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Measuring the Efficiency of a Local Cultural Policy: the Toulouse Salons (1885-1939)

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June 20, 2021

Abstract

In 1885, some artists from Toulouse gathered together and decided to pursue a "cultural policy" ahead of its time, by organizing an annual exhibition in their city: the *Union artistique de Toulouse*. In 1905, other painters, sculptors, furniture makers and architects went even further in this regionalist and southern affirmation: they organized a second exhibition in Toulouse, the *Salon des artistes méridionaux*, which is still active today. Based on a comprehensive dataset of 24,646 artworks exhibited in Toulouse at the *Union artistique* and the *Salon des artistes méridionaux*, and using hedonic regression analysis, this paper aims at measuring the effectiveness and scope of this local cultural policy, from 1885 through 1939.

In 1885, some artists from Toulouse gathered together and decided to pursue a "cultural policy" ahead of its time, seeking to "encourage the progress of the arts in Toulouse, and to propagate the taste for them through public exhibitions". Grouped together in the *Société de l'Union artistique*, they organized an annual free exhibition in Toulouse. In its statutes, the *Union artistique de Toulouse* (UAT) was conceived on the same model as the Parisian Salon, and its ambition was to present artworks by painters, sculptors, engravers and architects to a wide public, after selection by a jury. In 1905 onwards, the UAT was coupled with a *Salon des artistes méridionaux* (SAM), still active today. According to the actual members of the Société des Artistes méridionaux, this initiative "had an undeniably stimulating role, until 1939, and its exhibitions retained a national influence"[1]

This paper aims at measuring the effectiveness and scope of this local cultural policy, in Toulouse. It is based on a comprehensive dataset of 13,160 artworks exhibited in Toulouse at the *Union artistique* from its creation until 1909[2] and 11,486 artworks displayed at the SAM from 1907 through 1939[3] This twofold corpus constitutes a very valuable source as the exhibition catalogues of the UAT and SAM detail all the works presented to the public, with their sale price, and they give biographical information on the exhibitors, including their addresses.[4] This twofold corpus thus includes all the information regarding the exhibitor – first name, name, birth place, awards, status, names of professors, address, other biographical information such as the medals awarded at the Parisian Salon – and all the information about the works – number in the catalog, title, medium, date of creation, sale price / name of the owner, reproduction in the catalog. The catalogues also include advertising inserts, which highlight the art world associated with these events.

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[1]http://www.artistes-meridionaux.fr/historique.html, accessed March 29, 2021.

[2]This figure includes the 1,344 artworks exhibited at the 1861, 1862 and 1864 UAT. The UAT then resumed in 1885, until 1909. This corpus was transcribed jointly by Léa Saint-Raymond and Hadrien Viraben.

[3]This database was made by Léa Saint-Raymond.

[4]Most of the catalogues are available online, on the website of the digital and patrimonial library of Toulouse: https://rosalis.bibliotheque.toulouse.fr/, accessed June 19, 2021.

While the current bibliography only considers the artistic life in Toulouse in the broadest sense [1] or after 1939 [6, 5, 9, 8], this twofold corpus makes possible to carry out an economic and social analysis of these local exhibitions, and measure their efficiency with the help of hedonic regressions. Section 1 sheds light on the failure of the UAT, at least for the artists living in Toulouse. This is why some artists sought to promote an even more "Southern" and regionalist exhibition – the SAM – from 1905 onwards : if this local politics has succeeded, in terms of identity (section 2), the economic and social results are more mixed (section 3).

1 The Union artistique de Toulouse: a failure for the local artists

The first UAT exhibitions took place in Toulouse between 1861 and 1864, then between 1885 and 1909. Founded on the same principle as the "friends of the arts" exhibitions ([7], [3], [2]), the UAT relied on an association of artists / collectors, who jointly purchased the exhibited works - these works being redistributed among the members of the association by drawing lots. According to its statutes, the purpose of the UAT Society was "to encourage, in Toulouse, the progress of the Arts and to propagate the taste for them through public Exhibitions of painting, sculpture, drawing and engraving".

The artists from the UAT decided to exhibit at the Capitole, the emblematic monument of Toulouse. Formerly the home of the "Capitouls" (the consuls of Toulouse), this city hall underwent several phases of construction: its current façade was built in the 18th century and, between the years 1880 and 1898, the municipality launched the creation of four grandiose rooms, including the Galerie des Illustres (Fig 1).

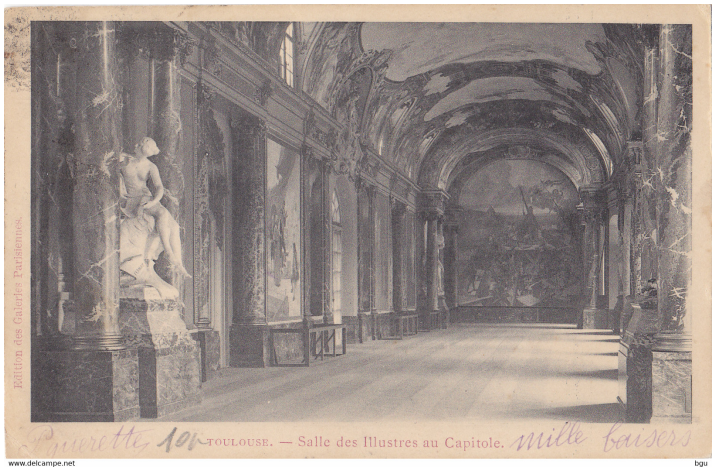


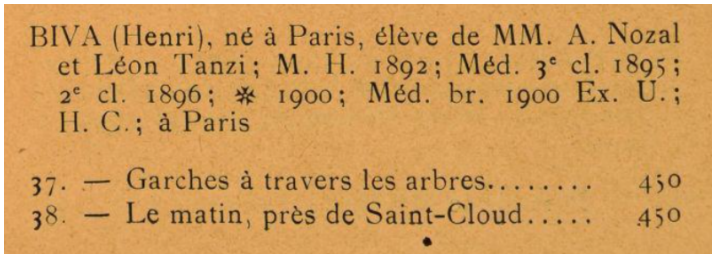
Figure 1: Postcard representing the *Galerie des illustres* of the *Capitole*, Toulouse

This venue recalls the artistic "golden age" of Toulouse. Indeed, in the 17th and 18th centuries, Toulouse had its own drawing school, which became the *Académie royale de peinture, sculpture et architecture de Toulouse* between 1750 and 1793 ([4]).[5] These artistic structures and this environment had no equivalent in France - outside of Paris - and gave a true identity to the *école de Toulouse* during this period, which can be described as the golden age of Toulouse painting ([13]). Between 1751 and its disappearance in 1793, the *Académie royale de peinture, sculpture et architecture de Toulouse* organized painting and sculpture exhibitions, called *Salons* (like the Parisian ones), in order to promote

[5] In the 19th century, the *Académie royale de peinture, sculpture et architecture de Toulouse* found an equivalent in the *Ecole nationale et spéciale des Beaux-Arts*, founded in 1827 in Toulouse, and then from 1883, in the *Ecole nationale et spéciale des Beaux-Arts*, when the latter came under the supervision of the *ministère de l'Instruction publique et des Beaux-Arts*.

local painters and sculptors. These *Salons* took place in the *Galerie des peintures* of the *Capitole*: not surprisingly, the *Union artistique de Toulouse* chose this same prestigious venue to organize their own *Salons* and to recover the artistic greatness of the city.

Despite this symbolical venue, emblematic of Toulouse, the UAT exhibitions attached great importance to the Parisian art world. Indeed, the exhibitors had to mention their performances and their awards obtained at the official Parisian Salon. For instance, at the 1907 UAT, Henri Biva mentioned that he had received an "honorable mention" at the 1892 Salon, a 3rd class medal at the 1895 Salon, a 2nd class medal at the 1896 Salon, that he had received a bronze medal at the 1900 Universal Exhibition in Paris and that he was now "hors concours", i.e. exempted from passing before the jury of the Parisian Salon (Fig 2).


BIVA (Henri), né à Paris, élève de MM. A. Nozal et Léon Tanzi; M. H. 1892; Méd. 3e cl. 1895; 2e cl. 1896; ✻ 1900; Méd. br. 1900 Ex. U.; H. C.; à Paris

37. — Garches à travers les arbres..... 450
38. — Le matin, près de Saint-Cloud..... 450

Figure 2: Detail of the catalogue of the Union artistique de Toulouse, 1907, page 21

Not only did this Toulouse exhibition symbolically model itself on the Paris Salon, but it privileged the Parisian academic system – which was still powerful in France until the 1910s ([10]). Indeed, if we look at the residential address of the UAT exhibitors (Fig 3), an average of 52% were by an artist living in or near Paris, and 39% by an artist living in Toulouse or its region – which can be approximated by the former "Midi-Pyrénées" region, which existed administratively between the years 1980 and 2016.

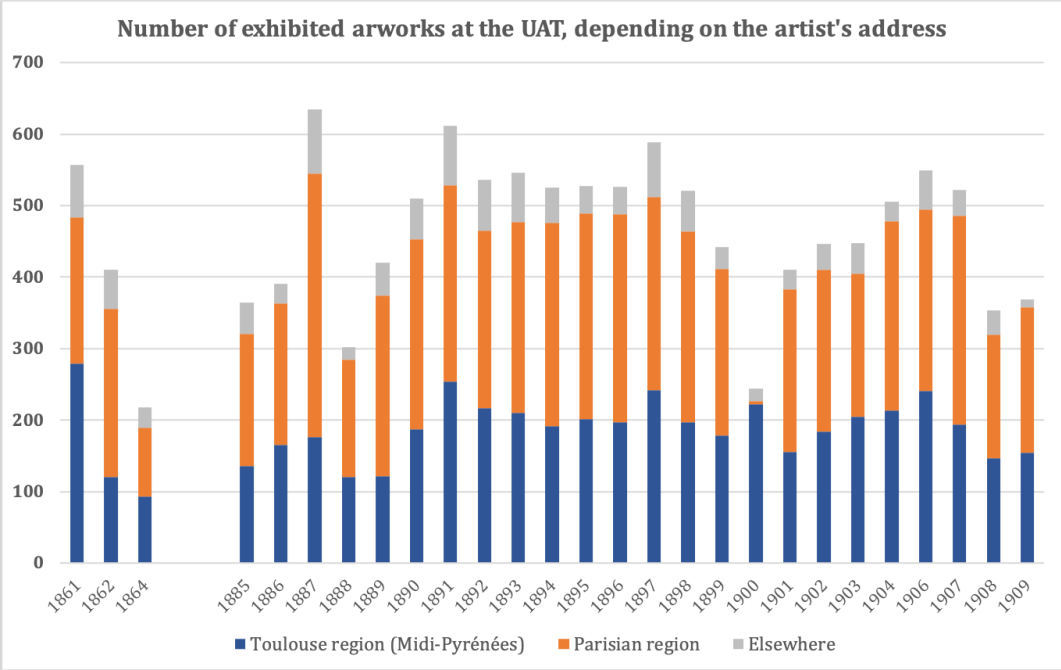


Figure 3: Number of exhibited arworks at the UAT, depending on the artist's address, from 1861 through 1909

The inequalities were even greater with the awards at the Salon: at the UAT, 47% of the works exhibited by Parisians at the UAT were by Parisians who had won a medal at the Salon, compared to 4% of the works exhibited by "Midi-Pyrénées" residents. The hedonic regressions, with or without fixed effects, show that living in Paris and obtaining a medal at the Salon increased the selling price at the UAT exhibitions, all the other things being equal (Table 1).

2 The SAM: a symbolical revenge against the Parisian domination

It seems that the exhibitions of the *Société des Artistes Méridionaux* were held in response to, or even against, the UATs. This group was created in 1905, by artists and craftsmen living in Toulouse.[6] After a first exhibition in 1906, in a disused chapel located rue de Languedoc, in Toulouse, they chose the Capitole in 1907 in order to display their works and they started publishing exhibition catalogues. Until 1909, the UAT and SAM exhibitions overlapped, in March-April for the UAT, and in May-June for the SAM.

The SAM artists deplored the flight of their comrades to Paris and the disaffection of the demand for the local production:

> Artists live mainly in Paris, and it cannot be denied that those who, for love of their native soil or any other reason, cannot attempt an exodus, have a hard life here. One does not want to know them, one does not trust their work, in their works, one addresses oneself outside, believing that what one asks of them cannot be carried out on the spot.[7]

The exhibitions of the SAM therefore sought to fight against this Parisian domination, by reintegrating the artists at the local level, by valuing the creations and by giving them a strong artistic identity.

From the beginning, the SAM took the opposite view of the UAT and the exhibitors asserted themselves as a much more local and southern group. The addresses of residence that the artists gave in the catalogs show two very different profiles. Between 1907 to 1909, half of the 655 exhibitors of the UAT came from the Paris region, while the 79 exhibitors of the SAM lived in Toulouse or its surroundings (Fig 4).

In addition, the places represented in the exhibited landscapes were equally contrasted: of the 227 works whose title mentioned a precise place at the UAT between 1907 and 1909, only a quarter of them concerned the South-West - Paris, the Côte d'Azur, the Atlantic coast, Brittany and Normandy being widely preferred. On the contrary, the 127 geolocatable works, at the SAM, clearly favored the South-West ([12]). From the point of view of the exhibitors and the exhibited works, the SAM thus affirmed a much more southern identity, as opposed to the UAT which were much more turned towards Paris

Beyond the geographical and symbolic revenge, the SAMs signed the end of an economic domination against the Parisians who were stepping on their toes in the UAT. On the one hand, the SAM gave more visibility to the artists: the exhibitors were fewer in number - about 30 annual exhibitors at the SAM, compared to about 200 for the UAT - and they showed more works at each exhibition - 2 per exhibitor, on average, for the UAT, compared to 7 to 11, on average, for the SAM. On the other hand, the SAM signaled the end of the economic stigma of Toulouse in the context of art exhibitions. Table 2, in the appendix, details the econometric results of hedonic regressions conducted on the selling price of artworks exhibited between 1907 and 1909 at the SAM or the UAT, and in the right-hand column, for

[6] These artists came from different backgrounds : painting (Augustin-Antonin Balon, Georges-François Castex, Paul Costes, Jean Diffre, G.-F. Lineau, André-Pierre Lupiac), sculpture (Auguste Guénot, Louis Oury, Georges Vivent), architecture (Raoul Castan), glassware (Louis-Victor Gesta), but also and above all decorative arts and furniture making (Edmond and Maurice Alet, Paul Balard, René Deflandre, Jean-Germain and Jules Rigal)

[7] [14] p.7: "Les artistes vivent surtout à Paris, et on ne peut nier que ceux qui, par amour du sol natal ou toute autre raison, ne peuvent tenter l'exode, ont plutôt ici la vie dure. On ne veut pas les connaître, on ne fait pas confiance à leurs travaux, en leurs oeuvres, on s'adresse au dehors, croyant que ce qu'on leur demande ne peut s'exécuter sur place."

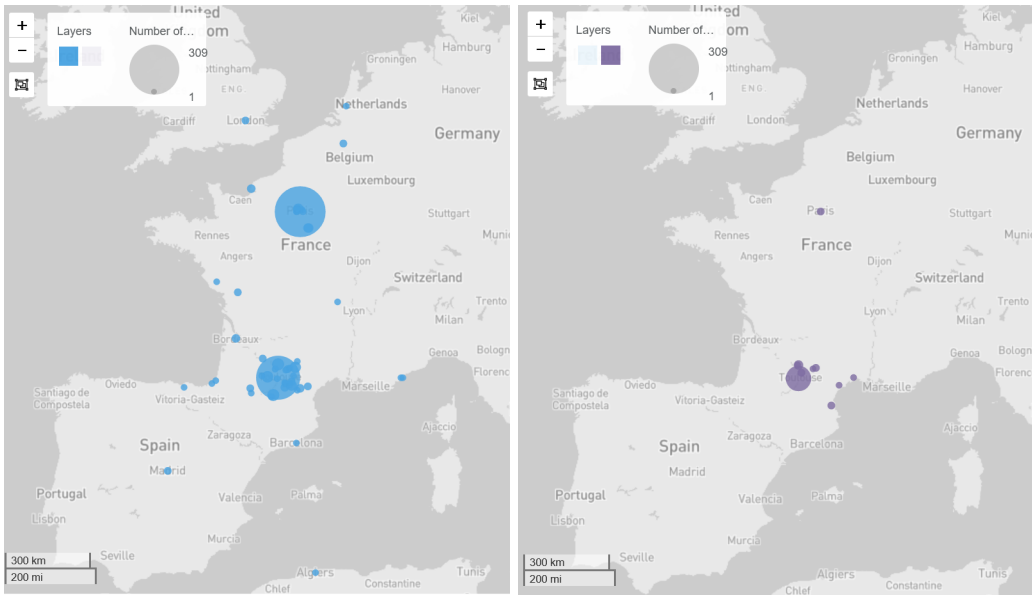


Figure 4: Addresses of the UAT exhibitors (left) and the SAM exhibitors (right) between 1907 and 1909

those exhibited at the SAM only. Significantly, artists offered much higher selling prices - 210 francs, on average - when they came from the Paris region. On the other hand, when restricting ourselves to the SAM, this margin ceased to be significant: exhibitors living in Haute-Garonne - i.e. Toulouse and its surroundings - gave significantly higher prices than their comrades, by 11 francs on average.

However, this claimed openness masked internal inequalities and fine-grained processes of exclusion, which the computational analysis of the data helps to shed light on.

3 The mixed success of the SAM policy

3.1 A man's world?

In spite of the opening towards southern artists, without distinction, the SAM were at the beginning almost exclusively male. In 1907, of the 38 exhibitors at the SAM, there was only one woman; the following year, no woman exhibited, and in 1909, one woman exhibited and 28 men. On the contrary, the UAT was much more feminized, with about a quarter of the exhibitors being women. Only after the war, from 1921-1922, did the number of women increase, both in absolute numbers and in percentage terms, to just under 30% of exhibitors (Fig 5).

Despite this catch-up, women experienced a higher turnover than men: 40% of women who exhibited at the SAM participated only once, compared to 35% of men. Similarly, 55% of women exhibited once or twice, compared to 50% of male exhibitors. Similarly, women were in the minority among the "regulars": of the 20 exhibitors who participated in 20 or more *Salons*, there were only three women, Jeanne Boyé, Pauline Rivière and Hélène Rivière.

Women thus stayed in SAM exhibits for less time than men. Perhaps they felt uncomfortable in this predominantly male environment. Perhaps they did not find it economically beneficial. Indeed, between 1907 and 1939, all other things being equal, the selling price of a work created by a woman was significantly lower than that of a work created by a man, even after 1920, a period of greater openness to women (Table 3). This effect of gender remained negative, even when controlling the regression by being a "regular" exhibitor (Table 4) - the fact of being a "regular" had no impact on the selling price.

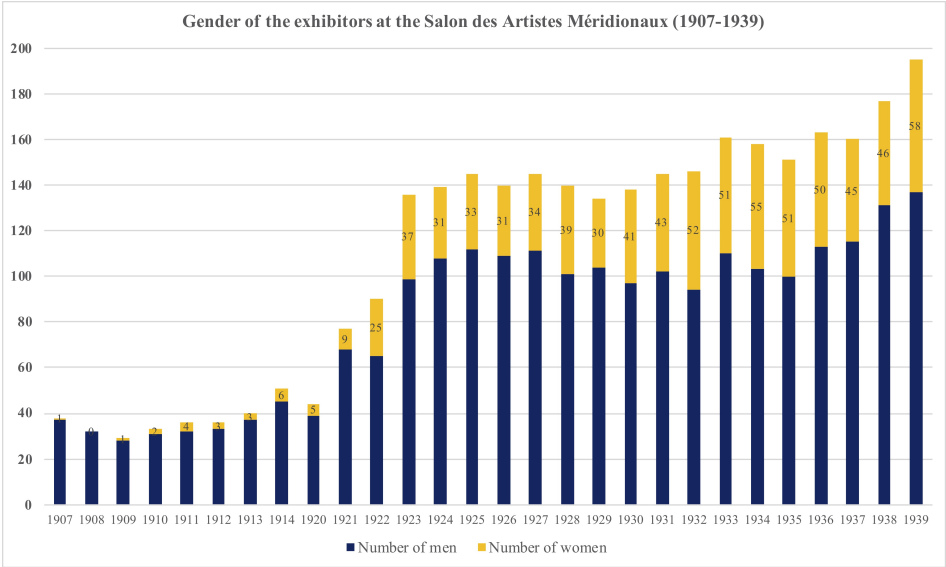


Figure 5: Number of exhibitors of the SAM, depending on their gender

3.2 A place for everyone but everyone in his / her medium?

Gender inequalities hide structural effects. Men and women did not exhibit the same type of works and the mediums were distributed differently. While painting and watercolor were the most exhibited mediums for both of men and women, men exhibited more sculptures and drawings and women showed more pastels. Men also produced more decorative furnitures (like Maurice Alet or Jean-Germain and Jules Rigal) while women, more "embroidered cushions" and ceramics. For instance, Pauline Rivière, the first woman who exhibited at the SAM, in 1907, showed cushions, collar and screen with embroidered patterns. Similarly, Madeleine Bijon-Cathary exhibited many paintings from 1928 through 1939 but the only works that were reproduced in the catalogue were the Art Deco ceramics she displayed during the first three years of her participation.

The SAM thus maintained a gendered division of artworks, while advocating a unique, "southern" and modern art.

3.3 A closed environment?

It is difficult to assess whether the SAM constituted a closed environment: to do so, one would have to measure the participation of all exhibitors in all existing exhibitions during the same period, from 1907 to 1939. Nevertheless, it is possible to understand this openness/closure from the database.

An indicator allows us to understand the routine - and therefore rather closed - aspect of an exhibition: the presence of a reproduction in the catalog, which was a kind of privilege granted to the creator of the work in question. Indeed, an artwork reproduced by photo-engraving has more visual impact on the visitors of the SAM, also leaving a trace in libraries and memories, even after the end of the exhibition. The logistic regression in Table 5 highlights the determinants that, in probability, increased the chances of an artwork being reproduced in the catalog. The results are striking: only the fact of being a "regular" in the strict sense - more than 20 participations - or in the broader sense - more than 17 participations - significantly increased the probability of this privilege. The emblematic example is Maurice-Gaston Alet, who exhibited the most and whose furniture was almost systematically reproduced in the catalogs. There seemed to be two speeds between the one-shot exhibitors and the "regulars".

Finally, the structure of the art market in Toulouse allows us to measure the economic openness

of the SAM: was there a national or international pool of collectors who lent works at these events? Did the SAM mobilize local, national or international art dealers? On this last point, it is striking to note the absence of dealers as intermediaries. The SAM catalogs made no mention of works lent or put up for sale by dealers, nor did they mention any artist who would give his or her address in a gallery. Nevertheless, a few *Artistes méridionaux* represented themselves, in their own art galleries, like Maurice Alet ([15]), Hélène Gasset-Ousset, Juliette Gustos and Henri Martin. They did not hesitate to advertise their business in the pages of catalogs. This is an important feature of the Toulouse art world. Indeed, when comparing the SAM with another exhibition in another southern city - the AIB, *Artistes Indépendants Bordelais*, active from 1928 in Bordeaux - the exhibitors of the AIB were either not represented by any local art gallery (there were only restorers of paintings) or they were represented by a Parisian dealer [11]. On the supply side, the art market in Toulouse was thus characterized by the adage "help yourself and Heaven will help you" (*aide-toi et le Ciel t'aidera*).

On the demand side, very few collectors supported local production. Most collectors hid behind an anonymous name, which makes identification impossible and therefore doubtful - perhaps the artist was hiding behind this mysterious name. Three collectors - only! - stood out in this network, by their willingness to reveal their names and therefore their patronage, and by the - quite relative - frequency of their loans: Louis Lacroix (president of the *Académie de Arts de Toulouse*), Dr. Camille Soula and Dr. Joseph Ducuing. Nevertheless, their choices were very selective. Louis Lacroix loaned works by well-known and deceased Toulouse artists - Jean-Paul Laurens and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec - and two drawings by Paul Bernardot. Dr. Soula lent works by André Arbus, Auguste Guénot and Paul Bernardot and Dr. Ducuing, a work by Paul Bernardot. These three patrons officially supported a very small number of southern artists, or even a single artist (Paul Bernardot).

4 Conclusion

A computational analysis thus made it possible to identify some characteristics of the SAM: a very strong anchoring in the local space, a detachment from the UAT which were too dominated by Paris, but also a certain form of machismo and, in fine, a milieu which was rather closed to a few privileged regulars and a few equally selective collectors-patrons.

These temporary conclusions must be subjected to further research, in the archives and reserves of museums - Musée des Augustins, Musée du Vieux-Toulouse. They will also benefit from being compared to other exhibitions that took place at the same time as the UAT and SAM, in order to test the degree of openness of the exhibitors and their commercial strategies. Last but not least, this first step will be followed by the meticulous research of the exhibited works.

The analysis of the Toulouse art world is part of a larger research project - DatART - led by Léa Saint-Raymond and hosted at the ENS-PSL *Observatoire des humanités numériques*. By making available data from the SAM, the UAT and the AIB of Bordeaux, it will allow us to understand the regional logics at work in the art world and to reconnect this history with the local artistic and cultural heritage.

5 Appendix

Table 1: Hedonic regression of the selling price of the artworks exhibited at the UAT between 1861 and 1909, in constant 1907 francs

Variable	**No fixed effect**	**Fixed effect "catalogue"**
Woman	−58.6 **	−40.0 *
	(18.5)	(18.2)
Honorary distinction	38.9	116.1 ***
	(29.1)	(30.4)
Medal at the Parisian Salon	177.0 ***	152.7 ***
	(30.3)	(31.1)
Living in Haute-Garonne	−99.7 ***	−65.2 **
	(21.6)	(21.4)
Living in Paris	85.2 ***	68.6 ***
	(18.9)	(18.5)
Sculpture	52.7 **	46.1
	(42.5)	(41.8)
Painting	190.2 ***	192.5 ***
	(18.0)	(17.8)
Still life	−123.3 ***	−118.5 ***
	(21.7)	(21.2)
Landscape	−91.2 ***	−79.7 ***
	(14.8)	(14.5)
Intercept	206.9 ***	
	(23.4)	
Nb of obs	6,736	6,736
Multiple R^2	0.1086	0.117
Adjusted R^2	0.1073	0.114

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table 2: Hedonic regression of the selling price of the artworks exhibited at the SAM and the UAT, between 1907 and 1909, in constant 1907 francs

Variable	**1907-1909 SAM UAT**	**1907-1909 SAM**
UAT	29.4	
	(2.8)	
Woman	−46.9 ***	dropped
	(37.7)	
Still life	−67.1	33.9
	(38.4)	(92.9)
Landscape	−64.7 **	−43.6
	(22.7)	(38.3)
Portrait	124.4 **	193.1 **
	(40.3)	(64.9)
Painting	−97.9	−242.4 **
	(60.8)	(82.8)
Sculpture	−210.6 **	−329.3 ***
	(67.5)	(92.4)
Graphic art	−233.2 ***	−359.5 ***
	(66.9)	(90.5)
Engraving	−381.4 ***	−370.7 **
	(89.3)	(141.6)
Haute-Garonne	−18.6	10.7 ***
	(37.6)	(55.0)
Midi-Pyrénées	5.9	−28.2
	(61.5)	(177.3)
Aquitaine	12.7	dropped
	(151.4)	
Ile-de-France	209.7 ***	115.2
	(52.2)	(221.9)
Constant	327.1 ***	451.6 *
	(82.2)	(188.1)
Nb of obs	1,536	653
Multiple R^2	0.1237	0.0485
Adjusted R^2	0.1162	0.0337

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table 3: Hedonic regression of the selling price of the artworks exhibited at the SAM between 1907 and 1939, in constant 1907 francs

Variable	**1907-1939 SAM**	**1920-1939 SAM**
Woman	−173.7 ***	−45.1 ***
	(48.5)	(7.2)
Still life	51.6	−21.2
	(47.4)	(12.3)
Landscape	−33.0	−32.4 ***
	(24.3)	(6.7)
Portrait	127.6 **	3.6
	(45.3)	(21.0)
Painting	−242.4 ***	−60.3 **
	(52.7)	(18.5)
Sculpture	−337.2 **	−68.3 **
	(60.0)	(24.4)
Graphic art	−352.4 ***	−146.1 ***
	(57.3)	(18.8)
Engraving	−352.9 ***	−176.0 ***
	(98.9)	(23.8)
Living in Haute-Garonne	46.1	−15.7 ***
	(31.9)	(8.2)
Living in Midi-Pyrénées	−75.9	38.4 **
	(68.3)	(12.7)
Living in Aquitaine	dropped	39.2
		(23.5)
Living in Paris	89.6	65.7
	(113.6)	(17.9)
Intercept	469.8	200.6 ***
	(81.3)	(20.2)
Nb of obs	3,990	2,874
Multiple R^2	0.0605	0.1202
Adjusted R^2	0.0511	0.1164

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table 4: Hedonic regression of the selling price of the artworks exhibited at the SAM between 1907 and 1939, in constant 1907 francs

Variable	**20 participations or more**	**17 participations or more**
20 participations or more	16.4	—
	(10)	—
17 participations or more	—	20.5
	—	(9.6)
Woman	−66.2 ***	−69.3 ***
	(10)	(10)
Still life	−29.2*	−27.7*
	(14.9)	(14.9)
Landscape	−42***	−42***
	(8.4)	(8.4)
Portrait	66.7 ***	67.2***
	(20.2)	(20.2)
Painting	−90.8 ***	88.1 ***
	(8.6)	(22.6)
Sculpture	−31 **	−68.3 **
	(27.1)	(27)
Graphic art	−199 ***	−201.1 ***
	(27.1)	(23.3)
Engraving	-164.2 ***	-247.7 ***
	(27.1)	(30.9)
Living in Haute-Garonne	−6.3	−8.2
	(11.2)	(11.3)
Living in Midi-Pyrénées	−12.6	14.7
	(17.6)	(17.6)
Living in Aquitaine	23.5	26.5
	(35.4)	(35.4)
Living in Paris	233.7***	236***
	(17.5)	(17.6)
Intercept	274***	273***
	(26)	(26)
Nb of obs	3,990	3,990
Multiple R^2	0.0605	0.1202
Adjusted R^2	0.0511	0.1164

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table 5: Logistic regression of reproduced artworks exhibited at the SAM between 1907 and 1939

Variable	**20 participations or more**	**17 participations or more**
20 participations or more	0.8274***	
	(0.1823)	
17 participations or more		0.7031 ***
		(0.1686)
Woman	−0.4099 *	0.1966
	(0.2052)	(0.2066)
Constant Price	$7.195e-04$***	$7.031e-04$***
	(1.994e-04)	(1.970e-04)
Landscape	−3.178e-02	−3.313e-02
	(0.1845)	(0.1841)
Portrait	−1.528·	−1.1515·
	(0.8795)	(0.8728)
Painting	0.3560	0.3242
	(0.4881)	(0.4884)
Sculpture	0.3929	0.3065
	(0.6060)	(0.6068)
Graphic art	0.4148	−0.2603
	(0.5058)	(0.5067)
Engraving	0.2632	0.1568
	(0.7043)	(0.7054)
Still-life	0.198	0.2835
	(0.2996)	(0.2993)
Living in Midi-Pyrénées	0.6208	0.5863
	(1.016)	(1.017)
Living in Aquitaine	−12.53	−12.48
	(31.51)	(31.55)
Living in Paris	0.2282	0.2405
	(1.167)	(17.7)
Intercept	−4.592***	−4.487***
	(1.120)	(1.120)
Nb of obs	11,486	11,486
AIC	1,315.1	1,312.9

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, $\cdot p < 0.1$

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