

‘Inspired By’

**A temporary display in the V&A
Report on a qualitative and quantitative study
undertaken by TWRResearch during period
November 2010**



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Background and objectives

'Inspired By' is the V&A's annual competition for people studying arts and crafts. Participants create a work 'inspired by' an object in the V&A collection that is either in V&A South Kensington or the Museum of Childhood. Winning objects are displayed in the museum housing the source of the inspiration.

Market research was commissioned to evaluate visitor response to the display showing works at the V&A South Kensington during the period October-November 2010

The research objective was to evaluate the response of visitors to the exhibition and to identify levels of interest and appreciation of the idea behind the display. There was also an interest in understanding the level of perceived appropriateness to the V&A environment and the implications to the visit to the collection as a whole.

The research would be used to inform future initiatives and potential improvements to the 'Inspired By' concept and process.

Methodology & sample

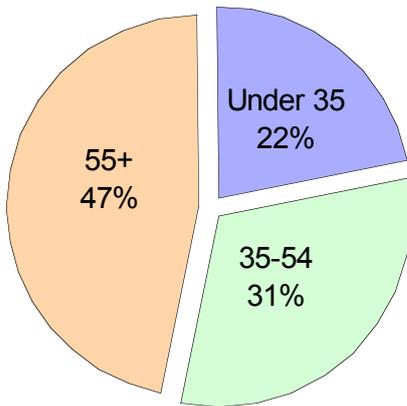
The Qualitative phase consisted of random intercept interviews conducted by a Director level moderator. The interviews canvassed opinion and provided a subjective level to the analysis. It was also felt important to observe visitor flow, dwell time and assess the quality of engagement with exhibits in a way that could inform the design of the quantitative questionnaire.

The Quantitative phase consisted of 101 face-to-face interviews that were conducted among visitors on leaving the display. The survey took place during November 2010.

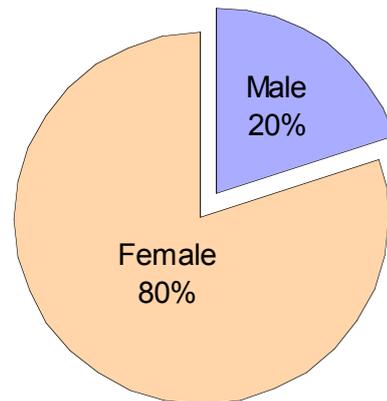
The research was conducted under the Market Research Society's code of conduct, including providing respondents with the background, objectives and purpose of the research. Apart from having an interest in the subject matter and the survey, there was not an incentive for participation.

The sample profile of respondents

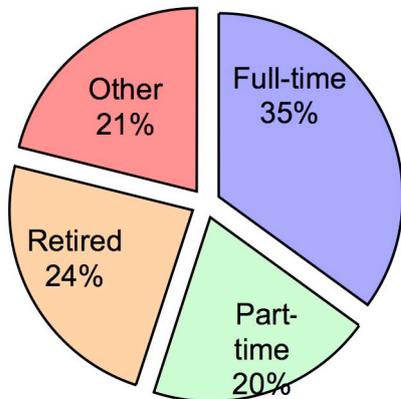
Respondent age



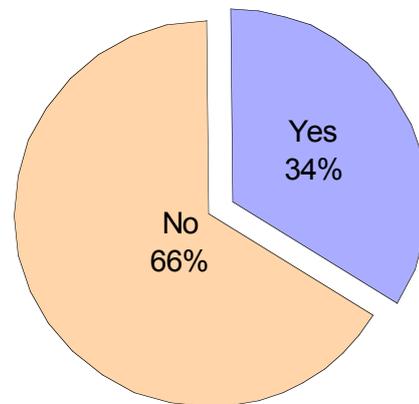
Respondent gender



Working status



Professional relevance?



For a third of respondents the exhibition had some professional relevance for them. Among those, the relevance was mostly because they were either artists or design students.

90% of respondents said they were of 'white' ethnic origin.

4. The main findings – Qualitative and Quantitative studies

The qualitative interviews encountered a very positive response. 'Inspired By' was popular with all the visitors interviewed. There was perhaps a degree of inevitability to this reaction as intercept interviews were only conducted with those who chose to enter the display and spend time exploring the environment.

That said, the display is considered to be a positive demonstration that the V&A seeks to be accessible and relevant and is not simply an archive of the past. This is no surprise to regular visitors who praise the museum's lively variety of contemporary and community focused activities. However it is a rewarding and fresh encounter for newcomers and is a welcome surprise.

The clear links to the collection provides an intriguing and stimulating hook. It both validates the experience of the 'average' visitor and encourages a refreshed way of looking and engaging with the collection. The contemporary artworks draw attention to objects in the collection in a dynamic, playful and accessible way and encourage a refreshed connection with familiar favourites, the obscure and the overlooked.

The overall credibility of the show is highly dependant on the perceived quality of the work. In all interviews the work was felt to be of the highest standards and suitable for display in the museum environment. The fact that this was the work of 'part-timers' makes the display particularly inspiring and accessible.

However many V&A visitors who pass by do not enter, and, often a short and cursory dwell time limits full appreciation. It is therefore valuable with short visits that the concept of 'Inspired By' is easily and instantly understood. Looking at one object is enough to reveal the rationale for the display.

The scale and rules of the 'qualifying event' are less obvious. Many are not that interested whilst others don't explore long enough to find the answers. The display also attracts those interested in Adult education and often those with a connection to exhibits.

Practical issues of exhibit maintenance can be a minor frustration. There were a number of requests to see pictures of the artists and to find out more about their work.

The welcome surprise and pleasure this display provides encouraged many visitors to suggest it deserves to be better publicised. One might question the benefits of financial investment however this view clearly shows a high degree of visitor support and that they consider this a very worthwhile initiative and worth celebrating.

'Inspired By' is valuable as a complimentary display to 'Design for Life'. Whilst the former appeals to mature visitors and 'inspires' 'non-vocational' audiences its counterpoint is focused on encouraging the development of vocational skills among young audiences.

The following summarises the main findings from the quantitative survey, which in tabular form have been analysed in full for each question in the questionnaire, cross-profiled by: age, gender, visited the V&A previously, aware of 'Inspired By' before visit, professional relevance, and working status.

In summary the quantitative findings indicate:

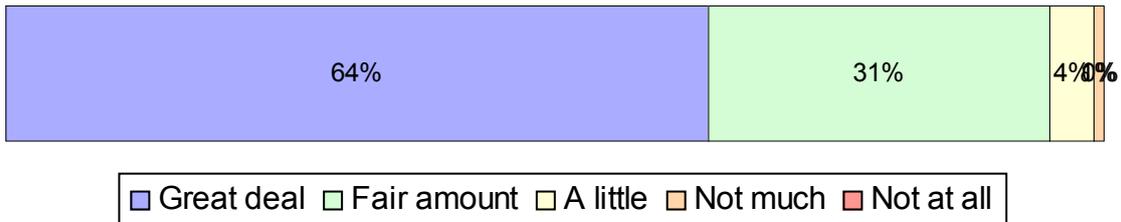
- Most (74%) visitors were unaware of the exhibition before their visit
- Most (65%) visitors say the exhibition has no professional relevance
- The exhibition was greatly enjoyed by visitors, across all age groups, with most (74%) saying they felt inspired in some way
- The diverse sources of inspiration and the fact that the artists are ordinary people were what appealed most about the display.
- It was clear who had created and contributed the work on display
- But the selection process was not especially clear
- A strong majority (83%) feel that the display enhanced their sense that objects in the V&A inspire contemporary creativity
- Most (82%) read the explanatory text and considered it important
- The exhibition is considered to be very appropriate to the V&A collection
- Nearly all (97%) feel that the display shows what anyone who wants to create art or design objects can achieve when inspired by a museum collection
- And nearly all (97%) thought the quality of work was good/exceptional
- Nearly all (96%) agree that the display demonstrates the value the V&A puts on contemporary creativity
- A small majority agree that the display demonstrates the V&A's work beyond London and the London based museum
- The exhibition justifies the publicity outside of the museum (92% agree)
- Generally visitors were enthusiastic, considered it good for the V&A, and were inspired in different ways by the diversity and fresh approach, but many thought there could have been better publicity

Advance publicity was not the main driver for visitors to the exhibition. The considerable majority (74% overall, 91% of younger respondents) 'discovered' the 'Inspired By' on their visit. 13% said that they knew one of the artists, but otherwise just a few (4% or fewer) heard about it from the V&A website, through college, word of mouth, or from friends.

People who went to the exhibition tended to be fairly regular visitors to the V&A. Three quarters of the visitors to the display had previously visited the V&A, particularly older respondents. Among those who had been to the V&A before, 21% had not visited in the past year.

Visitors greatly enjoyed the 'Inspired By' exhibition, especially those who knew about it in advance and those for whom it has a professional relevance.

How much did you enjoy the 'Inspired By' display?



The fact that the artists are ordinary people was the most appealing aspect, together with taking inspiration from various things, the diversity, and the artists themselves. Asked 'What appealed to you most about the exhibition?':

Artists ordinary people	19%	It's different / original	10%
Inspiration from various objects	15%	The variety / diversity	9%
Specific items liked	15%	Talent / skill of the artists	7%
Inspiration from the artists	14%	Contemporary / modern	7%

Most agree that it was clear who created and contributed the work for the display. However, people are far less clear about the selection process for participants and exhibits: just half overall thought it was clear, much lower among those aged 35-54.

Did you understand the selection process for participants?



The strong majority feel that the display has enhanced their sense that the V&A inspire contemporary creativity. This is most noted among those who were aware that the exhibition was on before their arrival.

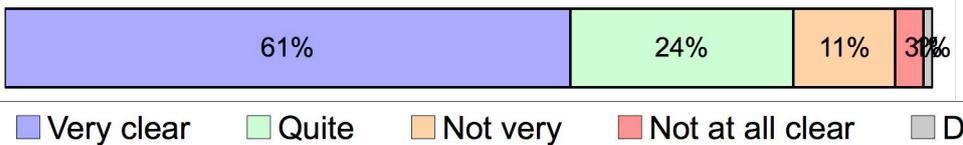
Has display enhanced sense that V&A inspires creativity?



Nearly all visitors felt that the exhibition *is appropriate* to the V&A collection:

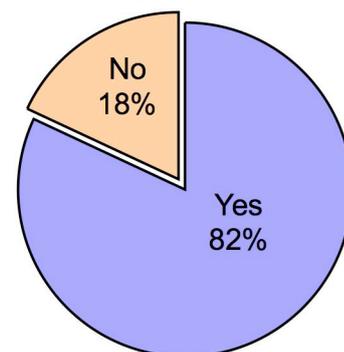
- 74% agree it is appropriate 'a great deal'
- 23% agree it is appropriate 'a fair amount'

Is it clear who created and contributed the work on display?



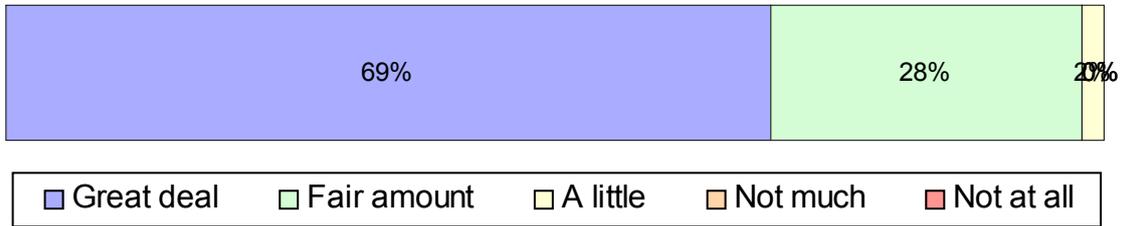
More than four in five say that they did read the text explaining the idea behind the exhibition, particularly those who knew the display existed before arrival, and those for whom it had some professional relevance. Those who read the text said they thought that it enhanced the quality of their visit, and was very important for this exhibition. 64% said that it was 'very important', and 30% thought it 'quite important'. Those aged under 35 are slightly more likely than older visitors to have read the text, but rather less likely to say it was important to the quality of their visit.

Read explanation text?



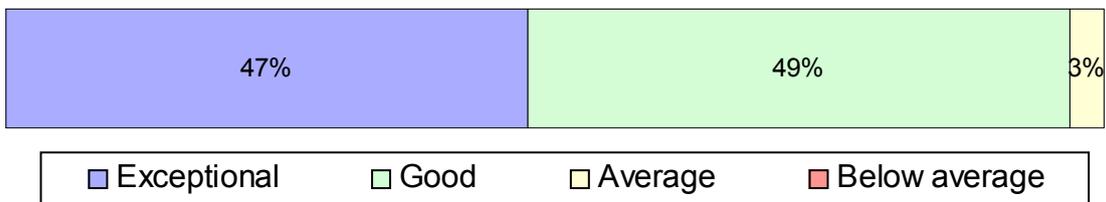
Nearly all visitors feel the exhibition shows what anyone who wants to create art or design objects can achieve when inspired by a museum collection.

Shows what anyone who wants to create art or design objects can achieve when inspired by a museum



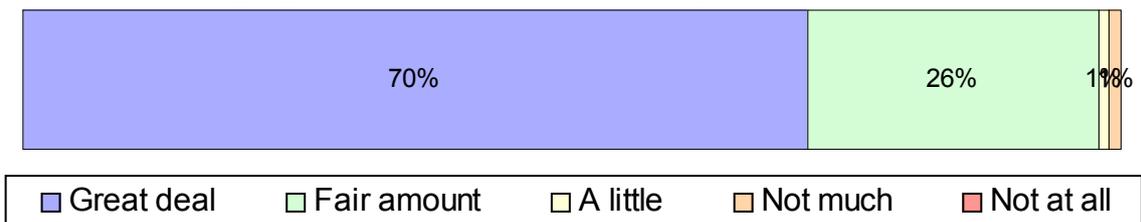
People were impressed with the quality of the work included in the display. It was considered to be good or exceptional, particularly among women. Appreciation was 100% among those for whom the exhibition has some professional relevance.

Quality of the work included in the display:

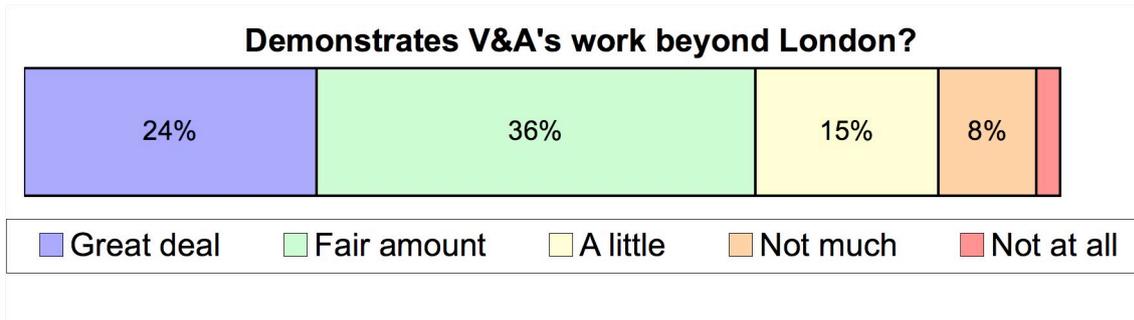


The exhibition is seen as demonstrating the value the V&A puts on contemporary creativity. Although agreement ('a great deal' or 'a fair amount') is highest among those aged under 35 (100%), those aged over 35 are far more likely to agree more strongly.

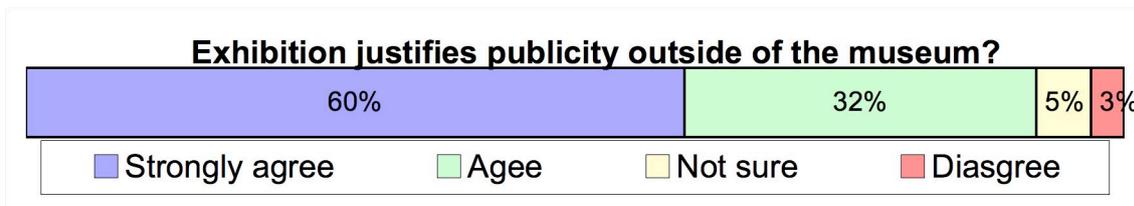
Display demonstrates value V&A puts on creativity?



A small majority, 60% agree that the exhibition demonstrates the V&A's work outside of London and the London museums. 14% did not answer.



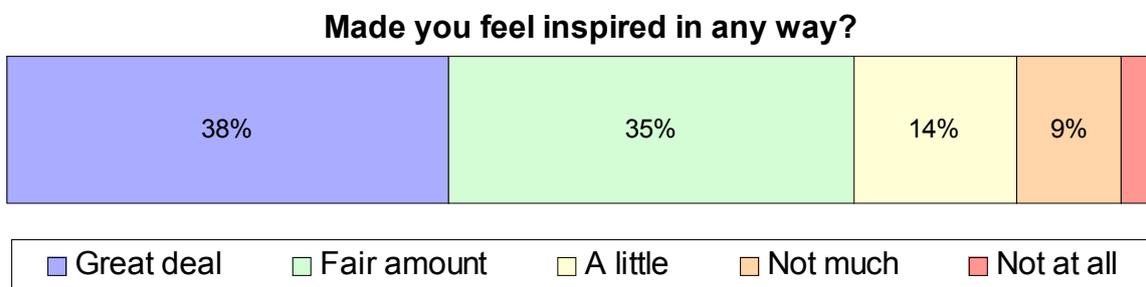
Most (92% overall) feel the exhibition justifies publicity outside of the museum



Asked for criticisms, there were few.

Asked how, if at all, this display changes or enhances the way they think about the V&A,

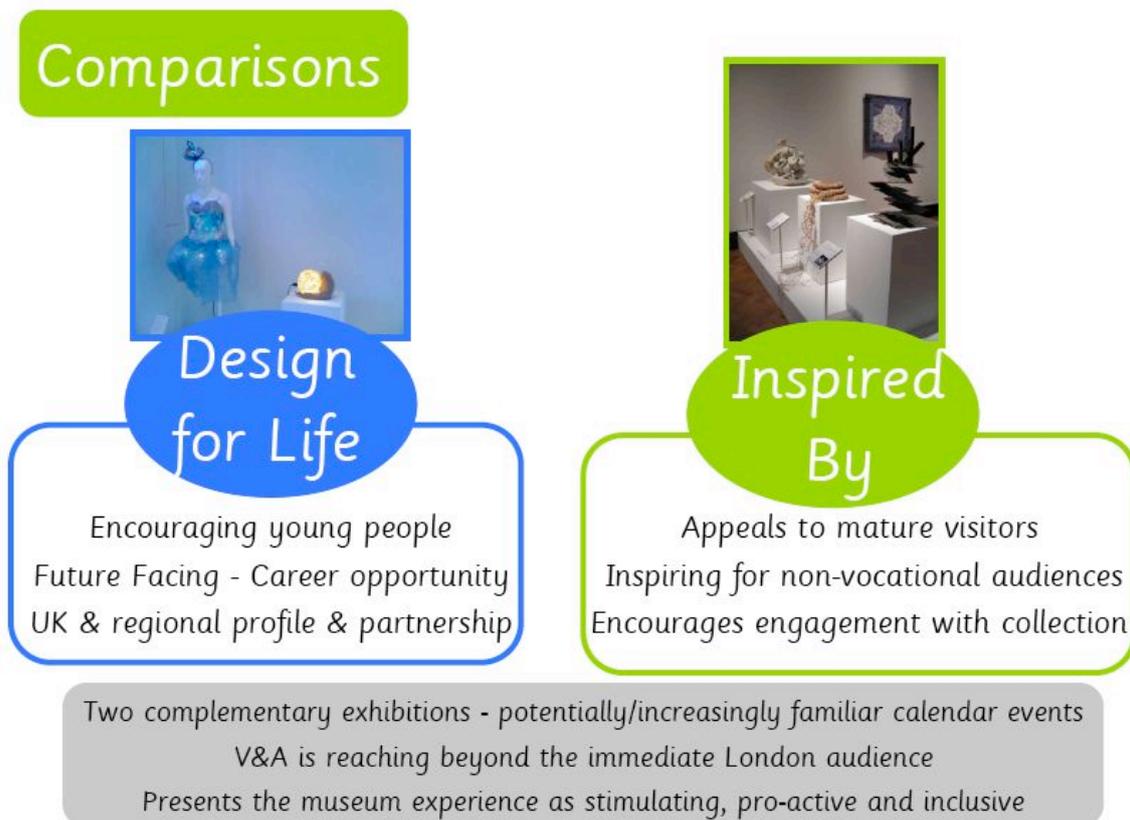
Three quarters overall said that they felt inspired in some way by the display. Resonance was greatest among those aged under 35 (82%), women (78%), those who knew it was there (88%) and any with a professional interest (94%).



Summary of Analysis (qualitative & quantitative methodologies)

'Inspired by' is a very welcome display providing an accessible and engaging means of connecting visitors with objects in the collection. It is considered a very relevant and appropriate presence in the V&A and helps visitors see objects in the collections in a refreshing way.

However, many V&A visitors don't enter, and, the apparent short dwell time limits full appreciation. It is therefore useful that the concept behind 'Inspired By' is easily understood even if the scale and rules of the event are less obvious.



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