

Where is the Queer?

**A case study of LGBTQ representation in
Aotearoa New Zealand exhibitions**

by Peter Derksen

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Abstract

Modern museums and galleries are cultural spaces that often participate in human rights advocacy and social activism. Exhibitions within these spaces are the physical manifestations of these ideologies, the way that institutions connect with their audiences and with the communities they purport to represent. 'Where is the Queer?' explores the ways that museums and galleries in Aotearoa represent queerness within their exhibitions, in various stages of the development process. This dissertation addresses a key gap in the literature by critically re-engaging with queerness, exploring the intersections between queer theory and museum theory in an area under-examined in New Zealand practice.

This research was exploratory in nature, utilizing a credible multi-method case study approach to retrieve data from an ephemeral process, exhibition production. Archival documentary research provided the necessary background to the exhibitions' development, as well as supporting evidence for various curatorial choices. Interviews with curators then established key areas of interest, including curatorial strategies, conceptual goals, tailored public programming, and their perspectives on issues with LGBTQ representation.

The findings of this research show that exhibiting queerness is difficult terrain to negotiate, although museums and galleries generally aim to present and include a diversity of perspectives in a balanced way. However, the ways that queerness is represented also tend to rely on now outdated ideologies, such as an emphasis on gay men's perspectives, reductive 'coming-out' narratives, and a neutral stance on the messages the exhibitions put forward. The comparative analysis of the cases points to the need for museums and galleries to engage more critically with queer history, theory and the community more broadly. In practice, this means greater levels of collaboration with the communities they hope to serve, taking a more activist approach that gives authority to queer voices throughout development. This is significant as queer communities become increasingly visible and celebrated in New Zealand society; representing these communities in public spaces needs to be a process in line with current ideas and not rely on defunct, overly simple, or potentially damaging modes of representation. This research therefore has applicability for both museum curatorial practice and a broader human rights movement, by challenging the sector within New Zealand and internationally to engage effectively with queer content.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Working as an archival intern at the Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts in Auckland in 2017, a significant part of my internship was focused on wading through a plethora of exhibition documents. Of particular interest to me was exploring those that had been retained from an HIV/AIDS responsive exhibition called *Implicated and Immune* – not an easy task, and one especially mired by the amount of seemingly ‘useless junk’ that had been retained. Throughout this process I came across a lot of material written by Lennid Taku, a curatorial assistant from Te Papa who had a significant role in developing the exhibition’s concept, having been a volunteer at the NZ AIDS Foundation for several years. This ephemeral material – scribbles, notes, memos, the occasional doodle – gave me a distinct sense of his personality, and from what I could gather from this material he was dedicated to his work, attuned to detail and determined to make *Implicated and Immune* a sensitive and well-rounded exhibition. After weeks of coming across his work, I did a quick google search to see where his career had taken him. As it turns out, Lennid Taku had gone missing in Florida in 2007, his car abandoned, torched and the man himself presumed dead.

That I had been so casually handling his ephemera without knowing his tragic disappearance was an overwhelming feeling, one heightened by the knowledge that he, as a gay Kiwi man working in museums and galleries, was in a similar position then to what I was now. This sense of Lennid as a person that I had gradually developed through exploring his writing, however partial it may have been, was a genuinely powerful experience made even more so by both his gay identity and the knowledge of his disappearance.

In this way, history, as told through the archival material retained from an art exhibition, spoke strongly to me about a queer person and his experience in the sector. It was a prompt for me to not only start thinking more seriously about the way that people from my community were represented in the industry, but also to consider how absent these

perspectives were – I certainly would have never had this powerful moment without private access to this material. Exhibitions are the main way that museums and galleries can present the experiences of queer people to the public, so when I began to search for explicitly queer exhibitions that may have done so I was saddened to see a serious lack of such shows.

This strongly motivated both my research as a whole and my research methodology. The purpose of this dissertation is manifold – to contribute to the field of museum studies by recovering exhibition histories, re-evaluating important queer history through contemporary theory, and to critically engage with these cases, demonstrating a need for institutions to do so as well, with more of these exhibitions being developed moving into the future. This research can benefit museum and gallery professionals by encouraging them to think more critically about the ways that they represent queerness, which ultimately results in more engaged exhibitions. This research not only analyses and assesses the representation of queerness in some of the few exhibitions in New Zealand that explore this, but also acts as a starting point for further research that could greatly expand this premise; such research could explore other exhibitions but also suggest different strategies for representing the queer community, their effectiveness and the value that such exhibitions deliver to the public.

This chapter begins with a review of the existing literature and theory on queerness in the museum sector, then goes on to detail the research design and methodologies used in this project.

Literature Review

Before delving into this literature review, I must outline my choice of terminology when referring to the primary subject of this research, LGBTQ individuals and communities. The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer community has always faced difficulty in outlining its boundaries. The please-everyone, please-no-one acronym of LGBTQ is currently the most common in usage, and many online resources are available that provide additional categories to the label (Human Rights Campaign, 2018). These labels are continually changing and evolving, meaning that any attempt to

capture them reflects the ideologies of the time; as such, I acknowledge that my own terminology may quickly become dated or inappropriate. Generally I use ‘LGBT’ when discussing historic references (as this was most commonly used in the past) and LGBTQ when referring to contemporary practical or theoretical examples. I largely omit the ‘I’ & ‘A’ (of the more encompassing acronym LGBTQIA+) not out of malice, but out of a near-total lack of discussion regarding specific intersex and asexual human rights within the museum sector. Scholars commonly use ‘queer’ as an umbrella term covering sexual and gender minorities that are not heterosexual or cisgender – I will follow this approach. By this logic, the use of the word ‘queerness’ here means a queer identification of being. Although I have attempted to remain sensitive to current language usage, I acknowledge that these terms carry different meanings for different people, and not everyone will be comfortable with my choices in this.

Within this review, I initially explore the role of the museum and its capacity for activism, tracing the history of the human rights museum, and how human rights have become the underlying philosophy behind many of our museological practices. I then bring these theories into a specifically LGBTQ context, by examining the critical discourse around representing LGBTQ stories and the inherent difficulties encountered in doing so. I consider the role of the archive in validating certain histories and discuss the problems with collecting a history that has been largely ignored and demonized. Lastly, this review examines considers exhibition-making within the context of queer subject matters, exploring a case study that highlighted transgender rights problems.

Throughout this review I aim to show the assertion of both the critical discourse and my own perspective, in that the inclusion of LGBTQ material in the museum can be seen more broadly as a push for LGBTQ rights, and in turn, human rights. Perfect equality of representation isn’t necessarily the end goal, but I aim to complexify this idea and how it might play out in museological theory; representation is fraught with institutional uncertainty, public controversy, and political debate. Theorists exploring LGBTQ representation therefore draw from a wide range of disciplines to strengthen their position, and I hope to outline these various approaches.

Museums, activism and human rights

What is the role of the museum? To what extent are museums responsible for shaping society? Should they take a stance on contemporary issues, or rather maintain a neutral voice? These are the questions which have increasingly troubled museum professionals and theorists in the 21st century. Museums have historically functioned in somewhat discursive power roles; that is, as “purveyor[s] of truth and a venerated ‘cultural authority’” (Harrison, 2005, 42). Collection, preservation and display of material evidence has been seen as the primary providence of museums, at least until the advent of the ‘New Museology’, a socially responsive model for museums that developed in the early 1990s (Harrison, 2005, 42-44). Prior to the ‘new museology’, histories collected were typically those of the wealthy and powerful, carrying an authority of tradition that further validated the museum’s legacies of colonialism and nationalism. The new museology instead claimed to focus on social conditions, driven by community needs and an understanding of the museum as proactive, sensitive to the political and social conditions of the future (Harrison, 2005, 47). Contemporary institutions often balance the principles of the new museology against a more consumerist model, which favours providing entertainment as a form of visitor engagement. This position shows the reality of museum practice, which is often affected significantly by monetary resources available and therefore must attract visitors in greater numbers than ever before (Harrison, 2005, 49).

In many ways the art gallery reflected similarly changing attitudes, although it still grappled with a heightened sense of elitism (Duncan, 2005, 87). For the purposes of this research I somewhat conflate the two, demonstrating how museum theory can provide an appropriate model for the development of art exhibitions – moreover, as the following chapters posit, the cases explored later in this dissertation effectively follow museum practices and procedures.

In her book *Museums and Social Activism*, Kylie Message highlights the productive exchanges that can occur between politics and culture, particularly the “interactions and exchanges between protest and reform demonstrations and museum activities” on the National Mall throughout 1960s and 1970s America (Message, 2013, 1). She focuses on the ways in which the Smithsonian responded to reform demonstrations by American

Indian activists, and how this developed into a tribal museum movement which sought to activate change both across government institutions and in American Indian communities. Walker described the situation:

Smithsonian officials began responding to internal and external pressures to revise dated representations of American Indians in the institution's museums and initiate programs that drew more Native peoples in the process of collecting, preserving and interpreting Native objects. This process took decades and was deeply contested (Walker, 2011, 480).

This ongoing process of exchange between museums and community activists reflected a desire not only for change at an institutional, governmental level but a recognition that such change would result in tangible benefits for the community – in this case, improved opportunities around housing, health, employment and education (Message, 2013, 126). The institution's role in this included a range of outreach programmes, conferences to provide training for tribal museums, and an exchange of ideas about American Indian collections (Message, 2013, 126).

This is but one example of how institutional change as the result of social activism can produce 'real-world' practical outcomes. But we can also consider the ways that social activism in the museum can affect broader sector practices. These are difficult to evidence and often remain contentious, but through considering an example closer to home we can see that the New Zealand museum sector was itself a subject of immense change, especially in regard to its relationship with Māori. McCarthy demonstrates how broad sector reform was achieved through rethinking the roles of the museum under the notion of 'biculturalism.' Whilst this had many detractors (and still does), "nearly all professionals, Māori and non-Māori alike... are positive about current developments and signs of greater Māori autonomy and independence" (McCarthy, 2011, 246). This reflected a shift from understanding the museum as a didactic, authoritative voice on Māori material to seeing it as a platform for Māori to use for their own ends, particularly through the development of community outreach and by building relationships with iwi, so that they could manage their own cultural resources (McCarthy, 2011, 246). And this was a process that began with activism, in the sense that 'Māori leaders, organisations and communities maintained the 'continuing quest' for rangatiratanga or self-determination,' especially throughout the late 1990s and early

2000s (McCarthy, 2011, 95). Despite hugely simplifying the sweeping social, cultural and legal changes that occurred throughout the 1980s – 2010s for both Māori museum practitioners and communities, the constantly renegotiated relationship between museums and Māori here serves to illustrate the importance of social activism, especially in areas of contentious indigenous rights and representations. The type of change around sector practice and social attitudes inevitably boils down to the notion of human rights, which sees itself expressed most explicitly in the ‘human-rights museum,’ or institutions that promote a human-rights agenda.

Carter traces the development of the human-rights museum over the past few decades, from those that were created in response to a particular atrocity or human rights violation (embodied in the memorial museum), to those that have evolved “in light of a desire to promote and foster a human rights culture generally” (Carter, 2015, 208). Human rights are essentially a contemporary project (although drawing on the lineage of Enlightenment philosophy) and their foregrounding as the moral standard which underlies much of our society means that their inclusion within the museum merits critical attention. Despite the widespread adoption within the museological field of issues/ideas-based approaches (in contrast to a ‘neutral’ historical viewpoint), human rights projects within the museum undertake a variety of approaches that have different aims altogether. Human rights museums have been established as both civic and national institutions, through private and public funding, with divergent approaches and practices shaped by both the pedagogies of the field and national, transnational and political discourses (Carter, 2015, 212). Seen as leading thinkers in civil society and largely influential in their representations of contemporary issues, museums that focus on human rights can trace their origins back to the wave of memorial museums that appeared in large numbers throughout the 1980s – and indeed, the goal of these memorial museums in providing a moral framework for sensitive historical events can see its direct lineage in many human rights museums (Carter, 2015, 212). But Carter also shows that memorial museums (and by extension, exhibitions presented in a memorializing tone) often emphasized a sensorial engagement with the past that ignored critical or contextual tools which help us better understand the realities of these difficult histories. Through adopting innovative exhibition and display strategies museums can go beyond immersion/commemoration to challenge its visitors to take concrete action, or more importantly, equip them with skills in human rights advocacy such as message

development, public outreach, mobilization, lobbying and negotiation. The overarching goals in this are to “achieve these rights in societies where they are not widely respected, and to actively defend them where their vitality is imperilled” (Carter, 2015, 220).

The recent emergence of a museum federation dedicated to human rights indicates “a significant new phase, and new social roles, for museums and museology more broadly” (Carter and Orange, 2012, 117). The Federation of International Human Rights Museums (FIHRM) was born out of the annual conference of INTERCOM, November 2008, held in Rotorua, New Zealand. David Fleming (FIHRM chairman) outlines several important points that were raised; he summarizes that “modern museums carry an increased social responsibility” and can “give visibility to issues that are often ignored” (Fleming, 2012, 253-255). Museums need to work in partnership with the media and communities and must place themselves within a wider effort. Moreover, Fleming points out that human rights are contested terrain, continually evolving, and cover a broad range of issues. As he suggests,

Museums can have impact in a number of non-traditional ways: They can incite social activism. They can support the land restitution process. They can help bring perpetrators to justice. They can help prevent genocide. They can affirm identity, fulfilling the expectations and needs of victims (Fleming, 2012, 254).

When the potential for museums to be engaged in social justice is this great, the importance of formal organisational structures that can lobby for, and provide support to, institutions in more difficult situations (such as those lacking funding, local support or negotiating political extremes) cannot be understated. But Carter and Orange also reference the inaugural FIHRM conference when they highlight potential difficulties confronting museum professionals developing exhibitions representing human rights. Firstly, there is no single definition of human rights, and supporters of theories such as cultural relativism have regularly debated with universalist positions, particularly in the field of anthropology (Sandell, 2011, 138). Secondly, despite the diversity of opinions surrounding human rights, the international community has aimed to set a universal notion of human rights into legally-binding norms (Carter and Orange, 2012, 119). The vagueness and cross-cultural nature of this goal means that the idea of human rights (and the legal language that outlines them) is interpreted differently throughout the

world. Lastly, these issues are regularly debated by the FIHRM, but can be played out at much smaller levels through both national and more local institutions. As such, museums and exhibitions actively shape the public's understanding of human rights through their own development of issues-based practices; by extension, they are agents in the future shaping of those legal rights.

LGBTQ in the sector

From the broad to the specific: if we are to understand the cultural sector as a platform for engaging with human rights debates, then evaluating the museum and the way that it handles these conversations is imperative. Sandell advocates a similar viewpoint yet argues that “museums, heritage sites and galleries are entangled with human rights in ways that are often unacknowledged and poorly understood” (Sandell, 2017, 6). And although museums and galleries are still grappling with the legacies of colonialism, reimagining these as places where human rights, particularly LGBTQ rights, can be debated and fought over, is arguably an equally important mission. The relationship between the cultural sector and the LGBTQ community has historically been one defined by problems; that is, the AIDS crisis and marriage law reform are common exhibition subjects (Muller, 2001). Muller highlights how a general shift in the public perception of homosexuality has rather belatedly reached the museum, and how the public visibility of these issues played a large role in this shift (Muller, 2001). But Sandell aims to complicate this rather simplistic public perception by challenging the sector to integrate LGBTQ narratives more fully within mainstream initiatives (Sandell, 2017, 156). The mainstream museum or gallery isn't often seen as a place for these stories, and queerness is seen as being better left to specialized institutions that can represent and serve that minority's identity and culture (Gabriel, 2010, 74). But this concern with shielding visitors from LGBTQ-themed material implicitly suggests that content's immorality, exposing a discomfort with same-sex desire and gender diversity, a sense of something embarrassing or shameful (Sandell, 2017, 156). Therefore we must look to the nature of queerness in the museum, explore why institutions have so much difficulty telling these stories, and question our underlying assumptions about museum work and its ability to promote an LGBTQ-rights agenda.

More often than not, queer lives are erased in the public sphere. Sandell outlines several key examples, including the romantic relationships between Walt Whitman and Peter Doyle and between Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns to name but a few famous pairings (Sandell, 2017, 75). These relationships have been repeatedly downplayed, made ambiguous, erased entirely, or scrutinized for inclusion within exhibitions with a rigor not applied to similar heterosexual relationships. Some museums have attracted criticism for not including references to same-sex love because of a lack of consensus amongst scholars and “the perception of insufficient evidence” (Sandell, 2017, 75). Other museums have been openly criticized for their erasure of queer historical realities in an attempt to curb public controversy which usually stems from religious fundamentalist groups or conservative local government (Sandell, 2017, 58). What this says about queer identity in the sector is that these stories are often deemed too difficult to tell. This is a troubling picture, despite the remarkable pace of change that the past fifteen years have witnessed; although same-sex desire and gender diversity are more widely accepted, “practice, nevertheless, remains highly uneven, with pockets of experimentation among widespread wariness, uncertainty, disinterest and, in some cases, persistent homophobia” (Sandell, 2017, 62).

When these stories *are* told, they can be simplistic at best and reductive at worst. In Robert Mills’ discussion on LGBT histories and public culture, he points to the deficiencies in museum exhibitions being motivated by an “epistemology of the closet” (Mills, 2010, 82). He discusses the difficulties for LGBT public cultures in resisting coming-out narratives and grandiose historical narratives, which trace a history from repressed Victorian sexuality through to a modern ‘liberated’ sexuality. In presenting queer culture through the diametric motifs of ‘in’ and ‘out,’ museums fail to account for the complexity of gender and sexual identity, and risk ignoring those who fall outside of this dichotomy. Within what Mills describes as a “heterosexual-homosexual matrix”, expressions of sexuality and gender identity that do not conform are marginalised; these dimensions of queer experience are left largely unexplored (Mills 2010, 82). By framing queer history as a story of progression from repression to visibility, the gay, white, urban male is positioned as the primary narrative focus, but museums can and should tell other stories.

But what then is the ‘queer story?’ By its very nature queer history can often be sexual, yet is more often portrayed as illicit. This is an interesting tension – the curators of *Out in Chicago*, an exhibition at the Chicago History Museum (CHM), reflected this dynamism through constructing a non-LGBT group and an LGBT group to inform their curatorial decisions in regards to portraying a sexually explicit lesbian history (Austin et al., 2012, 191-192). Interestingly, the non-LGBT group wanted to learn about the LGBT community through de-emphasizing its differences, relating them to their own personal experiences of family. The LGBT group wanted the polar opposite: they wished to make it clear “LGBT sexual practices were not only different from heterosexual ones but belonged in an exhibition on queer history”, and wished to avoid the pink-washing of erotic content for straight visitors (Austin et al., 2012, 192). Giving authority to both of these groups in informing decisions on the exhibition showed a uniquely collaborative effort that was remarkably contemporary in its thinking. Notably, “the process of sharing authority amongst a range of stakeholders can recast mainstream urban history – even if this is a gradual and contentious process” (Austin et. al, 2012, 196). By going through a process of ‘shared authority,’ CHM was able to resolve potential controversy over the display of explicit sexuality, and in doing so addressed the issues of power, ownership and agency that lay at the heart of the community involved project. Negotiating the realities of erotic (and queer) lives in the public sphere is evidently complex but achievable; however, this recasting of history through collaborative processes is still, sadly, an exception rather than the rule.

In Paul Gabriel’s passionate call for museums to not grapple with queerness but instead “fondle it”, he paints a bleak picture of the ways that his profession has “enclosed - and thus junk[ed] – a ‘queer self’” in a closet of discriminatory ideologies (Gabriel, 2010, 73). Perhaps the most significant of these is that “queerness is something that we can only come close to in general exhibitions if we desexualise and transform it, ultimately, into an object of pity or entertainment” (Gabriel, 2010, 74). Gabriel co-developed/curated an exhibition at the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society of San Francisco (GLBTHS) called *Discovering Passions/Evolving Bodies: GLBT Periodicals from WWII to the World Wide Web*, of which a good portion consisted of erotica or outright pornography, primarily gay male (Gabriel, 2010, 73-76). This embodied the “untouchable, radioactive core of queer junk” – the equation of

queerness with sensory experience, sensual pleasure, erotic play, and effectively “sex! Pleasurable, kinky, taboo sex!” (Gabriel, 2010, 76). But the exhibition faced criticism for the apparent narcissism of filling a room with pornographic images of Gabriel’s own sexuality (and therefore not sufficiently representing the L, B and T). Gabriel points to the importance of embracing complex desires and sexualities in all of its guises, and to stop grappling with the “hyper-sexualised, adolescent, narcissistic and domineering male body that fixates many of our present social stereotypes about queerness” (Gabriel, 2010, 76). He calls for the sector to embrace its erotic intelligence, and to critique the ways that queerness in the museum often denies the realities of human sexuality and pleasure-seeking bodies of any kind.

Collecting queer objects

Historically, a large part of the difficulty for curators and museum staff in approaching LGBTQ material is the relative absence of such. As Jack Gilbert suggests,

Very few museums or galleries have really addressed the enormity of their failure to properly collect, frame and interpret the lives and experience of LGBT people. Decades of homophobia still pervade – not necessarily because individual staff are homophobic, but because of an institutional failure (Gilbert, 2007, 19).

Because institutions have avoided presenting LGBTQ social history in the past, objects that could possibly have these associations were not deemed worthy of collection.

Institutional failure on this level not only makes the development of historical exhibitions more difficult, but limits the possibility for comprehensive histories to be told. Darryl McIntyre attributes this failure to several factors. Lack of collected LGBTQ-related material is partly explained by the nature of the material; personal papers, media cuttings, oral histories, and the written traces of LGBTQ individuals naturally seem better suited to libraries and archives (McIntyre, 2007, 49). Similarly, the nature of many LGBTQ objects is ephemeral and every-day, often ill-suited to the privileging of specialist objects historically favoured by collecting museums (Bartlett and Henderson, 2016, 158). Homosexuality (often incorrectly conflated with various forms of gender diversity) was also illegal in many parts of the world until fairly recently, and several laws actively prohibited the ‘promotion’ of homosexuality – in

effect, museums had no responsibility or obligation to confront the histories of LGBT communities (Section 28, Local Government Act 1988). In the present day, when these objects are collected, interpreted, and included within exhibition narratives McIntyre warns that museums should follow best practice, presenting information that is complete and balanced in its delivery. This is what McIntyre describes as an acknowledgement on the part of the museum, that they have “omitted the existence of different sexual orientations from the mainstream vision of society”, with a goal to correct this omission as best as the sector can (McIntyre, 2007, 51). Part of this correction lies in the rigorous contextualisation of objects, and the presentation of a range of ideas about LGBTQ issues. As Angela Vanegas points out in her discussion about representing lesbians and gay men in British social history museums at the beginning of the twenty-first century, when this rigor is absent in collections where contextual information is missing “the lesbian and gay contributions remain invisible and might just as well not be there” (Vanegas, 2010, 164). Although Vanegas argues that objects have no intrinsic sexuality, if everyday objects used in a queer context are not approached as such, their owners are likely to be assumed to have been heterosexual - their real meaning is then lost. She also points out the problem often encountered, that museums seem to think because lesbian women and gay men are defined by their sexuality, they can only be represented by objects relating to sex (Vanegas, 2010, 164). And while Paul Gabriel embraces his erotic intelligence, the same cannot always be said for every ‘queer object’ in a museum.

Although the way that museums order their contents through their collections is inherently subjective, these same collections are also often widely associated with authenticity and objectivity (Davison, 2005, 186). This is significant, because as Davison shows,

Every preserved artefact is a tangible trace, a crystallized memory, of its manufacture and use, but at the same time attests to conceptual and spatial displacements resulting from acts of acquisition, classification, and conservation (Davison, 2005, 186).

In this way, the archive validates certain forms of cultural expression and rejects others. Objects collected in the archive are pre-selected in a way that assumes cultural authority over the past, propagating a narrative that becomes deeply embedded within society and

collective memory. And when this is a discourse in which queer histories are absent the implications are vast. Feminist art historian Griselda Pollock agrees, stating that “the archive is overdetermined by facts of class, race, gender, sexuality and above all, power” (Pollock, 2007, 12). Patrik Steorn similarly turns to the archive to analyse the museum’s role in supporting heteronormative narratives that help to consolidate heterosexuality as a social norm. Questioning the wisdom of inserting queer ways of being into a heterosexual collecting framework, such as including objects simply ‘tagged’ with LGBT as a way to show LGBT connections, Steorn rejects the static labels defined by museum databases and reinforced by collection strategies. Instead, ‘queering’ these categories, destabilising homogenous identity groups and including queer interpretations in a museum’s collection can work to counter the canonised and, at times, explicitly heteronormative typical narrative; lest “an object that is collected in order to represent the LGBT community... [ends] up affirming and reproducing normative attitudes and social categories” (Steorn, 2012, 363). He finally, passionately argues that instead of adopting queer culture as a way to appear more progressive than they really are, museums should allow for queer presences to occur on their own terms – and ultimately devise new ways of involving the LGBTQ community.

Exhibition-making

Museum exhibitions are contested spaces that have always involved complex decisions about how to choose, display and interpret objects, decisions that are directly intertwined with the institution’s purpose, the communities they purport to serve, the stories they aim to represent, and an overarching curatorial vision (Lavine and Karp, 1991, 1). As Scott argues, exhibitions “have been the stage for confrontation, experimentation and debate, often presenting audiences with new ideas based on individual research and fieldwork” (Scott, 2012, 1). This research manifests in a practical setting through the development of the exhibition, but largely depends on the extent of collaboration among curators, museum staff and other partners during the planning stages. Source communities are recognized as a key audience for exhibitions that represent them, but significant debate still centres on the agency of these collaborations, with arguments debating the merits of curatorial decision-making and

the relinquishing of this authority in community-led exhibitions (Scott, 2012, 4). In some cases, communities can use the exhibition medium to assert their authority as either distinct from, or interacting with “a nationalized or globalized culture and economy” (Gordon et al., 2010, 11).

The distinction between contemporary art gallery exhibitions and historical museum exhibitions must be made here, in the sense that art exhibitions aim to present new content whereas museums typically are seen more as reflecting on historic content. Yet to represent artefacts in museum exhibitions “requires thorough examination of the selected narrative from various different perspectives”, thus creating “updated interpretations” which, as Turpeinen points out, constantly change over time (Turpeinen, 2006, 85). Art gallery exhibitions have a similar goal, in the interpretation and varied perspectives that both visitors and curators bring to their content, although these are meanings that are only produced in context and are constantly negotiated as well (Sitzia, 2016, 1). Museums and galleries present material through the exhibition platform that aims to engage specific audiences in this way, generating meaning that oscillates between the inherent properties of the objects and the artwork, a form of knowledge production that is “anchored in a collective and negotiated societal response” and focuses on the learner, and the interpretations brought by the curator, the collaborators and the visitors, a form of meaning-making that focuses on intrinsic value rather than the learner (Sitzia, 2017, 6). Evidently current exhibition-making practices, although now often much more sensitive to the communities they serve, are “as much exploratory journeys as finite objects,” embedded within a wide range of potential issues (Scott, 2012, 4).

If queer stories are brought into the museum, the institution must therefore be especially considerate of the ways that these stories are told. Sandell demonstrates how these perspectives might be incorporated in museum work and argues for the importance of greater museum engagement by articulating the value delivered in including transgender material in particular. Firstly he argues that the struggle for transgender equality is significant not only for transgender people but for society at large. People who express or experience their gender in different ways than what is considered normal are routinely denied their rights, and become targets for discrimination and violence; understanding the ways that systems and institutions make some lives viable and others

not “reveals how differences of *all* kinds are translated in hierarchically arranged social systems and institutions of power” (Sandell, 2017, 118). We can therefore understand the struggle for transgender rights as exposing greater social power structures and challenging these is important for all of society at large. Secondly, museums arguably provide a good platform for understanding transgender lives because of their ability to tap into the affective and emotional. Museums exploring transgender material can allow for new, more complex articulations of transgender identity to resonate with society; humanizing lives that are often seen as ‘other’ (Sandell, 2017, 118).

Sandell furthers this argument through a case study. He examines Glasgow’s Gallery of Modern Art and their 2009-10 programme *sh[OUT]*, which involved several outreach programmes for members of the TRANSforming Arts group (a transgender creative expression group set up and run by the Scottish Transgender Alliance since 2008). Sandell set up focus groups with members Kristi, Amy and Finn, and interviews with James Morton, Project Coordinator at the Alliance and a member of the gallery’s advisory board for *sh[OUT]*, questioning their roles and attitudes towards the collaboration. While the programme is ground-breaking in its context, Sandell uses it to illustrate the importance of community engagement, social agency, and progressive representations of transgender people. These are stories told “*from the perspectives and through the voices* of transgender people, as well as being shaped out of an understanding of the human rights issues affecting the community, past and present” (Sandell, 2017, 111). The TRANSforming Arts group developed several pieces which featured prominently in the *sh[OUT]* exhibition, and which explored several different elements of transgender experience; from the highly personal and affective to a more activist critique. By placing transgender perspectives and experiences at the heart of theorising, Sandell rejects a narrow museum-centric concern with curatorial practice and representation, and looks at understanding and valuing the expertise held by transgender people themselves, rather than seeing them as objects of study (Sandell, 2017, 115). The success of *sh[OUT]* led to the development of *Rendering Gender*, an exhibition where the transgender community members were wholly in control of producing the exhibition and the ways in which they were portrayed. This type of authentic and respectful portrayal of transgender experience worked against the stereotypical caricatures often represented in the mainstream media, a serious concern highlighted by many of the TRANSforming Arts group members. Sandell demonstrates

how even Morton realised a new appreciation for the affective force of unmediated, sometimes messy, but authentically powerful first-person accounts and creative expressions of transgender people (Sandell, 2017, 129).

Summary

The modern museum is a space for debate, a place where contemporary issues can be articulated, explored, critiqued, made visible, and even simply acknowledged as important. Human rights are one of the leading issues of our time and the systemic denial of those rights warrants a particular focus from the museum community. LGBTQ exhibitions are a way to explore those rights. Queer experiences articulated in the museum or gallery have a special power to humanize what is traditionally painted as ‘other’ and foster more culturally progressive attitudes. New Zealand’s LGBTQ history and art can be a rich resource for museums hoping to engage its visitors with contemporary issues – but the difficulties in representing these, as evidenced in numerous international case studies throughout this review, are likely applicable to the New Zealand context. This naturally brings to question the nature of queer representation, and the various strategies that institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand employ to represent these ‘difficult histories’. If the strategies are examined in greater depth, the ways that they conform to or reject contemporary ideologies can prove illuminating about the representation of queerness within mainstream spaces more generally.

Research Design

The previous section introduced the basis behind the research and the literature which it was grounded upon. The following section outlines the project’s research design, research questions, and the methodologies employed to investigate them. It highlights the benefits and principles of my choices, as well as suggesting some of the limitations and ways that they might be accounted for.

My primary research question is *'How do museums and galleries in Aotearoa New Zealand represent queerness in their exhibitions?'*

A selection of secondary questions further questions the nature of representation –

1. *What are the curatorial strategies employed in the development of LGBTQ exhibitions?*
2. *How have New Zealand exhibitions responded to contemporaneous queer issues?*
3. *To what extent have the ways that these exhibitions represented queerness advanced a social activist agenda?*

This research followed a case study approach, selecting specific exhibitions and exploring in depth the motivations, the conceptual basis, the development processes and the final products of these processes. A case study approach using qualitative data collection methods was the most effective approach in this instance because the ephemerality of exhibition-making makes other retrospective data collection methods difficult. “Case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a set of events or conditions and their relationships” - the benefit of a qualitative case study approach is that it allows the researcher to explore the social, political, community and personal contexts behind these processes, the *'why'* as well as the *'what'* (Soy, 1997). Within this project, this approach is important because of the complex nature of an exhibition and the transitory nature of exhibition production. A case study method has a greater applicability to contemporary social situations than other methodologies by relating directly to every-day experiences, and can help facilitate an understanding of complex concepts through public access to a report.

Moreover, the nature of the case study as an approach can allow for a more in-depth ‘behind the scenes’ view of the exhibition-making process, which in turn can reveal more of the conceptual basis of an exhibition than the final exhibitionary product itself, which is where most analysis is usually directed. The case studies selected are exhibitions that have received little critical assessment as *processes* of exhibition making – rather any public attention has been given to analysing the *content*, especially

in the case of the gallery exhibitions. While content analysis still proves an important endeavour, my interest lies more directly in the processes of development and the conceptual basis of these exhibitions, rather than analysing the artistic or historical merits of their content. This is still an important element of the exhibition and is therefore discussed more generally but analysing specific artworks or specific historical objects falls outside of the scope of this research project.

A key strength of the case study approach is the inclusion of multiple sources of data. It essentially encourages the use of various data sources and methodologies to paint a more complete picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny. The use of multiple cases within this approach also improves the generality of the conclusions that I reach. Critics of the approach suggest that a small number of cases offers no grounds for establishing reliability, and that the intense scrutiny applied to a case can lead the researcher to offer biased findings (Soy, 1997). However, because of the relative lack of LGBTQ-themed exhibitions that have been held in New Zealand, the small number of cases explored in this project is appropriately representative of the small sampling pool. As Denscombe points out, the aim of the case study isn't to suggest that individual cases are a 'slice of the cake' that are illustrative of the cake as a whole (Denscombe, 2014, 61). Rather, findings from the case are used in the development of theory, to "arrive at certain concepts, propositions or hypotheses that might explain what is happening, and why", within the particular context of the case being investigated (Denscombe, 2014, 61). The goal isn't to generalize statistically, but instead to suggest that the findings are transferable to other settings, in that the case study is an example of a broader class of things (Denscombe, 2014, 62).

Case study selection was driven by a set of criteria that I predetermined. Firstly, I wanted to explore exhibitions within mainstream public institutions. Although one of the exhibitions was held in a privately-owned gallery, this was an exhibition open to the public and widely discussed in public fora, and so was included. I approached this selection from the perspective of a queer male and a museum professional, who wished to see stories relevant to my own community represented in public institutions. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the visibility of minority groups within public spaces is considered an important aspect of human rights - so this prompted my decision to explore queer exhibitions in mainstream, traditionally non-queer institutions, rather

than exhibitions in specifically queer museum or gallery spaces. Further studies could include such cases as the Charlotte Museum of Lesbian History in Auckland, or the LAGANZ archive in Wellington's Alexander Turnbull Library. However, neither space offered regularly accessible exhibitions, and were by my account considered specialist institutions that targeted researchers or the community itself, rather than the general public.

Secondly, and this was especially the case for the art exhibitions, my criteria precluded the inclusion of exhibitions that only featured the occasional queer artist or individual. This research project has a broader focus in exploring exhibitions that from their *conception* thematically address issues and concepts relevant to the LGBTQ community. This stemmed from my personal belief that such exhibitions are more important, complex and nuanced forms of queer representation than what might be explored only tangentially in a differently-focused exhibition.

Thirdly, I chose to research cases from both museums and galleries. Although approaching them primarily from a museum-oriented viewpoint (as demonstrated through the museum-focused literature review), this is justified in that both art gallery exhibitions more closely resembled museum-type exhibitions, in their extensive programming and their incorporation of community input. This gives them a relevance to museum theory more broadly and allows for insights gathered through this research to be applicable to gallery theory as well.

These criteria led me to a selection of three cases; *Implicated and Immune: Artists' Responses to AIDS*, in 1992, *Slice of Heaven: 20th Century Aotearoa*, from 2010-2017, and *Implicated and Immune*, in 2015. The selection of these cases was as much by necessity as anything else; the lack of LGBTQ-themed exhibitions in New Zealand public spaces was resoundingly clear. Because of this, I believe that this research contributes to the field of museum studies to some extent through its reclamation of these exhibitions within a broader sector agenda of LGBTQ rights advocacy. The recovery of these exhibitions as an important part of New Zealand's queer history is also a driving motivation behind the project.

Within each case, qualitative research was conducted to gather important details, through the exploration of the development processes and final products. Qualitative

research is focused on understanding meaning and how people interpret their experiences (Merriam, 2014, 5). Within my particular cases, this was the most appropriate method and is somewhat intrinsic to a case study approach regardless.

Data was collected from multiple sources but primarily through two different methods. The first stage of data gathering was documentary archival research, which involved seeking out and extracting evidence from original archival records. Documentary research presents several challenges, including the wide variety of documents that have often been archived, the need to sift through this material to find pertinent information, and the difficulty of interpreting this information outside of its original context.

Denscombe suggests that the two features that makes documents useful for social research are their evidentiary value, in that they contain information that can provide straightforward facts, although this often requires further interpretation to be of use, and their permanence, in that the information that they capture is stable beyond the moment it was produced (Denscombe, 2014, 225-226). These are especially valuable strengths in this case because of the impermanent nature of an exhibition – in many cases, the only empirical evidence that an exhibition was held at all is through documentary records. However, some disadvantages to documentary research also exist. The credibility of the source is difficult to establish, largely because of the ephemeral nature of much this content. Due to this ephemerality, most of the data was produced for a purpose other than the specific aims of this investigation, and therefore my interpretation of these documents could lack objectivity. Despite this, the documentary research conducted for this project was still critical in the sense that little evidence remained of these exhibitions beyond personal recollection (which was also researched). As such, the benefits of carrying out documentary research outweighed the potential issues with use of the method.

The physical records that were analysed were held by the institutions that put on these exhibitions, in the Te Papa and Te Tuhi archives. The type of material kept in the archive varied wildly, including exhibitions proposals, planning documents, curatorial research outlining the social context that the exhibition was developed within, correspondence with key stakeholders (which revealed networks of people and communities that were involved in development), newspaper reviews, press releases, and public advertisement. The documentary evidence therefore provided me with a

solid grasp of what these exhibitions were about, the key concerns that led to their conception, and various issues and resolutions that occurred throughout the development process. This was an important first step in familiarising myself with these exhibitions, before moving onto the following phase.

Phase two involved another qualitative data gathering method, interviewing. Research interviews are best conducted when the research wants to “explore complex and subtle phenomena, such as opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences, complex issues, and privileged information” (Denscombe, 2014, 186). In this case two in-depth, semistructured interviews were able to be conducted with the curator of the Homosexual Law Reform section of *Slice of Heaven*, Lynette Townsend, and the curator of 2015’s *Implicated and Immune*, Michael Lett. These interviews focused heavily on the exhibition development process, and explored the reasoning behind certain curatorial choices, goals and outcomes.

At this stage, the small number of research participants was not considered a barrier to obtaining useful results, as the information gathered from the interviews only formed part of the broader picture and was synthesised with archival research. Later this was expounded upon through critical comparative analysis of the findings obtained from both methods. Moreover, the reality of exhibition development meant that most of the exhibition’s development was fronted by the exhibition curator, and their perspectives and experiences of these processes were absolutely key to understanding the choices behind deciding how queerness would be represented. Due to the relatively modest scale of the exhibitions, the curators were the main professionals involved that provided the majority of the input, so little relevant information could be gained from interviewing professionals tangential to the exhibitions’ development.

Ethical considerations for this type of research remain relatively minimal, in that although addressing sensitive topics, such as personal identity, LGBTQ communities and HIV/AIDS, any material quoted or assessed was part of a public exhibition, so was made available for public scrutiny anyway. Interview participants were selected based on their expert knowledge and represented no ‘clash of interests’ – they freely shared their experiences and opinions about the exhibition-making process. Before the interviewing stage was carried out, ethical approval for this research was granted by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee. Participants were

informed about the research and its intentions prior to interviewing, and gave written consent to being interviewed and quoted in this report. The participants also consented to being named in this report rather than remaining anonymous. While much of the ethical consideration of this type of research is delegated through an ethics committee, the researcher still holds an important responsibility in ensuring that ethics are accounted for in every step of their research.

Reflexivity on the part of the researcher is often an important part of qualitative research practice. This is a heightened awareness of the self, and consequently a self-awareness of the researcher's position in relation to the research subject. A reflexive researcher critically examines their own role within the research process and is aware of the role that personal value judgments can play in affecting the objectivity of the research. However, as May points out, values can never be entirely eliminated, and the whole idea of 'value neutrality' is impossible in a social research field so dependent on personal opinions and experiences (May, 2002, 277-279). To some extent then, the notion of the self as evident in the research is embraced, although to varying degrees.

Throughout this research project I endeavoured to be reflexive by confronting my personal biases and addressing the extent to which they affected my findings and my analysis thereof. However, my own identity as a gay male does in fact offer me insight into several elements of living as a queer person in New Zealand, as well as positioning me as a member of the community that these exhibitions explore. Because of this, elements of the argument developed in this research originates from personal interpretations of these issues, although are still largely based on the qualitative data gathered, representing the responses of the participants, and supported by critical theory.

Analysis of these findings discussed later in this report synthesises key concepts outlined in the research phase with broader concerns that have been expressed in similar exhibitions overseas, as introduced in the literature review. However before considering the broader topics, the raw data obtained from various sources required a structured analytical approach to draw out key concepts and themes. Qualitative data analysis is often an iterative process, whereby data collection and analysis occur concurrently – this emphasises the researcher's perspective and values, which ultimately are incorporated into the analysis itself. As a result of this iterative process, analysis of the

data involved a number of stages that overlapped and would inform the direction of later conclusions.

The first step to preparing my data for analysis was the recording and sorting of relevant archival data. As the set of data was limited by what was retained in the archive, my process involved going through all the material and selecting out documents that seemed to be relevant to my overarching research question. Throughout this archival research care was taken to maintain the integrity of the archive by keeping documents in order and handling them with appropriate conservation techniques. Then, these were categorised according to how they might provide evidence to answering my secondary questions. Documents of key interests were taken note of and their contents copied into a spreadsheet that systematically organised the records under key themes. These themes were developed iteratively throughout this process of sorting and organising.

Following the preparation of my archival data, the interview phase was carried out. The interviews were recorded and fully transcribed, annotated, and backed up offline, to ensure their safety. Because of the small number of interviewees full transcription was feasible, accompanied by various notes and observations that I took down during the interview process. These notes showed more of a ‘feeling’ of the conversation, describing the long pauses, body language and gestures that an audio recording wouldn’t capture.

When the audio content was in a written format, analysis of the interviews could begin. For both the interviews and the archival documents I undertook a grounded theory approach, reviewing the transcripts and documents to tag relevant sections with codes. These codes were thematic in nature, outlining key phrases and ideas described in the text. A systematic process of coding and categorizing to a higher level then allowed me to group these low-level codes under larger conceptual categories, which reflected the commonalities between the different types of information. The themes discussed in my findings were generated from these high-level conceptual groupings.

Grounded theory is a systematic approach that is nonetheless methodologically flexible, allowing for the researcher to be dynamic in their thinking (Ralph et al., 2015, 1-2).

Theorizing is carried out throughout this entire process, which doesn’t aim to extract objective truth but rather get at the heart of what participants’ main concerns are. As the

theory emerges, the researcher constantly compares the concepts and categories to each other and to their pre-existing knowledge, adjusting accordingly. This values the researcher's creative thinking albeit within a clear framework of staged analysis. Grounded theory is a viable approach for qualitative research as it allows researchers to extract broad concepts from raw data through a systematically robust process. It is generally suited to this type of exploratory research because of its dynamism, which is useful in this context as little previous research exists to draw similarities to. However, because the researcher is subjectively involved in so many stages of the research, it must be iterated that the conclusions formed are modest and theoretical in nature, drawn from the limited data available for each exhibition. As such, they do not represent an objective generalised statement but rather serve as exploratory examples to illustrate *potential* ways that these exhibitions could be critiqued.

Because of the limitations of this research project, which only forms part of an overall degree, the scope is minimal. As outlined above, selection criteria needed to be established to focus the research, especially for as broad a question as representation in the museum and arts sector. This inevitably meant that significant areas of research relevant to the question were left out. However, as explained in this research design section the lack of exhibitions that explored queer ideas to any meaningful level was an inhibitor to having a broader focus, which could have incorporated surveying techniques. This was my initial approach, to carry out a sector-wide survey questioning exhibition-making practice around queer themes – however, it became apparent that the lack of such exhibitions would be an impediment. As such, the case study approach I took offers a more specific and detailed examination of queer exhibitions, rather than a sector-wide survey. If this type of project were to be carried out on a larger scale, it could undoubtedly incorporate the areas that I purposefully excluded. Similarly if more of these types of exhibitions are held in the future, analysing them through case studies could reveal more complex networks of influences and conceptual underpinnings than my limited amount of cases could afford. An audience-centric approach could also be valid, but due to the time gap between my selected exhibitions this would have proved nearly impossible – such an approach would need to be determined prior to an exhibition opening, and planned systematically across several years. This would of course also rely on prior knowledge of these exhibitions being developed, as well as confidence that they would be developed at all.

Conclusion

This chapter began by introducing the existing theory and literature informing my research approach. This explored intersections between museological theory and queer theory, addressing the human rights activism that such intersections arise from. Furthermore, it considered the various implications of representing queerness within the sector, both for theory and practice, by the introduction of several international case studies that spoke to similar themes.

This chapter then outlined the research methods and justification for these methods as utilized in the following research stages. The methodology section points out my selection process for the case studies chosen and provides justification for this selection based on the scope of the project as a whole. These methods were then used to investigate the curatorial decision-making, the conceptual basis, the development process, and the resulting exhibition for each of the cases, extracting important evidence from a limited but encompassing selection of archival documentary and qualitative sources in order to answer my research questions.

This research process followed the principles of a case study approach, highlighting the benefits and limitations that this entailed for the data gathering stage. The following chapters detail the findings of these cases, followed by a synthesis section that critically analyses and compares these findings within the context of queer and museum theory. The following findings are grouped under each individual case, with sub-headings describing key thematic concepts that emerged iteratively during data analysis.

Chapter 2: Case Studies

Implicated and Immune: Artists' Responses to AIDS 1992

This section presents the findings of a structured analysis of the 1992 exhibition *Implicated and Immune: Artists' Responses to AIDS*, held at the Fisher Gallery (now Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts) in Pakuranga, Auckland. It relies primarily on select archival materials held at Te Tuhi in order to explore the question of queer representation, in its development, execution and the assorted programming accompanying the exhibition. It begins by outlining the exhibition and its contents, then establishes key themes that emerged from analysis of the exhibition ephemera. This addresses the secondary question of curatorial strategy by explaining the approach taken, highlighting the various curatorial choices that were made throughout the development process. The information from the archival material also shows the cultural and artistic context that the exhibition was responding to – in this case, the lack of response artistically to an important and ostensibly 'queer' issue.

Exhibition content

Implicated and Immune: Artists' Responses to AIDS was an exhibition curated by Lennid Taku under the guidance of gallery director Louis Johnston (now Le Vaillant) that ran from September 23rd – October 20th, 1992. The title itself was described in the accompanying publication as a comment on the negative language adopted by the dominant majority; an exclusionary barrier set up 'between those that are apparently safe – the immune – and the other – those implicated by aids' (Johnston, 1992, 4). This sets the tone of the exhibition's overarching goal, to re-examine the metaphors surrounding HIV/AIDS through a lens of artistic response. To this end, the gallery invited a group of artists to respond to issues relating to HIV/AIDS in Aotearoa New Zealand, an area that had been explored overseas in such ventures as ACT UP (an international advocacy group that incorporated anonymous art production as a mode of activism), but at this point had received limited attention from New Zealand's artistic

sphere. As the curator outlined, artmaking practice that explicitly addressed the impact of HIV/AIDS had been virtually invisible in mainstream art (Johnston, 1992, 4). Instead, popular culture and marketing had drawn much of this focus, presenting archetypes that were targeted at specific audiences. *Implicated and Immune* sought to question these archetypes by commissioning and borrowing works from a variety of artists, including queer and non-queer artists, some well-known and some more obscure. These explored a variety of themes: the memorial, the spiritual, faith in the face of the unknown, affirmative action, desire and seduction, the physical and historical decimation of the disease, and many others. Significantly the show wasn't shy to explore overtly queer sexual imagery, including works like Jack Body's *Figure in darkness*, which glorifies the male nude as an image of the ideal in a time of loss, and Fiona Pardington's *Relâche*, a photographic depiction of physical arousal that confronts the non-performance of sexual desire. These were relatively provocative for the time, especially in a conservative public climate.

Implicated and Immune was developed partially in response to an earlier exhibition, *Aids Now*, held at The Dowse Art Museum in Wellington from December 17, 1988. *Aids Now* sought to present the fundamental facts about AIDS in concert with a series of photographs by Fiona Clarke chronicling the lives of people in New Zealand living with AIDS (Taku, 1992, 10). In contrast, *Implicated and Immune* was somewhat more open-ended, seeking to operate at different levels of attractiveness to different functions and audiences through its diverse programming. More broadly however, the exhibition was developed at a time when the AIDS epidemic was in its second decade and had already had a devastating impact on many queer peoples' lives in New Zealand. This is an important context to consider the exhibition against, in that it was developed in the middle of the crisis, responding to it contemporaneously.

In its earliest iteration, named *Visual AIDS*, the exhibition concept was equally divided into two inter-related strands, the commissioned artworks and the education programme. To this end, the artworks in the final *Implicated and Immune* were supported by a wealth of programming and material that aimed to demonstrate "not only the facts and awareness of HIV/AIDS but also the social, political, cultural and economic issues surrounding the disease" (Taku, 1992, 3). This included educational

video screenings, a display of a Names Project Quilt, a panel discussion on ‘Censorship and the Arts’, and two painting workshops.

Curatorial strategy

One of the key curatorial strategies to *Implicated and Immune*’s concept was the freedom of response – artists were invited to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in any way they saw fit. At the time, the HIV/AIDS epidemic was more commonly presented as a medical issue, with limited relevance to society at large (Lindberg, 1992, 1). *Implicated and Immune* gave artists the freedom to respond to contemporary issues, be political about these issues if they so wished, and ultimately contribute in some way to an effort in changing public prejudices. In line with this most of the artworks were created specifically for the exhibition. In this way, queer and non-queer artists had the opportunity to share perspectives, discuss opinions and allow various stakeholder groups to inform their artistic processes. The development process for *Implicated and Immune* therefore took less of a curatorial approach, where a curator’s ideas might dominate the shape of the exhibition, and instead gave authority and validity to the artist’s creative expression. This was the underlying intention of the exhibition from the outset, as demonstrated in multiple exhibition proposals – that the freedom to respond, rather than trying to group works under a strict curatorial concept, was an essential part of representing the epidemic. The fact that this echoed the consolidation of artistic and queer communities in the face of the HIV/AIDS epidemic was no coincidence, demonstrating that in this case, giving a greater power of creative freedom to the artists was seen as an important approach to representing ‘queer’ issues.

Collaboration in the development process

Various community groups were involved to varying degrees throughout the exhibition process. The most important involvement was a meeting between community AIDS agencies and artists held on May 15th 1992, where the agencies were asked to give

presentations on the issues specific to their organisation. It was hoped that “these social issues may be picked up by the artists and incorporated into their works”, which would ultimately be incorporated into a timeline constructed by artist Phillip Kelly (Taku, 13 May 1992). The presentations were followed by discussions about the role of art in a time of crisis and what the exhibition could mean for HIV/AIDS in New Zealand.

Organisations involved included Positive Women, ADIO (Auckland Drug Information Outreach), the New Zealand AIDS Foundation, Te Roopu Tautoko, AGLY (Auckland Gay Lesbian Youth), ACAS (Auckland Community AIDS Services), PLWA Union (People Living with AIDS Union), NZPC (New Zealand Prostitutes Collective) and the Pacific Islands AIDS Trust. Prior to the meeting between artists and organisations, these various agencies were also approached in order to gauge their opinions on the crisis and how they could shape the type of exhibition being produced. What these various stages of organisational input demonstrates was a keen interest in involving community groups from the ground up – fore-fronting relevant opinions to not only shape the curatorial approach but also to inform the works of the artists themselves. This provided both information and arguably inspiration for the artists which would in turn be represented in the final exhibitionary product.

Activism through programming

Queer perspectives were foregrounded, debated and explored across various different platforms and media, with a breadth of programming that aimed to appeal to a variety of audiences and extended the exhibition’s offering beyond the artwork in the main gallery. In its earliest iteration as *Visual AIDS*, the exhibition concept was divided equally into two inter-related strands, the commissioned artworks and the education programme. To this end, the final *Implicated and Immune* was supported by a wealth of programming and material that aimed to demonstrate its activist agenda.

The programming included several panels of the New Zealand AIDS Memorial Quilt, which were displayed at the nearby Pakuranga Plaza with the accompanying opening and closing ceremony being observed. This was one of the earliest displays of the quilt in New Zealand, and was a memorial to those who have died of HIV related illnesses, created by family, friends, partners or co-workers. The exhibition was also accompanied

by two painting workshops run by Jonathan Else aimed at helping participants to use basic art techniques as tools for therapy – ‘Draw Yourself: Self portrait for self esteem’ and ‘Your Body – Your Life’. A panel discussion was held on October 15th 1992 – ‘Censorship and the Arts’, a public forum inviting various artists, activists and the former Chief Film Censor to consider the role that censorship played within the artistic community, especially in regards to queer artists and works. The initial exhibition concept proposed multiple screenings of important video works concerning HIV/AIDS, including the BBC documentary *Father Bernard Lynch in New York* (1987), and *Living with AIDS* (1987). These were seminal media on the epidemic, but due to budgetary limitations the original proposal was limited to the showing of a series of video tapes, *Video Against AIDS*, a compilation of HIV/AIDS related videos produced in 1985-89 for Video Data Bank and Peter Wells’ *Death in the Family* (1987), a ground-breaking New Zealand TV drama (Taku, 12 Nov. 1992).

By extending the exhibition’s offering beyond its physical locale (to include nearby commercial areas), beyond its fine art media (to include film screenings) and beyond its singular offering (to include workshops and education programmes), *Implicated and Immune* aimed to address multiple aspects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic through a range of informative and at times, activist offerings. This in turn allowed for a more complex and nuanced representation of the community and the crisis. The extensive range of programming was evaluated on equal footing as the art exhibition, not as an add-on or simply supplementary.

Representing contemporary issues

Lastly, an important consideration within the development of *Implicated and Immune* was the variety of perspectives that would be represented. Although an exhibition dedicated to exploring the informative, artistic and cultural responses to HIV/AIDS in particular, and with HIV still heavily, but not exclusively, a virus affecting gay men, the final exhibition was well received for its inclusion of straight artists as well – Don Bassett pointed out that ‘the curators have deliberately aimed at no specific audience, for this is not *just* a ‘gay problem’, gay problem though it is.’ The same sentiment is echoed in the accompanying publication by the curator, who describes the issue as

centred on the inclusion of gay and straight artists; whether or not sexual orientation established inclusion; in what proposition this could occur; or whether – by including a larger proportion of gay artists – the myth that AIDS is a gay disease would be reinforced and thus increase the existing sense of marginalisation (Johnston, 1992, 3).

The representation of gay men as the face of LGBTQ issues, the conflation of AIDS with gay identity, and the deliberate inclusion of queer artists or not, are all factors that this case brings to question, and which will be elaborated on in following chapters.

However, early concept development briefs suggests that a focus on gay men in particular was the original intention: to include “artists affected or influenced in some way by HIV/AIDS” in an early draft, and “to solicit responses from 12 commissioned Gay artists affected by the AIDS disease” (Taku, 1992, 2). As exhibition development continued, the archival evidence reveals that this idea was broadened considerably to include queer artists with no particular practice related to HIV/AIDS, and later to include non-queer artists as well.

Summary

Implicated and Immune: Artists’ responses to AIDS was one of the earliest exhibitions in New Zealand that really responded to the HIV/AIDS epidemic from an artistic standpoint. Developed in the midst of the crisis, it emphasised the importance of allowing artists, queer and non-queer, to express their own perspectives rather than pushing a particular curatorial agenda. However, these were perspectives informed by collaborations with community activist organisations, which meant that both the gallery and the artist could approach the HIV/AIDS exhibit with a better idea of what key concerns were for the community, especially in regard to fair and respectful representation. Presenting an artistic form of representation alongside an equally developed schedule of public programmes also meant the exhibition spoke to a broader audience, represented a broader swathe of the rainbow community, and attempted to engage on some level with activist concerns.

Implicated and Immune 2015

This section explores the 2015 exhibition *Implicated and Immune*, held at the Michael Lett dealer gallery on Karangahape Road, Auckland. It introduces the exhibition and its content, and then goes on to discuss the findings resulting from both an interview with the curator, Michael Lett, which considers his perspective on the politics of staging such a show, and criticism levied at the show by artists and critics in public fora. Both perspectives address my primary research question, *How do museums and galleries in Aotearoa New Zealand represent queerness in their exhibitions?* through establishing key areas of concern within the exhibition's representations of queerness, which are further defined through qualitative analytical methods.

Exhibition content

Implicated and Immune was an exhibition that ran at the Michael Lett dealer gallery in Auckland, from January 28th – February 28th 2015. Lett's gallery is a private art space that opened in 2003 and represents a selection of some of New Zealand's leading contemporary artists, including Shane Cotton, Fiona Clarke, Julian Dashper, Michael Parekowhai, and many others. Situated on K' Road, which is well known for its artistic, cultural and LGBTQ history, Michael Lett's gallery caters to an audience often savvy in contemporary art knowledge. Although considered by many critics as a re-staging of the original 1992 show, the 2015 *Implicated and Immune* was named so more in honour of the original. As discussed below, several key differences re-contextualised the focus of the 1992 show for modern audiences. Spreading out over three different floors, the 2015 show marked three decades since the HIV/AIDS crisis emerged in New Zealand and sought to partially reprise the 1992 exhibition through the inclusion of a number of the same works. The works from the original show included those by Philip Kelly, Fiona Pardington, Richard Wearn, John Reynolds and Richard Killeen. Additional works by queer artists Fiona Clark, Trevor Fry, Grant Lingard, Imogen Taylore, Peter Wells, Stuart Main and Douglas Wright were included, as well as a host of non-queer artists including Billy Apple, Simon Denny, Russ Flatt, Ava Seymour, Christine Webster, Jacqueline Fraser, Giovanni Intra and Julia Morrison. The extensive line-up largely

retained the works of non-queer and now-celebrated artists from the 1992 show but included additional works by contemporary queer and non-queer artists that explore a more varied schedule of themes. As well as these historical responses to HIV/AIDS, the 2015 *Implicated and Immune* offered broader meditations on desire, loss and the body.

A key inclusion in the 2015 show was a series of photographs taken by Fiona Clark: a seminal work titled *Living with AIDS* that had been commissioned for the 1988 exhibition at The Dowse, *Aids Now*. Discussion on this work was the focus of one of two public talks, with Auckland Art Gallery curator Ron Brownson and Fiona Clark in conversation. The other public talk lead by artists Ruth Watson and Trevor Fry was centred on the work of important gay artist Grant Lingard, whose final major work *Swan Song* was included in the exhibition.

Representing contemporary issues

The importance of visibility of queerness and queer perspectives emerged as a leading benefit of shows like 2015's *Implicated and Immune*. In the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic that provoked 1992's *Implicated and Immune*, social prejudice ran deep and vitriol against gay men in particular was common. 1992's show aimed to be a reaction against this prejudice by offering an informative and well-considered response to the crisis – in this way, part of the agenda of 2015's show was to reintroduce the conversation, to show that while access to treatment and preventative information is much better, both the legacy and current resurgence of HIV still deeply affects the rainbow community. As Lett points out, he was “shocked that things had gone quiet... almost as if the issue is over with already” (Lett). Therefore, by representing these stories/perspectives in a public way the show highlighted an issue that wasn't really being considered in public galleries by seeking to re-engage the public with the reality of HIV/AIDS as a continuing epidemic - and in doing so aimed to challenge the sector in their silence. Positive reviews of the show similarly focused on the value that the show delivered, “in carrying forward the discourses that have shaped the social and cultural impact of HIV/AIDS in New Zealand” (Grabner, 2015). The timing of this exhibition to open in concurrence with the 2015 Auckland Pride Parade speaks to its

motivations, as making a public statement about LGBTQ pride and the power of visibility.

Collaboration in the development process

The collaborative nature of producing queer exhibitions also emerged as a positive factor in developing a balanced mode of representation. Much like the original show, 2015's *Implicated and Immune* involved collaboration with various organizations, including the NZ AIDS Foundation, Body Positive Inc., and the NZ Prostitute's Collective. Consultation with and the inclusion of these organisations outside of the sector meant that the exhibition not only used appropriate terminology, but also aimed to involve groups with a different field of expertise. This allowed for a variety of activist perspectives to be involved in the formative stages of the exhibition.

Collaboration within the sector was also highlighted as an unexpected benefit. Lett discussed the role of the Christchurch Art Gallery, who couldn't loan him the Grant Lingard piece he wanted for the exhibition, but instead offered a more major work by Lingard, *Swan Song*, that hadn't been exhibited before – “unheard of for a major museum to lend to a commercial private art gallery such as mine” (Lett). This collaborative element wasn't restricted to operational or curatorial processes. Lett discussed the work of a gay woman artist, Imogen Taylor, whose piece in the show *Freddie*, 2015, was based on the dimensions of an AIDS memorial quilt. Through the inclusive exhibition development process, Taylor was able to visit a display of the quilts at the nearby film archive (Tāmaki Makarau, the Auckland branch of Ngā Taonga), and was inspired to create her work (which was the first time she touched on this subject matter). This example demonstrates the opportunity for multiple types of representation coming from within the community, that exhibitions such as this can foster.

Curatorial strategy

The inclusion of queer artists was a contentious issue, proving difficult to account for and generating a range of opinions regarding the appropriateness of representation in

this 'restaging'. As a show that aimed to present a broader perspective of HIV/AIDS than the original, the inclusion of artists that identified as queer was agreed by both curator and critics as being essential to the spirit of the original show – but was in this case deemed not satisfactory by several critics. As Steve Lovett argued:

Taking the name of the original 1992 exhibition and making the changes to the original roster of artists altered the historical record that it claimed it was highlighting... [failing] to reflect the accuracy of the original (Lovett, 2017, 31).

The discussion, which largely took place in online and published criticism, was mired in a back-and-forth between which artist was included and which wasn't, whether *these* artists were queer, and why *these* non-queer artists were included (Lovett, 2017, 30-32). Queer artists from the original show that were not included in the 2015 version were Jane Zusters, Lili Lai'ita, Paul Rayner, Fear Brampton, Jack Body, Malcolm Harrison, Richard McWhannell and Steve Lovett. Yet Lett viewed this criticism as tokenistic, pointing to the problem of including artworks just because the artist is queer rather than considering the works themselves by their merits and the issues that the works address. As with the original 1992 *Implicated and Immune*, the inclusion of queer and non-queer artists in the 2015 show was designed to show a multitude of perspectives. As Lett pointed out,

you can't just show one view... [as] an echo from the original show, the response came from the friends, supporters and arts community more than anywhere in the beginning (Lett).

The show therefore considered not only gay men (although Lett acknowledged that they have been the group most affected by the epidemic) but also the important perspectives of friends and supporters in the arts community.

However, in various criticisms the balance between these two groups was seen as being skewed, with more straight than queer artists included in total. Moreover, the omission of most of the original show's queer artists and replacement with works by younger contemporary artists drew criticism for the lack of focus on HIV/AIDS, with questions raised regarding the relevance of younger artists to the epidemic (Stealing the Show, 2015).

Summary

Although not an exhibition specifically about queerness, 2015's *Implicated and Immune* highlighted the works of historical and contemporary queer artists, bringing them into conversation with other groups so that different motivations could come to light. But more than this, the foundation for the show – emphasising an awareness of the impacts of HIV/AIDS in contemporary society – addressed an issue that significantly affects the rainbow community, and so was an important form of LGBTQ activism within the sector. Just like the 1992 show, Lett's *Implicated and Immune* “carefully avoided ghettoising the AIDS affected gay community” by representing diverse perspectives and collaborating with various community organisations (Hurrell, 2015). This was celebrated by some as an effective component of the show, due its inclusive nature, but criticized by others for the selection criteria which didn't carry over queer artists from the 1992 show. Representing queer artists is an important goal for cultural institutions because it gives authority to queer perspectives within both the development process and the final product. A diversity of inclusion, however contested in this context it may have been, expanded the show's appeal and more accurately represented the diversity of the rainbow community itself.

Slice of Heaven: 20th Century Aotearoa 2010-2017

Slice of Heaven: 20th Century Aotearoa was a long-term history exhibit that ran from October 2, 2010 to January 23, 2017, on level 4 of New Zealand's national museum Te Papa Tongarewa, in Wellington. This case study focuses on the Homosexual Law Reform display within the Us & Them section but must be considered as an element within the broader exhibition. This in part explains several of the curatorial decisions that were made – the following findings explores these choices with the results of an interview with the curator of the Homosexual Law Reform section, Lynette Townsend. The following section begins with a description of the exhibition, then establishes key themes that affected the ways in which queerness was represented. These work to answer my research questions by outlining some key curatorial strategies that were employed, while also suggesting how these strategies aimed to respond to contemporary issues of representation.

Exhibition Content

Slice of Heaven was an exhibition that had been in development since the early 2000s and explored the myriad ways that Aotearoa New Zealand changed throughout the entirety of the 20th century. This was focused in six different areas: *Mother Country*, covering the world wars and the move from British sovereignty towards independence; *Cradle to Grave*, exploring a history of social welfare in New Zealand; *Maori*, concerning the changing nature of Māoridom in 20th century society; *Generations*, covering the generational differences that defined the developing nation; *Us and Them*, a section about the marginalisation of diverse groups; and *Heroes and Villains*, a section about famous 20th century Kiwis.

Us and Them, the broader section encompassing the focus of this case study, had three smaller units outlining the women's rights movement, the Homosexual Law Reform Bill and the anti-apartheid protests surrounding the 1981 Springbok rugby tour. The Homosexual Law Reform section was seen as part of a concerted effort to improve the visibility of LGBTQ histories within the national museum. Assorted smaller displays

had added to this throughout the years, such as a display of transgender performer Carmen Rupe's headdresses in 2015, but at 7 years on the floor the Homosexual Law Reform section of *Slice of Heaven* was still the longest-standing representation of queer history on display at Te Papa. Although the LGBTQ collections at Te Papa were specifically developed to improve the level of queer representation, *Slice of Heaven* would have likely been the most visited and viewed representation of queer history, as most of the collection content has only been made available in collections online, or by special request.

Curatorial strategy

The concept of the Homosexual Law Reform section of *Slice of Heaven* was driven by an emphasis on narrative, as opposed to being centred around objects. Within the greater narrative of *Slice of Heaven*, this moment was explained by Townsend as a "heightened point where there was a division in the way that New Zealanders were looking at different issues" (Townsend). Initially there had been a much broader storyline exploring changing attitudes through time, but this was condensed down to 'hot points', or key moments in history due to spatial considerations. The phrasing of the introductory panel reinforces this selective narrative approach, discussing key moments in the 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s. Under the heading of 'Coming Out', the text traces a trajectory from the discrimination (legal and social) of the first three quarters of the century to the more accepting society of the late 90s. However as Townsend explains, a major concern early in development was how to position the exhibition in the way that these changes were described, namely in "this idea that we've moved beyond that and attitudes had completely changed... but there were still lots of prejudices and we had to be careful not to paint this rosy picture" (Townsend). The intention behind this 'coming out' narrative was to suggest how changing social perspectives have changed, by tracing a linear progression throughout the decades.

Representational authority

The prominent material of the Homosexual Law Reform section of Slice of Heaven was a short four-minute video consisting of a series of interviews with 4 members of the LGBTQ community, Des Smith, John Jolliff, Tighe Instone, and Dana de Milo. This audio-visual content was significant because by-and-large, the rest of Slice of Heaven contained both AV content and a large number of historical objects. As the primary content of the Homosexual Law Reform section, the audio-visual interview material was described by Townsend as absolutely key in the way that it represented this specific history. Interviewing as a strategy for communication not only brought a diverse range of community members into the exhibition development process, but focusing on peoples' personal stories also represented the impact of law reform outside of the lives of gay men. The interviewees were "able to be really reflective about what their lives were like before", instead of just focusing on the protest and the two different points of view that divided national opinion (Townsend). Ideally this would perform a function that objects wouldn't necessarily, by bringing history outside of the abstract and "relating it to people's lives, where it has real poignancy" (Townsend).

Conversely, as Townsend explains, she approaches her work from the perspective of a historian who believes in the power of objects to materialise history in different ways:

Objects can sometimes put a lens on history that you don't otherwise get – with objects, there's the look, there's the smell, there's the colours. They represent history in a completely different way to what an archive will (Townsend).

Consequently although the limitations of exhibition design meant that physical objects weren't included in the exhibition, the concurrent development of LGBTQ collections at Te Papa, also led by Townsend, meant that objects could be brought out at various curator floor talks, and tied in to relevant contemporary moments. For example when the Outgames (a series of multi-event sporting competitions for the LGBTQ community) were held in Wellington in 2011, Townsend and the team did an exhibition tour bringing out additional objects from the collection and connecting them to the exhibition's main content.

Collaboration in the development process

The full breadth of what Te Papa was hoping to achieve with this exhibition – condensing 100 years of history into one exhibition – meant that difficult decisions needed to be made from the beginning. Because such a small space was allocated to telling these stories, the development team needed to be resourceful with the ways that they approached these narratives – hence the exclusion of objects and inclusion of AV material. Yet because of this clear decision to focus on narrative (partially due to the limitations of space and budget), the Homosexual Law Reform section of Slice of Heaven didn't end up consulting an advisory group, and Townsend admitted that this would have been an effective way of working. Townsend confirmed that for community exhibitions at Te Papa, a community advisory group would normally have been set up, but with the limited resources and space available for this exhibition, as well as a more specific idea of what type of story the curators wanted to tell, this wasn't deemed absolutely necessary. In this way the value ascribed to community representation and input in the development process was overridden by the limitations of the exhibition's scale and scope. Despite this however, the collaborative element of the AV material included was prominent in the final exhibition, which somewhat counters this lack of early collaboration.

Summary

As a turning point in New Zealand's history of LGBTQ rights, the debate around the Homosexual Law Reform Bill was a key moment to base the exhibit around. This is especially true considering the lack of representation that this important reform and protest had received throughout the sector. Yet clearly this presents issues in terms of a balance of representation, as this moment, although significant to the entire community, was focused on a history of gay men in particular. The curatorial approach taken at Te Papa was focused on a narrative of before and after, 'us and them', from invisibility to visibility – a 'coming out' narrative, which as a strategy for representation presents unique issues. This exhibition explored the social impact of the LGBTQ rights movement in New Zealand, emphasising the personal experiences of queer people rather than the ephemera of protest. As such, including the literal voices of LGBTQ people talking about their lives was essential, and potentially performed a more

relatable and humanizing function than objects could have. This speaks to the value of giving authority to queer self-representation and sharing authority with the communities that are being represented. However, the breadth of the exhibition wasn't as fully explored as it could have been because of the limitations of space and the specificity of the storyline decided on in the early development process. This also meant that community input in the development *process*, rather than just in the final product, was fairly minimal. Despite this, additional material representing the history of the community was still able to be connected to the exhibition throughout the years, with objects from the growing LGBTQ collection at Te Papa being brought out at various important moments. Representation through a curatorial strategy that draws on voices, objects (although only tangentially) and specific narratives points to an activist concern, but perhaps one that isn't especially active, instead neutrally presenting history and allowing queer people to represent their own stories. Within a national institution whose goal is to attract and speak to as broad an audience as possible, this was an expected approach.

Chapter 3: Synthesis & Comparison

This chapter outlines a discussion based on a comparative analysis of the three cases, addressing my research questions more directly and considering some theoretical implications. It begins by exploring the representation of queerness from the conceptual origins of these exhibitions, developing an argument that suggests the ways that these cases have been conceptualized are problematic to varying degrees. It then goes on to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the various curatorial strategies employed in these exhibitions, throughout both the development processes and in the final exhibitionary product. It considers how these exhibitions have responded to contemporaneous queer issues, and the ways that these development processes ultimately affected the representation of queer perspectives.

Throughout this discussion the various extents to which these exhibitions address activism through their approaches is also emphasised, concluding with a discussion of activism more explicitly. The implications to theory and practice are relatively modest, derived as they are from comparison of limited datasets. However, as I outline in this dissertation's concluding section, they are important implications to consider as they have direct impact on the validity of these institutions in putting on these types of exhibitions at all.

Conceptual representation

The development of all three exhibitions was influenced in a significant way by the acknowledgement that LGBTQ perspectives had not been adequately represented in the sector. Exhibiting the type of content and narratives in these exhibitions in both the Fisher Gallery and at Te Papa was not necessarily seen as a way of 'fixing' this, but certainly as a 'step in the right direction'. This content responded to contemporaneous queer issues by being conceptually based on issues that were important to the queer community at the time of their development. 1992's *Implicated and Immune* responded amid the AIDS epidemic by presenting an artistic exploration of the impact that

HIV/AIDS was having at that time. 2010's *Slice of Heaven* considered the entirety of the 20th century (although focused on 'hot' moments), with the Homosexual Law Reform section addressing the changing roles and rights of queer people in society, presenting this as a progression from the early 20th century to the beginning of the 21st. 2015's *Implicated and Immune* re-presented works from the 1992 show, integrated with more modern works to explore the impact of HIV/AIDS in our current culture – highlighting that the epidemic is far from over, and in fact has resurged within the queer community. In a variety of ways, these exhibitions responded to the issues most relevant to their institutional and historical context.

Yet from their inception, these exhibitions were also based on a position that emphasised the perspectives and lived experiences of gay men in particular. The HIV/AIDS epidemic was widely seen as a 'gay man's problem', although as I'll explain shortly, this is a perception that both *Implicated and Immune*'s aimed to challenge. Despite this however, the epidemic was admittedly mostly focused within gay communities, and of particular concern to these communities. Homosexual Law Reform was, as the name suggests, concerned with the decriminalisation of homosexuality; although this would have a broader impact, it is still rooted in the issues of gay men.

What this suggests in terms of representing queerness in the museum and gallery sector is that, by their very conceptual basis, 'queer issues' are reduced to 'gay issues'. Gay history is fore-fronted, gay issues presented as the leading concerns for the rainbow community. This is an example of homonormativity, a word that defines the desired assimilation of queer identities, usually gay, within heteronormative frameworks. Susan Stryker describes homonormativity as "an operation... that aligns gay interests with dominant constructions of knowledge and power that disqualify the very modes of knowing threatening to disrupt the smooth functioning of normative space", in this context the disruption of categorisation that transgender experience embodies (Stryker, 2008, 155). Homonormativity therefore describes queerness through the lens of gay interests because of the ways that these perspectives align with hierarchical power structures, such as neoliberal and patriarchal social models. In the museum this translates to trans-exclusionary exhibitions, and in these cases, a conceptual focus on gay men's issues and a lack of focus on divergent gender and sexual identities. This is especially important when we consider the lack of representation of these perspectives

throughout the sector; these cases are isolated examples, and in many ways exemplars of the *only* exposure that visitors would have had to queerness in mainstream New Zealand museums or galleries.

Importantly however, the homonormative basis which underlies the concepts of these exhibitions, and therefore the ways that they can represent queerness, is subverted through the curatorial strategies employed, in all cases, to explicitly undermine the 'gay focus'. These strategies engage a variety of perspectives and individuals, are representative of the diversity of the community, and ultimately paint a more nuanced picture of queerness than the exhibitions' concepts might suggest.

As explained in chapter two of this dissertation, *Implicated and Immune* 1992 may have initially intended to include only gay artists, or those affected personally by HIV/AIDS. This changed to more broadly included several non-queer artists, and queer artists who weren't gay males. I question why these intentions may have changed, especially as there was nothing in the archival documentation to explain this. In my opinion the most likely explanation is that, at least in part, this was due to the lack of artists in New Zealand already exploring HIV/AIDS in their work, as well as a lack of publicly out queer artists of 'gallery quality'. Including non-queer artists, the majority of whom were well-known and certainly added to the exhibition's profile, could have been as simple as 'filling the gaps.' Despite this, and despite the criticism that the 2015 show received for the same problem, the inclusion of a multitude of perspectives outside of gay male artists served an important purpose. Queerness was not represented as 'other' or as existing in its own cultural bubble but embraced through conversation with more mainstream artists. The inclusion of multiple viewpoints on a queer issue positioned queerness as part of the social issue, rather than distinct, separate or isolated.

Admittedly the inclusion of non-queer voices suggests a less radical or political portrayal of the queer community and one Stryker may have accused as hetero or homonormative, but also one whose intention was to show solidarity within the variety of communities affected by the disease. Based on the evidence presented, I would argue that this was a concerted effort to portray queer issues within a broader context, pointing out their relevance to everyone rather than just gay audiences. Within a public institution in the 1990s, this was an important element to queer representation when considering the likely prejudices that mainstream audiences could have held.

In line with the more progressive ideologies that our modern era allows, 2015's *Implicated and Immune* took this idea even further, including more queer (and not male) artists, more artists in general, and works that spoke beyond just HIV/AIDS to different aspects of the human condition, such as loss, identity, and the nature of desire. Despite this broader and more general focus, the curatorial choices were met with some scepticism and criticism even from within the community, especially because most of the original queer artists were dropped, while most of the original non-queer artists were included. Yet such a criticism relies on the premise that the original show was being restaged, rather than being partially reprised and largely re-contextualized. The curation of the show pointedly included artists representing a broader view of society and queerness to undermine this notion that HIV/AIDS was, or still is, just a gay issue. *Implicated and Immune* 2015 represents queerness through a conceptual basis of diversity, multiplicity and complexity – a balanced representation that includes queer artists in concert with non-queer artists for the value that this delivers with HIV/AIDS activism.

Conversely, the Homosexual Law Reform section of *Slice of Heaven* was evidently based on a historic moment of law reform, one of particular importance to gay men. Although this could have been yet another example of homonormativity, *Slice of Heaven* framed these legal changes through the lens of social activism, and in particular highlighted the experiences of a variety of queer people, not just gay men. Although important to gay men, the curatorial strategy of displaying interviews with queer people showed the impact of this moment beyond its conceptual focus, presenting a broader representation of queer identity.

Despite the numerous ways that these exhibitions might subvert expectations by presenting perspectives from a broad swathe of the LGBTQ community, and in several cases even those outside of it, they admittedly do still begin from gay men's issues. None of these cases explore in any detail a strong consideration of trans issues, which are often fairly distinct from those of sexual minorities. Nor do these cases explicitly address issues relevant to lesbian communities, which incorporate both queer and feminist concerns. Particular artists or voices might be represented, and certainly in as nuanced a way as the curatorial or conceptual limitations might allow, but these are queer perspectives that are framed against and within the context of gay men's issues, or

more specifically issues historically relevant to gay men. On this point, as the most recent case 2015's *Implicated and Immune* portrays a much more complex and less 'gay' focus than the other two cases, likely due to its alignment with current values and ideals. This is promising for future exhibitions which may deal with similar issues, as it suggests some progression in the priorities of the museum and gallery sector when representing queer issues, potentially moving beyond a focus on gay men, gay issues or gay perspectives as the most significant.

Representation within the development process

To varying extents these exhibitions were all collaborative processes, reaching out to communities and organisations in the development process. Although many exhibitions do this, the extent to which some of these did is significant – especially for both *Implicated and Immune* exhibitions, where collaboration with community groups was a concerted effort from the outset.

Representation within the development process is important, because this process of exchange between institutions and communities can bring the social activist concerns of community organisations into the museum space, which in turn can provide improved opportunities with real and tangible effects for society or the affected community (Message, 2013, 126). Community outreach and inclusion is especially important for queer representation because queer people, along with other minority groups, have historically been shut out of decision-making processes. In the case of HIV/AIDS outreach, these groups are even more vulnerable and isolated. Therefore, the inclusion of community agencies within the development process can and should shape the way that queer stories are represented, with the ultimate goal of developing an exhibition that is more considerate of activist concerns.

The benefit of collaboration was recognised as an important element in creating these types of exhibitions by the curators, but the extent of collaboration was sometimes limited, and lacked a true sharing of authority. This was the case for *Slice of Heaven*, where the normal process for establishing a community advisory group wasn't followed because they had a clear idea of what direction they were taking. The size of the

exhibition was also a determining factor, as it was a very specific moment within a much broader exhibition – it was impractical to involve community groups for every element of the overall Slice of Heaven exhibition, and so budget and timing considerations limited what collaboration or consultation could be done. Yet as I explain later in this chapter, the form that the final exhibit took allowed for a degree of self-representation that somewhat accounted for this lack of shared authority – although this was only decided on at a later stage of the development process, and was a strategy decided on in isolation by the curatorial group.

However, collaboration played a significant role in the development of 1992's *Implicated and Immune*. Various community groups, particularly those that advocated for LGBTQ rights and HIV/AIDS activism were involved in the exhibition process from the ground up. This was not merely consultation that was then ignored or not followed through with – they were deliberately asked about leading concerns for the community during the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and their responses actively shaped the approach that the curators, and the artists took. Many of the artworks themselves were influenced by a series of meetings between the artists and the community groups. What this demonstrates is a willingness to bring community groups into usually very private or selective parts of the development process, giving a greater validity to the experiences of the individuals representing these groups. 2015's *Implicated and Immune* took a similar approach by consulting with community groups, but was arguably more curatorially-minded, driven by the vision of the curator to a greater extent than these community agencies. As a result, the final exhibition was more contemplative and perhaps less activist in its approach.

The evidence suggests that collaboration with community groups, although to varying extents, had a positive impact on the development of these exhibitions. Although many exhibitions carry out research within their communities of choice, true collaboration needs to go further than mere consultation to 'tick' the appropriate boxes. By sharing authority in the exhibition-making process, a relationship described by Hutchinson as an "alongside conversational relationship between different experiences and knowledges", a crucial role is played, in creating an open and dialogue-inviting exhibition (Hutchinson, 2013, 143). This in turn has the potential to encourage audiences to

respond from their own experiences, framing a personal connection to the material rather than an abstract generalization about these ‘other’ social groups (Hutchinson, 2013, 143). The community advocacy groups for both 2015 and 1992’s *Implicated* and *Immune* represented an authority of culture and experience, that could be in dialogue with the academic authority of the curatorial voice. Yet Hutchinson also describes a critical aspect of shared authority – the demand for the presence of both community and curator as effective interacting players, lest the oppressive omnipresent position of museum knowledge takes up this space (Hutchinson, 2013, 146). Although the sharing of authority was important in the context of these art exhibitions, the curatorial voice still needs to be included and balanced against the authority of the community voice. Michael Lett’s show demonstrates this effectively, whereby the input of community advocacy groups was not explicitly described in the ‘fabric’ of the exhibition, but still played a large role in shaping the approach that was taken; similarly, his curatorial voice came through powerfully in the unexpected connections he drew between historical works and contemporary issues. Ultimately by giving community groups agency and sharing expert authority within the museum or gallery, from the beginning of the exhibition’s development, exhibitions represent queer perspectives with greater sensitivity and nuance. Additionally, the collaborative process can allow for audiences to engage with these perspectives on a more personal level.

Representation on the floor

After examining the process and conceptual basis behind queer exhibition development, the final product must be similarly evaluated. If we consider the strategies employed in the fabric of the final exhibition, and the way that queer stories, perspectives and narratives were framed within these strategies, we can begin to answer the question of how these exhibitions ultimately represented queerness. Firstly, all three exhibitions represented queerness through the lens of issues that are typical to LGBTQ exhibitions across the world, HIV/AIDS and law reform. These themes explore broad social and legal phenomena over the everyday. For exhibitions such as *Slice of Heaven*, this focus represented a national-scale issue that relates to “law-making with regard to decriminalisation, discrimination and same-sex rights... [which is] important for

defining queer peoples' sense of inclusion and belonging in terms of politico-legal rights" (Gorman-Murray, 2008, 77). Within our national museum this type of focus makes sense, and this national level of representation still managed to be tempered by the sharing of personal experiences. Furthermore, considering the incredibly broad audience that Te Papa engages, a focus on the sweeping changes that shaped New Zealand legal and queer discourse was appropriately general.

However, although law reform is the foundation upon which the Homosexual Law reform section of *Slice of Heaven* is built, the text used posed queerness as a process of 'coming out of the closet', presenting this as the ultimate goal of these sweeping national-scale legal changes. As Robert Mills points out, coming out narratives problematize queer experience by potentially ignoring the complexity of queer identity beyond this, framing queer experience primarily through the perspective of the visibly gay urban white male (Mills, 2010, 82). Representation through coming out narratives risks simplifying the full breadth of sexual identity and gender expression in particular, which can't be simply defined as a progression from repression to visibility.

Moreover, framing queerness through this type of narrative can also suggest that at this point in time (the 21st century looking back at 20th century history), the conclusion of this trajectory has been reached. By this standard, the closet no longer exists, is no longer necessary, and society has reached a complete level of understanding and acceptance. Obviously this isn't the case, and Townsend points out that this was an important consideration, not to "paint this rosy picture", or the "idea that attitudes had completely changed" (Townsend). However the text didn't reflect this, claiming instead that "By the century's end, many diverse groups have a say in New Zealand society and politics. 'They' have become part of 'us'". This somewhat frames the queer story as one of full integration into mainstream society.

Within *Slice of Heaven* the framing of queer experience through a coming-out narrative is problematic for the 'rosy picture' it paints. These types of narratives inevitably suggest a certain homogeneity. Barnhurst describes how the narrative of the closet has become commercially convenient within the media, and that through this repeated exposure to the closet narrative, this is now "a story that straight folks have learned to expect" (Barnhurst, 2007, 6). For Barnhurst it is a comfortable narrative for the mainstream, a "script that a non-queer perspective makes available" and a

heteronormative plot device at that (Barnhurst, 2007, 6). Conversely, the narrative of coming out has historically provided the community with powerful metaphors for living their lives openly and honestly. However, in a national museum this type of ready-made story is reductive, especially to our modern understanding of the complexity of queer experience. This contrasts with what is often thought to be a greater openness to representing these more ‘radical’ aspects of history in the sector.

So in *Slice of Heaven*, the national story of queerness isn’t one of radical sexual practices, but rather concerns the legal and social implications of law reform. Typically, HIV/AIDS-related exhibitions approach queerness from a national-scale as well, tracing a history of discrimination, legal opposition, and community welfare. However, *Implicated and Immune* 1992 brings this down to a much more personal type of representation, by artists and their reaction to the epidemic. Moreover, through the other side of the exhibition – including the public programmes around self-care and wellbeing and the powerfully evocative exhibition of memorial quilts – the personal rather than the legal or national is brought to the forefront. Sexuality is also not shied away from. Although the specific examples described in the previous findings section don’t point to an overall trend of celebrating sexual difference in the exhibition, they at least suggest that sexuality didn’t need to be censored for a public audience. This wasn’t an uncommon practice for museums, with the recent 1989 obscenity trial over Robert Mapplethorpe’s explicitly queer and sexual photography painting a backdrop for the concerns that many had over exhibiting queer sexual content (Mezibov, 1992, 12). The public forum topic for *Implicate and Immune* was appropriately dedicated to censorship in the arts.

In the more liberally-minded 21st century, 2015’s *Implicated and Immune* represented queer sexuality in a much more overt, but contextually less shocking manner, including artworks “showing erections, splattered with fake semen, made out of shit” (Lett). The curator explained this as a reaction against the way that “gay culture in New Zealand has been made more safe,” more palatable (Lett). This assessment is certainly indicated in common contemporary media portrayals of queer identities, which more often than not feature middle-aged Caucasian gay monogamous couples, positioning gay culture within the expectations of heterosexual audiences (Barnhurst, 2007, 11-13). This suggests that the freedom that a private art space offers is better for representing

queerness through sexual difference; that is, what Paul Gabriel describes as the sensory, pleasurable ‘core of queer junk’ – pleasurable, kinky taboo sex (Gabriel, 2010, 76).

The type of representation offered at a national scale clearly differs from more intimate regional spaces or private galleries. Private spaces are at liberty to take a more personal approach and potentially explore the more sexual aspects of queer experience because they aren’t publicly funded, they aim to engage a more specific audience and aren’t responsible for broader representation in the same way that a public institution is.

Within a national exhibition the radical nature of queer history is arguably somewhat tempered and made more ‘palatable’ for mainstream audiences, particularly for an exhibition like *Slice of Heaven* that targeted a “cross-generational” audience, adults and children (Lynette). Jill Austin’s example of the Chicago history museum paints this type of exhibition-making as a pinkwashing of LGBT experiences and argues that a balance must be struck between the agenda of de-emphasizing difference through desexualising queer experience, and that of embracing the realities of queer sexuality and pleasure (Austin et al., 2012, 193-195). There still exists this tricky territory to negotiate between radical queer sexuality and connecting queer perspectives with a broader social narrative.

Considering this potential ‘pinkwashing’ of queer sexuality in the case of an issuesbased approach taken by exhibitions like *Slice of Heaven*, exhibitions that explore sexuality of any kind have historically also been controversial, with museums playing an important role in what Jennifer Tyburczy describes as “the construction of modern sexual subjectivity and the categories of normalcy and perversity” (Tyburczy, 2016, 2). When sexual displays are included in museums, a politics of sexual normalcy is often present, so that when examined more critically the “postcolonial and postfeminist museum exposes itself as far from decolonization and liberation” (Tyburczy, 2016, 21).

Museums and galleries validate certain expressions of sexuality which tend to be rooted in conservative representations.

So although these aren’t issues limited to queer representation, when this material is omitted on the basis of “homophobia, transphobia, sex negativity and racism” queer sexuality in particular has the limitations of significant social prejudices that heterosexual displays have to a much lesser extent (Tyburczy, 2016, 4). As Tyburczy explains, the curation of queer sexuality faces significant and unique problems;

Queer anti-normative curating is crucial now in the struggle against oblivion, both in the form of the long history of suppression and of ignoring such materials and in the mainstreaming of gay culture, which may deem these materials irrelevant in the name of pride, dignity, and sameness with heterosexual cultures (Tyburczy, 2016, 4).

Ultimately these cases both subvert and ascribe to mainstream representations of queerness, through exhibiting sexual difference (as in the case of both *Implicated and Immune* exhibitions), or through framing queerness under the restrictive terminology of coming out (as in the case of *Slice of Heaven*). If the sexual nature of queerness is omitted from museum or gallery exhibitions, these spaces risk reinforcing their positions as normalizing forces, and not critically engaging with their roles in shaping and changing political ideas about gender, race, class and other ingrained power structures.

Representation through objects

As demonstrated both in my introductory passage and throughout my literature review, objects can have the power to connect individuals with their queer predecessors, to draw a link to the past that can have an incredibly emotive effect. Therefore, for an exhibition such as *Slice of Heaven*, their absence is notable. Many exhibitions of queer social history exhibit the ephemera of protest, such as posters, banners and t-shirts, and of queer lives, including personal papers, media cuttings, and written traces of LGBT individuals (McIntyre, 2007, 49). But, as McIntyre points out, objects related to LGBT histories have historically been absent from institutions altogether, due to the recent development of LGBT rights (McIntyre, 2007, 49). Queer representation in collections, or the lack thereof, can have a powerful effect on the development of exhibitions.

Slice of Heaven in particular excluded objects in the exhibition space because of the technical demands of conservation; that is, the need to replace objects every 6 months to account for light damage and exposure. The AV material was seen as falling somewhat within this category, as an oral history of sorts and a visual representation of queer history. Condensing what would otherwise have been posters or other objects on display into a graphic collage was also seen as a way of side-skirting conservation concerns,

and still displaying the essential content, the messages behind the protest material. The development of the LGBTQ collections at Te Papa was described by Townsend as part of Te Papa's collecting strategy and material from these collections was brought out at various strategic moments to complement the exhibition content.

So while there were objects that related to the queer story that Te Papa was wanting to tell, they weren't deemed as essential to the central narrative of the exhibition. Perhaps with the development of the LGBTI collections at Te Papa, future exhibitions can display queer objects with more authority, and to a greater extent, considering that this is an area that has been recognised as being insufficient, and that concerted efforts have been made to expand these collections. In line with this, Macdonald points out that museum objects "give substance, authority and implied veracity to narratives," although also suggesting their openness to alternative interpretation (Macdonald, 2007, 155).

Visitors are encouraged to "approach objects from a variety of self-selected directions" - by exhibiting this type of material and bringing these ephemera out of the collection and into exhibition spaces, Te Papa could offer the same types of connections between the past and present in a more concrete way than a narratively-driven exhibition would (Macdonald, 2007, 155). This requires an investment of faith on the institution's part, in the ability for objects to convey queer stories as powerfully as narratives can. Clearly this was an investment attributed to many other sections of the object-heavy *Slice of Heaven* exhibition.

Reclaiming representation

An important part of all three exhibitions was the voice that they gave to queer people within what is usually considered mainstream spaces. A primary tenet of the new museology, especially concerning content about and for minority groups, was the sharing of authority and the deepening of relationships with those authorities (Houlihan, 2016, 73). Giving the members of minority communities a platform within leading institutions is no small feat, and represents a move away from the authoritative voice of the museum and towards a more holistic inclusion of 'museum outsiders' within the exhibition-making process.

This goes beyond high-level collaboration with organisations or institutions, and instead looks to how the perspectives of actual queer individuals can be included in museum and gallery spaces. The freedom of creative expression afforded in the 1992 *Implicated and Immune* exhibition speaks powerfully to this idea of shared authority. Artists, both queer and non-queer were invited to create or offer works based on their own, very personal understandings of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In this way, artists were given the freedom to shape the exhibition to some extent, to make political statements if they so wished, and to take on a more definitive voice through their work. Because *Implicated and Immune* aimed to present a neutral and informed viewpoint, giving artists freedom of expression, although within thematic confines, meant that artists could actively shape the exhibition's level of activism through their work – the onus was placed on the artist, with the gallery giving them the platform to have this conversation.

This in some ways rejected a museum-centric view of curation and representation and instead values the expertise and the authenticity of experiences held by queer people themselves. We can compare this to Sandell's example of the 2009-10 sh[OUT] programme and the resulting *Rendering Gender* exhibition in Glasgow's Gallery of Modern Art. The transgender creative expression group TRANSforming Arts developed works which featured prominently in sh[OUT] and explored highly personal and affective elements of transgender experience. *Implicated and Immune* 1992 similarly gave creative control to queer (and non-queer) individuals. However, *Rendering Gender* took this even further; following the success of sh[OUT], this exhibition gave the group total control over the production of the exhibition, albeit with guidance and expertise given by the gallery staff (Sandell, 2017, 115). Transgender people were able to directly facilitate the exhibition of their own experiences and their own works. While this wouldn't have necessarily worked for *Implicated and Immune* it does give credibility to a greater level of queer authority within gallery spaces. Moreover, when queer people are given the opportunity to control the means of their own portrayal, the resulting exhibition can more powerfully and authentically represent queerness itself.

Slice of Heaven reinforced this through the inclusion of actual queer voices, in the AV material that constituted a large part of the exhibition. Interviewing a variety of members of the rainbow community not only illustrated a commitment to extending the narrative of the exhibition beyond the perspective of gay men, but also to the validity

and importance of personal experience. This is especially relevant for LGBTQ voices, in that these are voices that have historically been silenced and repressed. As Townsend suggested, the exhibition could have focused only on news footage but this would have presented a narrow point of view. By instead allowing queer individuals to relate their personal experiences before, during and after homosexual law reform, the often abstract social history could be brought into a more relatable realm where “it has real poignancy” (Townsend). The interweaving of these experiences within a broader social history exhibition points to a development for LGBTQ visibility – it naturalized these voices as a regular part of the ‘bigger picture’. Although this is a fairly usual interpretative strategy in museums, it holds special significance for queer individuals, in its validation of these voices as equally vital in our country’s official history.

Although I have outlined the value of objects in representing queer histories previously, this emphasis on personal storytelling as an interpretive device suggests another side to the story – that the unmediated and affective force of personal experiences as told by actual queer people can prove similarly powerful. Naturally this is difficult to quantify – however, even from my own experience visiting this exhibition and watching these interviews as a younger person questioning my sexuality, it was incredibly affirming. While this by no means is direct evidence of the validity of this interpretive strategy in representing queerness, it does at least suggest that queer stories as told by queer people can have the potential to evoke strong reactions, especially in younger queer audiences. Seeing people like yourself represented in mainstream spaces can provide role models for younger individuals questioning their identity. Seeing queer people openly discussing their struggles, experiences and the ways that they’ve overcome adversity speaks powerfully to the foundational principle of queer pride.

Representation as activism

By their very inclusion within mainstream spaces, all three cases were in their own right fairly innovative, simply for the topics that they presented. However, in various ways they also maintained a relatively neutral stance, doing little to further activist concerns beyond presenting information or works. While this is still an important thing to do, neutrality on the part of the museum or gallery, although giving more freedom to artists

and queer voices, does not necessarily actively result in benefits for the community at large, which in these cases would presumably be the institution's goals. This is a type of passive activism, putting material up, representing queer perspectives (which in itself has often been controversial), but not taking a strong stance on queer issues, nor fighting for LGBTI rights. While assessing the impact or validity of these different types of activism is somewhat outside of the scope of this research, and certainly cannot be evidenced through the case study approach used, it is important to note that evaluation of the impact would provide a valuable, self-reflexive resource for institutions. Exhibitions do have the potential to be activist in their concerns, especially through good public programming. Not only can these types of programmes extend the exhibition beyond the single visit, they can also allow the institution to consider topics that wouldn't fit within the focused confines of an exhibition space, and through these take a more activist stance.

HIV/AIDS-related exhibitions in particular have done this overseas. Art AIDS America Chicago, which ran from December 1st 2016 – April 2nd 2017 at the Alphawood Gallery in Chicago, included public programming and related events such as artist and expert talks, panel discussions, performances and free HIV testing (artaidsamericachicago.org, 2017). These programmes included topics like: breaking down barriers and structures that create a lack of equitable representation in arts institutions, discussions about the connections between HIV/AIDS and race, the effect on women or those who identify within the feminine spectrum (including transgender, gender non-conforming persons, and womyn), theatre and poetry performances, and exploring histories of activist artists through panel discussions. This extensive range of programming was focused on confronting topics to forward some of the leading activist issues surrounding HIV/AIDS. While the public programming of *Implicated and Immune* was similarly involved, it was also somewhat more cautious, and didn't actively challenge visitors to take up activist positions – the various programmes were more focused on the connections between HIV/AIDS and the art world.

Of course, budget and scale play a significant role in this, and the programming for 1992's *Implicated and Immune* was still appropriate and innovative. Considering programming as an essential part of these types of exhibitions and a crucial way of representing queer stories in the sector, brought the institution more into the public

sphere, and more into an activist type of role. Clearly targeted programming can be a method of expressing more activist concerns in smaller institutions and encourage people to implement real change. In our cases though, the institutions were either not allocated adequate resources to explore these avenues extensively or did not consider this type of outreach as part of their exhibition's goals. These institutions were not able to carry out significant outreach, which could be focused on teaching visitors skills in human rights advocacy. Although they collaborated with institutions outside of the sector, they lacked a formal support group *within* the sector that advances human rights considerations in New Zealand museums, especially in relation to LGBTI rights. While the Federation of International Human Rights Museums may do this for institutions that as a whole advocate human rights, little practical support is allowed for exhibitions in other institutions that could approach the same kinds of advocacy. Although advocacy groups were involved in the development processes for both *Implicated and Immune* exhibitions, these activist positions weren't explicitly shown in the fabric of the final exhibitions, with a more contemplative and neutral stance taken. This reflects the needs for museums to not only be reflective of contemporary human rights issues but responsive to them in a way that is noticeable.

Despite this lack of traditional activist approaches taken by our cases, each case still progressed an activist approach simply for being exhibited – as Fleming points out, museums can “affirm identity, fulfilling the expectations and needs of victims” (Fleming, 2012, 254). In this way, exhibitions like *Implicated and Immune* 1992 and 2015 affirm queer identity through their representation of queer artists, queer art work and HIV/AIDS information. Similarly, the inclusion of a queer narrative within New Zealand's national museum, as *Slice of Heaven* showed, shows advocacy of a sort, by emphasising and affirming queer identity as valid through the authority granted by Te Papa's status.

Conclusion

This dissertation began from a personal desire to add to a queer history of exhibition-making, which has been absent in New Zealand's critical museum literature. However, the complete lack of some broader catalogue critically examining our queer exhibition-making drove me to consider this research as a starting point for such an endeavour. Following a case study approach, I systematically uncovered the origins, conceptual bases and development processes of three key exhibitions that represented queerness in mainstream museum and gallery institutions, through a combination of archival documentary research and interviewing. This was a complex endeavour, as the recovery of information about a fleeting and ephemeral occurrence – exhibitions developed 20-30 years ago – means that little empirical evidence about their existence is retained. What information remained was pieced together, with conclusions drawn from analysis of this evidence. While in several areas, a lack of empirical evidence meant that these conclusions are modest, they nonetheless speak to the plethora of issues facing the representation of queerness within the sector, and ultimately address the goals of this research.

This conclusion re-establishes the primary focus of this research, the question of how queerness is represented in New Zealand exhibitions, by outlining the strategies that these exhibitions employed in representing queer perspectives, the various ways that these exhibitions responded to contemporaneous queer issues, and the extent to which activism may or may not have shaped their approaches. I further consider some of the limitations imposed by my approach, and then go on to consider the implications these different approaches to representation have for theory and practice within the museological field, arguing for the importance of activism within this context, and suggesting future directions that research such as this could explore.

The overarching question that drove this project was:

'How do museums and galleries in Aotearoa New Zealand represent queerness in their exhibitions?'

Secondary questions that then elucidated upon this primary question were further explored. The first of these was the most extensively evidenced through primary research material –

What are the curatorial strategies employed in the development of LGBTQ exhibitions?

Common curatorial strategies that emerged were the inclusion of community organisations throughout the exhibition process, the use of broad and varied programming options, the creative and personal freedom of queer expression in the final exhibition, and the use of narrative, voice and objects as storytelling devices.

These different curatorial strategies provide insight into the complex nature of producing LGBTQ exhibitions, and the wide variety of forms that such exhibitions can take. This speaks to the question of representation in multiple ways. Firstly, the inclusion of community organisations was demonstrated as ensuring community input from the ground level, which in turn allows for a more in-depth and accurate understanding of the issues that the queer community faces. This is undoubtedly important when representing these issues in public spaces, to some extent on behalf of said communities. In this chapter I pointed to the processes of shared authority, and the value that this adds to exhibition content.

Secondly, the development of extensive public programming to accompany main gallery/museum exhibitions was a common approach that aimed to engage audiences beyond a single visit to the exhibition. Critically exploring queer perspectives through a variety of engaging public programmes therefore more broadly represents these perspectives outside of the artistic or historical content of the exhibition and can in some cases deliver a more activist-engaged offering than the exhibition itself.

Thirdly, allowing a freedom of creative expression in the art exhibitions and expression of personal experience in *Slice of Heaven* meant that queer perspectives could be authentically conveyed without being overshadowed by curatorial input. This type of personal response put queer people in collaborative control of the means of cultural production, validating and authenticating their expertise.

Lastly, the use of narrative and storytelling elements within *Slice of Heaven* in particular was critiqued for the use of ‘coming out’ as a framework for understanding queer

experiences. Objects could just as powerfully tell these stories and I demonstrated how both the development of collections and the limitations imposed by the development process can influence the content of queer exhibitions.

This research considered the findings of these case studies within a broader context, examining the evidence supporting these cases as it related to key areas of concern around queer representation, initially established in the literature review section. Then, by synthesising these findings within a broader context, this dissertation explored and critiqued the various levels of representation that these exhibitions encompass, through the analytical assessment of this representation under the lens of contemporary theory. This addressed another of the secondary questions: *How have New Zealand exhibitions responded to contemporaneous queer issues?*

The very basis of these exhibitions was critiqued for their conceptual focus on gay men's issues. This is significant in an environment where gay men in particular have historically been the focus of the LGBTQ rights movement. Representing the community as a whole is difficult because of its incredibly diverse nature, but more effort needs to be made to explore more diverse perspectives, especially as the shape of LGBTQ identity politics focuses on more contemporary concerns.

However, these exhibitions also managed to subvert initial expectations by incorporating a broad variety of perspectives on typically 'gay issues', which was a leading concern for both interview participants. Although museums and galleries can and should try to foreground alternative perspectives, especially those of gender diverse people, these exhibitions were still relatively attuned to the importance of representing the diversity of the rainbow community. However, moving into the future, as the rights of transgender people becomes a more important focus of LGBTQ activism, exhibitions should reflect these types of perspectives from a conceptual standpoint, telling the stories of the community outside of the gay man's experience. As Sandell argues, these stories can have incredible relevance for everyone, in terms of the unequal social systems, power relationships and hierarchies that they can reveal (Sandell, 2017, 118).

The relationship between queerness and representation was more explicitly explored in this synthesis section through the discussions around queer narratives, queer objects and queer voices. The issues with coming out narratives being used as a common framing

device for queer experience were discussed, and it was determined that while coming out narratives are more easily and readily understood by general audiences, their use can reduce queerness to a single, clear-cut narrative that ignores the complexity of queer experience and the legacy of prejudice and discrimination that still prevails. Queer objects similarly have the power to attest to this complexity but inclusion within exhibitions can be limited by a lack of collected material. Building collections is key in this sense, in accounting for the historical under-representation of queer history in museum collection policies. However, these hidden histories often stay in the collection, and despite the limitations of exhibition space and scope, ostensibly should be exhibited 'on the floor' as well. Lastly, featuring queer voices within exhibitions can help encourage a more personal connection between visitors and exhibition content, by describing abstract historical concepts in personal terms. Relinquishing creative authority to queer individuals gives validity to their own experiences, and ultimately positively impacts the way that these experiences are represented in the museum or gallery space.

Another of the secondary questions,

To what extent have the ways that these exhibitions represented queerness advanced a social activist agenda?

was similarly answered through critical analysis of the various levels of representation that these exhibitions offered. This question was initially based on my perspective of LGBTQ-themed exhibitions as always being activist to some extent – their very existence promotes the discussion of queer rights, and by extension human rights, in museum or gallery institutions. This is a viewpoint further consolidated by my literature review, which iterated the ways that human rights projects in the museum have direct parallels to LGBTQ rights projects. Questioning representation within this context therefore has a direct impact on the ways that these exhibitions may or may not progress activist concerns.

Within the synthesis section of this dissertation, consideration of the collaborative nature of producing queer exhibitions examined the roles of community organisations, largely activist in nature, within the exhibition development process. For 1992's Implicated and Immune especially these community groups were an essential part of the

exhibition's vision. The input of activist organisations brought the issues most relevant to queer communities to the forefront and resulted in these issues being at the centre of programming, artwork and critical review. Collaborating with community groups allowed for the concerns of these groups to shape the exhibition from the ground up, a process of shared authority that resulted in a more considered final exhibition.

A more direct analysis of the extent to which these exhibitions take on the role of activists also offers us the follow consideration – that activism can take on assorted 'guises'. Displaying these exhibitions in the first place is activist in nature to some extent, as such an action counters mainstream narratives and pushes queer issues into public focus. Conversely none of the institutions explicitly outlined particular stances on the issues they described, largely maintaining a neutral platform for queer people to make these more political statements themselves. As such, the ways that these exhibitions represented queerness could be further critiqued for the impact of the activism they purported. Although this falls outside of the scope of this research, impact evaluation that has a more audience-centric focus could prove a useful area to explore further – how valid this type of activism may have been for actually changing people's thinking, and real-world consequences that lead on from this. Of course, these types of broadly reaching impact evaluative projects are difficult to carry out and unlikely in a context that fails to support even the development of queer exhibitions. Despite this, such a project would still be a useful and direct way of demonstrating the value that these exhibitions deliver to the public.

To some extent this analysis doesn't in any great depth discuss the complexity of identity politics and assumes that 'diversity of representation' constitutes the inclusion of different categories of queer identity. However as demonstrated in my literature review, criticism focuses on the somewhat defunct categorization of the rainbow community under lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and asexual identity categories, when queer identity is so much more fluid. Despite this, such categorization still proves to be a central focus of mainstream exhibition making and is employed in many ways as a simplifying device to make queer content more accessible to non-queer audiences. This is somewhat problematic, but within the context of the cases I explored was largely left unquestioned.

Similarly throughout this research I used the terms ‘queer’ and ‘queerness’ in their meaning synonymous with LGBTQ – that is, the identity label that exists outside of cisgender and heterosexual identities. The limitations of the case study approach meant that I did not engage with the more political meaning of ‘queer’, as a radical and disruptive descriptor that challenges established systems and heteronormative knowledge or practice. The cases analysed here followed standard museum and gallery practice and similarly did not engage with queerness or queering in its more political sense, but rather aimed to represent LGBTQ perspectives instead of ‘queering’ their own approach. Conclusions were drawn from the material evidence available, and so analysis of these exhibitions through the political reading of ‘queer’ would have been entirely speculative, especially from a modern perspective. However, I acknowledge that this is an important area that should be explored further, albeit with a different selection of cases, or perhaps with a different research methodology altogether. In the future we might push for more nuanced and complex queering of representing identity, beyond the limits of law reform or HIV/AIDS narratives, but these cases are positive starting points and I suggest do more good for a still fairly conservative general public than bad.

Much of this research is also based on the assumption that physical exhibition spaces provide the best opportunities for communicating these stories, and for representing queer histories and perspectives. As queer identity politics are more and more contested in digital spaces, physical exhibition-making may take a backseat to digital spaces and the intrinsic issues that would accompany representing queer stories in these spaces would need to be explored.

Ultimately queer identity is difficult to capture, describe and delineate, which in turn makes analysis thereof incredibly complicated. New Zealand museums and galleries are aware of this, and aim to represent queerness in ‘broad strokes’, with clearly articulated and publicly understood categorisation. Queerness is underscored by a politics of inclusion, through the equal presentation of different identity categories and their perspectives. For the sake of simplicity and clarity throughout this research I have taken a relatively basic, general interpretation of queerness and used this for analysis. Further research on queer-related New Zealand exhibitions should complexify this further, challenging museums and galleries to queer their practices as well as displaying queer

histories or art. To this end, this research was largely introductory, in the sense that it attempts to establish a starting point for examining a queer exhibitionary history, and primarily from the perspective of the exhibition itself.

Analysing and evaluating queer exhibitions through the lenses of museological and queer theory is useful because it challenges the sector to think more critically about the ways that they represent queerness. Museums and galleries should be considering the broader theoretical implications of their exhibitions because of their roles as creators and disseminators of cultural authority. Museums and galleries authorise certain representations of people, which is a powerful position and one that needs to be continually examined. Without this scrutiny, institutions that claim to represent particular communities risk doing these groups a disservice, by propagating outdated and potentially dangerous ideas about minority groups. Conversely museums and galleries also have this opportunity to affect real change, although the extent of this effect is hotly debated. As a platform that is widely and publicly discussed, institutions have the opportunity to be leading thinkers in queer theory, progressing debate positively and advocating for LGBTQ communities.

As demonstrated by these cases, in practice queer representation is contested, constantly negotiated and balanced against the limitations of exhibition design, development, and institutional scope. These case studies provide us with some of the most important examples of queer exhibitions in the country because of their initiative, their agency, and for *Slice of Heaven* in particular, its placement within a significant institution. Despite this, little academic criticism examines these shows as *processes* of exhibition-making, with popular or general criticism exploring the artistic and historical merits of the content. Evaluating the processes and effects that particular strategies have on the representations presented in the final exhibition's fabric is crucial to forwarding an activist agenda; if the sector does not critically engage with issues relating to queer representation, it risks being tokenistic, presenting exhibitions that do not progress the human rights goals that are ultimately the foundation for these types of shows. Moreover, through analysing and critically examining the ways that queerness is represented in these exhibitions, this research works in part as a reclamation effort, bringing important moments in New Zealand's queer history out of academic critical obscurity, connecting seemingly disparate moments through their shared concerns for

forwarding LGBTQ rights. This is an important goal for a critical museology whose examination of queerness in the New Zealand sector is wholly lacking.

In the future, as the nature of queer identity is increasingly disputed in these public spaces, exhibitions should adjust accordingly and modernize the ways that they represent these identities. Further research into queer New Zealand exhibitions should bring this research out into the communities they aim to represent, evaluating the needs of queer people in relation to the museum and building this into guidelines for developing exhibitions. This was evidently outside of the scope of this research but would bring a more audience-centric viewpoint into potential decision-making processes – which as outlined in the various collaborations involved in these cases, is a crucial goal. As the forms that exhibitions can take become more innovative, unusual, digital or otherwise, the ways that queerness *can* be represented will undoubtedly evolve. Evaluating these representations should still be an important goal in holding institutions accountable as authorities on cultural discourse, thereby ensuring that critical thinking around queerness constantly progresses.

Appendix 1: Interview Schedule

Exhibition development (curatorial):

What was your role in this exhibition?

How did the concept for this exhibition develop?

Was it an organic process?

A collaborative one?

An individual or an organisational goal?

What was the aim for this exhibition?

Was there a particular mission or vision statement?

Were there specific short term or long term goals?

Were there set targets in terms of visitor demographics? Communities involved?

How did you come up with the name? What was the thought process there? Were there earlier names considered?

What did you see as the value of keeping the original name?

To what extent were other organisations, communities or individuals included in this early stage of development?

Were LGBTQ groups approached?

Why/why not? Do you see this as important, or was it not relevant or

In what ways did this exhibition aim to follow or challenge the leading *sector* practices of the time?

What was happening in the sector at this time? What do you think were some of the leading issues in the sector at the time of this exhibition's development?

necessary in this context? Or was it more a direct communication with artists?

Was this exhibition developed in response to any others?

What was the social context of the time?

To what extent did this exhibition aim to respond to contemporaneous social issues?

If you know, in what other ways were queer people being represented in society?

Were there any limitations (perceived or otherwise) to what you could hope to achieve? If so, what were they?

Were there any perceived attitudes that affected your approach to developing this exhibition? If so, what were they?

Were there organisational politics that affected this exhibition's development? If so, what were they?

Exhibition design (interpretation, inclusion):

What was the reasoning behind specific artists or topics being selected? How did you decide who to interview?

Were LGBTQ perspectives foregrounded? Or was there a broader (or more important) theme being explored?

In what ways did the interpretation aim to represent queerness?

For example, were there particular narratives that were being stressed?

Did you see queerness, an LGBTQ perspective, or LGBTQ issues as having an impact on the exhibition's design?

Was the look and feel of the exhibition impacted at all by a queer perspective? i.e. did the exhibition design seek to challenge hetero-normative assumptions underlying modes of display, methods of interpretation, particular language used?

To what extent were LGBTQ voices included within the interpretative strategy?

Were LGBTQ individuals asked to contribute? Did the interpretation methods used speak for, or facilitate showing the perspectives of queer community members?

Exhibition Engagement (public programmes, education, community involvement, communications):

If there were any, what were the overall goals of public programming, education or publicity? Engage with LGBTQ issues?

Were there any programmes (public or education) developed to correspond to the exhibition?

Did these programmes aim to draw specific audiences? Engage LGBTQ communities?

Did these programmes include (or particularly cater to) LGBTQ participants? If so, how?

Do you believe these were effective in their delivering their initial goals?

Did any groups, communities or organisations have a stake in this exhibition?

If so, who were they? How were they involved?

How was the exhibition pitched/delivered to the public?

In your role, did you think of this as an important element to the exhibition?
Why/why not?

Was there a particular angle that you took?

Was any advertising involved?

If so, how did this advertising represent queerness? Literally, visually, humorously?

What was the public reaction to the exhibition like?

Was it well received? Why do you think that is?

Was there any feedback obtained?

Was there any public controversy involved?

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