'In Art, man reveals himself.'
Rabindranath Tagore

Visitor responses to the Art of Peace display

January 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
'In Art, man reveals himself.'
Art of Peace had the lowest visitor figures of any Room 3 display. But it was not a failure.

The display attracted and engaged a highly motivated audience who wanted to know more about Rabindranath Tagore.

The display held special resonance for Asian and Bengali visitors who came seeking knowledge but left having gained a deep sense of personal identity and connection.

On average, visits were longer than for any previous Room 3 display, with visitors engaging deeply with the key themes and learning points.
In Art, man reveals himself.

Contents

1 Summary 5
2 The art of peace: Paintings by the poet Tagore 9
3 Scene setting 10
4 What we did 12
5 Who visited? 14
6 What did visitors do? 18
7 How engaged were visitors? 24
8 What did visitors engage with? 27
9 How did visitors respond? 31
10 Outcomes 33
11 Conclusions 35
12 Comparison table 38
Summary

1.1 Lowest attendance of any Room 3 display so far

The Art of Peace attracted a lower proportion of visitors to Room 3 when compared to other displays in the series so far. 5% of visitors to the British Museum during the exhibition period visited Art of Peace.

The core audience for The Art of Peace was Londoners, recent repeat visitors and incidental visitors.

1.2 Video attracted visitors' attention, but many then decided not to enter

People passing the doorway were more likely to notice Room 3 compared to results from previous displays. This is possibly due to the film on the back wall, which is likely to have attracted visitors' attention on the way past. However, few of these visitors then entered the room. Significantly, around four in 10 visitors approached the room but did not enter – it seems that these visitors were actually put off by the appearance of the room from the doorway.

The proposition of Tagore's art was perhaps too specialist for general visitors looking for something of interest. The display also has a noticeably old age profile – it is likely that families were put off by the, hushed appearance of the room from the door and the lack of family friendly visual cues.

1.3 Attracted very high proportion of Asian visitors

Roughly a third of Asian visitors to the British Museum during the display period visited Art of Peace. Almost all of the Indian visitors to the museum during the display period visited Room 3. One in five of Art of Peace visitors could speak and/or read Bengali.

Visitors from the Bengali community were more likely to be aware of the Art of Peace display before visiting compared to other visitors – perhaps due to strong word of mouth recommendation or specific marketing within the Bengali community.
1.4 Visitors from Bengali / south Asian backgrounds have distinct motivations and outcomes

Asian visitors were much more likely to be motivated to visit the British Museum to improve their own knowledge than other visitors. Those from the Bengali community were twice as likely to be visiting due to a personal interest in the subject compared to other visitors.

Bengali-speaking visitors were much more likely to say they had gained a strong sense of personal connection or identity from the exhibition than other visitors.

1.5 Longest average dwell time of any Room 3 display to date

Those who come in stay a long time. Visitors spent a mean average of 4 minutes 26 seconds in the display – the longest average dwell time for any Room 3 display so far. Just under half the visitors (44%) who enter the room stay for longer than 5 minutes, compared to an average of 24% for previous Room 3 displays.

1.6 Visitors were fairly engaged

On average, visitors to Art of Peace stayed for longer and spent a greater proportion of time looking at the exhibits than visitors to previous Room 3 displays. A third of visitors displayed following behaviour, looking at each exhibit in turn, and one in ten visitors exhibited searching behaviour. Whilst over half of visitors exhibited browsing behaviour, this could be due partly to the room layout rather than lack of engagement with the themes of the display. This may also be due to the similarities between browsing and searching behaviour when observed.

1.7 Most visitors looked at the object in focus

Around three quarters of visitors looked at the bust of Tagore – almost identical to the proportion looking at the object in focus (Game Of Ur) in the last display, and similar to that for the Warren Cup (80%). It is interesting that this proportion seems to remain static irrespective of subject matter and levels of crowding in the room.
1.8 Tagore becomes an artist panel was the most successful exhibit

61% of visitors used this exhibit, spending an average of 71 seconds looking at it. The exhibit therefore accounts for a fifth of total time spent engaging with exhibits in the display. The exhibit managed to engage 58% of users (reaching discovery or immersion phases). Whilst the Tagore bust was viewed by more visitors, these visitors did not look for long and only 26% became engaged.

1.9 The film was the most engaging exhibit for those who used it

The Ray film had a success rate of 65% for those visitors who used it. However, only a third of visitors used the exhibit. Several visitors suggested that the film could have been shown in a more accessible way – lower down, with chairs available for people to watch from – to increase the number of people watching it.

1.10 Positive response to Bengali text

Although only 3% of visitors were observed reading the Bengali text in the display, there was strong support for its inclusion from all visitors. Visitors found it aesthetically pleasing, felt it was important for Bengali visitors to be able to understand the text panels, and also felt it added a sense of connection between the artworks on display and Tagore’s poetry (see outcomes below).

1.11 Different types of engagement depending on prior knowledge

It seems as if visitors to Art of Peace who already knew something about Bengal and/or Tagore engaged with the exhibition by thinking about the man and linking the exhibits back to their existing knowledge of his work. On the other hand, general visitors with no prior knowledge tended to engage with the exhibition as an art show, thinking about the pieces in terms of visual art and their relationship to poetry and Bengali script.

1.12 Delivered learning outcomes to visitors

Emphasises the comprehensive nature of British Museum

Art of Peace changed some visitors perceptions of the museum: they were surprised to find modern art in an institution that they associate more with artefacts from antiquity.
Fans of Tagore welcomed the exhibition enthusiastically and there was a sense that this was giving the artwork and the man well-deserved recognition.

Visitors expressed their delight in being shown something new and unexpected – even people familiar with Tagore had no idea he was also an artist before visiting.

**Understood main messages of the display**

As well as engaging with the main message of the display that Tagore was a visual artist as well as a poet, visitors also engaged deeply with the connections between his written and visual works, drawing their own connections about the links between drawings and poetry.

**Many visitors wanted to see / know more**

All of the visitors we spoke to wanted to see more images by Tagore and/or find out more about the interrelation between his art work and poetry. Visitors with an existing knowledge of Tagore / Bengal were inspired to carry out independent study on related subjects.
The art of peace: Paintings by the poet Tagore

The art of peace display was held on Room 3 at the British Museum from 14 September to 3 December 2006.

The display was designed as an introduction to the renowned Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore, and also sought to shed new light on the writer by focusing on Tagore’s little-known paintings held in the British Museum’s collections, on public display for the first time.

The display formed part of the museum-wide Voices of Bengal season, which showcased the rich cultural heritage of the region through a range of exhibitions, displays and events.
Scene setting

3.1 Objectives of the display

Whilst Art of peace followed the broad ‘object in focus’ approach of the previous two Room 3 displays, the star object this time was the life and work of Rabindranath Tagore.

Taking a bust of the nobel prize winning poet as a starting point, the display explored his work and aimed to raise awareness of Tagore's little known visual art, on public display for the first time.

3.2 Presentation and interpretation scheme

The diagram below describes the contents of the Art of Peace Room 3 display.

The first object visible on entering the room was the bust of Tagore in a freestanding case, flanked by text panels giving a brief introduction about the exhibition and a quote from Tagore's poetry. Another case placed back-to-back with the bust in the centre of the room contained an open book ('Tagore: writer and inspiration') and an ink drawing inspired by Tagore. This case was flanked by a quote from Gitanjali and a panel detailing the other elements of the Voices of Bengal season.

The left wall comprised two panels. The first (Portraits of Tagore panel below) consisted of two portraits of Tagore and text explaining the context of the portraits. The other consisted of three paintings from the early part of Tagore's artistic career, depicting a bull, fantasy bird and woman respectively with text giving commentary.

The back wall consisted of a photo album in a glass case, accompanied by a label, a quote from Tagore's poem 'In praise of trees' was displayed on the wall above. An extract of Satyajit Ray's documentary 'Rabindranath Tagore' was shown high on the central portion of the back wall. The back wall also showed a photographic portrait of Tagore accompanied by a quote from Wilfred Owen.

The right wall showed seven paintings of animals by Tagore, with identical labels at both ends of the panel. Two landscape paintings were mounted with interpretation.
‘In Art, man reveals himself.’

Most of the text panels in the room gave interpretation in both Bengali and English. The overall atmosphere of the room was hushed and contemplative, with low lighting and a muted colour scheme.

**Schematic diagram of Art of Peace**
What we did

Morris Hargreaves McIntyre was commissioned by the British Museum to evaluate the Art of Peace display as part of an on-going evaluation of the Room 3 displays. This report forms the seventh report in the series.

The following primary research took place at the Museum over five shifts between 15 November and 1 December 2006, covering weekdays and weekends.

Sequential visitor tracking

We tracked individual visitors during their visit to Room 3. We recorded their usage of each case and text panel, the order in which they used them and the time they spent.

This data allows us to identify patterns of visitor behaviour, which is essential for understanding how visitors are responding to the design of the exhibition. We are able to tell how deeply visitors engaged, and relate this to the assumptions about visitor behaviour which were built into the design of the space. This also allows us to identify any ergonomic, interpretative or display problems affecting engagement.

100 visitors were tracked using sequential visitor tracking.

Meaning making observations

Using observation, we classified visitors’ behaviour into three modes: Browser, Follower and Searcher. Visitors were observed throughout their visit to the room and their dominant behaviour mode noted. This gives a measure of how engaged visitors were with the display as a whole.

100 visitors were classified into Meaning making modes.

Engagement matrices

We recorded visitors’ levels of engagement with the exhibits using engagement matrices. Visitors’ behaviour was mapped according to their depth of engagement and usage of interpretation. This technique allows us to identify how successful the exhibits and surrounding interpretation are at engaging visitors.

786 Engagement observations were carried out.
'In Art, man reveals himself.'

**Mini-survey**

Visitors were asked a short series of 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 the 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.

90 *mini surveys* were completed.

**Post-it notes and vox pops**

Respondents were given a pencil and pad of post it notes, colour coded according to their group type (families, first time independent adults and repeat independent adults).

When visitors addressed an exhibit, they noted down any comments, questions or responses they had. This was followed by a short interview with our researcher, where they were asked to give more detailed responses to aspects of the exhibition.

This exercise produces a rich source of qualitative data on visitors’ responses to the exhibition.

27 *post it notes* and 10 *vox pop interviews* were collected.

**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. This exercise provides an indication of the relative attractiveness of this display against others in the room.

200 *entrance observations* were carried out: 100 with visitors on their way into the museum, and 100 with visitors on their way out.
Who visited?

5.1 Visitor profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Room 3</th>
<th>British Museum*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Base</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Origin</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsewhere in UK</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge of subject areas covered</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little/ none</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figures taken from November 2006 rolling survey
**Figures for the whole visitor group, not just respondents

Similarities to profile of previous Room 3 displays

Once again, there is evidence of the core Room 3 audience for Art of Peace – a greater proportion of Londoners, recent repeat visitors and incidental visitors compared to British Museum visitors as a whole.

High proportion of asian visitors

From visitor figures, we estimate that around a third of Asian visitors to the British Museum during the display period visited Art of Peace and almost all of the Indian visitors to the museum during the display period visited the display.

21% of visitors to the display could either speak or read Bengali.

Attracted a greater proportion of older visitors

Art of Peace attracted a much lower proportion of children and young adults compared to all British Museum visitors. This seems to be because the display failed to attract families – just 6% of visitors were visiting as part of a family group, with six in seven groups consisting of adults only.
In contrast to Royal Game of Ur, families were not the target market for the display this time and the relatively sombre appearance of the room from the door, complex subject matter, lack of interactivity and lack of visual cues for family friendliness (e.g. display height of works and film) seem to have put off families from entering.

### 5.2 Awareness and intention

**Relatively high pre-visit awareness of the display**

Bengali speakers/readers were around twice as likely to have been pre-aware of the exhibition compared to other visitors. This indicates that any specific marketing/outreach activities within this community have been very effective. However, this might also be a result of strong word of mouth: our research took place at the end of the exhibition period so it is likely that Bengali visitors had been recommended to visit by friends or family who had been.

Once again, Londoners and recent repeat visitors were also more likely than others to have been pre-aware of the display, either through local marketing activity or having seen internal marketing for the display on a previous visit or on the website.

### 5.3 Getting visitors in to Room 3

**Place in visit**

For two thirds of visitors Room 3 was their first encounter with the museum’s collections that day. This is higher than for previous Room 3 displays, perhaps due to the film which attracted visitors’ attention almost as soon as they entered the building.

**Attracting visitors into the space**

Our entrance observations showed that around half of the visitors (45%) who walked past did not notice the Art of Peace exhibition. This is lower than previous displays (typically around 60%), possibly due to the video which attracted people’s attention as they passed.

Visitors were more likely to enter the room on their way in to the museum, similar to most other Room 3 displays (except Royal Game of Ur).

However, a significant proportion ~ 38% - looked at or approached the room but did not enter. Perhaps the relatively static appearance of the room from the door and niche subject matter did not appeal to some visitors.
5.4  

Motivation

The table below compares Room 3 visitors’ main motivations* for visiting the British Museum with the main motivations of visitors to previous Room 3 displays and those of all visitors to the Museum.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main motivation for visiting the British Museum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All British Museum visitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art of Peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Royal Game of Ur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren Cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rembrandt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samurai to Manga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views from Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room 3 norm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A highly motivated audience

The results above show that visitors to Art of Peace were much more likely to be intellectually motivated and less likely to be socially motivated compared both to British Museum visitors in general and the profile for previous Room 3 displays. The largest specific motivators for visitors to Art of Peace were to improve their own knowledge (73% mentioned this, and 24% named as their main motivation) and having a personal interest in the subject (47% mentioned this, with 19% naming this as their main motivation). 11% named insight into other people / cultures as their main motivation.

As the Room 3 norm in the bottom row shows, visitors to Room 3 tend to be more highly motivated than those to the museum as a whole, with a lesser proportion of socially motivated visitors visiting the displays and a greater proportion of intellectually, emotionally and spiritually motivated visitors seeing the Room 3 displays.

Visitors with cultural connections to the display have distinct motivations

Although the small sample size makes it difficult to make robust comparisons between those visitors from Bengali / Asian backgrounds and those from other backgrounds, the data indicates that visitors with cultural connections to Tagore were motivated to visit the museum by different drivers.

* Refer to Made in Africa: Room 3 scoping study for definitions of visitor motivations
** Annualised figures taken from June 05 – May 06 rolling survey
Asian visitors were much more likely to be motivated to visit the British Museum to improve their own knowledge than other visitors (81% compared to 60%).

Those from the Bengali community were more likely to be visiting due to a personal interest in the subject compared to other visitors (60% compared to 44%). This perhaps indicates that many of these visitors were intentional to the room 3 display and / or Voices of Bengal season – they were aware of the season or exhibitions and were visiting specifically due to its cultural relevance.

However, many of this group were also looking for a good way to spend time with friends and family (47%) perhaps indicating that it was a good activity to do with others from the Bengali community.
What did visitors do?

6.1 Usage

Usage of exhibits

The chart below illustrates the proportion of all visitors to Room 3 viewing the individual exhibits in *Art of Peace*.

**Percentage of visitors using each exhibit**

As the chart demonstrates, the case containing the bust of Tagore was the most popular case in the display, visited by almost three quarters of visitors. This is similar to the figure recorded for the ‘objects in focus’ of the previous two Room 3 displays (Royal Game of Ur 77%, Warren Cup 80%).

Positioning of the film

Usage of the film seems to have been hampered by its positioning so far up the wall and lack of seating. Many visitors did not notice the film once they were in the room, meaning that it acted more as an attractor rather than an exhibit for these visitors. Others felt they needed dedicated viewing facilities to be able to engage fully:

‘People don’t look [at the film].’ Visitor

‘Perhaps the Ray documentary could have been screened in full elsewhere in the British Museum to accompany the exhibition?’ Bengali visitor
Detailed usage

The diagram below shows the percentage of visitors who used each of the exhibits, accompanying text panels and component images.

The results show fairly high usage for many of the labels and text panels relating directly to objects - generally 20% to 40% of visitors. However, stand alone text panels and quotes were less well used. It seems that the integrated presentation of text relating directly to images and paintings on the same board encouraged visitors to read the information.

The usage levels for images in the display show that visitors were relatively dedicated, with fairly high usage levels for most images in the display.
‘In Art, man reveals himself.’

Number of exhibits used

The chart below illustrates the number of exhibits used by visitors to Room 1.

Again this gives us a picture of fairly dedicated visitors, with over half visiting at least 6 exhibits – ie the majority of visitors looked at the majority of the exhibition. Everyone observed entering the room looked at two or more exhibits, suggesting that nobody wandered into the room by accident and then rejected the display.

On average, visitors used 4.9 exhibits, which seems higher than we might expect, given the trend observed for most Room 3 displays so far – that the higher the more exhibits there are, the lower the percentage of exhibits looked at by visitors. This either indicates that the display held visitors’ attention well, or the type of visitors attracted into Art of Peace were more dedicated than those for previous Room 3 displays.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Display title</th>
<th>Number cases</th>
<th>Avg number viewed</th>
<th>Avg % viewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Made in Africa</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views from Africa</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samurai to Manga</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rembrandt</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren Cup</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Game of Ur</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art of Peace</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2 Circulation

Start of visit

The diagram below illustrates the proportion of visitors beginning their visit to Room 3 at each of the sections making up the display.

*Proportion of Room 3 visitors starting at each exhibit*

As the graphic illustrates, around two thirds of visitors began their visit by looking at the bust of Tagore. This is similar to the 67% of visitors who began their visit to the last Room 3 display by looking at the object in focus, the Royal Game of Ur.

*Around the display*

There is a clear cohort of visitors moving logically around the display in a clockwise direction (equating roughly to the third of ‘follower’ visitors – see below). However, the relatively large number of exhibits in a small area with no dictated route means that the remainder of visitors circulated in a fairly random pattern, starting at the bust then moving off to whatever caught their eye. This didn’t seem to present a problem for visitors or prevent engagement: the size of the room meant that visitors were able to clearly see any exhibits they had missed.
6.3 Dwell

Average time spent in Room 3

Visitors spent a mean average of 4 minutes 26 seconds in the display. This is the longest average dwell time for any Room 3 display so far.

**Length of visit**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Display</th>
<th>Average dwell</th>
<th>0-2 mins</th>
<th>3-4 mins</th>
<th>5 or more mins</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art of Peace</td>
<td>4 mins, 26 secs</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Game of Ur</td>
<td>4 mins, 3 secs</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren Cup</td>
<td>4 mins, 9 secs</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rembrandt</td>
<td>2 mins, 15 secs</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samurai to Manga</td>
<td>3 mins, 42 secs</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views from Africa</td>
<td>2 mins, 49 secs</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table below gives a more detailed breakdown of the dwell times in the room.

**Time spent in the room**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time cohort</th>
<th>% of visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 1 min</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 2 mins</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 3 mins</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 4 mins</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 5 mins</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 6 mins</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 7 mins</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - 8 mins</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 - 9 mins</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10+ mins</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 46% of visitors who spent more than 5 minutes in the room is roughly consistent with the proportion of visitors displaying following and searching behaviour, indicating again that Art of Peace attracted and retained a fairly dedicated audience.
6.4 **Average time spent at exhibits**

The chart below shows the average length of time in seconds spent at each exhibit by those visitors who used them. This includes reading object labels but not any supporting text panels.

**Average time spent at exhibits**

![Chart showing average time spent at exhibits](image)

All the exhibits perform well on this measure, with most exceeding the Room 3 average of around 30 seconds per exhibit. The Tagore becomes an artist panel, film and landscapes panel stand out as comparable with star Room 3 objects (e.g., the Warren Cup and AIBO dog) in terms of dwell time, although none is comparable with the 115 seconds spent on the Game of Ur interactives.
How engaged were visitors?

7.1 Time spent engaging with the exhibits

On average, visitors spent 3 minutes 35 seconds engaged with the exhibits (including any related text panels) in the display out of the average 4 minutes 26 seconds spent in the room. The remainder of the time was spent circulating and generally being in the room.

This means that on average visitors spent 81% of their time in the room engaged with the exhibits – the highest for proportion for any Room 3 display so far. However, this could be because most of the text panels were related to objects in same view, making it difficult to discern how long visitors were looking at objects / artworks and how long they spent reading.

Engaged time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibition</th>
<th>Total time</th>
<th>Time engaged</th>
<th>% time engaged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art of Peace</td>
<td>266 seconds</td>
<td>215 seconds</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Game of Ur</td>
<td>243 seconds</td>
<td>118 seconds</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren Cup</td>
<td>249 seconds</td>
<td>183 seconds</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samurai to Manga</td>
<td>223 seconds</td>
<td>160 seconds</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views from Africa</td>
<td>169 seconds</td>
<td>100 seconds</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Distribution of total engaged time

The chart shows the relative ‘stickiness’ of the exhibits – the total engaged visitor time that each of the exhibits accounts for overall. This measure takes into account how many visitors use each exhibit and the length of time spent engaged with that exhibit.

‘Stickiness’ of exhibits

![Stickiness chart]

MORRIS HARGREAVES McINTYRE 5/10/10
As the chart shows, the Tagore becomes an artist panel accounted for around a fifth of engaged time in the room. Whilst the Tagore bust, film, animals pictures and landscape panel all appear equal at 12%, comparison of the time spent results (see 6.4) and usage results (see 6.1) reveals significant differences:

- **Tagore bust**: used by many visitors (73%) for little time (36 seconds on average).
- **Film and landscape panel**: used by few visitors (36% and 37% respectively) for a long time (69 seconds and 70 seconds on average respectively).
- **Animals pictures**: used by a moderate amount of visitors (50%) for a moderate amount of time (50 seconds on average).

### 7.2 Meaning making

Visitors were observed throughout their visit to Room 3 to determine their dominant meaning making mode. The results are shown below, alongside the results for the previous three exhibitions.

#### Dominant meaning making mode

![Meaning Making Mode Chart]

As the chart shows, around a third of visitors exhibited following behaviour, visiting each of the exhibits in turn. This is consistent with the data on circulation around the room (see 6.2) and dwell times (see 6.3).

There is a clear cohort of visitors moving logically around the display in a clockwise direction (equating roughly to the third of ‘follower’ visitors – see below). However, the relatively large number of exhibits in a small area with no dictated route means that the remainder of visitors circulated in a fairly
random pattern, starting at the bust then moving off to whatever caught their eye. This didn’t seem to present a problem for visitors or prevent engagement: the size of the room meant that visitors were able to clearly see any exhibits they had missed.
What did visitors engage with?

8.1 Depth of engagement

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>Unsuccessful</td>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Briefly consider the exhibit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interactions</td>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Acknowledge the exhibit, but quickly moving on</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.
For visitors who watched it, the film was the most engaging exhibit in the room. Broadly, exhibits which focussed on Tagore himself were more engaging than exhibits focussed on the art itself. This suggests that visitors saw Tagore himself as the ‘object in focus’ and key theme of the display.

8.2 The role of interpretation in engagement

Visitors’ use of interpretation at each of the exhibits was recorded in the engagement matrices, and the results are shown in the chart below.

None: the visitor did not use any interpretation

- Reference: the visitor referred to written interpretation alongside the exhibit
- Human: the visitors to spoke to someone whilst looking at the exhibit – either staff or other visitors
- Interactions which used both reference and human interpretation were recorded as human.
Diagram of proportions used for each

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Human</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tagore bust</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portraits</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagore</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>becomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an artist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo album</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilfred</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owen board</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and ink</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drawing</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscapes</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a clear relationship with usage of interpretation and engagement. Once again, the most engaging exhibits were the ones where more visitors used either reference or human interpretation. Visitors who talked to each other or staff were consistently more likely to engage with the exhibits, and visitors who used written interpretation were on average 50% more likely to engage than those who used no interpretation at all. 82% of visitors to the room said the information in the room made them look at the images / objects more closely than they might otherwise have done.

However, the most engaging exhibit in the display (the film) bucks this trend, with the vast majority of people using no interpretation. It is likely that the personal subject matter of the film, the novelty of moving image in the space and possibly the relatively high levels of contextual knowledge of the subject matter amongst visitors to the room (most visitors of Bengali origin would already know about Tagore) contributed to this success.

As the diagram in 6.2 shows, around half as many visitors read the right hand animals panel compared to the left hand one (13% versus 25%). Perhaps because there was a fairly strong clockwise flow around the exhibition this device of repeating the interpretation was less successful than it might have been in a more scattered display. One visitor commented that they would have preferred more interpretation relating Tagore’s life to the works on the second panel to continue this theme:

‘The decision to repeat the animal commentary at the end of the scenes could be useful if people study the exhibition from that side of the room but I

MORRIS HARGREAVES McINTYRE
5/10/10
29 of 39
thought it would have been better to have a different commentary there to keep up the sense of progression / chronology through Tagore’s life.’ Bengali visitor

8.3 Responses to Bengali text

Although 12% of visitors to Art of Peace could read Bengali, only 3% were observed reading the Bengali scripts in the room. The inclusive messages given by including Bengali text and its aesthetic and interpretative contribution to the display were therefore equally as important as the practical reasons:

‘The first thing I noticed was the bilingual commentaries, which I thought was a wonderful idea both on a practical level (for Bengali-speaking visitors) but also because Bengali is such an aesthetically pleasing script.’ Bengali visitor

‘I noticed that the English translation is below the Bengali original on a couple of occasions; an unusual and brave curatorial decision.’ Bengali visitor

‘It’s very beautiful to look at but I don’t understand it.’ Visitor

‘It’s important to have [the Bengali script] in the room as we have an enormous Bengali community in this country.’ Visitor

Perhaps the inclusion of Bengali script also helped visitors draw visual comparisons between the art on display and Tagore’s poetry – a link drawn strongly by visitors even though this was not explored in detail in the interpretation (see 9.2 and 9.3 below).
How did visitors respond?

9.1 Enthusiastic reception from visitors

The Art of Peace display generated a very positive response from those who chose to visit it:

‘Thank you for giving this recognition to Tagore’s work.’ Bengali visitor

‘I was very surprised to learn that this is the first time the British Museum has exhibited these works – an overdue exhibition!’ Bengali visitor

‘This is an excellent exhibition and great introduction to the work of Tagore.’ General visitor

9.2 Positive response to Room 3 in general

Once again, visitors identified Room 3 as an asset to the British Museum, providing variety during the visit experience:

‘People when they go to museums like to see small things as well as the big things so I think this is brilliant – they can pop in here and then go off to see whatever else.’ Visitor

‘It’s another little thing you can go and see so it’s a good idea ... If you just came to the museum to see this it’s probably not enough, but if you are coming to the British Museum don’t miss this because it is easy to overlook.’ Visitor

Some visitors also again mentioned that Room 3 shows embody the best of the British Museum approach, giving visitors a window on different cultures and seeing culture as a continuum, encouraging visitors to reflect forwards as well as backwards:

‘You open up new avenues and new doors – you show culture as it was, as it is and as it is going to be.’ Visitor

9.3 Some visitors surprised to find modern art at the British Museum

Art of Peace made visitors aware of the breadth and scope of the museum’s collections:
'In Art, man reveals himself.'

'It was a nice surprise to find it here ... as I tend to think of the British Museum as very ancient things – ancient sculptures, ancient pieces, rather than art work. Whereas this is art and more modern as well.' Visitor

9.4 Display was accessible from several different standpoints

The approach of the display (Tagore's life through his paintings, or the paintings through the life of Tagore) meant that the display was engaging both for visitors who already knew about Tagore and general visitors alike.

Visitors without prior knowledge of Tagore approached the display as a general art show:

'I especially like the image of the fantasy bird.' General visitor

'Although his constant layering and overlayering of coloured inks created this almost muddy effect, I think it sets an eerie mood and atmosphere which is especially nice.' General visitor

Whilst those with prior knowledge were much more focussed on Tagore the man and contextualised the exhibits within their existing framework of knowledge:

'Tagore was not a politician, he was a simple man, wrote national anthem for India ...' Bengali visitor
Outcomes

10.1 Visitors engaged with the main points of the display

The visitors we spoke to had all understood the key learning points of the display:

'I didn’t know that he was an artist as well as a poet.' Visitor

10.2 Visitors drew links between poetry and visual art

Interestingly, visitors spontaneously drew comparisons between Tagore’s poetry and art and speculated on the interrelationship of his work. This indicates that visitors were deeply engaged with the content and themes of the exhibition:

'The doodles themselves could even be seen as poetry – almost fluid and quite meaningful.' General visitor

10.3 Display had an unexpected emotional impact for Bengali visitors

Whilst many visitors from Bengali and wider Asian backgrounds made their visit for intellectual reasons – to improve their own knowledge and due to a personal interest in the subject matter – these visitors often gained a strong sense of personal connection or identity from the display (40% of Bengali speakers compared to 11% of everyone else, and 23% of Asian visitors compared to 16% of others). This is an unexpected outcome as only 11% of these visitors had named this as something they considered they would get from a visit to the museum.

10.4 Intention to follow up after their visit

Many visitors mentioned that they were intending to investigate the central themes of the display further once they had left room 3. Visitors unfamiliar with Tagore were interested to find out more about him and his work, whilst those who already had knowledge of Tagore were interested in finding out more about his art work and felt their interest in him was renewed:

'This has opened up more doors for me and given me ideas to follow up so thank you very much British Museum.' Visitor
'In Art, man reveals himself.'

10.5 Visitors wanted more

Visitors would have liked to have seen both more art and more information about Tagore. This is not a negative reaction – visitors were not dissatisfied with the materials included – but rather testament to the success of the display, which engaged visitors on a number of levels and whetted their interest.

'I would like to have seen more of his work.' Visitor

Visitors were particularly interested in finding out more detail about how his artistic practice evolved and its interrelation with his literature. This would have been too detailed for the Room 3 display which was intended as an introduction, but indicates that the display attracted and engaged a highly motivated audience and illustrates the capacity of visitors to engage with complex themes:

'I would like to have known more about the words that tie in from his point of view ... links from the writings to the art.' Visitor

'It would have been wonderful to see the genesis of Tagore's drawing, joined together blots of ink from his manuscripts formed into pictures, as this would have illustrated the important point made by the curator that he only too up art late in life as a direct offshoot of writing text. For the same reason it would have been nice to see some examples of his handwriting.' Bengali visitor
Conclusions

11.1 Display was successful at attracting and engaging fairly specialised audience

Whilst its relatively specialist and static appearance from the door may have put off general visitors and some of the core Room 3 audience from entering Room 3, it attracted very high intentional visiting from people already familiar with Tagore and was especially successful at attracting visitors of Bengali and wider Asian heritage.

The exhibition proposition had extremely strong resonance with Asian (and especially Bengali) visitors – far more so than the Myths of Bengal exhibition which attracted 19% Asian visitors compared to 37% for Art of Peace. Put the other way around, this means that a lesser proportion of non-Asian visitors were attracted to Art of Peace compared to Myths of Bengal which had a more general appeal. This reflects Tagore's status as a national hero for people with a connection to the Indian subcontinent, but his relatively low profile amongst the general UK population.

This fairly specialist appeal meant that visitors to Art of Peace were approaching exhibits with a high level of motivation and commitment – they wanted to engage and were bringing to bear their pre-existing knowledge.

However, this is not to undermine the extremely positive results which indicate deep levels of engagement for visitors to the display: the longest dwell time of any Room 3 display to date; high proportion of time in the room spent at exhibits; high use of interpretation; and deep understanding of the explicit and implicit themes of the display.

11.2 Good fit as a season Myths of Bengal is 55% socially motivated

As an ancilliary display as part of a suite of exhibitions and activities in the Voices of Bengal season, Art of Peace was very effective.

It fitted well with Myths of Bengal, attracting and satisfying the needs of a highly intellectually motivated audience (50% of visitors’ main motivation was intellectual) where Myths of Bengal attracted and satisfied a more social, general audience (55% socially motivated visitors).
11.3 Personality approach was successful

The scheme of making Tagore the ‘object in focus’ of Art of Peace seems to have been very effective. This approach enabled visitors without prior knowledge of his life and work to get an introduction via his art, and visitors with prior knowledge to extend their understanding of his life and work by seeing his ink paintings.

Tagore was the way into the images, even for people previously unfamiliar with him as his life was seen as the link connecting the poetry and art – understanding of his life and work was integral to understanding the images on display.

11.4 Integrated text panels are successful

Stand alone text panels and quotes were less well used than those that were integrated into panels displaying artworks. It seems that the integrated presentation of text relating directly to images and paintings on the same board encouraged visitors to read the information.

This is consistent with other research carried out by the British Museum into integrated text panels and labels.

11.5 Different to previous Room 3 displays

Whilst the previous Room 3 displays have worked to attract browsers and engage them by proving opportunities to become followers, Art of Peace was essentially a follower / searcher gallery. It attracted people who already had some knowledge or interest in Tagore, and deepened their engagement in the subject making them want to follow up their visit by researching specific areas.

This raises the question of what Room 3 is for – as a test bed for different curatorial approaches, Art of Peace worked well. As a bite-sized gallery to encourage follower behaviour and equip visitors with the tools to engage with other objects, Art of Peace might have been better placed in another less immediately accessible gallery which specialists would root out, and a more general and introductory display used instead.
11.6 How can Room 3 principles be applied to other galleries?

The museum is now in a position to take forward many of the generic findings from Room 3 and apply them to redisplay / alteration to the permanent galleries.

We suggest that inserting pockets of Room 3 style display into galleries would provide browsing visitors with an introduction to the subject, equipping visitors with the overarching themes and ways of looking to approach other objects in the gallery.

The object in focus approach trialled so successfully in many Room 3 displays would also be essential in promoting following in permanent galleries. A single object can act as a gateway, interpreted with reference to related items in the gallery and therefore providing routes onwards for visitors to follow (this can also be suggested through physical cues).
In Art, man reveals himself.

### Comparison table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Ur %</th>
<th>Warren Cup</th>
<th>Rembrandt</th>
<th>Samurai</th>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>Tagore</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsewhere in UK</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little/ none</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average dwell time</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>4 mins, 3 secs</td>
<td>4 mins, 9 secs</td>
<td>2 mins, 15 secs</td>
<td>3 mins, 42 secs</td>
<td>2 mins, 49 secs</td>
<td>4 mins, 16 secs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% total time spent at exhibits</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Browser</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follower</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searcher</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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