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ZANELE MUHOLI

PRESS 2016

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Zanele Muholi's best photograph: out and proud in South Africa

'She wanted to be a model, but not many South African agencies accept LGBTI people as clients'



Sinenhlanhla Lunga photographed by Zanele Muholi for her Faces and Phases series. Photograph: Zanele Muholi courtesy of Stevenson Gallery

Interview by Laura Snoad

Thursday 25 August 2016 04.00 EDT

This photograph is part of a series called Faces and Phases, which I've been working on for a decade. It's about creating positive images of black lesbians and transgender people in South African society, and it's dedicated to a close friend of mine who died in 2007 at the age of 25. She was a so-called "curative" rape survivor. I felt I needed to remember the people that were growing up in front of me, and to see myself as one of "us" rather than one of "them". The project is about us being counted in South African visual history. I think that's true photography – to say that you were present. **y | r**

Most of my subjects are friends or friends of friends, and often activists like me. I photograph people who are already out and fully understand who they are. I don't shoot people that are underage because I don't want them to risk their lives, especially if they're still dependent on their parents. It's too dangerous.

I took this shot of Sinenhlanhla Lunga at a friend's place in the Katlehong township. I don't use a studio – we just threw a blanket over the fence as background. I think what defines this image is the gaze. It's beautiful; there's nothing superfluous. Sinenhlanhla wanted to be a professional model, but it never happened. You can have a dream of being a visible queer or trans model, but the mainstream hasn't reached that level of acceptance. When we last spoke, she was about to have a child.

I'm so happy that we're alive, living in a country that is so infested by hate crime. About three months ago, we had droughts in my hometown of Durban and a church leader said they had been caused by homosexuality and same-sex marriage. It was reported in the media, too. It's painful to me because the church should be preaching love. At the end of July, on the weekend of Durban Pride, there were storms, floods and snow – it was very strange. I said to a friend: "I wonder what the church leaders are saying now?"

In the same year this photograph was taken, lots of my photographic equipment and my computer was stolen from my apartment in Cape Town. It was a backlash against my work, and it was a double blow because I lost a lot of unpublished material.

One of the most challenging things about being a queer visual activist in [South Africa](#) is not having access to spaces to exhibit my work here – where it would be most important – even as I gain recognition abroad. The attitude of politicians towards LGBTI people fluctuates a lot. When one of us has been killed – or there are elections – you find a lot of support, and then when it’s over they come up with a different agenda. That’s why it’s so important to have our own people in politics, in medicine and in the media.

Faces and Phases will carry on as long as I live – we are growing up together. I also give workshops to young women and provide them with cameras to let them document their own lives. Some have even become photographers. That really excites me because I know I’m not fighting alone.

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Photograph: pr/no credit

Zanele Muholi's CV

Born: Umlazi township in Durban, South Africa, 1972.

Education: Market Photo Workshop in Newtown, Johannesburg, and Ryerson University, Toronto.

Influences: “The LGBTI individuals I photograph.”

High point: “Working on a project that has reached 10 years. Also, Faces and Phases being shown at Venice Biennale in 2013 – one of the few queer projects that has made it to that stage.”

Low point: “Being misunderstood.”


Y A N C E Y R I C H A R D S O N

Top tip: “Collaborate, support each other’s projects, and give credit where it’s due. Feed the passion of people who want to become the next generation of photographers.”

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ICP GIVES 2016 INFINITY AWARDS TO WALID RAAD, ZANELE MUHOLI, DAVID BAILEY, MORE

BY *Maximiliano Durón* POSTED 02/03/16 11:03 AM

The New York–based International Center of Photography announced the 2016 winners of its annual Infinity Awards, which have been given annually since 1985 to honor excellence in photography. The awards will be given at the ICP’s annual benefit on April 11, ahead of the much-delayed summer opening of its new space at 250 Bowery.

— For documentary and photojournalism, Zanele Muholi, whose photographs capture the often unseen population of LGBTQ people of South Africa and who recently had an exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum.

EVENT

Interview with Zanele Muholi by Ginger Liu

JANUARY 7, 2016 - UNITED KINGDOM , WRITTEN BY GINGER LIU



© Zanele Muholi. Dimpho Tsotetsi, Parktown, 2014. Courtesy of Stevenson, Cape Town and Johannesburg



© Zanele Muholi. Kekeletso Khena Green Market Square Cape Town 2012



© Zanele Muholi. Somizy Sincwala, Parktown, 2014. Courtesy of Stevenson, Cape Town and Johannesburg

Liverpool's Open Eye Gallery showcases the first major exhibition in the UK for South African photographer and visual activist **Zanele Muholi**. Muholi has exhibited her work of black lesbian and LGBTI South Africans for more than a decade and has achieved international recognition by producing a visual history which keeps visible the faces, bodies and lives of a community living with homophobic violence and discrimination. Another photographer might focus a little too much on the sensational subjects of rape and murder that affects a community, but in Muholi's hands there is a determination to show the whole picture. In doing so, her

audience is witness to a very personal connection between photographer and participant with gorgeous images of dignity, defiance and celebration of black lesbians and LGBTI.

I interviewed Zanele at Open Eye Gallery before the opening of Vukani/Rise where I was also introduced to two of her participants, Lerato Dumse and Somizy Sincwala.

Ginger Liu: What is the meaning behind Vukani/Rise?



Zanele Muholi: Vukani is a Zulu word meaning rise. It calls upon every second LGBTI person to rise above whatever circumstance that person might be going through, especially at the height of different phobias because fear is two way. Either the person who is a homophobe is in fear of the unknown or it is us having to live in fear of not knowing what might happen where or when. It is a call for action and to say never allow any circumstances to pull you down. Just rise beyond, no matter what.

GL: You have a special relationship with your subjects, many of whom you return to photograph year after year. How has this grown and developed over the years?

ZM: I don't work with subjects, I work with participants. I'm very specific with that. People who are in my photographs participate in an ongoing project. I want to connect and also that connection has to be consented to do it with respect. And to make sure that we fully understand that whatever you are doing at a particular time, you are standing there and you are writing a history or you are a history maker. The fact that you say you are, not everyone is as brave as you, which is why I say it is participation. That act, your action, your involvement, your intervention may lead to another person being liberated or being educated around the same issues that affect us.

GL: Twenty years ago did you ever expect that you would be a visual voice for the lesbian and LGBTI community?

ZM: I've been around for some time and you saw the low quality documentary that shows events that took place more than ten years ago. So twenty years ago I was still there and even though I said things differently, I was clear with my plan. Obviously my work was not as known as much as now. I was studying public relations and I wanted to do something else. I wanted to focus on film and documentaries. But now I've found a personal and positive approach to this visual activism and I've managed to break through. People are listening. Others are thinking art activism or visual activism is key. I knew I wanted to be somewhere. I knew I wanted to travel. How it was going to happen, I didn't know at that time.

GL: Explain how the Faces and Phases project began and what you wish to convey with these set of images?

ZM: Faces and Phases began in 2006. Prior to them I started shooting portraits of different individuals who were close to me. In 2006, I lost a friend who was a HIV activist and poet and also a lesbian mother. And as I was still trying to process that, my nephew committed suicide. My other friend who was also an HIV activist, poet, writer, a spokesperson for hate crimes and a "corrective" rape survivor also succumbed to HIV complications. Those were three major losses that happened in a short space of time. It was then that I thought that we needed positive

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images that could speak today and in which we remember the people that we loved and treasured and contributed so much to our lives. I just need to have these positive images of these beautiful beings occupying the same space as me and be remembered.

GL: How do your participants react when they see themselves over a period of time?

ZM: There are different reactions because you can see when a person was young. And the reaction is never the same because you see how beautiful some of them look right now and you see so much change because we grow up as individuals.

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GL: And of course, only they know what they were thinking at the time.

ZM: We request people to write their stories and also to ask basic questions of how they are doing now and why they agreed to participate.

GL: You seem to favor black and white photography in your practice.

ZM: I was taught photography in black and white so I know how to shoot, develop and fix. My early work is in black and white which is partly currently on show at Liverpool Tate. I needed to have that timeless feel of our lives being there before I was born. If you had black LGBTI individuals in the 1950s and '60s, that photography is likely to be captured in black and white because of what was accessible back then. That sepia tonality would have been part of the document and the grain and the stain would have been part of the document. I like black and white. It's a more classic and timeless feel that represents something that was, that existed before. Whereas color is present and it could be anything and any time.

GL: Being visible is a common theme in your work. Why is it so important for the LGBTI community to be seen and heard in South Africa?

ZM: In South Africa and Beyond. We don't see many black faces at galleries abroad and in museums. People either have objects in different spaces that speaks to a different past. We don't see much. That's the whole point of making the invisible visible because we are part and parcel of whatever is happening in different spaces. So we as LGBTI people owe it ourselves to make sure that we are seen because to be seen means that we are recognized and recognition means that we are being respected and being respected means that our voices are heard. It's not about flaunting the queerness or to exoticize the black gay man and black body. It is beyond just that.

It's time that we see ourselves positively and also in a manner that makes us feel whole and safe and sensible. Those voices connect and keep you going because you know that you are not alone. Before being lovers we come from families. We are born by men and women and I think that these are the documents that are lacking in the mainstream archive right now. Let us bring these voices and visuals to the fore. Bring them forward into the gallery spaces. We can't limit it to our spaces and say this is only a LGBTI group. I don't want to be projected in a limited space. I want to mainstream our issues so people understand and have some education around LGBTI people from home and beyond. I want to be remembered as a human being before my sexuality is fed into me. I want my work and the work featuring those that I respect, to be recognized beyond just naming.

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So it's very political. I wish that LGBTI people and the mainstream society get the opportunity to see and ask questions and also to wonder where are your own people and why this work is here because each and every individual comes from somewhere. And each and every individual has their own life story to tell beyond just the body that is projected in your face. I want to make sure that we have a visual history that speaks to us and to the current generation and will inform future generations because the past is not easy to touch.

GL: The After Tears project is a moving collection of portraits depicting the “Mo(u)rning” of gay activist Muntu Masombuka. Explain the image process and the impact these images have had.

ZM: These are very enacted scenes where we had a night vigil remembering those that came before us who are no longer here. And it features individuals who are in Brave Beauties 2013-2014. So I needed to remember. You know, remembering again? Also having a memory and memorizing. And it's simplified because you can tell in their faces that something has happened but you don't know until you are told they are enacted scenes. And I could relate to one major case in which I could see how death connects LGBTI individuals when somebody has passed and then we don't even need to wait for invitations to come to funeral, it becomes automatic for us to be there and make sure that we mourn with the family. And we are basically saying, we remember you, we remember you.

GL: Zava is a very personal group of images of you and your girlfriend. Is this something you intend to develop in the future?

ZM: Like all my projects, Zava is continuous but it is really deeply personal. I'm in a long distance relationship so I don't get to see my girlfriend every day because we are both busy and live in faraway places. She lives in Paris. So the two to three minutes that we get to be together, that's when I really feel the beats that once again I'm with her. We've been working on this project tirelessly for the past three years and she is really someone that I love and I'm not posing with a model. This is me and her and that's how I like to remember.

The interview was published by <http://ragazine.cc>. Ginger Liu is a photographer, writer/editor and filmmaker based in Los Angeles and London. www.photo.gingerliu.com @gingerliu

AWARDS

2016 ICP Infinity Awards : Zanele Muholi (Documentary & Photojournalism)

APRIL 29, 2016 - UNITED STATES , WRITTEN BY L'ŒIL DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE

For more than a decade South African photographer **Zanele Muholi** has documented hate crimes against members of the LGBTI community in South Africa. Though the country ratified gay marriage in 2006, the discrimination and violence persist.

Zanele Muholi was born in Umlazi, Durban, in 1972, and lives in Johannesburg. She co-founded the Forum for Empowerment of Women (FEW) in 2002, and in 2009 founded Inkanyiso (www.inkanyiso.org), a forum for queer and visual (activist) media. Muholi's self-proclaimed mission is 'to re-write a black queer and trans visual history of South Africa for the world to know of our resistance and existence at the height of hate crimes in SA and beyond'. Muholi studied Advanced Photography at the Market Photo Workshop in Newtown, Johannesburg, and in 2009 completed an MFA: Documentary Media at Ryerson University, Toronto.



She has won numerous awards including the Fine Prize for an emerging artist at the 2013 Carnegie International; a Prince Claus Award (2013); the Index on Censorship – Freedom of Expression art award (2013); and the Casa Africa award for best female photographer and a Fondation Blachère award at Les Rencontres de Bamako biennial of African photography (2009). Her *Faces and Phases* series has shown at, among others, Documenta 13; the South African Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale; and the 29th São Paulo Biennale. She was shortlisted for the 2015 Deutsche Börse Photography Prize for her publication *Faces and Phases: 2006-14* (Steidl/The Walther Collection). Muholi is an Honorary Professor of the University of the Arts, Bremen.

**Visual activism**

Photos spotlight brutal hate crimes faced by South Africa's black lesbian community

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Zanele Muholi is on a mission to rewrite the visual history of the black LGBTI community in South Africa, and expose rampant violence and discrimination

BY KATIE BOOTH 04.15.16



ZANELE MUHOLI. (© NAJIB NAFID)

Twenty-two years after ending apartheid and ushering in democracy, South Africa today presents a troubling paradox. Despite being the first country in the world to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation in its constitution in 1996, and the only country in Africa to recognize same-sex marriage in 2006, violent hate crimes against the LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex) community in South Africa — particularly for lesbian women of color — are a growing problem.

Members of the black LGBTI community in South Africa live in fear — not only of being exiled by their peers and family members, but also for their lives. For women and

trans people who defy norms of gender expression and sexual orientation, corrective rape, committed as an attempt to “convert” women to heterosexuality, assault, and even murder are rampant in townships across the country.

The magnitude of this widespread violence and intolerance, not to mention the stories of survivors, often go unseen and unheard. But one photographer has dedicated her career to making the South African LGBTI community visible, and the world is taking notice. On April 11, Zanele Muholi was awarded the International Center of Photography (ICP)’s Infinity Award for Documentary and Photojournalism. As she took the stage to accept her award on Monday night, she paused. “Before going on, I want to thank every parent, every lover to the same sex in the house, and trans people in the house,” she said. “Our mothers, our fathers, it’s not a crime to have children like us.”

Muholi is a self-described “visual activist” and her work’s impact extends far beyond the walls of a gallery or museum. Growing up the daughter of a domestic worker during the 1970s in the township of Umlazi, Muholi has lived directly with the threats of violence and alienation facing so many of her peers. She’s also been keenly aware of the lack of written history, acknowledgment, and representation of black queer women in South African society. “My work is about documenting a history of black LGBTI people in South Africa that I didn’t have access to when I came out,” she has said.

Faces and Phases, Muholi’s first major project, is a serene but captivating series depicting black lesbian and trans women. The project, which today has grown to almost 300 portraits, and has been published in a 368 page photobook by Steidl, is an undeniably positive reminder of the existence and humanity of each individual portrayed. “I wanted to use visuals as a way in which to push an agenda, a visual history, to reference and say that this existed,” Zanele told *Women in the World*. “I’m creating a visual history of these people, which will then inform those who come after us.”

Muholi’s subjects, who represent a number of diverse backgrounds, have stories that are both humbling and heartbreaking. One lesbian woman she photographed, Lungile Cleopatra Dladla, whose story was told in a *New Yorker* article, survived “corrective rape” as she walked home one night with a friend. An armed man approached them and raped them, telling them, “*Ja*, today I want to show you that you’re girls.”

Dladla faced an uphill battle when she brought her story to the police, who insisted she wasn’t a woman. “They said, ‘He’s not a girl. How can he be raped?’” she told the *New Yorker*. Two years later, when she went to the doctor with trouble breathing, she was informed that she was H.I.V. positive.

Racial politics are also a major focus of Muholi’s work. In 2014, she turned the camera towards herself. Taking on multiple personas, her self-portraits in *Somnyama Ngonyama* ask the viewer to confront aspects of South Africa’s troubled history, along with their own perceptions of race and identity. “By exaggerating the darkness of my

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skin tone, I'm reclaiming my blackness, which I feel is continuously performed by the privileged other," she wrote of the project.

ICP's Infinity Award is one of several major accomplishments in the past year that have brought Muholi's work to the forefront of the international stage. In 2015, *Faces and Phases*, along with several of her other projects, made up a major exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum's Elizabeth Sackler Center for Feminist Art. "I think Zanele is covering an issue that should be discussed, and through photography, she is changing people's perceptions," ICP's Executive Director Mark Lubell told Women in the World. "Not only is she documenting her community, she has also turned the camera on herself to continue that conversation. I think she has tremendous strength."

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Zanele Muholi accepts the International Center Of Photography's 2016 Infinity award for Documentary and Photojournalism. (Getty Images)

Chosen by a committee of other reputable members of the photography community, including Charlotte Cotton and Teju Cole, Muholi's receipt of the Infinity Award is a testament to the impact she's making, not only on her own community in South Africa, but also on the perceptions of outsiders. Looking back at the tremendous global support that came from artists and activists during the era of apartheid, Muholi stressed the need for continued support and awareness of human rights violations impacting the black LGBTI community in South Africa today.

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“The generation that came before ours, they had to deal with apartheid, and the generation after had to deal with HIV/AIDS, etc., and now we’re dealing with hate crime in ways that we would never have expected at this particular time, as South Africa is celebrating 22 years of democracy,” she said. “Still, we are fighting for unjust situations. We are forced to fight, using every tool that is there, to make sure there is no more violence, there is no more hate crime, there are no more lives claimed. Every life lost it means we have lost a member of the community, we have lost somebody’s child, we have lost one of us.”





21 April - 3 June 2016

SEX

DINEO SESHEE BOPAPE / STEVEN COHEN /
PAMELLA DLUNGWANA / FAKA /
SIMON GUSH / MOSHEKWA LANGA /
MITCHELL GILBERT MESSINA /
SABELO MLANGENI / NANDIPHA MNTAMBO /
NÁSTIO MOSQUITO / ZANELE MUHOLI /
MAME-DIARRA NIANG / ARTU PEATOO /
LINEO SEGOETE / THEMBA SIWELA /
LADY SKOLLIE

Evocative exhibition is sexing up the atmosphere

Curated by Lerato Bereng, the exhibition SEX is one of its kind in Johannesburg, forcing much-needed conversations about sex to be had at dinner tables. MBALI PHALA is no art critic but believes that the artworks exhibited are necessary.

My life starts and ends with art. On most days, I camp on the internet, looking at art and reading about it – new and old, African and international. It's held me on days when the world wanted nothing to do with me. However, never in my graceful courtship with art did I ever imagine exhibiting art displaying sex so explicitly.

There was excitement in my stomach when I walked through the doors of Braamfontein's Stevenson Gallery. It's like when you're crushing over somebody and you get butterflies in your stomach – but not quite. This excitement quickly turned into a sea of inexplicable emotions, and an element of discomfort as my eyes locked onto a screening of restaged sex scenes from men-only sex clubs by Joburg-based collective FAKA. I had never seen this before, but it wasn't that scene that caused the discomfort. It was the realisation of knowing that I am exploring sex, publicly.



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The exhibition, SEX, is a set of continuing responses to the question "sex?" which, according to Stevenson gallery, was offered to artists as a curatorial proposition. SEX is a kaleidoscope of positions unearthing sexual narratives from Johannesburg, South Africa, and the continent through various mediums of art. From cartoonist Themba Siwela's paintings depicting fictional scenes from black South African rural and urban contexts, to Moshekwa Langa's piece portraying a moment of masculine eroticism, expressing the weakness of intimate moments of self-pleasure in relation to the presence of another – a kind of juvenile sexuality.



Other artists on display include Laura Windvogel (under the pseudonym of Lady Skollie), whose artistic expression focuses on themes of greed, lust, sex and gender

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roles; Sabelo Mlangeni, who has made a name for himself with his touching black-and-white photographs; and Zanele Muholi, who is known for exploring black lesbian and gay identities and politics in South Africa. Muholi is also displaying a homophobic hate crime timeline on the gallery's fifth floor, detailing over a decade of murdered women and men within the LGBTQI community in South Africa.

Across the wall from Muholi's exhibit was "Sextime". This is a selection of short stories from African writers' collective, Jalada, which had me chuckling as I moved one from story to the next. The fiction works primarily focus on sex, along with other literature and archived sound and film. A collection of video works will be screened during the run of the show until June 3, including *Of Good Report*, which was the first South African film to be banned since 1994.

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I had learnt a ton about sex and its different narratives at the end of my walkabout in the gallery. I know this because the shipment assistant said to me, "Your facial expression says it all. You'll be okay".

The exhibition runs at the Stevenson Gallery from 21 April – 6 June 2016.



Mead Museum Unveils Two Unprecedented Contemporary Art Exhibits

By *Sophia Salazar, Staff Writer*

The Mead Art Museum opened two new stunning exhibitions on Feb. 16: “Tom Friedman: Untitled (Foundation)” and “Second-Hand Reading: William Kentridge and Zanele Muholi.” Both exhibits are unique not only to the Mead, but also to the art world. Friedman’s contemporary art exhibit is directly inspired by various artworks from the Mead’s own holdings, making it the first time the artist has based his work on a single museum’s collection.

“Tom Friedman: Untitled (Foundation)” features Friedman’s contemporaneous reimagining of notable paintings, sculptures and photographs from the Mead’s permanent collection. Such works in the permanent collection that served as muses for Friedman’s artwork include Joshua Reynolds’ infamous portrait of Lord Jeffrey Amherst (1765) and Claude Monet’s “Morning on the Seine” (1897).

Other works from which he draws influence range from second century Greek sculpture and eighth century Japanese woodworking. Friedman uses a range of media to restructure and/or repurpose the preexisting artwork, such as glitter, Styrofoam and Plexiglas, which introduces a fresh take on great art pieces, allowing them to transcend time and space. In some of his pieces, Friedman engages the artistic emblems of the past to poignantly deliver ironic and politically charged messages on modern issues. For example, in his piece “Untitled (Lord Jeffrey)” (2016), Friedman horizontally elongates Reynolds’ original portrait of Lord Jeffrey Amherst and places multicolored bars over the stretched image. Friedman metaphorically places Lord Jeffrey behind bars on the inkjet image, alluding to the application of our current legal definition of war crimes on historical accounts of despicable violence. Another one of Friedman’s works “Snowflakes” (2016) takes on the now infamous Starbucks red holiday cup controversy. White snowflakes cover the image of Dutch Golden Age painter Bartholomeus van Bassen’s painting, “Interior of a Church” (1624). On the artwork’s description, Friedman states that the image is a response to Starbucks removing the snowflakes on their holiday cups. The juxtaposition of festive snowflakes on a 15th century painting of a hallowed, sanctified church speaks volumes about the artist’s perspective of the Christian right’s recent movement against Starbucks’ sans-snowflake red

holiday cups. Ultimately, Friedman's new works feature his creative interplay with the past, introducing spectators to new conversations and ideas about pieces from the Mead's art collection.

"Second-Hand Reading: William Kentridge and Zanele Muholi" feature the works of the two renowned contemporary South African artists, who stem from two different generations. Zanele Muholi, born in Umlazi, Durban, South Africa in 1972, uses the photographic medium to display aspects of the complex history of race, sexuality and gender in her home country. The majority of Muholi's photographs that are currently on display at the Mead are selections from her "Faces and Phases" series.

The series praises members of South Africa's LGBT community through stunning black-and-white portraits. The remaining works contributed by Muholi include recent self-portraits, which are vividly gorgeous in black-and-white form. In a quote on a wall of the exhibit, Muholi, who is an activist in addition to an artist, states that she aims to "re-write a black queer and trans visual history of South Africa for the world."

William Kentridge, born in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1955, uses text, drawing, collage and stop-motion animation to portray the nature of recording and articulating history. On display in the exhibit is Kentridge's stop-motion film "Second-Hand Reading," which is set to a revised version of an old Sesotho church hymn performed by Neo Muyanga. Kentridge's works draw on themes, of memory, tragedy and hope, markedly influenced by his life experience growing up during apartheid, and his life's work dedicated to investigating apartheid's consequences on South Africa's historical memory. By observing the display of Kentridge's art on display at this exhibit, one can grasp his beautiful take on difficult questions that arise from historically accounting for South Africa's apartheid.

Overall, these two new exhibits work actively to engage with history in a contemporary context. Moreover, they represent the beautifully creative ways in which humanity interprets and engages with the past. "Second-Hand Reading: William Kentridge and Zanele Muholi" is on view until April 3 while "Tom Friedman: Untitled (Foundation)."



Welcome to Culture Type!

An exploration of black art through vintage and contemporary books, magazines and catalogs, Culture Type shares invaluable interestingness culled from the published record on black art.



The Year in Black Art: May 2015

by VICTORIA L. VALENTINE on Jan 24, 2016 • 1:29 am



Vuwyelwa Vuvu Makubetse, Daveyton, Johannesburg, from the series "Faces and Phases" 2013, by Zanele Muholi on the cover of the May 2015 issue of Black + White Photography magazine.

MAGAZINE | An image by South African photographer **Zanele Muholi** covers the May issue of [Black + White Photography](#) magazine, Issue No. 173. The activist photographer uses her images to create visibility for lesbian and transgender communities in South Africa and the cover coincides with "[Zanele Muholi: Isibonelo/Evidence](#)" (May 1-Nov. 8), her solo exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum, the most comprehensive museum presentation of her work to date. Inside the issue, coverage includes an article about "[Staying Power: Black British Experience 1950s-1990s](#)," a photography exhibition and archival project at the Victoria & Albert (V&A) Museum in London, and a feature about **Carlos Javier Ortiz**'s photographs documenting the aftermath of gun crimes in Philadelphia and Chicago.

Arles 2016 : “SYSTEMATICALLY OPEN?” ? Curator Zanele Muholi

JULY 11, 2016 - FRANCE, WRITTEN BY L'ŒIL DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE

Somnyama Ngonyama is an ongoing project by photographer and activist Zanele Muholi. While her earlier projects have depicted members of the black LGBTI community of South Africa, “Somnyama Ngonyama” finds the artist turning the camera on herself. Self-portraiture is used as a tool of intimacy, serving as commentary on contemporary political and cultural issues that affect black people in Africa and its diaspora.

Zanele Muholi is a visual activist born in 1972 in Umlazi, Durban, and based in Johannesburg, South Africa. She co-founded the Forum for Empowerment of Women (FEW) in 2002, and in 2009 founded Inkanyiso (www.inkanyiso.org), a forum for queer and visual (activist) media. Dedicated to representing issues central to the black queer and trans communities in South Africa, she continues to facilitate photography workshops for young women in various townships. Muholi studied Advanced Photography at the Market Photo Workshop in Newtown, Johannesburg, and in 2009, completed an MFA in Documentary Media at Ryerson University, Toronto. She is an Honorary Professor at the University of the Arts/Hochschule für Künste Bremen. Muholi has won numerous awards including the ICP Infinity Award for Documentary and Photojournalism (2016); the Outstanding International Alumni Award from Ryerson University (2016); the Fine Prize for an emerging artist at the 2013 Carnegie International; a Prince Claus Award (2013); the Index on Censorship – Freedom of Expression art award (2013); and the Casa Africa award for best female photographer and a Fondation Blachère award at Les Rencontres de Bamako biennial of African photography (2009). Her Faces and Phases series has shown at, among others, Documenta 13; the South African Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale; and the 29th São Paulo Biennale. She was shortlisted for the 2015 Deutsche Börse Photography Prize for her Faces and Phases 2006 – 14 (Steidl/The Walther Collection). Muholi is currently included in the exhibition African Art against the State, on view at the Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Massachusetts through August 2016.

EXHIBITION

SYSTEMATICALLY OPEN?

New Forms for Contemporary Image Production

Curators : Walead Beshty, Elad Lassry, Zanele Muholi, Collier Schorr

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SYSTEMATICALLY OPEN? Nouvelles formes de production de l'image contemporaine

ARTREPORT

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Gender, Sexuality and Art

BY BRIDGET CASEY

2 JULY



The first Pride March was held on June 28, 1970 to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the Stonewall Riots. Crowds of resilient queers and strong-willed activists marched from Christopher Street to Central Park, and the tradition soon spread like Shane/Jenny gossip on the *L Word*.

Over forty years later, Pride parades and events are hosted around the world. Some take New York Pride for granted as a festival of neon, glitter, and shirtless men on floats, but in many countries Pride events are still a crucial platform for publicly embracing queerness and opposing homophobia. Homosexuality is **illegal** in 65 countries and punishable by death in 10, as of June 2016.

We have certainly come a long way since 1970, although we have a long way to go. And where exactly are we headed? In honor of Pride Month, let's take a moment to highlight some fresh(er) faces who confront contemporary issues of sexuality and gender identity. There are the all-stars in recent art history: **Robert Mapplethorpe's** homoerotic and hyper-masculine photographs, **Catherine Opie's** documentation of San Francisco's queer leather subculture, **Felix Gonzalez-Torres's** action pieces on the 1980s HIV/AIDS crisis. No one would deny their importance (or their place in our collective heart), but who is shaping what it means to make queer art in the twenty-first century?

Here are a handful of emerging artists and their exciting, challenging, and uplifting bodies of work.

ZANELE MUHOLI



Muholi is a South African photographer known for her stunning black and white portraits. The same year that South Africa legalized same-sex marriage she began the series *Faces and Phases* in 2006 to document black lesbian and trans communities in the face of rampant violence. She invites her queer and gender-nonconforming

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subjects to participate in the making of their own image, and she encourages others to learn photography through her visual activism project [Inkanyiso](#). In 2015, [Muholi](#) not only published a book but also presented her work in the solo exhibition *Isibonelo/Evidence* at the [Brooklyn Museum](#).

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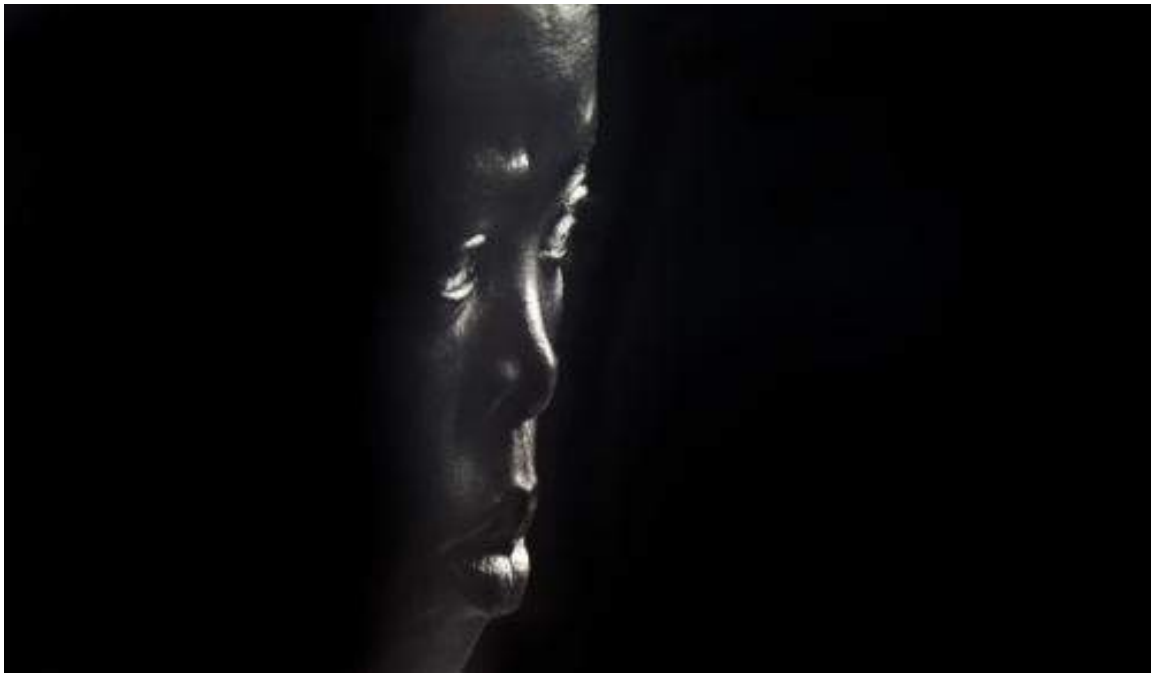


Muholi's back with 'Hail the Dark Lioness'

CAPE TIMES / 05 Jul '16, 6:19pm

PHOTOGRAPHER and visual activist Zanele Muholi's powerful portraits demand attention. Each image is beautifully styled and tells a story that requires the viewer to question and to understand the message behind each photograph.

Her exhibition titled *Somnyama Ngonyama* (meaning: Hail, the Dark Lioness) is currently on display at the Standard Bank Gallery in Grahamstown, as part of the annual *Grahamstown National Festival* (NAF).



MIRROR IMAGE: A self-portrait of photographer, Zanele Muholi taken while travelling in South Africa, America and Europe exhibited at the Standard Bank Gallery in Grahamstown. Picture: THOBILE MATHONSI. Credit: Independent Media Ltd

YANCEY RICHARDSON

The series of work featuring black and white self-portraits confronts the politics of race and pigment.

It also includes photographs from her ongoing essay titled *Brave Beauties*, which celebrates and raises awareness about hate crimes against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community.

The Durban born Muholi launched her visual activism with her first solo exhibition titled *Visual Sexuality: Only Half the Picture* at the Johannesburg Gallery in 2004.

She has since exhibited in and around South Africa as well as in Vienna, Milan, London and Amsterdam.

Muholi has also won a number of awards including the ICP Infinity Award for Documentary and Photojournalism (2016) and Africa'Sout! Courage and Creativity Award this year.

As co-founder of the Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW), a safe space for women, she raises awareness about the realities of corrective rape and HIV/AIDS.

Her book titled *Faces and Phases* features a series of black and white portraits by commemorating and celebrating South African black lesbian lives.

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#NAF16: 'Dark Lioness' strikes at racism

06 Jul '16, 5:38pm

Nontando Mposo

Powerful photographs force viewers to examine politics of race and pigment as well as hate crimes against LGBTI community, writes Nontando Mposo.



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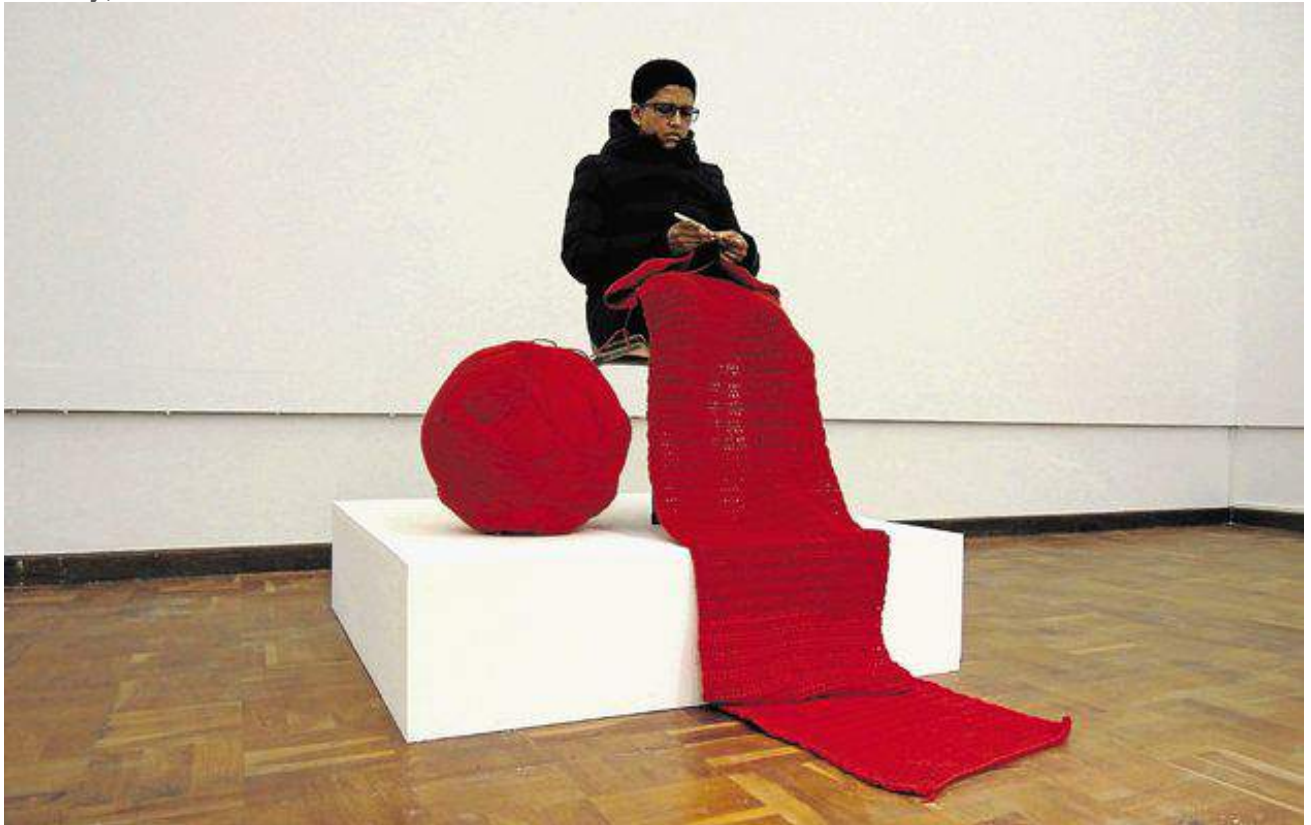
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The Grahamstown National Arts Festival runs until Sunday.



Arts festival: Women's toil tops the bill

05 July, 2016 08:15



WHERE THERE'S WOOL: Lerato Shadi at her never-ending piece

It's that time of year again, when bigwig dramaturges and spiced-nut sellers, cultural apparatchiks and amateur landscape painters all heed the frostbitten call of Grahamstown.

The standout exhibitions on the National Arts Festival stage, the last devised by outgoing artistic director Ismail Mohamed, are by women.

Trained at the University of Johannesburg, Berlin-based Lerato Shadi's *Noka ya Bokamoso* is an arresting showcase that includes two video works and a new wall drawing.

YANCEY RICHARDSON

In *Sugar & Salt* (2014) we see Shadi licking sugar from her mother's tongue, and her mom licking salt from hers. The work is remarkably tender.

But it is Shadi's physical presence in the museum that has got everyone talking.

Every day, she comes into the Albany Museum, seats herself on a chair near her artworks and continues crocheting an ever-growing length of red fabric.

Shadi doesn't interact with her public while sewing. It lends her labour a quiet solemnity.

Celebrated photographer Zanele Muholi has work in a neighbouring gallery. Her exhibition *Somnyama Ngonyama* (Hail, the dark lioness) is an extraordinary feat.

It is composed of two distinct portrait series: *Brave Beauties*, a 2014 suite of portraits of Miss Gay beauty pageant contestants, and a self-portrait collection after which the exhibition is named.

In her self-portraits Muholi wears dark make-up and bends and contorts her body as she pleases. In one photo she wears a crown made of pot scourers. In another she throttles herself. She is often naked.

One senses Muholi's abandon as she tumbles into an inner world in these ravishing photos.

Muholi's master class in self-portraiture is not entirely matched by Mohau Modisakeng, who premiered his Standard Bank Young Artist Award exhibition *Lefa La Ntate* (My father's legacy)

His show includes a four-screen video of the artist navigating a coal yard. Coal pieces also ring his main sculptural installation, a long table into which six performers have carved a pattern quoted from the R100 note.



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June 2016: The Queer Issue VII

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Image: *Zanele Muholi*, "Zinzi and Tozama II Mowbray, Cape Town," from the series *Being*, 2010. Gelatin Silver Print. © Zanele Muholi. Courtesy of the artist and *Yancey Richardson Gallery*.

This month we present the seventh installment of our annual Queer Issue. From the turbulence of adolescence to the resignation of middle age, in prison cells and open relationships, characters navigate queer desire and social constructs around the world. Jeon Sam-hye's smitten space trainee moons over her superstar roommate. In São Paulo, Alexandre Vidal Porto's straitlaced husband and father turns a cab into a confessional. Khadi Hane's broken ex-convict remains captive to the past. Mu Cao's runaway turned hustler finds sanctuary with an

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older man. In an excerpt from the first lesbian novel in Arabic, Lebanon's Elham Mansour articulates a philosophy of love. Ronald M. Schernikau follows an infatuated teen on a school trip with his unwitting crush. And in two views of (and from) *ménages à trois*, Gabriela Wiener's compulsive cheat finds it takes three to tango, and Lawrence Schimel's serene polyamorist spreads the word and opens his arms. Our special feature showcases Latino-Canadian literature, introduced and translated by María José Giménez.

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Wangechi Mutu, Jidenna, Santigold & More Come Together for a Cause at 'Africa's Out! 2016'

06.08.16

Wangechi Mutu and Zanele Muholi. Photo courtesy of Richard C. Burrows.

by NADIA SESAY



At the second annual Africa's Out! benefit, held on Friday at Pioneer Works in Brooklyn, art and music notables from the diaspora showed up and rocked out to support [UHAI EASHRI](#), an organization in East Africa which promotes sexual health and LGBTQI rights.

Let the name-dropping begin.

The featured guest roster was an all-star lineup of diaspora talent: Jidenna and Derrick Adams, Santigold and Mickalene Thomas, Jojo Abot and Renee Cox, DJ April Hunt and Hank Willis Thomas—to only list a few. The evening honored Zanele Muholi, a photographer and visual activist who explores black queer identities in contemporary South Africa.

The event kicked off with guests sipping cocktails and nibbling hors d'oeuvres to background electronic beats from Moon Medicin—self-described as “a multimedia concept band that performs against a backdrop of curated sound effects and images of sci-fi, punk, sacred geometry, coded symbology, film noir, minstrels, world politics, and ceremonial dance”—that was formed by visual artist Sanford Biggers.

Cocktails led to dinner that opened with a presentation to Muholi. I spoke with the artist before she accepted her award, an honor she dedicated to the people she's featured in her work. Muholi says of the recognition, “I'm excited. Whoever thought it was difficult to produce the kind of material that I have produced over more than ten years would have at least a reference point to start from to encourage other people who want to document their communities.”

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Back in South Africa, Muholi currently teaches youth photography skills so that a new generation may continue beyond her to use the camera lens as a tool of activism. “[I] cannot be the only one. [Others] deal with different issues and challenges and the more we document the better. It means our voices will be heard in different ways and in different spaces,” she explains.

Santigold’s performance at the conclusion of dinner was a turning point. The dining space, set up with two rows of formal dinner tables, quickly turned to a boisterous concert venue as guests fled their seats to rush the stage at the other end of the room for a closer look at the *L.E.S.*

Artistsinger. And in response, Santigold invited several people on stage to join her.

For any planned event, venue is an important consideration. The expansive Pioneer Works space allowed for dedicated areas of activity: the dining room, a photo studio where guests could be photographed by *the Renee Cox*, an exhibition space with artworks by **Lina Viktor**, **Ayana V Jackson**, and **Omar Victor Diop** (again to only list a few) that were auctioned during the event.

In another area a barbershop pop-up where attendees could get temporary tattoos of the Africa's Out! logo—a butterfly. The “barbershop” was complete with vintage chairs and painted signs advertising hairstyles, like those common in [Pointe-Noire, DRC](#).

Detail was a clear priority for the organizers that even extended to the dress code: ‘Bougie Jungle.’ Based on observation, this lay somewhere in the intersection of chic and funky. The elegant hostess Mutu sported **Duro Olowu**’s Spring/Summer 2016 collection but electrified the look with white cornrows. Ghanaian [Afro-Hypno-Sonic](#) songstress Jojo Abot fit in with a neon yellow dress and matching wig that called to mind Lil Kim’s monochromatic looks in Junior M.A.F.I.A.’s “Crush on You” video, but with the soulful essence of Erykah Badu.

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Muholi punctuated her all black look with beaded accessories from the **Ndebele** people of Zimbabwe. The charismatic MC **Mr. Gandy** kept the atmosphere joyous and the schedule prompt while himself managing at least three wardrobe changes.

Ever-dapper Jidenna, who has previously showed his appreciation for [ankara](#), dressed the part in an ankara ensemble. Africa's Out! was my first time experiencing Jidenna perform live, and the man's got moves. When he recited the lyrics, "Now watch pretty mama while I slang my cane," from the song "Long Live the Chief", he skillfully gyrated accordingly. Having a near-front-row-view of the performer, I blushed. He also paused to spotlight Muhammad Ali's passing, dedicating the song, "Extraordinaire," to the GOAT.

Mutu [previously told OkayAfrica](#) she was inspired to create Africa's Out! by her friend Wanja Muguongo's work with UHAI EASHRI and also by another close friend, writer and activist Binyavanga Wainainahe, who in 2014 revealed in a public letter that he was gay (Only one week prior to Binyavanga's letter, former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan passed an anti-gay law, which made same-sex relationships illegal, punishable with up to 14 years in prison. Soon after Uganda followed suit with a similar law).

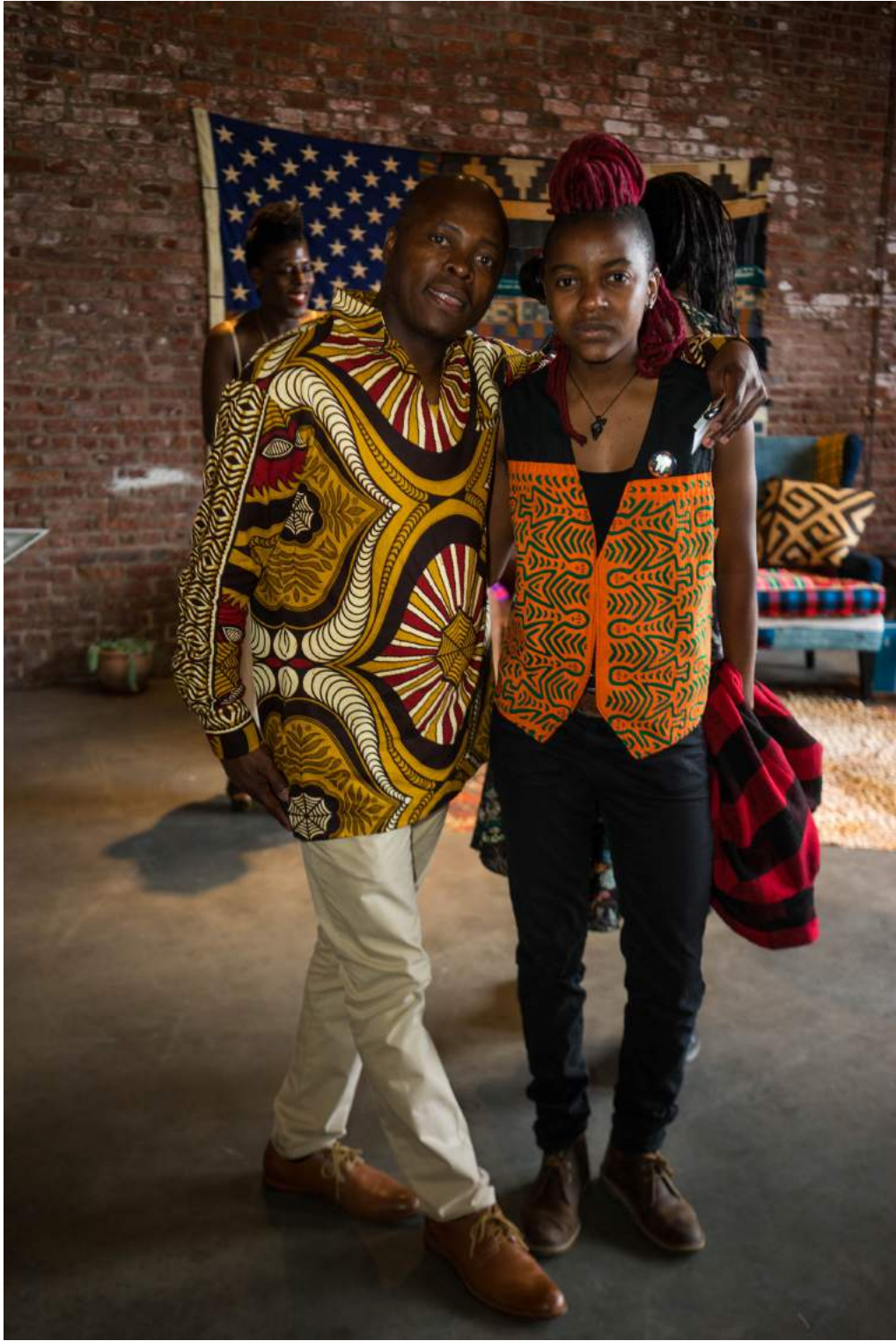
"I want people to understand where gay rights are in East Africa and do something that actually makes an impact," Mutu said. "So that's what Africa's Out! is, it's this big, big powerful love fest of politically minded cultural makers coming together to do good stuff, important stuff quickly."

Indeed.

The Africa's Out! benefit was not a superficial highlight reel of popular artists from the diaspora. It was a social gathering that remained true to its humanitarian mission. Case in point, the male and female icons that typically identify restrooms at Pioneer Works were each replaced with the butterfly logo, so that a person could use the restroom of his or her choice.

The Africa's Out! benefit was about art and entertainment, but at its core, activism. Take a look at photos from the night below:















To keep up with Africa's Out! events throughout the year, check out their [website](#), and follow on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

tags: [africa's out](#), [jihanna](#), [jojo abot](#), [santigold](#), [wangechi mutu](#), [zanele muholi](#)