

International Expositions (online, 24–25 Mar 22)

Online, Mar 24–25, 2022

Deadline: Oct 31, 2021

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International Expositions: Looking to the Past, Seeing the Future

The Institute for the Study of International Expositions (ISIE) invites proposals for its inaugural online symposium "International Expositions: Looking to the Past, Seeing the Future" to be held online on 24-25 March 2022. Abstracts due: 31 October 2021.

ISIE is a new global interdisciplinary network of researchers interested in the design, promotion, reception, and consequence of the world's fairs and expositions held since 1851. Though rooted in the history of architecture, science, diplomacy, art, and technology, our members hail from many disciplines and we welcome all those interested in exploring the many intersecting aspects of international expositions.

The 2022 symposium will bring scholars and enthusiasts together to generate new ideas about the history and legacy of international expositions. We seek to emphasise new and developing strategies for research, curation, and preservation to maximize outreach opportunities. We want to facilitate both scholarly and popular understandings of the significance of these global events that serve as mirrors of concurrent (both real and visionary) political, cultural, and technological conditions of the times in which they were held. Our aim is that participants will leave the symposium with both new understandings and insights into the study of expositions as well as stronger connections to the global community of scholars from a vast range of disciplines involved in the study of expositions.

In addition to paper sessions, the symposium will include a roundtable event focused on the Institute, as well as opportunities to informally socialize and network with others sharing related interests. We also invite those interested in the study of world's fairs to become involved in the future development of ISIE.

We especially welcome proposals for individual papers that address any of the six core themes of the 2022 symposium:

1. Unbuilt Visions: What Could Have Been

Throughout the history of international expositions organizers and designers have envisioned fair pavilions and even whole expositions that were never realized. This includes fairs planned for Miami in 1941, Rome in 1942, and Chicago in 1992. Unrealized pavilions resulted from both changing political and economic conditions in the years leading up to the events and architects and other designers using the expositions as venues through which to present their ideas on paper. This

theme will bring together papers that explore the designs and underlying reasons for exposition visions to remain unrealized and reflect on their lasting significance. Questions to be considered include, but are not limited to:

- How did these failed bids leave a mark on the prospective host city in material, financial, or political terms?
- Through which channels did exposition organizers or prospective state participants attempt to garner support?
- Did pavilions, although unrealized, have an impact on the fair, host city, the designer, or broader developments in architecture?
- Is it possible to identify a common thread between unrealized exposition bids?

2. Traces: Re-evaluating the Exposition City

In the excitement to play host to an exposition many cities have turned a blind eye to the long-term impacts, both physical and invisible, these events can have on the metropolis and more specifically on the area of the former fairgrounds. Papers presented under this theme will explore various aspects of the vast physical, economic, social, and cultural impacts of a world's fair on its host city, including on local identity and popular memory. We seek answers to such questions as:

- How have international expositions permanently altered the built environment and daily conditions of their host cities?
- How have they affected urban development and planning?
- How have past expositions impacted local identity and cultural memory?
- What is the link between expo-specific elements of material culture and popular memory?

3. Expositions as Geo-political Spaces

The Paris Expo of 1937 stands out for its dramatic representation of a world on the brink of war with the famous 'stand-off' between the USSR and German pavilions. But what of more subtle geo-politics played out at other expositions? And what of their role in 19th and early 20th-century colonialist agendas?

- How did expositions reflect the geo-politics of their time? How, for example, did they convey aspects of global colonialist projects and how may they be considered through a post-colonial lens?
- How did expositions serve to amplify (or stymie) the cultural policy of certain state actors?
- What were the diplomatic functions of expositions?
- How was national identity expressed (both in pavilions and by host cities)?

4. Visions of the Future

Since the construction of the massive iron and glass Crystal Palace in 1851, international expositions have served as venues in which to display and celebrate new innovations in technology and design. An even more conscious emphasis on presenting how advances in technology could make possible an exciting and better future for mankind began permeating expositions beginning in the 1930s and continues to this day. This theme will bring together papers that explore how technological advances have been used by fair organizers, governments, and corporations to market exciting popular visions of the future to the masses. Questions to be considered include, but are not limited to:

- How did expositions envision the future?
- What were the political underpinnings of such future visions?

- How have these visions been driven by the potential of new technology?
- How have these visions been realised? (or if they have not been realized, why not?)

5. Digital Preservation and Reconstruction

Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality and Mixed Reality technologies can play a crucial role in both reconstructing and representing expositions within the realm of digital cultural heritage practices. This session is interested in papers that explore how virtual reality and other digitization techniques can improve our overall understanding of world's fairs, including their pavilions and spaces. Questions to be considered include, but are not limited to:

- How can we harness the power of VR/AR/MR technology to raise awareness about the impact certain expositions have had on daily life in major cities around the world?
- How can VR/AR/MR create other layers of experience of the ephemeral architecture of expositions?
- Can VR/AR/MR technology democratize these expositions in new ways by affording different populations the opportunity to make remote visits to exposition grounds?
- How has digital preservation shaped the way designers and fair organizers alike approach their proposals and design plans?

6. Yes, They Are Still Held!

This theme engages with the role and changing values of expositions in the 21st century. It provides space to reflect upon the design and impact of expositions, past and future, since Expo 2000 held in Germany introduced the Hannover Principles of Sustainability to the world. It is interested in questions such as:

- How has the greater realization for the need of the global community to come together to find solutions to climate change and growing pressures for the world's resources shaped the design and focus of 21st-century expositions?
- How has shifting global power structures impacted the focus of expositions and where events are held?
- How will COVID-19 and other potential pandemics impact future expositions?

Paper proposals that do not fit into one of the six themes may be considered for inclusion in an open session. We also plan to hold a lightning session for those in the early stages of a relevant research project. Interested graduate and undergraduate students may submit a proposal for consideration to either a paper or lightning session.

Deadline for paper proposals: 31st October 2021.

Notification of acceptance: 15th January 2022.

Symposium registration deadline: 28th February 2022.

To submit a proposal, please send a 250-300 word abstract that identifies the area in which it should be considered (specify specific session theme, open session, or lightning session) and a 2-page CV to the conference through our Website: <https://www.isie-global.org/> You must be registered for the symposium by 28 February 2022 to be eligible to present at the event.

We look forward to hearing from you

Flavia Marcello, Lisa Schrenk and James Fortuna

Reference:

CFP: International Expositions (online, 24–25 Mar 22). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 23, 2021 (accessed Jul 4, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/34891>>.