

Great Exhibitions in the Margins (Wolverhampton, 26–27 Apr 12)

University of Wolverhampton, Apr 26–27, 2012

Deadline: Nov 1, 2011

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Great Exhibitions in the Margins, 1851-1938

Research has for a long time focused on world fairs, great exhibitions or expositions universelles in the capitals of Europe and in the large cities of the USA. Their crucial role in communicating ideas about the identities of the exhibiting nations (and their relation to other cultures) and in showcasing contemporary art and design has been examined in detail. However, in the heyday of these spectacular events - in the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century - smaller cities and regional centres, such as Liège, Pozna, Edinburgh or Wolverhampton, staged their own “great exhibitions” modelled on those held in the national (or imperial) centres. Their goals, although executed on a more modest scale, were often the same and involved the promotion and sale of goods but also communication of ideas, ideologies and identities. These smaller shows usually had large ambitions and tried to engage not only the local population but also national and international audiences and exhibitors.

This symposium turns attention to the exhibitions of arts and industries in the regions outside the capitals and to the assumptions that lay behind them. Its main focus will be placed on their ambitions, originality, relationship to the “greater” exhibitions and, in particular, their engagement with visual culture. The questions explored may include:

- what ambitions motivated the idea of staging an exhibition in the particular location and what were its objectives
- what was the long-term impact of the show on the region, nationally and internationally
- how were the arts displayed at the exhibition and what role they played
- what specific influence did exhibitions like the Great Exhibition or Expositions Universelles in Paris have on the exhibitions in the margins?

The symposium encourages an inter-disciplinary approach to the topic and papers are therefore welcome from scholars in a wide range of disciplines, including the history of art and design, history, politics, anthropology, ethnography, cultural studies etc. A network of researchers interested in the subject of exhibition cultures will be created through the symposium as further academic activities on the theme are planned (a publication and a research network). News about the symposium and the research network will be posted at <http://greatexhibitions.blogspot.com>.

Please send your paper proposals of up to 250 words to Dr. Marta Filipová at Marta.Filipova@wlv.ac.uk by 1 November 2011.

Reference:

CFP: Great Exhibitions in the Margins (Wolverhampton, 26-27 Apr 12). In: ArtHist.net, Aug 30, 2011 (accessed Jun 10, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/1708>>.