So I’m E-J and I’m the curator of the Museum of Transology and I’m also the curator of this years ‘Queer and Now’ Festival 2018.

In actuality, for me my transness is not my identity, my queerness is my identity.

The whole thing about queerness is that it can’t be defined.

That it is the unexpected and the unexpected can lead to ways of doing things better.

There’s a lot of us who have been working for a very long time on finding and establishing queer archives that write back in missing narratives.

We’ve done a lot of work to get to this point, which brings me to my first question Joe.

Why do we need our queer museum to be built of bricks and mortar?

So, I think it’s really important that we have somewhere that is a beacon to people who would never come to an event like this, to people that don’t see themselves as necessarily part of the queer community but who are LGBTQ, maybe isolated, but will be able to see there is a big, prestigious, exciting building that they can go to where they can see themselves reflected.

Is it the collecting or the collection that matters?

It’s both and it’s very much intertwined and museums are kind of a long game really but in order to build a collection that means that it is a museum - that would really take quite a few years.

So when I was advocating for an LGBT programme for the National Trust a couple of years ago I did a surface level sweep of what LGBT histories do we know at the National Trust, what do we have and what I found were a lot of stories of extremely wealthy white men who’d been caught and prosecuted for same sex acts. That was what we knew. That was the queer history that we were acknowledging that we had access to. So the fact that women’s relationships, lesbian relationships haven’t been criminalised in that same way. The fact that they’ve been written out of the law, has meant they have been written out of recorded history and as historians, as curators, we relay on recorded history to tell the truth of the past. It’s incredibly rare to find diary entries and letters from women to women talking about “I really liked what we did last night”. “This is what we did”. Really explicitly highlighting queer relationships. So if we continue to rely on proof, on evidence of records we disproportionally write out women’s experiences. So, we need to look past records, past evidence and often past sex to find the really positive stories of women’s relationships and lesbian relationships that are there hidden in the past ready to be brought out.

For me the idea of a queer museum would be a huge back step that lots of people who are here today have been working really really hard to agitate against what mainstream museums are doing and enacting change from within them.

To answer the question that E-J originally sent me. Accessibility for visitors

will be guaranteed by disabled people fully included from the start.

Because a queer museum will celebrate and acknowledge the body in all its aspects there will be no need for shame or denial.

We care about communities, we care about these pieces, we care about what we’re doing. We are striving for something beyond ourselves. Using the power of the institution in a benevolent and really beautiful way asking people when you come into the space are you open to new learning? Please don’t judge or presume based on how someone’s presenting. Don’t use them as a focus for an entire community. They represent themselves. I think the creation of values and the display of values is crucial.

Institutions like museums, libraries, archives, big trusts, funds have to think of like helping, supporting projects that are about those so-called marginalised communities within the marginalised communities. For example if you look at refugees they don’t even have money to get them here to this place. We have to think how can we enable people not just that we’re providing activities, projects, spaces, but also how do we get those people in the spaces and there’s a lot of discussions to be had to be really, really, truly, inclusive and diverse.

Whether or not we have a queer museum or whether or not we do it in institutions is about providing a support and social network where we are giving a space to museum

professionals who are from a BAME background, giving us the feeling that we can go into our institution’s and say so where’s our story? Where are we reflected?

I think it is very important that we have a museum, because there are huge numbers of artist’s work and material that is not going anywhere because they won’t take them - usually because we’re not right for the average viewer - and that work is getting destroyed.

I was told again and again that the new safeguarding government regulations they no we can’t have that because its too pornographic. What is porn? What is nudity? They are completely different things. But I can tell you Queer Art is about who we are and that should be accepted everywhere, okay.

Yeah, and I think what you’ve hit on there is the conversation that surrounds by going into a museum and working within the systems do we have to de-eroticsise our collections? What are we allowed put on the walls? What is suitable viewing? Who gets to choose what is saved and so are we actually falling into colonial hetero normative cis normative models just by participating in that world?

This is oppressive for me (laugh). The notion of who defines what queer is and where queer is placed and the idea that there is a specific idea of where or even specific ideas that queer have which are Euro-centric, which are Western, which are Metropolitan so there are places in which if we are thinking about a museum both in terms of its geographic space, its online and virtual space, what does actually that mean in terms of what that space actually is and who’s it for and who can enter into that space safely. So the idea of ‘what is queer’ has to be investigated. The definition of museum has to be investigated. So its not necessarily about whether there should be or shouldn’t be a museum. It’s about the nuts and bolts space spiritually, historically, erotically that we inhabit and have a real honest conversation about that.

When does activism become acceptable and when is it not? Because activism is viewed from an historical lens, as “Oh the Suffragettes… Weren’t they great? Yes, they got us the vote. They never say the Suffragettes were lesbians. It’s true. It’s drives me mad. The last two programmes on the BBC nothing about lesbians. Yep.

Every gallery should be a queer gallery. It doesn’t mean we shouldn’t have our space too but I think they’re tandem they’re not separate.

One of the things that I would really like to see whether the museum exists as bricks and mortar or not - is a virtual museum and I mean that in a sense that more and more indeed institutions like this are doing where you can position yourself as an avatar, you can go through the spaces, you can come right up to stuff, you can turn it over. If you are developing a building then I think its about putting the funding in to make sure that each and every exhibition remains for good in the virtual space cause its going to be such a critical part of our history in the future. But then of course if people don’t feel comfortable coming into a queer space then at least they can access it online. But yeah I think at the moment I would just settle for some inclusive queer spaces where we can come together and not just borrow somebody’s gallery for an hour and a half (applause).

I think that establishing a new museum model is something that’s going to take an incredible amount of debate and that we all agree that there’s a complexity here that’s yet to be grappled with. I think.

We are staring by talking. We are staring by listening and re-interpretation and writing our narratives back in starts at that point.