A Study of Visitors to

Portraiture Now: Asian American Portraits of Encounter

At the National Portrait Gallery

July 2013

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Office of Policy and Analysis
Study Credits

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Cover photo credit

Roger Shimomura. Americans vs. Japs 2, 2010
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Background

The Study

In early 2011, the Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) was asked by leaders of the National Portrait Gallery (NPG) to undertake a series of visitor studies for the Gallery's temporary exhibitions. As part of that series, this report looks at visitors’ interactions with and reactions to *Portraiture Now: Asian American Portraits of Encounter (Encounter)*, which was on display on the second floor of the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture from August 12, 2011 through October 14, 2012.

Methodology

Quantitative Surveys

OP&A staff intercepted and asked random samples of adult visitors\(^1\) entering and exiting *Portraiture Now: Asian American Portraits of Encounter (Encounter)* between September 18 and 28, 2012 to complete a survey.\(^2\) In total, 376 entering and 300 exiting visitors completed the survey, with response rates of 77% and 76%, respectively. The questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix A and the frequencies of responses to each question are provided in Appendix B.

Survey respondents, with some caveats, may be treated as a representative sample of the larger population of exhibition visitors.\(^3\) 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.\(^4\)

Qualitative Interviews

The study team conducted 28 semi-structured interviews with 42 visitors in the gallery space. 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

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\(^1\) Every visitor was intercepted, excluding those under 18 and organized groups. At busy moments, some visitors were missed. Missed visitors were counted and weighted in the data analysis.

\(^2\) Survey administration was conducted over seven entrance and seven exit sessions, each lasting 90 minutes and comprised of three 30-minute segments.

\(^3\) 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.

\(^4\) For the sample sizes of 376 and 300, the 95 percent confidence interval is ±5.05% and ±5.66%, respectively, depending on the survey question. (The interval applies to a response rate of 50%; the confidence interval grows smaller as the rate in question approaches 0% or 100%.)
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. Qualitative findings should be read as suggestive rather than representative of how visitors approached, interpreted, and responded to the exhibition.

Interviewers used a general question guide, reproduced in Appendix C. 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 into thematic sections.
Findings

Visitor Demographics

Visit Groups

About one quarter of respondents were visiting alone (23%). The vast majority were visiting with adults (69%), and about one in ten were visiting with children (9%).

Sex

About 56% of visitors were female, and 44% were male, the average for exhibitions at the Reynolds Center.

Residence

Nearly nine out of ten respondents were from the United States (85%); about one in ten (15%) was a resident of another country. About one in five (21%) was a resident of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region. The local-visitor figure is low in comparison with other NPG exhibitions studied by OP&A.

Age

The mean age of visitors was 43, and the median age was 42.

By generation, visitation consisted of 32% Generations Y and Z (born 1982 and later); 26% Generation X (born 1965-1981); 15% Trailing Baby Boomers (born 1956-1964); 20% Leading Baby Boomers (born 1946-1955); and 8% Silent Generation (born before 1946).

Race and Ethnicity

Most visitors self-identified as White (80%), and one in ten visitors as Asian (11%). Fewer than 10% identified themselves as African American/Black (6%); American Indian/Native Alaskan (4%); and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (1%). Seven percent of visitors were of Hispanic or Latino origin.
Visit Experience

Visit History

Two in three survey respondents were visiting the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture for the first time (67%), while one third of respondents had made at least one previous visit to the Reynolds Center (33%). In this report, the former will be called “first-time visitors” and the latter “repeat visitors.”

- Asian visitors were more likely to be first-time visitors to the museum than other visitors (79% vs. 66%).
- Visitors over the age of 60 were more likely to be repeat visitors.

Visit Purpose

Visitors were asked why they decided to visit the museum. About 5% of respondents indicated that they had come to the Reynolds Center specifically for Encounter.

About one third of visitors decided to visit the museum to see a Smithsonian museum (33%) or because they feel that visiting museums is valuable (30%). About one in ten came to see another exhibition (16%), take a break from their daily routine (13%), or because of their companions (11%). The following options were chosen by less than one in ten people: the subject matter (8%), to see Encounter (5%), and as a class assignment (1%).

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 be noted that the figure for Encounter (5% came specifically) is very low in comparison with other recent NPG exhibitions studied by OP&A and was comparable to the Ronald Regan exhibition.

Finding out About the Exhibition

Most visitors did not know about the exhibition before entering the museum and found out about it from being in the museum (51%). One in five visitors found out through friends, family or colleagues. A smaller percentage found out from the National Portrait Gallery website (6%), a newspaper or magazine (5%), or social media (3%). About one in five found out through other means (18%).

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5 For questions asked on both the entrance and exit surveys, the figures given here are for the merged responses from both, weighted as appropriate.
Ratings

Entering visitors were asked to rate their expected 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. Exiting visitors were asked to rate their actual experience in the exhibition on the same scale.

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 experience tend to mark excellent, and for most Smithsonian exhibitions, the modal rating is excellent. Those who have very positive responses tend to mark superior.

About two fifths of visitors exiting Encounter rated their overall experiences in the lower three categories—good (35%), fair (7%), poor (0%). Just under half rated it excellent (49%), and about one in ten rated it superior (9%) (Figure 1). There was no difference between expectations and actual ratings of Encounter. Taking into account sample sizes and the resulting statistical uncertainties, these results are a bit lower than the average for a Smithsonian exhibition.

*Figure 1. Overall Experience Rating*

Exhibition-specific visitors tend to rate an exhibition they have come to see more highly than general visitors do. They are usually more likely to rate it superior, and less likely to rate it in the lower categories of poor, fair, and good. While this pattern held for the exhibition-specific visitors responding to the Encounter survey, the absolute number of such visitors was too low to allow any statistical generalizations to the larger population of visitors.
• Visitors aged 50-59 year old were the most likely to rate *Encounter* as superior. There were no other relationships between age and rating.

In the qualitative interviews most visitors revealed their enthusiasm for the art and talked about their positive experience in the exhibition.

*I thought it was really interesting. I was saying I love what the Portrait Gallery does to bring a fresh perspective on portraiture. You think of portraits as these staid things of old rich people. It’s actually a really exciting medium. I’m Asian American, I liked these very different takes on the immigrant experience and the national/cultural identity. I thought it was really interesting.*

*I thought they were really beautiful and symbolic.*

**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. Ratings for *Encounter* were slightly lower.

*Figure 2: Comparative Overall Experience Ratings for Recent NPG Exhibitions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibition</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Poor, Fair or Good</th>
<th>Superior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elvis at 21</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black List</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing Gertrude Stein</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>20%</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>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americans Now</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Life: Ronald Reagan</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American Portraits of Encounter</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Portraits</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of superior ratings, *Encounter* (10%) is slightly lower than the figures registered for Calder’s Portraits (20%), Seeing Gertrude Stein (20%), Hide/Seek (19%), and Americans
Now (18%); considerably lower than the figures for Elvis at 21 (27%) and Black List (25%); and similar to the figure for Ronald Reagan (11%) and Capital Portraits (9%) (Figure 2).

Conversely, when looking at the lower ratings of poor, fair, and good, Encounter, at 43%, did about as well as Capital Portraits (38%) and Ronald Regan (42%), and less well than Elvis at 21 (17%), Black List (23%), Seeing Gertrude Stein (26%), Calder’s Portraits (28%), Americans Now (29%), and Hide/Seek (31%).

**Portrait Gallery-Specific Interests**

Visitors were asked a question about the experiences visitors might specifically expect in NPG exhibitions, as opposed to any museum exhibition. It was phrased as follows:

“In the context of the National Portrait Gallery in general, how interested are you in the following?”

For each of five topics – Art, History, Biography, Images of America’s human diversity, and Images of influential and/or famous Americans – visitors were asked to rate their interest on a three-point scale of very, somewhat, and not at all interested.

Two thirds of visitors were “very interested” in art and history. Slightly more than half of visitors were “very interested in “Images of influential and/or famous Americans,” “Biography,” and “Images of America’s human diversity” (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: In the Context of NPG in General, How Interested Are You in the Following?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Not at all interested</th>
<th>Somewhat interested</th>
<th>Very interested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influential/famous</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notably, exiting visitors were more likely than entering visitors to say that they were very interested in America’s human diversity (58% vs. 48%) (Figure 4).
Visitors who indicated that they were very interested in any of the five topics were less likely to rate *Encounter* in the lower three categories of *poor, fair,* and *good.*

Asian visitors were more likely than others to be very interested in history.

The theme of America’s human diversity was particularly prevalent in the interviews with visitors to *Encounter.* Many said that they were inspired by seeing the diversity of artists in the museum. Interviewees commented on how, although all of the artists were Asian Americans, they were all unique individuals.

*I was surprised, because its pictures of people, [were] all [of] Asian descent, and I thought it was unique. I haven’t ever seen anything like it. But it makes big statement to me. Basically indicating that they may be similar in terms of where they are from and whatever, but they are all different from their backgrounds, and just their experiences and different direction they have gone in their lives. To me that is the real message. It is what you experience that makes you who you are.*

*It is interesting to see the diversity of different cultures.*

*We need diversity in this nation, so to see things from a Korean, Asian perspective, it really touched my heart. I really enjoyed it. It’s different.*

*I like the fact that they have this particular exhibit because it’s more than just about Caucasians. America is a melting pot of diversity, and we need that diversity. I enjoyed that, and I enjoy coming because they speak to the heart of the people. It’s good.*
Contemporary vs. Historical Portraiture

Visitors were asked, “Should the Portrait Gallery display historical or contemporary portraiture?”

The majority of visitors responded that NPG should display both (80%), 3% said historical, 7% contemporary, and 10% had no opinion (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Should the Portrait Gallery Display Historical or Contemporary Portraiture?

- Visitors 18-29 years old were more likely than older age groups to say that the Portrait Gallery should display only contemporary portraiture.
- Visitors age 30-39 were more likely than others to say that they did not have an opinion.
- Asian visitors were likely to respond that NPG should only display historical portraiture.

In interviews, some visitors highlighted their surprise and enjoyment at seeing contemporary art in the National Portrait Gallery.

_I was surprised to see it in here because it was so contemporary. I like that it gives a good mix. I think it's cool. I mean, I like that it's more people, rather than purely historic people. And that it gives us the background of the stories rather than just the art being there._

_I liked to have this here. I think it is nice to have young, contemporary artists._
I was kind of surprised to see it in Portrait Gallery, but I love contemporary art. And I really love it.

This part of the Portrait Gallery, Portraiture Now, I always like. There’s always an interesting exhibit. Before we talked to you, that’s what I was saying, that’s what I really like about the Portrait Gallery. They really show you how many different things can be encompassed in the concept of a portrait.

Role of Visual Art

In this study the OP&A team piloted a new question, asking visitors “What role does visual art play in your life?” Visitors were able to choose multiple answers. About half of visitors marked that they visit art museums regularly. The other choices were less popular; 12% indicated that they are artists, 12% study art, 16% said that art plays a role than what was mentioned. About one in four visitors (23%) responded that art does not really play a role in their lives.6

Visitors who visit art museums regularly were less likely to rate the exhibition poor, fair, or good (56% vs. 28% of visitors who do not visit regularly).

Visitors who identified as artists appreciated the exhibition:

It was intriguing. Some I liked more than others. Each person found a unique niche I thought, so it’s nice to see what other people are doing. I paint myself, so I like to see what artists are doing.

Notably, some groups were more apt to have art play particular roles in their lives.

- 18-29 year olds were likely to study or have studied art.
- Visitors 60 years of age and older were more likely than other visitors to visit art museums regularly.
- Visitors who came to the museum alone were more likely to be artists or regularly visit museum.

Exhibition Features and Activities

Layout of the Exhibition

The exhibition consisted of six rooms and a connecting hallway. Each of these seven areas displayed works of an individual artist. Half of respondents visited five or more of the

6 The distribution of responses was the same for entering and exiting visitors.
seven artists’ rooms, while the other half visited four artists’ rooms or less. Of the second half, one in three respondents visited three or four rooms.

Three out of ten visitors stopped in all seven rooms (30%). Those who went to all seven rooms were less likely to rate Encounter in the lower categories.

A number of visitors enjoyed the exhibition arrangement. Interviewees commented that having individual rooms for the artists helped them appreciate each artist. Reading about the artist and seeing his/her art aided in creating a meaningful experience.

*I liked that there is a nice introduction, and then you could go deeper into the different styles. It captures your attention.*

*I like that each artist had their own space and gave me a small space to take it all in collectively. It’s nice to see a group of artists together because it’s usually developing from one painting to the next work.*

*I liked the presentation of it and being able to go in and read about the artist and where they were coming from. I thought the exhibition itself is really well done.*

*I thought that was nice. The rooms weren’t overcrowded. They were very simple, with just one artist per room.*

*It was self-contained yet unified.*

**Exhibition Text**

In interviews visitors talked about the information gained through reading the text.

*I think it is about the right amount of information. It is too long to read it [all], but you want something to give you a bit of grounding.*

The survey results show that about two out of five visitors read the introductory text for the exhibition (43% read it, and 57% did not). Visitors who did not read the introductory text were much more likely to rate the exhibition in the three lower categories of poor, fair, and good than those that did (65% vs. 35%), and correspondingly, those who read it were more likely to rate it excellent (56% vs. 44%).

- The visitors who were interested in art, biography, America’s human diversity and influential people were more likely to read introductory text.

Most people read some of the introductory text for the individual artists (54%), one in ten read most of it (31%), and 15% read none.
Those very interested in art, America’s human diversity, biography, and influential people were also likely to read most of the text in the individual artist rooms.

*It was nice because it gave background about the artist and why they created this particular work of art.*

*I looked at all the pictures and read at the end, and then I looked back through the exhibit afterwards. It really helped me understand the perspective of the artists.*

**Ways of Accessing Information**

**Brochure**

Most people did not use the brochure (76% did not see it, while 12% saw it but did not take one), and 13% took one (6% took one to look at after their visit, 4% read it during their visit, and 3% took one as a keepsake).

**Other Useful Resources**

The survey asked visitors if they would have found any of the items on a list of resources helpful during their visit to the exhibition. There was also an option to choose or not choose three other resources (Audio guide, Guided tour, Smart phone/tablet app). Over half of the visitors responded that they would not have found any of the resources helpful (56%). One in five would have found a smart phone/tablet app helpful (21%), and one in eight noted that for an audio guide (15%) or guided tour (13%).

**Individual Artists**

Visitors were asked if they had heard of any of the artists featured in the exhibition before visiting. Almost all visitors had not heard of any of the artists before visiting the exhibition (90%).

Qualitative interviewees expressed their appreciation for learning about artists with whom they were not familiar. Some appreciated the exhibition as a good opportunity to expose a lot of people to Asian artists and suggested that the artists did not take away from their interest or enjoyment of the exhibition.

The following are artists’ statements of work, along with comments made by visitors about the individual artists and their work.
Born in Seoul, raised in the United States, and now based principally in Beijing, CYJO (born 1974) is a self-described Kyopo—the Korean term for ethnic Koreans living in other countries.

**Artist’s Statement:** Most of my portraiture thus far is related to ethnography in that I am using it to examine issues of individual identity in relation to both ancestral heritage and contemporary life. The KYOPO Project is a photographic and textual exploration of immigration and identity through the lens of Korean ancestry.

In this work, more than two hundred people—mostly living in America—consider their relationships with their ancestral culture and the other cultures they embody through citizenship/residence or life experiences. I enjoy capturing both the silent, direct, and informational physiognomy of each individual and the textual portraits that are obtained through interviews.

Some interviewees explained that they enjoyed seeing CYJO’s work because it offered a glimpse into the diversity of Korea. Some connected them to their Korean friends’ experience. Others enjoyed reflecting on diversity more broadly.

_I like the Korean-American section where they just took pictures of the people. It gives you an idea of how different everybody is. You should not have stereotypes._

_I spent the longest amount of time with these, probably because I have friends who are Asian American, and it’s been a real struggle for them. One of my friends is Korean, and she moved to the States when she was 16. A lot of what people were saying about “am I Korean, am I American?, I don’t fit in either place” is similar to things she’s told me. I think it mirrors things in my life._

_I actually don’t know a lot about the Korean American experience. I know more about other Asian cultures – Chinese American, Japanese American – but not so much about Koreans, so this is interesting. I would say it’s expanding my knowledge a little._
Zhang Chun Hong

Hong Zhang (as she is known in the United States) is a Chinese-born artist living and working in this country whose work combines traditional skills with contemporary ideas.

**Artist's Statement:** According to Eastern culture, a young woman’s long hair is associated with life force, sexual energy, growth, and beauty. Like a portrait, the image of hair can express personal feelings and emotions.

I have had long hair since high school, and it has become a part of my identity. I use long hair as a metaphor to extend the meaning beyond the surface. The charcoal medium creates a visual image of my hair, which incorporates fine details, darkness, and illumination.

In addition, traditional Chinese culture has influenced my work, including its presentation as scroll paintings. This accentuates the length of the piece and the flow of my hair. The larger-than-life scale presents an imposing and surreal image with a three-dimensional effect.

Visitors’ reactions to Zhang Chun Hong’s portraits of Long, Straight, Black hair were quite varied.

*In this one the artist talked about how she had long hair all her life. You can see how things about her personal life impacted what they are doing now. There are all new cultures.*

*It was enormous, simple and beautiful.*

Zhang Chun Hong’s works provoked thought about what must be present for a painting to be called a portrait. Some visitors commented that these works were an unusual form of portraiture, because it features a part of the body. However, they would still consider it portraiture. Other interviewees did not see her work as portraiture:

*It is beautiful art, but we can’t see anyone’s face. I don’t consider that a portrait. I think portraits require a face.*

*I thought it was really cool, but I think the hair one is probably not a portrait.*
Hye Yeon Nam

“I hope my audience finds connections between my work and their lives,” writes Hye Yeon Nam (born 1979). This young Korean artist, a PhD candidate at the Georgia Institute of Technology with an MFA in digital media from the Rhode Island School of Design, uses her artwork to address issues of personal and societal concern.

**Artist’s Statement:** My work explores social issues based on personal experience. As a woman and a Korean immigrant in the United States, I have struggled to adjust to my new culture. Every situation summons different customs, requiring me to adopt unfamiliar behaviors in order to conform to expectations. My work reflects my desire to resist such pressure by using physical dissonance to reveal different perspectives upon the “norm.”

Art is not meant to be merely decorative or beautiful; instead, it can be a question, an argument, a proposal, a resolution. By addressing the everyday challenges that beset us all, my work strives to encourage others to confront social concerns and constraints and to seek to surmount them.

A number of visitors mentioned how this portrait created a multi-faceted subject. They also discussed the creativity of Hye Yeon Nam’s art and how this work stretched the definitions of portraiture.

*I liked the videos, and the things on the scrolls were really cool. It just shows that you can do a ton of things in a portrait; it doesn’t have to just be a picture of someone. I thought it was great.*

*There was one piece in which the artist was talking about the awkwardness of being immersed into the American culture. She used an example of sliding off of a chair and tying long slabs to her feet. Sometimes I wonder what planet artists are on, in terms of how they come up with some of these things. The mind of an artist, and the ingenuity that’s involved with that, I lack completely. That fascinates me in itself.*
Shizu Saldamando

Shizu Saldamando (born 1978) depicts how American social spaces are the laboratories for new ways of being.

*Artist’s Statement:* My work is an investigation into different social constructs and subcultures seen through backyard parties, dance clubs, music shows, hang-out spots, and art receptions. By exploring subculture through personal narrative and employing an eclectic mix of materials, I hope to disarm fixed hierarchical social and artistic constructs.

I am interested in documenting mundane social moments as a way to glorify everyday people who are often overlooked, yet whose existence is the embodiment and legacy of historical struggle. We are all interested in the process of creating and re-contextualizing culture by virtue of language, dress, and memory.

Visual signifiers drawing from fashion and place are constantly in flux, fluid in meaning yet rich in historical context. For this reason I gravitate towards portraiture as practice and process. Rather than depicting moments of cultural “diaspora,” I lean towards the idea of fragmentation within the self as being more of an evolving, fluid, and never-ending process.

Some visitors shared their personal connection to Shizu Saldamando’s art; others found her medium and materials notable.

*There’s a piece I like – a young Asian man holding a drink on wood, who is contemplative and sort of sad. That piece was particularly moving to me. It tells a story about a person in a state of mind that I can relate to.*

*I thought the gold leaf on the wood really stood out. That was really unique. Something I’ve never seen before. I have some gold leaf at home that I’ve used to adorn certain things. I never thought of the fact that one artist could use it to really make a painting or picture pop like that. So it spoke to me, and I wondered why she picked those particular subjects.*
Roger Shimomura

Since 1969, Roger Shimomura (born 1939) has lived in Lawrence, Kansas, where he has served as an art professor at the University of Kansas. As a painter, printmaker, and performance artist, Shimomura has focused particular attention on the experiences of Asian Americans and the challenges of being “different” in America.

**Artist's Statement:** I was born and raised in Seattle, Washington, a city where ethnic diversity is standard fare; however, for the last forty years, I have lived in the Midwest, where the Asian American presence is still somewhat of a rarity.

Since living in Kansas, I have found it to be routine to be asked what part of Japan I am from, or how long I have lived in this country. Just as common, subtle references continue to connect me to stereotypical “oriental” traits, both physical and behavioral.

Far too many American-born citizens of Asian descent continue to be thought of as only “American knockoffs.” This latest series of paintings is an attempt to ameliorate the outrage of these misconceptions by depicting myself battling those stereotypes or, in tongue-in-cheek fashion, becoming those very same stereotypes.

Some interviewees were struck by how Roger Shimomura synthesized various characters and imagery across culture into his works.

*I liked Roger's work. I just thought it was really amazing how he used very traditional techniques and characters and tropes from American and Japanese culture. I loved how he put himself in all the portraits, no matter what a harsh and crazy juxtaposition it was. The American Hello Kitty work was hilarious. I really liked it.*

*I really liked the scale of his work and the techniques he used – comic book and graphic art techniques. These techniques are generally not associated with portraiture. I also liked that he really borrowed and played on the styles of different iconic images from pop culture, including some famous Japanese artists and the "Crossing the Delaware" piece.*

*Roger Shimomura was fantastic. It was more of a graphic take. I enjoyed those ones probably the most.*

*In Roger's funny pictures of WWII and Hello Kitty there's certain sense of humor we sometimes don't see. He picks out stereotypes and focuses on how others may see that stereotype.*
Tam Tran

Tam Tran (born 1986) moved with her family to Memphis, Tennessee, from South Vietnam when she was a young child.

**Artist’s Statement:** Accents is a study/commentary on form and style, on self-definition through appearance. It is a series of self-portraits that started out as simple convenience. I was always available and did not need to explain myself or give guidance to a model.

I found it easiest to be at once the taker and the taken. Eventually, the self-portraits grew to be increasingly varied, where I take on multiple sets of identities that challenge viewers to decipher for themselves “Who am I?” I attempt to lead on the viewer and have control over him/her for the time of at least one image.

Many interviewees were impressed by viewing this exhibit because it gave unusual experiences to interviewees.

*I like the energy in the four-cuts. They all have plain backgrounds, so you really focus on the people and their expressions. You can see the energy between the two people.*

*I like storytellers. I like to think, see visually, and read about what people think about the way things are. These pieces seem to be right in that line. They seem to be engaged in the same sort of thing that interests me.*
Satomi Shirai

The title of Satomi Shirai’s photographic project, Home and Home: New York in My Life, indicates a coming-to-grips with the dislocations caused by her move to the city from Japan in 2004. She writes about how she watched a small cherry tree in her Queens neighborhood and how she was shocked to discover one day that it had been cut down.

**Artist’s Statement:** My work investigates what constitutes the concept of “home,” as an immigrant who chose to live in New York. Tangibility versus intangibility are brought up and added to the discussion. How do we assess or assume home?

My relocation to New York is not about overcoming a culture that is distinct, but encountering and understanding cultural difference and similarity. I bring into my work questions of custom, holiday, architecture, dress, food, location, and home design as a means to explore how culture is intermixed or remains unchanged, as well as how national identity and sensibility persist while living a cross-cultural life.

Comments about Satomi Shirai’s art were centered on her point of view:

*There is sassiness about the younger female artist’s storytelling.*

*There’s an irony to the work that I like. A healthy disrespect for events.*


**Discussion**

It appears that the merit of this exhibition for many visitors was the exposure of diversity – both in relation to the national origin of the artists as well as the various mediums used by the artists. The exhibition survey and qualitative interviews show that the exhibition sparked visitors' interest in diversity and art.

This study also showed that the majority of visitors appreciated seeing both historical and contemporary portraiture at the Portrait Gallery and believed that both have a place in the museum.

For this study, OP&A piloted a new question, “What role does visual arts play in your life?” The study team found several connections between specific demographic groups and the role of visual arts in their lives. While this information is not directly related to the evaluation of this exhibition, it is important to understand audience preferences in order to better serve the interests of all visitors. OP&A recommends doing a study of these connections to better understand the experiences and desires of NPG visitors.
Appendix A: Questionnaires

National Portrait Gallery
*Portraits Now: Asian American Portraits of Encounter*

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

How do you think you will rate your overall experience with this exhibition, *Portraits Now: Asian American Portraits of Encounter*, when you leave?
- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent
- Superior

What role does visual art play in your life? [Mark one or more]
- I am an artist
- I studied art (or currently study)
- I visit art museums regularly
- Other: ____________
- Doesn’t really play a role in my life

With whom are you visiting? [Mark one or more]
- 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: ________
- Other country, specify: ______________________

Are you of Hispanic or Latino origin?
- Yes
- No

What race do you consider yourself to be? [Mark one or more]
- African American/Black
- American Indian/Native Alaskan
- Asian (Chinese, Indian, Japanese, etc.)
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- White

In the context of the National Portrait Gallery in general, how interested are you in the following? [Not at all interested] [Somewhat interested] [Very interested]

Art

History

Biography

Images of America’s human diversity

Images of influential and/or famous Americans

Thank you for your time.
National Portrait Gallery

Portraiture Now: Asian American Portraits of Encounter

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

Please rate your overall experience in this exhibition, Portraiture Now: Asian American Portraits of Encounter.
- Poor  - Fair  - Good  - Excellent  - Skeptical

Did you visit today specifically to see this exhibition?
- Yes  - No

Did you read the introductory text for this exhibition?
- Yes  - No

In this exhibition, how many of the seven artist rooms did you stop in? 
(Hallway plus six connected rooms)
- None  - Most  - Some

How many of the introductory texts for the individual artists did you read?
- Most  - Some  - None

Did you use the exhibition brochure?
- I did not see it  - I saw it, but did not take one  - I took one to look at after my visit  - I took one as a keepsake  - Yes, I read it during my visit  - Other: ____________________

Would you have found any of the following helpful during your visit to this exhibition?
- Mark one or more
  - Audio guide  - Guided tour  - Smart phone/tablet app  - Other: ____________________
  - No

In the context of the National Portrait Gallery in general, how interested are you in the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art</th>
<th>Not at all interested</th>
<th>Somewhat interested</th>
<th>Very interested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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>

Thank you for your time

- En  - Ln  - 1  - 2  - 3  - C  - R  - L  - I
Appendix B: Frequencies of Responses to the Survey Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Entrance</th>
<th>Exit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is this your first visit to this building, the Donald W. Reynolds Center?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why did you decide to visit this museum today? [Mark one or more]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See a Smithsonian museum</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See this exhibition, <em>Asian American Portraits of Encounter</em></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See a different exhibition</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A break from my daily routine</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The subject matter</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting museums is valuable</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My companion(s)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class assignment</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you find out about this exhibition? [Mark one or more]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting this building today</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends / Family / Colleagues</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper / Magazine / Television</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Portrait Gallery website</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What role does visual art play in your life? [Mark one or more]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am an artist</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I studied art (or currently study)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I visit art museums regularly</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t really play a role in my life</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With whom are you visiting? [Mark one or more]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am alone</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult(s)</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth under 18</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you male or female?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you of Hispanic or Latino origin?</td>
<td>Entrance</td>
<td>Exit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What race do you consider yourself to be? [Mark one or more]</td>
<td>Entrance</td>
<td>Exit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Native Alaskan</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian (Chinese, Indian, Japanese, etc.)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the context of the National Portrait Gallery in general, how interested are you in the following?</td>
<td>Entrance</td>
<td>Exit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all interested</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat interested</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very interested</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all interested</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat interested</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very interested</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all interested</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat interested</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very interested</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images of America's human diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all interested</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat interested</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very interested</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images of influential and/or famous Americans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all interested</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat interested</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very interested</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you visit today specifically to see this exhibition, Asian American Portraits of Encounter?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you read the introductory text for the exhibition?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many of the seven artist rooms did you stop in?</td>
<td>Exit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many of the introductory texts for the individual artists did you read?</th>
<th>Exit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did you use the exhibition brochure? [Mark one or more]</th>
<th>Exit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I did not see it</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I saw it, but did not take one</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I took one to look at after my visit</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I took one as a keepsake</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I read it during my visit</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Would you have found any of the following helpful during your visit to this exhibition? [Mark one or more]</th>
<th>Exit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audioguide</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided tour</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart phone/tablet app</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Should the Portrait Gallery display classic or contemporary portraiture?</th>
<th>Exit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classic portraiture</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary portraiture</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Had you heard of any of these artists before visiting this exhibition?</th>
<th>Exit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**ENTRANCE:** How do you think you will rate your overall experience with this exhibition, *Portraiture Now: Asian American Portraits of Encounter*, when you leave?

**EXIT:** Please rate your overall experience in this exhibition, *Portraiture Now: Asian American Portraits of Encounter*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience Level</th>
<th>Entrance</th>
<th>Exit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your age? (by generation)</th>
<th>Entrance</th>
<th>Exit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GI (Born before 1925)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silent (Born 1925-1945)</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading Boom (Born 1946-1955)</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trailing Boom (Born 1956-1964)</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation X (Born 1965-1981)</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y (Born 1982-1995)</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Z (Digital Natives) (Born after 1995)</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your age?</th>
<th>Entrance</th>
<th>Exit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you live in the United States or another country?</th>
<th>Entrance</th>
<th>Exit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other country</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-local</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Qualitative Interview Guide

Background
Where are you visiting from? Have you been to the Portrait Gallery before?

Why did you decide to visit the museum today?
   Did you know about this exhibition before you came? Did you come specifically to see it? What interested you in it?
   Do you generally visit a museum to see a specific exhibit or to see the whole museum?
   Were you aware of the Portraiture Now series before today? Have you visited previous Portraiture Now exhibitions?
   What types of exhibitions do you generally prefer? (History, art, biography, other)

Are you an artist?

How long have you been in the museum today?

Overall exhibition
Tell me about your experience in this exhibition Portraiture Now: Asian American Portraits of Encounter.
   Did it meet your expectations? Why/why not?
   Did you find anything surprising or unexpected?

What did you think about seeing contemporary art in the Portrait Gallery? For you, how does this space fit with the rest of the museum?
   What did you think about the variety of approaches (and mediums) in the exhibition?

Did you relate to any of the messages in the artists’ works? (Were they engaging?)

Exhibition Elements

Tell me about your visit—what did you do? How many of the rooms did you visit? Did you read the texts? Etc.
   Did you pick up the exhibition brochure? If yes, what did you think of it? If no, did you see it? Why did you decide not to take it?
   Was there enough information for you? Would you have used a smartphone/tablet app, audioguide, or other aid?
   Did you watch the video? Tell me about your experience with it. Would you describe it as portraiture?
What did you think of the organization of the exhibition?

What did you think about the overall look and feel of the exhibition?

Did you visit the NPG website before you came? Do you think you will visit it after you leave?