The HBCU Digital Art Project

What is H-DAP?

The HBCU Digital Art Project (H-DAP) is a groundbreaking technology-based art history project, that was conceived by HBCU Morgan State University graduate and Art Consultant Valerie A. Cooper, and since 2023, is supported by the Smithsonian American Art Museum. H-DAP's goal is to benefit the American Art canon at large and the project has a threefold purpose: 1) provide digital access to select works of art from HBCU Permanent Fine Art Collections nationwide; 2) correct the omission of Black artists from the American art canon by bringing to light the rich fine artworks that have been stewarded by HBCUs since the 1800s and 3) create opportunities for African Diaspora artists by including fine artworks by those who identify as African, African American, Caribbean, Latinx, and American Indian.

H-DAP will produce significant deliverables exclusively for research, education, and cultural enrichment in three phases.

Phase I: A **Digital HBCU Fine Art Collections Directory** designed to provide a high-level overview of each collection's characteristics. After being permissioned by the HBCU President, HBCU Art Collection managers will be invited to complete a "20 Questions Survey" and this data will be summarized in the Directory. The goal is to have 100% participation from all HBCUs. **Timeline:** Publish the 1st Edition of the Directory in July 2026, during HBCU Legacy Week on Martha's Vineyard.

Phase II: Education, Research & Scholars Materials designed to educate H-DAP's three target audiences: 1) Academic Institutions (K-12 through higher ed), 2) Appraiser Associations, Auction Houses, Museums and Non-profit Organizations (e.g. The Links, Incorporated, The Society, Incorporated, supporting the Arts, etc.), and 3) Corporate America Workforce and Career Development Teams. Timeline: 2026 – ongoing.

Phase III: A **HBCU Art Collections Searchable Database** of ~ 10 to 100 digital images from HBCUs who desire to participate and find it valuable to provide a sample of their collection's fine art contents. Each HBCU will independently determine which of their artworks will be added to the database, sharing the priority of selecting works that are most relevant for education and research. **Timeline:** 2026 – ongoing.

How can HBCU Art Collections solve the problem?

HBCUs' museums, galleries, libraries, and archives have long collected and protected African American art, beginning with the Hampton University Museum, which in 1894 acquired Henry Ossawa Tanner's "The Banjo Lesson" and "Lion's Head".

Why is the Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM) Engaged with H-DAP?

The Smithsonian joined forces with H-DAP when SAAM on-boarded Valerie Cooper as a consultant and visionary for SAAM's Community Outreach initiatives. SAAM is positioned to assist in H-DAP's development due to its expertise in American art and craft, commitment to shaping the field through research and scholarship, and its vast collection of African American art.

When and where will the Digital HBCU Art Collections Directory be Available?

The 2026 launch of the HBCU Digital Art Collections Directory will celebrate OUR SHARED FUTURE in conjunction with the United States' 250th Anniversary. The 1st Edition of the Directory will be published in July 2026, during HBCU Legacy Week on Martha's Vineyard. Institutions nationwide will be invited to host the Directory on their websites including HBCUs, African American Research Centers, Smithsonian Institution Education Learning Labs, and SAAM's Research portal.

Where and when will future H-DAP convenings and H-DAP Education Academy seminars be held?

Beginning Sep. 2024, H- DAP convened its first three cohorts in the Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM), in Washington, DC. The fourth cohort convened Dec. 2025 in the historic Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library. The 5th cohort will also convene in AUC Woodruff Library, Dec. 11, 2026. H-DAP Academy seminars began in Nov. 2026. All sessions are hybrid and will be offered virtually and in-person @ AUC Woodruff Library, Atlanta, GA.

1st Cohort September 2024 - Completed	2nd Cohort June 2025 - Completed	3rd Cohort September 2025 - Completed	4th Cohort December 2025 - Completed
1. Benedict College	1. Clark Atlanta University	1. Alabama State University	1. AUC Robert W. Woodruff Library
2. Florida Memorial University	2. Coppin State University	2. Bowie State University	2. Bennett College
3. Fort Valley State University	3. Grambling State University	3. Cheyney University of Pennsylvania	3. Delaware State University
4. Livingstone College	4. Howard University	4. Claflin University	4. Fayetteville State University
5. Morehouse College	5. Spelman College	5. Meharry Medical College	5. Harris-Stowe State University
6. Morgan State University	6. Tuskegee University	6. North Carolina A&T University	6. Jackson State University
7. Savannah State University		7. Prairie View A&M University	7. Southern University and A&M College
8. Talladega College		8. South Carolina State University	8. Voorhees University
9. University of the District of Columbia		9. Winston-Salem State University	9. West Virginia State University

Contact Valerie A. Cooper, H-DAP Project Director, @ hdap.hbcuart@gmail.com or (203) 253-0294 to enroll your HBCU in our next cohort.