Unsettling Gender, Sexuality, and Race:

‘Crossing’ the Collecting, Classifying, and Spectacularising Mechanisms of the Museum

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Working to achieve gender, sexual, and racial equality in museum staffing, collections, and programming is an important political and pragmatic response to the continued, pervasive inequalities and structural discriminations within the societies of which museums are a part. It is fully appropriate that museums, which are associated with the fostering of public values as well as knowledge and heritage, are scrutinised in relation to their equality practices. Recent examples of such investigations have consistently demonstrated that women and other minoritised groups continue to be disadvantaged in their representation and progression in museum organisations (Reilly 2015; Dymond 2019). Although museums are associated with a progressive social activity that seeks to share the advantages of knowledge and enjoyment throughout society, we are faced with stark evidence of the continued unequal status of women, people of colour, and LGBTQI+ identified individuals in the museum and heritage sectors. Why such progressive institutions should still be haunted by unjust and outdated social segregation is a conundrum that suggests that there are deep and structural causes of museum inequality.

The museum form and its role in the production of inequality

It has been known for some time that the contents of museums are shaped by the unequal social relations of gender, sexuality, and race that pervade European and settler colonial societies. Volumes like Amy Levin's *Gender, Sexuality, and Museums: A Routledge Reader* (2010) recognise the overarching connections between gender and sexuality, and to some extent, race, in their studies of the subject but retain an emphasis on examining the representation of gender and sexuality in isolation from the consideration of the overall structures and functions of museums as organisations. Without considering the structural connections between museum representation and museum practice, we avoid a full understanding of how and why museums continue to replicate these unequal relations. Rather than proposing museums as sites in which unequal social relations are simply manifested or represented, in this text, we propose that museums have a constitutive role in the production of structures of difference in terms of gender, sexuality, and race. They are not just sites in which gender inequalities are registered, but sites in which gender inequalities are produced. From this position, the work of addressing gendered inequalities in museums becomes not simply a matter of striving for 'gender balance' or evening out the 'weenie count', as the Guerrilla Girls called it in 1989. Instead, it requires a disruption and transformation of the modes of authoritative address about gender, sexuality, and race that the museum produces. In order to achieve this, we must not just describe how difference is manifested in the museum but must also answer the question, 'How do museums embed structures of inequality, including gender inequality?'

This question is posed in relation to the museum as a form of organisation, rather than in relation to individual institutions. Museums' work in the production of gender difference can best be understood by recalling that the formation of the museum as a type of organisation was one of a nexus of actions that consolidated the political formation of the nation state and the economy of colonial capitalism. Indeed, it has become commonplace to distinguish museums from their forebears—cabinets of curiosity and princely collections—because of their correlation with the 'modern' form of the nation state (Preziosi and Farago 2004). In such accounts, museums are correlated with the emergence of a global system of representation that subsumes the Earth and its people within nations and empires (rather than kingdoms or other forms of relation); historians of the 18th century Britain in particular have situated the museum as a prominent cultural form in a nexus of changes to the consumption and production of material culture of which nation and empire building, connoisseurship, and enlightenment epistemologies as well as the 'industrial revolution' all play a role (Brewer 1997; Sloan 2003). Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983) was one of the first volumes to position museums as one element of a modern system of technologies for ordering geographies and peoples in relation to nations; his chapter 'Census, Map, Museum' explores these three forms of representation as interrelated modes of articulating nations and their nationalist origins. While Anderson does not introduce gender or sexuality in his discussion of the ordering activities of nation building, since the 1980s, many scholars have contributed to our understanding of how race, gender, and sexuality are implicated in the nation state's structures, inseparably from one another.

To understand how particular and unequal relations of gender, sexuality, and race were integrated in the history of the formation of the nation state and its corollary, the museum, we have drawn on M. Jacqui Alexander's *Pedagogies of Crossing* (2005). In this volume of collected essays, Alexander develops an account of how metropolitan nation states imposed structures of heteropatriarchy on colonised nations as part of the 'modernisation' of their civic management and their population. Her thesis is that 'there are particular codices through which state conduct unfolds, and those codices are grounded in particular configurations of class, gender, racial, and sexual antagonisms', and that while nonconforming sexual, gendered, and racial identities are always in play, they are only made visible in the extent to which 'they assist or frustrate the imperatives that promote nation building and break apart the ideologies of a seamless nation' (Alexander 2005, p. 195).

While her own examples address the disciplining of sex, gender, and race through judicial and other self-evident apparatuses of state power, the importance of museums in her framing is suggested in her description of the role of the dynamic between the material and the immaterial (or psychic) in

Fig. 1. Temporarily removing J.W. Waterhouse's Hylas and the Nymphs (1896) from the Manchester City Art Gallery during Sonia Boyce's Takeover, March—September 2018. Performer from Family Gorgeous in foreground. © Andrew Brooks/Manchester City Art Gallery.

formations of the state. Museums can be considered a primary locus of this dynamic. Alexander writes that:

> *The fiction of disappearing threat as a way to eliminate opposition has left a sort of residual psychic memory, the belief that physical removal ensures that which has been expunged will never again reappear. And it leaves this memory precisely because it confuses the metaphysical with the material, believing that material removal is, simultaneously, a metaphysical removal* (Alexander 2005, p. 25).

In this account, we can posit the museum form itself as a site which facilitates the dynamic of removal and persistence, of manifestation and repression, of the gendered, raced, and sexual identities that sustain or undermine the heteropatriarchal regimes of the modern social order. It is the play of advance and retreat in these dynamics that Alexander describes as 'crossings', gesturing both to the trans-Atlantic sea crossings that provide the historical context for her examples but also to the sense of exchange, and of frustration or reversal, that is carried by the word 'crossing'.

Our argument is that museums do not just represent or evidence gender relations in their collections or in their staff, but that the very formation of the museum is a site of 'crossings', that is, the material and psychic processes of removal and persistence of gendered, raced, and sexual identities. We suggest that museums manifest this function through several interrelated activities. These activities include firstly *classification*, or the creation of knowledge through identification and categorisation that sustains the definition of the groups or individuals who are 'acceptable' or 'inacceptable' in the modern social world.

Related to classification is the activity of *spectacularisation*, or the production of artefacts in such a way as to render visible the defining characteristic of these things or persons in relation to their classification, through display and didactics. The importance of visuality in museum culture is an effect of the importance of spectacularising or manifesting the ways in which people and things fit into the state's categories. Finally, the function of *collecting* in the museum is a crucial form of domination. Collecting as a colonialising function has been contested in relation particularly to artefacts associated with ethnographic collections; the moves to decolonise ethnographic collections have manifested in large part through varied approaches to object ownership, from repatriation to collaborative knowledge production. All three mechanisms are used in museums in ways that secure concepts of gender, sexuality, and race; they are relational forms and devices for organising and dominating bodies, materials, and behaviours. All three of these museum practices can be 'unsettled' or 'crossed' through undertakings that shift the balance of manifestation and repression in the museum. In what follows, we explore two specific examples of resistance to the 'metaphysical removal' or constraint of women, same-sex desire, and racialised people in the museum through projects that have 'unsettled' or 'crossed' the structural activities of classifying, spectacularising or 'owning' gendered/raced/sexually identified people and artefacts.

Since the 1980s, many scholars have contributed to our understanding of how race, gender, and sexuality are implicated in the nation state's structures, inseparably from one another.

Intervention as crossing: Sonia Boyce's *Manchester City Art Museum Takeover*

The museum's authority to endorse, through display, certain forms of dominant and patriarchal sexuality is so naturalised that, like more explicit forms of sexual violence, it can rarely be spoken about. Imagine a #MeToo movement concerned with the female and racialised bodies that we see being sexually harassed, visually violated, forcefully seduced, involuntarily exposed, and raped in the paintings and sculptures that are in the collection holdings and permanent exhibitions of art museums? This would include historical artistic masterpieces just as much as so-called minor historical artworks. Most of these acts of violence are excused on the basis that the women depicted are mythological or allegorical and not real; yet what does it say about European culture and societies that sexual harassment and sexual violence of mythical proportions are embedded in major museum collections across the European geographies? Are they not real in their representations? And what were the historical conditions of labour of those who modelled for the painters so they could perform their act of painting?

It could identify (with) historical violations of gendered, racialised, and sexualised bodies. Such a #MeToo movement could ask for the removal of specific artworks and for new forms of wall labels that provide trigger warnings of X-rated explicit scenes (such as, for example, Zeus seducing/raping Europa, an act of colonial violence performed on a female body as the mythical cornerstone of shared European origins), but maybe even more importantly, that provide a fuller and much more critical understanding of how female sexuality, rape culture, and the oppression of female and racialised bodies, with Europa a Phoenician princess, is foundational to the European project (Hammer-Tugendhat 2009).

One such interventionist project was realised as part of Sonia Boyce's retrospective at the Manchester Art Gallery in 2018. Programmed as *Manchester Art Gallery Takeover*, a format suggested by the institution, artist and curator Sonia Boyce held a series of conversations with a group of 30 members of museum staff, including curators and volunteers. These conversations offered the opportunity for participants to speak, many for the first time, about the way in which they experience art on display in the permanent exhibition, including their observations on how the general audience interacts with sexualised and gendered visual content. In particular, one of the paintings on display made many in the group feel awkward and uncomfortable. This was the 1896 painting *Hylas and the Nymphs* by John William Waterhouse, one of the best-known paintings in the Manchester Art Gallery. The painting shows a scene from classical mythology in which seven nymphs lure Hylas to his death by water. In Greek mythology, Hylas was Heracles's companion, servant, and lover. The painting can therefore be read as joining misogynist and homophobic beliefs in a cultural value system; seduction by females results in the death of male homosexuality. This painting has attracted much selfie traffic and new forms of visitor behaviour. In particular, 'middle-aged men and teenage girls' appreciate the painting as a backdrop when posing for selfies, as Sonia Boyce explained in an interview with art writer Jennifer Higgie (2018). These channels of digital traffic and the importance of social media are integral to popularising public museum culture in the present. Today's selfie culture paradoxically and hauntingly becomes part of reproducing historical notions of gendered and racialised body politics as, for example, a 19th century painting functions as a backdrop for portraits. This is a new field of what we can understand as novel forms of digital art appreciation, which in fact reproduces and reinforces the acceptance and circulation of the violent legacies of our past as captured in historical painting.

Together, the group convened by Boyce decided to experiment with temporarily taking down this painting, an act which 'unsettled' the museum's presentation of sexuality by removing an image of repressed homosexuality and replacing it with a work that offered a different vision of gender and sexuality. The painting was not simply taken down. The occasion of its removal was used for different actions, both audience participation and artistic performances (Figs. 1 and 2). The removal of the painting made room for other voices to be heard and other actions to be seen. In a public evening performance, which also formed the basis for what then became Sonia Boyce's six-screen film *Six Acts*, different performance artists were invited to respond to historical paintings hung in the gallery.

The drag collective Family Gorgeous (Liquorice Black, Eva Serration, Donna Trump, Venus Vienna, Anna Phylactic, and Cheddar Gorgeous) was among the invited performance artists. They improvised in front of paintings of their choosing. Curated though not directed by Boyce, the performers' only limit was to not hurt any people or damage any property. At the end of their improvisations in front of historical paintings, including *Hylas and the Nymphs*, the work was uninstalled. Gallery technicians carefully took it off the wall. For the time, the wall space otherwise occupied by the painting was freed up and gave way to public debate. A text invited museum visitors to 'write their thoughts about the painting and the representation of the female form on Post-it notes, which were stuck to the wall where the painting had been hung' (Higgie 2018). The painting gave way to a discussion on the act of its temporary removal. Yet the real public debate was, of course, not confined to the wall space that had been freed up and much less controlled by the museum institution and the artist who had initiated this response to the painting. Public outrage ensued and went far beyond the art context. 'The vitriol was really unhealthy', as Boyce stated in an article published in *The Guardian* (Higgins 2018).

This shows how the removal of a museum exhibit is rightly understood as an intervention that appears as an attack, an act which might be understood in terms of our technologies of gender, sexuality, and race as a reordering of the ownership function of the museum. Removing the artwork from display attacked the systems that had endorsed the acquisition and display of the Waterhouse painting. Referred to as 'Waterhouse-gate' by journalist Mark Hudson in *The Telegraph,* the removal provoked public outcry against censorship and puritanism. The rhetorical use of such terminology, such as in the backlash against the #MeToo movement, is an often successful strategy for concealing the heteropatriarchal values that are perpetuated by the naturalisation of sexual violence.

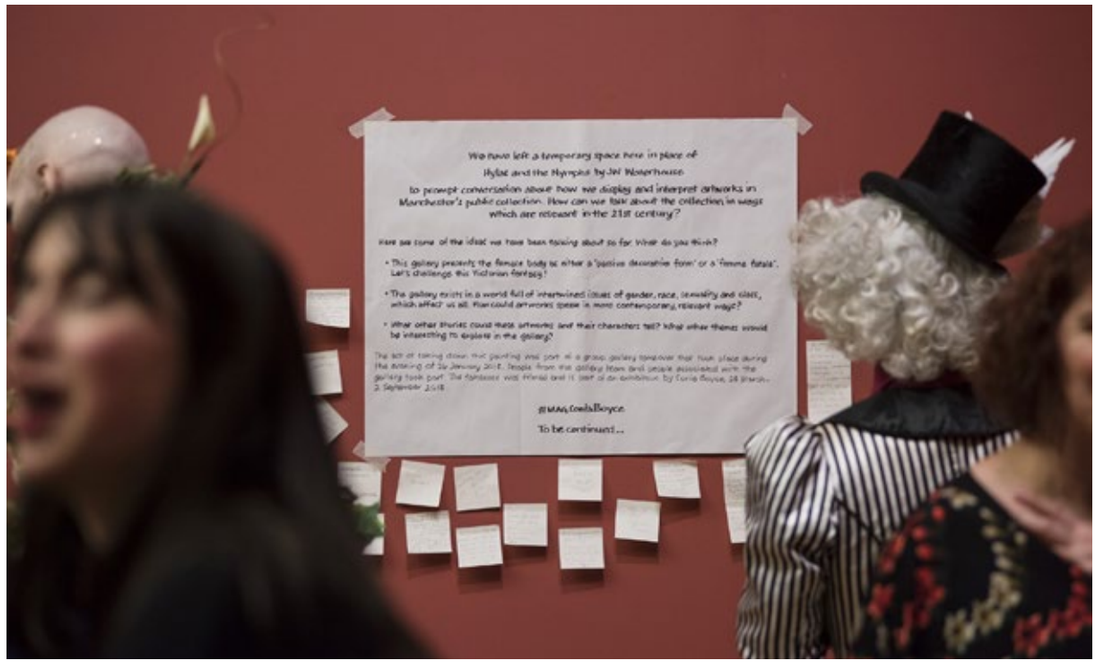

Fig. 2. Wall with removed artwork during Sonia Boyce's Takeover Manchester City Art Gallery, March-September 2018. © Andrew Brooks/ Manchester City Art Gallery.

Extending invitations to artists to work with complex collections, toxic pasts, and difficult questions is a staple among curatorial strategies precisely in order to activate, and ultimately also control, such crossings. The disruptive energy of the intervention is often harnessed in order to capitalise on it so that museums can more effectively demonstrate that they are open to critique. Yet of course, museum institutions seek to be very careful in defining the intervention's boundaries in order to limit the disruption to a specific period or duration. So while an intervention which is a temporary removal from display may not be as significant a disruption as destroying or deaccessioning an artwork, its aim is nevertheless to command the control and authority over the object which is associated with museum practice.

Intervention is a broad concept not only employed by museums but in statecraft, legal relations, medicine, and health care. In legal terms, an intervention is the use of force by a state in the affairs of another state. Very often, the idea of removing that which lies at the heart of a problem is part of such forceful interventions. In medical terms, an intervention is the care provided to improve a situation. Again, 'removal', which we might think of here as the operation of tumours, ulcers, or cancerous tissue, is a key strategy, used here to provide care. Thinking of Sonia Boyce's artistic intervention from the angles of statecraft and medicine, we come to understand how her use of removal as intervention is at once forceful and careful. Force and care were brought together in such a way that no physical damage was done, yet the attack was nonetheless perceived. The message was read. Imagine the removal of all scenes of misogyny, homophobia, sexual harassment, sexual violence, and rape, only for a week, in all major art museums around the globe. What would be left? To borrow from the lexicon of Avery Gordon's *Ghostly Matters* (1997), what would the 'ghostly matters' that would be 'haunting' the empty walls say to us, the museum visitors? What would we learn through the strategy of removal about the gendered, racialised, and sexualised violence of our history as it is collectively shared through museums? What cannot be removed through removal? What can start healing through removal? The play of removal and replacement in the artist intervention works with the dynamic of repression and resurgence that Alexander reminds us is central to our modern political formations. The metaphysical and psychic existence of resistant people, practices, and artefacts cannot be erased through domination, whether by collection, categorisation, or spectacularisation; they will always effect a crossing against the regulatory devices of the modern social formation.

A crossing is a place where one thing intersects with another. It is also the act performed by those who cross, such as at an junction. A temporary removal sits at the crossing of disappearance and reappearance, like an invitation to engage with pedagogies of crossing. What will occur with the reappearance of works that had been temporarily removed? What might be added so their return includes responses to its removal and its reappearance? All of these possibilities and others yet to be tested and explored open ways for working with pedagogies of crossing in order to develop public rituals of temporary removal as they intersect the taking down and the bringing back, the disappearance and the reappearance.

This creates time and space for working through and opening up a debate on the legacies of gendered and racialised violence stored and displayed in the museum artefacts that have been temporarily removed. Some works might remain removed for a long time after such public debates. Others might be removed permanently. But of course, the return of some works might be awaited with longing and desire. Temporary removal is not a quick fix to the problem of racialised and sexualised violence on public display but offers a route of working through that which may be repeated over a very long period of time in the future.

Fig. 3. Boxers from Mum, Museum of Transology, on loan to Bishopsgate Institute Special Collections and Archives, London. © Katy Davies.

Fig. 4. Left: Package of Sustanon. Right: Used Progynova packet. Museum of Transology, on loan to Bishopsgate Institute Special Collections and Archives. © Katy Davies.

Unsettling classification: The Museum of Transology

An artist's intervention unsettles or crosses the authority of the museum and its modes of address to its audience through a temporal act, but in another example, we want to explore how 'unsettlings' can work in the context of the traditional form of the museum display. A crossing does not have to happen only in a temporal, spatial, or dynamic sense. Jack Halberstam and Tania Nyong'o use the term 'wildness' to identify practices and identities that resist the colonial social order, those which function 'as a foil to civilisation, as the dumping ground for all that white settler colonialism has wanted to declare expired, unmanageable, undomesticated, and politically unruly […] what hegemonic systems would interdict or push to the margins' (2018, p. 453). 'Wild' is also a term used by Judy Attfield in her book *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life* (2000) to formulate a proposition for a design history that refuses disciplinary categories of production and consumption in favour of examining objects in the context of their everyday use. These two propositions allow us to identify the way in which objects might also enact crossings by showing objects that resist conventional modes of classification and display. The museum can give space and visibility to 'wild things' that challenge the gendered order that pervades museum practice.

One example of such a practice is the Museum of Transology, a collection and exhibition programme that was forged in resistance to the invisibilisation or pathologisation of trans people in UK museums and their collections. Founded by E-J Scott, an independent curator, the project was developed with the intention of creating an object collection that would allow for the self-representation of trans lives. It was assembled, not through the collection, evaluation, and classification of objects by an external 'expert', but through donations by members of the community. Initiated as a grassroots project, it has collected artefacts from trans individuals who were asked to contribute items that were significant to them in their own transition story. The close connection between the community of origin and the collection is emphasised through its labelling protocol, which uses brown paper swing tags handwritten by the donor to describe the history of the artefact and its significance in their life. The objects are not part of the processes of collection and museum display in the usual sense. As well as the 'wild' didactics, the collection itself has been exhibited as a temporary display in a civic museum (Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, 2018-2020) and at the London College of Fashion (2017-2018); it has now been deposited not with a museum but with the Bishopsgate Institute in London notably not a museum, where it is recorded as an archival holding of 213 files, 280 artefacts, 155 paper tags, and associated electronic documents.

The logic of the Museum of Transology collection refuses the typical museum classificatory principles of originality, preciousness, or comprehensiveness (Figs. 3 and 4). The collection is extremely heterogeneous in the typology of objects it comprehends, including clothing (mainly mundane, although some is fashionable or high quality), prosthetics, both homemade and mass produced, cosmetics, institutional correspondence, popular publications, pharmaceutical packaging, video material, and preserved human flesh. While the relationship to transgender lives or living is evident in every artefact, the logic or rationale for the types of objects collected and presented resists conventional forms of museum classification, such as object type, quality, or place and time of origin. Some artefacts are clearly unique, while others acquire their meaning through repetition, such as a large number of mass produced and disposable pharmaceutical packages. Some clothing is collected in relation to its association with a specific transgender body; others with political messages adopted by some transgender campaigns, and still others for their association with gender identity as it pertains to both transgendered and cisgendered bodies.

The Museum of Transology thus engages in a crossing of the museum with a collection that refuses to perform according to the usual museum logics of classification; in this sense, it is a 'wild' materiality. Relationships between the content (transgender lives as told by transgender people) and the form of the museum (a selection of artefacts whose relation to one another and the viewer are determined by extra-museal logics) are related. The mix of artefact typologies reflects not only the heterogeneity of the materials collected but also the very conception of gender itself that is posed in the display; in some parts of the exhibition, gender is presented in the register of the individual body and its discomforts and pleasures, while other dimensions of the exhibition invite us to reflect on the social, cultural, and commercial elements of those individual experiences. The significance and authority of the individual experience of gender is foregrounded, resulting exhibition is one that appropriates but also undoes the authority of the museum to inscribe knowledge of gender.

Fig. 5. Photographs of a staff kitchen in a UK museum showing the organisation of shelf contents such as mugs, teabags, and flasks. © Annebella Pollen, 2018

Crossing museum hierarchies: what does equality mean in museum workplaces?

So far, our argument has addressed the ways that museum programming and displays can adopt practices that disrupt the standard patterns of authorised or dominant hierarchies of gender, sexuality, and race. How do these examples of wildly gendered artefacts and crossing actions in museum displays and collections help us to imagine gender equality for the museum as an organisation? Counting numbers of men and women in similar kinds of roles is often adopted as a proxy measure of equality, but our proposition of unsettling rather than equalising suggests that there may be other ways to understand and measure social equality in an organisation. The configuring of the world's matter through the apparatus of collecting, categorising, and spectacularising collections and displays is also present within the museum's own organisational structures. Formed in the 19th century alongside the modern professions more broadly (the self-organised and state-regulated services of physicians and lawyers, for example), museums are organisations whose internal structures are (stereo)typically distinct and sedimented.

Different domains of work within the museum are normally highly structured and siloed; curatorial and collections research is separated from education and audience engagement, which is in turn separated from marketing and fundraising. Cleaning objects and cleaning floors are entirely different forms of labour. Photographs taken in 2018 by a visiting researcher, Annebella Pollen, of the shelves in the staff kitchen of a well-known museum illustrate how the impulse to classify in the museum extends from the management of the collections to the management of the staff and their possessions (Fig. 5).

The classificatory impulse that is manifested in the staff coffee cups points to the ways in which museums replicate in their internal organisational structures the processes of classification and hierarchising that are also observed in their collecting and displays. While the gender of the different occupational groups represented in labels like 'technical services' and 'education/guides' is not explicit, it is the case that these categories are often linked to gender. Historically, there is a clearly gendered pattern in the differentiated structures of museum labour, as traced, for example, by Kate Hill in her book *Women and Museums, 1850-1914* (2016). Women were, and often still are, central to the unpaid and philanthropic work of the museum (donors, volunteers, directors) but more marginal in its senior leadership; men are welcome guests of the museum, but women, children, and families are its enthusiastic and specially entertained visitors. Intellectual labour (masculine) is highly valued and rewarded, while social labour (feminine) less so, and manual labour (in any of its gendered forms) is barely acknowledged or more often wholly hidden. This is not just a matter of the organisation of labour outside the museum inflecting and forming its internal structures but of how museum organisations are completely integrated into and replicate the gendered, classed, and raced relations of the colonial economy.

Disruptions to these hierarchies of work in the museum are equally generative of 'crossing' and 'wild' effects. Some of the most progressive and aspirational new developments in museums in recent years have been formulated as interventions, both caring and forceful, in the very rigid traditions of working in the museum. Several of the contributions to the 2016 issue of the journal *OnCurating,* which explored 'Curating in Feminist Thought', were given over to investigations of reframing the ethical and organisational relations of curators to their institutions and exhibitions. Peter Samis and Mimi Michaelson's *Creating the Visitor-Centered Museum* (2017) describes initiatives such as the programme at the Van Abbe museum in Eindhoven, which created a new staff role that sits between research and education and which reframes the work of gallery attendants from protecting the objects to soliciting visitor contributions to wall labels.

Emily Pringle's *Rethinking Research in the Art Museum* (2020) captures the ways in which not just curators but everyone who works in a museum with visitors and objects performs research processes in the conduct of their work – processes which, if creatively captured, can be fully integrated into the reflective and generative practices of the museum. Gallery attendants become researchers, visitors take on the work of curators, and education becomes knowledge. Such practices, which dismantle the classification and hierarchisation of work within the museum, are also ones that will disrupt the rules of who can occupy which roles. By destabilising the regulatory practices implicit in museum labour, we open the possibilities for museums to produce new, more dynamic social relations are wide open.

In this text, we have argued that owing to their structural and historical role in the evolution of the nation state, inequality of gender, sex, and race informs museums as organisations in a deep and systemic way. Using the work of M. Jacqui Alexander to offer an account of these inequalities as the function of a dynamic rather than a system in which equality is a function of equivalence. Rather than a static and measurable feature of a collection or organisation, inequality exists in a play of removal and persistence of different gender, sexual, and racial identities within the social organisation associated with the modern social order.

Our case studies show how equality in museums could be promoted or envisioned as a process of 'crossing' or 'unsettling' the ordering of gender, sexuality, and race that is present in the museum, positing that museums articulate these orderings in their interrelated practices of collection, classification, and display. The case study of artist Sonia Boyce's *Manchester City Art Museum Takeover* (2018) demonstrates of how an artist's intervention disturbed the visibility of sexual threat/objectification in the museum's display and challenged the museum's entitlement to display a particular artwork. While the second case study of the Museum of Transology (2017-19) explored how usually repressed gender and sexual identities could be sensitively manifested in the museum by decoupling gender and sexuality from conventional museum patterns of object collecting and display. Finally, we considered how the classification and hierarchisation of museum work has also sedimented certain patterns of gender inequality in museum organisations and how various examples of interruption to those established patterns created new forms of relations between museum workers, visitors, and objects.

What opportunities are embedded in the current reversals, crossings, and unsettlings that we are experiencing in the present for promoting more equally functioning museums, and societies, in the future? As we finalise this text in April 2020, the museum sector is poised at the beginning of what seems to be potentially a radical transformation of museums' typical physical and organisational structures. In the midst of a painful plunge into an unknown future, examples like the ones examined in this article provide a touchstone for imagining museum organisations that can dynamically rework the patterns of inequality that characterise the social world that has produced and sustained them. It is hoped that a model of museum work that celebrates the opportunities associated with instability and engages with the potential of dynamic reciprocity between genders, races, and sexualities (and other still-prevailing inequalities) could transform museums into hosts of more equal social relations.

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