THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE:
UNDERSTANDING STUDENT'S EXPERIENCE OF THE AFRICAN ART GALLERY AT THE ACKLAND ART MUSEUM
BACKGROUND
RESEARCH DESIGN

• Interview 5 art “insiders” and 5 art “outsiders”
  • 5 Art History Masters Students
  • 5 Library Science Masters Students

• Walk through permanent collections galleries as naturally as possible

• Phenomenological approach to interviewing and question design
RESULTS

1. Outsiders relied on textual information more heavily (and remember it better)
2. Outsiders perceived the principle of organization of the gallery more quickly than insiders
3. Insiders brought expectations about how a museum is usually organized
4. Insiders were aware of the curatorial “they”
5. Everyone perceived a difference in vibe between the Western galleries and the African Art Gallery
“In the African gallery it seems like highlight is the emphasis and so we give you this pop of red, the lights are on the objects are like very explicitly lit and you note the lights I think more clearly.

Like I saw, like I looked up at the lights because of how strong it felt versus the other galleries. So that seemed to me to be like a very different mood and attitude between the galleries.”
Unidentified artist, South Africa, Zulu culture
**Necklace or Cache Sexe**, 19th century
beads, fiber, and brass
Ackland Fund and Gift of Norma Canelas Roth and William Roth, 2017.19.9

Unidentified artist, South Africa, Zulu culture
**Snuff Bottle Holder and Necklace**, 18th century
beads and wood
Ackland Fund and Gift of Norma Canelas Roth and William Roth, 2017.19.4

Unidentified artist, South Africa, Zulu culture
**Necklace or Cache Sexe**, 19th century
beads, fiber, and brass
Ackland Fund and Gift of Norma Canelas Roth and William Roth, 2017.19.10
RESULTS

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## IMPACT ON EXPERIENCE

### INSIDER
- Interested
- Want more
- Incompetent
- Intrigued
- Suspicious
- Alert
- Uncomfortable
- Surprised
- Engaged

### OUTSIDER
- Uncomfortable
- Frustrated
- Confused
- Reassured
- Curious
- Annoyed
- Angry / Mad
- “Aware of my own lack of knowledge”
CONCLUSION

• Difference between Western and non-Western art was noticeable
  • In label information
  • In manner of display
  • In mode of perception

• Subjects left curious about African Art
• HOWEVER, this was a very educated and discerning subject population
THANK YOU!