RECLAIMING PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION:
SEEING AND BEING THROUGH THE LENS

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As humans we have used appearance, culture, language, and history as a way to define our own identities and at the same time set ourselves apart from others. The construction of the 'own identity' has resulted in an 'Othering' which has been instrumental in asserting societal power dynamics in the West and beyond.[1] As a result, dominant cultural archives supporting thought-systems and discriminatory behaviour towards those designated as the 'Other' continue to be justified and perpetuated.[2] In the nineteenth century, photography was made complicit in these identity politics. The medium, once thought to depict the world in an objective manner, became a way of forming the manner in which we perceive the 'Other' in line with the dominant cultural archive.

Taking the work of Carrie Mae Weems and Zanele Muholi as a point of departure, the following essay methodologically explores the role of photographic representation through their artistic processes and underlying ideas. What does it mean for artists who are categorically defined as the 'Other' in terms of race, gender, or sexual orientation to represent their own communities and command existing technologies and systems that aim to keep power structures intact that benefit the (historically) privileged? How do the historical layers of photography's complicity in the oppression of (historically) marginalised communities come into play in their artworks?

One of the most well-known applications of the term the 'Other' was put forward by Edward Saïd in his seminal publication *Orientalism* (1978). The Palestinian-American cultural critic uses the term to describe the 'Orient' from a European or Western perspective. According to Saïd, the 'Orient' is a key point of comparison in asserting Western identity, in which the Western self is constructed through the process of 'Othering'.[3] For Saïd, this 'Othering' is intrinsically linked to the power dynamics between the East and West, with the Middle Eastern 'Other' being put into a subservient position by a dominating West. 'Othering' was ultimately used as a justification of the imperial project and the oppression of communities that differed from the colonizer in cultural, ethnic, and religious aspects.[4]

1
Edward Saïd, *Culture and Imperialism* [1993], reprint (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 50-51.
Gloria Wekker, *Witte onschuld: Paradoxen van kolonialisme en ras* [2016, translation by Menno Grootveld], (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 8.

2
The first to use the term "cultural archive", was anthropologist Wendy James in the publication *The Listening Ebony: Moral Knowledge, Religion, and Power Among the Uduk of Sudan* (1988). See also: Wendy James, *The Listening Ebony: Moral Knowledge, Religion, and Power Among the Uduk of Sudan*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988). In *Culture and Imperialism* (1994) Saïd asserted that that the Western cultural archive is characterised by imperialism and defines the dominant discourse on the non-Western world and its inhabitants. More recently, Gloria Wekker, professor of Afro-Caribbean and Gender Studies, has breathed new life into Saïd's use of the term and applied it to her theory on white ethnocentrism in the Netherlands, published in *White Innocence* (2016). Both authors argue that the cultural archive is an immaterial archive that influences our view of the world, our attitudes, and our behaviours. Effectively, the past continues to inform the present, and cultural archives with links to colonial history continue to perpetuate colonial thoughts that are ingrained in the way that we think, speak and act, even in our postcolonial era.

3
Edward Saïd, *Orientalism* [1978], (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 1, 3.

4
Ibid, 1, 3, 13.

When discussing visualisation of these differences through images, 'the gaze' has become an important term, referring to image-construction that reproduces, inscribes, and in certain cases even justifies existing hierarchies of power in regards to the 'Other'.[5] The gaze is closely linked to the representational power of photography, because this representational power creates the illusion of reality. Photography's technological ability to capture the likeness of things and people in great detail can distract us from the hidden (political) messaging.[6]

The postcolonial era has brought about the wish to break down remaining colonial power structures that continue to contribute to injustices in contemporary societies. With this, there has been a recognition of the need to bring to the fore plurality in stories, histories, and representation, in order to reassess previous colonial cultural archives that have encoded inequalities in today's society. In 1991, Jay Ruby, anthropologist and theorist in the field of visual anthropology, published an essay titled '*Sharing the Power,*" proposing that multi-vocality in anthropological documentary practices employing film and photography should become *de rigueur* in the postcolonial age.[7] Ruby's argument concerns groups that have historically been the subject of anthropological studies and subject to the bias and narrative of the photographer. Through photography and film, they can take control of their depiction and the framing of their lives through self-representation, circumventing the gaze in the production of the image.[8]

Recontextualizing Photographs of the 'Other'

The American artist Carrie Mae Weems is well-known for her work that challenges the representation of African Americans, women specifically, in terms of stereotypes and symbolism.[9] The work *From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried* (1995-1996) explores the role of photography in the depiction of the African American individual. The photographic poem illustrates what happens when photography is recontextualized to tell an alternative narrative of photographic and cultural history.

Using existing photographic material, Weems collected anthropological photographs from the archive of the Harvard University's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, studio photographs from the exhibition *Hidden Witness*,[10] and a variety of 20th century photographs, either documentary or artistic in nature.[11] The selected photographs depict painful parts of African American history, including oppression, violence, and racism. Toned red, overlaid with round and oval-shaped mats, and framed, Weems sandblasted a poem on the

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In 1975, in a period when the photography of individuals from other social groups in photojournalism was heavily debated, the feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey coined the term "the male gaze" to refer to the way that women were depicted in film, specifically in regard to the way in which they were objectified. See also: Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16 (1975) no. 3, 6-18.
Since then, the term "gaze" has been repurposed to describe the way in which oppressed groups are depicted through photography and the media, exemplified in the phrase "imperial gaze". See also: E. Ann Kaplan, *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film, and the Imperial Gaze*, (London / New York: Routledge, 1997).

The American art historian and critical theorist Kaja Silverman offers us an alternative to the Saïdan "gaze", which is steeped in existing hierarchical structures and unable to change. In her terms, the "gaze" is not the offender in question, but rather the "cultural representations that intervene in it and us" (57). The resulting photograph becomes what Silberman would have called the "screen" in Lacanian terms: it is the material that forms the viewer's perception of the world (18-19). Kaja Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visual World*, (New York / London: Routledge, 1996), 18-19, 57.

6
Compare: Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* [1980, translation by Richard Howard], (New York: Hill and Wang,1981), 89.

7
Jay Ruby, "Sharing the Power," *Perspektief* no. 41 (1991): 4-5.

8
Ibid., 5-16.

9
Carrie Mae Weems, 'Biography', accessed March, 2018, <http://carriemaeweems.net/bio.html>.

glass that exposes the dehumanization, denigration, stereotyping, and objectification of African Americans from the era of slavery through to the 1980s, all of which were perpetuated through the use of photography.

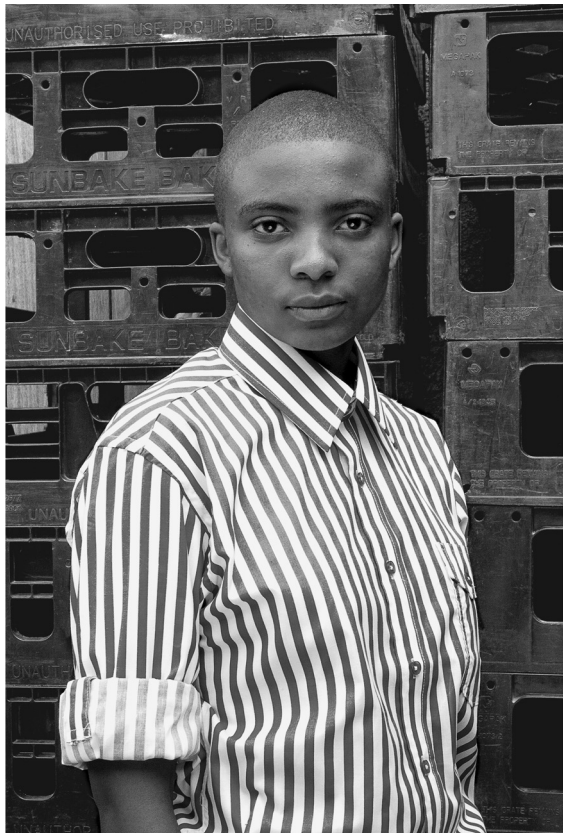
The poem reads:

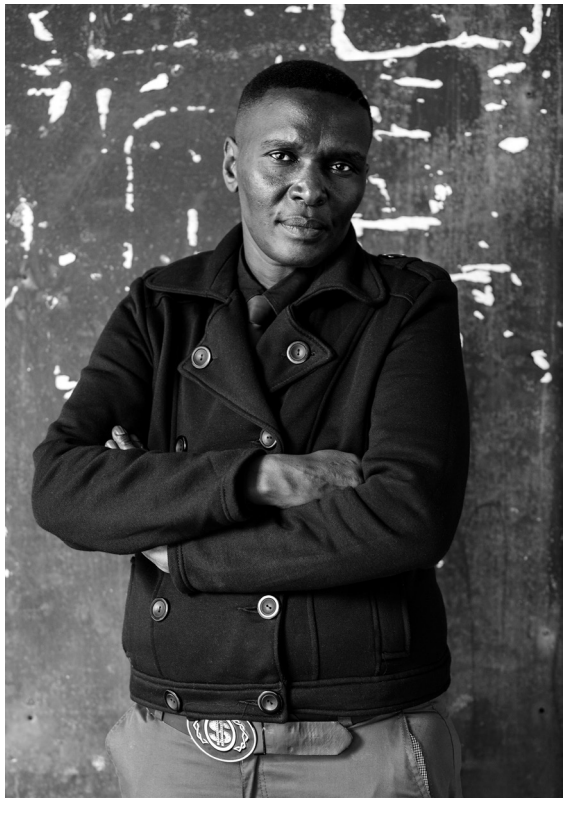
"1. FROM HERE I SAW WHAT HAPPENED
2. YOU BECAME A / SCIENTIFIC PROFILE (fig. 1)
3. A NEGROID TYPE (fig. 2)
4. AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL / DEBATE (fig. 3)
5. & A PHOTOGRAPHIC SUBJECT
6. YOU BECAME / MAMMIE, / MAMA, / MOTHER & / THEN, YES, / CONFIDANT — HA
7. DESCENDING THE THRONE / YOU BECAME FOOT SOLDIER / & COOK
8. YOU BECAME UNCLE TOM / JOHN & CLEMENS' JIM
9. DRIVERS
10. RIDERS & / MEN OF LETTERS
11. YOU BECAME / A WHISPER / A SYMBOL OF A / MIGHTY VOYAGE / & BY THE SWEAT OF / YOUR BROW / YOU LABOURED / FOR SELF / FAMILY / & OTHERS
12. FOR YOUR NAMES YOU TOOK / HOPE & HUMBLE
13. BLACK AND TANNED / YOUR WHIPPED WIND / OF CHANGE HOWLED LOW / BLOWING ITSELF — HA — SMACK / INTO THE MIDDLE OF / ELLINGTON'S ORCHESTRA / BILLIE HEARD IT TOO & / CRIED STRANGE FRUIT TEARS
14. BORN WITH A VEIL / YOU BECAME / ROOT WORKER / JUJU MAMA / VOODOO QUEEN / HOODOO DOCTOR
15. SOME SAID YOU WERE / THE SPITTING IMAGE / OF EVIL
16. YOU BECAME / PLAYMATE / TO THE / PATRIARCH
17. AND THEIR DAUGHTER
18. YOU BECAME AN ACCOMPLICE
19. [Music to god bless the child]
20. OUT OF DEEP RIVERS / MIXED-MATCHED MULATTOS / A VARIETY OF TYPES MIND YOU — HA / SPRANG UP EVERYWHERE
21. YOUR RESISTANCE / WAS FOUND IN / THE FOOD YOU PLACED / ON THE MASTER'S TABLE — HA
22. YOU BECAME / THE JOKER'S JOKE &
23. ANYTHING / BUT WHAT YOU WERE / HA
24. SOME LAUGHED / LONG & HARD & LOUD
25. OTHERS SAID / 'ONLY THING A NIGGAH / COULD DO WAS SHINE MY SHOES'
26. YOU BECAME / BOOTS, / SPADES & / COONS
27. RESTLESS AFTER / THE LONGEST WINTER / YOU MARCHED & / MARCHED & / MARCHED
28. IN YOUR SING SONG / PRAYER YOU ASKED / DIDN'T MY LORD / DELIVER DANIEL?
29. AND I CRIED"[12]

[10] The exhibition *Hidden Witness* was shown at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles in 1995 and featured rare portraits of African Americans from the mid nineteenth century. It was co-curated by Weston Naef, Curator of Photography at the Getty, and Jackie Napolean Wilson, a lawyer and private collector, who owned many of the photographs on view in the exhibition. At the time, Weems' exhibition ran parallel to and stood in relation to *Hidden Witness*, and was aptly named *Carrie Mae Weems Reacts to Hidden Witness*, but taken out of the context (and sold as a separate artwork), the resulting work would be re-titled as *From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried,* referencing the first and last stanza of the poem inscribed on the work. See also: David Pagel, "Hidden Witness: African Americans in Early Photography, Carrie Mae Weems Reacts to 'Hidden Witness'," *FRIEZE* 9-8-1995, accessed March, 2018, <https://frieze.com/article/hidden-witness-african-americans-early-photography-carrie-mae-weems-reacts-hidden-witnesses>; Jennifer Doyle, "Feeling Overdetermined: Identity, Emotion and History," in *Hold It Against Me: Difficuty and Emotion in Contemporary Art*, (Durham / London: Duke University Press, 2013), 112.

[11] Doyle, "Feeling Overdetermined," 112-118.

[12] Transcribed in accordance to the images of the series on Weems' website. Compare: Carrie Mae Weems, 'From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried', accessed March, 2018, <http://carriemaeweems.net/galleries/from-here.html>.





←fig 1. Zanele Muholi, *Lerato Dumse, Kwa Thema, Springs, Johannesburg*, 2010. © Zanele Muholi. Courtesy of Stevenson, Cape Town/Johannesburg and Yancey Richardson, New York.

↑fig 2. Zanele Muholi, *Zanele Muholi*, Durban, 2018. © Zanele Muholi. Courtesy of Stevenson, Cape Town/Johannesburg and Yancey Richardson, New York.

←fig 3. Zanele Muholi, *Pastor Royo Fezeka, City Hall, Johannesburg*, 2017. © Zanele Muholi. Courtesy of Stevenson, Cape Town/Johannesburg and Yancey Richardson, New York.

Weems' choice of photographic images is closely linked to the depiction of the oppressed 'Other' throughout photography's history: Photography, in the form of the daguerreotype printing technique, became commercially available in the 1840s, when the second wave of Western endeavours for colonial expansion was already in full swing.[13] The eighth edition of *Janson's History of Art* describes photography as "a perfect tool for the Positivist Era,[14] for initially it was largely perceived as a recording device for cataloguing, documenting, and supporting scientific inquiry"."[15] Photography scholar Ariella Azoulay argues that the development of photographic technology was closely related to Western imperial conquests, for colonial powers made use of systems of categorisation to create indexical overviews to lay claim and subjugate countries they knew little about.[16]

The illusion of photography as an objective tool was used to make the technology complicit in these colonial endeavours. As historical and visual anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards writes in the introduction to her book *Anthropology and Photography, 1860-1920* (1994), the "Western perception of the 'Other' [is] central to the creation and consumption of anthropological photography in the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries."[17]

Anthropological photographs depicted 'exotic' individuals in profile and *en-face* headshots, and were often used as evidence to support racist ideologies based on physiognomy.[18] The aesthetic conventions of these images, the way in which the subjects are depicted — which *nota bene* are also employed by the police mugshot — echo a clinicality that strips the individual of humanity. Instead, the subject becomes a scientific specimen.

The way in which these individuals were photographed — or to be more specific: the way in which they were represented in photographs taken by the privileged 'Other' — says a lot about how they were seen through the Western lens. As the American philosopher, writer, and activist Susan Sontag once put it, "[t]o photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed."[19] Although Sontag was not specifically talking about anthropological photography, the quote aptly describes what happened in such photographs and in the world outside of them: photography became symbolic for the way in which the 'Other' was seen: as a possession.

13
Compare: Mary Gilmartin, "9: Colonialism/imperialism," in *Key Concepts in Political Geography*, ed. Carolyn Gallaher *et al.* (London: SAGE), 115.

14
According to *Janson's* (2011), the Positivist Era spans the period 1848-1885. See also: Penelope Davies *et al.*, *Jansons History of Art: The Western Tradition*, 8th ed. (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2011), 859.

15
Ibid., 890.

16
Still Searching..., Ariella Azoulay, "Unlearning the Origins of Photography", 6 September 2018, accessed March, 2020, https://www.fotomuseum.ch/en/explore/still-searching/articles/155239_unlearning_the_origins_of_photography.

17
Elizabeth Edwards, "Introduction", in *Anthropology and Photography, 1860-1920*, (New Haven / London: Yale University Press. 1992), 4.

18
Physiognomy is the study of human facial features in relation to personality or character. In the 19th century it was used to support race-based theories of European (read: white) superiority. Compare with the life's work of the Swiss-American zoologist Louis Agassiz: *BRITANNICA*, 'Louis Agassiz', accessed March, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Louis-Agassiz#ref169>.

19
Susan Sontag, *On Photography* [1973], (New York: RosettaBooks, 2005), 10.

Photography, as an end product, as well as its very processes, circulation and vocabulary, is thus intrinsically linked to cultural archives steeped in colonialism. Weems touches on this in her choice of appropriated photographs: both in anthropological photographs from the eighteenth century and studio photographs from the twentieth century the exoticization and (sexual and scientific) objectification of the black body comes to the fore. She chooses images made to depict stereotypes and that perpetuate xenophobic beliefs about her community.

Weems exposes the power structures behind the shaping of visual perception, emphasizing that text, words, and language hold power over images.[20] Weems' choice of words echoes phrases previously and currently used to describe African Americans: individuals are reduced to "scientific profiles", caricatures such as "Uncle Tom", stereotypes like the "mammie", and even feared mystical figures such as the "Voodoo Queen". The language she uses is empathetic and retells a history of oppression. The words "From Here I Saw What Happened [...] and I Cried" and and the repeated words "You Became" communicate the witnessing of history unfolding by the narrator, while she is too removed ("From Here") and therefore unable to prevent it. The words "You Became" refer to the absence of a choice, and indicate a forceful becoming. Simultaneously it also alludes to a lasting being in the dominant cultural archive. Weems visualizes a recollection of history from the perspective of the African American 'Other', which represents a different collective memory — one that is not the dominant one in Western society.

While the original photographs have an identifying, oppressing gaze, Weems reframes the images using the text of her powerful poem, humanizing the depicted individuals and expressing the pain and violence inflicted on her community. She does this by approaching this pain historically, and by looking at the after effects that this oppression has carried through to our present times. In combining her poem with the photographs, the artist simultaneously lays bare the representational power of photography; exposing how photography was used to justify systematic oppression and discrimination, as well as the cultural archive that allowed for this type of use.

Reclaiming the Photographic Archive

Visual activist and photographer Zanele Muholi has dedicated their life to the cause of the LGBTI-community in South Africa, documenting their peers from the community in the series *Faces and Phases* (2006-ongoing).[21] With this project, Muholi lends both a voice and a camera to an underrepresented and marginalized community. Though South Africa has legalized same-sex marriage and constitutionally promises equality for all, the country remains a dangerous place for LGBTI-individuals, with hate crimes and discrimination rampant. At the same time, *Faces and Phases* can be read

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See also the French semotician Roland Barthes' concepts of "anchorange" and "relay". Roland Barthes, "Rhethoric of the Image," in *Image-Music-Text* [translated by Stephen Heath], (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 38-41.

21
STEVENSON, 'Zanele Muholi: Biography,' accessed March, 2018, <http://www.stevenson.info/artist/zanele-muholi/biography>.

as an archive — after all, it is intended as a place of history and memory for the LGBTI-community. Methodologically, it is similar to the archive, as Muholi employs a systematic approach to the titles of the photographs which contain objective information such as name, place, and year. While the archive is mainly photographic, the photo-book edition of the series adds textual information to the visual.

As part of the black LGBTI-community Muholi occupies a unique position in South African photographic history. For a long time, photography in South Africa was part of the oppressive system that governed the country. During apartheid, official photographs were taken of black individuals for the so-called "dompas",[22] an identification document that limited the movement of black individuals beyond their townships.[23] Parallels between these photographs and *Faces and Phases* can be drawn: the facial features of the unsmiling individuals, as well as the neutral, out-of-focus backgrounds, which seem implicit references to the portraits used for identification.

For a long time, black subjectivity was captured through the white gaze and used for the systematic oppression of black individuals. However, even under Afrapix, an activist collective that aimed at giving visibility to and creating awareness about the inequalities and brutalities against non-white communities in the 1980s, many of the photographers were white. Not only were the tools more accessible to them due to economic differences, but they could also move around more freely, and get away with illegal activities more lightly than their black counterparts. Additionally, most of them were male, with few notable exceptions. In their MFA thesis from 2009, Muholi highlights the fact that their own Zulu heritage traditionally assigned the task of photographing and documenting occasions to men.[24]

Due to the stigma surrounding the LGBTI-community in South Africa, the community has largely been erased from official archives, histories, and other spaces of remembrance. Muholi has previously also pointed out that many studies about the local black LGBTI-community were conducted by outsiders of that community, due to the power dynamics in society.[25] As an insider of the black LGBTI-community, Muholi combats the notion of the exploitative gaze that frames the subject in accordance with existing paradigms of power. Accompanied by the participants in their photographic projects, they are able to control the way in which portraits of individuals in the community are contextualized. Self-representation eliminates the outsider's gaze and the 'Othering' of black

22
M Neelika Jayawardane, "Embracing the Dark Lioness' Call," in Zanele Muholi, *Somnyama Ngonyama,* (self-published 2016), 7.

23
Townships are small settlements on the peripheries of urban areas, many of which were set-up during apartheid. Under racially segregating apartheid laws, these settlements were especially designated to the non-white labour force which was prohibited to live in towns or cities its individuals worked in. Poverty and other social issues continue to be very specific to these areas — as Lisa Findley and Liz Ogbu: "What was once a racial divide has now become a class divide — although, of course, the two are linked in South Africa by racism and limits on education and social mobility." See also: Lisa Findley & Liz Ogbu, "South Africa: From Township to Town," *Places Journal*, November 2011, accessed 1 April, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.22269/111117>.

24
Zanele Muholi, *Mapping Our Histories: A Visual History of Black Lesbians in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, (self-published 2009), accessed March, 2018, <https://www.scribd.com/document/166745768/A-Visual-History-of-Black-Lesbians-in- Post-Apartheid-South-Africa>, 14.

25
Ibid., 4.

LGBTI-individuals by those in more privileged positions. Muholi makes a point to reject the notion of a "subject" and instead refers to their subjects as "participants" in their project.[26] This emphasizes the participants' active and collaborative role, instead of a passive one of being objectified by the camera. In doing this, Muholi is rejecting the notion of the objecthood of the photographic subject and emphasizes the shared making of these photographs, which is aimed at benefiting the whole community.

A topic central to the work of Muholi is representation. Firstly, representation in the meaning of visibility: Muholi's portraits create an official visibility for the black LGBTI-community of South Africa, which has been snubbed by history in a country that struggled with racial inequalities since it was colonised. Under apartheid homosexuality was made illegal and the visual activist's community still suffers from the aftermath of these discriminatory laws. Racial inequalities culminated in a lack of self-representational power in the black LGBTI-community, with outsiders often speaking for the community and patronizing it.[27] *Faces and Phases* offers Muholi's community a platform for their voices, stories, and remembrance. "[The portraits work] as a site of memory for us, as a trace of 'who and what existed' in a particular space at this particular moment when our black lesbian and South African histories intersect", they write.[28] This intersectional position of the community emphasizes the importance of documenting black LGBTI-lives, as they are especially vulnerable in the face of high death rates related to HIV/AIDS or hate-crimes.

Secondly, the topic of self-representation is an important factor for a community who has, as Muholi puts it, "continually [been] represented by the privileged other".[29] These outsiders have decided what is 'correct' and 'normal' in society for centuries. Due to its marginalized position in South African society, the black LGBTI-community has been subject to a great range of studies and stories which were not authored by themselves.[30] Therefore they have had no say about the context in which their likeness would circulate, and the mediation that their photographic image would receive. This means that individuals have had no control over how they would be perceived by viewers at large. With *Faces and Phases*, Muholi is creating a space in which the community is visualized by themselves and on their own terms. In explaining their view on the topic, Muholi writes,

> "I began to wonder in 2001 how I could turn myself and my community from being objectified to become the producers of our own histories, knowledges, and subjectivities. I was angry for having been used for the gaze of others, and instead wanted to [sic] us to do for ourselves. [...] I wished for us to stare back as black lesbian-identified women, to resist and challenge the idea that our bodies can be researched, understood, displayed for heterosexual and [W]estern consumption.

26
Brian Dillon, "Zanele Muholi: The artist confronting politics, danger and self-invention in her portraits of lesbian and trans South Africans," *ArtReview* (2017), 75.

27
Muholi, *Mapping Our Histories*, 4.

28
Ibid., 27.

29
STEVENSON, "Zanele Muholi: Somnyama Ngonyama", accessed March, 2017, <https://stevenson.info/exhibition/1440>.

30
Muholi, *Mapping Our Histories*, 2009, 4.

> My objective was to produce work for the very same subjects I would capture, in order for them to have a point of reference in our collective memories, in the archives and beyond." [31]

Muholi is very particular in calling themselves a "visual activist".[32] By taking the representation of black, and LGBTI-individuals and their stories into their own hands, Muholi is countering the stigmatization of these individuals that 'Othering' has caused. They give a voice to individuals and a community which had up to that point been largely invisible and misrepresented as victims in the mainstream circulation of images. Instead, Muholi offers stories and images that highlight their strength in the face of adversity. Muholi's *Faces and Phases* subverts existing power dynamics by creating an archive in service of an oppressed and marginalised community. They emphasize the individuals' dignity and humanity in a socio-political, economic, and visual environment that attempts to strip them of these: they are fighting the dominant cultural archive that hides, oppresses, and misrepresents their existences.

Reclaiming Photography

The movement for self-representation in these postcolonial times has led to artists arming themselves with the very mechanisms that perpetuated oppression, in order to counter existing systems of inequality. Artists and photographers are using existing photographic material and archival conventions in the name of marginalized social groups. They are criticizing existing power structures and creating new ones, relying on the authority of photography to achieve their missions. In doing so, they are reclaiming the medium of photography and their right to self-representation.

Weems does this by diving into archives and the holdings of institutions that collected images of African Americans. She lays bare the ways in which they were depicted in the photographs and how their images were categorized, described, and ultimately contextualized as objects that created a perception of African Americans and perpetuated racist beliefs. The artist is reframing the images with a narrative that comments on the representation that was forced onto the photographed individuals and their community at large. Though poetic in language, she is doing what many museums and institutions of knowledge are fervently scrambling to do currently: she is rewriting history from the standpoint of our post-colonial times.

In *Faces and Phases*, Muholi takes on the authority of the archive, becoming the gatekeeper of those who are represented, memorialized, and remembered, and those who are not. They place themselves in a position of authority — that of the knowledge producer, who consciously decides to share stories from their community in a way that is collaborative and anti-hierarchical. This allows the visual activist to take control of the representation of their community and how this is done, as well as challenge existing power structures in society that unjustly represent the black LGBTI-community. It can be read as a counter-archive which combats the erasure of LGBTI-stories from South African history and is aimed at undermining a cultural archive that discriminates against LGBTI-individuals.

Ultimately, by understanding the power that photography has in creating images of the 'Other', Weems and Muholi harness photography to the benefit of their communities. They strive for a form of representation which they feel comfortable with and which simultaneously challenges the dominant cultural archives that have framed their communities in a light that has diminished their humanity and their deservingness to be treated as equals. The way that photographic technology was formed by the socio-political contexts in which it was created, and the way that it was employed to depict the 'Other' can tell us a lot about subconscious and implicit systems of values, as well as the social dynamics that dictate its use. However, the very tools that are used to create, perpetuate, and uphold inequalities are also tools that can be used to open our eyes to inequalities in society.

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This article is largely based on Chiang's MA thesis *Archive vs. Archive: Carrie Mae Weems and Zanele Muholi's Approaches to Challenging Existing Power Dynamics Through Self-Representation of the "Other"* (2018), approaching above questions by way of case studies centered on the work of Carrie Mae Weems and Zanele Muholi.

31 Ibid., 4-5.

32 Ibid., 3.