

History of world Expos

World exhibition fairs have their origins in European civilization. The graduation of exhibition presentations from national to world scale resulted in a fundamental impact on the global ambitions of the British Empire, which, at a later date and with the considerable help of the age of steam, had converted England to the "workshop of the world." Rivalry with France, which wanted to keep pace, spawned in the late 18th and early 19th centuries the nascent series of National Exhibitions (in 1798 on Champs-du-Mars, and in 1801 and 1802 in the Louvre), which were supposed to celebrate the survival of the French Republic and subsequently the Empire (in 1806, at the Esplanade des Invalides).

The organizers of these exhibitions took more and more to heart the aims of presenting the best products and of triggering a competitive spirit between entrepreneurs, which would be achieved by declaring the best product winners. At the same time, this stage is remarkable for the inclusion of all types of manufacturing and the unusual broad sweep necessitated that the exhibition be divided into categories. The increased cost factor of these events was solved by obtaining state support, which was a reason for issuing the exhibition catalogue.

The idea for a world presentation was imparted by Sir Henry Cole (inspired by a visit to the Paris Exhibition in 1849) to Prince Albert, the husband of Queen Victoria. Crystal Palace grew up on a spacious exhibition space, designed by Joseph Paxton and built in a mere three months (!) in Hyde Park. The response from France came soon and so in 1855, Paris threw open its gates to the world in the largest city of continental Europe. The subtext of this pompous event was the attempt by its initiator, Emperor Napoleon III to come out of political isolation.

The London Exhibition of 1862 suffered with the sudden death of its principal organizer, Prince Albert, in December 1861. The crest of the economic boom brought along the Paris Exhibition of 1867.

Another European superpower, able to present itself to the world was Austria Austro – Hungary. The Exhibition of 1873 however, was strongly impacted upon by a crash of the Viennese Stock Exchange. All that the Viennese have to show for it now are the Prater carnival grounds. The exhibition secured the introduction of Strauss's waltzes to London and from there to the entire world.

One hundred years of independence of the United States was celebrated in Philadelphia in 1876. The exhibition commission, remembering lessons of previous exhibitions, abandoned the concept of one universal mega-space, and opted instead for numerous specialized pavilions.

A truly revolutionary novelty was prepared by the 1878 World Exhibition in Paris, when it offered participating states the opportunity to contribute to the building of its own pavilions on the Avenue of Nations. A grandiose monument to the ability and creativity of the French engineering school was left behind in the form of the Eiffel Tower, by the Paris Exhibition of 1889.

The emergence of modern American civilization, some 400 years after the discovery of the continent by Christopher Columbus was the subject of the Chicago Exhibition of 1893. The waning 19th century was ended in style in Paris in 1900. To this day the exhibition area of 515 ha (1272 acres) from the 1904 exhibition in Saint Louis has not been trumped. Any larger area cannot be covered and duly absorbed by a normal visitor. In 1915, at a time when the USA was not yet engaged in the world war conflict, San Francisco hosted a Panama – Pacific Exhibition on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the discovery of the Pacific Ocean by Francesco Balboa.

Barcelona 1929 – 1930 entered the visitors' subconscious as the exhibition of light. Each evening, the Avenue of Queen Christina came to light, lit water effects of the Magic Fountain were added and everything was crowned by an aureole above the Montjuic Mountain. The pearl of the exhibition, which unfortunately was not duly noted, was the German pavilion by the architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

Trying to introduce some type of order in the World Exhibitions resulted in the forming of a committee, which met in 1902 in Paris to deal with this subject on an international level. At a meeting of the most active participants in 1908 in Brussels, a committee (Fédération des comités

permanents des expositions), was formed, which sought to get involved in the events surrounding the World Exhibitions. In the decade preceding WWI 12 World Exhibitions were held, (in 1907 there were three). Finding solutions to existing problems was moved to the back burner by WWI. This became possible only after 1928, when at the invitation of the French government, 48 states attended the congress (5 of whom, for instance the USA, only sent observers). A permanent International Exhibitions and Expositions Bureau was set up (Bureau International des Expositions, abbreviated BIE) located in Paris and on November 22nd 1928, 43 nations signed a diplomatic convention, whose principal task was to guarantee the high quality of World Exhibitions and restrictions on the number of exhibitions among others. The convention came into full force and effect on January 17th 1931.

List of epochs in the history of World Exhibitions:

1851 – 1867 Presentation of Anglo-French dominant positions in industry, to the world;
1873 – 1902 Rapid expansion of World Exhibitions to other developed countries and to other continents (North America, Australia);
1902 – 1928 Attempts to introduce order in organizing exhibitions, crowned by establishing the BIE and accepting diplomatic conventions for World Exhibitions;
From 1931 to this day, the convention stands (changed by amendments in 1948, 1966, 1977 and 1989);
Until 1946, the BIE was part of the League of Nations;
1958 – 1988 bi-polar splitting of the world, competition within the Cold War;
Since 1992, globalization has been the principal theme of World Exhibitions.

The 1930s were marked by a world-wide economic crisis and the growing aggression of totalitarian states but also by an undying belief in better tomorrows, fed by successes in scientific and technological developments. All these trends were reflected in the World Exhibitions. On May 27th 1933, president Hoover opened the International Exhibition in Chicago, as the Century of Progress, whose theme was the Success of Science and its use by Industry for the betterment of humanity. The exhibition was organized at the occasion of the amalgamating Chicago into one city.

The exhibition area covered 427 acres, south of the city, on the shore between 12th and 39th streets, on an artificial island in Lake Michigan. Access to the island was possible, besides ferries, by the Sky Ride cable car which was designed by Joshua d'Esposito. At a height of almost two hundred meters above the water, the visitors flew around on bizarre, suspended rockets. The organizers attempted to illustrate the significance of scientific discoveries, the method used in achieving them and which of their changes will be used in industry and day-to-day life. Large companies presented the latest manufacturing procedures. Right there, before the very eyes of the visitors, Chrysler Motors was building cars on an assembly line. Success was celebrated by a German health pavilion, the didactically precise "Glass Man" and it was not for the last time in the World Exhibitions. The star of the Midway entertainment centre was the incorrigible Sally Rand with her well-endowed girls. The exhibition was revolutionary from two points of view straight away. Thanks to the continuously improving electric lighting, it was now possible to build pavilions without windows and make the interiors fully independent of daylight. Another factor which made it possible to radically change the appearance of exhibition halls was paint. The exhibition council did not hesitate to hire the scenographer Joseph Urban to design the exhibition site's colours. Urban went as far as detaching individual themed whole segments. To increase the impression, there was night lighting of the pavilions. After verifying the profits, the Chicago City Hall decided on a second exhibition season. Thanks to that, the present 22.5 million visitors were joined from May 26th to October 31st 1934, by another 16.5 million visitors. For the following season's innovations, one thing had not been forgotten – all the buildings were given a new coat of paint.

Paris hosted the International Exhibition of Arts and Technology in Modern Life from May 25th – November 25th 1937.. The exhibition grounds of 105 acres covered the Champs-de-Mars, Trocadero and both banks of the Seine, roughly the same size as in 1900. Organizers divided the theme into three areas – economy, the spiritual world and world peace (this theme was a topic for several congresses at the exhibition). Participation was accepted by 46 countries. The opening of the exhibition was delayed several times due to strikes, indifference on the part of the authorities and to top it all off, there had been floods and problems with the construction of the Chaillot Palace. After the official opening, many pavilions stood unfinished, so the joke of the day among Parisians was that the exhibition was opened just because the Eiffel Tower had been finished. The dominant feature of the exhibition became the Chaillot Palace. The Chaillot was designed by architects Carlu, Louis-Hippolyt Boileau and León Azéma. Of other structures, Paris was

permanently enriched by the neo-classicist Museum of Modern Art. Among the nations' pavilions, the highest award went to the Finnish pavilion for the use of traditional northern materials of wood and the highest prize went to the architect Alvar Aalto. For the second time (if we don't count the "anti-colonial" pavilion from the Colonial Exhibition of 1931) was the participation of the Soviet Union (the first time was in 1925 in Paris). Its pavilion stood symbolically facing the German pavilion. Boris Iofan, as well as Albert Speer had created molochs, without an ounce of humanity. The rivals were kept optically apart only by the Trocadero fountains. The Soviet pavilion was smaller but it was topped off by the colossal martial statuary by V. I. Muchin, "The Kolkhoz woman and a worker" directly opposite the Reich's eagle, perched on a swastika. Hopes for peace were expressed on pillars of the Chaillot with the word PAX. Anti-war sentiment was emphasized most emphatically by the Spanish exhibition of its Republican pavilion – Picasso's Guernica. On the other hand, Nazism had found an excellent propagandist in the young and able film director, Leni Riefenstahl, who impressed the exhibition panel with the film "Triumph of the Will." For this document about the meeting of the NSDAP, she received the Grand Prix. 31 million visitors passed through the gates of the exhibition. The location of the exhibition in a metropolitan city centre has proven to be unbearable for organizers of subsequent exhibitions.

From April 30th 1939 until October 31st 1939, and after re-opening on May 11th 1940 to October 27th 1940, the World Exhibition was hosted by New York. The insensitively presented topic of "Creating the World of Tomorrows" only confirmed that the isolationist tendencies of the USA did not reflect reality. The exhibition site was located on a reclaimed waste dump (F. S. Fitzgerald in his novel *The Great Gatsby*, calls this place the valley of ashes), where today the Flushing Meadows Parkstands. The area of the exhibition grounds was huge – 486.6 hectares (1200 acres). A record of 60 nations and international organizations took part. There were two events prepared for the opening day on April 30th 1939, when 200 thousand people came. The first one was to have been the flight of K. V. Kokkinaki with a navigator from Moscow, over the Arctic to New York. After an emergency landing in New Brunswick, the crew was saved by Canadians and flew in with some delay on an airplane borrowed from the Soviet Embassy. In an event with historical significance was the first public broadcasting in New York. On April 30th, David Sarnoff, the president of Radio Corporation of America (RCA) stood in front of his company's pavilion and declared that "this event will change the world." The dominant of the exhibition grounds was the 213 m high, three-sided obelisk Trylon and a Perisphere ball of 60 meters in diameter, by the architects W. K. Harrison and J. A. Foulhoux. The eccentrically planned structures incorporated a dynamic clash of antithesis uniformity. The exhibition introduced a number of new materials – plexiglass, glass fibre, Bakelite, fluorescent lights, nylon (abbreviation of New York and London), Kodak colour films and three-dimensional movies watched through Polaroid glasses. The most successful company exhibition was the Futurama in the General Motors pavilion – a vision of a metropolis in 1960. A time capsule with microfilms was buried in the courtyard of the Westinghouse Corporation for future generations about life in the USA. Of the national pavilions, the one judged the best was the Swedish pavilion by S. Markelius but the most visited (and mysterious to the Americans) was the Soviet one. It was air-conditioned and lined with Carellian marble (like Lenin's mausoleum). In January 1940, at a time of the increasing war campaign against Finland, it was torn down, at the request of the Soviet Commissar and taken back to the Soviet Union. The Finns stayed on (the Symphony in Wood was by A. Aalto and Aino Marsio-Aalto and was underlined by music by Sibelius) for another year and presented photographs of Finnish towns, which were filled with death and destruction, compliments of the Red Army bombers. In the second year, besides the USSR, even Holland, Argentina as well as Siam had called it quits. The national exhibitions were changing into an exhibition of shadows – many countries lost their sovereignty or vanished from the surface of the earth. The denier of World Exhibitions was experienced by the League of Nations. The organizers began to realize the seriousness of the situation and within the next year, they changed the motto to Peace and Freedom. The exhibition was seen by 50 million visitors – their numbers were continually monitored by a seven-storey high cash register.

Two years after ending the greatest hecatomb in the history of humanity came an idea to invite the countries of the world to compete without weapons, where the arena would be a World Exhibition in the capital city of the Belgian Kingdom. The euphoria which followed the defeat of fascism went by the wayside and the world was irreconcilably bipolarized (NATO versus the Warsaw Pact). The emergence of the Cold War almost destroyed it and in order for the exhibition to take place at all, it had to be moved from 1955 to 1958. The rapid advancement of decolonization was clear from the defeat of the French in Vietnam in 1954 and the subsequent crisis of the IV. Republic related to the war in Algeria. The Burgundy Conference of 1955 saw the incorporation of Third World countries into the Unaligned Bloc movement. The invitation, sent out by the Belgian government in 1954, accented the role of humanity in the world and everything should be seen through human eyes – a

certain role here was certainly played by the fear of the recent horrors. The basic theme of the Exposition Universelle et Internationale de Bruxelles (unofficially Expo '58) was establishing the motto "Balance the world for a more humane world." Almost fifty states and various international organizations (UN, the Vatican with the exhibition of Civitas Dei, the Order of Malta, the Red Cross, the European Society of Coal and Steel, the European Council and the European Payment Union among others) came together in one of the centres of European culture, from which came (the birth of the EHS, the founding of Euroatom) and to this day, stronger and stronger initiatives for European integration originate with them.

The exhibition site spread north from downtown, in the Heysel suburb, along both sides of the Boulevard of the Century. The basic disposition stemmed from exhibition grounds built in 1935, which was used from that point on as trade fair grounds. The complex was expanded by roughly one fifth to an area of 200 hectares in a south-eastly direction, which put it right next to the Royal Park. Organizers of that era, having foresight, had built a parking lot with adequate capacity. The rich and famous took advantage of the opportunity to fly from the airport by helicopter to the new heliport, immediately next to the exhibition grounds. Visitors to the exhibition travelled within the grounds by either buses or motorized rickshaws; to cover the exhibition ground on foot was nearly impossible. The most favoured means of transport were the green, yellow and blue cable cars, floating some 10 meters above the exhibition avenues and which offered beautiful vistas. The monumental entry into the grounds was the reconstructed Century Palace (finished in 1935, in the year of the 100th anniversary of independence). It was topped off with a blue parabola strewn with stars and a dove of peace. From here, the visitor could go in any direction for a tour 25 km long and like a magnet, he / she headed in the direction of the Atom. This structure, the symbol of the exhibition and a proof of the technological possibilities which to this day are a dominant feature of Brussels, celebrated its creator André Waterkeyn, the chief engineer of the exhibition grounds. The structure was the child of the period, which began penetrating inside it, so that the energy released from within could be used for the benefit of humanity, when the first introduction to the mysterious force of the core was so tragic for the citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The project was inspired by the structure of iron crystal. The cube with eight balls in the corners and one in the middle (all interconnected with tubes and walkways on the inside) was supposed to, according to the first plans, rest only on the bottom ball, which was rejected and the three lowermost balls were supported. The silvery giant had a lot of firsts; for example the longest escalator in Europe and the fastest elevator in the world, which took the visitors to a height of 102 meters within several seconds. The Atomium is used to this day, even though it's a losing proposition and other uses for it are subject to excited debates.

Right behind the main entrance in the International Palace of Creative Arts, there awaited a jewel for art lovers in the form of a grand project. Its first part called "Fifty Years of Modern Art" took place between the 17th April and 21st July. The representative selection of paintings and statuary gave a hint of the direction modern art was heading from the onset of the new century – Fauvism, Cubism, Futurism, Orphism, Expressionism, Constructivism, Dadaism, Surrealism, naive art but also socialist realism. This compendium was followed by no less a fundamental exhibition entitled "Humanity and the Arts," comparing development of the arts in various civilizations. Despite tremendous support given to the project by the General Commissioner, Baron George Moens de Fernig's exhibition in the International Palace of Science did not achieve, as intended by Robert Cauwenbergh, the wished-for level of success and popularization of scientific achievements. Merit-worthy admiration was earned by the next pavilion with international participation – Génie Civil (engineering structures) for its daring construction, with the participation of architect van Doorselaer, engineer A. Paduart and sculptor J. Moeschal. The view of an elegant and slender needle built from reinforced concrete with a suspended bridge, took one's breath away. In the overall rating of all the pavilions, the Génie Civil took second place (the best was the pavilion of Czechoslovakia, the British were third). Of other national pavilions, one should mention the pavilion of the Federal Republic of Germany. Architects Egon Eiermann and Sep Ruf had consciously continued in the pre-war Bauhaus tradition. In an attractive exhibition called Instrumentarium, composer Carl Orff put together the strangest tools and devices, whose sole common denominator was that they made a sound of some sort. The principal theme resonated with the Netherland's exhibition "Humanity and the sea," where many water surfaces reflected centuries' worth of struggle with the sea of this small but brave nation.

The General Commissioner of the US participation, Mr. Howard Cullman, took it upon himself to influence visitors with a high degree of objectivity. He thought it as serious to show that even a free society has its own problems, which cannot be solved overnight. This is why he instigated the project "Unfinished task," which was to show real problems of American society. He entrusted the

project's realization to Professor Walt W. Rostow. However, shortly after the opening, a number of critical voices made themselves heard and they were mainly from the same side. Katharine Howard in a memorandum to the General Commissioner spoke of the exhibition "Unfinished task," as damaging to the prestige of the United States. The Eisenhower's administration recoiled in the face of increasing criticism and on May 9th the exhibition was closed for "renovations." Examples of racial segregation, photographs from poor ghettos and parched land were replaced by a presentation of public health care, education and social security. The exhibition was reopened on August 1st. An infamous end of this daring attempt proved that it is very difficult to swim against the current and fight the propagandist showcase of successes as it was impossible in those days, to rely on an independent judgment of the majority of visitors. At the same time, the circular pavilion itself with its interior swimming pool by Edward Stone, and specifically its incorporation into the whole area, were judged by an expert panel worthy of fifth place among all the other pavilions. In a struggle between superpowers, the Soviet Union had bet on a simple principle of apotheosis, while not worrying too much about unifying its exhibition script with that of the basic theme of the exhibition as a whole. The main triumph of Soviet ideologues was the fresh successes of their cosmic program. Models of Sputnik 1 and 2 (launching of the first man-made satellite on October 4th 1957 was an undeniable scientific success), served as proof of the supremacy of the Soviet political system. A larger-than-life statue of Lenin loomed over the satellite models and the scene was "lyrically" underlined by a panorama of Moscow. Of the company pavilions, the most popular was Philips. This company did not hesitate to engage a trio of excellent artists – Le Corbusier, Iannis Xenakis and Edgar Varése. They created an eccentric exhibition, at whose heart was an electronic poem, an impressive audio-visual program – some sort of a cry of humanity – which left a message in the souls of those he subdued.

The Brussels Exhibition with all its experiments pushed the possibilities of construction as it existed then, to the very limits, it ushered in the mass use of reinforced concrete structures, which further freed the hands of architects in their next growth. The exhibition was seen by a considerable 41,452,412 visitors. Concurrent with the Expo, Brussels lived its World Fest 1958.

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