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Les six continents: An Exploration of Political Visual Rhetoric in Public Sculpture

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Les six continents:

An Exploration of Political Visual Rhetoric in Public Sculpture

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for my grandparents

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Preface

Last summer, I interned at an art restoration atelier in Paris where I enjoyed learning new skills from varnishing paintings to handling art. However, in the time following the internship, I struggled to be honest when I was asked about my experience. I did not want to express any dissatisfaction, afraid of sounding naive, "too politically correct," or unprepared for the real world if I expressed my difficulties working in a comparatively conservative workspace that included the casual yet pointed micro-aggressions from a colleague to restoring artworks made with dubious intent.

My first major assignment was to restore a Blackamoor statue. The minstrel figure stood tall in Roman gear holding up a torch, serving his future owner for eternity. It was not even for a personal collection, which I still cannot tell if for the better or worse, but for an antique shop. My job was to help make this heavily racialized black body transform to peak-enough condition to sell for the shop of a middle aged, presumedly upper-middle class, white man–the typical clientele found at the atelier. I felt dissatisfied with the artwork I was tasked with repairing. The piece seemed better suited for a European equivalent of the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia than for a sales display, ready to be circulated again as contemporary interior decor. There was always a near tangible tension in the room, wondering if someone else would share what was on my mind. When asking questions of my colleagues about the statue, I rarely received anything beyond, *c'est beau, non?*

I still struggle to describe how the experience was, as it was an incredibly informative summer, teaching me practical skills and metaphorically opening my eyes to new ideas that I hope to explore, not only in this paper, but also in years to come. There was a particular

assignment that caught my attention which led to a slight disillusionment with the neutrality of the art restoration field. A much needed reminder for why I fell into this major to begin with, the experience impassioned me to return to the world of art history and visual culture as I wanted to write and discuss these objects under a critical lens.

Perhaps made more alert by this experience, I was on the bus one day and saw a flash of a statue with a startling composition. Underneath the statue of a general-like figure laid a base consisting of an Asian man holding him up. I later found out that the statue additionally features a half-nude African female figure, another female figure representing Madagascar explicitly, and a clothed Romanesque female figure holding up the base for a statue of Joseph Gallieni, the former minister of war of France, responsible for massacres in colonies including Madagascar and Vietnam. In June 2020, three French anti-racism activists had actually draped a black cloth over the statue, leading to their arrests. The event did not prompt any curatorial changes to how the statue is displayed.

During my time in Paris, I was conflicted about how I wanted to consume and interact with the content I was being presented, given without hesitation or question. While I wanted to visit museums like the Quai Branly and the Musée de l'Homme to see how stolen artworks or inhumane objects were acquired (eg. the objectively immoral display of Sarah Baartman's preserved brain, skeleton, and genitalia at the Musée de l'Homme well past her death in 1815 until its removal in 1974), I also did not want to contribute to them financially. At the very least, I thought, such works are enclosed in museums and often overshadowed by larger museums such as the Musée d'Orsay.

It is there that I found the topic of this paper, at the esplanade of the Musée d'Orsay, free and on public display. Six female statues are placed in a hierarchical series, the non-white bodies

sexualized, frozen in provocative positions for eternity. While the statues are often overlooked or trivialized for selfies at the museum, they exist as a taunting reminder of the world power that is still in place. Who narrates history and who gets to define the "other"? While I am aware that problematic statues exist in all countries in which Western colonizers dominate written history, I was struck by how we, as either tourists or locals, participate and become complicit in such passive public sculpture.

While seemingly innocuous, these statues, made for the Paris World's Fair of 1878, are far from mere statues. They are markers of a colonial period and living proof that its traces still linger today. I find myself so drawn to these female figures. While many of the fairs featured real women who actually existed, "imported" for living colonial displays, they have faded out of the public realm, into the relatively inaccessible world of academia, whereas the statues not based in any reality have the final word. These fantasy compositions are given the chance to exist beyond the moment of the fair. Later, I was made aware of a similar set of statues in New York, made several years later for the U.S. Customs House. This placement is itself significant because of its location in Bowling Green, where immigrant populations coming to America would get their first glimpse of Manhattan after entering from Ellis Island. (The statue of America is ethnographically depicted as white, a change which I hope to explore in an upcoming paper in relation to the National Park site of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Home and allegorical prints).

In this paper, I hope to unpack the visual elements that are enforced in reductive and othering depictions of non-white figures. Art history is not just the beauty that is created by a society. Art feeds into everything, as an aspect of our public consciousness. It is political, economic, and visual rhetoric that was shaped to document our attitudes about history, reflecting the values of those in charge of commission who wished to enforce and impose perceptions onto

others. While the details and colonial intent of the world fairs are often forgotten by those who visit their remnants in tourist sites including the Eiffel Tower, the structures are still in place and a source of profit for these mother countries. In short, I hope this essay will illuminate the stakes of these controversial statues beyond *c'est beau*.

Introduction

The statues of *Les six continents* stand as remnants of the 1878 *Exposition Universelle* and visual markers of the cultural, social, and economic culture of the time period. The series, serving as public art, continues to inform and participate in its environment and space, as it is on display by the entrance of the Musée d'Orsay today, seated well beyond its initial opening at *le Palais du Trocadéro* over a century ago. As an example of public art, the series is available to the general public, free of charge and on full display. The maintenance and continued display of statues has recently come into debate over questions about what constitutes memorialization and what we as a collective society are commemorating.

According to the Association for Public Art, the genre is a "reflection of how we see the world–the artist's response to our time and place combined with our own sense of who we are."[1] In other words, it is a communication of values and how they are ingrained into our collective community. As some works are governmentally funded, commissioned public art is an established method of incorporating politically motivated visual rhetoric into a physical landscape, and in turn, into the public's subconscious. In the case of the 1878 *Exposition Universelle*, the public sculpture of *Les six continents* offers great insight into the colonial world where it emerged, and how its impact has been visually ingrained in contemporary society. By using these six statues as a case study, this paper will show how the public sculptures provided a permanent alternative to the ephemeral cases of human display popular at other 19th century

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[1] Penny Balkin Bach, "What Is Public Art?," Association for Public Art, March 4, 2021, https://www.associationforpublicart.org/what-is-public-art/.

fairs and thereby perpetuated a more durable image of an ambiguous, non-white, ethnic "other"

in Europe into the 20th and 21st centuries.[2]

In terms of propaganda and visual depictions of the "other" within the *expositions*

universelles, public sculpture and works from the 1878 event are often overlooked. In general,

research on the 1878 Exposition Universelle is limited, often overshadowed by the 1867 and

1899 exhibitions which featured prominent usage of human display, as well as the opening of the

Eiffel Tower (in the latter event.) Works such as *Peoples on Parade* and *Human Zoos* feature

extensive research on the aspect of human display at these events, which often excludes focus on

the 1878 event. Further, Paul Greenhalgh's *Ephemeral Vistas* offers great insight into the history

of these exhibitions. However, by focusing on the temporary aspects of the fairs, Greenhalgh

leaves 1878 underrepented as it featured a greater focus on laying the groundwork for future

exhibition site expansion through public architecture, including the groundwork for today's

popular tourist site of Trocadéro plaza.

Further, the 1878 *Exposition Universelle*'s permanent site expansion through architecture

also featured public art in the form of sculptures, as seen in *Les six continents,* with the genre of

statues yet to be deeply considered within the context of its influence from human display and

world's fairs. While advertisement media and photographs have been researched, other forms of

art including sculpture are referenced but have yet to be considered in depth with particular case

studies. There is a notable lack of information regarding the six statues that are currently on

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[2] Human display was quite literally the display of human bodies considered "ethnic others" to a white European public. During the world's exhibitions, people were brought to fair sites to be displayed as a form of entertainment and spectacle. The practice of these human zoo displays at world's fairs lasted until the Brussels World's Fair in 1958, when it already was considered immoral and had been banned in other countries. While human zoos are mainly discussed in relation to the 1867 and 1889 exhibitions, it is important to note that the 1878 exhibition did feature living displays of ethnic others to a smaller, but still objectionable and immoral degree. More will be discussed in the next section of this paper. https://www.theguardian.com/world/ 2018/ apr/16/belgium-comes-to-terms-with-human-zoos-of-its-colonial-past.

display at the popular Musée d'Orsay, which averages over three million annual visitors.[3] The

plaques attached to each statue give only the name of the artist, where they were born and died,

and the following text followed by a reference code:

> *Commandé en 1877 pour la terrasse du premier palais du Trocadéro Exposition*
>
> *Universelle, Paris, 1878 Attribué en 1986*

The plaques offer no explanation for how and why the sculptures were acquired for the museum,

nor do they give any context or acknowledgment of the colonial world they inhabited. Moreover,

those who wish to find out more about these mysterious statues would be disappointed to find

out that *le* Musée d'Orsay's online collection database does not include any entries for the

statues, leaving viewers to their own devices.[4] Ultimately, what is at stake here is that these

highly public works perpetuate racist tropes borne of their colonial context to the contemporary

public without framing or interpretation, which I intend to provide.

In this paper, I will explore the 1878 *Exposition Universelle* in further detail in order to

examine one aspect of the enduring effects of the world's fairs in public art and architecture. I

will do this by examining the colonial context and contemporary legacy of *Les six continents*.

Unlike the more famous 1867 and 1899 fairs, the 1878 Exposition's colonial rhetoric was not

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[3] "Musée D'Orsay," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed April 12, 2022, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Musee-dOrsay.

[4] As of the 4th of May, 2022, the Musée d'Orsay's online collection catalog does not include any entries for any of the six statues in this series. However, a painting entitled *La Tour Eiffel* by Louis Welden Hawkins does show up as it features a painting of Falguiere's *Asia*, an almost amusing taunting of the website's acknowledgement of the statue's existence within its collection. However, one can use the *Ministère de la Culture POP: La plateforme ouverte du patrimoine* website to collect further details about the statues. As Schœnewerk's *L'Europe* is currently labeled as "Edme Bouchardon (1698-1762) Sculpteur," it should be noted that these works require some effort to be located and minimal information is granted as reward. Of the works able to be located, there are conflicting accounts to where the statues were historically located, featuring impossibly coinciding dates. "(L'Europe)," Edme Bouchardon (1698-1762) sculpteur - Identification du bien culturel, accessed April 28, 2022, https://www.pop.culture.gouv.fr/notice/joconde/000SC013407?mainSearch=%22Sch%C5%93newerk%22&last_view=%22list%22&idQuery=%22f665e7b-177-2e87-1f-0edbdc88412%22.

carried by the same level of zoo-like colonial spectacles. Rather, the implicit superiority of the white host-nation was signified by the grandeur of its elaborate architectural plans, which dominated the much smaller ephemeral displays of foreign exhibitors.

Though human display was a horrific practice worthy of in–depth research, I contend that we have yet to fully examine the potentially more damaging effects of the 1878 fair, which reified a cultural landscape that allowed for such biases to remain unchallenged in the public realm today. Human display was ephemeral in nature, but the white supremacist rationalization behind the practice was memorialized in the form of allegorical sculpture, a feature of the 1878 *Exposition Universelle* that must be examined more closely. In using *Les six continents* as a case study of public statues made in colonial context, we can not only better understand these underrepresented works from the 1878 fair, but also understand the implications that public display has on public awareness of political history and how colonialist history can be diluted for complicit and unquestioning consumption.

Using these statues as an example of political public sculpture, I hope to provide context on this genre and its implications for a modern audience. How did the genre of allegorical sculpture set up the mindset for the reception of such racially biased ethnographic types? What tropes are deployed in the representation and what do they imply? In examining these questions, we can explore how these works may even be more damaging than the dehumanizing displays of people for live, ephemeral spectacle of the fair, offering persistent imagery of a racialized "other" that is still on display to a mass audience without explanation or context. Should we display these sculptures? If so, how and why should we interact with them? How should they be framed or contextualized? How do they seduce viewers into a state of complicity as they view and appreciate works rooted in racial hierarchy?

Historical Background

In order to better understand the implications of the six statues with their lasting presence in today's landscape, one must understand the world in which they were introduced, at the 1878 *Exposition Universelle*. The world's fair was conceived as a spectacle meant to entertain an international audience, give manufacturers a large-scale stage on which to introduce new technologies and commercial products, and act as an event to educate the public about the accomplishments of "all nations."[5] In 1851, England opened the first recognized major world's fair known as the "Great Exhibition" at the newly constructed Crystal Palace.[6] At the fair, Queen Victoria and England's colonial enterprise was on full display with the presence of 44 participating nations, British colonies, and British tourists. England set a new standard for Western industrial display by incorporating exhibits mounted by colonial subjects into their expositions. By doing so, England was able to offer a false sense of equality with the offer of self-representation to their subjects. However, it was within the framework of colonial subordinates, following a European bias. Organized by the colonial ruler, the fairs were able to further establish the hosting country's position as an imperial force on the global scale.[7] After the

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[5] The first major exhibition was hosted at the Crystal Palace, London. The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, or more known as the "Great Exhibition" featured exhibitors from Britain, British colonies, and 44 foreign states with a British curatorial advantage.

[6] Industrial expositions were a slowly developing cultural phenomenon in the century prior to the first international world's fair, notably with The French Industrial Exposition of 1844 which sparked Anglo-French competition.

[7] "Expo 1878 Paris." Official Site of the Bureau International Des Expositions, https://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/1878-paris; Paul Greenhalgh. "Origins and Conceptual Development." Essay. In *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2000.

hit of the "Great Exhibition," the phenomenon spread throughout Europe and America as international exhibitions became a new standard for the next century.

The world's fair's earliest semblance evolved in France where the recurring perennial display of industrial production was national policy. Recognized as a tool for promoting trade and industrialization, the fairs attracted a large and growing attendance with government support, as they welcomed an increasing number of exhibiting manufacturing firms and crafts workshops. The Great Exhibition of 1851 revolutionized the format of the fair when it added empire to the equation, including thirty colonized nations through colonial pavilions and vendors.[8] Soon after, France responded with the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1855, following the two nations' history of cultural, economic and military rivalry. Diverting from the 1851 Crystal Palace model of a single large exposition site, expositions expanded in spectacle, scale, and architectural transformation. Developments included newly constructed sites specifically for the fair, additional pavilions and the participation of foreign participants with temporary recreations of "streets" and "villages" (figures 1.1-4). These villages also included the elaborate and exploitative additions of human display as a visitor attraction, which brought the fairs to a new extreme in the display of European supremacy.[9] Considerable research has been done for France's 1867 and 1889 expositions which included many human displays that were expanded with an array of new pavilions and fair sites.

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Human display had been incorporated into exhibitions prior to the Paris Expositions Universelles of 1867 and 1899 in earlier British exhibitions such as the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 which featured foreigners as entertainment and displayed Indians as native types respectively. However, the Paris exhibitions of 1867,including foreign participation via shopkeepers and servants, and the exhibition of 1899, actively importing people for sole human display in pavilion villages, provide examples of human display with notable influence on the European and American standards for world fair displays with greater influence. Sadiah Qureshi, "The End of an Affair" *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth Century Britain,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 2011, (248, 274).

France's ambitious efforts to surpass Britain's single exposition model was motivated by a period of loss in the late 19th century following military failures and political uncertainty. After the notable 1871 defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, the question remained whether France was fit to hold the title of a world power. To begin with, the war resulted in the Prussian annexation of the Alsace-Lorraine region in 1871, as well as major financial losses. Adding to these injuries, a radical government, known as the Communards and National Guard, seized control of Paris during the unstable period after the Prussian defeat. Though only lasting from March through May of 1871, the ability for a revolutionary group to overthrow the state government was indicative of a country that was not on stable footing. Just under eight years after the defeat, the ambitious project to host another world's fair was a risk in 1878, especially after French claims to global powers had been so publicly damaged.

France's 1878 Exposition thus had to uphold the high expectations of rebranding the country after such public humiliation on the world stage. Following the highly successful 1867 Exposition Universelle, which had displayed imperial-economic ambition and the enlightenment goal of "civilizing" others through Western colonization, the 1878 exposition in particular was an attempt to portray an idealized vision of France that had recovered from the war and Commune. While the government had invested money into the construction of the ornate new Palais du Trocadéro, both literally and figuratively investing in the construction of public space, the French public seemed doubtful of the nation's full recovery that was being advertised through the 1878 world's fair.[10] However, while authors such as Paul Greenhalgh have described this particular fair as a failure, ultimately losing money due to attendance that could not meet the costs of the ambitious projects made for the fair, I argue that the fair was successful in its mission of

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[10] Greenhalgh, 35.

influencing the general public.[11] The event's purpose was to advertise the host country as a world power using the marvel of the Parisian space and fair at which the 1878 event certainly succeeded. Additionally, the event laid the groundwork for the eventual 1889 Eiffel Tower Expansion and set a standard for investing in public art and architecture for the fair.

With the high earning capacity of world fairs and the massive public reach, the exhibitions acted as an efficient medium for political, commercial, industrial, military, and artistic business, using entertainment to reel in the public.[12] The event offered the French government the opportunity to reshape its public identity in the way it organized the major event. In turn, the world fair could be likened to the modern publicity stunt that allowed France, as a host-nation, to control its public image and standing in the world's stage. While the decade began in chaos and turmoil, the 1878 fair was an entertaining diversion that could distract the public from the French losses that had marked the past while unifying the nation with themes of French nationalism and patriotism through curated imperial exhibition halls and displays. After the loss of French territory to the Prussians in the War of 1870, the French public lost interest in establishing colonies in Africa and Asia after losing territory on home ground.[13] However, the 1878 Exposition Universelle attempted to shift focus back to French colonial exploits in Africa and help rebuild a sense of French national confidence through tools of propaganda in visual representation.

At the 1878 event, architecture and decorative arts then became the main focus meant to present a strengthened display of national character through Eurocentric architecture. The new Palais du Trocadéro signified power with its façade of semi-circular arches, a second floor with a

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[11] The low attendance vs. high costs resulted in a financial loss for the 1878 *Exposition Universelle*. Ibid.

[12] Ibid, 49.

[13] The defeat resulted in the Prussian annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, a major symbolic loss to France. Ibid.

buttressed drum and cupola roof and its elaborate setting at the top of Chaillot Hill surrounded by

gardens, fountains, and sculptures. The building, built to house a music hall, organ, and public

space, recalled the aesthetic greatness of past centuries. Despite the intention for the palace to

represent France with baroque architecture, recalling an earlier age of power instead of

presenting the reality of a contemporary France; the work also ironically featured non-French

aspects of Venetian and Moorish design, presenting a cultural hybridity that conflicted with the

mission of glorifying France as its own entity. The building's design attempted to suggest a

French dominance in fine and applied arts, despite recalling the past rather than offering new or

progressive advancements to the arts world. Presenting past greatness to project a better future

has always been a powerful tool for propaganda.[14] By utilizing a distant past soaked with

glorious nostalgia, Trocadéro attempted to manipulate a historical sense of French nationalism

that was met with a positive public reception.

   While it may be argued that the 1878 *Exposition* architecture had a fleeting influence due

to the Trocadéro Palace's semi-permanent status, having later been renovated for the 1937

Exposition Universelle, many of the features of the space were widely circulated through

postcard ephemera and had a much longer life and significance due to the fact that this fair

inaugurated the site of future events. The grounds constructed for the fair lasted beyond the

exposition period, carrying over the legacy of Trocadéro and the narratives of global power and

French identity after the fair was over. Moreover, the constructed site influenced the public

decades beyond its debut through permanent structures such as galleries, museums, railway

stations, parks and even mass-housing.[15] The Third Republic opted to rule with soft power, in

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[14] Thinking of contemporary examples of Mussolini's use of stripped Classicism under fascist Italy to call back to the greatness of ancient Rome and fascist architecture. Millon, Henry. "The Role of History of Architecture in Fascist Italy." Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 24, no. 1 (1965): 53–59. https://doi.org/10.2307/988281.

[15] Greenhalgh, 49.

1878 and beyond, providing positive amenities to the site, encouraging the public to enjoy the

public expenditures that were invested in the fair in art, architecture, and displays. The first

metro stations would be built for the expositions, including the Trocadéro stop in 1900, servicing

visitors to the site beyond its year of construction. By incorporating function and accessibility

into a site dedicated to French nationalism, public architecture and art, the fair's organizers could

deflect doubts about French capability and about financial investments in the fair, instead

focusing on the vision of the future it crafted. While the 1878 *Exposition Universelle* prioritized

permanent art and architecture advancements over human display, I maintain that the fair must

be recognized for its important repercussions, especially with the ongoing public display of *Les*

six continents.

The building site of a grand convention is not a passive environment without messages

for the audience. In many ways, the history of museums as cabinets of curiosities gives us the

opportunity to realize how these institutions perpetuate the mission of colonial dominance. The

Palais de Trocadéro not only sought to display France, but also the international world, with

Europe at the center. French colonial displays were located along the Chaillot Hill leading up to

the Palais de Trocadéro, putting France at the center and utilizing approximately half of the

Trocadéro park's allocated space.[16] Moreover, French colonies were given priority with

individual buildings, while foreign colonial displays, such as England's Indian pavilion, were

housed in a single colonial pavilion in the main exhibition hall. Mirroring this display, the

current location of *Les six continents* at the Musée d'Orsay, provides a site of pilgrimage for

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[16] France's colonies in 1878 included Algeria, Tunisia, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Cambodia, Vietnam, amongst others. The Trocadéro park featured recreations of French colonies including a model caravanserai and recreated mosque for Algeria, a Tunisian café, and a general "groupe oriental" that featured kiosks in which vendors could "sell trinkets and sweets" according to the *Guide-Souvenir de L'Exposition Universelle: Paris 1878*. The large European concert hall that featured two columnade wings versus the significantly smaller kiosks illustrates an evident bias in how space was distributed at the fair.

those who admire French art. The museum's collection, a cherry-picked curation of national treasures, houses works that are expected to show the greatness of France, including works of predominantly French origin. Including works of Orientalism and Japonisme, the museum offers little voice to non-European artists, while appropriating art forms of non-European origin. The museum continues the legacy of the fair while presenting *Les six continents* with little context and perpetuating the display of a Western-invented "other."

The expositions were recognized as a medium that could project commercial, political, industrial, military and artistic business. They were intended to distract, indoctrinate and unify a population, providing entertainment and displays of objects similar to the department stores that were growing in popularity in the late 19th century. Ultimately, these findings were not merely limited to the 19th century. The foundational sites of the exhibition, including the Champ de Mars, the Palais de Tokyo, and Place de Toracadéro, remain as major tourist attractions in Paris. Moreover, while the original 1878 site was rebuilt, the crowning *Six continents* that stood upon the site are currently on display at the *Musée d'Orsay* with little acknowledgement of their forgotten history. By unpacking the tropes and imagery used in these statues, I hope to provide context on how these statues carry the problematic legacy of the fairs and continue to influence the public through subconscious visual rhetoric and bias. By doing so, I hope to provide discourse on the role public statues play in shaping social bias and illustrate the implications of the contemporary display of colonial-era public sculpture.

Personification of the Continents

Facing the future spot of the Eiffel Tower, the Palais du Trocadéro was built in 1878 as a landscape that could influence a large public including local and foreign tourists. Located in the 16th arrondissement, across the Champs de Mars fairground, the site expanded the world stage France was creating as it prepared the neighboring 7th and 18th arrondissements for a future of recurring fairs. Named after an 1823 battle in which France aided Spain, Trocadéro reestablished imperial patriotism that marked the early 19th century with the association of France as a military power and world force.[17] The palace expanded the Chaillot Hill which was landscaped for the 1867 Exposition Universelle. Trocadéro was built as the crowning jewel of the newly constructed fairgrounds as it rested at the highpoint of the fairgrounds, overlooking the small temporary vistas of exposition.

At the 1878 Exposition Universelle, visitors were already familiar with the fairgrounds of Champs de Mars that were divided by nation and type of product including industrial machines, craft goods, and commodities. However, in 1878 the exposition laid out the exhibits in a more efficient rectangular plan instead of the ovular plan in 1867 (figures 2.1-4). Additionally, railways were constructed to bring visitors to the fairgrounds arriving on the riverside, a more scenic part of the fairgrounds which included a park, man-made reservoirs, and eventually, the Eiffel Tower. The addition of Trocadéro expanded the Champs de Mars exposition, located in the 7th arrondissement, across the Seine to the facing 8th arrondissement and allowed for the fairgrounds to incorporate more landscape and parkgrounds (figure 3). Including over sixty acres

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[17] The battle was led by Duc d'Angoulême, son of the future Bourbon king Charles X. Thus the battle played into French nationalism as an example of French foreign intervention and invasion ensuring King Ferdinand VII success in maintaining Spain's monarchy after it was facing a rebellion in favor of a constitutional monarchy.

of land, the 1878 exposition was held on a large scale that surpassed previous fairs held throughout the world.

Visitors were able to cross the river using Pont d'Iéna to reach the new addition in the Chaillot area that included a high incline from the hilly landscape. In turn, the visitor would view the Palais du Trocadéro from a low point, increasing the sense of grandeur of the palace. The palace included a pair of colonnade wings that appear like arms enveloping the park and fairgrounds. The park allowed space for temporary structures from visiting nations to be displayed outside of the Rue des Nations in Champs de Mars. Visitors would pass through the smaller visiting nations with the goal of reaching the top of the hill to the concert hall of Trocadéro, the central building of the space. France is thus represented with a grand palace that takes the majority of the space and central focus of the area. The path to the top featured landscaped gardens and a central fountain which connected to the concert hall with a balcony overlooking the park.

Placed on full display on the front balcony of Palais du Trocadéro, a series of six statues of women were commissioned for the 1878 *Exposition Universelle* overlooking the fairgrounds of the hill (figure 4). The series of six female figures are allegorical personifications of the six explored continents of the time. Known as the series *Les six continents*, each statue features items that were associated with the continent that they signify. Commissioned by the French government and designed and created by six academically trained French artists, the sculptures show the European biases and stereotypes that emphasized an Orientalist gaze. It is important to note that there is a clear divide between *Europe* and her contemporaries in that while they are in various degrees of physical nudity, *Europe* is the only figure to remain fully clothed. While these works were commissioned for the newly constructed Palais du Trocadéro for an event dedicated

to progress and modernity, there was a long precedent of this genre of sculpture that depicted

continents through personification, particularly as women. In order to better understand the

significance and role that these statues play in shaping public thought, it is necessary to first

delve into the history of the personification of continents in visual culture.

Prior to 1878's *Les six continents*, the allegorical personification of continents existed in

earlier iterations including the early example of the Barberini Ivory dating from Late Antiquity

(figure 5). The 6th century Byzantine ivory features a central panel with the depiction of a

Christian emperor, likely Justinian, seated on a horse holding a flag of victory.[18] Beneath the

central panel, there are several figures who represent the conquered as they rest below the

reigning emperor, demoted to a lower panel and in turn lower status. The figures are placed

geographically according to the Byzantine central panel with the left portion featuring two

figures of "barbarian" tribes with bearded faces, wearing tunics and pants standing beside a lion.

To represent Eastern civilizations, two shirtless figures are placed on the right beside an elephant,

wearing turbans, loose fitting harem pants and sandals. While both groups feature a sense of

"othering" through an explicit display separate from the central panel, greater emphasis is placed

on the Orientalist elements of the Eastern figures, in particular the stark semi-nudity which is

unseen in any other figures in the ivory. Still, all of the figures in the bottom panel are displayed

offering tribute to the central panel's emperor as they hold up a basket of golden coins and ivory

tusks.

The work is a piece of imperial propaganda combining the theme of power with colonial

trade and prosperity. By placing the emperor in the central panel in greater scale above the

Barbarian, or Roman, and Eastern figures, the work visually implies Byzantine supremacy. The

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[18] For more information on the Barberini Ivory Diptych see Alan Cameron, "City Personifications and Consular Diptychs," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 105 (2015): 250–87, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26346901.

emphasis on materials being provided to the emperor adds a colonial angle to the piece as it reduces the figures to the goods that they provide for the emperor. The figures are important within the piece for showcasing non-Byzantines as ethnic others, but equally important are the commodities that can be collected and utilized by the Byzantine ruler. The work itself is a product of colonial enterprise as it was made of ivory boasting trade with Egypt and East Africa and featured a multifaceted display of empire with its material and narrative content.[19] The combination of these elements form a visual rhetoric that communicates the strength of the Byzantine era by depicting a visual hierarchy and conflation of foreign bodies and the commodities they provide to a colonial ruler.

European understanding of the world would quickly expand after contact with and colonization in the Americas. Starting in the late 15th century, European mapmaking began to incorporate the perpetually changing borders of the Americas. The "discovery" of the New World led to the inclusion of the Americas in these continental allegories as an entire entity, combining modern day North and South America as well as Oceania.[20] The "four continents" would become a new tradition until further discoveries in Oceania and colonization in the Americas would later differentiate themselves into separate personifications.[21] While there are

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[19] Edmund C. Ryder, "Byzantine Ivories," in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–), http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/ivor/hd_ivor.htm (October 2007).

[20] Initially, European maps were informed by both indigenous peoples and colonial explorers with a strong European bias. The first seventy years of mapmaking information were from individual and state-supported efforts primarily from Spanish and Portuguese sponsored navigators. For more information see, Dr. John R. Hébert, "The 1562 Map of America:Articles and Essays:Discovery and Exploration:Digital Collections:Library of Congress." The Library of Congress. Accessed March 3, 2022. https://www.loc.gov/collections/discovery-and-exploration /articles-and-essays /the-1562-map-of-america/.

[21] While iconography remained the same, the concept of the Americas as a continent expanded with the division between Northern and Southern America and Oceania. Benjamin Schmidt, Ed. Daniela Bleichmar, Peter C. Mancall, "Collecting Global Icons: The Case of the Exotic Parasol" Essay, in *Collecting across Cultures Material Exchanges in the Early Atlantic World*, 37, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

multiple iterations of the representations of the four figures, nearly all feature elements of European superiority, colorism, and a separation between the cultural products of Europe and the natural products of the other continents. Allegories of Europe, for example, typically included symbols of regalia including a crown, objects of the arts and sciences including books and an artist's palette, and classical architecture, while allegories of Africa, Asia, and the Americas included animals, fruits, and cloth goods. Thus, Europeans visualized their contribution to the world as products of the mind and what they considered "civilizing," whereas non-Europeans were most notable for their raw resources and craft goods that they could provide to Europe.

In the late 16th century, iconographer Cesare Ripa created the widely circulated emblem book *Iconologia* (figures 6.1-4) which combined written explanations of symbols and ideas with allegorical illustrations as a resource for poets, writers, and scholars.[22] The work was popular among artists and provided the basis for pictorial imagery associated with many subjects including the arts, sciences, and most importantly to our case, geography. Ripa depicted global continents allegorically by dressing and accessorizing each landmass as a woman with geographically associated products and commodities. Ripa's approach to geographic representation included using elements from earlier European prints.[23] In turn, Ripa's *Iconologia* work highly influenced the public perception of the Americas based on early information based on very little actual discovery and research related to the Americas.

Ripa's work reinforced and codified elements that would be considered inherently "American" based on information gathered from insufficient sources rather than actual

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[22] The work was highly influential in the 17th and 18th centuries, influencing many artists including Vermeer. For more information see Bradford Venable, "The 'Iconologia:' Helping Art Students Understand Allegory," *Art Education* 61, no. 3 (2008): 15–21. https://doi.org/10.2307/27696292.

[23] "His allegory of America, more particularly, borrowed from a series of Flemish prints and drawings done in the late sixteenth century and from decorative elements appearing in early atlases." Schmidt, "Collecting Global Icons: The Case of the Exotic Parasol."

interaction with the cultures being studied. His works used a combination of classical symbolism which he sourced from ancient books, coins, and sculpture, which strongly influenced artists in continental Europe for nearly two centuries.[24] However, Ripa used outdated, historical accounts of other continents which lacked current information of the Americas, rather capturing the reality of the Americas as it was then in a state of perpetual "discovery" via colonization. His work perpetuated outdated ideas of the New World rather than capturing the growing understanding of the New World which included new cartography and cultural information including some contributions from indigenous groups.[25] Moreover, his sources were always grounded in a clearly European bias, as they were written by and for Europeans. As an early prolific example of geographic iconography, Ripa's work would provide the basis, however incorrect, for the public perception of the continents for several centuries.

During the Renaissance, the identification and familiarity of the four continents as separate entities was perpetually reinforced in the visual arts and public events. It is noted that in the Renaissance, Europeans developed their ideas about the Four Continents through parades.[26] Throughout the 16th century, monarchies utilized public parades as a tool to display wealth and power, as royal personnages and aristocrats rode into cities with musicians, officials, townspeople, and actors. Some attendees included people costumed as allegories with the

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[24] Note: The *Iconologia* would not be published in England until 1709 making the emblem book a major influence mainly in continental Europe. Clare Le Corbeiller, "Miss America and Her Sisters: Personifications of the Four Parts of the World," T*he Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin 19*, no. 8 (1961): 209–23. https://doi.org/10.2307/3257853.

[25] Early map-making included and relied upon indigenous contributions, though of course they were used alongside European charting which included a European bias. For more see Brian J. Harley. "Rereading the Maps of the Columbian Encounter." Annals of the Association of American Geographers 82, no. 3 (1992): 522–36. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2563359.

[26] Ibid.

popularity of *tableaux vivants* that traveled on floats within the parade.[27] In an example from 1549, the Spanish heir to the throne, Prince Philip, rode into Antwerp in a *tableaux vivant* with three figures dressed as Asia, Africa, and Europe kneeling before him in homage.[28] By the end of the 16th century, the concept of the Four Continents became familiar as four separate allegorical figures each with its own set of icons and ethnographic features, all with the bias of serving to a European audience supporting European monarchical power.

The Renaissance's understanding of globality also expanded from the introduction of new scientific discoveries and improved understanding of geography in the Americas. However, after early discoveries were established, little change to initial perceptions were made as early iterations of allegorical imagery were constantly referenced and recycled. Personifications of continents included a "curious mixture of genuine documentation, details copied from classical sources, and a fertile imagination" with a mythical tradition of representing the four continents through four geographical rivers.[29] The use of allegory as a visual rhetorical device therefore allowed artists to incorporate their imagination and project their fantasies onto their compositions.

In works such as *The Four Rivers of Paradise* by Rubens in the 1610s (figure 7), as well as Bernini's Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi (figure 8), a public fountain in the Piazza Navona in Rome, the use of four rivers to represent the four continents combined logical aspects of

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[27] Ibid; For more information on the pageantry and use of *tableaux vivants* in Renaissance Italy see Edward Muir,"Images of Power: Art and Pageantry in Renaissance Venice," *The American Historical Review* 84, no. 1 (1979): 16–52, https://doi.org/10.2307/1855658.

[28] Prince Philip's elaborate *tableaux vivant* also included panels with painted nude acrobatic figures in a scrollwork motif around to frame him and the actors. For more information on this particular *tableaux vivant* see Bussels, Stijn. "Staging Tableaux Vivants in the Theatre of the Dutch Golden Age." *RACAR: Revue d'art Canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 44, no. 2 (2019): 79–91. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26869479.

[29] Le Corbeiller, "Miss America and Her Sisters," 216.

geography with fantastical elements. Here, the four continents were not personified merely as human figures, but as river spirits which allowed for fantasy, as well as partial nudity, in the composition. In both examples, the four continents of Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas are represented with the Danube, Ganges, Nile, and Rio de la Plata rivers respectively. However, Rubens' painting offers little insight into the continents represented. Most importantly however, these works are notable for depicting continents without the requirement of proper anthropological information allowing for the artist to embed personal imagination and fantasies onto the work.

By the time of the European Enlightenment in the 18th century, attributes of the four continents were standardized and well established in the public imagination. Even when new information could be ascertained by recent European voyages, the earliest conceptions of foreign lands that were already known to a European audience were maintained for ease of identification. While previously depicted as a unified other, advances in geographical studies slowly recognized differences between the highly distinct geographic locations. However, as European colonial contact began in Central and Southern America, even though the charting of North America and Oceania progressed in the 16th to 18th centuries, the imagery related to North America and Oceania followed the basis set by Central and Southern America. Therefore, iconographic associations of savagery lasted for centuries in the Americas within personifications. However, they were less associated with North America after American independence and the establishment of the United States.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the depiction of the four contents as female figures was a prominent trend in public sculpture. The use of public funding to create memorials allowed for a "bureaucratic logic of state-regulated public memory" by utilizing public art in

public spaces to shape social perceptions.[30] The Beaux-Arts style of architecture that was popular

in Paris from the 1830s to the end of the 19th century emphasized using decorative elements to

include allegorical figures. A notable contemporary to *Les six statues*, is London's Albert

Memorial (figure 9), which featured allegorical sculptures at the corners of the memorial

dedicated to Albert, Prince Consort of Queen Victoria. The use of continental allegory in public

statue is later followed by David Chester French's *Four Continents* in New York City in the

Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House (figure 10). The statues, inaugurated in 1905, show an

American example of the genre as the United States was establishing its own history in the

decades following its 1876 centennial and show the growing trend of allegorical personification

in sculpture in the late 19th century.

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[30] While Bruggeman uses this phrase in regards to birthplace memorials for Americana culture in the United States, the phrase applies well to public art in general focusing on the nationalistic and curated nature of government commissioned public memorials. Seth C. Bruggeman, *Born in the U.S.A: Birth, Commemoration, and American Public Memory*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press), 2012.

Les six continents

With the fair's expansion across the Seine, the 1878 Exposition Universelle was able to create a lasting impression on the public of French grandeur. The site became an instant hit for locals and tourists after the fair and continues to draw in visitors today and was recognized for its ability to be seen by many and influence the public. The Palais du Trocadéro's concert hall may have been the main attraction, but its placement and decorative elements supported a colonial mission by telling a visual story of French superiority. The newly constructed area centralized France as a world power by memorializing colonial ambitions and global conquest. The park featured processional elements as one would walk up the hill and pass by visiting spectacles, landscaped gardens, and a central balcony space decorated with *Les six continents*.

The six statues of Palais du Trocadéro were commissioned by the city of Paris for the *Exposition Universelle* of 1878. The French government, which paid for a sizable amount of the first three fairs through public funding, requested a selection of six rising artists of the French school to each depict one of the six continents known at the time: Europe, Asia, North America, South America, and Oceania.[31] The statues were placed on pedestals in two groups of three on the balcony of the main entrance to the Palais du Trocadéro music hall. However, the setup of the balcony allowed for four statues to be visible from the front with a pair of statues standing behind the corner pieces, placed out to the balcony sides, obstructed from a frontal view (figures 11.1-2). The four visible statues were of Europe, Asia, Africa, and North America, as the

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[31] The commission was appointed by the Commission of Fine Arts through the Minister of Agriculture and Commerce. Toshiyuki Shimazu. "Personified Continents in Public Places: Internationalism, Art, and Geography in Late Nineteenth Century Paris." Essay. In Decolonising and Internationalising Geography Essays in the History of Contested Science. Springer International Publishing, 2020., 89.

predominant sequence in focus, with South America and Oceania, out of visibility, standing behind North America and Europe respectively.

Today at the Musée d'Orsay, they are currently on display in a series of six statues following a chronological order of Western "discovery." The left side of the display features the three "old" continents that represent the longstanding Europe, Asia, and Africa that had interacted together through trade prior to the Modern Period. To the right, the statues continue with North America, South America, and Oceania representing the "new" continents that had been considered discoveries to the West. In the tradition of a Latin reading of left to right, the statues are placed with Europe as the beginning of the sequence suggesting the start of civilization and the spread of Enlightenment as Western colonialism spreads to the "new" continents. This placement therefore follows a chronology of Western "discovery" from a European's imperial sense of knowledge. The six allegorical female personifications once overlooked the Chaillot Hill, each featuring items that were associated with the continent they signify, all constructions that were based in European bias and Orientalist stereotype.

The statues were each designed by a different artist from the French Académie des Beaux-Arts, a conservative choice that represented an already outdated standard of arts in France at the time.[32] All were well known and successful within the Académie and had a legacy of shaping Paris through sculptural commissions largely granted through the government. It is doubtful that the artists had any special knowledge or education about the continent they were portraying, and were therefore unaware of the cultural nuances within broad continents, but they were technically proficient in the arts and familiar with continental iconography. Their use of conventional iconographic symbols allowed them to effectively communicate imagined

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[32] In context, the first Impressionist Exhibition had already occurred four years prior in 1874 as public interest was waning away from the conventional academy style in favor of new influences such as *japonisme*, straying away from French conventions.

constructs of other cultures. Already, the use of broad continents was an arbitrary way to characterize the complex diversity of cultures within one land mass. Iconographic symbols added to the already reductive categorization of continents by further emphasizing dated tropes and symbols.

The imaginative landscape that the artists and *Les six statues* create was not only a passive reflection of how other cultures were conceived, but also a lasting account of how public arts conveyed information to the public. Therefore, it is important to unpack the visual meanings that were on display through a social and political lens. The plastic arts are not simply ornamental but also communicative media that could be utilized by the government to push any number of agendas via propaganda. In this way, an array of attitudes and messages could be circulated to the public using the supposedly neutral means of art.

Traditionally, female figures were used as icons, serving as a blank slate for artists to project onto. The use of women as allegorical figures is rooted in ancient representations of Egyptian, Greek, and Roman goddesses and figures.[33] This can be seen in the depictions of the Four Cardinal Virtues (figure 12) which depict Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence, and Justice (*temperantia, fortitudo, prudentia, justitia*) as female figures, in correspondence with Latin's gendered feminine placement for the words. Female personifications were also associated with nationalist imagery as words such as *justice*, *liberty*, and *truth* are typically gendered as female. Beyond serving as female figures, the forms also exist to embody civic values that male society

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[33] Melissa H. Weresh, *Gauzy Allegory and the Construction of Gender,* 25 Wm. & Mary J. Women & L. 7 (2018), https://scholarship.law.wm.edu/wmjowl/vol25/iss1/3.

sought.[34] Female bodies are on display, removed from the reality of living women, as the

allegorical forms conflate female nude bodies with ideas and values that men seek to possess.[35]

Using female personifications allowed typically male artists the capacity to project ideas

onto what was seen as an empty vessel. While male figures might be associated with strength

and heroism without question, when they were represented by women, it was implied that she

was an allegorical figure.[36] The female form serves as an abstract ideal rather than a real woman,

allowing the male artist to take ownership and lay claim to these women's bodies.[37] The

allegorical employment of female bodies allows for inherent objectification, idealizing the

female form and projecting the male artist's fantasy. *Les six continents* complicates this

relationship by adding race and colonial context, insinuating that these female figures, in

particular colonized women, are not only desires but also possessions.

The use of female personification was a popular choice for the time of the 1878

Exposition Universelle, in line with contemporary taste. Female icons increased in popularity for

statues, particularly in France, from after the French Revolution until the First World War.[38]

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[34] Ibid, 31.

[35] Women were, of course, rarely the ones commissioning artworks, including those of female allegorical figures. Katherine C. Sheehan, "Toward a Jurisprudence of Doubt," *UCLA Women's Law Journal* 7, no. 2 (1997), 202-205, https://doi.org/10.5070/l372017674.

[36] The assumption was that the common woman was not someone who could achieve these ideals, placing the female figure into the realm of allegory.

[37] Weresh, 33.

[38] The period also established caricatures that would represent countries as allegorical women until they were later replaced in the 20th century with popular male figures including Britannia as John Bull (small stocky man with a frock coat, top hat, and Union Jack) as well as Germania and Michael the German Deutscher Michel (man wearing a nightcap) Ursula E. Koch, "Gender and Revolution in Europe, 19th-20th Centuries," Encyclopédie d'histoire numérique de l'Europe, Sorbonne University, June 22, 2020. https://ehne.fr/en/encyclopedia/themes/gender-and-europe/gender-and-revolution-in-europe-19th-20th-century/gender-and-revolution-in-europe-19th-20th-centuries.

National allegories depicted as female emblems were part of typical high-circulating media including albums, posters, postcards, and newspapers.[39] These figures were evidently helpful in shaping a national identity, an important focus after the fall of historical monarchical structures. Female icons also increased in popularity through monumental statues, busts, coins, stamps, medals; notably with the popular figure of Marianne whose usage to represent France became official during the Third Republic (1870-1940).[40] The phenomenon was also popular in English sculpture; just two years before the 1878 Exposition, Great Britain revealed the Albert Memorial, a public sculpture which featured human figures as allegorical continents on full display.

The Albert Memorial was commissioned by Queen Victoria in 1861 after the death of her husband Prince Albert. The monument was revealed in Kensington Gardens in 1872 and eventually completed in 1876 when the centerpiece statue of Albert was seated. England's socio-political climate was in a similar state as France in the 1870s and '80s, undergoing a period of economic depression.[41] In turn, the British government sought to respond to the growing uncertainties of the country's social, political, and economic future by reasserting its overseas empire.[42] The monument was constructed along with the Imperial Institute, both located in Hyde Park, as works of public and monumental architecture. The Institute focused on preserving the cultural value of late 19th century British imperialism, placing the Albert Memorial within a context of British imperialism and supremacy. Additionally, the sites were produced after the

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[39] Notably, female allegories were most popular in France while nearly non-existent in Germany. Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Alex G. Bremner, "'Some Imperial Institute': Architecture, Symbolism, and the Ideal of Empire in Late Victorian Britain, 1887-93," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 62, no. 1 (2003): 50–73. https://doi.org/10.2307/3655083.

[42] "This was a vision that understood the British empire to be a self-interested, global network of territories aligned by common cultural, political, and defensive bonds." Ibid, 51.

Great Exhibition of 1851 and the International Exhibition 1862 which highlighted colonial

territories as "British Possessions."[43] The monuments were an important public signifier of

Britain's colonial power that they were promoting at the fairs. As a product of the "Age of

Empire," the memorial asserts Britain's "triumph" as an empire.

The monument has a stone base and an arching frieze structure with four corners, each

adorned with allegorical sculptures representing the four continents of Europe, Asia, Africa, and

the Americas (figures 13.1-4). Each representation includes an animal associated with the

continent as well as ethnographic figures, some directly representing British colonial territories.[44]

Above, there is a smaller base with four corners of figures that depict the industry types of

commerce, manufacturing, trade, and agriculture (figures 14.1-4). The figures of industry are

depicted as ethnographically white Europeans, likely to frame a celebration of British

Enlightenment, power, and progress.

At the center, Prince Albert is seated, a central figure in this memorializing ode to British

colonial power. The country's "greatness" is on display with a hierarchical display of the

colonized continents, with Albert and British industry placed above (figure 15). His central

placement insinuates a deserved spot for England and the Crown as the center of the world, as

England's peak of colonial power is memorialized. In the 1990s, the Victorian Society advocated

for the memorial's importance as "the most significant Victorian monument of its kind in Britain,

as important to London, in its way, as the Eiffel Tower is to Paris" clearly holding an influence

on the public, more than a century beyond its erection.[45] The work has received its criticism, but

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[43] Bremner, "Some Imperial Institute…" 54-56.

[44] The expositions of the time period would have influenced the sculpture by presenting Egypt, Tunisia, Mauritius and Seychelles to English visitors as national acquisitions. Ibid 52-54.

[45] The Victorian Society is a national group that campaigns for the protection of Victorian arts and culture. It is interesting to note that Prince Albert expressed his wish not to be made into a monument when it was proposed

also evidently has its support from those who wish to romanticize the glory days of Britain's colonial past with a provocative depiction of 19th century empire.

The six statues, which may well have been conceived in part as an answer to the British memorial, contributed to the visual display of colonial ambition with European hierarchical influence spreading and dominating the other five nations. First, I believe that this colonial hierarchy begins with the large scale of the Palais du Trocadéro, which engulfed the small and temporary colonial displays in the garden space as it stands, a tribute to European greatness. The location set the tone and context for which the statues are received, the world's fair being an atmosphere of ethnographic instruction and marvel. Second, the statues continue the idea of "imagined geographies" and the constructed perception of global space through the operations of Orientalism, which Edward Said describes as, "desires, fantasies, fears, and projections of their authors, who are generally external observers."[46] International consciousness and awareness of global geography became increasingly public through government funded artworks, including the statues and architecture that spread throughout world's fairs. The use of geography was instrumental in the dissemination of a popular world consciousness in how people perceived the world.[47] Last, the six statues' sequencing, beginning with Europe, and ending with Oceania, shows a hierarchy with a European bias. In fact, multi-layered messages are implied in the imagery, symbols, and visual rhetoric.

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in 1851. Alan Baldwin, "Crumbling Prince Albert Bronze Stirs Controversy : Sculpture: Queen Victoria's Memorial to Her Husband Is Shrouded in Scaffolding, but the Economy Has Forced Britain to Defer Its Restoration. Some Contend It Isn't Worth Saving," *Los Angeles Times*, May 16, 1993. https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1993-05-16-mn-35990-story.html.

[46] Edward Said, "Imaginative Geography and Its Representations: Orientalizing the Oriental," *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage, 1979). Toshiyuki Shimazu also writes of the role of imagined geographies in Toshiyuki Shimazu, "Personified Continents in Public Places."

[47] Shimazu, 83.

EUROPE

The series begins with *Europe* (figure 16) designed by Alexandre Schœnewerk, presenting a fantasy of historical Western greatness.[48] She appears as a Greco-Roman vision wearing an armored dress featuring a lion's head on a chest plate and pauldrons protecting her shoulders. She embodies a vague projection of Greco-Roman history, employing the imagery of the Latin Cardinal virtues with *Fortitude*'s icons of armor and lions.[49] She wears a matching helmet adorned with myrtle branches, sandals, and a cape draped on her left shoulder. Her right arm rests on top of a shield with a horse motif, while in her hand she holds an olive branch, the symbol of peace. Beside her, lies a book underneath a paint palette and brushes and caduceus, or staff of Hermes. Europe is the only continent that is depicted with books, implying that what Europe offers to the world is the fruits of enlightenment, knowledge, and the arts and that it is exclusive to the West.

While she is meant to embody Europe, she is not adorned with the markers of European countries that were well-established at the time of her creation. She is rendered as a vaguely Greco-Roman historical figure, resembling the embodiment of Rome who was represented as a female warrior wearing a helmet.[50] Despite the fair's efforts to legitimize France as a world power, the statue instead reasserts the canon of Neoclassical imagery, set in an idealized ancient past. The Neoclassical elements project a sense of timelessness and authority to Europe, as an Enlightened civilization that has existed for over a millennia. Greco-Roman imagery was used as

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[48] Schœnewerk, a student of David d'Angers who worked in the studio of Jacques-Louis David, was an academically esteemed artist who received the Légion d'honneur in 1873, marking a conventional choice.

[49] Weresh, 33-35.

[50] Koch, "Gender and Revolution in Europe."

visual shorthand to create quick associations to the empire known for its power. The style applied the nostalgic idealization of Greece and Rome as an overarching trait of Europe, legitimizing the countries that were newly established and were heading into their colonial peak.

In order to better understand the implications of this imagery, one must understand the contemporary understanding of Greek art, set by art historian Joann Joachum Winckelmann in the mid-18th century. The Greco-Roman revival, or Neoclassical movement, was a popular choice after Winckelmann, often referred to as the "father of art history," declared Greek art as the ultimate visual style. Having never been to Greece, Winckelmann based his information on Roman copies of Greek works, often projecting preconceived ideas on what Greek art should be based on his personal taste.[51] Winckelmann selectively chose what he would champion as "Greek," praising whiteness as a Greek art form while in some cases actively misattributing polychrome colored sculpture of likely Greek origin as Etruscan, an earlier civilization he deemed as inferior.[52] Winckelmann selectively chose aspects of Greco-Roman style that he considered superior in order to champion a Neoclassical Revival that supported a narrative of an ethnographically white Europe. Similar to the Orientalist and Primitivist tropes of Asia, Africa, and the Americas, the use of Neoclassical imagery was one that was born out of misinformation and the triumph of projected fantasy over ethnographic reality.

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[51] Butler, E. M. *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany: A Study of the Influence Exercised by Greek Art and Poetry over the Great German Writers of the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, 59, 81.

[52] In one case, when Pompeii and Herculaneum were excavated, Winckelemann noticed artifacts that featured color which he claimed were Etruscan, avoiding the acknowledgement of the use of color in Greek art. He later would recognize that the works were probably Greek. Margaret Talbot, "The Myth of Whiteness in Classical Sculpture," in *The New Yorker*, October 22, 2018, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/10/29/the-myth -of-whiteness-in- classical- sculpture. For more on polychromy in Greek art see: Gisela M. A. Richter, and Lindsley F. Hall, "Polychromy in Greek Sculpture," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 2, no. 8 (1944): 234, https://doi.org/10.2307/3257059.

The Greco-Roman trope was used by Winckelmann to raise Europe's status and perceived greatness. Winckelmann's ideal of Greco-Roman superiority was always an illusion at best. By 1878, the idea was even more dated within a changing Europe that consisted of multiple ethnic groups and an influx of migration from colonies. However, the associations were longstanding and positively served the European agenda in invoking a familiar and powerful ancient empire. Greco-Roman attributes visually legitimized Europe as a superior civilization, especially in comparison to its contemporaries. By this period, Greek history had been fully contorted to become an overarching character of Europe's history and identity.

It is important to unpack the intellectual framework that allowed for this Greek hierarchy to be set in place, one that is evident in the statues, as Europe is depicted as a superior and "enlightened" being in comparison to her counterparts who appear in various degrees of nudity and primitivist elements.[53] Taking shape in the late 17th-century through an evolving, pan-European discourse, the Enlightenment period boasted ideals such as liberty and equality, a "process of social, psychological or spiritual development" or as Kant defines it, "humankind's release from its self-incurred immaturity."[54] Enlightenment thought provided an escape from religion as it destabilized theological power structures, returning will to individuals through scientific thought. While Enlightenment thinkers diverged into multiple branches of thought, all

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[53] Enlightenment philosophy also helped facilitate Greek revivalism in the philosophical and social sphere. Enlightenment philosophy also sought to revive the tradition of Greco-Roman philosophy and its pursuit as an academic discipline of its own while challenging the Greek canon. The Enlightenment period reevaluated classical thinkers, ie. Locke rethinking Aristotle's school of thought while also reviving the pursuit of philosophy after a period in Europe in which theological structures. For more on Locke see: William Uzgalis, "John Locke," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Stanford University, May 1, 2018, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke/.

[54] Immaturity for Kant being "the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another" alluding to theological structures like the church and focusing on returning intent, will, and power to the individual. However, Enlightenment free will ironically still calls for an overarching superior framework of power, ie. the Leviathan figure.. For more see: William Bristow, "Enlightenment," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Stanford University, August 29, 2017. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/enlightenment/.

agreed that there is a scientific process to find truth, valuing reason which enables people to act in a scientific way.[55] Importantly, they believed that all are capable of using reason to find truth, making us all fundamentally equals.[56]

It may then seem that there is a paradox in that although the Enlightenment spread notions of "the equal rights of man" and begat slogans of "liberté, fraternité, égalité," it also became the basis of European "enlightened" superiority granting themselves as authorities in Western political, social, and economic systems. However, as contemporary critics to the declared "rights of men " like Olympe de Gouges knew, the equality of Enlightenment was not about equity or equality as we contemporarily think of it. Equality, for enlightenment thinkers, did not mean the equality of deservedness but that human beings all have an innate equal capacity for seeking a universal truth that was obscured by religious and monarchical frameworks.

In search for the truth, Enlightenment thought allowed new power structures to dominate after the destabilization of religion and monarchy in the following centuries, superseding the authority of the church and crown. In turn, the way of thought empowers the individual with the illusion of free will while still participating in a hierarchy that prioritized Western thought and science. By allowing the state to become the powerful figure, rather than the church or crown, a greater demand for materials and capital grew. In turn, Enlightenment thought can be seen as a way of setting Europe on the path for colonization, justified as a means of utilitarian gain. As Enlightenment allowed for the pursuit of self-interest and the basis of early capitalism, their wish to expand markets paired with the idea of spreading "truth" allowed for colonial ambitions to

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

expand.[57] In turn, the philosophy gave the promise of self-authority to European individuals, and theoretically all who embraced Enlightenment values, while also providing a way to substantiate colonial ambitions as a rational course of action.

Now, we can return to *Europe* and see her as she truly is, a symbol dedicated to an idealized vision of European greatness. Her Neoclassical elements are a clear choice to represent a European identity that was a construct of Enlightenment, offering insight on how France wished to present an idealized vision of Europe rather than the contemporary state of the developing continent.[58] Given the context of Enlightenment hierarchy, we can make sense of Europe's intentional position as the first figure within the series. As scientific truth was understood to be linear, so was the progress of civilization.[59] *Europe* is then seen as a powerful entity that will provide "enlightenment" and greatness to the rest of the world as it makes its way to each continent via colonialism.

She stands graciously, as if on a throne, with her body facing forward and away from the rest of the statues. She glances to her left as if guiding her fellow continents. While her breasts are visible with pronounced nipples protruding from underneath her clothed bust, she is the only figure granted the modesty and virtue of no explicit nudity. She is treated with a higher level of

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[57] Enlightenment thought as a truth was able to justify spreading its ideas to civilizations that were deemed inferior for not following the same ideals. Additionally, the branch of Enlightenment known as Utilitarianism justified actions that "appeared to increase the happiness of the person or group whose interest is in question." Fundamentally, philosophers like Bentham believed humans act towards pleasure and avoidance of pain which was used to justify capitalism, which in turn allowed for colonialism. For more see: Julia Driver, "The History of Utilitarianism," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Stanford University, September 22, 2014, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/utilitarianism-history/.

[58] The concept of Europe is a contested concept, as the continent historically has been split into multiple cultural tribes and groups, divided ethnically, geographically, religiously, and culturally. For more see: J. G. A. Pocock, "What Do We Mean by Europe?" The Wilson Quarterly (1976-) 21, no. 1 (1997): 12–29, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40259591.

[59] Margaret Meek Lange, "Progress," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Stanford University, February 17, 2011, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/progress/.

respect and attention in comparison to her contemporaries who all feature bare chests to varying

measure. She stands as an example for the following continents to follow and emulate, notably

featuring items that allude to cultural products instead of natural products. Her cultural products

and decorum are that much more striking when compared to the other continents that display

produce, animals, and nudity.

Paired with her markers of Classical authority and Enlightenment values, there is an

implied fair exchange that is to be made, where Europe offers the ability to "civilize" and

"educate" her fellow figures with the fruits of enlightened knowledge in exchange for the fruits

of colonial bounty. *Europe* sets the groundwork for how the other continents are to be seen. They

are displayed on her home grounds, originally as foreignized bodies at the Trocadéro Palace

adorned with French flags.[60] Further, the non-European continents are displayed as semi nude

with a range of suggestive poses. The direct contrast to the arguably sexless depiction of Europe

offers the viewer the opportunity to openly sexualize other female bodies on display, while also

acting as an invitation to penetrate and colonize the continents in which they represent through

the illusion of Enlightened knowledge, and the projected fantasies of riches, goods, products and

eroticized bodies.

ASIA

The sequence of non-European continents starts with *Asia* (figure 17) with the artist's

amalgamation of different cultures that fall under the vast borders of the continent. Her

placement in the series suggests that Asia was considered second to Europe in terms of

civilization. With a history of trade in luxury products including silks and pearls, European

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[60] The statues are now at the Musée D'Orsay, a contemporary tourist site that is similarly dedicated to the greatness of French contributions in the art world.

history respected Asia with an emphasis on its ancient histories but with the assumption that it was a fallen civilization.

Compared to her contemporaries, the statue for Asia leaves much to be desired in terms of cultural or natural symbols. The statue was made by Alexandre Falguière, who, though did win the opportunity to leave France after winning the prix de Rome, does not appear to have learned substantial cultural knowledge beyond Europe, as evidenced by the sparse details used to represent Asia.[61] *Asia* sits facing forward and looks into the distance, with only two particular symbols to represent her continent. She holds a small statue on her lap, likely based on the Hindu god Brahma, typically represented with four faces or bodies.[62] Behind her, there are two elephants that face outwards in symmetry. There are no other cultural objects used to signify Asia, as Falguière focused more on her physical body, hairstyle, and the clothing she wears.

While her cultural products appear to be from South and Southeast Asia, her garments and appearance are from East Asia. Her hair resembles a Japanese *nihongami* cut. She is wearing a dress that lightly resembles a Chinese *hanfu* and wears block sandals. Her facial features are vaguely rendered, with partially monolid eyes and a slightly flattened nose bridge. Her generic facial features are a pattern that is seen in the series of statues, as all of the non-European figures are rendered without specificity, rather appearing as Westerners with facial features that were slightly modified to look non-Western.

While it is plausible that the artists did not have physical contact with the continental cultures they depicted, they had plenty of access to historical material that could have aided a

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[61] Falguière, a winner of the 1859 Prix de Rome, had high esteem and standing within the institutional Académie des Beaux-Arts. In 1882 he would later serve as a professor at the Académie des Beaux-Arts. He offers a government approved idea of French art that follows academic tradition. His appointment is conservative and offers little to no focus on ethnographic or anthropological insight of Asia.

[62] Mark Cartwright, "Brahma, Cambodian Statue," World History Encyclopedia. Metropolitan Museum of Art, May 13, 2015, https://www.worldhistory.org/image/3857/brahma-cambodian-statue/.

more ethnographically accurate depiction of someone of Asian descent. For example, Charles

Cordier had established himself in the French Society of Anthropology with his detailed

ethnographic sculptures, sculpting busts for Paris's National History Museum.[63] Cordier's works

were made in the mid-nineteenth century, at a time when live models for ethnographic others

were difficult to find. When models were unavailable, Cordier utilized catalogs, daguerreotypes,

and anthropological galleries to render articulate and precise sculptures that were based on real

people.[64] If Cordier could find these sources in the mid-19th century, it is interesting to consider

how Falguière, given even more opportunities to find models at national museums and even

Expositions Universelles such as the 1867 event that included a showcase of Cordier's

ethnographic busts, chose not to employ specificity in ethnographic depiction in his work.[65]

In direct contrast to Falguière's *Asia*, Cordier's *Chinoise* (figure 18) focuses on one

particular woman of Chinese descent. The use of a specific person, as opposed to a vague

perception of Asian features, allows for a sculpture of arguably better quality in its accuracy and

rendering. Falguière's sculpture, in comparison, fails to provide ethnographic details of the

figure's face, likely not based on a particular model. Instead, Falguière focuses more on her body

and clothes, in particular her breasts that are coyly peeking out of her dress. It is in this depiction,

that one can see a possible source for his ethnographic modeling, not based on human models or

busts available. Though Falguière's exact influence cannot be known, I would argue that they

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[63] Cordier created ethnographic busts for the museum from 1851 to 1866 that are now housed in the *Musée de l'Homme* located in Trocadéro. Laure de Margerie, Papet Édouard, Christine Barthe, and Maria Vigli, *Facing the Other: Charles Cordier* (1827-1905), Ethnographic Sculptor, (New York, New York: Harry N. Abrams), 2004.

[64] Ibid, 13, 96.

[65] Cordier featured his works at the Universal Exposition of 1867 with "Decorative and Ethnographic Sculpture" which featured busts of non-white peoples with precise likeness.

share compositional elements with the genre of tourist photography including images of geisha that would have been easily available to a French audience as a mass-manufactured media.

While ethnographic sculptors used photography, they relied on racial type photography that gave the impression of scientific neutrality, for example, the photography of Jacques-Phillippe Potteau whose works Cordier used as reference (figure 19.1-19.2).[66] The genre was far from neutral, as these works were based on the same imperial ideologies under discussion, colonially motivated. In comparison to travel photography, racial type photography offered a better resource for ethnographic sculpture as it provided relatively few props or items of a projected fantasy or Orientalist view-which were so often featured in the alternative of travel photography. Falguière's composition, I argue, more closely resembles Japanese tourist photography of the mid to late nineteenth century, particularly sharing similarity to Baron Raimund von Stillfried's *Portrait with a Fan* (figure 20) featuring a geisha-like figure with her breasts emerging from her dress.

The use of travel photography as a basis for the sculpture grants an even higher level of Orientalist fantasy to be incorporated into the work, as the photograph further implicates the statue with sexual fetish, in particular by utilizing photographs based on prostitutes rather than ehthnographic racial type photography. Like Falguière's generic fantasy of "Asia," the photographic travel albums created in Japan for a Western audience, enabled the West to imagine a constructed escape from European Industrial society by depicting an idealized imagining of

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[66] While often presented in a sterile environment, racial type photography documented different ethnicities with ranging levels of invasiveness. While some included actual documentations with tools of measurement, others appeared as regular portrait photographs, all focusing on documenting all conceptual races as a form of empirical scientific knowledge. The practice was far from neutral, as they were made by the colonial forces who viewed the subjects they documented as inferior and in need of documentation before they would be "civilized" and disappear. Additionally, this genre of photography became a collectible novelty, which further enforced differences between races and an implied racial hierarchy which placed Anglo-Saxon "Teuton" supremacy. For more see: James R. Ryan, "Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire," (London: Reaktion Books Ltd.), 2013.

traditional Japanese culture featuring images of Mount Fuji, Buddhist temples, samurai, and

geisha.[67] However, the irony of this genre was that while it allowed the West to enter Japan

pictorially, what is presented is not authentic. The geisha are not actually geisha but "working

women" including prostitutes and entertainers, as properly trained geisha remained exclusive to

Japanese patrons.[68]

Photographic albums made by photographers like von Stillfried or Felice Beato depicted

Japanese women "transformed from prostitutes and entertainers into aesthetic and/or erotic

images for the pleasure of the foreign male collector."[69] The figures pose as an image of sexual

allure and availability; Beato even writing text to accompany his photos of erotica with, "she is

gentle; - she is inviting; - she is very coy!" and in reference to a figure's *samisen*, an instrument

associated with geisha, he writes "[she] will show you all her little toy-like treasures."[70] With the

context of Beato and von Stillfried's mass circulated media, we can revisit the statue of Asia and

see the influence of the available photographs that were collected as a hobby practice, readily

available to Falguière in the late nineteenth century.

*Asia'*s breasts are coyly sneaking out of her cloth dress, appearing delicately sensual. The

coquettish nature of her sexuality is the focus. While the other non-European statues in the series

are more explicitly sexual, *Asia*'s nudity is framed as demure, fetishizing a projected timid

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[67] Eleanor M. Hight, and Gary D Sampson, *Colonialist Photography : Imag(in)Ing Race and Place*, Documenting the Image, (London: Routledge).

[68] Trained geisha, a class of female Japanese artists and entertainers trained in various skills such as dance, music and singing, conversationalists and hosts, are not to be misinterpreted as prostitutes. As Japan opened its borders to the West, they limited foreign contact with Japanese women, providing lower status prostitutes rather than trained geisha. Due to rigidly demarcated gender roles, many women typically remained at home in the domestic sphere which limited the Western idea of Japanese women to mainly working class women of inferior social status. For more see: Hight, *Colonialist Photography,* 127-130.

[69] Ibid, 128.

[70] Ibid, 139.

presentation with a gaping dress that opens her body to the audience's view. Falguière's statue of Brahma, I argue, resembles the toy-like usage of the travel photo *samisen*, appearing more like a small doll in her hands rather than a statue of worship. Her sexuality focuses on infantilization and a loss of innocence, as the viewer can peek at her nudity, waiting for when her cloth dress will finally drop. *Asia* sits up straight, ready to be explored by the viewer.

As a symbol for the continent of Asia, the statue represents a continent that is in turn, also waiting to be explored and officially colonized. France's brutal colonization of Southeast Asia began in the mid-nineteenth century, already well established at the point of this statue's creation.[71] The statue does not reference France's colonies explicitly, offering an image more resembling Japan rather than the cultures France was colonizing. Though one may argue that the elephants in the statue might reference the exploitation of ivory materials sourced in French Indochina as a colonial product, France's Vietnamese ivory industry originated much later in the 20th century.[72] Perhaps, in one way, the statue of Asia is a beckoning to reassert colonial efforts and further expansion into territories.[73] *Asia*'s lack of commodities, when compared to others in the series, may reflect a call to arms for the exploitation of natural resources in Indochina which would increase in the 20th century.[74] Meanwhile, the main focus of the statue is the eroticization

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[71] France established Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia under the colonial French Indochina between 1858 and 1893. https://www.britannica.com/place/Indochina.

[72] France relied on Côte d'Ivoire for supply in the 19th century. Daniel Stiles, "An Assessment of the Illegal Ivory Trade in Vietnam," Bookdepository.com (Traffic Southeast Asia, December 31, 2008), https://www.bookdepository.com/Assessment-Illegal-Ivory-Trade-Vietnam-Daniel- Stiles/9789833393190.

[73] Despite a treaty between France and Siam in 1867, France continued colonial attempts of expansion in Indochina resulting in the Franco-Siamese War in 1893 conflicting with bordering Siam. "Oun Kham," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed April 20, 2022, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Oun- Kham#ref208480.

[74] As colonial expansion increased, France utilized colonial taxes as a method of extracting raw materials from Vietnam and Cambodia. France considered Indochina a *colonie d'exploitation économique*, increasingly focused on extracting goods including rice, tea, tobacco and coal.

of Asia, using the framework of a self-effacing geisha-like nature. Falguiere compositionally

casts Asia in a state of submission to the Western and male gaze, marking her as sexually

available and, as a continent, colonially available for the taking.

AFRICA

The third statue in the sequence is *Africa* (figure 21), created by Eugène Delaplanche,

finalizing the trio of "old" continents. Noticeably, her composition is the first in the series to

feature raw materials and she continues the progressive level of nudity in the series. In the vein

of primitivism, she is barefoot with one foot resting on top of a turtle.[75] Delaplanche dresses her

in a dress of a free-falling and thin fabric, showing the contours of her body and navel. Her right

breast is exposed completely, falling outside of her dress.

In her left hand, she holds a platter filled with fruits that are native to Africa, likely

alluding to the commodities of colonial trade. The cornucopia, a typical symbol reinforcing

themes of abundance and fertility, is embodied in the tray platter she holds.[76] The tray itself is a

commodity, resembling a woven basket. However, the tray lacks specificity and gives a vague

notion of an African "other" through its allusion to the woven textile industry.[77] The tray holds

fruits that would have been seen as exotic to a French European audience, emphasizing Africa's

sense of "other" and the commodities that can be harvested in the continent. Fruits featured on

the tray include mangoes, dates, tamarind, and a pomegranate that is split open.

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[75] The use of animals and animality as well as the sexualization of savage imagery will be explored further on page 50 with discussion of *Oceania*.

[76] Le Corbeiller, 217-218.

[77] The use of "traditional" Africanism increasingly became a stylistic desire for French consumers, particularly in the 20th century. For more see: Victoria L. Rovine, "Colonialism's Clothing: Africa, France, and the Deployment of Fashion," *Design Issues* 25, no. 3 (2009): 44–61, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20627816.

The pomegranate itself is loaded with symbolism as it is suggestively sliced open. The pomegranate is a symbol of fertility in several religions, with its lush bounty of red seeds that burst out from its hard shell when split open.[78] The placement of the tray is just to her left, at eye level, along with her open-legged, seated position. Her left leg is bare as her dress is hiked above her knee as if answering the desire to see more with an invitation. The placement of the split pomegranate acts as a metaphor for both desire and sexuality. Like the fruit that can be split and enjoyed, so, too, can the personified continents in a sexual and colonial sense. The fruit doubles as an invitation to penetrate Africa and reap the colonial benefits.

The idea of Blackness in French identities was an emerging point of concern, with fears of miscegenation, as the racial makeup in France was changing due to the influx of migration that followed colonization.[79] In 1777 France had a black population of roughly three thousand people out of twenty-five million. By 1878, immigrants from French colonies, particularly from French Antilles, shaped a small but noticeable black population in Paris.[80] While the population was small, black bodies, particularly those of women, disproportionately received attention as "curiosities and aesthetic fodder" for European sexual fantasies.[81] Delaplanche's composition exists as a marker of the fetishized black female in French visual culture.

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[78] Pomegranates are used to symbolise fertility in multiple religions including Juadaism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, in some acting as part of wedding rituals. Patricia Langley, "Why a Pomegranate?," BMJ (Clinical research ed.) (BMJ, November 4, 2000), https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1118911/.

[79] Denise Murrell, Posing Modernity the Black Model from Manet to Matisse to Today (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2018).

[80] Denise Murrel writes of the "highly visible population of ordinary black people" in a deeper look into Manet's Olympia and the black model known as Laure. It is important to consider that despite France's usage of Africa as a separate entity from Europe, the late 19th century already integrated black figures into French art, though with its hesitations and difficulties, in photography and painting. Ibid.

[81] Robin Mitchell writes extensively on the colonial fantasies that were projected onto black bodies by both men and women in 19th century France. For more see: Robin Mitchell, *Vénus Noire: Black Women and Colonial Fantasies in Nineteenth-Century France* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2020), 3.

Mitchell writes, "the discursive presence of black women in nineteenth-century

France-how they were seen, perceived, produced, and represented- suggests that French elites

were deeply unsettled to an unclaimed and ignored racialized national identity."[82]After losing

Haiti in 1804, France increased the use of savage, hypersexual imagery within the depiction of

black bodies in order to further establish a binary between colonized black bodies and a white

French national identity.[83] By using an explicit black African "other," visual depictions could

remove fears of an integrated France by explicitly separating "uncivilized" black figures from

"civilized" white figures, removing the presence of African women in France.[84] This visual

binary continues in post-colonial discussion of France with the mindset of racial blindness. The

depictions of these continents as explicitly separate refused to visually acknowledge that

colonization has and will lead to immigration and a mixed society, resulting in a non-white

France.

While Mitchell offers great context for the depiction of black women in France, it is

important to consider this statue's absence in North Africa in context with the recent 1871

Mokrani Revolt in Algeria.[85] Mitchell suggests that France focused on recovering from the loss

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[82] Ibid, 11.

[83] Robin Mitchell, *Vénus Noire*, 3-5.

[84] This separation was, of course, far from the reality of the time, as black women played a major role in the cultural makeup of the time. Depictions of black and metissé women were largely influential in the cultural landscape in the late 19th century. Notable figures and works include Manet's *Olympia*, Flaubert's *Education Sentimentale* which features a metissé love interest, and Jeanne Duval, the Haitian-born muse of Charles Baudelaire. Ibid, 105-112.

[85] The revolt was the largest Algerian uprising since its initial takeover in 1830 in which 250 tribes, or roughly two-thirds of Algeria, united against France. The revolt resulted in a French victory at the expense of 100 European-French deaths and an unknown number of Algerian casualties. Tensions increased as French oppressive forces interned and deported over 200 Algerian civilians. For more see: X. Yacono, Kabylie : L'insurrection De 1871, Encyclopédie berbère (Éditions Peeters, January 13, 2012), https://journals.openedition.org/ encyclopedie berbere/1410; "Cheikh El Mokrani (1815-1871) Le Chef De La Commune Kabyle, En Guerre Contre La

of Haiti throughout the 19th century, and established a clear binary between white Europeans and black colonial identities; hence, Delaplanche's use of Central and Southern African symbols to reify Africa's colonial identity. While the revolt resulted in a French victory, the period reflected instability and increasingly hostile tensions between France and Algeria with increasing French settlements in the colony.[86]

Africa is ethnographically depicted as, what was contemporaneously considered, a Central or Southern African woman while excluding explicit markers of Northern Africa. While one might suggest that the headscarf Africa wears may resemble a Taureg tagelmust or a Moroccan Berber headscarf, the coin embellishments suggest that Delaplanche had an entirely different scarf in mind. The headscarf instead resembles a *diklo*, which is traditional to the Romani people located in Western Europe. The scarf is adorned with coins, a typical visual marker of Romani or *gitane* culture that was heavily exoticized. The allusion to Romani culture separates Europe from the ethnic group, falsely placing their culture in a separate continent in order to uphold the false perception of a white European culture.

In 1878, it was already clear that France's *colonie de peuplement* in Algeria was leading to higher cultural involvement between the colonies and France. The statue's absence of North Africa offers distance from the event and the fear of racial mixing and migration that settlement colonies spurred. This absence allows Algeria to remain out of public discussion when looking at the statue today. Ultimately, the statue maintains the familiar stereotypes that linked Africa with wildlife and nature, with a turtle linking her physically to her ecosystem and animality and her

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Colonisation (43)," https://www.humanite.fr/tribunes/cheikh-el-mokrani-1815-1871-le-chef-de-la-commune-kabyle-%3Fen-guerre-contre-la-colonisation-.

[86] Terms of Algerian defeat included a fine of 36 million francs as well as France confiscating 450,000 hectares of land (over one million acres) that was given to French settlers, primarily refugees from the recently lost Alsace-Lorraine region, Ibid.

tray of natural commodities. She exists in contrast to *Europe*, her bare feet directly contrasting the implied "civility" of a sandalled Europe. With a focus on this colonial bounty instead, Africa's symbolic contribution to the world is represented as the produce that can be harvested and collected as colonial tax. Africa is further removed from the French public, seen as a commodity instead and a colony to be exploited.

NORTH AMERICA

On the right side of the Palais du Trocadérop entrance, *North America* (figure 22) begins the sequence of "new continents" depicted by Ernest Eugène Hiolle. North America is the first statue in the series to have her breasts exposed with full nudity, setting forward the level of savagery that was associated with the newer continents. Instead of wearing garments, she wears a skirt of leaves and a cape attached to a strap of leather across her chest. In Hiolle's depiction of North America, he supports the fantasy of the "native savage." Her feet are bare and she is adorned with body jewelry with bangles on her arms and ankles. She wears a bear claw necklace, an allusion to the indigenous necklaces that are prominent in Pawnee, Otoe, and Omaha tribes, and a vague assortment feathers in her hair that contribute to primitivist imagery.[87]

Hiolle constructs a motif of waves by her side to hold a handheld boat rudder over which also acts as a plaque.[88] The rudder itself may allude to the "discovery" of North America by European voyagers and the eventual colonial efforts of Columbus. Carved onto the rudder are the names of several of the Founding Fathers of the United States, reading: Washington, LaFayette,

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[87] Emma Hansen, "A Pawnee Bear Claw Necklace," Buffalo Bill Center of the West, June 25, 2021, https://centerofthewest.org/2014/03/19/pawnee-bear-claw-necklace-2/.

[88] "Amerique Du Nord - Identification Du Bien Culturel," Amerique du Nord, accessed April 22, 2022, https://www.pop.culture.gouv.fr/notice/joconde/000SC013726.

Franklin, and Jefferson. The plaque proclaims Europe's understanding of North America, a place

fundamentally linked with American colonialism. Focusing on the United States also ties France

politically to the success of America, as it would be recalled that Louis XVI supported the

American Revolution against Britain, with General Lafayette's carved name acting as a reminder.

The statue consecrates the colonial efforts of the American founding fathers, as well as France's

ability to aid other nations, particularly in the defeat of its archrival, Britain.[89]

　　　　As Central and South America were the first points of European colonization in the early

16th century, these early determined the overarching visual understanding of the "New World."

North America, despite its significantly colder climate, is still presented as a tropical figure in

1878.[90] Some changes did occur, present in Hiolle's work, with a club replacing the typical bow

and arrow, arguably a weapon with more savage implications. However, the distinctive

"American" markers of partial nudity, a headdress, and feathers exotic to Europe, remain in

North America. The symbols, centuries-old, draw from Ripa's allegorical prints which, by the

19th century, were already dated in a radically changing North America that included the

growing, and predominantly white, United States.[91]

SOUTH AMERICA

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[89] The focus on America also conveniently ignores the historical French loss of New France, or Canada, to Britain in 1763.

[90] Le Corbeiller, "Miss America and Her Sisters," 210.

[91] Of course, the United States in the 19th century was not, and never was, entirely white. However, over the 19th century, depictions of North America in allegorical form was shifting to be ethnographically white, erasing the image of the people indegnous to North America, as well as the Black, Asian, and Latin populations that built the foundations of America. The white-washed depiction of North America as an ethnographically white woman can be seen in early prints including P. Gally publishing's 1804 *Europe and America* as well as David Chester French's 1907 public statue *America*.

   South America (figure 23) follows with a statue by Aimé Millet. Draped in loose fabric,

South America's breasts are fully exposed despite the excessive fabric around her. She wears

bangle bracelets and bone and bead necklaces to illustrate South American craftsmanship,

though bearing no particularly to an exact region or culture. One of her legs is perched up as she

rests a bare foot on top of a pile of fruits exotic to Europe including hands of bananas and

pineapples.[92] Her body becomes entangled with the fruits she sits above, as she, a female figure

representing the colonial "other," becomes synonymous with the fruits she brings.

   Millet's depiction of South America appears ethnographically white rather than an

ethnographically indigenous figure native to the continent. She holds a plaque listing the names

of the South American countries that follow the colonial sanctions of Spain and Portugal.[93] The

plaque reinforces Western colonialism, focusing on the countries that were constructed, as well

as the produce that was extracted from the lands.

   Like *Africa*, *South America* also features the same pomegranate motif used in *Africa*.

Native to Persia, the pomegranate does not originate from either of the continents that

compositionally feature the fruit. However, the pomegranate provides the same rhetorical device,

welcoming colonial forces to the land. Additionally, *South America*'s inclusion of the

pomegranate along may be seen as a marker of colonial farming, as the fruit was introduced by

Spanish settler colonies in the 18th century.[94] While Hiolle possibly used the fruit merely to

allude to the exotic, it is worth considering how colonial enterprises changed and curated

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   [92] Bananas are native to South and Southeast Asia as well as Northern Australia. Portuguese settlers in the 16th century brought the fruit to South America to be cultivated extensively.

   [93] Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia, Uruguay, Peru, Chile, Columbia, Venezuela, Paraguay, Centro America, Rep. Arjentina [sic].

   [94] "Pomegranates," Fruits From Chile, acc. Apr. 27, 2022, https://fruitsfromchile.com/fruit/pomegranates/.

agricultural production in foreign territories. Further, the focus on agricultural bounty reduces *South America*'s identity into being merely an agricultural producer catering to the European market.

OCEANIA

Oceania (figure 24) finalizes the sequence of the six continents with a statue by Mathurin Moreau. The statue of Oceania marks the completion of world exploration as the final continent to be recognized and the most recent area of the world to be colonized.[95] She is notably the most physically bare as she wears a cloth that slings across her torso, only covering her back and right leg. To her right, there is a kangaroo, a native of Australia and New Guinea, following the convention of using a symbol of one part of the continent to represent Oceania. As Benjamin Schmidt notes in regards to allegorical iconography, "icons of continents could be capriciously presented, since they were presented so commonly," making markers of one island interchangeable with another or applicable to all.[96]

Further, not only is her chest fully exposed, but the fabric ever so slightly covers her pubic area, leaving a significant portion visible to classify as near full-frontal nudity. Using stereotypical depiction of a naked savage, Oceania is depicted nearly completely nude and barbaric, completed with a club in her left hand. The savage imagery used in the sculpture supports the labeling of the "new" continent as animalistic and uncivilized, despite the history of indigenous populations existing prior to Western colonialism. *Oceania* is depicted with the most nudity, in the most explicitly suggestive pose.

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[95] Antarctica was discovered in 1820, however, the statues focus more on continents with permanent human habitation that also feature cultural and natural resources that can be extracted via trade.

[96] Schmidt, 37-40.

Oceania acts as a foil to *Europe*, originally placed right behind Europe when at the Palais du Trocadéro as if to follow as an example (figure 25.1-2). Their contrast represents multiple constructed binaries of representation. The "civilized" versus the "savage," the cultural versus natural product, and the modest versus nude woman, are all exemplified in these two statues presented, on opposite ends of the series and museum esplanade. While other statues in the series also feature savage elements, *Oceania*'s position as the newest continent best depicts the imperial world that France sought to display at the 1878 *Exposition Universelle*. To better understand *Oceania* and her contemporaries, we may now look into the use of savagery, cultural products, and nudity as a foil to *Europe*.

Oceania, a broad region including Australasia, Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia, was first discovered in the 16th century, but had yet to be extensively colonized until the 19th century, notably with French Tahiti, the British colonization of Australia and New Zealand, and Christian missionary work in the Cook Islands.[97] Christian missionaries developed an ethos in their colonial missions that Phillipa Levine describes as "the three 'c's of Christianity, Civilization, and Clothing' ' whereby these elements formed the criteria of a civilized and superior society.[98] Levine cites Revelation 16:15, "Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed" as an example of the biblical conflation of modesty and good moral character.[99] Nudity is then seen as an inherently backward and degenerate trait, embodied in incivility and savagery.

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[97] "Colonial Rule," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed April 24, 2022, https://www.britannica.com/place/Pacific-Islands/Colonial-rule.

[98] Philippa Levine, "States of Undress: Nakedness and the Colonial Imagination," Victorian Studies 50, no. 2 (2008): pp. 189-219, https://doi.org/10.2979/vic.2008.50.2.189.

[99] Ibid, 191.

The colonized people were *primitive,* which their colonizers believed justified the brutal actions of European colonization. The use of primitive imagery in Moreau's statue is visually signified through nudity and packed with sexual connotations. As Marianna Torgovnick states, "the idiom 'going primitive' is in fact congruent in many ways to the idiom 'getting physical'" as European repressed sexuality and control of aggressive impulses are projected onto the "uncivilized" colonial peoples.[100] Oftentimes, the use of *primitivism* is particularly used to overtly sexualize women of color, as seen in the statues of *Africa* and *Oceania* especially.

Further, nudity gives the impression of being unarmed and vulnerable for these statues as well as the cultures and peoples which they represent. The statues act as permanent markers for the real women who were on display at the world's fairs in the same, if not worse, states of undress and exploitation. While *Oceania* holds a club in her hand, she is no match against the shield and armor of *Europe*. As the symbolic representation of Oceania, she represents a land ready to be taken by Europe. She is rendered within a naked, savage existence, where the power is given to the viewer over her as a subject. *Europe* in comparison to *Oceania* resembles anthropological photographs of the Victorian period. The genre, used to enforce colonial supremacy, employs the visual device of juxtaposition with clothed Westerners posing with naked natives as illustrated in works like figure x. While many of these photographs have since faded or are now circulating within inaccessible archives, *Les six continents* offer the same visual representation, presenting a clothed Europe versus the nude other continents as if they are an unbiased rendering of the diverse world.

The "savage" imagery is further emphasized when compared to the statue of Europe which features cultural products instead of natural products. Unlike the other personifications,

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[100] Marianna Torgovnick, Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives (Chicago, Illinois: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1990), 228.

Oceania features the fewest amount of cultural or natural symbols. *Oceania* features a kangaroo, but in this personification, it appears more to represent animality as a character rather than an industry. However, animality and commodity are alluded to with a sheepskin draped on her leg, serving as a marker of *Oceania*'s savagery and the sheep and wool industry established in Australia. She lacks the agricultural products seen in *Africa* and *South America*. *Oceania* is presented as a continent in need of cultural and natural cultivation, or, in other terms, Western colonization. *Europe*'s scientific and artistic symbols represent a civilizing mission by establishing them as enlightened aspects of solely European origin, ready to be spread throughout the world via Western influence via colonial efforts. Colonization is thus presented as an advantageous relationship for non-European continents who can receive the fruits of knowledge falsely attributed to only Europe, while Europe can exploit the natural commodities and cultivate the land of the "uncivilized" continents.

The statues were ingrained into the semi-permanent structure of the Palais du Trocadero, lasting beyond the event duration and entering the collective consciousness of over 16,156,626 recorded visitors for the 1878 Exposition Universelle as well as locals and those who visited after the event. The statues, present in postcards beyond the 1878 fair dates, act as passive confirmations of racial bias. The statues, which are a Western interpretation of foreign cultures, have lasted well beyond the colonial villages that supposedly offered representation to the peoples and cultures iconographically represented in the Six Continents statues. The statues' continuous presence in France, currently at the Musée d'Orsay provides perpetual miseducation, reinforcing outdated constructs of cultures outside of Europe. The statues and architecture that support their presence and themes uphold European expectations of non-Western cultures with an emphasis on colonial bounty, breasts, and utility.

Reception and Afterlives

The Palais du Trocadéro was inaugurated on the first of May, 1878. In hopes of a major

success, the government had declared the day a holiday so that workers could celebrate the

event.[101] *Les six continents* served as decoration and ornamentation for the main palace. The

series's secondary role as theatrical scenery for the main event is reflected in the contemporary

reception of the statues. The *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* wrote, "As for the allegorical figures which

stand on the terraces of the two galleries and are less imposing [than the *La Renommée* statue

that is stood at the top of the Palais du Trocadéro dome], they are also too far away to do

anything but stand out against the sky. In this great fair of eyes and mind, we have not yet had

time to distinguish the differences and the values, but the sculptures of the descent already have

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[101] "1878: Palais Du Trocadéro." Auditorium-Orchestre National de Lyon.

their importance."[102] This difficulty was evidenced in non-photographic accounts of the

inauguration that depict the statues with vague renderings that bear no resemblance to the

originals, notably one illustration depicting them all in draped clothing (figure 26).

While the statues received positive acclaim for their craftsmanship, they did not go

without criticism, especially in regard to the general content of the statues. The *Gazette des

Beaux-Arts* even commented on their dated nature, writing, "overall, in these works, especially

when they are hurried, the value of the theme rarely meets all the awareness that would be

necessary to treat them well, and here too many figures are absolutely clichéd."[103] Already at

their reception, the statues were notably too vague to provide information about other cultures, as

the exposition's mission posited, as they noticeably relied on dated visual stereotypes. The

criticism does not end there, expressing disdain for the statue of *Europe* writing, "they have

really abused the crowned and conventional figure, which is used for everything and expresses

nothing."[104]

The journal considered *Asia* and *Africa* to be the most noticeable statues in the series,

even offering detailed drawings within the volume. However, the journal also offers a valuable

suggestion regarding the geographies of the statues, writing "it would have been better to have

focused on national types, which would have been much more characteristic."[105] The journal

particularly notes that Falguiere's *Asia* seems rooted in Japan, resembling a statue placed in

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[102] My own translation. *Gazette Des Beaux Arts* 2, no. 18, (1878), 45, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uva. X001940854.

[103] My own translation. Exactly, "Dans ces travaux d'ensemble, surtout quand ils sont hâtifs, la valeur du thème rencontre rarement toute la conscience qui serait nécessaire pour les bien traiter, et ici trop de figures sont absolument des poncifs," Ibid, 45-56.

[104] My own translation. Ibid, 46-47.

[105] National types referring to statues dedicated to one particular nation or country. Ibid.

Champs de Mars to represent the country (figure 27). The *Bulletin des Beaux-Arts* v1. 1877-78

also notes the similarity listing "l'*Asie*, en Japonaise, par M. Falguière, et l'*Europe*, coiffée d'un

casque grec, par M. Schœnewerck[sic]."[106] The contemporary reception of the 1878 fair already

noted that the conventions of continental allegories were too broad to provide adequate cultural

insight about foreign lands. The statues, along with the baroque-inspired Palais du Trocadéro,

presented an already outdated vision for France in 1878, the site standing as a relic of the past

that would not last long into the 20th century. [107]

Little over half a century later, The Palais du Trocadéro was partially demolished and

reconstructed for the 1937 *Exposition Universelle* in favor of a more contemporary design.[108] As

part of a broader mission to remodel and clean up Western Paris, neoclassical façades were

chosen to replace the Venetian-Moorish Palais du Trocadéro.[109] The palace was torn down and

replaced with the Palais de Chaillot, ready for its debut at the 1937 *Exposition Universelle*. The

deconstruction of the 1878 fairgrounds included the removal of *Les six continents,* setting them

off for departure in search of a new home (figure 28).

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[106] *Bulletin des Beaux-Arts*, v.1 (1877-78), https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433081863197.

[107] Despite its dated nature in 1878, the genre of allegorical personifications of continents continued into the 20th century, notably in New York's public sculpture of the *Four Continents* (figure 10). Daniel Chester French's works were installed at the former U.S. Customs House, currently the National Museum of the American Indian, in 1907. The allegories are notable however for changing the depiction of "America " as an ethnographically white instead of an indigenous woman. The change marks the political establishment of a "white America" via public and political art which I hope to explore in future work.

[108] "1878: Palais Du Trocadéro," Auditorium Lyon, accessed April 5, 2022, https://www.auditorium-lyon.com/en/1878-palais-du-trocadero.

[109] James D. Herbert, "The View of the Trocadero: The Real Subject of the Exposition Internationale, Paris, 1937," *Assemblage*, no. 26 (1995): p. 94, https://doi.org/10.2307/3171420.

After their removal from Paris, the statues were shipped to Nantes and placed in deposit from 1935 to 1985.[110] In the 1980s, Anne Pingeot, an art historian and curator was tasked with finding notable works of art from the 19th century, primarily from the Musee du Louvre, the Musée du Jeu de Paume, and the former National Museum of Modern Art.[111] Pingeot's work also included scouting notable works throughout France which led her to Nantes, where *Les six continents* had been lying in a public landfill since 1963. At this point, the Musée d'Orsay offered, in exchange for the statues, a Sisley painting that is now at the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nantes.[112] After conserving the works, the statues were officially added to the collection in 1986 and displayed on the esplanade flanking the museum's entrance.

While it is unclear why exactly Pingeot selected these statues, the Musée d'Orsay sought to revive the interest in 19th century sculpture after its lapse into relative obscurity. The 19th-century was a prolific period for sculpture due to two main reasons: "the triumphant middle-class and the political powers that eagerly appropriated this art form, the former to decorate its homes and proclaim its social status, and the latter to inscribe the ideals and beliefs of the period in stone and bronze."[113] After 1945, these works fell out of favor, which the museum's web page on "sculptures" attributes to being considered "too official."[114] I find it extremely important to note the reason for the distaste in politicized sculpture post-1945 may not

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[110] The statues' circumstances after 1937 and prior to 1963 remain relatively unknown. "Amerique Du Nord," https://www.pop.culture.gouv.fr/notice/joconde/000SC013726.

[111] "Musée D'Orsay," American Friends of the Musée d'Orsay, February 14, 2022, https://aforsay.org/musee-dorsay/#:~:text=The%20museum%20formed%20its%20collection,National%20Museum%20of%20Modern%20Art.

[112] "From Excess to Oblivion," Sculptures | Musée d'Orsay, accessed April 28, 2022, https://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/node/504/sculpture.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Ibid.

have been simply because it was "too official," as the Musée d'Orsay suggests, but also due to a changing attitude towards art in favor of individual expression over aesthetics after World War II.

Post-war taste reflected an understandable shift away from highly politicized rhetoric that can be seen in *Les six continents*, an example of sculptures that the museum itself recognizes as vehicles for transmitting political ideals. Post-1945 movements starting with Abstract Expressionism and Surrealism focused on art as a mode of individual and internal exploration. Even by 1945, movements of the avant-garde such as cubism had become co-opted by government officials, notably receiving public criticism from Clement Greenberg on the avant-garde and kitsch, reflecting a public disdain for works that were conservative and politically involved.[115] Avant-garde movements including cubism had already become subjects of decorative items, a victim of their own success.

By the 1950s, the center of the art world had moved from Paris to New York. The Musée d'Orsay's explicit mission was to refocus on the second half of the 19th-century, when Paris last produced the most culturally relevant artworks in the Western world. By the 1960s and 70s, interdisciplinary movements including Fluxus dismantled boundaries of what art could include, incorporating more relevant mediums including technology and visual art. In the 20th century, older 19th-century sculpture that was read as pompous, cliché, and "official" would have no relevance to a post-war audience. Regardless of their exact intent, the statues were able to find a new home at the repurposed Orsay railway station, in a space dedicated to the historical period.

There has been little recent discussion of *Les six continents* since its inauguration at the Musée d'Orsay, save for Toshiyuki Shimazu's recent publication, "Personified Continents in Public Places: Internationalism, Art, and Geography in Late Nineteenth Century Paris" in 2020.

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[115] Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," *A History of the Western Art Market*, 2017, pp. 24-27, https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520340770-005.

While Shimazu discusses the presentation of the six statues as a linear progression of a primitive Oceania to a civilized Europe, Shimazu's focus is on decolonizing the geographical presentation of France as the center or the start of civilization. Until now, there has been little scholarship focusing on *Les six continents* in-depth and the colonial tropes that are employed in the work to convey a political message of French superiority. The Musée d'Orsay has yet to give context beyond its commissioning for the 1878 *Exposition Universelle* and placement at the Palais du Trocadéro, a renunciation of educational purpose that is evidenced in how visitors interact with the work today.

Currently, *Les six statues* are placed on the southern esplanade of the museum (figure 29), slightly less public than the esplanade along the river which features heavier foot traffic from local transportation and the Passerelle Léopold-Sédar-Senghor. The statues are publicly accessible, though the placement of statues is slightly secluded at the current group entrance. While some may not even notice the statues or quickly pass by in order to dart inside the museum, some interact with the statues, with varying levels of contact, including posing for photographs and selfies with the statues in the background. Visitors would not do so with actual human specimens, but these statues are so far removed from their cultural context that some feel inclined to trivialize their content with a lighthearted selfie.

Even in 2022, one may often see family members taking pictures with the statues such as a mother taking a picture of her sons admiring *Asia* (figure 30) undoubtedly unaware of the statue's resemblance to 19th-century photographs of Japanese prostitutes. While it is true that the museum does not provide deeper context on the statues, the contrast of Europe as clothed, and the racial "other" as a nude woman, is visually evident and can be easily identified by the viewer. How can these statues be treated as mere backgrounds for lighthearted family photographs and

selfies and what does that imply? The current display of these statues shows how these works are not merely decorative, but that they also perpetuate a bias that normalizes the nudity of non-white bodies through their brazen presentation.

The statues continue to live outside the Musée d'Orsay today, perpetually presenting and reiterating the social hierarchical biases by which they were created. They are neither neutral nor removed from their original mission, as the Palais du Trocadéro has simply been replaced by a museum dedicated largely to the greatness of 19th Century Paris. As if in response to their original criticism, the statues are even placed with easier viewing access nearly at ground level. The statues are now more accessible than ever, so close to the public that the museum posts signs not to climb onto the esplanade and statue (figure 31). Additionally, the statues are no longer displayed in two separate groups as they were at the Palais du Trocadéro. Today, the implied "evolution" of a civilized *Europe* to the "savage" *Oceania* is more easily seen with the statues presented in close succession, than in its original placement behind Europe at the Palais du Trocadéro (figure 32). The museum's uncontested display and lack of context trivializes their colonial histories that are presented as historical relics or even truths that the viewer can either distance themself from or leave undisputed. The lack of explicit context contributes to the selfie culture that is implicitly permitted or even encouraged with these statues.

While the 19th century also featured public interaction via postcards and paintings, they have since been replaced by smartphones which require less time and thought behind each shot (figures 33.1-4). The rising issue of selfie culture trivializing political or racial works calls to mind the more extreme case of Kara Walker's 2014 installation piece, *A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby*.[116] The titular allusion to subtlety is an irony, as the work faces the viewer

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[116] The full title being: *A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby, an Homage to the unpaid and overworked Artisans who have refined our Sweet tastes from the cane fields to the Kitchens of the New World on the Occasion of the demolition of the Domino Sugar Refining Plant. Sugar Baby* was installed at a former Domino Sugar factory in

with the violence and racism of the sugar industry through caricatures, Blackamoor-style figures,

and molasses that resembles dripping blood.

At its reception, installed in a defunct sugar processing plant, Valérie Loichot, a professor

at Emory University specialized in Caribbean literature wrote of the experience, "*Sugar Baby* is

something as yet unseen in its scale, beauty, and monstrosity. The "wow" effect created by art,

the monstrous beauty of the installation, the lightning making its way through the creases and

narrow windows, and the blasts of thunder shaking the walls evoke the history of slavery."[117]

While the work was largely understood as a criticism of the history and an homage to the lives

that were lost and exploited for the sugar industry, its reception was marred with controversy in

how the work's largely white audience interacted with the work, particularly with insensitive

selfies (figures 34). On the topic of visitor interaction with the statue, editor Cait Munro

remarked that "visitors have been unable to stop themselves from mocking and sexualizing the

work, uploading photos pretending to cup its breasts or tongue its buttocks."[118] Even when

subtext is presented so explicitly, especially in a contemporary work that seeks to critique

historical stereotypes, the inanimate nature of the statues, however important or sensitive the

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Brooklyn, facing viewers with the reality of the slavery and deaths embedded into the sugar industry. The installation also included 13 statues of boys resembling Blackamoor figures that resemble being coated in molasses or bloodied sugar. Roberta Smith wrote of the central piece, " Dominated by an enormous sugarcoated woman-sphinx with undeniably black features and wearing only an Aunt Jemima kerchief and earrings, it is beautiful, brazen and disturbing, and above all a densely layered statement that both indicts and pays tribute. It all but throws possible interpretations and inescapable meanings at you." Roberta Smith, "Sugar? Sure, but Salted with Meaning," The New York Times (The New York Times, May 11, 2014), https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/12/arts/design/a-subtlety-or-the-marvelous-sugar-baby-at-the-domino-plant.html.
    [117] Valérie Loichot, "Kara Walker's Blood Sugar: A Subtlety or the Marvelous Sugar Baby," Southern Spaces (Emory University, July 8, 2014), https://southernspaces.org/2014/kara-walkers-blood-sugar-subtlety-or-marvelous-sugar-baby/.

    [118] Cait Munro, "Offensive Instagram Pics Plague Walker's Sphinx," Artnet News (Artnet News, March 27, 2015), https://news.artnet.com/art-world/kara-walkers-sugar-sphinx-spawns-offensive-instagram-photos-29989.

message they embody is, can still lead to an audience behaving with insanely inappropriate comportment, letting the discussion the piece calls for go over their heads.

So, how do we go about presenting historical statues that reflect past biases that could potentially reinscribe them to the modern audience? First, we must provide context that is explicit enough to provide educational value to an audience that is unfamiliar with the territory of the work. Second, we must provide space for discussion that can allow for context to be understood and biases unlearned. The Musée d'Orsay's 2019 exhibit "Black Models: from Géricault to Matisse" was a recent attempt by the museum to provide a deeper look into the black figures seen within the Musée d'Orsay and Musée du Louvre collection.[119] While reception at the time was generally positive, as the exhibit provided much needed context regarding the real figures who existed for these works, the curation of the exhibit framed the artist's use of black models as beneficial to the abolitionist movement and an assertion of black identity in Paris. However, the exhibition and catalog commended the use of the black model without delving into the biases, fetishes, and rhetorical use of the "other" that contributed to the model's selection in the first place.

In particular, the 1800 painting by Marie-Guillemin Benoist, formerly known as *Portrait of a Negresse*, was presented for the first time with the model's actual name as *Portrait of Madeleine* (figure 35). The retitling was framed as a positive change for the museum, however, the change still left much unsaid. Benoist's depiction of nudity within the work is partially based

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[119] The exhibit "Black models: from Géricault to Matisse" was open Mar 26, 2019 - Jul 21, 2019 and was sparked by the publication of Denise Murrell's work "Posing Modernity" which focused on black models in late 19th century French art, particularly in Manet's *Olympia*. Murrell had actually served as the curator of the Wallach Art Galllery's original version of the show, which was later co-curated with Cécile Debray and Stéphane Guégan for the Paris Exhibition. Rianna Jade Parker, "In Paris, 'Black Models' Show Offers Essential Insights on Figures Excluded from Art History," ARTnews.com (ARTnews.com, November 18, 2019), https://www.artnews.com/art-news/reviews/black-models-musee-orsay-denise-murrell-13115/.

on the black "savage" bias that a black woman would not have the civilized nature to be concerned for modesty or respectability. None of Benoist's portraits of white women feature frontal nudity of any sort. While some may argue the portrait's nudity was intended to be understood as an allegory in the style of Marianne, as this paper has shown, the rhetorical use of the female body as an allegorical motif further disenfranchises real women by removing them from a work. The allegory and painting is based on a real woman and the content is still a black woman made nude by a white artist for a white audience.[120]

Regardless, the changed title was merely a temporary change for the exhibit, and the painting is now on display at the Musée du Louvre as *Portrait d'une femme noire,* Madeleine back to her nameless state. The exhibit's framing of racism as a fact of the past, without unpacking the biases and social framework that established and maintained a hierarchy, fails to provide these racialized works with the context required to provide genuine or significant educational or cultural value. The temporary name change calls to mind "woke washing" or "diversity washing" in which superficial efforts to acknowledge diversity is provided as an attempt to signal progressivism without providing significant changes at the institutional level.[121] In the case of the 2019 exhibition, the title change of *Madeleine* offers a small solution to a much deeper issue in how we present racialized works of art.

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[120] For more context of this work see: James Smalls, "Slavery Is a Woman: 'Race,' Gender, and Visuality in Marie Benoist's Portrait D'une Négresse (1800)," Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide, January 1, 1970, http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring04/286-slavery-is-a-woman-race-gender-and-visuality-in-marie-benoists-portrait-dune-negresse-1800.

[121] "Woke washing" or "diversity washing" was co-opted from Jay Westerveld's 1983 term "greenwashing" (a play on "whitewashing") in which companies employ minor changes to appear environmentally friendly or sustainable as a form of virtue signaling without addressing truly environmentally sound practices ie. Coca Cola's 2022 campaign with Bill Nye advocating recycling bottles while currently deforesting the Amazon in Brazil. For more on greenwashing see: Watson, Bruce. "The Troubling Evolution of Corporate Greenwashing." The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, August 20, 2016. https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2016/aug/20/greenwashing-environmentalism-lies-companies.

Since the 2019 exhibition, the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020

coincided with the shutdown of museums during the pandemic which led many to consider the

opportunity for a change in curatorial efforts at these institutions. In New York, the controversial

statue of Theodore Roosevelt seated on a horse, placed hierarchically and literally above a black

and indigenous figure was removed in 2020 (figure 36). The statue, originally placed at the

American Museum of Natural History in 1940, had been met with protests in recent years,

including paint splattering to resemble blood.[122] In 2020, the sculpture was announced to be

removed and by 2022 the statue no longer stands. The museum's removal now features

acknowledgments and a web page explicitly addressing the statue's removal and how we are to

understand its legacy.[123] The museum holds the statue accountable with some calling it as it is: "a

monument to white supremacy."[124]

The Metropolitan Museum of Art's recent 2022 exhibition marks another progressive

effort in "Fictions of Emancipation: Carpeaux Recast." The exhibition is open to the public from

March 10, 2022 to March 5, 2023 featuring thirty-five works of art that portray the racialized

"other" and the enslaved. The exhibition's central piece *Why Born Enslaved!* (figure 37.1-2) is

provided with clear context that leaves no room for misinterpretation as the museum's wall label

explains, "This bust is not a portrait. Rather, it depicts the Black figure as an eroticized and

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[122] Hakim Bishara, "Controversial Roosevelt Monument Doused in Red Paint at American Museum of Natural History," Hyperallergic, October 11, 2021, https://hyperallergic.com/682520/roosevelt-monument-doused-in-red-paint-at-american-museum-of-natural-history/.

[123] The museum page features interpretations of the work from multiple historians while providing context of the work and figures. For more see: "How Is the Theodore Roosevelt Statue Understood Today?: AMNH," American Museum of Natural History, accessed April 30, 2022, https://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/addressing-the-statue/today.

[124] Ibid.

racialized 'type'... the bust also perpetuates a Western tradition of representation that saw the

Black figure as inseparable from the ropes and chains of enslavement."[125]

The gallery also features sections dedicated to continental allegories, displayed as

"Allegories of Empire," as well as ethnographic busts. The wall text for *Bust of a Man,* originally

titled *Le Chinois*, (figure 38), an ethnographic sculpture by Cordier, explains, "While the artist

has carefully modeled the features of his sitter, the bust…transforms this likeness into an

idealized 'type,' or stand-in for an entire people."[126] For the bust of Cordier's *Woman from the*

French Colonies (figure 39) the plaque tells us, "Its historic title, *La capresse des colonies*,

invokes a slur to refer to a Caribbean woman of mixed African and European ancestry, alluding

to the sexual relations that took place between settlers and enslaved individuals in the

colonies."[127] The exhibit does not shy away from providing valuable context within the wall text,

interacting with the statues in a way that can present them to a modern audience with historical

background. The exhibit frames the work with the hopes that "these objects offer viewers an

opportunity to reflect on the formative role visual art has played in shaping abiding

misconceptions, or fictions, of racial difference, as well as the crucial role it still might play in

dismantling them."[128]

While the exhibition does provide extensive context of the works, the museum gallery

also features space for discussion. The exhibition is located between the Robert Lehman

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[125] Wall text, *Why Born Enslaved!*, Fictions of Emancipation: Carpeaux Recast, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York.

[126] Wall text, *Bust of a Man*, Fictions of Emancipation: Carpeaux Recast, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York.
[127] Wall text, *Woman from the French Colonies*, Fictions of Emancipation: Carpeaux Recast, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York.

[128] Curated by Elyse Nelson and Wendy S. Walters with the assistance of Rachel Hunter Himes and numerous other contributors.

Collection and Medieval Art section, located near staircases that lead to the European Paintings, 1250-1800 wing. The gallery, therefore, receives heavy foot traffic as visitors either walk through on their way to other galleries, or it may stop people in their tracks. The gallery also made a place for audience interaction through an area devoted to contemplation and written participation regarding the exhibition's mission (figures 40.1-2). Visitors are invited to consider the following questions, "What is the legacy of the Black figure in Western art? Who narrates history? What is abolition? What is representation?" and are invited to write their responses to be displayed at the museum (figures 41.1-2). While this space for discussion is far from perfect, stowed away in the Robert Lehman collection, and slightly hidden, it is a radical shift in the progressive direction that allows for these works to be looked at critically and in context.

While it remains to be seen if we can display a racialized work to justice within the colonial context of the museum, this exhibit shows the beginning of holding these 19th-century works accountable for the biases they captured and reaffirmed. In the case of *Les six continents*, the allegorical works are far from mere decoration. There is an invisible cost allowing them to go unchallenged as they reassert a blind eye and acceptance of these stereotypes and hierarchies as insulated by the past. These works require not only context, but also an opening for discussion to unpack and address the centuries-old biases they employ. The statues are located outside the museum, ready to be interacted with by the public.

So now, I ponder at the protest, *mais, c'est beau, non?* While I do not believe we will live in a world where all controversial works of art will be, nor need to be, removed, I hope we can all enter the discussion in order to gain meaningful reflection and academic value from these works. I believe that by providing context and tools to understand these works, we can engage in fruitful discussions and get a better understanding of how these biases infiltrate the public

subconscious and need to be reassessed. There is an entire realm of decolonization that can be

explored within these works, should the Musée d'Orsay choose to acknowledge them and

hopefully inspire other museums to do so as well. The result can provide these statues the ability

to truly educate a public, hopefully providing a notable reframing for those who uphold these

biases as well as provide a sense of comfort and visibility for those who have been trapped

within these tropes and stereotypes.

Figures

Historical Context

Figure 1.1 *1878 Siam*, 1878, illustration, Guide Souvenir de L'Exposition Universelle.

Figure 1.2 *Groupe Oriental*, 1878, illustration, Guide Souvenir de L'Exposition Universelle.

Figure 1.3 *Pavilion of Siam*, 1889, albumen print.

Figure 1.4 *African Habitat,* 1889, albumen print.

Personification of Continents
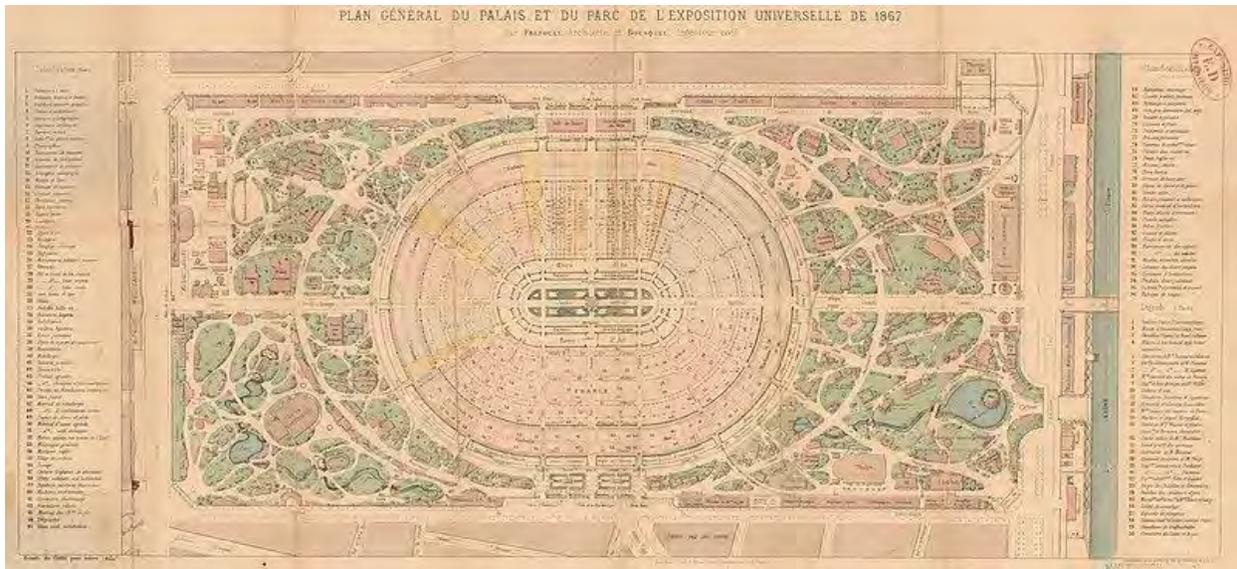
Figure 2.1 Frezouls, Briet & Perrée, Lith., *Plan général du Palais et du parc de l'Exposition universelle de 1867*, 1867, lithograph. Credit: Norman B. Leventhal Map Center Collection
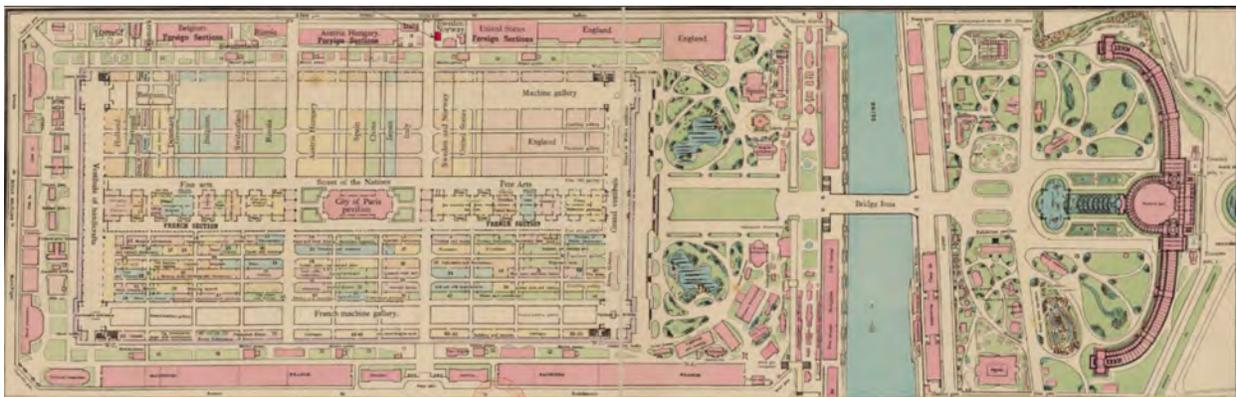
Figure 2.2 Ministère de l'agriculture et du commerce., creator, Frederick Dangerfield, Lith., *Exposition universelle internationale de 1878 ; plan général*, 1878, lithograph. Credit: Curiosity Collections Harvard Library

Figure 2.3 Isidore Laurent Deroy, *Panorama de l'Exposition Universelle de 1867, à Paris*, ca. 1867, lithograph.

Figure 2.4 Jean Dosseray, *Vue de l'Exposition Universelle de Paris 1878*, 1878, lithograph.

Figure 3 Isidore Laurent Deroy, *Exposition universelle. Paris, 1878. Palais du Trocadéro*, 1878, lithograph. Credit: Gallica

Figure 4 *Paris - fontaine du Trocadéro*, c.1880s, albumen print.
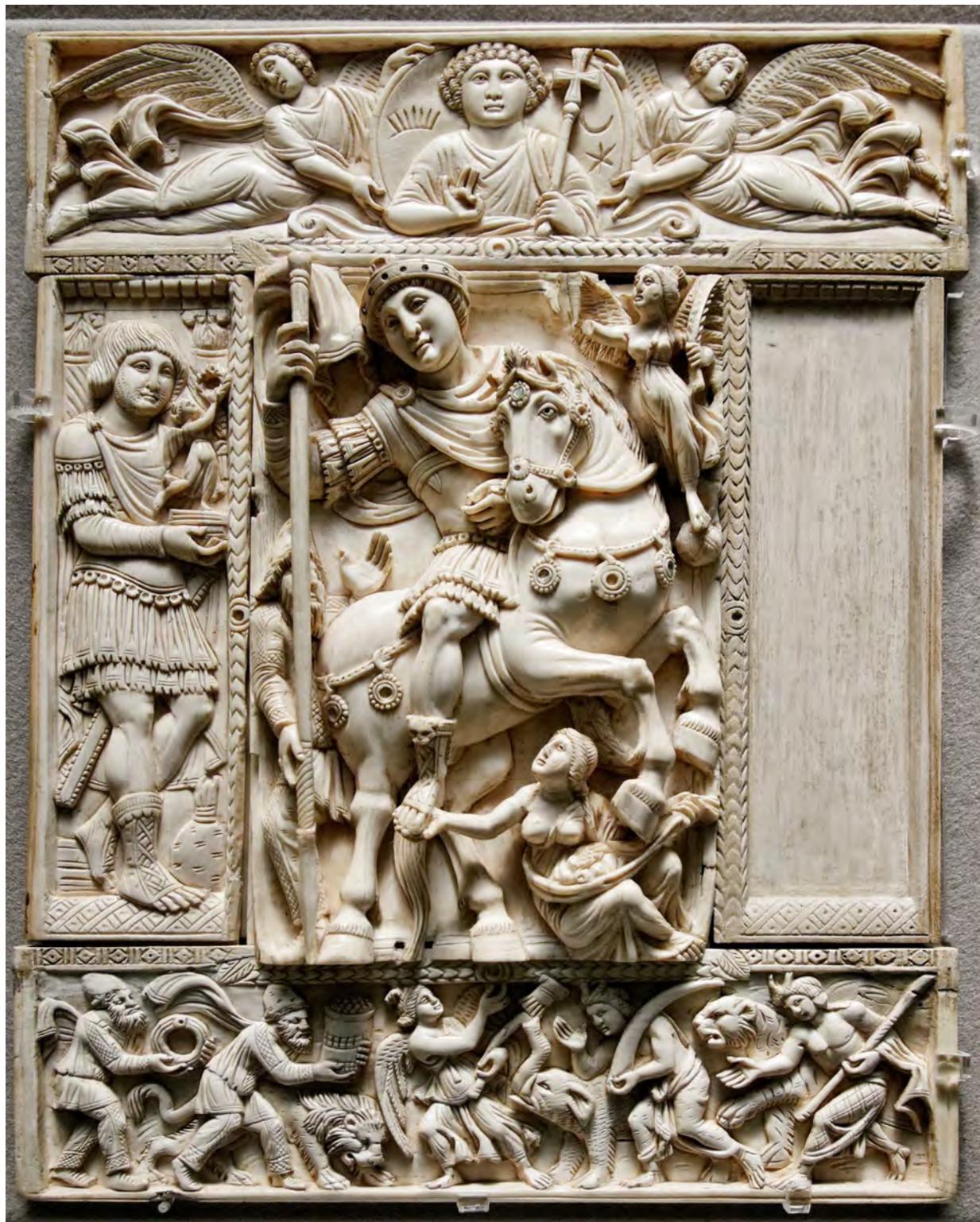
Figure *The Emperor Triumphant (Barberini diptych)*, mid-6th century, ivory inlay, Paris, Musée du Louvre.

Figure 6.1 Cesare Ripa, *Europe*, ca.1593, woodcut.

Figure 6.1 Cesare Ripa, *Asia*, ca.1593, woodcut.

Figure 6.3 Cesare Ripa, *Africa*, ca.1593, woodcut.

Figure 6.4 Cesare Ripa, *America*, ca.1593, woodcut.

Figure 7 Peter Paul Rubens, *The Four Continents*, ca.1615, oil on canvas, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

Figure 8 Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi*, 1651, travertine, marble, granite, and bronze, Rome, Piazza Navona.

Figure 9 George Gilbert Scott, 1872, stone, granite, marble, London, Kensington Gardens.

Figure 10 David Chester French, *Four Continents*, 1905, marble, New York, Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House.

Les six continents

Figure 11.1 *Le Palais du Trocadéro à Paris, bâtiment construit pour l'exposition universelle de 1878,* ca. 1890-1900, postcard.
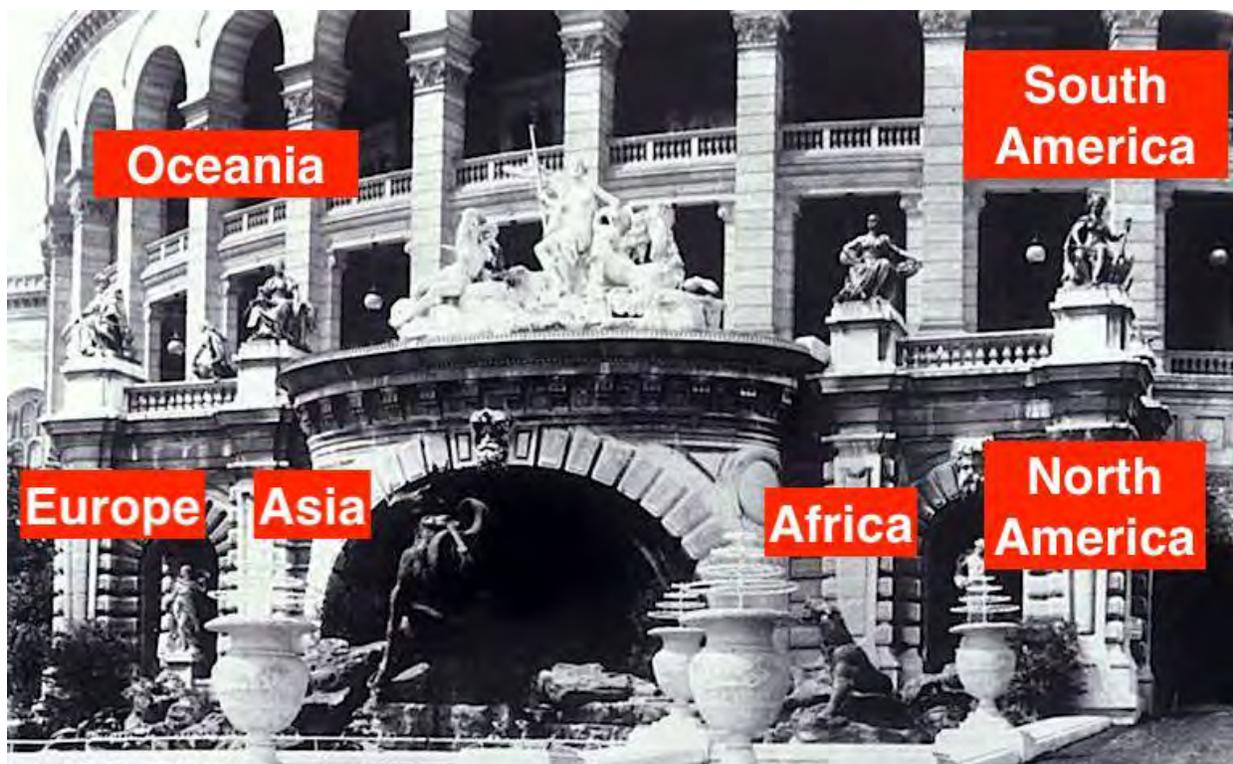
Figure 11.2 Labeled version of *Paris - fontaine du Trocadéro*, c.1880s, albumen print.

Figure 12 Jacques Patin, "*The Four Virtues" from Ballet comique de la reine*, 1582, engraving.

Figure 13.1 Patrick Macdowell, *Europe*, 1872, marble. Credit: A London Inheritance

Figure 13.2 John Henry Foley, *Asia*, 1872, marble. Credit: A London Inheritance

Figure 13.3 Patrick Macdowell, *Africa*, 1872, marble. Credit: A London Inheritance

Figure 13.4 John Bell, *America*, 1872, marble. Credit: A London Inheritance

Figure 14.1 Calder Marshall, *Agriculture*, 1872, marble. Credit: A London Inheritance

Figure 14.2 Henry Weekes, *Manufacturers*, 1872, marble. Credit: A London Inheritance

Figure 14.3 John Lawlor, *Engineering*, 1872, marble. Credit: A London Inheritance

Figure 14.4 Thomas Thornycroft, *Commerce*, 1872, marble. Credit: A London Inheritance

Figure 15 J.H. Foley, *Statue of Prince Albert*, 1872, gilt bronze. Credit: A London Inheritance

Figure 16 Alexandre Schœnewerk, *L'Europe*, 1878, bronze.

Figure 17 Alexandre Falguière, *Asia*, 1878, bronze. Credit: Steve Liu

Figure 18 Charles Henri Joseph Cordier, *Chinoise (Bust of a Chinese Woman)*, ca.1857, bronze, gilt, silvered and black patina.

Figure 19.1 Jacques-Phillippe Potteau, *Sumi, 17ans, Femme Japonaise à Yédo*, print on aristotype paper on cardboard**.**

Figure 19.2 Jacques-Phillippe Potteau, *Portret van Sen-Diam,* 1863, albumen print.

Figure 20 Baron Raimund von Stillfried's *Portrait with a Fan*, c. 1870-80s, hand colored alb

Figure 21 Eugène Delaplanche, *Africa*, 1878, bronze.

Figure 22 Ernest Eugène Hiolle, *North America*, 1878, bronze. Credit: Steve Liu

Figure 23 Aimé Millet, *South America,* 1878, bronze. Credit: Steve Liu

Figure 24 Mathurin Moreau, *Oceania*, 1878, bronze. Credit: Steve Liu

Figure 25.1 L'exposition universelle de 1878 illustrée, pg. 27-28, *Le maréchal-président de la république proclamant, du haut de la terrasse du trocadero, l'ouverture de l'exposition universelle*, 1878, illustration.
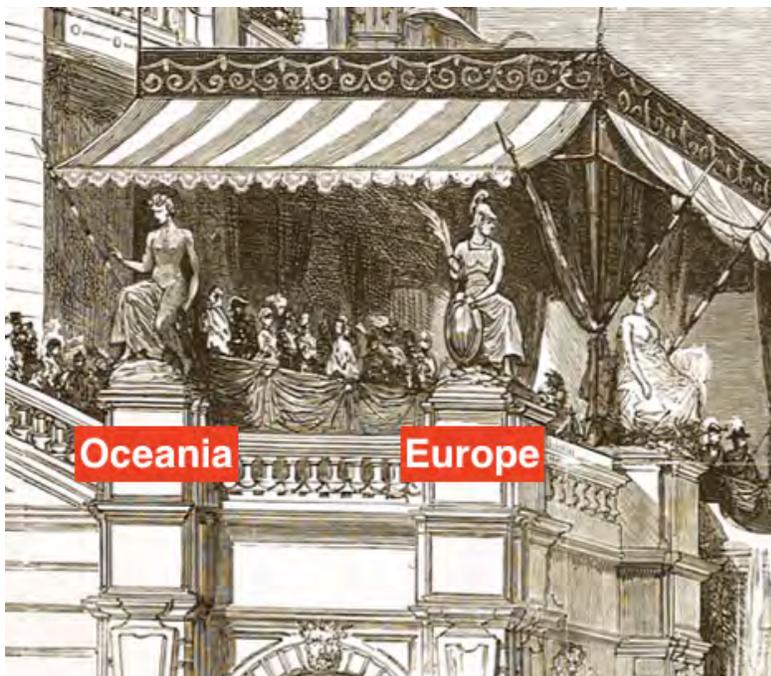
Figure 25.2 Detail from L'exposition universelle de 1878 illustrée, pg. 27-28, *Le maréchal-président de la république proclamant, du haut de la terrasse du trocadero, l'ouverture de l'exposition universelle*, 1878, illustration.

Reception and Afterlives

Figure 26 *Inauguration of the International Universal Exposition*, 1878, illustration.

Figure 27 M. Aizelin, *Japonaise,* ca. 1878, artist sketch.

Figure 28 *Vue du chantier de démolition de l'ancien Trocadéro*, ca. 1935-1937, photograph.
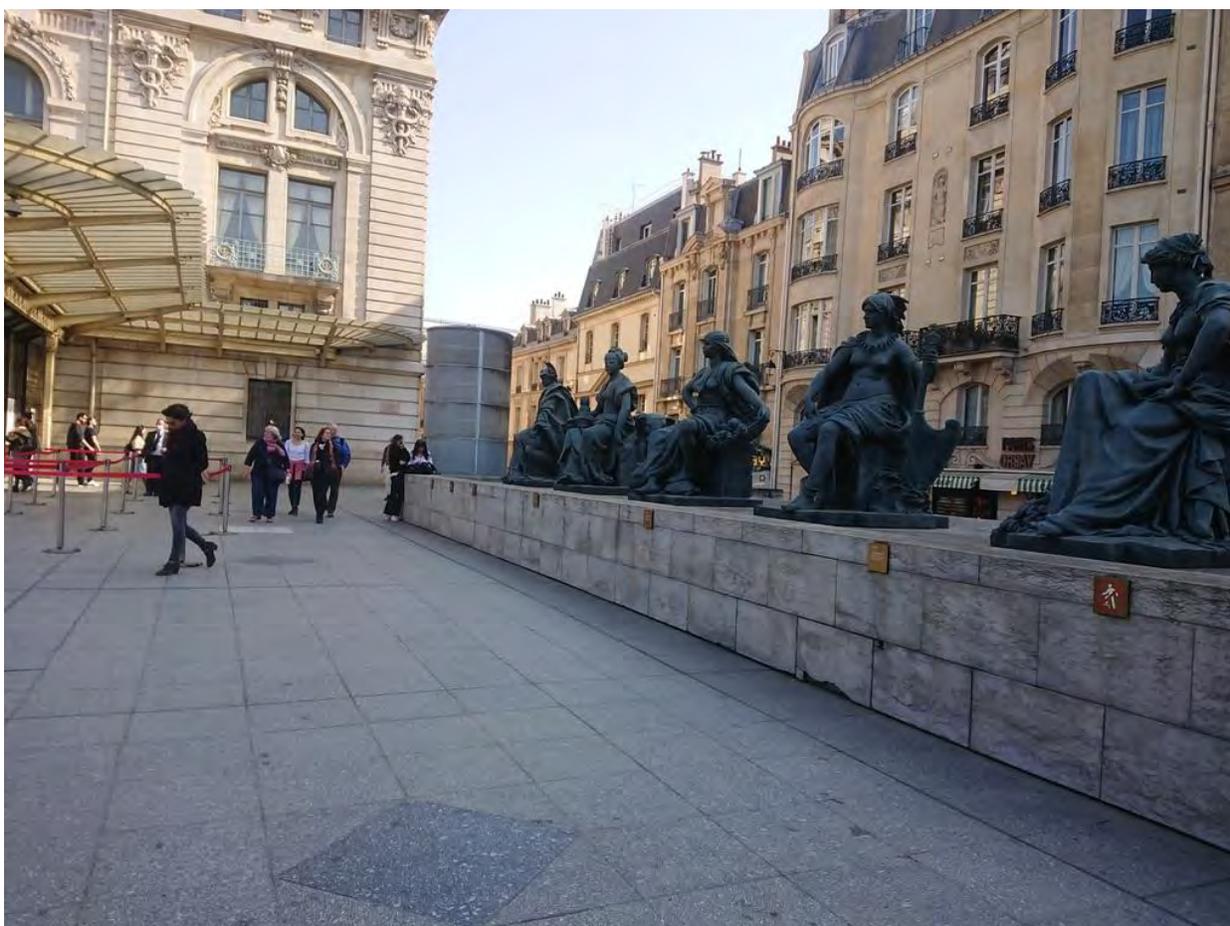
Figure 29 *Photograph of the Musée d'Orsay esplanade,* March, 2022, Paris, Musée d'Orsay.
Credit: Steve Liu

Figure 30 *Photograph of visitor interaction,* March, 2022, Paris, Musée d'Orsay. Credit: Steve Liu

Figure 31 *Photograph of the Musée d'Orsay esplanade,* March, 2022, Paris, Musée d'Orsay. Credit: Emma Gossett
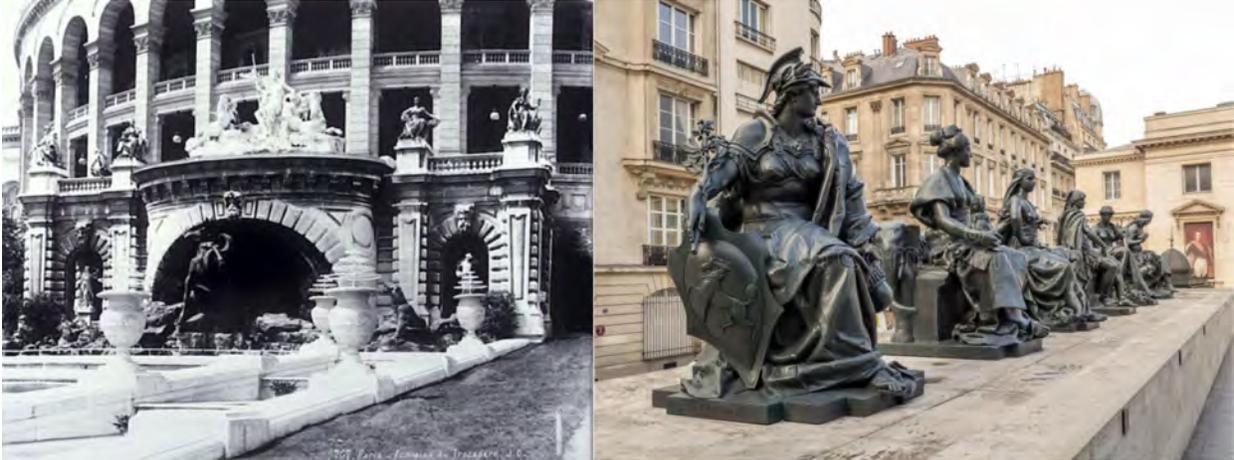
Figure 32 *Comparison of the Trocadéro and Musée d'Orsay placements.*
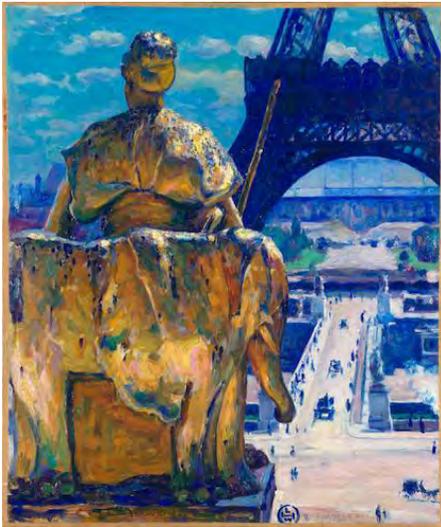
Figure 33.1 Louis Welden Hawkins*, La Tour Eiffel*, 1889, oil on canvas, Paris, Musée d'Orsay.

Figure 33.2 *Paris-Le Champ de Mars Vue prise du Trocadéro*, ca.1900s, postcard.

Figure 33.3 *Photograph of visitor interaction,* March, 2022, Paris, Musée d'Orsay. Credit: Emma Gossett

Figure 33.4 *Photograph of visitor interaction,* March, 2022, Paris, Musée d'Orsay. Credit: Steve Liu

Figure 34.1 *Instagram post interacting with "A Subtlety,"* ca. 2014, digital post.
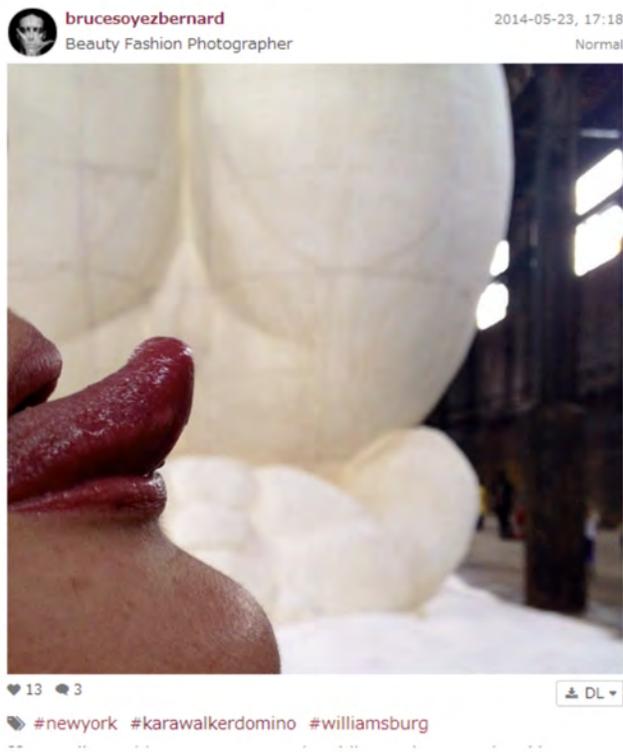
Figure 34.2 *Instagram post interacting with "A Subtlety,"* ca. 2014, digital post.

Figure 35 Marie Guillemine Benoist, *Portrait of Madeleine*, 1800, oil on canvas, Paris, Musée du Louvre

Figure 36 John Russel Pope, *The Roosevelt Memorial*, 1940, bronze.

Figure 37.1 *Why Born Enslaved!*, Fictions of Emancipation: Carpeaux Recast, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York.

Figure 37.2 *Why Born Enslaved!*, Fictions of Emancipation: Carpeaux Recast, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York. Credit: Olivia Guillotin

Figure 38 Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, *Bust of a Man (Le Chinois)*, 1872, bronze.


Figure 39 Charles Henri Joseph Cordier, *Woman from the French Colonies,* 1861, Algerian onyx-marble, bronze, enamel, amethyst; whie marble socle.

Figure 40.1 *Exhibition discussion area,* Fictions of Emancipation: Carpeaux Recast, Mar. 2022-2023, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York.
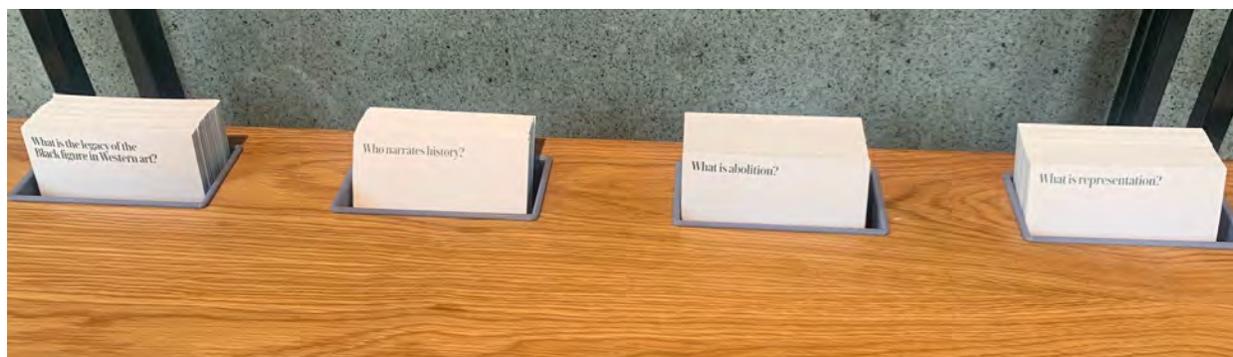
Figure 40.2 *Exhibition discussion area,* Fictions of Emancipation: Carpeaux Recast, Mar. 2022-2023, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York.
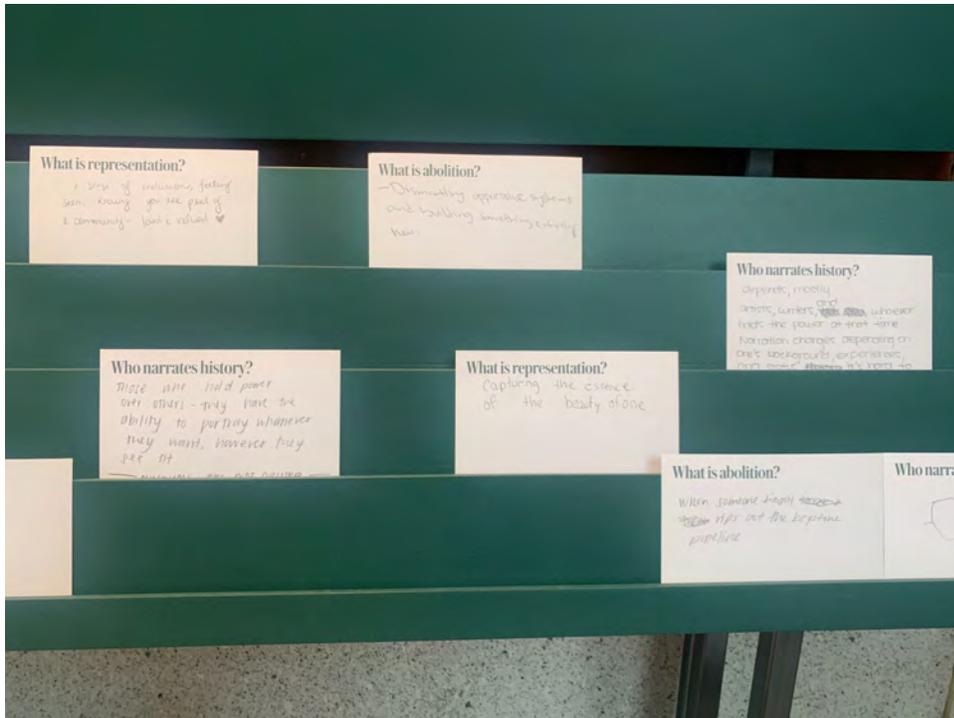
Figure 41.1 *Responses to the exhibit*, Fictions of Emancipation: Carpeaux Recast, Mar. 2022-2023, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York.

Figure 41.2 *Responses to the exhibit*, Fictions of Emancipation: Carpeaux Recast, Mar. 2022-2023, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York.

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