

Where One Empire Ends and Another Begins

Katz, Wendy Jean (ed.). *The Trans-Mississippi and International Expositions of 1898–1899: Art, Anthropology, and Popular Culture at the Fin de Siècle*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018. 498 pp. \$65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8032-7880-6.

Nathan Cardon

University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

doi:10.1017/S1537781419000203

World's fairs or international expositions have proven a rich ground for historians of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. This collection of essays, edited by art historian Wendy Jean Katz, takes as its focus the now largely-forgotten 1898 Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition held in Omaha, Nebraska, and the even more neglected 1899 Greater America Exposition that followed. Like many expositions, the Trans-Mississippi was a combination of local and regional boosterism set within the context of national industrial growth. It aimed to create an image of Omaha and its extended region as progressive, and open for investment and settlement. With over 2.6 million visitors, the Trans-Mississippi was one of the largest and most popular to occur in the decade between the World's Columbian in 1893 and the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition held in St. Louis. Located on a former frontier of the United States' continental empire, the Trans-Mississippi coincided with the expansion of the nation's overseas one. Not wanting to lose an opportunity to make a tidy profit off the United States' new global platform, the fair's Midway and ethnological shows were repacked along with a newly-constructed Philippine Village to form the Greater America Fair, described as the nation's First Colonial Exhibit, the next year.

In the last few decades, the study of international expositions has become somewhat of a cottage industry, and this collection of essays does not deviate from many of the themes found in writing on world's fairs. Contained here are essays on empire and imperialism, progress and civilization, the built environment of the fairs, and the gendered performance of art and symbols. Where the Trans-Mississippi stands out from other expositions and where this collection makes a central contribution is in the analyses of the fair's "Indian Congress," which began life as a serious anthropological study of Native life and devolved into a Wild West Show.

Robert Rydell, the foremost historian of the United States' world's fairs, introduces the collection and opens with a call for historians to pay closer attention to the sensory environments of expositions. Unfortunately, the essays that follow do not take him up on this. In the first chapter, art historian Sarah Moore views the Trans-Mississippi as a "discursive map of progress" (30) which reveals the role of technology in transforming the region from a vast inhospitable desert to one open for settlement. Moving from a map to a stamp, American Studies scholar Bonnie Miller demonstrates how the fair's commemorative stamps celebrated a "New West" in which the federal government

acted as national historian, legitimizing certain stories over others. In this case, it touted a mythic image of the West to appeal to the new consumer society. The next three chapters examine the feminine performance, art, and symbols of the fair.

Katz's chapter looks at the debates that surrounded local women's participation. Unlike the fairs held in Atlanta (1895) and Nashville (1897), Omaha's society women chose not to have a separate Woman's Building, instead focusing on aestheticism to maintain class difference through art. At the same time, the ability for middle- and elite-class women to participate in the exposition marked the expansion of feminine public space. Emily Godbey, an art historian, also turns to the question of performance and class: in this case, focusing on the nude painting by Astley Davide Middleton Cooper of "Trilby," the protagonist of the eponymous British-novel that reflected the increasingly pitched battle of high versus popular art. Lastly, Women's Studies scholar Tracey Jean Boisseau takes the fascinating production of the Trans-Mississippi's souvenir coin in which a composite portrait of regional women's faces was made into the ideal form of white feminine civilization as a launching point to explore a broader history of women on display. Compellingly, Boisseau uses the photo identification cards and souvenir photographs of working-class, ethnic, and racialized workers as a way to read alternative feminine images.

The collection finishes with a trio of essays on the Trans-Mississippi's imperial imagination. Akim Reinhardt takes a cultural studies approach to representations of indigenous people in which the tropes of the savage, noble, and progressive Indian merged with the new imperial iconography of world's fairs. Anthropologist and Indian Studies scholar Nancy J. Parezo glides past the spectacular Indian Congress to examine the static anthropological exhibits scattered across the fair. In doing so, she explores the tensions and contradictions contained within the nascent field of anthropology as it sought to instruct and compete against the live-action showmanship of the Congress. Stacy Kamehiro and Danielle Crawford, art and literature scholars, make the most use of the Greater America Fair to compare the changing representation of both Hawai'i and the Philippines in the United States. Hawaiian pro-annexation white settlers used the Trans-Mississippi to advance their cause and the 1899 fair to encourage further investment, whereas the Philippines were initially presented as an archipelago of civilized peoples under the Spanish yoke, only to be transformed at the later fair as primitive and uncivilized. The collection finishes with a meditation on the archive and the historical subject by novelist Timothy Schaffert, whose *The Swan Gondola* is set at the Trans-Mississippi.

This collection of essays makes a compelling case for the importance of the Trans-Mississippi and the Greater America Fair. World's fairs produced copious amounts of material and ephemera, and it can be difficult for a single scholar to offer analysis of all aspects of an exposition. This collection demonstrates the worthiness of a collective approach. At the same time, the reader may become frustrated that there is no single overview of the fairs, as key details emerge throughout the book. At other times, themes and anecdotes are repeated. For instance, the report that Salvation Army officers cut off the nude arms and legs of a statue appears in both Katz's and Godbey's essays to make the same point. Lastly, the collection could have made more explicit and examined more thoroughly the overlap, intersection, and continuation between the fairs' representations of the United States' domestic and overseas empires. Despite these quibbles, this is a strong edited collection that will interest art historians, world's fairs scholars, indigenous studies researchers, and cultural and social historians of empire.