



Impact Planning, Evaluation & Audience Research

Randi Korn & Associates, Inc.
118 East Del Ray Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22301

Formative Evaluation: African Art Reinstallation

Prepared for the
Baltimore Museum of Art
Baltimore, MD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|------------|
| LIST OF FIGURES..... | III |
| SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION..... | IV |
| Introduction..... | iv |
| Interpretative Strategies..... | iv |
| Messages Taken Away from <i>Hand Held</i> | v |
| African Art Themes..... | v |
| References..... | vi |
| INTRODUCTION..... | I |
| Methodology..... | 1 |
| Data Analysis and Reporting Method..... | 1 |
| PRINCIPAL FINDINGS..... | 3 |
| Introduction..... | 3 |
| Overall Experiences in <i>Hand Held</i> | 3 |
| Awareness and Use of Interpretive Strategies..... | 6 |
| Exhibition Messages..... | 8 |
| Response to African Art Themes..... | 9 |
| Miscellaneous Findings..... | 16 |
| APPENDICES.....SOME REMOVED FOR PROPRIETARY PURPOSES | |

LIST OF FIGURES

- FIGURE A:** Themes Clearly Presented in the Exhibition 10
- FIGURE B:** Most Interesting Themes 10
- FIGURE C:** Least Interesting Themes 11
- FIGURE D:** Themes that are Unclear or Confusing 11

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

The study, conducted by Randi Korn & Associates, Inc. (RK&A) for the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA), reveals many findings that will help the BMA prepare for the reinstallation of its African Art collections. This summary and discussion is organized around the objectives of the study. In doing so, we have identified findings we believe are most salient to the African art reinstallation. We have intentionally not included recommendations for the future reinstallation as we recognize that the new curator's vision may significantly change how the BMA proceeds with the reinstallation.

INTERPRETIVE STRATEGIES

Not surprisingly, the text and images on the labels were the most used interpretive strategies in *Hand Held*. Noteworthy, is that visitors found text and images most important to their exhibition experience because they provided cultural context for the objects, and in particular, they explained or showed Africans using the objects. It is typical for visitors to seek cultural context when viewing African art in exhibitions because visitors realize that African objects have a cultural role, so when interpretation responds accordingly, they feel satisfied and accommodated (RK&A, 2001; 2006; 2010a). As was evidenced in this exhibition, the cultural context for the objects—understanding that they are everyday objects—helped visitors appreciate the aesthetic qualities of the objects.

Maps were used by a large portion of visitors and were very important to a select few. The emphasis and approach to maps in the exhibition seemed to be appropriate since they were useful to visitors who wanted to know where objects were from, and for visitors who do not care or have the capacity to understand the geographical nuances of African art, the maps served as reminders that “African art” covers a large continent. Similar mapping strategies—small maps of the continent without borders that identify the area of origin of specific objects—were used in the Detroit Institute of Arts' exhibition *Through African Eyes: The European in African Art, 1500-Present* with success (RK&A, 2010b).

The drawers of objects were also well-received by visitors who used them. However, more than one-third of visitors in this study did not notice the drawers. The exhibition *Hand Held* seemed to present a confused directive regarding touching, which may have deterred people from using the drawers as intended. Messaging inside the exhibition was clear about not touching the objects, particularly because the textiles and other works of art were exposed—that is, displayed without glass or stanchions. As a few visitors mentioned, they took the “do not touch” message to heart and did not look for opportunities to touch anything in the exhibition, including the drawers.

The quotations in this exhibition were used by about one-third of visitors. Interestingly, another one-third of visitors were aware of the quotations but chose not to read them, which is surprising given the popularity of quotations in other exhibitions representing cultural works of art. For instance, wall quotations used in *Art of the American Indians: The Thaw Collection*, a traveling exhibition of the New York State Historical Association, and *Through African Eyes* were extremely memorable for visitors, some of whom recited the quotations almost verbatim in exit interviews. Potentially, the quotations in the above exhibitions were more powerful or conjured a notable image or feeling. Another possible difference is that the quotations presented in those exhibitions were in exhibition spaces that were larger than *Hand Held* and thus the quotations were bigger and more visible from across the room. While many were

aware of the quotations in *Hand Held*, visitors may not have taken the time to read them simply because there was not a good vantage from which to view the quotations given the small gallery space.

The videos and textile samples were the least used strategies, mostly due to their location outside of the exhibition proper. While the videos and textile samples are displayed in a main corridor, some visitors came from American Decorative Arts or upstairs, thus bypassing them completely. There was some interest in the videos in particular, although their usefulness is not able to be gauged because of their unfortunate placement.

MESSAGES TAKEN AWAY FROM *HAND HELD*

Visitors took away many messages ranging in depth and breadth from the exhibition. For instance, when asked what they thought the exhibition was trying to show or tell visitors, more than one-half recalled a broad message that was not specifically related to African art and culture. Yet, when further probed to talk about the exhibition, nearly two-thirds provided concrete examples of what they learned about African art from the exhibition, with the majority speaking about the beauty and ornate detail of everyday objects and a few mentioning symbolism. It is not so surprising that visitors had difficulty identifying messages that they took away from the exhibition as visitors from one culture and time period may have difficulty fully understanding works of art from another culture or time (RK&A 2001, 2010a). In fact, a few visitors spoke directly to this point, mentioning that they were confused about how a specific work of art was used, such as the long checkered textile. As the BMA moves forward it may further consider how to use interpretive and display strategies to help visitors gain context for the works of art. For instance, one intention of the *Art of the American Indians: The Thaw Collection* exhibition was to help visitors appreciate the aesthetic qualities of American Indian art; therefore, clothing were displayed on abstract, wire mannequins (versus lifelike ones) to show visitors how the object functioned, but also to first and foremost accentuate the works of art.

AFRICAN ART THEMES

Of the six themes shown, Everyday Beauty was the theme that came across most clearly in the exhibition *Hand Held*. However, visitors had mixed reactions about how interested they were in Everyday Beauty for the African art reinstallation. Visitors interested in the theme liked that it provides a window to African culture and Africans' daily life. By comparison, other visitors thought it was prosaic—a way that museums typically present African art. These visitors thought that the Museum should endeavor for a unique approach to presenting African art in the reinstallation.

As visitors thought about the themes in relation to reinstallation, it became evident that uniqueness was an important quality to visitors. For instance, the theme Global Connections was interesting because visitors believed it would show the endurance of African art and culture as well as demonstrate that African art is not primitive, which some felt was the stereotype. The themes Identities and Women and Men in the Making were also among the most interesting themes because they showed a personal or human insight into African culture. Unlike Everyday Beauty, these themes did not seem typical of African art exhibitions.

Structuring the African art reinstallation by theme as the BMA intends can create powerful learning experiences. Yet, thematic organizations can also challenge visitors to draw connections between what may look like disparate works of art and the themes (RK&A, 2010a). As planning evolves, we offer two suggestions: 1) consider how many themes the exhibition space can adequately accommodate, and

choose three or four themes as opposed to six. Space is one factor, but the more important factor is the limitation of the human brain, which can recall and retain only a few ideas at one time; if there are too many ideas—the brain may not recall any of them. 2) The BMA could also consider how to further utilize interpretive and display strategies to help visitors connect the objects to the themes.

REFERENCES

- Randi Korn & Associates, Inc. (2010a). Front-end Evaluation: Visitors' Ideas about African Art and the African Art Reinstallation at the Newark Museum. Unpublished manuscript. Newark, NJ: Newark Museum.
- _____. (2010b) Summative Evaluation: *Art of the American Indians: The Thaw Collection* Exhibition. Unpublished manuscript. Cooperstown, NY: New York State Historical Association.
- _____. (2010c) Summative Evaluation: *Through African Eyes: The European in African Art, 1500 to Present* Exhibition. Unpublished manuscript. Detroit, MI: Detroit Institute of Arts.
- _____. (2006) Front-end Evaluation: New Exhibition at the Museum for African Art. Unpublished manuscript. New York, NY: Museum for African Art.
- _____. (2001) A Formative Evaluation of African Gallery Reinstallation Label Text: Results from Focus Groups. Unpublished manuscript. Kansas City, MO: Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

INTRODUCTION

The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) contracted Randi Korn & Associates, Inc. (RK&A) to conduct a formative evaluation in preparation for the reinstallation of its African art collection. The evaluation explores people's understanding of the BMA's potential approach to the African art reinstallation, employing the temporary exhibition *Hand Held: Personal Arts from Africa* as the base for visitor feedback.

Specifically, this study was designed to explore:

- ◆ Visitors' awareness and use of the various interpretive strategies (drawers, maps, quotations, labels, video, touch object);
- ◆ Messages that visitors took away from the exhibition *Hand Held*; and
- ◆ To what extent visitors see the themes in *Hand Held*, specifically the umbrella themes Global Connections and Ways of Seeing and Sensing.

METHODOLOGY

RK&A conducted open-ended interviews with visitors who visited the temporary exhibition *Hand Held: Personal Arts from Africa*, which was on view in the temporary exhibition space on the first floor of the BMA. RK&A selected interviews for this evaluation because they encourage and motivate visitors to describe their experiences, express their opinions and feelings, and share with the interviewer the meaning they construct from an experience. Additionally, open-ended interviews solicit top-of-mind responses, which is important to formative evaluation.

All interviews were conducted at the BMA on two Saturdays: January 14 and February 4, 2012. The evaluator followed a continuous random sampling method to identify eligible¹ interview participants. In keeping with this method, the evaluator positioned herself outside of *Hand Held* and asked the first adult visitor who exited the exhibition to participate in the interview. If the visitor declined, the data collector logged the visitor's gender, estimated age, and reason for declining. If the visitor agreed, the evaluator conducted the interview with the intercepted visitor and his/her visit group (if they desired) using an interview guide (see Appendices A and B). All interviews were audio recorded with visitors' consent and transcribed to facilitate analysis. Upon completing the interview, the evaluator returned to the exhibition's exit and approached the very next adult visitor to exit.

DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORTING METHOD

The data are qualitative, meaning that results are descriptive. In analyzing the data, the evaluator studied the transcripts for meaningful patterns and, as patterns and trends emerged, grouped similar responses. The objectives of the study as well as our professional experience with art museum visitors informed the analysis.

Findings are reported in narrative and with exemplary quotations. Interviewers' questions or comments are presented in parentheses. If a quotation includes comments from more than one interviewee, the

¹ Only adult (18 years or older), English-speaking, walk-in visitors were eligible to participate in the interviews.

first speaker is identified by one asterisk (*), the second speaker by two asterisks (**), the third speaker by three asterisks (***), and so on. The genders and ages of interviewees are identified in brackets following the quotations.

PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

RK&A interviewed 31 groups of visitors² about the exhibition *Hand Held: Personal Arts from Africa* and six themes identified by the BMA (see Appendix B, Card B). Interviews were conducted during two Saturdays in January and February 2012. The evaluator approached visitors as they exited *Hand Held* and asked them to participate in the interview. The participation rate was 82 percent.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS

Of the interviewees:

- ◆ Two-thirds are female;
- ◆ The median age is 31;
- ◆ Almost two-thirds identify as Caucasian/White, and more than one-quarter identify as African American/Black;
- ◆ Most interviewees are U.S. residents, and two-thirds reside in Maryland (see Appendix C for zip codes of U.S. residents);
- ◆ Slightly more than one-half were visiting the BMA for the first time. Of the interviewees who had visited the BMA before, most said they had visited the BMA more than once in the past two years; and
- ◆ Most were visiting the BMA with a group of family or friends.

OVERALL EXPERIENCES IN *HAND HELD*

The findings below describe interviewees' experiences in the exhibition *Hand Held*. Questions were open-ended and allowed interviewees to speak about top-of-mind experiences.

MOST INTERESTING

When asked what they found most interesting about the exhibition, more than one-half talked primarily about specific works of art. Some gave superficial or brief explanations as to why the work of art was of interest; comments focused on the aesthetics or the appearance of the objects, rather than the history, meaning, or symbolism of the work of art (see the first quotation below). Additionally, a few interviewees made connections between specific objects and their everyday, personal lives, or to modern examples of these objects. The objects that elicited the most comparison were the combs, which many visitors recognized from personal experience or modern-day use (see the second quotation).

(What about the exhibition that you left was most interesting to you?) I liked looking at the blankets and the different type of texture and designs on them, and I really liked the detailed designs on the staffs and things like that. [female of unidentified age]

² The 31 groups who participated included 50 individuals.

I like the combs best of all. I can relate to them from my generation, having the bush.
[female 63]

About one-third were primarily interested in the stories behind the works of art, specifically how the objects exposed them to different traditions, histories, and cultures. While the majority of these interviewees provided vague responses (see the first quotation below), a few provided specific examples of objects and ideas that they took away from these objects (see the second quotation).

(What did you find most interesting about the exhibition?) I liked all the background information that kind of told the stories that went along with the stuff. (Okay, can you give me an example of a specific story?) I like the story about the big blanket and the people who lived in the Sahara Desert the best.

[I liked] the seats. There was one explaining the seats and how they're passed down. You know, it's very important that they're kind of a symbol of status or respect, and they're portable, [which] was interesting because whether you leave something at home or whether or not you take it with you means it's different somehow. [male 26 & female 26]

About one-quarter of interviewees cited the design of the exhibition, or the specific placement of the objects, as favorite elements of the exhibition. A few interviewees commented on the exhibition space, noting that its design allowed visitors to get close to the objects, either by walking completely around an object or by viewing an object more closely in a drawer. These interviewees appreciated the close proximity and unorthodox placement of the objects (see the quotation below). More broadly, a few interviewees simply appreciated the variety of art in the exhibition.

I like the fact that you can walk around all of it. It's much more accessible than just flat to the wall. [male 57 & female 53]

A few interviewees made direct reference to overarching themes of the exhibition, specifically the importance, function, and beauty of everyday objects. For instance, one visitor specifically mentioned this overarching idea (see the quotation below).

(Based on your experience in the exhibition, what did you find most interesting about it?) I liked this idea of commonly used objects, everyday objects, and at the entrance, there was this discussion of where and sort of suggesting that these are things that people used on an everyday basis and that they actually have a connection to it and become part of these objects to a degree, right? [female 53 & male 44]

LEAST INTERESTING

When asked what they found least interesting about the exhibition, more than one-half of interviewees said that they did not skip over anything or did not find anything least interesting. These responses were brief and either had no further explanation or reiterated what they found interesting about the exhibition (see the quotation below).

(Was there anything you found least interesting or you may have skipped over in the exhibition?) No, no. I didn't. I liked everything in it. It was nice and also the containers that the women had. They was lugging on their head and they have water and stuff like that. And those were heavy themselves and then they had all this extra stuff. [female 46 & female 34]

The other one-half of interviewees named types of objects they were not interested in. Textiles, hats, and chairs were the most mentioned types of objects, although interviewees had various reasons why they did not like these objects. For instance, the majority of interviewees said the work of art itself was not aesthetically interesting (see the first quotation below). Other explanations were miscellaneous but include disinterest in objects that do not have a clear function (see the second quotation) or objects that they usually see in African art exhibits (see the third quotation).

I didn't spend as much time as I thought I would actually on the textiles. I think usually, I'm just always thinking you're going to see brighter or richer colors with, and I think it was more muted pieces, so it didn't catch my eye. [female 31 & female 29]

Was there anything that you found less interesting or maybe even skipped over?) The hats. Maybe it's just that I don't care for them, but they seemed purely decorative. [female 21]

A lot of it [art in the exhibition] is wood-based African art and so that's how you see African art in a museum setting—that is what you expect and that's kind of what you see. I guess I bypassed a lot of it because a lot of things I had seen already. [male 26 & female 26]

CONFUSING ASPECTS

When asked if there were any aspects of the exhibition that were confusing or unclear, about two-thirds of interviewees replied that there were not. A few added that they did not spend enough time in the exhibition or did not spend enough time reading text in the exhibition to be confused about anything (see the quotation below).

(And from your experience in the exhibition, was there anything you found unclear or confusing?) *No. **Well, we didn't read all that much. [female 26, female 25, & female 25]

A few interviewees said that they were confused about how a specific work of art was used, such as the long checkered textile (see the first quotation below). A couple said that they were initially confused by an object because it was unfamiliar but gained clarity by reading the text (see the second quotation), while a couple others thought that there was not enough interpretation to understand the function or meaning of a work of art (see the third quotation).

(Was there anything that was unclear or confusing about the exhibition?) The only thing that I found unclear was the long piece of fabric that they had. I couldn't find what that was. And they also had just one area where they had a picture of the woman and her skirts, and I didn't know if the skirt was wrapped around because it didn't have an actual skirt to look at. (So you weren't sure if the depiction of the skirt that was on the wall was actually the long piece of fabric?) Was it a skirt? I can't imagine it could possibly be a skirt but [trails off]. [female 65 & male 30]

The seats, I didn't quite get that right away and then we had to read the detail. We were kind of surprised that the reclining seat was actually [a seat]; we thought it was a skateboard or something at first. That was interesting to learn that. It's not really that we didn't understand it. It just took time to read it, and we never had seen seats like that before. [female 45]

They had an amorphic pot or some sort of pot. It wasn't explaining what it was used for, and I just wanted a little more background on what some of these items were. [male 23 & female 23]

A couple interviewees, both self-proclaimed foreigners, said that the text difficult to understand. One suggested shorter and simpler explanations (see the quotation below).

(Was there anything you found hard to understand or confusing about the exhibit?) Because I'm a foreigner, it makes me tough to read all the descriptions there. It's long and I want something that is very simple and easy to understand. That's all. [female 30]

A couple interviewees were confused about how the exhibition was organized. These interviewees suggested organizing the exhibition more traditionally by region/tribe or chronologically (see the quotation below).

(Was there anything that you found confusing or unclear about the exhibit?) I think maybe if it were organized by region of Africa or age [it would be clearer]. . . . So pick one of those two. Otherwise, it's kind of random. [male 39 & female 31]

AWARENESS AND USE OF INTERPRETIVE STRATEGIES

Interviewees were shown a list of seven interpretive strategies and asked about which ones they had used in the exhibition and why these strategies were important to their experience.

TEXT ON LABELS

Almost all interviewees said they used the text on labels, and more than one-half said that it was the interpretive strategy that was most important to their experience in the exhibition. Not surprisingly, the majority of these interviewees thought the label text was important because it provided useful context about the objects, and oftentimes, interviewees talked about how the text was particularly important because they were looking at cultural objects (see the quotation below).

(Of the things that you used, what did you feel like was most useful for your experience?) Definitely the text because it's a culture I'm not familiar with and the text really helped. [female 21]

PICTURES ON LABELS

More than two-thirds said they used the pictures on the labels, and almost one-quarter said it was the interpretive strategy that was most important to their experience in the exhibition because the pictures *showed* them (through a visual depiction) how a work of art was used (see the quotations below). A couple interviewees said they were aware of the pictures but did not use them, while a couple others did not remember seeing pictures on the labels they looked at.

(Which would you say was most important to your experience in the exhibit?) The text and the pictures because some of the items you can't actually tell what they were used for. It's hard to visualize them because they're not in common use now. [male 40, female 40, & male 20]

*The pictures on labels. . . . you actually see people use things. That's kind of neat. **Like the woven baby's hat. [The picture helps] you understand how that keeps the baby's [head protected]. *And the headrest. Yes, exactly, because you're like, 'How in the world [do they use a headrest]...you've got to be kidding. Someone's making this up.' [male 57 & female 53]

MAPS

About two-thirds said they used the maps in the exhibition, and a few said it was the interpretive strategy that was most important to their experience in the exhibition because they found it important to see exactly where a work of art was from. Moreover, one interviewee said that the maps were important for emphasizing that Africa is large and made up of many countries and regions (see the first quotation below). Additionally, a few interviewees said they were aware of the maps but did not use them, with a couple stating that knowing the exact location of a work of art is not important to them (see the second quotation) and another noting that geography does not help him/her understand the works of art (see the third quotation). A few others did not remember seeing the maps.

[The maps] helped because they give you an idea of what part of Africa [the works of art are from]. I think a lot of people, and it's very typical, lump the entire continent of Africa into one big thing. It's 44-some countries, so [it seems] there's never a regional focus. But it's not a negative, but it's just people get a big picture of Africa that way [through the maps]. [female 53]

For us, it was not crucial to know exactly where the objects come from. But the first map was useful to show where the overall collection—what was presented in terms of parts of Africa—but we didn't go into that detail. [female 53 & male 44]

For me, I am just geographically ignorant. It was nice to look at [the maps], but it didn't make a connection for me. [female 65 & male 30]

DRAWERS OF OBJECTS

More than one-half of interviewees used the drawers of objects in the exhibition. Interviewees who used the drawers thought they were “fun” and liked that they were interactive (see the first quotation below). However, more than one-third of interviewees were unaware of the drawers and sometimes expressed disappointment at missing them (see the second quotation). A few interviewees were aware of the drawers but the majority said they were not sure whether they were allowed to use them (see the third quotation).

I liked the drawers of objects because it was a new experience to open and see things that weren't out on display. And it made it interactive. [female 63]

(And how about the drawer of objects? Did you see any of those?) *Yeah, I don't actually remember those. (There's a few pullout drawers underneath podiums. You pull it out and there are objects inside.) **Oh! We're allowed to touch [stuff]?! [female 26, female 25, & female 25]

(And how about the drawers of objects? Did you see those—where you pull out a drawer and it has objects in it?) *No, where was that? **I didn't. No I didn't see those. (There's a couple on the pedestals; there's a handle. So you didn't see those?) *Oh, because I thought we don't touch anything so that's why. [female 46 & female 34]

QUOTATIONS

More than one-third of interviewees said they read the quotations in the exhibition, and the quotation “Without the thumb, the hand is useless” was most cited (see the first quotation below). Additionally, more than one-third of interviewees were aware of the quotations but decided not to read them; the majority of these interviewees did not explain why they chose not to read the quotations, while one said that quotations translated from foreign languages can be misleading (see the second quotation). A few interviewees were unaware of the quotations.

(Did you happen to see those or use those in the exhibition?) *The only one I saw was the one on the way out. The one about the thumb. **A hand without a thumb is useless. *It was up high so maybe it's just not where you tend to look. [male 57 & female 53]

(Which one was least important to you?) I'd have to say the quotations. (And why is that?) I guess sometimes, especially with foreign stuff, when they translate it, it might be sort of off or confusing to some. [female of unidentified age]

TEXTILE SAMPLES

Two-thirds of interviewees were unaware of the textile samples. The majority of these interviewees said that they entered the exhibition from American Decorative Arts or from upstairs, and thus, did not walk past the samples; some others passed by the textile sample but did not notice it. A few interviewees used the textile samples, while a couple were aware of the samples but chose not to use them; none of these interviewees commented on why they did or did not use the samples.

VIDEOS

More than two-thirds of interviewees were unaware of the videos; as with the textile samples, the majority of them said that they entered the exhibition from American Decorative Arts or from upstairs, and thus, did not walk past the videos. A few interviewees said they watched the videos, but at least one did not initially associate it with the exhibition (see the first quotation below). A few others said they were aware of the videos, but decided not to watch them; one of these interviewees said it was not something she wanted to spend time doing (see the second quotation). However, prior to being asked about the videos in the interview, a few interviewees suggested incorporating videos into the exhibition, and the evaluator observed that a few interviewees stayed and watched the videos after the interview was over, indicating that the videos' location and visibility are factors that may determine use.

*I saw quotations but not videos. **Yeah, I didn't see the videos. (The videos are actually these two.) **Oh, okay. *Okay. We saw these. (You just didn't associate them with the exhibition?) *Right. [female 46 & female 27]

For videos, I mean, it's good for representation, but I wouldn't want to spend most of my time just watching it. [female of unidentified age]

EXHIBITION MESSAGES

When asked what they thought the exhibition was trying to show or tell visitors, more than one-half of interviewees left the exhibition with broad messages that were not specifically related to African art and culture. For instance, almost one-quarter of interviewees said the exhibition showed visitors similarities and differences among cultures—never mentioning Africa specifically (see the first quotation below). Additionally, a few interviewees said the exhibition showed them how creative humans have been across history (see the second quotation). A couple said the exhibition aimed to cultivate an appreciation for all kinds of art (see the third quotation).

(And based on everything that you did and saw in the exhibition, what do you think it's trying to show or tell visitors?) I think that there's a lot of sort similarities of cultures to what we do here versus what's there and that artistry and how it's interpreted in different countries because they're all recognizable pieces. There's nothing that came across as like oh, 'What is that? I have no idea what that is.' But I think because it is accessible but a different interpretation. [female 31 & female 29]

(And based on your experience in the exhibition, what do you feel like the Museum's trying to show visitors?) Really the past. The neatest of the past. How people were creative and communicating. [male of unidentified age]

(Based on everything that you saw in the exhibition, what do you think the Museum's trying to show visitors?) It's trying to show different types of foreign appreciation for art, so art isn't just one specified form. It can be different things all around the world. [female of unidentified age]

More than one-third of interviewees said the exhibition showed them something about African art and culture. Several interviewees talked about how the works of art are utilitarian or everyday objects and still very intricate and beautiful (see the first quotation below). A few others talked generally about what the objects showed them about African culture and heritage (see the second quotation).

(Based on everything that you saw in the exhibition, what did you feel like the Museum was trying to show or tell visitors?) Well, how in this particular culture, the African culture, that beauty and function and also I think symbolism and heritage can be incorporated in the same object. . . . We were discussing beauty from the very beginning—beauty and utility or aesthetics and utility. [female 60]

(Based on your experience in the exhibition, what do you feel like the Museum was trying to show or tell visitors?) I think they were trying to tell a story in terms of the different—I mean, there's a section on drinking and traditions and things like that. So I think the story was kind of the culture throughout Africa. [female 35]

After asking interviewees about their top-of-mind response to the exhibition, interviewees were asked specifically to talk about what they learned about African art. Nearly two-thirds provided concrete examples of what they learned about African art from the exhibition. The majority of these interviewees spoke about the beauty and ornate detail of everyday objects (see the first quotation below). A few also talked about the symbolism in the works of art (see the second quotation).

I did learn how intricate the people were in their artwork. That I had not seen before. I was used to the traditional figurines that people have, and I saw a lot more today and a lot more artistic work on practical tools and items. [female 53]

(And do you feel like you took anything away about African art from the exhibition?) Definitely. That resounding theme about the figure. How the breasts meant something and like they always say the birds meant a past and future kind of reference. They definitely like the symbolism. . . . Even though they seem like functional [objects], like the pulley items seems functional, but they embellished it. I felt like everything was functional and beautiful. [male 41 & female 31]

RESPONSE TO AFRICAN ART THEMES

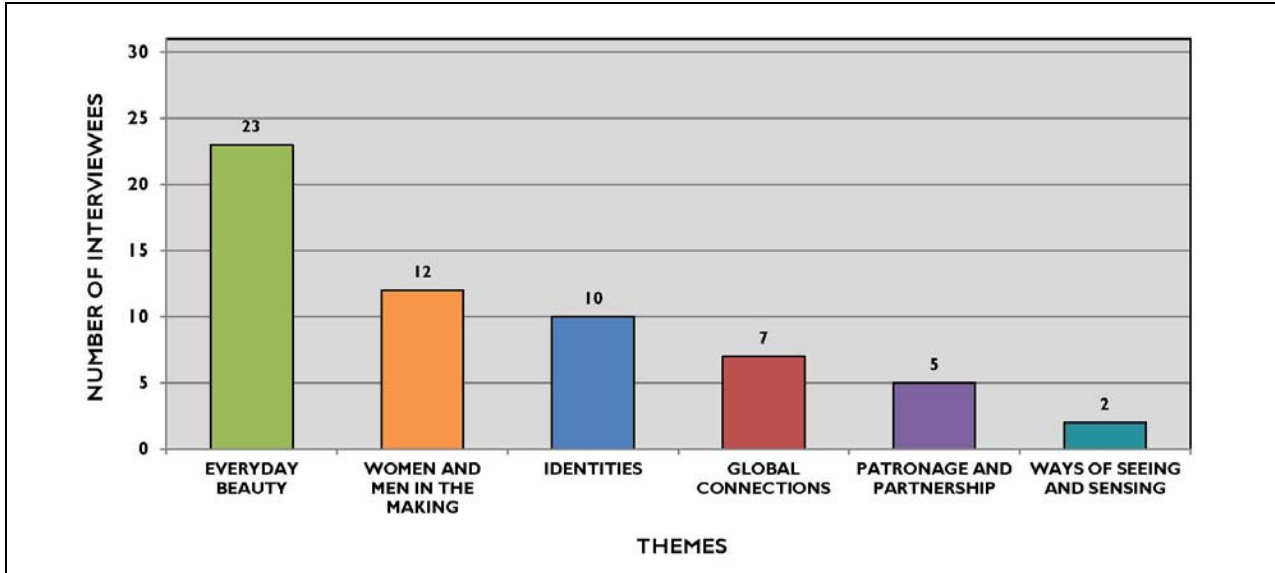
The evaluator showed interviewees six themes identified by BMA staff and a short description of each theme. The evaluator then asked interviewees a series of questions about which ones came across most clearly in the exhibition *Hand Held*, were generally confusing, and were most and least interesting in the context of the African art reinstallation. In this section, we first present a summary, via graphs, that describes how the themes performed relative to each other. Following the visual summary, findings according to each individual theme are presented in narrative form with exemplar quotations.

SUMMARY OF AFRICAN ART THEMES

CLEARLY PRESENTED

The greatest number of interviewees thought that, of the six themes, Everyday Beauty was most clearly represented in the exhibition. By contrast, the fewest number of interviewees thought that Ways of Seeing and Sensing was clearly represented in the exhibition.

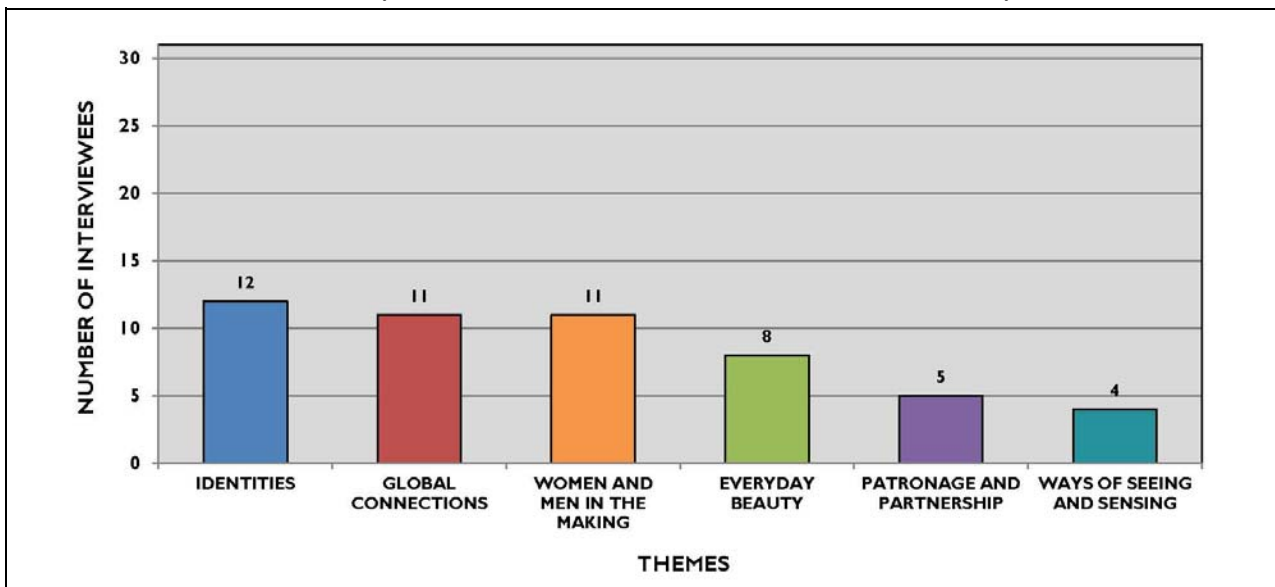
FIGURE A
THEMES CLEARLY REPRESENTED IN THE EXHIBITION



MOST INTERESTING

The greatest number of interviewees said that, in thinking about the African art reinstallation, Identities was the most interesting theme, followed closely by Global Connections and Women and Men in the Making. By contrast, the fewest number of interviewees said that Ways of Seeing and Sensing was the most interesting theme.

FIGURE B
MOST INTERESTING THEMES (IN CONTEXT OF AFRICAN ART REINSTALLATION)

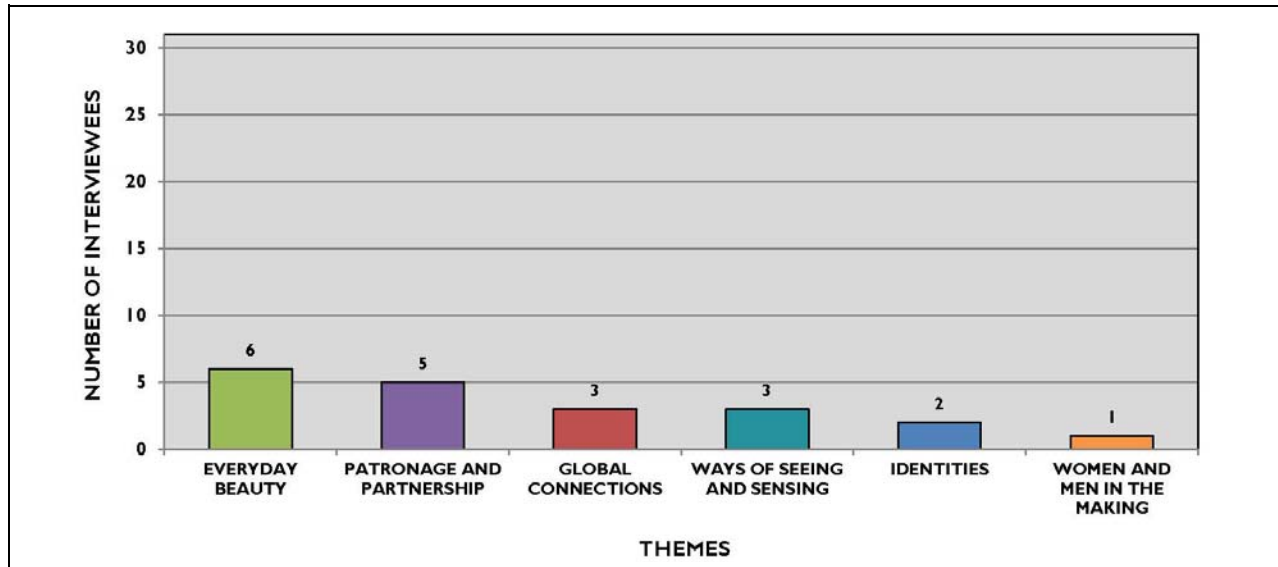


LEAST INTERESTING

The greatest number of interviewees said that, in thinking about the African art reinstallation, Everyday Beauty was the least interesting theme, followed closely by Patronage and Partnership. By contrast, the fewest number of interviewees said that Women and Men in the Making was the least interesting theme. Additionally, several thought all the themes were interesting.

FIGURE C

LEAST INTERESTING THEMES (IN CONTEXT OF AFRICAN ART REINSTALLATION)

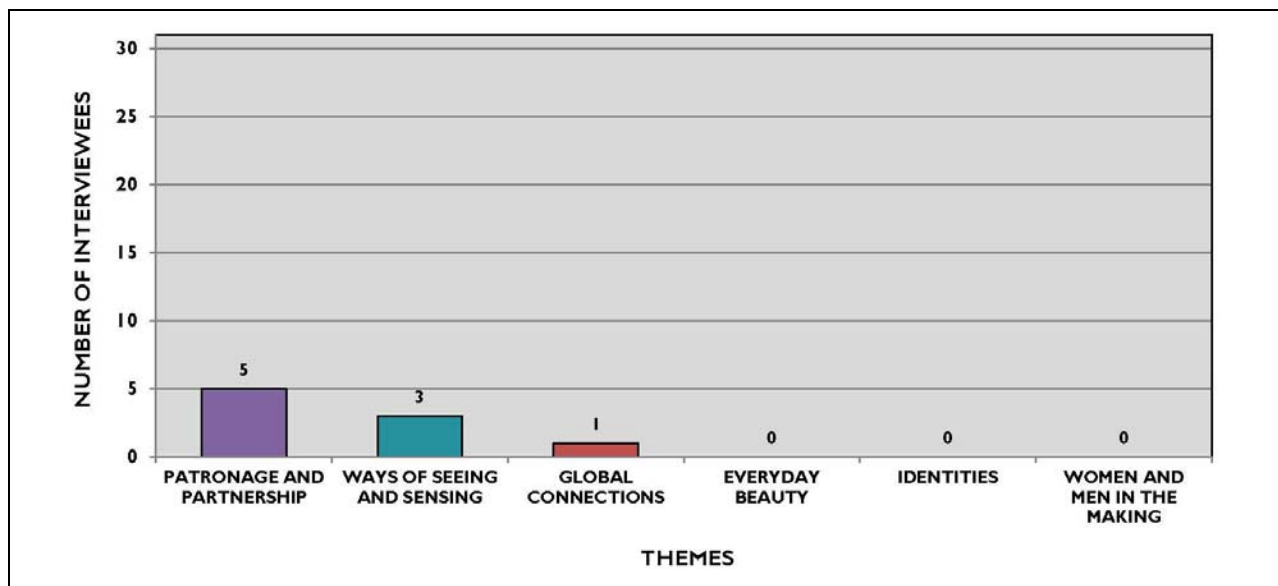


UNCLEAR OR CONFUSING

Overall, few visitors said that the themes were confusing. However, of those who found themes confusing, the greatest number said that Patronage and Partnership was confusing, followed by Ways of Seeing and Global Connections. No one found the themes Everyday Beauty, Identities, and Women and Men in the Making confusing.

TABLE D

THEMES THAT ARE CONFUSING



EVERYDAY BEAUTY

Everyday Beauty

Decorative objects—personal adornments, containers, architectural elements, and implements for domestic, occupational, and recreational use demonstrate how African arts play an important part in daily life.

More than two-thirds of interviewees said that Everyday Beauty was clearly represented in the exhibition. The majority of interviewees said that this theme came across through the types of objects displayed, such as the combs, containers, and hats (see the quotations below).

(Of these ideas, are there any that you feel like came across in *Hand Held*, in that exhibition?)
*Everyday beauty. (Can you tell me about where you saw that in the exhibition or how it came across to you?) *Well, the combs. You know, the personal adornments. Also have the vessels, containers. There are also containers in here. [female 46 & female 27]

(Okay, of these ideas, are there any that you feel like you saw in the exhibition *Hand Held*?)
Some of the everyday beauty. Some of the staffs. Some of the hats again. They had a lot of containers. . . . It's kind of the everyday things that are now considered prize art. [male 26 & female 26]

About one-quarter of interviewees said Everyday Beauty was the third most interesting theme to them when thinking about the African art reinstallation. The majority of these interviewees liked seeing objects from the daily life of Africans (see the quotation below).

Honestly, everyday beauty. . . . I just like to see all of the elements of Africa and the things they used before, how they were made. [female 40]

By contrast, about one-fifth of interviewees said Everyday Beauty was the least interesting theme when thinking about the African art reinstallation. The majority of these interviewees thought the theme was familiar—something they had seen before (see the quotations below).

I feel like everyday beauty is kind of the whole museum. I don't know if that's too much of a generalization. That one, it doesn't seem particularly new. [male 26 & female 26]

(Are there any of these ideas that you don't like or find less interesting?) This is common. The everyday beauty is common to me. . . . I wouldn't say it's not interesting but it's common. Everyone thinks of that. [female 46 & male 27]

WOMEN AND MEN IN THE MAKING

Women and Men in the Making

A selection of artworks will reflect ways in which African girls and boys come of age, and their respective roles, social obligations, and moral responsibilities as adults.

More than one-third of interviewees said that the theme *Women and Men in the Making* was clearly represented in the exhibition. The majority of these interviewees mentioned specific objects that were designated for men and women and some mentioned objects related to rites of passage (see the quotation below).

(Okay, of these ideas, which ones if any do you feel like came across in *Hand Held*?) I very much felt that the women and men in the making came across from the stuff that I focused on. (Can you describe to me which...?) Well, I very much definitely remember the combs, the decorative combs that men gave to women as gifts and the designs on them. And of course, the ones that were practical like the African picks that were just used for everyday use. And then, I saw a lot of tools that men used, including urns for various things. And I got a feeling that these were either for men or for women or gave them rites to passage as adults. [female 53]

About one-third of interviewees said that *Women and Men in the Making* was the most interesting theme to them when thinking about the African art reinstallation. The majority of interviewees liked that this theme showed them more about African culture (see the first quotation below). A few were generally interested in understanding the transition from children to adults (see the second quotation).

I like women and men in the making. If they were to add more, I think it would show a lot more of African culture and art and like the creativity. [male of unidentified age]

This one stuck out to me, women and men in the making. (What about that one?) I don't know. I work with kids on a regular basis and I'm always trying to get on their level and find out what makes them tick because the same thing that makes them tick didn't make me tick when I was their age. But they have social obligations, the moral responsibilities as adults. All of these things, they stand out to me. [male 42]

IDENTITIES

Identities: Society, Family, and the Individual

African arts reflect both collective and individual identities in documentary, mythical, and personal histories and self-expression.

One-third of interviewees said that the theme *Identities* was clearly represented in the exhibition. The majority of these interviewees talked about family relationships (see the quotation below).

(Are there any themes that you feel like you saw in the exhibition *Hand Held*?) Identity, they kind of touched on briefly. (Can you give me an example of where you saw that in the exhibition?) Well, the headdresses. They had ornamentation on them would fit a certain person's head over time and then the next generation would keep the head ornaments kind of like a keepsake for them, the person that had lived in it. [male 23 & female 23]

More than one-third of interviewees said that *Identities* was the most interesting theme when thinking about the African art reinstallation. The majority of these interviewees were generally interested in personal and family identities, while a few were specifically interested in "mythical histories" mentioned in the description (see the quotation below).

(Of these ideas, which one is most interesting to you in general?) Identities in society because I enjoy mythology and different fables that different people have. [female of unidentified age]

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

Global Connections: Africa and Beyond

African arts and artists are richly heterogeneous in their expressions, processes, and aesthetics, and suggest Africa's longstanding interaction and involvement with cultural and artistic influences both within the continent and beyond.

Almost one-quarter of interviewees said that the theme Global Connections was clearly represented in the exhibition. The majority of these interviewees did not give a concrete example of how this theme was represented, but mentioned the variety of arts (see the quotation below).

(Which ideas do you feel like came across to you in the exhibition?) Global connections: Africa and Beyond. (Can you give me an example of where you saw something like that in the exhibit?) They talked about the arts and the expressions from the headdresses to the combs to the different staffs and sizes to the chairs. You know, the recliners and how chairs were made to sit low in purpose for whatever reason and why. Males would take their chairs to different households and to the market. [male 42]

About one-third of interviewees said that Global Connections was the most interesting theme when thinking about the African art reinstallation. The majority of these interviewees thought it was interesting because it shows the significance of African culture and dispels the idea that African art and culture is primitive or antiquated (see the quotations below).

You can just see the significance and the influence of the African culture's aesthetic. And it's permeated not just staying on the continent but has influence worldwide. So that kind of connection for me would be really interesting if they were considering how they're going to organize the collection. [male 40 & male 20]

Global connections because a lot of people look at Africa as being an antiquated continent. It's very rarely expressed in a modern way in galleries and exhibitions, so the global connection seems more interesting. [male 26 & female 26]

PATRONAGE AND PARTNERSHIP

Patronage and Partnership: Negotiation and Creative Collaboration

The creation and effectiveness of African arts often require social, spiritual, economic, and creative relationships among individuals.

A few interviewees said that the theme Patronage and Partnership was clearly represented in the exhibition. The majority of interviewees provided vague examples of where they saw the theme in the exhibition, including objects adorned because of social relationships and how family members collaborated to create pots (see the quotations below).

(Did you see any of the other ideas in this exhibition?) Patronage and partnership and the clothing and what you had to wear when you were meeting with the higher ups. [female 60]

I guess a little bit of like the negotiation, creative collaboration. Only because some of the objects might have been like maybe the woman would make some of the pots but probably the children would help. It's sort of like these family objects. [female 26, female 25, & female 25]

A few interviewees said that Patronage and Partnership was the most interesting theme when thinking about the African art reinstallation. The majority of interviewees said they were interested in art that reflects relationships and life (see the quotation below).

Negotiation and creative collaboration; wow. I think that's a way to show everything in a very broad perspective because its artwork integrated into life and into the way they interact, and it's probably the most useful way of using some of the pieces that I saw at least. [female 21]

A few interviewees said that Patronage and Partnership was the least interesting theme when thinking about the African art reinstallation. Some interviewees were generally confused about what this theme means (see the first quotation below), while others were confused about how this theme could be communicated in an exhibition (see the second quotation).

(Are there any that you find confusing or unclear?) I guess the patronage and partnerships. I was trying to figure out what was that conveying. I understand patronage very well and I see where some of this artwork came from. I don't know if I got that sense completely. [female 53]

(Okay, any of these that weren't interesting to you that you didn't like or actually any that you found confusing also?) *I think Patronage and Partnership would be hard to communicate to people. **But it's an interesting idea for a quick visit that's pretty complicated. [female 40]

WAYS OF SEEING AND SENSING

Ways of Seeing and Sensing

African aesthetics and the varied original contexts for African arts shaped ways in which Africans originally understood and experienced the artworks on display.

A couple interviewees said that Ways of Seeing and Sensing was clearly represented in the exhibition. One interviewee said that this came across in the exhibition because the label mentioned how Africans experienced an object (see the quotation below).

(Which of those ideas, if any, do you feel like came across in *Hand Held*?) . . . I think a little bit of Ways of Seeing and Sensing as well. (Can you tell me where you feel like you saw that in the exhibition?) . . . Mostly because the last thing we saw in there was a cup, and it was talking about how for them, it was the idea of touching it and bringing it with them when they went places. Anyway, they were very sensory. [male 39 & female 31]

A few interviewees said that Ways of Seeing and Sensing was the most interesting to them when thinking about the African art reinstallation. Interviewees found this theme most interesting for various reasons. One thought that this theme would encourage a multi-sensory approach to interpretation (see

the first quotation below), while another liked that it would address how objects were originally used and understood (see the second quotation).

(Can you tell me what you like about that one [Ways of Seeing and Sensing]?) Well, because when you walk through, you really don't get any different perspectives of how to look at something. They just kind of show it to you and what it's about. But if you took like a multi-sensory perspective of what was there, you may have a better understand of something. . . . I'm not sure how exactly you'd go about doing that, but if they have a way, that sounds like it could be really effective. [male 23 & female 23]

(Of these ideas, are there any that are most interesting to you?) Ways of Seeing and Sensing because I think you create for the people around you, and you can't make global assumptions about what is important. [male 63]

A few interviewees said that this theme was the least interesting when thinking about the African art reinstallation. A few interviewees said that the theme was confusing. The majority of interviewees who said the theme was least interesting or confusing said that they were not sure what an exhibition on this theme may communicate or show.

MISCELLANEOUS FINDINGS

Some interviewees had comments or specific suggestions for the exhibition presentation or layout. A few said that they wished that the exhibition was more interactive. For instance, one interviewee suggested that having more interactive materials would make the exhibition more interesting, stating "the interactive part may increase my awareness of what I was doing rather than just walking around." Additionally, one interviewee thought the interactives should be more involved than simply a textile sample, noting that they thought that the sample did not show them anything new about the objects (see the quotation below).

I mean, what's the point of you touching it [the textile sample] if it feels like a piece of cotton you already had? [male 40, female 40, & male 20]

A few interviewees were confused by the title of the exhibition. A couple thought that it was in conflict with that the fact that they cannot touch the objects in the exhibition, while another was just generally confused about the meaning.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

REMOVED FOR PROPRIETARY PURPOSES

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW MATERIALS

CARD A

Text on Labels

Pictures on Labels

Videos

Maps

Quotations

Drawers of objects

Textile samples

CARD B

A. Global Connections: Africa and Beyond

African arts and artists are richly heterogeneous in their expressions, processes, and aesthetics, and suggest Africa's longstanding interaction and involvement with cultural and artistic influences both within the continent and beyond.

B. Ways of Seeing and Sensing

African aesthetics and the varied original contexts for African arts shaped ways in which Africans originally understood and experienced the artworks on display.

C. Women and Men in the Making

A selection of artworks will reflect ways in which African girls and boys come of age, and their respective roles, social obligations, and moral responsibilities as adults.

D. Everyday Beauty

Decorative objects—personal adornments, containers, architectural elements, and implements for domestic, occupational, and recreational use demonstrate how African arts play an important part in daily life.

E. Patronage and Partnership: Negotiation and Creative Collaboration

The creation and effectiveness of African arts often require social, spiritual, economic, and creative relationships among individuals.

F. Identities: Society, Family, and the Individual

African arts reflect both collective and individual identities in documentary, mythical, and personal histories and self-expression.

APPENDIX C: ZIP CODES

TABLE A
US RESIDENTS

| ZIP CODES | <i>n</i> | ZIP CODES | <i>N</i> |
|------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 21218 | 4 | 20015 | 1 |
| 21030 | 3 | 20603 | 1 |
| 21210 | 3 | 20695 | 1 |
| 19380 | 2 | 20878 | 1 |
| 20001 | 2 | 21028 | 1 |
| 20008 | 2 | 21040 | 1 |
| 21042 | 2 | 21146 | 1 |
| 21117 | 2 | 21207 | 1 |
| 21202 | 2 | 21211 | 1 |
| 21222 | 2 | 21230 | 1 |
| 22003 | 2 | 21286 | 1 |
| 10031 | 1 | 22201 | 1 |
| 17683 | 1 | 22209 | 1 |
| 19807 | 1 | | |