Gertrude Stein in Portraits: A Pose Is a Pose Is a Pose

A STUDY OF VISITORS TO SEEING GERTRUDE STEIN: FIVE STORIES AT THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

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Foreword

The American writer Gertrude Stein was an influential figure in the worlds of art and literature in the first half of the twentieth century. In addition to her original and highly challenging contributions to English literature, she was a patron of the arts with a gift for recognizing and nurturing undiscovered talent. Among the artists she championed before they became widely known were Pablo Picasso, Man Ray, Cecil Beaton, and Marsden Hartley.

Her private life also continues to fascinate today. Although embracing an unconventional lifestyle for her time—living in an open lesbian partnership with Alice Toklas, and projecting a masculine image in her demeanor and dress—she defied conventional labels in her politics and social values. The unorthodox nature of her domestic arrangements and the avant-garde quality of much of her writing suggest a restless social iconoclast; but Stein's personal life with Toklas was marked by a degree of stability, tranquility, and predictability rarely seen in a public figure. Her stature in the worlds of art and serious literature may suggest an elitist with little time for those of lesser talent or depth; yet Stein maintained a common touch throughout her life. Her decision to live her adult life as an expatriate in France suggests a woman who turned her back on her homeland as a matter of principle; yet Stein continued to crave the attention and esteem of her distant countrymen throughout her life.

For three months in the winter of 2011-12, the legend of Gertrude Stein was on display in all its multifaceted complexity at the National Portrait Gallery in an extraordinary exhibition, Seeing Gertrude Stein: Five Stories. Seeing Gertrude Stein was far more than a selection of portraits. It was a detailed, multi-layered visual biography that not only explored at Stein's own remarkable life and work, but delved into the historical context in which she lived and probed her powerful, continuing cultural influence. This report presents the results of a study of visitors to this exhibition undertaken by the Smithsonian Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) at the request of the leadership of the National Portrait Gallery.

I wish to acknowledge here the OP&A personnel responsible for this study. The project was led by OP&A staff members Sarah Block, Maria Raviele, and James Smith. Block supervised the survey administration, analyzed the qualitative data, and wrote the qualitative section; Smith analyzed the quantitative (survey) data, wrote the quantitative section, and did the final editing; Raviele assembled the various parts into a final report, contributing writing and editing as needed. All three wrote the survey instrument and interview protocols, conducted in-depth qualitative interviews, and spent time on the floor administering surveys. They were assisted in survey administration by OP&A intern Minjung Kim and contractor Eliza Weeks.

I also wish to thank the leadership of the National Portrait Gallery, particularly its Commission and its Associate Director Nik Apostolides, for their continuing interest in exploring, through visitor studies, how audiences experience the Gallery's exhibitions and programs.
Finally, I would like to thank the curators of *Seeing Gertrude Stein*—Wanda M. Corn, Tirza True Latimer, and in-house curator Wendy Wick Reaves—who generously donated their time to meet with OP&A staff to help formulate research questions for this study.

Carole M. P. Neves

Director, Smithsonian Office of Policy And Analysis
Introduction

In early 2011, leaders of the National Portrait Gallery (NPG) asked the Smithsonian Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) to undertake a series of visitor studies of temporary exhibitions. This report, a part of that series, looks at *Seeing Gertrude Stein: Five Stories* (hereafter, *Seeing Gertrude Stein*), an exhibition jointly organized by NPG and the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco, California. The exhibition was on display on the second floor of the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture from October 14, 2011 to January 22, 2012.

Gertrude Stein is best known as a writer whose work was marked by radical experimentation with language, and as a prescient patron of young artists, some of whom (notably Pablo Picasso) went on to enjoy great success. She also achieved a degree of notoriety for living in an openly homosexual domestic partnership at a time when doing so was not common. Stein had a profound influence on writers and artists of the early twentieth century, and her influence continues today.

*Seeing Gertrude Stein* leads the visitor through five different aspects of Stein’s life. Shown chronologically, each “Story” presents a significant period or aspect of Stein’s life. “Picturing Gertrude” (Story One) displays a variety of portraits of Stein, who modeled extensively for sculptors, painters, and photographers, as well as photographs of her family. Story Two, “Domestic Stein,” focuses on Stein’s partnership with Alice B. Toklas and the couple’s unique mode of dress, decoration, and willingness to open their home. Story Three, “Art of Friendship,” presents the post-World War I relationships and collaborations between Stein and her artist friends. “Celebrity Stein” (Story Four) traces Stein’s return to the United States as a celebrated author and speaker, while Story Five, “Legacies,” examines Stein’s continuing influence in art and literature today.

The many portraits of Stein herself were central to the exhibition. However, the diverse mix of artifacts, contextual photographs, and audio/visual elements that surrounded the portraiture provided a rich framework for understanding the life and times of Gertrude Stein.
Methodology

Quantitative Surveys

Every visitor\(^1\) exiting *Seeing Gertrude Stein* through a given exit\(^2\) during 10 survey administration sessions\(^3\) conducted between December 19, 2011 and January 14, 2012 was intercepted and asked to complete a survey.

The exit survey was completed by 335 visitors, with a response rate of 64%. The questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix A and frequencies of responses are provided in Appendix B. Open-ended (write-in) comments from the survey are provided in Appendix C.

Survey respondents, with some caveats, may be treated as a representative sample of the larger population of exhibition visitors.\(^4\) Thus, the findings of the survey are, subject to the limits of statistical inference imposed by the sample size, generalizable to the overall population of exhibition visitors.\(^5\)

Qualitative Interviews

The study team conducted 18 semi-structured interviews with 23 visitors in the *Seeing Gertrude Stein* galleries. This methodology is effective in probing visitor responses in depth, as it allows visitors to raise issues that are particularly salient to them and to discuss them in their own words at whatever length they wish. However, this methodology does not yield a representative sample of exhibition visitors. Interviewees were not chosen in a systematic fashion and no effort was made to encourage reticent visitors to participate. Findings presented in the qualitative section should be read as suggestive rather than representative of how visitors approached, interpreted, and responded to the exhibition.

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1 Excluding visitors under 12 and organized groups. At busy moments, some exiting visitors were missed. Missed visitors were counted and weighted in the data analysis.

2 The exhibition had two entry/exit points; only one was covered per survey administration session. The exit covered alternated among sessions.

3 Each session lasted 90 minutes and was comprised of three 30-minute segments.

4 The chief caveat is the assumption that the visitor population at the times of the survey's administration did not systematically differ from the visitor population over the course of the exhibition's run.

5 For the sample size of 335, the 95 percent confidence interval for survey figures is ±5.35\% or less, depending on the survey response in question. (The ±5.35\% interval applies to a response figure of 50%; the confidence interval grows smaller as the figure in question approaches 0\% or 100\%.)
Interviewers used a general question guide, reproduced in Appendix D. This guide, however, was only a basic framework and interviewers were given latitude to depart from the guide and follow up on points raised by interviewees. OP&A staff and interns transcribed all interviews, coded passages judged to be particularly original, articulate, or insightful, and organized the qualitative findings around thematic sections.
Quantitative Findings

Visit History

Over half the survey respondents (56%) had made at least one previous visit to the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture. Those visiting the Reynolds Center for the first time comprised 44%. In this report, the former will be called “repeat visitors” and the latter, “first-time visitors.”

This is approximately in line with what would be expected for an exhibition at the Reynolds Center at the time of year when Seeing Gertrude Stein was on display. Past OP&A visitor studies of NPG exhibitions, and of the Reynolds Center overall, indicate that visitation outside of the summer months consists of roughly half new visitors and half repeat visitors. During the summer months, it is closer to two thirds new visitors, or even slightly higher.

The survey asked exhibition-specific visitors to indicate, as a write-in response, what drew them to Seeing Gertrude Stein. The study team did not attempt a rigorous analysis of these responses, which are reproduced in Appendix C. However, a cursory inspection suggests that exhibition-specific visitors were most likely to be attracted by the subject itself, although many also indicated that they decided to visit after reading an article about the exhibition (the Washington Post was the source cited most frequently) or on the recommendation of a friend or acquaintance.

Visit Purpose

About 43% of respondents indicated that they had come to the Reynolds Center specifically for Seeing Gertrude Stein. We will refer to these as “exhibition-specific visitors,” and others will be called “general visitors.”

Although the exhibition-specific visitor figure can vary on the basis of factors that have little to do with the exhibition or its subject (time of year, location of the exhibition within the Reynolds Center, coverage of the exhibition in the media, and so on), it should nevertheless be noted that the figure for Seeing Gertrude Stein is high in comparison with other recent NPG exhibitions studied by OP&A. Only the 47% figure registered on the Hide/Seek exit survey was higher.

As is typically the case, there was a strong positive correlation between repeat-visitor status and exhibition-specific visitor status.\(^6\)

\(^6\) Repeat visitors were much more likely to be exhibition-specific visitors (55%) than were first-time visitors (29%). Conversely, exhibition-specific visitors were much more likely to be repeat visitors (70%) than general visitors (44%).
Visit Groups

One-fifth of respondents (20%) were alone. The vast majority (80%) were accompanied by other adults and/or children.

Sex

About 61% of visitors were female and 39% were male, in line with past results for the Reynolds Center and art museums in general.

Residence

The vast majority of respondents were from the United States (93%). About 7% were residents of other countries. Half (50%) were residents of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region.

Age

The mean age of visitors was 45 and the median age was 48—comparatively older than other NPG exhibitions studied by OP&A.7

By generation, visitation consisted of 31% Generations Y and Z (born 1982 and later); 19% Generation X (born 1965-1981); 18% Trailing Baby Boom (born 1956-1964); 20% Leading Baby Boom (born 1946-1955); and 13% World War II Generation (born before 1946). (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Visitation by Generational Cohort

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7 For example, the exit survey for Hide/Seek, conducted at around the same time of year in an adjacent gallery, indicated an average visitor age of 39 and a median age of 31.
To get a sense of how different age cohorts reacted to various aspects of *Seeing Gertrude Stein*, OP&A broke down the age distribution of visitors into three broad categories it has used in visitor studies at other Smithsonian museums, and which have proven more analytically tractable than the somewhat unwieldy structure of generational cohorts discussed in the previous paragraph. This approach divides visitors into three broad categories that we will call “younger” (under 30 years of age), “middle-aged” (30–50 years of age), and “older” (over 50 years of age).

Exhibition-specific visitor status and age were directly and very strongly correlated. Among younger visitors, only 16% were exhibition-specific visitors, compared with 41% of middle-aged visitors and 62% of older visitors. As a result, the mean and median ages of exhibition-specific visitors were even higher than those of general visitors: 53 and 56, respectively. By any standard, the exhibition-specific visitor group for *Seeing Gertrude Stein* was an older demographic.

**Ratings**

**Overall Experience Rating**

Exiting visitors were asked to rate their overall experience in the exhibition, using a five-point scale that has been applied by OP&A across Smithsonian exhibitions: *poor, fair, good, excellent,* and *superior*. In general, visitors who are critical of an exhibition, to one degree or another, select one of the lower three categories—*poor, fair, or good*. Those who are basically satisfied with their visit tend to mark *excellent*; for most Smithsonian exhibitions, the modal rating is *excellent*. Those who have very positive responses tend to mark *superior*.

About a quarter of visitors to *Seeing Gertrude Stein* rated their overall experience in the lower three categories, although only fraction rated it in the lowest two categories: *good* (22%), *fair* (5%), *poor* (0%). More than half selected *excellent* (54%), and about one in five rated their experience *superior* (20%). (Figure 2)

![Figure 2: Overall Experience Rating](image-url)
Taking into account sample sizes and the resulting statistical uncertainties, these results are fairly typical for a Smithsonian exhibition. In terms of superior ratings, Seeing Gertrude Stein’s 20% is indistinguishable from the average superior rating of Smithsonian exhibitions studied by OP&A. However, the exhibition appeared to be slightly above average in the sense of a higher percentage of excellent ratings relative to good, fair, and poor.

As is typically the case, exhibition-specific visitors were more likely to rate the exhibition superior (25%, vs. 14% for general visitors), and less likely to rate it in the lower categories of poor, fair, and good (11%, vs. 39% for general visitors).

Cross-tabulations of overall satisfaction with the repeat-visitor and age variables superficially showed similar results. However, in these cases, the significance of any apparent differences disappeared when exhibition-specific visitor status was controlled for. In other words, with respect to overall rating, differences associated with repeat visitor status and age appear to be explained by the fact that repeat visitors and middle-aged/older visitors were more likely to be exhibition-specific visitors.

**Comparison with Other NPG Exhibitions**

Overall satisfaction ratings for recent NPG exhibitions studied by OP&A have tended to cluster together near the overall average for Smithsonian exhibitions, and Seeing Gertrude Stein was no exception.

In terms of superior ratings, Seeing Gertrude Stein’s 20% is similar to the figures registered for Calder’s Portraits (20%), Hide/Seek (19%) and Americans Now (18%); lower than the figure for Elvis at 21 (27%); and higher than the figure for Capital Portraits (9%). Conversely, when looking at the lower ratings of poor, fair, and good, Seeing Gertrude Stein, at 26%, did about as well as Calder’s Portraits (28%), Americans Now (29%), and Hide/Seek (31%); better than Capital Portraits (38%); and less well than Elvis at 21 (17%). (Figure 3, next page)

**Individual Exhibition Aspects**

In addition to asking visitors to rate their overall experience in Seeing Gertrude Stein, the questionnaire asked them to rate, on the same five-point scale, three specific aspects of the exhibition: design/layout, artworks, and theme.

In terms of the distribution of responses among superior, excellent, good, fair, and poor, ratings for all three of these aspects roughly tracked the overall exhibition rating. Therefore, it does not

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8 In comparison with the overall rating, the design rating was slightly worse in the sense of a higher proportion of low (poor+fair+good) ratings (36%), and the theme rating was slightly better in the sense of a higher proportion of superior ratings (26%). However, these differences did not appear to be large enough to be of practical significance in “explaining” the overall rating.
appear that any of these aspects had a substantially stronger (or weaker) influence than the others on visitors’ overall assessment. (Figure 4)

**Figure 3: Comparative Overall Experience Ratings for Recent NPG Exhibitions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibition</th>
<th>Superior</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good + Fair + Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elvis at 21</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing Gertrude Stein</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calder’s Portraits</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hide/Seek</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americans Now</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Portraits</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4: Ratings of Specific Exhibition Aspects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Superior</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good + Fair + Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artworks</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design/Layout</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Visitor Experiences and Interests

General Experiences

Visitors exiting Seeing Gertrude Stein were invited to choose, from a list of eight experiences, those that they found particularly satisfying in the exhibition. The listed experiences were the following:

- “Being moved by beauty”
- “Seeing rare, valuable, or uncommon things”
- “Gaining information”
- “Enriching my understanding”
- “Feeling an emotional connection”
- “Getting a sense of the everyday lives of others”
- “Recalling personal memories”
- “Reflecting on the meaning of what I saw.”

Broadly speaking, the first two of these are object experiences, the next two are learning experiences, and the remaining four are personal-connection experiences.

The most commonly cited satisfying experiences were the learning experiences of “Enriching my understanding” (67%) and “Gaining information” (66%), both of which were chosen by about two-thirds of respondents. These figures are high relative to other NPG exhibitions studied by OP&A—and not just for these two particular experiences, but for any experiences. On the surveys for the five NPG exhibitions recently studied by OP&A, no experience had previously been selected by more than 58% of respondents. Indeed, it has been rare to find an experience selected by even half of respondents, let alone two thirds.9

Slightly lower were the personal-connection experiences of “Reflecting on the meaning of what I saw” (27%) and “Getting a sense of the everyday lives of others” (31%), as well as the object experience of “Seeing rare, valuable, or uncommon things” (35%), all of which were chosen by about one in three respondents.

The personal-connection experience of “Feeling an emotional connection” was selected by about one-fifth of respondents (22%), while only about one in eight selected the object experience of “Being moved by beauty” (13%), and even fewer chose the personal connection experience of “Recalling personal memories” (6%). (Figure 5, next page)

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9 The experiences question was not asked on the Americans Now questionnaire. The 58% figure alluded to here was for “Connecting with the emotional experiences of others” in the Hide/Seek exhibition.
Exhibition-specific visitors were slightly more likely to select “Seeing rare, valuable, or uncommon things” (41%, versus 30% for general visitors). This was the only experience for which the responses of exhibition-specific visitors diverged from those of general visitors.

Selecting certain experiences was associated with a higher likelihood of rating the exhibition superior. Although the object experience of “Being moved by beauty” was not commonly chosen, those who did select it were more likely to rate the exhibition superior (33%) than those who did not (18%). The same was true of visitors who selected the other object experience, “Seeing rare, valuable, or uncommon things,” with 28% rating the exhibition superior, versus 16% of those who did not select this experience. This pattern also emerged with the experience of “Gaining information”—24% of those who chose this experience rated the exhibition superior, against 10% of those who did not.

After controlling for exhibition-specific visitor status, a positive relationship was found between age and the experience of “Enriching my understanding” for general visitors, but not exhibition-specific visitors. Younger and middle-aged general visitors were considerably less likely to choose this experience (58% and 51%, respectively) than older general visitors (77%). However, it should be noted that even among younger and middle-aged general visitors, the likelihood of selecting this experience was high in comparison with other NPG exhibitions studied by OP&A.
Interests within the Exhibition

Visitors were asked which kinds of artworks and other elements of the exhibition they found very, somewhat, and not at all interesting.

Most of the suggested elements were deemed very interesting by two-thirds of respondents or more: “Photographic portraits of Gertrude Stein” (72%), “Wall and label texts” (68%), “Drawn and painted portraits of Gertrude Stein” (67%), and “Historical and contextual photographs” (66%). Of slightly less interest to visitors were the “Sculptural portraits of Gertrude Stein” (50%, very interesting). The only elements that were deemed very interesting by less than half of respondents were “Artifacts (clothing, jewelry, newspapers, etc.)” (46%) and “Audio and video elements” (35%). (Figure 6)

Exhibition-specific visitors were more likely than general visitors to say they were very interested in most of the exhibition elements about which the questionnaire asked. The only exceptions were the “Sculptural portraits of Gertrude Stein” and “Historical and contextual photographs.”

Figure 6: How Interested Were You in the Following Exhibition Components?

In the case of the latter, the obtained chi-square figure for the cross-tabulation was on the borderline of statistical significance (0.064).
After controlling for exhibition specificity, a positive relationship was found between age and interest in the photographic elements of the exhibition ("Photographic portraits of Gertrude Stein" and "Historical and contextual photographs") among exhibition-specific visitors, but not among general visitors. Among younger exhibition-specific visitors, 53% indicated they were very interested in “Photographic portraits of Gertrude Stein,” compared with 62% of middle-aged exhibition-specific visitors and fully 95% of older exhibition-specific visitors. The pattern of responses for “Historical and contextual photographs” was similar if a bit less extreme: 47% of younger exhibition-specific visitors said they were very interested in this element, compared to 64% of middle-aged exhibition-specific visitors and 81% of older exhibition-specific visitors.

**Portrait Gallery-Specific Interests**

On the two NPG surveys prior to this one (for *Capital Portraits* and *Calder’s Portraits*), OP&A piloted a question focused on experiences that visitors might specifically expect in NPG exhibitions, as opposed to any museum exhibition. The question posed was: “For you, which of the following were highlights of this exhibition?” The suggested answers reflected goals for the visitor experience that NPG has laid out in its strategic plan: “Exploring portraiture as an art form,” “Exploring portraiture as visual biography,” “Seeing influential Americans,” “Appreciating the diversity of the United States and its people,” “Reflecting on American identity,” and “Delving into the American experience.” Analysis of responses suggested that the question in its initial form was poorly formulated. The question and answer choices were substantially revised for this survey, to focus on interests rather than experiences. The new question was phrased: “In the context of the National Portrait Gallery in general, how interested are you in the following?” The answer choices were “Art”; “History”; “Biography”; “Images of America’s human diversity”; and “Images of influential and/or famous Americans,” each of which visitors were asked to rate on a three-point scale of very, somewhat, and not at all interested.

Visitors’ interest in all of these suggested areas was quite high. In no case did more than a negligible 4% of respondents say they were not at all interested, and in all cases large majorities indicated they were very interested—ranging from 62% very interested in “Images of influential and/or famous Americans” to 79% very interested in portraiture as “Art” (Figure 7, next page). The median number of areas in which visitors said they were very interested was four (out of five).
Visitors who indicated they were very interested in portraiture as “Biography” were more likely to rate Seeing Gertrude Stein as superior overall (23%) than others (11%).

No significant differences existed between exhibition-specific visitors and general visitors with regard to this set of interests. However, a number of relationships were discovered between age and interests. Younger visitors were found to be significantly less interested in portraiture as “Art” (65% very interested) than either middle-aged or older visitors (both 85%). A similar but slightly weaker relationship appeared with respect to portraiture as “History,” with 64% of younger visitors indicating they were very interested, as compared to 77% and 81% of middle-aged and older visitors, respectively.

Miscellaneous

Label and Text Reading

On the whole, visitors to Seeing Gertrude Stein appeared to be very interested in the label and wall text. When asked “How much of the label and wall text did you read?” over half of respondents (51%) answered most or all, and almost all of the rest (45%) answered some. Only 4% indicated that they read little or none of the text in the exhibition.
Exhibition-specific visitors were much more likely to report having read *most or all* of the text (74%) than general visitors (32%).

**Exhibition Path**

When asked "Did you proceed through the five ‘stories’ in the numbered order?” a little under half of respondents (46%) indicated that they did, about a third said they did not (36%), and the remaining fifth (18%) said they did not know or had not noticed the order.

Exhibition-specific visitors were far more likely to be aware of and to follow the prescribed path through *Seeing Gertrude Stein*. Only about one tenth were unsure about the path (8%, versus 27% for general visitors); about two-thirds followed the path (65%, versus 28% for general visitors); and about a quarter did not (27%, versus 46% among general visitors).

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11 Among exhibition-specific visitors but not general visitors, there was an unusual relationship between age and text-reading, with both younger and older visitors (79% and 80%, respectively) more likely to say they had read *most or all* than middle-aged visitors (56%). However, this result was on the outermost cusp of statistical significance (chi-square significance of 0.050), and should be considered with caution.
Qualitative Findings

Qualitative interviews for Seeing Gertrude Stein were conducted during January 2012. Eighteen interviews were conducted with 23 interviewees (eight males and fifteen females), ranging in age from about 20 to 70, with the majority of interviewees toward the older end of this range.\(^{12}\)

On a whole, interviewees enjoyed the exhibition and had many insightful comments about their experience in it. Several interviewees had spent over an hour in the exhibition, and a few had spent close to two hours.

General comments on overall impressions of the exhibition include the following:

\[This is the most complete [picture] that I have seen of her life and influence.\]

\[****\]

\[I heard about it from a friend. She has seen it three times. She doesn’t particularly like Gertrude Stein, but she thinks that the exhibit and what it displays of a life are just amazing. She thought it was amazingly well put together, with all the multiple perspectives. So she told me it was such an amazing exhibit, and I had to come to look at the beautiful way they assimilated so many aspects of [Stein’s] life.\]

\[****\]

\[I love to go to a show on an artist that gives you a sense of the human being in all [her] dimensions, and how [she] developed over the course of [her] career—how [her] art evolved. The presentation was very clear, and the depth and the insight that I got into the life of Gertrude Stein were really amazing.\]

\[****\]

\[It was great. I took my time and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I read and saw almost everything, which is awesome to do. Usually I breeze through [an exhibition], but I knew I wanted to take my time on this one. It was really well done.\]

Content Level /Accessibility

In terms of their familiarity with the exhibition’s subject, interviewees ranged from those who had little previous knowledge of Stein to those who were well-informed about all aspects of her life and

\(^{12}\) In most cases, age was estimated rather than provided by interviewees.
work. The exhibition appeared to be accessible and engaging to interviewees regardless of their previous acquaintance with its subject. Most indicated that they learned something new about Stein and her times from the exhibition. In the case of those who were already well-acquainted with Stein, several mentioned that the exhibition filled in gaps in their knowledge:

It filled in all the gaps for me. I don’t know that I have learned anything strikingly new, but I am certainly going to leave here with a more comprehensive picture of her and her influence than I had when I arrived.

*****

You hear [Stein’s] name all the time, but you don’t necessarily know a lot about her, and this has filled in the gaps. That’s what my friend said—that this filled in a lot of the gaps for her.

Perception/Classification

The way in which interviewees perceived the focus of the exhibition (as art, biography, and/or history) varied. Several indicated that they had expected primarily an art show, and were pleasantly surprised to find rich biographical and historical content surrounding the art. Indeed, some appeared to be more engaged by the contextual material than by the art itself:

[I see this show as about the] history more than the actual artwork. It is the history of really pretty extraordinary people, artists who had an extraordinary eye. ... She brought so many people together and they inspired each other.

*****

Those associations [with artists] are what make her who she is. Of course we expect to see art, ... but we were [also] expecting it to be a show about who she knew, her lifestyle, and her associations. So this is exactly what we were expecting. And very well done, too.

*****

There are only so many portraits you can look at before they all start to blend together. You know—a bunch of faces. But [I liked] seeing [the contextual] stuff ... along with the portraits. I feel it creates a better experience.
Layout and Presentation

Order

The exhibition displays were designed to be seen in a set, roughly chronological order, although the configuration of the exhibition space—a central corridor with six rooms off of it—made it impossible to literally set up a linear path through the show. Rather, each thematic space (“Story”), including the corridor, was labeled with a number (1-5) and a descriptive title. Both entrances included an explanation of this organization and a map with the layout of the rooms.

Most interviewees chose to follow the numbered order of the rooms, and indicated that this helped them to organize in their own minds the vast amount of material on display:

I think the organization of the show is really quite ingenious—to have divided it up in terms of her personal life, her influence, her circle, and so forth. I think that's quite illuminating. ... It presents a picture of the whole person, and in the case of a person like Stein, I think that's critical, because her influence was so varied and so vast and so enduring.

*****

I love this chronology. That was great. It was nice that you have [the exhibition layout plan at both ends of the exhibition], because I'm sure it gets very crowded some days.

*****

I like order. I like having [it organized] clearly—like, this is what we are talking about in this section, and that is what we are talking about in that section. ... I like it where I can trace where the heck I am going.

Some interviewees even suggested it might be difficult to make sense of everything on display in exhibition if one did not note the organizational structure:

It was presented very well ... [with] the multiple perspectives that they talked about. ... But if you didn’t stop and read [the introductory material] when you came in, it might have been a little confusing. It was well labeled, but you did not have the context if you did not read that.

*****

It was compartmentalized, so you know which phases you’re dealing with. ... I think it was really important that you read that first piece when you came to the exhibit, so you saw the different stories, in order to appreciate it correctly. To see the evolution, you needed to follow the [recommended path.]
Some interviewees, unfortunately, also suggested that it was easy to miss the introductory material presenting the organization structure of the exhibition.

**Look and Feel**

Interviewees were for the most part impressed by the exhibition installation. A few commented specifically on the sparse layout of the penultimate room, with its single, dramatically-lit piece accompanied by a droning audio of Stein reading of her own work:

> It was very dramatic. I liked that [the Davidson sculpture] was really the only piece of art in the room. I liked that you could see it from the hall, sort of beckoning you through the doorway. It was a very dramatic and effective presentation.

However, the Story that came up most frequently with respect to look-and-feel was Story Two, “Domestic Stein.” For many interviewees, the combination of creative exhibition design, photographs, and artifacts effectively evoked the atmosphere of Stein and Toklas’s personal space and aesthetic style:

> I like how the wallpaper from her home was recreated here, to show the domestic Stein. I thought that was very engaging.

*****

Definitely the wallpaper was a nice touch. It was a great (I assume) reproduction. It’s that great attention to details that puts you in [a particular] place.

*****

In that room, you get a feeling of what [Stein] was doing on a day-to-day basis. I daydream a lot, and what I think about is, “What is so-and-so doing at the moment?” I used to work next to the White House; I would get off the bus in front of the White House, and think, “What is Barack Obama doing right now?” And in that room, it showed me what she was doing on a day-to-day basis, and it helped me to imagine how she moved around, how she sat in her house, how she thought and wrote and created some of these amazing pieces of work. Thinking about that makes me feel really close to her.

*****

I loved feeling like I was in her atelier in Paris or in her home in southern France. There was just enough there to give you a feeling of what it must have been like.
Favorite Objects, Artworks, and Displays

When visitors were asked about their favorite pieces in the exhibition, a number of art works came up repeatedly in both interviews and survey write-in responses. These included the Andy Warhol pop-art piece; Red Grooms’s whimsical three-dimensional depiction of a seated Stein; Marsden Hartley’s *One Portrait of One Woman*; Man Ray’s photographic portrait of Stein; Picasso’s portrait of Alice Toklas; and the “split-screen” photograph by Cecil Beaton that greeted visitors at the exhibition’s entrance. Two pieces that seemed to particularly fascinate many visitors were Jo Davidson’s terra cotta sculpture of a slumping, seated Stein and Devorah Sperber’s spool-thread recreation of Picasso’s famous Stein portrait.\(^{13}\) (The latter was also cited by a number of survey takers in response to a write-in question on what they found surprising or unexpected in the exhibition.)

*The Sperber work] is amazing. To string all those things together to be able to see [the portrait of Stein], and then to have to turn it around in the opposite direction. It reflects how the brain works. It’s wonderful.*

*****

*[My favorite piece was] the [Sperber] spools of thread! With the little crystal ball you could look through to see it right-side-up. That was terrific. ... I [also] loved the caricatures, the drawings, and that little pop-out picture of her; that was very clever. People who were extraordinary artists were interested in her, and wanted to see her in all aspects and points of view.*

Many respondents, however, pointed not so much to specific favorite works of art, but rather to broader categories of objects that they found engaging. The many historical photographs featured in the exhibition appeared to be extremely popular, for example. A variety of specific photographs were mentioned in this connection—Stein with her dogs, Stein and Toklas in Venice, Stein and Toklas as medics in World War I\(^{14}\)—as well as more general references to related groups of photos (Stein with her family, Stein with Toklas, and so on).

Other visitors responded to the question about favorite displays or pieces by citing the books, magazines, or newspapers on view, the written excerpts from Stein’s writing, or the audio of Stein reading her own work:

---
\(^{13}\) The reader may note that the works mentioned here disproportionately cluster toward the end of the exhibition. This may be in part because they were freshest in the memory of the exiting visitors who were surveyed or interviewed by the study team.

\(^{14}\) For a complete list of such specific mentions, see Appendix C.
To hear her reading from her work is a high point. We heard it as we’re going through [other parts of the exhibition] and we knew somewhere something was going to happen. That’s an amazing room.

Other favorites frequently mentioned were Stein’s personal artifacts (clothing, jewelry, scarves, and so on). The vest on display in “Domestic Stein” was singled out for comment by several interviewees:

I really appreciated seeing Stein’s clothes that Alice made, because that was really a part of her personification and [their] relationship. ... It is one thing to look at [the vest] in the picture, but [it makes more of an impression] to actually see it and how big it actually was. The fabric selections, I think, were very important to her and to Alice.

*****

She definitely had her own sense of fashion that made her stand out as an individual. ... I do not know that vests on women at the time were especially popular. ... Seeing something from the early 20th century that was considered non-traditional was really cool.

*****

I loved seeing her vests and how she dressed as a lesbian who identified with the mannish side of a lesbian couple; it seemed that Alice was the more feminine side.

Themes

When asked about underlying themes or messages they saw in the exhibition, interviewees suggested several possibilities: the juxtaposition of Stein’s personal story with the historical times in which she lived; Stein’s unusually multifaceted character; her role as a cultural trend-setter (particularly living openly in a same-sex partnership); and her relationships with other artists.

Historical Context

One aspect of the exhibition that many interviewees appreciated was the historical context provided in each Story. A few commented that the historical context was a kind of immersive experience; others found it enlightening just to have the chance to fit the various parts of Stein’s life into the larger historical landscape. Interviewees indicated both that this the historical perspective helped them better understand Stein’s life, and, conversely that the focus on Stein’s life gave them a unique perspective on the history through which she lived.

I was struck by the significance of the times in which she lived. The exhibition made me feel like I was immersed in those times.
It didn’t initially click for me that she was in Europe during the Holocaust and was Jewish. ... Clearly, she had a picture of herself as very capable—I would have run for home! But with her personal strength, she was able to make personal contacts that got her through it. It says a great deal about her ability, and perhaps Alice’s too, to find the support that was necessary. Others left; she did not.

We were talking about how the world must have been in that time. You get this [view into] what seems like a magical world that was created around Gertrude Stein and her personality. ... I lived in Paris for four years myself, and I am interested in that period in history, and all the artists she supported and nurtured and collaborated with. It was just an extraordinary period in the history of art and the development of art.

It kind of gives you an entryway into the time and place[.] You get to see the era through a lens of a certain person’s experience. I think that is really valuable.

I find that when you concentrate on one person ... you can put things into perspective and follow it along. ... You hear about a lot of these artists here and there, [but this exhibition] puts it all together, and it’s wonderful.

Multifaceted Character

The introductory text at the exhibition entrance stressed the contradictions within Stein’s personality—for example, her paradoxical commitments to literary experimentation and to conservative politics. Interviewees picked up on this theme of Stein’s multifaceted character as one clue to the general fascination with her, both in her own day and in ours.

I think the theme might be how we Americans perceive Gertrude Stein in five different ways. ... I love that they broke it up into parts. That gave us more clarity about the celebrity side of her [and] the domestic side. ... She was a very complex woman.
The presentation was like a Picasso sculpture, in the sense that it looked at the subject from a number of different perspectives all at once, and in the process gave us deeper understanding of that subject.

*****

In this exhibit, you get so many angles on this one person. Many different roles. I thought that was beautifully done. It was very significant, because lives are like that. You caught that in this one famous person’s life, and displayed it.

**Cultural Trend-Setting**

The complexity of Stein’s personality was reflected in range of areas to which she made lasting contributions—not only as a writer and as an artistic muse, but also as a larger-than-life cultural trend-setter who was ahead of her time in some ways, particularly with regard to her open homosexuality. A few interviewees commented on the exhibition’s portrayal of this aspect of her influence:

*She flaunted her lesbianism at a time when it was not that fashionable to do, and she surrounded herself with homosexuals.*

*****

*It’s interesting to see what a powerful figure she must have been—leading the way, especially for homosexuals in the last century.*

*****

*She was so ahead of her time in so many aspects of life. ... She cut her hair short back in the 1920s, she had a female partner, and so forth.*

*****

*She was doing all of these things that maybe now we have come to see as normal, but [she was doing them] in Europe, a hundred years ago. She’s living this lifestyle that is really on the edge, but she is doing so very comfortably.*

Yet at the same time, comments on the exhibition’s treatment of the relationship between Stein and Toklas generally focused on the more prosaic aspects of their domestic partnership: cooking, fashion, home décor, spousal roles (Stein as the voluble public face of the partnership, and Toklas as
the more quiet partner), and so on. Relatively little was made of the unconventional nature of this relationship in the context of its time, although a few interviewees did comment on the courage displayed by Stein and Toklas in choosing to live openly as a couple.

A number of interviewees specifically commented on the exhibition’s finely-textured portrayal of Toklas, a figure who had previously appeared even to some of the more Stein-savvy among them as something of an enigma:

*I was also interested [to discover] that Alice, who kept such a low profile from what we generally know from history, actually had quite a sharp wit and a sharp tongue about her, too. It makes sense that someone like Stein, who was considered a genius, would have high standards for a partner. I wouldn’t think she would want someone dull accompanying her constantly.*

*****

*I knew about the relationship to some extent, but I did not really know anything about Alice. ... It was interesting that they played up the male/female aspect in their clothes and in their relationship. It said that even though Alice was much quieter, a lot of the artists began to like her the more they got to know her.*

**Artistic Relationships**

Some interviewees saw Stein’s extraordinary web of relationships with other artists as an underlying leitmotiv within the exhibition. While not necessarily denigrating Stein’s originality as a writer, such interviewees tended to see her lasting impact more in terms of her influence as patron and coach of young artists, some of whom—most notably Picasso, but certainly including a number of other less household names—subsequently went on to have lasting impacts on the art world.

*[She had a big] influence on the art world of her day, and of today for that matter, because the people she promoted—and I think that’s a fair word for her influence— influencer subsequent painters and writers and sculptors.*

*****

*We were just talking about the relationship between Picasso and Gertrude Stein, which I had not fully appreciated until now. They had a strong, almost symbiotic relationship—each*

---

15 This was surely at least in part because the section of the exhibition that focused on this relationship—Story Two, “Domestic Stein”—itself stressed the sheer *ordinariness* of Stein and Toklas’s relationship in most respects.
depending on the other for the promotion of their individual works. I had not realized how strong that relationship was until I visited this exhibition.

*****

One of the things that was significant to me and that was well-portrayed here was her influence and ability to spot and nurture other artists. She looks severe; she looks like someone I probably would not approach. Yet there had to have been something about her personality that said to young, struggling artists, “I can talk to this woman. I can show her my art and maybe it’ll work.”

*****

[This exhibition] is a unique opportunity to see such a collection of portraits, of stories, of narratives, of examples of her work and the people she influenced in her life. ... Picasso is the best example—she encouraged him and admired his work and believed that he was an artist who was destined to become great. And of course it was true. It was a prophecy that was realized[.] ... How wonderful that she was able to foresee the artistic talent of so many of these people before they were even appreciated.

*****

She has this immense maternal-ness. She was taking people like Picasso and Hemingway under her wing and giving them the ability to fulfill their full potential.

*****

Her fame really comes through her association with so many different artists who span such a long period of time, far more I think than her actual contributions. ... She was sitting in judgment, in a way, on young aspiring artists.

Miscellaneous

A few interviewees, who were happy with the exhibition as far as it went, also expressed an interest in seeing information about how the curators and exhibition people put it together. Such interviewees were interested, for example, in learning how and from where the objects in the show were obtained and why certain curatorial decisions were made.¹⁶

¹⁶ More than one interviewee asked why the famous Picasso portrait of Stein was not on display.
I would say that everyone who was involved in all aspects of this show did a really great job. I loved all the signage, all the explanations. The only thing is that at every exhibition, I would like to see an explanation of how it was put together, from beginning to end. How they brought the works in and were transported, etc.

Several interviewees commented that Seeing Gertrude Stein inspired them to want to read or re-read Stein’s works. It even inspired one couple to want to visit Stein’s house:

It’s made us interested, on our next trip to France, to see the house in the southeastern part of France [where Stein and Toklas lived], to see if it still exists and whether it’s been converted to some kind of memorial or foundation. And her residences in Paris would be interesting to see.

One interviewee drew a contrast between the focus in Seeing Gertrude Stein on a single figure of interest, and a contrasting approach taken in an adjacent exhibition:

I like it if there’s a balance [between exhibitions that focus on a single individual and those that have a broader focus]. It is very interesting in these two [adjacent exhibitions.] [In Seeing Gertrude Stein,] you have one life’s struggle with people and events. Then right next to it, you have [an exhibition on] contemporary black Americans [The Black List] who have achieved great things. [One is] specific, and [one] is very broad. I like the point and counterpoint.

Several interviewees mentioned that their interest in Gertrude Stein had been recently rekindled because of the appearance of Stein as a character in the Woody Allen movie Midnight in Paris, released in June 2011. They seemed to find it intriguing to compare Kathy Bates’s performance with the real Gertrude as portrayed in the exhibition.

I have always been very interested in learning more about [Stein, although] I haven’t read any of her books. And the recent movie Midnight in Paris spurred my interest again.

*****

I was just thinking about the movie Midnight in Paris, which featured Gertrude Stein and that gathering of people in her living room. I don’t suppose they timed the exhibition to coincide with that movie, but I think that movie did raise a lot of people’s interest in her.

*****

I have always been fascinated by her life. It seemed to me that [Gertrude and Alice] lived in a fairy tale. They had a lot of money and they were always traveling, and with wonderful people. I thought that was fabulous. This film Midnight in Paris by Woody Allen just brought it all back.
Discussion

Overall, *Seeing Gertrude Stein* can be judged a successful show on several counts, perhaps above all in the skill and depth with which it combined the personal narrative of an intriguing historical figure with the times and trends through which she lived, and to which she contributed. Both the qualitative and quantitative analyses suggest that visitors had positive reactions to the exhibition’s design and layout, art works and artifacts, and themes, as well as to the basic approach of presenting one fascinating life within a rich historical context.

*Seeing Gertrude Stein* appeared to appeal above all to an older demographic. This is not to say that younger visitors who visited the exhibition were less satisfied with it; on the survey, no age-related differences were found in overall satisfaction after controlling for exhibition-specific status. However, in terms of who it drew to NPG as exhibition-specific visitors and whose attention it caught among general visitors, *Seeing Gertrude Stein* disproportionately attracted older audiences.17

Although some visitors undoubtedly found *Seeing Gertrude Stein* highly engaging on a personal and emotional level, survey results suggest that the exhibition succeeded above all as a learning experience in the broadest sense of the term. The proportion of visitors who marked “Enriching my understanding” and “Gaining information” as memorable experiences were extremely high in comparison with other NPG exhibitions studied by OP&A.

Comments from interviewees provide a richer picture of the kind of learning that took place in *Seeing Gertrude Stein*. A key factor for many seemed to be the exhibition’s juxtaposition of an intimate portrayal of Stein’s complex personal life, artistic pursuits, and personality with the larger story of the historical era in which she lived—an era marked by dramatic artistic ferment and by wrenching geopolitical conflict. The story told in *Seeing Gertrude Stein* thus not only served to increase visitors’ understanding of a noted historical figure, but offered a unique perspective on the social and cultural upheavals she experienced at first hand.

Those who were particularly interested in biography as a subject were more likely to rate the exhibition superior. When coupled with the many comments from qualitative interviews alluding to the multiple, engaging perspectives on Stein and her times offered by the exhibition, it is reasonable to conclude that *Seeing Gertrude Stein* succeeded as an exemplar of the genre of “visual biography” to which the recent NPG strategic plan alludes.

17 The former conclusion was directly demonstrated by the survey data; the latter can be inferred from the high mean and median ages of visitors as a whole. The generally older demographics of the exhibition’s visitors were also anecdotally noted by the OP&A study team, both while administering surveys and when conducting interviews.
A finding that was unrelated to the exhibition itself, but which may be of interest from the perspective of NPG as a whole was that younger visitors to Seeing Gertrude Stein were less interested in both portraiture-as-art and portraiture-as-history than were middle-aged and older visitors. Until confirmed by subsequent surveys, this finding needs to be regarded with some care. If confirmed, however, its implications are unclear but potentially far-reaching, particularly in terms of strategies for drawing younger generations of visitors to NPG.
Appendix A: Questionnaire

Is this your first visit to this building, the Donald W. Reynolds Center?  □ Yes  □ No

Did you visit today specifically to see this exhibition, Seeing Gertrude Stein: Five Stories?
□ Yes  □ No

If you came specifically to see this exhibition, what attracted you to it? __________

Please rate your overall experience in this exhibition, Seeing Gertrude Stein: Five Stories.
□ Poor  □ Fair  □ Good  □ Excellent  □ Superior

Please rate the following individual elements of this exhibition, Seeing Gertrude Stein: Five Stories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Superior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design/ layout</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artworks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which experiences did you find especially satisfying in Seeing Gertrude Stein: Five Stories? [Mark one or more]

□ Being moved by beauty
□ Connecting with the emotional experiences of others
□ Enriching my understanding
□ Gaining information
□ Getting a sense of the everyday lives of others
□ Recalling memories
□ Reflecting on the meaning of what I saw
□ Seeing rare, valuable, or uncommon things
□ None of these

Within this exhibition, Seeing Gertrude Stein: Five Stories, how interested were you in…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all interested</th>
<th>Somewhat interested</th>
<th>Very Interested</th>
<th>Did not notice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The <strong>drawn and painted</strong> portraits of Gertrude Stein?</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <strong>sculptural</strong> portraits of Gertrude Stein?</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <strong>photographic</strong> portraits of Gertrude Stein?</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (historical and contextual) <strong>photographs</strong>?</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <strong>wall and label texts</strong>?</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <strong>artifacts</strong> (e.g., clothing, jewelry, newspapers, etc.)?</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <strong>audio and video elements</strong> (including interactive audio/video kiosks)?</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the context of the National Portrait Gallery in general, how interested are you in the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all interested</th>
<th>Somewhat interested</th>
<th>Very Interested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images of America’s human diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images of influential and/or famous Americans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How much of the label and wall text did you read?

- [ ] None or little
- [ ] Some
- [ ] Most or all

Did you proceed through the five “stories” in the exhibition in the numbered order?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Not sure/ did not notice the numbered order

What was your favorite portrait, artifact, or display in this exhibition, and why? __________

Did you find anything surprising or unexpected in this exhibition? _______________________

With whom are you visiting? [Mark one or more]
- [ ] I am alone
- [ ] Adult(s)
- [ ] Youth under 18

Are you male or female?
- [ ] Male
- [ ] Female

What is your age? ______

Do you live in the United States or another country?

- [ ] United States, specify zip code: ________________
- [ ] Another country, specify: __________________

THANK YOU!

Ses [ ] Seg [ ] Status [C] [R] [L] [I] [I]/passing through [ ] ID [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
Appendix B: Frequency of Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is this your first visit to this building, the Donald W. Reynolds Center?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you come to this building today specifically to see this exhibition?</td>
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<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall experience in <em>Seeing Gertrude Stein</em></td>
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<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>
**Satisfying experiences in *Seeing Gertrude Stein***

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being moved by beauty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling an emotional connection</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enriching my understanding</td>
<td>67%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gaining information</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting a sense of the everyday lives of others</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recalling personal memories</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on the meaning of what I saw</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing rare, valuable or uncommon things</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Did you proceed through the five “stories” in the numbered order?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure/Did not notice the numbered order</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Please rate the following individual elements of this exhibition**

**Design/Layout**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Rating</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<td>Superior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>0%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Artworks

<table>
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<th>Fair</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Theme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superior</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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**In this exhibition, how interested were you in the following?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In this exhibition, how interested were you in the following?</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Did not notice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawn and painted portraits of Gertrude Stein</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sculptural portraits of Gertrude Stein</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographic portraits of Gertrude Stein</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (historical and contextual) photographs</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wall and label texts</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts (clothing, jewelry, newspapers, etc.)</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio and video elements</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### How much of the label and wall text did you read?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None or a little</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most or all</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### With whom are you visiting?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With others</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What is your sex?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Do you live in the U.S. or another country?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other country</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Open-ended Survey Comments

Responses reproduced verbatim with minor edits for clarity. Unintelligible or illegible responses excluded. Simple responses present on multiple surveys (e.g. “subject,” “friend’s recommendation”) are not repeated.

If you came specifically to see this exhibition, what attracted you to it?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject matter</th>
<th>I found the wall texts about Picasso [interesting] because I’m fascinated by her relationship with him</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everything</td>
<td>I saw it yesterday, but ran out of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject matter and artists involved</td>
<td>Been here before and wanted to see it again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The legend and story of G.S.</td>
<td>My friend’s recommendation, and I was interested in G.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recently saw the Stein collection exhibition in Paris</td>
<td>Dynamic exhibit, rich in cultural history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in Stein</td>
<td>Article in Washington Post; SAAM’s newsletter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>I didn't come here to see it, but once I saw it was here, I came directly to it because I'm currently reading her writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend’s recommendation</td>
<td>Internet descriptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in her life and work</td>
<td>Article in Washington Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td>Timelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit to museum’s webpage—special exhibits</td>
<td>Docent tour, article in tourist magazine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>I didn’t really know who G.S. was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The character has always been of interest to me</td>
<td>I wrote the novel the Book of Salt (2003) about the Vietnamese cook for Stein’s Toklas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The roses of Gertrude Stein’s silk twill scarf</td>
<td>Friend’s advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The section that said the “Art of Friendship”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woody Allen movie Midnight in Paris</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Out of town visitor
Interest in 1920–30s
General interest (historical)
Wanted to learn more about Stein
Past experience with Stein’s work, life, etc.
My friend’s interest in Gertrude Stein
A friend, a writer [recommended it;] inspired by G.S.
Gertrude
Content; origination of personal history/ trajectory
I followed the American Presidents
Thought it might be intense
Name recognition, but I wanted to know more
She was an interesting woman
Washington Post article about the exhibit
It was highly recommended by a friend who saw it recently, and I had read a review of it in the paper. Ultimately, I’m interested in the life of Gertrude Stein, so the two recommendations guided me here.
Saw “The Stein” in San Francisco
Literature [of the] Lost Generation
I’m familiar with Stein, had heard good things about the exhibit.
The reputation of G.S.
Interest in F. Rose, Feral Benga
Prints/photos by Beaton
Preview in Washington Post
This is so complete, high-quality, and well-done
Stein’s literary work and [the] photographic aspect of exhibit
Interested in G.S. after reading The Paris Wife
Reading Monique Truong’s Book of Salt
Interest in seeing images related to G.S.
To increase my knowledge of the life of G.S.
Interest in G.S.—this is my second visit to the exhibit
I’m a critic and I [wrote] on G.S.
I know rather a lot about G.S.’s published work and about her
I have heard a lot about G.S.
Fascinated with G.S.
G.S work and the preservation of her [life]
Interest in her relationship with Picasso
Love G.S
Reputation of exhibit
Gerty Gerty Stein Stein is back back home
home back
Exhibit introduction and the entrance
Her life and life stage

Learning about the life of an American artist

The subject and presentation

I'm a big fan of G.S. and wanted to see the exhibit

I'm curious about G.S.'s life

Closing soon—was here last week but ran out of Stein

Knowing about the history of G.S.

Mouse trap

Gay

Website

Famous name—knew nothing about her

She was famous, but I know little about her
What was your favorite portrait, artifact, or display in this exhibition, and why?

Red Grooms

Poem text on the wall. Would have liked much more about her work as a writer; relationships with Hemingway and Fitzgerald; book store in Paris.

Enjoyed photographs in Story 2 the most

New Yorker cartoons

The terra cotta sculpture of Stein by Jo Davidson

The old photos and sculpture as a group—they are wonderful

One Portrait of One Woman by Marsden Hartley

David Levine and Red Grooms—Amazing [work]

The quotes showing her life

Small portrait of Alice B.

Photography of Gertrude and her girlfriend

Fabulous photos of Stein and Toklas, sculpture and paintings of Stein

Andy Warhol pop-art piece

Generally the pictures of Gertrude and her girlfriend

Warhol—could connect with [it]

Photographs of Gertrude and Alice

The display on Stein’s home life

Devorah Sperber’s spools of thread

recreation of Pablo Picasso’s Stein portrait

Clothes

Gertrude Stein by Man Ray

Many of the photographs, esp. later life; also seeing her clothing

Stein’s home

Gertrude Stein’s silk twill scarf

Love, love, love: [homage?] to Gertrude Stein; it appealed to me

One Portrait of One Woman; it showed bright colors

Gertrude Stein silk twill scarf, because it’s beautiful

One Portrait of One Woman because it is something that encourages someone

Portraits

Paste jewelry mounted in tarnished silver

Image of Stein eating with troops in war video presentation

Haven’t finished visiting yet

The spindle art piece

All photographs of Gertrude, her poem
Picasso one

Audio room

Photo of her and her family; wall text explaining her relationship with Alice, ... identity of an “art lesbian” is interesting

Photos of G.S. at her desk

The photo of her posing for the sculpture

The dove wallpaper in the picture, which was glued unevenly

The sculpture of Stein by Jo Davidson, along with her recorded voice reciting [from her work]. Photos from youth to advanced age.

Portrait of G.S. with poodle

Gertrude Stein by Sir Cecil Beaton

The audio. I love hearing speeches from the past.

Her personal articles; very interesting

Her life story

Devorah Sperber’s recreation of Pablo Picasso’s Stein portrait

Her role in World War II

Story #2—Domestic Stein

I truly enjoyed most [of the displays], but a few that I had not seen before made a particular impact, such as the photo of Alice coming through the connecting door between the atelier and the apartment.

The vests. They were smaller than I expected, which gave me an understanding of Steins physique in a very real way. They were ... beautiful too.

Loved everything, especially the profession

Room 2

Picasso’s orange head of Toklas

Stein’s early childhood/ early adult photos and history

D. Levine

The picture of her and Alice B. Toklas in Venice, because it was very pretty and different

The reading. Her voice gave me a new understanding of her writing.

Alice B. Toklas and Gertrude Stein by Man Ray

Photos and wallpaper of her apartment

Artwork of her [by a] very famous artist

Audio; written portraits; images of Toklas/Stein

The picture within a picture—her dressed in a skirt and then later with coat and hat

Timeline and intro biography info

Oil painting by American artist (the first one to visit her called "mol")

The sample of her writing. I wanted to see [more of] her work.
Seeing the people she interacted [with]

Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas departing Newark Airport with Zuni fetishes by Carl Van Vechten

Recordings of her reading her works

Picasso's portrait of Toklas

#5—The legacy room

Bird wall paper room

One of her photos with Alice and other people

The poodle one

Negrosunshine

[Images from] two Paris apartments

Loved the audio (Picasso/Matisse readings)

 Didn’t like exhibit, not interested

Picasso portrait

I especially liked the clothing and discussions of Toklas’ needlework. Wish there was more about her cooking. What about the famous brownies?

No one favorite [object], but enjoyed the ... layout showing different facets of her character.

The display covering Stein’s home life

The portrait in the hallway closest to the Black List exhibit looks like painter’s windows

Photos of 1st home/ atelier in Paris

F. Rose’s portrait of G.S. and art

The separation from Leo, her writing music

Liked the pictures and history at the beginning on wall

Man Ray's photo is sparse

Audio of her work being read

Displays in section 2—Am interested in everyday life and home surroundings of subject

Time portrait

So many, hard to choose. Delighted to see.

The operas; they were interesting but comically bad.

The early family photo in California

Family stein is my favorite because the photos are unique

The photo of her dressed up as a neo-Roman

Gertrude Stein’s clothing

I enjoyed the 1st and [last] displays the most

Entire show

Rose scarf—just liked it; I love textiles.

Didn’t have a favorite

Riba Rovira’s portrait of Stein

The chronology

The entrance photo
G.S. and Alice by S.S. Chemplain—graceful Vests
Quote "When you see this, remember me"
“Rose is a rose is a rose”—today I understood its meaning
Her life with Alice
The terra-cotta sculpture of Stein by Jo Davidson and voice recording—spectacular lighting
_Time_ magazine article—reflection on how long it has been ...
I loved the exhibit—couldn’t choose one
A photo: “Gertrude Stein, Bilignin” by George Platt Lynes
G.S. with partner
All the photographs, esp. Story #2—“Domestic Stein”
Picasso’s painting of Toklas
The one with the crest over her shoulder
Photos of G.S. and Alice—seeing what their lives looked like
Story #2—“Domestic Stein,” because I like their relationship best
The portrait of G.S. and A.T. with their dogs
Showed who G.S. was
Stein in Balmain suit
The spool one; video image; book she wrote
Her and the poodle walking down the street
The one on display in Story #5
World War II history, auctions, newspapers, paintings / Picasso
After Picasso by Devorah Sperber
GS photographed with her Picasso portrait, because it emphasized how much she was proud of it, and of Pablo.
House in a rural France
She seems to be an exhibitionist
Picasso portraits, _Life_ magazine
The portrait that showed her "self love," because it seemed to capture the essence of her
Picasso with Poodle
The vest—it's personal; made me feel closer
Did you find anything surprising or unexpected in this exhibition?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration with Virgil Thomson and Stein's monumental egoism</td>
<td>I didn't know anything about Gertrude Stein, so everything was interesting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stein's reading of her textual portraits of Picasso and Matisse</td>
<td>I was not familiar [with her popularity] before this exhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn't know about the home in the south of France</td>
<td>Very entertaining, art work is very comedic in Story #5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not really. I had learned a lot from the Paris exhibit of the Stein collection</td>
<td>I'd never known or heard about her, so everything was surprising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images Gertrude's friend with Virgil Thomson</td>
<td>Learned quite a few things that I didn't know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much I learned about them</td>
<td>The range of her activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No background on family to provide context</td>
<td>She was an outspoken lesbian (for her time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship of Picasso and Gertrude</td>
<td>To hear her voice, to see her clothes, to learn A.B. Toklas sold her Picassos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open discussion of sexuality/ sex preference</td>
<td>She was large but gentle, a beautiful soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her voice</td>
<td>Comprehensive portraits of friendships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devorah Sperber's spools of thread</td>
<td>How much information was provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recreation of Pablo Picasso's Stein portrait</td>
<td>Her rags to riches story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found interesting artifacts</td>
<td>Amount of info on Alice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The elements in the illustrations and how they differed</td>
<td>Didn’t know who she was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I thought one portrait of her was a man</td>
<td>Hadn’t seen images of the Rue Catherine apartment or Billignin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How the paintings are painted</td>
<td>The paintings that included Pepe!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group of male homosexuals, many literary</td>
<td>That Stein supported the Vichy government, and the extent of her self-promotion throughout her life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The self-fashioning

The basket one

I knew very little about her. It was all unexpected.

Her fame

We found her activities to be very diverse

Stein’s widespread popularity in her later life

Breadth of her influence and fame

Element of opera

Little info on her money, how she met Alice, or falling-out with her brother

Wanted to know more about family life and wealth—father’s work

Her clothing

More info about Gertrude’s life than I previously knew

Her reading of her work

The video of her operas being performed

Her personal art collection/ her power in the world

I was surprised to learn that given her name and fame, the Germans didn’t capture her during World War II

That she was so popular with regular people and soldiers.

After the war aid to GIs

[Wanted to know] what the source of her income was [and] how she avoided deportation in Vichy.

Her access to artists / talent

Lots of her portraits and sculptures

Andy Warhol pop art piece

Not really. I already knew a lot about Stein and her life.

I didn’t know much about her before arriving

The poetry being read to me while I was reading the poetry on the wall

Unaware of libretto authors

Hurst photos

The whole exhibit— I didn’t know it was here. I had about an hour and spent most of it here!

I wasn’t aware of many of Stein’s accomplishments

Quite a bit; was not aware of Stein’s earlier years and associations

Everything

Personal artifacts (wall paper, clothing, and jewelry)

How many pictures were taken/ made of her

Language of her writing

Loved her fiancé, two Jewish women during World War II
Steins theater (opera) productions, specifically "Four Saints"

The fact that she was a lesbian

Didn't know she was a lesbian, and that she was open about it

I never realized G.S made an opera

Didn't know much beyond 1920

The complexity

Where is the Picasso portrait?! Also, integrating more of her writing would be nice.

Not really, but I may be atypical

That they remained safe in France during World War II

The itinerary of her U.S. lecture tour

Highlight [was] her relationship with Alice

Stuff about her collaborations

The cloud display

I liked the artwork inspired by G.S.

I didn’t know she created “A rose is a rose is a rose”

Story #2—“Domestic Stein”

Stein as both very traditional and non-traditional at the same time in almost all aspects of her life

Her popularity and renown

Very surprised by G.S. and A.T.'s relationship

Learned a lot more about her personal life

Whole exhibit was interesting

Curious why G.S.'s years in occupied France were glossed over.

Pablo Picasso’s business card reading "Paul Picasso"

The contemporary/recent items

I was surprised at how early in her life the famous Picasso portrait was

Focus on her clothes—would an exhibit of a male writer have similar focus?

The wall paper
Appendix D: Qualitative Interview Guide

Visitor Information
Where are you visiting from?

What brings you to the museum today? Have you been here before?

Did you know about this exhibition before you came? Did you come specifically to see this exhibition? If so, what interested you in it? Did it meet your expectations? Why or why not?

(General prompt:) Tell me about your experience in this exhibition so far.

Design/Content of Exhibition
Did you find anything surprising or unexpected in this exhibition? Does this seem to you like a typical art exhibition? Why or why not?

What did you think about the organization of the exhibition? (Prompts: Ascertain whether visitors were aware of the five-section organization; whether and why chose to follow it or not; whether they may have missed sections, started in the middle, etc.)

What do you think about the overall look and feel? (Prompts: Wall colors, wall paper, material culture such as clothes, jewelry, books, and gallery brochures, audio and video resources, lighting)

What do you think about exhibitions that focus on one historical figure? What do you think about Gertrude Stein as the focus of an NPG exhibition?

Knowledge about Gertrude Stein
Were you familiar with Gertrude Stein before seeing this exhibition?

If yes: Has this exhibition changed how you think about Stein's work or personal life? How?

If no: After viewing this exhibition, what are your thoughts about Stein as a writer, cultural figure, etc.? What are your impressions of her work? Her personal life? Does she strike you as an important cultural figure? Why or why not?
Other

(If with children:) Which parts of the exhibition were engaging for your children?

Did you use any of the interactive AV kiosks? Did they enhance your experience in the exhibition? In what ways?

What, if anything, would you change about the exhibition? (Or:) What else would have liked to have seen done in the exhibition? Does the exhibition raise any unanswered questions in your mind?

What do you see as the underlying theme(s) of this exhibition?