

# Beauty and the East

Summative Evaluation:

Visitor responses to *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* at the  
British Museum

December 2007

This is an online version of a report prepared by MHM for the  
British Museum. Commercially sensitive information has  
been removed

MORRIS HARGREAVES McINTYRE 



**Beauty and the East - Visitor responses to *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* at the British Museum**

© 2007 MORRIS HARGREAVES MCINTYRE

50 Copperas Street, Manchester, UK M4 1HS

Telephone 0161 839 3311

Fax 0161 8393377

Email [inray@lateralthinkers.com](mailto:inray@lateralthinkers.com)

[www.lateralthinkers.com](http://www.lateralthinkers.com)

*Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* attracted the **typical special exhibition** visitor at the British Museum.

Visitors liked the **new interpretive techniques** tested in this exhibition, especially the amount of varied information to be found on object labels.

The exhibition provoked strong **emotional** and **spiritual** outcomes in its visitors.

## Contents

1	Executive Summary	6
2	<i>Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan</i>	8
3	What we did	9
4	Key findings	11
5	Visitor profile	12
6	Motivation for visiting	16
7	Engagement	21
8	Interpretation & display	22
9	Visit Impact	27
10	Outcomes	33
11	Conclusions	36

# 1 Executive Summary

## 1.1 Visitors were extremely knowledgeable

33% of visitors to the exhibition had a specialist knowledge of the subject areas covered, with a further 47% of visitors saying they had a general knowledge.

## 1.2 There was a high percentage of repeat visitors

Visitors to *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* tended to be repeat visitors to the Museum, and as a result there was a relatively low proportion of *New Intenders* at this exhibition. Pre-awareness of the exhibition amongst its visitors was also high, suggesting that the marketing and publicity successfully appealed to exhibition visitors.

## 1.3 The audience was highly motivated

There was a much higher proportion of highly motivated visitors at this exhibition than at the Museum as a whole which can be partly attributed to the high pre-knowledge base amongst visitors. This meant that many visitors did not need an intellectual back-fill, and so expected to have an emotional or spiritual experience.

There was also a high number of visitors who expected to behave as searchers or researchers within the exhibition space, looking at every object in detail.

## 1.4 The new interpretation techniques proved popular

Visitors liked the variety of information available on the object labels as it offered them the opportunity to learn about both the object and its creator, whilst giving them enough historical context for a contemporary art exhibition. The videos in the exhibition were also extremely popular as they helped bring the exhibition to life and gave a deeper insight into the techniques used to make the objects.

Visitors were less convinced by the colour coding of the text panels, as some simply missed this altogether whilst others were unsure as to the purpose of the different colours.

## **1.5 The layout encouraged visitors to engage**

The way in which the exhibition was displayed enabled visitors to either look at every object in a linear order, or to choose specific sections on which to concentrate their attention.

The use of large panels gave visitors an introduction to each section, whilst the videos offered a break from the objects and explored the work in greater detail.

## **1.6 Visitors experienced strong emotional and spiritual outcomes**

One of the most commonly cited outcomes by visitors was that they had seen real aesthetic beauty in the exhibition, and for many it was a real eye-opening experience. The exhibition also helped give them a much deeper insight both into the artists' minds but also into the ways of other people and cultures.

The exhibition also helped to stimulate creativity and inspiration in many visitors who were keen to go away from the exhibition and try some similar crafts for themselves. For some, the exhibition offered a revelatory experience, whilst others felt *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* brought up some relevant issues to contemplate.

## **1.7 Visitors wanted more**

Visitors said they would have liked to see more objects, videos and background into the crafting techniques in the exhibition.

## 2 *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan*

*Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* was a paying exhibition held in Room 35 of the British Museum from 19 July - 21 October 2007.

Concentrating on a number of different media of Japanese craft including textiles, lacquer, ceramics, metal, wood and bamboo, the exhibition highlighted some of the best work from the annual Japan Traditional Art Crafts Exhibition.

The exhibition featured work from some of Japan's 'Living National Treasures', and also contained pieces from the Museum's permanent collection to add some historical context.

A separate report has also been produced covering reaction to the accompanying events and activities programme which ran alongside this exhibition.



## 3 What we did

Morris Hargreaves McIntyre was commissioned to carry out the summative evaluation of the *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* exhibition at the British Museum.

The objectives of the research were to determine:

- Exhibition visitor profile
- Number of repeat visitors to the Museum (1 year)
- Number of repeat visitors to the Museum (1 year +)
- New visits to the Museum driven by the exhibition
- Intentional vs. incidental visitors
- Reasons and motivations for visiting
- Marketing (pre-visit awareness, on-site awareness, sponsor recall)
- Events programme awareness
- Average dwell time and engagement level
- Average dwell time with audio guide
- Audio guide use
- Printed guide use

The following research methodologies were employed at the Museum:

### 3.1 Exit surveys

Surveys were conducted with visitors at the exit of Room 35 to ascertain a basic visitor profile, awareness of marketing and publicity, motivation for visiting the exhibition, behaviour within the room and impacts and outcomes of the exhibition.

As per the exhibition brief, exit surveys were completed during normal Museum opening hours and so did not cover late night openings on Thursdays and Fridays.

154 *exit surveys* were conducted

### 3.2 **Mystery visits (*Thinking Out Loud*)**

A number of mystery visitors were recruited to carry out a visit to the exhibition. These visitors were either repeat Museum visitors whom had visited a special exhibition at the Museum before, or they were young professionals making their first ever visit to the Museum.

These visitors were asked to complete a normal visit to the Museum, whilst completing a mystery visit audit booklet. They were asked about their expectations and preconceptions of the exhibition, and then after their visit to what extent the exhibition had matched their hopes and fears.

Whilst on the actual visit itself they were also asked to speak into a tape recorder to describe their spontaneous reactions to various aspects of the exhibition including layout and interpretation.

The transcriptions of the mystery visitor comments are available in the appendices, together with a blank copy of a mystery visit booklet.

6 *mystery visits* to the exhibition were completed.

### 3.3 **Rolling Research**

A question was added to the ongoing rolling research at the Museum to ascertain awareness of the *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* exhibition amongst Museum visitors.

## 4 Key findings

The table below shows the key findings from *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* and compares them with the last three exhibitions to be held in the same space. Comparison tables for all the special exhibitions that have been evaluated by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre are available as appendices to this report.

It must be noted that visitor behaviour differs greatly between free and paying exhibitions, so direct comparisons between *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* and *La Bouche du Roi*, for example, need to be viewed with some caution.

### *Key findings*

	Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan	La Bouche du Roi	The Past From Above	Power & Taboo	Word Into Art	Michelangelo Drawings
	Paying	Free	Paying	Free	Free	Paying
Average length of visit	54 mins	18 mins	62 mins	34 mins	38 mins	86 mins

## 5 Visitor profile

Where appropriate, the report compares the findings of the *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* exhibition with those from the last special exhibition to be held in Room 35 - *La Bouche du Roi*<sup>1</sup> and the previous paying exhibition in the space - *The Past From Above*<sup>2</sup>. Data is also compared with the Year 2 findings of the British Museum's rolling visitor research<sup>3</sup>.

### Visitor profile

	Crafting Beauty (paying)	La Bouche du Roi (free)	The Past From Above (paying)	British Museum
<b>Base</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>2,705</b>
<b>First-time</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>64%</b>
<b>Visited in past 12 months</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>Visited more than 12 months ago</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>Intentional visiting</b>				
<b>Intentional visit to British Museum</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>90%</b>
<b>Incidental visit to British Museum</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Knowledge of subject areas covered</b>				
<b>Specialist</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>General</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>74%</b>
<b>Little/ none</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>Origin</b>				
<b>London</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>Elsewhere in UK</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Overseas</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>75%</b>

*Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* attracted a high proportion of repeat visitors, with half of the exhibition attenders having visited the Museum in the past 12 months. As a result of this, there was also a higher percentage of London based visitors than at the Museum as a whole and at previous exhibitions.

The exhibition attracted a very knowledgeable audience, with a third of attenders saying they had a specialist knowledge of the subject areas

<sup>1</sup> *'The life you don't live'* - Visitor responses to *La Bouche du Roi* at the British Museum, Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, June 2007

<sup>2</sup> *The world from a different angle* - Visitor responses to *The Past From Above: through the lens of Georg Gerster* at the British Museum, Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, March 2007

<sup>3</sup> Data taken from British Museum rolling research: Year 2

covered, and a further 47% having a general knowledge. Only a fifth of exhibition visitors had little or no knowledge of the subject areas covered.

### **Visitor age**

The age profile of visitors was very similar to that found at the last paying exhibition in the space - *The Past From Above*.

Targeted marketing and publicity may have attracted a younger audience on the evenings the Museum was open later, and some of these younger audiences have also been captured through the events programme.

### **Intentional visiting**

There was a high level of intentional visiting to the *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* exhibition, with nearly half of visitors describing it as the main reason behind their visit to the Museum that day.

## Segmentation

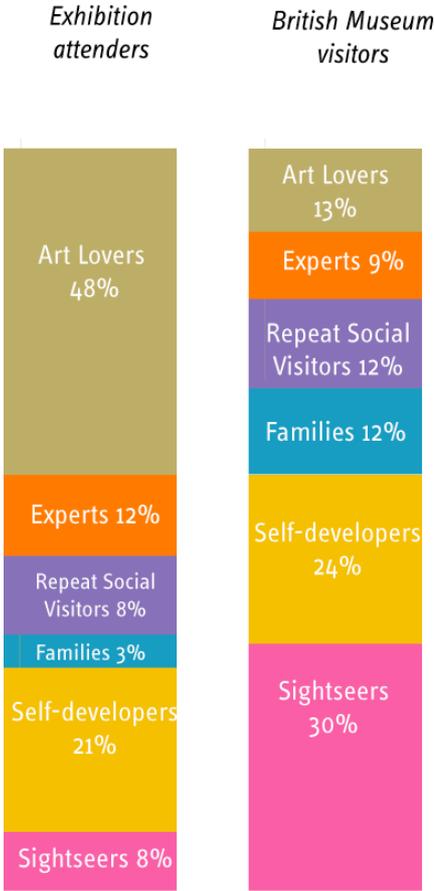
The table below describes the segments that current Museum visitors have been divided into.

**Segment table**

Segment name	Description	Broad needs
Sightseers	First time visitors making a general visit. Mainly tourists who want to 'do' the museum	Ease of access, comfort, orientation, good facilities
Self developers	Non-specialists wanting to informally improve their general knowledge about subjects covered in the museum.	Journey of discovery, layered information, finding out new things
Families	Mixed age groups, wanting fun and educational trip for children	Ease of access and movement, child friendly facilities and activities, different levels of service to meet diverse age needs
Repeat Social Visitors	Repeat visitors, meeting up with others at the museum. Use the museum as a sociable space and want to feel a sense of ownership in their surroundings.	Ease of access, comfort, orientation, good facilities, warm welcome, accessible exhibitions
Experts	Specialists wanting to deepen their knowledge further by engaging deeply with the collection	High quality access to collections, critical engagement, access to expert staff
Art Lovers	Spiritually and emotionally motivated visitors who want to commune with objects in the collection, and use their existing knowledge as a base to go deeper	Ambience, deep sensory engagement, space for contemplation

The diagram below compares the proportion of visitors that fall into each segment at the *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* exhibition with those for the whole Museum.

**Visitor segments**



This model shows that *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* attracted a much higher proportion of Art Lovers and Experts - experienced, frequent, knowledgeable visitors - than can be found at the Museum generally.

## 6 Motivation for visiting

### 6.1 Hierarchy of motivation

We have identified four key drivers for visiting museums:

See museum as a...	Have this driver...	And they seek this from a visit..
CHURCH	SPIRITUAL	Creative stimulation and quiet contemplation, they see museums as an opportunity to escape and recharge their batteries, food for the soul
SPA	EMOTIONAL	May have a personal connection to the subject matter, want to see fascinating objects in an inspiring setting, seek ambience, deep sensory and intellectual experience
ARCHIVE	INTELLECTUAL	Keen to encourage their children's or their own interest and knowledge, may have professional interest in the subject, seek a journey of discovery, to find out new things
ATTRACTION	SOCIAL	See museums as an enjoyable place to spend time with friends and family, seek ease of access and orientation, good facilities and services, welcoming staff

MORRIS HARGREAVES McINTYRE >>>

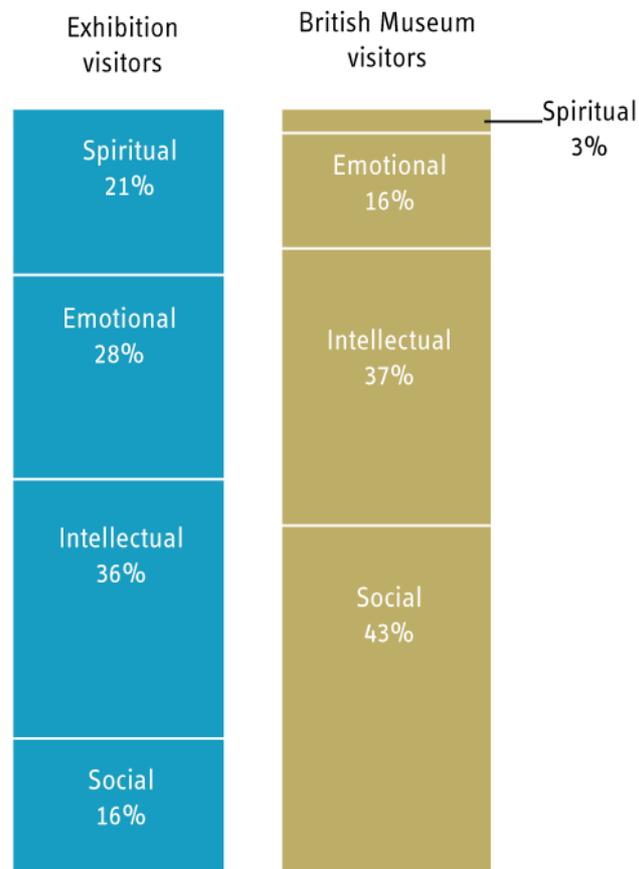
These motives form a hierarchy: as visitors move up from Social through to Spiritual motivations they become more increasingly engaged with the museum and its collections. The further up the hierarchy they reach, the more fulfilling and rewarding visitors report their visit to be. That doesn't mean that Social visits should be any less valued, it simply means that they result in lower levels of engagement with the content of the museum.

At each level of the hierarchy visitors have different needs. The suggestion is not that visitors are forced or even led up this hierarchy, but that they get the opportunity to engage at the deepest level they wish to.

### 6.2 Main motivation

Using a series of statements on the exit survey we asked visitors to *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* to identify the main motivation for their visit to the British Museum that day. The diagram below shows the main motivation of visitors to *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* compared to all visitors to the British Museum.

### Visitor motivations



This chart shows us that visitors to *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* were extremely motivated, with 21% of visitors citing spiritual motivations, and 28% of visitors citing emotional motivations to visit. This shows that the exhibition mainly attracted people who responded to the aesthetic and intellectual promises of the exhibition.

There was also a much lower proportion of visitors with intellectual motivations to visit *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* than at other paying exhibitions, with only 36% of visitors to this exhibition being intellectually motivated, compared with 62% at *A New World*.

Over a quarter of first time visitors to the Museum in the exhibition were spiritually motivated, whilst 31% of repeat Museum visitors were emotionally motivated.

### Specific motivations

In addition to identifying visitors' main motivations for visiting the exhibition, we are also able to look at the proportion of visitors motivated by specific motivators. The table below gives the proportion of visitors to *Crafting*

*Beauty in Modern Japan* by each individual motivator, and compares them with all British Museum visitors.

**Specific motivators**

	Crafting Beauty	British Museum	% Difference
Personal interest in the subject	63%	38%	+25%
To improve my own knowledge	61%	58%	+3%
Aesthetic beauty	55%	33%	+22%
To see fascinating/awe-inspiring things	50%	31%	+19%
To stimulate my own creativity	46%	19%	+27%
Better understanding of other people/cultures	43%	37%	+6%
Enjoyable way to pass the time	41%	49%	-8%
One of the major attractions in London	32%	60%	-28%
Peaceful, quiet contemplation	30%	14%	+16%
Architecture	28%	31%	-3%
Academic/professional interest	27%	14%	+13%
Insight into artist's mind	22%	-	-
Emotionally moving experience	20%	8%	+12%
To escape and recharge my batteries	19%	-	-
Social interaction	15%	20%	-5%
Personal connection or identity	9%	5%	+4%
To visit the shop / café	7%	-	-
Encourage children's interest in history	6%	12%	-6%

This table confirms that the exhibition visitors were much more motivated than Museum visitors generally. There were significant increases in visitors who were motivated to visit the Museum to stimulate their own creativity, because of a personal interest in the subject and to see beautiful things in an attractive setting.

**Reasons for visiting**

Visitors were given a list of options and then asked to identify their reasons for visiting *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* that day.

Over three quarters of visitors to the exhibition said they wanted to see contemporary / modern art and craft, whilst the opportunity to find out more about Japan today was a reason for over half of the exhibition's visitors.

## Meaning making

Through our qualitative work into how visitors select and engage with objects in the museum environment, we have identified four modes of visitor behaviour. These modes classify how the visitor selects objects to explore and what kind of interpretation they need to make meaning from objects.

### *Hierarchy of Meaning making*

Mode	Object selection	Needs
RESEARCHER	Specific objects/ collections	Focused, specialist museum visitors, select objects themselves based on their in-depth knowledge of the subject area, want access to expert information
SEARCHER	Classification/ collection	Have good general understanding of the topic, consume all the information available in the museum on that subject, want museum to select and present objects
FOLLOWER	Narrative theme	Require a narrative explanation, want the museum to select and present objects which illustrate themes to follow
BROWSER	Random objects	Select objects by browsing the exhibition, will wander until they find a 'gateway' object that catches their attention, require explanation of their selected objects

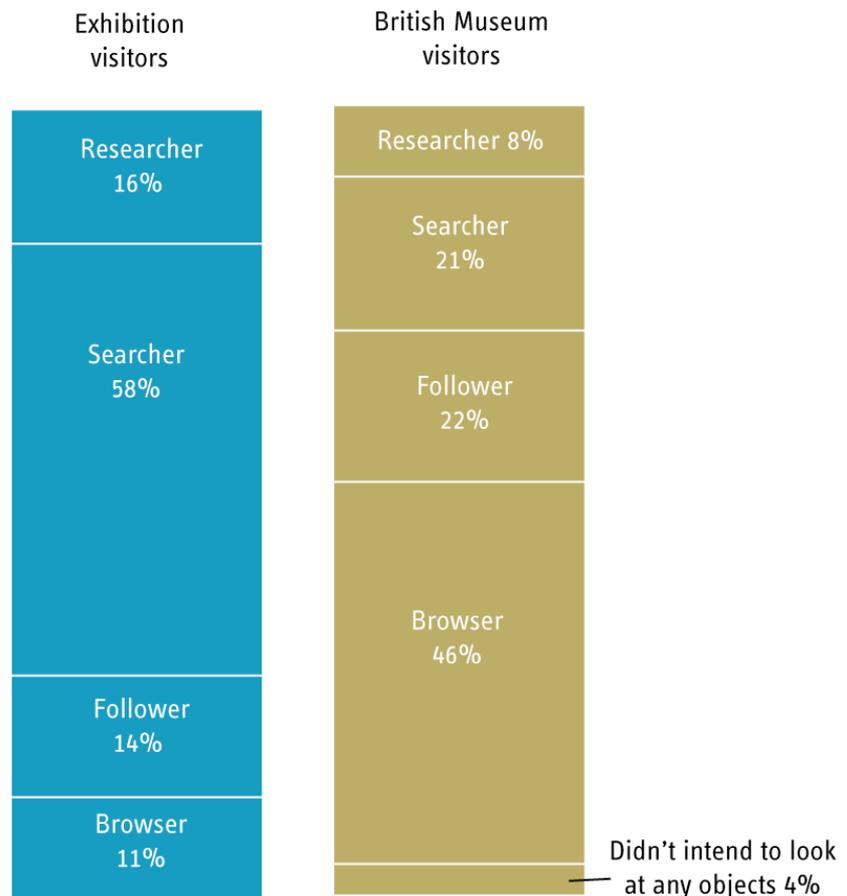
MORRIS HARGREAVES McINTYRE 

The four modes form a hierarchy, with each level of the hierarchy representing an increased level of engagement with objects. It is possible for visitors to move upwards through the modes of behaviour – the modes can be seen as stages in the development of a visitor's meaning making skills.

Visitors who are continually browsing an exhibition can only making fleeting connections with a limited number of objects. If the museum is committed to developing visitors' levels of engagement it should seek to encourage visitors to develop their meaning making skills by selecting objects and offering interpretation that propels visitors up the hierarchy and engages them pro-actively.

Visitors were asked a question on the exit survey to identify their entry mode; that is how they behaved on entry to the exhibition. The results are shown below and compared with all British Museum visitors.

**Entry meaning making mode**



The chart above shows that *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* visitors were far more motivated than general Museum visitors, with nearly three quarters of exhibition visitors saying they expected to behave as searchers or researchers.

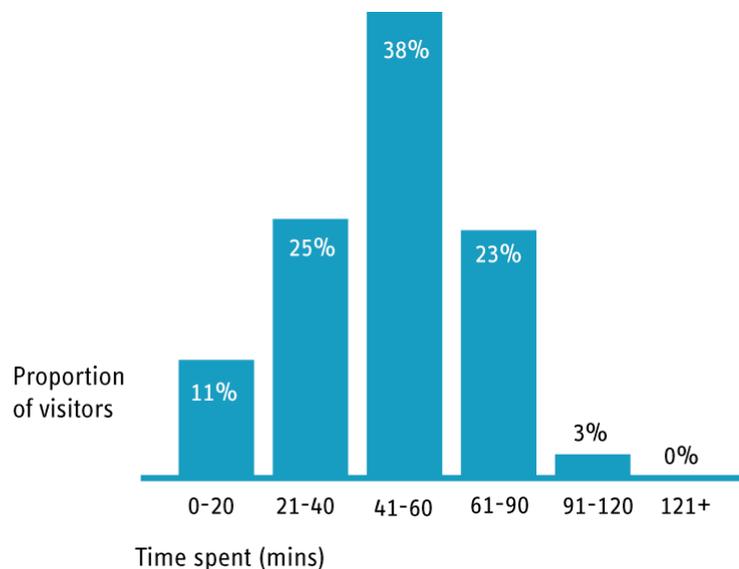
The large difference in expected behaviour between exhibition and Museum visitors can partly be explained by the fact that *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* was a paying exhibition, and therefore we would expect highly motivated visitors, but it is also a reflection of the intellectual and aesthetic motivations of visitors.

## 7 Engagement

### Time spent

The chart below shows the length of time visitors spent in Room 35 for the *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* exhibition. Time is a useful indicator of engagement as the more engaged visitors become in an exhibition, the longer they are likely to spend in it.

### Time spent



This chart shows us that 74% of visitors spent up to an hour in *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan*, with 23% spending between an hour and an hour and a half. Only 3% of visitors spent more than 90 minutes in the exhibition.

The average visit length for visitors to *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* was over 54 minutes - significantly higher than the 18 minutes visitors spent on average at *La Bouche du Roi* but slightly less than the 62 minute average at *The Past From Above*.

## 8 Interpretation & display

### 8.1 Interpretation

#### Visitors were happy with the amount of information in the exhibition

60% of visitors felt that the amount of information in the exhibition had strongly enhanced their experience, with a further 30% of visitors saying it had slightly enhanced their visit. No visitors felt that the amount of information on offer had had a detrimental effect on their visit.

The tone of the information and language used was another positive element of the interpretation, with 77% of visitors saying it enhanced the experience.

Over three quarters of visitors felt that the added historical context in the exhibition had enhanced their visit.

*I think the information has been very well thought out ... and every time I wanted to know something there is definitely something there* **Mystery visitor**

*I liked the depth of information about style, technique and influence. Seemed to be written by someone with a real passion for the field* **Mystery visitor**

#### Object labels

Visitors liked the labels relating to each object, saying that they helped them learn about the artists and their work.

*I thought the information relating to the specific objects was good. It was relevant, it was clear and I think it would appeal to a wide range of understanding* **Mystery visitor**

*I think the information about the artist and the object is completely spot on* **Mystery visitor**

Visitors also liked the variety of information available on the individual object labels.

*What I like about the information they give me is that it is more about the artist and less about the history* **Mystery visitor**

*I would much rather have this information about the artist and the object rather than viewing it being like an art show* **Mystery visitor**

*I like the photo of the artists as well - that is really good* **Mystery visitor**

The information on the labels affected how people engaged with the objects.

*You look at the object first - you are drawn to that, and then you look at the panel and then you look at [the object] again and obviously it helps you to understand how it has been crafted, the thought behind the artist / craftsman who has actually done it* **Mystery visitor**

*I found myself looking at the objects more because of the information* **Mystery visitor**

### **Larger text panels**

Visitors felt that the larger text panels were also very useful, although one visitor felt they were too large and infringed on the actual objects themselves.

*I like the information boards that are on each section - they are very informative and for somebody who doesn't know much about all the crafts it explains really well what each bit is* **Mystery visitor**

*The information panels are really good, they are big and not too much writing and easy to read and succinct and informative* **Mystery visitor**

*Good information on the signs* **Mystery visitor**

*I think that they interfere a bit with the work themselves and so it would have been nice if these were clear but not quite so big and overpowering in the space* **Mystery visitor**

### **Visitors especially liked the videos**

The video elements in the exhibition were especially popular amongst visitors who felt they helped bring the exhibition to life.

*The videos are very good and I think they added another dimension to an otherwise quite static exhibition* **Mystery visitor**

*The short films were good too - different medium to learn from - breaks up the reading* **Mystery visitor**

*Video was really good - real voice from artist* **Visitor**

*The TV point with the short films was a really good idea ... and there is a sign to tell you how long it is etc.* **Mystery visitor**

Visitors would have liked to see more videos in the exhibition.

*I would have enjoyed more videos with experts Visitor*

*More detailed films of techniques used make it easier to understand the result Visitor*

### Coloured text panels

A quarter of visitors felt that the use of colour coding on the text panels had significantly enhanced their experience, with a further 21% saying it had slightly enhanced the experience. However, over half of visitors to the exhibition said that the colour coding had made no impact on their visit.

This may be because visitors simply did not notice the colours, or were uncertain of their purpose, as was the case amongst some of the mystery visitors.

*I didn't really think it was particularly effective ... it punctuates each area but it wasn't something that stood out massively Mystery visitor*

*I couldn't work out why some of the information panels had a coloured background whilst the rest had a white background Mystery visitor*

### Interaction

Visitors would have liked more interactivity in the exhibition to break up the flow of the exhibition and to offer them a deeper context to the objects. Suggestions included objects that could be handled and more staff in the room talking about the objects or modelling the kimonos. A greater awareness of the accompanying events and activities might satisfy some of these requests.

*I would like to have been able to touch things Visitor*

*I thought it might be slightly more interactive Visitor*

*A life-like element would have made it worth the money or something interactive Visitor*

Visitors to the *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* events especially enjoyed the interactive elements of the events, such as being able to speak directly to the artist.

*I really enjoyed the opportunity to meet the artist at the reception after the lecture Event Attender*

*The opportunity to experience material hands-on Event Attender*

*Connecting with the art on display with the original artist, live from Japan. Being able to communicate with him, see and handle his work - amazing!*

*Event Attender*

## 8.2 Display

40% of visitors said that the layout and flow of the exhibition had strongly enhanced their visit, with a further 29% saying it had slightly enhanced it.

The themes and narrative were also very popular, with 84% of visitors feeling it had enhanced their experience in some way.

### The flow of the exhibition helped visitors engage

Visitors liked the linear layout of the exhibition and the way it was split into different sections. This helped them add a narrative to the display, rather than being faced with just a large collection of unrelated objects.

*Really well set out, easy to move around, makes it more appealing - flow from one area to the next* Visitor

*I like the design and layout here - it is very simple so that your eyes are drawn to the pieces rather than anything around it.* Mystery visitor

*I was really impressed by the layout and thought that went into the exhibition and although I thought it would be quite boring I was really engaged throughout* Mystery visitor

*I think it is good the way the room is separated into the different sections because it means you can spend time in the sections that you actually want to spend more time in* Mystery visitor

### The room had a calm, relaxing, Japanese ambience

The layout and display of the exhibition was further praised by visitors who felt it offered a calming environment in which to view the art, whilst the ambience was likened by some to that of a Japanese space.

*First impressions on entering the room - it is quiet, it is calm ... I am thinking about Japan* Mystery visitor

*It is very easy with Japanese and Oriental stuff to add too much ... style to the surroundings but it's not needed here and it is quite nice to see* Mystery visitor

*All aspects - the videos, signage, lighting, layout, concept and explanation were excellent and helped to create a peaceful, harmonious and stimulating exhibition* *Mystery visitor*

*It was quite spacious, it wasn't too crowded* *Mystery visitor*

### Supporting materials

Take up of the accompanying materials at *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* was relatively good, with 58% of visitors using the exhibition guide and 38% using the exhibitions and events leaflet. Other elements were not so well used:

- *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* section on the British Museum website 12%
- Large-print guide 11%

### Events programme

From a list provided, exhibition attenders were asked to choose the statement which most accurately described their response to the accompanying events and activities programme for the *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* exhibition.

56% of attenders said that they were interested in the programme and tried to look out for events to attend. A third of exhibition attenders said that they were interested in the events, but they simply did not have the time to attend them, whilst only 2% thought the events were too expensive / not value for money.

Only 10% of exhibition attenders said that the events programme did not interest them.

A full report detailing response to the accompanying programme of events and activities has been produced separately.

## 9 Visit Impact

Visitors were asked to choose whether they considered the exhibition to be an art exhibition or a more traditional British Museum piece with historical learning-based content.

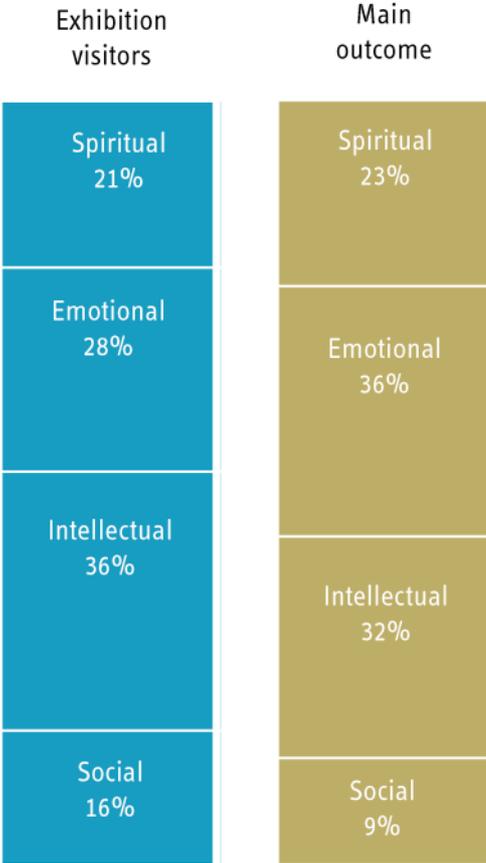
Nearly half of exhibition visitors said they thought *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* was just an aesthetic exhibition of Japanese art and craft, with only 10% saying they thought it was solely an intellectual exhibition exploring the historical context of Japanese crafts history.

42% of visitors felt that the exhibition covered both of these descriptions in some way.

### Impact

From a list provided, visitors were asked to identify what outcomes they felt they had gained through the exhibition. The chart below compares visitors' main motivation of visiting against the main outcome they got from the exhibition.

**Overall impact**



This chart shows us that the exhibition successfully matched visitors' motivations, and also generated some unexpected emotional and spiritual outcomes.

**Ranked impact on specific motivations**

	Pre-visit	Post-visit	% Difference
Personal interest in the subject	63%	57%	-6%
To improve my own knowledge	61%	67%	+6%
Aesthetic beauty	55%	59%	+4%
To see fascinating/awe-inspiring things	50%	45%	+5%
To stimulate my own creativity	46%	39%	-7%
Better understanding of other people/cultures	43%	40%	-3%
Enjoyable way to pass the time	41%	42%	+1%
One of the major attractions in London	32%	15%	-17%
Peaceful, quiet contemplation	30%	24%	-6%
Architecture	28%	18%	-10%
Academic/professional interest	27%	15%	-12%
Insight into artist's mind	22%	32%	+10%
Emotionally moving experience	20%	22%	+2%
To escape and recharge my batteries	19%	12%	-7%
Social interaction	15%	12%	-3%
Personal connection or identity	9%	7%	-2%
To visit the shop / café	7%	4%	-3%
Encourage children's interest in history	6%	5%	-1%

The biggest increase from motivation to outcome was in visitors who felt they had gained an insight into the artist's mind. Other significant increases included visitors improving their own knowledge and seeing fascinating, awe-inspiring things.

**Impact on future behaviour**

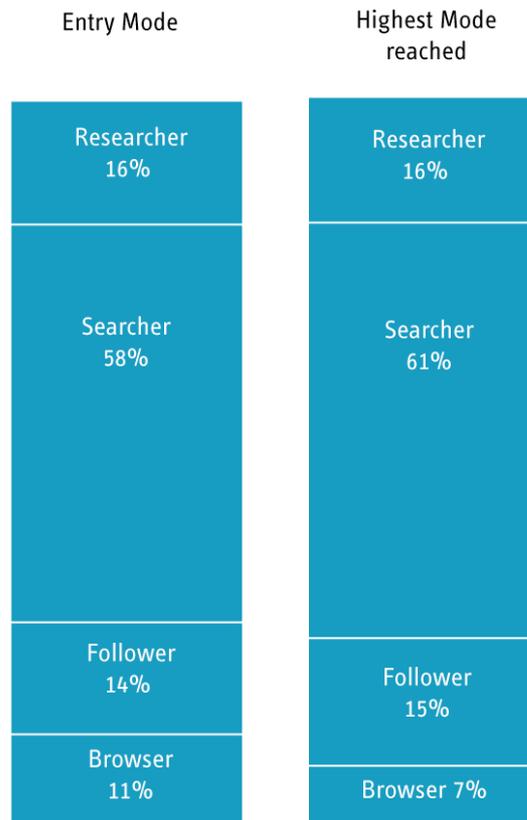
Visitors were asked whether visiting the *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* exhibition would affect the way they used the British Museum in the future, Visitors said they would be more likely to:

- Visit the Japan galleries 59%
- See or find out more about *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* events and activities 49%
- Be more inspired to produce their own work 45%
- Use the British Museum website 40%
- Visit British Museum special exhibitions 40%
- Visit the British Museum in general 32%

- Find out more about the British Museum 31%

Raising awareness and encouraging visits to the new re-presented Japan galleries was an initial objective of the exhibition which has successfully been achieved.

### Meaning making impact



The chart above shows that visitors largely behaved as they had expected to, but with such a large number of visitors expecting to behave as searchers or researchers, this is not a cause for concern.

### The exhibition encouraged visitors to think differently about the Museum

Some visitors, and especially the mystery visitors, felt that their perspective of the British Museum had changed as a result of the *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* exhibition.

As we have seen at previous contemporary art exhibitions such as *La Bouche du Roi*, many visitors simply do not expect to see contemporary or modern art at the British Museum.

*It was displayed in a very modern way, which helped dispel any notions that the Museum is old and stuffy* Mystery visitor

*I suppose from the British Museum I would expect more historical ... rather than modern art ... I'd probably see it at Tate Modern rather than here* Mystery visitor

Visitors were pleasantly surprised to see the Museum exhibiting modern art and craft from other cultures.

*It made me feel that the Museum is able to focus in on other cultures. I had felt it was too 'big' for that before* Mystery visitor

*I already have a good opinion of the Museum but this was strengthened by this exhibition, particularly the quality of curation, the exhibits and the imaginative concept for the exhibition* Mystery visitor

### Visitors want more

A consistently appearing comment cited by visitors was that they would have liked to have seen more objects in the exhibition.

*A few more examples in each area* Visitor

*More to see, more objects* Visitor

*Too small - more objects* Visitor

*Expected a little more* Visitor

Visitors would have also liked more descriptions of the techniques used by the artists.

*More information on how things are done, the techniques* Visitor

*I would like to see a bit more about techniques and methods* Visitor

*A little more intellectual information, more information on tools and techniques used* Visitor

A larger exhibition space would have appealed to some visitors.

*Larger exhibition or same exhibits in a larger space* Visitor

*It could be bigger* Visitor

*Bigger - too small* Visitor

*The size thought it was pretty small* Visitor

*If they had a bigger exhibition area they could have everything there, instead of breaking it down Visitor*

# 10 Outcomes

## 10.1 Intellectual outcomes

### To improve my own knowledge

From a list provided visitors were asked whether they had improved their own knowledge in the exhibition. Visitors felt they had learned something new about:

- Contemporary Japanese crafts 82%
- The manufacturing techniques employed to make the objects 81%
- Contemporary Japanese artists 69%
- Japanese culture 55%
- The things that influence and inspire Japanese artists 49%
- The British Museum collections 28%

This shows that the exhibition successfully facilitated learning amongst visitors across a range of subjects.

*A deeper knowledge about Japanese art and craft Visitor*

*I understood a little more about the Living National Treasures of Japan Visitor*

*Everything that I saw was new and so I learnt about the different artists and what their art meant to them Mystery visitor*

*Opened my eyes Visitor*

*I hadn't anticipated the level of skill that went into the objects Visitor*

*It was interesting the way they used the materials and colours, how they blended them, what they did with the materials and how they used them Visitor*

## 10.2 Emotional outcomes

### Beautiful things in an attractive setting

85% of visitors said that they thought the objects in the exhibition were beautiful.

*The level of craftsmanship and individual beauty Visitor*

*The exhibits were stunning and seeing some of them close up in such a pleasant situation was great Mystery visitor*

*Purely beautiful objects Visitor*

*The colours are so vibrant Mystery visitor*

*The work was very pure, something almost magical, not only what's exhibited but how it's made Visitor*

### **Fascinating, awe-inspiring things**

The quality of the work was an unexpected outcome for some visitors who were struck by a sense of awe and wonder in the exhibition.

*Mind-boggling - the delicacy of the work is amazing Visitor*

*Wow! Visitor*

*So overwhelmed Visitor*

*Lost for words Visitor*

### **A better understanding of other people and cultures**

The exhibition helped to give visitors a deeper insight into the lives and culture of others, often helping to build a greater respect in their minds.

*Greater respect for modern Japanese crafts Visitor*

*People dedicate their whole lives to the objects I saw Visitor*

*It supports my impression that exhibitions like this about work from other parts of the world tend to make us more internationalist and less prejudiced about others Visitor*

### **A strong sense of personal connection or identity**

Some visitors felt a personal connection with the artists and their work as a result of seeing the exhibition.

*We don't invent - just reinterpret the past - but that's a good thing Visitor*

*I get the feeling that the artists get as much of a buzz in creating their work as I do in seeing it - I felt a connection with the artists Visitor*

## 10.3 Spiritual outcomes

### Stimulating creativity

*Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* stimulated creativity amongst its visitors who commented that they would like to try some of the techniques displayed in the exhibition.

*I want to make it too Visitor*

*I want to see if I can do something like they're doing Visitor*

*Quite fancy working out how to do modelling in these styles Visitor*

*With my own craft it gives me new forms and techniques Visitor*

74% of visitors said that they thought the exhibition was inspiring.

*Supreme skill is always inspiring Visitor*

*Quite inspired by it, having a different perspective inspiring me to do my own work Visitor*

*Inspired to find out more about Japanese culture and craft Visitor*

*I was really impressed and left with the feeling one should always leave a museum with: curiosity to find out more and satisfaction that my understanding and experience had been enriched Mystery visitor*

### Peaceful, quiet contemplation

The exhibition highlighted a number of topics which encouraged contemplation amongst some visitors.

*Gave me things to think about Visitor*

*Seeing a tradition that has lasted through centuries in spite of horrendous periods of history Visitor*

### Revelation

One visitor went as far as to describe the exhibition as a journey of revelation and discovery.

*It really opens up a new world in many respects - feel a bit like Christopher Columbus Visitor*

# 11 Conclusions

## **An extremely successful exhibition**

*Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan* was successful in attracting the usual British Museum special exhibition visitor, and indeed proved very popular amongst these visitors.

These visitors entered the exhibition in a highly motivated manner and expected to see beautiful objects and learn something new. These motivations were largely achieved, with the added benefit of significant spiritual outcomes too. As well as improving their own knowledge and seeing beautiful objects in an attractive setting, visitors' creativity was also stimulated by the themes, narratives and objects on display.

Visitors were happy with what the exhibition had to offer them, and did not expect much more in terms of quality from a British Museum exhibition.

## **New interpretive techniques largely popular**

The exhibition also saw the introduction of a number of new interpretive techniques – the majority of which were a success. The range of information available on the object labels encouraged visitors to take in more bite-size chunks, and the mixture of text and pictures also helped facilitate the learning process.

Less successful was the use of colours on the object labels, and a clearer explanation of this for visitors may be required if the technique is to be tried again at future exhibitions.

## **Visitors want more**

As has been the case at some previous British Museum exhibitions, some visitors wanted slightly more from the exhibition. These visitors were split relatively evenly between those who wanted to see more objects, covering a wider spectrum of Japanese arts and crafts, to those who were happy with the range of objects but would have preferred the exhibition to be housed in a larger space.



**Morris Hargreaves McIntyre** is a creative and intelligent arts management consultancy working in the interests of audience and organisational development.

The company combines thorough project planning with incisive, deep analysis, lateral thinking and detailed, intelligent strategic planning to produce relevant, helpful and high quality reports with practical recommendations.

**Our services include:**

- strategic analysis, planning and development
- product and service development
- feasibility studies
- market appraisals
- marketing audits, strategies and plans
- audience development strategies and implementation
- access strategies
- in-service training
- training needs analysis
- training programmes
- organisational development
- change management

Most of our projects are research-based.

We have a fully integrated market research service that undertakes:

- quantitative research
- qualitative research
- telephone marketing
- community consultation

