KEWPIE
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Salon Kewpie

2024: VISIBILITY

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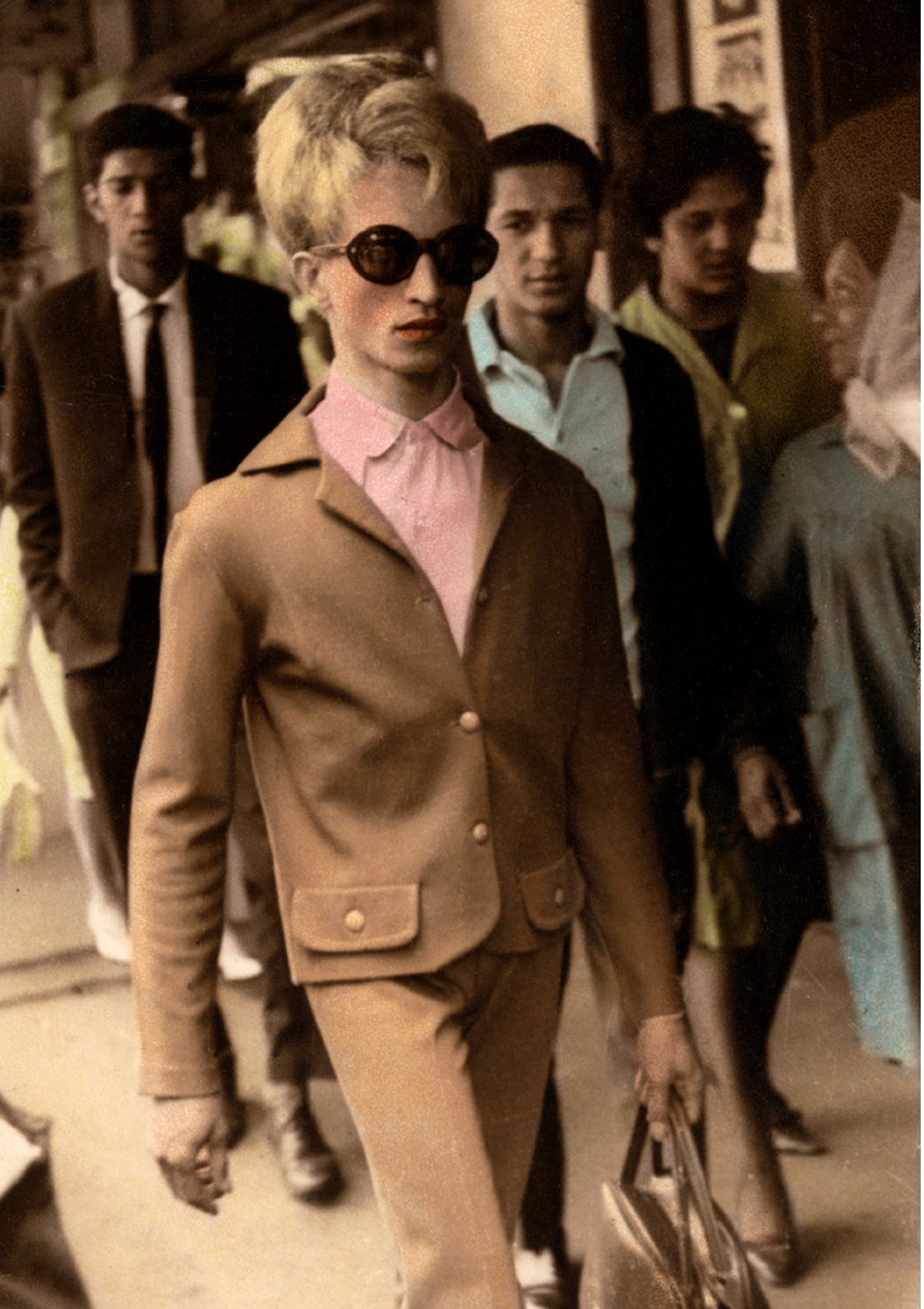


INTRODUCTION

We are Salon Kewpie, a collective whose primary aims are to celebrate the vital legacy of District Six's beloved Kewpie (1941–2012) and to make her incredible archived collection of photographs more accessible to a wider audience. The Kewpie Collection, as this archival resource has come to be known, is significant and multifaceted. It offers us a rare insight into life under apartheid for a group of people who lived in Cape Town's District Six, who expressed their genders and sexualities in diverse ways, and who described themselves as gays and girls. It shows us how they resisted and reimagined the constraints that were placed upon them, both by the Nationalist government and by their wider society. It reminds us that another way of life is possible.

Salon Kewpie first emerged in 2020, in the form of a series of events aiming to raise much-needed funds for the important work of the District Six Museum. Since then, we have evolved in our capacity and outputs. Our work now pivots on an annual educational programme, Salon Kewpie: The Legacy Project. Our collective has grown to incorporate cultural workers, community organisers, academics, heritage experts, and archivists, including individuals at the GALA Queer Archive, where the Kewpie Collection is held, and the District Six Museum, who are joint custodians of Kewpie's memory. Each of us has spent years engaging with the Kewpie Collection. However, each of us has approached this important archival resource from our distinct vantage points and respective fields, bringing to it our unique knowledges and lenses. Coming together as Salon Kewpie, we work collaboratively to keep Kewpie's memory alive through public and educational programming, creative community work, and events that centre queer and trans communities of colour.

With this publication, we hope to continue this work by sharing some of what we have learned about Kewpie, her wonderful photographs, and the incredible gays and girls of District Six, and by discussing some of the work we are doing to keep their legacies alive. We seek to introduce the Kewpie Collection to those who might be less familiar with it, and to expand beyond this by celebrating other figures alongside Kewpie. We are delighted to

I DIDN'T KNOW WE EXISTED SINCE BACK THEN, BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN TOLD. NOW, I CAN SAY THAT I'M ACTUALLY COMFORTABLE WITH MYSELF. I WANT TO BE RECOGNISED.

Chloe Caesar
2023 Participant

include new voices, whose memories of Kewpie and interpretations of the Kewpie Collection are not yet widely known. In this zine, you will find reflections from us; some of Kewpie's friends, contemporaries, and family members; participants in our educational programme; and other inheritors of Kewpie's vital legacy who continue to show us the way forward.

We begin with an overview of the Kewpie Collection and its histories, covered by Salon Kewpie's academic lead, Ruth Ramsden-Karelse. Ruth and Cheshire Vineyard, Salon Kewpie's cultural architect, then discuss some of the synergies we have tapped into between the Kewpie Collection and the contemporary culture of ballroom in Cape Town, grounded in many of the same key themes found in the Collection. We then introduce our annual educational programme, Salon Kewpie: The Legacy Project, in the form of reflections by one of our 2024 participants, Rushan Kiel. This is followed by excerpts from the 2024 panel discussion, featuring four members of the team, who discussed some of their favourite photographs from and relating to the Kewpie Collection in light of our 2024 theme, visibility.

We are deeply thankful for the invaluable support of members of Kewpie's family—including her nieces, Elwyn Hansby-Consul and Wendy Haupt, and her surviving sister, Mrs Ursula Hansby—who have generously shared their

memories of Kewpie with us and taught us about how she moved through the world. We're grateful to be able to include here some of these precious memories, recounted by Mrs Hansby.

Two important aspects of the work we do as Salon Kewpie are fostering intergenerational dialogue and celebrating Kewpie's as-yet lesser-known contemporaries: the many other icons and queer and trans elders who were celebrated by Kewpie herself. These two aspects of our work shine through in the final contributions to this zine. Tina Smith, who is Head of Exhibitions at the District Six Museum, reflects on the time she spent with Mogamat Benjamin, also known as Kafunta, towards the end of his life. During these final years, he wholeheartedly joined in celebrations of Kewpie's story and began to tell us his own. We are honoured to conclude this publication with a conversation between the iconic Liberty Matthyse—Gender DynamiX Director and former Miss Sovereign Western Cape—and Sandra Dee—a friend of Kewpie's, renowned community organiser in Hanover Park, and Salon Kewpie's very own fairy godmother.

Interspersed throughout these pages, you will find reflections on our 2024 theme, visibility. This is a concept that has always been crucial to gay, queer, and trans life, but also highly complex—and particularly so for gay, queer, and trans people of colour. Some say that the project of a community archive, particularly a

queer one, is to foster visibility by shedding light on previously ignored histories and ensuring they are preserved for future generations. In this spirit, the foresight and fortitude that Kewpie showed by compiling and preserving her own archive of photographs, which documented not only her own becoming but also that of her wider community, is remarkable. It reminds us that memory is about action.

This approach to memory has been crucial to the work of both the GALA Queer Archive—which was once known as Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action to reflect its educational and community work—and the District Six Museum, which started out as a protest action and, after a planned two-week exhibition in December 1994, found that it could not close its doors. We are grateful to have as our partners these two institutions that, unlike the stuffy, traditional archives of yesteryear, recognise the incredible value of historical materials documenting queer and trans, working class, and Black and coloured communities and subcultures.

We are galvanised by Kewpie's actions as a visionary archivist of herself and her community and, also, by the ever-growing public excitement about the incredible archive that she has left us with. As Salon Kewpie, we aim to contribute to the continued circulation and expansion of this archive, including with this publication.

As we do so, we are always cognisant of the cost involved for those who have blazed the way for us. We remember those whose lives have been unjustly cut short by structural inequality, a lack of access to affordable healthcare, and transphobic and queerphobic violence. We write this at a time when we are daily reminded of the precarity of trans and queer life on the African continent. And we are determined to highlight how the legacy that Kewpie leaves us with is not only one of celebrating the gays and girls of District Six, but also one of insisting on protections for the sex workers about whom Kewpie speaks so lovingly and tenderly; on all of our rights to have access to places where we can live together, safely; and on our right to exist freely, on our own terms.

There is so much yet to explore in the Kewpie Collection and beyond it: so many histories to be told, celebrated, and learned from.

Thank you for joining us on our journey to do so.

Yours,
Salon Kewpie

BETTER WORLDS ARE POSSIBLE: *GETTING TO KNOW THE KEWPIE COLLECTION*

Ruth Ramsden-Karelse introduces Kewpie and the incredible legacy she has left behind.

On a sunny afternoon, in faded technicolour, two friends stand close together outside the Cape Town station, glancing back at the camera with teasing smiles. This photograph is among 600 collected between the 1950s and the 1990s by the person seen on the right, dressed in gold. She had been born in District Six on 17 April 1941 and was known from an early age as Kewpie, having been nicknamed by an aunt who saw a resemblance to the popular cherubic dolls. Many of Kewpie's photographs depict friends from a larger group whom we might now think of as queer or trans, but who at the time commonly described themselves, somewhat interchangeably, as gays and girls. Like Kewpie herself, many of the gays and girls referred to each other using she/her pronouns and expressed themselves in accordance with conventions of femininity. This photograph exemplifies Kewpie's iconic style: the type of casual glamour that she would convey with apparent ease. Her training as a ballet dancer and skill as an on-stage performer is hinted at by her graceful posture, accentuated by her left arm's muscular curve. She also wears the hairstyle, in her signature blonde, for which she was best-known as a hairdresser: the beehive that they say she could construct to survive the fierce South-Easter that would blow through the District.

The reverse of this photograph bears an inscription, handwritten by Kewpie: "Miss Capucine & Miss Andrews in their new Movie, 'Girls will be Boys, Boys will be Girls' '73." Along with the sartorial styles depicted and the photographs' size and colouring, the year provided by Kewpie, 1973, tells us that the photograph was taken at what was the height of apartheid oppression for those, such as herself, who were among the country's "non-White" majority and who lived their genders and sexualities in diverse ways. By dictating where and how people could work and live and who they could mix with, by tearing apart communities through forced removals, and through the increasingly draconian policing of people who

transgressed strict, cis-heterosexual norms of gender and sexuality, the apartheid regime sought to isolate people like Kewpie, prohibiting their public appearance and any formation of meaningful alliance.

Yet, Kewpie's handwritten caption hints at just some of the ways in which she and her friends worked together to contest their attempted repression and to imagine and live otherwise. The reference to a "movie" reflects how Kewpie—a self-declared "bioscope fanatic"—drew inspiration from the iconography of cinema and stardom. The names that she references—"Capucine" and "[Julie] Andrews"—represent the gays and girls' practice of adopting names of women celebrities, using them to promote upcoming performances and refer to each other more casually. (It is worth noting that, while many of these names remind us that the entertainment industry has been structured by white supremacy, we also know that Kewpie counted among her circle of gay friends a Diana Ross, a Kafunta, named after the P. P. Arnold album, and a Miriam Makeba.) The title of Kewpie and Andrews's imagined movie, "Girls will be Boys, Boys will be Girls," rejects the cruel logics of compulsory gender and sexuality in Kewpie's typical, playful fashion. It captures not only the possibility but the concrete existence of a world in which gender and sexual diversities "will be" accepted as fact, revealing the futility of queerphobic and transphobic resistance of this eventuality. Flouting legal and social restrictions, Kewpie appears in this photograph, beautiful and composed, lovingly framed both by Andrews' intimate stance and by the admiring gaze of her unseen friend behind the camera. She appears together with both friends, in public, looking happy and distinctly gay.

In 1998, Kewpie's collection of photographs was acquired by the newly founded GALA Queer Archive, then known as the Gay and Lesbian Archive. The acquisition was facilitated by activist and film-maker Jack Lewis, who was at the time creating the documentary film *A Normal Daughter: The Life and Times of Kewpie of District Six* (2000). The photographs are still held at GALA, in Johannesburg, along with 120 copies, a handful of negatives, and three interviews conducted with Kewpie in the late 1990s.

Materials held by official archives tend to be skewed, reflecting the lives of socially and economically dominant—white, cis, straight, and/or affluent—groups at the expense of others. The Kewpie Collection, on the other hand, depicts life under apartheid for people who lived their genders and sexualities in diverse ways, and who were coloured and Black, and working class. Moreover, the Kewpie Collection is substantial. In comparison to standard family albums from District Six, Kewpie's 600 original photographs represent a significant financial investment. They evidence engagement with a remarkably broad range of photographic genres, showing how the gays and girls used existing, popular practices such as street and studio photography in novel, creative ways. The Collection's size and variety indicates their deep investment in seeing differently and being seen on their own terms. In these ways, the Kewpie Collection's contents and scale make it rare, and maybe even unique, as a publicly archived resource.

Kewpie passed away on 18 June 2012. Six years later, in 2018, the GALA Queer Archive collaborated with the District Six Museum to

organise the first extensive public exhibition of her photographs. After its extended run at the District Six Museum, *Kewpie: Daughter of District Six* opened for a second leg at Johannesburg's Market Photo Workshop in 2019. These exhibitions made Kewpie known to a wider, younger audience and have inspired renewed engagement with her photographs and her memory.

I have had the privilege of researching and writing about the Kewpie Collection since 2017, when I started working on my PhD thesis about this invaluable archival resource. A key aim of my work has been to make a case for the Kewpie Collection's as-yet-underexplored political and cultural importance. The thrust of my main argument is that the Kewpie Collection shows us how gays and girls used creative practices available to them such as photography and collectivity to create new possible worlds that were more just, more liveable, and more expansive.

One example of gays and girls' worldmaking work involves the ways in which they defined themselves, both collectively and individually. Their friendship groups were diverse, and their use of the self-descriptors *gays* and *girls* opened up at times to incorporate a whole range of people, including those who might now be thought of as lesbians, trans men, and straight, cis women. This reveals a deep imaginary of queerness, showing us how alliances were formed between groups whom society would pit against one another in order to contest norms and create new spaces of safety, care, and freedom. These groups included trans and cis sex workers, biological mothers and gay mother figures, and butch lesbians and gays who would, as Kewpie puts it, "drag."

Most often, Kewpie described herself expansively while refusing labels applied to her by others. She famously declared, "people can't say I'm a man, they can't say I'm a woman. I'm just Kewpie, just me!" Her typical self-descriptions were capacious: "I'm just me. I'm naturally, naturally born Kewpie. The gay. The lady. The woman. The sister. I am just me." While embracing these terms for herself, however, she refused labels applied to her by others. When one interviewer followed this up by asking when Kewpie first realised she was gay, she responded by telling him: "I have never ever realised that I was gay. I've always realised that I am me. I'm Kewpie. I'm just me." Kewpie's responses remind us that we should not have to make ourselves legible to others using their inadequate frameworks. As she puts it: "[people] can't push their fingers into my eyes and tell me this and that. I'm normally just

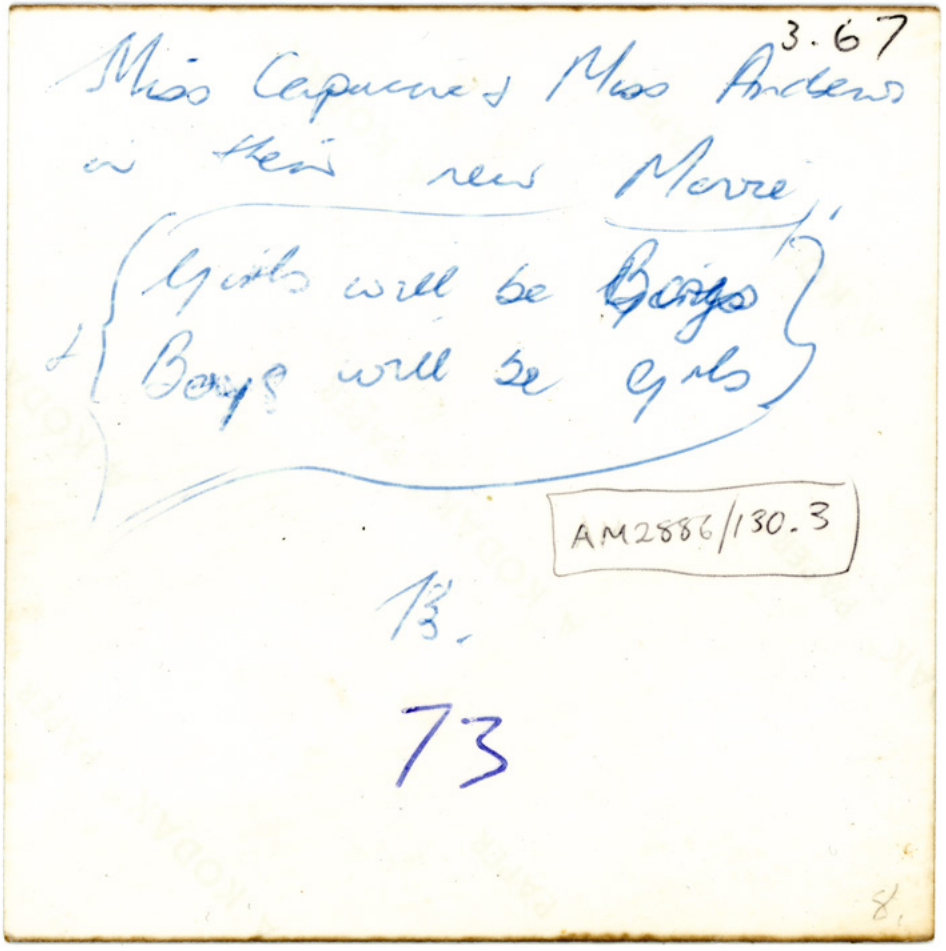
me." In such ways, Kewpie opens our eyes to an organisation of social relations yet-to-come, in which we will be able to understand and experience ourselves in ways that are both unbound and held, changeable and insistently fixed. By insisting on the freedom to self-define and not be defined by others, Kewpie prefigures a world in which this freedom can be actualised for everyone.

Another example of how gays and girls created new possible worlds, which also relates to our 2024 theme of visibility, is illustrated by the photograph of Kewpie and Andrews that I opened with. The Kewpie Collection includes many such photographs of gays and girls in public, on streets and pavements in and near to District Six. Because we see small children, for example, hanging out in the corner, looking on, or people watching from the background, these photographs

have tended to be read as evidence that gays and girls were accepted and embraced by a wider community to whom they were clearly visible. My suggestion is that we should reframe this reading slightly. As queer and trans people, and particularly for queer and trans people of colour, we know that there are no magical places of acceptance that we just happen to find. We create these spaces ourselves. When we do find spaces of acceptance that feel magical—if we go to a ball for the first time and experience that feeling of homecoming, for example—these are spaces that have been created by those who came before us. And they're often created at great cost.

Indeed, at the time these photographs were taken, attitudes towards gay people in Kewpie's wider community were complicated. Although some were accepting, others were less so, and Kewpie and her friends found themselves targeted with harassment and abuse on the basis of being seen to be gay. Though gays could achieve a greater degree of acceptance by fulfilling the social roles assigned to women, Kewpie tells us that this also made them vulnerable to forms of gender-based violence to which women were routinely subjected. Kewpie recalls that gays and girls' public safety was by no means guaranteed and was, often, violated. And it was in this context that they articulated their right to safely appear in public as their authentic selves precisely by claiming it: by appearing in public together, and by using photography to bring this dreamed-of reality of public safety into visibility so that it could be more widely shared. In such ways, I argue, the forms of acceptance and freedom that we see in the Kewpie Collection were imagined and fought for by gays and girls themselves. And the labour that they put into this deserves to be recognised and celebrated.

These are just two among many possible examples of how the gays and girls of District Six worked together to create new realities—as gay, queer, and trans people of colour have always done and continue to do. They afford a mere glimpse of Kewpie's rich legacy. This is a legacy that anticipates forms of care and togetherness that are presently impossible. It is one that reminds us that other, better worlds are possible. Indeed, such worlds have already been created by our gay, queer and trans ancestors—even if they could not be sustained within the society we have inherited.



Pinetee Mazwai
2024 Participant

FROM SPECTACLE TO SPECTACULAR: CLAIMING BALLROOM CULTURE AS PART OF KEWPIE'S LEGACY

Cheshire Vineyard and **Ruth Ramsden-Karelse** explore how the culture of ballroom that is currently growing in South Africa honours the legacy of District Six's gays and girls.

Fundamentally, ballroom is about creating and holding space in which we can revalue what has been devalued by our wider society. Ballroom involves affirming those of us who have been told by the world that our identities are invalid, by creating an experience that allows us to feel not only seen but celebrated. Because queer identities and experiences don't fit seamlessly within normative society, fully embodied queer people tend to be labelled dramatic, or extra, or too much. In ballroom, we turn these labels on their head, by celebrating the act of bringing one's story to the runway and dramatising the various archetypes and multiplicities that exist within each of us. Through ballroom, we transform what has been deemed a spectacle into a celebration of the spectacular.

In our work with Salon Kewpie, we have looked to the culture of ballroom that is evolving in Cape Town today as one of the key ways that the legacy of District Six's gays and girls is being honoured and kept alive. Originally pioneered in 1960s New York by Black and Latina trans women who had rejected white drag pageants' racist standards, ballroom was created as an underground place for queer and trans people of colour to engage in radical self-expression. Walking in a range of categories, ball attendees developed the movement language known as voguing, which remains a cornerstone of the ball scene today in the various forms into which it has evolved. At the same time, the gays and girls of District Six were organising parties and events in private residences and

public venues, where they would often provide the entertainment and arrive in fabulous costumes to great fanfare. Surviving photographs highlight how, across the ocean, each burgeoning scene—in Harlem and in District Six—fostered experimentation, authenticity, and inclusivity. Brought to Cape Town in 2017 by the late, pioneering Kirvan Fortuin (Kirvan Le Cap) and Niki van Callandt (Red Vineyard), ballroom continues to offer a means of creating safe and celebratory spaces for those marginalised in mainstream society, just like the gays and girls worked to do.

The dynamics of ballroom continue to echo the particular performance culture of District Six, which is remembered as interactive, organic, and enabling of the exploration of identity. It is often said that the streets were like stages on which residents would gather to see and be seen, making themselves known to the wider community by parading fashionable outfits, for example. Whether watching movies or live performances, District Six audiences were enthusiastically responsive, vocally and physically. While less successful performers would find themselves pelted with food and other objects, Kewpie remembers dancing on stage for the first time at the Star Bioscope to riotous applause and standing ovations. Likewise, within the space of a ball, spectators are as much a part of the cultural experience as those on stage. Their responsiveness establishes the conditions in which a performance can take place, and there is a fluid interchange between audience members and those walking the runway. Legends and icons pull the spectators in, eliciting their vocal adoration and, moreover, empowering them so that they want to get on the runway themselves.

Many of us who don't fit in with cis-heterosexist and white supremacist norms have been denied the opportunity to pursue our dreams and desires. Society has placed limits on us, dictating what we can and cannot do on the basis of who we are and how we look. Such a rejection might mean being told, for instance, that we can't be a ballerina. This is what happened to Kewpie—and her response was defiant. "So I decided," she tells us, "to bang back into my gay life." For many, ballroom has offered the sense of return or homecoming that Kewpie describes, allowing us to bang back into a whole gay life that is rightfully ours. And many have turned to ballroom as a space in which we can practise and express our otherwise denied dreams and desires, bringing them to life while walking in categories such as runway, executive realness, and female figure realness.

By the same token, ballroom has afforded queer and trans people an

opportunity to master the mechanics, mannerisms, and body language that society demands of us. Realness is a foundational category of ballroom, in which LGBTQIA+ individuals can practise the art of passing as their heteronormative counterparts. At the time ballroom originated, this skill was vital to ensuring economic safety and security as well as upward mobility in normative society. Indeed, it remains crucial for many. Likewise, while Kewpie did not identify as a woman, she said that she was often safe in public because "people always thought [she] was a woman passing by." The ways in which Kewpie and her gay friends crafted a reputation for themselves through their glamorous expressions of femininity, both on the stage and in everyday life, also served important social functions. It allowed them to carve out a niche as sought-after hairdressers and entertainers who were able to make a living for themselves, while offering some protection against discrimination and harassment.

This notion of protection, as well as care, is at the foundation of ballroom as a culture, in the form of chosen family. Typically, this takes the shape of a ballroom house, such as, in South Africa, the House of Le Cap, the House of Vineyard, the House of LaBeija, or the House of Diamonds. Of particular importance is the figure of the house mother. In the same way that birthing mothers act as portals into this earthly reality, the foremothers of ballroom who birthed the culture became access points for queer youth to find a sense of home and belonging. House mothers continue to play this role today, acting as a channel or doorway to a reality of connectedness. Kewpie fulfilled this same mothering role for many younger gays in her community, giving them a safe place to stay, training many in hairdressing, and always letting them know that "they're wanted." Kewpie described herself as "a queen mother to all the gays." In ballroom and queer community, choosing one's lineage is a powerful practice. In the same way, when we claim Kewpie as ancestor, we choose to stake out our place in a line of change makers.

In contemporary South Africa, there has been so much erasure of experience through forced removals, through the invisibilisation of entire realities. And, if we are made to believe that we are without a root system, then we continually shrink ourselves, not feeling stable enough to grow and take up space. The Kewpie Collection has therefore meant so much to so many people because it does the crucial work of contextualising the queer experience. It provides us with a legacy of difference and diversity being valued. It offers us glimpses of the kind

of spaces that ballroom co-creates. These are spaces of what the artist Haneem Christian has described as gender abundance. In these spaces, everyone is welcome, but Black and brown queer and trans people are centred, in defiance of society's exclusionary dictates. The Kewpie Collection reminds us that this act of collective creation has historical roots and precedent in our very own South African communities.

We want to end by sharing with you an image from the Kewpie Collection that has long intrigued us. In this photograph, a fresh-faced Kewpie crouches close to the packed dancefloor of the Ambassador Club on Sir Lowry Road. Around her, dancers swirl and step, their clothing immediately conjuring the late 1950s: a pair of saddle shoes, a flouncing circle skirt, and pedal pushers worn with a peep toe wedge. Kewpie's own simple white boat neck and dark pants provide a refined backdrop for her expertly styled hair, gelled back sides making way for soft curls to gracefully tumble above her brow. Kewpie's hand is elegantly extended to her left and her lips evocatively parted as she glances casually to her right, away from the camera to which her body is turned. This photograph is one of many in which we see Kewpie dancing—twirling, doing the splits, kicking one leg in the air—at parties and on streets and beaches. What is particularly remarkable about this one is that, to us, looking back now, Kewpie appears to be voguing.

At the time this photograph was taken, ballroom was about to be birthed in Harlem—and meanwhile, in District Six, it looks as though Kewpie is duckwalking, and doing hands performance, which is a signature of the vogue femme style that would be developed in the decades after this image was captured. This photograph of Kewpie reminds us that, because our stories have been erased and invisibilised, we are unlikely to access complete histories that allow us to fully comprehend all the intricate connections between the cultures that Black and brown gay, queer, and trans people have produced the world over. It is even more important, then, to lay claim to our histories and lineages and infuse them with our own imaginaries and desires. This photograph reminds us of the deep resonances between ballroom and the Kewpie Collection, and the time-and-space-defying magic of both.

WITH SUCH RICH HISTORY, IT IS GOOD TO BE QUEER! *MY EXPERIENCE OF SALON KEWPIE'S 2024 LEGACY PROJECT*

Rushan Kiel **reflects on their experience as a participant in Salon Kewpie: The Legacy Project 2024**

Being chosen as a participant for the 2024 Salon Kewpie: The Legacy Project was life-changing. Walking in at District Six Museum with like-minded individuals, not knowing where this week will take us but trusting the process, will always be my best decision thus far. With such rich history (that should be taught at school), it is good to be queer!

Utilising Kewpie's photo collection from earlier than the 1980s and especially hearing her story of being a success during the mess of life in those times gave me a profound respect for my fellow LGBTQIA+ community and myself. As a young, openly gay human, we were taught we are the future, yet, without learning our history, how do we move forward? Kewpie's legacy is much more than her beauty, photographic lifestyle, and being an entrepreneur. It shows us that in those times she was empowered, confident in herself, and not scared to show up uniquely wherever she went. This speaks volumes for our generation.

On day one of Salon Kewpie: The Legacy Project, after being given an introduction to what the entire week would entail, we focused on Kewpie's archives and voguing 101. The amazing Cheshire Vineyard gave a presentation on ballroom 101. Later, Cheshire taught us the important elements of creating a perfect picture and we were judged as a team on integrating theory into practice. We then learned about the history of voguing and all its basic elements. The workshop was split into theory and practical and facilitated by the talented Rori Le Cap and Berlin Williams, who showcased the five elements of vogue. Afterward, we created our own vogue choreography as a presentation.

To begin with, day two was facilitated by Ruth Ramsden-Karelse, focusing on the archives of Kewpie's history, containing 600 pictures, to get a better understanding of how everything began. Kewpie was a South African drag queen and hairdresser, she was gender fluid and preferred feminine pronouns. She resided in District Six and her salon became the centre of the queer community. We looked at her photographs and poses, the photogenic

THIS [SALON KEWPIE: THE LEGACY PROJECT] IS HOME. IT'S HOME TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE DIFFERENT SEXUALITIES, PEOPLE WHO HAVE DIFFERENT PHYSICAL DISABILITIES, DIFFERENT CHALLENGES. WE ARE ALL THERE FOR EACH OTHER.

Lesa Dlamini
2024 Participant

celebrity she portrayed during her life, and explored how she branded herself through photography. After lunch, an empowering embodied confidence workshop was facilitated by Loren Loubser. Melody Seherrie from Gender DynamiX then led a beautiful session about being queer and trans in the city.

On day three, we continued to dive deeper into the Kewpie Collection with Ruth. We spoke about the photographs on display in the workshop space and we created our own photographs, drawing inspiration from Kewpie and her friends. This was followed by Liberty Matthyse and Sandra Dee, who educated us with an intergenerational dialogue. We then focused on hair, facilitated by Maxine Wild, and make-up, facilitated by Michelle-Lee Collins. They gave us various skills on how to construct the proper make-up face. Michelle spoke to us about the importance of skincare and the important role it plays when applying makeup. We constructed our own make-up look and were given a make-up bag as a gift with the essentials we will need to do an everyday, natural make-up look. Up until today, these tools are very useful. We also learnt about creating your own drag persona, led by Kat Gilardi and Dee Blogging.

Day four was all about Costume Design! I have been dreaming of being full glammed, full drag, and being a designer, and this was my favourite part of the week. Material and garments were supplied, and we had the creative freedom to construct a garment that not only suits us but our entire team with the amazing help of Zaid Philander.

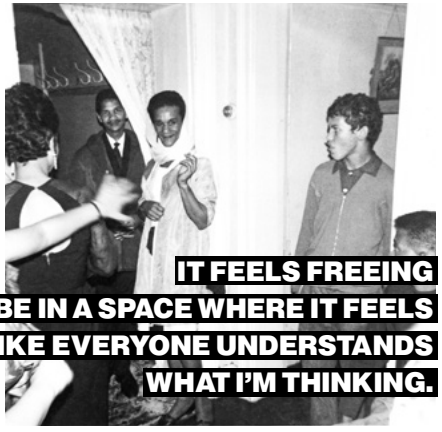
Cheshire had already categorised the group into three different houses, each led by Rori, Berlin, and Loren, in which we had to create a look that represented us. The name we chose for our house, House of La Vintage, was inspired by our theme-based looks: rich, vintage, and late '80s. Salon Kewpie provided us with fabric and, as we created our looks, we were taught how to use sewing machines and put garments together.

On day five of Salon Kewpie: The Legacy Project came the LEGACY BALL. The Night of Nights! Since the Legacy Ball was my first experience of ballroom, it felt exhilarating walking down the ramp. Seeing other queens I aspire to be and knowing everyone is here for the same reason, I felt a sense of comfort. We graduated and got the opportunity to show off the creative pieces we put together during the week.

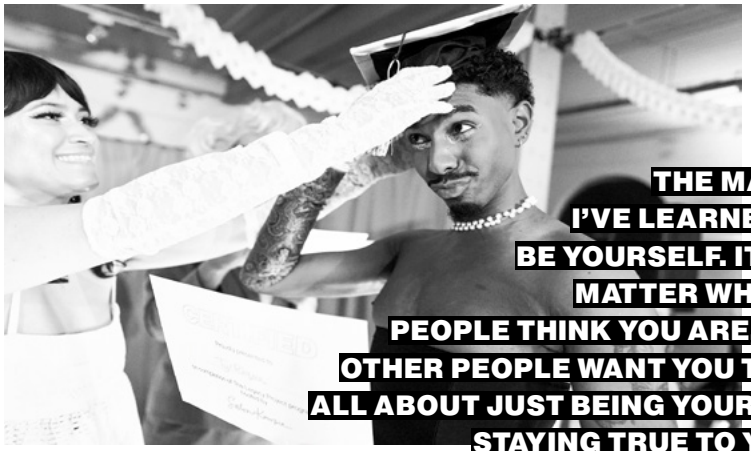
All in all, my experience of Salon Kewpie: The Legacy Project was amazing. Because of my experience, I now am very comfortable in knowing who I am, and how to be my authentic self. I have learned so much about ballroom culture and drag artistry and also got to know our queer and trans ancestors.

This experience taught me so much. It is important to raise awareness of queer histories such as Kewpie and the gays and girls of District Six, it helps to recognise and celebrate the achievements and contributions of queer communities which is often overlooked or erased in mainstream narratives of history. The gays and the girls from District Six lived in a very accepting and cultural environment, where LGBTQIA+ individuals could live relatively openly and freely, especially compared to other areas in apartheid South Africa. The neighbourhood had a thriving drag culture emerging

Mihle Mboyise
2024 Participant



IT FEELS FREEING TO BE IN A SPACE WHERE IT FEELS LIKE EVERYONE UNDERSTANDS WHAT I'M THINKING.



THE MAIN THING I'VE LEARNED IS JUST BE YOURSELF. IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK YOU ARE, OR WHAT OTHER PEOPLE WANT YOU TO BE, IT'S ALL ABOUT JUST BEING YOURSELF AND STAYING TRUE TO YOURSELF BUT ALSO OPENING UP CHANNELS FOR [OTHERS].

Ty'Rique Keanu Munsamy
2024 Participant

also. While same sex relationships were not widely accepted across South Africa, District Six provided a relatively safe space for gay men and women to form relationships and express themselves.

When it comes to the rich history of Kewpie, I have gained so much knowledge on how to build my own legacy, confidently. I also gained a trusted network with everyone who participated in Salon Kewpie: The Legacy Project 2024 and for that, I will forever be grateful. I also realised it's important to acknowledge the fact that there were people before us that paved the way, and now my understanding of these things is much more clear. I am now optimistic about stepping out as my unique self. With the make-up and hair tutorials, costume design lessons, vogue 101 basic, and even the reflection at the end, I know the huge impact Salon Kewpie: The Legacy Project has given me.

Salon Kewpie: The Legacy Project is hands down one of my best experiences ever. I love that today, the legacy of Kewpie and the gays and the girls of the District Six community is being recognised and celebrated through various initiatives, including documentaries, exhibitions, and memoirs, ensuring that their stories and contributions are not forgotten. I recommend this for everyone and if I could participate one more year I would. The skills I have learned set me up for a lifetime, as well as being able to share these skills with those who come after me.

Thank you to everyone involved for giving me a new safe space to just be uniquely myself.

FOR THOSE WHO NEVER SAW THEMSELVES IN HISTORY: *VISIBILITY AND THE KEWPIE COLLECTION*

On 8 April 2024, we held our second annual panel discussion exploring the Kewpie Collection and its vital legacies, at the District Six Museum Homecoming Centre. The event featured four members of the Salon Kewpie team: District Six Museum Head of Exhibitions, Tina Smith, GALA Queer Archive Director, Keval Harie, artist and facilitator Cheshire Vineyard, and Kewpie Collection researcher Ruth Ramsden-Karelse. We have published here edited extracts from each of our opening presentations discussing just a few favourite images from the Kewpie Collection in relation to our 2024 theme of visibility.

Tina Smith

District Six is about Cape Town, and Cape Town is about District Six. So when they bulldozed and removed people, they literally removed the heart of Cape Town: the cultural centre, the political centre. And now,

at the District Six Museum, we work with fragments, with woundedness, with brokenness. We're always piecing together this puzzle, and it's an emotional trauma that we're piecing together. But the Kewpie Collection offers another dynamic, by not only giving visibility to a gay community—which is so important—but also to the nuances of how the District Six community held that queer community. I often think, would there have been a Kewpie without District Six? I don't think so. Because it was such a special place. And I don't want to romanticise it, but, at the same time, we also need to celebrate it—I mean, this archive is all about celebration! Mandy Sanger, Head of Education at the District Six Museum, said once that Kewpie was a very much-loved citizen of District Six. And it's true, Kewpie was indeed a much-loved citizen of District Six. We're very fortunate that many of Kewpie's contemporaries were still alive while we were conducting research for the exhibition that first opened at the District Six Museum in 2018, *Kewpie: Daughter of District Six*, and we had the opportunity to really dig deep into the story. And everybody spoke very kindly about Kewpie.

A common thing that is told in interviews about District Six is: my child is your child. It was that kind of community, where people were looking out for each other. And it's deeper than just words. It was in action; it was in practice. Growing up in District Six, there was that sense that the community held each other, they were accountable to each other. There was this kind of living cheek-to-jowl lifestyle and everyone was in a similar economic situation, everybody looked out for each other. It was a close-knit community like that. People shared children, and shared those responsibilities. So there are a few images in the Kewpie Collection where you see children surrounding Kewpie. This photograph was taken at Trafalgar Bath, which is still in existence. There's still some areas in District Six that they didn't manage to bulldoze and clear out—and there are still a few sites remaining where Kewpie lived and where she used to frequent quite a bit. In fact, number 13 Osborne Street, where Kewpie's family come from, is still intact.

But then, we also see Kewpie in the ruins of District Six. I always come back to this very compelling image of Kewpie. In District Six, also, people's lives were a lot on the streets. The streets were the performance spaces—their stages—because the boundaries of the architectural, built fabric and space of District Six were really blurred. This image also gives you a sense of time, because we know that there is an end time to District Six: District Six was dying. So it is fairly haunting and, at the same time, it's an embodiment of Kewpie's sense of resistance and defiance of what was happening at the time. So I'm thinking about visibility in the face of trauma and loss. And about what it means to go back to a space where you've lost something. You really get a sense of this DNA of trauma that we're still sitting with 30 years into democracy. We see it in our everyday lives as South Africans. And coming back to this image, you realise the importance of the work of the District Six Museum. It is about return, it is about memorialisation.

Keval Harie

I just love this picture of Piper Laurie (photograph on page 28), who was a friendly rival of Kewpie, taken in the 1970s. This picture wasn't displayed in the 2018–2019 exhibition that Tina mentioned—and there's still so much of the archive, like this picture, that hasn't yet been publicly excavated and that are not as visible as other photographs from the Collection. We often speak

about the girls and how they were inspired by celebrities like Diana Ross. But, to me, this picture is so reminiscent of Bollywood glam, of Sharmila Tagore, and it shows how worldly they were, how they drew their inspiration from so many sources and also what a rich culture and diverse community they were a part of.

On Heritage Day in 2018, we marched in honour of Kewpie and it was amazing to meet so many community members who were really reflecting not only on Kewpie but also on their own lives—including this guy who we met braaing outside a flat Kewpie used to live in. It reminds us that there is something so deeply personal about this historical collection. You can't look at the photos and not feel something personal, and know that it would be your mother who went to the hairdresser at like the early hours of the morning on the 24th, to make sure that her hair was done for Christmas and that the ladies worked throughout the night on Christmas Eve to ensure that everyone was zhooshed, snatched for Christmas Day.

This picture is a shout out to Joburg, firstly, and, secondly, gives a sense of how Kewpie's legacy has come full-circle. It was taken at the opening of the Joburg leg of the *Kewpie: Daughter of District Six* exhibition, which opened in May 2019. In the picture, we see Sally Werq, who is a drag artist based in Cape Town but who lived in Joburg at the time. And on the left, we see Rumain Akoob, who draped this African print in a sari. Rumain had never even seen the Piper Laurie picture, so for me it really gives a full sense of the fact that none of us in our wildest dreams could have ever imagined what Kewpie would come to represent to a community and yet, time and time again, we keep being told that the Kewpie Collection, the exhibition, and this project, the work being done by Salon Kewpie, mean so much to people who've felt erased from history and who never saw themselves in history. And so I think the work that we're doing here with the blessing of the ancestors is so important and necessary.

Cheshire Vineyard

Keval so beautifully spoke about how this Collection means so much to people who didn't see themselves represented in any historic archives, who didn't have that kind of tangible sense of this is where I belong, this is the lineage that I belong to. And like many young queer people, I spent a lot of time in my imagination, and for most of my life, I was seeing myself through cartoons and comics and animation. And it was only at 15, 16 years old, when I discovered the documentary *Paris is Burning*, about ballroom culture in Harlem, that I for the first time felt a sense of connection and belonging to a human experience. And this has sent me on this beautiful journey

through my artistic development.

But, when I did eventually arrive in New York at 21 years old and step into ballroom—which I thought was going to be this experience of, like, arriving at my Mecca—there was such an immense disconnect that left me very confused. I didn't feel the connection that I thought I was going to feel to this community, even though the culture that I discovered through *Paris is Burning* and through everything I had been studying around ballroom meant so much to me. So, when I then discovered the Kewpie Collection through the 2018 exhibition, it was this revelation that catalysed a paradigm shift in my life—and I saw that happen for every queer person who was as at that exhibition—because it was the first time that I connected to a root system that made me belong to this land. And as I was learning the histories, the same obsession that I had for ballroom, I developed for Kewpie.

Months or weeks leading up to the exhibition, as I was moving about town, people were coming up to me going, "oh, my God, congratulations on your campaign!" And I was like, what? Who is using my image that I didn't know about? Because I wasn't paid. I didn't sign the contract. What campaign, babes? And, eventually, I saw this big banner hanging outside the Homecoming Centre, with the image of Kewpie. And I realised that this was this "campaign" that everyone was speaking about. So, Kewpie was calling me long before I even engaged with the archive. And the sense of homecoming that I thought I was going to experience when I experienced ballroom in its place of emergence, I ended up experiencing here in the Homecoming Centre through the Kewpie Collection.

Now, we get to dig deeper and excavate and uncover these parallels that are so evident in the Kewpie Collection, that connected to what was happening in New York City, even when they might not have known what was going on in New York. You know, the culture of the gays and the girls in District Six parallels the unfoldment and development of ballroom that was happening in Harlem and the streets of New York; that was giving a home to the queer culture and community an ocean away. And as a community leader within ballroom, I felt clearly the call and the charge that Kewpie was leaving me with.

Ruth Ramsden-Karelse

There are photographs from the Kewpie Collection that capture a kind of tension that exists for me when thinking about visibility in relation to the ways in which we remember and celebrate Kewpie and her legacy: a tension between iconicity and collectivity.

So, on the one hand, of course, Kewpie is an icon. A cropped version of the photo taken at one of Kewpie's parties in Rutger Street, just showing Kewpie, was included in the *Kewpie: Daughter of District Six* exhibition, and Nina Milner used that same cropped version for our initial Salon Kewpie: The Legacy Project posters last year—because it's just stunning. In the original photograph, Kewpie is posing with two friends, Stella and Amy. But it's like Kewpie is in a completely different photo. She holds a white cigarette holder between fingers in long white gloves, blonde hair curled gently from her face. She knows how to find her light, how to create an effect, and there are many images in the archive like this one, in which Kewpie uses strategies available to her to construct for herself a kind of celebrity.

But then, on the other hand, if we listen closely to the interviews with Kewpie and if we look at her collection of photographs as a whole, it's all about collectivity. Everything is so deeply collaborative. And we know that the forms of togetherness that we see in photographs of the gays and girls together on streets and pavements in and around District Six, for example, are necessary. They're fundamental to claiming

the forms of safety and creating the kinds of visibility that we're celebrating with this year's Salon Kewpie: The Legacy Project. Because we know that we're only able to change the world in the ways that we need to, to make it more liveable, when we work together.

One way that Kewpie reminds us of the importance of collectivity during interviews is through her description of the Queens Hotel. Kewpie tells the story of always being on the lookout for a place to stay—but, she says, "not just for me, but for my gay friends to stay with me." And eventually she finds this place to rent on Sir Lowry Road, in Woodstock, and she names it the Queens Hotel. And that's actually the building that Keval showed him and Gen outside of, adorned with the wheat paste portrait of Kewpie in September 2018. It's also outside of the Queens Hotel, opposite the Ambassador club, where we see Kewpie and her gay friends spending afternoons posing on the traffic island, or the "aisle," as Kewpie calls it.

When we now remember the gays and girls, we tend to remember them as hairdressers, for example, who made all the women in District Six look like film stars, or we remember them for the fabulous parties that they organised, attended, and performed at in public venues like the Ambassador Club. In other words, we tend to remember them from the perspective of District Six's straight majority. And, of course, it is crucial to celebrate gays and girls for this important cultural work that they did. But there is also perhaps a risk of playing into the same trap highlighted by queer and trans cultural workers today, who find themselves celebrated when their queerness and transness is safely relegated to the demarcated space of the stage and when they're available for the consumption of straight and cis audiences. And the Kewpie Collection also reveals a very rich history of gays and girls creating spaces like the Queen's Hotel that were less public and that welcomed and provided shelter, often regardless of the ability to pay rent, for a whole range of people who lived their genders and sexualities in diverse ways—including sex workers, precariously employed cultural workers, and those who found themselves without a place to stay. This leaves us with an imaginary, an imaginary of what community and home might yet mean, that is a really important part of District Six's history but that has, so far, been less visible. With our thinking about visibility in Salon Kewpie, we want to highlight histories like this that are actually so crucial for the work that we all have to now collectively do—the work of not only imagining more expansive futures but actualising them.

THAT FREE AND WARM WELCOME: *REMEMBERING KEWPIE*

Mrs Ursula Hansby (née Fritz) was born in 1947 and is Kewpie's younger sister. Mrs Hansby speaks fondly about their family life at 13 Osborne Street with their parents, Walter and Jean, and little brother, Trevor. In the 1960s, the Fritz family relocated to Bellville South, while Kewpie chose to remain in the heart of District Six. Mrs Hansby still lives in Bellville with her husband, Allister, where they raised their daughters, Elwyn and Wendy. Mrs Hansby loves knitting, cooking, and spending time with her children and three grandchildren.

In April 2024, Mrs Hansby shared some of her memories of Kewpie in a conversation with Ruth Ramsden-Karelse and Cheshire Vineyard.

Growing up on Osborne Street, it was really a family street with families intermingling. Everybody was everybody's mother and father. That was the community we lived in, with only thirty houses in the road. And it was there that Kewpie started doing hairdressing. Kewpie used to bunk from high school and, while my dad was at work, invite hairdressing clients to our house in Osborne Street. She would balance my mother's mirror—my mother had one those old-fashioned dressing tables with a big, big mirror—on the settee, until, one day, my dad came home from work unexpectedly and found out. And that was the end of the house hairdresser! Around that time, Kewpie had met Piper Laurie, who was doing hairdressing in Hanover Street. Piper Laurie was the first friend that Kewpie met. So, when she could no longer see clients at home, Kewpie started going to Piper Laurie's and getting extra training and, from there, Kewpie expanded. And wherever Kewpie went, there were followers.

While Kewpie still lived at home, I don't know how my parents weren't aware of Kewpie attending all these competitions and parties. The house wasn't big in Osborne Street. But then—it's early hours, it's almost daylight—I'd hear a knock on the window. Kewpie had come in from the back gate, crawled onto the rooftop, and now I must open the

window! I slept on a three-quarter bed, and Kewpie would slide down between the bed and the wall, because my dad and them know that Kewpie's not in yet, and my dad would check in, keep checking if Kewpie's still not in.

In the 1950s, my parents moved to Bellville, and Kewpie stayed in District Six. She lived in Nelson Street, and then at Invery Place right opposite the Ambassador Club in Sir Lowry Road—where Tony Naidoo would compere and where all the competitions and parties started—and then, later, at Fifth Avenue in Kensington. And wherever Kewpie lived, in a place meant for one person, there you would find a thousand people! You don't have a place to sleep? Kewpie will put you up. By the time Kewpie was living in Invery Place, I had moved to Bellville with my parents. But I would pop in after school, and oh my word, it was like sardines! There was no walking surface, because Kewpie made sure that everybody who needed it had a spot to sleep or a seat to sit. That free and warm welcome of family life that Kewpie extended to each and every person: that all came from my mother. My dad was also generous and welcoming, but my mother was really a home-maker. That homely person, that caring person, always making sure there's food: that is how my mother was and Kewpie was the same. And Kewpie was my *ma se oogappel*. Kewpie adored my mother, and my mother adored Kewpie. She kept all of Kewpie's secrets.

Then Kewpie expanded her hairdresser into Kensington. The bus to Cape Town used to drive down Fifth Avenue, past Kewpie's hairdresser. On Saturdays, the ladies who would stay at home would cook their food, would take the bus to do their shopping at the Parade—at OK Bazaars on Darling Street—and then they would have a free afternoon after that. And Kewpie would accommodate all those people, keeping the hairdresser open until whatever time. When I had my hair done by Kewpie, I had to wait and wait. I had to have patience because Kewpie was the one who did our hair; we would never have allowed any of the other stylists to do our hair. But everybody wanted Kewpie to do their hair. Kewpie used to do the beehive, those years, with the curls turned up. It was crazy, when we got married the people thought that the bride had absconded because we sat so long in the hairdresser, and came in late for our own wedding! But nevertheless, that was Kewpie—because of the hairdresser accommodating so many people, and late at night. It wasn't like now, when you close at a certain time. If you wanted Kewpie to do your hair, you had to just be patient! But she was very meticulous, of course.

After we moved, Kewpie was still very much involved with the family in the background. And on Wednesdays, when Kewpie was off duty, she would visit my mom, long before my dad comes home from work. So of course, Kewpie was keeping up to date with all the birthdays and things, and when my twenty-first was coming up, she said, "don't worry, I've got the perfect dress for you." And I got this beautiful, layered dress with silver sleeve edge. The party was at the Elsies River Civic Centre, but Kewpie wasn't there because it was a Saturday so she was busy hair-doing until midnight. And then, I don't know what competition it was, but Kewpie asked me, "can I borrow your dress?" And then one of the friends got married and, unfortunately, we never got the dress back, because Kewpie gave it to her as a wedding dress and she

never returned it! I would easily have framed that dress by now because it has such an incredible legacy.

Mitzi would work at the back of the hairdresser as a shampooist and, when the hairdresser closed, all the friends would have a dora out the back. At about 10 o' clock or even midnight, the hairdresser would close—only after accommodating all the ladies—and then, about once a month, Kewpie and Mitzi and Sammy and the other workers would come to us to spend the rest of the weekend. By that time, my husband and I were married. After Kewpie, Mitzi, Sammy, and everyone arrived at our place, I would go to sleep, so that I could get up early to go to church. But they would all stay up and have a party. By the time I came back from church, they would still be awake! But they would say, "no, get dressed, go to church, and while you're there we will see to the food." Sammy was a wonderful cook, even braising onions with lettuce leaves and pepper. When I came back from church, they would have the food all ready and the table's set. So that is how weekends were spent with us.

Kewpie was really everybody's friend. In Kensington, you can't talk about Kewpie and nobody knows Kewpie. Towards the end of her life, Kewpie started getting ill. She had oesophageal cancer. Kewpie moved in with us, and we cared for her, but my husband and I both worked, the children were still in school, and Kewpie needed to be somewhere where she had twenty-four-hour care. Kewpie was in hospital, but then when she was discharged, we were worried about finding somewhere for Kewpie to be cared for and safe. But as I said, in Kensington, the world knew Kewpie. So we went to the home in Kensington and we explained the situation. We first applied for a place under the name Eugene Fritz, and then when we said, "it's Kewpie," the sister on the other end of the phone said, "why didn't you say so long ago? We don't know a Eugene Fritz!" And just like that, Kewpie got a place. And you know there's normally a long waiting list, but immediately they accommodated Kewpie.

While she was in the home, Kewpie would sit out in the courtyard in the sun and knit. And she would go out walking around Kensington. Then if the other residents in the home heard, now Kewpie's going to the shops, they would ask, "buy me a packet of chips," and everybody would give a little order. But then it's suppertime before Kewpie gets back, because the whole of Kensington, everywhere Kewpie comes, she stops and chats. Then they must keep the stuff for tomorrow! Because everybody knew Kewpie. Kewpie knew everybody, but the world knew Kewpie.

THE SOUND OF HIS OWN DRUMMER: *REMEMBERING KAFUNTA*

Tina Smith, Head of Exhibitions at the District Six Museum, reflects on the life and times of Moegamat Benjamin.

And I miss District Six.

And I miss District Six.

It might look like I'm telling this story so happily

But we had to fight for survival…

Moegamat had a rhythm to his step from the day the Salvation Army home in District Six ushered him into this world on 13th October 1957. A fitting arrival for he who danced to the sounds of his own drummer.

Captured by his unrelenting, lively embodiment of District Six's past and present, Moegamat's monologue flowed like a continuous stream of anecdotes demanding our attention from all corners of the District Six Museum. His was a composite life story layered with a variety of personalities; his inescapable larger-than-life characters took us on journeys into District Six.

This is where his story begins and lives on through us.

Moegamat was the second eldest of eleven children from his mother's first marriage. His earliest memory of District Six was of his paternal grandmother Motjie Beira, who reared him at her home in McKenzie Street. Here, he lived with his extended family and close neighbours until the apartheid Group Areas Act of 1950 declared District Six a "whites only" area in 1966, forcibly removing residents to racialised townships on the Cape Flats.

Growing up in the District, hardship and joyous times lived in parallel worlds. Moegamat spoke passionately about the women in his family: they were an integral influence in his life and led by example, offering their services to make ends meet, from washing clothes, to baking bread and koe'siesters, to seamstressing.

Formal schooling for Moegamat was short lived. At the age of nine

years old, he was running errands for the family and neighbours, and later doing menial tasks as a tea boy, toilet cleaner, till packer, and runner at various department stores in the city. Driven by his own ambition, with only a Standard Two-level education, he worked his way up as a salesperson, window dresser, and gradually to a store manager.

> *I wanted to achieve something in my life and my employment in different jobs gradually improved my life.*

Despite apartheid's discriminatory laws taking grip, District Six was a vibrant and bustling, working-class inner-city community with its own counterculture. Like his predecessor Kewpie, Moegamat carved out an alternative life that was subversive to any form of conservative, heteronormative, and racial prejudice.

District Six was best known for its effervescent street culture—a public performance space that encouraged both its live audience and participants to act out multiple personas and give expression to gender making and cultural identities. It was, for most District Sixers, a normal occurrence and lived experience. Drawn there by his own curiosity and extroverted nature, the street was, for Moegamat, a place for spontaneous expression, social engagement, and re-worlding.

Moegamat's most memorable childhood activity was playing street netball with friends from surrounding streets. He was later instrumental in formalising the District Six gay netball team which took on the name the Silvertree Supremes. Moegamat recalled that Kewpie was a very prominent figure on the netball court and an ardent supporter of the game.

It was the annual carnival (Klopse) that held a special place for Moegamat: it drove his interest to start dancing. "I started dancing for the carnival at the age of eight until my thirties." He joined a club called Young Pennsylvanian Darkies, where he soon took on the role as the lead drag dancer. Moegamat described, "Many dancers took their names from famous people, like the late Margaret Singana, Eureka Blake. Sandra Dee danced in drag with me in the Klopse."

The Tweede Nuwe Jaar (Klopse) Carnival, with its multifaceted space for creative expression, is an explosion of colourful artistry deeply rooted in slave ancestral heritage with decades of history in District Six. In this atmosphere of collective re-imagination, Moegamat as lead dancer (voorloper) found freedom to project into the world his gender identity and to gain visibility beyond the streets of District Six.

During the '60s up until the '80s, Kewpie was the heart and soul of the gay scene in District Six. This was a turbulent time in the history of apartheid's forced removals, which came with a menu of restrictive discriminatory laws—in particular, the 1969 amendment to the Immorality Act which criminalised homosexuality. Regardless, Kewpie and her friends were defiant and pioneered an alternative way of life for the younger generation to thrive and live their truth, including Moegamat and Sandra Dee.

Their first real encounter with Kewpie was at her home in Rutger Street, especially on Saturday afternoons. On these occasions, the sisters dressed up in the latest fashionwear and transformed the streets into lively catwalks, where many photographs were taken. They also met at the Ambassador nightclub, where matinee dances were a regular lunchtime feature for factory workers. At the time, Moegamat worked as a runner at a nearby factory and spent his lunch hours socialising with Kewpie and her friends.

Kewpie introduced them into the gay social circle—from beauty pageants and annual "Moffie Queen" competitions, to themed drag parties and private parties at Lala's home in Dry Dock. Kewpie's home at Invery Place, which she named the "Queens Hotel," was a place they often frequented. For both Moegamat and Sandra Dee's generation, Kewpie paved the way. They looked up to and mirrored themselves against her.

Moegamat got his first taste of recognition as a singer when he was baptisted as Kafunta by his friend Howard, the hairdresser better known as Diana Ross, after the long-playing record album released by P. P. Arnold in 1970.

> *I loved her songs. The guys on the corner gave me money to sing this song for them:*
>
> *Dear Girl by the time you read this letter I'll be far away*
>
> *After this morning when I went to the office, it seemed the easiest way…*
>
> *I was the best singer of that song today; everybody still knows me as Kafunta.*

Moegamat's first entry into the District Six Museum in 1994 was as compelling as his untimely passing in 2019, a few months after the closure of the *Kewpie: Daughter of District Six* exhibition. For him, the Museum was a symbolic return—an

awakening that led him to find his voice and reconnect with the memories of District Six. He became a popular entity, first as an unofficial volunteer then graduating to become a storyteller and Museum guide.

The *Kewpie: Daughter of District Six* exhibition opening in 2018 was a pivotal turning point. Moegamat was visibly and emotionally moved by the revival of Kewpie's photographic collection and the research project in which he was a key participant. It gave him a personal platform to re-live his youthful memories as part of a spirited gay community of District Six.

Living as a Tablighi—a Muslim evangelist—the exhibition provided a space for Moegamat to settle his inner conflict with his past life as Kafunta. In a way, he was able to mourn both the loss of Kafunta and District Six, yet at the same time regain self-affirmation and acceptance so that he could celebrate and continue proudly with both lived realities that make his story so authentic.

For the duration of the exhibition, Moegamat took on more than just a role of exhibition guide; he was our medium. Through his recollections, we were able to extend our gaze beyond the framed edges of the images, allowing us to see into the nuances of Kewpie's photographic collection and what it represented for the broader District Six community. Moegamat had the ability to derive meaning through purposeful re-enactment, providing tangible engagement by re-tracing the sites and routes that Kewpie and her sisters frequented, giving presence to absence. He emphasised the importance of the Kewpie Collection as a site of queer heritage for all to value and celebrate.

We remember Moegamat Benjamin for the lessons and legacy that he left behind, for his vibrant soul that fueled heartfelt stories of District Six. Whether in times of difficulty or happiness, his unwavering spirit of humanity and deep sense of community carried him through. He left this world at peace with himself and what he stood for—listening to his own drummer.

THE AUDACITY! *LEARNING FROM OUR TRANS ELDERS*

On 10 April 2024, Salon Kewpie facilitated an intergenerational dialogue between **Liberty Matthyse** and **Sandra Dee.** The session was moderated by Cheshire Vineyard and attended and by participants of the second annual Legacy Project, who later joined in on the conversation. Now the Executive Director of Gender DynamiX, a Cape-Town based organisation fighting for the rights of transgender and gender diverse people in Southern Africa, Liberty has a wealth of experience as a social justice activist and organiser and as the winner of Miss Sovereign Western Cape 2014. A friend of Kewpie's and a legendary performer and hairstylist, Sandra Dee continues to serve the Hanover Park community through her Fairy Godmother Project.

Published here is an edited version of their varied and instructive conversation.

Liberty Matthyse

The first time that I met you, Auntie Sandy, was at Miss Sovereign Western Cape, which at the time was called Miss Gay Western Cape, in 2012, and you came with Samantha Fox, who at the time was the Legends Queen. And then, when I started with Gender DynamiX a couple of years later, that is when I started really to get to know you through the work that you do with the Fairy Godmother Project, trying to be that fairy godmother in the lives of so many people, and playing a fundamental role in holding community.

This beautiful project that we are part of now, Salon Kewpie: The Legacy Project, reminds us of the importance of remembering our elders and ancestors. It reminds us of the importance of chosen family as well as biological family, and making those linkages in order to connect future generations to the legacy of values, of principle, of being in the world in a way that makes us feel like we belong in spaces, the way in which we want to belong and need to belong.

I first crossed paths with Gender DynamiX in 2011, when there was an incident, which I've written about since, at a nightclub on campus at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), where I was a student. I approached Gender DynamiX and the Triangle Project, and they gave some support to students like me in being able to hold the institute, UWC, accountable. And that really catalysed my activism, because a lot of our activism is forged at the heart of struggle and experiences of human rights violations. And so that is how I then journeyed with Gender DynamiX. At that point in time, I could never have imagined that I would be working with the organisation. But here I am, more than ten years later, and it's just an honour to be with the organisation, championing the very change for people like me in those spaces that I wanted to see back then.

Sandra Dee

It's so beautiful to hear that you people could survive, that you had somebody to run to. We had nowhere to run to. In the 1970s, it was tough. Back then, it was compulsory for us to wear pants and, by law, we could not wear a dress or false breasts. So I

used to get picked up for "masquerading as a woman."

I remember coming from a nightclub called the Kraal in Claremont in the '70s and then hiking my way to District Six. Coming in Mowbray I was stopped, it was about two in the morning, half past two, and I was stopped by a white car. And they just said, "get in." I said, "no." They said, "get in." I said, "no!" But then, this other car came past, reversed, and came back to us. It was this guy, known as Detective van Rensburg, head of something. Well, you can just imagine! *Hy sê, "Wat gaan hier aan?"* The others said, *"Meneer?"* He said, *"Jy ken my mos né?"*

He spoke to them and they drove on, but they were very cross. I walked on, it was fine. The second week, again, they stopped us, and this man said, *"jy vermom soos `n vrou so jy' gaantronk to." So hy vat my hof toe maar hy't my geboor... The Magistraat sê,* "I'm going to give you a warning, Stephen. *Verskyn nooit weer in my hof, en voetsek jy uit!"* But another time, when I was picked up, when they called me, they called "Stephen," and here I come with make-up on. And the Judge was like, "where's the guy? Is this a man dressed as a woman in my court?"

And I had to go to Pollsmoor for six months.

It was a continuation of what I've been through but you know what happened that same time, *ek was so gelukkig*, because they put people in prison, they put them in Valkenberg, they put them under 30 days' observation to see if they are normal, they gave them lumbar punctures…

And julle is baie gelukkig.

Liberty Matthyse

I just want to acknowledge the courage with which you navigated the city, as a gender non-conforming woman at that particular point in time, as well as Kewpie and many others like you. Our ability to feel safe within our communities is very much tied to the knowledge that our communities have about gender non-conforming people, and about transgressing gender norms. And that would not have been possible if you didn't have that courage and that resilience to show up in the way in which you did.

In terms of legal landscapes, I do think that we have come quite a long way from where we were. In South Africa, we've made particular strides, especially on gay and lesbian equality. But, when it comes to trans and gender diverse equality, the law is shaped in a way where trans and gender diverse persons are still relegated to second class citizens based on how they live. I've waited three years for my gender marker to be processed—and I've had access to the Minister of Home Affairs and senior officials! Now imagine, if it takes somebody in an organisation like Gender DynamiX three years to get access to that… We have a long way to go in terms of developing a legal framework that actually recognises trans people as full human beings within this country.

In South Africa, the majority of transgender people don't have access to medical care that's gender affirming. And in that same bracket, the majority don't have access to equal gender recognition. And there's a link between the two; it's a vicious cycle. Because you need to show the state medical certificates from healthcare practitioners in order for your gender marker to be processed, you cannot get recognition if you don't have access to medical care. But if you can't get access to legal gender recognition, you can't get access to healthcare.

Looking elsewhere on the continent, and elsewhere in the world, we are seeing a shift to the right—to authoritarianist governments, strongman politics, and anti-human

rights, anti-gender, anti-woman politics—and that should scare all of us. And we should be mobilised by that in different ways to be able to counter it.

Sandra Dee

That's why my advice for the next generation would be: study. Study as hard as you can because, let me tell you something: the day hospital where I am in Hanover Park, they'll still address you as sir. They still have that policy where they address you as they want to. I fight all the time, you know. I'm a fighter! *Sê vir my, "Meneer." Toe sê ek vir hulle,* "I'm gonna fight for my rights." *Toe sê hulle,* "I'm gonna call the cops." *En ek sê* "Yes, call the cops. *Jy't gesê ek is `n moffie... hof toe nou.* I'm going to sue you!" Am I right? I can get away with it. *Sy sê vir my,* "the lady in the office I sent you to, you know, she's anti-gay," and I said "is it?"

This is what happens all the time. You go to the hospital, say, *"kyk hie, my naam is mos Stephen, maar voor vir my sit is dit Sandy." Sê, "um Stephen?"* I say, *"Ek't gesé lyk ek soos `n Stephen?"* That's how I made up my mind, I need my ID changed as Sandy.

Liberty Matthyse

Thinking about how we make these changes happen for all of us, two words come to mind: representation and collective. In terms of securing the futures, we must consider how are we be able to occupy more spaces as LGBTQI+ people and particularly spaces of strategic value, where decisions are being made that impacts our lives? And this ties into what you were saying in terms of continuous learning: we need to study, and focus on, what do we need to do in order to shift into those spaces and occupy them? Can we dream of having a LGBTQI+ president, can we dream of having a LGBTQI+—and, particularly, trans woman of colour—Constitutional Court Judge? In the corporate environment, what does representation look like within boardroom spaces? In the NGO sector, we can see we are making very slow

progress when it comes to trans women of colour occupying leadership positions in non-trans organisations, and that is an indicator that we are far behind within the broader societal scheme of things. So, for me, representation means having the audacity and the boldness to step into those spaces. Cisheteronormative people have had the audacity to occupy a space that they are not necessarily fit for and competent for, but they have had the audacity! So, we need to do the same with the belief that through continuous learning and self- and professional development that we will grow into those positions.

Sandra Dee

And another thing, before you go further darling, let me tell you one thing: I fought, and you know how? Without education. I went to Standard 3 but, before I came to Standard 3, I was brutally raped. I was seven or eight, and they were boys. I was brutally raped, but I went back to school. They continued raping me so when I was 13 or 14, I said, no, I'm tired of school, I ran for my life, not because I wanted to run but because I wanted to get away from them. So I ended up in Sea Point at night and became a prostitute.

When I discovered myself, I was with Kewpie in 1971, 1972, she worked from Kay's Salon in Darling Street into Hanover Street, and I remember Charmaine, the first trans woman, taking me there. We all ended up in Sea Point, and the girls baptised me, but I hated the name they gave me! And then Sandra Dee Fourie, she walked in, with long hair, and she sang so beautifully, and I asked her, can I use the name Sandra Dee, and she said yes.

I was so clear that God was with me. And I fought my way, I became a hairdresser. I worked as a shampooist at a hotel and from there I worked for Ashley Hayden, on Strand Street, and from there I ran to Joburg and I became qualified.

Liberty Matthyse

It's so important to us when you share your experiences. It gives us insight on where we have come from and where we are at now. It also assists us in thinking about what we can build towards. I think that these conversations are so important.

Your story reminds us that visibility goes part and parcel with the questions around the legal, political, social contexts that determine the extent to which we are able to feel safe, and be visible at the same time. So the extent to which visibility can actually mean protection is determined by class, by location, etc. In a country where there is legal protections for LGBTQI+ people, these are largely enjoyed by middle-class and highly privileged people. We must increasingly move to a space where at top level, strategic level, we are able to shift the needle to greater protection for all, so that more people, more people like us, are able to show up in society and not just identify but express who they are in all and different contexts.

Sandra Dee

And you must fight for your rights! Be a fighter. I mean, I'm streetwise. It was not that I was born streetwise. Where I come from, I wanted to be streetwise 'cause I wanted to be whatever I wanted to be. Not even the law could stop me. That's how determined I was. I even spoke with the Minister of Police then, the apartheid years... I slept with the Minister of Finance! I don't want to go into detail now… But you see this street here, there was a bar here called Harry's Bar. It was our bar, I'm talking about in the '70s, in the '80s, Harry's Bar. From there I hiked down the road, I walked down the road, and stood opposite the bus stop, at six o'clock. "Girls, you're sitting there, I'm coming, I'm gonna make some money for the club." So I stood there and here this car come, big black car, very dangerous..."Hey corporal…" *Hy haal sy kep af…* I did my job, and I got my money, and I took all the girls to the clubs with his money! Now that is how determined I was. We all want the same. I'm a fighter! Yes, you must fight for your rights, fight for what you want. We even had to go to jail, that is how we fought. We fought for our rights. So fight for your survival, and get a good education if you can. Because, you know, today, you can go wherever you want, you can do what you want, you can become whatever you want to. But nothing without education.

IT FELT LIKE COMING HOME. IT'S BEEN AMAZING TO FALL IN LOVE WITH MYSELF AND THE COMMUNITY.

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SALON KEWPIE

Cheshire Vineyard is a performance artist, muse, cultural architect, and House Mother. As a native of the rural town of Mamre, they have built a reputation as a changemaker on the world stage. They have toured with FKA twigs (2016), led projects for Athi-Patra Ruga (2018), opened for M.I.A. (2018), and was part of the South African cast of Kinky Boots (2019-2020).

Gavin Mikey Collins is a fashion stylist and creative producer whose work bridges the worlds of fashion, advertising, music, and nightlife. They are the co-founder of Diskotekah, a conceptual brand that has cultivated an alternative queer nightlife community in Cape Town since 2014.

Karin Tan is the Culture and Media Coordinator at the GALA Queer Archive, where she runs the arts-based programme. She is a visual artist who works with things that travel and how they influence experiences of belonging and disconnection.

Keval Harie is an activist, writer, and attorney. Throughout his career, he has utilised the South Africa's Constitution as a tool for innovatively promoting social justice and human rights. As Executive Director at the GALA Queer Archive, his focus is to create visibility for queer life in Africa and celebrating queer experiences in the global South.

Nina Milner is the caretaker of a heritage building and is currently studying sculpture. Her artistic and curatorial endeavor emphasise a care for histories, and consider how physical and conceptual spaces transform over time. She has a background in craniosacral therapy, which initiated her curiosity for life's subtler systems and the ways trauma can be held and integrated.

Ruth Ramsden-Karelse is an academic researcher and teacher. She received her PhD from the University of Oxford in 2022 and is now part the University of Toronto's Queer and Trans Research Lab, where she is working on turning her PhD thesis about worldmaking and the Kewpie Collection into a book.

Tina Smith is the Head of Exhibitions of the District Six Museum. Her background in art education and museum studies informs her collaborative, participatory and immersive approach to exhibition making. She works with the testimonies and stories of displaced communities, and upholds the Museum's curatorial vision and practice.

DISTRICT SIX MUSEUM

The District Six Museum Foundation was established in 1989 and launched as a Museum in 1994, to keep the memories of District Six alive and to draw attention to the situation of displaced people locally, nationally ,as well as globally. It has evolved into a vehicle for advocating for social justice, a space for reflection and contemplation, and for challenging the exclusions and distortions which were entrenched in the history of the city of Cape Town, as well as of the country. Different interpretations of that past are facilitated through its collections, exhibitions, and education programmes.

The Museum is committed to telling the stories of forced removals and assisting in the return of the former community to District Six, drawing on a heritage of non-discrimination, an affirmation of local knowledge, and the encouragement of debate. The closest natural constituency of the Museum is the displaced ex-resident community of the District who are dispersed across various areas of the Cape Flats, and they are at the core of the organisation's work.

districtsix.co.za

GALA QUEER ARCHIVE

Founded in 1997, the GALA Queer Archive (GALA) is a catalyst for the production, preservation, and dissemination of information about the history, culture, and contemporary experiences of LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and otherwise gender and sexually diverse) people in Africa. GALA was established as a response to the continued erasure and omission of LGBTQIA+ history from official museums and archives, even in the wave of more diverse histories and heritage being celebrated and emphasised in post-apartheid 1990s South Africa.

As an archive founded on principles of social justice and human rights, GALA continues to work towards a greater awareness about the lives and experiences of LGBTQIA+ people in Africa. Thus, our main focus is to preserve and nurture LGBTQIA+ narratives and culture, and use this as a tool for promoting social equality, inclusive education, and youth development. GALA also actively adds to the archive by collecting historical material, adding to existing collections, recording contemporary experiences, and starting new collections.

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GALA

Salon Kewpie