A Lost World

Visitor responses to *The Caribbean before Columbus*

July 2007

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

MORRIS HARGREAVES McINTYRE ▶▶▶

A Lost World: Visitor responses to *The Caribbean before Columbus*

As well as its usual core audience of recent returning Londoners, the display also attracted a high proportion of **overseas tourists** and visitors of **Caribbean origin**.

Visitors felt the exhibition was a **successful introduction** to a subject of which they had **little or no knowledge**.

However, they wanted **more information** about the culture and people that created the objects, and responded positively to the idea of a **permanent Caribbean gallery**.

Contents

1 Summary

1.1 Room 3 audience

Whilst the exhibition attracted its usual audience of recent returning Londoners, there was also a high proportion of overseas visitors compared to other Room 3 displays, with 58% of visitors to the exhibition based overseas. There was also a high proportion of female visitors to this exhibition – only slightly fewer than at the *Fabric of a Nation* display.

14% of visitors made intentional visits to the exhibition.

1.2 Strong Caribbean connection

6% of all visitors to the exhibition said they were of Caribbean origin, compared to 1% at the whole Museum in the same period. Nearly two thirds of the Caribbean visitors to the exhibition lived in London.

Over a fifth of visitors to Room 3 said they had a personal connection with the Caribbean which tended to mean they had been born there or had made a visit there.

1.3 Visitors had little or no knowledge of the exhibition's subject area

Although 85% of visitors to the exhibition said they had either a specialist or general knowledge of the subject areas covered in the whole Museum, only 35% had a specialist or general knowledge of the themes covered in *The Caribbean before Columbus*.

14% of visitors said they were aware that the British Museum had early Caribbean objects in its collection.

1.4 High proportion of socially and intellectually motivated visitors

Visitor motivations to *The Caribbean before Columbus* were similar to those at the *Royal Game of Ur* display, with 34% of visitors citing social motivations and 35% citing intellectual motivations to visit. 24% of visitors were emotionally motivated to visit the display.

The main motivation for visitors was to improve their own knowledge.

1.5   Visitors did not start their visit at the introduction panel

89% of visitors started their visit at the first object (carved male çemi figure) that faced them as they walked in to Room 3. This meant that although the usage of all the objects in the room was high, visitors tended not to read the introduction panel until the end of their visit.

As visitors' knowledge of the subject area was low, they felt the introduction panel might have been positioned in a more accessible, obvious place to help give them some background knowledge before looking at the objects.

1.6   Positive response to the display and interpretation

Visitors liked the atmosphere created by the low lighting, sounds and smells as it helped to transport them to the time and place of the Caribbean before Columbus' arrival. The display also made the objects appear more impressive and focussed visitors' attention onto them. This helped to create an totally immersive environment in the room.

The text panels successfully told visitors what they needed to know about the individual objects with the right amount and level of interpretation. The line drawings were not criticised, but were not particularly singled out for praise, whilst the use of native words pleased some visitors and confused others.

1.7   Visitors wanted more

Many visitors left the exhibition feeling that it had been a good introduction to the subject, but felt that they wanted more background information about the people and culture that created these objects in the first place.

81% of visitors said they would be very or quite likely to visit a permanent Caribbean gallery if one were created at the British Museum.

1.8   Better understanding of other cultures

Visitors took large intellectual and emotional outcomes from this exhibition with 56% of visitors saying they had gained a better understanding of other people and cultures, and 41% improving their own knowledge as a result of the display.

31% of visitors went on to say that they felt they had experienced what the past was like.

1.9   Key message

The key message that visitors took from this exhibition was that there had been a rich and varied culture in the Caribbean long before the arrival of European settlers.

Visitors were also quick to point out that it was the arrival of Europeans like Columbus that had such a devastating effect on this culture.

2 The Caribbean before Columbus: The Taíno Universe

The Caribbean before Columbus display was held in Room 3 of the British Museum over the period 3 May – 17 June 2007.

The display offered visitors the chance to see objects created by the inhabitants of the Caribbean islands several hundred years before Columbus' voyages.

The selection of rare wooden artefacts offered a glimpse into the Taíno culture which is now completely extinct.

3 Scene setting

3.1 Objectives

The Caribbean before Columbus display focussed on five single objects, aimed at highlighting a number of different aspects of the Taíno culture.

3.2 Presentation and interpretation scheme

For this display a very dark grey colour scheme was used throughout the room to help recreate a mysterious setting.

The shape of the room was also altered to make it feel more intimate, and a selection of sounds and aromas were present in the room to try to return visitors to the time and place of Taíno culture.

Upon entering the room visitors were met with a large glass display cabinet containing the five wooden objects. Only glass separated one figure from another so visitors were able to see all the sides of the objects from different places in the room. There was also a highly reflective surface underneath the objects.

Each object had a related interpretation panel which consisted of a line drawing picture of the related object and a piece of narrative which moved from one object to the next. There were no titles on the interpretation panels, which also used native Taíno words such as *çemi* and *cohoba*.

There was an introduction panel on the right hand side of the display case, and more informative text on the left wall of the room. Images of the caves in the Caribbean where the objects were found, together with images of Taíno rock art were projected onto the back wall behind the display case.

Schematic diagram of *The Caribbean before Columbus*
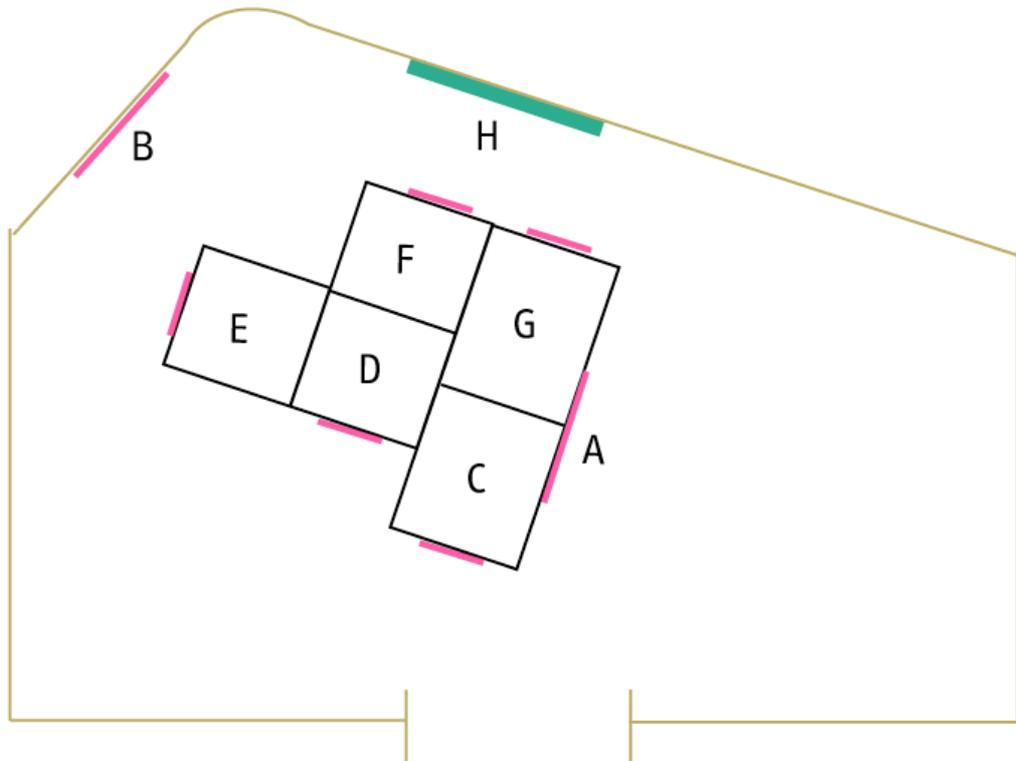
Map key:

A: Text panel *'The Caribbean Before Columbus, The Taíno Universe'*

B: Large wall panel / introduction

C: Carved male *çemi* figure (Jamaica)

D: *Cohoba* snuff tray, face (Jamaica)

E: *Duho* (stool) (Haiti, Dominican Republic)

F: Crawling man (Haiti, Dominican Republic)

G: *Cohoba* snuff tray, bird (Jamaica)

H: Images showing caves & Taíno rock art

4   What we did

Morris Hargreaves McIntyre was commissioned by the British Museum to evaluate *The Caribbean before Columbus* display as part of an on-going evaluation of the Room 3 displays. This report forms the ninth report in the series.

The following primary research took place at the British Museum over 5 shifts between 10 – 17 June 2007, covering weekdays and weekends.

Mini-survey

Visitors were asked a series of short questions to determine: group composition; motivation; knowledge of the subject; prior awareness of the exhibition and intentional visiting; levels of repeat visiting to the Museum as a whole and to Room 3; and impact of visit.

This information provides a basic segmentation of visitors to the Room 3 exhibitions, and allows for comparisons against all visitors to the British Museum over the evaluation period.

99 *mini-surveys* were completed.

Sequential visitor tracking

We tracked individual visitors during their visits to Room 3, recording the time spent in the room, usage of each exhibit and text panel, which element they looked at first and the direction which they took around the room.

This information allows us to identify patterns of visitor behaviour, which is essential to understanding how visitors are responding to the design of the exhibition.

91 visitors were tracked using *sequential visitor tracking*.

Mini depth interviews

Visitors were asked a series of questions regarding the exhibition, giving us detailed insight into issues of display and interpretation.

This provides us with a rich source of qualitative data on visitors' responses to the exhibition.

11 *mini depth interviews* were completed.

Entrance observations

Visitors were observed as they passed the entrance to Room 3 to determine the ratio of visitors ignoring, rejecting or entering the exhibition space. This exercise provides and indication of the relative attractiveness of this display.

110 *entrance observations* were carried out: 54 with visitors on their way into the Museum, 56 with visitors on their way out.

5 Who visited?

5.1 Visitor profile

Core Room 3 audience

The Caribbean before Columbus attracted a similar audience to its predecessors, with the core audience of recent returning Londoners again present at this display.

There was also a high proportion of overseas visitors to this display compared to most previous displays, whilst only 5% of visitors were from the UK outside London.

As at *Fabric of a Nation*, there was a high proportion of female visitors to *The Caribbean before Columbus*.

High proportion of Caribbean visitors

6% of visitors to *The Caribbean before Columbus* were of Caribbean origin compared to just 1% at the Museum as a whole.

22% of visitors said they had a personal connection with the Caribbean. For most visitors, this connection was either that they were born in the Caribbean, or that they had visited there.

The survey period for *The Caribbean before Columbus* took place after the *La Bouche du Roi* installation had closed at the British Museum.

Knowledge of subject areas

Visitors to *The Caribbean before Columbus* said they had a general knowledge of subject areas covered in the Museum, with 74% of visitors having a general knowledge, and 11% having a specialist knowledge. This is a similar proportion to visitors to the whole Museum.

Visitors to Room 3 were then asked about their depth of knowledge of the subject areas covered in *The Caribbean before Columbus*. Visitors were much less informed about this subject, with 65% professing to having little or no knowledge. Only 7% of visitors to Room 3 had a specialist knowledge of the Caribbean before Columbus.

14% of visitors were aware that the British Museum had early Caribbean objects in its collection.

5.2 Getting visitors into Room 3

Our entrance observations showed that 59% of visitors who walked past Room 3 did not notice the room. This is slightly less than at *Fabric of a Nation* which appeared bright and colourful, suggesting that the outward appearance of the room is not massively deterring or attracting visitors.

In fact, many visitors were drawn into the room by its dark appearance, with the contrasting brightly lit object in the centre of the room arousing visitors' curiosity.

> *I liked the colours in the room, I think they contrasted nicely with the main exhibit* **Visitor**

> *I think it was curiosity* **Visitor**

> *The statue, the front one – it made it look intriguing* **Visitor**

> *Satisfying curiosity ... I didn't really know what was in here until I actually came in and started looking around* **Visitor**

Visitors were more likely to enter the room on their way out of the Museum – a similar trend to those found at *Fabric of a Nation* and *Royal Game of Ur.*

5.3 Motivation

This table compares Room 3 visitors' main motivations for visiting the British Museum that day. It compares visitors to *The Caribbean before Columbus* with the other previous Room 3 displays.

	Social	Intellectual	Emotional	Spiritual
All British Museum visitors	41%	37%	18%	5%
The Caribbean before Columbus	34%	35%	24%	3%
Fabric of a Nation	18%	48%	21%	13%
Art of Peace	12%	50%	25%	13%
The Royal Game of Ur	35%	39%	21%	5%
Warren Cup	20%	40%	35%	5%
Rembrandt	20%	34%	24%	20%
Samurai to Manga	33%	33%	17%	16%
Views from Africa	23%	47%	17%	14%
Room 3 norm	24%	41%	23%	12%

The Caribbean before Columbus attracted a high proportion of socially motivated visitors, and a low proportion of spiritually motivated visitors. The

motivations of visitors to *The Caribbean before Columbus* matched those found at *Royal Game of Ur* closely.

Nearly half of overseas visitors to the exhibition were socially motivated, compared to just 14% of London based visitors.

The largest specific motivator of visitors to *The Caribbean before Columbus* was to improve their own knowledge, with 57% of visitors stating this as a motivation to visit, and 18% saying it was their main reason. Other popular motivators were 'it is one of the major attractions in London' (48% of people mentioned it, 13% said it was their main motivation) and 'it is an enjoyable way to pass the time' (48% of people mentioned it, 13% said it was their main motivation).
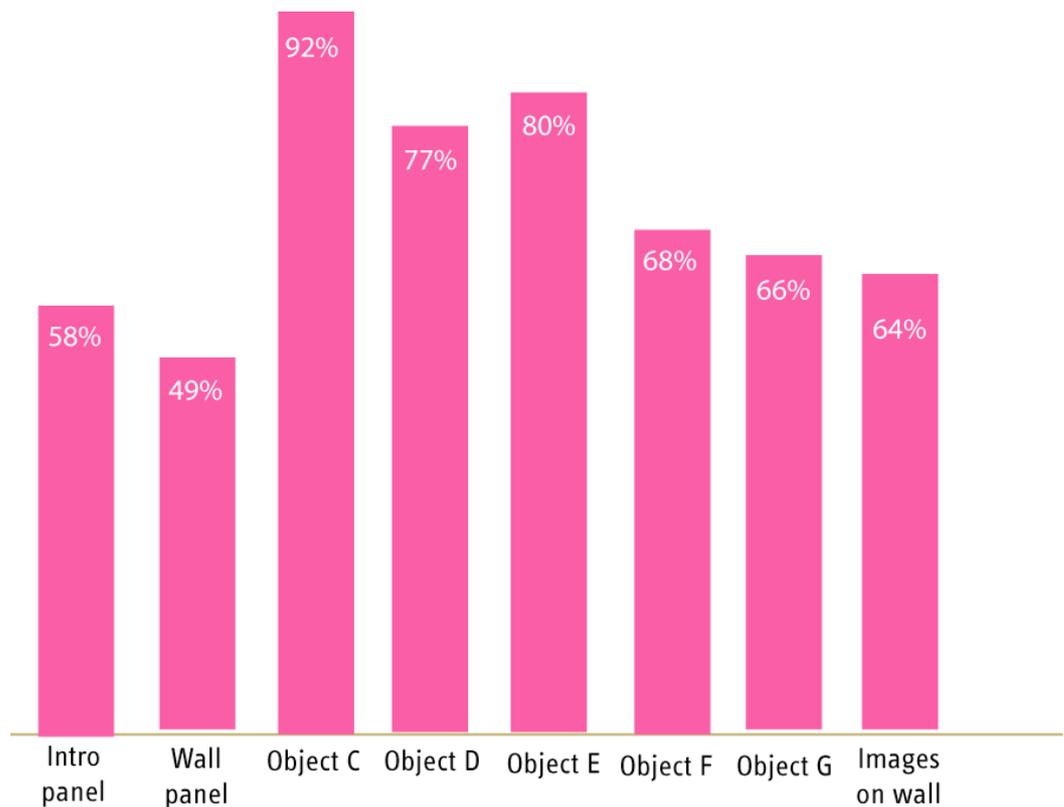
6 What did visitors do?

6.1 Usage

Usage of exhibits

The chart below shows the proportion of all visitors to Room 3 viewing the individual exhibits in *The Caribbean before Columbus* exhibition. The coding of the objects (Object C, Object D etc.) relates to the key found on the map in section 3.

Percentage of visitors using each exhibit

| Exhibit	Percentage
Intro panel	58%
Wall panel	49%
Object C	92%
Object D	77%
Object E	80%
Object F	68%
Object G	66%
Images on wall	64%

This chart shows that Object (Carved male çemi figure) was the most popular object in the display with 92% of visitors looking at the piece. This is perhaps unsurprising considering that this was the first object to greet visitors when they entered the room. Conversely, only 58% of visitors actually looked at the introduction panel to the right of the display, suggesting that

people did not receive as much explanatory background information as they might have done, had the panel been positioned elsewhere.

The five carved objects in the room were the five most popular elements of the display, more so than the images on the wall, the introduction panel and the introduction written on the left wall.

Detailed usage

The diagram below shows the percentage of visitors who used each of the exhibits and accompanying text panels.
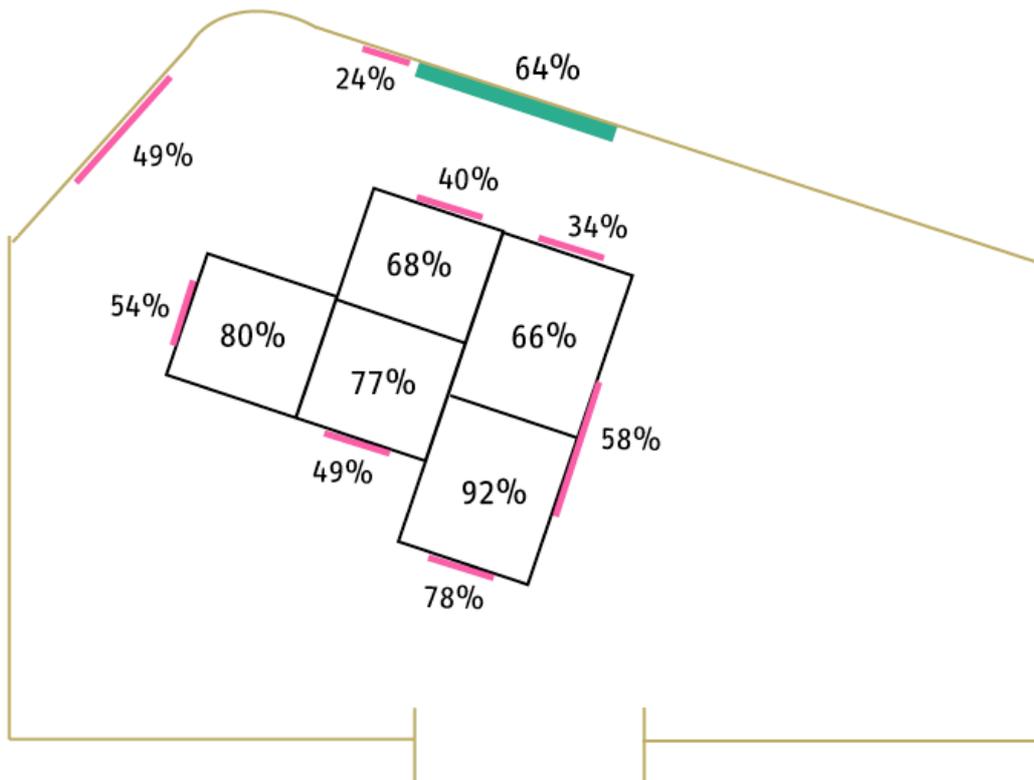
This diagram shows that the usage of the text panels at each carved object was relatively high, with the percentage of visitors using the text panels ranging from 34% – 78%.

Less than a quarter of visitors read the explanatory text panel for the images projected onto the back wall of Room 3.

Number of exhibits used

The chart below illustrates the number of exhibits used by visitors to Room 3.
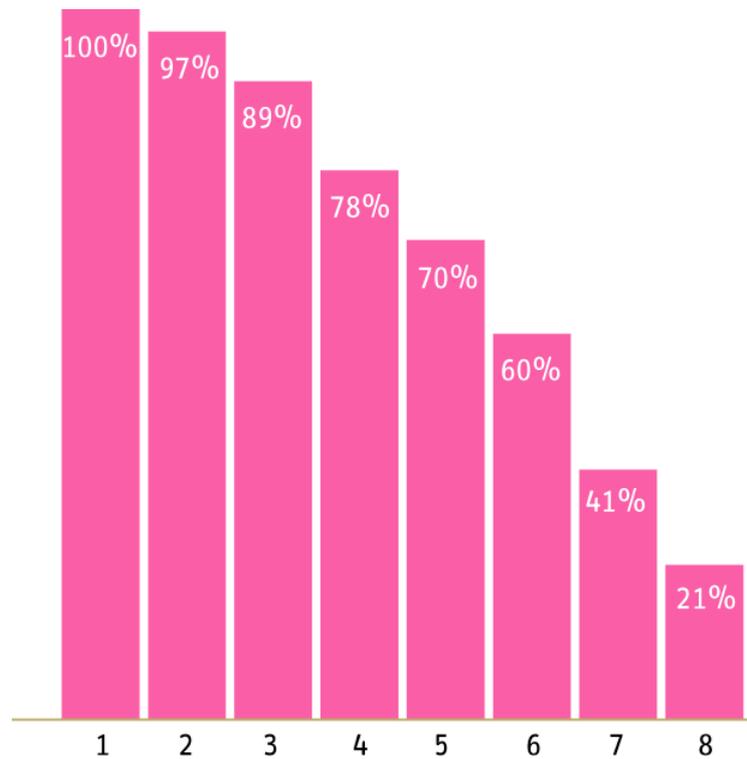
This model shows that the Room 3 audience for *The Caribbean before Columbus* was dedicated, with 60% of visitors viewing at least 6 objects. As at *Fabric of a Nation*, nobody entered the room and rejected it outright, as everyone looked at 1 object, and 97% of visitors viewed at least two.

A fifth of visitors to the exhibition looked at every exhibit in Room 3.

On average visitors used 5.6 objects in the room – the highest average for any Room 3 exhibition so far.

Display title	Number cases	Avg number viewed	Avg % viewed
Made in Africa	3	2.49	83%
Views from Africa	6	3.24	54%
Samurai to Manga	6	3.36	56%
Rembrandt	2	1.92	96%
Warren Cup	5	3.27	65%
Royal Game of Ur	4	1.88	47%
Art of Peace	10	4.9	49%
Fabric of a Nation	9	5.3	59%
The Caribbean ...	8	5.6	70%

6.2   Circulation

Start of visit

89% of visitors started their visit at Object C (Carved male çemi figure), whilst the other 11% of visitors went straight to the introduction panel on the right of the display cases.

This suggests that the introduction panel would have been better positioned elsewhere, where visitors could notice it as soon as they walked into the room. The main object was so striking that it deflected visitors' attention away from the introduction panel.

The fact that 58% of people looked at the introduction panel, but only 11% used it as their starting point shows that visitors were not choosing to reject it, either they did not notice it upon walking into the room, or they wanted to look at Object C first.

Around the display

62% of visitors moved around the display in a clockwise direction, with 22% going anti-clockwise and 16% moving about the display in a random manner.

When combined with the fact that so many visitors started their visit at Object C, moving in a clockwise direction meant that the introduction panel was the last exhibit they viewed in the display.

6.3   Dwell

Average time spent in Room 3

Visitors spent a mean average of 2 minutes and 8 seconds in the display. Although this is the shortest dwell time for any Room 3 exhibition so far, the fact that all the objects were positioned in a central display case meant that visitors could see them all in a shorter period of time. This is in contrast to exhibitions such as Fabric of a Nation which had a number of display racks, all holding more than 20 individual cloths.

Length of visit

	Average dwell	0-2 mins	3-4 mins	5 or more mins
The Caribbean ...	2 mins, 08 secs	65%	21%	12%
Fabric of a Nation	4 mins, 29 secs	11%	52%	34%
Art of Peace	4 mins, 26 secs	26%	12%	44%
Royal Game of Ur	4 mins, 3 secs	44%	33%	23%

Warren Cup	4 mins, 9 secs	38%	29%	33%
Rembrandt	2 mins, 15 secs	35%	59%	6%
Samurai to Manga	3 mins, 42 secs	13%	46%	41%

Time spent in the room

Time cohort	% of visitors
0 – 1 min	34%
1 – 2 mins	31%
2 – 3 mins	14%
3 – 4 mins	7%
4 – 5 mins	2%
5 – 6 mins	3%
6 – 7 mins	5%
7 – 8 mins	1%
8 - 9 mins	1%
10+ mins	0%

7   What did visitors engage with?

7.1   Depth of engagement

We judged depth of engagement on a scale of observed behaviours, defined as follows:

Levels of engagement

| Success	Term	Static exhibits
Successful interactions	Immersion	Spending an extended period looking at exhibit in depth, studying it closely
	Discovery	Spend time looking at the exhibit in some depth
Unsuccessful interactions	Exploration	Briefly consider the exhibit
	Orientation	Acknowledge the exhibit, but quickly moving on

© MORRIS HARGREAVES McINTYRE ▶▶▶

The chart below shows the percentage of visitors addressing each exhibit who were judged to have a successful engagement with the exhibit.

The dark blue columns below show the percentage of users who engaged with the exhibit (reached discovery or immersion), and the light blue columns show unsuccessful attempts at engagement (orientation or exploration).

The chart also shows how these results compare to our benchmark rates of success for engagement. These benchmarks rates were established according to engagement results on a variety of different types of museum exhibits, looking at clusters in the range of results.

Percentage of visitors to each exhibit who reached engagement
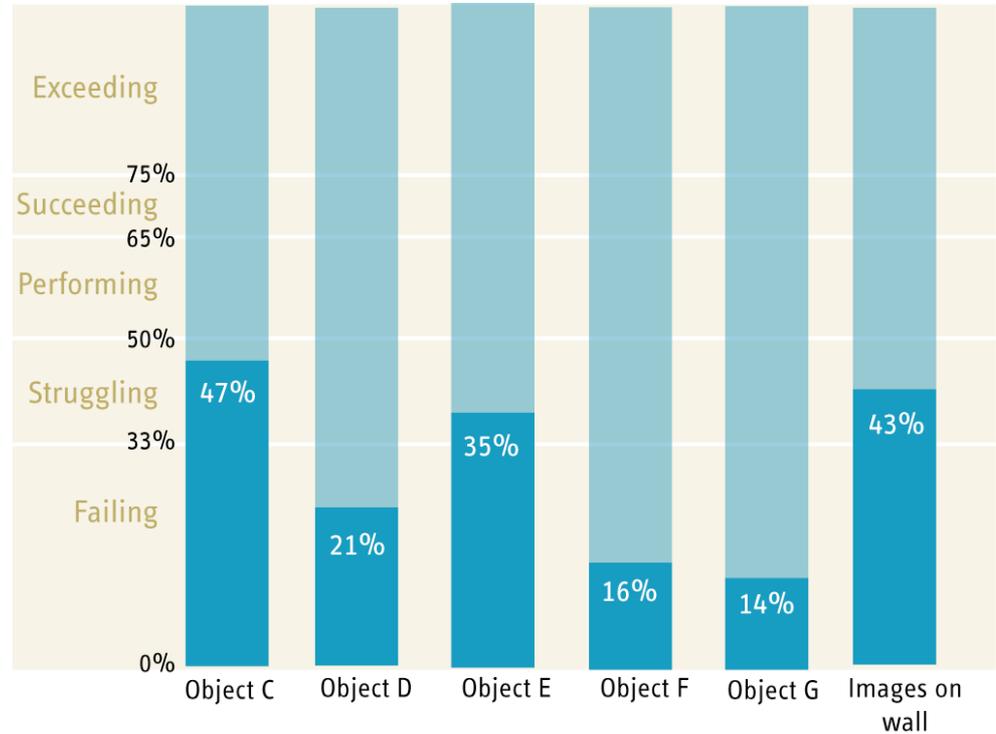
This model shows that Object C (Carved male çemi figure) was the most engaging element of the display. The other objects either struggled or failed to perform, perhaps due to the fact that visitors had limited pre-knowledge of the objects or culture, and then did not use the introduction to the subjects in the exhibition.

If the individual objects had been considered as a single display however, the engagement levels would be higher. Visitors tended to become immersed in the overall environment of the room rather than taking the time to pore over each individual object.

7.2   The role of interpretation in engagement

Visitors' use of interpretation at each of the exhibits was recorded in the sequential visitor tracking, and the results are shown in the chart below.

- None: the visitor did not use any interpretation

- Reference: the visitor referred to written interpretation at the exhibit

Diagram of proportions used for each exhibit

Reference	85%	67%	68%	58%	54%	40%

| 15% | 33% | 32% | 42% | 46% | 60% |

None

0

Object C   Object D   Object E   Object F   Object G   Images on wall
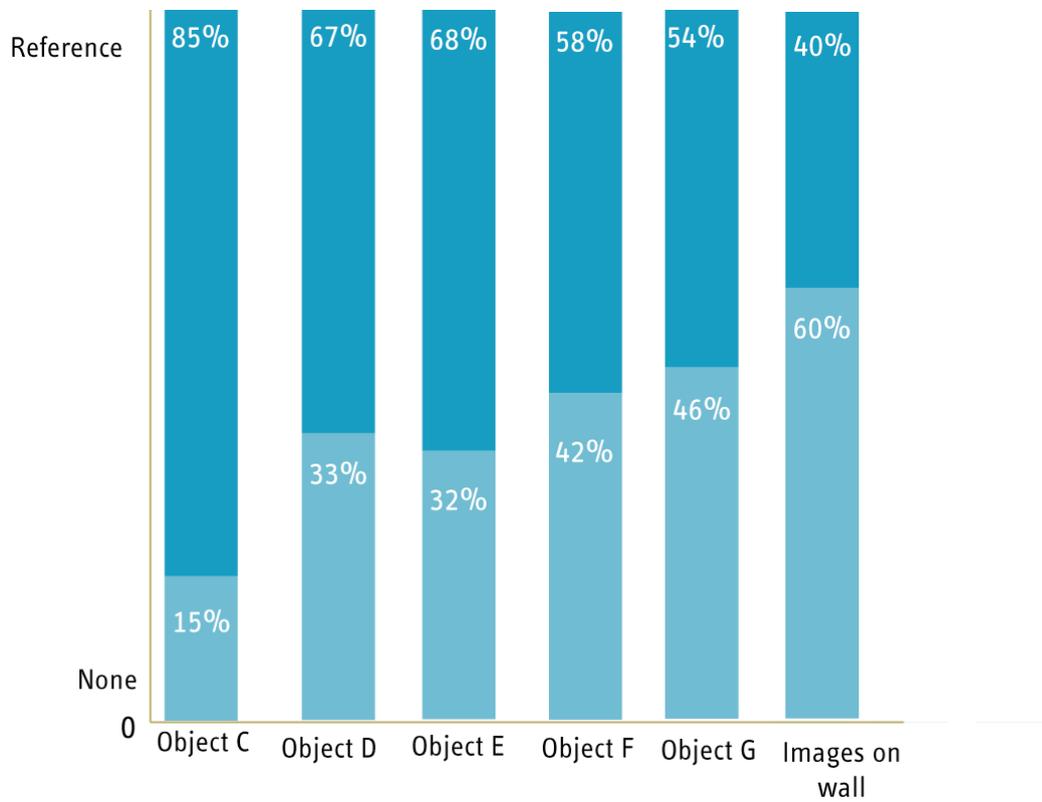
This shows us that most visitors to each exhibit used the written interpretation, but tended to use less as they walked round the exhibition. 85% of visitors to Object C (Carved male çemi figure) used the written interpretation, perhaps looking for some form of introduction to the whole display.

The least amount of interpretation used was for the images projected onto the wall, where only 40% of its visitors read the accompanying text.

8 Display and interpretation

8.1 Display

The display of this Room 3 exhibition was popular amongst visitors who appreciated the simplicity of bright objects against a dark background, as they felt this was an effective way of focussing on the objects and making them seem more impressive.

I like the way it's not surrounded by nonsense. It's a direct exhibition on a black background without any disconcerting sidelines **Visitor**

It's very aesthetic and simple, and it seems tasteful **Visitor**

The statues do have a lot of presence, even thought they are quite small **Visitor**

It's nice, it's very simple, it points your attention right to the pieces **Visitor**

Visitors liked the reflective surfaces underneath the statues.

I thought it was nice with the reflecting block and the object itself – it doesn't take away from the other ones but it has its own uniqueness to it **Visitor**

The mirror underneath ... you see the whole of it, and the light above. You can see perfectly clearly and well **Visitor**

I like the reflective surfaces on the base **Visitor**

8.2 Atmosphere

The combination of low lighting, sounds effects and smell helped create a relaxing environment which helped take some visitors back to the time and place of the Caribbean before Columbus.

Subdued, calm, maybe a little bit more reflective because of the blue and ... some sound effects going on as well which adds nicely to the atmosphere **Visitor**

Simulated a rainforest **Visitor**

A quiet haven **Visitor**

Some visitors felt the atmosphere in the room was even more special.

> *It's really mysterious* **Visitor**

> *Quite magic* **Visitor**

However, the atmosphere was not universally popular, with some visitors feeling that the size of the room, coupled with the low lighting created a somewhat claustrophobic environment.

> *Claustrophobic* **Visitor**

> *A bit claustrophobic in there* **Non-visitor**

8.3   Introduction

As most visitors had little or no pre-knowledge of the subject areas covered in the exhibition, they felt they would have liked more of an introduction to the display.

> *I really didn't see much in the way of an introduction* **Visitor**

Many visitors were attracted straight to the first object (Carved male çemi figure) and then moved in a clockwise direction around the room. As a result, they arrived at the introduction panel at the end of the exhibition.

> *One tends to get drawn to this statue because it's so prominent, rather than looking ... at the panel at the side* **Visitor**

> *I think [the introduction panel] is poorly placed because I came in and went straight to the object, and there was no introduction there, and then I went around it to the left so I didn't actually see the introduction until the end* **Visitor**

> *I didn't read the introduction until I came around to the end* **Visitor**

Visitors also tended not to look at the wall panel upon entering the room, and so were forced to use the narrative text panels with little introduction.

> *I didn't read the part on the wall over there first* **Visitor**

> *I did not look at the wall initially* **Visitor**

Visitors would have preferred to have an introduction panel to the left of the first object.

It might have been better if [the introduction panel] was on the left so you saw them clearly **Visitor**

The first object you see when you enter the room – I walked to the left so maybe just to the left of that, so you come in and you see the object, and then you have an introductory panel that talks about what the objects are, and then you can go back and keep moving and see the other objects **Visitor**

One visitor stated they would have liked the wall panel to have been directly facing them as they walked into the room.

The main title of the introduction is on one side wall, so it would have been better perhaps if it was facing you as you walked in, so that you knew exactly what you were going for **Visitor**

A number of visitors also stated they would have liked some form of introduction to the exhibition outside Room 3 so they knew what to expect in the room.

It might have been useful to have had something outside to introduce what was inside **Visitor**

Maybe just outside the door **Visitor**

8.4   Interpretation

Line drawings

The line drawings accompanying the text on the individual panels were not a massively popular element of the display. Whilst there were no specific complaints about them, most visitors said they had not really noticed the drawings.

It's not something that I looked at really **Visitor**

It's not something that I immediately picked up on **Visitor**

Some visitors did appreciate the line drawings as they helped them relate the text to the appropriate object.

They actually led me to know that I was looking at the right picture in accordance to the words **Visitor**

I suppose I subconsciously looked at them when I was reading **Visitor**

Use of indigenous terms

There were mixed responses to the use of indigenous words such as çemi and cohoba without an explanation of their meaning. Some visitors were pleased that they were present in the interpretation as they added an element of authenticity.

> *I understood by context clues what they meant, and I just thought it was interesting because it was trying to bring more of their actual culture into the words themselves* Visitor

Other visitors were left confused by the lack of explanation of these words.

> *I didn't know what they meant … çemi means nothing to me at all* Visitor

One visitor felt that there should have been an explanation as to how to pronounce the words in order for them to be truly effective.

> *It should have been done in layman's terms, and it should have been described phonetically for people who have never read it before and don't know how to pronounce it* Visitor

> *I just don't think it's easy for people to pronounce, and I think things should be pronounced properly out of respect for the culture that you're learning about* Visitor

Text panels

The quantity and quality of information in the text panels relating to each object were praised by visitors to the exhibition. Previous knowledge of the subject was low, yet visitors felt that there was enough information to help them understand the objects.

> *You probably couldn't have deduced that just looking at the exhibition on its own* Visitor

> *It's nice, not too much, so you are invited to read it* Visitor

> *It's well written, there's not too much jargon* Visitor

> *I think it's a good amount of information for the object, you wouldn't really want more than that* Visitor

> *I think the statues are quite striking … but I needed to read about them in order to find out more about what was going on* Visitor

9 How did visitors respond?

9.1 A good introductory exhibition

Visitors recognised that this was just a small exhibition designed to introduce them to a subject they might not previously have known about.

> *I think it's a good sort of compact, comprehensive, tiny exhibition* **Visitor**

> *It was a good introduction ... to this culture. You can't learn everything (in an exhibition), you can read books about it* **Visitor**

9.2 Visitors wanted more

Many visitors felt that the exhibition was too small and that they left with questions unanswered.

> *I think what's here is really good but it's not very vast. There's not enough* **Visitor**

> *I would have liked more* **Visitor**

> *I was hoping it was bigger! I was hoping that there would be more things in here basically* **Visitor**

Visitors would like to know more background information about the culture and people who created these objects.

> *I'd like to know more about these people, more about where this was found* **Visitor**

> *I'd like to know more about the civilisations that produced the work* **Visitor**

> *If there's any more information I would have liked, it would have been stuff about ... the mythology behind it. Why they're really doing this ... what sort of stories they were telling* **Visitor**

9.3 Positive response to a permanent Caribbean gallery

Visitors were asked how likely they would be to visit a permanent gallery for Caribbean objects, if one were to be created. 32% of visitors said they would be very likely to visit, with 49% of visitors saying they would be quite likely.

Only 17% of visitors said they would be not very or not at all likely to visit a permanent Caribbean gallery at the British Museum.

10   Outcomes

10.1   Large emotional impact

The display successfully matched the social and intellectual needs that had motivated its visitors to attend. It then went on to have a significant emotional impact on attenders.

56% of visitors said they had gained a better understanding of other people and cultures, whilst 41% said they had improved their own knowledge as a result of the exhibition. 37% of visitors said they had experienced what the past was like.

10.2   Visitors drew a number of different messages from the display

The main message that visitors drew from this display was that it highlighted the existence of an ancient culture in the Caribbean.

> *The early Americas, they had their own culture, and they had their own style and way of doing things* **Visitor**

> *There was a rich culture in the Caribbean, Dominican Republic and Haiti before the Europeans showed up* **Visitor**

> *There were some primitive religious activities in the Caribbean before the likes of Columbus got there* **Visitor**

Visitors then went on to learn that this culture was virtually destroyed by the arrival of Columbus and other European settlers.

> *Taíno culture was wiped out by Christopher Columbus and the settlers – I think that came across pretty strongly* **Visitor**

> *The culture of the Caribbean was drastically changed when Columbus arrived* **Visitor**

> *I was interested to see that some items had remained of these people who were virtually destroyed by Columbus, or anyway by the Europeans* **Visitor**

Some visitors felt the main aim of the exhibition was to highlight the specific beliefs of Taíno culture.

It was really focussed on the use of the cohoba as a means of communicating with the spirits. The ritual aspect of some of the artefacts came across **Visitor**

It was to do with communication with the spirits ... it was primarily through drugs. So it was interesting that I hadn't really concluded whether it's approving or not **Visitor**

The exhibition was about how people try to control their environment, through ritual, and how objects help them do that **Visitor**

11 Conclusions

11.1 Visitor profile

The Caribbean before Columbus attracted a similar proportion to those found at the other Room 3 displays, The visitor profile however was slightly different as the exhibition attracted more overseas visitors than normal, and also a high proportion of female visitors.

Visitors professed to having little or no knowledge of the subject areas covered in the exhibition, and were largely unaware that the British Museum held early-Caribbean objects in its permanent collection. Visitors were therefore keen to improve their own knowledge of this subject.

11.2 Visitors liked the display and interpretation

The low lighting and dark walls helped to attract some visitors into Room 3 as they sought to satisfy their curiosity of what was in the room. The use of low lighting, sound and smell was also praised for helping to create a calm, relaxing atmosphere in the room.

Housing the five objects in a clear display case with bright lighting and reflective surfaces received a favourable response from visitors as they felt this focussed their attention immediately onto the objects.

In general visitors did not disapprove of the use of line drawings and native terms on the text panels, but most felt that they did not add a lot to the display which was very much object-based rather than text-based. Visitors did however appreciate the quality and quantity of information relating to each object on the relevant text panels.

The use of low lighting, sound and smells in the room, combined with the object-focussed display helped to create an environment in which visitors totally immersed themselves. This means that they did not spend time at individual objects, taking in all the information available and studying the object closely, instead visitors felt it was the whole display that helped to transport them to another time and place.

11.3   The introduction panel was not well placed

As visitors did not have a good knowledge of the subject areas covered in the exhibition they were keen to be given a good introduction to the display before they started looking at individual objects. However, the positioning of the introduction panel on the right hand side of the display meant that visitors did not go directly to it upon entering the room, instead heading for the first object which immediately greeted them upon entry.

Visitors would have liked a more prominent introduction panel either outside the room, immediately facing them in the room or just after the first object.

In its actual positioning on the right of the display case, the introduction panel did not give visitors the information they wanted in order to fully engage with the objects on display.

11.4   Visitors want more

Although many visitors understood that Room 3 is designed to offer them a brief introduction to a subject, many felt would have liked more background information about the people and culture that created the objects.

There was a favourable response to the suggestion of a permanent Caribbean gallery that visitors would like to see house these objects and offer them a deeper insight into a subject about which they know little, but are keen to learn.

12   Comparison table

Measure	Caribbean	Fabric	Tagore	Ur	Warren Cup	Rembrandt	Samurai	Africa
Male	37%	34%	53%	55%	48%	52%	43%	49%
Female	63%	66%	48%	45%	53%	48%	57%	51%
Intentional visit to BM	72%	86%	79%	75%	86%	77%	64%	76%
Incidental visit to BM	28%	13%	21%	25%	14%	23%	36%	24%
Specialist (British Museum)	11%	18%	12%	6%	21%	10%	9%	14%
General (British Museum)	74%	62%	46%	76%	59%	70%	73%	64%
Little/ none (British Museum)	15%	20%	42%	18%	20%	19%	18%	22%
Social	34%	18%	12%	35%	20%	20%	33%	23%
Intellectual	35%	48%	50%	39%	40%	34%	33%	47%
Emotional	24%	21%	24%	21%	35%	24%	17%	17%
Spiritual	3%	13%	13%	5%	5%	20%	16%	14%
Average dwell time	2 mins, 08 secs	4 mins, 29 secs	4 mins, 16 secs	4 mins, 3 secs	4 mins, 9 secs	2 mins, 15 secs	3 mins, 42 secs	2 mins, 49 secs
% total time spent at exhibits	-	68%	81%	48%	72%	-	71%	59%
Browser	-	-	56%	62%	45%	26%	39%	55%
Follower	-	-	33%	34%	42%	46%	50%	44%
Searcher	-	-	10%	3%	13%	28%	11%	1%

▶▶▶

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

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

Our services include:

- strategic analysis, planning and development

- product and service development

- feasibility studies

- market appraisals

- marketing audits, strategies and plans

- audience development strategies and implementation

- access strategies

- in-service training

- training needs analysis

- training programmes

- organisational development

- change management

Most of our projects are research-based.

We have a fully integrated market research service that undertakes:

- quantitative research

- qualitative research

- telephone marketing

- community consultation

▶▶▶