**HAM Art Database Findings**

3/20/25

Data discovered in **ED\_fields.ipynb**

* All 245,715 object records have been surveyed for this review
* Acquisition of objects spanned from 1963 to 2025, with a steady increase. There is a large spike (6X) in 2011 when a large acquisition was made.
* Objects were created spanning from year -8000 to present day with some clustering around year -500 to 500 as well as a marked exponential increase beginning in 1500 to present day.
* In order of volume, the collection includes 82940 Photographs, 69244 Prints, 31037 Drawings, 18055 Coins, 8499 Archival Materials, 5920 Paintings, 5052 Vessels, 4732 Sculptures, 3864 Fragments, etc…
* The ‘division’ of objects is approximately 50% Modern and Contemporary Art, 30% European and American Art, 20% Asian an Mediterranean Art
* The most collected ‘culture’ in order of distribution includes: American, German, French, Italian, British, Japanese, Greek, Chinese, Roman, Dutch, Byzantine, Roman Provençal, Flemish, Korean, Persian, Spanish, Indian
* Acquisitions include 52% Gifts, 18% Transfer, 12.7% Not Recorded, 8% Purchase, 7% Bequest, etc…
* 14% of records have descriptions
* Descriptions disproportionately are found in records between years -600 and 600
* Descriptions are more likely to be found for object that are classified as Byzantine, Indian, Roman Provincial and Roman Imperial
* 1% of records have comments
* Objects acquired in late 1960 as well as late 2000’s are more likely to have comments.
* Objects made between 1940 and 1960 are more likely to have comments.
* Comments are more likely to be found in objects the are Byzantine, Syrian and Egyptian.

Data discovered in **ED\_bias\_terms.ipynb**

When performing a keyword search for derogatory terms:

**‘squaw’**

* is found 0 times

**‘negro’**

* is found 306 time, for 297 of these the keyword is in the title.
* Most of these objects come from the Social Museum Collection, a collection of more than 6000 photographs collected in the first 3 decades of the 20th century which came out of a project “to promote investigations of modern social conditions and to direct the amelioration of industrial and social life” [[1]](#footnote-2) Titles are similar to: ‘Social Settlements: United States. Alabama. Calhoun. "Calhoun Colored School": Agencies Promoting Assimilation of the Negro. Development of Social Standards among the Negroes. Calhoun Colored School, Calhoun, Ala.: Class in Scoring Cows.’ These titles also often include the keywords ‘Indian” and “Jew” to refer to humans rather than names.
* additional instances of this keyword, in the title exist for both paintings and drawings. Most of them identify humans by keyword such as: The Negro, Negro Soldier, Negro in a Punt in a Landscape, etc
* Written to **ne.csv**

**’n\*\*\*\*r’**

* Is found 3 times
* one instance of print title ‘Free N\*\*\*\*r’
* Written to **ni.csv**

**‘Savage’**

* 16 records were found with word savage
* Most are from a series of prints, ‘Bineau the Savage’, with one lithograph “Isn’t that savage ugly!”
* Written to **savage.csv**

**‘Eskimo’**

* 0 records found

**‘Indian’**

* 76 records were found where Indian is referring to a person of Native American descent
* Examples: American Indian Costumes, American Indian Battle, Indian chiefs, an Indian Miniature, Indian Girl, Indian with White Man, Lo, the Poor Indian
* Additional records were found where the culture is listed as Plains Indian
* Written to **indian.csv**

**‘Redneck’**

* 0 records found

**‘jap’**

* 0 records found

**‘Oriental’**

* 84 records found with keyword used to describe people or objects of east asian origin
* Examples include: 'oriental woman', 'oriental rug', 'oriental paper', 'oriental cap', 'oriental style', 'oriental dancer', ‘An Oriental Holding a Horse', ‘Nude Oriental Youth’
* Written to **oriental.csv**

A file with all examples has been written to **example.csv**

An additional csv file with primary examples and limited fields has been written to **brief\_example.csv**

3/27/25

Data discovered in **Descriptions.ipynb**

**Sentiment Analysis**

* Sentiment Analysis (Google distilled BERT model) run on on 36688 descriptions with poor results. The sentiment seemed to be driven by keywords that could have negative or positive sentiment in conversation though have simply descriptive purpose in this use case.
* On quick visual inspection of description field I was not able to find text that looked bias. This field could use further processing. It seems to be much more formal and regulated than the below mentioned comments field.

**Comments**

* Comments fields were extracted for 2424 objects. The number was reduced to 1258 by excluding comments that were simply indexes.
* Records with comments written to **comments.csv**

First 100 objects with comments were reviewed. Some interesting finding were:

Richard Prince, *Untitled (Portfolio of Twelve Prints)*

* Personal opinion regarding artwork: ‘the prints examine masculinity in a sensitive, smart, and unusual way.’

Tanning, *Portfolio*

* Eroticsizing of female artist, use of terms: ‘her self-projection as an erotic fantasy’, ‘perhaps still an adolescent’, 'in a tableau filled with sex and violence’, ‘naked from the waist down ‘, ‘she herself admits it is a retrospective self-portrait, according to the dealer from which this was purchased.’

Sandri, *Giacomo Leopardi*

* Derogatory text concerning mental illness
* ‘In 1965, the critic L. Bracchi, on the occasion of a posthumous exhibition in Saronno, wrote, "I recall above all his graphic work which is impressive. From a psychological point of view I especially recall the splendid drawings of the lunatics.’

Degas, *Portrait of Hilaire Germain Edgar Degas (1834-1917)*

* Unessecay mentions of prostiution in commentary on a simple pencil portrait of a male friend, “Desboutin was one of Degas's close friends, whom he painted in his famous genre tableau of an apparent toper and prostitute at a Parisian cafe. In fact, Desboutin and the woman in the painting, another friend of Degas, were simply models for the artist, not disreputable habitués.”

4/3/25

Data discovered in **Missing.ipynb**

Gender

* Out of the approximately 250K items, 2.2% are female-attributed, 61.3% are male-attributed, and the remaining 36.2% are attributed to an unknown gender.
* Most of the pre 1500 objects are of unknown gender aside from a cluster of male attributed items between years 0 and 600.
* Objects where a creation date is not known are disproportionately attributed to men over being unknown or female.
* There is an exponential increase in male attributed objects beginning around 1500 and peaking at 2000.
* The only female attributed items exist in a cluster beginning around 1900 with a linear increase also peaking at the year 2000.
* Beginning in the year 2010 the percentage of objects collected attributed to men have begun to decrease while the percentage attributed to women had increased. This shift is dramatic. Near 2018 the percentage of female attributed objects overtook the male reaching a ratio as high as 100:1 in the last few years.

Exclusion

* Most of the objects without a person attributed to them are from antiquity
* Moreover, items dated after 1800 with no ‘person’ are often reproductions of older items or those whose origin is unknown.
* Other examples of excluded people include Japanese prints which include the artist’s name on the image, but it’s not listed under the artist field. radiographs that mention the original work but not the name of the radiographer. Several Korean prints lack an artist’s name but provide extensive exhibition text.

Exclusion by Keyword:

‘negro’

* Of the 79 records, there are a number of images of people of color with their color (or derogatory names for their color) being the primary identifier rather than name. Eg. Negro Soldier, Two Women of Color, Dominica (French Mulatress of Dominica and a Negro Woman in their Proper Dress), Purchasing Fruit (A French Mulatress Purchasing Fruit from a Negro Wench).
* Another interesting observation is that there are a large number of photographs taken by Ben Shahn, a realist painter from the early 20th century. These were likely taken in the 1930s when Shahn was employed at the Resettlement Administration in Washington DC. The names of Black American subjects are largely excluded from the photos; additionally, it was noted that Shahn often used a right-angle viewfinder to take the photos while his subjects were unaware. 'The compact and portable camera of the 1930s and 1940s was the 35mm Leica. Because of its novel size, it was also less conspicuous, and the right-angle viewfinder attachment allowed photographers to shoot subjects surreptitiously while facing away. With this advantage, photographers such as Walker Evans, Ben Shahn, and Helen Levitt made pictures of their subjects caught unawares on crowded streets.'

‘indian’

* Like the keyword “Indian,” which returns records that describe a person by their name rather than their ethnicity, there’s usually no trace of the person identified as “Indian” in the “person” field.
* Another important observation is that the term “American” is often used to describe a culture in the “person” and “object” fields, which can be seen as a form of erasure. In my analysis, the only way to determine if a person is Native American is if their birthplace is listed as something like “Indian Territory (Chickasha, OK).” And there is no way aside from looking up the artist to know if they are part of the Black American community.
* I found just one record where the Native American sitter is identified :
* Caleb Cheeshahteamuck[{'role': 'Artist', 'birthplace': 'Beverly, MA', 'gender': 'male', 'displaydate': 'born 1948', 'prefix': None, 'culture': 'American', 'displayname': 'Stephen E. Coit', 'alphasort': 'Coit, Stephen E.', 'name': 'Stephen E. Coit', 'personid': 24213, 'deathplace': None, 'displayorder': 1}, {'role': 'Sitter', 'birthplace': None, 'gender': 'unknown', 'displaydate': None, 'prefix': None, 'culture': 'Native American', 'displayname': 'Caleb Cheeshahteamuck', 'alphasort': 'Cheeshahteamuck, Caleb', 'name': 'Caleb Cheeshahteamuck', 'personid': 56120, 'deathplace': None, 'displayorder': 2}]
* Surprisingly, the term “Native American” is used in the cultural field here. This is the only instance I’ve encountered where it’s used.
* I wonder if the museum could create a more systematic and culturally sensitive cultural field. This could be particularly useful for contemporary artists who identify with a specific culture.
* Another possibility is to provide contemporary artists with an identity field. At this point, art is inevitably read through the lens of identity. There are numerous examples of artists within stigmatized communities using derogatory keywords subversively in their works. Having this information is crucial for interpreting artwork.

Data Discovered in **Exhibitions.ipynb**

* 4973 exhibition records were extracted spanning from 1730 to 2025.
* 4604 exhibitions do not have a recorded curator; 389 do.

Curator Exhibition Trends

* There are 9 curators with over 10 exhibitions, some as high as 25. There are around 30 curators with 3-10 exhibitions. The remaining curators have just 1 or 2.
* Plotting by exhibition year and looking at the curator’s interests, we can see some trends:
* Stuart Cary Welch:
* Indian and Persian, 1981-2000, 25 exhibitions
* Laura Muir:
* European and Modern, 2007-2025, 25 exhibitions
* Robert D. Mowry:
* Asian Art, 1997-2012, 23 exhibitions
* Mary McWilliams:
* Islamic, Indian, SE Asian , 1999-2014, 22 exhibitions

Object ‘division’ by acquisition year

* We can see clear trends in acquisitions. Largely European and American Art until the 1970s when the volume of Asian and Mediterranean art collected rose dramatically. Beginning in the 1990s, collecting of European and American Art again achieved dominance with discrete clusters of high volumes of Modern and Contemporary collecting between 2000 and 2025.

Object ‘culture’ by acquisition year

* Collecting of American art was dominant between 1970 and today.
* There is discrete high-volume collecting of German art both in the 1960s and near 2020.
* High-volume collecting of Japanese art in the 1930s and 1980s.
* French art had a surge in the 1980s.
* There was a long cluster of collecting Greek art in the 1970s-1980s.

4/16/25

**Derogatory\_Response.ipynb**

* Contains examples of ways that Museums are presenting derogatory words found in historical artwork data.

Final\_Presentations.ipynb

* A compilation of important findings and charts contained in previous notebooks

1. Francis G. Peabody, The Social Museum as an Instrument of University Teaching. Publications of the Department of Social Ethics in Harvard University, no. 4 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1911) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)