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Title of Thesis:

**THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY THROUGH THE LENS OF
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO AS IT RELATES TO VISUAL ARTS.**

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ABSTRACT

There has been a lack of representation for marginalized groups in the creative arts. In the Caribbean, specifically in Trinidad, citizens identified as sexual minorities, such as the LGBTQIA+ community, have been treated with discrimination and ostracism. This study serves to underscore the experiences of visual artists of the LGBTQIA+ community and the pressures of sex, gender, and sexual orientation in a society where the discrimination against queer people persists. This research attempts to connect and pervade conversations in the intersection of Trinidadian people as they are confronted with subjects surrounding sexual minorities and addresses homophobia in the Caribbean space. This study was informed by primary and secondary research and literature based on the works of other researchers and respondents who have worked in the art scene across other Caribbean islands. The researcher gathered responses, reactions, and experiences from Trinidadians by utilizing convenience sampling methods and analyzing data. Through the social, political, and hyper-religious structures of the Caribbean, the cause for the lack of queer art and LGBTQIA+ visibility in Trinidadian culture unfolds.

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INTRODUCTION

Sexual ambiguity can be found throughout the traditional art space. Traditional art is any media created from different elements like culture, religion, lifestyle, and historical influence. In the Caribbean art space, this sexual ambiguity is less apparent due to the fear instilled by social and legal prejudice as opposed to international art communities. These subtle queer arts may include, but are not exclusive to, homoerotic art, images of androgyny and hermaphroditism, and portraiture of same-sex partners although it often goes unrecognized by the public. Additionally, most Caribbean societies have suppressed questions and dialogues concerning sexuality creating an unhealthy space of guilt and ambiguity for all gendered spectrums.

According to Karl Whittington, Professor of History of Art at The Ohio State University, and author of “QUEER. Studies in Iconography, “queer’s ambiguity is built into its dictionary definition.” That is, its meaning varies with people and context, Oxford English Dictionary’s nineteenth-century definition reads: “strange, odd, peculiar, eccentric; also: of questionable character, suspicious, dubious” (157–168). However, for the purpose of this study, the term “queer” will be used as both an identifier of non-heterosexual and non-cisgender artists, including but not limited to persons belonging to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, and also as a descriptor of themes and representations of this community. Many artists have been connected to queer themes due to the open-mindedness of the form but have had difficulty propagating change or going as far as representing that social liberality on a regional level.

There are many contributors to the reserved nature of these themes or the artist themselves, the main one being discrimination and ostracization of individuals who advocate for queer rights. Homosexuality is still illegal in most Caribbean countries through the prohibition of

same-sex relations (Taylor). By enforcing buggery and indecency laws between consenting persons, it serves to legitimize discrimination. Although Trinidad and Tobago decriminalized consensual sexual conduct between adults in sections 13 and 16 of the Sexual Offenses Act, the punishment still exists in the minds of homophobic citizens. The struggle for equal rights is acknowledged globally but continues to hold negative stigmatization, affecting the general health and the social and economic growth because of enacted punitive laws. The United Nations Development Programme reinforces this, "punitive laws, policies, and practices contribute to pervasive stigma and discrimination, which can lead to hate crime, police abuse, torture and ill-treatment, and family and community violence". In Caribbean reports, it is apparent that displays of queer identity are caught and extinguished as seen by the brutality of 17-year-old Dwayne Jones in Jamaica who was brutally murdered at a party for being seen in women's clothing (Figure 3.1).

It is important to identify the reason for the lack of queer art and society's role in the influence and creation of visual arts in general. It is the artists who are directly affected by their nation's social constructs, thus affecting their art, making it difficult to sign up for themes that hold pessimistic views. Compiling a literary investigation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer artists of the Anglophone diaspora is an inculcation in queer scholarship. In this regard, the artists themselves are not only the creators of the pieces but become their own subjects and sources of inspiration as they illustrate the community and the experiences they face.

Rationale

This research paper will highlight an existing marginalized community of visual artists in Trinidad by investigating the perspectives of citizens in Trinidad and research data gathered from the artists in the Caribbean. The problem this thesis identifies is based on the premise of

underrepresentation of artists in a particular minority group in the visual arts community and Trinidad in particular. It identifies the gap in an ongoing discussion about queer, Caribbean identity, and consequently, a lack of exposure in media. The aforementioned terms “queer” or “queer art” are used to intervene in an ongoing discussion through the lens of Caribbean citizens. This thesis will act as a precursor to diagnosing the lack of queer art representation in the Caribbean. While there is much work still to be done globally, some countries have made significant strides in being more legally and socially inclusive of queer people, and queer art is celebrated as a form of artistic expression. With the progressive wave of civil rights and gay pride movements globally, many Trinidadian citizens have also stood to declare their visibility and encouraged some change on a regional scale (See Figure 3. 2). Kenita Placide, a Caribbean adviser for LGBTQ human rights group OutRight Action International, stated. “the activism and advocacy will continue in Trinidad and Tobago and across the Caribbean until equality for LGBTIQ people is guaranteed” (Sopelsa). To reiterate, the continual challenge to stand against queer discrimination in Trinidad while contributes to the lack of representation in the visual arts field.

Objectives

The primary objective is to survey and examine the visibility of queer art and the contributions of artists of the LGBTQIA+ community to the visual arts faction of Trinidad and Tobago.

1. To identify causes for the lack of queer art in the local art scene and understand how social norms have impacted the artists in that regard.
2. To understand the influences and views on the representation of queer art.

3. To examine how society, on a regional level, has driven or hindered, queer art and to the study the artists' perception.

This study will unpack the various themes and methodologies of queer art in the Trinidad and attempt to fill the gaps identified in LGBTQIA+ dialogues. This research will contribute to the ongoing discussion of queer art by examining a sub-group within the diaspora of Trinidad and Tobago while drawing reference to some of the multifarious representational art forms of the Caribbean: fashion, traditional paintings, contemporary arts, literature, architecture, ceramics, sculpture, printmaking, and photography.

Chapter Outline

This research contains four chapters in addition to the introduction. Chapter one will contain an overview of queer art and correspond with the contributions that have built up the Caribbean's cultural background. The chapter will also touch on historical and contemporary misconceptions or stigmas about the LGBTQIA+ community in general and as it relates to visual arts in the Caribbean diaspora. Chapter two will contain the methodological approach to this thesis, particularly the data collection methods and how the author compiles and analyzes the feedback gathered from qualitative and quantitative sources. Chapter three will provide insight into the role of an artist and how they plan to challenge the narrative of queer activism in their art form. Additionally, illuminate some of the key findings and discuss the lack of representation in the art form. Finally, chapter four concludes the information discussed with local visual artists and suggests future research.

CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

The LGBTQIA+ community has dealt with a maelstrom of passive and active sources of discrimination in the world. It is especially apparent in the Caribbean, where spiritual and religious beliefs are at the forefront of social normality. Like the majority of the Caribbean region, Trinidad and Tobago has institutionalized homophobia and continues to reinforce a system of segregation and marginalization amongst its diverse society, including the restriction of LGBTQIA+ rights. While centuries of internalized racial and gender discrimination has normalized a disregard for human rights, homophobia reaches unprecedented levels and must be treated with intolerance. Consequently, any person who is suspected of being different from the norm, or communicates being an ally, is ostracized, whether it is an act of creative expression or not. For example, the artists themselves begin sharing the similar traumatic experiences of an LGBTQIA+ member and creating work that encourages same-sex rights creates a target for similar prejudices.

Claude J. Summers, in his study “The Queer Encyclopedia of the Visual Arts,” notes the denigration, suppression, and robbery of queer art identity and roots in an attempt to make a socially acceptable space for all forms of visual arts. In some instances, heteronormative gatekeeping in the visual arts has stifled and repressed ideas of queer identity until almost unrecognizable. In an interview with Avram Finkelstein, one of the creators of the “silence = death” poster (Figure 3.3), he emphasizes the challenges associated with queer representation. Advocates of Finkelstein state that being queer is an ongoing battle where you will never stop fighting no matter how you maneuver through the daily bout; it is imperative to keep their lives discreet and marginalized in a straight world.

Additionally, in Angelique Nixon's "Troubling Queer Caribbeanness" she writes about the association of all people in the art scene. Art spaces not only assemble people of various classes, races, colours, genders, and sexualities but also serve as safe spaces for non-conforming people and minorities. The reading probes the discussion of new social norms in a post-colonial art space, the potential of experiences (shared and individual) coalescing and visually expressing all facets of the nation and not just the traditional concepts. It can be hypothesized that if all facets of the nation are celebrated then it opens up and pervades change in the narrative. Nixon's research is a fraction of the Small Axe project titled "Caribbean Queer Visualities", which is a compendium of ideas from other Caribbean writers as they examine the boundaries of contemporary "queer" dialogues in the Caribbean art practice (Scott).

To reinforce these ideas, Nixon takes the opportunity to dissect Trinidadian-born artist Nadia Huggins, who intimately communicates her sentiments as a queer photographer. Huggins had given herself the responsibility to create a space where members of the LGBTQIA+ community could have their voice heard. In her theme "home" she shares an experience that has been a recurring subject in the queer community. She describes this subtle recognition of queer life as leaving the nest to grow and how, in most cases, the experience of leaving one's home impacts queer people more. Huggins expresses that "home is a concept that many members of the LGBTI community in the Caribbean – like the rest of the world – grapple with given the economic, social and political barriers to equality there." In the article "Her father's ghost" by Andre Bagoo, the audience is given insight into Nadia Huggins' exhibition. Her character and perspective shift after losing her father, becoming more sentimental, and returning to her home where the feeling of settlement eludes her. Like most LGBTQIA+ community members, Huggins internally struggles with being a queer person of colour and finding a safe space in her own

country which does not recognize her as a person, and in turn, seeks refuge in her art. The fragility of a queer artist is comparable to Rosalyn Driscoll's statement "many artworks are not appropriate to touch; they are too delicate, valuable, large, complicated, or dangerous" (16).

In the discussion of queer art visibility, Jean-Ulrick Désert, a queer artist and another collaborator of "Caribbean Queer Visualities" speaks on behalf of queer artists. Désert says "I would imagine one could say this about most of the practitioners in this exhibit – we are not dedicated explicitly to a queer practice. It is implicitly there, they are one of many elements in our works" (Bagoo 3). Similar to black representation in visual arts, the queer movement exists but is not boldly expressed due to the lack of open advocacy. At the Caribbean Queer Visualities art exhibition, Désert fills a room with translucent pearlescent balloons as rainbow garlands hung to represent the pride colours (Figure 3.4). A Bible edict is repeated along the installation space strung in five creole languages, including patois, reminiscent of a chant to oppose the use of religious text as a tool against same-sex identity.

In the Caribbean, hyper-masculinity in men has created rifts and stigmas in men who do not fit the role of a traditional Caribbean man. According to Helen I. Safa in her study "The Male Breadwinner and Women's Wage Labor," men of the Caribbean emphasize the old-fashioned norms where the women are primarily in the caretaker role of the family while the men are forced into the provider role and are titled the head of the household. To encapsulate its meaning, a Caribbean male expects to exert the air of being the "man in charge" physically and socio-economically. Kofi O.S Campbell highlights in "The Queer Caribbean Speaks: Interviews with Writers, Artists, and Activists," that masculinity becomes synonymous with acts of sexism, misogyny, and homophobia. Those who do not fit the stereotypical, hetero-normative gender

roles are subjected to derogatory terms and slang, the implications being that they are less of a man/woman and are therefore gay.

In "The Queer Caribbean Speaks," a queer Vincentian contributed their experiences growing up (Campbell). Being more academically or literarily inclined instead of favoring sports as a Caribbean male, he was stigmatized with derogatory terms. By imposing gender norms onto young men and women, Caribbean society nurtures fear and dissociation from one's self-identity over time. Listening to the discussions surrounding queer subjects instills dread for the safety of those who grow amongst us as a nation.

Albeit, the people who do not fit the norm do, in fact, make up the cultural identity. In "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Stuart Halls expresses that the culmination of a historical past, shared cultural codes, and experiences reflect the current identity. It is inclusive of all its citizens, especially the queer creatives. In an interview with interviewee A, a Caribbean woman narrates her experiences as a queer female artist, how she navigated her sexual identity in the late 80s, and how those experiences influenced her current work. Interviewee A captures life through her photography and explains that it is the amalgam of her experiences that led her to express herself. Her photographs depict raw form and the vulnerability of being a queer woman. She submerges in the boundless and uncontrollable seas of Trinidad and Tobago. She explains the sense of freedom being untethered and living as her true self although there is fear in the vast openness.

When it comes to connecting the diaspora and the cultural identity of the Caribbean, one thinks about the two-day festival, Carnival. From cross-dressing and visual storytelling to energizing stage performances, Carnival has been a crucial hub for creative discoveries and traditions rich in historical culture. The origin of Carnival has evolved beyond the 18th-century

Masquerader's ball but the essence has survived decades of cultural and social changes because of the people who keep the tradition alive. The traditional Carnival atmosphere brought a deep sense of community that can be evoked in Wendell Manwarren's interview in the magazine article "Wendell Manwarren: None Shall Escape." It is a momentary spectacle that invites participants to experience freedom and be the most communal and liberal on the road. When it comes to Carnival, famous mas Artists like Peter Minshall come to mind. Minshall has etched his name in the Caribbean Carnival scene and has significantly contributed to the cultural identity of Trinidad and Tobago as a queer artist. Minshall has built a reputation after erecting colossal structures for masqueraders to participate and parade in the spectacle while simultaneously creating an optimistically free space for his band.

In an excerpt from Johnathan Valelly "Caribana's queer challenge," Rhoma Spencer, a queer Trinidadian-Canadian Carnival performer, states, "Some people know that I'm a lesbian, some don't. I'm still aware that in that Caribbean space, some people will be prejudiced, so I'm not going to call attention to myself. It doesn't stop me from being a part of anything that has to do with a Carnival, because it's my culture." Upon further reading, the article articulated the social diversity during the J'Ouvert spectacle and reiterated the lack of aggression in that welcoming mas band space.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

To deeply understand the status of queer art in the Caribbean, qualitative and quantitative data collection were conducted and contributed by practitioners in the art community and the queer diaspora. An online questionnaire was used via the non-probability sampling method to gather responses anonymously from Trinidadians and the Caribbean diaspora. Further data collection was conducted through primary and secondary research methods, for example, formulating and conducting key informant interviews and literature reviews. Due to the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, amassing secondary data through physical archives was significantly hindered. Additionally, as physical creative spaces and face-to-face communications were also affected, "real-life" data collection methods through probability sampling were lost.

Sampling method

This thesis used the non-probability sampling technique of convenience sampling which focused on the best suitable and available respondents. The candidates for the study were a mixture of the queer and art communities in Trinidad in addition to other respondents in other Caribbean islands. The study of queer art representation has similar recurring themes and influences across the Caribbean, for example, religious diversity, allowing the responses of other nationalities. Like the qualitative and quantitative methods, convenience sampling presented advantages and disadvantages which include:

- It stimulated further personal discussions and theories in a short time frame, pushing the narrative further in the qualitative method (Key interviews).
- This process for acquiring information and selecting the candidates became progressively simpler with each feedback as the participants are regional and socially accessible.

- The use of this method was economical which facilitated the distribution of further samples because of online surveys and social media platforms.
- The data collection process is set in a simple and comprehensive process and participants were not subjected to unconventional methods.

Unfortunately, with all data collection, the convenience sampling method revealed many limitations.

- The restrictions and protocols enacted in Trinidad and Tobago, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, severely disrupted the flow of samples.
- The credibility of the information holds a lot of uncertainty due to the subjectivity of the data and people-specific biases as opposed to other methods.
- The likelihood of unforeseen sampling errors became noticeably high, for example, the statistics.
- This sampling method does not allow one to informally extend the conversation beyond the survey.

Qualitative data collection was taken through interviews and literature analysis.

- The five key interviews bridge the gaps in information regarding the lack of queer art in Trinidad by adding their personal experiences and views into the interviews.
- It is an effective and flexible approach by using open-ended questions to invoke informative and deeply personal responses that could have been mutually and culturally understood and recognized.

- Key informant interviews assist in adding to the data gathered from the online questionnaire and providing further context to develop the discussion on sexual minorities and queer art in Trinidad.
- By using both key informant interviews and literature reviews, it adds and ameliorates the information on contemporary local art while building on established research findings.
- Interviewees are given the opportunity to be natural, truthful, and expressive in their responses, and being able to tell their story in a safe space becomes relieving as they share their experiences as a queer person of the Caribbean.

However, some limitations arise with the interviews and literature analysis:

- Gathering the particular qualitative data depended on the experiences of interviewees and retelling of their experiences inclusive of highly sensitive and trauma experiences or lack thereof.
- Limited in the types of sources available - unable to access physical public records and archival data in libraries due to COVID-19 restrictions, and therefore, the study was heavily reliant on online secondary sources.
- The sample size was limited since many queer artists were unwilling to share their stories, perhaps out of fear of being further marginalized/ostracized.
- Lack of previous scholarly research on queer art in Trinidad and having to draw on secondary sources based on other Caribbean countries and other parts of the world.

Quantitative data collection was taken by employing online surveys because:

- The analysis of the samples required efficient handling of large masses of data which online surveys generated and calculated.

- The data compiled from the online surveys were easier to manage than most alternative methods by having laid out the data structured and compiled in an illustrated format.

However, some limitations arise with the quantitative method:

- This method brought the risk of having structural bias which affects the data gathered by collecting inaccurate statements and misleading information.
- By becoming an error-prone approach while tracking and accumulating substantial statistical data, consequently, the data gathered limits the potential for broader themes and discussions.

Data Collection

This thesis required a level of confidentiality due to the sensitivity of the data in the form of personal stories and trauma. The research data, using the key informant interviews, stimulated responses that would build qualitative data and add to the literary conversation (Appendix A). The online questionnaire was sent using the non-probability sampling method (convenience sampling) to efficiently and anonymously accumulate responses directly from creatives in the Caribbean space and build on the information collected (Appendix C). This method was devised to disseminate otherwise confidential information through social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Although many sources were used, the participants were selected to fit into the thesis' theme and prompt further context using multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions, and long, essay-type responses (Appendix A). The use of the questionnaire was intended to subtly break down personal (introspective) questions from a first-person view of discrimination in the Caribbean as it relates to the LGBTQIA+ community. The initial questions were organized to gauge the demographic of the respondents as different

social and religious backgrounds play a role in the lives of people in Trinidad, especially in sexual minority groups. The survey goes on to address perceptions of queer art and probe any information on its visibility in the local art spaces and their personal experiences. The survey continues to ask the participants of the queer community about the potential for change in the Caribbean. The thesis raises the question: is social change possible through the visual arts, and would greater queer art representation give rise to a positive shift against gender and sexuality-based discrimination?

Due to the sensitivity of the information shared, confidentiality was a priority and code names were used to protect the identity of participants. Any information that may jeopardize the privacy and/or safety of the participants was omitted. In addition, the existing data that addresses the contributors of the LGBTQIA+ community in relation to visual arts will be an amalgam of subjective views reinforced by international, online resources. While researching existing data surrounding the intersections of visual arts and the queer Caribbean, information gathering became heavily influenced by the individual experiences of LGBTQIA+ members and any general LGBT literature from the Caribbean.

Analysis of Data

Intertwining themes and statistics coalesced and were reviewed before dissecting it. The utilization of Google Forms allowed the data to be categorized and converted into tables and graphs to visually represent the opinions of the diaspora. The results were then transcribed in favor of the majority. Simultaneously, the key informant interviews were recorded for later review and synthesized with the insightful literature cited from the authors who wrote about the queer Caribbean and queer art through a contemporary lens.

CHAPTER THREE: SURVEY ANALYSIS

The online survey compiled responses from 15 participants and the key informant interviews successfully gathered five respondents.

Respondent analysis

Most respondents were male (66.7%), tied at ages 25-29 and 30-39 (33.3%). There was a mixture of traditional painters and digital artists tied at (53.3%) and Performance and drama (46.7%) who were predominantly of Roman Catholic beliefs (57.1%) while other participants chose not to disclose their religious backgrounds (See Appendix C. Charts and Graphs).

Visibility of LGBTQIA+ Art

Figure 5 shows that most respondents prefer to keep their sexual identity hidden although the survey was anonymously sent out and this is reinforced by (Figure 9) the respondents' openness about sexuality in Trinidad and Tobago (See Appendix C. Charts and Graphs). As stated previously, the stigmatization and discrimination associated with being a sexual minority translate into other forms of self-expression.

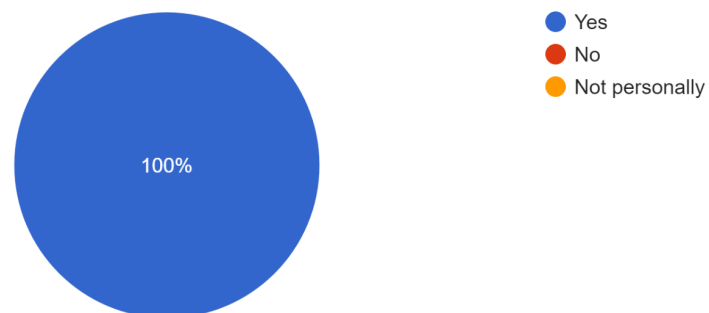


Figure 12. Pie chart representing whether respondents have been discriminated, witnessed discrimination and/or violence against LGBTQIA+ persons.

Discrimination of LGBTQIA+ Rights

In an interview with Rosamond S. King, an American critic and poet who focuses on Caribbean sexuality, art, and literature, there were discussions surrounding claims in her book "Caribbean Queer Visualities." King stated that she does not believe that the Caribbean is any more homophobic than other societies with the example of searching online for discrimination, assault, and unjustified rape in other parts of the world. With the exception of Jamaica, she argues that she has faced more harassment because of her sexuality in the streets of New York as opposed to in the Caribbean. As mentioned, to present queerness is to be subjected to derogatory terms and slang, and through King's experience, harassment becomes a matter of unfortunate circumstances like being at the wrong place at the wrong time and, as visual artists, representing queerness can risk similar associations. However, each key informant stated that they experienced discrimination greater within Trinidad and Tobago, extending onto the Caribbean, than overseas (Key Informants 1-5).

In this study, contemporary art was used to prompt discussions regarding LGBTQIA+ visibility in visual arts and evoke responses to queer themes.

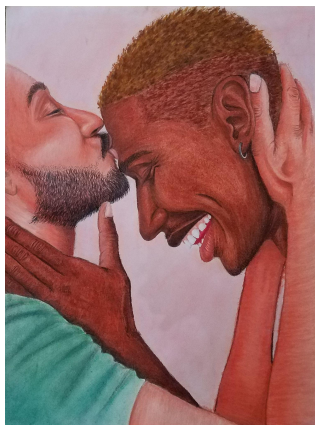


Figure 3. 5. Contemporary male art

Contemporary male art depicts an intimate interaction between two male figures in Figure 3.5. This piece immediately captures the respondents' attention to the homosexual undertones and most respondents reacted either negatively or in discomfort as if it were taboo. In a study conducted by Eduard J. Beck and his colleagues in "Attitudes towards homosexuals in the seven Caribbean countries: implications for an effective HIV response," the majority of the communities in the Caribbean hate LGBTQIA+ people. Other participants in the survey admitted to tolerating LGBTQIA+ people but would choose not to socialize or associate with homosexuals. Similarly to the sourced data above, it is evident that the discontent with homosexuality is not exclusive to persons but to art as well.



Figure 3. 6. Contemporary female art

Contemporary female art conveys emotion between two female figures in Figure 3.6. Using key informant interviews and public sampling, the majority of Caribbean people (90%) have stated that they appreciate the detail of the work. However, after initial praise, inspections of the two females' sexuality resulted in a level of unease or discomfort with the exception of persons allied or within the LGBTQIA+ community. To reiterate Eduard J. Beck, the majority of the communities in the Caribbean actively choose not to associate themselves with homosexuals,

in this case, homosexual media.

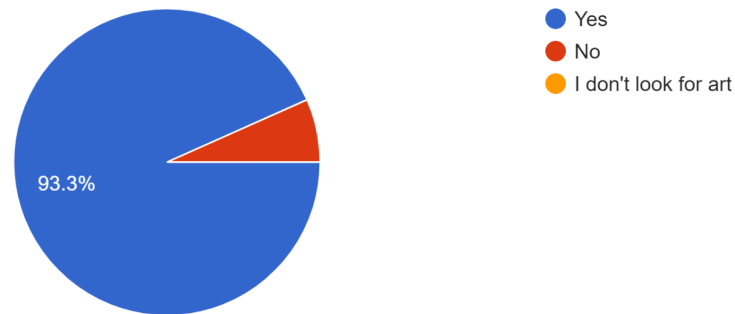


Figure 8. Pie chart identifying the lack of queer art in Trinidad and Tobago.

As seen in Figure 8 above, most respondents (93.3%) believed there is a lack of queer art in Trinidad and Tobago. Similarly, key informants 1-5 have agreed that there is a lack of local queer art. The consensus was that the lack of queer art is a social issue due to hyper-religious backgrounds and the institutionalized nature of segregation and marginalization in a diverse society.

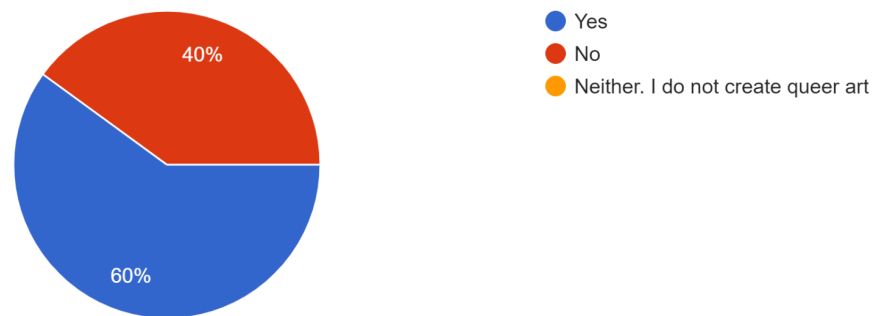


Figure 11. Pie chart representing whether or not creating queer art makes the respondents feel fearful/ guilty.

In a discussion between Kofi O.S Campbell and Thomas Glave in “The Queer Caribbean Speaks: Interviews with Writers, Artists, and Activists,” Glave responds to the harsh treatment of homosexuality in the Caribbean. Glave says, "I think a lot of the intense anti-gay sentiment is

due to many people's literal interpretations of the Bible," he continues, "add to this the prominence, in many people's religious imagination, of the Old Testament, which features a stern, unforgiving, vengeful God. This is a God who enacts drastic measures against anybody who transgresses." He proceeded to explain that one of the main issues concerning the ostracism of the LGBTQIA+ community is directly involved with people's literal interpretations of the Bible and the abomination, that is homosexuality. Consequently, the queer creatives in the community are traumatized by this continuous fear of violence, divine judgment, or discomfort from peers leading creatives to oppress and mask themselves further. In Figure 1. it was beneficial to note the respondents' religion in order to gauge the religious factors potentially influencing their acceptance of queer media. However, many respondents opted to "rather not specify" their religious persuasions. (See Appendix C. Charts and Graphs).

Key informants 1-5 stated that the perception of art, specifically queer art, can be interpreted differently depending on the viewer. Additionally, it is not the role of the artist to suppress their concept to suit the norm. The key informants 1-5 expressed that any themes and stories portrayed in media, especially concerning the LGBTQIA+ community, that creatives attempt to communicate will predominantly invoke responses from viewers who share those experiences and can be overlooked by others. The interviewees agreed that further contributions to the queer art community in Trinidad, as well as the Caribbean, can only be achieved with the resistance of the deep-rooted and hyper-religious culture found on our shores. Trinidad, and the diaspora of the Caribbean, must create a safe space to generate more diverse themes of sexual minorities and promote empathy amongst citizens, decolonizing systemic discrimination and educating those ignorant of queer art forms and media.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

In a rich and culturally-driven Trinidadian society, creative expression through visual arts has diversified into several contemporary and traditional art forms tackling many controversial subjects over the years. In the maelstrom of the many cultural backgrounds and identities, Trinidadian art, and the artists themselves, are reflective and heavily influenced by the social norms of its people. Although the representation of queer art has made significant strides globally, the delicate nature of sexual minorities in Trinidad has hindered the visibility of the LGBTQIA+ community. The catalyst for the lack of queer art in Trinidad is governed by social and hyper-religious structures which encouraged years of discrimination and segregation in the country, inclusive of queer creatives.

Visual artists in Trinidad must conduct a modern-day liberalization of rights and pilot change even through contemporary media. As there are paradigm shifts in the various art forms, so too there must be a mindset shift in the people, in order to adapt and accept the progressive nature of visual arts and what it represents. Remodeling the Trinidadian perceptions of the LGBTQIA+ community and queer art within the Caribbean is a first step towards addressing and triggering change. To achieve this, future research can examine the role of education in normalizing same-sex media and queer art. Future research can also address the impact of governmental resources and support (or lack thereof) for visual artists, specifically queer artists. Finally, since this research was limited to island of Trinidad, future research can explore the visibility of queer art and artists in Tobago and the other Caribbean islands in order to boost the visibility of queer art and the social inclusion of queer artists in the region.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

RESPONDENT CONSENT

1. Do you consent to this anonymous survey?

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. What are your main form(s) of art practice?

Check all that apply.

☐ Traditional painting

☐ Sculpture

☐ Craft

☐ Digital

☐ Fabric and textiles

☐ Performance and drama

☐ Photography

☐ Film

3. What is your religion?

☐ Christian

☐ Other

☐ Hindu

☐ Muslim

☐ Pentecostal

☐ Baptist

☐ Anglican

☐ Roman Catholic

☐ Rather not specify

4. What is your gender identification and pronoun?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Transgender (Female -> Male)
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Transgender (Male -> Female)
- ☐ Other:

5. What is your age?

- ☐ Under 17
- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-29
- ☐ 30-39
- ☐ 40-49
- ☐ 50+
- ☐ Rather not say

6. What is your sexual orientation?

- ☐ Heterosexual
- ☐ Homosexual (male)
- ☐ Homosexual (female)
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Transsexual
- ☐ Pansexual
- ☐ Asexual
- ☐ Rather not say
- ☐ Other: _____

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7. Do you see any work related to the LGBTQIA+ community in Trinidad and Tobago?

☐ Yes

☐ No

8. What are your thoughts on Queer Art?

☐ I love the representation!

☐ Oversexualized and vulgar!

☐ Do not really see it

☐ Indifferent

9. Do you think there is a lack of queer art in Trinidad and Tobago?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I don't look for art

10. Have you ever published work that relates to queerness, queer experiences and expression?

☐ Yes

☐ No

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11. Are you open about your sexuality?

- ☐ Yes, of course
- ☐ No, not really
- ☐ Depends on where I am
- ☐ Definitely not in this country!

12. How do you contribute to the LGBTQIA+ community in the arts? (if applicable)

13. Would you feel guilt or fear creating work with themes of the LGBTQIA+ community?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Neither. I do not create queer art

14. Have you ever experienced discrimination or witnessed discrimination and/or violence against LGBTQIA+ persons? (Yourself included)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not personally

14. What kind of infrastructure would you like to see take shape for LGBTQIA+ art in the Caribbean? (in production, public space, and publication)

15. What is your experience being queer in the Caribbean? (Positive/ Neutral/ Negative) and state why.

16. Do you believe more queer art will alleviate some of the negative stigmatization

associated with the LGBTQIA+ community in Trinidad?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Other: _____

APPENDIX B: REFERENCES

Figure 3. 1. Acts of discrimination- Dwayne Jones

The following excerpt is from the Minority-Insights blog:

On July 22, 2013 Dwayne Jones a Trans-gender otherwise known as “GULLY QUEEN” and “Dwayne Gagastar Trensetta” was shot and stabbed to death in the Irwin community, St James.

According to Irief news report, “the 17-year-old was dressed as a female and was dancing with a male, when a woman at the party recognized him and told other patrons that he was not a woman, but a male. One of the men at the party accosted the teen and conducted a search where he discovered that the teen was not a female. A mob then descended on the teen and chopped and stabbed him to death, before dumping his body in bushes along the Orange main road.”

Furthermore, the Jamaica-Gleaner reported that, “a number of explosions were heard and the police were summoned. They discovered Jones’ body on the roadway, with multiple stab wounds and a gunshot wound.” No arrest has been made.



Figure 3. 2. Members of the LGBT community demonstrate outside the Hall of Justice in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago on April 12, 2018.



Figure 3. 3. Silence = Death poster



Figure 3. 4. Jean-Ulrick Désert, *Neque mittatis margaritas vestras ante porcos*, 2016.

Installation of laser cut pvc biblical text garlands, acrylic paints, pearlescent balloons, and metal chains; variable dimensions. The garlands read as follows: “Pa jété grenn pèl devan kochon” (Kreyol); “No tek unu gud gud porl dash gi pig” (patois); “Èn no trowe parelkrara gi agu” (Sranan Tongo); “No ta tira perlanan dilanti e porkonan” (Papiamentu); and “No echen perlas a los puercos” (Dominican Spanish). Jean-Ulrick Désert, May 2016.

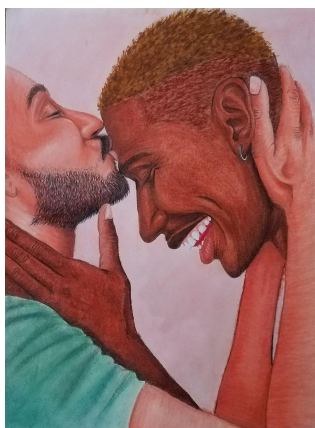


Figure 3. 5. Contemporary male art



Figure 3. 6. Contemporary female art

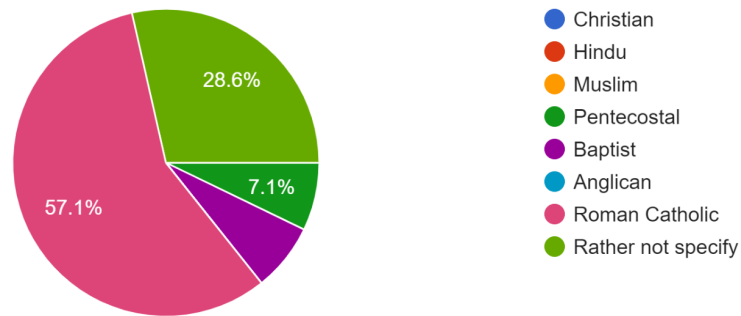
APPENDIX C: CHARTS AND GRAPHS**DEMOGRAPHICS**

Figure 1. Pie chart displaying the religion of respondents.

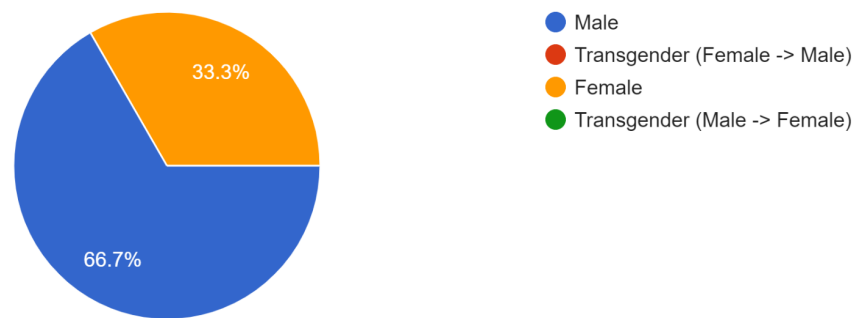


Figure 2. Pie chart displaying the gender identified by respondents.

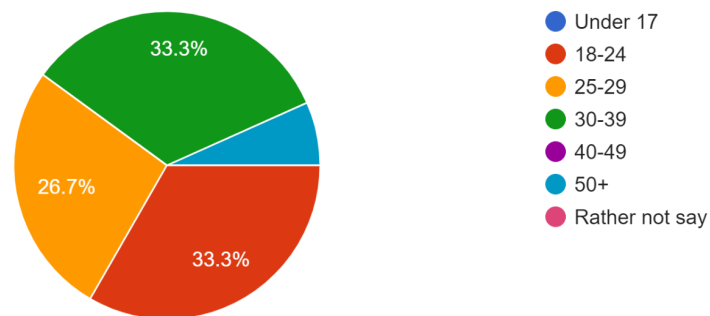
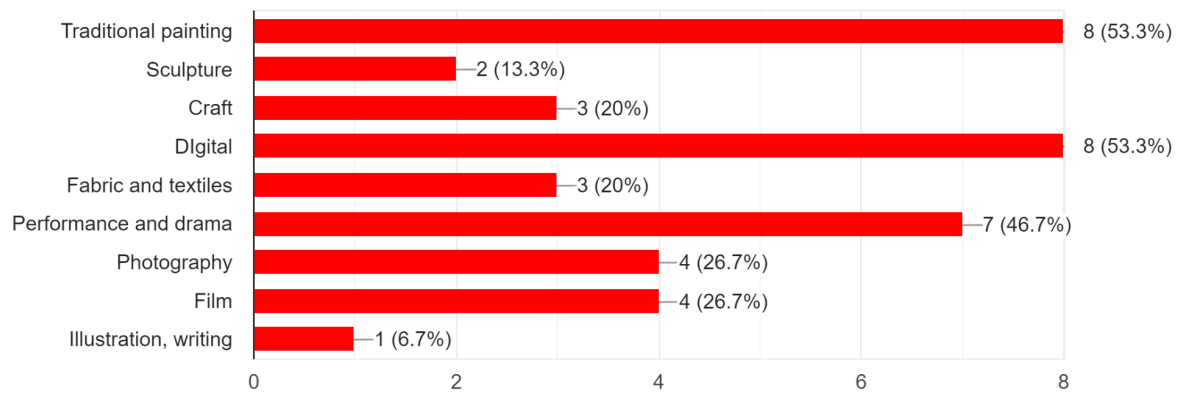
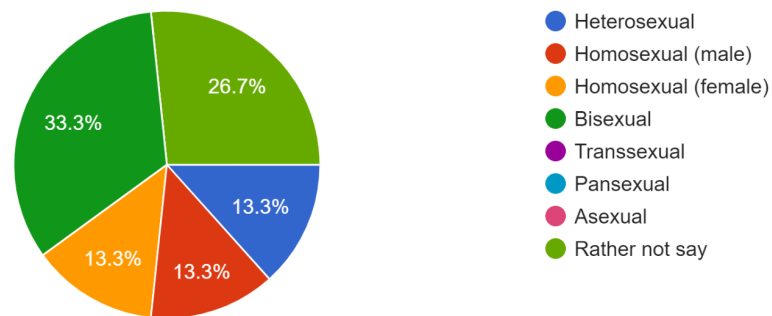


Figure 3. Pie chart displaying the ages of respondents.**Figure 4.** Graph displaying the main form(s) of art practices.**Figure 5.** Pie chart displaying the sexual orientation of respondents.

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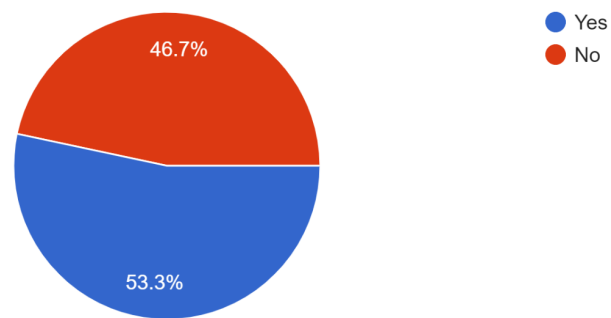


Figure 6. Pie chart displaying the level of visibility of LGBTQIA+ related art in Trinidad and Tobago.

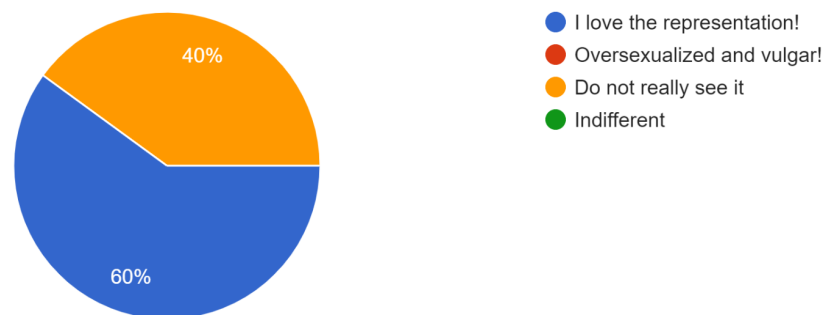


Figure 7. Pie chart displaying the thoughts of the respondents in regards to queer art.

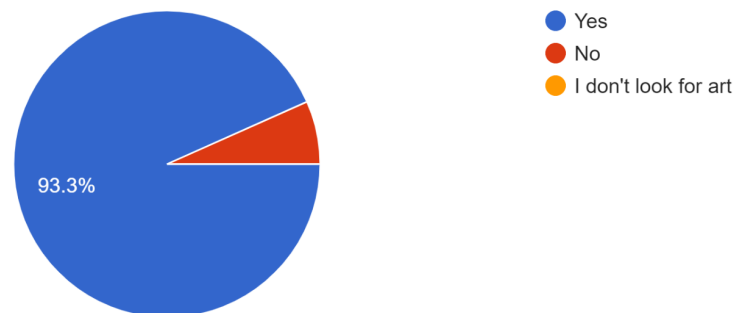


Figure 8. Pie chart identifying the lack of queer art in Trinidad and Tobago.

DISCRIMINATION OF LGBTQIA+ RIGHTS

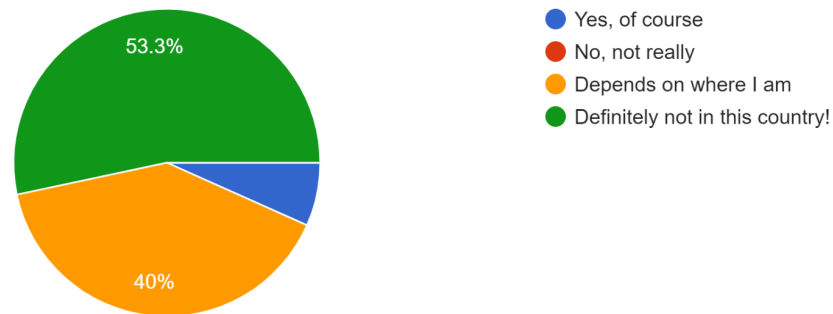


Figure 9. Pie chart showing the openness about sexuality in Trinidad and Tobago.

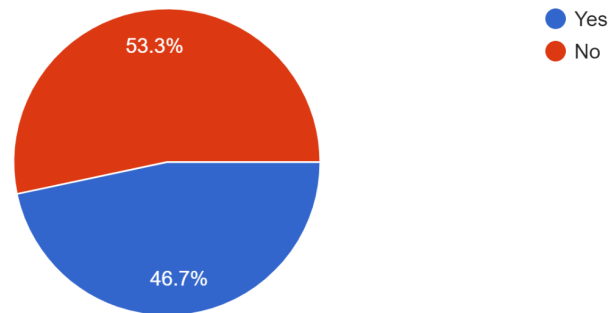


Figure 10. Pie chart questioning if respondents have ever created queer art in the Caribbean .

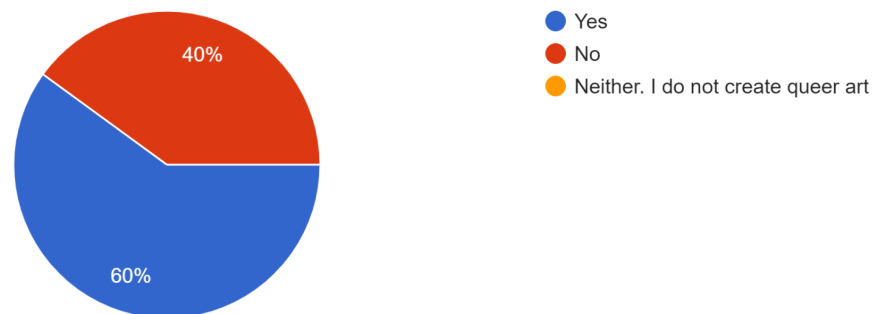


Figure 11. Pie chart questioning whether or not creating queer art makes the respondents feel fearful/ guilty.



Figure 12. Pie chart asking respondents if they have been discriminated, witnessed discrimination and/or violence against LGBTQIA+ persons.