

Tufts University

The Politics of Visual Culture:
2010 Shanghai World Expo

Senior Honors Thesis

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Introduction

“It is an alluring idea to use the venue of a pavilion to brand and improve a country’s image and reputation... What needs to be better understood is what tactics help to enhance visitors’ sensory enjoyment, but more importantly, what will ultimately appeal to their heart.”

–Jian Wang, “Creating a Nation-brand Experience at Shanghai Expo”

Images bombard our everyday lives. The visual surrounds us wherever we go from grocery stores to arts museums to public transportation. It seems easy – almost too easy – to manipulate visual media for marketing and branding purposes. After all, aren’t those components of advertising or perhaps propaganda? We easily absorb messages through images without questioning its origins, aims, and politicization. Perhaps this facility explains why countries find it “alluring” to use a world expo pavilion to modify its image. The politics of visual culture is integral to understanding who controls power and arbitrates taste. Exhibitions, architecture, and maps all fall into the realm of visual culture, and each medium can convey specified messages. One should look the 2010 Shanghai World Expo because of countries’ dependence on visual media.

World expositions (also called world’s fairs, international or universal exhibitions) concentrate highly politicized visual culture in one location. Because each expo seeks to promote a paradigm or ideology, it follows that what is featured is infused with meaning. The Shanghai Expo is no exception. It ran from May 1 to June 30, 2010, in Shanghai, China; during its six-month run, more than seventy-three million people walked through its gates. Following the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the Shanghai Expo continued China’s mission to assert its growing international presence. A hundred ninety-two countries agreed to participate to increase their own visibility in China. Visual media pervaded the Expo site with its numerous pavilions and exhibitions.

This thesis seeks to explore the goals of such media as envisioned by its creators through an analysis of the Shanghai Expo. But before one is able to understand the significance of the Expo, it is important to know how expos have been historically examined.

World Expositions in the Past

Past and current scholarship on world expositions varies from discipline and through time. Because available primary material ranges for each exposition since the first one in 1851 in London, scholars approach the subject in several ways. Sociologists, historians, and cultural studies experts study world expositions the most frequently. These scholars predominantly focus on materialist, colonialist, and post-structuralist theories. All tend to prove an exposition's role in contributing to the host nation's cultural and political hegemony. These theories, however, can benefit from an art historical point of view and method. As the world expos impact subsequent expos, the institution of the museum, the industry of advertising, and even store display, an approach based on visual analysis can tie together complex ideas such as national identity and commodity. Aspects of visual analysis such as formalism, visual deconstruction and an acknowledgement of the problems of representation can aid scholars to better understand how world expos communicate.

Scholars often approach world expos through the lens of materialism, colonialism, or post-structuralism. Materialist scholars examine the valorization of industry, the rise of consumer culture and the reinforcement of class structure. It draws on the theories of Karl Marx, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, and other Marxist thinkers. For example, the Great Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations of 1851 – more commonly known as the Great Exhibition in London – is

frequently viewed as an arbiter of taste that passed elite cues to the proletariat audience.¹ This viewpoint focuses on the machinery and manufactures on display and their importance to commodity-based industrialized Britain. Manufactured objects are celebrated through presentation and separated from their means of production; the Great Exhibition encouraged capitalistic production and consumption. Furthermore, a materialist considers the colonial exhibits as demonstrating the ever-expanding choices made available to the British consumer through overseas conquests.

Scholars such as Thomas Richards and Paul Greenhalgh study the Great Exhibition and other expos through a materialist viewpoint. Greenhalgh's research is a seminal work in the history of studying world expositions, as he is one of the first to sketch out common themes in such events. In particular, he looks at representations at the event and how all exhibits are "explicable directly or indirectly in terms of technology" from "the steam engines, the manufactured products, the colossal objects transported to the site by machinery, [to] the imperial product won with commercial and military technology."² The architecture of Crystal Palace, the building housing the Great Exhibition, exemplifies this celebration as the materials – glass and iron – were created by different contractors and then built by separate teams; it was a "master-piece of prefabrication" and an "awesome indication of the capabilities of industry."³ Each exhibit "fetishizes" technology and the machine, and by doing so, even Britain's empire becomes fetishized as a commodity.⁴

¹ See Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), and Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

² Greenhalgh, 13.

³ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁴ Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century" in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, trans. Edmund Japhcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 151.

Colonialist thinkers see certain expos as legitimizing expansionist foreign policy by reducing conquered peoples to the “other.” The writings of Edward Said are integral to this school of thought. Colonial theory attempts to reveal the moral and economic righteousness of overseas conquests to its citizenry. Many of the 19th-century and early 20th-century expos have been studied using a colonialist lens. The World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 reinforces racial social structures with the stratification on the Midway and the creation of “White City,” an area characterized by whitewashed classical architecture.⁵ The 1931 Colonial Exposition in Paris physically embodies the *mission civilisatrice* of France by exhibiting the backwardness of its colonies.⁶ Such exhibits domesticate the foreign and exotic so that visitors can easily understand the colonies.⁷ The colonial exhibits represent the power of the French over the colonized peoples and thus symbolizes French dominance over the world.

Research by Patricia Morton, Reid Badger, and Peter Hoffenberg reflects the strong strain of colonialist thinking. Art historian Morton analyzes how the architecture at the 1931 exposition performs France’s civilizing mission and how it also reflects the paradoxes within the colonialist project. By magnifying exotic ways of life, the French audience comes to understand the world outside Europe as depraved. At the same time, the colonizer must prove that colonialism is a worthwhile mission and must show the progress that the colonies have made towards civilization. As a result, the exhibitions of colonies become the nexus of backwardness and progress, creating a “hybrid modernity” that is unrepresentative of the actual colony.⁸ In a sense, Morton demonstrates the process of “othering.”

⁵ Reid Badger, *The Great American Fair: The World's Columbian Exposition & American Culture* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1979).

⁶ Patricia A. Morton, *Hybrid Modernities: Architecture and Representation at the 1931 Colonial Exposition, Paris* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 177.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

Finally, post-structuralists focus on how expos can create histories and knowledge. They draw on the work of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Gilles Deleuze. Technology is vital to this lens and how meaning is created. Sociologist Penelope Harvey exemplifies a post-structuralist approach to the study of world expos. She focuses on the 1992 Seville Expo in Spain. She argues that the expo site serves as a “technology of nationhood” in that truths about nations and their identities are manufactured at the expo, involving the decontextualization and standardization of facts.⁹ The histories and worldviews produced by each pavilion may not align with one another and can produce conflicts, but they teach the viewer certain paradigms of thought. World expos have an active role in shaping public opinion and dominant modes of thinking.

Despite the variety in approaches, current and past research could benefit from visual analysis and a deconstruction of the display to better understand how exactly it articulates complex conclusions. For an event based on exhibition and display – two core concepts of critical art history – an art historian’s voice is valuable. While art history might prove to be useful, it must be recognized that such an approach has been met with skepticism:

Art historians have tended to retrospectively inflate the significance of the fine arts at exhibitions, allowing them to dictate the historical flavour of events they had relatively little impact on in actuality. Vital as their presence was on the curriculum vitae of an exhibition, no-one seriously believed it was they who brought the crowds, attracted attention or generated the atmosphere; they did not.¹⁰

This derision of art history betrays a mistake that both art historians and scholars of expos make when it comes to the field of art history. “Art history” becomes a narrow field focused on the traditional arts such as painting and sculpture; its theories and methodologies, especially visual

⁹ Penelope Harvey, *Hybrids of Modernity: Anthropology, the Nation State, and the Universal Exposition* (London: Routledge, 1996), 53.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 198.

analysis, are glanced over and seen as inapplicable to objects such a map or sewing machine, even if the object is part of a museum-like display.

The need for an art historical approach is apparent in recent expo research. In *Globalization and the Great Exhibition* (2009), historian Paul Young is concerned with how the Great Exhibition of 1851 communicates a new world order. The author uses a diverse range of primary sources from “cartoons, catalogues, comic sketches” to “personal reflections, plays, [and] poems,” all of which add depth to his argument.¹¹ He omits, however, images and consequently, in-depth visual analysis, despite a professed interest in Terry Eagleton’s visual theory and Tony Bennett’s “Exhibitionary Complex” idea.

For example, in his chapter, “Geography Made Easy,” he describes maps of the Great Exhibition, and how and where objects are situated. Yet without a physical image, his textual description cannot imitate or reproduce the actual map. Young’s chapter would have been enhanced with a picture of the map of which he speaks because the reader would be better equipped to understand his conclusions. As Chapter 1 will discuss, cartography is tied closely with power relations and the representation of knowledge. Seeing the map is crucial to guiding the reader from visual observations to theoretical analysis. The analytical gap between the object (the map) and the conclusion exists because the visual material and analysis are missing.

This lack is problematic because making generalizations and conclusions about display is logically unsound if there were no object or analysis from which to work. In “Art History and its Theories,” Yve-Alain Bois calls for a return to formalism, or engagement with visual qualities rather than representational ones, and such a method should be applied to world expos. He demonstrates that formalism is not outdated but still a relevant theory. Moreover, it is not

¹¹ Paul Young, *Globalization and the Great Exhibition: The Victorian New World Order* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 7.

ahistorical; in fact, formalism allows him to situate painter Jackson Pollock within his historical and ideological contexts. Bois' formalism is different than others' formalism, most notably Clement Greenberg's, because Bois "deliberately" injects a dose of ideology into Greenberg's neutral process.¹² A formalist method is applicable to world expo studies because it roots arguments in object-based study and can also further an ideological point.

Bois also argues that form and content are intertwined and that the formal qualities of an object are integral to drawing conclusions about its historical context. Beginning with formalism might help scholars who are interested in world expos to explore representations and prevent them from prematurely jumping to meaning.¹³ For example, historian Meg Armstrong believes that the "jumble of foreignness" in colonial exhibits created and legitimized stereotypes of non-Europeans.¹⁴ She places the Great Exhibition in a linear history of world expositions and includes some images, but it is problematic that she does not focus on a specific exhibition or section at the Great Exhibition nor does she include any images from this Exhibition. Her claims relating to the 1851 event appear generalized and not grounded in historical evidence, even if her interpretations might apply. An art historical perspective and especially a formalist method would have aided her in showing her readers how she arrived at such an interpretation. Bois reasons that:

...[O]ne is never a pure eye – that even one's most formal descriptions are always predicated upon a judgment and that the stake of this judgment is always, knowingly or not, meaning. And it is my contention that the reverse is also true: *it is impossible to lay claim to meaning without specifically (and I would say initially) speaking of form.*¹⁵

¹² Mieke Bal et al, "Art History and Its Theories," *The Art Bulletin* 78, no. 1 (1996), 9.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Meg Armstrong, "'A Jumble of Foreignness' The Sublime Musayums of Nineteenth-Century Fairs and Exhibitions," *Cultural Critique* 23 (1992-1993), 200.

¹⁵ Mieke Bal et al., 10. My own emphasis.

Bois' belief in a "judgment" can be seen as similar to art historian Norman Bryson's concept of visuality. If researchers can show what specific elements of display speak to them, it would bridge the gap between observations and the conclusions. Armstrong could prove the link between visual disorder and confused stereotypes of the "other." She is not the only scholar who "miss[es] the detail [and]...misses the whole," but this thesis seeks to change this methodology by using visual analysis.¹⁶

The current state of research needs an approach based on visual analysis. This approach critically examines representation and display and does not take them for granted. Researchers can work only from images, catalogs, and primary accounts to reconstruct past expos. Although one can study some architecture such as the Eiffel Tower, not all expo buildings remain and certainly not in their original context. Bois' historical formalism is useful because it grounds scholars in the object of examination. So long as they are conscious of their role in reconstruction and representation, they can strive to thoroughly examine how expos communicate to audiences and their place in the history of world's fairs. I do not wish to argue that art historians have not engaged with later world expositions. Art historians have, but they solely focus on the fine arts exhibits or external architecture. World expos speaks to several contemporary issues in the discipline, and it is an opportunity to show the wider application of art historical methods.

Why Shanghai? Why 2010?

The 2010 Shanghai World Expo is particularly worthwhile for scholars for several reasons. First, it represents the first world expo hosted in a developing country. All past ones have occurred in developed nations such as France, the United States, and Japan. Second, it is the

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

most recent world expo and affords the opportunity to collect information first-hand. The volume of available primary sources outstrips expos a century ago, and therefore, the analysis can be more in-depth and complete. Additionally, examining the ideology in play at the Expo is especially intriguing because the event takes place in China. Given the recent financial crisis and China's constant growth both economically and politically, those interested in world politics should pay attention. Identities presented at the Expo are not necessarily stable, especially when they concern the European Union (EU). What this thesis reveals about nation-branding, international relations, and display is applicable to other contemporary studies.

This thesis aims to show the pervasive power of visual culture at work in the Expo. It follows the legacy of earlier research in that everything at the Expo has a mission. As a wholly constructed site, the Expo grounds are transformed into a simulation of the real world. While certainly not mimetic, the Expo serves as visitors' "trip around the world." As a grand-scale event, the Expo offers participating delegations the rare chance to promote to hundreds of thousands of people a day. About ninety-five percent of Expo visitors were Chinese, and about eighty percent of those visitors traveled from outside Shanghai. In six months, more than seventy-three million people visited. (Comparatively, Disneyland registered just under eight million visitors in the same amount of time in 2009.¹⁷) This work explores what dominant messages are communicated, the means of communication, and larger implications and effects of the messages.

In Chapter 1, *Signs of Ideology*, I show the complete lack of objectivity in the Expo's visual culture because ideology is always present. Whoever dictates knowledge holds power because they (an individual, an organization, or a nation) control what the audience understands.

¹⁷ "Disneyland Park," *ThemeParks.US*, (accessed April 6, 2011), <http://www.themeparks-us.com/disney/disneyland-park>.

In the case of the Shanghai Expo, the knowledge-holder always has an agenda. Drawing from scholars such as Roland Barthes, the chapter demonstrates the power of maps in knowledge-creation, even though maps are trusted sources of objectivity used for wayfinding and orientation. In addition, the chapter shows that the primary unit of understanding at the Expo is the nation and that a hierarchy does exist in the Expo world.

Chapter 2 builds upon the concepts in the previous chapter and applies them to national pavilions. *Architecture and Nation-branding* reveals how foreign delegations craft identities through exterior architecture and that this identity is an artificial construction. Dramatic and imaginative exteriors are valuable to entice visitors, luring them inside to the interior exhibitions. Chapter 3, *Display Strategies: Commercialization and Consumption*, explains how the means of interior display modify visitors' knowledge because they deliberately lead visitors to certain interpretations. At the Expo, the displays aim to transform the viewer into a future potential consumer, for countries seek to tap into the Chinese market. As a result, the nation, its culture, and its identity become commercialized; visitors are empowered to "possess" a nation.

After establishing the common mechanisms and aims at work, the last two chapters focus on a specific identity tension. The EU and its member states are the case study because they provide a microcosm that combines the politics of visual culture and international relations. Chapter 4, *Politics of the Symbol*, argues that EU group identity is weak. The inconsistent appearance of the EU flag outside of pavilions hints that a strong subscription to a common community is fragmented. In addition, member states assign other meanings to the symbol of the EU to advance national interests, and the concept of the union is removed from the symbol. Instead, "EU" is attributed with notions of good investment and financial credibility. As a result of weak group identity, member states are more likely to act as separate actors instead of one

cohesive unit. The last chapter, *Unstable Visual Identity: The European Union*, demonstrates that weak EU identity results not only from its representation by member states but also from the European Union itself. Because of architectural hierarchies and loose couplings between polity and culture, the EU's identity is fundamentally in a state of crisis. Consequently, identification with the EU is low, helping to explain in part the EU's lack of influence at the Expo.

Chapter 1: Signs of Ideology

At 3.28 square kilometers, the 2010 Shanghai World Expo is double the size of Monaco. Without reliable wayfinding and navigation, visitors would find themselves lost and confused. In general, we trust maps and do not question its legitimacy because it objectively and accurately depicts the landscape. Yet, the map of the Expo is anything but objective. Although reliable for orientation and wayfinding, it is infused with the interests of the maker, the Bureau of the Shanghai World Expo Coordination. The Expo Bureau, represented by information booths, hands out official maps and extends its power over visitors. Maps, a part of visual culture, reflect the viewpoints of the Expo organizers and influence how visitors perceive the Expo.

Analyzing semiotic signs is a solid starting point to understand the map's lack of objectivity. Geographers Trevor Barnes and James Duncan define the function of maps as “not mimetic...but to communicate ideas within a cultural and political context.” Analyzing maps at the Expo will give insight into how visitors interpret the Expo landscape and make decisions on where to go next.¹⁸ By the simple act of looking, visitors absorb the representation of the Expo site presented to them. Hidden messages need to be gleaned from the official Expo map. This chapter will discuss how visual culture through the Expo map promotes China's dominant position in the Expo world, emphasizes the nation instead of the city, and specifies a hierarchy of power. In addition, the discussion on maps is extended to other maps in the Expo such as those within the Turkey Pavilion and to advertisements on the official Expo map.

Theoretical Background

¹⁸ Trevor J. Barnes and James S. Duncan, preface to *Writing Worlds: Discourse, text and metaphor in the representation of landscape*, edited by T.J. Barnes and J.S. Duncan (London: Routledge, 1992), xii.

The fields of semiotics and iconography, and postmodernist theory posit that images communicate more than their face value. Scholars who have influenced this project to understand the Shanghai Expo map include Roland Barthes, Louis Marin, Erwin Panofsky, and J.B. Harley. In particular, Harley relied heavily on the writings of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. The idea of deconstruction is of utmost importance to a postmodernist reading of cartography. Maps can be “read” much like a text or a painting, and they need to be decoded to extract underlying relations and tensions. Furthermore, maps are not “discrete images” or singular objects but rather connected to the context of its creation.¹⁹ To borrow a term by art historian Norman Bryson, the map is a type of “visuality,” a social lens that affects how one sees the landscape.²⁰ Because “cartographic facts are facts only within a specific cultural perspective,” the Expo experience is subject to visualities, especially the one presented in the map.²¹ Reading and deconstruction will aid our understanding of how Expo visitors, who rely on the map, come to comprehend the landscape of the Expo.

In order to read a map, a semiotic system must be established. In the world the Expo, the code of signs is international. Similar to Barthes in *Empire of Signs* (1982), a foreigner in Japan interpreting signs unfamiliar to him, any visitor has the ability to read and interpret the signs of the Expo map. But unlike Barthes, the code in play at the Expo is internationally recognized and disseminated. It is different than his situation in Japan where he found the signifiers and the signifieds to be totally changed because he was a Westerner engaging with an Eastern system. The Expo, on the other hand, operates on an international level because it bills itself as an international event and therefore needs to be understood from diverse geographical audiences.

¹⁹ J.B. Harley, “Deconstructing the Map,” in *Writing Worlds: Discourse, text and metaphor in the representation of landscape*, edited by T.J. Barnes and J.S. Duncan (London: Routledge, 1992), 232.

²⁰ Norman Bryson, “Mortal Sight: *The Oath of the Horatii*”, in *Tradition and Desire: From David to Delacroix*, by N. Bryson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 70.

²¹ Harley, 233.

Despite its internationalism, the Expo map is not free from subjectivity. Geographers James and Nancy Duncan rightfully identify that “the reading of landscapes is a political, albeit often passively political, act” as evidenced by Barthes’ work.²² Reading the map is almost identical to reading a painting as they are both images, and the juxtapositions of signs reveals more than the sign itself. The manipulation of signs enables the map creator to convey pointed messages.

Not all signs in the map are arbitrary, however, as usually defined by semiotic theory. Many of the symbols in the map are associated with and even representative of a specific area. Being able to identify specific icons such as a building or boat helps the viewer place what they look at into his or her physical reality. According to Panofsky, iconography consists of the identification of images or motifs and the deduction of their conventional meaning, stories, or allegories.²³ The general visitor practices iconography each time he or she looks at the map, such as identifying a specific pavilion or landmark. Yet, few actually use iconology to analyze the image. Panofsky points out that the practice of iconology interprets what is presented; it synthesizes symbolic values.²⁴ Harley recognizes that iconology helps examining maps as a critical exercise: “It is often on this symbolic level that political power is most effectively reproduced, communicated, and experienced through maps.”²⁵

The postmodern approach to maps contributes to the aims of this chapter, which is to reveal the ideology behind the Expo map. Deconstruction, a Derridean method, works well to comprehend how knowledge and meaning are produced in maps. Power relations and tensions are inherent in map-making. Whereas Harley believes that the knowledge in maps is “privileged”

²² James S. Duncan and Nancy G. Duncan, “Roland Barthes and the Secret Histories of Landscape,” in *Writing Worlds: discourse, text, and metaphor in the representation of landscape*, edited by T.J. Barnes and J.S. Duncan (London: Routledge, 1992), 36.

²³ Erwin Panofsky, “Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art,” in *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, by E. Panofsky (Garden City: Doubleday, 1955), 31.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁵ J.B. Harley, “Maps, knowledge, and power,” in *The Iconography of Landscape*, edited by D. Cosgrove and S. Daniels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 279.

because Western European history reveals trends of “cartographic secrecy,” the Expo map democratizes knowledge.²⁶ In other words, restricted access to maps and the knowledge it contains affects a balance-of-power, but at the Expo, everyone can access the official map. In fact, every visitor is encouraged to grab a free map. In order to deconstruct the Expo map, one cannot look at who can access the map. Instead, we need to examine the “unconscious’ distortions of map content,” such as the rule of ethnocentricity, the hierarchicalization of space, and the silence of maps.²⁷ Unconscious rules govern “discursive formations” or systems of knowledge such as a map that restrict conceptual boundaries.²⁸

The first of these distortions, ethnocentricity, leads most societies to place their geographical location at the center of the map’s frame. Everything else in the map is measured and understood in relation to the center. Ethnocentricity, according to Harley, automatically “adds geopolitical force and meaning to representation” because the viewer knows that the middle must be the most important.²⁹ The second distortion is the hierarchicalization of space, which means that more powerful locations appear more prominent. This distortion functions similarly to the hierarchy of scale in that larger signs indicate greater importance. It not only includes bigger scale but also greater contrast in coloring, detail, or even textual description. Giving the map space a hierarchy automatically creates inequality and distinction, and the accompanying cartographic signs legitimize this organization. The last manipulation, the silence of maps, refers to remembering what is omitted from the map as to what is included. Thinking about what is excluded can reveal what social forces and ideological bents are at play.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 284.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 289-92.

²⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York, Pantheon Books: 1972).

²⁹ Harley, “Deconstructing the Map,” 236.

Visitors rely on these folded sheets of paper upon entering the Expo, and the map allows them to see the event in its totality. But, what is represented is never reality. Perhaps it is a utopian reality, but nonetheless, to use Harley's expression, the map "helps to create a different reality"³⁰ – a believable reality because the map is the locus of authority. Harley sums up the postmodern view of cartography:

Both in the selectivity of their content and in their signs and styles or representation maps are a way of conceiving, articulating, and structuring the human world which is biased towards, promoted by, and exerts influence upon particular sets of social relations.³¹

The map is a technology of power in the Foucauldian sense. To deconstruct the map of the Expo means to question what is distorted, how and why is it distorted, and who is responsible for the distortions. These questions of representation will lead to the power relations in play in contemporary global society.

Semiotics, iconography, and postmodernism allow a critical understanding of how the images on the Expo map relate to one another to communicate to its audience an edited version of reality. Visitors look at the map and unconsciously absorb the organizer's ideology. While seen as a neutral space, the spatial reality of the map is charged with subtle agendas.

A Sequence of Events: The General View Map

The official map pamphlet of the Expo contains five maps, of which this chapter will focus on two, the Expo Park General View map and the Official Map. The general view map (Fig. 1.1) is found in the bottom left corner of the Official Map (Fig. 1.2); it is a smaller inset map, whose purpose is to give the main idea of the site. The smaller map sets up different zones, which disappear in the larger map. These zones are the first level of orientation and

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 247.

³¹ Harley, "Maps, knowledge, and power," 278.

understanding to the Expo Site. The major signs in this map are text, colors, icons, and viewpoint. Already in the inset map, ethnocentricity reveals itself as well as an ordering or sequencing of the Expo.

What first gives meaning to the abstract representation of land surrounding a river is the accompanying text. The first and foremost text is the “Expo Park General View,” which is the only text outside the map. The title gives the reader an immediate recognition of what he or she is looking at and can expect. The title implies an overview, a zooming out of the site, and a de-cluttering of visual signs in relation to the adjacent Official Map. This map simplifies the Expo grounds, boiling down the expansive site to its essentials, but what are these essentials?

The sparse labeling within the map indicates the essentials. If the categories of text were organized by size from largest to smallest, they would run something like this: Huangpu River, Zones, Bridges, Parking lots/China Pavilion/Centers, and Street Names. By applying hierarchy of scale, we find that the river separating the two sides of the Expo site might be the most important, while streets are the least important. By placing the most importance on the River, the map emphasizes the Expo’s geographical location, the city of Shanghai. The river is the historical lifeblood to Shanghai,

and by emphasizing its presence on the General View map, the Expo reinforces how deeply rooted the event is in its host city. The zones are the second most important category stressed by text size, yet they



Figure 1.1. The Expo Park General View Map.

also grab the viewer's attention through color. At the Expo, five zones exist, lettered "A" through "E", each one designating about a fifth of the Expo grounds. Each zone corresponds to a larger geographical location or theme, such as Europe, the Americas and Africa (Zone C). On the General View map, each zone is assigned a color:



Visually, two sequences exist in the General View map; there is the alphabet (A-E) and a rainbow (from red, orange, yellow, blue, to purple). Let us take the first zone in the sequence of colors and letters, Zone A. It is the first in a sequence of five because it starts with the first letter of the alphabet. The color that corresponds with A is a fire-engine red. Arguably, the color red and this particular shade makes the corresponding zone stand out visually because eyes are attracted first to primary colors and because warm colors will desaturate cooler colors. As a result, red accents itself vis-à-vis other colors. Therefore, red Zone A is the first zone. It follows that B is second, C is third, and so on. The last zone is the least compelling because it is the last alphabetically and coded by a cool shade of purple. From this organization system, it seems as if a visitor should first go to Zone A, then to B, C, D, and finally E. Zones A through C contain national pavilions, while D and E feature corporate and urban-themed pavilions. Furthermore, the visitor finds the China Pavilion in Zone A.

Through the alphabet and color, a subtle tourist plan has been mapped out. The icons, or signifiers that resemble the signified, found on the map further advance this preplanned route, as

maps are also spaces in which narrative itineraries are displaced.³² The icons in the map have identifiable details that one would recognize in reality, appearing as miniature versions of the real object. These objects include the two bridges, the Expo Center, the Theme Pavilion, the Expo Culture Center, and China Pavilion and the Expo Axis. Besides the bridges, the rest of the icons appear on the left bank of the river, or the bank dedicated to national pavilions. The icons cluster around the Expo Axis, creating a localized hubbub, straddling Zones A and B, and defining the “center” of the Expo site. This center is the primary destination because it contains the most important buildings – those represented by icons – and because the other zones (C-E) are relatively empty of main attractions. The emptiness reflects the silence of maps of which Harley speaks. The cluster of icons accentuates the start of the journey in Zone A and the next step to Zone B.

The viewpoint, too, contributes to the embedded visitor path. The visitor assumes the position of a bird’s eye view, a viewpoint that allows he or she to see everything. From the angles of the buildings and bridges and the direction of the shadows, the bird’s eye sees the Expo grounds from the southwest corner. This minute distortion is most visible in the Expo Axis, which narrows in width as it approaches the Huangpu River. Therefore, the left bank appears larger than the right bank, which shrinks with depth. The perception again emphasizes the cluster of icons as a main feature of the Expo and the greater importance of zones containing nations over those with corporations or thematic pavilions.

The General View Map, although much smaller than the Official Map, serves as a quick reference for visitors. This map creates a subtle tourist path through the systems of the alphabet and the color wheel. Viewers come to understand, even subconsciously, that Zone A is the most

³² Louis Marin, *Utopics: The Semiological Play of Textual Spaces*, translated by Robert A. Vollrath (New York: Humanity Books, 1984), 205.

important, while E is the least worth visiting. The center is located around the Expo Axis, which promotes the conspicuousness of the China Pavilion. The map also creates a value judgment on the nation as more important by placing Zones B and C before the zones without national pavilions. Regardless of size, maps do not remain objective and tint the lens through which visitors see the world of the Expo.

The Official Map: Ideology in Play

Zooming out from the General View map, the viewer's eyes adjust to focus on the Official Map of the Shanghai Expo. As the main image in the wayfinding pamphlet, the map occupies more than two-thirds of one side. It is a complex, detailed map featuring specific pavilions and visitor amenities. In essence, the site, which represents some version of the world, is boiled down to its essentials in the Official Map. In other words, the Official Map is a type of world map. Semiotician Louis Marin proposes that hidden narratives “need to be revealed, then deciphered” in maps.³³ Although his work focuses on city maps, the same deconstruction of a map can also reveal the ideology beneath the Expo map. Applying a similar process to the Official Map will reveal the growing dominance of the Chinese nation and the importance of the nation vis-à-vis cities, organizations and corporations. Much of the discourse in this map builds on the ideas first elicited from the previous section.

Compared with the inset map, the Official Map contains more text to identify. Hierarchy of scale still applies; the font sizes vary with the map title being the largest. The title of “Official Map” denotes authority and authenticity. The visitor can believe the map because it has the approval of the Bureau of Shanghai World Expo Coordination. Its “official-ness” conveys a

³³ *Ibid.*, 204.

sense of truth and trustworthiness for wayfinding. In a plot of land that was only completed days before the May 1st opening, the Expo site is a foreign, unknown space for any visitor. By creating a need for wayfinding and filling that gap with a believable map, the Expo Bureau immediately extends its power and influence over 400,000 people who visit each day.

The Bureau can then begin its ideological mission. The most resonant example of this ideology manifests itself through the textual labeling of the China Pavilion. Two lines of text accompany the China Pavilion, which appears under the coordinates of E5 (Fig. 1.2). The font size of the first line, “China Pavilion” is larger than most text in the Official Map, conveying its importance. The second line, “Chinese Provinces Pavilion,” is printed below “China Pavilion,” and the font size is the most often used. The placement of “China Pavilion” directly above “Chinese Provinces Pavilion” demonstrates physically the power relation of the nation over the province. Furthermore, the font size visually confirms this relation. This relationship between central and provincial power extends to the pictorial representation on the Official Map. Because of the bird’s eye viewpoint, one can only see the unmistakable “China red” roof; the spaces housing the provincial pavilions beneath the China Pavilion are rendered invisible. Chinese identity asserts itself to be more powerful and dominant than provincial identities and components, which constitute the nation.

As mentioned before, the textual representation of the General View icons appears larger than other text. The pictorial representations are also bigger and more detailed than other buildings on the site. In the Official Map, the zones identified in the General View map disappear, but the icons remain and visually stand out. The magnification of these icons from the General View to Official maps reflects the hierarchicalization of space of which Harley speaks.

As Barthes suggests regarding maps, the center is a place of truth and therefore full.³⁴ In the Expo map, these icons create a full center. Similar to the General View map, the China Pavilion is at the center, and the narrative of China's importance continues. By placing China in the center both in physical and cartographical spaces, China asserts its dominant position and exemplifies ethnocentrality. To the left of the center are the Americas, Europe and Africa, and to the right lies the rest of Asia.

Marin defines ideology as "the representation of the imaginary relationship between people and their real conditions of existence."³⁵ The perspective of the Official Map provides insight into the maps' ideology and specifically the relationship between nations and other entities. Similar to the General View map, the bird's eye view hovers above the southern end of the Expo Axis. The riverbank containing nations is enlarged and encompasses more cartographical space than the other riverbank with corporations and cities. Again, the nation asserts its dominance as the primary unit of understanding at the Expo. Cartographical representation as does pictorial rendering amplifies this power relation. The rendering further exaggerates the importance of the China Pavilion because the sun illuminates the grand steps leading up to the pavilion. If the path is not clear, a bold arrow labeled "Main Entrance" further accentuates it. The itinerary discussed in the previous section is still present in the main map.

Despite China's assertion as the center of the world, the peculiar case of Taiwan presents an obstacle to the interpretation of unquestioned dominance. It is important to note the proximity of the Hong Kong and Macao Pavilions compared with that of the Taiwan Pavilion. Hong Kong and Macao are located on the same plot of land as the China Pavilion; a direct relationship between these Special Administrative Regions (SARs) and China's central government exists.

³⁴ Roland Barthes, *Empire of Signs*, translated by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 30.

³⁵ Marin, 201.

That is, China's government still controls these SARs, although they may have some degree of autonomy. Taiwan, on the other hand, appears across the Elevated Pedestrian Walk from the China Pavilion. To picture this relationship on the ground, one would notice that the walkway blocks the sightline between the China and Taiwan. While the intention of this positioning is unclear, the map marks a separation between these two entities. The map, as an example of visual culture, reveals political tensions in addition to presenting a specific viewpoint. The case of Taiwan reflects this tension.

I would venture to say that the pavilions, especially national pavilions, which appear with more detail and color correspond with a greater importance to China. The pavilions are recognizable; there is a direct, representational relationship to what appears on the map to what exists in reality. After all, this quality is part of the credibility and dependability of a wayfinding map and contributes to its power of believability. Most buildings appear as gray structures with no detail. Examples include the Qatar Pavilion, Lebanon Pavilion and Iran Pavilion, which are located in G6. Several pavilions are depicted with more detail and color such as the Japan Pavilion (H5) and the United Arab Emirates Pavilion (F6). In line with expectations, a greater number of national pavilions receive more attention than corporations or cities, which again lifts the standing of the nation in the Expo world.

In considering what parts of the Official Map receive more attention, it is also just as important to think about which areas fall silent. To an American viewer, the most obvious absence is the USA Pavilion (B3). Resting on the edges of the Expo, the USA Pavilion is barely visible. Painted the same shade of gray as its neighbors, the representation of this pavilion makes the building blend in with its surroundings unlike more colorful countries like Japan or the Netherlands. Furthermore, other signs, such as icons for information, shops, telephones, and

food and beverage, cover the USA Pavilion. It suffocates underneath the multitude of icons, and no other national pavilion on the Official Map receives the same treatment. The USA becomes a muted symbol from its lack of color and the presence of other icons on top. Perhaps the USA lacks power in comparison to China, who asserts its superiority, in the map of the Expo.

The US, however, is not the only country thrown into the periphery. In a mimetic world map, Africa is situated between the Americas and Asia. In the Expo map, however, Africa (B2, C2) rests on the outer corner of Zone C. Like the US, the joint Africa Pavilion has been pushed to the outer edges of the Expo site. In addition, the names of all the countries participating in the Africa Pavilion appear *outside* the demarcated Expo site. Perhaps the mapmaker could not find enough space to place all the names into the image like with most other pavilions. For example, “Finland Pavilion” (C3) is typed directly onto the image of the Finland Pavilion. In terms of the politics of cartography and representation, however, the appearance of country names outside the Expo realm signifies a silencing of voices within the international stage of the Shanghai Expo. Finland receives a significance that all African nations do not. Perhaps a correlation exists between those muted voices in the Expo and those in the contemporary world. Other nations whose names appear separated from their pavilion include most South American, Caribbean, several Eastern European and Balkan, Pacific Island, and most central Asian countries. In reality, these countries do not hold a strong sway in international affairs and are economically and politically weaker. The representation of these countries and the US evokes the question of to what extent the Official Expo map represents the Bureau’s vision of the world or actual reality?

Certainly through ethnocentrality and the hierarchilization of space, China declares itself to be the center of the world. Secondly, the nation is revered as the most important unit. The



Figure 1.2. The Official Expo Map.

World Expo is an event celebrating the nation rather than the problems of urbanization or “Better City, Better Life,” the Expo’s official theme. The 192 countries represented are organized into a recognizable map of the world, but even so, certain ones are pushed to the periphery, away from China, the center. Perhaps this world is the one China sees or would like to see in the future, or maybe this is a reflection of the world stage in 2010. Is the US silent and powerless now, or is that a vision of the map organizers? It is difficult to say, but evidently, even the Official Map of the Expo is not free from tensions inherent in international relations. Though there is this tension, this map still impresses clearly onto its beholders the absolute power of the host nation.

The Turkey Pavilion Map Rewrites History

The practice of manipulating maps is pervasive throughout the Expo. Other political elites, not just the Expo Bureau, also recognize the power of visual culture. A vast majority of the pavilion representatives believes that the Chinese visitor knows little or nothing about their country.³⁶ The Turkey Pavilion exemplifies the practice of using “objective maps” to teach visitors about ancient Turkish culture. The main theme “Cradle of Civilizations,” which refers to the first known human settlement, Çatalhöyük, guides the pavilion funded by Turkey’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Located on the Konya Plain in central Turkey, the settlement dates from 9000 BC and exemplifies Neolithic Anatolia. By demonstrating the shared historical heritage between Turkey and the rest of Europe, a small map video located on the right-hand wall attempts to address and answer the question of “European-ness” (Fig. 1.3).

³⁶ In my interviews, almost each representative of national pavilions revealed that the pavilion was working off of the assumption that the audience knew next to nothing about the represented country. The exceptions to this were countries with a longstanding influence in China such as Japan and Germany. Even so, the German representative believed that the visitors held stereotypes of Germany and possessed little knowledge of its history or culture.

Outside the Expo world, Turkey’s long-standing desire to become a full voting member of the European Union (EU) causes much controversy. Since the end of 1995, the EU and Turkey have been bound by a Customs Union agreement that guarantees duty-free exchange of industrial goods. This agreement follows the 1963 EU-Turkey Associate Agreement to promote trade and economic relations. Turkey, however, has expressed interest to become a full voting



Figure 1.3. Still of the map video in the Turkey Pavilion. Photograph by author.

member, a proposition that has met a variety of reactions both in the EU and Turkey. At the forefront is the question of “European-ness,” a concept nebulous enough that it still sparks debate. The question remains regarding Turkish and European cultural compatibility. Turkey arrives at the Expo with this argument in the background.

In the map video, the visitor sees a map of Turkey and the Mediterranean Sea. As the video progresses, the map moves through time. A red blob first appears in Turkey, marked with “8500 B.C.” Then arrows point outwards away from this red center, expanding into a yellow blob. “8300 B.C.” and then “8000 B.C.” appears. This blob keeps expanding and the arrows keep directing the expansion towards Greece, Italy, and eventually north into the rest of Europe. By the time the blob reaches Italy, enough time has lapsed for it to read “6000 B.C.” What is this blob? The blob symbolizes Anatolian Neolithic culture. The map is a space to play out the spread of Anatolian culture.

To a visitor, the map is geographically believable. Its authority lies in its seeming objectivity in that this map seems to have no distortions. The land is green and brown, and the sea is blue; this color scheme is characteristic of a normative map. The arrows and dates are also authoritative and interpret the movement of the blob for the visitor. These guiding tools tell the viewer that Anatolian Neolithic culture began in central Turkey and reached into the Balkans and then towards northern Europe. Yet, Turkey's take on a history of culture and influence completely undermines traditional European history, a linear progression that stems from ancient Greek and Roman culture.

Many trace the birth of Europe to ancient Greece.³⁷ Historians, philosophers, and even politicians propagate this version of history; in fact, this narrative was used as part of the construction of the European Community in which Turkey desires to become a full member:

Early Members of the European Parliament (then an 'Assembly') urged each other and the outside world to try to live up to the splendour and principles of Greco-Roman antiquity; to recreate the Renaissance; to fulfil Europe's quest for reunification apparently voiced since the fall of the Roman Empire...³⁸

In the Turkey Pavilion map video, the narrative disseminated does not support this traditional Greco-Roman history but instead pinpoints the origins of European culture to the heart of Turkey, Anatolia. The usual European narrative does not involve Turkey, but the map seeks to rewrite, present a new history, and perhaps even institutionalize this version.³⁹

Despite the map's normative objectivity, the map is not impartial. Similar to the Official Map of the Expo, specific political and ideological messages are articulated. Turkey and the members of the EU do not have cultural differences because European culture originates from

³⁷ Maryon McDonald, "'Unity in diversity': some tensions in the construction of Europe," *Anthropologie sociale* 4, no. 1 (1996), 48.

³⁸ McDonald, 50.

³⁹ Fatima El-Tayeb, "'The Birth of a European Public': Migration, Postnationality, and Race in the Uniting of Europe," *American Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (2008), 653.

Turkish Neolithic Anatolia and *not* from ancient Greece and Rome. The staff of the Pavilion further repeats this message: “[T]he original civilization is the Anatolian civilization. That’s where Çatalhöyük is. If you look, the cultural basis of Europe today is not Greece. Before Greece, it was Anatolia.”⁴⁰

Through visual culture, video and cartography, the organizers of the Turkey Pavilion control and manipulate the map to serve political aims. What Harley says is true that the state remains “a principal patron of cartographic activity in many countries.”⁴¹ For the official delegation, the main purpose of the pavilion is to show an alternative representation of Turkey as a response to political conflicts outside of the Expo.⁴² The map video disproves the “irreconcilable cultural differences” that serve as a pretext for denying full EU membership and extending a custom union.⁴³ Similar to the Official Map and the General View Map of the Expo, mapmaking confirms the authority of the mapmaker.

A Collection of Signs

At the bottom right corner of the map pamphlet, one finds an advertisement for the Expo passport. As maps are able to transform complex ideas such as a nation into a simple two-dimensional sign, the passport also render a multitude of countries into an amalgamation of simple two-dimensional signs. Started at the 1967 Expo in Montreal, the Expo passport is sold at almost each souvenir store for 30RMB (about \$4.50), comes blank and is stamped at each pavilion visited.⁴⁴ The Expo passport, like a real passport, serves as physical proof of all the

⁴⁰ Sencar Ozsoy, interview by author, tape recording, Turkey Pavilion, Shanghai, China, August 14, 2010.

⁴¹ Harley, “Maps Knowledge Power”, 284.

⁴² Ozsoy, interview.

⁴³ Hasan Kosebalaban, “The Permanent ‘Other’? Turkey and the Question of European Identity,” *Mediterranean Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (2007), 106.

⁴⁴ MarkAtTheExpo, “The Expo Passport,” *MarkAtTheExpo*, June 23, 2010, <http://markattheexpo.blogspot.com/2010/06/expo-passport.html>.

pavilions visited during one’s “trip around the world.” Its advertising in the Official Map pamphlet reinforces the passport as a fetishized object representing the well-traveled at the Expo. Its appearance in the map is significant because it promotes traveling around the Expo and demonstrates the power of visual culture to influence behavior.

In the advertisement, several details encourage the wide travel of the visitor, the non-egalitarian nature of the Expo, and the consumption of nations as two-dimensional representations (Fig. 1.4). First, the flatness of the passport stresses the two-dimensionality of stamp collecting. Each stamp collected appears as colored lines on paper; each nation becomes an ink-and-paper entity. Second, the advertisement touts multiples types of passports. There is the standard version, the cartoon version, and even a luxury version. The different passports stratify the visitor population, and each conveys a different class and associated exclusivity.

Evidently, the luxury passport with its sleek silver cover, gravitates more towards elite visitors

or those who would like to be elite. Like the Expo map and its favor towards representing some nations more vividly than others, the Expo passport is also an object of power relations. This class stratification will become even more apparent in analyzing architecture and exhibitions.

Lastly, the passports depicted in the advertisement uncannily resemble real passports. The layout of the cover, the gold lettering, the size and shape combine to form



Figure 1.4. Advertisement for the Expo passport.

a believable passport. This believability gives the little paper book sold in souvenir shops its authenticity. Yet, as maps have proven, the Expo passport is another construction of the Shanghai Expo, created to simulate a larger world and to contain it within a smaller space. The nation, exalted by the passport (after all, real passports document travel between nations), again cements its status as the primary unit of understanding. Furthermore, the nation becomes a commodity, meant to be consumed and collected. This concept is ingrained in every pavilion, which will be explored further in depth in Chapter 2.

Numerous pavilions have reported that visitors are not only “keen” but also crazy in their pursuit to collect stamps from various pavilions.⁴⁵ The Czech Pavilion made a direct correlation between the length of the pavilion queue and the value of the stamp.⁴⁶ Just as how the passport advertisement prominently sits besides the Official Map, the Expo passport has become a popular and omnipresent object in the Expo vista. Souvenir shops sold more than 50,000 a day, and online auction sites like eBay featured stamped passports selling for more than \$200.⁴⁷ The advertisement and the actual object represent the condensing of the Expo world into two-dimensionality. This is what the maps do, too, as well as act as spaces for ideology to play out.

Summary

From the beginning of the visitor’s experience, he or she is provided with a lens through which to view the Expo world. Reality and representation are mixed and intertwined in visual culture, as shown by the Expo map. The map marks the start of a journey through the Expo microcosm, but the journey is not a neutral experience. A sequence to the day is sketched out,

⁴⁵ Kristina Schubert-Zsilavec, interview by author, tape recording, Austria Pavilion, Shanghai, China. August 20, 2010.

⁴⁶ Jiri Potuzruk, interview by author, tape recording, Czech Republic Pavilion, Shanghai, China. August 17, 2010.

⁴⁷ MarkAtTheExpo, “The Expo Passport.”

and certain places are emphasized through visual and cartographic tactics. Visitors are encouraged to see as much as they can through the totality of the map and the Expo passport; to possess the pavilions, especially national pavilions, through collecting stamps becomes part of the journey. The Expo Bureau asserts its power in making the map and artificially creating the desire to collect. Image and word combine to promote the nation over other entities, and this emphasis does not align with the stated priority or theme of the Expo, “Better City, Better Life.” Outside of the Expo Map, other countries such as Turkey also are cognizant of the power and authority vested in maps. As the map video demonstrates, the Expo is a site to contest history. It is a place filled with tension. (Other tensions are explored in subsequent chapters.)

Finally, the power of the Expo and its signs of ideology cannot be contained within the boundaries of the site. Despite the isolated site depicted in the Official Map, the Expo is situated within a larger city, Shanghai. The representations disseminated spread beyond the borders of the Expo. Maps and passports are taken home. How much flow is there between the Expo world and the outside world?

Chapter 2: **Architecture and Nation-branding**

This chapter begins to explore how nations construct representations of themselves and the intended consequences of these representations to the general visitor. Because 95 percent of the visitors are Chinese, each participating nation and its pavilion tailors messages to this economically-growing demographic. Whether to plot simply their country on the Chinese mental map or to increase consumption of national goods, the international delegations employ multiple strategies to communicate these ends. At times successful and at other times disappointing, the strategies can be likened to marketing and branding but on a monumental scale. “Nation-branding” describes these activities at the Shanghai Expo.

External architecture is important to visitor impressions because images of a pavilion are disseminated through the media and person-to-person contact. In the perfect experience imagined by the Expo Bureau, visitors would first unfold the Official Map, peruse its contents, and then embark on the prescribed journey discussed in the previous chapter. Yet, outside the Expo world, the media, friends’ accounts, and personal interests influence a visitor’s experience before he or she even steps foots into the Expo. The Expo is an architect’s playground, for the architecture is dramatic, spectacular, and experimental. Architects are well aware of the significant role pavilion exteriors play: because people see exteriors first, the façade acts to draw visitors inside. They are designed to capture attention and entice entrance because visitors selectively allocate their time. But, exterior architecture also represents a country’s larger theme or idea whether ideological, commercial, or diplomatic. Architecture is a major component of nation-branding.

Architecture at Previous Expos

Forward-thinking structures tend to characterize expo architecture and are some of the most visible exposition legacies today. Examples include the Eiffel Tower (Paris, 1889), the Ferris Wheel (Chicago, 1890), and the Atomium (Brussels, 1958). But expo architecture also reveals much about a nation, issue, or even an event's present relevance. The intangible such as the nation, power, and identity, surfaces through tangible architecture. Pavilion façades not only act as evidence to these intangible concepts but also work as indicators of the interior. A parallel can be drawn to museum architecture. Similar to expo pavilions, museums share similar goals of articulating an idea, such as the state or a national historical narrative, and are also viewed as places separate from the real world. Etienne-Louis Boullée, a French museum architect active in the 1780s, believes that “the first *coup d’oeil* of the space [i]s necessary to separate visitors from the outside world and prepare them for the experience” inside.⁴⁸ In this regard, effective buildings must have “character.” In other words, they need to lucidly inform passersby of their purpose.⁴⁹ Through character, buildings, whether museums or pavilions, can immediately impress upon visitors the more intangible qualities of what is being represented.

At the 1958 Brussels World's Fair, the US Pavilion became a lauded symbol of the American nation. Designed by Edward Durell Stone, the pavilion was the largest circular building in the world at the time and was meant to suggest the United States' openness and hospitality.⁵⁰ The Belgian hosts chose a dramatic location for the American pavilion; the land plot was accessible from all sides and adjacent to the USSR's and the Vatican's pavilions. In the midst of the Cold War, an ideological battle was inevitable, and architecture became a part of the arsenal. Stone's circular structure denoting fellowship and democracy infused “airy simplicity”

⁴⁸ Andrew McClellan, *The Art Museum From Boullée to Bilbao* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 67.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁵⁰ Andrew Garn, *Exit to tomorrow: world's fair architecture, design, fashion, 1933-2005* (New York: Universe Publishing, 2007), 105.

with a Beaux-Arts façade. For the pavilion’s organizers, the State Department, the pavilion acted, to borrow Robert Haddow’s expression, as a “silent ambassador for democratic ideals.”⁵¹ Exterior architecture had a specified purpose at the world’s fair.

The US Pavilion in 1958 is not the only example of articulate architecture. Architecture at world expositions can also imply power relations. In 1931 Colonial Exposition in Paris, organizers sought to reinforce the “relative primitivism and degeneracy of the colonized peoples” to the French public.⁵² The message of France’s colonial power reverberated throughout the expo. The architecture of each French colony’s pavilion was interpreted “as the record of the artistic achievements of [the] indigenous culture” and said much about the colonized people’s civilization or lack thereof.⁵³ Simpler and less technologically advanced structures revealed the pressing need of France’s *mission civilisatrice*. At the same time, however, architecture attempted to show the benefits of colonization and its ability to lift people from backwardness. In other words, the paradoxes and tensions of the colonization project were inherent and made visible through architecture.

Lastly, architecture calcifies not only ideological tensions relating to power but also those relating to identity. For example, the Regional Center at the 1937 Paris Exposition reflected the problems in constructing national identity. France is notorious for its cultural split between Paris and its provinces. The organizers sought to convey a united France – a France that is not solely represented by Paris but also by its regions – through the Regional Center, an amalgamation of buildings designed to represent each region’s architectural identity. Unfortunately, such identities are not clearly present, as one region may have multiple identities. Also, two regions may share

⁵¹ Robert H. Haddow, *Pavilions of Plenty: Exhibiting American Culture Abroad in the 1950s* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 74.

⁵² Morton, 178-9.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 180.

nearly identical architectural styles. As a result, because “regional identity was more easily conveyed through familiar but isolated elements,” the architects chose recognizable architectural fragments to represent the whole.⁵⁴ Façades stand witness to identity formation, a process marked by conscious choices and artificial constructions.



Figure 2.1. The Expo Axis frames the China Pavilion, nearing completion before the May 1 opening. Photo courtesy of Confuciusonline.com

Historically, architecture at world expositions has played important roles whether predicting the future of architecture or serving as a silent ambassador. At the 2010 Shanghai Expo, architecture acts in similar ways. Attracting visitors, promoting identity, and acting as a witness to the times, façades are more than skin-deep.

A Power Statement

As an organizer of the 1937 Paris Exposition once stated, “Everything depends on and connects to the architecture.”⁵⁵ The pavilions with the highest popularity and the longest lines are all visually striking. At a site where more than 200 participants vie for attention, the boldest, most daring, and most imaginative tend to draw crowds. Certainly familiarity with and popularity of a country also affect visitor priority, as most Chinese visitors try to see the best-known countries first. Regardless, exterior architecture plays a central role in diverting attention away from its neighbors and to itself. The China Pavilion exemplifies this aim.

⁵⁴ Deborah D. Hurtt, “Simulating France, Seducing the World: The Regional Center at the 1937 Paris Exposition,” in *Architecture and tourism: perception, performance, and place*, eds. D. Medina Lasansky and B. McLaren (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 153.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 147.

According to the Expo map's preplanned route, visitors should first seek out the China Pavilion. On the map, its presence resembles that of a landmark. As the visitor shifts attention from the map to the Expo, the monumentality of the China Pavilion translates directly, too. At 49 meters tall, it sits as the largest and tallest national pavilion.⁵⁶ The China Pavilion evokes wonder through its imposing



Figure 2.2. Yan Liben, *Thirteen Emperors*, 7th century, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Image courtesy of mfa.org.

size (Fig. 2.1). Art historian Stephen Greenblatt defines wonder as “the power of the displayed...to stop the viewer in his or her tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, [and] to evoke an exalted attention.”⁵⁷ The pavilion's mere size and height gives the building “symbolic potential” and “return[s] a sense of occasion.”⁵⁸ Even from the Expo Axis skywalk, a visitor still must crane the neck upwards to view the building entirely. Its totality takes over one's eyes, and one cannot mistake its importance as a symbol of a rising China. All other national pavilions seemed dwarfed in comparison.

Visitors recognize the structure's likeliness to an emperor's crown, as it is popularly called the “Oriental Crown.”⁵⁹ The crown signifies absolute authority and power, and it is no coincidence that such a design was chosen from more than 340 entries.⁶⁰ It bears resemblance to

⁵⁶ Li Zhenyu, “Lead director reveals behind-the-scene story of China Pavilion film,” *Global Times*, June 2, 2010, <http://www.globaltimes.cn>.

⁵⁷ Stephen Greenblatt, “Resonance and Wonder,” in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, edited by Ivan Karp and Steven D. Levine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 42.

⁵⁸ McClellan, 80.

⁵⁹ Xinhua, “Construction of China Pavilion completed,” *China Daily*, February 8, 2010, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn>.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

the headgear depicted in a 7th-century scroll in the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, *Thirteen Emperors*, by Chinese artist, Yan Liben (Fig. 2.2). The top of the diadem is wider than its base. The rest of the Expo site seems to defer to China's symbolic power. Visitors can palpably feel "initial feelings of fear and vulnerability," a reaction to the wonder of China's ability to "conceive and harness" symbolic power.⁶¹

The exterior of the "Crown of the East" also features *dougong* architecture, a style specific to Chinese culture. Wooden brackets strategically interlock between the top of a column and a crossbeam, allowing buildings to gain height without using nails. Traditional Chinese buildings showcase *dougong* technique such as the Forbidden Palace and the Summer Palace, and the technology dates back to more than 2,000 years. This architecture represents a point of pride in Chinese culture as a symbol of innovation. Its use relates a high point in Chinese history and reminds the audience of the nation's lengthy history. The pavilion reveals the continuity of China's past and present, melding tradition in a contemporary interpretation. In addition, the fifty-six *dougong* brackets correspond to the fifty-six ethnic minority groups in China.⁶² The building is an agglomeration and recognition of the many diverse sections that make China into one cohesive nation. This nation governs the smaller provinces. Architecturally, the crown is constructed on top of the provincial pavilions building, which is another statement to cement China's power.

The color, too, of the pavilion adds to the architectural program to evoke China's power. The architects termed the hue "*gugong*" or Forbidden City red. The Forbidden City, located at the heart of Beijing, historically marks the emperor's vast power through its architecture, ornamentation, and selective access. *Gugong* "represents the spirit of traditional Chinese

⁶¹ McClellan, 60.

⁶² "La Chine affiche sa puissance," *Directmatin*, April 30, 2010, 15.

culture,” according to an interview of He Jingtang, the pavilion’s chief designer.⁶³ Again, the link between past and present is made clear to audiences.

What art historian Andrew McClellan says rings true in the China Pavilion: Monumentality allows huge symbolic potential.⁶⁴ The architects and designers capitalized on the pavilion’s immensity and infused it with meanings of authority and tradition. It inspires the overwhelmingly Chinese audience with wonder, stirring each citizen’s pride in national history. The architecture of arguably the most important Expo building successfully communicates China’s power and encourages its citizenry’s patriotism.

Bilbao Buildings in Shanghai

China is not the only country to comprehend the advantages of monumental architecture and its ability to woo audiences. Other countries also built colossal and spectacular structures that rely on a sense of drama to win attention. This practice, however, is not specific to expo pavilions; in the study of world expositions, scholars frequently compare pavilions to museums. Many museums also believe in a “connection between alluring architecture and high visitor numbers,” which originates from Frank Gehry’s winding and gravity-defying building for the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain.⁶⁵ Since its unveiling in 1997, many museums have sought to construct spectacular and dramatic wings and buildings in hopes of achieving higher visibility and visitor numbers. The concept of the Bilbao effect readily applies to the Expo.

Even though world expo architecture has historically pushed boundaries, the structures in 2010 strive to be out-of-this-world. National pavilions rely on awe-inspiring architecture to gain

⁶³ Annie Wei, “China: Red colors and traditional gardens,” *Beijing Today*, February 25, 2010, <http://www.beijingtoday.com.cn>.

⁶⁴ McClellan, 60.

⁶⁵ McClellan, 81.

press coverage and visits. The public space of the Expo allows for “heightened possibilities for visibility, education, and interaction,” but constructing elaborate façades and structures is not a cheap endeavor.⁶⁶ Therefore, if one delegation does not spend the funds and effort to maximize an exterior’s appeal, then another delegation will do so and win over public opinion. This competitive environment generates architectural feats, many of which seem to naturally follow a lineage of Bilbao buildings.

In particular, the Spain Pavilion is one of the largest self-built pavilions; its twisting shape is covered in more than 8,500 hand-woven wicker panels (Fig. 2.3). The pavilion receives much attention not only from the press and everyday visitors but also from other pavilion delegations. The Iceland Pavilion’s director says, “Spain is not very well-known in China, but the pavilion enhances the reputation of the country as big and having a strong culture and doing things well.”⁶⁷ The Turkey Pavilion’s Commissioner General laments, “[I]f you look at the newspapers, everyone is speaking about the Spanish Pavilion.”⁶⁸ Over seven million people visited the Spain Pavilion, which is two million more than the pavilion director had predicted. The wicker panels’ multiple shades of gray, brown, and gold change throughout the day with the arc of the sun, providing unique photo opportunities for each tourist. The pavilion exemplifies Bilbao architecture; the materials, shape, and overall look wholly differ from any other structure surrounding it. It is a spectacle that emphasizes singularity.⁶⁹ This singularity is exactly what the Spanish organizers, the State Society for International Expositions (SEEI), sought to achieve to

⁶⁶ Emily Alice Katz, “It’s the Real World After All: The American-Israel Pavilion-Jordan Pavilion Controversy at the New York World’s Fair, 1964-1965,” *American Jewish History* 91, no. 1 (2003), 129.

⁶⁷ Hreinn Palsson, interview by author, tape recording, Iceland Pavilion, Shanghai, China, August 16, 2010.

⁶⁸ Ozsoy, interview.

⁶⁹ Joan Ockman, “New Politics of the Spectacle: ‘Bilbao’ and the Global Imagination,” in *Architecture and tourism: perception, performance, and place*, edited by D. Medina Lasansky and Brian McLaren (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 233.

help Spain stand out among the participants. This singularity allows Spain to make bold statements about China and Spain's relationship as well as to promote Spanish culture.

Architectural historian Joan Ockman argues that the Bilbao effect introduced a new politics of appearance in that “[a]rchitecture is inherently a positive form of enunciation [because] it allows something that was previously latent to become visible.”⁷⁰ The Spain Pavilion's architecture unveils the similarities between Spanish and Chinese cultures that were “previously latent.” Dubbed the “Basket” by Chinese media, the pavilion consists of wicker panels woven in various patterns; this woven craft bridges the two cultures. According to an interview of Benedetta Tagliabue, the chief designer, “Spain has a very long history in making wicker-weaving products... We know that China has that kind of handicraft too. So we thought this was something we had in common.”⁷¹ Especially since the Shanghai Expo affords a significant public diplomacy opportunity, providing a link between the two cultures, though both diverse, is fundamental to the diplomacy exercise. Regardless if basketry is significant to Chinese culture, the architecture constructs cultural connection even if slightly forced.

Establishing a common cultural ground advances the Spanish delegation's larger mission at the Expo. A major goal of its participation is to increase economic relationships with China by marketing its appeal.⁷² Peaceful economic progress, however, cannot move forward without some type of common ground. The Spain Pavilion solves the question of mutual understanding physically through architecture. It publicly demonstrates a perceived link between the two nations so that it becomes undeniable. While almost every nation attempts to establish a

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁷¹ Li, “Lead director reveals behind-the-scene story of China Pavilion film.” This connection was echoed in an interview with the Spain Pavilion. Miguel Angel Munoz, interview by author, tape recording, Spain Pavilion, Shanghai, China, August 23, 2010.

⁷² EFE, “China Seeks Closer Economic Ties with Spain,” *Latin American Herald Times*, August 31, 2010, <http://www.laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=364740&CategoryId=12395>.

connection between their country and China, Spain is one of the few to do so clearly and architecturally. The pavilion's success and popularity derives from this lucidity.

At the same time, the Spain Pavilion also communicates “Spanish-ness” through architecture. Although trying to show a country's similarity with China simultaneously as



Figure 2.3. The Spain Pavilion's wicker plates undulate against its urvacous structure. In the back, the Lupu Bridge connects the two sides of the River. Photo by author.

showing its distinctiveness may sound mutually exclusive, this pavilion accomplishes the endeavor. Reports of the pavilion include both descriptions of Spain's passionate culture and its shared ties with China. According to Tagliabue, “Spain is a nation of vitality and passion. So our design is to put those Spanish spirits into the structure, and the Spanish-style flow of motion must be reflected.”⁷³ The

undulating folds of the exterior and amoeba-like shape do suggest a “flow of motion” and liveliness that contrast with the solidity of adjacent pavilions. The architecture evokes a feeling – an effect the organizers specifically constructed who wished for visitors to mentally connect Spain with emotion and passion. The essence of Spain represented by the pavilion is based purely on emotion.

The exterior architecture produces a feeling that speaks to Spanish identity, and it also performs this identity. Media descriptions pick up on this sensuality, using the pavilion's interior exhibitions to reinforce the exterior. The first exhibition features live flamenco dancing. The artistry and fervent passion that the dancers summon appear to echo the same qualities in the architecture. In fact, the Spain Pavilion has been compared by journalist Zhenyu Li to the

⁷³ Li, “Lead director reveals behind-the-scene story of China Pavilion film.”

swirling dress of a flamenco dancer in motion.⁷⁴ Just as the flamenco dancer performs continually throughout the day, the architecture performs Spanish identity. Architecture and world expositions are performative in nature, meaning that it actively shapes identity and does not merely reflect what is already constructed.⁷⁵ The Spain Pavilion is no exception. In other words, the façade of Spain actively enacts into being Spanish identity, even if this identity is narrowly defined.

Similar to the Spain Pavilion, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao accomplishes similar aims. Through imaginative architecture, the museum attracts swarms of tourists. In the process, the city of Bilbao benefits with a growing tourism industry. Yet at the Expo, the Spain Pavilion also defines and attaches an identity to what it represents, the Spanish nation. The dramatic, soaring architecture enralls visitors and acts as outdoor advertising for the nation. Similar to advertising, the pavilion appeals to the masses, makes a strong, pleasing impression, and evades any sort of argumentation.⁷⁶ It simply states. Behind architecture, exhibitions, and identity construction, one finds the pavilion's economic goals. This marketing hopes to boost Chinese tourism to Spain by piquing interest in the Iberian nation, one of several economic goals but probably the largest. As of 2010, Spain is the second most popular tourist destination in the world but not the most popular among the Chinese.⁷⁷ About 90,000 Chinese visit Spain per year, and the SEEI hopes to triple that number after the Expo.⁷⁸ At an overwhelming investment of 23 million euros, the Spain Pavilion hopes to recuperate the expenses through growth in the tourism industry. By creating a strong, yet simple impression, the Spain Pavilion brands its home nation

⁷⁴ Zhenyu Li, "Expo 2010: Spain Pavilion Impresses With Creative Power," *NowPublic: Crowd Powered Media*, October 1, 2010, <http://www.nowpublic.com/culture/expo-2010-spain-pavilion-impresses-creative-power-0>.

⁷⁵ Katz, 129-130.

⁷⁶ Laura E. Baker, "Public Sites Versus Public Sights: The Progressive Response to Outdoor Advertising and the Commercialization of Public Space," *American Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (2007), 1191.

⁷⁷ EFE, "China Seeks Closer Economic Ties with Spain."

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

as passionate and fiery. It transforms each of the seven million visitors into a consumer of a constructed Spanish identity.

Lost In Translation

Not all national pavilions, however, are as coherent or successful as the Spanish one in imparting messages. For some such as the Germany Pavilion, the visitors receive a different message than what the organizers intend through architecture. The case of Germany reveals the difficulties in national identity construction at the Expo. The Germany Pavilion sits in the heart of the European zone and occupies one of the largest sites at 6,000 square meters. At twenty meters tall, the mammoth-silvery gray building can be seen from a distance, as its exterior gently reflects light. Surprisingly, this pavilion is one of the few national pavilions to engage deeply with the theme of the Expo, “Better City, Better Life.” Because the Germany-China relationship is more established, more Chinese are familiar with the country even if with only stereotypes.⁷⁹ As a result the pavilion organizers felt that the effort most countries spend on national identity



Figure 2.4. The Germany Pavilion’s big blocks are held up through a delicate balance and precision engineering. The mesh fabric is almost opaque. Photo courtesy of Germany Pavilion.

construction would be better allotted to address problems of urbanization.

The overarching theme of the Germany Pavilion is “balancity,” a word merging “balance” and “city”. Balancity refers to “a city in balance between renewal and preservation, innovation and tradition, urbanity and nature, society and its

⁷⁹ Marion Conrady, interview by author, tape recording, Germany Pavilion, Shanghai, China., August 13, 2010.

individuals, work and recreation, and finally, between globalization and national identity.”⁸⁰ In other words, the solution to a better life is to achieve an equilibrium that touches all aspects of city living. The architecture of the pavilion reflects the search for balance. Designed by Schmidhuber + Kaindl GmbH, an architecture firm based in Munich, Germany, the pavilion consists of four separate structures that cannot stand alone. The building’s stability relies on the precarious interaction between the structures (Figs. 2.4 and 2.5). The framework is irregular, for none of the supporting steel columns are vertical. The soil by the Huangpu River cannot support too much weight due to its softness, adding to the precariousness. Within the construction and engineering of the pavilion, a delicate balance exists to prevent the building from sinking or collapsing into the ground.⁸¹ In addition, the outer covering, a grayish textile membrane called “mesh,” also contributes to balancity. Made in Germany, the lightweight mesh creates shade that reduces air conditioning needs, demonstrating nature’s balance in terms of energy consumption.⁸² The complex architectural program is meant to symbolize that through working together, stability and a better life can be reached.

Competing

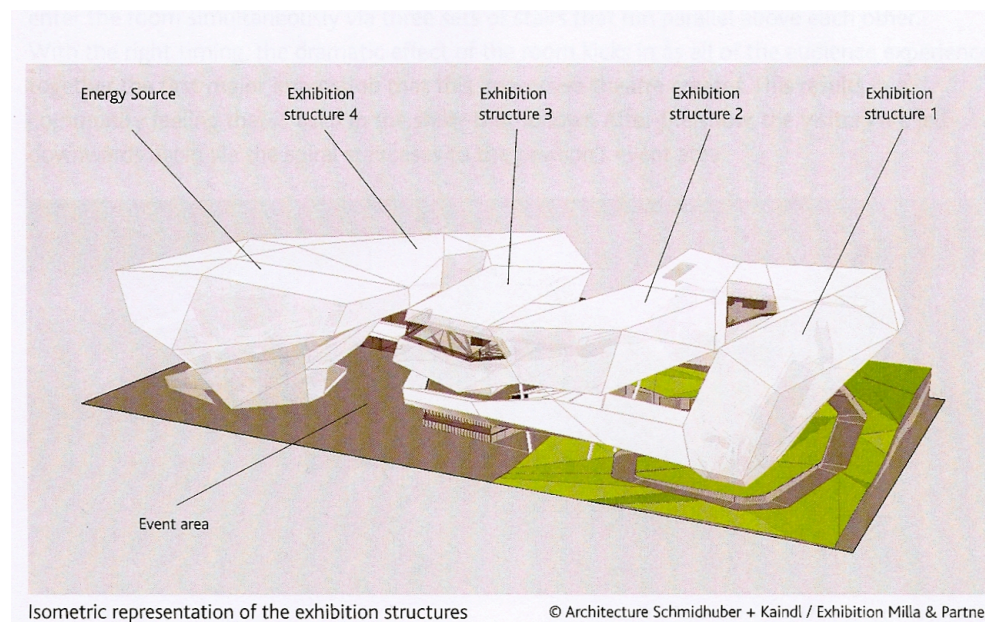


Figure 2.5. The architect's renderings of the Germany Pavilion. Courtesy of the Germany Pavilion.

⁸⁰ German Pavilion Expo 2010 Shanghai, *Concept* (Shanghai: German Pavilion Expo 2010 Shanghai, 2010), 1.

⁸¹ *balancity – The evolution of a pavilion*, DVD, German Pavilion Expo 2010 Shanghai (Shanghai, German Pavilion, 2010).

⁸² Conrady, interview.

architectural concepts that the media failed to pick up cloud these messages of balance and sustainability, and visitor interpretation. Similar to the Spain Pavilion, the exterior should communicate a cultural connection with China. Lennart Wiechell, the chief architect, states that the mesh fabric is “meant to remind visitors of China’s strong textile industry and the 1,000 year old tradition of umbrellas in the Middle Kingdom.”⁸³ But, the cultural meaning of mesh is articulated nowhere in the pavilion. Instead, visitors equate the silvery mesh with stereotypical German seriousness and with major German companies like BMW.⁸⁴ Visitors perceive the pavilion to be machine-like and somber. The designers had not imagined this reception. For a pavilion that sought to build upon an established presence in China, old stereotypes pervade visitor impressions. Although visitors leave appreciating German innovation, their preconceived notions of seriousness and pragmatic high-tech design are reinforced.⁸⁵

Perhaps the gap in transmission can be traced back to the institution of the world expo. Because nations are the primary unit of understanding, visitors expect each national pavilion to speak about its distinct identity. Visitors project preconceived notions onto their experiences and interpretations. Although the Shanghai Expo should address problems of urbanization, many national pavilions dedicate space and time to national representation – an endeavor not without reason. The German Pavilion demonstrates what happens when delegations focus solely on the Expo’s theme without a preoccupation with national representation. Although unfortunate that urbanization cannot be the main focus, visitors seek nations instead of cities. The structure, site plan, and even passport of the Shanghai Expo echo this priority.

⁸³ *balancity – The evolution of a pavilion.*

⁸⁴ Conrady, interview.

⁸⁵ Zhenyu Li, “Opinion: Shanghai Expo's Germany Pavilion showcases prowess,” *Digital Journal*, August 16, 2010, <http://www.digitaljournal.com/article/296162>.

Exterior-Interior Disconnect

Awe-inspiring and imaginative architecture for self-built pavilions is a given at the Expo. It piques interest and indicates what might lie inside. Yet, effective pavilions –those who easily transmit central message(s) to the audience – are few. Cohesion proves to be key to Expo success. As the Germany Pavilion has shown, some pavilion architecture is lost on the audience; the meaning does not transmit well. Although visitors may queue for hours, some pavilions disappoint tourists once they have walked through. Several pavilions also suffer from a disconnect between their interiors and exteriors. Perhaps the best-known example of this description is the United Kingdom Pavilion.

The UK Pavilion, also known as the Seed Cathedral, is an architectural feat (Fig. 2.6). Sixty thousand transparent fiber optic rods at 7.5 meters long densely fan out from a central cube. Nicknamed the “Dandelion” by the Chinese, the pavilion emanates airiness and lightness, as if the structure floats above the ground. Designed by Thomas Heatherwick, the twenty-meter high building has won praise from designers and architects around the world. It received the 2010 Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Award as well as the prestigious RIBA Lubetkin Prize. The positive hubbub surrounding the pavilion built people’s excitement; throughout the duration of the Expo, lines extended for hours. Unfortunately, popular opinion believed that while the Seed Cathedral was beautiful from the outside, the actual exhibits were less than engaging and did not meet the expectations that the media had brewed.

This disappointment stems from visitors' failure to understand that the Seed Cathedral is meant to both "house the exhibition and also be the content of the exhibition."⁸⁶ The British delegation aims to address the Expo's theme of urbanization by stressing the importance of urban parks and greenery. The end of each fiber optic rod houses a seed. Natural light funnels through the rod to illuminate the Cathedral's small interior, which is the only platform to view the lit-up seeds. The building itself is an exhibition and not simply a structure that houses one. In fact, visitors are guided around the site and led through



Figure 2.6. The UK Pavilion and its urban park. The Lupu Bridge can be spotted in the back. Photo by author.

outdoor exhibitions, before finally arriving at the UK Pavilion building, which takes up less than one-third of the total site. Upon entering the Seed Cathedral, however, the relative emptiness disappoints visitors who do not feel entertained.⁸⁷ Many do not understand the overarching comment on park preservation and felt that the pavilion lacks the same "hustle and bustle" as others.⁸⁸

While the design community lauded the architectural concept, the masses were confused. People visit the Expo to experience the sensational images and take pleasure in exhibitions that provide entertainment value.⁸⁹ For example, the Saudi Arabia Pavilion, arguably the most popular pavilion with eight-hour lines besides China's, was known for its IMAX movie that took

⁸⁶ *Designer Thomas Heatherwick Talks about Pavilion Concept* [Video] (2010), retrieved January 19, 2011, from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bUMg7XYq6Bk>.

⁸⁷ Malcom Moore, "Shanghai Expo: British pavilion disappoints visitors," *Telegraph*, May 4, 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk>.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Harvey, 151.

visitors on a vicarious journey through the country. The UK Pavilion, though visually stunning, was difficult to understand and did not clearly communicate the theme of urban parks. Perhaps, the steely-gray color of the site detracted from messages of greenery.

In order for national pavilions to effectively spread their message, the inside and outside need relate cohesively to one another. Art historian Deborah Hurtt defines a national pavilion as “a vague building-type designation, it elicit[s] no defining visual attributes other than its temporary and idealized showcase quality.”⁹⁰ The Expo amasses all these messages, whether they are related to the Expo theme or national identity. This world is a collection of representations removed from reality, meant to entertain the masses, and create goodwill towards the delegations who may hold larger commercial, diplomatic, or cultural motives. To effectively nation-brand, countries must provide the “-ness,” or essence of itself. The Spain Pavilion provided “Spanish-ness” and was able to promote the country as an attractive destination. The UK Pavilion failed to provide the “British-ness” that tourists sought. Especially as the UK gears up for the 2012 London Olympics, it would behoove the nation to pique visitors’ interest in them. Instead, people left their site feeling unfulfilled and disappointed. Association of the UK Pavilion experience with negativity does not aid the British diplomatic effort at the Expo.

Restrictive Rented Pavilions

State-funded, or self-built, pavilions receive the most attention because their spectacular architecture defeats imagination. They capture interest because the structural shapes depart from the everyday. In reviews and blogs, travelers highly anticipate self-built buildings such as the Spain, Denmark, UK, and South Korea pavilions. Most countries, however, do not command budgets large enough to build their own pavilion. Rather, they rent pavilions from the Expo

⁹⁰ Hurtt, 154.

Bureau for an extremely subsidized price. These rented pavilions come in some variation of a cube. Examples of rented pavilions include the Hungary, Slovakia, and Cuba pavilions.

The rented pavilions most noticeably differ from self-built ones in the basic structure of the buildings. Self-built ones play with a variety of forms from trapezoids to circles, but rented ones are forced to utilize rectangles. Comparatively, self-built ones are more visually exciting than rented pavilions. Despite the banal basic structure, rented pavilions can be cleverly modified so that the exteriors and interiors appear more imaginative. The Expo organizers, however, impose stifling restrictions. For example, the thirty-centimeter rule states that additions to the exterior cannot exceed more than thirty centimeters out.⁹¹ The Hungary Pavilion wished to construct a “wooden forest” made of wood panels outside but had to change their original plans due to this rule.⁹² While restrictions can derail plans for dramatic features, they also can push designers’ creativity. Overall, the differences between rented and self-built are visible and palpable, yet the more eye-catching rented ones have created an exterior that gives the illusion of a self-built pavilion.

Turkish Commissioner General Sencar Ozsoy asserts that his rented pavilion rivals self-built pavilions in terms of attendance and popularity. The Turkey Pavilion saw more than seven million people walk through its halls. Sitting in the middle of the European Zone, the pavilion is visually striking with its cobweb-like façade painted a brilliant rosewood red (Fig. 2.7). At the pavilion’s entrance, wall text describes the inspiration for the façade: the first fresco discovered at the first known human settlement, Çatalhöyük, which dates to 7500 BC. The fresco represents Hasandağ, a volcanic mountain, which explains the red stain.⁹³ The exterior directly relates to the

⁹¹ Richard Mohr, interview by author, tape recording, Hungary Pavilion, Shanghai, China, August 16, 2010.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Ozgur Tore, “Over 4 million visited Turkey Pavilion at the Shanghai Expo,” *Focus on Travel News: Travel News Gazette*, August 9, 2010, <http://www.ftnnews.com>.

pavilion's theme, "The Cradle of Civilization," which affirms that Turkey, home of Çatalhöyük, is the birthplace of human civilization.

The exterior is visually interesting because of its play with negative space and its complete coverage of the building underneath. Large holes of varying sizes puncture the rosewood structure; as a result, the yellow ochre stucco building framed inside becomes visible. The eye fixates on not only the space taken up by the web-like façade but also the negative space left by the imperfect circles. The word, "Turkey," and its Chinese translation also appear through use of negative space like a potter's sgraffito. The façade also creates shadows on the yellow stucco, and these shadows alter the look of the pavilion depending on the time of day. In



Figure 2.7. The façade of the Turkey Pavilion hides the structure underneath, beguiling tourists into believing they are seeing a self-built pavilion. Photo by author.

addition, the exterior shell completely covers the pavilion, which effectively masks the rented building. Unlike other rented pavilions that are covered in colored wallpaper, the Turkey Pavilion gives an impression of ethereality and originality that self-built pavilions tend to possess.

The masking of the pavilion is integral to assuming the likeliness to a self-built pavilion. In the case of Turkey, the designers transformed a rented building simply through outward appearance. Other rented pavilions simply covered the outside with a printed membrane such as Iceland and Lithuania. Furthermore, the architectural concept of a self-built pavilion is national in nature. In other words, Chinese designed the China Pavilion, and Americans conceived the USA Pavilion. But, as Ozsoy laments, "We didn't choose the architecture because it's a rented pavilion. We didn't construct it. It's not a Turkish plan or architecture. We took the

preconceived, prefabricated Chinese building, and we covered it with the façade.”⁹⁴ The difficulty of the national representation endeavor is intertwined with renting a prebuilt pavilion, and so modification of the façade must hide the rented form.

The Turkish effort paid off. Before the Shanghai Expo opened, the Expo administration released twenty-four photos of selected pavilions to stir excitement. All were self-built with the exception of Turkey. “If you look, you believe that it is a self-built pavilion. It’s a rented pavilion in reality,” Ozsoy boasts.⁹⁵ When rented pavilions disguise the outside, they can give a semblance of a self-built pavilion. Within the scope of this section, however, rented pavilions refer only to freestanding pavilions. In fact, the majority of countries at the Expo are housed in group pavilions such as the Africa Joint Pavilion. Architecture becomes evidence of an international political hierarchy. Those with self-built pavilions are the most powerful and prosperous. The freestanding rented pavilions are for second tier countries, and those in the group pavilions are the weakest and smallest countries. However, this hierarchy does not perfectly reflect the current world. For example, Latvia, although it has a self-built pavilion, is not an influential or powerful country on the global stage. Yet, the Expo world allows countries to dream and perhaps show their vision for the future global stage. As a constructed and artificial site, the lines between imagination and reality blur. In some areas, the verisimilitude with reality is unmistakable.

⁹⁴ Ozsoy, interview.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Chapter 3: **Display Strategies: Commercialization and Consumption**

While architecture attracts visitors inside, pavilion organizers' utilize various display and exhibition strategies to achieve their goals for participation. When displaying objects, the preservation of aura, or inaccessibility, and value are paramount to the successful dissemination of messages. In addition, multimedia exhibits such as movies and projection screens are highly popular, but these types of display are so pervasive to the extent that digital images bombard and exhaust the visitor. Visitors tend to remember experiences in which they are somehow the subject rather than an object passively absorbing information. All the means of display, however, share the common goal of nation-branding. Commercialization, commodification, and consumption are infused in the interior exhibitions. These processes are tied with the goal of national representation. What is displayed and how it is displayed influences and can modify visitor behavior and perception.

A History of Commerce and Display

The Shanghai Expo represents the most recent chapter in the historical relationship between commerce and display. With 192 national pavilions competing for attention from 400,000 visitors each day, the exhibitions within pavilions help visitors to understand the countries and mold them into future consumers. This historical dialogue between commerce and display manifests itself as early as the 1851 Great Exhibition in London and continues through to 20th-century exhibitions such as at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met) in New York City. Again, as with architecture, expo pavilions and museums share similar characteristics regarding exhibitions. Museums give order and sense to multitudes of objects through display and

installation. Through display strategies, certain objects become valorized and revered, creating an unattainable fetish.

At the beginning of this dialogue is the 1851 Great Exhibition in London. The main goals of the first international exhibition are to enlighten the British citizenry of the empire's industrial and cultural hegemony and to give them a means to understand the modern world around them.⁹⁶ For several scholars, the Exhibition is a didactic tool to educate the middle- and working classes about taste and consumption. Manufactured objects are celebrated through presentation and separated from their means of production; the Great Exhibition encourages capitalistic production and certain display tactics such as spectacle that further promoted consumption.

This giant exhibition was completely housed in Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace. Materialist historian Thomas Richards analyzes how the glass and cast-iron architecture directly contributes to the elevation of an everyday object into a fetish when he states that "[t]he gigantic structure...had been designed to make ordinary glass look like crystal and the shape of a green house look like the outline of a palace."⁹⁷ The striking similarities between Crystal Palace, the retail environment, and the museum cannot be ignored:

The design of the building, however, produced a kinetic environment for inert objects...it placed them in a climate-controlled landscape, it flooded them with light, it isolated them in departments, it channeled people through them, and it turned them into the focal points of aesthetic and linguistic contemplations. Its peculiar ambience charged things with special significance and made it difficult to perceive them as static.⁹⁸

Visual manipulation occurs at the Great Exhibition, which persuades visitors to believe that the objects housed inside are more valuable than the everyday. Because of the means of display,

⁹⁶ Greenhalgh, 151.

⁹⁷ Richards, 3.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

objects from sewing machines to jeweled crowns to marble sculptures increase in value in viewers' eyes.⁹⁹

Many of the strategies of display at the Great Exhibition continue to be employed in museums, retail stores, and world expos today. These strategies include the flooding of light, elevated pedestals, and display in isolation. They tend to make the object on display seem special and singular. In addition, to “assert the inviolability of the object,” displays tend to hold a barrier between the viewer and the object such as a rope or a policeman.¹⁰⁰ Through display, fine art and even manufactured, mass-produced objects fuel desire, earn singularity, and create a valorized representation of itself. At the Great Exhibition, what might be ordinary becomes extraordinary, and though the exhibits were not meant to physically sell what was on display, the displays did “sell” their objects.¹⁰¹

The dialogue between commerce and display continues into the 20th century in one of the United States' most revered museums. Even the Met cannot escape the relationship between commodity and exhibition. Similar to the Great Exhibition, which did not sell objects, museums create an unattainable desire for objects on display, although this mechanism is frequently downplayed. The 1920s and 1930s mark a short-lived era at the Met when store display and commodity became more conspicuously involved in the museum's exhibitions. In 1929, the Met opened an exhibition titled, “The Architect and the Industrial Arts,” featuring nine architects who designed interiors with modern flair. The exhibition was arranged into vignettes, or an exhibition area with three surrounding walls allowing the museumgoer to peer inside a room-like space.

⁹⁹ Spicer Brothers. *The Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, 1851*, corrected edition. London: W. Clowes & Sons, 1851.

¹⁰⁰ Richards, 32.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 4 and 38.

This exhibition is important not only for its use of vignette display but also for its unusual inclusion of objects into the fine arts realm.¹⁰²

Vignette display traces its roots to furniture stores in the 1920s. In 1923, Joseph Urban, an Austrian designer and architect, opened a store on Fifth Avenue selling Werkstatte products to gain an American customer base.¹⁰³ In 1928, the International Exposition of Art in Industry sponsored by R.H. Macy and Company also featured vignettes because the simulated real rooms photographed better and allowed a feeling of totality and of a unified whole.¹⁰⁴ Commercialism is inherently intertwined with vignette display, and its appearance in the Met confirms the relationship, if not often subdued, between commercialism and exhibitions.

In the “The Architect and the Industrial Arts,” the vignettes themselves become works of art and not simply the decorative objects within the display because they are “protected from the masses and elevated on a pedestal – offered up, as it were, for all to admire and respect.”¹⁰⁵ The interiors containing curtains, rugs, and architecture seem unusual for a fine arts museum and even a universal survey museum, but the aim of the exhibit was to teach a specific set of values and to encourage appreciation for modern American design. The ideals of taste and consumption here echo those at the 1851 Great Exhibition. The totality of the vignettes overpower the viewer, “encourag[ing] escapist fantasies and assert[ing] itself as a deeply compelling portrait of a decorating style and, more important, a lifestyle that one might attain.”¹⁰⁶ Similar to store displays and other museum exhibitions, a distance between the viewer and object is preserved, creating desire in the visitor turned potential consumer.

¹⁰² Kristina Wilson, *The Modern Eye: Stieglitz, MoMA, and the Art of the Exhibition, 1925-1934* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 55.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

A Boost to Consumerism at Shanghai

The ability to elevate everyday objects occurs not only at the Met but also at the Shanghai Expo. Given China's rise in economic and political power, each participating country saw the host country as holding great potential for future economic growth. Each visitor walking through the turnstiles became a possible consumer. I argue that many countries decided that it is most effective to employ display strategies that cultivate desire not only for what is displayed but also for the represented country. In a sense, the nation becomes a commodity at the Shanghai Expo, and this commodification is integral to nation-branding. Comparable to the 1851 Great Exhibition, nations at Shanghai are exhibited by foreign delegations more like "...quantifiable batches or produce rather than as cultures."¹⁰⁷ The same principles that govern how the arts are glorified and exhibited in museums also dictate exhibition at the Shanghai Expo, which are designed to add value to an object and attract the Chinese visitors' desire. By replacing "use-value" with aesthetic value, inspiring wonder through monumentality, and conducting the flow of visitors into an organized trail, nations commodify themselves, their identities, and their products. In particular, the Italy, Belgium and Finland Pavilions exemplify this process.

The popular Italy Pavilion, with lines extending for more than four hours, aims to provide visitors with an explanation and understanding of "The Joy of Living," its stated theme. The pavilion conveys the Italian way of living, which consists of a combination of culture, fashion, innovation, and technology.¹⁰⁸ Housed inside are a gourmet food exhibit, Caneletto paintings, treasures from Sicily, a miniature Bottega Veneta leather workshop, and other exhibits featuring a luxurious lifestyle. The Italian life appears joyous, aesthetically beautiful, and completely desirable. The fantastic displays and the scale of the exhibition impress entering visitors. It feels

¹⁰⁷ Greenhalgh, 54.

¹⁰⁸ Marianna Drago, interview by author, tape recording, Italy Pavilion, Shanghai, China, August 18, 2010.

as if “Italy comes inside of you”; in other words, the visitor is wholly overwhelmed by the pavilion and filled with “Italian-ness.”¹⁰⁹ The Italy Pavilion, like the 1929 exhibit at the Met, inspires desire for a specific lifestyle by evoking wonder through monumentality. Displays also strip away an object’s intended use, and it becomes admired for its aesthetic qualities rather than its purpose.

The main space of the Italy Pavilion is the large, central atrium. From here, one can access all the smaller exhibits, and this space serves as a meeting place and venue for the larger-than-life displays designed by Basilio John Carlo, the pavilion’s art director who has a background in cinematography. He describes the effect of the atrium and its parts as an “emotional journey.”¹¹⁰ An orchestra display defies gravity, for it vertically perches on a three-story high wall. A three-dimensional cutout of the Duomo in Florence arches over the escalators, frozen in a state of construction. Larger-than-life mannequins wearing designer dresses are rooted in the center, raised on pedestals (Fig. 3.1). Every object in this atrium dwarfs the visitors; perhaps the monumentality of these exhibits signals its importance because it “absorb[s] more manual and imaginative labour” than normally sized objects.¹¹¹ For example, the large mannequins wear Versace and Armani dresses, but this clothing must have been specifically created for the pavilion because no human being is as large as the mannequin.¹¹² The sheer size augments visibility; visitors cannot help but notice the dresses, which clothe the white mannequins. Like the modern gallery space, the “[u]nshadowed, white, clean, artificial” mannequins allow the intense aesthetic contemplation of the clothing.¹¹³ The dresses become

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Duncan, 449.

¹¹² Visitors learn of the designers’ names through pedestal labeling.

¹¹³ Brian O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Santa Monica: The Lapis Press, 1999), 15.

unique objects and are filled with wonder, or the power to attract attention because of its singularity.¹¹⁴ The exquisite details of the dress stand out such as the crystal beading, fine stitching, and careful drapery.

Because they are filled with wonder, the dresses, to use Greenblatt's expression, "evoke the dream of possession and evacuate it," similarly to how today's museums also rely on wonder



Figure 3.1. Large mannequins wearing Armani and Versace sit at the center of the Italy Pavilion and tower over the visitors. Photo by author.

to incite desire of the exhibited object.¹¹⁵ The desirability of luxurious dresses, symbolic of the Italian life represented at the Expo, is further echoed in another wall in the atrium. This wall features an exhibition of almost twenty regular-sized mannequins clothed in sumptuous eveningwear. It, too, spans three stories high, and so its height, monumentality, and ability to inspire

wonder are unmistakable. Italian eveningwear represents a facet of "The Joy of Living" and lets Italy market itself as not simply a nation, but a lifestyle.

The Italy Pavilion also effectively replaces the use-value of objects with its aesthetic value, to use Marxist terms. While the aforementioned example of dress also exemplifies this replacement of value, a small display dedicated to shoes better demonstrates this exhibition principle. In the "I-Tech" room, the exhibit promotes Italy's technological innovations and features a hybrid Ferrari car, a Vespa, and other brand name companies. Arguably, this room points out the utility of Italian technology, but a shoe display in the "I-Tech" room undermines this goal. A gigantic magenta velour shoe sits on top of a waist-level pedestal. The huge stiletto

¹¹⁴ Greenblatt, 42.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

does not grab attention as much as the dozens of stilettos and high-heels that decorate its heel (Fig. 3.2). Light from the bottom illuminates the platform on which the giant shoe sits, softly highlighting all the shoes on the heel. The use-value of the shoes, that is its wearability, disappears under this dramatic lighting and its unconventional organization.¹¹⁶ The aesthetic value of the shoes is emphasized, and shoes, the “accessories of a mundane life,” are “transformed into works of art.”¹¹⁷ The visitor’s gaze magnifies the architectural qualities of the heels, colorful decoration, and leather workmanship. It is no coincidence that similar displays might be found in the windows of Saks Fifth Avenue or Macy’s, which emphasize the beauty of the shoe rather than its realistic wearability.



Figure 3.2. The shoe display in the “I-Tech” room. Photo courtesy of Travepod.com.

Like the dresses in the central atrium, the shoes in “I-Tech” undergo the same process to become glorified objects representing “la dolce vita” of the Italians. The entity and nation of Italy becomes a producer of luxury items from leather shoes to Vespas. Commodities fill the pavilion, and the nation itself becomes a commodity. “Italian-ness” can be purchased. This consumption takes place outside the Expo grounds because the pavilion has no store.

The Belgium Pavilion is most notably the pavilion with the highest sales turnover.¹¹⁸

With an excess of 2.9 million euros in sales, this pavilion demonstrates its ability to turn visitors into consumers.¹¹⁹ Although it also houses the European Union Pavilion, the Belgium Pavilion

¹¹⁶ Wilson, 152.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹¹⁸ Helsingin Sanomat, “Finnish design sold well at Shanghai Expo,” *Helsingin Sanomat: International Edition*, November 18, 2010, <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Finnish+design+sold+well+at+Shanghai+Expo/1135261739400>.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*



Figure 3.3. The first chocolate exhibit at the Chocolate Corner in the Belgium Pavilion. Each chocolate has its own boutique light within the glass encasement. Photo by author.

introduces this small European country to the Chinese because it has not had the same historical and cultural impact in China as larger European counterparts such as Italy and Germany. According to the pavilion director the organizing body, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, seeks to represent the country in an easily understandable manner. Accessibility is a priority, which assumes the forms of “chocolate and beer and diamonds,” and as a result the pavilion has received much attention from the Chinese public.¹²⁰ Tangible objects are readily accessible to the visitors than Belgium’s complicated and complex politics, a part of Belgium that the organizers purposefully

excluded. Through the selling and marketing of “Belgian” goods, the pavilion can export an abstract, although incomplete, idea of “Belgium,” the nation. A paradox exists, however, for in the pursuit of accessibility, the pavilion also preserves the inaccessibility of its objects through display. This inaccessibility, or aura to use Walter Benjamin’s term, creates a desire for the objects on display.

The chocolate exhibition exemplifies this paradox because the aura around chocolate is constructed and preserved. Chocolate becomes an art form. In the middle of the pavilion route, the visitor enters the Chocolate Corner, featuring an exhibit of different chocolates and a live workshop of chocolatiers. Each chocolate appears enclosed in glass containers (Fig. 3.3). The overall display enforces the aura around the chocolate because it preserves the distance between the visitor and object. According to Benjamin, aura is defined as “[a] strange tissue of space and

¹²⁰ Etienne Dubuc, interview by author, tape recording, Belgium Pavilion, Shanghai, China, August 20, 2010.

time: the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be,” and this concept of aura applies to the chocolate exhibit.¹²¹ Placed on a white, rectangular and waist-level counter, the chocolates are at a close proximity to the visitor; the position is reminiscent of looking down on a kitchen counter. Although s/he may feel close to the chocolate, the layer of glass separates the two. The transparent glass allows and directs concentrated looking, and the chocolate, fundamentally a food, becomes an aesthetic object. Its taste and smell, qualities inherent to eating, are blocked and contained within the glass. Spot lighting enhances the formal details within each glass dome. Because of the glass barrier, boutique lighting, and elevation through a pedestal, little chocolates are given special value. Their unattainability adds to this value and stokes desire to possess the chocolate.

A live *chocolaterie* immediately follows this exhibit of chocolates. Here, Barry Callebaut, Godiva, Guylian, Neuhaus and seventy other traditional chocolatiers create chocolate delicacies in real time.¹²² They make not only traditional shapes, but also fantastic objects such as Haibao, the Expo’s mascot, dragons, and even buildings. Since the earlier exhibit taught appreciation for chocolate’s fine details, visitors now can appreciate this “chocolate art” even more. A glass wall still separates the space between visitors and the special chocolate. The pavilion director links this “easy” strategy directly to the high volume of chocolates sold in the pavilion store at the end of the visitor route.¹²³ This concept resembles the rationale of museums to sell merchandise of their exalted masterpieces. As Greenblatt writes, the dream to possess the art is displaced “...onto the museum gift shop, where the boutique lighting once again serves to

¹²¹ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility,” in *The work of art in the age of its technological reproducibility, and other writings on media*, edited by M. W. Jennings et al; translated by Edmund Jephcott et al (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2008), 23.

¹²² “Chocolate Corner,” Belgian EU Pavilion Shanghai Expo 2010, <http://www.shanghai2010.be/default.aspx> (accessed November 21, 2010).

¹²³ Dubuc, interview.

heighten the desire for acquisition, now of reproductions that stand for the unattainable works of art.”¹²⁴ The desire for chocolate is displaced to the pavilion store.

The celebration of commodities turned art is not exclusive to chocolate at the Belgium Pavilion. Diamonds, beer, Belgian fare, and even dancing flowers powered by solar energy are successfully marketed. The push to create desire works at the Belgium Pavilion and translates into consumer action in the pavilion store located at the exit. For the visitors, the distance between them and the desire object finally collapses; “the veil” of the object disappears in a way, allowing gratification of their wants, finely cultivated throughout their route in the pavilion.¹²⁵

For the chocolatiers involved, the desire of the consumer is essential to their involvement with the Belgium Pavilion. Says Kris Doods, the Chocolate Corner project leader:

I did this to help the industry as a whole. China is too important for one Belgium company... You will see over the next five years newer brands entering China. Godiva is already here, but others will follow... And I want to believe if we didn't do this it might have taken 15 years for the Belgium chocolate companies to get into China.¹²⁶

Economic expansion drives their participation and their display strategies. The goal of chocolate companies at the Shanghai Expo is to first tease the visitors’ taste buds and create the concept of chocolate as luxurious and rare. Housed in the Belgium Pavilion, chocolate not only assumes an aura of delicacy but also an identity as a representation of Belgium. “Belgium” as a nation-state is distilled into marketable commodities like chocolate and diamonds, but these objects hold immense wonder. The means to stimulate wonder in visitors is no different than those used by museums and retail stores. The relationship between display, commerce, and art comes to light at the Belgium Pavilion, a nation of luxury consumption much like Italy.

¹²⁴ Greenblatt, 49-50.

¹²⁵ Benjamin, 23.

¹²⁶ Zachary Franklin, “Belgium Brings a Mountain of Chocolate,” *EU @ Shanghai 2010*, <http://www.euatshanghai2010.eu/news/belgium-brings-mountain-chocolate> (accessed November 21, 2010).

The Finland Pavilion also participates in the dialogue between display and commerce, although its approach slightly differs from those of Belgium and Italy.

Finland seeks to promote itself as a nation of sleek and smart design. The pavilion features three-walled displays that resemble vignettes

and that revolve around different moments and rooms in a Finn's life such as the sauna or the dining room. The vignettes here share a common history with the 1929 "The Architect and the Industrial Arts" exhibition at the Met, which also utilized vignette display. This mode of display effectively convinces the Chinese visitors of the value of featured objects. This strategy translates into the second highest total sales of a pavilion after Belgium.¹²⁷

The first vignette-like display is titled, "Entrance" (Fig. 3.4). It depicts sundresses, messenger bags, and futon seating. With its white-washed setting and boutique lighting, the display emphasizes objects' singularity. In discussing the 1929 Met exhibition, art historian Kristina Wilson argues that vignette display is powerful because it can "totaliz[e] vision"¹²⁸; it combines all the objects into one coherent display. "Entrance" does draw on the power to totalize vision by providing photographs on the back wall, depicting variations of Finns' homes. These photos show how the singular objects in front can be arranged and combined into a colorful, desirable entrance to a house. By combining the vignettes' ability to totalize and the desirability of an isolated object, the Finland Pavilion can market the aesthetics of Finnish interior design.



Figure 3.4. The first vignette-like display, "Entrance," at the Finland Pavilion. Photo by author.

¹²⁷ Helsingin Sanomat, "Finnish design sold well at Shanghai Expo."

¹²⁸ Wilson, 55.

This strategy aligns with the professed aims of the pavilion. According to the pavilion director, one goal of the vignette display is to transfer a perceived benefit onto the visitors from “...using Finnish products or buying services or even visiting Finland as tourists.”¹²⁹ The commercialization of Finnish life has an economic goal. Finland, like Belgium and Italy, becomes represented by an amalgamation of commodities, and its identity is tied with consumption.

At the Shanghai Expo, the nation becomes a commodity, represented by a multitude of smaller merchandise. Organizers use display tactics that inspire wonder and the desire to own part of this national commodity with the hopes that these sentiments might drive greater sales of souvenirs, improved economic relations, and even increased tourism to the country. In other words, the Expo serves to whet the appetite of the Chinese consumer. The Belgium Pavilion, for example, teases visitors’ taste buds at the Chocolate Corner, a carefully contrived representation of chocolate, to turn them into future customers. Each country represented seeks to promote itself as desirable, whether they are exhibiting an object or a lifestyle. Intangible concepts such as class, lifestyle, and even national identity can be marketed and spread through the display of a single object or collection.

Oversaturation

A substantial number of pavilions feature multimedia and digital exhibitions. From 4-D movies to panoramic projections to mini videos on walls, the typical visitor walks through this type of exhibition multiple times in one day. Although the moving image can be an effective communicator, such exhibitions do exhaust audiences. They are so prevalent and popular among pavilion organizers that visitors are bombarded with ephemeral images. While some pavilions do

¹²⁹ Mikko Puustinen, interview by author, tape recording, Finland Pavilion, Shanghai, China, August 23, 2010.

utilize this type of display effectively such as Saudi Arabia, I argue that visitors are oversaturated by such exhibitions, driving them to appreciate other forms of display.

The vogue for multimedia and digital exhibitions can be traced in the history of recent world expositions. In the preceding decades before the Shanghai Expo, such exhibitions were effective communicators and wooed audiences. Especially in the 1990s when the technology was a novel phenomenon, possession of the technology reflected the holder's modernity and power.

Philosopher Umberto Eco argues:

Modern expositions...are most clearly distinct from their nineteenth-century predecessors in according less attention to what they show than to the means of its presentation...with the result that the means of displaying are accorded an increased significance in this regard.¹³⁰

With innovations in technology, the means of display have become more important than what is displayed. Flatscreen TVs and touchscreens are among these innovations that have hedged their way into exhibition spaces to impress crowds, showing off the represented nation's technological prowess. Furthermore, multimedia and digital exhibitions allow the organizer to flash multiple images in a short time. More can be communicated in less time, and the message(s) can reach more people. This rapid-fire imaging is at the heart of commercials – something also close to the missions of Expo delegations.

Multimedia and digital exhibitions' popularity can also be explained by the proven value of the hyper-real. The hyper-real refers to a recreation of reality, but it is a simulation of reality.¹³¹ At Expo '88 in Brisbane, the Australia Pavilion created “a kaleidoscopic portrayal of

life in modern, multicultural
Australia” through high-tech

Figure 2.5. The architect's renderings of the Germany Pavilion. Courtesy of the Germany Pavilion.

¹³⁰ Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 215.

¹³¹ Harvey, 151.

displays.¹³² Titled the Rainbosphere, the exhibition marketed itself as a “world first” in terms of audio-visual production technology.¹³³ Four years later at Expo ’92 in Seville, Spain, anthropologist Penelope Harvey observed that the most popular displays were based not on tangible object artifacts but on the “more ephemeral visual imagery,” such as sound and light show on a lake with images of flamenco dancers.¹³⁴ In earlier expositions, the simulation of reality became more pleasurable than the real. Spectacular audio-visuals garnered and held attention because of its novelty, statement of power, and fast-messaging capabilities.

At the 2010 Shanghai Expo, however, multimedia and digital exhibitions do not affect visitors to the same extent. Almost all pavilions have audio-visual displays. For some, the only exhibitions are such displays. Because they are so prevalent, multimedia and digital exhibitions lose their novelty. The excitement to experience the technology also decreases because it can be accessed in any pavilion. The rarity of the technology in the past decades is lost in the 21st century. Unlike Expo ’88 or ’92, these displays say little about a country’s modernity or power because all possess the technology. In a way, all are on a fairly level playing field, although a substantial number of nations from the global South still do not use the technology in their pavilions. Mini-movies, projection screens, and moving light shows constantly barrage visitors throughout their visit. As a result, people leave unengaged and disenchanted.

The means of display rather than what is actually displayed become mundane and banal in the Expo. In fact, hyper-real technology, such as video, loses its power to educate and entertain to the extent that people tend to appreciate real objects more such as sculpture. For example, in the France Pavilion, visitors briskly walk past the scenography circuit – meters of projection screens with clips of French cities. But, all tourists slow down at a display of

¹³² Bennett, 215.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ Harvey, 151.

masterpieces from the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. Cameras constantly flash in front of Auguste Rodin's *The Bronze Age* (1877-1880). Other examples of the valued real include the *Little Mermaid* at the Denmark Pavilion; the giant sculpture of a baby, *Miguelin*, at the Spain Pavilion, and the *Golden Lady* at the Luxembourg Pavilion.

All the aforementioned valued real are works of sculpture, but this category also encompasses other tangible objects and even live performances. The Austria Pavilion demonstrates the failure of the hyper-real to incite interest and its displacement of entertainment value on another aspect of the pavilion. In the pavilion, multimedia presentations consist most of the pavilion's exhibitions. Visitors walk through white hallways with images of Austria projected upon them. Austrian company Kraftwerk installed seventy-three LCD projectors throughout the 900 square-meter exhibition space.¹³⁵ Says the pavilion brochure:

...[T]he architects SPAN & Zeytinoglu came up with the concept of a flowing space, featuring worlds of sounds and images, in which visitors to the pavilion are led through Austria's topographical and culture, technological and economic hotspots...Modern Austria is going places, and visitors should actively participate in this, they should be able to experience the country's diversity.¹³⁶

The aims of the audio-visual exhibitions echo the goals of such exhibitions at past expos to evidence a country's modernity. Yet, many visitors quickly walk by the projections, barely noticing the colors and scenes on the walls, perhaps feeling oversaturated with all the images. This effect runs contrary to the pavilion's goals of trying not to overload the visitors with too much information.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Federal Press Service in the Austrian Federal Chancellery, *Austria in China: Expo Shanghai 2010* (Vienna: Unicom, 2010), 92.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 90-92.

¹³⁷ Schubert-Zsilavec, interview.

Visitors do not stop until they reach the final hall, a modest concert hall. Here, musicians perform daily Austrian music, which ranges from classical to modern music.¹³⁸ Visitors cram into the hall and sit for a long time. Perhaps they simply wish to rest in air conditioning, but they pay attention to the music much more than the preceding multimedia displays. The Austria Pavilion demonstrates the renewed power of the real to capture audiences at the Shanghai Expo.

Harvey observed at the '92 Expo that people were more impressed with the hyper-real.¹³⁹ Simulations and their artificiality were more enjoyable and therefore more appreciated than the real. The hyper-real communicated ideas like modernity much better than the real. Shanghai differs from this paradigm with an appreciation for the real such as art treasures, live performances, and historical artifacts. Although some like Jean Baudrillard argue that the absolute level of the real may be impossible to discover, the Shanghai Expo reveals that simulations and simulacra are not as important.¹⁴⁰ Especially since the majority of visitors treat their visit as a trip around the world (a simulation exercise in itself), encountering the authentic is a bonus and valued experience. Visitors wait hours in line to take a picture of the *Little Mermaid*, a small statue removed for the first time from her perch in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Digital installations at the Shanghai Expo also reveal lessons on value and rarity. Whereas boutique lighting and other tactics increase an object's aura, digital installations lose aura and value in simple economic terms. The more prevalent multimedia presentations become, the less excitement they generate, and they decrease in value. Treasured objects and even objects elevated to a high status gain value because they are harder to come by. Especially with an

¹³⁸ Federal Press Service in the Austrian Federal Chancellery, 92.

¹³⁹ Harvey, 151.

¹⁴⁰ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. by Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 21.

increased emphasis on interactivity, digital installations break the distance that, by definition, aura creates. This interactivity will be explored in the following section.

Experiential Marketing – Creating Memorable Exhibitions

Delegations at the Expo first focus on piquing visitor attention and creating a positive reputation around their pavilions. Delegations then concentrate on making their pavilion memorable. They compete against one another not only for visitor attention but also for visitor memory. In the previous chapter, I discussed how architecture works to attract attention. In this chapter, display tactics seek to accomplish the goal of being remembered. For most of the foreign delegations, their country's name does not mean much in China. In order to increase consumption and business, a country's name can be a huge marketer. The Expo affords an undeniable opportunity to become a household name. Memorability is the ultimate goal, but becoming memorable can be a major obstacle because few visitors are familiar with most countries at the Expo. Interactive exhibitions attempt to simultaneously entertain and teach. They, however, are not as effective as exhibitions that completely capture attention and envelop visitors in a single experience. Experiential exhibitions at Shanghai prove to be more memorable than interactive ones.

Interactive exhibitions distract for only short periods of time, but effective ones present several benefits. They combine learning with entertainment. They differ from traditional exhibitions in that the visitor actively engages with the exhibition. This engagement breaks down aura. Furthermore, interactivity can have positive political implications in supporting citizen agency. Social scientist Andrew Barry argues:

For advanced liberalism, the task of the public authorities is not to direct or provide for the citizen but to establish the conditions within which the citizen could become an

‘active agent in his or her own government’. Seen in this context, interactive devices have a function, for they may foster agency, experimentation and enterprise, thus enhancing the self-governing capacities of the citizen.¹⁴¹

At the Shanghai Expo, however, equipping Chinese citizens with “self-governing capacities” is not the main priority of the foreign pavilions or of the China Pavilion. The China Pavilion aims to augment national pride, and the foreign pavilions wish to convert the visitors into consumers. Political agency is not on the agenda. If improving citizen agency is a main benefit of interactive exhibitions, then they, whether touchscreens or video games, are almost useless at the Expo.

Interactive exhibitions also fall prey to a host of problems. These problems include the prevalence and visitor treatment of these exhibits. First, similar to multimedia and digital exhibitions, one can find some element of interactivity in many pavilions. The frequency detracts from its novelty. For example, the touchscreen at the Lithuania Pavilion receives far less attention than other components of the interior exhibitions. At the Lithuania Pavilion, a shooting basketball hoops draws people young and old; the deputy commissioner general lists the basketball corner as one of the top three attractions at the pavilion.¹⁴² None of the top draws include interactive touchscreens. These interactive digital exhibitions are not especially effective at the Expo due to the oversaturation of multimedia experiences. They fail to seize and hold onto visitor attention because such they are not a rarity. This medium does not distinguish the country from its neighbors, for visitors seek national distinction.

Interactive exhibitions also suffer from excessive visitor exposure that can leave them broken. By definition, interactive exhibitions invite direct contact, but most interactive exhibitions are not built to endure thousands of people a day. Visitor treatment varies between

¹⁴¹ Andrew Barry, “On interactivity: Consumers, citizens and culture,” in *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, edited by Sharon Macdonald (London: Routledge, 1998), 102.

¹⁴² Aivaras Krianuciunas, interview by author, tape recording, Lithuania Pavilion, Shanghai, China. August 16, 2010.

individuals, and at a monumental scale, this treatment can damage the exhibitions. This erosion is not conducive to becoming a memorable exhibition. For example, the Czech Republic's pavilion houses a cockpit simulation in which the visitor controls a joystick and flies over Czech landscapes.¹⁴³ The joystick had to be repaired several times. In order for nations, their pavilions, and the interior exhibits to be remembered, they must totalize visitor experience, and envelop the visitor fully in it. Exhibitions that totalize visitor experience are far more effective because people are forced to pay attention without other distractions.

Perhaps one of the most memorable pavilions is the Latvia Pavilion; this pavilion demonstrates the power of a total experience and its advantages to nation-branding. This Eastern European country is virtually unheard of in China, and the delegation's main goal is to become imprinted in the minds of the Chinese.¹⁴⁴ To do so, the pavilion's theme is "Technology of Happiness," for the organizers wish for Latvia to become associated with happiness. Aesthetically, bright colors and rounded shapes embody Latvia and happiness (Fig. 3.5).

Architecturally, the pavilion is three-story cylinder with 100,000 reflective squares in shimmering colors.¹⁴⁵ The building houses an air tunnel, and this air tunnel, by stark contrast with other neighboring pavilions, is the only exhibition within the building. Every thirty minutes, a pair of Latvian men performs in the wind tunnel; they run, twist, and flip to the audience's delight. People clap, film the show, and later disseminate it through websites. According to a representative



Figure 3.5. The official logo of the Latvia Pavilion.

¹⁴³ Potuzruk, interview.

¹⁴⁴ Ansis Egle, interview by author, tape recording, Latvia Pavilion, Shanghai, China, August 13, 2010.

¹⁴⁵ Armin, "Manufacturing Happiness," *Brand New: Opinions on Corporate and Brand Identity Work*, August 2, 2010, http://www.underconsideration.com/brandnew/archives/manufacturing_happiness.php.

of the pavilion, the wind tunnel show “fits” into the idea of happiness.¹⁴⁶

This gymnastic demonstration is the only exhibition. When one shuffles into the pavilion, there is little to do but watch the show. As a result, all audience attention turns towards and fixates upon the central wind tunnel. In addition, the show itself creates a vicarious experience, as seeing human bodies float a story above inspires feelings of flight. The sense of drama is there as is the entertainment factor. Lastly, the wind show promotes the Latvia Pavilion’s theme of “Technology of Happiness” because the performance, along with the architecture and visual identity, manufactures happiness within the visitors. Tourists leave feeling elated, and they remember that unique performance and associate it with positive emotions. Latvia gains positive connotations, and its national identity becomes associated with color and a casual atmosphere.

Latvia, a relatively tiny country compared to China, creates a big impact with its interior exhibition. It becomes memorable through a total experience that combines the pavilion’s larger themes and constructed national identity. This cohesion is also integral to becoming remembered. Latvia not only achieves its goal of making an impression but goes further to create goodwill towards the represented country in its nation-branding endeavor through its theme.

Because people visit the Expo to see a microcosm of the world, pavilions that totalize their nation and the experience aid visitors in their grand journey around the world. Experiences rather than interactivity aid visitor memory.

¹⁴⁶ Egle, interview.

Chapter 4: Politics of the Symbol

Symbols by definition are arbitrary signifiers, for their linguistic or visual form has no true connection to the concept of object evoked.¹⁴⁷ At the Expo, symbols pervade the site from map legends to transportation signs to national flags. As countries strive to express identities simply and clearly, symbols gain importance as vectors to communicated these identities. The Expo by its organization and history is connected to the national unit and therefore national identity, but a supra-national or continental identity introduces interesting outcomes. For the first time in history, the European Union (EU) has established a pavilion at a world exposition located outside of continental Europe. Before 2010, the EU was represented only at European expositions. Negotiating a European identity proves to be problematic as EU member states must balance national priorities with the seeming responsibility of representing the EU. First, the appearance of the EU flag outside of member states' pavilions is inconsistent, revealing the identity issues and controversies associated with national symbols.¹⁴⁸ Second, member states manipulate the EU name and flag for national business interests, and the EU becomes a symbol for economic growth. What it signifies becomes even further removed from the actual political community, demonstrating the arbitrary nature of and the special interests behind political symbols.

The Lack of a European Presence

¹⁴⁷ Charles S. Peirce, vol. 2 of *Collected Writings*, ed. Charles Hartshorne, Paul Weiss, and Arthur W. Burks (1931-58): (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931-58), 249.

¹⁴⁸ In this chapter, Belgium will not be discussed in-depth but rather in the next chapter because it will deal exclusively with the EU Pavilion, which is housed within the Belgium Pavilion. Therefore, the dynamics between the EU and Belgium are radically different than other member states at the Expo.

At almost every international event, a country's flag appears to demarcate the presence of the delegation, and the Shanghai Expo is no exception. Flags are an integral part of the visual culture at the Expo. Flags, as national symbols, are sources of political power and serve a variety of functions.¹⁴⁹ They can rally support for government initiatives, assemble people for movements and politicians, and serve as props of protest. Flags tend to represent an abstract notion of a group such as a nation without representing the group's "utilitarian" functions.¹⁵⁰ In other words, waving the flag conjures up positive sentiments associated with a specific group rather than the actual structures that constitute the group. Historically, however, flags can ignite controversy suggesting that what it signifies can be fragile. The inconsistency of the EU flag's appearance reveals issues relating to solidarity and fragmentation.

First and foremost, flags are symbols. Like all signs, symbols lend meaning to an image. According to philosopher Charles Peirce, the symbol is arbitrary in that the image does not resemble what it signifies.¹⁵¹ In addition, the interpreter is of utmost importance to a symbol, for without the "symbol-using animal," the signifier would fail to embody any connection to the signified.¹⁵² Flags epitomize the definition of the symbol because they suggest the concept of another entity unrelated to the patterned or colored rectangle. National flags evoke the ideals of a country, its people and culture, and values. Without the attached meaning, flags become empty objects. Therefore, what is signified gives the image its political importance, but the signified can be changed and manipulated because its attachment is arbitrary. Therefore, flags as symbols can have unstable visual identities depending on its use. This is the case at the Expo.

¹⁴⁹ Robert T. Schatz and Howard Lavine, "Waving the Flag: National Symbolism, Social Identity, and Political Engagement," in *Political Psychology* 28, no.3 (2007), 330.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 332.

¹⁵¹ Peirce, 249.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 299.

A flag primarily functions to form a specific group identity. As sociologist Emile Durkheim states, when clans, or in this case nations, choose emblems, the emblems come to symbolize the group because it is part of the group formation process.¹⁵³ According to political scientists Robert Schatz and Howard Lavine, the appearance of national symbols such as flags render national identity a salient topic. These physical symbols are “manifest object[s] of identification,” working to produce a group identity based on an abstract concept of the group.¹⁵⁴ National symbols not only arouse group identification but also differentiate those within from those outside of the group. Furthermore, it represents the group entity “across time” and connects the entity to “a larger meaning and purpose”¹⁵⁵; in a sense, the flag then embodies two signifieds, the entity and the entity’s purpose. It follows that inclusion of the EU flag with its blue background and gold stars helps to create European identity and European community cohesion at the Shanghai Expo.

Because flags contain political importance, they are subject to controversy based on their use despite the fact that the object, the signifier, may not be important. The burning of the flag epitomizes this concept. Essentially to burn a flag is to set a piece of fabric on fire, but the act carries deep meaning. It is a sacrilegious, rebellious, and at most times unlawful to burn a flag. In fact many laws and guidelines exist to govern the use of flags because they evoke strong visual identities. When such rules are transgressed, controversy follows. In 1989 the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, “Dread” Scott Tyler unveiled his installation, “What Is The Proper Way To Display A U.S. Flag?” at a juried minority student exhibition. His artwork featured a ledger and notebook on the gallery wall in which visitors could write down answers to his question. In order to reach the notebook, however, one had to walk on an American flag, which was laid on the

¹⁵³ Emile Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), 230-1.

¹⁵⁴ Schatz, 332.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 333.

floor. From the beginning, Tyler's exhibit reflected the problems of national symbol misuse, for the jury worried more about its "possible illegality" than its provoking message.¹⁵⁶ Within a week of the opening, the flag display caused uproar across the country, unleashing violent reactions and a lawsuit in response to the alleged desecration. This example illustrates the power of political symbols and the emotions and strong reactions it can evoke through its usage. What it signifies, whether it is freedom or a community, requires some form of protection because it is fragile.

The signified can be not only fragile but also not cohesive. A lack of cohesion such as a contested identity can lead to tension in the use of the symbol. Flags often are sources to contest identity because they can have multiple signifieds that do not necessarily align with the population. For example, the *hinomaru* flag of Japan remains an embattled symbol within Japanese society. The red circle centered on a white rectangle represents the days of imperial Japan for many. In fact, the national flag and anthem (another national symbol although linguistic and not visual) are viewed as extreme right wing.¹⁵⁷ The political left sees these symbols as not representative of "secularized, demilitarized Japan" and as detrimental to the idea of democracy.¹⁵⁸ For some Japanese, the *hinomaru* flag accurately represents the nation, while for others it does not. This divide leaves the symbol fragmented. As a result, what it signifies also starts to crumble.

The Japanese flag's divisiveness partially explains why Japan chooses not to wave any flag at the Expo. The country cannot present a fragmented front. In addition, it fears stirring old wounds stemming from WWII. In an interview, a representative of the Japan Pavilion says,

¹⁵⁶ Carol Becker, "Art Thrust into the Public Sphere," *Art Journal* 50, no. 3, Censorship I (1991), 66.

¹⁵⁷ Roger B. Johns, "Victims or Victimizers?: Museums, Textbooks, and the War Debate in Contemporary Japan," in *The Journal of Military History* 69, no.1 (2005), 192.

¹⁵⁸ Andrew Bernstein, "Whose Fuji?: Religion, Region, and State in the Fight for a National Symbol," in *Monumenta Nipponica* 63, no.1 (2008), 89.

“[T]aking this measure this time is to give consideration to the Chinese anti-Japanese sentiment... We are purposely preventing the things we show here from getting dragged into politics.”¹⁵⁹ Japan sees the Expo as an opportunity to patch a historically strained relationship with China. By refusing to wave the Japanese flag, the Japan Pavilion acknowledges the power flags hold to convey poignant political messages. The choice to wave one or not and which one reveals much about how a country views itself and its participation at the Expo.

Both the examples of the 1989 flag exhibition and the *hinomaru* flag showcase that what a flag symbolizes is politically volatile and extremely fragile. Its usage is significant because the flag carries immense symbolic weight. Inconsistencies reflect weak identity and reveal tensions regarding group dynamics. Therefore, at the Expo, the appearance of the EU flag outside member states’ pavilions should shed light onto the EU community. This chapter answers how the EU’s representation through its members at the Expo might reflect its real reaches and limits on the real international stage. I argue that the EU community lacks solidarity and is fragmented, which leads member states to act on their own accord instead of in a concerted effort.

But before analyzing the EU flag’s appearance, a short introduction to the EU is needed to understand the importance of the supra-national organization within the politics of its states. The European Union evolved from the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), founded in 1950 by six European nations. These six countries are France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, and they form the backbone of the EU. For them, the success of the EU is a national mission to promote peace and prevent further continental war. Furthermore, the formation and development of the EU has been a major part of their recent history and politics. Since its inception, the EU has expanded to twenty-seven countries, and it is China’s

¹⁵⁹ Key, “Shanghai World Expo: Japan Pavilion not raising Japanese flag to give consideration to anti-Japanese sentiment in China,” *China Hush*, May 9, 2010, <http://www.chinahush.com/2010/05/09/shanghai-world-expo-japan-pavilion-not-raising-japanese-flag-to-give-consideration-to-anti-japanese-sentiment-in-china/>.

largest trading partner. Therefore, one might expect a significant EU presence in and around member states' pavilions. Yet, just the opposite occurs. The original six players do little, if anything, to assert their membership in the EU and even less to project a communal European identity. As far as the unknowing visitor is concerned, these countries are not part of the economic and political union.

Before describing which flags are present, it must first be clarified that hoisting flags at the Expo is completely a matter of conscious choice. In the six original members of the EU (France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg), the flag choices vary. Germany and Luxembourg fly no flags. France flies only the national flag. Italy and the Netherlands fly the national flag, the EU flag, and the Chinese flag. And Belgium flies both the national and EU flag. The visibility of the EU flag is inconsistent; this visibility starkly differs from the 2005 Aichi Expo in Japan in which all member states flew the EU flag along side their national flags.¹⁶⁰

As sociologist Robert Shanafelt argues, the act of hoisting a flag creates a political hierarchy.¹⁶¹ Those who stand below it must be in deference to the group or nation that the flag represents. By lifting the EU or Chinese flag to the same height as the national flag, an equality of deference is achieved. This deference signifies the recognition of the EU's and China's power and influence, especially on the Expo site. The Netherlands, Italy, and Belgium express this respect to the supra-national community. Through the appearance of flags, these countries articulate support for the EU as an abstract concept – that is, as a constructed European community rather than a supra-national political organization. The EU flags performs a group role to distinguish those within the community from those outside of it.

¹⁶⁰ Dubuc, interview.

¹⁶¹ Robert Shanafelt, "The Nature of Flag Power," *Politics and the Life Sciences* 27, no.2 (2008), 16.

How do we understand member states that do not fly the EU flag, and what explains this decision? Perhaps the choice is connected to the presence of a EU Pavilion at the Expo, which embodies the abstract notion of the EU, just as national pavilions symbolize nations. Because of the appearance of the EU Pavilion, member states of the EU may feel that it is not their responsibility to evoke the European identity.¹⁶² By the simple presence of the EU Pavilion, the community of “Europe” is fractured because not all member states choose to fly European flags. Without flying European flags, the process of forming the European community is dampened. The inconsistency in the appearance of flags, in general, renders the identity formation process less durable, and the identity of the EU becomes less conscious to society.¹⁶³ In the Expo case, the majority Chinese society becomes less conscious of European identity.

The flags of the six founding members of the EU demonstrate that the European community as an abstract group is weak at the Expo. The union does matter to the six countries, but it is the institutions and structures of the EU that matter, which are concepts not summed up in national symbols, such as flags, which tend to conjure sentiments. Simply looking at newspapers in these six respective countries will elucidate that EU issues are core issues for these countries, especially when it comes to economics. In the world of the Expo, however, there is no space for such discussion, as everything from architecture to food vending must speak to the all-encompassing nation. National interests edge out European ones, as representing a physical land away from China is the primary goal for most.

Integration of EU into National History

¹⁶² Weird Vonk, interview by author, tape recording, Netherlands Pavilion, Shanghai, China, August 20, 2010.

¹⁶³ Durkheim, 231.

Several members of the European Union do, however, mention the union within their pavilions. This inclusion does not conflict with the findings of the previous section and chapter. In speaking of the EU, these countries are not attempting to articulate a European identity. They, too, have left that up to the EU Pavilion. Rather, these countries in their self-interest use the EU to promote their own country. Countries such as Cyprus, Poland, and Lithuania share relatively recent admission into the EU and integrate their accession into their national timeline. Perhaps inclusion of the EU within the pavilion marks a historical achievement, although not a major exhibition focus. Mentioning the EU becomes a tactic of display to turn visitors into potential future consumers. Membership is a stamp of approval and conveys credibility for economic investment. Such countries fail to address issues of a European identity because it is not relevant to their being at the Expo.

Lithuania in particular demonstrates the European stamp of approval to prove economic soundness. For candidate countries, admittance into the EU is a perceived economic boon with eligibility for structural funding, access to more markets, freer movement of labor, etc. This reasoning holds true especially for eastern European countries and former members of the Soviet Union. Indeed, since Lithuania's admittance into the union in May 2004, its economy has grown significantly. At a conservative estimate, the economy has grown at a rate of eight percent per year pre-global financial crisis.¹⁶⁴ In short, EU membership has benefited Lithuania greatly in terms of economics. It has given the Baltic nation stability, infrastructure improvements, and

¹⁶⁴ "Lithuania – Country Brief," The World Bank, last modified September 2009, accessed March 5, 2011, <http://web.worldbank.org/>.

increased development.¹⁶⁵ Since its separation from the Soviet Union, Lithuania has grown economically almost each year, except recently due to the global financial crisis.¹⁶⁶

According to the pavilion deputy director, Lithuania is not very well known in China, and if the name is recognized, it is in conjunction with the Soviet Union.¹⁶⁷ Its mission for participating at the Expo is to increase the country's visibility as a step in promoting economic benefits of investing in Lithuania. Though basketball, air balloons, and other "Lithuanian" activities dominate the pavilion, the appearance of the European Union on its historical timeline is important. The EU is included solely for the purpose to cement Lithuania's economic credibility. Its appearance is a symbol meant to convince potential investors.



Figure 4.1. The interior wall of the Lithuania Pavilion features maps and a timeline, but this information is hidden behind interactive stands. Photo by author.

Along the interior wall of the Lithuania Pavilion runs basic information about the country. Maps pinpoint the location of the Baltic nation, and a timeline details major events in its history. The EU makes its only appearance in the pavilion on this timeline, which is partially obscured by the interactive stations (Fig. 4.1). Lithuania is one of several countries to place admittance into the EU onto a national timeline. The events on the timeline are state-building events that have shaped the evolution of Lithuania. EU integration shares equal importance with events such as the Battle of Zalgiris in 1410 in which the Grand Duchy of Lithuania defeated

¹⁶⁵ "Enlargement – 3 years after: Safer for all Europeans on the move, improving road safety in Lithuania," *European Commission*, last modified October 30, 2010, accessed March 5, 2011, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/5th_enlargement/safer_for_all_europeans_on_the_move_en.htm.

¹⁶⁶ "Lithuania – Country Brief."

¹⁶⁷ Krianuciunas, interview.

German eastwards expansion. Another example of an important year is 1990 in which Lithuania was the first republic to declare itself independent of the Soviet Union. Therefore, EU admittance becomes part of Lithuania's state-building history. It would seem as if the EU's importance to Lithuania should also concern identity, as all the other events have contributed to contemporary ideas of Lithuanian identity. Yet, the pavilion exhibitions and publications focus on the EU for its economic processes. The only mention of a European community is located within the pavilion bilingual brochure: "Lithuanians always have regarded themselves, and been regarded, as Europeans. And so when the European Union accepted Lithuania as a full member in 2004, it was a moment that was at once exhilarating and ordinary."¹⁶⁸ This enumeration of Lithuania's accession is relatively dull, making no comment on "European-ness" save for the inevitability of its entrance into the union. Rather, the statement simply acts to confirm Lithuania's membership.

I argue that like this statement, the timeline exhibition and its marker of the European Union act in the same manner. Making no comment or interpretation of "European-ness," the inclusion is only a statement of membership and acts as a symbol. This symbol, however, does not represent the EU as an entity or idea, but rather qualities to reference the symbol's user, Lithuania. The symbol accomplishes two tasks. First, it represents Lithuania as economically stable and viable. Secondly, instead of connoting any cultural or identity value such as a flag, the inclusion of the EU connotes economic meaning. This meaning is generated by the aims of the Lithuanian delegation, which includes improving trade ties with China in the long-term.

This symbolic use is articulated in multiple arenas. For example, in the pavilion's official magazine, *Made in Lithuania* (2010), the EU is used to describe the business opportunities in Lithuania. The EU acts as an adjective of Lithuania's enticing business opportunities. A symbol captures an abstract notion, and the EU holds the abstract idea of a sound economy without truly

¹⁶⁸ Jeremy Hildreth, *Lithuania: Expo 2010 Shanghai* (Vilnius, Lithuania: Sapnu sala, 2010), 11.

referencing the organization of the EU. The EU sign in the pavilion does not represent a concrete, tangible object (the union) but rather looser ideas (good investment). Lithuania manipulates the EU sign to serve national interest purposes.

The EU signifies Lithuania's economic opportunity, but the use of this symbol also reflects the meaning of what lays behind the symbol. While the symbol of the EU employed by the Lithuania Pavilion speaks to an abstract notion of economic opportunity, it reveals how a member state may regard the union. This particular usage of the sign shows how the EU represents more of an economic rather than a cultural community. Pavilion deputy director, Aivaras Krianuciunas, echoes this understanding of the EU when he says:

[W]e are a European Union country. It's...[t]he same buying and selling regulations...No customs between the countries just helps. Globalization came already ten years ago, and now everything can be done really fast, so this is just one or two to make it easier, to make a business, to travel, to do other things.¹⁶⁹

In Lithuania's eyes, the EU is little more than an economic community. The political union is irrelevant and therefore plays no part in Lithuania's representation of the nation. The concept of a European identity plays no role unlike how the EU seeks to construct "European-ness" (which will be explored in the next chapter). As the quotation from the bilingual brochure implies, being European is simply a part of Lithuania's geographical location and not through sharing similar cultures or values as other EU members.¹⁷⁰

The meaning of the EU symbol in the Lithuania Pavilion remains consistent with the display and exhibition strategies explored in previous chapters. Countries, motivated by economic and commercial concerns, aim to create more business in China. Creating a tight

¹⁶⁹ Krianuciunas, interview.

¹⁷⁰ The first two sentences of the section titled "Lithuania in Europe" read as such: "Lithuanians have always regarded themselves, and been regarded, as Europeans. And so when the European Union accepted Lithuania as a full member in 2004, it was a moment that was at once exhilarating and ordinary." For more see Hildreth, *Lithuania: Expo 2010 Shanghai*.

national representation aids this motive as does having good business credentials, of which membership in the EU is one. As we have witnessed, the delegations at the Expo manipulate representation to improve their public image, and believable economic credentials are part of this image.

The symbol of the EU is used out of national self-interest. In the case of Lithuania and others, what is signified changes from that of the EU flag. Whereas the EU flag evokes notions of identity, the EU symbol within pavilions has little to do with “European-ness” or community. The EU symbol is detached from the political and economic organization, the members of the European Parliament, its laws and treaties, and its culture. Rather, the EU signifies stable, worthy, and credible business investment. Again, the usage of the EU affirms the definition of the symbol in that what it signifies is an arbitrary and unrelated assignment.

Pursuing Politics and Policy Alone

Symbolically, the European Union serves as a trade credential. It signifies a sound investment because the user of the symbol is a member of a large economic community. Yet, it does not directly signify the community. At the Expo, members of the EU manipulate this symbol to forge deals with China and Chinese businesses without EU intervention. These actions of pursuing politics alone follow nation’s self-interests and are seen repeatedly throughout the Expo site. Unlike the 1992 Seville Expo in which EU members gave the impression of a united project, the Shanghai Expo differs in this paradigm of action.¹⁷¹

Although architecture was previously discussed, these nations’ pavilions further reflect these missions to strike deals alone and not in conjunction with the supra-national organization. Within each pavilion, each nation has specially dedicated space to entertain guests. These VIP

¹⁷¹ Harvey, 67.

spaces are secluded within pavilions, and its purpose is to please visitors and foster greater inclinations towards the hosting nation. These spaces also express a country's identity and culture because it must aid the country in being remembered by important visitors.

Members of the EU almost exclusively use their own VIP spaces rather than the one provided by the EU Pavilion. Each member advocates for itself rather than letting the union advocate for it. In the same line of thought, this separation of efforts creates more competition for partnership with China and goes against what the union touts as its "enhanced partnerships." These are agreements that concern "economic, political, social, and cultural elements" of the relationship between the EU and China.¹⁷² By forgoing a joint European effort, member states choose to pursue economic relationships with the Expo host country alone, which is evidenced by the architecture of VIP spaces and by the volumes of trade deals signed within these spaces.

Sweden exemplifies this practice for several reasons. First, pavilion exhibition spaces and promotional brochures never mention the EU. Second, the main aim of the delegation is to forge more partnerships, which explains the gigantic appropriation of space for VIP guests. Because more than half of Sweden's gross domestic product (GDP) relies on exports, entering and securing Chinese consumers is of utmost importance in ensuring Swedish success and economic stability.¹⁷³ The goals of the pavilion outstrip the temporality of the Expo: "We are here to not only showcase Sweden for this six-month period, but we are here to build a platform for a continuous dialogue after Expo has finished."¹⁷⁴ As the interiors seek to create consumers from visitors through strategic displays of IKEA furniture and Pippi Longstocking cut-outs, the brochures and VIP spaces seek to do the same but with upper echelons of society.

¹⁷² "Activities of the European Union – External Relations," *EUROPA – The official website of the European Union*, last updated February 3, 2011, accessed March 6, 2011, http://europa.eu/pol/ext/index_en.htm.

¹⁷³ Nina Ekstrand, interview by author, tape recording, Sweden Pavilion, Shanghai, China, August 13, 2010.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

The brochures promote positive Sino-Swedish relations and especially what Sweden can offer to China. Every image and word articulates the benefits of improving relations and positions the Swedes as the best option to beat out other competitors at the Expo. According to the main brochure, “At Expo 2010 Sweden will offer solutions for sustainable renewal and growth. Working with trusted partners in business and society, we can meet global demands and make sustainable development a reality.”¹⁷⁵ Such strategic words combine with the architecture of the VIP space to entice and convince Chinese government and business leaders. At the heart of what is being offered is national in nature and has little to do with Europe.

The architecture of the VIP space is designed to give visitors a sense of privilege and exclusivity. By doing so, the Sweden Pavilion is able to give off similar vibes, making whatever it offers within from exhibits to trade deals seem more alluring. The VIP space consists of two floors of the pavilion and occupies a third of the pavilion. Relative to other pavilions, this proportion is large and signifies the importance the Swedish delegation places on its VIP guests.¹⁷⁶ With over 1000 square meters of space which with to play, the pavilion architects have allotted a fair amount to conference rooms, a rooftop deck, as well as a bar. Physically this space relates its superior position because it is the highest level in the pavilion, denoting a hierarchy of priority and power. The rooftop deck and bar

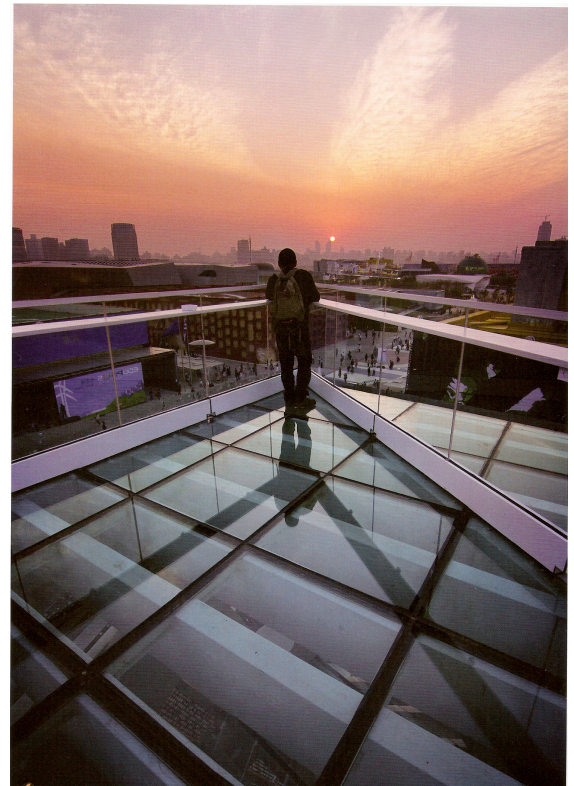


Figure 4.2. A visitor peers over the rooftop deck and surveys the Expo below. Photo courtesy of Sweco.

¹⁷⁵ Swedish Committee for Expo 2010 in Shanghai, *Sweden Expo 2010: Spirit of Innovation*, 2010, 4.

¹⁷⁶ Ekstrand, interview.

emanate, too, a sense of privilege, through its view above the Expo grounds. Like the Eiffel Tower at the 1889 Paris exposition universelle, the position at the pinnacle of the pavilion lends the visitor a “sense of panoramic command” because it is a position of surveillance.¹⁷⁷ This position reinforces the dominant position that comes with a high vantage point (Fig. 4.2).

To an extent, the Sweden Pavilion relies on this constructed sense of dominance and exclusivity to market itself. Although it may not necessarily be the tipping point to signing a deal, the architecture and amenities within the pavilion experience do leverage Sweden’s position vis-à-vis potential Chinese business. The pavilion also capitalizes on the temporality of the Expo event to rarefy Sweden. The view from the pavilion is temporary, as is the rooftop bar sponsored by Absolut Vodka, a well-known Swedish brand. For the Expo, the Swedish delegation commissioned a limited-edition bottle specially designed to appeal to the Chinese (Fig. 4.3).

Named “Absolut 72 Transformations,” the pop art design recalls the popular folktale of the Monkey King and the 72 magical transformations he undergoes throughout his epic journey¹⁷⁸. The use of the limited edition combined with a rare, power-inspiring view makes VIP guests believe that their experience is precious and exclusive. It guides them in thinking more positively about Sweden, the nation, and in thinking that the business opportunities presented by the delegation are just as valuable.

For the Swedish delegation, the accomplishments during the Expo include a number of strategic partnerships formed. In June 2010, five environmental deals were signed at the Sweden Pavilion, and eighty percent of the people present were Chinese. The IVL Swedish Environment



Figure 4.3. Absolut 72 Transformations. Image courtesy of CNNgo.com

¹⁷⁷ James D. Herbert, *Paris 1937: Worlds on exhibition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 25.

¹⁷⁸ Louise Chen, “Absolut Vodka Recruits Artist Gao Yu to Design a Monkey-Themed Bottle,” *Artinfo.com*, June 29, 2010, <http://www.artinfo.com/news/story/35052/absolut-vodka-recruits-artist-gao-yu-to-design-a-monkey-themed-bottle/>.

Research Institute agreed to continue cooperation with three cities in China with the end goal of more research and development collaboration between the two nations.¹⁷⁹ In the beginning of July, the pavilion hosted the Sino-Swedish SymbioCity Forum, a joint event between the Swedish Ministry of the Environment and the Chinese Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development. At the forum, the Swedish signed an environmental technology agreement with the Chinese. In addition, the pavilion serves as a platform for Swedish companies to promote development projects and technologies to the city of Wuxi, where these companies are seeking to build an eco-city, or an environmentally sustainable city.¹⁸⁰ The Sweden Pavilion acts as a catalyst and promoter for these emerging political and economic relationships. The VIP experience of the pavilion along with promotional brochures all advocates the rarity and benefits to working with Sweden, but the voice of the European Union is deafeningly absent.

Summary

In terms of sustaining a European community by the member states, it is safe to say that such a community does not exist. The symbols of the EU used within member states' pavilions articulate idea of economic opportunity. In pavilions where the EU is sideskirted, the idea of the Union along with the being of the Union ceases to exist. Perhaps this outcome results from the presence of the European Union Pavilion, which member states interpret to displace the responsibility of representing the union onto the EU Pavilion rather than onto themselves. Perhaps, it results from the geo-political context of the Expo in that this large-scale event occurs in a booming China. The time and place of the Expo provides incentives to the nation-states

¹⁷⁹ "Five new agreements signed at Expo 2010 in Shanghai," *IVL Swedish Environment Research Institute*, June 14, 2010, <http://www.ivl.se/english/ivlstartpage/news/newsarchive/fivenewagreementssignedatexpo2010inshanghai.5.4a08c3cb1291c3aa80e8000226.html>.

¹⁸⁰ "Sustainable cities Swedish theme at Expo 2010 in Shanghai," *Government Offices of Sweden*, June 28, 2010, <http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/12872/a/148811>.

seeking economic opportunities when their economies at home have been hard hit by the 2007 global financial crisis. Drawing on the tenants of liberalism, especially in times of hardship and instability, countries are more inclined to act as independent actors than relying on others. The economic climate may explain the nations' behavior at the Expo, especially in regards to pursuing trade agreements. It also explains the usage of the EU symbol and the lack of a European community as well as the allocation of VIP space.

Chapter 5: Unstable Visual Identity: The European Union

The members of the European Union do not present a cohesive European identity for several reasons, but all believe that the responsibility to represent the EU falls onto the EU Pavilion's shoulders. For the first time in world expo history, the EU has a pavilion at an expo outside of Europe. Due to constricting circumstances such as last-minute planning and a slim budget, however, the EU delegation was unable to secure an independent, free-standing pavilion. After asking member states, Belgium finally agreed to host the EU within its pavilion because the next EU president was Belgian. The Belgium Pavilion became the Belgium-EU Pavilion.

Consisting of about five people, the EU Expo delegation lacks manpower and is daunted by the monstrous task of introducing a supranational organization that even scholars have difficulty defining. One of their main aims is to present European culture and identity. The architectural embodiment of power reveals the weakness of EU delegation to act like an authoritative supranational organization. In addition, European identity remains unresolved due to the loose coupling between Europe's changing territorial boundaries and cultural collectivity; what is European is more easily identified by what it is not. And finally, the EU's lack of influence at the Expo reflects a larger lack of influence over its member states in contemporary foreign policy, especially vis-à-vis China. A strong European community does not exist because members see fewer incentives to act in unison and more to act as independent actors.

An Organization Bound by the Nation

Many delegations of EU member states express dissatisfaction at the European community's absence at the Expo. Several cite "no real cooperation" and "talking heads" in

reference to the EU delegation.¹⁸¹ Perhaps the EU's physical space limits the delegation's ability to promote real cooperation. The space in which the EU Pavilion is located suppresses the union's supranational power because the EU becomes subordinate to a nation: Belgium. The architecture of the EU Pavilion restrains its power and authority, resulting from the clashing of identities and exhibitions. As demonstrated in earlier chapters, a strong sense of cohesion creates an effective pavilion, while disconnects are obstacles to success. The EU-Belgium Pavilion lacks cohesion because two separate groups with different end goals are forced to work with each other. The most tension occurs at the borders between these two pavilions. The structural, architectural inconsistencies translate into a weak European community.

The Belgian delegation started preparing its pavilion in 2008 with a budget of 10 million euros.¹⁸² The European Commission committed 11 million euros in May 2009, a year before the Expo opening.¹⁸³ By then, most countries were already in the construction process. Compared with other delegations, the EU lagged behind; they were still in the planning stages, which most groups had finished by 2008 and as early as 2007. It was too late for the EU to pursue its own space, and it opted to rent about 1000 square meters from the Belgium Pavilion, whose interiors are just over 5600 square meters. It decided on Belgium because the country would assume the EU presidency halfway through 2010 and because Brussels is the capital of Europe.¹⁸⁴ Even in a sprawling site, space is precious at the Expo because each delegation has limited time, resources, and space to maximize visitor impact. Therefore, member states were unwilling to share valuable space with the EU Pavilion, but Belgium finally acquiesced.

¹⁸¹ See for instance Ansis Egle, interview, and Jiri Potuzruk, interview.

¹⁸² Belgian EU Pavilion, "Architecture."

¹⁸³ Nannan Wang, "EU Pavilion fact sheet," EU @ Shanghai 2010 (accessed March 17, 2011), <http://www.euatshanghai2010.eu/eu-pavilion-fact-sheet>.

¹⁸⁴ Chloe Lahousse, interview by author, tape recording, EU Pavilion, Shanghai, China, August 10, 2010.

The hasty conceptualization process of the EU Pavilion reflects itself in the architecture and layout of the EU-Belgium Pavilion. Throughout the pavilion, Belgium dominates the supranational organization. This power play essentially reverses the theoretical power structure between the EU and its member states. Instead of the EU being an authority, it now subjects itself to Belgium, who gives the EU access to its business center, auditorium, and other facilities.¹⁸⁵ Visually, this translates into the Belgian signage above the EU's, which diminishes the EU delegation's visibility and subsequently its power to attract (Fig. 5.1).

In the pavilion, this reversed relationship becomes problematic for the visitors and results in a lack of cohesion for both delegations. For example, the transition from one pavilion to the



Figure 5.1. The name of the European Union is obscured by queues and its placement on the glass front.

other is unclear and indistinct. Most people who enter the pavilion believe that they are visiting Belgium and not the EU. As discussed in the first chapter, the unit of the nation is the primary, dominant unit of understanding for visitors, and so entering the EU Pavilion generates confusion.¹⁸⁶

The confusion is exacerbated given that international organizations such as the

United Nations are housed in another area in the Expo. Initially, the designers of the EU-Belgium Pavilion envisioned two separate entrances, so that each delegation would have its own entrance. This idea was discarded, however, for logistical reasons because two lines would be

¹⁸⁵ Wang, "EU Pavilion fact sheet."

¹⁸⁶ Dubuc, interview.

much harder to manage than one.¹⁸⁷ Instead, one queue and one entrance exist. Visitors flow first through the EU Pavilion and then into the Belgium Pavilion, but their entrance into Belgium is not the original welcoming exhibition intended in preliminary designs.

The placement of the EU Pavilion within Belgium’s building imposes on and derails the Belgian delegation’s original plans. The EU delegation causes more trouble instead of easing processes, as they are supposed to do as a supranational group. The original entrance to Belgium is a library of famous citizens with a large overarching message, “Welcome to Belgium” (Fig. 5.2).¹⁸⁸ Yet during the Expo, visitors leave the last room of the EU, a temporary exhibition room subject to two-week changes, and “suddenly” find themselves in the Belgium-China friendship corner.¹⁸⁹ This



Figure 5.2. The library of famous Belgians was intended to be the welcome entrance to the pavilion. Photo by author.

space was not intended to act as the entrance and should be viewed in the middle of a visitor’s experience. Indeed, the transition between the two pavilions and between the two delegations is unclear.

Anthropologist Maryon McDonald argues that the tension between nationalism and Europe is a constant threat to the creation of a totally integrated Europe. Nationalism stagnates integration.¹⁹⁰ The same idea can be applied to determine the strength or weakness of the EU Pavilion. It is tightly confined within the Belgium Pavilion. Because the Belgian delegation

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ McDonald, 53.

holds more power as the landlord, it promotes itself more effectively through greater visibility of the pavilion name. The EU name is almost hidden behind lines of waiting people (Fig. 5.1). The strong expectation of the nation continues to “derail” and stagnate the construction of Europe.¹⁹¹ Furthermore, like other member states, Belgium includes the EU within its own exhibitions but as a symbol to build its own national identity. It, too, removes the organization of the European Union from the symbol and attributes it with other meaning.

For example, in the beginning of the visitor’s route through the Belgium Pavilion, a room is filled with short, silent videos. Each aims to show a different aspect or dimension of Belgium from food, to traveling, to technology. One video projects Belgium’s global power and influence. Similar to timelines in other pavilions, the video seeks to place Belgium in a glorified historical trajectory. In this video, the screen flashes images of the Atomium, the monumental legacy of the 1958 Brussels World’s Fair. These images anchor Belgium as a significant player in the history of world expositions. More importantly, the video features several panoramic shots of EU buildings located in Brussels. Although the EU has no official capital, Brussels is considered the capital of Europe. The EU flag flies prominently in front of each building, and the Belgium delegation uses the flag to boost its representation of international power. In a sense, the same power play within the architecture of the Belgium-EU Pavilion is repeated and reinforced in the video. Belgium has international influence because it hosts a supranational organization, which increases its national power.

The construction and the diffusion of a European identity are extremely difficult under Expo circumstances. It is unsurprising that member states do not feel a sense of European community at the Shanghai Expo. With the dominant paradigm of the nation and the suppressive

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

architecture of the EU Pavilion, the EU delegation finds itself fighting an uphill battle to successfully communicate with the audience.

Unresolved Identity

Even though the EU delegation faces obstacles in its Expo debut, European identity has and remains problematic for those pursuing the integration of Europe. What specifically makes someone “European” has been under constant revision in the past decades. Often, the “other” defines Europeanness. In the case of the EU, the European identity is weak because the coupling between territorial and cultural boundaries is fundamentally inconsistent and fragmented.

Identity is closely linked with history and historicity. The European narrative has undergone many significant changes in the last century. This narrative is subject to political revision, rendering it relatively instable. According to McDonald, two histories of Europe exist. These versions are the “history of the category” and one “composed of moral exhortation.”¹⁹² In the first, binary opposition is key. At its origins, Europe was defined as the Greeks against everyone else; later this became Rome versus the “barbarians”, and soon afterwards the Christians against the pagans.¹⁹³ In this “history of the category,” Europe is constantly reinvented according to the opposition, or the “other.” The narrative is discontinuous and involves being on the “right” side of history. Unfortunately, not all member states of the EU have always been on the “right” side. It is difficult for members to identify with this formation and conception of Europe, and finding a common Europeanness rooted in history is impossible.

¹⁹²*Ibid.*, 48-50.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 48.

The second narrative implies a moral trajectory to the conception of Europe and has been a popular history for the past century.¹⁹⁴ In this version, an integrated and united Europe is the end goal, similar to how Marxism stresses the proletariat revolution. Greece and Rome established principles, while World War Two (WWII) catalyzed unification. The communist threats further pushed Europe together, although the collapse of the Soviet Union did complicate the European integration.¹⁹⁵ Member states theoretically can identify with this history of Europe because it underlines the importance of unity in the face of diversity. Yet, this historicity remains problematic in assuming that nations willingly suppress nationalism for a pan-European community. The possible, and real, fragmentation is not considered.

Since the mid-1980s, the European Parliament, the legislative branch of the EU, has pushed for the “People’s Europe,” in which Europe should be regarded as a “humanistic enterprise” and not simply a political and economic union.¹⁹⁶ To raise consciousness and to promote this new view of Europe, Parliament placed much significance on “symbols” and “culture.”¹⁹⁷ For example, the first European flag was hoisted in Brussels on May 29, 1986. Other objects such as commemorative stamps, sports tees, history books and a common passport were envisioned. Despite this new effort, the fundamentals of European identity remain unclear. The main tenet of European identity, “unity in diversity,” also confuses and prompts questions. What qualities are attached to this identity? What differentiates this identity from other regional or supranational ones?

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁹⁵ Cris Shore, “Inventing the ‘People’s Europe’: Critical Approaches to European Community ‘Cultural Policy,’” *Man* 28, no. 4 (1993), 780.

¹⁹⁶ P. Fontaine, *A citizen’s Europe* (Luxembourg: Office of Official Publications of the European Communities, 1991), 6.

¹⁹⁷ McDonald, 54.

To better understand how the EU delegation visually constructs a European identity at the Expo, one must first look at national identity construction. Identity formation processes are artificial constructions but are in some way based in historical, cultural, or social conditions. In the idealized model of the nation-state, the identity must encompass the “imagined community” that seeks a common point from which to communicate. As sociologist Rogers Brubaker posits, a strong national identity implies a “tight coupling” or congruence between the nation and state:

First, the frontiers of the state as an actually existing territorial organization should match the frontiers of the nation as an “imagined community” – to use [Benedict] Anderson’s overworked but still indispensable phrase. Second, polity and culture should be congruent: A distinctive national culture should be diffused throughout the territory of the state, but it should stop at the frontiers of the state. There should be cultural homogeneity *within* states, but sharp cultural boundaries *between* them.¹⁹⁸

European identity as constructed by the EU lacks the tight coupling articulated by Brubaker. In fact, European identity finds itself in an “unresolved identity crisis” because it cannot sort out the nuances of identity and especially those of national identities.¹⁹⁹ First, cultural homogeneity does not exist between states, and there is even cultural diversity in certain states. For example, in Belgium, a geo-cultural divide between Flemish-speaking and French-speaking Belgians has resulted in unstable elections results. Most notably in 2007, nine months passed before a coalition government was formed.

The cultural differences across member states’ borders are even more pronounced, and cultural boundaries do not exist parallel to the political borders of the union. In this regard, enlargement poses a critical problem to the construction of European identity. The EU has undergone enlargement several times, expanding from its six original members to today’s twenty-seven. More countries await admission as candidate countries, and even more are listed

¹⁹⁸ Rogers Brubaker, “Migration, Membership, and the Modern Nation-State: Internal and External Dimensions of the Politics of Belonging,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 41, no. 1 (2010), 63.

¹⁹⁹ El-Tayeb, 650.

as potential candidates. The political borders of the EU have shifted numerous times in a short time, but the cultural homogeneity that Brubaker suggests is key to stable identity has not kept pace with political enlargement. Because an “imagined community” is just as much defined by similarities between members as differences with non-members, enlargement forces problems onto the identity project. What separates members from non-member states constantly changes because non-member states can become included in the European community relatively quickly. The exclusionary qualities are in flux, and this state of change contributes to an unresolved and unstable European identity. For example, the collapse of the Soviet Union forced the EU to reconsider itself; pre-USSR, democratic Western Europe dominated the EU, and post-USSR Europe came to embrace former communist states.

The lack of a tight coupling between polity and cultural homogeneity in the European Union is reflected at the Shanghai Expo. The EU Pavilion tackles the issue of identity with a universalistic approach in that the cultural boundaries of Europe seem to know no boundary. In other words, the identity in the pavilion is not distinct and seems rather universal, especially with regards to culture. Little qualifies European identity in the EU Pavilion as distinctly and culturally “European.” The “imagined community” of Europe is lost, especially in comparison to the stronger national ones disseminated by the 192 national pavilions. This cultural unity is integral, especially because the EU forges its common identity and history based on the aftermath of WWII. Cultural studies scholar Fatima El-Tayeb summarizes the European spirit (*l'esprit européenne*) as a vague transnational identity with a common history.²⁰⁰ In the pavilion, this common past is placed in the first room of the four-room pavilion, which explains the birth of the EU post-WWII. Qualities and values of Europe are enunciated with buzzwords such as

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 649.

“peace and reconciliation,” “solidarity,” and “respect for diversity.”²⁰¹ The pavilion then attempts to explain the political structure and outcomes of the union in its second and third rooms, titled respectively “Open Europe” and “Green Europe”. The last room is dedicated to experiencing European culture through an exhibition, “Living Europe.”

“Living Europe” is a means to create and reinforce European identity through a seemingly common culture. The exhibition features a screen that wraps around the room in a cylinder that plays a two-minute movie on repeat (Fig. 5.3). Called the “cyclorama,” the movie depicts a day in the European Union through the lenses of twenty unnamed cities within the union.²⁰² Starting with the sunrise, the 360-degree screen envelops the visitor with scenes of families waking up, commuting to work, and eating dinner together among other daily routines. The cyclorama seeks to create an “emotional



Figure 5.3. The cyclorama in the EU Pavilion. Photo courtesy of <http://expo2010shanghai.com/2010/06/>.

sensation” about Europe with the viewer and to demonstrate the principle of “unity in diversity.”²⁰³ Within the cyclorama, however, *l’esprit européenne* remains unclear, and there is little effort to clarify European identity. It fails to show what distinguishing cultural characteristics of the member states are exactly “European.” Instead, the scenes of daily life appear more universal and human than particular to a specific region, continent, or supranational organization. For example, reading newspapers and riding public transportation to and from

²⁰¹ “Scenography of permanent exhibition.” EU @ Shanghai 2010 (accessed March 26, 2011), <http://www.euatshanghai2010.eu/scenography-permanent-exhibition>.

²⁰² Lahousse, interview.

²⁰³ “Scenography of permanent exhibition.”

work is a routine with which many adults around the world can identify. It is not a “European” characteristic. In addition, eating family dinner is also not exclusively a European practice. In trying to construct European identity, the EU delegation makes a widely-inclusive identity, but it is so encompassing and not exclusive enough that the “imagined community” is not distinct. As a result, European culture and subsequently its identity remain vague notions that are not clearly transmitted to the visitor.

A strong European identity must be defined by the other and by exclusion. National identity is dualistic in nature with its search for a coupling between physical and cultural boundaries. A pan-European identity must also accomplish the same goal, but without the “mobilization of difference for strategies of inclusion and exclusion” it is extremely difficult to create a strong, distinct identity.²⁰⁴ A large component of the EU’s problem with identity lies in its political goals of enlargement and the tenet of “unity in diversity,” a phrase that contradicts the process of identity formation. Furthermore, the European identity presented by the EU Pavilion is too broad. In fact, it is broader than the identity that many scholars argue is European: white and Christian.²⁰⁵ These factors operate invisibly, for they cannot be traced within the pavilion, but this European identity based on “race and religion” explains much, such as the issue with admitting Turkey. This version of European identity cannot, however, be presented in the pavilion because it clashes with the EU’s stated “respect for diversity.”²⁰⁶

European identity remains unresolved, and the exhibits at the EU Pavilion are evidence of this identity in crisis. In Chapter 3, I discussed the inconsistencies of the EU flag’s appearance. The inconsistent appearance of the flag signifies not only the EU’s lack of influence over its member states but also the weak community as a result of a weak identity. According to a EU

²⁰⁴ El-Tayeb, 652.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ “Scenography of permanent exhibition.”

Pavilion representative, the delegation wished to create a community and especially a “feeling of belonging [and] solidarity.”²⁰⁷ The representative cited the US flag in that the flag produces feelings of pride and hoped that the EU flag could evoke the same emotion. By raising the EU flag at the Expo, member states could become “more European.”²⁰⁸

El-Tayeb makes an important observation in arguing that Europe is far from being postnational. The level of the nation is still integral to identity formation and community formation. It is the level of the nation that prevents a truly European identity from being created.²⁰⁹ At the Expo then, it becomes even more difficult to reach the goal of constructing a strong European identity because the paradigm of the nation is so dominant. To create a supranational identity may not work in the space of the Expo, and to do so successfully would take careful planning, consideration, and time that the EU delegation did not have. Self-representation is a difficult exercise. The fragility and incompleteness of being “European” translates itself into a visually weak European community at the Expo.

Translation of the Simulation World to the Real World

A visually weak community correlates to the European Union’s difficulty to bring member states together within the Expo. The EU sent a delegation as a symbolic gesture of openness and readiness for cooperation.²¹⁰ In order to demonstrate a collective openness, the EU delegation faced the task of organizing the member states to produce events, seminars, and meetings together. For the EU Pavilion, their biggest success was probably a public parade that included all the members on May 9th, Schuman Declaration Day. For the EU delegation, pulling

²⁰⁷ Lahousse, interview.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ El-Tayeb, 666.

²¹⁰ Lahousse, interview.

off this parade was momentous because all the members “*actually* replied and participated,” betraying the sentiment that organizing all members was a daunting and uncertain task.²¹¹

Yet, the difficulty in mobilizing member states is not particular to within the Expo site. Voter turnouts for European elections are notoriously low, especially in comparison to the rates for national elections, and apathy towards European issues is consistently high.²¹² Perhaps a correlation exists between weak identity and high levels of apathy. Most EU citizens feel that European issues are unrelated to their lives and will identify first with their country of nationality before the EU.²¹³ Driven by self-interest, countries do not see the benefit to joining and acting as a cohesive group to advance their economic or political policies. Especially when the EU back at home is in crisis (political and financial), countries are more likely to break away and act as independent actors. This analysis does not say that the EU in China is as fragmented. In fact, the EU presence in China is growing, although this may be part of a general trend of an increasing foreign diplomat population in China.

Summary

EU pavilion and its actions show how real world current events and issues translate into the simulated world of the Expo. The process of identity formation is a problematic one. Narratives and boundaries must be congruent. This congruency follows the idea of coherence, which is essential to a successful pavilion. Outside of continental Europe and in an emerging market, China, the European Union starts to show some weaknesses. Member states may seek trade agreements and deals separately instead of acting as one body. Perhaps this results because a

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² Adrian Michaels, “European elections 2009: Low voter turn-out is a failure for sceptics as well as Brussels,” *The Telegraph*, June 1, 2009, <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk>.

²¹³ Lahousse, interview.

strong community does not exist. It is not a common threat that holds the union together but common opportunity. In a rapidly growing China, however, this common opportunity can be achieved without a large supranational lobbying organization.

Conclusion

The 2010 Expo is a highly politicized site. Everything from pavilions to exhibitions to maps has been specially constructed or brought in for the Expo to carry out specific goals. Whether foreign delegations wish to create a nation-brand or forge strategic partnerships, visual culture is manipulated to convince and conquer opinion. The elements of visual culture are inescapable as delegations participate in representation projects. While some of these projects are cohesive and streamlined, others are fragmented and filled with tension.

I argued in Chapter 1 that even normatively objective objects are actually highly subjective. Maps exemplify the practice of politicizing visual culture because we take them for granted as trusted imitations of reality. Visitors at the Expo rely on its objectivity to guide them from pavilion to pavilion. But, a map is, in fact, a representation of reality, and a point of view is inherent in representation. In the words of art historian David Summers, representation presupposes “the presence of someone by whom and to whom representation is made.”²¹⁴ Everything that has a dominant visual component, or visual culture, engages in some form of representation and subsequently betrays a viewpoint and aims.

The other major aspects of the Expo’s visual culture, architecture and interior exhibition, actively and consciously modify representation. These aspects were discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. In particular, they construct and tinker with representations of the nation, or in other words, national identity. As some pavilions have demonstrated, the identity presented at the Expo is far removed from that within the nation. Expo identities are relatively one-dimensional because their audience is unfamiliar with most nations. Nuances and complexity are forgone in order to imprint a simplified, but memorable national identity on the mind map of visitors. These simple

²¹⁴ David Summers, “Representation,” in *Critical Terms for Art History*, edited by R. Nelson and R. Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 3.

identities work in concert with the representations of objects within the pavilion to turn the visitor into a future consumer. The means of display give objects value and incite desire. In a sense, visitors are led to believe that national identities are consumable. For example, “Italian-ness” can be bought through purchasing designer clothing, leather goods, and pasta. At the Expo, nations commercialize their identities.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I focused on a specific case of conflict in representation: European Union identity. This issue is one that exists outside of the Expo world, but the way it plays out in the Expo demonstrates the observations and analysis in the preceding chapters. Identity formation is an artificial process because it involves the representation of a group. It involves the politics of the group, and weak identities reveal a fragmented polity. By investigating the visual culture surrounding EU identity, we can observe the politics of “European-ness.”

This thesis has sought to show the importance of visual culture and representation. It has used the Shanghai Expo as a case study because world expositions have a history of engaging in issues of representation. Most scholars focus on late 19th- and early 20th-century world expositions. Those that examine ones in the second half of the 20th-century are few, and this thesis adds to a growing body of work on recent expos. In addition, because my study relies heavily on first-hand experiences (interviews, newspaper articles, photographs), the analysis is more holistic and complete. While the thesis often uses a postmodern approach, it has attempted to consider and evaluate other theoretical approaches, and it has been interdisciplinary though reliant on art history. The arguments made draw on a diverse range of fields such as sociology, history, political science, anthropology, and philosophy. This interdisciplinary approach is fitting for world expos because they are complex events that have been studied by many disciplines. My

study has purposefully brought in multiple viewpoints so that my representation of the Shanghai Expo is not one-dimensional, but multi-faceted.

In addition, this study has deliberately utilized more art historical methods such as visual and formal analysis. In this regard, my study differs from other recent studies of expos. Because the issue of visual representation lies at the core of the world exposition phenomenon, visual analysis is a useful and required tool to examine representations. The process of creating a representation can be deconstructed through my combination of visual and interdisciplinary analysis. Meaning and interpretation have roots in visual analysis.

Even though the 2010 Expo occurred in a developing nation, that condition had little effect on the goals and structure of the event. By continuing the scholarship on representation and world expositions, I have realized that the 2010 Shanghai World Expo follows the original goals and organization as the first expo, the Great Exhibition of 1851. In both, the elite give cues to the masses about power and taste. Both educate their citizenry about the world – a world that most will never see outside the borders of their country. And both use visual culture and its means of display to communicate abstract ideas such as identity, taste, and power.

The Shanghai Expo, however, also continues the trajectory of the most recent expos because it is dedicated to specific theme, “Better City, Better Life.” Yet, as this thesis has shown, this theme plays little to no active role in the Expo; most attention is directed to other priorities. Visitors do not walk away with these themes, which the Bureau of International Expositions characterizes by its “broad scope” and its universality.²¹⁵ What resonate with the audience are the streamlined, directed messages from each pavilion, and most of these do not concern the problems of urbanization at the Shanghai Expo. The Shanghai Expo is truly more concerned with

²¹⁵ “Introduction to Expos,” Official Site of the Bureau International des Expositions, <http://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/expos/intro-to-expos.html> (accessed July 2, 2010).

international politics and national representation. In this way the 2010 Expo shares much in common with early world expositions. Perhaps China's economic and political context explains this preoccupation with national representation, because the host nation seeks to test and assert its newfound muscle.

My thesis, while taking a close look at the Shanghai Expo, does not attempt to explicate the effects of the Expo. This research is primarily interested in what happened during the six-month event and not with the aftermath. Some of the observations made about strategic partnerships between foreign delegations, companies, and their Chinese counterparts still need to be more completely researched. One can look at the effectiveness of such relationships in the years to come. This research is dependent on qualitative information but provides a starting point for those interested in testing quantitative data. One can perhaps measure the number of relationships established between foreign delegations and China and perhaps chart any increase in Chinese consumption of imported goods before and after the Shanghai Expo. More research can also look into the value of participation to understand if time and money spent on nation-branding is a fruitful investment by foreign delegations. Furthermore, one could also explore how coordinated the EU is in China outside the Expo. All these studies would provide beneficial information to those interested in politics, economics, and public diplomacy. A number of research questions remain, but this thesis has laid a fundamental understanding of the Expo that will be useful for the future.

The next world exposition will open in 2015 in Milan, Italy. It is expected to receive fewer visitors, and the site will take up less space. It is not expected to have the same impact as the Shanghai Expo. But perhaps the same politics of visual culture will be present in Milan. The phenomenon of the world exposition continues into the future, and Milan can serve as another

case study for some the ideas in this body of work. In any case, the Shanghai Expo has demonstrated the power of the visual to manipulate, to guide, and to lead people's perceptions of their identity, their reality, and the world at large.

Appendix

Select Abridged Interviews of Pavilion Organizers

European Union Pavilion, Chloe Lahousse
August 10, 2010

Lumay Wang (L): Do EU member states have a sense of European community at the Expo?

Chloe Lahousse (C): It's difficult because it's the problem of the European Union in general. It's still hard to create a European feeling as the citizen mostly refers to his or her own country first, then to the European level. It's hard to make people come out to vote for European Parliament because they feel it's so far away. Their own national elections are much more interesting. They live it, they see it, and they see the results. So a lot of what we are trying to do is organize things with EU member states, so that we feel connected. I must say it's quite successful. The most successful was the ninth of May, which is the Schuman Declaration Day, an official EU day, and here it was the honor day of the pavilion. We organized a huge parade with 400 participants from all 27 member states. All 27 member states actually replied and participated. I almost cried. It was like a real European feeling, and they were all there celebrating Europe Day. That's when you actually noticed that they feel European, so we're really happy about it.

L: Is this building a rented building or a specially constructed building? Do you have any idea about how the building was chosen? The design?

C: It's specially constructed for the Expo. We, the EU, rent a little space from the Belgians, so the whole selection of the building and the architect bureaus was done by the Belgians. We did an inquiry among the 27 member states to see where we could fit in. As it was the Belgian presidency, etc, we decided to rent a little space here in the Belgian Pavilion. So all the details, we had no control over. We are actually two participants in one building, so we have a lot of things in common like the building and the catering, but we are two different participants. They see first the EU, and then they go into Belgium, which I think is not very clear. So I don't know if they get a good impression that they are going first in Europe then in Belgium.

L: For the Expo, is there anything you would change about the way you participated or did the exhibit?

C: Yes, we wasted and used a lot of money for these fantastical audiovisual creations because it is the new technology. There are other ways to pass a message. The fact is that people go so fast, so you have to do something very simple and very catchy because they run to see other pavilions. But, I think our pavilion is quite successful because it gives you a good idea of what's Europe. The message is really clear, really good. The cyclorama, the last bit, is like two minutes life. Many Europeans told me were touched by it; they almost cried from the film. They felt European because it spoke to them as European, which maybe a Canadian may not feel the same thing.

There also 20 European cities filmed, so they recognize their city. This thing really creates a European feeling, which is the purpose, so I'm happy about it.

L: How do you see EU and China's relationship in the next couple of years? How do you think participating at the Expo is going to affect the relationship between these two blocs?

C: We hope that we give a message to China saying that we are completely open to China. We want a good relationship, and that's the main point – that's there's no hostility. We want to work together on all different aspects – on trade, on cooperation projects, and on anything. That's why we participate – to give a message to China, that Europe is really open towards China.

L: After being open for three and a half months, is there anything you would change about the pavilion, exhibits, EU participation in general?

C: I'd give ourselves our own pavilion. That's a long story. That would be good. We started a bit late, so we had no time to build and no ground to build on. That's why we joined Belgium because of the Belgian presidency. We would have started three years earlier, but our president, Barosa, decided to join quite late.

L: When you member states' pavilions, would you wish to see some reference to the EU?

C: Of course, and sometimes it's a bit disappointing that there's no European flag. We try to make it happen. We really insist on that because we know, like I told you, this European feeling is not very clear to all countries, but the least we expect is that there is a European flag somewhere. We cannot impose it, but we can push for it a little bit. We really appreciate it when it's there. It's not only the flag. It's about belonging to Europe. It's as if all the USA states were separate, and they only have their state or province flag. We want to create this feeling of pride of the flag and a feeling of belonging, solidarity like in the US. The flag symbolizes it well, and when it's there, it already makes people more European.

Germany Pavilion, Marion Conrady
August 13, 2010

L: What do you wish for the visitors to take away from your pavilion?

Marion Conrady (M): The Expo is about “Better City, Better Life,” urbanization problems, and this what we are focusing on - to offer solutions to these problems. Our idea is “Balancity,” which consists of “balance” and “city.” The message behind that is that a city can be a good place when several factors are in a good balance like green spaces, urban spaces, spaces for individual need like leisure but also for work, and public spaces. A lot of things are focusing on sustainable development, green technologies, alternative energy supply and so on. We have a lot of exhibits. There are a lot of things you can touch, a lot of games, and at the very end, you have the Energy Source Center. It’s a huge sphere covered with 400,000 LED points. It is influenced by noise. We have in the ceilings some speakers, and the speakers are collecting the noise that the audience makes. The audience has to make noise, to raise their voices, to collaborate, to work together. This is also our message. If you raise your voice, if you put all your energy together and you work together you can create a “balancity” wherever you are.

The Ministry of Economy and Technology, which is in charge of the German Pavilion, they know the Expo is for very common group of visitors. The people coming here – some are quite well-educated, some they never went abroad, and they are not specialized in sustainable development – they’re just common people.

L: Do you think most of the visitors coming to your pavilion know of Germany?

M: I think so. Many of the people know about BMW and the reputation of Germany’s high-tech, and Marx and Engels are the commonest ideas. They have already a certain imagination of what is Germany. Of course, we show some of these things. Germans, we have a reputation that we are very serious and correct and punctual. But we also like to entertain ourselves. We stick to the stereotypes and refer to them. Then we do the next step and do things that they won’t know.

L: Why was this particular building design chosen?

M: This is a very modern design. If you take a look at each part, it seems to be very instable, but by leaning on each other, supporting each other, you get a balance in the architecture.

L: Do visitors recognize at first glance that this pavilion is the German pavilion?

M: Sometimes. They tell us it is very German because it looks like BMW, or it’s not very colorful. It is silver; it is bright, but it’s not a lot of color, so it’s a bit serious. Some of them know it’s Germany, and others ask the volunteers. We wanted to show a modern German pavilion because this [pavilion] is also Germany.

Latvia Pavilion, Ansis Egle
August 13, 2010

L: What do you wish for the visitors to take away from your pavilion?

Ansis Egle (A): I think the most important is that they grab the name “Latvia.” It’s important that Latvia is being remembered. Through the pavilion of Latvia in the Expo, the Chinese are mind-mapping. We’re just spreading the word of Latvia.

L: Do you think a lot of the visitors entering the pavilion have a preconceived notion of Latvia?

A: I think they do not know anything. China is big, and Latvia is small and faraway. They just don’t have an idea, and this is why we’re here. This is why it’s really important for us to make a great impression of what we’re doing. Actually that’s what we’re doing with the performances. Latvia gets noticed. We hope that they will come [to Latvia], and we will get a bigger growth.

L: What’s the relationship between Aerodium, the maker of the wind tunnel and “Better City, Better Life”?

A: City living – To answer why Aerodium and why this Technology of Happiness concept is because naturally when people are flying, when they jump out of an airplane, use the parachute or flying in a vertical wind tunnel, there are certain chemical reactions going on in your body. You feel high naturally without substances. If you feel happy, you tend to be a better human being, and you want to do better things. That’s so simple. It’s not rocket science there, and through that we believe that those people who try flying here can become happy physically, mentally. In this sense, we see that this is the right approach to spread the word because when people are happy, they are also spreading the word about how happy they are. This is another way of how we see people spread the word about Latvia, and how they try to think about themselves, how to be more happy in the future and do better things.

L: It’s interesting that you decided to link Latvian identity with an emotion rather with some cultural images...

A: Honestly, that’s what we did with the Latvian companies with the graphic identities. We’ll be spreading this word after Expo because this concept of happiness reflects what Latvians are striving for. The whole world is striving for it, but we definitely we have some special approach of how to be happy and how to make other people who want to communicate with us happy as well. We will be extending the campaign after Expo for sure for the whole country of Latvia, for tourism, for everything. The concept is great, and people like it. They are buying t-shirts, and they like how it looks, and this is as well really important.

L: Why was this particular building design and interior exhibition chosen?

A: Because of the concept actually, of how it looks, of how easy it was to make, and it fits well with the whole concept of happiness. It reflects happiness – different colors of happiness.

L: Has there been a lot of interaction between the EU and Latvia in terms of Expo participation?

A: We're planning to have a visit of the EU pavilion on the 19th, which is just an official visit, but there are not other interactions. What we are doing, we are doing by ourselves. We're inviting all the countries to try our pavilion, and a lot of countries are attending, so this is how we are spreading the word of Latvia.

L: So no programming done by the both of you? What do you think of the EU participation at the Expo?

A: Not really, not so much because the EU is kind of too official, I would say. As a Scandinavian pavilion put it, we are more of a "guerilla" style. We're not so official, but it's good for us, because we're friendly and we're not stuck up. We're like people. People-to-people, not like officials standing and don't know what to do, what do say. I haven't been in the pavilion yet, only passed by. They put just a big screen, and some talking heads are there. It doesn't make any sense honestly speaking.

L: Is interaction is the mark of a successful pavilion?

A: Interaction is the thing that makes sense. I've been working in marketing for 15 years, and I pretty much know what happened during those 15 years. I have a notion of what is new marketing, and it's definitely interaction. Interaction and experience. Experiential marketing – this is even a term coined five years ago.

L: What about those exhibits with a touch screen? Would those be considered interactive?

A: If you enter ten pavilions, five of them have those touch screens, and you just get lost.

Turkey Pavilion, Sencar Ozsoy
August 14, 2010

L: What do you wish for visitors to take away after they've been through your pavilion?

Sencar Ozsoy (S): Turkey is a big country, but Turkey is an unknown country. My first purpose was to show the Turkish Pavilion to the Chinese audience what is Turkey in reality. You see the past history of the Turkey until today, and you see the present Turkey with the Istanbul movie.

L: Do you think the visitors coming into your pavilion have a preconceived notion of Turkey?

S: No, because this is China. If this were the US, I would say yes, they have preconceptions, but the Chinese people are an open-minded people. They don't know too much about Turkey, and what they know are good things. At the exit of the Turkish pavilion, we have a book of signatures. They give comments on Turkey, and now we have 18 books full. We are compiling these comments, and we are seeing that the comments are all, without exception, all good.

L: This pavilion is among the most popular in the Expo, and I read on your website that as of last year 90 thousand visitors to Turkey were Chinese. Is that correct?

S; Yes. For the next years, we will have a big increase because several million is an important figure, but above that, the press coverage, the radio, TV, and newspapers are very good.

L: Why was this particular building design chosen? I read that the outside supposedly comes from a fresco. What is that supposed to articulate?

S: We didn't choose the architecture because it's a rented pavilion. We didn't construct it. It's not a Turkish plan or architecture. We took the preconceived, prefabricated Chinese building, and we covered it with the façade. The façade is the first fresco in a room in Çatalhöyük village. The Çatalhöyük village is 7500 BC. It's the first known settlement, and the first settlement is the better city, better life. If you see inside the first temple that means man meets God first time, and the first temple is also better city, better life.

L: How do you think participation at the Expo is going to affect the relationship between Turkey and China, and what type of effect will it have?

S: More knowledge on Turkey is an effect. More people, more Chinese will know Turkey. In the pavilion we are explaining that Turkey is a big country. Turkey has much big potential. We are the sixth largest economy of Europe. We are the 16th largest economy of the world. China is now the second. We are a member of the G20. We would like more cultural exchange and political exchange, and more Chinese would join us in trade. The Chinese now discover Turkey and are interested to invest, to buy, and so on. That is a rapidly increasing country. There's a big potential. We have a custom union with the European Union. Our goods are going without duty to the European Union, and there is a big advantage for Chinese companies to invest and produce and sell around Turkey.

L: What has been the most popular aspect of your pavilion? And why?

S: I would say the most popular is our ice cream! We had one post of ice cream, and now we have three because there is huge demand. There is more queue for ice cream than to visit the pavilion. The Turkish cuisine – we had no queues, but we increased our capacity for the restaurant and now we are doing take-away. Our food gives an image of Turkey. You taste it, and you remember how nice the Turkish cuisine was, how nice Turkish ice cream is, and then you will have a positive image. If you look at the newspapers, everyone is speaking about the Spanish Pavilion.

L: To be honest, when I saw the façade of the Turkish pavilion, I didn't think it was a rented one. I didn't realize that you had to completely construct it.

S: The Expo administration published 24 photos of the pavilions. All pavilions were self-built pavilions. The countries built them, but there was one exception – the Turkish one. If you look, believe that it is a self-built pavilion. It's a rented pavilion in reality.

L: You have received how many visitors so far?

S: We have passed 4 million. Today it should be 4.3 million or something, and by the end we will reach 8 million.

L: It's also a very good location that you have.

S: Yes, the location is good. We have a good location. We are in the center of Europe. The Chinese authorities proposed that, we negotiated, and we accepted.

L: In this map of the Expo, you are now in the center of Europe, and when I was in the restaurant, the video is about Istanbul and how it's the European capital of culture for this year. This year is the first year that there is a EU pavilion at the Expo shared with Belgium. Do you feel that there is a strong EU presence here at the Expo?

S: No. The EU is not so strong. The national pavilions are on top. It is national, and the activities of the EU and the coordination between EU members is not enough. You can see here on the field that there is no strong EU identity still. The people do not have a strong EU identity. They put the EU flag, and most countries don't have the EU flag up.

L: Your pavilion and your exhibits – are you trying to articulate some type of European identity?

S: No, we have a movie downstairs. If you look at the Neolithic lifestyle, 8500 BC, starts from Turkey, and 7500 BC it's reaching Istanbul, and after that, it's reaching in, 6000 BC reaching the Balkans and reaching 5000 BC France and reaching Scandinavia 4500BC. This means that the Neolithic lifestyle went from Turkey to Europe. There were populations in Europe, but the origins of today's civilization are the Neolithic lifestyle and civilization. You can see that the Greece and Balkans are 1000 years later than this civilization. But the original civilization is the Anatolian civilization. That's where Çatalhöyük is. If you go, it's the movie on the right side in a

small screen, and you will see the spread, expansion of civilization up. If you look, the cultural basis of Europe today is not Greece. Before Greece, it was Anatolia.

L: What is your opinion on the status of Turkey in the EU?

S: We are not a full member, but we have the custom union. The custom union means that you are the inside of the market economy. You are inside the club action and the free circulation of your goods. It is not agricultural goods; it's only industrial goods, but you are a member of the club. You are theoretically a member of the market club, but politically you are not a member of the club.

Turkey is the sixth economy of Europe, and if you look at the Maastricht criteria, we are better than Greece. We are better than Italy; we are better than Spain. The resistance is not economic. Nobody wants to say, but it's religion. It's a non-issue for them. Turkey is a prospering country with a young, dynamic population. We are increasing. In ten years, we will be the tenth economy of the world. The population in Europe is decreasing – ageing population, ageing market, no new markets. The future is ours, like China. America is declining. Europe is declining.

In this decline, they can still have a Christian identity if they seek the Christian identity. We are saying that you should overcome this ideology. Religion is ideological of course. Europe wants to be a big power, globally, but they are not a power today. Economically, it's a giant, but not a power because they lack political decision, political determination. It's France and Germany, and France is standing still. No army. If you they want to have power, you need an army also. This can be only by accepting Turkey, but now we solve the situation. We are not pushing. I am sure that in 10, 20 years, they will say “please.” Then we'll see. We will see the environment of those days. We cannot predict. Now the world is changing so rapidly that we cannot predict.

Czech Republic Pavilion, Jiri Potuzruk
August 17, 2010

Jiri Potuzruk (J): So our intention it to stay and be kept in the minds and hearts of the visitors as a country with an extraordinary creativity and with an extraordinary skill of innovations.

L: Do you think a lot of the Chinese visitors coming here have a prior knowledge of Czech Republic?

J: We are a pavilion with an extremely high number of visitors. More than 50,000 are coming everyday. First thing, concerning the knowledge of the Czech Republic, the Chinese people know a few things about the Czech sport. For instance, the football players, sometimes they do know about Czech ice hockey because we won the world championship just a few weeks ago, and the hockey pucks are used as a design of the façade and so on. But concerning the Czech history, it seems to me that it's mixed in their minds. It's just a part of Europe. The Chinese are able to make a point of view, make a difference between UK, France, and Italy. That's basically all. Even identifying the difference between Germany and the Czech Republic is a little bit difficult already. But I guess that's going to be changed after this exposition because the recognition in the people is extraordinary.

L: Do you think visitors visit the pavilion based on what they see on the outside or their prior knowledge of the country?

J: If there is a too long queue, they will just pass by. "I'm not going to waste my two hours just queuing." The Chinese they do like to collect the stamps, and of course there is a long queue, the stamp has a higher value. Sometimes even the long queue could help the pavilion but maybe that is just a few percent of the visitors. Personally, visitors choose pavilions based on the general recommendation of newspapers and what friends say and then the attractiveness of the pavilion and the programs.

L: What would you say is the most popular part of your pavilion?

J: I have to say the most popular is the Lacrimu. People are just wondering how is it possible to make perfume from personal feelings. They just don't understand how it is possible to make it. But it's just for the every 500th visitor because it takes some time, the procedure. It's one hundred people per day. Very popular is the plane for not only kids. The Chinese, they like to handle something, so if there is a small cockpit, a handle you can fly to change the direction a bit, they will like it a lot. Those interactive exhibits, really. If there is any interactivity, it's good.

L: Do you feel a European Union presence here at the Expo?

J: No, not at all. There's no real cooperation. There was a European Day, but it was just a parade of all European countries. Well, we do those parades everyday for three months. If that's all we can do as Europe...

Italy Pavilion, Marianna Drago
August 18, 2010

L: What do you wish for visitors to come away with after they've been through your pavilion?

Marianna Drago (M): The theme of the Expo is "Better City, Better Life," so all the pavilions have to interpret that in their own way. The theme of our pavilion is the City of Man, so it means a city built around human needs. It's very important to look at the future, look at the innovation, but always keep the heritage, cultural heritage, and the tradition. It's our way of living. We want the visitor to understand our way of living, and it means culture, it means fashion, it means innovation, it means technology, it means all these things together. Also, we have permanent exhibitions on the first floor, and there is laboratory that changes every two weeks.

L: Like Salvatore Ferragamo?

M: We wanted to also show that behind the famous brand, there are artisans. Everybody knows Prada, but there are some other little brands in Italy that are also quite famous. Anyway, behind big brands, there are always artisans or a small city. Also, on the second floor, we have temporary exhibitions. In particular, one room is dedicated to regions, so every two weeks, we host a different region. In totally we have 12 regions and 3 cities, so we want Chinese people to know all of Italy from the North to the South, not only Milan and cities they might already know.

L: Do you think a lot of the Chinese visitors coming back here have some background knowledge of Italy, and if they do, what do they know about Italy?

M: I think that most of the Chinese people know Italy and have a general idea about Italy. Italy is a beautiful country from antiquity. They know Rome, they know the most famous brands, and they know Sicily. They know the name, but don't know much about Sicily. These days, we are hosting the Sicily region, so the Chinese can know more about Sicily as well. Sardinia will be the next region. We will have also a fashion show with Sardinia, so the brands of that region will be presented.

L: China and Italy have much an economic relationship between many companies in Italy, and they've been here for quite a couple years now, and the diplomatic relationship is also quite good. How would say the Shanghai Expo is going to affect the relationship between Italy and China.

M: We have quite a lot of events, and some events are related to business taking the form of a seminar, or forum, or b2b meeting, which are good to improve the relations between Italy and China. We have some related to music and entertainment and to the tourism section. Then we have some forums related to architecture, design, all the things that are good in Italy but more related to the work, the business. Sometimes we have some b2b meeting for the wine actually. We have some wine tastings. We invite some Chinese industry people to promote our wine to them.

L: So importers?

M: Yes, I think this would a good occasion to meet our Chinese friends here inside our pavilion and to share a new idea, our new design, our new technology, our new architectural, our wine, all our best.

L: The Duomo is here. Do the Chinese react to seeing what is such an architectural symbol of Italy?

M: I think they are impressed. I've only seen a few other pavilions, and all the pavilions are good in some way, but maybe this one is more impact. They are impressed because they see the huge dome, then they see the orchestra, then they see the artisans at work. Actually, this was the idea of our art director because the exhibition on the ground floor was created by Triennale Milano, and in particular by an art director, which is Basili John Carlo, and he is a very interesting person. He's worked a lot in cinema. He knows how to impress people, how to create a dialogue with them, so that's why he calls this an "emotional journey." Italy comes inside of you. That's why he didn't want lots of things on the wall, not a lot of information. He just wants to impress. It's very visual.

Belgium Pavilion, Etienne Dubuc
August 20, 2010

L: What do you wish for the visitors to take away after they've been through your pavilion?

Etienne Dubuc (E): The fact that the Expo is in China, and for Europe this is so relevant in terms of economic investment, so we had to be here. For once, what is at stake is so huge that they would not dream of criticizing us for being here. Of course, China is still very far away and is a concept very hard to integrate still. Europe is not really a peaking environment right now, so in a way it helps. For the public what we wanted to do, well, Belgium is a very complicated country. I don't know if you know the political structure of our country, but it is extremely complicated. It's a federal country like the United States of America with a federal government and with regions, but we also have communities, which govern the linguistic and cultural part of the country and the education part. Those are three different communities and three different regions. It's an extremely complicated country, and at the time we decided what kind of image we want to build, what do we want to show.

We first wanted to represent the country in a way that is easy to understand. For us, Belgium is already difficult to understand with the political reality, so we didn't want to export that. It's a real crisis we have now and we are trying to form the new government since the election that took place in June. It will take an extra six months before we reach a new standard, but it would very likely modify the constitution and will give more autonomy to the regions. Those are kinds of things in Belgium that are very sensitive. But we could only afford to present the country as it used to be – one united country, one unified image, so that's what we did. The three regions did agree to participate which is not always the case. It's very important in the sense that the competence of foreign trade are already regionalized, because the federal government is not in charge of foreign trade anymore. It's relevant in the sense that if the money doesn't come from them, then the impact of our presence is completely different. We decided to go for something that is quite accessible. Indeed, you mention chocolate and beer and diamonds, and those things have really spoken to local public.

L: After the visitor goes through the pavilion, what do you think s/he enjoys the most? What do you want them to remember?

E: Recently there was a survey at the exit of the Expo, and people were being asked which pavilion did you remember, which one do you like. And Belgium being such a small country surprisingly came up as number six after all those big countries like Japan, Germany, Saudi Arabia. Why? Not because of the shape - it's not really fancy, and the brain cell is quite dull during the day. So why did it show up? Because a little bit of everything in the Belgian Pavilion. The chocolate tasting – it sounds very, very easy, but it actually makes the relationship with the pavilion personal because you get something, you taste it, and at the end they do end up buying also. By the way, the Belgian Pavilion is number one in terms of turnover inside the Expo site.

L: You share your pavilion with the EU. As I understand the EU is renting space from you. When you first enter the pavilion, you enter the EU part, and that's made clear with the EU flag.

But do you think that when they leave the EU exhibit and enter the Belgian one, they understand that they're leaving Europe and entering one particular country?

E: That's actually such a problem. From the time that we decided to be working together with the European Union, the plan was to have two separate entrances. One for the EU pavilion and one for the Belgian pavilion. In some way we saw that it was possible to have the flow of visitors mix together within the pavilion, giving them the chance to visit the other one, but it not feasible, and I was quite sure of that since the beginning, it's not possible. We had no choice but to manage the crowd in some way, so we decided to go for only one entrance, a common entrance. So, the design of the pavilion was not really foreseen for one queue in the beginning. It was two separate pavilions which was supposed to mix at one point with clear indication, but since it couldn't be handled for the flow management, it was not possible, so we had to go for this solution which is the best we could find – one queue for both pavilions.

Indeed, the transition you can see was not the one foreseen, so you end up in the European part with a temporary exhibition room, which is subject to change every two weeks, and the suddenly you end up in a place which is the Belgium-China friendship corner, which is not supposed to be the entrance of the Belgian pavilion. The entrance of the Belgian pavilion starts where the library of famous people and it's written, "Welcome to Belgium." There is a Smurf there, and there are all those pictures of famous Belgians. That is where it's supposed to be the beginning. So between the time the people get into this temporary exhibition room of the EU part and the Belgian-China friendship corner, and finally you reach the official entrance, there is a part where I believe they get lost. They do get lost, and of course Belgium gets more and more present during the visit and at one point they understand that they are in Belgium. There's no real border.

L: Obviously, your pavilion feels more of the European Union than any other pavilion, but outside your pavilion, do you feel that there is a strong European presence here? Do you feel a sense of European community?

E: Well, they've been quite active in trying to set up some events, the European Union, more than previous expos in the sense that for the first time they are there. Normally we only get some instructions from the EU delegation in the capital of the hosting country like in Tokyo. We had in Japan, although we didn't have the stamp, but a European flag in front of each of the pavilions, which is not the case this time. Some of them they have it; some of them do not.

I think that the presence of the European Union this time as a pavilion has relaxed all the countries about the role, that's my personal opinion, on the implication, how proactive they should become or not, and the fact that the European Union itself came as a pavilion makes everybody feel like, "Okay, they are here. They should take care of their own stuff for us."

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