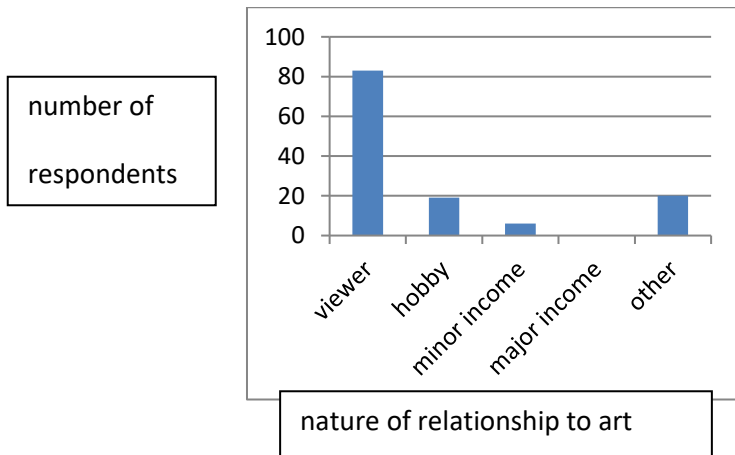
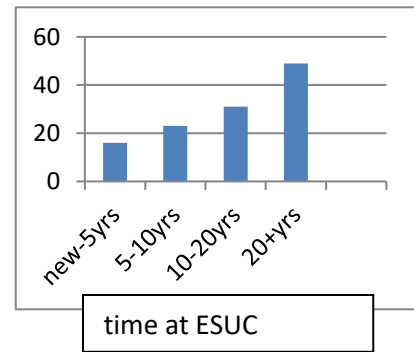
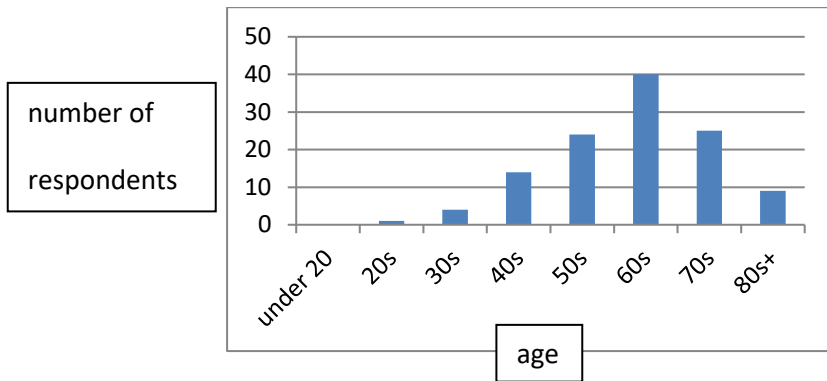


EAST SHORE GALLERY -- past, present, and future

Survey -- Jan-Feb 2017: Summary of Results

Background: The Gallery committee decided to conduct a survey as a way to gather opinions and ideas from the East Shore congregation. A survey was made available, both online and in hard-copy format, for 5 weeks during January and February, 2017. A total of 125 people responded to the survey -- these respondents were expected to come from the 'extremes' among the congregation: that is, they were expected to be either positively or negatively disposed toward the Gallery and its workings. While such a convenience sample of self-selected respondents can NOT yield results that are statistically representative of the congregation as a whole, this type of 'exploratory' research can yield useful insights and ideas, which is what the Gallery committee was after.

Respondents: Who did respond? Here is how our respondents described themselves:



51 people provided their name on the survey

Have you ever shown or sold your art at East Shore Gallery?

yes! - 27 (23%)

no - 90 (77%)

Responses to open-ended survey questions about the role, place, and operation of the Gallery at East Shore

Q2: Think back over Gallery shows that you have seen at East Shore. How does the Gallery impact you individually? How do the Gallery shows influence your experience at church? (use a few words, phrases, or sentences)

Responses: 69 positive comments -- most common themes:

enjoy the art, enjoy the variety; calming and enriching; a quiet and contemplative experience; beauty expands my horizons and gives me an opportunity to explore new things; makes church-going a more positive experience; inspiring to see "all the creativity out there;" reminds me that I am entering a special time of the week, set aside for my soul; provides a good conversation topic through which to interact with other members and with visitors; begins my transition into introspection and reflection; it helps me quiet my mind prior to entering the sanctuary; support local artists (even some artists in the congregation)

Some quotations that provided additional insights:

"The gallery is an integral part of my experience at East Shore. There is something very right about walking into a church and finding it full of wonderful art. That's been the tradition of churches (for various reasons) for a very long time and it is still very important. How many people never see artworks 'in the flesh' rather than in a book or on TV except when they come into our foyer?"

" The Gallery has been one of the constants that keeps me coming to East Shore. While I don't 'like' all the hangings, they make me think and build connections that I would probably not have seen on my own to the interconnected web. I'm not an artist but there are times, the Gallery hanging has kept me from turning around and leaving on a Sunday morning. Building out the additional space for the Gallery is what tipped the scales for me about approving the budget for remodeling back in 2000..."

"...there is an added benefit for me. I am a shy person and don't know a lot of people at East Shore. The gallery gives me a chance to have something to do while I'm looking for friends. It gives me a way of interacting with other people. I would really miss it if it was not there."

Responses: 14 negative comments -- most common themes:

uncomfortable with selling things at church (though many of these commenters still admitted to enjoying the art and sometimes buying from the Gallery); it would be better to show what the church is all about at the entry to the Sanctuary; find it crowded or distracting; reeks of privilege and exclusivism; does not reflect me (in cost or taste)

Some quotations that provided additional insights:

"I enjoy the visual input. I do not like the sales aspect much. I think the panels near the doors should be related to our social justice or spiritual activities, not for selling."

"It shows me a lot of art I can't afford."

Q3 - Do any of the past Gallery shows stand out in your memory?

responses: 76% said yes

most frequently mentioned:

25 - family show "it helps to recognize the talents we have among us"

23 - show featuring homeless men photographers

[this show]..."enabled me to hear their voices and see their talent"

10 - holiday show "I always find cool presents for my family" "I like knowing that I'm supporting local artists and this church through my holiday shopping"

5 - Native American

5 - nature

5 - color

5- other cultures, women from around the world

other memorable shows mentioned: Fair Trade items; work by disabled artists; work featuring the NW; the show that included work by Jacob Lawrence

interesting perspective regarding the photographs by homeless men:

"This exhibit said, 'All artists have a place here.'"

Q5 - Thinking ahead, what ideas can you suggest for future Gallery shows? Are there specific themes or media (types of art) that you would like to see featured in a Gallery show in the future?

75 people responded to this question; a variety of ideas (about possible show themes) and recommendations (changes to make) were provided -- the most frequent responses are provided here:

ideas mentioned by more than one responder: PNW themes and NW coastal nations were the most commonly mentioned; other themes included: diversity (faiths, people of color, genders, autistic, prisoners, homeless, cultural diversity of the Eastside, refugees, immigrants -- indicate how we value diversity); variety in media; watercolors; photography; wearable art; art that reflects our UU values, mission, goals, and/or social justice issues; more involvement with members and children

recommendations mentioned by more than one responder included: use the panels by the doors to represent who we are as a religious community; lower prices; keep it kid-friendly; keep the quality high; use the Gallery to counter the perception that East Shore is a class-bound, wealthy, whites-only congregation; provide art workshops that demonstrate/teach art as a path to spiritual growth; use the foyer for something other than art

Q8 - Some people feel that art can play a role in expressing or invoking 'spirit' or spirituality. If you feel that art plays a special role in your own experience of religion or spirituality, please describe briefly:

of the 75 people responding to this question, 62 (83%) provided comments about the positive impact of art on their own spiritual experience; among the many perspectives shared were these:

"Certain art pieces move me beyond words. There is something so fundamentally raw, vulnerable and tactile about visual arts that can really shake me."

"Art is an important aspect of my spirituality. I don't go out to galleries very much, so what East Shore offers fills a gap in my life. It reminds me of the many gifts we humans have to offer each other."

"Art can help me step outside myself, into a different experience. Yet also, bring about inward contemplation -- kind of the zen moment. Beauty and appreciation for the skill and talent and insight of the artist."

"...the art in the Gallery helps me make the transition from the busy world outside into the 'soul' of the entryway, as we stand around greeting each other, listening to the musicians finishing their rehearsal. Then we are ready when the doors to the sanctuary open, to get in touch with our 'spirit.'"

"One of the roles of both church and art for me is to help me see the world in a different way. It expands my understanding of other people and other ways of seeing the world. I also think that appreciation of beauty in art, music, or nature is an extremely important part of spiritual and mental health."

"...I view the art, learn about my response, and grow from the wealth and range of art. Art can evoke a response in me, and almost always there is something that does so at East Shore."

"Definitely, worship for me begins before I enter the sanctuary, even before I enter. The large decorative doors are a wow! The gallery is just part of the experience."

13 of the 75 respondents to this question (17%) provided comments about the negative impact of art on their own spiritual experience; these perspectives included:

- art is OK but should not be commercial, should not be for sale
- high prices of some items are out of reach of most congregants and promote an image of East Shore that is affluent or elitist
- art should be by church members; I would love to see pieces that show what UU means to them, what we are about as a faith, and as a community
- concern about the location of the art in the entry way or in low displays that are accessible to children

Q9 - We're interested in knowing what sorts of concerns having artwork in the church foyer may cause for some people. Does any aspect of the Gallery and its location cause you concern?

17 of the 71 people who responded to this question (24%) expressed concerns that the Gallery should remain supported within the church in its current space; their comments included:

the space was designed for the Gallery--we should not lose that; the Gallery makes our church stand out above others; art feeds the soul; I so appreciate the beautiful art; the artwork in the foyer was one of the things about East Shore that drew me in; I love the fact that the Gallery is located so that you can't help but see it; the Gallery provides an opportunity for individuals and families to teach each other to appreciate and respect art

54 of the 71 respondents to this question (76%) expressed concerns of their own or of others about the Gallery -- these comments included:

20 of the 54 negative responders (37%) -- wanted the space to better reflect the religious values and history of East Shore, reflect activities of the church, to promote church activities, to welcome new visitors by showing the values of UU and our church members and programs

12 of the 54 (22%) -- expressed concern about the crowdedness of the Gallery space and North Room during the time just after the service ends, though several pointed out the 'narrow hallway there (into the North Room) so it would be crowded in any case'

12 of the 54 (22%) -- concerns centered on breakable items in low displays leading to parental anxiety

5 (9% of the 54) -- expressed unhappiness that price tags are visible; felt that selling has no place in a church

3 of the 54 (6%) -- were afraid that high prices could represent an unwelcoming message for members or visitors

2 of the 54 (4%)-- want the foyer to accommodate outreach tables since they are no longer permitted in the North Room [note: this already happens]

1 of the 54 (2%) -- the Gallery doesn't generate funds for the church [note: factually untrue]

~ as author of this summary, I'll be happy to respond to any questions or comments!

April Atwood ~amatwood@gmail.com