

# WHO IS MARCIA SMITH?

## She is the AVERAGE Arts Patron

She's white, somewhere between 45 and 54 years old. She has at least a college degree and earns more than \$75,000 annually. We imagine she enjoys the symphony, visits the High Museum's rotating exhibits a few times a year, and loves to read.

Marcia is a collection of statistics. She's computed from ticket sales reported by arts-based nonprofit organizations. Marcia is an agglomeration of best efforts to measure participation in the arts. But Marcia is really just part of the picture. She's the part that attends the symphony, donates to the High's annual campaigns, and attends lectures by poets at local libraries. The National Arts Participation report benchmarks attendance at jazz, classical music, opera, musical plays, non-musical plays, and ballet performances, and visits to art museums or art galleries.

There are other people who belong in that picture too — people who experience the arts in a variety of formats or attend arts events where ticket counts are not recorded. Who are these other people, and what does their participation in the arts look like?







## GAMER

Name: **Santiago Garcia**

Gender: Male

Age: 30

Ethnicity/Race: Hispanic

The average gamer is a 30 year old Hispanic male according to research conducted by both PEW and the Entertainment Software Association, and they are helping to contribute to the 14.8 billion dollars in sales that video games brought in during 2012. 70% of games being played are a combination of puzzle games and casual / social games. 47% of Individuals playing video games are reporting that they are spending less time going to the movies.

Research is also showing, however, that while African-American and Hispanic video gamers are the largest two demographic blocks, they are woefully underrepresented in video game content. A study by University of Southern California professor Dmitri Williams found less than 3% of video game characters were recognizable Hispanic, while African Americans were represented at a rate of 10.74% (though the majority of those were athletes and gangsters). Under-representation is largely blamed on institutional lack of opportunity in the industry actually making the games. Gamers consume the work of graphic designers, digital animators, writers, etc, but those professions are lacking in representation from their largest consumer blocks.



## TELEVISION

Name: **Lisa Williams**

Gender: Female

Age: 55+

Ethnicity/Race: African-American

The average TV watcher is an African-American female over 50. Not including this brand of arts patron omits those who consume all the creative activity involved in the production of television shows and marketing media. These cultural consumers are multi-taskers, less willing to commit to being unplugged from the world while they consume cultural content.

61% of TV viewers check email while watching TV, 47% visit social media sites, 37% look up information related to the program they are watching and 27% look up product information they just saw advertisements about. With 1/3 of this audience immediately being engaged enough with a product to take action, it is not surprising that advertising dollars spent in the tv industry dwarf those marketing budgets being committed to the non-profit arts.





## MOVIE GOER

Name: **Elana Perez**

Gender: Female

Age: 18-24

Ethnicity/Race: Hispanic

The average ticket-buyer at the movies is a Hispanic female between the ages of 18 and 24. Movie goers consume the creative work of writers, directors, actors, set and costume designers, sound designers, and a myriad of other creative employees involved in movie production.

## RADIO LISTENER

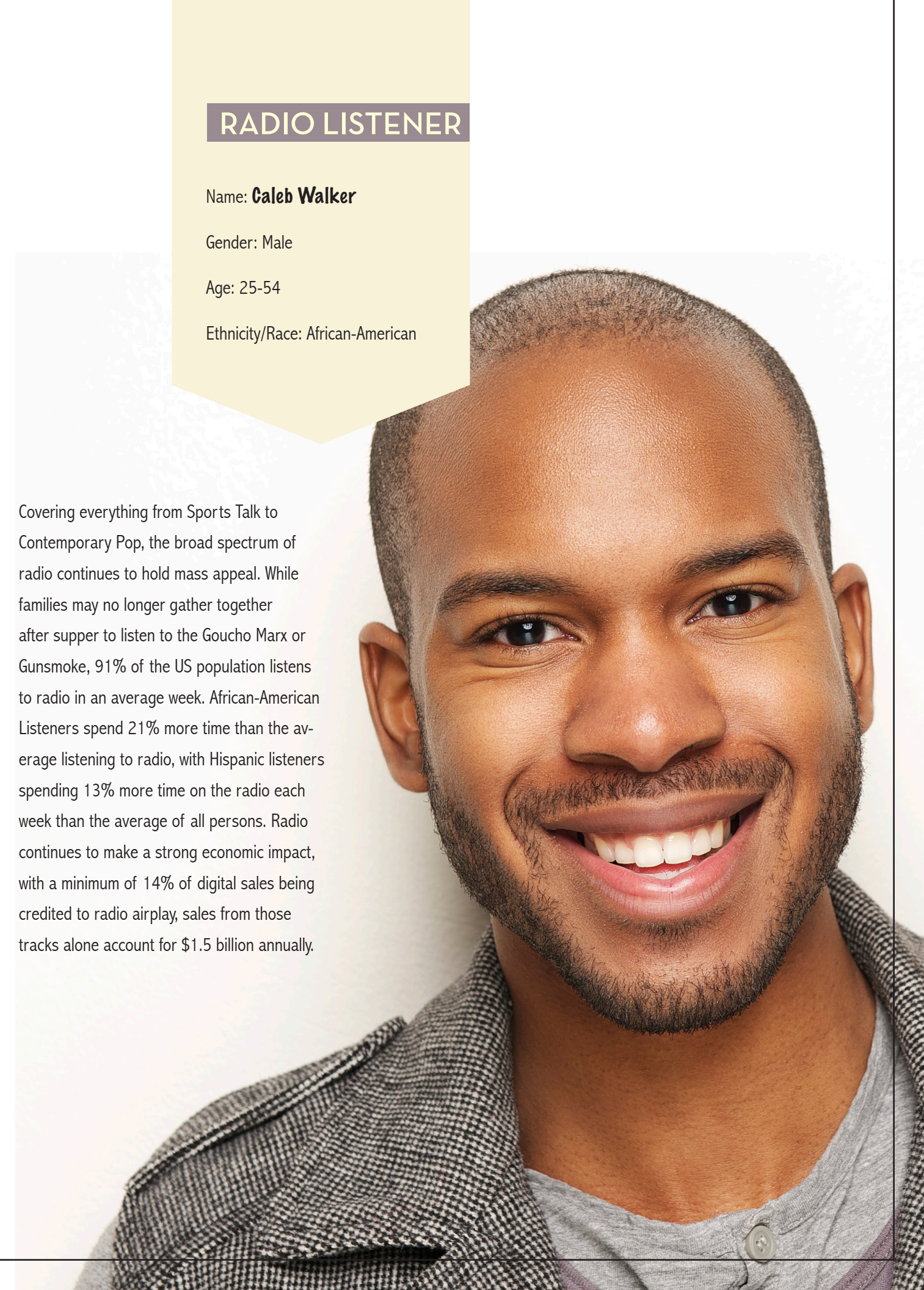
Name: **Caleb Walker**

Gender: Male

Age: 25-54

Ethnicity/Race: African-American

Covering everything from Sports Talk to Contemporary Pop, the broad spectrum of radio continues to hold mass appeal. While families may no longer gather together after supper to listen to the Goucho Marx or Gunsmoke, 91% of the US population listens to radio in an average week. African-American Listeners spend 21% more time than the average listening to radio, with Hispanic listeners spending 13% more time on the radio each week than the average of all persons. Radio continues to make a strong economic impact, with a minimum of 14% of digital sales being credited to radio airplay, sales from those tracks alone account for \$1.5 billion annually.





# MEASURING

When mining for hard data on the arts, choices made about how to track the arts and what to include in statistical measurements can seem like common sense. When one wants to know who attends arts events, it makes sense to look at ticket sales, of course. It's also the easiest and quickest place to start. So when we learn through ticket sales records that the average arts patron is Marcia Smith, we have to keep in mind what's missing from our data.

Mining for data on other forms of arts participation can be difficult and time-intensive. Even within the non-profit sector festivals, visual arts and public art creating measurement tools has been challenging. The 501c3 non-profit is a very specific subgenre within the cultural ecosystem. When participation in the creative sector is viewed more broadly, tracking participation becomes more challenging.

A more complete picture will also need to include non 501c3/ticket based participation methods. Measuring how individuals are impacted by the arts, and who arts audiences truly are, will require measuring.

## Other ways to measure:

**Surveys** – The Neilson's provide specific score for TV, Radio and more on a daily basis. The largest non-profit survey is done every 5 years. To create a clearer picture, shared methodologies may be needed across disciplines, with surveys a likely tool.

**Audience estimation** – As recognition technology becomes more ubiquitous, the same technology used to track number of cars on the road each day could be used to track people at a festival.

**Active Participation** – On top of passive arts participation, in 2007-8 almost half (%45) of US adults reported in participating in the arts through some sort of artistic creation.

# FUTURE AUDIENCES



The diversity and depth of the creative industries mean that the audiences that comprise it are much richer and more diverse than Marcia Smith, Santiago Garcia or Lisa Williams. Each of the different sectors discussed in this article has future challenges and opportunities based on how the demographics of the broader community are changing. As demographic changes shrink the number of patrons who make up the traditional arts audiences, organizations that have served those audiences will have to develop strategies to appeal to populations that are more diverse. The absence of African-American and Hispanic protagonists in the digital media industry presents a challenge to companies seeking to hold on or grow their market share. How each of these parts of the broader creative industries sector respond to these challenges by reaching out to new audiences while at the same time making sure the audiences participating have a seat at the creation table may in part determine the success of these sectors moving forward.

## What types of arts consumer are you?