

**EXHIBITING FRANCE IN AMERICA: THE FRENCH PAVILION AT THE
NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR OF 1939**

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines France's use of expositions to promote its systems of governance, its world power status, and its products from 1851 to 1939, focusing particularly on the French pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair. France used the World's Fair of 1939 to showcase the cultural and consumer products which were significant components of its cultural propaganda during the interwar period. This thesis argues that in responding to the Fair's central themes - the supremacy of democracy and the promise of the future - French displays were designed to show how the French past was an integral part of current developments and future innovations. This thesis also examines how this message was recognized by analyzing the coverage of the French pavilion in the American press.

Acknowledgements

Despite the single name on the title page, this thesis is the result of a community. I would like to thank the history department for its financial support, which allowed me to move to Ottawa to continue my education. In particular, the Peter Browne scholarship allowed me to make a trip to the New York Public Library for archival research and order a number of ILL documents from institutions in the United States. During my time at Carleton I found all the staff members to be welcoming and encouraging. Thank you to the history faculty and staff for your support. At the library, the assistance of Heather Matheson, Callista Kelly and the ILL department proved to be invaluable as I amassed materials from all over the continent.

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There are two people without whose interest, engagement and support this thesis could never have been completed. My supervisor, Dr. Susan Whitney, went above and beyond, tailoring a self-directed study to my interests, encouraging my enthusiasm and curiosity, and patiently listening as I recounted Fair-related details which were unrelated to the final completion of this study. At the same time, she was an amazing editor who helped to identify the core components of my thesis when I had buried them in footnotes or lengthy descriptive paragraphs. Her timely return of chapter drafts, particularly in the last two weeks, ensured that I always had something to work on.

Sitting by my side during those final two weeks as I competed with librarians for the number of hours spent in the building was my husband Cameron Prentice. His support for this project was beyond all that I ever could have asked for - he encouraged me on days when I could barely produce a paragraph, he challenged me when I was becoming defeated, and he sat for days and edited chapters with me when he had his own courses and deadlines to meet. When the end was in sight he became my assistant, running to get books in the stacks, checking and re-checking that my footnotes were complete, and typing when I no longer could. His support and presence are what allowed me to successfully complete my Master's programme.

Any mistakes that are left in the thesis are my own, but I will probably ignore them in the years ahead and instead celebrate what I achieved during my two-year love affair with the New York World's Fair of 1939.

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A peaceful France, an intellectual France, a France of art and elegance will be there in its creative strength, unified and progressive in its sincerity, and in its immemorial desire to enhance the brotherhood of man. Thus the people of the United States will know what our friendship hopes to give them. They will know us as strong and just, free and friendly, and I hope that in this pavilion they will find incentives to love us better.¹

- Marcel Olivier, French Commissioner General

As France prepared the Champ de Mars and the Palais de Chaillot for its own international exposition in 1937, it also announced its intention to participate in the New York World's Fair of 1939. As the first nation pledged to participate in the World's Fair, it secured a lease for a prominent pavilion site along the central boulevard of the Fair. In January 1939, five months before opening day, the Fair Commission and French pavilion committee met to commemorate the placement of the first foundation piling. Pavilion construction was completed in time for opening day, but as a result of a dockside fire visitors had to wait until late May for admission to the opulent displays.

Once the pavilion opened, visitors were able to roam through the varied exhibits of the three-story structure. The displays attempted to educate visitors, just as Marcel Olivier had foretold, about "intellectual France, a France of art and elegance," a France whose past was of immeasurable value

¹ Marcel Olivier, French Commissioner General, *Address of French Commissioner General Marcel Olivier at the Dedication of the French Pavilion*, 13 January 1939, New York, file France Foreign Government Participation, Box 99, New York World's Fair records, 1935-1945, New York Public Library.

to the future.² The exhibits emphasized familiar exports such as art, philosophy, fashion, and gastronomy in an effort to emphasize France's role as the foremost contributor to Western culture. The organizing principle of the pavilion was a conviction that the past was a vital component of present day achievements and future potential; the pavilion's exhibits were designed to convey the message that the French past could contribute to the American future.

International exhibitions had been held regularly in the major cities of the world following their inception at London in 1851 and had gained a reputation as valuable forums for the international exchange of information, ideas, products and technologies.³ They were also, as cultural historian Robert Rydell has noted, "amongst the greatest tourist events of the last two centuries."⁴ The opportunity to advance national interests by means of representative display became an increasingly central function of international exhibitions during the late nineteenth century. The introduction of national pavilions to Exhibitions in 1867 enabled nations to represent their unique attributes. Initially confined to architectural display, the pavilions encouraged visitors to view interior displays during the interwar years. The exhibits held within sought to persuade fairgoers that the ideological, industrial or artistic

² Olivier, 13 January 1939, New York World's Fair records.

³ Shanny Peer, *France on Display: Peasants, Provincials, and Folklore in the 1937 Paris World's Fair* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 5.

⁴ Robert Rydell, *The Book of Fairs: Materials about World's Fairs, 1834-1916 in the Smithsonian Institution Libraries* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1992), 2.

achievements of the sponsoring nation were worthy of special recognition or emulation.

France utilized its pavilion at the New York World's Fair to advance its culture-based propaganda in the hopes of winning the affections of the American public at a time when France needed American support. France had been present at previous exhibitions held in the United States, but the New York World's Fair represented a new departure: it was expected to attract a larger audience than ever before, and it was designed to commemorate an event - the inauguration of George Washington - that symbolically linked the two nations. Washington's inauguration, which followed French support for American revolutionary efforts, marked the triumph of a revolutionary republican system, a shared Franco-American value system that had been mentioned at previous international exhibitions.⁵ Moreover, it came at a time when war threatened and when an alliance between France and the United States was more important than ever as tensions heightened in Europe. Marcel Olivier's desire that Americans "find incentives to love us better" in the pavilion took on new urgency.⁶ This urgency related to French concerns over its security. Following the Munich agreement in 1938, many of France's Eastern European allies lost confidence in their agreements.⁷ France also lost a valuable ally in late August 1939, when the USSR, despite Franco-British efforts

⁵ Wolfram Kaiser, "The Great Derby Race: Strategies of Cultural Representation at Nineteenth-Century World Exhibitions," in *Culture and International History*, edited by Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Frank Schumacher (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 49.

⁶ Olivier, 13 January 1939, New York World's Fair records.

⁷ Anthony Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War 1936-1939* (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1977), 264-79.

to secure an alliance, aligned itself with Germany. At such a precarious moment, the New York World's Fair was an important opportunity to attract the affections and sympathy of the American public.

American familiarity with the themes exhibited in the French pavilion was an important aspect of the pavilion's appeal. The French foreign ministry had recognised in the post-World War One period that the successful transmission of positive images of France required a receptive audience. At the same time, the foreign ministry was convinced that a shared set of opinions existed for the French and American elite, namely that "art, literature, and the rest had a particularly French resonance, that French had a special cachet as international language, and that Paris was the place to be seen."⁸ In New York, this time-honoured role as a cultural leader and innovator was explored in displays that were designed to celebrate the French past as a vital part of current developments and future innovations.

This thesis examines the French pavilion at New York World's Fair in 1939 as an example of the policy of cultural propaganda adopted by the French foreign ministry during the interwar period. It considers the influence of the Fair's futuristic "World of Tomorrow" theme on the organising principle of the pavilion and examines how the presentation of France's culture was shaped to communicate a specific message to the American audience at the Fair. How was that message presented? Did some of the pavilion exhibits illustrate the unifying inspiration of the pavilion better than others? Which ones did this, and

where were they located in the pavilion? The thesis also analyzes how the message was received by examining coverage of the pavilion in the American press. Here special attention is paid to the *New York Times*, which ran the most extensive coverage of the Fair and its foreign participants. How did American reporters respond to the French pavilion? Did they identify the underlying meaning of the displays? Coverage from the fine arts and architectural press will also be analyzed with a view to establishing how these writers assessed the meanings and achievements of the pavilion and its displays.

To investigate these questions, a range of French and American sources were consulted. Memoranda regarding French exhibits and participation as well as texts of official speeches were consulted at the collection of archival materials on the World's Fair held at the New York Public Library. Pavilion-sponsored publications and two French magazines published during the Fair season provided additional information about the contents and location of pavilion displays. The discussion of American press coverage of the Fair and French pavilion was based on a digital search of the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post* for the period of March 1 to November 15 1939.

This thesis argues that France continued to emphasize cultural achievements as the main avenue of approach to the American public in its pavilion at the New York World's Fair. The intended role for French culture at

⁸ Robert J. Young, *Marketing Marianne: French Propaganda in America, 1900-1940* (New

the Fair was to emphasize the contributions that France could make to the United States as both nations advanced to the Fair-imagined “World of Tomorrow”. As a nation with enduring and distinct cultural qualities, France would be able to contribute to the future through its historical achievements: the past was, therefore, a vital part of current achievements and future innovations. The thesis further argues that this conception of France’s role, as presented through the exhibits of the pavilion and in some of the accompanying literature, was largely overlooked by the American press in its coverage of the French pavilion.

This study is situated within the context of a larger body of scholarship on international exhibitions and recent work on national pavilions. The large body of academic exhibition literature can be sorted into five broad categories: general histories of Fairs, histories of individual exhibitions, histories of individual pavilions, and topical studies that subordinate Fairs to a particular problem of scholarly interest.⁹ The general histories of exhibitions are valuable reference tools which include details about the exhibition sites, costs, participants and distinctive attributes.¹⁰ The cursory details provided by the general histories are examined in the literature on individual Fairs, where the

Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), xii.

⁹ Rydell, *Books of the Fairs*, 10.

¹⁰ The most frequently cited general history is that of John Allwood, *The Great Exhibitions* (London: Studio Vista, 1977). More recent works include: Philippe Bouin and Christian-Philippe Chanut, *Histoire française des foires et des expositions universelles* (Paris : Baudouin, 1980); John E. Findling and Kimberly Pelle, *Historical Dictionary of World’s Fairs and Expositions, 1851-1988* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990); Erik Mattie, *World’s Fairs* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998); Brigitte Schroeder-Gudehus and Anne Rasmussen, *Les Fastes du Progrès: Le Guide des Expositions Universelles 1851-1992* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992).

context and theme of the exhibition become the focus of analytical discussion.¹¹ Scholars have also started to publish analyses of participants and their pavilions. Many of these essays are interested in national pavilions, but some scholars also consider the extensive commercial displays that became a component of American exhibitions during the interwar years.¹² Fairs are increasingly the focus of theme-centred enquiry in fields such as women's history, architectural history, the history of science and technology, intellectual history and colonial history.¹³

¹¹ See for example, Burton Benedict, *The Anthropology of World's Fairs: San Francisco's Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915* (Berkeley: Scolar Press, 1982); Helen A. Harrison (ed.), *Dawn of a New Day: The New York World's Fair, 1939/40* (New York: New York University Press, 1980); Richard D. Mandell, *Paris 1900: The Great World's Fair* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1967); Shanny Peer, *France on Display: Peasants, Provincials, and Folklore in the 1937 Paris World's Fair* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

¹² See for example, Carol A. Breckenridge, "The Aesthetics and politics of colonial collecting: India at World's Fairs," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31:2 (1989): 195-216.; Fabienne Chevalier, "Finland through French Eyes: Alvar Aalto's pavilion at the Paris International Exhibition of 1937," *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 7:1 (Fall/Winter 1999-2000): 65-105.; Nicholas J. Cull, "Overture to an Alliance: British Propaganda at the New York World's Fair, 1939-1940," *Journal of British Studies* 36(July 1997): 325-354.; Karen A. Fiss, "In Hitler's Salon: The German Pavilion at the 1937 Paris Exposition Internationale," In *Art, Culture, and the Media under the Third Reich*, edited by Richard A. Etlin (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002): 316-342.; Catherine B. Freedberg, *The Spanish Pavilion at the Paris World's Fair*, 2 volumes (New York: Garland Publishing, 1986); David E. Nye, "Ritual Tomorrows: The New York World's Fair of 1939," *History and Anthropology* 6:1(1992): 1-21.; Pascal Ory, "Plus dure sera la chute: Les pavillons français aux Expositions Internationales de 1939," *Relations Internationales* 33(Printemps 1983): 81-90.; Anthony Swift, "The Soviet World of Tomorrow at the New York World's Fair, 1939," *The Russian Review* 57:3(July 1998): 364-379.; Akiko Takenaka, "Orientalism and Propaganda: the construction of a wartime national identity," *Thresholds* 17(1998): 63-68.; Maurico Tenorio-Trillo, *Mexico at the World's Fairs: Crafting a modern nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

¹³ Elizabeth Ezra, "The Colonial Look: Exhibiting Empire in the 1930s," *Contemporary French Civilization* 19:1(1995): 33-49.; Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), Wolfram Kaiser, "The Great Derby Race: Strategies of Cultural Representation at Nineteenth-Century World Exhibitions," in *Culture and International History*, edited by Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht and Frank Schumacher (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003); Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984); —, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).

As a whole, Fair literature remains disproportionately focused on a small number of major exhibitions held since 1851. A large number of exhibitions have not yet been considered by scholars, and some exhibitions -- such as that in 1851 -- are overly represented in exhibition literature. As a result of the disparate nature of published works, the scholarship on international exhibitions has not developed as a cohesive field.¹⁴ This thesis draws especially on studies that concentrate on national pavilions; these works provide a foundation for arguments about the significance of exhibitions or the use of an exhibition or pavilion to meet a defined set of goals.

The Spanish Pavilion at the Paris World's Fair by Catherine Freedberg is one of the earliest books focused on a national pavilion at an international exhibition. In her study, Freedberg analysed the roles played by art and architecture in the expression of national ideals. Freedberg argued that national expression was best served by modern design statements with elements of national tradition rather than through the building of anachronistic replicas.¹⁵ Furthermore, she asserted that Spain was able to best express itself at the 1937 exposition because of the collaborative relationship between the architect and commissioned artists. Her argument was supported by case studies of Alexander Calder's *The Mercury Fountain*, Joan Miro's *Le Faucheur*, and Pablo Picasso's *Guernica*. These works, commissioned on behalf of the Spanish government, were designed to achieve a precise political goal: to demonstrate the Republic's goals and its dramatic situation in the hopes of

¹⁴ Rydell, *Book of Fairs*, 10-11.

convincing French authorities to allow safe passage of war materials purchased in France to the Spanish republic.¹⁶ Her argument thus explored the connection between displayed objects and political goals and messages.

The 1998 article "The Soviet World at the New York World's Fair, 1939" by Anthony Swift examined the political context of participation, the objects on display, and the layout of the Soviet pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair. Swift argued that the USSR used the World's Fair to "demonstrate its economic power and, implicitly, military preparedness, as well as to cultivate relations with the United States" despite the two countries' ideological differences.¹⁷ The pavilion was designed to convince an American audience of Soviet power, and that there was no need to construct an imaginary future, since the future already existed in the USSR.¹⁸ In his study, Swift described and analysed the content of successive halls, drawing the reader's attention to dioramas, paintings and maps. Using the *New York Times*, and a few other newspaper articles, Swift argued that the Soviet pavilion was well-received, even if public opinion shifted with the invasion of Finland in November 1939.

"Orientalism and propaganda: the construction of wartime national identity" by Akiko Takenaka also examined the 1939 New York World's Fair. Takenaka studied the Japanese pavilions at the 1937 *Exposition Internationale* and the 1939 World's Fair to construct an argument about government

¹⁵ Catherine Blanton Freedberg, *The Spanish Pavilion at the Paris World's Fair*, 2 volumes (New York: Garland Publishing, 1986), 57.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁷ Anthony Swift, "The Soviet World of Tomorrow at the New York World's Fair, 1939" *The Russian Review* 57 (July 1998): 365.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 377.

propaganda. The Japanese pavilion of 1937 was a modernist adaptation of a traditional style structure, a principle which had been approved by the Japanese government. But the architect in charge of the project in Paris went beyond the anticipated changes and, despite winning the *Grand Prix* in design, the Japanese government did not elect to re-create the 1937 pavilion at the next exhibition. In 1939, the pavilion returned to traditional style, with the interior displays concentrating on arts and crafts, in response to a Western interest that had been first noted in 1873. Takenaka argued that this emphasis on maintaining the stereotypical image of Japan was motivated by the “political uncertainties building up between the two nations.”¹⁹ This article, more than any other, provides a forceful examination of how ideas about American expectations of Japan combined with the international political context to dictate the presentation of identity at the 1939 Fair.

Karen Fiss’ Ph.D. dissertation on the German pavilion at the 1937 *Exposition Internationale* is another important work on national pavilions. In “‘Deutschland in Paris’: The 1937 German Pavilion and Franco-German cultural relations,” Fiss considered the meaning of the pavilion as interpreted by the French press. In particular, she examined the lack of criticism about the German pavilion and French accounts of Nazi party congresses and film documentaries. Fiss also did a close reading of two films shown at the pavilion,

¹⁹ Akiko Takenaka, “Orientalism and Propaganda: the construction of a wartime national identity” *Thresholds* 17(1998): 67.

and explored the willingness of reviewers to “suspend their political judgement of the films in order to extol their artistic and cinematic merits.”²⁰

“*Deutschland in Paris*” was the basis for a 2002 article, “In Hitler’s Salon: The German Pavilion at the 1937 Paris Exposition Internationale”. The German pavilion at the 1937 exhibition caught the attention of the world in its “face off” against the Soviet pavilion. In her article, Fiss analysed how the German pavilion embodied Nazi culture and ideology. She examined the politics of German participation, secured much later than other nations and conceived as part of the French policy of rapprochement. Before examining the interior of the building, Fiss drew attention to the inspiration, and contemporary responses to, the pavilion’s architecture. Then using Ernst Bloch’s theory of parlor aesthetic, Fiss addressed the layout of the pavilion’s interior, including an analysis of why the Germans did not have prices on any of their display pieces. Finally, Fiss incorporated an analysis of the art displayed in the pavilion, whose “labor-intensive effort” represented the “immutability of the German soul”.²¹ Her essay is perhaps the most successful of all of the works cited in combining political, intellectual and cultural approaches.

The article which is most directly relevant to this study is “Plus dure sera la chute: les pavillons français aux Expositions Internationales de 1939” by

²⁰ Karen A. Fiss, “‘Deutschland in Paris’: The 1937 German Pavilion and Franco-German Cultural Relations” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1995), 9.

²¹ Karen A. Fiss, “In Hitler’s Salon: The German Pavilion at the 1937 Paris Exposition Internationale,” In *Art, Culture, and the Media under the Third Reich*, edited by Richard A. Etlin (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 329.

historian Pascal Ory.²² This article examined the prominence of culture in the French pavilions at the New York and San Francisco World Fairs of 1939, highlighting the role of hierarchical value structures and the pavilions' privileging of culture. Ory argued that the third floor of the New York pavilion was its culminating point, where visual art, literature, and cuisine were celebrated. Furthermore he argued that the prominence of culture to the French value system was emphasized by the absence of science and machines at the California pavilion, whose sole focus was fine arts and philosophy. Despite Ory's identification of culture as the emphasis in both French pavilions, his analysis does not go beyond the pavilions' contents to analyze their relationship to broader propaganda efforts or to the themes of the Fairs themselves. This thesis builds upon his insights to make these connections.

The thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the progression of international exhibitions and the development of national pavilions, focusing particularly on France's important role in their evolution. France had used exhibitions in the past to bolster its national prestige and transmit carefully conceived messages about the country to international audiences. The motivations and expectations that inspired the exhibitions and pavilions of France in the past were relevant to the French decision to participate at New York in 1939. In addition, the decision to stress French cultural traits at the pavilion was in keeping with the approach adopted

²² Pascal Ory, "Plus dure sera la chute: les pavillons français aux Expositions Internationales de

for interwar propaganda in the United States analyzed by historian Robert Young. The discrete education of Americans until the Second World War, Young argues, concentrated on “the many varied virtues of France and French civilization,” and campaigns were built around “democratic values and [the] freedom of expression”.²³ The French Ambassador to Washington, Jules Jusserand, stressed the importance of truth, unembellished by hyperbole and lies, as the best approach to propaganda in the United States. For Jusserand, the virtues and genius of French culture did not need exaggerating, and the act of instructing and reminding the world about French capabilities would be the best way to secure amity.²⁴ As a result of these guiding principles, French propaganda was a “steady promotion of France as the cultural capital of the world, as a country committed to ideas and aesthetic pursuits,” a campaign that was conducted in “the libraries, the galleries, the theatres, and the concert halls” of America.²⁵ Jusserand and the Foreign Ministry hoped that the point of view promoted by French propaganda would be useful to their cause, affecting not only American action, but also American sentiment.²⁶ I argue that these factors influenced the decision to stress cultural contributions at the pavilion over industrial and technological progress.

The second chapter introduces the New York World’s Fair and examines the French pavilion. This chapter will first discuss the motivations for the New York World’s Fair and the progressive, peaceful rhetoric that the World’s Fair

1939” *Relations internationales* 33(printemps 1983) : 81-90.

²³ Young, xvii & 81.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 81.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 49 & xviii.

Corporation embraced. A discussion of the Fair's theme (Building the World of Tomorrow) and its effect on the French pavilion will follow. French design plans were also affected by the role of the Fair's design committee in vetting the pavilion proposal and the pavilion's location on the Lagoon of Nations, and these will be analyzed. The remaining sections of the chapter consider the displays on each floor, examining how and why they might have been chosen to cater to the interests of an American audience. Whereas the theme of the Fair was forward-looking, a number of France's displays emphasized the past. I argue that the French products displayed in the pavilion were meant to be representative of the enduring creativity of France, which was to inspire the future envisioned at the Fair.

The final chapter examines the responses of the American press. As the newspaper in closest proximity to the Fair, the *New York Times* provided the most extensive coverage of the Fair and will be analyzed most thoroughly. *The Washington Post* and the *Christian Science Monitor* also reported on national pavilions at the Fair and their coverage will be discussed. In addition to the dailies, fine art and architecture magazines published essays critiquing the art exhibits and architectural design of the various national pavilions. The chapter addresses the question of how successfully France attracted the attention of the American press, and it examines what displays the press found most interesting. I argue that despite American attention to the contents of the pavilion, the pavilion's main message was largely overlooked.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, xvi.

This study is restricted to the World's Fair season of 1939. The French displays were altered slightly for the 1940 exhibition year, and the addition of a new exhibit was recorded in a fundraising pamphlet sold at the pavilion. The contents of the new exhibit, *France at War*, were not documented in any of the sources consulted. Furthermore, the tone of the World's Fair changed under the direction of a new president, Harvey Gibson. A new theme, "For Peace and Freedom," was adopted, and the Fair Committee made changes designed to create an impression of the traditional county and state fairs.²⁷ The international section of the Fair was most affected by the elimination of the nightly fireworks from the light and sound show on the Lagoon of Nations, a move which was the subject of vehement protest.²⁸ With a new theme and a more nostalgic focus, the atmosphere of the Fair changed considerably, as did the dynamic of the international zone, where national pavilions remained standing despite war overseas. France participated in both Fair seasons, but the 1939 season allowed France to be presented at its best, before it was invaded and defeated in 1940.

²⁷ Robert W. Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 58.

²⁸ Administrative Assistant J. C. Holmes to The President, 04 June 1940, file - France Foreign Government Participation, May - August 1940, Box 99, New York World's Fair 1939-1940 records, 1935-1945, New York Public Library.

France and International Expositions

Exhibitions were an important feature of the industrial era, and industrialized nations used exhibitions in a variety of ways to advance their economic and political interests. This was especially true between 1851 and 1939, when industrialized nations participated frequently in international exhibitions. Exhibitions were particularly important to French governments. France was a frequent host of international expositions after the first one in London in 1851, hosting exhibitions every eleven years during the nineteenth century. France became the leading host of exhibitions and was admired by political rivals Great Britain, the United States and Germany. Following the Great War, it welcomed the international community to Paris on three occasions and it participated in six international exhibitions.

Exhibitions allowed the French to display their manufacturing processes, products, and ideas to the world in a manner that flattered the country's national prestige. As the motivations and role of exhibitions evolved, they became a vital component of French efforts to educate the world about the professed superiority of France. The international exhibitions held in Paris reached a wide audience and were designed to encourage the belief that France was the centre of culture and civilization. This chapter traces French participation in and contributions to international exhibitions from 1851 to 1937. As an exposition host, France introduced new categories of display and adapted new technologies to enhance the visitors' exhibition experiences. Many of these innovations were later implemented by other host nations.

France as host

French national exhibitions helped inspire the transition from the localised markets and fairs of the Middle Ages to the vast international expositions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹ The early French exhibitions had two distinct attributes missing from historical fairs: they were open to the public and they were national. Exhibitions provided a method to stimulate the French economy, challenge the leading British manufacturers, and celebrate the progress being made by humanity.² The first national exhibition was organized in 1797 by the Marquis d'Avèze, an astute businessman linked with Sèvres ceramics, Les Gobelins tapestries and the carpets of Les Savonneries. The exhibition was held in the forecourt of the Louvre in order to revitalize sales of these products, which had suffered in the aftermath of 1789.³ Inspired by this, the Minister of the Interior, François de Neufchâteau, mounted a larger exhibit the following year. Although increased trade remained a central motivation, the exhibition was also intended to educate French manufacturers. The growing international threat of English manufacturers meant that the French had to try harder, pay attention to self-

¹ Pascal Ory, *Les Expositions Universelles de Paris: Panorama raisonne, avec des aperçus nouveaux et des illustrations par les meilleurs auteurs* (Paris: Editions Ramsy, 1982), 6; Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 3-9.

² Ory, *Expositions*, 8.

³ John Allwood, author of *The Great Exhibitions* (London: Studio Vista, 1977), draws readers' attention to the industrial demonstrations in Britain in 1761. However, this exhibition and subsequent ones focused on industrial inventions and processes, while the above noted French Exposition displayed industrial products instead of methods of production. See Allwood, 9-12 for more details.

presentation, and utilize more aggressive marketing techniques.⁴ The exhibition was also designed as a warning to their English rivals of the French intention to usurp their manufacturing advantage.⁵

The success of the 1798 exhibition prompted the French government to pledge its support for the hosting of exhibitions every five years. During the fifty years that followed, France hosted ten more official national exhibitions. The Champs-de-Mars exhibition site grew to accommodate an increasing number of exhibitors and a broad assortment of products. The French also developed exhibition practices which became components of the international exhibitions that followed. In 1802 the Société d'Encouragement was established to oversee the creation and awarding of medals at all subsequent national exhibitions.⁶ Adopted by international exhibitions in 1851, these awards played an important role in the development of commodity purchases by consumers. They encouraged manufacturers to excel in product quality and development with the promise of recognition and increased sales. Frank Morton Todd, historian of the 1915 San Francisco Fair, remarked that the award system was "the essential substance of all expositions that do their proper work in the world."⁷

⁴ Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 4.

⁵ Brigitte Schroeder-Gudehus and Anne Rasmussen, *Les Fastes du Progrès: Le guide des Expositions universelles 1851-1992* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992), 5.

⁶ Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 6.

⁷ Frank Morton Todd, *The Story Of The Exposition: Being The Official History Of The International Celebration Held At San Francisco In 1915 To Commemorate The Discovery Of The Pacific Ocean And The Construction Of The Panama Canal* (New York: G. P. Putnam's sons, 1921) quoted by www.sanfranciscocomemories.com accessed February 17, 2005.

The transition from national displays to international exhibitions took place at London's Hyde Park in 1851. The Crystal Palace exhibition was the idea of Henry Cole, an Assistant Keeper at the Public Records Office, who had attended the 1849 French National Exhibition where he learned of M. Buffet's unsuccessful attempt to make the 1849 exposition international in scope. Upon his return to England, he proposed to Prince Albert that the English do what the French had not. The exhibition was housed in a single, impressive building of iron, glass and wood. Twenty-five guest countries exhibited in one-half of the building and Great Britain and its empire in the other half. The exhibition was a financial success that inspired many other countries to host international exhibitions of their own.

Although not the first nation to organize an international exhibition, France was the most frequent exposition host between 1855 and 1937. Following the success of the first international exposition in France in 1855, the government committed to coordinating expositions every eleven years. As a result, Paris welcomed participants in 1867, 1878, 1889 and 1900. A planning delay and the Great War meant that the next major exhibition, *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* was not held until 1925. It was followed by an *Exposition Coloniale* in 1931 and an *Exposition Internationale* in 1937. Between 1851 and 1937, by contrast, Great Britain hosted two international exhibitions and the United States five.⁸

⁸ It is important to note that the *Bureau International des Expositions* does not recognise the 1925 or 1931 exhibitions held in Paris because they were not universal, i.e. all encompassing, in nature. For the same reason, the British annual exhibits of 1871, 1872, 1873 and 1874 and the colonial exhibitions of 1886 and 1924 are not recognised either. It is notable that France

The economic motivations for hosting an international exhibition were often combined with other national and ideological aims. Indeed, the role of trade in exhibitions was at times emphasized, but was more often hidden beneath the rhetoric of progress, education, and peace.⁹ The French government viewed expositions as platforms from which to celebrate and increase the nation's prestige.¹⁰ An exposition was not regarded as an end in itself but was considered a point of departure. A triumph at an exposition should not last for only the exposition's duration; instead, it was essential that the triumph continue.¹¹ Substantial visitor attendance and the imitation of French exhibition techniques served as a confirmation that the world was watching France.

Expositions also had clear political purposes. For example, Napoleon III used the 1855 international exposition to bolster support for his regime. Although delayed by a year by the Crimean War, the 1867 exposition opened with great fan-fare and was used to promote French prestige and material interests. Britain may have been more advanced in industrial production, as demonstrated during the Crimean War, but France had better quality, superior

hosted five international exhibitions during the 1851-1900 period; whilst between 1900 and 1939 it was the United States that hosted four. This is perhaps a not very subtle demonstration of the shift of power during the early twentieth century.

⁹ Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 17.

¹⁰ The anthropologist Benedict Burton has compared the potlatch ceremony of the Northwest Indians to World's fairs, each of which require a lavish presentation and considerable investment in order to impress friends and rivals. Burton explained that "The more lavish the expense and the more elaborate the display, the greater the prestige." Quoting from David E. Nye, "European Self-Representations at the New York World's Fair of 1939," in *Cultural Transmissions and Receptions: American Mass Culture in Europe*, edited by R. Kroes, R.W. Rydell, and D. F. J. Bosscher (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1993), 63. See also Burton Benedict, *The Anthropology of World's Fairs: San Francisco's Panama Pacific International Exposition* (London: Scolar Press, 1983), 10-11.

goods.¹² The newly formed Third Republic used the 1878 exposition to demonstrate its vitality and energy and France's ability to recover from defeat and civil war. Although Germany had demonstrated its military might during the Franco-Prussian War, the exposition attested to the fact that France was a more educated, civilized, and politically advanced nation.¹³ The exposition was also designed to illustrate the superiority of a republican governmental system, the festivities surpassing the imperial displays of 1855. The next two expositions, those of 1889 and 1900, were also motivated by the desire to display French achievements and enhance her national prestige.

International rivalry played a significant role in the transformation of exhibitions following the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851. The most intense rivalry existed first between Great Britain and France, the two leading Western European powers of the time. Inspired by the success of the British international exhibition of 1851, the French organized an exposition for 1855 that had an extended season, encompassed a larger site and introduced a new awards classification system. In 1867, the British returned to their 1851 system of classification, deeming the 1855 system to be ineffective. Each classification system was designed so that the host country could benefit from receiving the most number of judicial awards.¹⁴ Anglo-French competition was also stimulated by the display of goods using classification systems. Similar products

¹¹ Charlotte Benton, "The International Exhibition," In *Art Deco 1910-1925* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 2003), 155.

¹² Wolfram Kaiser, "The Great Derby Race: Strategies of Cultural Representation at Nineteenth-Century World Exhibitions," in *Culture and International History*, edited by Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Frank Schumacher (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003): 46.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 46.

were displayed alongside one another allowing visitors to evaluate easily comparable goods from different nations.¹⁵

The United States entered the competition between Great Britain and France with the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. The three-way rivalry proved a key factor in the expansion of exhibition grounds and the amplified cost of hosting an exhibition. Along with an augmented number of pavilions, their construction became increasingly elaborate and ornate. Furthermore, exhibitions provided a rationale for building permanent galleries and museums. As historian Paul Greenhalgh writes, “the British inaugurated the [exhibition] tradition in 1851, the French embellished its form and became the acknowledged masters of it, [and] the Americans pushed its size and expense to a final extreme”.¹⁶ The World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago was three times the size of the most recent, and thus far, largest French exposition. By 1939, the international exhibition in New York extended across one thousand, two hundred and fifty four acres, more than sixty two times the size of the 1851 site.

The competitive nature of international exhibitions compelled organizers to be innovative. France was especially inventive during the nineteenth century, frequently spurring others to duplicate or develop a concept introduced in Paris. The need for creative adaptation was recognised early by exhibition directors. A poor turnout for the 1853 exhibition in Dublin alerted

¹⁴ Schroeder-Gudehus and Rasmussen, 22.

¹⁵ Robert W. Rydell, *The Books of the Fairs: Materials about World’s Fairs, 1834-1916, in the Smithsonian Institution Libraries* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1992), 7.

¹⁶ Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 2.

exhibition observers to the necessity of surpassing previous fairs “in order to maintain an atmosphere of novelty and avoid the dreaded accusation of *déjà vu*.”¹⁷ Historian Paul Greenhalgh argued that Parisian exhibits between 1867 and the eve of the Second World War “dispensed with practicality and reserve in an attempt to sum up and transform the world”.¹⁸ As a result, France infused each exposition with new energy and ideas which attracted record numbers of visitors.¹⁹

Attendance figures were not the only factor in the drive to make each exhibition better than the last; professional exhibition specialists also scrutinized exhibitions in order to understand the reasons for success or failure of preceding fairs.²⁰ Delegations travelled between the international exhibitions and provided reports on their findings, enabling successful pavilions or entertainment shows to be reproduced at the next exhibition. Thus, exhibitions became sites of professional congresses and places of entertainment.

France introduced innovative techniques in a range of exposition areas. At her first international exposition in 1855, the French concentrated their efforts on surpassing the British exhibit in both size and duration. The

¹⁷ Richard D. Mandell, *Paris 1900: The Great World's Fair* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1967), 5-6.

¹⁸ Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 15.

¹⁹ The French *Expositions Universelle* consistently drew the most number of visitors during the nineteenth century. The 1900 Exposition held the record for highest total attendance until the 1967 Montreal Exposition. Few other expositions came close to the record numbers that Paris was able to attract to all of her exhibitions. The attendance numbers are as follows: 1855- 5,162,330; 1867- 6,805,969; 1878- 16,032,725; 1889- 32,350,297; 1900- 48,130,300. Only the United States was able to attract similar crowd sizes: Philadelphia in 1876- 9,910,966; Chicago in 1893- 27,529,400; St. Louis in 1904- 19,694,855; San Francisco in 1915- 18,876,438. For further details on attendance please see Allwood, 180-185.

expansion of exhibition grounds became a feature of subsequent fairs as nations sought to include more manufacturers and products. These changes were slight in comparison to the introduction of fine art to international exhibitions by the French in 1855. France had become the “acknowledged masters of paint” and it “had no rivals” by 1855 according to historian Paul Greenhalgh.²¹ The French set the standard in the fine art at exhibitions by the massive fine art palaces they built and in the quantities of work they sent to foreign exhibitions. France further distinguished itself from its competitors by creating, according to Greenhalgh, “the most important art displays within the exhibition tradition [which] rank amongst the greatest exhibitions of fine art of any kind held anywhere.”²² Few subsequent exhibitions omitted a fine art display and many invested generously in its presentation which brought status to the exhibition site and distinguished exhibitions from trade fairs.²³

At the next international exposition France once again introduced concepts that were adopted by later exhibitions. The *Exposition Universelle de Paris* in 1867 inaugurated national pavilions, ethnic restaurants, an amusement park, and special gardens and waterways. Five years later, the garden setting for national pavilions first used at the Parisian exposition was recreated in Vienna along with seven independent national pavilions.²⁴ Henceforth no international exhibition was held without state-run pavilions.

²⁰ Rydell, *Books of the Fairs*, 7.

²¹ Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 201.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 198.

²⁴ Benedict, 23.

An additional novelty of the exposition was its extended hours; in 1867 the French made use of newly laid gas lines to keep the main hall open until 11pm.²⁵ This gave visitors additional time to explore the first attempt at an international thematic display on the history of work. John Allwood has argued that the "display showed the various phases through which each country had passed before arriving at its present state of civilization, and was intended as a preface to the entire exhibition."²⁶ The French section, which displayed a survey from the Stone Age to the Eighteenth Century, was regarded as the best. The introduction of a centralising theme was embraced by other exhibition commissionaires and became an expected element in later exhibitions.

International exhibitions were temporary celebrations that allowed for architectural innovation, the huge halls of the early fairs a stimulus for the development of new methods of building construction. Exhibitions also provided an opportunity for experimentation and the standardization of new materials such as glass, iron and steel, which resulted in more rapid building times and less expense. The exhibition hall of 1867 was particularly remarkable for the advances in structural engineering that were achieved. As architect-historian Walter Friebe has pointed out, "the exhibition building was the first one to have the stresses and strains of its structure properly computed before

²⁵ Arthur Chandler, "Empire of Autumn: The Paris *Exposition Universelle* of 1867," *World's Fair*, VI(3): 24.

²⁶ Allwood, 43.

its erection.”²⁷ The chief designer, Gustave Eiffel, would go on to build the Eiffel tower for the 1889 international exposition.

The French added a supplementary component to expositions with the organization of specialized congresses for scientists, engineers and industrialists at the 1878 exposition.²⁸ In the future, these conferences would grow to include innumerable occupations and interest groups. The delegations gathered at international exhibitions provided the foundation for the creation of international professional standards and endowed exhibitions with a new authority.

The need to attract larger audiences for profit and prestige also necessitated the adaptation of display methods. At times a change in building design or the addition of new exhibition categories met this need. In 1878, France changed its method of colonial display. Although French colonial products had been displayed since the early expositions, the colonial displays of 1878 were given greater importance with a large building of their own. The reproduction of an Algerian Mosque, a Tunisian bazaar and a Moroccan shop received a positive response from exhibition visitors. It was the first time that large-scale exhibits were centred on colonial peoples as part of the display.²⁹ In 1889, the colonial displays were further refined. An ethnological village at the base of the Eiffel tower replaced the display of colonial products and people with the display of colonial peoples. Whereas in 1878 the colonial displays had featured colonial peoples working as vendors, waiters, and servants, in 1889

²⁷ Walter Friebe, *Buildings of the World Exhibitions* (Berlin: Edition Leipzig, 1985), 48.

native villages were created with the explicit purpose of allowing Fairgoers to gaze at colonial peoples who were enclosed within.³⁰ The observation of colonial peoples was a valuable addition to the anthropology congress that was held in conjunction with the exposition. Otis Mason, a Smithsonian anthropologist, observed "the whole Exposition seemed to have been arranged for his special pleasure and profit."³¹ The simulated reality of the French colonies was also popular with exhibition visitors.³²

The increased prominence of French colonial possessions in ethnological displays at expositions reflected the competition for empire among the world's leading power then taking place. In the last decade of the nineteenth century Great Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy and the United States formally partitioned almost all of Africa and increased their possessions in Asia. When negotiations and the scramble for Africa finally concluded, France had the

²⁸ For a brief exploration of the growth of international congresses please see Benedict, 42-43.

²⁹ Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 85.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

³¹ Otis Mason, "Report on the Department of Ethnology in the U.S. National Museum, 1890," quoted by Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 56. The ability of the villages to draw larger attendance numbers and the racially charged messages that they embodied made them invaluable to the American fairs that followed. The Chicago World's Fair of 1893 recreated the Street of Cairo, and the Midway Plaisance included a number of other sideshow villages. Americans continued to expand the size and scope of ethnological villages: In St. Louis (1904) the villages were attributed new importance as a place to scientifically study other races. Twenty thousand people from the Philippines, Canada, China, and Japan lived on the site for the duration of the fair. See the works of Robert W. Rydell for a detailed discussion of the use of ethnological villages in the United States from 1876 forward.

³² See Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) for her discussion of the role of observation and spectacle in Parisian life.

second largest colonial empire which encompassed three-and-a-half million square miles of territory in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean.³³

French exhibition techniques continued to evolve in 1889, when the French introduced the Eiffel Tower as a central architectural feature of the exposition. While it was badly received at the time because of its lack of aesthetic beauty, the tower represented the climax of iron construction.³⁴ Future designers would attempt to match the drawing power of the first *clou*. The role of the tower during the exposition was seen not only as a technological achievement but as a pleasurable distraction, the first step towards the integration of entertainment with the lofty ideals of exhibitions.

France once again hosted an innovative international exposition for the turn-of-the-century. The exposition was to celebrate all that mankind had achieved during the nineteenth century. It is remembered most, however, for the astonishing effect produced by electricity. Sixteen thousand incandescent lamps and three hundred arc-lamps spread along the main routes of the exposition grounds, "providing the colossal organism with movement and light."³⁵ Equal to the attraction created by the use of electric lighting at the *Exposition Universelle* of 1900 were the entertainment exhibits, including ethnological villages, theatre, restaurants and the Olympics - whose location and role at exhibitions gained prominence after 1893.³⁶

³³ E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), 59.

³⁴ Henri Loyrette, "La tour Eiffel," in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, volume 3, *De L'Archive à L'Emblème*, edited by Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1992).

³⁵ Allwood, 84 quoting Hachette's '1900 Almanach'.

³⁶ Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 83-5 & 123. Entertainment at the *Exposition Internationale* in 1900 included the second modern Olympics, held in the *Bois de Vincennes* which was accessible

There is consensus among writers in this field that the entertainment zone at the world exhibitions of 1893 and 1900 were pivotal in propelling future exhibitions in new directions. International exhibitions had long attracted independent entertainment organizers to areas outside of their gates. After a series of disasters in an uncontrolled area outside of the 1876 Philadelphia Fair, exhibition organizers for the Chicago 1893 Fair elected to include the hereto unrecognised entertainment booths inside the Fair grounds.³⁷ At subsequent exhibitions, the entertainment zone and its individual attractions continued to expand, eclipsing other sectors during the interwar period.³⁸ By the time of the 1939 New York World's Fair, commercial exhibitions integrated entertainment into their displays in an effort to attract visitors away from the amusement zone.³⁹

France was not the only innovative force working for the enhancement of the exhibition experience, but it introduced a significant number of important changes and was frequently imitated by competitors during the nineteenth century. The ability of French exhibition directors to be inventive

along the new metro line. The Olympics were held in conjunction with World Exhibitions again in 1904 (St. Louis) and 1908 (The Franco-British Colonial Exhibition at Wembley).

³⁷ The Philadelphia exhibition, as with many of the other exhibitions, was subject to an entertainment area that grew up outside its main gates. It included "restaurants, small hotels, beer-gardens, ice-cream saloons, and small shows". A suspicious death and a large fire were enough to have the city authorities clear the area. At the following exhibition in 1893, an entertainment zone, renamed the Midway Plaisance was introduced. Organisers, following the advice of P.T. Barnum, created an opulent entertainment area on a scale never before seen. Consisting of ethnological exhibits, exotic bars, restaurants, sideshows and joy rides, the moral overtones of the exhibition were forgotten in this sector devoted to leisure. For more information see Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 32-35.

³⁸ Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 45.

³⁹ David E. Nye, "Ritual Tomorrows: The New York World's Fair of 1939," *History and Anthropology* 6:1 (1992): 7. Nye examined five successful corporate exhibits of the Fair (Perisphere, Consolidated Edison, General Electric and General Motors) to support his argument.

may have been related to their funding guarantee from the government. Unlike British and American exhibitions, French expositions after 1878 were paid for by government endowments, a system developed in response to the losses sustained by the 1855, 1867 and 1878 expositions. The state, Paris city council, and private firms shared the cost, and in the case of the 1889 exposition, the profits. The funding approach adopted by the French aided when it came to hosting and participating abroad. French government control and subsidies ensured coherent national displays.⁴⁰ In contrast, British participation, although overseen by a state agency, solicited the necessary funds from private sources, whose own interests were reflected in the official representations. American funding methods were similar to the British, although they were even more dependent on private organizations for financial support.⁴¹

The importance attributed to international exhibitions and the admiration of French international expositions can be seen as a symbiotic relationship. The worth that France ascribed to exhibitions derived from the exposure that France was able to gain from visitors. This was true whether or not the exhibition was held in France. At the same time, other nations admired the exhibiting talent of France because of its ability to consistently attract record-breaking audiences to the international expositions held in Paris. Thus, because of the admiration gained from its own hosting abilities, France was able to feel confident in its assertion of its status as a cultural leader when it exhibited in Great Britain and the United States.

⁴⁰ Kaiser, 46.

France as participant and the emergence of National Pavilions

The opportunity to increase national prestige was not limited to hosting international exhibitions. Exhibiting abroad also enabled politicians, manufacturers, artists and tourists to evaluate their rivals. As Edmond Labbé, Commissioner of the 1937 exposition, wrote "International exhibitions ... allow nations to become aware of their resources, to take stock of their strengths and weaknesses, to realize the prospects open to them, to see what their competitors have done, and to learn, if need be, how they have been left behind."⁴² Furthermore, foreign exhibitions provided opportunities to create a favourable national image abroad, form or strengthen national or ideological alliances, and facilitate the transfer of culture.⁴³ As the focus of international exhibitions shifted from the exhibition of commercial goods to national displays in the late nineteenth century, more money was spent on the design and construction of national pavilions. The central role of foreign participation was emphasized at exhibitions by national days. As historians Brigitte Schroeder-Gudenus and Anne Rasmussen note, "La nation est toujours le principal point de repère des expositions - une tendance mise en lumière par le défilé presque ininterrompu des « journées » pendant lesquelles chaque pays participant, à

⁴¹ Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 27-41.

⁴² Cited in Shanny Peer, *France on Display: Peasants, Provincials, and Folklore in the 1937 Paris World's Fair* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 6.

⁴³ Kaiser, 46.

tour de rôle, monopolise l'attention officielle et s'approprie l'avant-scène de l'exposition."⁴⁴

France was a regular participant at international exhibitions hosted by its national rivals. Although the constrained size of national pavilions limited the quantity of goods that France could display, French organizers did not miss any opportunity to flaunt French commodities to a new audience. Yet, the construction of independent pavilions by France at these exhibitions remains difficult to assess. Apart from examining maps of exhibitions, little scholarship has been done in the area. France built pavilions for the Chicago, St. Louis, and San Francisco Fairs; her participation at other international exhibitions is certain, but her investment in independent buildings remains unconfirmed.⁴⁵

National pavilions developed along lines similar to those of exhibitions. When first introduced at Paris in 1867, the structures were small and they were intended as administrative centres to supplement the display areas of the large halls. In addition to displaying commodities, the national exhibits in the main exhibition halls included ethnic restaurants and teashops where young girls in the costumes of different nationalities waited upon visitors.⁴⁶ The façades of national pavilions were often stylised, visually reinforcing a sense of distinct culture and nation. In Vienna in 1873, a regional, agrarian style dominated the

⁴⁴ Schroeder-Gudehus and Rasmussen, 6.

⁴⁵ The discussion of international exhibitions that follows is not exhaustive. France participated in an exhibition, on average, every 5 years: 1873 Vienna, 1876 Philadelphia, 1880 Melbourne, 1888 Barcelona, 1893 Chicago, 1897 Brussels, 1904 Saint Louis, 1905 Liège, 1906 Milan, 1910 Brussels, 1913 Ghent, 1915 San Francisco, 1929 Barcelona, 1933 Chicago, 1935 Brussels. Remember that France was the site of international exhibitions in 1867, 1878, 1889, 1900, 1925 and 1937.

⁴⁶ Allwood, 45.

architecture of the national pavilions which were set amongst the garden grounds. The pavilions were similarly stylised at the 1876 Philadelphia exhibition. In 1878, however, architects were forced to adapt to the centralised exhibition style of a single building. The designers encouraged the use of characteristic architecture by grouping the visiting nations in one half of the exhibition hall. Each foreign participant had an entranceway to its exhibits in the central courtyard of the main building; it became known as the *Rue des Nations*. At the 1889 exposition, organizers returned to a decentralised grounds plan and national pavilions were built under the shadow of the Eiffel Tower.

The exhibitions of 1893 and 1900 were particularly important in the development of national pavilions; at both, the size and prominence accorded to national pavilions increased. The newfound importance of national pavilions can be linked to the growing nationalism and national competition of the period.⁴⁷ Historian Eric J. Hobsbawm connected the increased significance of nationalism from 1870s to 1914 to the role that national identification played in social and political changes of the period.⁴⁸ The construction of pavilions at international exhibitions provided nations with a peaceful forum in which to compete, as opposed to the diplomatic and military conflicts of the period. At the Chicago exhibition of 1893, foreign participants were clustered at the north end of the grounds, and the pavilion of the newly united continental power

⁴⁷ See Hobsbawm, *Age of Empire*; E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd edition, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990): Chapter 4, "The transformation of nationalism 1870-1918," page 101-131.

⁴⁸ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 109.

Germany, attracted attention because of its "180-foot onion-domed tower."⁴⁹ France, Great Britain, Spain, Norway and Sweden also assembled large buildings that attempted to reflect something of their national culture in their design.

The scope, number, and importance of national pavilions reached new heights at the *Exposition Universelle de Paris* in 1900. Exposition organizers erected a platform over the Seine where nations were invited to build their own pavilions. International participants constructed pavilions alongside one another, creating a chaotic assemblage of dissimilar architecture along the river's edge. The length of the boulevard however, did not allow for all foreign participants to situate themselves along the river, and a second row of pavilions was established off the riverside. Early discontent emerged with this method of ranking nations. The United States had initially been given a site in the second row, but diplomatic negotiations ensured that it was moved forward, something which occurred at the expense of the other nations. This was an important acknowledgement of the increasing influence of the United States in international affairs. The finalized space allocations were only the beginning of the "ranking of nations" during the preparation and execution of the exposition.⁵⁰ Germany, the United States and Great Britain spared little expense in the construction of their pavilions and they were not alone in their efforts. Less globally powerful nations, such as Belgium, Switzerland, the

⁴⁹ Benedict, 21. Germany's emergence as a unified and internationally recognised state in 1871 coincided with the introduction of national pavilions at international exhibitions. Its first pavilion was constructed for the 1876 Philadelphia World's Fair. In subsequent exhibits, the location and size of its pavilions became increasingly noteworthy.

Netherlands and Austria-Hungary, also mounted large expensive exhibits which had a range of goals. According to scholars, the most successful architectural design was that by Eliel Saarinen for the Finnish pavilion. As Richard Mandell argues, "In a quiet way, Saarinen's pavilion was a self-conscious declaration of Finnish nationality in the face of a concurrent campaign by their Russian masters to eliminate the Finnish language and culture."⁵¹ Sweden, too, attracted a great deal of attention for its large colourful version of a medieval Norse church. Few pavilion designs, however, were original. Many were based on well-known existing structures. Whereas some foreign participants invested in interior displays, for the most part national pavilions remained "principally an architectural exercise," as products were displayed throughout the exposition.⁵²

Foreign participation at St. Louis in 1904 was much the same as Paris in 1900. Replicas of famous buildings were constructed. Once again, the pavilions, for the most part, were "used for receptions and as headquarters for the national contingent."⁵³ Notwithstanding their administrative purposes, some nations started to mount elaborate displays and encouraged public visits.

In 1915, despite the war on the European continent, San Francisco played host to an international exhibition. Although many foreign nations could not participate, a notable few made the effort to mount pavilions and send displays. It is arguable that governments were beginning to recognise the

⁵⁰ Mandell, 78.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 81.

⁵³ Allwood, 114.

role that national exhibits could play in foreign countries. France, Italy, Greece and Norway sent displays on the U.S. Naval collier *Jason*. Great Britain, Spain and Austria-Hungary also sent some small consignments. Although the exhibition was only open for nine months, France contributed to the legacy of the Fair. As the historian John Allwood notes, "So impressed were the people of San Francisco with France's fortitude that when they came to consider the possible forms a war memorial might take, they decided to use the plans of the French pavilion."⁵⁴ The California Palace of the Legion of Honor in Lincoln Park, which houses a fine art collection, continues to memorialise both the dead of the Great War and the tenacity of France.

France was the first nation to host a major exhibition after the Great War. The 1925 *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* is distinct from the other exhibitions examined here because it is not recognised today by the Bureau International des Expositions as a category one exhibition.⁵⁵ Despite its unofficial status, it would be a mistake to overlook its significance to the evolution of national pavilions at international exhibitions. The avant-garde art theme of the exposition encouraged foreign architects to experiment. The Soviet Union was represented for the first time with a building that "blurred boundaries between inner and outer spaces."⁵⁶ Austria,

⁵⁴ Ibid, 122.

⁵⁵ The function of the BIE was to regulate the frequency of exhibitions and to define the rights and responsibilities of exhibitors and organizers. "All international exhibitions of a non-commercial nature (other than fine art exhibitions) with a duration of more than three weeks, which are officially organized by a nation and to which invitations to other nations are issued through diplomatic channels," are included in their mandate. A category 1 exhibit allowed participating nations to build their own pavilions. For further information see Bureau International des Expositions <www.bie-paris.org>.

⁵⁶ Erik Mattie, *World's Fairs* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 144.

too, pushed the limits and was represented by "an almost postmodern design."⁵⁷

At the 1929 Barcelona exhibition national pavilions continued to increase in scope even as economic problems led to a drop in foreign participants. Of particular note was Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's "Barcelona Pavilion," designed and built to hold the German display. Not initially recognised for its achievements, the building is today considered to be "one of the great signature buildings in the history of western architecture."⁵⁸ Four years later, when unemployment had reached even higher levels across the west, only six national pavilions were built at the Chicago Exhibition.

With the return of economic stability in 1937, national pavilions took on a new role as sites of propaganda. Thirty-eight national pavilions were created for the exposition; for the first time they functioned as an additional area of display. Visitors were no longer to simply marvel at the architecture which evoked the power and status of the respective nations as they had in the past; in 1937, visitors were encouraged to explore the interior displays as well. In carefully created exhibits, the viewing audience learned about the values and ideological foundations of the respective nations. Historian Pascal Ory described the national pavilions of the 1937 exposition as "une démonstration architecturale en soi et une franche boîte à propagande".⁵⁹ A number of foreign participants created formidable presentations: Italy, Great Britain and Finland drew crowds with their representations of their cultures and societies.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 144.

Republican Spain made a powerful cry for help, bolstered by its well-known artists and memorialised in Picasso's *Guernica*, painted especially for the pavilion.⁶⁰ As an often-cited photograph attests, the German and Soviet pavilions faced off against one another, the Eiffel tower centred in the background. The photograph was suggestive of the international ideological tension outside the exposition gates.⁶¹ Despite the hopes of Fair organizers, the ideological tensions consuming Europe could not be kept outside the Fair grounds.

In the final months before the Second World War, a number of nations constructed pavilions for the 1939 New York World's Fair. Twenty-two nations built their own pavilions while thirty-eight more took advantage of buildings provided by the Fair Corporation. Shortly after the opening in April 1939, two buildings came to symbolize the struggle in Europe: the Czech and Polish pavilions became sites of defiant nationalism, sponsored and maintained by donated funds. The leaders and monarchs of other nations visited the Fair, as tremendous efforts were made to sway public opinion.

French Fairs & Participation in the Interwar Period

Despite the Depression, a series of internal political crises, and international tensions, France continued its commitment to hosting and participating in international exhibitions during the interwar period. Its three

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁵⁹ Ory, *Expositions Universelles*, 102-103.

⁶⁰ Catherine Freedberg, *The Spanish Pavilion at the Paris World's Fair*, 2 volumes (New York: Garland Publishing, 1986).

major expositions were motivated by a desire to reaffirm its role as the foremost cultural power, a leading colonial power, and a resourceful country with a modern economy.⁶² All three expositions were held in a twelve-year period, during which France also participated at exhibitions in Barcelona, Chicago and Brussels.⁶³ The extent of French participation during this period of economic recession serves to affirm the importance it attributed to international exhibitions.

The three expositions demonstrate instances in which France re-asserted her identity as an authority in the arts, as an imperial power, and a balanced society that did not want urbanization to deny or shift the nation away from its rural roots. The expositions were planned in part to provide economic stimulus - through the production of luxury goods displayed at the 1925 exposition, through tourism to the metropole for the exposition and tourism to the colonies for adventure at the 1931 exposition, and through promotion of regional goods at the 1937 exposition. France might have been slow initially to respond to the challenges posed by economic competitors, but her interwar expositions attest to the fact that she did make changes and was ready to defend what she saw as her unique place in the world: defender of luxury goods and unique products,

⁶¹ Peer, 42-48.

⁶² Arthur Chandler, Martin Evans and Shanny Peer, whose works are listed in the bibliography, have explored the association between the French interwar exhibitions and French efforts to revitalize the country's image following the Great War.

⁶³ French participation in the 3 international exhibitions of the period is confirmed by the *Bureau International des Expositions* <www.bie.org>. Details about the construction and contents of the pavilions, however, remain absent from any scholarly work done on the exhibitions. Further information on French pavilions would need to be acquired in the archival collections of the appropriate exhibition. French participation at Chicago was unofficial; therefore the possibility of a national pavilion is limited. The Chicago exhibition of 1933 had only six national pavilions, likely because it occurred during the Depression.

civiliser of the colonised, and moderniser of the rural world without its destruction.

In 1925 France held an exposition that was designed to showcase its contemporary arts and indirectly demonstrate the nation's recovery from the Great War. Participants had to adhere to strict guidelines that emphasized the need for originality and modernity. The requirements also served as a response to the growing international threat of mass production; the wares displayed were handcrafted and unique. The exposition and the regulation of style were intended to reassert the importance of France as the arbiter of taste and style.⁶⁴ Although France remained the leader in the world market for luxury objects, the increased production of foreign-produced objects had become alarming.⁶⁵ Aside from reasserting the superior abilities of French artists, the products were displayed "according to their intention and function," thus informing the bourgeois consumer of their proposed role in everyday life.⁶⁶ The reassertion of French eminence was important for the international reputation of France and public morale.⁶⁷ The success of the Art Deco exposition was confirmed by the use of the style in other nations; it was especially popular in the United States.

⁶⁴ Arthur Chandler, "Where Art Deco was born: Paris, 1925," *World's Fairs* VIII.3(winter 1989): 5.

⁶⁵ Simon Dell, "The Consumer and the Making of the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes*, 1907-1925," *Journal of Design History* 12(4): 312.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 314, quoting R. Guilleré, "Rapport sur une Exposition internationale des Arts Décoratifs Modernes". Dell argues that the display method employed at the fair catered to a bourgeois audience. It was the fashioning of the display space to match the fashion of the bourgeois lifestyle that excluded the middle- or working-class visitor from aspiring to ownership of the products displayed.

⁶⁷ Philippe Garner, "The Birth of Art Deco: Paris Exhibition of 1925," *Country Life* December 25, 1975: 1792.

The 1931 *Exposition Coloniale* was motivated by the desire to display and celebrate the vast French empire. It provided an opportunity to sustain, and possibly improve, the national economy and at the same time assert French power because of the size of her overseas colonies. Marshal Hubert Lyautey, the General Commissioner, articulated three purposes for the exposition: it was to touch hearts and minds in a lasting way, stress the economic necessity of the empire and project France's civilising mission within the empire.⁶⁸ The exposition was motivated by the desire to educate both the international community and French citizens.⁶⁹ It was also designed to stress the steady expansion of the colonial empire under the Third Republic and serve as a testament to the work of the civilized world, and its devotion to the same ideals of progress and humanity.⁷⁰ International participants included Belgium, Portugal, Italy and the United States. The diverse participation at the exposition provided the French public with an opportunity to compare the civilizing work of its own leaders with that of other countries.⁷¹ The late onset of the Depression in France allowed it to invest the necessary funds to ensure its success. It was the 1931 Paris *Exposition Coloniale*, not the 1939 New York

⁶⁸ Herman Lebovics, *True France: The wars over cultural identity, 1900-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 52-53. Martin Evans, "Projecting a Greater France," *History Today* 50.2 (February 2000): 20.

⁶⁹ Thomas G. August discussed a number of practical results achieved by the exposition for France. He mentions an increased prestige associated with the colonial service, increased interest in imperial studies, a flourish of colonial and exotic literature and films as well as the sprouting of Vietnamese and North African restaurants in Paris. See Thomas G. August, *The Selling of the Empire: British and French Imperialist Propaganda, 1890-1940* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985), 150-151.

⁷⁰ Charles-Robert Ageron, "L'exposition coloniale de 1931: Mythe républicain ou mythe impérial?" in *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, edited by Pierre Nora, vol. 1, (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1997), 496. Ageron was quoting Albert Sarraut, the Minister of the Colonies.

⁷¹ August, 142.

World's Fair or 1933 Chicago Century of Progress Exposition, that had the greatest single-year attendance during the 1930s.⁷²

The final French exposition was held in Paris in 1937. It was dedicated to the industry and arts of modern life. The French displays honoured its progressive industries, such as aviation, electricity and aluminium as well as its folkloric traditions. The exposition displayed the modernization of the countryside through the ongoing process of electrification, education and medical care.⁷³ The Fair is best remembered for the “pompous [and] intentionally intimidating pavilions,” of Italy, Germany and the Soviet Union.⁷⁴ Despite the aggressive tone of some of the national pavilions, the exposition was seen at the time as the promise of a peaceful future because of the willingness of Germany to participate.⁷⁵ Of course, the Franco-German *rapprochement* of the exposition was short-lived; the war started twenty-two months later.

Conclusion

International exhibitions provided France with a medium through which to enhance its national prestige and develop its economy. France's success as host attracted the attention of its would-be rivals Great Britain and the United

⁷² Robert W. Rydell and Nancy E. Gwinn, “Introduction,” in *Fair Representations: World's Fairs and the Modern World*, edited by Robert W. Rydell and Nancy E. Gwinn, (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994), 3.

⁷³ Rod Kedward, *France and the French: A Modern History* (New York: The Overlook Press, 2005), 195.

⁷⁴ Mattie, 180.

⁷⁵ Karen A. Fiss, “ ‘Deutschland in Paris’: The 1937 German Pavilion and Franco-German cultural relations” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1995), 1-2.

States, who often reproduced successful French exhibits. Following the 1900 *Exposition Universelle* and the Great War, exhibitions became increasingly important as an avenue through which to disseminate cultural propaganda. The three interwar expositions it hosted gave France the opportunity to reassure the international community of its status as a global power and to attract the sympathies of potential allies. The French did not only rely on their own expositions to spread the message of their achievements, but they also participated abroad, reaching out to international audiences in the hope that popular sympathy would result in political alliances. The French government did not miss any opportunity to present itself overseas, and the importance attributed to exhibitions by France is attested to by the fact that France was either hosting, or participating in, an international exhibition every two years during the 1930s. The final exhibition of the interwar period, hosted as Europe descended into war, was the New York World's Fair of 1939. The French pavilion utilized the display of cultural artefacts to educate Americans about France's contributions to Western culture. A detailed examination of what products France was emphasizing and how they were displayed follows.

France for the American Eye: The French Pavilion at the New York World's Fair

The New York World's Fair of 1939 provided France with an opportunity to present the nation as multi-talented to American Fairgoers. France had focused its interwar propaganda on educating Americans about the cultural achievements of French artists, writers and philosophers. The French pavilion at the New York World's Fair of 1939 stressed the same cultural themes as those employed by the interwar propaganda practiced by the French government in the United States. The pavilion emphasized France's contributions to the past as a way of securing her role in the development of the future. France *la créatrice* was on display, each exhibit documenting and expanding her continuous contributions to the arts and sciences.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that both were treated equally. The main floor, through which visitors entered, showcased "Art, Luxury and Elegance". High culture, the primary focus of propaganda efforts throughout the United States, once again provided the medium from which to approach curious Americans for their affection and support. The second floor similarly emphasized literature, art and institutions. For visitors who were already familiar with French cuisine the French Restaurant brought them in touch with familiar messages. The lower level, however, moved the image of France in another direction. Visitors had to explore the entire pavilion to come into contact with the exhibits on transportation and tourist destinations. Thus, based on both space allocations and exhibit locations, it can be said that France continued to emphasize her longstanding reputation

for aesthetic expression and high culture over her manufacturing capabilities. The arrangement of exhibits also underscored the central idea of the pavilion, that France's past, represented by exhibits on the main and second levels, was a vital contributor to the current achievements of civilization and its future potential.

New York World's Fair

Before analyzing the French pavilion, it is necessary to discuss the exhibition context in which the pavilion was situated. Announced in September 1935, the New York World's Fair was planned to coincide with the 150th anniversary of George Washington's inauguration on Wall Street. More important to organizers, however, was the financial potential that the Fair represented. In the mid-1930s, the United States was still suffering from the effects of the Depression, and was struggling to regain the prosperity it had enjoyed in the 1920s. When the Fair was announced to the public in September 1935 it was hailed as a stimulus to industry, "not only in New York, but throughout the country."¹

The New York World's Fair was publicized on the heels of the 1933-34 Chicago Century-of-Progress exhibition, which had rejuvenated the economy of the host city to the tune of one hundred million dollars.² George McAneny, the New York banker who had proceeded with preliminary plans for the New York World's Fair, pointed to a larger population base and ease of access for European visitors as good reason to expect a larger return than

¹ "Great World Fair for City in 1939 on site in Queens," *New York Times*, 23 September 1935, 1. Despite the early celebration of the Fair's potential to help economic recovery, the *Official Guidebook* downplayed the financial motivations behind the Fair.

² "First World's Fair opened at London," *New York Times*, 23 September 1935, 14.

that experienced in Chicago.³ But the Fair committee also believed the exhibition would have a positive effect on employment in the city. From an anticipated investment of forty million dollars by the Fair Corporation, residents of the five boroughs would see immediate improvements in their employment prospects.⁴ Not only did the Fair provide financial relief, but it boosted morale as well.⁵ Anticipating healthy returns, the Fair committee announced profit allocations soon after the plans of the exhibition were made public.⁶

To maximize profits, Fair President Grover A. Whalen and the steering committee focused intense energy on attracting foreign participants and securing their participation in the six-month event.⁷ The Fair committee was motivated by the experiences of previous exhibitions,

³ Not only had Chicago benefited, the Fair corporation had declared a profit of \$700,000 (before demolition). George McAneny's remarks can be found in "New York to hold World Fair in '39," *New York Times*, 23 September 1935, 14; "Site is selected on Flushing Bay," *New York Times*, 23 September 1935, 14.

⁴ The total cost of the Fair was \$155 million. \$30 million was contributed by foreign participants, \$26.7 million was contributed by New York City in the form of infrastructure development (roads, sewers and subway extension) and construction of a permanent building on the site, \$6.2 million by New York state for infrastructure development (primarily roads) and the construction of a permanent building on the site, and \$3 million from the federal government for their pavilion. Primarily domestic and foreign participants made up the \$40 million balance. See *New York World's Fair, Official guide book of the New York World's Fair, 1939*, (New York: Exposition Publications Inc, 1939), 25-26.

⁵ Erik Mattie, *World's Fairs* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 195.

⁶ "The first 2 million of next revenues goes to the City of New York for the building of Flushing Meadow Park; the next 1.7 million is returned to the City as repayment for the cost of extending the Independent Subway system." From *New York World's Fair, Official guide book*, 26-27. See also "A Magic City within the City," *New York Times*, 29 September 1935, xxi.

⁷ Curiously, according to materials in the archival records of the New York World's Fair, the 1940 season seems to have been an unexpected addition late in the 1939 season, with Grover Whalen travelling to Europe to secure the continued commitment of international participants. Indeed, as a result of the annexation of Czechoslovakia and the invasion of Poland and Finland, a number of nations withdrew from the exhibition for the 1940 season. See Memorandum by Administrative Assistant J.C. Holmes to President for Management Council, 13 July 1939, File - President, Box 526, New York World's Fair 1939-1940 records, 1935-1945, New York Public Library; Address by President of the New York World's Fair 1939, Grover A. Whalen, to Commissioners of Foreign Pavilions, 13 September 1939, File - 1940, Box 536, New York World's Fair 1939-1940 records, 1935-1945, New York Public Library. However, the first press announcement of the Fair includes plans for two six-

where administrators had noted that foreign participation was a strong motivating factor for public attendance. Despite the global financial crisis, fifty-nine nations agreed to participate at the New York World's Fair in 1939. Germany was the only country to rescind its invitation acceptance, citing "financial difficulties."⁸ Despite the German absence, the Fair was acclaimed for attracting the most number of foreign participants to an exhibition.

The Fair Corporation benefited from the large number of foreign participants, twenty of which leased land for the construction of national pavilions.⁹ The space devoted to foreign participants was only about ten percent of the exhibition site, but, "foreign expenditures [were] about twenty percent of the ... total investment in the Fair."¹⁰ The Fair Corporation also benefited financially through a participatory rate on all goods and services provided at the Fair. In 1939, the Fair Corporation made \$344,000 from sales in the foreign pavilions.¹¹ Of that, France contributed \$71,548.98 as a result of its large restaurant transactions.

month seasons. "Great World Fair for City in 1939 on site in Queens," *New York Times*, 23 September 1935, 1.

⁸ "Reich Withdraws from World's Fair," *New York Times*, 27 April 1938, 1. The article theorizes that financial difficulties may not have been the sole reason for the German withdrawal. The author also mentions anti-Hitler remarks made by Mayor La Guardia in 1937 and the failure of Germany to obtain large quantities of Helium from the United States. An article the next day also suggested that American hostility towards the National Socialist regime may have played a part in their withdrawal. German officials denied all reasons other than the financial difficulties arising from currency exchange.

⁹ As a Category 1 Fair the Corporation was required to provide each international participant with a ten-thousand square foot exhibit area free of charge, any additional space requirements had to be leased.

¹⁰ "War held No Curb to World Fair here," *New York Times*, 29 September 1938, 27.

¹¹ Executive Vice President to Chairman of the Board, 24 November 1939, file Restaurant Data - General, Box 532, New York World's Fair 1939-1940 records, 1935-1945, New York Public Library. In 1939 the participation rate was eight percent, but the board was considering an increase to twelve percent for the second season.

The sales enjoyed by the foreign pavilions and amusement zone companies all originated with exhibition visitors. As with many of the other international exhibitions, the audience at the New York's World Fair was primarily middle- and upper-middle class.¹² The expense and considerable time that Fair-going required limited the opportunity of members of the working class to attend. In addition to the seventy-five cent admission charge, many journalists complained of inflated food and entrance prices at the Fair.¹³ Despite media criticism of the high costs at the Fair, Le Restaurant Français, which was touted as the most expensive at the Fair, was also the most popular with visitors. In July 1939, for example, a memo sent to the Director of Foreign Government Participation drew attention to the fact that the French Restaurant violated regulations by jamming in two times as many seats as authorized.¹⁴ The popularity of the Restaurant Français was most likely bolstered by the high percentage of affluent visitors.

Food, however, was not the only consumable commodity on show at the Fair. Early in the planning process the Fair committee decided that the exhibition would be "a Consumer's Fair... an Everyman's Fair."¹⁵ The result

¹² See Gardner Harding, "World's Fair, New York," *Harper's Magazine*, 179(July 1939), 196-197 and David E. Nye, "European Self-Representations at the New York World's Fair of 1939" in *Cultural Transmissions and Receptions: American Mass Culture in Europe*, R. Kroes, R.W. Rydell & D.F.J. Bosscher (eds.), Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1933, 52.

¹³ "Food Price Trend High at Fair; A Few Restaurants Keep Cost Low: Places With Only a la Carte Menus Listing Dishes up to \$2.50 - Assert Fair Treats them Same as 'Hot Dog Stands'," *New York Times*, 3 May 1939, 16. See also "Both Fairs Seek More Business," *Business Week*, 22 July 1939, 14, and Harding, 197.

¹⁴ William T. Ashby to Director of Foreign Government Participation, 19 July 1939, file Restaurant Data - General, Box 532, New York World's Fair 1939-1940 records, 1935-1945, New York Public Library.

¹⁵ Michael M. Hare, "Basic Speeches on World's Fair with Relation to Theme and Architecture," 22 December 1936, Box 307, New York World's Fair 1939-1940 records, 1935-1945. Quoted in Marco Duranti, "Utopia, Nostalgia and Total War at the 1939-40 New York

was an emphasis not on production methods, but on consumer goods. As Burton Benedict argues, exhibits at World Fairs provided a medium through which visitors were "taught to want more things, better quality things and quite new things."¹⁶ Although the prominence of consumer goods at an international exhibition was not new, their display had replaced earlier attention to their production. Sixteen hundred manufacturers participated in the Fair, of which thirty-four built their own pavilions.¹⁷ Major commercial exhibitors such as General Motors, Chrysler, Consolidated Edison and General Electric all mounted eye-catching, rumour propelling exhibits that attracted the greatest number of daily visitors for the duration of the Fair. For its part, the French pavilion offered an assortment of consumer goods - including perfumes, fashions, furs and wine - that reflected established American purchasing patterns of French goods.¹⁸ The effects of the Depression were temporarily suspended for visitors once they entered the Fair; indeed, the Fair offered a world of tomorrow, where the fulfilment of material needs and wants was equated with happiness.¹⁹

World's Fair" (paper presented at the World's Fair Symposium, San Francisco, CA, March 2005), 6.

¹⁶ Burton Benedict, *The Anthropology of World's Fairs: San Francisco's Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915* (Berkeley: Scolar Press, 1982), 2.

¹⁷ "What shows pulled at the Fair," *Business Week*, 4 November 1939, 22, and Benedict, 23.

¹⁸ Victoria de Grazia implies that one effect on American consumption patterns was the imitation of French department stores by their American counterparts. See Victoria de Grazia *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 157. Arguably, one could examine the rise of consumer culture and the role of exhibitions in expanding the export of French goods to the United States. In addition, the importance of French fashion styles to American readers is demonstrated by the continued inclusion of fashion articles despite increased tensions on the European continent. See for example, "Hats with evening gowns stress silhouette length in new Paris styles: Patou features hiplines," *New York Times*, 7 August 1939, 17; "Paris winter styles are extravagant, with rich fabrics and trimmings of the pre-war era," *New York Times*, 20 August 1939, 12. Sandra Stansbery Buckland and Gwendolyn S. O'Neal, "We publish fashions because they are News: The New York Times 1940 through 1945," *Dress* 25(1998): 33-41.

¹⁹ Folke T. Kihlstedt, "Utopia Realized: The World's Fairs of the 1930s," in *Imagining Tomorrow: History, Technology, and the American Future*, Joseph J. Corn (ed.),

The New York World's Fair site was the largest to date, covering twelve hundred acres in New York City's borough of Queens. The Fairgrounds were divided into a series of nine thematic zones, each with a Fair-built focal exhibit.²⁰ In order to facilitate orienteering, officials opted for coloured flags and buildings to indicate a visitor's proximity to the Fair's focal exhibit.²¹

The New York World's Fair of 1939 was organised around two central ideas: the superiority of democracy and the promise of the future. Designed as a commemorative tribute to George Washington's inauguration, the *Official Guidebook* explained that "the Fair exalts and glorifies Democracy, as a way of government and as a way of life, with all her freedoms and opportunities."²² As a further tribute to the vision of Washington and his colleagues, the Fair committee determined that "emulation was the highest tribute [and] that the Fair should attempt to accomplish in our day what Washington and his contemporaries did in theirs."²³ As a result, the Fair adopted the theme "Building a World of Tomorrow" which would "show the way toward the improvement of all the

(Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), 97. See also Rosalind H. Williams, *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) for her discussion of how fantasy and consumerism interact in an exhibition setting.

²⁰ The nine zones and corresponding focal exhibits, in alphabetical order: Amusement, Communications and Business Systems, Community Interests, Food, Government, Medicine and Public Health, Production and Distribution, Science and Education, and Transportation.

²¹ The Trylon and Perisphere were the only pure white buildings at the Fair. As sightseers moved away from the theme centre pastel colours gave way to a more vibrant palette. Along Constitution Mall, towards the government section, the colours changed from rose to burgundy. Other sectors of the Fair were in yellow and blue. Overall, however, this orienteering method was lost on exhibition visitors. The colour patterns were, for the most part, only visible from the air. Helen Harrison, "The Fair Perceived: Color and Light as Elements in Design and Planning," in *Dawn of a New Day: New York World's Fair 1939/40*, Helen Harrison (ed.) (New York: New York University Press, 1980), 44-45.

²² New York World's Fair, *Official Guidebook*, 40.

²³ *Ibid.*, 40.

factors contributing to human welfare”.²⁴ The commemorative aspect of the event was overshadowed during the Fair by forward-looking exhibits.

The central theme buildings were the Trylon and Perisphere, a 700-foot high triangular pylon and a 200-foot-wide sphere which served as a point of orientation for visitors as well as a host for its own theme-related attraction.²⁵ The theme buildings integrated the lofty democratic ideals of the exhibition and entertainment, in a way that the Eiffel Tower had been used by the French at the 1889 *Exposition Internationale*.²⁶ Democracy, a large-scale diorama created by the industrial designer Henry Dreyfuss, was on show in the Perisphere. The display was a panoramic view of the operations of an ideal garden metropolis from dawn to dusk in 2039. As the second most popular display at the Fair, Democracy oriented visitors to a promising democratic future and reminded them of the Fair’s theme: Building the World of Tomorrow.²⁷ Upon leaving the Democracy exhibit, patrons were able to see the first urban planning attempts right in the Fair

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

²⁵ Francis V. O’Connor comments that the Trylon, Perisphere and Helicline, “create[d] an overwhelmingly impressive proto-space-age primary structure with few precedents or successors in the history of architectural fantasy.” Francis V. O’Connor, “The Usable Future: The Role of Fantasy in the Promotion of a Consumer Society for Art,” in *Dawn of A New Day: The New York World’s Fair 1939/40*, Helen Harrison (ed.) (New York: New York University Press, 1980), 59.

²⁶ The historian Paul Greenhalgh described the Tower as a symbol of technological achievements of an age and a pleasurable distraction. See Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World’s Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 42. The Tower, as much as it was an engineering feat that would not be outdone for forty years, also hosted visitors as an observation platform and restaurant during the Fair.

²⁷ Norman Bel Geddes, an emerging industrial designer during the 1930s, designed the most popular exhibit at the Fair, “Futurama” for General Motors. Curiously, both exhibits had visitors cast their view down from above onto dioramas of working cities. In the case of Democracy, the emphasis was on the cleanliness of the streets and the suburbs in 2039; for Futurama the emphasis was placed instead on the positive impact of superhighways for decreasing traffic congestion in 1960. See Kihlstedt, 102-105, for his discussion of the utopian characteristics of democracy and its allusions to the book of Revelation.

grounds. According to the *Official Guidebook*, the wide main avenues of the Fair were an expression of democratic ideals.²⁸

Radiating out from the Trylon and Perisphere were six major boulevards dividing the Fair into thematic zones. Fair officials had opted for a formal layout in order to reinforce the thematic sectors and to “facilitate the distribution and circulation of people.”²⁹ The central axis of the Fair was Constitution Mall, which was enclosed at either end by the U.S. Federal Building and the Trylon and Perisphere. Between the two lay Washington Square, the Lagoon of Nations and the pavilions of foreign participants. Directly in front of the U.S. Federal Building lay the Court of Peace, surrounded on either side by the Hall of Nations. (see Figure 1)

The layout of the government section of the Fair, and the rhetoric surrounding the Fair in newspapers and in the *Official Guidebook*, all likened the exposition to a forum where nations could meet to resolve their differences. In particular, “the U.S. Federal Building and the Court of Peace was designed in such a way that the United States appeared at the end of a giant ‘conference table’ at ‘which the nations of the world meet in friendly interchange.’”³⁰ Fair-sponsored events, such as National and State days, furthered the image of the exhibition as a forum for international exchange due to the regular attendance of foreign Ambassadors. In addition, a Foreign Government Commissioners Club was founded in March 1939 to promote the interests of the international participants at the Fair.

²⁸ New York World’s Fair, *Official guide book*, 40.

²⁹ Eugene A. Santomasso, “The Design of Reason: Architecture and Planning at the 1939/40 New York World’s Fair,” in *Dawn of a New Day: The New York World’s Fair 1939/40*, Helen Harrison (ed.) (New York: New York University Press, 1980), 32.

³⁰ Cited in Duranti, 13.

The government zone was accentuated by the Flushing River which divided the zone in two. Whereas the majority of foreign participants were clustered in the eastern section along with the U.S. Federal Pavilion, the French pavilion was situated on the western side of the aquatic divide, in closer proximity to the Tylon and Perisphere. One of five nations to the west of the water, France had secured a prominent site on the Lagoon of Nations and Constitution Mall for her pavilion.³¹ France was the first nation to commit to participating at the New York World's Fair; as an early applicant for exhibition space, she had been able to secure a site that allowed the French to benefit directly from the nightly light and sound show displayed in the Lagoon. Fair visitors were attracted to the nightly display, and many dined in the French Restaurant while enjoying the show.

The French Pavilion

Architecture

The French were determined to make the best of their enviable location on the Lagoon of Nations. Initially, architects Pierre Patout and Roger-Henri Expert wanted the pavilion to cover a large percentage of the site and rise to a height of five storeys. But the Board of Design imposed strict height and land usage restrictions on all exhibition pavilions in order to complement the Fair's surroundings. In sharp contrast to the tall towers of the skyscrapers in Manhattan, the Fair was to have a low profile. The area around the Lagoon of Nations was viewed as particularly important,

³¹ The Belgian pavilion was similarly positioned. The Brazilian pavilion was adjacent to the French pavilion along the riverfront, and the Swedish and Turkish pavilions were located in the Foods section.

and all the pavilions were to have “the same architectural scale” as the U.S. Federal Building. As a result, M. Expert and M. Patout were forced to revisit their designs twice before construction was authorised to begin.³² Under pressure from the French government, which had already allocated exhibits to the contested floor space, M. Patout requested that the Board reconsider. The final decision was a compromise that reduced the pavilion by one-storey and set back its top-most storey by twenty feet from the main portion of the building.³³ No further protests were lodged with the design committee, and construction continued according to Board-imposed plans.

Despite the constraints created by the Fair’s design committee, Roger-Henri Expert and Pierre Patout created an imposing, modern and inviting pavilion to attract and awe the casual Fair attendee. The architects were both familiar with the opportunities presented by the design of temporary structures; Expert and Patout had both designed structures for French exhibitions during the interwar period. They took advantage of the prominent site in New York and created a pavilion in the International Style that alluded to their interests in liner architecture.³⁴ The pavilion honoured the three controlling principles of the International Style, but was not

³² Chairman of the Board of Design to the Director of Foreign Participation, 7 February 1938, file France Foreign Government Participation, Box 99, New York World’s Fair 1939-1940 records, 1935-1945, New York Public Library. Messrs. Kohn, Delano and Lamb to the Board of Design, 18 February 1938, file France. Foreign Government Participation Jan - Apr 1938, Box 99, New York World’s Fair records, 1935-1945, New York Public Library. Foreign participants were also issued a booklet with the regulations governing the construction of the pavilion and its contents. See “Regulations for the design, construction and equipment of structures,” undated, file Regulations, Box 526, New York World’s Fair 1939-1940 records, 1935-1945 New York Public Library.

³³ Kohn, Delano and Lamb, 18 February 1938, New York World’s Fair records.

³⁴ Pierre Patout had contributed to 3 French liners: *L’île-de-France*, *L’Atlantique*, and *Le Normandie*; Roger-Henri Expert had also contributed to *Le Normandie*.

limited by them.³⁵ The size and volume of the building were emphasized by a glass curtain façade at the entrance. The choice of glass and synthetic sheeting materials provided it with volume without an added sense of mass that would have come from using brick or stone. Also in keeping with the tenants of International Style, the building and the placement of windows were not governed by symmetry, but regularity. (See Figures 2 & 3)

The principles of International Style were adapted to the needs of Fair architecture for the French pavilion. In particular, the temporary nature of the structure was disguised through the architectural design which gave the false impression of durability. The illusion of permanency was important, as the building was symbolic of France outside its borders. The enduring quality of the French state was reflected in the permanent appearance of the pavilion.³⁶ The symbolic implications of the building can also be seen in its volume. France had one of the largest pavilions in the government zone.³⁷ The volume of the building alluded to France's position

³⁵ The three controlling principles of International Style are defined as; "the conception of architecture as volume rather than mass"; "regularity rather than symmetry as the chief means of ordering design"; "proscribing arbitrary applied decoration." From Andrew Ballantyne, "International Style," *Grove Art Online* (Accessed 25 November 2005), <www.groveart.com/shared/views/article.html?section=art.041418>

³⁶ The illusion of permanency was not only important to France. Both the Polish and Czechoslovak pavilions became important symbols of their struggles to survive annexation and invasion by the German Reich. The presence of a Czechoslovakian pavilion at the Fair was considered to be an important testament to their will to fight the German annexation, and was expressed as such by the exiled President, Edvard Benes, at the official opening of the pavilion. The Polish pavilion also came to represent the struggle to retain the state after the German invasion in September 1939.

³⁷ France contracted for a 100,702 square foot plot on the Lagoon of Nations. In comparison, the Hall of Nations, built by the Fair to house exhibits by the 59 participating countries, was built on a 308,900 square foot plot. See *New York World's Fair, "France," Information Manual, New York World's Fair 1939* ([New York, 1939]) and *New York World's Fair, "Hall of Nations," Information Manual, New York World's Fair 1939* ([New York, 1939]). The large size of the pavilion is also attested to in the many aerial photos of the Fair. For example, see Stanley Appelbaum, *The New York World's Fair 1939/1940 in 155 photographs by Richard Wurts and Others* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1977), 38-39.

as an economic and world power and evoked the idea of "Greater France" which had been so important at the 1931 Colonial Exposition in Paris.

The external walls of the pavilion were devoid of decoration. As historian Pascal Ory points out, "la totalité du système représentatif français est à l'intérieur du bâtiment."³⁸ The absence of ornamentation would not distract the observer from the artistic value of the architectural design, and invited the casual sightseer to be drawn into the pavilion by what he/she saw through the extensive glass façade and the recessed entranceways.³⁹ The extensive use of glass by Expert and Patout is particularly remarkable given the fact that many Fair-built pavilions had no windows whatsoever. The elimination of windows by Fair architects was in keeping with the American streamlined aesthetic, which provided a large amount of exhibit space that might have been lost as a result of the use of glass.

Even the exterior of the French pavilion identified it as different from American projects. The recessed roof terrace, a trademark of the well-known French architect Le Corbusier, alluded to the decks of a transatlantic liner. This imagery was important because of the tremendous amount of tourist traffic from the United States to France, but also because of a long standing rivalry to diminish crossing times. In 1935 the French Line had launched *Normandie*, "the largest, the fastest, and most luxurious liner in

³⁸ Pascal Ory, "Plus dure sera la chute : Les Pavillons Français aux expositions internationales de 1939," *Relations Internationales* 33(Printemps 1983): 83.

³⁹ Recessed entranceways were used most effectively by department stores where "inward flowing lines at a store's entrance led a pedestrian's glance to its interior and increased the chance that he or she would enter." Jeffrey L. Meikle, *Twentieth Century Limited: Industrial design in America, 1925-1939* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979), 176.

the world”.⁴⁰ The pavilion profile thus alluded to French technological achievements even before the attendee entered the pavilion.

The Display Concept

The French interpretation of the Fair’s theme also differed from that of other exhibitors. If American Fair organizers made well-planned highways, streamlined transport, radios, televisions and electricity central to their presentation of the World of Tomorrow, the French honoured the industrial and technological future in their pavilion while also emphasizing intellectual and creative endeavours. Many of the exhibits underscored “the continuity of [France’s] effort in contributing to Literature, Art and Science.”⁴¹ This was consistent with French propaganda efforts in the United States during the interwar period. As Robert Young has argued, French propaganda was a “ceaseless celebration of France’s literary, artistic, scientific and medical genius”.⁴²

The French further reinterpreted the focus on the future; rather than focusing on a single timeline with “tomorrow” as a culminating point of today, French exhibits instead emphasized the role of the past in shaping the future. Commissioner General Marcel Olivier described the pavilion as an homage to “la perpétuité du goût français.”⁴³ Olivier explained that “Notre exposition ne pouvait suggérer l’avenir sans révéler toutes les traditions qui la justifiaient et toute la vitalité qui rendait assurée sa

⁴⁰ Harvey Levenstein, *We’ll always have Paris: American tourists in France since 1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 13.

⁴¹ Saint Quentin, 13 January 1939, New York World’s Fair records.

⁴² Robert J. Young, *Marketing Marianne: French Propaganda in America, 1900-1940* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 49.

⁴³ Marcel Olivier, “Introduction,” in *France: Exposition Internationale de New York* (Paris : Ateliers d’impressions et de cartonnages d’art, 1939), 30.

prophétie”.⁴⁴ As such, the French could place their “past achievements ... at the service of the years to come”.⁴⁵ The future could take its creative cue from past French accomplishments, thus extending France’s role in artistic and intellectual development. As an old nation with a history running back to the Romans, France would be able to make cultural contributions to the young American nation.⁴⁶

The French celebrated their longstanding democracy just as they had emphasized their role in the development of civilisation. According to Marcel Olivier, the pavilion emphasized “the spirit of tolerance and liberty.”⁴⁷ Exhibits spoke directly to French support of democracy, particularly in regards to the American Revolution, and indirectly of France “as a land of individual liberty, of intellectual and religious freedom.”⁴⁸ The importance of democracy to France and to the United States was further stressed in speeches made by pavilion and diplomatic officials.⁴⁹ At the pavilion dedication in May 1939, for example, French Ambassador Count

⁴⁴ Marcel Olivier, “Introduction,” in *Plaisir de France* no. 58 (Juillet 1939), 3.

⁴⁵ Georges Wildenstein, “Introduction” in *Five centuries of history mirrored in five centuries of French art: New York World's Fair, 1939, Pavillon de la France, Groupe de l'art ancien* (Paris: G. Lang, imprimeurs, 1939), 7.

⁴⁶ Young, *Marketing Marianne*, 19. The idea of France as old and wise versus America as young and callow is explored in chapter 2 of Young’s book. At the same time, however, this assessment of their relationship is what steered the course for French propaganda in the United States during the early part of the twentieth-century. See also Harvey Levenstein’s *We’ll Always have Paris*, which discusses the educational tourism that was still taking place through the 1920s and 1930s as Americans sought to experience and learn from French culture.

⁴⁷ Maynard B. Barnes, First Secretary of Paris Embassy to Secretary of State, 16 June, 1938, file France Foreign Government Participation, May - August 1938, Box 99, New York World’s Fair 1939-1940 records, 1935-1945, New York Public Library. Please note that Barnes is quoting from an interview published in France in which M. Marcel Olivier discussed French participation at the New York World’s Fair.

⁴⁸ Memorandum by Deputy Commissioner General of France, 15 November 1938, file France Foreign Government Participation, September - December 1938, Box 99, New York World’s Fair 1939-1940 records, 1935-1945, New York Public Library.

⁴⁹ See News Release No. 592, file - France. Foreign Government Participation, January 1939, box 99, New York World’s Fair records, 1935-1945, New York Public Library; Saint Quentin, 13 January 1939, New York World’s Fair records.

Réne Doynel de Saint-Quentin described France as the “great sister republic” of the United States, while New York Mayor, Fiorello LaGuardia, declared “as long as Frenchmen and Americans live, democracies shall not perish from the earth”.⁵⁰ Although de Saint-Quentin and LaGuardia both spoke of democracy, they did so in different ways and to different ends. Whereas France used democratic rhetoric and display during the Fair to align itself with -- and emphasize its similarities to -- the United States, Fair officials used democratic rhetoric, in part, to demonstrate how the United States could maintain democracy in the midst of the Depression and resist the growing threat of communism and fascism in Europe.⁵¹

The interior of the pavilion was arranged into three broad categories: Industry, Art and Thought. The main floor was devoted to contemporary fine art, haute couture, jewellery and handicrafts. Visitors entered the pavilion on this floor and were able to access the auditorium for movie and documentary screenings. The second floor included exhibits on literature, science, Franco-American relations and Art of the past. Visitors accessed the rooftop terrace bar and wine tasting as well as the restaurant through the exhibits on this floor. Grouped together on the lower level were heavy industry, transportation and tourism.

The French displays gave prominence to a few central ideas such as the perpetuity of French design and culture. Historian Neil Harris has identified this selective approach to presentation as a chief characteristic of exhibition styles at the 1939 New York World’s Fair. Harris has further

⁵⁰ Russell B. Porter, “France’s Impressive Pavilion is Dedicated by Officials at Ceremony at the Fair,” *New York Times*, 25 May 1939, 22.

⁵¹ See Kihlstedt, 100, for his discussion about the Fair’s use of democracy.

argued that the reliance of exhibitors on selectivity, argument and dramatic impact was an important factor in maintaining audience attention.⁵² France adopted these displays methods as well by using short commentaries, photographs and paintings in their exhibits.

The Main Floor

France enticed Fair patrons and awed pavilion visitors with displays of “Art, Luxury and Elegance” on the main floor.⁵³ It sought to capitalize on American interests by exhibiting sculptures, contemporary paintings, haute couture and furs as well as jewellery and perfume on the entrance level. The pavilion’s emphasis on French cultural objects was consistent with the thrust of French propaganda in the United States since the First World War, which emphasized “France intellectual, across the humanities and sciences; France aesthetic and athletic, from art to sports [and] France luxurious, from interior design to personal adornment.”⁵⁴ French ateliers were already aware of the emergent American market for all things luxurious: well-heeled American women had been visiting Paris since the late nineteenth century to secure the latest in scents, jewels and fashions.⁵⁵ A similar purchasing pattern by American art collectors also emerged in the early twentieth century.⁵⁶ The purchase of French products did not simply

⁵² Neil Harris, *Cultural Excursions: Marketing appetites and cultural tastes in modern America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 69. In this section, Harris developed the work of Carlos E. Cummings who studied the New York and San Francisco fairs of 1939 to determine the implications of fairs for museum management. His conclusions were published in *East is East and West is West*.

⁵³ Deputy Commissioner General France, 15 November 1938, New York World’s Fair records.

⁵⁴ Young, *Marketing Marianne*, 136.

⁵⁵ Levenstein, 111.

⁵⁶ See Flaminia Gennari Santori, “The Taste of Business Defining the American Art Collector 1900-1914,” in *Across the Atlantic: Cultural exchanges between Europe and the United States*, Luisa Passerini (ed.) (Brussels, Presses Interuniversitaires Européennes, 2000), 73-94. Similarly, advertisements in the *New York Times* of the same period often declared

happen in France, but also occurred in the United States, particularly on New York's famed Fifth Avenue where windows were full of signs advertising French imports.

Visitors were welcomed to the pavilion by a striking statue of *France*, sculpted by Paul Landowski, president of the Académie des Beaux-Arts. Dressed in classical garb and holding a shield, the statue represented *France* as a defender of liberty. Surrounding *France* in the centre of the floor were the sculpture and contemporary painting exhibits, the exports that France used to attract American affections. The statue's central position and the surrounding fine art exhibits highlighted the central role played by culture in French propaganda efforts in the United States. As one French reporter observed, "La peinture est la fleur la plus exquise qu'ait produite le sol si richement cultivé de la France."⁵⁷ It was therefore fitting that contemporary fine art be exhibited at the core of the pavilion.

The main floor contemporary art exhibit embraced the Fair's theme of a world of tomorrow by giving prominence to the artists that would bring French art into the future. The numerous and eclectic choices of paintings attested to the continuous activity in Parisian studios.⁵⁸ The display included over one hundred artists, but attention in French publications gave preferential coverage to well-known artists from established art movements. Sculptors of international renown such as Aristide Maillol and Pierre Georges Jeannot were included alongside Nabi painters Pierre

France as the country of origin for a variety of goods, including dresses, gloves and handkerchiefs.

⁵⁷ André Maurois, "Le pavillon de la France," *France, Exposition Internationale de New York, 1939* (Paris: Ateliers d'impressions et de cartonnages d'art, 1939), 39.

⁵⁸ Raymond Lécuyer, "L'art français a New York," *Illustration* 97:5023 (10 Juin 1939): [15].

Bonnard and Edouard Vuillard. Other artists included Albert Marquet and Maurice de Vlaminck, well known Fauvists, and Georges Braque, the French Cubist originator. In choosing whom to display, Georges Huisman, the General Director of the school of Beaux-Arts, emphasized native French artists or foreigners who “felt the identification of their art with the spirit” of France, and who had elected to become French citizens.⁵⁹ Although the display brought together diverse artistic approaches, Huisman stressed creative intelligence as a unifying principle. By including artists of international stature and those just starting to blossom, Huisman created a show that confirmed the continuity of French talent in the field of aesthetic expression.⁶⁰

The main floor also displayed France’s venerated place at the centre of world fashion. From the early twentieth century, French designers had created and exported their haute couture to the European and American elite, whilst many ready-to-wear collections brought the latest French styles to department stores and boutiques. It was also during the early twentieth century that distinguished Parisian dress designers such as Paul Poiret and Jeanne Paquin “patronized the arts and often constructed themselves as artists,” aligning themselves with high culture and its discourses.⁶¹ Poiret and Paquin’s artistic assertions were endorsed by the presentation of fashion as art at the 1925 exposition in Paris. In aligning themselves with high culture, these fashion designers associated themselves with qualities

⁵⁹ Georges Huisman, introduction to *L’art français contemporain: Palais de la France, Section des beaux-arts, 1939* ([Tours: Arrault, 1939]), 14.

⁶⁰ André Maurois, 39.

⁶¹ Nancy J. Troy, *Couture Culture: A study in Modern Art and Fashion* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2003), 6.

that were being emphasized at the time in French propaganda in the United States. The popularity of French fashion in the United States was reflected in its ceaseless celebration in the pages of *Vogue* and other American magazines.⁶² A handful of American designers gained some recognition in the 1930s, but most were occupied with interpreting French designs for American ready-to-wear collections.⁶³ A *Vogue* editorial declared, "There is, we hope, no such thing as American fashion."⁶⁴

Confident of the support from American consumers, the fashion display in the pavilion eschewed seasonal displays of the latest designs in favour of idealised silhouettes and dresses. The exhibit was glamorised with elegant textiles and fixtures, similar to those employed in the display of fine art. Twenty couturiers participated in the exhibit which was intended to evoke the essential values of French fashion. In addition, the exhibit was designed to draw attention to the artistic inspiration for fashion, the importance of Parisian culture, and the restraint of refinement.⁶⁵ The sculpted figures and their carved couture transmitted two messages: the timelessness of fashion and the timelessness of Parisian couture. French eminence in the field would continue and French designers would still clothe the world of the future. The display equally implied that French fashion was a fine art, a field in which French expertise was also recognised. In connecting fashion and art, the exhibit emphasized the French message

⁶² *Ibid.*, 271.

⁶³ Sandra S. Buckland & Gwendolyn S. O'Neal, " 'We Publish Fashions Because They are News': The New York Times 1940 through 1945," *Dress* 25(1998): 33.

⁶⁴ Troy, 277, quoting "The Story of the Fashion Fête," *Vogue* 44:9(1 November 1914): 122.

⁶⁵ Léandre Vaillat, "Le Palais de la France," *Illustration* 97:5023 (10 Juin 1939): [7].

that it was the primary creator of high culture, both in the past and in the future.

Complementing the fashion display were additional exhibits of furs and fashion accessories such as jewellery, perfume and lingerie. Original furs, unlike haute couture, were displayed draped over mannequins in an artistic manner that best emphasized their high quality and the unusual combination of furs and colours. Close by six jewellers displayed one hundred million francs worth of jewels. Perfume, an especially extravagant purchase, and a particularly French product, was also displayed.⁶⁶ Oversize bottles were placed in individual nooks encircled by a flower. These displays were expected to attract American women, who were famous for their purchases of perfumes and their interest in French luxury products.⁶⁷

Adding to the splendour of the floor was *La Salle des Fastes* and an auditorium. *La Salle des Fastes*, or the Golden room, was a sumptuous display of luxury goods that gave prominence to established French industries. A long table ran the length of the room and was set with French crystal goblets, porcelain place settings and gold candlesticks whilst Gobelins tapestries decorated the walls. The room was emblematic of the floor - a celebration of art, luxury and elegance that was created in the past and could serve to inspire the future. Similarly, the auditorium sought to impress American visitors with its sumptuous silk wall hangings, draperies

⁶⁶ Alain Corbin described perfumes as "an irretrievable and unprofitable expenditure" in *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French social imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 116. Constance Classen, David Howes and Anthony Synnott equally described perfume as a "wasteful frivolity" after the late eighteenth century when early hygiene practices were introduced. See Classen, Howes & Synnott *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 83.

⁶⁷ Classen, Howes & Synnott, 162.

and silver and gold metalwork.⁶⁸ The four-hundred seat theatre had extensive programs including French Opera, French orchestras, French educational and tourist films, lectures and theatre presentations.⁶⁹

The presentation of thematic films was an important component of the pavilion. The cinematic portrayal of subjects showcased elsewhere in the pavilion provided viewers with additional impressions about the subtleties of life in France. The films explored topics such as the lives of fisher-folk, mountaineers, and farmers, who were represented by the model interiors on the lower floor as well as the scenic beauties of France, also illustrated by dioramas on the lower floor.⁷⁰ According to a November 1938 article published in *Le Figaro*, a Parisian daily, a number of well-known and respected directors were approached to realize a series of films for screening at the French pavilion.⁷¹ The attempt to employ such admired directors suggests that the pavilion commission was committed to demonstrating the finest in French cinematic capabilities to Fair visitors. This was particularly important given the strength of the American film industry by the early 1920s.⁷² The pictures were also an opportunity for France to educate interested spectators, without fear of accusation from

⁶⁸ *La Plaisir de France* notes that the wall hangings are not simply an aesthetic display, but are being used to investigate and study acoustic problems. See "La Section du Théâtre," *La Plaisir de France* 58(Juillet 1939): 41.

⁶⁹ Deputy Commissioner General France, 15 November 1938, New York World's Fair records.

⁷⁰ *Guide to the French Pavilion and to the France-Overseas Pavilion* ([New York?]: French Government, [1940]), 27.

⁷¹ The list included René Clair, Marcel Carné, Julien Duvivier, Abel Gance, Marcel L'Herbier and Jean Renoir. Whether or not these particular projects were realized for the French pavilion is not known. See Julien-J. London, "Le cinéma français sera dignement représenté à l'Exposition de New-York," *Le Figaro*, 17 November 1938.

⁷² Gerben Bakker, "America's Master: The Decline and Fall of the European Film Industry in the United States (1907-1920)," in *Across the Atlantic: Cultural exchanges between Europe and the United States*, edited by Luisa Passerini (New York: PIE Lang, 2000). See also De Grazia, 293-319, for the competitive dynamic of the American and European film industries during the interwar period.

the American press, which was increasingly sensitive to foreign propaganda during the interwar period, often believing it to be an attempt to entangle them in any future conflict.⁷³

The Second Floor

The second floor of the pavilion was dedicated to French contributions to the evolution of civilisation.⁷⁴ Large panels were used throughout the floor to explore themes in French thought, literature, science, inventions, medicine and social security. Not surprisingly, given international tensions and the increasing likelihood of war, France dedicated pavilion space to an exhibit on Franco-American relations which emphasized the long-standing relationship between the two nations. Complementing the focus of the floor were ten rooms dedicated to five centuries of French art and history. Visitors also accessed a roof garden *Bar de Dégustation* and the Restaurant Français by way of this floor.

The retrospective approach of displays, more than those on the floors below, addressed the perceived importance of historical achievements to future development. Léon Perrier spoke of French spiritual and material efforts of the previous five centuries as contributing to a better society for humanity in the future. Perrier maintained that the past and present could not be disassociated; in fact, it was by looking to the past that the future was revealed.⁷⁵

The past had been an element of French propaganda in the United States during the interwar period. The Ambassador and Minister of Foreign

⁷³ Young, *Marketing Marianne*, 81.

⁷⁴ Deputy Commissioner General France, 15 November 1938, New York World's Fair records.

Affairs hoped that by convincing the American public of France's indispensable contributions to humanity in the humanities and sciences that they might maintain and increase American popular support for their nation. As with the 1915 San Francisco exhibition, French participation at the 1939 New York World's Fair gave France the opportunity to educate Americans on French cultural contributions to the world, all within the safe confines of "exhibiting" rather than the despised "propagandising".⁷⁶ American sensitivity to foreign propaganda had been aroused by the launch of a French information office in New York in 1935. At international exhibitions, however, overt manifestations of propaganda were not a matter of concern; indeed, the Fair-going public was drawn to international exhibitions in part because of the national pavilions erected for the occasion. As a result, the New York World's Fair of 1939 provided France with an opportunity to engage with an interested audience and present more intensive instruction about French culture and civilisation.

A central component of French cultural leadership was its enduring literature, traced back ten centuries on the exhibition panels. Victor Hugo had declared "Literature is civilization" and French civilization was represented, in part, by a series of panels dedicated to French literature that featured a symbolic river, representative of "la durée, la continuité et le perpétuel enrichissement de la littérature française".⁷⁷ Ten centuries of

⁷⁵ Léon Perrier, "Message" *France, Exposition Internationale de New York, 1939* (Paris: Ateliers d'impressions et de cartonnages d'art, 1939), 43.

⁷⁶ Young, *Marketing Marianne*, 49 & 123.

⁷⁷ Harry W. Paul, *From Knowledge to Power: The Rise of the Science Empire in France, 1860-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1. In a 1930 survey of France, the German author Ernst Curtius noted, "Literature plays a far larger part in the cultural and national consciousness of France than it does in any other nation." Gaston Rageot, "La Pensée Française et l'outillage intellectuel," *Plaisir de France* 58 (Juillet 1939): 11.

French literature were displayed, starting with *Serments de Strasbourg*, largely believed to be a document that recorded the birth of the French language. The age of chivalry, defined as the eleventh to the fifteenth century, were represented by Adam de la Halle and *Roman de la Rose*. The sixteenth century was associated with humanists, such as Rabelais, while the seventeenth century was remarkable for its great classics. The eighteenth century was dedicated to French philosophers, and the nineteenth century the advent of romanticism.⁷⁸ French theatre, a one-hundred year literary retrospective, literary manifestos and literary associations were each allocated a panel elsewhere in the room. Jean Racine, a famous playwright of tragedies, was given a distinct accolade in a panel dedicated to his work, which had been performed three hundred years earlier.

The display designers drew attention to panels dedicated to realism and symbolism as being of particular import to American literature.⁷⁹ Distinguished American realist authors such as Henry James, Mark Twain and Wallace Stevens were said to have been influenced by the works of Balzac, Gustave Flaubert and Emile Zola. Works of French symbolists such as Charles Baudelaire and Théophile Gautier were described as inspiration for the great American poets T. S. Eliot and Edgar Allan Poe.⁸⁰ These panels were designed to help extend American knowledge of their literary roots while at

⁷⁸ See the accompanying photographs to Gaston Rageot, "La Pensée Française et l'outillage intellectuel," *Plaisir de France* 58 (Juillet 1939): 10-11.

⁷⁹ Gaston Rageot, "La Pensée Française et l'outillage intellectuel," *Plaisir de France* 58 (Juillet 1939): 11.

⁸⁰ www.ncteamericancollection.org <accessed February 07, 2006>

the same time confirming the important cultural role of France in the development of American literature.

On display in the same area were institutions that collaborated in the remarkable achievements of French literature. Twelve panels elaborated on French cultural institutions (outillage intellectuel), whose role has been to “nurture and preserve the genius of France through many centuries of history”.⁸¹ Their presentation in the pavilion further alluded to the ease of access to past achievements in France, and their continued importance to the development of civilization. Panels introduced pavilion visitors to the Bibliothèque Nationale, Collège de France, Sorbonne and l’Institut de France. These significant institutions had all been associated with the educational component of French propaganda in the 1920s and 1930s. The Foreign Affairs ministry had invested heavily in funding French programs at universities abroad as well as providing endowments to foreign students interested in studying in France.⁸²

Complementing the literary exhibit was the Hall of Sciences, whose focus was on French research pioneers. The exhibit was divided into four sections: researchers, organisers, works and industrial illness. Portraits of famous French scientists such as Pasteur, Laennec, Villemin, Calmette and Roux adorned the appropriate panels. At the same time the panels also showed pictures of sanatoria, new hospitals and graphs of illness prevalent in France and her colonies.⁸³ In addition, scientific equipment previously

⁸¹ *French participation in the New York World’s Fair* ([New York?]: French Government, [1939 or 40?]), 20.

⁸² Antoine Marès, “Puissance et présence culturelle de la France: L’exemple du Service des Œuvres françaises à l’Étranger dans les années 30,” *Relations internationales* 33(printemps 1983): 67.

⁸³ Léandre Vaillat, “Le Palais de la France,” *Illustration* 97:5023 (10 Juin 1939): [9].

used by Pierre and Marie Curie was on display in the hall.⁸⁴ This display, as with the transportation and industry exhibits on the lower level, was designed to highlight French innovation and technical competence. As with the other exhibits on the floor, the scientific accomplishments on display stressed the continuity of French participation, and arguably, leadership, in the scientific field. These foundations were important for the scientific achievements of the day, and looking to the future, the possibility of new innovations.

French adaptation was showcased in the exhibit *Five Centuries of French History illustrated by Five Centuries of French Art*. The exhibit was composed of ten distinct rooms exploring historic eras and styles from the fifteenth century to the turn of the twentieth century. Each room was ornately decorated with original wood panelling, tapestries, furnishings and art objects from each period.⁸⁵ The continuous execution of distinguished art and furnishings stressed the “amazing continuity of French genius” and “the inexhaustible creative impulse which ... past [French] achievements place at the service of the years to come” according to the President of l’art ancien.⁸⁶

Visitors started their tour in a rotunda decorated with two Louis XIV fountains from the Chateau Versailles. The sequential tour then continued through Gothic, Renaissance, Louis XIII, Louis XIV, Louis XV and Louis XVI rooms before entering the Directoire. The final display was dedicated to the

⁸⁴ *French participation in the New York World’s Fair* ([New York?]: French Government, [1939 or 40?]), 20.

⁸⁵ *French participation in the New York World’s Fair* ([New York?]: French Government, [1939 or 40?]), 22.

⁸⁶ Wildenstein, 7.

realist and impressionist painters of the 1890s: Corbet, Manet, Renoir, Toulouse-Lautrec, Cézanne, Degas, and Monet. The special selection of works included many paintings which had never before been exhibited in the United States.⁸⁷ As with the contemporary art show on the main floor, the *art ancien* exhibit was seen as a cultural ambassador that could promote France to the United States. It was hoped that fine art could further a mutual Franco-American understanding which could “mean so much for the destinies of [the French] nation”.⁸⁸ The United States was of particular importance in 1939 because it was seen as a vital part of the main tripod of world peace along with France and England.⁸⁹

A long gallery ran down the centre of the second floor that was dedicated to Franco-American relations. The interwar years had been particularly stormy for Franco-American relations because of trade barriers established as a result of the Depression, French suspension of debt payment, and increasing American isolationism in international diplomacy. The central location of the display spoke to the importance attributed to the relationship by the French and appealed to American visitors as colleagues committed to the same values: liberty and equality. This reflected the fact that French appreciation of the United States as a world power and a potential ally had increased during the first half of the twentieth century. The importance of the United States to French security was emphasized in the Franco-American security treaty brokered at the

⁸⁷ *French participation in the New York World's Fair* ([New York?]: French Government, [1939 or 40?]), 22.

⁸⁸ Wildenstein, 9.

⁸⁹ Mr. A. Touche, Counsellor of Foreign Trade, to Grover Whalen, New York World's Fair President, 27 July 1938, file- France Foreign Government Participation, May - August 1938, Box 99, New York World's Fair 1939-1940 records, 1935-1945, New York Public Library.

same time as the Treaty of Versailles. Yet the failure of the U.S. Senate to ratify the Treaty left France without a firm commitment of military support from either the United States or Great Britain in the event of a German attack. Despite the “dissolution of the wartime entente,” many Parisian policy makers continued to consider the United States France’s ultimate source of security.⁹⁰ For their part, however, the Americans continued to distance themselves from the political instability on the European continent. Their support in the event of another European war was doubtful, especially after the approval of a neutrality act in 1935.⁹¹

From the time of France’s initial acceptance of the American invitation to participate, her presence in New York had been framed using the rhetoric of friendship and shared values. Indeed, in Marcel Olivier’s first letter to Grover A. Whalen, he spoke of emphasizing “the spirit of tolerance and liberty of the French people,” and hoped that ideals such as these represented in the French pavilion would “tighten the bonds of Franco-American friendship.”⁹² Photographs and short descriptions commemorated a relationship that began with the discovery of America. French explorers Marquette and de la Salle were featured alongside Washington’s officers, La Fayette and Rochambeau. This emphasis on a

⁹⁰ William R. Keylor, “France and the Illusion of American Support, 1919-1940,” in *The French Defeat of 1940: Reassessments*, edited by Joel Blatt (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1998), 223.

⁹¹ The Neutrality act passed in August 1935 was troubling for potential victims of aggression. The act empowered the President, on being apprised of a state of war, to declare an embargo on arms shipments to the belligerents and to announce that U.S. citizens travelling on belligerents’ ships did so at their own risk. An amendment of February 1936 expanded the act to limit the trade in materials useful for war. See Henry Blumenthal, *Illusion and Reality in Franco-American Diplomacy 1914-1945* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 228-232.

⁹² French Commissioner General to New York World’s Fair, 16 June 1938, file - France Foreign Government Participation, May to August 1938, Box 99, New York World’s Fair 1939-1940 records, 1935-1945, New York Public Library.

shared revolutionary and democratic past was not a new theme in Franco-American relations for the Fair, as it had also been a consistent element at previous international exhibitions.⁹³ The display included details about American aid in the Great War, and celebrated American war heroes who helped in the liberation of France. By highlighting the longstanding relationship between France and the United States, the pavilion display suggested that the importance of the Franco-American relationship in the past was vital to any future alliances.

Le Restaurant Français

“No one on earth will dispute the pre-eminence of French cuisine,” wrote American epicure and author Crosby Gaige.⁹⁴ Gaige was in accord with the French pavilion committee, who allocated the largest amount of square footage in the pavilion for food and drink. At the pinnacle of the pavilion visitors could find the French Restaurant, but those without reservations stood little chance of securing a table.⁹⁵ Two floors down, accessed via the second floor of the pavilion was a *Bar de Dégustation*, which specialised in regional foodstuff and beverages. The *Bar de Dégustation* was able to offer samples for a small fee in part because of negotiated trade tariffs, whereby wine, liquor and malt beverages were imported for use in the pavilion duty-free.⁹⁶ Great emphasis was placed on

⁹³ Wolfram Kaiser, “The Great Derby Race: Strategies of Cultural Representation at Nineteenth-Century World Exhibitions,” in *Culture and International History*, edited by Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Frank Schumacher, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 51.

⁹⁴ Crosby Gaige, *Food at the Fair: a gastronomic tour of the world, New York World's Fair, 1939* (New York: Exposition Publications, 1939), 30.

⁹⁵ André Maurois, 49.

⁹⁶ J. Gerald Cole, Supervisor of Import Clearance, to Dr. A. F. Staub, Inspector in Charge, Bureau of Animal Industry, 20 April 1939, file - Import Clearance, Box 524, New York World's Fair 1939-1940 records, 1935-1945, New York Public Library. Indeed, the letter is

the authenticity of the cuisine being served at the Fair. Well-known Parisian restaurateurs composed the restaurant committee, while chefs, sommeliers and service personnel came from France for the duration of the Fair, giving the restaurant its Parisian charm.⁹⁷ The restaurant appears to have been more popular than anticipated, as the pavilion was cited for violation of fire regulations; the restaurant had exceeded its declared capacity by more than one hundred percent with 1264 seats.⁹⁸ If the promise of a taste of France's culinary supremacy was not enough to attract American guests, then the pavilion location overlooking the nightly sound and light show in the lagoon did.

The aims of the restaurant were multiple. The restaurant represented a clear effort to promote French cuisine in the United States, which, by this point, had a lengthy but inconsistent presence in the United States. Although French cuisine had been established in some of the cosmopolitan centres by the 1880s, Prohibition had greatly reduced the number of restaurants still operating and advertising through the 1930s.⁹⁹ Despite its repeal in 1933, few French chefs had been enticed to return. New York remained an exception, with a number of restaurants still operating and advertising through the 1930s. The pavilion afforded an opportunity to reintroduce American consumers to French specialities such

an appeal to have import tariffs also suspended for meat products designated for use at the World's Fair. No reply confirming or denying the appeal was found in the file.

⁹⁷ Deputy Commissioner General France, 15 November 1938, New York World's Fair records; Gaige, 31; Memo to Sr. Monaghan, 31 January 1939, file - France. Foreign Government Participation January 1939, Box 99, New York World's Fair 1939-1940 records, 1935-1945, New York Public Library.

⁹⁸ The Restaurant was to have 350 seats and the tasting area seating for an additional 250 patrons. In a spot check on all Fair restaurants, it was discovered that France had exceeded her declared capacity by 664 seats. See Ashby, 19 July 1939, New York World's Fair records.

as champagne, foie gras and cheese after the damaging impact of the Prohibition. As with literature, for some, according to historian Pascal Ory, "the supremacy of French cuisine, which is taken for granted, implies the superiority of French 'civilization'".¹⁰⁰ The restaurant, therefore, also became a form of propaganda, designed to attract American patrons to French causes, who might come to sample the food, and then stay to view other exhibits in the pavilion.

The Lower level

The Fair's futuristic theme was most thoroughly explored in the exhibits of the lower level; it was here that France highlighted her industrial and technological achievements in an effort to remind American visitors about continued French prowess in these key arenas. Although France had been at the forefront of global innovation in automobiles, airplanes and electrification at the beginning of the twentieth century, her achievements were frequently overshadowed by American and German progress in the postwar period. According to M. Touche, the French counsellor of foreign trade, the exhibits sought to eradicate an underestimation of French creativity, activity and ability in the United States and replace it instead with admiration.¹⁰¹ The lower level celebrated present-day achievements that pointed to tomorrow's innovations, whereas the rest of the pavilion looked to the past for future inspiration.

⁹⁹ Richard Pilsbury, *From Boarding House to Bistro: The American restaurant then and now* (Cambridge: Unwin Hyman Inc, 1990), 52.

¹⁰⁰ Pascal Ory, "Gastronomy," *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, vol. 2. *Traditions*, edited by Pierre Nora, translated by Arthur Goldhammer, English-language edition edited by Lawrence D. Kritzman, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 443.

¹⁰¹ Touche, 27 July 1938, New York World's Fair records.

This emphasis was deemed particularly important since the American public was already familiar with French excellence in art, fashion and wines due to French emphasis on cultural exports and American consumer advertising.¹⁰² French journalist Léandre Vaillat argued in the July 1939 English edition of *Illustration* that the industrial exhibits of the lower level “explode[d] the outworn legend which makes of France a land of feminine furbelows, of perfumes, wines and good food.”¹⁰³ The association of France with femininity stemmed from its relation to the female consumer. As a prominent feature in the Parisian culture of consumption, women were directly associated with the purchase of commodities sold in luxury boutiques, such as high-priced fashions and hand-crafted furniture.¹⁰⁴ This connection between the female consumer and Paris was transmitted to the United States through the travel-to-shop lifestyle of the American elite and the advertisements of domestic department stores such as Bloomingdale’s, Lord & Taylor’s, and Macy’s.¹⁰⁵

The transportation display on the lower level was designed to stress French modernity. As mentioned, this was a sector in which France had excelled in the pre-war period. Although it did not regain its status as foremost global producer of airplanes and automobiles, it did retain its high standing and was second only to the United States for most of the interwar

¹⁰² Young, *Marketing Marianne*, xiii & 3; Levenstein, 32 & 41-46. Nearly every edition of the *New York Times* in 1939 had an advertisement that emphasized France as the originating location for the product being promoted.

¹⁰³ Léandre Vaillat, “The French Building,” *Illustration* (Juillet 1939) supplement XXXVII, 6. Definition of furbelow: a flounce, ruffle, or other ornamental trim.

¹⁰⁴ Tag Gronberg, “Paris 1925: Consuming Modernity,” in *Art Deco 1910-1939*, edited by Charlotte Benton, Tim Benton, and Ghislaine Wood (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 2003), 161-163.

¹⁰⁵ Levenstein, 40.

period.¹⁰⁶ The French transport section spoke to the “World of Tomorrow” theme directly by showcasing up-to-date technological developments. In addition, the display separated France from the other exhibiting foreign nations, as few others presented such a range of innovative transport products.

France showcased its successful automotive industry, displaying eight vehicles in its pavilion during the New York World’s Fair.¹⁰⁷ The automotive exhibit was designed to appeal to American consumers, who were buying increasing numbers of automobiles during the interwar period, and to promote France’s reputation as an innovative automotive nation.¹⁰⁸ As the foremost producer in the world until 1905 and in Europe until 1935, the French took tremendous pride in their varied automotive industry. Renault, which displayed four cars at the pavilion, was the foremost French manufacturer of the interwar period and the best example of a successful, large-scale automotive manufacturer in France.¹⁰⁹ In contrast were the three other manufacturers, Delahaye, Delage and Bugatti, which specialized

¹⁰⁶ Paul, 175.

¹⁰⁷ Philip B. Coan, writing for the *New York Times*, lists two Russian cars at the Soviet Pavilion, a single Rolls Royce at the British Pavilion, and an expected delivery of “several native cars” for the Italian Pavilion. No further discussion of automobiles in the Italian pavilion could be found. See “Fair sees Foreign Autos,” *New York Times*, 9 July 1939, p.130.

¹⁰⁸ The American automotive industry had sustained a great boom during the interwar period as more Americans became car owners and enthusiasts. The popular interest in motorcars was attested to by the millions of vehicles on the roads, regular newspaper columns dedicated to them, as well as increased attendance at races and endurance trials. See Christopher Finch, *Highways to Heaven: The Auto Biography of America* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc, 1992), 59-64. The Fair also attested to the flourishing popularity of the motorcar. One fifth of its overall size (250 acres) was allocated for parking lots, and inside the Fairgrounds the most popular pavilion was “Futurama” sponsored by GM motors.

¹⁰⁹ It had expanded to forty-nine countries in 1929, but was only present in the United States from 1904 to 1908 and had sold 600 cars in the United States from its New York offices between 1906 and 1908. See James M. Laux, *In First Gear: The French Automobile Industry to 1914* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1976), 99.

in luxury automobiles, producing small numbers of unique vehicles.¹¹⁰ During the 1920s Delage dominated international racing and in the 1930s Delahaye and Bugatti also made names for themselves in racing.¹¹¹ For automotive enthusiasts in the United States, there was great incentive to import these cars, not only for their racing capabilities, but also because of their luxury.

Through its automotive displays, France targeted sectors of the American market previously neglected in its culture-centred propaganda. The automobiles were thought to appeal to three broad groups of Americans: tourists, automotive enthusiasts and engineers. For tourists, the cars were an example of transport that they could expect to see and use during an extended stay in the country. For automotive enthusiasts, the exhibits provided a rare opportunity to view celebrated vehicles up close. For American engineers, the displays allowed a chance to examine alternative approaches to automotive construction and design. France might have been overtaken by the quantity of vehicles produced in the early decade of the century, but the quality of the products it manufactured allowed it to maintain its international reputation.

The French also drew attention to the airplane as they attempted to demonstrate their modern industrial credentials. France had been an early innovator in airplanes just as she was in automobiles. In fact, historian

¹¹⁰ Charles W. Bishop noted that Delage and Delahaye, "furent célèbres bien au-delà des frontières françaises comme symbols de grand luxe et d'élégance." He also mentioned their presence at the 1939 Fair, "En mai 1939, l'Exposition Universelle s'ouvrit à New York, et pour les fanatiques de l'automobile, ces grand voitures de luxe offrirent une satisfaction esthétique indescriptible." See *La France et L'Automobile: Contribution Française au développement économique et technique de l'automobile des origines à la deuxième guerre mondiale* (Paris: Editions M. TH. Génin, 1971), 411& 418.

¹¹¹ This was particularly true of the 1938 Grand Prix at Pau where a Delahaye driven by a French Jew, René Dreyfus, bested the German state-sponsored and developed Mercedes-Benz Silver Arrow.

James Laux attributed the early French improvements in aviation to their lead in automotive developments.¹¹² By 1939, the airplane had surpassed the automobile as “a symbol of progress and the future.”¹¹³ The celebration of the airplane was particularly intense in the United States. Here the plane was infused with utopian possibility, and was believed to have the capacity to “foster democracy, equality, and freedom.”¹¹⁴ Enthusiastic proponents of flight and those who believed in their potential to better human life were described as “airminded”.¹¹⁵ Flight continued to remain “wondrous ... [and] miraculous.”¹¹⁶ France thus attempted to tie itself to the thrill and wonder that Americans felt in regards to aviation in its aeronautical display.

The French represented their aviation industry with a map tracing Air France routes of the late 1930s. During the interwar period, French aviators were a source of pride as they continued to beat world records and set new goals for long distance flights. As a result of some of their daring feats, new postal air routes were established. The heyday of civil aviation was still in the future, but Air Mail routes were a rapidly expanding business, one that France was keen to lead. In a 1939 article Jean de Beaumont, deputy of Cochinchina, admired the “avant garde” role of France in establishing postal routes.¹¹⁷ Aviation represented a shrinking world with greater opportunities.

¹¹² Laux, 205.

¹¹³ Rosemary Wakeman, “La Ville en Vol: Toulouse and the Cultural Legacy of the Airplane,” *French Historical Studies* 17:3 (Spring 1992), 773.

¹¹⁴ Joseph J. Corn, *The Winged Gospel: America's Romance with Aviation, 1900-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 34.

¹¹⁵ Cited in Corn, 12.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹¹⁷ Jean de Beaumont, “L'Aviation et le Service Postal,” *La Revue de Paris* 46:2(15 Janvier 1939), 407.

The French also showcased their railway industry, which remained important in France after its significance had receded in the United States. In France, rail lines provided a much-needed transport system that helped sustain the French economy and were a vital element of the French defence system.¹¹⁸ Yet despite this economic and military importance, the French railways were emphasized as a method of popular transport in the French pavilion. As such, the display was designed to appeal to potential American tourists who had rediscovered rail travel during the 1930s as result of new streamlined locomotives and passenger cars.¹¹⁹

The French display encouraged pavilion visitors to admire the luxury of the Micheline railcar and Wagon-Lits by Pullman. For visitors inspired by new innovative techniques, the two railcars on display also had plenty of these. The Micheline railcar used rubber tires and a gas-powered engine capable of achieving eight-five miles per hour. The Wagon-lit by Pullman, a company well known for its luxurious cabins and myth-making routes, displayed the latest in lavish over-night berths. Both opulent models connected France's reputation for luxury goods to travel opportunities inside its borders. Equally, they allowed the French rail industry to compete with the American industry, not in the number of railcars produced, but in the clientele that they could attract.

The French pavilion further advertised the possibility of transatlantic passenger travel on French liners. This was an area in which the French

¹¹⁸ Kimon A. Doukas, *The French Railroads and the State* (New York: Octagon Books, 1976), 269 & 271.

¹¹⁹ In the 1930s there was a resurgence of interest in, and travel on, passenger trains in the United States. New streamlined locomotives and passenger cars attracted curious travellers and spectators as they sped across the continent. By 1939 railroad patronage, measured in

excelled, and France benefited from steady transatlantic passenger travel during the interwar years. In the pavilion, France mounted a display of the increasing tonnage and speed of the principle luxury liners crossing the ocean, including a model of the magnificent *Normandie*, a luxury liner that had operated between New York City and Cherbourg since May 1935.¹²⁰ The *Normandie* was renowned for its size, speed and luxury, and both the pavilion architects had been involved with its design and decoration. A second model ship on display, the pristine *Pasteur*, was launched in 1939, but did not have her maiden voyage until 1940. By highlighting these two ships France once again reiterated the particularly French relationship that existed between luxury and technological innovation.

The transition from transportation exploits to potential tourist destinations was a natural one and the lower level of the pavilion provided a touristic advertisement of the people and places of France designed to attract potential American visitors. American tourism was important to France; the New York Times noted in 1930 that Americans provided over one-third of all France's tourist income, contributing two and a half billion francs to the economy in 1930.¹²¹ Yet French tourism had been adversely affected by the Depression, as the number of visitors decreased, as did the

passenger-miles, had increased 38 percent over 1933 levels nationwide. See Mark Reutter, "The lost promise of the American railroad," *Wilson Quarterly* 18:1 (Winter 1994).

¹²⁰ "She was a ship of superlatives: the largest ship in the world for five years, more than 20,000 tons larger than White Star's *Majestic*; the first liner to exceed 1000 feet in length; the first liner to exceed 60,000 tons (and 70,000 and 80,000, for that matter); the largest turbo-electric powered liner; and the first to make a 30 knot eastbound Atlantic crossing." By Mark Baber <www.greatships.net/normandie.html> accessed January 11, 2006.

¹²¹ Ellen Furlough, "Making Mass Vacations: Tourism and Consumer Culture in France, 1930s to 1970s," *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History* 40: 2(April 1998), 259, citing League of Nations, Economic Committee, *Tourist Traffic Considered as an International Economic Factor* (Geneva, 1934), AN CE 162. Furlough's estimate is 8 billion for all foreign visitors in 1930. That same year, however, the New York Times noted that Americans provided over one-third of all France's tourist income; also see Levenstein, 6.

amount of money spent. France re-doubled her efforts to attract visitors, and by 1938 there was a resurgence of travel to France. Since France had long prided itself as a centre of high culture, tourism flattered this conviction.

Fourteen dioramas acquainted pavilion visitors with the “many beauties of France.”¹²² Early in the pavilion’s conception, the French wrote of using the lower level to display France’s “infinite variety of treasures,” using the general theme “the sea to the mountain.”¹²³ In a short walk around the display, visitors were quickly introduced to the vast diversity of France’s landscape. Its coastlines were represented by dioramas of Brittany and the Côte d’Azur and its mountains were illustrated by Mont Blanc, Le Puy, and le cirque de Gavarnie.

Three dioramas represented the land and the French people. The first depicted the ramparts of Carcassonne, a fortified medieval city established in the 6th century B.C. Beyond the touristic potential of the site, Carcassonne was symbolically important to the message France was trying to convey on the floors above - that her history and artistic achievements would be the foundation for the “World of Tomorrow”. The second depicted les châteaux de la Loire, a region whose landscape and cultural monuments associated with the ideals of the Renaissance and the age of Enlightenment on Western European thought.¹²⁴ As Jean Prévost pointed out, “... il suffit d’avoir fait la visite des châteaux de la Loire pour

¹²² *French participation in the New York World’s Fair* ([New York?]: French Government, [1939 or 40?]), 8.

¹²³ Deputy Commissioner General France, 15 November 1938, New York World’s Fair records; Touche, 27 July 1938, New York World’s Fair records.

¹²⁴ This association continues to this day. See, for example, <http://whc.unesco.org/>

reconnaître qu'il y eut là, ... un collier de brillantes cités, une vie française spirituelle, vigoureuse et douce, dont la Loire faisait le lien et l'unité."¹²⁵

The location and its symbolic importance alluded to the display on the third floor relating to French thought. The third diorama was of the Rhône valley. The thriving wine regions of Beaujolais, Côtes Rôties, Châteauneuf-du-Pape and Tavel d'Arles were all found in the département, and wines were available for sample on the third floor.¹²⁶ The area was also a centre for silk work and dying, as well as a growing centre of electric energy, thereby tying the region to the textile displays on the second floor and the industrial displays on the lower level.¹²⁷

In the same area were four model interiors of a fisherman's home in Brittany, a youth hostel in Savoy, a Provençal farmhouse and an Alsatian home. These four interiors, more than the sites highlighted in the dioramas, reflected the emphasis on French folklore. At the 1937 *Exposition Internationale* in Paris, a series of displays and a rural centre celebrated the importance of rural France; as Shanny Peer has argued, it provided a "counterbalance to centralization, urbanization, and cultural standardization."¹²⁸ The display's meaning was further explained by the guidebook. Here, Raoul Dautry, a civil servant and engineer, asserted the

¹²⁵ Jean Prévost, "La Province française," *France, Exposition Internationale de New York, 1939* (Paris: Ateliers d'impressions et de cartonnages d'art, 1939), 76.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹²⁷ Although only these eight dioramas were specifically mentioned in *Illustration*, I would suggest that the other six dioramas were illustrating La Seine, L'Orne (a department in Normandy), Le Mont Saint-Michel, Riquewihr in Alsace, the canals of Annecy and the caves of Champagne. This is based on pictures included in the chapter on provincial France in the publication *France, Exposition Internationale de New York, 1939* as well as additional articles in the June and July editions of *Illustration* which do not mention the pavilion or Fair directly, but elaborate on some of the showcased areas of France.

¹²⁸ Peer, 13, paraphrasing Richard Bauman and Patricia Swain, "The Politics of Participation," *Exhibiting Cultures: the poetics and politics of museum display*, edited by Ivan Karp & Steven D. Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 288.

importance of the rural, provincial and artisanal character to the future development of France.¹²⁹ American visitors may have been attracted to this display because of a similar upsurge of interest in folklore being experienced in the United States during the 1930s.¹³⁰ Folklorist Louis C. Jones asserted that New Deal projects and literature about the common man, who was the heroic figure of the Great Depression, brought folklore to the attention of the American public.¹³¹

At the centre of the lower level France drew attention to her water therapy spas. A large crystal map of France, executed by the manufacturer Saint-Gobain, featured a fountain with waterspouts identifying distinguished spas.¹³² This reflected the fact that hydrology and spa medicine had experienced a resurgence in France during the 1930s. *Thermalisme* had become the fastest growing medical field in French universities as well as an interest of famous scientists, who worked to identify the chemical composition of many of the waters, making France a leading proponent in the field.¹³³ At the same time, there was an alignment of the spa industry and the powerful tourism industry that enjoyed considerable political

¹²⁹ Raoul Dautry, "La Force et le Travail Français," *France, Exposition Internationale de New York, 1939* (Paris: Ateliers d'impressions et de cartonnages d'art, 1939), 109.

¹³⁰ Beth Lomax Hawes, "The Growth of the Profession of Folklore," *Social Science: An Interdisciplinary Digest of Research* 1986 71(1): 65-69; Timothy Lloyd, "Whole Work, Whole Play, Whole People: Folklore and Social Therapeutics in 1920s and 1930s America," *Journal of American Folklore* 1997 110(437): 239-259; James S. Miller, "Inventing the 'Found' Object: Artifactuality, Folk History, and the Rise of Capitalist Ethnography in 1930s America," *Journal of American Folklore* 117(446): 373-393.

¹³¹ Louis C. Jones *Three Eyes on the Past: Exploring New York Folk Life* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1982), xix quoted by Simon J. Bronner, *American Folklore Studies: An Intellectual History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 97-98. Bronner provided Davy Crockett, Sam Patch and Mike Fink as examples of common-man heroes who represented the vitality of the nation. He also argued that folk songs and folk art became a source of "pride in a forbearing American spirit".

¹³² Deputy Commissioner General France, 15 November 1938, New York World's Fair records.

¹³³ George Weisz, "Spas, Mineral Waters, and Hydrological Science in Twentieth-Century France," *Isis* 92:3(September 2001), 465.

support.¹³⁴ France had been wooing American doctors and their spouses with state-sponsored weeklong trips since 1930 in the hope that they would return and advise colleagues and patients to “take the cure”.¹³⁵ The fountain was designed to attract the attention of potential tourists, but it also functioned as a representation of French medical research.

The exhibits of the lower level attempted to bring together both France’s acknowledged strength in luxury goods with her long-established strength in technology. Thus, her past aesthetic achievements were applied in an original manner to current, and likely future, innovations such as automobiles and railcars. Yet the positioning of the industrial exhibition on the lower level detracted from the importance attributed to these displays. The layout of the pavilion allowed visitors to choose whether or not they saw the displays on the lower level, which is not true of the displays created for the main floor. Moreover, the *Official Guidebook* slighted technological achievements, emphasizing the tourist exhibits and making no mention of the extensive industrial displays on the same floor.¹³⁶ The effort to associate France with technology and industry was of secondary importance when compared to the long-established efforts to maintain France as the foremost creator of cultural products.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 465.

¹³⁵ Levenstein, 9, quoting *New York Herald* (Paris Edition), May 29, 1930; June 22, 1930; August 22, 1933.

¹³⁶ New York World’s Fair, *Official Guidebook*, 127.

The Fair, France, and the American Press

The New York World's Fair received a great deal of press coverage during the 1939 season. Its varied participants and its unveiling of inventions, including the television, attracted the attention of numerous reporters. Aside from the many commercial products on display, journalists also took note of the presentations mounted by international participants. The Fair represented an opportunity for the journalists, and the general public, to travel the world in a day. The sights, sounds and smells of the international pavilions were all recounted with mixed enthusiasm. The world was in the New York, and the press was there to celebrate, describe and criticize it.

The American press was particularly interested in the French pavilion, the subject of this study. France received the most consistent and lengthiest coverage in the *New York Times*, the newspaper which followed the Fair most closely.¹ Other daily newspapers, such as the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and the *Washington Post*, also reported often on French exhibits. The architectural and fine arts press devoted attention to the French pavilion, which organized one of the largest fine arts displays at the Fair.

This chapter analyzes coverage of the pavilion by the American press, examining article content for themes prevalent in French propaganda during

¹ The French pavilion received exclusive coverage in the *New York Times* sixteen times during the Fair season, and was included in twenty-three comparative articles during the 1939 Fair season (May 1 - October 31, 1939). In comparative articles such as "Three Countries and Seventy-nine" by Edward Alden Jewell on May 28, 1939, *New York Times*, page X7, where France was discussed in forty-five percent of the column, whilst the remaining fifty-five percent was divided between Great Britain, Russia and Italy. Another example is the Walter Rendell Storey article "Home Decoration: A World of Furniture at the Fair", *New York Times*, 4 June 1939, D8 where France received twice as much column space as Sweden, Finland or Poland.

the interwar period. It argues that American coverage emphasized French cultural traits which were familiar in the United States before the opening of the World's Fair. The French attempt to integrate the past into Fair conceptions of the future was thus overlooked.

Press coverage of the New York World's Fair

Before examining coverage of the French pavilion, it is important to survey coverage of the World's Fair to consider the approach taken by the press when addressing Fair-related pavilions and themes. The New York's World Fair Corporation was able to attract and retain press interest in its progress from the initial public statement in 1935 through opening day on May 1st, 1939 through frequent announcements and events. The Fair received varying amounts of coverage as the reclamation project of Flushing Meadows progressed, the theme buildings and Fair layout were unveiled, and foreign nations along with large national corporations leased space for their extravagant pavilions. Despite the carefully formulated theme and regular references by Fair dignitaries to democracy and the unity of mankind, the American press frequently emphasized the importance of the reciprocal relationship between American business and the Fair.

The *New York Times* displayed the most interest in the Fair. Throughout the three and a half years of preparation for the Fair, the *Times* published articles about the reclamation of Flushing Meadows, the construction of rail, road and subway infrastructure, and the dedication of pavilion sites. Fair

coverage was increased starting in the first week of March 1939, with a seventy-two-page supplement where notable scholars, journalists, politicians and essayists contributed a series of articles that were “designed to illuminate the themes of the World’s Fair” and prepare “the hearts and minds of fair-bound millions for that vision of the future.”² None of the other dailies afforded the Fair such extensive coverage. The *Christian Science Monitor* and the *Washington Post*, started their coverage of the Fair in March, mainly identifying displays deemed to be of interest and relaying some of the final preparations for opening day. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* restricted its increased Fair coverage to the final week of April.

The opening day of the New York World’s Fair (May 1, 1939) shared front-page space with Hitler’s demands for Polish territory. Many articles on April 30 contained speculation about President Roosevelt’s speech at the Fair ceremonies for the following day. Roosevelt ignored Hitler’s threats and instead focused on the underlying message of the Fair, which, Roosevelt declared, was “to encourage peace and good will among the nations of the world.”³ The interest in Roosevelt’s speech, as well as the disappointment expressed about the absence of a response to Hitler, was unusual. For the most part, journalists dealt with the World’s Fair as an isolated event, seldom discussing it in conjunction with the deteriorating situation in Europe.

² “The New York Times World’s Fair Section,” *New York Times*, 5 March 1939, sec. 8, pg 3. The supplement was divided into five sections that addressed The Fair and Its Theme; This Machine Age; World, Nation, State, City; Life and Living; and The March of the Arts. “Tomorrow’s World in Words,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 10 March 1939, 22.

³ “Roosevelt Plea Ignores Hitler; New Demand Made on Poland,” *Los Angeles Times*, 1 May 1939, 1.

The separate treatment of the Fair and current affairs by journalists suggests there was a desire to view it as a self-contained space minimally affected by the world outside of its gates. This reflected the goals of Fair organizers who adopted an optimistic message about the positive promise of the future on display at the Fair.⁴ The theme of the Fair, “World of Tomorrow,” further set the Fair grounds apart from the city that surrounded it. When visitors entered through the gate they were given an opportunity to leave behind economic and diplomatic uncertainties and focus instead on the world to come.⁵ The Fair was further isolated from its international context by the press which emphasized that the Fair was organized by Americans and for Americans.⁶

Overall, press coverage of the Fair was primarily descriptive. A large percentage of Fair coverage following opening day “exhaust[ed] the vocabulary of the press agent who [dealt] in superlative adjectives,”⁷ as one author put it, as journalists sought to articulate the size of the Fair and the details of displays. The American press responded very little to the “World of Tomorrow” theme of the Fair and the goals of the Fair administrators as outlined in the

⁴ Folke T. Kihlstedt, “Utopia Realized: The World’s Fairs of the 1930s” in *Imagining Tomorrow: History, Technology, and the American Future*, edited by Joseph J. Corn (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), 97.

⁵ Anne O’Hare McCormick, “World of Undying Hope,” *New York Times*, 5 March 1939, Section 8, pg. A511 [18?]. The sense of being welcomed into a trouble-free, utopian space is very prominent in the many personal websites dedicated to remembering the World’s Fair. See personal contributions to <<http://websyte.com/alan/nywf.htm>>. Another site <<http://www2.sjsu.edu/faculty/wooda/nywf.html>> provides great onward links.

⁶ A possible explanation for the focus on American contributions to the fair is that the majority of pavilions at the Fair were presented by American businesses and governments and had little or no relation to the rumblings on the European continent.

⁷ Robert M. Hallett, “New York Fair Concentrates Wonders of the World for Benefit of Visitors: World Efforts for Peace And Trade Stressed by Fair,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 27 April 1939, 9.

Guidebook of the World's Fair in coverage during the Fair season.⁸ Instead, articles focused on topics such as "fair feet," the unexpectedly high cost of food in the Fair grounds, and excessive construction costs because of unionised labour.⁹

The *New York Times* provided the most complete coverage of the Fair. An early March supplement marked the beginning of daily coverage that was sustained for the duration of the Fair. Readers of the *New York Times* were treated to extensive reporting that ran the gamut from caught-in-the-act stories to labour unrest to exhibit descriptions.¹⁰ In general, there were no fewer than four articles a day from opening day until the end of August, when Fair coverage dramatically decreased as the international situation deteriorated and gained new prominence.

Although much of the coverage was descriptive, there were news items which received regular coverage. The *New York Times* was particularly attentive to the sixty national participants at the Fair. On the whole, at least

⁸ The goals listed in the *Official Guidebook of the New York World's Fair* included the Fair being a force for peace, an illustration of the interdependence of nations and corporations, the education of Fair visitors, the promotion of foreign trade, and profit in order to fund the establishment of a park on the Flushing Meadows site. See *New York World's Fair, Official Guidebook of the New York World's Fair* (New York: Exposition Publications, 1939), 41 & 117.

⁹ For Fair feet see Ida Jean Kain, "Your Figure, Madamel: Right Shoes for World's Fair Most Important," *The Washington Post*, 23 May 1939, 11; Antoinette Donnelly, "High Heels are for Dress Occasions, No for Walking," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 8 July 1939, 11; "Podiatrist Says 'Fair Feet' Are Easily Cured, But Women Must Sacrifice a Little Style," *New York Times*, 11 July 1939, 14. For the high cost of food at the Fair see "\$1.50 Hamburgers cause protests at New York Fair," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 5 May 1939, 1 and Inez Robb, "World of Tomorrow Has the Same Old Hot Dogs, Both Kinds," *The Washington Post*, 1 May 1939, 1. For the affect of unionised labour see "Foreign Exhibitors Protest American Prices at Fair," *Christian Science Monitor*, 9 June 1939, 4; Willard Edwards, "WPA Labor Cost 2 ½ Time that of Private Jobs," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3 May 1939, 10.

¹⁰ Meyer Berger's "At the Fair" articles were an amusing distraction that recounted overheard stories or interesting oddities found at exhibits in the Fair grounds. It was a daily feature of the paper.

one article a day examined an international participant with articles including reviews of exhibits, restaurants and national days. A large number of articles were also comparative pieces, drawing attention to similar displays in the international area and highlighting the unique attributes of each. Other articles included recommended tour routes and itineraries for one or more days of Fair attendance, thus broadening the coverage given to foreign exhibitors.

Headquartered merely hours away from the Fair, *The Washington Post* published a number of articles on the Fair. More than any of the other newspapers, the *Washington Post* emphasized both the potential trade benefits and the diplomatic events that resulted from activities at the Fair. A significant number of articles read like stories out of the society pages, documenting what events were attended and by whom. Indeed, the Fair received considerable attention in some of the daily and weekly commentary columns of the *Post*.¹¹ The *Washington Post* coverage of the World's Fair was not limited to generalised commentary; journalists from the *Post* took an interest in the official guidebook, visiting dignitaries, fine arts exhibits and national pavilions. The business community was of particular interest to many of the writers. A regular contributor, Merryle Rukeyser, was impressed by the corporate exhibits which he felt were selling the business as well as the product.¹²

The *Christian Science Monitor*, located in Boston, provided less coverage of the World's Fair but took an interest in exhibits that some of the other

¹¹ Such regular contributors included Alice Hughes, "A Woman's New York," Betty Beale, "Top Hats and Tiaras," H. I. Phillips, "The Once Over," Leonard Lyons, "The New Yorker," and Charles B. Driscoll, "Pages from a Journalist's Diary" amongst others.

¹² Merryle Stanley Rukeyser, "Says: U.S. Industry Sells Itself At Big Fair," *The Washington Post*, 30 April 1939, R14.

dailies overlooked. For example, journalists gave rave reviews to the fine arts exhibits, the fireworks display, corporate exhibits, and of particular interest to this study, national pavilions.¹³ The *Monitor* did not only focus on the Great Powers who were present at the Fair, but also drew attention to the national pavilions of Ireland, Argentina, Rumania and Sweden.¹⁴

From the Midwest the *Chicago Daily Tribune* attended to the Fair much less diligently, and it adopted a critical approach. The disparaging treatment of the Fair is no doubt connected to the rivalry between Chicago and New York that started in the late nineteenth century when both cities vied for the opportunity to hold a World's Fair. Chicago won the privilege of hosting the 1893 Fair, and had more recently held the Century-of-Progress exhibition in 1933-34. The opening day coverage by the *Tribune* is indicative of the restrained spitefulness found throughout its coverage. The noisy festivities of the day were described as "hullabaloo and ballyhoo" whilst the diligently crafted layout of the fair was reduced to a last minute free-for-all in which buildings were "thrown up" and "strewn about" the grounds.¹⁵ Nothing was above reproach as the author criticized the architecture, noting that it ran the "whole gamut from surrealism to cockeyed" only to be completed by a "bizarre colored lighting system."¹⁶ The author finished the article with comments

¹³ "Fireworks as Craft and Art Call for Wholehearted Zeal," *Christian Science Monitor*, 14 June 1939, 5; "Salesmen See the Fairs, 'Sold' on Both," *Christian Science Monitor*, 15 July 1939, 3; "New York Fair of '40 Assured of Big Displays," *Christian Science Monitor*, 14 November 1939, 3.

¹⁴ "Ireland's Story Told at Fair," *Christian Science Monitor*, 18 April 1939, 7; "Rumania and Sweden Open Pavilions at N.Y. World's Fair," *Christian Science Monitor*, 6 May 1939, 5

¹⁵ "New York Fair opens in burst of Hullabaloo," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 1 May 1939, 4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

about the theme buildings, “Mr. Whalen’s bat and ball” on the “Flushing dump” grounds.¹⁷ Subsequent articles examined attendance, labour issues, visiting dignitaries and the Fair’s financial difficulties, featuring cutting remarks as well as frequent comparisons with Chicago’s exhibition of 1933-34. Journalists boasted of Chicago’s layout, the architectural style, and even art exhibits whilst decrying the apparent inadequacy of New York’s effort.¹⁸ Nor did the newspaper devote any column space to the discussion of individual pavilions, preferring instead to discuss the Fair as a whole.

France and the American Press

Coverage of the French pavilion was not only affected by the attitudes of the American press towards the Fair, but also the treatment of France in the American media. In the years leading up to the New York World’s Fair, France had experienced a great deal of critical coverage in the United States.¹⁹ Public support for the nation was unstable in the United States and the French foreign ministry was concerned about the inroads made by German propaganda during the 1930s.²⁰ The unstable political climate and frequent changes in French government were of concern to political commentators in the United States.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ See for example: William Fulton, “Free Tickets Flood Gates of New York Fair,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 11 May 1939, 20; Eleanor Jewett, “Discovers Art Is One Feature N.Y. Fair Lacks,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 4 June 1939, F4; “New York’s Big Show,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 12 August 1939, 6.

¹⁹ For a general introduction to France in the American media during the 1930s, see Robert J. Young, “A Douce and Dextrous Persuasion,” in *French Foreign and Defence Policy, 1918-1940*, edited by Robert Boyce (New York: Routledge, 1998): 195-214 as well as his book *Marketing Marianne; French Propaganda in America, 1900-1940* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2004).

²⁰ Robert J. Young, *Marketing Marianne: French Propaganda in America, 1900-1940* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 11, 65-66, 71, 102, 117-118, 119.

Additional condemnation resulted from the suspension of debt payments to the United States in 1932 when German reparation payments were no longer being made to France. As the end of the decade drew near, American suspicion of French entanglements on the European continent reached new heights, fuelled by the support for isolationist international politics.²¹ Although the threat of war on the European continent began to overshadow other concerns, the American press continued to discuss all these issues through much of 1939.²² A particularly insightful article in the May 1939 issue of *Harper's Magazine* traced the wide range of political, financial and foreign policy issues that France was forced to address since the end of the First World War. The authors, Hervé Schwedersky and John McJennett, identified France's deplorable financial condition as the root cause of its unstable governments, which in turn adversely affected France's international policy. The authors argued that if Daladier did not have the "heritage of twenty years' bungling" France would not have had to rely so extensively on Great Britain for security at Munich in 1938.²³

French foreign policy was frequently the focus of articles during the six-month season of the World's Fair. American journalists were interested in

²¹ Henry Blumenthal, *Illusion and Reality in Franco-American Diplomacy 1914-1945* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 229-233. Robert J. Young, *Marketing Marianne*, 81.

²² Examples of contemporaneous articles are R. Dell, "Phil La Follette is right: warning against American alliance with present ruling forces of England and France," *Nation* 148(29 April 1939): 490-2; Gallicus, "France under Daladier," *New Republic* 99(26 July 1939): 327-28; G. Chaput, "What's Wrong with France?" *Saturday Evening Post* 210(18 September 1939): 16-17, 104-106.

²³ Hervé Schwedersky and John McJennett, "Democracy's Crisis in France," *Harper's Magazine* 178(May 1939): 628.

French responses to German posturing and threats.²⁴ Reporters also examined the efforts by British and French diplomats who were trying to stave off war and maintain their national dignity and world power at the same time.²⁵ Much of the coverage had to do with Anglo-French efforts to secure a treaty with Soviet Russia.²⁶ Japanese advances in China also attracted French diplomatic and military responses.²⁷ The attitude of journalists for the *New York Times* was watchful and only occasionally critical when opportunities for peaceful resolution seem to have slipped away. The invasion of Poland and the declaration of war in September resulted in increased coverage of the European situation. Support for the war, however, was still restrained because of American isolationism.²⁸ Diplomatic manoeuvrings were not the only subject of interest to the *New York Times*. Attention was also devoted to French internal policies, such as aircraft purchases, cabinet shuffles, and financial

²⁴ "Daladier declares that France will stand by its pledge to check German aggression," *New York Times*, 5 May 1939, 13; "Daladier warns France will arm further if her neighbors continue 'massive mobilizations'," *New York Times*, 12 May 1939, 1; "France awaits German reply to diplomatic warning that Danzig will be protected from seizure," *New York Times*, 3 July 1939, 3; "France will go to war with Germany if she attacks Poland, Paris declares," *New York Times*, 23 August 1939, 1.

²⁵ "Lebrun begins second term as French President; Premier to tell Parliament of readiness for war," *New York Times*, 11 May 1939, 16; "France and Britain unite colonial programs to meet threats of Axis," *New York Times*, 11 July 1939, 10; "France shows her military might as Bastille Day is marked: Daladier stresses peace hope," *New York Times*, 15 July 1939, 1; "France mobilizes; now expects war; people are confident of strength to meet an aggressor," *New York Times*, 24 August 1939, 1.

²⁶ "French encouraged by British attitude toward Soviet pact; see European situation improved," *New York Times*, 25 May 1939, 4; "New Anglo-French-Soviet talk is inconclusive; Paris ponders effect of possible failure," *New York Times*, 17 June 1939, 3

²⁷ "French military mission is now aiding China," *New York Times*, 22 May 1939, 9; "Great Britain and France reject a warning to leave ports of Foochow and Wenchow," *New York Times*, 28 June 1939, 12; "German and French Consulate in Chungking damaged by Japanese aerial bombs," *New York Times*, 5 August 1939, 4.

²⁸ Walter Van Kirk, "Who Wants War? Not the Mothers, or Youth Organizations, of the Churches; Not the People as a Whole," *Christian Science Monitor*, 26 August 1939, WM3; "Allies can't lose, Hoover says; urges us to keep out of the war," *New York Times*, 4 October 1939, 12.

budgets. Alongside these political articles were pieces about French fashions, tourism destinations and French film releases in the United States.²⁹

The French Pavilion

French participation at the World's Fair attracted a great deal of attention from the American daily press, especially the *New York Times*. Although the French Pavilion was covered in all the dailies consulted, it was only the *New York Times* which devoted significant column space to the details of the opening ceremony and specific exhibits within the pavilion.

French participation received early attention in mid-April when the French liner *Paris* sank at the dock in Le Havre along with some cargo destined for the pavilion. The loss resulted in front-page coverage by the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*.³⁰ All of the papers noted the presence of important cargo destined for the World's Fair, including art objects and jewellery.³¹ Only the *New York Times*, however, continued to follow the story and dedicated eleven articles to it over the next two weeks. The impact on the French pavilion was

²⁹ See for example "100 More Planes for France," *Christian Science Monitor*, 3 April 1939, 4; "Normandie serves as a Movie Studio," *New York Times*, 15 August 1939, 16; "Paris to carry on in launching fashions," *New York Times*, 10 September 1939, 14.

³⁰ "Liner Paris Burns and Sinks at Dock," *Christian Science Monitor*, 19 April 1939, 1; "Fire Wrecks French Liner; Sinks at Dock," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 19 April 1939, 1; "Liner Paris Afire; One Is Killed; Italian Questioned," *Washington Post*, 19 April 1939, 1; "Fire Destroys Liner Paris; \$500,000 Art Thought Lost," *New York Times*, 19 April 1939, 1.

³¹ The fire and loss of the *Paris* resulted in a delayed opening of the French pavilion. Most of the art and jewellery aboard the ship were recovered before it sank, but the bas-relief displays in the fashion exhibit were lost and had to be recreated.

not overlooked, and an article informed readers of the eight million franc loss that delayed the pavilion's opening by three weeks.³²

The coverage of the pavilion by the *Chicago Daily Tribune* and the *Washington Post* was limited in both scope and size. The *Washington Post* provided coverage of the French pavilion only in conjunction with the movements of the French Ambassador. His visits to New York for the opening ceremony and to celebrate Bastille Day were noted, the reporter displaying more interest in the guests attending these events than the building which inspired the ceremonies. As such, the articles did not reflect the message of France as the centre of Western Civilisation that would guide the world into tomorrow that the French were attempting to promote. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* demonstrated more interest in the pavilion, publishing two articles about it; the paper noted that it was, "one of the best appointed, and already one of the most popular, of the foreign sections" in an article about developing fashion trends.³³ Although interested readers learned here about the pavilion's appeal to women because of its display of dresses and accessories, the paper provided no further details about other French exhibits and made no mention of the unifying theme of the pavilion that French achievements of the past would inspire the innovations of the future.

Although the pavilion did not receive any outright negative press coverage, the restaurant was the subject of mixed reviews. As the exhibit

³² "Fire on Liner Delays French Fair Pavilion; Furnishings and Exhibits Worth About 8,000,000 Francs Lost," *New York Times*, 22 April 1939, 33.

³³ May Birkhead, "Pair of French Dress Clips Is Creating Stir," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 11 June 1939, G6.

occupying the topmost floor and awarded the largest area of the pavilion, the restaurant was assigned the important role of attracting patrons and increasing American knowledge of the superiority of French cuisine. The mixed reviews of many journalists did not challenge the purported supremacy of French cuisine, but rather bemoaned the difficulty of securing a table at the popular Restaurant Français. Articles differed in their assessment of the Fair's "Epicures' Retreat".³⁴ A front-page article in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* spoke of bribing the maître d'hôtel in order to get a table.³⁵ Yet, the *New York Times* could not wait for the pavilion's official opening to praise the restaurant, devoting an entire article to the "gustatory enjoyment and feast for the eyes" enjoyed by its reporter in early May.³⁶ Although these two articles are the only ones to focus exclusively on the French restaurant, it was frequently mentioned in reports on food at the Fair or articles about the foreign zone. *The New York Times* also included a few anecdotal stories about the difficulties of securing a table, even for celebrities like Eve Curie, as well as the extraordinary number of broken glasses.³⁷

Overall the French pavilion attracted a great deal of positive attention. *The New York Times* commended the French on selected exhibits, most of which were found on the main and top floors of the pavilion. Appreciative

³⁴ Kathleen McLaughlin, "Epicures' Retreat opened by French," *New York Times*, 10 May 1939, 21.

³⁵ William Fulton, "\$10 Bill Solves French Riddle at Fair in N.Y.," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 14 July 1939, 1.

³⁶ Kathleen McLaughlin, "Epicures' Retreat Opened by French," *New York Times*, 10 May 1939, 21.

³⁷ Meyer Berger, "At the Fair," *New York Times*, 2 June 1939, 16; Meyer Berger, "At the Fair," *New York Times*, 19 July 1939, 12.

coverage began before the pavilion was completed. Two weeks into the Fair a reporter for the *Times* noted that visitors were already filling the pavilion and were showing particular interest in the dioramas and transport displays on the lower level. The yet-to-be-completed couture and jewellery exhibits were much anticipated.³⁸ Even the restrained *Christian Science Monitor* demonstrated an eagerness for the pavilion displays, including an article in mid-May about the furniture and fine art display on the top floor of the building.³⁹

The official opening of the pavilion received ample coverage. The *New York Times* printed four articles and an editorial about the momentous occasion. Enthusiasm for the “magnificent” pavilion and its “luxurious” displays was unrestrained, with one reporter going so far as to declare that the French pavilion would dominate the Fair on both the 23rd, during a preview for a select few, and again on the 24th on the occasion of the official opening ceremonies.⁴⁰ Another reporter confirmed the astute choice of exhibits by the French, remarking “the features of France known and loved by most Americans ... are combined in the three-story French Pavilion at the World’s Fair.” He then went on to describe the cultural exhibits.⁴¹ Some members of the touring party, who found the decorations, perfumes and jewellery displays to be the best in the pavilion, declared that the pavilion would be of most interest to female Fair

³⁸ “French Pavilion, Unready, Popular,” *New York Times*, 16 May 1939, 18; “\$5,000,000 Gems Arrive,” *New York Times*, 16 May 1939, 19.

³⁹ “French Art at the Fair,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 May 1939, 16.

⁴⁰ “France’s exhibits seen in preview,” *New York Times*, 24 May 1939, 13.

⁴¹ “Varied Treasures in French Center,” *New York Times*, 24 May 1939, 14.

visitors.⁴² Despite these overheard comments, articles in the *New York Times* and the *Christian Science Monitor* did not omit details about the industry-oriented lower level which Léandre Vaillat had hoped would attract male Fair visitors. In their opening day articles, the *New York Times* reporter drew attention to the Micheline railcar whereas the staff reporter of the *Christian Science Monitor* drew the reader's attention to the model home exhibit.⁴³

The American press realised that the pavilion represented more than just the exhibits displayed inside, giving attention to both the opening ceremonies and France Day in July where official addresses by both French and American dignitaries spoke to the symbolic importance of French participation. The commemorative inspiration for the Fair, lost and overlooked in the general coverage, received full attention here as sizeable excerpts of speeches accompanied articles. In these excerpts, speakers emphasized the importance of democracy and individual rights, and they assured listeners of their nations' commitment to peace. Marcel Olivier enumerated the shared Franco-American values of "individual initiative, merit, honesty, character, ... fairness in government, love of enlightened justice and of social peace..."⁴⁴ The extensive quotation of the speeches' contents gave the impression that France and America were closely aligned and were working towards similar goals in the future. An editorial noted that in both the speeches and pavilion, visitors would find "a symbol of the ideals which bind two democracies in the strength of

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ "Varied Treasures in French Center," *New York Times*, 24 May 1939, 14 and "French Pavilion Exhibit Shows Proudest Traditions," *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 May 1939, 6.

⁴⁴ Russell B. Porter, "France's Impressive Pavilion Is Dedicated by Officials at Ceremony at the Fair," *New York Times*, 25 May 1939, 22.

freedom.”⁴⁵ The article and editorial were thus important confirmations of what visitors would learn at the Franco-American friendship display inside the pavilion.

Although the art, furniture and couture exhibits of the French pavilion attracted the interest of reporters at the *New York Times*, these were often discussed in comparative articles. The bookbinding exhibit on the top floor of the pavilion was the only exhibit afforded a complete article more than once. The book exhibit was described by the *Times* journalist as a “literary treat” and an “important exhibition” that reflected a design and spirit of welcome.⁴⁶ The author found the open display approach particularly hospitable, as pavilion visitors could browse and read from over six thousand titles arranged by category. He found the exhibit “extremely valuable to those interested in French thought and literature, as well as to printers, artists and bookbinders.” Featured again in mid-July, a brief history of modern bookbinding accompanied a list of French artist-binders who were on show at the pavilion.⁴⁷ Despite the favourable coverage given to the exhibit, readers were not informed of any larger symbolic importance of the literary exhibit to the future of American prose.

France received more consistent coverage and longer column length coverage than other foreign participants at the Fair from the *New York Times*. France was frequently cited in the “World’s Fair” section of the *Times*’ daily

⁴⁵ “The French Pavilion,” *New York Times*, 25 May 1939, 24.

⁴⁶ Edward L. Tinker, “French Book Show is Literary Treat,” *New York Times*, 9 June 1939, 18.

⁴⁷ Edward Larocquetinker, “Fine Bindings at the World’s Fair,” *New York Times*, 16 July 1939, 72.

index and was often given a larger percentage of space in comparison articles written by reporters for the *Times*. Although the index did not list all Fair articles, it often highlighted four of the longer pieces, with the index including an article about a foreign participant about half of the time.⁴⁸ France and Great Britain were both listed ten times while the USSR received only six listings. The articles on Great Britain, however, were grouped at the end of May and the beginning of June. France, on the other hand, was represented throughout the duration of the Fair.⁴⁹ These regular reminders may have served to heighten the admiration for the French pavilion amongst readers of the *New York Times*. At the very least, the recurrent articles were publicity that kept the French pavilion in the public eye.

Attention to France was also evident in the *New York Times* Fair guides, which introduced readers to the lay out of the twelve hundred acre site and its three hundred buildings. An initial guide provided a brief description of the pavilion location and some general remarks. Already in March the reporter noted the presence of the restaurant at the French pavilion as well as a “stress on French democracy and the part France has played in the growth of civilization” in its display.⁵⁰ The next instalment of the guide was more sophisticated. One section was devoted to describing the buildings and another

⁴⁸ As tensions increased in Europe at the end of August, the World’s Fair index was omitted more frequently from the daily index. Of the one hundred and thirty World’s Fair indexes between May 1 and October 28, fifty-eight did not list a topic that featured an international participant.

⁴⁹ Articles about Great Britain were listed in the index on May 19, May 20, May 21, May 23, June 4, June 6, June 12 and October 26. France was listed in the index on May 10, May 16, May 25, June 3, June 9, June 25, July 11, July 15 and September 24. The USSR was listed on May 2, May 17, May 18, June 12 and August 30.

⁵⁰ “Sights to be Seen,” *New York Times*, 5 March 1939, XX3.

section identified Fair attractions by topics of interest. Details about the French pavilion once again included the restaurant, but this time the dioramas, short films, couture and accessories, as well as the philosophical exhibits, were also mentioned. This brief description of the pavilion corresponded well with the exhibit elements France chose to emphasize in the *Official Guidebook*. The French entry drew attention to the tourism section of the lower floor, neglected the industrial exhibits in their entirety, and provided lengthy detail about the main and second floor.⁵¹ The article listed the special item as the art and history exhibit on the top floor.⁵² As one of the best-appointed exhibits, one which was supplemented by a souvenir album with essays on the corresponding historical periods, it was fitting that the exhibit be emphasized. The journalist thus took up and reflected the French message and emphasis on the past, although the basis for the recommendation was not revealed.

The second section of the Fair guide drew attention to those exhibits that set France apart. For Fair visitors interested in books, cosmetics, home furnishings, letters, lingerie, perfume, silk and wine, the French pavilion was mentioned by name as a desirable destination.⁵³ These exhibits were in keeping with American perceptions of France as a creator of luxury products, which often appealed to women; this was a belief encouraged by interwar

⁵¹ New York World's Fair, *Official Guidebook*, 127.

⁵² "The Exhibits: An Amazing Array," *New York Times*, 30 April 1939, 128. Each pavilion had a special item listed along with their description. Other special items of foreign exhibitors included the Belgian diamond cutters, the Danish silverware exhibit, The Finnish model of the Olympic Stadium, the waterfall on the exterior wall of the Italian pavilion, the world's fastest automobile in the British Pavilion, and the replica of a Moscow subway station in the Soviet Pavilion.

⁵³ "If You Are Interested In--," *New York Times*, 30 April 1939, 136.

propaganda and the exhibit placements of the pavilion. It is notable that some of the larger and more expensive exhibits, particularly the fine and contemporary art displays, were omitted from the listings. Where the authors were unwilling, or unable, to identify a unique or superior exhibit, they indicated that "most foreign pavilions" had a section. As such, France did not benefit from the listings for art, automobiles, or food, as these were deemed to be present in most of the international pavilions. At the same time, there were exhibits that drew attention to other foreign exhibitors which could have equally drawn attention to French displays. Of particular interest was the willingness of journalists to highlight the Belgian and British jewellery displays as well as the Polish railways and Soviet trains.⁵⁴ The categories used by the journalist did not draw attention to French industrial contributions, but rather confirmed the French cultural contributions to the Fair. This bias was in keeping with the French propaganda focus of the thirties, and also reflected the arrangement of the exhibits in the pavilion.

The daily newspapers provided readers with a variety of touring itineraries for Fair visits. All of the suggested routes included the international section of the government zone which emphasized the importance of foreign participants to the Fair. As Richard Watts, Jr. wrote "The international section of the Flushing carnival is a splendid and exciting thing in which the great outside world makes a considerably more successful bid for our favor than it

⁵⁴ Other omissions included the Alps, represented in some of the diorama on the lower level; Illumination, represented in the neon tubing display on the lower level; Motion pictures being presented in the auditorium, and shipping, again a topic explored on the lower level of the pavilion.

does in the news columns.”⁵⁵ In keeping with the results from a May public opinion survey, many journalists wrote positively about the Soviet Pavilion and urged their readers to include it as the only stop in the foreign section if they could not allow time for any other national pavilions in a tour of the Fair.⁵⁶

It is in these suggested Fair itineraries that the most cutting remarks about the French pavilion were made. A reporter from *Time* magazine suggested “The jumbly French Pavilion look[ed] like a Paris department store on bargain day....”⁵⁷ Equally dismissive was Gillian Strickland of the *Washington Post* who urged visitors to see the light and fireworks show from ground level because “No lamb chop is worth a dollar ninety” and “...two large, opaque waiters” would not get in the way.⁵⁸

The exhibits that convinced some reporters to list France on their itineraries were the same exhibits that discouraged others from recommending it as a Fair destination. Despite the urging of Gillian Strickland, France was considered the place to eat at the Fair. The influential journalist Walter Lippmann described the French restaurant as “civilized,” “very correct” and “very French,” whereas another critic praised the “refreshment terrace the

⁵⁵ Richard Watts, Jr., “Both Applauds and Resents the World’s Fair,” *The Washington Post*, 11 June 1939, L3.

⁵⁶ John Markland and Charles Phelps Cushing, “‘Abroad’ at the Fair,” *New York Times*, 4 June 1939, XX1; Walter Lippman, “Today and Tomorrow; A Day At The World’s Fair,” *The Washington Post*, 6 June 1939, 9; Richard Watts, Jr., “Both Applauds and Resents the World’s Fair,” *The Washington Post*, 11 June 1939, Elizabeth Inskip Wye, “Sure You Can See the World’s Fair in a Day,” *The Washington Post*, 11 June 1939, L10; “Time visits the Fair,” *Time*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 24, 12 June 1939, 12; Burns Mantle, “A Critic Tells How He Would Visit the Fair,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 30 July 1939, D2.

⁵⁷ “Time visits the Fair,” *Time*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 24, 12 June 1939, 12.

⁵⁸ Gillian Strickland, “The Post Impressionist; Seeing A Fair,” *The Washington Post*, 27 September 1939, 10. This opinion could have been particularly damaging, as the French Restaurant was a regularly recommended viewing spot for the fireworks show in other papers.

like of which no other government has the taste or the experience to build".⁵⁹ Journalists all continued to praise the restaurant despite the difficulty of gaining admission. All claimed to be echoing popular sentiment that it was "the best" and "the last word in food, service and luxurious surroundings".⁶⁰ The French officials were no doubt hoping that the Restaurant would receive such attention; they allotted the best view at the Fair to the restaurant and also ensured its success by importing chefs, waiters and maître d'hôtels to give the dining room an authentic air.

Reporters did not overlook the prime location of the pavilion. Three different itineraries for tours of the international section suggested to readers that they start with the French pavilion.⁶¹ In addition to its favourable positioning, the pavilion was also attractive because of the variety of exhibits on display. Again, however, the industrial displays on the lower level failed to fire their imaginations. It was the "grand" and "glamorous" display of paintings, jewels, and couture that attracted these journalists to the pavilion.⁶²

⁵⁹ Walter Lippmann, "Today and Tomorrow; A Day at The World's Fair," *The Washington Post*, 6 June 1939, 9; Burns Mantle, "A Critic Tells How He Would Visit the Fair," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, D2.

⁶⁰ August Loeb, "Menus and Prices Vary Widely at Fair," *New York Times*, 28 May 1939, XX3; "New Eating Places Ready at the Fair," *New York Times*, 18 May 1939, 21; Grover A. Whalen, "Whalen Finds Food at Fair is Cheap," *New York Times*, 26 June 1939, 8.

⁶¹ John Markland and Charles Phelps Cushing, "'Abroad' at the Fair," *New York Times*, 4 June 1939, XX1; August Loeb and Philip Gendreau, "Two Weeks At World's Fair," *New York Times*, 11 June 1939, XX1; Celeste Weyl, "Take a 'World Cruise' at the New York World's Fair," *The Washington Post*, 18 June 1939, F8.

⁶² John Markland and Charles Phelps Cushing, "'Abroad' at the Fair," *New York Times*, 4 June 1939, XX1; August Loeb and Philip Gendreau, "Two Weeks At World's Fair," *New York Times*, 11 June 1939, XX1; Celeste Weyl, "Take a 'World Cruise' at the New York World's Fair," *The Washington Post*, 18 June 1939, F8.

The main and upper floors of the French pavilion drew more press attention than the exhibits found on the lower level. The Art exhibits were the subject of both exclusive articles as well as comparative ones. Whereas some of the art-centred articles simply described the contents, others set the French display apart.⁶³ In a "round-up" of the notable Fair attractions, the French pavilion was mentioned alongside the fine art presentations of Italy, Great Britain and Canada.⁶⁴ Elsewhere the pavilion was compared to a museum because of the extensive collection on display.⁶⁵ Pictures of French art were featured alongside an article praising the exhibit in the *New York Times*. Edward Jewell spoke highly of the "delightful rooms" which contained an appropriate number of works to "provide the requisite flavor" of the era in the third floor exhibit.⁶⁶ In addition to the display, Jewell was complimentary of the accompanying catalogue.

The home decorations on display at the French pavilion were equally lauded. A *New York Times* reporter identified the French home decoration exhibit as one that should not be missed.⁶⁷ The furniture, rugs, glassware and porcelain were all discussed in complimentary terms over a series of three articles. France was the only nation featured in all three articles and each time

⁶³ Thomas C. Linn, "Art Down the Ages Shown at Fair With All Branches Represented," *New York Times*, 1 May 1939, 9.

⁶⁴ Howard Devree, "Round-up; Notable Attractions During the Fair," *New York Times*, 2 July 1939, X7.

⁶⁵ "French Pavilion Exhibit Shows Proudest Traditions," *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 May 1939, 6.

⁶⁶ Edward Alden Jewell, "Three Counties and Seventy-Nine; Tour the French, British and Italian Buildings at the Fair - Contemporary Painters in International Exhibition," *New York Times*, 28 May 1939, X7.

⁶⁷ Walter Rendell Storey, "Home Decoration: Tapestry and Rugs from Many Lands," *New York Times*, 13 August 1939, D7.

was afforded the longest discussion. That three articles were written about this section of the pavilion is interesting given that the French had very little to say about it in either the official guidebooks of the Fair or in the Pavilion literature. The dearth of French commentary no doubt reflects a confidence that France's pre-eminent place in home decoration was already recognised as a result of the successful outcome of the 1925 exposition. With this exposition, France had asserted her lead in the decorative arts, and the use of art deco in the United States confirmed that.⁶⁸

As mentioned earlier, the lower level exhibits of the French pavilion received the least attention from the press. Not only were the displays atypical of products usually associated with France in the United States, but they were also located on the lowest floor of the pavilion. Only two articles drew attention to this area during the Fair season. The first was related to foreign automobiles at the show. France received a particularly long entry that described the most luxurious of the automobiles and listed all the cars on show.⁶⁹ As no other foreign participant displayed as many vehicles, the column length was most likely reflective of the quantity exhibited. A second article on lower floor exhibits dealt with tourism. The author noted the comfortable lounge located on the lower level near the crystal map and the dioramas. A photograph of a French pavilion employee accompanied the article.⁷⁰ The

⁶⁸ Charlotte Benton, "The International Exhibition," in *Art Deco 1910-1939*, edited by Charlotte Benton, Tim Benton, and Ghislaine Wood (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 2003), 155.

⁶⁹ Philip B. Coan, "Fair sees Foreign Autos," *New York Times*, 9 July 1939, 130.

⁷⁰ Jean Libman, "'Tourism' at the Fair," *New York Times*, 13 August 1939, XX5.

negligible press coverage of the lower floor reflects the French emphasis on its art and luxury products at the expense of industrial products.

It is impossible to gauge how much the daily newspapers examined here could have influenced Fair visitors. It is equally impossible to assess how much newspaper columns were reflective of the interests of the Fair-going public. Considering the dailies alone, however, one can conclude that overall France received a great deal of favourable coverage. Journalists drew attention to examples of French culture, such as fine arts, couture and cuisine, that were already familiar to the American public. The media, however, did not respond to the limited French efforts to tout their expertise in industry. The lower level exhibits did not attract much attention and, in part, that could be attributed to their location in the pavilion. In many ways the pavilion and the media coverage of the pavilion preserved the status quo with an emphasis on French culture as a bridge for increasing American respect. It did not, however, respond to the French construction of the past as a valuable contributor to the envisioned "World of Tomorrow".

Specialty Literature - The Architectural and Fine Arts Press

The New York World's Fair represented a unique opportunity for the fine arts press in America to review international masterpieces found at a number of exemplary exhibits throughout the Fair grounds. As one editor wrote, "The American art record for 1939 is surely the fullest in its history..." as a result of

the fine exhibits organized for the World's Fair.⁷¹ The foreign participants at the Fair were key contributors to this overabundance of fine art in the New York area. Reviewers consistently cited the contemporary and historic fine art exhibits in the French pavilion as one of the best for its exceptional collection.

France had its most ardent supporters amongst the artistic press of the United States. It was perhaps the best understood exhibit in the pavilion as authors wrote of the "continuity of aesthetic standard [and] the preservation of an always completely identifiable line of stylistic development...."⁷² The idea of a long-standing French contribution to fine art was accepted, and authors encouraged Fair visitors to see the exhibit for themselves. *The Art Digest* described the exhibit as "a concentrated display of art and taste." Evidence of its fondness for the French display was visible in both the column length and the font size used to describe the exhibit.⁷³ The *Magazine of Art* was less generous in its coverage of the French pavilion, choosing instead to quote a lengthy announcement about the British display. The difference in coverage, however, is striking. Whereas the section devoted to the British display only described the contents, readers were urged to visit the French exhibit which

⁷¹ Alfred M. Frankfurter, "The Editor's Review: The Year in Art: A Review of 1939," *The Art News* XXXVIII.13: 8.

⁷² Alfred M. Frankfurter, "The French Tradition: Festival Show," *The Art News* XXXVII.37 (June 10, 1939): 13. See also: "Art in the Foreign Pavilions," *The Art Digest* XIII.17 (June 1, 1939): 36 and Jeannette Lowe, "Art at the World's Fair: France," *The Art News* XXXVII.37 (June 10, 1939): 7.

⁷³ "Art in the Foreign Pavilions," *The Art Digest* XIII.17 (June 1, 1939): 36. The column length for the French exhibit was 19.5cm, where as the eighteen other foreign exhibits were allocated 13cm in total. In addition, description of the French exhibit was in what could be compared to font size 10, whilst the brief list of other foreign exhibits might be compared to font size 8.

“promise[d] to be one of the high points of the Fair...” and was described as a “pictorial review of rare distinction.”⁷⁴

France received its most complimentary reviews in the pages of *The Art News*. Three well-illustrated articles were devoted to praising various pieces in the collection on display. Editor Alfred Frankfurter and author Jeannette Lowe described the exhibit with a series of superlative adjectives in an attempt to describe what “one [could] hardly find [an] adequate means to report.” Both authors also repeatedly stressed the underlying message of artistic continuity as presented in the accompanying exhibit catalogue by Georges Wildenstein. Most importantly, however, Lowe recognised the fine arts exhibit as a “vivid link between France and this country.”⁷⁵ To pavilion organizers, Lowe’s comment no doubt affirmed France’s use of culture as a foundation for encouraging closer Franco-American relations, as envisioned in Ambassador Jusserand’s approach to interwar propaganda.⁷⁶

The support that France enjoyed in the pages of the arts press was not duplicated in the pages of the architectural press, but it was not the only pavilion to disappoint. The architectural press in the United States was overwhelmingly dissatisfied by the design presentations at Flushing Meadows. At its worst the Fair was described as having “... no architectural character whatsoever. It is just a cozy sector of chaos.”⁷⁷ Unlike the contributions of

⁷⁴ “News and Comment,” *Magazine of Art*, 32.5 (May 1939): 305.

⁷⁵ Jeannette Lowe, “Art at the World’s Fair: France,” *The Art News* XXXVII.37 (June 10, 1939): 7.

⁷⁶ Robert J. Young, *Marketing Marianne*, 81.

⁷⁷ Lewis Mumford, “The Skyline in Flushing: West is East,” *Royal Architectural Institute of Canada*, 16.8 (August 1939): 181 and “Foreword,” *The Architectural Review* 86 (July -

previous world fairs, one author lamented "The architectural world is no richer for New York."⁷⁸ Authors explained that a lack of harmony was an important factor in the failure of the Fair's architecture.⁷⁹ Compliments for the Fair were scarce and often focused on the wide avenues and the night lighting.⁸⁰ As a result, many articles sought to bring to light remarkable aspects found in any of the buildings erected for the Fair. For *The Architectural Review*, the national pavilions, although only numbering a few, were the best source of "architectural interest."⁸¹

Commentary on pavilions was not limited to their exteriors. Interior design plans, display methods and stairwells were all considered in building assessments, as the external shells alone were not what made exhibits popular with architectural critics.⁸² Despite the fact that the French pavilion did include a number of features lauded by authors in architectural journals, it was cited only once as an example to follow. The *Architectural Record* complimented France on the sliding glass panels that protected its rooftop

December 1939): 57. The architectural press was not alone. Both the *Christian Science Monitor* and *The Washington Post* included critical commentary on the architecture of the fair. See "Architect Sees Inharmony in World's Fair Buildings," *Christian Science Monitor*, 8 July 1939, 3; "World's Fair Inharmonious, Architect Says," *The Washington Post*, 9 July 1939, R2.

⁷⁸ "Foreword," *The Architectural Review* 86 (July - December 1939): 55.

⁷⁹ Lewis Mumford, "The Skyline in Flushing: West is East," *Royal Architectural Institute of Canada*, 16.8 (August 1939): 181 and "Foreword," *The Architectural Review* 86 (July - December 1939): 57. "Architect Sees Inharmony in World's Fair Buildings," *Christian Science Monitor*, 8 July 1939, 3; "World's Fair Inharmonious, Architect Says," *The Washington Post*, 9 July 1939, R2.

⁸⁰ See Lewis Mumford, "The Skyline in Flushing: West is East," *Royal Architectural Institute of Canada*, 16.8 (1939): 182 and "The Site and the Plan," *The Architectural Review* 86 (July - December 1939): 59.

⁸¹ "Foreword," *The Architectural Review* 86 (July - December 1939): 56.

⁸² "The Buildings," *The Architectural Review* 86 (July - December 1939): 62.

terrace.⁸³ The glass doors provided a novel approach to crowd accommodation, considered important because of the expected quarter million visitors each day.

Lewis Mumford commended the use of glass, particularly the glass-walled show window, which was discussed in the previous chapter as an important element in the French pavilion. Mumford chose to illustrate his point, however, with a Fair-constructed structure, the Contemporary Arts Building.⁸⁴ The expansive front entrance of the French pavilion used the design feature in order to attract visitors to the exhibits inside. Elsewhere in the *Architectural Record*, authors complimented the Swedish pavilion for its pottery display. Set on an open table, the authors felt that it provided an opportunity for visitors to see the works to “full advantage.”⁸⁵ France too had adopted this display method in the *Salles des Fastes* for its porcelain, glassware and silverware. It was perhaps the high quality and ornate surroundings which kept the author from choosing to emphasize the French display. The accompanying pictures are of daily use pottery, not the carefully crafted and expensive porcelain found in the French pavilion. In a similar manner, the crystal map of France was not mentioned, whereas the national maps of Russia, Finland, Great Britain and Sweden were featured. In addition, despite the enthusiasm of the *New York Times* bibliophile for the French book display, it

⁸³ “New York Fair: Flexibility, Circulation, Light Control,” *Architectural Record* 86 (August 1939): 41-42.

⁸⁴ Lewis Mumford, “The Skyline in Flushing: West is East,” *Royal Architectural Institute of Canada*, 16.8 (August 1939): 183.

⁸⁵ “Comparative Criticism,” *The Architectural Review* 86 (July - December 1939): 90.

too was overlooked in favour of a reading library, where visitors could browse examples of Argentinean literature and newspapers.

France was frequently overshadowed in the architectural press by Sweden. Its “elegant charm” and “intelligent handling of the problem of exposition presentation” as well as its central garden made it a Fair favourite for architects.⁸⁶ France had its “superb cantilevered balcony” for watching the nightly fireworks, but nothing that could attract the interest of design students for more than fifteen minutes.⁸⁷ A guide for design students written to identify sights that should not be missed because of their aesthetic quality provided suggested times for coverage. It suggested fifteen minutes in the smaller pavilions of Ecuador and Ireland, and as much as forty-five minutes in the Brazilian, Finnish and Swedish pavilions. France, however, was absent from the list of notable international exhibitors. Instead it was listed under miscellaneous and the authors suggested that the textiles display on the main floor was worth a brief glance.⁸⁸

France was equally slighted by the *Architectural Review*. Eleven national pavilions were discussed alongside interior plans and pictures. A twelfth pavilion, Great Britain, had a five-page article devoted to it. France was not included and was criticised in the accompanying introductory remarks. The

⁸⁶ “The National Pavilions,” *The Architectural Review* 86 (July - December 1939): 63 and Frances T. Schwab, *A Design Students' Guide to the New York World's Fair* (New York: Laboratory School of Design, 1939), 17.

⁸⁷ Humphrey Carver, “Canada at the Fair,” *Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 16.8 (August 1939): 184.

⁸⁸ Frances T. Schwab, *A Design Students' Guide*, 29. France was not the only nation with one of its exhibits listed under miscellaneous rather than the whole building under the international exhibitors. Other snubbed nations include Denmark, Norway, Poland, Portugal and the U.S.S.R.

author pointed out that France should have made better use of the reflective qualities of the Lagoon of Nations at the front of the pavilion and the river that ran alongside it.⁸⁹ Furthermore, the author argued that by concentrating their efforts on the "great concave front" the French had neglected the other sides of the building. The author added to this list complaints about poor display construction and inattention to visitor circulation. The final insult was the suggestion that the pavilion would have been worse if the *Paris* had not sunk with more displays destined for the Fair.⁹⁰

The response of the architectural press to the French pavilion could be described as indifferent. They had very little to say about the pavilion, and what was printed was, on the whole, negative. In examining what was said about the Swedish pavilion, it becomes apparent that authors for the architectural journals did not see the French pavilion as a radical departure from anything that had been done before. In addition, the methods of display and floor layout were crowded in comparison to the favoured pavilions. Although the coverage was critical of France, a casual reader might have noted its absence from the lists of recommended pavilions more than the tone of authors. The American architectural press therefore did not confirm the implied and explicit role of France as the aesthetic guide for Western civilisation. The essays instead emphasized the great achievements of other nations and corporations at the World's Fair. As such, architecture, as an important expression of France's long-standing lead-edge innovator was

⁸⁹ "The Buildings," *The Architectural Review* 86 (July - December 1939): 63.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

rejected. It is perhaps best that France received so little attention instead of the resounding, and noticeable, criticism of the Russian and Italian exhibits.

Conclusion

France was well-received by the American press during her participation at the World's Fair. France was the focus of the most articles and the most column space in the *New York Times* when compared to the other foreign participants. Although she was not the focus of extensive commentary in other dailies, for the most part, reporters were appreciative of her display. As with their coverage of the World's Fair, the journalists kept their reports on the pavilion strictly separate from the political climate of the day. Nor was France accused of using the pavilion as overt propaganda. Rather, journalists praised the French exhibits, especially the displays of already familiar cultural artefacts.

The main and upper floor of the pavilion, the focus of French propaganda during the 1930s, received the most frequent and laudatory mentions in the press. The lower level of the pavilion, while attracting some attention, was generally overlooked. As such it can be argued that the American press was comfortable with the ready-made image of France as a cultural capital of the Western world, and that efforts to expand this image were not readily accepted. Despite French achievements in industry, the American press, and perhaps the American people, were most comfortable with the fine art, fashion and food that was being enthusiastically exported long before the New York World's Fair.

The French exhibits, which were designed to emphasize the importance of France's past achievements to the future, were not discussed as communicating a message to the pavilion visitors. Where France did not succeed in promoting her message of the past's integral role in the future in the press, it did succeed in drawing increased attention to itself. The same was true of the fine arts press, where the continuity of French contributions did receive some mention, but was not connected to the larger framework of all the pavilion displays. The extra coverage that France received could no doubt be considered a victory, for the American press and its readers were encouraged by the description of French exhibits, to discover "incentives to love [France] better," a message that would not have been conveyed through the conventional political coverage of France during the same six-month period.⁹¹

⁹¹ Marcel Olivier, French Commissioner General, *Address of French Commissioner General Marcel Olivier at the Dedication of the French Pavilion*, 13 January 1939, New York, file France Foreign Government Participation. Box 99, New York World's Fair records, 1935-1945, New York Public Library.

Conclusion

France attributed a great deal of significance to international expositions, hosting and participating in a considerable number after their inception in 1851. From the mid-nineteenth century until 1900, France contributed to an exposition approximately every five years. This trend continued following the interruption caused by the First World War. France increased its participation still further during the 1930s, participating in six international exhibitions: its own colonial exposition in 1931, the Chicago Century of Progress exhibition in 1933, the Brussels international exhibition of 1935, the French exposition of 1937, the San Francisco Golden Gate Exhibition of 1939 and, finally, the New York World's Fair of 1939. Its reliance on exhibitions as forums to strengthen its reputation is remarkable during the 1930s given the challenges posed by the Depression and international tensions.

France's approach to the New York World's Fair reflected a propaganda strategy created in the early 1920s by the French Ambassador Jules Jusserand. The superior contributions of French culture were understood by the French foreign ministry to be the best counter-offensive to German propaganda in the United States. Consistent with the propaganda policy, the French pavilion at the Fair was a large-scale exhibit of French achievements in the arts, and to a lesser degree, industry. The extensive allocation of exhibit space to fine art, fashion and its accessories, as well as literature, was a physical reflection of the importance attributed to these cultural products as a representation of France. These areas of expertise were used as an avenue to attract American

affections. In the pavilion, these cultural products also represented a formidable history of achievement that the French wished to demonstrate as invaluable to the Fair-imagined "World of Tomorrow". The industrial and tourism displays of the lower floor, which featured automobiles, airplanes and railcars, attested to continued French capabilities in areas where France had once led. Despite their lapsed importance, the exhibits on the lower floor contributed to the overall emphasis of the pavilion's celebration of the past as a vital part of current developments and future innovations. France *la créatrice* would help to inspire the "World of Tomorrow".

Marcel Olivier, the general commissioner of the French pavilion, had hoped that the pavilion might provide incentives for Americans to love the French better, and the American press responded positively to the French displays. The *New York Times* wrote about the pavilion regularly for the duration of the Fair. The articles, however, concentrated on the French exhibits of the main and upper levels; the lower level was not discussed in any exclusive articles. The coverage supplied by the American press suggested that the pavilion did not provide any new revelations about France. Indeed, the treatment of the pavilion instead reminded readers of the same themes that were already prevalent in French press releases, cultural evenings, and other propaganda used during the interwar period.

France was committed to fulfilling its participatory contract with the World's Fair. But midway through the second Fair season, France was invaded by German forces and surrendered to Hitler. Although the dissolution of the

Third Republic and the establishment of the Vichy regime signalled a dramatic shift in national policies, the French pavilion remained open until the closing day of the Fair in October 1940. Many of the pavilion contents were held in trust in the United States until after the war.

The world continued to gather for international exhibitions after the end of the Second World War. France has not, however, hosted an international exhibition since 1937.¹ Although the explanations for this fall outside the scope of this thesis, it is likely that France's failure to host international exhibitions can be connected to changes in its international status in the postwar period. Prior to the Second World War, France was confident of its world power status, demonstrated by its cultural preeminence and its sizable colonial possessions. Conversely, after World War II France had to contend with the steady dissolution of its empire and a diminished international status. According to historians Brian Jenkins and Tony Chafer, the French government dedicated itself to developing a new niche as a middle ranking power during the Cold War.² It is conceivable that the change in France's status made it reluctant to spend money on an unprofitable venture when its role in NATO, the United Nations, and later, the European Economic Community provided France with venues in which to affirm its new roles. There has been a tendency amongst exhibition organizers and contemporaries to declare the heyday of

¹ Although France has not hosted any international exhibitions, it did host a series of special exhibits in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Paris hosted a special exhibition on Urbanism in 1947, Lyon hosted a special exhibition on rural habitation in 1949, Lille hosted a special exhibition on textile in 1951, and Paris hosted a special exhibition on flowers in 1969.

² Brian Jenkins and Tony Chafer, "Introduction" in *France: From the Cold War to the New World Order*, edited by Tony Chafer and Brian Jenkins (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 3.

international exhibitions long past. In the case of France, one may declare that its heyday as the foremost international exhibition host is past, but its legacy lives on in what has become the international symbol of Paris: the Eiffel Tower, constructed for the 1889 *Exposition Internationale*.³

³ See Henri Loyrette's article about the Eiffel Tower for an interesting analysis of the history of the Tower and its transition into a site of memory. Henri Loyrette, "La tour Eiffel," in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, volume 3, *De L'Archive à L'Emblème*, edited by Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1992).

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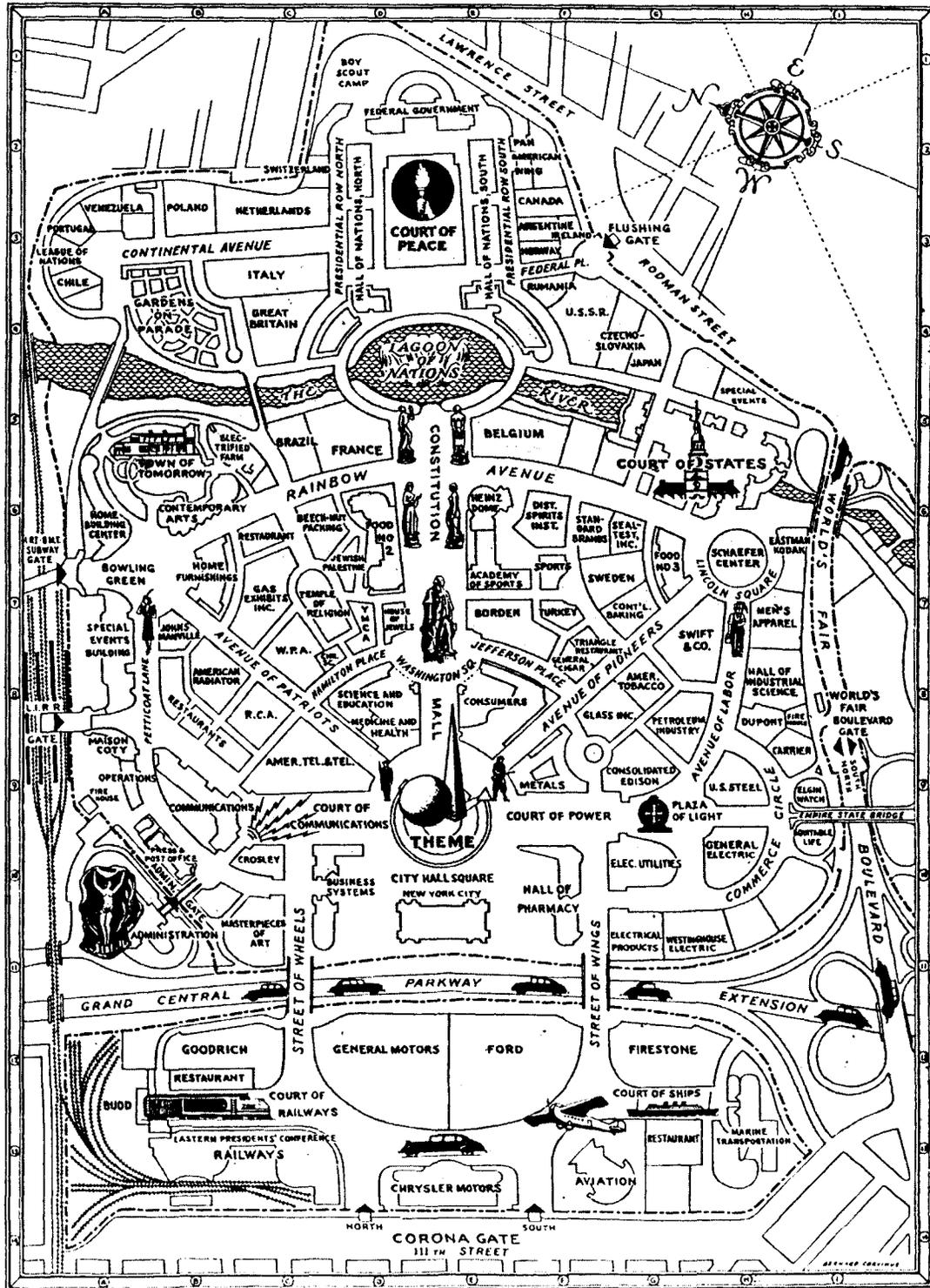
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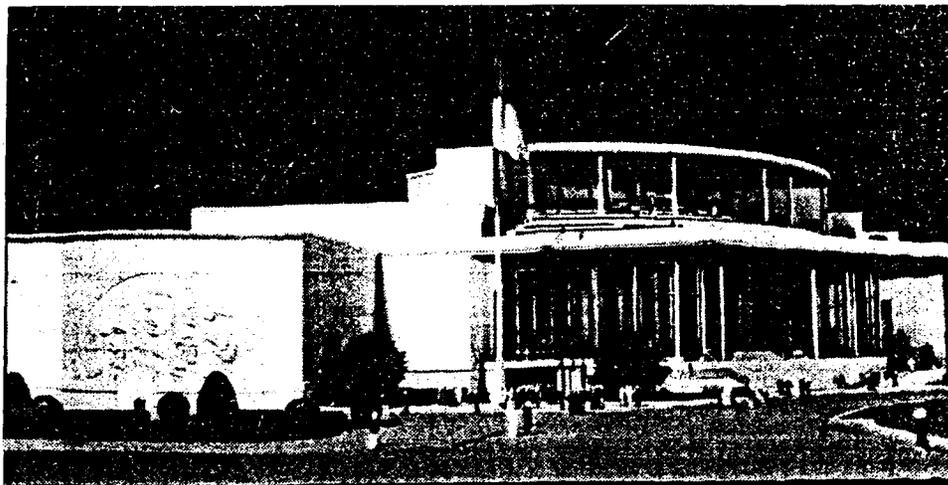
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