

## **VISS 599 World's Fairs**

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Spring 2021, Wednesdays 2-4:50pm

Office Hours: Thursdays, 2-4pm or by appointment

Sign up here to receive the Zoom link for office hours

The world's fair is the product of modern industrial capitalism. As fabricated environments staged to sell impressions and manipulate desire, world's fairs (or *expositions universelles* and Great Exhibitions) encompassed grand schemes of urban planning, national and corporate pavilions, in addition to visual displays of objects, commodities, and people. This seminar examines the history, design, and theory of the world's fair in Europe and US from the Crystal Palace Exhibition in 1851 to expositions in the 1950s and 60s. We will explore the architectural history and material culture of fair infrastructure, the design of visual spectacle and politics of display, colonial encounters, discourses on technology, and the selling of popular taste. Note: The course meetings will be online, and it looks increasingly unlikely that a session at the Getty will happen.

### **Learning Objectives:**

- gain historical and historiographical knowledge of the exposition phenomenon
- study visual and material examples of fairs and fair culture
- situate fairs in relation to discourses on race, colonialism, and capitalism
- pursue original research

### **Required Texts:**

Available through the USC Bookstore and other sites

Robert Rydell, *World of Fairs: Century-of-Progress Exhibitions*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Karen Fiss, *Grand Illusion: The Third Reich, the Paris Exposition, and the Cultural Seduction of France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

Andrew Shanken, *Into the Void Pacific: Building the 1939 San Francisco World's Fair* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

Optional: Robert Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions 1876-1916*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

### **Requirements:**

- Attendance and participation: Students are required to attend class and to participate fully in the discussion. Preparation for class is essential.
- Blackboard Blog entries: In preparation for each class, you will write a short paragraph on some aspect of the week's assigned reading, or submit 2-4 good questions for discussion.
- Presentation: Each week, one student will present an exhibition (chosen in consultation with me) and organize comments for discussion (15 minutes)

- Research Paper: There is abundant primary material about world's fairs. Write a research paper that demonstrates original research and argument about any aspect of the exposition phenomenon. 20-25 pages

**Grading:**

Presentation	30%
Discussion	15%
Blog entries	15%
Research Paper	40%

**Online Resources**

**General:**

This database, available through the USC libraries login, contains documents and images of fairs: World's Fairs: A Global History of Expositions, <https://www.worldsfairs-amdigital-co-uk.libproxy2.usc.edu/> The Library of Congress has extensive visual and documentary materials of both American and European fairs available on their website: loc.gov. Many nineteenth-century jury reports and exhibition catalogues, maps, and documents are available through multiple internet sources, such as those noted above. For France, see Gallica.bnf.fr

<https://www.worldfairs.info/forum/index.php?sid=33ec34eead67252ac07914f8882ced5c>

<https://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/>

[https://www.wikiwand.com/en/List\\_of\\_world%27s\\_fairs](https://www.wikiwand.com/en/List_of_world%27s_fairs)

**Bibliography:**

[https://www.sil.si.edu/silpublications/Worlds-Fairs/WF\\_Format.cfm?format=Articles](https://www.sil.si.edu/silpublications/Worlds-Fairs/WF_Format.cfm?format=Articles)

<https://library.fresnostate.edu/sites/all/assets/doc/scrc/worldfairs/ExpoBibliography3ed.pdf>

**1851:** <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/n/national-art-library-great-exhibition-collection/>

**Objects:**

[http://ecollections.lib.csufresno.edu/specialcollections/collections/larson\\_collection.php](http://ecollections.lib.csufresno.edu/specialcollections/collections/larson_collection.php)

**Cinema:** <https://www.in70mm.com/news/2016/fairs/index.htm>

**New York:** The New York Public Library has scanned some documents from their archival holdings on the 1939-40 and 1964-65 World's Fairs; the Queens Museum and the Museum of the City of New York also have relevant collections, however, few are accessible online. There is also a considerable popular following of this and other American fairs, such as <http://worldsfairauction.com/> and <https://www.1939nyworldsfair.com/>

## Schedule of Meetings (subject to change or modification)

Week 1 January 20

### Introduction: Theories of Expositions

- Umberto Eco, "A Theory of Expositions," *Travels in Hyperreality*, 291-307.
- Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex," *The Birth of the Museum*, 59-88.
- Burton Benedict, *The Anthropology of World's Fairs*, 1-60.
- Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, Introduction, Chapter 1, 1-26.

Optional:

- Toshio Kusamitsu, "Great Exhibitions Before 1851," *History Workshop Journal* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1980): 70-89.
- Robert W. Rydell, "The Literature of International Expositions," *The Books of the Fairs*.

Week 2 January 27

### The Great Exhibition, 1851

- John McKean, *The Crystal Palace: Joseph Paxton and Charles Fox*, 15-36 ("The Scheme Develops, Natural Building-Filling a Space Without Qualities").
- Jeffrey Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851*, 91-158.
- Thomas Richards, "The Great Exhibition of Things," *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England*, 17-72.
- Lara Kriegel, "Commodification and Its Discontents: Labor, Print Culture and Industrial Art at the Great Exhibition of 1851," *Grand Designs: Labor, Empire, and the Museum in Victorian Culture* (Duke, 2007), 86-125.
- Owen Jones, "Gleanings from the Great Exhibition of 1851, No. 1: On the Distribution of Form and Color Developed in the Articles Exhibited in the Indian, Egyptian, Turkish and Tunisian Departments of the Great Exhibition," *Journal of Design and Manufactures* 5 (June 1851): 89-93.
- Gottfried Semper, "Science, Industry and Art: Proposals for the Development of a National Taste in Art at the Closing of the London Industrial Exhibition," *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, 130-167.

Optional:

- Ralph Wornum, "The Exhibition as a Lesson in Taste," *Art-Journal Illustrated Catalogue*, I-XXII

Week 3 February 3

### Material Culture and Mid-Century Fairs

- Walter Benjamin, "Grandville, or the World Exhibitions," *Arcades Project* 7-8; 17-18; "[Exhibitions, Advertising, Grandville] Convolut G," 171-202.
- Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, chapter 6
- Philippe Hamon, "Plaster, Plate, and Platitudes," *Expositions: Literature and Architecture in Nineteenth-Century France*, 125-156.

- Volker Barth, "Displaying Normalisation. The Paris Universal Exhibition of 1867," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 20, no. 4, 2007: 462-485.
- Livia Rezende, "Manufacturing the Raw in Design Pageantries: The Commodification and Gendering of Brazilian Tropical Nature at the 1867 Exposition Universelle," *Journal of Design History* 30, no. 2 (2017): 122-138.
- François Brunet, Jessica Talley, "Exhibiting the West at the Paris Exposition of 1867," *Transatlantica* 2 (2017): 1-26.

Optional:

- Shane Adler Davis, "'Fine Cloths on the Altar': The Commodification of Late-Nineteenth-Century France," *Art Journal* (Spring 1989): 85-89.
- Volker Barth, "The Micro-History of a World Event: intention, perception and imagination at the Exposition universelle of 1867," *Museum and Society* 6, no. 1 (2008)
- Pat Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire: The Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867* (New Haven: Yale, 1990).

Week 4 February 10 [College Art Association Conference]

### **Visual Culture and Expositions**

GUEST: Karen Fiss, Professor, Visual Studies, California College of the Arts

- Karen Fiss, *Grand Illusion: The Third Reich, The Paris Exposition, and the Cultural Seduction of France* (Chicago, 2009).
- James D. Herbert, "The View of the Trocadéro: The Real Subject of the Exposition Internationale, Paris, 1937," *Assemblage* 26 (April 1995): 94-112.

Optional:

- Tom Gunning, "The World as Object Lesson: Cinema Audiences, Visual Culture and the St. Louis World's Fair, 1904" *Film History* Vol. 6, No. 4 (Winter, 1994): 422-444.
- Amy F. Ogata, "Viewing Souvenirs: Peepshows and the International Expositions," *Journal of Design History* 15, no. 2 (2002): 69-82.

Week 5 February 17

### **1889 Paris: Technologies & Colonies**

- Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture*, 243-290.
- Gustave Eiffel, "In Defense of the Tower" (1887) Dorra, *Symbolist Art Theories*
- Paul Gauguin, "Notes on Art at the Exhibition," (1889)
- Debora L. Silverman, "The 1889 Exhibition and the Crisis of Bourgeois Individualism," *Oppositions* 8 (Spring 1977): 71-91.
- Alexandre Labat, "Charles Garnier et l'exposition de 1889," *La Tour Eiffel et l'exposition universelle*, 130-147.
- Isabelle Flour, "Orientalism and the Reality Effect: Angkor at the Universal Exposition 1867-1937," *Getty Research Journal* 6 (2014): 63-82.

- Zeynep Çelik, "Search for Identity: Architecture of National Pavilions," *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs* (California, 1992), 95-137.

Optional:

- Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, "The Aztec Palace and the History of Mexico," *Mexico at the World's Fairs* (California, 1996), 64-80.
- Frédéric Seitz, "Les rapports entre architectes et ingénieurs en France: L'Exposition universelle de 1889," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 39, no. 3 (1992): 483-492.
- Miriam Levin, *When the Eiffel Tower was New: French Visions of Progress at the Centennial of the Revolution* (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1989).

Week 6 February 24

### **American Fairs, 1876 and 1893**

- Robert Rydell, *All the World's A Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions 1876-1916*, chapters 1, 2.
- Neil Harris, "Memory and the White City," *Grand Illusions: Chicago's World's Fair of 1893*, 1-40.
- Curtis Hinsley, "The World as Market Place: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893," *Exhibiting Cultures*, 344-65.
- Hannah L. Sigur, "A Neoclassical Translation: The Hôôden at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition," *Expanding Nationalisms at World's Fairs*, Raizman and Robey, eds., 92-108.
- David E. Nye, "Electrifying Expositions, 1880-1939," *Fair Representations*, 140-156.
- Lydia Mattice Brandt, "Re-creating Mount Vernon: The Virginia Building at the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition," *Winterthur Portfolio* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 79-113.
- Pamela Simpson, "America's World's Fairs 1894-1915," *Corn Palaces and Butter Queens: A History of Crop Art and Dairy Sculpture*, 85-112.

Optional:

- Christopher Green, "A Stage Set for Assimilation: The Model Indian School at the World's Columbian Exposition," *Winterthur Portfolio* 51, no. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 2017): 95-133.

Week 7 March 3

### **Colonial Fairs & Imperialism**

- Rydell, *World of Fairs*, chapter 3
- Raymond Corbey, "Ethnographic Showcases 1870-1930," *Cultural Anthropology* 8, no. 3 (1993): 338-369.
- Pat Morton, "National and Colonial: The Musée des Colonies at the Colonial Exposition, Paris, 1931," *Art Bulletin*, Vol. 80, no.2 (1998): 357-377.
- Carol Breckenridge, "The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting: India at World's Fairs," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31: 195-216.
- Timothy Mitchell, "Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order," *Colonialism and Culture* (1992), 289-318.
- Conal McCarthy, "Objects of Empire? Displaying Maori at International Exhibitions, 1873-1924," *Journal of New Zealand Literature* 23 (2005): 52-70.

Optional:

- Rydell, Findling, Pelle, "Fairs of the Imperial Era," *Fair America*, 45-71.
- Carol Christ, "The Sole Guardians of the Art Inheritance of Asia: Japan and China at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair." *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 8:3 (2000): 675-709.

Week 8 March 10

### **Paris 1900: Nationalism, Technology, and Craft**

GUEST: Debora Silverman, Distinguished Professor and University of California Presidential Chair in Modern European History, Art and Culture, UCLA

- Debora L. Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France*, 270-314.
- Mabel O. Wilson, "Exhibiting the American Negro," *Negro Building: Black Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums* (California, 2012), 84-138.
- A.S. Byatt, *The Children's Book*, 266-304.
- Henry Adams, "The Dynamo and the Virgin" (1900)
- Anca I. Lasc, "Paris, 1900: The Musée centennial du mobilier et de la decoration and the Formulation of a nineteenth-century national design identity," *Expanding Nationalisms*, 109-129.

Optional:

- Mandell, *Paris 1900*, 25-88.
- Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, chapter 5.

Week 9 March 17

### **1925: Selling and Consuming Modernity**

- Nancy J. Troy, *Nationalism and the Decorative Arts in France* (Yale, 1991), 159-226.
- Marilyn Friedman, "The United States and the 1925 Paris Exposition: Opportunity Lost and Found," *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 13, no. 1 (2005-6): 94-119.
- Le Corbusier, *The Decorative Art of Today* (1925)
- Tag Gronberg, *Designs on Modernity: Exhibiting the City in 1920s Paris*, Introduction, chapter 1, chapter 5, Conclusion, 1-25, 114-158.

Optional:

- Simon Dell, "The Consumer and the Making of the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs Modernes, 1907-1925," *Journal of Design History* 12, no. 4 (1999): 311-325.

Week 10 March 24

### **World's Fairs of the 30s: Science, Commerce, Utopia**

- Rydell, *World of Fairs*, chapters 2, 4, 5, 6.
- Roland Marchand, "The Designers go to the Fair, I: Walter Dorwin Teague and the Professionalization of Corporate Industrial exhibits, 1933-40;" "The Designers go to the Fair, II: Norman Bel Geddes, The General Motors 'Futurama,' and the Visit to the Factory Transformed," *Design History, An Anthology*, Dennis Doordan, ed., 89-121.

- Christina Cogdell, "The Futurama Recontextualized: Norman Bel Geddes's Eugenic World of Tomorrow," *American Quarterly* 52: 2 (2000): 193-245.
- Lisa D. Schrenk, *Building a Century of Progress*, chap 5 "Exposition Houses of Today and Tomorrow," 157-186.
- "Whose Modernity? Utopia and Commerce at the New York World's Fair," Kargon, Fiss, Low, Molella, *World's Fairs on the Eve of War* (Pittsburgh, 2015), 57-82.

Optional:

- Peter J. Kuznick, "Losing the World of Tomorrow: Battle over the Presentation of Science at the 1939 New York World's Fair," *American Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (1994): 341-373.

Week 11 March 31

### **Fairs in California**

GUEST: Andrew Shanken, Professor of Architecture, UC Berkeley

- Andrew M. Shanken, *Into the Void Pacific: Building the 1939 San Francisco World's Fair* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).
- M. Elizabeth Boone, "Using Spain to Ignore Mexicans at the 1915 California Fairs," *The Spanish Element in our Nationality* (Penn State Press, 2019), 155-192.
- Robert A. González, "Beyond the Midway: Pan-American Modernity in the 1930s," *Designing Tomorrow: America's World's Fairs of the 1930s* (Yale, 2010), 57-75.

Optional:

- Bill Brown, "Science Fiction, the World's Fair and the Prosthetics of Empire," *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (1993), 129-163.
- Matthew Bokovoy, "Spectres of Social Housing, San Diego, 1935," *Designing Tomorrow: America's World's Fairs of the 1930s* (Yale, 2010), 159-175.

Week 12 April 7 **Wellness Day**

Week 13 April 14 **Reading Day (Amy at Society of Architectural Historians Annual Meeting)**

Submit a plan for your paper (topic and general argument, sources) via email

Week 14 April 21

### **1950s & 60s Fairs**

GUEST: Vanessa Schwartz, Professor Art History, History, Cinema and Director of VSRI, USC

- Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations," *Selected Writings*, 166-184.
- Robert H. Haddow, *Pavilions of Plenty: Exhibiting American Culture Abroad in the 1950s*, chapters 3, 4.
- Rosemarie Haag Bletter, "The 'Laissez-Fair,' Good Taste and Money Trees: Architecture at the Fair," *Remembering the Future: The New York World's Fair from 1939 to 1964*, 105-135.
- Vanessa R. Schwartz, "Disneyland and the Art of People-Moving," *Jet Age Aesthetic: The Glamour of Media in Motion* (Yale, 2020), 56-97.

- Ben Highmore, "Machinic Magic IBM at the 1964-1965 New York World's Fair," in (2003-2004) *New Formations* 51
- Selected advertisements and editorial from *Progressive Architecture* (1964)

Optional:

- Rydell, *World of Fairs*, Chapter 7
- Lawrence R. Samuel, *The End of Innocence*, chap 1 "Greatest Event in History," 3-31; chap 5 "Global Holiday," 124-163.

Week 15 April 28

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century World's Fairs**

- Penelope Harvey, "Multiculturalism Without Responsibility? The Contemporary Universal Exhibition," *Critical Quarterly* 38 (Autumn 1996): 30-44.
- Chin-Ee Ong and Hilary du Cros, "Projecting Post-colonial Conditions at Shanghai Expo 2010," *Urban Studies* 49, no. 13 (2012): 2937-2953.
- Shiloh Krupar, "Sustainable World Expo? The Governing Function of Spectacle in Shanghai and Beyond," *Theory, Culture & Society* 35, no. 2 (2018): 91-113.
- *Beyond Design: 2010 Shanghai Expo architecture and space design* (2010).
- "Design Diplomacy: U.S. Rejoins World's Fairs," *New York Times*, November 4, 2004.

Week 16

Research paper due **MAY 10** via email, please submit via email as a Word doc

## Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

### **Academic Conduct:**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, [policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](https://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

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