

HISTORY ACCESS

The “Kewpie - Daughter of District Six” pictorial exhibition was housed at the Homecoming Centre in Cape Town. The Exhibition has been open to the public on weekends, although one of the curators of the exhibition - Ms. Tina Smith, made an arrangement for the History Access programme to see it outside of these hours on Tuesday the 12th of March. She also was with us throughout our excursion and engaged many of our questions and thoughts - across a variety of conversations. The story of Kewpie is intersectional in many ways, highlighting amongst other aspects, the social/cultural history of District Six which is sometimes accentuated in Kewpie’s pictures or spaces of influence - such as those which draw attention to District’s Six’s geographic spatiality, or even those which are telling of the public culture around dress, hairstyles or even music during Kewpie’s prime years spent in District Six (i.e. the 1950’s to the 1970’s). In addition, Kewpie’s life is juxtaposed against historical occurrences at the time such as the Group Areas Act which eventually forced Kewpie’s District Six community out of their homes eventually. The exhibition also tells the stories of advocacy and the lived experience of the LGBTIAQ+ community in this time. This History Access excursion was well received by us for several reasons, namely:

1. The opportunity to be in conversation with one of the curators of this exhibition gave us time to ask questions about what the process of putting together an exhibition entails, particularly when we heard that over 700 pictures - spanning over several decades - were whittled down to about 100 for the exhibition.
2. We discussed what the role of visual materials is (pictures in this case), and whether engaging multimedia sources makes historical on goings better accessible.
3. We also engaged conversations about District Six's history of forced relocations, and how District Six Museum and the Homecoming Centre are memory spaces which are encouraging ongoing dialogue about restitution and human rights etc.
4. Kewpie’s pictures enhanced discussions about some of the social and cultural norms associated with being ‘queer’ in this time.