



A Study of Visitor Responses to



Facing East:  
Portraits from Asia

An exhibition at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery



Office of Policy and Analysis  
Smithsonian Institution  
October, 2006

## Director's Preface

*Facing East: Portraits from Asia*, which included works of art from China, Japan, ancient Near East, and South Asia from the collections of the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery and Freer Gallery of Art was designed to have visitors view extraordinary portraits and think about memory, likeness, and identity and projecting identity. When I visited the exhibit, it appeared as if the portraits could be placed on a continuum somewhere between “this really adds to my cognitive workload” and “I grasp this idea.” It also made me think about questions like: “Who am I? Would I like to be portrayed? Would my children understand me better if I were portrayed? How do cultural practices and styles of painting influence portraiture? Are photographs more powerful forms of portraiture than sculptures and paintings?” In short, the net effect was an appreciation of portraiture and thinking about why we have portraits and what impacts they may have upon the visitor.

I thank the Director of the Freer and Sackler Galleries of Art, Julian Raby, for his continuing interest in visitors' experiences, as well as Debra Diamond, the exhibition curator, and Theresa Esterlund, manager of in-gallery interpretation, for their expertise and support.

Carole Neves  
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### Cover Photos:

Jitsukawa Enjaku II by Natori Shunsen (1886–1960); Japan, 1925–1929 Freer Gallery of Art F2004.14  
Maharana Bhim Singh of Mewar at a Palace Window; Workshop of Chokha, India, ca. 1810–20; Gift of Terence McInerney; Arthur M. Sackler Gallery S1996.33  
Head of a pharaoh; Egypt, ca. 2500–2170 B.C.E.; Freer Gallery of Art F1938.11

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## Background

The exhibition *Facing East: Portraits from Asia*, on view July 1 through September 4, 2006, at the Smithsonian Institution's Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, included approximately 70 works of Chinese, Japanese, South Asian, Islamic, and ancient Near Eastern art in the collections of the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery and the Freer Gallery of Art.

The artworks were presented in juxtapositions both within and across cultures and were spatially organized under three central themes: Memory, Likeness and Identity, and Projecting Identity. The theme of Projecting Identity was further sub-divided into three sections: Projecting Gender Identity, Projecting Collective Identity, and Projecting Devotional Identity.

The aim of the exhibition was to show “the unique ways that the self was understood, represented, and projected in Asian art,” as well as to demonstrate the richness and diversity of the Asian portrait tradition.

The exhibition was timed to coincide with the opening of the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery.

*Facing East* is one of a series of Sackler Gallery exhibitions that stand out in sharing three key features:

- Using art from the Freer and Sackler Galleries’ collections
- Spanning multiple Asian cultures
- Being based on a theme rather than a medium, period, or artist

A key aim of this study is to provide information that will aid in the development of future exhibitions in this series.

## **Methods**

This study used three separate methods:

1. A self-administered survey of visitors entering the exhibition, and a survey of an equivalent, but different sample of visitors leaving the exhibition.
2. In-depth interviews with visitors leaving the exhibition.
3. An analysis of the comment book in the exhibition.

### **Survey**

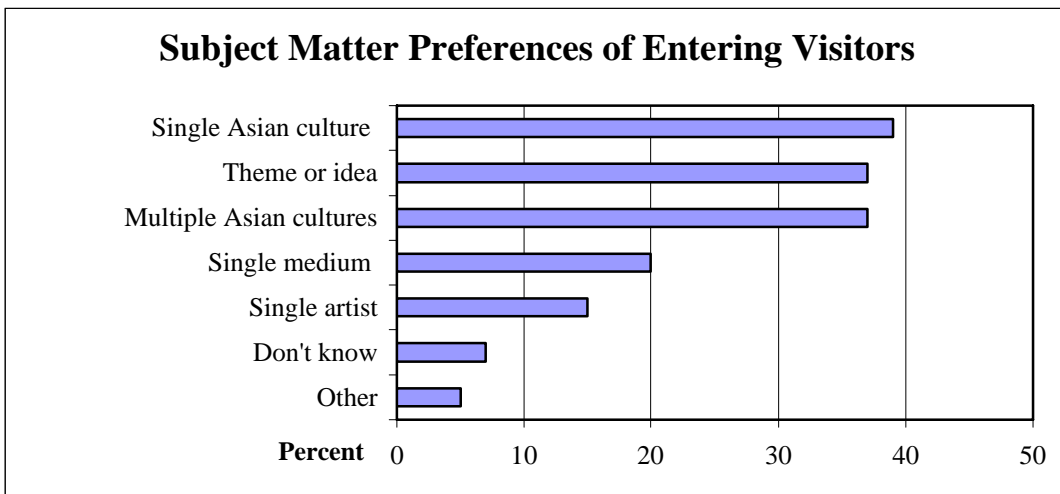
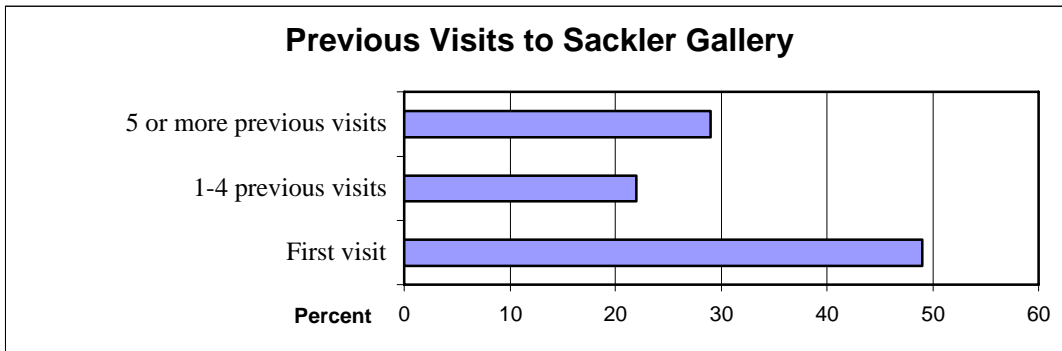
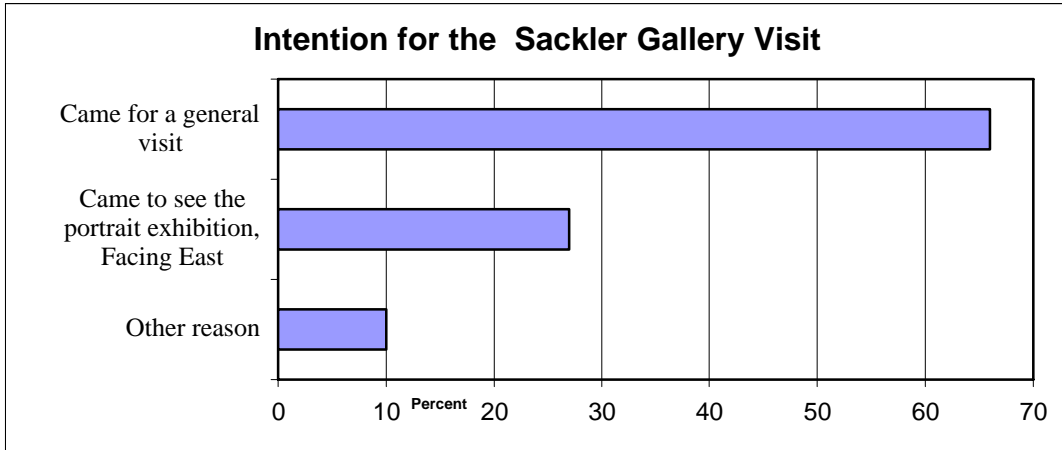
At the entrance to the exhibition 249 visitors completed questionnaires, and at the exit 247 visitors did so. The overall response rate was 88 percent. Complete survey results are presented in Appendix A. Selected results are shown graphically within the report.

### **Interviews**

Thirty-three visit groups, involving 40 visitors, were interviewed as they left the exhibition. Interviews ranged in length from one minute to 25 minutes. Visitors were asked about the exhibition theme, their experiences, behavior, and background. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Extended selections from the interviews are provided in Appendix B.

### **Comment Books**

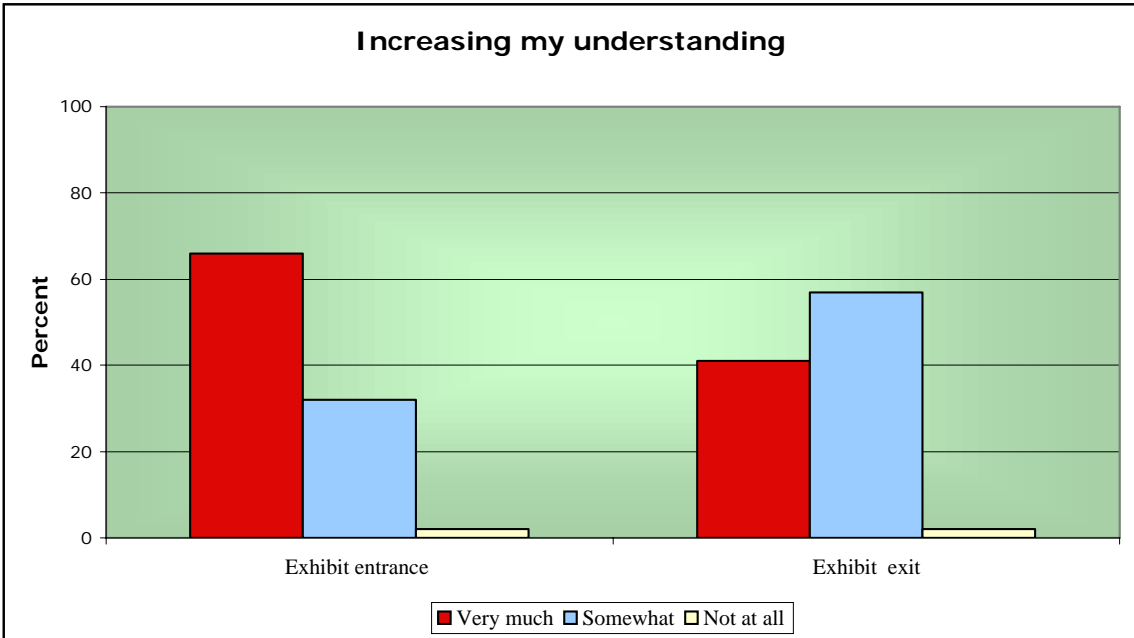
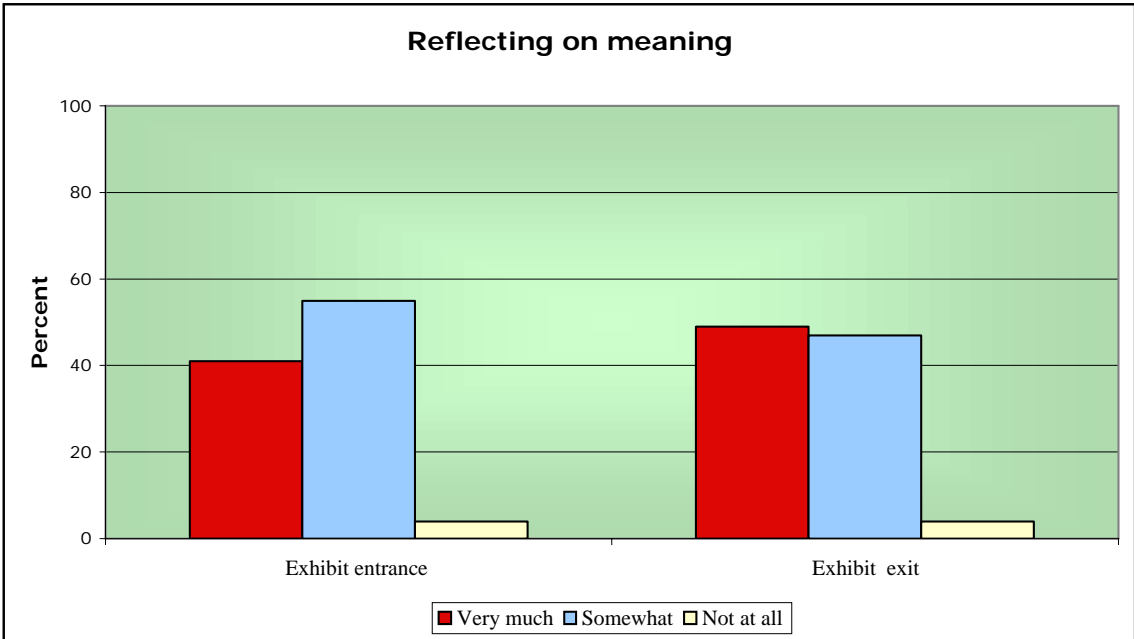
A comment book was available on a stand just before the exhibition exit. A sign above the book said: "What did you discover about Asia portraiture in this exhibition? What would you like to tell us about your experience? What are you still curious about? Please share your thoughts and reactions to this exhibition."



## Survey Results

### Visitor Characteristics

INTENTION FOR THE VISIT	<p><b><i>Facing East</i> visitors differed from the typical visitors for major special exhibitions at the Sackler Gallery, such as the recent <i>Hokusai</i> exhibition. Many were tourists on a general visit to the gallery.</b></p> <p><b>Only about one in four came specifically to see <i>Facing East</i>.</b></p>
RESIDENCE	<p><b>About one in three visitors lived in the metropolitan Washington area. About one in ten live outside the United States.</b></p>
AGE	<p><b>The average (and median) age is 40. One in five is under 25 and one in four is 55 or over.</b></p>
SEX	<p><b>The audience was evenly divided between men and women.</b></p>
VISIT GROUP	<p><b>Roughly speaking, out of every three visit groups, one was a person alone, one was a pair, and one was a group of three to nine visitors. One in eight visit groups included individuals under 18 years of age.</b></p>
INTERESTS	<p><b>Two in three were very interested in Asian art, one in three very interested in portraiture, and two in five very interested in Middle Eastern art.</b></p>
PREVIOUS VISITS	<p><b>Half of the visitors were coming to the Sackler for the first time. Over half regularly visit museums or exhibitions of Asian art outside the Washington DC area.</b></p>
SUBJECT MATTER PREFERENCES	<p><b>Entering visitors equally preferred exhibitions focused on one culture, multiple cultures, or a theme. They reported less interest in exhibitions focused on one medium or one artist.</b></p>







## Expectations and Experiences

Entering visitors were asked which of seven experiences they were looking forward to, and exiting visitors were asked which of those experiences they found satisfying. For five of the seven experiences visitors got what they expected. For one, *Reflecting on the meaning of what I'm looking at*, more of them had this experience than came looking for it. For another, *Increasing my understanding*, fewer had this experience than were looking for it.\*

BEAUTY, RARE ART, INFORMATION

*Being moved by beauty*, *Seeing rare/valuable art*, and *Gaining information/knowledge* were the three dominant experiences in both expectations and actuality (three in five visitors).

IMAGINING, SPENDING TIME

*Imagining other times or places* and *Spending time with friends/family* were both expected and experienced by about half of the visitors.

REFLECTING ON MEANING

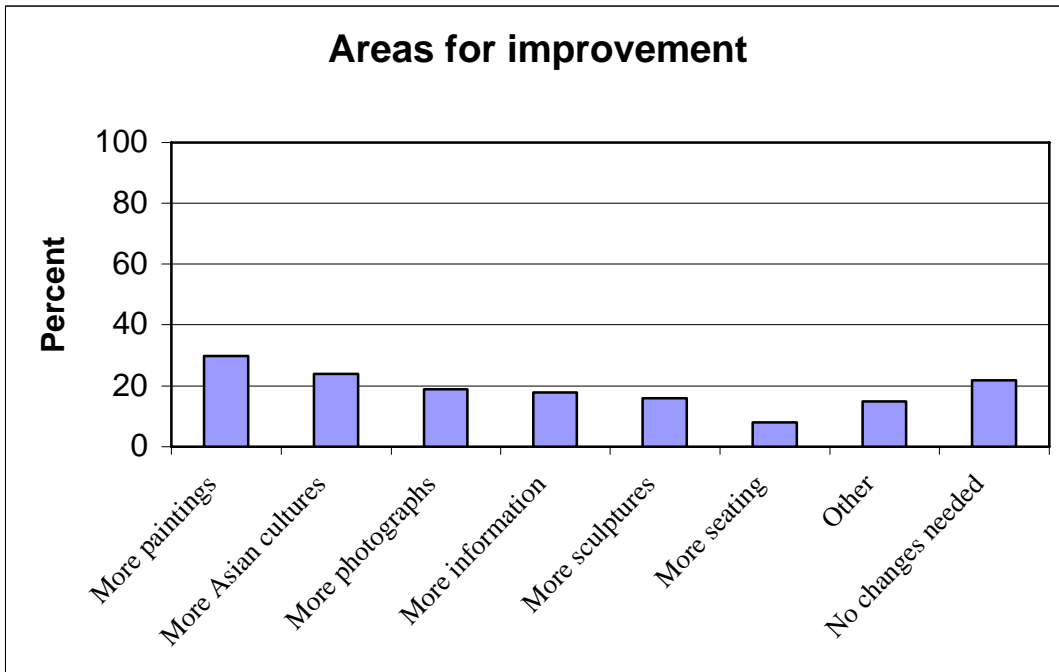
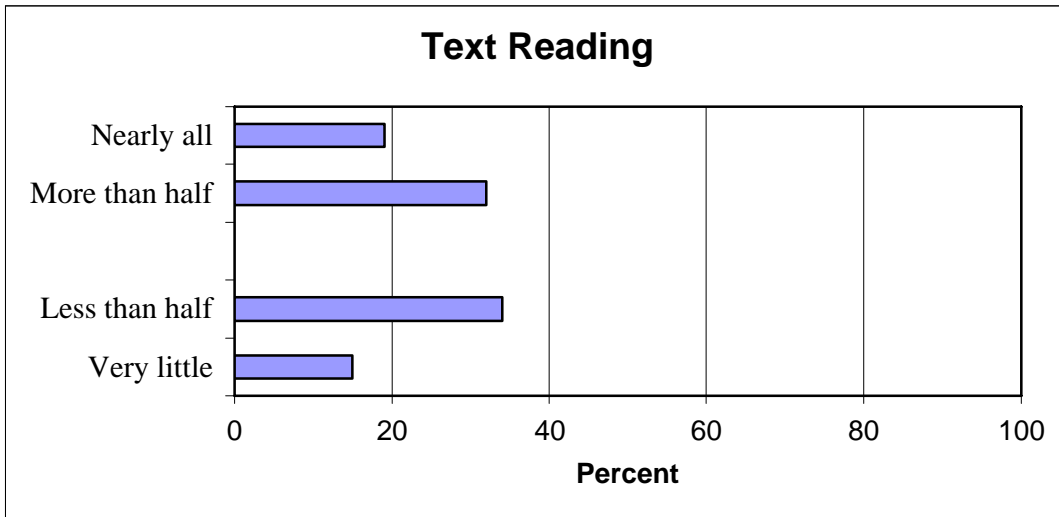
Two in five entering visitors were very much looking forward to *Reflecting on the meaning of what I am looking at*, and half of exiting visitors reported finding this experience very satisfying.

INCREASING MY UNDERSTANDING

While two out of three entering visitors very much looked forward to *Increasing my understanding*, only two in five exiting visitors reported finding this experience very satisfying.

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\* Visitors were asked to indicate whether their anticipation or satisfaction was “very much,” “somewhat” or “not at all.” Hardly anyone marked “not at all,” and the “very much” responses are the focus of the analysis.



## Text Reading

**One in five visitors reported reading nearly all the texts in the exhibition. Half said they read at least half of all texts.**

Two in five read the laminated cards (biography cards) that gave biographical information for six of the figures in the portraits. Of those who did not read a card, one in four did not see these cards, and one in five did not have time to read them. Only one in ten saw a biography card and had time to read one, but chose not to. Nearly all of those who read them reported that it enhanced their experience.

## Influence

**Three out of five visitors felt that *Facing East* would influence the way they think about portraits.**

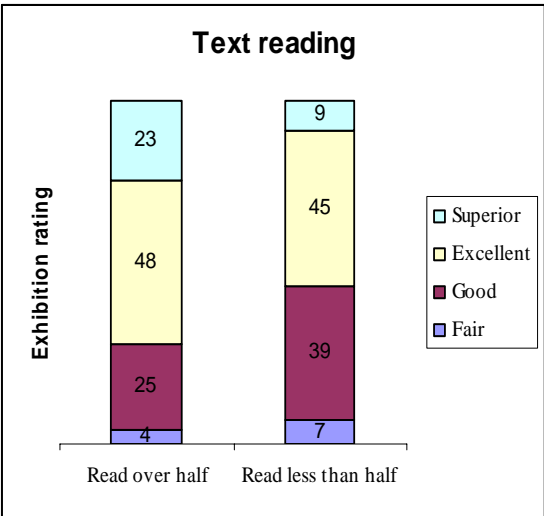
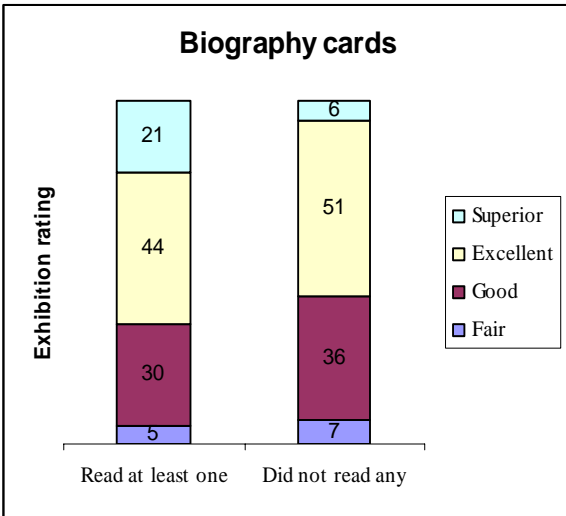
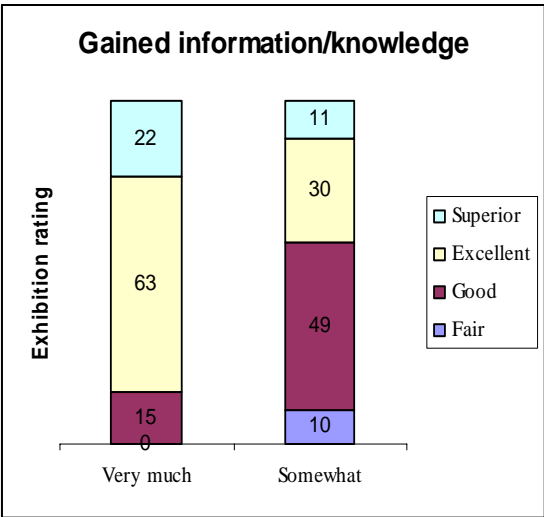
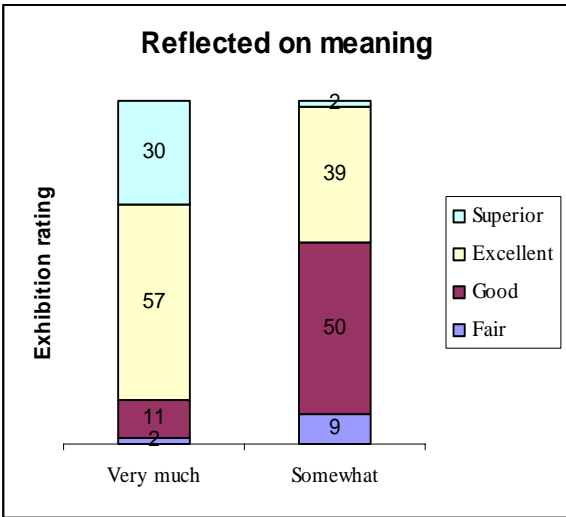
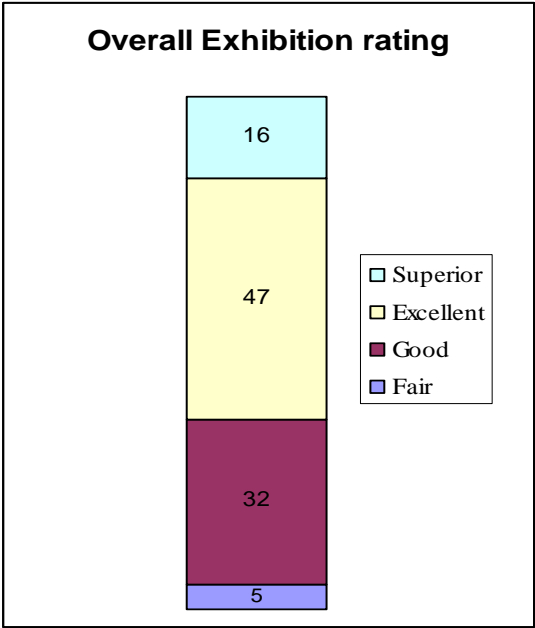
Those who gave reasons cited a new appreciation for the diversity of approaches, methods, and cultures in portraiture; a new appreciation for the context within which a portrait is created (especially the intentions of subjects and artists); and a new appreciation for interpretation, i.e., considering portraits from the point of view of their possible meanings.

## Areas for Improvement

**One in three would have liked more paintings. One in four would have liked to see more Asian cultures represented.** One in five wanted more photographs, one in five wanted more information, and about one in five wanted more sculpture. Another one in five felt that no changes or additions were needed.

## National Portrait Gallery

**Two of three visitors were planning to visit the National Portrait Gallery.** This proportion was the same for those leaving the exhibition as it was for those entering.



## Exhibition Rating

**On a scale of Poor-Fair-Good-Excellent-Superior, 16 percent of visitors rated the exhibition as Superior.** This score is comparable to the rating for the exhibition of Chinese ceramics from the Indianapolis Museum of Art, another small exhibition that drew primarily a tourist audience.

## Key Experiences

**By comparing how different sub-groups rated the exhibition, we learn that it was most successful for those who:**

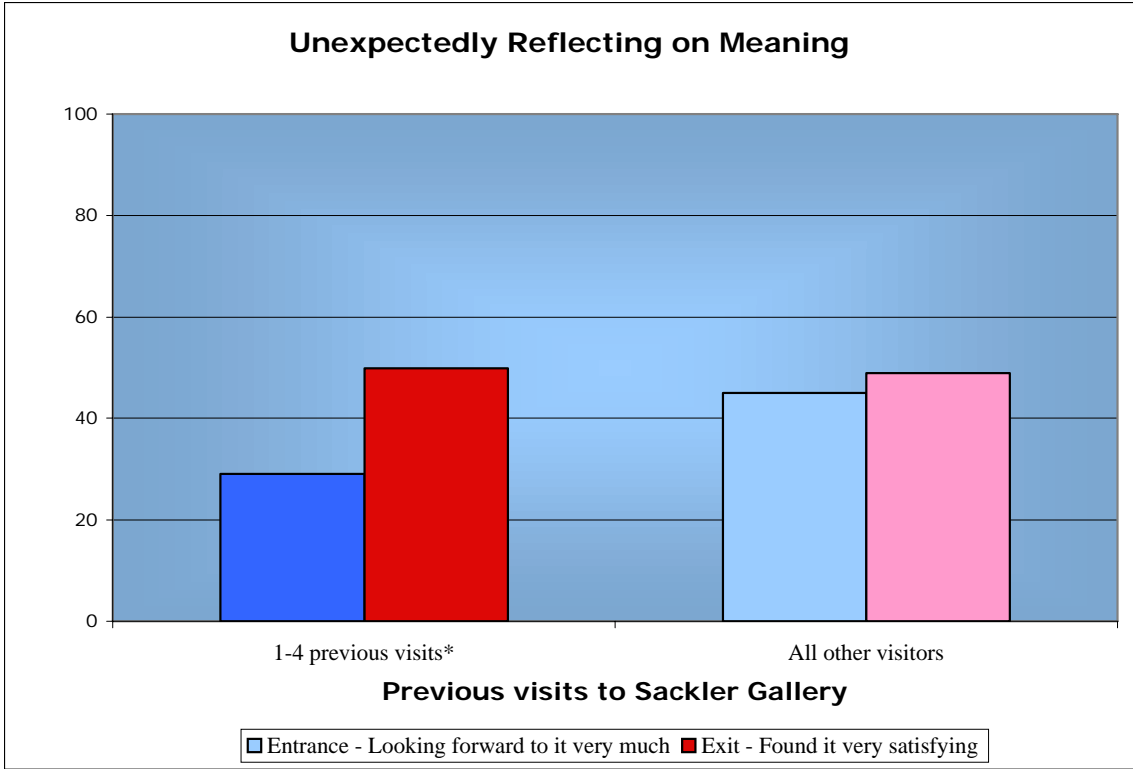
- **Reflected on meaning (very satisfying)**
- **Gained information (very satisfying)**
- **Read at least one biography card**
- **Read over half of the texts**

## Target Audience

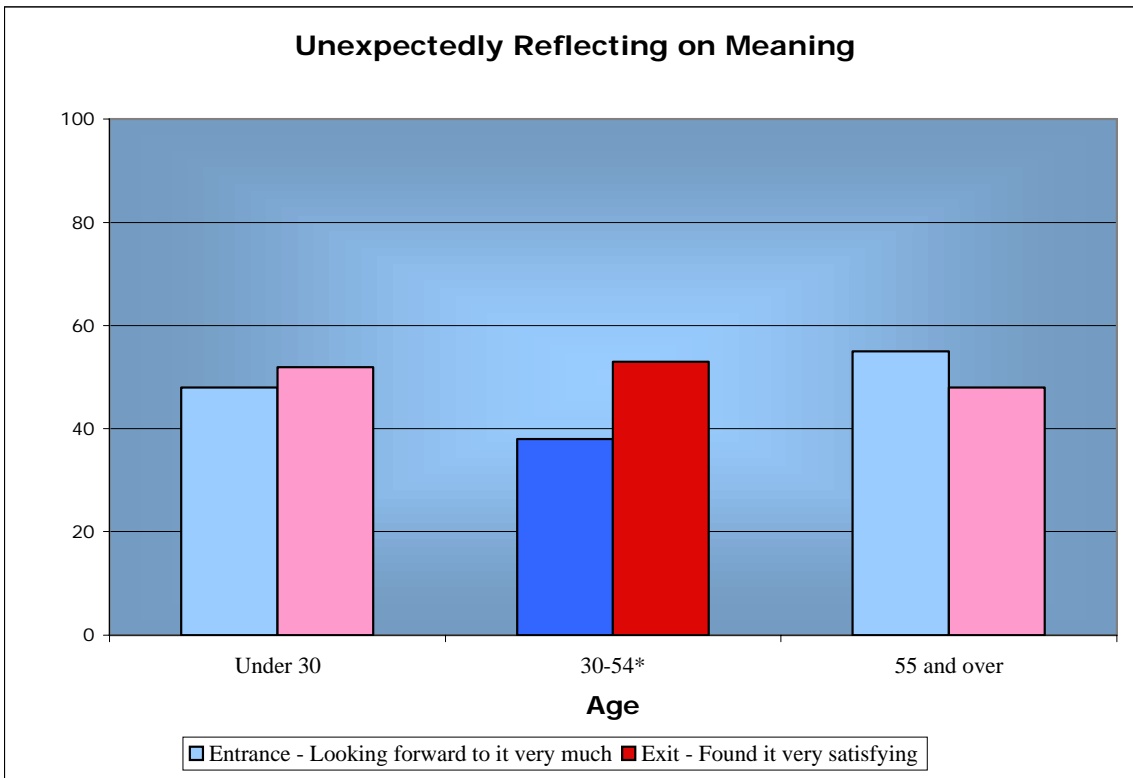
**By looking closely at who came to the museum specifically to see *Facing East*, we can identify features of the exhibition's *de facto* target audience. Those who came to the gallery for the exhibition were more likely to be:**

- **Familiar with Asian art**
- **Very interested in portraiture**
- **Prefer exhibitions of single artists**
- **Ages 55 and over**

(See tables, pages 31 and 32.)



\*Statistically significant difference between entrance and exit ( $p < .05$ )



\*Statistically significant difference between entrance and exit ( $p < .05$ )

## Unexpectedly Reflecting

Some sub-groups had more *Reflecting on meaning* experiences than they expected when they entered:

- Those who had previously visited the Sackler Gallery between 1 and 4 times
- Those aged 30 to 54

## No Increase in Understanding

Nearly all sub-groups reported on exit that they had experienced significantly less *Increasing understanding* than members of those sub-groups were looking forward to on entering. One sub-group, visitors who were alone, reported equal levels of *Increasing understanding* between the entrance and exit.



## Interview Excerpts:

### Interestingly diverse

*I think that is intriguing -- the jumping through periods of time. It makes the whole exhibition more solid, because some people prefer plates or knick knacks and others prefer drawings. It gives you a clearer foundation that this is an exhibition of portraiture as part of life and how people experience it and identify with some things more than other things.*

*I liked the fact that it was mixed media, because in a whole room of little drawings and things, you can tend to glaze over.*

### Thought-provoking

*It's an interesting way of understanding how in one culture or set of cultures, they look at how people are captured in portraits. It makes me think of my own background and culture, and it's interesting to see that we have the same themes but different ways of thinking about the world.*

*It reminded me that portraits are subject to all kinds of filters and have different purposes, whether it's to show actual reality or religion or hope to obtain merit. It can't be neutral --- just by the fact of being there, it innately seems to have a purpose.*

*This sounds horrible, but I never thought of Asian art as having portraiture aside from gods and statues. I never saw those statues as being representative of a ruler who is now trying to embody those elements. I thought all those statues were all the same, just depicted slightly differently. I never realized they could be portraits.*

### Not culturally specific

*Portraiture from Asia over time is a lot more naturalistic [than I realized] and really shows the particulars of all the different faces. I thought it was more stylized, and it was more about the symbols around the person, but I thought the faces were very naturalistic and showed a lot more of what the person might have looked like.*

## The Interviews

### Overall Responses

#### INTERESTINGLY DIVERSE

- "It covers so many different countries and so many different points of view."
- "I like... the fact that it wasn't centered on one particular part of Asia."
- "I enjoyed the jumping through time and having everything together."
- "It was less the cultural disparity that confused me than the timing, the chronology."
- "I liked the juxtaposition of different cultures."

#### THOUGHT-PROVOKING

- "It makes you think"
- "I found myself thinking...about how the subjects often wanted to present themselves."
- "This was a very intelligent exhibition."
- "I liked it because I don't think we think about the concept of self enough and it was nice to explore that."

#### NOT CULTURALLY SPECIFIC

- "I was thinking about Asians and how they have changed."
- "I don't think the exhibit was set up for me to consider what is Chinese culture versus Korean, or Japanese."

#### STRIKING CONTENT

**Many interviewed visitors were pleased by the diversity of cultures, media, and time periods.** "Jumping" through cultures and periods made the exhibition interesting and provocative for them. One interviewee found that diversity confusing, especially the range of time periods.

**For a number of visitors the exhibition inspired reflections on topics such as cultural differences, East vs. West, self, identity, the nature of art, idealization vs. realism, etc.**

**Interviewees tended to discuss Asia as a single entity rather than comparing across cultures.**

**The artworks most often mentioned and admired by the interviewees were photographs: the paired photographs of Iraqi women by Jannane al-Ani, the two composite photographs by Do-ho Suh; and the photographs of the Empress Dowager.** A number of interviewees were also struck by the portrait of Fath-Ali Shah, and the relief from Palmyra.

## Layout

*I liked the lighting, and the way that you engineered the floorplan so that sometimes a piece will just jump out at you...*

*It's quite confusing. I think the whole museum is quite confusing, because you have lots of little galleries opening out. There's no direct way and you keep coming to dead-ends, which is frustrating.*

*I like how its kind of set up from the older stuff and seems to progress from the beginning to more modern as you go around.*

## Entrance

*I was a little confused at the beginning, with the three large features. I guess it's introducing you to the three themes, memory, projection of identity, and likeness. I thought, "That's a little complex," and remember looking at the map and there were seven.*

*[I wanted] more information at the beginning to say what was happening. I felt that it was very much up to my interpretation rather than what the person who settled the exhibits up wanted you to think. They might have had a different idea to what I actually took away with me.*

## Themes

*I guess it was arranged by the type of selfhood they were projecting, whether it was individual, group, royalty, or famous people.*

*I didn't quite understand the concept, because there was all this mixed media kind of thing.....: I felt it lacked a central theme.*

## Labels

*When you look at something old and don't have the context or background knowledge, you tend to think it's almost mummified or just not that interesting. When you can read a card and think about the artist's intent, cultural norms and religious norms of that time, it becomes more dynamic.*

## Biography cards

*I liked that they are nice and sturdy, because in other museums when they are flimsy, torn-up, and dog-eared, they get gross. The plastic backing was nice. I liked that they were labeled sides 1 and 2 so that if the person before you put it in the wrong way you know that you need to start from one way and not the other. I liked that there were several of them so that you didn't feel like you were stopping someone else from using them.*

## Exhibition Presentation

### LAYOUT

"It's a little hard to find the other part of it. You work your way through it and end up at a dead end."

"It was a little harder to go through that space."

"I realized I made a left turn into a different part of the exhibit when I should have turned right, but it wasn't clear to me."

### ENTRANCE

"[The introductory area] didn't hit you as a gate, it hit me as being more climatic. I just looked at it and thought it was beautiful and then filed it aside and looked at the rest of the exhibit."

"I would personally like a slightly in-depth introduction. It was nicely summarized, but I could have gone for a slightly longer introduction, because I felt the way you explore the different types of selfhood could have been slightly more in depth."

### THEMES

"I did not get any theme feel from it. [The themes on the walls were] not that helpful..."

"Even though there were sort of different themes in different rooms, that didn't register strongly, because I wasn't paying attention to it."

### LABELS

"I read about half of the [texts]. They were really long."

"They were pretty short, or like a newspaper column, you could choose to stop reading wherever you wanted to."

### BIOGRAPHY CARDS

"They were really great. It's art, it's history, what is it? Is it religion?"

**Not all interviewees grasped the organization of the exhibition, and some were annoyed by the arrangement of rooms that required them to backtrack.**

**Some interviewees did not grasp the orientation aspect of the first room.**

Others entered through the exit, attracted by the large composite photograph of the Korean girl.

**Some interviewees noticed the room themes and others did not.** Overall a number of the interviewees did not see or make use of the larger thematic structure of the exhibition.

**Some interviewees liked to read and others tried not to read but could not resist it.** A few felt that labels were too long.

**A number of interviewees noted that they enjoyed the "little stories" of the portrait subjects.** One noted that the biography cards are also easier to use than the labels because you can hold them in your hand as you look at the artwork.



*Untitled*  
Jannane al-Ani, 1996  
Color photographic prints from  
black and white internegatives  
Purchase Arthur M. Sackler  
Gallery, S1998.112.1

## Discussion

Two features stand out in this study. The first is the nature of the audience. Only about one quarter (27%) of visitors came to the gallery specifically to see the exhibition, unlike *Hokusai* (86%), *Style and Status* (65%), *Caravan Kingdoms* (58%), and *Return of the Buddha* (43%). Among recent, surveyed exhibitions at the Sackler Gallery, only the exhibition of Chinese ceramics from the Indianapolis Museum of Art had fewer visitors who came to the gallery to see the exhibition (5%).

Visitors to *Facing East* were primarily tourists who were making a general visit to the gallery and happened upon the exhibition. A casual audience like this responds very differently than a focused, prepared audience and includes within it a broader range of experience and interests.

Why was this audience so different? Was it because the exhibition was smaller than the others mentioned above? If so, how did anyone know that? The exhibition reviews did not discuss the scale of the exhibition. Was it because the subject matter was not culturally specific? It is interesting to note that the top preference among this audience is for single-culture exhibitions, although thematic exhibitions are a close second. Was it because portraiture was not that appealing a subject? Since only those who came to the exhibition were surveyed or interviewed, we cannot know why others made the decision not to come, but we can wonder whether future thematic, trans-Asian exhibitions could draw the kind of large, focused audiences that came to *Hokusai* or *Style and Status*.

The second outstanding feature of this exhibition is the effect of its diversity of media, cultures, and periods on visitors. Confronted with unfamiliar juxtapositions, visitors were inspired to think creatively and abstractly about art, culture, and portraiture. They did more thinking than they expected to do when they entered, especially those in the middle age bracket (between 30 and 54), and those in the middle levels of experience with the Sackler Gallery (1-4 previous visits).

The interviewees shared a number of the ideas that they reflected on. Some ideas were directly inspired by the exhibition texts, but others originated in ways of thinking about Asian art that visitors brought with them into the exhibition, such as the nature of Asian vs. Western art, or the significance of cultural difference.

At the same time, the survey results showed that fewer visitors at the exit felt that they had increased their understanding than had anticipated this experience on entrance. The only subgroup that reported as much increased understanding as anticipated was those visiting alone. In the two other Sackler Gallery exhibition studies that compared anticipated and actual experiences, *Increasing my understanding* either stayed at the same level (*Hokusai*) or rose (*Style & Status*) as a result of seeing the exhibition. (Similarly, *Reflecting on meaning* stayed at the same level in *Hokusai* and rose in *Style & Status*.)

What might have caused this result? It was not due to a lack of information. Although one in five exiting visitors (18%) wanted more information, the visitors who wanted more information reported the same level of increasing understanding as other visitors, and

overall, visitors acquired as much information as they wanted. Could it have been the mixing of cultures? The striking diversity of content, while it inspired reflection, might also have made it more difficult for visitors to draw reliable, direct conclusions about any one Asian culture. Could it have been the organization or presentation of the exhibition? Some interviewees reported difficulty grasping the curatorial perspective of the exhibition, and some did not see the room titles (which were well above eye-level) or noted that the initial room did not provide the solid introduction they were expecting.

Nonetheless, both the survey results and the interviews make clear that a majority of visitors found new perspectives on portraiture in the exhibition and enjoyed the experience, especially those who were inspired to reflect on meaning.

The biography cards were well-received and seem to have made a real difference in enhancing the experience. A number of visitors, however, did not pick them up, usually due to time pressure or reading overload.

Overall, the extent of textual information seems to have been about right – half the visitors estimated that they read more than half of the labels, which reflects both the eagerness of the audience for information and the quality of the texts.

The strong impact of the contemporary photographs on interviewees suggests that such materials should be considered for inclusion in future thematic exhibitions. The response to the Jannane al-Ani photographs was particularly notable, in part, it seems, because of the way that were displayed facing one

another, and the way they challenged pre-conceived notions of veiled women. Conversely, the other notably popular photographs among interviewees, the composite boy and girl by Do-ho Suh, seem to have been so effective because they matched visitors' ideas of the different attitudes towards the individual and the group found in the West and the East.

As the museum contemplates other thematic, trans-Asian exhibitions, the results of this study suggest that special attention should be given to the following issues:

#### **Attraction**

Is there a way to test titles, graphics, and subject matter with various Sackler Gallery audiences to determine what might be done to increase the number who choose to visit?

#### **Organization**

The results of this study suggest that, if content of remarkably different appearance and type is intermingled in an exhibition, there should be a very strong, clear organizational framework. This structure should be strikingly and unambiguously introduced in the beginning of the exhibition.

#### **Content**

Visitors seemed to find an exhibition that offers a very broad range of art, from contemporary photography to ancient objects, to be appropriate, revealing, and interesting. Some visitors will be confused, however, unless the organization and layout provide clear guidance.

**Experiences**

The challenge that exhibition makers will face is to provide increased understanding at the same time that they provoke reflections about meaning. To do this might require sub-sections of the exhibition that take a single-culture focus within the context of the larger theme.

**Information**

Separate cards with more personalized information, such as the biography cards can be very effective. Object labels should be written in “newspaper style,” with the most important information at the top.





*Self-portrait*

1917

Kohno Michisei (1895-1950)

Oil on canvas

Gift of Shuntatsu Kohno and the Kohno family in memory of their father.

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, S1998.115

## Appendix A: Survey Results \*

### Intention for the visit

"What led you to visit the Sackler Gallery?" [Choose one or more]

Choice	Exhibit entrance and exit Percent
Came for a general visit	66
Came to see the portrait exhibition, <i>Facing East</i>	27
Other reason	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>
Number of respondents=	496

### Residence

"Where do you live?"

Choice	Exhibit entrance and exit Percent
United States	88
Other country	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=	489

### Residence -- U.S. regions

Category	Exhibit entrance and exit Percent
Metro Area Washington, DC	31
Southeast	16
Mid-Atlantic	16
Midwest	5
New England	3
Mountain Plains	4
West	8
Unspecified U.S.	5
Other Country	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=	489

\* In these tables, exhibition entrance and exit results are combined in cases where there is no statistical difference between them. Entrance and exit results are shown separately when the difference between them is statistically significant using the chi-square test, i.e., there is a less than five percent chance that the difference is an accident of the sample.

## Age

"What is your age?"

Age Category	Exhibit entrance and exit Percent
12 to 17	6
18 to 24	12
25 to 29	10
30 to 34	9
35 to 39	8
40 to 44	10
45 to 49	8
50 to 54	12
55 to 59	10
60 to 64	6
65 to 69	4
70 and over	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
Mean age=	40.2
Median age=	40
Number of respondents=	487

## Sex

"What is your sex?"

Choice	Exhibit entrance and exit Percent
Male	51
Female	49
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=	483

## Companions

"Are you visiting alone or with others?"

Choice	Exhibit entrance and exit Percent
I am alone	31
With others	69
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=	495

## Size of visit groups

Visit Group Size	Exhibit entrance and exit Percent
One person	32
Two persons	38
Three persons	11
Four persons	10
Five persons	4
Six persons	2
Seven persons	2
Eight or nine persons	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
Mean number of persons=	2.3
Median number of persons=	2
Number of respondents=	495

## Composition of visit groups

Visit Group Category	Exhibit entrance and exit Percent
1 adult	32
1 youth (age 12 to 17)	1
1 adult & 1 child (age under 12)	1
1 adult & 1 youth	2
2 adults	35
1 adult & 2 children/youths	2
2 adults & 1 child/youth	3
3 adults & 1 youth	7
2 adults & 2 children/youths	2
3 adults & 1 youth	1
4 adults	5
3 adults & 2 youths	1
5 adults	2
All other compositions	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=	496

## Composition of visit groups

Category	Exhibit entrance and exit Percent
One adult	32
Two adults	35
Three or more adults	14
Youth(s) only	1
Adults and youth(s) only	9
Adults and child(ren) only	7
Adult(s), youth(s), and child(ren)	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=	496

## Portraiture interest

"How interested are you in Portraiture?"

Choice	Exhibit entrance and exit Percent
Very interested	34
Somewhat interested	61
Not interested	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=	489

## Asian art interest

"How interested are you in Asian art?"

Choice	Exhibit entrance and exit Percent
Very interested	64
Somewhat interested	35
Not interested	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=	489

## Middle Eastern art interest

"How interested are you in Middle Eastern art?"

Choice	Exhibit entrance and exit Percent
Very interested	43
Somewhat interested	53
Not interested	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=	483

### Motivator

"Who in your group suggested visiting the Sackler Gallery today?"

Choice	Exhibit entrance and exit Percent
I did	44
Someone else in my group did	43
I am alone	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=	471

### Previous visits

"How many times have you previously visited this museum, the Sackler Gallery?"

Choice	Exhibit entrance and exit Percent
First visit	49
1-4 previous visits	22
5 or more previous visits	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=	496

### Familiarity with Asian art

"Do you regularly visit museums/exhibitions of Asian art outside of the Washington DC area?"

Choice	Exhibit entrance and exit Percent
Yes	55
No	45
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=	488

### Subject matter preferences

"What kind of exhibition(s) do you personally prefer?" [Choose one or more]

Category	Exhibit entrance Percent
An exhibition focused on a single Asian culture (e.g., Japan, India, etc.)	39
An exhibition focused on multiple Asian cultures	37
An exhibition focused on a theme or idea	37
An exhibition focused on a single medium (e.g., painting, ceramics, etc.)	20
An exhibition focused on a single artist	15
Other	5
Don't know	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>160</b>
Number of respondents=	231

## Experiences

Exhibition entrance: "How much are you looking forward to the following experiences in this portrait exhibition today?"

Exhibition exit: "How satisfying were the following experiences in this portrait exhibition today?"

<b>Being moved by beauty</b>		<b>Exhibit entrance and exit Percent</b>
<b>Choice</b>		
Very much		64
Somewhat		34
Not at all		2
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=		471

<b>Seeing rare/valuable art</b>		<b>Exhibit entrance and exit Percent</b>
<b>Choice</b>		
Very much		60
Somewhat		36
Not at all		4
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=		469

<b>Gaining information/knowledge</b>		<b>Exhibit entrance and exit Percent</b>
<b>Choice</b>		
Very much		57
Somewhat		40
Not at all		3
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=		463

<b>Imagining other times or places</b>		<b>Exhibit entrance and exit Percent</b>
<b>Choice</b>		
Very much		52
Somewhat		43
Not at all		5
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=		471

<b>Spending time with friends/family</b>		<b>Exhibit entrance and exit Percent</b>
<b>Choice</b>		
Very much		46
Somewhat		25
Not at all		29
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=		471

<b>Reflecting on the meaning of what I'm looking at*</b>	<b>Exhibit entrance Percent</b>	<b>Exhibit exit Percent</b>
<b>Choice</b>		
Very much	41	49
Somewhat	55	47
Not at all	4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=	220	249

\*Statistically significant difference between entrance and exit (p<.05)

<b>Increasing my understanding*</b>	<b>Exhibit entrance Percent</b>	<b>Exhibit exit Percent</b>
<b>Choice</b>		
Very much	66	41
Somewhat	32	57
Not at all	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=	222	258

\*Statistically significant difference between entrance and exit (p<.05)

<b>Total number of experiences</b>	<b>Exhibit entrance and exit Percent</b>
<b>Choice</b>	
None	9
One	10
Two	15
Three	17
Four	16
Five	17
Six	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Mean number of experiences=</b>	<b>3.4</b>
<b>Median number of experiences=</b>	<b>3</b>
Number of respondents=	425

Excluding "Spending time with friends/family"

## Text reading

"What portion of the texts in this portrait exhibition did you read?"

<b>Choice</b>	<b>Exhibit exit Percent</b>
Nearly all	19
More than half	32
Less than half	34
Very little	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=	263



## Biography cards

"Did you read any of the laminated portable cards in this exhibition?"

Choice	Exhibit exit Percent
No	57
"If NO, why not?"	
Didn't see them	26
Wasn't interested	10
Didn't have time	21
Yes	43
"If YES, how did it affect your experience?"	
Enhanced it	35
Detracted from it	1
No effect	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=	237

## Influence

"Do you think this exhibition will influence the way you think about portraits?"

Choice	Exhibit exit Percent
Yes	68
"In what way?"	
Diversity of media, cultures	10
Context of portrait-making	9
Interpretation of portraiture	9
Other change	8
No explanation provided	32
No	32
"Can you explain why not?"	
Already knew	1
Criticism of exhibition	1
No explanation provided	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=	237

## Improvements

"Which of the following would have enhanced your visit to this portrait exhibition?"

[Choose one or more]

Choice	Exhibit exit Percent
More paintings	30
More Asian cultures represented	24
More photographs	19
More information	18
More sculptures	16
More seating	8
Other	15
No changes/additions needed	22
Number of respondents=	266

Total number of improvements Choice	Exhibit exit Percent
None	23
One	39
Two	28
Three	8
Four	1
Six	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
Mean number of improvements=	1.3
Median number of improvements=	1
Number of respondents=	266

## National Portrait Gallery visit

"Are you planning to visit the National Portrait Gallery in Washington DC in the near future?"

Choice	Exhibit entrance and exit Percent
Yes	68
No	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=	485

## Exhibition rating

Exhibition exit: "How would you rate this portrait exhibition, "Facing East'?"

Choice	Exhibit exit Percent
Superior	16
Excellent	47
Good	32
Fair	5
Poor	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of respondents=	266

## Came to see *Facing East* and Familiarity with Asian Art

Visit Asian art exhibits elsewhere	Came to see <i>Facing East</i> (in percent)			Num. Resp.
	Yes	No	Total	
Yes	32	68	<b>100</b>	242
No	11	89	<b>100</b>	242

## Came to see *Facing East* and Interest in portraiture

Interest in Portraiture	Came to see <i>Facing East</i> (in percent)			Num. Resp.
	Yes	No	Total	
Very interested	34	66	<b>100</b>	164
Somewhat interested	15	85	<b>100</b>	307

## Came to see *Facing East* and Prefer single-artist exhibits

Prefer single-artist exhibitions	Came to see <i>Facing East</i> (in percent)			Num. Resp.
	Yes	No	Total	
Yes	38	62	<b>100</b>	34
No	19	81	<b>100</b>	195

## Came to see *Facing East* and Age

Age	Came to see <i>Facing East</i> (in percent)			Num. Resp.
	Yes	No	Total	
Under 30	12	88	<b>100</b>	145
30-54	20	80	<b>100</b>	233
55 and over	38	62	<b>100</b>	106

### Exhibition rating and Reflected on meaning of what I was looking at

Reflected on meaning	Exhibition rating (in percent)				Total	Num. Resp.
	Superior	Excellent	Good	Fair		
Very much	30	57	11	2	<b>100</b>	122
Somewhat	2	39	50	9	<b>100</b>	117

### Exhibition rating and Gained information/knowledge

Gained information/knowledge	Exhibition rating (in percent)				Total	Num. Resp.
	Superior	Excellent	Good	Fair		
Very much	22	63	15	0	<b>100</b>	131
Somewhat	11	30	49	10	<b>100</b>	106

### Exhibition rating and Biography cards

Biography cards	Exhibition rating (in percent)				Total	Num. Resp.
	Superior	Excellent	Good	Fair		
Read at least one	21	44	30	5	<b>100</b>	102
Did not read any	6	51	36	7	<b>100</b>	133

### Exhibition rating and Text reading

Text reading	Exhibition rating (in percent)				Total	Num. Resp.
	Superior	Excellent	Good	Fair		
Read more than half	23	48	25	4	<b>100</b>	135
Read less than half	9	45	39	7	<b>100</b>	128

### Reflecting on meaning and Familiarity with Sackler Gallery

Familiarity with Sackler Gallery	Reflecting on meaning (in percent)		Entrance and Exit combined
	Entrance - Looking forward to it very much	Exit - Found it very satisfying	
1-4 previous visits*	29	50	39
All other visitors			47

\*Statistically significant difference between entrance and exit (p<.05)

### Reflecting on meaning and Age

Age	Reflecting on meaning (in percent)		Entrance and Exit combined
	Entrance - Looking forward to it very much	Exit - Found it very satisfying	
Under 30			42
30-54*	38	53	46
55 and over			51

\*Statistically significant difference between entrance and exit (p<.05)



*Portrait of Gaofeng Yuanmiao, 1238-1295*  
Chuan Shinko, 1392-1568  
Hanging scroll; ink on paper  
Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1911.317

## Appendix B: Selections from the Interviews

INTERVIEWER: What did you think about the exhibit?

RESPONDENT: There are some really fascinating pieces in it, and it makes you think. At times it seems – because it covers so many different countries and so many different points of view – at times it seems it’s hard to pull together an image. You have faces on porcelain; you have photographs; you have oil paintings; you have ink drawings. The commentary was interesting. This is my second time seeing it.

....

INTERVIEWER: Was your experience different the second time?

RESPONDENT: I suppose so. I found myself thinking more this time about how the subjects often wanted to present themselves.

....

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned the idea of mixed media. How did you feel about that? Is there a way that you would have been able to understand it better?

RESPONDENT: In most museums, you go and you see paintings; you go and you see sculpture. They don’t intermingle that much with each other, so I was surprised to see sculpture. I hadn’t thought of coins as portraits.

INTERVIEWER: Did you like the mixed media?

RESPONDENT: The lamps. I wouldn’t [have included]. And even in looking at them I was thinking, “I could see how somebody could commission those.” I wouldn’t have thought of them as portraits, and I’m still struggling with that. They were commissioned and represent an idealized way. Maybe it’s more like Western ideas of individuals not being types or representations of some abstract thing.

INTERVIEWER: With the mixing of the cultures, did you find that helpful? Or problematic?

RESPONDENT: I think it’s problematic in a good way. You have to wonder what the Sackler is doing when you see those things there. I assume that it’s not random, so it’s contrasts. I was really struck at how often there were various idealizations of some characteristics and then the attempt to make it particular, maybe just by adding particular details. I think the test is, for me, when I read, will I see things differently than I did before. Then I say, “ah, all right.” It’s a little early for me to tell you what conclusion I’ve reached – at least with this type of an exhibit. In fact, that’s why I came back, because it did seem a little disjointed, and I thought, “Well, let me come back and reintroduce myself to some of the pieces that are here and see what happens as a result.”

INTERVIEWER: Did you read more of the labels the second time?

RESPONDENT: I was going to concentrate more on the images themselves, because I did a lot of reading the last time, but as I got going, just to understand what I’m looking at – there’s a lot of interesting descriptive background, so I found myself reading. There is so much there. I got caught up in it again. The only problem with that is that if someone tells you what you are going to see, then you see it. So I wanted to see these for myself. Not easy to do. There are so many words. And the words are good. They are very interesting. It may take a third time.

INTERVIEWER: Would you come back a third time?

RESPONDENT: Probably

....

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about the space and the design?

RESPONDENT: It’s a little hard to find the other part of it. You work your way through it and end up at a dead end. You have to work your way back out and there’s another piece of it. I was looking for it. I knew there was the Korean girl’s face.

INTERVIEWER: What did you come away with?

RESPONDENT: The use of portraits, photographs, in our culture – we use it a lot for news stories, for family albums. Here there was a real contrast between the artworks that were ceremonial, that had a cultural message they were meant to portray, and usually the artist cooperated in providing that. As in the magnificent painting of the Shah, the one with the bow. There's a message being communicated there. It almost doesn't matter if he looked like that. And paintings for ancestor worship – there she is in some idealized clothing. One of them looks like an actual tiger beneath her. And dragons. Just beautiful stuff. There is a cultural place for that, which we don't have, except possibly for presidents. That really contrasts with the women that are veiled or the self-portrait of the artist. It was hard for me to see how he used Durer, but the portrait itself was fascinating. There are portraits where the artist has control, and usually then it is sending a much more subtle message. If you look at the self-portrait, not only is it incredibly detailed, but he is looking at you, the viewer, in an incredibly detailed way, and he sees himself in a more detailed way than one usually sees oneself – one eye is a little bigger than the other because of the lens. It's almost beyond a photograph. But then he's looking out at the viewer, and the viewer has to think that he may be even more detailed than he knows. And the whole business of being veiled and unveiled and yet the very direct gaze of the women. These are much more subtle messages. There is a cultural context, but it is commenting on the context and on art, as opposed to "Here's an idealized object that you can worship."

INTERVIEWER: What spoke to you, if you draw that line between what is contemporary and older?

RESPONDENT: I probably liked the contemporary more, although the funeral piece – the relief – that was very striking. I'd seen a number of those. And the Egyptian Pharaoh was very striking as well. I liked both of those pieces. The Iranian women piece is such a striking piece. And at least for me, looking at that, I guess it says more than I as a Westerner – the veiled faces lose identity. I'm put off by it. But in this case you actually get to see the identity. So it's quite a contrast. The way in which you control and project identity, and even what you mean by identity is interesting and that piece has a lot of resonance in that regard. In others it is more controlled, it is projected for a purpose.

---

INTERVIEWER: Are you interested in Asian art or portraiture?

RESPONDENT: Normally I'm interested in Western art. I do like portraiture a lot, so for me it's a very interesting exhibition. Also, the iconic imagery, the narrative imagery, I like that about the exhibition.

INTERVIEWER: It sounds like a theme that you really picked up on.

RESPONDENT: I wrote a book about iconic imagery, so I'm interested in this type of stuff.

INTERVIEWER: What things overall did you pick up in the exhibit as you were walking through?

RESPONDENT: The idea that the images were deliberately meant to have a dialogue with the viewer, authority, of course, identity plays a big role in the exhibition, identity as a construct and how artists were engaged in that. I thought it was also interesting how the curators did not really respect geographical or chronological boundaries, and instead tried to fashion a message of continuity of what would be different traditions of portraiture that emerged in different cultures. I thought the continuity across time and geography was an interesting approach to take, and across media too. You end here with digital imagery, so I thought the idea of combining different media was an effective one because it emphasizes not just continuity across time and geography but also medium.

INTERVIEWER: So you feel that was effective and you enjoyed that?

RESPONDENT: Yes.

....

INTERVIEWER: What percentage of the labels did you read in this exhibit?

RESPONDENT: Since I'm really tired now and I've been walking in all these museums, probably only 20%.

INTERVIEWER: Was it effective in helping you capture themes?

RESPONDENT: I read these, right here – the introductory labels, but I didn't focus much on individual ones, about 20% of the individual ones.

INTERVIEWER: It's impressive when you're talking about this exhibit – did you notice the large theme titles?

RESPONDENT: No, can't remember it without turning around to look at it. I'm sure I looked at it. I did think that this is a very nicely arranged exhibition. I do remember the 3 portraits right there, facing out, neatly greeting the visitor as one walks in there, and I do recall other passages when you go into the dark area and there's this nice soft mellow light, but whether I read those large titles, you're asking me about? I must have looked at them, but I can't remember them now.

....

INTERVIEWER: Did you notice that these objects were all from the permanent collection?

RESPONDENT: No, I didn't pick up on that one detail. Sometimes I look to see where the collection is [from], whether it's a private collection or if it has an accession number, but I didn't note that.

---

INTERVIEWER: I noticed you were reading the [biography] card. What did you think about it?

RESPONDENT: It was informative. Very enjoyable. It added more behind the scenes, not just the picture and the plaque on the wall.

INTERVIEWER: So you'd already read the label before you picked up the card?

RESPONDENT: No, I read this first.

INTERVIEWER: Did it feel different to you, the kind of information that was on it? You said behind the scenes. What do you mean exactly?

RESPONDENT: Yes. It's more human interest.

---

INTERVIEWER: Tell me what you thought about the show.

RESPONDENT: I liked it. I thought it was about identity mostly.

INTERVIEWER: Ah, Identity. In what way?

RESPONDENT: I thought it was about all the decision-making that goes into creating a portrait of someone, whether it be a cultural agenda, an artistic agenda, personal sitter/patron agenda, or religious.

INTERVIEWER: You definitely got the point of the show.

RESPONDENT: I read the labels. It was a small show. It only took me about 10 minutes.

....

INTERVIEWER: Do you think those laminated cards changed your experience in some way?



RESPONDENT: No. For the most part, I don't think they really changed my experience. The only one that I was really fascinated with, again, was the one that talked about him killing his daughter, because it was such an anecdotal story that seemed to get beyond the formal parts that museums usually do with the label.

INTERVIEWER: So dramatic.

RESPONDENT: Yes. And I'm kind of nosy. I like portraits because I like learning about people. If it goes into the personal side, I like it more.

....

INTERVIEWER: What did you think of the labels?

RESPONDENT: I was able to skim them and get the basic information quickly. I read them definitely because I wouldn't often know what was going on in the portrait just staring it, especially the older watercolor pieces. I wouldn't know what to look for; so, I thought the labels were really helpful in keying into why that particular piece was chosen and how it related to whatever theme they had in each room.

INTERVIEWER: Did you read the theme panels?

RESPONDENT: Briefly. I did.

INTERVIEWER: Did you notice that the rooms had titles overhead? Did you kind of know where you were in the exhibition?

RESPONDENT: I did. I saw projecting identity, for sure. I don't know that I noticed the other ones. There was one on religion. I was aware that the labels were keying back to overarching themes. There were one or two themes in a room. I think one of the labels had projecting identity in italics, and I saw it on the wall, so I figured that's what they were doing. Some of the rooms seem to be divided laterally, with 2 themes going on that played against one another.

---

INTERVIEWER: Did you like the exhibition?

RESPONDENT: Yes. I like the mixture in the fact that it wasn't centered on one particular part of Asia. It covered all the countries from Persia to Japan. That was very interesting. Also, the different head titles that show the things that went across Asia; whatever the countries: gender or apparatus portraiting.

....

INTERVIEWER: What pieces did you find most interesting?

RESPONDENT: I really liked the bust of the woman that you see at the end of the corridor Lights down and the dark, very striking. I could relate to it. I could also relate because it's the kind I know and like. So, I was immediately attracted to it. For other parts, I think the photographs were very interesting. You go further than simply – I wouldn't say that photographs are not art – but some people do consider that there's a break at the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century, that there are paintings before and photography after. They do not necessarily make the bridge between the two. But that's what impressed me about this exhibition. No divide between different media – there were sculptures, paintings, prints, photographs; so, you mixed everything around one particular issue. That was very interesting.

INTERVIEWER: Did you like the range of media used? Does your idea of portraiture change? Do you think of it differently?

RESPONDENT: It strengthened my idea of portraiture. You have a different range from the realistic [to the] idealized ones. There is this progression from idealization in early times and more realistic in modern times, and it shows also in the portraits. Because when you have 16<sup>th</sup> century paintings, you ask yourself, "Was the sitter really looking like that?" But with the modern ones they are more personalized looking and you can identify the features of the person.

INTERVIEWER: With the labels...

RESPONDENT: More developed than what I have seen in other museums. I've been several weeks in New York, and several museums have very short labels or even no labels at all. This means that you have no idea whatsoever if you do not buy a large guide. It's difficult to identify. Here there are sufficient enough labels and the small cards that allow you to have extra information, like the one on the late empress of China. There are also four other types – one in each room. That was very nice.

---

INTERVIEWER: What did you think about the exhibit?

RESPONDENT: Good variety of objects from different times and places.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything in particular that you liked about it?

RESPONDENT: Nothing in particular. It was one of the special exhibits here, so we came to see it.

....

INTERVIEWER: Did you find the variety of media helpful, or would you want it to be organized in a different way?

RESPONDENT: No, I didn't pay much attention to the organization of it. Just came to see what you had. Even though there were sort of different themes in different rooms, that didn't register strongly, because I wasn't paying attention to it.

RESPONDENT2: The cards were nice because it explains the history of the person. You should encourage people to pick them up.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any suggestions?

RESPONDENT2: Maps near the people so that you don't have to go back to the front.

INTERVIEWER: What did you think of having all the pieces from different cultures but in the same rooms?

RESPONDENT2: Confusing.

RESPONDENT: I didn't pay much attention to the themes, I was just looking at the objects.

---

INTERVIEWER: What did you think about the exhibit?

RESPONDENT: I liked it. It's an interesting way of understanding how in one culture or set of cultures, they look at how people are captured in portraits. It makes me think of my own background and culture, and it's interesting to see that we have the same themes but different ways of thinking about the world.

....

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about the fact that it wasn't organized by culture?

RESPONDENT: It was less the cultural disparity that confused me than the timing, the chronology. What was done – 2200 years ago was I think the oldest pieces – there were a couple of sculptures. And then with photographs or computer-generated photographs that are very modern. The difference in thought process, the skills between those is what would be easier to see, I thought, where I like the changes in culture. More chronological would be easier to follow, though it might not capture the same effect.

INTERVIEWER: What did you come out of the exhibit thinking?

RESPONDENT: How we use art to really try understand the world around us – in this case, specifically the people, and not just how the person's portrait was being drawn but how the

person wants to portray themselves and how we on the other side viewing it understand what we see and how people are portrayed. There are a couple great pieces, I think Japanese, where they were almost like editorial cartoons where they took certain features and overemphasized them to show different things about the people and not just physical features, but very much their personalities.

....

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about the layout and exhibit design?

RESPONDENT: Usually I really catch that stuff. I'm having to think about it, so the exhibit design must have been pretty good. I struggled with the U back in the corner both going in and out – because people were by, as opposed to a linear process. It was a little harder to go through that space. I really liked the way certain pieces were placed on the walls – the entrance was amazing, and I really like the Uni-Woman at the end, loved that, that type of piece to finish it off. I kind of got a glimpse of that coming in. I'm not a big sculpture person. So, the sculptures, that kind of weaving part going into one of the rooms was a little distracting.

INTERVIEWER: Did you like the mixed media – having all of them together?

RESPONDENT: I liked that. I just didn't like the weaving part of it. I liked the variety, especially the fact that the bowls were there.

....

INTERVIEWER: When it comes to the labels and the wall chats – how did you feel about those?

RESPONDENT: I read about half of them. They were really long. I love a good oral tour, so you have the little thing you can punch the number, it's the same thing as on these labels. These labels were much more than just your standard size – location, artist that kind of stuff. And I like having that information, but I love hearing it so that I can look at the same time.

INTERVIEWER: What about the wall chats?

RESPONDENT: I noticed them, but didn't spend much time with them. I did grab a couple little fliers [Family guides]. They look like they're more adolescent things.

....

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel that you learned anything about the cultures from the pieces?

RESPONDENT: I didn't look closely enough. This piece is China, that piece is China... What does that say about Chinese culture? Some of the things I had seen enough of that I could do some of that, but I don't think the exhibit was set up for me to consider what is Chinese culture versus Korean, or Japanese. I think it was meant to be more fluid. That wasn't the objective of the exhibit at all. The exhibit spoke more to me about how we as human beings from many different cultures see ourselves and the world and other people in the world.

---

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel like you learned about other cultures from the exhibit? What did you take away?

RESPONDENT: I was thinking about Asians and how they have changed. As I was looking at that, I was thinking about how in Japan they used to bind children's feet, and over the years they don't do that any more, thankfully, and how it changed, and that's interesting.

....

INTERVIEWER: Did you read any of the labels?

RESPONDENT: It was great. But I have to admit that when I got about 3/4ths down I had to... A little more succinct would be okay.

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INTERVIEWER: Did you notice the themes in each room? The wall chats?

RESPONDENT: I read them, but not all the time. Sometimes I just look at things in a purely visual sense, and then other times I'll actually read to get some context.

RESPONDENT2: It is nice that every piece has a little story attached to it, and then I noticed some of the pieces had pull outs that you can take. It's nice to be able to do that – to walk through and enjoy the beauty for what it is, but also stop to look at everything as an individual piece.

INTERVIEWER: Did you read the cards?

RESPONDENT2: Yes, I did. They were really great. It's art, it's history, what is it? Is it religion?

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INTERVIEWER: Would you have preferred it being organized in a different way?

RESPONDENT2: I think it's wonderfully organized. It all somehow works together.

RESPONDENT: It's fantastic. It can be confusing, but you're looking at these broad trends rather than something that's so specific to a 20-year period.

RESPONDENT2: But I think it's helpful to have some familiarity when you go into an exhibit like this with all the cultures you have presented here. Familiarity with this museum and the Smithsonian, because I do hear the chitter-chatter around because there are so many different cultures put together: "What is that?" "Oh that's wacky. What is she holding?" There's not as much of a lead-in, so it can be a bit confusing for some people, and me as well, but I'll stop and read the thing. But it does hold the interest more as well, so you don't walk in and have that slowness.

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INTERVIEWER: Did you feel as though you have a different idea about portraiture now?

RESPONDENT: I think here I have more of a sense of artistic interpretation within that time period, which is something I don't often get a lot of when I look at something that's very old, especially when I don't have the context or information about it. When you look at something old and don't have the context or background knowledge, you tend to think it's almost mummified or just not that interesting. When you can read a card and think about the artist's intent, cultural norms and religious norms of that time, it becomes more dynamic.

RESPONDENT2: Honestly, that's why I like this museum so much. Because you get that and in every one of the [other] museums you don't get that, and maybe you have to come in with that knowledge or you go through with a tour, but otherwise you are looking at each piece and pulling it together based on your background. When you come here, it's very different, much more educational.

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INTERVIEWER: How did you like the exhibit?

RESPONDENT: I thought it was very interesting. I was here this weekend, but didn't know about this exhibition. I was home reading the brochure, and thought this is something I would have liked to have seen, so I took an hour from work today to come down and see this. I went through it in about 15 minutes.

INTERVIEWER: What was your favorite part?

RESPONDENT: The mix of old and new. I thought it was a very well-curated exhibition. I think the conceptual photographs attracted me from the brochure, the one by the Iranian woman. I had seen that before. I really liked the Korean wallpaper with the miniature. There were some other people there, and I'm not sure if they noticed the wallpaper.

INTERVIEWER: Did you notice it because of the label?

RESPONDENT: The labeling was fine. I have mixed feelings about labeling and educational aids, but I thought the placards were fine. I hate museums like San Francisco's Asian Art

Museum that have multimedia stations in their exhibitions, and I hope that the Freer-Sackler will not move to install multimedia consoles.

INTERVIEWER: You said you have mixed feelings about labels. I want to hear it all.

RESPONDENT: This was a very intelligent exhibition. I had forgotten about the reopening of the Portrait Gallery and went there quickly last month. It's huge. And I read about this being done at the same time – brilliant idea. It's a really good exhibition, the color. I was a little confused at the beginning, with the three large features. I guess it's introducing you to the three themes, memory, projection of identity, and likeness. I thought that's a little complex and remember looking at the map and there were seven. There was Egypt there and that was interesting because I liked the fact that there's very little Egyptian art at the Freer Gallery. I still think the Smithsonian needs to put a mummy on display, because of children in Washington. In any other city you can go see a mummy, but you can't in Washington. To tell you the truth, I did look at some of the labels of the 19<sup>th</sup> century photographer. A couple of them referred you to other photos. The last room was about projecting gender. I enjoyed it enough so I didn't really need to think about gender issues. I was a little confused by the small photograph of the Empress Dowager's attendant with the powdered face, but when I got to the second to last room, I saw the actual photograph so that made sense. That was very interesting, because her face seemed to be modeled. I just assumed that the powder was evenly placed over the face, now I see that it was a snow puff effect.

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INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about the exhibit design?

RESPONDENT: This was one of the best. A couple of your ones over in this area have been... I thought this one just made sense. It was a little edgy, in a good sense, because it had the contemporary photography as well as the portraiture. To tell you the truth, I expected more photography from the promo. That didn't matter. I did see the 1925 Kabuki that was used in the background of the graphics. You include these devotional works here, and to me that dropped off from portraiture. That famous one of that 10<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century Bakti woman – aesthetic dance, shrunken breasts – had much more personality. The little devotional things weren't quite as strong maybe because those were from the Freer Collection and you had to bring those over here. I expected to see those Yemeni desert figures, because those are beautiful.

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INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about the fact that there were different Asian cultures all together?

RESPONDENT: I would say first that it worked for me. However, I would indicate that even though there's a map in the beginning, which I kind of ignored, it wasn't clear until later walking through that it was from a lot of different places. That distinction between countries and cultures, even though the styles are obviously different, it wasn't a predominant thought, I would say that the exhibit as a whole had a oneness about it.

INTERVIEWER: It wasn't difficult to go from one piece to another?

RESPONDENT: I enjoyed the jumping through time and having everything together. One second you're looking at something from BC and then looking at something from 2000. It was unique and enjoyable. It stressed that these symbols and portraiture elements are the same now as they were thousands of years ago. The same as when you look at the Empress photos from the turn of the century.

INTERVIEWER: Did you walk out of the exhibit with different ideas about portraiture or Asian portraiture?

RESPONDENT: Yes. This sounds horrible, but I never thought of Asian art as having portraiture aside from gods and statues. I never saw those statues as being representative of a ruler who is now trying to embody those elements. I thought all those statues were all the same, just depicted

slightly differently. I never realized they could be portraits. When I think of Asian art in broad terms, especially depicting people, I think of scrolls, a Japanese vase, actors or theater type things, a lot of religious pieces. I don't know, very 2-D, flat. This had a lot more life to it and 3-dimensionality. The two lamps of the nobleman and woman putting themselves in bronze were pretty interesting.

INTERVIEWER: Did you read the labels?

RESPONDENT: Very recently I've gotten into a kick of not reading labels at all, but because I was looking for something scholarly and educational, I read almost all of the labels, which got kind of annoying, because I didn't want to read them, and I was taking notes. I was looking for something. Almost every piece had something interesting to say, something quotable. It was a little time-consuming. Typically, I like looking at and experiencing art and coming up with my own ideas. Today viewing was very different. I didn't find the cards useful, but I thought they were a useful tool, if I was here with family or something, they would be great to have.

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about the exhibit design?

RESPONDENT: I did think about that. I realized I made a left turn into a different part of the exhibit when I should have turned right, but it wasn't clear to me. I didn't follow the originally designed path.

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INTERVIEWER: Did you notice the themes on the walls?

RESPONDENT: About Identity? Yes. Not that helpful, except for the fact that I was looking for a label.

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about mixed media in the exhibit?

RESPONDENT: Great. No, I think that is intriguing – the jumping through periods of time. It makes the whole exhibition more solid, because some people prefer plates or knick knacks and others prefer drawings. It gives you a clearer foundation that this is an exhibition of portraiture as part of life and how people experience it and identify with some things more than other things.

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INTERVIEWER: What did you think about the exhibit?

RESPONDENT: I really enjoyed it. I liked it because I don't think we think about the concept of self enough, and it was nice to explore that. I wasn't familiar with Asian portraiture, except little Japanese scroll portraits.

INTERVIEWER: What did you like most?

RESPONDENT: I loved the wallpaper, because I didn't even notice it at first, and after I read the placard, it really made a lot of sense to me. What a neat combination of singular and plural, they don't even have in Korean, which is new to me.

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INTERVIEWER: Did you like the trans-Asian groupings?

RESPONDENT: I really liked it. I liked the way it jumped around a bit. I guess it was arranged by the type of selfhood they were projecting, whether it was individual, group, royalty, or famous people. I liked the jumping around to different cultures. You don't normally see that. I could compare things that are not normally grouped together, and I'm a librarian, so I realize that sometimes when we group similar things together we miss out on the opportunity to contrast disparate elements. I was thinking with museum work that tradition might sometimes hinder planning in terms of what you put together. It's perfect for the Smithsonian, because so many people come here who don't normally come to museums. I love the Freer-Sackler. I thought the mixing was a nice touch.

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INTERVIEWER: In terms of the labels, I noticed that you definitely paid attention to the labels. How did you feel about everything coming together?

RESPONDENT: I liked it. I love this part of your floor plan and how there's always a nice introduction to this exhibit and the way it flows through. I noticed it was smaller than usual because you usually go downstairs. I would personally like a slightly in-depth introduction. It was nicely summarized, but I could have gone for a slightly longer introduction, because I felt the way you explore the different types of selfhood could have been slightly more in depth. The signage was perfect. It always is here. I'll go to other museums, and there will be mistakes, but you guys are very careful. The only thing I don't like is that I have an astigmatism, and sometimes I feel the text could be slightly larger. If you had a way of making it slightly larger without competing with the artwork, that would be great. I liked the lighting, and the way that you engineered the floor plan so that sometimes a piece will just jump out at you like this stone sculpture. You walk in there, and then the spotlight just hits you and it really draws you into that U section. That's really well done, and you have a real knack for it here. I like that part of the museum.

INTERVIEWER: Did you notice next to the paintings you could pull something out and read?

RESPONDENT: Yes. I probably looked at three or four of them. I liked that they are nice and sturdy, because in other museums when they are flimsy, torn-up, and dog-eared, they get gross. The plastic backing was nice. I liked that they were labeled sides 1 and 2 so that if the person before you put it in the wrong way you know that you need to start from one way and not the other. I liked that there were several of them so that you didn't feel like you were stopping someone else from using them.

INTERVIEWER: Did you feel as though the first room gave you an idea of what you'd be in for later on.

RESPONDENT: Yes. Normally you only see one piece from the stairs. It was nice that there was a juxtaposition there and you knew what was going on.

INTERVIEWER: What did you take away from the exhibit? Did it change your ideas of portraiture or Asian Art?

RESPONDENT: I never thought of portraiture as small things like coins. Of course, now I realize most coins have portraiture going back to Rome, and I guess before that. I hadn't thought of that as portraiture as much as labeling of what is important in a culture, but I guess that's what portraiture does too. So, when I think of portraiture, I never thought of a bowl, non-traditional portraits.

INTERVIEWER: How did you like the fact that there was mixed media and the organization of them?

RESPONDENT: That worked really well. The variety of objects made it interesting. I could tell you went through lots of different separate collections, and I'm a librarian so I appreciate that. I'm at Library of Congress, and going through different collections is a big deal. I thought: "Gosh, they went through the entire attic and went through a lot of things to find things that were relevant." And it worked really well with the way it was arranged by the concept of self. I'll take that away with me. I have a friend who took a course on what is the self, and I'll make sure she sees this, because this is a great meditation on what is the self, how do we load meaning into that in terms of the visual. It was thought-provoking.

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INTERVIEWER: Did you read the labels?

RESPONDENT: Having been in quite a few museums today, I noticed that a few labels have been driven out by the last few labels, and knowing that, the labels I read now will be driven out

by the labels I'll read tomorrow. I'm keen to get the feel of the paintings and the appreciation of the art, not so much the history. I've no head for facts.

INTERVIEWER: Did you notice the titles?

RESPONDENT: That would be a no.

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel as though the entrance set up the rest of the exhibit?

RESPONDENT: I went through the exit, because of the face. The face of the Korean girl here, I thought it was so imposing on the archway that it was the entrance, though obviously that one has the title.

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INTERVIEWER: When you walked into the first room, did that set the stage for what the exhibit was going to be?

RESPONDENT: No. You walk in and see three Asian art [works], Chinese people, whatever. Interesting shoes, that guy in the middle. It's different being in there. Maybe I'll go back and appreciate those more and read again and try to follow it.

INTERVIEWER: Did you notice that each room had a theme?

RESPONDENT: I would say more or less yes. But it wasn't so obvious.

INTERVIEWER: Did you like the fact that different media was put together?

RESPONDENT: Yes. It brings a lot, and you don't get bored.

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INTERVIEWER: Did you notice where all the artists were from?

RESPONDENT: I did notice the map of Asia. It went beyond what I originally thought of Asia as being – going to Turkey and Egypt. I thought it was really interesting because you don't really think of that connection, so you see a lot more similarities.

INTERVIEWER: Did you like that the exhibit wasn't organized by culture, time, or media?

RESPONDENT: I think when you organize things more, you tend to pass things over. Things were mixed so you noticed a plate or a photograph or an oil painting more. It stood out instead of having ten oil paintings and you don't really see them.

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INTERVIEWER: What did you come out of the exhibit with?

RESPONDENT: The large photographs in the back. You never know what people have underneath – whether that be clothing or ideas. Each person is a little bit of a mystery, and that's kind of interesting.

INTERVIEWER: So, this informed you about people?

RESPONDENT: The other thing I really liked about those photos that impacted me is that – I always think of women who are very covered as a weakness, but when you look at those photos, they don't look weak at all. Their faces show a lot of strength and determination.

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INTERVIEWER: What did this exhibit tell you about that? What did you come out with?

RESPONDENT: According to where you're born in the world, what great gulfs of culture there are between people.



INTERVIEWER: What did you think of the mix of Asian cultures?

RESPONDENT: I'm not particularly interested in Islam. Where I come from, we've just had a big exhibition in my hometown about Islamic Art. My particular interest is Chinese and Japanese.

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INTERVIEWER: Did you notice the wall boxes?

RESPONDENT: Yes, I used several of those. That's a good idea.

INTERVIEWER: The fact that we had mixed media – what was your take on that?

RESPONDENT: I think that's a good plan as well. It's broadening your experience. I think it's much better to have a much broader view, so I think it's a good idea to mix them up. You can pick the theme out in different contexts and in different material.

INTERVIEWER: Did you feel as though the first room set the stage for what you would expect from the exhibit?

RESPONDENT: Not necessarily. More information at the beginning to say what was happening. I felt that it was very much up to my interpretation rather than what the person who settled the exhibits up wanted you to think. They might have had a different idea to what I actually took away with me.

INTERVIEWER: What about the layout?

RESPONDENT: It's quite confusing. I think the whole museum is quite confusing, because you have lots of little galleries opening out. There's no direct way and you keep coming to dead-ends, which is frustrating. There were several times we went round a corner and we were up a corner. I think you need more direction, more orientation through.

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INTERVIEWER: What did you think about the exhibit?

RESPONDENT: It was beautiful, interesting, and informative.

RESPONDENT2: Fantastic, overwhelming, and extremely interesting.

INTERVIEWER: Why overwhelming?

RESPONDENT2: I think just over the time-span and the geographic area that it covered. I try to look at art and put it in some historical and geographic context, and I was jumping all over the map.

INTERVIEWER: Did you feel as though that was a problem?

RESPONDENT2: No.

RESPONDENT: All over the map and time.

INTERVIEWER: Would you have structured it differently?

RESPONDENT2: Part of what I liked about it was that it wasn't what I expected, which would have been looking at one artist's work over a 25 to 50-year period.

RESPONDENT: It was more thematic than linear.

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INTERVIEWER: What would you say you walked out with – the biggest theme you'd take from it?

RESPONDENT2: An appreciation of how universal art is. When I've studied art, it's been from a European perspective. That's why I enjoy coming to this museum so much. We've been here many times. It opens my eyes.

RESPONDENT: For me it was the variety of media and styles. This is probably not a politically correct thing to say, but I think I expected more uniformity. I didn't think about photographs in the context of Eastern art. It wasn't something that connected in my head.

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel as though the introduction room set the stage for the exhibit?

RESPONDENT: No, but I liked it. There was Japanese, Chinese, and Persian.

RESPONDENT2: It didn't hit you as a gate, it hit me as being more climactic. I just looked at it and thought it was beautiful and then filed it aside and looked at the rest of the exhibit.

RESPONDENT: It wasn't a table of contents.

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INTERVIEWER: What did you think about the exhibit?

RESPONDENT: Very beautiful, interesting, and had a lot of detail, in the garments. I wasn't quite sure of the general theme.

INTERVIEWER: Did you find that problematic in understanding the art together?

RESPONDENT: I looked at it as a visual experience at this point. Maybe I should have read the introduction, which explains the concept, but I didn't quite understand the concept, because there was all this mixed media kind of thing.

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about the fact that there were different cultures, it was mixed media and not chronologically ordered?

RESPONDENT: I felt it lacked a central theme.

INTERVIEWER: It didn't come together as a result?

RESPONDENT: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Would you have ordered it differently?

RESPONDENT: It depends on what you're trying to do, and maybe I just missed the point of what you're trying to do here.

INTERVIEWER: So walking out of the exhibit, what's the main thing you draw from it?

RESPONDENT: In different cultures, what is acceptable in doing a portrait varies, how much of the person you can actually expose.

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INTERVIEWER: What did you think about the exhibit? What about it did you enjoy?

RESPONDENT: I enjoyed it. It was very interesting. I liked the juxtaposition of different cultures.

INTERVIEWER: Was it a problem that it wasn't arranged chronologically? Mixed media?

RESPONDENT: I didn't think it was a problem either. Seemed to make sense in terms of what it was about.

RESPONDENT2: I liked the fact that it was mixed media, because in a whole room of little drawings and things you can tend to glaze over. That was an interesting aspect. I liked the show very much, and I liked the way things were displayed so that when you came around a corner you saw a huge Chinese general, and it really just took your breath away. There were several moments like that in the show that captured my emotional and aesthetic attention, and I really enjoyed that. I liked the dark background it was presented against. I didn't find any of the things you were concerned about. I thought the informational pieces beside the art were concise and very explanatory. The little things – like in the India drawing in three-quarter face compared to the profile – what's left made me want to go back and re-look. The curator did a nice job with the write-ups too.

INTERVIEWER: Were they too long?

RESPONDENT2: They were pretty short, or like a newspaper column, you could choose to stop reading wherever you wanted to.

RESPONDENT: It supplied a lot of useful information for interpreting the images.

RESPONDENT2: I would agree with that. I found that near the end there were two large portraits of the five family members and when you come around the corner there's a reading there, and it really goes with the Chinese portraits behind you. I found that oddly placed, but I could also see there wasn't room for it on the wall. I thought – this makes no sense at all. It was fun because I've seen pictures that I've only seen in reproduction.

INTERVIEWER: What did you come away from the exhibit with?

RESPONDENT: That different ways of portraiture can be approached, realistically or symbolically, and how different cultures have used it. To me that was really quite interesting.

RESPONDENT2: I thought the use of portraiture was different. I came away with individual snapshots in my mind, for instance, Issai and the poem was just really captivating to me – but then I like Japanese poetry. I will remember the big powerful images that came across and how much on some level we all like representation of the human form and the human face.

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INTERVIEWER: What did you think about the exhibit?

RESPONDENT: I liked it. I came here specifically to see it, because the style of Eastern art is very different than Western art, just the way they position themselves, like the Japanese self-portrait is very direct, which is unusual. It's a different culture in general, so I enjoy it a lot.

INTERVIEWER: You said earlier that it was very direct and frontal, the Japanese portrait. What did you come out of the exhibit thinking?

RESPONDENT: I got what I expected. I like Eastern art. I didn't know it was going to be this diverse, the selections you had, and some of them were modern stuff. A good impression I guess.

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INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about the layout of the exhibit?

RESPONDENT: I liked it. I like how it's kind of set up from the older stuff and seems to progress from the beginning to more modern as you go around.

INTERVIEWER: Did you feel as though that was a theme?

RESPONDENT: Yes. Was it supposed to be that way? Cause that's what I kinda got. I noticed that there is some mixture of older stuff, it just seemed that it had kind of a theme transcending from earlier to later in general. And the selection was very much, not just from different regions.

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INTERVIEWER: Is there something that you really remember that stuck with you as you left?

RESPONDENT: The way the art is different and what they concentrate on, as far as what they do. A lot about the very formal, almost as if the art itself is supposed to represent a strong sense of character, majesty and presence.

INTERVIEWER: Did you actually start in the entrance?

RESPONDENT: Yes, I went in the entrance and went all the way around. It's weird because you have that one way back there and then you come back around. I went and came back here.

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INTERVIEWER: How do you feel about having all the different cultures mixed together?

RESPONDENT: I was hoping to see a map as you walked in, a right to left from Egypt to Syria to – I was almost expecting to see that type of transition, yet here was this mixed Chinese and

Japanese, and I don't know if that was on purpose to catch the difference between those too, but I was expecting more of a linear flow.

INTERVIEWER: Did that work for you, or do you think a linear flow would have helped you more in understanding the exhibit?

RESPONDENT: I think it would have been a little bit useful if as you walked in you had a visual reference as to what parts of the world you are looking at. Obviously China and Japan are close, but those who aren't familiar with the geographic layout – it might have helped them understand as far as understanding more – these are Syrian, these are Egyptian, have a little bit better understanding of the relationship to the culture as far as the geographic aspects.

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INTERVIEWER: Did you feel as though each room came together with a theme?

RESPONDENT: I didn't get that. I was expecting more of a regional/cultural type, not the mixture. But I did not get any theme feel from it.

INTERVIEWER: So you didn't understand or it wasn't conveyed to you that each room was based around a theme and that these were supposed to work together?

RESPONDENT: No. I didn't get that feeling. I didn't take time to read – there were a lot of inscriptions as you walk into the room, as far as text on the wall, because I know that at the National Gallery as you walk into the exhibit, there will be a whole thing at the reception. Either I missed it, I wasn't looking for it, but I don't know if that was even available to put things into perspective.

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INTERVIEWER: Walking out of the exhibit, what is the one thing that you got from it?

RESPONDENT: I guess you come in here and have a preconception of Asian art, and I wasn't expecting to see sort of non-Asian portraiture in here, but how beautiful it all blended together. I think my favorites were the portraits of the Iranian women. That amazed me seeing that in here. I really enjoyed that. I love Asian art, I love 19th century Asian art. So, I loved the whole thing.

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel as though your ideas about Asian art and portraiture have been influenced by this exhibit?

RESPONDENT: Yes, definitely, because I'm familiar with a lot of the kind of flat, very Asian, and I was amazed to see the depth, the texture, and yet the kind of flat portraiture at the same time. I was just loved seeing how that was played with through the different cultures.

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INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about it being a trans-Asian exhibit?

RESPONDENT: It reminds me that all of these people lived or existed at the same time on this earth and that they weren't separate and distinct. I like seeing that kind of mixing – it helps me to realize that and reminds me of that.

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INTERVIEWER: What would you say is the biggest thing you walked out of the exhibit with? Did it influence ideas of Asian art or portraiture you had before?

RESPONDENT: It reminded me that portraits are subject to all kinds of filters and have different purposes, whether it's to show actual reality or religion or hope to obtain merit. It can't be neutral. Just by fact of being there, it innately seems to have a purpose.

INTERVIEWER: So that's what you drew the most from?

RESPONDENT: Yes. That all of us have our own filters that we look at things through, and it's very hard to lose those filters, or you can accept those filters and enjoy them as they are, and just seeing how the culture shaped these portraits, how the times and so on – I found that enjoyable.

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INTERVIEWER: Walking out, what would you say is the main thing that you drew from it?  
RESPONDENT: Portraiture from Asia over time is a lot more naturalistic [than I realized] and really shows the particulars of all the different faces. I thought it was more stylized, and it was more about the symbols around the person, but I thought the faces were very naturalistic and showed a lot more of what the person might have looked like.

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INTERVIEWER: The large wall introductions?

RESPONDENT: I find that helpful and interesting and gives a nice summary. It's also helpful any time a curator introduces what they are trying to do, because you can take the same collection, make different choices, arrange them in a different sequence and make a different point, so it's nice to confess what you're up to.

INTERVIEWER: What was the point for you that the curators were making?

RESPONDENT: One of the fundamental differences between the East and West is the notion of the individual and what role the individual plays. In the West and, by the way, this can be seen from the very beginnings of Jericho in 8000 BC where they're rebuilding skulls and they try to rebuild them according to the identity of the person who died. It's not uncommon to rebuild skulls, but most people rebuild them showing tribal markings to identify them with a group. The West has always been transfixed by the idea of the individual. But the individual has to have some place particularly in aristocratic settings, so the problem becomes – how do we show a person idealized and at the same time the person? The image of the Pharaoh is the perfect example of that. There are others throughout here, the Empress (or the about to be Empress) with maybe a bit too much white powder on her face. That disguises her but also identifies her. So the tension between an individual and a member of a group and the tension between the East and the West in that sense, because as the West influences the East, that individual person as you can see that Japanese artist in that self-portrait – he uses Durer to inspire him towards this much more identifiable individual self. And of course photography does that, but you'll notice that the photograph of the boy is a generic photography – so instead of me it's us. And I think that's what they were trying to do, and I think they did it.

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INTERVIEWER: Did you enjoy it overall?

RESPONDENT: I enjoyed this exhibit for the perspective that it's presenting.

INTERVIEWER: How do you mean perspective?

RESPONDENT: Well, we see portraits all the time; you take it for granted. But I've always known, unarticulated, that it's however the painter paints it or how the sitter wants it, and even with my taking pictures with my family members, you know how. So, there's always a little bit of the perception of the artist and also how the person wants to be portrayed. It just presents another dimension, how to approach it, how to view it and putting that into a perspective. I just came back from Charlottesville a few weeks ago, and I went to the Lee Chapel, and there was this beautiful picture of Robert E Lee, and she was saying, "Oh he just looks so benevolent and kind." And I had to step back from that perspective because his portrait indeed was very father-like, and yet, if you take it from a political standpoint, as benevolent as his portrait may be, he led these men in war...

INTERVIEWER: Did you see some of those juxtapositions where the nature of the portrait was maybe different from the history in this exhibit?

RESPONDENT: I took a couple of pictures after I found out that I could. The Chinese Dowager, and how she actually posed in the lotus garden one. I'd seen it before, but I didn't know the explanation, how she staged that to be a goddess. That was actually a positive image among the people who saw this picture.

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INTERVIEWER: Overall, how did you like the exhibit?

RESPONDENT: On a scale of 1-5, I would say 3.5.

INTERVIEWER: Care to explain?

RESPONDENT: I think there were some outstanding pieces in the show, I liked the mixture of contemporary and historical. The number of first rank major masterpieces is the reason I ranked 3.5. Not all the pieces are of equal quality in my eyes. I appreciate the curatorial effort to give a broad diverse view of the subject, which is the theme. It was a piece by piece experience. They are not all at the same level of quality.

INTERVIEWER: How do you feel they tied into the theme?

RESPONDENT: The theme was portraiture in the East, the East being from Middle East (Egypt) to the Far East. There were some liberties taken with the theme – the coins, the hunt. I guess it's representation of the figure as opposed to portraiture. I think it adhered to the theme of the project by the title.

INTERVIEWER: Are you the type of person who comes to see rare or beautiful objects?

RESPONDENT: Yes. I'm an artist, so I come to lots of shows. I tend to kind of zip through and only spend time with the pieces that are most interesting. It's totally subjective.

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INTERVIEWER: What did you think of it?

RESPONDENT: I thought it was interesting. I thought the text was a little infantile for the Smithsonian.

INTERVIEWER: How so?

RESPONDENT: I thought it sounded like it was addressed to children.

INTERVIEWER: What were you looking for in the text?

RESPONDENT: I would have been interested in more about the people and more about the artists.

INTERVIEWER: Did you read the laminated cards next to the paintings?

RESPONDENT: Yes. They were ok. Again, that seems more like something for kids.

INTERVIEWER: So it didn't answer your questions?

RESPONDENT: It answered some of them.

INTERVIEWER: In general, did you pick up on the themes being discussed in the exhibit?

RESPONDENT: I think so. It was an exploration of what people are trying express about themselves in portraits and what other people are trying to express about them.

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**Smithsonian Institution**

Office of Policy and Analysis

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