



The Cultural Museum 2.0

Engaging Diverse Audiences in America



A White Paper

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Prepared by the
Japanese American National Museum

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JAPANESE AMERICAN NATIONAL MUSEUM

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Introduction

Akemi Kikumura Yano, PhD

President and Chief Executive Officer
Japanese American National Museum

The Japanese American National Museum explores how the experiences of an American ethnic group enrich and contribute to the socioeconomic, cultural, and political traditions that define our democracy and even the very idea of what it means to be an American. Our hope is that, in this spirit, our stories are seen as a reflection of everyone's stories.

While exploring the intersections between art, history, culture, and community is not new to the Museum, the characteristics and defining qualities of America's ethnic groups are constantly changing—and are always subject to new interpretation.

Using the arts to interpret issues surrounding culture, ethnicity, and identity has long been our passion, a special niche to which we strive to bring innovation, creativity, and collaboration. As we near the twenty-fifth anniversary of our incorporation as an institution, however, it is clear that the Museum serves a very different world today, a world transformed by dramatic shifts in demographics, the impact of globalization, and stunning advances in technology.

Thanks to a generous grant from The James Irvine Foundation's Arts Innovation Fund (AIF), the Museum has had an opportunity to holistically reassess itself and its relationship with its audiences.

We have gained valuable data and insights into prevailing public attitudes, allowing us to learn what more diverse audiences find relevant in our mission and programming.

Such information has helped the Museum embrace changes both highly visible—such as the installation of exhibitions by *Giant Robot* co-editor Eric Nakamura, musician Mike Shinoda of the band Linkin Park, and photographer Kip Fulbeck—as well as shifts nearly invisible to the public in areas such as strategic planning and organizational restructuring.

Equally as important, these changes have allowed us to foster a new dialogue about one of the fastest-growing audience sectors: people who are multiethnic/multiracial. This dialogue also encompasses broader changes in the way Americans see themselves and others, access or exchange information, and communicate or identify with one another, allowing us to consider how such changes impact the ability of culturally specific museums and arts organizations to sustain themselves.

As both our museum and the arts field prepare to begin a new era, we hope that you will benefit from this report, which shares the experiences and initial findings from our three-year Arts Innovation Fund project. We sincerely invite you to write to us with your feedback and to share your own perspectives.

Executive Summary

How does a culturally specific arts organization adapt to changing demographics in order to more effectively engage and serve contemporary audiences that are increasingly multiethnic?

Witnessing dramatic shifts in its audience demographics over the past 25 years, the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) has grappled with this question. One out of every three Japanese Americans is now multiracial, and increasingly audiences are no longer identifying themselves simply by ethnic or racial categories as they had in the past.

At a time when self-identity is playing a significant role not only in how people see themselves but also in how they view their relationship with museums and cultural centers, there are no simple solutions for how organizations—regardless of institution size, focus, budget, or geographic location—can ensure the relevancy of their programming and their long-term sustainability.

In order to recalibrate itself to better serve more diverse audiences, JANM launched the *Re-visioning + Engaging Multiethnic Audiences in America* project, supported through a major grant from The James Irvine Foundation. This project has impacted all levels of the Museum, bringing about widespread modifications to the institution's organizational structure, economic logic, strategic planning, and programmatic models.

Specifically, the project:

- Developed new prototypes for culturally/ethnically sensitive survey tools, working in collaboration with an audience research firm specializing in the nonprofit sector;
- Consulted other ethnic/cultural institutions from across the nation;
- Conducted extensive audience research over a three-year period;
- Tested a strategic selection of programming; and
- Used research findings to inform decision-making about the future direction of the institution.

These activities were driven by a set of core essential questions:

- To what extent is the visitor experience influenced by cultural/ethnic self-identification?
- What is the relevance of the Museum to younger, multiracial audiences?
- How can the Museum develop programming to engage and sustain these audiences?
- How can the Museum engage new audiences while sustaining its current constituency?
- What impact does engaging these audiences have on the ability for the Museum to sustain itself in the future?

Some key findings and observations during this project included:

- Multiracial audience members tend to be younger. Younger audiences as a whole want to see their interests, experiences, and perspectives represented in the programming being presented.
- Art exhibitions tend to be more



Photo by Gary Ono

◀ Visitors examine the work of street/graffiti artist David Choe, one of the young cutting-edge artists featured in the Museum's new *Salon Pop* program.

popular with multiracial audiences; pop culture-themed programming also resonated with younger and more diverse audiences.

- Twenty-first-century audiences are looking for efficient and active museum experiences.
- The alignment of external and internal perceptions is critical: how audiences perceive an institution can dramatically impact their desire to engage with the organization.
- Successful models of engagement can be developed that attract younger and more diverse audiences as well as address issues of institutional sustainability.
- To fully engage younger and more diverse audiences, simple changes in programming or marketing were insufficient. Museum leadership, staff, and volunteers had to embrace institution-wide change in order to create successful models and new paradigms.

These initial findings are in no way intended as one-size-fits-all guidelines for addressing the complex challenges of serving diverse audiences. Rather, they are presented as a catalyst for further discussion in the nonprofit arts field, which we hope will lead to new understandings and collaborations.

The changing face of America—the diversification of its population—has been documented as a major trend, yet the full implications of this change for museums and other types of arts organizations remain largely unknown. Through the *Re-visioning* project, the Museum finds itself on the forefront of a movement that seeks to challenge culturally specific organizations, and more broadly, museums of all varieties, to reexamine how they engage new audiences and connect with their next generation of supporters.

Diversity Within Diversity:

Next-Generation Arts Audiences



I am a person of color.
I am not half- "white".
I am not half- "Asian".
I am a whole "other".

☒ other

chinese, japanese, german, hungarian, english

➤ Identity-based portraits give voice to the multiracial experience in the *kip fulbeck: part asian, 100% hapa* exhibition, shown at JANM in 2006 and currently traveling to venues around the country.

© Kip Fulbeck

The Changing Face of America

For the first time in its 210-year history, the U.S. Census Bureau in 2000 allowed respondents to self-identify with more than one race. Of the 281.4 million people in the United States at the time, 7.3 million reported more than one race, although researchers estimate that the actual multiracial population in America is closer to 20 million. This is in comparison to the estimated 500,000 multiracial Americans in 1970.¹

People who reported more than one race were more likely to be under age 18 than those reporting only one race.

—U.S. Census Bureau

While numbers vary depending on geographic location and racial groupings, interracial marriage and multi-racial/multiethnic offspring—most of whom are under the age of 30—have a major effect on how individuals as well as communities perceive themselves.

Take, for example, the Asian American community: Of those 12 million people who identified themselves as Asian/Pacific Islander, 2.1 million selected more than one race, making multiracial Asians the second largest subgroup of Asian/Pacific Islanders in the country, second only to Chinese Americans.

With communities growing ever more diverse, with the social activism of the 1960s having set the stage for

the ethnic studies movements of the 1970s and curriculum-based multicultural education of the 1980s and 1990s, and with the election of the first biracial president in 2008, in the past four decades we have witnessed a widespread change in the way we see racial differences in America. Today we are faced with a future where Americans no longer fit neatly into easily hyphenated categories.

This change has dramatic implications for culturally specific arts organizations such as museums. Increasingly these institutions must balance the needs of their core constituency—the ethnic or cultural communities out of which they grew and who they are accustomed to serving—with the needs of an expanding audience that no longer identifies itself based solely on cultural or racial categories.

The Japanese American National Museum, with the support of The James Irvine Foundation, undertook a major three-year project to examine this issue.

How does a culturally specific arts organization adapt to changing demographics in order to more effectively engage and serve contemporary audiences that are increasingly multiethnic?

1. Unless otherwise stated, census data cited in this paper was taken from the U.S. Census Bureau.



Gift of Nobuko Miyamoto. Japanese American National Museum [98.363.2]

◀ Asian American performance artist Nobuko Miyamoto Betserai (center) with her husband Tarabu Betserai (left), granddaughter Asiyah Ayubbi, and son Kamau Ayubbi in Los Angeles, November 1998.

The Changing Face of a Community

The Japanese American community has seen an accelerated change in its demographics over the last 60 years that has far outpaced other ethnic groups in America. These rapid changes are especially evident when it comes to marriage and, more specifically, outmarriage²:

Outmarriage Rates Among Japanese Americans	
Generation since Immigration	Rate of Outmarriage
First / Issei	2%
Second / Nisei	12%
Third / Sansei	60%

The Issei—the first generation of Japanese immigrants who began arriving in America in 1885—had an outmarriage rate of only 2 percent due to the antisegregation laws in California and many other states which forbade interracial marriage. After World War II, this percentage jumped to 12 percent with the Nisei, the second generation of American-born Japanese.³

With the Sansei—third-generation Japanese Americans—the rate of outmarriage took a dramatic leap to 60 percent.⁴ Not surprisingly, the 2000 Census showed that while one out of every six Asian Americans considered himself/herself multiracial, the rate doubled to one out of every three for Japanese Americans.

- For the purposes of this paper, interracial marriage or “outmarriage” is defined as marriage between partners of different racial or ethnic backgrounds. More precisely, however, marriages between people of different racial backgrounds are “interracial marriages,” while marriages between people of different ethnic backgrounds but of the same race—for example, a Chinese American marrying a Japanese American—are “intermarriages.”
- Akemi Kikumura and Harry H. L. Kitano, “Interracial Marriage: A Picture of the Japanese Americans,” *Journal of Social Issues* 29, no. 2 (1973): 67–81.
- Harry H. L. Kitano et al., “Asian-American Interracial Marriage,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 46, no. 1 (February 1984): 179–90.



Photo by Nobuyuki Okada

*One out of every three
Japanese Americans
is multiracial.*

A community assessment conducted in 2000 by the Japanese American Consortium of Community Related Organizations recorded a shifting attitude within the Japanese American community toward being more inclusive of multiracial/multiethnic issues. The report noted, however, that multiracial participants still felt isolated: “They feel strongly that they would always remain connected to their Japanese heritage; however, if the Japanese American community does not embrace the Multiracial constituency, they will look elsewhere.”⁵

The demographics of the Japanese American community have also transformed over the last several decades due to geographic dispersion, postwar immigration, and the aging of the Nisei generation, the primary stakeholders and founders of community organizations. The

◀ More than 1,800 multiracial/multiethnic visitors pondered the question “What are you?” during the run of the *kip fulbeck: part asian, 100% hapa* exhibition.

complexity of these changes, their ramifications for the community, and the ways scholars are looking at this phenomenon are further discussed in Appendix III in a short essay by Dr. Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, the George and Sakaye Aratani Professor of the Japanese American Internment, Redress, and Community at the University of California, Los Angeles.

The rapid diversification of the Japanese American community has complex implications. If people no longer identify themselves solely as Japanese Americans, what is the future of the community as a whole?

Some community members fear that the high outmarriage rates and multiracial makeup of the younger generations spell the end of the community’s integrity; however, many—including the Museum—choose to see these trends as a way of increasing the community’s size and reach, with each outmarriage and birth expanding the number of people connected to the community through affinity rather than ancestry alone.

5. From “Charting Course and Shifting Direction for the Nikkei Community” (organized and published by the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center of Northern California, San Francisco, April 2000).

*Thank you for
helping this hapa
know she's not alone.*

—Visitor, *kip fulbeck: part asian,
100% hapa* exhibition



Photo by Nobuyuki Okada

Program Profile: Kip Fulbeck

◀ Multiracial Asian Americans helped to make *kip fulbeck: part asian, 100% hapa* one of JANM's most successful exhibitions.

The exhibition *kip fulbeck: part asian, 100% hapa* (June–October 2006) was the Museum's first project to tackle the topic of multiracial America head-on.

Originally a derogatory label derived from the Hawaiian word for “half,” the word hapa has been embraced as a term of pride by many whose mixed-race heritage includes Asian or Pacific Rim ancestry. The exhibition featured photographic portraits by artist Kip Fulbeck, whose work addressed in words and images the one question that hapas are frequently asked: “What are you?” By pairing portraits of hapas—unadorned by makeup, jewelry, and clothing—along with their handwritten statements about who they are, Fulbeck's powerful yet intimate expressions of identity offered

a complex perspective on the changing reality of contemporary America.

Based upon Fulbeck's Hapa Project and created in collaboration with the Museum, the exhibition focused not upon any technical discussion of race or multiracialism, but on the power of self-identification versus imposed categorization. The more than 1,800 Polaroid photos and statements created by visitors during the run of the exhibition overwhelmingly expressed how powerful multiracial audiences found this concept.

Audience research conducted more than a year later found visitors still recognizing and reflecting upon the exhibition. Audience research firm Campbell Rinker concluded: “The *kip fulbeck* exhibition not only drew in

large numbers but deeply resonated with visitors and members to a degree that hasn't been repeated since. The respondents feel that the Museum still delivers in these areas, but not to the degree they felt during that time or immediately after. Future exhibitions should seek to tap into the spirit of the Fulbeck exhibition: to reflect and mirror the uniqueness of all of us.”

Because the subject continues to be timely, the Museum is traveling the exhibition nationally through 2012. Fulbeck—an award-winning photographer, filmmaker, writer, spoken-word artist, and professor/chair of art at the University of California, Santa Barbara—will be returning to partner with the Museum in 2010 on a new exhibition featuring portraits of multiracial children.

[The Nikkei Student Union] when I was at UCLA looked different. NSU now has a total crossover thing going on. Not everyone is Japanese American. It's a complete mix. And I think that's an indicator of what it takes to be successful now or in the future. It's all about being able to blend with the rest of the world, not just doing things on your own or with your own ethnic group.

—Eric Nakamura
co-founder, *Giant Robot Magazine*
Imagined Futures Conference, May 2009



Photo by Nobuyuki Okada

The Changing Face of a Museum

While the ethnic/racial background of museum visitors may be influenced by programmatic offerings, time of year, marketing efforts, and organizational focus, over the past decade the Japanese American National Museum has witnessed the accelerated diversification of its audiences.

Presented with the opportunity to share its mission—to promote understanding and appreciation of America's cultural and ethnic diversity through the Japanese American experience—with a significantly larger potential pool of visitors and supporters, the Museum began

to closely question the wants and needs of this diverse audience.

In doing so, the Museum's staff uncovered a set of questions that encapsulates the core ideas and concerns surrounding any endeavor to engage this new visitor and supporter base. The answers to any one of the "essential" questions would have a profound affect on the programs the Museum presented and the exhibitions it chose to display.

Essential Questions

- To what extent is the visitor experience influenced by cultural or ethnic self-identification?
- What is the relevance of the Museum to younger, multi-ethnic audiences?

Ethnic Identity of JANM Visitors ⁶		
Ethnic Identity	1999	2007
Japanese/Japanese American	65%	41%
Non-Japanese Asian/Pacific Islander	4%	9%
White/European American	24%	34%
Hispanic/Latino	3%	9%
Black/African American	1%	3%
Unspecified	3%	4%

6. Audience research for 1999 was conducted by People, Places, & Design Research during the opening of the Museum's Pavilion building (overall sample=377). Figures for 2007 were taken from an analysis of visitor surveys gathered throughout the year (overall sample=866). The Museum has since added the category "Multiracial (please specify)" to its visitor surveys.

- How can the Museum develop programming to engage and sustain these audiences?
- How can the Museum engage new audiences while sustaining and satisfying its current constituency?
- What impact does engaging these audiences have on the ability for the Museum to sustain itself in the future?

While some museums turn to programs, exhibitions, and marketing to diversify their audiences, JANM and other culturally specific museums must look to more complex solutions. Instead of trying to attract a specific ethnic group to a broad area of interest—for example, modern

art or natural history—culturally specific institutions must attempt to interest broader audiences in the history, art, culture, and identity of a specific community.

Broader audiences pose an unusual challenge in that they possess a set of complex and often conflicting wants, needs, and assumptions. Thus, in order to engage and serve its next-generation visitors, the Museum's leadership and staff committed to undergoing a difficult process of changing the fundamental beliefs and assumptions that have guided the institution for the past 25 years.

Innovation as Catalyst:

Establishing an Organization-wide Audience Development Project

Criteria for Innovation⁷

1. Discontinuous and unpredictable change, not incremental change
Unpredictable, disruptive alterations that lead to revolutionary rather than evolutionary change in usually unproven ways.
2. High impact on mission
While unproven and often viewed as risky endeavors, these changes have an unusually high impact on the ability of the organization to meet its mission, ultimately making the risk worthwhile to undertake.
3. A shift in fundamental organizational assumptions
Organizational assumptions are the foundation on which every decision is made within an institution. When an organization questions one or more of these assumptions, innovation often results.

7. Extract from a working paper by EmcArts on innovation in the arts (October 2006).

How does an entire organization go about recalibrating itself in order to appeal to a more diverse audience?

With a multitude of possible programmatic and organizational paths emerging, the Japanese American National Museum was at a crossroads, a pivotal point of decision-making that had significant implications for its long-term sustainability.

It was during this time that The James Irvine Foundation launched its Arts Innovation Fund (AIF), aimed at increasing the ability of California arts institutions to innovate in three areas: artistic capacity, constituency engagement, and organizational management.

A core team of Museum staff developed a three-year, institution-wide project entitled *Re-visioning + Engaging Multiethnic Audiences in America*. This project sought to explore largely uncharted territory: How can a culturally specific organization adapt to multiethnic and diverse audiences in programming, fund-raising, marketing, communications, and organizational structure?

Project Goals

1. Creation of a significant body of quantitative and qualitative research about the Museum's diverse stakeholders to inform key insights for future priorities and practices for the institution

2. Clarity in direction and long-range vision to more closely align the Museum's work and structure with sustainable target audiences
3. Alignment among stakeholders around this vision
4. Alignment in programming and organizational structure based on the vision
5. Increased dialogue in the field around the challenges that organizations face and the development of new strategies to address those challenges

Embracing Innovation

The cornerstone of the newly formed project rested in fully embracing innovation and change within the organization. For the purposes of the grant, the Irvine Foundation defined "innovation" as organizational change that provides new pathways to fulfilling the mission, is not an extension of "business as usual," and results from a shift in underlying organizational assumptions.⁷

The Museum's project goals possessed elements of all three criteria. In order to recalibrate the organization, the Museum not only had to experiment with innovative and untested approaches to audience engagement, but also develop its capacity to adapt to the changing landscape of the arts and cultural fields. This endeavor did not alter the Museum's original mission—rather, it reinterpreted it for a twenty-first-century audience.

*You know, people say
“think outside of the
box.” Artists should not
have boxes to worry
about. We should not
have those limitations.
Those boxes are created
by us... We artists must
not have any limitations.*

—George Takei, actor/activist
Imagined Futures Conference, May 2009

8. Project logic model created by JANM with guidance from EmcArts, a partner with The James Irvine Foundation Arts Innovation Fund.

Finding the Project Logic

Working with EmcArts, a New York-based firm engaged by the Irvine Foundation to work with its AIF grantees, the project team created the project's logic model by:

- **Setting goals**
What are the broad long-term desired results of your project?
- **Identifying resources**
What resources—human, financial, organizational, and community—are you investing in this innovation to achieve your project goals?
- **Establishing steps**
Using these resources, what activities are you carrying out to achieve your project goals?
- **Stating desired outcomes**
What measurable benefits to your internal and external stakeholders do you expect over time as a result of your project activities?
- **Determining indicators**
What are the indicators you will track to measure the progress towards your project outcomes?⁸

With the project logic model in hand, a newly formed cross-departmental

project team was able to solidify the project goals, identify resources, and establish desired outcomes that spanned the entirety of the organization, from the contributions of volunteers to the roles of the Museum's Board of Trustees and Board of Governors.

Expecting the Unexpected

Despite the establishment of a project logic model, the innovative nature of the project—to shift organizational assumptions—meant that the Museum began by asking questions rather than proposing solutions. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered first. The resulting information about member, visitor, and public needs and perceptions drove the remaining two years of the project, with the institution responding to the data through programmatic, communication, marketing, and organizational means. In general, the project fell into three phases: Information Gathering; Strategic Planning and Implementation; and Analysis and Evaluation.



Photo by Gary Ono

Program Profile: *Salon Pop*

► Visitors at the *Giant Robot Biennale: 50 Issues* exhibition create PIKA PIKA, an abstract animated film made with flashlights.

In 2007 the Museum launched *Salon Pop*, an experimental program that provided short-term opportunities for the Museum to present the creative talents of Japanese and/or Japanese Americans whose innovative work is currently having an impact on American popular culture. In doing so, *Salon Pop* illustrated the relevance of Asian American youth culture and its place within our everyday society.

Salon Pop is characterized by:

- Topics that are “current” or part of pop culture that would attract younger, more diverse audiences
- Nontraditional partnerships with artists, organizations, entities, and/or corporations
- Short runs for exhibitions on average two to three months

- Low overhead costs
- Less staff time and fewer resources required than for typical exhibitions or programs

Why *Salon Pop*?

Salon Pop was created in direct response to audience research suggesting that the Museum “break the exhibition mold.” *Salon Pop* provided the Museum with a forum and framework in which to experiment with new, “outside-of-the-box” programming and enabled the Museum to better respond to trends and changes in today’s culture that staff would otherwise be unable to explore through traditional exhibition and programming means.

Who is the audience for *Salon Pop*?

The Salon challenged past thought on how the Museum should engage

and maintain relationships with its audiences. From the beginning, no expectations were imposed that *Salon Pop* would increase membership, as the Salon’s audiences are younger and less inclined to be members/donors. The main focus was to change the general perception of the Museum—the Museum as cold, elitist, or “uppity”—and to begin to build a lasting relationship with a younger audience.

How is *Salon Pop* funded?

Because the Salon’s target audience (ages 18–34) is a prime marketing category, the Salon presented new opportunities for corporate sponsorship, easing reliance on more restricted foundation grant funding.

How is *Salon Pop* marketed?

Much of the Salon’s marketing is done through the partnerships and

► Visitors used their cell phones and digital cameras to capture the *Giant Robot* exhibition and posted their photos to dozens of blogs, Web sites, and social networks the next day.



Photo by Gary Ono

sponsorships created through this process. The Museum has also found success in viral marketing techniques and through social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

How did we explain *Salon Pop* to the Museum's core constituents?

It was important for the Museum's core constituents to understand that *Salon Pop* represented an opportunity to engage their children and grandchildren in a meaningful dialogue about their place within the community; in turn the Salon helped older generations understand the impact these trends, artists, and thoughts have on not only the Japanese American and Asian American communities, but on American culture as a whole.

What programs and exhibitions are considered part of *Salon Pop*?

- *Giant Robot Biennale: 50 Issues*
See *Salon Pop* Case Study 1 on page 23
- "Eyes and Ears: A Night of Asian American Hip-Hop"
A night of music and fashion featuring internationally known hip-hop artist Jin the MC
- *Mike Shinoda Glorious Excess*
See *Salon Pop* Case Study 2 on page 30
- "Secret Identities: The Asian American Superhero Anthology"
The Los Angeles premiere of *Secret Identities*, a collection of original stories by top Asian American writers, artists, and comics professionals
- Imagined Futures Conference
See *Salon Pop* Case Study 3 on page 33
- "Salon Pop: Thursday Nights at the Museum"
An open and experimental Salon, showcasing art, performance, and music by professionals and professional amateurs⁹

9. The term "professional amateur" or "Pro-Am" was coined by Charles Leadbeater to describe innovative, committed, and networked amateurs working to professional standards. For further information, see Leadbeater's article "The Pro-Am Revolution: How Enthusiasts Are Changing Our Economy and Society" (Demos, 2004).

Creating Cultural/Ethnic Audience Surveys:

Challenges and Opportunities

I think it's great that you have this survey. It opened my eyes to venture out and learn more about my culture and others. I didn't know until this survey that I know very little about my own culture as well as others... Thank you, great survey!

—Research participant

The information-gathering phase of the project focused on conducting extensive quantitative and qualitative audience research in order to create a compilation of concrete and accessible data on ethnic identity, both within the setting of a culturally specific organization and outside of it.

At the heart of the audience research was the need to establish a baseline against which later progress could be measured. It was also important to clarify key issues, including whether people who do not identify themselves as Japanese Americans could identify with the mission and content of a Japanese American institution.

A full discussion on the methodology utilized for the project's research—facilitated by Los Angeles–based Campbell Rinker, a veteran audience and marketing research company specializing in the nonprofit sector (selected through a competitive process)—is available in Appendix I. The challenges and opportunities involved in the development of new survey tools to track, record, and quantify how audiences perceive their cultural identity and the impact this information has on a culturally specific museum bear additional attention.

Deciding What to Measure

The audience research included both external and internal constituencies, studied through a variety of means.

Qualitative Research

- Depth Interviews: In-depth interviews conducted with 15 community and Museum leaders
- Focus Groups: Six focus groups
Museum members;
Japanese American nonmembers;
Non–Japanese Americans (30 years or older);
Non–Japanese Americans (younger than 30);
Multiracial; and
Japanese speakers (sessions conducted with a translator)

Quantitative Research

- Staff and Volunteer Survey: Online survey of 139 Museum staff and volunteers
- Visitor and Member Survey: Responses taken from an online survey of 1,000 visitors, members, or supporters
- Trending Survey: Follow-up conducted with 1,200 visitors, members, or supporters
- Cultural Survey: Responses taken through a national survey panel of 1,500 respondents

The research components were developed in partnership with Campbell Rinker, based upon the established essential questions and project goals. Initially, much effort was spent in an attempt to focus on “new” audiences only; however, it quickly became evident that before finding out where the Museum could go, it must first know from where it was starting. This realization led to the establishment of

Working with the Japanese American National Museum as part of the Irvine initiative has been eye opening, especially in highlighting the issues we share—explorations into relevance, engagement of young leadership, and interdisciplinary art practice as cultural instigator... This has been an amazing experience for me—transforming my understanding of innovation and leadership in museum professionals.

—James G. Leventhal, Director
of Development and Marketing
Judah L. Magnes Museum
(Berkeley, California)

research that tracked current Museum supporters, members, and visitors in addition to research that recorded the perceptions of nonvisitors.

Consulting with Peer Organizations: Creating a Feedback Loop

The information-gathering phase also involved collecting input through a series of peer and community convenings. These convenings represented a tremendous opportunity for the Museum, allowing project staff to confirm and/or challenge the findings of the professional audience research while simultaneously informing stakeholders about the changes they hoped to implement.

Representatives from 11 peer institutions—selected based upon similarity in size and content—arrived in Los Angeles on August 4, 2007, to discuss the most pressing challenges facing culturally specific arts organizations and to ensure that the project design yielded results relevant to other institutions. Participating organizations included:

- Arab American National Museum (Dearborn, Michigan)
- California African American Museum (Los Angeles)
- Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History (Detroit)
- Chinese American Museum (Los Angeles)
- Judah L. Magnes Museum (Berkeley, California)

- Museum of Chinese in America (New York)
- National Hispanic Cultural Center (Albuquerque)
- National Museum of American Jewish History (Philadelphia)
- The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center (Cincinnati)
- Skirball Cultural Center (Los Angeles)
- Wing Luke Asian Museum (Seattle)

The rich and candid discussion during the daylong meeting allowed participants to share concerns, ideas, and suggestions around the topic of engaging the next generation of audiences. The main issue on many professionals' minds was sustainability, a topic that proved even timelier with the major economic downturn in late 2008. The feedback provided by these colleagues informed the cultural study survey and helped to deepen the thinking behind the project.

Additional input was gathered via a series of three community forums focused on different segments of the Japanese American community: leadership, non-California core supporters, and younger generations. Partnering with the California Japanese American Community Leadership Council (CJACL), the Museum conducted a one-day conference in Los Angeles on September 21, 2007, to discuss the future of the Japanese American community in an increasingly multiracial America. Members of CJACL include representatives from organizations such as:

➤ College students take part in a facilitated discussion at JANM, examining their future role in the Japanese American community and the Museum.



Photo by Richard Murakami

- Hapa Issues Forum
- Intercollegiate Nikkei Council of Southern California
- Japanese American Citizens League
- Japanese American Cultural & Community Center, Los Angeles
- Japanese Cultural & Community Center of Northern California
- Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California
- Little Tokyo Service Center, Los Angeles
- Nikkei Federation

The conference, facilitated in part by Dr. Mitchell Maki, Dean of the College of Health and Human Services at California State University, Dominguez Hills, vividly highlighted the fact that the leaders of community-based organizations were also wrestling with similar issues of sustainability, diversity of future

audiences, and engagement of the next generation of leaders and supporters.

Another community forum was held in Denver, Colorado, on July 5, 2008, during the Museum's national conference entitled *Whose America? Who's American? Diversity, Social Justice, and Civil Liberties*, which allowed the project team to solicit feedback and opinions from national constituents in a series of two focus group-like settings. The final forum occurred on January 25, 2009, in partnership with the Japanese American Citizens League and UCLA's Nikkei Student Union. Entitled "LT [Little Tokyo] and Me: A Survey of Youth," the forum brought together students and community leaders to discuss the students' role in the future of Los Angeles' Little Tokyo district, the Japanese American community, and the Museum.



Photo by Gary Ono

◀ New technology, such as JANM's photo "booth" which uploaded digital images to a flickr site, allows younger audiences to connect with museums in new ways.

Other Things to Consider: The Impacts of Technology, Terminology, and Timing

Technology

Recent advancements in technology have greatly expanded the options—some of which, such as Internet surveys and PDA-assisted data recording, are more affordable than ever before—available to museums and nonprofit organization when collecting information from visitors and non-visitors alike. These technologies, however, can pose both an opportunity and a challenge depending on the type of technology used.

With an older member constituency, the project team wondered if the use of Internet surveys would mean that these members would be left voiceless. Contrary to this assumption, approximately 50 percent of survey

respondents were between the ages of 45 and 64, and 25 percent were older than 65. In fact, Campbell Rinker uncovered a larger issue when trying to contact members via phone—the advent of caller ID, call blocking, and voice mail made it difficult for call centers to get people on the phone to answer initial questions or invite them to attend focus groups. Anecdotal evidence showed members to be more skeptical of phone requests than those received via email, which ultimately led to the decision to completely eliminate the phone interview component of the audience research.

Terminology

Project staff found another challenge when debates arose regarding survey language, especially during the creation of the cultural survey. With many Americans using words such as "race," "ethnicity," "nationality,"

38% of Americans age 65+ go online or use computers, compared with 74% of 50–64-year-olds, 86% of 30–49-year-olds, and 91% of 18–29-year-olds (and about 95% of teenagers).

—Pew Internet and American Life Project

and “culture” interchangeably, much discussion went into how to best phrase questions. In the end, surveys generally used the phrase “ethnicity or cultural background.” “Race,” on the other hand, was only utilized when asking respondents to define themselves, and even then it was used in conjunction with “ethnicity.”

While issues with language and technology were anticipated from the start, what was completely unexpected was the discovery that respondents to the cultural survey were up to three times more likely to have completed college and/or hold advanced degrees across all racial and ethnic groups. The current hypothesis is that the well-educated respondents were more interested in the survey topic and therefore more likely to complete it compared to those with less education. As a result, the cultural survey was redeployed to 300 participants with high school diplomas (or a lower level of education) in order to balance the data.

Timing

Even current events—such as the historic election of the nation’s first African American president and an international economic crisis—showed their impacts upon the survey. While all efforts were made to either note and/or mitigate the effects of these various socioeconomic influences, in the end only the collection of additional data will provide a clearer picture of how Americans truly view their cultural affiliations.

Unfortunately, while the Museum was able to compile a diverse and rich portfolio of information about audience expectations, needs, and desires, the time between Year 1 and Year 3 of the project was not long enough to track significant and ongoing changes in audience perceptions. Despite this challenge, Campbell Rinker identified several key areas where change occurred.



Photo by Gary Ono

Salon Pop Case Study 1: Collaboration with a Maven (*Giant Robot*)

◀ The *Los Angeles Downtown News* described the audience at the *Giant Robot Biennale: 50 Issues* as “an eclectic mix of ages and cultures with plenty of young, hip and tattooed types.”

During the research process—whether in the focus groups or the online survey—visitors expressed a desire for programming relating to American and Japanese pop culture. In Fall 2007 JANM approached Eric Nakamura, the co-founder and co-editor of *Giant Robot* magazine, to help create an exhibition that would have a short run during the same period that ©MURAKAMI was on display at the neighboring Geffen Contemporary at MOCA (Museum of Contemporary Art).

The result was *Giant Robot Biennale: 50 Issues* (November 3, 2007–January 13, 2008), which celebrated the magazine’s fiftieth issue with artwork by an ethnically diverse group of 10 cutting-edge artists—APAK, Gary Baseman, David Choe, Seonna Hong, Saelee

Oh, Pryor Praczkowski, Souther Salazar, Sashie Masakatsu, Eishi Takaoka, and Adrian Tomine—who had been featured in the magazine’s past issues. As a “maven”—the term, whose widespread use is based upon Malcolm Gladwell’s 2000 book *The Tipping Point*, describes those who are intense gatherers of information/ impressions and are the first to pick up on new or emerging trends—within the area of Asian American pop culture, *Giant Robot* highlights the talents of up-and-coming artists, often launching their careers and exposing a national audience to the contributions of Asian Americans.

The public opening on November 3, 2007, was the largest in Museum history, with more than 2,700 people attending; many more were turned away at the door at closing.

The exhibition was well attended throughout its run, in part because of collaborative programming with MOCA, publicity through the *Giant Robot* site and blog, and a viral—and inexpensive—marketing campaign. The simple act of allowing visitors to take photos in the galleries using their cell phones and digital cameras equaled unprecedented exposure for the exhibition through blogs, Facebook, and other Web sites.

In total, the exhibition took a little more than two months of planning and \$25,000 to create, a fraction of the time and resources that the Museum normally spent on exhibition development. The exhibition also attracted new sponsorship opportunities from companies such as Scion and interTrend Communications, Inc.

Findings from the Field, Learning in the Organization

Once the data was gathered—or was in the process of being gathered—the findings were shared with Museum staff, leadership, and volunteers as the first stage of the implementation phase. Next the data was used to test new programmatic models—such as *Salon Pop* (see page 16 for model description)—and inform a three-year institutional strategic plan, which identified target audiences, planned for programmatic changes, and implemented findings in organizational and budgetary areas.

This project phase was the most difficult because the directions suggested by the findings challenged previously held assumptions and encouraged the exploration of new engagement possibilities in programs, marketing, communications, and development. The actions suggested by the data and their strategic implications are further described in Appendix II: Summary of Audience Research.

In July 2007 Campbell Rinker presented the following four emergent themes summarized below to the Museum’s Board of Trustees. These four themes in turn led to five key areas of institutional learning.

Get the Word Out

Every focus group and a majority of online surveys noted that the Museum needed to better publicize

its programs and exhibitions. In fact, the Japanese American nonmember focus group listed some programs—such as a free summer concert series on its Plaza or an exhibition on taiko (Japanese drumming)—as things they would like the Museum to present, not realizing the Museum had already done those exact things.

Even more unsettling was the discovery that a number of Japanese Americans also viewed the Museum as aloof—using words like “uppity” and “elitist”—and removed from the Japanese American community.

Acknowledge external perceptions.

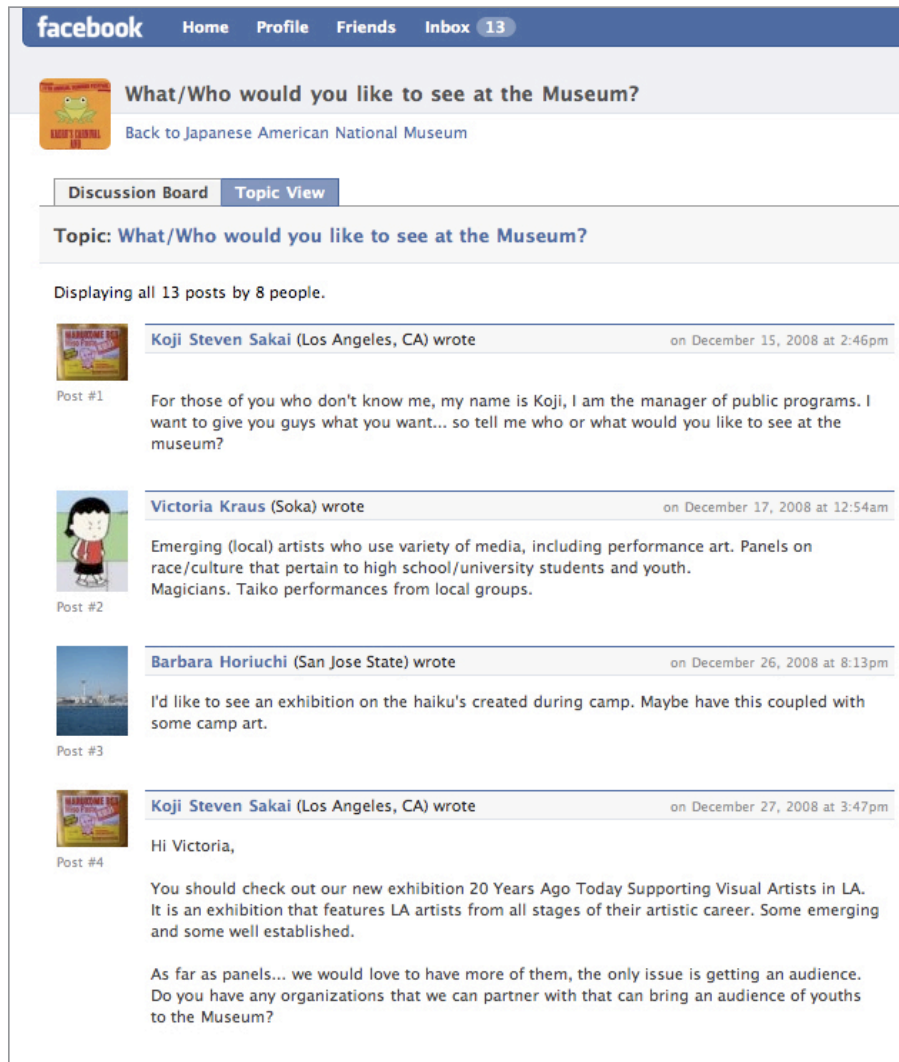
What does the public really think about you?

While the research data provided several communication and marketing suggestions—such as converting printed materials into PDF formats to increase the ease of distribution online—perhaps the most important realization that arose out of it was that the Museum needed to first understand the unintended consequences of its past communication strategies.

Previous strategies promoted the Museum as “world-class,” leading to the misconception that the Museum had left behind its grassroots and community-based origins. While the Museum could buy more ads, print more

Before they had the new building they were in the old Buddhist temple. And there I felt this closeness... But I don't feel that sense in the big place anymore.

—Research participant



◀ Museum staff discuss programmatic offerings with the public via social networking sites such as Facebook.

With 75 percent of adults ages 18 to 24 using social networking sites and with older adults also logging in (the number of adult users has more than quadrupled in the last four years), the Museum, like many nonprofits, turned to Web 2.0 techniques to connect with younger audiences.¹⁰ Museum staff have since developed a Facebook group, a Twitter account (jamuseum), and a YouTube channel (janmdotorg). Instead of encountering a cold or elitist organization, visitors meet Koji, the Museum's Public Programs Manager, or Clement, its Art Director, who invite them to events, ask for their suggestions, and offer special discounts or opportunities.

Enliven the Museum

Focus groups and surveys both noted a lack of warmth or feeling of welcome based on the outward appearance of the Museum. Some even thought that the Museum was closed or not incorporated into the rest of Little Tokyo.

newsletters, and send more emails, none of this would be effective without first addressing these perceptions.

Today the Museum has focused on connecting—and reconnecting—with audiences through networking, much as the Museum did 25 years ago when it was first created. The main difference, however, lies in the many social networking sites that exist today.

10. Internet statistics from the Pew Internet and American Life Project, a part of the Pew Research Center. Additional statistics on Internet usage by generation is available at <http://www.pewinternet.org/>.



Photo by Clement Hanami

*You go in and it's like
super quiet and there's
just this big, empty space.*

—Research participant

Furthermore, it became apparent that most of the key competitors for people's leisure time were not necessarily amusement parks or other art institutions, but typical everyday activities such as going to the movies, dining, or hanging out with friends. Participants noted that the Museum could tap into these interests by creating an area—free space or green space—and an atmosphere that encouraged visitors to come and gather, not necessarily to see the exhibitions but just to hang out.

Learn the landscape.

How is the twenty-first-century museum visitor different?

One of the numerous differences between twenty-first-century visitors and the visitors of years past is their expectations of how their time

◀ Food fans line up outside of the Museum for fusion delights such as kimchi quesadillas and Korean tacos.

will be spent at museums. Previously, museums were places to visit. Today they are places to experience—with the definition of “experience” evolving to include more and more activities in less time. This idea of “leisure at efficient scale” is described by David Touve and Steven Tepper from the Curb Center of Art, Enterprise and Public Policy, Vanderbilt University, in this way: “People are seeking more flexible affiliations—where they can move in and out of groups to fit their busy schedules and spontaneous leisure impulses. They are also patronizing those entities that can more efficiently provide services and a range of cultural activities—mega churches, Borders Books, theme parks, casinos—what sociologist George Ritzer calls ‘cathedrals of consumption.’”¹¹

While the Museum has no plans to become a “cathedral of consumption,”

11. “Leisure in America: Searching for the Forest amongst the Trees” by David Touve and Steven Tepper, commissioned by the Getty Leadership Institute and National Arts Strategies for the “Cultural Organizations And Changing Leisure Trends” convening, May 10–11, 2007, at the Getty Center in Los Angeles. Copyright © 2007 J. Paul Getty Trust.

➤ The *Secret Identities* program highlighted parallels between Asian Americans and comic book heroes, describing superheroes as “the ultimate immigrants” in their migration from other planets to Earth.

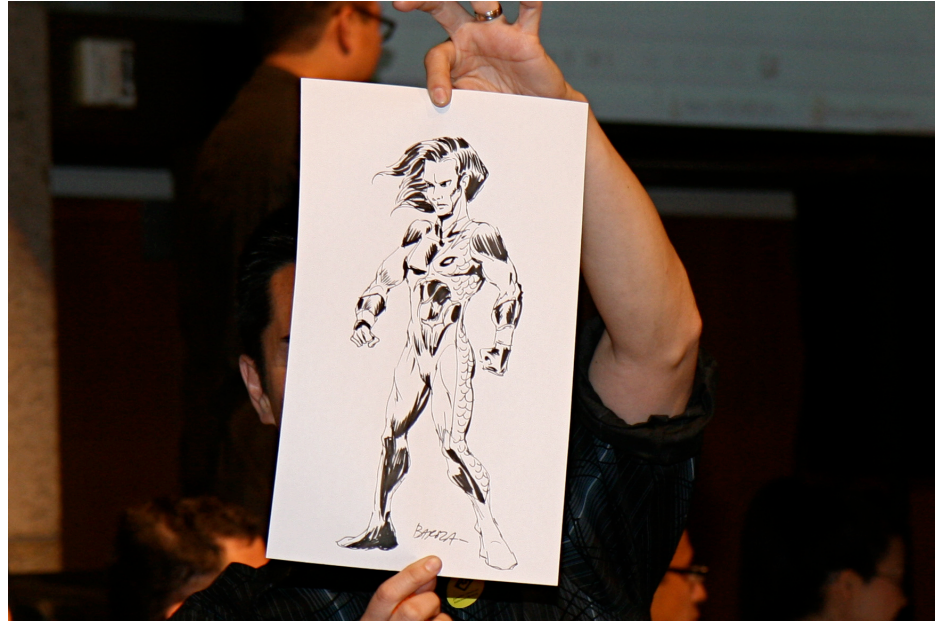


Photo by Richard Murakami

...Develop programs that relate to...pop culture. For example, [display] ethnically diverse young artists that exhibit Asian art style in their work or are simply of Japanese ancestry themselves.

—Research participant

it has reexamined the use of its space, activating it in ways that provide visitors with more leisure activities—such as shopping and eating—while still remaining true to its mission. On an average Thursday evening—when the Museum offers free admission to the public—a visitor to the Museum’s Plaza will find a line snaking around the corner for the Kogi Truck, a Los Angeles food phenomenon housed in a taco truck and serving fusion Asian and Mexican food. A visit to the Museum’s Lobby in December 2008 would have revealed a display of custom vinyl Daruma dolls—a futuristic version of a traditional Japanese New Year’s folk toy—presented in a collaboration between the Museum Store and Dacosta Bayley of Chocolate Soop.

Create Active Programming

Research participants frequently brought up program ideas that related to their day-to-day interests and/or were more active in nature. These topics included: food, popular culture, music, gardening, and film. In other words, they wanted to be able to interact with exhibitions, not just look at them; they wanted the exhibitions to be relevant to them, not just about the past.

Multiracial and younger respondents (under age 35) were much more likely than Japanese American respondents to have attended an art event or exhibition. Specifically, participants desired exhibitions that

... They want to call us the MTV generation I guess but we tend to feed more into things if we can relate to what's going on. And I feel like what gets lost a lot of times for young adults is that we're part of history too.

—Research participant

featured up-and-coming artists instead of older, more traditional artists and programs that explored elements of Japanese culture that are popular today among youth, such as anime, manga, technology, and music.

Discover the good hook.

What are visitors truly interested in and how can that be used to draw them to you?

The Museum quickly discovered that while these types of exhibitions would indeed entice younger and more diverse audiences to visit, visitors often stayed to view the Museum's permanent exhibition *Common Ground: The Heart of Community*, which happened to be the route they had to take in order to leave the temporary gallery space. During the *Giant Robot Biennale: 50 Issues* exhibition (see *Salon Pop* Case Study 1), there were more visitors in *Common Ground* than in the temporary exhibition galleries by the end of the opening night, with staff leading impromptu tours of the exhibition due to the high interest level of new visitors.

The main issue surrounding the creation of exhibitions and programming that are “current” or “in” is that they are often “yesterday’s news” and “out” by the time they have been

vetted, approved, planned, researched, funded, and implemented. For this reason, the Museum created a program model in *Salon Pop*, which incorporates a quicker turnaround time and utilizes fewer funds (which means less fund-raising). Thanks to the Irvine Foundation's AIF grant, the Museum also had a small pool of risk capital available, which provided seed money for projects and enabled staff to move quickly when opportunities presented themselves. More importantly, however, the organization as a whole began to acquire the skills necessary to build its innovative capacity, such as developing the Board's capability to support new thinking and increasing the Museum's tolerance for ambiguity.¹²

Bring the Story to the Present

Participants were especially eager to know how the Museum was relevant to them. They indicated that they would be more interested in the information if they could somehow see themselves reflected in the story being told. This statement held true for both younger and multiracial research participants. Specifically, the Museum's *Common Ground* exhibition, an overview of the Japanese American experience from early immigration in the 1880s through the redress movement in the 1980s, ended abruptly and did not include events recognizable to more recent generations.

12. Characteristics of innovation capacity building adapted from “New Frills or Deep Change? Innovation and the Performing Arts Organization” (a presentation by EmcArts to the National Performing Arts Convention, Denver, Colorado, June 12, 2008).

➤ Visitors are confronted with a montage of tabloid images, challenging them to question how the mainstream media impacts popular culture at the most recent *Glorious Excess* exhibition.



Photo by Shane Sato

Establish relevance.

Can your visitor see themselves in the story?

Aware of this deficiency—which has been highlighted to an even greater degree because of the success of the *kip fulbeck: part asian, 100% hapa* and *Giant Robot Biennale: 50 Issues* exhibitions—the Museum plans to decommission *Common Ground* and replace it in stages with two new permanent exhibitions set to open in 2011 and 2012. The data gathered and innovative processes learned will

be utilized in the development of the exhibitions. This is the next challenge for the Museum's staff: to see if it can apply the lessons from this project to another long-term endeavor.

In the meanwhile, the Museum's staff continues to look for ways to find points of intersection between the history, art, and culture of Japanese Americans and the lives of young Americans in interesting and unexpected ways. For an example, see *Salon Pop* Case Study 2 for more information on the Museum's partnership with Mike Shinoda of the band Linkin Park.

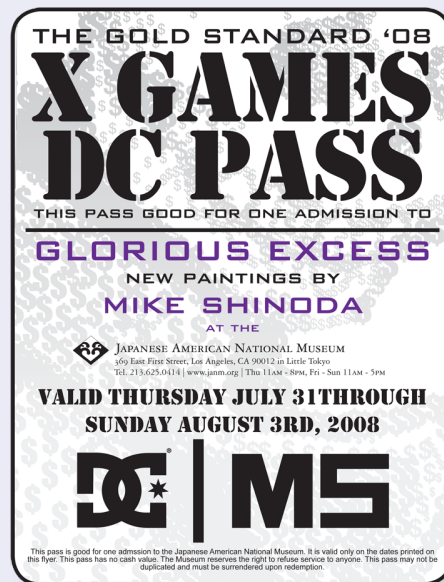


Photo by Shane Sato

Salon Pop Case Study 2: The Intersection of Interests (Mike Shinoda)

◀ Musician and artist Mike Shinoda talks about his artwork, which explores society's obsession with celebrity culture, consumer addiction, and fascination with excess.

► The day following the exhibition opening, DC Shoes, one of the exhibition sponsors, distributed Museum passes at the X Games.



On February 4, 2006, the Museum honored artist and producer Mike Shinoda at its Annual Gala Dinner with the Award of Excellence. A member of the band Linkin Park and lead for his solo project Fort Minor, Shinoda utilized his father's and aunt's experiences during World War II in his song "Kenji" (which is Shinoda's Japanese middle name) on the Fort Minor *Rising Tides* album.

In 2008 Shinoda's second public art show debuted at JANM. An exhibition of digital work and original paintings, Mike Shinoda's *Glorious Excess* was a two-part interpretation of the classic "vanitas" (a type of still life painting commonly created by Northern European painters in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries).



Photos by Shane Sato

I don't think many people know he's of Japanese American decent... It's a great way to show that there are artists of that sort from the community.

—Visitor, *Glorious Excess (Born)* opening

A graduate of the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, Shinoda is involved in Linkin Park's album artwork, band merchandise, Web design, and on-stage production in addition to collaborating with brands such as DC Shoes and creating his own artwork.

Glorious Excess (Born) was displayed in the George T. and Sakaye Aratani Central Hall (July 12–August 3, 2008), with proceeds from the sale of the art and merchandise going to support both Shinoda's scholarship at Art Center and the Museum. The expanded continuation of the series, *Glorious Excess (Dies)*, was displayed in the Weingart Gallery (August 29–October 4, 2009).

Working with Shinoda allowed the Museum to connect to new and younger audiences (more than 800

fans stood in line for hours outside of the Museum for the openings), tap into new revenue sources (approximately \$22,000 in merchandise sales were recorded during the first two-hour public opening), and explore new marketing opportunities (DC Shoes distributed Museum passes at their booth at the X Games).

Much as the song "Kenji" raised mainstream awareness about the incarceration of Japanese Americans and its impacts, the *Glorious Excess* exhibitions introduced a wide range of people to the Museum and its programs, creating a natural point of intersection between the Museum's mission and the work of a music superstar.

Let Go of Fear

The final area of learning was not necessarily an emergent theme among our audiences, but it addresses a major concern expressed by Museum staff and leadership throughout the *Re-visioning* project: Will providing new types of programming mean that the Museum will lose the support of its core supporters and donors?

The qualitative audience research showed that the Museum's members believe that researching and sharing the Japanese American experience is JANM's most important function. These members, who are primarily Japanese American, were the least likely to have visited any other cultural museums in the past year and were less likely than nonmembers to see the Museum's role as promoting ethnic and cultural diversity.

On the other hand, the qualitative data—including depth interviews, focus groups, and community convenings—indicated that the Museum's members are supportive of programming that can capture the interest of their children and grandchildren, who they fear are losing their connection with their Japanese American heritage.

Find the right balance.

Does attracting new audiences automatically mean losing touch with your core?

In the future, as the Museum explores the boundary where tolerance gives way to alienation, it is important to find a balance. The Museum will continue to research, preserve, and present the experiences of Japanese Americans; however, it is now our task to help members and nonmembers alike understand that the definition of “Japanese American” is evolving, just as the definition of what it means to be American is also changing. While pivotal moments (such as the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II) in history, art, and culture will continue to be of primary focus, there is still room to explore, expand, and enhance what we once believed to be finite definitions and perceptions. Equally as important, the Museum can play a crucial role in facilitating these discussions, as it did during the 2009 Imagined Futures Conference (*Salon Pop* Case Study 3), which connected students and young people with established professionals in their fields.

I believe that it's extremely important to document Japanese American history so we can educate future generations. However, it's equally important to address current issues so that we don't alienate younger generations.

—Research participant



Salon Pop

Case Study 3: Connecting to the Future (Imagined Futures Conference)

➤ Director Quentin Lee talks to budding filmmakers about the business behind making movies.

What does the future hold for the Japanese American and Asian Pacific American communities? What is the role of the young artist in defining our community's future? What opportunities and challenges do young artists face?

While a lot of places talk about doing programs for the new generation, Imagined Futures was one of the first times I saw a community organization actually trying to do programs for them.

—Imagined Futures
conference participant

Imagined Futures, a free one-day conference, was designed to help up-and-coming artists of all disciplines start to think about these and other pertinent questions. Sponsored in part by UCLA's Asian American Studies Center, the conference provided college students, young professionals, and professional amateurs with the opportunity to learn from already established and successful artists and to network with other Asian Pacific American artists in the Los Angeles community.

Keynote speakers included *Giant Robot's* Eric Nakamura and actor George Takei. Following the plenary session, participants broke out into two-hour workshops of their choice:

- **Filmmaking** with director/writer/producer Quentin Lee
- **Anime & Comics** with Jeff Yang and Parry Shen, editors of *Secret Identities:*

The Asian American Superhero Anthology

- **Blogs & New Media** with Phil Yu of the Angry Asian Man blog
- **Spoken Word & Hip-Hop** with hip-hop artist and MC Shin-B
- **Fiction** with Naomi Hirahara, award-winning author of the Mas Arai Mysteries
- **The Art & Business of Clothing** with Ryan Suda, owner of Blacklava T-Shirts

The entire conference, from publicity to registration, was done through the social networking site Facebook. The two conference facilitators, UCLA graduate student Emily Morishima and JANM Public Programs Manager Koji Sakai, communicated with participants via Facebook, solicited input, and provided networking opportunities between people with similar interests.

Key Observations and Future Directions

Encouraging Organizational Growth

This project profoundly changed the way the Museum operates, plans, and presents its programming. By embracing innovation, the Museum's leadership and staff have asked questions, challenged assumptions, opened themselves up to possibilities, and embraced experimentation.

This process, however, was not an easy one. Over the last three years, countless hours went into encouraging organizational growth, including:

- Quarterly updates given to all volunteers and staff detailing project goals, findings, and progress;
- Professional facilitation of board and staff meetings by Dr. Ronald Stewart, a consultant specializing in nonprofit and public sector organizational capacity building, which helped with the internal alignment of institutional expectations, goals, and priorities;
- The formation of a new volunteer training and management structure to encourage the recruitment of younger volunteers;
- The establishment of a three-year strategic plan through a series of facilitated and non-facilitated board and staff retreats; and
- Management training for senior level staff

As the Museum underwent these changes, the project team noted some key observations centered around

making the shift to a paradigm of innovation and change a smoother experience for staff, volunteers, and board members:

- **Be mission-driven**
Ensure that any change does in fact advance the organization's mission. It is easy to let enthusiasm take hold, which can lead to conflict if others do not see a clear connection to an agreed-upon institutional vision and mission.
- **Determine what is strategy and what is merely a tactic**
Similarly, it can be easy to lose sight of the bigger picture when experimenting with new models and methods of engagement. Having a series of unrelated tactics is not the same as having a strategy, even if that strategy fails to work over time.
- **Use data to get buy-in**
Too often staff will gather audience research and evaluations but then leave the information in a filing cabinet or desk drawer. Sharing supporting data with staff, volunteers, the board, and the community will ensure greater buy-in for the need and/or process of any changes.
- **Utilize facilitators if necessary**
Change can expose underlying organizational imbalance or areas of disagreement. An outside perspective or an impartial third party can encourage dialogue, synthesize ideas, and facilitate compromise.
- **Invest in risk capital**
Setting aside an amount of money earmarked for experimentation and

innovation will allow staff to act more quickly—and, in some cases, more freely—when presented with opportunities.

Innovation During Times of Crisis

It cannot be ignored that the financial downturn of 2008 had serious and long-term implications for the nonprofit field. When looking at instituting change during these tough economic times, the question that many arts organizations will ask is this: How can we start innovative programming, change our organizational structure, *and* still manage to survive—especially if we are unsure whether audiences are willing to pay for “the unknown”?

The answer to this question can be found, in part, in the for-profit sector, where major corporations have turned to innovation in response to increased competition from foreign markets, rapid advancements in technology, and the current economic downturn. Google Inc., for example, has instituted Innovation Time Off, which encourages their engineers to spend 20 percent of their time on projects that interest them.

A 2008 article from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania noted that an economic crisis can, in fact, provide the perfect birthplace for innovation: “Loss of revenue and profit will at first instill a

cost cutting mentality.... If the patient is bleeding, you need to stop that first. Then, however, a phase starts where leaders ask which parts of their business model are weak (and perhaps unsustainable) and that, in turn, can lead to restructuring and reinvention.” The article goes on to detail how a “sticking to our knitting” mentality can adversely impact a business: “Old-fashioned, linear approaches that rely on standard measurement schemes are often outdated if relied upon solely.”¹³

The Museum found these lessons to be particularly true. By challenging old assumptions—many based upon information collected a decade earlier—and encouraging the Museum’s staff, volunteers, and leadership to stretch their ways of thinking, this project revealed more efficient models of production, created collaborations with new partners, and pointed us toward “blue oceans,” a term used by the Wharton article to describe unrealized, and therefore uncontested, markets.

Specific examples of these implemented measures and how they addressed issues of sustainability—through, for instance, sponsorships and revenue generation—are further discussed in the various case studies in this paper. Overall, however, one important lesson enabled the Museum to be innovative despite economic stress: By dedicating both resources—specifically a small pool of risk capital—and staff time to innovation, the Museum’s investment

13. “Why an Economic Crisis Could Be the Right Time for Companies to Engage in ‘Disruptive Innovation’” (Knowledge@Wharton, <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu>, the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, November 12, 2008).



Photo by Gary Ono

was returned multiple times over, not only in terms of revenue, but also in the opportunity to develop long-term relationships with its next generation of audiences.

Future Directions

While the last three years have allowed us to answer one set of questions, they have also opened up another set of equally important questions for us to consider in the future.

To fully engage younger and more diverse audiences and ensure that the Museum's work is reflective of their experiences, what additional changes need to be made within the organization?

◀ Visitors contemplate Sashie Masakatsu's "orb paintings" at the *Giant Robot Biennale: 50 Issues* exhibition.

At its most basic level, this project forced the Museum to reexamine its relationship with its audiences, in particular the institution's next generation of visitors and supporters. The Museum is no longer just a "place" to visit, but an "entity" worth getting to know. Much as our earliest members supported the Museum's mission—before there was even a physical building—we must now show younger and more diverse audiences their connection to the same mission. Efforts must be made to invite them to come in—into the Museum, into a Web site, or into a social network—and stay a while, letting them get to know *each other* in addition to the Museum and creating new communities in the process.

Now that the Museum better understands how to engage younger and more diverse audiences, how does it retain these audiences over time?

The questions have now changed from "doing" to "maintaining." With successful exhibitions and programs demonstrating that new audiences can indeed find relevancy in its programming, the Museum is inclined to accept innovative ideas

and proposals—what was considered “risky” three years ago is now “comfortable.” Is this then a moment to repeat the established model (more Shinoda, more *Giant Robot*, more pop culture) or can this innovation be pushed further to look at how we can engage these audiences *and* retain them over time?

With this in mind, the project team has begun to formulate an additional set of essential questions:


- How can the Museum sustain the implemented changes over the long term? What is the return on investment over time when working to retain these audiences?
- How can the Museum ensure that these audiences become a viable means of future and long-lasting support? If the old measures of success (attendance, membership, etc.) are no longer completely valid, then what new measures must be accepted by the organization (revenue generation, sponsorship and promotion opportunities, etc.)?
- Now that we are aware of how we are perceived externally, how can the Museum efficiently change these perceptions about itself and its programs?
- How can the Museum transfer a sense of ownership in the institution to the next generation, creating a greater connection and commitment to its mission?
- How can the organization effectively change its organizational culture to allow for ongoing innovation over time? How does the Museum continue to embrace innovation and

change throughout its organizational structure, leveraging these changes into opportunities to address issues of sustainability?

How do JANM’s experiences compare to other culturally specific institutions?

The Japanese American National Museum’s experiences throughout this project have proven unique, due in part to the solutions that the institution chose to implement. The complex nature of the questions being posed and the identity issues being explored, however, are shared among many arts and cultural organizations. Therefore, despite the novelty of this project, many institutions are currently or will soon be challenged to reevaluate the needs of their rapidly changing audiences.

If other arts organizations are willing to conduct similar analyses of their audiences, the results yielded will illuminate new directions and possible solutions, fostering an ongoing dialogue to address the vital needs of our institutions.

The Museum’s staff and leadership remain committed to providing ongoing information and updates on their progress to engage new audiences in innovative ways. We welcome the opportunity to work with like-minded organizations on this topic in the future, and we appreciate the support and intellectual partnership offered by many institutions and colleagues throughout this process. 

Appendix I:

Summary of Audience Research Methodology

In 2006 the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) sought and received a multiyear grant from The James Irvine Foundation to conduct a multifaceted study that sought to:

- Research and assess techniques of audience engagement;
- Identify best practices that will benefit other cultural organizations adapting to shifting audience demographics; and
- Examine findings and implement recommendations for organizational development.

To help achieve these goals, JANM partnered with Campbell Rinker, a marketing research firm that specializes in nonprofit organizations, to conduct qualitative and quantitative research among several targeted audiences, including Museum members, staff, volunteers, board members, community leaders, and the general population.

Qualitative Research

The qualitative portion of the study consisted of 6 focus groups, 15 depth interviews, and 139 online qualitative surveys.

Focus Groups

The six focus groups were conducted at three different facilities in the Los Angeles area and consisted of eleven participants each. The groups contained the

following types of participants:

- Members of the Museum, any age
- Japanese American nonmembers, any age
- General population, non-Japanese American, 30 years of age or older
- General population, non-Japanese American, under 30 years of age
- Multiethnic group with Asian ancestry, any age
- Japanese-speaking group (conducted in Japanese with a translator)

Other than the member group, respondents were recruited through the focus group facilities' lists of local residents and were not informed that the group was conducted for the benefit of the Japanese American National Museum.

It was challenging to recruit participants for the member group. Initial response to telephone calls from the focus group facilities was low, and response remained low even after members were mailed a postcard from the Museum notifying them of the opportunity to participate. Members were then sent an email invitation to participate in the group. Those who responded were officially recruited after being screened to ensure they met the group requirements.

Campbell Rinker worked closely with staff at the Museum to create a discussion guide to gain feedback from participants on topics of interest in an unbiased, open manner.

Staff and Volunteer Survey

To help ensure confidentiality and to provide the opportunity for open, unguarded feedback, the seventh focus group, intended for staff members and volunteers, was converted into an online qualitative survey.

All JANM staff members and volunteers were invited to participate in the online survey, which consisted of a handful of multiple-choice and rating questions along with several open-ended questions. Only a summary of the overall results was shared with the Museum. Actual quotes were not shared in order to ensure participants' confidentiality.

Board Members and Community Leaders Depth Interviews

Fifteen depth interviews were conducted with board members and community leaders at various locations in Los Angeles and Orange counties, with the majority of them occurring at the Museum. The interviews also included board members from out of state as well. The interviews, which lasted approximately one hour, were conducted using a discussion guide developed with the assistance of Museum staff.

Quantitative Research

The quantitative portion of the study consisted of an online survey among Museum constituents, a follow-up trend study among the same population, and a cultural identity study among the general U.S. population.

Constituent Online Survey

Given the goals of the research and the difficulty in engaging members via phone during the qualitative phase, Campbell Rinker and key members of the Museum's staff determined that an online study would be the best course of action to reach members, visitors, and other constituents, despite the fact that online participants might skew slightly younger than the Museum's actual membership and visitor population. The actual age of the Museum's membership is not known, so the researchers were not able to weight the data to reflect membership. Still, the researchers feel confident that this data is reflective of the Museum's membership and visitor population as a whole. Further, the analysis notes any significant or important differences between younger and older respondents.

Names for the survey research were gathered from onsite raffle forms, exhibition forms, and short visitor intercept surveys conducted by Museum volunteers, as well as the Museum's own database. Constituents included members, visitors, and those who signed onto the Museum's Constant Contact list, who were potentially neither members nor visitors. Over a 12-month period—from February 2007 to February 2008—approximately 10,000 invitations were sent from Campbell Rinker; these were crafted to appear as if they came directly from JANM. Campbell Rinker was prominently mentioned as a partner in the research

to help ensure respondents' confidentiality. A total of 1,000 survey responses were gathered, representing a 10 percent response rate.

Trending Survey

To track changes in visitor and member behavior and attitudes, Campbell Rinker and the Museum conducted a follow-up study in May 2009 among the same constituent population surveyed in 2007 through 2008.

The same email invitation methodology was employed, and the initial 10,000 constituents were invited to the 2009 follow-up study, along with an additional 3,100 new names added to the Constant Contact list after the initial survey closed in 2008. Out of 13,232 invitations, 1,215 respondents completed the follow-up study, representing a 9.2 percent response rate.

Only key questions from the initial study were included in the trending study, namely visitation and perception questions. The results were presented to show any differences between three key groups: All 2009 respondents; 2009 respondents who were not invited to the initial survey; and those who were invited to both surveys. Trends were presented only between the 2008 and 2009 respondents who were invited to both surveys.

Cultural Identity Online Survey

As part of an ongoing study regarding audience engagement in an increasingly diverse America, the

Museum chose to conduct a study regarding cultural identity, expression, and engagement among the general national population rather than pursue more research among local populations. It was felt that the qualitative research provided a wealth of information specifically for the Japanese American National Museum and that further survey research in the Los Angeles area would not be as effective in meeting the project goals as would a national survey.

The goals of this study included:

- Identifying best practices that will benefit other cultural organizations adapting to shifting audience demographics; and
- Examining findings and implementing recommendations for organizational development to accommodate this new audience.

Initially, a total of 1,498 responses were collected from online Internet panels. Roughly 750 respondents each were collected using two different panel sources to help minimize bias. Given the large sample parameters (general population), the likelihood of overlapping respondents was minimal.

In order to capture enough responses from minority populations—whose population size would render insignificant—a quota was established to limit the number of Caucasian/European American respondents to 350 (representing 23 percent of the sample vs. 80 percent as found in the

U.S. population). Respondents were allowed to self-identify their racial and ethnic backgrounds. These verbatim responses were then categorized, and for reporting purposes, grouped based on standard U.S. Census categories: Non-Hispanic White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Other, which includes Mixed Race, Pacific Islander, Hawaiian and Native American.

Throughout the survey, respondents were asked about their awareness and expression of their ethnic or cultural identities as well as their engagement with their ethnic or cultural groups. Although there are distinct differences behind the concepts of race, ethnicity, and culture, a review of secondary research suggests that typical Americans do not dwell on these differences or are even aware of their true sociological definitions. Therefore, for ease of deployment, the survey generally used the phrase “ethnicity or cultural background”; those two concepts were used together throughout the survey. “Race,” on the other hand, was only utilized as a way to ask participants to define themselves, and even then it was used in conjunction with “ethnicity.”

After analyzing the initial respondent pool, the data revealed an extremely well-educated respondent set. Internet samples tend to be populated with well-educated respondents, and the plan was to weight the sample to be more reflective of the general population. However, this skew was more than even a typical panel sees:

Respondents were two to three times more likely to have completed college and/or hold advanced degrees across all racial and ethnic groups. The current hypothesis is that the well-educated respondents were more interested in the survey topic and therefore more likely to complete it compared to those with less education.

The survey was redeployed, and an additional 300 respondents with only high school diplomas (or a lower level of education) were captured in order to balance out the sample. Consequently, 300 well-educated respondents who reflected a similar gender and racial/ethnic background as the newly acquired group were dropped from the sample, allowing the overall sample goal of 1,500 to remain intact. The data was then weighted based on key demographics (e.g., education and age) within each racial group to reflect current U.S. census data.

Additionally, Museum constituents who were invited to the trend study were also invited to participate in the cultural identity study as a comparison group. Overall, 1,205 JANM constituents chose to complete the study. The difference between the Museum’s constituents and the general population was noted in Campbell Rinker’s report to the institution.

Copies of specific discussion guides and surveys from the quantitative and qualitative components of this project are available upon request.

Appendix II:

Summary of Audience Research

Qualitative Findings

Four common themes emerged from the six focus groups, the depth interviews, and the online staff and member survey:

1. Get the Word Out

I would say the first thing they need to do is get the message out, because I've probably frequented a couple of museums a year and I've never even heard of it.

Sponsor something...like a concert series in the summertime.

I think advertising and PR is huge, and I think that...like, what grabs my attention a lot of times is if they put the banners on the light poles. All the time I'll see that and I'll be like "Cool, that's interesting" at the Getty or whatever. They should use that.

Comments from participants suggest that awareness of the Museum and its mission—let alone recent exhibitions—is rather low among the general non-Japanese American population.

Additionally, comments from the nonmember Japanese American participants suggest a potentially intentional alienation from the Museum. This group views the Museum as aloof and removed from the Japanese American community, and they are largely unaware of its current efforts within the community.

2. Enliven the Museum

It's kind of always dead...there's nothing really going on there.

You go in and it's like super quiet and there's...just this big, empty space.

...the Japanese museum to me has always been kind of an elitist group and they've always kind of been like "Well, we're here...and when you guys are ready you can come in and see us."

Participants who were aware of the Museum described it as cold, dark, or even closed. When asked to list what they liked about museums in general, many described museums that had a more active, lively presence. Several participants discussed museums as a "destination," a place to hang out or to gather with friends, rather than simply a place to see artifacts.

Further, most of the key competitors for people's leisure time are not necessarily amusement parks or other art institutions, but rather typical everyday activities such as going to the beach, reading, dining, or hanging out with friends. The Museum has an opportunity to tap into these areas of interests by creating a space and an atmosphere that encourage visitors to come and gather, not necessarily to see the exhibitions, but to just hang out. Throughout the groups, several participants made reference to an "open space" or "free space"

where they could relax and meet up with friends. This may prove a strong draw for the younger generation.

3. Create Active Programming

...develop exhibits and programs that relate to...pop culture. For example, an ethnically diverse group of young artists that exhibit Asian art style in their work or are simply of Japanese American ancestry themselves.

I love going to shows where they have interactive screens...you can get more information right there. And you don't have to...walk around and find out if anyone's there [to answer questions].

...have anime or have something modern that would draw young people. Something interesting and different, something different than we're used to seeing every day, that's how you get people in there.

Participants noted that a key attribute of a great museum is interactive exhibitions. Increasingly, visitors to museums are expecting an “all-encompassing experience.” They want all of their senses to be affected, not just sight. They want to be able to interact with exhibitions, not just look at them. They want the exhibit to be relevant to them, not just about the past. In short, they want a more active role in their learning experience.

4. Bring the Story to the Present

...it would have to be relatable. I feel like, I don't know...in my age group between like 18 and about 26... they want to call us the MTV generation, I guess, but we tend to feed more into things if we can relate to what's going on. And I feel like what gets lost a lot of times for young adults is that we're part of history too.

Improve the Common Ground exhibition to make it a much more interactive gallery for multiple learning styles.

As touched upon earlier, participants want to see exhibitions that are relevant to them. They want to see themselves in some way in the exhibitions, and they are expecting that connection when they visit a museum. Because younger audiences want to see relevance and to relate to objects in a museum, include their story.

Quantitative Findings

Upon analysis of the quantitative data, it was determined that the overall member and nonmember profiles did conform to the theory that the “member” category was made up of the Museum’s original core supporters—primarily Japanese American and older—while the “nonmember” category represented younger, more diverse audiences. For ease of reporting, the general terms of member/

nonmember will be used throughout this section unless otherwise specified.

Members and Nonmembers

The online constituent survey revealed key differences between member and nonmember respondents. The typical Museum member is a third-generation Japanese American and is likely to be married. The typical nonmember respondent, on the other hand, is more likely to be ethnically diverse; if Japanese American, most are either third or fourth generation. In contrast to members, nonmembers are significantly younger and less likely to be married. Yet, like members, they are highly educated.

For members, the most influential factor in their decision to purchase a Museum membership is to support the Museum’s mission. This mindset represents that of the current membership base—an older, more loyal generation. Although they still value the Museum’s mission, former members and nonmembers tend to place more emphasis on tangible benefits of membership such as saving money on frequent visits, the location of the museum, exhibitions offered, and specific membership benefits. This may indicate a shift in ideology from one where members joined solely to support the Museum’s mission to one focused more on frequency of use and personal enjoyment. The Museum’s

mission is important, but it alone may not be enough to justify a year's membership for these nonmembers.

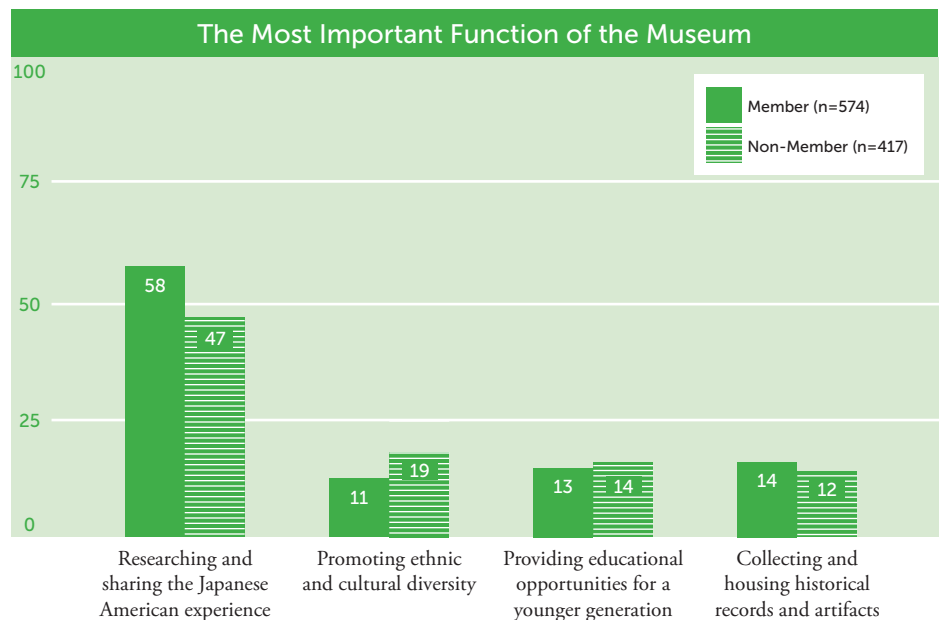
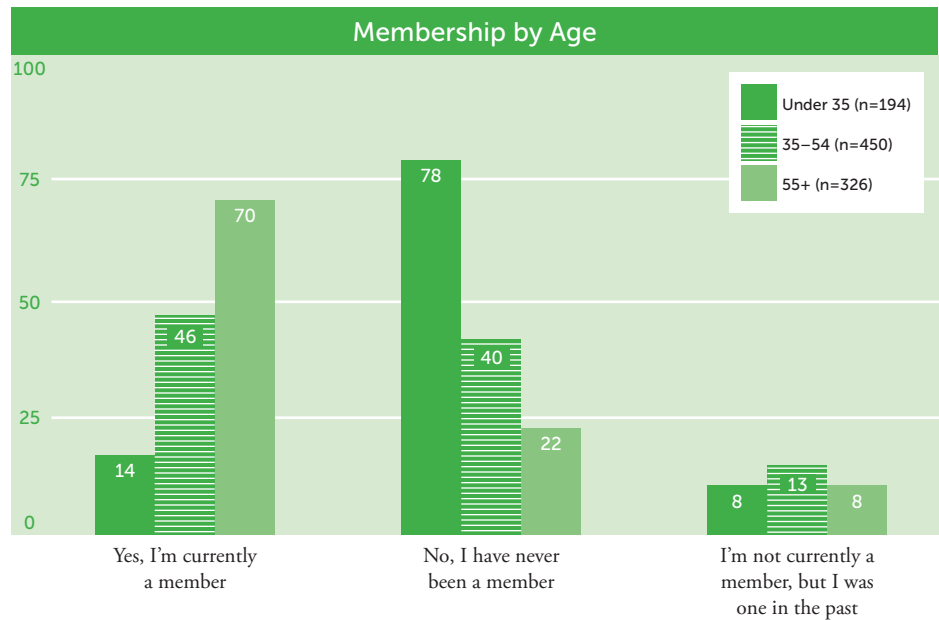
The Role of Art at a Culturally Specific Museum

Members and nonmembers agree that the Museum's most important role is that of a cultural institution, followed by its role as an educational and community resource. The Museum's role as an art museum was considered most important by only a small fraction of the respondents.

However, the initial constituent study revealed that art exhibitions are a main draw for visitors, and they rate highly on a list of new museum offerings that constituents would be interested in. In fact, their stated activities and preferences indicate that they are more likely to have attended an art exhibition in the past and to attend one in the future rather than an educational or community event. When asked about the likelihood of their visiting the Museum again to see an exhibition that was not similar to one they attended, respondents who visited a pop culture exhibition or an art exhibition were more likely to say they would return to visit another type of exhibition compared to those who visited a cultural history exhibition.

Preserving Culture While Promoting Diversity

A strong majority of members and nonmembers say the Museum's most important function is researching



and sharing the Japanese American experience. For nonmembers, promoting ethnic and cultural diversity is perceived as the second-most important function—and they deem it

more necessary to acknowledge and explore the multicultural nature of American society than members do. Museum members—largely Japanese Americans—were the least likely to

have visited any other cultural museums in the past year. The Museum can reach out to other cultures, promote diversity, and provide education, but these must be grounded in or relate to the Japanese American experience so as not to alienate its core support group of current members.

Society and Culture in a Changing World

The Museum's response to society and culture in a changing world is viewed somewhat differently among older respondents. Almost two in three respondents aged 35 and older feel people can maintain traditions and cultural identity, even as the world changes. Although the majority of younger respondents agree with this as well, they are significantly more likely to say that while traditions are important, they can be adjusted to reflect changes in the world.

Trends Relating to Younger and Multiracial Audiences

Specifically, multiracial respondents were less likely to have learned about the Museum from friends or family (38 percent vs. 45 percent) or from direct mail (4 percent vs. 17 percent) compared to Japanese American respondents. Multiracial respondents were more likely to have learned about the Museum from teachers (6 percent vs. 1 percent), Internet or email (10 percent vs. 4 percent), and just walking by the Museum (15 percent vs. 4 percent). Similarly, younger respondents are more likely

to have learned about the Museum from walking by it, the Internet or email, or a teacher, and less likely to have learned about it from family or friends, newspapers, or direct mail.

Younger respondents (under the age of 35) showed a stronger preference for hands-on interactive exhibitions, enhanced public programs, music, and theatre or dance performances. Multiracial respondents were much more likely than Japanese American respondents to have attended an art event or exhibition and were more likely to say they go to museums when they have some free time. However, they were also less likely to have shopped at the store, contributed money or products, or contributed their time. The same holds true for younger respondents.

A Successful Exhibition: Multiracial and Interactive

With its emphasis on a multiracial society, *kip fulbeck: part asian, 100% hapa* was seen by a higher proportion of nonmember respondents than any other exhibition referenced during the fielding duration. The exhibition had an interactive component, which younger nonmembers found appealing: Visitors could take Polaroid snapshots of themselves and place them on the wall alongside the artwork included in the exhibition. Multiracial respondents, females, and those under 35 were most likely to have seen this exhibition compared to other groups. It received its highest ratings

for maintaining relevance to current events, allowing the visitor to relate to exhibition content, and provoking thought. Multiracial visitors were more likely than Japanese Americans to want to see similar exhibitions.

The trending study revealed a slight decline in respondents' perceptions of the Museum's ability to help people understand America's cultural and ethnic diversity, although the overall rating of the Museum in this area remains high. The decline was seen among almost all age groups and among members and nonmembers. Digging deeper into the survey data revealed that respondents acquired during the Polaroid activity held in conjunction with the *kip fulbeck* exhibition, as well as names gathered around that time show the sharpest declines in these ratings from 2007 to 2009. The *kip fulbeck* exhibition not only drew large numbers, but it also deeply resonated with visitors and members to a degree that hasn't been repeated since. Respondents believe that the Museum still delivers in helping visitors appreciate America's diversity, but not to the degree they felt during or immediately after that exhibition.

Addendum to Appendix II

Cultural Study

The Museum also commissioned Campbell Rinker to conduct a study regarding cultural identity, expression, and engagement among the general

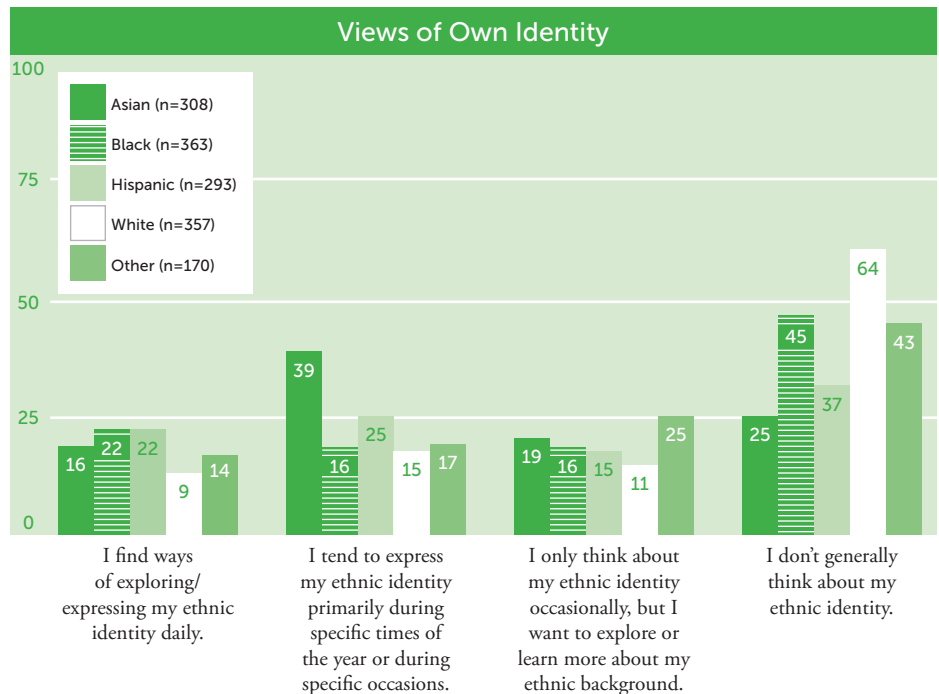
population. The goals of the study were to identify best practices that will benefit other cultural organizations' adaptation to shifting audience demographics and to examine findings and implement recommendations for organizational development to accommodate new audiences.

In order to quantify personal perceptions of identity and cultural affiliations, respondents from a national panel were asked about of their awareness and expression of their ethnic or cultural identities as well as their engagement with their ethnic or cultural groups. Respondents were allowed to self-identify their racial and ethnic backgrounds. These verbatim responses were then categorized, and for reporting purposes, grouped based on standard U.S. Census categories: Non-Hispanic White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Other, which included Mixed Race, Pacific Islander, Hawaiian, and Native American.

Although the younger generation is more likely to express their culture and ethnicity on a daily basis, a majority of respondents do not find ways to express it on a daily basis. For the most part, focusing on one's ethnicity is not an everyday occurrence for people. Respondents are most likely to experience their culture and other cultures through food, which is consistent with past project findings.

Additional findings include:

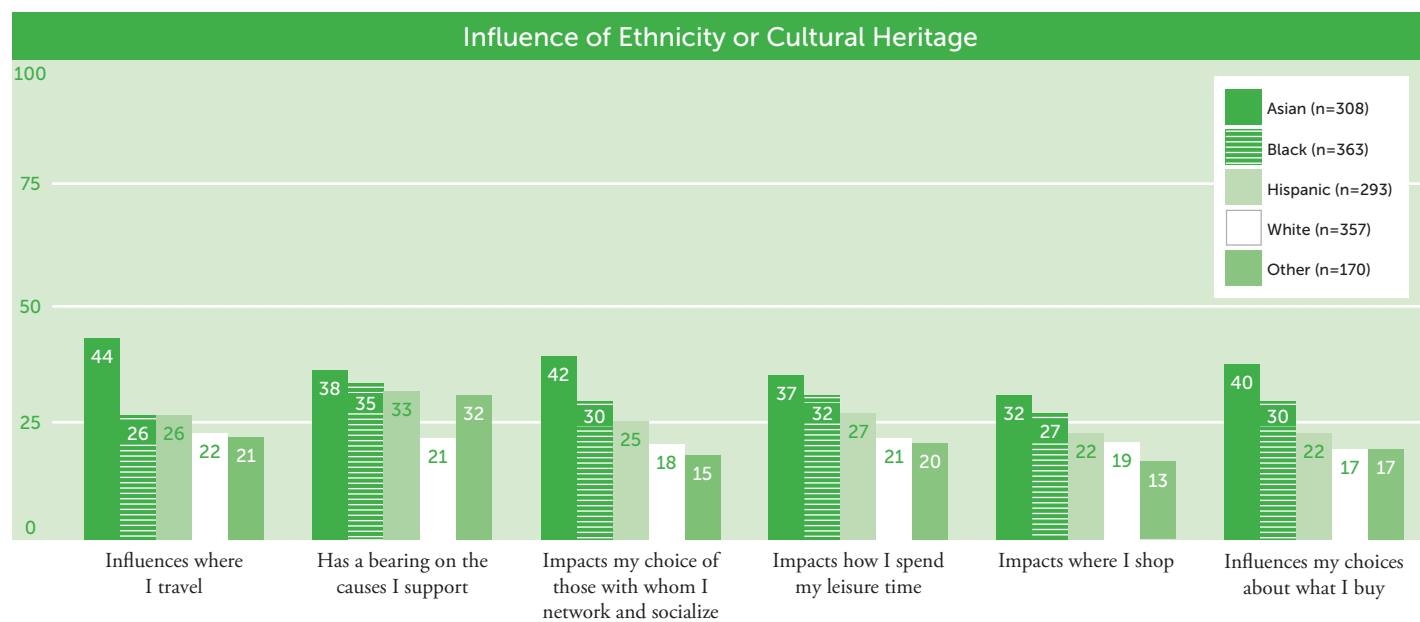
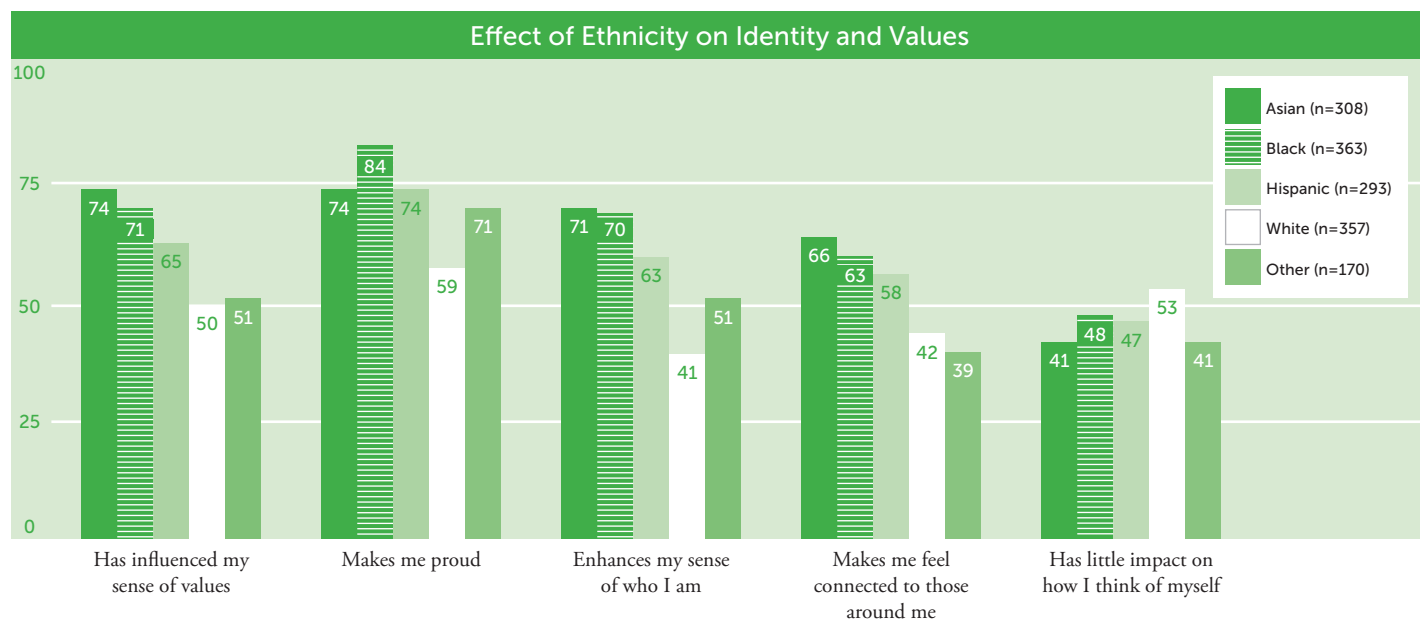
- Aside from Asians and Whites, four in ten respondents say they do not



generally think about their ethnic identity. At two-thirds, Whites are the most likely to say they do not think about their ethnic identity. Only a quarter of Asians feel this way.

- Asians are significantly more likely to express their cultural identity during specific times of the year than are other groups. Hispanics and Blacks are the most likely groups to find ways of expressing their cultural identity daily. Generally, younger respondents (under age 35), particularly younger White respondents, are more likely than older respondents to say they find ways of expressing their identity on a daily basis and wish to learn more about their background.

- Respondents also strongly agree that their cultural or ethnic identity has influenced their sense of value, particularly Asian respondents. Blacks are more likely than other group to say that their heritage makes them proud, enhances their sense of who they are, and makes them feel connected to those around them. In contrast, Whites have the least connection to their culture and ethnic identity. They are significantly more likely than any other group to feel that their ethnic identity has *little* impact on how they think of themselves, and they tend to agree less often with the other statements in general.
- Asians are significantly more likely to have agreed that their ethnic identity influences their lifestyle choices





- (where they shop, travel, spend leisure time, etc.). Whites, on the other hand, were much less likely than the other groups to state that their ethnicity or culture influences their various lifestyle activities.
- Blacks are significantly more likely than other group to enjoy being in an environment with others who share their values or life experiences, seek ways to express their pride, look for opportunities to learn about their heritage, and actively seek opportunities to pass their cultural heritage to the next generation.
 - For parents, passing along their cultural and ethnic identity is important. Statements regarding the importance of passing along their culture and the extent to which they do so received

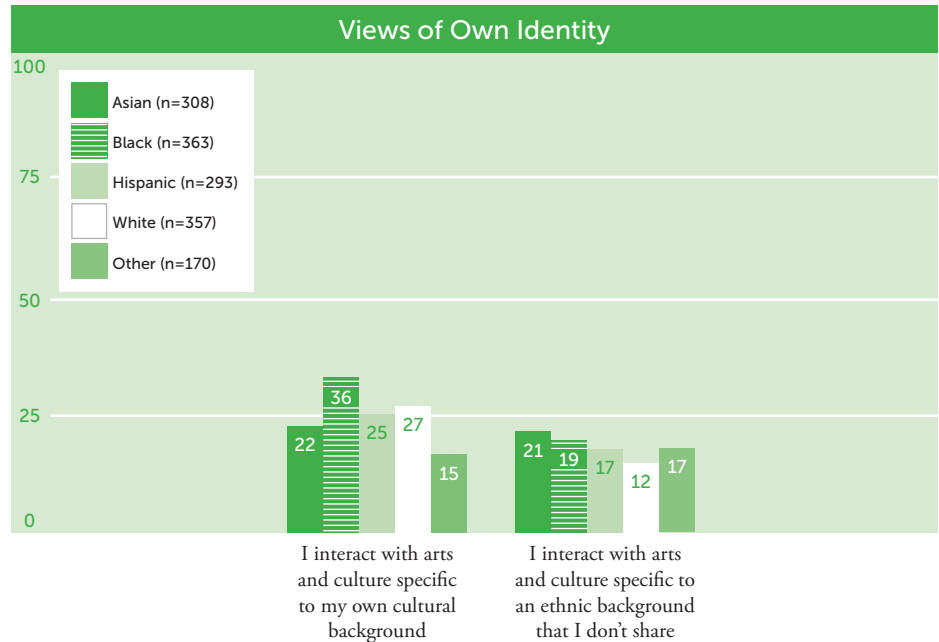
higher ratings than other questions about the influence and importance of ethnic and cultural identity.

- For every group, parents are most influential in developing an understanding of one's cultural heritage. This is followed by other relatives and friends as influences.

Findings regarding participant attitudes towards museums and cultural centers echo comments made in other stages of research. Namely, museum visitors want to be able to see themselves in the exhibitions and they want to be able to interact with the exhibition on a meaningful level.

- At most, a third of the respondents attend various art and cultural venues (e.g., art museums, history museums,

- opera, ballet, community events) at least once a year. Among all respondents, local community events are attended most frequently, while the ballet and opera are visited least frequently.
- Respondents were asked to share the first thoughts that come to mind when they hear the phrase "ethnic or cultural museum." There was no major thought that dominated this list. About one in seven respondents said "history" or "museum for a single culture." Whites are more likely than any other group to say that "nothing comes to mind," while Blacks are more likely than those of other groups to have mentioned a particular racial or ethnic group.
 - About four in ten respondents are likely to visit cultural museums in the



next 12 months. The likelihood of visiting is generally similar whether it is a museum focusing on their culture or another culture. Whites are least likely to visit such museums, while Blacks are most likely to visit them.

- A quarter to half of all respondents have visited a museum dedicated to their ethnic or cultural group. Blacks are most likely to have visited a museum dedicated to their cultural group, while Whites are least likely to have done so.

- The majority of respondents had visited a cultural museum of their own cultural or ethnic group more than once. Although still a majority, slightly fewer respondents had visited cultural museums dedicated to other groups more than once.
- A strong majority of all respondents has visited a museum dedicated to their own cultural or ethnic group or of another culture or ethnicity with family and/or friends.

Appendix III:

Imagined Futures: Opening Possibilities for the Construction of Culture and Community

Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, Ph.D.

George and Sakaye Aratani
Professor of the Japanese
American Internment,
Redress, and Community
UCLA Department of Asian
American Studies

"Is Japanese America still out there?" Everywhere we look today, the key characteristics that framed the prewar and immediate postwar Japanese American (JA) experience have become increasingly fragmented. For example, the once seemingly stable generational designations—Issei, Nisei, Kibei, Sansei—have been markedly transformed by the arrival of new Japanese immigrants and sojourners, by transnational movements of individuals and families between Japan and the United States, and by a relatively large proportion of intermarriages on the U.S. mainland, among other developments.

Evidence of fragmentation, in turn, has allowed critics to raise challenges about the coherence of concepts such as "identity" and "community," especially when ethnicity is seen as the matrix of these collective levels of solidarity.¹ While these challenges may be annoying to anyone who belongs to a viable or vibrant Japanese American community organization, perhaps there are some benefits that accrue if we heed such rhetoric. If we take seriously critics' dictums that there is no such entity as "Japanese America" or that these words provide only a fragmented understanding of the world around us, then, if nothing else, this impels us to ask what alternative conceptual tools are at hand for describing the kinds of things we see and experience.²

In this essay, I'd like to propose philosophical perspectives that reject the tenet that either modernism or post-modernism offer an alternative way to envision imagined futures. In particular, I'd like to demonstrate how the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze's concept of assemblage casts new light on current transformations of cultures that are not easily encompassed within ordinary theories of ethnic experience.³ My foci here are the evolution of Nikkei space/place in Southern California and the well-known Asian American pop culture magazine *Giant Robot*. Let's start with space and place.

Because its territorial base was diminished by World War II, and because it is vulnerable to the fluctuations of the real estate market, a good deal of attention has been devoted recently to L.A.'s Little Tokyo. Although it remains a (if not *the*) center of Southern California's Japanese American community, the district has suffered a series of setbacks beginning in the 1940s and continuing today. The mass removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans precipitated the transformation of the area; when other people of color moved into the buildings vacated by JAs, Little Tokyo was transformed into what was euphemistically termed "Bronzeville."⁴ Those Japanese Americans who returned after the war were only able to reclaim about a quarter of Little Tokyo's original space. In the 1960s and 1970s, Nisei and Sansei progressives fought a war of position against both

the city’s Community Redevelopment Agency and an influx of Japanese capital.⁵ The local community was eroded, piece by piece, as corporations displaced affordable housing and small businesses alike in favor of hotels, boutiques, and shopping malls catering primarily to tourists.⁶ Concomitantly, as housing covenants were abolished beginning in the 1960s, those who experienced upward occupational mobility during the postwar period moved into a variety of Los Angeles neighborhoods ranging from the Westside to Gardena.⁷

My point here is that, despite the exigencies of history, Little Tokyo remains the premiere territorially bounded space for Japanese Americans in southern California. If not able to fulfill every essential urban function, the area does have a plethora of organizations that span educational, media and the arts, religious institutions, service centers, and a wide range of businesses. Nonetheless, concerns about the immediate future of this community—especially in terms of how the city’s plans for rapid transportation lines could impact everything from historical buildings to day-to-day thoroughfares—are fully justified. This is because so many resources critical to the JA community, most especially political resources, revolve around networks that are rooted in Little Tokyo.⁸

Once our attention turns from downtown Los Angeles, other historical processes of Nikkei community formation

both to the north and to the south of L.A. proper are apparent. If we take the South Bay area, for example, while the different communities there are certainly linked to Little Tokyo, they are not wholly dependent upon this key urban site. How can we best understand the features and functions of the JA enclaves and main streets in the suburban hinterlands, especially in contrast to the major community formation in Little Tokyo?

If we consider the prewar and immediate postwar South Bay JA communities, their social ecologies, economic bases, daily rhythms, and other features seem distinct from those of Little Tokyo. Whether we are discussing JA clusters in Gardena, Lomita, or the Palos Verdes peninsula, their boundaries are debatable; social relations in these places seem more porous vis-à-vis non-Nikkei than those in Little Tokyo.⁹ Generally speaking, these communities are characterized by fluidity, at least compared to a seemingly stable Little Tokyo—if Little Tokyo has a defined territorial base, Nikkei community formations in the South Bay area may not. At this level, Japanese Americans in the South Bay seem perpetually involved in creating “place” out of space. Over the period of a decade or two, that “place” may also be dramatically transformed.¹⁰

These, of course, are broad generalizations. My point, however, is that in retrospect, the prewar JA space and place—like the generational

nomenclature I mention above—appeared to be definable and seemingly discrete: San Francisco’s J-Town, San Jose’s Nihonmachi, L.A.’s Little Tokyo. By contrast, like Nikkei generations, Nikkei communities today in places such as the South Bay are unbound; they are shifting even as they are more visibly and concomitantly local, national, international, and global.¹¹

In any case, instead of fixed boundaries that position various social actors as in, out, or “liminal” to the community, South Bay JA manifestations of space and place may appear and then recede depending on the moment as well as the needs of the individual or network defining the situation. The florescence of JA political networks in Gardena during the 1970s and 1980s, and their intersection with other power networks in that city, followed by their gradual erosion as many JA families moved away in the 1990s, illustrates the kind of flux I am thinking about here. In any case, it is the creative appropriation of the idea of a territorial assemblage that enables us to go beyond the limitations of modernist concepts such as “community” and postmodern critiques, alike.¹²

To sketch another example, let’s consider a project such as *Giant Robot (GR)*. Rather than identifying a specific person associated with the project—for example, Eric Nakamura, one of the founding editors of this influential Asian/Asian American pop culture magazine—we’d begin by imagining

lines of flight (deterritorialization) that link a series of bodies and things together. *Giant Robot* magazine started as a very rough-and-ready Kinko’s-produced publication that found its inspiration in the disparate intersection of punk rock, Japanese B-thriller monster movies such as *Gidra*, and a nascent designer toy market. As *GR* began to take off, other intersections emerged as the staff began inhabiting the new worlds of ‘zines and other such publications, the “new” media arts (including indie movies and manga), Asian/As Am pop and fusion music, fashion, cuisine, etc., as these were evolving on the two coasts as well as in Japan.¹³ Out of this swirl of people, networks, companies, products, ideas, art, and technologies, different inchoate linkages began to consolidate and take form. They were knit together via signs (e.g., *Giant Robot* itself) and energized by desire (in particular the desire of As Am youth to have products and a lifestyle reflective of their interests and experiences).

So rather than a traditional subject, what emerges in focus here is another kind of assemblage, but this time one that is more heavily oriented toward signs, symbols, and language reflecting these.¹⁴ This assemblage has a foundation of sorts in a Japanese American experience—via Nakamura and his evolving interests—but to see it solely as either Nakamura’s personal creation or as a simple

manifestation of Japanese America would be a mischaracterization. From such roots one can discern lines of flight, machinic linkages of the material and the virtual. Elements both real and virtual melded and mutated into a wonderful new entity, fusing disparate influences and entities—human and nonhuman—in ways that intensified, reverberated, built, until ultimately they mutated again in an explosion of creative energy.

What I’m proposing can be recapitulated as follows: Attacks may be launched by postmodern critics in regard to the legitimacy of “identity” politics and the status of “ethnicity” and individual “subjects” as part-and-parcel of the former. The fact is that Nikkei culture and community do persist today, albeit in sometimes fractured and unstable forms. Other manifestations such as *Giant Robot*, directly (although not solely) related to Japanese America, continue to percolate through the cracks even though their contemporary manifestations are flexible, evolving, and inherently linked to non-Nikkei persons, networks, ideas, and things. This is fascinating; these phenomena can’t be encompassed within the realm of modernist thought, let alone postmodern deconstructions—at least not so far as I’ve read or seen.

But things don’t stop here. *Giant Robot* and all its manifestations

entail a reterritorialization of lines of flight that once freely moved outward. For a given moment, lines of flight that crisscross the globe reconsolidate and manifest themselves in spaces such as a *Giant Robot* exhibition at the Japanese American National Museum or in the form of *gr/eats*, the Giant Robot restaurant on Sawtelle Boulevard, one of the locales where all of the above began and where lines of flight have landed momentarily in new manifestations.

So instead of capitulating to deconstruction, it is far more interesting to explore how amodernism allows the revisioning of contemporary experiences that have lines of flight emanating from what was once thought of as strictly Japanese America. The benefit is that without denying what we see around us, we can always eschew the notion of fixed subjects, identities, or ethnicity per se, if and when such concepts disguise more than they reveal.

In the end, we are led to a working hypothesis that promises to be fruitful: that “Japanese America,” wherever and whatever that may be, has *always* been a matter of intersections and assemblage. Once we acknowledge this point, then a wealth of new insights about the past and future of Japanese American and American ethnic culture in general become possible.

Notes

1. See Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature, and Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1989). Although it has been almost twenty years since Fuss wrote this classic book, it remains one of the clearest texts illustrating how postmodern critics apply the techniques of deconstruction in order to indicate that the foci of feminism and ethnic studies are misconstrued. To wit, postmodern critics who have followed in footsteps of the debates Fuss outlines have argued that the very concepts of “woman/women” or of “race” are illusory. Once this is supposedly demonstrated, it becomes relatively easy to dismiss either a sense of identity or community that is based on these foundations as essentialist.
2. Specifically, if “identity,” “ethnicity,” and “community” have modernist intellectual genealogies, postmodernism became a kind of cottage industry for academics in the 1990s who used linguistic analysis (deconstruction) to argue that these concepts were essentialized and thus false. For one example of how postmodern currents were seen by a number of theorists in the 1990s in Asian American Studies—both pro and con—see “Thinking Theory,” ed. Michael Omi and Dana Takagi, special issue, *Amerasia Journal* 21, no. 1 (1995).
3. In a nutshell, if modernism posits entities like “the subject,” postmodernism attempts to dismiss and dissolve them; Deleuze provides a way to transcend both positions via the concept of assemblage. A useful short overview of the concept can be found in J. Macgregor Wise, “Assemblage,” in *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts*, ed. Charles J. Stivale (Montreal and Ithaca, N.Y.: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), pp. 77–87. Wise notes that assemblage “shows us how institutions, organizations, bodies, practices, and habits make and unmake each other, intersecting and transforming: creating territories and then unmaking them, deterritorializing, opening lines of flight as a possibility of any assemblage, but also shutting them down” (p. 86). A more extensive discussion of assemblage, which is key to Deleuze’s thought, appears in Ian Buchanan, *Deleuzism: A Metacommentary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 117–142.
4. See Ichiro Mike Murase, *Little Tokyo: One Hundred Years in Pictures* (Los Angeles: Visual Communications/Asian American Studies Central, 1983).
5. Jim H. Matsuoka, “Little Tokyo: Searching the Past and Analyzing the Future,” in *Roots: An Asian American Studies Reader*, ed. Amy Tachiki et al. (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1971).
6. A very insightful account is available in Dean S. Toji and Karen Umemoto, “The Paradox of Dispersal: Ethnic Continuity and Community Among Japanese Americans in Little Tokyo,” *AAPI Nexus* 1, no. 1 (summer/fall 2003): 21–46.
7. See my brief overview of the postwar history of Japanese Americans in Gardena. Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, “Community Lost,” in *Asians in America: A Reader*, ed. Malcolm Collier (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall-Hunt Publishing, 1993), pp. 169–83.
8. To get a picture of how development issues have impacted the relatively large Japanese American communities in San Francisco and downtown Los Angeles, one can review articles and op-ed discussions in the *Nichi Bei Times*, a vernacular newspaper published weekly in San Francisco. Additional articles on San Francisco’s Japantown appear in the *Hokubei Mainichi*, another vernacular published in San Francisco.
9. A good example of how smaller Japanese American communities and families were fairly closely tied, economically speaking, to their surrounding neighborhoods is available in a monograph by Mark H. Rawitsch, *No Other Place: Japanese American Pioneers in a Southern California Neighborhood* (Riverside, Calif.: Department of History, University of California, Riverside, 1988).

Appendix III: “Imagined Futures: Opening Possibilities
for the Construction of Culture and Community”

10. For example, perhaps because I was not able to visit there very often over a period of twenty years, the Gardena that I remember from the early 1980s seems surprisingly transformed today, if not erased.
11. It is apparent that these levels are actually interlinked in complicated ways that have escaped previous notice, even in terms of scholarly accounts of Little Tokyo. Takashi Machimura has written an interesting essay that underscores this point in terms of contemporary Little Tokyo. See Takashi Machimura, “Living in a Transnational Community Within a Multi-Ethnic City: Making a Localized ‘Japan’ in Los Angeles,” in *Global Japan: The Experience of Japan’s New Immigrants and Overseas Communities*, ed. Roger Goodman et al. (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003). Paradoxically, some elements of the Japanese American experience and its physical manifestations remain particular (think of relatively unusual JA Christian agricultural collectives such as the Yamato Colony in California), even as others become increasingly universal (e.g., fusion “sushi” restaurants that may be owned by Korean Americans who have Mexican Americans working as chefs). See Kesa Noda, *Yamato Colony: 1906–1960* (Merced, Calif.: Livingston-Merced Japanese American Citizens League, 1981).
12. For an examination of the concept of *territorial* assemblage, see Wise, “Assemblage.”
13. Much of this account is drawn from a keynote address given by Eric Nakamura about the evolution of *Giant Robot* at “Imagined Futures,” a one-day conference that I helped organize at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles on May 2, 2009. An online site about *Giant Robot* with a number of links to interviews and stories that describe how *GR* evolved is available at Wikipedia under the subject category “Giant Robot (magazine)”: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giant_Robot_magazine.
14. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari refer to “a collective assemblage of enunciation.” In other words, this is a form of assemblage that is related to but distinctive from a territorial assemblage. For a commentary, see Wise, “Assemblage,” p. 80.

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Project Director: Lisa Sasaki

Project Core Team: John Esaki, Clement Hanami, Vicky Murakami-Tsuda, Miyoko Oshima, Lisa Sasaki, Janis Wong, Akemi Kikumura Yano

Contributing Museum Staff: La-Tanya Alexander, Nancy Araki, Akira Boch, Sarah Carle, Irene Hirano, Karin Higa, Lloyd Inui, Carol Komatsuka, Maria Kwong, Valerie Lawrence, Adrienne Lee, Darryl Mori, Sabrina Lynn Motley, Koji Sakai

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Community Convening Participants:

Chris Aihara, Japanese American Cultural and Community Center
Wayne Doiguchi, Japanese American Chamber of Commerce of Silicon Valley
Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, University of California, Los Angeles
Jerry Hiura, Japantown Community Congress of San Jose
Tom Ikeda, Denshō
Charles Igawa, California Association of Japanese Language Schools
Aya Ino, Nikkei Community Internship Alumni Northern California
Richard Katsuda, Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress
Jeff Kuwano, Japanese American Museum of San Jose
Mitch Maki, California State University, Dominguez Hills
Kaz Maniwa, Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California
Wes Mukoyama, Yu-Ai Kai
Alan Nishio, California Japantowns Preservation Committee
Tamon Norimoto, Japantown Community Congress of San Jose
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Ernest Britton, National Underground Railroad Freedom Center
Eduardo Diaz, National Hispanic Cultural Center
Kathryn Girard, Skirball Cultural Center
Gwen Goodman, National Museum of American Jewish History
Charmaine Jefferson, California African American Museum
Robert Kirschner, Skirball Cultural Center
Michelle Kumata, The Wing Luke Asian Museum
Cynthia Lee, Museum of Chinese in America
James G. Leventhal, Judah L. Magnes Museum
Danny López, National Hispanic Cultural Center
Juanita Moore, Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History
Pauline Wong, Chinese American Museum

Dr. Ronald Stewart

Dr. Lane Ryo Hirabayashi

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