

Through Visitors' Eyes

A Study of Visitor Responses to
*African Vision: The Walt Disney-Tishman
African Art Collection*
At the National Museum of African Art



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FOREWORD

African Vision: The Walt Disney-Tishman African Art Collection is a powerful exhibition that features more than 80 objects from one of the nation's—and the world's—most significant collections of African art, in a beautifully designed display environment that enhances the experience of the art for visitors. Numerous supplementary information resources are also on offer in exhibition, to deepen visitors' understanding and appreciation of the context in which the art was created and subsequently collected. The physical exhibition is complemented by a scholarly catalogue and an excellent online exhibition.

This is not the first National Museum of African Art exhibition for which the Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) has explored visitor responses, but the results of this study suggest it is one of the most successful with visitors. NMAfA Director Sharon Patton and her staff are to be commended for their commitment to defining, understanding, and effectively communicating with their audience. I wish to thank her for entrusting this important research to OP&A.

I also wish to thank the OP&A personnel who contributed to this project. Staff members Lance Costello, James Smith, and Ioana Munteanu all contributed to creating the survey instrument, administering the survey, and writing/editing the final report. In addition, Lance and James conducted qualitative interviews and analyzed the interview findings;

Ioana analyzed the survey data. OP&A interns Marilyn Reis and Alison Drury conducted qualitative interviews, and Alison and her fellow intern Hilary Friedman assisted with survey administration.

Carole M.P. Neves
Director
Smithsonian Office of
Policy and Analysis



INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

From February 15, 2007 through September 7, 2008, the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art (NMAfA) hosted *African Vision: The Walt Disney-Tishman African Art Collection*, featuring more than 80 pieces from one of the world's great collections of African art. Donated to NMAfA in 2005 by the Walt Disney Corporation, the Disney-Tishman Collection includes a multitude of unique and rare works of traditional art from throughout sub-Saharan Africa, and has been instrumental in defining the field of African art history for a generation of African art scholars and enthusiasts. *African Vision* was the first full-sized exhibition of Collection works at NMAfA since this generous gift was made.

The exhibition was divided into three main areas. A small introductory room contained several unusual works that illustrated Paul Tishman's bold taste as a collector, as well as three plasma display screens that scrolled through video collages of African art, culture, and landscapes, respectively. This room was flanked on the left by a medium-sized room that hinted at the depth of the Collection in one particular area, and on the right by a large

gallery that showcased the breadth of the Collection with a wide variety of masks and sculptures from numerous African cultures.

African Vision offered a variety of information and education resources to visitors, including a number of art catalogues for reference, “big picture” wall text, individual object labels, and two published handouts, available in racks at both entrances to the exhibition. The first handout was a small, glossy fold-out brochure that shared a title with the exhibition, and that offered a brief descriptive overview of the Collection; a timeline showing when African art found its way into European artistic sensibilities and providing a terse history of the Disney-Tishman collection; and several photographs of Collection objects, with identification. The second handout was a larger, matte-finish booklet aimed primarily at families with children that offered a number of educational activities and short pedagogical essays based on pieces on display in the exhibition.

In terms of the perennial question of balancing aesthetics and cultural context in NMAfA’s presentation of African art, *African Vision* occupied a middle ground between the extremes represented by context-heavy exhibitions such as *Where Gods and Mortals Meet* and aesthetic presentations such as *Treasures*. Labels and wall text provided basic background on the history of the Collection and the cultural milieus in which the objects were created and used.

In the summer of 2007, NMAfA senior management approached the Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) to request a visitor study of *African Vision*. NMAfA leaders were particularly interested in the following questions:

- ❖ Who is visiting *African Vision*, and why? What are the demographics of exhibition visitors, and how many have a specific interest in African art or cultures?
- ❖ Is the exhibition drawing new visitors to the Museum? If so, what do these visitors look like, demographically?
- ❖ How do visitors respond to the various information resources available in the exhibition? Are they getting enough information?
- ❖ What kind of experiences (aesthetic, education, emotional, and so on) do visitors have in the exhibition? How do differences in experiences correlate with other differences, such as race/ethnicity, first-time versus repeat visitor status, and different overall satisfaction ratings with the exhibition?
- ❖ What did visitors like about the show? Where did they see weaknesses and the need for improvement?
- ❖ On the whole, how satisfied were visitors with the show?

To answer these questions and gain other insights into how visitors saw *African Vision*, this study used two main research methods:

- ❖ A survey of a random sample of visitors exiting the exhibition through both the main entrance and the secondary entrance adjacent to the NMAfA museum shop. Visitors completed 500 self-administered survey questionnaires, with a response rate of 82 percent. Frequencies of responses to questions on the survey are provided in Appendix A.
- ❖ In-depth qualitative interviews with visitors within the exhibition. Most of these were undertaken prior to the survey for the purpose of informing its content. The OP&A study team conducted 21 interviews, involving a total of 24 people. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed by the study team to search for common themes and well-articulated insights.

In addition, members of the study team inspected comment books in which exhibition visitors were invited to write their thoughts and reactions to the show.¹

¹ As a general rule, comment-book entries must be considered with caution, because they tend to disproportionately represent the views of visitors with strongly positive or strongly negative opinions. However, bearing this caveat in mind, the study team found that comment-book entries did tend to reinforce the major points suggested by analyses of the survey data and qualitative interviews. See Appendix C for transcribed comment book entries.



FINDINGS: SURVEY

The OP&A study team developed a survey designed to assess visitors' satisfaction with *African Vision*, elicit their opinions on the information resources provided in the exhibition, and draw out their suggestions for improvements. The survey also asked respondents to complete a series of questions on their backgrounds, demographics, and experiences in the exhibition.²



Visitor Demographics

The demographic characteristics of visitors to *African Vision* were similar to those identified a few years earlier (summer 2004) for visitors to NMAfA as a whole.³ The most notable exception was that a higher percentage of *African Vision* survey respondents

² To check for response bias, the study team separately looked at demographic characteristics of visitors who completed the survey and those who refused. Visitors living outside the Washington DC metro area were slightly more likely to refuse to complete the survey; for all other demographic characteristics (gender, age, group composition), visitors who refused were similar to those who completed the survey.

³ See the OP&A report *Results of the 2004 Smithsonian-wide Survey of Museum Visitors*, October 2004. Available online at http://www.si.edu/opanda/Reports/Reports/SI2004_Survey_Booklet.pdf.

were white, and a correspondingly lower percentage were African-American. Table 1 compares the demographics of *African Vision* respondents to the demographics of NMAfA visitors in the summer of 2004.

Table 1. Visitor Demographics
African Vision (summer 2007) vs. NMAfA (summer 2004)
 (percent)

| | <i>African Vision</i> | NMAfA 2004 | | <i>African Vision</i> | NMAfA 2004 |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--|-----------------------|------------|
| Gender | | | Are you of Latino/Hispanic origin? | | |
| Female | 62 | 63 | No | 92 | 92 |
| Male | 38 | 37 | Yes | 8 | 8 |
| Age | | | Race/ethnicity (Mark one or more) | | |
| Millennials (12-18) | 6 | NA ^a | African American/ Black | 33 | 46 |
| Generation Y (19-29) | 21 | 29 ^a | American Indian or Alaskan Native | 1 | 3 |
| Generation X (30-40) | 18 | 21 | Asian American/ Asian | 8 | 8 |
| Trailing Baby Boom (41-51) | 22 | 24 | Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander | 1 | 1 |
| Leading Baby Boom (52-60) | 21 | 15 | White | 59 | 46 |
| Post War (61 and over) | 13 | 11 | | | |
| Where do you live? | | | What is the highest degree/level of school you completed? (25 and over) | | |
| Washington DC metro area ^b | 23 | 20 | High school graduate or less | 4 | 6 |
| Southeast | 21 | 28 | One or more years of college | 11 | 9 |
| Mid Atlantic | 16 | 13 | Associate degree | 5 | 8 |
| Midwest | 9 | 9 | Batchelor's degree | 24 | 28 |
| New England | 4 | 3 | Graduate/professional degree | 56 | 49 |
| Mountain Plains | 7 | 4 | | | |
| West | 9 | 10 | With whom are you visiting this exhibition today? ^d | | |
| Other US | 4 | NA ^c | Alone | 33 | |
| Other Country | 8 | 14 | With others | 61 | |
| | | | I am with school/organized group | 7 | |

- a. In the 2004 NMAfA survey, Millennials were included in the Generation Y group.
- b. Considered local visitors.
- c. "Other US" not presented as a separate category in 2004 data.
- d. Question not asked in a comparable way in the 2004 NMAfA survey.



Visitor Background

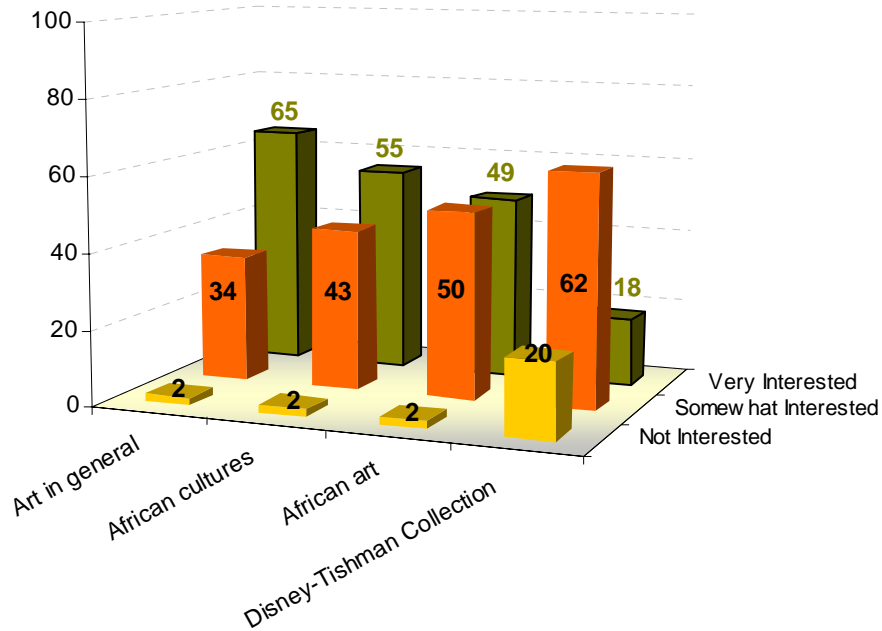
Most survey respondents (74 percent) were visiting NMAfA for the first time. About three in ten of these first-time visitors (28 percent) said they came to the Museum specifically to see the *African Vision* exhibition. The percentage of first-time visitors

who came specifically to see *African Vision* (to whom we will refer as *exhibition-specific first-time visitors*) was higher than for other NMAfA exhibitions on which OP&A has survey data.

Most visitors (59 percent) heard about the exhibition during their visit to the Museum on the day when they were surveyed. “Friends, family, colleagues” (word of mouth) was the next-most-common way that visitors heard about the exhibition (17 percent).

A large majority of respondents (65 percent) said they were *very interested* in “art in general.” About half were *very interested* in “African cultures” (55 percent) and “African art” (49 percent). Only 18 percent reported being *very interested* in the Disney-Tishman Collection specifically. (See Figure 1)

Figure 1. How Interested Are You in the Following?
(Percent)



Regarding respondents’ familiarity with African art and cultures, three in four (76 percent) said they had read books about African art/cultures. About two in five (38 percent) said they had studied African art/cultures/history; about a third (33 percent) had traveled or lived in Africa; and a small minority (8 percent) had professional or business ties to Africa.



Satisfying Experiences

When asked to choose from a list of ten possible experiences the ones that they found especially satisfying in the *African Vision* exhibition, the following four were selected by half or more of the respondents:

- Learning about African art/cultures (61 percent)
- Getting a feel for African art/cultures (58 percent)
- Appreciating the diversity of African art/cultures (53 percent)
- Being moved by the beauty of African art (51 percent)

When asked which of the ten listed experiences was *most* satisfying to them, a plurality of respondents (about one in six—16 percent) marked “Being moved by the beauty of African art.”



Information Resources

African Vision offered a variety of resources—such as exhibition guides and brochures, text panels, object labels, reference books, display screens, and docent tours—to provide visitors with information about the Disney-Tishman Collection, the individual pieces of art on display, and the context in which the art was developed or used. NMAfA staff was especially interested in how many visitors used these resources, whether they found them valuable, and in some cases, how they used them.

As expected, some information sources were more likely to be used than others. The plasma display screens and introductory text panel were both used by a large majority of visitors (72 percent each). About half said they used the handout brochure *African Vision* (49 percent) and the reference books inside the exhibition (46 percent). About two in five (40 percent) indicated that they picked up the handout guide booklet *Explore!* And about one in five (22 percent) took a docent tour. (See Figure 2, next page.)

Visitors who used the information resources available in the exhibition tended to find them useful. On a three-point scale of *not useful*, *useful*, and *very useful*, none of these resources was rated *not useful* by more than a small minority of respondents who used it. The introductory text panel and docent tours were rated *very useful* by over half of their users; the reference books, plasma screens, and *African Vision* handout brochure were rated *very useful* by around half of their users. (See Figure 3, next page)

Figure 2. Visitors Using Information Resources
(Percent)

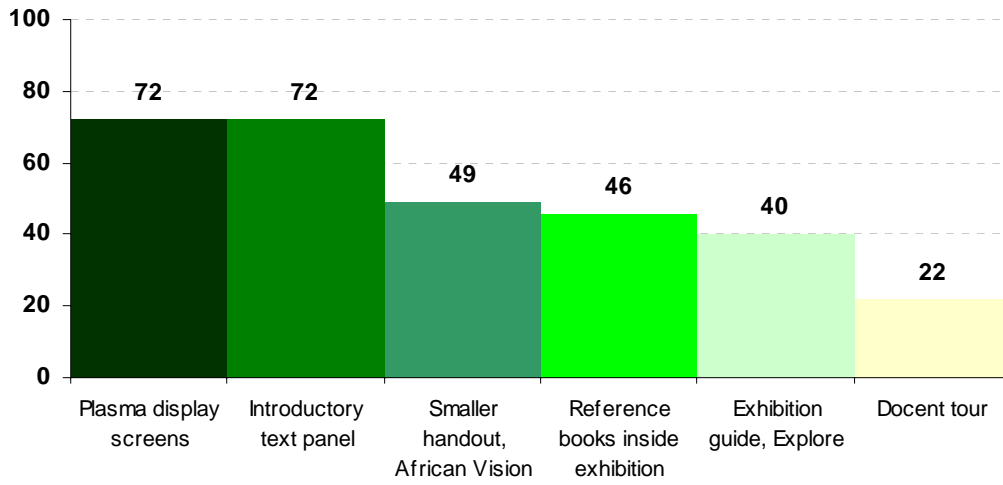
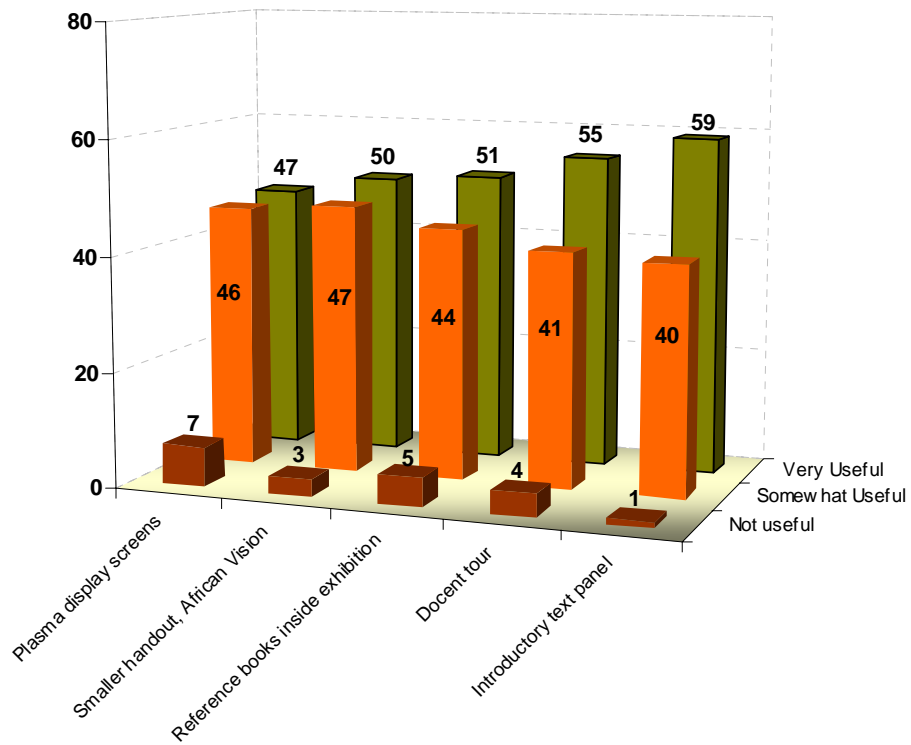


Figure 3. How Useful Did You Find the Following in the Exhibition?
(Percent of those using resource)



The Guide Explore!

The handout family exhibition guide *Explore!* was available in racks at both exhibition entrances. Two in five survey respondents (40 percent) picked up *Explore!* Of these, essentially all (99 percent) said they planned to take it home, about half (49 percent) said they used it in the exhibition, and nine in ten (87 percent) said they planned to use it at home.

Respondents who took the *Explore!* guide were *more* likely to be visitors who...

- ❖ Came to NMAfA specifically to see *African Vision*
- ❖ Thought there was “too little information” in the exhibition
- ❖ Also used the handout brochure *African Vision* and reference books
- ❖ Were African-American
- ❖ Were part of the Leading Edge Baby Boom generation

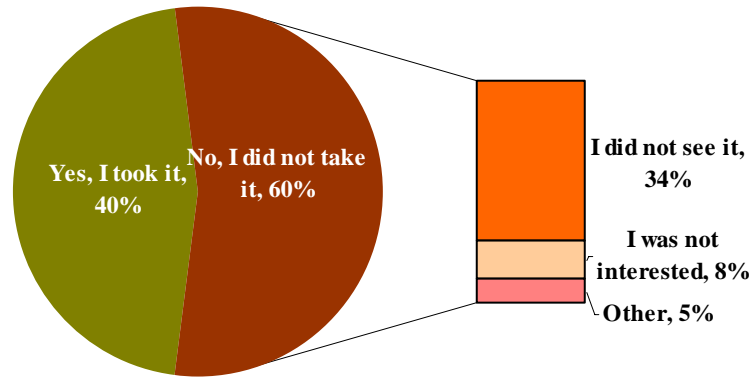
They were *less* likely to be visitors who ...

- ❖ Thought there was “just the right amount of information” in the exhibition
- ❖ Were white

Among respondents who did *not* pick up *Explore!* about three in four (72 percent, or 34 percent of all visitors) said they did not see it; only 17 percent (8 percent of all visitors) said they were not interested in it. Eleven percent (5 percent of all visitors) gave other reasons for not taking the guide.⁴ (See Figure 4, next page)

⁴ Thirteen percent of visitors who said they did not take the guide did not answer the question “Why not?”

Figure 4. Did You Take the Guide *Explore!* (If Not, Why?)



Labels

Visitors were also specifically asked their opinions of the exhibition's labels. With regard to content, responses were favorable: three quarters of respondents (74 percent) said the labels offered "just the right amount of information," one in six (15 percent) felt they gave too little information, and only a tiny minority (1 percent) suggested that they contained too much information.

With regard to appearance as well, very few visitors had complaints. Twelve percent found the type size too small, while 4 percent said there was "not enough contrast between text and background."



Visitor Satisfaction

Overall Rating

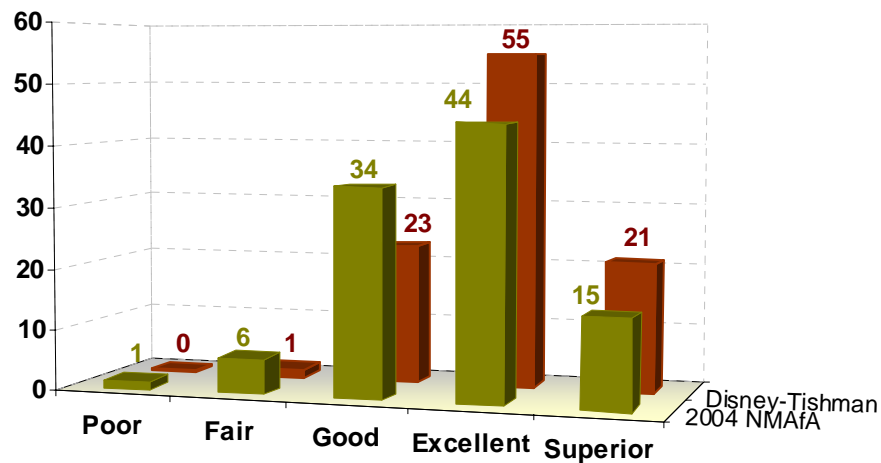
African Vision received the highest satisfaction ratings on any survey OP&A has conducted at NMAfA. Three out of four respondents rated it either *superior* (21 percent) or *excellent* (55 percent), the top two categories on the five-point satisfaction scale used by OP&A (*poor, fair, good, excellent, superior*). Moreover, it received significantly higher ratings than the Museum as a whole received in the summer of 2004. (See Figure 5, next page)

A higher percentage of respondents in the following categories gave *African Vision* a *superior* rating:

- ❖ Repeat visitors to NMAfA (30 percent of whom rated the exhibition *superior*);

- ❖ Those who reported having the following satisfying experiences: “Learning about African Art/cultures” (24 percent); “Reflecting on the meaning of the art and its symbolism” (28 percent); “Enriching my understanding of African art/cultures” (26 percent); and “Being moved by the beauty of African art/cultures” (28 percent);
- ❖ Older visitors (those who rated the exhibition *superior* were, on average, seven years older than those who did not);
- ❖ Those who marked a higher *number* of satisfying experiences (those who rated the exhibition *superior* chose 5.1 experiences on average, compared with 4.3 among those who rated it *excellent*, and 3.6 for those who rated it less than *excellent*).

Figure 5. Visitor Satisfaction Ratings
African Vision (summer 2007) and NMAfA (summer 2004)
 (Percent)



By contrast, those who thought the exhibition offered “too little information” were less likely to rate the exhibition *superior*—just 14 percent of these visitors rated it *superior*.

Those who chose certain experiences as their *most* satisfying ones in the exhibition were also more likely to rate the exhibition *superior*. One third (33 percent) of the respondents who selected “Being moved by the beauty of African art” as their *most* satisfying experience rated the exhibition *superior*,⁵ as did 27 percent of those who selected

⁵ In general, “Being moved by the beauty of African art” appeared to be a particularly important satisfying experience. Fifty percent of respondents chose it as a satisfying experience; 16 percent chose it as the most satisfying experience; and a third of those who had it as a satisfying experience rated the exhibition as a whole *superior*.

“Learning about African art/culture” and 27 percent of those who selected “Looking at rare/valuable/authentic art.”

Lack of interest in picking up the exhibition guide *Explore!* was found to correlate with *lower* overall satisfaction ratings: 40 percent of respondents in this category rated the exhibition *good* or less

Exhibition Design

Visitors rated the exhibition’s design very highly—over a quarter of respondents (26 percent) gave it a *superior* rating.

Those who rated the exhibition design *superior* tended to choose a greater number of satisfying experiences in the exhibition, and were more likely to say they had the following satisfying experiences: “Learning about African art/culture,” “Feeling a personal connection with the places/peoples of Africa,” “Enriching my understanding of African art/culture,” “Being moved by the beauty of African art,” and “Appreciating the diversity of African art/cultures.”

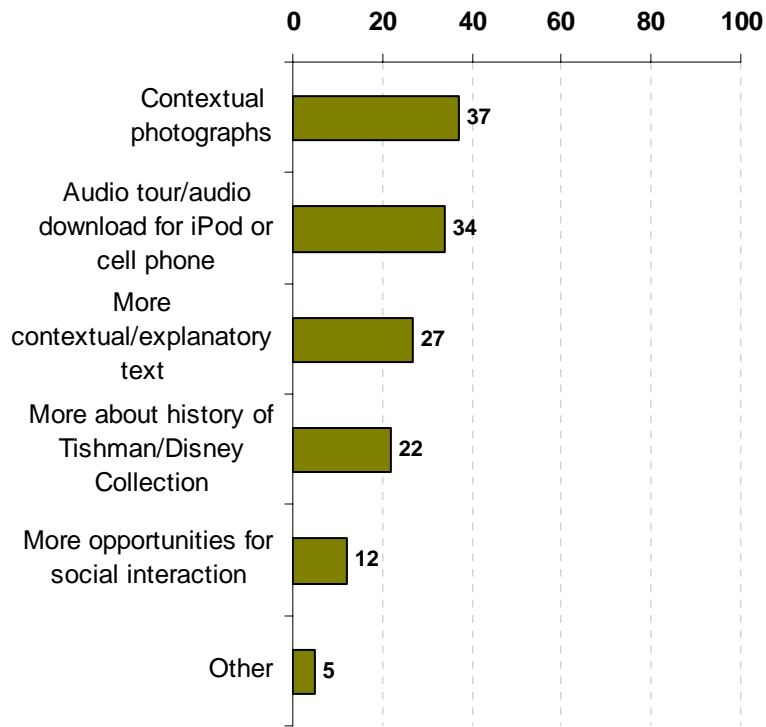
Interestingly, respondents who rated the exhibition design *superior* also were more likely to indicate their experience would have been enhanced by an audio tour. They were also more likely to find the *African Vision* brochure, reference books, and plasma display screens *very useful*, and to rate the exhibition as a whole *superior*.



Suggested Improvements

Many respondents indicated that more contextual or explanation information would have enhanced their experience in *African Vision*. Close to two in five (37 percent) selected “more contextual photographs” as a desirable improvement; about a third (34 percent) would have liked an audio tour; and about a quarter opted for more explanatory text (27 percent) and more information on the history of the Collection itself (22 percent). (See Figure 6, next page)

Figure 6. Which of the Following Would Have Enhanced Your Visit to This Exhibition?
(Percent)



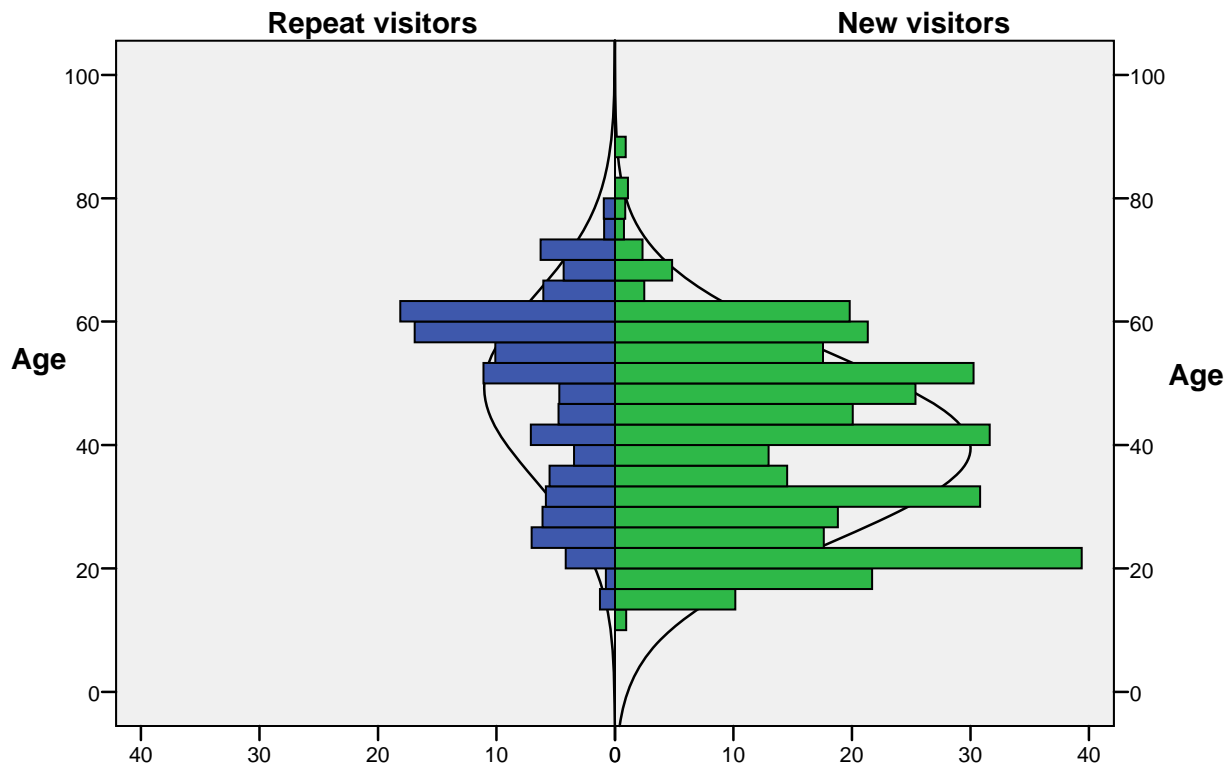
Analysis of Sub-groups

First-Time vs. Repeat Visitors

The study team compared the responses of first-time visitors to NMAfA with those of repeat visitors, to see how the views of these two groups differed. (See Appendix B, Table B-1.)

Differences in the demographic characteristics of the two groups were similar to what might be expected. Repeat visitors were more likely to be locals, and were ten years older on average. (See Figure 7) Specifically, repeat visitors were more likely to belong to the Baby Boom Generation while the new visitors were more likely to belong to Generation Y. First-time visitors were slightly more likely to indicate residing in countries other than the United States.

Figure 7. Age Distribution of Repeat vs. First Time Visitors⁶



Differences in interests were similarly as expected. Repeat visitors reported having more connections to Africa than new visitors; they were more likely to have traveled or lived in Africa and to have studied African art, cultures, and history. Repeat visitors were more likely to be *very interested* in art in general, African art, African culture, and the Disney-Tishman Collection.

Repeat visitors were more likely to have heard about the exhibition from newspaper articles, and a higher percentage of them went through *African Vision* alone. They were more likely than other visitors to choose an audio tour as a desirable improvement, and also more likely to rate the exhibition *superior*.

As one might expect, first-time visitors were more likely to have first heard about the exhibition while visiting the museum. More surprisingly, first-time visitors were also more likely to have heard about the exhibition from friends, family, or colleagues. New visitors who did *not* pick up the guide were more likely than repeat visitors to say this was because they did not see it. (By contrast, a higher percentage of the repeat visitors reported not being interested in the guide.)

⁶ Visitors younger than 12 years of age were not eligible for this study.

African American Visitors

African Americans constituted about one third of the *African Vision* survey respondents, and their opinions were of special interest to the study team. (See Appendix B, Table B-2.)

Demographically, when compared to other surveyed visitors, African Americans stand out as being on average six years younger (39 years old). They were almost twice as likely as non-African American visitors to be *very interested* in African art and African cultures, and more likely to have studied African art/culture/history. (Non-African American visitors were more likely, however, to have traveled or lived in Africa.)

Almost half the African Americans respondents came to the museum specifically to see the *African Vision* exhibition—well over twice the rate of other respondents. They were more likely to have heard about it through word of mouth and less likely to be visiting the exhibition by themselves.

African Americans' overall satisfaction ratings were similar to those of other visitors. However, they indicated having different satisfying experiences during their visit. African-American respondents were more likely to select “Feeling a personal connection with the places/people of Africa,” “Spending time with friends and family,” and “Imagining myself in another time and place.” Among African-American respondents, the experience most likely to be selected as *most* satisfying was “Appreciating the diversity of African Art/cultures.” (By contrast, non-African American respondents were more likely to choose “Getting a feel for African art/cultures” and “Being moved by the beauty of African art” as satisfying experiences, and were most likely to choose the latter as their *most* satisfying experience.)

Another interesting difference was that African-Americans were most likely to choose “More about history of Disney-Tishman Collection” and “More opportunities for social interaction” as desirable improvements, while others favored “More contextual photographs.”

Exhibition-Specific and General First-Time Visitors

Among first-time visitors to NMAfA, the study team separated examined the responses of those who came specifically to see the exhibition (*exhibition-specific first-time visitors*) and those who did not (*general first-time visitors*). (See Appendix B, Tables B-3 and B-4.)

Exhibition-specific first-time visitors were most likely to have heard about the exhibition from friends, family, and colleagues. They were much more likely than other visitors to

pick up the *African Vision* and *Explore!* handouts, to look at the plasma display screens, and to choose an audio tour as a desirable improvement; they were less likely to mark that the labels had “just the right amount of information.” In terms of demographics, they were more likely to be members of Generation X, more likely to be African-American (fully half of exhibition-specific first-time visitors were black), and less likely to visit alone. In terms of interests, they were more likely to have studied African art/culture/history and to be *very interested* in African art, African cultures, and the Disney-Tishman Collection itself. Finally, in terms of experiences, they were more likely to mark “Reflecting on the meaning of the art and its symbolism” as a satisfying experience.

General first-time visitors—new visitors who were not in the Museum specifically to see *African Vision*—were less likely to be African-American and to report being very interested in art in general or African art or cultures. They were more likely to be visiting alone, to be members of Generation Y or Trailing Baby Boomers, to report using the guide *Explore!* in the exhibition, and to mark as a satisfying experience “getting a feel for African art/cultures.”



FINDINGS: QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

The study team talked to 24 visitors to the *African Vision* exhibition in a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews. In addition to identifying issues to be covered in the survey, these interviews sought to probe the feelings and thoughts of *African Vision* visitors more deeply than would be possible through survey responses, and to get some insight into questions that could not be addressed adequately through a structured survey. Although results obtained in this way cannot be generalized to the larger population of exhibition visitors, interviewees' comments raised some interesting issues and provided richer insight into how some visitors perceived the exhibition.

Generally, the study team found visitors to the *African Vision* exhibition to be similar in their ideas and backgrounds to visitors interviewed over the past several years at other NMAfA exhibitions.⁷ As in other studies, the more thoughtful interviewees tended to be

⁷ See the OP&A studies of *BIG/small*, *African Art Now*, *Where Gods and Mortals Meet*, *Treasures*, and *Playful Performers*. All available online at <http://www.si.edu/opanda/>.

those who had some previous exposure to African art and cultures, African Americans who had come to explore their own cultural heritage, and visitors with a general interest in art who had found their way into NMAfA's galleries.



Theme

NMAfA staff were interested in whether visitors picked up on the loose thematic arrangement of the exhibition by room, detailed in the background section above. For the visitors to whom the study team talked, the short answer appears to be “no.” When queried about themes, some interviewees offered some tentative ideas, but the thematic division by room was not recognized by anyone to whom the study team spoke:

OP&A: Did you pick up on any underlying themes in the exhibition?

Visitor: Well, there were a lot of things that were used in a ceremonial rituals and ceremonies. I'd say that was a theme.

OP&A: What did you think the theme was?

Visitor: Male and female poses. Sculpture.

OP&A: Did you understand the difference between the three rooms? Did you see different ideas being presented in the three rooms?

Visitor: Not really.

OP&A: What would you say the overall theme was?

Visitor: I don't know. Wasn't the big thing kind of “everyday life,” —just a lot of carvings of women and child and things that people used when they had visitors come...? Just kind of everyday life things. ... I don't remember much on war and big things like that—just everyday life and home.

Indeed, most interviewees appeared to be uninterested in searching for thematic threads, but rather saw *African Vision* as an exhibition to be enjoyed mainly for the art and craftsmanship of the objects:

I'd say that the art's the draw—just the way it looks. I didn't see too many themes from a cultural perspective.

They were obviously virtually all [examples of] fine craftsmanship from various periods. But I wasn't able—or hadn't spent enough time, at least—to go through and try to figure out what's in that room versus this room versus that room.



The Collection

The gift of the Disney-Tishman Collection to the Smithsonian was a big story in DC media coverage of cultural issues, and the study team was interested in how this publicity affected visitors to the exhibition. Some interviewees were indeed drawn to *African Vision* out of a sense of curiosity aroused by the media coverage, rather than by an abiding interest in art or Africa:

OP&A: *Do you have a particular interest in African art?*

Visitor: *Not really. I really wanted to see this collection, because I had heard so much about it. ...*

OP&A: *And now that you've seen it, did it pique your interest in African art at all...?*

Visitor: *[Long pause] A little bit. I'd say it more educated me, because I didn't really know anything.*

OP&A: *Why did you come to this museum today?*

Visitor: *I had seen some earlier publicity about this show—I think in the **New York Times**, a while ago.*

The study team did not talk to anyone who had been drawn in by the “Disney” name on the assumption that the exhibition had something to do with the creations of Walt Disney Studios. In fact, the only time this issue came up at all was when it was mentioned by a visitor who was extremely relieved to find that such a connection did *not* exist:

My first thought was, “Disney—Oh, no!” [Laughs] But it wasn't Disney. I was real grateful for that!

Visitors did not make many explicit references to the story of the Collection in interviews. However, one interviewee did note:

In some ways I would like to know more about the Tishmans and their reasons and how they went about it. ... I know the front panel describes some of that, but I would like to have more detail about how and why [they built the Collection], and whether they also made later trips to Africa, and what was going on there.

It should also be noted that a few people who were familiar with the size and range of the Collection were slightly disappointed that only a small fraction of it was on display, although they appreciated the logistical constraints that dictated this:

I wouldn't recommend putting all 500 pieces out, unless you had a much larger area, because you lose the perspective and you can't really walk around them to see all sides of them. ... But hopefully, you'll show the others at some point.



The Art

Interviewees overwhelmingly offered favorable comments on the art itself. For several, seeing this art with their own eyes was clearly a very powerful and moving experience—whether in terms of the aesthetics, or in terms of some deeper, non-cognitive appreciation hinted at by descriptives such as “overwhelming,” “breathtaking,” “striking,” “gripping,” and “touching.” Several visitors—including several who were clearly very familiar with African art—were particularly impressed with the variety of art on display, and the rare or unusual character of some pieces:

Everyone's seen African masks, [but] there are a lot of different types [here] I've never seen before. ... You usually see a lot from West African, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire; and you'll see a lot from Kenya, Tanzania. But you don't see much like the stuff from the Congo.

One of the things that impressed me is that there are peoples [represented here] that I didn't know about. Senufo pieces, I'm familiar with. But the Wee people, I've never heard of. And there are many others whose works are represented here that I've never heard of.

One thing that struck me was the four headed [mask]. I'd never seen anything quite like that. ... [Also] the Bamaleke mask that's there against the wall; it's really unusual and interesting.

I thought it was amazing to see so many pieces in one exhibit. It's really comprehensive. There are many different types of art; that was interesting.

Other singled out the craftsmanship of the objects on display as especially compelling, in some cases expressing a desire for more information on how they could have been crafted using relatively simple tools and techniques:

Back when these were done, they didn't have the modern tools that we have now. So to think of how you carve out the minute details on these things—it's like, “Wow; what did they use...?”

The craftsmanship is what interested me most—the delicate and the detailed carvings, in particular of the armlets, the ivory armlets. And the beadwork. Both of those represent enormously ... painstaking work.

The ivory bracelet over there is about as intricate a thing as I've seen in Hong Kong. And some of the other craftsmanship is really pretty interesting.

A couple of the ivory pieces are unbelievable in their intricacy. ... I mean, those little holes are all pierced very regularly throughout the piece—how do they do it? I'd love to have been there watching it.

Several interviewees were fascinated by the parallels they perceived between the art in *African Vision* and other types of art with which they were familiar, including but not limited to types of modern and contemporary art that are known to have been explicitly influenced by African art:

I know [African art] was important for 20th century modernism. It helped to begin 20th century modern art, so that's sort of what brought me here in the first place.

It always surprises me how much some of [this resembles] Alaskan native art and some of the American Indian native art. ... I guess it's because we're all humans and we all sort of have a little bit of the same perspective, even though we're from different cultures.

[These pieces] reminded me a little bit of much older Asian art. It looks like some exhibits I've seen of temple carvings from Southeast Asia in the 13th century. There was same sort of "bulkiness" to the figures.

The one piece over there, from the Congo—it was a crucifix. I thought that was really interesting because it was very African, but it had obvious European influences from the Portuguese.

A lot of it really reminds you of medieval [art]. And of course, the very modern [art] as well. Sort of the very old and the very new—you see the similarities. Just the stark lines and the abstractness. It especially reminds me of the medieval statues where the proportions are not accurate, and yet they're very evocative. You really see into that person or that figure, even though it's not realistic. ... For me, art is not too much about "accurate" representation. I mean, there is some beautiful art that is accurate and proportioned, but I don't think that's a quality that you necessarily have to have to have fine art.

Interviewees also frequently commented on the symbolism they perceived in the art—particularly the evocations of home, family, and hospitality—and how this symbolic dimension deepened their appreciation of the art:

I think [my favorite piece] was this female libation stand on the other side of the Madagascar funerary statue. ... That one struck me because it was very close to

home, personally. I pour libation in the African custom, and that's a libation bowl. The faces around the top represent the spirits that protect the family, in that they are looking in all directions. ... It just struck chord at the family level, the libation level, and several other things that I could relate to personally.

These masks represent a lot more than can just be gleaned from looking at the figures. They represent a lot of culture—in-depth lifestyles, in-depth family relationships.

I particularly liked the spoon—the ceremonial spoon. ... The description talked about hospitality and the willingness to receive visitors ... I like the overall aspect of what that represents.

[I particularly liked] the funerary statue here from Madagascar. ... The connection with the people—what it said about the warrior and various other things. The connection with the people and the culture.

I like the one, it looks like a big spoon, with a woman's figure on the top and they were saying that its used for [inaudible] dances and when they have visitors come; it represents the female providing food for the husband and guests. I thought that was kind of interesting.

Finally, several interviewees discussed how they connected personally, emotionally, or imaginatively with the art:

It gives me [as an African-American] a sense of pride in their ability and their creativity and their craftsmanship.

I got a real feel for the people, looking at these things. There were definitely some emotions pulled to the forefront. ... The conference I was at was the Children's Defense Fund, and we were talking about the children who are starving and dying in certain places in sub-Saharan Africa. I was looking at pieces from the Sudan, and thinking, "Gee; these are the very places where these kids I'm so concerned about come from. This is their culture." It was kind of sobering.

I know an African girl at [the school in New England where I teach], and one of the boys is first-generation African American. I've taught a little bit of African literature. So I'm looking at it as a way of seeing where those kids came from.

I've seen some [echoes] of [this kind of art] even with the current art in the black community.

I would have loved to have actually been there when they were creating this work. I do imagine that, because I've never been to Africa before. So just to be in that

environment—to actually see this stuff being done—would have been nice. To go back in time. [Laughs]



Contextual Information

An issue that hangs over every presentation of traditional African art, whether at NMAfA or elsewhere, is the extent to which art and culture should be balanced in the presentation. Should African art be presented as Western art is typically presented—to be appreciated on aesthetic and emotional terms? Or does the different social context in which most traditional African art is created justify a different mode of presentation that is more contextual and cognitive? Does information about the cultural use of African art objects deepen visitors' appreciation of them? Or does it in some sense demean the art, reducing it in visitors' eyes to mere artifact?

As with other shows at NMAfA that OP&A has studied, some interviewees had come to the exhibition because of an interest in the cultural dimension,⁸ others were clearly focused on the art itself, and many were interested in both culture and object—or happy to take whatever was on offer. A few of the more culturally-oriented visitors hinted that they found the contextual information a bit thin for their purposes:

I would like to see more cultural information on the various peoples represented. Because as I read the very brief descriptions, I became curious. I don't know as much about the art, and I'm not as much of a museum person, as my [companion]. But I study African history and African culture and travel to Africa for the purpose of learning the culture. So from that angle, I would be very curious as to more information from the various cultures represented here.

*It's not just the worshipping of lovely objects that you have here. ... I mean, the thing with these pieces here is that you don't see how they're used. And they **are** used; most of these things are used in some sort of fashion.*

I'd like to see more [contextual information] presented in the exhibition, because I'm planning to bring my three children to see the exhibition. And I'd like for the older two children, at least, to see more on the spot, and associate it right then and there with the artifacts that are presented here—as well as taking advantage of the website.

⁸ One of the more culturally-oriented visitors went so far as to comment:

I hesitate to call this “art,” because this was functional in its time. We regard it as art, but it had some other meaning for the people who created it.

However, others felt that the information available in the exhibition was appropriate—even some who were primarily interested in the cultural dimension:

It wasn't overdone or underdone. It was about right—for me, anyway.

I think the explanations are excellent. If you know nothing, you learn.

I didn't read all of the little descriptions, but the ones that I did read seemed pretty good—a good overview without getting too wordy. What it's made of, what context you find it in, what region of African it came from—which is pretty much all I need.

I'm a wall reader, so I read everything. I thought it was really pretty thorough. When I looked at a piece, I felt like I knew where it came from and what it had been used for and the time period and all the things that put it in context.

Indeed, at least a few visitors felt that cramming more information onto walls and labels might actually undermine the exhibition experience:

It's an art museum, so you don't want to try and take on too much. ... If you put in too much history and culture, it just gets overwhelming. ... You try to do too many things, and end up not doing anything well. So I think it's best if you just focus on the art. I mean, write up some good text—especially for the casual visitors, to get an idea of what's going on. But we're not taking a master's course in African art.

Some visitors also commented on other, less-traditional ways of conveying information that might be worthy of consideration—through electronic media or live performances. For example, the following exchange between two interviewees is quoted at length because of the insight it offers into how visitors value the former:

Visitor 1: *As many times as I have come to NMAfA, I've never had the opportunity to have an audio tour. The National Gallery does that frequently. But I've never seen them [here], and that is certainly something they should consider. Sometimes people would rather listen than read, because often the reading is too far away, and you have to do this [squinting and craning her neck] or whatever to read it. Whereas if you have a listening guide, you get a lot more information, and you can stand and observe while you're listening, rather than moving back and forth [between an object and a label]. ... A good way to provide it [would be] with anecdotes about the culture and the people.*

Visitor 2: *There are also a number of pieces that seem to refer to divination or oracular activities or spiritual activities; so maybe [offer] a short film on indigenous African spiritual systems. Or, there were a number of pieces that referred to kings, and of course kingship was different in all of these different cultures. [Maybe something on] the whole concept of kings and kingship in an African tradition. That might be helpful as well. And I would love to see audio*

tours as well that were geared toward children. I have my personal interest because of my own children; and I'm also a teacher, and I'd consider bringing my students down. But rather than having them wander and not fully appreciate what's in front of them, the audio tour would certainly be very helpful.

One interviewee also discussed how the integration of musical or dance performances into the schedule of programming in and around an exhibition would enhance their experience:

I can't recall an event here with live African music. There may have been, and I may have missed it. But one of the most interesting experiences I've had in museums here was next door at the Sackler, and this was early on, when they had a Chinese[?] orchestra. It was just a very small room, but the music was fabulous. Since so much music goes along with traditional African art—consider some of that, too. Live African music is hard to find in DC, despite the number of Africans who live here.



Design

NMAfA exhibitions have a reputation for particular strength in the design and presentational aspects, and *African Vision* proved to be no exception. On the whole, visitors' comments indicated overwhelming approval—whether implicit, or explicit—for the environment created by the exhibition's designers. The spaciousness and taste of the design drew particular compliments. The following comments are just a sample of the positive words that interviewees had for this aspect of *African Vision*:

I thought it was really well put together. I liked how it was set up. ... It was very classy, it was very sophisticated. It's giving [African art] the same attention and grandeur that other art from other regions of the world often gets.

I thought it was really well-presented. I liked the way the colors accented the art, and that you had enough space for each piece—it wasn't crunched together.

The layout is fine. I remember a previous visit to a museum in Mexico, and I thought that was probably the best [display] that I've encountered. This is comparable to that. ... It's not heaped up on you. You get to stroll from one [object] to another; you get to think about them. Sometimes, in a poor display, you have too many pieces too close to each other.

Visitor: *The display is fine. You can walk around [the objects]. I like the layout very much.*

OP&A: *Do you think they chose the right colors...?*

Visitor: Well, I wasn't conscious of the colors. But that's the value; you don't even notice it. One may have benefited from it, but it's subtle.

I liked the way it was laid out. It felt like there was a lot of empty space around each piece, so you could really focus on what you were looking at. ... I especially liked the wall that was glass on both sides, with the masks. That was really cool.

The study team was curious about what visitors thought about the ambient music. In past studies at NMAfA and elsewhere, some interviewees felt that music in art exhibitions was kitschy or distracting. However, this time, interviewees' attitudes toward the music were on the whole neutral or positive:

I liked it. It gives a good tone, I guess. ... It's not too overwhelming or distracting for the art, it's just kind of in the background. It's nice, it's pleasant.

I think for people who have never heard [African music], it definitely adds something to the experience.

I liked the music. ... It gives you another dimension of culture.

Visitor: You have music playing in here—not all of which relates to the objects themselves, but it's nice.

OP&A: So you don't mind the music? Some people might call it distracting...

Visitor: Those are people who have no sense of rhythm, don't like to dance, and are easily distracted, obviously!

The plasma display screens seemed to elicit a similar response—pleasant to those who chose to pay attention to them, unobjectionable to those who did not:

I just stayed for a few seconds and took a look at it. But, yeah, I liked it; everyone likes pictures and videos and things. [Laughter] ... What I was thinking was that a lot of the art has to do with everyday life, and these depict some everyday scenes in life. So it matches, I think.

I saw it was the art, the culture, and the land. I noticed it, but I didn't stop and watch it.

Two interviewees, however, mentioned that they would have liked the images on the display screens to have been more of an information resource, rather than just a design feature:

There wasn't much information there—except picture information. So I'm looking at the screen and seeing things that I haven't seen before, but it's not telling me what part of Africa it's in, or what sense it should make to me.

They were okay... [I would like to see] more people, and more examples of urban Africa. Because just about all the people were looking very traditional. And that's only one part of what Africa is now. ... I'd like to see more people in modern dress, more urban scenes.

Some interviewees did raise criticisms of the exhibition's design aspects. However, these usually dealt with details of lighting, layout, flow, and color choices, rather than with the global look and feel of the exhibition:

The colors distinguish the rooms, [but] there are some colors here I don't have much attraction to—such as this light green color.

I thought everything was really nice, but I have to confess I had some trouble with the glare on the cases. There were places where I had to reposition myself several times, and sometimes I still got a little glare back on me so I couldn't quite see. I don't know if there's anything you can do about that or not. That's not my area. [Laughs] It bugged me a little bit, but that would be my only complaint. I thought everything else was great.

I kind of like it when there's path through. When it is like this—it's nice, but you sometimes miss pieces. It wasn't very crowded today, so that wasn't a problem. ... With the way it is presented here, you sort of have to backtrack a little bit.

Circulation is a little bit tricky, I think. ... I'm not quite sure if I've seen this room, and I'm not sure whether it goes on to the other side or not.

Interestingly, one visitor criticized the design in an area that was often explicitly singled out for praise by others—the spacious, uncluttered feel of the exhibition—providing further proof (as if any were needed) that you can't please all the people all the time:

Visitor: *I thought that some of the areas were a little bit sparse; but other than that, I was fine with it.*

OP&A: *Just put some more objects in...?*

Visitor: *Exactly.*



DISCUSSION

African Vision was a successful exhibition by several measures.

- ❖ Not only did it receive higher overall visitor satisfaction ratings than any other NMAfA exhibition for which OP&A has survey figures, but it received higher ratings than the Museum as a whole received just three years earlier.⁹
- ❖ It attracted a larger percentage of first-time, exhibition-specific visitors than other NMAfA exhibitions for which OP&A has conducted surveys.
- ❖ *African Vision* information materials appeared to be highly effective. Most respondents thought the labels had an adequate but not excessive amount of information, and those who availed themselves to the other information resources offered in the exhibition overwhelmingly found them useful or very useful.
- ❖ Visitors expressed widespread satisfaction with their aesthetic, learning, and object experiences in the exhibition.

⁹ Of course, it should be kept in mind that—with the exception of small displays outside of the main gallery spaces—the exhibits in NMAfA in 2004 were completely different from those in 2007.

- ❖ The exhibition design appeared to be particularly successful.

When visitors were broken out by various categories in the analysis, some interesting differences emerged.



NMAfA Repeat Visitors

Repeat visitors, who were more likely to be visiting alone and more likely to be local, were one audience with which *African Vision* was notably successful. This audience was more likely than others to give the exhibition a *superior* rating, and they found their aesthetic experiences especially satisfying. Thus, to the extent the Museum wishes to target future exhibitions at audiences seeking primarily aesthetic experiences, *African Vision* can serve as a successful model.

These visitors reported being less interested in the information resources in the exhibition, and were more likely to choose an audio tour as a desirable improvement. The Museum may therefore want to consider other approaches to meeting the needs of these visitors for information, including technological approaches that go beyond traditional printed resources.

Repeat visitors were more likely than others to hear about the exhibition for the first time from newspaper articles, suggesting that soliciting press coverage for future exhibitions in local newspapers might help to bring in these core audiences. NMAfA should also consider ways of keeping *directly* in touch with its core audience—for example, through mailing or e-mailing lists that keep them abreast of developments, so they do not have to wait to find out about them in the media.

Many repeat visitors are African art aficionados with a specific interest in—and some background knowledge of, or experience with—NMAfA’s subject-matter: international travelers who have toured Africa; Foreign Service officers and Peace Core alums who have spent time in Africa; enthusiasts of art in general, non-Western art, or African art; scholars and students of the arts, history, and cultures of Africa; people with personal, business, or professional ties to the African continent; African expatriates and their families; and so on.¹⁰ These aficionados form a solid audience core for the Museum. They are relatively numerous in the Washington area, and are strongly drawn to what NMAfA already does well: providing strong aesthetic experiences featuring a variety of African arts. However, the aficionado audience is a small and specialized niche relative

¹⁰ Not all repeat visitors are “aficionados” as discussed here, and vice versa. Nonetheless, a great deal of overlap exists between the two categories.

to the total population of potential visitors. Thus, the Museum must look beyond them if it is to grow and fulfill its obligations to the public as a part of the Smithsonian.



African American Visitors ¹¹

Another important NMAfA audience consists of African Americans who are drawn to the Museum out of cultural curiosity or pride.¹² On the *African Vision* survey, these visitors indicated a particularly high interest in African art and culture, and were more likely to have studied about Africa than others.

African American visitors reported having a different set of satisfying experiences than other visitors. Not surprisingly, they were more likely to report as satisfying the experience of “Feeling a personal connection with the places/people of Africa.” More interestingly, they also were more inclined to indicate that “Spending time with friends and family” and “Imagining myself in another time and place” were especially satisfying experiences for them. Thus, the findings suggest that African Americans’ visits would have been enhanced by more opportunities for social interaction and more personally-relevant contextual material. Perhaps the Museum could serve this audience better by looking in greater detail at what specific types of opportunities for social interaction would appeal to African American visitors. Further, NMAfA should explore other steps to make repeat visitors out of first-time African American visitors. For example, these visitors might appreciate information about how the arts and cultures they see in the Museum tie into the African American experience.

Historically, the study team would note that NMAfA has tended, at least since becoming part of the Smithsonian, to cater more to the African art aficionados than to the African American audience *per se*. The African-American audience—both local and tourist—is a potentially large audience, and relative to the aficionados, it is less clear that NMAfA is giving this audience what it wants.

¹¹ The repeat/aficionado audience and the African-American audience are by no means mutually exclusive. The focus in this section is on what makes the latter distinctive.

¹² A recent study of arts participation by the Urban Institute indicated that African Americans (and Latinos) are much more likely than non-Latino whites to participate in cultural activities for the purpose of celebrating cultural heritage. See Chris Walker, Stephanie Scott-Melnyk, and Kay Sherwood, *Reggae to Rachmaninoff: How and Why People Participate in Arts and Culture* (Urban Institute, 2002).



Exhibition-Specific First-Time Visitors

Visitors who came to the Museum for the first time specifically to see *African Vision* were more likely to have found out about the exhibition through word of mouth, to be African American, and to be *very interested* in African art, African culture, and the Collection on display. However, exhibition-specific first-time visitors' satisfaction ratings were similar to those of other visitors.

Since word of mouth was especially effective with these visitors, the study team would suggest that a social network analysis could inform NMAfA on how to use such networks to reach out to potential new visitors.¹³

An important set of questions concerns how many exhibition-specific first-time visitors are inclined to become repeat visitors, and what the Museum might offer them during their visit to entice them to come back. Based on the findings noted above, the study team would suggest two general areas that merit consideration: exploring ways to better facilitate these visitors' social experiences while visiting the Museum, and providing a larger variety of contextual and background information.



General First-Time Visitors

General first-time visitors might be an audience worth investigating in greater detail in future studies. For example, do these visitors tend to be tourists who are checking out the Museum because it happens to be on the Mall, and a part of the Smithsonian? Or are individuals with a special interest in art disproportionately represented in their numbers? What are these visitors expecting to find when they enter NMAfA? What do they like and dislike once they are in? Are they inclined to come back?

Unfortunately, because of the dates on which this study was conducted—around the time that a popular exhibition (*Encompassing the Globe: Portugal and the World in the 16th and 17th Centuries*) was opening in the adjoining Sackler Gallery—the data for this study do not provide a good picture of “typical” first-time NMAfA audiences.¹⁴

¹³ Social network analysis looks at the social relationships and networks that connects people to other people and to content.

¹⁴ A module of this exhibition (“The African Coast”) was actually situated within NMAfA. Thus, much of the first-time NMAfA audience at the time of the *African Vision* survey consisted of Sackler visitors who had come to see *Encompassing the Globe* and wandered into NMAfA via that module.

Because of its location and Smithsonian affiliation, NMAfA will always host a steady stream of “walk-in” visitors, and it would be easy for the Museum to take them for granted. Nonetheless, with regard to its obligations to the public as a part of the Smithsonian, NMAfA would be remiss not to take basic steps to make such visitors feel welcome and comfortable, and to provide them with a brief education on the basics of African art that they may never have another opportunity to receive.¹⁵

¹⁵ In this regard, the study team would also note that general first-time visitors surveyed at *African Vision* seemed to find the museum interesting once they were there; for example, nearly two-thirds of them marked “getting a feel for African art/culture” as a satisfying experience, and they were more likely than other visitors to make use of the information materials available to them.



APPENDIX A: VISITOR SURVEY AND SURVEY RESULTS

Is this your first visit to the National Museum of African Art? (n=484)

26% No

74% Yes

If yes, did you come to this museum today specifically to see this exhibition, *African Vision*? (n=218)

72% No

28% Yes

From where did you find out about this exhibition, *African Vision*? (Mark one or more) (n=487)

59% Visiting the museum today

17% Friends / family/ colleagues

8% Newspaper article

6% Website

4% Banner/poster/billboard

2% Newspaper advertisement

12% Other (Specify: _____)

Did you take the (larger, green) guide/brochure *Explore!* from the rack at the exhibition entrance? (n=436)

60% No **Why not? (n=239)** 72% I did not see it
 17% I was not interested in it
 11% Other: _____

40% Yes **If yes, did you use the guide?(n=147)** 49% Yes 52% No
Are you going to take it home?(n=159) 99% Yes 2% No
Do you plan to use it at home? (n=145) 87% Yes 14% No

Thinking about the labels in this exhibition, with which of the following do you agree? (Mark one or more) (n=412)

74% Just the right amount of information
 15% Too little information
 12% The type size was too small
 4% Not enough contrast between text and background
 1% Too much information
 5% Other: _____

Overall, how would you rate this exhibition, *African Vision*, today? (n=431)

0% Poor 1% Fair 23% Good 55% Excellent 21% Superior

How useful did you find the following in this exhibition?

| | Did not See/do | Not Useful | Somewhat Useful | Very Useful |
|--|----------------|------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Smaller handout, <i>African Vision</i> (n=463) | 51% | 2% | 23% | 25% |
| Reference books inside exhibition (n=450) | 54% | 3% | 20% | 23% |
| Docent tour (n=426) | 78% | 1% | 9% | 12% |
| Introductory text panel (n=441) | 28% | 1% | 29% | 42% |
| Plasma display screens (n=446) | 28% | 5% | 33% | 34% |

How would you rate the design of this exhibition? (n=447)

0% Poor 3% Fair 26% Good 46% Excellent 26% Superior

Which experiences did you find especially satisfying in *this exhibition*? (Mark one or more) (n=494)

- 61% Learning about African art/cultures
- 58% Getting a feel for African art/cultures
- 53% Appreciating the diversity of African art/cultures
- 51% Being moved by the beauty of African art
- 48% Looking at rare/valuable/authentic art
- 47% Enriching my understanding of African art/cultures
- 41% Reflecting on the meaning of the art or its symbolism
- 28% Feeling a personal connection with the places/peoples of Africa
- 26% Spending time with friends/family
- 20% Imagining myself in another time and place

Which one of the above experiences was *most* satisfying to you? (n=435)

- 16% Being moved by the beauty of African art
- 14% Learning about African art/cultures
- 12% Getting a feel for African art/cultures
- 12% Appreciating the diversity of African art/cultures
- 12% Enriching my understanding of African art/cultures
- 11% Looking at rare/valuable/authentic art
- 8% Reflecting on the meaning of the art or its symbolism
- 7% Spending time with friends/family
- 6% Feeling a personal connection with the places/peoples of Africa
- 3% Imagining myself in another time and place

Which of the following would have enhanced your visit to *this exhibition*? (Mark one or more) (n=415)

- 37% Contextual photographs
- 34% Audio tour/audio download for iPod or cell phone
- 27% More contextual/explanatory text
- 22% More about history of Tishman/Disney Collection
- 12% More opportunities for social interaction
- 5% Other

Which of the following applies to you? (Mark one or more) (n=374)

- 76% I have read books about African art/cultures
- 38% I have studied African art/cultures/history
- 33% I have traveled or lived in Africa
- 8% I have professional or business ties to Africa

Are you of Latino/Hispanic origin? (n=407)

- 92% No
- 8% Yes

What race/ethnicity do you consider yourself to be? (Mark one or more) (n=463)

- 33% African American/ Black
- 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native
- 8% Asian American/ Asian
- 1% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- 59% White

What is your age? (n=484) Mean: 42 (s.d.=16.02)

- 6% Millennials (12-18)
- 21% Generation Y (19-29)
- 18% Generation X (30-40)
- 22% Trailing Baby Boomers (41-51)
- 21% Leading Baby Boomers (52-60)
- 13% Post war (61 and over)

What is your gender? (n=489)

- 62% Female
- 38% Male

How interested are you in...

| | Not Interested | Somewhat Interested | Very Interested |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Art in general (n=471) | 2% | 34% | 65% |
| African art (n=466) | 2% | 50% | 49% |
| African cultures (n=453) | 2% | 43% | 55% |
| Disney-Tishman Collection (n=387) | 20% | 62% | 18% |

Highest degree/level of school COMPLETED? (Adults 25 and over) (n=489)

- 4% High school graduate or less
- 11% One or more years of college
- 5% Associate degree
- 24% Bachelor's degree
- 56% Graduate/professional degree

Where do you live? (n=483)

- 92% United States
 - 23% Washington DC metro area
 - 21% Southeast
 - 16% Mid Atlantic
 - 9% Midwest
 - 4% New England
 - 7% Mountain Plains
 - 9% West
 - 4% Other US
 - 8% Other country

With whom are you visiting *this exhibition* today? (n=494)

7% I am with school group/organized group

33% I am alone

61% I am with others



APPENDIX B: RESPONSES OF SELECTED SUB-GROUPS ¹⁶

Table B-1. Repeat NMAfA Visitors

| | | Is this your first visit to NMAfA? | |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------------------|-------|
| | | No | Yes |
| Overall exhibition rating | <i>Poor</i> | .0% | .3% |
| | <i>Fair</i> | .9% | 1.6% |
| | <i>Good</i> | 21.8% | 24.1% |
| | <i>Excellent</i> | 47.0% | 56.6% |
| | <i>Superior</i> | 30.4% | 17.4% |
| Heard about exhibition through newspaper article | | 20.2% | 3.4% |
| Heard about exhibition while visiting Museum | | 48.3% | 63.6% |
| Heard about exhibition through friends/family/colleagues | | 7.9% | 19.4% |
| If you did not pick up <i>Explore!</i> , why not? | <i>Did not see</i> | 55.2% | 77.4% |
| | <i>Not interested</i> | 28.4% | 13.4% |
| | <i>Other</i> | 16.5% | 9.2% |

¹⁶ Results shown only for questions for which responses of sub-group differed significantly from those of other visitors.

| | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|-------|-------|
| Marked "Being moved by beauty of African art" as especially satisfying experience | | 58.3% | 47.2% |
| Marked "Audio tour/download for iPod" as desirable improvement | | 41.5% | 31.6% |
| Studied African art/culture/history | | 46.5% | 34.2% |
| Traveled or lived in Africa | | 47.7% | 26.8% |
| Interest in art in general | <i>Not interested</i> | .9% | 2.2% |
| | <i>Somewhat interested</i> | 20.3% | 38.9% |
| | <i>Very interested</i> | 78.8% | 58.9% |
| Interest in African art | <i>Not interested</i> | .0% | 2.3% |
| | <i>Somewhat interested</i> | 34.5% | 55.3% |
| | <i>Very interested</i> | 65.5% | 42.4% |
| Interest in African cultures | <i>Not interested</i> | .0% | 2.0% |
| | <i>Somewhat interested</i> | 32.9% | 46.8% |
| | <i>Very interested</i> | 67.1% | 51.3% |
| Interest in Disney-Tishman Collection | <i>Not interested</i> | 11.9% | 23.9% |
| | <i>Somewhat interested</i> | 64.1% | 60.0% |
| | <i>Very interested</i> | 24.0% | 16.1% |
| Age/ Generation | <i>Millennials</i> | .8% | 7.8% |
| | <i>Generation Y</i> | 14.3% | 23.6% |
| | <i>Generation X</i> | 14.3% | 19.9% |
| | <i>Trailing Boomers</i> | 15.9% | 23.6% |
| | <i>Leading Boomers</i> | 31.7% | 17.6% |
| | <i>Postwar</i> | 23.0% | 7.5% |
| Visit group | <i>Alone</i> | 37.7% | 29.9% |
| | <i>With organized group</i> | 2.6% | 8.4% |
| | <i>With others</i> | 59.7% | 61.7% |
| Washington DC metro resident (local) | | 44.2% | 14.3% |
| Live in United States | | 96.7% | 89.9% |

Table B-2. African American Visitors

| | | Self- Identified African-American/Black? | |
|---|----------------------------|---|------------|
| | | No | Yes |
| Came specifically to see <i>African Vision</i> | | 20.2% | 47.5% |
| Heard about exhibition through friends/family/colleagues | | 12.6% | 24.7% |
| Marked “Feeling personal connection to places/ peoples of Africa” as especially satisfying experience | | 20.3% | 44.3% |
| Marked “Imagining myself in another time and place” as especially satisfying experience | | 16.3% | 26.4% |
| Marked “Spending time with friends/ family” as especially satisfying experience | | 18.1% | 41.3% |
| Marked “Appreciating the diversity of African art/ cultures” as especially satisfying experience | | 49.5% | 57.8% |
| Found reference books useful? | <i>Not useful</i> | 7.7% | 3.1% |
| | <i>Somewhat useful</i> | 51.0% | 40.4% |
| | <i>Very useful</i> | 41.3% | 56.5% |
| Found plasma display screens useful? | <i>Not useful</i> | 9.4% | 3.5% |
| | <i>Somewhat useful</i> | 52.2% | 36.6% |
| | <i>Very useful</i> | 38.5% | 59.9% |
| Marked “More about history of Disney-Tishman collection” as desirable improvement | | 18.8% | 28.2% |
| Marked “More opportunities for social interaction” as desirable improvement | | 8.9% | 16.3% |
| Studied African art/culture/history | | 32.6% | 46.1% |
| Interest in African art | <i>Not interested</i> | 2.0% | 0% |
| | <i>Somewhat interested</i> | 59.8% | 31.3% |
| | <i>Very interested</i> | 38.2% | 68.7% |
| Interest in African cultures | <i>Not interested</i> | 2.3% | 0% |
| | <i>Somewhat interested</i> | 54.2% | 22.1% |
| | <i>Very interested</i> | 43.6% | 77.9% |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|-------|-------|
| Visit group | <i>Alone</i> | 39.3% | 18.1% |
| | <i>With organized group</i> | 3.3% | 14.9% |
| | <i>With others</i> | 57.3% | 67.1% |
| Live in United States | | 88.4% | 97.9% |
| Average age | | 44.54 | 39.27 |
| Education (25 years old and over) | <i>High school or less</i> | 2.8% | 2.6% |
| | <i>One or more years of college, no degree</i> | 7.3% | 17.9% |
| | <i>Associate degree</i> | 3.6% | 4.3% |
| | <i>Batchelor's degree</i> | 21.0% | 30.8% |
| | <i>Graduate/professional degree</i> | 65.3% | 44.4% |

Table B-3. Exhibition-Specific First-Time Visitors

| | | Exhibition-Specific First-Time Visitor? | |
|---|-------------------------------|--|------------|
| | | No | Yes |
| Heard about exhibition through friends/family/colleagues | | 11.7% | 35.7% |
| Picked up the exhibition guide <i>Explore!</i> | | 34.0% | 56.7% |
| Thought labels had “Just the right amount of information” | | 78.6% | 67.2% |
| Marked “Reflecting on the meaning of the art of its symbolism” as an especially satisfying experience | | 34.8% | 47.4% |
| Did not see/do smaller handout <i>African Vision</i> | | 63.6% | 35.5% |
| Did not see/do plasma display screens | | 30.9% | 18.9% |
| Marked “Audio tour/download for iPod” as desirable improvement | | 27.5% | 41.2% |
| Studied African art/culture/history | | 28.6% | 48.1% |
| Race/Ethnicity | <i>African-American/Black</i> | 21.8% | 49.9% |
| | <i>White</i> | 68.5% | 44.1% |
| Interest in African art | <i>Not interested</i> | 3.5% | 0% |
| | <i>Somewhat interested</i> | 64.0% | 31.1% |
| | <i>Very interested</i> | 32.5% | 68.9% |
| Interest in African cultures | <i>Not interested</i> | 2.8% | 1.5% |
| | <i>Somewhat interested</i> | 54.2% | 29.6% |
| | <i>Very interested</i> | 43.0% | 69.0% |
| Interest in Disney-Tishman collection | <i>Not interested</i> | 25.3% | 18.3% |
| | <i>Somewhat interested</i> | 62.8% | 52.9% |
| | <i>Very interested</i> | 11.9% | 28.8% |
| Visit group | <i>Alone</i> | 35.3% | 27.9% |
| | <i>With organized group</i> | 5.6% | 13.3% |
| | <i>With others</i> | 59.1% | 58.1% |

| | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------|-------|-------|
| Age/ Generation | <i>Millennials</i> | 5.5% | 16.0% |
| | <i>Generation Y</i> | 28.8% | 14.9% |
| | <i>Generation X</i> | 16.2% | 29.6% |
| | <i>Trailing Boomers</i> | 25.2% | 15.1% |
| | <i>Leading Boomers</i> | 16.8% | 15.1% |
| | <i>Postwar</i> | 7.5% | 9.3% |

Table B-4. General First-Time Visitors

| | | General First-Time Visitor? | |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------------------|------------|
| | | No | Yes |
| Used the guide <i>Explore!</i> in the exhibition | | 41.2% | 59.0% |
| Marked “Getting a feel for African art/cultures” as especially satisfying experience | | 53.4% | 63.0% |
| Studied African art/culture/history | | 43.3% | 30.4% |
| African-American/ Black | | 37.8% | 27.9% |
| Found plasma display screens useful? | <i>Not useful</i> | 4.2% | 10.7% |
| | <i>Somewhat useful</i> | 43.8% | 48.5% |
| | <i>Very useful</i> | 52.1% | 40.8% |
| Interest in art in general | <i>Not interested</i> | 2.2% | 1.5% |
| | <i>Somewhat interested</i> | 28.1% | 40.1% |
| | <i>Very interested</i> | 69.6% | 58.3% |
| Interest in African art | <i>Not interested</i> | 0% | 3.7% |
| | <i>Somewhat interested</i> | 40.3% | 59.5% |
| | <i>Very interested</i> | 59.7% | 36.9% |
| Interest in African cultures | <i>Not interested</i> | 0.4% | 2.6% |
| | <i>Somewhat interested</i> | 35.3% | 51.2% |
| | <i>Very interested</i> | 64.3% | 46.2% |
| Live in Washington D.C. metro area | | 28.8% | 14.4% |
| Age/ Generation | <i>Millennials</i> | 5.7% | 6.9% |
| | <i>Generation Y</i> | 18.7% | 24.4% |
| | <i>Generation X</i> | 19.1% | 17.5% |
| | <i>Trailing Boomers</i> | 17.5% | 25.3% |
| | <i>Leading Boomers</i> | 23.6% | 18.4% |
| | <i>Postwar</i> | 15.4% | 7.4% |



APPENDIX C: COMMENT BOOK ENTRIES

The following are verbatim transcriptions of all written comments from the *African Vision* visitor comment books.

- ❖ Outstanding! I am glad to see a museum that is more focused on African lifestyles and traditions rather than just the human evolution aspect that the National History Museum presents.
- ❖ Excellent
- ❖ Very Nice. Interesting.
- ❖ Its very beautiful, I love it!
- ❖ I like the different structures. I also like how it tells a story.
- ❖ I think the exhibit is beautiful
- ❖ De Jubma [?] collection is beautiful
- ❖ I loved it, the artwork and historical pieces were beautiful and I would love more information on new exhibitions and pieces.
- ❖ Exquisite layout—Kudos for the museum lights!

- ❖ Enjoyed everything. It's my first visit since the original opening 1987. You've done a remarkable job in keeping current and user friendly. The collection is very creative, says my 9 year old grandson. Thanks for the great Black History Holiday Tour.
- ❖ Wonderful significant improvement over previous Smithsonian collections. Well done!
- ❖ Creative, inspiring history of Africa in art! Tantalizing
- ❖ This is a very good exhibition. Congratulations! Keep working hard to maintain the building nice.
- ❖ Impressive figures, much more than in the new Branly in Paris. I would like to know more about the teeth that are very prominent in some figures. Why such prominence? Secondly, many all are missing the upper front teeth. I would love an explanation.
- ❖ Good Tour. Suggestion—put a mirror under Ivory armband.
- ❖ The ad and Washington Post article [*illegible*]. The mask at the front of the exhibit with the skin was remarkable, beautiful. Nice placement—lighting is nice but could be a little brighter for those of us 40+. Thanks—artwork is incredible and design of the exhibit is warm and not distracting.
- ❖ I liked it
- ❖ No words can describe beauty.
- ❖ Wonderful to see all this. I have lived 9 years in Africa and traveled to more than 20 countries. Thank you.
- ❖ It is wonderful. I'm truly enjoying the experience and the information. Thank you.
- ❖ Love the collection. Please make a digital narrated version to be shared with classrooms across and all over the world.
- ❖ This is spectacular!! The atmosphere tone of exhibit and of course the artifacts were a feast for the senses!! I loved it!
- ❖ Excellent exhibit! Beautifully displayed! I am a Head Start Teacher for DC Public Schools and I will bring my class to view this wonderful exhibit!
- ❖ This was my first time here and it was awesome.
- ❖ Amazing! Many pieces I have never seen before in any books. Collections of museum exhibitions [*illegible*]. Great to see these one-of-a-kind pieces here. Especially love the funerary sculpture from Madagascar. Where can I get a copy? Keep up the great work! — Private art dealer, museum specialist
- ❖ I think it is superb, but I would love a brief history of Yoruba and Benin kingdoms in Africa. It would be much better to make the writing on the wall double its present size so that older people can read it.
- ❖ Thrilling. Gorgeous. Beautifully installed. Useful, Intelligent text.
- ❖ Exquisitely and artistically presented. I enjoyed the warmth of colors and art.
- ❖ I have been waiting for this exhibit since learning of the gift from Walt Disney. It is amazing, in particular the placement of each piece. I particularly like being able to see the pieces from different angles. The space is like a beautiful living room and one wants to remain and or visit again and again. The quality of the Disney-Tishman art exceeds expectations. I will be back for this exhibit and cannot wait to see other treasures. Thank you so much.
- ❖ Thoroughly enjoyable. Maps of region/illustrations of continent would be helpful to identify regions detailed in descriptive paragraphs. Thanks!
- ❖ Entrance people and security people makes me feel warm in this cool day. They are very good leader in tourist guide. Thanks
- ❖ Wonderful art representing cultures within Africa. This exhibit and others would be more educational for the younger teens and older if a map highlighting the region from which the artwork of artifact original. Great work.

- ❖ Beautiful objects that are beautifully displayed. I am looking forward to seeing the remainder of the collection on display.
- ❖ Wonderful exhibit. Each piece exquisite. Loved the presentation color design of presentation.
- ❖ One of the most exciting African exhibitions I have seen. We have visited many African countries and have collected many pieces of love. No where have we seen as many pieces in one collection in the USA and the size of the pieces. Thank you for sharing.
- ❖ That was really good, but Africa is not only black people, so maybe you should have some objects that come from North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya). But that's good stuff that this big continent is represented in the Smithsonian Museum. Thank you.
- ❖ The collection is unique in its own right, the design to display the first 88 pieces set the stage for what's to come. I notice that women [*are represented in?*] collection—outstanding. The tour guide Annette was very informed. Also the depiction on the ivory bracelet just outstanding. I didn't know Africans craft that type of work, armllet ivory.
- ❖ The information seemed extremely in-depth. I loved how each description had a sketch so as to enable a patron to distinguish which item went with which description—very helpful. Also the music and open design gives the museum a very peaceful air. Thank you; it was well worth the visit.
- ❖ We loved the exhibit! Bravo! One question, however,...why is there a gap in the front [*teeth?*]—so prominent in so many of the masks and figures. Thanks!
- ❖ Wonderful exhibition, but please place a mirror in the case showing flywhisk so visitors may better see the elephant and his passenger bird! Can't wait till you display the remaining 437 objects.
- ❖ Fabulous collection, spectacularly displayed. I really like being able to see all sides of an object. The screens with grass are great and the lighting is excellent. Thanks a lot.
- ❖ Beautiful presentation. The first look brings you to a dramatic opening. Love the color.
- ❖ A beautiful exhibit—its objects and installation. Congratulations!
- ❖ It is an awesome exhibit. I may wish that music loop was a lit longer. Maybe using some of the music sold at the museum shop would have worked. Thank you for sharing.
- ❖ It's beautiful! Duran was extremely helpful in answering the questions we had. Thanks!
- ❖ I have to say that this exhibit was and is fabulous. Beautiful choice of display and color. Amazing job. Thank you.
- ❖ This exhibition was wonderful. The colors, designs, and sculptures were magnificent! The art of Africa is truly wonderful. You should keep on making wonderful exhibits. Thanks.
- ❖ Amazing exhibition. Impressed with its arrangement and unusual spatial contents. Well arranged and organized, and appropriate descriptions of all the artwork. Always in awe of the diverse and creative art work, along with its abundance, that the continent of Africa produces, especially the apparent designs and symbolism form [*various?*] regions in Africa.
- ❖ Great installation and design. Best ever. Very user friendly.
- ❖ This is a heartfully designed exhibit. What I found most enjoyable was the small description of each object included in the exhibit. People take away from this room not only a great experience of viewing beautiful cultural objects but they are also given an opportunity to expand their understanding and appreciation of those objects. Well done!
- ❖ Beautiful. I loved the [*illegible*] displays that allowed one to see front and back and the grass hanging behind sculptures. Thank you.

- ❖ Outstanding! The pieces are exquisite, the setting warm and natural. The display [is] inviting, the text informed and enthusiastic. This collection has been given an exhibition worthy of its status. Congratulations to the curators and staff of this museum.
- ❖ This exhibition is exquisite. Beautifully mounted and reverentially lit. Thank you so much for making it accessible to the public.
- ❖ It is pretty good, but everything is naked.
- ❖ Absolutely wonderful! I have never seen such great pieces. The displays are also excellent. A lot of words—almost too much—but imperative.
- ❖ Great exhibit! Wonderful exploration.
- ❖ Overwhelming and enlightening. This type of display is very original and enhances the art. Thanks.
- ❖ Bowl with lid—attributed to Areogan (1880-1954). Date listed as “early 19th to mid 20th century.” Typo? Should be “late 19th –“?”
- ❖ The art is good, but I want more info on the climate, culture, etc.
- ❖ Wonderful examples and beautifully displayed! True and wonderful.
- ❖ Butterfly mask graphics need repair.
- ❖ Fantastic! I especially appreciated the reading area with the selection of children’s books. Great idea! I wish more museums/galleries would do this—we had an educational break and then explored more! My children are 8,9,10. Many thanks.
- ❖ Wonderfully done. Nice use of colors; strong images; connection between atmosphere and artwork is pleasing. ☺ Very peaceful and calm. The colors are very warm and inviting to visitors.
- ❖ Thank you Disney for sharing and for the terrific [*illegible*]. I marked the date on each page of the book where I toured the work.
- ❖ Fantastic! The objects are beautiful and the explanations are clear, the design of the exhibition is spectacular. I enjoyed the museum.
- ❖ Wonderful exhibit! Please: the music to your collection for purchase at the shops.
- ❖ Quite overwhelming in its artistry, beauty, spirituality; a powerful representation of the collection and the incredible diverse art he collected.
- ❖ Excellent and very good light.
- ❖ I learned so much about African art. I was so amazed. I bragged to my friends. Adios.
- ❖ I think it was very cool. How they make the masks.
- ❖ The exhibition is beautifully displayed. It is great to see the high caliber contemporary art works.
- ❖ Very inspirational. I learned about a new culture. Nice sofas. ☺
- ❖ Utterly fantastic!
- ❖ The exhibit was very informative and the artwork is extravagant. The layout works very nicely and I love this exhibit.
- ❖ I like it very much.
- ❖ Too humid
- ❖ It was plain gay.
- ❖ Don’t listen to the person who said this was “plain gay.” It rocked.
- ❖ Amazing display. Captivated true African spirit.
- ❖ Very nice details. I wonder how long it took them to make.
- ❖ I love the museum. It displays the art of African in this true context. I came here for [*illegible*]
- ❖ It was great.
- ❖ I think it was unique and delicate. Very well done
- ❖ It is wonderful—should become a permanent exhibit.

- ❖ Very intricate designs.
- ❖ The calm feelings of walking in shrine of peoples of long-past culture demands. Respect and admiration.
- ❖ It was very [*illegible*] over emphasized
- ❖ It was awesome
- ❖ Great exhibit. The masks are phenomenal
- ❖ Very elaborate, interesting and informative. Beautiful
- ❖ This is one of the best museums I've ever been to!
- ❖ This place is great where did you find all this stuff?
- ❖ Fantastic collection. I'll be back soon!
- ❖ Your work is so nicely put. I love it. It told me more about African art and what they used it for. Even through I am 11 years old, I am very interested and will return to this museum. The design is fabulous. It speaks to me in a way.
- ❖ Beautiful! Absolutely spectacular. Thank you.
- ❖ Very stunning! Absolutely fabulous! Perfect effect.
- ❖ This is an interesting museum. It tells you a lot about African culture.
- ❖ I love the fact that explanation, interpretive text [is] often on the side of the display and so one could first take in visually the art w/out "intellectualizing" and "understanding."
- ❖ Very interesting and enjoyable. I think I need to get some food—it makes me hungry! Let's eat!
- ❖ I really like the design and the art is interesting. I especially like the ceramics. The beaded stuff is really pretty. I think it's cool that you play the music in the gallery. PS I am not a tourist I live around here. I hope I don't sound like a tourist. ☺
- ❖ Magnificent!
- ❖ I really enjoyed each and every exhibit. It brought me back to the environment and life of my ancestors
- ❖ Very fine but there is not a lot of people. You should try to attract more tourists.
- ❖ They were very fantastic. They were excellent.
- ❖ Wonderful. The Smithsonian's collection has been lacking.
- ❖ I really like it. Pretty impressive
- ❖ I'm so tired of European exploiting and taking form Africa to fatten their pockets and give their barbaric [*illegible*] "culture" and they have the audacity to try and "give it back" through banks called museums.
- ❖ I like it because it's nice.
- ❖ It's cute and I like the pen.
- ❖ I love the masks!
- ❖ Very interesting!!
- ❖ I liked it a lot.
- ❖ Beautifully displayed! It couldn't be better...yes.
- ❖ This was my first time there and it was awesome.
- ❖ Idea of African Culture contains no evidence of "modern" culture. Would an idea "American Culture" be at all similar. It reinforces the stereotypes Americans have of Africa.
- ❖ Statues are beautiful, [except] however for the explicit statues which are nude, because there are young children who tour the exhibits. I would suggest placing signs outside the exhibit in regard to the nudity forewarning parents
- ❖ Disappointing and tragic depictions of my race and heritage. Denver has an African American Library with better photos sculpture and general information. As a black African American citizen, I was so disappointed in this museum. I have walked all day to

find the museum and I am disappointed to see women depicted [naked] as I have seen in no other museum. Our Black brothers as well. Our bodies are beautiful full and supple and if displayed should be done with pride and true representation of our form. The masks, although important, should not represent satanic-like forms. That is not or I would prefer was not the only replicas we can find of ourselves. So heart breaking to know that we have living legends such as Ed Dewitt that are sculptures of beautiful African artifacts that would give all races a sense of pride in our contribution to this, our Nation's Capital. I expect more and I want more to represent me and our contributions to our Nation's capital.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Cover: Bowl with figures. Olowe of Ise (c. 1875-c. 1938); Yoruba peoples, Ekiti region, Nigeria, early 20th century. Wood, paint. (Cat. no. 10)

Page 3: Mask. Boki peoples, middle Cross River region, Nigeria, late 19th to early 20th century. Wood, paint, metal. (Cat. no. 77)

Page 5: Mask. Bamum peoples, Grassfields region, Pa Nje village, Cameroon, late 19th to early 20th century. Wood, horns, plant fiber, spider silk. (Cat. no. 60)

Page 8: Funerary sculpture. Sakalava or Bara peoples, Madagascar, early to mid-20th century. Wood, pigment, metal. (Cat. no. 42)

Page 21: Ceremonial sword fragment. Yoruba peoples, Owo region, Nigeria, late 19th century. Ivory. (Cat. no. 67)

Page 32: Armlet. Yoruba peoples, Owo region, Nigeria, 16th century. Ivory. (Cat. no. 66)

Page 37: Four-sided mask. Attributed to Takim Eyuk (died c. 1915); Akparabong peoples, Cross River region, Nigeria, c. 1900-1915. Wood, skin, dye, iron. (Cat. no. 78)

Page 42: Large mask. Nuna peoples, Burkina Faso, mid-20th century. Wood, pigment, metal. (Cat. no. 45)

Page 49: Hunting horn. Sapi-Portuguese style. Bullom or Temne peoples, Sierra Leone, late 15th century. Ivory, metal. (Cat. no. 15)

Recurrent Icon: Mask. Idoma peoples, Nigeria, c. 1920-40. Wood, pigment, metal. (Cat. no. 52)