Mysterious, enigmatic, spiritual

An evaluation of The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan

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Mysterious, enigmatic, spiritual: An evaluation of The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan

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50 Copperas Street, Manchester, UK M4 1HS
Telephone 0161 839 3311
Fax 0161 8393377
Email intray@lateralthinkers.com
www.lateralthinkers.com
The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan attracted an audience of ‘core’ British Museum repeat attenders who like visiting the Museum’s free exhibitions.

The exhibition attracted two types of visits – those from dedicated specialists, and those from incidental exhibition visitors in the Museum on a general visit.

Visitors experienced deep emotional and spiritual outcomes, inspired by the mix of alluring ambience, informative interpretation and inherently fascinating objects.
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Executive summary

1.1 The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan was a very successful exhibition

This exhibition provoked very strong emotional and spiritual outcomes from visitors, who were surprised by the content of the exhibition. Many visitors had not previously heard of dogu, and were interested to find out more about the rich history of ancient Japan. The content of the exhibition itself also surprised visitors, many of whom had not expected to see so many excellent examples of dogu outside of Japan.

These strong emotional and spiritual motivations came about as a result of clear design and layout, interesting and accessible interpretation and aesthetically appealing objects. Visitors were impressed by the level of detail on the objects, which in turn encouraged them to think differently about ancient civilisations and their own lives.

1.2 The exhibition pulled together examples of best practice from other shows at the Museum

The exhibition featured numerous examples of interpretation and layout design that had been successfully tested at other exhibitions within the Museum. For example, the use of large contextual images at The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan had been proven a success at large exhibitions such as The First Emperor: China’s Terracotta Army, while the 360° access to the objects had tested positively at an array of Room 3 shows.

This shows that the Museum is learning from past exhibitions, and the findings being incorporated into future exhibition design. This proactive approach has ensured that all British Museum exhibitions are of a high standard, which repeat visitors have now come to expect.

1.3 The exhibition appealed to a ‘core’ audience of repeat Museum visitors

The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan appealed to a core audience of repeat visitors, many of whom come to the Museum without a prior knowledge of the temporary exhibition programme. However, they trust the Museum to provide interesting and appealing exhibitions, and are happy to be converted on site.
The exhibition also seemed to attract two types of visits – either dedicated visits from specialists, or incidental visits from Museum visitors who tended to have little or no knowledge of the subject matter. It is testament to the inherently interesting nature of the subject matter, coupled with the information on offer, that the exhibition successfully catered for both visit types.

1.4 The exhibition design helped create an ambience that encouraged engagement

Visitors commented how the design and layout of the room created a relaxed and peaceful environment that improved their experience. Several features combined to add to the ambience, especially the lighting and amount of space in the room. Visitors also liked the 360° access to the objects which allowed them to see the detail on the pieces from all sides.

This 360° degree access is a tried and tested display technique that has already been used to good effect in other exhibitions at the Museum, notably Room 3.

1.5 Visitors tended not to notice the use of gateway objects

Although visitors tended not to notice the specific use of the gateway object and interpretation in each display case, they were very positive about the amount and content of the interpretation in the exhibition. At each display case visitors tended to engage with the actual objects themselves, but usage of interpretation was also relatively high.

However, when combining what visitors looked at in each display case, this suggests that the interpretive and display technique used in this exhibition successfully engaged visitors, and possibly encouraged a deeper level of engagement than might be found using a more traditional display and interpretive approach.

1.6 The exhibition increased visitors’ knowledge of the subject matter, and encouraged different behaviour in the rest of the Museum

The exhibition encouraged visitors to think differently about the history of Japan, as visitors gained a deeper insight into the subject. However, it also encouraged visitors to act differently elsewhere in the Museum, as it raised awareness of the Japanese Galleries and the Room 3 exhibition. This suggests that some visitors were looking for their visit to encapsulate the whole “Japan
experience', and having been to *The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan*, they were then keen to find out more about similar subjects.

Respondents to the vox pop interviews suggested the links to the other prehistoric objects in the Museum were also popular, and visitors liked being directed to other comparable objects within the Museum.
2

The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan

This exhibition aimed to highlight the beauty and power of remarkable ceramic figures known as dogu, mysterious masterpieces that were produced in great numbers in prehistoric Japan.

Unusually for a British Museum exhibition, the entirety of the content was loaned from public and private collections in Japan, with many of the objects designated Japanese National Treasures or Important Cultural Properties. Many of the objects have never been seen before outside of Japan.

This free display was held in Room 91 of the British Museum, and ran from 10 September – 22 November 2009. The exhibition was sponsored by the Mitsubishi Corporation.
3 Research methodology

3.1 Aims and objectives

The aim of this research is to provide an independent evaluation of *The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan*, where appropriate benchmarking the findings against other special exhibitions at the Museum such as *Babylon: Myth and Reality* and *Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan*, the free installation *Statuephilia: contemporary sculptors at the British Museum* and other displays in Room 91 of the Museum such as *Between Tibet and Assam*.

The specific aims and objectives of the research can be divided into 3 sections.

Quantitative information

- Knowledge and professional / academic interest
- Audience segmentation

Visitor impact

- Combining meaning making and motivation
- In-depth tracking of complete visits

Qualitative outcomes

The brief also highlighted a number of elements to the exhibition to be tested through qualitative research:

- Intellectual and emotional outcomes
- Content of interpretation
- Room display
- Reaction to large images and line drawings
- Reaction to ‘gateway’ interpretation / display scheme
- Impact of the objects on visitors
3.2 Our approach

Exit survey

Surveys were conducted with visitors who had just completed their visit to the exhibition to ascertain a basic visitor profile, motivation for visiting the exhibition, behaviour within the room and the impacts and outcomes of the exhibition.

146 exit surveys were conducted across weekdays, weekends and evenings.

British Museum rolling research

Several questions were added to the British Museum’s rolling research exit survey to ascertain awareness and attendance at the exhibition among general Museum visitors.

Sequential visitor tracking

Visitors were observed in the exhibition space, from the moment they entered to the moment they left. Their behaviour was marked on a specially designed map of the room that enables us to ascertain first object visited, usage of individual objects, engagement and meaning making in the room. Visitors who left almost immediately were classed as ‘walkthroughs’.

143 visitors were tracked in the room.

Vox pop interviews

Vox pop interviews were carried out throughout the exhibition in order to test visitors’ responses both to the individual elements of the display and to the exhibition as a whole.

75 vox pops were conducted.

Depth interviews

While vox pops were useful in getting general outcomes from the exhibition, short depth interviews were conducted to dig deeper into the visit experience, exploring the impact of the exhibition on visitors.

28 depth interviews were conducted.
Key findings

The table below shows the key findings from *The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan*, and compares them with 3 other exhibitions at the British Museum that have been evaluated by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan</th>
<th>Statuephilia: contemporary sculptors at the British Museum</th>
<th>Crafting Beauty in Modern Japan</th>
<th>Myths of Bengal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition dates</td>
<td>10/09/09 – 22/11/09</td>
<td>4/10/08 – 25/01/09</td>
<td>19/07/07 – 21/10/07</td>
<td>14/09/06 – 7/01/07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room</td>
<td></td>
<td>Museum-wide</td>
<td></td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free/charging</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Charging</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average length of visit</td>
<td>18 mins&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>54 mins</td>
<td>22 mins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Figure taken from exit survey
2 Dwell time used here is the mean dwell, in order to be comparable to other exhibitions. For further information about dwell time go to Section 8

Pre-awareness of the exhibition was high at this exhibition, with 40% of visitors saying they had heard about it before their visit that day, considerably higher than the 24% at Statuephilia: contemporary sculptors at the British Museum.

Awareness of the sponsor was also high, with over half of visitors correctly naming the exhibition sponsor.
### Visitor profile

**Visitor profile**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>exhibition dates</th>
<th>the power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan</th>
<th>statuephilia: contemporary sculptors at the BM</th>
<th>crafting beauty in modern Japan</th>
<th>myths of bengal</th>
<th>bm rolling Year 4 (Apr 08 – Mar 09)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Base</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>3409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge of subject in museum</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specialist</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>general</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>little / no</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan* attracted a high proportion of repeat visitors, many of whom have a specialist knowledge of the areas covered by the Museum. This audience can regularly be found at free exhibitions at the Museum, especially in Room 3. They either come specifically to see all free special exhibitions at the Museum, or arrive speculatively, trusting that the Museum will be hosting an interesting exhibition.

#### 5.1 Knowledge

Visitors’ knowledge of the subject areas covered in the Museum was fairly good, with 65% saying they had a general knowledge, and only 21% saying they had little or no knowledge.

However, when asked about their knowledge of the subject areas covered in the exhibition, the results differed greatly. Over half of exhibition visitors said they had little or no knowledge of dogu and the Jomon period, and for many this affected the subsequent outcomes they got out of the visit. This meant that the whole exhibition was a new experience for many visitors, and so they were able to learn a lot about the subject. Also, knowing nothing about the subject meant that many of these visitors felt a sense of
awe and wonder at seeing something so old and impressive, about which they previously knew so little.

The level of specialists remained fairly constant across the Museum as a whole and the exhibition, with 12 – 14% of visitors having a specialist knowledge. It is unusual for the proportion of specialists to remain constant even when the proportion of visitors with little or no knowledge rises significantly. This suggests that the content of the exhibition invited less ‘middle ground’ than usually might be found among Museum visitors. 35% of visitors said they had a general knowledge of the subject, which although lower than usual, is still higher than the 12% of specialists.

I was surprised by this stage in the development of Japanese culture. I didn’t really know anything about it

I feel a bit stupid for not knowing

I’m a sculptor and I have seen figures like that before, but if you’d asked me what their name was I wouldn’t have known
5.2 Segments

The table below shows the MHM-devised segmentation system used at the Museum, and describes the broad needs of each segment group.

**Segment table**

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

The diagram below compares the segment breakdowns for *The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan* and Year 4 of the Museum’s rolling research.
Mysterious, enigmatic, spiritual:

An evaluation of *The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan*

Segmentation breakdown

This exhibition attracted a much higher proportion of Art Lovers than at the Museum as a whole with the exhibition appealing to visitors with emotional and spiritual motivations to attend.
6 Motivations for visiting

6.1 Motivations

We have identified four key drivers for visiting museums:

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

6.2 Main motivation

Using a series of statements on the exit survey we asked visitors to *The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan* to identify the main motivation for their visit to the British Museum that day. The diagram below shows the main motivation of visitors to *The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan, Myths of Bengal* and at the British Museum in the 4th year of rolling research.
Mysterious, enigmatic, spiritual: An evaluation of The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan

Main motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan</th>
<th>Statuephilia: contemporary sculptors at the British Museum</th>
<th>Crafting Beauty in modern Japan</th>
<th>Myths of Bengal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual 10%</td>
<td>Spiritual 3%</td>
<td>Spiritual 1%</td>
<td>Spiritual 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional 20%</td>
<td>Emotional 16%</td>
<td>Emotional 10%</td>
<td>Emotional 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual 33%</td>
<td>Intellectual 37%</td>
<td>Intellectual 33%</td>
<td>Intellectual 41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social 37%</td>
<td>Social 43%</td>
<td>Social 36%</td>
<td>Social 46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Social 16%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This exhibition attracted a high proportion of emotionally and spiritually motivated visitors looking to see fascinating objects and gain an insight into a topic, about which many had a limited existing knowledge.
Mysterious, enigmatic, spiritual: An evaluation of The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan

6.3 Specific motivators

The table below shows all motivations to attend among visitors at The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan.

Specific motivators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation statement</th>
<th>The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To use facilities such as shop / café / toilet / restaurant</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To spend time with other people in a nice place</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To visit one of the major attractions in the region</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To encourage children’s interest in history</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a personal / academic / professional interest in the subject</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve my own knowledge and understanding</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To experience awe-inspiring, fascinating or beautiful things or places</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To feel a strong sense of personal connection</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To travel back in time</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be moved emotionally</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To gain a deeper insight into the subject</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To stimulate my own creativity</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To reflect and contemplate</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To escape or recharge my batteries</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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7

Behaviour

7.1 Attractor

60% of visitors were converted to attend the exhibition while on site, meaning that it had a significant attracting power to get visitors into the room. This compares with 76% at Statuephilia: contemporary sculptors at the British Museum, 17% at Crafting Beauty in modern Japan and 68% at Myths of Bengal.

This attraction came from a number of sources, from on-site publicity to existing knowledge.

In many instances however it was a combination of elements that attracted their interest – for example an interest in ceramics coupled with a recommendation from a friend or relative.

Interest or connection to the subject

A personal interest or connection to one of the subjects covered in the exhibition was a common attractor into the room. This interest or connection was often with art or ceramics.

I’m just a fan of old primitive art

I came specifically from Brussels to see this exhibition, as an art dealer and an art collector I’m interested in everything including Jomon

I’m an art historian so I’m interested in ceramics

On other occasions people cited a personal interest or connection to Japan – usually from having lived there or previously visited the country.

I used to live in Japan so it interested me

I’m particularly interested in Japan because I lived there for 15 years

Recommendation

Word of mouth was an important form of publicity for this exhibition, and the high proportion of visitors citing a recommendation as their reason for attending suggests high levels of satisfaction at the quality of the exhibition.

I work with ceramics and my brother had been to see the exhibition and said it was interesting
I go to a ceramic class and someone else in the class had been here and was talking about it

I’m actually studying Japanese at university and I was told by one of my lecturers that we should come and have a look at this exhibition

A friend had been and recommended it so that’s the reason I came today

Museum behaviour

39% of visitors found out about the exhibition when they came across it in the Museum, and many of these visitors will have been drawn to the general area by the *Revolution on paper: Mexican prints 1910 – 1960* exhibition (22/10/09 – 5/04/10) which was being held next door in Room 90.

We came through the Mexican artwork, and I’ve always had a fascination with Japanese culture so we thought we’d carry on

It happened to be next to this one that I wanted to go to

I was interested particularly in the prints and drawings and since that’s close by I came to see what was here

I didn’t come to see *The power of dogu* – I came to see the Mexican exhibition
7.2 Visitor behaviour

This section highlights how visitors spent time in the exhibition, specifically outlining the following behaviour:

- What visitors looked at first in both ‘zones’ of the exhibition
- The proportion of visitors who looked at the individual display cases, objects, large photos and wall panels
- Interpretation and objects looked at within each display case
- Level of engagement at each display case

7.3 Meaning making

The following viewing strategies show how visitors behave differently in the exhibition:

**Browsing:** Visitor selects random objects and displays in no apparent narrative or sequence

**Following:** Visitor looks at a number objects and cases in a sequential pattern

**Searching:** Very applied following, visitor reads everything and possibly talks about objects with fellow visitors or staff

**Choosing:** Visitor picks pieces of interest and quickly becomes immersed in them, often pieces they may have seen before or have knowledge of. They choose what sequence to follow.

**Researching:** Visitor studies, sketches or examines objects in very close detail, perhaps for a project
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Zone 1
1. Photo
2. Two objects
3. National Treasures
4. Introduction and object
5. Exhibition introduction
6. Find out more
7. Prehistoric figures at the BM

Zone 2
8. Photo
9. Photo
10. Photo
11. Photo
12. Photo
13. Photo
14. Photo
15. Photo
16. Origins of dogu
17. Rare example
18. Sponsor
19. Exhibition lenders
20. Goggle-eyed dogu and the BM
21. Benches
22. Dogu timeline
23. Excavation sites
24. Hollow masked figures
25. 'Venus' figure
26. Breaking the goddess
27. Jomon pots
28. Dogu and animal spirits
29. Animating dogu
30. Spectacular dogu
31. Dogu revived
32. The end of dogu
33. Dogu and transformation
34. Posed figures
35. Info panel

1st object looked at

Entrance used → Exit used

% of visitors who visited object first

0-5  6-10  11-20  21+

Gateway object
7.4 Gateway objects

The first object visited was observed and recorded for both the entrance area of the exhibition (Zone 1) and the main exhibition space itself (Zone 2).

The most common object visited first in Zone 1 was the main exhibition introductory panel, which was viewed by nearly half of visitors in the space. The positioning of this introductory panel is crucial as it gives visitors the necessary background information and context to enjoy and understand the rest of the exhibition.

Unsurprisingly, the ‘Spectacular dogu’ display was the most popular first object for Zone 2 as this was immediately visible through the entrance. Having such appealing objects immediately captures visitors’ interest and draws them in to the rest of the exhibition. This technique has been used very successfully on a larger scale in the Reading Room exhibitions.

The next two most common first objects visited were the ‘Rare example’ and ‘The end of dogu’ respectively, as some visitors took a clockwise or anticlockwise path around the exhibition on entry.
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Objects
1. Photo
2. Two objects
3. National Treasures
4. Introduction and object
5. Exhibition introduction
6. Find out more
7. Prehistoric figures at the BM
8. Photo
9. Photo
10. Photo
11. Photo
12. Photo
13. Photo
14. Photo
15. Photo
16. Origins of dogu
17. Rare example
18. Sponsor
19. Exhibition lenders
20. Goggle-eyed dogu and the BM
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33. Dogu and transformation
34. Posed figures
35. Info panel

Star objects
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Interface:
- Entrance used
- Exit used
- % of engagement

- 0 - 22
- 23 - 30
- 31 - 40
- 40+
- Star object

Objects:
1. Photo
2. Two objects
3. National Treasures
4. Introduction and object
5. Exhibition introduction
6. Find out more
7. Prehistoric figures at the BM
8. Photo
9. Photo
10. Photo
11. Photo
12. Photo
13. Photo
14. Photo
15. Photo
16. Origins of dogu
17. Rare example
18. Sponsor
19. Exhibition lenders
20. Goggle-eyed dogu and the BM
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31. Dogu revived
32. The end of dogu
33. Dogu and transformation
34. Posed figures
35. Info panel
Most popular objects

The most commonly visited object of the whole exhibition was the ‘hollow masked figure’ which had featured in all of the publicity and marketing material for the exhibition. This was an excellently-preserved example of dogu, with which visitors could either engage on a purely aesthetic level or intellectually by reading the accompanying interpretation. The other object at the rear of the exhibition space, the ‘Venus’ figure also fared well, with 57% of visitors looking at the display case.

The large display cases around the sides of the exhibition attracted between 43% and 50% of visitors to them, and the consistently high usage around the room shows there was little or no drop off among visitors who did follow the exhibition chronologically.

Other very appealing aspects of the exhibition included the ‘rare example’ and the ‘Dogu timeline’, the latter of which helped visitors to contextualise and existing knowledge.

The central display cases (apart from the ‘spectacular dogu’) were slightly less successful, with between 32% and 38% of visitors looking at them.

Other popular objects

Other popular objects in the exhibition included the ‘spectacular dogu’ display case and the ‘rare example’ of dogu. These pieces were likely to have a high usage due to their position near the entrance to the room, but they also had individual qualities that made them appealing to visitors.

The level of workmanship and detail on the spectacular dogu was greatly appreciated by visitors, who were then able to contrast this with the early example of dogu, and appreciate the similarities and differences.

*It's so small and yet somebody managed to find it and not discard it. It's got the same importance as the big ones*

*The very old one – the really, really small one. I think it's quite cool*

*I found the one right at the start where there's hardly anything left of it, the very earliest example. I think that's very interesting to see compared to these really elaborate, larger pieces towards the end*

*It didn't look like much but it must have some significance*
7.6 Engagement

Depth of engagement

The map on the previous pages shows visitors' levels of engagement with each of the display cases. We judged depth of engagement on a scale of observed behaviours, defined as follows:

**Levels of engagement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Static exhibits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>Immersion</td>
<td>Spending an extended period looking at exhibit in depth, studying it closely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interactions</td>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>Spend time looking at the exhibit in some depth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Briefly consider the exhibit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Acknowledge the exhibit, but quickly moving on</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The percentages on the map show the proportion of visitors addressing each display who were judged to have a successful engagement with the display.
Mysterious, enigmatic, spiritual: An evaluation of The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan

Objects
1. Photo
2. Two objects
3. National Treasures
4. Introduction and object
5. Exhibition introduction
6. Find out more
7. Prehistoric figures at the BM
8. Photo
9. Photo
10. Photo
11. Photo
12. Photo
13. Photo
14. Photo
15. Photo
16. Origins of dogu
17. Rare example
18. Sponsor
19. Exhibition lenders
20. Goggle-eyed dogu and the BM
21. Benches
22. Dogu timeline
23. Excavation sites
24. Hollow masked figures
25. "Venus" figure
26. Breaking the goddess
27. Jomon pots
28. Dogu and animal spirits
29. Animating dogu
30. Spectacular dogu
31. Dogu revived
32. The end of dogu
33. Dogu and transformation
34. Posed figures
35. Info panel

Interpretation behaviour

Entrance used
Exit used

% of visitors who looked at:
Gateway context
Gateway object text
Gateway object
Other objects
Object labels

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7.7 Interpretation behaviour

Interpretation usage in the room was measured through observation, and given the proximity of the objects and information in the display cases, it often proved difficult to determine exactly what visitors were looking at. Therefore, these figures should be viewed with some caution. However, the results do show that usage of the contextual information panel, gateway object and gateway panel were relatively high, with over a third of visitors stopping to read interpretation.

Further qualitative analysis of the interpretation in the exhibition can be found in section 10 of this report.
7.8 Dwell time

The median dwell time for the exhibition was four minutes, considerably lower than the eight minutes at *Between Tibet and Assam*. However, the mean dwell time is over 11 minutes. The graph below shows the time visitors spent in the exhibition:

Dwell (through observation tracking)

The median dwell time for the exhibition was four minutes, considerably lower than the eight minutes at *Between Tibet and Assam*. However, the mean dwell time is over 11 minutes, suggesting that visitors tended to either undertake very brief or very long visits.

7.9 Walkthroughs

Visitors were observed in the space, with the proportion of ‘walkthroughs’ noted. A walkthrough is a visitor who enters the room but then leaves again immediately without engaging.

The proportion of walkthroughs at *The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan* was 38%, which compares very favourably with the 78% walkthroughs at *Between Tibet and Assam*.

This means that the content of the exhibition, or its design and layout, must have been inherently appealing, as the majority of visitors stayed in the room and engaged on some level.
8 Design and layout

General responses to the design and layout of the room were very positive

Visitors were enthusiastic about the display of the exhibition, specifically commenting that the exhibition contained a good number of objects, but was sufficiently large to prevent crowding. This has been a common concern at the Museum’s popular paying exhibitions. Allowing visitors space to view the objects comfortably enabled them to achieve deeper outcomes.

There’s a nice mix of having lots of things on show but enough space so that you weren’t crowded when you were looking at them

It’s nicely lit, you’ve not got too many things all stuck together, you’ve got time to look at and appreciate them

As exhibition design goes I think it’s one of the best I’ve seen for a long time in England

360° access to the objects

As has been seen previously in research at special exhibitions at the Museum, especially Room 3, visitors like being able to walk round the objects and look at them from all sides. This allows them to appreciate the full detail of the pieces.

I think especially it’s good when you have the possibility to see objects from behind

You can look at them from the front, the side and the rear

When the objects were in a display case against a wall, some visitors suggested having mirrors behind the objects so they could see all the surfaces. This was a technique used well at the Room 3 exhibition The Caribbean before Columbus.

Direction taken around the room

The visitor tracking shows that the majority of visitors took a ‘random’ direction around the room, browsing objects and display cases that appeared interesting to them.

Just under a third of visitors took the correct clockwise route around the room, and in the vox pops and depth interviews, most respondents seemed to understand the chronological layout of the room without much difficulty.
Mysterious, enigmatic, spiritual: An evaluation of *The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan*

I think it’s just beautifully staged, it’s delightful and you go round in an obvious progression

I pretty much followed the order that you have things laid out, starting with the earliest period and going on to the late Jomon period

Responses to the exhibition lighting were very positive

Several visitors commented that the exhibition was well-lit, with the focus being attracted onto the objects themselves. Research in Room 3 has highlighted the importance of lighting in an exhibition, and *The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan* has further demonstrated how it can be used positively to help create an ambience to encourage engagement.

*It is very well displayed because often with modern museum practise people seem to be afraid of lights, so quite often you go to exhibitions and the things are so obscurely lit, whereas here it’s very well done*

*The lighting is superb, it’s easy to appreciate each dogu figure*
9 Interpretation

The majority of visitors felt the amount of interpretation was good given their lack of general knowledge of the subject.

Many visitors had little or no knowledge of the subject areas covered in the exhibition, and therefore needed background contextual information to enjoy the pieces and deliver intellectual outcomes.

Most reported that the interpretation available had been sufficiently dense to answer their questions, without being overwhelming.

*The content is interesting. It gives lots of speculations about what the possible reasons for the art is, and it gives a good background on everything.*

*You had enough information to keep you going rather than being too overwhelmed by everything.*

*Sometimes I find if there’s too much you actually lose interest in it, but they’ve summarised it nicely.*

*I think it was sufficient because I’ve just been introduced to it, so it gives me sufficient information to get more information myself.*

Visitors appreciate presentation of uncertainty

Visitors were happy with the Museum’s decision to explain that some information is not known, rather than promoting theories and guesswork.

*It just seemed to give me all that I needed to know, based on the limit of what’s known about it.*

*The candour of the exhibition – there is uncertainty as to what these are, and the British Museum don’t pretend to tell the viewer what they think this could be.*

*What actually exists has to precede descriptions about it.*

*Very good considering I suppose there’s a certain amount of guesswork going on and understandably so.*
However, some visitors wanted more explanation of potential explanations and theories

Several visitors commented that they would have liked more explanation from the Museum as to the purposes of the dogu, at times failing to recognise that this information is simply not known.

Perhaps a little bit more about how these figures may have been used – if experts have more theories of how they fitted into culture at the time. I don’t get much of a sense of exactly what Japanese people 5000 years ago were doing typically so it would be nice to imagine or led in imagining how they fitted into people’s lives

I want to learn more about it. I want to find out the intent. I’m not fully understanding what they were used for – was it purely a burial thing? Was it an offering? I’m still not clear

Some visitors requested information about how the words are pronounced and translated

There were several requests for guidance on the key words used in the exhibition – notably ‘jomon’ and ‘dogu’ in terms of how they are pronounced and what they literally mean. Even some specialist visitors were unsure of this.

How it would have been pronounced, that would have been something that would be good to know

The word isn’t even explained, there’s nowhere where it actually says ‘dogu – what does this actually mean?’ Can we translate it? Who used that word?

Please note that a translation of ‘dogu’ as ‘clay spirit’ was present in the introductory interpretation to the exhibition.

Although not widely used, the line drawings helped some visitors appreciate the detail

The majority of visitors in the room did not comment about the line drawings that featured on the interpretation panels. However, those visitors that did notice and use them said that they were useful in highlighting the detail on the objects.

I guess it was nice having the drawings to show particular parts of the piece that you wouldn’t necessarily get. I found it most noticeably with the cat-shaped animal at the back – it kind of emphasised the deliberate symmetry of it
Mysterious, enigmatic, spiritual: An evaluation of *The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan*

*It’s nice for bringing out details that are maybe hard to see when it’s in a case and lit from one direction*

**Maps and panels were popular features of the exhibition**

The vox pops and depth interviews suggested that the various maps, panels and timelines dotted around the exhibition were another popular feature among visitors, who liked the mix of objects and interpretation. These panels help give visitors context for their visit and enable them to better appreciate and understand the object.

*I like the maps and the panels. I think it’s a really good balance between the information and the objects which is good*

![Large images](image)

9.1 **Large images**

The exhibition featured nine large images around the rooms, some of them displaying close up images of the dogu themselves, with others showing landscapes of Japan where some of the objects had been found.

**Images helped create a Japanese ambience to the exhibition**

Many visitors felt that the large images helped add a context to the exhibition, helping them understand where the dogu had come from. Others mentioned that the images helped to transport them to another time and place.

*I appreciate the big pictures of the greenery and the areas around and how they look today*

*The photograph of Mount Fuji and the other photograph of this volcano – it really gives you the feeling of being in Japan*
Mysterious, enigmatic, spiritual: An evaluation of The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan

Something that seems to have added to it are ... your blow-ups of the geography, of the area. I think it gives you a sense of the physical presence of the place where these things came from

Images of the objects helped visitors appreciate the intricate detail

The large images helped visitors to see the intricate detail on some of the dogu – highlighting skill and craftsmanship that might otherwise have been missed.

The figures are actually quite small so I think it’s good for the attention to have something big and like the details

[Pictures] show fine detail that maybe you couldn’t see so clearly on the smaller objects
10 Outcomes

10.1 Main outcome

Visitors are asked to say which outcomes they feel they have got out of their visit, and which has been the main outcome. Comparing this against their main motivation for attending the Museum shows how the exhibition can provoke unexpected outcomes for visitors.

The diagram below compares visitors’ main motivations for attending *The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan* with the main outcome they received from the visit to the exhibition.

*Main motivation vs. main outcome*

This diagram suggests a significant increase in emotional outcomes, with almost a third of exhibition visitors saying their main outcome from the exhibition was emotional.
10.2 All motivations vs. all outcomes

As well as asking about visitors’ main motivations and outcomes, it is also useful to look at all the outcomes they feel they got out of a visit. The table below compares all visitors’ motivations with all of their subsequent outcomes.

Motivation to outcome shift

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>All motivations</th>
<th>All outcomes</th>
<th>Difference %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To use facilities such as the shop / café / toilet / restaurant</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>+8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To visit one of the major attractions in the region</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>-12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To spend time with other people in a nice place</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To encourage children’s interest in history</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>-3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve my own knowledge and understanding</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>+5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a personal / academic / professional interest in the subject</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>+1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To travel back in time</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>+1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To gain a deeper insight into the subject</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>+8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To experience awe-inspiring, fascinating or beautiful things or places</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>+5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be moved emotionally</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>+3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To feel a strong sense of personal connection</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To escape or recharge my batteries</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>+7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To stimulate my own creativity</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>+1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To reflect and contemplate</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures highlighted in red show the key outcome shifts – in this case for intellectual, emotional and spiritual outcomes. The largest single outcome from the exhibition was intellectual, with over half of visitors to the exhibition saying they had improved their own knowledge and understanding.

10.3 Intellectual outcomes

Improving own knowledge and understanding

54% of visitors said they had improved their own knowledge and understanding as a direct result of the exhibition, with just over a quarter of visitors saying it was the main outcome of their visit.
Given the high proportion of visitors who entered the exhibition with little or no knowledge of the subject, this shows that the exhibition has successfully captured the interest of visitors and delivered learning points.

Visitors said they had improved their knowledge and understanding of this ancient Japanese culture.

- A little bit more about an ancient Japanese civilisation which I didn’t know much about
- Incredibly comprehensive. Really shed a light on a subject I knew very little about
- Like so much in life that you don’t know about, it’s always good to learn something new
- I’ve come away knowing more than I went in with, so that’s always good
- I didn’t know anything about this before I came here, so I think I’ve learnt that there’s a lot that we don’t know about
- A greater knowledge and understanding of ancient sculpture

**Art vs. archaeology**

The Museum was interested in finding out whether visitors considered the display to be an exhibition of art or archaeology. In reality, most visitors chose not to make a clear-cut distinction, instead appreciating the objects for both their historic and aesthetic value.

- Fascinating both aesthetically and historically
- This is art – it’s a rediscovered art
- I would say they were quite beautiful objects as an art object, but very interesting archaeologically also

**10.4 Emotional outcomes**

In the vox pops and depth interviews visitors expressed deep emotional and spiritual outcomes, suggesting that the exhibition had gone beyond merely teaching them something new, and encouraged them to think more deeply about their own lives and how they relate to different cultures.

**Deeper insight into and appreciation of another culture**

Many visitors commented that the exhibition had made them think differently about Japanese culture and history, challenging preconceptions.
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Several visitors admitted they had not realised that Japanese history was so extensive.

_I didn’t realise the Japanese civilisation went back so far and that there was so much discovered about them. It has even a longer history than I already thought it had_.

_It’s a culture which was pretty sophisticated that existed long ago. We always think of Japan as a culture that started like in the Middle Ages, but there is a longer history than that_.

Others spoke of their appreciation of the skill that had gone into the creation of the objects, especially from such an ancient civilisation such as this.

_Some [objects] have taken a long time and very careful layering on the cord to get the decoration effect, I mean they’ve been very lovingly made with great skill_.

_I never realised that Jomon was that extensive, that there was so much great material from different periods. I’ve been to Japan and I’ve seen Jomon there, but I’ve never seen the breadth of this exhibition, so many wonderful pieces at once_.

_A very clever people, they didn’t harm their environment and they made use of everything that they had around them and they lived in a very difficult time before a lot of agriculture. I think one has an admiration for the way that they lived as well as the art they were producing_.

The exhibition also gave visitors a more rounded understanding of contemporary Japan.

_I think of Japan as being very modern, having just been there and been on the bullet train, everything’s quite modern. But here it really shows what culture they have – it’s terrific_.

_It gives me a touch of ancient Japan to go with what I think everybody knows about contemporary Japan_.

Visitors experienced a sense of awe and wonder

Many visitors found the content of the exhibition to be fascinating, with the age of the objects triggering their imagination.

_The idea that there are traces of these ancient lives that we can still see and speculate about it pretty interesting_.

_The idea that something lasted for 13,000 years – they kept doing it and doing it and doing it. Hard to believe_.

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Seeing fascinating, awe-inspiring or beautiful objects

35% of visitors named having seen fascinating, awe-inspiring or beautiful objects as an outcome of the exhibition visit. The inherent beauty of the objects gave them immediate appeal, and meant that some visitors could appreciate them on a merely aesthetic level without having to read the interpretation.

   So many of the exhibits are engaging immediately. You think how interesting it looks and there’s such a wide variety of features

   Fantastic, astonishing figures to look at

   It was just a thrill to see the best from each period in one place

   It’s magic, every ceramic is extraordinary

   You find yourself coveting them

   I know these things from photos but to see them is entirely different. Unfortunately I can’t touch them and turn them around but I have had a great deal of visual pleasure

Some visitors even commented that the objects are so unusual that they appear to be from another world.

   Almost otherworldly – it’s like they’re from another time. It’s very strange

   Its weirdness, its alienness, its otherworldliness

Visitors recognised that this might be a once in a lifetime chance to see such an exhibition

The opportunity to see a ‘once in a lifetime’ exhibition is always a big draw for visitors, as has been seen at past exhibitions such as The First Emperor: China’s Terracotta Army. Although obviously on a much smaller scale here, visitors with an existing knowledge of dogu or the Jomon period were aware of the importance of this exhibition, and were subsequently effusive in their praise for The power of dogu: ceramic figures from ancient Japan.

   It’s very rare to see such pieces and I will never have a chance to see these together in my lifetime

   I’m interested in early Japanese art, Jomon period, and I’ve never seen a Jomon show to this extent before

   It’s brilliant that they have brought National Treasures over here and we are seeing it
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There’s not many of them in the UK, if any, so it’s an opportunity to see a particular culture and a particular artform which you wouldn’t usually get to see without going to Japan

I’ve never seen so many high quality pieces all together ever, I don’t think you can see that in Japan, you can see them individually but not together

10.5 Spiritual outcomes

14% of visitors said their main outcome from this exhibition had been spiritual, an increase from the 10% of visitors who cited spiritual reasons as their main motivation to attend the Museum.

To escape and recharge my batteries

The ambience and content of the exhibition helped put visitors in a relaxed mood where they could appreciate the objects and find some form of escape. This atmosphere was created by the design of the exhibition, but also the room’s somewhat hidden position in the Museum, therefore tending to attract less incidental visits. As a result there is less crowding in the room, and visitors can enjoy the peaceful nature of the exhibition.

just being able to sit and appreciate them in a relative peace and quiet

A sense of peace, I think some of these pieces are quite quiet and gentle

Inspiration

The exhibition inspired some visitors to go on and find out more about the subject through their own study.

i shall go home and look at my books and that will bring it all back and i’ve made some sketches

I’ll take the knowledge from this and I’ll certainly be imparting it to my friends and probably even do a little bit of surfing on the web to try and find a little bit more about it

Some visitors expressed a desire to visit Japan in order to find out more about the culture, as a direct result of this exhibition.

i would love to see these sites. That would be fascinating and they also indicate there are places where the kind of villages are reconstructed. It would be fun to see some of these things

Never been, would love to go. I’ve seen a lot of things here today that are probably going to draw that even closer
Visitors’ future behaviour in terms of how they interact with the Museum has also been affected by the exhibition, with some visitors saying they were going to look at the Japanese Galleries or Room 3 exhibition (Professor Munakata’s British Museum adventure, 5 November 2009 – 3 January 2010). Of the people who had not previously visited, 71% said they intended to visit the Room 3 exhibition in future, while 69% said they would visit the Japan Galleries. Others intended to search out the similar prehistoric objects at the Museum.

I’ve laboriously written out all the information on there as to where the other prehistoric art is – I’ll tell you how much I value this exhibition, it’s going to send me on umpteen other visits to the Museum, I want to see all of those

I’ve never really been to the Japanese rooms in the Museum, it has never occurred to me. I would always go to Egypt or Greece or Rome or Mesopotamia

The exhibition also inspired some visitors in their own creative work.

Maybe some ideas for making some figures of a different sort because I do hand things in pottery

Reflection and contemplation

One of the most consistent outcomes that emerged from the vox pops and depth interviews was that of reflection and contemplation. The objects and information available in the exhibition encouraged visitors to think deeply about their own lives and preconceptions of other people and cultures.

Some visitors contemplated the sophistication of the people who created the objects, especially given how long ago they lived. Several visitors also picked up and commented on the fact that the people making these objects had no form of agriculture at the time, making the sophistication of these objects all the more impressive.

Learning a lot more about the sophistication of people. I think it’s remarkable they could do all this sort of sophisticated level of craftsmanship without having that settled sort of supply – hunting, gathering food all the time

I think their level of sophistication in some of the work is surprising given the period

I suppose I had a bit of a preconceived idea that it would be quite primitive work, I suppose a bit like the sort of Stone Age you see in Britain. But the level of workmanship – I wasn’t expecting that level of detail
How clever humans were so many thousands of years ago

Other visitors found themselves thinking about the age of the objects, and on occasion drawing comparisons with their own lives.

What we would all do if we sat round a fire 5000 or 6000 years ago to amuse ourselves, and then I can see the other functional uses of the pots and decoration, trying to make your beliefs more concrete maybe

Looking into the eyes of that thing, it’s just amazing – the age of it. I couldn’t believe it – makes you realise how insignificant we are

I think you found that you were looking at something very important. You did feel a sense of how important it all was really

Some of them going back to 2000BC which is just totally ridiculous. It’s behind my comprehension really if they were created back then. Even as art today I think they’re fascinating. I’d be impressed if I could make something like that

This is the way young people, if you gave them clay, would behave with objects, so the history of mankind’s use of objects is also the history of the average human person

Given the current lack of existing knowledge about the actual purpose of the objects, some visitors started to form their own opinions of what they might have been used for, and the importance of beliefs in their society at the time.

The complete emphasis on the female form, how prominent it was in prehistoric times. I mean, we’re talking of the world where the feminine figure or the femininity of giving birth was just of huge, huge importance in contrast to today

What I’m thinking about is the people who created them – were they trying to be representative or were they appealing to some sort of stranger, mystical elements that Japanese people shared at the time but which we don’t understand now?

Visitors were encouraged to think differently about another culture, one which some visitors feel is often overlooked in terms of their rich cultural history.

People pretend that the Japanese have no imagination and all they do is copy other people, but this is 3500 years ago and if these people didn’t have imagination than no one has any imagination

I think you have to look beyond Europe far more than we actually do

Reinforces the depth of cultural history
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Zone 1
1. Photo
2. Two objects
3. National Treasures
4. Introduction and object
5. Exhibition introduction
6. Find out more
7. Prehistoric figures at the BM

Zone 2
8. Photo
9. Photo
10. Photo
11. Photo
12. Photo
13. Photo
14. Photo
15. Photo
16. Origins of dogu
17. Rare example
18. Sponsor
19. Exhibition lenders
20. Goggle-eyed dogu and the BM
21. Benches
22. Dogu timeline
23. Excavation sites
24. Hollow masked figures
25. 'Venus' figure
26. Breaking the goddess
27. Jomon pots
28. Dogu and animal spirits
29. Animating dogu
30. Spectacular dogu
31. Dogu revived
32. The end of dogu
33. Dogu and transformation
34. Posed figures
35. Info panel

1st object looked at

% of visitors who visited object first

Entrance used  Exit used