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Investigating World's Fairs: an Historiography

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World's fairs and international expositions captured the imagination of both the public and world leaders from the late nineteenth century until well into the twentieth. Expositions organized the world into an orderly, symbolic representation of cultural modernity and industrial progress. At their zenith, expositions took place several times a year in different locations around the world, but occurred most frequently in the United States and Europe. Nations across the globe scrambled to host their own expositions or, at the very least, participate in an important exposition in order to share in the excitement that surrounded these fairs. The multiple goals, exhibits, and expressions of the nature of world's fairs and international expositions makes them ideal subjects for cultural historians to understand the assumptions, beliefs, and worldviews of people who both constructed and attended these major events. These fairs not only captivated international audiences, but also influenced collective and individual memories of the enormous spectacles.

The visual representation of people and concepts has structured knowledge and provided people with an easily understood ideological map of the world. Although images had always served to transmit information and ideas, representations assumed an even higher profile in the late nineteenth century after the Industrial Revolution and the emergence of an economic system that relied on the production of massive amounts of consumer goods that came to adorn public venues for visual consumption. A pattern of display emerged: Visual representations took on increased significance as private, closed displays of collections of art, scientific specimens, and archaeological artifacts became more accessible through the gradual opening of locations that encouraged the public to understand the world through exhibition. The shift toward expositions formed part of a larger "exhibitionary culture" that developed during the late nineteenth century.¹ The increased visibility of world's fairs, national museums, and department stores allowed new cultural attitudes toward display and exhibition to flourish, making visual representation an authoritative medium for the transmission of knowledge. The strategic display of material culture in these public venues provided a tangible way for powerful institutions, such as local and national governments, as well as elite economic interests to broadcast visually their worldviews to a large audience.² The increasing visibility of science, art, and consumer goods promoted

visual representations as the primary means of learning about the world as well as providing explanations about its order and purpose. The culture of display helped structure the relationships between visitors and objects in the exhibit that mirrored the proper relationship between the public and state institutions and reinforced social order. Furthermore, expositions served didactic purposes in that fair organizers designed exhibits inculcate the public in acceptable social roles and cultural values.³

Among the plethora of exhibits of natural resources, scientific devices, and modern consumer products, the display of human beings constituted a crucial part of the visual messages that viewers received. Fairs offered viewers a glimpse of strange and exotic beings through both living ethnographic exhibits and static dioramas, which commonly featured indigenous people from both overseas and internal colonial possessions. Colonized peoples at fairs served as trophies as well as souvenirs for imperial nations and their citizens. Even in stationary dioramas, exhibits that displayed archaeological and ethnographic materials represented the symbolic presence of foreign peoples and structured the relationship between the viewers and the exhibit. The display of people served as a bridge between popular entertainment and both popular and anthropological conceptions of race and evolution based on Social Darwinism. These exhibits conveyed a number of ideas, such as the power of empire as well as popularized pseudo-scientific ideas about the nature of indigenous people. By the end of the nineteenth century, representations of imperialism had become standard fare at expositions.⁴ Fair organizers, often in the guise of anthropologists, attempted to present indigenous people in supposedly authentic settings, creating the impression of savagery, barbarity, and exoticism that titillated fairgoers.⁵ The juxtaposition of well-heeled visitors and savage Indians emphasized the dichotomy between civilization and barbarity as well as progress and primitivism.

The subtle ideas and discourses generated at expositions remained lodged in the public consciousness long after the destruction of the temporary pavilions. Millions of people constructed, found employment within, or attended world's fairs. Millions more heard stories about the fairs from friends and relatives who visited and saw advertising for the fairs that had spread far and wide. Furthermore, expositions played a major role in the creation of national museums in the United States, Europe, and Latin America, as art and ethnographic items left over or returned from expositions found new meaning as museum pieces. The arrangement of these objects created narratives that constructed and reproduced a governmental vision about the world that explained national histories that ultimately served political purposes. More importantly, ephemeral ideas and discourses from expositions moved to museums, where they became institutionalized as a permanent part of national consciousness that continued to reproduce fair discourses to museum visitors. The underlying assumptions embedded in expositions, such as power relationships, social order, and governmental jurisdiction, took on

increased prestige when exposition displays gained new legitimacy from their roles as official museum exhibitions. The museum building, as the repository of collections, framed the physical display of the knowledge that the objects generated and provided visitors with the appropriate environment in which to marvel at the exhibits well as a symbolic space for the enactment of rituals of civilization.⁶

Social scientists have relied on multiple theoretical frameworks to analyze world's fairs. The dissemination of dominant cultural values to subordinate classes and the internalization of those values through the displays at fairs have led scholars to conceptualize of world's fairs through the application of Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony. In this sense, fairs represented the exercise of dominant cultural and social values over subordinate classes, who internalized these ideas and reproduced them in everyday contexts. The expanding field of world's fair studies has also borrowed from museological theory to investigate international expositions. The influential work of Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, argued that museums played an important but often overlooked role in the exercise of government power over citizens.⁷ It focused on the relationship between museum displays and the creation of knowledge and power and posited that the shift to exhibitionary culture can be understood as the reverse of the developments that Michel Foucault outlined in *Discipline and Punishment*.⁸ The prison and conceptions of punishment inexorably moved from grandiose public spectacles to an increasingly closed form of justice that focused on punishing the internal life of the prisoner. Bennett conceptualized expositions as the opposite of this process, as the display of objects in private settings for a limited audience gave way to public expositions and museums aimed to attract the general public. Nevertheless, these two seemingly opposite movements ultimately achieved the same result of increasing government control of individuals and society.⁹ World's fairs also fit within the theoretical model that Eric Hobsbawm proposed in *The Invention of Tradition*.¹⁰ These enormous spectacles effectively invented a shared cultural tradition that suggested a collective experience that served as a foundation for the creation of new ideas about national identity during the nineteenth century. Similarly, world's fairs can be understood to play the same role that Benedict Anderson outlined in *Imagined Communities*, as imaginary but significant bonds formed between fairgoers, as well as citizens who had only heard second- or third-hand about the wonders of the exhibits, ultimately creating a strong sense of national identity.¹¹

Robert Rydell became the first historian to argue that world's fairs merited serious attention due to their complex nature and overlapping discourses that illustrated the zeitgeist of an era. The publication of his book, *All the World's a Fair*, in 1984 demonstrated the richness and potential of world's fairs studies. Spanning from the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876 to the twin expositions in San Francisco and San Diego in 1915,

Rydell argued that fairs created symbolic universes that provided a sense of order for Americans during times of social and economic upheaval as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Using official fair sources and literature, he focused on the construction of the U.S. empire and the changing geopolitical landscape, which would cement America's reputation as a dominant world power. He relied on an economic determinist analysis that placed primary emphasis on the actions of the fair organizers and the collaboration between government officials and business interests that financed a long string of fairs across the country. He structured his argument around a Gramscian framework and viewed the production of world's fairs as a form of cultural hegemony that relied on the consent of the American public.¹² This methodology and theoretical approach resulted in a heavily "top-down" history that focused nearly exclusively on values of upper-class citizens and their efforts to inculcate these ideas into the lives of the fair-going public. At the time of publication of his book, American world's fairs remained virtually unstudied.

In a sequel, *World of Fairs: The Century of Progress Expositions*, Rydell continued his analysis of American international expositions but argued that the fairs held from 1933 to 1958 held a cultural meaning distinctly different from that of their Victorian predecessors. The expositions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century had aimed to explain the present and provide an image of stability and order in the midst of rapid changes. Staged during the darkest days of the Great Depression, the Century of Progress Expositions promised a brighter future and distracted fairgoers from the dismal realities of the present. Rydell expanded his analysis to include the numerous fairs held in Europe during the interwar years that highlighted the expanding colonial empires and their exposition of colonized people as trophies. He argued that these fairs not only reinforced the established political and social order, but that they also damped criticism of overseas capitalism, socioeconomic inequality, and class conflict. Despite the similarities in the ulterior motivations for the fairs' production, he illustrated the differences between American and European fairs. Specifically, the latter touted overseas empires as a solution to chronic economic problems, whereas the former stressed the application of scientific and technical know-how in order to overcome the global economic slump.¹³ He continued to emphasize the economic aspects of expositions and their organizers, leaving unanswered questions about the experiences of people within ethnographic displays and the messages that fairgoers understood through the medium of display.

The exclusive focus on American and European world's fairs eclipsed the importance of fairs held in other regions. Nations throughout Latin America both participated in and hosted a number of expositions in an effort to promote images of cultural modernity and industrial progress to international audiences. Historian Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo built on Rydell's work, but he focused his analysis on Mexico. Developing nations participated in fairs for reasons quite different from the United States and Europe. Instead of

providing a blueprint for social order, Tenorio-Trillo argued, the Mexican pavilions at three world's fairs, the 1889 Paris Exposition Universelle, the 1922 Rio de Janeiro Fair, and the 1929 Seville Fair, sought to illustrate the nation's understanding of modernity.¹⁴ These constructed images masked the growing social unrest that marked the end of the Porfiriato. The fair organizers, many of who formed an integral part of Porfirio Diaz's clique of *científicos*, created a national pavilion that not only linked the nation's future with its mythical indigenous past, but also to what they understood to represent cultural modernity. Most of the analysis focused on the Aztec-inspired pavilion at the 1889 Paris Exposition Universelle, but the book also included an analysis of Mexico's participation in world's fairs after the 1910 Revolution and its efforts to rehabilitate its tarnished international image and reputation. Like Rydell, Tenorio-Trillo argued that the twentieth-century fairs held a different social meaning than their nineteenth-century counterparts due to changing global conditions that played out in local contexts at world's fairs. Additionally, he also relied on the same types of sources that Rydell used in his analyses of expositions, leaving unanswered questions about the popular reaction to the Mexican displays.

Interest in world's fairs in Latin America continued to grow as cultural historians looked to fairs to illustrate the reciprocal relationship between popular and elite social classes. In 2000, Ingrid Fey published a chapter of her dissertation¹⁵ in *Latin American Popular Culture*, edited by historians William H. Beezley and Linda Curcio-Nagy.¹⁶ Looking at the 1889 Paris exposition, Fey provided an analysis of the Argentine pavilion, which flanked the Mexican pavilion that Tenorio-Trillo examined. Fey argued that the designers of the Argentine display faced difficult questions about how they would explain the nation's indigenous population to French audiences. Desperate for foreign investment and immigration in order to stimulate the country's economy, the Argentine organizers elected to adopt a strategy that emphasized "two Argentinas." One vision of the nation emphasized the chic cosmopolitan nature of Buenos Aires, while the other highlighted the untapped resources and vast empty spaces of the interior. Rather than create a plausible explanation for the continued presence of indigenous people, fair organizers simply omitted any mention of their existence. Like Tenorio-Trillo, Fey viewed the nation's participation in this important exposition as a way to demonstrate national ideas about modernity as well as generate economic benefits and court foreign investment. Although she alluded to the fact that Latin American nations continued to wrestle with their "Indian problem," the lives of actual indigenous people received little attention.

Historians have approached world's fairs from a top-down perspective that reflects the nature of the primary sources available, which include organizing committee reports, official fair literature and catalogs, newspaper accounts, and images of the fairs. Nevertheless, these sources do not reveal much about the experiences of colonized and seemingly exotic people

displayed at international expositions. These exhibits became standard fare at expositions and featured people from far-flung overseas empires. Living ethnographic exhibits featured supposedly barbaric and uncivilized people in order to emphasize the distinction between civilization and savagery implied by the juxtaposition of the fair goers and exhibited people. Blanca Muratorio, in her essay, "Images of Indians in the Construction of Ecuadorian Identity at the End of the Nineteenth Century," examined the indigenous group that the Ecuadorian government sent to Madrid for the 400th celebration of Columbus's voyage to the Americas to show the peoples the Spanish had sought to civilize through religious conversion and assimilation to European culture.¹⁷ The people within this and similar exhibits represented colonial trophies and served to accentuate the colonial power of European nations and the United States. Even prior to the Spanish-American war in 1898, the United States had displayed internally colonized American Indians and symbolically declared victory over the numerous Indian tribes that continued to resist the U.S. government's goal of continental domination. To achieve the desired effect, anthropologists encouraged people living within the displays to behave in "authentic" ways and to perform "traditional" cultural practices that both shocked and fascinated genteel Victorian audiences.

The experiences of the people within living exhibits have attracted the attention of cultural anthropologists and other social scientists who aim to provide a bottom-up narrative to counter the predominant top-down approach to the subject of fairs. The work of Nancy J. Parezo and Don D. Fowler in their book, *Anthropology Goes to the Fair*, an examination of the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition, provided several interwoven narratives calling attention to the multiple social meanings of fairs and included an examination of the roles of anthropology, fair organizers, and popular conceptions of science.¹⁸ The book's major contribution stemmed from the way it explicitly addressed the question of how displayed peoples understood their roles within the fair and the ways that American Indians and other indigenous people challenged and manipulated fairgoers' stereotypes about the nature of supposedly primitive and barbaric people. The authors consulted a wide range of primary and archival sources to reconstruct the historical experiences of both fair organizers and the indigenous people who lived within the fairgrounds for the duration of the exposition. The main narrative focuses on W. J. McGee, the head of the fair's anthropology department, who was charged with the collection and display of the living ethnography exhibits, but the indigenous people from around the globe who participated in the exposition formed the true focus of the story. McGee handpicked the exhibited people in order to present a cohesive cultural and racial evolutionary display that reinforced white cultural, racial, and social superiority in juxtaposition to the exhibited indigenous people. He insisted that the people living within the exhibits perform their traditional, authentic cultural practices and demonstrate their material culture in order to ensure that Indians and others

matched the spectators' stereotypes about them. Nevertheless, the people within the exhibits often exaggerated their behavior, mocked fairgoers, and participated in the exposition in surprising ways. For example, people from the polyglot African tribes on display used humor, exaggerated theatrical ritual performances, and learned English phrases in order to adapt to a foreign and strange way of life as exhibited trophies within the fairgrounds.¹⁹

Anthropologists have also considered world's fairs as public places for the enactment of important social rituals. In Burton Benedict's study of expositions, *The Anthropology of World's Fairs: San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition*, he argued that expositions resembled the ritual potlatches commonly associated with American Indian tribes and maintained that both of these rituals served to restructure social hierarchies and maintain equilibrium within society.²⁰ He argued that both potlatches and world's fairs featured the ritual exchange of material goods that accentuated rivalries between groups and created greater cohesion within them. He contended that world's fairs existed primarily as public, sacred spaces to conduct modern rituals that centered on material culture. Visitors from distant lands flocked to expositions around the globe in a manner that suggested pilgrimage to important cultural shrines. The congregation of large numbers of fairgoers required that fair organizers create a public space that invoked feeling of awe and reverence and that the organizers provided the public with rituals to perform in order to maintain order within the exposition. Much as Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger suggested, these types of invented secular rituals often seem timeless, despite their recent origin, and promote a shared sense of identity.²¹ Additionally, the ritual nature of expositions accentuated the subtle messages about the relationship between socioeconomic classes as well as citizens and the government. World's fairs centered on themes of material abundance and the rise of consumer culture that made the objects on display the central focus as fairgoers visited fairs in order to interact personally with sacred objects in specially created spaces. Furthermore, he argued that world's fairs and the redistribution of material culture played an important role in the reorganization of social hierarchies in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. While widening social inequalities and class conflict threatened the social order, a growing middle class required public spaces and cultural events that would instruct them in proper social values. Finally, fairs followed ritual, cyclical calendars through their ephemeral nature and predictable cycles of construction and destruction.

The rapidly expanding literature on world's fairs and international expositions has managed to cover a wide range of important subjects, including the use of photographic displays.²² Additionally, scholars have examined the visual representation of empire, industrialization, and the creation and display of scientific knowledge, but they have left other topics virtually untouched. The substantial gaps in the historiography of world's fairs appear due to a nearly exclusive focus on expositions in Europe and the United States. The vast majority of secondary literature and historical studies about

fairs focus on their social meaning from the perspective of industrialized, colonizing nations determined to provide visual confirmation of their modern status as nations engaged in global imperial processes. These studies of expositions highlight large themes of industrial progress, colonial possession, economic stimulation, and the display of the cultural values and visions of the elite sector of society. Additionally, the establishment of permanent cultural institutions such as museums officially to enshrine these themes and assumptions constituted an important feature of expositions. Conceptions of race, Social Darwinism, and a linear evolutionary framework that located culture on a continuum from primitive to civilized also found expression at many expositions. Historians, anthropologists, and other social scientists disagree as to the features that constitute the essential elements of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century fairs, but these elements generally constituted the most obvious and essential concepts that required visual representation.

Despite the numerous studies devoted to expositions of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, historians have invested relatively little time in the exploration of fairs hosted by nations outside of Europe and the United States. Expositions took place around the world in former colonial possessions that had gained independence and used expositions to shake off their colonial legacies and demonstrate their independent nature. Fairs staged in former colonies held meaning distinctly different from those held in either the United States or Europe, as these nations varied in their approaches to fair organization, access to funding sources, and understandings of the cultural and social significance of expositions. A short list of former colonies that hosted expositions includes Australia, Brazil, Guatemala, Indonesia, Jamaica, New Zealand, and South Africa.²³ These nations participated in and learned from their experiences at a wide variety of fairs. The leaders of these nations became convinced of the utility of expositions and in the potential social and economic benefits that they could bring to their home countries. Although former colonies sought to imitate the grandiose spectacles they observed abroad, they often adapted the exposition format to meet their particular political, economic, social, and cultural needs.

World's fairs, as temporary museum-like spaces, have been analyzed using museological theory. As giant collections of collections, they often served as the basis for the development of national, public museums after the fairs closed. The leftover objects found new life and meaning as museum pieces, and the institutionalization of these objects ensured that the ideas promoted at the fair entered into official discourses that museum visitors received when perusing the permanent collections. The establishment of national museums also signified a commitment to nineteenth-century paradigms of cultural modernity and became a necessity, especially for developing nations acutely conscious of their international reputations for backwardness. Official state museums continued the role of world's fairs in the lives of ordinary citizens, in that they framed the relationship between the citizen and the government,

taught citizens about their social roles and appropriate cultural values, and provided a reverent, sacred space for public rituals. Nevertheless, despite the obvious link between the political, economic, social, and cultural functions of international expositions and the development of national museums, no work presently exists that examines this relationship.

In addition to the role of museums in the maintenance of social order and assuaging public anxieties about changing demographics, museum scholars have also focused their attention on the ways that museums, panoramas, and other public spectacles have reinforced concepts of empire. Rydell first identified the ways that world's fairs amplified ideas about the role of empire and imperial processes through exhibits of colonized people that hinted at the benefits of colonial rule. For example, after the acquisition of the Philippines as a U.S. colony in the aftermath of the 1898 Spanish-American War, the ethnographic exhibits that featured Filipinos emphasized the benevolence of U.S. colonial rule and promised civilization of the newly acquired colony and its people.²⁴ Additionally, the exhibit taught fairgoers about the Philippines and sanctioned the new U.S. role as an imperial power. In short, world's fairs brought the colonial empire home. The blatant references to empire obscure a related process identified by Robert Aguirre in his work, *Informal Empire: Mexico and Central America in Victorian Culture*. Like Rydell, Aguirre argued that exhibition spaces, such as museums, panoramas, and freak sideshows, constituted a more subtle type of imperial process. He focused on the British presence in Mexico and Central America; Great Britain never extended its formal colonial system beyond British Honduras in either of these areas. Nevertheless, the British acquisition of ethnographic and archaeological objects that made their way to London museums created a "softer," informal empire.²⁵ Drawing on the influential work of Mary Louise Pratt, he examined travel accounts, diplomatic dispatches, and other imperial media that symbolically created an invisible British empire throughout the region.²⁶ World's fairs scholars could adapt the idea of the informal empire to their work and dramatically increase the state of knowledge about the relationship between world's fairs and the softer processes of empire.

Music constituted a crucial component of international expositions because of its power to unite people and promote a sense of shared national identity. Military bands often played concerts and other special events during the fair to entice visitors through the gates. The midway featured popular musical acts that accompanied fairgoers as they strolled through "ethnic" villages that provided entertainment and refreshments. Fairs provided an important venue for the inauguration of national anthems and other types of nationalistic compositions. For example, Guatemalans heard their national anthem for the first time at the Central American Exposition in 1897.²⁷ Nationalism formed one of the core themes of all expositions and music provided a way to identify quickly with a particular nation. Despite the emphasis

on national identity and role of music in its creation, music at world's fairs has not been studied extensively. Annegret Fauser's work, *Musical Encounters at the 1889 Paris World's Fair* investigated the soundscape of the exposition and the ways that music reinforced racial hierarchies and contributed to stereotypes about the supposed civilization of the French and the tasteful nature of their musical exhibitions and the noisy, disorganized, and exotic musics that emanated from the entertainment zone.²⁸ This study ultimately reveals more about the way the French perceived themselves and their discourse constructed Others through music.

Scholars also know little about the ways that fairgoers perceived their experiences and how they understood the multiplicity of both subtle and overt messages that they received through the displays. Part of the problem centers on the lack of sources from visitors. Fair organizers often left copious documentation about their efforts to create, organize, fund, and manage such enormous spectacles. In contrast, the reaction of fairgoers remains difficult to gauge. Visitors might have spent an enjoyable day at the fair and then returned home to describe their experiences to friends and family. Researchers need to search out personal documents, such as postcards, journals, and photographs of world's fairs that may be found in family archives. A number of souvenirs from many expositions circulate between online stores and private collectors. Oral history projects that focus on the experiences of recent fairgoers, such as the 1964 World's Fair in New York City, also prove valuable to researchers and scholars attempting this type of difficult reconstruction of historical memory.

Fairgoers perceived their experiences both inside the constructed reality of fairgrounds and the world that existed outside the exposition, and scholars have drawn stark contrasts between these two realities. Nearly all studies of world's fairs argue that the carefully maintained representations of the world reflected visions of how the world should appear from the vantage point of cultural elites and that this ideal stood in contrast to the world outside the fairgrounds. Compared to the manicured fairgrounds, the outside world often looked turbulent and disorganized. Recent scholarship has begun to challenge the dichotomy between the fair and reality. Timothy Mitchell argued that not only did nineteenth-century Europeans create exhibitions that produced an orderly representation of the world, but also that these people actually viewed the entire world as an exhibition. Drawing on travel accounts from Arab visitors to Europe as well as European writings about Egypt, he demonstrated that these constructions blurred the division between the manufactured reality inside the fairgrounds and its outside counterpart. Museums, panoramas, zoos, and other representations created a visual effect that made the world outside the exposition nothing more than a series of representations of further realities.²⁹ Questioning the certainty of representation and its corollary of misrepresentation provides a new theoretical approach for

world's fairs scholars as they continue to contemplate the ways that representation affected fairgoers' perceptions of reality.

Despite the gradual shift from top-down approaches to an increasingly bottom-up perspective, studies of world's fairs still lack much information about the ways in which exhibited people understood and perceived their experiences as ethnographic, scientific specimens. The chronic shortage of primary source materials that express the thoughts, feelings, and desires of the people within the ethnographic "villages" makes it difficult for researchers to accurately reconstruct these experiences. Nevertheless, indigenous people can still be viewed through the primary sources of official fair materials using the technique of reading "against the grain," as proposed by James C. Scott in his groundbreaking work, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*.³⁰ This type of analysis would not only aid scholars in their attempts to uncover the subtle ways that indigenous people resisted their exhibition as stereotypes of themselves, but it also would help answer questions about the degree of cultural hegemony that Rydell theorized in his first study of world's fairs. Approaching world's fairs in this way emphasizes the personal and collective sense of agency of the people within the displays and dispels notions of their complicity in their exhibition.

The studies of world's fairs considered here focus on the human actors who cooperated to create expositions that lingered in public memory for years. Fairs centered on extravagant displays of material items that exemplified the shift to a consumer-based culture. Despite abundant evidence of the importance of material items, no study illuminates the "lives" of those objects. The symbolic lives of these items of material culture began with their manufacture and can be traced through their inclusion in collections that arrived at world's fairs from distant regions. Fairgoers purchased the items for their own purposes as collectibles or gave souvenirs as gifts, which changed the meaning of the object. Host nations also appropriated both foreign and domestic objects for national museums. Former world's fair objects also ended up at art galleries, which often served the same social purposes as museums. Participating nations also recycled the items within their national displays and reused them for other expositions. Objects acquired specific meanings that changed depending upon the use of the objects and their relationships with people and other objects. Following the trajectory of objects throughout world's fairs would illuminate the ways in which specific items created and re-created relationships between people and other objects as pieces moved in and out of collections.³¹ Museum scholars have begun to consider the question of the lives of inanimate objects, and this analytical framework could easily be applied to the growing field of world's fairs studies. Additionally, no study addresses the critical and abundant role of food as both sculptures and as display items at world's fairs, or the recycled nature of many of the exhibits.

In conclusion, the world's fairs and international expositions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries serve as the ideal subjects of investigation for scholars interested in the total worldview of a specific time period. These spectacles contained multiple competing discourses that effectively cooperated to form a cohesive microcosm of the world and offered an explanatory blueprint to fairgoers unsettled by rapid socioeconomic change. The fairs allowed fairgoers a didactic experience that relied on the consumption of images and tangible objects that broadcast the world views of elite classes. The confluence of multiple and intertwined concepts, such as nationalism, colonialism, and industrialization, represented important themes that influenced citizens in their daily lives. Additionally, more subtle ideas permeated the displays and suggested particular ways that visitors should conceptualize of scientific advances, such as biological evolution, as well as ideas about class, race, and gender. Expositions were aimed to categorize and classify the entire world and present visitors with an encapsulated, cohesive vision that explained fundamental questions about the role of human beings in the world through extraordinary means. These spectacles affected millions and millions of people through visits to the fair, but also through tourism, advertising, and word of mouth.

World's fairs appeal to scholars precisely because of their complex nature. Not only do they show how people conceptualized of popular celebrations in the past, but also they illustrate the worldview of entire eras. Fairs can be analyzed and understood using different lenses and angles, which makes them particularly rich areas for scholars of popular culture. Social scientists have approached fairs from a variety of ways that emphasize certain aspects of the fair while leaving other parts unexamined. The field of world's fairs studies continues to grow as scholars take greater notice of the ways in which fairs can be analyzed. Much research remains to be done to grasp the lasting impact of fairs in the fairgoing public's cultural consciousness and on popular culture of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Notes

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2. *Ibid.*, 59.

3. Tony Bennett, "Speaking to the Eyes: Museums, Legibility, and the Social Order," in *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), 25–35.

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10. Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terrence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

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12. Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 2.

13. Robert W. Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 5–7.

14. Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *Mexico at the World's Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 2.

15. Ingrid Elizabeth Fey, "First Tango in Paris: Latin Americans in Turn-of-the-Century France, 1880 to 1920" (PhD dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1996).

16. Ingrid Fey, "Peddling the Pampas: Argentina at the Paris Universal Exposition of 1889," in *Latin American Popular Culture: An Introduction* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2000).

17. Blanca Muratorio, "Images of Indians in the Construction of Ecuadorian National Identity at the End of the Nineteenth Century," in *Latin American Popular Culture: An Introduction* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2000), 105–21.

18. Parezo and Fowler, *Anthropology Goes to the Fair*.

19. *Ibid.*, 205–10.

20. Burton Benedict and Robert H. Lowie Museum of Anthropology, *The Anthropology of World's Fairs: San Francisco's Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915* (Berkeley; London; Berkeley: Lowie Museum of Anthropology; Scolar Press, 1983).

21. Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*.

22. Julie Brown, *Making Culture Visible: The Public Display of Photography at Fairs, Expositions, and Exhibitions in the United States, 1847–1900* (Australia; Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2001).

23. Alexander C. T. Geppert, Jean Coffey, and Tammy Lau, "International Expositions, Expositions Universelles, and World's Fairs, 1851–2005: A Bibliography," <http://www.csufresno.edu/library/subjectresources/specialcollections/worldfairs/ExpoBibliography3ed.pdf>.

24. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 167–68.

25. Robert Aguirre, *Informal Empire: Mexico and Central America in Victorian Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xxii.

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