3.2

# Change Over Time

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF CONSERVATION AND
THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT
FALL 2013

## INTERPRETATION AND DISPLAY

INTERVENTION EXPERIENCE THEORY
CONSERVATION SEE ANALYSIS
SOUL DOCUMENTATION
HEAR AUTHENTICITY
EXPLANATION EMOTION
SCENOGRAPHY
INTERVENTION
HERITAGE FEEL COMMENTARY
BELIEFS TECHNOLOGY
PRESERVATION
CURATION CUSTOMS
NARRATOLOGY KNOW DIALOG
AUTHORITY

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Frank Matero
University of Pennsylvania

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Kecia L. Fong
Institute for Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney

Rosa Lowinger
Rosa Lowinger & Associates, Conservation of Art + Architecture, Inc.

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Meredith Keller
University of Pennsylvania

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Nur Akin
Istanbul Kultur University, Turkey

Erica Avrami
World Monuments Fund

Luigia Binda
Politecnico di Milano, Italy

Daniel Bluestone
University of Virginia

Christine Boyer
Princeton University School of Architecture

John Dixon Hunt
University of Pennsylvania

Jukka Jokilehto
University of Nova Gorica

David Lowenthal
University College London

Randall Mason
University of Pennsylvania

Robert Melnick
University of Oregon

Elizabeth Milroy
Wesleyan University

Witold Rybczynski
University of Pennsylvania

Steven Semes
University of Notre Dame

Jeanne Marie Teutonico
Getty Conservation Institute

Ron Van Oers
World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for Asia and the Pacific (WHITRAP)

Fernando Vegas
Universidad Politécnica de Valencia

Change Over Time

FALL 2013
VOLUME 3
NUMBER 2

ISSN 2153-053X

Copyright © 2013 University of Pennsylvania Press.
All rights reserved.
Published by the University of Pennsylvania Press,
3905 Spruce Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104.
Printed in the U.S.A. on acid-free paper.

*Change Over Time* is currently seeking papers for the upcoming themed issues *Vandalism* (Spring 2015), *Landscape and Climate Change* (Fall 2015), and *Ruskin Redux* (Spring 2016). Please visit cot.pennpress.org for a more detailed discussion of these topics and deadlines for submission. Articles are generally restricted to 7,500 words or fewer. Guidelines for authors may be requested from Meredith Keller (cot@design.upenn.edu).

None of the contents of this journal may be reproduced without prior written consent of the University of Pennsylvania Press. Authorization to photocopy is granted by the University of Pennsylvania Press for individuals and for libraries or other users registered with the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) Transaction Reporting Service, provided that all required fees are verified with the CCC and payments are remitted directly to the CCC, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923. This consent does not extend to other kinds of copying for general distribution, for advertising or promotional purposes, for creating new collective works, for database retrieval, or for resale.

*2014 Subscription Information (USD)*
Print and electronic:
Individuals: $35.00; Students: $20.00; Institutions: $72.00.
Single Issues: $20.00.
International orders, please add $18.00 for shipping.
Electronic-only:
Individuals: $31.50; Institutions: $63.00.

Subscriptions are valid January 1 through December 31. Subscriptions received after October 31 in any year become effective the following January 1. Subscribers joining mid-year will receive immediately copies of all issues of *Change Over Time* already in print for that year.

Please direct all subscription orders, inquiries, requests for single issues, and address changes to: Penn Press Journals, 3905 Spruce Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104. Telephone: 215.573.1295. Fax. 215.746.3636. Email: journals@pobox.upenn.edu. Prepayment is required. Orders may be charged to MasterCard, Visa, American Express, and Discover credit cards. Checks and money orders should be made payable to "University of Pennsylvania Press," and sent to the address immediately above.

All address changes and other business correspondence may be sent to the address immediately above.

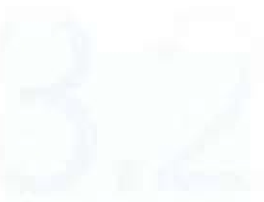
Typographic cover artwork by Kerry Polite.

Visit *Change Over Time* on the web at cot.pennpress.org.

# Change Over Time

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF CONSERVATION
AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

FALL 2013



## CONTENTS

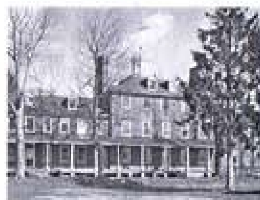
154 Editorial: Interpretation, Experience, and the Past
FRANK G. MATERO

ESSAYS

162 Storyscapes and Emplacement, Layer by Layer
MARY MITCHELL AND DAVID S. BARNES

174 World's Fairs: Language, Interpretation, and Display
FERNANDO VEGAS AND CAMILLA MILETO

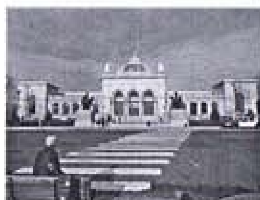
188 Housing the Bell: 150 Years of Exhibiting an American Icon
FRANK G. MATERO


162

202 With "Feelings of Reverence for Departed Greatness"
FRANCES HENDERSON FORD

222 The Display of Ruins: Lessons from the Ghost Town of Bodie
DIANA STRAZDES

244 How Heritage's Debate on Values Fuels Its Valorization Engine: The Side Effects of Controversy from Alois Riegl to Richard Moe
CHRISTOPHER KOZIOL


174

188

202

222

# WORLD'S FAIRS

## Language, Interpretation, and Display

FERNANDO VEGAS
Universidad Politécnica de Valencia

CAMILLA MILETO
Universidad Politécnica de Valencia

Figure 1. Memorial Hall, Philadelphia, 1876. Memorial Hall, built for the Centennial Exhibition, is almost the only architectural vestige of a world's fair characterized by its obsession with order and the exhibitive classification of objects within the enclosure of the exposition. (Fernando Vegas and Camilla Mileto)

Apart from some cases related to the glories of nineteenth-century structural engineering and some isolated examples representing the avant-garde of the moment, world's fair architecture of the eclectic period continues to be quite an unexplored subject within the panorama of recent architecture. This article analyzes the function of nineteenth-century world's fair architecture by considering the interpretation and display of past traditions in local and international exhibitions, the different strategies implemented in their conception, and current approaches to interpretation. Finally, a reflection is made about the role of world's fair architecture in the creation of the architecture and urban planning of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century cities. This paper is an elaboration of some ideas presented in the book: Fernando Vegas López-Manzanares, *La Arquitectura de la Exposición Regional Valenciana de 1909 y de la Exposición Nacional de 1910* (Valencia: Ediciones Generales de la Construcción, 2003).

From the second half of the nineteenth century until the psychological catastrophe of World War I, the great world's fairs were forums of progress and culture, competitions of all branches of art, quality contests for company products, periodical gatherings for competitors, and more. The cities hosting the fairs strove to display their progress and vitality to people at home and abroad. In the case of the former, self-satisfied spectators saw the great fair reflected as an interpretive image of the future of their city. In that of the latter, it was an excuse for competing countries, cities, or companies to advance and excel. While the host city took center stage dressed up in all its finery, a bloody commercial and industrial battle was being waged in the wings.

The origin of these events was not the famous 1851 Great Exhibition in London or New York's 1853 World's Fair, but earlier events that date as far back as the eighteenth century. In 1754 the Royal Society of Arts, an association for the promotion of industry and trade, was founded in London. The first industrial and agricultural fair held in 1756 proved so successful that it developed into a yearly event from 1761 onward. When this society moved to the spacious Adelphi Building in the center of London in 1774, award-winning machines from previous editions that had been purchased by the group were put on permanent display in a hall there, and had considerable influence on the development of agricultural machinery. In England, the fairs were national throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, although at the end of this period there was a tendency to open them to other participants until the above-mentioned first world's fair was held in London.

Of similar events that followed, Prague set up an industrial exposition in 1791, which, although small, was one of the earliest.[1] In 1798 the Parisian event, Première Exposition

des Produits de l'Industrie Française, was promoted by its organizers as a first campaign against English industry. Initially intended as an annual event, the exposition foundered due to the turmoil of the times and was not held again until 1801 when it drew over two hundred participants to the courtyard of the Louvre. Between 1819 and 1849, another six exhibitions were held. The last of these, located in the Champs-Élysées, had as many as 4,532 stands. All these French national exhibitions were created in provisional buildings that were dismantled afterward. During this time, other European cities simultaneously established national fairs protected against the participation of foreign competitors.

In 1851, the first Great Universal Exhibition in which all countries could participate was held in London in an immense glass structure specially created for the occasion by greenhouse designer Joseph Paxton. The remarkable impact of the event resulted not only because of the huge dimensions of the venue but also because it was a showcase for the synthetic microcosm of its contents. This fair was the first in a long series of international events in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including London (1851, 1862, 1886, 1908), Paris (1855, 1867, 1878, 1889, 1900), and other cities like New York (1853), Vienna (1873), Philadelphia (1876), Sydney (1879), Melbourne (1880), Antwerp (1885, 1894), Barcelona (1888), Chicago (1893), Brussels (1897, 1911), Omaha (1898), Buffalo (1901), Rome and Turin (1911), San Francisco and San Diego (1915), and many others.[2] Parallel to these exhibitions of an international nature, each country separately continued to hold specific national and regional events covering different aspects of their economy or culture (industry, agriculture, mining, the fine arts, the decorative arts, the colonies, and numerous others), devised in the same style as the more important ones, albeit on a smaller scale. There were so many of them that it would be nearly impossible to name them all.

The host cities of the fairs aspired to display the degree of development of their economy or even their capacity to recover after undergoing a natural catastrophe of some kind. All these shows were a sort of peaceable war, or even a warning of future hostilities, as was the case of the Krupp gun displayed in the Prussian section of the Paris fair in 1867 during tensions leading to the Franco-Prussian War. The periodical encounters with commercial rivals spurred the development of each exhibitor, who attempted to imitate the success of other companies in the same field.

The spontaneous appearance of fairground attractions at the Paris and Philadelphia exhibitions in 1867 and 1876 and their complete inclusion after the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 undermined the initial aim of these events focused on industrial and economic progress and laid the grounds for the creation of the important fairgrounds and theme parks of the twentieth century. The original concept of world's fairs deteriorated over the years. On the verge of World War I, the first trade fairs for showcasing products were created, and little by little those based on a particular theme became a regular event. Art festivals gradually broke away from the great world's fairs and became independent events that invited participants to attend and granted awards. The development of reproduction and audiovisual media (photography, gramophones, the telephone, the radio, the cinema, television, among many others), and the subsequent diffusion and internationalization of culture neutralized the didactic aspect and dulled the spectators' capacity for surprise. The

great wars stripped the fairs of their self-confidence and their optimism regarding progress. The foremost exhibitions from that time onward were deprived of their industrial and commercial content and watered down due to the falsity of their progress, which no longer augured a brave new world but threatened imminent self-destruction. The phenomenon of world's fairs still exists today, but their content is a hackneyed caricature of the original intention that these events boasted in the nineteenth century.

## Exhibition Strategies

Exhibitions as a showcase of objects also underwent an evolution in their architecture; the space changed from a single, large enclosure to a series of smaller structures. This transition from one massive building to a group of buildings went hand in hand with the growing prominence of the discipline of urban planning and interventions of interior rehabilitation and urban development in European and American cities, for example, with the creation of the City Beautiful Movement. The obsession with order and the exhibitive classification of objects in a large enclosure that characterized particularly the world's fairs of Paris in 1867, Vienna in 1873, and especially Philadelphia in 1876 (Fig. 1) gradually became an urge for suitable and befitting urban design in the respective location of the official and individual pavilions.[3]

The rather exorbitant paradox of a great urn to contain the stands, which in turn contained displays or showcases of objects, broke up into myriad smaller pavilions whose expressive role could reflect their content. The message of progress transmitted by the large metal structures was replaced by a preponderance of the representative expression of the architectonic language of each pavilion, which reflected the content, the program, or the nationality, by means of a mechanism of association of ideas linked to the manipulation and interpretation of the architectonic signifiers.

The reasons for this transformation must be sought in the inordinate growth of exhibitors, in the cost and repurposing problems of large structures, and in the expressive and representative requirements of the architecture, understood as the interpretation or corporative image of a nation, service, or product. The importation of national architectures in exhibition enclosures created fantastic Babel-like cities, encouraged alchemies of varied styles, and brought about the traffic of architectonic signifiers. The architecture of the pavilions gradually became the real protagonist of these events. In a word, the eclecticism of architecture was a fertile breeding ground in the world of exhibitions, which became the champions of this quest for architectonic expressivity.

On the other hand, the built exhibition enclosure, constituting the rehearsal, interpretation, and exhibition of a future city, acquired connotations of unreality in the eyes of its visitors. The threshold of the fair was the entrance into a world of happiness, free from everyday concerns, a promise of eternal youth and permanent exaltation, where the offer of continuous and unlimited entertainment and attractions prevailed. Everything contrasted with the usual city: impeccable, grandiose buildings, constructed with virtuosity; perfect urban planning; beautiful, healthy, and well-tended flower beds; freshly swept passages; abundant urban furniture in the form of fountains, sculptures, and lampposts;

luxuriant lighting. In fact, the enclosure was a sort of 1:1 scale model of an ideal city, the product of the intimate desire of its creators. It was an autonomous meta-city, an interpretation of local tradition and collective imagery as well as a reflection of the aspirations of the organizers or stand owners. Furthermore, the urban scenography formed by the pavilions aimed to endorse in a plausible manner the urban nature of the fairground, whose land was usually liable to be added to the city.

Eventually architecture emerged as the focus of the venue. This tendency to give priority to the container rather than the content increased accordingly as industry lost its leading role in the fairs.[4] Besides, the influence of the great world's fairs on local trade decreased precisely at the same time as the influence of the event on the urban planning and architecture of the host city increased.

## Composition Strategies

At this point, it is worth posing the question whether an international architectonic world's fair language was created, or whether this architecture responded to an interpretation of local architectural tradition, or, as we shall demonstrate below, whether both phenomena coexisted in an exhibition enclosure, according to the purpose and function of the different pavilions. In the years going from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth, this kind of international world's fair language constituted a bizarre international architectonic koiné, no more eclectic than Dr. Zamenhof's Esperanto. The appearance of Esperanto (1887), conceived as an international auxiliary language, does not constitute an isolated case, but was one in a long series of attempts at creating a universal language. *Communicationsprache* (1839), *Volapük* (1879), *Langue Universelle* (1886), *Spelin* (1886), *Bopal* (1887), *Dil* (1893), *Balta* (1893), *Veltparl* (1896), and others essentially constitute linguistic systems a posteriori, that is, artificial languages created on the basis of manipulating one or several existing languages, with simplified or optimized grammar.

It is highly significant that the nineteenth century witnessed this parallelism between the proliferation of international auxiliary languages and eclecticism, understood as the pursuit of a new architectonic language based on the manipulation of one or several existing architectonic styles. Umberto Eco points out two possible uses for international auxiliary languages: that they be maintained on a theoretical level, which would lead to the conservation of their purity, or that they be divulged, which would lead to the hybridization or "Babelization" of the language.[5] The same occurs with the architectonic koiné of the exhibitions, French eclecticism-classicism at the turn of the century, sometimes present in a pure state, sometimes mingled with elements or characters typical of the place where the event is held.

These architectonic elements, which in this text we have called *iconemes*, and the study of their origin and meaning, which we have called *etymography*, allows us to delve into the semiotic content of eclectic architecture, whose ultimate purpose was none other than the genuine search for a new architecture based on known fragments of others, like Esperanto, which was based on known words from heterogeneous languages to create

new means of expression. The decomposition of this communication code into different fragments in many cases provides an explanation and justification of the solution adopted.

In the case of national pavilions, there are some peculiar examples, like the joint pavilion of Luxemburg, San Marino, Andorra, and Monaco at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1878, which had a common façade sporting typical *iconemes* of each country; or the joint pavilion of Persia, Siam, Morocco, and Tunisia at the same event, mixing Chinese and Arabian *iconemes* on the same façade.[6] In both cases, as in other simpler ones, the final result of the study of the *etymography* of the pavilion is the individuation and identification of isolated *iconemes*, just as the etymology of a phrase in Esperanto would lead us to the original words or roots in each of the original languages.

The combination system between linguistics and architecture, however, is different out of necessity. Esperanto and other artificial languages are analytical languages, that is, systems that use free morphological elements (such as prepositions, conjunctions, and articles) to express the relationship between words whose lexicons are mainly formed by the combination of complete words or roots from different Western European languages. And to establish a parallelism, the architectonic koiné of the exhibitions, and also the eclecticism of architecture in general, would have belonged to the group of agglutinating languages, which essentially establish their grammatical relationships by the juxtaposition of affixes to the roots, that is, by the combination of a set of stylistic *iconemes* to a structural, functional or *etymographic* root in order to construct the linguistic-architectonic discourse of the building.

The content of this discourse was completely new despite the fact that it was made up of known or interpreted fragments of local or international tradition, as was the case of Esperanto, which, using known words of different origin, had created a new, modern, universal language. The architecture was modern for the time, in spite of the stylistic *iconemes* of the past, since its morphology and syntax were indeed modern. In fact, notwithstanding the classicist or historicist character of most of the pavilions of the period, contemporary critics considered the buildings in these exhibitions as innovative architectonic creations. This classification at that time responded to the vision of buildings that interpreted and manipulated known historical styles according to a new syntax. They were new styles made up of known fragments, styles with a *mnemophilous* character, just as this newly coined word invented by us, "mnemophilia" being a new word resulting from the combination of two known historical roots: "mnemon" (memory) and "philia" (love). These new styles did not necessarily reject history; they used all the rational means that the latest construction technology offered them for the erection of a building; and, at the same time, they did not renounce the communicative potential of architecture, in particular, in the precinct of a world's fair.

The major source of inspiration of many of the pavilions at the world's fairs at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century was French classicism, which became a sort of cosmopolitan and mundane international style that, adapted to the anamnestic coordinates of each context, characterized most of the architecture of the world's fairs at the time, and later, in consequence, the new urban centers of European cities. In the second (but no less important) place coexisted the interpretation of styles

Figure 2. The Trocadero, Paris, 1878/1937. The Trocadero, initially built for the 1878 exhibition in Neo-Moorish style by the architect Jean-Charles Alfand, was replaced in 1937 with a more severe architecture that respected the original layout, and is still today considered an architectonic urban milestone in the city of Paris. (Fernando Vegas and Camilla Mileto)

derived from the local or national tradition of each region or country, which used their respective representative pavilions as a sample of the identifying character and uniqueness of their own architecture.

Furthermore, on occasion, the architecture of the exhibitions constituted a linguistic essay opened up to the future. It played a role of avant-garde standard bearer of eclecticism due to the volitional condition inherent in this type of event. Finally, it must be pointed out that this architecture was also endowed with a certain amount of solemnity, pomposity tinged with ceremoniousness and triumphalism that perfectly fulfilled the desired aim.

This architectonic eclecticism also found an excellent breeding ground and opportunity for experimentation in the international and cosmopolitan nature of the exhibitions of the time, where the language, partly international and partly an interpretation of local tradition, was put to the test before being transplanted into the architecture of the city (Fig. 2). In fact, the pavilions of a fair displayed a great need to find means of expressions suitable for their content. Classicist eclecticism at the turn of the century became a kind of architectonic koinè and acted as an international auxiliary language at the great exhibitions of the period, a language that in each specific context was submitted to personal assimilation and different interpretations.

Eclecticism, which under the historiography of the Modern Movement was demonized and dubbed whimsical, regressive, or impersonal, responded on the contrary to a modern attitude that strove to transport to the present the values and ideals that these *iconemes* of the past personified. The architect's task consisted of transforming and adapting these references to respond to the program of the building.[7] In 1755, Diderot defined the concept in his dictionary:

> An eclectic is a philosopher who disregards prejudices, tradition, antiquity, universal consensus, authority and everything that subjugates the opinion of the masses; who dares to think for himself by reassessing the most obvious general principles, examining them, discussing them and accepting nothing that is not evident from one's own experience and reason. Of all the philosophies he has analyzed, without respecting people and without being partial, he has formed his own philosophy, which belongs only to him.[8]

Therefore, architectonic eclecticism is not reduced to a doctrine: it consents to the existence of them all and goes beyond them, so that the final project is the result of its confrontation in pursuit of the best response to the expressive and constructive needs of the program.

## Interpretation Strategies

The architecture created for an exhibition, whether regional, national, international, or universal, has always had some peculiar features that depended on a series of factors concerning the event. These features can be found in all the exhibitions held in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, regardless of their historical, cultural, and architectonic context.

In principle, the architecture present at a fair responds to the psychological and actual reality of the host's exhibition enclosure, materialized in a varied panorama of pavilions that permit several levels of reading and interpretation. At the first reading level, the style used in the pavilions of a fair manifests the volitional aspect of the people it represents, that is, the aspiration of that people's collective subconscious. At a second level, we can point out this group's response to the expectations of visitors from other places, that is, the preconceived image strangers have of the host. At a third level, no less obvious, the architecture of the fairs reveals the essence of the host people and reflects the general construction of the city, region, or country where the exhibition is being held. These three levels of interpretation are always featured to a greater or lesser degree in the architecture of the exhibitions, and some prevail over others depending on the circumstances involved in the event. The volitional aspect usually has priority over the others, because the substance inherent in these events consists in showing outsiders both the progress achieved by the host city and the future unfolding before their eyes. The volitional condition of these ephemeral architectures was evident, for example, in the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago in 1893, where the choice of classical Beaux Arts architecture faithfully

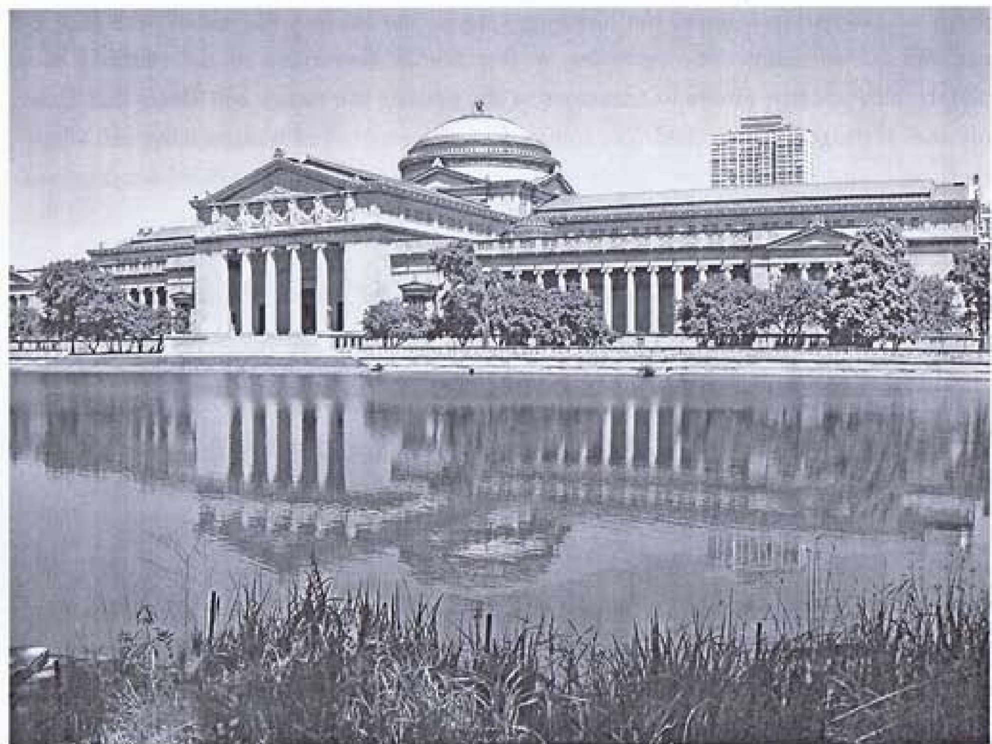


Figure 3. Palace of Fine Arts, Chicago, 1893. The Palace of Fine Arts represents one of the few remaining buildings of an exhibition where the choice of classical Beaux Arts architecture that faithfully reflected the collective subconscious cultural aspirations of the Midwest would, in Louis Sullivan's words (*Autobiography of an Idea*), have set back modern American architecture by forty years, showing the big influence it had on the city's architecture. (Fernando Vegas and Camilla Mileto)

reflected the collective subconscious aspiration of the Midwest, which was striving to keep up with the magnificence of the East Coast and European civilization (Fig. 3).[9]

On the other hand, the scope of the exhibition determines, for example, whether there are pavilions of diverse regions or nationalities, which are obliged to represent figuratively their region or country of origin, by using either immediate rhetorical forms or more or less obvious *etymographic* allegories (Fig. 4). In this way, the participating nations choose from a range of their own internationally recognized or vernacular architectures, at times borrowing collective signifiers interpreted from a local viewpoint. Nothing serves this purpose better than the eclectic project and composition philosophy, which, as we have said, sought to construct a new language, a modern language, based on the use of formal *stylemes* of the past synthesized by a new architectonic syntax.

The type of exhibition also conditions not only the fact that certain pavilions are included but also the vein through which the architecture of the event as a whole will be conceived. In this way, the pavilions of an industrial fair will be different from, for example, those of an agricultural or a fine arts exhibition. Similarly, a national or international fair can also have a specific character that has to do only with a sector of the economy or

Figure 4. Municipal Pavilion of the Expo, Valencia, 1909. The Municipal Pavilion of the Expo was the result of interpretation and amalgam and a sample of local religious and civil gothic architecture, and was a token of similar interpretations of local tradition built both in the city and for other world's fairs. (Fernando Vegas and Camilla Mileto)

culture of the nation organizing the event. This factor will have less influence on a universal or international exhibition, since the latter would attempt to embrace all branches of industry and culture. The International Exhibition of Modern Decorative Art in Turin in 1902 is a paradigmatic case in point, because the rules of the competition of projects organized for the design of the pavilions for the fair contained an article that said: "Mere imitations of styles of the past will not be admitted."[10] In this way, the lines of the architecture that would be designed for the exhibition were set beforehand, in an attempt to identify fully with the guidelines of the exhibition: modern decorative art. This event was completely different, for example, from the architecture featured at the Italy 1898 General Exhibition in Turin, only four years earlier, where there was not a single example of the Liberty or Art Nouveau style, or from the International Exhibition of Industries and Work, also held in Turin, in 1911, which was a sample of the exuberant Italian baroque of the beginning of the century. For that reason, it is practically impossible to compare literally the architecture of one exhibition with that of another, not only in different countries or different periods, but even in the same city in the same period of time. Although they cannot be compared, it is interesting to juxtapose architectures in order to interpret them,

always after a prior analysis of the historico-cultural context, since even similar signifiers—two analogous pavilions—can transmit different signifieds according to the subject or group of subjects viewing them.

## Expression Strategies

The architecture of the fairs at the turn of the century not only plays the part of a container to house the exhibition, but must announce this role by means of the language of the building. It plays a strictly functional role in regard to the typology of the building required for each occasion, and even resorts to the most modern construction methods to build this container, but urgently needs to *express* itself by means of the language of its façade. The architecture of the exhibitions must not only "speak" from a semiotic point of view, but must "shout" in order to put some order in the tumultuous medley of pavilions producing background noise. This noise can be more or less controlled depending on the harmony between the composers—at least between those in charge of the official pavilions—but the private kiosks and less important installations will always make a certain amount of noise. Above all, the sound of each pavilion and the clarity with which it broadcasts its message must be allowed to be heard above the ill-assorted chorus of loud voices coming from the exhibition enclosure. Sometimes the hyperbole, the strident note, is used to attract the attention of the casual visitor, but always in the line of the architectonic signifier. The latter must be frank and its signified must be immediately visible to the recipients of the message. Even so, the polysemy of the signifiers, depending in the first place on the contexts and, ultimately, on the figurative preferences of the project designer, endows the reading with such a high degree of complexity that it is sometimes impossible to make a contemporary or retrospective interpretation of it.

The celebratory component of these events is absolutely intrinsic to them. One does not set up an exhibition displaying a range of artistic, cultural, and industrial products in order to lose face before the other participants. A demonstration of the hosts' material progress and an exaltation of their values form an integral part of the essence of fairs since they first came into being. Behind each exhibition we often find the hosts' need to show those around them the extent of their recent global development. This triumphal undertone in the exhibition's hosts, whose competitions awarding prizes to the objects exhibited constitute a sort of unarmed combat, is moderated in the shape of a festive ingredient that garnishes the taste of each pavilion. For this reason, the architecture of the exhibitions is usually very strongly flavored and well-seasoned.

The fairs of the period, which were manifold and featured myriad typologies, formed a kind of circuit that was repeated cyclically, and they maintained their own architectonic style, or rather a certain way of designing architecture that constituted an important part of the teachings at schools of architecture and the profession of architect. Within this circuit, it was quite common for the authors of the pavilions to resort to ideas they had seen in the architectures of other fairs, which were usually refashioned and interpreted in a new project designed for the geopolitical coordinates of each place with ingredients taken

from local tradition. A veritable circuit of linguistic loans for pavilions can be said to have existed, in which signifiers were worked upon and signifieds were reinvented according to the geohistorical coordinates. This pattern is true to the extent that a kind of genealogical tree could be drawn to show the influence of the different pavilions, from the Great Exhibition of London in 1851 onward, with few absolutely innovative architectonic contributions. Once the exhibitions with great container buildings ceased to exist, this phenomenon was accentuated in the architectures corresponding to the different pavilions in the event, where a taxonomy could be drawn to identify both international and local genetic contributions.

## The Spectator's Role

The creation of the modern spectator is linked to the great nineteenth-century exhibitions. The exhibitions played an important didactic role for the visitor, who went from being a schoolchild amazed at the industrial progress of machinery and inventions to an eager and astute consumer of the fairground attractions created by these technological advances.

The initial aim of the exhibitions, which included the industrial and geocultural education of the common man, imperceptibly gave way to pure entertainment.[11] This transformation is one of the reasons for the disappearance of the great engineering structures of the early exhibitions, genuine tokens of progress characterized by the univocity of their message, making way for expressive architectonic languages, which succeeded in decking the pavilions with a polysemy in which concepts like dignity, elegance, fun, exoticism, tradition, and nationality, among others, were interpreted.

Another interesting aspect of these events has to do with the fact that the visitors were turned into spectators of a whole microcosm. The systems of lifting them up in the air at some fairs are particularly impressive: trips in captive balloons (Paris, 1867, 1878, 1889; Chicago, 1893; Buffalo, 1901); viewing towers, such as the Sawyer Observatory (Philadelphia, 1876), the Eiffel Tower (Paris, 1889, 1900), Leopold Bonet's tower (San Francisco, 1894); and the Ferris Wheel (Chicago, 1893, imitated in Paris, 1900, and reconstructed in St Louis, 1904). All of these afforded a panoramic view of the whole exhibition. Although the latter was in its own right an amalgamated compendium of the human universe, the aerial view of the whole site constituted a magnificent experience that was almost tantamount to viewing the Blue Planet from the orbit of the moon.

These comprehensive views of the universe materialized in literal spectacles of the terrestrial globe. The Great Exhibition in London in 1851, which did not have a specific entertainment area but included different kinds of attractions, apart from panoramas and dioramas of several parts of the world, boasted a rotunda twenty-two meters in diameter made out of plaster models representing oceans and continents that could be viewed from staircases leading up and down. The 1889 Paris Exposition featured a similar structure, and at the successive event in Paris in 1900, there was even a pavilion entitled *Le Grande Globe Céleste* with a large globe of the firmament supported on arches as a figurative

image. This last great event also boasted a *Cinéorama*: a panoramic film projected on the intrados of a sphere displaying aerial views of several cities.[12]

A similar effect was caused in the national pavilions at the Rue des Nations of the Paris Expositions by simultaneously viewing close-ups of the history of human dwellings, the reconstructions of whole districts from other cities or other eras, the exhibition of the aborigines from different colonies, and the presence in the precinct of a large number of languages other than that of the event host. The least important part of this spectacle was its authenticity, an example of which was found at the 1894 San Francisco fair, where, since the local Japanese refused to pull rickshaws for the visitors, a group of Germans dressed in Oriental costumes did so instead.[13]

The exhibitions were also the scene of assassinations committed in front of large audiences with a view to causing an even greater impact on public opinion. Thus, the mayor of Chicago was shot two days before the closing ceremony of the 1893 edition while he was preparing his final speech; Carnot, the president of the French Republic, was assassinated at the Lyon International Fair in 1894; and McKinley, the president of the United States, was shot to death in the enclosure of the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo in 1901.

## Exhibitions and Architectonic Heritage

We can see the role played by the architecture of the nineteenth-century world's fairs not only in the interpretation and display of the international trends of architecture combined with local tradition, but also in the creation and geocultural education of city dwellers in their new condition as urban spectators. Furthermore, the fairs generated an important architectonic heritage—a reflection of these exhibition, composition, interpretation, and expression strategies—which has not always received the recognition it deserves. Many pavilions of the great exhibitions, ephemeral in nature, were demolished, but so were many solidly built permanent edifices. The fairs left an indirect legacy behind them that today forms part of our historic centers: the urban planning and architecture of the host cities drew partly from experiments in interpretation and exhibiting that were tried out and sanctioned at the great world's fairs, at the same time as these cities reached new horizons of growth and expansion on the fairground sites.

## References


1. *Encyclopédie du Siècle*, "L'Exposition de Paris 1900," vol. 1 (Paris: Montgredien et Cie. Éditeurs, Librairie Illustrée, 1900), 4.
2. Linda Aimone and Carlo Olmo, *Storia delle esposizioni universali 1851–1900: Il progresso in scena* (Milano: Umberto Alemandi & C., 1990). A. Baculo, S. Gallo, and M. Mangone, *Le grandi esposizioni nel mondo 1851–1900*, (Napoli: Liguori, 1988).
3. Bruno Giberti, *Designing the Centennial: A History of the 1876 International Exhibition in Philadelphia* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2002), 1–32.
4. M. José Bueno Fidel, *Arquitectura y Nacionalismo* (Málaga: Colegio de Arquitectos, 1987), 11.
5. Umberto Eco, *La búsqueda de la lengua perfecta* (Barcelona: Grijalbo Mondadori, 1996), 266–81.
6. Bueno Fidel, *Arquitectura y Nacionalismo*, 19.
7. Jean-Pierre Épron, *Comprendre l'Éclectisme* (Paris: Norma Editions, 1997).

8. Peter Collins, *Los ideales de la arquitectura moderna: su evolución (1750–1950)* (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 1970).
9. Luis Calvo Teixeira, *Las Exposiciones Universales* (Barcelona: Labor, 1992), 12.
10. G. Beltrami, "L'arte nuova all'Esposizione di Torino," *La Lettura* 2, no. 7 (July 1902): 599–607.
11. Burton Benedict, *The Anthropology of World's Fairs* (Berkeley: Regents of the University of California, 1983): 53.
12. Daniel Canogar, *Ciudades Efímeras. Exposiciones Universales: Espectáculo y Tecnología* (Madrid: Julio Ollero Editor, 1992), 63–64.
13. Calvo Teixeira, *Las Exposiciones Universales*, 74.