



William Peterson

Asian Self-Representation at World's Fairs

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Asian Visual Cultures

This series focuses on visual cultures that are produced, distributed and consumed in Asia and by Asian communities worldwide. Visual cultures have been implicated in creative policies of the state and in global cultural networks (such as the art world, film festivals and the Internet), particularly since the emergence of digital technologies. Asia is home to some of the major film, television and video industries in the world, while Asian contemporary artists are selling their works for record prices at the international art markets. Visual communication and innovation is also thriving in transnational networks and communities at the grass-roots level. Asian Visual Cultures seeks to explore how the texts and contexts of Asian visual cultures shape, express and negotiate new forms of creativity, subjectivity and cultural politics. It specifically aims to probe into the political, commercial and digital contexts in which visual cultures emerge and circulate, and to trace the potential of these cultures for political or social critique. It welcomes scholarly monographs and edited volumes in English by both established and early-career researchers.

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To my students, from whom I continue to learn



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Acknowledgements

My love of World's Fairs began in 1965 when my family moved from the American Midwest to a New York City suburb on Long Island. Two things made New York loom large in my imagination: the recently-opened Verazano Narrows Bridge, still the longest suspension bridge in the Northern Hemisphere, and the 1964-65 New York World's Fair, one of the most attended of such gatherings in history. Though I can't remember every detail of my time at the fair in 1965, family photos show that like many Americans, I went with my family, which included my younger brother, my parents, and my grandparents. Writing now during the time of COVID-19, many months after the book was completed, what I recall most strongly was the feeling that the whole world was in New York in 1965, that the future was being revealed through the fair's pavilions and exhibitions, and that the future would be a wonderful and glorious place. New York in 1965 felt like a time of great optimism and hope, one in which the power of humans to build a better future seemed unlimited. Today, the Anthropocene has answered back.

In such times, my first debt of gratitude is to my parents, Rozanne and Bill, who throughout my childhood supported and encouraged what were often the very unusual interests of a very serious-minded young boy, one whose favorite outing by age ten was to do yet another tour of the United Nations Building whenever family and friends came to visit.

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Talented and generous archivists have given me access to the materials that support much of this book, notably those in the Manuscripts and Archives Division of the New York Public Library, the Queensland State Archives, the Queensland State Library, the Bancroft Library Special Collections at the University of California, Berkeley, and the San Francisco History Center at the San Francisco Public Library.

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Note on Works Cited

Because this work relies almost equally on archival, newspaper, and scholarly resources, types of resources will not be set out in separate categories in the Works Cited section. This is also necessary inasmuch as many of the newspaper columnists whose work is cited in this book were considered leading authorities in a particular part of the field and it is my wish for the reader to be able to easily link a particular view or assertion directly to the author.

Whenever a source has an individual or corporate author and can be located by researchers outside an archive, it will be listed by the author's name. Where works can only be found within a particular archive and where it would be either cumbersome or imprecise to set out a full reference in the Works Cited section, footnotes will be used to direct the reader to the original source.

In the case of newspaper articles without designated authors, particularly those from newspapers in the first half of the twentieth century that are not available via internet sources (as, for instance, the San Francisco newspapers or the many smaller New York City metropolitan papers), the name of the newspaper, date, and page number will be provided in-text in a parenthetical reference.

Attribution of images sourced from archival sources will follow the institutional requirements of the relevant archives or copyright requirements of the original rights holders. In some cases, subsequent use of images from the same archival source does not require full attribution. Whenever this is the case, the text linking the image to a source may be abbreviated or truncated.



Note on Asian Names

American newspapers in the first half of the twentieth century were frequently inconsistent in their spelling of Chinese and Japanese names. At the time of the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, it appears that journalists often wrote down Asian names as they sounded to their ears or relied on transcriptions of names provided by the non-native speaker themselves or their handlers. Even business cards of some of the key Asian players at that expo found in the official fair archives used spellings that could not always be matched with news reports. In the case of Chinese names, the situation is further complicated by the inconsistent use of the Wade-Giles transcription system which has subsequently been replaced with Pinyin. A further difficulty is when Cantonese names are turned into Mandarin ones, a practice that would not be followed in the same way today. Where Chinese names connected with the 1915 Expo used the Wade-Giles system, that will be preserved, with the Pinyin version in parentheses whenever possible.

As this book focuses on how Asians represented themselves in the West, I will endeavour to present their names as they circulated in archival and press accounts at the time. This is so that individuals can be tracked more easily across a range of historical sources in English. Where individuals are Asian-American (Jim Wong) or known in the fair context by their initials and a family name (e.g. T.C. Chu), that manner of representation will be preserved so they can be tracked more easily against existing and future scholarship. And where spellings found in archival and media sources differ from the historical record, their historically accurate name will appear along with a parenthetical indicating how that individual's name appeared in the press and official writings. Especially when Chinese or Japanese characters cannot be readily matched to any version of a particular name, it may not be possible to absolutely verify identity. In such cases, a footnote will set out the possible variations.



1 Introduction

Setting the Stage

Abstract

The chapter sets out the rationale for and structure for this inquiry into Asian self-representation at World's Fairs, or international expositions. Using a case-studies approach, the book will consider how independent Asian nations have sought to shape and control the ways in which they were represented at these events. China and Japan at the San Francisco Panama Pacific International Exposition in 1915 are the focus of the first two chapters, followed by Japan in at the 1939-1940 New York World's Fair, and China at Expo '88 in Brisbane. Other fairs and nations examined in the 100-year span of this inquiry include the 1964-1965 New York World's Fair (the Philippines and Indonesia) and the 2015 Milan International Exposition (Thailand and Korea).

Keywords: exhibition, exposition, performativity, representation

International expositions remain the largest and most important stage on which millions of humans routinely gather to experience, express, and respond to cultural difference. The London Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851, regarded as the first of what later became known as 'world fairs,' evidenced features that were later to become standard, and was largely a national trade show, with Asia represented primarily through the display of objects, chiefly from British-colonized India. By the time of the 1889 Paris Exposition Universelle and the 1893 Chicago Exposition, these mass events presented opportunities for fairgoers not just to look at objects, but to gaze upon humans from far-flung, colonized lands, as foreign bodies increasingly constituted a key audience attraction. During the 'golden age' of the exposition which lasted until World War I, these human encounters, many of them staged in virtual villages such as the Cairo Street at the 1889 Paris Exposition or the Philippines Reservation at the 1904 Saint Louis Exposition, were presented

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as authentic reproductions of life 'back home,' making villagers available to fairgoers to be scrutinized, evaluated, and judged as they carried out the activities of daily life. Numerous studies (Benedict 1982; Parezo and Fowler 2007; Greenhalgh 1988; Hinsley 1991; Delmendo 2005) have set out how the display of colonized peoples constituted an integral component of the imperial project, providing domestic audiences with a narrative designed to justify colonization in order to pacify and civilize foreign bodies; at the same time, these vast swathes of the colonized earth extended the landmass of relatively tiny European nations, while the raw materials extracted from the colonies fueled their economies and contributed to the twin narratives of Empire and Progress.

This book seeks to turn the lens around by focusing on the agency evidenced in Asian self-representation at selected international expositions in the West over a one hundred-year period from the end of 'golden age' of the grand exhibition, starting with San Francisco's Panama Pacific International Exposition in 1915, and ending with the 2015 Milan Exposition. Throughout this period, Japan, the acknowledged early master of the exposition form, and to a more modest extent Thailand, were arguably the only two Asian nations that consistently offered fairgoers at European and American expositions representations of Asian peoples and cultures that were not largely mediated, curated, or presented by Western imperial powers themselves. Thus, the story of an empowered, self-conscious Asian self-representation at these events begins when Japan is joined by China, which at the time of San Francisco's 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition (PPIE) had just emerged two and a half centuries of Manchu rule under the Qing Dynasty. While Europe was engulfed in a war that would become global, in San Francisco peace prevailed, and it was here, as events were taking place elsewhere that would doom the imperial project and put an end to the exposition as a site for the display of one's imperial conquests, that for the first time Asian self-representation shifted markedly from the largely one-way exchange between West and East where Asia's means of self-representation assumed significantly greater agency. And unlike the expositions in Europe, it was in San Francisco, with its sizable communities of Chinese and Japanese residents, where for the first time Asian self-representation had to consider and respond to the needs and concerns of local Asian communities, marking the beginnings of what would become over the next century increasingly transnational Asian identities.

'Asia' in the context of this study is both the artificial creation of the West, the projection of an orient to counter an Occident in the ways identified and critiqued by Edward Said (1978; 1993), and also a geographic region



spanning continents and archipelagic formations in which individual states as actors have increasingly sought to control their self-representation. The wider context is a world that at the time this analysis starts was very much skewed, with the West in the driver's seat, and Asian nations – including Southeast Asia and South Asia – responding as the colonized or economically weaker nation. Indeed, as Timothy Mitchell observes, by the early twentieth century, the international exposition was the means through which the manufactured images of Asia as a place of 'otherness' was most widely disseminated: 'The new apparatus of representation, particularly the world exhibitions, gave a central place to the representation of the non-western world,' a site where 'the construction of otherness,' a key feature of 'the colonial project' (1992, p. 290) found its fullest expression. While this book can offer no overarching claims about the nature of any essential 'Asian self-representation,' it seeks to demonstrate how political, business, and cultural leaders in individual Asian nations responded creativity and strategically over time to Western hegemony in the context of these mass events. As such, it looks at self-representation in ways roughly parallel to those set out by Aiwa Ong, who has sought to tease out 'the cultural logics that inform and structure border crossings as well as state strategies' (1999, p. 5). This book will look both at the border crossings of those responsible for the planning, design, and running of national pavilions, but also at the ways in which the transnational bodies inside individual pavilions reflect and respond to the strategies of the state.

In this respect, the 'Asia' of this inquiry also follows the more recent formulation of 'Asia as method' as set out by Chen Kuan-Hsing. Chen talks back to the work of Said, crediting him with demonstrating that 'cultural discourse, together with cultural practices and politics, produces a system of domination that extends throughout the space of the cultural imaginary, shaping the parameters of thought and defining the categories of the dominant and the dominated' (2010, p. 25). Within the reality of a Western-dominated world, one that the recent rapid rise of China is now poised to radically shift, the work of 'Asia as method' is partially the task of what he terms 'deimperialization.' As Chen observes, 'Asia as method recognizes the need to keep a critical distance from uninterrogated notions of Asia, just as one has to maintain a critical distance from uninterrogated notions of the nation-state. It sees Asia as a product of history, and realizes that Asia has been an active participant in historical processes' (2010, p. 215). This book then looks at Asia as both a product of history, as a creation of the West, but as individual sites from which self-representation might reflect active participation in historical processes in the ways identified by Chen.



As the premiere global site for national self-expression, one where a country's message, its cultural, prowess, and economic and political muscle might find expression and reach the greatest number of individuals directly, this study is largely devoted to the ways in which selected, emerging Asian nations have sought to craft the form and content of their self-representation. A nation's participation, particularly during the hundred-year period from which the studies in this book are drawn, was, as we shall see, shaped primarily by state actors, often with the support and active consultation of businesses keen on stimulating overseas markets for domestically produced consumer items. The terms of representation were driven by the state, typically through a series of government ministries, and then filtered through the national committee in charge of the country pavilion and displays in international themed pavilions. Thus, the locus of Asian self-representation is primarily the state – or rather particular Asian nations – what they generate, display, and export at international expositions, and how this cultural labour is reported on and received in the West. While it is beyond the scope of this book to interrogate Asian notions of nation or nationalism, at times we will see clearly how national myths – the stories a nation tells itself about itself – are reflected in the content and manner of presentation inside national pavilions. Indeed, it was in the late nineteenth century, just as the exposition form emerged as the dominant locus for intercultural exchange between Asia and the West that Ernst Rehan set out his famous formulation of the ways in which nations define themselves by virtue of being in possession of a common soul:

A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. (1882; 1990, p. 19)

Memories and what they mean at the level of national consciousness are frequently constructions by the state (Anderson 1983, 2006; Bhabha 1983; Gellner 1983; Smith 1999) that are manipulated for its own ends. Anderson's work on the imaginative component of what comes to be known as a nation identifies 'the *attachment* that peoples feel for the inventions of their imagination,' (Anderson 1983, 2006, p. 141), attachments that may blind them as to how others on the outside may perceive such inventions. Those constructs that citizens have to which they are the most attached, those that prop up and constitute a nation



and that are projected externally as key elements of national identity are frequently the objects being examined and interpreted in this study.

While the focus may be on the state as actor, a comprehensive survey of Asian national self-representation at all officially recognized international expositions is not possible. Thus, this book offers a selected case studies approach, which in addition to San Francisco and Milan expositions, considers Asian self-representation at the two large New York Expositions of 1939-1940 and 1964-1965 as well as Brisbane's Expo '88. The story of the unstoppable rise of Japan and America's love affair with all things Japanese begins and ends with the San Francisco and first New York expositions, while the rise and fall and subsequent rise of China is the backdrop for their participation in the San Francisco exposition and their resurrection from the ashes of history in 1988 at the Brisbane exposition, where they connected with Australian bodies through what I term 'acrobat diplomacy.' The New York World's Fair of 1964-1965, though not an 'official' international exposition, offered newly independent Southeast Asian nations such as the Philippines and Indonesia a unique and valued opportunity to connect with millions of Americans through traditional dance and the visual arts at an historical moment when it felt that modernity and democratic values were spreading around the globe, and when New York was the international centre of modernity and cool. The final set of case studies, drawn from the 2015 Milan Exposition, contrasts the self-representations of South Korea, with a focus on youth culture, high tech expertise, and clever solutions to global challenges in food production, with Thailand, which offered Italian consumers food products in which they showed no interest while dramatizing their own internal national psycho-drama at a moment when their beloved King was heading toward the final days of life. As we shall see, the one hundred-year period from 1915 to 2015 brings us to the end of a cycle in which the importance of a unified, coordinated, state-sponsored self-representation by Asian nations at expositions in the West has diminished, if only because the international exposition as a form appears to be increasingly economically unviable for host countries in the West. The Milan Exposition is being followed by expositions in Dubai (2020) and Osaka (2025), both future-oriented in theme,¹ and where non-state actors such as corporations are taking on an increasingly important role. Thus a future inquiry might well look at how selected Western nations have sought to self-represent in the 'old Oriental'

1 The theme of the Dubai 2020 Expo is 'Connecting Minds, Creating the Future,' while the 2025 Osaka Expo is to run under the theme, 'Designing future society for our lives' (*Japan Times* 2018)



of the Middle East or at expositions in Asia, notably Shanghai (2010)² and the 2025 Osaka Exposition.

From the Exhibitionary Order to the Performative Order

The so-called 'golden age' of the exposition was one in which these fairs ceased to be merely places where products and new inventions might be exhibited, but when they became truly international. This was a time when commissions formed by national governments, often working in conjunction with the captains of industry, were increasingly placed in charge of a nation's self-representation. As Greenhalgh, a foundational scholar of the field, observes:

Expos are a quintessentially modern invention, the physical manifestation of material progress, and their rationale can be found in the need for money and national cohesion. That is why government and the private sector have invested in them, and why they were often created on gargantuan scales. They were the most effective peaceable way to wage war. (2015, p. 4)

As the Western world industrialized, the human and material resources of far-flung colonies increasingly exploited, and international trade between nations expanded, the importance of these events as cultural, political, and economic tools grew. The earliest major fairs, notably the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851, and the first large world's fair in the US, the Centennial International Exhibition of 1876 in Philadelphia, retained the designation of 'exhibition,' reflecting the origins of these events as outgrowths of trade fairs, as places where the latest inventions might be displayed and demonstrated, and where objects for the home might be displayed. The shift to the use of the widespread use of the term 'exposition' in part follows the French use of the term to characterize a succession of increasingly massive and monumental Paris expositions in 1878, 1889, and 1900. The Bureau Internationale des Expositions (BIE), the international regulatory body governing these events, was formed in 1928, and thereafter the term became used for all officially sanctioned international expositions. While in the English-speaking world the words 'exhibition' and 'exposition' have frequently elided, it bears noting that the shift in what these events have been called runs parallel to the historical movement away from the mere

2 For an analysis of French self-representation in Shanghai see Peterson 2012.



exhibition of manufactured goods, artefacts and artistic products, and the display of exotic peoples before an audience of curious Westerners, to one in which nations created and performed a more discursive narrative of nationhood. This shift to a more holistic, narrative-driven approach to self-representation is one that I will argue in the context of Asian modernity increasingly expressed itself through a performative turn at these events, where human actors in and around the country pavilions of Asian nations became the means through which to push back against objectification and placement of the Asian other into the Orientalist framework that earlier exhibitions fostered.

Facilitating this discursive shift was the appearance of country pavilions run by national governments and often designed in a distinctive national architectural style, which increasingly provided the physical setting in which national self-representation could be created and staged before audiences. From as early as the 1867 Paris Exposition (Benedict 1982, p. 20), these dedicated country pavilions become an increasingly important feature of world's fairs, sometimes working in tandem with needs of businessmen and those in the import/export trade wishing to display products and inventions in a bid to expand sales into overseas markets. In the twentieth century these increasingly interactive spaces became the key environments in which Asian self-representation could be expressed while offering encounters between peoples. After the Paris expositions of 1889 and 1900 in particular, it was in these spaces along with exposition-run art pavilions, where art objects and fine crafts were displayed, an increasingly important means of projecting a nation's identity and right to claim or expand their geopolitical power. From the last half of the twentieth century and into the present, pavilions have also offered nations a way of setting forth and responding to the fair's theme in a more expository fashion. As expos in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century have increasingly been organized around themes, the need to be able to set forth, explain, and interpret a particular position with respect to themes such as urban sustainability (Shanghai, 2010) or 'feeding the planet' (Milan, 2015) within the context of a country pavilion has become paramount. While objects are still on display in country pavilions today, the 'ethnographic turn' that underpinned the display of exotic foreign bodies which took off most spectacularly from the time of Chicago's World's Columbian Exposition in 1893 has increasingly meant that the mode of communication within pavilions has shifted from the static to the performative, to the shared encounter with other human bodies in space and time. And as we shall see in the final two chapters on the 2015 Milan Exposition, in the digital age, such encounters may extend into virtual fields and immersive environments as well.

The rise of Asia as reflected at expositions from 1915 reflects the movement from what Timothy Mitchell (2003) has called the 'exhibitionary order' to what I term the 'performative order.' Performance at the grand colonial expositions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was largely about display, about showing and being looked at, and with respect to Asia, apart from Japan, what was displayed was not an empowered subject, but rather a colonized one, arranged for the colonial gaze of the white metropole and for their education and edification. As Mitchell observes, '[t]he world exhibitions of the second half of the [nineteenth] century offered the visitor exactly this educational encounter, with native and their artefacts arranged to provide the direct experience of a colonized object-world' (499). In so doing, it 'reduced the world to a system of objects' that 'enabled them to evoke some larger meaning, such as History or Empire of Progress' (499-500). Yet by the time of the time of San Francisco's 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, two increasingly powerful Asian nations – Japan as a long-time expo player, and China, both largely controlled their own means of self-representation. And increasingly the mode through which an empowered self-representation before fairgoers in the West took place was performance, even as what was being sought was external validation by the West. This was famously the case when in 1958 the fledgling national folk dance company from the Philippines, Bayanihan, was rapturously received by a European audience at the Brussels International Exposition. From this key moment of self-representation through the presentation of a highly theatricalized programme of folk dances, Bayanihan then took to the world stage, becoming one the most toured companies in the world over the next decade, ultimately also becoming emblematic of the Philippines in the minds of many.

Performance has three primary modes of operation in the case studies of Asian self-representation that appear in the chapters to follow. Operating in the most readily identifiable and traditional mode are the many performances featuring Asian bodies engaged in choreographed, rehearsed practices before audiences, particularly dance and to some extent, formal, ritualized practices such as the ever-popular Japanese 'tea ceremony.' These performances were presented on or around the pavilion grounds, in dedicated entertainment zones, and are of set duration and presented before audiences of a regulated size, in suitable, often purpose-built venues. These are the types of 'cultural shows' one often expects to see at such fairs, ones that require skilled, trained performers to present a brief show that entertains and is seen to offer some insights into a 'foreign' culture.



A second mode of performance is that which is undertaken by country pavilion ‘natives’ who are typically selected on the basis of specific, desired criteria, trained for specific duties, and placed in and around country pavilions for all or a significant portion of the fair. Often categorized as ‘guides,’ these are performers undertaking a highly prescribed and sometimes extremely regimented social performance which turns into a believable cultural performance when in situ in the country pavilions. Here I draw from Jeffrey Alexander’s formulation of the relationship between the two, one that he sets out by considering the relationship between a strong collective organization and the differentiation of its parts:

The more simple the collective organization, the less its social and cultural parts are segmented and differentiated, the more the elements of social performances are *fused*. The more complex, segmented, and differentiated the collectivity, the more these elements of social performance become *de-fused*. To be effective in a society of increasing complexity, social performance must engage in a project of *re-fusion*. (Alexander 2005, p. 32)

It is this process of ‘*re-fusion*’ that constitutes the cultural labour of these guides. What is necessary for a foreign audience is a presentation that appears ‘*fused*,’ one that generates for fairgoers an overall impression as they are guided down a particular pathway into an understanding of guest country’s culture, enabling them to leave the pavilion grounds with something tangible, one sparked by the generation of affect; for example in an encounter with guides in a Thai pavilion at the 2015 expo in Milan, one might leave a lingering feeling that Thailand is indeed ‘the land of smiles.’ The social performance presented in the pavilion thus becomes a cultural performance for others, in this study constituted by fairgoers in the West, to experience the quality of being Japanese or Thai, for example. As Alexander observes,

Cultural performance is the social process by which actors, individually or in concert, display for other the meaning of their social situation. This meaning may or may not be one to which they themselves subjectively adhere; it is the meaning that they, as social actors, consciously or unconsciously wish to have others believe. (2005, p. 32)

What matters most in these controlled and staged encounters is that the experience rings true and is persuasive in terms of meeting the initiating group’s overall objectives. As Alexander observes, ‘Successful performance

depends on the ability of convince others that one's performance is true, with all the ambiguities that the notion of aesthetic truth implies' (2005, p. 32).

While it will often prove difficult to fully go behind the scenes and detect motives guiding the form and content of Asian self-representation at some of the older fairs, in Chapters Two through Seven in particular, we will see how data from internal documents, press releases, and news and media stories reflect a particular sense of how these actors in and around these pavilions were perceived and what meanings and beliefs were taken away by spectators from these encounters. By calling the world into being through the expository statements and acts within the context of Asian country pavilions, the performative becomes the dominant mode for communicating directly with and imprinting on the bodies of spectator/participants. The site of the encounter is thus the space in which cultural gaps can be set out and bridged or inadvertently widened through the aesthetic, human, and material means that collectively contribute to cross-cultural communication. Increasingly affect and affective encounters, the stickiness of the encounter within and around the precinct of country pavilions, becomes a key experiential element, a line of inquiry that will be taken in Chapters Eight and Nine, which draw from my encounter with the pavilions of Thailand and Korea at the 2015 Milan Exposition.

The third mode of performance is generated by the great, seemingly unstoppable engine of contemporary neoliberalism driven by the gods of market forces which has increasingly taken over the public sphere while increasingly finding expression in our private lives. Long before the so-called 'performative turn' began to inform humanities scholarship, reducing human labour to outputs based on metrics tied to 'performance' had been a practice in the corporate world. Our concept of ourselves as productive units engaged in performances that are quantified and judged by our employers, educational institutions, and even our potential online dating partners, is encapsulated by Jon McKenzie's assertion that *'performance will be to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries what discipline was to the eighteenth and nineteenth, that is, an onto-historical formation of power and knowledge'* (italics original, 2001, p. 18). Not surprisingly, Asian nations have increasingly presented themselves as highly productive and successful performers, as highly capable and successfully problem solvers, offering a model for other nations. This impulse to demonstrate performance at the highest levels of achievement is reflected most notably in the final two case studies, that of Korea and Thailand at the 2010 food-oriented Milan Exposition; here Korea in particular might have received a mark of A++ for productively responding to the fair's theme, making them the most outstanding of performers.



Asian bodies, the placement of bodies in their real and virtual dimensions, and the opportunities for bodies to connect across cultures both virtually and in real time within these pavilions are key points of entry in each case study. It is also necessary to continually interrogate who is performing for whom. Audiences within these pavilions, particularly within built environments that offer multiple possibilities for interactivity and to see and be seen, are themselves performing and can be seen as performers, as for instance, when I observed young Chinese fairgoers in the France country pavilion at the 2010 Shanghai Expo using their phones to record images and short videos of themselves in front of enormous video installations of the streets of Paris (Peterson 2012). In such situations, the spectator becomes an actor in the space and a potential co-creator of a new work, one with a life that may extend into the future through social media. Such environments increasingly offer a strong sensorial component in the exchange, while sophisticated video installations may activate multiple modes of sensation, creating a synaesthetic response to what it offered in the pavilion. Where the 'real' and 'authentic' encounter exists becomes increasingly slippery when experience is not contained within the walls of a pavilion and where it may have various, even infinitely numbered afterlives.

Performance is not limited to the areas in and around the pavilions, something we will see most dramatically in the two chapters considering Japanese and Chinese self-representation at the 1915 San Francisco exposition. The spectacular financial success of the 'Midway'³ entertainment zone at the Chicago Columbian Exposition (1893) resulted in expanding the size and scale of such dedicated areas at expos, offering additional opportunities outside the context of country pavilions to immerse one's self into exotic, foreign cultures. The Chicago exposition was also noteworthy for the ways in which 'anthropology went to the fair' (Parezo and Fowler 2007, p. 4); here colonized native peoples were placed on display in dedicated areas, not just in the Midways alongside freak shows, but as objects of serious display in faux-ethnographic encounters. The most infamous of these was the so-called Philippines Reservation at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in Saint Louis which advanced the American colonial enterprise in the Philippines through the display of as many as 1,200 imported natives in villages meant to represent each of the country's ethnic and cultural groups, with from the highest level of cultural assimilation to the lowest. The Hispanicised lowlanders, with

3 Originally known as the 'Midway Pleasance,' the term 'Midway' came to denote any entertainment area at an American fair.

their guitars and Spanish-inflected dances represented the most civilized, while the primitive were famously embodied by the scantily clad warriors of the Cordillera region in northern Luzon who were accused by locals of emptying the neighbourhoods near the fair of its canine population to satisfy their taste for dog meat.⁴ Fairgoers wandered through these mini-villages, believing they were witnessing 'authentic' scenes of actual village life taking place in and around them, curated by W.J. McGee, head of the fair's anthropology department (Delmendo 2005, p. 51). By the time of the San Francisco fair in 1915, the more exotic and commercially lucrative of the foreign elements had moved into the entertainment area, though as we shall see, fair organizers maintained significant oversight of these commercial operations, lest they turn into low-life, honky-tonk styles of display. These areas were popular with spectators – promoted as places for 'fun' – as they brought the exotic, native people into a space where they could be encountered, and, as fairgoers were led to believe, understood. This impulse to provide fairgoers with the real thing, an authentic experience, had by 1915 become increasingly important.

As Asian countries have increasingly used pavilions and adjacent area as performative spaces in which to exercise agency, Asian bodies have presented and represented themselves on their own terms rather than through the mandate of a colonizing power. Yet this is not to say that Asian countries have been immune from self-exoticism when it might suit or advance national or commercial needs. Further, internal ethnic and cultural diversity has at times been used through cultural representations – and dance in particular – as a way of advancing a nation's celebratory 'unity in diversity' trope, as we shall see in the case of the Philippines and Indonesia at the 1964 New York World's Fair, and more recently with China at the 2010 Milan Expo. And where colonization has been external to the boundaries of the state, as for instance with Imperial Japan's colonization of Taiwan and parts of China prior to World War II, the national narrative ran parallel to that used by the colonizing powers in the West; colonized peoples were presented as in need of protection from a stronger, more civilized 'big brother,' the fundamental underpinning of Japan's so-called 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.' Indeed, Imperial Japan's self-representation at key expos rested on justifications for colonization remarkably similar to those that underpinned the great colonial expositions of the early modern era. By seeking admission into the club of powerful nations with vast overseas empires relatively late in the game as it were, Japan was in fact one of the

4 For a detailed historical account of the Philippines Reservation at that fair see Fermin (2004).

last to incorporate the artefacts, narratives, and products from colonized lands into the fabric of their country pavilions.⁵

In framing the fairgoer's experience, seeking to connect it with the intentions of those responsible for organizing and curating national spaces, this book will also consider the performance of diplomacy, drawing from archival files and newspaper accounts which offer the backdrop to participation. There is typically a highly gendered dimension to these performances, with women are generally represented as objects, things of beauty, or repositories of visual culture, while the men act with gravity and, in the words of George Keenan, 'conduct foreign policy histrionically' (1971, p. 29). Also considered are public performances inside and around the pavilion, including those associated with special days, notably the pavilion's opening ceremonies and events in later fairs connected with a dedicated 'country week' in which the nation is given a special focus at the fair. At the 2015 Milan International Exposition, for instance, Korean performance cultures literally exploded from stages around the city of Milan at night during 'Korea Week,' bringing Korean B-boying, K-Pop, and Taekwondo to an audience far removed geographically from the exposition precinct. Occasions such as these reasonably call into question the objectives, whether articulately publicly or not, of the pavilion's organizing committee, ones that are often controlled by the country's political or business leaders. Regardless of whether or not a nation's intentions were realized, what is performed is often a microcosm, a snapshot of a particular socio-political moment, as for instance it was at the same fair when Thailand scrapped plans to create an intensely performative environment within their country pavilion, replacing it with a series of videos, the last of which glorified their King at the very moment when he had absented himself from public view due to illness. On such occasions, one could argue that the pressures of a nation's internal politics make it impossible for pavilions to perform anything other than their own domestic socio-political psychodrama, even while pavilion organizers may believe they are offering up a meaningful encounter with their country and its culture.

Often country pavilions appear to fail to connect with actual bodies or to communicate across cultural divides. This was most likely the case, I will

5 Japan however was not the last. Perhaps the last spectacular export of colonized peoples to an exposition was after World War II, when at the 1958 Brussels International Exposition, Belgium brought nearly 600 Congolese from their Central African colony to staff the fair. Many were exhibited in virtual 'human zoos' with a live display of black men, women, and children in 'native conditions' (Boffey 2018).

argue in Chapter Eight, with Korean attempts to win over Italian converts to the healthy, fermentation-heavy *hansik* diet at the Milan Expo. Frequently, what pavilions do instead is to show us more about themselves than what they want from others or what they want others to see of themselves. Sometimes what is presented is not recognized at all on the new audience, even though it may have been set out in great earnestness, as what is offered is inconsistent with the way the foreign nation's culture is viewed from the outside. In Chapter Four, we will see how this was the case with Japanese participation at the 1939-1940 New York Exposition, where even on the eve of war, America was so invested in the view of Japan as the land of cherry blossoms and willow maidens, that even the leading dance critic of the time failed to recognize the gender-bending Takarazuka Revue as a reflection of Japan's genius at cultural fusion, a distinctively Japanese modernist project quite at odds with the prevailing American view of Japan's cultural greatness being expressed through 'classical' performance forms such as Kabuki or Nō.

This example also points to the historical situatedness of these pavilions, how whatever the intent behind it, its content, reception, and afterlife is influenced by events that take place after the pavilion was conceptualized, planned, and built. Political events at home may in fact completely hijack the content of the pavilion and the people on display within it. Such was the case in the Philippines country pavilion at the 2010 Shanghai Exhibition when a brief power vacuum corresponding with a change in government made the pavilion rife for hijacking by powerful business leaders who wished to use it to further their own pecuniary interests in China (Peterson 2018). Thus this book, though focusing largely on the visual and performative, on the embodied encounter between Asia and the West in the interactive environment of the country pavilion, is always bounded by time and place and rooted in a particular historical and political moment, offering readers an opportunity to better understand and make sense of complex intercultural transactions between Asia and the West over the last one hundred years at some of the world's most well-attended events.

Methodology and Scope

The research methodology supporting this inquiry blends ethnographic and archival research. For fairs prior to the 21st Century, I rely heavily on the archives associated with the relevant fair which typically contain framing and administrative documents, press materials, official fair promotional materials, speeches, photos, films, and press clippings, generally in English.



This includes the official archives of the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition (PPIE), held at the University of California Berkeley Library, and related materials, some generated by the PPIE, held in the San Francisco History Collection at the San Francisco Public Library. The State Library of Queensland and the Special Collections Department at the Queensland State Library contained invaluable material on Chinese and Japanese participation Expo '88, while the official documents of the corporations running the New York World's Fairs of 1939-1940 and 1964-1965, held in the Archives and Manuscripts Division of the New York Public Library, offered detailed information on virtually all aspects of the planning, operation, and reception to those two fairs.

I rely too on the rich scholarship on individual fairs and particularly those studies that focus on material culture. A necessary limitation of this inquiry is that it relies on English-language resources and does not delve into materials in the many potentially useful archives of those nations participating in these fairs. To identify these archival holdings and make productive use of them would have required advanced language skills in multiple Asian languages as well as a vast team of researchers. The archives set out above that hold the official documents connected with the fairs are themselves vast, and what they do reflect is how at least in the official record, Asian nations sought to articulate and control the nature of their self-representation. In that respect, they offer important, foundational insights, even if the fuller story might be traced back at some future point to relevant archives in each individual nation. One of the consequences of examining English-language sources, particularly when official press releases are then compared with what appeared in many English-language news sources that covered the American fairs in particular, is that we can track how intended self-representation was interpreted, reinterpreted, and at times hijacked by those crafting the narratives in American newspapers and magazines. Whenever possible, I have sought to incorporate relevant scholarship in English that relies upon sources in Asian languages. For instance, Japan scholars writing in English, particularly those focused on the export of Japanese visual arts, material culture and the manufacturing and distribution of decorative objects in the first half of the twentieth century, have produced a wealth of material that support key points made in this study. To the fullest extent possible, I have sought to triangulate my findings with theirs, placing my results into a conversation with their work.

This study cannot fully enter into the minds and reveal the intentions of all key individuals from each nation who were ultimately responsible



for the ways in which their countries were represented. But as we shall see, particularly for the American fairs in San Francisco and New York, because official fair corporation documents include virtually all significant correspondence between the respective national fair commissions organizing participation and all key offices connected with the fair itself, including publicity and promotion, it is often possible to gain a reasonably accurate view into the ways in which countries sought to self-represent. Particularly with the New York fairs of 1939-1940 and 1964-1965, where the business of public relations (PR) was already quite advanced and even entrenched, it is possible to see how PR firms crafted a nation's message working alongside the nation's official exposition commission to effectively 'sell' it to an American audience. For the final fair under consideration, the Milan Exposition of 2015, research methods include fieldwork, drawing on personal observations, interviews with pavilion guides, evaluations of still and moving images as well as sound files, as well as the vast range of ancillary materials, many of them electronically generated.

The other obvious limitation of this study is that it takes the position and importance of the international exposition as a given. This study is not intended to critique what international expositions can and have done. It is abundantly clear that in many cases the construction of these vast precincts in and around some of the world's largest cities has destroyed the social fabric of established neighbourhoods by essentially obliterating them and forcing people to move, most famously the case for the 2010 Shanghai Exposition. Massive infrastructure is built for these fairs, often with the promise of future redevelopment of such sites and the repurposing of structures by the fair corporation when they plan and sell these events to cities and municipalities, while those promises have all too frequently been forgotten, particularly at expositions in the twentieth century, which have become increasingly corporatized affairs. The veritable wasteland left behind by the 1964-1965 New York World's Fair Corporation in Flushing, New York, is legendary, with vast swathes of the old site still looking like film locations for a post-apocalyptic disaster film.

And finally, while I will examine the role of Asian labour at every fair, and in particular, cultural labour, at the five fairs under consideration, it is beyond the scope of this study to consider fully the conditions under which that labour was recruited, trained, housed at the fair, and further, what their lives and subsequent careers were like upon return to their home countries. Though such a study would be all but impossible for the fairs prior to the 1960s, to do this for the three fairs for which participants would still be alive today (New York, Brisbane, Milan) would again require



huge research budgets, considerable time in numerous countries, a team of researchers, and advanced language skills in multiple Asian languages.

What this title can do however, is focus on what was presented and how it was received, as intentions are often set out either explicitly or implicitly in official fair corporation records, ones that are remarkably complete for the fairs chosen for this study. Also possible is an examination of scrapbooks and other ephemera left behind by fair enthusiasts, useful resources that provide ballast for the observations about audience responses to the 1915 San Francisco and 1988 Brisbane expositions in particular. In addition to fair catalogues and the scholarship in art history and material culture which provide further data on what was exhibited, contemporary news reports are invaluable in identifying patterns both in the reporting of Asian self-representation, and in projecting how audiences responded to what they saw. At the time of the New York fair of 1964-1965 there were nearly a dozen major daily newspapers in the New York Metropolitan area. The publicity office of the fair corporation went through each of them daily, assembling, organizing, and cataloguing every print item that appeared on any aspect of the fair. Such a resource is invaluable, offering an effective and useful way of identifying and tracking how prevailing tropes governing the reception of Asian self-representation were generated and disseminated. In many cases too, press releases are largely reprinted in local newspapers, giving the PR firms engaged by the respective country commissions considerable power in shaping and containing the narrative of self-representation. Collectively, and with a particular focus on the visual and performative, this study then seeks to consider what Lockyer argues for as the work of an Exhibition, 'what an exhibition does; what people, given these possibilities and constraints, try to do at exhibitions, and how this is related to the contemporary context' (2000, p. 26).

Organisation and Overview

In turning the lens around on an energized, activated Asia, one seeking to communicate on the global stage on an equal footing with the West, this book will largely follow a case studies approach, with chapters primarily devoted to Asian self-representation in the context of country pavilions at selected fairs in the West. Apart from the 1988 Brisbane and 2015 Milan expositions, three of these expositions were in the United States. This is not to minimize the importance of scale of Asian representation at fairs in Europe, but a reflection of the need to bound this inquiry so that it is not



just the story of Japan at international expositions; Japan dominated Asian self-representation at European fairs and much has already been written about Japan their mastery of the form. And more fundamentally, as we shall see, in a century in which an increasing number of Asian nations were in a position to represent themselves, there was simply more to be gained by them through actively participating in the three American fairs, the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition (PPIE) in San Francisco, and the two New York World's Fairs of 1939-1940 and 1964-1965.

The San Francisco exposition was occasioned by the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914, which connected the east coast of the US to the growing population and economic power of the country's west. The movement toward a global economy based on the exchange of manufactured goods, one that integrates Asia into the West, takes off from this point, leading to an explosion of trade between Japan and the US in the years prior to World War II. The sheer fact of a shared ocean marks the 1915 San Francisco exposition as more profoundly Asia-focused than earlier ones in Europe or the US, making it a useful and significant starting point for this inquiry. San Francisco, the most Asian city in the Western world at the time, was also the site, as was California more broadly, where the Asian imprint on culture was already the strongest, and where relatively sophisticated cross-cultural interactions were undercut by strong anti-Asian sentiments from a large segment of the majority white population who hung on to well-established, negative cultural stereotypes. Both the Chinese, and to a lesser extent, the Japanese communities with a foothold in the San Francisco Bay Area, were a force to be reckoned with, and actively contributed to how their ancestral lands were represented. Writing of San Francisco's Chinese community that began forming in the mid-nineteenth century, one numerically and culturally significant by the end of the century, Yong Chen observes that theirs is 'a story about the emergence and development of a Pacific Rim community' (2000, p. 7). Thus, the first two chapters which focus on Japanese and Chinese participation respectively, contribute to the earliest stories of the emergence of Pacific Rim Asian identities. For their part, the governments of Japan and China both had a profound understanding of what was at stake in San Francisco; as will be demonstrated, they controlled their representation in ways that brought the active spectator into a closer, deeper, more embodied encounter with their culture, its art, and consumer products. Both countries projected themselves publicly in ways that suggested they understood their future was inextricably linked to that of the West, and particularly to the Asia-facing West coast of the US.

The second and fourth chapters are largely about rise and rise of Japan, the acknowledged master of the exposition form, bookended by chapters



setting out China's corresponding attempts to achieve what Japan had, notably its export markets, its cultural cachet, and respect in the wider world. Because Japanese modernity was so inextricably linked to its presence and self-representation at international exposition from the very start of the Meiji Restoration in 1868 when it began to enthusiastically embrace industrialization while expanding trade and diplomatic ties with the West, by the time of San Francisco's Panama Pacific International Exposition (PPIE), Japan had already demonstrated mastery of the exposition form. Post-Qing dynasty China, by contrast, a fledgling independent nation by 1915 with parts of it occupied by Japan, was, in the eyes of the West, only just emerging from 'oriental despotism,' while the position of actual Chinese in California, where they lived in greater number than elsewhere in the Western world at the time, was precarious indeed, as we shall see. In many ways, the story of Asian agency at these expos, one which Japan was not the only major player, begins in San Francisco. Indeed, throughout much of following 100 years, and until other Asian nations found themselves on a firmer footing politically and economically vis-à-vis the West, the two Asian nations competing most strongly for recognition from fairgoers and the public at large were China and Japan.

Japan's apogee in terms of self-representation was surely the New York 1939-1940 World Fair. Thus, Chapter Four examines the seeming disjuncture between the public performances of diplomats and politicians and the highly aestheticized performances of young, attractive, kimono-clad Japanese women within their country pavilion at the same fair. Using archival materials and newspaper accounts, a rich performance history of this East-West encounter is analysed, concluding that ultimately Americans were largely unable and unwilling to accept Japan's attempt to present itself as a modern country, capable of fusing traditional and contemporary cultural expressions through new hybrid performance forms. While Japan was seducing American fairgoers with performances of maidens spinning silk and serving tea within their country pavilion, ultimately the only encounter with Chinese culture fairgoers were offered largely a self-guided tour through New York City's Chinatown with the aid of a brochure.

Chapter Five completes the story of the rise of Japan and China, concluding with the inevitable rise of China by looking ahead two generations to the presence of the People's Republic of China (PRC) at Brisbane's 1988 Exposition, a watershed moment in post-Mao China, a year before the Tiananmen Square protests when the country appeared to be moving rapidly toward freer expression domestically while opening up to the West. By the late 1980s what had started with small ripples had turned into a tidal

wave of reform as Deng Xiaoping steered the country in the direction of economic liberalization while still paying lip service to the precepts of Maoist socialism. There has been little scholarship on this exposition, one that also opened up Australia to Asia in ways that have had lasting significance. Even though the Brisbane Exposition of 1988 was never going to draw the attendance numbers of a fair in Europe or the US, both China and Japan recognized the importance of making a strong connection with Australians in their shared corner of the world. For post-Mao China, self-representation in Brisbane, regarded as a relatively backward city at the time, was taken very seriously because, though small in population, Australia was rich in the raw materials needed to rapidly modernize China's economy. While Japan was at the top of its game as a high-tech economic powerhouse and appeared to hold all of the economic and cultural cards, China had spent the better part of the prior decade enhancing people-to-people contacts with Australia, particularly in the performing arts, and played their cards in ways that paid off well in terms of establishing positive future relations with a strategically significant Western country in the Asia-Pacific region. Thus, China's success in building on existing cultural links with Australians at that fair mark the Brisbane Expo as an important end point in the story of Chinese and Japanese self-representation.

Chapters Six and Seven talk back to one another in much the same way as the first two sets of chapters. Under examination here are the complex political and cultural performances of two newly-independent Southeast Asian countries at the 1964-1965 New York World Fair: America's former de-facto colony and important ally, the Philippines, and an Indonesia led by the fiercely independent President Sukarno who famously told US President Lyndon Baines Johnson to 'Go to hell with your aid' rather than support America's geo-political objectives in the region. By the mid-1960s, a time when the exposition no longer mattered all that much to the most seasoned and powerful players in the international order, countries such as Indonesia and Philippines that had long been on the periphery sought to claim a place in the spotlight. It matters little that the New York fair was considered by many to be largely a commercial enterprise, frequently derided as a vulgar celebration of the triumph of American consumer culture. For the Philippines and Indonesia, two of the first countries to sign on to that fair, seeing and being seen in New York, the most glamorous and powerful city in the world at the time, mattered greatly.

At a time when the US was about to ramp up the war in Vietnam using the Philippines as its key regional military base, the Philippines used its pavilion to display its human qualities. From the shape of the pavilion,



designed to resemble a traditional wide-brimmed *salakot* hat, to the dance performances inside the pavilion's 500-seat outdoor amphitheatre, the pavilion experience offered participants a warm, human encounter with hand-made artefacts and graceful Filipino bodies in motion. Chapter Six will map out the performative encounters shaped by and contained within the country pavilion and its adjacent grounds, while pointing to the confluence and disjunction between these performances and those staged in the official public sphere, notably the diplomatic encounters between Filipino and American political leaders.

Relations between Indonesia and the West, already troubled by the time the fair started, reached a breaking point when in 1965 President Sukarno withdrew his country from the United Nations and the pavilion that he himself had a strong hand in designing was boarded up for the duration of the fair. Like the Philippines pavilion, live performance was a key element in the exchange between visitors and host country residents, and the interplay between what was presented for consumption by fairgoers and what transpired outside the fairground was complex; in both cases, a dialogue exists between attempts at positive self-representation at the fair and the public pronouncements of politicians at a time when uncontrollable, uncontainable forces would eventually throw Indonesia into a civil war and turn the Philippines into a vassal state for American military exploits in Vietnam, rendering the fair's theme, 'Peace through Understanding,' deeply ironic.

Since the 1970s, international expositions have increasingly relied upon overarching themes as the means through which participating nations might justify their participation, particularly given the escalating costs of conceiving, designing, building and running country pavilions, the less-than-obvious returns on investment, and the increasing criticism of resource use at these expos. Thus, the final two chapters before the conclusion look at two vastly different Asian responses – that of Thailand and Korea – to the 2015 Milan International Exposition's theme, 'Feeding the Planet: Energy for Life.' Organizers of the Milan Exposition sought to create 'an Expo in which content and container, signifier and signified, are therefore no longer separated but become a single whole.' Here the tone and methodologies employed shift from the earlier chapters; in the absence of historical fair archives and because this fair is a recent one, these chapters instead seek to offer readers a peripatetic journey through these two pavilions, one that seeks less to describe and analyse the context behind the contents of the pavilion, as much as it endeavours to map out the possible experiential and affective nature of the experience of moving

through it, to map out its 'sensuous geographies' (Rodaway 1994). Thus, the tone is far more descriptive, and the analysis necessarily more speculative and personal in expression. I have previously undertaken similar analyses of the French and Philippines pavilions (Peterson 2012; 2018), assuming at times the role of the emancipated spectator or flâneur (Rancière 2009) to enter the space of 'the imagination as a social practice' (Appadurai 1996, p. 31). Rather than a lessening of analytical rigour, this constitutes a shift toward an 'anthropology of perception' (Csordas 1990), invoking the phenomenology of perception (Merleau-Ponty 1962), offering the reader an affective encounter with the pavilion to sit alongside the analysis of its contents and larger cultural and socio-political context.

Possibly no country took Milan fair's food brief as seriously as the Republic of Korea, with their ambitious theme, 'Hansik, Food for the Future: You Are What You Eat.' *Hansik*, Korea's vegetable-heavy cuisine featuring fermentation, was set out as a solution to the problems of world hunger, obesity, and scarce resources. Thus, Chapter Eight considers how the energy harnessed by the interactive installations and an army of attractive, young Korean hosts in the pavilion appeared to maximize the possibilities for affect. A bold assertion of an attractive Korean modernity, responding rigorously to the fair's theme with playfulness, energy, creativity, and a tightly controlled vision, offered a remarkable contrast to the consumerist and relatively backward-looking Thai pavilion. Whether Korea's efforts at the fair were successful in changing Italian or European eating habits is uncertain. In Milan Korea had presented itself under its own terms, as a hip, sophisticated, high-tech, modern Asian nation with an ancient food culture and vibrant, contemporary performance forms that spread throughout the city during 'Korea week.' The form and manner of representation was no longer traditional or modern, Eastern or Western, but a deeply Korean cultural fusion. Korea was not an abject, an outlier, a place resembling some other place, but was instead proudly its own unique thing, its own place with its own culture, people, land, and traditions, its own take on modernity.

In Milan, Thailand sought to project itself as 'the Golden Land,' a nation in a unique position to feed the planet due to the blessings of a fertile land enhanced by corporatized food production and under the divine guidance of the country's beloved 'Farmer King' and 'Royal Rainmaker,' the then-ailing King Bhumibol Adulyadej. Thus Chapter Nine considers how power was exercised both at home in Thailand and inside the pavilion, while describing the fairgoer's experiential encounter with the divinized King in the pavilion's three chambers where a series of rapidly-fired images and dazzling videos celebrated the human capacity of Thailand, evoked wonder and delight in

its food, and clear sought to strike a tone of reverential admiration for the man behind it all, the Thai King. Yet there is perhaps little to celebrate in this final case study, as the corporatist and heavy-handed way with which Thailand represented itself through high-tech, impactful video presentations reflects the retreat of democracy throughout so much of Asia, a trend that has accelerated since Donald Trump became President of United States in 2017. As the final two chapters will suggest, the ways in which the visual, particularly through powerful, repetitive images and spectacle in the service of the corporatized, neoliberal state, can contribute to the creation of a docile and compliant consumer culture and citizenry can be ignored only at our collective peril.

