

Cite this article: Mary Okin with Celie Mitchard, “Mining @ Tenth Street: Visualizing New York City’s Tenth Street Studio Building,” in “Toward a More Inclusive Digital Art History,” special section, *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 7, no. 2 (Fall 2021), <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.12824>.

Mining @ Tenth Street: Visualizing New York City’s Tenth Street Studio Building

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Mining @ Tenth Street: Visualizing New York City’s Tenth Street Studio Building is a macro-analysis of the canonical creative cluster and architectural structure that existed at 51 West Tenth Street (fig. 1) in Greenwich Village from 1858 to 1956. This project began in 2018 as an experiment with mining Annette Blaugrund’s pioneering work on the building’s nineteenth-century history, particularly her publication of rosters that catalogued tenant data: names, life spans, and years of occupancy.¹ Her rosters and qualitative analysis demonstrate the centrality of the Hudson River School and American Impressionist painters within this space and model how to include understudied figures in the history of American art. Working initially on validating her data using recently digitized materials, *Mining @ Tenth Street* has since recovered more than two hundred additional nineteenth- and twentieth-century tenants and collected granular data about them, including age, gender, ethnicity, birthplace, education, travel, military service, preferred genre, and other quantifiable information.



Fig. 1. “Artists’ Studio Buildings, Tenth Street, New York—From a Photo by Holmes,” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, April 13, 1867, p. 53.

This project demonstrates how big data and digital humanities tools enable us to trace the building’s gradual slippage from Gilded Age art center to postwar anachronistic periphery. Speaking to current debates about canon formation, the project positions the Tenth Street Studio Building as a particularly rich case study for exploring how to create a more inclusive American art history. Mining a more expansive dataset in search of aggregate insights about the building, we discover the ways in which it elucidates patterns of exclusion in art history and museum collections. In pushing against traditional art history methodology, namely monographic writing and chronological ordering, we illuminate the messy and fascinating life of the Tenth Street Studio Building and its substantial contributions to American cultural history within and beyond the visual arts.

Currently, for *Mining @ Tenth Street* we are processing data computationally to create visualizations, including a timeline, social network reconstruction, and mapping of the building’s transnational geographic reach, and to assemble data necessary for creating a 3D model that can be used to explore the building’s influential design and identify the spatial proximity of specific tenants to one another in the building. These and other avenues of growth for the project have benefited greatly from participation in *Panorama’s* “Toward a More Inclusive Digital Art History” initiative. Feedback from Diana Greenwald and Johnathan Hardy, as well as other members of the journal’s editorial board, has been invaluable to the project’s data-gathering methods, research agenda, findings, and future goals, which include our forthcoming *Panorama* article next fall and our concurrent development of a website that will be an open-access scholarly resource.

As the project team’s leader, I also found inspiration and encouragement in Paul Jaskot’s keynote address, “Thinking about Visibility and Invisibility in the Art Historical Canon: The Tensions between Evidence and Data in Digital Art History,” and the Q&A that followed at *Panorama’s* workshop. If our aim is to interrogate power relations in order to create a more inclusive digital art history, Jaskot suggested, then coauthorship is a way to render visible the networked efforts of collaborators. This advice is very much aligned with feminist approaches to digital humanities, particularly the principle of making labor visible.² The publications I envision creating with the data—and data visualizations we are assembling—will take their cue from Jaskot, from proponents of feminist approaches to working with data, and from the Studio Building’s history of collaborative labor by crediting all those involved in constructing *Mining @ Tenth Street*.³

Notes

¹ Annette Blaugrund published two versions of her dataset in the *American Art Journal* (“The Tenth Street Studio Building: A Roster, 1857-1895,” *American Art Journal* 14, no. 2 [1982]: 64–71, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1594309>; and “Tenth Street Studios: Roster Update,” *American Art Journal* 17, no. 1 [1985]: 84–86, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1594416>) and the final roster in the exhibition catalogue *The Tenth Street Studio Building: Artist-Entrepreneurs from the Hudson River School to American Impressionism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), which are widely cited and remain influential.

² As Catherine D’Ignazio and Lauren F. Klein argue in “Feminist Data Visualization,” making labor visible is one of the core principles of feminist approaches to data science and digital humanities; see D’Ignazio and Klein, “Feminist Data Visualization,” in *Workshop on Visualization for the Digital Humanities at EEE VIS Conference 2016* (2016), http://www.kanarinka.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/IEEE_Feminist_Data_Visualization.pdf. Their recently coauthored book, *Data Feminism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020), expands on this principle in “Show Your Work,” a chapter devoted to explaining the need to make working with data and the “larger ecology of knowledge . . . both sustainable and socially just.” See the chapter online at <https://data-feminism.mitpress.mit.edu/pub/ovgzaln4/release/3>.

³ My ongoing work on this project is greatly indebted to the labor of my project team members, past and present. A 3D mock-up of the building and an initial project proposal were created in collaboration with Melina Gooray (PhD student, Northwestern University) in spring of 2018. Since January of 2020, much of the data gathered and processed for *Mining @ Tenth Street* can be credited to Celie Mitchard (BA, UCSB 2019), my research assistant.