ABSTRACT

LOCATING MODERNITY: JAPONISME, GENDER, AND ENCHANTMENT AT THE 1893 WORLD’S FAIR

by Rebecca Tinch

Intersections of Japonisme, gender, and enchantment represent elements of emerging modernity in American culture at the turn of the twentieth century. Locating the concept of modernity geographically and metaphorically in three locations at the 1893 World’s Fair illustrates points of origin for each of these elements. These locations include the Japanese Pavilion on the Wooded Island; the Women’s Building in the White City; and the Ferris wheel on the Midway. The ways that architects and designers shaped these locations and how they responded to them while the Fair was in progress and afterward provide case studies for understanding how these three geographical points of origin correspond to metaphorical societal shifts toward modernity in the late nineteenth century. Using a micro-historical analysis to examine the “watershed” cultural precedents associated with each location, one can discern how hybridity, ambivalence, and enchantment characterized emerging modernity in the United States in 1893.
LOCATING MODERNITY:

JAPONISME, GENDER, AND ENCHANTMENT AT THE 1893 WORLD’S FAIR

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DEDICATION

To Jamie, Alec, Luc, Ella and Hana,
Always look for the Enchantment in life.
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LOCATING MODERNITY: AN INTRODUCTION

…An awareness of the subject positions…of race, gender … [and] location … that inhabit any claim to identity in the modern world… [is necessary] to focus on these moments …that are produced in articulation of cultural differences. These ‘in-between’ spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood…that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation in the act of defining the idea of society itself.

-Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture

On one level, any quest to locate modernity is illusionary because the concept is malleable and can be defined in many different ways. One cannot contain or locate modernity in a specific location or definition. Rather, modernity is something that can be located in many places and fulfill many definitions simultaneously, much as one can be enchanted with and disillusioned by something at the same time. This analysis of three specific locations at the 1893 World’s Fair illustrates that while the quest to locate modernity may be illusory, it is nevertheless geographically grounded, socially defined, and temporally specific.

For the purpose of this study, modernity may be defined in a variety of ways. Modernity can be defined as a cultural state of being shaped by and in reaction to the processes of modernization, including the adaptation of society to new ideological perspectives and new advancements in technology.¹ The new perspectives examined here include reactions to tradition originating from multiple cultures, shifting gender roles, and technological advances located in the same geographic setting. Put more simply, this study views modernity as “the condition of being modern” with a particular emphasis on interpretations of traditional cultures, gender roles, and technological innovation located temporally in late nineteenth-century America.² World’s fair historian Robert Rydell has observed that “long before the internet and the World Wide Web, another network—a veritable web—of world’s fairs ringed the globe, giving form and substance to the modern world.”³ This “web” distributed cultural influences from disparate parts of the globe and gathered them in a single setting. Rydell argued that the Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition in particular proved a “defining event in the life of the nation” which influenced the development of American culture into the twentieth century and beyond.⁴
Whether it be “white” cultural hegemony, the commercial aims of fair sponsors, the proliferations of amusements, the common person’s experience, the anthropological nature of exhibits, the City Beautiful movement, or the involvement of the men and women classified as “movers and shakers” in American society at the turn of the twentieth century, world’s fairs, especially the 1893 Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition, have played a unique role in both shaping and reflecting American culture.5

The varied architectural forms displayed at the 1893 World’s Fair provide historians with a better understanding of the wider cultural forces at work in late-nineteenth century America. Built structures provide a profound cultural record that reflects the lives, beliefs, and values of the people who created them. One of the challenges of examining architecture as part of the historical record lies in illustrating its relevance as a viable source within a larger historical framework. Architecture embodies a historical record in a three-dimensional tactile form. Specifically, the architectural “locations” at the 1893 World’s Fair chosen for this study provide insight into American cultural diversity.

The cultural diversity in American society at the end of the nineteenth century is often examined in terms of the racial and ethnic subjugation of European and Asian immigrants as well as people of African descent. However, within the same context as this “white” cultural hegemony there is also the naissance of cultural diversity which ultimately informs the emerging modern national identity of the United States. Cultural diversity, with respect to race, ethnicity, and gender overcomes a multitude of obstacles over the course of the twentieth century during which time those once relegated to the periphery of society move steadily toward the center. By observing the emergence of this modern identity, one may discern the less attributed sources which contributed to the rich complexity and diversity of contemporary American culture.

Enchantment, Ambivalence, and Hybridity: Cultural Forces at the 1893 World’s Fair

The complexity of diversity in American culture is found in the societal reaction toward difference. While subjugation and hegemony play an integral part in racial, ethnic, and gender relationships, one must also recognize the roles of enchantment, ambivalence, and ultimately, hybridity within these relationships. Viewing societal reactions to difference in only negative
terms is overly simplistic and ignores the dramatic shift of cultural norms from the periphery to
the center of American life over time. Enchantment with cultural “others” may be viewed
alternatively as a positive reaction to cultural difference. The idea of enchantment can be defined
as feeling of excitement or pleasure derived from engagement with a specific idea or
phenomenon. Enchantment can also be described as a state of being where individuals find
themselves under the influence of an idea or phenomenon as if under a magic “spell.”6 Although
the exhibition of people is correctly considered a comodification and a subjugation of people
based on cultural and racial difference, the cultural diversity of the 1893 World’s Fair also served
to inspire and enchant many in attendance, including some of the most influential architects and
designers at the turn of the twentieth century. 7 Moreover, the enchantment of those who visited
the 1893 World’s Fair provides a compelling example of enchantment within modernity.

Although social theorist Max Weber famously declared, “The fate of our times is
characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the ‘disenchantment of
the world,’” enchantment has not only survived but has also thrived in the modern world.8
Secular forms of enchantment, such as an enchantment with cultural “others,” actually facilitated
American’s assimilation to cultural change. In No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the
Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920, historian T. J. Jackson Lears examines the
origins of American antimodernism, a cultural response rejecting modernization in favor of
physical and spiritual experiences rooted in medieval and Oriental cultures.9 By embracing
“authentic” experiences in the form of Eastern culture, Catholic mysticism, and the European
medieval past, antimodernists eased their adjustment to profound cultural change. 10 Lears
concluded that American antimodernism had a dual significance promoting the “accommodation
to new modes of cultural hegemony” while preserving “an eloquent edge of protest.”11
Ultimately, antimodernist discontent facilitated the birth of modernist culture. In much the same
way, enchantment with cultural difference served to facilitate societal adjustment to cultural
diversity over the span of a century.

Ambivalence, along with enchantment, worked in tandem to facilitate the American
adjustment to the cultural diversity within modernity. Theorist and critic Walter Benjamin
attempted to “reconcile the processes of modernity with the idea of enchantment.”12 In his 1940
essay, “Theses on the philosophy of history” in Illuminations, Benjamin wrote, “The class
struggle…is a fight for the crude and material things without which no refined and spiritual
things could exist.” In this case, crude and material things represent a necessary counter-part to spirituality which allows for disenchanted forces, such as materialistic greed, to co-exist with enchanting forces, such as mythic and spiritual phenomena. In fact, Benjamin implies that enchantment and disenchantment are interdependent and inextricably linked. Thus, ambivalence toward modernity can coexist along with enchantment toward cultural change.

Ambivalence is another important component for understanding the complexity of the modernity emerging at the 1893 World’s Fair. Ambivalence can be defined as a state of being that incorporates multiple, often contradictory, feelings and suppositions about specific ideas or phenomena. In this state, ambivalence within relationships involving cultural and gender difference and technological innovation and tradition can simultaneously enchant and disenchant, subjugate and liberate, and can connect to the distant past while also offering a glimpse of the distant future. In the context of post-colonial studies, theorist Homi Bhabha defined ambivalence as “the mixture of charm and revulsion in the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized.” This suggests that extremely negative connotations with respect to racial, ethnic, and gender relationships can also co-exist in the same geographic and metaphorical space with unexpectedly positive connotations. Historian Neil Harris acknowledges that from “their very start, world’s fairs have been a mixture of many things: they have simultaneously been a repository for high idealism, money-making, critical evaluation of the world and message-sending.” He also allows that “their legacy has been just as ambiguous. They strengthened prejudices and liberated minds; they enriched individuals and benefitted whole regions; they were moments of high culture and of crass advertising.” Despite these seeming contradictions, Harris suggests that “fairs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries represented a culture that seemed hopeful, energetic, optimistic.” Certain locations at the 1893 World’s Fair powerfully illustrate this enchantment and ambivalence which resulted in a form of cultural hybridity that developed over the course of the twentieth century.

The cultural hybridity found at the 1893 World’s Fair exemplifies the assimilation toward modernity taking place in the late nineteenth century. The term hybridity can be understood as a synthesis that occurs among diverse cultural elements which combine to form a new distinct culture. Hybridity can also be defined as the blending that results when two distinct cultures interact and create new forms. The 1893 World’s Fair provided a venue for extensive and protracted encounters between distant cultures which resulted in new cultural forms, such as
styles of architecture and design that emerged in the early twentieth century. When the term hybridity is used in post-colonial studies, it indicates a state of intermingling among cultures, races, ethnicities, and nations. Although the term hybridity carried negative racial connotations within colonial and imperial discourse of the nineteenth century, its meaning has effectively been reversed with contemporary use. Recently, the term hybridity is most closely associated with the work of Homi Bhabha who uses the term to “stress the interdependence of colonizer and colonized, and to therefore argue that one cannot claim a ‘purity’ of racial or national identity. All identity…is produced in a kind of third space, which is ‘in between’ the subject and their idealized other.” While these cultural encounters with racial, ethnic, and gender difference undoubtedly resulted in negative reactions, such as the commodification and subjugation of peoples as Midway exhibits, these encounters also resulted in positive reactions that served to inspire modernist architects and designers throughout the twentieth century.

By exploring the ideas of enchantment, ambivalence, and hybridity at the 1893 Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition, one may discern how seemingly conflicting ideas previously viewed in a dichotomous fashion, such as Eastern / Western culture, women’s / men’s roles, tradition / innovation, enchantment / disenchantment, can all inhabit the same metaphorical and geographic space. By adopting an antinomial approach to these seemingly mutually exclusive concepts, these ideas emerge as a part of a modern American culture that has not been created in a vacuum, but rather by a complex, intersecting web of multiple sources. The result, both in the late nineteenth century, and over one hundred years later, is a truly diverse culture, one that is informed by multiple sources, from both near and far. Cultural “others” that were once on the borders, have effectively moved to center stage. What was once considered inferior has become accepted. What was intended to be subjugated has become liberated. As part of the cultural assimilation to modernity in the late nineteenth century, Japonisme, gender, and enchantment created lasting ties in American culture that persisted into and throughout the twentieth century.

**Historiography: Intersecting Threads**

Due to the diverse nature of this topic, the required historiography involves multiple intersecting threads: the study of Japonisme; scholarship on the lives and work of architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Marion Mahony Griffin among others; the study of gender and the
1893 World’s Fair; general scholarship on the architecture and culture at the 1893 World’s Fair; and finally scholarship on modernity and enchantment in the nineteenth century.

The first thread is the study of *Japonisme* in Western culture, specifically in America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. General sources on *Japonisme* in Western culture include Siegfried Wichmann’s 1981 *Japonisme: The Japanese Influence on Western Art in the 19th and 20th Centuries* and Lionel Lambourne’s 2005 *Japonisme: Cultural Crossings between Japan and the West*. Wichmann addressed the scope and breadth of the Western fascination with Japanese culture and its influence on artists such as Edouard Manet, Mary Cassett, and James Abbott McNeill Whistler as well as architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Richard Neutra.23 Similarly, Lambourne focused on the two-way dialogue between Japan and the West which expanded with the re-opening of Japan’s boarders for trade in 1858.24 In addition, editors Julia Meech and Gabriel P. Weisberg’s 1990 *Japonisme Comes to America: The Japanese Impact on the Graphic Arts, 1876-1925* discussed *Japonisme* in America, including the Japanese Pavilion and its impact on modernist architecture.25 Concerning Japanese architecture, Arata Isozaki and David B. Stewart’s 2006 *Japan-ness in Architecture* offered Japanese architect Isozaki’s views of the interaction between traditional Japanese architecture, modernity, and Western architecture.26

In addition, Edward Said’s 1978 *Orientalism* and two responses to Said, A. L. Macfie’s 2002 *Orientalism* and John M. MacKenzie’s 1995 *Orientalism: History, Theory, and the Arts*, address the study of Eastern culture. Although these texts primarily focused on the Near and Middle East, the theory involved may be applied to the Far East as well. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* dealt specifically with a revision of studies of the “Orient” which he describes as inferring cultural inferiority to Eastern culture as well as representing a lack of genuine understanding on the part of Orientalist scholars.27 A.L. Macfie’s *Orientalism* provided a balanced compilation of texts which examines the modern theory of anti-Orientalism, as espoused by Said and others, as well as the main criticisms of that theory.28 In addition, John M. MacKenzie’s 1995 *Orientalism: History, Theory, and the Arts* explored the idea that Western culture received genuine inspiration from the East in the visual arts, architecture, design, music, and theatre.29 This examination of theory is particularly valuable concerning the contribution of Eastern culture to the West.
The next thread concerns scholarship on the work of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century architects, such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Marion Mahony Griffin. General biographical works which discuss the influence of Japanese culture on Frank Lloyd Wright’s work include Brenden Gill’s 1988 *The Many Masks of Frank Lloyd Wright* and Ada Louise Huxtable’s 2004 *Frank Lloyd Wright*. Gill personally knew Wright and wrote about the many facades that Wright imposed publically and offered insight into the true nature of Wright’s persona. Similarly, Huxtable attempted to correct Wright's mythologizing of his life, most notably assertions about his life and work in his autobiography, including the influence of *Japonisme* on his work.

Recent scholarship specific to the influence of Japanese culture, prints, and architecture on Wright’s work include Kevin Nute’s 1993 *Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan: The Role of Traditional Japanese Art and Architecture in the Work of Frank Lloyd Wright* and Julia Meech’s 2000 *Frank Lloyd Wright and the Art of Japan: The Architect's Other Passion*. Nute was billed as the first scholar to thoroughly explore Wright’s stylistic debt to Japanese culture. Meech explored Wright’s side-career as a Japanese print dealer and his genuine passion for *Japonisme*. In addition, Paul Laseau and James Tice’s 1992 *Frank Lloyd Wright: Between Principle and Form* specifically discussed how Wright’s famous Winslow house appears derived from the Japanese Pavilion at the 1893 World’s Fair. Conversely, sources pertaining to the work of architect Marion Mahony Griffin noted her open attribution to the influence of *Japonisme* such as David Van Zanten’s “Marion Mahony Griffin” and Debora Wood’s 2005 “Introduction: Drawing the Form of Nature” in *Marion Mahony Griffin: Drawing the Form of Nature* edited by Debora Wood.

Another historiographical element concerns the study of gender and world’s fairs. A classic work on this theme is Jeanne Weimann’s 1981 *The Fair Women* which discussed women and the Women’s Building at the 1893 World’s Fair. A recent publication, Tracey Jean Boisseau and Abigail M. Markwyn’s 2010 *Gendering the Fair: Histories of Women and Gender at World’s Fairs* addressed gender, architecture, and Japanese involvement at the 1893 World’s Fair. Specifically, Lisa K. Langlois’s contribution to this anthology, “Japan—Modern, Ancient, and Gendered at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair,” discussed the different exhibits sponsored by Japan and the gendered nature of these exhibits. Mary Pepchinski’s essay, “Women’s Buildings at European and American World’s Fairs, 1893-1939,” discussed the history of the Women’s
Buildings including the first Women’s Building at the 1893 World’s Fair.\footnote{8} Finally, Judith Butler’s theory of performative gender in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* provides a valuable theoretical basis for understanding dramatically changing gender-roles and women’s professional behavior in the late nineteenth century as part of a continuum rather than from a binary perspective.\footnote{40}

Yet another thread concerns a general study of the culture and architecture of the 1893 World’s Fair. Some of the earliest works of scholarship on the Fair, Benjamin Cummings Truman’s 1893 *History of the World’s Fair*, Roisseter Johnson’s 1897-98 four volume *A History of the World’s Columbian Exposition*, published under the authority of the Fair Board of Directors; and Halsey C. Ives’s 1893 *The Dream City*, each provided contemporary accounts and images of the Fair and its buildings.\footnote{41} Two classic general histories of the 1893 World’s Fair are Reid Badger’s 1979 *The Great American Fair: The World's Columbian Exposition & American Culture* and Stanley Appelbaum’s 1980 *The Chicago World's Fair of 1893: A Photographic Record, Photos from the Collections of the Avery Library of Columbia University and the Chicago Historical Society*. Badger discussed the cultural impact, while Appelbaum provided a photographic history of the 1893 World’s Fair.\footnote{42} A popular trade book relating to the culture surrounding the Fair is Erik Larson’s 2003 *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic and Madness at the Fair that Changed America*. Using meticulous historical methodology, Larson cited numerous primary source documents and first-hand accounts providing readers with an impressive historical account of the Fair.\footnote{43}

Scholar Robert W. Rydell has written multiple works on the cultural impact of the 1893 World’s Fair. In Rydell’s 1984 *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*, he argued that world’s fairs disseminated the values of America’s elite and suggested that these fairs blended progressive values with racist ideology, particularly in the displays of people as “exhibits” on the Midway.\footnote{44} Alternately, in Rydell’s 1993 “Rediscovering the 1893 Chicago World’s Exposition” in *Revisiting the White City: American Art at the 1893 World's Fair*, edited by Carolyn Kinder Carr and George Gurney, the author suggested that the 1893 World’s Fair marked a turning point in American art and architecture. This work provided a centennial history of the Fair, including the influential role of architect Daniel Burnam, the Director of Works for the exhibition.\footnote{45} In addition, Rydell, John E. Findling, and Kimberly D. Pelle’s 2000 *Fair America: World's Fairs in the United States*
analyzed the intentions of fair organizers, audience reactions, and stereo-typical depictions at the fairs and suggested that world fairs both displayed and contributed to American culture.46

Other works that discuss the cultural impact of the Fair include James Gilbert’s 1991 *Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893* which argued that urban experiments, including Daniel Burnham’s White City, ultimately propagated the mass culture they intended to inhibit, such commercial leisure in the Midway.47 Additionally, Curtis Hensley’s 1991 “The World as Marketplace: Comodification of the Exotic at the World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893,” in *Exhibiting Cultures: the Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, edited by Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, dealt specifically with exhibition practices and the idea of the exotic as spectacle at the Fair.48 Furthermore, Neil Harris’s 1993 *Grand Illusions: Chicago's World's Fair of 1893* offered alternative perspectives to the traditional narrative on the impact of the Fair, from the architecture of the White City to the treatment of ethnic groups and women.49

Recent interdisciplinary scholarship, such as William A. Gleason’s 2011 *Sites Unseen: Architecture, Race, and American Literature*, and classic architectural scholarship, such as Marcus Whiffen and Frederick Koeper’s 1981 *American Architecture, 1607-1976*, have discussed the direct influence of the Japanese pavilion on American architecture.50 Moreover, Homi K. Bhabha’s 1994 *The Location of Culture* provides a useful platform for understanding the metaphorical locations of culture at the 1893 World’s Fair through his theories on hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence, space, and location.51

The final set of historiographical works concerns the study of modernity and enchantment. A classic writing on this topic is T.J. Jackson Lears’s 1981 *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920* which explored the American cultural rejection of modernization in favor of “pure experiences” in the form of Eastern culture, Catholic mysticism, and the European medieval past.52 Lears relied heavily on social theorist Max Weber’s theory that modernity is inherently disenchanted.53 More recent scholarship on this topic includes Michael Saler’s scholastic journal articles, “Modernity and Enchantment: A Historiographic Review” published in 2011 in the *American Historical Review* and “Modernity, Disenchantment, and the Ironic Imagination” published in 2004 in *Philosophy and Literature*.54 Saler discussed the concept of enchantment within modernity as well as the notion that disenchantment and enchantment can co-exist within modernity. Saler relied heavily on social theorist and literary critic Walter Benjamin’s antinomial approach incorporating a both
and logic rather than an either/or binary model in his work. In addition, Joshua Landy and Michael Saler’s 2009 *The Re-Enchantment of the World: Secular Magic in a Rational Age* discussed secular sources of enchantment in modernity, such as technology, transcendentalism, and diversity. This notion of enchantment is a unifying theme throughout the Fair including enchantment with cultural “others,” the professionalization and public activities of women, and the technological innovations of modernization.

The three geographic locations connected to these sources of enchantment, the Wooded Island, the White City, and the Midway, each represent a metaphorical location of modernity at the 1893 World’s Fair. Beginning in May of 1893, visitors traveled to Chicago, Illinois from all over the United States and the world to visit the World’s Columbian Exposition. On the Wooded Island, these visitors experienced Eastern traditions that would later inform Western notions of modernity. In the White City, visitors found a building that embodied the “New Woman” of the 1890s and displayed her new roles in society. On the Midway, visitors were carried gently up into the black, star-studded sky, where they marveled at the White City, glowing in the darkness, from atop Ferris’s famous wheel.

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NOTES


Books, 1978) who argued that studies of the “Orient” attributed cultural inferiority to Eastern culture and represented a lack of genuine understanding on the part of Orientalist scholars.


10 Lears, No Place of Grace, xiv.

11 Lears, No Place of Grace, 301.


17 Harris, Cultural Excursions, 113-114.

18 Harris, Cultural Excursions, 112.


20 Adapted from Susan Mayhew’s definition of hybridity as “the mixture of meanings that emerges when two cultures interact; the new forms that are created when cultures merge.” See Susan Mayhew, "hybridity," in A Dictionary of Geography (Oxford University Press, 2009), Oxford Reference Online, <www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.lib.muohio.edu/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t15.e3499.>


31 Ada Louise Huxtable and Frank Lloyd Wright, Frank Lloyd Wright (New York: Lipper/Viking, 2004).

37 Tracey Jean Boisseau and Abigail M. Markwyn, eds., Gendering the Fair: Histories of Women and Gender at World’s Fairs (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010).
51 Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994).
CHAPTER ONE

MODERNITY LOCATED IN TRADITION:
JAPONISME AND THE JAPANESE PAVILION ON THE WOODED ISLAND

Modernity can be located in multiple origins for tradition found at the 1893 Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition. The 1893 World’s Fair was conceived as a celebration of the four-hundredth anniversary of Columbus’s landfall in the New World.¹ This connection to a distant European past provided a legitimizing effect for a city, and a nation, struggling to make their cultural identity known to the world. The architectural design of the White City with its monumental Beaux-Arts structures in neo-classical style also proved legitimizing in that it promoted the United States as partaking of the same classical traditions as their Western European counterparts.² While these expected origins of tradition found at the Fair provided a strong Western cultural reference, Eastern sources of tradition also proved unexpectedly influential in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As a result, Americans established their own unique style of architecture based in part on a hybrid of transnational cultural sources. By examining the work of two prominent architects during this period, one can discern the simultaneous enchantment and ambivalence toward Eastern culture which characterized Americans’ eventual assimilation toward modernity.

On the Wooded Island

From the Fine Arts Palace on the shore of Jackson Park, one could see the Wooded Island in the distance. The morning breeze flowed from the White City across the rippling waves of the Lagoon rustling the sedges and bulrush on the banks of the island. The crisp air passed through the shutters of the south wing of the Hō-ōden, fluttering the Ashikaga era scrolls displayed on the library walls and moved soundlessly past the table settings in the konnoma. Fair visitors mounted the low steps leading to the veranda from the south side to enter the Edo castle inspired central hall. Once inside, they followed the staggered route around the cruciform parti to find the tokonoma resembling a domestic hearth at the center of the hall. The breeze followed them as they made their way to the north wing where the sunlight filtered through the doorway illuminating Fujiwara period tapestries and simple furnishings inside. Later that night, music drifted across the water, paper lanterns hung from boats and bridges providing an ambiance that permeated the island landscape.³

The Wooded Island was located in the central lagoon on the shore of Jackson Park and served as a central feature in the Fair’s landscape. The main buildings surrounded the banks of the Lagoon with honeysuckle and summersweet growing below their formal terraces.⁴ The banks were filled with sedges, ferns, and bulrush with iris and yellow buttercup rising among the greenery.⁵ In the center of the Lagoon, the island vegetation included trees and dense foliage comprised of adlumia, Madeira vine, catbriar, virgin’s bower, brambles, sweet peas, Jimson weed, milkweed, sunflowers and morning glories.⁶ Daniel Burnham, Director of Works, later commented that the introduction of the canal, the lagoons, and the Wooded Island were among the most original of the design components of the 1893 World’s Fair.⁷ The “natural” design of the Wooded Island was intended to compliment the classical ornament of the structures flanking the Court of Honor, making up the Fair’s high culture in contrast with the popular culture on the Midway.⁸
Frederick Law Olmsted, the supervising landscape architect in charge of designing the fairgrounds, fought valiantly for the Wooded Island to remain a natural site without any man-made structures (figure 2).\(^9\) The island was the most informally arranged part of the Fair and Olmsted intended it to “serve as a foil to the official grandeur and sumptuousness of the other parts of the scenery.”\(^10\) Yet as the fairgrounds took shape in 1891, exhibitionists clamored for space on the Wooded Island. Theodore Thomas, conductor of Chicago’s symphony, wanted to build a music hall on the island.\(^11\) Theodore Roosevelt, head of the U.S. Civil Service Commission, sought the island for a hunting camp exhibit for his Boone and Crockett Club.\(^12\) The U.S. Government even wanted an Indian exhibit on the island while the Fair’s chief of ethnology sought to have the island for exotic village exhibits.\(^13\) Finally, the Japanese Government requested the island as the site for the Hō-ōden which would house the Japanese Pavilion.\(^14\) Burnham appealed to Olmsted to accept the Japanese exhibit on the island arguing that the Japanese structures would prove the most harmonious with the landscape that Olmsted envisioned.\(^15\) Olmsted grudgingly accepted the pavilion and the Japanese exhibit was built on one of the most sought after sites at Jackson Park. In *The World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893*, authors Trumbull White and William Igleheart maintained that the Japanese Pavilion was built in “the middle of two acres of space in the most charming location of the
whole grounds.” The location of the Japanese Pavilion was just one of many aspects that made it so appealing.

The Japanese Pavilion represented more than a regurgitation of Japanese style. In fact, the pavilion’s design involved a synthesis of Eastern and Western culture. Japanese government architect Kuru Masamichi’s design for the pavilion was inspired by the Hōō-dō, or Phoenix Hall, of the Byōdō-in temple built in the city of Uji near Kyoto Prefecture, Japan in 1053. However, the Beaux-Arts trained Masamichi made modifications rather than simply replicating the original. He preserved the symmetrical organization of the original Uji building but modified its scale in order to create three functional exhibition spaces in a single unified composition. The Hō-ōden featured a copper-sheet roof with period style doors and shutters to differentiate the discrete exhibitions spaces in the otherwise stylistically unified exterior cladding (figure 1). The result was a synthesis of Japanese architectural elements superimposed with Beaux-Arts proportions. This synthesis attracted the attention of fairgoers and architects alike.

The interior spaces of the Japanese Pavilion served as an exhibition space as well as a three-dimensional history of Japanese culture mirroring the four hundred year period commemorated by the Fair. In the Official Directory of the World’s Columbian Exposition, Moses B. Handy described the interior of the Japanese Pavilion as comprised of three distinct exhibition spaces which depicted three eras in Japanese history: the north wing displayed art from the Fujiwara era; the central hall represented an Edo castle in the Tokugawa period; and the south wing contained a library and tea room in the style of the Ashikaga period. This design created a narrative of Japanese “tradition” which served to contextualize the modern national identity that the Japanese Pavilion was intended to convey. Official sources, such as Okakura Kakuzo’s guide, History of the Empire of Japan, also sought to convey the political legitimacy of Japan’s Meiji government. Kakuzo carefully articulated the modernity of Japan while also providing a connection to Japan’s distant past. In particular, the guide conspicuously featured the iconography of the phoenix crest. This historic imagery signified that the modern Meiji government was a “just sovereignty” in Japan.

Like the United States, Japan sought to establish its legitimacy among the modern nations of the world. Through its multiple exhibits at the Fair, Japan demonstrated a national presence that was located within the Western model of modernity while also firmly based in Eastern tradition (figure 3). In addition to the main Japanese Pavilion located on the Wooded Island,
Japanese exhibits at the 1893 World’s Fair also included the Japanese Ladies Boudoir in the Women’s Building, the Japanese Nippon Tea House in the White City, and the Japanese Bazaar on the Midway Plaisance. Japan also had exhibition space in the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, the Fine Arts Palace, and in the Agricultural, Horticultural, Forestry, Mines, and Fisheries buildings. In all, Japanese exhibits accounted for over 82,850 square feet of exhibition space throughout the Fair. In *The World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893*, White and Igleheart reported, “Japan leads all foreign countries in the amount of her appropriation for display at the Fair…The total amount appropriated by the government is nearly $650,000.” By devoting sizable resources to the task, the Japanese government succeeded in firmly locating their culture at the Fair. Although at first glance the Japanese influence appears relegated to the confines of the Wooded Island, Japanese culture proved pervasive throughout the Fair appearing in several locations in the White City and on the Midway.

Locating Modernity in Tradition

Japanese culture represents one of many that exhibited their unique traditions at the 1893 World’s Fair; however, there are several noteworthy points about the Japanese involvement. The Japanese exhibits comprised an unusually substantial presence at the Fair. The three prime locations of this presence—the Japanese Pavilion on the Wooded Island; the Japanese Women’s Boudoir in the Women’s Building and Nippon Tea House in the White City; and the Japanese Bazaar on the Midway—were concentrated near the junction of the White City in Jackson Park and the Midway Plaisance, quite literally in the center of the Fair, with lesser locations interspersed throughout the rest of the fairgrounds. In addition, the proximity of these locations to the main buildings of the Fair, such as the Manufactures and Liberal Arts building, the Transportation Building, and the Women’s Building, explains the exceptional visibility of the Japanese exhibits. Thus, the locations and proximity of Japanese exhibits made Japanese culture one of the most prominently represented forms of tradition at the Fair.

In many ways, cultural “others” existed on the periphery at the 1893 World’s Fair, both metaphorically and geographically. Like other “foreign” cultures, Japanese traditions were commodified for consumption on the borders of American mainstream culture, such as the Japanese Bazaar on the Midway and the Nippon Tea House in the White City. In addition, Japan’s main exhibit, the Japanese Pavilion, appeared relegated to the Wooded Island, away from the European-styled White City. In a sense, the pavilion was located on the outskirts of the White City, geographically separated from the “mainland.” However, from another perspective, the island is located in the center of the Lagoon in the metaphorical “heart” of Jackson Park. In the proceeding decades of the twentieth century, the tradition found in the pavilion on the Wooded Island moved from the periphery of American culture to “center” stage. Western architects subsequently embraced elements of Japanese culture in architecture in much the same way as Western artists had embraced the Japanese print earlier in the nineteenth century. Consequently, Western conceptions of modernity became located in Eastern tradition as Western architects created a synthesis of traditional and new forms in order to establish their own unique style of architecture.

The nineteenth-century influence of Japanese culture in the West began when Japan’s borders opened to Westerners for trade in 1858. At this time, Japanese art flooded into Europe, particularly France and England. In 1872, Philippe Burty, an art critic for the Gazette des Beaux-
Arts, coined the term *Japonisme* to describe nineteenth-century European artists’ infatuation with Japanese art, culture, and aesthetics. American interest in Japanese aesthetics piqued by the French *Japonisme*, and the English *Japanesque*, resulted in the popularity of Japanese prints and household objects. By the late nineteenth century, Chicago architects such as Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, Walter Burley Griffin, and Marion Mahony Griffin joined Western artists, such as Edouard Manet, Mary Cassett, and James Abbott McNeill Whistler in their interest in Japanese style. Thus, by the turn of the twentieth century, architects Frank Lloyd Wright and Marion Mahony Griffin began incorporating Japanese styles into their work. These architects, either directly in their writings, or indirectly in their style of work, credited Japanese culture as a source of their inspiration. By looking to cultural sources beyond their own, these American architects sought to create a uniquely American style of architecture that departed from the rest of the Western world’s preoccupation with classical revivalism.

In addition to their shared an interest in *Japonisme*, Mahony and Wright’s collaborations also involved shared aesthetic and ideological sensibilities. Wright’s principles for his evolving theory of “organic architecture” were applied to his Prairie house designs which Mahony often delineated, such as the 1906 K.C. de Rhodes House in South Bend, Indiana. Mahony wrote in her memoir, “The definite idea of architecture to my mind lies in the organic, systematic way of creation that nature shows in fitting an infinite variety of means to as many ends with perfection of form for every function.” Along with a shared long-standing loyalty to their mentor, Louis Sullivan, who coined the phrase “Form follows Function,” Wright and Mahony each established long careers that endured for more than half a century.

Marion Mahony Griffin’s architectural career spanned nearly seven decades and inhabited three continents. She studied with Eugène Létang, and later with Désiré Despradelle, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where she was the second woman to receive a degree in architecture upon her graduation in 1894. She practiced architecture in the Chicago area from 1894 until 1914 when the practice she shared with her husband moved to Australia from 1914 to 1930. After briefly returning to America for two years, Mahony resumed her practice in Australia in 1932. In 1935, the Griffins expanded their architectural practice to India where her husband, Walter Burley Griffin, died unexpectedly in 1937. After her husband’s death, Mahony returned to the United States in 1938 where she continued her independent design work until her
death in 1961 at the age of ninety. \(^{35}\) Throughout her life, Mahony was outspoken about many issues including architecture, city planning, nature, politics and women as professionals. \(^{36}\)

Similarly, Frank Lloyd Wright practiced architecture for nearly sixty years in the United States and abroad. He began his architectural career as an apprentice in 1886 and he opened his own practice in 1893. Wright attended the University of Wisconsin for two semesters in 1886 as a special student in civil engineering while working for A.D. Conover, the Dean of Engineering and a practicing architect. \(^{37}\) In 1887, Wright left the University to work as an apprentice draftsman with Joseph Lyman Silsbee in Chicago. Next, he worked, first as an apprentice and then as an assistant, for Louis Sullivan and Dankmar Adler. \(^{38}\) Wright was working for Adler and Sullivan while they designed the Transportation building for the 1893 World’s Fair. \(^{39}\) However, Sullivan fired Wright in 1893 shortly after he learned that Wright was working with clients and designing houses on his own. \(^{40}\) Around this time, Wright, along with fellow architects Dwight Heald Perkins, Robert Clossen Spencer, Jr., and Myron Hunt, founded a group of architects at Steinway Hall called the Eighteen. \(^{41}\) In 1898, Wright moved his practice from Steinway Hall to the studio he built alongside his residence in Oak Park, Illinois. \(^{42}\) Wright eventually took on multiple apprentices, first at the Oak Park studio and later at his homes, Taliesin, in Spring Green, Wisconsin, and Taliesin West, near Scottsdale, Arizona, forming the Taliesin Fellowship. Wright continued to practice architecture until his death in 1959 at the age of ninety-two. \(^{43}\)

Mahony and Wright first came to know each other in the 1890s while working in separate architectural practices in Steinway Hall in Chicago, Illinois. Designed by architect Dwight Perkins, Steinway Hall became a “lodestone” for Chicago progressives. \(^{44}\) Mahony and Perkins were cousins and she began her career in his Steinway Hall studio. Fresh out of MIT, Mahony drafted for Perkins for a year before going to work in 1895 for Wright who had recently moved his own independent practice into Steinway Hall. \(^{45}\) As part of Wright’s studio, Mahony proved her skills as a draftsman while working with some of the most progressive architects of the time, known collectively as the Prairie School. She worked regularly as Wright’s assistant from 1895 until 1904 and continued to work with him infrequently until he closed his Chicago studio in 1909. \(^{46}\) According to Architect Pamela Hill, during her tenure with Wright, Mahony “became his most senior assistant…helping him to produce some of his most significant projects and creating a portfolio that would earn her a reputation as the most gifted renderer of the era.” \(^{47}\) According to Wright biographer Brenden Gill, Mahony exhibited a “gift for delineating Wright’s
work that was far greater than Wright himself possessed.” In addition, Mahony designed furnishings, stained glass, textiles, and murals, as well as producing some of the firm's most renowned drawings. Mahony’s creative skills were put to extensive use, far beyond simply creating finished drawings from Wright’s rough sketches.

Enchantment with *Japonisme*:
Marion Mahony Griffin and Steinway Hall

Wright’s studio, like many others at the turn of the twentieth century, was profoundly influenced by *Japonisme*. Mahony recalled how Wright and others in the Prairie School were influenced by the movement:

> Wright whose early work was without distinction was only just out of Sullivan's office and only now was following the Japanese emphasis on the horizontal line which had considerable influence on the whole group.

Mahony also remembered how the Japanese exhibition at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893 had gained attention among the Chicago architects:

> Looking back to the days following my graduation in architecture, after a year of drafting with my cousin [Perkins] I went into an informal partnership with another [Wright] of the Chicago school of architecture who had just started independent practice though he had in the mean time built several houses of no particular character, one half timber, etc. But now the influence of the Japanese, who had exhibited at Chicago's first World's Fair, was being felt among a number of the young Chicago architects.

As a result of this influence, Mahony developed her distinctive style of delineation, reminiscent in both composition and technique of Japanese prints, which she used to render several of Wright’s most famous projects. Many of her best known renderings were featured in Wright’s portfolio, *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe, von Frank Lloyd Wright*, published in Berlin in 1910. Wright’s Wasmuth portfolio is considered “one of the three most influential architectural treatises of the twentieth century.” Recent scholarship credits Mahony with at least half the portfolio’s drawings despite earlier scholarship which had minimized the scope of her participation. Mahony’s rendering in her characteristic drawing style with sparse detail, skewed perspective, and dramatic use of space significantly contributed to the enduring success of the portfolio.

While still at Steinway Hall in the late 1890s, Mahony also interacted with other architects who shared her enthusiasm for *Japonisme*. Mahony knew Japanese architect George
Shimoda who designed an unexecuted garden scheme in “the Japanese style” meant to build upon Olmsted’s existing landscape at the Hō-ōden site for South Park commissioners in 1894. Also during this time, Mahony associated with Birch Burdette Long who had introduced Eastern presentation techniques into Wright’s practice. In 1901, Long displayed his renderings featuring the Hō-ōden built for the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition which had remained on the Wooded Island long after the Fair ended. The Hō-ōden on the Wooded Island fueled widespread interest in Japanese arts and culture during the same time as the Arts and Crafts movement promoted the value of hand-crafted arts with elements of Eastern culture. Long, Mahony, and Wright were among many Chicago architects and designers inspired by the Hō-ōden and Japonisme.

Around the same time, Mahony met another young architect named Walter Burley Griffin who was also associated with the architects at the Steinway Hall. Griffin demonstrated his interest in Japonisme by designing a cottage “explicitly derived from the Hō-ōden temple.” Mahony recalled in her memoir that “Griffin had established the [second] Story horizontal sill line, he and others perhaps under the influence of the Japanese prints of the Columbia Exposition which waked up America to the beauty of the oriental arts.” Griffin eventually joined Wright’s Oak Park studio in 1901. After Long left Wright’s employ in 1903, Mahony began experimenting to develop her unique rendering style. By 1906, Mahony’s rendering of the K.C. de Rhodes House featured her matured Japanese-inspired style.

When Griffin and Mahony married in 1911, their marriage became a merger of personalities, ideals, and careers. They eventually collaborated on several hundred projects in the U.S., Australia, and India, including their prize-winning design for the Australian Federal Capital at Canberra. Part of the Griffin’s success can be found in their presentation style which featured Mahony’s Japanese-inspired technique. Together they created a new method of presentation which entailed a vertical drawing of “uniform size, 18 by 36 inches…with a complete exposition of the building—plan, perspective, section, [and] decorative details, worked together in a unified panel.” Mahony’s delineation work contained:

Forms [that] are abstracted; suggested rather than defined by precise elegant lines, the house…is placed in the middle ground while careful delineated [foliage detail]…hold’s the viewer’s attention in the foreground…[she] achieves a remarkable diversity in line contrast…the scene is framed by straight lines that cut off neat sections of the sky, the lower portion left to flow off in the imagination. The linearity of her style and her composition…are clearly based on knowledge of Japanese prints.
Mahony created renderings using silky Japanese vellum and a crow quill pen and ink. First the drawings were made on linen tracing cloth, then lithographed on window shade Holland and rendered with water color and photographic dyes. She would lithograph the drawings onto satin, dip the satin in thin glue, then size and stretch it smooth on a board. When dry, the rendering was done with dyes, then stripped from the board and dusted with a cloth. This technique along with their unique presentation style set apart the Griffin’s work and contributed substantially to their collaborative success, particularly in their submission for the Canberra competition.

Mahony’s Canberra drawings reflect her Japanese-inspired style in technique and format. The horizontal drawings were divided into three panels, much like traditional Asian scroll drawings, with flat planes in golden hues. Her renderings were described as having captured the rich variety of color that comprised the Australian landscape which resonated with the judges.

Mahony’s later work continued to exhibit a distinctly Japanese-inspired style. In 1930, Walter Burley Griffin displayed some of Mahony’s ‘Forest Portraits,’ renderings of Australia’s native flora and fauna, at the Institute of New South Wales Architects’ Exhibition. Building magazine reviewed the exhibit and of Mahony’s renderings reported, “If we were told they were work of the best period of Japanese art we would hardly raise a question.” Mahony’s enchantment with Japonisme characterized her work throughout her long career. Recent scholarship by David Van Zanten and Debora Wood attests to Mahony’s open attribution to the influence of Japonisme. Recalling the first decade of the twentieth century, Mahony candidly admitted, “At this period I too followed the Japanese feeling.” She admired the Japanese’s respect for the landscape stating in her memoir “Japanese roads, all in cuttings, do no violence to topography.” She also subscribed to the simplicity and harmony with nature the Japanese aesthetic achieved:

It is sufficient to be gracefully simple and direct in character of the ground arrangement and adornment which have useful purpose preferably dispersed, not with a rigid symmetry… but composed in a more subtle symmetry such as the Japanese know which is the apotheosis of order, by no means included in a generalization – ‘naturalistic.’

Above all, Mahony marveled at the spirituality of the Japanese, suggesting that it was a “pity these Anglo-Saxons have not the reverence of the Japanese in making their tea-houses beautiful expressing thus their recognition of the spiritual beings who have set forth such beauties for them to enjoy.” Mahony admired the respect that the Japanese had for the environment and the
simplicity and harmony with nature the Japanese aesthetics achieved. She believed that Westerners stood to gain insight from these Japanese ideals.

Walter Burley Griffin had a similar respect for the Japanese aesthetic. In the essay, “Underlying Principles” included in Mahony’s memoir attributed to Griffin, he maintains, “The Japanese are right in using from their stores only one decorative ornament as jar, picture, statuette, flower group, at a time set off by the simplicity of the general treatment of surfaces.”77 He argued for the minimalism of Japanese design, “The room itself should be beautiful before anything is brought into it.”78 Mahony recalled that Griffin, like many in the Chicago School, worked “under the influence of the Japanese prints brought to their exhibit in Chicago's Columbian Exposition in the last decade of the 19th century.”79 She suggests that the prints had a “spiritual influence” which “transform[ed] rational thinking…into creative thinking ...”80 This transformation helped to develop a uniquely American architecture.

Frank Lloyd Wright: A Study in Ambivalence

Frank Lloyd Wright was far less forthcoming about the inspiration of Japanese art and architecture in his work. Wright claimed that Mahony copied Japanese prints while he was simply inspired by them.81 For her part, Mahony returned the accusation in her memoir stating, “The Japanese type with the overhanging eaves brought low to form the window heads is about the only thing we see in Wright's work…”82 She maintained that Japanese elements were clearly evident in Wright’s designs despite his repeated denials. As evidenced by this exchange, Wright’s relationship with the Japanese aesthetic was characterized by ambivalence throughout his career. In 1957, Wright responded to the identification of Japonisme in his work,

To cut ambiguity short: there never was exterior influence upon my work, either foreign or native, other than that of Lieber Meister [Louis Sullivan], Dankmar Adler and John Roebling, Whitman and Emerson…As for the Incas, Mayas, even the Japanese—all were to me but splendid confirmation.83

This confirmation, he argued, simply restated what he already intuitively knew. Yet at the same time, he admitted his admiration for Japanese artists and their art,

I love the great Momoyama period in Japanese painting and the later Ukiyoe as I found it in the woodblock prints of the periods...[I] learned much from Korin, Kenzan, Sotatsu and always the primitives. The Ukiyoe and the Momoyama, Japanese architecture and gardening, confirmed my own feeling for my work and delighted me, as did Japanese civilization which seemed so freshly and completely of the soil, organic.84
In 1954, Wright wrote about the philosophic relationship between his designs and the “Oriental,”

Many people have wondered about an Oriental quality they see in my work. I suppose it is true that when we speak of organic architecture, we are speaking of something that is more Oriental than Western. The answer is: my work is, in that deeper philosophic sense, Oriental…So this gospel of organic architecture still has more in sympathy and in common with Oriental thought than it has with any other thing the West has ever confessed. 85

Yet, he demurred, “It cannot be truthfully said, however, that organic architecture was derived from the Orient. We have our own ways of putting these elemental (so ancient) ideas into practical effect.” 86 Ultimately, Wright claimed to have processed and reinterpreted Eastern design principles rather than to have used their elements in his work.

Despite his ambivalence toward admitting inspiration from Eastern aesthetics, Wright did openly affirm his admiration for the Japanese house, “[The Japanese] way of doing things was always more or less organic. The Japanese house is the closest thing to our organic house of anything ever built.” 87 He clearly respected the Japanese aesthetic, writing about it in 1931, “But for the purposes of this hour, I have preferred tradition because Japan has already done, in her own perfect way, what now lies for study before us.” 88 Wright also indirectly admits to Japanese influence on the renderings for the Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe, von Frank Lloyd Wright, published in Berlin in 1910. He wrote, “The drawings, by means of which these buildings are presented here, have been made expressly for this work [the Wasmuth portfolio]…Their debt to Japanese ideals, these renderings themselves sufficiently acknowledge.” 89 Yet, he denied a direct relationship between his Prairie house and Japanese architecture,

There had been nothing at all from overseas to help in getting this new architecture planted on American soil. From 1893 to 1910 these prairie houses had planted it here…nothing from ‘Japan’ had helped at all, except the marvel of Japanese color prints. They were a lesson in elimination of the insignificant and in the beauty of the natural use of materials. 90

Wright consistently denied the extent to which Japonisme influenced his architectural designs despite all of the evidence to the contrary.

Biographical scholarship on the life Frank Lloyd Wright has customarily noted that Japonisme played a significant role in his designs although he did not publically admit the sources of his inspiration. Biographer Brenden Gill maintained that Wright used “elements of Japanese architectural grammar” which “mingled” with elements of other styles in his work. 91
Gill noted that in 1900, seven years after the 1893 World’s Fair, Wright designed a “charming little Japanese cottage” in West Pullman southwest of Chicago for attorney S.A. Foster. Wright’s design synthesized Japanese motifs with more conventional Queen Anne elements for the summer cottage in a manner consistent with the Japanese style that was en vogue following the Fair. Gill stated that although Wright was several years from his first visit to Japan, he had begun collecting Japanese prints and “he had studied with care a half-scale replica of the Japanese temple of the Fujiwara period, erected at the Chicago Fair.” Similarly, biographer Ada Huxtable maintained that it was well-known that Wright was introduced to the architecture of Japan by the Hō-ōden at the 1893 World’s Fair. Historian Donald L. Miller also claimed that Frank Lloyd Wright had visited the Japanese Pavilion on the Wooded Island and that this encounter may have influenced his ‘Prairie’ residential designs. Architectural historian, Harold Zellman, and professor of religious studies, Roger Friedland, noted the remarkable resemblance between Wright’s 1905 Unity Temple design in Oak Park and the seventeenth-century mausoleum in Nikko near Tokyo that Wright had visited while in Japan. They also reported that Wright’s penchant for taking multiple apprentices derived from his interest in the Japanese apprentice tradition that he witnessed in practice while in Tokyo. In one instance, Wright had compared chores at Taliesin to the Japanese tea service, explaining to the apprentices that all work, regardless of how menial it seemed, was important and should contain beauty in both the performance of the work as well as the outcome.

Architectural historians have also concluded that Wright was highly influenced by the Japanese aesthetic. Architectural historian William J.R. Curtis suggested that “it was Japanese architecture which helped Wright to achieve his synthesis.” Curtis also assumed that Wright had seen the Hō-ōden temple on the Wooded Island, in addition to oriental examples in books and Japanese prints, which influenced his work prior to his first trip to Japan in 1905. Hisao Kōyoma, Professor of Architecture at the University of Tokyo, asserted that “Wright’s own words were sometimes confusing and contradictory. Whether he admitted it, there is no doubt that he was greatly influenced by Japan among other sources.” Similarly, John Sergeant, Lecturer in Architecture at the University of Cambridge, argued that “Wright was shown to have been familiar with a circle of Orientalists who were promoting Japanese aesthetic ideas around the turn of the century as a deliberate counter to the bankrupt historicism of the period.” Sergeant lamented that although it has long been accepted that major artists such as Toulouse-
Lautrec, Gauguin, Klimt, and Whistler had been influenced by the Japanese woodblock print, there has been less acceptance of influence on major Western architects such as McKim, Mead and White, Macintosh, and especially Frank Lloyd Wright. Among early Japanese influences on Wright’s work, John Sergeant also noted that the Japanese Pavilion was “available for daily reference during much of Wright’s career.” Furthermore, Sergeant maintained that Edward Morse’s *Japanese Homes and their Surroundings* published in 1886 had a similar affect on Wright.

More recent scholarship on Wright’s architectural career carefully examines his attempts to distance his work from Japanese influences. Architectural historian Kevin Nute noted that Wright made repeated efforts “to differentiate his appreciation for Japanese aesthetic ideas from any use of Japanese forms.” Wright asked his personal friend and colleague architect Charles Ashbee to write an introduction for his 1911 Wasmuth photo-study. Ashbee’s essay suggested that, “The Japanese influence is clear. [Wright] is obviously trying to adapt Japanese form to the United States, even though the artist denies it.” Wright responded, “Do not say that I deny my love for Japanese art has influenced me—I admit that it has but claim to have digested it.” Nute maintained that several of Wright’s “organic” ideals are embodied in traditional Japanese art and architecture and Japanese architectural forms were assimilated in Wright’s designing process.

Furthermore, Nute argued that the Fair proved to be a “watershed” in Wright’s personal relationship with Japan, bringing him into direct contact with Japanese buildings and bringing to Chicago several of America’s leading experts on Japanese art such as Ernest Fenellosa, Edward Morse, and William Sturgis Bigelow. Nute suggested that the central hall of the Japanese Pavilion may have inspired Wright’s departure from the conventional “box” represented in the design of the typical American home at the turn of the twentieth century. The ‘deconstructed box’ with spatial zones and the layering of indoor and outdoor spaces became typical of Wright’s later work and of suburban ranch housing in general by the mid-twentieth century. There are strikingly similar aspects between the Japanese Pavilion and the typical Prairie house design, such as in the William Winslow House (1893), the Harry C. Goodrich house (1896), the S.A. Foster house (1900), the Frank Thomas house (1901), and the Arthur Heurtley summer house (1902). In addition to the Hō-ōden on the Wooded Island, elements from the Japanese Bazaar on the Midway and the Nippon Tea House across the lagoon from the island are also reminiscent
in Wright’s work, such as in the design of the Robert Lamp cottage (1893). Moreover, Nute argued that a merger of the religious and the domestic based on the Hō-ouden may have led Wright to design the family home as a sort of temple to traditional family life “based around the ‘alter’ of a central communal hearth.” Although one could argue that Wright did not explicitly copy Japanese architecture, he was clearly inspired by Japonisme.

**Japonisme in Western Architecture: Hybridity and Assimilation**

The modern architecture emerging after the 1893 World’s Fair was firmly located in tradition, specifically in Japanese tradition. By the turn of the twentieth century, architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Marion Mahony Griffin, Walter Burley Griffin, and Greene and Green in America as well as Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Charlotte Perriand in Europe were incorporating elements of Japanese art and architecture in their work. Thus, Japonisme proved a strong artistic force both in the United States and in Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Japanese tradition served to inspire a cultural hybridity in Western architecture much as the Japanese print had inspired hybridity in Western art in the mid-nineteenth century. In this sense, Japanese culture informed Western “modernity.”

There is sufficient evidence to conclude that Japonisme in architecture in the United States coincided with the Japanese Pavilion exhibit at the 1893 Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition. It is important to note that inspiration based on Japanese architecture should not be interpreted as an exact replication. Japonisme represented in the West is not authentic Japanese architecture in much the same way neo-classical or neo-gothic is not classical or Gothic architecture. However, despite this qualification, the cultural influence of Japanese art and architecture is clearly evident in Frank Lloyd Wright and Marion Mahony Griffin’s designs. Mahony wrote about this influence in her memoir clearly crediting Japonisme in art with inspiring her architectural delineations and with inspiring the designs of many architects in the Chicago School. These examples clearly speak of a hybridity in architecture that includes elements of both Eastern and Western culture combined in a unique way to create a new American style.
There is a certain irony in the idea of searching for Western modernity in the Eastern tradition of *Japonisme*. The idea of modernity at the Fair became tied directly to national and cultural identity, for America as well as for other nations represented there. Paradoxically, all of these national identities were informed by encounters with cultures from afar, as well as by cultural elements native to specific geographic locations. The impact of the Japanese exhibits at the Fair illustrates how contacts outside of the cultural norm perpetuated diversity despite the intentions of many Fair promoters who sought to reinforce specific social and racial hierarchies. *Japonisme* may also be analyzed as a source of enchantment facilitating the American cultural assimilation to modernity as Americans worked to shape a new cultural identity that integrated the conflicting aspects of modernity. Moreover, locating modernity in tradition in the geographical location of the Wooded Island and metaphorical location of *Japonisme* at the 1893 World’s Fair illustrates American’s simultaneous rejection, acceptance, and finally, assimilation to modernity in the late nineteenth century. After the Fair, the influence of *Japonisme* moved from the periphery to center stage as the nation embraced modernity and began to forge a modern national identity in the early decades of the twentieth century.

The modernity of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been inextricably linked to Western culture and a model of Western “progress.” Consequently, the transnational movement of modern culture has been depicted as a one-way “imperial street” running from West to East. Such a depiction fails to recognize the multilateral nature of transnational culture, which moved beyond the metropole / colony dichotomy to include the transmission of culture from points across the globe, informing the cultural and national identities of societies located continents apart. Modernity is an international concept that moves beyond borders and between continents. Rather than an East versus West dichotomy, modernity involved two-way traffic along an East / West continuum (figure 4). The Japanese Pavilion at the 1893 World’s Fair in Chicago illustrates this phenomenon. The pavilion inspired the architectural counterpart of *Japonisme*, originally a stylistic trend in the art community, which came to signify modern architectural style and stimulated major architectural movements and designs in the early twentieth century, particularly through the Chicago School in the United States.

Consequently, *Japonisme* may be viewed as a “watershed” precedent that has informed modern American culture and national identity. *Japonisme* represents an aspect of modernity that has lingered in the collective peripheral vision: the stylistic debt to Eastern culture. This issue
proves historically significant even though it existed on the borders of mainstream society at the time and can be traced to important developments well into the twenty-first century. The historical subjugation of Eastern societies to Western culture has been well-documented; however, the significance of Eastern culture in the formation of Western social and national identities has only recently gained recognition. The debates surrounding Western cultural hegemony underscores the necessity of understanding that culture and identity are neither formed in a vacuum, nor are they shaped in response to any one source, but rather in reaction to a multitude of factors. To ignore the debt of Western culture and national identity to Eastern sources is to continue a pattern of disproportionate historical inquiry. Clearly, *Japonisme* contributed to the multivalent nature and the rich complexity of transnational culture in the heart of the Western world.

The concept of locating modernity metaphorically and geographically in traditions found at the 1893 World’s Fair provides a new way of examining the emerging cultural identity of the United States in a world context. The popularity of and reactions to the Japanese Pavilion at the Fair contributed to the continued prevalence of *Japonisme* well into the twentieth century. The pavilion served as a significant *fin-de-siècle* precedent for modernism in architecture. At the same time, *Japonisme* served as a secular source of enchantment easing the American assimilation to modernity. Although relegated to the “borders” in 1893, *Japonisme* has become a central conceptual idea within Western modernity. As a result, *Japonisme*, representing a cultural “other,” has challenged, and in many ways eclipsed, more traditional elements of nineteenth-century modernity over the course of the twentieth century and beyond.

NOTES


5 Frederick Law Olmsted, “Memorandum as to What is to be Aimed at in the Planting of the Lagoon District of the Chicago Exposition,” 118.


7 de Wit, “Building an Illusion,” 75.

8 de Wit, “Building an Illusion,” 95.


15 Burnham to Olmsted, 168.
20 Handy, *The official directory of the World's Columbian exposition*, 131-132; also see Harris, *Cultural Excursions*, 43.
41 Brooks, *The Prairie School*, 29, 42.
46 Birmingham, “The Case of Marion Mahony Griffin,” 90.
54 Hines, “Portrait: Marion Mahony Griffin,” 40.
55 Birmingham, “The Case of Marion Mahony Griffin,” 90.
56 Birmingham, “The Case of Marion Mahony Griffin,” 90.
65 Birmingham, “The Case of Marion Mahony Griffin,” 102.
66 Birmingham, “The Case of Marion Mahony Griffin,” 91.
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98 Friedland and Zellman, The Fellowship, 49.
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109 Nute, Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan, 49.
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113 Nute, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan*, 67.
114 Nute, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan*, 68.
CHAPTER TWO

MODERNITY AND GENDER PERFORMANCE:
THE WOMEN’S BUILDING IN THE WHITE CITY

In the late nineteenth century, the social roles of both women and men became characterized by the ambivalence and hybridity of the emerging modernity of the era. By examining the roles and social characteristics of notable women and men associated with the Fair, it is possible to examine the complex cultural shifts taking place in America at the turn of the twentieth century. Located physically and metaphorically in the Women’s Building at the 1893 Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition, the shifting roles and characteristics of women in the late nineteenth century were exhibited not only in this space, but rather, they were apparent throughout the Fair, from the administrative body of the Board of Lady Managers, to the artists and the architect who decorated and designed the Women’s Building, and finally, to the ordinary women who visited and worked at the Fair.

In the White City

From the Hō-ōden on the shores of the Wooded Island, one could see the White City surrounding the Lagoon. The east façade of the Women’s Building stood gracefully on the northwest shore, its reflection dancing in the water under the warm afternoon sun (figure 5). The waters of the bay stretched out in front of the building and housed a grand landing for the electric boats to glide silently into port. An elegant staircase rose up toward an impressive terrace six feet above the water. From the terrace, visitors climbed another staircase to the ground level and walked one hundred feet from the shore to the Women’s Building. The terrace gardens featured assorted flowers and low shrubbery softening the stark white finish spanning the four-hundred-foot Italian Renaissance style façade (figure 6). The façade was encased with “staff” like the other buildings of the White City. Once past the terrace gardens, visitors climbed the wide staircase to the loggia and entered the center pavilion. They passed through the triple-arched entrance with its colonnade open to the second story exposing a pediment above decorated with an elaborate bas-relief. The statuary on the building sculpted by artist Alice Rideout of California represented Sacrifice, Charity, Virtue, and Wisdom. The colonnades of the corner pavilions to either side opened above the main cornice to reveal lush hanging gardens rustling in the soft afternoon breeze.

Once inside, visitors stepped into the majestic lobby leading into a wide, open rotunda called the Hall of Honor surrounded by a two-story open arcade. The rotunda’s skylight was its central feature, casting sunlight down upon the fine statuary and exotic plants surrounded by display cases and walls covered in paintings (figure 7). The arcade, reminiscent of an Italian-style courtyard, welcomed the bright sunlight into the building’s mellow interior. The architect, Sophia Hayden, located this main hall in the central pavilion and divided the rest of the space into lavishly furnished parlors and assorted rooms for exhibition, assembly, and education. She tempered her use of Italian Renaissance architectural features with a delicacy and scale which conveyed a feminine sensibility. In addition to Hayden’s architectural efforts, female artists also contributed to the décor, including several sculptures and murals throughout the building. At the south end of the main hall, visitors saw a triptych mural painted by impressionist artist Mary Cassatt entitled, “Modern Woman.” At the opposite end of the hall to the north, visitors saw artist Mary MacMonnies’s mural entitled, “Primitive Women.” As visitors promenaded through the first floor, they discover numerous exhibits including a model hospital on the left and a model kindergarten on the right. Continuing further, visitors found the south pavilion housed the retrospective exhibit and the north pavilion housed the work and charity organization.


As visitors climbed to the second floor, they found the ladies parlors, committee rooms, and the dressing rooms which all led to the magnificent open balconies on the east and west
sides, with the east side facing the Lagoon (figure 9). As they move to the west side of the central pavilion, visitors walked through the Library and the Bureau of Information. The Library contained shoulder-height bookcases that spanned the entire length of the room flanking either side of the stained wood-paneled fireplace (figure 8). In the second floor of the north pavilion, visitors found the club room as well as the assembly room with a large stage to accommodate speakers and seating for fifteen hundred people. In the second floor of the south pavilion, visitors saw the model kitchen and refreshment rooms. The President’s Office, located in southeast corner on the second floor of the south pavilion, was decorated with classical furnishings, nature paintings, and netting from the women’s fisheries exhibit which draped from the ceiling over Bertha Palmer’s desk. In the east side of the central pavilion, visitors found reception rooms designed to represent important sections of the country from the Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western United States. The Connecticut Room featured a grand fireplace with a classically-inspired décor and prominent pilasters on either side. Next, the Kentucky Parlor featured a colonial interior with an ornate mirror-topped fireplace and floor-to-ceiling decorative wood trim all in white. In the Cincinnati Room, visitors discovered ornate furnishings, floral wall-coverings, and an assortment of china and delicate lamps (figure 8). Finally, visitors perused the California room with its brown wood-paneled walls and ceilings, and full-length wall-sized mirror, complete with a bear-skin rug. In addition to the American-themed reception rooms, there was also a Japanese Parlor filled with painted and embroidered screens and traditional Japanese hangings covering the walls.
Climbing higher still, visitors made their way to the rooftop cafés located at each end of the roof with Oriental awnings creating shady spaces to rest. Although the building was filled with ornament and lavish décor, it was one of the smallest of the major buildings in the White City as well as one of the most modest. In *The Dream City*, Halsey C. Ives describes the Women’s Building as one of the least pretentious buildings of the Fair, “It is considered noteworthy that the female sex, celebrated for its love of ornament, placed in Jackson Park the plainest of its buildings.” Besides the unique qualities of its architecture and floor plan, the Women’s Building was renowned for its diverse arrangement of exhibits.

The Women’s Building featured international exhibits largely housed on the first floor in the north and south pavilions. These included exhibits from countries such as Russia, England, and Australia in the north pavilion, and from countries such as Italy, Japan, France, Spain, Mexico, Austria, Germany, Belgium, India, Brazil, Ceylon, Mexico, Sweden, Norway, and Siam in the south pavilion. The French Salon featured baroque-style décor complete with elaborate lamps and chandeliers, ornate wood panels and wall-coverings, Parisian furnishings, and tapestry rugs. Conversely, the Japanese Ladies Boudoir featured historic and contemporary household and toiletry items, as well as line drawings and Japanese prints that represented women’s private lives in the Japanese home.

The Japanese Ladies Boudoir in particular represents the hybridity of women’s roles worldwide. As a counterbalance to the Hō-ōden on the Wooded Island, which heavily featured masculinity in Japanese culture, the Japanese Women’s Boudoir was sponsored by the empress of Japan and her court to represent the feminine side of their culture. Rather than being vastly different than their Western peers, Japanese women similarly wanted suffrage and representation. Yet, like many nation-states, Japan did not support female suffrage and sought to portray Japanese women as the traditional counterpart to the modernity of the Japanese men. Much like the United States sought to link their country to a legitimizing past by celebrating the landing of Columbus four hundred years before, Japan’s Meiji government wanted to promote a legitimizing tradition by linking their rule to the iconography of the Phoenix. Surprisingly, the Japanese leadership recognized that this legitimacy was also linked to the world’s perceptions of Japanese women and their role in Japanese society. Thus, Japan sought to promote a view of Japanese women in a traditional, yet progressive enough light to indicate Japan was as civilized
as any Western country. As a result, the Japanese Ladies Boudoir offered a conflation of the present and the past, linking modernity to tradition. This juxtaposition of Japan’s perceived present and their past signified the ambivalence many nation-states embodied with their presentation of women’s and men’s roles at the Fair.

Located on the outskirts of the White City, the Women’s Building at the 1893 World’s Fair was the first major world’s fair structure designed, organized, and administrated by women. This building served to capture the attention of the world. For the next half century, world’s fair officials considered the inclusion of a women’s building essential for exhibiting women’s work and feminine ideals. Women from more than forty countries worldwide sent examples of their work and culture for exhibition in the Women’s Building. As a result, the contents of the Women’s Building ideologically promoted the hybridity of women’s roles in the late nineteenth century by featuring both the advancement of women as well as their more traditional roles.

Locating Modernity in the Professionalization of Women

There is a certain irony in looking for modernity in 1893 when these shifts in gender performance are usually associated with the late twentieth century. By the 1890s, women found themselves in a much different situation than their predecessors earlier in the nineteenth century who had no legal, professional, or educational equality with their male counterparts. Shifts in social, cultural, and economic factors played a significant part in this change, as well as the choices of individuals. Consequently, shifting gender performance led to a change in the perception of women in the mainstream of society. In Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, Judith Butler argued,

> Gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, then the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief.

Although Butler wrote this conception for understanding gender in 1990, these ideas are clearly applicable one hundred years earlier. The acts in which one engages defines them far more than preconceptions they and others hold about themselves. Referring to professional architecture in turn-of-the-century Chicago, architect Marion Mahony Griffin recalled,
It was necessary for women to take up work in the same spirit as men did. If we wanted anything in the world we must pay the price for it, and to succeed in the more interesting lines meant the greater effort. As a man did so a woman must - work day times, night times. It must form the basis of her dreams. She must give it her Saturdays and her Sundays and go without holidays... any real accomplishment would always mean a life's devotion.42

Women in professional and political roles in the 1890s adopted this mindset, and in doing so, they changed what it meant to be a professional woman in this era. Rather than simply mirroring the behavior of their male contemporaries, these women incorporated these values and these mindsets into their conceptions of their gender. By performing these gendered behaviors in a professional and political context, these women set in motion a cultural shift that is recognized as commonplace in American society by the late twentieth century.

The professionalization of women in the 1890s is clearly demonstrated by women’s increasing involvement in professional, male-dominated fields such as architecture. This period represented a time of transition for the modern American woman. Progress from the preceding decades culminated in this period where women’s organizations and women’s participation in professional fields demonstrated rapid growth despite efforts to halt their progress.43 Although legal codes still limited women’s rights, women were becoming ever more present in post-secondary education. The increasing availability of college educations for women proved a critical component in the expansion of women’s roles in the 1890s and into the twentieth century.44 While this availability was arguably limited to the women from families of financial means and women of extraordinary talents, education contributed substantially to the advancement and professionalization of women at the time.45 Roughly fifteen percent of women over the age of 16 were regularly employed in 1870, and just two decades later, women were represented in 360 of the 369 occupations listed in the census of 1890.46 While impressive, it is important to note that less than 8 percent of women were employed in professional fields during this time.47 Furthermore, family life began to change for working women. Birthrates declined, particularly among the upper and middle class, as women increasingly sought professional careers as a viable alternative to marriage.48 Changes in women’s professional and personal lives characterized this time of transition along with becoming increasingly active in the political sphere.
During a time characterized by conservative values, women were entering the public arena via politics and professional careers. The “New Woman” of the 1890s often combined Victorian values with social activism. This hybridization was a product of the profound changes taking place in American society due in part to rapid urbanization and economic maturity. This time of transition may also be considered a period of assimilation toward modernity. As an aspect of modernity, shifts in gender performance explode at the turn of the twentieth century, yet women’s agency constricts considerably in the post-World War II era.

Although women’s suffrage and other victories for women persist into the mid-twentieth century, women are repressed socially and professionally after the war, particularly in male-dominated professions such as architecture. These constraints are not overcome until much later in the twentieth century, making the relative autonomy and public involvement of women in the 1890s that much more noteworthy as an important precedent. Women’s expanding agency at this time becomes an important marker of modernity on the world stage. As a case study, the lives and work of several Chicago-area architects and leaders, and their professional ties to the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, intertwine to illustrate how shifts in gender performance came to characterize this “modern” era.

The Women’s Building at the 1893 World’s Fair embodied not only women’s participation in the Fair, but also the shift taking place with respect to women’s roles in society. Although some may attempt to relegate women exclusively to this space, the reality was that women were involved in varying capacities throughout the Fair. From the empowered positions of the women on the Board of Lady Managers to the exploited positions of the exhibition performers on the Midway, women were represented in nearly every aspect of the Fair. This active participation by women was perceived as a demonstration of America’s emerging modernity and legitimacy among European powers on the World Stage. J. F. Martin stated in his 1892 *Martin's World's Fair Album-Atlas and Family Souvenir*, “One notable particular wherein the World’s Columbian Exposition differs from any previous World’s Fair is the prominence of women in its management.” The Board of Lady Managers was created in compliance with Section 6 of the Act of Congress creating the World’s Columbian Exposition. Led by its president, Bertha Honoré Palmer of Chicago, the board consisted of 117 members. This board had the dual responsibility to promote the general interest of the Fair as well as women’s special interests. In Benjamin Cummings Truman’s 1893 *History of the World’s Fair*, the author
described the large number of prominent women among the members of Board of Lady Managers as “The Women Who Control.” The board counted among its members many moderate reformers who believed that women should have certain economic and social rights particularly with respect to education, property, and their reproductive health. Historian Susan Ware maintained that the existence and the power wielded by this board illustrated the influence that women had gained over urban life by the 1890s. The professional women involved with the 1893 World’s Fair, along with their male contemporaries, provided leadership at the Fair and also led the way for the gendered social change taking place in the late nineteenth century.

Fair Women, Fair Men: Creating a Hybrid Gendered Identity

The lives of Chicago architects and leaders became inextricably intertwined as the enthusiasm and arduous work to get the World’s Columbian Exposition underway came to a fever pitch. Each of these individuals became involved in the Fair either as leaders, designers, or consumers. The women and men of the Fair often worked together in ways that defied society’s traditional gender roles. For example, architect Marion Mahony Griffin was an early collaborator of famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Mahony and Wright first came to know each other while working in separate architectural practices in Steinway Hall in Chicago, Illinois. Mahony recalled in her memoir how the buildings and exhibits at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair gained attention, particularly the Japanese pavilion, and how the Chicago School of architects, herself, Wright and their shared mentor, Louis Sullivan included, all fell under its spell. Both Mahony and Wright undoubtedly were caught up in the excitement of the Fair since they both had ties to fellow architects who designed buildings in the White City: Mahony was a close contemporary of Sophia Hayden, who won the national design competition for the Women’s Building, and Wright was the apprentice and draftsman of Louis Sullivan, who, along with his partner, engineer Dankmar Adler, designed the Transportation Building. Architect Daniel Burnham and his partner, engineer John Root, were also among Chicago’s architectural elite. Together, the architectural firms of Burnham & Root and Adler & Sullivan dominated Chicago architecture in the 1890s. A notable counterpart in leadership to Daniel Burnham, the Director of Works for the Fair, was socialite and social activist Bertha Palmer, the president of the Board of Lady Managers. Palmer was concerned with the station of ordinary women in America and abroad. As a result, she sought connections with other powerful women in order to promote women and
societal change. Palmer wanted to include the work of professional women, such as architect Sophia Hayden and artist Mary Cassatt, in the Women’s Building at the Fair in order to demonstrate the possibilities and changes in store for women in America and around the world. With respect to gender, these political and professional connections become intertwined with how these architects and leaders perceived each other as well as themselves.

When examining the 1890s, the phrase “women’s work” takes on a whole new meaning. The shift in gender performance in some women in professional and political leadership roles in this decade was profound. As Judith Butler suggests,

> Gender ought not be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts.62

The women of the Fair were building upon an identity they had spent years constructing. They also quite literally built a gendered space, the Women’s Building, to house the works and the livelihood of women in the process of building upon who they were publically and professionally. The resulting hybridity in their gender performance embodies the femininity of women while also exhibiting character traits traditionally associated with their male peers, such as professionalism, leadership, and endurance.

Among the women leaders at the Fair, Bertha Palmer stands out as one of the most influential. Socialite, social activist, and later business woman, Bertha Honoré Palmer was the wife of a wealthy Chicago financier, Potter Palmer. She was a patron of the arts as well as active in social-reform efforts.63 As the president of the Board of Lady Manager, Palmer indicated her concern with the state of the lives of ordinary women.64 In her address delivered at the formal opening of the Women’s Building, she expressed pride in women’s accomplishments in the face of adversity as well as criticism against the exclusion of women from activities in the public arena in many areas around the world.65 Palmer requested famed impressionist artist Mary Cassatt to paint the triptych mural entitled “Modern Woman” for the Women’s Building.66 The central panel was titled “Young Women Plucking the Fruits of Knowledge or Science,” the left panel titled “Young Girls Pursuing Fame” and the right panel “Arts, Music, Dancing.”67 These themes promote the advancement of women in educational, professional, and creative contexts which embodied the spirit of Palmer’s social goals. Throughout its duration, Bertha Palmer
proudly referred to the Women’s Building and its contents as “The inspiration of women’s genius” at the Fair.  

Like thousands of women across the nation who visited or simply read about the fair exhibits, Chicago born architect Marion Mahony Griffin was among those dramatically influenced by the Fair. She took great inspiration from the diversity found in the exhibits, particularly the Japanese Pavilion. In addition, the Women’s Building was designed by a fellow Massachusetts Institute of Technology graduate, architect Sophia Hayden of Boston. Mahony was the second only to Hayden as a woman to receive a four-year degree in architecture from MIT in 1894. In 1898, Mahony was one of 12 candidates to take the first license examination administered in Illinois and earned the third-highest score. Shortly after, she became the first woman to be licensed to practice architecture in Illinois. Mahony, like Hayden, was among the first women in America to benefit from the opening of various schools and professions to women in the late nineteenth century and she capitalized on the opportunity to excel in her chosen field of architecture.

Chilean born and Boston raised architect Sophia Hayden entered the design competition for the Women’s Building in 1891. Five years earlier, in 1886, Hayden had become the first women to be admitted into the architecture program at MIT and, in 1890, she was the first woman to graduate with a bachelor of architecture degree with honors. Described as quietly determined and as exhibiting great fondness and perseverance toward her work, Hayden had to heavily rely on these qualities during her appointment as architect of the Women’s Building.  

Originally, Daniel Burnham, the Director of Works, had appointed Richard Morris Hunt to design the Women’s Building. Bertha Palmer, the president of the Board of Lady Managers, objected and insisted that a national competition be conducted to find a woman architect for the position instead. Despite her noble intentions, Palmer’s difficult personality and constant involvement in the building’s construction complicated matters considerably. Her solicitation and then insistence on the inclusion of assorted donations received from each state in the decoration of the building placed an enormous burden on Hayden. Hayden was an inexperienced and very young architect fresh out of college without any practical experience on the construction site and Palmer’s interference constantly tested her resolve. The culmination of the situation reportedly resulted with Palmer reassigning responsibility for the building’s décor to designer Candace Wheeler. In frustration, Hayden went to see Daniel Burnham and reportedly
had a “nervous breakdown” in his office from which Hayden’s professional reputation never fully recovered. Rather than suffering from a nervous breakdown, it is more likely that Hayden’s frustration and determination to “carry her point,” led to a momentary lapse in her professional demeanor. Reports that she was discretely whisked away by the Fair’s ambulance for prescribed rest to treat “a violent attack of high nervous excitement of the brain” only further undermined her public persona. Nevertheless, Hayden returned to the Fair a few months after the incident for the building’s dedication ceremony. Unfortunately, the situation distracted from Hayden’s exemplary accomplishments serving as architect of the Women’s Building and persevering through all of the difficulties the appointment entailed.

Although at the time Hayden’s experience appeared discouraging rather than serving as a role model for future women architects, the facts remain that the building stood successful in the end and, much like the Fair itself, overcame tremendous construction difficulties and personality conflicts in the process. Hayden’s apparent “nervous collapse” prompted a professional stir among academically trained female architects. Architect Minerva Parker Nichols, a fellow entrant in the design competition for the Women’s Building, wrote an article in American Architect and Building News in which she generously defended Hayden. Nichols argued that an “illness” in one woman’s case under unusual circumstances would not be enough of a deterrent to keep other women from pursuing careers in architecture. Proving Nichols’s point, the personal and official recognition that Hayden’s work received belied the feeding frenzy that ensued when she momentarily faltered.

Hayden’s winning design for the Women’s Building was described in various guidebooks as “that harmony of grouping and graceful details which indicate the architectural scholar.” She received the artist’s medal from the Exhibition Jury for the building’s “delicacy of style, artistic taste, and geniality and elegance of the interior hall.” In addition, architect Richard Morris Hunt of New York, who was originally appointed to design the Women’s Building and went on to design the Administration Building instead, sent Hayden a letter of commendation for her work. Moreover, Daniel Burnham clearly respected Hayden despite her rumored breakdown in his office. Of her capability to undertake the design of the Women’s Building he wrote, “Examination of the facts show that this woman had no help whatever in working up the designs. It was done by herself in her home.” In fact, Burnham was so impressed with Hayden’s work that he encouraged her to start an architectural practice in Chicago after the Fair ended.
1894 report to the Board of Lady Managers upon completion of her duties, Hayden confirmed Burnham’s assessment of her skills. She remarked, “As I was not established in an [architectural] office at this time, I made the drawings in my own home, and it may interest the state that they passed no one’s inspection until they were opened in Chicago.”

She also noted that Burnham considered her education and her plans as sufficient evidence of her ability. Also of interest, Hayden’s final report detailed her earnings of the original fee of $1000, plus additional expenses, with her total payment of $1,977.00. Her original fee was just one-tenth of the fee her male contemporaries received for designing other buildings at the Fair. Hayden’s report demonstrated her determination and fortitude seeing the project through to the end, and for less pay than her peers, as well as her unwavering confidence in her own abilities despite the criticisms leveled at her throughout the construction process. Although Hayden’s career progressed as a teacher and an artist rather than as an architect, her success is undeniable. Hayden’s performance as architect of the Women’s Building demonstrates the hybridity of women’s social and cultural roles as American society underwent tremendous social change at the end of the nineteenth century.

Ambivalence and the Shifting Nature of Masculinity in the 1890s

While the women of the Fair were building a new hybrid identity, the men of the Fair were undergoing changes of their own. The shift in gender performance by some men, especially those in creative careers, was equally profound to that of women during this time. As Judith Butler maintains,

The effect of gender is produced through stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.

While many men still performed their gender to fulfill traditional societal expectations, others were exploring aspects of their personalities that coincided with the feminine. There is a certain ambivalence at play here as on one hand men celebrated their virility and masculinity while, on the other hand, they sought a profound intimacy in their relationships with other men along with an intense appreciation for feminine aesthetics such as found in Greek literature, in poetry, and in nature. While these men would not be characterized as effeminate, they also would not be characterized as “manly” in the same sense as the rough and tough cowboys depicted in Buffalo
Bill’s Wild West show. Ironically, while women were incorporating traditionally masculine character traits into their gender performance, men were exploring traditionally feminine character traits in some areas of their lives while alternately embracing traditionally masculine traits in others.

Among the men in leadership at the 1893 World’s Fair, architect Daniel Burnham stands out as one of the most influential. New York born and Chicago raised, Daniel Burnham was half of the architectural firm of Burnham & Root. Well known for his thriving architectural practice by the early 1890s, Burnham was chosen to act as the Director of Works for the 1893 World’s Fair. Among other responsibilities, this position placed Burnham in charge of appointing the architects who would design the Fair’s iconic White City. Unexpectedly, Burnham’s business partner, John Wellborn Root, succumbed to pneumonia in 1891, just as the Fair planning had begun in earnest. At this critical juncture, Burnham set aside his grief and rose to the challenge ahead without his partner’s support. Burnham’s contemporary, architect Louis Sullivan who designed the Transportation Building, often criticized Burnham for his dependence on classical ideas in his architectural practice and in his direction for the design of the Fair’s buildings. Despite these criticisms, it was undeniable that Daniel Burnham’s leadership was critical in the Fair’s success overcoming financial and logistical challenges. Although he found a certain kinship in his relationships with other men, particularly with his late partner, John Root, Burnham performed his gender largely as society expected with the exception of his strong empathy for the women under his direction, particularly with the plight of Sophia Hayden during the construction of the Women’s Building. With respect to Burnham, Hayden reportedly expressed a genuine fondness for him and his family indicating there had been a friendly mentorship between them that went beyond the formal niceties of Fair business.

Unlike Daniel Burnam, who exemplified a more traditional masculinity, Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright demonstrated a modern gender awareness that did not require rigid adherence to prevailing social norms. Their relationship began in earnest when Wright came to work for Sullivan in 1887 and they worked together for six years before a falling out led to Wright beginning his own practice in 1893. Therefore, in the early 1890s while Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan designed the Transportation Building for the Fair, Frank Lloyd Wright was a young draftsman working in their office. Sullivan was an American master of ornamentation. He signature style included “efflorescent tendrils and blooms that snaked their way along his
arches and his capitals were delicate, yet stunningly powerful.” Wright admired Sullivan’s design philosophy which revolved around biological organisms such as birds, trees, and flowers. These forms evolved within their environment in the best way to perform their specific functions. In the same way, Sullivan believed that architecture should incorporate natural forms, yet facilitate the necessary function for the structure. Sullivan famously declared, “Form follows function,” a mantra reiterated by his many followers in the Chicago School of architects, Wright and Mahony included.

Wright and Sullivan’s relationship went beyond simply sharing the same architectural philosophy. They also shared interests in art, poetry, philosophy, and music. Wright considered Sullivan his mentor and referred to him as his Lieber Meister, meaning “beloved master,” for the rest of his life. Sullivan, though involved sexually with women, appeared to have more of an affinity for men. He was a member of the Lotus Club, a group of intellectual men who loved flowers and developed their bodies by rowing, body-building, and racing. Sullivan enjoyed the camaraderie so much he often sketched his cohorts as they frolicked. His Lotus Club Notebook featured drawings of the naked men wrestling and swimming. Reportedly, Sullivan’s few drawings of women were not near as flattering to the subject. Sullivan was also fond of the works of poet Walt Whitman, including Leaves of Grass, which prominently featured a new model of manly, homosexual love. Fittingly, Sullivan’s relationship with Wright demonstrated a “new” model of apprenticeship that actually harkened back to Greek and Roman traditions. Wright embraced this relationship with an older man that went beyond the technical aspects of architecture to include the arts and a “passionate identification” with one another. Wright wrote of Sullivan after his death,

To know him well was to love him well. I never liked the name Frank until I would hear him say it and the quiet breath he gave it made it beautiful in my ears…The deep quiet of his temper had great charm for me.

Wright was one of the few who developed a lasting relationship with Sullivan who was notoriously difficult in personality and struggled with addiction. In short, Wright was the love of Sullivan’s life.

For his part, architect Frank Lloyd Wright was always one to live his life with flair. Beginning as a young man and on into adulthood, Wright dressed flamboyantly for the times wearing his hair long with tight pants and a mink collar sewed onto his overcoat. As an adult,
he often wore a cape. Looking back on his youth in his later years, he called himself “an incorrigible sentimentalist.” Wright also lived his life on the edge, spending money faster than he could obtain it. Some Wright scholars believe that he suffered from bipolar disorder and linked his outlandish behavior with periods of mania. However, these periods were also times when Wright’s architectural genius would emerge in one project or another. Wright lived to seize the moment, and like Sullivan, his sensitivity to beauty in nature and his creative genius often came into conflict with the traditional masculine traits society expected.

Like his Lieber Meister, Wright had a difficult time maintaining relationships. As his thriving architectural practice began to show signs of slowing, Wright left his first wife, Catherine Tobin, and their six children in 1909. After a brief sojourn in Europe, Wright set up house in Spring Green, Wisconsin, in a home he built called Taliesin with his mistress Mamah Borthwick Cheney, the wife of a former client. In 1914, Mamah Cheney was killed, along with her two children from her marriage, by a mentally unstable servant while Wright was away for work. Afterward, Wright’s loneliness led him to marry Miriam Noel, who also struggled with addiction, and their marriage lasted for only one year. His third, and final, marriage to the formidable Olgivanna Lazovich, a dancer he met at a Petrograd Ballet performance in Chicago, was as much on her terms as it was his and only took place after the birth of their daughter, Iovanna. Biographer Brendan Gill noted that Wright was drawn to women who behaved as his equal and accepted the “rules of male conduct,” including his mistress, Mamah Cheney, his second and third wives, Miriam Noel and Oglivanna Lazovich, as well as his architectural collaborator, Marion Mahony Griffin.

In light of his embattled relationship with the women, one could convincingly argue that Sullivan was the true love of Wright’s life as well. Wright demonstrated a closeness and loyalty for Sullivan that went beyond any he had shown for his own parents, his children, or the women he had lived with or married. Like Sullivan, Wright had an affinity for literature dating back to his youth. From reading an old volume left behind by his father, Wright developed a fondness for the works of Plutarch. He identified with Alcibiades, the “amorous object for scores of well-born Greek men, each whom sought to flatter him with ‘unmanly fondness.” The great philosopher Socrates eventually became Alcibiades’s mentor. In much the same way, Wright considered Sullivan to be his Socrates. Although Alcibiades and Socrates were involved in a homo-erotic relationship, Alcibiades also represented manhood as a warrior and a military
strategist. Wright scholars Friedland and Zellman maintain that Wright felt himself to be a “divided soul” in much the same way. Wright, like Sullivan, carried himself differently than many of his peers. Wright’s gender performance conveyed his unique style, his passion for beauty, and his creative genius, setting a precedent for a modern conception of masculinity that is still prominent in American culture nearly one hundred and twenty years later.

Society’s Enchantment with Gendered Change: An Assimilation toward Modernity

The American transition toward modernity involved a significant shift with respect to gender performance. After the Fair, these shifts moved from the periphery of society to center stage as the nation embraced the modernity of women in leadership and professional roles as well as men in creative and androgynous roles. This shift in gender performance became an integral part of a modern American national identity in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Gender studies and women’s history have illuminated the significance of women’s agency and the fluctuations in women’s societal roles over time. Women such as Sophia Hayden and Marion Mahony Griffin were entering architecture programs in universities in the 1890s representing an unprecedented inclusion of women in a traditionally male profession. Also during this period, women were more visible in politics and social work than ever before. Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr at Hull House in Chicago are powerful examples of this phenomenon. Women such as Bertha Palmer and the Board of Lady Managers found themselves in leadership roles that, although without formal authority, welded a powerful cultural authority nonetheless. Additionally, and just as relevant, changes in men’s roles have helped to shape this modern national identity as well. Changes in how people perform their gender represent one of the many diverse origins of modernity. These changes have significantly informed the “modern” American identity which is evident in how these characteristics have persisted into the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Although clearly resisted by mainstream society at various points throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, gendered change has become an important component of modern life. Women’s agency expanded and constricted throughout this period, yet eventually overcame social and professional repression to a significant degree. An enchantment with this
change is evidenced by the cumulative changes that have taken place worldwide, particularly in Western society. In the twenty-first century, women closely match men in post-secondary educational settings and professional fields, both in number and in expertise. Although earnings and advancement disparity with respect to gender continues to be an issue, these problems persist according to race and socio-economic levels as well. Despite these continuing challenges, gender equality has made significant strides over the course of a century aiding in the American assimilation toward modernity.

The role of gender in the culture of the 1893 World’s Fair illuminates the changing social and professional roles of women and men in the 1890s. Shifting gender performance by prominent figures involved with the Fair illustrates an important element of modernity which has come to characterize mainstream life well into the twenty-first century. Much as the conception and construction of the Women’s Building itself represents an important precedent, Sophia Hayden’s appointment as architect of the Women’s Building at the Fair may be viewed as a “watershed” precedent that has informed modern American culture and national identity. Changes in the ways these women and men behaved and in how they perceived themselves as fulfilling male or female roles in society in the 1890s represents yet another important precedent for how these roles are fulfilled in mainstream society over one hundred years later. Although, these architects and social-reformers arguably represented the upper element of their society in the 1890s, they were also blazing a trail for the “everywoman” and “everyman” in the decades following them.

Locating modernity geographically and metaphorically in gendered space in the White City and gender performance at the 1893 World’s Fair demonstrates American’s simultaneous rejection, acceptance, and eventual assimilation to modernity in the late nineteenth century. Moreover, part of the American transition to modernity involved a genuine enchantment with gendered change. As women became less subjugated and more liberated, men found liberation as well. Rather than being trapped in static, gendered identities, the modern women and men of the 1890s had the liberty to choose their performance in some parts of the world. This proliferation of gendered diversity accompanied the cultural diversity at the Fair. As a result of this performative shift, gendered “others” were embraced and diversity came to be celebrated over the course of the twentieth century.
The Women’s Building at the 1893 World’s Fair represented women from around the world. Eastern cultures joined Western cultures under the same roof, such as the Japanese Ladies Boudoir and the French Salon in the Women’s Building. The United States and Japan, among others, sought to demonstrate their legitimacy through the expanse of women’s agency. These representations reflect ties to tradition as well as notions of modernity on a transnational stage. As a result, the changing roles of women became a significant contributor to the complexity of transnational culture into the twentieth century and beyond.

The modernity of expanding women’s agency and shifting gender performance has had a significant impact on conceptions of modern American identity. These representations of gender have challenged, and in many ways, eclipsed more traditional gender representations that existed prior to the turn of the twentieth century. As Judith Butler maintains, “Genders can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent, neither original nor derived.”¹¹⁵ This mixture of hybridity and ambivalence in gender performance is a truly modern development that can be traced back to the late nineteenth century. By locating modernity in gendered metaphorical and geographical spaces at the 1893 World’s Fair, the emerging modern identity of the United States comes into focus.

NOTES

1 The Columbian World's Fair atlas: containing complete illustrations of the World's Fair grounds and buildings, general illustrations of the public buildings, parks, monuments, street scenes, etc. of Chicago, and maps of every state and territory of the United States and Canada, and general maps of the world. (New London, Ohio: Published for J. Brubaker, ca.1893), no pagination; description of the Women’s Building.


3 The Columbian World's Fair atlas, description of the Women’s Building.


5 The Columbian World's Fair atlas, description of the Women’s Building.

6 Ives, The Dream City, descriptive caption below image of the Women’s Building; also see Rossiter Johnson, ed. A history of the World's Columbian exposition held in Chicago in 1893; by authority of the Board of directors, Vol. 1 (New York, D. Appleton and Co., 1897-98), 220.

7 The Columbian World's Fair atlas, description of the Women’s Building; also see Martin, Martin's World's Fair Album-Atlas and Family Souvenir, description of the Women’s Building.


11 Torre, Women in American Architecture, 57.

12 Weimann The Fair Women, 213.

13 The Columbian World's Fair atlas, description of the Women’s Building; also see Martin, Martin's World's Fair Album-Atlas and Family Souvenir, description of the Women’s Building.

14 The Columbian World's Fair atlas, description of the Women’s Building.

15 The Columbian World's Fair atlas, description of the Women’s Building.


18 The Columbian World's Fair atlas, description of the Women’s Building; also see Martin, Martin's World's Fair Album-Atlas and Family Souvenir, description of the Women’s Building.


20 Weimann The Fair Women, 229.


22 Weimann The Fair Women, 230.


25 Weimann The Fair Women, 266.

26 Ives, The Dream City, descriptive caption below image of the Women’s Building.


28 Ives, The Dream City, descriptive caption below image of the Women’s Building.

29 Torre, Women in American Architecture, 58, floor-plan image.


Torre, Women in American Architecture, 73.


Weimann, The Fair Women, 176-177; also see, Larson, The Devil in the White City, 142-143.


Torre, Women in American Architecture, 73.


Martin, Martin’s World’s Fair Album-Atlas and Family, description of the Women’s Building; Also see, The Columbian World’s Fair atlas: containing complete illustrations of the World’s Fair grounds and buildings, general illustrations of the public buildings, parks, monuments, street scenes, etc. of Chicago, and maps of every state and territory of the United States and Canada, and general maps of the world (New London, Ohio: Published for J. Brubaker, 1893), 19.


Torre, Women in American Architecture, 58.

Daniel Burnham, “Director of Works Report,” 24 October 1892, Burnham Archives, Box 58, File 12; also see Larson, The Devil in the White City, 120.

Torre, Women in American Architecture, 58.

Hayden, “Report on the Women’s Building,” Boston, 28 April 1894; also see, Torre, Women in American Architecture, 73.

Hayden, “Report on the Women’s Building,” Boston, 28 April 1894; also see, Torre, Women in American Architecture, 73.


Weimann The Fair Women, 602; Chapter VIII notes include excerpts from a letter from Sarah Angell to Bertha Palmer concerning Sophia Hayden’s visit to Ann Arbor. This letter details Hayden’s conversation with Sarah Angell including a reference her enthusiasm for the Burnham family.


Friedland and Zellman, The Fellowship, 18.

Friedland and Zellman, The Fellowship, 18.

Friedland and Zellman, The Fellowship, 18.

Friedland and Zellman, The Fellowship, 19.


Gill, The Many Masks of Frank Lloyd Wright, 40.
103 Friedland and Zellman, *The Fellowship*, 12.
107 Friedland and Zellman, *The Fellowship*, 37
109 Friedland and Zellman, *The Fellowship*, 70.
113 Friedland and Zellman, *The Fellowship*, 12.
114 Friedland and Zellman, *The Fellowship*, 12.
LOCATING MODERNITY IN INNOVATION AT THE 1893 WORLD’S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION ILLUSTRATES AN ENCHANTMENT WITH BOTH MODERNIZATION AND TRADITION FOUND IN AMERICAN CULTURE AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. BY EXAMINING THE ENGINEERING MARVEL OF THE FERRIS WHEEL JUXTAPOSED WITH THE AMERICAN INTERPRETATION OF *BEAUX-ARTS* ARCHITECTURE IN THE WHITE CITY, ONE CAN DISCERN THE AMBIVALENCE TOWARD MODERNITY WHICH WAS SIMULTANEOUSLY EMBRACED AND REJECTED AT THE FAIR. THE 1893 WORLD’S FAIR SERVED BOTH TO RECONNECT AMERICANS WITH THEIR WESTERN EUROPEAN ROOTS AND TO PROVIDE A NEW SPACE WHERE CITIZENS COULD OBSERVE THE TECHNOLOGICAL AND INDUSTRIAL WONDERS OF MODERNIZATION.  

Thus, the innovation found at the Fair combined modernization with reinterpretations of tradition revealing the hybridity of the emerging American modernity. While innovation has long been perceived as an integral part of modernity, the role of tradition within modernity is an often less apparent, but no less significant aspect of American culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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*Figure 10. The Ferris Wheel, Midway Plaisance, World’s Columbian Exposition. Uncredited photo in Martin’s World’s Fair Album-Atlas and Family Souvenir. Chicago: C. Ropp & Sons, 1892.*
Located in the center of the Midway just outside of the White City, the Ferris wheel reached its apex two-hundred and seventy feet into the sky. Facing eastward in the approaching dusk, visitors were gently carried in an upward circuit. There were thirty-six cars comprised of wood-veneered cabins slightly larger than Pullman Palace train box cars carrying sixty passengers each (figure 10). The wind rushed against the windows and through the bars gently swayed the hanging cars, but the wheel frame continued gliding resolute into the cool evening breeze. Stretched out below, the crowds on the Midway Plaisance shrank to the size of ants; the buildings into miniature versions of themselves. Looking beyond the Midway to the east, the impressive vista of the White City came into view (figure 11). Visitors could clearly see the Women’s Building just ahead in the distance, and beyond that lay the Lagoon with the Wooded Island at its center. To the southeast, visitors could see the rooftops of the Manufacturers and Liberal Arts Building, the Horticulture Building, and the Transportation Building. Further to the south, just out of view, was the Administration Building in the heart of the Court of Honor.

Figure 11. Looking East from atop the Ferris Wheel. Photographed by Government Photographer [C.D. Arnold] and arranged in The Dream City, N.D. Thompson Publishing Co., St. Louis, MO, 1893.
As the dusk turned to night, the White City lit up with an ethereal glow (figure 21). One hundred and one arc and incandescent combination post lamps placed thirty feet apart illuminated the pathways of the Fair against the black night sky. Each post had an ornamental triangular base and the tops were covered with colored glass globes. In addition, Five hundred eighty-nine incandescent lamps lit the spaces for various exhibitors and *concessionaires* while eight alternating-current arc lamps lit the upper dome of the Administration Building (figure 23).\(^5\) As the Ferris wheel reached the ground, it began its ascent again for the second revolution of the ride. The Midway glowed brightly into the night illuminating the German, Javanese, Irish, Turkish, Chinese, and other villages, the Nippon Tea House, the Moorish Palace, and the Japanese Bazaar below.\(^6\)

![Figure 12. Axle of the Ferris Wheel. Photographed by Government Photographer [C.D. Arnold] and arranged in *The Dream City*, N.D. Thompson Publishing Co., St. Louis, MO, 1893.](image)

As it turned, the seventy-ton main axle of the Ferris wheel effortlessly supported the weight of the spokes and the cars (figure 12). At the bottom curvature, the heavy castings formed the outer periphery of the wheel interspersed with five-ton rods which supported the entire weight.\(^7\) Only the spokes below the axle were in use, holding up lower arch of the wheel and likewise supporting the upper arc like a perpetually arched bridge.\(^8\) From a distance, the whole contraption was reminiscent of a gigantic bicycle wheel, appearing unsettlingly insubstantial for
the load it was carrying. Despite its appearance, the wheel possessed six times the strength necessary to maintain its soundness. As Fair visitors waited anxiously to board for the next ride, they noticed that the movement of the wheel was nearly silent as the cogs engaged the chains and the lesser wheels in a clock-train motion. They looked up at the forty-five foot long, thirty-two inch diameter axle that rested firmly on steel towers one hundred and forty feet tall. The towers stood steadfastly, supported by timber piles driven thirty-five feet through Chicago’s notorious twenty-foot stratum of quicksand and into the stable bedrock located deep below the surface. As it slowed to a stop, the two-hundred-fifty-foot span of the wheel from car-to-axle-to-car seemed to fill the Midway with its expanse. Once the exhilarated visitors disembarked, the six lower cars were quickly loaded up again to capacity, the break was released, and Ferris’s wheel slowly resumed its continuous journey bringing Fair visitors up and away from the earth and back again.

**Locating Modernity in Innovation:**

Ferris Invents the Wheel

While modernity is quite obviously illustrated through innovations such as the Ferris wheel, many other sources of innovation could also be found throughout the Fair. Familiar transportation technologies saw improvements such as intramural railway stations and silent electric powered boats. New technologies, such as electric lighting and fresh water systems added to the safety and comfort of Fair visitors. Fresh water was brought in to the Fair from a spring several miles away in order to avoid cholera and other water-borne diseases. The Fair also provided sanitation and emergency communication services. Behind the scenes, less apparent uses of technology were critical in bringing the Fair to life, such as innovative construction methods that aided in building the enormous structures and producing mature landscape designs in an unprecedentedly brief period of time. Although the structures of the White City appeared to be permanent Beaux-Arts buildings, they were in fact merely plaster facades instead of masonry construction. Olmstead’s landscape architecture was equally impressive with man-made lagoons and a completely invented “natural” environment. The construction of the White City proved to be as much of an engineering marvel as the invention of Ferris’s great wheel on the Midway.
The Midway at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition was conceived as an “amusement zone” where the idealized didacticism of the White City and its diverse representations of the world gave way to fantastic representations of these same cultures as entertainments (figure 13). The Ferris wheel was originally conceived to be an icon for the Fair much like the Eiffel tower had been for the Paris Exposition. It was intended to be a dynamic, moving architecture, a building in motion, but in practice it became an amusement and an attraction for the Midway. The Ferris wheel followed a distinguished tradition of similar metal-frame world’s fair monuments dating back to the Great Exhibition of 1851. The Crystal Palace built in Hyde Park in London, England featured a cast iron construction with thousands of plate-glass panes becoming the largest such building at the time. Similarly, at the 1889 Exposition Universelle, also called the Paris Exposition, the Eiffel Tower on the Champ de Mars in Paris, France featured wrought iron construction and became the tallest man-made structure at that time. Each of these world’s fair monuments became symbolic of the host-nation’s innovation as well as a source of fascination and enchantment for the visitors to the fairs. Likewise, the Ferris wheel served not only as an icon for the 1893 World’s Fair, but also as a monument to American ingenuity. Ferris reinvented the wheel, and in doing so, met the challenge to create a modern engineering marvel that would rise to meet Eiffel’s tower.
As planning for the 1893 World’s Fair progressed, the Director of Works, Daniel Burnham, envisioned a structure that would surpass the innovation and notoriety of the Eiffel Tower which had made a spectacular impression at the Paris Exposition of 1889. Engineer Alexandre Gustave Eiffel had created the one-thousand-foot tall tower of iron in the heart of Paris. Despite Burnham’s hopes that someone would come forward with a fresh idea for surpassing Eiffel’s novel design, the emergence of an American engineer up to the task remained elusive in the early months of planning for the Fair. At one point, Eiffel himself offered to submit a proposal for the Chicago tower. Once word spread that the Fair officials were seriously considering allowing the Frenchman to design the iconic structure, American engineers united in protest against the idea.

Pittsburg engineer George Washington Gale Ferris submitted his plan for a structure that would outshine Eiffel’s tower to the Fair’s Ways and Means Committee, but it was initially rejected because his plan was deemed not feasible. Undeterred, Ferris consulted his partner in his steel inspection firm, W.F. Gronau, to calculate the requirements for the “live load” which had more in common with bridge design than with Eiffel’s tower in Paris. After confirming the feasibility of his plans, Ferris again approach the Ways and Means Committee, who agreed to grant a concession only to revoke it the next day based on fears that the strong winds in Chicago would send the structure crashing to the ground. Determined, Ferris spent $25,000 of his own money on consultations, calculations, and specifications for a set of drawings. He consulted with prominent engineers Robert Hunt and Andrew Onderdonk to confirm the soundness of his design. Ferris submitted a proposal for the third time along with a list of investors backing his project. On December 16, 1892 the Ways and Means Committee again granted him a concession on his project. Ferris began planning the construction of his two-hundred-and-fifty foot diameter wheel designed to carry thirty-six cars, each with a sixty-person capacity, nearly three hundred feet into the sky above the Fair.

Ferris’s wheel, along with much of the Fair, was not finished in time for opening day on May 1, 1893. Construction and steel supply difficulties along with weather-related delays resulted in the wheel becoming operational midway through the Fair. The first successful test of the wheel took place on June 9, 1893 and, finally, on June 21, 1893, the Ferris wheel began to carry passengers. Almost immediately, the Ferris wheel became the most popular attraction of the entire exposition selling tens of thousands of tickets each week. On average, twenty
thousand people each day bought tickets to ride the Ferris wheel up to the closing of the Fair in October 1893. The Ferris wheel reportedly contained 1,700 tons of steel and cost $400,000.00 to build. By September 1, 1893, it had earned its entire cost and began earning a profit. The success of the Ferris wheel provided a satisfactory answer to its French counterpart. Benjamin Truman stated in his 1893 History of the World’s Fair that “What La Tour Eiffel was to the last Paris Exposition the great Ferris wheel is to this.” However, the iconic status of the Ferris wheel had one serious challenger: the White City.


The White City: An American Interpretation of the Beaux-Arts

In Daniel Burnham’s Book of Builders, he explained that the grounds of the 1893 World’s Fair were divided into seven regions. These regions begin near the main entrance to the Fair with the Court of Honor, which included Richard Morris Hunt’s Administration Building at its the center. Robert Swain Peabody and John Stearns’s Machinery Building and Charles F. McKim, William R. Mead, and Stanford White’s Agricultural Building were located to the south of the Court (figure 14). The Statue of the Republic was located at the east end of the Court with
the Harbor beside it and the Pier extending into Lake Michigan. George F. Post’s Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, Henry Van Brunt and Frank M. Howe’s Electricity Building, Solon S. Berman’s Mines and Manufactures Building, and Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan’s Transportation Building were located to the north of the Court, on the south shore of the Lagoon.

The Lagoon was located in the heart of Jackson Park with the Wooded Island at its center. Buildings on the east shore of the Lagoon included the United States Government buildings, Henry Ives Cobb’s Fisheries Building, and the foreign government buildings. Just to the north of the Lagoon there was the North Pond which included Charles Atwood’s Fine Arts Palace surrounded by the area containing state buildings. The west shore of the Lagoon included Sophia G. Hayden’s Women’s Building and William Le Baron Jenney’s Horticulture Building. Directly behind the Women’s Building was the Midway Plaisance, which included the Ferris wheel, concessions, and international village exhibits. The southeastern region of the grounds, located behind the Machinery Building and Agricultural Buildings, included the livestock buildings and the Anthropology Building. The southwestern region included the warehouse and workshop areas located behind the Terminal Railroad Station at the west end of the Court of Honor. For simplicity, these regions may be grouped into three basic areas: the Lagoon, the Midway Plaisance, and the White City. The Lagoon represented the untamed, natural landscape portion of the park. The Midway signified the commodification of entertainment and mass consumption. The White City embodied the yearning for a connection to a legitimizing past, which was accomplished through a demonstration of an American interpretation of the Beaux-Arts tradition in architecture.

Ironically, interpreting traditional European style in the White City resulted in a modern, uniquely American adaptation of Beaux-Arts architecture. On March 9, 1884, nearly a decade before the Fair, New York journalist and architectural critic Montgomery Schuyler delivered a lecture entitled “Modern Architecture.” Schuyler asserted there was a need for a universal architecture in the United States much as the Beaux-Arts system had existed in Europe. He noted that the Beaux-Arts system could provide a basis for this except that it failed to produce an architecture that was appropriate for modern life. While Schuyler clearly favored a direct, more expressive form of modern architecture, he never explicitly rejected the Beaux-Arts tradition. This same ambivalence, vacillating between modernity and tradition, characterized the architecture of the White City at the 1893 World’s Fair.
The *Beaux-Arts* style originated in Europe and was taught at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. The École taught architecture from 1819 after the merger of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture and the Académie Royale d’Architecture. The school sought to establish universal principles of architecture. Among the topics of the curriculum were the five orders, the greatest buildings and texts of Roman antiquity, and the Italian Renaissance.\(^34\) Strong emphasis was also placed on construction including mathematics, descriptive geometry, stereotomy, and perspective. The principles of École des Beaux-Arts architecture required that buildings should be composed of both plan and elevation; they should rationally express their component functions; and they should convey a clear hierarchy.\(^35\) Typical elements of *Beaux-Arts* architecture included a formal symmetry, rustication, and a raised foundation. Classical architectural details found in *Beaux-Arts* design often included arched windows and doors, pilasters, columns, colonnades, arcades, and pediments, as well as decorative elements including sculpture, statuary, bas-relief and painted murals.\(^36\)

The Americanized *Beaux-Arts* style of the 1893 World’s Fair inspired a wave of neoclassical architecture that swept across America.\(^37\) The resulting influence of the Fair’s architecture quickly moved beyond a preoccupation with the *Beaux-Arts* style to a collective civic adaption of it by the early decades of the twentieth century. Architectural historian Sally Anderson Chappell noted, “A characteristic quality of American architecture during this period was the great freedom with which architects and their clients reorganized old categories.”\(^38\) Furthermore, architectural historian William Curtis noted that the so-called “American renaissance” was not always superficial and in fact fulfilled specific needs at the time.\(^39\) The American *Beaux-Arts* provided a standard for civic institutions such as museums, libraries, universities, and monuments. It also provided a link to a legitimizing past during a time when the United States was emerging as a world power. In addition, the Fair served to inspire the ‘City Beautiful’ movement in the early 1900s which combined the progressivism of social reform and the technology of “scientific planning” with the conservative style of the *Beaux-Arts*.\(^40\) This movement served to both tame and ennoble the rapidly modernizing American metropolis.\(^41\)

The resulting architecture of the White City was not a replication of European style but rather an American interpretation of it. According to architectural historian Alan Colquhoun, the tendency toward classicism in the design of the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition was spurred by a desire for collectivization and standardization on the part of the Fair’s promoters.
Daniel Burnham welcomed this shift toward European tradition while Louis Sullivan decried this trend as the “sounding of the death knell” of the individualism that had inspired Sullivan and the Chicago School architects. 42 It was at this juncture that two disparate trends become apparent: one shifting toward a reinterpretation of classical Beaux-Arts tradition as embraced by East Coast architects, and the other, shifting toward a new American architecture based on non-classical tradition, natural forms, and geometry that was plastic and adaptable to modern conditions. 43

The planning for the Fair started in 1890 under the joint direction of Frederick Law Olmsted and Daniel Burnham. By choosing to select at least half of the architects from the East, the Fair’s promoters sought to ensure uniformity and a legitimizing classicism. The architectural philosophy espoused by the East Coast architects opposed the values of the Chicago school by subjugating the buildings of the Fair to total visual control and by requiring the use of a predetermined architectural language rather than giving the individual architect agency and flexibility with respect to style. 44 In short, classicism was deemed most appropriate expression of the United States’ national power and cosmopolitan culture at the Fair. Whether arriving by boat or by train, visitors’ impressions of the Fair were shaped by the Court of Honor surrounded by the Fair’s most important pavilions, and as well as by the pavilions dotting the shores of the picturesque Lagoon. Although designed by different architects, the pavilions were all built using the same lathe and plaster, also called “staff,” for the façades, and most were painted a creamy white for time savings as much as for simplicity’s sake. 45 Despite their differences, the architects of the White City succeeded in creating a collective voice.

When the construction of the White City began in the winter of 1891, Daniel Burnham’s position as Director of Works placed him in charge of fourteen thousand men constructing the buildings and ten of the nation’s top architects. 46 There were two distinct groups among the architects chosen to design the White City: those from the East Coast, primarily New York and Boston, and those from the Midwest, primarily from Chicago. Burnham referred to the East Coast architects as the “Beaux-Arts boys” in reference to the style of architecture they sought to exemplify in their work. 47 The Fair’s Beaux-Arts architects were viewed as leaders in forging an American architecture based on the precedent of Beaux-Arts architecture in Europe. Conversely, the Midwestern architects were seen as rogue experimentalists attempting to develop a uniquely modern American architecture that was still in its infancy.
The White City architects all had received professional training through university programs, apprenticeships, or both. An examination of the formal training and professional careers of the White City architects offers a compelling portrait of men and a woman literally and figuratively building a modern American national identity one building at a time. Many of these architects actually studied at the prestigious École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and were adapting the Beaux-Arts style for a uniquely American architecture. New York architect Richard Morris Hunt, who designed the Administration Building, received his training at the École de Beaux-Arts while spending ten years in Paris beginning in 1846. Hunt was the first American to be admitted to the École De Beaux-Arts.\textsuperscript{48} He entered the atelier of Héctor Lefuel the same year and supervised work on the Louvre museum. Once he returned to the United States in 1855, Hunt began teaching architecture and co-founded the American Institute of Architects. One of Hunt’s students, William Robert Ware, went on to found two architecture programs: in 1866, Ware founded the program at MIT and in 1881 he founded the program at Columbia University.\textsuperscript{49} Similarly, East Coast Architect Charles Follen McKim, who designed the Agricultural Building, studied architecture at Harvard and then at the École de Beaux-Arts.\textsuperscript{50} In 1877, he formed the partnership of McKim, Mead, and White with William Rutherford Mead and Stanford White.\textsuperscript{51} Both White and McKim had begun their careers in the office of Henry Hobson Richardson in 1870.\textsuperscript{52} Boston architect Robert Swain Peabody, who designed the Machinery Building, also studied at Harvard University and the École de Beaux-Arts. He was the co-founder of the firm Peabody and Sterns.\textsuperscript{53} Furthermore, Chicago architect Louis Sullivan, who designed the Transportation Building, studied architecture at MIT before moving on to work with architect Frank Furness. In 1873, Sullivan worked briefly with William LeBaron Jenney on the first steel-frame building in Chicago before moving to Paris to study at the École de Beaux-Arts.\textsuperscript{54} After his return to the United States, engineer Dankmar Adler hired Sullivan in 1879 and a year later they formed the partnership of Adler and Sullivan.\textsuperscript{55} Their firm was well-known for their 1889 Auditorium Building in Chicago, among others.\textsuperscript{56}

Several of the White City architects studied the Beaux-Arts style of architecture at prestigious American universities. For example, Chilean born and Boston raised architect Sophia Hayden, who designed the Women’s Building, was an 1886 graduate from MIT and the first woman to graduate with a bachelor of architecture degree with honors.\textsuperscript{57} Similarly, New York architect Henry Van Brunt, who designed the Electricity Building, graduated from Harvard in
1854 and then went to work with Richard Morris Hunt. New York architect George B. Post, who designed The Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, received a degree in civil engineering in 1858 from the Scientific School at New York University. He also went on to become a student of Richard Morris Hunt that same year and in 1860, he formed a partnership with another one of Hunt’s students, Charles D. Gambrill. Remarkably, Post’s Equitable Life Assurance Society building was the first office building in New York to be designed with elevators. Some of the architects during this period received training through apprenticeships instead of university architectural programs. Chicago architect Solon Spencer Beman, who designed the Mines and Mining Building, was trained in the New York office of architect Richard Upjohn in 1870. Notably, Berman was commissioned by George Pullman in 1879 to design the Pullman company town.

Although they received similar training, many of the East Coast architects viewed the Chicago architects, who were experimenting with organic forms and new ideas, as advocates of a “crude regional vernacular.” Ironically, some of the prominent Chicago architects became caught up in Burnham’s enthusiasm for Beaux-Arts style classicism, such as William Le Baron Jenney, designer of the Horticultural Building, a Renaissance-inspired structure on the main lagoon. However, others such as Henry Ives Cobb, who designed the Romanesque-inspired Fisheries building, and Louis Sullivan, whose building features a polychromatic color scheme, departed somewhat from the collective adherence to neo-classical style.

To the untrained eye, the buildings of the White City appear as part of a homogenous collective, devoid of individualistic qualities to set them apart. However, upon closer inspection, the designers of these buildings employed their own unique interpretation of an American Beaux-Arts style. Representing the White City, the Transportation Building, the Administration Building, and the Arts and Manufactures Building, each illustrate a different configuration of Beaux-Arts architectural elements and varying adherence to Beaux-Arts design principles. For example, the Administration Building, designed by Richard Morris Hunt, was located in the Court of Honor at the west end facing eastward. The dome reached a height of two hundred sixty feet from the floor below (figure 15). The general style was described as French renaissance with the first story in the Doric order surrounded by a balustrade. The second story of the Administration Building represented the Ionic order. It featured an open colonnade and statuary
at the corners of the roofline. The design included four pavilions, one at each side of the building with an entrance fifty feet tall and fifty feet wide covered by arched vaults.

The central rotunda was clad in glass to allow maximum sunlight into the interior. The building was topped with a ribbed, octagonal dome which featured sculpted panels, and an elaborate bas-relief. As one of its most iconic identifying features, the Administration Building dome was lit at night with incandescent lights (figure 23). Although a mainstay of the Fair’s night skyline, the Administration Building represented one of the smallest of the main buildings in the White City.

Conversely, the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, designed by George B. Post, covered nearly thirty-one acres and at the time was the largest exposition building ever constructed (figure 16). The predominantly white exterior façade was decorated to imitate marble and each side contained three main entrances with the center entrance flanked on either side by an array of arches and columns. The entrances to each pavilion featured a one hundred twenty-two foot high pylon. The main roof was constructed with iron and glass that spanned an area of three hundred eighty-five by fourteen hundred feet with the ridge one hundred fifty feet from the ground (figure 17). Post’s design notably exceeded the interior span of its similar
predecessor, the Machinery Building at the Paris Exposition in 1889. The interior spaces of the massive building were divided into eighty-six small galleries each twelve feet wide. With loggias leading down each side east and west, visitors could step outside and enjoyed scenic views of both the Lagoon and Lake Michigan.


Alternatively, the Transportation Building, designed by Louis Sullivan, faced eastward toward the Hō-ōden on the Wooded Island. The façade style was described as Romanesque with a cupola situated in the center of the roof one hundred sixty-five feet high serviced by eight elevators. The façade consisted of simple archways repeated across the length of each side with angel bas-relief sculptures situated between them (figure 18). Halsey C. Ives describes the colorful, polychromatic décor prominently featuring red details as providing an “Oriental expression and effect” in contrast with the predominantly white buildings of the White City.  


The main entrance featured an immense Richardsonian arch. The golden doorway contained delicate traceries, murals, colorful patterns, and ornate bas-relief (figure 19). The stairs on either side led to terraces and minor entrances alongside the main entrance. In addition, outdoor seating, fountains, and statuary complimented the exterior amenities of the building. The interior of the building contained a large, open exhibition space complete with clerestory windows and an open arcade. The “rose” windows and ceiling skylights bathed the displays with sunlight (figure 20). Sullivan’s modern interpretation of the Beaux-Arts provided arguably the most unique structure in the White City, complete with over two thousand feet of train track that ran into the annex from the rear. Nevertheless, each building in the White City represented a different, individualized American interpretation of the traditional Beaux-Arts style.

The ambivalence toward modernity in American culture in the late-nineteenth century is demonstrated at the Fair through a simultaneous embrace and rejection of modernization. Fair visitors clearly embraced the modernity of the Ferris wheel, yet the Fair promoters sought to connect to a distant, legitimizing past through the classical tradition emulated in the design of the White City. This yearning to connect with the past is demonstrated by the very theme of the Fair. The 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition sought to connect America with a European heritage through the travels of Christopher Columbus. This yearning is also demonstrated by the Beaux-Arts architecture which is a neo-classical, Greek revival model. Modernity was essentially
rejected in favor of a connection to a legitimizing European past which was loosely based on the fact that Europe largely colonized the United States. This transnational connection is not a geographic connection, but rather a metaphorical cultural connection. Ironically, the most “American” tradition presented at the 1893 World’s Fair was Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show which portrayed a contrived historical narrative featuring Native Americans. More ironic still, the Paris Exposition of 1889, which Burnham sought so fervently to outdo, featured a more “modern” Art Nouveau architectural style four years before the unveiling of the White City. 81

In the early 1890s, Midwestern American architects were attempting to create a “modern” American architecture that departed significantly from the Beaux-Arts style of the White City. Some of these architects reacted very strongly against the classicism that Daniel Burnham and the “Beaux-Arts boys” so enthusiastically endorsed. Architectural historian Arthur Drexler maintains that in modern architecture, “Its moralizing fixation on utility and industrial technique led to an anti-historical bias the consequences of which have yet to be fully understood.”82 Three prominent Chicago-area architects took an anti-historical stance against classicism in American architecture: Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright and Marion Mahony Griffin. The Beaux-Arts style of the White City was roundly criticized by all three of these architects, particularly in their advanced age when they were writing their memoirs including Sullivan’s The Autobiography of an Idea, Wright’s Frank Lloyd Wright, An Autobiography and Mahony’s The Magic of America.83

Both Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright looked back at the Fair with contempt because its neo-classicism and traditionalism interfered with the modern-leaning experiments for an American architecture being developed in the Chicago School.84 Sullivan publically criticized Burnham for his dependence on classicism in his architectural practice and for his use of classicism for the language of the Fair’s buildings.85 The sweeping influence of the Fair distracted from the work of the Chicago School of architects, bringing forth a renewed interest in classical architectural forms. Sullivan complained bitterly that the influence of the Fair had derailed the quest for a uniquely American architecture. In Autobiography of an Idea, Sullivan wrote,

Thus Architecture died in the land of the free and the home of the brave—in a land declaring its fervid democracy, its inventiveness, its resourcefulness, its unique daring, enterprise and progress…The damage wrought by the World’s Fair will last for half a
century from its date, if not longer. It has penetrated deep into the constitution of the American mind, effecting there lesions significant of dementia.86

Sullivan’s prediction held some truth in that American civic and government buildings would continue to be built in the Americanized Beaux-Arts style well into the twentieth century.

Wright and Sullivan often shared the same beliefs in philosophy and architectural design. Wright had worked as “a pencil in the Master’s hand” while Sullivan designed the Transportation building for the Fair.87 In the early 1890’s, Wright also had a social relationship with Daniel Burnham who attempted to sway Wright to study the Beaux-Arts.88 In fact, Wright claimed that Burnham had offered to send Wright and his family to Paris for three years so that Wright could complete Beaux-Arts training courses and come work for Burnham afterward.89 However, Wright purportedly turned down the Burnham’s offer. He clearly had other ideas in mind.

Based on his writings, Frank Lloyd Wright despised the revival of classical architectural styles. He criticized the cultural disingenuousness of attempting to connect to a distant past that had little, if any, relationship to the present time and location. In 1931, he wrote,

Every commercial interest in any American town, in fact, is scurrying for respectability by seeking some advertising connection, at least, with the ‘classic.’ A commercial renaissance is here; the renaissance of the ‘ass in the lion’s skin.’ This much, at least, we owe to the late Columbian Fair—that triumph of modern civilization in 1893 will go down in American architectural history, when it is properly recorded, as a mortgage upon posterity that posterity must repudiate not only as usurious but as forged.90

Wright insinuated that the Fair connected American architecture with illegitimacy rather than the legitimacy Burnham and the Fair promoters had sought. His mind had not changed even after a quarter of a century had passed. In “A Testament” in 1957, Wright recalled,

I had just opened my own office in the Schiller Building, 1893, when disaster—Chicago’s first World’s Fair. The fair soon appeared to be more than ever tragic travesty: florid countenance of theoretical Beaux-Arts formalisms; perversions of what modern building we then had achieved by negation; already a blight upon our progress. A senseless reversion… By this time the American people had become sentimentally enamored of the old-lace, nervous artificiality of the ‘classic’ grandomania endorsed by the A.I.A. at the fair. It was everywhere in evidence: excess—as usual—mistaken for exuberance. Owing this to the first World’s fair [in Chicago], recognition of organic American architecture would have to wait at least half a century.91
Like Sullivan, Wright maintained that a modern American architecture, more specifically the recognition of an organic architecture, had indeed been delayed by the infatuation with classicism. Wright was stating this nearly thirty years after Sullivan when mid-twentieth century modern architecture was at its apex. Architectural historian Kevin Nute pointed out that Wright’s distain for Beaux-Arts design seems to have developed only after the Fair ended. As several researchers have noted, many of Wright’s designs prior to 1893 were based on classicism. It was only after the Fair that Wright’s own style departed from this trend significantly, perhaps due in part to the Exhibition itself. Nute suggests that the Exposition was a turning point in Wright’s thinking, with the Hō-ōden on the Wooded Island acting as an antithesis of the White City that surrounded it. 92

Much like her mentor Sullivan, and her early collaborator Wright, Marion Mahony Griffin seemed to share their disappointment with the architecture promoted at the 1893 World’s Fair. In her memoir, The Magic of America, Mahony wrote,

> The half dozen or more under her in the drafting room worked well and enthusiastically, for here was one of the few places where the ice was being broken for the freeing of the profession from the apron strings of stylistic architecture, a movement so wonderfully started and established by Louis Sullivan, the very heart of the movement in the Chicago Columbian Exposition, the whole nation being seduced by the superficial beauty of that wanton thing. 93

Mahony also sought to promote a modern architecture. Interestingly, she and her husband, Walter Burley Griffin, sought to export the American ideals of democracy and equality to Australia in the form of an organic architecture. 94

> Americans should emigrate to all parts of the world teaching the things that have been ingrained in their blood through the two centuries of the experience of democracy and should spread the knowledge of it throughout the world for elsewhere democracy is unknown. 95

Although ambivalent toward a classical European conception of tradition, Sullivan, Wright, and Mahony were willing to accept a modern, hybrid Americanized architecture that incorporated natural forms in non-hierarchical spaces.
Hybridity and Enchantment: Tradition meets Modernity at the Fair

Despite the regional divisions in American architecture in the late nineteenth century, American architects were essentially creating a hybrid modern Americanized architecture. Rather than a re-creation of the *Beaux-Arts* in Europe, East Coast American architects were creating their own interpretation, an Americanized version of the *Beaux-Arts* style. Similarly, the Midwest architects, such as Sullivan, Wright, and Mahony were creating their own interpretation of a uniquely American architecture, but based on simple geometries and natural forms instead of the *Beaux-Arts* model.

This hybridity is demonstrated in the architecture of the Fair. The Americanized *Beaux-Arts* style of the White City contained elements of modern architecture along with the traditional. For example, Sullivan’s Transportation Building was classically designed, such as its symmetry, but had modern elements, such as the Richardsonian influence in the arch doorway. As a result, the building was a hybrid of neo-classical and modern design. The Transportation Building is just one of many examples of tradition and innovation inhabiting the same metaphoric and geographic space.

In a broader sense, the architecture of the Fair incorporated a spectrum of design from the most traditional, such as the Japanese Pavilion, to revival style, such as the neo-classical *Beaux-Arts* facades of the White City, to the so-called proto-modern style of the Transportation Building, to the modern engineering and design of the Ferris wheel. This type of merger of tradition and innovation facilitated people becoming comfortable and eventually accepting the emerging modernity of the era. Like explained in T.J. Jackson Lears’s *No Place of Grace*, anti-modernist longings actually facilitated their acceptance and assimilation to the modernity despite their disenchantment with it. Much as the Transportation building serves as a modern archetype, the architecture at the Fair serves that purpose as well. When examining the White City as a collective entity, it serves as an intermediary for change. This facilitates people becoming familiar with new forms, new designs, and new ideas. In the case of the Transportation Building, it serves as an intermediary between the *Beaux-Arts* and the modern architecture that would emerge in the first decades of the twentieth century. Canonical architectural histories emphasize that modern architecture resulted from technological innovation or artistic experimentation as
evidenced by the visual qualities of the buildings.96 These modern qualities are readily apparent in the architecture of the White City.

The 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition was a magical place that defied previous boundaries and ignited the imaginations of both its builders and its visitors. An integral part of the magic of the Fair lies in the mystery surrounding its many wonders. To the average Fair visitor in 1893, fresh running water, electric boats, and a moving built structure, such as the Ferris wheel, led to an enchantment with technology that was nothing short of magical. In the *History of the World’s Fair*, Benjamin Truman maintained that “Chicago has given birth to one of the wonders of the age” with the invention of the Ferris wheel.97


The magic of the Fair could also been seen throughout the grounds, particularly at night (figure 21). Rossiter Johnson asserted in *The History of the World’s Columbian Exposition*,

The peculiar beauty of the Exposition grounds and the buildings at night can hardly be realized from description. The recent advances in the uses of electricity as a means of illumination gave opportunity for effects that never have been surpassed...The most charming electrical effects were produced in the evening as the twilight deepened. All along the margins of the great basin lines of incandescent lights flashed out of the shadows, and were answered by other lines along the cornices and pediments of the great
white palaces. Long wreaths of light climbed the ribs of the Administrations dome and twined themselves into a brilliant coronet at its summit. Arc lights flamed everywhere like mimic suns and with incandescent bulbs more numerous than the stars were reflected in rippling radiance on the dancing waters of the lagoons. 98

Two Thousand-horse-power Allis engines were used to power the incandescent plant, and in turn, power all of the lights in the White City, including the spectacular display on the dome of the Administration Building (figure 23). In addition to the electric lighting, the White City offered other amenities. The Department of Water-Supply, Sewage, and Fire-Protection organized in November 1890 serviced an average population of 200,000 to 600,000 people visiting and working at the Fair. At this time, Typhoid fever and Cholera outbreaks were enormous public health risks. To limit the risk of water-borne illness, the Exposition Company installed one hundred Pasteur-Chamberland water filters at various points in the fairgrounds to supply filtered ground water for public use as well as installing an over one hundred mile pipeline of spring water from the Waukesha-Hygeia Mineral Springs Company in southern Wisconsin. Furthermore, three separate systems were built to handle the sewerage generated by the Fair and a pumping station was installed to provide sufficient water pressure to operate fire-protection equipment. 99 There was even telephone service lines laid along with dedicated fire and police alarm lines for the Fair. 100

The transportation services at the 1893 World’s Fair were another source of enchantment for the visitors. An intramural railroad was installed in Jackson Park with twelve trains in service making one hundred and ninety-six rounds a day for one hundred and seventy days without any serious accidents or delays (figure 22). From May 1 to November 1, 1893 there were a total of 5,803,895 visitors riding the intramural railroad with an average of 31,473 a day which represented twenty-seven percent of the paid admissions. 101 Additionally, from the beginning of the Fair planning, Olmsted had his mind set on electric boats to ferry visitors across the Lagoon in an effort to avoid the noise of steam-powered vessels. 102 These new technologies allowed for ease of reliable transportation for the masses.
Furthermore, the construction methods employed to build the Fair buildings represented the cutting-edge technology of the era. Storm protection was in place to limit damage to the buildings under construction. Labor unions were involved to mitigate contract disputes and the construction sites included shelters for the workers. Large dredging machinery was required to reshape the landscape and form ponds and the lagoons. Wood pilings were used to stabilize the foundations and new materials such as steel and plate glass were used along with the lathe and plaster “staff,” brick, and iron. Very little wood was used in the exposed construction due to the risk of fire. Although perpetually behind schedule due to the nearly impossible task to build an entire invented city-scape in just two years, the fact the Fair buildings were actually completed was an enormous accomplishment. The architects and the workers were constantly battling the environment in Jackson Park, the Chicago weather, logistical and supply challenges, and at times, even each other. It is truly remarkable that the Fair was a financial and cultural success despite these obstacles that threatened the entire enterprise.

Enchantment with diversity at the Fair also took the form of international exhibits on the Midway. The foreign peoples associated with these exhibits and amusements had varying level of agency from positions as paid performers to the unempowered human exhibits. Yet, it is important to recognize that not all Fair visitors saw these people as inferior, but rather as a
representation of new and exciting places from around the world. In fact, the involvement of some Eastern countries, such as Japan, was welcomed in certain cases as simply an Eastern counterpart to Western contemporaries.\textsuperscript{108} While there were certainly racist and imperialist sentiments toward the non-white and non-Western participants of the Fair on the parts of some Fair organizers and visitors, the very fact that these minorities were so well represented throughout the Fair, such as with the Japanese, brought forth a extraordinary display of diversity. The exposure of Fair visitors to this racial and ethnic diversity also had unexpected positive outcomes despite the Anglo-Saxonism common to the period. Although issues with discrimination based on race and ethnic identity have persisted into the twenty-first century, great improvements with respect to these issues have also emerged as a true marker of modernity on the world stage. Improvements such as equal liberties and human rights began with exposure and greater understanding of diverse cultures, which over time grew to include acceptance and even celebration of cultural difference. The cultural difference that at one time resided on the periphery of society has actually shifted to center stage over the course of a century.

Technology and cultural diversity represent just some of many sources of enchantment within modernity. Social theorist Max Weber stated emphatically that modernization resulted in disillusionment; however, modernity can also simultaneously involve enchantment. Historian Michael Saler critiques the notion that an essential characteristic of modernity is rational “disenchantment.” Instead, he argues for a “modern enchantment” where secular forces act as enchantments in the modern world. Saler suggests,

\begin{quote}
The corollary to the alleged predominance of instrumental reason in the modern world is a greater acceptance of the imagination as a source of multiple yet finite meanings that enchant in their own way. These meanings are often enjoyed with a certain ironic detachment—they delight but do not delude—and this acceptance of contingent meanings, provisional wonders, only expands the possible sources of enchantment in the modern world.\textsuperscript{109}
\end{quote}

The wonders of the 1893 World’s Fair represent these sorts of enchantments. Saler’s argument for a secular means of enchantment adopts a similar theoretical stance to that of theorist and critic Walter Benjamin who suggested that disenchanting forces within modernity can co-exist with enchanting forces, such as mythic and spiritual phenomena, and that these forces are actually interdependent and inextricably linked. Alongside the dirt and grime of 1890s Chicago arose a gleaming White City with clean running water, sanitation, entertainment, education—all
of the delights one could imagine and even more. Marion Mahony Griffin thought that the American Dream represented something magical, like the White City,

There are many lovely and wonderful people elsewhere in the world but they are helpless. Migration to America frees their spiritual forces. That is the magic of the United States. . . . . The immediate task of Americans is to go out individually to every part of the world - emigrate instead of immigrate the watchword - and break down the bondage of individuals everywhere. 110

The enchantments found at the 1893 World’s Fair were built on similar principles. Perhaps not always carried out in the same manner as people have come to expect in the twenty-first century, but the seeds of democracy and equality were sown. The Fair represents a point of origin for enchantment within modernity brought about by diversity.

The varied architectural forms displayed at the 1893 World’s Fair provide historians with a better understanding of the wider cultural forces at work in late-nineteenth century America. Specifically, the engineering marvel of the Ferris wheel and the architectural adaptations of the Beaux-Arts style in the White City provide insight into American cultural diversity and the complex realities of a nation in the throes of modernization yearning for a cultural connection to the past. The study of architectural forms provides a profound cultural record that reflects the lives, beliefs, and values of the people who created them. The emerging modern architecture of the 1890s represents a “watershed” precedent that informed modern American culture and national identity. The ambivalence with which Americans embraced innovation, through new technologies, yet also rejected modernity, through the continued effort to create lasting ties with a distant European past, existed on the borders of mainstream society in 1893. However, the hybridity of a modern architecture that is also rooted in the past can be traced to significant developments in contemporary architecture well into the twenty-first century.

Ambivalence and enchantment with modernization in late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries did in fact exist simultaneously. These seemingly conflicting notions within modernity actually worked synergistically to facilitate American society’s transition toward modernity at the turn of the twentieth century. Rather than viewing society as either embracing or rejecting modernization, this antinomial perspective recognizes the rich complexity of modernity and modern identity in American culture.

The Ferris wheel and the White City serve as points of origin for locating modernity in innovation at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition. The professional lives and relationships
between the architects of the White City serve as case studies for understanding how these points of origin correspond to metaphorical locations of enchantment at the Fair. The desire to explore tradition found in Eastern cultures, such as in the Japanese Bazaar or the Nippon Tea House, coexists with the desire to reconnect with European tradition through the White City. Similarly, the Fair’s architectural and technological wonders illustrate a simultaneous acceptance and enchantment with modernity. At the same time, the Beaux-Arts façades of most of the buildings in the White City represented a resistance to modernity and an attempt to re-connect with traditions from the past. By locating modernity in innovation at the Fair, one discerns an enchantment with technology, with the representations of cultural “others,” and genuine mixture of enchantment and ambivalence with the Beaux-Arts tradition that entranced so many of the twenty-five million visitors to the World’s Fair in 1893. Much as in Eastern Buddhist tradition the turning of the Wheel leads to enlightenment, Ferris’s wheel led toward a path of enchantment and modernity in the White City.

NOTES

1 Benjamin Cummings Truman, *History of the World's fair: being a complete description of the World's Columbian Exposition from its inception / by Major Ben C. Truman ... ; with special articles by Thos. W. Palmer ... [et al.]* (Chicago: Mammoth Publishing Co., 1893), 583.

2 Halsey C. Ives, *The Dream City*, descriptive caption below image of the image of the view from the Ferris wheel; also see, Donald L. Miller *City of the Century: The Epic of Chicago and the Making of America* (Simon & Schuster, 1996), 497.


8 Ives, *The Dream City*, descriptive caption below image of the image of the Ferris wheel from a nearby roof-top.


10 Ives, *The Dream City*, descriptive caption below image of the Ferris wheel axle during construction.

11 Ives, *The Dream City*, descriptive caption below image of the image of the Ferris wheel from a nearby roof-top.

12 Ives, *The Dream City*, descriptive caption below image of the image of the Ferris wheel from a nearby roof-top; also, see Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 193-194.


15 Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 134 and 155.


17 Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 134 and 155.

18 Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 15.


20 Barnes, “George Ferris’ Wheel,” 177; also see, Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 174.


22 Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 179.


28 Ferris, “Ferris Wheel, Statement of Business by the Week”; see also, Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, 327.


30 Ives, *The Dream City*, descriptive caption below image of the image of the Ferris wheel from a nearby roof-top.


59 Miller, *City of the Century*, 381.
60 Miller, *City of the Century*, 384-385.


Ives, *The Dream City*, descriptive caption below image of the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building.


Ives, *The Dream City*, descriptive caption below image of the Transportation Building Doorway.


Ives, *The Dream City*, descriptive caption below image of the Transportation Building Doorway.


Ives, *The Dream City*, descriptive caption below image of the Transportation Building Doorway.


Truman, History of the World's fair, 583.


Olmsted to Burnham, January 26, 1891, Olmstead Papers, Reel 41 Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; also see Larson, The Devil in the White City, 375.

Olmsted to Burnham, January 26, 1891; also see Larson, The Devil in the White City, 382.

Olmsted to Burnham, January 26, 1891; also see Larson, The Devil in the White City, 116.

Olmsted to Burnham, January 26, 1891; also see Larson, The Devil in the White City, 137.

Olmsted to Burnham, January 26, 1891; also see Larson, The Devil in the White City, 153.

Olmsted to Burnham, January 26, 1891; also see Larson, The Devil in the White City, 154.

Olmsted to Burnham, January 26, 1891; also see Erik Larson, The Devil in the White City, 157.


Robert W. Rydell, All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 50-51. Rydell’s work focuses on the exclusion and discrimination brought about by imperialism at the Fair. This section deals with the discrimination faced by Asians, particularly the Chinese and to some degree the Japanese at the Fair. However, he admits that the Japanese were treated more equally by Western countries who perceived them as an Eastern force for Westernization in Asia. In fact, Japan was extremely well represented at the 1893 World’s Fair in an unprecedented show of exhibits throughout the Fair; also see Robert W. Rydell, “Rediscovering the 1893 Chicago World’s Exposition” in Revisiting the White City: American Art at the 1893 World’s Fair, ed. Carolyn Kinder Carr and George Gurney (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1993), 38-44. This section explains well the display of cultures and imperialist ideology found at the 1893 World’s Fair.


CONCLUSION

INTERSECTING LOCATIONS OF MODERNITY:
BEYOND GEOGRAPHICAL AND METAPHORICAL BORDERS

The ‘beyond’ is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past...beginnings and endings may be sustaining myths in the middle years; but in the fin de siècle, we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion.

-Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture

As the October night fell, from the top of the Ferris wheel, visitors could see the radiant arc street lamps and the incandescent-lit rooftops of the White City glowing in the distance. Further away paper lanterns dotted the shore of the Wooded Island while the waters of the Lagoon gently swelled under the cool evening breeze. In the Grand Basin in the Court of Honor, the great electric fountains on either side of the MacMonnies fountain shot brilliant colored water in red, gold, green, and blue up into the sky in rapid intervals and then faded into the night (figure 24). The concessioners prepared to close their stands while exhausted and exhilarated visitors made their way toward the boats that would take them across the Lagoon and then by railroad to reach the exits. The massive crowds that had engulfed the Fairgrounds dwindled to a trickle as the Fair gradually came to a close. The visitors who left Chicago each night took memories of the wonders of the Fair along with them.

The legacy of the 1893 Fair has proved resilient with scholars continuing to study its cultural impact into the twenty-first century. The wonders and enchantment of the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition stayed with many of the visitors long after the buildings succumbed to fire and demolition. Fair visitors, as well as Exposition architects, repeated the stories and impressions that lived in their memories for years to come. While Jackson Park remained a geographic location on Chicago maps, the rest of the Fair endured as a site of memory, a historical symbol of modernity and enchantment. The geographical locations of the Wooded Island, the White City, and the Midway each had discreet borders that divided and contained their intended sphere of anthropological, ethnological, or entertainment purpose (figure 25).
After the Fair, these borders became blurred or disappeared entirely. In much the same way, the metaphorical boundaries of the Fair also changed. The divisions between Eastern and Western culture, women’s and men’s roles, and innovation and tradition began to fade. Over the course of the twentieth century, ideas that had once existed on the cultural periphery slowly moved to the “center” of American society.

Intersections of *Japonisme*, gender, and enchantment at the 1893 World’s Fair represent elements of emerging modernity in American culture at the turn of the twentieth century. Locating the concept of modernity geographically and metaphorically in the Japanese Pavilion on the Wooded Island; the Women’s Building in the White City; and the Ferris wheel on the Midway at the 1893 World’s Fair illustrates points of origin for each of these elements. Additionally, the ways that architects and designers shaped these locations and how they responded to them while the Fair was in progress and afterward provide case studies for understanding how these three geographical points of origin correspond to social and cultural shifts toward modernity in the late nineteenth century.

Moreover, the intersecting locations of modernity at the 1893 World’s Fair illuminate aspects of modernity often under-emphasized in the cultural historical scholarship of the late
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Emerging modernity within a culture may be observed by examining a society’s art, architecture, gender roles, and technology within their location geographically, socially, culturally, and temporally. Thus, three intersecting metaphorical aspects also emerge as “locations of modernity”: non-Western tradition, women’s agency, and innovation. Each of these “locations” corresponds to structures located geographically at the Fair: the Japanese Pavilion, the Women’s Building, and the Ferris wheel on the Midway. All of these geographic and metaphorical “spaces,” as well as the women and men who inhabited them, shared the common characteristics of ambivalence, enchantment, hybridity, and ultimately, assimilation toward modernity.

When examining modernity as a complex web of intersecting threads, ambivalence, enchantment, and hybridity emerge as necessary elements for the gradual assimilation toward modernity. Ambivalence and hybridity allowed seemingly conflicting ideas to inhabit the same metaphorical space, such as Eastern and Western cultures, female and male gender roles, and tradition and innovation. Likewise, enchantment allowed people to explore cultural “others” before gradually accepting them as a fundamental part of their society. For example, non-white ethnic groups, such as the Japanese, had a large stake in the Fair. These groups planned and executed a wide range of exhibits, both in the White City and on the Midway. Similarly, women and men invested much of their emerging professional and public identities in the buildings and exhibits they designed and constructed for the Fair. Furthermore, new technological achievements took their places among more resolutely traditional structures throughout the Midway and the White City. Despite the palpable racism, the gender and ethnic subjugation, and the strong preference of Fair officials and visitors for the familiar elegance of the past over new possibilities for the future, sources of modernity and enchantment introduced at the Fair in 1893 eventually withstood the test of time to become integral parts of mainstream American culture.

In a similar way, an initial enchantment with difference—such as the Chicago architects expressed for *Japonisme*, or the Fair women saw in the women’s movement, or Fair visitors voiced about the Ferris wheel or electric lights—led to lasting phenomena that transformed American culture. People who attended the Fair were exposed to distant cultures, to a space completely dedicated to women’s accomplishments, to new technologies they could have never imagined existed. Many fair goers remained completely enchanted with the ideas or concepts they experienced for the first time in Chicago in 1893. Exposure to these ideas led some
Americans and visitors from abroad to create something new out of what they had first witnessed at the Exposition. The tradition located in *Japonisme*, the shifts in gender performance, and the innovation found in technology and architecture represent multiple threads in the web of modernity that connect “watershed” precedents witnessed at the Fair. For example, the adaptation of Eastern culture in architecture, first in the Arts and Crafts movement, and then in modern architecture, inspired new architectural forms that dominated western urban and suburban landscapes by the mid-twentieth century. The expansion of women’s participation into traditionally male-dominated arenas—architecture, administration, and politics—followed the trajectory established in the late nineteenth century. As the women’s movement took hold in the later twentieth century, men’s gender performance continued to shift as well. As the twentieth century progressed, the White City lived on as a model for urban renewal and city beautification movements. Civic and government structures continued to bear resemblance to the Americanized *Beaux-Arts* buildings of the Fair. Meanwhile, American architects continued to experiment with the stylized geometries and massive volumes that came to characterize the high modernist International style which emerged worldwide by the mid-twentieth century. Along with these “modern” buildings came better communication networks, better sanitation, newer cutting-edge building technologies, and of course, the proliferation of electrical service to all buildings, both public and private. Furthermore the spread of products, such as electric lighting and mass entertainments found on the Midway, eventually permeated American life. The Midway at the 1893 World’s Fair was noteworthy in part due to the separation of amusements from the educational exhibits, foreshadowing the emergence of amusement parks as sources of entertainment and mass consumption in the twentieth century. Thus, the American transition toward modernity involved a genuine interest in non-Western culture, a shift with respect to gender-roles, and an enchantment with both the traditions of a shared distant past, as well as the marvels of new technology. After the Fair, these influences move from the periphery of society to center stage as the nation embraced modernity and forged a modern national identity in the early decades of the twentieth century.

By exploring the ideas of enchantment, ambivalence, and hybridity at the 1893 Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition, one sees clearly how seemingly conflicting ideas can inhabit the same metaphorical and geographic space. The ideas that emerged as a part of modern American
culture were woven out of a complex, intersecting web of multiple sources resulting in a heterogeneous and diverse public culture. As Homi Bhabha wrote in *The Location of Culture*,

It is in this sense that the boundary becomes the place from which *something begins its presencing* in a movement not dissimilar to the ambulant, ambivalent articulation of the beyond…

American society as a whole reluctantly embraced the modern, and then gradually became enchanted with change, with new opportunities for self expression and public involvement, and with new technologies and forms of entertainment. Over time, this cultural hybridity was followed by a gradual acceptance of what had once existed tangibly and metaphorically on the borders of American society. As part of the cultural assimilation to modernity in the late nineteenth century, *Japonisme*, gender, and enchantment became embedded in a modern American identity that formed the basis of American culture throughout the twentieth century and beyond.

![Figure 25. The Wooded Island and the surrounding buildings of the White City. Photographed by Government Photographer [C.D. Arnold] and arranged in *The Dream City*, N.D. Thompson Publishing Co., St. Louis, MO, 1893.](image-url)
NOTES


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APPENDIX

MAP OF THE EXPOSITION GROUNDS AT THE 1893 WORLD’S FAIR