

Met Museum: 3 Qualitative Project Ideas February/March 2018: Clare Churchouse

Project 1: Where uncertainty falls, the incidence of the word "uncertain" in The Met's collection

Do database search in titles and web label text descriptions for 'uncertain' and do a Printed Matter-like table of uncertainty images. What does a database search on "uncertain" and "uncertainty" return?

The idea is to bring a different viewpoint / approach to the database and online collection: What does this reveal in terms of image appearance when multiple images are shown together. Use the results as another way of entering the collection, textural written context to group images across centuries, across genres, across departments.

Consider relation between image and text.

Enable viewing without text
 with all text
 by aggregated date
 by genre

The web labels are on the website, work from the api though since this has all the information together with the image urls. Use p5.js to search titles, save searches into a json, and use html for layout.

Initial idea to visualize this based on ideas from Printed Matter tables and from the website <http://www.microtyp.org/> - partly overlapping books, can zoom in, click to get info on one piece. Interested in using overlapping, and mouse click to get image information on each piece (search classification (uncertain, artist name, artwork title, date, web label text, image url link). Also want to convey a degree of uncertainty with the look of the artboard by including fading for instance, random placement on load, random reload so placement is not the same each time.

When using the actual data, found that the focus here was on the relation between text and artwork image. The text description holds the information on uncertainty – leading to decision to display the images with the word uncertain in view in the text but the rest of the sentence is only apparent on hover.

Include buttons to display text if view of all text required.

Aim is to approach the works in terms of their uncertain content, uncertain titling & descriptions, aggregating artwork images by the search term.

Use the results as another way of entering the collection, textural written context to group by look / feel / emotion of the image.

Depending on the results, extend this to other word searches, e.g. '?', 'random', 'precarious', 'hesitant', 'incomplete', 'falling', 'doubt' – these are some words that are used to describe visual artworks that have been selected as conveying a degree of uncertainty.

Note: found that the labels are not in the public domain, so altered the display so that the web label text does not appear. To see the web label description, click on each image to go to that image's page on The Met Collection where the uncertainty web label appears.

Project 2: Gender words – all the women in the Met / 1437 – 2017 as cited in the api of the Modern & Contemporary Art Collection, all the men in the Met

Investigate the Modern and Contemporary Art collection (ModCont) by use of specific gender-related words such as male, female:

- 14,350 ModCont collection, search words in the api which are gender related, e.g.
 - o Male, female, man, men, woman, women
 - o If that doesn't come up with enough options, use she, he, his, her
- Show the whole sentence they appear in. Use:
 - o "webLabel": {"label": "Gallery Label", "text":
 - o "informationBoxes": [{"label": "Catalogue Entry", "text":
 - o "label": "Technical Notes", "text":
 - o "metadata": {"pageTitle": "Albrecht Dürer | Virgin and Child with Saint Anne | The Met", "metaTitle": "", "metaDescription":

Explore context of descriptions, in some ways this might show disproportionate emphasis on men and artwork by male artists but it may also give a qualitative richness around the data. Interested in what this shows about the ways that women and men are discussed, male and female, whether there are things that stand out, or a general sense of framing that comes over with qualitative word mining.

- Run this by object begin date to give a structure and possibly find some sort of progressional flow to the wording choices and framing changing over decades.
- Use rita.js / python alphabet soup and p5.js for layout

Do parallel version of this that swaps out the gender-referenced word for the opposite, so for example, in a sentence which reads, "he was considered a genius in his lifetime" change it to read, "she was considered a genius in her lifetime."

Visualize ongoing descriptions with running text sentences in one block across the screen. Interested in exploring how to create streaming, continuous moving with this piece. Run all the female ones first and then the male and do as a continuous stream.

Aim is to explore ways that women and that men are referred to in the ModCont collection.

Project 3: The artist / the artist is

Again a word search, this one using the whole api db and based on mining for any words that have "the artist" or "the artist is" or "the artist was" – return text streams with the sentence and the corresponding images.

See what the phrase returns, how it is used, how the Met writers / curators have used this phrase and what it returns.

e.g. <https://collectionapi.metmuseum.org/api/collection/v1/object/436210>

"Here the artist presents himself as a learned painter, with a large book and scholarly attire." ("webLabel": {"label": "Gallery Label", "text"})

"Portrait of the Artist,\" January 18–March 7, 1972, no. 9.

New York." ("label": "Exhibition History", "text")

"Vol. 1, London, 1829, pp. 34–35, no. 101, states that the artist has depicted himself at about the age of forty; gives provenance information." ("label": "References", "text")

"Portrait of the Artist." ("label": "References", "text")

"Gerrit Dou's Self Portraits and Depictions of the Artist." ("label": "References", "text")

"Zwolle, The Netherlands, 2001, p. 20 [German ed., \"Von der lustvollen Betrachtung der Bilder,\" Leipzig, 2000, pp. 19, 22 n. 27], discusses the pigments that appear on the artist's palette." ("label": "References", "text")

Use rita.js / python alphabet soup and p5.js for layout

Visualize this as a word tree so start with "the artist" and go to "is" "was" etc. Inspiration

<https://www.jasondavies.com/wordtree/>, <http://hint.fm/>

Aim is to create stream that reveals what kind of patterns there are - how the Met writes and organizes information about "the artist" in the textual information surrounding artworks in the Met.

Use the results as another way of entering the collection, by look / feel / emotion of the image (rather than the website collection's categories and classification.)