

SOCIAL MIRROR GALLERY

INTERIM REPORT OF EVALUATION FINDINGS

February 1, 2019



CMOA



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

In 2005, the Columbus Museum of Art acquired the Philip and Suzanne Schiller Collection of American Social Commentary Art, which spans the years 1930 to 1970. The works vividly address complex social issues such as race, economics and war as portrayed by artists active in the United States from the Great Depression to the early decades of the Cold War. Many of the artists viewed their works as a means to stimulate change and promote progress. In 2017, the Museum installed some of these works in its new Social Mirror gallery. The first installment focused on themes of economic hardship, war, women, and race. As a way to stimulate civic dialogue among visitors, a "Join the Conversation Station" was installed in the gallery. This connector prompts visitors to reflect and respond to different prompts that are inspired by the artworks and topics being explored in the gallery.

EVALUATION GOALS

The primary goals of this study were to:

- 1 Understand what visitors are doing in the gallery. Which artworks are they most drawn to? Are they engaging with the Connector?**
- 2 Explore how visitors perceive the gallery. How do they feel in the space? Do they feel like the topics are relevant to them?**
- 3 Understand how visitors are impacted by their experience. Does the gallery encourage reflection and dialogue? Does it influence empathy and compassion?**

METHODOLOGY & SAMPLE

Audience Focus trained CMA staff to collect data in the Social Mirror gallery.. Between summer of 2018 and January 2019, CMA staff conducted 34 observations and 22 in-depth interviews with adult visitors. Half of the visitors (50%) explored the gallery on their own, while 35% were in an all-adult group and 15% were in groups that included children. Just over two-thirds of visitors (70%) were age 40 or older, while the remaining 30% were 39 or younger.

ENGAGEMENT

Data collectors observed visitors' behaviors in the Social Mirror gallery, noting overall time spent in the gallery, entry and exit points, number of artworks viewed, use of the Join the Conversation station, and physical or verbal indicators of empathy.

Visitors spent an average of 7 minutes in the Social Mirror gallery, with a minimum of 1 minute and a maximum of 15 minutes.



60% of visitors entered the gallery through E1, with another 30% entering through E3, and 10% through E2.

44% exited through E3, with 29% exiting through E1, and 27% exiting through E2.

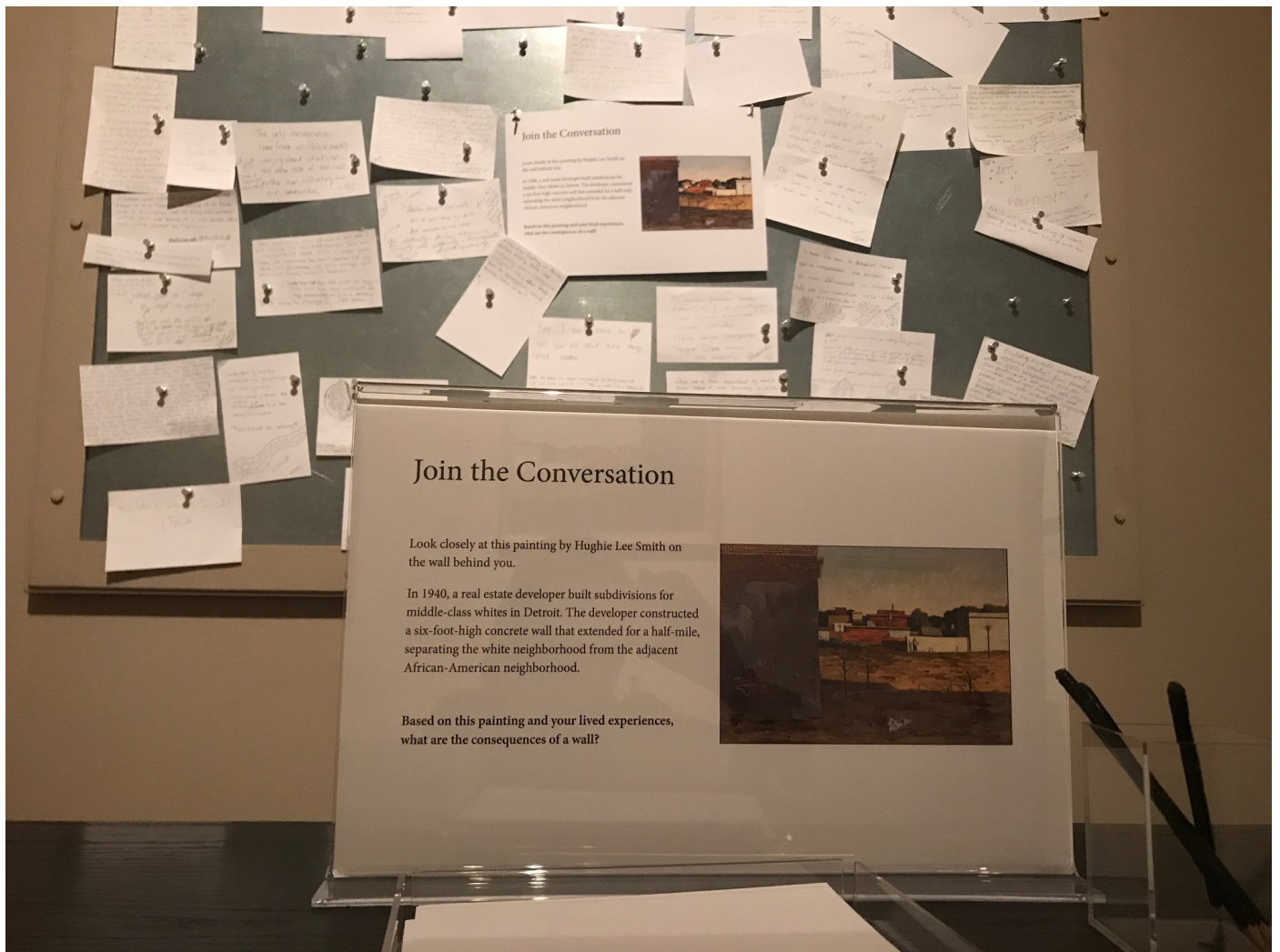
10 Visitors viewed an average of 10 of the 21 available artworks (roughly 50%). At the minimum, a visitor viewed only 2 artworks, and at the maximum, one visitor viewed 21.



ENGAGEMENT

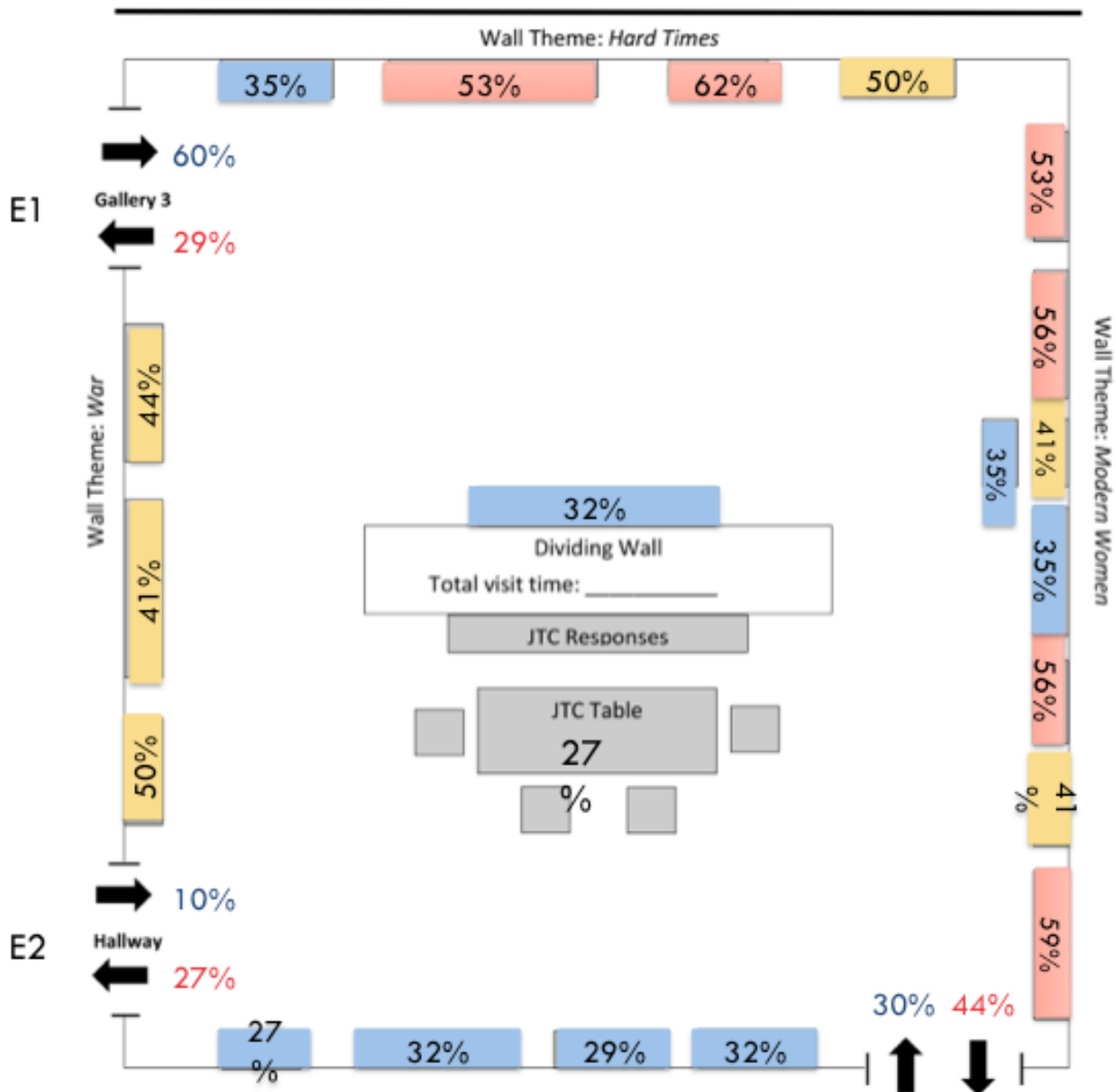
27%

of visitors stopped at the Join the Conversation Station. Of those 66% read the provocation, 56% read other visitors' responses, 44% wrote a response of their own, and 22% engaged in conversation with others in their group regarding the prompt.



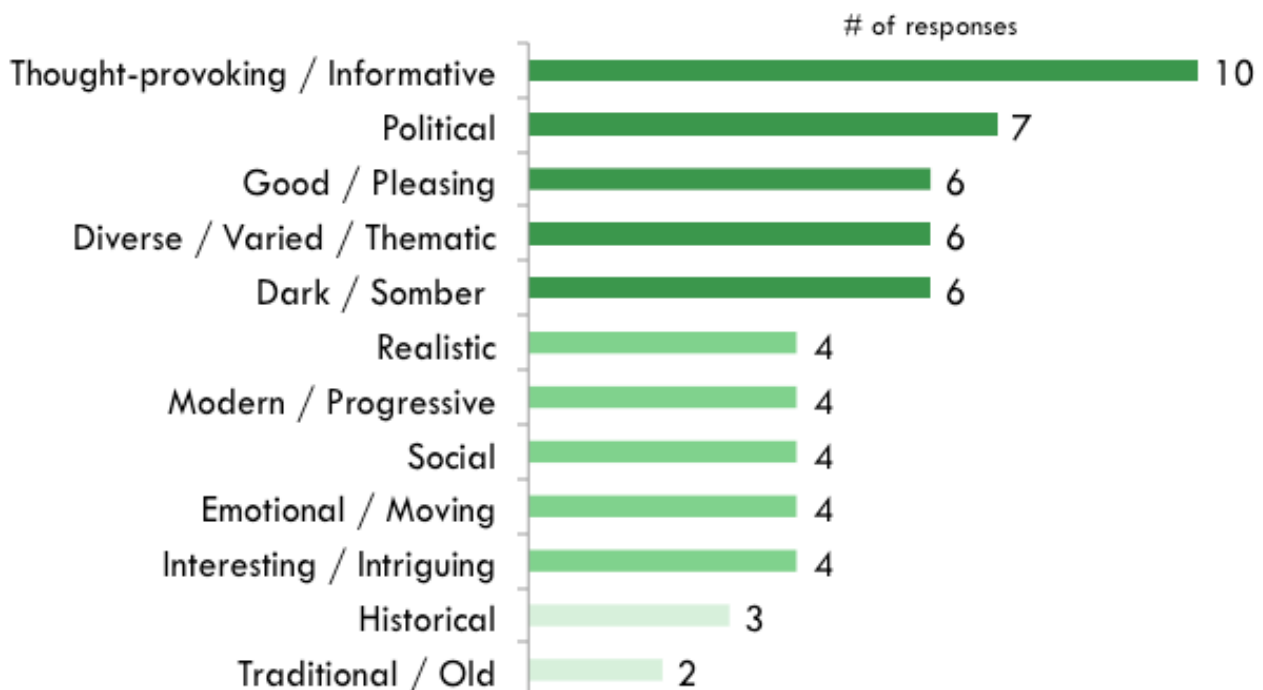
ENGAGEMENT

The heat map below shows the percentage of visitors who stopped at each artwork. The artworks with the greatest number of stops included those along the walls that focused on "Hard Times," and "Modern Women" (e.g. those in positions A2, A3, A5, A6, A10, and A12). The artworks with the fewest amount of stops included those along the wall that focused on race and the Join the Conversation station. Around half of visitors viewed the artworks focused on the theme of "war." As many visitors entered through E1 and exited through E3, that might explain why artworks focused on race had fewer viewings than the other themes.



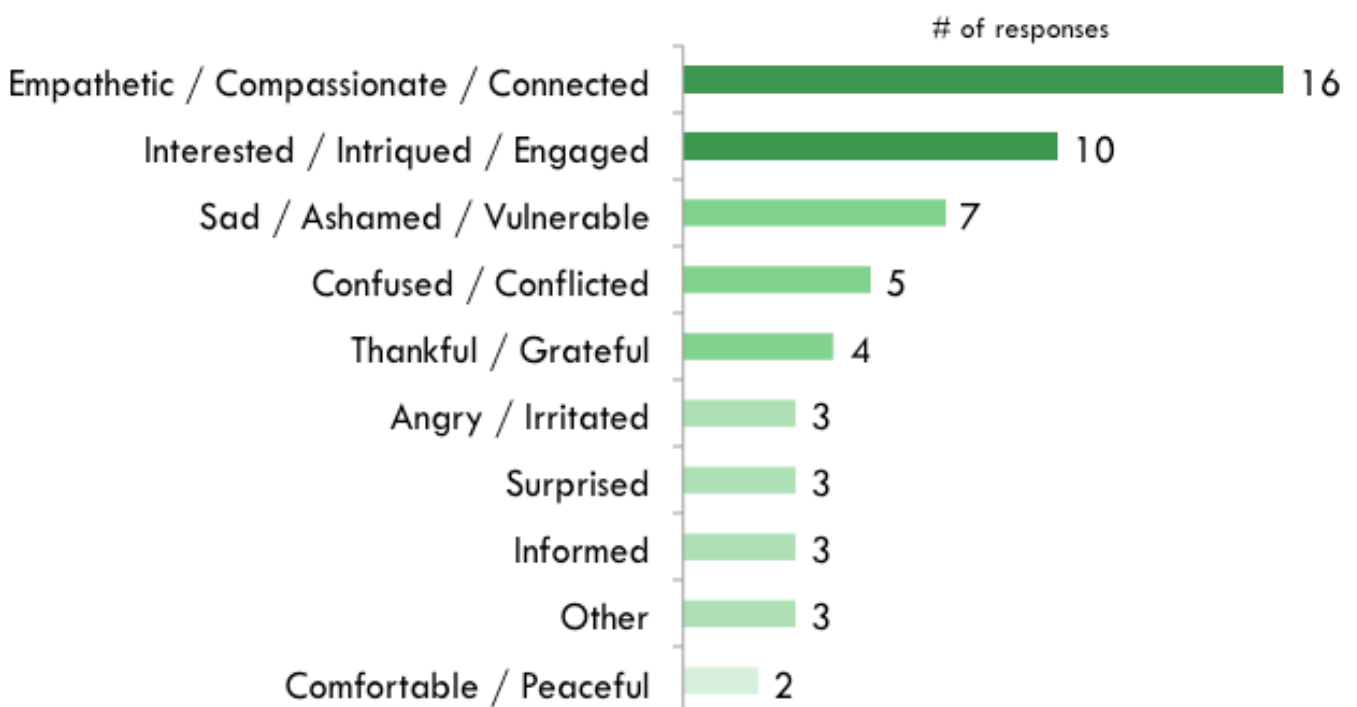
PERCEPTIONS

Visitors were asked to describe the Social Mirror Gallery using three words. Responses were categorized into 12 themes. The most commonly mentioned themes were "thought-provoking and informative" and "political."



EMOTIONS

Visitors were asked to describe how they felt in the Social Mirror Gallery using three words. Responses were coded into 10 categories. The feelings most commonly described by visitors included compassion, empathy, interest, and sadness.



RELEVANCE



of visitors said the topics presented in the Social Mirror gallery are "very relevant" to their lives right now. Another 42% said the topics were "somewhat" or "slightly" relevant to their lives. Only two people (10%) said the topics were "not at all relevant."

How is it relevant to your life?

Hard times, poverty, wealth disparity

The theme of hard times is relevant to my life currently.

It's relevant in a way of looking at my own life, especially with my privilege and evaluating how I can do better.

It talks about poverty and financial hardship and about a sense of belonging

Humanity / Human Condition

Being able to see what it is to be a human being, seeing a whole variety of human lives.

There are themes that apply to humanity and they apply to everyone.

Show how other people feel, like at (picture A12), the kid growing up unhealthy. The expression on the mother's face... It all makes me think of people facing the situation

Current events

It's relevant to what I'm seeing on the news or what I'm reading - I'm uncomfortable with the feeling.

So much is going on at this time that history is bound to repeat itself. There are different versions of the issues, but they're still relevant to society.

War / Violence

I have kids, so I feel more of a sensitivity to inequality and violence. It's so relevant, especially right now, to people and the uncertainty.

I guess it is somewhat relevant thought because it's so current. We had the war to end all wars which led to more wars. Beautiful young people are still being sent to be shot and we still have not learned.

Not relevant

I am past worrying where my next nickel came from.

None. It seems very ethnic, and I'm looking for Caucasian representation in this gallery. It seems as if there is an agenda being segmented.

INFLUENCE ON THINKING



43%

of visitors said their experience in the Social Mirror gallery influenced their thinking. Another 29% said it did "somewhat," while the remaining 29% said it did not influence their thinking.

How did it influence your thinking?

Connection to historical events

Looking at hard times, it made me think about how relevant it is today, and how it all can happen again.

Shows a lot of different situations of people of the time period. It's like a looking glass to people's lives; and it's different from my time period, parts I can relate to on lots of levels.

Confirms / reinforces beliefs

It reinforced my way of thinking of what is going on currently - the destruction, war, fear, and poverty.

It confirms what you think.

Learned something new about topics

The war section of the gallery made me a lot more aware of international war and what people are going through.

It made me think of social issues that I hadn't thought about before today.

Thought about others in relation to myself

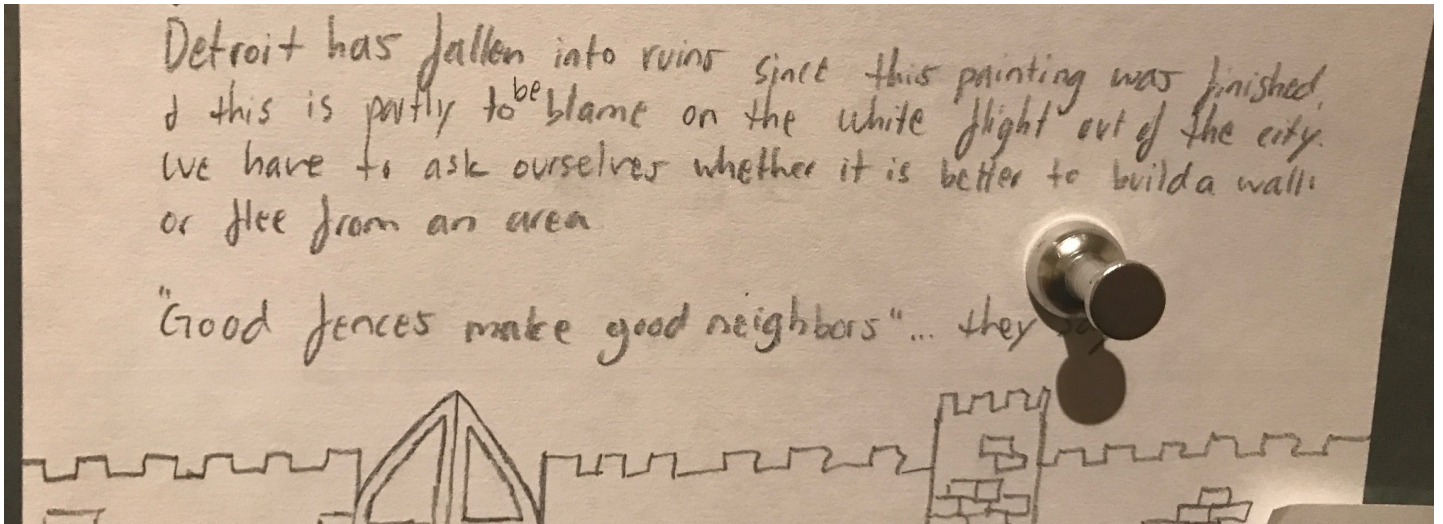
Other people worked just as hard as you but do not have the same privilege.

Don't take for granted your life, your children have food, clean water

RELEVANCE OF JTC

71%

of visitors think the Join the Conversation station is an effective way of stimulating civic dialogue around sensitive issues. Another 21% said they were "unsure" whether it is effective, and only 1 person (7%) thought it wasn't an effective way to stimulate dialogue.



What makes it an effective strategy?

Platform for dialogue among diverse people

I find that people are disconnected from each other and are finding a way to interact together.

Has people consider different sides.

It gives people a focal point and a context by answering questions and being narrowly focused - which leads to constructive conversation.

Gives people a voice

It's the ability for someone to give voice to a hot topic.

it helps people with how they're feeling.

Gives an outlet for people to have a voice, given the platform.

It gives everyone a chance to speak up and feel comfortable.

Art is personal

Art is personal, so in an age of social media, this feels much permanent in a healthier setting.

It's a unique question for each person, and it has to be on a personal level.

Art is a great way to talk about anything

SOCIAL ISSUES AT CMA



of visitors believe CMA should be a place where people can come together to have dialogue around current issues facing our society.

Why should CMA be a place for dialogue around social issues?

Art reflects society

Art is always talking about society. Artists are great interpreters of society. Absolutely – that's been the purpose of art all along – to encourage a dialogue and think about it more.

People don't know how to voice/know what to say. A picture is worth a thousand words, and CMA can be a place for anything that provokes a conversation. What a better way to look at our society than art? It's social and political, which gives a segue to what's going on in our community and beyond. It's able to help people talk about their emotions without any repercussions

Museums are learning institutions and can enlighten people

Absolutely, people should learn, especially in Columbus where people are arguing about if the coach is going to get hired or not is good to know there are other places where these things can be discussed.

It is a place for people to come and learn without having the same issues. Someone may be interested in having those discussions.

It (CMA) is an important part of the community with its history in Columbus. I find that the programing around current issues could help people understand what's going on today.

It's a common place where everyone can share opinions and still enjoy the art.

Why not? Let's try it. We need it!

It's a good way to discuss current issues. It's not an avenue to grand social change, but it gives people a chance to discuss and listen to each other. Let's try it here. If it could stimulate dialogue and awareness, that would be terrific.

As an educator, society has an immense hunger for dialogue and discussion. Being able to make connections with questions and dialogue is very helpful. It's an art museum where you need to be talking about current issues surrounding us – from the meaning and story from the artist. This is relevant to the time and growing into something. We need to be able to talk, learn and evaluate.

* One person who hesitated to say whether CMA should be a place for civic dialogue said s/he would like it so long as it doesn't veer into political bias.

INTENDED IMPACTS

Visitors rated 5 of the 7 intended impacts very highly. Most visitors (83%) said they felt compassion for others while in the Social Mirror gallery, while 78% said they tried to imagine how other people think or feel. 72% said they tried to put themselves into others shoes, were moved emotionally by what they saw, and considered viewpoints different from their own. Visitors were less likely to agree that the gallery influenced them to think about an issue in a new way, and/or become more open-minded.

