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ARTL@S: A Spatial and Trans-national Art History
Origins and Positions of a Research Program

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Abstract
ARTL@S is a project on the spatial and transnational history of the arts and humanities, based on the collaboration of quantitative methods and cartographic visualization. These two strategies fit into a perspective nourished by critical and sociological theory that, in short, aims to highlight not only the link between a work of art and its space, but also its underlying political, social, aesthetic or economic issues. From this standpoint, we have chosen to take advantage of what a digital approach can offer: the constitution of databases, quantitative analysis, graphic and geographic representations of data, as well as the Internet. In this introduction we present ARTL@S, explain the contribution maps can have to art history, and put our project in a broader historiographical context.

Résumé
ARTL@S est un projet d’histoire spatiale et transnationale des arts et des lettres, fondée sur la pratique conjointe de l’approche quantitative et de la visualisation cartographique. Ces deux stratégies s’insèrent dans une perspective nourrie de théorie critique et sociologique, intéressée par la mise en évidence de l’articulation entre une création et son espace, et des enjeux politiques, sociaux, esthétiques, économiques, sous-jacents à cette création. Nous avons choisi de tirer au mieux parti des possibilités offertes par l’outil informatique : bases de données, analyse quantitative, représentation graphique et géographique, web. Cette introduction, après avoir présenté ARTL@S, se propose de démontrer les apports de la cartographie pour l’histoire des arts et des lettres et de situer notre projet dans un contexte historiographique plus large.
Introduction

ARTL@S endeavors to encourage the study of the spatial and transnational history of the arts and humanities based on the collaboration of two closely related approaches: quantitative methods and cartographic visualization. These two strategies fit into a perspective nourished by critical and sociological theory that, in short, aims to highlight not only the link between a work of art and its space (both social space as well as material space), but also its underlying political, social, aesthetic or economic issues. By space, we mean a multi-dimensional area in which individuals or groups as well as material objects are located. This area may be physically noticeable, in the way that we experience the presence of a painting in an exhibition, or not at all, as in the case of an artist in a given neighborhood, an exhibition in a metropolis, or the circulation of works of art around international circles. Whatever the case may be, a position in space is socially and politically visible and traceable, and our ambition is to analyze those implications at the core of artistic creation.

Our purpose is the history of the arts, whatever they are, insofar as they involve creative activity: fine arts, literature, design, music, theatre, cinema, etc. Indeed, we do not want to separate those activities whose protagonists were often part of the same networks or could even have been the same individuals before the progressive separation of these occupations in separate fields, and are still, in some cases, one and the same. These activities also point out the same ambiguous position: that of the status of creator or artist, whose activity is often presented as a resistance to social, economic and political logic, torn between individual projects and group logic, between ambition of originality and stylistic transfer, between vocational pretense and marketing strategies, between the ideal of universality and ethnical realities, and so on. We focus on the locations and movements of these arts and their actors, their integration in social milieus and more specifically in the logic of political, cultural, and artistic fields, as well as their response, whether visual or discursive, to these spatial logics. Thus we don’t settle for narrative history, a necessary but insufficient step for our perspective. We keep in mind a transnational (not just international) and serial perspective, yet without neglecting what is called close reading—i.e. an analysis of works and a consideration of their formal characteristics.

By a spatial approach, we may initially understand the study of specific locations and distributions where do the artists live? Where is art shown? But we also aim especially to have a point of view in which all space, whether geographic, simply material or even artistic (a work entering into a space), is intersected by social and political logic, and therefore by domination and conflict relations. This approach is in line with what Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu would have written about space, each in his own way, accepting the idea of a structural domination in the social world.

With this standpoint, we have chosen to take advantage of what the digital approach can offer: constitution of databases, quantitative analysis, graphic and geographic representations of data, and the use of the internet. In addition to the discursive explanation of our sources, assumptions, methods, observations, analyses and interpretations, we also work with images: historical and animated maps, and interactive ones, as a means to better illustrate conclusive quantitative reports by visual means rather than as supposedly objective figures in charts or tables. This major investment, too much for many of our colleagues, is necessary because it will give to scholars efficient tools for their research. The “digital” strategy of ARTL@S also implies a promotion of research results towards diverse publics, from school teachers and pupils to museum visitors, as well as for the academic community.

We are aware of the fact that these projects confront significant technical difficulties and require the utmost methodological prudence. Keeping in mind that ARTL@S should not exclude other methods, and that it cannot to claim to become the only way to study and analyze the history of arts, I wish to clarify in this introduction how the ARTL@S team arrived at this approach, and what its potential problems are. The essays following this introduction will explain in greater detail our major project, present the work of some of our students who have adopted, sometimes recently, this cartographic approach, and finally propose two studies of artworks that cross the cartographic question (those of Marcel...
Duchamp and Guy Debord). This introduction is much more of a presentation of Artl@s, an explanation of the contribution of maps to art history, and an attempt to put it in a broader historiographical context.

The Origins of Artl@s: from the International and Quantitative to a Cartographic Approach

Internalist, formalist, or simply monographic methods, generalized in the history of art, have provoked dissatisfaction for a long time. It is in this perspective that what we might designate rather vaguely as a "social" history of the arts was developed, focusing on the contexts, professional groups, creative and marketing structures, as well as the social and political positions taken. Artl@s is a part of this perspective, attempting to create a history of the arts that has greater quantitative (out of monography), temporal (working on longer periods of time) and geographic (leaving the national perspective) scope. Artl@s also endeavors to make a more comprehensive history, in the sense that it will try to explain and not only describe, and that it will attempt to not separate the study of art from that of human beings and the structures in which their joys and sorrows are registered. The specific difference of our project is its cartographic and digital dimension, which seems however to open other issues that have hardly been explored.

A socio-cultural and transnational history project

The paths of several historians met before arriving at this project. We were attracted by the explanatory ambitions of quantitative and comparative social history inspired by Pierre Bourdieu [1992], especially the research of Christophe Charle [1977 and 1981]. Another inspiration was the works of Fernand Braudel [for example, 1949] and more generally the program of the first École des Annales: the consideration of long periods of time, studies on several scales and on the articulation of these scales, the linkage of the microstorial and the macrostorial, and the ambitious application of quantitative approach. It is, of course, out of the question to study and research history as in the 1960s. But since the start of this century, more and more scholars have consistently gone against the hold of a "soft" history of attitudes (interesting but hardly theorized), and even more so against the predominance of monographic works in art history, in an attempt to make analyses not in terms of "places" (places of memory, places of art) but rather in terms of spaces. The road was paved by social sciences. The development of computer software has allowed us to use the best of the quantitative legacy of the Annales, with the certainty that by not abandoning neither case studies and detailed surveys, and even less so research archives, nor the consideration of what might be referred to as "well-lived or experienced history", or finally the works themselves, one could attempt to create a more contextualized study of history that is less descriptive and narrative, but rather more explanatory. Therefore, a study of history that tries, in fact, to understand the larger forces at work in the history of the arts and humanities, a little better than with patchy stories of individual creators or, at best, of movements that are too isolated from broader contexts.

Opening the angle of approach meant two things: moving away from monographic works on the one hand, which we have already seen, and leaving a strictly national framework on the other. Since the 1980s, the method of cultural transfers, developed especially for Franco-German studies, has provided an effective example for leaving the established methodological nationalism [M. Espagne and M. Werner, 1994; M. Espagne, 1999]. Methodological nationalism, if not that of blinders to unfortunate political predetermination, or rather that of the result of the political construction of our disciplines and sources, no longer makes sense. Moreover, it has become clear that bilateral studies are hardly more interesting than national ones, and that a coherent historical topic should really be more international, taking into account the plurality of cultural and artistic transfers at work in the creative process and in its reception [B. Joyeux-Punel, 2002]. Hence the usefulness, furthermore, of comparative approaches, already developed in the study of cultural and social history [C. Charle, 2001 and 2008, H. Kälble, 1991; J. Kocka, 1996].
Why not also compare what happens on one side and the other of different borders, for artistic or literary questions? It became necessary to observe the passing of arts, artists, ideas, esthetics etc. from one side to one other, or to others. There were also news fields of research on re-composition of the same ideas according to their locations and the public for which they are intended, since their reception differs in each location and milieu. It also became necessary to study artistic strategies adapted according not only to national but also to the social spaces in which they are developed.

It is in this context, sometimes in a relatively separate way, that several doctoral projects of the same generation have been developed, inspired surely by various references, but nonetheless oriented in the same direction, both transnational and non-monographic: those of Blaise Wilfert on the literary importation in France in the 19th and 20th centuries [2003], those of Véronique Tarasco-Long on French and American patrons [2007], that of the author of this introduction, on the internationalization of Parisian avant-garde painting from 1855-1914 [B. Joyeux-Prunel, 2005], of Anaïs Fléchet on Brazilian music in France [2007], of Mélanie Traversier on the Opera in Italy in the 19th and 20th centuries [2005 and 2009], of Catherine Dossin on the construction of artistic reputations between the United States and Europe after 1945 [2008], and finally that of Jérémie Cerman on the internationalization of Art nouveau wall paper painted [2012].

From the quantitative approach to cartographic visualization

The case study on the internationalization of Parisian avant-garde painting may illustrate what kind of methodologies these approaches implied, and how the use of a serial approach and geographic orientation ties in [B. Joyeux-Prunel, 2009a]. It is, from a "remote" point of view, the study of the exportation of avant-garde Parisian artworks between the 1850s and the first World War, thus also working on the internationalization of their trajectories and reputes, as with that of their aesthetics. The idea being to not simply be satisfied with inter-articulated case studies, but rather to reconstruct structural logics, we had to identify a population, to study its opportunities to exhibit abroad, to see what was shown or not, to highlight channels and networks that would be favorable or not for this internationalization, as well as the perception of this internationalization at the time. Such a serial approach was necessary: we had to undergo a kind of substantive clearing and the observation of gradual evolutions was then an efficient tool. We chose then to base our work on the analysis of one primary sources: a collection of exposition catalogues. Hence the establishment of a database designed to list shows, to count artists, track artworks, and identify various populations (artists, exhibitions organizers, art critics, translators, and networks of merchants and collectors). Finally, from these lists of people and groups, the quantitative approach helped us to count and to chart shows, to track artworks, and to trace their diverse itineraries.

This method did not entirely prevent the use of monographic surveys—for example, in which places a certain work of art was exposed, or how its titles changed from exhibition to exhibition—as a means therefore to better research what a given work of art cost at the time, what was said about it in the press, by artists or in intimate sources (i.e. correspondence, personal diaries, etc.). A "tighter" approach did also allow us to study the strategies implemented to both counter and foster this internationalization, for some of the more instructive or interesting examples (such as the Impressionists, Signac, Matisse, or Picasso), as well as for lesser-known cases. From this grew a particular interest for the protagonists of the internationalization of innovative art, i.e. the artists, critics, dealers, collectors, and other intermediaries involved in the process. The study of the nesting of these processes—often accompanied by universalizing discourses, in a context of nationalization of artistic logic and even stronger nationalist rivalries—showed the biased character of main-stream interpretations that systematically equate the avant-garde position to one of humanist internationalism.

Therefore, from the individual to the collective, from a national market context to an international one, from the artwork and views that supported it to its reception, or rather receptions, analysis has shown that the internationalization of avant-garde Parisian artwork in the nineteenth century was not just carried out by market...
networks and logic. Indeed, the internationalization process functioned all the better since it was founded on differentiated strategies according to the various reception systems and, furthermore, that it relied on, most often, national (even nationalist) logic that the avant-garde did not necessarily oppose. It was truly a demonstration of the geopolitics of art. The initial serial and transnational methodological choices painted a relatively unusual picture of the avant-garde: one that used the 'international' for national strategies, one of an internationalism that was as strategic as subjective, one that was compatible with nationalist choices. In addition, it was one that, more surprisingly, showed a distribution of the innovation of the period according to places and environments.

In the case at hand, in addition to the importance of counting it was also important to carry out geographical work and to map this data. It was necessary to "see" where and how artworks, artists, and other people moved around, to see where quantitative accounts and circulatory trends localize the centers and peripheries of a European system of artistic movements, and how these centers and peripheries evolved. A facilitator of this cartographic approach was its quantitative screening: it is easier to graphically represent encrypted distributions than qualitative data, which often lacks necessary information (for example, the itinerary or the circulation of Cubist style throughout Europe). Maps, as well as charts, allow us to observe relationships that the reading of texts or numerical tables do not illustrate. As a tool of new discoveries, maps have proven themselves to be, furthermore, useful for showing results and their interpretations: from the heuristic we move on to the demonstrative.

We have promoted this quantitative approach elsewhere (percentages and more formalized approaches such as factor analysis, logistic regression, or network analysis) [B. Joyeux-Prunel and L. Sigalo-Santos, 2010], for which too few historians of art and literature have been trained, both for practical reasons (lack of quantitative training in the curricula) as well as for methodological, even ideological, ones [B. Joyeux-Prunel, 2010]. Now, the map is an indispensable corollary for this quantitative approach. First, it can be understood as one chart or graphic among many: it displays graphical information—dots, lines, and areas—as well as visual signs—arrows, disks, etc.—associated with information presented relating to spatial coordinates. When quantitative, the map shows the distribution of metric data. In contrast to a spreadsheet where figures appear and are likely to be considered "real", a map presents orders of magnitude and already interpreted data. From a distant approach in the study of the history of the arts and of literature, maps are tools as useful as graphs or charts, as noted in particular by Franco Moretti [2008]. Both help to get out of a purely theoretical speculation, and to replace the "old unnecessary distinctions (high and low, canon and archive, such-and-such national literature...) by new temporal, spatial and morphological distinctions" [Ibid, 126].

The Cartographic approach: a new field for art history

The idea to foster this approach, both quantitative and cartographic, as well as to make a group research project for the history of the arts, was called for by the field’s paradoxical lack of mapping approaches.

Maps in art historical research

The use of maps in art history has hardly been developed, especially in contrast to other historical disciplines. Some works are an exception, but they are isolated and limited in scope. In France, after Le Monde de l’Art, published by Larousse in 1964, there have been few others like it. Le Grand Atlas de l’Art, an imposing collective work of two volumes edited by Universals [1993], is disappointing: it does contain maps, but does not endeavor to understand what they represent. Furthermore, the subjects of the maps and those of the articles accompanying them are unrelated: the articles give general summaries on the evolution of the history of the arts, while the maps simply show the location of artistic activities—at best the journeys of a few artists, selected without specific criteria, including what they represent exactly. Two other books have been more ambitious. The Atlas of Western Art History edited by Antony White and John Steer [J. Steer and A. White 1995] and the Atlas of World Art, edited by
John Onians [2008] focused on the junction of geographic and historical issues. Can one describe and explain art by its means of emergence and dissemination in space? Is there a geography of art, and what is its evolution? What can mapping art history teach us? The circulation of objects; the constitution of private or public collections; the politics of national patrimony and the capitalization of the artistic treasures of humanity by rich countries; the interest in various geographical areas (from the Arctic to Oceania, from Rome to New York, from Korea to Mexico, from Cameroon to the Cyclades...): the issues are both ambitious and relevant for diverse chronological periods, from the Paleolithic to the modern era. We regret, however, the striking discrepancies between map and text, the hasty nature of the proposed analysis, and the weak heuristic scope of the majority of proposed maps.

Atlases of artistic history thus do not stand with pride, when compared to the many archaeological atlas whose authors, in contrast to art historians, are perhaps all the more interested in the places with which their artworks are associated: their information is more geographical than temporal: local junctions of archeological sites can help to date the investigated objects. Likewise, a comparison is also weak in the case of "historical atlases", published for decades now, though only in the francophone historiographical field. These works are often vast Geo-historical panoramas of civilization, such as one edited by Georges Duby in the 1970s [1978, 1988 and 2006], other "monographic" works, which are mostly exhaustive accounts, such as the *Atlas historique de la Révolution française* [S. Bonin et C. Langlois, 1987-2000], essential studies like the *Atlas historique des villes de France* and the *Atlas de l'Histoire de France*, edited by Jean Boutier [2000 et 2005-2007], or the *Histoire de l'Europe urbaine de l'Antiquité à nos jours* edited by Jean-Luc Pinol [2003].

Since 2009, our team has focused on this cartographic dimension, first by a seminar entitled "la mesure et la représentation graphique des circulations artistiques internationales aux XIXe et XXe siècles" on graphic representation of international artistic movements in the 19th and 20th centuries, and later by one focusing more on map-specific issues. It became necessary to teach ourselves, as well as our students, how to map, as well as the limitations of mapping, its implications, its methods, and its challenges for the history of art. Hence the importance of strengthening our methods of quantification and visualization—what data we are tracking? How are we counting it? With what? What does it represent? What can we represent and not show? Where do we start, where do we stop? And as for various artistic movements: what exactly is moving around? Where is it going? Hence the project to give scholars tools to map art history and to accomplish these approaches through the online publication of a collective atlas of the history of the arts in the 19th and 20th centuries, centered on the study artistic spaces and the circulation between them.

**ARTL@s and the “spatial turn”**

Is ARTL@s so removed from the "spatial studies " or the "Kunstgeographie"? There has been indeed a spatial turn in the humanities [A.Torre 2008]. We do not linger on the popularity of "mapping", which is not a real cartographic trend in the true sense of the word; "Mapping" is not necessary cartography but rather a visual translation of complex ideas [K-E. Chang et al, 2002 and W. M. K. Trochim, 1989]. Since the 1990s, however, the work of Denis Cosgrove on landscape has led art historians to take into account space as well as time, thus bringing together the concerns of geographers of culture, as well as geo-historians [D. Cosgrove, 1989]. The basis of this approach is the idea that space is a historical construction, and that landscape in particular is the result of processes that are not only natural but also social or cultural. This spatial turn, largely linked to the linguistic, and then cultural, turn of human sciences, has deeply affected art history, especially by the attention it has given not only to the question of the representation of space but also that of "places of art".

This art historical fascination with the relationship between place and style is well established. Already in the 18th century, climate was considered as an explanation of the differentiation of national productions [J. R. Mantion, 1983]. In the 19th century, the tendency to build a necessary relationship between place and style was encouraged by the success of Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893), who applied to the study of art, the ideas of his *Histoire de la littérature anglaise*, published in 1864, later
further developed in his courses at the École des Beaux-Arts and in his *Philosophie de l’art* (1867). Taine considered works of art according to "la race, le milieu, le moment" ("race, environment and time"), a trinity in which the environment held the lead role [H. Taine, 1867, 1901-2001]. Art history contributed to the justification of more underhand political theories—especially nationalism, linked to a deterministic anchor to the land, which made the very idea of exchanges between artistic "languages" impossible. In a softer version, this interpretation allowed for the association of a given style with a specific geographic area, as one could see it at the first international exhibitions of the 19th century [P. Mainardi, 1987]. It was just the beginning of a still budding trend where national criteria influenced the comprehension of artworks [G. Kultermann, 1997], a trend whose most interesting avatar is the idea of "school" [C. Peltre and P. Lorentz, 2007; D.-P. Peters Corbett et al. 2002; M. Warnke, 1998; W. Hofmann, 1999]. From the study of cultural dimensions to the analysis of the role of arts in the assertion of identity, questions of nationalism and nationality come very quickly. This is why very interesting studies on the visual and textual construction of national or ethnical frontiers are now so numerous in art historical research.

Most scholars studying these questions feed the ambition to relativize spaces and conceptions of place that had long since been presented as absolute. In his book *Toward a Geography of Art* [2004], Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann created a genealogy of art historical trends that link, since Vasari, a style to a given local or national school. Da Costa Kaufmann thus frees himself from the denunciatory temptation. He proposes to better formulate a geographical approach too little problematized in art history, encouraging scholars to no longer employ heavy concepts such as center, periphery or capitals, without reflection. Following this perspective academic encounters on the question of the places of arts have multiplied: for example at the international historical congress on the theme "Sites and Territories of Art History," in Montreal (Canada) in 2004, the International Springtime Academy in Art History in 2005, on the issue of territories of art, as well as other symposiums on the geographies of English art [Peters Corbett et al. 2002], and on Impressionism (Rouen, September 2010). University courses on "places of art" or "artistic geography" (Universities of Bordeaux III and Nanterre) have also been created.

But if studies on the "geography of art" have developed for over a decade, these are not first and foremost works on the location of artistic activities themselves, but rather on the relationship between location and artistic production, the style or the artwork being the object of primary interest. These geographical approaches make no steps towards mapping and even less towards quantitative analysis. "Geographers of art" have borrowed their concepts from geographers but their tools rarely. They do not describe surfaces, but form theories that present art in a geographical way. It is strictly a meta-geography and not a geographic approach to history.

Reciprocally, one can also ask questions about the ability of "geographies of art" to consider space as a historical phenomenon. If one questions the views of a given time on the arts and on artistic spaces, one does not necessarily question the historicity of these spaces in the true sense of the word. Hence a risk of bringing together views on art and its link to certain places. These approaches have endorsed the turning point of linguistic criticism, its deconstructive conceit and its easily denouncing tendency, without however abandoning the modern and pre-modern prevalence of time on space, already denounced by Edward W. Soja [1989, introduction and chapter I]. In this representation of the world, social and cultural space is still seen as dead, not as dialectical (which Michel Foucault greatly regretted), or at even as less important than what one could write and think about it.

The *Artl@s* project’s position is therefore different. We refuse to begin by studying points of view. We begin with the reconstitution of distributions first, by highlighting movements and circulations, and by tracking the spatial embodiment of social hierarchies, and artistic competition. Only then do we study discourses and points of views. Next, we endeavor to better understand how representations and views, which were often tainted with ideology or aesthetic positions, were articulated by concrete conditions of artistic practice, with the idea that spatially anchored social forces act as much on the side of practice as on the side of representation. We also hope to bring new insight to the field through the visualization provided by our maps at the least, the "encyclopedic" perspective that we offer will allow historians to see who
was living next to the artists they study; but also, perhaps, we can bring something new to art history by linking constituted geographies to explanatory rationales that would not just be political or aesthetic.

**ARTL@S: a digital strategy**

To realize this endeavor, ARTL@S gives its members the possibility to work with four interconnected digital workspaces:

1. A wiki-Database (BasArt)
2. A statistical and geographical workspace: ARTL@S worksite
3. A publication space (ARTL@S website)
4. A collection of interactive books on different research themes of ARTL@S members

**Four interconnected digital environments**

**BasArt**

BasArt is not only a database at disposal for scholars. It is a kind of wiki, or a collaborative database, that we feed according to scientific rules. It grows according to what scholars who use it bring to the project. The database contains primary sources: exhibition catalogues, catalogues raisonnés, editors’ catalogues and those of film makers; lists of artists – sources that are precisely identified, dated, localized. We conceived BasArt so that no information could be added without the mention of its origin. The database is a possibility to centralize and unify various data that art historians have, but have not yet been able to link together. Its characteristic is thus to register relationships between activities or people that are usually studied separately, as soon as these links are known to be certain (i.e. that a given artist was also the collector of certain works, or that he wrote such-and-such article, that he had a gallery between 1898 and 1904, and that he lived at the same address as another person of the database, etc.). BasArt is an indispensable tool to get precise information on dates, places, titles, numbers, name, etc.—even before moving on to quantitative or geographical analysis. Above all, in the perspective of spatial studies, BasArt’s specificity is to propose an automatic address geo-localization: both for current as well as for former and no-longer existing addresses. BasArt is thus the first step towards historical and geographical good research.

**ARTL@S worksite**

We began, at the start of the 2010-2011 academic year, the progressive establishment of a mapping portal of GIS applications based on ESRI (ArcGIS 9.3) products, hosted by the Chronocarto server. The GIS is used to make maps with the locations of, for example, national heritage objects, artworks, the homes and studios of artists, places of training or education, exposition sites, travel destinations, collections, journals etc. that are registered in BasArt or in other spreadsheets.

ARTL@S, designed with usability in mind, works by superimposing layers that the user can view according to his or her choice: in addition to the traditional map backgrounds (such as city maps and ortho-photo ones), it is also possible to determine, for example, on a given day, whether or not we want the mapping tool to display various Parisian exposition locations (and, furthermore, which specific sites, for example, only the salons, or galleries and bookstores), artist and sculptor studios, sculptors, museums locations, etc. Thumbnail images will also allow the user—if copyright questions are not an issue—to view photos of any given work, and more generally to show a brief description of the object at hand (for example, the address of an artist, or his or her name and nationality) and thus to access other information that will complement the visual rendering of the interactive map.

With ARTL@S, it is possible to do the following operations:
To query the database, through detailed interfaces, to select and analyze various information
To visualize your query results with charts, graphs, and maps or statistical maps, but also with automatically generated chronologies.

To insert these visualizations into a text, so that they are never separated from the interpretations and hypothesis that precede them: whether images, maps or graphs, they must all be linked to historical narration and interpretation.

Specification and methodological sheets, as well as concrete examples, will also be available on the worksite, so that scholars can use their maps in a scientific way. Our goal is to help them treat large amounts of information in an analytic and synthetic way, and to help them thus in their reflection and research.

**ARTL@S website**

This private worksite is an initial step for the online publication of research results—after these results have been approved by ARTL@S’ scientific committee. The public website artlas.ens.fr will grant access to these results, in addition to other forms of academic publications: books, articles, associated digital contents (animated maps, zoomable maps, images, movie, etc.). ARTL@S is thus a new kind of scientific publication, different from but also complementary to reviews, conference proceedings, and books, and thus needed in the academic arena. ARTL@S has also been conceived to be a center of resources as well as other visual and animated content, and will also refer to further “written”, or “textual” publications (via URLs and QR codes).

Finally, ARTL@S-public is designed to give broader publics an access to research methods and results. We want to allow the general public to be able to ask the database with simple questions (i.e. where did Picasso exhibit in 1926?), in order for it to be possible for everyone to automatically generate simple localization maps. ARTL@S is thus a means for diverse populations to come into contact with art history through new paths; the website will give synoptic presentations of scientific conclusions. It will also give methodological advice and present tools that help to both read and understand the produced maps.

Our team counts on the interest of economical actors for the contents of BasArt and the maps it makes, to finance the continuity of the project and the development of its tools, to generate scholarships, and to update the technical structure of ARTL@S. Indeed, the historical geolocation of artworks’ trajectories can contribute to the promotion of the art market. Art galleries and auction houses perpetually look for original, historical and digital contents that could be associated with the works they sell. ARTL@S will have what they need.

**ARTL@S-publications**

At the very least, ARTL@S is a series of book publications, linked to a website. We will publish four collections related to the project’s main research orientations: artistic and literary circulations, artistic spaces in the metropolis, the geographical reflection of artworks, and theories. These books will be available online (in PDF format), as well as in print format, and will be available for consultation through diverse mediums. The intelligent use of QR codes will provide an opportunity for a free movement between texts and digital animations.

**Figure 1. ARTL@S website QR code**

http://www.artlas.ens.fr

**Financing and organization**

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Non-problematic” mapping and its contributions

Used merely as a tool for localization, even the simplest mapping of art history already provides a great deal of insight. This initial, “neutral”, approach to localization, allows one to examine lists of thousands of addresses that have been provided by, in most cases, exhibition catalogues and artistic directories. Where does this artist live? Where is that work exposed? Where does a certain collector live? What is the address of that merchant? We begin to enter into an encyclopedic dimension that the creation of a GIS makes automatic by moving my cursor on the addresses near to my artist’s own locales, I can discover that every morning he passed a certain colleague whose work is close to his own, or that every evening the artist, on his way home from the Academy, walked past a display of African sculptures at a nearby gallery. In short: mapping exposes new information that help change the image we have of a certain person, of history, or of a group. It allows a more thorough contextualization, at least on a microscopic scale. It is, one might say, a creator of information.

Taking a step back, the map-assisted localization also generates nebulae of information that sometimes draw consistent eras. Where were all the workshops? The galleries? The amateurs? Imagine a map that allows us both to understand the position of any given “actor” of the art world in relation to a larger area, and, furthermore, to consider his or her position in other social, cultural or economic spaces. Under these geographical issues lies an interest for structures on, or against, which artistic creation has developed. Locating these structures, indeed a truly complicated task, thus brings up new questions in sociology and history.

The advantage of using traditional serial sources in art history, especially exhibition catalogues, is not only that their information is easily translated to maps, but also that they are dated: each address is linked to a specific date. From this simple kind of mapping the historian moves on to a vast worksite on the evolution of spaces of artistic creation, of the art market, of collections, of artistic domination processes, centers and peripheries.
A global history of major artistic cities

In cartographic representation, we also wish to better understand the link between artistic activities and their surrounding urban spaces, and thus contribute to a history of the arts in various large cities. The cartographic perspective requires changing our focus, because, with quantitative data, it "objectivizes" facts (without holding on to things as objectives, sources themselves being the product of history, environment, culture) that the study of literary sources can often increase or decrease. Thus, the mapping of Parisian galleries shows that the traditional opposition between the left and right banks no longer holds [J. Verlaine 2008].

One can expect a great deal from what Artl@s has in the works for its "Paris" section, presented in this volume [see the article by Félicie de Maupeou and Léa Saint-Raymond]. This research program is the first of a series that will hopefully expand on several artistic cities, in collaboration with other research teams, for example on Brussels, London, Berlin, Munich, and New York. This would also fit in following other recent studies, especially ones on the modern era, such as those of the IrHIS team, in Lille [M. Traversier 2009].

The issues of our project on urban artistic spaces are not only to delineate artistic neighborhoods or to trace the meanderings of certain groups of individuals. They are also to understand, with the tools of historical comparison and cultural transfers, how artistic cities developed. Moreover, these issues also revolve around understanding how both comparative processes and ones of cultural exchange were responsible for constructing artistic cities. This often happened by the concentration of artistic assets (patrons, academies, dealers, museums), making cities attractive but also more susceptible both to conflict and covetousness. Finally, we seek to understand how these spaces were at the heart (or not) of a transnational history of arts of which we are the heirs.

This history of major artistic cities must be "global" both in the transnational and the sociological sense. It must integrate the study of these peripheries whose foreign communities, settling in central cities, we often forget. It must take into account the circulation of artworks that were often excluded from the main circuits of consecration. It must also integrate the study of separated linguistic communities: the peripheries themselves can be in the centers of these large cities. This new study of history must take into account the nesting of inter-urban comparisons in the management of artistic politics [see for example the article by Mathieu Haroux on the presence of the Parisian repertoire in Lille theatres], whether or not these comparisons are formulated. It must also reflect upon, in a historical approach, the link between the insertion of a given metropolis in international relations, and its own artistic life.

A history of artistic movements on a global scale

The spatial approach to studying artistic cities allows us to consider transnational artistic movements in different ways than in the usual hierarchies. Enrico Castelnuovo and Carlo Ginzburg [1981] suggested, for example, a reconsideration of the links between "symbolic domination and artistic geography," for the specific case of Italian art after the Renaissance. Many of us have crossed such matters, whether we seek to understand the domination and reconsideration of Paris, or the perpetual negotiation of hierarchies among cities in literary history [B. Wilfert-Portal, 2009], as well as the history of modern art. Simple mapping of the evolution of art exhibitions that were considered modern between the 1850s and the first World War shows us that the concentration of modernist activity in Paris, the "world capital of modern art," was no longer obvious starting from the turn of the twentieth century, and also helps to better study how it was brought into question at the beginning of the 1910s by various cultural and artistic capitals of Central Europe, especially Berlin [B. Joyeux-Prunel, 2009b]. The same goes for the study of American artists' reputations after 1945: without Europe, American art would not have realized its domination during the 1960s-1980s – a result that reconsider the very idea of American domination [C. Dossin, 2008].

This work grows to no longer use the concepts of "center" and "periphery" from a perspective considering ideas of innovation and delay, but rather to analyze the world of art as a space where general competition for symbolic
domination is at stake. This view is especially able to interact with the historiographies produced in peripheral areas, at least when they try to resist the imposition of criteria developed in the centers [P. Piotrowski, 2009]. What a map shows, at this stage, can be the complexity of the distribution of powers between "center" and "periphery," the periphery not necessarily being where we thought it was, and the center, not necessarily what we assume. We are in a close perspective to Immanuel Wallerstein's proposals for the study of what he calls "worlds-systems" [I. Wallerstein, 2009]: even in art history, we do not want to consider "peripheries" as complete relegation zones. Artistic geography takes, then, a dynamic dimension: "centers" are seen through their attempts to rob the artistic legacy of peripheries, while dominated regions have to be analyzed through their capacity for resistance to the artistic standard imposed by the center.

Another important component for our project on the history of artistic and literary migrations is the study of translations. Indeed, in the case of Europe, one of the most decisive forms of cultural circulation between different linguistic areas, was the translation of literary works. Translations, including novels, poetry, drama, critiques and literary history, were one of the most important forms of trans-nationality between European elites. In belles-lettres (fiction, poetry, drama, essays), translations published in volumes has been the primary means of circulation for literary works, aside from small circles of multilingual scholars who were able to read in a foreign language. More than a simple question on the circulation of texts, on the dissemination and reception of works, or even on the creation of literary reputations, these translations were involved in an essential part of the structures of European literate communities since they mobilized publishers, translators, commentators, and critics. They also sometimes allowed radical reconfigurations of literary market strategies, questioned the national status of a given language, examined literary cannons and hierarchy, and occasionally mobilized the efforts of professional, but also political, authorities, on the issues of copyright and of national cultural power.

On the artistic side, the study of translations is an essential aspect to any project on circulation, and remains an unexplored field. By translations, one must not think merely of "texts", which is a rather theoretical concept characteristic of an insufficient internal approach; but, instead, of books, articles, brochures, catalogues, or posters, written and/or translated and adapted by artists, critics, collectors, and dealers for which we must begin a collective study. We have observed elsewhere how the transfer of the writings of Paul Signac and Maurice Denis in Germany changed their content: those of Signac initially followed academic reasoning, inserted into the history of French art, while those of Maurice Denis were more oriented towards the construction of an art steeped in Christianity. Upon their arrival, one finds reconstituted works that were truncated and adapted to the expectations of a Nietzsche-following public that were quite different from those of Neoimpressionism and the philosophy of the Nabis [B. Joyeux-Prunel, 2012b]. The study of translations must also involve the works themselves. The study of international artistic movements incites to detect real strategies for the adaptation of a given work from one context to another: it can be renaming of a book or its translation or adaptation, the change of a picture frame, or even the changes of the discourse and interpretation associated with one work or another. Such are the strategies that were employed both in the 19th century for avant-garde painting [B. Joyeux-Prunel, 2009a] and for the European exportation of American art [see the "transatlantic" project presented here by Catherine Dossin].

The history of artistic movements reread from a cartographical and geopolitical point of view, accompanied by the cultural transfers method, and therefore completes a historiography of art too often limited to compilations of texts that are erroneously presented as reception studies. It also encourages scholars studying circulations to not simply settle for hypothetical findings based on stylistic proximity of two works, or on the presence of a given artist in a certain city at the same time as another artist or an exhibition. It calls for, on the one hand, an expanded assessment of the circulation of objects, as a distant starting point that poses questions on an international, even global, level, with constantly reconstituted hierarchies. On the other hand, it also encourages the adoption of case studies, and of smaller scales, where we study in considerable detail the trajectory of a given object, artist, or artwork, and changes that the object was subject to during its circulation, by
precisely analyzing the link between a date, socio-spatial coordinates, and its content and evolution.

The result of such approaches is the radical reconsideration of a large part of art history as it is taught today. It is no longer possible to reduce artwork to content, and to consider, above all, artistic content as fixed. Nor is it possible to consider a given artistic production as a result of the intrinsic superiority of an artist, a group or a particular center of artistic activity. Should we lament this Heraclitean vertigo or, on the contrary, think that such an approach will allow us to do without various self-delusions, and to open ourselves up to a larger understanding of the history of the arts, leaving once and for all the many disputes perpetuated by indigent interpretations in the field?

Artworks and social space

From the "distant" to the "close", as we see it, ARTL@s does not at all lack interest in the artworks themselves. The way we study art history does not necessarily issue from a given work of art, as traditional art historical practice anchored in monographic texts and the museum approach would have it; but it always leads back nonetheless, to the artworks. More specifically, we wish to not separate the study of outdoor artistic spaces from "internal" ones, associated with specific works of art. This interest is based on the idea that a work is a spatial construction, inserted into a physical space, but that this space is never only material, but also social. It anchors itself, furthermore, in the belief that the work is a non-verbal thought [D. Arasse 2000 and 2004]. Why, then, would works of art not have things to teach us about the social spaces in which they were made?

One case in particular concerns us: since the modern era, and even more so since the First World War, artists, and especially painters, have incorporated maps into their thinking and practice. Questioning this practice seems particularly relevant to us for understanding the history of the avant-garde: why, indeed, did groups who thought of artistic activity as bellicose (reflected by the military origins of the expression "avant-garde" as proof), need to resort to maps—a visual expression of war activity? The map index incites us to take seriously and to read in a more socio-and geo-political way how some artists' approached the realities of the time with spatial and cartographic representations. Thus, for Marcel Duchamp who claimed to be a "geographer from the top of an air [plane]" [see the article of B. Joyeux-Prunel inside this bulletin]. More recently, since the 1960s, the Situationists questioned the issue of space, but not without making a number of maps, for example all of those ones published by Guy Debord in many of the Situationist journals [P. Simay 2009 and E. Guy, in this volume]. Much remains to be done, still, for the use of maps in conceptual art, and more broadly in contemporary art, to understand why so many artists used, and still use, maps in their artistic practice.

Less specifically, we want to also study space in the works, and to confront this with our own maps. "Internalist" mapping proposed by Franco Moretti in the second part of his Atlas du roman européen [2000] thus also interests us. Moretti discusses the spatial translation of places in various European novels, for example, the Paris of Balzac, and the London of Dickens, in the same way as Pierre Bourdieu was interested in the Paris of Flaubert’s Éducation sentimentale [P. Bourdieu 1992].

For the fine arts, this approach may indeed seem more complicated, and require specific strategies: did artists translate in their art their understanding of the social space in which they vigorously inserted themselves? This is an interesting hypothesis, with non-negligible heuristic virtues. Painting, in particular, and especially landscape painting, involves the question of place, and thus geography and maps, in a sequential enough way so that it is interesting to investigate this phenomenon. The study of imaginary geography [J.-F. Staszac, 2003] does not rely enough on map tools—would it not only be helpful to compare imaginary geography with those geographies that are often presented as "real". Are painted places well-lived or experienced ones? It is a reductive question whose analysis needs to be nuanced, by both a quantitative and cartographic approach: why is one place painted more than another, what places are not painted? It has been shown elsewhere, for example, how certain words—especially "Paris"—were more likely to be used for foreign exhibitions than local ones, according to strategies that were more or less aware of the importance
of places in the collective mind, but especially of their emotional or political connotations [B. Joyeux-Prunel, 2009a]. A project on the titles of paintings exposed in the Salons of the 19th century has allowed us to highlight artists’ predilection for certain places, or rather for their exposure and their representation: the place becomes a resource on which to build, or to change, the aesthetic identity of an artist, depending on his socio-professional positions, the art market, and the tastes of the socially well-situated public; this is not only because of familiar or gustatory tropisms, or the conveniences of transport—one could study this relationship elsewhere in the case of Impressionism, and more specifically for Claude Monet [B. Joyeux-Prunel, 2012a].

We now know how space and time were—and still are—linked together in the representations of different artists: some places are more “forward” than others, and others are more “retrograde” than some. Paris was for a longtime the “Greenwich meridian” of world literature [P. Casanova, 2008], and taking a stand on the time scale of literary modernity also involved taking a spatial stand. In the same way, assuming artistic positions has also implied the occupation of spatial positions, at least for one century.

Some artists were particularly aware of the spatial logic of modernist temporality—artists who were often cosmopolitan, who travelled a lot, who were attentive observers of the lands they crossed, like in the cases of Duchamp and Kandinsky [K. Koehler 1998]. De Chirico [K Jewell, 2004], Max Ernst, and even Salvador Dalí. Their works thought visually about the implications of the art world’s spatial dimension, be it to describe themselves in their own way, to criticize them, or to subvert them. If there is a connection between artistic forms and time, between time and space, why there would there not be one between shape and space, and this all the more since one between shape and space, and this all the more since there is a connection between artistic forms and time, why there would there not be one between shape and space, and this all the more since shape is, for fine art, indeed inserted into space?

Conclusion

It is difficult to conclude this introduction to a project that is still in its early stages, especially since ARTL@S can only be successfully executed collectively. From a historiographical point of view, by establishing an art historical study with this spatial approach, and in using a transnational and circulatory approach, we are aware of being at the junction of two turning points that are often presented as innovative in the discipline: the spatial turn, as well as the global turn. As time goes on, we will see better how ARTL@S is within each of these two historiographical fields. One thing is certain here, however: on this side of the historiographical and methodological positions, the cornerstone of ARTL@S is one of the so-called “Digital Humanities”. Let’s wager that by providing not only researchers, but also of the general public, efficient and scientifically-sound artistic mapping interfaces, as well as databases that are rarely shared by art historians so far, ARTL@S is humanist in more than a disciplinary sense. In any event, this is its most important goal.

Bibliography


