

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. 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 Art Collections nationwide; 2) correct the omission of Black artists from the American art canon by bringing to light the rich artworks that have been stewarded by HBCUs since the 1800s and 3) create opportunities for African Diaspora artists by including works 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:

Phase I: A **Digital HBCU Art Collections Directory** designed to provide a high-level overview of each collection's characteristics. After being permissioned by the HBCU President, 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: Published first version by 2026 year end.

Phase II: A **HBCU Art Collections Searchable Database** of ~ 100 digital images from HBCUs who desire to participate and find it valuable to provide a sample of their collection's 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 – 2030.

Phase III: **Education & Research Materials** designed to educate H-DAP's three target audiences: 1) Academic Institutions (K-12 through higher ed), 2) Non-profit Organizations, Museums, Auction Houses and Appraiser Associations and 3) Corporate America Workforce Diversity & Training Teams. 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 acquired Henry Ossawa Tanner's "The Banjo Lesson" and "Lion's Head" in 1894.

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

The Smithsonian joined forces with H-DAP when SAAM brought Valerie Cooper onboard as a consultant and visionary for SAAM's Community Outreach initiatives. SAAM is well-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. SAAM can also host and preserve a H-DAP database and establish a permanent H-DAP Kiosk with related research materials for museum visitors.

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 Directory will be made accessible as a complimentary digital flipbook. A variety of nationwide educational platforms will host the Directory including HBCUs, Smithsonian Institution Education Learning Labs, and SAAM's Research portal.

When was the Convening of the first cohort held?

H-DAP convened its first cohort of HBCUs at the Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM), in Washington, DC., on September 9-10, 2024. The second convening is scheduled for first quarter 2025. **Please contact Valerie A. Cooper, H-DAP Project Director for more information CooperVA@si.edu or (203) 253-0294.**