

The British Galleries Project at the V&A

Are People in Tune with New Plans for the Interpretation?

Qualitative Research with Visitors and Non-Visitors

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Chart 1

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Chart 3

Objectives

To draw together a wide range of visitor and non-visitor opinions.

- To establish the image and expectations of the V&A and identify barriers to visiting.
- To explore peoples' perceptions of the current British Galleries and their content
 - Tudor, Hanoverian, Victorian associations
 - Expectations and hopes for the new Galleries
- To establish how well people understand style and chronological terms and to explore how best to explain style and to place objects historically.
- To explore people's acceptance and interest in the proposed gallery themes
 - Style
 - What Was New?
 - Who Led Taste?
 - Fashionable Livingin the abstract and through examples.
- To test out alternative names for the themes.
- To gain guidance on proposed interpretive techniques within the Galleries.
- To establish the preferred tone for future development in the British Galleries.

The Sample

Ten group discussions with visitors and non-visitors to the V&A

Eight visitor groups

- 1 • Independent Learners
 - 2 • Foreign Visitors
 - 4 • Specialists
-

- All recruited in the galleries and interviewed on the same day.
- All requested to walk through the British Galleries

Two non visitor groups

- 9 • Visitors to other museums, heritage centres

- No British Galleries walk through

Focus Group Dates

Moderators

- Susie Fisher, Clare Mansfield, Shaku Lalvani

All held in the Museum

- 3 • FE/HE Students
 - 5 • Local Community
 - 6a • Secondary Teachers (mini group)
 - 6b • Primary Teachers (in-home mini group)
 - 7 • Families
 - 8 • Ethnic Minority Visitors
-

- All taken through the British Galleries by a staff member (except primary teachers in-home)

Held in home

- 10 • Enjoy decorating, making and purchasing objects for their houses.

June 23rd, 24th, 25th, July 2nd. 1998

Overview • What Is the Overall Response to

the British Galleries Plans?

- The British Galleries plans are welcome and appropriate. The Galleries as they are, stand in sore need of structuring and lightening.
- The themes are interesting and they open up the subject matter by exploring the context of design. This is a need articulated by everybody. The specific themes are considered to be the Museum's territory. The four on offer are fine.
- Style turns out to be different in kind from the other themes. The historical and social contexts give the objects a place and a significance. Once this understanding is achieved, the next step will be to learn more about style.
- The Museum should not be afraid to help visitors learn more about style, explicitly and with its correct terminology. This knowledge is valuable. It carries status.

Overview • What Is the Overall Response to

the British Galleries Plans? cont'd

- Two areas are not well dealt with in the current proposals, and need further thought.
 - The design and the creative process themselves. These are the design influences and techniques which were in play, as the artist or craftsman created a particular object.
 - The perspective on Rich and Poor
- Interactives bring the Museum to life and create the actual learning environment which people experience. They should not impair the calm of the gallery and they should be designed to help visitors see the object more acutely.
- The Museum should be ready to go out to its public and make itself known. Many potential visitors do not realise the Museum is devoted to the Decorative Arts but are open to being persuaded of their value.

What Is the Image of the V & A?

- The V&A is mysterious, hidden, not in the public eye.
"Not for people just coming off the street" **Ethnic Minority Visitor**
- It is a traditional museum of the old kind.
static **dull** **boring** **dark** **idiosyncratic**
gloomy **glass cases** **cluttered** **tiny labels** **chaotic**
- There is a sense of bulk behind it,
huge **serious** **unchanging** **calm** **adult**
impressive **quiet** **awesome** **overwhelming**
- The positive side is lurking beneath; for those who know it
exciting **beautiful things** **the unexpected**
catacombs **inspiring** **treasure trove**
- There is a barely articulated view that it is for 'women's things', particularly amongst non visitors.
"There's not much for the average bloke" **Non Visitor**
- The name, Victoria and Albert, suggests a predominantly Victorian identity.

IMPLICATION • THIS IS A FINE, GRAND MUSEUM OF THE OLD SCHOOL, SOMEHOW OUT OF THE MAINSTREAM AND NOT WELCOMING TO ORDINARY PEOPLE.

The Role of the Museum Is More Elusive

- Only those most familiar with the Museum realise that it is dedicated to the decorative arts. Specialists, local residents, foreign visitors, FE students

"The museum is here for the objects. They sell knowledge about the objects"

Mature Student Visitor

- The majority have a more catholic view and different expectations.
The argument runs:

- **All museums have old things in them.**
- **The point of keeping old things is to tell you about the past.**
- **The past is history, therefore the V&A will tell me about history.**

Many people expect a historical account and historical links.

- Users who enter with an agenda, usually have a particular subject, passion or task to perform.
- The general interest visitor can be:
 - killing time in a museum
 - taking the kids, because of a school project
 - trying to re-enter the past, through heritageand may well be puzzled and disappointed that the V&A seems so dry.

IMPLICATION • THE V&A MAY NEED TO DEFINE ITS ROLE FOR THE NEXT CENTURY AND POPULARISE THE CONCEPT OF THE DECORATIVE ARTS.
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Overall Reactions to the British Galleries

Interpretive Themes are Very Positive

- The fact that they are being considered at all means
 - The V&A is trying to reach out to its visitors and become more accessible.
 - The objects are to be put in context so that they become more meaningful.

"Just looking at an object means nothing without some context"

Non-Visitor Decorator

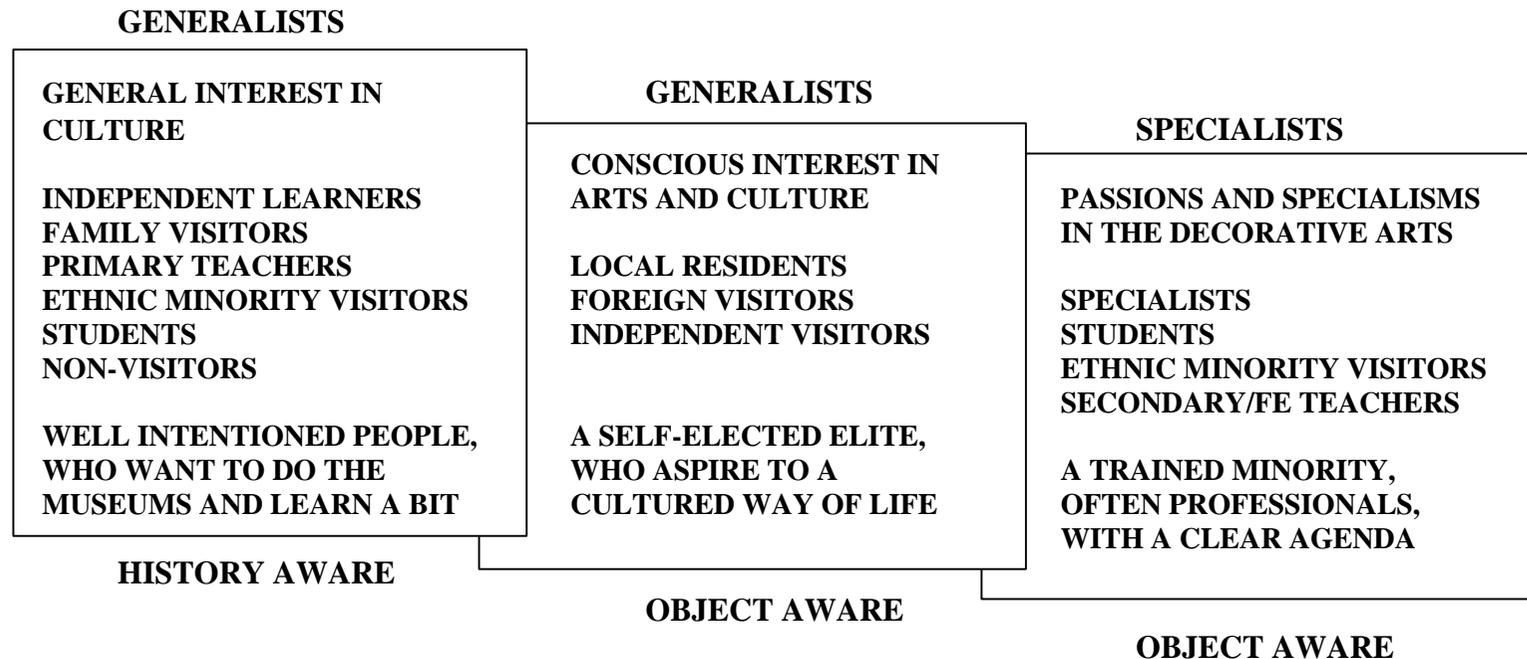
- The whole attempt promises to personalise, contextualise, and 'bring alive' a dead and dusty collection.
- People begin to consider that they might enjoy themselves and be fascinated in the galleries. They begin to have a sense of what's in there.
- Everyone, from specialist to non-visitor wants a resonant context for the objects. No one currently feels they have enough.

IMPLICATION • INTERPRETATION OF THIS TYPE IS A WELCOME MOVE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.
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How Did the People Segment?

The most significant split was between specialists and generalists.

Diversity within our focus groups means that group members may crop up in more than one segment.



The issues are

- Sensitivity to history versus sensitivity to objects.
- General interests versus specific interests.
- Desire for active or contemplative atmosphere.

IMPLICATION • THE MUSEUM WILL NEED TO DESIGN AN ENVIRONMENT WHICH EDUCATES UP ITS GENERAL INTEREST VISITORS, WITHOUT APPEARING TO PATRONISE ANYONE.

Sensitivity to History or to Objects?

Object Aware

- The idea of the object as 'be all and end all' is familiar only to those people already well acquainted with the Decorative Arts as a category.
- They have trained themselves to appreciate form, nomenclature, ornamentation and provenance. This is hard-won, a game of mind and senses and deeply satisfying in its own right.
- This group has learned how to **look** at objects, to see detail, to investigate and appraise.

IMPLICATION: • **OBJECTS SPEAK TO THEM BECAUSE THEY ALREADY HAVE THE BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE THROUGH WHICH TO INTERPRET THEM.**

Sensitivity to History or to Objects? cont'd....

History Aware

- The majority of potential visitors see objects as a route to understanding the historical period.
- Most people need to see an object in a meaningful framework, in order to attribute meaning to it. A room setting is the favourite.
- The purposes of the people connected to the object and the significance which the object held for them are of great importance .
- Without this context, people can glaze over in looking at objects, particularly when they look superficially similar.
- Many people are not equipped to look in detail at objects. They need support.

IMPLICATION: • OBJECTS ARE A ROUTE TO UNDERSTANDING A HISTORICAL PERIOD. THEIR MEANING NEEDS TO BE ILLUSTRATED, BROUGHT OUT.

Active or Contemplative?

- Everyone feels the need for the V&A to be brought to life, the British Galleries in particular. This is closely allied to light levels. Bright, joyful lighting signals alive.
- At the same time, many people value the calm and contemplation of the current V&A.
- A strong segment, concerned with young people,

Families

Students

Primary Teachers

don't see why the whole place shouldn't become more active, lively, experiential.

Active or Contemplative? cont'd

- This is closely tied in to the issue of interactives
 - Should they be there at all?
Where should they be sited?
Do they just distract people from the objects?

VERSUS

- Bring it to life with actors, room sets, activities, experiences
- The museum is currently perceived as adult and on balance, people want it to stay adult.
- This means non-patronising interpretation in a calm atmosphere.

IMPLICATION • THE DESIGN OF THE GALLERIES NEEDS TO DO MORE TO BRING THE EXHIBITS TO LIFE, FOR ALL VISITORS, BUT THIS SHOULD NOT ALTER THE PEACEFUL ADULT ATMOSPHERE.
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A Thumbnail Sketch of each Visitor Group

- | | |
|--|---|
| Family Visitors | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child-orientated, chatty, want to make the V&A friendlier. |
| Independent Learners | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Articulate, able, middle-aged women. Disparate range of arts knowledge. |
| Primary Teachers | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dedicated, impassioned - making links. |
| Ethnic Minority | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fragmented, on the side of the underdog. |
| Students | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impatient, looking for thrills. |
| Non-Visitors to V&A
B C 1. Heritage | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Museums are for children, hands-on, re-creation of the past. |

A Thumbnail Sketch of each Visitor Group cont'd

**Non-Visitors to V&A
Enjoy Decorating**

- Restless, interested, looking for contemporary relevance.

Local Residents

- Cultured, sense of ownership, civilised conversation.

Foreign Visitors

- Older, enthusiastic, informed, determined to get the most out of the trip.

Secondary/FE Teachers

- Teach an arts subject and impatient with the old-fashioned Museum.

Specialists

- Familiar with the Museum and problems in using it. Open to new ideas.

And now in detail

Family Visitors

Why visit?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School project. Special Exhibition. Museums are a good thing. "My 13-year-old son is fashion-mad. There was an exhibition of fashion." 	Parent
Feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The V&A is not really set up for children: too quiet, daunting, passive. "It's stately, not child friendly. Children can cause damage, it's extremely unnerving." 	Parent
The Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benign, interested and know a little. Feel flattered to regard the Arts as part of their agenda. "You have to have an interest in the first place" 	Parent
Attitude to change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive, because they feel more included. "If you get hold of the influences, there's more involvement. You understand more." <p style="margin-left: 20px;">"Like the Dorling Kindersley CD-Rom for children. There are layers waiting beneath."</p>	Parent
Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costume will play a strong role for children. Parents really enjoy testing themselves on style terms even though they fail miserably. "I quite enjoyed that!" 	Parent

IMPLICATION • **THE V&A IS NOT AN EASY PLACE TO TAKE CHILDREN AND PARENTS HAVE A STRONG STAKE AS ADULTS IN WANTING IT TO BE MORE ACCESSIBLE.**

Independent Learners

- Why visit?** • Time to kill, something to look up, Friend of the Museum, long term curiosity.
- Feelings** • The place needs waking up, both for those who know it and for those who are trying to take it in from scratch.
- "It's crowded and empty at the same time."** **Independent Visitor**
- "It's idiosyncratic, you can never find out about what's in there."** **Independent Visitor**
- The Arts** • Love them. Some are expert, some are not.
- "I don't know enough. It's interesting to go and look at them."** **Independent Visitor**
- Attitude to change** • It's about time.
- "I'm very comfortable. I know a little bit about it and it can take me a lot further."** **Independent Visitor**
- But not,
- "Dumbing down, looking down on people."** **Independent Visitor**
- Observations** • These are tough, older ladies with time on their hands. Is the Museum tough enough?

IMPLICATION • THE INDEPENDENT LEARNER WANTS TO BE RECOGNISED AND CATERED TO, WITH MORE CONSIDERATION FOR HER NEEDS.

Primary Teachers

- Why visit?**
- For school trips. These might use any group of objects as a jumping off point, probably including costume. They enjoy the 'recce'.
"We're doing a topic on fabrics. The history of clothing." Primary Teacher
- Feelings**
- They have a personal fondness for arts and crafts and use them in school. The arts are linked into other subjects in a deliberately cross-disciplinary approach.
"You have to develop an attitude of mind to history." Primary Teacher
"It's anything that relates back to them. Empathy." Primary Teacher
- Attitude to change**
- Long overdue. Of course it must be more child friendly.
"Children find things out by experience. Interacting, looking for details, being asked questions." Primary Teacher
- Observations**
- Primary Teachers are engaged in establishing a framework for the world, including basic chronology and geography. They are engaged in linking up discrete bits of experience. They are wonderfully gifted at asking questions to trigger insight.

IMPLICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TEACHERS WANT EXTENSIVE HELP AND SUPPORT FROM THE MUSEUM, PLUS DEDICATED AREAS CLOSE TO THE GALLERIES WHERE CHILDREN CAN BE THEIR EXUBERANT SELVES.
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Ethnic Minority Visitors • Chinese, Indian, Afghani, Afro-Caribbean

- Why visit?**
- Either to pursue special interests (embroidery, ceramics) or a general desire for education.
- "I want to be able to inform myself. Some [of the label] information is so small, it gives the impression you are there to consider and look." Ethnic Minority**
- Feelings**
- The Museum tells the tale of a wealthy successful elite. They want recognition of the craftspeople, the poor and the influences from abroad.
- "We need something to relate to. What about the people who didn't have money? If you neglect them, then the people who don't have much money now, will feel neglected." Ethnic Minority**
- The Arts**
- Part of education rather than communion with objects.
- "How to do the explanation? Five elements of the news - who, what, when, why?" Ethnic Minority**
- Attitude to change**
- Yes. It needs to be more easy and pleasurable to use, with clear information to pick up and open staff, ready to discuss and help.

Ethnic Minority Visitors • Chinese, Indian Afghani, Afro Caribbean cont'd....

- Observations** • Ethnic minority respondents were no more uninformed about British History than other respondents. They responded as visitors rather than representatives of a foreign culture.

The Chinese respondent would have liked the text translated in Chinese.

A young respondent felt out of place because of his age.

"I felt put on the spot, out of place, going round seeing all these old people, thinking maybe I'm not the type."

<p>IMPLICATION • THERE IS A NEED FOR GENEROSITY IN THE WAY THE MUSEUM SHARES ITS INFORMATION, RATHER THAN A NEED TO PRESENT IT FROM SPECIFICALLY ETHNIC VIEWPOINTS.</p>

Students • Graphic Design, Fashion,

Theatre, Photography, Sociology

- Why visit?**
- To research and sketch source material, they are also remembering family and school visits, pre-student days.
"My parents brought me quite a lot. It was boring as a child." Student
- Feelings**
- The V&A is a place apart, barely connected to the modern world. Unsmiling security guards, catacombs hiding beautiful things.
"It's in a time warp." Student
 - **"You get dirty looks when you're sketching."** Student
- The Arts**
- They are studying subjects in the Arts, but seem not to categorise themselves as Decorative Arts lovers. Their study seems more practical, worldly, career-minded.
"I'm doing fashion promotion and journalism." Student
- Attitude to change**
- Can't come soon enough. They want drama in the presentation and enough control to sample things in their own way. What they want and when they want it.
"Enthusiasm is missing from this museum." Student
 - **"It can't be forced on you."** Student

Students • Graphic Design, Fashion,

Theatre, Photography, Sociology cont'd....

- Observations**
- They are young and demanding and not well informed about the Decorative Arts outside their special subject.

The interest is there, but needs lot of context and inspiration to bring it out. They fear being bored.

<p>IMPLICATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• STUDENTS NEED TO BE CHARMED IN WITH A MIX OF HUMAN STORIES AND BEAUTIFUL OBJECTS. THEY DON'T TRUST THE V&A TO KEEP THEM INTERESTED AT PRESENT.

Local Residents

- Why visit?**
- Part of the local area. Go and familiarise yourself with the kinds of objects you hope to live amongst, yourself.
- "The importance of a Museum is to be able to get up close to the objects."** **Local Resident**
- Feelings**
- A certain crossness with the Museum. It doesn't make things easy. Not well displayed, dark, sometimes in pokey corners. The contemporary bits are better.
- "Very dark corners, where you have to go right up to pieces to see them."** **Local Resident**
- The Arts**
- What every cultured person knows a bit about. Part and parcel of civilised life and intercourse.
- "If you have a cabinet of silver, you have to see how it relates to furniture etc. within the same period."** **Local Resident**
- Attitude to change**
- They are impatient for structure, themes, context, so they can talk about it all.
- "Currently it doesn't touch on the politics or the history of the period, which is all tied in."** **Local Resident**

Local Residents cont'd...

- Observations**
- They are confident, without being as knowledgeable as they seem. They are keen for the information to be clear, bite-sized and palatable.

<p>IMPLICATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• LOCAL RESIDENTS ARE HIGHLY CONTEXT-AWARE AND IDENTIFY WITH THE PAST WORLD ON DISPLAY. THEY WANT MORE ROUTES INTO THAT WORLD.

Foreign Visitors • North American and Australian

- Why visit?**
- Part of travel/holiday agenda. Get the most out of it! They might have gone to another London museum, but this one seems more special, out of the way. A find! They go to lots of museums world wide.
- "We wanted to see the equivalent here." Foreign Visitor**
- Feelings**
- Not all had realised the V&A meant Decorative Arts.
- "I guess I thought it was what the British Empire was all about. Foreign Visitor**
- Many found it overwhelming, jammed, muddling.
- "It would have been easier if things had been put in an obvious chronological order." Foreign Visitor**
- The Arts**
- Yes! They made it their business to stay abreast and enjoyed the elite feel which comes with it. Several have personal hobby horses.
- "Where's commercial design?" Foreign Visitor**
- Attitude to change**
- Wary. They would like a simple accessible structure and briefing. but they are very anti gimmickry. They want to revere the place.
- "[Tapes of] musical instruments yes, but everything else seems kind of gimmicky." Foreign Visitor**

Foreign Visitors • North American and Australians cont'd....

- Observations**
- They have very little grasp of English history, so they need a lot of help, with chronology, kings, time lines etc. They are on much firmer ground with style terms.

<p>IMPLICATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• FOREIGN VISITORS NEED THE FRISSEON OF A TRADITIONAL BRITISH MUSEUM, BUT THEY NEED A STRONG STEER ON HISTORICAL REFERENCES AND WOULD APPRECIATE CLEAR BRIEFINGS ON EACH AREA.
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Secondary Teachers / FE

- Why visit?**
- To support the curriculum. Many teach art subjects, largely at A-level, and often come for student project work with small groups.
- "I've often used the cast room for drawing." Secondary Teacher**
- Feelings**
- They like to come for their own interest and tend to go to more contemporary exhibitions and galleries.
e.g. Toshiba, 20th Century, 60's & 70's, Karl Larsson, Posters.
- The Arts**
- Have a genuine interest and active pursuit eg; fabric design, silk-screen printing. They have a good grasp of time periods, styles and objects.
- Attitude to change**
- They have the teacher's mission to provide context and links, and welcome links with history, people, costume.
- "You'd get a feel for the period. How people lived; why did they have that kind of furniture, what did they use this or that for. Because you'd know what they looked like." Secondary Teacher**
- Observations**
- They were often thinking of their students. How important it was to get something discrete out of a trip. They responded to packages - themes, trails, colour coding.

IMPLICATION	• THIS IS A COMMITTED VISITOR GROUP. THEY WOULD BE HELPED BY MORE HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND 'TEACH IN PACKAGES'.
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Specialists • Textiles, Archaeology,

Design, Photography, English Literature.

Why visit?

- For research, for particular objects, for reference. They were very familiar with the V&A as a resource. It is a habitat.

"If you are interested in the decorative arts, you get inspiration from here." Specialist

Feelings

- The V&A is not glamorous but it is a treasure trove full of inspiration. This is a place for looking, contemplation of the real thing. However, there is wide scope for the Museum to be clearer about its message and how it communicates it.

"The Applied Arts Museum in Vienna have made an extremely radical selection of the objects they are displaying. By doing this, they've really made you think about the objects. I'd like to feel there are stronger ideas coming through the displays than at present." Specialist

The Arts

- They worry about what has earned the right to be included in the V&A. Is it just the artefacts of the wealthy? What about folk art?

Specialists • Textiles, Archaeology,

Design, Photography, English Literature cont'd....

**Attitude
to change**

- Two ends of a spectrum. At one end, fear of destroying the calm, with mentally impoverished gimmickry. At the other, a desire for entertainment.

"The atmosphere is calm. It's tremendously important to keep that. The Science Museum is mayhem."

Specialist

"It lacks character, it's difficult to relate to, to build up a context. It has a dead atmosphere."

Specialist

- Observations** • There is a peevishness about standards of display in the V&A and a real hunger for historical context.

IMPLICATION	• SPECIALISTS WILL SUPPORT CHANGE AS LONG AS IT MEANS BROADENING THE CONTEXT, AND NOT DISTRACTING PEOPLE FROM THE OBJECTS.
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How Different Were Non-Visitors? The Decorators.

Social classes C1C2 D

Why not visit?

- They do visit museums, (Science Museum, Tate) but they simply don't think of this one. Someone should jog them.

"Who are Art Museums for? Just tourists?"

"They're not selling it to our own people, not bringing it to our attention."

Feelings

- Indignant, puzzled, mystified. The museum is likely to be too uptight for them.

"Goldy-mouldy. Dusty"

"The Tate, the door's always open. You're not intimidated because it's art you can relate to. A lot of contemporary art."

The Arts

- They have a genuine interest in objects, but they don't think of themselves as art lovers. They respond hugely to the V&A material - waiting to be awakened.

"It's all there but we can't relate to it. We need to be educated where it comes from."

How Different Were Non Visitors? The Decorators.

Social classes C1C2 D cont'd....

Attitude to change

- They welcome change because without it, they would not think of visiting. Bringing the objects into context has made it all accessible to them and they are delighted.

Observations

- These people experienced a conversion in the group and were genuinely keen to get involved. Dragged in from the cold. Will this last?

IMPLICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• THERE IS A WIDER MARKET OUT THERE, PROVIDED THE PRODUCT GOES OUT TO MEET THEM AND SOMEONE MAKES THE EFFORT TO SELL IT.
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How Different Were Non-Visitors? Heritage Goers.

Social classes BC1.

Why not

- They don't know where it is. It's never advertised. Its image suggests it's stuffy and irrelevant and certainly no good for children - which is why they go to heritage attractions. What's its theme anyway?

"I should imagine it's all Victorian, Edwardian and what not. That's about as far as it goes."

"I wouldn't have thought a child would find it interesting."

"Costumes, frilly hats."

Feelings

- Musty old-fashioned, dreary, aloof.

"You've got the Science Museum and the Natural History. It's obvious what they're about, and then the Victoria and Albert, It seems stuck out. It's one that I've never considered. The others, they sort of jump out at you."

The Arts

- They prefer heritage. It's more direct and more fun.

"It would be nice for the children to have an interactive Victorian scene, where they can go up a chimney and down a mine."

How Different Were Non Visitors?

Heritage Goers. Social classes BC1 cont'd...

**Attitude
to change**

- Sure, if it is all going to be interactive and child-orientated.

Observations

- At the same time, they are touchy about being patronised by simple interactives. Is this too close to home?

"I find that patronising; touch fabric, touch a wooden block."

<p>IMPLICATION • HERITAGE VISITORS HAVE LITTLE IDEA OF THE REMIT OF THE V&A AS A MUSEUM FOR DECORATIVE ARTS. THEY WOULD PREFER THE V&A TO BE A HERITAGE CENTRE.</p>

Certain Common Themes Arise across all Groups

Communication

- The Museum should be clear what it wants to communicate and should design its exhibits to make their point.

Context

- Bring in the historical and social context of the objects.
- Give a clear chronological siting for collections.
- Deal with the poor as well as the rich.

Atmosphere

- Don't destroy the calm.
- Bring the interpretation to life, involving people and room settings.
- Make it light.
- Don't overcrowd.

IMPLICATION • PEOPLE WANT MORE STRUCTURE, INTERPRETATION AND CHEERFULNESS THAN THE MUSEUM CURRENTLY OFFERS.
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• Sensitivity to Rich and Poor Was a Consistent Theme

- The content of the V&A suggests that this is a Museum for the rich. All the groups we interviewed felt that this was unreasonably skewed.

They wanted to span the social classes from rich to poor. To see how all kinds of people lived and the role of art and art objects in their lives.

"I'd like to know how the ordinary people lived, not just the rich. What their artefacts were that weren't the most expensive."
Non-Visitor

"I miss Folk Art"
Specialist

"Maybe it's being American but to me, fashionable, means the cream of society, as opposed to the ordinary people. Because people project how they would have lived in that era."
Foreign Visitor

"I'd like a broader view, the underclass, the children working in coal mines, what did they eat?"
Ethnic Minority

"It's very elitist, you're ignoring anybody that's poor or not a fashion leader. Historically it's very skewed."
Specialist

"It's biased towards the upper classes."
Independent Learner

IMPLICATION • THE V&A NEEDS TO MAKE AN EXPLICIT EFFORT TO SHOW THAT IT RECOGNISES THE UNDERPRIVILEGED AS WELL AS THE PRIVILEGED.
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What Makes People Feel Comfortable in a Museum?

- Physically**
- Light, seating, space, no crowding.
 - For children, hands-on - something to do.
- Intellectually**
- Seeing the information is accessible at your level.
 - Discrete chunks.
 - Clear signage.
 - Being given enough context to appreciate what you're looking at.
 - Coming out, having learnt something recognisable.
- Emotionally**
- Feeling wanted, welcome - an open door.
 - Being given a role within the exhibition, something to do.
 - Feeling the subject of the exhibition, can be related to people like you.
 - For people with children: feeling the environment recognises children. Nothing they can damage. Areas where they can touch, let off steam.

The reverse of this, makes people uncomfortable!

"There's lots to see, but you can't be bothered because you have to decipher everything. It's not given to you on a plate."

Local Resident

IMPLICATION	• BY AND LARGE, PEOPLE WANT MUSEUMS TO MAKE A VISIT EASY, OBVIOUS AND PLEASANT FOR THEM. THEY DON'T WANT TO WASTE TIME SWIMMING AGAINST THE CURRENT.
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What Image Do People Have of the British Galleries?

- The current British Galleries are the V&A at its least effective.

Gloomy	Cluttered	Uninspiring	Corridors and Corners
Dusty	Dead	Crowded	Static

"I didn't feel like part of the room. I felt I was being watched by the furniture." **Student**

"Don't crowd the objects, each has its own value. If there are too many together, it's confused." **Ethnic Minority**

"I continually struggled with the light and never adapted to it." **Foreign Visitor**

"It obviously desperately needs modernising and updating. It was very difficult to see where one thing ended and another began." **Teacher**
- The chronology is hard to grasp. There is no proper signage and few clues about what you are actually being shown and what it means.

"Context, then you understand better. If things are isolated, they don't expand your interest." **Ethnic Minority**

"There is an abrupt beginning to the British Collection. It begins at an arbitrary time. More backward-looking historical development would be good to see." **Specialist**

"If you go into another room, you need to know, what basically is in it." **Foreign Visitor**
- Many people feel that interiors should be related to architecture, in which London abounds.

IMPLICATION • THE BRITISH GALLERIES ARE RIPE FOR CHANGE. THE ATMOSPHERE IS DEADENING AND IT IS VERY HARD TO INTERPRET THE OBJECTS

What Do People Know about the Period 1500 - 1900?

- Only teachers can tie the different periods down by date, everyone else is very hazy.

Tudors and Stuarts

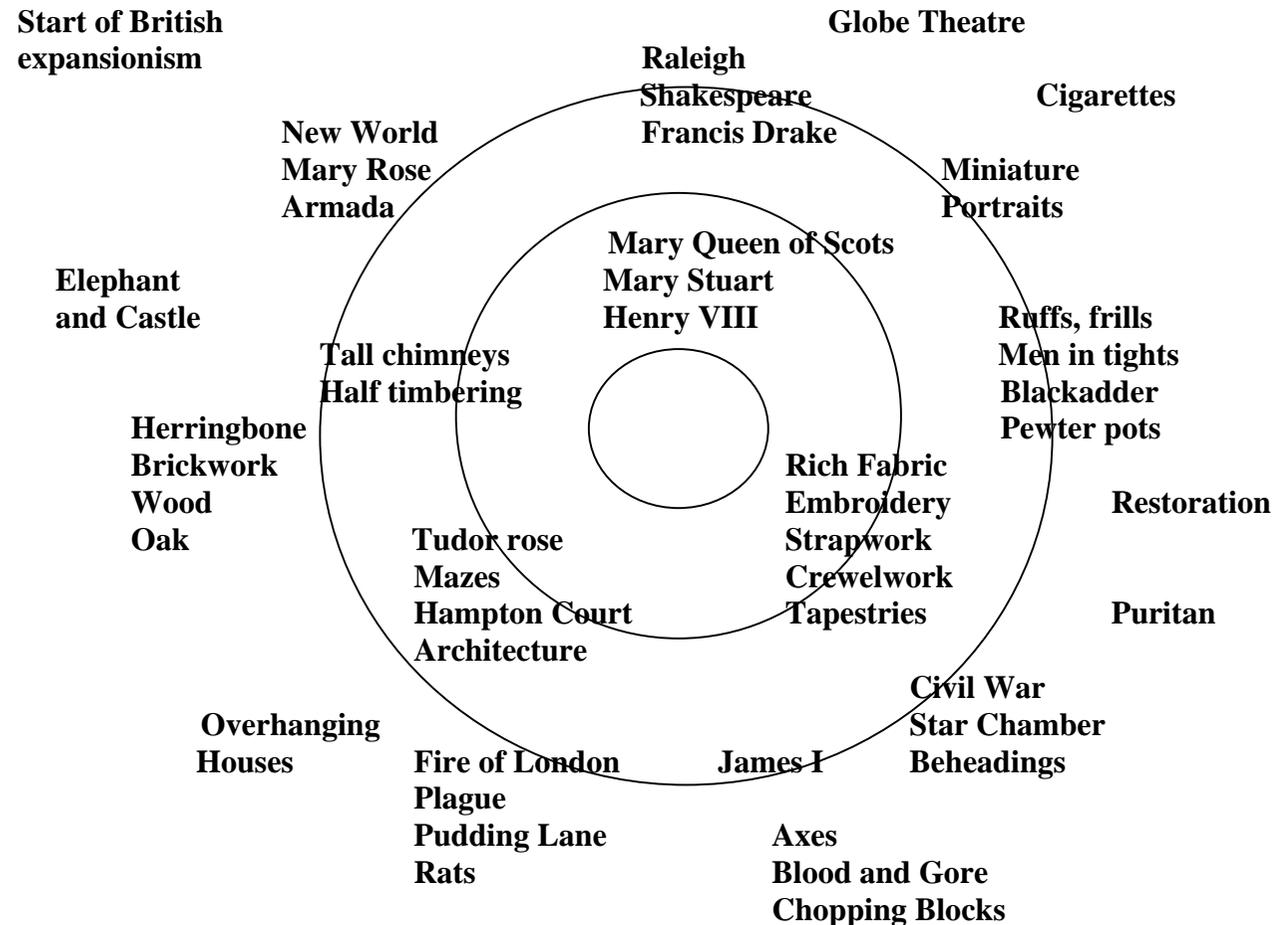
Hanoverian (expressed as Georgian and Regency)

The Victorians

- The Victorians are far better known, through character, exploits and achievements than Tudor and Stuarts or Georgian and Regency. These last two have a more caricatured image.
- People draw on TV and cinema interpretations, to give them a sense of period: Blackadder, Jane Austen, Mrs Brown. Picturing the costumes orientates them towards the rest.
- Architectural styles are as important as artefacts (and more reliable) in identifying a period.
- Stuart is less familiar than Tudor. Georgian and Regency is the least familiar of all. Architecture and artefacts constitute quite a lot of the little they do know about the Hanoverians !

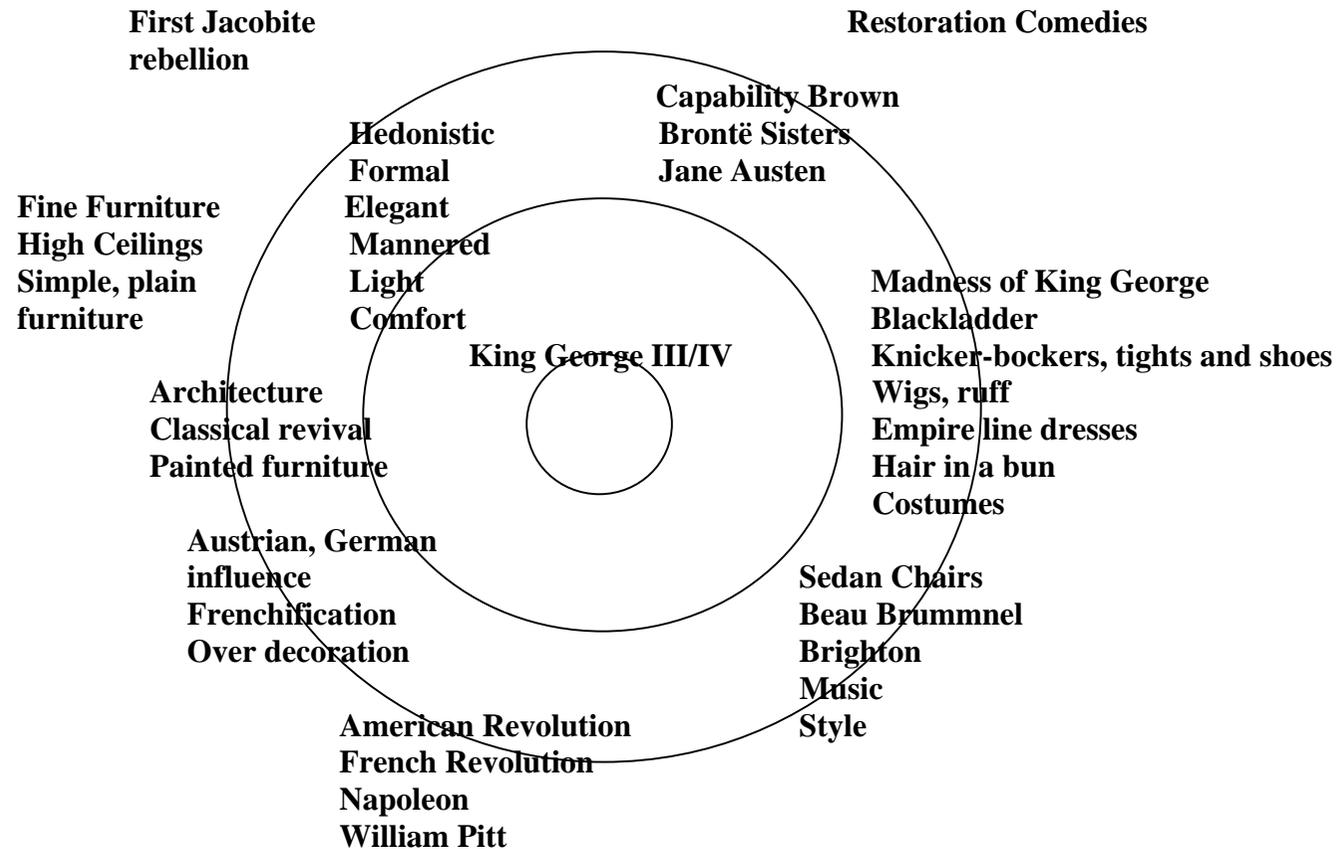
IMPLICATION: • PEOPLE CAN'T ALWAYS TIE IN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL EVENTS WITH PERSONALITIES AND STYLES, BUT THEY FEEL GREAT SATISFACTION WHEN IT IS INTEGRATED FOR THEM. COLLECTIVELY THEY KNOW QUITE A LOT, BUT INDIVIDUALLY, IT CAN BE PAINFULLY LITTLE.

Associations with the Tudors and Stuarts



The centre of the bullseye represents the most commonly mentioned associations. This is the sum of the comments across the sample. Specialists are omitted in order to give a true layman's perception.

Associations with Georgian and Regency



The centre of the bullseye represents the most commonly mentioned associations. This is the sum of the comments across the sample. Specialists are omitted in order to give a true layman's perception.

Associations with the Victorians



The centre of the bullseye represents the most commonly mentioned associations.

This is the sum of the comments across the sample.

Specialists are omitted in order to give a true layman's perception.

Chart 43

How Do People React to the Themes?

STYLE
WHAT WAS NEW?

WHO LED TASTE?
FASHIONABLE LIVING

- Well, it all sounds like progress.

"It seems fresher, newer. It has a usefulness about it. It's not old and stuffy."

Ethnic Minority

The museum is opening up the subject and making it more accessible to ordinary people.

"They seem to go back to the original purpose of the Museum. It's not an Art Gallery. It's meant to show the product of people's hands and craftsmanship. This relates more to that than walking through those galleries as we did today."

Local Resident

"Better than it is now. More interesting. There's a fascination with 'how did it come about in the first place'."

Independent Visitor

- No-one criticises the choice of themes. There is a feeling that this is a delicate job and the Museum probably knows best.
- All in all, the sense of people and their purposes, change, reaction, dynamism all confer the missing sense of life, even seem contemporary.

IMPLICATION: • THE THEMES SEEM NATURAL, WELCOMING AND ENLIVENING.

Verbatim Quotes • Spontaneous Reactions to the Themes

"Moves it on enormously, not so stuffy, institutionalised." Local Resident

"You know what impresses me, how bright and new and interesting the boards look and you go to places like the V&A and everything looks so dreary and dowdy." Non-Visitor BC1

"I like the way these are written. They're quite good. It's the kind of thing, I'd like to read as I went round." Non-Visitor BC1

"This is a serious attempt to put over the information that lies behind the object and so help us to get more out of looking at the objects." Specialist

"It is important that the object stays in the centre of attention. There should be a certain sacredness." Specialist

"It gives a focus, applying all these different elements, codifying. It actually makes it real. Who bought and why. It goes beyond the beautiful." Ethnic Minority Visitor

Verbatim Quotes · Spontaneous Reactions to the Themes cont'd...

"It's relating to people's interests now. Things that are interesting today spark off our interests in what happened in other times." Ethnic Minority Visitor

"Will it meld together?" Ethnic Minority Visitor

"It gives more of a context, if you know why they chose to use them, who paid for them and who made them." Independent Learner

"This is not a museum of life. We're here to look." FE/HE Student

"Social history should be in here, how they lived. If you get hold of the influences, there's more involvement. You understand more." Family Visitor

"It's great that they're making the effort. They're on the right track, more lateral. With more environment, it's more interesting, more welcoming. Better presented, not static." Student

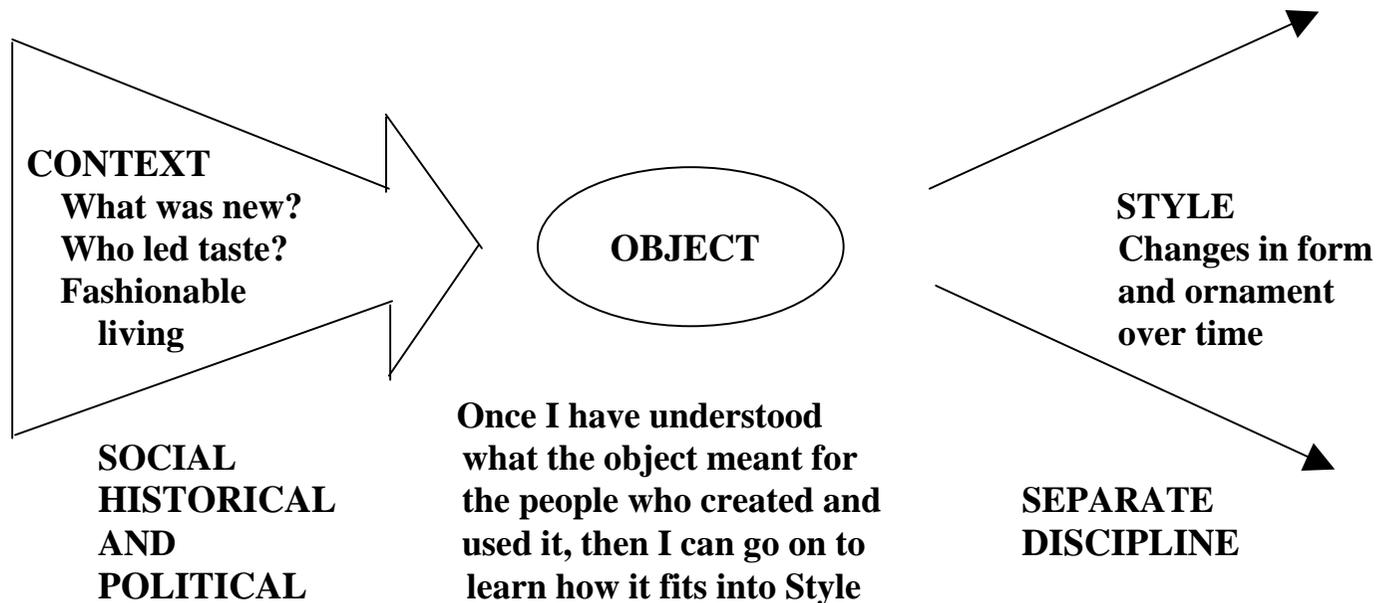
What Do we Learn from Specific Topic Boards?

- The Victorian Era** • **Gothic Revival** - **Style**
Papier Mâché - **What was new?**
William Morris - **Who led taste?**
The expanding wardrobe - **Fashionable living**
- The Gothic Revival achieves a blank reaction on its own. There's too much detail to look at, and people aren't sure how they are meant to progress, after the first visual impact.
 - Papier Mache is full of human interest, at our level. Who'd have thought it?
 - William Morris - oh excellent! An identifiable and semi-familiar character. A real person to be curious about.
 - The expanding wardrobe - yes and ? They grasp the idea of having to have a lot of different outfits, quite quickly. Now they want a route to appreciating the objects in use.
 - The accompanying bullet points hit the right level of information. Interesting, varied and not too wordy.

IMPLICATION: • **THEMING WORKS WELL TO TRIGGER DIFFERENT KINDS OF QUESTIONS AND INSIGHTS. THEY ALL COMBINE TO GIVE A LINKED SENSE OF PERIOD.**

The Meat of the Discussion Reveals More

- Style appears to be a logically different category from all the others.



The Meat of the Discussion Reveals More cont'd....

- For all non-specialists, the object has to prove its worth in terms of beauty or human significance, before style kicks in.
- Once they get interested in Style, then the learning, expertise, recognition involved become personally rewarding.
- Specialists who accept the primacy of the object automatically, find in this discussion, that they are unexpectedly context-hungry.

IMPLICATION: • THE MUSEUM NEEDS TO INTEREST ITS VISITORS IN THE OBJECTS FIRST. IT THEN HAS A PERFECT PLATFORM ON WHICH TO PROVOKE INTEREST ABOUT STYLE.

Naming and Using the Themes

- The names of the themes can stand despite some niggling problems.
 - **Style**
 - **What was new?**
 - **Who led taste**
 - **Fashionable living**
 - **But another version might be**
 - **Style**
 - **What was new?**
 - **People with influence**
 - **Who were the consumers?**
- People feel all the elements should be integrated in exhibition terms to give a complete sense of the period.
 - They nonetheless welcome some form of symbolic labelling. This gives the possibility of editing the exhibit, for those people short on time. Schools in particular find trails a great help, both marked in-gallery and supported by leaflets.
 - Themes, with some idea of content, are very helpful to teachers planning trips limited to a school project or topic.
 - Teachers use questions, related to the child, all the time to trigger links and learning. These question are vivid and meaningful to all ages, but have come to be associated with children. People sensitive to being patronised (often non-visitors) can feel patronised by the use of questions.

IMPLICATION: • **THESE ARE NOT INDEPENDENT THEMES. THEY WORK BEST TO CREATE LINKS WITH THE BIGGER PICTURE. QUESTIONS ARE THE BEST TRIGGERS.**

What Was New?

- This was a question most people were interested and excited about.
- Men (a little wary of the decorative, female image of the V&A) were reassured. Technological innovation, engineering, 'feet on the ground' cities such as Birmingham.
- New materials and machines and what they could do with them dominated the discussion. People were keen to see the machines and watch them in use.
- There was less obvious enthusiasm for tracing how design ideas were transmitted and taught.
- New objects for a new age, seems a very contemporary topic. It instantly draws young people.

Is this the right Theme title?

- Yes.
- A few, more formal, visitors were equally happy to have 'Innovation'.

IMPLICATION: • THIS IS AN INTRINSICALLY INTERESTING THEME AND EXTENDS A HAND TO MALE VISITORS AND THE YOUNG.
--

What Was New? • Papier Mâché

- This was an interesting subject because it had the common touch.
 - Items which ordinary people could have.
 - A material, which everyone's worked with at school.
- This had the element of surprise. Who would have expected such a miscellany of objects? Surprise triggered questions. How robust could it be? A bed? What happens if you put water in the vase?
- The men showed a manly interest in the steam press. People started to ponder on mass production.
- People were prepared to consider the decoration, a high level of decoration for a humble material. There is a resonance too in imitating lacquerware from Japan. What's imitation and what's real?
- The painting of Birmingham on a chair, evoked more personal curiosity than the more general decorative motifs.

IMPLICATION: • BRINGING DEPTH TO A FAMILIAR MATERIAL OR THEME IS AN EFFECTIVE TECHNIQUE.

Comments on What Was New? • Papier Mache

- "There's more for the average bloke here." Non-Visitor BC1
- "I'd go for 'What was New?', because it's the turning point to the next age. As a teacher, making connections to the next period is important." Secondary Teacher
- "Not just a cheap and clumsy modelling material for children." Secondary Teacher
- "I would like to learn something of the craftsman who created these things." Specialist
- "Did it survive, was it useful, how much is it worth now?" Independent Learner
- "The whole idea of decoration spread to the entire social classes." Independent Learner
- "What will happen when it gets wet? How quickly will it deteriorate?" Family Visitor
- "It seems very ornate for something out of Birmingham. More industrial. Was it mass produced? How?" Family Visitor
- "Papier mache is quite interesting. You wouldn't think it. It's bizarre." Student
- "I don't know if I would be drawn to papier mache. It seems to be a museum concept to me, an esoteric, specialist subject. I can't relate to it." Local Resident

Who Led Taste?

- Who led taste? is a contentious theme because it subtly confirms the Museum as interested only in the rich and influential.
- Many people are offended at this. Who's to say that the taste of ordinary folk wasn't just as good as the people whose taste actually prevailed. (The assumption is that there is good taste and bad taste, and the elite are presumed to set the standard.)
- The historical message of how it **actually** happened, is swamped, because people regard this as unfair.
- Proper recognition of rich and poor and an analysis of their complementary relationship is demanded throughout. Many visitors (local residents excluded perhaps) will identify with the poor and knowing the artefacts of the poor gives them permission to be there at all.
- An important case of this is the relationship between craftspeople, artists, designers and their wealthy patrons. How much value was placed on their skills? Were they given recognition?
- **Is this the right theme title?**
 - Yes on balance, but fraught with danger.
 - Trend-setters is popular with young people, but no-one else.
 - People or 'influential people' is a less value-laden title.

IMPLICATION: • **THIS THEME SCRATCHES SENSITIVITIES ABOUT RICH AND POOR. IN FACT, THE DIFFICULTY IS OVERCOME IN PRACTICE. VISITORS SIMPLY INTERPRET THE THEME AS 'PEOPLE'.**

Who Led Taste? • William Morris

- People felt relieved to see Morris, a familiar figure already. They were glad to be reminded and told a bit more.
- The designs were visually appealing and familiar and provoked very little comment.
- The interest lay in Morris' background.

How did he come to be so concerned for the underprivileged?

What were the details of his ménage à trois?

How did he treat his workers?

- Many people wanted to see a microcosm of the workshop, certainly a working room, showing how the patterns were created.

Interpretive Techniques

- Rather low enthusiasm
- Touching the printing block is inadequate and unilluminating about the **creation** of the design.
- The narrative of George and the Dragon sounds dull (they may be underestimating the appeal in practice).

IMPLICATION: • MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE TO LINK THE MAN TO HIS DESIGNS.

Verbatim Quotes • Comments on Who Led Taste? • William Morris

- "I'd much rather see them using the printing block than just touch it. Touch it!
So what! Why can't they have somebody there demonstrating?"** Non-Visitor BC1
- "I'd prefer to know how William Morris started, why he started with flowers, what his
thinking was - rather than a story telling [George and the Dragon]"** Secondary Teacher
- "Taste indicates just a few people:"** Foreign Visitor
- "He had the new dyes. The need to cross-refer."** Independent Learner
- "Show the influences, books, the room set-up..."** Independent Learner
- "What's the symbolism in the designs? It was romantic and slightly phoney."**
Independent Learner
- "You're more involved. What's his background? How come he's so cultural?"**
Family Visitor
- "His workshop would be quite interesting."** Student
- "If you understand the people who led the taste, you could think who leads taste now
and how different it is."** Local Resident
- "When was he born, when did he die? What was his working period? Where did he go
to school?"** Local Resident

Fashionable Living

- This was a hard concept to get hold of, but obvious once you saw it. 'Keeping up with the Jones's'.
- It had much contemporary relevance. Buying sports kit today is equally unforgiving.
- Refinement is another socially loaded term. What about the ordinary people?
- By using the word, fashionable, visitors are sent off on the track of clothes and tend to see the subject matter in a more limited sense.
- Some people think it is an unnecessary theme, but women and young people are drawn to it as an area of natural interest.
- Once they see it in action, it turns out to be just the kind of thing people are asking for. A window into people's everyday lives. What they had to do. What they needed in order to do it.
- **Is this the right theme title?**
 - It is slightly unhappy/misleading, but none of the alternatives catches the meaning.
 - Are we dealing here with nascent consumerism?

IMPLICATION: • THIS IS THE RIGHT SUBJECT MATTER, INTIMATE AND OBJECT FOCUSED, BUT MAYBE THE WRONG TITLE.

Fashionable Living · The Expanding Wardrobe

- People struggled to achieve a satisfying amount of depth with this subject. It is easy to look at clothes and accept them just at face value.
- They needed lots of input and illustration to explain the rituals, expectations and social kudos involved in the wearing of the clothes.
- One-upmanship and getting your clothes exactly right is an issue close to home for many. But if they perceive this as a story of the rich lording it over the poor, hostility will get in the way. Perhaps the rich lording it over the rich would be more acceptable!
- Clothes mean people and people call for room sets. A physical evocation of their lives is the natural next step, with all the relevant objects in place, ready to be used.

Interpretation Techniques

- Touching fabrics. Yes, as far as it goes. It's a bit patronising. For children not adults.
- Dressing up is the natural request. A place set aside for children - to feel what the clothes were like to wear.

IMPLICATION: • THE MORE THEY GET INTO THE IDEA OF PATTERNS OF LIVING, THE MORE THEY WILL WANT 'SLICES OF LIFE' AS ILLUSTRATION.

Comments On Fashionable Living

· The Expanding Wardrobe

"I'd go for Fashionable Living, I suppose. From the children's point of view, that's what they'd be interested in."

Non-Visitor

"Redundant."

Foreign Visitor

"Didn't the women go to Paris for the best?"

Specialist

"They were dependent on cheap labour. Poor seamstresses, bad eyesight."

Independent Learner

"As well as the cruelty of the clothes, it was overt classicism."

Independent Learner

"Show us the grisly detail, their makeup, the things living in their hair."

Student

"Wardrobe is interesting, glamorous."

Student

"Keeping up with the Jones's."

Local Resident

Style • Gothic Revival

- The visual impact is stunning. Suddenly people are aware of Gothic Revival as a category they half recognised but didn't know they knew. They picked up its exuberance, ornamentation, medieval references.
- But they seemed incapable of studying and seeing the individual objects. Often they could not distinguish the function of one piece from another.
- They needed clues about what to look at. Particularly satisfying was the information that furniture was built to look like church buildings.
- Many had little tolerance for distinguishing between Gothic and Gothic Revival. Too close to worry about.
- They needed some kind of road map to guide them through the category. Otherwise they would march past the lot, gaining a simple impression, unable to explore.

Interpretation Techniques • Burges Washstand Video

This was a great success. It guided people through the detail of the piece and gave them insight into its intimacies and clever touches as well as some of the design influences. This allowed them to go back to the piece and examine it.

IMPLICATION: • THE INDUCTION OF THE NON SPECIALIST VISITOR INTO THE STUDY OF STYLE, MUST BE VERY CAREFULLY THOUGHT OUT AND STAGED.

Comments on Style · Gothic Revival

- "I'd like to know how did styles come in and go out, what linked styles." Foreign Visitor
- "They use style about furnishings and fireplaces, but as a man, I think more of style equals fashion." Non-Visitor
- "You see it through the designer's eyes. Passionate!" Independent Learner
- "Labour was no object, I'd love to know what it would cost to re-make today. I'd like to know what sort of person would own or commission it. Was there a three-year waiting list?" Independent Learner
- "Some poor maid had to empty that [washstand]." Independent Learner
- "They link it up with the architecture, the Church. It gives a comprehensive picture. Pugin, Ruskin, the Houses of Parliament." Family Visitor
- "I don't feel as involved. It's not me looking. It's me being told." Student
- "Put things round it [the washstand] In a setting. Who would live in a house like this?" Student
- "Did this fireplace come out of a palace, a merchant's house? Was it bought in Liberty's?" Local Resident

How Do People Relate to the Discipline of Style?

- Knowledge and confidence about style is tantamount to asserting that you are a cultured (enlightened) person. There is a snob value to it, and class grievances are inextricably linked.
- People can be huffy and sensitive about being ignorant of style details. Other people pooh-pooh the whole area as being too pretentious to bother with.
- Almost everyone who can conceive of visiting the V&A wants to learn a bit about style. To leave with a little package of knowledge which advances them in this fraught area.
- Each visitor segment has a different stake in the style arena.

- | | | |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| Doing the museums | • | Give me a rough idea of the three or four big style changes. |
| Cultured way of life | • | Teach me what to look for to identify the main styles, so I'll know what I'm looking at, wherever I am. |
| Trained professionals | • | Give me detailed reference material for any style I happen to need. |

IMPLICATION: • **ALTHOUGH THE V&A IS A MUSEUM DEDICATED TO DESIGN IT MAY BE IN THE POSITION OF HAVING TO MAKE A CASE FOR STUDYING STYLE TO A BIG CHUNK OF ITS VISITORS.**

The Style Quiz Revealed a Lively Interest in

Testing your Knowledge

- The team quiz in a supportive environment was very enjoyable. Guess! Were we right?
- Only specialists, A-level teachers, Decorative Arts students and some foreign visitors can achieve any real level of success, with the Specialists far outstripping the rest.
- Most groups manage to name correctly three or four obvious styles.

Typically	Scottish school	Rococo
	Tudor	Elizabethan

The rest are incorrectly attributed through guesswork or genuine error e.g.

Georgian is 19th-century
Regency Classicism is Exotic
Arts and Crafts is Renaissance
Early Baroque is Rococo

The Style Quiz Revealed a Lively Interest

in Testing your Knowledge cont'd....

- Most people feel happiest, talking about periods in history: Elizabethan, Victorian, Regency, even if they can't recognise them. The clear exception are foreign visitors, who have only the vaguest idea of English history, kings and queens.
- At the other end of the scale, recondite and unfathomable, are

Baroque (in all its forms)	Palladianism	Rococo Revival	Restoration
Exotic	Neo Classicism	Gothic Revival	Chinoiserie
French Revival	Regency Classicism	Renaissance Revival	

People don't have a clue what to look for. They are led astray by the words. If it looks exotic, it must be Exotic. The Revivals just add insult to injury.

- Some terms sound as though you should know them, but in practice, people don't.

Renaissance	Classicism	Gothic	Arts and Crafts	Aestheticism
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IMPLICATION: • PEOPLE NEED AND WANT TO START FROM THE BASICS AND ACQUIRE THE SPECIALIST TERMS SLOWLY.

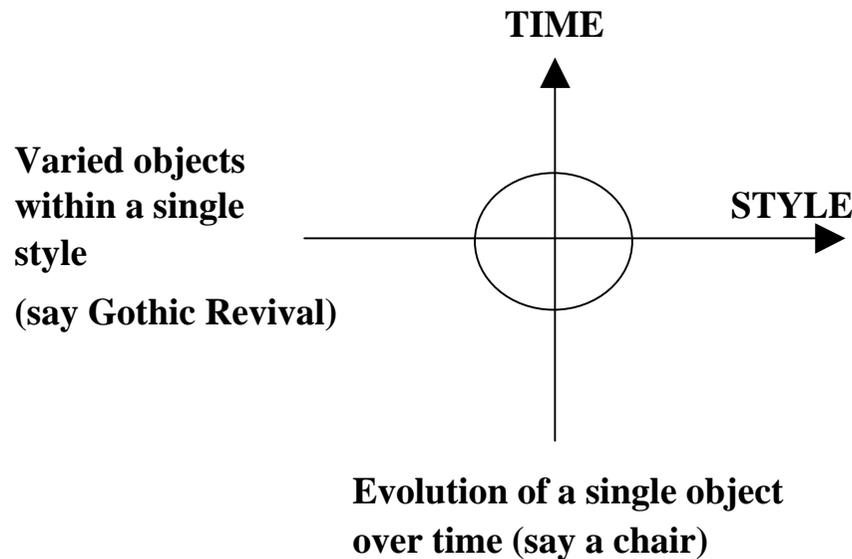
How best to Describe Objects in the Museum

- Everyone wants a **date**. This is fact and allows you to orientate yourself. This was when the object was made. Referring to the century is acceptable but not enough.
- The most evocative and popular description is by historical period usually named after royal houses (e.g. Georgian, Victorian). Even these can be obscure (Restoration, Hanoverian). The most direct route to evoking a sense of period is through costume. The paintings in the test were the easiest to guess because of costume.
- Virtually everyone asks for some historical orientation, sometimes even a time line. What other events, issues and politics were going on at the time?
- The style terms should be alongside, as reference for those who want them. Foreign visitors will need them as a primary descriptor.
- For many, the style terms, will be part of a learning process. They will be looking for clues, identification features to spot and confirmation that they've spotted the right ones and put a name to them.
Could this be done graphically, rather than by words?
- Nobody likes long labels in tiny writing. It is boring and detracts from the object.
"They might as well look it up in a book at home."

IMPLICATION: • THE BASIC DESCRIPTION IS BY CHRONOLOGICAL PERIOD AND DATE. THE STYLE TERM SHOULD BE ALONGSIDE, SUPPORTED BY A VISUAL INDICATION OF WHICH FEATURES INDICATE ITS STYLE.
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Giving Style Terms a Meaning for the Objects

- Only those who have chosen to study the Decorative Arts have sufficient context to see and assess a single disembodied object from a style perspective.
- Everyone else needs to see the object at a point on a spectrum of change. They need to experience the changing dynamics.
- This can be thought of as a crosswire.



STYLE CROSS WIRE

Our object is at the intersection of the crosswires

Defined by

- Being a member of a specific style set
- Being at a certain point in the particular evolution over time, of a particular type of object.

- The style subjects (Restoration Baroque, Chinoiserie, Gothic Revival) used in research, communicated poorly, because they encompassed too many dimensions.

IMPLICATION: • THESE STYLE LESSONS MAY NEED SMALL DEDICATED DISPLAYS - SAY STYLE CHECK POINTS - INTERSPERSED THROUGHOUT THE GALLERIES.

Verbatim Quotes · Style and Style Terms

"A name conjures up an image." Secondary Teacher

"You can associate the Stuart with a particular style, whereas you can't with a century. A century's a long time." Non-Visitor

"Rococo's in theatres and Churches - gilding and ornamental." Non-Visitor

"If we go somewhere where there are costumes and there's furniture in the background, it saves so much time. It's there in front of them." Secondary Teacher

"The trick is to give the keys rather than long descriptions. You have to stimulate." Specialist

"Gothic Revival won't mean anything unless you know what Gothic is." Specialist

"They could do a display of chairs through the whole period. A dozen chairs displayed in a row. It would tell you in twenty feet of gallery all about changes in form." Specialist

"We will be able to look at it and understand you can identify Gothic from Elizabethan." Ethnic Minority Visitor

Verbatim Quotes o Style and Style Terms cont'd....

"Early and late Baroque - too much technical stuff at the beginning will put people off. You need the key feature. This is what you're looking for." Independent Learner

"Restoration. I wouldn't know. Restored? It could be any of them." Family Visitor

"They should put information with them. What's the Revival about? Placed in date form. The century's a help - the king and queen, linked to historical events." Family Visitor

"I'd love to be able to use most of these titles. I did study Baroque and Rococo a couple of years ago." Student

"You should know roughly what period and how people lived, before getting into an exclusive language." Local Resident

"It would be fun to take one object from all the periods as you go through. You can see the evolution of things. You can relate to it easier." Local Resident

The Question of Interpretation

- This is the area where people come alive and express definite opinions. They get the feel of what they will experience.
- Frustratingly, black and white descriptions do not capture the delight of lifting a label or touching a fabric. So research may underestimate their appeal, whereas actual observation suggests they enhance visitors' experience.
- The purpose of interpretation is to bring the visitor closer to the object.
 - physically
 - rationally
 - emotionally
 -and to introduce a note of exploration and personal control for the visitor.
- Most visitors welcome calm interactives which help you see, handle and appreciate the object on the spot, without disturbing everyone else.
- Young people (children, teenagers and students) are the exception. The interactives are better than the exhibits for them. They will not take the Museum's word for things. They want to experiment; hands-on and noisy. If they have a screen, they expect to control where it goes. There should be a task/activity centre for them (soundproofed).
- Most adults want an easy life. Facts and insights easily available. Maybe a little tease, but with the answer close at hand. They don't want to be slowed down and they don't want to have to concentrate on one thing for too long.

IMPLICATION: • THERE ARE REACTIVE AND PROACTIVE INTERPRETIVE TECHNIQUES. THE GALLERY IS THE RIGHT PLACE FOR CALM, OBJECT-CENTRED INTERACTIVES. THERE SHOULD BE SEPARATE AREAS FOR THE LONGER, MORE DEMANDING TASKS.

Verbatim Quotes • Feelings about Interactives

"Is it more for children, making it tactile and that?" Foreign Visitor

"I find that patronising, touch fabric, touch a wooden block." Non Visitor BC1

"I think you just want to stimulate an interest and show how simple things were done. The video was really good. It showed you how it was being used and the fact that it had been influenced by different styles. But it didn't go into too great a detail." Foreign Visitor

"I think being able to touch fabrics would open up a whole new area of awareness." Secondary Teacher

"You want people to interact with the objects, but if they are interacting with all sorts of different gadgets, it would be really disastrous." Specialist

"I'm against anything which puts more objects in store. They should have little opening drawers underneath." Independent Learner

"The more senses, the more interesting it is." Student

"It won't hold young people's attention. You can't make old furniture interesting." Student

"Use all media to give information: listening, watching videos, music, reading." Local Resident

"There's a risk of dumbing down." "Let's draw a picture, everybody." Local Resident

"If the Museum is giving information about objects, you'll remember it. If they are giving information redundant from the objects, you won't. It's got to be linked to the actual item you're looking at." Local Resident

How Did People Rate the V&A's Interactives Ideas?

**FOCUSES YOU
ON THE OBJECT**

POPULAR

Video label
Feeling fabrics
Acoustic guides
Architectural historian
Lift the label
Quiz
Facsimile book
Musical Instruments
Spot the difference
Watching a working machine

REACTIVE

Gallery book
Touch a baroque balustrade
Touch a Morris printing block
Handle papier mache
Audio story

ANTICLIMAX

**IT'S NICE TO PICK IT UP
BUT SOMETHING MORE IS
NEEDED.**

HANDLING WITH A PURPOSE

Furnish a room on screen.

Design on magnetic board

19th century drawing exercise

Mystery Object

PROACTIVE

**TOO MUCH WORK TO
ACCOMPLISH IN THE
GALLERIES BUT MIGHT BE
FINE IN AN ACTIVITY CENTRE.**

**THE ASSUMPTION IS THAT IT
WILL BE FOR CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE.**

UNINSPIRING

IMPLICATION: • ALL THE POPULAR GALLERY TECHNIQUES ARE QUICK, SIMPLE, QUIET AND FOCUS YOU ONTO OBJECTS. THE REWARD IS AN INSIGHT - UNDERSTANDING A BIT MORE THAN YOU DID BEFORE.

Interpretation Techniques · The Specifics

The Washstand Video

- In principle, this is very well received, with a little executional refinement necessary.
- It is best thought of as a video label. This helps viewers get over the on-screen expectations of a fully produced mini documentary.
- It works because
 - It can focus visually on details, thus giving visitors an agenda for examining the object themselves - e.g. the mouse, the fish.
 - It can reveal how the object worked, was used, clever design details - eg; tipping the sink to empty it, the fish in water, the poor maid who emptied it.
 - It can indicate the designer's sources of influence and inspiration.

When the visitor goes back to look at the object, it is a fuller experience.

- The video was variously perceived as too long, too short, too complex, too simple, and probably balanced out about right.

Interpretation Techniques • The Specifics cont'd....

- Everyone was upset by the lack of sound. They come to support the absence of a voice commentary, but they would all like ambient sound, water running, hands soaping etc.!
- The worry from specialists, is that it will distract from the object. Once the visitor has watched the video, there will be no need to look at the object. The strong probability is that it will work the other way and imbue the object with meaning.
- Young people will expect some measure of personal control, on screen. Able to bring their up their own interests.
- A minority of specialists took against it as being "ludicrous"!

IMPLICATION: • THE VIDEO LABEL IS A POWERFUL AND SUITABLE TOOL FOR VIEWING OBJECTS WITH AN INFORMED EYE.

Interpretation Techniques • Handling

- Handling is a tricky tool. Everyone who wants to examine an object would rather **pick it up** and look at it. This is the normal procedure in everyday life (consider shopping), it is the museum which has imposed the constraint of not being able to touch.

"It's a natural instinct to want to touch something."

Non-Visitor BC1

- If there is an object to touch and handle this will enhance the display.
- If the touching and handling is singled out as an experience in its own right, the chances are it will be an anticlimax. Touch a Baroque balustrade? Big deal!
- If the handling focuses on some of the issues which contributed to the design, e.g. feel how solid this is, in comparison with that, then the exercise has a purpose and works better.
- A guided comparison of two objects by touch or sight is a popular task and yields instant insight.

IMPLICATION: • HANDLING IS GOOD, BUT MAY NEED TO OFFER MORE GUIDANCE ABOUT WHAT PEOPLE ARE FEELING FOR.
--

Interpretive Techniques · Audio Programmes

- People on the whole, welcomed audio input for themselves, but were unwilling to have other people's foisted upon them. Low" ambient noise signals life and is good, but loud competing sounds are disturbing.
- There was widespread support for acoustic guides, which people had encountered elsewhere (Bath, National Gallery etc.). These let you control your own agenda and left the atmosphere calm.
- Music brings to life a period room and was popular. However, people were keen to see it localised, only playing when needed and not intruding elsewhere.
- The suggested St George and the Dragon story tape was not popular. Did it illuminate the object or did it distract? Did it take too long to complete? Children might have taken a different view.

IMPLICATION: • AUDIO DOMINATION BY MACHINE, WITH COMPETING NOISES IS REJECTED, BUT A REAL PERSON TALKING REMAINS A GREAT DRAW. AN ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN ON A PERSONAL ACCOUSTIC GUIDE IS A POPULAR HALF WAY HOUSE.

Interpretive Techniques • Testing Yourself

- This is a positive approach, drawing on people's fondness for giving themselves little puzzles. It is helped along by people's genuine desire to come away with a little learning (about style).
- It works as long as it remains light and instant and as long as people do get answers. Did I get it right or wrong?
- Lift the label works in practice, but might seem patronising in the research context.
- The interactives quiz will probably work well on spotting styles, spotting fakes, spotting the difference between the style and its revival, and so forth.
- The level of the questions should aim to let the visitor get at least half-right or they will switch off, discouraged.

IMPLICATION: • USED WITH A LIGHT TOUCH, THIS CAN PROVIDE A FUN ROUTE TO LEARNING.

Interpretive Techniques • Proactive Tasks

- Mystery Object displays
 - Magnetic Board activities
 - 19th Century Drawing exercise
 - Furnish a room on screen.
-
- Tasks requiring proactive involvement on the part of the visitor i.e. where they are expected to think and create something, will not generally be popular with the adult visitor.
 - Why not?
 - Most won't want to break out of their browsing, feeding, reactive mode, in order to gird up and think.
 - Many won't want to devote the time to it. They are likely to fiddle and break off, without getting anything out of it.
 - Many won't have the background knowledge to tackle the task anyway and will be discouraged.

Interpretive Techniques • Proactive Tasks cont'd....

- The on-screen tasks provide more ongoing guidance and may prove more tempting.
- Children may be more ready to launch themselves into a creative activity, given dedicated surroundings. However, in order for them to gain from the activity, they will need time, as well as stimulus and guidance from adults. A single task, executed in the right spirit may be the main activity of the day.

IMPLICATION: • THE ROLE OF PROACTIVE TASKS, NEEDS TO BE CLOSELY QUESTIONED. HOW DEMANDING CAN THEY BE AND STILL ACHIEVE A USEFUL COMMUNICATION GOAL?

Using Text in the Gallery

- Text inspired no great enthusiasm in the gallery. For specialists, too much text detracted from the objects. For ordinary visitors, long texts slowed you down and were too difficult and boring to read.

"It has to be simple, not too in depth, because you're in a Museum and you have to move on. You want to be able to glance at something rather than standing in front of a long explanation, holding up the queue."

Secondary teacher

- There is, nevertheless, a need for orientation and description. This works better as part text, part image, part object, part screen. The bullet points used in research stimulus hit a positive note.
- People were very keen for galleries to offer information on two levels.
 - Quick, to the point, easy to assimilate the main story.
 - Follow up detail for people, particularly interested in a subject.

How to do this was less simple.

Using Text in the Gallery cont'd....

- The gallery book, (example: Chinoiserie) should have been the right compromise, but few people could be bothered to examine it. they were more likely to flick through without concentrating. It seemed unremarkable - a bit dull.

"If your attention's on the book, it's usually distracting you from the exhibit."

Foreign Visitor

- Facsimile books on the other hand, are treated as objects from the past, which we are allowed to handle and were popular. They were not conveyors of gallery information.

IMPLICATION: • TEXT NEEDS TO BE FREQUENT, BRIEF AND DISCIPLINED. LONG CHUNKS OF TEXT ARE BEST LEAVENED WITH OTHER INPUTS WHERE THERE IS A GENERAL PICTURE TO BE CREATED.

Verbatim Quotes Expressing the Visitor's Needs

"It should be educational. You want to go home with knowledge."

Ethnic Minority Visitor

"It does make it more a place for people as opposed to a place for things. I like the idea that instead of people just walking round, you're going to stop them by bringing information to them with videos and different activities. It's making me more interested, making it easier."

Ethnic Minority Visitor

"I was hoping for this sort of thing. It's on the right lines."

Independent Learner

"Don't trivialise it, you could alienate the specialist."

Independent Learner

"Don't take it above the common person's head."

Independent Learner

"They could have a trail - a start and finish. And a little place of orientation to each thing. Pick one person for that time and acclimatise you to that period. You can relate to it more."

"Student

"They've got to actually make it interactive [for 5-7-year-olds]. Have separate locations for children to go and look or try on clothes. In a room where they're not spoiling anything else."

"Primary Teacher

"Colour coding is a very good idea, so if you want to do twenty minutes, you can."

Local Resident

"When you enter the galleries, you want a large potted version, that takes forty-five seconds to read, so you gather all this information before looking at individual artefacts."

Local Resident

"You don't want to come out, feeling you've just come out of the most awful lecture. It's got to be enjoyable."

Local Resident

Directions for Gallery Development (I)

A stylised gallery plan combining the features endorsed by visitors

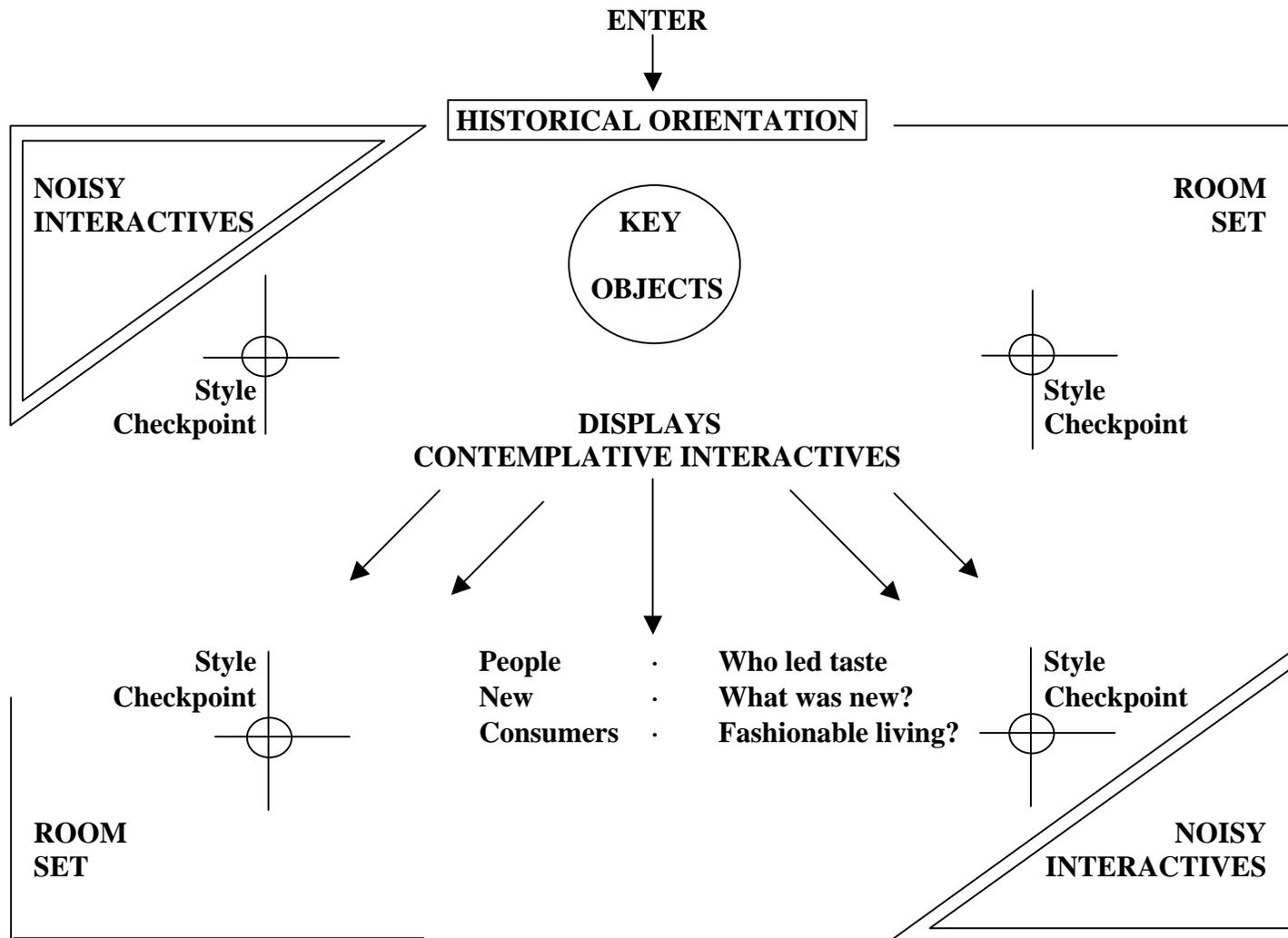


Chart 82

Directions for Gallery Development II

- Give people orientation and focus as they enter each new area.
 - Historical orientation
 - Key objects
 - Dates, events, costumes, kings
 - What are the iconic objects which sum up the style of the period?
- Then allow them to wander and immerse themselves in the displays
 - Objects and people in context
 - Who led taste?
 - What was new?
 - Fashionable Living
 - Contemplative interactives which reveal the objects.
 - Things to touch and watch.
- Construct frequent room sets and corners. These are a great treat, the nearest people can get to re-entering the past. They are the physical evocation of fashionable living.

Directions for Gallery Development II cont'd....

- Construct style checkpoints. People want to learn something tangible about style. They are ready to punctuate passive wandering with a little focusing and learning. Style pavilions?
- Develop dedicated sound-proofed areas to house noisy interactives. These will give a bolt hole for young people without disturbing other visitors.
- Be sure to extend the range to cover aspects of the poor as well as rich, the craftsman as well as the commissioner.

Appendix

METHODOLOGY

Definition of Target audiences

Recruitment Questionnaire

Discussion Guide

Stimulus Material

Style

What was new?

Who led taste?

Fashionable living

Style and chronological terms

Definition of Target Audiences

All visitors should have visited the V&A at some time. At least half should have visited in the past three years (and more recently if possible).

Group 1

- **Independent learners**

18 plus. Visiting alone or with another adult (no children). No professional reasons for visiting.

Personal enrichment

Evening class(not examination course)

Curiosity and doing something about it.

Not visiting as part of a formal educational group (i.e. everyone except FE/HE and school groups).

Sample achieved • 8 women

Including 3 V&A Friends, 1 mature student, 1 headmistress.
2 out of town mums.

Group 2

- **Foreign Visitors**

All visitors residing overseas. All to speak English comfortably and fluently.

At least half to reside in North America because half the V&A's foreign visitors are from North America.

Sample achieved • 5 American, 3 Australian: 5 women, 3 men.

Including lawyers, physician, teacher, painter, engineer, retired textile lecturer.

Definition of Target Audiences cont'd....

Group 3

- **Further/Higher education groups 18-25**
All visitors arriving at the V&A as part of an art college, some other type of college, university or an adult education group.

Sample achieved · 4 women, 4 men.

Including fashion, graphic designer, theatre, photography, sociology.

Group 4

- **Specialists**
Any age
Amateur or professional
Have a professional or personal specialism in an area, represented in the V&A collections.
e.g. Lecturers, dealers, collectors, artists, crafts people, set designers.

Sample achieved · 4 women, 3 men

Including textiles, archaeology, design, photography, English literature, PhD 18th Century.

Definition of Target Audiences cont'd....

Group 5

- **Local Residents**
All visitors residing within walking distance of the V&A.

Sample achieved • 6 women, 3 men

Group 6a

- **Teachers of School Children 11-18**
All to have brought a school group to the V&A in the past three years.

Sample achieved • 4 women, 1 man
GCSE, A-level, FE.

Group 6b

- **Teachers of primary school children 5-11**

Sample achieved • 3 women.

Group 7

- **Families**
All visitors visiting the V&A with other members of their family, including at least one child under 12 in the past three years.

Sample achieved • 5 women, 3 men.
Richmond, Sheen, Putney.

Definition of Target Audiences cont'd...

Group 8

- **Ethnic minority groups**
All to be living permanently in the UK.
Range of cultures including:

Afro Caribbean	Chinese	Indian
Black African	South Asian	Pakistani
Turkish		

All to speak English fluently.

Sample achieved: 7 respondents.
Including Chinese, Indian, Afghani, Afro Caribbean.

Definition of Target Audiences cont'd....

- Groups 9 & 10**
- **Non visitors**
None to have visited the V&A in the past 15 years.
Non-rejecters of the V&A. Do not include the V&A amongst places they would never visit.
Three out of eight never to have visited the V&A.
At least three out of eight to have children 5-16.

 - 9** • All to have visited a museum or heritage site. Social classes BC1.
Sample achieved • 4 men, 4 women
Including 3 parents of young children, 2 retired men,
New graduate, biological sciences, Art technician, Policeman

 - 10** • All to enjoy decorating, making, purchasing objects for their houses. Social classes C 1 C2D.

Sample achieved • 4 men, 3 women
Including customer relations, works engineer, home help, care assistant, financial manager, computer manager.

Recruitment Questionnaire

Chart 91

Job No. 750/SF

Job Title: British Galleries

Date of Group: _____

Time of Group _____

Q1. We are carrying out a Market Research Survey for the Victoria & Albert Museum. Do you work or are you involved in any of the following occupations?

<u>READ OUT AND CODE BELOW.</u>	YES	NO
ADVERTISING	1	1
MARKET RESEARCH	2	2
PUBLIC RELATIONS	3	3
JOURNALISM	4	4
MUSEUMS OR GALLERIES PROFESSIONALS	5	5

IF YES TO ANY OF ABOVE CLOSE INTERVIEW.

Q2 Have you ever attended a Market Research Discussion?

Yes Go to Q2a

No Go to Q3

Q2a. How long ago did you attend a Market Research Group Discussion?

Within last 6 months	1	Close interview.
6 - 12 months ago	2	Ask Q2b (No more than 2 respondents)
1 year to 2 years ago	3	Ask Q2b
2 years to 3 years ago	4	Ask Q2b
More than 3 years ago	5	Ask Q2b

Q2b What was the discussion about?

IF ON A SIMILAR SUBJECT TO THIS. CLOSE INTERVIEW.

ASK GROUPS I TO 8 ONLY - VISITORS.

Q3a Have you ever visited the Victoria & Albert Museum?

Yes 1 Go to Q3b

No 2 Close

Q3b And have you visited the Victoria & Albert Museum within the past 3 years?

Yes 1

No 2 Close

ALL RESPONDENTS MUST HAVE VISITED IN THE PAST 3 YEARS.

ASK GROUPS 9 AND 10 ONLY. NON-VISITORS.

Q4a Which of the following have you visited in the past 15 years?

Q4b Which have never visited?

Q4c Which would you never visit?

	Q4a	Q4b	Q4c
Natural History Museum	1	1	1
Heritage Centres	2	2	2
National Trust Properties	3	3	3
Victoria & Albert Museum	4	4	4
British Museum	5	5	5
Science Museum	6	6	6
Other Museums	7	7	7

NO RESPONDENTS TO CODE 4 AT Q4a (VISITED V & A IN PAST 15 YEARS).

NO RESPONDENTS TO CODE 4 AT Q4C (REJECTORS).

WITHIN EACH GROUP 3 RESPONDENTS MUST 4 AT Q4B (NEVER HAVE VISITED THE V & A).

WITHIN GROUP 9 RESPONDENTS MUST CODE OTHER MUSEUMS OR HERITAGE SITES.

ASK GROUPS 9 & 10 ONLY.

Q5 Do you have children of school age? (5 - 16 years)

Yes 1

No 2

AT LEAST 3 RESPONDENTS IN EACH GROUP TO HAVE CHILDREN AT SCHOOL.

ASK GROUP 10 ONLY

Q6 Which of the following activities do you enjoy?

Decorating your home. 1

Buying decorative objects for your home. 2

Making decorative objects for your home. 3

None of these activities. 4

NO RESPONDENTS TO CODE 4 AT 06.

SOCIAL CLASSIFICATION

Male/Female
(Delete as appropriate)

Married/Single/Cohabiting

Occupation of Chief Wage Earner _____

Qualifications _____
(Probe fully)

Social Classification _____ Age _____

Name of Respondent _____

Address _____

Telephone No. Home _____ Work _____

Interviewers signature _____

Date _____



V&A

Discussion Guide

5.3.2. FEEDBACK ABOUT PEOPLE'S REACTION TO AND EXPECTATIONS OF, THE V&A AND MUSEUMS IN GENERAL.

- **What do people expect to find at the V&A? (This will be particularly important for non-visitors).**
- **What puts people off visiting museums? (This will be particularly important for non visitors).**
- **What puts people off visiting the V&A? (This will be particularly important for non-visitors).**

What impression do you have of the V&A?

Explore briefly:

Welcoming	Specialist
Old fashioned	Exquisite
Stuffy	etc. etc.

What do you expect to find in there?

What sorts of people would you expect to find in there?

Many people are ambivalent about museums. How do you feel about the V&A? On the one hand.....on the other hand.....

What features allow people to feel comfortable and welcome in a museum:

Physically
Intellectually
Emotionally

What features act as barriers and put people off?

What potential barriers should the V&A be particularly conscious of when they design the new British Galleries: Briefly...

- Thinking of your brief impression of the current British Galleries.
- Thanking of any other successful gallery development you are aware of.

5.3.3. THE GALLERY CONTENT

- **How do people perceive the historical periods covered by the galleries? What spring immediately to mind in connection with Tudor, Hanoverian, Victorian etc.**
- **What do people think of the existing galleries?**
- **What would they expect to see in the new galleries?**
- **What do they hope to see in the new galleries?**
- **Do they have particular interests that they would like addressed?**
- **What will help people feel intellectually and emotionally comfortable in the new galleries?**

How well do you feel you know the existing British Galleries (Tudor, Georgian, Regency, Victorian)? What is your overwhelming impression? What objects spring to mind?

What comes to mind when you think of the Tudor period overall? Styles, materials, objects, people, politics, issues. What words sum it up? Where are your blanks? What would you love to know more about? Which aspects do you really enjoy? Which do you have a special interest in?

What comes to mind when you think of the Georgian and Regency periods?

etc. etc.

What comes to mind when you think of the Victorian period?

etc. etc.

5.3.4. TERMINOLOGY

- **How well do people understand style terms like 'Rococo'?**
- **How would they like us to explain style terms?**
- **What chronological terms do people find easiest? For example, does 'Victorian' or 'nineteenth-century' make more sense?**

There is a debate about how widespread is the use of style terms. Which ones are obvious and which are more elusive?

Here is a quiz (show quiz boards with untitled pictures). Ask respondents to match the labels with the pictures.

Listen to the level of debate as they discuss which one goes where. How confident are they, what features do they pick out to guide them? Listen for any spontaneous use of chronological terms.

What are the easy pointers to spotting which style is which? How do revivals fit in? How do you think the museum should describe its objects and styles?

For the lay person?

For the specialist?

5.3.5. THE GALLERY THEMES: SUBJECT AND INTERPRETATION)

- **Are style. What was new? Who led taste? and Fashionable living understood?**

The museum plans to interpret the three periods more vividly through the following themes:

Style

What was new?

Who led taste?

Fashionable living

This is what each of the themes is setting out to illuminate (show theme definition boards and leave them on display).

How does this strike you? Where would your attention naturally go? How would you want to navigate round these four areas?

Take the Victorians for example. What questions might you be curious about under each of these headings: (Board - show the complete list of Victorian topics). This is the spread of topics planned for the Victorians. What strikes you?

How might this framework lead you on from the sort of thing which the V&A already does:

More depth?

More insight?

More about people?

More history? More real world?

or maybe

More irrelevancies?

Forced repetitions?

Squeezing a subject into a framework which it doesn't really fit?

How would this way of interpreting fit with your needs from the British Galleries?
What would make your individual task easier, more productive? What would just get in the way and make life more difficult?

How well does the V&A seem to understand you in taking this new approach? What are the details which let you judge this? Would the overall be more to attract people in or to put them off? What new kinds of visitor might be drawn in?

The museum is trying to work out which titles draw people most quickly into the themes and get them interested. What do you think?

Present alternatives:

- What Was New? **What Was New? alternative titles**
Innovation New ideas and products
- Style **'Style' alternative titles**
What was the look?
What did it look like?
What was the style?
The way things looked
How did it look?
- Fashionable Living **'Fashionable Living' alternative titles**
What did people buy?
What did people want?
What was the latest fashion?
What was in?
The refinement of life
- Who Led Taste? **'Who Led Taste?' alternative titles**
Trend setters
Who set the style?
Who set the trends?
Who set the fashion?

What carries the essence of the idea?

Let's look at what this might mean in practice.

THE VICTORIANS

The display would offer a full view of what was going on in a particular period. This is how it would work for the Victorians. Show all four Victorian boards together:

Gothic Revival
Expanding wardrobe

William Morris
Papier Mache

and talk about them individually in the order in which they're interested.

For each individual board ask:

- What is your impression of this period?
- How do you react to these objects?
- What do you learn about the style of the period from what they've selected, and the pointers they've given?
- What stage in history have we reached? What was the historical context?

If you were wandering around this part of the gallery, what would you be thinking and feeling? What would you want to know more about? What would the atmosphere be? What would the angel in you say? What would the devil be saying?

If you could ask one serious question and one stupid question what would you ask? If you were allowed to get your hands on anything here what would you want to do with it? If you could do anything and then go back in time and undo it, what would you do?

What impression do you have of the personalities involved? For example:

The maker
The user
The designer
The subsequent owner

What kind of world did they inhabit? How were things made? How were things used?

How has the V&A moved on by taking this approach? How well does it understand what its visitors feel and want.

What difficulties can you imagine in practice? How could you bring it all to life? (Mention the interpretation techniques being considered for that gallery).

e.g. Touching the objects Gothic washstand video
Finding how much it cost

Show the Things to Do in the gallery board. These are some of the ideas for gallery activities, what kind of things might enhance this display?

STYLE

This is how it might work for some style examples (show all three style boards).

Go through as before in the order they choose, asking them about gallery ideas at the end.

Show the Chinoiserie board and ask the same questions.

Show the Gothic Revival and ask the same questions.

Show Style overview board.

You would be able to take a longitudinal look at the main style themes across the centuries - what do you think?

Finally, ask what impression do you have of the V&A's new approach?

More interesting or more tedious?
More attuned to visitors or interested in itself?
More personal, less personal?
More relevant, less relevant?

Do the proposed subjects and interpretation make people feel they would like to visit the new galleries? How helpful are the themes in revealing the spirit and subject matter.

If you were directing the rejuvenation of the British Galleries, how much of the approach you've seen today would you hang onto and what would you drop? What advice do you have for the V&A on how to make it interesting and accessible to visitors.

Stimulus Material

Concept Boards

Style & Chronological Icons (plus style & chronological terms) played as a quiz

Themes

Words and Images • **Victorian**

Expanding Wardrobe
William Morris

Papier Mâché
Gothic Revival

• **Style**

Restoration Baroque
Chinoiserie

Overview

Theme definitions • **Style**

Who led taste?

What was new?
Fashionable Living

Alternative theme names

Interpretation techniques

Video

- Burges Washstand

Gallery Book

- Chinoiserie

Bubble Cartoons

- Before and after record of participants' responses.

Style

- **The prevailing appearance of objects.**
- **Changes in form.**
- **Changes in ornament.**
- **Overview of period styles.**

What was New?

- **New types of objects.**
- **How design ideas were transmitted and taught.**
- **Technological, product and design innovation.**

Who Led Taste?

- **Legislators of taste.**
- **How different groups came to decide what was beautiful or desirable.**
- **Court, Church, Aristocracy, Marketplace, Gentry, Merchants, Artists, Designers, Crafts people.**

Fashionable Living

- **How changing patterns of living led to the development of objects for specific uses.**
- **Refining of public and private life.**
- **New consumption patterns.**

STYLE TERMS

Classicism	Exotic	Gothic Revival
Renaissance	Palladianism	French Revival
Jacobean	Rococo	Renaissance Revival
Baroque	Chinoiserie	Classical Revival
Early Baroque	Neo-Classicism	Aestheticism
Restoration Baroque	Regency Classicism	Arts and Crafts
Late Baroque	Rococo Revival	Scottish School
Later Stuart Baroque	Gothic	

CHRONOLOGICAL TERMS

Tudor	Regency
Elizabethan	Victorian
Stuart	16th Century
Restoration	17th Century
Georgian	18th Century
Hanoverian	19th Century