

# Mapping Paris: Social & Artistic Networks, 1855-1889

Map: Letts, Son & Co. *The Environs of Paris*. Lett's Popular Atlas. London, 1883. p. 41.



Top: Giuseppe de Nittis, *Place de la Concorde after the Rain*, 1875, Oil on canvas. Government Palace, Istanbul



Center: Edgar Degas, *Place de la Concorde*, 1875, Oil on canvas. The Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg



Bottom: Giuseppe de Nittis, *La Place du Carrousel: the Ruins of the Tuileries in 1882*, 1882, Oil on wood. Louvre, Paris

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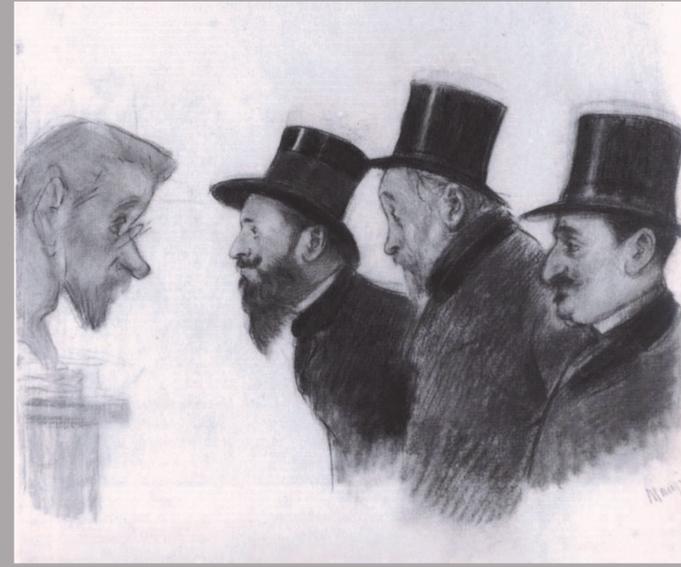
Top left: Edgar Degas, *Portrait of Alphonse Hirsch*, 1875, Etching. Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Bibliothèque d'Art et d'Archeologie, Collections Jacques Doucet



Top right: Giuseppe De Nittis, *Portrait of Alphonse Hirsch*, 1875, Etching. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

Bottom left: Giuseppe De Nittis, *Portrait of Degas*, 1875, Etching. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

Bottom right: Marcellin Desboutin, *Portrait of Degas*, 1875, Etching. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris



Michel Manzi, Albert Bartholomé, Edgar Degas and Michel Manzi in front of a bust of Paul Lafond. Charcoal and pastel on paper. Paris, Musée d'Orsay

## Genesis of the Project

The images above represent different means of engaging in artistic conversation, sourced from my manuscript *Degas and the Italians: Transnational Conversations* (under consideration at Ashgate Press). In order to discuss each of these three examples in the manuscript, it was necessary to first establish the social networks that existed between Degas and his Italian colleagues in Paris. This was a task that often introduced unnecessary complexity into the text, in an attempt to establish a credible social relationship, ahead of discussing the artistic resonances and/or connect the works' origin stories to a larger picture of exchange between Degas and Italian artists living and working in Paris. It became clear that a way to visualize these complex social networks would provide a means by which to better analyze the information and use it as a methodological tool of investigation.

- The three works on the left were the products of an artistic volley between Edgar Degas and Giuseppe De Nittis, surrounding ideas of depicting the novel spaces of Hausmann's Paris, and the pedestrian negotiation of these space.
- The four works in the center find their genesis in an evening shared by Degas, De Nittis, Marcellin Desboutin, and Alphonse Hirsch, using each other as models in an attempt to better understand and work with the medium of etching.
- The caricatural drawing on the right illustrates the friendship between Degas, Michel Manzi, Albert Bartholomé and Paul Lafond.

## Project Abstract

*Mapping Paris* seeks to quantify data and utilize collaborative networks of scholars in a way that charts and analyzes nineteenth-century social networks in order to map the artistic collaborations taking place in Paris between the Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1889. Between these years, Paris saw the shifting role of the Salon, the exhibitions that sprung up in counter-dialogue, and the expansion of galleries. It is during this period that Paris claims its role as the center of the Western art world, and as a result, scores of international artists descended upon to the city to live, work and form social networks with their contemporaries. *Mapping Paris* aims to chart out these social relationships established in the city during this time and in this place, to reconsider Paris as a cosmopolitan mélange of aesthetic exchange, artistic cooperation and conversation.

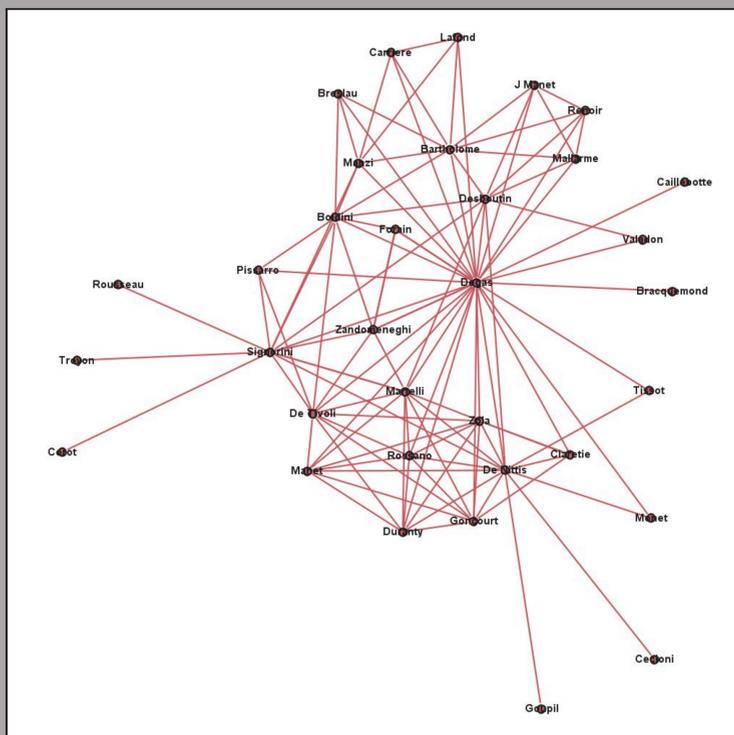
Finding its place somewhere between contemporary conceptions of collaborative and crowd-sourced inquiry, *Mapping Paris* aims to provide a space on the internet for interested individuals to input data about artists' time in Paris, whether they were Parisian pure-sang, ex-pats or visitors passing through the city. In doing so, it will allow scholars to view the data in novel ways, to foster considerations of aesthetic dialogue through crossed-paths, acquaintances, friendships and collaborations in the social condenser of Paris.

The networks will be mapped through primary source documents, connecting various artists and their circles. Examples of sources will include letters between artists, memoirs, exhibition records, art objects, and other means by which one could link two individuals within a social network. This practice will examine the nodes (the individuals), the links between them and examine the possibility of other connectors (i.e. people with an anomalously large number of links, who functioned as disseminators of aesthetic ideas), alongside the more traditionally-considered hubs, such as the Impressionists, of nineteenth-century art historical discourse. It will also provide the opportunity to engage and reconsider the concepts of center and periphery in Paris itself, renegotiating the international nature of this cosmopolitan city

Utilizing data from peer-reviewed contributors, *Mapping Paris* will amalgamate this social information, making it available publically; and mapping social networks that can then be investigated for avenues of artistic exchange and collaboration. The intention is to provide a space where this information can be compiled, charted, and shared, providing a novel resource and method for art historians (and those in related disciplines) to understand the complex nature of Paris' art scene in these decades of social connectivity and exchange.

## A Sample Social Network Map

- The image to the left is a sample social network map, made using Gephi, of the social networks outlined in Chapter 4 of Kovacs' manuscript, *Degas and the Italians*.
- The social networks in this sample were mapped using only primary text sources and are non-directional (i.e. they only chart mutual social awareness, not a directional awareness of one of the parties—socially or artistically).
- Each node is connected by an edge and the references for each edge have been bibliographically cited with notation. (Data sets available for perusal.)
- Another direction this map could take is to add weights (i.e. multiple references). In this sample, each node is only connected via one, unweighted edge.
- The only sources for this social network were primary text documents directly cited within the chapter, and thus brings up some inherent biases in the map (i.e. that the chapter's sources are used in service to a thesis). This brings to the fore the need for community-sourced information to create a more complete network.
- In this sample, mapped using a Yifan Hu layout, allows the viewer to get a sense of the social relations between groups of individuals through the weighted length of the edge—allowing for an understanding of those nodes that function as expected hubs (Degas) and connectors (e.g. Desboutin, De Nittis, Martelli, etc.).



## Art Historical Research Implications (a few examples)

- Ability to more easily map artistic collaboration and exchange
- A re-evaluation of the relationship between traditional hubs and their role in the dissemination of ideas
- Possibility of new connectors whose work might be currently overlooked, but through whom ideas flowed
- A better sense of the larger social networks of Paris, moving beyond the demarcations of different cultural circles, to get a better sense of the complexity of the time
- A more nuanced consideration of the role of Paris as an transnational, cosmopolitan artistic condenser
- A better sense of those artists who passed through Paris, and the connections that they made and maintained

## Project Timeline (projected)

- Summer 2014: Call for participation in *Mapping Paris* planning conference/roundtable
- October 2014: *Mapping Paris* advisory board planning conference/roundtable
- November-January 2014: Project realization, in the manner constructed by the advisory board
- Spring 2015: Hire two developers (web design and database)
- Summer 2015: Calls for participation in *Mapping Paris* beta testing
- Fall 2015: Final stages of preparation and launch of the *Mapping Paris* website
- August-October 2015: Beta testing of *Mapping Paris*
- November 2015: Public launch of *Mapping Paris*

## Project Software



## Project Website

www.mappingparis.org

The website is still under construction, check back often as the project progresses.

## Project Mailing List

If you would like to be included on updates about *Mapping Paris*, please add your name and email to the sign-up list