

Modernism at the Fair

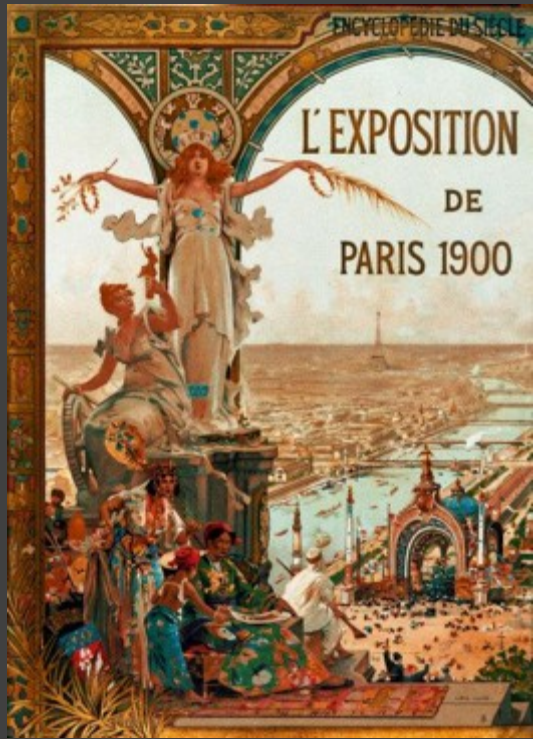
Other modernisms

8 November 2023

Introduction

- London: Great Exhibition, 1851
- Vienna: Weltausstellung, 1873
- Paris: International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts, 1925
- Paris: Colonial Exhibition, 1931
- New materials
- New ideas
- Discoveries
- Progress

World's fairs, international exhibitions, expositions universelles



Exhibitions theory

- Tony Bennett: "the exhibition complex"
- Walter Benjamin: "sites of pilgrimages to the commodity fetish"
- Paul Greenhalgh: "ephemeral events"
- Robert Rydell: exhibitions closely linked with global expansion of capitalism and imperialism

Bennett, Tony. "The Exhibitionary Complex," *New Formations* 4 (Spring 1998): 73–102.

Benjamin, Walter. "Paris, die Hauptstadt es XIX. Jahrhunderts," In *Allegorien kultureller Erfahrung. Ausgewählte Schriften 1920-1940*. Leipzig: Reclam. 1984.

Greenhalgh, Paul. *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*. Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 2000.

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

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

World's fairs and international exhibitions (selected)

- 1851 Great Exhibition, London
- 1855 Exposition Universelle Paris
- 1869 Exposition des Beaux-Arts Appliqués a l'industrie, Paris
- 1873 International Exhibition, Vienna
- 1876 Exposition Internationale, Brussels
- 1876 Centennial Exhibition, Philadelphia
- 1881 Colonial Exhibition, Australia
- 1889 Exposition Universelle, Paris
- 1891 Jubilee Exhibition, Prague
- 1896 Millenium Exhibition, Budapest
- 1900 Exposition Universelle, Paris
- 1901 Glasgow International Exhibition
- 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exhibition, St. Louis
- 1915 Panama Pacific Exhibition, San Francisco
- 1922 Colonial Exhibition, Marseille
- 1924 British Empire Exhibition
- 1925 International exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts, Paris
- 1930 Colonial Exhibition, Paris
- 1933 Century of Progress, Chicago
- 1935 International Exposition, Brussels
- 1939 World of Tomorrow, New York
- 1939 Golden Gate Exhibition, San Francisco

World's fairs



- Industries, inventions
- Technology
- Foreign possessions
- Animals, plants
- Art and design

Paris, Exposition universelle, 1889

The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations of 1851, London



- Industries, inventions
- Technology
- Overseas (colonial) gains
- Foreign sections
- Animals, plants
- Food
- Art and design



Henry Clarke Pidgeon (1807-80), 'The Indian Court and Jewels', 1851

Initiators

Prince Albert (1819-1861)



Henry Cole (1808-1882)



Henry Cole

- "good design" x "bad design"
- ~~naturalistic images~~
- ~~excessive ornamentation~~
- ~~Replicating perspective~~
- ~~Illogical use of material~~
- The False Principles Gallery



FALSE PRINCIPLES. 35



Victoria and Albert Museum

- Museum of Manufactures
- South Kensington Museum
- from 1899 Victoria & Albert Museum
- the largest museum of applied art, crafts and design in the world
- Museum as a classroom for everyone
- A showcase of good design and good taste



Exhibitions introduce

- Taste
- What is good design
- Means of new technology
- Canon of modern art and design
- Museums

World's fair, 1873, Vienna

Motto "Culture and Education"

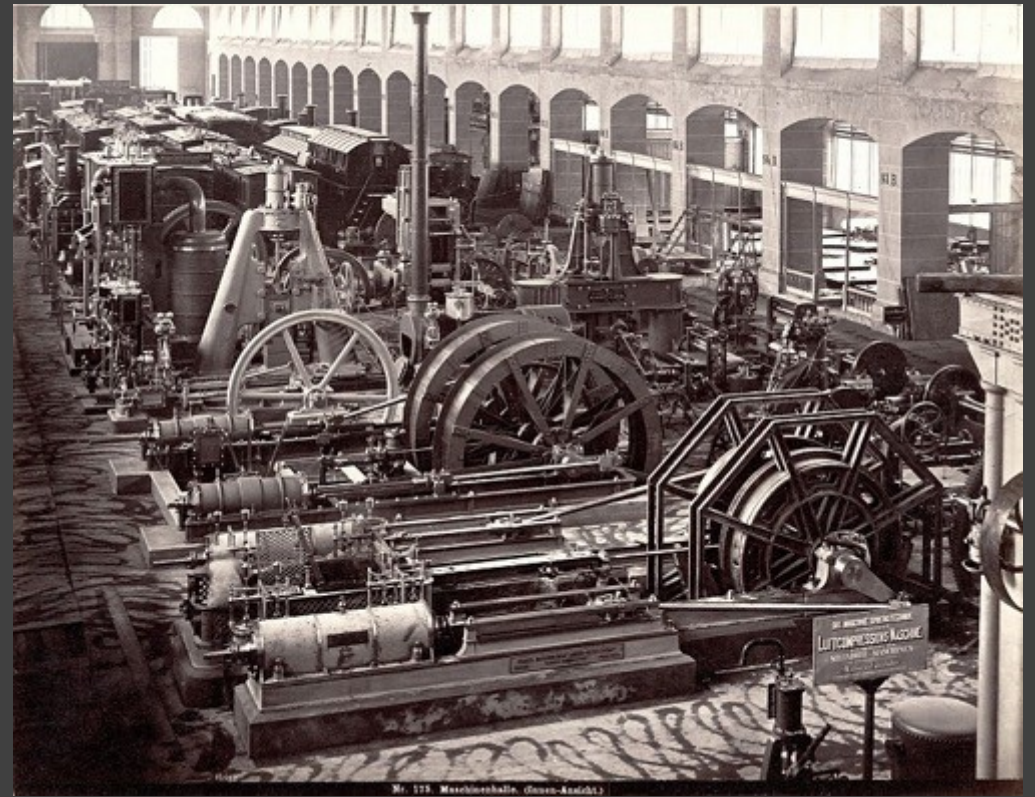
"To direct the gaze of the world towards Austria and ensure the recognition of the participation of our fatherland in the promotion of the wellbeing of mankind through work and instruction."

Archduke Carl Ludwig, 1873





Lobmeyr glass factory



Machine hall



Persian pavilion



Chinese display



Ottoman pavilion

Large ethnographic displays: Vienna

Examples of other foreign displays:

- American wigwam
- Japanese garden



The peasant 'village' at the 1873 Vienna World's Fair

Open air museums



Skansen by Artur Hazelius (1833–1901)



Folk dance at the Skansen in 1904

The spectacle of the exhibition

- Pageants / tableaux vivants
- Life performances
- Human zoos
- Recreations of streets, villages, e.g. Rue de Caire



- wildness and civility
- nature and culture
- black and white
- female and male



The spectacle and the other



Little Egypt in Chicago, 1893



Balinese dancers in 1931

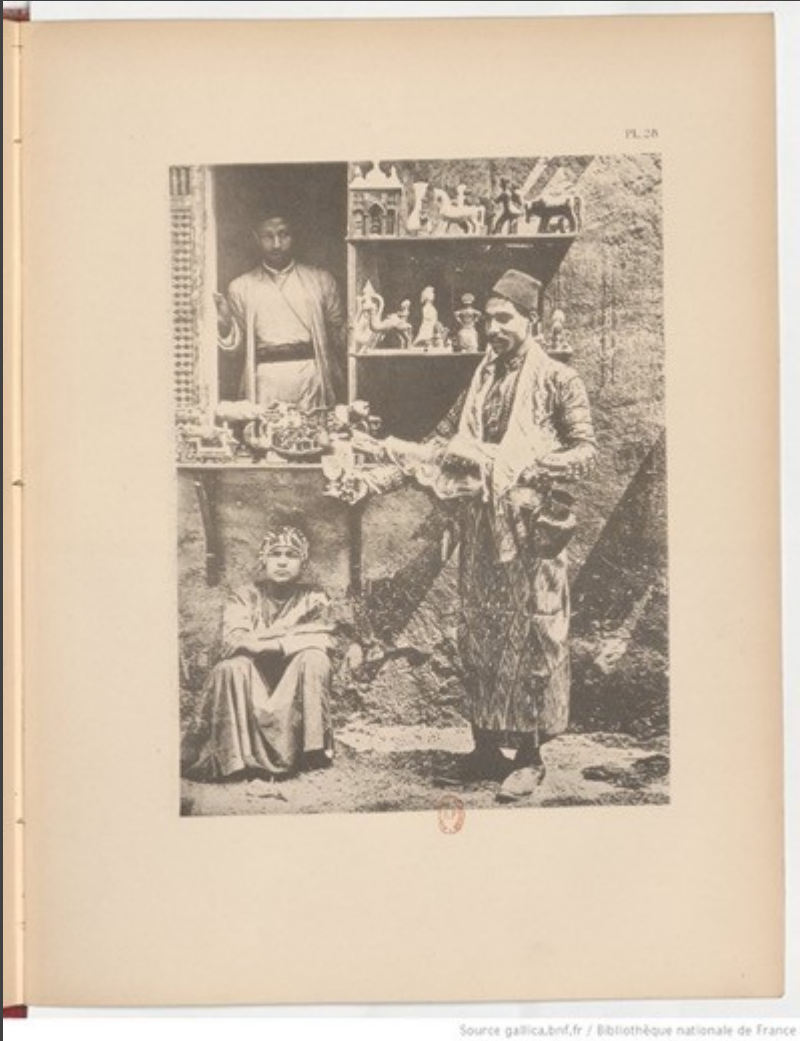


Sally Rand in Chicago 1933

Exhibited colonies



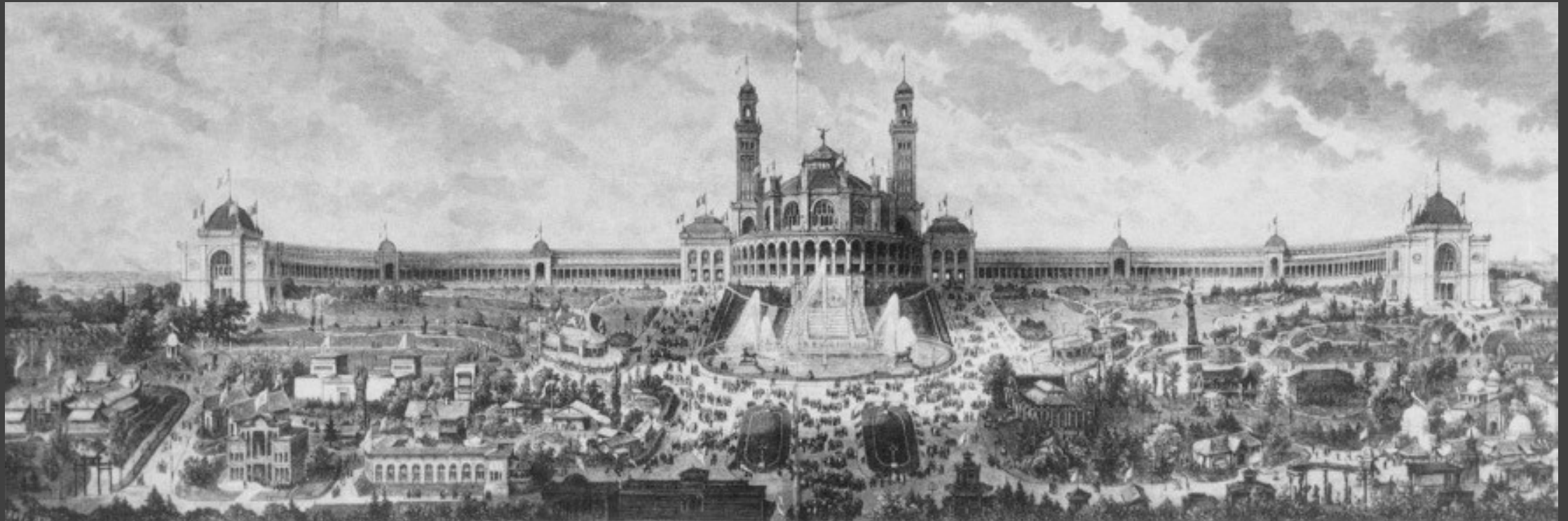
Rue de Cairo, Paris, 1889



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Colonial displays

1878 Algerian village in front of Trocadero Palace, Exposition universelle, Paris



A recurrent notion was: 'they' *are* where 'we' *were*. I.e. they remained stuck at a primitive stage of existence whereas 'we' (i.e. the West) have developed, moved on.





Colonialism

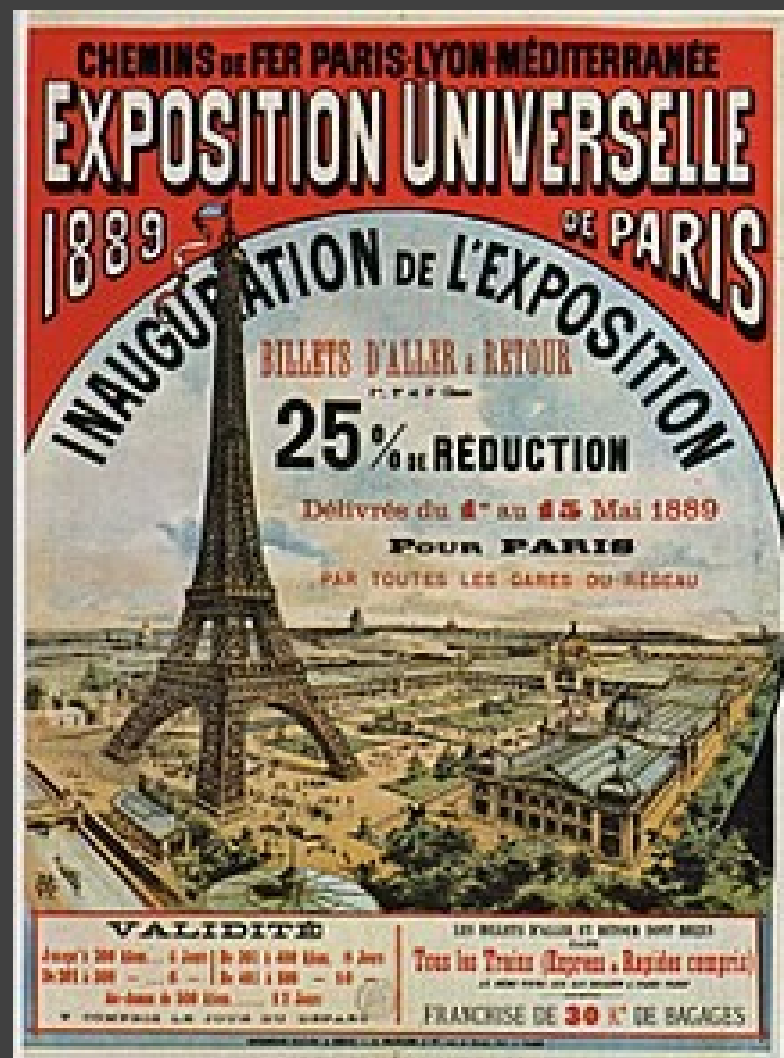
1. European powers came into direct control of ca. $\frac{3}{4}$ of the world's population.
2. It brought Europeans into contact with cultures that technologically were far less advanced (Sub-Saharan Africa, North America, South Seas) or who had radically alien customs and beliefs (Central America).
3. It produced a close relation of economic interdependence and exploitation. E.g. black slavery in the US, sugar plantations in the Caribbean, Tea plantations in India and Sri Lanka, rubber plantations in Malaysia etc.

France and its colonies



Paris exhibitions before 1900

- 1855 Exposition universelle des produits de l'agriculture, de l'industrie et des beaux arts
- 1867 Exposition Universelle: Agriculture, Industrie et Beaux-Arts
- 1878 Exposition Universelle: Technologies Nouvelles
- 1889 Exposition Universelle: Centenaire de la Révolution française
- 1900 Exposition Universelle et Internationale: Le bilan d'un siècle



Exposition universelle, Paris 1889

The Machinery Hall



Rue de Cairo



- diverse, often precious (expensive) materials
- various combinations of man-made materials (plastic, bakelite, aluminium, reinforced concrete) and natural materials (nephrite, silver, ivory, obsidian, chrome, crystal, zebra skin).
- Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann, a table with rotating wooden top and ivory inlay, 1925

Materials



Sonia Delaunay



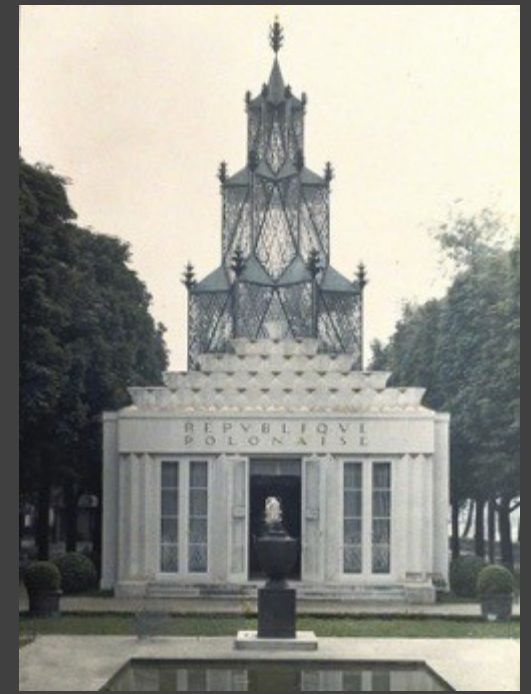
Boutique for the exhibition, 1925



Vogue cover, 1926

- Architecture by Józef Czajkowski, Wojciech Jastrzębowski
- Sculptor Henryk Kuna, painter Tadeusz Gronowski, Józef Mehoffer and Zofia Stryjeńska

Polish pavilion



Zofia Stryjeńska



Czechoslovak pavilion



Josef Gočár



Pavel Janák



František Kysela

27 — „Keramik“, gobelin pro Mezinárodní výstavu dekorativních umění v Paříži, r. 1925.
Uměleckoprůmyslové muzeum v Praze

Austrian pavilion

Josef Hoffmann

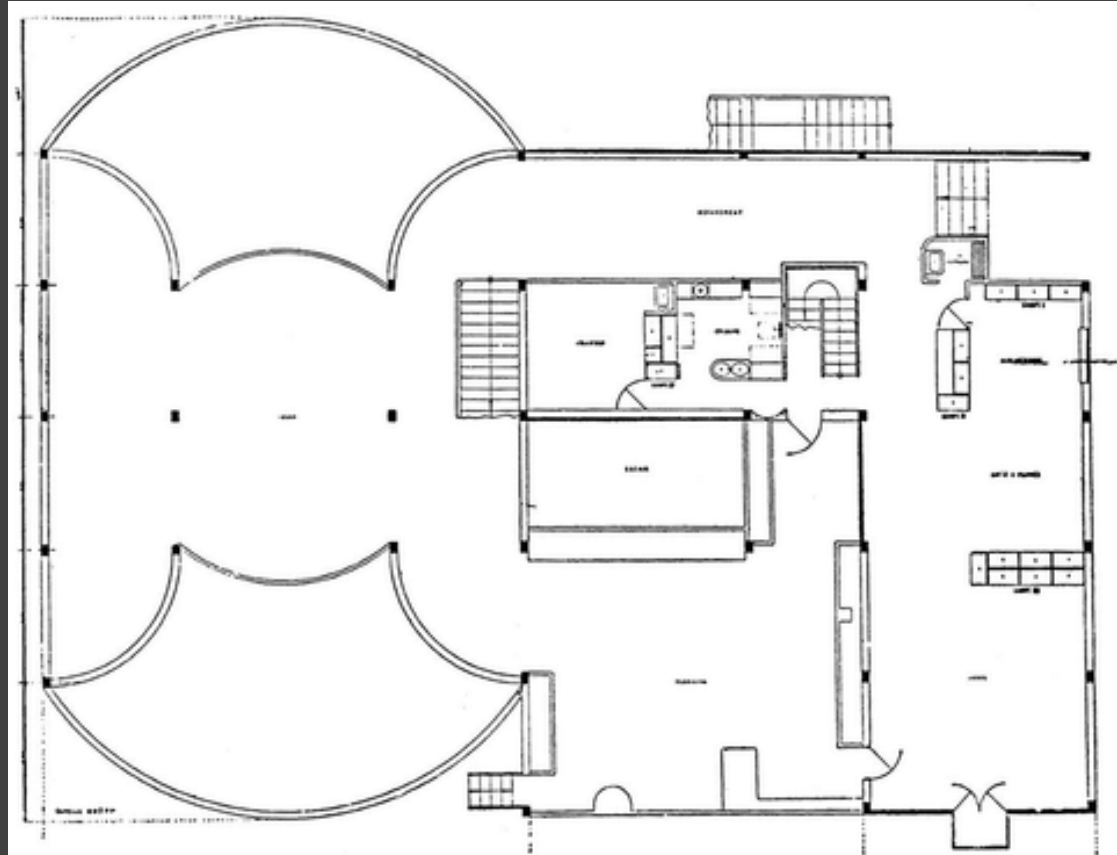


Study

Main exhibition hall



Alternatives

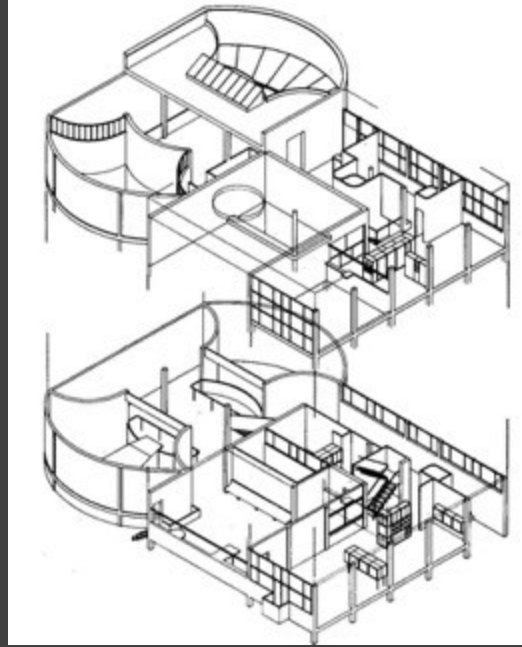


(a)



(b)

Le Corbusier, Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau





Soviet pavilion

Konstantin Melnikov





Alexander Rodchenko, The Worker's Club

Colonial exhibition, Paris, 1931

- France and her colonies
- The Netherlands
- Belgium
- Italy
- Japan
- Portugal
- United Kingdom
- United States

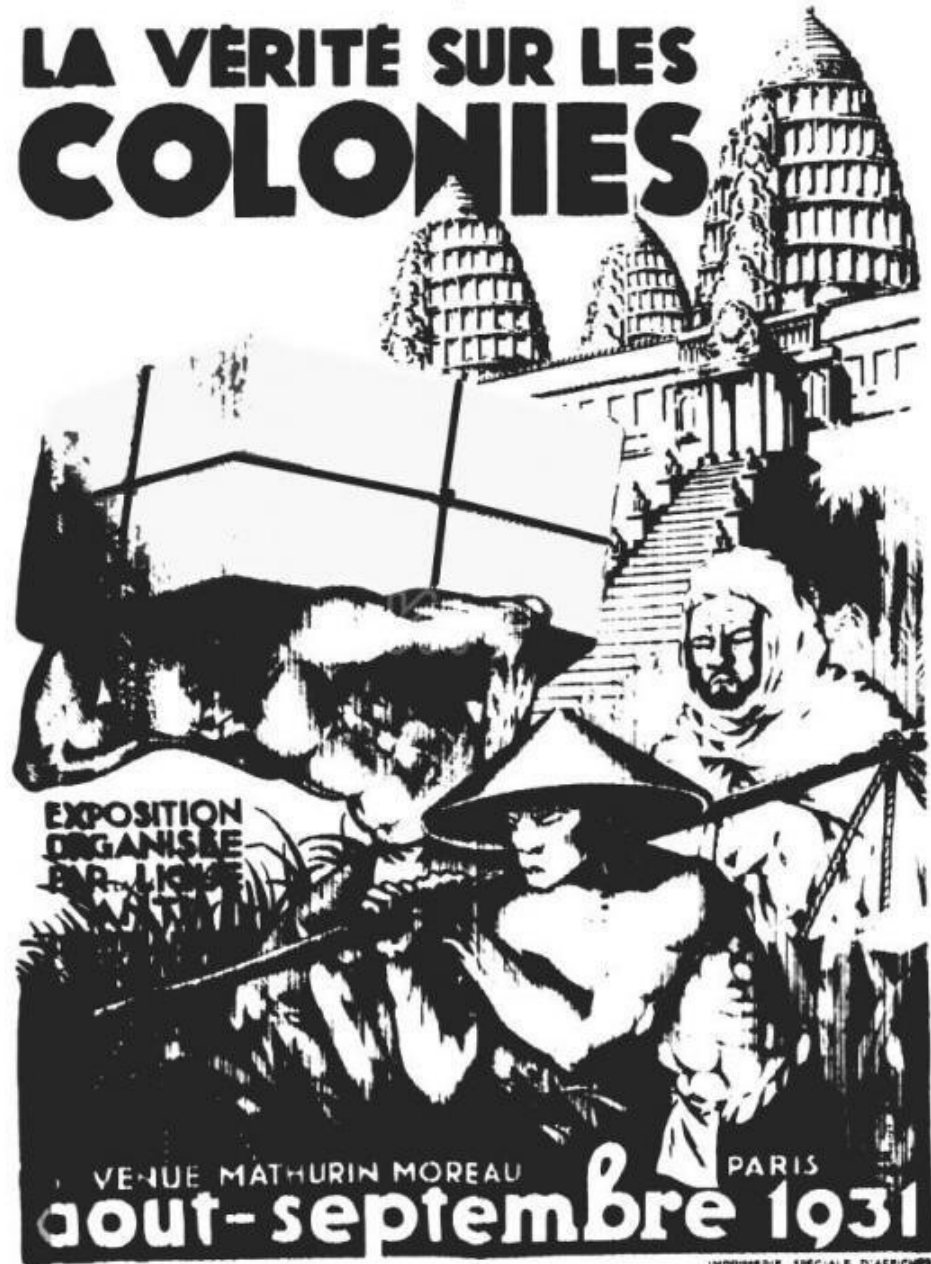




Ruberlet. Sculpt

Blanche. Archs

LA VÉRITÉ SUR LES COLONIES



"Here we have rebuilt the marvelous stairway of the temple of Angor Wat, and we watch enthralled the sacred dancers; but, in Indo-China, we are shooting, we are deporting, we are imprisoning these people."

Léon Blum *Le Populaire*, May 7, 1931

Milada Marešová



Pestrý týden 1931

Brussels International Exhibition, 1935



Joseph van Neck, The Exhibition Hall

The Indian village



The Belgian Congo pavilion



Human zoos



Brussels 1897



Brussels Expo 1958



When I was at first asked to attend the St. Louis World's Fair I did not wish to go. Later, when I was told that I would receive good attention and protection, and that the President of the United States said that it would be all right, I consented... Every Sunday the President of the Fair sent for me to go to a Wild West show. I took part in the roping contests before the audience. There were many other Indian tribes there, and strange people of whom I had never heard... I am glad I went to the Fair. I saw many interesting things and learned much of the white people. They are a very kind and peaceful people. During all the time I was at the Fair no one tried to harm me in any way. Had this been among the Mexicans I am sure I should have been compelled to defend myself often.

Geronimo, biography

Geronimo in a Locomobile Model C (not a Cadillac) at the Miller brothers' 101 Ranch, 1905

USA

- Chicago 1893
- St. Louis 1904
- San Diego
- San Francisco 1913
- Philadelphia 1926
- Chicago 1933
- New York 1939
- San Francisco 1939

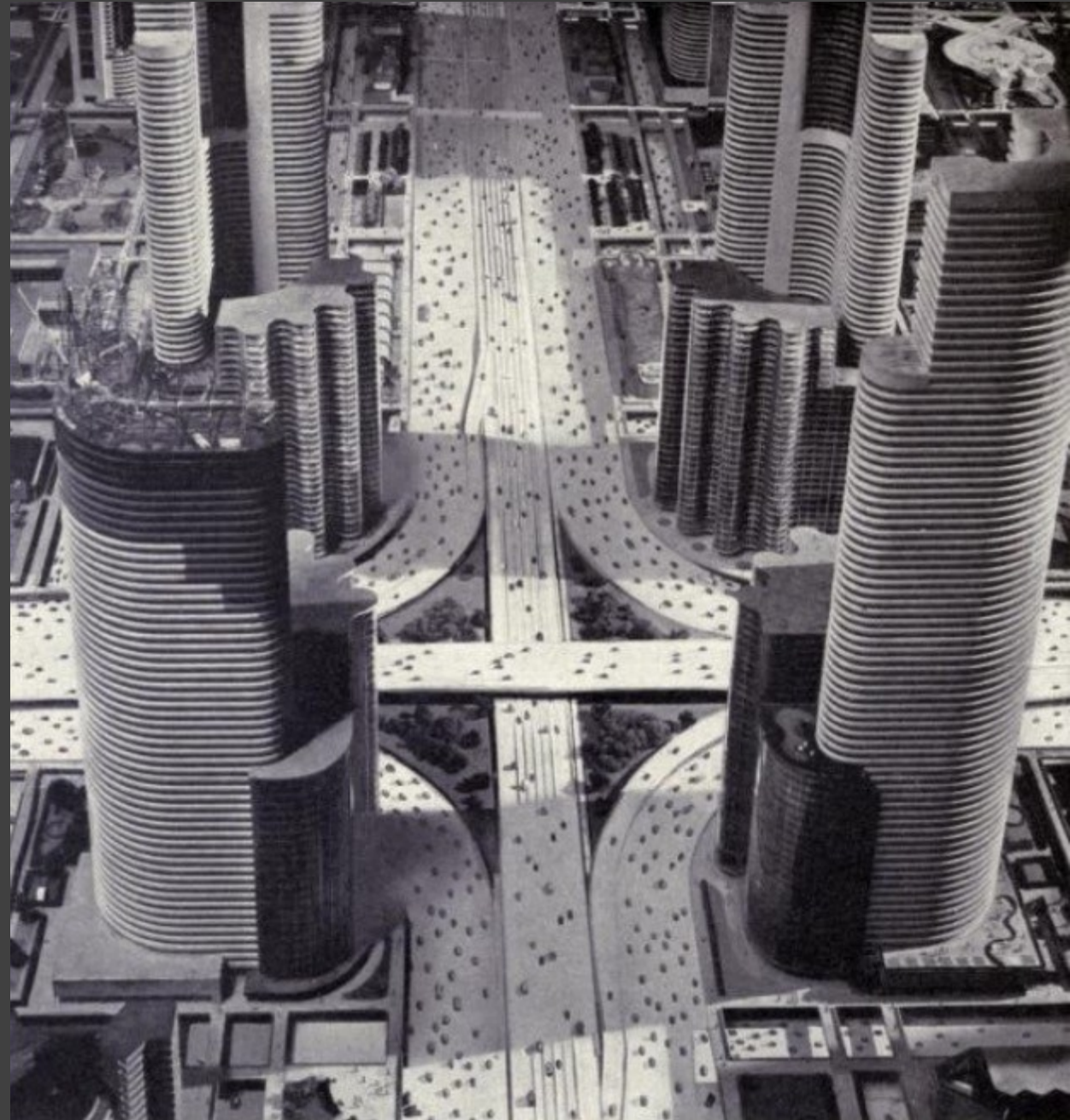
New York, The World of Tomorrow, 1939/40



The world of tomorrow



Norman Bell Geddes, Futurama



Exhibitions show

- Taste
- What is good design
- New technology
- Canon of modern art and design
- New materials
- Future, progress
- Knowledge
- Museums
- Human zoos
- Hierarchy