

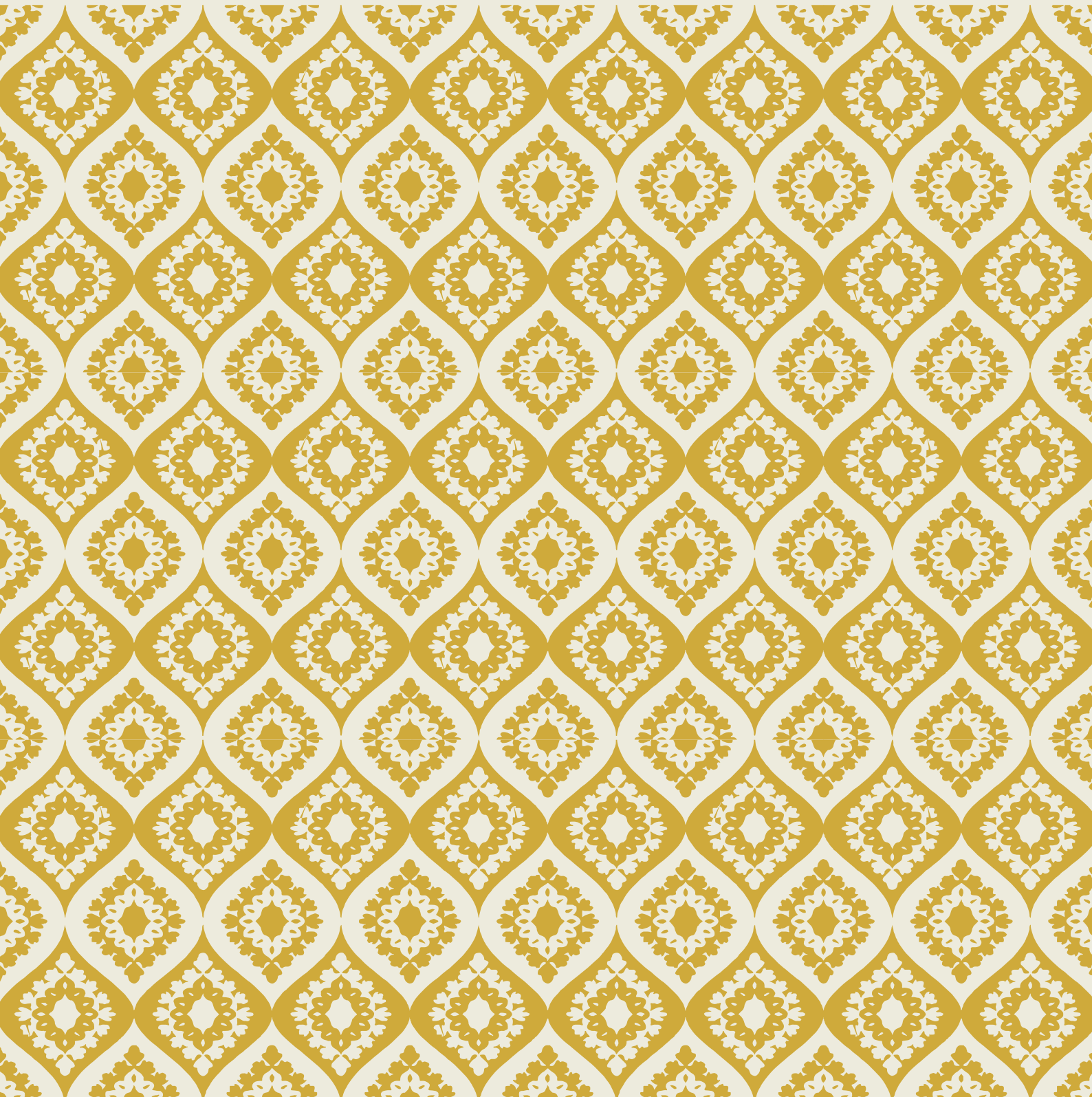
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Osservazioni introduttive

Con il numero monografico *Le arti in mostra: le esposizioni internazionali del XIX secolo/ Arts on Display: the 19th Century International Expositions*, la rivista MDCCC1800 ha voluto ricordare il 150esimo anniversario dell'Esposizione Universale di Parigi del 1867 riflettendo sul fenomeno delle grandi mostre internazionali del XIX secolo. Nella mostra parigina, che segna il definitivo passaggio dalla mostra industriale tradizionale a quella culturale, sono stati definiti criteri che hanno profondamente condizionato gli sviluppi futuri, basti pensare alla simbologia del progetto architettonico unitario a forma ellittica, alle norme espositive per le classi di prodotti o ai percorsi di accesso e di visita. Con l'Esposizione del 1867 si chiude anche il periodo dell'egemonia incontrastata di Inghilterra e Francia e si apre una fase che introduce nuovi organizzatori europei e soprattutto nordamericani. Si è così concepito un numero monografico su questo «delirio del XIX secolo» (Gustave Flaubert), dove sono stati raccolti – mediante una call for papers internazionale e un articolato processo di valutazione che ha dovuto fare i conti con un numero molto alto di proposte – contributi originali e inediti che approfondiscono, a partire dall'esposizione londinese del 1851, la conoscenza, gli sviluppi e i significati di questi grandi eventi. Si tratta di un volume che conferma la vocazione internazionale della rivista, l'attenzione per la documentazione inedita e la capacità dei suoi autori di dialogare tra le arti senza rinunciare al rigore scientifico, nella convinzione che ricerca d'archivio e capacità d'interpretazione possano convivere senza confliggere.

Anche se molti degli articoli scelti riservano al tema delle mostre internazionali approcci che si inseriscono nei consolidati dibattiti su centro e periferia e sulle ambizioni europee coloniali e imperialistiche, i punti di vista e gli esempi adottati sono per lo più insoliti e nuovi. Il volume si apre con il saggio di Lauren Walden, che cronologicamente sembra stonare con l'impostazione della rivista, ma l'inedita ottica dell'analisi della Esposizione internazionale surrealista del 1938 comporta anche uno sguardo originale sulle politiche colonialiste delle Esposizioni di Parigi del 1889, che celebravano il centenario della Rivoluzione,

e del 1900. Uno sguardo critico e comparativo sulla messa in mostra di oggetti di arte islamica propone il testo di Daniel Fulco. Con l'aiuto della Weltausstellung di Vienna del 1873 e dell'Esposizione Universale di Parigi del 1878 l'autore analizza non soltanto i contesti architettonici e i modi di esposizione di arte persiana e islamica, ma soprattutto i diversi approcci metodologici e ideologici di due scuole di pensiero. Di Oriente parla anche l'articolo di Alia Nour. L'autrice traccia un articolato profilo della presenza egiziana alla mostra parigina del 1867, dimostrando come il processo di modernizzazione del paese sotto il Khedivè Ismael Pasha sia l'occasione per rivendicare una cultura storica e contemporanea autonoma rispetto all'Impero ottomano e per qualificare l'Egitto, proprio grazie alla partecipazione francese, come un ponte tra Oriente e Occidente. Per Lucia Colombari l'Exposition del 1867 è l'occasione per indagare la pittura americana all'indomani della fine della Guerra civile e per definire le strategie che, dopo il sostanziale fallimento dell'esperienza europea, furono messe a punto per allineare la produzione artistica ai livelli di quella industriale e per indirizzare la pittura su quella strada che porterà prima a un allineamento con la Francia e poi, attorno allo svolgere del secolo, alla sua autonomia e riconoscibilità. Un capitolo davvero poco considerato propone il saggio di Anna Zavyalova che illustra la partecipazione russa alle esposizioni americane, in particolare quella di Chicago del 1893. L'approccio è inedito perché la ricerca integra il punto di vista strettamente europeo e si interroga sull'ambivalente successo dell'arte russa in America anche alla luce della recente riforma dell'Accademia di San Pietroburgo. Anche il saggio di Álex Garrís Fernández tratta di un argomento poco conosciuto, vale a dire il rapporto che s'instaurò tra lo sviluppo della tecnica della fotografia e la compilazione dei cataloghi d'arte. Nel caso specifico, l'autore rivela al pubblico un fotografo di elevata qualità, Manuel Horta y Molada, e il suo *Álbum del Museo de Zaragoza* realizzato per l'esposizione internazionale di Parigi nel 1878. Richiesto dalla Commissione provinciale per i monumenti, l'*Álbum*, oltre a costituire esso stesso un'opera artistica di pregio, funge

anche da catalogo del patrimonio di Saragoza, aprendo una prospettiva di ricerca insolita sullo sviluppo delle attività di tutela a livello locale esercitata dalle esposizioni internazionali. Argomenti italiani sono al centro delle ricerche di Cristina Beltrami, Gianpaolo Angelini e del saggio a quattro mani di Federica Stella e Annalisa Dameri. L'articolo di Angelini, dedicato all'Esposizione voltiana del 1899 tenutasi a Como per celebrare il centenario dell'invenzione della pila elettrica da parte di Alessandro Volta, si interroga sul rapporto tra arte e scienza. In questo saggio trova spazio un tema inusitato, quello delle arti chiamate a confrontarsi con le sfide imposte da una ricorrenza rivolta a magnificare la scienza e la 'modernità'; arti che l'autore ha voluto indagare ad ampio raggio, dalla grafica alla pittura sino all'architettura, con approfondimenti sulla storia del gusto, rendendo appieno il fascino generato dalla ricezione locale di quella che potremmo definire una 'esposizione-internazionalemania'. Nel

saggio di Federica Stella e Annalisa Dameri viene proposto un interessante spaccato sulle esposizioni internazionali come 'cantiere aperto': gli architetti Costantino Gilodi, Carlo Ceppi e Giacomo Salvadori si mettono alla prova a Torino, nel 1898, ottenendo risultati tanto validi da preparare il successo della partecipazione italiana del 1900 a Parigi, dove il padiglione che richiama e ripete motivi dell'architettura veneziana riceve grande apprezzamento. La produzione vetraria veneziana muranese è analizzata da Cristina Beltrami in riferimento alla sua presenza alle mostre parigine dal 1867 al 1900. Basandosi prevalentemente su articoli di stampa, l'autrice si interroga sul successo di una produzione improntata sul recupero di forme e tecniche tradizionali che deve confrontarsi con le correnti innovative promosse da Gallé e Tiffany.

Martina Frank
e il comitato di redazione

Le arti in mostra

Le esposizioni internazionali
del XIX secolo

Arts on Display

The 19th Century International
Expositions

From the *Rue des Nations* to the *Rue aux Lèvres* The 1938 International Surrealist Exhibition Parody of the 1889 and 1900 World Fair Cityscapes

Lauren Walden
(University of Coventry, UK)

Abstract The International Surrealist Exhibition of 1938 is viewed as a foil to the *fin de siècle* world fairs of 1889 and 1900, which created taxonomies of nations, promoting colonial exoticism. The cosmopolitan tenet of perpetual peace was present at the latter events but this was subordinated to an imperialist agenda. Surrealist subversion of world fairs stems from the exhibition *La Vérité sur les Colonies*, a riposte to the official *Exposition Coloniale* of 1931. I argue the 1938 surrealist exhibition goes further to subvert the entire legacy of the world fairs as an unwanted *fin de siècle* hangover rather than bolster traditional views that envisage surrealism as a postmodernist precursor to installation art. Indeed, the political teleology of surrealism and the *Expositions Universelles* is completely polarised but both exhibitions employ similar themes and techniques of sensory immersion. The 1938 International Surrealist Exhibition in Paris concocts a prolifically photographed cosmopolitan cityscape brimming with culturally-hybrid scenography and artworks. Marcel Duchamp creates the space of *La Ville Surréaliste* with suggestive streets such as the *Rue des Lèvres*. Leaves, flowers and sand are strewn on the floor creating a multi-sensory appeal alongside fetishized mannequins, furniture and ponds. This is a potential parody of the 1889 World Fair, which created the *Rue des Nations* and similarly functioned as a miniature town. A *Rue de Caire* was also constructed to promulgate stereotyped oriental sexualities of belly dancing. Similarities between architecture, dance, mannequins and the domestic space are explored. Ultimately, the *Exposition Universelle* emphasises alterity for colonial gain whilst the surrealist exhibition employs curatorial cosmopolitanism to injure the impending threat of fascism.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Exhibition Design and Contrasting Cityscapes. – 3 The Body Politic: The Danse du Ventre and the Danse Hystérique. – 4 Mannequins and Automatism. – 5 Domestic Space. – 6 Conclusion.

Keywords World Fairs. Surrealism. Avant-garde Exhibitions. Cosmopolitanism. Colonialism.

1 Introduction

At first sight, the 1938 International Surrealist Exhibition appears anathema to the world fairs of the 19th century. Surrealism's vehement anti-colonialism counters France's sense of imperialist triumph which typified the *fin de siècle* imaginary of the Third Republic. Instead of looking back to the 19th century, the surrealists are widely considered to be postmodernist promontories. For Lewis Kachur, the International Surrealist Exhibition exemplifies a "postmodern confrontation" (2001, 211) whilst for Alice Mahon "the 1938 exhibition is an important model for what would become installation art" (2005, 32). Indeed, the organisers Marcel Duchamp and André Breton stimulated all the senses, partaking in an "assembling of environments" as Bruce Altshuler puts it (1994, 122). Yet, is a postmodern antecedent the correct prism through which view this enterprise granted its associated white cube aesthetic? The same immersive traits adopted by the surrealists could be found at the 1889 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, a beacon of populism and

officialdom attended by over 32 million visitors. Given the surrealists' prolific knowledge of *fin de siècle* art and literature, they appear engaged in parody rather than novelty in 1938. Surrealist torchbearers were certainly well acquainted with the spurious, quasi-nationalistic politics of world fairs. Empirically speaking, subordination of these events stems from their 1931 riposte to the *Exposition Coloniale* of the very same year, also held in Paris. This was entitled *La Vérité sur les Colonies*, organised by Louis Aragon and André Thirion. Notwithstanding, the 1938 Surrealist Exhibition goes further to subvert the entire legacy of the *Exposition Universelle* as an unwanted *fin de siècle* hangover. The Kantian cosmopolitan tenet of perpetual peace was advocated through world fairs with the explicit aim of fostering trade between nations in order to subdue belligerence. However, this aim was thoroughly subordinated to an imperialist agenda. Therefore, one should distinguish between the seminal museological trope of a 'Universal Survey Museum' and what I term 'curatorial cosmopolitanism'. For Duncan

and Wallach (1980) the Universal Survey Museum displays international collections and “evokes the Roman tradition of triumphal display”, something enacted by the colonial looting lauded at world fairs. Conversely, curatorial cosmopolitanism embodies comparative juxtaposition between multiple cultures and media which the surrealists achieve with aplomb.

This article is divided into four different sections. Firstly, comparative analysis detailing the architectural spaces of both exhibitions occurs. Duchamp’s 1200 coal sacks are contrasted with the 1889 *Palais des Machines* and the *Exposition Militaire* which connote the interstices between industrial progress and preparation for war. The surrealists also gesture to war in Duchamp’s display by playing recorded German marching songs in tandem with hysterical cries. Next, treatment of the body is contrasted between fetishized surrealist mannequins and highly popular performances by belly dancers at the World Fair. Next, the 1938 vernissage dance performance by Hélène Vanel, *L’Acte Manqué*, will also be contrasted with these exotic dancing spectacles. Subsequently, I turn to the domestic space: surrealist furniture such as Kurt Seligmann’s *Ultrameuble* and Breton’s *Object-Chest* are contrasted with the 1889 pavilion *L’Histoire de L’Habitation*, of which the latter emphasises an historical development of non-western civilisations. Ultimately, the Surrealist Exhibition strives to subvert this very taxonomic universe by recreating diverse facets in their own guise. The political teleology of surrealism and the *Expositions Universelles* could not be more different but their techniques of engagement are remarkably similar. Historically speaking, a fight between cosmopolitanism and nationalism dominates the fin de siècle through to the eve of World War Two, the period which these two exhibitions demarcate.

2 Exhibition Design and Contrasting Cityscapes

Both the 1889 *Exposition Universelle* and the 1938 International Surrealist Exhibition erect displays that supersede the traditionally neutral space of the art gallery or museum. Installations and architecture overwhelm individual artworks. Arguably, the most immersive installation of the Surrealist Exhibition was Marcel Duchamp’s 1200 coal sacks. Protruding from the ceiling, a sense of claustrophobia ensconced the viewer in a nightmarish industrial underbelly. Parisian

elites were thrust into a coal mine-cum-war-time underground bunker, viewing artworks by torchlight as the sacks blocked pre-existing sources of luminosity. According to Chapman (2009,72) “The very real risk of explosion and flammability added to the heightened sense of spatial disorientation”. Coal is perhaps the iconographical reference *par excellence* for the industrial revolution which reached its apogee in the 19th century. Yet, such iconography is completely absent from the 1889 World Fair. Instead, the aesthetically clean, diaphanous by products of coal such as electricity and steam are foregrounded. The apotheosis of industrial advancement at the *Exposition Universelle* resides in the construction of the *Palais des Machines* envisioned by Ferdinand Duterte (fig. 2). Continuing the trope of transparency, the *Palais* was constructed from iron and glass, designed to showcase industrial progress as portending to peace among nations. The *Palais* was also built at a time of economic growth encapsulated by its grandiosity, the “largest wide-spanned iron framed structure ever built” (Stamper,1989). Conversely, the Surrealists exhibit their art at a time of international turmoil catalysed by the rise of fascism, unaided by an erstwhile government in France. Accompanying Duchamp’s darkened installation was the smell of Brazilian coffee, cries of sojourners in a psychiatric ward and the ominous sound of German marching band songs. The *Palais* had no less of an immersive effect upon visitors, albeit much more ontologically positivist. Spectators were greeted with a “flood of light” (1989) eschewing the traditionally hermetic exhibition space, hence conveying an interstitial zone between representation and the world at large. Furthermore, visitors were able to interact with the machinery on display with frequent demonstrations. Equipment for generating electricity was particularly prominent and travelling walkways dubbed ‘Ponts Roulants’ enabled visitors to navigate the buildings labyrinthine expanse. A viewing tower was erected in the middle of the *Palais* in order to grant a panoramic panopticon of this extraordinary totality, gesturing towards a synthesizing of reality.

Whilst the spaces of the *Exposition Universelle* were clearly delineated, Duchamp’s section boasts an intermixing of different disciplinary paradigms. Here, fine art and coal coexist without contradiction whereas the *beaux-arts* were taxonomically segregated in the 1889 exposition. It was through architecture that these two disparate worlds would collide, the *Palais* simultane-



Figure 1. Anonymous, *Visitors with Flashlights at the Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme*. Paris, 1938



Figure 2. *Vue d'ensemble de la Galerie des Machines*. M. Glücq, *L'Album de l'Exposition 1889*, vol. 1. Paris: Ch. Gaulon, 1889

ously inspired by Gothic architecture and Classical Greek interiors. Indeed, Stuart Durant notes of the gothic inflections behind the *Palais* allow architects to “defer to science” (1994, 26). The Gothic was also an internationally recognisable style that had propagated across Europe from the northern countries. Duterte’s wrought iron functionality contrasts strongly with a lavishly decorated interior inspired by antiquity with a resoundingly dramatic cupula. This eclectic style was perhaps intended to traverse social class as much as to invoke cosmopolitanism. By commingling two traditional exposition environments, Duchamp also questions traditional boundaries of taste. André Breton commented that he wanted to create “an atmosphere as remote as possible from that of an art gallery” in 1938 (Mahon 2005, 32). Similarly, Silverman (1977) views the 1889 exhibition as torn between “a solemn *musée* or a fantastic, bustling *foire*”. Indeed, both exhibitions incite a sense of performativity in their display spaces and negate curatorial neutrality.

In 1889 the overwhelming narrative stemming from the *Palais* was technological progress over belligerence. Innovations from countries other than France took up a quarter of the *Palais* in ersatz diplomatic spirit. However, glass had pioneering connotations in terms of social class as Elkadi notes it hosts “no relation to wealth” (2016, 9). Furthermore, the semantic connota-

tions of the word *palais* are transformed from the exclusive domain of the aristocracy to that of the citizenry. In stark contrast, the surrealists adopt a more pessimistic view and seem prepared for war. An element of class-based social commentary does seem present in Duchamp’s installation, a proletarian environment containing aristocratic pleasures. The surrealists make their inevitably elitist audience as uncomfortable as possible, the coal sacks (fig. 1) nearly touching their heads. The surrealists further parodied their own audience through Dali’s *Rainy Taxi* wherein lies a sodden, dishevelled mannequin dubbed ‘Madame Snob’. Yet, instead of trying to appeal to the working class, the principal surrealist prerogative seems to be to alienate the cultural elite, which inevitably were a rather cosmopolitan coterie.

Despite contentions of inspiring peace amongst nations, some of the most popular exhibits in the *Palais* were those that inferred the opposite. Durant notes that in 1889 “prominent displays of heavy artillery by armament manufacturers drew large crowds of visitors” (1994, 13). Indeed another section, the *Exposition Militaire*, was designed to reaffirm France’s military prowess in the wake of its defeat in the Franco-Prussian war of the 1870. The tagline “Cent Ans de l’Armée Française” clearly invokes the French revolution and republican spirit (fig. 3). Counterpoised



Figure 3. Poster for *L'Exposition Militaire*, 1889.
Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de La France



Figure 4. Oscar Dominguez, *Untitled*, 1936. Decalcomania
(© ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2016)

to untrammelled patriotism, cosmopolitan surrealist artworks were displayed in Duchamp's space. Decalcomania was particularly prevalent at the Surrealist Exhibition. Invented by Oscar Dominguez, the artist would spread gouache onto glass before subsequently printing it onto the canvas. The abstract shapes would often invoke chaos resembling explosions and foreshadow the detonation of the atomic bomb (fig. 4). Duchamp's sacks also spewed dust onto the visitors, creating a sense of a society already *in media res* of armed conflict. Ultimately, the surrealists are ahead of their epoch by configuring the devastating sequelae of bombardment. Conversely, the *Exposition Universelle* deals with war from a distance, creating categories as armed conflict itself were part of history. The *Exposition Militaire* delineated between the armoury of modern conflict and weapons of the past. Industrial advances were portrayed as something that would enable military success, advancing battlefield technology. Naturally, no mention of the mass devastation these devices could cause was narrated. In 1889 with a relatively stable French government, war was

a merely conceptual state of affairs which led to public fascination. The two exhibitions propose strikingly different ontologies of combat: we are confronted with a patriotic display of progress versus a cosmopolitan plea to perpetual peace in the midst of a nationalist epidemic.

3 The Body Politic: The *Danse du Ventre* and the *Danse Hystérique*

Another thematic tie between the 1889 *Exposition Universelle* and the 1938 Surrealists Exhibition is the corporeal realm. The surrealists select dancer Hélène Vanel to perform at the 1938 vernissage attended by the Parisian elite. This choice is significant given the propagation of the belly dance at the world fairs and the surrealist reputation for exoticism. In 1889 "the number of spectators who came to watch the Egyptian belly dancers averaged two thousand per day" (Celik, Kinney 1990). This engendered a cosmopolitan sense of "virtual travel" (Szerszynski, Urry 2006). Remaining in Paris, one is visually



Figure 5. Anonymous, *Interior view of the Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme with Hélène Vanel*, 1938. Paris: Galerie des Beaux Arts



Figure 6. *La Rue du Caire*. M. Glücq. *L'album de l'Exposition 1889*, vol. 1. Paris: Ch. Gaulon, 1889

transported to the Orient. The *danse du ventre* is designed to seduce and mystify the audience. In stark contrast, Vanel's dance is a highly modernist European manifestation of hysteria. The dance is thoroughly contemporaneous, a stark contrast to the *danse du ventre* which typified "the inert and timeless status of the dominated entity" (Celik, Kinney 1990). In fact, Egypt, an Islamic country, had tried to curb this traditional practice as it predated Islam. The Egyptian government even attempted "to counteract the promotion of the belly dance in French painting and travel literature" (1990). Consequently, the World Fair of 1889 did not depict the actuality of Egypt as a semi-autonomous Islamic republic but as a chimerical harem (fig. 6). Although her torso is nude and her dress torn (fig. 5), the surrealists do not ascribe an erotic value to Vanel's dance whilst the *danse du ventre* conflates the orient with the exotic. Indeed, Edmond de Goncourt's recollections of the 1889 exposition reveal that he "treat the Rue de Caire virtually as a red-light district" (1990), conflating performance with sexual transgression. Whilst the surrealist mannequins could be said to have similar connotations, situated as they are on different 'rues', Vanel's dance is too imbricated in politics to be viewed as such.

In the above photograph of Vanel, her nude torso mirrors a mannequin placed at the right side of her bed. Many political connotations to this

photograph go unnoticed. Appallingly, Vanel was ultimately murdered in Auschwitz by the Nazi regime. Her dance assumes the form of an erotic, corporeal protest against fascism. Here, dance is not a form of entertainment but a conceptual social commentary. Indeed, her performance was commented on by an Austrian Nazi Newspaper whereby it was sardonically dismissed as "an only too-realistic impression of a hysterical fit" (LaCoss 2006) which, in turn, perversely conveys the global reach of the Surrealist Exhibition. Lacoss comments that at the time of Vanel's performance "lawless flesh and undisciplined minds were being harshly policed throughout the Northern hemisphere". Indeed, even the Nazis had kept up to date with surrealist happenings. Furthermore, Lacoss (2006) states "in one sense, hers was a hysteria that challenged the other forms of hysteria that were convulsing Europe and the Soviet Union in the late 1930s". In stark contrast to this political analysis of a surrealist dancer, Annagret Fauser (2005, 221) laments the academic treatment of the belly dancers at the *Exposition Universelle* of 1889 as "extras". Yet, the body is a prime site of political praxis. Due to the *Rue de Caire's* appeal to veracity or "vérité scrupuleuse" (Bourde 1889, 77) analysis beyond the limits of western mediation is scarce. The significance of this dance to its indigenous culture has evaded research.



Figure 7. *Salambo*, 1900. Postcard. Palais du Costume, Project Felix, La Samaritaine. Paris: Imprimerie Lemercier

Figure 8. Anonymous, *Vue de l'Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme*, 1938. La «Rue surréaliste»

The belly dancers, like Vanel, would enact movements of convulsion as part of religious rituals. The official revue of the exhibition describes Egyptian women as “captives ennuyées” (Bourde 1889, 74), labelling the dance as hysterical release much like Vanel. The conflation of indigenous rituals and madness carries forward into Freud’s premise for *Totem and Taboo* (1913), who visited the *Expositions Universelles* from 1878 onwards, rather unimpressed. Perhaps his racist theory was partially to blame for contemporary attitudes towards indigenous ceremony. Despite Freud’s influence upon the Surrealists, exoticism connotes freedom from the nation state, not madness for these artists. Conversely, Waller describes the *danse du ventre* as “fundamental to the formation and maintenance of colonialist discourses” (2015, 141). Indeed, alterity propagated a sense of distance between spectator and performer. The *danse du ventre* was a highly politicised entity. Yet, this spectacle was confined to a stage whilst Vanel would touch spectators, even “splattering and soaking the unsuspecting by-

standers” with water from an artificial pond created by Wolfgang Paalen (Lehmann 2014), which belied any distancing. She mingled throughout the audience whereas belly dancers performed in ‘café-concerts’, dance becoming a commodity fetish to induce sales. Furthermore, dance anthropologist Anne Decoret-Ahia (2004, 28) notes “*la danse du ventre*, cette dénomination proprement occidentale, forgé par la soldatesque coloniale, induisait l’idée d’une essence chorégraphique commune à tout l’orient et à tous les femmes orientales”. Indeed, Decoret-Ahia recognises the multiple different varieties of belly dancing that fail to be noticed and nuanced by contemporaneous commentators. Whilst Vanel’s dance is inherently political, the *danse du ventre*, primarily a spiritual expression, is politicised for colonial gain.

4 Mannequins and Automatism

Notably, the *Exposition Universelle* predominantly used live performers whilst the surrealists embellished mannequins. Lehmann (2014) comments that the Surrealist Exhibition was “one of the most evident precursors to performance art”. Yet, wasn’t this performative trope already present at the *Exposition Universelle*? Live performance was not confined to the *Rue de Caire*, there were Senegalese villages, Javanese dancers and a street resembling Algiers. That said, Mannequins did feature at the 1889 and 1900 *Expositions Universelles*. Saroli (2004, 25) comments: “in a note in *Das Passagenwerk* Benjamin states that during the 1900 *Exposition Universelle* there was a *Palais du Costume*, where wax dolls wearing the clothes of populations from all over the world and from different ages, moved in front of artificial backdrops”. Even clothes are signifiers of nationhood, categorized accordingly. In stark contrast, accoutrements of the surrealist mannequins served to complicate identity. Marcel Duchamp’s mannequin is dressed in an androgynous style with the artist’s own attire. Masson’s mannequin, dubbed the ‘Femme Maison’, also parodies gender stereotypes. The model’s head is trapped in a house whilst hair explicitly marks the taboo of genitalia, something unsurprisingly missing from the *Exposition Universelle*. The surrealist mannequin creates “a caricature” (Nixon 1999, 65) of woman’s status in society, something that the performers at the exposition were accustomed to, viewed as ephemeral fetish. Whilst the mannequins at the *Palais du Costume* were designed to provoke alterity in terms of dress and accessories, the surrealist mannequin serves to create a distancing from eroticism; it is merely spectacle. Unlike the 1889 exhibition, where colonies had their own area, the *Palais du Costume* induced comparisons between western and non-western attire. Clothing became a synecdoche for civilized and primitive peoples, the wealth of the west embroidered into lavish renaissance frocks. The mannequin of *Salammbô*, a fictional tale by Flaubert set in Carthage, shows that oriental costume was literally a figment of the organizers imagination. Yet, an appeal to verisimilitude is still rather comically asserted by the exposition (fig. 7).

Another technological advancement in the 1900 Fair was a moving mannequin, a dystopian version of surrealist automatism. For André Breton the mannequin is a symbol of the marvelous, as he states in the surrealist manifesto of 1924. Invented by Pierre Imans, the 1900 auto-

matic mannequin through “An invisible mechanism allowed her to move her head and eyes, fan herself and powder her nose” (Parrot 1983, 44). And yet, despite technological advances, woman is confined to standardized feminine tasks. The surrealist mannequins visualize reprehensible acts of violence committed towards women that would otherwise remain ineffable (fig. 8). As Richard Martin (1987) puts it “the object could be the surrogate of the figure, and it could be the powerful expression of all that is unseen and/or unexpressed in a given image”. Indeed, the *Palais du Costume*, by using artificial mannequins, did not have to stay as ‘authentic’ to history as it attempts to do in other exhibits, using live performers. The mannequin represents in both exhibitions a site predicated on imaginative whimsy, eschewing the realms of historical accuracy. Pierre Imans’ automatic mannequin appears as the apotheosis of testosterone-driven fantasy; an ability to literally control the movement of the opposite sex. In stark contrast, the surrealists did feature one mannequin designed by a female artist, Sonia Mosse. Mosse’s mannequin, quasi-nude, appears to be wearing a funeral veil in place of a wedding veil for the consummation of a marriage, implying that the institution signifies literal bondage. Similar associations of the female mannequin and automatism ensue. Mosse’s mannequin is decorated with “wires connected to an extension” (Kachur 2001, 45). This implies, much like Imans’ mannequin, that woman is viewed by society as mere automata powered by electricity, that one can turn off and on again at whim.

5 Domestic Space

The *Exposition Universelle* of 1889 presents the genesis of domestic space through three tropes; prehistoric housing, historic housing and primitive contemporaries. Thus, non-western societies are semantically equated with prehistory. Bouvier (2005) comments that for the creator, Garnier, “L’habitation peut être considérée comme un miroir qui montre, fidèlement, la physionomie de l’habitant”. Racial stereotyping was not confined to the corporeal. In total 44 houses were built along the Quai d’Orsay, each expressing a nationality, whilst postcards contrasted a country’s architecture with an inhabitants clothing (fig. 9). A sense of timelessness is created as the third category of houses is dubbed the “civilisations contemporaines des civilisations primitives”



Figure 9. *Histoire de l'Habitation Humaine, Maison et costumes chinois*. Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1889. Vingt-cinq vignettes scolaires représentant l'histoire de l'habitation humaine. Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Figure 10. Anonymous, *View of André Breton's Object Chest at the Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme*. Paris: Galerie des Beaux Arts, 1938



(Frantz, Garnier 1890, 17). Similarly to the Surrealist Exhibition's pond, a lake features prominently as Garnier views "les cités lacustres tiennent, selon lui, une grande place dans l'histoire du développement de l'humanité et anticipent d'une certaine façon sur la société industrielle" (Bouvier 2005). Naturally, this is portrayed as a western innovation from the Bronze Age. Indeed, a lake invokes vastness, strategic town building and an abundant food source. In stark contrast, the surrealists only create a pond (indoors) which symbolizes stasis, stagnation, interiority in an enclosed space.

Reviews of the 1889 exhibition tend to make derogatory social commentary rather than focus on architectural details. Indeed, the goal appears to be to imitate all indigenous peoples: Inuits and Africans produce the same types of buildings. Private property is equated respectively with intelligence: "la chaleur de l'Afrique orientale amènent des résultats identiques avec ceux qui le froid produisent au pôle nord. L'un et l'autre s'engourdissent et ankylosent les facultés intellectuelles de l'homme" (Frantz, Garnier 1890, 18). The house is viewed as an extension of man in a highly racist manner. Moreover, house building is equated with the capabilities of creation accorded to us by God. Garnier also com-

ments: "dans un élan de viril orgueil comme dieu il veut faire œuvre de créateur", by proxy implying that Europeans had greater creative prowess when in fact architecture was simply adapted to one's environment in a purely utilitarian manner in all cases. Western man enjoys a 'période historique', whilst the oriental simply doesn't follow 'man's' passage of time. Time and chronology are henceforth defined in a purely western sense.

In stark contrast, Dali creates an "antique style bed with rumpled sheets" (Downing 2011, 274). Naturally this accompanies the mannequins' libidinous connotations. Kurt Seligmann fashions an *Ultrameuble*, supported by three woman's legs and two arms ensconced in a cage. This deprives furniture of its use-value, yet is fashioned in 19th century art nouveau style. Indeed, Pass (2011, 308) comments that "Throughout the second half of the 1930s, nostalgia was becoming increasingly important to visual culture in the United States and Western Europe, particularly in fashion. This nostalgia, which was the result of the impending war, was a longing for an imagined idea of the 19th century". Indeed, surrealist furniture aesthetically appears as a nostalgic parody of the world fairs grandiosity amidst contemporary political turmoil. The surrealists focused on creating "objects of symbolic function", to use

Dali's terminology. It would seem that the colonialist *Exposition Universelle* also cast a symbolic decorative function onto the home. This trope is used to incite racial difference when in fact non-western homes designs were largely empirical in use-value. Perhaps surrealist furniture can be criticised for its lack of use-value necessitated by design. Indeed, André Breton's Object Chest is flippantly supported by two sets of mannequin's legs (fig. 10). Paradoxically, this seems to tie into Garnier's belief that the house is an extension of man's physiognomy, mere interior furniture belongs to the female gender. By elaborating a synecdoche, the surrealists convert racialized physiognomy into erotic fetish. In other words, racism becomes sexism as one type of discrimination is substituted for another.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, I have identified several points of convergence between the 1938 international Surrealist Exhibition and the fin de siècle Parisian world fairs. Both attempt to reach diverse social strata but the ontological positivity and copious technological exhibits of the *Expositions Universelles* garnered a far greater plebiscite. An aesthetic mix of industrial scenography and *beaux-arts* pervades both cityscapes. The *rayonnement* of French culture reaches its apotheosis in the theatrically illuminated Eiffel tower of 1889. Conversely, the surrealists portray an ontological abyss in the darkness of their underground bunker. War is a mere concept in the fin de siècle, musealised as nostalgia dating back to the French Revolution. In stark contrast, war becomes an immersive omen that pervades the Surrealist Exhibition of 1938. The body is also a battleground at the *Exposition Universelle*, where the oriental dancer is defeated by the homogenising colonial gaze, choreography reduced to a repetitive synecdoche of culture. In surrealist dance, the psyche is bullet-ridden, unable to cope with the hysteria of the world outside. Whilst world fairs constantly appeal to verisimilitude, nascent pre-surrealist features abound. Clothing exhibitions incorporated mythical oriental personae as mannequins, belittling verisimilitude. The homestead is a staple of the two exhibitions. In both cases, the home is simply an extension of the corporeal realm. The surrealist home is erotic whilst the *Exposition Universelle* racially segregates the 'primitive' into a different time zone. Interestingly, the surrealists were banned from exhibit-

ing at the world fair entitled *Exposition des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne* of 1937. Mahon (2005, 31) comments "the surrealists were not given any space in the exhibition, not even in the French pavilion". Their work evades taxonomy, a possible catalyst for parodying the world fairs legacy. Prominent discourses of colonialism, war and the body resonate between both exhibitions to create a *mise-en-abyme* of life as spectacle. Ultimately, the ideological fight between cosmopolitanism and nationalism is what merits contrasting these exhibitions in an inter-epochal context. The legacy of the fin de siècle world fairs continued far well into the 20th century as did poisonous nationalist rhetoric.

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Chefs-d'oeuvre de légèreté et de grâce Il vetro di Murano alle Esposizioni Universali di Parigi

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Abstract This article analyses the inclusion of Venetian glass pieces and mosaics at four Universal Exhibitions in Paris from 1867 – the first year in which Italy could be represented as a unified country – till 1900, when the annual event inaugurated a new century and a completely different art system. The widening of an international market was the main impulse behind the revival of the Murano tradition and the rebirth of its economy, which had been in crisis in the first half of the 19th century. The main players in this relaunch were Antonio Salviati – at first with a company with his own name and, after 1878, as Compagnia di Venezia e Murano – Pietro Bigaglia and other smaller, less prominent foundries. All were equally active in the production of glass pieces imitating Renaissance pieces, mirrors and mosaics.

Keywords Glasswork. Expositions Universelles. Paris. Antonio Salviati. Mosaic. Murano.

L'analisi della presenza dei manufatti muranesi alle Esposizioni Universali è stata circoscritta al caso parigino, non solo per evidenti esigenze di spazio concesso all'articolo rispetto alla potenziale vastità del tema – il vetro di Murano alle Esposizioni Universali – ma anche per l'esemplarità del caso francese che assume un valore in un certo senso paradigmatico. Parigi, che nel settembre del 1870 Victor Hugo non esitò a proclamare «il centro stesso dell'umanità», era indubbiamente la capitale di quello che si stava definendo come un vero sistema dell'arte. Osservare come i vetrai veneziani si siano inseriti in questa rete internazionale significa definire un atteggiamento di generale risveglio dell'industria muranese, secondo modalità replicate anche in altri contesti.

Allo stesso modo, i due termini cronologici (1867-1900) sono date fondanti rispetto a un percorso storico ed estetico, nonché rispetto allo sviluppo di un sistema commerciale. L'Esposizione del 1867 è la prima occasione in cui il neonato Regno d'Italia, unito sulla carta ma ancora politicamente fragile, si presenta come tale in Francia. Nel caso specifico delle imprese veneziane, va tenuto presente che il Veneto era stato annesso appena l'anno prima. È il 12 novembre del 1866 quando Vittorio Emanuele II onora della sua presenza il museo vetrario a Murano (Dorigato 2006, 18), che proprio a Parigi ebbe l'occasione di presentare ad un pubblico internazionale la sua «Collection d'objets de verre, anciens et modernes». Nella medesima sezione – la XVI – dedicata a *Cristaux, verrierie de luxe et vitraux*, s'incontrano i nomi di Marietti, con alcuni «Verres, cloches,

tuiles, mortiers et bouteilles de verre»; la Kapff, specializzata in perle e smalti; Giacomo Tommasi, con un consueto repertorio di «verre filé» e infine i vetri colorati della Coen Siffonni et Cie (*Exposition Universelle de 1867 à Paris* 1867, 134). È presente anche Giuseppe Zecchin che però, per via di un'offerta più eterogenea,¹ è inserito nella sezione XV: *Ouvrages de tapisserie et de décorateur*. Zecchin, come il più celebre Pietro Bigaglia, era stato presente anche alla mostra del 1855 con alcuni vetri ad imitazione del marmo – «blocs de belle aventurine [...] qui sont superbes» (Maestri 1855, 2) – che conquistarono il pubblico e il mercato dell'epoca. Si ricordano in questa stessa occasione anche gli «émaux et l'aventurine mêlée dans les verres de toutes les nuances» (Maestri 1855, 1) di Bigaglia, che si aggiudica una medaglia di I classe, riconoscimento reiterato nel 1867 con una medaglia di bronzo per la creazione di marmi artificiali.²

La Voce di Murano è invece polemica con la presenza di «Scordilli», noto a Venezia solo come fabbricatore di mosaici ma che a Parigi ha l'ardire di presentare una vetrina di soffiati – sanquirici – ed alcune imitazioni dei calcedoni, alla

1 *Exposition Universelle de 1867 à Paris* 1867, 131: «Zecchin (Joseph), à Venise – Aventurine grise, ciments, ouvrages de marqueterie, verres de couleur, perles, carrés pour pavé de ciment, colonnes et tables en ciment marbré».

2 Sulla figura di Pietro Bigaglia e il suo peso sulla rinascita del vetro muranese rimando a Bova 2006, 25-28 e Zecchin 2006, 279-96; testo completo di una dettagliata bibliografia precedente.

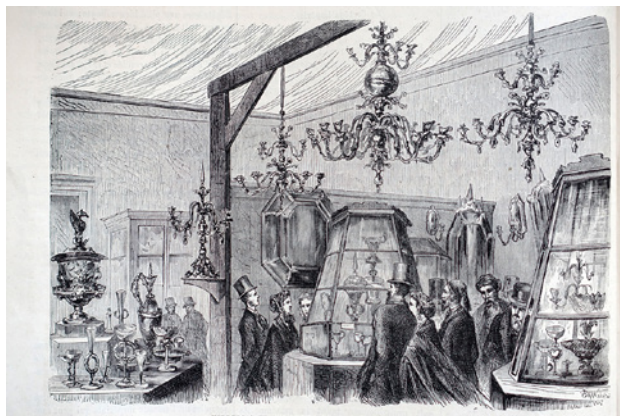


Figura 1. *Verre et mosaïque de Venise*. Incisione storica da *L'Exposition Universelle de 1867 illustrée* 1867, 294

Figura 2. Vetri della Salviati & C. presentati all'Esposizione Universale di Parigi del 1867. Incisione storica da *The Art Journal*, 1868, 68

maniera «di Radi», ovvero di uno dei maggiori fautori del museo vetrario a Murano (Dorigato 2006, 17-18), ma di una qualità non paragonabile e dunque pregiudicante per la nomea dei manufatti muranesi («L'Arte vetraria...» 1867, VII; Bova 2006, 32 nota 20). A parte la stampa specializzata³ gli articoli si concentrano sulla Salviati, reduce da un assestamento amministrativo che, nel 1866, l'aveva trasformata nella Società Anonima per azioni Salviati & C. con la partecipazione di soci inglesi,⁴ e che presenta un'ampia offerta di vetri e mosaici «de tout genre et de tout style» (*Exposition Universelle de 1867 à Paris* 1867, V, 131).⁵

Naturalmente i mosaici di Salviati erano già stati presentati con successo a importanti mostre nazionali:⁶ nel 1861 a Firenze e nel 1864 a Murano, come nel 1862 all'Esposizione Universale di Londra, nel 1863 all'Esposizione Industriale di Vienna ma mai come a Parigi nel 1867 la proposta fu vasta, con una certa propensione per la ritrattistica, i cui soggetti variavano dalle figure di regnanti – appartenenti anche alla storia recente come il Napoleone III su modello del celebre dipinto ufficiale di Franz X. Winterhalten – a quelle di celebri capolavori del passato, da Tintoretto a Carlo Dolci e Ludovico Caracci (Comte de Castellane 1867, 290).

I visitatori si affastellano di fronte ai mosaici Salviati, ai quali s'affiancano quegli straordinari soffiati dalla «légèreté aérienne» (Comte de Castellane 1867, 267) che hanno contribuito a salvare il mercato del vetro muranese, la cui foggia imita la produzione dei secoli passati al punto che la stampa francese sfida a datarli correttamente se scovati in un'asta del Drouot (Comte

3 *La Voce di Murano* lamenta come, a parte per un accenno a Tommasi, «ogni altra nostra produzione in fatto di vetraria non è tenuta in nessun conto, e passano quasi inosservate al visitatore»; inclusa l'industria delle *conterie* che aveva permesso la sopravvivenza di Murano durante gli anni della dominazione austriaca «figurano a Parigi con un ridicolo campionario, collocato *in excelsis*, lontano dalla vista d'ogni visitatore» («L'Arte vetraria...» 1867, VI).

4 Le differenti fasi della complessa storia della ditta fondata da Antonio Salviati nel 1859 sono bene riassunte dal saggio di Puccio Migliaccio (Migliaccio 2010, 17-20).

5 Sul successo e la diffusione dei mosaici della «Salviati Dott. Antonio», fondata nel 1859 ben prima della mostra parigina del 1867, rimando all'ampia bibliografia precedente; solo per citare la più recente, Mamoli-Zorzi 2016, 201-04; Rainald 2016, 156; Barovier Mentasti 2013; Dorigato, Migliaccio 2010.

6 Sulla vicenda del rilancio del mosaico veneziano, e dunque dell'economia stessa di Murano a partire dalla metà dell'Ottocento, rimando a Barovier Mentasti 1978; Barr 2008; Migliaccio 2010.



Figura 3. Salviati & C., *Candelabro*, 1862 ca. Londra, Victoria and Albert Museum



Figura 4. Salviati & C., *Calice con serpente a filigrana*, 1866. Londra, Victoria and Albert Museum



Figura 6. Salviati & C., *Bottiglia con tappo a pinnacolo in vetro acquamare*, 1866. Murano, Museo del Vetro



Figura 5. Salviati & C., *Calici*, 1866. Londra, Victoria and Albert Museum

de Castellane 1867, 291). La Salviati incanta il mercato francese con:

una coppa portata da tre delfini, un completo assortimento di vetri in forma di calice di ogni colore, la coppa viene sostenuta da fusti a traforo ornati di corone di fiori e di foglie, di delfini di cigni e di rilievi di ogni maniera; piatti ove l'avventurina s'intreccia col bleù, lo smalto col rubino; ove le bolle d'aria chiuse fra due

strati di vetro danno alla superficie l'aspetto di piccole onde regolarmente contenute: altri piatti nei quali i vetri colorati vanno a finire in punta imitando le lingue di fuoco della fiamma e perciò portano il nome di fiamma, una grande copia di coppe di vetri si leggeri che sembrano giustificare la leggenda che pretende il loro peso non essere sufficiente a spezzarli se cadono a terra. («Industria vetraria» 1867)



Figura 7. Cecil Van Haanen, *Le perlaie*, 1876. Olio su tavola, 64,8 × 94, 5 cm. Collezione privata

Di questo bazar della leggerezza restano colorite descrizioni, come quella del conte de Castellane,⁷ nonché un disegno alquanto parlante (fig. 1) di come l'offerta della Salviati si ampliasse anche agli specchi e a una serie di oggetti che riflettono un gusto storicista ampiamente condiviso dalla Francia del Secondo Impero.⁸ Dal disegno si riconosce anche un candeliere a più braccia con ciocche e fiori che riappare nel *The Art Journal* di Londra (fig. 2) accanto ad altri oggetti esposti nel 1867 a Parigi e confluiti oggi nella collezione del Victoria and Albert Museum (Liefkes 1994, 286-87; figg. 3-5). Dallo stesso disegno inglese si riconosce anche la bottiglia inventariata col numero 1519 e conservata oggi al Museo del Vetro di Murano (fig. 6).

Tra gli oggetti in vetro più ammirati dell'esposizione va segnalato il grande lampadario, di cir-

ca cinque metri, prodotto sempre dalla Salviati & C. ed appeso in un *café chantant*.⁹ Un'opera monumentale i cui bracci, realizzati interamente in vetro e senza armatura, possono tenere fino a sessanta candele e sono magistralmente decorati da foglie e fiori ad imitazione dei modelli antichi. Benché in molti lamentino una collocazione penalizzante («*Industria vetraria*» 1867), il lampadario fu «subito smerciato» (Zanetti 1868, 111).

L'investimento di Salviati è premiato anche da un acquisto imponente di almeno 400 pezzi, da parte dei vertici dello Schloss Köpenick, nascent-

7 Comte de Castellane 1867, 291: «le filigranes, les tordus, la flamme, les mille-fleurs, la calcédoine, la glace, et toutes nuances si délicates: l'opale, l'albatre, le jaune d'or, l'eau marine».

8 Segnalo solo il titolo più recente e aggiornato sull'argomento: Badetz 2016, 248-66.

9 Turgan 1867, 2: «Cette belle oeuvre [...] est tristement reléguée, couverte de poussière dans un café chantant, accolé, nous ne savons pas pourquoi, à la section italienne; si encore on n'y chantait que des mélodies italiennes!». Prontamente *La Voce di Murano* traduce l'articolo francese («*Industria vetraria*» 1867). Il lampadario nasce da una commissione del 1864 del Municipio di Murano congiunto alla direzione del Museo del Vetro, a dimostrazione delle straordinarie capacità tecniche dei vetrai e a simbolo della rinascita dell'intera industria vetraria. Viene realizzato grazie alle competenze di Giovanni Fuga e Lorenzo Santi, entrambi assunti da Antonio Salviati.



Figura 8. Vincenzo Moretti e Compagnia di Venezia e Murano, *Vaso con coperchio in vetro murrino*, 1878. Murano, Museo del Vetro



Figura 9. Compagnia di Venezia e Murano, *Calice con alto stelo con coppa a corolla rosso rubino*, 1878. Murano, Museo del Vetro

te Museo d'arti applicate di Berlino, destinati a formare lo zoccolo originario della collezione del museo (Dorigato 2006, 19).

La vetreria veneziana ottiene la Médaille d'or, gratifica che si affianca sia al premio ricevuto all'Esposizione di Londra del 1862¹⁰ che all'assegnazione della Legione d'onore nello stesso 1867. Forte dei recenti successi Antonio Salviati pubblica un catalogo – in francese – sancendo fin dal titolo la sua leadership nella produzione di «mosaici, vetri soffiati di Murano e vetri colorati per vetrate»,¹¹ attività quest'ultima a cui era de-

dito con successo anche Pietro Bigaglia.¹² Non va sottovalutato infatti il cespite rappresentato dalla collaborazione con i grandi cantieri d'architettura per i quali le vetrate sono per l'appunto, un «couronnement indispensable» (Comte de Castellane 1867, 291).

Il 1867 è anche l'edizione in cui trionfano i vetri *mussoline*, dei «prodigi di leggerezza» («Industria vetraria» 1867) che fanno sembrare tutto il resto dei massi. La concorrenza per i veneziani veniva naturalmente dalla Francia stessa con Monot, Saint Gobain e Baccarat, nonché dalla Russia, capace di una vasta produzione di vetri, inclusi i mosaici («L'Arte vetraria...» 1867, V) e dall'Irlanda e Gran Bretagna che – oltre a dipinti realizzati in mosaico di vetro inglese o ceramica (*Exposition Universelle de 1867 à Paris* 1867, 243) – di evidente gusto vittoriano – propongono oggetti in vetro incisi a diamante e alcuni tentativi d'imitazione di *ciocche* e *patere* della tradi-

10 Sulla diffusione dei vetri Salviati a Londra attraverso il canale delle Esposizioni Universali rimando a Liefkes 1994, 283-90.

11 *Mosaïques* 1867: l'opuscolo, che ancora una volta rinvaga le antiche radici del vetro muranese, fornisce importanti informazioni commerciali sull'azienda che, nel 1867, può vantare oltre alla sede storica a San Vio a Venezia, anche due importanti punti vendita all'estero: uno a Parigi (al 25 di rue d'Hauteville) e l'altro a Londra (al 431 di Oxford Street) entrambi due indirizzi commercialmente nevralgici.

12 Sul successo commerciale delle vetrate neo-medievali prodotte a Murano, in primis quelle di Pietro Bigaglia, rimando al recente articolo di Maria Antonella Bellin (Bellin 2014).



Figura 10. Società Venezia-Murano, riproduzione del vaso Barberini esposto a Parigi nel 1889. Incisione storica da Parigi e l'Esposizione Universale del 1889, 1889



Figura 11. Società Venezia-Murano, riproduzione del fondo del vaso Barberini esposto a Parigi nel 1889. Incisione storica da Parigi e l'Esposizione Universale del 1889, 1889

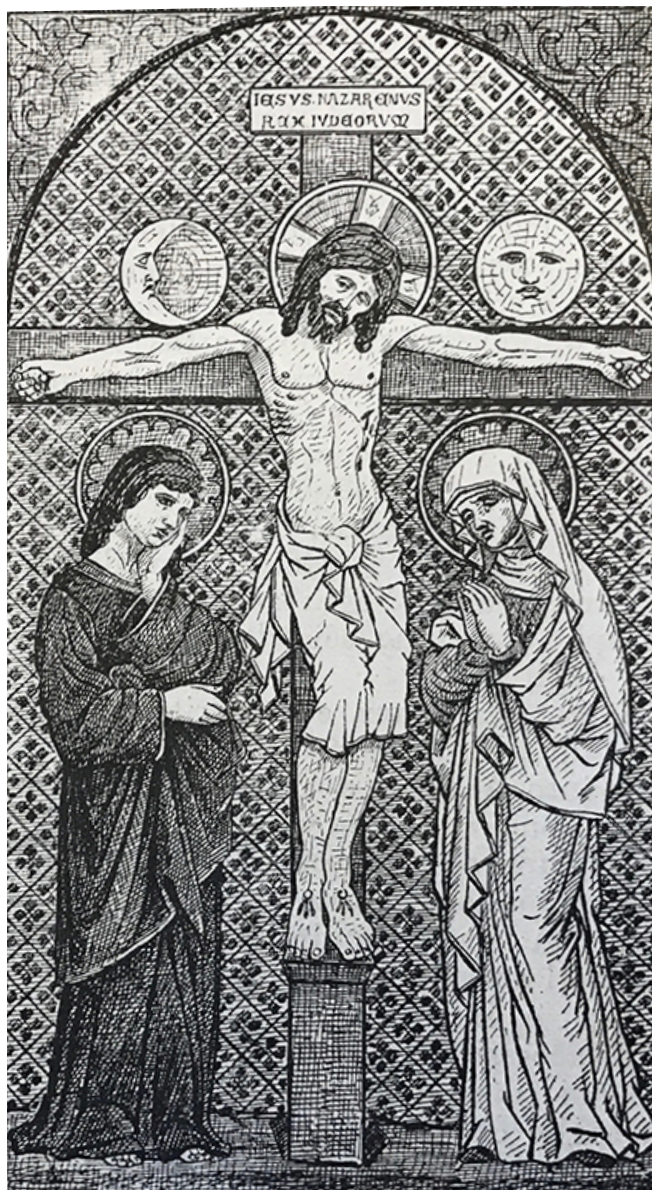


Figura 12. Società Venezia-Murano, riproduzione del mosaico La Crocefissione esposto a Parigi nel 1889. Incisione storica da Parigi e l'Esposizione Universale del 1889, 1889

zione veneziana («L'arte vetraria...» 1867, IV). A favore della produzione veneziana, oltre alla qualità, gioca il prezzo, decisamente concorrenziale.¹³

La presenza del vetro muranese alla mostra successiva – 1878 – è in un certo senso anticipa-

ta e la curiosità alimentata, dal successo di *The bead stingers* di Cecil Van Haanen (fig. 7). L'artista olandese si era aggiudicato una medaglia di terza classe al Salon del 1876 con un dipinto che mostrava un interno muranese nel quale alcune *impiraresses*, di diversa età, erano intente ad infilare perle di vetro. Van Haanen ripropone lo stesso soggetto, in dimensioni maggiori e con una più grande indulgenza ai dettagli, al Salon del 1878 dove riceve nuovamente una medaglia

¹³ Un lampadario a 18 braccia si aggirava sui 250-300 franchi, senza naturalmente cambio con l'Italia (*Guide-Livret International de l'Exposition Universelle* 1867, 25) cifre che già De Castellane aveva segnalato per l'ottimo rapporto tra qualità e prezzo, dal «prix modeste, et à la portée de tous» (De Castellane 1867a, 267).

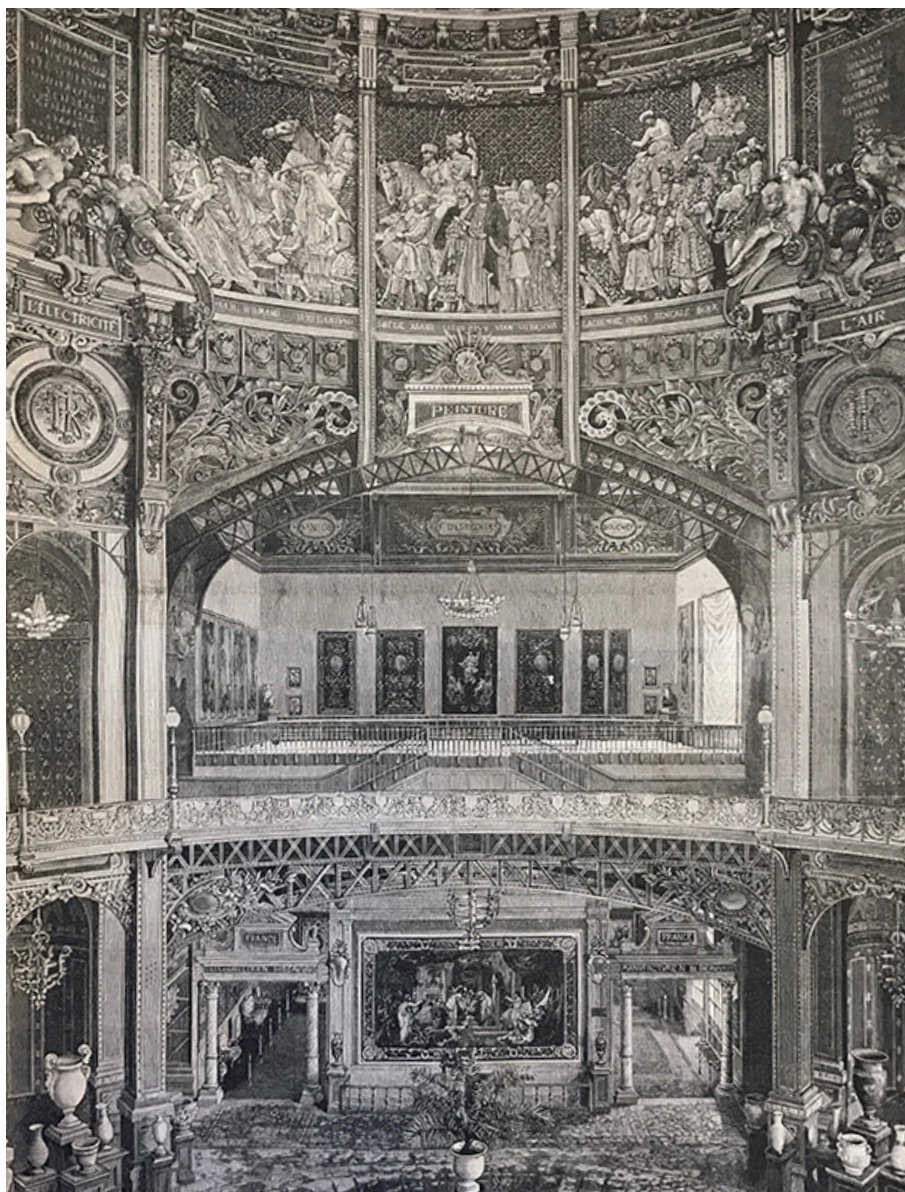


Figura 13. Cupola centrale dell'Esposizione Universale di Parigi del 1889.
Incisione da *Parigi e l'Esposizione Universale del 1889*, 1889

e il plauso del pubblico.¹⁴ Se da un lato il dipinto rispondeva a quello stereotipo internazionale che vedeva l'Italia come una miniera di folclore, di povertà abbinata a gaiezza e astuzia, che incontrava il gusto di un'ampia fetta di acquirenti, dall'altro dava testimonianza della realtà che aveva maggiormente contribuito alla sopravvivenza

dell'economia di Murano durante la dominazione austriaca. Non è un caso forse che proprio nel 1878 anche la stampa francese tocchi quest'ambito dell'economia veneziana che si sarebbe risolta grazie al recupero dell'industria delle conterie e del merletto (Lamarre, Roux 1878, 113). Più specifico, Gustave De Molinari, nella sua guida non manca di ricordare come l'attività muranese non sia solo legata alla produzione di vetri di lusso ma anche alle conterie, «qui fournit les matériaux de la parure d'eau sexe nègre,

¹⁴ Per una bibliografia sul dipinto, in lingua italiana, rimando a Serafini 2010, 38-39. E una scheda sulla prima versione del dipinto - 1976 - è pubblicata a firma di Luisa Turchi in Zerbi, Turchi 2012, 48, 91.

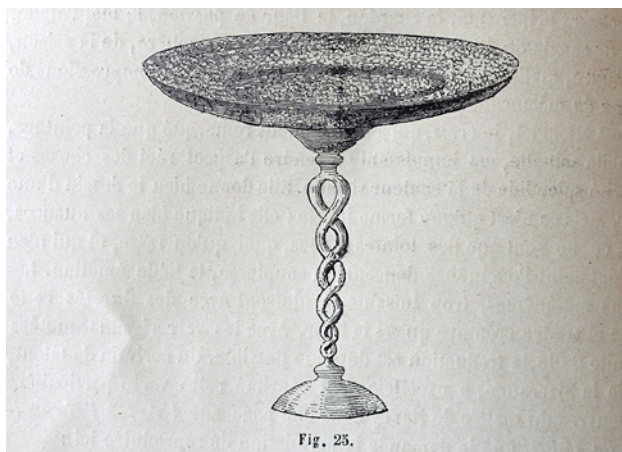


Figura 14. Schizzo per calice, 1902. Incisione da *La verrerie à l'Exposition Universelle*, 1902, 78

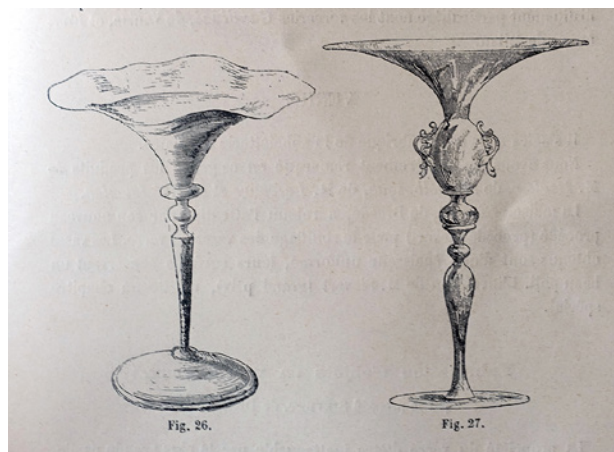


Figura 15. Schizzi per calici, 1902. Incisione da *La verrerie à l'Exposition Universelle*, 1902, 80

de l'Abyssinie à la Cafrerie, et qui sert même de monnaie dans l'intérieur de l'Afrique», arrivando a dare anche la cifra d'affari annua, pari a «8 ou 10 millions de francs» (De Molinari 1878, 110).

I vetri veneziani trovano spazio nel padiglione italiano progettato dall'architetto Ernesto Basile, di chiara impronta neorinascimentale, a sancire un gusto che dilaga anche nella produzione vetraria che, accanto alla Salviati, ai pezzi di rievocazione storica del Museo vetrario («L'Esposizione di Parigi e l'Industria...» 1878, 38) assiste all'avvento della neonata Compagnia di Venezia e Murano.¹⁵

Fortemente specializzata nell'imitazione dei capolavori del passato la Compagnia di Venezia e Murano propone nel suo repertorio la riproduzione di vetri provenienti dal Tesoro di San Marco e da quello della chiesa di San Donato di Murano, alcune lampade e croce, la lampada a quarantotto becchi eseguita per il Teatro di Siracusa, il bacino del XV secolo in vetro smaltato col simbolo Priuli (Lamarre, Roux 1878, 199) ai quali si aggiungono specchi rococò o occhieggianti la tradizione dei Briati, vetri murrini, mosaici e imitazioni di pietre dure. Lamarre e Roux, ammirati da questi «verres *graffiti* sur or» (Lamarre, Roux 1878, 199) entrano nel dettaglio della descrizione: un vaso sferico a forma di reliquiario occhieggiante un pezzo della collezione di Alessandro Castellani

a Roma.¹⁶ E lo stesso Castellani, che nel 1919 aveva donato la sua collezione al Museo di Valle Giulia a Roma, è ricordato dalla stampa italiana come colui che incoraggiò la vetreria veneziana a copiare filologicamente i modelli antichi («L'Esposizione Universale» 1878, 8).

Con atteggiamento lungimirante, la Compagnia di Venezia e Murano edita, in francese sempre, una dettagliata descrizione dei pezzi presentati nel 1878, un prezioso viatico sia per i cronisti che per gli acquirenti.¹⁷ L'opuscolo parla di una «urna cineraria imitante l'agata con coperchio» che la bibliografia riconosce in un vaso, realizzato da Vincenzo Moretti, oggi al Museo vetrario di Murano (fig. 8; Dorigato 2013, 206). Oltre al vasto successo dei murrini, Molmenti ricorda le sue coppe «ricche di fulgida eleganza, le sue anfore graziosissime, i suoi bicchieri paiono trine». ¹⁸ Ma il giudizio più lusinghiero per la Compagnia di Venezia e Murano, viene dalla «Gazette des Beaux Arts» che definisce i soffiati veneziani, «molto superiori come gusto e come colorazione a tutto ciò che si fece altrove in questo genere» («L'Esposizione di Parigi...» 1889, 45-46): rife-

¹⁶ Lamarre, Roux 1878, 199: «un vase sphérique en forme de reliquaire avec piédestal et couvercle en verre *pagliano* (couleur paille) offrant dans le pourtour des ornements et emblèmes chrétiens encadrés de cercles entrelacés. C'est la reproduction exacte d'un vase fort connu de la célèbre collection de M. Alessandro Castellani de Rome». Sul medesimo oggetto si veda anche, Dorigato 2006, 22; Dorigato 2013, 206.

¹⁷ *Les manufactures de la Société de Venise* 1878.

¹⁸ Molmenti 1878, 234. Successo naturalmente ribadito da *La Voce di Murano* che sottolinea anche la perfezione d'esecuzione («I vetri murrini...» 1878).

¹⁵ La Compagnia di Venezia e Murano nasce dalla liquidazione di Antonio Salviati, da lui stesso fondata nel 1877 (cf. Cisotto Nalon; Barovier Mentasti 2002; Dorigato, Migliaccio 2010; Barovier Mentasti 2013, con una dettagliata bibliografia).

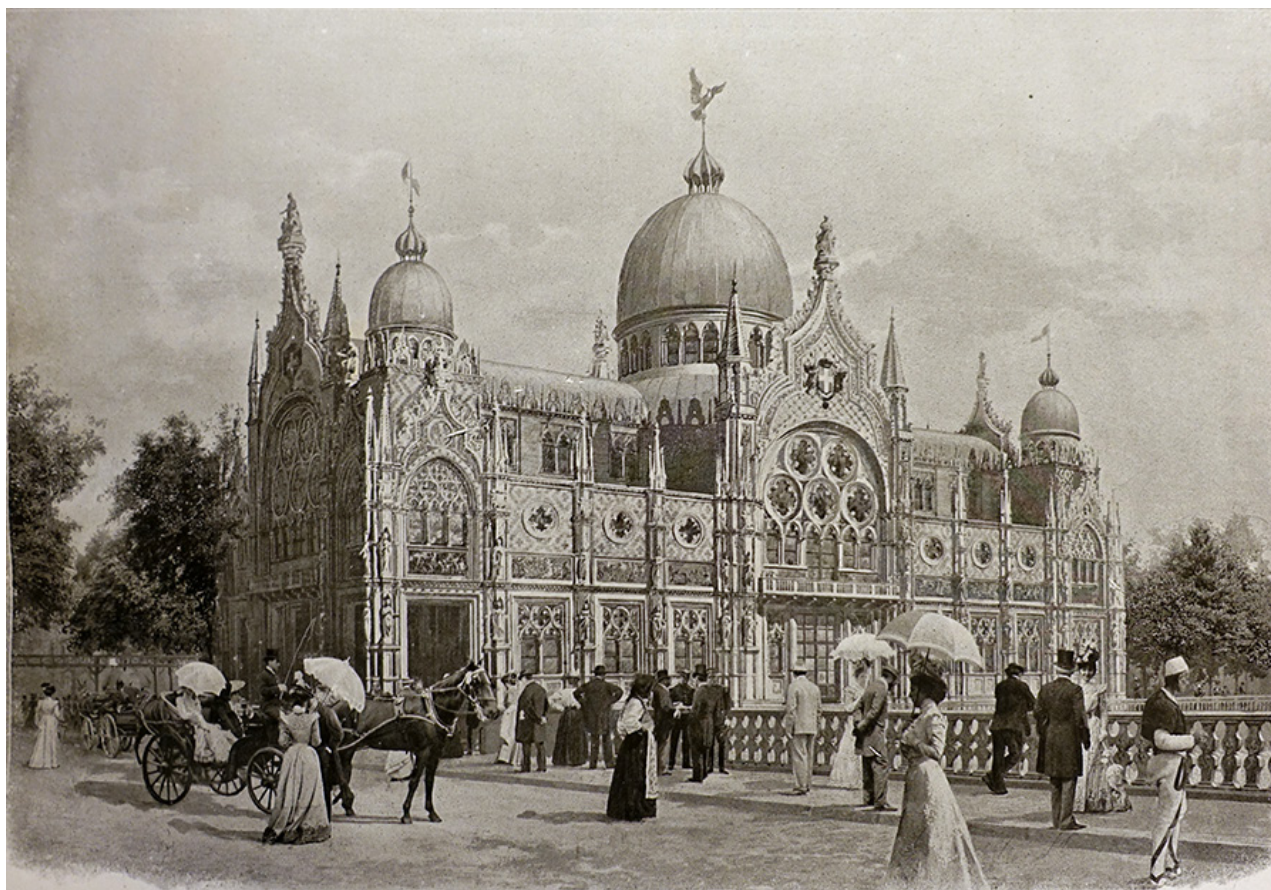


Figura 16. Le pavillon royale d'Italie, fotografia storica da *Le Panorama*, 1900

rendosi probabilmente al calice con stelo rosso rubino custodito oggi al Museo del Vetro a Murano (Dorigato 2002-2013, 200; fig. 9). Giudizio che trova concorde anche Henry Houssaye, che nella *Revue des deux mondes* afferma: «Ove l'Italia è rimasta senza rivali è nelle vetrerie di Murano»,¹⁹ senza però che la descrizione di soffiati leggeri e di delfini attorcigliati permetta di ricondurre il commento a una vetreria specifica.

Gustave De Molinari, dopo aver ribadito il primato dei vasi murrini della Compagnia di Venezia e Murano e l'antagonismo di quest'ultima con la Salviati,²⁰ tocca, come sua abitudine, an-

che questioni meramente economiche: «On peut se procurer une jolie coupe en verre murrhin au prix de 2 ou 300 fr.» (De Molinari 1878, 109); mentre i vetri iridati e «fort jolis» del Dottor Salviati hanno un «prix abordable» (De Molinari 1878, 110), strategia ripagata da vendite altissime fin dai primi giorni della mostra (Lamarre, Roux 1878, 200).

L'offerta muranese non si limita solamente alle due maggiori aziende dell'isola. Sono presenti anche la «Fratelli Toso» con «vetri soffiati ad uso antico assai belli» e Lorenzo Radi jr con un campionario di smalti per l'arte musiva e un «tavolo vestito di vetri imitazioni delle pietre dure che tanto bene si adattano ai lavori di tarsia» («L'Esposizione di Parigi e l'Industria...» 1878, 37-38).

¹⁹ Articolo tradotto in *I vetri di Murano all'Esposizione Universale* 1878, 81.

²⁰ Molinari 1878, 108-09: «La verrerie artistique est en train de renaitre à Venise. Il y a deux vitrines concurrentes; celles de MM Salviati et Cie et de la Compagnie de Venise et Murano qui se disputent la palme. Mosaïques à fond d'or, verres émaillés et irisés, verres chrétiens et verres murrhins, lustres et candélabres en verre opale, miroirs dans le vieux gout vénitien s'y étalent comme dans un musée, et il faudrait être un amateur des plus experts pour distinguer cette

nouvelle verrerie de l'ancienne. [...] Les plus chers entre ces morceaux de choix sont les verres murrhins, quoiqu'ils n'atteignent pas à beaucoup près les prix dont on les payait jadis à Rome. Ce fut Pompée qui rapporta les premiers d'Asie après sa victoire sur Mithridate, et ils devinrent l'objet du plus vif engouement».



Figura 17. Un interno della sezione bavarese all'Esposizione Universale di Parigi del 1900. Fotografia storica da *Le Panorama*, 1900

Il mosaico è indubbiamente la proposta più largamente condivisa dalle vetrerie veneziane con la presenza di Davide Bedendo, Luigi Olivieri, Tommaso Olivotti, Enrico Podio e veri e propri dipinti realizzati in tessere di vetro dalla Società Musiva veneziana.²¹

La mostra del 1878 fu l'ennesima conferma del valore raggiunto dai vetri della Salviati Dott. Antonio che pochi mesi più tardi, nella primave-

ra del 1879, è invitata ad esporre le sue «imitations des verres du seizième et du dix-septième siècle»²² al Musée des Arts Décoratifs di Parigi, nell'ambito di una mostra d'arte in senso lato, e in una sala - la E - dove giganteggia «un grand lustre à cent lumières».²³

Il 1878 era stato però l'anno della comparsa dei vetri di Emile Gallé, espressione di un gusto distante da Murano che poteva ancora contare sui proventi della collaborazione con l'architettura, in particolare quelli dei cantieri all'estero. Proprio aprendo la recensione all'Esposizione Universale del 1889, la rivista ufficiale della mo-

21 «I vetri murrini...» 1878, 43: La testata locale elenca tutti i nomi delle fornaci presenti a Parigi: «Domenico Busolin con alcuni saggi di vetri antichi, Macedonio Candiani con alcune paste vitree; [...] i fratelli Rubbi di Venezia con degli occhi di vetro [...] Tommasi e Gelsomini con vetri filati; Giovanni Fuga con vetri soffiati, Antonio Trevisan con delle lastre smerigliate, e infine Federico Weberback e compagnia con le avventurine, conterie specchi e cornici a intarsio». Alcuni nomi erano stati notati anche in Lamarre, Roux 1878, 200.

22 *Exposition d'Art Contemporain* 1879, 18. Ringrazio Jean-Luc Olivié, Responsabile del Dipartimento del Vetro al Musée des Arts Décoratifs di Parigi, per la preziosa segnalazione.

23 *Exposition d'Art Contemporain* 1879, 18.



Figura 18. La sala della stampa della V Biennale di Venezia disegnata Raffaele Mainella, foto storica, 1903

stra sottolinea come la Compagnia di Venezia e Murano sia fuori dal concorso poiché la vera finalità della sua presenza è «l'estensione sempre maggiore da darsi ai suoi commerci» («L'Esposizione della Società Venezia-Murano» 1889, dispensa 12, 95) e cita i cantieri in Congo e in India. La Compagnia di Venezia e Murano ebbe infatti l'incarico per la realizzazione del pavimento del palazzo del Maharajah Gaickwar del Baroda completato con elementi di decorazione architettonica, «medaglioni e fregi, di cui non si saprebbero trovare gli uguali, neppure nell'antichità» («I prodotti vitrei italiani...» 1889, 13). Anche alla mostra parigina la Compagnia di Venezia e Murano gioca la carta della «perfetta imitazione dei

vetri assiri, fenici ed egiziani»²⁴ nonché mosaici a soggetto sacro (figg. 10-12). La descrizione entra nel dettaglio della mostra con

[...] brocche dai fianchi appiattiti, con sopra anse, delfini, dragoni, ripiegantisi, torcentisi, con la bocca spalancata, la lingua fuori, ed inoltre riproduzione di rami incisi della Per-

²⁴ Il catalogo della Compagnia di Venezia e Murano è ampio e variegato: «vasi, coppe, patere, tazze, vetri, anfore, urne, scodelle, piatti, calici, reliquiari, etc.. Imitazioni d'agate, di murrine, diaspri, calcedonie, amatiste, zaffiri, madreperle, e di pietre preziose di tutta sorta. Un abbagliamento, uno scintilli, una vera festa degli occhi. [...] mosaici decorativi sacri e profani, di tutti gli stili e di tutti prezzi, nonché lampadari, appliques, candelabri, in ogni genere d'illuminazione e fra gli altri un bellissimo lampadario in forma di rosone, che sta in mezzo al soffitto del vasto spazio che occupa» («L'Esposizione di Parigi e i nostri prodotti vetrari» 1889, 45-46).

sia, lampadari in cui ricadono, s'intrecciano, ondeggiano, mossi dal soffio della fiamma, fiori dai mille colori. Il contingente delle due esposizioni è ingrossato, inoltre, da note imitazioni di vasi greci, romani, cristiani, da fiale e motivi applicati, da specchi, da bicchieri a mosaico, smaltati, filigranati, reticolati, il tutto fatto con una meravigliosa finezza di lavoro e con una varietà infinita di forme, quale soltanto la più fervida e bizzarra fantasia può suggerire («L'Esposizione della Società Venezia-Murano» 1889, dispensa 41, 322).

Quella stessa «fantasia» sfrenata che non pativa la concorrenza boema «dal fracasso cromatico assordante» («L'Esposizione della Società Venezia-Murano» 1889, dispensa 41, 328) né le incisioni grossolane di quella britannica.

Tra le vetrerie «minori» si fa certamente notare, per l'audacia dell'iniziativa, la ditta Candiani che allestì un forno dimostrativo tra gli edifici del Champ de Mars, dunque all'interno dell'esposizione stessa.²⁵

L'operazione costa a Candiani 250.000 franchi dei quali rientra – anche in termini d'immagine – poiché la folla entusiasta acquista gli oggetti ancora prima che siano soffiati («Esposizione di Parigi» 1889, 72).

Nel 1889 l'industria veneziana deve però fronteggiare due concorrenti importanti: da un lato l'affermazione di una scuola di mosaico locale che ha il suo trionfo nella cupola dell'edificio centrale in Champ de Mars, (fig. 13) interamente realizzata da maestranze nazionali,²⁶ e dall'altra la definitiva consacrazione di Emile Gallé, sostenuto da un «sistema dell'arte» che proprio in Francia ha il suo fondamento. Roger Marx ne magnifica «son originalité native, ses méthodes décoratives, son ardeur à s'enquérir de moyens d'expression inusités» e soprattutto liquida i manufatti muranesi «sans éclat et sans variante» (Marx 1889, 54). E nonostante l'immane riconoscimento sia

per la Salviati²⁷ – ormai entrata in una fase di inesorabile declino (Migliaccio 2010, 17) – che per la Compagnie de Venise-Murano (Exposition Universelle Internationale de 1889 à Paris 1891-1892, 32), i vetri muranesi trovano per la prima volta un'accoglienza fredda da parte della stampa francese.

Nel 1900 infine, per quanto la guida dell'Esposizione parli dei manufatti in vetro veneziano come di «[...] délicates et précieuses créations que les amateurs se disputent» (*Guide Universel de Paris* 1900, 261), lo scarto con la produzione Art Nouveau è incolmabile. I protagonisti sono ormai Gallé e Tiffany, le cui soluzioni in pasta di vetro rappresentano la novità formale,²⁸ distanti dall'imitazione del passato sulla quale ancora puntano i veneziani. Marx si domanda quale possa essere ora il destino delle fabbriche muranesi, dovendo presto rinunciare alle loro «copies sans gloire» e indicando una via di salvezza nell'imitazione proprio del «maitre de Lorraine» (Marx 1900, 106), ovvero Gallé. Con un paio d'anni di ritardo, Jules Henrivaux, chimico-ingegnere e direttore della manifattura di Saint-Goban, decreta che le manifatture francesi hanno sostituito l'Italia nel primato del vetro artistico;²⁹ egli pubblica però alcuni schizzi che mostrano ancora una dipendenza dai modelli muranesi (figg. 14-15).

In realtà la sezione della *verrerie* italiana godeva nel 1900 d'un «place d'honneur» poiché il padiglione italiano (fig. 16) apriva l'infila degli edifici stranieri, col suo *pastiches* di elementi architettonici immediatamente identificabili a partire proprio dalla citazione della Porta della Carta di Palazzo Ducale,³⁰ tenuti assieme da un fregio in

25 «L'Arte vetraria cittadina a Parigi» 1889, 25. Un mese dopo la stessa testata avrebbe specificato come la piccola fornace, costruita all'interno del recinto espositivo, fu possibile grazie all'associazione di Candiani con Giuseppe Guetta, un non meglio specificato investitore socio inglese, e con la direzione tecnica di Ferdinando Ferro che aveva curato la selezione degli operai muranesi. (Cf. «L'Esposizione di Parigi e i nostri prodotti vetrari» 1889, 45). Macedonio Candiani aveva già proposto una soluzione simile in occasione dell'esposizione nazionale torinese del 1884 (cf. Cretella 2014, 134-42).

26 *Rapport adressé à Monsieur le Ministre* 1889, 11.

27 Cf. «Liste des décorations accordées aux Etrangers» 1889, 2; «Esposizione di Parigi. Premi ai nostri industriali» 1889, 72: la testata muranese specifica che anche la Candiani e il suo direttore tecnico, Ferro, ricevono un diploma di medaglia d'argento. L'elenco completo dei premi è riportato in *Parigi e l'Esposizione Universale del 1889* 1890, 195.

28 Marx 1900, 103: «Aussi bien la personnalité de M. Louis Tiffany est-elle parmi les plus importantes que l'Exposition ait révélées [...] On retrouve dans les originaux, obtenus par les vapeurs de métaux en fusion, les irisations de la verrerie antique, irisations opalines et mates, qui ne se peuvent comparer qu'à celles de la perle».

29 *La verrerie à l'Exposition Universelle* 1902, 80: «L'Italie est, peut-on dire, la patrie de la verrerie artistique. Elle n'en a plus le monopole, tant s'en faut, et nos maisons françaises surtout, produisent pourtant toujours des pièces remarquables».

30 *La verrerie à l'Exposition Universelle* 1902, 80. In realtà l'edificio, progettato da Carlo Ceppi, riprendeva elementi piuttosto stereotipati del gotico fiorito italiano con un risultato che ha per modelli sia la Basilica di San Marco che il

mosaico «d'un très bel effet» (1900. *L'Exposition et Paris. Guide illustré du Bon Marché* 1900, 42).

Accanto ai mosaici toscani e ai coralli napoletani, Venezia «[...] brille toujours par ses Cristaux de Murano, ses Verroteries qui ressemblent à des fleurs délicates et somptueuses, de couleurs et de formes ravissantes» (*Paris Exposition* 1900, 222). Nel pubblicare l'elenco delle vetrerie partecipanti³¹ e dei relativi premi,³² *La Voce Murano* lamenta con stupore l'assenza delle conterie («L'Esposizione Mondiale di Parigi» 1900, 22).

In un sistema d'inevitabile scambio, la mostra del 1900 avrà una profonda influenza sulla futura produzione muranese che, se da un lato poteva sopravvivere con acquirenti e committenti dal gusto attardato, dall'altro sentiva l'esigenza di adeguarsi ai tempi, in una Venezia che già da cinque anni aveva lanciato l'ambizioso progetto di un'esposizione internazionale. È infatti alla Biennale del 1903, la prima edizione che accoglie ufficialmente le arti decorative, che Raffaele Mainella, artista e decoratore, realizza un sistema d'illuminazione con lampade vagamente zoomorfe nello spazio del *Fumoir* (fig. 18), riproponendo la soluzione del padiglione bavarese all'Esposizione parigina (fig. 17).

Rincorrendo quella modernità che avrebbe portato a un'accelerazione della storia e, fatalmente, a una rapida evoluzione del gusto, la mostra del 1900 – con la quale ho ritenuto opportuno terminare l'intervento – non solo chiudeva un secolo ma annunciava in realtà l'avvento di un nuovo sistema. L'economia di Murano sarebbe sopravvissuta per alcuni anni ancora grazie alla produzione di oggetti d'uso in stile revival,³³ divenuti però, anche se non simbolo di moderni-

tà, certo garanti di qualità, di preziosità tecnica del manufatto. Murano dunque come sinonimo di lusso, luogo di produzione di quei «Salviati glasses» (Carryl 1903, 39) nei quali i protagonisti di *Zut and other Parisians* – racconto pubblicato nel 1903 dal poeta e umorista statunitense Guy Wetmore Carryl (1873-1904) – sorvegliano Château Laffitte.

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31 «L'Esposizione Mondiale di Parigi» 1900, 22: «Napoleone Candiani, Vetri, cristalli, specchi e mosaici; Compagnia Venezia-Murano, Vetri, specchi e mosaici; G e C Maffioli, Vetri, cristalli, specchi incise, brillantati ecc; Paglierin e Franco, Vetrerie, mosaici, mobili, ecc; Ditta Salviati e C., Vetrerie, mosaici, mobili, ecc; Società Musiva Veneziana, Mosaici; Testolini fratelli, Vetrerie, mosaici, mobili, ecc; Angelo Toso Borella, Specchi stile veneziano; Francesco Toso Borella, Vetri Dorati, smaltati, stile antico e moderno; Zanetti, Seguso e C., Vetri soffiati artistici e specchi».

32 «Premi all'Esposizione di Parigi» 1900, 56. Oltre alla Salviati una medaglia d'oro va anche alla Scuola di disegno legata al Museo di Murano.

33 Rimando a tal proposito ad alcuni interventi dell'ultimo convegno sull'Arte del vetro tenutosi all'Istituto Veneto di Scienze Lettere ed Arti: Barbe 2016, 89-119; Barovier Mentasti, Tonini 2016, 46-57.

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Egyptian-French Cultural Encounters at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1867

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Abstract The subject of this article is the Egyptian exhibition at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1867. At the time of the exhibition, Egypt was at the peak of its modernization reforms, and Ismail Pasha had recently received the *khedival* title and more autonomy from the Ottoman Empire. Focusing on the Egyptian official exhibition catalogues and media coverage, this article argues that the Khedive used the exposition as an opportunity to fashion a powerful dynastic order with a distinct cultural identity independent from the Ottomans, a dynasty that could become the new political and cultural center of the Islamic world and a *hyphen* between the Occident and the Orient.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Organizing the Egyptian Pavilion. – 3 Egypt at the Champ de Mars. – 4 Conclusion.

Keywords Exposition Universelle. Khedive Ismail. Egypt. Ottoman Empire.

1 Introduction

In the mid-1860s, Egypt, nominally a province of the Ottoman Empire, was at the peak of its modernization reforms. When, in 1865, Ismail Pasha (r. 1863-1879) was offered the opportunity to assert his country's global stature at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1867, he took advantage of it. That year he also received the *khedival* title and more autonomy.¹ On about 6,000 square meters at the Champ de Mars, Egypt presented an elaborate display that “spoke to the eyes as well as to the mind”, and “expressed a political idea”.² Four architectural structures comprising a temple, a *selamlık* (men's reception pavilion), an *okel* or *wikala* (caravansary), and stables encapsulated its ancient, medieval, and modern history (figs. 1-4).³ The nearby Isthmus of Suez pavilion – representing the colossal engineering project under construction – added to the picture of a modern Egypt with close ties to

France (fig. 5).⁴ The French also took the lead in designing and executing the Egyptian section. Two books were published for the exhibition. One by the writer Charles Edmond (pseudonym for Karol Edmund Chojecki, 1822-1895)⁵ provided information about Egypt's history, geography, religion, economy, government, and described the display of a “splendid and brilliant Egypt”.⁶ Organized chronologically by historical periods (ancient, medieval, and modern), the book included engravings of the pavilions, and a frontispiece depicting Ismail in military regalia with a *tarboosh* (headdress), flanked by sphinxes, mosque minarets, and a ship's mast (fig. 6). The second book by the Egyptologist and Director of the Bulaq Museum (now the Egyptian

1 The *firman* (decree) of June 8, 1867, gave Ismail the title of *khedive* – a Persian word meaning ruler or Lord – and granted him authority to conclude commercial and financial treaties with foreign powers (including customs, trade transit, and posts), and to initiate laws and regulations for the internal affairs of the country (Douin 1933-1934, 1, 442-43).

2 “Cet étalage somptueux parlait à l'esprit comme aux yeux; il exprimait une idée politique” (About 1869, 48).

3 Egypt has a multifaceted history including ancient Egyptian/Pharaonic, Greco/Roman, Arab/Islamic, Mamluk, and Ottoman. The latter themselves, who ruled Egypt from 1517 to 1798 and 1801 to 1914, comprised multiple ethnicities (Albanians, Circassians, Georgians, Bosnians, and others).

4 The Suez Canal pavilion was independently organized by the French diplomat and developer of the Suez Canal, Ferdinand de Lesseps (1805-1894). The pavilion was designed in Neopharaonic style by the French architect Alfred Chapon (1834-1893) who previously designed structures for the Suez Canal Company and who was also the architect of the Moroccan and Tunisian pavilion at the 1867 exposition (Nickou 1997, 233).

5 Originally Polish, Edmond, in 1845, fled to Paris from Russian persecution, where he lived most of his life and became a citizen in 1875. In 1850 he joined the army in Egypt for a year, and he later fought with the Ottomans against Russia in the Crimean War. During the War he met Prince Napoleon, who appointed him as the librarian of the Ministry of Algeria, which he led (Desurvire 2011).

6 “L'Égypte, brillante, splendide” (Edmond 1867a, 15).

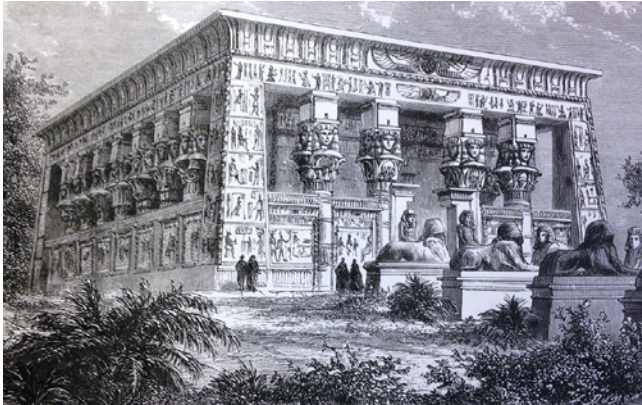


Figure 1. D. Lancelot, *Temple*. Engraving (Edmond 1867a, 20)



Figure 2. D. Lancelot, *Selamlik*. Engraving (Edmond 1867a, 128-29)



Figure 3. *Wikala*. Engraving (Edmond 1867a, 202)

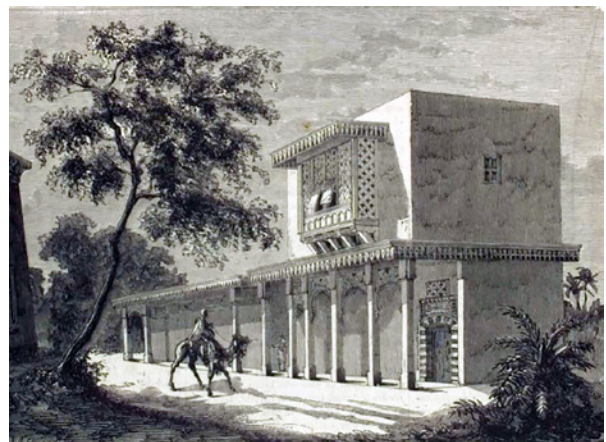


Figure 4. M. Gaildrau, *Egyptian House (stables)* Engraving (Ducuing 1867, 1, no. 4, 56)

Figure 5. D. Lancelot, *Isthmus of Suez*. Engraving (Ducuing 1867, 1, no. 8, 1)



Museum), Auguste Mariette Bey (1821-1881)⁷ described the pavilions; the temple received fifty-one pages out of one hundred and one (Mariette 1867). This essay examines Egypt's representation at the Exposition Universelle of 1867, focusing on its official publications and media coverage.⁸ Previous scholarship on Middle Eastern and North African displays at world fairs has tended to explore them as exotic spaces highlighting cultural otherness and Western imperial authority, while more recent cross-cultural studies have concentrated on architectural representations.⁹ By focusing on the 1867 exposition's narrative covering the preparation, display, reviews, and cast involved, I seek to provide a deeper insight into the varied political, economic, and diplomatic implications of the Egyptian-French encounter in Paris. France and Egypt's relationship had reached its pinnacle under Napoleon III (r. 1852-70), and Ismail was convinced that "Egypt's happiness depends on its separation from Turkey".¹⁰ With a striking display, Egypt hoped to attract economic investments¹¹ and forge an international image as a modern, civilized, and independent nation that could "become the center of the Islamic world",¹² with "a foot in both worlds [...] the Occident because of its future interests [...] also the Orient because of its ties with all its past".¹³

7 In 1850 the Frenchman, Mariette discovered the Serapeum (the tomb of the Apis sacred bulls) at Saqqara, and in 1858 Egypt's Viceroy Said Pasha (r. 1854-63) appointed him director of antiquities. In 1863 he opened the Bulaq Museum to house Egyptian antiquities. He lived in Egypt until he died in 1881 and is buried there (Wallon 1883; Maspero 1904; David 1994).

8 In Egypt at the time of the exposition, there were only two journals: *al-Waqai al-Misriyya* (Egyptian Events), the government's journal comprising mainly official reports and news with little cultural content; and *Wadi al-Nil* (*The Nile Valley*), a short lived semi-weekly newspaper from 1867 until 1874, sponsored by the Khedive. At the time of my research in Egypt, however, the latter journal was not available.

9 Leprun 1986; Mitchell 1988; Çelik 1992; Ersoy 2015. See also Nickou 1997 (unpublished dissertation).

10 "Nous sommes tous convaincus que le bonheur de l'Égypte dépend dans sa séparation définitive d'avec la Turquie". Letter dated 8 April 1867, from Ismail to Nubar Pasha, in Douin 1933-34, 2, title page.

11 Egypt lost its dominance of the cotton market at the end of the American Civil War, and increased debts that Edmond attributed to Ismail's predecessor Said Pasha (r. 1854-1863), who made concessions to the Suez Canal Company. Ismail renegotiated it with Napoleon III and paid an indemnity of 84,000.000 francs (Edmond 1867a, 3-6).

12 "L'Égypte tend à devenir de nouveau le centre de l'islamisme" (Edmond 1867a, 205).

13 "Mais si l'Égypte tient à l'Occident par les intérêts de son avenir, elle tient aussi à l'Orient par ses liens de tout son

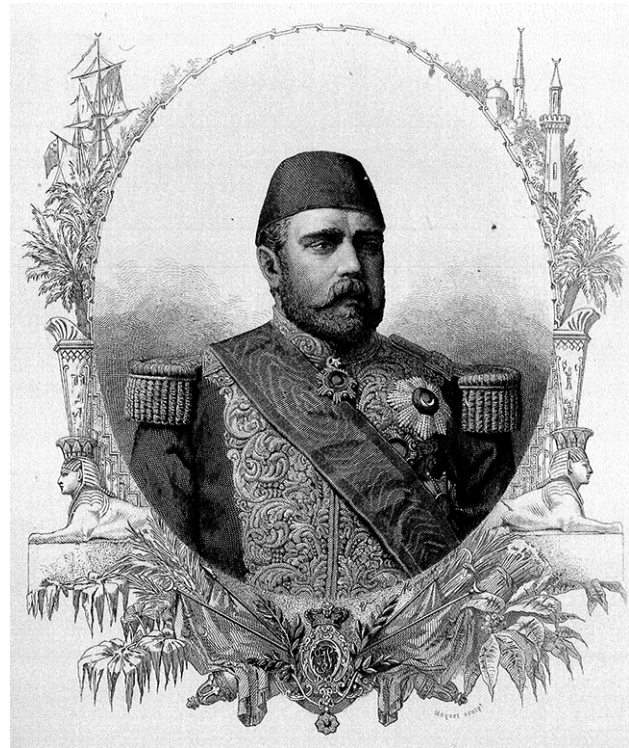


Figure 6. Ismail Pasha, Viceroy of Egypt. Engraving (Edmond 1867a, frontispiece)

2 Organizing the Egyptian Pavilion

Edmond's book reported that Ismail "conceived the magnificent plan [...], directed everything, took the initiative on the artistic and the industrial sections, overseeing all the details".¹⁴ To help him, he appointed a Commission, presided by his Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nubar Pasha (1825-1899),¹⁵ and Edmond as the General

passé. Elle a le pied à la fois dans deux mondes" (Edmond 1867a, 3).

14 "Il en a conçu le magnifique plan d'ensemble. Il a tout dirigé, pris l'initiative de la partie artistique aussi bien qu'industrielle, veille aux moindres détails" (Edmond 1867, 14). Letters in the Egyptian archives corroborate Edmond's claim. Mariette wrote a document on June 27 to obtain Ismail's approval listing objects and manpower to travel to the exposition, such as a *dahabieh* (river boat), camels and donkeys, native artisans, and attendants in the café (Mariette Document 1866).

15 An Armenian by birth, Nubar Pasha was educated in Switzerland and France. He came to Egypt when he was seventeen years old to become secretary of his uncle—who served as Minister of Commerce and Foreign Affairs under the founder of the khedival dynasty Muhammad 'Ali (r. 1805-1848). Nubar Pasha served in the governments of consecutive viceroys (Nubar Pasha, Ghali 1983).

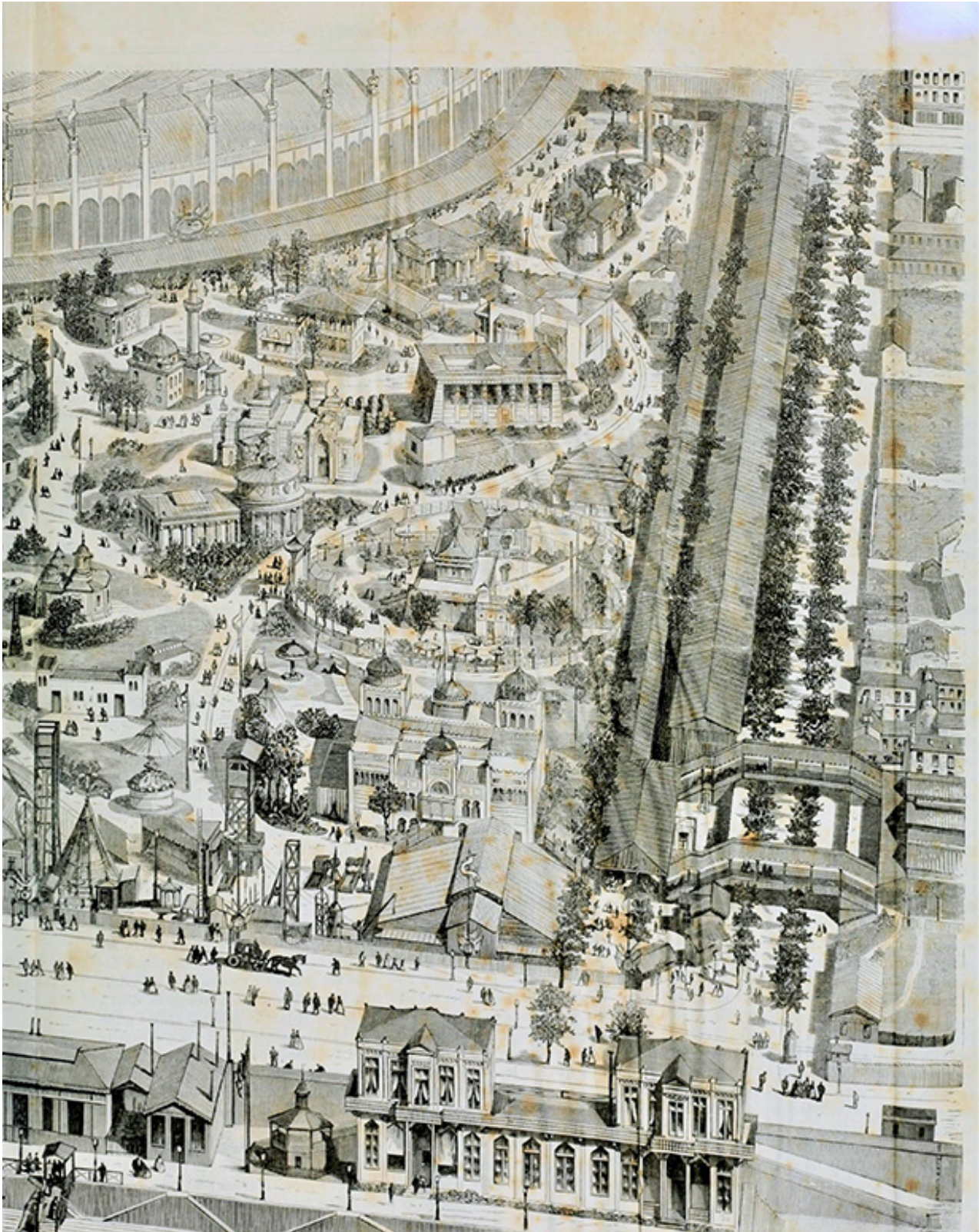


Figure 7. M. Cecéri, *Oriental Quarter*. Engraving (Ducuing 1867, 1, no. 49, 296)

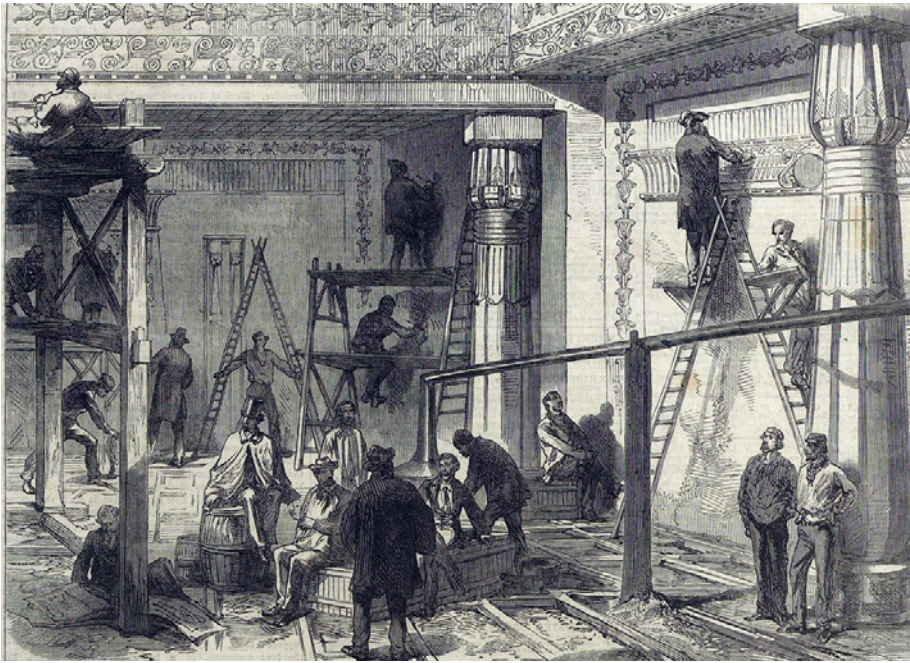


Figure 8. *Construction of the Egyptian Temple*. Engraving. *The Illustrated London News*, 1418, 23 March 1867, 273

Commissioner¹⁶ – who was lauded in France as “an elevated spirit”.¹⁷ At the end of the exposition, Napoleon III awarded Edmond Officer of the Legion of Honor, and Ismail gave him the title of Bey. Mariette was charged with overseeing the archaeological section of the exhibition. He diligently prepared the display, and by the end of 1866 went to Paris to supervise the work with three hundred models, scenes, colour samples, and inscriptions from temples in Upper Egypt. The French government recognized his work at the exposition and awarded him Commander of the Legion of Honor.

The other members of the Commission, mostly Frenchmen living and working in Egypt, were charged with different sections including scientific, agricultural, and commercial exhibits.¹⁸

¹⁶ The Exposition’s official publication reported that Edmond was delegated by the Imperial Commission (Marini 1867, 1, 53). However, according to Edmond, Ismail, chose him to serve as a liaison between Cairo and Paris (1867, 14). The latter narrative is more likely, as Edmond had built networks within the Egyptian elites while serving in the Egyptian army in the 1850s.

¹⁷ “Tout le monde connaît M. Edmond, esprit élevé” (Marini 1867, 1, 53).

¹⁸ They were: Colonel Mircher, Chief of the French military mission in Egypt, who supervised the Commission in Cairo and oversaw the scientific and geographical sections; Figari Bey, General inspector of pharmaceutical services in Egypt, was in charge of the agricultural and natural history sections; Joseph Claude, an Alexandrian merchant, was

Jacques Drévet (1832-1900) was hired as the official architect, however, he had never visited Egypt. He relied on Mariette for technical information, and on Édouard Schmitz (?-1879),¹⁹ a French architect working in Egypt, for the pavilion plans. For his work, Drévet was made Knight of the Legion of Honor, and Officer of the Order of Medjidie (Hellé 1912, 10).

Egypt focused its display in the Park surrounding the elliptical-shaped exhibition building or Palace, conceived by Saint-Simonian Frédéric Le Play (1806-1882).²⁰ That Park, designed by Adolph Alphand (1817-1891), housed entertainment venues and the national pavilions “in the taste of [each country’s] national architecture” (*Rapport*

a negotiator and oversaw the commercial section; Vidal, a civil engineer, mathematics professor at the State College was secretary of the Commission, and charged with public construction and editing the general catalogue; Gastinel, chemistry and physics professor at the Viceregal School of Medicine and director of the zoological garden, was in charge of the chemical, pharmaceutical sections as well as ground products; Aly Bey Assib, Division Chief of the Ministry of Finance, was charged with manual arts products (Douin 1933-34, 2, 1).

¹⁹ Very little information is available about the French architect Schmitz. He studied with his father and exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1859. He worked in Egypt on several residences including the Gabary palace (Dussieux 1876, 393).

²⁰ In the main exhibition building or Palace, Egypt had 555 sq. m. and in the park 5560 sq. m. (*Rapport sur l’exposition universelle de 1867* 1869, 440, tab. 8).

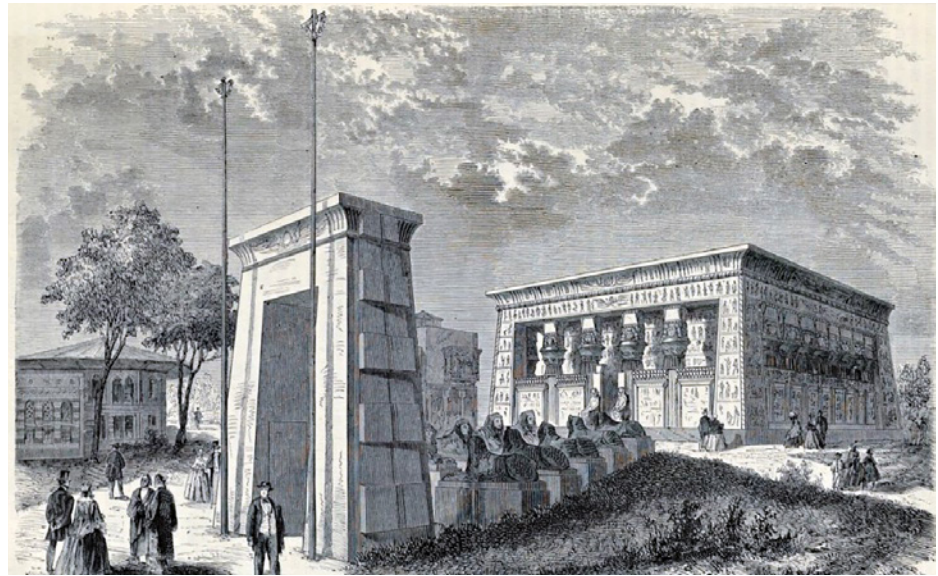
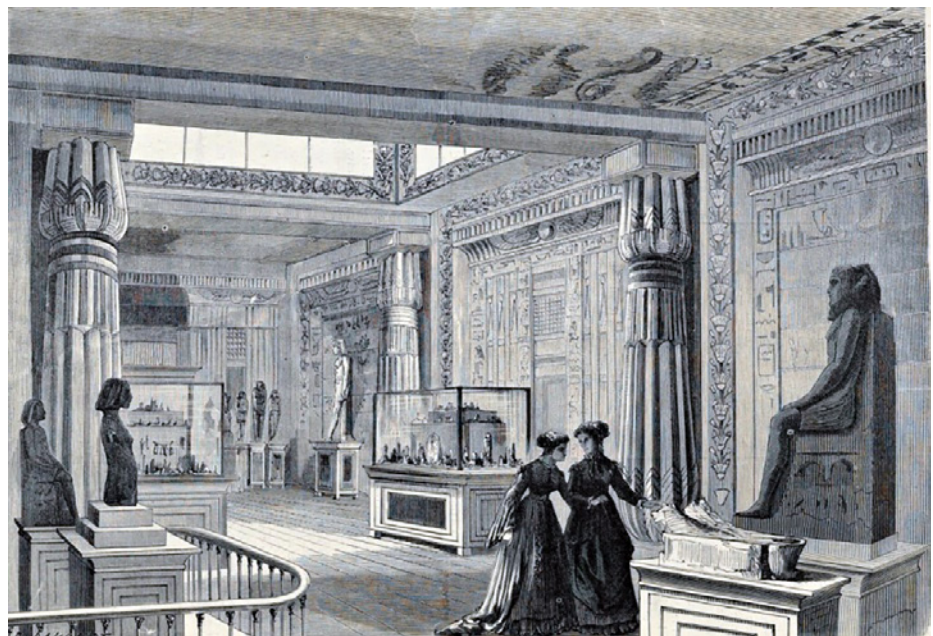


Figure 9. J. Gaildrau, *Egyptian Temple*. Engraving (Ducuing 1867, 1, no. 4, 57)

Figure 10. D. Lancelot, *Egyptian Temple Interior*. Engraving (Ducuing 1867, 2, no. 27, 424)



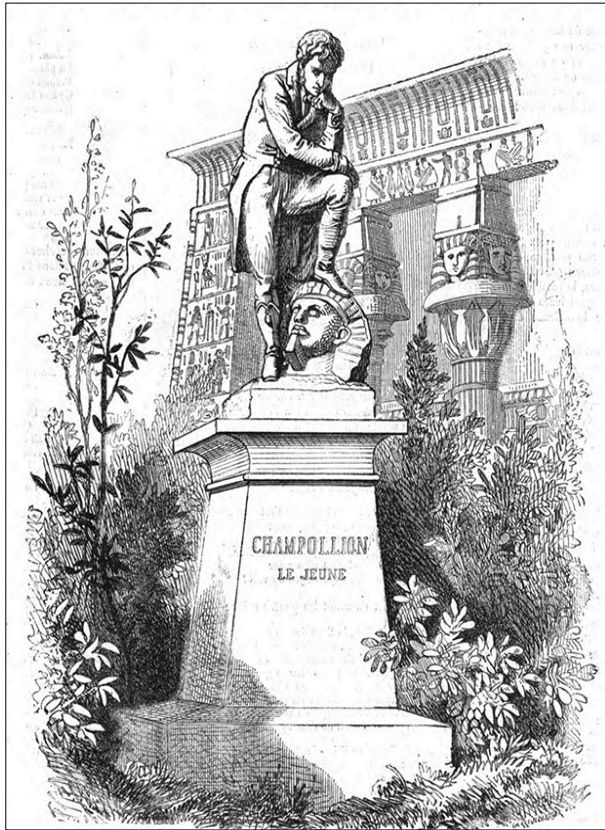


Figure 11. Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi, *Champollion*. Engraving. *Le Journal illustré*, 185, 25 August-1 September, 1867, title page

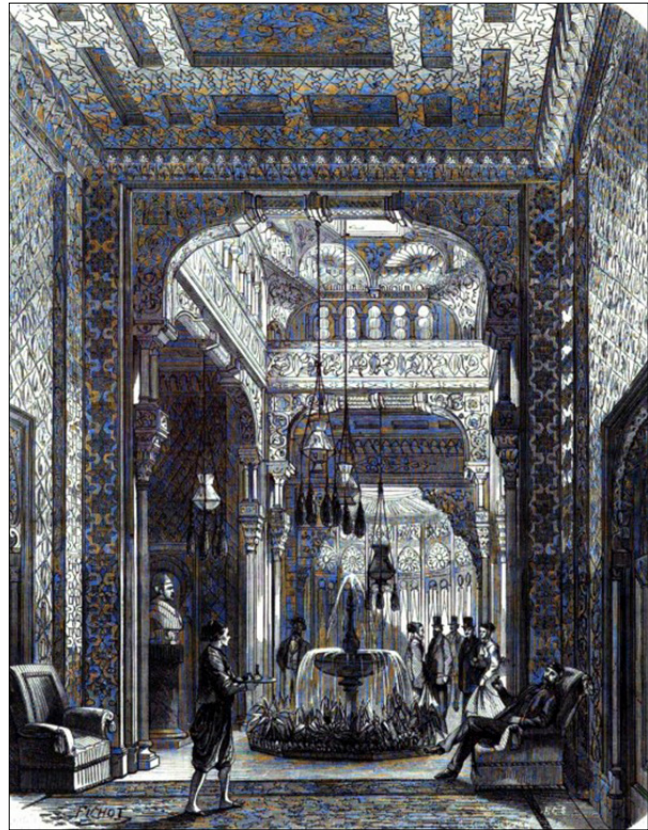


Figure 12. *Interior of the selamlık (showing marble bust of Isma'il)*. Engraving. *L'illustration: journal universel*, 1293, 7 December 1867, 376

sur l'exposition universelle de 1867 1869, 70). On August 1, 1866, Egypt was given its allotted space in the "Oriental section" together with the Ottoman Empire, Morocco, Tunisia, China, Japan, Siam, and the principality of Romania (fig. 7). Nineteen days later, *Le Moniteur universel* reported that Ismail's constructions will be off the ground in a few days,²¹ and in November, *al-Waqai al-Misriyya* published the final plan with the increased space allocated for the Egyptian section, which "equaled that of England, and surpassed that of America and Russia".²² By February 1867, *Le Moniteur universel* reported that

21 "Encore quelques jours, et l'on verra sortir de terre les murs des trois constructions" ("L'Égypte à l'Exposition universelle de 1867". *Le Moniteur Universel* 1866, 1033).

22 The article written on 15th November 1866 in the Egyptian newspaper was the lengthiest dedicated to the Egyptian exhibition. It cited the initial plans reported in *Le Moniteur Universel* on 19th August 1866 (comprising three structures: one representing the antiquity and two its modern history) and the modified plans that replaced one of the modern structures with the *selamlık*. According to the journal, the space

the buildings were "almost complete", praising the "originality of the Egyptian constructions," and "passion of the Parisian artists and carpenters for this novel work" (fig. 8).²³

was increased from 4800 sq. m, to 5328 sq. m., "Internal News". *Al-Waqai al-Misriyya*, 52(15), November 1866, 236-37.

23 "L'exposition égyptienne sera donc prête avant l'ouverture [...] L'originalité même des constructions égyptiennes [...] En effet, les artistes, les ouvriers de Paris se sont vite passionnés pur ce travail si nouveaux pour eux". ("L'Égypte à l'Exposition universelle de 1867". *Le Moniteur Universel* 1867, 126). Among the French artists hired to work on site, were the history painter, M. Bin, for the decorative paintings, and M. Mallet from the Bernard and Mallet firm for the sculptural work and moldings. Other contributors included the sculptor M. Godin, and the mason M. Céleri (Edmond 1867a, 15; Mariette 1867, 8).



Figure 13. *Ottoman Quarter*.
Engraving. *L'illustration*, 1253,
2 March 1867, 140



Figure 14. *Mannequins with
Costumes in the Egyptian
section*. Engraving. *The
Illustrated London News*, 1426,
11 May 1867, 473

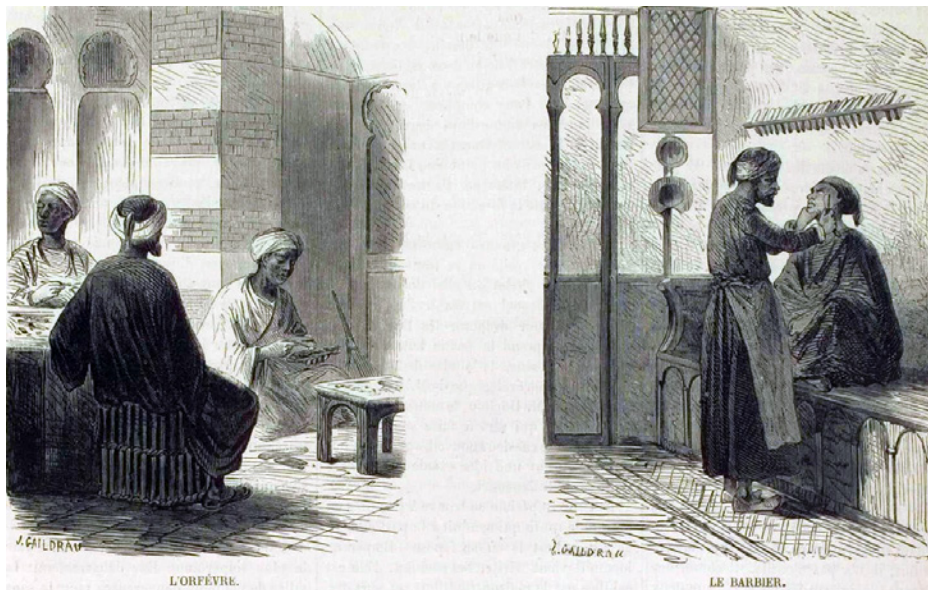


Figure 15. J. Gaildrau, *Artisans in the wikala*. Engraving (Ducuing 1867, 1, no. 22, 341)

3 Egypt at the Champ de Mars

The 1867 exposition was Egypt's second official exhibit at a world fair,²⁴ and the Ottomans tried to downplay this independence until the last moment. Two days before the opening ceremony, Ottoman embassy envoys suggested to Edmond that the Egyptian Commission convene at their site, and the flags of His Highness and coat of arms be surmounted by the Sultan's, to which he respectfully answered that he "was not a diplomat", just "a humble servant of his Highness, a simple Commissioner, and that he had no orders from Cairo".²⁵ Hence, on April 1, 1867, the Egyptian Commission participated in the opening ceremony separately "like all the Commissions of powerful countries". During the following seven months,

the Egyptian section offered a journey across six thousand years of history with three major pavilions that Edmond noted began with the land of the pharaohs, then the Caliphs, and that of Ismail's.

A temple housing authentic antiquities signaled Egypt's position as the cradle of civilization, Edmond pointed out, arguing that "the modern civilization attributed to the Greeks and Romans originated from the Nile".²⁶ Thus, the temple display "reconstructed the oldest ideas of human civilization, from its religion, its arts, its industry, its customs [...]".²⁷ Preceded by a pylon and an avenue lined with ten sphinxes,²⁸ the temple was modelled after Emperor Trajan's kiosk at Philae, combining elements from the "most brilliant periods of the Pharaonic architecture",²⁹ so that it would be "a lesson of Egyptian archeology"³⁰ (fig. 9). Although Mariette considered the granite ma-

²⁴ The first time Egypt sent an official exhibit was in 1862 to London's universal exhibition (David 1994, 144-46; *London International Exhibition 1862*).

²⁵ "Deux jours avant la cérémonie, on m'a expédié des négociateurs de la part de l'ambassade ottomane avec charge de me faire entendre qu'il serait convenable que la Commission égyptienne se réunisse à la Commission turque, de même qu'il était nécessaire que les drapeaux de son Altesse fussent surmontés par celui du Sultan, et que les chiffres et armes de Son Altesse fussent dominés par celui du Padischah. J'ai répondu avec la plus respectueuse énergie, que je n'étais pas un diplomate [...] je n'étais pas qu'un humble serviteur de Son Altesse, un simple Commissaire [...] je n'avais reçu aucun ordre du Caire, et que je n'agissais que sous ma propre responsabilité [...] J'ai donc déclaré que la Commission égyptienne se présenterait à la cérémonie séparément, comme les Commissions de toutes les puissances étrangères" as Edmond wrote on 3rd April (Edmond Letter 1867).

²⁶ "La civilisation moderne vient de Rome et de la Grèce; mais le germe des civilisations romaines et grecques venait du Nil" (Edmond 1867a, i).

²⁷ "Reconstituer par la pensée la plus vieille des civilisations humaines, avec sa religion, sa politique, ses arts, son industrie, ses coutumes" (Edmond 1867a, 18).

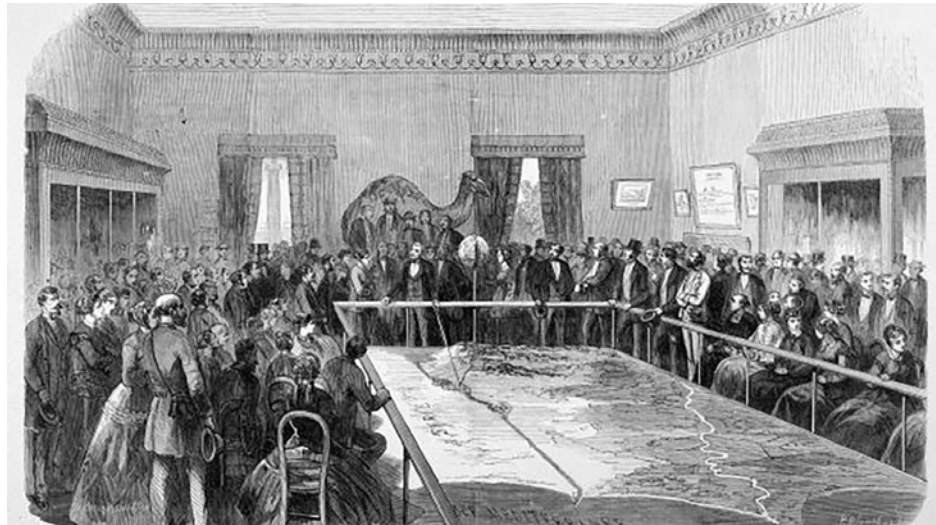
²⁸ The sphinxes were cast from a model in the Louvre Museum. Together with the two statues placed at the entrance, they were reproduced by a new method using cement plastic by Chevalier (Mariette 1867, 15).

²⁹ "Les époques les plus brillantes de l'architecture pharaonique" (Edmond 1867, 88). The decorative elements used were from the Old and New Kingdoms and Ptolemaic period.

³⁰ "Comme une étude d'archéologie égyptienne" (Mariette 1867, 11). For a description of the temple, see Edmond 1867a, 85-128; Mariette 1867, 9-60; Çelik 1992, 115-16.

Figure 16. *Isthmus of Suez Pavilion, A Conference of M. de Lesseps. Engraving. L'illustration, journal universel, 1283, 28 September 1867, 200*

Figure 17. *Emperor Napoleon III and Empress Eugenie with Khedive Ismail at the Temple. Le Monde illustré, 535, 13 July 1867, 24*



terial a 'heresy', as "Egyptian temples were built in sandstone",³¹ he was proud of the hieroglyphs adorning the structure that he recorded himself and his aide, the German Egyptologist Heinrich Brugsch (1827-1894),³² copied in lithographs. The interior also offered a diverse sample of Egyptian art from the Bulaq Museum, including the famous diorite statue of Chephren, the wooden *shiekh al-balad* (chief of village), the cow Hathor and jewels of Queen Ahhotep (fig. 10) which caught the eye of Empress Eugénie, who asked to have them, a request that Mariette firmly refused (Wallon 1883, 143; David 1994, 181-82).

Praised as being "the most remarkable" of all the pavilions in the Oriental section (de Launay 1867, 2, 423), the temple also evoked Europe's longstanding engagement with Egypt's antiquity.³³ It was the French campaign in Egypt (1798-1801), however, that marked a turning point with the publication of *Description de L'Égypte* (1809-1828), the discovery of the Rosetta stone and Jean-François Champollion's (1790-1832) subsequent decipherment of its hieroglyphs in 1822, events that were at the root of modern Egyptology and "Egyptomania".³⁴ An author of the exposition's illustrated publication commended the Egyptian Commission for placing Champollion's statue (plaster, ca. 1867, Musée de Grenoble) by Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi (1834-1904) beside the temple, "a gesture made in good taste [...] to pay tribute to the illustrious scholar of whom France is very proud" (fig. 11).³⁵

Egypt chose to represent its Islamic civilization with a secular building. The *selamlık*, built of wood and plaster with blue and red bands over a white background, and surmounted by a cupola, was designed by Schmitz.³⁶ The interior decorative scheme by Drévet included mosque lamps, a gold crescent at the top, a fountain in the center, and arabesque ornaments, which, on Ismail's request, reproduced those in the room he was born in at the Gamalieh palace – an explicit sign to legitimize his dynasty as the heir of this splendid Islamic civilization.³⁷ Ismail's coat of arms and a medieval illuminated Qur'an were displayed together, which Edmond read as "weapons and the Qur'an, the sword and the law".³⁸ Moreover, Ismail's marble bust (1866, Manial Palace Museum, Cairo) by the French sculptor Charles Cordier (1827-1905) greeted the visitors at the entrance (fig. 12).³⁹ Dressed in a military uniform and *tarboosh*, similar to the engraving in Edmond's book, Ismail conveyed his Oriental origin, while exemplifying his Occidental orientation by ignoring the Islamic prohibition of figural art.⁴⁰

Egypt's medieval Islamic heritage, the Fatimid Caliphate presented another political message. The Fatimids had established a powerful Shiite caliphate in Egypt between 969 and 1171, in opposition to the Sunni Abbasid caliphate in Iraq, suggesting an example that modern Egypt would follow against the Ottomans. Moreover, the Fatimid revival of art and architecture had made Cairo the cultural hub of the Islamic world, a point

31 "Quelle hérésie! Tous les temples égyptiens son construits en grès!". Letter from Mariette to Charles Edmond dated 6 July 1866, in Wallon 1883, 92.

32 Brugsch served as Prussia's consul in Egypt from 1864-1866. He became the first director of the school of Egyptology (School of the Ancient Language) that Isma'il founded in 1869 until it closed five years later. He was the Egyptian commissioner for the 1873 Vienna Exposition and then again to the Philadelphia world's fair in 1876 (Reid 2002, 114-116).

33 Europeans knew Egypt's ancient civilization from Greco-Roman accounts, and later from other European traveler accounts—there were over 300 accounts from the eleventh to eighteenth centuries (Piacentini 2010).

34 It is worth noting that the Italian archeologist Giovan Battista Belzoni's (1778-1823) had a significant influence on the popularity of the Egyptian style in design, art and architecture in London in the early nineteenth century. He presented the first exhibition showing Egypt's antiquities in an educational and entertaining manner. (See Mayes 2003; Fassone, Luca 2010, 53-58).

35 "La commission égyptienne, par un sentiment plein du goût, a voulu rendre hommage à l'illustre savant dont la France est si fière, Elle a placé entre le temple de Philae et l'okel la statue de Champollion" (Marini 1867, 1, 59).

36 For a description of the *selamlık*, see Edmond 1867a, 190-201; Mariette 1867, 87-93; Çelik 1992, 111-12.

37 "Mariette Bey m'a écrit que S.A. désire que le Selamlık fût exactement comme [...] la représentation [...] arabesque de la chambre du palais de Jamalieh ... D'ailleurs S.A. a imprimée l'ordre que la Selamlık reproduisait l'ornementation de chambre ou Elle a vu le jour". Letter from Nubar Pasha to Mahmoud Bey dated 3 December (Nubar Pasha 1866). According to Edmond, some of the decorative elements may have been inspired by the illuminated Qur'an displayed in the *selamlık* (Edmond 1867a, 196).

38 "Il renferme les armes du Vice-Roi et un magnifique Coran. – Les armes et le Coran, le glaive et la loi" (Edmond 1867a, 197).

39 Famous for his ethnographic types, Cordier went to Egypt in 1866 on a government grant to produce sculptures of "the various types of indigenous peoples", some of which were displayed at the exposition (De Margerie et al. 2004, 131-32).

40 There was a general Islamic prohibition towards the depiction of figural art (which was not strictly abided) until 1908, when the Egyptian theologian Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) proclaimed a religious decree legalizing figural imagery (Vernoit 2001, 19, 31-32).

Edmond emphasized.⁴¹ It was in Egypt that “the true mosques in Arab [Islamic]⁴² style were constructed,” and spread to “Syria, Persia, India, and Sicily through North Africa, Spain, and finally to Turkey”.⁴³ By contrast, he singled out the latter for being incapable of inventing its own art or even tastefully assimilating the art of the others, and concluded that “after stealing the Arab genius, they let it die”.⁴⁴ This negative assessment of Ottoman art and architecture was echoed by others. Hippolyte Gautier, in his account of the exposition’s Ottoman display, stated that it “has not sought to rival the splendour of its neighbours, Egypt and Tunis,” with its “three structures [mosque, residential structure, and public bath] of modest proportions, more appropriate to arouse curiosity than admiration” (fig. 13).⁴⁵

Egypt’s display and accompanying publication underscored its revival and modernization, which began under Ismail’s grandfather Muhammad Ali (r. 1805-1848) following a long period of decadence (Edmond 1867, 200), and flourished in “the living Egypt [...] of Ismail Pasha”.⁴⁶ An exhibition hall, at the back of the *selamlik* featured relief maps of ancient and modern Alexandria, a mineralogical collection, geological maps, a group of photographs of Egypt’s ancient and medieval monuments by resident photographer, Désiré Ernié (active in Egypt 1860-1880), and books printed in the Bulaq press (Douin 1933-34, 2, 214). At the exposition’s Palace, galleries built of wood in the ‘Pharaonic style’, showcased Egypt’s industrial and agricultural products – including cotton samples, which won a gold medal.⁴⁷ Other

products from Nubia, Sennar, Kordofan and Sudan highlighted the territories that “had been annexed to its [Egypt’s] empire” (Douin 1933-34, 2, 17).⁴⁸ Cordier’s sculptures representing Egypt’s ethnographic ‘types’ (ca. 1866, location unknown) welcomed visitors (fig. 14).⁴⁹

In the third building, the *wikala*, as the author of *L’Album de l’Exposition illustrée*, Gabriel Richard noted, visitors encountered Egypt’s ‘living types’ (1867, 244). The two storied structure, designed after prototypes in Aswan, featured *mashrabiya* screens (made of wood and turned in different forms to create lattice-like patterns), doors, ornamental ceilings, and arabesques.⁵⁰ Native artisans demonstrated their craft-making, that were sold in the shops (fig. 15),⁵¹ and a café offered complimentary coffee, a *chibouk* (Turkish tobacco pipe), and *shisha* (water pipe) to visitors with passes from the Egyptian General Commissioner (Mariette 1867, 98). On the upper floor an anthropological gallery, organized by Mariette, displayed over five hundred skulls, and a number of mummies that were unwrapped at several sessions, offered by invitation to Parisians interested in the new field of anthropology.⁵² Two donkeys and two dromedaries, which Edmond indicated were from Lower, Middle, and Upper Egypt, as well as from the Sudan, were shown at the stables behind the *wikala* (Edmond 1867, 222-23; Mariette 1867, 101-02).

233); see also Douin 1933-34, 2, 16-17, and also for Egypt’s prizes at the exposition (18-19).

⁴⁸ Muhammad Ali began expanding into Sudan in 1820. Ismail would continue his grandfather’s expansionist policy focusing on Central Africa in the 1870s. On Egypt’s expansionist policy under both Muhammad Ali and Ismail, see Ibrahim 1998, 198-216.

⁴⁹ Ten mannequins included Untitled Female (possibly Grande dame), Dancer, Abyssinian woman, Female peasant, Male peasant, Negro woman, Negro man, merchant, *Cheikh-el-Beled*, and *Says* (one who runs before the cars) (Edmond 1867a, 238-39, 341-43; Douin 1933-34, 2, 16).

⁵⁰ For a description of the *wikala*, see Edmond 1867, 214-25; Mariette 1867, 95-100; Çelik 1992, 112-15.

⁵¹ They were jewelers, a saddle maker, an embroiderer, a turner, a *chibouk* (Turkish tobacco pipe) maker, a mat maker, and a barber (Edmond 1867a, 218-19, 253-55).

⁵² The first session presided by Dr. Paul Broca (1824-1880), General Secretary of the Society of Anthropology of Paris was held on May 28, 1867, and was attended by Mariette, and scientists, as well as writers and artists including Théophile Gautier (1811-1872), Maxime du Camp (1822-1894), Alexandre Dumas fils (1824-1895), Edmond de Goncourt (1822-1896) and Jules de Goncourt (1830-1870). See David 1994, 177-79; de Goncourt, de Goncourt 1888, 3, 129-33; Gautier 1877, 1, 98-110.

⁴¹ On the art and architecture of the Fatimids, see Ettinghausen, Grabar, Jenkins 2001, 187-214.

⁴² “Arab Art” or style was the term used to refer to “Islamic art” until the mid-twentieth century. The Museum of Arab Art in Cairo was renamed Museum of Islamic Art in 1952. For the terminology used to refer to Islamic Art (Reid 2002, 215).

⁴³ “Les premières mosquées vraiment arabes [...] ont été construites sur les bords du Nil [...] Importé ensuite en Syrie, en Perse, dans les Indes, en Sicile, à travers le nord de l’Afrique, en Espagne, et enfin en Turquie” (Edmond 1867a, 182).

⁴⁴ “Après avoir volé le génie arabe, ils l’ont laissé s’éteindre” (Edmond 1867a, 183).

⁴⁵ “L’Empire Ottoman n’a pas cherché à rivaliser de splendeur avec ses voisins de l’Égypte et de Tunis; il s’est borné à élever trois édifices de proportions modestes, plus propres à exciter la curiosité que l’admiration” (Gautier 1867, 51).

⁴⁶ “L’Égypte vivante [...] d’Ismael Pacha” (Edmond 1867a, 214).

⁴⁷ The galleries extended from the garden of the exposition’s Palace to the Gallery of Machines (Edmond 1867a,

Nearby, the Isthmus of Suez pavilion attracted large numbers of visitors because “the exhibition [...] also like the canal itself represented a transition between the Occident and the Orient”.⁵³ Ferdinand de Lesseps himself took part in the display, delivering lectures on the Suez Canal. The Suez Canal pavilion received the lengthiest reviews of all the exhibits, including one by Théophile Gautier, who in *Le Moniteur universel* called it a “gigantic project”. The display boasted a diorama of the isthmus by M. Rubé and M. Chaperon (decorators of the Paris Opera), relief maps of the canal towns, its natural history and geography, and even a stuffed camel (fig. 16).⁵⁴ For the French, the Suez Canal not only represented French engineering ingenuity, but was also financially important to those who had invested in the Suez Canal Company shares. For Egyptians, it was a colossal project that not only reflected their alliance with France, but also Egypt as the key to global trade routes.

The highlight of Egypt's presentation at the exposition however, was Khedive Ismail himself. In the *selamlik*, where he had private rooms to rest, Ismail was seen seated on a divan “smoking from his long Oriental pipe,” graciously welcoming notable Parisians with “the charm of his serious and fine spirit”.⁵⁵ Among his guests were the French Emperor and Empress and the Imperial Prince, who together toured the exhibit with Mariette and Edmond (fig. 17). The French press amply covered his sojourn in Paris. On June 18, *Le Figaro* wrote of his “good nature”, “good humor,” and “perfect French without the slightest accent”.⁵⁶ François Ducuing, the editor of the exposition's illustrated publication described Ismail's Parisian education as an “Occidental baptism,” and predicted Egypt was “destined to be the providence of Europe, sometimes for wheat, sometimes for cotton, and soon for transit”.⁵⁷

53 “Cette exposition [...] formant ainsi, comme le canal lui-même, une transition entre l'occident et l'orient” (*Rapport sur l'exposition universelle de 1867* 1869, 113).

54 Gautier, “Autour de l'Exposition V. L'Isthme de Suez”. *Le Moniteur Universel*, 21, 3 August 1867, 1067, rep. in Gautier 1877, 1, 110-22.

55 “Assis sur son divan, aspirant la fumée de sa longue pipe orientale [...] sous le charme de son esprit si sérieux et si fin” (Douin 1933-34, 2, 14).

56 “On a tout d'abord remarqué son air affable, sa tenue pleine de bonhomie et l'extrême bienveillance avec laquelle il accueille tout le monde”. Isma'il parle le français le plus pur, sans le moindre accent”. *Le Figaro*, 19 June 1867, in Douin 1933-34, 2, 8.

57 “L'Égypte destinée à devenir la providence de l'Europe, tantôt pour le blé, tantôt pour le coton, et bientôt pour le transit” (Ducuing 1867, 1, 375).

4 Conclusion

This essay aimed to show the various political, cultural, and economic subtexts underlying the Egyptian representation at the 1867 exposition. Lauded as “the most splendid” and “the most complete”,⁵⁸ the Egyptian display attested to Ismail's success in positioning his country as heir to the glorious Pharaonic and medieval Islamic civilizations, and as a modern, civilized and secular state, distant from its Ottoman sovereign who, as a French commentator noted, continued to resist Occidental ideas (de Merzer 1877, 406). In contrast, he described Ismail as “willing to transform Egypt, by borrowing our [France's] laws and [...] institutions,” and that the “canal of the isthmus of Suez has established so many serious interests between France and Egypt”.⁵⁹ While Edmond noted Egypt was “clearly chosen to introduce modern civilization to the rest of the Orient”,⁶⁰ the French press proclaimed it could “become among the most civilized countries in Europe,” and a *trait d'union* (hyphen) between Europeans and lesser known countries of the Far East (Marini 1867, 154).

Post exposition, Ismail accelerated his modernization programs including massive urban development projects and preparations for the grand ceremonial opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. All this however, came at a price. Enormous debts led to the establishment of a Dual Control by Britain and France in 1876, his abdication in favor of his son Tawfik (r. 1879-92) in 1879, and the British occupation in 1882. The 1867 exposition, however, marked a watershed moment for Egyptians to begin debating their national identity, which culminated in the early twentieth century.

58 “Les Expositions, la plus splendide, la plus complète”. An excerpt from a speech by M. Donnat, the director of the exposition's foreign section; quotation in a letter from Edmond, unaddressed, undated, and unsigned, numbered 186 (Edmond s.d.).

59 “Ismail-Pacha, au contraire, se montre tout disposé à transformer l'Égypte, en empruntant nos lois et nos institutions [...] Le canal de l'isthme de Suez a noué entre la France et l'Égypte tant d'intérêts sérieux” (de Merzer 1867, 406-07).

60 “L'Égypte a été visiblement choisie pour initier le reste de l'Orient à la civilisation moderne” (Edmond 1867a, 200).

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Displays of Islamic Art in Vienna and Paris Imperial Politics and Exoticism at the Weltausstellung and Exposition Universelle

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Abstract This paper examines the exhibition of Islamic art at the Weltausstellung in Vienna (1873) and the Paris Exposition Universelle (1878). In particular, it explores how European officials represented both inhabitants and their traditional decorative arts. As will be demonstrated, such displays anticipated more scholarly, specialized exhibitions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries through their strategic concentration on objects from specific societies.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 The Wiener Weltausstellung (1873). – 3 The Exposition Universelle of 1878. – 4 Comparisons & Conclusions.

Keywords Islamic Art. World's Fair. Weltausstellung. Exposition Universelle. Exhibition. Display. Vienna. Paris. Ottoman Turkey. Persia. Fin de siècle.

1 Introduction

World's fairs or universal expositions offered visitors a microcosm of nineteenth-century European technological advancements, colonial expansion, and global consumer culture. Concurrently, they afforded non-western countries the opportunity to exhibit and partake in commercial ventures that projected a feigned atmosphere of peace, cooperation, and equality among all nations. Such events displayed native peoples in national pavilions and exhibition halls that attempted to replicate their indigenous surroundings. Moreover, these occasions facilitated the staging of the first large public exhibitions of Islamic art held in the West.

This paper discusses the exhibition of Islamic art objects at the Weltausstellung in Vienna (1873) and the Paris Exposition Universelle (1878). In particular, this essay focuses on the sections of the Ottoman Empire, Persia, and the *Galérie Orientale* in the Trocadéro Palace. Special attention is paid to the displays of traditional decorative and fine arts. By evaluating articles, engravings, and photographs documenting these events, the aesthetic and conceptual differences between the installations are explored.

As will be demonstrated, the approaches and motivations of the Austrian and French exhibition organizers converged at times but equally dif-

fered from one another, and therefore embodied fundamental, diverging attitudes toward Islamic art and culture. While such displays were often colonialist and exotic in their conception and design, it is argued that they prefigured more specialized exhibitions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through their strategic concentration on objects from selected societies. Thus, exposition officials decisively established hierarchies that would eventually define future categorizations and perceptions of Islamic art and civilization in Europe.

2 The Wiener Weltausstellung (1873)

Like previous world's fairs, the Weltausstellung was laid out on vast proportions (fig. 1) in Vienna's Prater. Arranged according to racial categorizations and national hierarchies (fig. 2), the organization of these sections revealed the order of world cultures as determined by Europe, and alluded to power relations among the exhibiting countries. The European host nation occupied a superior position at the center, the independent western nations surrounded it, and non-western cultures or colonies were either allotted smaller exposition spaces or relegated to the peripheries. According to the plan of the Weltausstellung, Germany, Britain and France were assigned some of the largest, most prominent locations in the

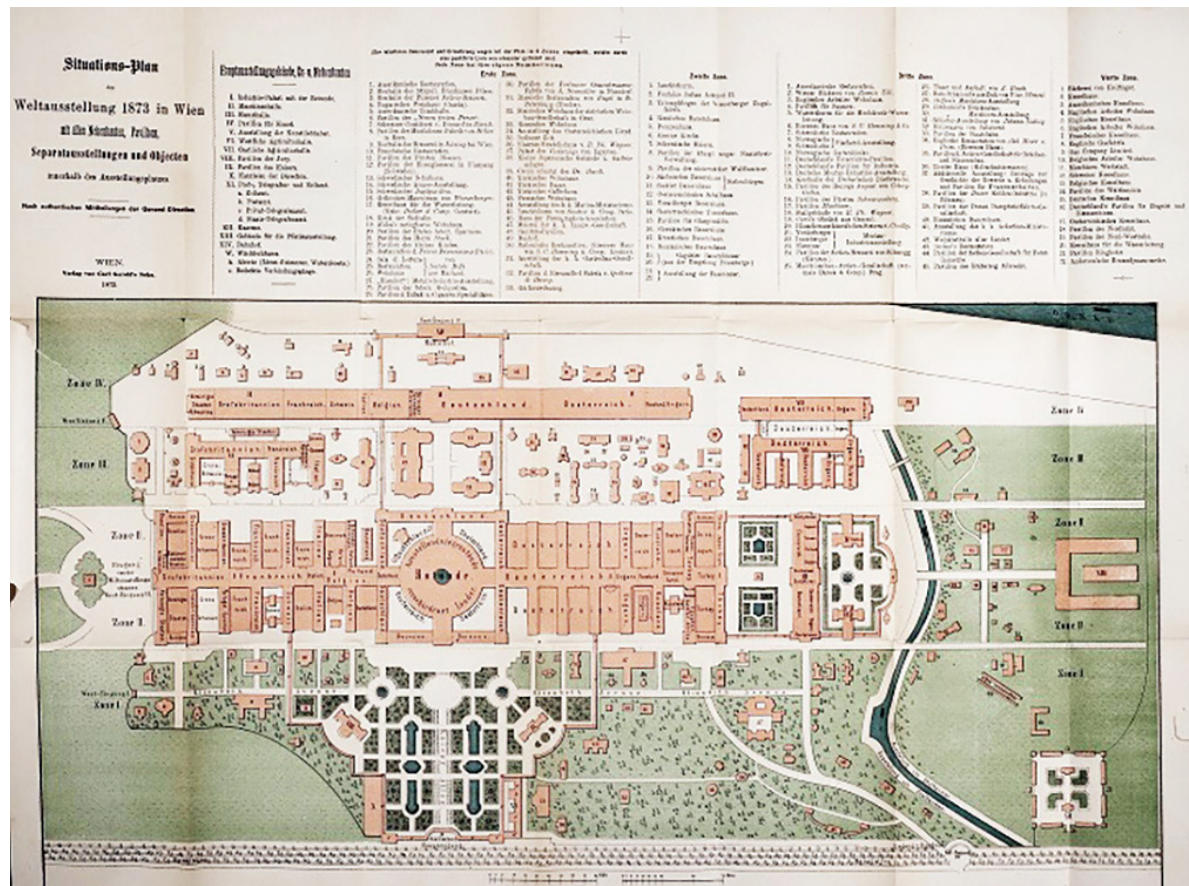


Figure 1. Plan of the Vienna Weltausstellung, 1873. Engraving (Falke 1873)

main rotunda (fig. 3), which housed different industrial exhibits, while Turkey, Persia, China, Japan and other Islamic nations were condensed into several smaller exhibition halls. As visitors strolled through the Fair, they observed artisans and technicians working on their traditional crafts and trades, all of whom were displayed as curiosities or trophies acquired via colonization by western Imperial powers, most notably Britain, France, and Belgium.

Whereas France had already established a large colonial empire in North Africa and mounted several universal expositions, this was the first such occasion to be staged by a Central European power which had sometimes been viewed as peripheral in international affairs. Thus, this event afforded Austrian authorities the opportunity to claim significant influence in global politics and garner prestige and recognition from competing European nations. Originally conceived by Austrian liberal politicians, bankers, and other entrepreneurs, the Weltausstellung aimed to transform Vienna from a provincial city into a

world metropolis with sophisticated culture, bustling trade, and thriving industries. Moreover, this Fair equally permitted Austria-Hungary to form new diplomatic and economic relationships with Islamic countries and helped to expose the Austrian public to Islamic art and culture. In contrast to France or Britain, the Habsburg Empire sought to expand its influence in the Balkans, Ottoman Empire, and Persia by more peaceful and less costly commercial measures than territorial expansion or colonization. These activities included railway construction, the establishment of trade agencies and schools, and the sponsorship of cultural missions (Esroy 2015, 30-31, 42-44; Kadletz 1980, 147-73). Exhibition organizers in Vienna represented the Islamic cultures of Turkey, Persia, and Egypt at pavilions whose architecture recalled actual monuments in those lands and amalgamated different historical styles and decorative forms. Several notable buildings (figs. 4-7) were the Egyptian Khedival Palace, Persian Pavilion, a replica of Sultan Ahmed III's Fountain in Istanbul, and a Turkish Café (cf. *L'Espos-*

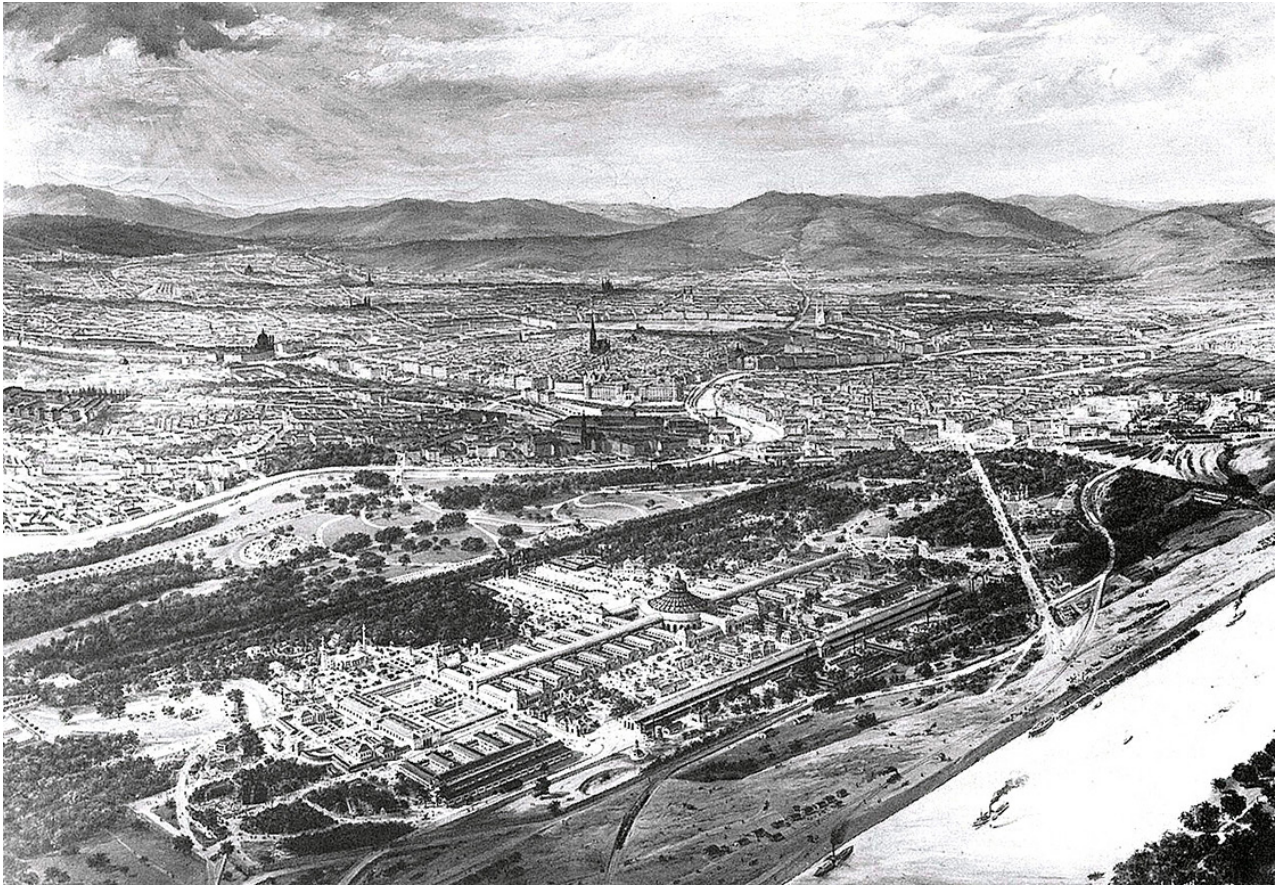


Figure 2. Bird's eye view of the Vienna Weltausstellung and Prater, 1873. Engraving (from Wikimedia Commons)

sizione Universale 1873; *Allgemeine Illustrierte Weltausstellungs-Zeitung* 1874).¹ These hybrid, exoticized structures and their contents summarized Islamic societies and presented visitors with a window onto their customs and lifestyles (Çelik 1992; Leprun 1986, 104). While such attractions actually stereotyped the characteristics of each ethnicity on view, they nevertheless attempted to instruct and, at times, entertain attendees by offering them an 'authentic' experience of the different societies' ways of life, one that perpetuated a myth of the static, unchanging Orient, which was frozen in the past.

Among the Islamic countries exhibiting at the Weltausstellung, Turkey and Persia are of particular interest.² For the first time in Austria and

other German-speaking nations, visitors could view art objects from these lands that were drawn from private collections and displayed alongside various ethnographic artifacts. In the main rotunda, both the Ottoman Empire and Persia had submitted a wide range of manufactures, agricultural products, minerals, and decorative wares. In the Turkish section the organizers arranged books, furniture, textiles, metalwork, ceramics, and clothing in the same room (fig. 8).³ In all like-

¹ For *L'Esposizione Universale*, 146-47, 212-13, 262-63, 281-82, 331-34, 597-98.

² In contrast to the 1878 Exposition Universelle, the Weltausstellung's non-western pavilions and exhibitions were very thoroughly documented through both engravings and photographs.

³ Of all the exhibiting Islamic nations, the Ottoman Empire received the largest space and representation from Austrian organizers. Such arrangements coincided with the pursuit of diplomatic rapprochement by two historically rival countries, both of which aimed to achieve mutually beneficial political and economic interests. Eventually, Turkey would become Austria's most important trading partner and closest ally in the Middle East. Furthermore, several major publications related to Ottoman culture were commissioned by Turkish officials specifically for this Fair: Victor Marie de Launay's *Usul-i Mi'mari-i 'Osmani* (*L'architecture ottomane*, 1873), a history of Turkish architecture which advocated the creation of a Neo-Ottoman style for modern structures; and the *Elibse i-'Osmaniye* (*Les costumes populaires de la*



Figure 3. The main rotunda at the Vienna Weltausstellung, 1873. Historic photograph from Wikimedia Commons

lihood, these objects included late nineteenth-century wares along with a selection of older objects that best represented Turkey's range of manufactured products and industrial arts.⁴ One notes the inclusion of plaster mannequins or statuettes dressed in various costumes that represented the diverse peoples who inhabited

Turquie, 1873), an ethnographic study of peoples living in the Ottoman Empire authored by Launay and Osman Hamdi Bey (1842-1910). For accounts of Austro-Turkish affairs and the *Usul-i Mi'mari-i 'Osmani*, consult Ersoy 2015, 1-27; 44-46; 132-240; Wharton 2015, 97-98.

⁴ Unfortunately, in contrast to the Persian, Japanese, and Chinese sections, an official catalogue of the Ottoman installation and an inventory of its artifacts were not published. Thus, it is not possible to determine many of the exact periods and types of the industrial wares that appear in engravings and historic photographs of this installation. Critic and cultural historian Jacob Falke (1825-1897) lamented this omission in his book, *Die Kunstindustrie auf der Wiener Aufstellung 1873*, 174.

Ottoman lands.⁵ Whereas in some areas objects were piled up or placed on tables, in other locations they were more neatly displayed in vitrine cases and cabinets. This somewhat haphazard, crowded installation melded seemingly disparate items in one exhibition space and encapsulated the traits of the cultures on view.

In the Persian section the display resembled the Ottoman exhibition in its crammed presentation of objects and through its combination of scientific, ethnographic, and artistic artifacts (figs. 9-10). Although the exact contents of the Turkish section were not recorded, a detailed inventory of the Persian exhibit does exist and it allows us to understand some of the motivations

⁵ For a detailed study of the *Elibse i-'Osmaniye* and various ethnic groups represented in the Ottoman section, see Ersoy 2015, 29-90.

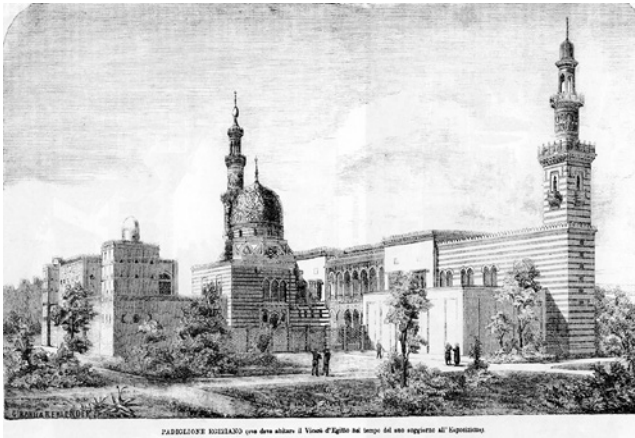


Figure 4. Egyptian Pavilion. Vienna Weltausstellung, 1873. Engraving (*L'Esposizione Universale 1873*)

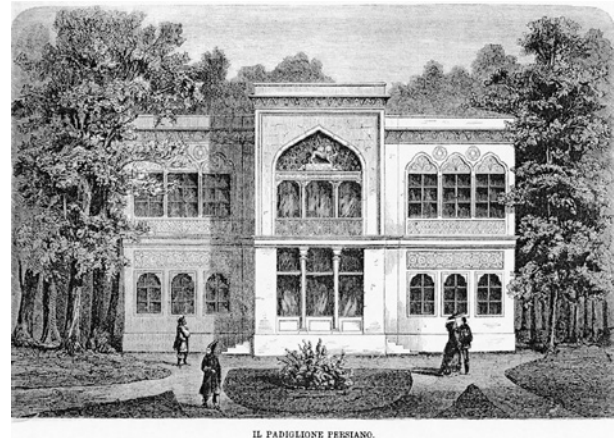


Figure 5. The Persian Shah's Pavilion. Vienna Weltausstellung, 1873. Engraving (*L'Esposizione Universale 1873*)



Figure 6. Sultan Ahmet III's Fountain. Vienna Weltausstellung, 1873. Engraving (*L'Esposizione Universale 1873*)

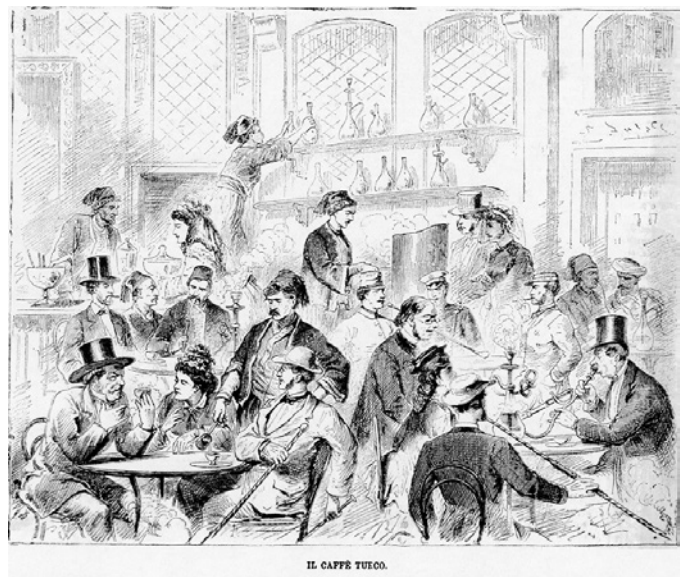


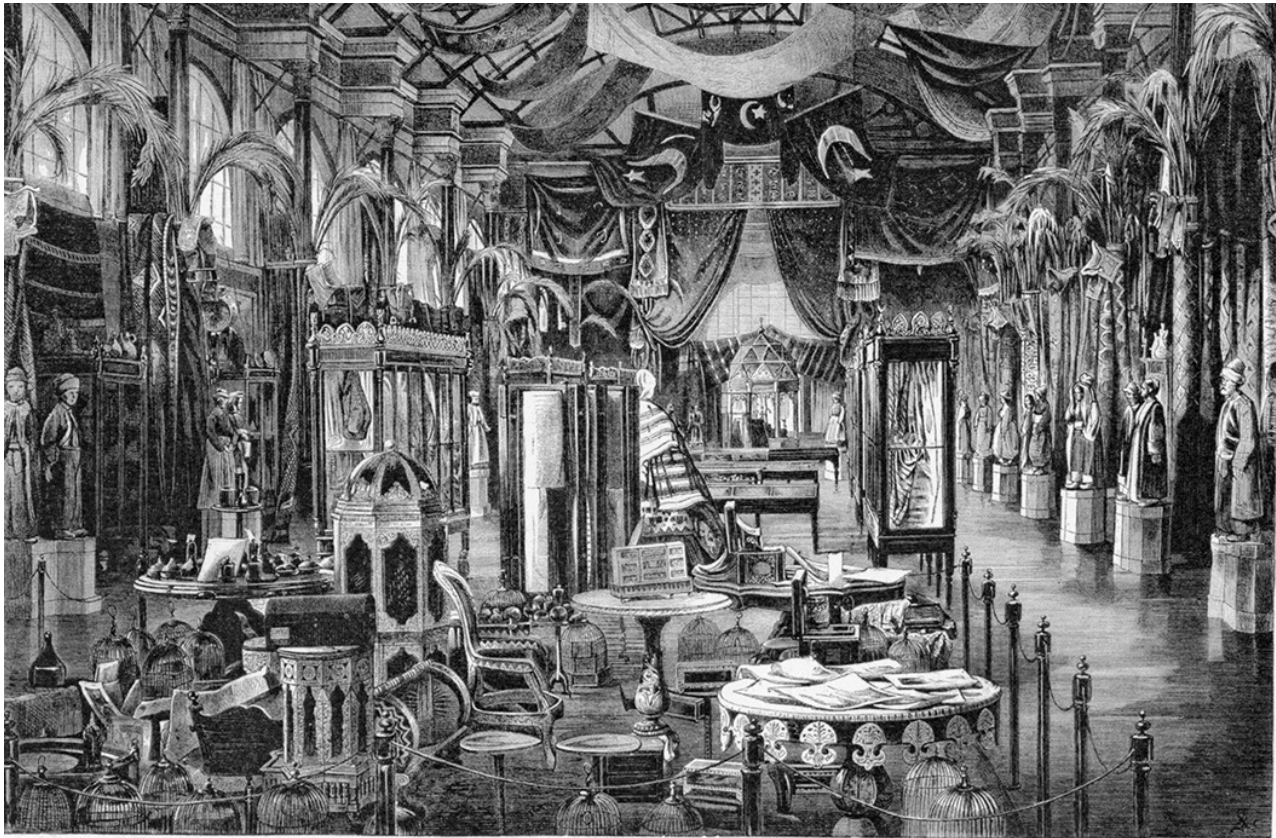
Figure 7. Interior view of the Turkish Café. Vienna Weltausstellung, 1873. Engraving (*L'Esposizione Universale 1873*)

and attitudes of the curators.⁶ Like other Middle Eastern countries that exhibited their products at the Weltausstellung, the Persian government participated in order to establish economic and cultural contacts with the West and learn about

its advances in science and technology (Pemsel 1989, 46). In the decades leading up to the Fair, Austria and Persia had forged close economic ties with one another, mostly because Shah Nasir-ad-Din pursued a policy of modernization along western models that he thought would improve his society and culture (Kadletz 1980, 147-73).⁷ He was the first Persian ruler to travel to Europe,

⁶ See *Special-Catalog 1873*. Several instrumental figures who coordinated Persia's involvement in the Fair were the Austrian General Consul in Beirut, Mr. Zwidinek, and Dr. Jakob Eduard Polak (1818-1891), a diplomat, personal physician, and tutor of Shah Nasir-ad-Din (1831-1896). An ethnographer and orientalist scholar, Polak helped to introduce the Austrian public to Persian history and culture through his translations and publications on a wide range of subjects. For more information on him, consult Werner 2014.

⁷ Among these reforms were the construction of a telegraph system with British assistance, attempts to restructure the Persian military, and the Austrian supervision of improvements to the country's postal and coin minting operations.



LA GALLERIA TURCA (Vedi pag. 598).

Figure 8. Turkish section, interior of the main rotunda. Vienna Weltausstellung, 1873. Engraving (*L'Esposizione Universale 1873*)

and he visited Vienna in August 1873, where he toured the Weltausstellung with Emperor Franz Joseph I (1830-1916) (*L'Esposizione Universale 1873*, 202-03, 211). The Shah's involvement in the event provided an excellent occasion for his regime to showcase its mercantile and trading enterprises, particularly carpet weaving and textile manufacturing, products which European consumers admired and acquired increasingly. As the authors of the catalogue explain, the primary purpose of this exhibition was commercial. However, it also sought to educate visitors about Persian geology, cultural traditions, art, and history by assembling a broad array of items.

Part of this display included examples from Persia's long artistic heritage. For this occasion Ali Kuli Mizra (1822-1880), Minister of Education and the uncle of Shah Nasir-ad-Din, loaned a portion of his art collection. In several historic photographs of the installation, we observe these artifacts, which are placed on tables, moveable walls, and in cabinets. Like the Ottoman installation, they included minerals, ceramics, weapons,

armour, and clothing in addition to miniatures, calligraphic pages, textiles, carpets, musical instruments, and scientific devices, which ranged in date from 1570 to 1860.

As described in several contemporary sources, nineteenth-century applied art objects from Persia such as clay, gold, and silver vessels, along with embroideries, were interspersed among Indian wares to illustrate key visual parallels between them (Falke 1873; 1875, 171-72; 174-77, 191). Dividing textiles, pottery, and metalwork according to common design elements, Jacob Falke characterized Persian and Indian works (figs. 11-12) by their extensive use of abstracted flower motifs and arabesques while he emphasized the predominance of geometric forms among Turkish, Levantine, and North African artifacts. For him, Indo-Persian ceramics, carpets, and fabrics achieved coloristic appeal and excellence through a harmony of assembled tones in which no single color dominated the other and subtle contrasts emerged (Falke 1873, 1875, 171-72; 174-77, 191). Similarly, Falke's colleague, Aglaia



Figure 9. Persian section. Vienna Weltausstellung, 1873. Historic photograph (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek/Wien, Inv. Nr. 63.704 E STEREO)



Figure 10. Persian section. Vienna Weltausstellung, 1873. Historic photograph (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek/Wien, Inv. Nr. 63.705 E STEREO)



Figure 11. Mid- to late nineteenth-century Persian metalware vessels. Engraving from Lützow, 1875

Figure 12. Mid- to late nineteenth-century Indian ceramic vessels. Engraving from Lützow, 1875

Figure 13. Table containing framed pages from sixteenth-century Persian manuscripts. Persian section, detail. Vienna Weltausstellung, 1873. Historic photograph. (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek/Wien, Inv. Nr. 63.705 E STEREO)



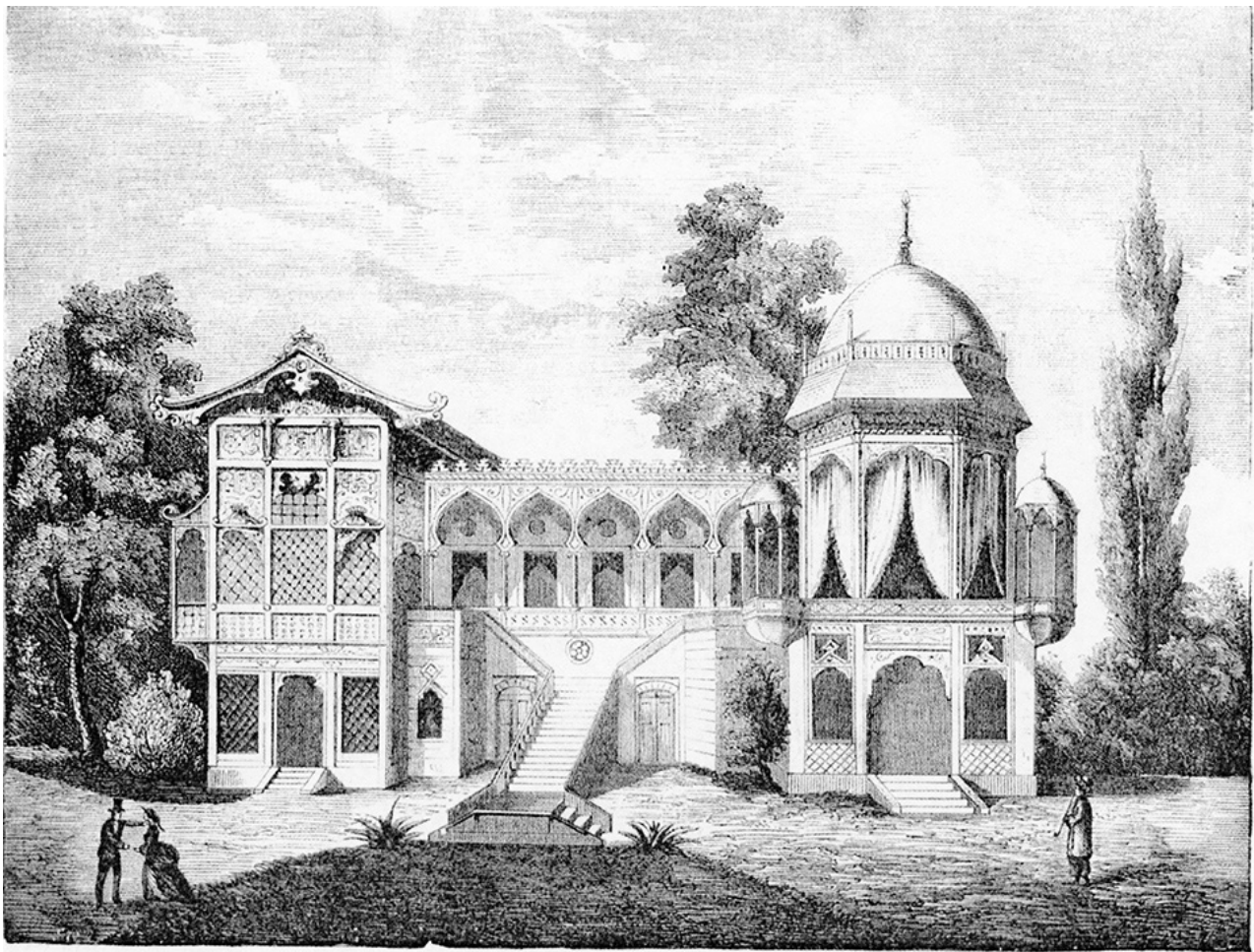
von Enders (1836-1883), lauded Persian and Indian embroideries for their intricate designs that gracefully intertwined birds and flowers using gold and silver threads (Enders 1875, 250-54).

Of all the objects on view, one set of works counted among those of the finest artistic quality and received considerable commendation from critics. In the lower left of one photograph (fig. 13), two framed manuscript pages arranged on a table are noteworthy because they could have derived from the *Hamzanama* (1562-1570), the renowned Persian novel recounting the adventures of Hamza bin Azrak.⁸ Alternatively, the free-

standing wooden frames could have contained images from a copy of the *Khamsa of Nizami* (1597) since this book was one of the few of its kind (apart from the *Hamzanama*) that featured both figural paintings and text. Therefore, it is not surprising that following the closure of the Weltausstellung the newly-created Orientalisches Museum (later the Österreichisches Handelsmuseum) purchased sixty *Hamzanama* folios from Ali Kuli-Mizra for its permanent collection of Far Eastern and Central Asian decorative arts (Pokorny-Nagel 2009, 38-40).

⁸ Due to the limited resolution of this photograph, it is difficult to determine exactly whether the visible framed pages derived from the *Hamzanama* or another Persian manuscript.

The *Hamzanama* was commissioned by the Mughal Emperor Akbar (1542-1605) and completed by Persian painters and artisans.



CIRCOLO ORIENTALE. (Costruzione in stile greco-moresco, situato nel parco dell'Esposizione).

Figure 14. The Cercle Orientale Pavilion. Vienna Weltausstellung, 1873. Engraving (*L'Esposizione Universale 1873*)

Like the exoticist displays of Muslim peoples scattered throughout the pavilions at the Weltausstellung, these works were supposed to provide moral, intellectual, and practical edification to visitors about Islamic societies. Responding both to trends in the British Arts and Crafts Movement and displays of Islamic art at the Vienna Fair, critics argued that with the rise of mass-production, European manufacturers of decorative art had declined because their products lacked their former originality, quality workmanship, and had been sullied by mass-production processes. In the view of various authors, specific aspects of Islamic decorative arts exhibited a harmony of ornament and form with their stylized, non-illusionistic use of floral and geometric patterns. Thus, designers needed to

seek inspiration from such 'pure' forms so that they could reinvigorate their industrial and applied arts traditions.

Engaging with these attitudes in their essays, Falke and Enders established a hierarchy within the nineteenth-century Islamic decorative arts that ranked each culture's products according to qualities of superior design and craftsmanship that exhibited refinement. According to Austrian critics, Indian metalwork and textiles were of the best quality while those exhibited by Turkey (excluding some carpets from Izmir) lacked refinement and exhibited "decadence" and "crudeness" by comparison. Persia stood in the middle of this classification system, followed by Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco. Often employing conde-

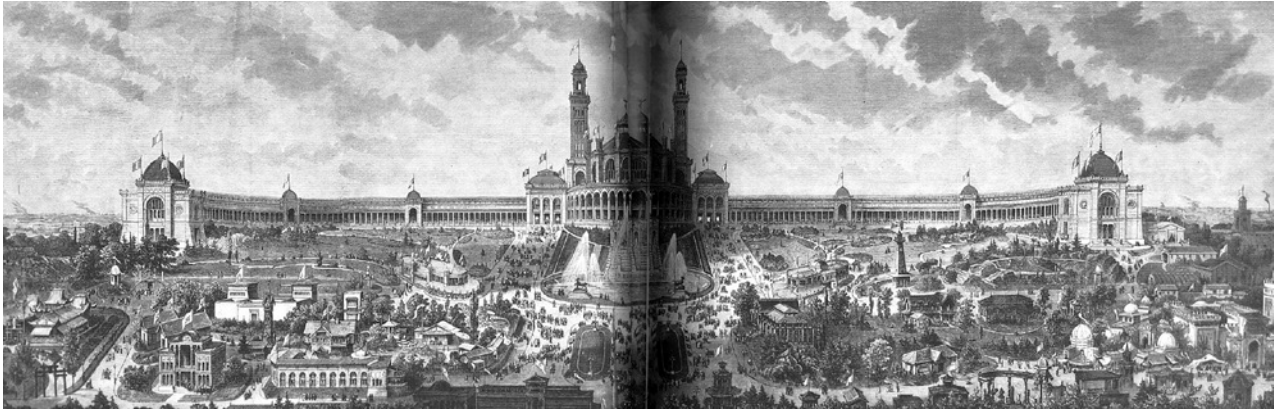


Figure 15. Trocadéro Palace. Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1878. Engraving (*L'Exposition Universelle 1878*)

scending assessments, Falke sweepingly argued that Indian craftsmen, through trade and cultural exchange, transmitted to their Persian counterparts abstracted floral motifs and arabesques, elements that they did not possess inherently, thus rendering the latter society's traditions more "perfect, diverse, and rich" (Falke 1873, 191). At the same time, however, he credited the Persians with employing the most free-thinking approach in their depictions of human figures in miniature paintings. In doing so, he attempted to elevate their aesthetic and cultural status by implying that such images more closely resembled and emulated exemplary European naturalistic representations.

Such categorizations, while often historically inaccurate and thoroughly grounded in Eurocentric attitudes toward race, civilization, and cultural sophistication, nevertheless shaped the critical reception of Islamic artistic traditions among other authors, collectors, and readers. Perhaps most significantly, these widely distributed publications and the displays themselves helped foster an emerging awareness of Islamic art and culture both in Austria and Europe at large, thus opening the door for further scholarly inquiry in subsequent decades. An immediate consequence of these activities was the establishment of the *Orientalisches Museum* during the *Weltausstellung*.⁹ Its founders, including Arthur von Scala (1845-1909) and Joseph Ritter von Schwegel (1836-1914), convened at the *Cercle Orientale* pavilion (fig. 14), where they steadily acquired Islamic artifacts from exhibiting countries to es-

tablish a "master collection" of industrial wares that informed visitors about the geography, inhabitants, and industries of non-western cultures (Ersoy 2015, 47-49; Pokorny-Nagel 2014, 188-93; Haslauer 2010, 276-78; Haslauer 2013).¹⁰

3 The Exposition Universelle of 1878

In the five years that elapsed between the end of the *Weltausstellung* and the opening of the 1878 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, the European consciousness of Islamic art increased steadily, as critics continued to praise the superiority of its designs and techniques, which helped to propel its status among scholarly circles.¹¹ In response, repositories such as the *Österreichische Museum für Kunst und Industrie*, *South Kensington Museum*, and *Union Central des Arts Décoratifs* gradually acquired and exhibited more objects. As France consolidated its colonies in the Maghreb and established close diplomatic and commer-

¹⁰ Scala was an important engineer, economist, and museum official. He played a seminal role in shaping the *Orientalisches Museum's* collections while Schwegel served as General Consul in Istanbul and Director of the Department of Commercial Policy in the Austrian Foreign Ministry. In contrast to the sections found in the rotunda, images and precise documentation of the *Cercle's* displays do not survive. This site also served to introduce visitors to the Austrian government's policy of economic and cultural expansionism in the East (Ersoy 2015, 47).

¹¹ Key authors such as the archaeologist Emile Prisse d'Avennes (1807-1879) promoted scholarship on Islamic art and architecture by founding the *Revue orientale et algérienne* (1852-1854) and publishing his renowned study *L'art arabe* (1869-1877), one of the earliest comprehensive studies of its kind on Cairene Islamic monuments and their decoration (Marchal 1896, 46).

⁹ This institution was modeled on British and French organizations such as the *South Kensington Museum* and the *Union Central des Arts Décoratifs*.

cial ties with various Muslim countries, many art objects from these regions flowed onto the Parisian art market. Next to Vienna and London, the French capital evolved into one of Europe's main centers for the study and collection of Islamic art and its display in large public exhibitions by the late nineteenth century.¹²

Whereas Austrian and German authors predominantly concentrated on how Islamic motifs could improve industrial art and design, French critics began to move away from this approach during the 1870s. In a series of pioneering articles from the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, French critic and scholar Henri Lavoix (1846-1897) responded to the growing presence of Islamic art in Paris. He surveyed the notion of representing human figures and animals in manuscripts, coins, metalwork, and ceramics from Egypt, Syria, and Persia, ranging in date from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries (Lavoix 1875). While by today's standards his observations and assertions exhibit noticeable inaccuracies and biases, he demonstrated specialized knowledge of Islamic art and culture, and exhibited an understanding of its complex, often paradoxical history. Such an approach is typically absent in the writings of contemporary Austrian and German theorists. Perhaps most significantly, Lavoix treated the works in his essay as individual specimens which he analyzed and interpreted in relation to their cultural and historical contexts.

The main purpose of his essays was to disprove a common, erroneous western attitude: that Islamic peoples banned entirely the portrayal of human figures.¹³ Lavoix was among the first Europeans to write about Islamic art broadly, taking into account its shared characteristics, styles, and geographic locations. However, like Falke, he possessed ethnocentric views that surfaced in his remarks. Despite his scholarly ambitions, Lavoix cannot be absolved of his Orientalist motivations that involved, according to Edward Said, the appreciation and study of Islamic culture as a



Figure 16. Persian miniature, fourteenth-fifteenth centuries. Engraving (Duranty 1878)

¹² For the pertinent literature on the collection and display of Islamic art in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe, see Troelenberg 2010; Roxburgh 2000; Vernot 2000; Labrusse 1997, 2007.

¹³ Austrian scholars such as Josef von Karabacek (1845-1918) addressed this issue subsequently. In contrast to Lavoix, he examined the phenomenon from a broad historical and theological perspective but neglected to analyze specific artworks to support his assertions. Two years later, the novelist and art critic, Louis Edmond Duranty (1833-1880), would write on this topic as well. Consult Karabacek 1876; Duranty 1878.



Figure 17. Glass mosque lamp. Egypt or Syria, 1309-1310. Engraving (Lavoix 1878)

means of asserting and advancing Europe's domination of "the East" (Said 1978, 3-6). For Lavoix, Arab culture was unoriginal and simple-minded because it copied other societies' ways of life and assimilated them. In his view, Arab artists merely integrated Byzantine and Ancient Near Eastern art forms. Thus, the author expressed both respect and disdain for Islamic culture, conveying his ambivalence and bias toward it. Despite his articles' shortcomings, Lavoix did make erudite and insightful observations about the objects that he chose to examine, and he advanced the study of artistic patronage in late medieval Egypt and Syria.

Though the official pavilions of Muslim nations at the 1878 Exposition Universelle (located on the Champs de Mars) still showed industrial manufactures and raw materials, one installation assembled a comprehensive selection of works that were displayed as individual *objets d'art*. In contrast to the Ottoman and Persian sections of the Weltausstellung, the Galerie Orientale display in the Trocadéro Palace (fig. 15) eliminated ethnographic and scientific artifacts. As such, it

was the first installation of its kind exclusively devoted to the arts of the Islamic world.¹⁴ According to contemporary accounts, the gallery itself was rather simple and lacked excessive pseudo-Islamic architectural ornament or accoutrements. As Rémy Labrusse has observed, this installation allowed the items to be viewed independently of the surroundings (Labrusse 2007, 66-73). Therefore, the planners of the 1878 Trocadéro Gallery innovatively removed the objects from an exotic, fantasy-like atmosphere.

Collaborating with Albert Goupil (1840-1884), an avid collector of Islamic art who initially inspired the show's inception and provided critical assistance in its realization, exhibition organizers realigned their foundational curatorial ambitions. Significantly, they shifted their chief aim away from simply seeking to revive European applied arts through the emulation of non-western forms to advocating a comprehensive survey and documentation of the history of Islamic art. Furthermore, their motivations were not primarily grounded in commercial interests but rather were driven more directly by scholarly pursuits.

In 1878, the novelist and art critic Louis Edmond Duranty (1833-1880) reported that the exhibition in the Trocadéro was subdivided into three halls: The Hall of Modern Egypt, the Hall of the Caliphs and The Great Oriental Hall on the first floor. This room, located in the right wing of the Trocadéro, was reserved for Islamic artworks, or as Duranty termed it, "arts islamites" (Duranty 1878, 1020).¹⁵ It included items from Persia, the Arab countries, Turkey, Egypt, and India that were arranged geographically by medium. As the author described, the hall's contents were well balanced and included an assortment of woodwork, glass, metalwork, fabrics, ceramics, arms and paintings, many of which were drawn from private collections (Duranty 1878, 1020).¹⁶ Like the Weltausstellung, most of the works were displayed in vitrine cases throughout the Galerie Orientale (Lavoix 1878, 784). One of Duranty's key goals was to discuss objects that exhibited diverse stylistic influences from both Arabic and East Asian sources. In order to identify these formal inter-

¹⁴ Unfortunately, no photographs or engravings of this installation are available. Therefore, my discussion of the display and its organization is based upon several contemporary sources.

¹⁵ This show also featured Hindu miniatures, Cambodian sculptures, and Chinese and Japanese bronzes.

¹⁶ Some other notable collectors included Charles Schéfer (1820-1898) and Jules Jacquemart (1837-1880).

relationships, he highlighted Persian miniature paintings (fig. 16), carpets, pottery, and lacquerware, pointing to their incorporation of intricate decorative motifs derived from nature such as vegetal scrollwork, trellises, phoenixes, gnarled trees, and water lilies (Duranty 1878, 1020-1027).

In a review of the Trocadéro Gallery, Lavoix boasted about the great importance of the works displayed in this space, claiming that in their variety and number they surpassed the works that might be found within aristocratic collections of contemporary Damascus (Lavoix 1878, 769-91). Sometimes prone to hyperbole, he doubted the possibility that such an "oriental museum" could be found anywhere that would match the Trocadéro's impressive exhibition of objects. His bold statement demonstrated his feelings of French national pride and superiority in relation to this installation, and he condescendingly concluded that displays of Islamic art in their countries of origin were inferior to those held in Europe and France in particular. Centering his attention on fourteenth-century Egyptian mosque lamps (fig. 17), Lavoix analyzed them formally and attempted to determine their original patrons based upon detailed examinations of their Arabic inscriptions. Specifically, he investigated whether these objects were produced for Mamluk sultans such as Nasir ad-din Muhammad and Baibars II or their emirs (Lavoix 1878, 776-80). In concluding his article, Lavoix advocated that a history of Arab art should be written by a scholar, and he implied that his friend, Charles Schéfer, might be a good candidate for the task.¹⁷

Building upon the work of his predecessors, Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931), a renowned anthropologist and psychologist, wrote several articles during the 1880s that critically defined a new outlook on the arts of Islam and that came to characterize future French scholarship on this subject (Le Bon 1883-1884, 66-73; 508-20). He differed sharply from Lavoix, for he viewed Islamic craftsmen as highly skilled and original artists, who were not copyists or assimilators of different forms and traditions. Le Bon's thoughts and methods were derived from his study, *La Civilisation des Arabes* (1884), which surveyed the religious customs and social practices of the Arab peoples. It also included several sections about their architectural heritage.

In his essays, Le Bon rebuked the assessments

of such previous reviewers as Lavoix (Le Bon 1883, 509-19). For him, Islamic peoples inherited and expanded upon the lessons and achievements of other cultures that preceded them. Consequently, Arab cultures were able to improve and advance over time. For the author, the "industrial arts" were just as important to understanding a society as the fine or high arts. Studying decorative, functional objects, many of which were displayed in the Trocadéro, revealed the intimate lives of cultures that produced them, allowed scholars to appreciate their artistic knowledge and techniques, and permitted specialists to comprehend how societies used the items in daily life. In Le Bon's opinion, Arab craftsmanship deserved praise notwithstanding the fact that it was not as refined as it had been in previous centuries. Thus, he believed that traditional and nineteenth-century Islamic workmanship still surpassed the methods and techniques of European manufacturers (Le Bon 1884, 70).

Furthermore, Le Bon critiqued over-simplified, often inaccurate studies of Islamic monuments from previous decades. He advocated studying the architectural diversity of the buildings that were produced by different peoples, spanning many lands but that were bound together by their use of common designs, concepts, and practices. Rather clairvoyantly, the critic anticipated the modern-day notion of broadly-defined forms of Islamic art and architecture, many of which are characterized by a shared system of beliefs and traditions spread across multiple continents (Le Bon 1883-1884, 70). By arriving at these conclusions Le Bon, like the curators of the 1878 installation, helped foster a new attitude toward Islamic artworks in which they would be viewed and exhibited as examples of fine art rather than as purely decorative wares.

By 1889 viewpoints similar to those expressed by Le Bon were interestingly echoed in an article by the Austrian architect and urban planner Camillo Sitte (1832-1903). In his discussion of Islamic ornament's impact on western applied arts, Sitte criticized Emile Prisse d'Avennes' book *L'art arabe* (1869-1877), in which the French author (much like Lavoix) had argued that Arabic peoples lacked their own original artistic abilities (Sitte 1889, 39). In contrast, Sitte maintained that Islamic decorative schemes, with their rich, harmonious variation of complex geometric and floral patterns, influenced Renaissance ornament considerably and laid the basis for its further development in subsequent periods. Specifically, he observed that the German engraver and sculptor

¹⁷ Interestingly, Henri-Jules Saladin (1826-1906) and Gaston Migeon (1861-1930) would later realize his suggestion and publish such a survey, viz., the *Manuel d'art musulman* (1905).

Peter Flötner (ca. 1490-1546) drew direct inspiration from Moorish botanical designs by incorporating vines, scrolls, and arabesques into some of his prints (Sitte 1889, 41). Sitte's remarks signalled a new trend among some Austrian critics whose traditionally Eurocentric assessments of Islamic art and civilization began to shift toward more balanced attitudes that would ultimately prevail as the nineteenth century drew to a close.

4 Comparisons & Conclusions

As this study has demonstrated, the 1870s and 1880s were a period of great transition in the analysis and display of these objects. In contrast to many of their Austrian and German colleagues, French reviewers and curators attempted to move beyond solely employing Islamic art to revive the applied arts and industrial design. Instead, they directed their attention toward scholarship, antiquarian values, and the aesthetic appreciation of individual works. Eventually, these concerns would displace previous preoccupations with the decorative arts among critics and academics alike. In addition, articles in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, devoted to Islamic art, illustrated a level of scholarly expertise and sophistication that remained unparalleled through the 1890s. By the end of this decade, Austrian, German, British and other scholars also began to specialize in specific periods, publish on them more extensively and establish departments in universities and museums devoted to their study.¹⁸

Thus, it is argued that the French organizers of the 1878 Trocadéro galleries ultimately surpassed their more conservative Austrian colleagues' undertakings. Decisively, they broke with previous, eclectic installations found in the Turkish and Persian sections of the Weltausstellung. Concurrently, French curators and writers became more cognizant of the diversity of Islamic artistic traditions, and they advocated their serious consideration as an academic field within the disciplines of

art history and archaeology, effectively laying the basis for a common scholarly method of studying Islamic art that would emerge in twentieth-century Europe. These changes equally exerted a considerable impact on the practical methods of publicly displaying Islamic art at world's fairs and in future exhibitions, most notably at the Exposition d'art Musulman (Paris, 1903) and Ausstellung von Meisterwerken muhammedanischer Kunst (Munich, 1910). In these installations, Islamic objects were classified and displayed by region, chronology, technique and medium, and the cultures featured most prominently at the Fairs were emphasized: the Ottoman Empire, the Levant, Egypt, Persia, and India. In conclusion, the Weltausstellung and 1878 Exposition provided a critical impetus for exhibiting Islamic artworks in a manner that sensitively and thoughtfully attempted to consider their thematic, historical, and cultural relationships.

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¹⁸ Some of these individuals included Henri Saladin, Robert Murdoch Smith (1835-1900), Gaston Migeon, Josef Strykowski (1862-1941), Friedrich Sarre (1865-1945), Alois Musil (1868-1944) and Ernst Herzfeld (1879-1948). From approximately 1895 through much of the early twentieth century, books and articles on Islamic art and architecture increased significantly in number as archaeologists, art historians and other scholars published their research prolifically. For several studies on the growth of such scholarship, consult Marchand 2010; Wokocek 2009 and the essays in Vernoit 2000.

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Zaragoza en la Exposición de París de 1878 a partir de fuentes de archivo y fotografía

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Abstract Since their appearance in the 19th century, universal exhibitions have been closely related to the artistic collections of numerous nations, and they have been a fundamental source for art historians as a historical event in which the most outstanding novelties of each period can be observed. However, the study and more detailed knowledge of the attractive pavilions, or the award-winning artistic works displayed in these events has diverted the attention from many other artistic projects. The contribution of the Provincial Commission of Monuments of Zaragoza to the 1878 Universal Exhibition not only enabled awareness to be raised about the historical-artistic riches of our province, but also helped spread knowledge about the Aragonese heritage outside our borders through the assembly of a comprehensive catalogue, and a splendid photo album of Aragonese artistic works, which were sent to Paris.

Sumario 1 Consideraciones preliminares: Arquitectura Neomudéjar y Ecléctica en las Exposiciones Universales. – 2 Primeras tentativas de la Comisión de Monumentos para realizar una Exposición Retrospectiva. – 3 Las colecciones histórico-artísticas de Zaragoza visitan París. – 4 Conclusiones.

Keywords Commission of monuments. Exhibition. Photography. Heritage. Zaragoza.

1 Consideraciones preliminares: Arquitectura Neomudéjar y Ecléctica en las Exposiciones Universales

La aparición de las Exposiciones Universales a mediados del siglo XIX se había convertido desde su primera celebración en 1851 en uno de los principales logros de las grandes potencias mundiales para dar a conocer los más relevantes avances tecnológicos y científicos, a la vez que expositores de los tesoros artísticos del mundo entero (Viera de Miguel 2016). Desde 1867, la decisión adoptada por la organización para construir un pabellón representativo del país invitado a la muestra dio lugar a una arquitectura efímera (Hernández Martínez, Poblador Muga 2004; Sánchez Gómez 2006) e identitaria del estilo nacional, cuyo ejemplo sirvió a la postre en tipologías constructivas que seguirán su estela. Este propósito se consiguió en el caso del Neomudéjar, cuando el arquitecto Lorenzo Álvarez Capra construyó en este estilo el Pabellón español de la Exposición de Viena de 1873 (Biel Ibáñez, Hernández Martínez 2005, 21-24). Una interesante edificación nada convencional que proyectaba en el espectador un atractivo exotismo y una nueva visión de nuestro país.

Este exitoso proyecto volvió años más tarde a ser el principal estímulo de los patrocinadores españoles para la muestra de París de 1878.

Presidida por el Ministro de Fomento, el Conde de Toreno,¹ la Comisión general española fue liderada, sin embargo, por José de Cardenas, Director general de Instrucción Pública Agricultura e Industria. Fue realmente esta distinguida personalidad quien asumió las tareas de la presidencia y propuso una vez más a Álvarez Capra para realizar el pabellón de la exposición parisina. No obstante, la oferta trasladada al arquitecto fue denegada por cuestiones personales siendo finalmente Agustín Ortiz de Villajos el responsable del proyecto. Este arquitecto madrileño se encargó del levantamiento de planos, la ejecución del pliego de condiciones y la dirección de las obras desde la capital española, aunque fue su hermano Manuel quien llevó a cabo realmente *in situ* la construcción. La obra de los hermanos Ortiz de Villajos resultó toda una construcción ecléctica al incorporar en su fachada un lenguaje artístico genuinamente español e inspirado en la más pura esencia de nuestra arquitectura nacional (fig. 1).

Con una entrada principal formada por cinco pabellones de ingreso, claramente diferenciados en dos pisos, la disposición de los ubicados a ambos lados de la fachada y el situado en el eje central aparecían enfatizados en

1 Francisco de Borja Queipo de Llano y Gayoso de los Cobos.

Figura 1. *Fachada del Pabellón de España para la Exposición Universal de París de 1878, 1878. Albúmina sobre papel (colección del Autor)*



proporción y altura respecto a los otros dos más retranqueados. Una singular portada donde, a modo de tapiz ornamental, confluían las mejoras tradiciones toledanas, granadinas y sevillanas, mediante un rico programa decorativo de fabricación española que recordaba las mejoras construcciones arquitectónicas palaciegas de la monarquía española medieval, tal y como podemos asemejar al proyecto del rey Pedro I, en 1364, cuando se realizó en los Reales Alcázares una de las primeras fachadas monumentales de la edificación civil en la Península Ibérica.

La memoria oficial de la exposición redactada por el comisario general José Emilio de Santos nos resume en buena medida el interés manifiesto de plasmar en este pabellón la idiosincrasia del pueblo español:

Hay en España edificios donde están reflejados gallardamente las ideas de tres estilos principales en el arte musulmán, y por ello entramos a estudiar, las del primero en la Catedral de Córdoba y en el único, pero importante resto, conservado en la de Tarragona; las del segundo en la destrozada Aljafería de Zaragoza, las del postrero en las fantasías, sueños, delirios y quimeras poéticas de los moros granadinos; y, por último las modificadas ideas mudéjares, puestas al servicio de las cristianas y hebraicas en la capital Imperial Toledo. (Emilio de los Santos 1881, 134-35)

De esta manera el resultado alcanzado a ojos del público internacional permitía identificar una fachada ecléctica de elementos cristianos y árabes con un exacerbado exotismo hispánico.

La presencia de las colecciones españolas en la Exposición de 1878 contó con el favor de D. Francisco de Asís para trasladar una muestra de la Armería del Palacio Real además de un conjunto de obras artísticas procedentes de los museos dependientes del Ministerio de Fomento, donde destacaban piezas del naciente Museo Arqueológico Nacional. Sin embargo, la representación del patrimonio artístico español pudo haber sido cuantitativa y cualitativamente mejor, como lo demuestra la reducida participación de particulares, instituciones provinciales y algunos museos nacionales, como el arqueológico de Córdoba y de Tarragona, o el provincial de Segovia. A esta lista debemos añadir la escasa participación de las Comisiones Provinciales de Monumentos Históricos y Artísticos, al concurrir únicamente Zaragoza, Salamanca y León.

Vinculada a la sección de arte retrospectivo, que presentaba piezas de arte europeo desde la antigüedad más remota hasta el año 1800 (Lasheras Peña 2009, 209), se exhiben en tres salones: de Carlos V, de Goya y etnográfico, la principal muestra de obras de arte españolas (fig. 2).

Si nos detenemos en la participación de la provincia zaragozana debió ser realmente significativa, a tenor de la visita practicada por el

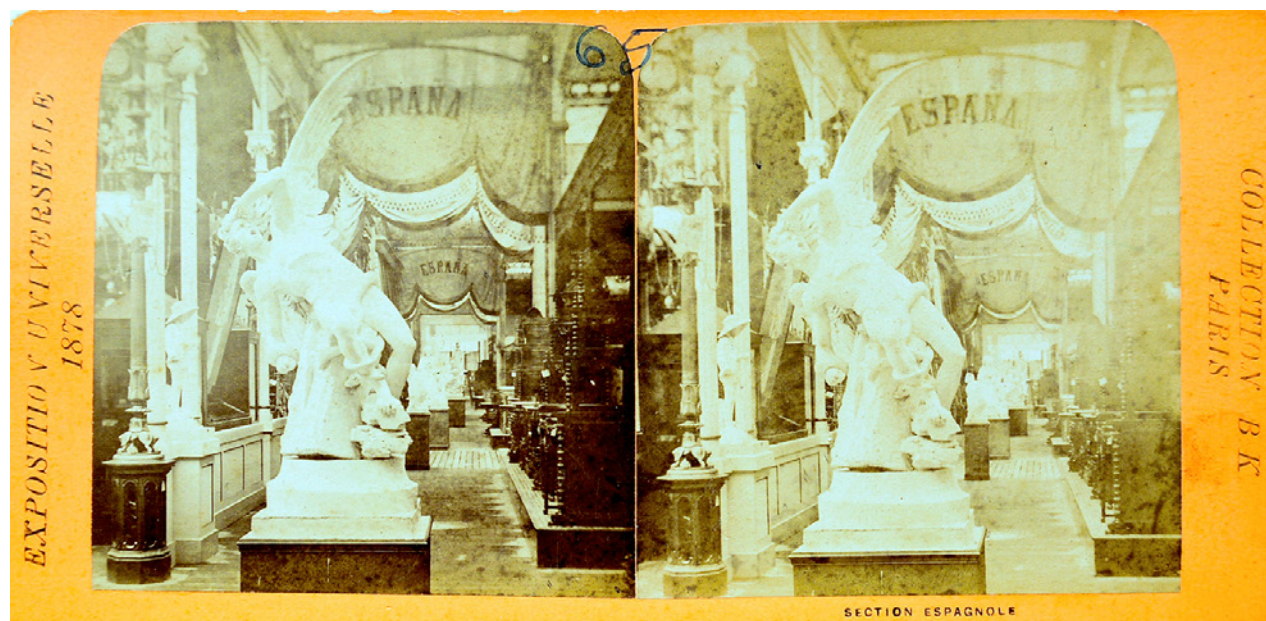


Figura 2. *El Ángel Caído*. Obra de Ricardo Bellver y Ramón, en uno de los salones de la sección española, Exposition Universelle, 1878. Albúminas sobre tarjeta de cartón. Collection B K París (colección del Autor)

Director de la Escuela especial de Veterinaria de Zaragoza, el Doctor en Medicina y Cirugía Pedro Martínez de Anguiano, cuando realizó su viaje hasta París como comisionado de la Real Sociedad Económica Aragonesa de Amigos del País:

Pasamos después a ver nuestra Sección de Pinturas y con agradable sorpresa vimos todas las salas llenas de admiradores. Llamaban la atención el famoso cuadro del laureado pintor aragonés Sr. Pradilla, "Doña Juana La Loca" que ya conocíamos por haberlo visto en la Exposición de Madrid cuando el régio enlace de nuestro querido Rey D. Alfonso XII (q.D.g.) con la malograda Reina Mercedes (q.e.p.d.). Nos llamó muchísimo la atención el cuadro del Sr. Gonzalvo, que representa el interior de la capilla de San Braulio de la Catedral de la Seo de Zaragoza que le habíamos visto pintar, el cuadro de Pescador y algunos otros. En esta Sección creemos que nuestra España estaba dignamente representada. (Martínez de Anguiano 1879, 29)

De estas palabras se deduce el interés que suscitaron las obras aragonesas expuestas en el pabellón español, en especial la magnífica pintura de historia realizada por el pintor Pradilla, citada por el mismo Pedro Martínez de Anguiano, una de las obras más significativas de este estilo pictórico en nuestro país en el siglo XIX.

2 Primeras tentativas de la Comisión de Monumentos para realizar una Exposición Retrospectiva

La contribución de la Comisión Provincial de Monumentos de Zaragoza en la Exposición Universal de 1878 fue un proyecto ambicioso que ya venía gestándose desde la década precedente. Ángel María de Pozas y Escanero, secretario de la Comisión zaragozana en aquel momento, fue el impulsor de esta idea a imagen y semejanza del éxito conseguido en la Exposición Retrospectiva de Barcelona de 1867. El interesante informe realizado por la Comisión de la ciudad condal entendía necesario la realización de estos eventos para dar a conocer la belleza del Arte y su aplicación inmediata en las producciones industriales solicitadas por los diversos mercados internacionales: «y las Exposiciones universales han sancionado el principio de que no basta una buena elaboración para que las producciones industriales que entren en la jurisdicción del arte suntuario sean apreciadas, sino que es indispensable además que las formas sean bellas» (Serra i Gilbert 1868, 3).

La notoriedad de la muestra, alcanzada no solo por el volumen de objetos artísticos sino también por la calidad de ellos, fue puesta en valor por la Academia de Bellas Artes una vez impreso el Catálogo razonado de pintura, escultura y artes suntuarias (*Catálogo de la*

Exposición Retrospectiva 1867). La adquisición de este ejemplar años más tarde por la Comisión zaragozana sirvió de base para conformar la pretendida *Exposición Retrospectiva* durante las fiestas del año 1872 en honor a Nuestra Señora del Pilar. El programa propuesto por Ángel María de Pozas recogía casi literalmente en ocho epígrafes el reglamento realizado en la barcelonesa del año 1867, cuya relación de obras a exponer bien por particulares o corporaciones debía expresar la procedencia y noticias históricas conocidas acerca de las piezas seleccionadas.²

Esta iniciativa resultaba muy interesante para los intereses de la Comisión porque ponía de manifiesto su relevante papel como principal organismo artístico de la provincia con capacidad para gestionar, difundir y dar a conocer a la sociedad aragonesa nuestro patrimonio. Pero a pesar del interés mostrado hacia la ejecución de este proyecto finalmente no llegó a materializarse, bien por la escasa implicación de coleccionistas, bien por la falta de asignaciones económicas. Estos contratiempos dejaron pendiente la exposición para el año siguiente, una vez se acuerda en la primavera de 1873 la creación de una subcomisión encargada de llevar a cabo su exhibición en el Museo de Zaragoza, para el mes de octubre.³ Una vez más, asuntos de mayor importancia ejercidos por la Comisión zaragozana dejaban pendiente la 'retrospectiva-arqueológica', aplazándola en el tiempo hasta 1908, con motivo de la *Exposición Hispano-Francesa* celebrada en Zaragoza (Hernández Martínez, Poblador Muga 2007).

3 Las colecciones histórico-artísticas de Zaragoza visitan París

La Comisión General Española,⁴ corporación encargada a nivel estatal de las actividades emprendidas para la representación en la *Exposición Universal de París de 1878*, se dirigió por mediación de su presidente, José de Cárdenas, mediante un primer oficio en noviembre de 1877 al presidente de la Comisión de Monumentos Históricos y Artísticos de Zaragoza. En él, se hizo constar la importancia de la representación de la institución artística en la muestra mediante el envío de los trabajos ejercidos desde que quedo establecida. En concreto: «Colecciones duplicadas de cuantas memorias, discursos, planos haya publicado en el espacio de los diez últimos años».⁵

Una vez recibida la correspondencia en Zaragoza, se inició desde la Secretaría los primeros pasos para extraer en casi una veintena de Memorias los trabajos realizados por la Comisión en la última década. José de Cárdenas, que desconocía la ejecución de estos resúmenes que iban a remitirse a la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando se anticipó con un nuevo comunicado, el 8 de enero de 1878, para averiguar las intenciones de la corporación zaragozana.⁶

La Comisión no tardó en mandar contestación a la Comisión general española para participar en la muestra mediante el envío del *Catálogo del Museo Provincial de Pintura y Escultura de Zaragoza* (1867) junto con un apéndice manuscrito donde se recogían las últimas adquisiciones realizadas hasta la fecha, además de un ambicioso *Álbum del Museo de Zaragoza dispuesto para la Exposición de París* (1878) compuesto por veinticinco pliegos de cartulina

2 Museo Provincial de Zaragoza (MPZ), Archivo-Biblioteca, C-76-100, L. 78, Proyecto de una Exposición retrospectiva en Zaragoza bajo la Dirección de la Comisión de Monumentos. «1º Esculturas de todos géneros y de toda clase de materiales, 2º Pinturas y grabados por toda clase de procedimientos, 3º Medallas, camafeos, sellos y monedas, 4º Joyas, alhajas, insignias, códices y libros de uso religioso profano, 5º Armas ofensivas y defensivas, 6º Instrumentos de música, 7º Obras de cerrajería y broncearía, como material de construcción de edificios, 8º Muebles y utensilios de toda clase de materiales y de uso religioso y profano, 9º Producciones cerámicas y de cristalería y vidriera, 10º Estofas y brocados de todas clases, bordados y recamados».

3 MPZ, Archivo-Biblioteca, Memoria Nº 9, Memoria de las Actas y Tareas de la misma durante el 2º trimestre de 1873 (Abril-Mayo-Junio).

4 Gazeta: colección histórica. *Gaceta de Madrid* (GM), 79, 20/III/1877, 776-78: Dentro del *Reglamento* de la Comisión General Española para la Exposición de 1878 de París se recogen las siguientes nueve secciones: «Arte primitivo y antigüedades de las Galias, Escultura antigua de la Edad Media y del Renacimiento. Glíptica, Numismática gala y de la Edad Media. Medallones. Sigilografía, Cerámica de la Edad Media. Renacimiento. Lozas y porcelanas, Monumentos. Libros incunables. Dibujos. Encuadernaciones, Armas y armaduras, Platería. Marfiles. Cristales. Alhajas, Mueblaje. Telas. Tapicería, Etnografía o descripción plástica de las costumbres de los pueblos no europeos».

5 MPZ, Archivo-Biblioteca, sig. 101-138, L. 121, Madrid 30/XI/1877.

6 MPZ, Archivo-Biblioteca, sig. 101-138, L. 121, Madrid 8/I/1878.

fin a donde se iban a disponer 85 fotografías referidas a objetos del Museo entre los siglos XI al XV⁷ (fig. 3).

Para abordar convenientemente ambos trabajos, participaban junto a Ángel María de Pozas los vocales Bernardino Montañés Pérez y Pablo Gil y Gil en calidad de conservadores del Museo con dos misiones fundamentales: realizar el apéndice manuscrito para ampliar el número de objetos artísticos ingresados hasta la fecha en el Museo y dictaminar el mérito histórico-artístico de 19 retratos procedentes del Monasterio de Rueda, donde se representaban abades de la Orden de Bernardos, como Gastón de Ayerbe, el Cronista de Aragón, Miguel Zapater, o el Obispo de Lérida, Miguel Escartín, entre otras personas distinguidas. Un conjunto de lienzos pictóricos, fechados algunos de ellos en siglo XVII, cuya ejecución apenas resultó relevante para la historia del arte, según recoge el testimonio de Bernardino Montañés:

Estos cuadros son de muy escaso mérito artístico y solo tienen el interés histórico relativo a la orden del cister en que florecieron los Santos y Abades que representan. De estos la mayor parte son convencionales ó ideales y solo tienen carácter de verdaderos retratos los consignados con los números 252. 253. 256. 258 y 259.⁸

A esta relación de piezas se anotan las cedidas por el Arzobispo de Zaragoza Manuel García Gil y procedentes de la Orden de San Juan de Jerusalén, según recoge la *Real Orden de 2 de Junio de 1877*, referente al archivo procedente del Palacio de San Juan de los Panetes. Esta serie de obras de arte lo conformaban 7 retratos pictóricos y una colección de 67 grabados de grandes maestros de la Orden atribuidos a Francisco Barbazza en 1763. Por último, se anotaban el conjunto de 12 obras cedidas en depósito por el Museo del Prado sobre artistas españoles del siglo XIX, entre los que se encontraban obras de los zaragozanos Marcelino de Unceta, Pedro Gonzalvo Pérez o Carlos Larraz, junto con otros lienzos de los sevillanos Carlos María Esquivel o Valeriano



Figura 3. José María Toro, Portada del Álbum del Museo de Zaragoza dispuesto para la Exposición de París en 1878, 1878. Museo de Zaragoza, FD01476 (foto: José Garrido)

Domínguez Becquer, entre otros.⁹

La variedad de obras tuteladas por la Comisión desde la última década alcanzó un total de 67 piezas artísticas. Un volumen considerable de objetos que sumados a los catalogados en la última impresión de 1867 terminó por reunir en el Apéndice mencionado un total de 350 obras.¹⁰

A pesar de registrar las medidas, inscripciones, fechas o incluso las autorías de numerosas obras incorporadas al *Catálogo del Museo Provincial*, la elaboración de este apéndice manuscrito carecía de ilustraciones que permitieran al visitante hacerse una idea general del conjunto de piezas descritas. Para suplir este vacío la Comisión preparó un *Álbum* monográfico con fotografías representativas del Museo zaragozano. El encargado de 'arreglar' la publicación no fue otro que el fotógrafo oficial de la Comisión, Manuel Hortet y Molada (Garris Fernández 2015). Su aportación profesional a este proyecto ha permitido ampliar no solo su trayectoria artística sino dar a conocer uno de los primeros trabajos en la historia de la fotografía artística para su exhibición universal, permitiendo por un lado exhibir las riquezas histórico-artísticas de la provincia y a la vez dar a conocer varios gabinetes fotográficos zaragozanos fuera de España (Hernández Latas 2010). Por ello, aunque no fue el único ejemplar presentado a la muestra

⁷ MPZ, Archivo-Biblioteca, sig. 101-138, L. 122. Expediente del *Álbum* que se remitió a la Exposición Universal de París en 1878. *Catálogo del Museo Provincial* con las notas de los apéndices al mismo.

⁸ MPZ, Archivo-Biblioteca, S/i, Zaragoza, 9/II/1878.

⁹ MPZ, Archivo-Biblioteca, S/i, Zaragoza, 9/II/1878.

¹⁰ MPZ, Archivo-Biblioteca, S/f, Objetos que adquiere la Comisión de Monumentos después de imprimir el primer *Catálogo del Museo Provincial* (1867).



Figura 4. Antonio Gascón, *Conjunto de capiteles y celosía de labor geométrica del palacio de la Aljafería*. Albúminas sobre papel, 1867. Museo de Zaragoza, FD01476 (foto: José Garrido)

con colecciones fotográficas, tal y como se refiere Gumersindo Vicuña y Lazcano (1878, 266) en su obra sobre la famosa serie de tipos españoles realizada por Jean Laurent, si que resulta una obra pionera en la difusión del arte aragonés en el extranjero.

Para su diseño se emplearon 73 albúminas con un estudiado discurso cronológico y estilístico que permitía representar e identificar la naturaleza de las piezas escultóricas, pictóricas o arquitectónicas. Tanto la forma como el tamaño de cada una de las copias fotográficas fueron elementos a tener en cuenta para elaborar cada una de las composiciones seleccionadas (fig. 4).

Las 22 primeras imágenes respondían a restos árabes del siglo XI trasladados desde el Palacio de la Aljafería al Museo, con un característico tratamiento individualizado de varios capiteles en alabastro y fragmentos de yeso adornados con labor geométrica o de ataurique. Su ejecución por el fotógrafo Antonio Gascón¹¹ resultaba un muestrario de piezas suspendidas en el “aire” y carentes de profundidad, además de un encuadre muy rígido que apenas dejaba espacio para intuir la dimensión de las obras. Todo lo contrario a las

6 fotografías siguientes propiedad de J. Laurent y Cía (Romero Santamaría et al. 1997) donde la composición de los capiteles y fragmentos pertenecientes también a la Aljafería muestran un naturalismo más evidente gracias a la profundidad de campo y los contrastes de luz conseguidos por el autor.¹²

La siguiente serie de imágenes son 9 escenas religiosas de época medieval dedicadas al apóstol Santiago y la Virgen del Pilar¹³ regaladas por el académico de la historia y secretario del Cabildo de N^{ra} Sra. del Pilar, Diego Chinestra, a la Comisión de Monumentos.¹⁴ La reproducción de estas fotografías permitió sacar a la luz una breve

¹² Zaragoza_1731-1732-1733, Museo Provincial, Detalle de la mezquita de la Aljafería; Zaragoza_1734-1735-1736, Museo Provincial, Capiteles árabes del castillo de la Aljafería.

¹³ MPZ, Archivo-Biblioteca, sig. 101-138, L. 122. Reseña del *Álbum* que se mandó por la Comisión de Monumentos de Zaragoza a la Exposición de París en 1878: «1^o Santiago despide a la Virgen en Jerusalén, 2^o Santiago entra en Oviedo, 3^o La Virgen devuelve a unos Mallorquines un hijo perdido en el Mar, 4^o Saca de Alcañiz un cautivo y lo devuelve a su madre, 5^o Entrada de Santiago en Zaragoza, 6^o Bautismo de San Anastasio por Santiago, 7^o La Virgen libra de un lobo a un niño de Bigorra, 8^o Libra en Medina del suplicio a Martín y Sancho Fernández condenados injustamente, 9^o Aparición de la Virgen a Santiago en Zaragoza».

¹¹ MPZ, Archivo-Biblioteca, sig. Actas, C.1, Zaragoza 10/I/1867.

¹⁴ MPZ, Archivo-Biblioteca, sig. Actas, C.1, Zaragoza, 10/I/1867.



Figura 5. *Aparición de la Virgen a Santiago en Zaragoza, 1867.* Albúmina sobre papel. Museo de Zaragoza, FD01476 (foto: José Garrido)

muestra de las colecciones pictóricas pilaristas e implícitamente recoger a través de su iconografía uno de los momentos más interesantes de la historia sagrada de Zaragoza (fig. 5).

Este mismo espíritu religioso parece conducir a Manuel Hortet al seleccionar la siguiente colección de fotografías, que habían sido regaladas a la Comisión por Bernardino Montañés. Se trataba de una selección de dibujos del pintor zaragozano sobre la obra escultórica del presbítero agustino e inquisidor Pedro de Arbués en la Catedral de la Seo. Las 7 escenas referidas al beato aragonés narraban el tránsito de su muerte desde su martirio hasta que es conducido por los canónigos a la sacristía, donde una vez dispuesto su cuerpo yacente y en presencia del Arzobispo Alonso de Aragón se llevaban a cabo sus exequias fúnebres.

La ejecución de estas albúminas no fueron las únicas que se incluyeron en el *Álbum*, puesto que se realizó otra copia para su envío a Roma. Al parecer el propio Montañés visitó Italia personalmente en compañía de la comitiva eclesiástica española, encabezada desde nuestra ciudad por el Arzobispo Manuel García Gil y sus familiares. Un episodio que describe la cercana relación mantenida por el pintor zaragozano con las altas esferas eclesiásticas y los vínculos mantenidos con la santa sede italiana para hacer entrega personalmente al Papa Pío IX de

las copias fotográficas del retrato de San Pedro Arbués, con ocasión de su canonización en junio de 1867 (Hernández Latas 2002, 109-10) (fig. 6).

Como elementos destacados del renacimiento aragonés aparecían en las páginas sucesivas 4 albúminas de la casa fotográfica de J. Laurent y Cía,¹⁵ pertenecientes a diversos canetes del consistorio y del Palacio de la Diputación del Reino de Aragón, también denominado Aduana Vieja, con motivo del derribo de la aldea Puerta del Ángel. La fastuosa talla de estas piezas permite apreciar una interesante labor de escultura que responde a dos artistas diferentes, la referida a composiciones naturales con un follaje vegetal abigarrado de piñas y hojas de acanto (*Catálogo del Museo Provincial* 1867) y la compuesta por figuras tanto antropomorfas como zoomorfas entrelazadas con labor vegetal. Este repertorio de ménsulas que habían sido almacenadas durante años por el Ayuntamiento en la Lonja fueron finalmente tuteladas por la Comisión para su conservación en el Museo.¹⁶ En adelante, la labor de los arquitectos José de Yarza, Mariano

¹⁵ Zaragoza_1737-1738, Museo Provincial, Canecillos de alero de tejado, estilo ojival de la ex-aduana; Zaragoza_1739-1740, Museo Provincial, Canecillos de alero de tejado, estilo ojival.

¹⁶ MPZ, Archivo-Biblioteca, sig. Actas, C.1, Zaragoza, 14/VI/1866.



Figura 6. Dibujo de la estatua yacente de S. Pedro Arbués realizada por Bernardino Montañés, 1867. Albúmina sobre papel. Museo de Zaragoza, FD01476 (foto: José Garrido)

López Altahoja y el escultor José Antonio Palao, como responsables de la Comisión creada para la adquisición de aleros, permitió acrecentar estas colecciones con motivo de la apertura de la calle Alfonso I y el derribo de algunas casas renacentistas aragonesas.¹⁷

Si avanzamos hacia las últimas páginas del *Álbum*, nos encontramos con un repertorio de 23 fotografías realizadas por Manuel Hortet y Molada sobre los bocetos realizados por Antonio González Velázquez, los hermanos Bayeu y el ilustre Francisco de Goya, para la Basílica del Pilar. Una interesante muestra de la mejor pintura mural barroca aragonesa que se inicia con la edificación de la Santa Capilla en 1752 y la ejecución de los primeros bocetos propuestos al pintor González Velázquez. Entre ellos, podemos contemplar la ornamentación de la cúpula representada por *La Venida de la Virgen a Zaragoza* y *La Construcción de la primitiva Santa Capilla por Santiago con los convertidos a las orillas del Ebro*.

Para cubrir las diversas cúpulas entorno a la Santa Capilla, el cabildo confió a Francisco Bayeu, pintor de cámara de Carlos III desde 1767, la realización de un programa decorativo con escenas dedicadas a la Virgen. Para ello, contó con la ayuda de su hermano Ramón y de su cuñado Francisco de Goya. Esta vinculación personal y profesional parece ser el hilo conductor de la composición realizada por Hortet y Molada en el *Álbum*, cuando agrupa las fotografías en torno a una imagen de la Virgen del Pilar de gran tamaño. La importancia adquirida por este 'icono' de la religión católica había pasado a ser uno de los temas más difundidos desde 1878 con ocasión de la reproducción litográfica realizada por Antonio Andrés Oliván (Hernández Latas 2010, 27). Un éxito adquirido por diferentes casas fotográficas zaragozanas que iban a convertirse desde entonces en transmisoras de esta estampa devocional para la sociedad española y, al final, con carácter universal tras su muestra en París (fig. 7).

La disposición de las otras 13 albúminas iba a congregarse en torno a la imagen principal de N^{ra} Sra. del Pilar. A ambos lados de ella y en la parte superior se ubicaron los bocetos realizados por Francisco Bayeu para varias cúpulas con el tema de la *Regina Angelorum* y *Sanctorum Omnium*, a un tamaño muy inferior se dispusieron los bocetos realizados por su

¹⁷ MPZ, Archivo-Biblioteca, sig. Actas, C.1, Zaragoza, 29/X/1866.



Figura7. Manuel Hortet y Molada, *Imagen de la Virgen y composición de bocetos para las cúpulas y pechinas de la Basílica N^o Sra. del Pilar*, 1863. Albúminas sobre papel. Museo de Zaragoza, FD01476 (foto: José Garrido)



Figura 8. J. Laurent y Cía., *Patio del Museo Provincial de Zaragoza*. Vidrio al colodión. Fototeca del Patrimonio Histórico, Archivo Ruiz Vernacci, VN-00009

hermano Ramón para las pechinas de la *Regina Confessorum* y *Patriarcharum*, y en un cuerpo inferior, los bocetos realizados por Goya para la *Regina Martyrum*. El resultado final de este interesante pliego dejaba clara la intencionalidad del fotógrafo al enaltecer la imagen titular de la ciudad de Zaragoza y acomodar el resto de ciclos pictóricos a su alrededor sin menospreciar ni encumbrar la obra del pintor de Fuendetodos, Goya, que era artísticamente mucho más valiosa.

El resto de imágenes fotográficas volvían a congregarse en torno a una estudiada composición, dejando espacio en la parte central e inferior del pliego los bocetos de Ramón Bayeu acerca de la decoración pictórica de la *Regina Virginum*, *Confessorum* y *Patriarcharum*. La valía artística de su hermano Francisco se reflejaba una vez más en los ángulos laterales superiores mediante otras dos cúpulas dedicadas a la *Regina Prophetarum* y *Apostolorum*, dejando lugar en los laterales a la mencionada decoración de la

Santa capilla de González Velázquez (Utrera Gómez 2012).

El recorrido cronológico trazado a través de las anteriores obras artísticas culminaba en las últimas dos páginas del *Álbum* con la visión arquitectónica del Museo Provincial de Zaragoza, una referida a su patio y otra a una de sus galerías. Ambas albúminas, obra del fotógrafo Jean Laurent,¹⁸ permitían reflejar no solo el estado de conservación del edificio sino el lugar donde se había establecido la Comisión Provincial de Monumentos en las últimas décadas (fig. 8).

Realizado a tafilete, encamado y adornado a mano, la cubierta llevaba impresa las armas de Zaragoza en varios colores junto con diversos adornos que enfatizaban, sobre todo en el anverso, las letras doradas del «Álbum del Museo

¹⁸ Zaragoza_1741, Galería del Museo Provincial, Zaragoza_1742, Patio del Museo Provincial.

de Zaragoza», mientras que el reverso disponía de las mismas armas con trabajo en dorado y acompañadas de diversos adornos.¹⁹ Una lujosa publicación en la que participaron varios profesionales, el mencionado fotógrafo Manuel Hortet y Molada, el calígrafo José María Toro, el encuadernador Pablo Comas, el copista Tomas Villanueva y el carpintero Elías Barta.²⁰

4 Conclusiones

En síntesis y para concluir, la representación de Zaragoza en esta muestra internacional supo estar a la altura de las circunstancias exigidas para un evento de esta naturaleza, gracias al envío del catálogo actualizado de la Comisión de Monumentos y la aportación fotográfica de sus colecciones como principal referente del arte de nuestro territorio.

Se trata de un acontecimiento que adquirió una relevancia extraordinaria desde la misma realización del encargo. De ello queda constancia tras su exhibición en el Museo de la capital zaragozana, el 13 de febrero de 1878, con ocasión de la visita del Vicepresidente de la Diputación Provincial de Zaragoza, Francisco de Paula Oseñalde, en compañía de algunos diputados. El interés despertado por estas personalidades fue todo un éxito, en especial la contemplación del *Álbum*, que fue muy valorado por todos los asistentes. Y es que la proyección de nuestras colecciones artísticas fuera de las fronteras españolas puso el foco en nuestro Museo Provincial durante unos días tanto para visitantes como para periodistas locales, a quienes se invitó al día siguiente.²¹

19 MPZ, Archivo-Biblioteca, sig. 101-138, L. 122. Expediente del *Álbum* que se remitió a la Exposición Universal de París en 1878.

20 MPZ, Archivo-Biblioteca, sig. 1860-1880, L. 141. Libro de contabilidad de la Comisión. Cuenta de los ingresos y gastos habidos durante el primer semestre del ejercicio de 1877 al 1878. «1. Pagados a D. José María Toro por la portada para el *Álbum* que la Comisión mando a la Exposición de París (recibo nº 1) - 30 pts., 2. Son asimismo data pagados al fotógrafo D. Manuel Hortet por arreglo de las fotografías para el *Álbum* (recibo nº 2) - 25 pts y 50 cts., 3. Pagados a D. Pablo Comas librero encuadernador por la encuadernación de las fotografías formando con las mismas un *Álbum* y el Catálogo con su apéndice manuscrito (recibo nº 3) - 145 pts, 4. Pagados a Tomas Villanueva por su trabajo en la copia manuscrita del Apéndice del *Álbum* (recibo nº 4) - 12 pts y 50 cts., 5. Pagados a Elías Barta Carpintero por la mano de obra del Cajón para colocar el *Álbum* y Catálogo (recibo nº 5) - 4 pts».

21 MPZ, Archivo-Biblioteca, sig. 101-138, L. 133, 13/II/1878.

No obstante, el elevado precio que supuso el arreglo, la encuadernación y el envío de ambas publicaciones en una caja realizada expresamente para la Exposición, fue una tarea económicamente costosa para las arcas de la Comisión debido a los recortes presupuestarios ejecutados desde la Diputación Provincial de Zaragoza.²² El desembolso realizado había contribuido no solo a potenciar nuestro patrimonio mediante la visita de la sociedad zaragozana a la exposición local, sino a crear cierta expectación acerca del arte aragonés fuera de nuestras fronteras.

Sin lugar a dudas, los trabajos de catalogación, impresión y exhibición de las colecciones durante este año 1878 en París supusieron el cenit cultural de la historia de la Comisión de Monumentos durante el siglo XIX, y, en particular, la elaboración del *Álbum* se convirtió en el principal escaparate del patrimonio existente de la ciudad de Zaragoza ya que la novedosa utilización de la fotografía había permitido contrastar y verificar visualmente la catalogación de las obras artísticas dentro del Museo. En este sentido, debemos hacer especial hincapié en la labor realizada por el fotógrafo oficial de la Comisión zaragozana, Manuel Hortet y Molada, cuya figura aún desconocida por la historiografía artística española debe ser considerada como uno de los primeros fotógrafos que dio a conocer a la comunidad internacional la historia y el patrimonio de Zaragoza, la histórica capital aragonesa.

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Catálogo de la Exposición Retrospectiva de obras de pintura, de escultura y artes suntuarias, celebrada por la Academia de Bellas Artes, en junio de 1867, y formado con arreglo a las relaciones presentadas por los señores expositores (1867). Barcelona: Imprenta de Celestino Verdaguer.

22 MPZ, Archivo-Biblioteca, sig. 101-138, L. 133, 3/IV/1878. «de 1871 al 72 y 1872 al 73, tuvo esta Comisión 6.000 r. von. anuales luego sin comprender la economía y era a menos de creer, se redujo a 4.000 r. y al presente a 3.000».

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Arte, celebrazione e progresso Como e l'Esposizione voltiana del 1899

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Abstract In May 1899, the town of Como inaugurated an universal exhibition organized for the centenary of the invention of the battery by Alessandro Volta. The exhibition, set up in honour and celebration of an illustrious citizen of Como, was not focused on electricity alone, but also on decorative arts and the silk and furniture industry, including a special section of artistic objects from the territories of the Diocese of Como curated by Santo Monti, author a few years later of a pioneering study on the arts in Northwestern Lombardy. The operation resonated with national and international press: a congress of electricians was presented at the exhibition, anticipating the famous international symposium of physics that would be held in Como in 1927 with the participation of, among others, Fermi, Marconi and many Nobel prizes in a changed political and cultural context. The exhibition halls, designed by engineer Eugenio Linati, occupied much of the area then destined to become a public garden, on which the first museum dedicated to Volta's work, the Tempio Voltiano, was founded in 1928. The exhibition architectures were characterized by a magniloquent style in a fusion of classical, allegorical, eclectic elements, in order to provide a valuable framework for the public *rituals* of the inauguration in presence of King Umberto I and Queen Margherita. Mostly destroyed by a fire, from which the hall of Belle Arti survived, the exhibition buildings were quickly reconstructed and reassembled. This paper explores the multiple aspects of the great exhibition, from the architecture of buildings to the media propaganda (posters, periodicals, etc.) and investigates the connection between the promotion of historical and artistic studies on the territory, the heritage preservation, the decorative and industrial arts ranging from the eclectic style to Art Nouveau.

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Keywords Como. Alessandro Volta. Eugenio Linati. Decorative arts. Eclecticism. Liberty. Art nouveau. Industrial arts. Lombardy. Simbolism. Landscape painting. Divisionism. Emilio Longoni. Adolf Hohenstein.

1 Introduzione

La ricorrenza nel 1899 del centenario dell'invenzione della pila elettrica da parte di Alessandro Volta suggeriva alle autorità cittadine di Como l'opportunità di organizzare un evento espositivo che fosse, nel contempo, momento di celebrazione del grande scienziato, promozione di industrie e manifatture locali, occasione di consacrazione della città lariana quale meta del turismo nazionale ed internazionale. Una fortuita circostanza volle che l'anno cadesse alla chiusura del XIX secolo, configurando quasi immediatamente le celebrazioni voltiane come collettivo e fantasmagorico rituale annunciante l'avvento della modernità sotto l'egida della scienza, del progresso tecnologico e delle arti. L'esposizione del 1899 si collocò sotto il nume tutelare di Volta, il quale era ambito in egual misura dalla parte laica della società italiana postunitaria e dal suo *coté* religioso, nonché celebrato a livello mondiale, come si poté misurare durante i festeggiamenti in suo onore tenutisi all'Università di Pavia nel 1878 (Cantoni, Morando 2011; Cantoni, Morando, Zucca 2013).

Nella stessa Como, più precisamente a Camnago, dove in un'«erma valle» a monte della città (Cantù 1870, 157) era sepolto lo scienziato, nel 1875 erano giunti, per omaggio estremo, addirittura i postelettrificatori francesi e gli *Electrical Students of England* (Angelini 2015, 390).

L'evento, a cui alacremente lavorarono sin dal 1896 le autorità locali di Como con un ampio concorso di privati – imprenditori e industriali nel campo della seta – e con sussidi significativi dal governo (almeno nel momento successivo al fatidico incendio dell'8 luglio che distrusse l'esposizione), riscosse ampio successo di pubblico, suscitò recensioni entusiastiche sulla stampa nazionale ed internazionale e mobilitò un grande numero di espositori, ospitando prototipi tecnologici sperimentali quali il primo telegrafo senza fili di Guglielmo Marconi e il primo tram elettrico su rotaie. L'elettricità, eletta a minimo comune denominatore di ogni forma di progresso e produzione industriale su vasta scala, venne impiegata per l'illuminazione dei padiglioni espositivi e dei giardini che li circondavano, affacciati sul bacino del ramo occidentale del Lario (fig. 1),

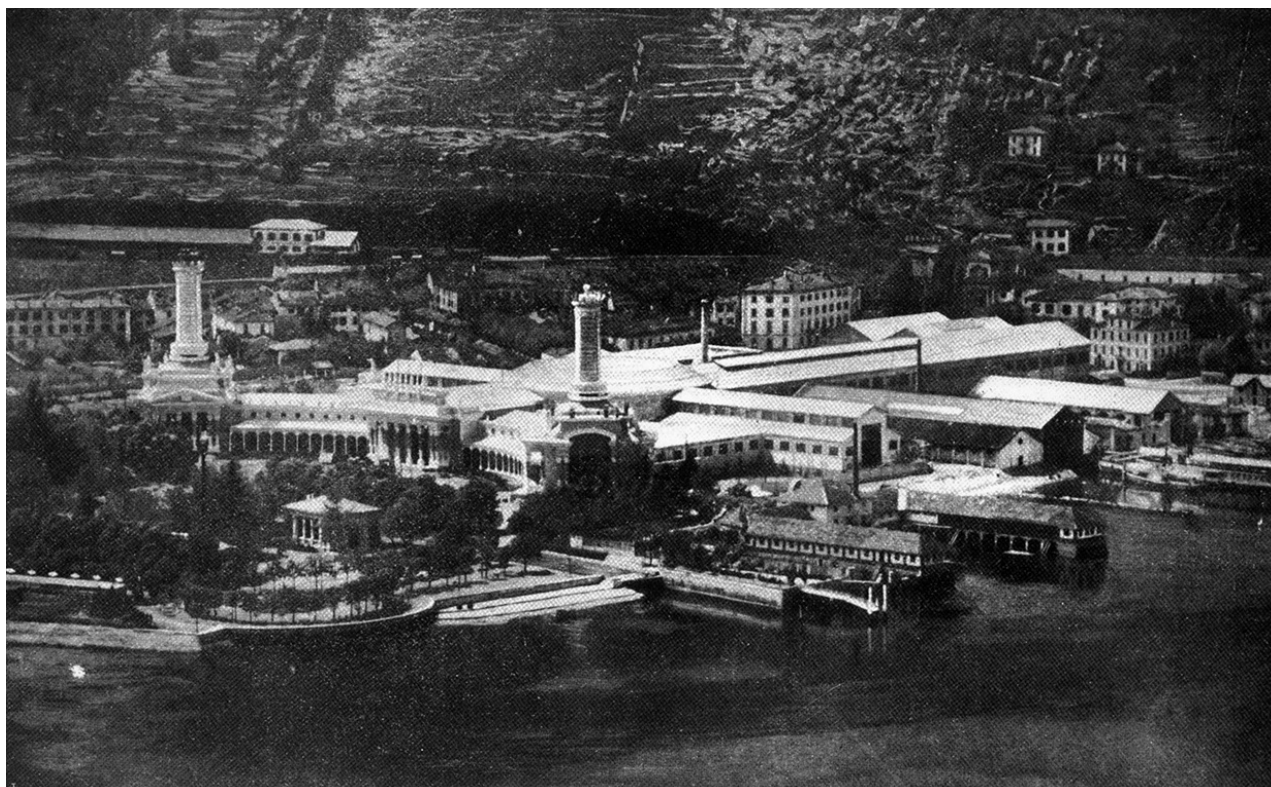


Figura 1. I padiglioni della prima Esposizione voltiana di Como, su progetto di Eugenio Linati (da *Como* 1899)

inquadrate da alte colline boschive, con effetti di fortissimo impatto scenografico, anticipando di un anno – come avrebbe poi sottolineato la stampa più fortemente campanilistica – quanto realizzato in occasione dell'*Exposition de Paris 1900*.

Ritornare in questa sede sull'esposizione voltiana del 1899 non significa solo ripercorrerne le vicende inerenti all'organizzazione e all'allestimento, ma anche sottoporre ad analisi quali siano state le scelte adottate in merito alla progettazione dei padiglioni espositivi, alla grafica destinata alla *réclame* e alla propaganda, alla stampa periodica ed alla editoria, ai riflessi nei settori della promozione della arti decorative, della pittura e della scultura contemporanea e della tutela e riscoperta del patrimonio storico-artistico e monumentale della città, della sua provincia e della sua diocesi. Se in tempi recenti non sono mancati momenti di riflessione, è stata tuttavia prevalente la tendenza alla rievocazione dell'evento (Marino 2012; 1899. *Como e*

l'Esposizione Voltiana 2016),¹ mentre resta di fatto ancora da tracciare una rilettura delle sue molteplici e variegate componenti per comprendere a quale grado del 'termometro del gusto' si possa collocare la grande *kermesse* comasca. Alla ricostruzione cronachistica della mostra, a cui si sono dedicati gli studi precedenti, è possibile affiancare un'analisi più circostanziata delle scelte stilistiche (e quindi anche comunicative), delle architetture e della pubblicistica e una disamina delle mostre collegate, in modo particolare quella dedicata alla pittura contemporanea, sinora pressoché trascurata, suggerendo di volta in volta i termini di confronto con il panorama locale e nazionale.

¹ Si veda inoltre la scheda di Aprigliano, Lucibello 2007-2008, ora riapparsa, con sussidi multimediali, in <http://edvara2.uniud.it/esposizioni-arte-antica/document/18423/> (2017-04-26). La documentazione d'archivio, già segnalata da Cani, Monizza 1984, comprende i materiali depositati presso il Tempio Voltiano dalla Società Storica Comense e gli incartamenti in Archivio di Stato di Como, Fondo *Ex Museo*, cc. 68-69, con un cospicuo nucleo di fotografie solo in parte impiegate nelle pubblicazioni periodiche e nei manifesti dell'esposizione.



Figura 2. Testata del settimanale *Como e l'Esposizione Voltiana*, 1, 20 maggio 1899

Se è possibile anticipare una valutazione consuntiva, l'esposizione voltiana esprime, in misura parziale ma non meno significativa, le contraddizioni di un momento di transizione, a chiusura dell'Ottocento e nell'anelito di nuovi sviluppi. Essa appare, anche ad un primo sguardo, operazione ambiziosa ma squilibrata, divisa tra ideali di universalismo e manifestazioni di municipalismo, tra pervicaci tradizionalismi e slanci avanguardistici, tra iperboli eclettiche e timidezze *Art Nouveau*. Come è stato evidenziato, «sotto l'usbergo dell'esaltazione del progresso, la parte del leone l'ebbe invece la difesa della tradizione» (Longatti 2012, 12). Al binomio tradizione-progresso si possono ricondurre le ragioni di molte scelte e, se esso può apparire scontato, nondimeno si deve riconoscere che i termini della questione – sia per l'osservatorio comasco sia per le altre esposizioni ottocentesche – si muovono su questi binari, ovvero la promozione culturale ed economica della singola città e l'apertura a nuovi orizzonti di investimento.

2 Luoghi, tempi, protagonisti

Gli ultimi due decenni dell'Ottocento rappresentarono per la Lombardia un momento di affermazione di una *leadership* industriale e culturale sulla giovane nazione per tramite di un'articolata successione di eventi espositivi, che avevano avuto sede nel capoluogo, a partire dalla grande

Esposizione Nazionale del 1881 sino alle Esposizioni Riunite del 1894. In questo contesto sorse l'idea di organizzare una mostra a Como, che cogliendo l'occasione del centenario dell'invenzione della pila potesse congiungere la storica tradizione industriale della città nel campo della produzione serica alla sempre più crescente vocazione turistica. L'esempio indicato dall'*Exposition Universelle de Paris* del 1889 confortava nella convinzione di un felice esito dell'iniziativa.

I protagonisti, nonché primi promotori dell'esposizione dedicata a Volta, furono gli amministratori comunali e provinciali di Como insieme ad un nutrito consorzio di imprenditori, industriali e liberi professionisti, i quali avevano già verificato l'utilità di mostre campionarie, industriali e artigianali a livello locale nel 1865, in occasione di una esposizione «agricola e industriale» nel 1865 e di una mostra di belle arti nel 1872, così come dell'esposizione «regionale» di Varese nel 1886. Una delibera della Giunta provinciale di Como in data 7 maggio 1896 recepiva due precedenti risoluzioni del Consiglio comunale per la raccolta di fondi in ordine alla realizzazione di una esposizione di elettricità da tenersi nel 1899 in onore di Volta «pel centenario della sua grande scoperta» (Archivio Storico del Comune di Como, fal. 4370, cat. 11, cla. 4, fasc. 1; Marino 2012, 15). L'orizzonte municipalistico era già definito in questi primi atti formali, apertamente dichiarato: «le onoranze centenarie al sommo fisico si impongono per decoro e orgoglio



Figura 3. *Onoranze a Volta nel centenario della Pila. Como 1899*. Manifesto dell'Esposizione voltiana del 1899 (Como, Archivio di Stato)

cittadino», aggiungeva nella stessa occasione il prefetto. Se l'opzione espressa dai promotori era chiaramente indirizzata ad una mostra di elettricità, nei suoi molteplici e ammalianti impieghi tecnologici, di lì a poco tempo si profilò anche la necessità di affiancare alle celebrazioni voltiane spazi ed eventi dedicati all'industria serica, motore economico della città e di parte della sua provincia (Marino 2012, 28-31) e successivamente alla produzione di mobili della Brianza, dove a Cantù esisteva dal 1882 una Scuola di Arti Applicate alle Industrie, con corsi maschili serali e domenicali presto aperti anche alle donne con una scuola di disegno per merletto (Pirovano 1999).²

Per Como l'impegno ad organizzare una grande esposizione internazionale significava investire su nuove prospettive di crescita economica e culturale, proprio negli stessi anni in cui venivano potenziati i collegamenti ferroviari con la Svizzera e si realizzavano importanti infrastrutture, quali nel 1894 la funicolare a vapore che collegava la località di Brunate, a monte della città, dove sorgevano grandi alberghi e ville di soggiorno stagionale (De Carli 2009). Contestualmente veniva costruito in città, sul lungolago orientale, l'hotel Plinius su progetto di Federico Frigerio (1897-1899) e veniva restaurato il neoclassico Teatro Sociale (1899) (Rovi 2013, 172-73; Cani 2015, 42-47). In questo quadro generale l'esposizione voltiana non solo divenne occasione di enorme rilancio turistico, ma si configurò anche come motore per l'evoluzione del progetto urbano della città alle soglie del nuovo secolo. Infatti il sito prescelto per ospitare i padiglioni espositivi era Prà Pasquée, sul lungolago occidentale, alla foce del torrente Cosia, tra l'antico molo da poco trasformato in piazza Cavour, i cantieri della Società lariana di navigazione e le storiche ville di Borgovico. La localizzazione della mostra in questo luogo avrebbe segnato importanti sviluppi, nei decenni tra le due guerre mondiali, per l'espansione urbana di Como, come si avrà occasione di sottolineare più avanti.

² La Scuola, divenuta Regia negli anni Venti del Novecento, esiste tuttora come Liceo Artistico Statale "Fausto Melotti".

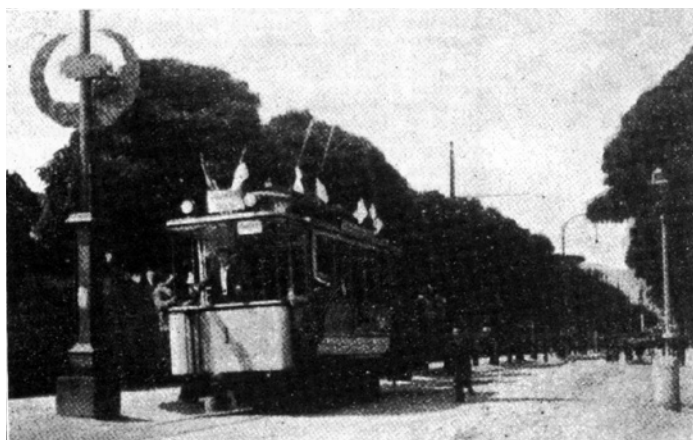


Figura 4. Tram elettrico al servizio dei padiglioni dell'Esposizione Voltiana (Como 1899).

3 Editoria, grafica, retorica

Tra il 1896 ed il 1899 la storia organizzativa dell'evento attraversò difficoltà economiche e fu contraddistinta da appelli e riscontri sempre più crescenti, definendo una vera e propria retorica dell'esposizione, sostenuta dai giornali locali, *La Provincia di Como* e *L'Ordine*, e culminata nell'avviso emesso dal Municipio il 14 febbraio 1899, in cui si invitava la cittadinanza a ripulire le facciate delle case «valevoli a presentare la nostra Como in modo degno della grande solennità» (Marino 2012, 37). Nel frattempo il Comitato generale era stato riconosciuto ente morale, con regio decreto del 2 dicembre 1897 (Archivio Storico del Comune di Como, b. 2259; Marino 2012, 45) e i lavori fervevano grazie ad un sistema ramificato di commissioni e sottocomitati. L'inaugurazione era prevista, alla presenza del re, nella primavera del 1899 e per questo motivo la costruzione dei padiglioni dell'esposizione era stata avviata sotto la direzione di Eugenio Linati, uno specialista nel recupero degli stili storici, fiduciario della borghesia imprenditoriale di Como nonché restauratore di edifici monumentali (Cani, Monizza 1988).³

In previsione quindi di un grande concorso di pubblico e per favorire un positivo riscontro da parte dei visitatori – illustri e non – un industriale milanese trasferito a Como, Enrico Musa, figura singolare che riuniva ambizioni imprenditoriali e impegno sociale, fondò il settimanale *Como e l'Esposizione Voltiana. Rivista settimanale illustrata*

autorizzata dal comitato, che uscì regolarmente dal 20 maggio al 12 novembre 1899, ancora oggi fonte imprescindibile di notizie, commenti, immagini (Como 1899). Per la stampa egli si appoggiò a Aristide Bari, titolare di una tipografia cooperativa, e per le cronache a Luigi Massuero, direttore del quotidiano *La Provincia di Como*. La testata della rivista (fig. 2) esprimeva il senso dell'operazione, di documentazione e autocelebrazione insieme, mostrando al di sotto del profilo dei monti un esile skyline del bacino del Lario, dove si riconoscevano da sinistra a destra la grande mole dell'hotel Plinius, la cupola della cattedrale, la torre del Castel Baradello, i padiglioni dell'esposizione con i due fari in forma di pila elettrica, mentre a sinistra una vittoria alata, coronata di alloro, reggeva una medaglia di Alessandro Volta e girava lo sguardo verso il paesaggio alle sue spalle. Il tema sarebbe quindi ritornato in uno dei manifesti pubblicitari della mostra (fig. 3), dove due figure muliebri, tratte con chiarezza dal repertorio *Art Nouveau*, reggevano la pila elettrica e la spoletta per la tessitura ed esibivano sontuosi panni in seta, sullo sfondo a puro contorno dei monumenti, delle ciminiere industriali e delle montagne di Como. L'autore del cartellone dell'esposizione era Adolfo Hohenstein, figura di formazione e caratura internazionale, direttore artistico dell'editore Ricordi (Manzato 2003); tra il 1899 ed il 1900 firma i manifesti della *Exposition et Concours de Canots Automobiles* di Monaco e della IV Esposizione Triennale di Belle Arti di Brera, per rimanere sul tema delle grandi mostre e fiere campionarie, nonché i cartelloni pubblicitari della *Bitter Campari* e della *Brasserie Monaco* di Cannes. Nell'affiche destinata all'esposizione comasca Hohenstein fonde tematiche e schemi compositivi comuni alle locandine delle

³ Suoi erano i progetti dell'hotel Volta in piazza Cavour a Como (1870) e dell'hotel Grande Bretagne di Bellagio (1877), una delle più imponenti strutture ricettive in Lombardia sullo scorcio del secolo (Selvafolta 2016).

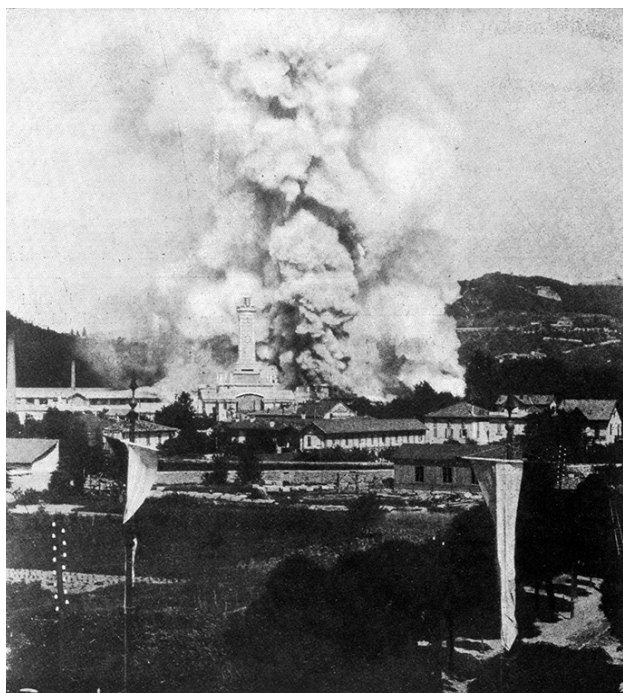


Figura 5. L'incendio dell'8 luglio 1899 che distrusse la prima Esposizione voltiana (Como 1899)

Figura 6. Fotografia delle rovine della prima Esposizione voltiana (Como, Archivio di Stato)

società elettriche, delle società di navigazione e delle attrazioni turistiche.⁴

L'inaugurazione si tenne, come previsto, il 20 maggio 1899, con la partecipazione di Sua Maestà Umberto I, giunto in treno da Monza e ricevuto dal presidente del comitato esecutivo, il cavaliere Francesco Bertolotti, presidente della Camera di Commercio e titolare dal 1863 di un'importante industria serica. Il sovrano visitò i padiglioni di tutte le esposizioni e incontrò poi il vescovo di Como, monsignor Teodoro Valfrè di Bonzo. L'incontro assunse connotati di rilievo politico per i difficili rapporti che casa Savoia intratteneva con la Chiesa, ma si svolse in modo piano grazie all'amicizia personale tra Umberto I e il presule, che apparteneva ad una famiglia della vecchia nobiltà piemontese.

4 Successi, incendio, ricostruzione

Il programma dell'esposizione e degli eventi collaterali era piuttosto nutrito; comprendeva una stagione operistica e di balletto al Teatro Sociale, dove si tenne anche il Ballo Excelsior, che trovava nell'occasione piena aderenza simbolica e temati-

ca. Venne esposto, come già accennato, un prototipo del telegrafo senza fili di Guglielmo Marconi nella sezione della Regia Marina; inoltre, ad uso esclusivo della mostra, viaggiava il primo tram elettrico (fig. 4). Sul monte di Brunate venne realizzato un faro provvisorio, che doveva fare da contrappunto visivo con quello dell'esposizione, sul sito su cui poi nel 1927 sarebbe sorto l'attuale Faro Voltiano. Nel primo mese di apertura l'esposizione contò centomila visitatori, mettendo a volte a dura prova la capacità ricettiva della città. Nel giugno si tennero commemorazioni di Volta a Camnago, sul suo luogo di sepoltura, e grandi congressi nazionali ed internazionali dei telegrafisti e degli albergatori a Bellagio.

All'apice del successo, riconosciuto anche dalla stampa straniera, l'8 luglio, a metà mattina, un cortocircuito innescò un incendio che divampò al di sotto delle pavimentazioni dei padiglioni che erano sopraelevate di due metri per evitare danni in caso di esondazione del lago. In poco tempo l'intero villaggio espositivo, realizzato in materiali facilmente soggetti all'azione del fuoco come il legno e lo stucco, fu completamente distrutto, con l'eccezione del padiglione dedicato alle Belle Arti e all'Arte Sacra. Cimeli e manufatti appartenuti ad Alessandro Volta, in prestito dalle civiche collezioni di Como, dagli eredi dello scienziato e dall'Università di Pavia andarono perduti o seriamente danneggiati, nonostante che il padiglione che li ospitava fosse l'unico costruito in mura-

⁴ Termini di confronto, tra i molteplici richiamabili, sono offerti dai manifesti di G. Mataloni per la Società anonima per l'incandescenza (1895) e di L. Basorini per il Kurssal di Lugano (1909) (Weill 2001, 126, 129).

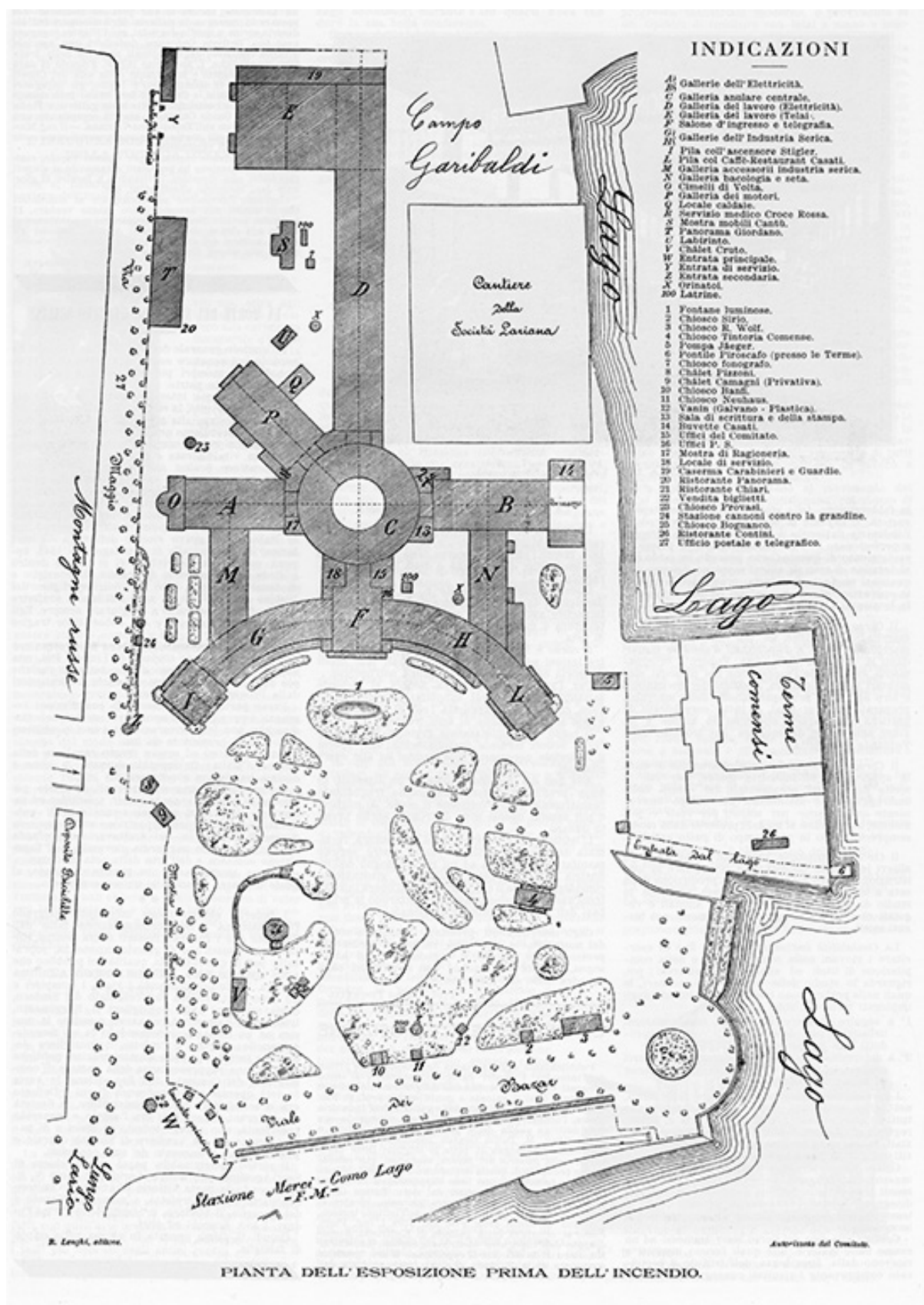


Figura 7. Planimetria della prima Esposizione voltiana (Como 1899)

tura.⁵ L'eco del disastro fu ampio e rapidissima la risposta del comitato organizzatore che attivò subito una raccolta fondi che in pochi giorni raggiunse la cifra ragguardevole di cinquantamila lire, raddoppiata da una donazione di Umberto I in persona, il quale vedeva nella mostra di Como un evento di prima fila nella costruzione di un prestigio internazionale della nuova Italia.

Gli eventi collaterali proseguirono come da programma e i padiglioni vennero ricostruiti in tempi molto celeri, sempre su progetto di Linati, lavorando ininterrottamente grazie all'illuminazione notturna del cantiere. Il 18 settembre il re tornò a Como, insieme a tutta la famiglia reale, per inaugurare la riapertura dell'esposizione voltiana, in occasione del congresso internazionale degli elettricisti. La mostra chiuse, come previsto, il 5 novembre.

La ricostruzione dei padiglioni fu, come si è detto, evento che ebbe risonanza quasi superiore a quella riscossa sino ad allora dalla mostra. Il settimanale dell'esposizione si indirizzò sull'enfatizzazione dell'incendio e della successiva rinascita, dedicando riproduzioni fotografiche a piena pagina alle immagini della colossale colonna di fumo che si alzava dai padiglioni in fiamme e poi alle rovine degli stessi (*Como 1899*, 65-72); le medesime immagini furono impiegate per cartoline e *souvenirs* (figg. 5-6).

5 Le architetture, le arti decorative

La prima esposizione voltiana, ovvero l'insieme di padiglioni inaugurati nel maggio 1899 e distrutti dalle fiamme nel luglio successivo, era stata progettata da Eugenio Linati, il quale vi confermava le sue qualità di architetto dalla spiccata vena eclettica, capace di fondere molteplici suggestioni stilistiche e variegate allusioni simboliche in un disegno coerente, dominato dal richiamo ad un neoclassicismo piuttosto tardivo. Il villaggio dell'esposizione (fig. 7) era inserito in un ampio sistema di giardini piantumati e organizzati in viali alberati, che completavano il lungolago occidentale trasformato così in «un *quai* degno di una grande città» (*Como 1899*, 2). La facciata principale era articolata in una grandiosa esedra ai cui vertici erano due torri in forma di pila elettrica, dell'altezza di quaranta metri (figg. 8-10), una delle quali ospitava il *café-restaurant* Casati

ed era munita di faro luminoso per le ore notturne, mentre la seconda era accessibile ai visitatori grazie ad un ascensore delle officine meccaniche Stigler di Milano (le prime costruttrici di elevatori in Italia).

Anche per quanto concerne le architetture espositive, come per la grafica e la pubblicistica esaminata nelle pagine precedenti, è sinora stato disertato un tentativo di lettura stilistica, in relazione non solo ai *desiderata* del comitato organizzatore ma anche alla sua immediata ricezione da parte della stampa specialistica.

Il corpo centrale della facciata (fig. 11) consisteva in un portico su pilastri ionici rastremati e scanalati, impostati su alti vasi ed era sormontato da quattro figure allegoriche alate dello scultore comasco Ezechiele Trombetta, distintosi alle esposizioni di belle arti di Roma, Torino e Nizza grazie a gruppi scultorei dedicati alla celebrazione delle invenzioni voltiane (fig. 12). All'interno il grande vestibolo (fig. 13), destinato a divenire sala del trono in occasione dell'inaugurazione del 20 maggio, traboccava di rivestimenti e tessuti, così come la rotonda centrale (fig. 14) su alte colonne corinzie anch'esse impostate su fantasiosi vasi e palmizi. In questa sala, illuminata dall'alto, convergevano le gallerie dedicate al lavoro e alle macchine tessili, all'elettricità, alla Regia Marina, mentre separato era il padiglione dei cimeli voltiani, come accennato, l'unico realizzato in muratura, sormontato da un gruppo allegorico dello scultore comasco Enrico Rusconi, *L'elettricità guida le forze del mondo* (figg. 15-16). A completare il percorso erano poi il padiglione dei mobili di Cantù, il labirinto-palazzo di cristallo (fig. 17), il «panorama Giordani», il padiglione termale, i cantieri della Società Lariana di navigazione e l'edificio ospitante le due esposizioni di Belle Arti e Arte Sacra, quest'ultimo progettato dal milanese Francesco Solmi e destinato a sopravvivere all'incendio proprio in virtù della sua collocazione oltre la carreggiata stradale.

Il carattere magniloquente del complesso espositivo di Linati aveva convinto il Comitato organizzatore che aveva preferito questo progetto a quello presentato da Luigi Broggi e Enrico Rossetti (Cani, Monizza 1984, 24-25). Il progetto di Broggi, professionista ben accreditato su molteplici fronti (dall'architettura pubblica a quella delle esposizioni, dall'edilizia commerciale a quella alberghiera) (Gallo 1992), ricordava non tanto nelle soluzioni stilistiche, quanto nella concezione complessiva le strutture destinate a impianti termali e a soggiorni climatici, mentre i grandi padiglioni di Linati evocavano una mo-

⁵ Esso venne riconvertito, dopo l'incendio, nuovamente a funzioni espositive, come padiglione dell'industria serica (salone dei bozzoli) (*Como 1899*, 192).



Figura 8. La grande esedra all'ingresso della prima Esposizione voltiana (Como 1899)



Figura 10. La torre in forma di pila che ospitava l'ascensore Stigler (Como 1899)



Figura 11. La facciata principale della prima Esposizione voltiana (Como 1899)



Figura 9. Manifesto della ditta Felice Vittone di Milano con la facciata della prima Esposizione voltiana (Como, Archivio di Stato)



Figura 12. E. Trombetta, *Arte e Scienza* (Como 1899)

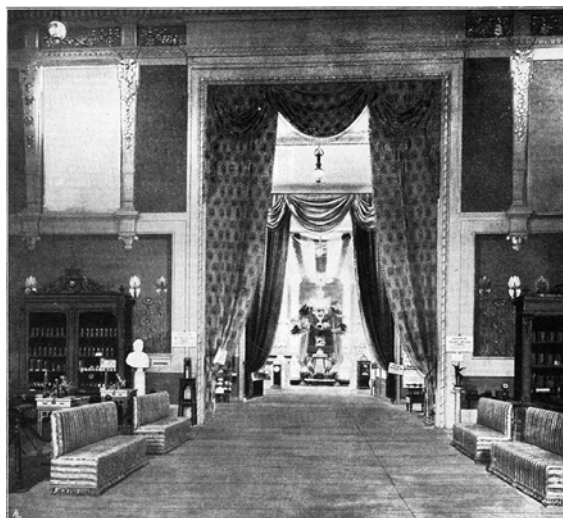


Figura 13. L'ingresso adibito a sala del trono della prima Esposizione voltiana (Como 1899)

Figura 14. La rotonda centrale della prima Esposizione voltiana (Como 1899)

Figura 15. Il padiglione dei cimeli voltiani (Como 1899)

Figura 16. Interno del padiglione dei cimeli voltiani (Como 1899)

numeralità più gradita agli organizzatori della mostra. Tuttavia essi non mancarono di suscitare perplessità e, a tratti, qualche censura, persino in anticipo sull'inaugurazione, come accadde nel 1898, quando *Il Monitore Tecnico* pubblicò i disegni di Linati. L'attenzione del commentatore cadde sulla mancanza di misura, che enfatizzava l'effimerità dei fabbricati, concludendo che «lo stile *Empire* si prest[a] forse più per l'ammobiliamento che non per l'architettura» (Manfredini 1898). L'osservazione è rilevante e apre qualche spiraglio di valutazione ulteriore, poiché suggerirebbe – nella coscienza dell'epoca – una sorta di divaricazione tra gli esiti progettuali dell'architettura e il disegno industriale, destinato alla produzione di mobili e oggetti di uso quotidiano, una divaricazione che tuttavia proprio i movimenti artistici di fine Ottocento avevano tentato

di saldare in percorsi comuni, orientati a scelte stilistiche coerenti e innovative ed alla ricerca di eccellenza qualitativa. Gli *Arts and Crafts* inglesi e l'*Art Nouveau* franco-belga si erano mossi in questa direzione; in modo particolare il modernismo, anche nella sua radicazione peninsulare, ovvero il *Liberty*, operava con ragguardevoli risultati in questo settore. A Como l'esperimento non riuscì perché in realtà non venne neppure tentato, come invece sarebbe accaduto pochi anni dopo, all'esposizione di Torino del 1902, con risultati a volte di grande eccentricità. Il dibattito sul *Liberty* negli anni dell'esposizione voltiana era già fervido di interventi e discussioni, ma se pensiamo alle posizioni critiche un po' alterne di un Luca Beltrami, architetto con cui Linati, almeno sul piano professionale, poteva condividere qualche parentela, non ci stupisce più di tanto

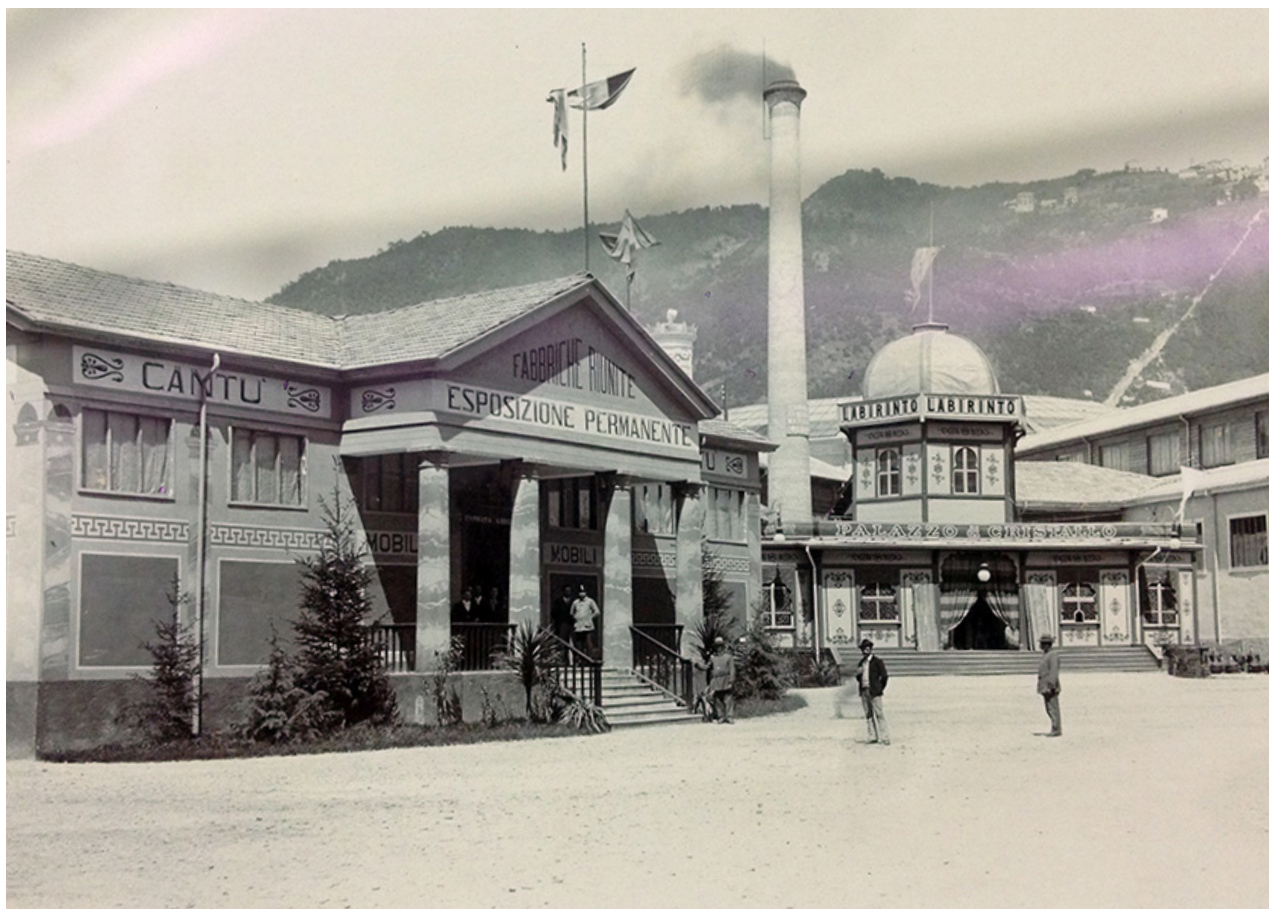


Figura 17. Il padiglione dell'esposizione permanente dei mobili di Cantù e il labirinto-palazzo di cristallo (Como e l'Esposizione Voltiana, 1899).

che i grandi padiglioni di Prà Pasquée avessero imboccato decisamente la via di un linguaggio sincretico ed eclettico, tradizionalista da un lato e stravagante dall'altro, sovraccarico anche quando cercava di essere classico, un linguaggio che potesse andare incontro alle sensibilità variopinte delle migliaia di visitatori della mostra. Solo la grafica delle pubblicazioni periodiche e dei manifesti concesse spazio a moduli e tematiche timidamente moderniste, come si è visto, ribadendo nuovamente i percorsi prioritari che il nuovo stile svolge nella grafica pubblicitaria.

Se ci si concentra invece sui dispositivi interni, ovvero l'allestimento e l'illuminazione, si incontrano soluzioni piuttosto limitate nel repertorio, ovvero grandi vetrine in legno e vetro dalle fogge sfarzose (figg. 18-19). Le critiche sorsero dallo stesso settimanale dell'esposizione, dove per voce di Piero Pinchetti, imprenditore tessile e docente alla locale Suola di Setificio, si osservava la «difficoltà di giudicare delle qualità dei tessuti rinchiusi e entro vetrine [...] le quali quando sono collocate le une di

fronte alle altre, producono la riflessione della luce, e ciò tanto più fortemente quanto più oscuri sono i colori delle rispettive stoffe» (Como 1899, 22).

Dopo l'incendio dell'8 luglio, Linati predispose con grande rapidità i piani per la costruzione di una seconda esposizione voltiana, poichè apparve subito chiaro che non sarebbe stato possibile, con le risorse ed il tempo a disposizione, riproporre gli edifici perduti. Antonio Giussani, architetto e restauratore di edifici storici, nel presentare il progetto del nuovo complesso espositivo (fig. 20), il 20 luglio, sulle colonne del settimanale della mostra poteva commentare: «L'architettura dei nuovi edifici è sempre di stile impero, trattato liberamente e con molto brio, in ispece nel padiglione di mezzo, dove il frontone curvo, e le torrette laterali *à jour* s'alzano con svelta eleganza, e danno al fabbricato una impronta veramente simpatica, ed aliena da ogni formalismo» (Como 1899, 87).

I nuovi edifici erano di dimensioni inferiori ai precedenti e rinunciavano a complessità planimetriche in favore di strutture regolari (fig. 21).



Figura 18. Le gallerie della prima Esposizione voltiana (Como 1899)



Figura 19. Le gallerie della prima Esposizione voltiana (Como 1899)

All'interno, forse per mitigare l'effetto di diminuzione rispetto alle gallerie distrutte, Linati introdusse vetrate colorate con decorazioni floreali a conferire morbidi effetti luministici a vetrine e teche. Giussani sembrava piuttosto esitante nella valutazione del nuovo progetto, di cui lodava la capacità di suggerire grazia in un organismo in realtà privo di coerenza, sia strutturale sia stilistica. I padiglioni non offrivano più, come i precedenti, continuità dei percorsi che si svolgevano tutti al coperto, mentre di contro accentuavano il carattere eclettico della decorazione architettonica, che riconosceva nel tema delle cariatidi, eseguite su modello dello scultore Rusconi, una linea guida replicata con tenacia un po' ossessiva. Solo la penna abile di Mansuero, cronista ufficiale dell'esposizione, seppe trovare per i progetti della seconda esposizione voltiana un codice interpretativo adatto ad una *vulgata* di facile digeribilità:

«[...] se l'edificio distrutto era monumentale, questo è di una grazia, e di una freschezza da far quasi dimenticare l'antico. Si direbbe che l'architetto, sotto la sferza del dolore, abbia avuto una di quelle ispirazioni geniali che solo i momenti solenni sanno dare» (Como 1899, 105).

6 Le sezioni di «Belle Arti» e «Arte Sacra»

Alla mostra di elettricità e dell'industria serica se ne affiancarono una di Belle Arti, dedicata ai maestri contemporanei, ed una di Arte Sacra, in cui vennero esposti oggetti antichi in prestito dalle chiese e dalle fabbricerie ecclesiastiche della diocesi di Como, nonché una esposizione dedi-

cata alla ragioneria, scelta già contestata all'epoca per il tenore utilitaristico della disciplina, che indica però quante correnti animassero le dinamiche interne all'organizzazione dell'evento.

Alla mostra di Arte Sacra è stata dedicata, anche recentemente, una discreta attenzione critica (Straffi 2006; Angelini 2009). Ordinata da don Santo Monti, storico e pubblicista, autore nel 1902 di un volume fondamentale sull'arte nei territori compresi nei confini diocesani (Monti 1902), ovvero il Lario e le valli prealpine e alpine della provincia di Sondrio, essa riunì per la prima volta dipinti, sculture, oreficerie, intagli lignei selezionati per il loro valore storico-artistico, per il loro interesse religioso, ma anche per il loro richiamo alle arti applicate alle industrie (fig. 22). La mostra, senza offrire linee interpretative storiografiche, si offrì come un saggio di catalogo territoriale e come tale venne positivamente accolta da critici avvertiti come Antonio Taramelli, Diego Sant'Ambrogio, Francesco Malaguzzi Valeri.⁶ Essa sollecitò, soprattutto dopo l'incendio, un dibattito acceso sulla tutela del patrimonio artistico, sui criteri di trasporto e sul restauro, avviando una riflessione che sarebbe tornata di scottante attualità in occasione delle smobilitazioni della prima guerra mondiale (Angelini 2016).

Di segno ben differente era l'esposizione di Belle Arti, promossa dall'avvocato Filippo Rubini, animatore della vita culturale cittadina e imprenditore nel campo della siderurgia. Essa si

⁶ Sulla sezione di Arte Sacra è in corso di preparazione uno studio specifico da parte di chi scrive.

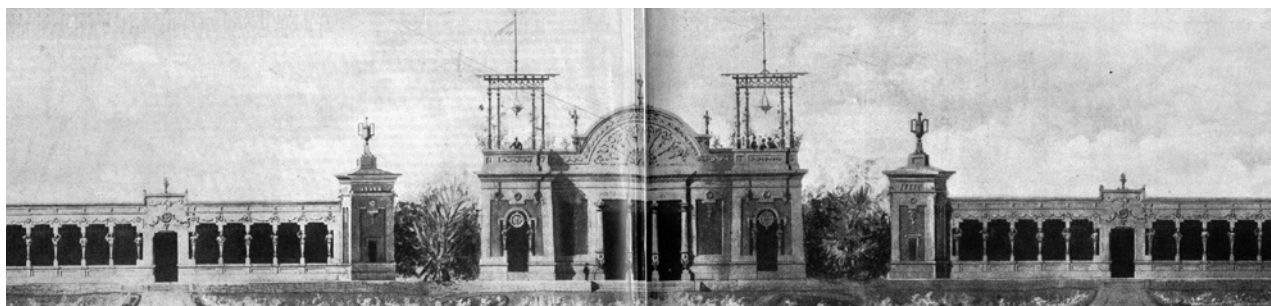


Figura 20. E. Linati, *Progetto della seconda Esposizione voltiana (Como 1899)*

Figura 21. I padiglioni della seconda Esposizione voltiana, su progetto di Eugenio Linati (*Como 1899*)

proponeva un compito arduo e ingrato insieme: rappresentare una scuola artistica locale, conferendole dignità a livello nazionale e presentare temi e prove di un dialogo tra le arti e le scienze, su un piano da un lato ideologico e dall'altro commerciale, aprendo canali di committenza e di acquisto da parte della borghesia industriale (Previtera 2008, 112-14). I primi commentatori dell'esposizione non mancarono di sottolineare le difficoltà a cui un simile progetto inevitabilmente sarebbe andato incontro: «La ristrettezza del tempo; l'assenza di un nucleo di artisti che altri ne potessero attrarre; la mancanza di ogni tradizione artistica; la opinione, comune, di una specie di antinomia fra la assidua preoccupazione per le industrie e pei commerci ed il culto dell'arte; la

notizia, smentita ora dal fatto, di inviti numerosi agli infiniti dilettanti di pittura della nostra città, facevano temere dovesse l'Esposizione di Belle Arti degenerare in una mostra di diletterismo più o meno imperito» (*Como 1899*, 11).

Lo stesso articolo, a firma di Pietro Casanova, ci fornisce anche un primo ragguaglio sugli artisti presenti e a partire da questa fonte è possibile sviluppare qualche osservazione. Ad una sommaria rassegna appare chiaro che dominante era la predilezione per la pittura di paesaggio, con particolare attenzione ai pittori ed ai soggetti lombardi; tuttavia se si scorrono i nomi degli artisti e le sintetiche definizioni che li accompagnavano, si ricava quasi un campionario di etichette 'critiche' spendibili in termini di mercato:



Figura 22. S. Monti, *Storia ed Arte nella provincia e antica diocesi di Como*. Copertina, 1899

«[Filippo] Carcano, il fortissimo pittore lombardo ben noto; [Eleuterio] Pagliano, dipintore della volta del nostro [Teatro] Sociale; [Giorgio] Belloni, l'innamorato del mare; [Eugenio] Gignous, l'interprete della squisita poesia cantata eternamente dalle sponde dei nostri laghi; [Carlo Paolo] Agazzi, il giovane già rivelatosi tanto forte; [...] Pasini Lazzaro che espone una *Primavera e Autunno* destinato certo ad essere oggetto di non brevi discussioni; [Pietro] Fragiaco, scrutatore delle luci e delle ombre del mare; [Ettore] Tito, studioso della sua bella, della sua cara Venezia (fig. 23); [Giuseppe] Carozzi, sempre ugualmente splendido sia che ritragga i quieti silenzi dei pascoli montanini sia che ci mostri i tramonti invernali schiariti dalle nevi intatte (fig. 24); [Telemaco] Signorini, nome amato da quanti apprezzano il disinteresse assoluto nel proseguimento di un proprio ideale contrario ad ogni convenzionalismo

accademico e bottegaio, nome che suona perpetua battaglia; [Francesco] Jerace, lo scultore del superbo monumento eretto da Bergamo a Donizzetti». (Como 1899, 11)

In fondo la selezione degli artisti non era né esigua né circoscritta al panorama regionale. Ai lombardi come Pagliano (di tutti il più anziano), Carcano e Gignous, divisi tra romanticismo e naturalismo, si affiancano Pasini, emiliano ma di formazione fiorentino, avvicinatosi in seguito anch'egli ai maestri lombardi, o Tito, veneziano di formazione e adozione, per citare due pittori di una generazione più giovane. Se da un lato le partecipazioni di Signorini e Fragiaco dichiarano dell'ostentata volontà degli organizzatori di offrire uno spaccato non provinciale della pittura italiana di fine Ottocento, dall'altro l'enfasi sul nome di Agazzi è un ammiccamento alla committenza altoborghese, poiché il giovane pittore ave-



Figura 23. E. Tito, *Il Tramonto* (Como 1899)

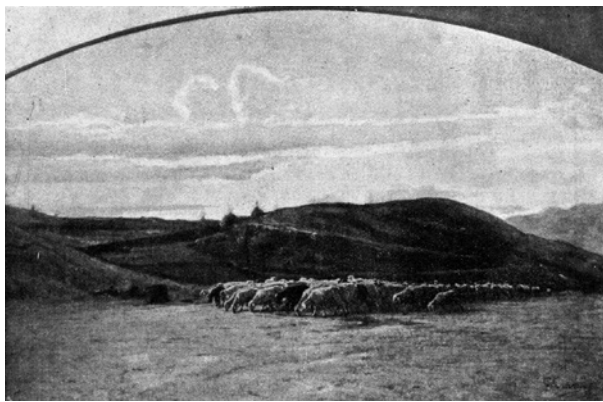


Figura 24. G. Carozzi, *Alti pascoli* (Como 1899)



Figura 25. E. Longoni, *La Preghiera* (Como 1899)



Figura 26. L. Bazzaro, *La seconda nutrice* (Como 1899)



Figura 27. A. Rinaldi, *Volta scopre l'elettromozione metallica*, 1863. Como, Tempio Voltiano

va lavorato alle decorazioni della grandiosa villa dello scrittore Carlo Dossi in località Cardina di Como (1897-1910), su ideazione di Luigi Conconi, nel cui *atelier* egli gravitava dopo la morte del suo maestro Giuseppe Bertini (Petrucci 1960).⁷ Tornando ai generi, il paesaggio non era tuttavia l'unico presentato in mostra, poiché altri soggetti comparivano nelle immagini che corredevano le colonne del settimanale dell'esposizione, spesso con commenti critici che confortano l'impressione di una mostra costruita all'indirizzo di un pubblico borghese di acquirenti. Il divisionista Emilio Longoni, ad esempio, era presente con *La Preghiera* (fig. 25), dipinto di mercanteggiata ispirazione simbolista, la cui vicenda merita di essere qui ricostruita: esso risale al 1897 ed è riconoscibile in realtà in uno studio per una *Crocifissione* a fresco in una cappella privata del cimitero di Velate di Varese, che compare in miniatura in basso nella tela (Ginex 1995, 227, 229). Nel suo commento Pietro Casanova ricordava la partecipazione di Longoni all'ultima triennale di Milano con *Le Tre Marie* e rimarcava l'aderenza tra il soggetto e la «grande semplicità di mezzi tecnici, con una rinuncia così completa alla ricerca di facili effetti» (Como 1899, 44).

Il 'riciclaggio' del bozzetto di Longoni prova che la vena simbolista-religiosa del divisionismo era certo la più spendibile in termini commerciali. Tuttavia è curioso rilevare la digressione che lo stesso Casanova operava in termini di lettura sociologica e lombrosiana di una serie di dipinti presenti all'esposizione, che si chiudeva con *La Seconda Nutrice* di Leonardo Bazzaro (fig. 26), il quale in quello stesso 1899 partecipava alla Terza Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte di Venezia (Rebora 1997, 27). Non si trattava dell'unico artista presente a Como che avesse inoltre esposto a Venezia (aprile-ottobre 1899); il confronto tra le due esposizioni in verità ha scarsa motivazione dal punto di vista storico, ma basta a definire la totale assenza a Como di maestri stranieri che invece a Venezia segnarono l'apertura verso il *Modern Style* inglese e lo *Jugendstil* austro-tedesco. Eppure la mostra di Belle Arti di Como avrebbe potuto cogliere almeno l'opportunità, nei limiti della pittura lombarda di fine secolo, di documentare la crisi del naturalismo e la dif-

ficile affermazione di una pittura 'ideista', di cui il divisionismo alla Previati e alla Segantini (un 'certo' Segantini) mirava a prendere le redini. Soprattutto nelle opere più tarde di Filippo Carcano, anch'egli presente sia a Como sia a Venezia, questo passaggio appariva ben rappresentato con tutte le sue esitazioni e incertezze (Valentini 1987, 21).

7 Una difficile eredità

L'esposizione voltiana si chiuse all'insegna di una trionfalistica retorica, concentrata sulle capacità imprenditoriali di una piccola realtà di provincia che era riuscita a divenire polo di attrazione internazionale e sull'eroica rinascita dell'esposizione dopo l'incendio dell'8 luglio. A suggello dell'esposizione, come ultimo atto di un alto patronato che la corona aveva implicitamente concesso, il re donò alle collezioni civiche di Como il dipinto di Alessandro Rinaldi raffigurante *Volta che scopre l'elettromozione metallica*, «di sua privata proprietà» (Archivio di Stato di Como, *Ex Museo*, cart. 69). Il quadro (fig. 27) era stato presentato all'esposizione di Brera del 1863, con grande riscontro; allievo di Hayez e Bertini, fervente patriota, Rinaldi era esponente di un indirizzo storico ed encomiastico ormai in liquidazione. Il dono regio esprimeva pienamente l'orizzonte celebrativo entro cui l'esposizione, anche al netto della retorica ufficiale, si era di fatto ripiegata.

Se si prova a fare un consuntivo della mostra voltiana del 1899 è evidente che la serie si divide in attivi e passivi, ma per comprendere la ricaduta che essa ebbe sul contesto cittadino si può ricorrere ad un parallelismo con le celebrazioni allestite nel 1927, in occasione del centenario della morte di Alessandro Volta. La città decise di rinnovare l'impresa dell'esposizione del 1899 approfittando della cornice neoclassica di Villa Olmo, acquistata dal Comune di Como tre anni prima. Sul sito dei giardini a lago, già sede dei padiglioni di Linati, su incoraggiamento dell'industriale Francesco Somaini l'architetto Federico Frigerio avrebbe costruito il neoclassico Tempio Voltiano per ospitare i cimeli e gli strumenti dello scienziato scampati all'incendio del 1899 (Cani 2016, 130-36), mentre sul monte di Brunate sarebbe sorto il Faro dedicato a Volta, anch'esso 'discendente' della struttura effimera eretta nel 1899 per i visitatori dell'esposizione. La mostra del 1927 comprendeva inoltre un congresso internazionale di fisici, alla presenza di numerosi premi Nobel, con l'eccezione di Einstein, assen-

⁷ La mostra di Como fu preparatoria, non solo della carriera di Agazzi, ma più in generale della sezione dedicata ai pittori viventi della grande mostra retrospettiva dedicata a *La pittura lombarda nel secolo XIX*, allestita nel 1900 dalla Società per le Belle Arti di Milano, a cura di Vespasiano Bignami.

te per ferma opposizione al fascismo (Gamba, Schiera 2005). Anch'essa celebrata dalla stampa e sottoposta al patronato del governo, che nel mutato panorama politico la integrò alla politica propagandistica di regime, l'esposizione non riuscì a superare lo scacco tra tradizione e progresso, soprattutto evidente nelle sue manifestazioni architettoniche.

L'indirizzo degli investimenti pubblici e privati era però mutato, non circoscritto all'occasione effimera, che pure aveva senso come momento di richiamo e strumento di risonanza internazionale; il trascorrere dei tempi aveva infatti suggerito di erigere attrazioni e istituzioni permanenti (il museo ed il faro), ma non solo: la città aprì ad una politica urbanistica che riqualificasse il sito dell'antico quartiere espositivo e lo integrasse agli ampliamenti del centro urbano. Infatti, nello stesso torno d'anni, con la costruzione nell'area dello stesso Prà Pasquée, che aveva ospitato l'esposizione voltiana del 1899, di nuovi quartieri residenziali e di nuove infrastrutture, tra cui il *Novocomun* di Giuseppe Terragni e lo Stadio "Giuseppe Sinigaglia" di Giovanni Greppi, la città di Como avrebbe trovato un'altra via, più concreta, alla modernità.

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Torino 1898-Parigi 1900

Carlo Ceppi, Costantino Gilodi e Giacomo Salvadori
tra tradizione e innovazione

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Abstract The last years of the 19th century in Turin are marked by the project of the General Italian Exhibition of 1898, whose coordination is entrusted to Ceppi, Gilodi and Salvadori. The closure of this Exhibition however does not terminate their experience in designing exposition spaces: in a sort of passing of the baton, some of the Turin pavilions, before being demolished, housed the laboratories where the pavilion, intended to represent Italy in Paris in 1900, was prefabricated. The Italian pavilion for the French exhibition was highly innovative; new materials and solutions make the project an iconic example of contemporary architectural culture and industrialization of the construction site. One of the highlights is the re-elaboration of Venetian Gothic, a fine example of Ceppi's ability to master and combine stylistic codes of the past and modern innovative techniques.

Sommario 1 Introduzione. – 2 Torino 1898: le premesse. – 3 Parigi 1900: la prefabbricazione del cantiere.

Keywords Carlo Ceppi. Costantino Gilodi. Giacomo Salvadori. Exhibition.

1 Introduzione

Al sodalizio tra gli architetti Carlo Ceppi (1829-1921), Costantino Gilodi (1853-1918) e Giacomo Salvadori (1858-1937) si deve il successo della partecipazione italiana all'Esposizione Universale parigina del 1900: la progettazione di un edificio di grande impatto scenografico si rivela uno degli esiti più riusciti della *kermesse* atta a rappresentare il momento di snodo tra Ottocento e Novecento.

L'autore principale del progetto, Carlo Ceppi, pressoché assente dai testi dedicati alla storia dell'architettura del XIX secolo in Italia – o, quando presente, ricordato solo nella realizzazione della stazione di Porta Nuova e l'apertura della diagonale torinese di via Pietro Micca (Meeks 1966; Restucci 2005) – vanta una lunga attività professionale, in cui si dedica all'architettura residenziale, religiosa, effimera, ai piani urbanistici, all'insegnamento presso la Università torinese e alla vita politica cittadina. Nonostante la sua opera attenda ancora uno studio approfondito che ne restituisca la complessità del profilo, il ruolo giocato nell'industrializzazione del cantiere in Italia, l'attenzione per i materiali innovativi e le tecniche costruttive e l'analisi delle espe-

rienze progettuali nell'ambito delle esposizioni di Torino, nel 1898, e Parigi, nel 1900, aiutano a comprendere l'indissolubile rapporto tra 'pelle e ossa' che contraddistingue la sua carriera architettonica.¹

In particolare, ad avvallare le capacità di Ceppi nel padroneggiare e far dialogare sapientemente codici del passato e tecniche costruttive innovative è il padiglione della sezione italiana realizzato per la rassegna parigina d'inizio Novecento. Contraddistinto da una 'rara eleganza' (Picard 1903, 65) e da proporzioni imponenti, enfatizzate dalla posizione dominante rispetto ai ventidue padiglioni esteri che si susseguono sulla *rive gauche* della Senna, lungo *rue des Nations*, figura tra le architetture «plus considérables» (Da Cunha 1900, 187) del recinto fieristico; la pianta basilicale e la personale rielaborazione del

¹ In tale contesto Ceppi assume un ruolo di rilievo, come palesano le prime applicazioni del cemento armato che portano la sua firma. La fiducia per la nuova tecnica costruttiva, diffusa in ambito accademico per la prima volta in Italia nelle aule politecniche torinesi, ad opera del prof. Guidi, lo portano a sperimentare il 'moderno' materiale sin dagli esordi applicativi. Quale contributo più recente sull'opera di Ceppi, sebbene ancora parziale, si segnala lo studio curato da Gron (2003).

gotico-veneziano «faisait le plus grand honneur à ses architectes» (Picard 1903, 65).

Se la scelta del revival gotico, influenzato dalle teorie che si sviluppano in Italia nel corso del XIX secolo e che vedono fra i principali rappresentanti Pietro Selvatico (1803-1880) e Camillo Boito (1836-1914), risponde all'esigenza di portare all'interno della rassegna i canoni di uno specifico periodo della propria identità nazionale, così da conformare l'area a una sorta di dizionario dell'architettura internazionale chiaramente riconoscibile, l'esito che ne deriva, seppur estroso, provvisorio e afferente a riferimenti apparentemente lontani dall'architettura del nuovo secolo, è un'eccezione rispetto alle partecipazioni espositive italiane precedenti, oltre che per le soluzioni formali e costruttive applicate, per via delle dinamiche che, sin dalla gestazione, condizionano le scelte dei tre architetti nel coniugare le esperienze maturate nella mostra torinese di fine secolo con quelle che contraddistinguono il *milieu* architettonico coevo.

2 Torino 1898: le premesse

Il sodalizio progettuale Ceppi, Gilodi e Salvadori, nonché fra questi e l'impresa costruttrice Pasqualin & Vienna di Venezia, incaricata dell'esecuzione della fabbrica parigina, si consolida nel recinto dell'ultima Esposizione ottocentesca torinese (1898),² in cui la ricorrenza del cinquantenario della promulgazione dello Statuto albertino offre l'opportunità, da un lato, di promuovere il progresso industriale nazionale, dall'altro, di sviluppare una serie di riflessioni culturali e architettoniche attraverso il progetto dei padiglioni espositivi.

Nel momento in cui Ceppi è chiamato a coordinare l'Ufficio Tecnico dell'Esposizione Generale Italiana del 1898, l'opportunità si esplica in un «inventario dei progressi e dei trionfi dell'industria, dell'ingegno e dell'arte ottocentesca», una «effimera città di legno, ferro e gesso» (1898. *L'Esposizione Nazionale* 1898, 6) entro cui sperimentare modelli distributivi e decorativi e le istanze teoriche e costruttive che si stanno irradando negli ambienti scientifici e tecnici.

La consolidata esperienza maturata da Ceppi nell'ambito dell'attività professionale, accademica e delle rassegne espositive (quali, fra le altre,

l'Esposizione Nazionale di Belle Arti del 1880 e la I Esposizione Italiana di Architettura del 1890) e la cooperazione di Gilodi e Salvadori (già collaboratore dell'ingegner Camillo Riccio nella redazione dei disegni e nella direzione delle costruzioni dell'Esposizione del 1884) in ciascuna fase progettuale – redazione del progetto di massima dell'area, dei singoli manufatti, dei particolari esecutivi da fornire ai costruttori, progettazione degli impianti, direzione del cantiere –, sono fondamentali per la riuscita dell'evento (Sacheri 1900, 7; Dameri 2003, 89).

Resterà tipico, nella storia del lavoro intellettuale ed artistico, questo fatto, non frequente; di tre menti, di tre cuori, di tre fibre che si uniscono, si fondono e si esplicano con assoluta unità di gusti, di intenti, di lavoro. Ceppi, Gilodi e Salvadori formano il *trinum perfectum*, simbolo d'ogni cosa complessa, forte e bella. [...] Gli è ben vero che, concretata un'idea, solo uno degli architetti si assume il compito di svolgerla e di tradurla in progetto, ma gli è anche vero che per talune opere l'elaborazione del progetto è di tutti e tre. Pare che Ceppi, Gilodi e Salvadori abbiano fatta loro la vecchia divisa piemontese «uno per tutti, tutti per uno», ed un così meraviglioso risultato, qual'è [sic!] la bellezza degli edifici dell'Esposizione, non si sarebbe potuto ottenere se l'armonia, la concordia dei tre architetti non fosse stata sempre ed in tutto assolutamente perfetta. (1898. *L'Esposizione Nazionale* 1898, 14)

La rassegna è allestita lungo le sponde del Po, nell'ottocentesco parco del Valentino, sull'area trapezoidale racchiusa tra il castello e il ponte Isabella (85.000 mq) e collegata, per mezzo del cavalcavia della Concordia, al settore tra corso Massimo D'Azeglio, corso Raffaello, via Madama Cristina e via Monti (25.000 mq), ospitante l'Esposizione Italiana di Arte Sacra, delle Missioni Cattoliche e delle Opere di Carità Cristiana (fig. 1).³

Un'eterogenea varietà di lessici eclettici, dal Neoclassico al Neomoresco al Neorococò, si articolano nella successione di differenti padiglioni frazionati in cinque lotti e collegati tra loro attraverso passaggi e gallerie. Il visitatore è proiettato

² All'impresa Pasqualin & Vienna è affidata la realizzazione di alcune fabbriche espositive del 1898 (ingresso principale, Galleria delle Industrie Manifatturiere, padiglione Ottagono, cavalcavia, ecc.). *Guida Ufficiale* 1898, 23.

³ In concomitanza con l'Esposizione Generale Italiana è organizzata l'Esposizione Italiana di Arte Sacra, delle Missioni Cattoliche e delle Opere di Carità Cristiana e l'ostensione della sindone. La presenza di un'esposizione laica e una religiosa rappresenta una novità assoluta nell'ambito di tali rassegne (Bassignana 2011, 60-61).

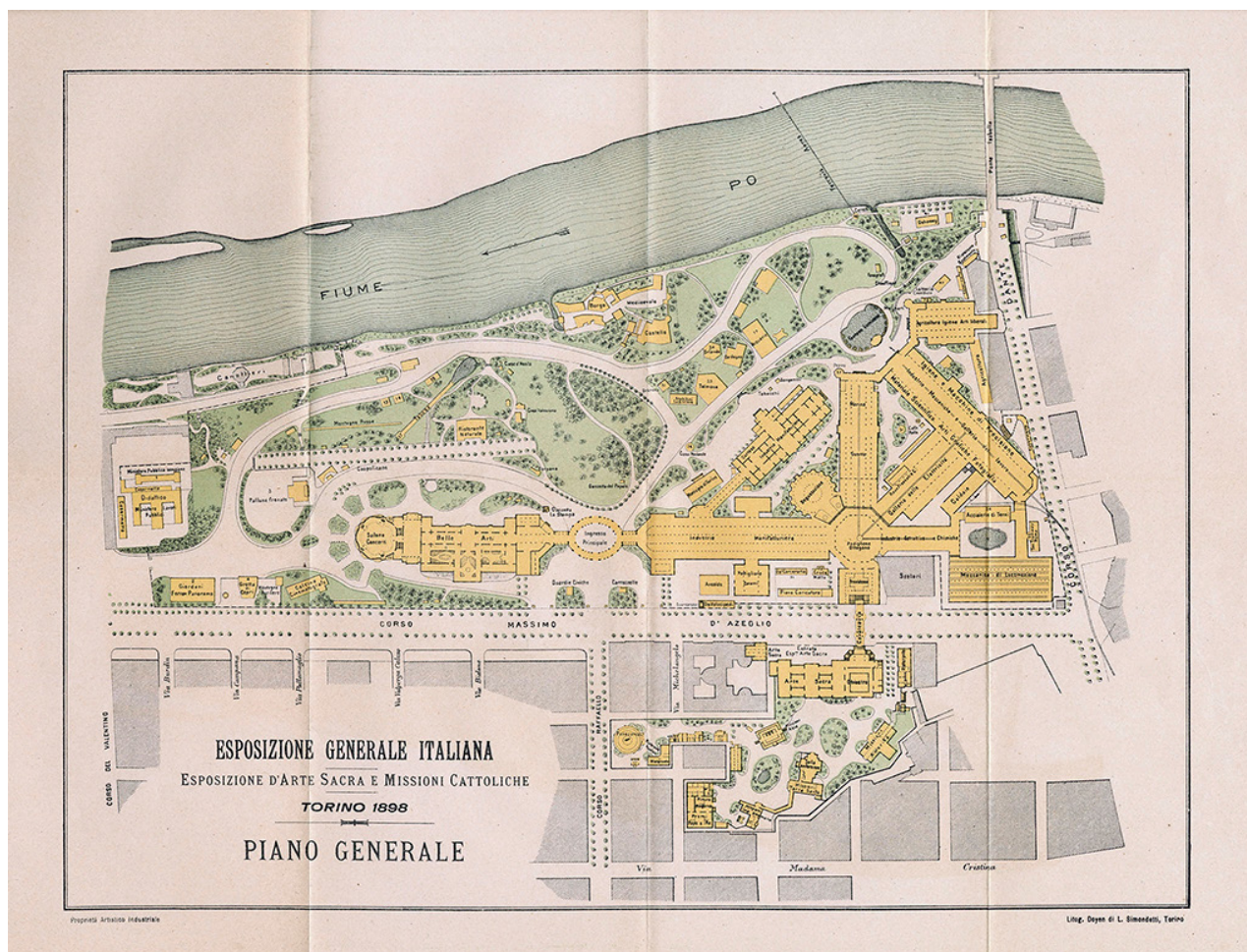


Figura 1. *Esposizione Generale Italiana. Esposizione d'Arte Sacra e Missioni Cattoliche. Torino 1898. Piano generale.* Dalla Guida illustrata di Giuseppe Giustina (ASCT, Collezione Simeom, C1964, 36)

nella 'città effimera' tramite un aulico ingresso attestato su corso Raffaello, il quale, progettato da Ceppi attraverso una personale rielaborazione dell'architettura barocca piemontese, è contraddistinto da un porticato ellittico, a colonne tra-beate alternate ad archi sormontati da statue. A destra dell'atrio, annesso al salone rettangolare di Belle Arti, si erge la Rotonda dei Concerti,⁴ un imponente salone progettato principalmente da Gilodi (Sacheri 1900, 15).

Dal lato opposto dell'ingresso, si erge la Galleria per le Industrie Manifatturiere, scompartita in cinque navate, la quale conduce il visitatore

nel settore sinistro del recinto. È in quest'area che gli esiti stilistici si rivelano più ricercati, in particolar modo nel bacino d'acqua adornato di conchiglie, tritoni, nereidi e gruppi statuari della fontana dei dodici mesi, realizzata da Ceppi attraverso «forme neosettecentesche, [...] spunti floreali e nostalgie rococò» (Dameri 2003, 97), nella neomoresca triplice facciata⁵ (fig. 3) verso il Po, in cui convergono i fronti della Galleria della Marina e della Guerra, della Galleria delle Industrie Meccaniche e del Lavoro e Galleria dell'Agricol-

⁴ Il fabbricato, impostato su una pianta pentalobata, all'interno è ripartito in nicchie cinte da una galleria e sormontato da una cupola e un cupolino; esternamente è contraddistinto da cinque avancorpi con timpani centinati sormontati da gruppi allegorici.

⁵ La triplice facciata orientale è realizzata con telai in legno tamponati con stuoia intonacata, con una copertura in lamiera ondulata e tele in corrispondenza del soffitto. Conduce alle Gallerie della Marina e della Guerra (a cinque navate, contraddistinte da due facciate ricalcanti rispettivamente gli arsenali marittimi e un dongione di città fortificata), del Lavoro (galleria centrale, a tre navate) e dell'Agricoltura (a cinque navate).



Figura 2. Il salone Ottagono dell'Esposizione 1898 (Sacheri 1900, tav. VI)

tura o, ancora, nel padiglione Ottagono (fig. 2) progettato da Salvadori in «stile da Esposizione» (Sacheri 1900, 36) e nel cavalcavia loggiato della Concordia progettato da Gilodi, elemento di giuntura tra l'Esposizione Generale e l'Esposizione dell'Arte Sacra, delle Missioni Cattoliche e delle Opere di Carità a emblema della collaborazione tra autorità laica ed ecclesiastica nella programmazione delle manifestazioni.

L'esito è la creazione di un 'giardino delle meraviglie' (Buscioni 1990, 156; Bassignana, Roccia 1999, 73-5), in cui l'intento è stupire attraverso gli espositori, le sinuosità della Galleria del Lavoro, le arcate e le colonne moresche della triplice facciata, «il frastuono delle acque della grande fontana», «l'audace frenesia delle linee dell'architettura», lo «schiamazzo della policromia e delle decorazioni» (Ceradini 1898, 7).

Progettare padiglioni espositivi permette di avventurarsi nel campo dell'effimero: poco o nulla di quanto è edificato durerà nel tempo. Le strutture portanti sono nella maggior parte dei casi realizzate in legno, irrigidite da sostegni metallici, piantati a poca profondità nel terreno. Per le

coperture si utilizzano lamiere di ferro o teloni, le pareti sono in muratura o anche in legno, intonacate per nascondere l'esilità dell'insieme.

Disegnare architetture destinate ad una vita di breve durata permette ai progettisti di sperimentare lessici nuovi, bizzarri e spesso volte frutto di una precisa volontà di sorprendere creando scorci imprevedibili, difficilmente impiegati nella realizzazione di edifici pubblici o privati. Al contempo, sotto una 'pelle' fantasiosa e singolare, il cantiere dei padiglioni diventa anche occasione di sperimentare soluzioni e tecniche che solo successivamente saranno impiegate su larga scala. Sintomatica dell'apertura culturale e progettuale dell'Ufficio Tecnico nell'applicazione di moderne tecniche costruttive, ad esempio, è la fontana progettata da Ceppi; destinata a perdurare nel tempo, anche in seguito allo smantellamento delle strutture espositive, è costruita in cemento e ferro (1898. *L'Esposizione Nazionale* 1898, 6).

A Torino, nonostante l'estrosità progettuale di ciascun fabbricato, le eterogenee linee progettuali lasciano già intravedere i codici, le prassi, la fiducia nelle potenzialità del 'moderno' sapere scientifico-tecnologico, i riferimenti stilistici ed architettonici che influenzeranno gli esiti del padiglione costruito due anni dopo a Parigi. Esemplificative in tal senso sono la riproduzione, lungo le rive del Po, della Ca' d'Oro di Venezia, la ripresa, nel paramento esterno del padiglione Ottagono, del rivestimento a piastrelle a scacchiera obliqua del Palazzo Ducale della città veneta (entrambi gli edifici forniranno sintomatici spunti nella realizzazione del padiglione italiano della *kermesse* francese), l'affidamento dell'esecuzione di numerosi fabbricati alla medesima impresa costruttrice del cantiere parigino (Sacheri 1900, 32-38).

3 Parigi 1900: la prefabbricazione del cantiere

Il giorno stesso della chiusura dell'Esposizione piemontese «Il Governo del Re che voleva che l'Italia si presentasse per ragioni politiche, in modo degno di Lei all'Esposizione di Parigi del 1900» (Salvadori 1919, 7), incarica Ceppi, Gilodi e Salvadori della direzione dei lavori del padiglione atto a rappresentare la nazione d'oltralpe.

S.E. l'onorevole Villa [...] nella sua qualità di Commissario generale non indugiò un istante a rivolgersi ai tre architetti Ceppi, Gilodi e Salvadori che avevano dato così splendida prova del loro genio ideando le costruzioni molteplici-



Figura 3. La triplice facciata dell'Esposizione 1898 (Sacheri 1900, tav. XI)

ci della ultima fortunata Mostra indetta a Torino per il cinquantenario dello Statuto. E i tre architetti, rispondendo volentieri e concordi all'appello, non vennero meno alla loro fama creando un edificio così imponente e fastoso, quanto gaio e gentile, tale da lasciare a distanza i padiglioni, le gallerie e le facciate del 1898. (Frizzi 1900, 6)

Mentre nel parco del Valentino si stanno ancora smantellando i fabbricati dell'Esposizione Generale, i tre progettisti si destreggiano nell'ideazione di forme e modelli costruttivi e distributivi per l'edificio che rappresenterà l'Italia all'evento francese.

All'interno delle sale del palazzo delle Belle Arti, lasciato momentaneamente in eredità dalla rassegna del 1898, è allestito il laboratorio-cantiere dove si programma ciascuna fase realizzativa e tutte le fasi connesse alla prefabbricazione. Dovendo coniugare l'arditezza formale alla facilità di messa in opera, all'economicità di trasporto e alla celerità costruttiva, peculiare attenzione è rivolta alla standardizzazione e al riciclaggio di specifici elementi. Da un lato l'impresa costruttri-

ce ricicla buona parte del legname ricavato dalle demolizioni dell'Esposizione del 1898, «preparando travi e incavallature con numeri di richiamo» (Frizzi 1900, 28), dall'altro Ceppi si avvale della prefabbricazione di buona parte dei componenti, creando dei calchi e versando nella sagoma un impasto di gesso e stoppa, per conferirgli maggior solidità. Con questo espediente taluni elementi sono realizzati a Torino, altri nel cantiere francese, attraverso casseforme inviate a Parigi in casse di spedizione smontabili – «per facilitare il ritorno con spesa relativamente piccola» (28) – per mezzo del binario di raccordo con la stazione torinese realizzato in occasione della precedente Esposizione. Ancora una volta, la buona riuscita della partecipazione italiana a Parigi è frutto di una consolidata e calibrata collaborazione che trova nella provvisorietà, facilità costruttiva e innovazione l'occasione per sperimentare codici stilistici nuovi e inusuali (Dameri 2009, 82).

La genesi della prima ipotesi progettuale del padiglione si deve a Salvadori, gli accurati sopralluoghi e rilievi dal vero a Gilodi, il quale dirige anche l'esecuzione fedele dei calchi per la riproduzione di ogni elemento architettonico e



Figure 4-5. Due vedute del padiglione italiano all'Esposizione Universale parigina del 1900 (*Exposition internationale 1900*, 25, 122)

scultoreo (Frizzi 1900, 9-11); a Ceppi, ormai settantenne, spetta il coordinamento, la scrupolosa supervisione e la definizione dell'opera e, infine, ai pittori Smeriglio e Gaidano, allo scultore Debiaggi e al formatore Rampinelli rispettivamente la decorazione interna, il fascione policromo della facciata esterna, l'apparato scultoreo e gli elementi ornamentali dei quattro prospetti.

Ne deriva un edificio simmetrico dalla planimetria basilicale a tre navate, sincretismo sapiente di più culture artistiche, in cui gli architetti accostano al rigore classico stilemi gotico-veneziani, esemplificati nei riferimenti al Palazzo Ducale di Venezia (nella decorazione parietale e nella riproposizione in facciata della porta della Carta dell'edificio veneto), alla Ca' d'Oro (nella statuarìa e negli elementi decorativi) e alla basilica di S. Marco (nelle cinque cupole dorate). Il repertorio

stilistico adottato, in particolar modo, scaturisce dalla volontà di rappresentare l'Italia attraverso un linguaggio universalmente riconoscibile, sulla scorta di esperienze nazionali consolidate – quali quelle di Giovanni Battista Meduna che individua nel gotico veneziano lo stilema più consono a rappresentare l'architettura nazionale (Romanelli 1988, 301; Restucci 2005, 125) – e del fervido dibattito alimentato da Camillo Boito sulla ricerca di un lessico comune nella costruzione dell'architettura postunitaria (Restucci 2005, 688-89).

Al padiglione si accede mediante tre ingressi, di cui il principale, collocato sul lato est, lungo la Senna, è trattato come un vestibolo tripartito e ornato con busti di Garibaldi, Mazzini, Cavour e Vittorio Emanuele (Blangino 1901, 21). Il fulcro dell'edificio corrisponde a un'ampia sala centrale quadrata, con angoli smussati, sormontata da



Figura 6. Scorcio del padiglione dal pont des Invalides (*Exposition universelle 1900a*)

una cupola. A questa sala s'innestano due bracci quadrati che generano una pianta a croce, che origina, in corrispondenza degli angoli, quattro spazi minori su due piani, separati dalle sale adiacenti mediante arcate sorrette da colonnine. Sul lato ovest è ripreso il medesimo schema compositivo, ma in luogo del vestibolo si sviluppa uno scalone monumentale (affiancato da due sale) che, nel riprendere la scala dei Giganti del Palazzo Ducale di Venezia, conduce al primo piano a una loggia balaustrata che percorre il perimetro dell'edificio (Frizzi 1900, 18-20).

Se l'interno è monumentale, è all'esterno che il concorso di tutte le arti raggiunge la massima intensità, in special modo attraverso la reinterpretazione dei lessici gotico-veneti (figg. 4-6). Protagonista indiscussa e *leitmotiv* del progetto è la porta della Carta di Palazzo Ducale, replicata dodici volte, in due dimensioni, lungo il perimetro dell'edificio. Nelle quattro copie di dimensioni maggiori il modello è riproposto in una versione sovradimensionata di un quinto e modificata rispetto all'originale (Frizzi 1900, 12); nelle otto copie di dimensioni minori, invece, lo schema rimane pressoché invariato. Mentre sui lati mino-

ri dell'edificio le tre porte sono costrette in uno spazio contenuto (tanto che la copia in prossimità del vestibolo è priva dei piloni con pinnacoli), sui lati maggiori la composizione si fa movimentata e particolareggiata.

Concludono la composizione le cupole dorate che sovrastano l'edificio, chiaro rimando alla Basilica di San Marco, ciascuna contraddistinta da un cupolino «a guisa di ombrello rigonfio ed aperto a metà» (Frizzi 1900, 13). La maggiore è sormontata da un'aquila ad ali spiegate modellata dallo scultore Alloati; all'esterno funge da perno dell'intera composizione e, all'interno, da fulcro degli spazi espositivi.

La statuaria, gli intrecci ogivali, le guglie, i pinnacoli, le bifore, le trifore, i rosoni trilobati, il fascione policromo perimetrale e le decorazioni addossate al rivestimento di piastrelle di marmo bianche e rosse mutano il padiglione in una rassegna di forme del passato, in una ipotesi di lessico nazionale fortemente riconoscibile – tanto che «on a immédiatement l'impression d'une construction d'Italie», «le voyageur y retrouve les mêmes émotions que sur les bords de l'Adriatique» (Da Cunha 1900, 188) – che

contribuisce, insieme ai padiglioni prospicienti, a conformare l'area a una sorta di dizionario dell'architettura internazionale.

Il fortunato esito è merito, oltre che delle scelte stilistiche, dell'approccio tecnico e materico, a partire dall'armatura di legno – data da tavoloni d'abete greggio e sovrastata da un rivestimento di latta, stuoia di canne e gesso «a piene mani» (Berri, Hanau 1900, 145) – e dalle decorazioni simulanti il marmo eseguite dal pittore Smeriglio col medesimo procedimento adottato nell'esecuzione dell'ingresso all'Esposizione torinese del 1898, per mezzo di pompe irroratrici a mano e speciali miscele coloranti.

Faite en bois et plâtre, la construction fut extrêmement intéressante per les très faibles dimension des pièces constitutives de la charpente et par la rusticité des assemblages. Il Y avait là de quoi inspirer au premier abord quelques craintes pour la stabilité, craintes dénuées, du reste, de fondement, car, en employant des pièces d'équarrissage réduit, sauf à les multiplier, les architectes italiens s'étaient bornés à l'application d'un système que la pénurie des bois de fort équarrissage impose souvent dans leur pays. (Picard 1903, 66)

La presenza d'impresе e artisti già coinvolti nella *kermesse* torinese, al pari dell'impiego di prassi già consolidate sono un fattore favorevole nella celerità della costruzione e nel risultato finale:

cesellato, intonacato, rabescato, ornato a profusione, sono gli scultori di gesso e i pittori quelli che han contribuito di più a crearlo. E tutte queste false sculture, questi falsi mosaici, questi smalti falsi, di un effetto meraviglioso e di una falsità irricognoscibile, sono gli operai nostri, che colla abilità leggendaria, han messo saldamente in opera in poche settimane. (Berri, Hanau 1900, 147)

Nonostante il successo formale del padiglione, sono le tecniche costruttive, la modernità delle prassi esecutive e l'industrializzazione del cantiere i veri artefici cui si deve la riuscita della partecipazione italiana all'evento francese.

Dopo il successo parigino, Ceppi al ritorno a Torino 'sposerà' la tecnica costruttiva del cemento armato: l'industrializzazione del cantiere di architettura, pur ancora per qualche tempo celata da forme decorative eclettiche, segnerà l'avvio del nuovo secolo (Dameri 2003).

Davanti a quelle cupole dorate che rammentano S. Marco, davanti alle larghe finestre dove la grazia purissima del cinquecento si unisce e si confonde colle svelte eleganze del nostro medioevo, si ha l'impressione che tutta la superba arte nostra abbia voluto portar qui tutte le sue glorie antiche; antiche glorie su cui sventola il tricolore, segno degli eroismi di ieri, e par ch'esso intenda [...] significare lietamente alla folla di tutto il mondo che qui passa ammirando: «Guardate, qui è l'Italia». (Berri, Hanau 1900, 145)

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Lesson Learned

American Art at the Paris World's Fair of 1867

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Abstract Displaying the most impressive recent inventions at the World's Fair of 1867 in Paris, the United States projected a strong idea of a modern country. The board responsible for selecting art works was equally ambitious. Even though the Americans sent their best art to France with the specific goal of showing that their art was as great as their industrial achievements, the exhibition must be considered a complete failure on this ground. Most of the paintings, compared to the European examples, were behind current movements and altogether unimpressive. While American artists did not achieve the recognition they had hoped for, this essay investigates the reasons why the World's Fair was a fundamental turning point for American art. The article also analyzes how the failures at the Paris event gave American artists a vision for improvement, illustrating that in the decades that followed many factors combined to elevate the quality of their works.

Keywords World's Fair. Paris 1867. American Art. American Artists. Art Exhibition.

The World's Fair of 1867 in Paris was visited by 15 million people, almost three times more than the previous exhibition in Paris in 1855 and the subsequent fair hosted by London in 1862. While the Fair was opening its gates to large audiences, a wounded United States was still recovering from the American Civil War (1861-1865) that sought to divide the country. President Abraham Lincoln had been assassinated and the southern states were just beginning the long and arduous steps toward reconstruction. Nevertheless a rebuilding and healing America participated in the Paris World's Fair.

Displaying the most impressive recent inventions and their industrial achievements, the Americans projected a strong idea of a modern country. The board responsible for selecting art works was equally ambitious. It was composed mostly of East Coast collectors who selected a total of 107 works by 49 artists, including some of the most important exponents of American art at the time: Frederic Edwin Church, Albert Bierstadt, and Winslow Homer, to name but a few.¹

Although the United States sent its best art to France with the specific goal of showing that American art was as great as its industrial achievements, the exhibition must be considered a complete failure on this ground. Most of the

paintings, compared to the European examples, were obviously behind current movements and altogether unimpressive. American artists didn't achieve the recognition they had hoped for and fell short of their countryman's accomplishments in the industrial sections. While observers on both sides of the ocean were highly critical of the Americans' art, they tended to agree that there was great potential yet to be achieved. The Paris World's Fair in 1867 in essence represents a fundamental turning point for American art. In the decades that followed many factors combined to improve the status of art in America. For example, patrons started to vigorously collect European art, particularly modern French painting, which helped American artists to see the need to seek training abroad. The failures at the Paris event gave American artists a vision for doing better in the future. In fact, they had far more positive experiences in subsequent exhibitions, notably the first World's Fair hosted by the United States, in Philadelphia in 1876, and again in Paris in 1878. After 1867 American art started on a more progressive path that would ultimately lead to a revolution in art in the middle of the twentieth century.

When the U.S. Secretary of State Hon. William H. Seward received the invitation for Americans to participate in the World's Fair, the Civil War was just ending. This unprecedented conflict on American soil exploded in 1861, after years of tensions between the northern and southern states over issues mostly related to slavery, industrial-

¹ The department of painting contained 82 works by 41 artists.



Figure 1. Frederic Edwin Church, *Niagara*, 1857. Oil on canvas; 101.6 × 229.9 cm (40 × 90 1/2 in). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Collection (Museum Purchase, Gallery Fund)

zation, commerce, and customs. Just in November of the previous year Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States of America and he guided the country through this internal war and a political crisis, ultimately defeating the Confederate States of America and preserving the Union. The southern states were just starting their long reconstruction when President Lincoln was assassinated, on April 15, 1865.

"By two decrees, dated June 22 and the 1st of last month, the Emperor has ordered that a Universal Exposition of the productions of agriculture, manufacture, and the fine arts should be opened at Paris May 1, 1867" (Blake 1870, 11). L. de Geofroy, minister of France to the United States, wrote to Seward on March 27, 1865. America had participated in three previous World Exhibitions, including the first ever in London in 1851, Paris in 1855, and London again in 1862.² Fairs offered America a stage to show off its industrial productions, to enhance its prestige, to increase exports, and to attract foreign investments. The Paris Universal Exposition gave the United States the further opportunity to project its newfound internal peace and increase its eco-

nomic prosperity. In another letter to Secretary Seward, the American minister to France noted that Napoleon III "had been very much astonished by the marvels of ingenuity and skill which he had observed in the United States, and was anxious to have them more known and appreciated in France" (Blake 1870, 13). Another American in Paris looked forward to the opportunity for the United States to exhibit a wide range of products "well selected, and complete enough to be national", which, he added, would "produce an impression of surprise analogous to that produced by the disclosures of the war" (Blake 1870, 26-27). He also believed an event of global range would be the perfect place to display an image of the newly re-united country, becoming a catalyst for bright skilled workers willing to emigrate to America. Several journals echoed that consideration. "If it be asked, Why take all this trouble for the French Exhibition?" stated *The Evening Post*. "The answer is: The audience in Paris is the largest, the juries the best to be found, and whoever carries off the award is the champion of the world. We cannot afford to absent ourselves from a contest of this importance nor we can afford to do less than our best".³

Secretary Seward undoubtedly was convinced by all the arguments about the potential for the

² With the aim to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the first World's Fair, the exhibition was set to be held in 1861. Due to international issues, such as the beginning of the American Civil War and the Italian Wars of Independence, the exhibition was postponed by one year.

³ *The Evening Post*, 11 December, 1865.



Figure 2. Albert Bierstadt, *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak*, 1863. Oil on canvas; 186.7 × 306.7 cm (73 1/2 × 120 3/4 in). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York: Rogers Fund, 1907

American people of an international event on European soil and about the need of a government support. The French Imperial Commission, which oversaw the event, compiled a classification of 10 categories subdivided into 95 classes, that every participating country had to follow. Fine Art⁴ was the subject of the first group.⁵

The US State Department created an advisory committee to select the wide range of entries from numerous applications. William J. Hoppin,

⁴ The first group dedicated to works of art was divided into 5 classes, including paintings in oil; other paintings and drawings; sculpture, die-sinking, stone and cameo engraving; architectural designs and models; engraving and lithography (Blake 1870, 239-41).

⁵ The classification contained 9 other groups, including apparatus and applications of the liberal arts; furniture and other objects for the use of dwellings; clothing, including fabrics, and other objects worn upon the person; products, raw and manufactured, of mining industry, forestry, etc.; apparatus and process used in the common arts; food, fresh or preserved, in various states of preparation; live stock and specimens of agricultural buildings; live produce and specimens of horticultural works; articles exhibited with the special object of improving the physical and moral condition of the people (Blake 1870, 239-41).

a lawyer known for writing on art subjects, became chairman of the art commission. Additional members of the selection committee were prominent names from the New York art world.⁶ John T. Johnston, for example, was involved in the railroad business but he was also a notable art collector and future first president of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Other industrialists on the committee shared Johnston's passion for collecting, including Robert L. Stuart and Robert M. Olyphant. The art dealers Michael Knoedler and Samuel P. Avery and the essayist and critic Henry T. Tuckerman, author of *The Book of the Artists* in 1867, added professional perspective to the committee.⁷ The selection committee had two major parameters: the artworks had to be realized since 1855 and landscapes had to pre-

⁶ *New York Daily Tribune*, 23 January, 1867.

⁷ According to Troyen, in the first phase of the selection process Frederic Church, Jasper Cropsey, and Edwin White had been appointed by the National Academy of Design in New York with the aim to recommend measures for a complete exhibit of the national art in Paris. They also suggested the formation of a selection committee (Troyen 1984, 28).

dominate among all works, a genre where the American artists had reached particular recognition. Those parameters would help guide the commission to select works that could compete most strongly with European art, proving that the work of American artists could be as impressive as the nation's industrial, mechanical, and manufacturing products. Despite the desire to be "complete enough to be national", the entire committee hailed from the East Coast as did all of the artists they selected. Many were landscape painters associated with the Hudson River School, an art movement that reflected the influence of romanticism. Others were identified with the National Academy of Design, a New York institution aimed to promote the fine arts and modelled on the Royal Academy in London. Just a few artists came from beyond New York, including Joseph Foxcroft Cole and William Morris Hunt, both from Boston, and James Abbott McNeill Whistler of Philadelphia.

Three of the most important landscapes chosen by the committee were two by Frederic Edwin Church - *Niagara* (fig. 1) and *The Rainy Season in the Tropics* - and Albert Bierstadt's *The Rocky Mountains* (fig. 2). Church painted *Niagara*, an oil on canvas of impressive dimensions, in 1857 and had a tremendous success on both sides of the Atlantic. For the creation of this painting Church used as reference oil sketches and drawings he realized during previous travels to Niagara Falls. The overall composition guides the viewer's eyes: starting from the left foreground the gaze follows the line of the water diagonally to the right border, and then returns to the left edge, slowly progressing inside to the picture plan. Beyond the impact of the falls, the rainbow and a delicate sky tinted with pinks and violets allow the viewer to see the land on the horizon. All the realistic elements are infused with a profound content. Church doesn't merely paint a dramatic wilderness, he symbolically makes a statement of the unlimited strength and energy of the young American nation. It's a country whose art is "impulsive, erratic, irregular, but yet full of promise and undeveloped power", as one critic put it, a writer who considered *Niagara* "perhaps the finest picture yet done by an American" (Badeau 1859, 123). The same nationalistic message is noticeable in the works of other artists, such as Thomas Cole and John Trumbull. Nevertheless, Church's painting has no equal in displaying an indomitable spirit characteristic of both homeland and country. But it can also be seen as a tribute to modernity and to the ingenu-

ity of people who were trying to dominate wild nature. After its first exhibit in New York, the local *Harper's Weekly Magazine* concluded: "It marks a point in American landscape-painting, and in the history of the Falls in an event as striking as the suspension bridge".⁸ The Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge was built in 1855 to connect the Canadian and American sides of the falls. Church included a faint piece of the bridge in a later painting, *Niagara Falls from the American Side*. Michael Knoedler commissioned that painting and Church completed it in 1867. If Knoedler had intended to select it for the Paris Fair that year, it ended up not being among the entries.

Albert Bierstadt was a German-born painter who emigrated to America with his family when he was just a boy. Although he was associated with the Hudson River School, his interest in the landscapes of the West took him rapidly to embrace a kind of painting that captured the imagination of the American collectors and art critics of the nineteenth century. He became the epic poet of the West and his paintings of enormous dimensions with romanticized landscapes and visions of the "Far West" gave him great success and recognition. *The Rocky Mountains*⁹ is the remarkable result of a trip he took with a government survey to the Nebraska Territory in spring 1859. Colonel Frederick W. Lander headed the expedition, and it was Bierstadt's first trip to the West. He finished the painting in 1863, basing it on the sketches he made during that trip. It depicts an idealized mountain landscape in the Wyoming Range of the Rocky Mountains. An encampment of Native Americans in the foreground is observed from a distance, increasing the romanticized atmosphere of the entire composition. The painting received wide praise. "It is purely an American scene", a *Harper's Weekly* critic declared in 1864, "and may be truly called a historic landscape".¹⁰ Bierstadt communicated the essence of the American West, and although the painting didn't win any medals in Paris, it was one of the few entries from the United States that instilled curiosity among an international audience.

The portrait was the second style where the Americans felt they should excel. Fewer in number than the landscape genre, the portraits the

⁸ *Harper's Weekly Magazine*, 9 May, 1857.

⁹ The painting is known now as *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak* (1863, oil on canvas). The Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, New York.

¹⁰ *Harper's Weekly Magazine*, 26 March, 1864.

committee chose included works by Charles Loring Elliott, George Peter Alexander Healy, and others. William Morris Hunt, a painter working in Paris at the time, had already been chosen to exhibit at the Fair but was allowed to add seven portraits to his portfolio. Hunt was one of the few artists in the show who had spent time abroad and who participated in the 1855 Paris exposition. Now, with 12 paintings among the 82 total in the American exhibit, Hunt was the most represented artist from the states. His *Italian Boy*,¹¹ realized in Paris the year before the World's Fair, reclaims the iconic subject of the Italian youth, popular among European and American painters. However, Hunt's composition reflects a knowledge of the French academic manner and the influence of French *peinture*, thanks to which he received some positive notice. Few other works exhibited in the American section showed that kind of European influence. Another exception was James Abbott McNeill Whistler,¹² who lived abroad since he was 21 and was clearly inspired by his European experience. Before moving to London in 1859, he enrolled in the Ecole Impériale and joined the atelier of Charles Gleyre. Whistler showed four paintings at the Fair, including *The White Girl*,¹³ (fig. 3) which had been rejected from two previous official exhibitions in 1862 and 1863 (the Royal Academy Exhibition and the Salon), but included at the Salon des Refusés the same year. This painting, dominated by various white shades in the subject's dress and in the background setting, received mixed reviews, but certainly was among the few American works often remembered in journals and newspapers.

The American exhibition included few historical compositions, an exception were Winslow Homer's paintings of the Civil War. Homer's activity as artist-correspondent during the conflict provided him subjects for his paintings. *The Bright Side*, depicting a group of African-Amer-



Figura 3. James McNeill Whistler, *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl*, 1862. Oil on canvas; 213 × 107.9 cm (83 7/8 × 42 1/2 in). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.: Harris Whittemore Collection

¹¹ The painting is known now as *Italian Peasant Boy* (1866, oil on canvas). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

¹² Randall stated that Whistler desired to display in the American section and it was possible thanks to the intercession of the American agent in Paris, George Lucas, with a member of the selection committee, Samuel Avery (Randall 1979, 26-27). Troyen noticed a certain ambivalence in Whistler participation in the World's Fair. In fact, he displayed his works in the British section in the two following Paris fairs (1878; 1889), but again in 1900 he contributed two portraits to the American section (Troyen 1984, 28).

¹³ Whistler later started to call the painting *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl* (1862, oil on canvas). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

ican slaves resting next to a Union's sibley tent, was painted at the end of the conflict, in 1865. In *Confederate Prisoners at the Front*¹⁴ (fig. 4) Homer shows a group of Confederate officers captured by Brigadier General Barlow, from the Union army. Also on view were some domestic scenes depicting African-American subjects. For example, Eastman Johnson's *Old Kentucky Home* is a characteristic Southern scene showing slave life in an interior yard. The selection for the Paris Fair included only one still life, a canvas by John La Farge. Throughout his career La Farge worked in a variety of media and he reached great recognition as a natural colorist. His numerous travels and his "extraordinarily un-American education" (Foster 1979, 4-37) stimulated his creativity. In 1856 he moved to Paris and joined another American artist, Edward May, to study painting under the guidance of Thomas Couture. That didn't last long. While in Europe he discovered the English Pre-Raphaelite movement and especially admired the works of John Everett Millais and Gabriel Dante Rossetti. La Farge soon returned to America and "recognized [he] needed a training in the practice of painting". In 1859 he settled in Newport, Rhode Island, to study with William Morris Hunt, who had also trained with Couture in Paris, "to try the experiment, and began in a little more serious way than before" (Cortissoz 1911, 110).

The sculpture selection was circumscribed to only four artists who all hailed from the East Coast, and displayed a total of six works. Notably among them, however, was the female artist Harriet Hosmer's *Sleeping Faun*. Hosmer was one of the most recognized female sculptors of the nineteenth century. After studying sculpture in the United States she wanted to continue her education and moved to Rome in 1852.

The painting sections of the Paris Fair included works from 25 countries. Brazil had merely three paintings and France led the way with more than 500 works. The jury consisted of 25 members, 12 from France. The Americans failed to meet the high expectations of the selection committee. "The pictures sent from America are naturally few in number", M.D. Conway concluded in a detailed report of the exposition for *Harper's*: "And hardly the best that could have been selected from the recent works of our artists" (Conway 1867, 248). Frederic Church was the only Ameri-

can to receive a medal. His *Niagara* won a silver, but that was a small consolation, given that the jurors awarded 290 prizes to American products and inventions in other sections of the Fair. In arts France alone won 32 out of the 67 prizes (Leslie 1868, 6). Italy, which like the United States had just come out a period of conflict, presented only 51 works but received four prizes, including a grand medal.¹⁵

Observers had numerous complaints about the American performance at the Fair. The American gallery was poorly laid out, not well illuminated, and confusing because of its proximity to the British space. Although the Paris exhibition was largely held for the first time in the Champ de Mars (fig. 5) and boasted a new format of concentric rings in an ellipse that spanned nearly 119 acres,¹⁶ the space for American art felt inadequate to many people. In his official government report Frank Leslie noticed how the Americans were displayed at "one end of the British gallery" and also along an adjacent pathway next to the Italian exhibit. "This passage", Leslie wrote, "was constantly crowded, so that the lower ranges or tiers of pictures could seldom be seen, or if at all at a great disadvantage. Thus Gifford's *Twilight on Mount Hunter*, Hubbard's *View of the Adirondacks* and McEntee's *Virginia in 1863* were hung in very bad light, while works far inferior had prominent places in the gallery itself" (Leslie 1868, 9). Critics and artists shared similar impressions. "[America] had to content herself with a few empty places in the gallery of the English paintings", stated the critic Mantz, "and a corridor without gaiety and without light, which the public passed through, but where no one stopped" (Mantz 1867, 230; trans. by the Author). Whistler was disappointed for how his works had been displayed in 'dark corridors' and in a letter addressed to the American agent in Paris George A. Lucas wrote that he "won't have them hung where they are" (Mahey 1967, 251).

Another problem was the way that the selection committee overlooked certain painting subjects that some people felt would have worked to the American artists' advantage. For exam-

¹⁵ Italy and Rome participated at the show separately, displaying 51 and 25 paintings respectively. In fact, Rome didn't become part of the recently formed state of Italy until 1870, three years after the Paris World's Fair.

¹⁶ The layout allowed visitors to choose between a 'national approach', touring the different departments of the same country, or a 'topic approach', in which they could view products of the same category from different countries.

¹⁴ The painting is known now as *Prisoners from the Front* (1866, oil on canvas). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figura 4. Winslow Homer, *Prisoners From the Front*, 1866. Oil on canvas; 61 × 96.5 cm (24 × 38 in). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York: Gift of Mrs. Frank B. Porter, 1922

ple, there were no animal and marine pictures, which could have strengthened the American entry. "Among animals we have a peculiarity in the bison, so little known in Europe", noted Leslie in his report. "And we have also artists who, like [William Jacob] Hays, have spent years in the Far West in the study of its habits and peculiarities, whose large pictures, truthful in drawing and colour, bold and effective, would have been a feature in our collection, and compared favorably with any corresponding works in any of the competing galleries" (Leslie 1868, 14). Others noticed the lack of distinctive American scenes: "There should have been a prairie, a sierra, and some views of New England home life and pioneer life", the *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* declared. And after positively judging one painting that depicted "our autumnal foliage which is not paralleled anywhere in the world", the critic suggested there should have been more of such scenes (Conway 1867, 248). Critics on both sides of the Atlantic negatively commented on most of the works and on a "meagre and unsatisfactory gallery" (Leslie 1868, 16). A French critic

reproached the American painters as "petites artistes!" and defined their works as the proof of "childish arrogance" and "puerile ignorance" (De la Madelène 1867, 2061; trans. by the Author). Another critic complained that Whistler's works were "rather suggestions of power than complete art" (Jarves 1869, 298). George Cochran Lambdin's *The Last Sleep* was recorded as "in the manner of poor romance", and Daniel Huntington's *The Republican Court, Time of Washington* was likewise impugned as "unequal, and no part shows absolute mastery".¹⁷

A recurring criticism concerned the debt of the American art to the English. With few exceptions, such as Church's and Bierstadt's works, "The American school badly trailed the English school", as the critic Ernest Chesneau noted. "Most of the American landscapes are painted in a spirit of convention that surprises, considering the American people seem to be free of so many other conventions" (Chesneau

¹⁷ *The Art Journal*, November, 1867.

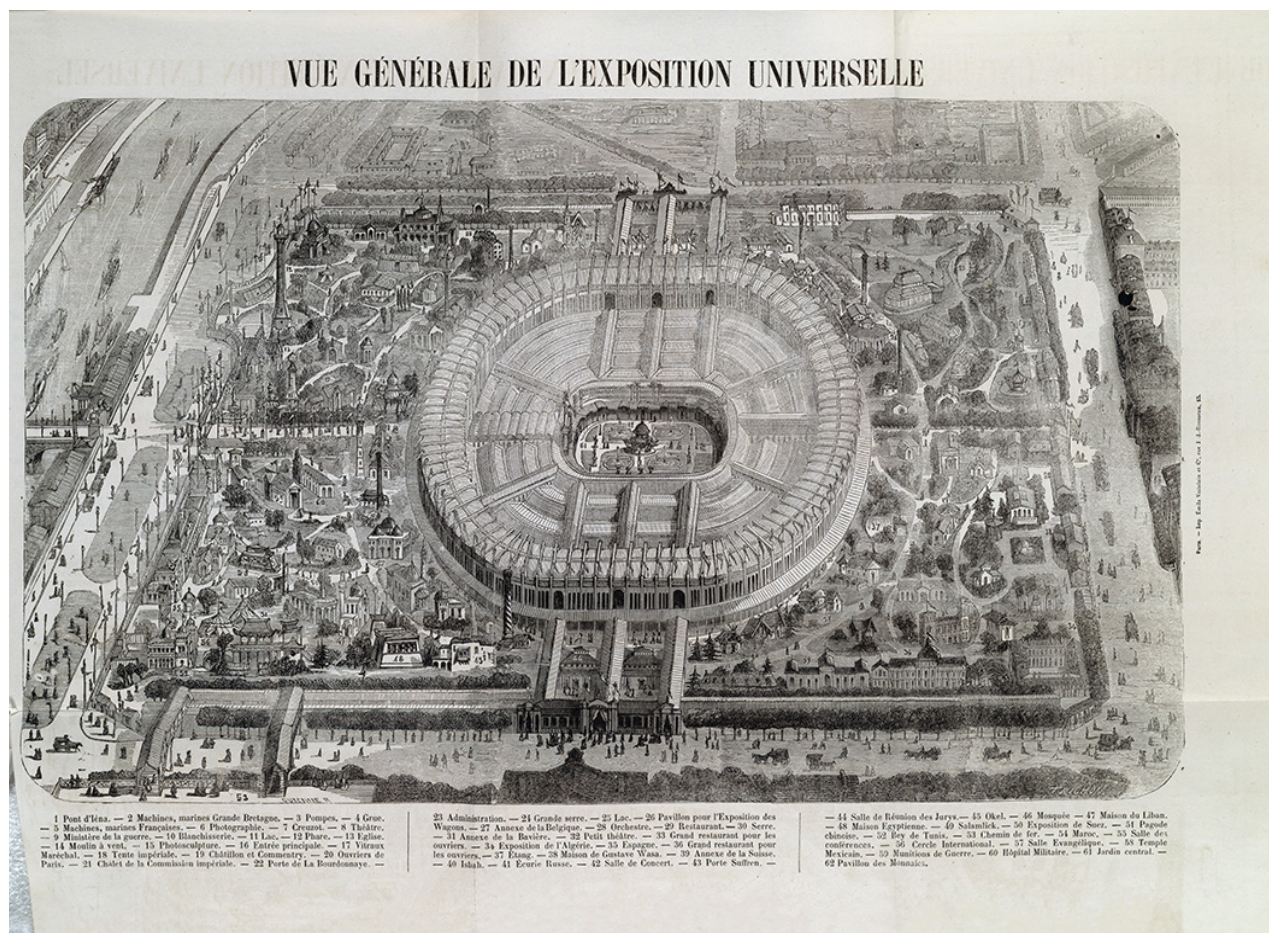


Figure 5. *Vue Générale de l'Exposition Universelle*, 1867. Engraving; 25.2 × 42.3 cm (9 9/10 × 16 2/3 in). John Hay Library, Brown University, Providence

1868, 161; trans. by the Author). Several history paintings presented more evidence that the Americans were influenced too much by British artists and themes. Two examples included Edward May's *Lady Jane Grey gives her Tablets to the Constable of the Tower of London and Goes to Execution*¹⁸ (fig. 6), and the painting of Mary Stuart in Scotland by Emanuel Leutze. *Harper's* was more generous in its review "In landscapes England and America easily lead", its critic wrote, noticing that one major difference was the "vastness and loneliness" of the American lands, which were a major inspiration for the artists (Conway 1867, 248).

Nevertheless, most critics agreed that the prominence of American art was yet to be achieved. The country that already accomplished

remarkable results in other fields would soon have painters and sculptors of equal stature. "In future gatherings of the nations, when the Arts in America shall have obtained further time for development, doubtless the pictures of the United States will obtain alike from Commissioners and critics more ample recognition", *The Art Journal* stated, adding that it was also looking "wistfully for new Art-developments".¹⁹

One major difference between European and American cultures is how each assesses the meaning of failure. Europeans are generally suspicious of failure and perceive it as something to be shameful of. Americans are great believers in giving people a second chance. In many fields, American people accept failure as part of the growth cycle of any enterprise and as a necessary step in a climb to success. Henry Ford went out of

¹⁸ The painting is known now as *Lady Jane Grey Goes to Her Execution* (1864, oil on canvas). Woodmere Art Museum, Philadelphia.

¹⁹ *The Art Journal*, November, 1867.



Figura 6. Edward Harrison May, *Lady Jane Grey Going to Her Execution*, 1864. Oil on canvas; 150 × 203 cm (59 × 80 in). Woodmere Art Museum, Philadelphia: Bequest of Charles Knox Smith

the car business two times, but it didn't prevent him to successfully launch the Ford Motor Company; R.H. Macy failed with his first stores, which closed for a lack of sales. Thomas Edison's early mistakes allowed him to invent his light bulb. And other people whom teachers, employers or commissions defined as mediocre and limited became major artists. For a country that bases its success and its economic model on individual initiative achievement rather than state sponsorship, failure is not a shame, it's part of the process.

For this reason, the American art world embraced the failure in Paris as a valuable learning experience. "The Great Exposition of 1867 at Paris", stated the critic James Jarves, "taught us a salutary lesson by placing the average American sculpture and painting in direct comparison with the European, thereby proving our actual mediocrity" (Jarves 1869, 298). The failures affected not only the artists, but also lenders, critics, collectors, and in a longer term museums.

With the mediocrity of the American art highlighted many wealthy American collectors saw the advantages of buying European art and bringing it back to the States. Some, like William T. Walters, had been doing that for years. But a new class of prosperous Americans emerged after the Civil War and found that French art especially could be a profitable investment. The selection chairman William J. Hoppin and other members of his committee visited the Fair's pavilions and art galleries in town, met French artists, and went on a buying spree. William Blodgett, who by the time of the Fair had already created a complete collection of American masters, rapidly started building what will be remembered as a comprehensive collection of French modern paintings. In several cases, these collections ended up in museums through major donations, some in existing institutions and others specifically opened to hold them. A well-known example is The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, founded



Figura 7. William Merritt Chase, 'Keying up' - *The Court Jester*, 1875. Oil on canvas; 101 × 63.5 cm (39 3/4 × 24 in). Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia: Gift of the Chapellier Galleries

only three years after the Paris exhibition, whose initial collection was a private donation of more than 150 paintings, all by European artists.

American artists didn't take their perceived setback in Paris personally. Many had already reached great recognition in their native country. Nevertheless, a new and younger generation of painters began to recognize the value of studying art and working abroad. As Leslie concluded in his report, the main lesson of Paris was that one's artistic education should take place in Europe: "Among our young artists there are some who show much invention and undoubtedly possess real genius. But, from lack of good art education, never rise above mediocrity" (Leslie 1868, 16). After the World's Fair more and more American painters moved to Europe and Paris became the

fundamental destination. There they found great teachers, inspiration, a vibrant atmosphere, and an international cultural milieu. "Here, technical facility and thematic sophistication were of the highest order", Barbara Weinberg stated in her study of American painters at the fine arts school in Paris. "Numerous independent academies and private teachers were accessible to students".²⁰

The experience of the Paris International Exposition proved that American artists, even some of whom had received great recognition at home, couldn't compete against the best of international art. They were too insular and dependent on a slavish kind of realism and anecdotal themes, as the Europeans were exploring new styles, techniques, and visions for their art. In retrospect the paintings displayed in 1867 were some of the best American works of late nineteenth century. Many of them are today in prestigious museums and represent American art realized by now admired mid-century artists. Yet at the time these paintings were perceived differently. This failure was a blow for the national art's world self-esteem, but it turned into a valuable lesson. Artists, critics, and collectors started to welcome cultural influences from beyond, finding new sources of inspiration. Just nine years later, at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, a new generation of American painters won fresh acclaim. Bierstadt's landscapes continued to impress but his art was increasingly seen as part of the past. Completely different styles and subjects were now gaining the most attention. William Merritt Chase, who had spent years abroad studying in Munich, won a medal with *'Keying up' - The Court Jester* (fig. 7). This portrait, dominated by the subject's red costume against a red background, reflects Chase's German training and reveals a use of colours that would become characteristic of his art. *Elaine* by Tobias Edward Rosenthal, a funeral scene reminiscent of the Pre-Raphaelites, was a brilliant product of his European education that some critics found hard to believe it had been realized by an American artist. By the time of the next World's Fair in Paris in 1878 the American selection committee focused more on figurative paintings rather than landscapes. That gave an impressionist portrait artist such as Mary Cassatt a chance to display her works next to older masters such as Church. In addition, American painters who looked beyond typical American subjects sparked new

20 Weinberg, *American Art Journal*, 1981.

enthusiasm among critics. One notable example was Frederick Arthur Bridgman, who presented an Egyptian scene in *The Funeral Procession of a Mummy on the Nile*.

Spurred on by the lessons of 1867 American artists and their patrons began to blaze new ground, a trend that would continue well into the next century. The influence of the French school on American artists strongly increased during the last decades of the nineteenth century. During the Paris World's Fair in 1889 the American paintings section was considered almost an addendum to the French show,²¹ however by the time of the Paris Fair in 1900 a distinctive American school was beginning to develop. Yet it can't be considered a particular national school in the traditional sense of the term, because it was the result of an incredible melting pot of origins, educations, and experiences. The 1900 exhibition reached great recognition, by the beginning of the twentieth century world attitudes toward American art had changed and it was finally recognized on the international stage.

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²¹ French Commissioner Alfred Picard described the American art exhibition in 1889 as a «brilliant annex to the French section» (*Official illustrated catalogue*, xv).

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Russian Fine Arts Section at the World's Columbian Exposition 1893 Notes on Organization and Reception

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Abstract Russian participation in American 19th-century World Fairs remains a rather neglected topic. The Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago was the largest and most ambitious fair before Paris 1900 and was considered an important event by Russian institutions. The expositional committee in St. Petersburg released publications on Russian economics, industry, technologies, etc. specifically for the occasion. Although international exhibitions in the 19th century were, first of all, industrial and technological displays, the artistic representation of a country had played a role since the first exposition in London in 1851 and was supposed to show the development of the national artistic school. Based on archival documents and published correspondence, the case of Russian fine arts participation at the Chicago exposition is examined. An attempt is made to outline the organizational issues as well as reception of Russian fine arts in the USA at that time.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Organizing the Russian fine arts section. – 3 Curator. – 4 Traces of the Russian artists in America: academic Salon art and the “national character”. – 5 Conclusions.

Keywords World's Columbian Exposition. Russian fine arts. Imperial Fine Arts Academy. Peredvizhniki. Russian painters in America.

1 Introduction

In the spring of 1893 in Chicago, the World's Columbian Exposition opened its gates to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival to the American shores. After the Philadelphian Centennial Exhibition in 1876 it is considered as the second official international exposition held in the USA, and the Russian Empire participated in both of these fairs. A special committee was organized to prepare for the Columbian Exposition in St. Petersburg and Pavel Glukhovskoy, member of The Council of the Ministry of Finance, was appointed as a general commissioner of the Russian department at the Fair. The Imperial Fine Arts Academy had to organize the Russian fine arts section, which was supposed to show the development of the national artistic school.

One of the valuable sources for describing the organization of the Russian fine arts section at the Columbian Exposition are the documents of the Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA), which contain some of the correspondence between the artists and the commission which was responsible for the exhibition and the letters of Feodor Kamensky, the curator of the Russian fine arts section in Chicago. To overview the reception of the Russian fine arts section, the main sources are the reviews of an American historian

Hubert Howe Bancroft (1832-1918) – *The Book of the Fair* (1893), and of painter and art critic William Walton (1843-1915) – *Art and Architecture* (1893). For the time, the principal research concerning the topic of Russian participation at the nineteenth century world's expositions is the dissertation of Dr. David C. Fisher, who studied the problem of defining Russia's national identity by participation in international fairs (Fisher 2001), though approaches to examine Russia's art and architecture have been made since the 1970s. This article exposes the factors that influenced the formation of a particular Russian fine arts collection at the Columbian Exposition and outlines the possible reasons for the public interest in it and in certain painters.

2 Organizing the Russian fine arts section

Since the London 1862 international Fair, Russian sections of the Fine Arts department had been organized by the Russian Imperial Academy of Fine Arts. Traditionally, a special commission of professors and administrative staff, who selected the artworks, was formed. In 1862 the exposition of the Russian section should have been comprised of the works from private and imperial family collections and was supposed to



Figure 1. Ilya Repin. *Reply of the Zaporozhian Cossacks*, 1880-1891. State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. Source: Wikimedia Commons

demonstrate the development of Russian art over the last hundred years (Kutejnikova 1971, 89). However, not all of the owners agreed to loan their works, so the expository concept changed and instead it was decided to take the works of artists who were recently awarded an academic title or a golden medal. For the Paris Fair of 1878 the commission offered the 'eminent painters' to exhibit their works. Although the collectors (for example the Tretyakov brothers, the Moscow patrons of art who owned a great collection of Russian art) were willing to give the works, the *Peredvizhniki* (or *the Wanderers*), the group of realist¹ artists, refused to contribute as at that time they generally set themselves aside from the official policy of the Academy.

By the 1890s the disposition had changed and the *Peredvizhniki* gained an influential role in institutional issues. Preparation for the Colum-

bian Exposition occurred at a crucial moment for the Academy. The group of reformers led by the count Ivan Tolstoy (1858-1916), a conference-secretary of the Academy and later its vice-president, pursued a policy of transforming the academic teaching system. In 1890 Tolstoy managed to get a resolution for creating a special commission, which, by 1893, had developed new academic bylaws, enacted in 1894 (Lisovskij 1982, 136). One of the changes was the formation of personal workshops instead of the former educational format, which was divided into classes of historical, portrait, genre, military and landscape painting. Some former or current members of the *Peredvizhniki* group got their workshops. Vladimir Makovsky (1846-1920), Ilya Repin (1844-1930) and Arkhip Kuindzhi (1842-1910) who joined the commission for forming the Russian art collection at the Chicago Exposition also appeared among the first professors in that new academic system. At the same time, in the early 1890s, the art of the *Peredvizhniki* became almost 'official', which was actually confirmed by the institutional recognition of the artists named above as Academic professors.

Count Tolstoy with Repin, Kuindzhi, Makovsky, Karl Lemoch (1841-1910) and Alexey Korzukhin

¹ A very influential Russian art critic Vladimir Stasov (1824-1906) associated the group with the motto "nationality and realism" and interpreted their art as confronting the academic idealistic and cosmopolite approach in art - which affected the reception of *Peredvizhniki's* art at their times and later (Shabanov 2015, 12), though there actually was not a clear border between the two 'camps' of artists and they existed in confrontation and interrelation at the same time.



Figure 2. Heinrich Semiradsky. *Phryne*, 1889. State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. Source: Wikimedia Commons

(1835-1894),² also members of the *Peredvizhniki*, formed a commission to organize the Russian fine arts collection in Chicago. At the first meeting on the 5th of May 1892³ they made a list of 65 artists and later sent out invitation letters. It was planned to organize a special exhibition-review in the halls of the Academy. The participants were asked to reply whether they were ready to take part or not, and to deliver the works to the Academy by the 15th of August 1892. The Academy undertook all the further expenses for the chosen works.⁴

Apparently there was no particular conception for the exposition so all the willing artists were allowed to present their works. Artists were aware of the forthcoming exhibition before the official invitation and some used their friendship with Tolstoy for personal gain – the count received letters in which he was asked to intercede for the works in front of the Academy's president. For example, Pelageya Couriar (1848-1898) on the 9th of November 1891 wrote asking for permission to forward her painting to Chicago as she had acquaintances there persuading

her to send something (*Vo glave Imperatorskoj akademii* 2009, 185). Her *Landscape*, which was finally shipped to the exposition appeared to be on the short list of sold Russian artworks. The other artist, Nikolay Dmitriev-Orenburgsky (1837-1898), a few days before the deadline for the review exhibition in the Academy, also wrote to Tolstoy. He described being very busy painting in his village during those “perfect days” and therefore he did not want to go to St. Petersburg. So he asked Tolstoy to take and bring two of his works from the studio in the Academy to the exhibition halls.⁵ Apparently Tolstoy did that favour, as three works of Dmitriev-Orenburgsky were eventually sent to Chicago.

Among the reasons for the impossibility of sending the artworks was, as previously, the problem of ownership. Not every collector granted permission to ship works to Chicago. A situation of that kind happened to the respectful artist Viktor Vasnetsov (1848-1926). According to his personal correspondence with Tolstoy an invitation had not been delivered to the artist but, as a result of the ‘friendly insistence’ of Kuindzhi, he decided to send his famous *Alionushka* and A

² Paintings of Lemoch and Korzukhin were represented at the Philadelphian Fair in 1876.

³ Correspondence from count Tolstoy. RGIA f.789, op.11, d.80-1, 35, 37-40.

⁴ RGIA f.789, op.11, d.80-1, 138.

⁵ Correspondence from Dmitriev-Orenburgsky. RGIA f.789, op.11, d.80-1, 233.



Figure 3. Nikolay Kusnetsov. *An Arbiter of Peace*, 1888. David Owsley Museum of Art Ball State University. Source: Wikimedia Commons

Knight at the Crossroads.⁶ However the owners did not allow it (*Vo glave Imperatorskoj akademii* 2009, 246).

In respect to some artists' demands, the commission made a request to take eleven works, most of which were in the battle genre – by Repin, Semiradsky, Vereshchagin, Bogolyubov, Dubovskoy, Beggrov, Kivshenko, Dmitriev-Orenburgsky – from the emperor's private collection. Alexander III only allowed the use of Repin's *Reply of the Zaporozhian Cossacks (the Cossacks)* (fig. 1) and Semiradsky's *Phryne* (fig. 2). According to comments from reviewers in Chicago these two huge works aroused the greatest public interest.

Two works of Heinrich Semiradsky (1843-1902) appeared at the exhibition: *Phryne* and *Christ in the House of Lazarus*, even though he first proposed other paintings. The artist informed the Academy that he would like to send *Bakhus* and *The Temptation of St. Hieronymus*, but only if the emperor agreed to give *Phryne* from his collection, as those two mentioned paintings were less

valuable – both in size and subject – than *Phryne*.⁷ Nikolay Dubovskoy (1859-1918) wanted to send only a landscape: *Hushing (Calm Before the Storm)*.⁸ The emperor gave no permission but at the next Fair in Paris 1900 this painting was honored with the silver medal. Alexander Beggrov (1841-1914) in his letter to the Academy inquired upon his works and the commission's choice to collect the works belonging to the royal family, as he had no appropriate works for the moment.⁹ The commission found it possible to demand the *Deck of the Frigate "Svetlana"*, but was unsuccessful in obtaining it.

It is quite interesting that the emperor did not give any military paintings from his collection. And at the exposition there were almost no Russian works depicting battles or similar motifs. This fact was marked by William Walton – he was

⁶ The painting appeared at the Paris Exposition in 1900 entitled *Ilia, the Hero of Murom*.

⁷ Correspondence from Semiradsky. RGIA f.789, op.11, d.80-1, 175.

⁸ Correspondence from Dubovskoy. RGIA f.789, op.11, d.80-1, 164.

⁹ Correspondence from Beggrov. RGIA f.789, op.11, d.80-1, 169.

surprised by the absence of that topic among the artworks of a “great military empire” (Walton 1893, 71). Kivshenko’s *The Military Council at Fily* appeared to be the only significant “military picture”, referring to “the greatest catastrophe in Russian history – the fire of Moscow” during the war of 1812. The painting was perceived as a military one, even though the depicted scene was not a battle, but a council.

The existing popular apprehension of Russia in America in the late nineteenth century could be called fairly vague. In addition to existing stereotypes, such as cold snowy winters and Russian richness and (often senseless) luxury, which actually was always confirmed by varied exhibits in the Russian departments at fairs, a negative attitude was promoted by accusatory texts about the life of Russian political prisoners in Siberia and the whole system of Russian Siberian exile by journalist and traveler George Kennan (1845-1924), who returned back to America from Russia a few years before the Columbian Exposition. He criticized the tsarist regime and glorified the revolutionaries¹⁰ and his propaganda was widespread, thus it is possible to say that by 1893 a certainly not very iridescent image of Russia did exist. At the same time, positive interest aroused because of Russian liberal reforms, especially concerning serfdom – which was compared to American slavery (Pavlovskaja 1998, 204-41).

This could perhaps clarify the choice of paintings, which were provided with comments in the English version of a Russian general catalogue – thirteen paintings created during the previous decade by quite well-known artists in Russia. The subjects could have been unclear to foreigners – Korzukhin’s *The Brides Evening Party*, Novoskoltsev’s *The Last Moments of the Metropolitan Philip*, Miassoyedov’s *Flight of Grigory Otrepiev From a Tavern on the Frontier of Lithuania* and others. Most of the paintings depicted historical events or national customs, but two paintings were about the current social situation in Russia: *An Arbiter of Peace* (fig. 3)¹¹ by Nikolay Kusnetsov (1850-1930) and *Alms for the Sake of Christ* (fig. 4) by Konstantin Savitsky (1844-1905). The first one was about the abolition of serfdom in Russia (in 1861), which set the peasants free on condition that they served



Figure 4. Konstantin Savitsky. *Alms for the Sake of Christ*, 1891-1892. Regional Art Museum in Irkutsk. Source: Artpoisk.info

their master for two years more before leaving. In order to prevent disputes between the peasants and their former masters, special “arbiters of peace” were introduced from “the best men of the nobility”, “impartial, just and disinterested” – who helped to change the rural and economic organization of the country without any riots (*Catalogue* 1893, 369). Actually, the arbiters of peace were indeed the ones who intended to help the peasants who were nearly always illiterate and unable to read or even sign the document for their liberation. The second painting was about the convicts in Siberia. The description of life of fugitive prisoners in “dark and lonesome” forests of Siberia was full of compassion: “they wander about in the wilderness, half naked, hungry and miserable” and “every evening, before going to rest, each peasant puts a loaf of bread and a jug of ‘kvass’, a home brewed sour liquor, made of malt, on the outer sill of their window with the words: ‘take it in Christ’s name’”. This help from common peasants was described as the only help the convicts got (*Catalogue* 1893, 376-77). Dr. Fisher considers that Russian department organizers at the international fairs always intended to educate foreigners about Russia (Fisher 2003, 13). Here also all the paintings’ explanations were most likely supposed to create a certain idealistic image of Russia’s past and present, although were not used by the commentators in their reviews.

¹⁰ His book *Siberia and the Exile System* was released in 1891 in two volumes.

¹¹ It was sold for 592 dollars to Mrs Arthur Caton from Chicago.

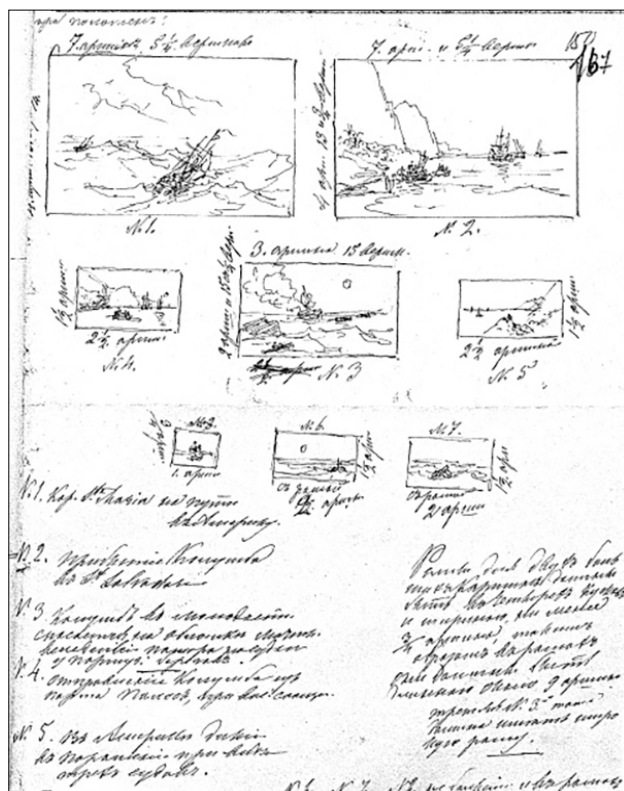


Figure 5. Correspondence from Ivan Aivazovsky . Source: RGIA f.789, op.11, d.80-1, 167

3 Curator

A curator for the Russian section appeared unexpectedly (his assignment was not generally planned) right before the opening of the Fair – Feodor Kamensky (1836-1913), a Russian sculptor who had graduated from the Imperial Fine Arts Academy in 1873 and lived in America. His appearance became possible by virtue of Kamensky's sister, Sophia Nenninger, who ensured his promotion to the curator position in messages to Tolstoy. Kamensky participated in the American fine arts section's organization and also worked at the sculptor atelier creating statues and decorations for the Exposition's main buildings. As Sophia Nenninger claimed, her brother was ready to offer his services "for good reward". He was expected to help in the unpacking and installation of the sculptures, hanging the paintings, communication and other issues as he was familiar with local circumstances and knew not only Russian and English, but also Italian, French and Spanish. Nenninger was rather importunate

in her letters to the Academy¹² and it was finally arranged.

We learn About Kamensky's work at the Fair from his letters published in several spring issues of the Russian newspaper *Novosti i Birzhevaja Gazeta* and from his regular reports to the Academy. In general, his messages were highly positive and even too flattering for the Russian artists – as he did not mention any criticisms from the Americans at all.¹³ Kamensky stressed his importance to the Russian section in every way and thus had managed to get a good salary. His participation seemed to be rather efficient indeed, although the general commissioner of the Russian department did not always approve his actions. For example, the day before the official opening of the Russian fine arts section, Kamensky just let the public in, without waiting for the specially invited guests. At the same time he administrated the sales of artworks, which seemed to be difficult without well-organized communication with the painters living in Russia and Europe. Furthermore, Kamensky had no information concerning the minimal prices for the works. Just 22 of 135 Russian works were sold in Chicago.¹⁴ Some were sold for lower prices and some potential purchasers just moved to other countries' halls unable to wait longer for an answer from the Russian side – in addition to the economic depression that started that year in the USA.

4 Traces of the Russian artists in America: academic Salon art and the "national character"

By the time of the Exposition the image of Russian art was formed by the previous Exhibition of 1876 in Philadelphia, the reviews from European exhibitions, personal artists' displays and by a number of publications at such journals as *Harper's Magazine*, *Scribner's Monthly*, and *The Century*. In 1889 an art critic Clarence Cook (1828-1900) claimed that before Philadelphia there was hardly anyone familiar with any Russian artists. Still, the Russian fine arts exhibition in 1876 could not be compared to those in Europe

¹² Correspondence from Nenninger. RGIA f. 789, op. 11, d.80-1, 337, 347, 404.

¹³ Correspondence from Kamensky. RGIA f. 789, op. 11, d.80-2, 21.

¹⁴ List of Russian artworks sending to Chicago (with prices). RGIA f. 789, op. 11, d. 80-2, 154-158.

since too few eminent artists sent their works. Thus it might have been difficult to evaluate the Russian painting school (Cook 1889, 279). That did not quite relate to the Russian section in Chicago. Its content can be called characterizing for the period, bringing together academic 'idealists' and 'realists' who wanted to show a *national accent* in their art.

In December of 1889 *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* published an article entitled *Modern Russian Art* by the journalist and critic Theodore Child (1846-1892) in which he described, in detail, his visit to the Tretyakov's collection in Moscow. Among the painters he distinguished Ilya Repin – placing his works above the rest of Russian painting (Child 1889a, 78). At the Chicago Exposition only one of Repin's works was presented – but it became nearly the most important one of the Russian section. The huge *The Cossacks* was first shown in America in 1893, but some fragments of it could be seen as illustrations in a wide article published in the November issue of *The Century* and entitled *A Russian National Artist*, written by Isabel F. Hapgood (1851-1928), who was a translator of Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) and promoted Russian culture in America. Researcher T. Borodina claims that there were more reproductions of Repin's artworks during the 1880-1890s in America than in Russia and some of the engravings were made by the artist himself (Borodina 2008, 59-60). William Walton saw *The Cossacks* as revealing the "true national character" claiming it to be a masterpiece without an equal among ten thousand paintings in the international galleries at the Fair (Walton 1893, 62). Bancroft also admitted it to be a masterpiece – though he found the subject repulsive (Bancroft 1893, 755).

Marine painter Ivan Aivazovsky (1817-1900) took part in the previous fair in Philadelphia sending seven of his works. For Chicago he prepared twenty works – all of them approved by the commission. Five paintings contained scenes of Columbus' journey. One of them, *Columbus' Farewell*, was sold for 1200 dollars,¹⁵ less than Aivazovsky expected. We suppose that the buyer was a rather well-known art collector from New York, a German emigrant Charles William Schuman, a famous owner of a jewelry shop who – by that time – also possessed works of Konstantin Makovsky. In the archive's documents on sales

from that exhibition the buyer's name was written as: *Schuman New York* while other purchasers records were more detailed. In that case any comments were perhaps not necessary.

Apart from these five, Aivazovsky presented fifteen smaller paintings. The painter was known for being exceedingly productive and in 1898 the newspaper *Peterburgskaja Gazeta* even published an article entitled *Prilichija v Iskusstve* (*Decency in Art*) in which the author quoted the painter complaining about being accused of making too many small paintings and selling them cheaply – which was found 'indecent'. But Aivazovsky himself was convinced that by doing so he popularized art, making it more obtainable for those who could not afford larger paintings (Pr-ov, V. 1898).

Aivazovsky started preparing for Chicago long before the official invitation and wrote one letter after another to the Academy commission with sketches of his works (fig. 5) explaining the amount of space required. He indeed knew how to popularize his art. Having the works sent to the Academy in 1892, the artist took a trip to Chicago himself. He planned to reach Niagara Falls, visit some cities and afterwards come to Chicago for the Fair's opening. During his trip around the USA Aivazovsky created a lot of artworks and opened a personal exhibition in New York and Washington – with only seven of twenty four represented works painted in Russia. That visit was widely discussed in American and European press (Sargsian 1986, 85) and was also important in a diplomatic sense as the two paintings created in Russia – *The Ship of Help* and *Food Distribution* depicting the American philanthropic campaign in the southern region of the Russian Empire – were gifted to the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington (and later sold at *Sotheby's*).

The painter returned to Europe in the winter of 1893, before the Fair's opening but his artistic presentation in the USA had already made him famous there. Six of his paintings were later sold in Chicago and the rest (excluding two stolen during packaging) were taken to San Francisco, where a new international exhibition had to be opened on the 27th of January 1894 – the *Mid-winter International Exposition*.

Another artist familiar to Americans was Konstantin Makovsky (1839-1915). The aforementioned Charles William Schuman purchased his *A Boyar Wedding Feast* for 60.000 dollars as far back as 1885 – after its presentation at the international exhibition in Antwerp (Plenniki krasoty 2011, 124). Schuman used to collect European Sa-

¹⁵ List of Russian artworks sold at Columbian Exposition. RGIA f.789, op.11, d.80-2, 103.



Figure 6. Hall of the Russian section in the Fine arts Palace. Source: Glukhovskoy (1895), Wikimedia Commons

lon art and by 1891 he owned four of Makovsky's paintings, which he described with the rest of his collection in a brochure *Art and Gems* (1891) and exhibited in New York and other cities. It is considered that Makovsky became famous in America through Schuman. In press during the 1890s Makovsky was shown as a "new Russian genius in art", whose oeuvre proved that "Russia shined in art as in literature" (Plenniki krasoty 2011, 125). However, at the Columbian Exposition, Schuman did not buy any of Makovsky's paintings and all of them were forwarded to the Midwinter International Exposition with the works of Aivazovsky. The fact that the paintings were sent to that exhibition in California showed the attitude towards them as valuable works. The exhibition appeared to be an extension of Chicago's and, according to the concept, only the best items would be selected for it (Smith [2005] 2006, 113).¹⁶

Heinrich Semiradsky participating at the Centennial Exhibition was also famous throughout Europe and his *Phryne* became one of the most striking showpieces of the Russian section. He wanted to exhibit it in 1889 at the Exposition in Paris if Russia would participate. Instead, Semiradsky opened a personal display in Saint

Petersburg where Alexander III purchased the painting to his collection and brought up – for the first time in public – the question of a Russian national fine arts museum. In fact, the painting had formed the base of what now is the State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg (Plenniki krasoty 2011, 32-34).

Kamensky, referencing *Phryne*, reported to the Academy that "Semiradsky's work was doing a credit to Russia".¹⁷ Although William Walton remarked that while the composition was indeed inventive, the painting lacked sincerity and conviction (Walton 1893, 66-67). Bancroft also wrote that "though with strong virility of conception and execution, it is rather a spectacular than an artistic composition, with lavishness, not to say garishness of colouring", concluding that it may had been a fair interpretation of Slavic art, but not art in its higher sense (Bancroft 1893, 756). Nevertheless, potential buyers were interested in Semiradsky's paintings and Kamensky even asked the Academy to send him the artist's address. Despite not being for sale, both his paintings had prices – forty thousand rubles for *Phryne* and seven thousand for *Christ in the House of Lazarus*.¹⁸

¹⁷ Correspondence from Kamensky. RGIA f. 789, op. 11, d. 80-2, 10.

¹⁶ Makovsky's *The Toilet of the Bride* was left in California (now at de Young Fine Arts museum).

¹⁸ List of Russian artworks meant to be sent to Chicago (with prices). RGIA f. 789, op. 11, d. 80-2, 154-58.

It is worth noting that none of Vassily Vereshchagin's (1842-1904) works were presented in Chicago, although he was one of the most famous Russian artists in America at the time: in 1881 *Scribner's Monthly* magazine published a wide article concerning his art; in 1888-1891 his large exhibition in America had been run, by the end of which 110 artworks were sold at auction (Zhuravleva 2012, 296-97). His painting *The Siege of the Trinity-Sergius Lavra* was unsuccessfully requested from Alexander III's collection for exhibition at the Columbian Exposition. Nevertheless, it might be said that the painter himself was present at the Fair – in a symbolic way – as a bronze statue by Ilya Gintzburg (1859-1939), which was bought for the museum in Saint-Louis by Mr. Halsey Cooley Ives,¹⁹ the director of the Fine Arts Department, marking Vereshchagin's recognition in America.

Art of the Russian Salon and 'national realism' happened to oppose each other on the walls of the exhibition halls in Chicago (fig. 6) – which in some way corresponded with the artistic situation in Russia. Semiradsky and Makovsky were among the most famous Russian artists in America and their paintings were among the most broad-scale works at the Russian section, but William Walton saw a lack of 'national' in them (Walton 1893, 66) declaring that the "real national accent" was achieved by Repin in his *The Cossacks*. Walton also proclaimed Repin to be "a realist, a democrat, a man newly arrived at 'intelligence'" quoting Theodore Child's article about contemporary Russian art (Walton 1893, 62-63). Repin and Semiradsky are considered to be the main representatives of the two 'confronting' leagues of artists, standing respectively for 'the real' and 'the ideal' and seeing the purposes and means of art differently (Has'janova 2001, 8). In American press Aivazovsky, as "the first among the idealists" was contraposed to Repin as "the first among the realists" – which was reflected in an issue of the *American Herald* (Russkij Hudozhestvennyj Otdel 1893). The note was almost entirely about Aivazovsky praise from the American public. Of course not all of the reviewers were positive. Bancroft was more than sceptical, saying about his paintings that most of them were marines and none of them very remarkable, except for the luminosity of hue (Bancroft 1893, 756). William Walton only noted the large num-

ber of Aivazovsky's works without any interest in actually describing them (Walton 1893, 70).

The hint of contraposition could be already seen in the earlier American text, though without accenting on *national*. In the illustrated catalogue for the masterpieces of the previous Centennial International Exhibition Semiradsky's work *The Amulet Seller* was reproduced and provided with a commentary, where Semiradsky was referred to representatives of a "Roman School" and his painting was called "the largest and the most important" work of that kind (Strahan 1876?, 302-03). Only after the passage about Semiradsky, although he of course was called Russian, an art historian Earl Shinn (pseudonym Edward Strahan, 1837-1886) turned to Russian contributors, shortly characterizing the set of works as the most striking and individual at the Fair and describing the rural *Old Russian Couple* by Nikolai Zagorsky (1849-1893) who started to exhibit with *Peredvizhniki* since 1880 (Konovalov 2008, 206) and was presented in Chicago by two paintings (RGIA 80-82; 154-58). Mentioning one of them, *A Broken Heart*, depicting a mother comforting her daughter, Bancroft wrote with sympathy to such art: "Scattered among the more pretentious works are pictures of home and everyday life, in pleasing contrast with the highly wrought and sensuous paintings which surround them" (Bancroft 1893, 757). His other work *At Breakfast* received attention of William Walton, who defined it as "a very good example of the unpleasant domestic genre", marking the "forcibleness with which the artist has presented his little incident" (Walton 1893, 71).

5 Conclusions

As previously, the organization of Russian fine arts department was entrusted to the Imperial Fine Arts Academy – and the commission consisted of painters belonging to the *Peredvizhniki* group, which reflected their official approach with the Academy. The represented art collection, formed without specific conception and widely influenced by personal relation between the painters and the members of the commission, illustrated the end of the 'confrontation' between 'national artists' and academics and, to some extent, concluded the period in Russian art bringing together a number of very important works in the history of Russian painting. Actually, in the nineties of nineteenth century there already existed new art trends such as *art nouveau* and

¹⁹ He also bought two paintings: E. Polenova's *After the Bath*, for 51 \$ and K. Kryzhitsky's *A Night at Little Russia* for 204 \$.

impressionism, though this was not represented in Chicago but only the next world's fair in Paris.

At that time interest to Russian culture in America surely existed and was influenced among other things by several publications both positive and negative. Generally Russian fine arts was familiar to the readers of *Harper's Magazine*, *Scribner's Monthly*, and *The Century* by varied publications, and to art professionals in America – by previous American and European exhibitions and personal artists' show. As at other international fairs, Russian organizers of different departments intended to educate about the country – for this purpose served the commentaries in the general catalogue of the Russian section, explaining to foreigners some scenes and attributes difficult to understand, romanticizing the history of the country and life of its tsars and serfs.

Fortunate became the unexpected appearance of a curator for the Russian section, who managed the sales of artworks and communicated with the public. As in the reviews we can find the search for realistic 'national accent' in painting and sculpture, the list of sold works shows that buyers were also good at obtaining pleasurable Salon artworks such as *Landscape* by Couriar, *A Head of Italian Woman* by Alexeev, *A Silent Day, After the Storm* by Endogurov, marines of Aivazovsky and wanted to enrich their museums collections with the busts of eminent Russians like Tolstoy and Vereshchagin.

In any way, the exposition had to show a high level of Russian art, though professional opinion could be rather sceptical (Bancroft 1893, 754): "from a Russian point of view it is doubtless of excellent quality; but art is universal, and works of art cannot be judged by the tenets and methods of a single school. In this super-abundance of energy, too often accompanied with faulty modeling and colouring, there is *the intention rather than the embodiment of art*". The notion corresponded with the popular image of Russia as a semi-barbaric wild inartistic region (Wellman 1893, 1) and also referred to a French historian and architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc's (1814-1879) concept of Russian art as combination of western and eastern features, only being on its way to 'civilized' worldwide art. Printed in 1877 his research on development of Russian art and architecture, *L'art russe: ses origines, ses éléments constitutifs, son apogée, son avenir*, had finally influenced not only European but American attitude to it as well. Theodore Child in 1889 was describing Moscow architecture guided by

Viollet-le-Duc's ideas (Child 1889b, 342-44). In 1893 Wiliam Walton referred to Viollet-le-Duc concerning Russian applied arts (Walton 1893, 58-59) and, mentioning Pimonenko's *Easter Halloween*, he slightly mockingly wrote: "[that] may not be very high art", though "at least better than black-avisaged icons to be covered with gold plate" (Walton 1893, 65).

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