

Acknowledgements

“We were queer way before gay liberation was invented.” Mogamat Kafunta Benjamin said this on the occasion of a small exhibition in Cape Town in 2019, which has since been widely received. Like so many others involved in *Dirty Dragging*, Mogamat didn’t live to see this publication. Today, our encounter feels like from another world. We first met during his guided tour of the District Six Museum, when I was researching carnival and the global history of blackface. From there he “schlepped” me next door to *Kewpie: Daughter of District Six* and showed me the drag photos of his friend with which this book now begins, five years later, in a changed global political situation. Mogamat’s refusal to subscribe to queer narratives of progress from the Global North turned my work around. Thanks to him, it leapt in a different direction and perhaps drew closer to pressing questions of today.

Texts emerge via detours, take unpredictable turns—often through chance encounters that offer perspectives at odds to one’s own viewpoint, disrupt the design of one’s research, and make one’s work a collective undertaking. In this sense, many people from very different contexts and at various stages of research and writing contributed to *Dirty Dragging*: reading, discussing, providing infrastructure, making contacts, offering impulses, producing leaps of thought ...

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