

Diversity at MoMA

I had gone to the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) a few years ago and was blown away by the artwork lining the walls and seeing paintings I had read about, from Monet's Waterlilies to Van Gogh's Starry Night. So when I saw the dataset, I really wanted to analyze it and get to know more about the MoMA.

I started by exploring the data and getting a better understanding of the artwork such as the departments, and artists, but narrowed down the scope to better understand diversity at the MoMA to answer the following question:

- How has MoMA prioritized becoming more diverse over the years? And have they?

Why is diversity at museums important?

Museums are important because they bring us into contact with art those before us have made, and valued, and can help us understand what it was like during a certain period in history. However, there are so many talented artists from diverse backgrounds that are underrepresented so when artwork displayed doesn't represent different demographics and is skewed, that's a problem. NYC where the museum of modern art is located is a very diverse city with people from different walks of life and cultures and what's displayed impacts what visitors see and learn about history and art. So, museums should reflect the average person at the time, and different perspectives.

Tools

Excel: To clean the data

Tableau: To create the visualisations

Datasets

The MoMA dataset has two files, artworks.csv and artist.csv. Artworks.csv includes information such as title, artist name, acquisition date, department, and classification while artists.csv includes nationality, gender, name, and birth date. I used the common column artist ID to join the two datasets together.

1. Data Cleaning

Data cleaning included renaming columns to be more understandable and changing columns to the correct data types, as well as dealing with nulls among others.

For example, while looking at the **gender** column for artists there were many nulls and as I dug deeper I noticed that while the gender for a lot of the artists were available online the MoMA dataset just didn't include this so I went in and filled out as many as I could. I also noticed that architectural firms, and design agencies were also considered as artists in this column which makes sense that their gender is blank so I removed these.

Date created was another column that was complicated where the dates were in over 20 different formats i.e. 1950s, Late 1930s, 2023-2024, 1947 (completed 1948), (1948, 6/3/1944), c.1988, (Reproduced drawings executed 1930) so I made sure to the dates followed the '1978' format.

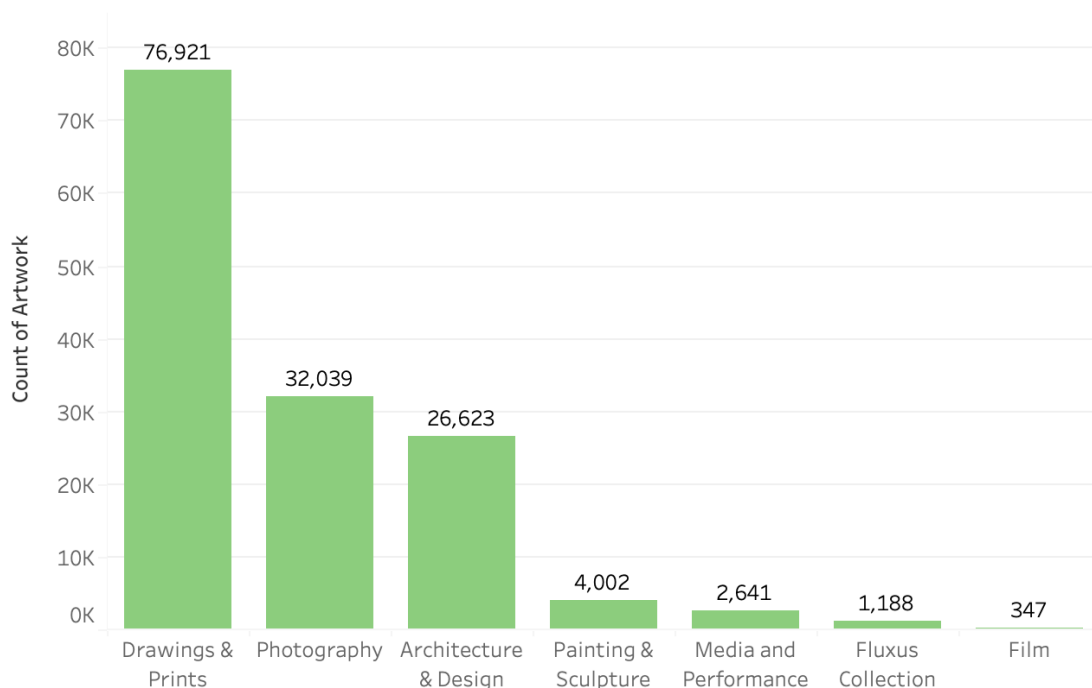
2. Exploring the dataset through visualisation

Using tableau I joined the two datasets on the artist id column and began exploring the data to get a better understanding of the MoMA and what the dataset has to offer.

I made about 30 visualisations but here are a few of them:

Departments at MoMA

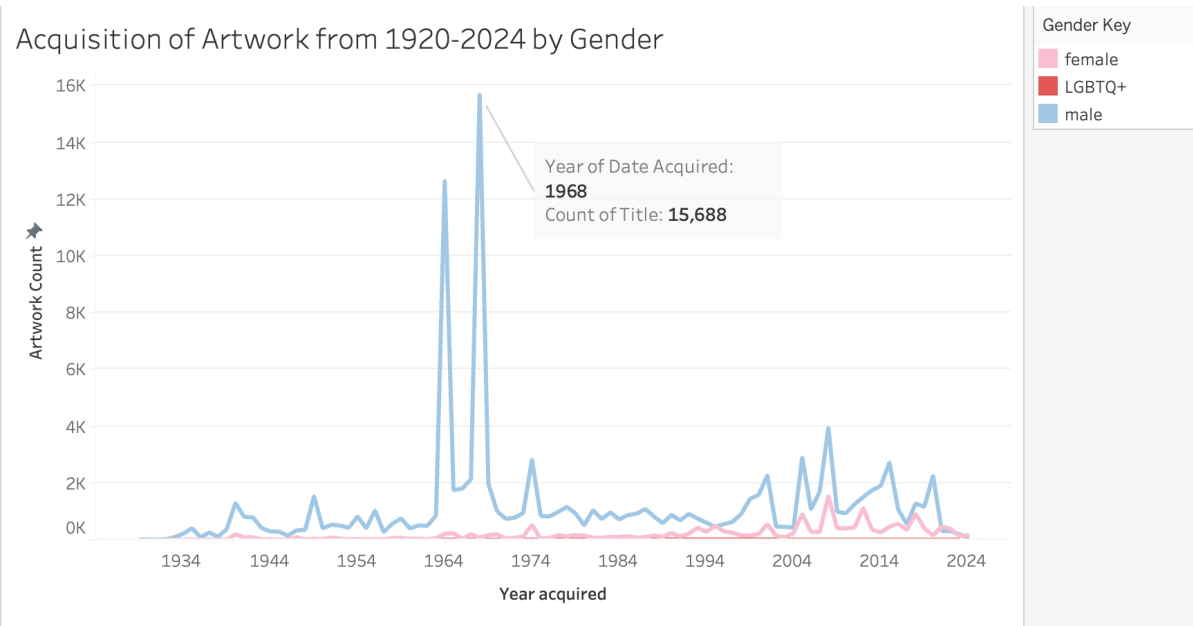
Artwork across departments



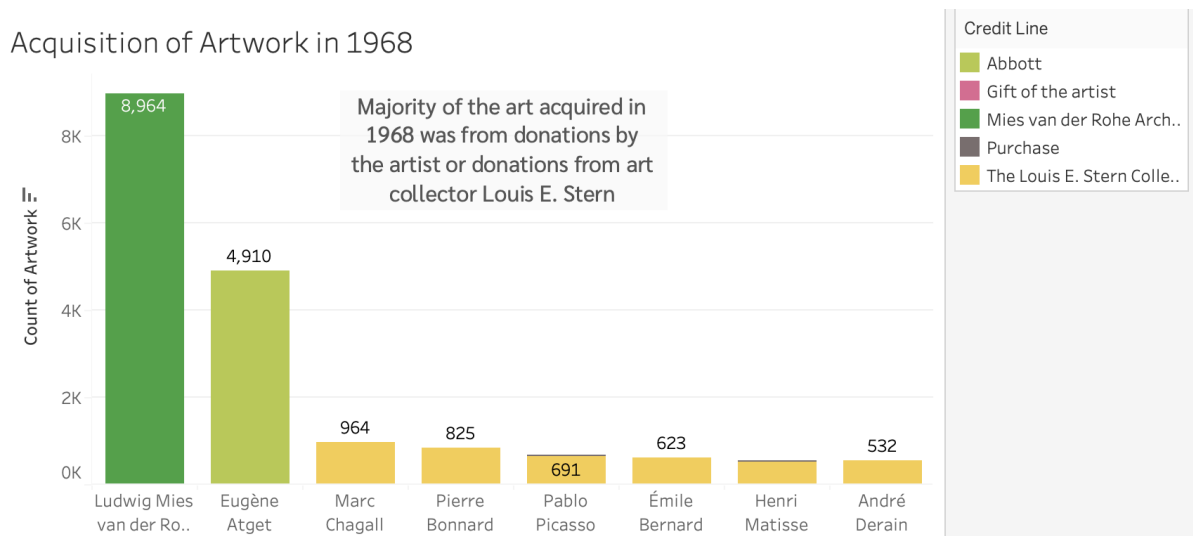
In the figure above, you can see that the drawing and prints is by far the largest collection, followed by photography, and then architecture and design. This makes sense as drawings and prints include rough sketches that the artist has done which don't take as long to make as paintings and sculptures for example.

Artwork Acquisition over time

While I was analysing acquisition of artwork throughout the years and what the gender distribution is I noticed a steep increase of artwork collected in 1968 of 15,688 and in 1964 and was curious why.



In 1968, a majority (13,874) of these artworks were by American architect, Ludwig Mies van der Roche and French photographer, Eugene Atget as can be seen below.

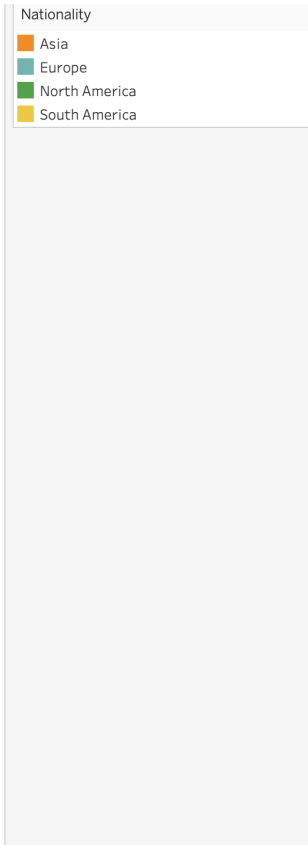
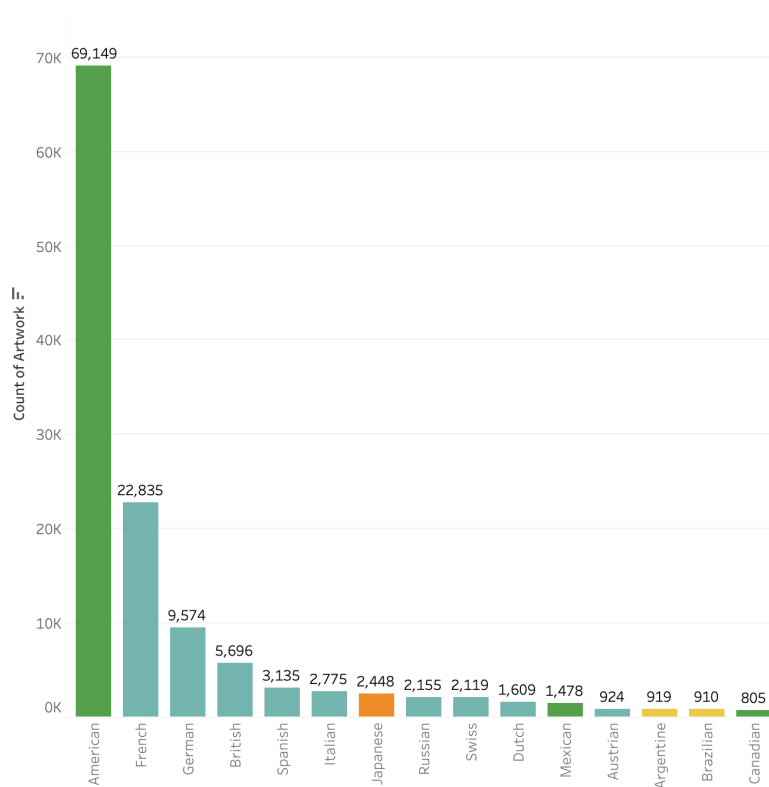


I dug deeper and discovered that the rise in acquisitions is due to a large amount of donations from the artist themselves as well as donations from art collector, Louis E. Stern who donated a lot of art in his collection after his death.

Top 15 Nationalities at MoMA

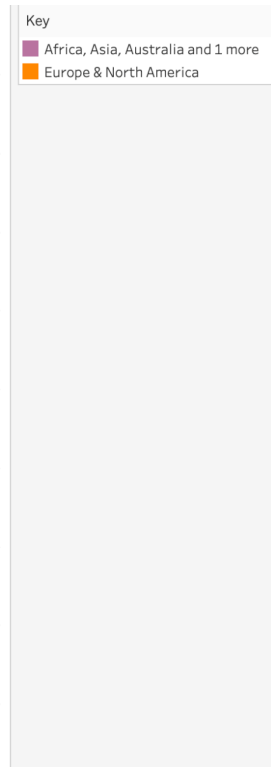
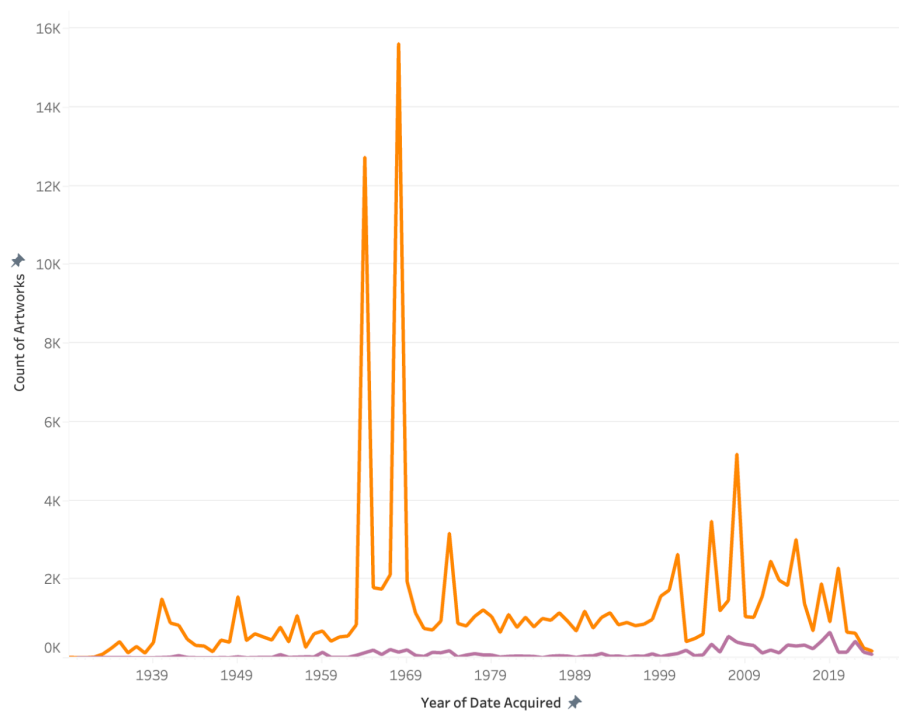
Most of the artworks are by American or European Artists, with American being by far the highest followed by French, German, and British. Japan is the only country from Asia that's on the list and Argentina and Brazil are the only countries from South America. This shows a lack of diversity with MoMA's collection being predominantly European.

Top 15 Nationalities at MoMA

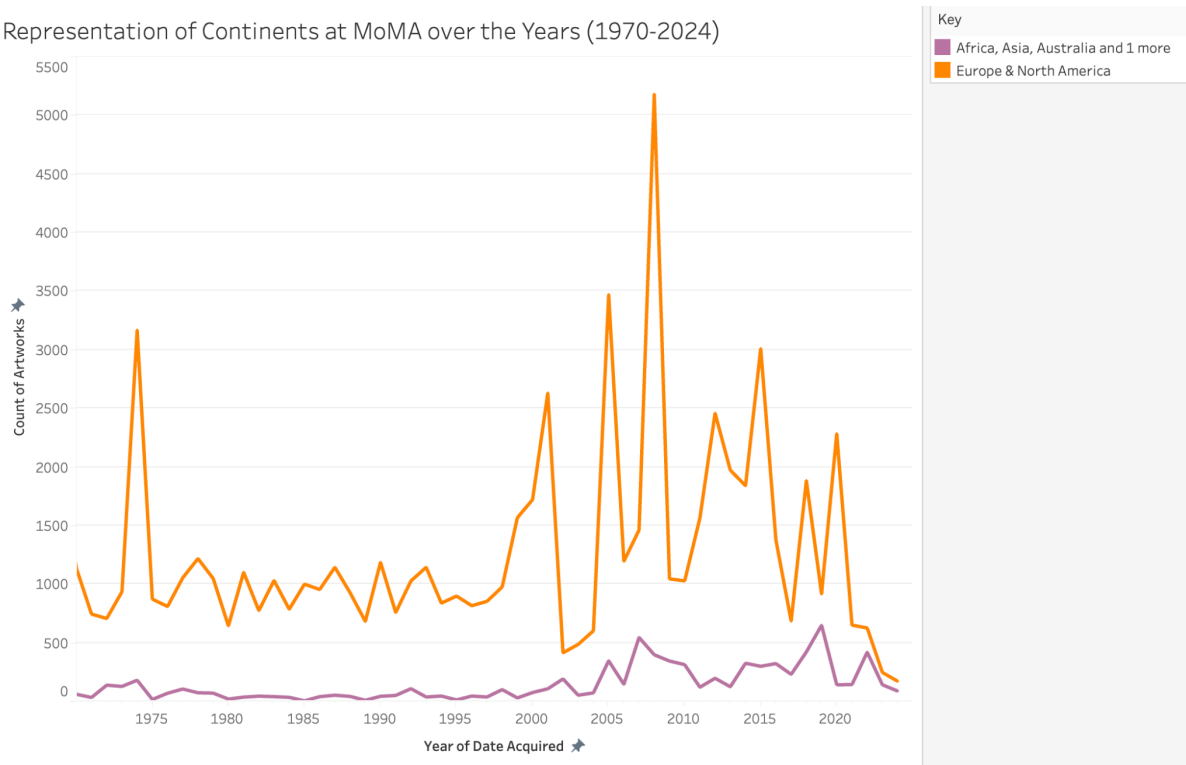


Artwork acquisition by continents at MoMA over time

Representation of Continents at MoMA over the Years



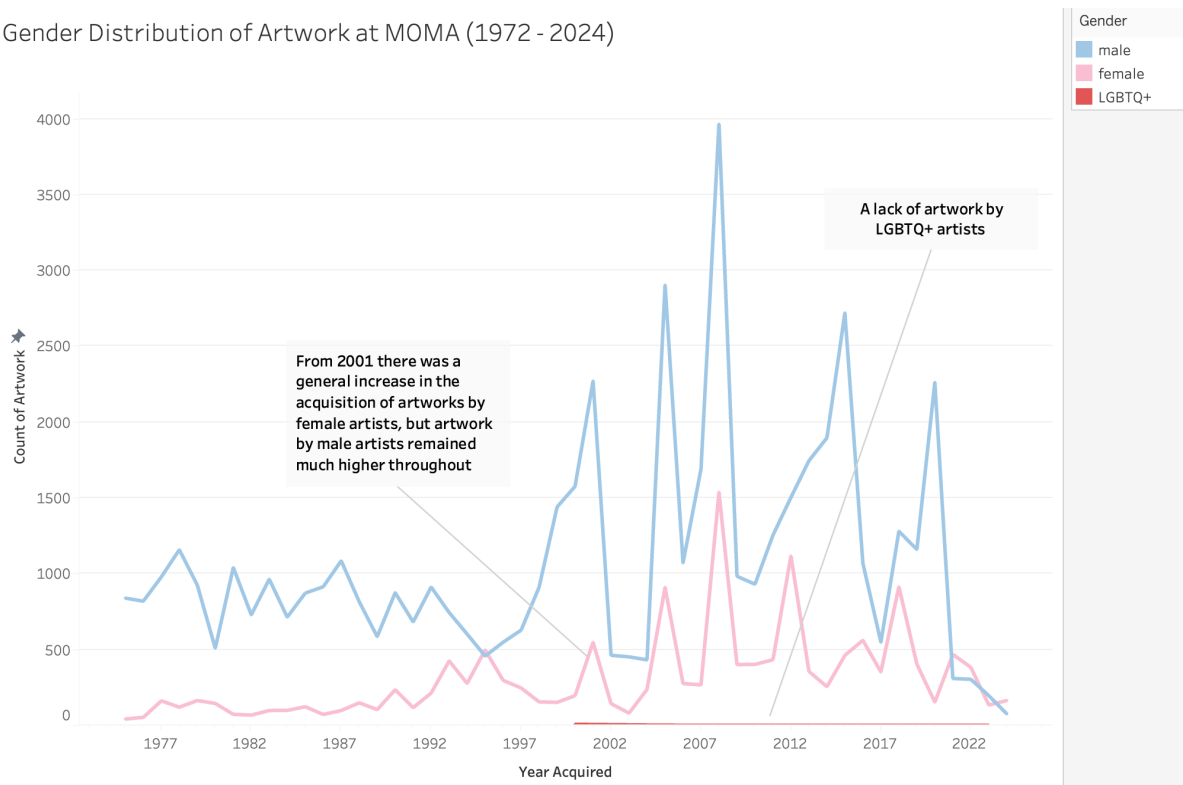
Representation of Continents at MoMA over the Years (1970-2024)



3. Final visualisations

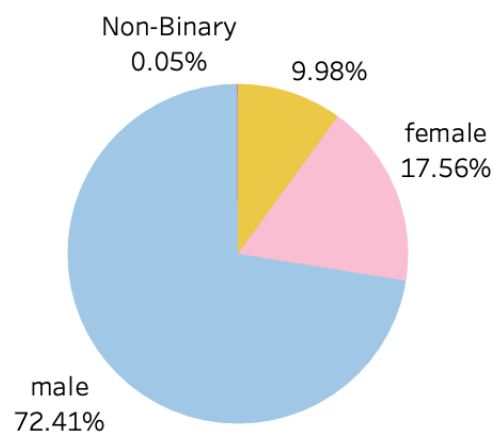
Gender

Gender Distribution of Artwork at MOMA (1972 - 2024)



You can see that there are more artworks by male artists than female artists. There was a general increase over time in the number of artwork acquisitions by female artists, with there even being 469 female artwork acquisitions compared to 310 artworks by male artists in 2021. However, at the same time artwork acquired by male artists remained much higher, for example there were 2,263 artwork acquisitions by male artists in 2020 compared to only 154 by female artists. In addition, non-binary artists are barely represented.

Gender Distribution of Artists at MoMA



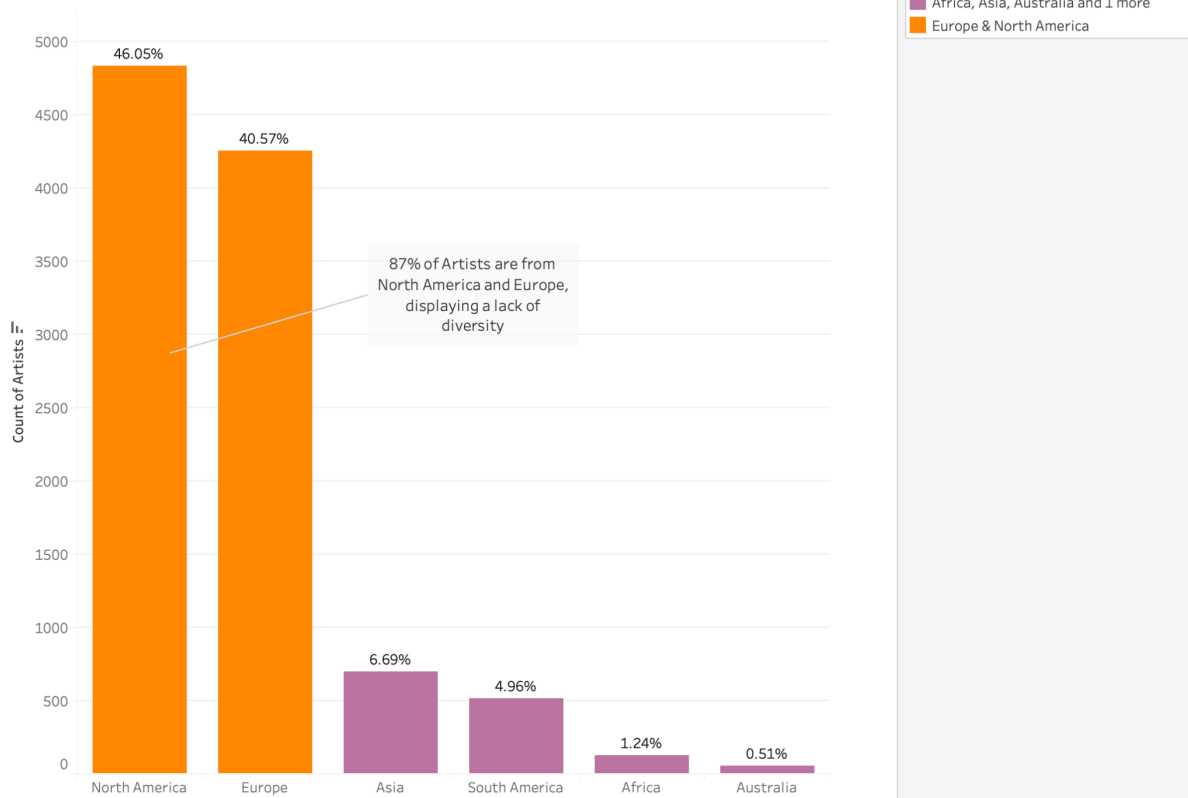
Gender

- Null
- female
- male
- Non-Binary

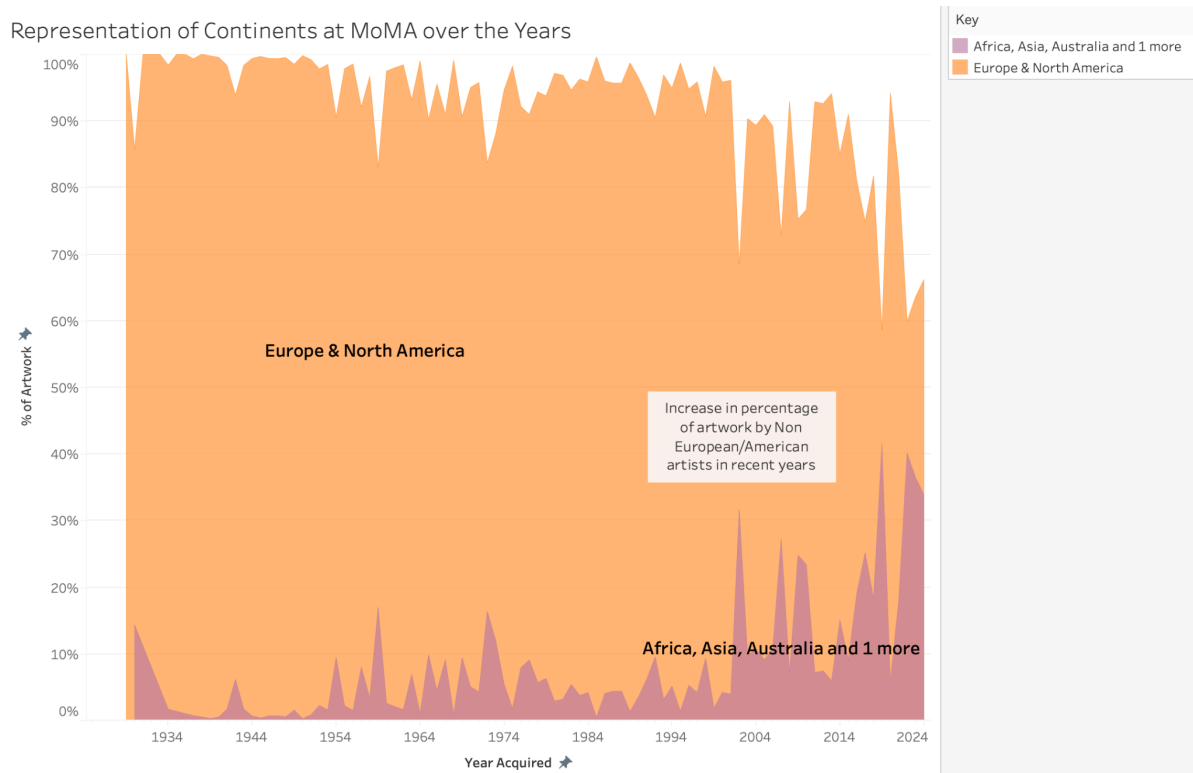
In addition, while there's been an increase in female artists in recent years, overall male artists at the MoMA are still significantly higher as can be seen above. 72.1% of artists are male, only 17.56% are female, and only .05% are considered LGBTQ+.

Nationality

Where MoMA's Artists are from



To better understand cultural diversity I grouped nationalities by continents because otherwise there were numerous different nationalities making the visualisations overwhelming. And as can see in the visualisation above, 87% of artists at MoMA are from North America and Europe while only 13% of artists are from Asia, South America, Africa, and Australia displaying a significant lack of cultural diversity.



Similar to the gender distribution, there has been a rise in acquisition of artists from continents other than North America and Europe in recent years but the majority of MOMA's artists are still from North America and Europe.

MoMA has tried to increase the diversity of their collection in recent years but overall the artwork is still predominantly by European/American, male artists and artists from other backgrounds are severely underrepresented. So the MoMA has a long way to go before its collection is truly inclusive or diverse.