

*Lara Stein Pardo is a cultural anthropologist and visual artist currently working as a Research Associate in the Laboratory for Race and Popular Culture (RAP Lab) here at CU-Boulder. You can find out more about her at [www.larasteinpardo.com](http://www.larasteinpardo.com)*

**EA:** Lara, I want to start by thanking you for taking the time to speak with me and to explain to our Digital Humanities class about your work. As you know, I'm incredibly interested in your Mapping Arts Project, which has led to some interesting developments in my own pedagogical aspirations. Could you tell us a little bit about what the Mapping Arts Project is, and where it is headed?

**LSP:** The Mapping Arts Project is a primarily web-based project that maps cities through places where artists have lived and worked historically. The project is online at [mappingartsproject.org](http://mappingartsproject.org), and includes Miami and Providence so far. Denver and Chicago are in development. The project includes archival, spatial, artistic, and ethnographic research and materials. Future plans include continual technological improvement such as the use of mobile locational technologies and the redevelopment of the website to show a global map (vs city maps). In the Spring I'll be working with students in the course, "Geographies of the Arts," to launch Mapping Arts-Denver.

**EA:** Could you explain what started the project? What were some of the biggest challenges (knowledge of coding etc., economically, gaining interest, etc.) you faced, and ones you may still be facing, when you started this?

**LSP:** I started the project in 2009, while doing ethnographic fieldwork for my dissertation on contemporary arts. I wanted to find a book that would tell me about the history of the arts in Miami. I could not find such a book. Instead, I began to conduct archival, ethnographic, and historical research. At first, I thought the project would be a short-lived participatory art project. But, the more research I did, the more I realized it needed to be a bigger project. That's when I designed and developed the website - to be able to create a broadly accessible and continually growing project. Some of the biggest challenges in the beginning were time and funds to do the initial web development. Oh, also, finding the right team to work with. I have kept the project manageable thus far. Eventually, I will need to raise funds again to expand the technological capabilities of the project.

**EA:** As a class, we have discussed the importance of collaboration in DH. We have also discussed the stigma that collaboration can hold in a university system because of the ever-present importance placed on the individual as creator— particularly when it comes to tenure position candidacy. How important has collaboration been to your project, and how do you view collaboration as far as the percentage of the work belonging to you v. shared?

**LSP:** Collaboration is critical in my work! In the Mapping Arts Project as well as in other projects. In terms of the academic system and the stigma of collaboration, I think it's a matter of being able to define and present the work one does or the work one designs and conceptualizes vs truly joint projects. It is not possible to work completely alone. Well, I'm sure some people do, but most rely on others. There are many ways to collaborate - sharing ideas on individual projects, hiring a web team or photographer, jointly organizing a series of events - that further both the collaborative and individual goals.

**EA:** Following this, as mentioned above, collaboration is not usually viewed favorably in the university. Why do you think this is, and what needs to be done, if anything, in your opinion, to change this mindset?

**LSP:** Mostly I think the idea of what can be done with academic knowledge and research needs to shift. With that shift would also come the awareness of what "counts" as scholarship. There is an organization I work with, Imagining America, and they have done a lot of work around this idea and have some productive suggestions on moving forward.

**EA:** Would you shed some light for us on the RAP Lab, what is the RAP Lab, what are you working on currently, what is it that makes the RAP Lab an actual laboratory?

**LSP:** The RAP Lab is a interdisciplinary space with multiple ongoing projects. It is a new space on campus, started by English professor Adam Bradley. Some of the projects include a Global Hip Hop project, a project to bring Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man to life through digital technology, and now that I'm a Postdoc, the Mapping Arts Project. It's a Lab in the sense that it's a space for innovative work that is pushing boundaries. In the Lab, we are testing out new ways of working and new ideas.

**EA:** Many of us in class have expressed interest with incorporating more DH into our classrooms. How much do you use in your own classroom? What advice would you give to those of us just starting out— what advantages or drawbacks have you experienced?

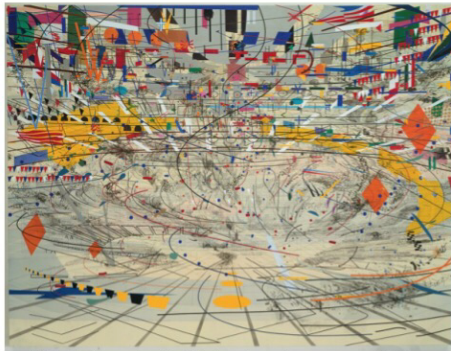
**LSP:** I use DH in my classroom as much as it seems to makes sense for the course and the topic. I try to integrate technology and all kinds of media to create a rich learning experience. My advice in terms of integrating DH in the classroom would be to make use of campus resources. ASSETT has workshops and individuals on staff to work with students and faculty. In my previous postdoc at Brown, I found resources on campus very helpful in my work and in my teaching. See above re collaboration.

**EA:** Following this, we spoke briefly last week about your upcoming class for the Spring 2016 semester. Could you explain what the class is, what you hope to do with it, and how DH might be involved?—

**LSP:**

## *Geographies of the Arts* *ETHN3101*

Dr. Lara Stein Pardo  
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University of Colorado, Boulder  
Spring 2016 - Wednesdays, 3:30 – 6:00PM  
Hellem 241



Julie Mehretu, *Stadia II*, ink and acrylic on canvas, 2004



Herndon Richard Davis, Tabor Grand Opera House, watercolor and gouache on paper, source: Denver Public Library, 1941

How do art and artists affect the places where we live? Does a 'map' have to represent geographic space or can it represent something else? In this course we will engage with a number of approaches to "Geographies of the Arts," including historical, cultural, ethnographic, literary, geographic, and artistic. Through readings, discussions, films, audio materials, and artworks, we will learn about artists, art worlds, art practice, and how scholars study visual art, artists, and places. The course includes participation in the mapping of arts in imaginative, historical, digital, and ethnographic assignments, all with the goal of learning about the spatial life of art. For the final project in the course students will launch Denver as the next city in the *Mapping Arts Project*, an online mapping project focused on the relationship between arts and place. The project will bring together the concepts addressed throughout the course as well as offer an opportunity to participate in an ongoing public humanities project. Materials in this course include texts by Ruth Behar, Adam Bradley, Edwidge Danticat, Nestor Garcia-Canclini, Setha Low, and Sharifa Rhodes-Pitts. Overall, students in this course will learn about the topic of global arts, aesthetics, and our engagements with places, and how to apply skills of critical analysis, collaborative research, arts, and design in scholarship.

Through this course students will be able to

- analyze the concepts related to space, place, geography, and art.
- apply digital technologies related to research, collaboration, and digital mapping.
- refine written, verbal, visual, spatial, and online presentation skills.
- evaluate and demonstrate effective modes of research and presentation in academic and public spheres.