Repatriation: A Framework for A Fairer Museum

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1.0 Abstract

Restitution is defined by Merriam Webster as “the restoration of something to its rightful owner.” [1] Many authors have explored the impacts restitution has had on art, museums and the party making the return request. However, universal models seem to be lacking. This paper proposes a model for the determination of an item's eligibility for the return to the original owner, through data visualization giving a voice to the marginalized in the process. The marginalized described in this paper are communities who have historically been colonized or without power in the restitution discussions. Restitution and repatriation will be used interchangeably in this paper. Firstly, it will explore the history of repatriation, some of the key contested pieces and some of the positives and negatives of the most popular restitution frameworks: the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)’s Illicit Property and Trafficking Act & the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). The framework is the main portion of the paper and proposes four pillars: Symbolism, Legality, Morality, and Preservation. Then we will explore application use cases. This model will be applied to the MET’s collection through their API, as proof of reproducibility. We will also explore other potential use cases.

Keywords: Data Visualization, Restitution, Repatriation, Model Building, Museums, Indigenous Culture

[1] “Restitution”. Merriam Webster, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/restitution

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1.5 Introduction

This paper sets out to deliver a framework in order to conceptualize a universal process for the repatriation of art with the following objectives: reconciliation and nation-building, and an increased perception of equity in museum collections. The framework was inspired by current repatriation events and the renewed interest by nations to return items that were possibly unfairly acquired. This model is one of many ways a restitution framework could be developed. However, no such universal system currently exists. The premise is that four pillars: symbolism, legality, morality and preservation, each with a specific key performance indicator (KPIs), weighted according to their importance in the process, come together to ultimately form a score on an artifact, the combined score can then be influential in the final decision repatriation process. This project is not meant to be a substitution to or erasing the provenance work currently being done by museum institutions. It is also not advocating that all works originating from countries outside of the museum host country should be returned. Art museums do provide a service to the general public by housing knowledge and beauty from around the world.

The arguments for the return or the remaining of artifacts have been contentious. Those who argue for the items to remain housed in their adopted institutions believe that the museum is the best place for the particular item on the basis of universality. In James Cuno's book *Who Owns Antiquity?*, the author makes the argument that the encyclopedic museum['s] direct attention to distant cultures, asking visitors to respect the values of others and seek connections between cultures.[2] On the other hand, proponents for the return of items to their original owners argue that the return of objects provides peace of mind to the people that have suffered under colonization and other power imbalances. "Ethnographic museums, in particular, have been the keepers of other people's cultures, imposing their own classifications and interpretations onto objects from different peoples around the world: indigenous groups almost never had a voice. Artifacts were even removed from communities in the late-nineteenth century–early-twentieth century on the basis that their cultures would become extinct, as a result of the 'inevitable' march of Westernization. But certain cultures are still thriving and want their objects back." [3]

As part of recent news, in 2018, President Emmanuel Macron of France announced that the Quai Branly Museum in Paris would be returning 26 items taken by French colonial forces in 1892 to Benin. He also committed to ensuring artifacts from sub-Saharan Africa be accessible in Africa through restitution, either by loans, exhibitions or exchanges[4].
The case above interestingly demonstrates that a case by case approach has been used for much of the restitution cases so far. Also, it is apparent that not all items currently being housed in museums are being held in bad faith, sometimes there is a gap in ownership knowledge. However, it is becoming more common for museums to have provenance departments to help generate awareness in artifact provenance research. Museum institutions do not have universal protocols for items deemed repatriable. "The concept of cultural property seems all-encompassing and the art-law community is consumed by the goals of repatriation and restitution. Despite this intense focus on preserving cultural heritage, current private and

[2] Cuno, James. Who Owns Antiquity? (p. xix)

[3] Taylor and Francis. Museums and Restitution: New Practices, New Approaches (p. 3)

[4] Nayeri, Farah. Return of African Artifacts Sets a Tricky Precedent for Europe's Museums

public legal regimes prevent most repatriation claims for art stolen before the twentieth century, and the world's museums are not receptive to centuries-removed restitution claims."[5]
Some of the legal regimes the quote refers to above include NAGPRA and UNESCO's Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property Act. NAGPRA, also known as The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act "describes the rights of Native American lineal descendants, Indian tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations with respect to the treatment, repatriation, and disposition of Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony, referred to collectively in the statute as cultural items, with which they can show a relationship of lineal descent or cultural affiliation."[6] UNESCO's act is the primary source of international law governing cultural property today and has been ratified by most, but not all, nations[7]. Both these acts have been positive paving a way to addressing various concerns related to the restitution of artifacts, however, there are also downsides to both acts that will be addressed in the treatment portion of this thesis.

It is common for museums to have their own disposition policy (another term in reference to restitution). The National Gallery of Canada, for example, uses a mix of international guidelines, national law, and best practice to decide upon what items should be returned[8]. As previously mentioned, repatriation approaches differ based on legislation in a particular country and museum protocols. This paper and visualization aim to bridge the gap by creating a universal structure that is broad in its approach but also has the ability for individual application and custom weighting depending on the situation.

2.0 Culture Debate

2.1 How the culture debate has shaped modern museums

The debate of culture ownership has been a ubiquitous part of human culture discussions for centuries and is a key debate within restitution discussions. However, the topic of restitution is incredibly complex and the whole scope transcends this paper. Until recent historical times, western museums held most of the power in restitution talks due to status and locations with governments as historical colonizers [9]. Many have called for restitution decisions not to be based on Western frameworks of cultural value. According to the National Geographic's list of "top 10 Museums and Galleries Worldwide", all happen to be in Western Europe with the exception of the Hermitage in St Petersburg Russia, a world power in its own right[10]. The Louvre has approximately 182 works on view belonging to its "Near Eastern

[5] Goodwin, Paige. 2008. "Mapping the Limits of Repatriable Cultural Heritage: A Case Study of Stolen Flemish Art in French Museums." *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 157 (2): 673.
[6] McManamon, Francis P. "The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)." National Park Service., accessed March 4, 2019, https://www.nps.gov/archeology/tools/laws/NAGPRA.htm.
[7] Ibid.
[8] DISPOSITION POLICY. Disposition Policy.
[9] Tythacott, Louise and Kostas Arvanitis. 2014. *Museums and Restitution: New Practices, New Approaches* Ashgate Publishing.
[10] "Top 10 Museums and Galleries." National Geographic., last modified September 20, accessed March, 2019, https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/top-10/museum-galleries/

Antiquities" collection[11], while the MET has an "Art of Native America" collection as part of its permanent collection with 116 masterworks[12].
With the rise of nationalistic agendas, it is important to define culture as not specific to any country boundaries but can belong to a place while still being an essential part representative of a landscape. It is self-evident that not all individuals and communities recognize the legitimacy of the state[13]. National heritage can also exclude and marginalize immigrants[14]. Western concepts of culture also need to be shifted, what are considered merely 'things' in the West may have deep emotional and symbolic meanings to source communities – some may be regarded as animate beings[15]. It is important to be sensitive and inclusive of diverse beliefs in regards to culture.

2.1.1 History of Repatriation and Legislations

Legislation such as NAGPRA and UNESCO's Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property Act have been implemented to try and give a legal framework to the topic of restitution. However, both acts have pros and cons. NAGPRA (rectified in 1990) for example, forced museums in the US to rethink their collections and to enter into a dialogue with tribal groups based on very different ideas of the significance of objects"[16] . Prior to 1990, there was no legislation legally protecting the treatment, study, and repatriation of Native American cultural items[17]. Some argue that NAGPRA lacks strong enforcement. As well another downside to NAGPRA is that many cultural items that lack a funerary, cultural patrimonial, or religious context are not covered by NAGPRA, and thus not eligible for repatriation under the legislation[18]. Under UNESCO's Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property Act enacted in 1970, there is a restitution provision which states: Per Article 7 (b) (ii) of the Convention, « States Parties undertake, at the request of the State Party "of origin", to take appropriate steps to recover and return any such cultural property imported after the entry into force of this Convention in both States concerned, provided, however, that the requesting State shall pay just compensation to an innocent purchaser or to a person who has valid title to that property ». The issue with this act is again, the lack of enforcement. To this day a total of 138 member states signed it in some form or another therefore, the act is not enforceable to those who have not signed it. Some art-rich nations including France have not signed the convention, meaning, any claims for restitution based off the convention holds no legal ground.

2.1.2 Context; Indigenous art in Canada, The Elgin Marbles and The Rosetta Stone

In this section we are looking at three case studies that have been fiercely debated in the context of repatriation, the Elgin Marbles, Indigenous art in Canada and the Rosetta Stone.. The Elgin Marbles, more properly known as the Parthenon Sculptures, were acquired by Lord Elgin in Athens between 1801

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[11] "Curatorial Departments." Louvre., https://www.louvre.fr/en/departements.
[12] "Art of Native America." The Metropolitan Museum of Art., accessed April 29th, 2019, https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2018/art-of-native-america-diker-collection.
[13] Tythacott, Louise and Kostas Arvanitis. 2014. *Museums and Restitution: New Practices, New Approaches* Ashgate Publishing.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] *Native American Repatriation and Nagpra* c. Wordpress
[18] Ibid.

and 1805. The Elgin Marbles have remained in the British Museum ever since. "According to the British Museum, Elgin was granted a firman (letter of instruction) granting him permission to take away the pieces "as a personal gesture after he encouraged the British forces in their fight to drive the French out of Egypt, which was then an Ottoman possession. The legality of this document is today hotly debated." The Elgin Marbles represent a point of pride for the greek populous.

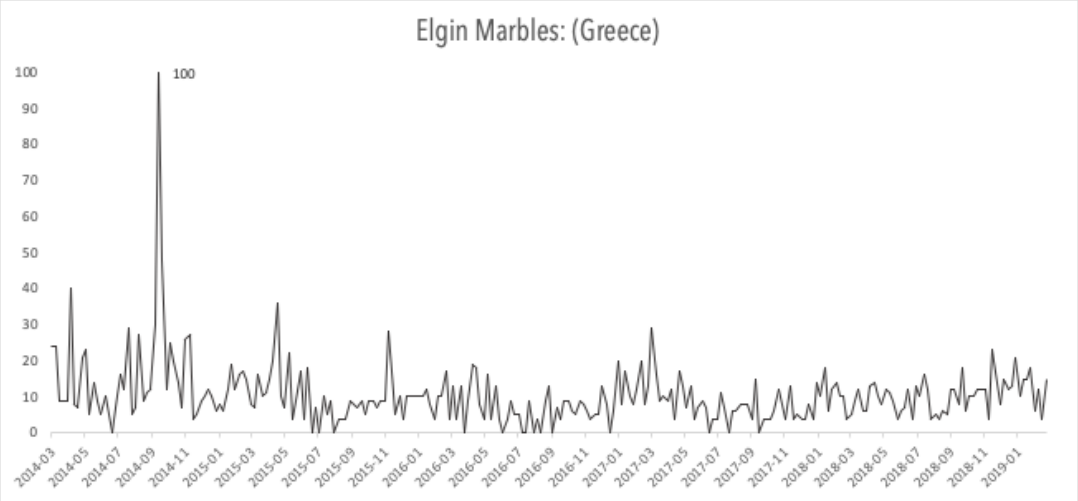

Figure 1: Elgin Marbles Google Search Trends, 5 Year Trend. (Source: Google)

In the chart above, we see that the Elgin Marbles have been trending as part of the Greek national discourse for the past 5 years. There is common ground amongst Greeks that they would like the Elgin Marbles returned to their country. So far, the British Museum has refused every return request.

The second case study is the Rosetta Stone. The Rosetta Stone is a broken part of a bigger stone slab. It has a message carved into it, written in three types of writing. It was an important clue that helped experts learn to read Egyptian hieroglyphs[19]. "Soldiers in Napoleon's army discovered the Rosetta Stone in 1799 while digging the foundations of an addition to a fort near the town of el-Rashid (Rosetta). On Napoleon's defeat, the stone became the property of the British under the terms of the Treaty of Alexandria (1801) along with other antiquities that the French had found."[20] The Rosetta Stone is currently on display at the British Museum. Egyptians argue that the Stone represents the icon of their Egyptian identity[21] . The Trustees of the British Museum could decide to loan the Rosetta Stone to Egypt but that no such request has been received. So far, the likelihood of its return to Egypt is slim. 'Loan' in this case implies ownership, and the setting of criteria (by the British Museum) implies authority and control over the object. From that perspective, one might argue that it is not at all surprising that the Egyptians have not put in a loan request, since by so doing they would legitimate the British Museum's ownership[22].

[19] "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about the Rosetta Stone.", last modified 14 Jul, https://blog.britishmuseum.org/everything-you-ever-wanted-to-know-about-the-rosetta-stone/.
[20] "The Rosetta Stone." Khan Academy., https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ancient-art-civilizations/egypt-art/ptolemaic/a/the-rosetta-stone.
[21] Cuno, James B. 2011. *Who Owns Antiquity? Museums and the Battle Over our Ancient Heritage* Princeton, N.J; Woodstock : Princeton University Press.
[22] Tythacott, Louise and Kostas Arvanitis. 2014. *Museums and Restitution: New Practices, New Approaches* Ashgate Publishing.

The third repatriation case study is Indigenous art in Canada, specifically art from the Nuxalk Territory in the northern British Columbia region. Indigenous cultures around the world have a different relationship with culture and artifacts than those from the traditional Euro-Western context. In *Switchbacks, Art Ownership, and the Nuxalk National Identity*, Jennifer Kramer notes that in Bella Coola, British Columbia, buying Nuxalk objects in order to take the from the valley was equivalent to theft. To this day, many Nuxalk remain ambivalent towards the sale of art outside Bella Coola. She further writes, the loss of objects is viewed as severing the Nuxalk from their culture. Thus, the removal of art from that region has a negative effect on the community at large[23].

2.2 The Model

The proposed model utilizes four pillars as part of its core strategy for a universal repatriation approach; Symbolism, Legality, Morality, Preservation, while also allowing for custom weighting depending on the situation. If the situation calls for a heavier weight on the Symbolism metric for example, the weighting can be increased. This model bridges the gap between the current legislation and the need for a more transparent, universal approach. Each item is scored against the metrics below while then being combined for an overall repatriation score.

2.2.0 Framework

A more robust data methodology section will be provided in 2.4 “Data & Methodology”. The model is made up by the metrics below. As mentioned above, this framework was created in order to build a process to help score artifacts and ultimately help with the restitution discussions as well as hopefully act as a 3rd party without agenda.

[23] Kramer, Jennifer. 2006. *Switchbacks : Art, Ownership, and Nuxalk National Identity* Vancouver : UBC Press.

Pillar	Metrics	Weighting	Total
Symbolism	*Does the item have symbolic value for a community?* Yes = 1 No = 0	Situation Dependent	Sum of all metrics* *If weighting is included then that weight is multiplied by the individual metric
Legality	*Was the item taken in a consensual manner?* Yes = 0 No = 1	Situation Dependent	
	Has the country or community made the request for the return? Yes = 1 No = 0	Situation Dependent	
Morality	*The court of public opinion* # Increase in Google Search Terms over time? Threshold: < 1000 searches = 0 >1000 searches = 1 Yes = 1 No = 0	Situation Dependent	
Preservation	*Can the item be preserved outside of the institution?* *Can the item be permanently loaned?* Yes = 0 No = 1	Situation Dependent	

The total metrics are then combined as such: if the total metrics are greater or equal to 15, then they are scored as "**contenders for repatriation**", else if the total score is equal to and between 10 and less than 15, then they are scored as "**contentious**", else if the total is equal to and greater than 5 and less than 10, then it's considered "**mid-point**", otherwise the total metric is scored as "**overall collection**".

2.2.1 Symbolism

In the proposed model, Symbolism refers to the importance of national pride and community pride, the importance as a religious symbol or the collective attachment to a place or its history. The idea is, anything with high symbolic value for a community should be repatriated. In this model, the key performance indicator represents a binary of 1 or 0 depending on the symbolic value for a community. any object name within the "Object Column" of the dataset that had any reference to funerary, marriage, armour/war or ceremonial meaning was given a score of 1. These components were chosen to be binary scored because historically, these events held symbolic meaning for people in many different cultures[24].

2.2.2 Legality

In the proposed model, Legality refers to two parts, was the art acquired during looting? Was there legitimate consent? As well, has the country or community made the request for the return? If there was no consent, then the item is scored as 1 while with consent, 0. The second KPI, part of the Legality pillar is; has the country or community made a request for an item's return? If yes, then the item is given a score of 1, if no the item is scored as 0.
This section is made up of two KPIs because there may be a case where an item was given consensually at the time but the original owner/community/nation is now requesting for its return. In the model, this metric was calculated by scoring any item in the sample that had a culture identified as "peoples" or a historically marginalized community as 1 while the rest of the items were scored as 0.

2.2.3 Morality

In the proposed model, Morality refers to the opinion of the general public on the item in question by looking at Google Searches over a period of time. If the Google search shows a higher search rate (>1000), then the item is given a score of 1, if not, it is scored as 0. In the application on the MET's sample, Morality was not utilized in the overall score. This pillar can be used when it is suitable to do so.

2.2.4 Preservation

With preservation, we are looking at long term and short term preservation of the item in question. ·Will returning the works of art have a strong impact on the local and international art community and art scholars? The unique value of the item? Are there significant numbers of similar

[24] Gino, Francesca and Norton, Michael L. "Why Rituals Work." Scientific American., last modified May 14, https://www-scientificamerican-com.libproxy.newschool.edu/article/why-rituals-work/.

items? Is the item reproducible, and would a copy achieve a similar objective in the sending/host museum? Can the item be permanently loaned?

The preservation metric is a combination of two parts, the materiality score and the risk assessment score. The materiality portion was calculated by assessing the strength of the material of the artifact. Materiality scale: Clay =1 Wood = 2 Ivory & Bone = 3 Stone = 4 Metals = 5[25]. The stronger the material, the easier the artifact would be to return without damage from transport or the elements. The risk assessment score was calculated from the Peace Index Scale[26], using their regional scale from most safe region to unsafest region. Regional scoring: Europe = 1 North America = 2 Asia-Pacific = 3 South America = 4 Central America & caribbean =5 Sub-Saharan Africa = 6 Russia & Eurasia = 7 South Asia = 8 Middle East & North Africa = 9 The safer the region, the less risk of damage to the artifact when in transit.

2.3 Application Use Cases

The application of this model would help both the requestor and requestee and would help facilitate discussions through a third party model without agenda. As the repatriation discussions evolve over time, the model could aid in the overall evolution or as a starting point to the discussions.

2.3.1 Indigenous Art in Canada

This model could also be beneficial for indigenous art cases in Canada. Similarly to other indigenous cultures around the world, indigenous art made in areas now known as collective Canada, have also been subject to artifact loss and stolen art thanks to colonization and mistreatment. In the book, *Negotiating Culture*, Laetitia La Follette explains how new repatriations guidelines are needed and that creating better guidelines will ultimately help with reconciliation efforts with the American indigenous population. This can also be applied to the Canadian indigenous population. “Repatriation is part of the renegotiation of the relationship between American archeologists and American Indians that is taking place.” Development of a more humanistic approach to the construction of knowledge about the past to the passage of repatriation legislation is an interesting interpretation of the trajectory of contemporary archeology[27].

2.3.2 Applying the model to the MET’s collection

As previously mentioned, not all museums have intentionally kept items from contentious backgrounds, the provenance is sometimes difficult to know. Eighty to ninety percent of artifacts in circulation do not have documented provenance[28]. More and more museums have rigorous provenance

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[25] Agarwal, Mamta. "Process of Preservation of the Artifacts | Archaeological Findings." *History Discussion*. http://www.historydiscussion.net/art/process-of-preservation-of-the-artifacts-archaeological-findings/18

[26] "Global Peace Index 2018." Vision of Humanity., http://visionofhumanity.org/indexes/global-peace-index/.

[27] Watkins, Joe. 2013. "THE POLITICS OF ARCHAEOLOGY; Heritage, Ownership, and Repatriation." In *Negotiating Culture*, edited by Laetitia La Follette, 15-37: University of Massachusetts Press.

[28] Frazen, Carl. "Ill-Gotten Gains: How Many Museums have Stolen Objects in their Collections?", last modified May 13, https://www.theverge.com/2013/5/13/4326306/museum-artifacts-looted-repatriation.

policies in place. The MET has returned dozens of objects since the early 1990's[29]. The MET's Provenance Policy regarding the acquisition of new works is outlined as follows:

"The Museum shall rigorously research the provenance of a work of art prior to acquisition to determine that the Museum can obtain clear title. Such research should include, but is not necessarily limited to, determining:

- *the ownership history of the work of art;*
- *the countries in which the work of art has been located and when;*
- *the exhibition history of the work of art, if any;*
- *the publication history of the work of art, if any;*
- *whether any claims to ownership of the work of art have been made;*
- *whether the work of art appears in relevant databases of stolen works; and*
- *the circumstances under which the work of art is being offered to the Museum.*

For all acquisitions, the Museum shall make a rigorous effort to obtain from sellers and donors all available information and accurate written documentation with respect to the ownership history of the work of art. For any purchase of a single work of art over $150,000 and for all archaeological material or ancient art that is coming from abroad for acquisition by the Museum, the Museum shall obtain all recent import and export documentation. See section 3 below for additional requirements for acquisitions of archaeological materials or ancient art."

Reading their provenance policy, it is clear that the MET takes great effort in maintaining an ethical collection.

For the visualization portion of this thesis, a random sample of 5000 artifacts were taken from the MET's overall collection for the application of the model. 0.4% of the 5000 items were deemed as "contenders for repatriation", 2% were considered "contentious", 8% were considered part of the "midpoint" and 100% of the sample was deemed part of the "overall collection".

[29] Frazen, Carl. "Ill-Gotten Gains: How Many Museums have Stolen Objects in their Collections?", last modified May 13, https://www.theverge.com/2013/5/13/4326306/museum-artifacts-looted-repatriation..

Figure 2: Stone Male in Parka with Harpoon

This artifact has a cumulative score of 15. The repatriation model likely picked up on this item because it meets the Preservation KPI's material assessment as a stone sculpture and the geographical location of where this item was made, Canada. The Inuit were historically marginalized so this meets the Legality KPI. The provenance of this item is not entirely clear. On the MET's website it says: "Said to be from: Port Harrison (Inukjuak) James A. Houston, New York, until 1969".

Figure 3: Shaman's Mask

This artifact has a cumulative score of 10. The repatriation model considered this item to be contentious. Likely because it's an item from an Tlingit indigenous people (therefore higher on the legality pillar) and for its symbolic meaning. The description on the MET's site describes this item as: "This malevolent mask manifests a powerful spirit being that helped a shaman mediate between the worlds of matter and spirit".

Figure 4: Medal of Captain Stephen Decatur, 1800–1830

This artifact has a cumulative score 16. The model picked up on a few American items, which makes sense considering how the metrics were combined. Items in North America scored higher. Not everything is required to be repatriated if the item makes sense in its current location.
The model was a success in terms of its ability to bucket the samples into 4 distinct "shelves" and that it chose the appropriate items for those buckets.

2.4 Data and Methodology

As previously mentioned, for purposes of the visualization, a random sample of 5000 items were taken from the overall collection data from the Metropolitan Museum of Art as of March 2019 using an Excel script. The metric calculations were run against this sample of data. Case and IF statements were used to create the calculations that make up the four overall metrics.

2.4.1 Data Collection

The collection for the main visualization was quite simple thanks to the archiving efforts of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. From there, the calculations were made on a sample of objects from the dataset. Mapping repatriation cases around the world was more difficult as there is no official worldwide dataset tracking these cases. In order to put the dataset together, there was lots of research through different media (online, journals, publications, books) in order to create a dataset that would make up a map tracing which items have been repatriated, will be repatriated or have yet to (but are contentious in nature).

2.4.2 Data Limitations

The model is highly subjective to circumstance and situation. No IF or CASE statement could be applied in the same way because each artifact or art database varies depending on how the archive was coded. As well, the Preservation metric brings up ethical questions about who gets to decide whether a country can house the returning object? What is considered suitable infrastructure? Many believe that by imposing these strict protocols on the return of artifacts, it is essentially putting more limitations and excuses on the artifacts return[30].

As well, the model did not bring dramatic results, it did not point out a large number of items that could potentially be contenders for repatriation. I had no expectations coming into the analysis so I am not disappointed with the results.

2.4.3 Design Process

Overall, I was interested in taking elements from a museum or gallery and incorporating them in the visualization. The first element is the use of a background image on certain slides that emulate being in a gallery space. This image has the perception quality of a gallery space and has spotlights that also give the illusion of being in the space. The font used for most of the text in the visualization was a serif with equal kerning between the letters. This was intentional to emulate the type of font headers you'd see on a wall of an exhibit at a museum (*Figure 5)*. I also decided to use a barrier similar to barriers you'd see at a museum keeping the public a few feet from the art piece. This "barrier" on the visualization is also being used as a tracker of where a specific person is while navigating the visualization. I chose a vintage looking white as the background of my visualization. I chose a pastel-red as the highlighting shade, while the rest are shades of grey.

The second view of the visualization is a map that maps out repatriation cases worldwide. It was difficult to decide whether to stretch the map to the full view of the screen or to keep it at a certain width and height. The map has two types of lines showing destinations and origins of artifacts. One of the lines has a dashed style while the other has a solid line, to mark the differences between the two types of artifacts "repatriated" vs "non-repatriated". As well as the map, there is an initial center modal that gives context to repatriation and why I decided to make my visualization on this subject (*Figure 6)*.

The third and fourth view of the visualization were the product of trying to figure out how to visualize the four pillars (Symbolism, Morality, Preservation and Legality). Trying to not have too many words on a page, I decided to use images of artwork that represent each of the four pillars (*Figure 7*). The first artifact to represent Symbolism is a religious statue from the hindu religion. Symbolism is highly tied with religion. The second image, chosen to represent Legality is an Egyptian tomb. Many Egyptian artifacts were looted and since the 2011 uprising, Egyptian artifacts have been even more vulnerable[31]. For the Preservation pillar, I used an image of an abstract painting, representing the delicate nature of a painting. For the Morality pillar, I used an image of the Elgin Marbles, an artifact that is part of the public's discussions in Greece. The small white squares on that page are a symbolic representation of

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[30] "Return of African Artifacts Sets a Tricky Precedent for Europe's Museums." c.*The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/27/arts/design/macron-report-restitution-precedent.html.

[31] "Italian Police Forces Seize Stolen Egyptian Artifacts in Naples." Egyptian Streets., last modified 23 May, https://egyptianstreets.com/2018/05/23/italian-police-forces-seize-stolen-egyptian-artifacts-in-naples/.

museum plaques beside artifacts that inform you about the piece. For the main visualization, I wanted to give the illusion of shelves, or artifacts hung from a wall. Since the dataset initially had so many objects in the sample (5000), I decided to represent each item as a circle. To show the density of the top line, representing the total collection, I used code to pull the top layer item being hovered forward. I also wanted to give the main visualization movement, so I added code to resemble items falling down from one shelf to another. In addition, I wanted to draw attention to a few items that were picked out by me in order to go into more detail about why the model may have pulled that item out. I gave the circles representing these three item case studies bigger radius' and a different colour so that users would know that the three items deserve more attention. When a user clicks on the different coloured circles, a side modal pops out with the extra information (*Figure 8*).
The next view in the overall visualization is a view of the four pillars separated into four columns with details into how every metric was calculated. I thought that it was important to incorporate so that people have a better idea of why certain items ended up on certain shelves (*Figure 9*).

I chose not to consider artifacts that were displaced during the Holocaust, the main controversy of these works has to do with ownership contract and validity of contract rather than colonialism and cultural relevance to a nation or group of people. I wanted to keep my focus on groups of people rather than single individuals.

I encountered many challenges in the creation of the visualization however, the issues did not stem from the data collection and data setup in the code. Rather it stemmed from making my vision a reality. The main visualization has been constantly iterated on with feedback so that users can digest the information being visualized with ease. I really wanted to distill complex information and process of making a visualizing a model with simplicity for the user. Making all the circles representing an item in the sample visually stand out so that the complexity and the enormity of the dataset standout was quite difficult. Also, it was important to get the animation correct so that the visualization would play when a user navigates to that specific slide with this visualization and not when the whole site reloads.

3.0 Conclusion

In the 18 and 19 centuries, increasingly unequal global power relations enabled European countries to accumulate huge numbers of cultural artifacts which found their way into their burgeoning museums. Ethnographic museums, in particular, have been the keepers of other people's cultures, imposing their own classifications and interpretations onto objects from different peoples around the world: indigenous groups almost never had a voice[32]. Restitution is not only about the loss of objects for museums, but can be about important gains in terms of cultural relationships and knowledge[33]. This model is intended to be a conversation starter. Ideally, becoming a neutral voice in the repatriation discussions.

In terms of model performance, the model performed better than expected on the sample of data from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It pulled a few interesting items that could potentially be contenders for repatriation that may have otherwise gone overlooked if a request had not been made.

[32] Tythacott, Louise and Kostas Arvanitis. 2014. *Museums and Restitution: New Practices, New Approaches* Ashgate Publishing.
[33] Ibid.

Museums are a reflection of society at large and should not hold objects that have a contentious nature as part of their provenance.

This framework is not intended to diminish past or present repatriation efforts. Museums are a reflection of society at large and provide a great service. As societies try to atone for past behaviours on marginalized communities, fairer museums are an important part of writing past wrongs.

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5.0 Appendix

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

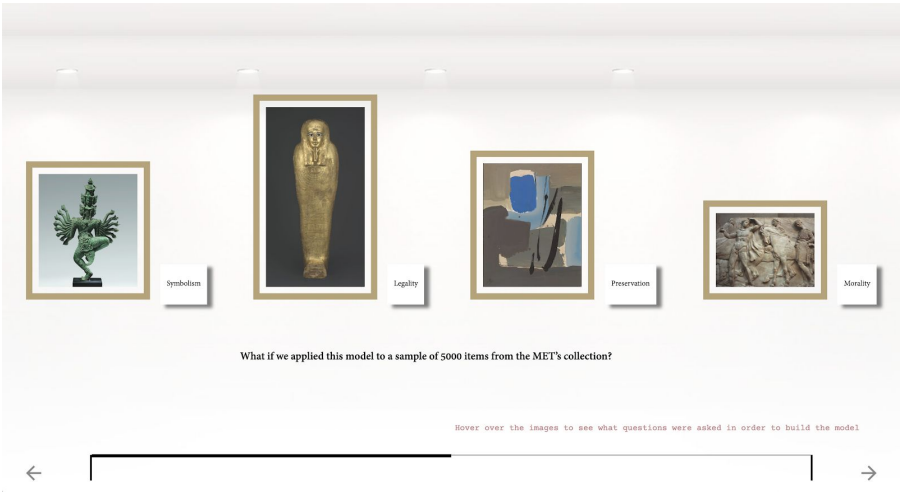


Figure 8

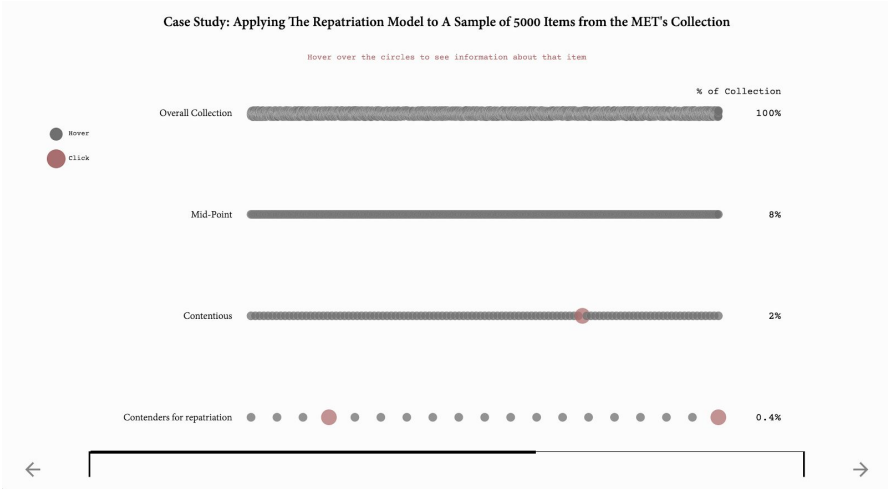
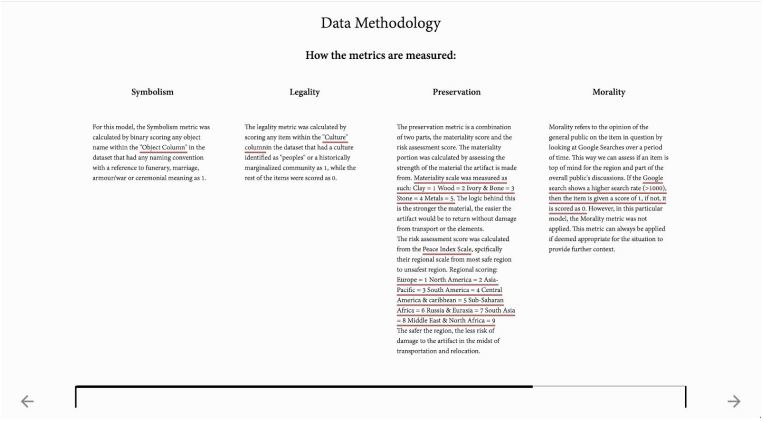


Figure 9


Data Methodology
How the metrics are measured:
Symbolism
For this model, the Symbolism metric was calculated by binary scoring any object name within the 'Object Column' in the dataset that had any naming convention with a reference to funerary, marriage, armour/war or ceremonial meaning as 1.
Legality
The legality metric was calculated by scoring any item within the 'Culture' columnin the dataset that had a culture identified as "peoples" or a historically marginalized community as 1, while the rest of the items were scored as 0.
Preservation
The preservation metric is a combination of two parts, the materiality score and the risk assesment score. The materiality portion was calculated by assessing the strength of the material the artifact is made from. Materiality scale was measured as such: Clay = 1 Wood = 2 Ivory & Bone = 3 Stone = 4 Metals = 5. The logic behind this is the stronger the material, the easier the artifact would be to return without damage from transport or the elements.
The risk assessment score was calculated from the Peace Index Scale, spcifically their regional scale from most safe region to unsafest region. Regional scoring: Europe = 1 North America = 2 Asia-Pacific = 3 South America = 4 Central America & caribbean = 5 Sub-Saharan Africa = 6 Russia & Eurasia = 7 South Asia = 8 Middle East & North Africa = 9
The safer the region, the less risk of damage to the artifact in the midst of transportation and relocation.
Morality
Morality refers to the opinion of the general public on the item in question by looking at Google Searches over a period of time. This way we can assess if an item is top of mind for the region and part of the overall public's discussions. If the Google search shows a higher search rate (>1000), then the item is given a score of 1, if not, it is scored as 0. However, in this particular model, the Morality metric was not applied. This metric can always be applied if deemed appropriate for the situation to provide further context.