Reviews in Digital Humanities • Vol. 2, No. 6

Review: GeoMAP

Kristan M. Hanson¹

¹Dumbarton Oaks

Published on: Jun 14, 2021

License: [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC-BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Project

GeoMAP – Géographie du Marché de l'Art Parisien

Project Directors

[Julien Caverio](#), Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée

[Félicie Faizand de Maupeou](#), Labex The Past in the Present

[Léa Saint-Raymond](#), ENS-PSL

Project URL

<https://paris-art-market.huma-num.fr/>

Project Reviewer

[Kristan M. Hanson](#), Dumbarton Oaks

Project Overview

Léa Saint-Raymond, Félicie Faizand de Maupeou, and Julien Caverio

In the 19th century, a robust Parisian art market developed, resulting in an increasing number of art dealers and in the specialization of certain districts as "rues des tableaux" ("streets of paintings"). The GeoMAP data comes from the analysis of 2,784 points of geographical data drawn from a single, consistent source: the category "Tableaux (marchands de)" ("picture dealers") registered in the *Bottin du commerce* (the Parisian business directory) between 1815 and 1954. Each entry corresponds to a single art dealer, for which we transcribed all the information in the source: name, address, and additional information. To transform this data into geographical information, the old addresses were accurately located using a geocoding system based on historical references of Parisian addresses. The challenge was then to analyze the geography of the Parisian art market and its evolution from a global point of view and over time, using methods from quantitative art history and digital humanities.

The GeoMAP interactive map proposes several ways to explore this historical and geographical data set. Different types of visualization highlight the spatial dynamics of this market at several scales (from the street to the entire city), as well as the individual trajectories of its art dealers, by offering the possibility to choose a heat map, point, or cluster map. The research bar and the timeline allow for more precise research for a given dealer or a given time period. To visualize the evolution of Paris

(which extends to the Thiers wall in 1860), the map displays changes in territory over time (12 arrondissements between 1795 and 1860, 20 arrondissements established on January 1, 1860, and the 80 administrative districts). The map and the website were developed with the Leaflet.js library, and we focused on responsive-design to ensure the site is accessible for multiple screen dimensions. The [TGIR Huma-Num](#) has been hosting the site since 2017.

The project was initiated by two PhD students in art history—Félicie Faizand de Maupeou and Léa Saint-Raymond—who needed information on the way the Parisian art market evolved at the turn of the 19th century. As they did not find a relevant study, they initiated one. They started analyzing the *Bottin du commerce* and built a data set identifying the name, address, and start and end date of each business. The cartographer Julien Cavero then georeferenced the addresses, built the map, and developed an interactive website. At the same time, thanks to the Labex TransferS and the Artl@s project, the team wrote a series of articles, published in *Artl@s Bulletin*, and presented the interactive map at several conferences, notably at the Getty Research Institute and at the University of Tokyo.

Initially conceived as a tool for researchers, the simplicity of the interactive map and its intuitive character have attracted a wider audience—students, descendants of artists or collectors, art market players, or simply curious people. The feedback shows that there is a real demand for enlarging the study to other periods or other fields than painting.

References

Cavero, Julien, Félicie de Maupeou, and Léa Saint-Raymond. 2016. "Les rues des tableaux: The Geography of the Parisian Art Market 1815-1955." In *Artl@s Bulletin* 5, no. 1 (2016): Article 10. <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/artlas/vol5/iss1/10/>

de Maupeou, Félicie and Léa Saint-Raymond. 2013. "Les "marchands de tableaux" dans le Bottin du commerce: une approche globale du marché de l'art à Paris entre 1815 et 1955." In: *Artl@s Bulletin* 2, no. 2 (2013): Article 7. <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/artlas/vol2/iss2/7/>

Project Review

Kristan M. Hanson

GeoMAP (Géographie du marché de l'art parisien) is a digital humanities project that uses cartographic approaches to examine the history of the Parisian art market. Its website maps a constellation of locations where art dealers operated in Paris between 1815 and 1955. By making its georeferenced data and visualization tools publicly available, GeoMAP furthers spatial analyses of locations where art was marketed, sold, circulated, and exhibited, as well as changes in clusters over time. The project was co-created by Léa Saint-Raymond, Félicie de Maupeou, and Julien Caverio under the aegis of Artl@s, a transdisciplinary research group that advances digital methods for studying the histories of art through its website, seminar, and peer-reviewed journal.¹

A powerful digital tool, GeoMAP supports research at the intersections of art, commerce, society, and geography. Its website hosts an interactive map of present-day Paris that displays spatial-temporal data. This information—specifically, the names and addresses of art dealers and their year(s) of operation at a given location—was extracted from the *Bottin du commerce*.² This Parisian business directory contains vital historical evidence about commerce and industry, which is generally labor-intensive to access, track, and organize. By sharing data harvested from *Bottin's* 1815 to 1955 volumes and providing means to search and visualize it, GeoMAP offers a robust apparatus for discovering which art galleries operated where and when and for analyzing their relationship to one another and to broader social contexts.

While GeoMAP is primarily a research tool, its functionality implicitly advances humanistic claims about the efficacy of digital mapping for studying global and social art histories. Developed using Leaflet.js, Jawg Maps, and OpenStreetMap, the website's interactive map invites exploration of information in a variety of ways. A time slider, for example, can be adjusted to narrow the data displayed to a single year or date range. Other ways that users can investigate data are by selecting a type of map visualization and activating layers demarcating districts and quarters. Additionally, a search box facilitates finding data associated with a particular art dealer. These functions support rich considerations of the art market and its enmeshment within social, cultural, and economic geographies.

In 2020, art historian Paul B. Jaskot asserted, "The deep art-historical interest in spatial questions (especially typological, formal, and social) intersects with the equally rich explosion of computational modes of spatial analysis."³ Jaskot's claim that certain technologies are ideally suited for conducting art-historical research related to space and its social dimension highlights the merits of GeoMAP for this discipline. Not just remarkable for furthering that kind of inquiry, GeoMAP is also noteworthy for its

contribution to art market studies. Indeed, art historians Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich argued that “spatial visualizations,” generated by GeoMAP and other projects, “can convey meaningful information about the lived experience of markets, allowing viewers to grasp patterns and clusters quickly.”⁴ While GeoMAP’s visualizations certainly do so, what remains to be seen is how scholars will interpret and problematize this evidence and place it in productive tension with other primary sources.

Footnotes

1. Léa Saint-Raymond, Félicie de Maupeou, and Julien Caverio, “*Les rues des tableaux: The Geography of the Parisian Art Market 1815–1955*,” *Artl@s Bulletin* 5, no. 1 (2016): Article 10; Léa Saint-Raymond, Félicie de Maupeou, and Julien Caverio, “*Les rues des tableaux. Géographie du marché de l’art parisien (1815–1955)*,” *Artl@s Bulletin* 4, no. 1 (2015): Article 6; Félicie de Maupeou and Léa Saint-Raymond, “*Les ‘marchands de tableaux’ dans le Bottin du commerce: une approche globale du marché de l’art à Paris entre 1815 et 1955*,” *Artl@s Bulletin* 2, no. 2 (2013): Article 7.

[↩](#)

2. “This commercial directory, created in 1797, was published as the *Almanach Bottin de la ville de Paris* in 1818. It was purchased by Firmin-Didot Frères in 1857 and became the *Annuaire du commerce Didot-Bottin* in 1909. It ceased publication in 1955.” Saint-Raymond, de Maupeou, and Caverio, “*Les rues des tableaux*,” 120, fn. 2.

[↩](#)

3. Paul B. Jaskot, “Digital Methods and the Historiography of Art,” in *The Routledge Companion to Digital Humanities and Art History*, ed. Kathryn Brown (Milton: Taylor and Francis, 2020), 12. [↩](#)

4. Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich, “Digital Methods and the Study of the Art Market,” in *The Routledge Companion to Digital Humanities and Art History*, ed. Kathryn Brown (Milton: Taylor and Francis, 2020), 172.

[↩](#)