

Virtual 
LAVENDER
 **Labels**

ZANELE MUHOLI

(South African, b. 1972)

*"Makhethi" Sebenzile Ndaba,
Constitution Hill, Johannesburg, 2010*

Silver gelatin print | 30 x 20 in.

The Alfond Collection of Contemporary Art at Rollins College,
Gift of Barbara '68 and Theodore '68 Alfond, 2014.1.29

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Courtesy of the artist and Yancey Richardson Gallery



Muholi identifies as a visual activist and also a Black, queer South African. Dedicated to establishing an archive of queer human existence, they create portraits that become a compilation of proof of life, centering the queer experience. This photographic image created by Muholi is part of a collection of hundreds that were bound in an art book with accompanying texts, *Faces and Phases*, 2006-14.

Writing in the text, Muholi says, “*Faces and Phases* is both highly personal and deeply political for me: an act of searching, resisting, transgressing the boundaries of oppressive racial, sexual, class and gender power structures.”

Muholi explicitly advocates for the presence and humanity of queer and trans people who have been violently persecuted, as well as politically disenfranchised. They work with a relentless purpose, navigating the harsh and threatening environments faced by LGBTQ South Africans. With their unadorned images of queer individuals, Muholi manages to communicate the human right to take up space and to exist in public spaces.

South Africa is a unique case where rights and protections for LGBTQ people were protected in their post-apartheid constitution, yet public opinion and support has lagged. About half the queer population report assault and abuse in the public sphere. Muholi takes up this work to inscribe a record, to make certain the evidence of queer lives is included.