a 'Publicly owned' museum, representing (2.1%). Despite this, respondents from a publicly owned institutions were more likely to note positivity among visitors and staff, and least likely to note that things have remained stagnant. However, it is worth noting that the respondent who commented 'some preexisting and simmering negativity has also increased' is also in a publicly owned/funded museum. Overall, publicly funded and university institutions saw an increase in positive reactions toward displaying lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists, which helps curators and directors feel more confident in choosing to display those works.

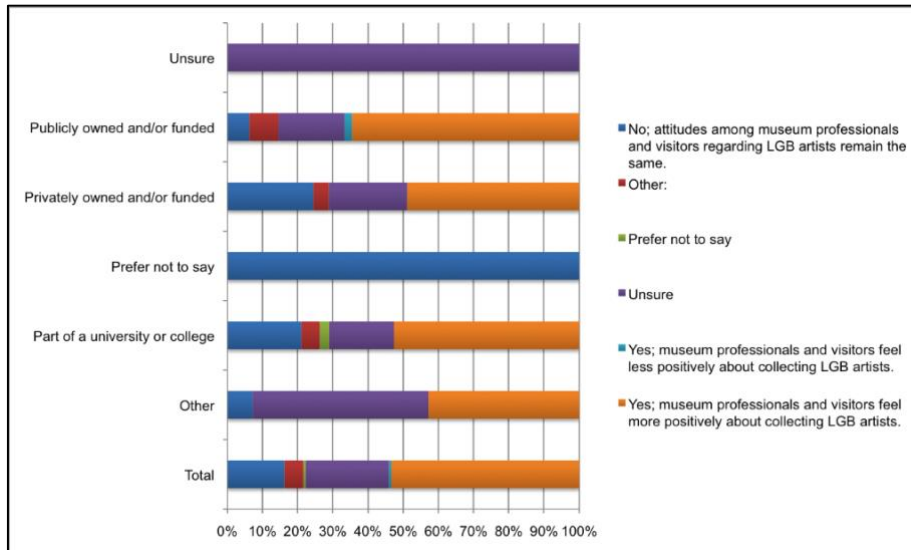


Table 6-6: Results of Question 28: In your professional opinion, have you noticed a shift over the last decade in attitudes about collecting LGB artists? cross-tabulated by governance & funding structure.

Question 29 asks respondents if they have hosted exhibitions with reference to artists' sexualities, what feedback did they receive.<sup>142</sup> Overwhelmingly, the response is positive, at a rate of (42.9%). The majority of this positive response comes from 'Publicly owned' museums. Among respondents in university/college museums and privately funded museums, the rate drops to (35.8%) each. Among negative responses, only university/college museums saw any negativity, at a surprising rate of (7.7%), a higher percentage of any demographic covered in this analysis. Among those who had not hosted such an exhibition (42.9%), the breakdown is as follows: 'Part of a university or college' (41.0%); 'Privately owned and/or funded' (40.9%); 'Publicly owned and/or funded' (36.7%). University and privately owned museums were more likely to host exhibitions about minority sexualities, and they were less likely to receive positive feedback. There was not 'Other' option for this question.

<sup>142</sup> The choices were 'extremely positive,' 'moderately positive,' 'slightly positive,' 'extremely negative,' 'moderately negative,' and 'slightly negative.' For the sake of space, I have combined these again.

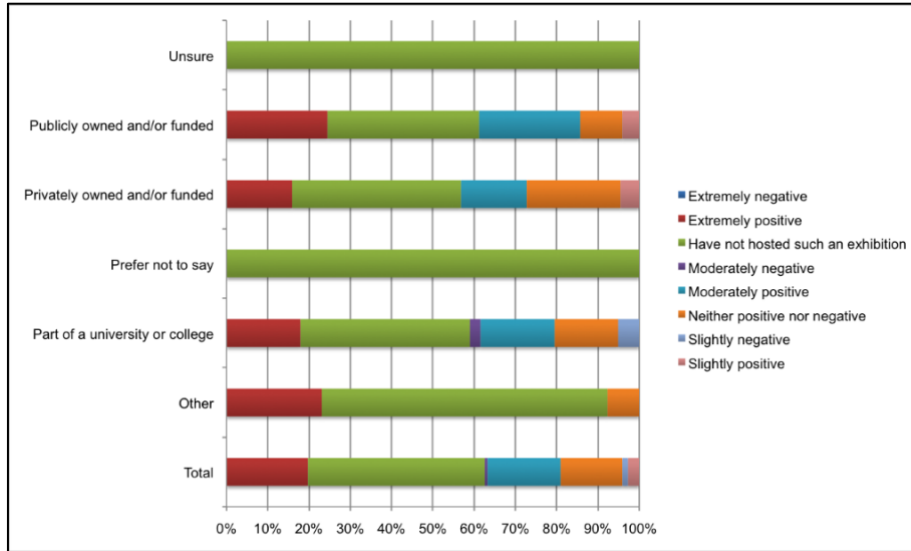


Table 6-7: Results of Question 29: If you have hosted exhibitions with reference to artists' sexualities, what feedback from the public did you receive? cross-tabulated by governance & funding structure.

Question 30 asks respondents if they have felt pressure to make changes regarding LGB artists' collection and displays, and where this may have come from. Most respondents selected 'No,' (57.8%). This is about even with 'Privately owned' (59.6%); 'Publicly owned' (57.9%); 'Part of a university' (51.0%). Of respondents who had received pressure, this was felt from mostly 'activist groups' (6.1%) and 'visitors' (5.6%). Among university respondents, (9.8%) said they received pressure from activists and (3.9%) from visitors. Among respondents from publicly owned/funded museums, (10.5%) felt pressure from visitors, (8.8%) from activists, and (3.5%) from funders.<sup>143</sup> (2.0%) of university respondents and (1.9%) of privately owned respondents said they felt pressure from board members. Among 'Other' responses, university/college museums were more likely to cite outside pressure from students and society, and both privately and publicly owned museums received pressure from their peers and from academics.

<sup>143</sup> No other respondents said they felt pressure from their funders.

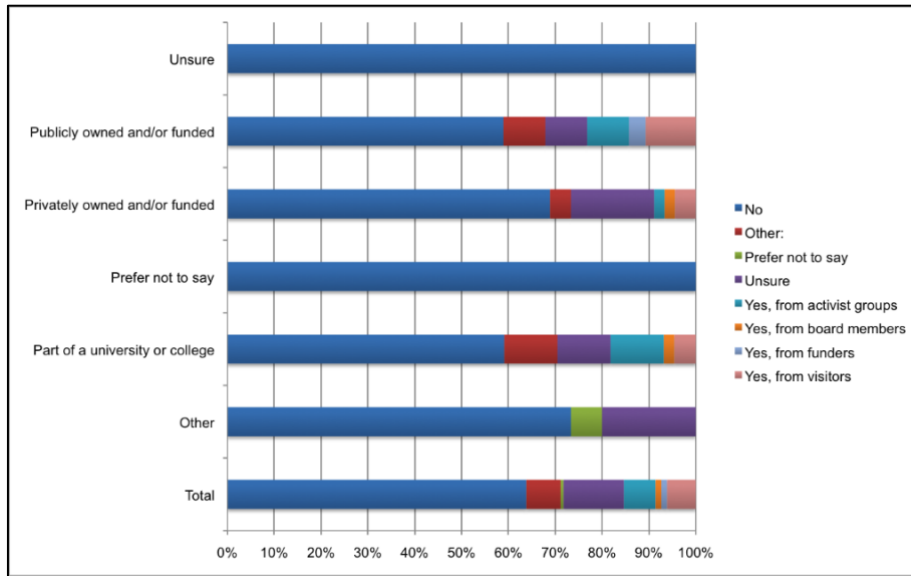


Table 6-8: Results of Question 30: Have you felt pressure to make changes regarding LGB artists' collection and/or display? Check/tick all that apply. cross-tabulated by governance & funding structure.

## Conclusion

University museums serve many communities, not just the ever-changing student body. The survey results reflect a genuine interest in making more LGBT+ exhibitions available to the public, and universities can lead the way with that. While they need to be a dedicated educational resource for the student body and reflect the values of their parent institution, they can offer progressive programming to the public, sometimes where there is none. At times this may be at odds with the community, and at other times it may be at odds with the students themselves. University museums may be the closest museum that some Americans get a chance to regularly visit, and this puts pressure on the institution to be all things to all visitors. Keene State College's risks in programming and exhibition have led to great institutional success, and a lesson to learn from their programming is that it is good to take risks. Do not assume a certain community, in this case seniors, would not appreciate or engage in LGB-specific course or exhibition.

## Regional Exhibition in Four American Museums

This final case study will focus on American regional institutions – the challenges they faced when with exhibiting lesbian gay, and bisexual artists, and the successes within their communities. When discussing community type, it is important to note the demographics of urban, suburban, and rural areas of the United States, particularly in regard to population. In a 2015 release from the United States Census Bureau, almost 63% of all Americans live in cities.<sup>144</sup> This release also estimates the Midwest and West have the highest percentages of people living in cities at around 75% each. According to the Washington Post, up to 80% of Americans live in urban areas, roughly 18% live in suburbs, and 15% live in rural communities. This is maps on to the results of my survey. For this set of case study, I will discuss four institutions in very different types of areas.<sup>145</sup> The first urban institution is the Des Moines Art Center in Des Moines, Iowa.<sup>146</sup> The second urban institution is BRIC Arts and Media in Brooklyn, New York.<sup>147</sup> The third institution, which I will classify as suburban, is the Bellevue Arts Museum located in Bellevue, Washington State.<sup>148</sup> It is also one of the only institutions I was able to speak to

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<sup>144</sup> Bureau, US Census. “U.S. Cities Home to 62.7% of Population but Comprise 3.5% of Land Area.” *The United States Census Bureau*, The United States Census Bureau, 9 Jan. 2017, [www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2015/cb15-33.html](http://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2015/cb15-33.html).

<sup>145</sup> Of all the types of institutions that were willing to speak with me, small rural American institutions were the least likely. I am reminded of an employee of a small institution in Nebraska that agreed to speak with me but requested complete anonymity for fear of reprisal from the community as well as their colleagues within the institution.

<sup>146</sup> Des Moines is the capital city of Iowa, a state in the Midwest. The city of Des Moines has a population of just over 215,000 as of 2019 and is the seat of an extremely important part of the United States presidential elections, the primary caucuses. While the state was called for Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential elections, Polk County (in which Des Moines is located) voted for Joe Biden by 15%.

<sup>147</sup> Brooklyn is one of the five boroughs of New York City, with a population of nearly 2,650,000 as of 2020. The politics here lean heavily progressive, with Joe Biden winning Kings County at 77% of the final vote. New York City voted overwhelmingly against Donald Trump.

<sup>148</sup> Bellevue is part of the Seattle Metropolitan area and could potentially be considered an urban institution. The population of Bellevue is around 148,000. It is across Lake Washington from Seattle, making it an attractive place to live in and commute to Seattle from – this is part of what would classify it as a suburb and why I will be discussing it as such. Washington State is an extraordinarily progressive state, overwhelmingly electing Joe Biden in the 2020 Presidential elections. In addition, the city of Seattle decriminalised marijuana possession in 2003 (among the earliest in the country) and legalised recreational marijuana in 2013. In addition, same-sex marriage has been legally recognised in Washington State since December of 2012, making it among the first states to legalise same-sex marriage through popular vote. It would be another 3 years before the United States Supreme Court would strike down all bans on same-sex marriage. Still, outside of the city and suburban limits, the area becomes less progressive and interpretations and tastes differ with these varied demographics.

on the West Coast. Finally, a lone rural institution: the Coutts Memorial Museum of Art in El Dorado, Kansas.<sup>149</sup>

## Queer Abstraction: Groundbreaking Exhibitions

Beginning with the Des Moines Art Center, a collecting institution, I spoke to a curator about a show that the assistant curator was preparing called *Queer Abstraction*.<sup>150</sup> The show was still a few weeks away from opening as the time of our conversation and was on view from June through September 2019. It was the first exhibition in the history of the Des Moines Art Center to feature queer art exclusively, and focused specifically on contemporary international art.<sup>151</sup> Because of the significance of the exhibition, the work put into it leading up to and after the opening was immense. The staff underwent LGBT inclusion training so they could be aware and informed of the ever-changing language surrounding the LGBT community. Their website also features an inclusion statement, titled 'Creating Together.'

Every voice belongs in contemporary art. The Des Moines Art Center commits to value and represent the unique experiences and perspectives of every visitor and staff member. Working toward equity and inclusivity within the museum, school, and community strengthens our ability to create better, together.<sup>152</sup>

The training was provided by a centre that supports LGBT teens, and the curator I spoke with made it clear that many people in the Midwest avoid taking these steps because they are afraid of the response from their community.<sup>153</sup> Des Moines, however, is a larger

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<sup>149</sup> El Dorado is a small city about 35 minutes east of the city of Wichita, the largest city in the state of Kansas (the capital being Topeka). The population of El Dorado is around 13,000 as of the 2010 census. Kansas is very traditionally conservative, having voted for the Republican Presidential candidate every year since 1968. Topeka and the surrounding county voted for Joe Biden in the 2020 Presidential election, but Wichita and El Dorado both voted overwhelmingly for Donald Trump. The state of Kansas banned same-sex marriage until 2014, and on July 7, 2015 (one week after the Supreme Court ruling legalising same-sex marriage nationwide), the governor issued executive orders contradictory to the United States Supreme Court. As of February 2019, a few Kansan lawmakers drafted the *Marriage and Constitution Restoration Act* in an effort to define same-sex marriage as a parody and looked to keep the state from recognising such marriages as valid. It was not likely to get anywhere.

<sup>150</sup> "Queer Abstraction." *Des Moines Art Center*, [www.desmoinesartcenter.org/exhibitions/queer-abstraction](http://www.desmoinesartcenter.org/exhibitions/queer-abstraction).

<sup>151</sup> Among the artists included were Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Harmony Hammond, Marsden Hartley, and Edie Fake.

<sup>152</sup> "Inclusion Statement." *Des Moines Art Center*, [www.desmoinesartcenter.org/about/inclusion-statement](http://www.desmoinesartcenter.org/about/inclusion-statement).

<sup>153</sup> Anecdotally, the curator I spoke with mentioned that the larger institutions seem to be taking a step back and watching everything in the industry and that it is the smaller institutions that are moving forward with this

Midwestern city with a strong LGBT community that supported the institution, and to quote the curator, 'they actually show up!' Therefore, the exhibition and programming are worth doing. The exhibition programming was rich, considering the show was on view for less than 100 days. The programmes included lectures on queerness and abstraction (surrounding ideas of queerness being used to subvert assumptions and bring visibility to concepts that are unknown to a more mainstream audience), dialogues with artists (including Mark Joshua Epstein and Carrie Moyer), and workshops for all-ages on the LGBTQ+ community and how to be a better ally to the community (part of the Iowa Safe Schools initiative<sup>154</sup>).

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work. Many larger institutions don't want to take the risks because of the attention paid to them -- anything MoMA does will get noticed, but smaller institutions need to shout to be noticed. No one may notice if they Des Moines Art Center is doing innovative programming, but this relative anonymity affords them that. The Des Moines Art Center was also prepared for negative backlash from the community, but I cannot find anything to suggest that there was any backlash at all. They opined that it is bizarre that it is harder to do more politically overt exhibitions in larger cities. They cited MASS Action as an example of a smaller city and institution who are doing big things. MASS Action (Museum As Site for Social Action) was launched in October 2016 with museum professionals across the industry to identify the most important issues facing the field and develop toolkits and resources to address those issues, as well as create actionable plans for other institutions. The Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) was the platform for this work. Mia is in the Midwestern city of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Minneapolis has a population of between 420 and 430,000 people. Mia is not an insignificant institution by any means, with a permanent collection of over 90,000 works spanning 5,000 years of human culture. Regarding MASS Action, they state, "the work that results from this project belongs to the collective of participating museum practitioners and stakeholders that help to create and embody it. Mia acknowledges that it is not an exemplar of best practices around equity and inclusion, but rather, serves as an example of a museum that is committing itself to doing the work we need to do to become a more equitable and inclusive institution." The strategy was bold, but it had been successful. Their final convening was in 2018, but hopefully the institutions and staff involved have not abandoned the work.

*MASS Action* About, [www.museumaction.org/about](http://www.museumaction.org/about).

<sup>154</sup> Iowa Safe Schools provides services and support to Iowan students who have been bullied or harassed for their sexuality or gender. It is the largest LGBT youth service in the Midwest. "About Us." *Iowa Safe Schools*, 10 Oct. 2019, [www.iowasafeschools.org/about-us/](http://www.iowasafeschools.org/about-us/).





Figure 7-1: Installation photograph from *Queer Abstraction*, Des Moines Art Center.

The institution has focused recently on comprehensively collecting contemporary art, despite a relatively small endowment.<sup>155</sup> Most works in *Queer Abstraction* were not in the collection, but works from the exhibition might make it in after it closes.<sup>156</sup> When we discussed display text, the most important factor considered was ‘what serves the work?’<sup>157</sup> Does the exhibition text help contextualise the work, does it help the viewer understand the work, and does it have information the artist would like the viewer to know? In the case of contemporary art, this is fairly easy to accomplish. Artists and curators can work together to craft meaningful text. This becomes harder when the work is divorced from context, and meaning, or when information is missing from the collections database. As an example, some works in the Des Moines collection from

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<sup>155</sup> In reading the Des Moines Art Center's 2019 Annual Report, 55% of their revenue comes from endowments and trust income, and they spent 47% of their expenses on collections, exhibitions, and works of art (24% of expenses went to education and access programming). Their net assets were \$121 million, and their operating revenue was \$7 million. Compared to the MoMA's \$1.2 billion and the Met's \$3.7 billion endowments, this is a small endowment indeed. Edmundson Art Foundation Inc., 2019, *Des Moines Art Center 2019 Financial Statement*, [www.desmoinesartcenter.org/webres/File/annual%20report\\_2019\\_pages\\_web.pdf](http://www.desmoinesartcenter.org/webres/File/annual%20report_2019_pages_web.pdf).

<sup>156</sup> At the time of our conversation, the curator had mentioned that they acquired some works by Edie Fake from a previous show. Upon writing this case study, I did check their (rather excellent) collections database search engine to find the two works by Edie Fake had made it into the collection from the earlier show, as well as works by Sheila Pepe and Catherine Moyer that entered the collection in 2019.

<sup>157</sup> The curator also informed me that they don't want to participate in tokenisation. After all, the work of Catherine Opie is incredibly different from the work of Ellsworth Kelly, and therefore while both are members of the LGBTQ+ community, you cannot collect art from just one and say you've got enough LGBTQ+ representation in your collection. What you have is a lesbian portrait and documentary photographer, and a gay abstract painter.

Jasper Johns is very evocative of a bed, and art history would tie that information to Robert Rauschenberg's work '*Bed*,' (1955) their artistic and romantic relationship, and the work they made while sharing studio space. Therefore, this information is critical when exhibiting the Jasper Johns works in their collection, as we know from Butt's writings on their relationship.<sup>158</sup>

*Queer Abstraction* is not only a significant show because it is the first of its kind at Des Moines Art Center, but also because it shows work that is coded to a community. This accomplished two things: it is a nod to the people that see the work and understand it intrinsically as members of a community that has had its lexicon buried, fetishised, or co-opted by more mainstream communities. Here, the coding adds depth to the work, and the work adds depth to the code. The second thing the show does is function as an entry point to those individuals who may be part of the LGBTQ+ community but may have no interest in contemporary art. Contemporary art already has a reputation for being too pretentious or abstracted for some visitors to understand, and they may feel intimidated by such a space. Exhibiting work that is coded by and for a community opens up the rest of the contemporary art sphere to visitors. The importance of this was not lost on the curatorial team of Des Moines Art Center: they knew they had to be successful in the realm of art history, but they also knew they had to be impactful for the gay teens that might go to see the work.

## BRIC: Consistent Public Programming

We move to our second urban institution, BRIC Arts Media (BRooklyn Information & Culture) in Brooklyn. It is a non-collecting institution and serves a much larger community than Des Moines Art Center. It is deeply embedded within the community. It is a unique space in New York City, and most likely the rest of the country: BRIC was founded in 1979 with city funds, as work with the artists living and working in Brooklyn, as well as provide PBS-style programming<sup>159</sup> for Brooklynites. The goal of the 'Fund' was to

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<sup>158</sup> "Bodies of Evidence: Queering Disclosure in the Art of Jasper Johns." *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948-1963*, by Gavin Butt, Duke University Press, 2006, pp. 136-162.

<sup>159</sup> PBS, or Public Broadcasting Service, is one of the few non-profit television broadcasting services in the United States, and hosts such educational shows as *Sesame Street*, *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, and *Nova*. In addition to American television shows, it is also the place to find a lot of British programming, including *Downton Abbey*, *Keeping Up Appearances*, and the American spin-off of *Antiques Roadshow*. BRIC has its

revitalise Brooklyn's neighbourhoods through the arts and provide free cultural programming for the residents of Brooklyn. It began with the Celebrate Brooklyn! Festival, and continued via the establishment of the Rotunda Gallery in 1981. In 1998 the name was change to Brooklyn Information & Culture (BRIC). In 2008, architectural plans were finalised and work began on a new, dedicated arts facility. Being community-focused has allowed them to grow, and their director is very interested in making it a diverse and welcoming place.<sup>160</sup> From their mission statement,

- We advance opportunity for visual artists, performers, and media makers.
- We present bold work that reflects diverse audiences and speaks to the world.
- We ignite learning in people of all ages.
- We unite Brooklyn through art and creativity to build community and make change.<sup>161</sup>

BRIC's 2020-2023 strategic plan defines their goals for the next few years, and I will highlight some relevant ones. They plan to increase service to creators and audiences and pursue equity<sup>162</sup> and accountability internally as well as in their programming.<sup>163</sup> To accomplish these goals, BRIC has developed the following methodologies: their LEARN programmes, or education programming for all-ages that work with individuals, schools, and other nonprofits in the community, their LAB programmes, which are for artists and other creatives to create meaningful cross-disciplinary relationships, and their LIVE programmes which present the work from curators and the other programmes to the public through presentations and exhibitions. All of this is to highlight and engage the vibrant communities in Brooklyn. The largest space they have is BRIC House, but they work in libraries, schools, parks, and other community centres.<sup>164</sup>

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own television stations: BRIC TV, a nonprofit community channel available on TV and digitally, and Brooklyn Free Speech TV, Brooklyn's public access channel.

<sup>160</sup> Their current director, Kristina Newman-Scott, was appointed in 2018 and is one of the few women of color to lead a cultural institution in New York City.

<sup>161</sup> "Our Mission & History | BRIC." *BRIC*, 11 Sept. 2019, [www.bricartsmedia.org/about-bric/our-mission-history](http://www.bricartsmedia.org/about-bric/our-mission-history).

<sup>162</sup> By increasing inter-departmental communication and collaboration and streamlining their programming to respond to artistic and cultural shifts.

<sup>163</sup> By developing diverse curatorial voices, invest in equitable pay for creators, and implement a diversity, equity, and inclusion plan (in most institutions in the United States this would likely fall under the purview of a DEAI committee).

<sup>164</sup> BRIC Arts Media, 2020, *BRIC Manifesto + Strategic Plan 2020-2023*, [www.bricartsmedia.org/sites/default/files/BRIC%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf](http://www.bricartsmedia.org/sites/default/files/BRIC%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf).



Figure 7-2: *BRIC Biennial: Volume III: South Brooklyn Edition*.  
The Gallery at BRIC House, Brooklyn. Photo: Jason Wyche.<sup>165</sup>

BRIC Arts Media is a non-collecting institution, but this may give them an advantage over other similar institutions. My interview was with the interim curator, and we discussed that very luxury.<sup>166</sup> When you aren't obligated to a collection, you have the freedom to respond quickly to the community and to an outrageously fast news cycle. You can also spend the money that would otherwise go to collections and acquisitions on programming and education. The curator I spoke with highlighted the difficulties of doing something truly socially engaged when seeking art outwith the traditional Western Art canon, specifically getting the work approved by a predominantly white, female, and wealthy board.<sup>167</sup> It is also reflective of the way curators are taught, which is: put abstract

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<sup>165</sup> Wolpow, Nina. "BRIC Biennial: Volume III, 'The Impossible Possible.'" *The Brooklyn Rail*, 27 Mar. 2019, [brooklynrail.org/2019/03/artseen/Bric-Biennial-Volume-III-The-Impossible-Possible](http://brooklynrail.org/2019/03/artseen/Bric-Biennial-Volume-III-The-Impossible-Possible).

<sup>166</sup> To continue my anecdotal story from the footnotes of Des Moines Art Center, it is worth mentioning that the curator I spoke to from BRIC also mentioned that they noticed larger institutions skirt around queer collection and exhibition, leaving smaller ones to take up the mantle. They also mentioned that the institutions who are operated or frequented by a younger audience focus on bolder or more ostentatious content, even working in such hallmarks of the LGBT community as drag performances. This is something I have personally noticed as the wider culture becomes more aware of drag culture, especially through shows like *RuPaul's Drag Race* and other celebrations of gender nonconforming people. The problem with this is that it is not meaningful or lasting change, the culture will become saturated with drag and will grow tired of it, and then what is left for these institutions to do, other than move on to the next inevitable zeitgeist.

<sup>167</sup> According to the latest available data from the Association of Art Museum Directors supports the statement that the majority of museum staff in higher institutional positions are white (between 74% and 80%) and female (between 62% and 79%). It is more difficult to find hard data to support the statement that they are

art on the wall, give it context, tell people what they are meant to think.<sup>168</sup> But visitors always bring their own language and experience to museums and galleries, and artists always bring the same to their work.

The collections always reflect the people in power,<sup>169</sup> and what makes BRIC special is that they can focus on the people living and working in an ever-changing and gentrifying South Brooklyn. An institution like BRIC cannot afford to remain neutral,<sup>170</sup> and BRIC does not. They do walk a fine line due to their funding sources as a non-profit, but they can also just function as a mouthpiece for the concerns of a community, and often they function as a forum for those discussions. If it seems like I haven't written a great deal about their LGBT-focused exhibitions, the reason for this is simple: they've had a lot of them. They host LGBTQ artists and musician spotlights, town halls, residencies, grants, podcasts, exhibitions, workshops, and film screenings. It is a practice that is woven into their community response, and a responsibility they take on knowing that they have to be accountable to the citizens of Brooklyn.

## Bellevue Arts Museum: Temporary Displays

Moving to the third institution, Bellevue Arts Museum in Washington State, brings us to the suburbs of Seattle. Bellevue Arts Museum has its beginning in 1947, with a volunteer-run art fair. The museum proper was founded in 1975, and they have been dedicated

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wealthier, but it's generally observable when working in the industry, particularly within New York City institutions.

"Latest Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey Shows Number of African American Curators and Women in Leadership Roles Increased." *Association of Art Museum Directors*, [aamd.org/for-the-media/press-release/latest-art-museum-staff-demographic-survey-shows-number-of-african](http://aamd.org/for-the-media/press-release/latest-art-museum-staff-demographic-survey-shows-number-of-african).

<sup>168</sup> Sheikh, Simon. "Positively White Cube Revisited." *e-Flux*, Feb. 2009, [www.e-flux.com/journal/03/68545/positively-white-cube-revisited/#:~:text=The%20white%20cube%20is%20conceived,from%20the%20experience%20of%20artworks.&text=It%20was%20a%20space%20for,economic%20investment%20for%20possible%20buyers](http://www.e-flux.com/journal/03/68545/positively-white-cube-revisited/#:~:text=The%20white%20cube%20is%20conceived,from%20the%20experience%20of%20artworks.&text=It%20was%20a%20space%20for,economic%20investment%20for%20possible%20buyers).

<sup>169</sup> They also told me a very interesting story on their time at the Whitney where a prints curator had lived through the AIDS crisis and saw how AIDS affected the community, so very quietly made it a focus of his collection praxis but never promoted it that way – the work was meaningful as canonical, so it was acquired.

<sup>170</sup> Indeed it is a position of privilege for a museum to remain politically neutral, publicly at least. The communities they serve do not remain neutral, their funding bodies do not remain neutral, and behind closed doors the board is not neutral.

exclusively to art, craft, and design since 2005, and still hosts the Bellevue Arts Museum Arts Fair annually. From their mission statement:

Bellevue Arts Museum provides a public forum for the community to contemplate, appreciate, and discuss visual culture. We work with audiences, artists, makers, and designers to understand our shared experience of the world.<sup>171</sup>

Similarly to BRIC, the museum has no permanent collection. The institution exhibits external travelling shows, short-term exhibitions, and long-term loans. When done with good intentions, this type of exhibition offers curators and registrars more opportunities to experiment with exhibitions and programming.<sup>172</sup>

My conversation was with the registrar of Bellevue Arts Museum (BAM), and we started by discussing question 28 of the survey, which asks respondents if they have noticed a shift in attitudes towards LGB artists among museum professionals. The respondent's gut said no: museum professionals are relatively progressive and that inherent progressivism is helpful in navigating potentially problematic content. The visitors had not mentioned any major issues with the exhibition content.<sup>173</sup> When we discussed question 26, which dealt with censorship in exhibitions, the registrar stated that this may have more to do with the words and culture that we have surrounding the works: the works aren't inherently sexual, we just perceive them as such.

The relatively small size of BAM<sup>174</sup> offers freedom to its staff. The legalisation of gay marriage in the United States<sup>175</sup> had a significant influence on what institutions were able to do, but large institutions still moved slower than smaller ones, which are able to take more risks. However, this enhanced interest in the LGBT community meant collecting

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<sup>171</sup> "About Us." *Bellevue Arts Museum*, [www.bellevuearts.org/about-us](http://www.bellevuearts.org/about-us).

It is worth noting on their about page that they also feature a four-paragraph Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement, highlighting their intention to create a respectful and inclusive environment through their exhibitions and programmes, as well as addressing when they have fallen short as an institution. They also provide a statement of Land Acknowledgment, stating they are aware that they are on the traditional lands of the Coast Salish indigenous peoples.

<sup>172</sup> The registrar I spoke with felt that the work of collecting and displaying lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists fits into decolonisation practice.

<sup>173</sup> The other side of this coin is indifference – maybe the visitors don't care now, or they never cared.

<sup>174</sup> The largest department seems to be Curatorial, with 5 members.

<sup>175</sup> At the time of this conversation, gay marriage had only been federally legal in the United States for about three and a half years.

organisations, responding to the times and to phases of collecting, were rushing to scoop up works by lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists – BAM did not have to do that. They were able to continue inviting a wide variety of artists. In addition, the size allows people to be level-headed when choosing exhibitions – the artists that exhibit can talk about themselves and their work any way they see fit. The shift in museums may also be a generational one: attitudes have not necessarily changed among age groups, but newer people with newer practices have entered the field. Older curators tend to feel that if the information was important to the work, it would be visible in the work. However, this mode of critique is outdated when we consider that laws against homosexuality and indecency would've made explicitly homosexual art difficult to make and nearly impossible to exhibit or collect. Of course, in contemporary collection and critique, the artist's identity is important for contextualisation and interpretation. This, in turn, affects how the artworks or exhibition might be received.



Figure 7-3: *Sampler 9*, Bren Ahearn, 2011. Installation photograph from *Strategies for Survival*.

Photograph by Kiny McCarrick.

Bellevue Arts Museum has indeed been bold with their exhibitions. When discussing exhibition content, the work of fiber artist Bren Ahearn was singled out as an example of a gay man with quite provocative work. 'Strategies for Survival' was on display from June

10, 2016 through January 15, 2017.<sup>176</sup> His large-scale embroideries deal with the expectations of traditional masculinity, violence, and gender roles. They reference 'samplers,' pieces of embroidery that were used to teach young women literacy while encouraging their embroidery skills, referencing the stereotype of a young gay child expressing himself through more traditionally feminine pastimes. They are gentle and poignant, referencing very dark moments in a gay man's life bittersweetly. In the complete other direction is *Camp Fires: the Queer Baroque of Léopold L. Foulem, Paul Mathieu, and Richard Milette*, on view from November 6, 2015 to February 15, 2016. These three French-Canadian artists create ceramics work that at a first glance are reminiscent of Baroque, Rococo or Greek pottery, or even something my devoutly Catholic grandmother might have kept in a curio, but on second glance is far more transgressive and homoerotic. Both shows were positively reviewed and for all my searching, I could not find any evidence of controversy within the community.



Figure 7-4: *Pair of Two Male Couples in Pseudo Rococo Setting*. Léopold L. Foulem, 2012.

Photograph by Richard Milette.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> "Bren Ahearn." *Bellevue Arts Museum - Art Exhibitions, Events, & Workshops*, [www.bellevuearts.org/exhibitions/past/bren-ahearn](http://www.bellevuearts.org/exhibitions/past/bren-ahearn).

<sup>177</sup> "Camp Fires." *Bellevue Arts Museum - Art Exhibitions, Events, & Workshops*, [www.bellevuearts.org/exhibitions/past/camp-fires](http://www.bellevuearts.org/exhibitions/past/camp-fires).



There is no doubt that Bellevue Arts Museum benefits from its location just outside of a progressive city, but there are many things that work in their favour beyond that. They are small, which allows them to stay level and intentional in their curatorial choices. In addition, they are a non-collecting museum, which means they do not need to adhere to the collection to create exhibitions. It might be easy for someone outside the museum sector to assume a small museum with no collection might be at a disadvantage when exhibiting potentially controversial works. However, when looking at BAM and their exhibitions it's clear that this is part of their strength.

### Coutts Memorial Museum: Challenges

The final institution, the Coutts Memorial Museum of Art in El Dorado, Kansas, is a bit of an outlier in the institutions I have featured in this case study. The museum itself was established by a private collector, Warren Hall Coutts II, who had purchased the building intending to turn it into a law office. When tragedy struck the family, the third floor of the building into a memorial museum.<sup>178</sup> Before Coutts died in 1988, he provided a vision for the future of the museum, including new acquisitions and expansion. They have over 1,500 works, particularly from Kansan artists. They also work closely with their community, hosting after-school programmes, student art exhibitions, and art classes in addition to exhibitions with works in the permanent collection and from local artists in the community: 'individual and community cultural outcomes include pride, ownership, and sharing culture and history.'<sup>179</sup> because of the way the museum began, the current staff have slowly been trying to move it from the 'home gallery' feel of it to an 'actual museum,' that is, proper interpretive wall text and artist biographies.<sup>180</sup>

Like the museum, the interview I had with its executive director went a little bit differently.<sup>181</sup> While we did not discuss any LGB-specific exhibitions the gallery has

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<sup>178</sup> "About." *Coutts Museum of Art*, [www.couttsmuseum.org/about](http://www.couttsmuseum.org/about).

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> This, of course, requires a large amount of time and resources, as we saw with National Portrait Gallery.

<sup>181</sup> There was no LGBT+ specific exhibition at the Coutts Memorial Museum from what I can tell. The only evidence I found was one artist, Sean Christopher Ward, who exhibited his works at a solo exhibition called *Chromatic Hallucinations* from August to September 2020 and also was a curator for *I Am Me and We are Free – LGBTQ Focused Exhibition* at the HUE Gallery of Contemporary Art in Wichita, Kansas (which he co-

hosted<sup>182</sup>, this museum is one of the very few opportunities I had to discuss my survey with a small, rural museum and I would be remiss if I did not present those findings here. The director noted that while Wichita has changed significantly in the last decade, it is still (anecdotally) some 5 to 10 years behind mainstream progressive politics. Even though the current staff<sup>183</sup> has made attempts to diversify the collection, the topic of sexuality has not come up. El Dorado, with around thirty times less people than Wichita, is even less progressive than Wichita, and the director often made connections with artists and musicians working in Wichita. The LGBT+ community in Wichita is also more accessible and 'out,' and the small one in El Dorado is much quieter.<sup>184</sup> When I asked the director about plans to expand the collection at the time, and while the collections policy does need updating, part of the battle faced by the staff is trying to get the board excited about collecting new work. At the time of our conversation, there was no cohesive collections plan.

Part of the challenge is that the museum's founder did not leave instructions or a direction for the gallery; he just wanted it to make sure it would survive him. New acquisitions are built on the original collection. Many of the newer pieces are from people who knew the founder and the type of art that fit in the collection, therefore they donate similar works. Some people are having trouble with the shift from personal collection to broader museum. The director also guessed that sometimes, the community just doesn't necessarily want to talk about art. Additionally, there is the consideration that if the artist wanted the viewer to know something, it would be coded in the work; if you were in the know, you would understand that coded language. This is compounded by the supposed inaccessibility of contemporary art – if a museum caters to people who already know art, there may not be an identifiable entry point for people who don't have that same foundation. But there are risks being taken. For Valentine's Day 2017, the museum experimented with hanging some nudes, some of them erotic. The community responded positively, with an openness that was not anticipated, but there is still fear of community

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owned and has since shut) in June 2018. This link is tenuous at best, as this artist has made no mention of his sexuality one way or another, but I did not want to leave any exhibition-related stones unturned.

<sup>182</sup> In addition, the director mentioned that most of the works in the collection have no mention of sexuality at all, regardless of the artists' sexuality.

<sup>183</sup> Who, according to their website, number three.

<sup>184</sup> If the statistic that 5% to 10% of American adults in the United States identify as LGB is to be believed, and El Dorado's population as of 2019 is around 13,000, that means roughly 650 to 1,300 people in El Dorado identify as LGB.

reprisal for more explicit works. It might be a slow process, but the Coutts Memorial Museum of Art is making headway.

## The Final Survey

The content of these conversations is reflected in the results from the survey. When responses were cross-tabulated for community type, most respondents are located in 'Urban' areas (69%), followed by 'Suburban' (15%), 'Rural' (12%), and 'Other' (2%); 'Prefer not to say' and 'Unsure' stand at approximately (1%) each. Question 24 asks respondents for their professional opinion regarding collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic. (51.0%) of respondents selected 'Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is a good way to promote diversity and inclusivity.' This is reflected in 'Suburban' (63.6%) and 'Urban' (53.2%); 'Rural' (25.0%). The second-most selected answer was 'Other' and (21.3%). Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is a form of discrimination' was selected at a rate of (13.5%), with this mostly reflect across all locations: 'Urban' (13.8%); 'Suburban' (13.6%); 'Rural' (10.0%).

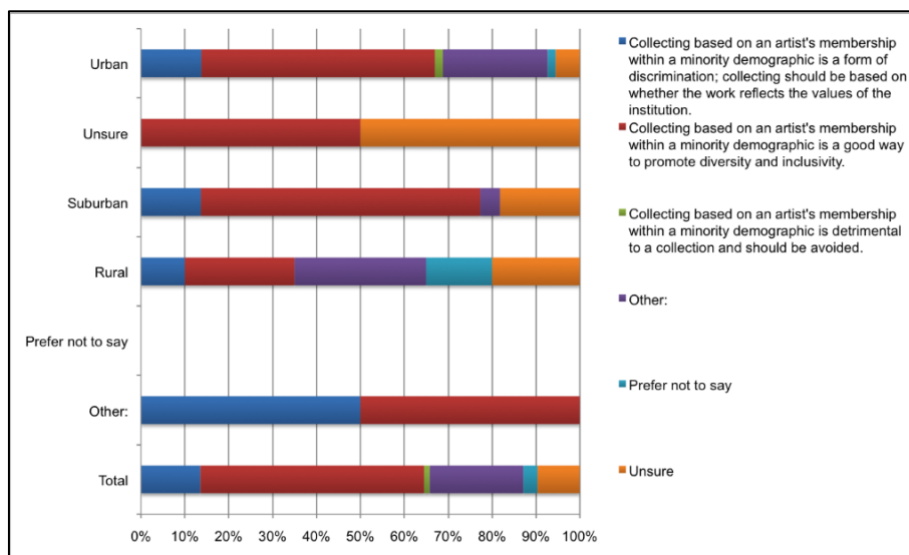


Table 7-1: Results of Question 24: In your professional opinion, which statement do you feel is most accurate? cross-tabulated by community type.

The only demographic to choose 'Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is detrimental to a collection' was 'Urban,' at a rate of (1.8%). Among long-form respondents in 'Other,' most were from respondents that were in an

urban setting. There was no discernable difference between respondents based on location. Urban institutions, like Des Moines Art Center and BRIC were most likely to have comprehensive LGBT+ programming, and the small rural institution, Coutts, had challenges even when trying to hone in on their local LGBT+ community.

Question 25 asks respondents for their opinions on if museums are doing 'too much,' 'too little,' or 'enough' to address diversity and inclusivity in their collections and displays. The most selected response was 'Museums and galleries are not doing enough...' and was selected at a rate of (66.2%). This breaks down to (70.4%) in 'Urban' settings, (55.0%) in 'Rural' settings, and (54.5%) in 'Suburban.' (9.1%) of respondents selected 'Museums and galleries are collecting and displaying enough...' This was selected by (10.2%) of 'Urban' institutions, (10.0%) of 'Rural' institutions, and (4.5%) 'Suburban.' Among 'Other' respondents (13.6%), there is no difference in these responses either. The respondents stated that collections should serve the museum's mission, and that it was too hard to make such generalised statements.

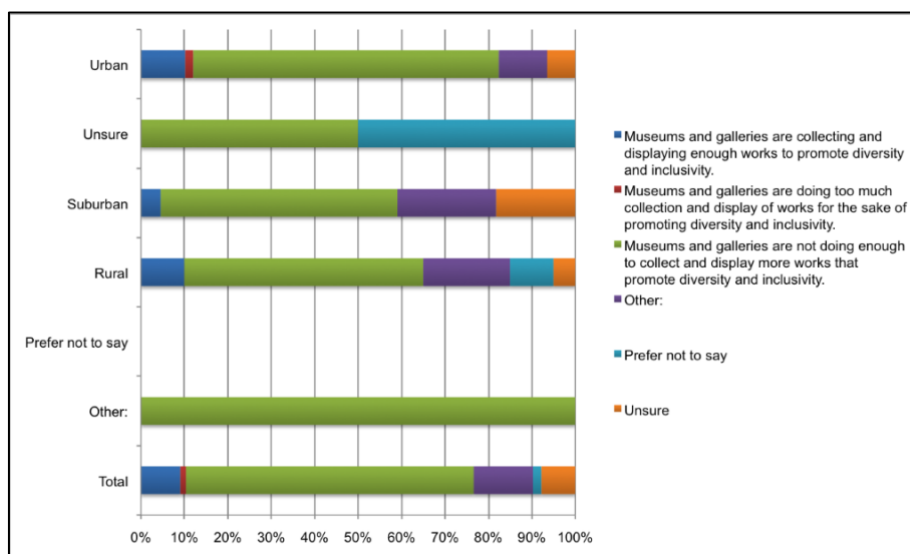


Table 7-2: Results of Question 25: In your professional opinion, which statement do you feel is most accurate? cross-tabulated by community type.

This question asks respondents for their opinions on censorship and display. Again, the most popular response was 'Despite the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists, these works should hang on the wall next to artists in a similar genre or movement,' selected by (58.1%) of respondents. Among 'Rural' respondents, this rate is

(75.0%), 'Urban' (59.6%), and 'Suburban' (45.5%). The next most selected response was 'Other' at (20.6%), followed by 'Despite to the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists, these works don't need to be censored...' at a rate of (11.6%). This breaks down to (11.9%) of 'Urban' respondents, (9.1%) 'Suburban,' and (5.0%) 'Rural.' Finally, the total percentage who selected '...these works should hang on the wall next to artists in a similar genre or movement. However, no mention of their sexuality should be made' was (18.2%) 'Suburban,' (5.0%) 'Rural,' and (2.8%) 'Urban.' Among all respondents in 'Other,' respondents stated that the context of the artwork was most important. Again, there was almost no difference between 'Urban,' 'Rural,' and 'Suburban.' There may have been an implicit bias toward LGBT+ exhibitions and artists from my interviewees, as they had chosen to discuss their experiences with me, but no one I spoke to felt censorship was necessary.

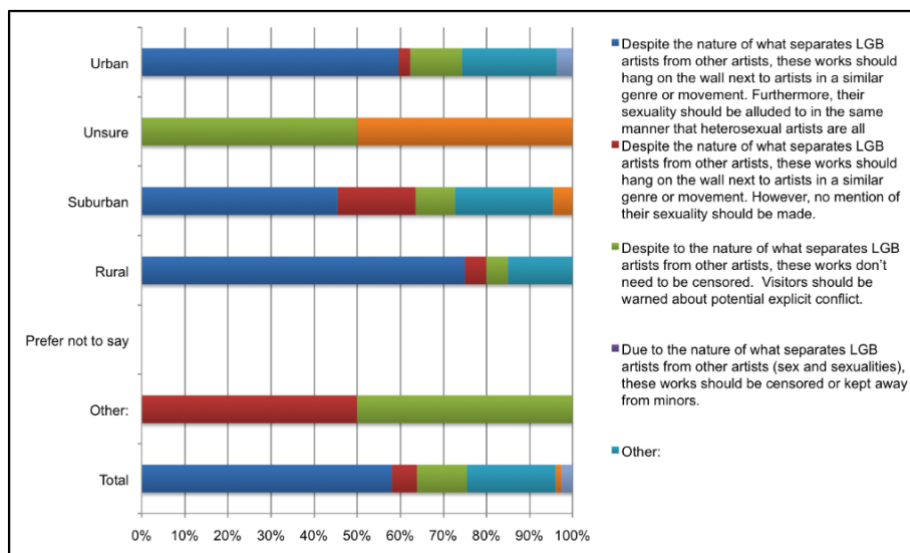


Table 7-3: Results of Question 26: In your professional opinion, which statement do you feel is most accurate? cross-tabulated by community type.

This question asked respondents if their institutions took positions on social, cultural, and political movements. The most popular response was 'Yes, and it has been positive for our institution,' selected by (27.1%) of respondents. Broken down by location, it was selected by 'Urban' respondents at a rate of (33.0%); 'Rural' at (20.0%); 'Suburban' (4.5%). The next most-selected response was 'Other,' at (24.5%). After that, 'No, and it would be negative for your institution' was selected by (16.8%) of respondents: (31.8%) 'Suburban;' (20.0%) 'Rural;' (12.8%) 'Urban.' This set of responses from suburban museums surprised me. I had not anticipated that so few respondents in suburban areas had hosted LGB

exhibitions, nor that they would believe it would be negative for their institution. I had expected this result from rural museums. The answer to this may lie in the number of museums that are part of college or university campuses in rural areas, which tend to be their own form of 'liberal bubble.' Outside of this, there is still no difference in approaches or opinions from the long-form 'Other' answers. Rural museums like the Coutts were still more likely to shy away from exhibiting lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists.

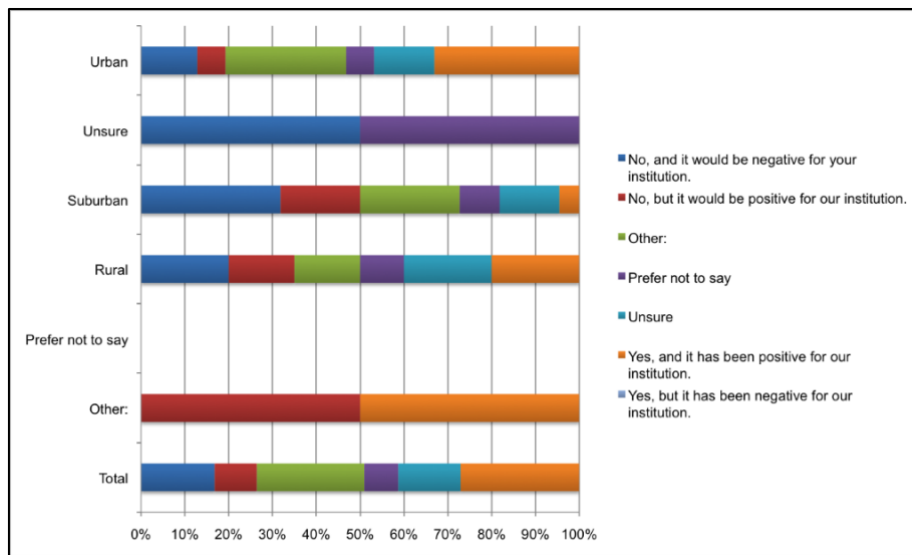


Table 7-4: Results of Question 27: Does your institution take public positions on social, cultural, or political movements? cross-tabulated by community type.

Question 28 asks respondents if they have noticed a shift over the last decade in attitudes about collecting LGB artists. Most respondents selected 'Yes; museum professionals and visitors feel more positively' at a rate of (53.7%): 'Urban,' (57.%); 'Rural,' (52.6%); 'Suburban' (36.4%). (16.1%) of respondents selected 'No; attitudes...remain the same: (31.8%) 'Suburban;' (13.5%) 'Urban,' (10.5%) 'Rural.' Here again, suburban museums stand out from the urban and rural museums. They were less likely to see a positive shift in attitudes, and more likely to state that they remained the same. There were no long-form responses from suburban museums, and among urban and rural museums there is the speculation that attitudes are better, but they cannot say for sure.

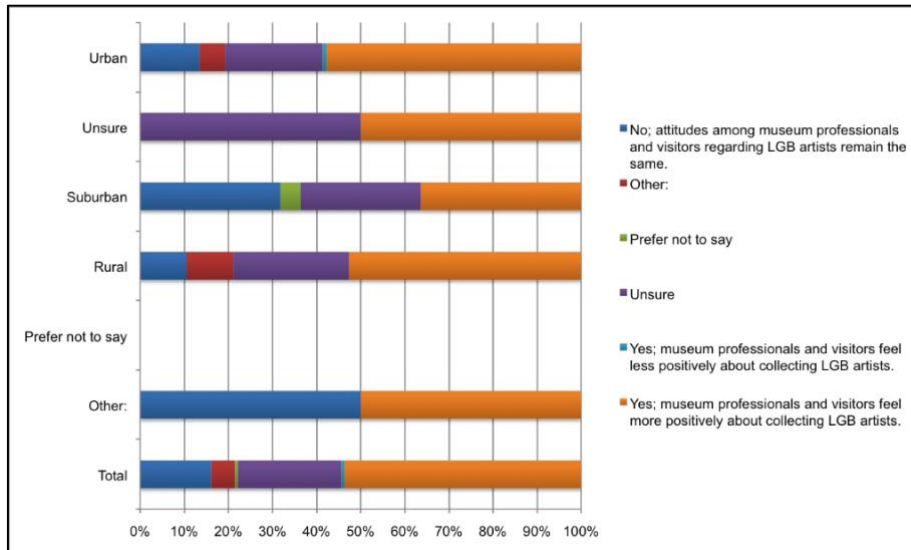


Table 7-5: Results of Question 28: In your professional opinion, have you noticed a shift over the last decade in attitudes about collecting LGB artists? cross-tabulated by community type.

This question asks respondents about public feedback for exhibitions about sexuality. The majority of respondents (43.6%) selected 'have not hosted such an exhibition,' broken down to (63.6%) of 'Suburban' museums, (52.6%) of 'Rural' museums, and (35.6%) of 'Urban' museums. Among respondents who selected 'positive:' 'Urban' (46.2%); 'Suburban' (27.2%); 'Rural' (26.3%).<sup>185</sup> The total rate of response for 'negative' was just (1.9%), with the only respondents selected these located in 'Urban' museums. This question did not have an option for long-form responses. I was surprised by these results as well: rural museums and urban museums were just as likely to have positive responses once hosting lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists.

<sup>185</sup> This includes 'slightly,' 'moderately,' and 'extremely' positive.

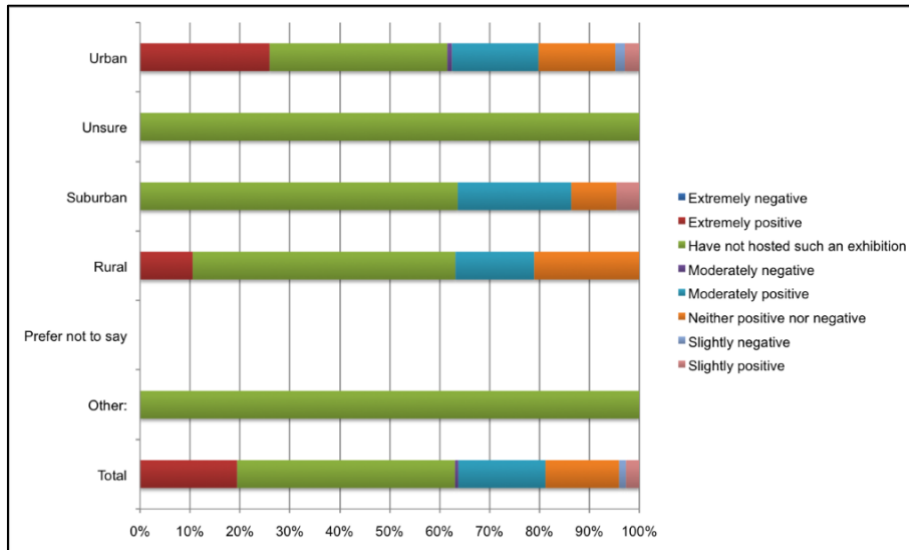


Table 7-6: Results of Question 29: If you have hosted exhibitions with reference to artists' sexualities, what feedback from the public did you receive? cross-tabulated by community type.

Question 30 asks respondents if they have felt any pressure to make changes to their collection and display of LGB artists. The majority of respondents (58.6%) said 'No,' including (68.2%) of 'Rural' museums, (60.7%) of 'Suburban,' and (57.1%) of 'Urban' museums. Among those who said that they had, 'from activist groups' was selected at a rate of (7.9%) in 'Urban' museums and (3.6%) in 'Suburban' museums; 'from visitors,' (6.3%) 'Urban,' (4.5%) 'Rural,' and (3.6%) 'Suburban.' The only museums to receive this pressure from 'funders' or 'board members' were 'Urban' museums at a rate of (1.6%) each. Among long-form answers from 'Other,' the majority of respondents were from 'Urban' museums and stated they felt pressure from their peers, academia, and themselves. One 'Suburban' museum stated they had requests from students to collect LGB students, but they are known for being part of a college campus that is known for being liberal, and suggested that this may be why they don't receive many requests to collect and display LGB artists – they are already doing so.<sup>186</sup> This follows the general pattern of my interviews: not many people in rural areas are clamoring for this type of exhibition.

<sup>186</sup> This includes an annual student exhibition, featuring works made by openly LGB students.



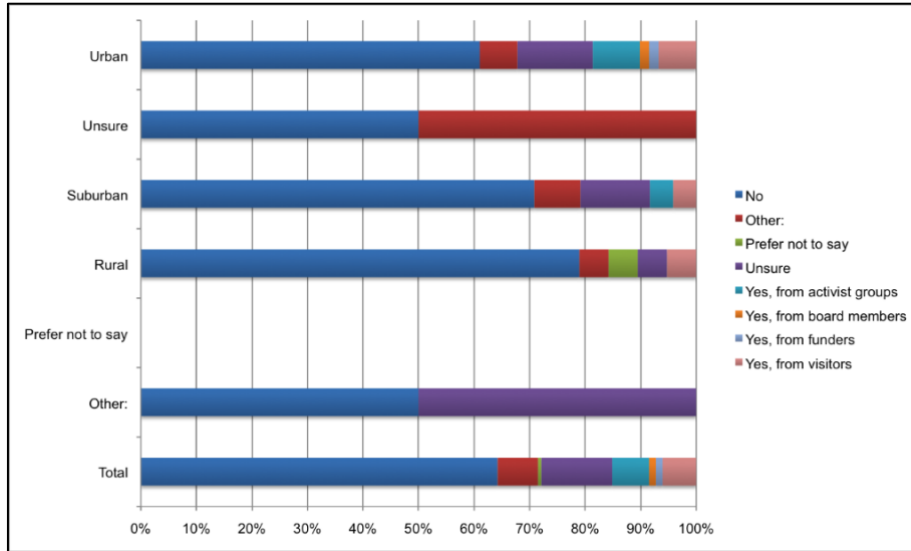


Table 7-7: Results of Question 30: Have you felt pressure to make changes regarding LGB artists' collection and/or display? Check/tick all that apply. cross-tabulated by community type.

## Conclusion

The type of community an American museum finds itself in can vary widely, but museums must be, and indeed are, adaptable. The broad community programming and resources of BRIC lead to a fantastic relationship with the community. The desire to drive diverse programming, not just in their exhibitions, but in their events and community resources, makes BRIC a resounding success. Des Moines Art Center is also driven by a community response, but they are also notable for their staff training and support. It is not enough to make a commitment to exhibitions; creating a strong and welcoming front-line staff is just as important, and Des Moines Art Center recognised this and provided the support. Bellevue Art Museum knows that their institutional strength lies in the variety of travelling exhibitions they've been able to bring to the public, and they choose to exhibit bold and challenging LGBT+ artists. All these institutions may have larger communities and resources than what is available at the Coutts Memorial Museum, but that does not minimise the efforts that their small staff go to make connections with the LGBT+ community, even going to other cities to find musicians and artists. I can appreciate their directors frankness about their challenges and their goals. These institutions prove that successful programming can happen anywhere.

# Final Thoughts

## The Success of Open Conversation

I conclude this dissertation more optimistically than when I started in the spring of 2018. At the start of my research the work was being done, but collections information was scattered and lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists were still spoken about sotto voce. Either we were special exhibitions to be rotated in for Pride Month,<sup>187</sup> or the all-important biographical information would be conveniently removed when placed in the larger context of an exhibition. We're now in a world where my straight friends know more about RuPaul's Drag Race than I do, and people ask me for my pronouns before I get a chance to share them. Following the rest of the culture, museum professionals were looking to make changes and open to conversation, but the resources were hard to find, and the audiences and industry were sometimes unkind. Nearly three years on, things are much brighter than they've been, and not just in the galleries, but in the collections stores and in the workforce.

In my proposal and introduction, I had theorised that attitudes toward collecting and displaying lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists would vary with demographic: age, gender, and sexuality. You'll notice, I had not discussed those at all.<sup>188</sup> The interviews and case studies didn't take my research in that direction, and I had decided to follow those instead. In addition, I sought to establish that contemporary museum practices are rooted in homophobia, as we are not too far removed from decriminalisation. It's not too much of a stretch to believe that exhibition practices would experience a holdover from those days. My methodology was not perfect, yet I gleaned interesting data and anecdotes from the survey that lead to incredible stories.

Despite a disturbing increase in violence and prejudice in the last few years towards the LGBT community, most museums and galleries, their visitors, and the communities they represent feel positively about lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists. Institutions might at first

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<sup>187</sup> Occasionally known as February or June.

<sup>188</sup> They are in the appendices.

be scared about exhibiting LGB artists, but with few exceptions, their fears are unfounded. In addition, most believe that their work is important to collect and to display without much deviation from the standard for heterosexuals. There are occasionally fears of repercussion from communities, but there are more than enough museum professionals that are doing their best to collect and display lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists to make up for the detractors.

I asked myself, where does the museum's responsibility lie: to the artists' wishes and identities, or to the needs of the public? I made argument that any time the museum acknowledges the LGBT+ population within their collection or through exhibitions is worthwhile. Coming from a fine art background, where so much of who you are matters in the classroom, and learning modes of post-modern critique that placed value on an artist's biography equal to their work, I had always believed that it was the responsibility to the artist, and to the work on the walls. I still believe that to an extent, of course. I also recall saying this line of questions was selfish: I want to see myself on the wall, and I'm sure others do to. At the end of this dissertation, I believe something a little bit different: when an institution responds the needs of their community and trusts them, the diversity in exhibitions will follow.

The interviews were the true highlight of completing this dissertation. I had done more than made it to the final report, but each one contributed to my understanding of the challenges facing museums and galleries when choosing what to exhibit.<sup>189</sup> I valued their insight, and the time they took to speak with me. It was from my interviews that the institutions that valued the community they served, and were looking to always do more – some of my interviewees even asked me what I think they should be doing. I have a better idea of what to do now than I did then. Jonathan Katz wrote in Spring 2018, the same season that began this research, that institutions censor, and it is the smart ones that do it in the databases and the stores, not on the walls. This may still be true of large institutions that don't feel the need to answer to their community. However, it is clear from my interviews that if there is a lack of exhibitions or programming, it's more likely due to

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<sup>189</sup> I will not soon forget the curator in Louisiana who said he purposefully doesn't schedule Black artists in February and LGBT+ artists in June to avoid tokenisation.

lack of resources: items in the collection, a dedicated LGBT+ audience, or funding. It's almost never malicious.

## Community is Key

Efforts from institutions like the Gallery of Modern Art, as part of Glasgow Life, and their Insight Cafés illustrate the importance of reaching out and trusting the community. The first Insight Café that I attended was a roundtable that discussed collections and acquisitions, asking participants how the institution can better serve the community through objects and exhibitions. Participants suggested rapid collection to respond to historical events, a conscious effort to be aware of potential tokenism, and more internal communications. The second Insight Café featured Glasgow Life staff discussing community programming, focusing attention on *queer timēs school prints* and a collaboration with LGBT Age, a project promoting health and wellbeing for LGBT people aged 50 and over. The work with LGBT Age was regarding a Germanic brass dish depicting St. Sebastian, who is considered a 'queer icon' by many. From their stories and object discussion, they moved the plate from religious object to 'queer' object, proving that acquiring stories and experiences, in addition to objects, from the community adds a richness to the collections. The café audience was then invited to participate in a group discussion to crowd-source solutions for improving LGBTI+ exhibitions, including more staffing and volunteers to run tours, more purposeful exhibitions and events year-round. Address the works that are already in the collection: review those stories. Try to flesh out new ones from what you have been sitting on. Work with communities and do outreach. The roundtables hosted by Glasgow's Gallery of Modern Art were a fantastic learning resource and a great way to make concerns known.

GoMA's early attempt at queer exhibition, 2009's *sh[OUT]*, received no insignificant amount of media backlash from Christian groups for content and from the community for 'censorship,' i.e., moving works to the less 'accessible' Tramway Gallery and cancelling education programmes in secondary schools, thereby reducing the visibility of the works and lowering the community's confidence in the city council that LGBT+ people would be represented properly. By the time the gallery moved to 2018's *queer timēs school prints*, the staff was much better prepared. The exhibition was the culmination of one year of

community outreach and artmaking, and participants in the workshops decided the criteria for the exhibition – GoMA learned from their experience with *sh[OUT]* and in decided to trust the community, they created a wildly successful LGBTI+-centred programme. 2019's *Domestic Bliss*, however, featured works by LGBTI+ artists alongside their heterosexual peers – here, the experiences of domesticity are all given equal importance on the gallery walls.

The National Portrait Gallery in London has an advantage over a Local Authority museum with respect to their size (some 11,100 portraits and over 320,000 images in their reference collection) and budget. But even a large and moneyed institution needs to make conscious choices in their collections management and exhibitions. Shortly after *sh[OUT]* opened in Glasgow, *Gay Icons* opened in London to great success: over 48,000 people attended. The portrait sitters were chosen for their contributions to history and contemporary culture. The selector panel portrait sitters, and portrait makers did not have to be members of the LGBTQI+ community either; they only had to influence the culture. The exhibition was groundbreaking for 2009, and is maintained digitally, including a digital gallery of visitor statements.

NPG has invested heavily in their database, at the insistence and efforts of dedicated staff.<sup>190</sup> Their database is one of the most robust and complex ones that I encountered in my research, and their efforts in creating and maintaining the database underscores the importance of investing in a foundation for your collections infrastructure. The networks and connections that allow individuals to search portrait sitters and artists are responsive and in-depth, linking family trees, interviews, lectures, and other events. The network contextualises the artworks and creates a sprawling network that one could get lost in for hours. Of note is the '*I am me*' image gallery, which was part of an exploration of art, gender, and identity in 2017. This digital gallery lands with LGBTQI portrait sitters, and when clicked on, it will take you to other works they are in, other sitters they are associated with, or other categories they might fit in. This work was not possible without the concerted effort of the staff members, who spearheaded the project. They were able to add biographical information to the database, which is one of the more tedious tasks in museum work, and often very thankless. They had to make decisions on labelling and

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<sup>190</sup> I am such a big fan of this database, after all it was a database search that inspired this dissertation.

outing, and provided a system of checks and balances to maintain standards. In choosing to take on this task, the National Portrait Gallery created an incredible resource for anyone looking to learn about their community.

The Thorne-Sagendorph Art Gallery at Keene State College in New Hampshire has to walk a fine line. It is a university museum in a liberal area, yet the collection does not lend itself to diverse exhibitions. In this area, it needs to be all things to all visitors: to older-than-average town residents, it's one of the few close museums. To the student body, it's part of a well-rounded education. Sometimes, the values of the residents and the student body do not align. Their director's handling of *The Power of Children* exhibition was deft – deciding to supplement the Ryan White section with an additional exhibition surrounding the 80s AIDS crisis and ACT UP! situated the 'innocent AIDS victim' conversation with a wider historical context and was received successfully. The cautious optimism following led to the success of hosting *cLick\ CliQue: A Warhol Experience*. The programming surrounding it reached other campus groups, and it was particularly beneficial to the seniors enrolled in continuing education, who helped develop the exhibition over the course of the school year.

The differing communities across the United States of America, and the current political climate, might lead one to believe that urban and suburban museums are much more likely to host lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists; small, rural museums don't want to touch the LGBT+ community with a glittered pole. This is only partially true. Urban and suburban museums might be more likely to host such exhibitions, but this is more likely due to their community's interests. Rural museums tend to be smaller, and their communities tend to be smaller and openly LBGT+ people might be few and far between.

Des Moines Art Center's *Queer Abstraction* was groundbreaking for their institution – it was the first of its kind, but it also showed work that is coded to the LGBT+ community. It acknowledged the buried lexicon of the community, and the depth that the code added to the work. It was an entry-point to the community that many visitors may never have had before. The staff preparation leading up to the exhibition was just as important as the exhibition itself, and their LGBT Inclusion training helped to create an accountable a safe environment for visitors and staff alike. Another urban institution, BRIC Arts Media,

regularly hosts queer programming. Their focus on Brooklyn-only creators allows them to respond to the ever-changing community, functioning as a gathering place and forum for the needs of Brooklynites. If their mission is to focus on the community, they were never going to avoid queer artists.

Bellevue Arts Museum is similar to BRIC Arts Media, in that it does not have a collection to answer to. They make bold and transgressive choices with their short-term and travelling exhibitions, and their relatively small size offers freedom to make those choices. They are able to be level-headed and responsive to cultural shifts. There is no rush to collect works and scoop them up before anyone else can – they can just schedule the artist at some point. The final institution, Couatts Memorial Museum, had very little in the way of LGBT+ exhibition at the time of our discussion, but from the time of the founder's death, they were left without direction. It is now up to the small staff to steer the institution, and they have been doing so by (this should not surprise you by now) reaching out to the community. The director does this quite literally by driving to surrounding towns and cities and inviting musicians and artists to participate in events at the small museum. They acknowledge that they have a community with limited exposure to contemporary art, and some of their visitors may lack an entry point. That does not stop the institution from gently moving forward.

And so, here we are. Museums and galleries across the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America continue to break ground with exhibiting lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists. They are aware of institutional challenges including limited resources and funding, but the work is successful thanks to the efforts of museum staff at all institutional levels. The steps any institution can take forward are surprisingly very simple: reach out to the community. The LGBT+ community, yes, but the local one is just as important when creating successful exhibitions. Most people are willing to learn, it's usually why we go to museums and surround ourselves with objects and artworks. My hope is that the work will accelerate after the pandemic, and I am filled with desperate hope for the sector after this is over. But it is clear that contemporary museums are emboldened but their communities, and the reverse is true. Communities and artists should feel empowered to seek out such programming. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual art has a rich and wonderful history, and it seems likely that it will have an even better future.

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# Appendix A

## The Survey

The purpose of this dissertation is to discover professional attitudes toward purposeful collection of lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists. The survey that was sent to institutions was cross-tabulated with what are the most important demographics or factors in a museum collection. Among individual staff respondents, these were sexuality, sex/gender identity, age, and job title. For the institutions they worked in, these were divided between the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Each nation's cross-tabulated results are museum location, museum budget, and funding sources. There is one cross-tabulation where the institution is US and UK combined, and that is location broken down by urban, suburban, and rural. As previously acknowledged, it might have benefited the surveys to separate them by nationality. This appendix is to provide data analysis of information from respondents that didn't make it into the case studies, but I still see as important and interesting.<sup>191</sup> If a question, graph, or cross-tabulation is missing, it is used in a case study.

The survey was divided into four parts: 'You,' 'Your institution,' 'Your collections and displays,' and 'Your professional opinions.' I will begin my analysis of the survey data by going through the demographics of the respondents and their institutions, as found in 'You' and 'Your institution.' As previously mentioned in *Methodologies*, of the 721 institutions that surveys were sent to, 263 recorded responses, therefore the response rate was slightly over 36%<sup>192</sup> at the start of the survey. Only 186 respondents fully completed the survey. This drops the response rate to approximately 30%. 70% of respondents that began the survey completed it.

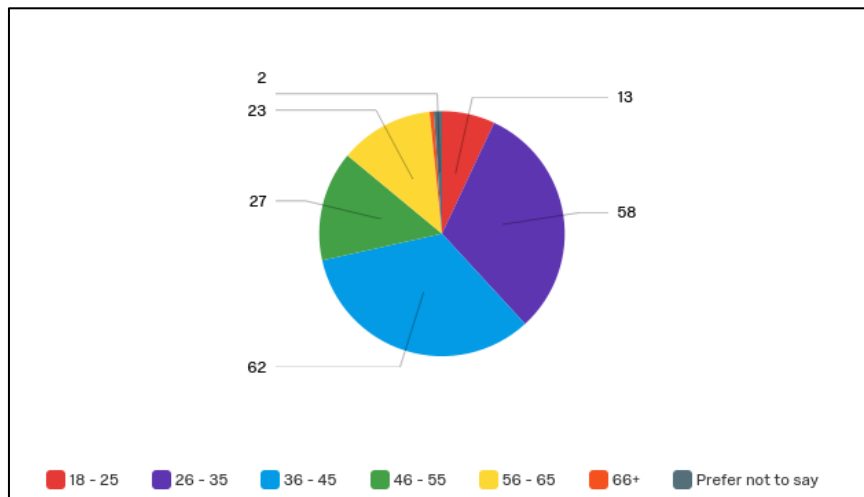
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<sup>191</sup> Basically I would just be very sad to see this information be lost to time.

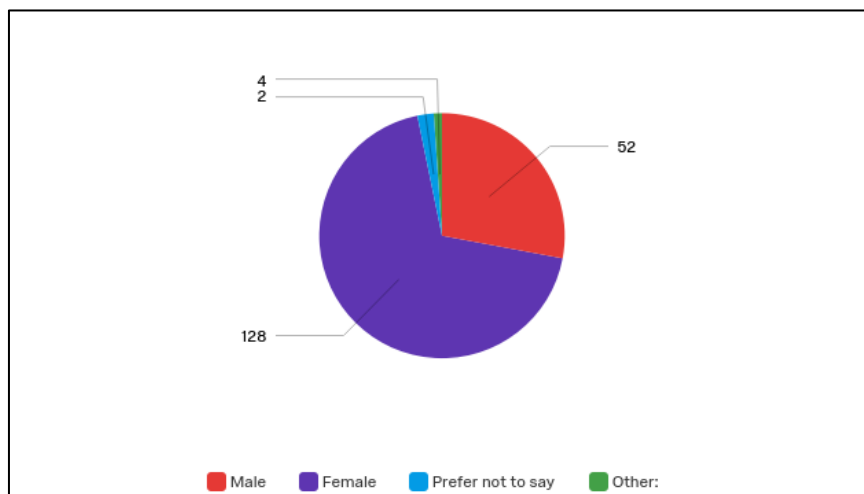
<sup>192</sup> All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number unless otherwise stated.

Questions 1 – 3

The first question was ‘What is your age?’ Respondents answered mostly ‘36-45’ (33%) and ‘26-35’ (31%). The next closest age bracket was ‘46-55’ (15%), ‘56-65’ (13%), ‘18-25’ (7%). Less than 2% of respondents were over the age of 55.



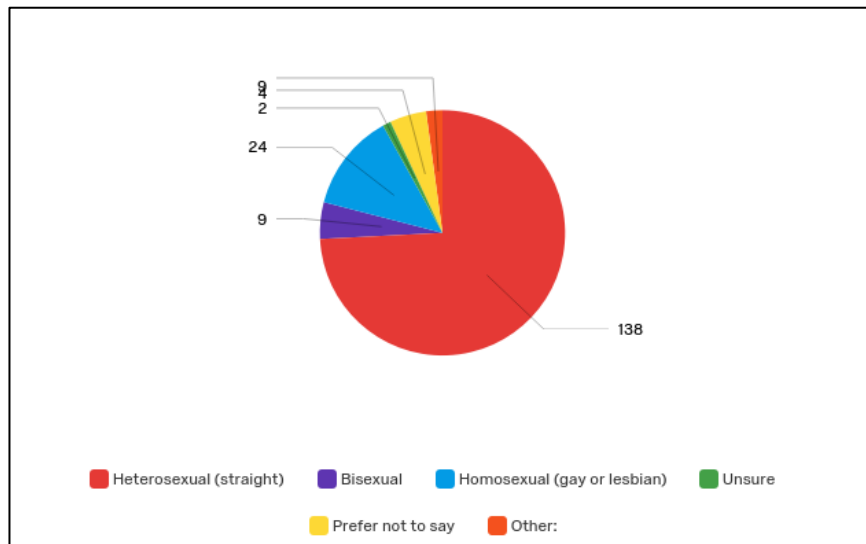
The majority of survey respondents identified themselves as female (69%) with males at a far second (28%). 2% of respondents selected ‘Prefer not to answer,’ the final 1% selected ‘Other.’<sup>193</sup>



<sup>193</sup> The two responses for respondents that selected ‘Other’ were ‘Transwoman’ and ‘gender queer’ (sic).



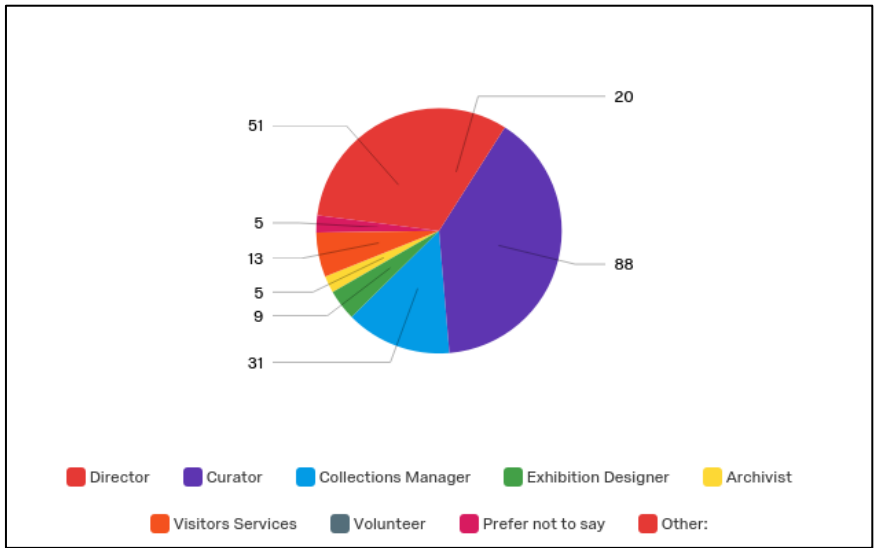
When asked about their sexualities, the respondents answered primarily 'Heterosexual' (74%), with 'Homosexual' at a far second (13%). 'Bisexuals' are an even farther third (5%) tied with 'Prefer not to say' (5%) and followed by 'Other'<sup>194</sup> (2%) and 'Unsure' (1%). The same number of individuals responded to these three questions, 186. This is the same number of individuals who completed the survey.



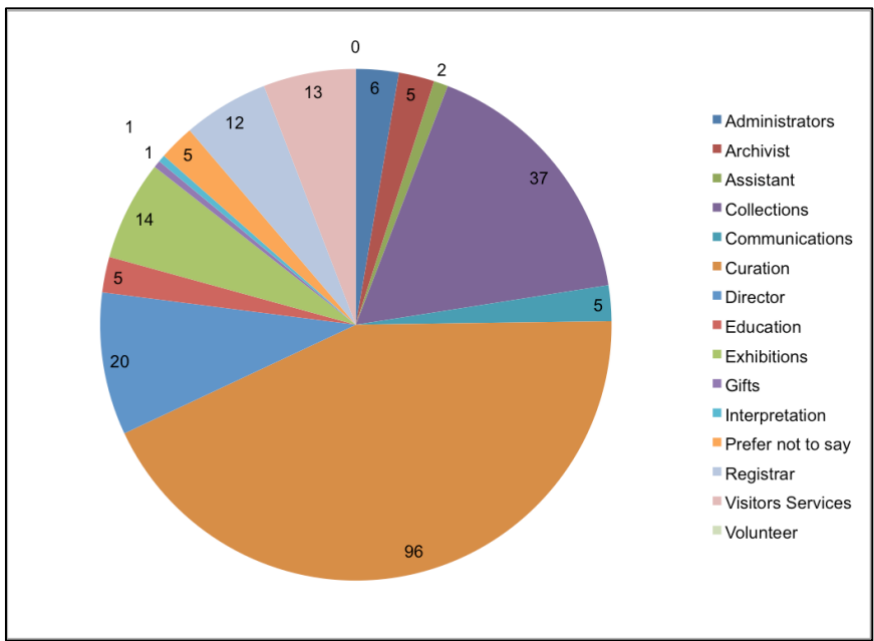
#### Question 4

'What is your job title or position in your institution? Check/tick all that apply.' has 222 responses. There are more answers to this question than respondents. This is most likely due to a respondent's job title not being listed, or the respondent holding more than one job. The majority of respondents selected 'Curator' (40%), with the second-most selected answer was 'Other' (23%). Collections Manager was the third-most selected response (14%), with a few collections-adjacent responses written-in. Thirteen respondents (6%) selected 'Visitors Services,' which is a position that usually does not require as extensive a knowledge of a collection and is more aligned with customer service.

<sup>194</sup> The responses for 'Other' are as follows: 'in a heterosexual relationship but on the bisexual spectrum,' 'polysexual,' 'queer,' and 'pansexual.'



The 'Other' option required the respondent to list their own option, therefore this is quite a significant percentage for a write-in answer. While not necessarily a bad thing, this could have been avoided by instructing respondents to select the closest selection to their own job title, providing their position, or making this question multiple answer to account for individuals that hold multiple job titles. All the respondents who selected 'Other' wrote in their answers. The write-in responses for this question required a reorganisation of this question to get a more accurate result. Therefore, when accounting for write-in answers, the responses are as follows:



When adjusted for responses collected from 'Other,' (43%) of all respondents are in curation (including curators, curatorial assistants, or curatorial interns). The next largest percentage were individuals who dealt with collections (including collections database managers, information managers, or heads of collection) at (17%). After that, the next position of respondents was 'Directors' at (9%). Individuals dealing with 'Visitors Services' and 'Exhibitions' (including exhibitions coordinators, managers, and assistants) factored at (6%) each. 'Registrars,' a position I had neglected to include in the original survey, factored at (5%) of respondents. The selections less than (5%) of respondents were 'Administrators' (3%), 'Archivists' (2%), 'Education' (2%), 'Prefer not to say,' (2%), 'Assistants' (1%), Gifts Officer (<1%), 'Interpretation' (<1%), and 'Volunteers' (0%).

As previously mentioned, this survey was sent directly to some individuals in an institution if I could find contact details for a curator or registrar; if I could not find a direct person to send it to, I would send it to a general email address for a museum or gallery and hope that it was sent to the correct person within the organisation. Neither method is perfect, as the former relies on the hope that the respondent knows the collection and institution well enough to respond, and the latter relies on the hope that whoever manages the institution's email account knows the best person to pass the survey along to.

Your institution

Questions 6 - 8<sup>195</sup>

Questions 6 and 7 refer to location<sup>196</sup>. Questions 6 and 7 had a combined total of 197 responses. 148 respondents answered question 6, indicating they were from the United States (56% of respondents that began the survey, and 80% of respondents that completed it); 49 respondents answered question 7, stating they were from the United Kingdom (56% of respondents that began the survey, and 80% of respondents that

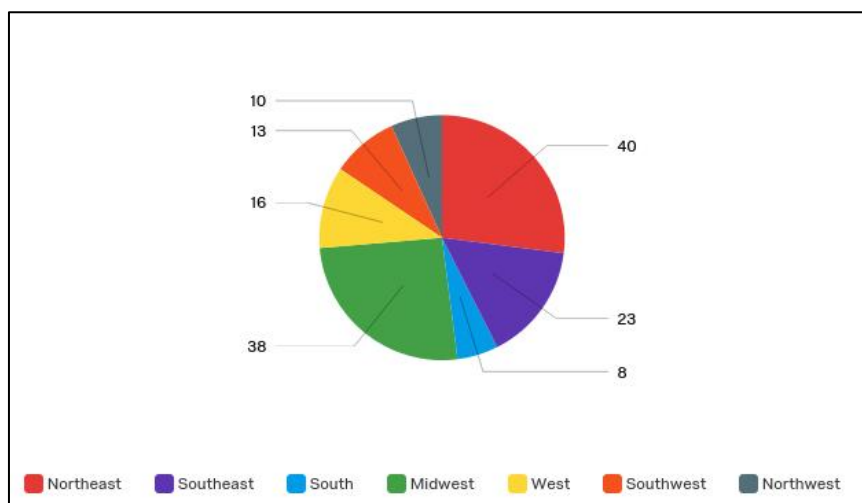
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<sup>195</sup> Question 5 deals with funding sources, and therefore I will return to it when I reach questions 10 and 11, regarding institution budget.

<sup>196</sup> This is one of the times when creating two different surveys would have been beneficial, to create less confusion among respondents.

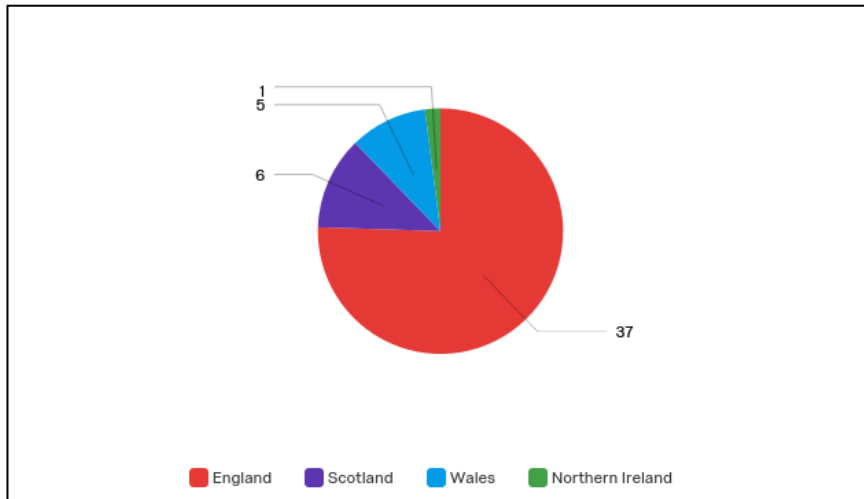
completed it). Since any question in the survey could be skipped, and it is likely that a number of respondents declined to answer this question. Question 6 is for the United States only and asks for the location based on broad geographical regions. Question 7 is for the United Kingdom only and asks for the location based on country. From this information we can conclude that of the recorded responses, 75% of survey respondents are from the United States and 25% are from the United Kingdom. When I had initially sent the surveys, of the 721 institutions that contacted, 81% were located in the United States and 19% were located in the United Kingdom. This means that the representation of respondents from the United Kingdom is slightly skewed in relation to the surveys sent. In both regards, it is still far less than both the number of surveys sent to and responses from American institutions.

Within the United States, the majority of respondents were located in the 'Northeast' (27%) and 'Midwest' (26%). The 'Southeast' came in third (15%), followed by 'West' (11%), 'Southwest' (9%), 'Northwest' (7%), and 'South' last (5%).<sup>197</sup>

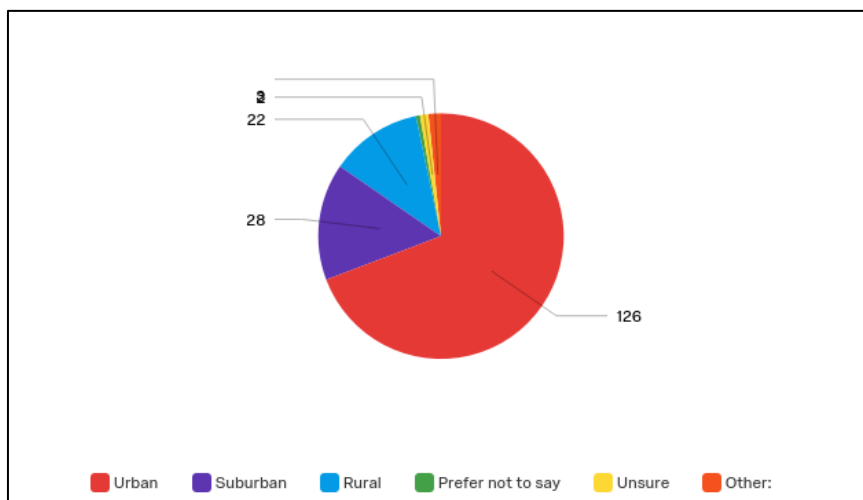


Within the United Kingdom, the responses left less room for regional debate. The vast majority of respondents were located in England (75%), followed by Scotland (13%) and Wales (10%). Northern Ireland saw the fewest respondents (2%).

<sup>197</sup> There is often much debate (among professionals as well as the average American) on how to differentiate the states within the United States. The reasoning is as cultural as it is political as it is geographical, and can range anywhere from four to ten regions. This is another potential area where my survey could have been designed better. However, as with the other demographic questions in this survey and due to the infinite number of regional factors, I left this question up to the respondent to self-identify.



Question 8 asked respondents for the type of city or town their institution was located in, and it did not differentiate between the United States and the United Kingdom.<sup>198</sup> A clear majority of respondents are located in 'Urban' areas (69%), with 'Suburban' (15%) and 'Rural' (12%) more evenly matched. 'Other',<sup>199</sup> 'Prefer not to say' and 'Unsure' were about equal (2%, 1%, and 1% respectively).



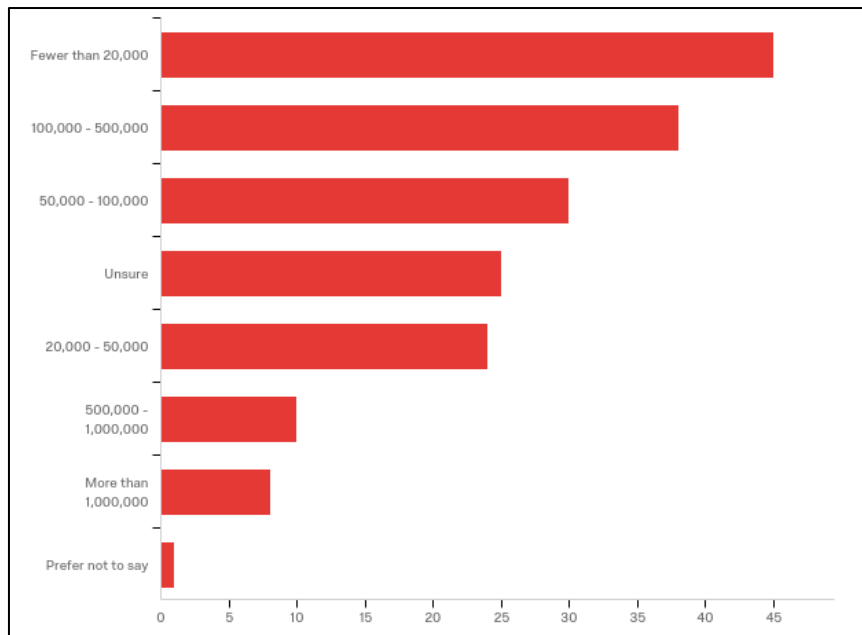
### Question 9

Question 9, 'How many visitors per year does your institution have?', has 181 respondents. Most institutions see 'Fewer than 20,000' (25%), followed by '100,000 –

<sup>198</sup> This question also required the respondent to self-identify on behalf of the institution.

<sup>199</sup> The responses for 'Other' are as follows: 'coastal,' 'small town,' 'We have 7 accredited museums throughout the region.'

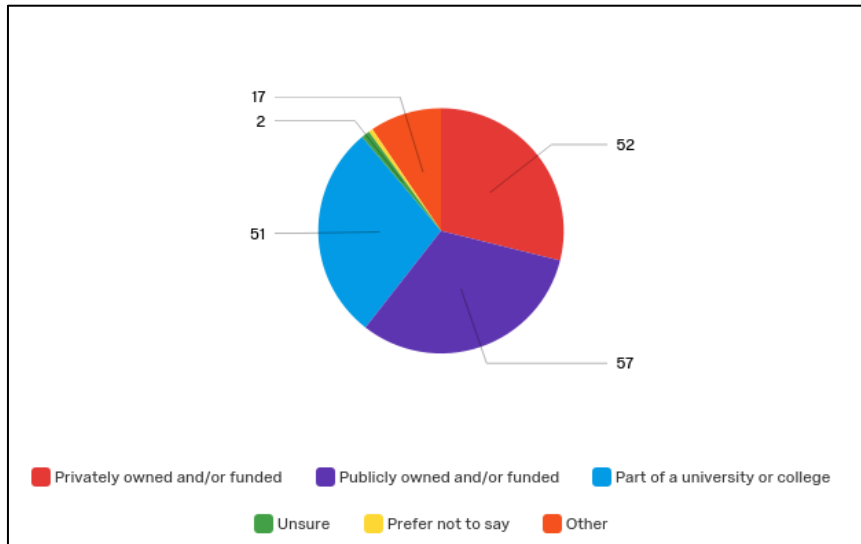
500,000' (21%), '50,000 – 100,000' (17%), 'Unsure' (14%), '20,000 – 50,000' (13%), '500,000 – 1,000,000' (5%), 'More than 1,000,000' (4%), and 'Prefer not to say' (1%).



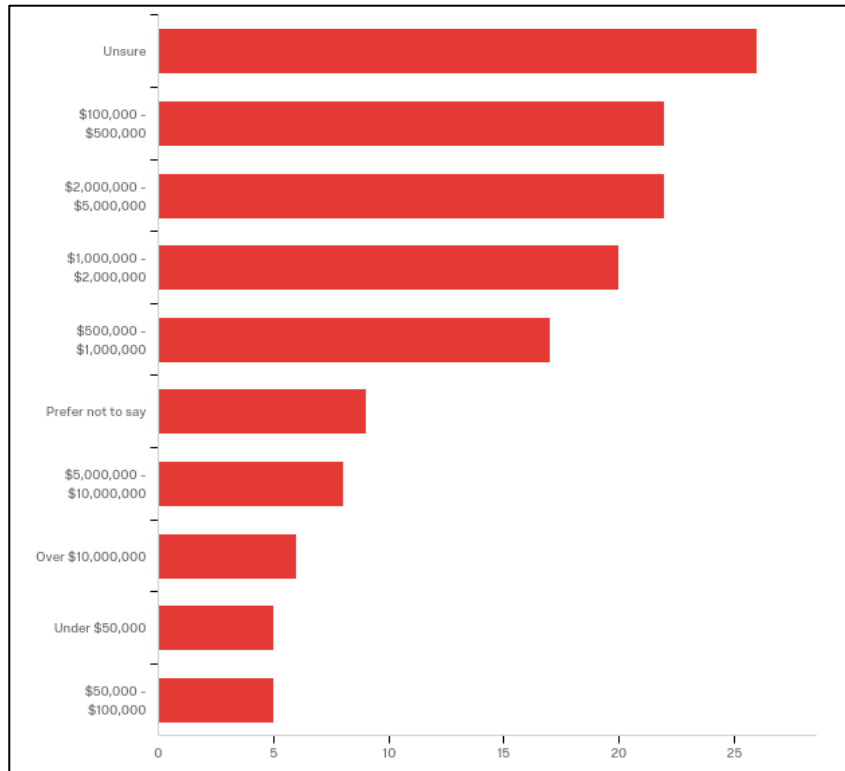
#### Questions 5, 10, & 11

Here is where I will return to question 5, which is directly linked to the budget information that questions 10 and 11 provide. Question 5 asks the respondent for the sources of funding for their institution. The responses were almost evenly split between: 'Publicly owned and/or funded' (32%), 'Privately owned and/or funded' (29%) or 'Part of a university or college' (28%). This is another question which might have been better served by having two surveys: a significant amount of respondents answered 'Other' and used the write-in space to respond with 'a combination of public and private' and 'non-profit/501(c)(3)<sup>200</sup>,' which is a tax code many institutions in the United States are classified as. 'Unsure' and 'Prefer not to say' came in last (1%).

<sup>200</sup> "Section 501(c)(3) is the portion of the US Internal Revenue Code that allows for federal tax exemption of nonprofit organizations, specifically those that are considered public charities, private foundations or private operating foundations." "What Is a 501(c)(3)?" Foundation Group®, [www.501c3.org/what-is-a-501c3/](http://www.501c3.org/what-is-a-501c3/).

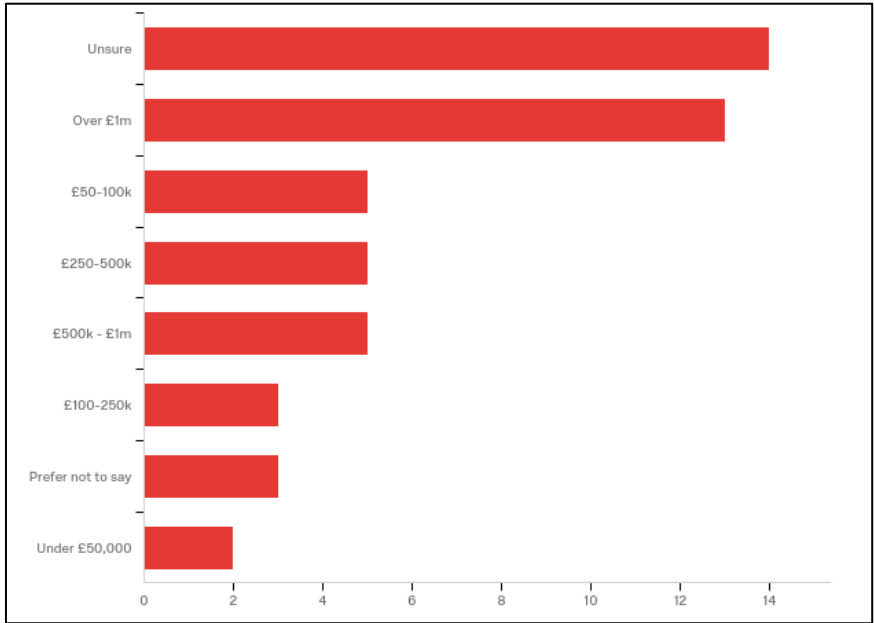


Questions 10 and 11 ask for the institution's budget, separated by the United States and United Kingdom respectively. In question 10, for the majority of American institutions the respondents selected 'Unsure' (19%), followed closely by '\$100,000 - \$500,000' (17%), '\$2,000,000 - \$5,000,000' (15%), '\$1,000,000 - \$2,000,000' (14%), '\$500,000 - \$1,000,000' (12%). Following that, there is a drop-off to '\$5,000,000 - \$10,000,000' and 'Prefer not to say' (6% each) and '\$50,000 - \$100,000' and 'Under \$50,000' (4% each). This question had 140 respondents, which is eight less than the amount of respondents that stated they were from the United States.



Question 11 referred to the budget for institutions within the United Kingdom. A slight majority of respondents stated they were 'Unsure' of their institution's budget (28%), followed closely by a budget of 'Over £1m' (26%). '£50-100k,' '£250-500k,' and '£500k - £1m' had an equal number of respondents (10% each), followed by '£100-250k' and 'Unsure' (6% each). The smallest amount of respondents selected a budget of 'Under £50,000' (4%). The total number of respondents is 50, which is inexplicably one more respondent that said they were located in the United Kingdom.

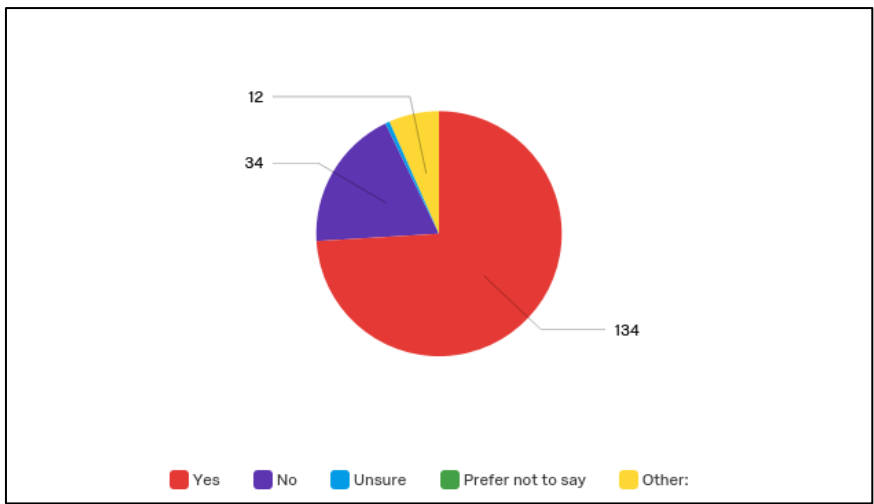




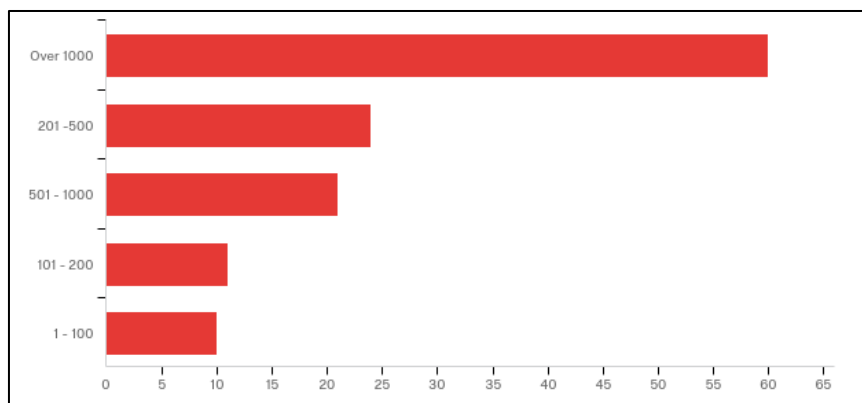
## Your collections and displays

### Questions 12 & 13

Question 12 asks the respondent 'does your institution have a permanent contemporary art collection?' I am not surprised at the responses to this question as I had sent the survey to museums with art collections on purpose and almost exclusively. The majority of respondents work in institutions with contemporary art collections (74%), followed by 'No' (19%). The majority of the respondents that selected 'Other' (7%) indicated that they have contemporary artworks within a broader collection.

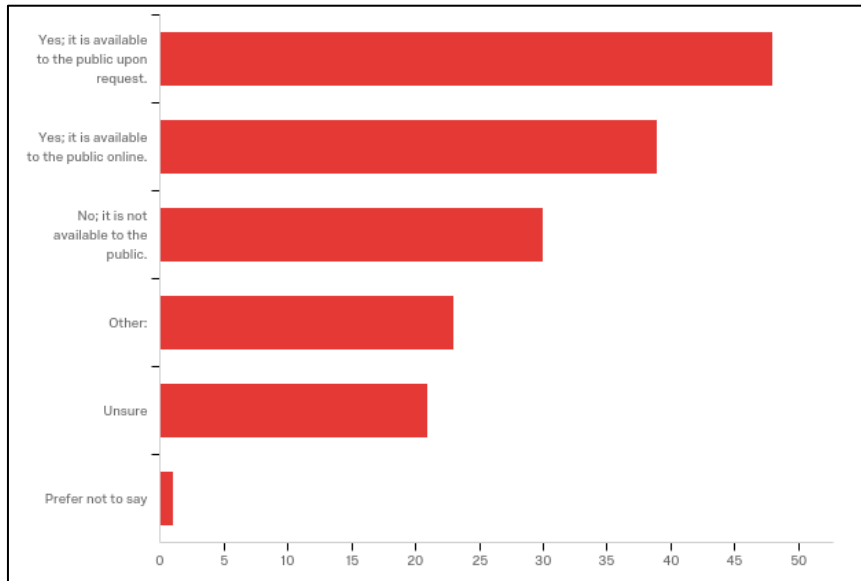


Question 13 was conditional and only displayed if the respondent selected 'Yes' in question 12. The majority of respondents selected that they have 'Over 1000' contemporary works in the permanent collection (47%). After a drop of 50%, a similar number of institutions have '201-500' (24%) or '501-1000' (21%) works in the collection. After another 50% drop, almost an equal number of institutions have '101-200' (9%) or '1-100' (8%) contemporary works in the collection.



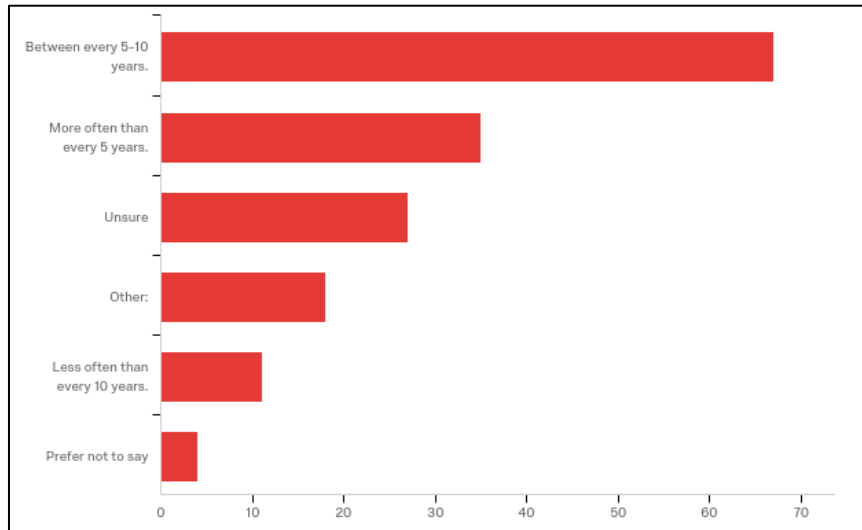
#### Questions 14 & 15

These questions ask respondents for information about their institution's collections policy. Question 14 asks if the collection policy is available to the public. Unfortunately, I did not make a selection for 'No collection policy' within the question, which led to the use of 'Other' for respondent's to discuss their particular institution's policies. The survey itself also left no space for a larger discussion about their policies, despite the importance in the actual research. The majority of respondents selected 'Yes; it is available to the public upon request' (30%), followed by 'Yes; it is available to the public online' (24%). The next selection was 'No, it is not available to the public' (18%), with 'Other' following (14%). 'Unsure' follows (12%) and 'Prefer not to say' was selected least (1%).



Since 'Other' was selected a significant number of times to provide a variety of responses, it is worth discussing. Of those 14% respondents who chose 'Other,' the majority indicated that they have no collections policy (38%). Other respondents wrote that their policies were in the middle of updates and rewrites, with plans to post them in the near future (33%). The last group indicated that the question did not apply to them, or they referred to their collections rather than the policies (19%).

Question 15 asked respondents 'how often is the collections policy updated?' I did not make this question conditional to the responses on question 14, so this question was presented to everyone who took the survey, regardless of the status of their institution's collections policy. Most institutions selected that the policy was updated 'Between every 5-10 years' (42%). (21%) of institutions updated the policy 'More often than every 5 years,' (17%) were 'Unsure' of how often their collections policy is updated. (11%) selected 'Other' as a response, which I will discuss further. (7%) of respondents surveyed said their institutions update the policy 'Less often than every 10 years,' and (2%) selected 'Prefer not to say'



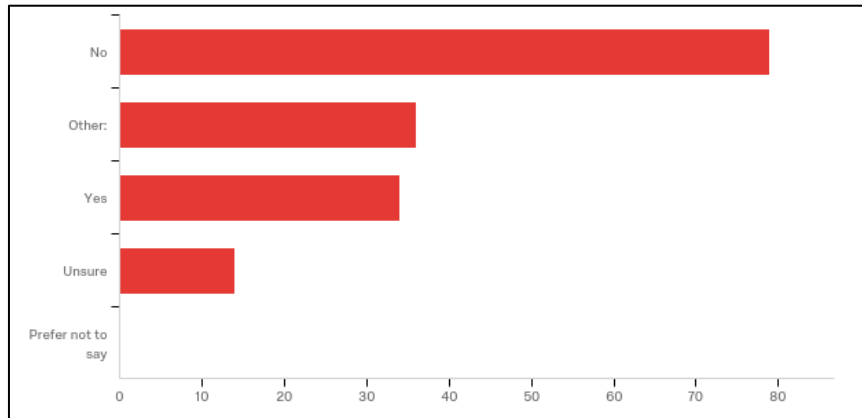
Of respondents who selected 'Other' and provided more information in the response field, (54%) of those indicated again that their institution has no policy or that it is not applicable to them (33%) wrote that the policy is updated as needed for accreditation, and (13%) don't have an official timeframe for policy updates.

#### Question 16 & 17

Question 16 asks respondents if their institution acquires art based on certain demographics (race, gender, religion, etc.).<sup>201</sup> This is another question where a fair amount of respondents made (22%) use of the 'Other' fields to provide additional insight. However, the majority of respondents (48%) responded that their institution does not collect based on certain demographics. (21%) of respondents selected 'Yes,' and (9%) were 'Unsure.'

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<sup>201</sup> I asked this question with a broad reference to demographics because while an institution might not have policies in place for sexuality specifically, it may be collecting other important demographics to diversify the collection.

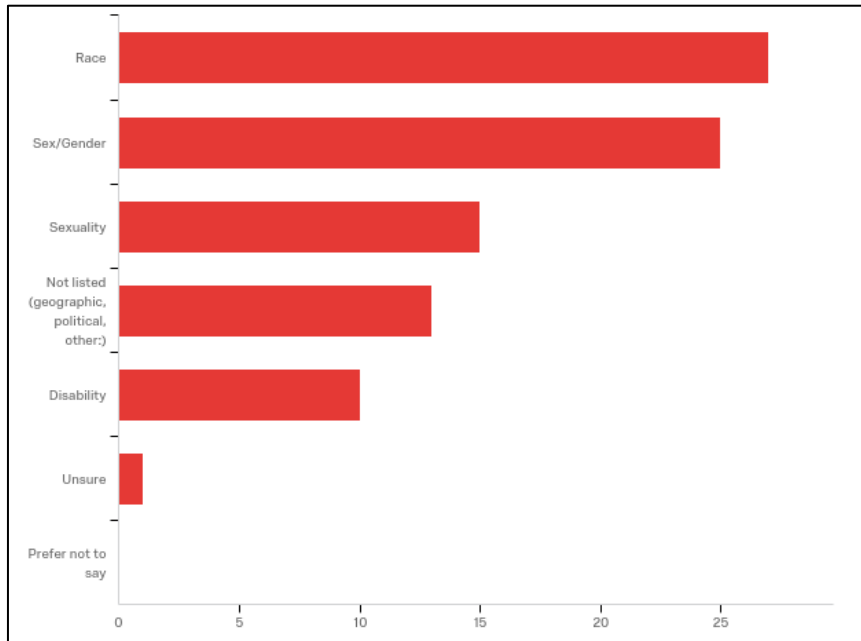


Of the respondents who selected 'Other,' there were a variety of differing responses in the write-in fields. An equal number of respondents (32%) indicated that demographics inform a larger acquisitions process but are not the sole criteria, or that this manner of collection is part of future plans. (21%) of respondents indicated that this manner of collection is not applicable to their institution; this may mean they wanted to reiterate they have no collections policy or that they don't collect. Finally, (15%) of respondents used the field to write the type of demographics they actively collect<sup>202</sup>.

Question 17 was conditional upon responses to question 16. 'Yes' must have been selected to proceed to this question, which asked respondents to check/tick all demographics that applied to their collection. The amount of respondents who did select 'Yes' for question 16 was 34, whereas there were 91 responses to question 17. Therefore, we can safely assume that respondents that were showed question 17 mostly selected multiple demographics. Of the respondents that were shown question 17, 'Race' was the most selected purposefully collected demographic (30%), 'Sex/Gender' was the next most collected demographic (27%). (17%) of respondents selected 'Sexuality;' (14%) selected 'Not listed (geographic, political, other).' Again, in this response, there was space for the respondent to list their particular answers. (11%) of institutions selected 'Disability,' and (1%) selected 'Unsure.'

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<sup>202</sup> These responses included demographics such as 'female,' 'lgbtq' 'bam' [sic] (Black, Asian, Ethnic Minority), and 'region of the country'



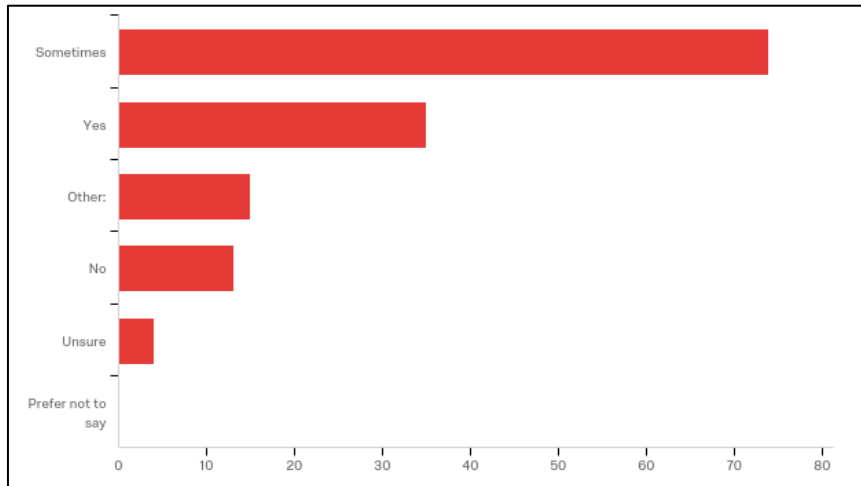
Of those who selected 'Not Listed' and provided an additional response, (73%) of those indicated 'geography' was a demographic, (18%) included 'nationality,' and (9%) indicated that it was based on the donor's theme.

#### Questions 18 & 19

Question 18 asks respondents 'does your institution host temporary exhibitions featuring the works of minority demographics?' and was discussed in Chapter 8, *The University Audience at Thorne-Sagendorph Art Gallery*. Question 19 is conditional on the respondent selecting 'Yes' to question 18, and asks the respondent 'does your institution acquire works from these exhibitions for the permanent collection?' The majority of respondents selected 'Sometimes'<sup>203</sup> (52%), followed by 'Yes' (25%). (11%) of respondents selected 'Other' and most of them used the write-in field to expand their answer. (9%) of respondents selected 'No,' followed by 'Unsure' (3%). No respondent selected 'Prefer not to say.' Of the respondents that selected 'Other,' (71%) stated that it was not applicable to their institution.<sup>204</sup> (14%) said that they have acquired works for the collection from an exhibition when/if they were a gift of the artist. (7%) cited budgetary concerns as a reason they could not collect from exhibitions; (7%) said their collections were fixed.

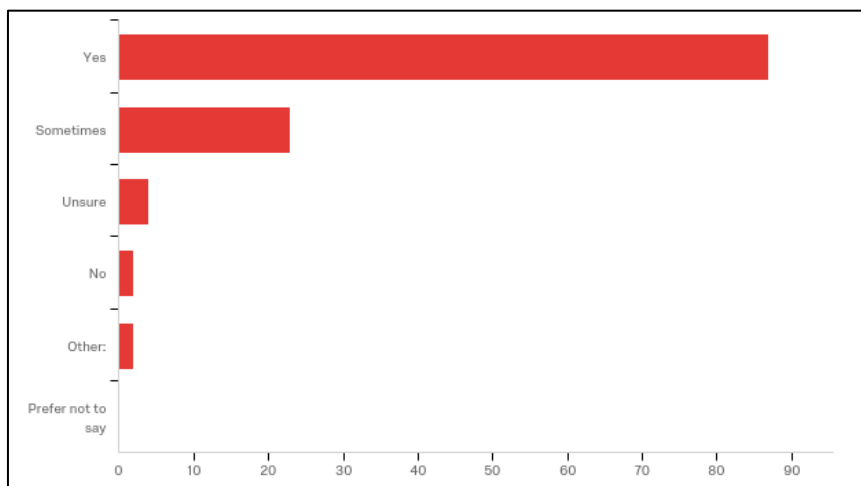
<sup>203</sup> There may be some discrepancy in the meaning of 'Sometimes' and 'Yes' in this context. For the sake of argument, selecting these responses means that at some point the institution has collected works from their exhibitions. An institution may not collect work from every exhibition, but it has happened previously.

<sup>204</sup> This includes responses that stated their institution had no permanent collection, as well as 'N/As.'



### Question 23

Question 23 asks respondents 'are works by openly LGB artists displayed with other works similar in movement or style (ex. abstract expressionist, Cubist, etc.)?' This question is important in discerning whether or not an institution considers their LGB works and artists to be part of the traditional/Western canon, or if they are a niche category. Again, a substantial majority of respondents selected 'Yes' (74%), followed by 'Sometimes' (19%); 'Unsure' (3%); 'No' (2%); 'Other' (2%). Of those who selected 'Other,' no respondents left any information in the write-in field.



## Your professional opinions

This block of questions asked for respondents to select the statement that they feel is most accurate, in their professional experience. Many respondents took the opportunity to write out longer answers in the 'Other' fields, which were tremendously valuable. This block is where the bulk of long-form responses were provided in the survey.

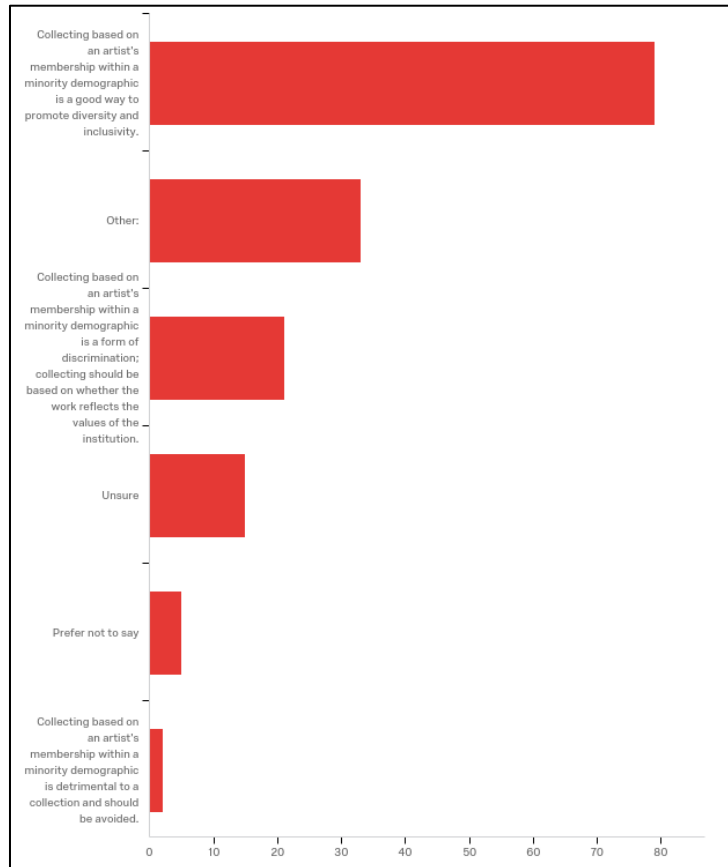
### Question 24

Question 24 asked respondents to select the statement that most closely fit their opinion on collecting an artist based on membership within a minority demographic. The majority of respondents selected 'Collecting based on an artists' membership within a minority demographic is a good way to promote diversity and inclusivity' (51%). The next most selected response was 'Other' (21%).<sup>205</sup> 'Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is a form of positive discrimination; collecting should be based on whether the work reflects the values of the institution' was selected at a rate of (14%); 'Unsure' was selected at a rate of (10%). (5%) of respondents selected 'Prefer not to say;' (1%) of respondents selected 'Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is detrimental to a collection and should be avoided.'

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<sup>205</sup> All but one of the respondents who selected 'Other' used the long-form response section to elaborate on their selection.





Among responses collected under 'Other,' one respondent replied that they were working under a policy which 'places stress on thematic/art historical strengths or gaps in collection.' This was an oft-repeated sentiment, where many respondents stated they believed it was worth doing periodic surveys of the collection to see where gaps lie. One respondent stated that '...when we have worked on our [won] biases, results in a more diverse collection.' Many respondents stated that they were actively working toward diversity and inclusion, but it is by no means the only consideration. One respondent suggested that the key to a diverse collection is to employ curators and researchers that have diverse interests: the diverse collection will follow. Still another suggested that it is '...less about representing the values of the institution...but critiquing an existing collection and drawing attention to a lack of representation in other areas...' In these responses, it is less about collecting for collections' sake, and more about correcting inequalities that have existed since the beginning of the institution that may have been carried forward.

Respondents that selected 'Other' also used this space to state that collecting based on demographic is not or should not be a consideration, one participant going so far as to

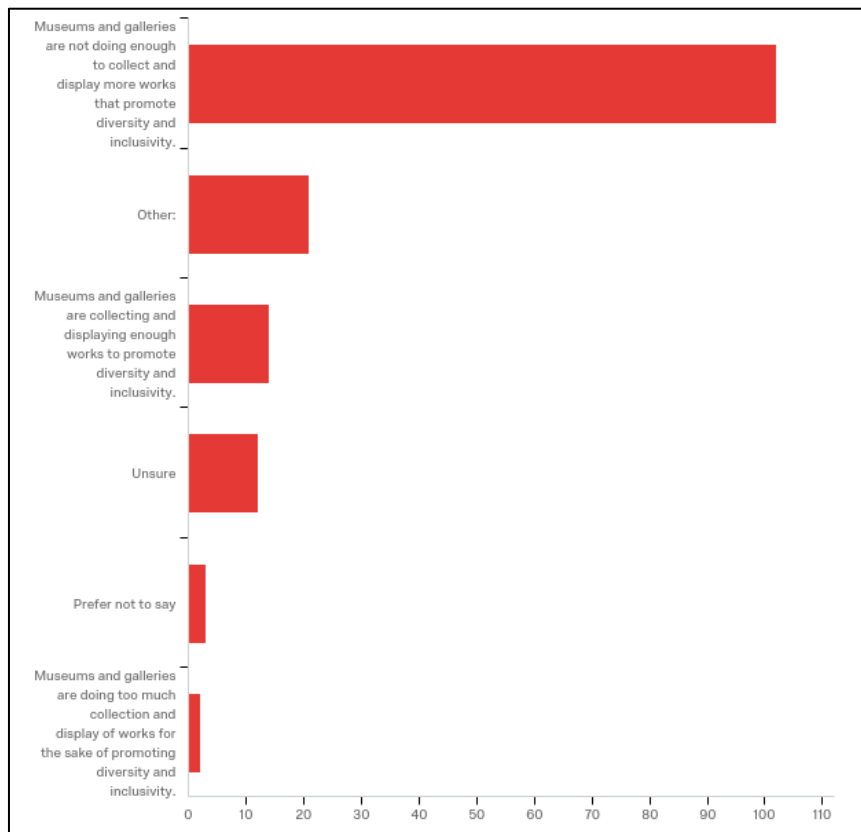
say that it is 'irrelevant'. Of course, this does not necessarily mean it is not important to the respondent or the collection; rather, they used the space to suggest that the work should stand on its own merit. I do not agree with the idea of collecting based solely on demographic, rather I posit that collecting with diversity and inclusion on the mind is a way to mitigate potential subconscious biases that one may have towards works of a certain demographic. One respondent suggested that 'collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic often does a disservice to the artists implying that the work isn't good enough otherwise.' This is also an important consideration, as there are many artists of a minority demographic that would eschew being known as a 'gay artist' as there are those that would celebrate it. It seems that the key to this all-important question is nuance: how does one find the balance between collecting to address diversity and inequality while maintaining integrity in the practice?

#### Question 25

Question 25 asks for respondents to select the response that most closely matches their opinions on current institutional efforts to collect and display works to promote inclusivity and diversity. The majority of respondents selected 'Museums and galleries are not doing enough to collect and display more works that promote diversity and inclusivity (66%); (14%) of respondents selected 'Other.'<sup>206</sup> (9%) of respondents selected 'Museums and galleries are collecting and displaying enough works to promote diversity and inclusivity;' (8%) of respondents are 'Unsure.' (2%) of respondents 'Prefer not to say' and (1%) of respondents selected 'Museums and galleries are doing too much collection and display of works for the sake of promoting diversity and inclusivity.'

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<sup>206</sup> Every respondent who selected 'Other' provided an extended response in the long-form answer field.



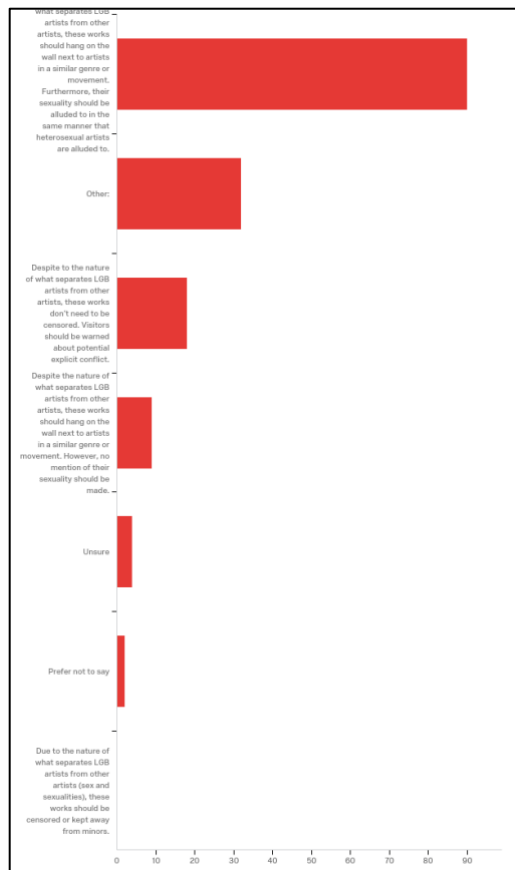
Among the respondents who selected 'Other,' many were keen to mention that the problem in many institutions lies in funding. One respondent stated that their institution has '...identified gaps which need to be filled and are working on doing this; however, resources are impacting our ability to do this.' While 'Museums and galleries are not doing enough to...promote diversity and inclusivity' was the most popular response, only the respondents that responded 'Other' were actually afforded an opportunity to provide suggestions within the long-form answer field. Among the suggestions were that the collection doesn't necessarily need to be updated or added to; rather, institutions can do more research within their collections and find new narratives.

There are obviously conflicting ideas about the role of a museum in the responses to this question. One respondent suggested that 'many [museum] are now [realizing] the importance and urgency of representing greater diversity and inclusivity in their collections and exhibitions' and yet another suggested 'museums and galleries should not concern themselves with this issue.'

Question 26 asks for respondents to select the response that most closely matches their opinions on separating works by LGB artists from other artists of the same genre or movement. The most selected response was 'Despite the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists, these works should hang on the wall next to artists in a similar genre or movement. Furthermore, their sexuality should be alluded to in the same manner that heterosexual artists are alluded to' (58%); again, the second-most selected response was 'Other' (21%).<sup>207</sup> 'Despite [to] the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists, these works don't need to be censored. Visitors should be warned about potential explicit [content]' was selected by (12%) of respondents; 'Despite the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists, these works should hang on the wall next to artists in a similar genre or movement. However, no mention of their sexuality should be made' was selected by (6%) of respondents. (2%) of respondents selected 'Unsure' and (1%) of respondents selected 'Prefer not to say.' No respondents selected 'Due to the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists (sex and sexualities), these works should be censored or kept away from minors.'

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<sup>207</sup> Of all the respondents who selected 'Other,' only 2 did not provide a response in the long-form answer field.



This question seemed to be one of the more controversial questions that I included in my survey. Among the responses were statements such as 'all of these statements are extremely problematic' and 'the wording for this question is deeply wrong. The phrasing 'despite the nature' suggests that there is something wrong with being LGB which I take offensively.' Still another respondent stated, 'all of these statements suggest that the nature of LGB artists' works are sexualised.' Again, I suggest I am working within an existing cultural framework. Indeed, the statements can be perceived as offensive. That does not mean that these opinions do not currently exist, even within professional spheres. It also does not mean I agree with these statements. The reason that lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists were originally legislated against and criminalised is our 'deviant' sexualities. Though traditions and cultural markers of the LGB community are not inherently sexual, persecution for different sexualities is what necessitated a separate community. Though this seems to be a distant memory for many professionals now, we are not that far removed from this time in history.

There are still many places in the United States where individuals can and do get fired after coming out in the workplace: 52% of all Americans live in a state where employment

laws do not protect an individual based on sexual orientation, and many professionals face repercussions for coming out in their jobs.<sup>208</sup> Similarly, Watkins College of Art has recently been absorbed by the Christian Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee.<sup>209</sup> Belmont University intended to fire any staff that do not identify as Christians, causing many of the university's LGBTQ faculty and students to fear for their safety and their futures at the university. After considerable backlash, the university reversed its position, but this does not undo the damage, nor does it alleviate the fears of its students.<sup>210</sup>

## Question 27

Question 27 is no longer in the form of a statement, and asks 'does your institution take public positions on social, cultural or political movements?' The most selected response was 'Yes, and it has been positive for our institution' (27%); the second-most selected response was 'Other' (24%).<sup>211</sup> (17%) of respondents selected 'No, and it would be negative for [your] institution;' (14%) of respondents were 'Unsure;' (10%) of respondents selected 'No, but it would be positive for our institution.' (8%) selected 'Prefer not to say;' no respondents selected 'Yes, but it has been negative for our institution.'

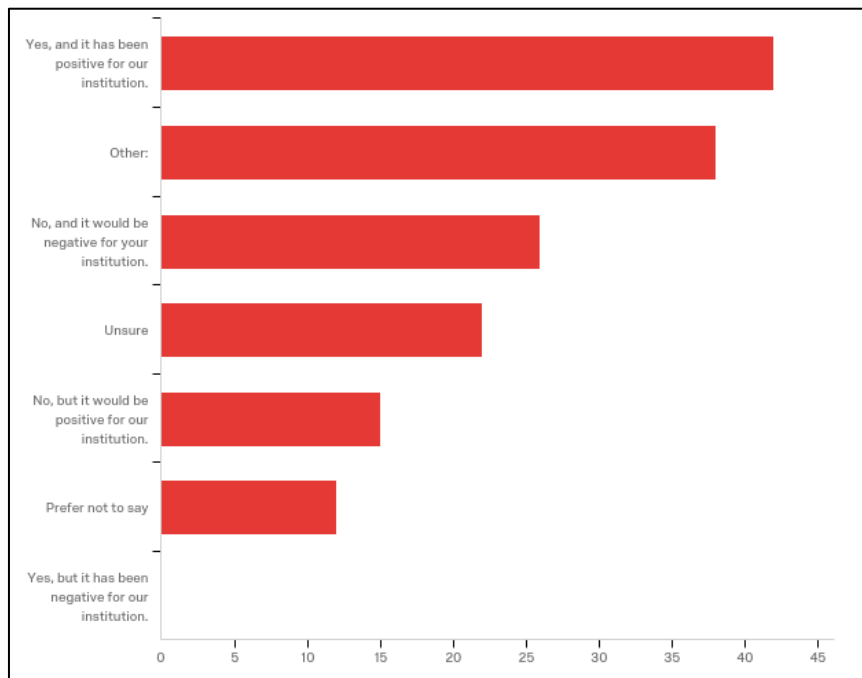
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<sup>208</sup> Miller, Susan. "'Shocking' Numbers: Half of LGBTQ Adults Live in States Where No Laws Ban Job Discrimination." USA Today, Gannett Satellite Information Network, 8 Oct. 2019, [www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/10/08/lgbt-employment-discrimination-half-of-states-offer-no-protections/3837244002/](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/10/08/lgbt-employment-discrimination-half-of-states-offer-no-protections/3837244002/).

<sup>209</sup> Small, Zachary. "A Nashville Art School Will Purge All Non-Christian Faculty Now That It Has Been Taken Over by a Religious University." Artnet News, Artnet, 4 Feb. 2020, [news.artnet.com/art-world/chaos-unfolds-as-students-and-faculty-at-nashville-arts-school-learn-of-merger-with-christian-university-1767246](https://news.artnet.com/art-world/chaos-unfolds-as-students-and-faculty-at-nashville-arts-school-learn-of-merger-with-christian-university-1767246).

<sup>210</sup> Dafoe, Taylor. "After a Backlash, Nashville's Belmont University Says It Will Let Non-Christian Art Professors Teach After All." *Artnet News*, Artnet, 5 Feb. 2020, [news.artnet.com/art-world/belmont-university-watkins-christian-teacher-policy-1769301](https://news.artnet.com/art-world/belmont-university-watkins-christian-teacher-policy-1769301).

<sup>211</sup> Of all the respondents who selected 'Other,' (84%) elaborated on their answers in the long-form answer field.



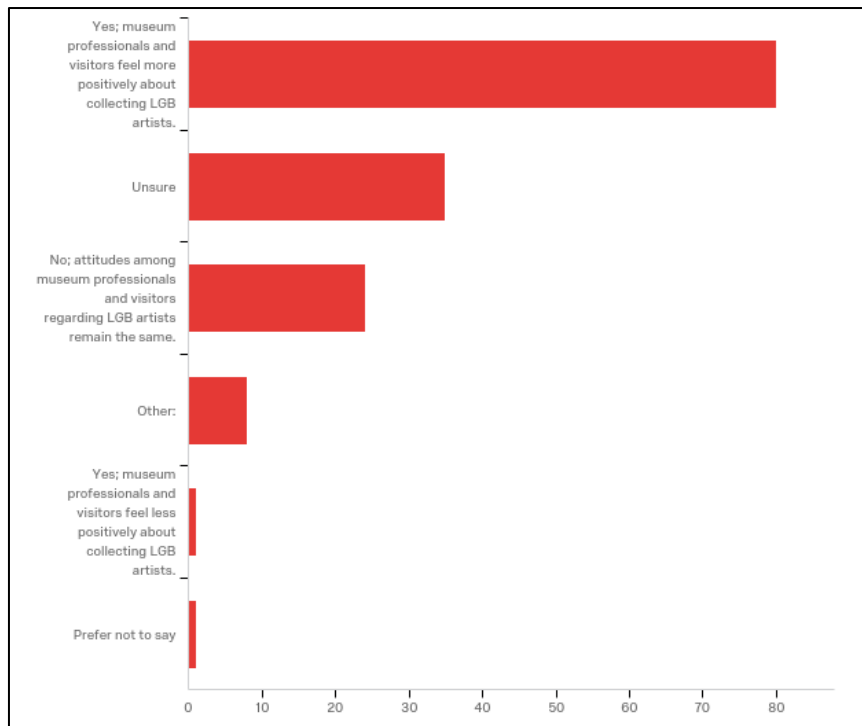
Some respondents to this question stated that they have received both positive and negative responses to their more political, social, or cultural positions and exhibitions. However, a number of respondents stated that they were not able to take political positions, citing their funding, governance, and institutional structure. One respondent stated that their museum cannot take positions that deviate from their university's positions; another respondent stated that they adhere to non-discriminatory laws but they cannot advocate for political agendas as they could lose their non-profit status. Still more respondents felt that museums 'are meant to present and inform not conform,' presenting as neutral and informative an exhibition as possible and to let the visitor form their own decisions.

#### Question 28

Question 28 asks respondents 'in your professional opinion, have you noticed a shift over the last decade in attitudes about collecting LGB artists?' Slightly over half (54%) of respondents selected 'Yes; museum professionals and visitors feel more positively about collecting LGB artists;' (23%) of respondents felt 'Unsure.' (16%) of respondents selected 'No; attitudes among museum professionals and visitors regarding LGB artists remain the same;' (5%) of respondents selected 'Other.'<sup>212</sup> (1%) of respondents each selected

<sup>212</sup> Of those who selected 'Other,' all respondents provided a long-form response in the answer field.

'Yes; museum professionals and visitors feel less positively about collecting LGB artists' and 'Prefer not to say.'



Like those who selected 'Yes...feel more positively about collecting LBG artists,' respondents that provided long-form responses in the 'Other' response fields suggested that their institutions and visitors do generally feel better about collecting LGB artists. However, there is a response I would like to highlight and expand. One respondent stated 'Yes, sometimes; museum professionals and visitors feel more positively about collecting LGB artists, though some preexisting and simmering negativity has also increased.' This statement is not without merit; on the contrary, it reflects a current trend. For the first time since the start of the survey, GLAAD's 2018 'Accelerating Acceptance Index' showed a measurable decline in support for the LGBTQ community among millennials.<sup>213</sup> There was an increase in the amount of 18-34 year olds who stated they would be uncomfortable with certain scenarios, including having their child learn about LGBTQ history or having an LGBTQ teacher. Furthermore, in 2019 the FBI reported that violent hate crimes in 2018

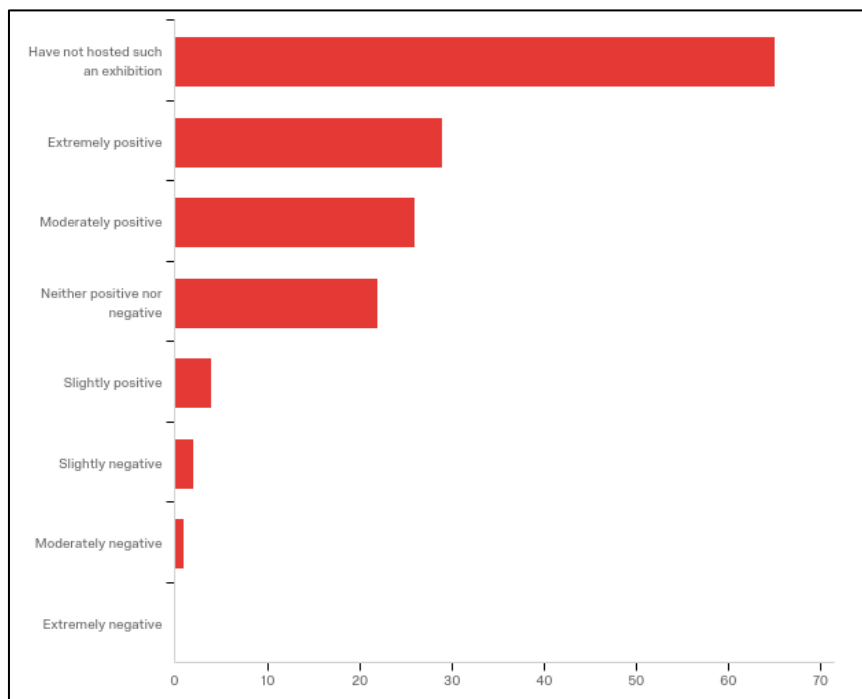
<sup>213</sup> Suleman, Nadia. "GLAAD: Millennials Grow 'Uncomfortable' With LGBTQ Community." Time, Time, 25 June 2019, [time.com/5613276/glaad-acceptance-index-lgbtq-survey/](https://time.com/5613276/glaad-acceptance-index-lgbtq-survey/).



were at a 16-year high;<sup>214</sup> (16.7%) of reported victims were targeted for their sexual orientation.<sup>215</sup>

### Question 29

Question 29 asked respondents ‘if you have hosted exhibitions with reference to artists’ sexualities, what feedback from the public did you receive?’ The majority of respondents selected ‘Have not hosted such an exhibition’ (44%). (19%) of respondents stated that the feedback received was ‘Extremely positive,’ (17%) of respondents stated it was ‘Moderately positive,’ (15%) stated it was ‘Neither positive nor negative;’ (3%) stated it was ‘Slightly positive;’ (1%) of respondents each stated the feedback was ‘Slightly negative’ or ‘Moderately negative.’

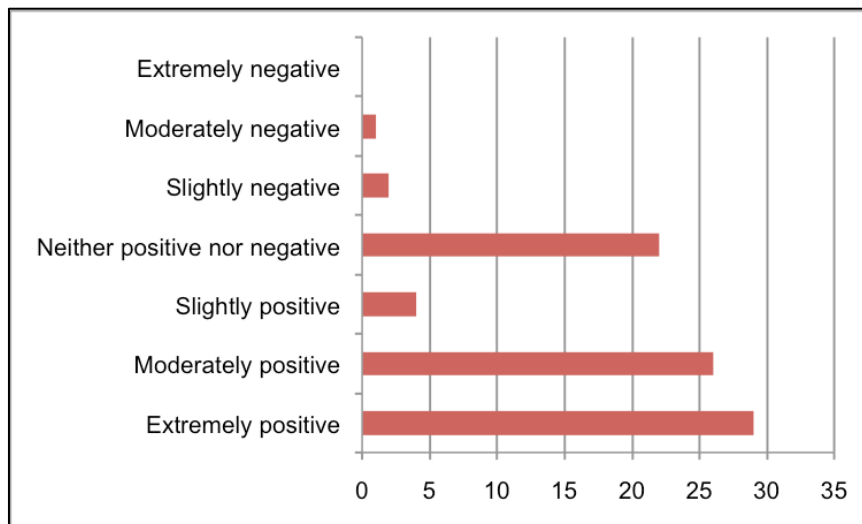


Removing responses from those who had not hosted such an exhibition gives in the following results:

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<sup>214</sup> Treisman, Rachel. “FBI Reports Dip In Hate Crimes, But Rise In Violence.” NPR, NPR, 12 Nov. 2019, [www.npr.org/2019/11/12/778542614/fbi-reports-dip-in-hate-crimes-but-rise-in-violence](http://www.npr.org/2019/11/12/778542614/fbi-reports-dip-in-hate-crimes-but-rise-in-violence).

<sup>215</sup> “Hate Crime Statistics.” The United States Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice, 23 Nov. 2019, [www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/hate-crime-statistics](http://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/hate-crime-statistics).



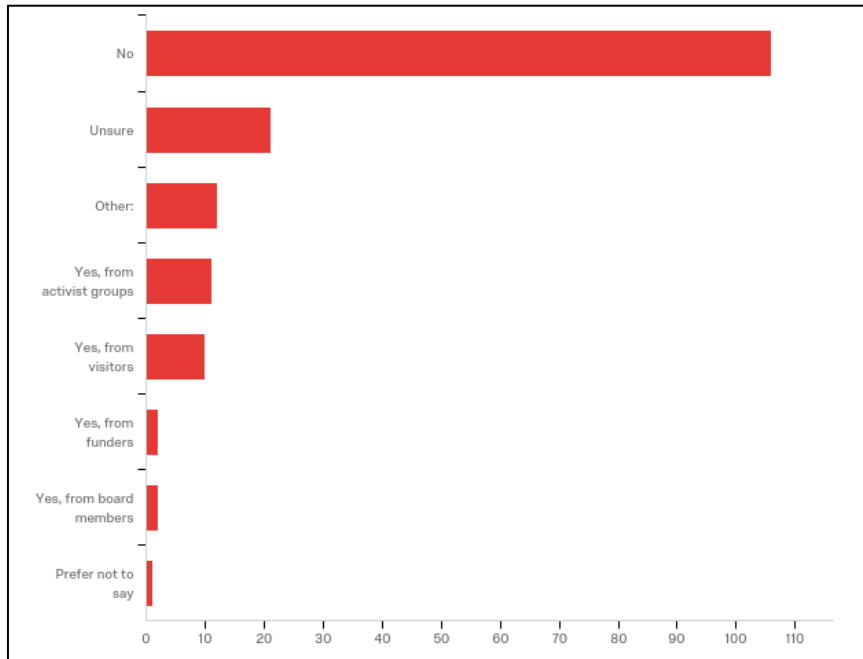
The majority of respondents who stated that the feedback for their exhibitions referring to artists' sexualities was overwhelmingly positive, with (36%) of respondents selecting 'Extremely positive,' (31%) selecting 'Moderately positive,' and (5%) selecting 'Slightly positive.' The total for positive feedback in these exhibitions was (71%). (26%) of respondents selected that their feedback was 'Neither positive nor negative,' with (2%) selecting 'Slightly negative' and '1%' selecting 'Moderately negative.' No respondents selected 'Extremely negative.'

#### Question 30

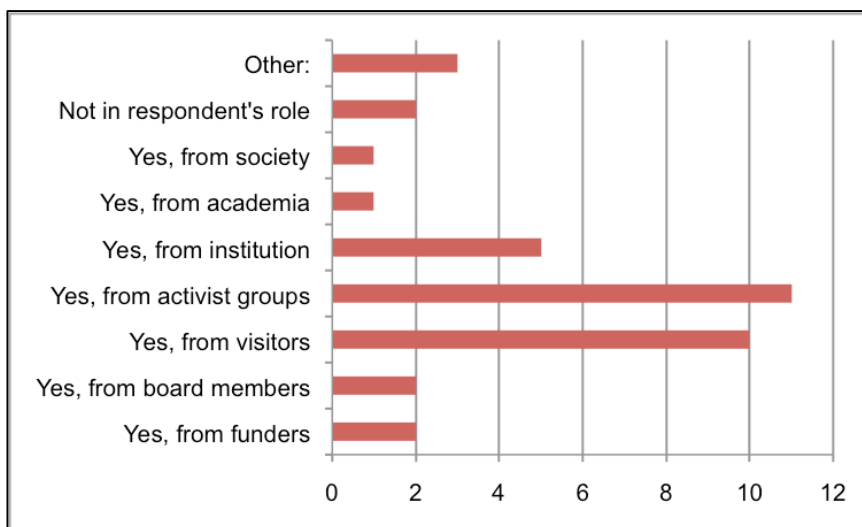
Question 30 is the penultimate question and asks respondents 'have you felt pressure to make changes regarding LGB artists' collection and/or display? Check/tick all that apply.' For this question, there was the possibility to select more than one answer.

Overwhelmingly, respondents selected 'No' (64%). (13%) of respondents said they were 'Unsure,' and (7%) selected 'Other.'<sup>216</sup> (7%) of respondents selected 'Yes, from activist groups;' (6%) selected 'Yes, from visitors;' (1%) each said 'Yes, from funders,' 'Yes, from board members,' and 'Prefer not to say.'

<sup>216</sup> All of the respondents who selected 'Other' used the long-form answer field to expand on their selection.



Since there was a significant number of responded that selected 'No' and a variety of answers included in the long-form answers to 'Other.' Some of those responses overlapped, so when removing any responses from 'No,' 'Unsure,' and 'Prefer not to say' and factoring in the myriad responses included in 'Other,' the data shifts thus:



Here we can see that the majority of 'Yes' respondents selected 'Yes, from activist groups' (30%); 'Yes, from visitors' (27%); 'Yes, from institution' (14%); 'Yes, from funders' and 'Yes, from board members,' and 'Not in respondent's role' (5%) each; 'Yes, from academia' and 'Yes, from society' (3%) each. I have kept 'Other' as a response for the still uncategorisable. Of these, two respondents noted that they were on fairly liberal

university campuses and while they do not feel much pressure from the community; anything that they did exhibit was positively received.<sup>217</sup>

### Question 31

Question 31 is not a question and has no truly quantifiable data; it is a long-form response field asking for any additional comments that a respondent may have had. Of the 186 respondents who fully completed the survey, 33 (18%) left a comment in this field. There were some interesting responses that were provided in the fields below that supports some of my theses, including comments about geography. One such response stated,

'...We are situated in a very rural community...when we do have guest artists display frequently, their sexuality has never been concern. Keep in mind, however ,being situation in this area, we are not approached by many (if any) outwardly LGBT artists to display their work...'

Despite respondents in urban or coastal areas being more open to lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists, anecdotally are still concerns about safety and public response in smaller, rural areas. Further to this point, a respondent was happy to speak to me if they were going to remain anonymous. The respondent was in rural Nebraska and though they identified as heterosexual, they feared for the museum's non-profit status and reputation in their area, stating, 'Our museum does not discriminate against artists, employees or visitors on the basis of sexuality, but we still have to be careful of public presentation due to sociopolitical trends where we are geographically. Unfortunate, but true.' This anecdote is in stark contrast to the respondent from a major city in the American northeast that suggested, 'sexuality is less divisive in the art world than in most other spheres of society.'

A popular long-form response were statements reflecting the concept that it is not the artist's identity, but the artist's work that matters. There were statements such as 'we have [show] LGB artists here but the quality of the work is what matters, not their sexuality. We do not draw attention to their sexuality as in most cases it is not relevant'<sup>218</sup> and:

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<sup>217</sup> The last respondent to be categorised in 'Other' questioned what I meant by 'changes,' asking if it meant more shows, more artists in the collection, or more detailed display information.

<sup>218</sup> This respondent self-identified as aged 46-55, male, heterosexual, working in a privately-owned suburban institution in the American Midwest that sees 20,000 to 50,000 visitors per year.

'I would like to straighten out the differences in asking questions about artworks (collections) and artists. Questions about artists may or may not be relevant to questions about artworks. One is a living, breathing mammal and the other is almost always an inanimate object.'<sup>219</sup>

I agree with this to an extent, in that the quality of the work is paramount, but I also believe that this is a view from a different generation of curators and collectors. In a postmodern critique of contemporary art, form and aesthetics are no longer the sole focus in the interpretation of a work. Currently, a proper interpretation of the work includes considering all the facets of an artist's identity. This method of interpretation results in a fully-rounded understanding of the work, allowing us not only to understand what we see, but what an artist wants us to see.<sup>220</sup> In other circumstances, the sexuality of an artist is integral to understanding the work. The daring use of Pablo Picasso's own sexuality in his own work is celebrated, while Robert Rauschenberg's (often less explicit) remained purposefully obfuscated for many years.

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<sup>219</sup> This respondent self-identified as male, 66+, unsure of his sexuality, and works in an urban university in the American Southwest that sees 500,000 to 1,000,000 visitors a year.

<sup>220</sup> Wolcott, Anne. "Is What You See What You Get? A Postmodern Approach to Understanding Works of Art." *Studies in Art Education*, vol. 37, no. 2, 1996, pp. 69–79., doi:10.2307/1320508.

## Cross-Tabulated Responses

This following section will deal with responses to key questions by demographic, including age, gender, sexuality, location, and institutional funding source. I will address the responses to questions 24 through 31, which represent the true focus of the survey, by cross tabulating the responses with the aforementioned demographics.

### Responses by Age

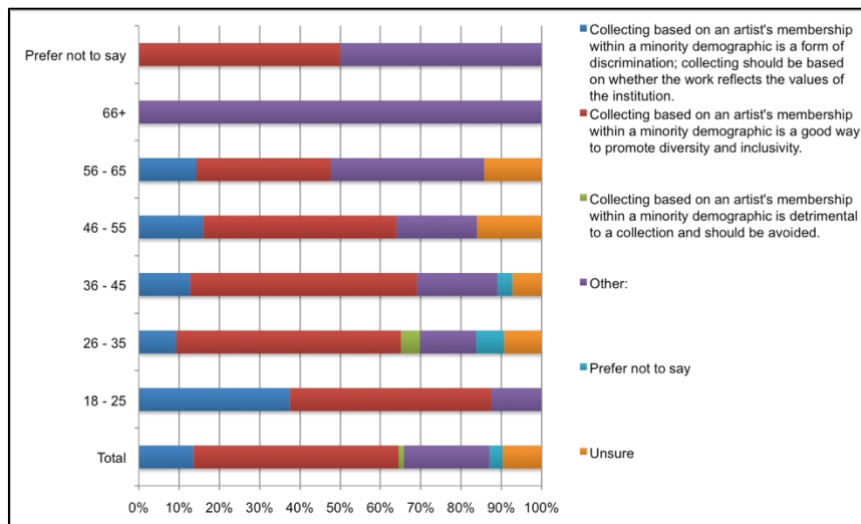
Part of my central thesis is that the attitudes toward LBG collection and display would vary with age, with older generations being less likely to overtly display lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists as such and younger generations more willing to purposefully collect, research, and display LGB artists. Again, the age responses to this survey are as follows: '18-25' (7%), '26-35' (31%), '36-45' (33%, the largest percentile), '46-55' (15%), '56-65' (13%), '66+' (<2%).

#### Question 24

Question 24 asked for professional opinions about collecting work based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic. The most-selected response for this question was 'Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is a good way to promote diversity and inclusivity.' This is reflected among individual age ranges. The highest percentage for 'Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is a form of discrimination; collecting should be based on whether the work reflects the values of the institution' occurred among ages '18-25,' then '46-55,' and steadily decreases among '26-35' and '36-45.' Interestingly, the only age range that selected 'Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is detrimental to the collection and should be avoided' was '26-35,' my own age range. It only was selected (1%) of the time by respondents, but selected entirely by the second-youngest age range.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> I tried to get more insight on these respondents by checking location and demographic. I cross-referenced the respondents by location of institution (rural, suburban, urban) and both respondents that selected this option were in urban areas, one in England and one in the American Midwest. They are both female curators,



As discussed in the general data analysis, most of the answers provided in 'Other' took time to state that the membership in minority demographic should not be the first consideration, rather it is the quality of the work and its reflection of the institutional values that is most important. Among all age groups, this was the most significant long-form response, as most respondents do not want to use this method of collecting as a 'tick-box' exercise. One respondent in the '26-35' bracket suggested a unique solution: '...a thoughtful way to make sure your collection is diverse is to make sure the curators/researchers you hire have diverse interests so you end up with a strong, diverse collection and exhibition program naturally...' I appreciated this response for its way of addressing diversity in the museum: not through 'tick-box' diversification of works, but through seeking a more diverse workforce.

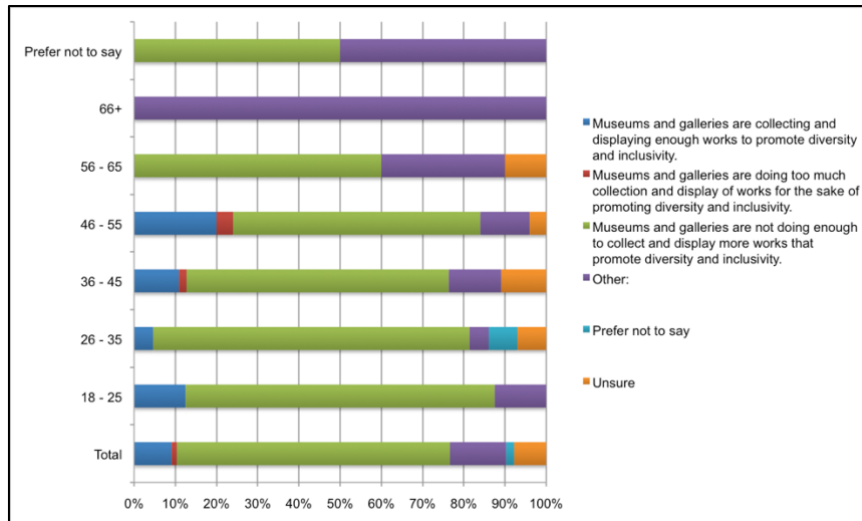
#### Question 25

Question 25, another statement question, asks if museums are doing "enough," "too much," or "too little" to address diversity and inclusivity. The highest percent of respondents across all ages felt that 'Museums and galleries are not doing enough to collect and display more works that promote diversity and inclusivity.' The majority of respondents that selected both 'Museums and galleries are collecting and displaying enough works to promote diversity and inclusivity' and 'Museums and galleries are doing too much collection and display of works for the sake of promoting diversity and inclusivity' self-identified as '46-55.' The percentage of respondents that selected

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and also both responded 'Museums and galleries are not doing enough to collect and display more works that promote diversity and inclusivity.' If I am honest, I do not know what to make of this.

“Museums and galleries are doing enough” decreases with the middle ages: ‘46-55’ (20%), ‘36-45’ (11%), and ‘26-35’ (6%). No one aged ‘56-65’ or ‘66+’ selected “Museums are doing enough” or “Museums are doing too much.” One respondent aged ‘18-25’ selected “Museums are doing enough.” However, these were the ages with the fewest respondents.



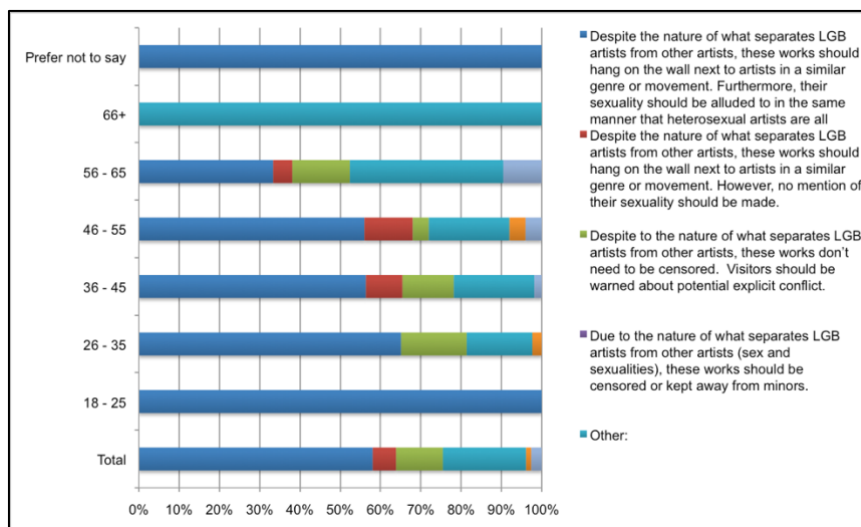
In the long-form responses, most responses stated a variation of ‘it depends on the museum,’ or ‘it is hard to make a blanket statement.’ One respondent, aged ‘36-45,’ stated

‘Many [museum] are now realizing the importance and urgency of representing greater diversity and inclusivity in their collections and exhibitions. This shift requires educating trustees and collections committee members, as well as our constituents, but is an important and vital undertaking in order to better reflect our world.’

I find this statement to be relevant as it describes a problem but also offers a possible solution that a few others have tried to articulate: this manner of collection does not necessarily start with a few proactive curators: it needs to be addressed from the top down, and needs to be part of an institutional plan. A different respondent suggested that ‘museums and galleries should explore narratives/didactics that highlight artworks’ relevance to key minority demographics,’ suggesting that collection and display is not the only consideration, but that educational strategies are just as important: looking into the collection as it already exists. Still, the consideration on many respondents’ minds is resources: museums are limited in their funding and resources, so this manner of collection and display, while an institution would welcome the opportunity, is not necessarily feasible.



Question 26 asks respondents about censorship in exhibitions and museums. Across all age groups, the most popular response was 'Despite the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists, these works should hang on the wall next to artists in a similar genre or movement. Furthermore, their sexuality should be alluded to in the same manner that heterosexual artists are alluded to.' No respondents selected, 'Due to the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists (sex and sexualities), these works should be censored or kept away from minors.' Furthermore, no respondents aged '18-25' or '26-35' selected, 'Despite the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists (sex and sexualities), these works should be censored or kept away from minors.' Furthermore, no respondents aged '18-25' or '26-35' selected, 'Despite the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists, these works should hang on the wall next to artists in a similar genre or movement. However, no mention of their sexuality should be made.' The second-most selected response was 'Other,' with about (20%) of respondents choosing to leave a long-form response. The third-most selected response amongst age groups '26-35,' '36-45,' and '56-65' was 'Despite to the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists, these works don't need to be censored. Visitors should be warned about potential explicit [content].'<sup>222</sup>



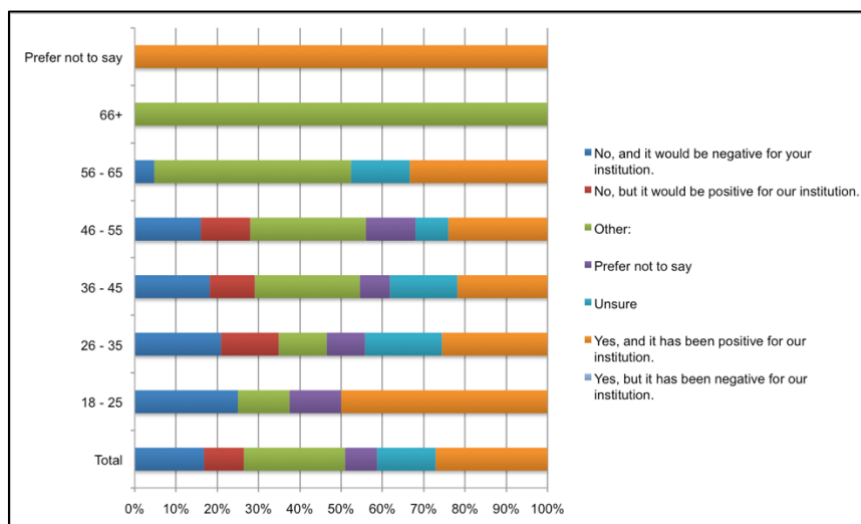
Among long-form responses, many respondents suggested again that the information on an artist's sexuality is only necessary when it would help enhance the understanding of the artwork. One respondent (age '66+') stated, '...The artist is one person. And the artwork is another thing all together.' It is difficult to reconcile this opinion with the postmodern theories of art history and criticism that suggest that understanding an artist's identity is vital to understanding their work, and that we should no longer

<sup>222</sup> This is a standard practice in many temporary exhibitions with explicit art, but often times homosexual/queer art is considered more explicit or deviant in nature than heterosexual art of a similar nature.

'separate the art from the artist.' A different respondent (age '46-55') suggested 'It is important to identify queer artists in certain exhibition contexts because the presumption is of heterosexuality. It is important not to censor such works.' I am more inclined to agree with this statement, as it brings up an important point: the default sexuality is still heterosexuality, and while it is important for a viewer to take their own meaning from an artwork or exhibition, it is also beneficial for a viewer to see themselves represented in an institution without being 'othered.' One respondent in the '56-65' demographic stated, 'preference should remain anonymous except for themed exhibitions.' This is partially what I believe museums should be moving away from: mentioning an 'alternative' sexuality only when it is the focus of an exhibition and shying away from the discussion enough that we normalise it.

### Question 27

Question 27 asks respondents, 'Does your institution take public positions on social, cultural, or political movements?' A slim majority of respondents selected 'Yes, and it has been positive for our institution,' but in the age groups '36-45,' '46-55,' '56-65,' and '66+' the most-selected response was 'Other.' Around 20% each of respondents aged '26-35' and '36-45' selected 'No, and it would be negative for your institution.'<sup>223</sup> No respondents selected 'Yes, but it has been negative for our institution.'



'Other,' with space for long-form responses, was the second-most selected option with a margin of (3%). Among all age groups, many respondents stated either that they were

<sup>223</sup> It is possible that this answer will be split more along location and funding sources, which will be addressed later on in this chapter.

unable to take positions as an institution and they let the artists and work do that within an exhibition, or that the reviews, positive or negative, were mixed.<sup>224</sup> A response which I found interesting was from a respondent aged '36-45,' which stated, 'Yes, in the sense that we do our best to let visitors know that ALL are welcome here.' The implication here is that institutional inclusivity and providing a welcoming space for all is in itself still a political act and not a relic of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>225</sup> Two respondents ('46-55') stated that it is not official policy for them to do so, but more of a practice and 'ethos' that their institution takes on and how they engage with local communities drives this practice.

## Question 28

Question 28 asks respondents if they have noticed a shift over the last decade in attitudes about collecting LGB artists? Across all age groups, the majority of respondents selected 'Yes; museum professionals and visitors feel more positively about collecting LGB artists.' The percentage of respondents that selected this response steadily decreases as the age of the respondent gets higher: '18-25' (75%); '26-35' (58.5%); '36-45' (53.8%)<sup>226</sup>, '46-55' (48.0%); and '56-65' (40.0%).<sup>227</sup> I had incorrectly assumed that the opposite would be true: that as a person aged and spent more time in the field, they would have seen a more positive shift towards LGB artists.

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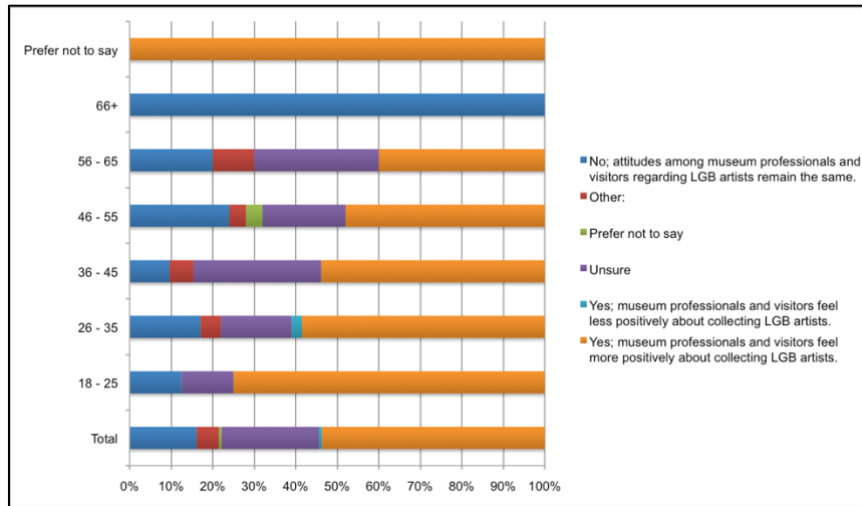
<sup>224</sup> This might have been avoided on my part had I used the phrases 'mostly positive' or 'mostly negative' in the responses.

<sup>225</sup> This is particularly important in the United States, because as recently as 2018, the United States Supreme Court Case *Masterpiece Cakeshop vs. Colorado Civil Rights Commission* upheld that businesses retain the right to refuse service to anyone and for any reason and they are protected by the First Amendment.

Supreme Court of the United States. *Masterpiece Cakeshop, Ltd., Et Al. v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission Et Al.* no. 16-111, 4 June 2018.

<sup>226</sup> Almost exactly the same percentage of total respondents that selected this response (53.7%)

<sup>227</sup> There is only one respondent that answered this question that was aged '66+' and they selected, 'No; attitudes among museum professionals and visitors regarding LGB artists remain the same.'



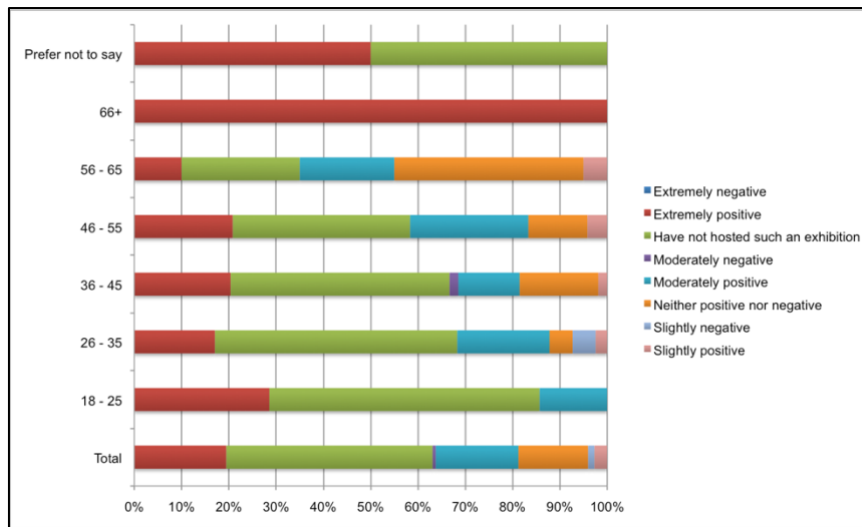
There were not many long-form ‘Other’ responses to this question but I would like to highlight a few. One response, from a respondent aged ‘36-45,’ I had addressed in my broader discussion of question 28, stated that ‘... some preexisting and simmering negativity has also increased.’ The second, from a respondent aged ‘56-65,’ stated ‘sexuality hasn’t necessarily defined purchases but Arts Council approach to Protected Characteristics has meant it is now strategic to publicly announce purchase on the basis of difference.’ ‘Protected Characteristics include disability, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. The way this response is phrased as well as this approach to collection are somewhat cynical: while it is ideal for an institution to collect artists that diversify a collection and amplify the voice of a minority demographic, this goal should not be viewed as a form of public strategy.

### Question 29

Question 29 asks respondents ‘If you have hosted exhibitions with reference to artists’ sexualities, what feedback from the public did you receive?’ The majority of respondents selected that their institution had not hosted such an exhibition, and when accounting for those who had not hosted an exhibition and only looking at respondents who selected ‘Extremely Positive,’ ‘Moderately Positive,’ and ‘Slightly Positive,’ the total is (71%) of all respondents. The highest percentage of respondents who answered, ‘Have not hosted such an exhibition’ is ‘18-25’ (51.2%); and steadily decreases as the respondent ages: ‘26-35’ (46.3%); ‘46-55’ (37.5%); ‘56-65’ (25.0%).<sup>228</sup> The reason for this is most likely very simple: more time in the field means more opportunities to host or work with exhibitions

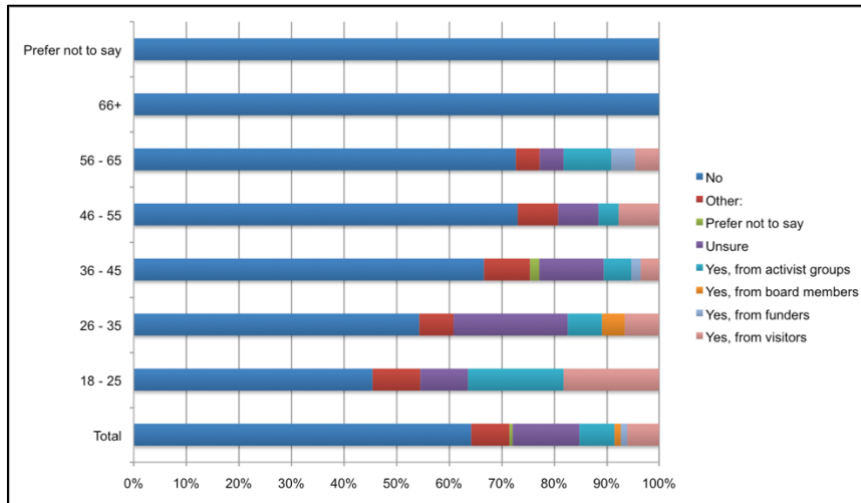
<sup>228</sup> Again, as there was only one respondent for ‘66+’, there is not a large enough sample size to make this statistically relevant.

highlighting an artist's sexuality. There was no option for long-form responses in this question.



### Question 30

Question 30 asks respondents if they have felt pressure to make changes regarding LGB artists' collection and/or display. The majority of respondents selected 'No' (64.2%). Separated by age, this selection generally increases as age increases: '18-25' (45.5%); '26-35' (54.3%), '36-45' (66.6%); '46-55' (73.1%); '56-65' (72.7%). There could be simple reason for this: the younger respondents may be in more forward-facing positions within the museum, and therefore have more opportunity to hear public opinions on collections and displays. Of the respondents that did choose an answer, the next highest percentage (among all age groups) was 'Unsure.' This selection decreases in percentage as age increases: '26-35' (21.7%); '36-45' (12.3%); '46-55' (7.7%); '56-65' (4.6%). The 'Yes' responses vary, but most respondents that selected a form of 'Yes' across all age ranges stated it was from 'activist groups.' Among 'Other' responses, across all age ranges, respondents stated they had received pressure from fellow staff members or academics.



## Responses by Gender

The majority of survey respondents identified themselves as female (69%) with males at a far second (28%). 2% of respondents selected 'Prefer not to answer,' the final 1% selected 'Other.' I did not make any predictions for gender, as I do not anticipate that one gender would be more or less inclined to inclusivity than another.

## Question 24

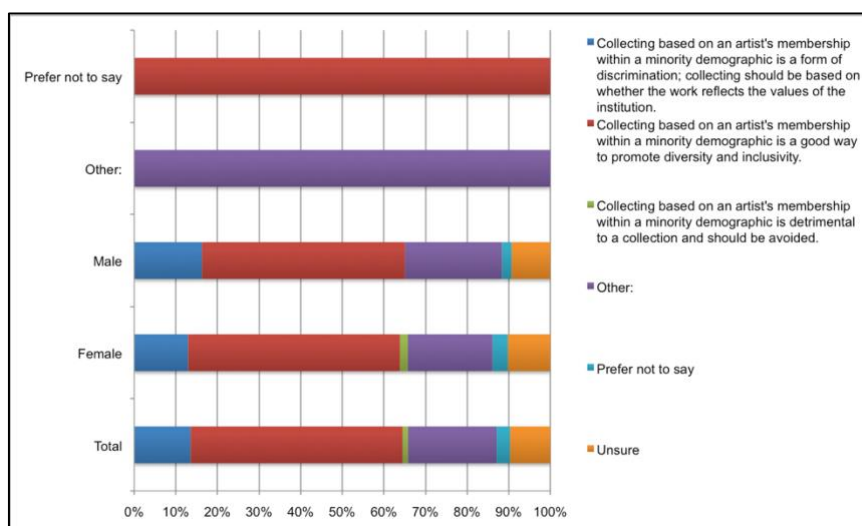
Question 24 asks respondents for their professional opinion regarding collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic. Here, almost an equal percentage of male (48.8%) and female (50.9%) respondents selected 'Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is a good way to promote diversity and inclusivity.'<sup>229</sup> Slightly more male respondents (16.3%) than female respondents (13.0%) responded that 'Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is a form of discrimination; collecting should be based on whether the work reflects the values of the institution.' Almost an equal percentage of female respondents (10.2%) and male respondents (9.3%) elected 'Unsure.' Among 'Other' responses, the general consensus among male and female respondents is that the quality and significance of the art come first. A museum should fulfill its mission statement above all

<sup>229</sup> (100%) of respondents who selected 'Prefer not to say' in regards to their gender selected 'Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is a good way to promote diversity and inclusivity.'

else. While I agree that this line of reasoning is paramount, it does not address any forms of previous discrimination. A key statement from a female respondent read,

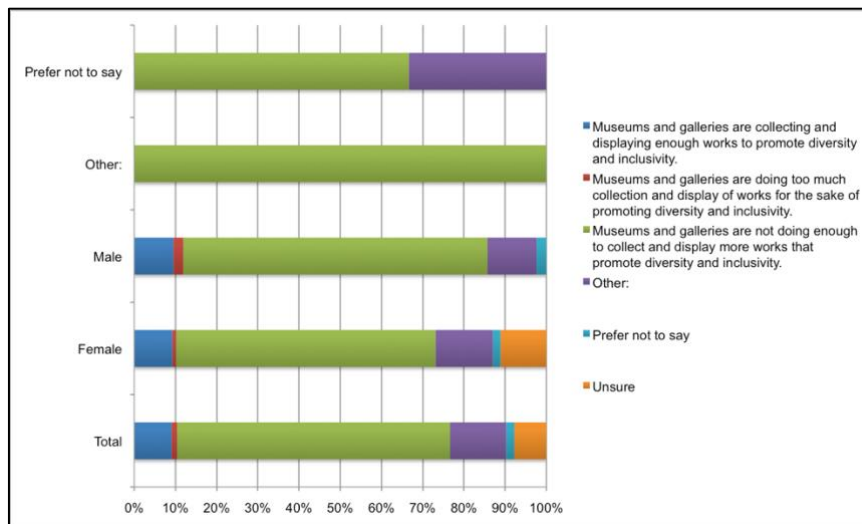
For collecting institutions it is important to monitor acquisition activity by demographics in order to promote diversity and inclusivity, historical imbalance in collecting requires this active redress. With limited [resource] it is necessary to focus those resources and use of demographics is a way of doing this, however, to say collecting was based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic often does a disservice to the artist implying that the work isn't good enough otherwise. So I wouldn't collect based on an artist's demographic but their demographic might prioritise collecting their work over other artists.

This statement is very much in line with what I think solutions are to this question: by no means do I think that bad art should be elevated to a collection because of the artist's demographic, nor do I think good art should be denied because the artist is heterosexual. Filling gaps in a collection is an important consideration that many respondents say their institution considers when acquiring new works.



### Question 25

Question 25 asks if museums are doing “enough,” “too much,” or “too little” to address diversity and inclusivity. Among all respondents, ‘Museums and galleries are not doing enough to collect and display more works that promote diversity and inclusivity’ was the most selected answer among all respondents (66.2%), with more male respondents (73.8%) selecting this response than female respondents (63.0%). More male respondents (2.4%) selected ‘Museums and galleries are doing too much collection and display of works for the sake of promoting diversity and inclusivity’ than female (.93%).



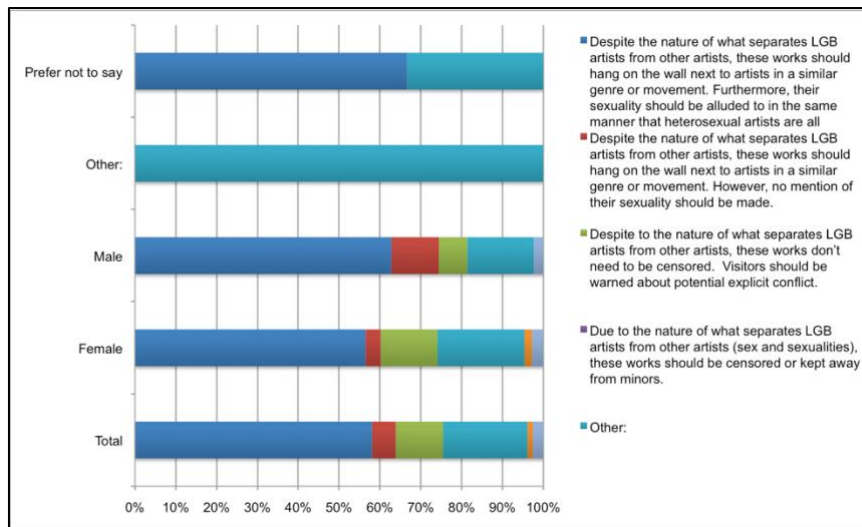
Slightly more female respondents (13.9%) than male (11.9%) selected 'Other' and left long-form responses. One female respondent suggested that 'It's too early to make claims such as the above: many museums are beginning to collect to promote diversity and inclusivity, it's recognised as our role. But many museums work without a collecting budget so funding opportunities must be sought to make every acquisition.' Others stated something similar, replying that it is hard to identify what 'enough' is, but they and their institutions are aware that more work is necessary. The biggest obstacle is still resources and funding. There is no real difference in the content of male and female responses.

#### Question 26

Question 26 asks respondents about censorship in exhibitions and museums. While the majority of respondents selected 'Despite the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists, these works should hang on the wall next to artists in a similar genre or movement...their sexuality should be alluded to in the same manner that heterosexual artists are alluded to,' male respondents (62.8%) selected that answer at a higher rate than female respondents (56.5%). Male respondents also selected 'Despite the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists, these works should hang on the wall next to artists in a similar genre or movement. However, no mention of their sexuality should be made' at a much higher rate: (11.6%) to female respondent's (3.7%). The response that female respondents (13.9%) selected more than male respondents (7.0%) was 'Despite to the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists, these works don't need to be censored. Visitors should be warned about potential explicit [content].' This is the response that was designed to be balanced between the two. 'Other' was selected by (20.6%) of total respondents, with females providing slightly more long-form responses.

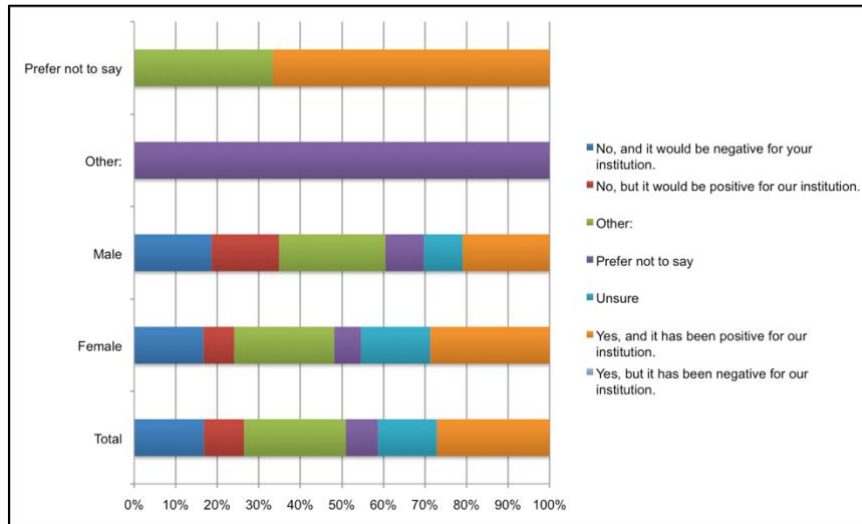


Many respondents suggested that while the works don't need to be censored, the artist's sexuality also doesn't need to be alluded to. 'If it matters, discuss it.'



### Question 27

Question 27 asks respondents if their institution takes public positions on social, cultural, or political movements. The majority of respondents (27.1%) selected 'Yes, and it has been positive for our institution.' This selection is skewed towards female respondents (28.7%) against male respondents (20.9%). Slightly less respondents selected 'Other' (24.5%), and this was equal with male and female respondents. Interestingly, (16.3%) of male respondents to (7.3%) of female respondents selected 'No, but it would be positive for our institution.' Men, at over twice the rate of women, believed that it would be a good thing for their institution to take public positions on the zeitgeist. More female respondents (16.7%) are 'unsure' if their institution has taken a stance, or if it would be a bad move, than male respondents (9.3%).

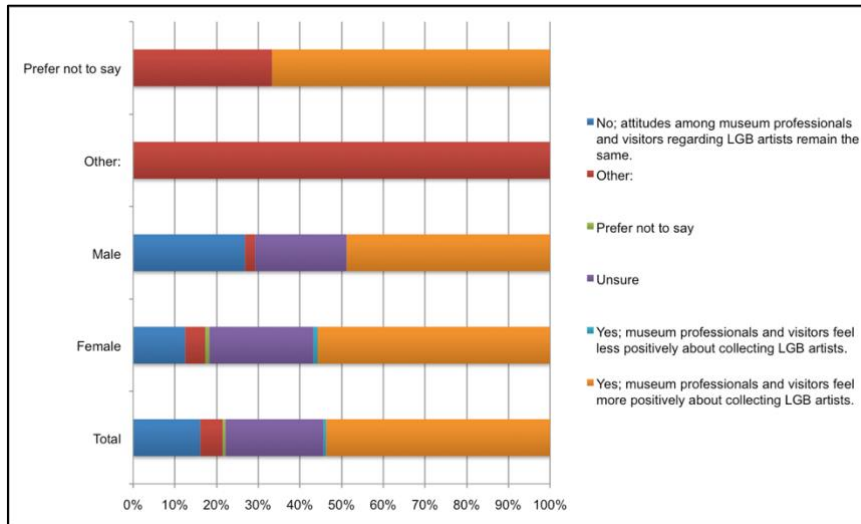


Among respondents that answered ‘Other,’ again there is no true discernable difference among attitudes between male and female respondents. Most respondents suggested that again, while their institution does not take political stances, they do host artists and exhibitions that will either take a stance or will present challenging work to engage the public. They also suggested that there is a mix of negative and positive responses.<sup>230</sup> Above all, nuance was key.

## Question 28

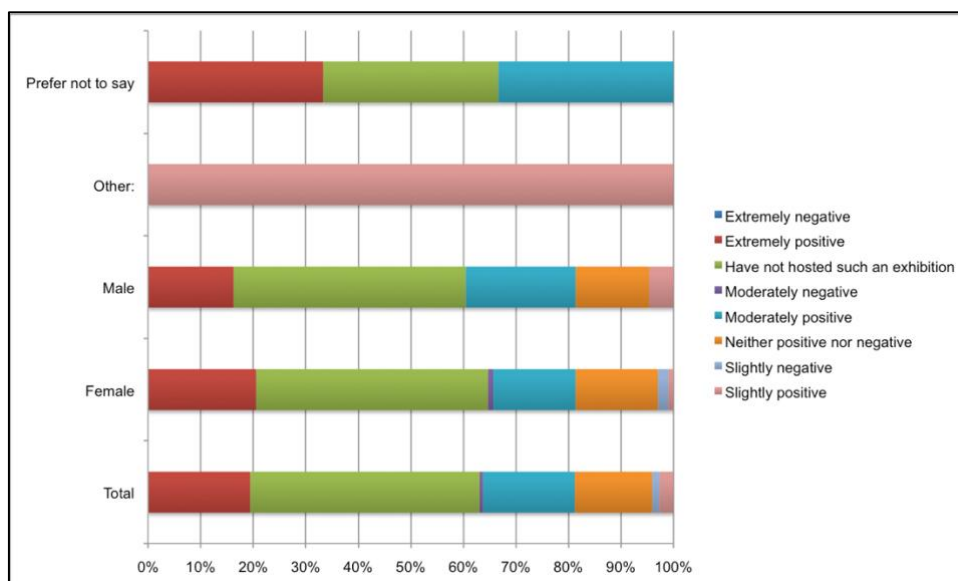
Question 28 asks respondents if they have noticed a shift in attitudes about collecting LGB artists. Most respondents (53.7%) selected ‘Yes; museum professionals and visitors feel more positively about collecting LGB artists,’ and it is also the most-selected option among male and female respondents (48.8% and 55.8%, respectively). However, a higher percentage of male respondents (26.8%) to female respondents (12.5%) selected ‘No; attitudes among museum professionals and visitors regarding LGB artists remain the same.’ Very few respondents left long-form responses in ‘Other’ (5.4%), and they state generally the same thing: overall, people are more positive about collecting LGB artists.

<sup>230</sup> If I were to rewrite this survey, I would leave space to expand on the type of responses that the public provided.



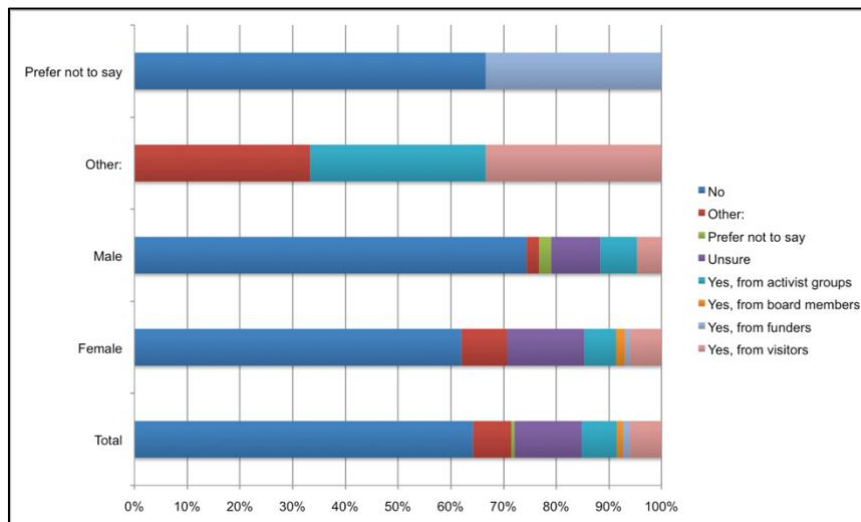
### Question 29

Question 29 asked if respondents' institutions had hosted exhibitions with reference to artists' sexualities and what sort of feedback they had received. This question had no option for 'Other.' The most-selected response was 'Have not hosted such an exhibition;' this is true across all genders. The next most selected responses among male respondents were 'Moderately positive,' (20.9%); 'Extremely positive,' (16.3%); 'Neither positive nor negative,' (14.0%); and 'Slightly positive' (4.7%). No male respondents selected 'Slightly,' 'Moderately,' or 'Extremely negative.' Among female respondents, the most selected response was 'Extremely positive' (20.6%), followed by 'Moderately positive' and 'Neither positive nor negative' (15.7% each); 'Slightly negative' (2.0%); 'Moderately positive' and 'Slightly negative' (1.0% each).



## Question 30

Question 30 asked respondents if they had felt pressure to make changes regarding the collection and display of LGB artists. This question was multiple choice. The majority of respondents responded 'No' (57%) and this is true across all genders, with more male respondents choosing 'No' (61.5%) over female respondents (56.3%). Among female respondents, 'Unsure' was higher (13.3%) than the total percentage of respondents (11.3%); male respondents were less at (7.7%). Among all respondents that selected a 'Yes,' the two most popular responses were 'Yes, from activist groups' (5.9%) and 'Yes, from visitors' (5.4%). The majority of respondents who selected 'Other,' were female (7.8%). Most of those responses stated that they did receive pressure to make changes, but that it was from their peers in the institution or from other academics.

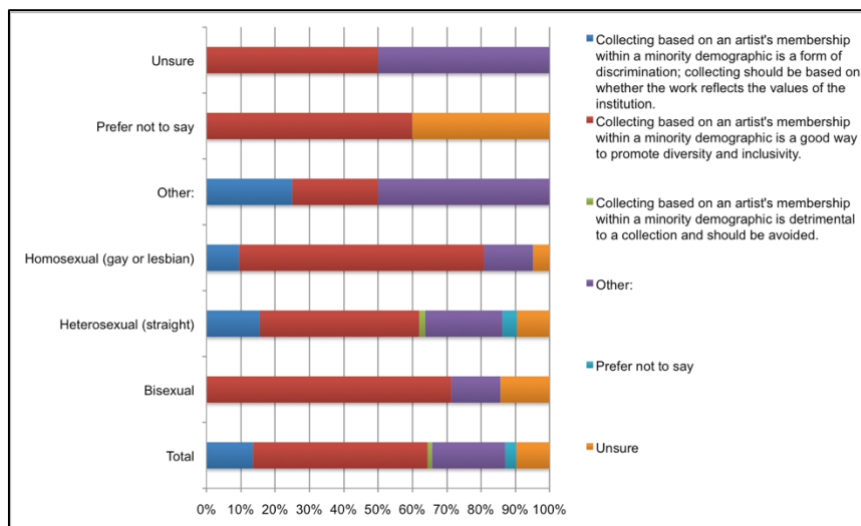


## Responses by Sexuality

The respondents self-identified primarily 'Heterosexual' (74%), with 'Homosexual' at a far second (13%). 'Bisexuals' are an even farther third (5%) tied with 'Prefer not to say' (5%) and followed by 'Other'<sup>231</sup> (2%) and 'Unsure' (1%). I had not made any hypotheses regarding respondents' sexuality.

<sup>231</sup> The responses for 'Other' are as follows: 'in a heterosexual relationship but on the bisexual spectrum,' 'polysexual,' 'queer,' and 'pansexual.'

The majority of all respondents (51.0%) responded 'Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is a good way to promote diversity and inclusivity.' When broken down across those who identified their sexualities, the percentage of both homosexual and bisexual respondents (71.4% each) is significantly higher than heterosexual respondents (46.6%). Additionally, the percentage of respondents (13.5%) that selected 'Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is a form of discrimination; collecting should be based on whether the work reflects the values of the institution' is higher among heterosexuals (15.5%) than homosexuals (9.5%). No bisexual respondents selected this choice. The smallest percentage of respondents (1.3%) selected 'Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic is detrimental to a collection and should be avoided;' they were all heterosexual. The highest percentage of 'Other' respondents were heterosexual (22.4%), compared to bisexual and homosexual respondents' (14.3%) each.



Most of the responses to 'Other' were submitted by heterosexual respondents and offered slightly more nuanced<sup>232</sup> solutions to the question, including variations on 'Collecting based on an artist's membership within a minority demographic can be a useful way to promote diversity and inclusivity but it should not be the only consideration,' referring to artistic merit and the needs of an institution. Being mindful of the collection and what will enhance the collection, rather than tick-box acquisition, is key to a successful and diverse collection. A different heterosexual respondent stated 'It's a complex situation but the collection and institution have a responsibility to interrogate and acknowledge our

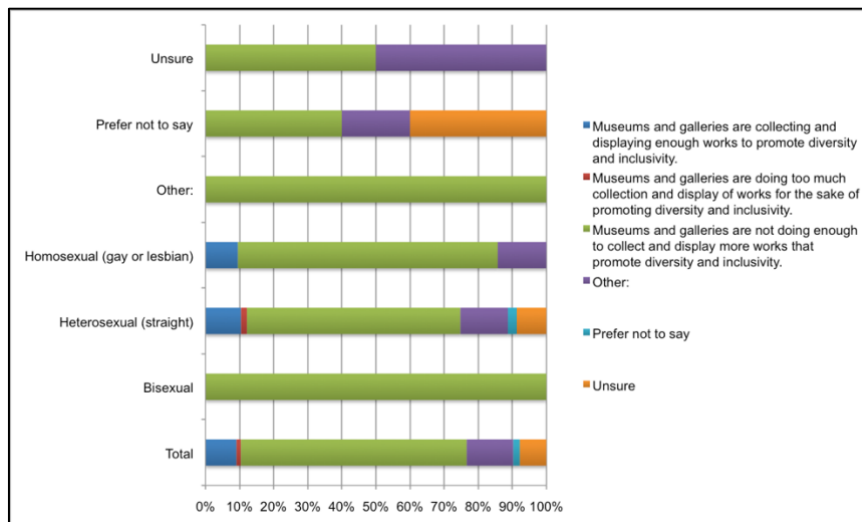
<sup>232</sup> More nuanced than my limited phrasing.

contemporary cultural position and acknowledge that collections developed from particular positions that were culturally biased - by actively seeking to collect works by artists from minority demographics we can recognise the past and shift current and future practice.' This approach reflects a different respondent's concept of 'active redress' to enhance a collection.

Among homosexual respondents, the statements were similar. There are fewer long-form responses to parse through, but again we see the solution of using a proactive method of collection to 'fill gaps' in a collection where works or information might have been missing. One respondent, who did not identify their sexuality, stated that this should be part of a 'broad-based strategy...to dismantle systems that oppress and [marginalize].' The one 'Other' respondent who identified as bisexual suggested 'annual surveys' of the collection, and while this is the ideal strategy, it is a strategy for an institution with incredible resources and cannot be undertaken by most museums.

#### Question 25

Question 25 asks if museums are doing "enough," "too much," or "too little" to address diversity and inclusivity. Among all respondents, 'Museums and galleries are not doing enough to collect and display more works that promote diversity and inclusivity' was the most selected answer among all respondents (66.2%). Among heterosexual respondents, this answer was selected at a rate of (62.6%), among homosexual respondents (76.2%); and (100.0%) among bisexual respondents. (10.4%) of respondents that selected 'Museums and galleries are collecting and displaying enough works to promote diversity and inclusivity' identified as heterosexual, (9.5%) as homosexual, and (0.0%) as bisexual. The only respondents to select 'Museums and galleries are doing too much collection and display of works for the sake of promoting diversity and inclusivity' self-identified as heterosexual.

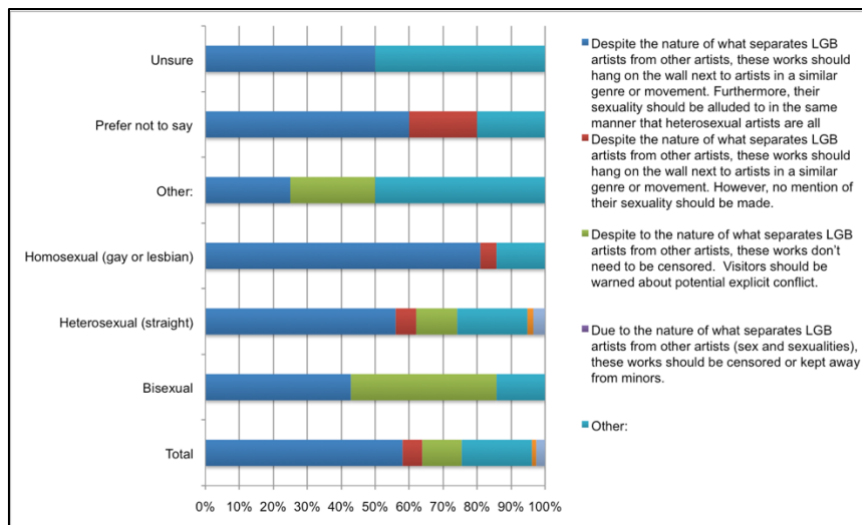


Among 'Other' responses, which were (13.6%) of the total responses, many statements suggest that museums are trying to do better but there are limitations. There are no discernable differences here between respondents of different sexualities. One heterosexual respondent suggested that 'museums and galleries should not concern themselves with this issue.' This is not the attitude adopted by anyone else in the survey, but it still represents a small slice of museum professionals who may not believe exploring diversity within the collection or through exhibitions should be a goal of institutions. If this is a result of 'colourblindness,' pretending that sexual minorities, among other diverse populations, don't exist does not benefit anyone except those who are already represented. Regardless of intent, ignoring diversity and inclusivity within museums does not make it go away, and does not make visitors want representation any less. Again, outside of this response, the general statement across all sexualities was that most institutions are doing the best that they can with the resources that they have available, but they acknowledge that they can be doing more.

## Question 26

Question 26 asks respondents about censorship within exhibitions. The majority of respondents (58.1%) selected 'Despite the nature of what separates LGB artists from other artists, these works should hang on the wall next to artists in a similar genre or movement...' Broken down over sexualities, (81.0%) of homosexual respondents selected this response, compared to (56.0%) of heterosexual respondents and (42.9%) of bisexual respondents. The next most popular selection was 'Other,' with (20.7%) of heterosexual respondents and (14.3%) of homosexual and bisexual respondents selecting this response and providing long-form responses. The response 'Museums and galleries are

collecting and displaying enough works to promote diversity and inclusivity' was selected at a rate of (9.1%). The percentage of heterosexual respondents who selected it was (10.4%), homosexual respondents at a rate of (9.5%).



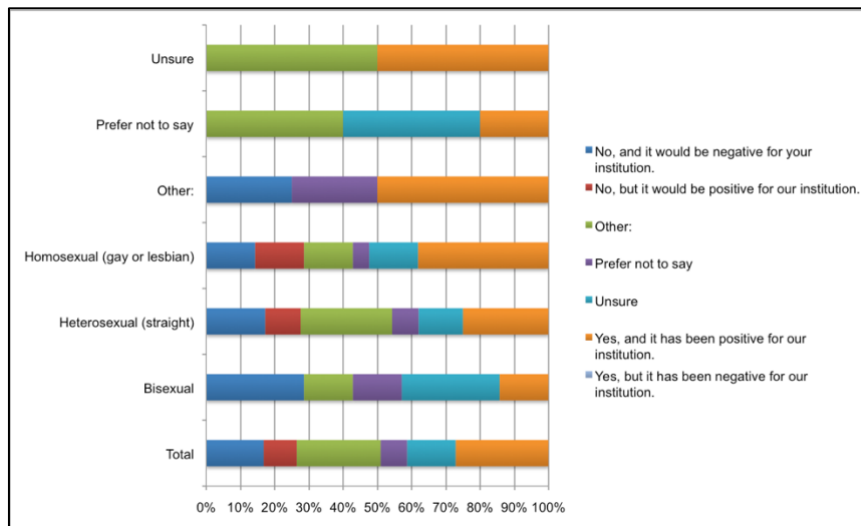
One heterosexual respondent replied, 'preference should remain anonymous except for themed exhibitions.' This approach creates an 'othering' of LGB artists: it says to visitors that it is important enough to mention when it is a special exhibition, but not enough on the wall of a permanent display. There are very few lesbian, gay, or bisexual individuals who have not heard something similar in the form of 'it's ok, as long as they keep it to themselves.' In a similar vein, another heterosexual respondent stated, 'If the artwork doesn't refer to sexuality why would the artists' sexuality even be relevant.' Further to a postmodern critique of art history, where all facets of an artist's life matters, this statement treats LGB art as though it is inherently sexual. It might not deal with sex at all. It might address bigotry, closeting, or family dynamics.

The final statement I'd like to highlight from heterosexual respondents is 'sexuality is less divisive in the art world than in most other spheres of society.' This is difficult to qualify, as a self-identified heterosexual person may not know what to look for or may not be made aware of any divisiveness through their experience in the field. Again, very few respondents that identified as homosexual left responses, but to highlight one: 'It is important to identify queer artists in certain exhibition contexts because the presumption is of heterosexuality.' I singled out this response in 'Responses by Age,' but it is important here because it is a member of the LGB community, highlighting precisely why representation is important.



## Question 27

Question 27 asks respondents if their institution takes public positions on social, cultural, or political movements. The majority of respondents across all sexualities (27.1%) selected 'Yes, and it has been positive for our institution.' (38.1%) of homosexual respondents selected this, (25.0%) of heterosexual respondents, and (14.2%) of bisexual respondents. Again, no respondent selected 'Yes, and it has been negative for our institution.'

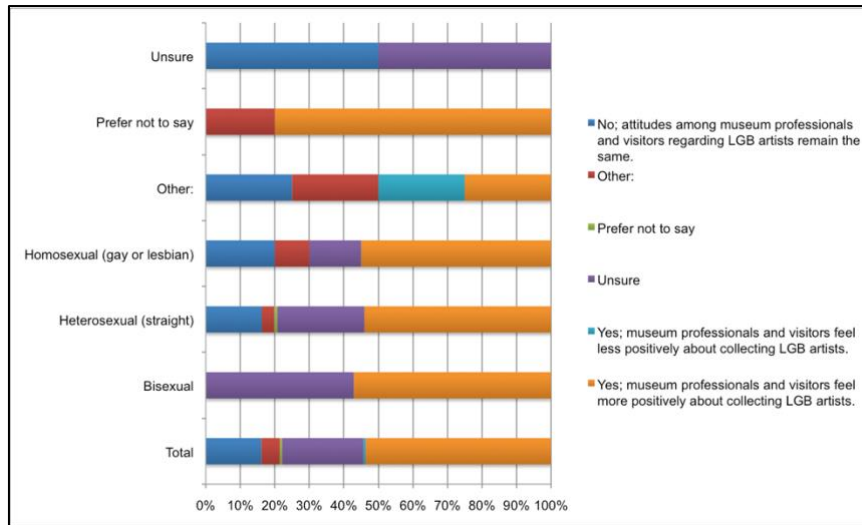


The next most-selected response was 'Other' (24.5%), then 'No, and it would be negative for our institution,' (16.8%). Among those respondents, (28.6%) were bisexual, (17.2%) were heterosexual, and (14.3%) were homosexual. Long-form answers to 'Other' were generally in line with each other: most organisations are happy to show works that might be political or seen as 'taking a stance' as long as the institution itself does not take sides. Most museums also receive a mix of positive and negative feedback for taking public positions. They also view exhibition of this nature as a contribution to a conversation and not present any absolutes.

## Question 28

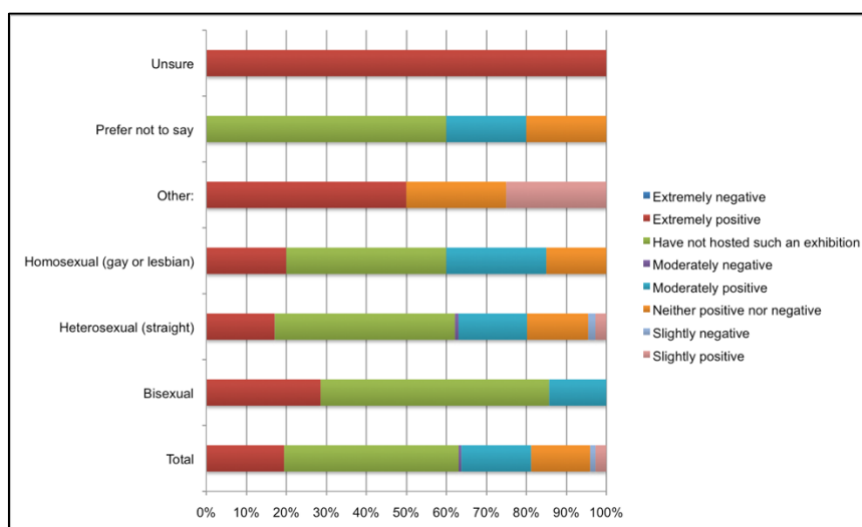
Question 28 asks respondents if they have noticed a shift in attitudes toward collecting LGBT artists. The majority of respondents (53.7%) selected 'Yes; museum professionals and visitors feel more positively about collecting LGBT artists.' This is also true among all identified sexualities: bisexual (57.1%); heterosexual (54.1%); homosexual (55.0%). The next most selected response was 'Unsure,' with a response rate of (23.5%). Very few respondents selected 'Other' (5.4%). Among responses in 'Other,' most agree that

attitudes generally seem to be more positive (or remain as positive). There are a few that also stated that they haven't been in the field long enough, or do not want to speculate.



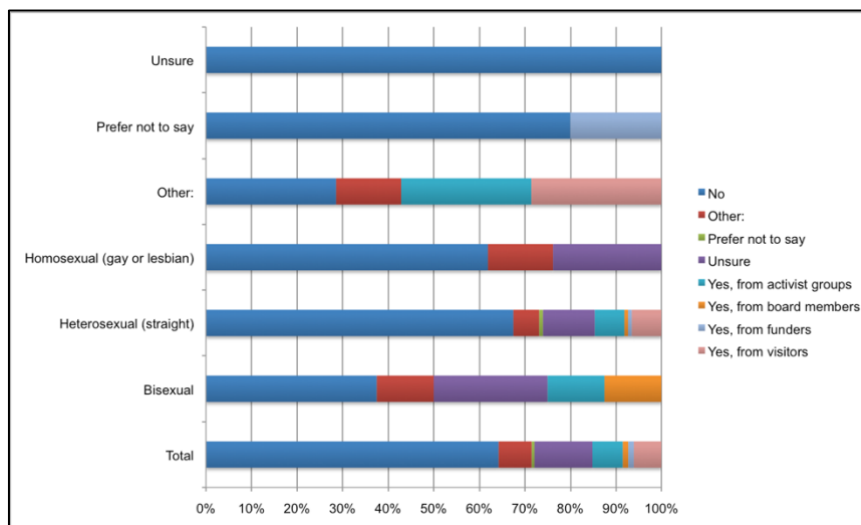
### Question 29

Question 29 asked respondents if their institutions hosted exhibitions referencing artists' sexualities, and what sort of feedback they received. The majority of respondents said they had not hosted such an exhibition (43.6%). Of those who selected a form of 'positive' (slightly, moderately, or extremely), self-identified heterosexuals responded at a rate of (35.9%); bisexuals at (43.9%); homosexuals at (45%). No respondents who identified as homosexual or bisexual selected a form of 'negative' (slightly, moderately, or extremely). Only (2.7%) of heterosexual respondents selected a form of 'negative.' There was no 'Other' option.



## Question 30

Question 30 asked respondents if they had felt pressure to make changes regarding LGB artists and their collections or displays. The overwhelming majority of respondents selected 'No' (57.0%). This percentage increases among heterosexual respondents (60.1%) and is slightly below the total for homosexual respondents (54.2%). The next most selected option was 'Unsure,' (11.3%) followed by 'Other' at (6.5%). This percentage increases among homosexual respondents. Among those who answered 'Yes, from activist groups, board members, funders, or visitors,' (0.0%) were homosexual respondents, (13.0%) were heterosexual, and (22.2%) were bisexual. Most of those who answered 'Other,' noted that they did experience some pressure from fellow academics or other members in their organisations. Among these long-form responses, I want to highlight one from a respondent who self-identified as homosexual: 'self-censorship.' I do wonder about this respondent, and if they find themselves in a situation where they have had to diminish their identity within the workplace or for the sake of an exhibition.



# Appendix B

## Preparatory Notes

The pages that follow are partial notes prepared for interviews with respondents or from meetings.<sup>233</sup>

### Preparatory Notes

1. Julia Bell, National Portrait Gallery
2. Grant Scanlan, Tolson Museum/Huddersfield Art Gallery
3. Brian Wallace, Thorne-Sagendorph Art Gallery at Keene University
4. Richard Rinehart, Samek Art Musuem at Bucknell University, p. 1
5. Richard Rinehart, Samek Art Musuem at Bucknell University, p. 2

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<sup>233</sup> They are partial because I moved twice since originally taking them. There were a good deal more interviews I did than made it to the case studies. I serendipitously found these on Day 4 of my COVID quarantine. Small miracles!

# Appendix C

## Interview & Meeting Notes

The pages that follow are notes I typed quickly during interviews with respondents or taken at meetings.

1. Gallery of Modern Art, Roundtable, 22 February 2019
2. Glasgow Museums, LGBT Stories Insight Café, 16 May 2019, p. 1
3. Glasgow Museums, LGBT Stories Insight Café, 16 May 2019, p. 2
4. Curator, Modern and Contemporary Art, Bristol Museum and Art Gallery
5. Manager, Huddersfield Museums, Kirklees Council
6. Curator of Collections & Exhibitions, Swope Art Museum