HAITI AND ART:
CURATING THE NATION
FOR INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS

by

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HAITI AND ART:
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation presents a fresh approach to the study of Haitian art through research conducted in the emerging interdisciplinary field of exhibition history. In a deliberate attempt to move away from existing notions of Haitian art as a formal or aesthetic style of art practice associated with primitivism – based on mid-twentieth-century art historical narratives – I have opted to explore the display of works by Haitian artists outside of conventional museum and gallery settings. Taking a broader cultural studies approach centred on three case studies, I examine the exhibition of artworks within the transitory sites of national cultural display at two world's fairs and an art biennial: the Haitian pavilion at the World's Columbian Fair of 1893; Haiti's "Little World's Fair" officially titled *Exposition Internationale du Bicentenaire de Port-au-Prince* of 1949-50; and the Haitian pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2011.

These exhibitions overlap in the sense that they all claimed to present an official representation of the Haitian nation-state and therefore an authoritative vision of Haitian culture. However, when we peer behind this veneer of official national rhetoric it becomes clear that at each of these sites there were numerous images of Haitian nationhood, as well as notions of a national cultural essence referred to throughout as Haitian-ness, being produced by various agents. Across the course of this study these include: Haitian and foreign state representatives, curators, artists, academics and cultural professionals drawn from Haiti, Haiti's diasporas and elsewhere, as well as NGOs and other international collaborators.

In each case those curating Haiti's national displays at these events balanced assertions of national sovereignty against international marketability: delicate negotiations that, I argue, can be discerned through analysis of the forms, aesthetics, subjects and contextualisation of the artworks displayed. Across the course of this dissertation therefore I chart a shift in the substance of these Haitian cultural displays, and the artworks presented within them, from a fin de siècle expression of Francophile neoclassicism, through an uneasy post-war coupling of folkloric exoticism and western modernity, to a fragmented picture of contemporary Haitian-ness articulated with reference to poverty and cultural otherness as well as cosmopolitanism.

Through an examination of these case studies I have sought to explore how the visual arts intersected with expressions of Haiti's postcolonial nationhood at exhibitions staged within events scattered across the Atlantic World. Further, by charting shifts in the production and projection of Haitian nationhood and art across these three sites I have attempted to grasp a fuller picture of how entangled ideas of nation and culture have had a bearing on exhibition histories, international institutional engagement with and the marketing and perception of the work of Haitian artists through the long twentieth century.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION – ART AND NATIONHOOD: POSTCOLONIAL HAITI AT INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is concerned with exploring how the visual arts have intersected with expressions of Haiti's postcolonial nationhood at exhibitionary spectacles from the late nineteenth century to the contemporary era. The central chapters of this research each present an in-depth exploration of an exhibition site, three national displays, all state-endorsed representations of Haiti at international events scattered across the Atlantic World. These case studies are: the Haitian pavilion at the World's Columbian Fair of 1893 held in Chicago; Haiti's "Little World's Fair" officially titled *Exposition Internationale du Bicentenaire de Port-au-Prince* of 1949-50; and the dual-sited Haitian pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2011. Each of these cases offers a representation of Haiti conceived, at least in part, by Haitians for display within a wider world picture. In all three cases these internationally engaged visualisations of Haiti were brought into critical dialogue with essentialised perceptions of 'Haitian-ness', notions of a national culture, circulating both at home and abroad.

My decision to focus on the display of works by Haitian artists within the context of broader cultural representations at world's fairs and an art biennial, rather than within commercial gallery or art museum settings, was a deliberate attempt to break with twentieth-century art critical and art historical discourses. This is because the latter have tended to centre on fixed notions of an identifiable formal and aesthetic style labelled 'Haitian art'. This label has been confusedly used to celebrate praxis by Haitian artists as both dynamic, suggesting movement, and authentic, suggesting stasis. In fact Haitian art is often characterised as exclusively flowing out from the resources of a national vernacular culture, which is dynamic, yet hermetically sealed off from international or transnational influences at some unidentified point in the past. The idea of Haitian art, an aesthetic category or style defined by nationality or national belonging, is an expression of "the unthinking assumption that cultures always flow into patterns congruent with the borders

of essentially homogenous nation states".[1] Despite its barely concealed contradictions this concept of a national aesthetic has gained wide international currency, and is routinely employed as the basis for critical engagement with work by Haitian artists.

I first came into contact with these discourses as I began to read exhibition catalogues, art historical and art critical texts produced in the United States and Europe, which were concerned with Haitian visual arts of the 1940s to 1990s.[2] An often repeated and central tenet underpinning the interpretive writing of many authors in such volumes has been that each artwork making up the vast and diverse body of 'Haitian art', in some way expresses an essential Haitian-ness. In order to perform such an all-inclusive feat of analysis the art criticism in these texts becomes an exercise in searching for signifiers or encoded markers of ethnic, racial, cultural or national identity.[3] As such their interpretation becomes homogenised and the works of every artist discussed become essentialised as potential, interchangeable representatives of the nation. This has imposed what Kobena Mercer has called a "burden of representation" on Haitian art as it entered international exhibition spaces from the 1940s onwards. This representational "burden" has had the effect of standardising and limiting the ways that artists from Haiti and their works have been positioned to relate to international audiences.[4] This is a pattern that has been mirrored across the twentieth century as groups perceived under broad ethnic, geographic, or supposedly formal artistic identities to be cultural 'others' to the western art historical

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[1] P. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993) p.5

[2] See for example: S. Rodman, *Renaissance in Haiti: Popular Painters in the Black Republic*, (New York: Pellegrini and Cudahy, 1948); S. Rodman, *Murals for Haiti,* (n.p. 1951); *Artists of the Western Hemisphere: Art of Haiti and Jamaica* (New York: Center for Inter-American Relations, 1968); *The Naïve Tradition: Haiti* (Milwaukee, WI: Milwaukee Art Center and Richard Flagg, 1974); E. Ingalls Christensen, *The Art of Haiti* (South Brunswick and New York: A.S. Barnes and Co., 1975); U. Stebich (ed.) *Haitian Art* (New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 1978); U. Stebich (ed.) *Kunst aus Haiti* (Neu-Ulm: Die GmbH, 1979); L.G. Hoffman, *Haitian Art: The Legend and the Legacy of the Naïve Tradition* (Davenport, IA: Davenport Art Gallery, 1985); S. Rodman, *Where Art is Joy: Haitian Art: The First Forty Years*, (New York: Ruggles de Latour, 1988); *A Haitian Celebration: Art and Culture* (Milwaukee, WI: Milwaukee Art Museum, 1992); T. Retretti, *Haitin Taide Ja Voodoo = Haitian Art and Voodoo* (Punkaharju, Finland; Retretti, 1998)

[3] L. Wainwright, *Timed Out: Art and the Transnational Caribbean* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2011) p.109

[4] K. Mercer, 'Black Art and the Burden of Representation' *Third Text*, 4.10 (1990) pp.61-78

canon (such as Native American; Black; Inuit; African; Oceanic; Aboriginal; and Primitive) have entered exhibition spaces in Europe and North America.[5]

My concern in this thesis is to challenge the invocation of these essentialised discourses in academic, museological, art critical and commercial contexts, whether in celebratory, dismissive of more neutral narratives. In order to do so I will firstly undermine their apparent objectivity by revealing, briefly in this chapter and more extensively in the next, the roots of these discourses forming notions of Haitian-ness. I will trace these back to the high-stakes, antagonistic political and philosophical polemics around pro- and anti-slavery, imperialism, modern and particularly postcolonial nationhood, 'race', ethnicity and culture circulating the Atlantic World from the turn of the nineteenth century. This effort at a discursive genealogy will then be continued in greater depth in Chapter 2 as I go onto explore the routes of these nineteenth century discourses towards formalisation as the basis of art historical understandings of the work of Haitian artists in the twentieth century. As that chapter will demonstrate, since the 1950s there has been a small but persistent, responsive critique directed towards the deployment of narrow and homogenised notions of Haitian art in Euro-American contexts, penned by a range of Haitian and non-Haitian art historians.[6]

Authors of this strand of critique have endeavoured to highlight asymmetries of power at work in narratives about Haitian art deployed by western art institutions, art critics and art historians from the 1940s onwards. Hinging upon Eurocentric, 'Othering' and neo-colonial dynamics, such narratives focus on the Haitian-ness of Haitian artist's work. By doing so

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[5] See for example: S. Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001); K. Mercer, *Ethnicity and Internationality: New British Art and Diaspora-based Blackness'* in Z. Sardar, R. Araeen and S. Cubitt (eds) *The Third Text Reader: On Art, Culture and Theory* (London: Continuum, 2002) pp.116-22; R. Araeen, *From Primitivism to Ethnic Art* in D. Preziosi and C.J. Farago (eds) *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004) pp.663-84; S. Price, *Paris Primitive: Jacques Chirac's Museum of the Quai Branly* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007)

[6] See for example: P. Thoby-Marcelin, *Panorama de l'Art Haitien* (Port-au-Prince: Impr. de l'Etat, 1956); E. Pataki, *Haitian Painting: Art and Kitsch* (New York: Jamaica Estates, 1986); M.P. Lerebours, *Haiti et ses Peintures: de 1804 à 1980: Souffrances & Espoirs d'un Peuple* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimeur II, 1989); R.J. Long, 'Artists of Haiti: Reflections on a Narrative' in S. Lewis (ed.) *Caribbean Visions: Contemporary Painting and Sculpture* (Alexandria, VA: Art Services International, 1995) pp.65-70; G. Alexis, *Peintres Haïtiens/Haitian Painters* (Paris: Editions Cercle d'Art, 2000)

they have sought to position their critique of the stereotyping and instrumentalisation of Haitian's artists' work and identities within wider denunciatory arguments focused on the control of non-western artists by western institutions. In seeking to subvert problematic patterns of institutional engagement with Haitian art in Euro-America, these responsive critiques often present alternative surveys of Haitian art, which: seek to sidestep these debates altogether; assert the modernism of artworks and artists routinely primitivised in institutional interpretation; or spotlight works by lesser known Haitian artists selected largely on the basis of the diverse set of formalisms and biographies that it will provide.[7] Yet these strategies have not substantially challenged the terms of debate, but rather have shifted search and decode methodologies to focus on signifiers of modernity rather than signifiers of an essentialised Haitian-ness.

Wanting also to confront reductive interpretations, of whatever stripe, of the work of Haitian artists, yet not wanting to do so through responsive art historical critique, I have chosen to situate my study of the exhibition of work by Haitian visual artists on explicitly interdisciplinary terrain. To do so I employ approaches inspired by writing in Art History and Atlantic History and methodologies drawn from Cultural, Postcolonial and Visual Culture Studies. By pursuing this heterogeneous approach I hope to be able to grasp a fuller picture of how entangled ideas of nation, culture, ethnicity and, to a lesser extent, race have had a bearing on exhibition histories, international institutional engagement with and perception of the work of Haitian artists through the long twentieth century to the contemporary era.

In response to the problematic historiography of Haitian art I have briefly outlined above (which I continue in more detail in Chapter 2) and through my interdisciplinary footing, I have identified three strategies to implement throughout. These are: reorientation of perspective, examining new material and employing cross-disciplinary theory. These overlapping strategies have influenced both my selection of the case studies explored in the following chapters and the methods underlying my handling of each.

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[7] Aside from those texts mentioned in the previous footnote, see: G. Alexis, 'Caribbean Art and Culture from a Haitian Perspective' in S. Lewis (ed.) *Caribbean Visions: Contemporary Painting and Sculpture* (Alexandria, VA: Art Services International, 1995) pp.59-63; C.A. Célius, *Langage Plastique et Énonciation Identitaire: l'Invention de l'Art Haïtien* (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2007)

APPROACHING HAITIAN ART AFRESH: METHODS, SOURCES AND CASES

Reorientation of Perspective

My first suggested strategy, of a reorientation of perspective, in attempts to open up fresh approaches to the work of Haitian artists is inspired by paradigm shifting work in Postcolonial Studies, American Studies and Art History. Said's foundational text in Postcolonial Studies, which explored and exposed the cultural practices and mechanics of *Orientalism* as a production of 'the Orient' by the west not merely a distortion of reality, provides a crucial, theoretical starting point for this attempted reconfiguration. Like "Orientialism", the notion of Haitian-ness signifies a parallel process of cultural fabrication, which has impacted upon perceptions of Haiti and the work of Haitian artists. It is therefore key to tease out the potency and currency of certain perceptions of Haitian-ness before new perspectives can be sought.[8] However the inclination of Postcolonial Studies towards illuminating and dissecting processes of colonial domination has been critiqued for its tendency to reproduce a sense of (neo)colonial power in the past and present, thereby muting the voices and limiting the agencies of the colonised or subjugated. Falling into this kind of embattled critique, which perpetuates a binary perspective, or 'us' and 'them' dynamic (whether that is along the lines of coloniser/colonised, black/white, outsider/insider, elite/popular west/non-west or any other oversimplified dualism) does indeed appear to be an occupational hazard of postcolonial cultural criticism. Yet such a risk should not dissuade all attempts to highlight asymmetries of power in the present that can be read as a continuation of past dynamics, as such work can also provide the vital impetus for research venturing out in new directions. Therefore after seeking better to understand and destabilise the discursive routes of Haitian-ness through art historical and art critical texts (in Chapter 2) to avoid becoming mired in debates around eurocentrism I will employ a method of reorientation that has been applied to considerable effect in American and Atlantic history in recent decades.

Such work has focused on attempting to "decolonise knowledge" by highlighting the legacies of "euroimperialism, androcentrism and white supremacy in education and official

[8] E. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978)

culture," and from there identifying strategies through which to begin undermining the Eurocentric imperialism encoded into histories of America and the Atlantic World.[9] Often these studies have taken as their exemplary target or jumping-off point a pivotal metonymic narrative of the Atlantic World: the Christopher Columbus-centric account of its beginnings, which habitually absents or restricts Native American and African agency. Daniel K. Richter, for example, highlights "while American Indians might make "contributions" to the dominant culture … [they] remain bit players in the great drama of a nation's being born".[10] Various alterations to the writing of Atlantic and early American histories have been suggested as a counterweight to such historiographic biases. These have included Richter's own suggestion of a new vantage point from which to recount such histories through visual reorientation. He suggests a shifting of foreground and background, centre and periphery, as embodied in the title of his work *Facing East From Indian Country*.

Just such a reorientation of knowledge is required to move away from limiting and dehistoricising narratives of Haitian art that place its foundations in the mid-twentieth century. This was a key moment when Haitian art, upon entering international exhibition spaces, was first perceived by western art markets, institutions and critics as a distinct strand of 'primitive' art practice revolving around expression of Haitian-ness. As mentioned above, such limiting perceptions enveloped a large swathe of the world's art practices as they entered Euro-American exhibiting institutions in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, resulting in a separation of western and non-western art practices. Such widespread divisions provided a catalytic basis for one of the most notable blockbuster exhibitions ever shown at the Musée National d'Art Moderne housed in the Centre Pompidou in Paris. This landmark exhibition, staged in 1989, was called *Magiciens de la Terre* and focussed on bringing together artists from different cultural and geographical contexts. The exhibition consciously sought to move away from disaggregated exhibiting of western and non-western contemporary art of the late '80s. Curator Jean-Hubert Martin, who conceived this exhibition for the Centre Pompidou, brought together the work of

[9] M. L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) pp.2-4
[10] D. K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001) p.8

around a hundred artists: half were drawn from Euro-American "centres" of the contemporary art world, and the other half from "marginal" positions in Central and South America, Asia and Africa. As such Martin sought to stage, as the show's subtitle claimed, the "first world exhibition of contemporary art".[11]

In recent years this exhibition has been increasingly cited as a key moment, for better or worse, in art history of the contemporary era.[12] For example, art historian Nicholas Bourriaud, focussing on the aspirations of the project has positioned this as a "ground-breaking" moment from which "we can date the official entry of art into a globalised world shorn of master narratives".[13] In contrast many other scholars have focused on the many points at which this exhibition fell short of its ambitious goal.[14] Perhaps most notably in an interview with Martin, art historian Benjamin Buchloh highlighted the transference of numerous binary western and non-western comparisons or perspectives into the show.[15] Indeed, the exhibition's curators seem to have associated certain forms of art practice, such as the ritualistic and the artisanal, with non-western cultures. Such biases suggest that, whether intentional or not, *Magiciens*' was engaged in a search for cultural authenticity when selecting artists to represent non-western countries.

For example, included within the list of marginal artists were four from Haiti. Amongst these was Wesner Philidor, whose work was a performance piece in which he drew symbolic vévé in cornflour upon the floor of a space within the art gallery.[16] Yet, in contrast to the professional, contemporary, western artists selected to exhibit within *Magiciens*, such as John Baldessari, Barbara Kruger, Christian Boltanski or Nancy Spero, Philidor was a *houngan* (Vodou priest) who seems to have exhibited in no art exhibitions before or since. This stark difference, which was replicated elsewhere in the show, suggests that the curatorial selection criteria remained quite different for western and non-western artists.

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[11] J.H. Martin, et al., *Magiciens de la Terre* (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 1989)
[12] L. Steeds et al., *Making Art Global (Part 2) Magiciens de la Terre* (London: Afterall, 2013)
[13] N. Bourriaud, *The Radicant* (New York: Lukas & Sternbeg, 2009) p.11
[14] See for example the issues raised in: *Third Text: Special Issue – Magiciens de la Terre*, 3.6 (1989)
[15] B. H. D. Buchloh, 'The Whole Earth Show: An Interview with Jean-Hubert Martin by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh' *Art in America*, 77.5 (1989) p.211
[16] The other three Haitian artists represented displayed a variety of sculptural works in metal. These were Gabriel Bien-Aimé, Georges Liautaud and Patrick Vilaire.

Indeed, unsurprisingly, in 1989 there were a range of professional, contemporary artists practicing in Haiti and within Haiti's diasporas, whose work engaged with themes of spirituality and ritual, but their work was not selected for this show.

However, notwithstanding these flaws in the implementation of the curators' ambitious objectives, this exhibition remains an important project in the history of exhibiting non-western and Haitian art because of its attempts to reorient criteria of curatorial selection for contemporary art exhibitions. Therefore taking my lead from examples such as these across Postcolonial Studies, American Studies and Art History, I am attempting to conduct the central case studies of this dissertation through a reoriented approach to researching Haitian art. As such, each case will focus on a site of national exhibition curated, to varying extents, by: the Haitian state, Haitian individuals, or private organisations led by resident or diasporan Haitians. This discussion leads onto the second strategy I am employing in this dissertation aimed at embodying fresh approaches to the study of visual arts and culture of Haiti, which is examining new material.

Examining New Material

A handful of texts have explored Haiti's national display at the World's Columbian Fair in 1893, which is the subject of my first case study. However, there are a wealth related sources materials that can be used to elicit new information about this exhibit and provide fresh perspectives on its significance. These include underused and unused text-based sources such as, the brochure or catalogue-style document produced by the Haitian committee to accompany Haiti's Pavilion at this event, contemporary newspaper articles published in Port-au-Prince and Chicago, the fair's official directory, guidebooks, souvenir publications and other printed ephemera. There is also an array of largely unexploited visual materials relating to the Haitian presence at the World's Columbian Fair. These include: photographic collections, illustrations in local media, images of objects displayed within the pavilion created previously or subsequently to the event and other image-based ephemera. I argue these visual sources can provide important new perspectives on the representation of Haitian nationhood at this event.

Existing historical and cultural studies that have been conducted around the Haitian pavilion at the Chicago World's Fair present analyses that frame this presence almost exclusively through a racially-defined perspective, based on textual sources such as manuscripts of the speeches Frederick Douglass gave as commissioner for the Haitian pavilion during the fair. In Chapter 3 I present an in-depth study of the Haitian presence at the Chicago World's Fair, which pays particular attention to the selective presence, aesthetics, forms, content, provenance and positioning of artworks (including neoclassical portraiture, painted landscapes or cityscapes and textile work) by Haitians within Haiti's pavilion. Through this analysis I propose a novel argument: that the Haitian nationhood projected on this international platform actually highlights a 'diasporic disconnection' between Haitians and U.S. African Americans rather than a 'reconnection' as has been argued in previous texts.[17] In contrast to this I then go onto underscore the importance of other regional and international dynamics through which to understand this construction of postcolonial nationhood by Haiti's political elites, such as aspirational Francophilia channelled via connections with Haiti's diasporic communities in Paris and Pan-Americanism which places Haiti into a Latin American context. Further, this case presents important material that can aid in attempts to move away from narratives of Haitian art that begin in the 1940s. Though many art critical texts assert that Haitian artists, art practices and movements existed in Haiti before the 1940s there are very few studies dedicated to in-depth analysis of a particular artist's work or an exhibition predating this era, and studies of Haitian art whose subject predates the twentieth century are very rare indeed.

Chapter 4 continues this set of case studies with a focussed examination of the Bicentenaire de Port-au-Prince of 1949-50. In many ways this event was another international marketing campaign for investment in Haiti, with a particular emphasis on the potential for tourism. At this event an idealised tropicality and exoticism was stressed as an essence of Haitian-ness through both text and image produced to advertise the event. Yet unlike the previous case, which was almost entirely for an international rather than

[17] Following the work of Millery Polyné, throughout this dissertation I use the term "U.S. African American" in recognition of the fact that African American is a demonym of continental scope applicable beyond the United States. See: M. Polyné, *From Douglass to Duvalier: U.S. African Americans, Haiti and Pan Americanism* (Gainsville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2010)

domestic audience and so was an outward projection of nationhood, this second case presents an exhibition of international scope, but one that took place in Haiti. This event was therefore not solely a display of Haitian nationhood for non-nationals but also a project for renewed nation-building, under Haiti's 'first black' head of state since the U.S. Occupation that had ended 15 years earlier in 1934. This case therefore provides a unique moment and event through which to explore intersections of class, race and culture with respect to representations of Haitian national identity. Further, within the fairgrounds custom-built for this event, an array of artworks by both Haitian and non-Haitian artists were exhibited. These included: newly created public sculpture, to murals inside central buildings, existing paintings displayed within a *Palais des Beaux Arts* and imported sculpture from international collections. Occurring in the mid-twentieth-century, this case was contemporaneous with the era of Haitian art's internationalisation through the Centre d'Art and the networks of U.S. art dealers and patrons such as Selden Rodman and DeWitt Peters, it provides a fascinating fresh perspective on representations of Haitian art and nationhood in a period which has proved both phantomical and highly provocative in recounting Haitian art history.

Existing examinations of this event have mainly taken place within the fields of political and social history, placing an emphasis on fiscal concern in relation to the Estimé government. Also, echoing existent historiographic trends around the Haitian pavilion at the Chicago World's Fair, cultural histories of dance and music have traced evidence of transnational diasporic connections between Haitians and U.S. African Americans active at the *Bicentenaire*. Matthew Smith, for example, very briefly touches on this event during his consideration of Haiti's political history from 1934-57.[18] Brenda Plummer has also made short references to the exposition in her work on mid-twentieth-century attempts to launch a successful tourist industry in Haiti.[19] Meanwhile Gage Averill touches on the exposition to register the visits of African-American performers (of dance, opera, jazz and

[18] M.J. Smith, *Red and Black in Haiti: Radicalism, Conflict and Political Change 1934-57* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009)
[19] B.G. Plummer, 'The Golden Age of Tourism: U.S. Influence in Haitian Cultural and Economic Affairs, 1934-1971' *Cimarron,* 2 (Winter 1990) pp.50-53

other art forms) from the U.S. at this event.[20] Finally, Kate Ramsey has insightfully examined the staging of folklore-inspired performance arts at the *Bicentenaire*, by the newly formed Troupe Folklorique Nationale. Placing these performances within a broader reading of the Haitian government's cultural policy in the mid-twentieth century, Ramsey convincingly argues that they can be understood as just one example of the state's strategic "folkloricization" of Haitian national identity in this period.[21]

Yet aside from these passing references and partial examinations, in the context of World's Fair Studies, this exposition in Port-au-Prince (colloquially referred to in contemporary media as Haiti's "Little World's Fair") remains little studied. A short profile of it is contained within Findling and Pelle's *Encyclopedia of World's Fairs and Expositions*, though even this remains a swift overview detailing the fair's organisation, main features of the fair site, international participation and other aspects of a quite neutral commentary.[22] This is a missed opportunity given the novel postcolonial vantage point Haiti's fair provides for the field itself.

Indeed, the roots of the itinerant exhibitionary form of the world's fair are invariably traced back to the imperialist displays staged in European metropoles in the late-nineteenth-century, such as London's Crystal Palace Exposition or the Expositions Universelles of Paris. Haiti's mid-twentieth-century exhibition allows us to pose the questions such as: How was this imperialist exhibitionary spectacle imported into a postcolonial context? What did this international event format offer the postcolonial and post-occupation government of Dumarsais Estimé? What was it being used to communicate to the global audience it sought? And were juxtapositions of civilisation and primitiveness, upon which this fair format rested at its height in the contexts of imperial metropoles, carried over as a deliberate or perhaps unintended backdrop in this project of postcolonial nation-building?

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[20] G. Averill, *A Day for the Hunter, a Day for the Prey: Popular Music and Power in Haiti* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997) pp.63-68

[21] K. Ramsey, 'Vodou, Nationalism and Performance: The Staging of Folklore in Mid-Twentieth-Century Haiti' in J.C. Desmond (ed.) *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997) pp.361-4

[22] J.E. Findling and K.D. Pelle, *Encyclopedia of World's Fairs and Expositions* (Jefferson NC: McFarland & Co., 2008) pp.314-6

The relative lack of attention paid to this event, like the first case I have chosen to study, could be attributed to the scarcity of source materials available. However there are a number of rich primary texts and visual materials that I have located, which have not been used in these passing glances at the event. These include: a commemorative picture album with short essays published by the Haitian government before the event; another text commemorating and cataloguing aspects of the exposition published 25 years later during the regime of Jean-Claude Duvalier; archives relating to sculptural work by international artists that was installed within the fairgrounds; a short 40 second film depicting clips of the opening day produced by British Pathé; a first-person account of visiting the exposition, meeting Haitian dignitaries and visiting the fairgrounds published in 1950 by Virginia Simmons Nyabongo an African-American academic; reports on the event in Haitian and U.S. newspapers; and various other ephemera associated with the event. Through an examination of this material I attempt to produce a much more detailed account of "Haiti's Little World's Fair" in which I explore the questions raised above as well as paying particular attention to the role that artworks by Haitians play within this modernist project of nation-building and projected nationhood.

Until recent years the art exhibitions at world's fairs have largely remained a blind-spot for art historians. Examination of such events seems to have been perceived as the preserve of cultural historians. However through the emergence of exhibition history as a recognised strand of art historical study and specifically the proliferation of biennials in recent decades giving rise to a corresponding field of 'biennialogy', art historians have begun to turn their attention to these large-scale spectacles of international exhibition as predecessors to the cyclical exhibitionary forms now developing as key sites of exhibition for contemporary artists in locales across the world.[23] The transition to my third and final case study reflects this trend and my commitment to interdisciplinary study. In Chapter 5 I turn to examine the national exhibition Haiti presented in 2011 on the prestigious platform provided at the Venice Biennale, the oldest institution on the global biennial circuit.

[23] E. Filipovic, M. Van Hal and S. Øvstebø, (eds) *The Biennial Reader: An Anthology on Large-Scale Perenial Exhibition of Contemporary Art*, (Bergen: Bergen Kunsthall/ Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2010)

This was an event of some significance within exhibition histories of Haitian art as it was the first time Haiti was represented at the Venice Biennale, despite this being the 54th edition of the event, which was established in 1895. Originating at this moment, in the late nineteenth century places the Venice Biennale's founding concurrent with the height of, what Curtis Hinsley has described as, "the age of the industrial exposition in the North Atlantic metropolitan world".[24] Yet the connection between Euro-American World's Fairs and the Venice Biennale's founding reaches beyond concurrence. This connection finds its most tangible expression in their parallel incorporation of sites, which in both cases are named pavilions, for national display. Joel Robinson, for example, highlights:

> The Biennale took after … the universal expositions that were then being staged throughout Europe … The first Biennale pavilions were those of Europe's chief powers, many of whom had already hosted their own grand expositions, and were thus very aware of the capital to be gained by building national pavilions at these kind of events.[25]

Such observations of a link between the Venice Biennale, and fin-de-siècle world's fairs, through the national pavilion exhibiting structure have also led Marian Pastor-Roces to speak of, "today's global art shows, which glint with endless spectral reflections of nineteenth century imperialism".[26]

Yet alongside this historical genealogy, it is also important to recognise more recent stimuli for these events: historical ruptures, as well as continuities, which have contributed to their emergence. Mary Biederman has for example argued that the launch of every major post-world-war-two art biennial (or other cyclical) exhibitionary format in localities around the globe "has been informed by responses to events connected to historical, often traumatic ruptures". In the contemporary era Biederman focuses attention on the launch of *Prospect New Orleans: An International Contemporary Art Biennial* in 2008 in the

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[24] C.M. Hinsley, 'The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893' in I. Karp and S.D. Lavine (eds) *Exhibiting Cultures* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991) p.344

[25] J. Robinson, 'Folkloric Modernism: Venice's Giardini Della Biennale and the Geopolitics of Architecture' *Open Arts Journal*, 2 (2013) p.7: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5456/issn.2050-3679/2013w04jr> [accessed 10 October 2014]

[26] M. Pastor Roces, 'Crystal Palace Exhibitions' in Filipovic, Van Hal and Øvstebø (eds) *The Biennial Reader,* p.51

aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, to demonstrate that such events mark significant "political and social transition" in local, national and regional contexts. In other words these events have often been employed as positive and proactive cultural responses to local political, economic and environmental disasters, which returns us to a point of continuity: these events like fin-de-siècle world's fairs before them are, "economic risks taken in expectation of future return".[27] Such interwoven historical and contemporary perspectives are crucial contexts within which I will explore Haiti's pavilion at the Venice Biennale as this was not only an event of significance from a historical perspective: being Haiti's first participation within this historically-loaded international art exhibition format. It was also a presence of contemporary significance for Haiti because it took place only eighteen months after a magnitude 7.0M earthquake struck the country, between the town of Léogâne and the capital city Port-au-Prince, on January 12, 2010, to devastating effect.[28]

In Chapter 5 I argue that the organisers and curators of Haiti's pavilion utilised: the backdrop of the Venice Biennale, with its embedded conventions of national art representation; the contemporary post-earthquake context; and the polemical postcolonial discourse of Édouard Glissant to facilitate the opening up of discussions around how Haiti and Haitian artists continue to be perceived and positioned to relate to the wider world. To examine how the pavilion's curators and organisers opened up these debates to represent Haiti at the Venice Biennale in 2011 I will be using a variety of source materials including: a short brochure or "press kit" about Haiti's Pavilion issued at the event, other official publications associated with the biennial that year, a portfolio or international press reviews collated by the Haitian Embassy in Paris, correspondence with curators and cultural professionals involved in organising Haiti's Venetian presence in 2011, as well as reviews and commentaries published online, which contain credible material posted by identifiable authors.

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[27] M.L. Biederman, 'Prospect.1 New Orleans The Spectacle of Disaster/ The Disaster of Spectacle and the Aesthetics of Globalization' (University of California, LA: unpublished phd thesis, 2010); Hinsley, 'World as Marketplace', p.344

[28] See for example: M. Munro (ed.) *Haiti Rising: Haitian History, Culture and the Earthquake of 2010* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010); M. Schuller and P. Morales (eds) *Tectonic Shifts: Haiti Since the Earthquake* (Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press, 2012)

I argue that an examination of these sources shows the Haitian pavilion's curators and other associated cultural professionals engaging with historically rooted notions of Haiti as a place of chaos. More recent pre-earthquake questioning of Haiti's sovereign status was also implicitly addressed. Issues including the level of international third sector involvement in the country, as well as debates around the place of diasporic communities and identities within notions of Haitian and Caribbean nationhood, were explored in some of the displayed artworks. However the weighty significance and timeliness of this latter issue was not directly expressed. Indeed the reticence of the curators behind this national pavilion project to candidly engage debates around the place of Haiti's diasporas will lead me to explore the contentious or unsettling potential of this issue alongside each of the other debates highlighted. Notably, all of these issues, from differing perspectives, open onto a questioning of contemporary notions of Haitian-ness.

Selecting Case Studies: Another Burden of Representation?

The above overview of the events I will be focussing on in each case study establishes that each offers an opportunity to examine the visions and versions of Haitian nationhood that were assembled, projected and received through the displays presented on international platforms at each of these historical events. Each also presents a site through which to consider the multivalent roles that artworks by Haitians played in communicating, negotiating, contesting and complicating essentialised notions of Haitian-ness that pre-dated, and existed at, these global exhibitionary spectacles. Finally, all of these displays were to some extent organised and approved by the government of Haiti at that time. Yet despite the clear parallels between these three official displays of the Haitian nation, the fact remains that they are scattered across a timespan of 118 years, with around six decades passing between each case study.

During these temporal lacunae neither notions of Haiti, Haitian-ness and Haitian nationhood, nor the concept of the nation and the nation-state, nor understandings of art remained static. All of these concepts shifted, which is both the challenge and the attraction of taking a case based approach to a qualitative interdisciplinary study in the humanities. Careful attention must be paid to historical context in order to avoid anachronism or elision of difference over time, but it is only through selecting certain

historical moments to study across a large timespan that I will be able both to chart significant change over time and drill down in some depth. Taking a case-based approach will therefore provide space for a clarity of focus in exploring key issues such as: what type of artworks (in terms of aesthetics, form and subject) have featured within the exhibitions at the centre of each case, or; who has been involved in curating the visions of Haitian nationhood conveyed through these art displays.

Lauren Berlant in her introduction to *Critical Inquiry's* special issue on the theme of case studies published in summer 2007 noted that the idiom of investigating the case "varies tremendously across disciplines" but its usefulness always rests upon understanding how this singular 'problem-event' folds into the general, or opens up the possibility of discussing generalisable issues of concern over time or space: providing "an offering of an account of the event and of the world".[29] Berlant considered, in a brief overview, how and why the case study approach had been mobilised across various disciplines including psychoanalysis, business and law. In many such contexts this is a method of isolation, where variables and bias are limited as far as possible in order to ask a fixed set of questions, with the resulting case being presented as a representative or normative example. These are the attractive aspects of a case study methodology in many disciplines, but as Diana Taylor has explained: "In the humanities and social sciences, case studies work as extended examples and interpretations of cultural systems and events … These are not measured by quantifiable data … their observations cannot be verified or replicated. Their explanatory power lies elsewhere".[30] To claim normativity or lack of bias for the events I have selected to study would be a fiction. These events are individual: they are not case studies selected randomly out of a larger pool of data for their potential representativeness.

However, there was a loose set of criteria that I employed in order to select a set of exhibitions with some level of continuity. Suitable events would be of an international scope containing within them a distinct Haitian national contingent. Haiti's national display

[29] L. Berlant, 'On the Case' *Critical Inquiry – Special Edition: On the Case Study,* 33.4 (Summer 2007), pp.663-4
[30] D. Taylor, 'Double-Blind: The Torture Case' *Critical Enquiry – Special Edition: On the Case Study*, 33.4 (Summer 2007) pp.710-33

within this event would either include or entirely consist of an art exhibition comprising works by Haitian artists. Lastly, the framing or organisation of these displays would have a level of input from Haitian curators, Haitian-led commissions or Haitian government bodies. Such sites of exhibition seemed like a productive place from which to begin exploring some alternative perspectives on what Haitian art could signify. These exhibitions allow exploration of a broader cultural history of art objects created by Haitians, beyond the boundary of the art gallery and the art historical narrative, in their context of display on international exhibition platforms.[31] Yet as Berlant argues a case needs to be more than just an interesting event, instance or illustration, it should "raise questions of precedent and futurity".[32] The three cases I chose seemed to present a meaningful series of case studies occurring at significant moments in their own right but perhaps more importantly they are meaningful in relation to each other. These three events are all junctures in a noteworthy series of exhibitionary firsts for Haiti spanning the twentieth century: Haiti's first national pavilion at a world's fair in the United States; Haiti's first and, to date, only instance of hosting a world's fair; and Haiti's first national participation at the Venice Biennale.

Further, in choosing to research these cases I have sought to pursue rich clusters of source material that until now have not attracted much scholarly scrutiny. It is a version of a method Darnton describes as "following leads wherever they went" of which he asserts, "…[this] may not be much of a methodology, but it creates the possibility of enjoying some unusual views, and they can be most revealing".[33] Though it may not be a very formal selection process or research practice new perspectives on histories of Haitian art are a central concern of this project. For me this is perhaps the most important point: these exhibition sites in many of their aspects open up new vistas of approach to studying the

[31] The three cases I finally selected were not the only noteworthy events that fitted some or all of these criteria; another example considered at an earlier stage was Haiti's pavilion at the Montreal World's Fair in 1967. Haiti's presence at Expo '67 is particularly notable in the context of Haitian history because this event was held during the years of Francois Duvalier's dictatorship: an era of intense though suppressed civil conflict, when Haiti was largely ostracised internationally. This case would present a rare opportunity to explore how Duvalier's government attempted to market Haiti to international audiences through cultural spectacle outside of Haiti.
[32] Berlant, 'On the Case', p, 665
[33] R. Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre: And Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 2009) p.5

convergence of concepts of nationhood and art in relation to Haiti, through the significant challenges they pose to the limits of existent historiography on this subject across a number of fields.

A CROSS-DISCIPLINARY THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Emergent Field of Exhibition History

As this research project is situated in the emergent field of exhibition history, which has disparate disciplinary foundations, employment of a cross-disciplinary theoretical framework (my third strategy to enable fresh approaches to histories of Haitian art) is essential. For example within my study analysis of world's fairs dovetails with nascent research in art history and museology on exhibition-making and curatorial practice, which has departed from conventional documentary approaches to writing histories of art exhibition and until recently, orthodox perceptions of the curator as a behind-the-scenes caretaker.[34] Instead this new strand of scholarship approaches study of exhibitions as a mode of critical inquiry and it therefore acknowledges the much greater reach of the curator as creative and visionary shaper of perceptions through these sites. In such studies the role of curators is often compared to that of an '-artist' or '-auteur' rather than a custodian.[35] Paula Marincola's introduction to the collection of essays by "active curators and historians" in *What Makes A Great Exhibition?*, opens opposite a reproduction of a large-scale painting of *The Opening of the Great Exhibition* of 1851.[36] Marincola describes exhibitions as "strategically located" events that "function as the prime transmitters through which the continually shifting meaning of art and its relationship to the world is brought into temporary focus and offered to the viewer for contemplation, education, and not the least, pleasure".

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[34] See for example: C.J. Farago and D. Preziosi (eds) *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); I. Karp and S. D. Lavine (eds) *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington, DC and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); B. Altshuler, *From Salon to Biennial – Exhibitions that Made Arts History, Volume 1: 1863-1959* (London: Phiadon Press, 2008); *Exhibition History: Research notebook of the catalog of exhibitions at the Centre Pompidou* <http://histoiredesexpos.hypotheses.org/ressources/histoire-des-expositions-et-etudes-sur-lexposition> [accessed 17 March 2014]

[35] See for example: P. O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2012); P. Marincola (ed.) *Questions of Practice: What Makes A Great Exhibition?* (Philadelphia: Reaktion Books, 2006); M. Brenson, 'The Curator's Moment' *Art Journal*, 57.4 (Winter 1998) pp.16-27

[36] Marincola, *Great Exhibition?,* pp.8-12

Yet the term 'exhibition' is a slippery one: it does not designate one standard mode of display, set of objectives or method of making meaning. Robert Storr has demonstrated, that even if we just focus on exhibitions of art, there are a whole range of possible frameworks through which the art objects on display can be organised. For group shows, for example he lists possible structures as: a survey; an overview of national heritage; an artistic or cultural tradition; a period; a style; an aesthetic principle in operation; or a roundup of current production.[37] Of course the exhibitions I am exploring in the first two cases of this study are broader again placing artworks alongside a whole host of other objects, which together were organised to impart a reified sense of nationhood. The links between these recent studies of art exhibitions and the literature on world's fairs are a particularly important grounding for this dissertation as I try to pay especial attention throughout to the ways in which artworks are suspended within nationalised exhibitionary structures, exploring how this casts them as signifiers or transmitters of shifting national identities.

Scholarship that focuses on international exhibitions, world's fairs and other itinerant or ephemeral cultural spectacles dating from the mid-nineteenth century onwards has mainly developed out of research by social scientists, anthropologists, historians and cultural theorists, who have explored a variety of different methods or different disciplinary vantage points to identify 'ways of looking' at these events. As an introduction to their overview of world's fairs in the United States Robert W. Rydell, John E. Findling and Kimberly D. Pelle, each distinguished scholars of international exhibitions and cultural spectacles, marshalled the expanse of literature on these subjects into six main strands.[38] Three of these, as Rydell, Findling and Pelle outline them, provide a substantial basis for arguing that world's fairs were in fact "mainstays … of the modernizing world".[39] These have therefore provided a stimulating foundation for my own research into Haiti's presences at the international events outlined above and so they also offer a germane body of scholarship through which to contextualise my project.

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[37] R. Storr ' Show and Tell' in Marincola (ed.) *Great Exhibition?*, p.15
[38] R.W. Rydell, J.E. Findling and K.D. Pelle, *Fair America: World's Fairs in the United States* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000) pp.5-7
[39] Rydell, Findling and Pelle, *Fair America*, p.5

The first of these is dubbed the "cultural hegemony school:" a producer-centred reading of fairs that focuses on the motivations and actions of those who organised and conceived these events. Within this vein of writing Rydell's own wide-ranging texts, which have drawn on the Marxist theory of Antonio Gramsci, are central. In these he argues that, "world's fairs need to be understood as vehicles intended to win popular support for national imperial policies".[40] This is also closely related to, and often intertwined with, arguments that first emerged out of a second strand of scholarship on the subject, which began with an anthropological reading of world's fairs. Burton Benedict has been identified as the originator of this anthropological line of enquiry through his exploration of world's fairs as 'modern-day potlatches': ceremonial displays of abundant gift-giving or destruction to demonstrate wealth.[41] From there researchers in adjacent disciplines from cultural and political history to sociology have interpreted early World's Fairs as 'liminal' events marking moments of social transition towards modernity in which consumerist worldviews, enabled by an aggressively expanding capitalist network, were prized and encouraged.[42] A wealth of rigorous research has been conducted along these lines and such readings of various early world's fairs have become so influential that this exhibitionary format in the late nineteenth century is now largely understood as a multifaceted expression of Euro-American imperialism and a shaper of worldviews filtered through an Imperial lens.

Sociologist Tony Bennett has much more critically focussed on world's fairs as one form of a wider institutional body emergent in the nineteenth century in his writings on the rise of the 'exhibitionary complex'.[43] Here he utilised Foucault's interpretation of the asylum, clinic and prison in *Discipline and Punish* as a starting point against which to juxtapose his own study of the rise of the "exhibitionary complex". Bennett argues that throughout this period museums facilitated wider access to objects that had previously been withheld from

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[40] See for example: R. W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984); R. W. Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century of Progress Expositions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); R. W. Rydell, L. Burd Schiavo, R. Bennett et al., *Designing Tomorrow: America's World's Fairs of the 1930s* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010)

[41] B. Benedict, ed., *The Anthropology of World's Fairs* (London and Berkeley: Scolar Press, 1983)

[42] See for example: W. Susman, 'Ritual Fairs' *Chicago History*, 12 (1983) pp.4-9

[43] T. Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex' *New Formations,* 4 (Spring 1998) pp.73-102; T. Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995)

the public gaze, "…secreted in the *studiolo* of princes, or …*cabinets des curieux* of the aristocracy".[44] Bennett places these among a series of other emergent institutions, including the department store, shopping arcade and the national and international exposition, which he suggests functioned as part of a new system for displaying and exercising the power of the state and for nation-building. Primarily through the example of the Crystal Palace exhibition, Bennett presents the ephemeral international exposition format as a point of transition for the modern state towards the founding of institutional sites "for the *permanent* display of not only national but imperial power/knowledge".[45] He argues that these liminal events presented early narratives and "object lessons" of progress that sought to make the national citizenry complicit in an exercise of state power over colonial bodies:

> this power marked out the distinction between the subjects and the objects of power not within the national body but, as organized by the many rhetorics of imperialism, between that body and other, 'non-civilized' peoples upon whose bodies the effects of power were unleashed …[46]

Timothy Mitchell has similarly blended perspectives drawn from postcolonial studies, cultural studies and museology in his writings on modes of displaying "the Orient" at late nineteenth-century world's fairs.[47] Following Edward Said he demonstrates how these events produced an essentialised, and even invented, image of the Orient through the creation of an ordered and representative 'object-world'.[48] Further, paralleling Hinsley's argument, Mitchell asserts that the 'exhibitionary order' he identifies as a vital dynamic at the heart of fin-de-siècle world's fairs, ultimately promoted "conversion of the world to

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[44] Bennett, 'Exhibitionary Complex', p.73
[45] Ibid, 76-80
[46] Ibid, p.80
[47] T. Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988); T. Mitchell, 'Orientalism and Exhibitionary Order' in Preziosi and Farago (eds) *Grasping the World*, pp.442-460; T. Mitchell, 'The World as Exhibition' *Comparative Studies in Society and History: An International Quarterly*, 31 (1989) pp.217-236
[48] Said, *Orientalism*; On a similar note see discussion of imagined Congolese architecture at the Parisian Exposition Coloniale of 1931 in J. Lagae, 'Displaying Authenticity and Progress' in R. Araeen, S. Cubitt and Z. Sardar (eds) *The Third Text Reader on Art, Culture and Theory* (London: Continuum, 2002) pp.47-61

modern capitalist production and exchange".[49] He explores both hegemonic and audience-centred approaches to construct these arguments: looking, for example, at both motivations and intentions behind displays of "the colonial other" at the 1889 Universelle Exposition in Paris, and Arabic responses to the carefully arranged, spectacular "object-worlds" that Europeans created at events in this era. These interdisciplinary approaches to exploring various ways of looking at world's fairs and international expositions, each with a particular focus and perspective on structures of exhibitionary representation, underpinning imperial ideologies, and modes of vision enabled through such large-scale international events have each provided crucial theoretical foundations for my own analysis in the case studies to follow.

In *All the World's a Fair*, Rydell states "world's fairs existed as part of a wider universe of white supremacist entertainments". To qualify this assertion he explains that, "exposition promoters drew upon and reshaped such sources of entertainment as the zoological garden, the minstrel show, the circus, the museum of curiosities … and the Wild West show".[50] This jumble of exhibitionary systems that each exploited and displayed human difference as a form of entertainment are indeed perceptible as the basis for various modes of display at world's fairs. Their influenced is particularly explicit in the commercial exhibition of various ethnic groups, usually from colonised territories, on midways or in ethnographic villages at fin-de-siècle expositions. The agencies of those at the centre of such exhibitions are addressed in the third and final strand of scholarship that Rydell, Findling and Pelle identify. This is what they term the 'counterhegemony school' and describe as a body of work that has focussed on the ability of the socially and politically marginalised to find advantageous opportunities to challenge negative perceptions and stereotyped images of themselves through the unique public spaces created at world's fairs. As these three scholars focus on fairs in the U.S. they point particularly to literatures concerned with the agency of Native Americans and also reference the opportunities for American women to contest restrictive, socially accepted norms about themselves based

[49] Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, p.16
[50] Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, p.3

on their gender.[51] Surprisingly amongst this strand of work Rydell, Findling and Pelle do not directly reference any of the existent scholarship on the marginalisation and exclusion of black Americans from world's fairs in the United States. This is despite a long-standing scholarship existing on the subject dating back to Ida B. Wells' pamphlet *The Reason Why the Colored American is not in the World's Columbian Exposition* distributed at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893.[52]

More recently Mabel O. Wilson has contributed an important monograph to the field that has drawn attention to the presence of 'black Americans in the world of fairs and museums'.[53] Prompted by the landmark 2015 opening of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture on the U.S. National Mall Wilson has sought to trace a history of "architectural and curatorial precedents" to "contemporary black museums" beginning with the Negro Buildings erected at certain U.S. world's fairs from 1895. Through these structures, she argues, "black men and women created and circulated public narratives of who they were and wanted to become".[54] Further, going beyond the U.S.-centric focus of Rydell, Findling and Pelle's overview, some of the richest 'counterhegemonic' readings of world's fairs have focussed on the exploitation and agency of those exhibited to represent foreign colonised nations or groups at U.S. and European expositions. Rydell himself considers the World's Columbian Fair as a "cultural Frankenstein" from the point of view of "people from Africa, Asia, the Dutch East Indies, and the Middle East" who were featured as displays at this event, leading him to conclude

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[51] See for example: L. G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883-1933* (Albuquerque, N. Mex.: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); M.F. Cordato, *Representing the Expansion of Woman's Sphere* (unpublished phd dissertation, New York University, 1989)

[52] See for example: R.W. Rydell, *The Reason Why the Colored American is not in the World's Columbian Exposition: The Afro-American Contribution to Columbian Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999 [1893]); D. F. Burg, *Chicago's White City of 1893* (Lexington, KT: University Press of Kentucky, 1976); C. R. Reed, *All the World is Here! The Black Presence at White City* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000); B. J. Ballard, 'African-American Protest and the Role of the Haitian Pavilion at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair' in J. C. Trotman (ed.) *Multiculturalism Roots and Realities* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002) pp.108-24; R. S. Levine, *Dislocating Race and Nation: Episodes in Nineteenth-Century American Literary Nationalism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008) pp.179-235

[53] M. O. Wilson, *Negro Building: Black Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012)

[54] Wilson, *Negro Building,* p.4

that, "from the perspectives of non-whites … the Chicago fair seemed less like a dream city than a nightmare come true".[55]

This rich array of diverse, and often equally convincing, readings of world's fairs has led the field to move towards a broad consensus that these ostentatious spectacles were complex events vacillating between areas of systematised and jumbled arrangement through which numerous (meta)narratives, at times in conflict or contradiction of one another, were broadcast and received. For example, many scholars have highlighted the recurrent presence of narratives related to Imperialism, industrialisation, capitalism, modernisation, progress, western civilisation, national identity and many more across the history of world's fairs. Jeffrey Auerbach's analyses of the Crystal Palace exhibition as a "cultural battlefield" on which "visions and versions" of a new British national identity grappled with each other, are particularly notable in this vein, because he also acknowledges and explores the fluid and restive elements of this and other world's fairs which threatened to spill over and subvert the intentions of their sponsors.[56] Therefore while Auerbach himself focuses on the importance of these "liminal" events as sites of collective imagination and remembrance amongst various socio-political groups, local and national audiences across Britain, his analysis emphasises the need for nuanced understandings of these events and the national identities that were projected, performed, and perceived through them. In the context of the metonymically present globe these international expositions provided crucial opportunities to reinforce or redress national brands and shape understandings of how each nation present did currently relate to the wider world politically, economically and culturally and more importantly how they could relate in the coming era.

Indeed in her recent study focussed on twenty-first-century nation branding, Melissa Aronczyk identifies "the staging of national culture" in the late nineteenth-century at

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[55] R.W. Rydell, 'A Cultural Frankenstein? The Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893' in N. Harris et al. (eds) *Grand Illusions: Chicago's World's Fair of 1893* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Historical Society, 1993) p.144

[56] J. Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999) pp.5, 231

world's fairs and international exhibitions as an important "piece of nation branding's prehistory".[57] Continuing she states:

> through artistic renderings, buildings, performance, and other material and symbolic representations, visitors could experience the nation at once as a bounded collection of unfamiliar goods and peoples and as one among many similar units in a system of international classification.[58]

As Aronczyk suggests within the wider systems of exhibition that such events offered was a chance not only to present a national brand to an international audience, but also to give such an image definition against the backdrop of the surrounding parallel displays of other national units. In fact the opportunities that international expositions offered for nations to be rebranded, and so (re)shape ways of relating to the international community, were acknowledged as key motivating factors behind each of the Haitian displays in the following case studies, as statements made in ephemera published to support each site attests.[59] Yet, how, and why, did a postcolonial nation repeatedly seek to perform a rebranding exercise by utilising the spaces afforded within iterations of an imperially rooted exhibition format?

Despite there being numerous fascinating instances of official postcolonial national presences at such events, or even of numerous postcolonial nations hosting them in the twentieth century, surprisingly little study has been dedicated to critically examining how such nations engaged with and utilised the exhibition format. An important work in this small field to date is Andrew Apter's study of the Nigerian state spectacle known as FESTAC '77.[60] Apter explains that he was attracted to studying Nigeria's oil fuelled Pan-African

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[57] M. Aronczyk, *Branding the Nation: The Global Business of National Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013) p.4

[58] Aronczyk, *Branding the Nation*, p.4

[59] See: R. Gentil and H. Chauvet, *Haiti à l'Exposition Colombienne de Chicago: Avec une Liste de ses Produits Exposés et des Notices de M. Dulciné Jean-Louis* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie Vve J. Chenet, 1893) p.3; *Exposition Internationale 1949-1950: Bi-centenaire de Port-au-Prince 1749-1949* (Port-au-Prince: Imp. des Antilles, 1948) p.6: Digital Library of the Caribbean <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00010663/00001/1> [accessed 10 December 2014]; Giscard Bouchotte quoted in A. Colonna-Césari, 'Venise pour tout l'art du monde' *L'Express*, 30 June 2011, Service Culturel (ed.) *Revue de Presse*, 2nd ed., p.9

[60] A. Apter *The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005)

cultural spectacle because it "involved cultural representations produced by Africans in a postcolonial context of exceptional prosperity, bringing visions of cosmopolitan Lagos and its upbeat modernity into critical dialogue with its colonial past". This provides a particularly interesting parallel for my own study of Haiti's 'Little World's Fair' of 1949-50. Though Haiti was not experiencing an era of particular economic prosperity at this time there was a similar sense of optimism circulating around this event and its visions of Haitian modernity, also intended to be in "critical dialogue" with Haiti's colonial pasts and perceptions arising from them. Yet aside from this specific parallel, Apter's text is conceptually significant because it extends the literature on international expositions beyond sites within Euro-American metropoles to postcolonial Africa, thereby providing nuance to understandings of the world's fair format as a site for the projection of national brands through a great tradition of imperial spectacles.

Postcolonial Perspectives

In exploring representations of Haitian postcolonial nationhood at various international events I will also be contributing to the emerging field of Francophone Postcolonial Studies, which aims to address biases in the largely Anglophone-focussed and -based corpus of Postcolonial Studies.[61] However, as texts in this nascent area of the discipline highlight, the significant raft of inward focussed criticism of postcolonial studies that has developed in recent years has exposed much more challenging structural issues within the discipline that go beyond its Anglophone bias. In the following section I will highlight my awareness of some of the issues in this area, which are most pertinent to my study, and how I hope to navigate these. In his substantial tome *Friends and Enemies* Chris Bongie engages with many of these intra-disciplinary critiques in the context of Caribbean and Haitian Studies. Bongie observes that at the core of many of these deep-cutting criticisms have been accusations of the discipline's tendency to have a strong culturalist emphasis that is removed from what has been termed the 'properly political'. Peter Hallward's critique in *Absolutely Postcolonial* is particularly damning in its assessment of postcolonial theory's impotency in the face of the 'asset-stripping' of the third world, while the discipline was

[61] C. Forsdick and D. Murphy (eds) *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical Introduction* (London: Arnold, 2003); C. Forsdick and D. Murphy (eds) *Postcolonial Thought in the French-Speaking World* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009)

still in its ascendency.[62] Along similar lines Robert Young has urged the discipline to take a "political turn" much like that in his own work, by asserting that engendering a "theoretically-informed activist politics" ought to be "the central concern of postcolonialism". As a base for making these arguments Young has both pushed against postcolonial studies' foundation within what he sees as the western and Eurocentric legacy of Marxist critique and the highly influential textualist or literary bias of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, which he has cast as a reduction and betrayal of postcolonial studies potential as a politically valuable resource.[63]

Noting also that a shift has taken place within the discipline, but taking a profoundly different perspective on this David Scott, in the words of Stuart Hall, has been "for some time now …puzzling about where critical inquiry goes next".[64] In his monograph *Conscripts of Modernity* Scott presents a book length analysis of C.L.R. James' *The Black Jacobins*. Through his examination of James' retelling of the Haitian Revolution Scott considers what form a politically charged postcolonial project might take in the present. He notes that postcolonial theorists, in seeking to find a site from which "to give utopian point to the project of social and political change", have continually returned to such anticolonial narratives and associated Bandung politics. These narratives and politics, he highlights, are invested with the nationalist and liberationist visions of sovereignty as self-determination.[65] Yet Scott finds no viable future in these politics and poetics, which he agrees are doing little to stem the flow of postcolonial theory's estrangement from Third World contexts towards understandings of the colonial and postcolonial condition based almost entirely on the experiences of metropolitan diasporas.[66] Therefore Scott's return to *The Black Jacobins* is not motivated by the hope that he can find within this telling of the Haitian Revolution routes to better potential futures through the socio-political models of

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[62] P. Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing Between the Singular and the Specific* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); C. Bongie, *Friends and Enemies: The Scribal Politics of Post/Colonial Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008) p.4
[63] Robert Young quoted in: Bongie, *Friends and Enemies*, pp.17-22
[64] 'David Scott by Stuart Hall' *Bomb – Artists in Conversation*, 90, (Winter 2005) <http://bombmagazine.org/article/2711/david-scott> [accessed 10 January 2014]; D. Scott, *Refashioning Futures: Criticism After Postcoloniality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); D. Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004)
[65] Ibid., p.30
[66] Scott, *Refashioning Futures*, p.197

nation and socialism contingently advocated by James. Though it is clear that Scott deeply admires James' writing, he leaves us in no doubt that the romanticised future James was longing for, through his narrative of the Haitian Revolution published in 1938, cannot belong to our present. He asserts that James' socio-political context at this juncture offered "a horizon of possible futures that are not, any longer, ours to imagine, let alone seek and inhabit".[67] Instead it is James' self-consciously contingent retelling of an anticolonial past to envision a longed-for utopian future useful and conceivable in his present that Scott is interested in. He suggests that we continue to return to these representations of anticolonial "futures past" because they both enable us to better understand the colonial questions they were formulated to answer and help us to illuminate the extent to which those questions have continued, and do continue, to be salient questions to pursue an answer to in subsequent postcolonial presents including our own.[68]

In a sense what I am doing in this study, like Scott, is exploring narrations of postcolonial (Haitian) futures through pasts constructed contingently to address the audiences and exigencies of each present space and time: be it Chicago in 1893, Port-au-Prince in 1950 or Venice in 2011. Scott applies his philosophically inflected thesis to a literary source in *Conscripts of Modernity*, but there are definite parallels to be drawn between C.L.R James' narration of an postcolonial future through retelling the Haitian revolution in *The Black Jacobins,* and the narration of Haitian postcolonial futures through visual display at each of the events I explore in the following case studies. For example, as I will outline in the following chapters, U.S. African-American activists and artists involved in aspects of Haiti's display at the World's Columbian Fair and at the Bicentenaire de Port-au-Prince also return to Haiti's revolutionary heroes at these events as a way to assert the Civil Rights cause of black Americans in the United States. Yet the displays I will explore in the three cases to follow were each curated by a variety of agents, with a significant and central contingent among these being drawn from Haiti and its diasporas. This offers a novel opportunity to explore Haitian-co-authored (and in the first two cases certainly Haitian-led) visions of potential postcolonial futures. Scott suggests in the postcolonial present the national is no longer a viable site for hope and longing, yet significantly the nation is the primary frame

[67] Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, p.29
[68] Ibid., p.33

through which each project of postcolonial imagining is performed in the case studies to follow. Therefore I will question within each the limitations, arbitrariness and artificiality of a national frame for the display being explored. I will also consider what postcolonial imagining through or bounded by the nation becomes in this post-independence period if it can no longer be hope and longing. Finally, I will explore why these nationally-framed events have continued to be attractive sites for projecting postcolonial futures up to the contemporary era.

Scott's earlier work in *Refashioning Futures* also explored how futures could be imagined after anti-coloniality and in the liminal present he termed *after postcoloniality*, yet here he did so through a cultural studies framework. His essay entitled 'Fanonian Futures?', which explored popular-modern practices towards such a refashioning by focussing on Jamaican dancehall, was pin-pointed by Chris Bongie as particularly representative of what many have seen to be postcolonial studies politically anaemic emphasis on cultural-politics often traced back to Said, whom Scott acknowledges as an influence on his work.[69] This dissertation also has a strong focus on historical-cultural events throughout; however these spaces and their cultural-politics were not divorced from the "properly political". These were sites for asserting cultural-national identity, which politicians and diplomats were actively involved in constructing alongside cultural professionals, curators and artists. These sites were active attempts, by those within positions of "properly political" power, to exercise that power through cultural capital in order to shape Haitian identity and relation within the international domain.

Drawing on Jeffrey Auerbach's thesis, I would argue that international expositions, world's fairs and biennials were, and are, not only "cultural battlefields" but political battlefields also. These are sites where jostling over cultural identities has political impacts and the potential to return longer term political-economic gains in terms of: investment, nation-building, improved diplomacy, or added value to cultural-national assets. Take for example seemingly positive domestic response to Haiti's World's Fair of 1949, its clear emphasis on launching a national tourist industry, and the level of international presence it was able to

[69] Scott, 'Fanonian Futures?' in *Refashioning Futures*, pp.190-220; Bongie, *Friends and Enemies*, pp.268-275

encourage ranging from participations by the United States and France, to Syria, Venezuela, Cuba, the Vatican and the United Nations.[70] However Dumarsais Estimé's swift exist from presidential power in Haiti before the planned end date of the fair, lacking U.S. support despite all the show of it on the fairgrounds, and his being subsequently lambasted from many quarters for assigning so much state money to the event, regardless of the fact that it laid the foundations for what is now routinely recognised to be a "golden age of tourism" in Haiti, also demonstrates the political limitations and risks involved in staging such an event.[71]

At each of the Haitian national displays I study below there were antagonistic political forces at play emerging from various loci: within Haiti, among its diasporas, from external collaborators and among organisers of the wider events. Some sought to assert Haiti's sovereignty and limit or prevent its 'asset-stripping'. Conversely others, by supporting this projection of nationhood, worked towards the containment of those national projects, by exercising soft power to maintain and extend the economic and political dependency of Haiti. Still other agents sought neither of these ends but aimed only to use this cultural-political platform to promote their own projects and agendas, be that anything from a business to an artist's practice. Though it may seem so initially, it is important to remember that none of these motives can be easily or wholly aligned to the subject positions outlined above. Yet studying these events presents a chance not only to explore the construction, projection and reception of cultural identities, but also to perceive 'properly political' dynamics at play whatever their point of departure.

It is also important to note that the perspectives I pursue in exploring representations of Haiti at each of these events attempt to depart from a central focus on western envisioning of a colonial or postcolonial other, as in Said's *Orientalism*. Instead I am seeking to explore representations of Haiti curated in part by Haitians in various roles for international audiences, thereby providing much more scope for exploring modes of asserting agency or sovereignty from postcolonial positions. It must be acknowledged, however, that these

[70] See for example: G.S. Schuyler, 'Haiti Looks Ahead' *Américas* (December 1949) p.6; 'Caribbean Carnival: "Little World's Fair" is Haiti's big bid for tourists' *Life*, 13 March 1950, p.108
[71] Plummer, 'Golden Age', pp.49-63; Smith, *Red and Black*, pp.145-7

cases do not give us direct access to a 'popular' or subaltern Haitian view. With the exception of the *Death and Fertility* site at the Venice Biennale in 2011, as far as Haitian representation goes, each of these displays were largely elite controlled visualisations of postcolonial nationhood and so are not typical sites for a cultural study. Further to this, within areas of the display explored in the first and third cases below, we are to a lesser and greater extent presented with visualisations of a national postcolonial experience significantly displaced to emerge from diasporic rather than 'third world' positions. Yet this, in my view, does not make the cases less valuable, as long as we acknowledge the positions from which they are emerging. Rather these varied sites and social positions from which each of the Haitian displays were constructed make these cases worth exploring for their reach beyond the dichotomy of metropolitan, (neo)colonial power versus third world, colonial subaltern. As a series these case studies offer more nuanced understandings of the multiple ways in which visualisations of Haiti as a postcolonial project have developed and circulated at certain moments from the late nineteenth century to the contemporary era.

Despite not being direct expressions of popular culture within or drawn from Haitian society, the wider events that these displays appeared within were constructed to cater to mass audiences as sites of edification and amusement, and certainly editions of these events held in the United States and Europe have been exemplary sites for focus within cultural studies for many years.[72] Though Bongie presented an extended commentary on critical debate that has found postcolonial studies cultural emphasis since the late 1970s to be problematic, he was also equally careful to delineate postcolonial studies silent disavowal of the value of popular culture by continuing to focus on an elite study of fiction and poetry authored by established or more recently designated literary giants as the privileged site of culture.[73] In response to this literary elitism Bongie then suggests a crucial way forward for the discipline as being in greater *dialogue* with such cultural studies.[74] For me this suggestion of the need for a fundamental methodological extension of the discipline to include an engagement with the wider source base and theoretical approaches engaged in cultural studies, which is already being pursued in many quarters, is

[72] See: J. E. Findling and K. D. Pelle, *Historical Dictionary of World's Fairs and Expositions, 1851-1988* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1990); Rydell, Findling and Pelle, *Fair America*, pp.153-161
[73] Bongie, *Friends and Enemies*, p.9
[74] Ibid., p.10

very important. However I would add to this, as a matter of course, that any recalibration of postcolonial studies should include an engagement with material and approaches employed in the field of visual culture studies, which remain more marginal at present.

Nicholas Mirzoeff in similarly seeking to respond to the elite literary bias or aversion for the visual at the base of many academic disciplines, has sought to theorise a field of visual culture studies.[75] However in doing so Mirzoeff also highlights these dynamics of disciplinary exclusion working in reverse in the field of cultural studies. He points out, for example, that "art has often been vilified by cultural studies … – its viewers in this scenario are the dupe of the dominant classes – it "art" has become the oppressive Other for cultural studies that allows popular culture to define itself as popular".[76] In response he presents visual culture studies as a "tactic" for moving away from such separations of popular versus elite allowing, for example, a study of artworks alongside other objects in contexts outside of the sanitised formal viewing setting of the art gallery or museum. Indeed, the "blend" of art history's "historical perspective …with the case-specific, intellectually engaged approach characteristic of cultural studies" that Mirzoeff proposes, fits well as a basis for the interdisciplinary approach I seek in my own study.[77] Applying such a frame to this dissertation, which explores projections of postcolonial nationhood through visual-cultural display at various historical moments within the more open-ended and indeterminate exhibitionary settings of world's fairs and biennials, will I hope open up the space to pursue those new vistas of approach to studying the work of Haitian artists, which I seek through this dissertation.

EXAMINING THE NATIONAL FRAME

Now that I have outlined the general theoretical and methodological framework for the case studies to follow all that remains is to give a brief overview of more specific theoretical underpinnings that will run throughout this study. I have opted for a case studies approach and within this framework selected three causally unconnected events to focus on that are geographically scattered and occurred at widely dispersed moments in

[75] N. Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999) pp.9-12
[76] Mirzoeff, *Visual Culture*, p.11
[77] Ibid., pp.12-13

time. Yet, as outlined above in the section on selection of cases to study within this dissertation, there are numerous parallels and threads of continuity running between these three projections of Haitian nationhood. Building on these continuities or parallels, and in response to the source material addressed in each case, I will now consider a broad thematic area around which the key concerns of this study will coalesce throughout: the concept of nationhood, and more specifically notions of Haitian nationhood.

Who Sings the Nation?

Each of the projections of Haitian nationality that are the focus of the three case studies to follow inevitably throw up the question of what, or who, exactly constitutes the nation? and how does this differ from the nation-state? These questions assert themselves as soon as we begin to peer behind the carefully constructed veneer of each of these displays, which are held together through an invocation of the national, a "language of commonality [that] glosses over [a] world of differences".[78] Each representation of Haiti in the cases to follow had a level of official state involvement or approval, making these appear at first sight to be comparable, ratified displays of Haitian nationhood situated alongside parallel representations drawn from across the globe in a peaceable meeting of nations. However the reality of national belonging is much messier than these artificially tidied world pictures comprising a multitude of national parallelisms. Just by glancing at the organisation, construction and projection of visions and versions of Haiti and Haitian-ness for any one of the three events explored in the case studies to follow, we quickly see that an assortment of different groups and individuals were involved, whose varied localities, locations, class, race, gender and even nationalities were glossed over through a single national framing.

If we take, for example, Haiti's pavilion at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 we can see the heterogeneous and markedly international scope of the collection of people involved in designing, producing and representing Haiti at the event. The Haitian pavilion's brochure or catalogue tells us that from within Haiti there were all manner of individuals, civic institutions and branches of the government who contributed objects to be exhibited

[78] N. Glick Schiller, 'Locality, Globality and the Popularization of a Diasporic Consciousness: Learning from the Haitian Case' in R.O. Jackson (ed.) *Geographies of the Haitian Diaspora* (New York: Routledge, 2011) pp.xxi-xxix

within the national pavilion at Chicago from the Ministry of Agriculture to a number of girls' boarding schools, and a host of private individuals. It also shows that then President Florvil Hyppolite and a variety of current and former politicians took an active interest in the project, by issuing invitations to external commissioners, serving on the pavilion's internal commission and in outlining an agenda for this national representation.[79] There were also contributions to this display from among Haiti's diasporas, most prominently Louis-Edmond Laforesterie, a sculptor based in Paris for much of his life. Laforesterie contributed two artworks to the national display, while one of the pavilion's external co-commissioners was "Haitian native" Charles A. Preston formerly of the Haitian Legation to Washington D.C.

Layering a further set of African diasporic meanings onto the Haitian national display were a number of key African-American figures of the time who took up various official and de facto roles in mediating Haiti at the World's Columbian Fair. Most prominent among these was Frederick Douglass who was appointed external co-commissioner for Haiti at the fair by President Hyppolite and took a lead on shaping Haiti's presence into a site of Pan-Africanist significance through his own speeches and through providing spaces of activism and representation to other U.S. African Americans.[80] Depictions of the exterior of Haiti's pavilion building are contained within a number of illustrated guides, directories and souvenir albums of the fair.[81] These show its design with colonnaded portico, described as being in the Greco-Colonial or Southern Colonial style, to draw on a neoclassially-inspired architectural style that was popular among moneyed slaveholding elites in the U.S. South, Saint Domingue and many other New World societies in the colonial era.[82] However it is notable that the Haitian coat of arms and three years were inscribed above the pavilion's entrance. These were: 1492, marking Columbus' landing in the Americas; 1892, the 400th

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[79] Gentil and Chauvet, *Haiti à l'Exposition*, pp.5-14

[80] G. McClish, 'Frederick Douglass and the Consequences of Rhetoric: The Interpretive Framing and Publication History of the January 2, 1893 Haiti Speeches' *Rhetorica*, 30.1 (2012) pp.37-73; R. Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines: The Haytian Pavilion and the Narrative of History' in M.A. Sourieau and K.M. Balutansky (eds) *Ecrire en pays assiégé Haiti – Writing Under Siege* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004) pp.39-59

[81] See for example: H.H. Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair* (New York: Bounty Books, 1894) p.915; J.W. Shepp, *Shepp's World's Fair Photographed* (Chicago: Globe Bible Publishing Co.; 1893) p.469

[82] M.P. Handy, *The Official Directory of the World's Columbian Exposition, May 1st to October 30th, 1893: A Reference Book of Exhibitors and Exhibits …* (Chicago, IL: W. B. Conkey Company, 1893) p.128; Bancroft, *Book of the Fair,* p.918

anniversary of the former, and 1804, the year of Haitian independence. Writing on the significance of national pavilion architecture at World's Fairs, John Lagae argues that "these displays underscored precise ideological goals and are a translation into architecture of what Hobsbawn has called the 'invention of tradition'".[83] In the fin de siècle era it was not unusual for central fair organisers to be in charge of the design and construction of national pavilions (it was not until later in the twentieth century that this came under the control of individual national exhibitors). In charge of the architectural design and construction of this crucial national framing device for Haiti at the Chicago World's Fair were U.S. architects and contractors E.S. Childs and John H Kelley of Brooklyn who worked in collaboration with Douglass and Preston.[84] This composite assembly of perspectives that went into constructing Haiti's image at the World's Columbian Fair demonstrates the diversity of positions from which individuals and groups have contributed to visions of Haiti at International Exhibitions and therefore reinforces the need for nuanced understandings of the displays being analysed. Along the lines of Auerbach's thesis on 'Britishness' at the Crystal Palace Exposition, I would suggest that we should not attempt to excavate what these displays meant as whole pictures. Instead, each national display is better perceived as a fragmented and at times even contradictory image of what Haitian nationhood has signified in the past, is in each present, and could be in the future.

The reality of this heterogeneity behind the national framing of Haiti's display at the World's Columbian Fair again throws up questions about who and what the nation is. Benedict Anderson, in the early '80s, first outlined a seminal theory of the nation as an "imagined political community" that is limited (i.e. not co-terminus with mankind or territorially with the globe) and sovereign, which has remained a basis for studies into national belonging to the present.[85] In this work Anderson pinpoints the territorialisation of the concept of the nation to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century creole elites of the New World who broke away from Europe through revolution. Previous to this the

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[83] Lagae, 'Displaying Authenticity', p.47

[84] Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines', p.43; E. Sandweiss, 'Around the World in a Day: International Participation in the World's Columbian Exposition' *Illinois Historical Journal*, 84.1 (1991) p.10

[85] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983)

concept of the nation had a more fluid application tied to language and culture, allowing for national belonging across the long-distances of empire. However, in modernity's post-revolutionary era national belonging became wedded to the state. This was a transition significantly contributed to by ex-slaves, their descendants and indentured servants who continually sought legal recognition and citizenship for the rights and protections it offered within the New World societies they laboured for. Highlighting the recentness of this sited concept of the nation-state Gayatri Spivak and Judith Butler have asked "what work does the hyphen do?" within this term. Does it disguise fallibility, finesse a relationship that needs explanation, or denote a historical soldering? In conversation these two theorists explore the concept's flaws, the status of the stateless and the rough and blurred edges of an apparently neat global system based on this nation-state model. In response they suggest notions of the nation-state should be recognised as locally and historically contingent "cobbled together" relationships between the "imagined community" of the nation and the "legal and institutional structures" of the state, which are glossed over by a standardised international vocabulary.[86]

In the wake of Duvalierism, Michel-Rolph Trouillot penned his influential reading of Haitian socio-political history titled *Haiti State Against Nation*. Since Trouillot highlighted what he termed a "disjuncture between political and civil society" in Haiti through this text, there has been a heightened awareness of modernity's fabricated link between nation and state, within studies of the country.[87] This has only become more acute in recent years with observations of the weakness of Haitian state power increasing in the face of de facto governance of branches of Haitian society by international third sector organisations. In contrast there remains in Haiti a doggedly strong Haitian national identity. In tandem, these two developments question the assumed hegemony of the nation-state model. In the same period, since the rise of Duvalierism, an increase in Haitian exiles as well as political and economic migrants has increased the academic and popular currency of the term diaspora. This term has become shorthand to refer to and unite those of Haitian nationality or descent who live transnational lives or reside in relative stasis in disparate

[86] J. Butler and G. Spivak, *Who Sings the Nation-State: Language, Politics, Belonging* (London: Seagull Books, 2007) pp.2-3
[87] M.R. Trouillot, *Haiti State Against Nation: The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990)

locations around the globe. Some of the most prominent of these are New York, Paris, Montreal, Miami, the Bahamas, the Dominican Republic and Cuba. This broadening of understandings of Haitian nationality in the post-war era parallels a more general shift in conceptions of national belonging globally. In acknowledgement of transnational identity claims, increased migration and improved opportunities to maintain regular physical and virtual contact with points of dispersal or homelands leading to greater recognition of diasporic communities, the long-distance element of national belonging (ungoverned though still to some extent shaped by the logic of empire) has once again come to the fore.[88]

Haitian migrants and their descendants in varied locations across the globe are often grouped together, despite the vast disparities of their daily lives, as the singular "Haitian diaspora". As this collected group, diasporic Haitians are then also conceptually reabsorbed into the nation as the "Tenth Department" or province of Haiti, denoting their value in economic as well as socio-political terms for their home country.[89] Nina Glick Schiller has pointed out for example that though Haitian migrants are often exploited and stigmatised as foreign labour in their countries of settlement they "find themselves hailed as agents of development in their homeland".[90] Indeed prominent Haitian diasporic communities have increasingly become first world filters or interlocutors on all things Haitian in the international domain, particularly those residing in New York or Paris. Yet patently the imposed and voluntary relationships of a Haitian migrant or their descendants (who may or may not regard themselves as Haitian) to a sense of Haitian nationality and to the Haitian state will differ decidedly from citizens residing in Haiti. While even this crudely simplistic division does not account for the many and varied geographies of the Haitian diaspora, or the complex social, political, economic and racial stratification of Haitians within each place, constructed idiosyncratically through a blending of social norms and expectations projected both from Haiti and within localities of settlement. In the foreword to a recently

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[88] Anderson and others have theorised this development with the term 'long distance nationalism'. See for example: B. Anderson, *Long-distance Nationalism: World Capitalism and the Rise of Identity Politics* (Amsterdam: Centre for Asian Studies, 1992); Z. Skrbiš *Long-Distance Nationalism: Diasporas, Homelands and Identities* (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1999)

[89] R.O. Jackson, 'Introduction: *Les espaces Haïtiens:* Remapping the Geography of the Haitian Diaspora' in R.O. Jackson (ed.) *Geographies of the Haitian Diaspora* (New York: Routledge, 2011) p.1

[90] Glick Schiller, 'Diasporic Consciousness', pp.xxi-xxix

published volume that seeks to pluralise understandings of the Haitian diaspora Glick Schiller emphasises that "the term *diaspora* has always been one of distance as well as connection" and this is true both within the scattered geographies of a diaspora, and between the dispersed and their homeland.[91] Specifically in relation to the Haitian case Glick Schiller further highlights that diaspora is still a fairly new and contested term that is itself an "imaginative invocation of a common diasporic identity". Being aware of the use, interaction, as well as disguised presence, of these layers of imagined communal identity will be crucial to move towards an understanding of how this discontinuous network of connections between Haiti and its diasporas has given diverse meaning to national belonging at the three events I explore below.

More often than not these layers of nuance, distance and division are glossed over through the invocation of national framing at world's fairs, art biennials and other international exhibitions. This is achieved through the structuring of these events, which are often organised by individual pavilions for displaying nations in parallel. These arrangements tidy a much messier reality of subjectivities ranging from the local to the global, while the formalised and officiated invitation or bidding processes behind the appearance of national displays at such events often conceal competing politico-cultural claims, by legitimising the perspectives of the group on display, or by subsuming such debates beneath a rhetoric of official representation, and a tone of frivolous entertainment. Introducing a recent collection of essays on the theme of pavilions across art history, editor Joel Robinson makes precisely this point by asserting that these structures, within the context of international exhibitions, "may appear trifling (especially next to grander civic monuments), but [they] are more often than not embattled structures, bound up with claims to power, status and identity".[92]

In each of the cases studied below, there is a consistent yet shifting presence of international involvement, be it diasporic or otherwise, in constructing visions of Haiti's national image. At the Chicago World's Fair we see the prominent involvement of U.S.

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[91] Glick Schiller, 'Diasporic Consciousness', p.xxviii
[92] Joel Robinson, 'Big Worlds Under Little Tents' *Open Arts Journal*, 2 (2013) <http://dx.doi.org/10.5456/issn.2050-3679/2013w01jr> [accessed 10 October 2014]

African Americans in shaping the identity of the Haitian pavilion framed as an African diasporic intervention, alongside the more hidden presence of Haitian diasporic perspectives from Paris, as well as the contribution of other U.S. citizens without any diasporic affiliation with Haiti in the construction of the pavilion's architecture. At the international exhibition in Port-au-Prince, African Americans from the United States were again significantly involved, though this time, mainly as guest performers, celebrities or visitors to the event, rather than in the shaping of Haiti's image for other visitors. Diplomats and celebrities from other participating nations were also present in this way, though not in the same volume. Aside from this other U.S. citizens were again, and perhaps even more so than at Chicago, involved in the framing of Haiti's image at the 1949 Bicentenaire. The fairgrounds architects, a significant number of its exhibitors and contractors were U.S. companies or individuals.

Finally, most markedly of the three, at the Venice Biennale in 2011 a significant degree of the framing for Haiti's national display was controlled and performed by individuals of non-Haitian nationality and organisations based outside of Haiti. One site was organised by an Italian artist-curator and a British artist-curator, with input from a U.S. academic and co-ordinated through a London-based artists' collective. The second site was significantly sponsored by a French-based company of global reach, while branches of the French government in collaboration with the Haitian embassy in Paris supported and facilitated the logistical aspects behind Haiti's presence at this major art event. Haitian diaspora groups, most notably those based in Paris, were significantly involved in the framing and content of the second of Haiti's pavilion sites. This comprised artwork by practitioners with diverse backgrounds. These included: those who were born in Haiti and now live and work in, for instance, Canada, the United States, Brussels and other areas of France; artists who have dual citizenship from Haiti and elsewhere only some of whom live in Haiti; and other artists who have never resided in Haiti. All of these were collapsed under the signifier of Haitian nationality.

This consistent international aspect to the imagining of Haitian national identity in each case presents an interesting and perhaps unexpected dimension to these visualisations of Haiti, yet highlighting these international elements merely bring into view something that

is always a factor in such national displays though it is rarely acknowledged. By openly doing so, within a study that has professed itself to be interested in locating and listening to postcolonial imaginings of Haiti from a Haitian perspective, a number of questions are raised about the authorship of these displays. It will be important, for example, to consider within the following case studies: to what extent are these displays being produced by Haitians? to what extent are we able to get at Haitian motivations behind these displays? do the source materials that we have access to provide a direct or even indirect view onto Haitian perspectives? Then on the flipside of these questions: do high levels of international involvement, through framing, curation or exhibition at these sites make the displays any less 'authentic', any more objective, or any more essentialised? and does international involvement make these displays more or less instrumentalised to the agendas of international organisations, transnational corporations or other nations?

In order to answer these questions some awareness is needed of the histories of politically-charged perceptions or symbolisms of Haiti that circulate internationally and have particularly strong and wide-ranging aspects in the United States. Much scholarly literature has focussed on exposing, undermining and debunking external (usually meaning white western) perceptions of Haiti as a place intentionally or unconsciously associated with all things negative, from natural disaster and extreme impoverishment to cultural absence, barbarity or primitivism and political ineptitude. (The historical routes and contemporary permutations of which I explore in much more detail in the next chapter, in order to understand their longer term impacts on the framing of work by Haitian artists in the U.S. and Europe). Yet countering these stereotypes of Haiti is a similarly strong and stark discourse of positive symbolism around the nation, which has become an area of increasing interest in more recent scholarship.[93] This strand of study has aimed to recuperate Haiti's image internationally by drawing attention to Haiti's symbolic significance as an emblem of liberatory struggle in the Atlantic World particularly for African diasporic communities in contemporary and historical contexts.

[93] See for example: M. Jackson and J. Bacon (eds) *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution: Selected Essays and Historical Documents* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010); M. Munro and E. Walcott-Hackshaw (eds) *Reinterpreting the Haitian Revolution and its Cultural Aftershocks* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2006)

This symbolic status is borne out of the way in which Haiti was established, when the enslaved and discontented of Saint Domingue revolted against the French and went on to declare an independent republic in 1804. Haiti was the second postcolonial republic of the New World, but the first in the Americas to be led by those declaring their African descent, and their antislavery position. As such Haiti swiftly became a palimpsest of polarised political, racial and cultural symbolism. The 'Black Republic', as Haiti became popularly known, presented an alternative visualisation of modern society (one might say a counterculture of modernity). This vision of modernity was not built upon international political and economic relationships that were bound by empire and led by Europe, or on a slavery-fuelled national economy, or even on a white supremacist hierarchy. Sibylle Fischer has called this radical alterity the "contestatory potential" of Haiti, which was and has continued to be a double-edged accolade for the country bringing both denigration and exaltation.[94]

Inspired by Paul Gilroy's seminal work *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness,* this study began as an exploration into the place or symbolism of Haiti within the positive imaginaries of the black Atlantic as expressed through art. I set out to "take the Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis … and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective" on the place of Haiti within black Atlantic art praxis.[95] Much has been written in recent years about the symbolic significance of the Haitian Revolution and the society it produced, for African Americans in the United States whether in the context of pre-Civil War antislavery or post-emancipation pursuit of Civil Rights. Such scholarship tends to delineate a history of idealised images of Haiti or actions and activism inspired by laudatory rhetoric, refracted through the lens of its revolutionary history.[96]

Maurice Jackson, for example, has charted the recurring presence of Haiti in cultural works of U.S. African Americans in the twentieth century, with a concentration of evidence

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[94] S. Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), p.37; see also: J.M. Dash, *Haiti and the United States: National Stereotypes and the Literary Imagination* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997)
[95] Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, p.15
[96] See for example: L.D. Pamphile, *Haitian and African Americans: A Heritage of Tragedy and Hope* (Gainsville: University Press of Florida, 2001)

around the era of the Harlem Renaissance and in its immediate aftermath.[97] He locates explicit images, mentions, and echoes of Haitian revolutionary figures, the Haitian people, Haitian landscapes, history and culture: in the writings of W.E.B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, Arna Bontemps and Ralph Ellison; in the anthropological studies of Zora Neale Hurston and Katherine Dunham; and in the jazz compositions of Sidney Bechet, Charles Mingus Jr. and Duke Ellington. Jackson also pays particular attention to a series of 41 paintings by Jacob Lawrence titled *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture* (1938), which selectively recounted a history of Haiti's founding, beginning with European conquest of Hispanola in the fifteenth century and reaching its narrative climax with the life and military successes of Toussaint during the revolutionary era.

Lawrence's discussion of his motivations in creating the Toussaint L'Ouverture series and a number of others, such as the Frederick Douglass and the Harriet Tubman series, provides a case in point. In a 1968 interview he explained,

> I was very involved with Negro history at the time. I think my first involvement came about from hearing someone at the Harlem YMCA tell the story of Toussaint L'Ouverture, the Haitian liberator who is often referred to as the George Washington of Haiti. And from that I did …[many] series. Now all of these dealt with … the Negro in a historical sense.[98]

Then speaking specifically about what the Toussaint series could achieve among his audiences, he explained, "if those people (who are much worse off than the people today) could conquer their slavery, we certainly can do the same thing".[99] His comments demonstrate that, at 21-years-old when he created this series Lawrence saw Haiti's revolutionary history as a key episode in a wider racially-defined, transnational history. His statement also suggests he identified this as a history that could act as a didactic instrument to educate and inspire.

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[97] M. Jackson, 'No Man Could Hinder Him: Remembering Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian Revolution in the History and culture of the African American People' in Jackson and Bacon (eds) *African Americans,* pp.141-164

[98] Jacob Lawrence interviewed by Caroll Greene, 26 October 1968, *Archives of American Art*: <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/lawren68.htm> [accessed: 20 January 2011]

[99] Jackson, 'No Man', p.152

This pattern of instrumentalising Haiti and representing it almost exclusively through a historical lens focussed on the revolutionary era extends into the work of other African-American artists practicing in the U.S. in the early- to mid-twentieth century, such as Aaron Douglas, Augusta Savage and Romare Bearden.[100] Much has been claimed about political, racial and cultural connections, collaborations, and affinities between African Americans in the U.S. and Haitians in countless historical moments throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries expressed through art and in countless other ways. However as Krista Thompson's research into the presence of Haiti as a subject in the work U.S. African-American artists from the 1920s to '40s demonstrates, many had difficulties maintaining "the dream of diaspora" during and after physical encounters with contemporary Haiti. Thompson, by distinguishing between works created by African Americans who had visited Haiti from those who had not has argued, "that it was easier to sustain an African diasporic consciousness at a geographic remove". [101] It seems direct physical encounters with contemporary Haiti seemed to highlight cultural differences to such an extent, for artists such as William Edouard Scott, Aaron Douglas and James A. Porter, that they were not able to view Haiti through a politicised Pan-Africanist lens but rather appealed to objectifying, essentialising and realist lenses to produce work about Haiti. In such cases Haiti and Haitian's struggle for independence have acted as shifting signifiers of agency, black leadership and self-determination, autonomy and freedom among those of African descent in the United States. As Jackson and Bacon assert for U.S. African Americans "Haiti [has] served more as a symbol of possibilities than a Mecca" with its galvanising power when essentialised and idealised proving a much more attractive and consistent diasporic link for its mainland neighbours than its complicated and checkered reality in various contemporary moments. [102]

In recent years scholars have also begun to explore the material and symbolic significance of Haiti's revolutionary history in other American contexts. In the decades following the

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[100] K. A. Thompson, 'Preoccupied with Haiti: The Dream of Diaspora in African American Art, 1915-1942' *American Art*, 21.3 (fall 2007)
[101] Thompson, 'Preoccupied with Haiti', p.75
[102] M. Jackson and J. Bacon 'Fever and Fret: The Haitian Revolution and African American Responses' in Jackson and Bacon (eds) *African Americans,* p.20

revolution, for example, subsequent Haitian leaders not only reinforced the nation's antislavery stance but also actively sought to extend those values into other parts of the Americas. Most notable, perhaps, is the case of Alexandre Pétion's military support of Simón Bolívar's 1816 campaign for the independence of Venezuela on the condition that Bolívar abolish slavery there if successful.[103] A case, known as the 1812 Aponte Rebellion, that has garnered increasing scholarly interest in recent years, took place in the same period in colonial Cuba.[104] This case actually encompasses a series of rebellions linked to José Antonio Aponte, a captain in Havana's free black militia. The case is particularly notable for those exploring 'aftershocks' or 'echoes' of the Haitian Revolution. This is because Aponte is reported, both by the investigating authorities and of his own volition, to have kept in his possession a book containing images of Haitian Revolutionary leaders. These he confessed to using as instruments to inspire potential conspirators into action. A more recent instance that demonstrates the Haitian Revolution's enduring potency as a rousing activist narrative particularly for African diasporic groups is C.L.R James' retelling of this history in 1938 and again in 1963.[105] In each of these contexts the Haitian Revolutionary era has proved an enduringly usable past, a vehicle through which African diasporic identity and collective liberatory action could be aroused. However, the larger claims of Haiti's African diasporic resonance throughout the Atlantic World have been less substantiated in many Central and South American contexts and perhaps most importantly in African contexts.

Finding examples even of idealised representations of Haiti in art in African diasporic contexts outside of the U.S. proved difficult or at least difficult to access, a dilemma which undoubtedly translates into other socio-cultural media and perhaps explains Gilroy's own conspicuous muteness with regards to Haiti in his decidedly Anglophone study. I say this, not to suggest that the significance of Haiti's revolutionary history and postcolonial

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[103] See for example: D. Geggus and N. Fiering (eds) *The World of the Haitian Revolution* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009)

[104] See for example: Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed,* pp.41-56; M. Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle Against Atlantic Slavery,* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); A. Ferrer, 'Repercussions of the Haitian Revolution in Cuba, 1791-1812, in Geggus and Fiering (eds) *World of the Haitian Revolution*, pp.223-247

[105] C.L.R James *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963 [1938])

existence is any less important than has been asserted in recent studies, but more to highlight that there is still much work to be done in fleshing out how and why this is expressed beyond the African diasporic heartland of the United States.

The recognition of this point had a significant impact on the trajectory of this dissertation, particularly after reading work such as Krista Thompson's, which highlighted African-American artists' difficulties of sustaining idealised and symbolic visions of Haiti after direct physical encounter with the place. At the same time I had been reading a number of works by Edwidge Danticat, a contemporary Haitian-American writer, who presents a much more nuanced vision of Haiti through her rich portraits of the country's socio-political present and history mediated through fiction and personal experience. She talks, for example, in *Create Dangerously* of shared yet impossible attempts in Haitian society to maintain an idealised image of the Haitian Revolution and the nation through collective amnesia as well as memory:

> We have, it seems, a collective agreement to remember our triumphs and gloss over our failures. Thus, we speak of the Haitian revolution as though it happened just yesterday but we rarely speak of the slavery that prompted it. Our paintings show glorious Edenlike African jungles but never the Middle Passage. In order to shield our shattered collective psyche from a long history of setbacks and disillusionment, our constant roller-coaster ride between saviors and dictators, homespun oppression and foreign tyranny, we cultivate communal and historical amnesia…[106]

Both Thompson's argument and Danticat's words, which peel away the edges of those idealised images of Haiti usually refracted through its revolutionary history, begin to reveal a much richer and more complex visualisation of Haitian national identity. These led me to wonder how Haitian artists' engaged with their own nation's revolutionary history in their work and how, or indeed if, engaging with narratives of Haitian history and national identity was a significant feature among Haitian artists' works. I began to explore these intersections between national identity and cultural production in Haiti by looking at the work of mid-twentieth-century Haitian artists, which continues to be the principal access

[106] E. Danticat, *Create Dangerously* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010) pp.63-4

point into histories of Haitian art practice. By doing so I found that there was a genuine interest in exploring national identity, histories and myths in some – though certainly not all – Haitian artists' practices. However, I found that the idealised symbolism of Haiti as well as its denigrating, lurid and fetishised symbolic flip-side have been replicated as a discursive basis for the writing and exhibiting of Haitian art history (issues which I will interrogate in some depth in the following chapter). Yet this is not the only place that such narratives have been asserted as a basis for understanding an event, cultural form or occurrence associated with Haiti.

CONCLUSION

In the aftermath of the earthquake that hit Haiti to such devastating effect in January 2010 many long-standing stereotypical narratives about Haiti and the qualities or vices seen to embody an essence of Haitian-ness resurfaced in international media reports. Scholars of Haiti fought hard in their writing to illuminate the roots of these narratives in attempts to push against their damaging effects. Gina Athena Ulysse was prominent amongst these. As she provided commentary and incisive response to a wide-range of problematic media footage that was broadcast in the U.S. in the immediate aftermath of this earthquake she observed that, "the day when Haitians as a people and Haiti as a symbol are no longer representatives of or synonymous with poverty, backwardness and evil is still yet to come".[107] Like many others, Ulysse pinpointed the root of this discourse to the period of Haiti's revolutionary independence and the new state's contestatory potential against the Atlantic or colonial world order at that time. She went on, "as scholars, advocates, or just plain concerned witnesses, we know, to put it crudely and in layman's terms, that historically speaking, Haiti has an image problem".[108] In response to this "image problem" Ulysse called for 'new narratives' of Haiti to be created, which she asserted in the post-earthquake era, were needed now more than ever. In light of such contemporary demands for a rethinking of Haiti's international image, yet at the same time uncertainty about how best to go about this or even perhaps what to aim for, it is particularly timely to look back at earlier visualisations of Haiti through projects led or approved by Haitians. In each of the

[107] G.A. Ulysse, 'Why Haiti Needs New Narratives Now More Than Ever" in Schuller and Morales (eds) *Tectonic Shifts*, p.241
[108] Ulysse, 'New Narratives', p.243

cases studies to follow Haiti was represented to international audiences with the involvement of Haitian politicians, curators, artists and governmental branches as well as NGOs and international collaborators.

Within each of the Haitian displays studied in the cases below their curators expressed concerns about the ways in which Haiti was being temporally and spatially conceptualised internationally at that time. As I explain in the next chapter, the work of Haitian artists has also been routinely distanced in space and time from the modern, western world. Each of the exhibitions studied below presented in some way a critique that sought to lessen these gaps. In response to an enduring perception of Haiti as primitive, backward, and consistently behind the status quo an emphasis was placed in each case on asserting the nation's contemporaneity in relation to western norms. At Chicago in 1893, therefore, Haiti was presented as a nation with roots in classical civilisation. In mid-century Port-au-Prince, Haiti was presented as a post-war modern nation-state. Finally in Venice in 2011, Haiti was presented as a contemporary and globally inter-connected nation, represented by a collection of artists, at least some of whom were transnationally mobile.

Similarly, in general terms, Haiti's displays at each of the three international exhibitions examined in the following chapters sought to close exaggerated spatial gaps between Haiti and the surrounding western world which had isolated the nation. Yet how specifically to go about this and who to position Haiti in proximity to shifts significantly within each display. At Chicago there was a tension between Pan-American and Pan-African positioning of Haiti's pavilion, while a strongly Francophile cultural image tussles with both. At the Port-au-Prince Bicentenaire the U.S. participation post-occupation was particularly strong. Both French and Latin American presences were likewise notable, yet we also begin to see Haiti positioning itself within a Caribbean frame in order to reap the potential commercial benefits of a burgeoning regional tourist industry. Lastly at the Venice Biennale Haiti was positioned in variety of ways by the different agents involved in curating its presence. Haitian and French politicians emphasised bilateral links between the two countries through development initiatives, while Caribbean and cosmopolitan frames were emphasised by curators and artists involved.

As suggested above, these attempts at tackling Haiti's "image problem" through a repositioning of the nation in the wider world picture can be perceived, at least in part, as national rebranding efforts. Reflecting this perspective, within each of the case studies to follow I will highlight key images or themes projected through these rebranding exercises with the aid of primary source material and appropriate theoretical tools drawn from secondary literature. In case one, with reference to Timothy Mitchell's discussions of late-nineteenth-century world's fairs as "object-worlds" carefully set-up to convey broad imperialist narratives of progress and civilization, I will argue that Haiti was presented at the Columbian Fair in 1893 as a "progressive nation" culturally comparable to dominant imperial powers of the era.[109] I will demonstrate that, responding to denigrating images of Haiti as a savage and backward nation circulating in international media at the time, the Haitian state chose to put together an "object lesson" that emphasised the French-ness of Haitian national culture.[110]

In case two I will argue that the Haitian national image presented at the Bicentenaire de Port-au-Prince was, in some respects, a direct reversal of the above strategy, as Estimé's post-war government sought to reappropriate Haiti's image-as-exotic from a pejorative denigration towards, what Krista Thompson has termed, a commercially beneficial, tourist-oriented "tropicality".[111] Thompson defines "tropicalization" as "the complex visual systems through which [Caribbean] islands were imaged for tourist consumption and the social and political implications of these representations on actual physical space on the islands and their inhabitants".[112] Thompson even goes on to list "the presentation of images and people at colonial expositions" as one in a series of mechanisms of tropicalization used "to project a new vision of the [Caribbean] islands before the eyes of North American" and European publics. Haiti's re-branding exercise at the 1949 Bicentenaire encompassed everything from the national landscape, all kinds of folkloric expressions, Vodou, art, dance, music, cockfighting, even human bodies "joined [this]

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[109] T. Mitchell, 'Orientalism', p.447
[110] See for example: 'For Hayti's Exhibit: The Pavilion at Jackson Park is formally accepted' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3 January 1893, p.11
[111] K.A. Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque*, (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2006)
[112] Thompson, *Eye for the Tropics*, p.7

parade of the picturesque".[113] Among these cultural forms were artworks that would be identified as belonging to the newly popularised Haitian 'primitive' or 'naïve' art movement. These products were recognised for their exotic appeal and, with varying levels of ambivalence, were presented to international consumers as attractions. Yet, echoing the branding strategies highlighted in case one, the Bicentenaire's commissioning body attempted to integrate this exotic appeal or "tropicality" with a sense of cultural conformity. In the mid-twentieth century this was conveyed through a purpose-built Art Moderne cityscape: a vision of urban modernity predicated upon western aesthetics.

Finally, in case three, I will examine the projections of Haitian nationhood through a dual-sited national pavilion staged at the Venice Biennale in 2011. As noted above Haitian state involvement in these two art exhibitions was somewhat less prominent than at the previous two events studied. However this was nonetheless a site at which divergent notions of Haitian-ness were marketed; yet here this was primarily in order to promote the practices of an array of contemporary Haitian artists. For example, while the artworks displayed within one site were presented as emblems of an economically impoverished, yet culturally rich, postcolonial society those housed within the second site were suspended within a hazily defined curatorial matrix that sought to balance postcolonial cosmopolitanism with exotic authenticity. With reference to Graham Huggan's seminal examination of the mechanisms by which postcolonial literary products have been marketed to international audiences I will consider to what extent these displays of Haitian art can be considered to exemplify variants of promotional processes drawn from the "booming alterity industry".[114] Moreover, despite the lack of direct state involvement, I will demonstrate that the Haitian pavilion at the Venice Biennale was nonetheless utilised by Haitian and French politicians, as well as private organisations, as a political vehicle via which to redress negative media imagery. As noted above this pavilion was staged eighteen months after the January 2010 earthquake, which had flooded the international press with images of Haiti exemplified by chaotic dystopian cityscapes. In response there was a focus in curatorial statements surrounding this project on reappropriating chaos as a signifier of

[113] Thompson, *Eye for the Tropics*, pp.5-6
[114] G. Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001) p.xvi

generative creativity rather than socio-political disarray. Therefore, despite their differing levels of state involvement, their varied locations and temporal contexts, each of these displays can be considered as efforts at rebranding Haiti. Each recognised "national culture" as a site from which to counter negative images and, more broadly as "a valuable resource in the growing competition for global investment, trade and tourism".[115]

In summary then, the experiment of the case studies that centre this thesis is to explore the roles of artworks and the ways in which they have been exhibited under the banner of, or as marketable representatives of a culture conceived of as co-terminus with Haitian nationality at three international exhibitions. In light of these new historical explorations, I am seeking to examine whether more complex understandings of how Haiti has been represented and perceived internationally can emerge from a study of sites at which nation and culture collide. Crucially though, my vantage point contrasts with most past projects exploring the exhibition of postcolonial nations and or cultures that have tended to focus on sites of 'othering'. Such studies often seek to identify, highlight and deconstruct the gaze or mechanisms of cultural and racial distancing at work. What I am seeking to present here instead is a fresh approach to exploring the exhibition of Haiti and the work of Haitian artists. This is an attempt at writing new narratives of Haitian art history and cultural display.

Yet before I go on to consider the possibilities of that project, I think it is first necessary to confront some key historical moments in which the convergence of concepts of Haitian nationality and culture has proved a persistently reductive exercise imposed upon Haitian artists. It is hoped that in teasing out the historical, political, and disciplinary roots and routes of these dynamics they will no longer provide a distraction, a detraction from or a derangement of my attempts to explore new vistas from which to approach histories of the work of Haitian artists. The next chapter will therefore provide a crucial preamble to the case studies that will follow. It takes as its focus the genealogy of art historical narratives that have encircled and at many points threatened to suffocate the work of Haitian artists since the mid-twentieth. It dissects some of the central institutional and personal relationships that shaped international perceptions of Haitian art as an aesthetic category,

[115] Aronczyk, *Branding the Nation*, p.3

the standard modes of its display and the context for its commercialisation for many decades since the 1940s. It is therefore a deconstructive exercise, which some may argue draws too much attention to, and therefore perhaps reinscribes, problematic frameworks for understanding the work of Haitian artists. Yet it is an essential exercise, because the apparent aesthetic category of Haitian art is still very much in use, and so it must first be demystified and undermined in order to prevent it being a spectral presence throughout the case studies to follow.

CHAPTER 2

DISTRACTED BY DEWITT PETERS: RE(AP)PROACHING HISTORIOGRAPHIES OF HAITIAN ART

INTRODUCTION

Many scholarly texts focussed on Haitian art history since the 1950s, have been focused on refuting repeated descriptions such as this early 1947 review, printed in *Life Magazine*, of work by Haitian artists practicing under the aegis of the Centre d'Art:

> Haiti's art … is a primitive Negro folk art overflowing with decorative exuberance and childlike observation of Haitian scenes.[1]

Such fixed descriptions that preclude recognition of changing, diverse, multiple, deracialised, innovative, or even any fine art practices emanating from Haiti have provided the impetus for many impassioned ripostes. Taking the form of reviews, treatises, monographs and exhibitions with an emphasis on seeking to disprove, correct, modify, and discount such flawed interpretations.

In many ways the following research is another response to such problematic and limiting narratives of Haitian art and artists, yet it is also equally motivated by a desire to move away from research in this area shaped as reactionary or responsive critique to Eurocentric accounts. This is because many responsive accounts have so absorbedly focused on pushing against older approaches to studying Haitian art that these texts themselves have become defined by the subject and themes they so wanted to shake off. That is by no means to disregard many important revisionist texts from as early as Philippe Thoby-Marcelin's *Panorama de l'Art Haitien* (1956) or *Haiti* (1959) that are critically sharp and have significantly contributed to slowly broadening understandings of art from Haiti.[2] Yet in remaining focused on the same debates, such as: disproving the naivety and primitivism of Haitian artists' works; insistently emphasising the existence of Haitian artists practicing in

[1] 'Haitian Painting: American Helps Island Natives Develop a Primitive Folk Art' *Life*, 1 September 1947, p.58

[2] P. Thoby-Marcelin, *Panorama de l'Art Haitien* (Port-au-Prince: Impr. de l'Etat, 1956); P. Thoby-Marcelin, *Haiti*, (Washington DC: Pan American Union, 1959)

Modernist styles; or on asserting the Modernism of those formerly labeled primitive Haitian art history has fallen into a rut akin to the Africanists' Trevor-Roper Trap.[3]

The latter was an incisive thesis put forward by the historian Finn Fuglestad who observed among scholars of African history "an enduring defensive attitude" of their discipline following infamous Eurocentric comments made in the early 1960s by Oxford University Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper. The assertions made by Trevor-Roper claimed that pre-colonial Africa had no history, he continued, "there is only the history of Europeans in Africa".[4] These assertions unsurprisingly unleashed a torrent of indignant responses, but as Fuglestad observed in the 1990s:

> part of the problem is … that Africanists have contented themselves with opposing the viewpoint of the Trevor-Ropers of this world with a scandalized moral indignation … they have seldom questioned his premises or the chain of reasoning which led him to draw the conclusion he did … once one accepts Trevor-Roper's framework and definition [of history], one finds oneself clad in a sort of straightjacket.[5]

A parallel problem of straightjacketed response to Eurocentric versions of Haitian art history is evident in the historiography of this field, where critical responses have generally reached little further than indignant retort. Art historian Leon Wainwright has recently argued in his far-reaching study of art and the transnational Caribbean that being able to identify various exclusionary discourses that have marginalised the Caribbean in art history "demands that we develop approaches other than postures of protest and historical revisionism". He continues, "this path has not led to a transformative view of the specific challenges for artists and artworks of the Caribbean and its diaspora and how to involve them in a more ambitious rethinking of art's histories".[6] Developing ambitious new approaches to art's histories is one of the central motivations behind the research for, and writing of, this dissertation. Yet in order to better understand how to go about that I will

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[3] F. Fuglestad, 'The Trevor-Roper Trap or the Imperialism of History: An Essay' *History in Africa*, 19 (1992) pp.309-326
[4] Hugh Trevor-Roper quote in Fuglestad, 'Trevor-Roper Trap', p.311
[5] Ibid., p.310
[6] L. Wainwright, *Timed Out: Art and the Transnational Caribbean* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2011) p.8

first of all focus in this chapter on examining the existing literature that surrounds Haitian art history.

The chapter will begin with an analysis of existing responses to or "postures of protest" towards limiting understandings of Haitian art, centred on mid-twentieth-century interpretations, such as that quoted from *Life* magazine at the outset of this chapter.[7] In this section I will seek to draw out key points of criticism that resonate across such responses, paying particular attention to suggestions that Haitian art has been distanced in time and space from Euro-American modernity or contemporaneity. Building upon these analyses I will then explore the roots of Haitian art history in anthropological studies of Haiti's folkloric culture conducted in the early twentieth century. Illuminating the development of the discipline from these foundations will provide a crucial understanding of the ways in which canonical Haitian art historical narratives have been formed.

In the following section I will then seek to delve more deeply into a dehistoricising narrative of Haitian art's "discovery", or its myth of origins, in the mid-twentieth century. This narrative is focused on the actions of U.S. art patrons, dealers and critics, most notably DeWitt Peters, who was integrally involved in establishing the Centre d'Art, a new art institution founded in Port-au-Prince in 1944. As I will demonstrate throughout this chapter the founding of the Centre d'Art was indeed a very important moment in Haitian art history, which facilitated the development of professionalised international art markets around the work of Haitian artists, and particularly popularised one group of Haitian artists' practices among audiences in the United States and Europe. The work of these artists, who practiced in a range of styles, were introduced to international audiences as characteristic of an art movement existing in Haiti that was described using pseudo-aesthetic terms such as "primitive", "naïve" or "popular". I will then demonstrate how these narratives and marketing practices excluded another stream of Haitian artists, many of whom had in fact been integrally involved in the establishment of the Centre d'Art. The latter group practiced in internationally-recognised Modernist styles influenced by their more affluent backgrounds and international travel or education. In order to try and understand why this latter group of artists have been omitted from canonical narratives of Haitian art history I

[7] Wainwright, *Timed Out*, p.8

will then go on to consider what was at stake for the wider discipline of art history and its western institutional centres, in selectively promoting and perpetuating a notion of Haitian art as emblematic of primitive art. Further to this I will also explore how discursive association of Haitian art with primitivism, among U.S. art dealers, patrons, press and institutions, was linked to wider histories of interaction between Haiti and the U.S., and particularly perceptions of Haiti in U.S. popular culture in the era of the marine occupation (1915-34) and its aftermath.

In order to substantiate the broader claims made about the defining relationship between U.S. cultural perceptions of Haiti and the ways in which Haitian art was positioned as an expression of primitivism in the mid-twentieth century, I will then go on to conduct a close-focussed examination of correspondence between individuals involved in setting up the Centre d'Art and those in key positions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Most centrally these include Dewitt Peters and Selden Rodman of the Centre d'Art and René d'Harnoncourt and Alfred H. Barr Jr. of the Museum of Modern Art. Finally, after having demonstrated the key role that the essays, reviews and promotional texts of Selden Rodman, in particular, have played in the positioning of Haitian art within the discipline of art history, I will go onto to explore his own extensive diaries and other writings in order to reveal the broader subjective contexts which crucially influenced his interpretations of Haitian art history. Rodman, I argue, was key in the production of the strand of narratives or discourse about Haitian artists' works that focussed on their supposed exemplification of "primitive" or "naïve" qualities. Though celebratory in tone, these narratives have proved very damaging over time to the development of interpretive writing centred on Haitian art and culture, and it is therefore an object of this chapter to undermine the perceived objectivity and authority of these accounts.

Yet it is not enough to only disrupt and confront those histories of art directly concerned with Haitian practices, as there are wider disciplinary structures and assumptions at work in the classification and marginalisation of Haitian and Caribbean art. If left unaddressed, these structures and assumptions would inhibit the reach of any reinvigorated art histories of the region beyond a limited discursive boundary. Two recent studies, which are both persuasive in their calls for a much-needed overhaul in approaches to art of the Caribbean

region and dynamic in their own discipline-challenging methodologies, are Erica James' thesis, 'Re-Worlding a World: Caribbean Art in the Global Imaginary', and Leon Wainwright's monograph, *Timed Out: Art and the Transnational Caribbean*.[8]

James takes a regional approach to propose a 're-worlding' of Caribbean art. To justify the need for this reconceptualisation James begins with a rich and wide-ranging exploration of the Caribbean in the global imaginary, the dehistoricising effects of modernism and mass tourism on Caribbean art historical discourse" and "the absenting of Caribbean art from general art history".[9] The hazily defined concept of "re-worlding" is a theoretical approach based on the slippery notion of 'worlding' that James traces back to Spivak's *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. Taking a skeptical stance, herself, towards the current state of post-colonial theory and its usefulness in this form to "describe and discuss" art from the Caribbean region, James suggests "in service of post-modern practice … [postcolonialism] has had a de-historicizing effect on the region" and in fact has often "served to reinscribe the region's absence in art historical discourse".[10] Therefore pushing against, though not completely dismissing postcolonialism's perspectives, James "seeks a more generative movement of the discourse". She seeks a reengagement, reconceptualisation or "re-worlding" of Caribbean art away from fetishised perceptions of sun, sea, sex, and sand, distance from civilization and therefore absence of history and culture. To achieve this her study centres on a methodology or approach that she terms 'auto-historiography'. A Eurocentric version of this historicised auto/biographical approach to discussing the works of particular artists is of course a well-established mode of engaging with Euro-American art, but the idea of viewing artworks of the Caribbean region from the "particular vision and context" of Caribbean artists has been all but absent in art history. The latter is what James then implements in her study by closing in to focus on expressions of a much more nuanced, diverse and complex "inner Caribbean" within a small selection of artworks by a cohort of practitioners from the region.

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[8] E.M. James, 'Re-Worlding a World: Caribbean Art and the Global Imaginary' (Duke University: unpublished Phd thesis, 2008); Leon Wainwright, *Timed Out*
[9] James, 'Re-Worlding', pp.3-16
[10] Ibid., pp.2-7

Wainwright similarly begins from an outlining of structural deficiencies in art history that have led to the work of Caribbean artists being "timed out" of its discourses by being "placed not only "outside" but "behind" the dominant art canons". Seeking to give shape to the potential contours of art studies beyond national narratives, he addresses debates at the heart of the "global turn" in this discipline through a study of Caribbean artists whose work and life traversed the Atlantic, particularly focusing on practices and practitioners from little studied Anglophone contexts within the Lesser Antilles. Wainwright's fundamental aims reach far beyond a revisionism ghettoised within a Caribbean corner of the study of art to challenge the "time-space logic" encoded within art history thereby directing new priorities for the discipline as a whole. He asserts:

> by turning to the Caribbean, what is at stake is not simply the matter of expanding an otherwise unchanged conception of the history of art and, by way of accretion, adding the Caribbean … [but considering] consequently, what vistas of theoretical priority it opens up for the entire enterprise of the historical study of art.[11]

Though my thesis is not as centrally concerned with reforming the discipline of art history as Wainwright's study, or as focused upon intradisciplinary critique of postcolonial theory as James' thesis, there are key aspects of both these studies which inform and resonate with my own attempts to explore new and challenging interdisciplinary approaches to the study of Haitian art through exhibition history. In this chapter, these will include attention to the marginalising and absenting effects of art history's "time-space logic" on histories of Haitian art. Some space will then also necessarily be given to deconstructing how these wider epistemic and discursive structures of art history in many ways defined the categorisation and marketing of Haitian art internationally from the 1940s onwards. This is not the central focus of my thesis, but nevertheless, I argue that it is an essential precursor to the studies that follow, which like James' and Wainwright's studies seek to present new perspectives on Caribbean art histories and their broader contexts.

The central objective of this chapter then, is to demonstrate the need for, value of, and originality of my own fresh approaches to Haitian art. In order to achieve this, within the chapter below, I will be sketching the point at which we find ourselves, and the flawed

[11] Wainwright, *Timed Out*, p.2

approaches to Haitian art history which brought us here. By pursuing a deconstructive method throughout this chapter I am trying not only to clarify the historiographical framework within which contemporary studies of Haitian art exist and have meaning, but also to reach beyond the narrow vistas of pervasive methodologies in the field. By doing so I hope to demonstrate the significance of the "approaches other than postures of protest and historical revisionism" to follow in the next three chapters.

POSTURES OF PROTEST:
HAITIAN ART IN THE IMAGINARY WAITING ROOM OF HISTORY

In Eva Pataki's 1986 study of Haitian Painting, she opened a chapter titled "Haitian painting before 1944" by pushing against the "inaccurate claim that before 1944 no important artistic activity took place in Haiti" a few lines later she stated "I must emphasize that a continuity in creative artistic activities always existed in Haiti," and again towards the bottom of the same page she stated of Haitian painting, "many historians still doubt the existence of … [fine] art in the pre-1944 era".[12] This recurring intradisciplinary critique may seem excessive, yet Pataki has by no means been alone in such exercises of responsive reiteration that seek to 'set the record straight' on Haitian art. In 1995, in an essay for the exhibition catalogue *Caribbean Visions: Contemporary Painting and Sculpture*, Gérald Alexis sought to discredit notions of Haitian art fixated on mid-twentieth-century practices. Less focused on dismissing stunted genealogies of Haitian art in order to affirm its historical existence, Alexis sought to encourage recognition of the work of modern and contemporary Haitian artists. Quoting a press release from an earlier exhibition held in Tennessee, Alexis asserted:

> The foreign art market … tends to perpetrate the old idea that Haiti is 'the only country in the world whose artistic output [is] represented by works of naïve painters, primitive not only in their approach, but also in their complete lack of academic painting.'[13]

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[12] E. Pataki, *Haitian Painting: Art and Kitsch* (New York: Jamaica Estates, 1986) p.19

[13] Gérald Alexis quoting from a 1967 press release for the exhibition *Naïve Art of Haiti* held at The Carol Reese Museum of East Tennessee State University in G. Alexis, 'Caribbean Art and Culture from a Haitian Perspective' in S. Lewis (ed.) *Caribbean Visions: Contemporary Painting and Sculpture* (Alexandria, VA: Art Services International, 1995) pp.62-3

More recently still, Mario Benjamin, one of Haiti's and the Caribbean's most celebrated contemporary artists, has raised concern about expectations placed on the work of artists from the region due to their national identity. In a 2008 interview for a documentary focused on his practice he articulated just such a critique of presumptive and inhibiting approaches to the work of Haitian artists:

> For a lot of people a Haitian artist is related to a certain type of inspiration, a certain type of colour, and when these things are missing, one feels uneasy and can even doubt the legitimacy of that art.[14]

Immediately following these comments, the documentary cuts to sweeping shots of Benjamin viewing the Sainte Trinité Episcopal Cathedral Murals: large-scale paintings created in the early 1950s by a group of internationally celebrated artists whose many styles were often collected under the terms "primitive" or "naïve" and came to define Haitian art internationally. Benjamin, like Alexis, then talks about the art market becoming fixated on such styles and inhibiting the development of these and later Haitian artists' practices through lack of recognition and sponsorship. Yet he completes this thought by stating, "Of course, what we see here [at St. Trinité] is different as it was made at a time when Haitian art existed in all its freshness and was in line with the reality of the time".[15] There is a sense here then not just of dehistoricisation, but of discordance, of a commentary or historiography out-of-sync with the object of its study.

For each of these commentators, there is an evident concern with how the politics of time are deployed in relation to Haitian art in academic, commercial and critical contexts. Pataki, Alexis and Benjamin articulate widely felt frustrations with the limiting vocabularies, narratives and curatorial frames employed within discourses surrounding the practices of Haitian artists. A particular concern for all is the continual resurfacing of narratives, opinions, and assessments of a certain strand of Haitian art. Such accounts were first penned in the 1940s and 50s and continue to be applied, without criticism or apparent historicist awareness, as descriptor or disqualifier to any and all artworks by Haitians.

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[14] Mario Benjamin, dir. Irene Lichtenstein, Troubadour Films, 2008
[15] Ibid.

The significance of the mid-twentieth-century era will be returned to in the next section of this chapter, but if we first focus on the politics of time in Caribbean art criticism more widely we find that various configurations of this issue have been raised by scholars across art history, cultural, and postcolonial studies. Specifically these include, a sense of commentary being out-of-sync with its object, critical dehistoricisation, or charges of artistic anachronism. Casting a glance over the historiographic resources at hand for those studying art of the Caribbean in the late 1990s, Veerle Poupeye opined,

> How difficult it is to define Caribbean art without lapsing into dogmas and stereotypes. Writers, curators and cultural administrators often approach the subject in terms of what they feel art from the Caribbean should be, a problem that affects Caribbean art professionals and outsiders alike. Consequently aspects of Caribbean art that do not match these preconceptions are often overlooked.[16]

Though Poupeye does not directly reference issues of temporality there is again the sense of Caribbean art criticism being routinely dehistoricised and often out-of-sync with the objects of its study. Meanwhile within his research, Leon Wainwright focusses much more explicitly on the politics of time as they relate to the Caribbean region in the writing of art's histories. Beginning with an examination of a widespread "refusal to accept the coevalness or simultaneity of art stories across continents," Wainwright highlights many important discussions here pointing to the work of Stuart Hall, Dipesh Chakrabarty and Johannes Fabian.[17]

Hall has, for example, highlighted the 'temporal enigma' between colonial and postcolonial subject formation with direct reference to Caribbean contexts.[18] In the same vein, Chakrabarty has cannily spoken of the "imaginary waiting room of history" to draw attention to evolutionary perceptions of human development popularised in Europe in the nineteenth century.[19] This was a temporally controlled epistemological space in which non-western cultures were held, often indefinitely, with the potential but not yet the ability to

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[16] V. Poupeye, *Caribbean Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998) p.10
[17] Wainwright, *Timed Out*, p.3
[18] S. Hall, 'When was 'the post-colonial'? Thinking at the Limit' in I. Chambers and L. Curti (eds) *The Postcolonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons* (London: Routlegde, 1996) pp. 242-260; S. Hall, 'Negotiating Caribbean Identities' *New Left Review*, 1 (January 1995) pp. 3-14
[19] D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008) p.8

follow in the path of European civilisation. Those held here were often referred to and thought of as the wards of Euro-American patrons: a perception that (as we will see below) shaped relations between Haitian art professionals and their colleagues in the United States. Both Chakrabarty's image of non-western peoples subjected to the staticising and infantilising "waiting room of history" and Wainwright's rich account of the "timing out" of Caribbean art draw from Johannes Fabian's intradisciplinary critique of ethnographic texts in *Time and the Other*, which was fundamentally concerned with the anthropologist's denial of coevalness to the cultures of his or her study.[20] In my own account of Haitian art history's checkered relationship with the politics of time, I now also turn to focus on the congruence between temporal distancing devices employed in early art critical texts focusing on Haitian art and those used in contemporaneous ethnographic texts.

HAITIAN ART HISTORY EMERGING FROM ETHNOGRAPHIC TEXTS

Tracing a genealogy of the historiography of what she terms "African Diaspora Art History," Judith Bettelheim begins in the 1940s and 50s by highlighting "the importance of … [texts by] anthropologists and ethnomusicologists, who were interested in material culture and objects associated with religious practices" in and across rural Africa and "Negro Folklife" in the Americas.[21] Haiti was a key site in the "anthropological imagination" of this era particularly due to its popularity as a site of ethnographic field research among U.S. academics in the aftermath of their country's occupation of Haiti, which came to an end in 1934. One of the most prominent U.S. figures who developed approaches to studying Haitian culture through the discipline of anthropology in this era was Melville J. Herskovits. His *Life in a Haitian Valley,* published in 1937 and based on less than three months fieldwork in Mirebalais in 1934, is recognised as a seminal text in the field.

Herskovits was influenced both by trends in the Euro-American academy (under the tutelage of Franz Boaz and alongside contemporaries such as Zora-Neale Hurston) and the earlier research and patronage of Haitian ethnographer Jean Price-Mars. Building on this

[20] J. Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983) p.80
[21] J. Bettelheim 'An Historiography of African Diaspora Art Hsitory: A World in Progress'. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the College Art Association, Chicago, March 12, 2010

foundation, in *Life in a Haitian Valley* Herskovits used diverse source material from his fieldwork to identify African cultural "survivals," "retentions," or what he termed "Africanisms" in contemporary Haiti, whilst he also sought to describe and explain what he called "the Haitian personality".[22] By doing so Herskovits sought to locate transnational connections and deep roots for Haitian culture in West Africa, to demonstrate the normativity of Haitian cultural practices in light of these contexts, which would vindicate them against occupation era sensationalism. Such pivotal theses based on encounters with Haitian culture had tangible legacies across many disciplines in the generations to come and had multiple connections with contemporary and later developments in the art histories and art practices of many working in the United States.

In recent studies, Lindsey Twa and Krista Thompson have both detailed the visits of a number of prominent African-American artists to Haiti in the 1930s for whom the country became an experimental site of artistic fieldwork. The Julius Rosenwald Foundation, for example, funded the visits of William Edouard Scott and Aaron Douglas. Both Scott and Douglas in their different ways expressed in correspondence with the foundation a parallel pursuit to Herskovits' attempts to document "the Haitian personality". This has led Twa to aptly refer to them as "creative ethnographers".[23] For example she documents their stated aims to visually document through portraiture "Haitian types": including the "peasant farmer"; the "market woman"; and "types about the wharf". Such subjects and iconographies had a deep impact on the practices of contemporary Haitian artists, most notably that of Pétion Savain, while they continue to appear in abundance on the stalls of tourist-vendors in Haiti today.

However causal connections between African Americans' and Haitians' art practices are not my concern here, but rather the discursive influence of early-twentieth-century ethnographic texts on the historiography of Haitian art history. The influence of the ethnographic mode of writing about Haiti in art historical texts is no more clearly apparent

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[22] G. Magloire and K.A. Yelvington 'Haïti et l'Imagination Anthropologique: Jean Price-Mars, Melville J. Herskovits, Roger Bastide' *Gradhiva*, 1 (2005) pp.127-152

[23] L. Twa, 'Troubling Island: The Imagining and Imaging of Haiti by African-American Artists, 1915-1940' (University of North Carolina: unpublished Phd thesis, 2006) pp.157-208; K.A. Thompson, 'Preoccupied with Haiti: The Dream of Diaspora in African American Art, 1915-1942' *American Art*, 21.3 (Fall 2007) pp.74-97

than in art critical use of what is termed the "ethnographic present" from as early as the 1940s.[24] This facet of ethnographic writing was identified by Johannes Fabian as among the matrix of temporal distancing devices employed by anthropologists, which deny the coevalness of their objects of study in written texts. In his landmark intradisciplinary critique of the 1980s *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* Fabian described two fundamental illusions that use of the 'ethnographic present' performs. First it "magnifies a statement to general validity" and secondly it "'freezes' a society at the time of observation". Continuing on this second point he explains that, such statements "… contain assumptions about the repetitiveness, predictability, and conservativism of primitives".[25]

Comparing this with the reviews of Haitian artists' practices published in the U.S. in the 1940s (such as the below referenced at the outset of this chapter) the transference of anthropological literary technique is patent through the unabashed use of the ethnographic present:

> Haiti's art … is a primitive Negro folk art overflowing with decorative exuberance and childlike observation of Haitian scenes.[26]

Aside from the obvious use of racialising, classificatory descriptors such as 'Negro,' 'primitive' and 'folk' here, the more insidious work of distancing is performed in this text through the oversimplification and fixing of Haitian art practices that results from the unassuming opening phrase "Haitian art is…" In this statement we find a clear echo of anthropology's allochronic discourse characterised by the denial of coevalness to the object being discussed: Haitian art.[27]

Studies by numerous Euro-Americans in the mid-twentieth century that examined Haitian art and culture, most often focussing on Vodou, were situated at this intersection of art history and anthropology with similar commentaries resulting. These have included: both the text and film versions of *Divine Horsemen* by artist Maya Deren (the latter notably

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[24] Fabian, *Time and the Other*, p.80
[25] Ibid., p.80
[26] 'Haitian Painting' *Life*, p.58
[27] Fabian, *Time and the Other,* pp.80-1

having an authoritative ethnographic narrator added posthumously); the wide-ranging writings by the anthropologist Alfred Métraux; and the texts of Afro-Atlantic Art specialist Robert Farris Thompson. The latter's life-long research focus on discerning resonances between aesthetic aspects of African and New World cultural practices has led him to discuss Haitian art on a number of occasions, perhaps most notably in his article 'The Flash of the Spirit: Haiti's Africanizing Vodun Art' for the Brooklyn Museum's 1978 exhibition *Haitian Art*.[28] In this text, Farris Thompson leans on anthropological studies to make his case for "African visual influence in Haiti" by referencing Herskovits and Courlander multiple times. Further, despite his endeavours to emphasise the "developmental brilliance" of Haitian culture, he also borrows heavily and somewhat awkwardly from the conventions of ethnographic discourse to articulate his argument. Consider for example the generalised conceptions of Haitian art practices and the rooted and over-determined paths mapped out for its development resulting from the following statements:

> vodun, is Africa *reblended*.[29]
>
> Haitian vodun art, a continuous linking of tradition with developmental brilliance.[30]

Farris Thompson's straining attempts to emphasise developmental possibilities and allow for changing definitions of Haitian art were not helped by his text's presence in a catalogue alongside other essays that left little space for such a view. The essay *Haitian Art: A Western View* by Gerald Nordland, then director of the Milwaukee Art Center, typifies the 'freezing' of Haitian art as his essay was peppered throughout with assertions made in the 'ethnographic present.' He explains:

> The Haitian artist has African roots … Haitian artists work in a direct, non-academic fashion. … Haitian art is closely intertwined with voodoo … Haitian art is immediately readable by the voodoo adherent … One of the historical realities of the Haitian art achievement is that it developed in isolation.[31]

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[28] R. Farris Thompson, 'The Flash of the Spirit: Haiti's Vodun Art' in U. Stebich (ed.) *Haitian Art* (New York: Brooklyn Museum, 1978) pp.26-37
[29] Ibid., p.26
[30] Ibid., p.27
[31] G. Nordland, 'Haitian Art: A Western View' in U. Stebich (ed.) *Haitian Art* (New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 1978) p.20

Many of these statements apart from becoming swiftly outdated would also represent only a very narrow view of certain art practices from Haiti at any time. The influence of ethnographic texts here is clear, for example Herskovit's search for Africanisms has clearly had an impact on Nordland's stating that Haitian artists have their roots in Africa, and of course this is only a partial, generalised and conservative view of identity formation. Indeed it is clear that many aspects of Haitian society and the cultural practices of Haitians have been integrally shaped by African cultures, but influences from the European and American continents are strongly present too. Further, when we begin to look in more detail at an individual artists' identity, and even more so that of an entire country, we see that it is drawn from infinite times and places and defining it in this rooted, neatly partitioned, and static way, can only ever present an over-simplified snapshot. Perhaps the most glaringly misrepresentative statement of Nordland's quoted above though is the idea that Haitian art "developed in isolation". Here we find an example of the distancing spatial element to the time-space logic that Wainwright and many others have identified as preserving inequality and separation between the art of different continents.[32]

A MYTH OF ORIGINS: HAITIAN ART TIMED OUT

Erica James has observed such spatial distancing devices permeating desirable yet degrading visualisations of the Caribbean for the post-war tourist industry, which she has then shown to be deeply intertwined with dehistoricised narratives of Caribbean art, and the region's absenting from canonical art histories. She points, for example, to the doubled spatio-temporal distancing performed by the Bahamas early 70s tourism campaign titled "'Runaway from Today'". This campaign, she argues, was indicative of what she terms "brochure discourse", which produces the Caribbean as a retreat from modern life alongside "airbrushed" images presenting an untouched paradise that is attractive for the vacationer, but degrading and misleading in its absenting of local society: infrastructure, culture, and populations from the picture. The Caribbean region in this visualisation, "reduced to sand, sun, sea and sex … [becomes] a mute paradise existing outside of time, a place without memory, a place without Art".[33] In such narratives the Caribbean becomes a

[32] Wainwright, *Timed Out*, pp.3-4
[33] James, 'Re-Worlding', pp.8, 12-25

place waiting to be discovered by the western consumer, validated and defined through their gaze.

Such discourses provided the underpinnings of a discovery narrative that developed around a cohort of artists' practices in Haiti in the late-1940s. Until this period art from Haiti seldom appeared in exhibition internationally which was not helped by the fact that public infrastructure for artists was lacking domestically. By 1950 this situation had changed dramatically as the work of a small number of Haitian artists began to circulate widely, being exhibited in gallery spaces and featuring in review articles in the U.S., Europe and the Caribbean. These were artists such as Hector Hyppolite, Philomé Obin, Rigaud Benoit, Castera Bazile and Wilson Bigaud, all of whom were associated with a new institution that had recently opened in Haiti: the Centre d'Art. This institution functioned as art school, exhibition space, promotional gallery and resource centre: a hub through which artistic creativity in Port-au-Prince and further afield could be facilitated, commercialised and internationalised.[34] Each of these artists came from the lower classes of Haitian society and so had varied levels of artistic training. Rigaud Benoit, for example, had worked as a musician and taxi driver, decorating ceramics and china as a "pastime" before beginning to work as a painter in his thirties soon after the opening of the Centre d'Art. In contrast Philomé Obin, who was in his fifties by the time that the Centre opened, had been painting scenes of contemporary and historic Haiti for many years after receiving some rudimentary artistic training in his younger years.[35] Yet despite their varied backgrounds and levels of experience, as they were all associated with the Centre d'Art when presented in exhibition or discussed internationally they were often referred to as a group or new movement. However their artistic styles were diverse and, at least initially, they often worked in separation from one another, they certainly did not produce any kind of artistic manifesto that designated them as a group.

Grasping for ways in which to understand and analyse the practices of these informally trained artists, local patrons and dealers, international curators, art historians, and critics

[34] D.C. Peters, 'Founders of the Art Center' in M.J. Nadal-Gardère and G. Bloncourt (eds) *La Peinture Haïtienne* (Pairs: Editions Nathan, 1986) p.35
[35] U. Stebich (ed.) *Haitian Art* (New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 1978) pp.153-171

shifted between a range of generalising or generic terms to refer to them collectively. Those that recurred most often were 'naïve', 'popular' and 'primitive' and though each in some way attempted to communicate the informality of these artists' previous training or their non-academic styles of painting, these terms placed a value judgment on their work and ultimately facilitated the essentialising of Haitian art and artists to international audiences. At the same time, trying to make sense of their sudden awareness of these Haitian artists, and their ignorance of previous art from Haiti, international art professionals working at the Centre d'Art began to articulate their initial encounters with these artists as discoveries. These narratives quickly converged to construct a larger and more fixed myth of Haitian arts' origins, in which the artists themselves became less of a focus as attention shifted to the 'discoverers'.

The central figures and main plot line of this overarching discovery narrative or myth of origins will be familiar to anyone who has spent some time looking at exhibition catalogues, art histories and reviews of Haitian art in the twentieth century and particularly from the 1940s-70s. The mythologised story begins with an often unspoken assumption of an artistic vacuum in Haiti until February 1943. This month marks the point when DeWitt Peters, a painter from the U.S. and a determining character widely attributed hagiographic importance in the narrative, took up alternative service as an English teacher there. Peters has been recurrently credited as creating an artistic movement in Haiti often, it has been suggested, single-handedly. The below version from a 1947 edition of *Life Magazine* incorporates many of the typical elements.

> Haiti's artistic boom started in 1943 when an enthusiastic American artist named DeWitt Peters took a U.S. government-sponsored job in Port-au-Prince … wangled the use of an old residence … christened it Centre d'Art and … started to hold public exhibitions… The artists were almost all untrained and, at first rather shy … By the time he [Peters] was through, Haiti was the proud possessor of a school of native primitive painting.[36]

Key features to pick up on here include: the representation of Peters as leader and the almost complete elision of Haitian artists' agency; the suggested absence of art in Haiti

[36] 'Haitian Painting' *Life*, p.58

previous to Peters' arrival; the paradoxical assertion that a U.S. agent was a crucial catalyst for the creation of "a school of native primitive painting" with attendant suggestions of cultural authenticity; and the deployment of distancing time-space markers through the labeling of resulting art practices as "primitive". These features have been repeated time and again in the continuous recounting of the DeWitt-centred narrative over succeeding decades by a variety of specialist and non-specialist commentators on Haitian art. In 1948 Selden Rodman, a crucial producer of knowledge around Haitian art whom I will return to later in this chapter, published his first account of this narrative in *Renaissance in Haiti: Popular Painters in the Black Republic* and then repeated or at least made reference to it in every one of the many publications he authored on Haitian art from the 1940s to 1990s including his much referenced *Where Art is Joy* (1989).[37]

Ute Stebich, another authoritative and recurrent voice in Haitian art historical discourse, also made a point of repeating this narrative in her publications on the subject. She was the curator of what is often seen to be a landmark exhibition titled *Haitian Art* at the Brooklyn Museum in 1978. In the catalogue she declared, "DeWitt Peters was the single most important person in the development of modern Haitian art", more important apparently than the artists themselves.[38] In 1992 Stebich curated another exhibition of Haitian art titled *A Haitian Celebration: Art and Culture* at the Milwaukee Art Museum in which she recounted the tale again from Peters' perspective, prefacing it with the statement "Haitian art, as we know it, started in 1944…" Though most of the authors referenced so far here were situated in the U.S. context, the mythology of Peters travelled far beyond North America and Anglophone readers to be reproduced and referenced, for instance, in publications associated with exhibitions in the UK, France, Germany, Mexico, Brazil and Finland.[39]

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[37] S. Rodman, *Renaissance in Haiti: Popular Painters in the Black Republic*, (New York: Pellegrini and Cudahy, 1948); S. Rodman, *Where Art is Joy: Haitian Art: The First Forty Years* (New York: Ruggles de Latour, 1988)

[38] U. Stebich, 'Preface' in Stebich (ed.) *Haitian Art*, p.14

[39] See for example: K. Bachman, *Popular Paintings from Haiti from the Collection of Kurt Bachmann* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1969); M.J. Nadal-Gardère and G. Bloncourt (eds) *La Peinture Haïtienne*; U. Stebich (ed.) *Kunst aus Haiti* (Neu-Ulm: Die GmbH, 1979); *Pintura de Haiti* (Mexico: Galeria Reger, 1952); Taidekeskus Retretti, *Haitin Taide Ja Voodoo = Haitian Art and Voodoo* (Punkaharju, Finland; Retretti, 1998): All of these sources were accessed at the Library of Congress in 2011.

A version of Peters' own account was published in *La Peinture Haïtienne = Haitian Arts* in 1986 (but presumably penned much earlier before his death in 1966).[40] Though in his own retelling Peters is generally much more modest about his own role, the same features of the narrative do appear. For example, despite demonstrating a knowledge of historic art practices and institutions in Haiti by referencing an "ecole des Beaux started under President Geffrard in the mid-nineteenth century" he goes on to perpetuate the idea of an artistic vacuum existing in Haiti before his arrival. In the very next sentence, for instance, DeWitt stated that in 1943, "as far as I could see, there was no art in Haiti". He goes on to reinforce this later by, for instance, describing the Centre d'Art's opening exhibition as, "the first comprehensive group show of Haitian painting ever organized in the Capital".[41] Further, whilst he acknowledges the roles of various Haitian intellectuals and artists in the founding of the Centre he still ultimately elides their formative initiatives, drive and ideas in previous decades (which I'll return to below) in the emphasis he places on his own agency and the importance of his vision in statements such as, "with them I discussed my ideas" or, recounting his first glimpses of the oft mentioned painted doors by Hector Hyppolite at Mont-Rouis, which led to the latter's "discovery". He asserts, "I caught sight, out of the corner of my eye, of the gaily painted doors … in later years, I have thought that it was a miracle I saw them at all".[42]

Many who have recounted this tale of Peters as an artistic pioneer in Haiti have been at pains to also give a sort of character reference for him. Even after a backlash of critique began that highlighted the neocolonial biases of this account, particularly seen in the writings of art historians on the subject from Haiti, many also included an apologetic account of him. Gerald Bloncourt and Marie-José Nadal-Gardère stated in a profile on Peters, "highly cultured, he was deeply human and very courteous. Profoundly attached to the Haitian people …"[43] If such accounts are to be believed then it seems even Peters' writing was unwittingly influenced by the mythology of his own encounters with Haitian artists, to reproduce what Michel-Rolph Trouillot so scathingly dismissed as a neocolonial

[40] Peters, 'Founders', pp.35-39
[41] Ibid., p.35
[42] Ibid, p.36-7
[43] Nadal-Gardère and Bloncourt (eds) *Peinture Haïtienne,* p.40

retelling of events of the 1940s. After recounting the presence of a number of art institutions in Haiti in the nineteenth century, under Petion and Henri Christophe, Trouillot asserted, "the story that Haitians had to wait for Mr. Peters to discover their hidden talent is just one more story of arrogance".[44]

Through this selective genealogy of Haitian art historiography since the mid-1940s, it is clear to see that what began as an informal and subjective myth of origins became canonised. As such it became a routine introduction to twentieth-century Haitian painting and often just any art from Haiti. In this sense the recounting of Haitian art history through this lens parallels the retelling of Eurocentric accounts of American History that situate its origins with Columbus' voyages of discovery, characterising him as pioneer and determining agent. Of course preserving Columbus' ultimate agency in that narrative of American history depends on the elision of others' agency including earlier European travellers to the Americas and most notably that of Native Americans. It also depends upon the reduction of many complicated historical encounters into a simple symbolic myth of origins. Similarly as the DeWitt-centred myth of Haitian art's origins in the 1940s has remained an authoritative account the roles and agency of numerous others have been elided and more complex political interactions and motivations behind the creation of the Centre have been suppressed. I do not have space to consider this in much detail, but I want to briefly illuminate some of these aspects in order to expose the more complex realities hidden behind this myth of origins.

DISREMEMBERED AND DISAVOWED MODERNISTS

The Centre d'art was established as an international venture with key actors and organisations from Haiti and the U.S. being integrally involved. Indeed early letterhead paper from this new institution attested to its collaborative creation. This stationary listed a number of Haitian artists in key roles in its left-hand margin, including 'Président' Maurice Borno, 'Trésorier' Geo. Remponeau, 'Secrétaire Général' Albert Mangonès and 'Sécretaire Adjoint' Gérald Bloncourt, though principal position was still preserved for

[44] M.R. Trouillot, 'Haitian art before and after 1944 and DeWitt Peters' *Bob Corbett: Haiti*, 17 December 1997 <http://www2.webster.edu/~corbetre/haiti/art/pre-1944.htm> [accessed 30 October 2013]

Peters who was the only name listed centrally on the letterhead as 'Directeur-Fondateur'.[45] Both the Haitian government and the United States Department of State sponsored the institution financially at $200 a month each by the mid-1940s, before which Peters had been subsidising it to some extent with his own money. Through Horace Ashton, Cultural Attaché at the U.S. Embassy, Peters also met with President Élie Lescot who secured a building for the Centre and attended its opening exhibition of Haitian painting in May 1944.[46] Peters said of this event, "we had the official inauguration of the Centre on Sunday, May 14. The President came and made a brief address – promising us his total support. It was a fine speech. The crowd was terrific, and people have continued to stream in".[47] It seems that both U.S. and Haitian politicians saw this as a good show-project that would complement the ethos of the recently formed Haitian-American Institute, headed by the above-mentioned Horace Ashton. This international organisation was founded in 1942 to promote positive cultural relations between the two nations. However some of the Haitian artists led by Mangonès were less keen on participating in this diplomatic exchange and successfully pushed against a move by Horace Ashton to tie the Centre exclusively to the Haitian-American Institute. Perhaps this was considered an attempt at political instrumentalisation by the Lescot regime, seeking to further ingratiate itself with powers in Washington. Alternatively, Daniel Simidor has suggested that these artists just did not want to be beholden to the apparent incompetence of the new bi-lateral organisation.[48] Either way it demonstrates the agency that these Haitian figures initially exercised in shaping the future of the Centre.

Notably, each of these Haitian artists involved in founding the Centre d'Art were from upper middle class backgrounds and influential families. Gérald Bloncourt, for instance, was the son of a French teacher and a celebrated Guadeloupian athlete who became Director General of Sports in Haiti under Dumarsais Estimé. His two older brothers both moved to France, Claude becoming a renowned surgeon, and Tony, who was part of the

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[45] Also listed were 'Secretaire Adjoint' Raymond Coupaud, and 'Conseillers' Émmanuel Lafond, Daniel Lafontant, Rev. James Peterson and Camille Tesserot: René d'Harnoncourt Papers, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York, (hereafter RH, MOMA) II.16.
[46] Peters, 'Founders', p.36; RH, MOMA, II.16
[47] Ibid.
[48] D. Simidor, 'Haitian art before and after 1944 and DeWitt Peters' *Bob Corbett: Haiti*, 17 December 1997 <http://www2.webster.edu/~corbetre/haiti/art/pre-1944.htm> [accessed 30 October 2013]

Bataillons de la Jeunesse, became a war hero after being tortured and killed by the Nazis in 1943. Gerald himself was a friend of René Depestre, Jacques Stéphen-Alexis and many other Haitian intellectuals who were influenced by Marxism, Surrealist non-conformism and anti-colonial cultural and political thought such as Negritude and Indigenism. Together they initiated a revolutionary movement in the mid-1940s that culminated in the "Cinque Glorieux" protests of January 1946 through which Élie Lescot was ousted and Bloncourt was eventually forced into exile.[49] Aside from Bloncourt's compulsory cosmopolitanism Borno, Mangonès, and Remponeau were all also able to travel abroad mostly to Paris and the U.S. for formal education and/or artistic training. For example Mangonès, who is perhaps best known for his sculpture *Neg Mawon* permanently installed on the Champs de Mars in Port-au-Prince, enrolled in the Brussels Academy of Fine Art. He then went on to study architecture at Cornell University and travelled through Mexico for six months before returning to Haiti in 1944, when he became involved in the founding of the Centre d'Art. Undoubtedly these internationally engaged lifestyles impacted the Modernist art practices of each of these artists: from the Fauvist landscapes of Bloncourt, to the impressionistic realism of Remponeau and Mangonès, to the Modernist abstract colour-blocking of Borno.[50]

Earlier cultural-political movements also influenced this Haitian intelligentsia. In the early decades of the twentieth-century through the *Indigéniste* movement some among Haiti's social elites began to celebrate the nation's African heritage and the folkloric cultural forms of the masses, paralleling *Indigenismo* movements all over Latin America at that time. In Haiti this movement was not only cultural, denoting new aesthetic explorations and expressions, but also a political statement. It was an anti-imperialist assertion of national sovereignty that sought to galvanise Haitians against the occupying U.S. Marine force, which was stationed in the country from 1915 to 1934. Michel-Philippe Lerebours points to the Pont St. Geraud group as particularly notable in this vein. This was a diverse and

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[49] M. Smith, *Red and Black in Haiti: Radicalism, Conflict and Political Change 1934-57* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009) pp.72-85; 'Haiti History 101: Gerald Bloncourt, The Symbol of Haiti's 1946 Generation – An Interview' *Kreyolicious* <http://kreyolicious.com/haiti-history-101-gerald-bloncourt-the-symbol-of-haitis-1946-generation-an-interview/10460/> [accessed 29 October 2013]

[50] Examples of work by each can be seen in: Nadal-Gardère and Bloncourt (eds) *Peinture Haitienne,* pp.42-44, 46.

informal cohort formed between 1926 and 1930 that included famed writer and founder of the Bureau of Ethnology, Jacques Roumain, future politicians including Dumarsais Estimé and the painter Pétion Savain.[51]

In the 1930s a number of prominent U.S. African Americans involved with the cultural explosion known as the Harlem Renaissance also visited Haiti and met with members of this group. Langston Hughes briefly met with Jacques Roumain in 1932 and, as noted above, artists such as Aaron Douglas and William Edouard Scott visited Haiti in the 1930s.[52] This open internationalism and alliance of culture and politics amongst the early-twentieth-century cultural vanguard in Haiti certainly influenced the next generation of which Bloncourt, Mangonès, Borno and Remponeau were part. Indeed as these figures were planning and shaping the initial months and years of the Centre d'Art's opening from 1944 through to 1945 key cultural figures from the francophone and hispanophone Caribbean as well as France paid them extended visits. Martinician writer, politician, and founding figure of Negritude, Aimé Cesaire, was the first, staying for seven months and giving a number of lectures from May 1944. He was followed closely, in early 1945, by Cuban art critic, curator, and advocate José Gómez-Sicre, who was then involved in bringing an early exhibition of 'Modern Cuban Art' to the Centre. Then, perhaps most well known of all were the coinciding visits of the 'Pope of Surrealism' André Breton and Cuban Modernist Wifredo Lam in December 1945. These events shaped the future programming of the Centre. For example, a scribbled note in the margin of a letter from Peters to d'Harnoncourt dated 4th December 1945 read "Breton and Wifredo are here – we're going to have a big Lam show next month".[53] It also seems that these visitors powerfully influenced the politics of the early Haitian artists working at the Centre. Indeed, Matthew J. Smith has recently linked the presence of students such as Bloncourt at the lectures of Breton to the revolutionary ousting of Lescot in January 1946.[54]

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[51] M.P. Lerebours, 'The Indigeniste Revolt: Haitian Art 1927-44' *Callaloo*, 15.3 (Summer 1992) pp.711-25
[52] L. Hughes, *I Wonder as I Wander* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1956) pp.29-32
[53] D. Peters to R. d'Harnoncourt, 4 December 1945, RH, MOMA, II.16
[54] Smith, *Red and Black*, pp.75-76

Tentative attempts to link Haitian art with Modernism have concentrated on transnational connections made through the lives and work of these already accepted Modernists. Featuring prominently have been André Breton, André Malraux and (in a supporting role) Wifredo Lam each of whom were swift to identify and engage with talent in the work of Haitian 'primitive' artists. These and other such connections are fascinating, and crucial in the breaking down of art histories' historic form as national narratives in parallel. However, focus on the existence of Modernism in Haiti through the transient presence of cosmopolitan French men and their friends is to visualise Haitian art as linked to Modernism at a remove exclusively channeled through non-Haitians. These more recent additions to the art historical accounts of Haiti may add new material to older narratives but they do not constitute new approaches and therefore have been widely used as appendages to the broad historic disavowal of the possibility of Haitian modernity in scholarship that spans a host of disciplines.

An abridged version of the Centre d'Art's exhibition history, up to the early 1980s, is included in the publication *Haitian Art: The Legend and the Legacy of the Naïve Tradition*. A close examination of this list shows that in the early years of this institution's existence the work of these Modernist artists was much more visible in domestic exhibitions than that of the 'primitive' or 'popular' artists.[55] If we look for example at the exhibitions in which the names of artists exhibited are present up to the end of 1954, we find that over fifteen of these list the names of recognised Modernists, including Bloncourt, Remponeau, Borno, Savain, Luce Turnier, Antonio Joseph, Lucien Price and Max Pinchinat. In contrast, less than ten titles includes the names of those labeled 'primitive' or 'popular' such as Philomé Obin, Bazile, Bigaud, Prefete Duffaut, Jasmin Joseph, Gesner Abelard and Wilmino Domond. Moreover, this disparity is much sharper in the early years with Philomé Obin being the only artist of the latter 'group' named in an exhibition title before 1950 compared with nine shows focused on Modernist work.

However, the selected record of eighteen international exhibitions listed in this publication, up to 1969, presents us with a deep contrast. None of those exhibition titles

[55] L.G. Hoffman, *Haitian Art: The Legend and the Legacy of the Naïve Tradition* (Davenport, IA: Davenport Art Gallery, 1985) pp. 221-227

contain the names of any artists, but in most cases there is an indication of the 'type' of mid-twentieth century Haitian art being exhibited. Out of eighteen titles, six contain the word naïve, three the word popular, and one each contain the words primitive or folk. All of these words have been used as vague synonyms to describe and group together the work of those artists from lower class backgrounds with varied levels of informal training, like Obin, Hyppolite and Bazile. Of the six exhibitions left, three whose exhibition catalogues I was able to access also only exhibited work by these artists.[56] Therefore at least fifteen out of eighteen of these exhibitions focussed exclusively on this grouping of Haitian artists. This, of course, is no exact science not least because these exhibition lists from *The Legend and the Legacy* publication are not comprehensive, and for some exhibitions, particularly in the record of domestic shows at the Centre d'Art, there is a generic title or no title given.

It is important to note also that divisions between these two groups were to some extent artificial and undefined. Those considered 'primitive' or 'popular' tended to appear in a host of group shows together over the decades to come and so are generally identifiable but there is no definitive record or official list of two separate groups. Furthermore, a host of other contemporary Haitian artists were not so easily associated with either group and indeed might display in their work formal elements or subjects associated with both groupings. However, despite these vagaries, the comparative figures highlighted above do demonstrate a constructed polarisation of Haitian art through the Centre d'Art in this era and, around these poles, a genuine split in the domestic and international dissemination and reception of two strands of art practices. This was in some ways confirmed by the founding of a less well known alternative visual arts institution called the Foyer des Arts Plastique in 1950. This was led by Lucien Price, Max Pinchinat and others who felt their practices were not being well represented by the Centre d'Art.[57]

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[56] These exhibitions were: *Artists of the Western Hemisphere: Art of Haiti and Jamaica* (New York: Center for Inter-American Relations, 1968); *The Art of Haiti* (Davenport, IA: Davenport Municipal Art Gallery, 1969); *Kunst aus Haiti: Sammlung Kurt Bachmann* (Dortmund, Germany: Museum am Ostwall, 1969)

[57] J. Robinson, 'A History of the Haitian Popular Arts Movement, 1944 to 1972' (University of Maryland: unpublished Phd thesis, 1983) p.163-5

For my study, which will focus on the international exhibition history of Haitian art at world's fairs and an art biennial, it is particularly important to consider why these strands of art received such disparate receptions abroad. In discussing the opening of the Foyer des Arts Plastique Jontyle Robinson ventures an answer to this question by pointing out that though these "academic artists" (those I have referred to above as Modernists) complained that DeWitt Peters and others were only exhibiting "the popular artists" at the Centre d'Art, and the centre's short-lived commercial branch in New York, "there was simply not a market for them". Continuing she asserts, "these artists simply did not have the nerve, the flair or the individuality of the popular artists".[58] After making an interesting observation about the divergent commercial value or marketability of these two groups internationally, Robinson's second point goes on to foreclose the discussion which might ensue from this thought-provoking point, by dismissively generalising about the lack of "flair" amongst a whole body of artists' practices. Without wanting to take away from the artistic achievement of those artists who were well received abroad, or to suggest that their recognition was not deserved, I think there is much more beneath this uneven reception that cannot be explained away by asserting a simple difference in talent or artistic invention. I argue that much more was and is at stake for the time-space logic and classificatory system of art history, which precluded recognition of Modern art practice from Haiti (and indeed most of the non-western world in that period), which I will explore in the next section.

Each of these strands of context surrounding the Centre d'Art's founding (from the political backdrop to its opening; to the international travel, academic training, and formal style of Haitian Modernist artists practice; to the polarised and uneven reception of Haitian art practices from this era internationally) are aspects crucial to a retelling of Haitian art history. This is because, individually they reveal numerous elisions from the oversimplified mythic version of the Centre d'Art's beginnings centred on DeWitt Peters, and together they being to demonstrate the impact that mythology's disavowal of Haitian Modernism has had on the documentation, circulation and marketing of Haitian art internationally since the mid-twentieth century. Yet, if this mythic Peters-centred narrative is so easily disproved, why has it remained so dominant?

[58] Ibid, p.165

THE USES OF 'HAITIAN ART' HISTORICALLY FRAMED

To explore possible answers to the above question I will consider two broader contexts to the Peters centred narrative of Haitian art history within this section. First, I will explore how the discourses and categorising vocabularies associated with this mythic narrative of Haitian art's origins were related to the channels of art circulation facilitated by the Centre d'art. Then secondly I will examine how these vocabularies relate to western art history's canonical narratives (centred on Modernism) and thereby consider what value the former has to the wider discipline. Secondly, with reference to Paul Farmer's thesis on the "Uses of Haiti" I will examine how this narrative of Haitian art can be interpreted with reference to a longer history of the Haitian nation's positioning as a symbol of primitivism in wider western discourses.[59]

The Centre d'Art provided a central and professionalised channel through which work by Haitian artists began to prominently enter international markets and exhibition spaces in the mid-twentieth century. Indeed it was through the establishment of this institution that many contemporaneous art critics, collectors, curators, and artists from the U.S. and Europe first became familiar with any visual art from Haiti. (Though, of course, those artists whose work did become highly visible internationally and enshrined in a myth of discovery did not represent all practices from Haiti.) The works of these artists who practices were less informed by formal and academic training, or cosmopolitan lifestyles of international study and travel due to their lower socio-economic status, were gradually positioned as key signifiers for 'primitive', 'naïve' of 'popular' art. We can establish that terms such as primitive, naïve and popular have little analytical value here by the fact that these terms were often interchangeably used without any definition and were indiscriminately applied to work as diverse as Hector Hyppolite's swiftly produced, formally unstructured, and highly imaginative depictions of Vodou lwas and at the same time Philomé Obin's highly structured and precisely rendered historical scenes.

[59] P. Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1994)

It becomes clear that the assigning of this terminology to work by Haitian artists had much more to do with the structure and perceptions of the existing international art world into which they were being integrated through the Centre d'Art than it actually had to do with their work. As Haitian art increasingly became a symbol of artistic primitivism, the discipline-specific functions of this term became integral to the art historical positioning and increasingly limited perceptions of art from Haiti from the 1940s onwards. As Jonathan Harris has explained in his work on the *Key Concepts* of art history, the meaning and function of 'primitivism' in this discipline is defined through its relation to "an apparently opposing idea and value: the modern".[60] Expanding on this point Robin Kelley has drawn attention to the fact that "terms like, 'folk', 'authentic', and 'traditional'" not only work in neutral opposition to "the modern", but are instrumentally applied to maintain rigid systems of classification that have as their central concern the definition and constitution of modernism. In the Haitian case we can also add to this list the terms primitive, naïve and popular. Of such terms Kelley explains:

> [these] are socially constructed categories that have something to do with the reproduction of race, class and gender hierarchies and the policing of the boundaries of modernism.[61]

Erica James in her rich thesis highlighted how such systems of classification in the discipline precluded recognition of modernist arts of Haiti and the Caribbean because acknowledging modernity in work by artists associated with this region would "problematise the binary purity of modernity and the notions of forward progression, time and space inherent in modernism".[62]

It is important at this point to clarify what I am referring to by the rather slippery term modernism whose meanings shift and change from one discipline to the next, and even one author to another. A number of recent authors in the context of art historical and art critical reflection have distinguished between various discipline-specific usages of the

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[60] J. Harris, *Art History: The Key Concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006) p.251
[61] R. Kelley, 'Notes on Deconstructing "the Folk"' *American Historical Review*, 97.5 (December 1992) p.1402
[62] James, 'Re-Worlding', p.182

term.[63] Clarifying the distinction between two variants in the original four volume Yale University Press/ Open University series *Modern Art: Practices and Debates,* reviewer Jane A. Sharp explained:

> To the authors of this series Modernism (capitalized) means not only the "formalist" critical tradition that is identified now with [Clement] Greenberg's writings, but also a canon of major artists and works validated primarily by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, beginning with Alfred Barr's exhibition "Cubism and Abstract Art" (1936). Otherwise modernism (not capitalized) is more inclusive and various.[64]

In relation to the positioning of 'Haitian art' in the 1940s, it is with this narrower understanding of Modernism (focussed on form, but also on delineating canonicity and endorsed by key institutions, particularly MoMA New York) that I am concerned because it was relative to these interests specifically that Haitian art was initially positioned as primitive.

Much has been at stake for this discipline, particularly in its institutionalised form, in validating its hierarchy of understanding by reinforcing the distinct identities of, and binary relation between, Modernism and primitivism at its very foundations. As Elizabeth Mansfield has explained, this Modernism designates not only a much-contested periodisation in art history and a succession of movements focussed on certain sets of formal and aesthetic concerns, but it is a value around which the discourse of the discipline was constructed. Mansfield asserts, art history was "[g]alvanized into a professional, academic field during the nineteenth century" it was shaped by imperial ideology and founded on an inherently western view of the world producing a "discipline born of

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[63] See for example: F.R. Myers, 'Introduction to Part One: Around and About Modernity: Some Comments on Themes of Primitivism and Modernism' in L. Jessup (ed.) *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001) pp.13-25; F. Frascina et al. (eds) *Modernity and Modernism: French Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press in assoc. with Open University Press, 1993)

[64] J.A. Sharp, review of F. Frascina et al. (eds) *Modernity and Modernism: French Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press in assoc. with Open University Press, 1993) in *The Art Bulletin,* 77.3 (Sep. 1995), p.503-4

modernism".[65] Therefore finding and reifying examples of primitive art became crucial to meaningful and laudatory engagement with Modernist work in this system. Consequently once Haitian art was identified as primitive it became very useful in the context of art history as a buttress to the canon-focused structure of the discipline and to preventing the disturbance of wider systems of knowledge. Yet why was Haitian art so swiftly and easily identified as primitive when being integrated into wider art history in the 1940s, despite the many self-consciously Modernist practitioners identified above? To understand this we must briefly consider how Haiti's positioning in art history was contingent upon and facilitated by broader international perceptions of the Haitian nation.

In his insightful text *The Uses of Haiti* Paul Farmer mediates on the "greater and greater symbolic functions" of Haiti accumulating from the year of its independence. To locate the fulcrum upon which this multi-layered symbolism hinges, Farmer quotes Jacques Nicolas Léger, a nineteenth century Haitian diplomat, lawyer and politician. Writing in 1907 Léger explained:

> To fully appreciate the origin of the unceasing calumnies to which Haiti has been made the target, one must go back to the very first days of her existence and call to mind the circumstances under which she started life as an independent republic.[66]

Those trying to make sense of international perceptions of Haiti from the nineteenth century onwards find themselves time and again returning to the crucial revolutionary era and anti-slavery foundations upon which the independent Haitian state was established. Particularly in the last decade, since the bi-centenary of 1804, many texts in the field of Haitian Studies have explored and explained Haiti's symbolic distancing from the concept of modernity through recounting histories of this era and its aftermath.[67] Most direct of all

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[65] E. Mansfield, 'Art history and modernism' in E. Mansfield (ed.) *Art History and its Institutions: Foundations of a Discipline*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2002) p.11

[66] J.N. Léger, *Haiti: Her History and Her Detractors* (New York and Washington, DC: Neale Publishing Co., 1907) p.300

[67] See for example: L. Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (London: Belknap Press, 2004); L. Dubois, *Haiti: the Aftershocks of History* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012); M. Muro and E. Walcott-Hackshaw (eds) *Reinterpreting the Haitian Revolution and its Cultural Aftershocks* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2006); M. Munro and E. Walcott-Hackshaw (eds) *Echoes of the Haitian Revolution 1804-2004* (Kingston, Jamaica: University

in recent years was Sibylle Fischer's monograph *Modernity Disavowed*. Explaining the threat that recognition of this new nation and its founding principles as modern posed to the Imperial powers of Europe at the outset of the nineteenth century she states, "[u]nder the name of Haiti, the first black state in the Americas had realized a complete reversal of imperial hierarchies and social goals: … slaves had become masters".[68] In his monograph of the same year, titled *Avengers of the New World,* Laurent Dubois concluded of this change, "it was a dramatic challenge to the world as it then was".[69]

Indeed, this new republic posed a threat to the transatlantic slave-trading economy led by the European powers through what Fischer terms its "contestatory potential".[70] Haiti, she explains, therefore became the target of the most virulent attacks whether through silencing, disavowal, or flagrant denigration. For it was not just that the rebellious slaves of Saint Domingue and their collaborators challenged the social model of the imperial powers by overthrowing it for themselves, but the existence of Haiti posed a new route to modernity and a new modern existence, which took the principles of liberty and equality much further in many ways than the societies produced through the French or American revolutions. Therefore Haiti has been not only left outside of histories that retell the formation of western modernity, but it has also been positioned as that modernity's antithesis: the exemplar of undeveloped primitivism, not only naively backward but also actively resistant to western development and progress.

Recent works, such as Fischer's, that have sought to delineate the specific history of Haiti's conceptual positioning in relation to modernity build on earlier theoretical and philosophical explorations of modernity's relation to, or disavowal of, the Caribbean region or the "non-West". Key amongst these is the decades long body of work of Haitian anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot. His recent work *Global Transformations* sustained a

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of the West Indies Press, 2008); N. Nesbitt *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2008)*;* D. Jenson (ed.) *The Haiti Issue: 1804 and nineteenth-century French Studies: Yale French Studies*, 107 (2005); S. Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); M.R. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*: *Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995)

[68]Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, p.1

[69] Dubois, *Avengers*, p.1

[70] Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, p.37

particularly extended analysis of the complex origins and development of overarching narratives and worldviews emanating from the West. To examine these Trouillot identified a whole series of prescriptive terms that feature in these narratives, which he called "North Atlantic universals". [71] His key exemplar amongst these was "modernity". This term, he explained, projects the particular North Atlantic vision of the world as a universal standard: as the "correct state of affairs: what is good, what is just, what is sublime or desirable".[72] Trouillot also goes onto explain that, "modernity always required an Other and an Elsewhere" to define it in negative, or by opposition.[73] These broader arguments, paralleling Fischer's specific thesis, present us with another framework for understanding negative perceptions of Haiti as modernity's antithesis. Indeed, if Haiti's challenge to the North Atlantic envisioning of the world in 1804 was a challenge to the supposed "correct state of affairs" invoked through concepts such as modernity, and at the same time, that modernity required "an Other and an Elsewhere" to define itself: who or where better than Haiti.

To demonstrate the form and endurance of this casting of Haiti as modernity's "Other", "Elsewhere" or antithesis in the U.S. context, Paul Farmer points to Lawrence Harrison's writings about Latin America. Harrison simplistically asserts that the cultures lived in these places, rather than other factors such as imperialism or external exploitation, are the root of social, economic and political problems within their societies. Indeed, Harrison authored an article published in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1993, whose title of "Voodoo Politics" eerily echoed those of nineteenth-century articles about Haiti in U.S. newspapers. In this text Harrison talks of "Voodoo" as a key influence on what he terms "the stultifying peasant world view" in Haiti.[74] These more specific arguments then contribute to over-arching theses such as *Underdevelopment is a State of Mind*.[75]

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[71] M.R. Trouillot, *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp.35-41
[72] Ibid., p.35
[73] Ibid., p.38
[74] For nineteenth century newspapers on the same theme see for example: 'Back to Savagery' *Chicago Daily Tribune,* 21 May 1893, p.33; 'Uncle Sam May Annex Haiti, Land of Mystery' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 21 September 1902, p.47; Lawrence Harrison quoted in: Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, pp.347-9
[75] Lawrence Harrison, *Underdevelopment is a State of Mind: The Latin American Case* (Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1985)

As I have suggested such attacks on Haitian culture, with Vodou as a key focal point, are nothing new. Pointing to the work of Brenda Plummer and Robert Lawless on the "literature of condemnation" surrounding the country, Farmer asserts that "[r]eadings of Haiti have for more than 200 years been invested with peculiarly strong emotions, most of them negative". Continuing, he explains "[a] good deal of Haiti's bad press would seem to be linked to "schemata" that generate, year after year, a small number of scripts [or narratives] … Many of these ready-made narratives have taken on the status of full-blown myths". He then points to the "master myth" surrounding Haiti in the nineteenth century as the incapability of black people to self-rule, buttressed by narratives containing "voodoo, zombies, cannibalism, and savage misrule".[76] Farmer parallels these to myths of the late 80s and early 90s when he was writing, such as "Haiti as the source of AIDs", or the discrediting of Haiti's democratically elected President Aristide as a gangster, while a cursory glance at the pseudo-historical explanatory narratives that emerged around Haiti in the aftermath of the earthquake in 2010 demonstrate that these narratives still have generative potency even if their roots have been widely forgotten outside of Haiti.[77]

Pulling historical variants of Haiti's "bad press" together with more contemporary instances, Paul Farmer draws out the "Uses of Haiti" in various eras and concludes by explaining the attitude of those who would instrumentalise Haiti to serve their own agendas, "from 1492 to the coup d'état of 1991 a pattern clearly emerges: Haiti and Haitians exist to serve the powerful".[78] The services or uses Haiti has been forced to render to the "powerful", Farmer explains, have manifested in symbiosis materially and symbolically. He asserts, for example, "in the nineteenth century, when the uses of Haiti included the continued production of tropical produce and raw materials, Haiti's prime symbolic function was to serve as a model of 'anti-civilization'".[79] Mimi Sheller's work adds regional context and depth to such understandings of Haiti's representation as

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[76] Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, pp.349-50
[77] 'Robertson's "true story": Haiti "swore a pact to the devil" to get "free from the French" and "ever since, they have been cursed"' *Media Matters for America*, 31 January 2010 <http://mediamatters.org/video/2010/01/13/robertsons-true-story-haiti-swore-a-pact-to-the/159019> [accessed 30 October 2013]
[78] Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, p.51
[79] Ibid., p.249

oppositional to civilisation in the nineteenth century. Exploring the continuous vacillation of European perspectives on the Caribbean generally from the early modern era onwards, Sheller charts a seemingly endless flux between depictions of a wild untouched paradise and a productively tamed environment denoting progress. Sheller argues that the appearance of these images at any given time depended on the level of control, or desire to control, that the observer had over the landscape viewed at that time.[80]

Therefore in the post-emancipation era the Caribbean region was often portrayed as in decline, fallen from civilisation and regressed into barbarism. Against this setting of "sublime primitive nature… accounts of European adventure in the island wilds" she argues, "served as pleas for renewed European intervention".[81] The imperial desires evoked by such images stretched beyond the old colonial powers of Europe to envelope the rising power of the U.S., which as Sheller points out would soon claim this region as its 'backyard'. To demonstrate how symbolic images of Haiti as primitive were interwoven with expressions of imperial desire in the U.S. context in this era Sheller quotes William Agnew Paton's argument for Occupation in 1888.

> It would be well for the Haytians – it would be their chance of redemption … if some strong foreign power … would take the island under its protection.

Going on to all too recognisably describe the nature of this 'hypothetical protection' Paton explained:

> The presence of a fleet in their harbours, a few soldiers, a constabulary stationed in a few central positions, would … check the Africanizing of the island … from that day the regeneration of *le pays de barbares* would be assured.[82]

The suggested gunboat diplomacy was a familiar feature of U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America broadly in the late nineteenth century and for Haiti Paton's suggestions of actual military presence on Haitian soil became a brutal reality with the Marine Occupation of

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[80] M. Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003) p.53-4.
[81] Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*, p.58
[82] William Agnew Paton quoted in Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean,* p.58

1915-34. Yet "empire requires stories as well as guns" and the U.S. Occupation of Haiti was no exception.[83]

In her far-reaching study, *Taking Haiti,* Mary Renda explored the occupation from the point of view of United States' cultural history and concluded that this was no incidental encounter between the two nations. Haiti, she argues, became an object of heightened cultural fascination and desire as well as a valuable commodity and means of negotiating American identity.[84] She focuses first on the rich cultural resources opened up to Marines during the occupation through their encounters in Haiti that became their basis of new articulations of race, gender and sexuality.[85] From this initial locus Renda then goes on to look at how many and varied negotiations of American identity were refracted through images of Haiti and disseminated widely in U.S. society during and after the occupation in popular novels, art, music, theatre and much more. This intensified contact between the two countries in the years preceding the opening of the Centre d'Art in Port-au-Prince had positioned Haiti prominently within U.S. popular culture. In fact Renda argues for recognition of its centrality as "one of several important arenas in which the United States was remade through overseas imperial ventures in the first third of the twentieth century".[86]

Similarly Brenda Plummer echoed the words of an early-twentieth-century U.S. Secretary of State to highlight the importance of psychology as a determining factor across the history of U.S.-Haitian relations. She asserted the relationship of these two nation-states has significantly "turned on matters of perception".[87] These multi-faceted explorations demonstrate how Haiti became a foil for the U.S. imagination: a crucial other which helped define the self. This lays the immediate groundwork for understanding why the work of selected Haitian artists of the 1940s was so swiftly positioned as essentially primitive as it entered exhibition spaces internationally via a new art institution that was crucially shaped

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[83] M.A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001) p.9
[84] Renda, *Taking Haiti*, p.185
[85] Ibid., p.17
[86] Ibid., p.12
[87] B. Plummer, *Haiti and the United States: The Psychological Moment* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1992)

by U.S. art patrons and dealers. By illuminating these links I am not trying to suggest that U.S. nationals and particularly those associated with the Centre d'Art were plotting in a Machiavellian manner to identify and fix perceptions of Haitian art as primitive. They may not have even been conscious of transferring wider cultural understandings of Haiti in the U.S. onto their work with its artists. Instead, by briefly outlining this historical context of mythic perceptions surrounding Haiti I am suggesting, in fact, that it would have seemed innocuously commonsensical to assume that Haitian art would be primitive in style as Haitian culture and society more broadly had been regarded in these terms in the U.S. for over a century.

Compounding this was the context of contemporary art discourses in which Modernism had reified primitivism in art as an object of cultural fascination. Indisputably at the institutional centre of these Modernist discourses in the U.S. context during the mid-twentieth-century was the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Formative visionary director of this institution and a chief tastemaker of Modernism, Alfred H. Barr Jr. declared the 'primitive' to be "one of the main streams of modern taste" in a foreword he authored for a text published in 1942 that focused on 'American primitive painters' titled *They Taught Themselves*.[88] Indeed Barr's agreement to pen a foreword for this text demonstrates his own keen interest in primitive art, as well as wider celebrations of primitive art and culture in Euro-American society in that era. Indeed such attentions to primitive art and culture were to some extent disruptive of the exclusively negative associations that Farmer has focussed on in "Uses of Haiti". These early twentieth century fascinations were often a reaction against or retreat from modernity society, industrialisation and urbanisation. In this context primitive art or culture was considered to be a liberatory force, a rejuvenating return to nature and cultural authenticity. Yet having said all of this, such terminologies were nevertheless limiting and damaging as they retained connotations of distance in space and time from modernity, and further, because of the ways in which they were imposed upon non-western societies and cultures and so reflected imperial asymmertries of power.

[88] A.H. Barr Jr., 'Foreword' in S. Janis (ed.) *They Taught Themselves: American Primitive Painters of the 20th Century* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1942)

Therefore Barr's statement, mentioned above, also intimates a more insidious aspect of the art historical relationship between the primitive and the modern. Specifically his statements suggests that it was perceived to be acceptable, even a cause for celebration, that those arts labeled primitive were valued only through their relation to and stimulation of Modernist practices. This positioning was immortalised by Barr in what is now often referred to as his 'Barr chart', a diagram in the manner of a flow chart which he constructed for the 1936 MoMA exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art* [Figure 1] in which "Negro Sculpture" was the only racialised entry, and this alongside "Japanese Prints" and "Near-Eastern Art" were highlighted in red and shown only to be early inputs into what were then considered to be purely Euro-American movements such as Cubism or Fauvism.[89] With such endorsements fuelling the fetishising of primitive art and promoting it as a modern commodity it is little wonder that a Haitian variant was 'discovered' only two or three years later upon the opening of a new art institution in Haiti.

Asserting that the primitive had a central role in constituting the Modern in art history is not a new statement, and neither is the idea that such constitutive relationships were significantly shaped and channeled through key institutions and particularly through MoMA, New York.[90] However the role taken up by Haitian art emergent in the 1940s as a key signifier of that primitivism has not been systematically explored. Further, how this designation of Haitian art as primitive relates to: the activities of the Centre d'Art; wider symbolic and psychological uses of Haiti in the U.S. context; and the discourses of Modernism being integrally shaped by MoMA has also lacked attention. To draw these links out more precisely I am now going to explore the many roles, writings, and personal connections of Selden Rodman. A native New Yorker, Rodman was born into a wealthy family in Manhattan and became deeply involved with the Centre d'Art and the development of discourses around Haitian art. As such his work was crucially situated at an overlap between all of these contexts.

[89] This chart appeared on the dust jacket of: *Cubism and Abstract Art* (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1936)
[90] Myers, 'Around and About Modernity', p.14

EXPOSING AUTHORSHIP AND ADVOCACY: SHAPING DISSEMINATION OF HAITIAN ART FROM THE 1940S

Selden Rodman has been one of the most prolific authors of Anglophone texts that focus on, what he interchangeably terms, "popular", "primitive", "naïve" or "self-taught" Haitian art. He has produced countless catalogue essays to accompany major exhibitions, short monographs, and articles between the 1940s and the 1990s, as well as a number of plays and travelogues focussed on Haitian history and tourism.[91] Yet Rodman's significance stretches far beyond the mere volume of his work, as he was involved in the internationalisation of Haitian art through the Centre d'Art taking up both official and informal roles in the infrastructure associated with that institution. He was director of the Haitian Art Center (HAC) in New York City, which appears to have been a short-lived (1948-1951) commercial gallery associated with the Centre d'Art.[92] The HAC was hosted at Julius Carlebach's Gallery of 937 Third Avenue. Carlebach's was a vendor of Native American and "ancient art" and a representative of "modern primitive artists". As such it became a famed haunt of Dadaists, Surrealists, Modernist artists and intellectuals of the 1940s in many fields including Max Ernst, Marcel Duchamp, Roberto Matta, Claude Lèvi-Strauss and André Breton.[93]

Robinson notes that it was in the era of the HAC's existence, under the leadership of Rodman, that prominent U.S. museums acquired the works of Haitian artists associated

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[91] For example see the following texts all authored by Rodman: *The Revolutionists: A Tragedy in Three Acts* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1942); *Renaissance in Haiti*; *Haiti: The Black Republic: The Complete Story and Guide* (New York: Devin-Adair Company, 1954); *The Miracle of Haitian Art,* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1974); 'Haitian Art: Birth of a New World' in *The Naïve Tradition: Haiti* (Milwaukee, WI: Milwaukee Art Center and Richard Flagg, 1974) pp.6-8; *Haitian Art: The Third Generation with an Overlook at the First and Second* (Norwalk, CT: Mind Inc., 1980); *Where Art is Joy*; 'Haitian Art 1946-1991: From Hector Hyppolite to Stivenson Magloire' in P. Waggoner (ed.) *Haitian Art: Selections from a Chicago Collection* (Chicago, IL: The Hyde Park Art Center, 1991) pp.6-8; *Spirits of the Night: The Vaudun Gods of Haiti* (Dallas, TX: Spring Publications, 1992)

[92] Jontyle Robinson states that Rodman was co-director of the Haitian Art Center with Jason Seley, however a short message on letterheaded paper of the HAC from Rodman to René d'Harnoncourt at MoMA, dated 20 September 1949, lists Rodman and DeWitt Peters as "directors" and "Agents for Le Centre d'Art, Port-au-Prince, Haiti": RH, MOMA, II.16; J. Robinson, *Haitian Popular Arts,* p.160

[93] 'Alteration for the Haitian Art Center at Julius Carlebach Gallery, 937 Third Avenue, NYC', William Muschenheim Collection, Avery Drawings & Archives, Columbia University Libraries (hereafter WMC, CUL) 17.109, .02573-.02583; P. McRandle 'Julius Carlebach, Antiques and Art Objects, 943 Third Avenue' *Surrealist NYC*, 31 January 2013: <http://surrealistnyc.tumblr.com/post/41951762713/julius-carlebach-antiques-and-art-objects-943> [accessed 3 November 2013]

with the Centre d'Art for their permanent collections. The Museum of Modern Art, for example, acquired Jacques-Enguerrand Gorgue's *Magic Table* (which had previously been in Rodman's personal collection) and Philome Obin's *Inspection of the Streets* in 1948, while the Walker Gallery of Washington D.C. also purchased a work by Micius Stephane later that year.[94] It was also at this time that exhibitions of what Robinson terms "popular" Haitian art began to be appear across the U.S. and in Europe. In 1949 an exhibition was held in San Francisco and Los Angeles at which buyers including Alfred Hitchcock and Arthur Freed purchased works. A solo show of Philomé Obin's work was also held at the HAC in May of that year under the title "Obin: Haiti's Master Primitive". In November of 1949 *The Second Annual Group Show of Popular Artists of Haiti* was also held at the HAC, while in 1950 a travelling show (perhaps the same exhibition) of 'popular' artists' work toured major cities in Europe from London to Munich.[95] It was between 1950 and 1951 that a set of now famed murals, many of which have been lost or badly damaged in the earthquake of 2010, were painted on the interior walls of the Saint Trinité Episcopal Cathedral in Port-au Prince by a group of the Centre d'Art's "popular artists". Among those involved in this commission were: Philomé Obin, Castera Bazile, Rigaud Benoit, Wilson Bigaud, and Préfète Duffaut. This project, which I will refer to again in my second case study, was again given much publicity by Rodman throughout his writing career. Robinson also notes that while in progress the murals were photographed by *Time* magazine and coverage of them appeared in *Art in America*, *Harper's Bazaar*, the *Magazine of Art*, *Collier's* and *Life*.[96]

Not wanting to over-determine the agency of Rodman, it is important to highlight that he was not by any means solely responsible for the developments listed above, though he was clearly directly involved in most if not all of them. It is further significant, as highlighted above, that the increased international interest in 'popular' Haitian artists' work became a point of contention among some contemporary 'Modernist' or 'academic' Haitian artists

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[94] Gorgue's *Magic Table* is listed as being in Rodman's collection in the List of Illustrations in: Rodman, *Renaissance*, p.51; Robinson, *Haitian Popular Arts,* p.161; 'Inspection of the Streets' *UNT Digital Library* <http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc8093/> [accessed 10 July 2012]

[95] Robinson, *Haitian Popular Arts,* p.162; *The Second Annual Group Show of Popular Artists of Haiti* (1949) Schomburg Center Clipping File, 1925-74, Art-Haitian, Schomburg Center Archives (hereafter SCA), SC Mirco F-1, FSN Sc 000, 343-1

[96] See for example: S. Rodman, *Murals for Haiti* (n.p., 1951); Robinson, *Haitian Popular Arts,* p.163

working with the Centre d'Art. In response the latter then articulated their dissatisfaction by focusing skepticism and criticism on the HAC in New York. Robinson highlights that in a letter dated 25th September 1950 DeWitt Peters asked Rodman to send him a copy of accounting documents for the HAC because a group of "academic artists" had accused Peters, Rodman and their colleagues of using the 'popular' artists for their own financial gain, and it was in the same letter (it seems) that Peters also informed Rodman that some "academic artists" had broken away from the Centre d'Art to open the Foyer des Arts Plastique.

To the first piece of news Rodman responded somewhat heatedly "the HAC was almost broke … buying thousands of dollars' worth of pictures … it was not able to sell in order to maintain the artists … in slack times at their request".[97] Going on to address the opening of the Foyer des Arts Plastique, Rodman talks disparagingly of the artists who chose to form a new institution. He emphasises strict division between two different "camps" going forward and demonstrates his high level of personal investment, both financial and emotional, in the Centre d'Art group by discussing the creation of their future work and the institution's outlook in the first-person plural. He states, "as long as we paint (and sell) the pictures and the murals, retaining (as we apparently have) all the important painters in our camp, their criticism must be recognised for what it is".[98] He then rebukes the artists who have chosen to form the Foyer des Arts Plastique and their supporters as "the disgruntled ones, the 'revolutionnists' [sic], the 'communists'".[99] He particularly singles out Maya Deren for supporting them in the New York issue of *Flair Magazine* published in September 1950 and describes her article there as a "snide attack on the Centre". Carrying on Rodman reveals more clearly his desire to control public opinion of Haitian Art in the U.S. by asking Peters, "[a]re you prepared to let characters like Deren carry the ball, leaving the field to them in the American press?".[100]

Less than a year after these exchanges the HAC of New York closed permanently. Yet, the HAC's short-lived existence reveals Rodman's crucial role in the early marketing of what he

[97] Letter from S. Rodman to D. Peters , 3 October 1950, quoted in: *Haitian Popular Arts*, p.160
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid, p.164

termed "popular" or "primitive" Haitian art particularly to audiences in New York. Further, through travelling exhibitions that had originated at the HAC and through related national and international press, audiences much further afield has also be influenced by Rodman's perspectives. This episode also reveals in a tangible way Rodman's positioning of "popular" Haitian art as a primitive object for "modern tastes" and a stimulant for Modernist practices (much like Barr's positioning of "Negro Art" in his famous 1936 chart) by situating it within Carlebach's Gallery. This was a space, which Marcel Duchamp's biographer compared to Ali Baba's cavern, as it marketed unattributed *Objets d'Art* from non-western cultures alongside European antiques in a "cabinet of curiosity" setting akin to the haphazard cultural-commercial jumble of a World's Fair midway.[101] Though the HAC appears to have had its own adjacent and specially constructed gallery space, this broader setting placed "popular" Haitian art alongside fetishised and anonymised examples of "primitive art" at a crucial moment of its early dissemination to U.S. and European audiences.[102]

Once the HAC ceased to exist, Rodman's involvement in shaping perceptions of Haitian art certainly did not cease with it. He remained an active promoter, critic, dealer and "informal ambassador" of art produced through the Centre d'Art for the rest of his life, spending many years living between Haiti and New York. Indeed, he often visited the institution in Port-au-Prince to be involved in its programming and to buy new works for international distribution. Indeed his connections in the literary and arts world were significant and wide-ranging as aside from his interests in Haitian art he was also a poet, playwright, travel writer, and art historian with broad interests in art from across the Americas. His tastes particularly tended towards Central and South America, with a focus on folk and primitive art as well as certain streams of Modern art. A portion of his surviving correspondence from 1944-84, now held at Yale's Sterling Memorial Library, reflects Rodman's broad interests and connections with recorded correspondents including Leonard Baskin, Allen Ginsberg, Ernest Hemmingway, Pablo Neruda, Octavio Paz and Andrew Wyeth.[103] His obituary in the New York Times also highlights his contrived meetings with Ezra Pound,

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[101] McRandle, 'Julius Carlebach', n.p.
[102] 'Alteration for the Haitian Art Center' WMC, CUL
[103] 'Guide to the Selden Rodman Papers' *Yale University Library*: <http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0871> [accessed 12 October 2011]

Leon Trotsky, James Joyce and Thomas Mann noting his "lifelong talent" for "ingratiat[ing] himself" with notables wherever he went.[104] His publications on Modern Art include his much prized "conversations with" Alexander Calder, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Diego Rivera, Adolph Gottlieb, Willem de Kooning, Salvador Dalí, Robert Rauschenberg, José Clemente Orozco and many more, while his extensive unpublished diaries record encounters with numerous other notable personages of the twentieth century.[105]

Of particular interest here though are his and DeWitt Peters' correspondence over a number of decades with Alfred H. Barr Jr. and René d'Harnoncourt, successive directors of MoMA in New York and as such key figures shaping the discourse of that institution which had a wide-reaching influence over art historical and art critical discourse internationally in the mid-twentieth century. The earliest evidence of correspondence between Barr and Rodman, now held in the Alfred H Barr, Jr. Papers, is a handwritten letter dated 1 December 1950 from "Selden" to "Alfred". Through the use of first names, the casual tone of the letter, and the clear continuation of previous discussions, this letter strongly suggests the two men were already on familiar terms. Therefore even in this first short note we get an idea of the nature and level of interaction between these two individuals and the institutions they represented. In this letter Rodman references sending two "interesting catalogues" to Barr for the museum library and a copy of his "article on the Haitian murals which comes out in the Harper's Bazaar tomorrow".[106] He then goes on to ask, "will the check for the Bigaud come soon?" perhaps in reference to the work *Murder in the Jungle* which MoMA is known to have acquired in January 1951.

The next letter on file then takes us to November 1954 where we find Barr making excuses for having missed meeting Rodman while he was "in town". Again this letter is written on

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[104] Selden Rodman Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library (hereafter SRP, YUL) MS 871; D. Martin, 'Selden Rodman, Writer and Folk Art Advocate, Dies at 93', *The New York Times*, 11 November 2002 <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/11/11/obituaries/11RODM.html>[accessed 12 October 2013]

[105] S. Rodman, *Conversations with Artists* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1957); S. Rodman, *The Insiders: Rejection and Rediscovery of Man in the Arts of Our Time* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1960); Series II Journals, 1938-2000, SRP, YUL

[106] S. Rodman to A.H. Barr, 1 December 1950, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York (hereafter AHB, MOMA) [accessed on microfilm at the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution (hereafter AAA, SI) mf.2176.169]

first name terms (though Barr spells Rodman's name incorrectly). Most tellingly though, clearly in reference to earlier solicitations, Barr impassively tells Rodman, "the person to talk to about a Haitian show here at the museum is Andrew Ritche" then director of the painting and sculpture department at MoMA.[107] Much of the additional correspondence between Rodman and Barr, which continues intermittently until 1965 (as held among Barr's papers at MoMA), is then concerned with matters other than Haitian artists or the Centre d'Art. Yet these later exchanges are still notable for the level of familiarity they reveal through their informal tone, the scattered mentions of previous or planned lunches, day-trips and dinners. Then later, in the most extended exchange of all, these letters reveal Barr's frank responses to the thesis and promotion of Rodman's publication *The Insiders* (1960).[108] Therefore altogether these informal discussions, mentions of the acquisition of Haitian art by MoMA through Rodman, the institution's collecting of material for MoMA's library through him, and particularly Rodman's attempts to arrange an exhibition of Haitian art at MoMA present evidence of sustained interaction between Rodman and Barr and the institutions they represent at an important moment in time for Haitian art history.

These were not the only connections between the Centre d'Art and MoMA either as previous correspondence between DeWitt Peters and René d'Harnoncourt now held within the latter's papers at MoMA, also demonstrates. Indeed these letters show that Peters had been leaning on his own influential contact in New York for a number of years to gain support for the institution he was involved in setting up in Port-au-Prince. After only two years of existence, that new Haitian art institution had already been graced with at least two visits from d'Harnoncourt. Peters was clearly well aware of the advantages that could result from continued contact, including validation through acquisition and influence. In September 1946 the purchase by d'Harnoncourt of an unamed work by "Hyppolite" for $35 is mentioned in a short note from Peters, but in a much longer correspondence beginning in December 1943, Peters references d'Harnoncourt's previous interest in acquiring a work titled *Combat de Coqs* by René Vincent for MoMA.[109] Peters confesses of this acquisition "if you buy the picture (as I earnestly hope you will) I shall play the thing up to the limit for the

[107] A.H. Barr to S. Rodman, 29 November 1954, AHB, MOMA [AAA, SI, mf.2180.1227]
[108] Correspondance between A.H. Barr and S. Rodman regarding Rodman's monograph *The Insiders*: October 1960 – February 1961, AHB, MOMA [AAA, SI, mf.2187.920-963]
[109] D. Peters to R. d'Harnoncourt, 26 September 1946, RH, MOMA, II.16

fine publicity it will give both the U.S. and the Centre d'Art ... it – has already had an impressive effect here".[110]

Following this a certain amount of haggling ensues in their correspondence, in trying to determine a reasonable amount for what d'Harnoncourt calls "paintings by unknown artists with a somewhat naïve character," suggesting his reason for doing so is in order to prevent "false expectation" among Vincent and other artists at the Centre of their value on the New York art market.[111] Aside from using his connection with d'Harnoncourt to ensure advantageous sales and engineer positive publicity, Peters also looked to his contact at MoMA for strategic assistance in the early period of the Centre d'Art's establishment, when the institution still had no building and was working towards acquiring one. In the same latter of December 1943, Peters references his need for support in dealing with the U.S. State Department by emphasising to d'Harnoncourt "I do count heavily on your good help". Then in a handwritten note on the side of this letter Peters asks d'Harnoncourt if he would "see the person who is handling the Centre d'Art at the State Dept? … we would appreciate anything you could do – D.P".[112]

Just over a year later, José Gomez-Sicre, a noted Cuban art critic and independent curator, visited the Centre d'Art. Upon his return Gomez-Sicre wrote a letter to Monroe Wheeler, then Director of Exhibitions at MoMA, in which he refers to the "wonderful primitive or popular painters and a group of progressive [sic] who very soon will produce remarkable works, I am sure".[113] This resulted in a letter from Barr to Peters in which the former asks to be sent "photographs of the work of the Haitian artists which seem to you most interesting and most representative of the Haitian school…"[114] Already distinguishing between two streams of Haitian art it is clear that Peters responds by selectively sending images of works only by what he terms artists "of the 'Popular' variety" and tellingly continues "…when the 'regular' Haitian painters get a bit more direction (which they are

[110] D. Peters to R. d'Harnoncourt, 30 December 1943, RH, MOMA, II.16
[111] R. d'Harnoncourt to D. Peters, 9 April 1944, and 31 May 1944, RH, MOMA II.16.
[112] Ibid.
[113] J. Gomez-Sicre to M. Wheeler, 17 January 1945, RH, MOMA, II.16.
[114] A.H. Barr to D.Peters 19 February 1945, RH, MOMA, II.16.

doing with great rapidity) I shall send you photographs of their works".[115] Elements of the "discovery" narratives, which would later become so canonically associated with Haitian art are also present in this correspondence as Peters writes to d'Harnoncourt in September 1945 of images of "three wonderful pictures by our newest discovery, Rigaud Benoit" which Peters is sending to MoMA. Continuing, Peters enthuses "I think you will agree that Benoit is one of the most interesting primitive painters in the world today".[116]

These exchanges of material did not only go in one direction either as Barr's copy of a letter to Peters from Porter A. McCray, director of MoMA's International Program, dated 27 May 1957 demonstrates. Here McCray mentions "the twenty publications of the Museum of Modern Art, for presentation to the Centre d'Art" being careful to emphasise that "this material is a gift". McCray also suggests that "…it may be appropriate to publicise the presentation. For this purpose I am enclosing a publicity release…"[117] This extended and detailed correspondence over a number of years shows the significant connections and exchange of mutually beneficial information between key figures at MoMA and the Centre d'Art from the 1940s to 60s when understandings of Haitian art were being meaningfully shaped in museological, art historical, art critical, and international market contexts. MoMA's dominant force in the development of art historical attitudes towards Modernism and the Modernist canon is recognised. Less well known however is the role that Barr and d'Harnoncourt played in validating the discourse created around Haitian art by Rodman and Peters and in supporting the artists advocated by them.

ESCAPISM, ROMANTICISM AND FANTASY: RODMAN'S EARLY ENCOUNTERS WITH HAITI

Though Rodman's private letters to and from Barr are less directly concerned with Centre d'Art matters than Peters' with d'Harnoncourt it remains clear that Rodman was in an influential position at the nexus between Haiti's newest art institution, the fledgling art market and exhibitionary circuit facilitated through that; and the contemporary centre of the Modern art movement in New York. This position then gave Rodman's prolific

[115] D. Peters to A.H. Barr, 12 March 1945, RH, MOMA, II.16.
[116] D. Peters to R. d'Harnoncourt, 29 September 1945, RH, MOMA II.16.
[117] P.A. McCray to D. Peters, 27 May 1957, AHB, MOMA [AAA, SI mf.2182.1154]

published work on the subject a noteworthy network of dissemination and influence, making it a significant mediator of Haitian art's identity internationally. To date, as Erica James observed in a footnote of her thesis, only Richard J. Long has made explicit reference to the significance of Selden Rodman's writings in the construction of the discovery-centred and DeWitt Peters-focussed narrative of Haitian art's beginnings, noting that it was "in his 1948 book *Renaissance in Haiti*" that the "frequently recounted tale" of Haiti's entrance into the international art scene was "first presented at length".[118] Long also notes that despite significant objections and published ripostes to Rodman's account of this early period (most notably by Philippe Thoby-Marcelin and Michel-Philippe Lerebours) "what the art world outside Haiti understands of Haitian art derives largely from Rodman's account".[119]

Indeed perceptions of Rodman as a, if not the, preeminent authority on Haitian art have been expressed in numerous publications since he began to write on the subject. Sometimes these endorsements have been expressed by others, but at times they have also been voiced by Rodman himself. A case in point is the short publication simply titled *Haitian Art* that accompanied an exhibition at the Americana Hotel in New York City in 1973. Rodman's was the only essay in this brief catalogue and his text aimed to provide "'A Background Note for Newcomers'" which it did by detailing much of his own involvement in shaping infrastructure and discourse around "Haitian "primitive" painting", even noting himself "I joined Peters in 1945, and began to write the first account of this growing congregation of popular painters".[120] Rodman was then billed in this catalogue as, "the world's leading authority on Haitian Art".[121] Similarly a newspaper clipping from May 1963, held within Alfred Barr's Papers, features an extended article focused on Rodman and his wide-ranging art collection as he became appointed a member of New Jersey's Art Commission. In the one very small section, which opens by commenting on his "ultra

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[118] James, 'Re-Worlding', pp.148-9; R.J. Long, 'Artists of Haiti: Reflections on a Narrative' in S. Lewis (ed.) *Caribbean Visions: Contemporary Painting and Sculpture* (Alexandria, VA: Art Services International, 1995) pp.65-70

[119] Both Long, and James (following Long), reference a 1959 text by Michel-Philippe Lerebours titled *Treatise on Haitian Art* (1959) however no such text seems to exist and instead Lerebours treatise on Haitian Art was: *Haiti et ses Peintures: de 1804 à 1980: Souffrances & Espoirs d'un Peuple* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimeur II, 1989): Long, 'Artists of Haiti', p.65; James, 'Re-Worlding', p.148

[120] S. Rodman, *Haitian Art* (New York: Streetworkers Inc., 1973) n.p

[121] Ibid.

colorful Haitian collection", Rodman is once again given a central role within the history of Haitian art and writing on it, both through his own comments and those of the article's author. It stated, "[i]n the early 40's Rodman developed a native art drive in what he termed "The Black Republic," which is also the title to one of his later books, and he said, the only authoritative one on that country".[122]

The tales of Haitian art popularised through the writings of Selden Rodman have accumulated further authority through time as their subjectivity has been forgotten. Long's incisive comments sought to disrupt that accumulation of authority through anonymity by pushing the authorship of Rodman to the surface again. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot asserted in his seminal work on power and the production of history in the Haitian context, "[t]he ultimate mark of power may be its invisibility; the ultimate challenge the exposition of its roots".[123] However Long's observation was only a brief mention made within a contextual essay for a Caribbean-wide exhibition in the mid-1990s and does not seem to have been picked up and explored in any detail since. Yet in order to challenge the authority of Rodman's accounts with any longevity the subjective aspects to and contexts for these writings need to be examined in much more detail. Above I have begun to do this by looking at Rodman's wider occupations, contacts and influences in the arts, but also of significance were his own early experiences of visiting Haiti, as well as his other published and unpublished writings inspired by Haiti, most notably: his travelogue *Haiti: The Black Republic* (1954); his published and unpublished plays; and his personal diaries.

Rodman's diaries show that he first visited Haiti "for a much-needed vacation" in February 1941. At this point the U.S. had yet to enter World War Two but Rodman's diaries, either side of this short visit (lasting somewhere between a week and two and a half weeks), are filled with daily updates about bombings and the movement of armies across Europe. Breaking this bleak account up on the 28th February he writes of "our first glimpse of this wonderful paradoxical country".[124] Yet despite the newness of the environment in Haiti and his acknowledged inability to fully understand it he makes swift judgments about the

[122] 'New Art Comsr. Boasts Enviable Collection' accessed in AHB, MOMA [AAA, SI, mf.2187.952-953]
[123] Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, p.xix
[124] S. Rodman Diary Entry, 28 February 1941, Journals 1938-2000, MS.871, 2.2.1, p.245, SRP, YUL

people he meets and the places he goes to. For example on encountering "a destitute family" who refuse to let him take a photograph of "its three-year-old daughter" because they say "its dress is too dirty" he romanticises the situation somewhat as a declaration of sovereignty "spoken with infinite dignity and decision".[125] Without any reflection on his own position in light of that comment he then decides this family's assertion demonstrates, "the pride that Toussaint and Christophe gave them is still theirs". Yet despite his commendation of their attitude he ultimately devalues and dismisses it by concluding, "but it is a tragic country".[126]

Much like the centuries of Eurocentric travel writing that preceded his account Rodman weaves a contradictory picture of Haiti, drawing together an impulse to document and create an authoritative account of his many encounters, with an enduring sense of romanticised nostalgia. The latter is particularly expressed with reference to a picturesque portrayal of Haiti's revolutionary history, an idealised depiction of "peasant" life as simple and noble, and representation of the landscape as an untouched paradise removed in time and space from contemporary horrors. Rodman seems here to be immersing himself in a temporary antimodernist imaginary akin to the escapist and self-illusory attempts at removal from modernity that Elizabeth Childs describes Gauguin unsuccessfully engineering when moving to Tahiti in the late nineteenth century.[127]

Rodman, for instance, notes at some length a conversation he had in March 1941 with Dantès Bellegarde, a Haitian historian and diplomat. Here Bellegarde informs him of the urgency of Haiti's contemporary economic difficulties which had been exacerbated by the war, "[o]ur sugar went to England and our coffee to France. The war has cut off both markets" Yet in a diary entry about a week later, after reading the New York newspapers, Rodman speaks of an update about the war as though he had been completely removed from it in Haiti, by remarking: "A batch of papers from New York brings the outside world into our horizon again with an ugly jolt. German troops have entered Bulgaria and the

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[125] S. Rodman Diary Entry, 28 February 1941, Journals 1938-2000, MS.871, 2.2.1, p.245, SRP, YUL
[126] Ibid.
[127] E.C. Childs, 'The Colonial Lens: Gauguin, Primitivism, and Photography in the Fin de Siècle' in L. Jessup (ed.) *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001) pp.50-70

English have left".[128] This fantasy of Haiti as removed in time and space from the west proves to be a two-edged sword that allows Rodman to both fetishise it, as above, but also to patronise and deride it as another nearby comment in his journal demonstrates. He explains: "[t]oday it is permitted – and permissible – to joke a bit at Haiti's backwardness … The people prefer to work little for a few bananas … than sacrifice the siesta and the dance for the strenuous life that leads to tractors and plumbing and Picasso and war". Though here again Haiti is being distanced from the realities of war this now appears to be proof of the country's deficiency and undeveloped state. Indeed the examples of engineering, infrastructure and high art, which Rodman suggests are lacking in Haiti, all seem to epitomise an idea of modern civilization for him.

Rodman's candidly expressed opinions seem to betray an unquestioning sense of the correctness of his own perspective and behaviour. Indeed his confidence in his own abilities to explain various situations he encounters in relation to Haiti's history or to successfully analyse contemporary Haitian society reveals the level of understanding Rodman felt he had of culture in Haiti even though he had only been there for a matter of days and weeks. Though Rodman barely mentions it, this familiarity he clearly feels with Haiti was indicative of a wider sense of knowing paternalism towards Haiti in U.S. society at that time, which had resulted from intensified contact with the country through the U.S. occupation. As Mary Renda has richly demonstrated, during the occupation popular culture in the U.S. began to be drenched with fantastical images of Haiti, and in its aftermath this phantasmagoria continued to mutate and populate new spaces within the collective U.S. imagination. She notes for example that the 1920 premiere of Eugene O'Neill's play *The Emperor Jones* was "the first major artistic translation of the U.S. occupation of Haiti in the United States". Following this, Renda highlights, images of black kings and emperors became a lucrative commodity appearing in everything from scenic wallpaper to adverts for cruises, while in the 1930s Haiti became the natural choice of exotic backdrop for the first feature length zombie film.[129] From the late 20s through the 30s a spate of opportunistically minded Marines, U.S. officials, journalists and novelists cashed in on this craze by creating fantastical memoirs and fictions based in Haiti that both fed and fuelled

[128] S. Rodman Diary Entry, 4 March 1941, Journals 1938-2000, MS.871, 2.2.1, p.251, SRP, YUL
[129] Renda, *Taking Haiti*, pp.185, 198-223

the demand for lurid and titillating depictions of the small island nation. Captain John Houston Craige, for example, produced two sensationally titled memoirs, *Black Bagdad* (1933) and *Cannibal Cousins* (1934). Sgt. Faustin Wirkus engaged the journalist Taney Dudley to create the far-fetched tale of his time in Haiti, *The White King of La Gonave* (1931). Lastly, novelist-journalist John W. Vandercook "introduced [Henry] Christophe to thousands of American readers, building on and popularising another version of the Emperor Jones" in his 'biography' *Black Majesty: The Life of Henri Christophe, King of Haiti* (1928).[130]

It is not surprising then to see that Rodman finds Haiti irresistibly attractive, declaring only a few days after arriving, "this country and its history are already biting a deep plateau in my imagination".[131] The proof of this statement's sincerity is evidenced by the publication in 1942 of Rodman's play, *The Revolutionists: A Tragedy in Three Acts,* which takes as its subject the Haitian revolution.[132] However, also deeply implicated by this play's swift materialisation and its strong resemblance to previous imaginings of Haiti in U.S. popular culture, was the, perhaps latent but clearly potent position that Haiti had already occupied in Rodman's imagination. Indeed Rodman himself admits in a note at the end of this publication that "no original documents were consulted in the preparation of this play" and that instead he had consulted a number of retellings of this history published in English by twentieth century authors from somewhat diverse perspectives. These include C.L.R. James' *The Black Jacobins* (1938) and Lothrop Stoddard's *The French Revolution in San Domingo* (1914), whose dissimilarity he acknowledges by saying, "[o]ne is by a radical Negro. The other is by a believer in White supremacy". He then goes on to mention John W. Vandercook's *Black Majesty* (1928) as "by far the best account of the rise and reign of Henry Christophe".[133] Clearly also, in his choice of literary form and in various aspects of the story he tells he had much to owe Eugene O'Neill. For example, Rodman ends this tale with Henri Christophe's death by means of a silver bullet, the legend that apparently first

[130] Renda, *Taking Haiti*, pp.3-5, 214-17
[131] S. Rodman Diary Entry, 1 March 1941, Journals 1938-2000, MS.871, 2.2.1, p.246, SRP, YUL
[132] Rodman, *Revolutionists*
[133] Ibid., p.195

inspired O'Neill to write *The Emperor Jones* and an episode that was played out with his protagonist Brutus Jones.[134]

However Rodman's play shared more than just a plotline and choice of form with O'Neill's. *The Emperor Jones* had at first appealed to some African-American audiences in the U.S. particularly for its critique of imperialism, its portrayal of a leading male character who was a strong and confident black man, and thereby also its promotion of black actors. Yet by the 1940s the novelty of those aspects had worn off and the fetishised primitivism, unabashed exoticism and racist perceptions embedded in the play soured African-American audience reception. Renda points to a particularly notable episode recalled by Langston Hughes in which a Harlem audience heckled Jules Bledsoe, playing the title character, so thoroughly "that he resorted to lecturing them – in the middle of his performance – on 'manners in the theater'. To his dismay, the audience continued to 'howl with laughter'".[135] This irreverent reception was paralleled not only by the audience but also the cast when Rodman was sent by the U.S. State Department "as a Good Neighbor gesture" to attend the opening of his play *The Revolutionists,* which was staged in Port-au-Prince in January 1943.

After his return he wrote glowingly of the enthusiastic reception that greeted him and the general excitement in Port-au-Prince over the premiere of his play. However he recorded in his journal various reactions he saw to be quite significantly out of line with his intent. For example, he noted with surprise that, "[t]hey laughed rapaciously at Christophe's charge that the Haitians would always be lazy".[136] Nevertheless he assessed the production to be "…a diplomatic success and a personal triumph, though" he continued, "it lasted four and a quarter hours".[137] Expanding to explain the drawn out performance time Rodman noted a recurrent pattern of indifference among the cast that resulted in an apparently farcical enactment of his play, though Rodman did not quite seem to comprehend the apathy or resulting comic effect. First of all, for instance, he noted:

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[134] Rodman, *Revolutionists*, p.192; Renda, *Taking Haiti*, pp.197-211
[135] L. Hughes, *The Big Sea: An Autobiography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963) pp.258-9
[136] S. Rodman Diary Entry 15 January 1943, Journals 1938-2000, 2.2.1, p.376, SRP, YUL
[137] Ibid., p.368

> The slaves who appeared effectively at the end of I; never came back in III, iii and as a result Christophe's body remained on the stage; it seems they went out for a drink with their pay and never returned.[138]

Rodman further asserted, "… finding the cast after each intermission was also a 'herculean task'". However we find it was not just peripheral cast members who seemed little impressed with the play they were performing:

> [the actor playing] Christophe was discovered a block away smoking a cigar at one point and returned to the stage leisurely still blowing out puffs of it.[139]

Despite his quite clear disconnection from the Haitian audience at the production of his play Rodman still feels he deeply understands Haiti and writes an exuberant romanticised elegy to his time there at the close of this journal entry:

> Haiti does not exist in Time – it is timeless. The Great Depression of 1933, the Fall of France, … Pearl Harbor seem ages away. Christophe was only yesterday … the languor and fear of colonial San Domingue the day before. Haiti in 1941 was the same as Haiti in 1943, and though one must hope with one's intellect and conscious mind that "conditions will improve" one knows that in 1949 and 1959 it will be exactly the same – slow and dirty and inefficient – and no doubt corrupt, but redeemed by a tender grace and beauty and by a people whose spirit partakes of that dignity and mercy and gentleness in associate with God.[140]

Repeated here we see that sentimentalised fantasy of Haiti as distanced from the harsh realities of the contemporary era, and though disdained for its 'backward' aspects, is idealised through the noble character of its people. Yet more importantly what is very clearly conveyed in this short paragraph is the role Haiti is playing within Rodman's mind. It remains, as it has been from the start for Rodman, an escape. For him, Haiti has signified an escape from economic depression in the U.S. and from the violence and horror of World War Two. Indeed, even the historical "fear of colonial San Domingue", or what he perceives as the slowness and inefficiency of contemporary Haiti, prove a comfort to him in the face of the disconcerting breakdown of Europe and encroachment of war into the U.S. through

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[138] S. Rodman Diary Entry 15 January 1943, Journals 1938-2000, 2.2.1, p.374, SRP, YUL
[139] Ibid., p.374
[140] Ibid., p.376

Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. This self-reflexive aspect of Rodman's narrative, his reflections on and making sense of contemporary U.S. realities by apparently writing about Haiti, is a classic device of travel writing. Further, as Renda has pointed out, it is a particularly typical feature of U.S. writing on Haiti in the era of the occupation and its aftermath.

It is something that appears just beneath the surface throughout Rodman's later writings on Haiti and in his "complete guide" to "the black republic" he seems to unconsciously recognise this. He writes of three particular aspects of Haiti that will prove attractive to the American. Firstly the potential for white Americans to experience at a remove "their share of national guilt" about the "treatment of the Negro" at home, and through being discriminated against by Haitians, to appease it.[141] Secondly, "the opportunities it still offers for exploration" and thirdly the "field day" it offers to "the efficiency-minded American, frustrated in his will to reform at home". Rodman then concludes "these aspects of Haiti's magnetism, and others less tangible, combine in a mysterious way to renew our confidence in ourselves".[142] Rodman here is portraying Haiti's many uses for U.S. citizens and holidays-makers. He presents it as a foil for their minds, or a scenic backdrop against which they can play out their sense of adventure, heroism or paternalism. Rodman is expressing a variant of that age-old attitude, which Paul Farmer articulated as "Haiti and Haitians exist to serve the powerful".[143]

Rodman's writings as a whole then typify that much broader historic symbolism attached to Haiti in the collective imagination of the United States. Yet, crucially for the historiography of Haitian art, Rodman found himself to be in an opportune position between Port-au-Prince's nascent Centre d'Art and New York's Museum of Modern Art in the mid-1940s. Situated between these two institutions, Rodman then became a central conduit through which this historic symbolism profoundly influenced new discourses, an international art market and an exhibitionary circuit around art from Haiti that shaped and continues to shape perceptions of it to the present. Rodman's initial experiences in Haiti,

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[141] Rodman, *Black Republic*, pp.xiv-xv
[142] Ibid.
[143] Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, p.51

the historic symbolism of that place as an antithesis of modernity within western thought, and images of the country pervasive in U.S. popular culture after the marine invasion in 1915, all provided context for his first interactions with contemporary Haitian art. Rodman's perception and framing of Haitian art was then contingent on his pre-formed views of Haiti and his particular fascination with its history, its people and their culture. A critical awareness of these contexts should therefore also inform our reading of Rodman's catalogue essays, reviews and promotional materials relating to Haitian art.

EXAMINING EXHIBITION OF ART AND NATION TOGETHER

In this chapter, I have explored the mid-twentieth-century era in which vocabularies, market networks and discourses surrounding Haitian art developed and converged to crystallise a limited perception of Haitian art among international audiences. I have sought to delineate multiple aspects of this process, with attention to key agents involved. I have also explored some of the prehistories and afterlives of this era. My intentions for doing so were threefold. Firstly, I sought to determine and demystify some crucial aspects of the basis for this crysallisation of ideas and discourses at a key moment in Haitian arts' histories. Secondly, I wanted to highlight the subsequent impacts of this era and its discursive formations. Then, thirdly, I sought to provide some broader historical context for the case studies to follow, with a particular emphasis on the mid-twentieth century era in which the Bicentenaire de Port-au-Prince took place. Finally I have sought to deconstruct the objectivity and authority of these accounts via detailing their authorship and influences, in order that such pervasive perceptions of Haitian art will not detract from, derange or haunt the fresh approaches to exploring Haitian art history that will now feature at the centre of this dissertation.

Yet if, as I have sought to establish at length above, historically rooted imaginaries of the Haitian nation have been so complexly and profoundly interwoven with the reception, interpretation, exhibition and commercial valuation of work by artists from Haiti since the 1940s, then it follows that any attempt to redress related art historical discourse must also address perceptions of Haitian nationhood. In other words, any attempt to successfully challenge the discursive distancing of Haitian art in time and space from the "centres" of Modernism and contemporaneity must first recognise that this is a discipline-specific

variant of a wider story of Haiti's imagined separation from western modernity since its revolutionary establishment. Sibylle Fischer likened this image of Haiti separated from the western world, which was produced in the post-revolutionary period by the imperial powers, to reactions that would prevent the spread of a dangerous disease. "A cordon sanitaire" she states, "was drawn around the island to interrupt the flow of people and ideas".[144]

To understand with any depth why Haitian art practices were so swiftly and completely perceived to be primitive when internationalised in the 1940s, there must first be an understanding of the effects of this imaginary "cordon sanitaire", which was a self-fulfilling prophecy of separation that resulted in Haiti being perceived as "in but not of the West".[145] Recognising the complex entanglement of wider historical discourses of the nation with the positioning of Haitian artists' work in art history, many authors of interpretive or critical texts focused on the work of Haitian artists have prefaced their engagements with a polemical history lesson of sorts that pushes back against narrow historical perceptions of Haiti. In recent years, for example, Donald Cosentino spends much of his introductory essay in the catalogue *Divine Revolution: The Art of Edouard Duval Carrié* (2004) with an animated retelling of the aftermath of Haitian revolutionary history, its reception and connections to Haitian art.[146] Contextual essays and reprinted extracts from older texts published in the catalogue that accompanied the exhibition *Kafou: Haiti, Art and Vodou* (2012) show that numerous authors have contextualised their interpretations of Haitian art with broader corrective discussions of Haitian history.[147] Similarly, Ute Stebich's essay 'History in Painting' in the catalogue for the exhibition *Haitian Art* (1978) shows that the importance of connections between interpretation of Haitian art practices and perceptions of Haiti have been recognised for sometime.[148]

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[144] Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, p.4
[145] C.L.R. James quoted in Wainwright, *Timed Out*, p.4
[146] D.J. Cosentino, *Divine Revolution: The Art of Edouard Duval Carrié* (Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum, 2004) pp.11-25
[147] A. Farquarson and L. Gordon (eds) *Kafou: Haiti, Art and Vodou* (Nottingham: Nottingham Contemporary, 2012)
[148] U. Stebich, 'History in Painting' in Stebich (ed.) *Haitian Art*, pp.38-41

Through the case studies that will follow in the coming chapters, instead of again retracing Haitian history back to the revolution in order to append a concern with national representation onto a research project otherwise concerned with fairly traditional group or monographic art exhibitions held in museum and gallery contexts, I will examine sites at which these connections were more direct and explicit. These three cases, as outlined in the previous chapter, focus on the displays produced to represent Haiti at two world's fairs and an art biennial. These were each international exhibition sites where concerns with representation of postcolonial nationhood and display of artworks collided. As we will see at each event art was deployed to articulate a vision of nationhood in order that perceptions of both could be altered through new representations. Following this chapter's deconstruction of the history of existing perceptions of Haitian art, I now too move on to explore what these fresh perspectives can offer. Crucially though, in another effort to undermine the authority of the 1940s-centred narrative of Haitian art's origins, I begin my series of case studies by focussing, in the first, on an event and a display of Haitian artworks staged in 1893, fifty years before the Centre d'Art opened it doors.

CHAPTER 3

THE BLACK REPUBLIC IN THE WHITE CITY: HAITI AT THE WORLD'S COLUMBIAN FAIR OF 1893

INTRODUCTION

In 1893 Chicago hosted the World's Columbian Fair (also known as the Chicago World's Fair or Exposition) at Jackson Park to celebrate, a year late, the quatercentenary of Christopher Columbus' landing in the Americas [Figure 2]. Over twenty-seven million visitors (equivalent to a quarter of the United States' population at that time) experienced the attractions on offer at the Columbian Fair's 633-acre site during the six months that the event was open.[1] Indeed, the author of Chicago's entry in the *Encyclopedia of World's Fairs and Expositions* referred to this event as "the most elaborate and extensive public exhibition produced by the United States in the nineteenth century."[2] The main area of the fairgrounds, known as the White City, contained a multitude of buildings, exhibits and attractions arranged to represent the highest achievements of human civilization and particularly the progress of the United States. Some notable features included a Palace of Fine Arts, a huge "machinery hall" dedicated to display of technological innovations, a decorative fountain depicting Columbus en route to the Americas, an artificial lagoon complete with Venetian-style gondolas, the first ever Ferris Wheel and the highest concentration of electrical lighting anywhere in the United States at that time.[3] Amidst this array of dazzling innovations and exhibtionary spectacles, designed to inspire awe and delight among fairgoers, was another first. The Columbian Exposition also hosted the first-ever freestanding national pavilion that Haiti presented at a world's fair [Figures 3 and 4].[4]

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[1] *A History of the Fair:* <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma96/wce/history.html> [accessed 8 January 2015]

[2] R. Reid Badger, 'Chicago 1893' in J.E. Findling and K.D. Pelle, *Encyclopedia of World's Fairs and Expositions* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2008), p.122

[3] S. McQuire, 'Immaterial Architectures: Urban Space and Electric Light', *Space and Culture*, 8.2 (2005) p.129

[4] For information about attractions and national participations at the World's Columbian Fair see for example: H.H. Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair* (New York: Bounty Books, 1894); B.C. Truman, *History of the World's Fair being a Complete Description of the Columbian Exposition from its Inception* (New York: Amo Press, 1976); S. Appelbaum, *The Chicago World's Fair of 1893: A Photographic Record*

Haiti was one among ninety-six nations, colonies, and principalities that took part in the World's Columbian Fair. Yet more notably it was also one of only nineteen foreign participants that erected a national pavilion with the fair's White City. This area of the fair site was so named because of the white stucco finish applied to form the grand neoclassical exterior of the event's imposing central buildings. Yet critics then and scholars since have found it to be a symbolically apt title for an event that encoded imperialist and white supremacist ideologies into its landscape, like numerous world's fairs before it.[5] At the time of the Columbian Fair the United States did not have a formal Empire to exhibit in the way that Britain had at Crystal Palace in 1851 or France had at the Exposition Universelle in 1889. Yet exoticised displays of distant lands and foreign peoples were nonetheless part of the event and the U.S. presented itself as a global power at the centre of international networks of trade and exchange.[6] Domestically, the United States was still coming to terms with the end of slavery just three decades earlier. The Chicago World's Fair therefore took place in the era Jim Crow Laws in the South and de facto racial segregation and disenfranchisement across much of the North. As a result displays representing the United States' black citizens were widely excluded.

This domestic circumstance makes the Haitian presence at Chicago's fair seem all the more remarkable. How was it that Haiti came to be represented at a world's fair in the United States when black citizens of the U.S. were simultaneously marginalised? and how, within the context of a fair underpinned by imperialist and white supremacist ideologies, was Haiti represented? The most recent study to attempt to answer these questions, and the only one to do so at length, is Karen Salt's doctoral thesis *The Haitian Question*.[7] Salt highlights the importance of understanding Haiti's presence on the fairgrounds in the

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(New York: Dover Publications, 1980); *Gems of the World's Fair: Over Two Hundred Photographic Views* (Springfield, OH: Mast, Crowell & Kirkpatrick, 1893)

[5] See for example: C. M. Hinsley, 'The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893' in I. Karp and S.D. Lavine (eds) *Exhibiting Cultures* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991) pp.344-365; R.W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984); T. Mitchell, 'Orientalism and Exhibitionary Order' in D. Preziosi and C.J. Farago (eds) *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum* (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2004) pp.442-460

[6] Before the end of the nineteenth century the U.S. would have an empire through the annexation of Hawaii and the Treaty of Paris.

[7] K. Salt, 'The Haitian Question' (Purdue University: unpublished phd thesis, 2011)

context of emergent Pan-American trading networks. Yet she also argues that Haiti's representation within the White City should be understood with reference to a racial analytical framework. Haiti's presence, she asserts, was predicated upon "a very particular racial requirement". In order to comply with the expectations and ideologies on display at the Columbian Fair, Salt contends that Haiti was represented as "a (pseudo) white nation", "rhetorically cleansed of its blackness".[8] She makes this argument by claiming, for example, that various architectural features of the building's exterior can be identified as "visual cues" of whiteness.[9]

In contrast, prior to Salt's thesis, the leading interpretations of Haiti's national pavilion presumptively claimed that it challenged, rather than conformed to, the Columbian Fair's racist and imperialist frameworks by being aligned in diasporan solidarity with the United States' marginalized black citizens.[10] The key evidence used in such analyses has been the Haitian government's decision to appoint Frederick Douglass as co-commissioner of their national pavilion. In this role, Douglass became one of the highest-ranking African-American officials on the fairgrounds and used his position to promote the cause for African-American civil rights in the United States in two key ways.[11] Firstly he provided a platform upon which other black citizens of the U.S. could be politically active. Then secondly, in speeches he gave at the time of the fair, Douglass employed a defiant Pan-Africanist rhetoric. In his oratory Douglass reminded listeners of, what Sibylle Fisher has termed, the "contestatory potential" of Haiti: its revolutionary, anti-slavery "struggle" for independence and its radical symbolic significance as a representative of racial blackness in an era of imperialism predicated on white supremacy.[12]

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[8] Salt, 'Haitian Question', pp.89, 121-123

[9] Ibid, p.121

[10] See for example: B.J. Ballard, 'African-American Protest and the Role of the Haitian Pavilion at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair' in J. C. Trotman (ed.) *Multiculturalism Roots and Realities* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002) pp.108-124; R. Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines: The Haytian Pavilion and the Narrative of History' in M.A. Sourieau and K. M. Balutansky (eds) *Ecrire en pays assiégé Haiti – Writing Under Siege* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004) pp.39-59

[11] See for example: R.W. Rydell, 'A Cultural Frankenstein? The Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893' in N. Harris et al. (eds) *Grand Illusions: Chicago's World's Fair of 1893* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Historical Society, 1993) pp.142-169; Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines', pp.39-59

[12] See for example: F. Douglass, 'Lecture on Haiti' (speech given at Quinn Chapel, Chicago, 2 January 1893) reproduced at *Bob Corbett: Haiti 1844-1915* <http://www2.webster.edu/~corbetre/haiti/history/1844-1915/douglass.htm> [accessed 1 May

Scholars preceding Salt attached a substantial degree of authority to Douglass' words and actions, conflating his personal perspectives and agendas with the aims and objectives of Haiti's government.[13] Salt's thesis is therefore significant because it departs from this presumptive alignment of the agendas and objectives of Haitian politicians with those of black activists in the United States. However, though her reading does not revolve around the actions and oration of Frederick Douglass, Salt's argument does not completely break with the line of thought that defined these Douglass-centred interpretations. Indeed her reading of the Haitian pavilion's significance, like these earlier interpretations, is still defined by race. She moves away from an assumption that Haiti represented a challenging blackness at the Columbian Fair, only to assert that it instead expressed a compliant whiteness.

Diverging from these racially-defined perspectives, the below chapter will argue that Haiti's pavilion can be best understood through the lens of cultural, rather than racial, conformity. It will centre on a close reading of the "object lesson" (the display of selected objects systematically arranged to convey a certain meaning) housed inside the Haitian pavilion [Figure 5].[14] Like Salt, I will argue that Haiti's pavilion was not a project that sought to assert the "contestatory potential" of Haiti, as there is little evidence to suggest that Douglass' defiant and challenging Pan-Africanist sentiments were conveyed by the displays housed inside the Haitian pavilion. Indeed examining Haiti's "object lesson", which has received little critical attention to date, provides a variety of new perspectives from which we can seek to reassess the Haitian pavilion's significance.[15] For example, the key agents involved in shaping this "object lesson" were men drawn from Haiti's social and political

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2012]; S. Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004) p.37

[13] See for example: Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines', p.40; Ballard, 'African-American Protest', p.120

[14] This concept of the "object lesson" is taken from primary source materials, the significance of which will be explored below. See for example: 'The Great Fair' *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated*, 1.6 (July 1891) p.2; 'The World's Progress as Shown at the Exposition' *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated*, 3.12 (February 1894) p.337: Broadside supplements of *Chicago Daily Tribune*: both held within the UL Periodicals in S.C. (Campbell's) Rare Books Collection, The Huntington Library, (hereafter RBC, HL) San Marino, CA, 246954

[15] To date most attention has been paid to this internal exhibition or "object lesson" in: Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines', pp.39-59

elites, including privileged diasporans. Examining the Haitian pavilion's interior display will therefore reveal how important class and gender dynamics were to the envisioning of Haiti for the Columbian Fair.

Haiti's "object lesson" also had its counterparts among the displays of many other foreign nations at the fair including a strong contingent of Latin American Republics. (These were Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Venezuela.)[16] In comparatively exploring these displays, it soon becomes clear, as Salt has suggested, that Haiti's national presence can be better understood within the context of nascent Pan-American trading relationships. Yet in surveying Haiti's "object lesson" we find that there was much more on display than tradable commodities. Over sixty artworks and craftworks were displayed within the Haitian pavilion: including a marble sculpture, a portrait bust, a painted portrait, "crayon" landscapes and a variety of embroideries and other works in textiles.[17] Analysis of the strategic selection of these artworks, arranged to convey a variety of messages about Haitian society, economy, national history and culture, will be a particular focus of the below chapter.

To date critical analyses of the visual arts on display at the World's Columbian Fair have mostly focussed on examination of architecture, while those that reach beyond this tend to examine displays housed in the Palace of Fine Arts.[18] Yet many nations presented exhibitions of artwork elsewhere on the fairgrounds. This bias towards architectural analysis is reflected across the historiography of world's fairs.[19] Studies that explore the art

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[16] Grouping these six nations as Latin American republics is a designation taken from primary sources. See for example: M.P. Handy, *The Official Directory of the World's Columbian Exposition, May 1st to October 30th, 1893: A Reference Book of Exhibitors and Exhibits …* (Chicago, IL: W. B. Conkey Company, 1893) pp.3, 30, 154-5; Bancroft, *Book of the Fair*, p.912

[17] R. Gentil and H. Chauvet, *Haiti à l'Exposition Colombienne de Chicago: Avec une Liste de ses Produits Exposés et des Notices de M. Dulciné Jean-Louis* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie Vve J. Chenet, 1893), pp.69, 79, 84-5, 97: *Digital Library of the Caribbean* <http://www.dloc.com/AA00007509/00001?search=haiti+=l%27exposition> [accessed 5 December 2014]

[18] See for example: R. Muccigrosso, *Celebrating the New World: Chicago's Columbian Exposition of 1893* (Chicago, IL: I.R. Dee, 1993); D. Dillon, '"The Fair as Spectacle": American Art and Culture at the 1893 World's Fair (Yale University: unpublished phd thesis, 1994)

[19] See for example: P. Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Exposition Universelles, Great Exhibitions, and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); J. Chin Davidson,

displays of particular nations across time are rare, and those that explore the art displays of Caribbean and Latin American nations are more rare still, despite the revealing opportunities they offer to examine how national commissions represented their nation's history and culture.[20] Therefore a close examination of the artworks contained within Haiti's "object lesson" at the World's Columbian Exposition provides a valuable chance to better understand how Caribbean and Latin American nations began to negotiate their presence within the imperialist world order on display at late-nineteenth-century world's fairs. Finally, by the same token, this case also opens up a space to reconsider the phenomena of grand exhibitionary spectacles of the late nineteenth century as more than a platform for the display of empire and imperial power.

"OBJECT LESSONS" AND "OTHERS" AT THE WORLD'S COLUMBIAN FAIR

On the 2nd January 1893, on the occasion of the Haitian building's dedication at the World's Columbian Exposition, Director-General of the Fair, Colonel George R. Davis, announced: "[w]ith a sagacity that is full of promise for the future, Hayti is preparing to give an object lesson".[21] The Haitian state, like all foreign and domestic governing bodies, commercial organisations, interest groups, and others who were invited and chose to put together an exhibit for this event, displayed a variety of objects which they felt would best portray their brand or identity, their interests and their future prospects on the cusp of the twentieth century. In connection with these displays the phrase "object lesson" was peppered throughout publications produced to advertise, document and commemorate the fair.[22] Yet what was it about the arrangement of objects in the Haitian pavilion and elsewhere at the fair that made them into a "lesson"?

'The Global Art Fair and the Dialectical Image' *Third Text*, 24:6, pp.719-734; *A Treasury of World's Fair Art and Architecture* <http://digital.lib.umd.edu/worldsfairs> [accessed 20 July 2015]

[20] The only study I have found for the Columbian fair is in: O.U. Herrera, *Toward the Preservation of a Heritage: Latin American and Latino Art in the Midwestern United States* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2008) pp.6-9

[21] 'For Hayti's Exhibit: The Pavilion at Jackson Park is formally accepted' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3 January 1893, p.11

[22] See for example: Handy, *Official Directory*, pp.122, 155, 181, 204, 391, 647; Bancroft, *Book of the Fair*, pp.101, 120, 162, 291, 296, 406, 461, 503, 512, 545; 'World's Progress' *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated*, p.337, RBC, HL, 246954

Contemporaries of the fair seemed to perceive these displays as innovative educational tools that demonstrated the veracity of ideas. Resembling the thoughts of such onlookers, the enthusiastic author of an article published in the *World's Columbian Fair Illustrated* (a serial produced between 1891 and 1894) almost two years before the fair was opened, declared:

> Nothing is near so educating as object lessons … objects are emphatically better calculated to instruct than are descriptions. Therefore the World's Fair … will be a good and universal school.[23]

To conclude this zealous essay the author asserted:

> The Fair … will be an epoch in the history of the general advancement of civilization and improvement. … The great thinkers of this earth may … express their thoughts orally and otherwise, but the OBJECT LESSON – the very thing itself, or its duplicate – is what is needed, and by it only will the greatest of World's Fairs serve as a grand medium … [of] modern civilization and enlightenment.[24]

The suggestion, though certainly excessively argued here, that the exhibition of a selection of objects would have educational value for a mass audience seems self-evident now in an age when public and private museums function as sites of information, entertainment and leisure for mass international audiences. Yet Henrietta Lidchi reminds us that "until the nineteenth century … objects were collected in a spasmodic and fortuitous way, acquisitions whose value lay in their novelty or 'curiosity'" rather than their didactic potential.[25] This valuation of the curious, of oddities and exotica displayed for titillation, as we will see below, was not absent from late nineteenth-century world's fairs and found notable expression in zoological and ethnographic displays of non-Western cultures and peoples. Yet for the first time in this era, the educational and communicative potential of an array of systematically arranged objects was being recognised. This was reflected in the

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[23] 'Great Fair' *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated*, p.2
[24] Ibid., p.2
[25] H. Lidchi, 'The Poetics and Politics of Exhibiting other cultures' in S. Hall (ed.) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage in assoc. with Open University, 1997) p.161

abundant displays staged at world's fairs that were, with varying degrees of control and success, strategically arranged to convey modernity's metanarratives to mass audiences.

Further, as a variety of scholars have demonstrated in studying world's fairs of this era, including the Columbian edition, it was not only the arrangement of objects that conveyed abstract ideas and ideologies or "lessons" at these events. Curtis Hinsley, Timothy Mitchell and Robert Rydell, for example, have all suggested that imperialist ideologies directed the design and organisation of these events' landscapes. This includes the arrangement of buildings, concessions, attractions, architecture, exterior artworks and more to create thoroughfares and vistas within an immersive cityscape. Each of these scholars, from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, suggests that such elements of these events were organised in relation to each other to "evoke some larger meaning such as History or Empire or Progress".[26] In a similar vein sociologist Tony Bennett has noted the display of "new technologies of vision" (including dioramas and panoramas) at world's fairs in his work on the exhibitionary complex.[27] Drawing similar conclusions to those referenced above, Bennett suggests these "technologies of vision" were deployed to convey the metanarratives of "new disciplines (history, biology, art history, anthropology) and their discursive formations (the past, evolution, aesthetics, man)".[28] These metanarratives provided contextual framing for the discontinuous object lessons on display across the landscape of individual world's fairs and so helped to sustain the larger visions, such as nationalism, imperialism or capitalism, that these events were staged to reify.

At the Columbian Fair, Bennett's "technologies of vision" can be identified with many of the materials provided by, and attractions organised by, U.S. fair authorities. This includes everything from souvenir maps with their bird's-eye view of the fairgrounds, to the artificial representation of scenes from around the world through attractions such as a diorama of the Kilauea Volcano of Hawaii, or Cairo Street: an imaginary Egyptian

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[26] Hinsley and Rydell draw particularly on source materials relating to the display of anthropological and ethnographic theories at fairs in the United States. Mitchell meanwhile uses late-nineteenth-century Arabic, and particularly Egyptian, accounts of visiting world's fairs, expositions and congresses in Europe. See for example: Hinsley, 'World as Marketplace', pp.344-365; Rydell, *All the World*; Mitchell, 'Orientalism', p.447

[27] T. Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex' *New Formations,* 4 (Spring 1988)*,* p.82

[28] Ibid.*,* p.73

thoroughfare [Figures 6 and 7]. Yet as I will demonstrate below in my discussion of the role of artworks within Haiti's pavilion at the Columbian Fair, foreign commissioning bodies also sought to employ these "technologies of vision" to convey their own nationalist narratives.

Bennett also highlighted the creation of vantage points, or "sites of sight", within the landscape of fin-de-siècle international exhibitions. He describes these as vantage points from which viewers could overlook ordered landscapes and feel a sense of complicity in the nationalist or imperialist worldviews on display. At the Columbian Fair `this concept applies to numerous viewing platforms around the fair-site: on top of central buildings, during a gondola ride on one of the fairground's artificial lakes, from a "captive" hot air balloon, or through a ride on the world's first Ferris Wheel [Figure 8]. Yet what kind of exhibits and arrangements did these "sites for sight" overlook at the Columbian Fair? and where did Haiti's "object lesson" feature within this landscape?

Existing historiography of this event often begins, as noted above, by highlighting a neat divide in the organisation of the fairgrounds between the carefully regulated display of high culture, industry and technological progress within the White City and the entertaining exotica of the Midway Plaisance. "Sites for sight" were particularly concentrated on the Midway. This area extended as a single avenue from the west of the White City, and was lined on both sides with concessionary displays of vast panoramas, simulated architecture of distant lands and novel amusements (including the Ferris Wheel and captive hot air balloon). In his early work on this subject historian Robert Rydell argued that the Midway's concessions were systematically ordered to convey pseudo-scientific theories of race to visitors in the form of an ethnological lesson.[29] Yet not only objects and architecture were arranged to convey such "lessons"; living displays of objectified people were also ordered and positioned to convey pseudo-scientific notions of racial alterity and cultural inferiority.[30] Among these were concessions that claimed to present living displays of Egyptian, Chinese, Indian, Javanese, Turkish and Dahomean people for curious fairgoers. Rydell argues that the most westernised nations were placed closest to the White City, and

[29] Rydell, *All the World*, p.236
[30] Timothy Mitchell refers to "a diversity of mechanisms" employed at world's fairs to emphasise the "objectness" of displays: T. Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley, CA; London: University of California Press, 1988) p.6

those societies considered least "civilized" placed furthest away to spatially articulate a hierarchy of peoples and cultures.[31] To support this James Gilbert points out that F.W. Putnam, famed American anthropologist and then curator of Harvard's Peabody Museum, was responsible for mapping out original plans for the placement of concessions along the Midway. He therefore agrees that "Putnam originally hoped to demonstrate evolutionary movement of cultures and civilizations toward the ideals of Western (and American) society" through this area of the fairgrounds (though Gilbert goes onto suggest that as construction began commercial considerations overcame Putnam's theoretical imperatives resulting in a much more jumbled display of exotica).[32]

Such displays of objectified people, whether meticulously ordered or not, certainly communicated imperialist ideologies to gathered audiences. Responses to the "Dahomean Village" situated at the end of the Midway Plaisance are exemplary of this [Figure 9]. Rydell reveals that this display was under the control of Xavier Pené, a French explorer and labour contractor who presented a group of over sixty "Dahomeyan" men and women (though these "performers" were actually recruited "from Senegal to Congo") in a fenced compound that also contained their meager pseudo-authentic lodgings [Figures 10 and 11].[33] Bancroft's *Book of the Fair* extensively described this exhibition site and then sketched an image of those displayed within it:

> Here is the strangest sight among all the spectacular wonders of the plaisance. … Dahomeans, all lean and lank, and all supremely hideous. They wear nose and earrings of metal, and as little clothing as decency permits … brandishing war-clubs and grinning as only Dahomeans can grin … [they swing] weapons as though nothing would delight them more than to kill and destroy. It is in truth a barbaric spectacle.[34]

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[31] Rydell, *All the World*, p.236

[32] J.B. Gilbert, *Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991) p.109

[33] Considering their remuneration negligible and their freedom of movement significantly restricted one contemporary reporter asserted, "the Dahomeyans were practically slaves. They got nothing but their board". Yet there limitations were not imposed for want of commercial success as the Report of the Columbian Fair's Board of Directors noted, the "Dahomean Village grossed $113,152.50". Rydell, 'Cultural Frankenstein', p.162; Ballard, 'African-American Protest', pp.113-4

[34] Bancroft, *Book of the Fair*, pp.877-8

This demeaning display of West African performers and the virulently racist reading of their objectified bodies, costume and performance by fair-going contemporaries shows the conveyance of imperialist and white supremacist ideologies in practice.[35] Yet for my study this case is notable for more than its exemplary demonstration of the workings of an "object lesson". This denigrating depiction of Dahomeans at the Columbian Fair and in ephemera associated with it strongly resembles a portrayal of Haitian people and culture printed in a Chicago newspaper the month that the fair commenced (and one month before the Haitian pavilion's interior display was opened).

On the 21st May 1893 the *Chicago Daily Tribune* published a long piece of 'journalistic' travel writing, unrelated in content to the fair, entitled 'Back to Savagery'.[36] The piece reported no particular news but contained a mish-mash of fantastical stories akin to the spate of excessive Haitian travelogues that would flood the U.S. market following the 1915-34 Marine Occupation. The only fact-based material presented was a much embellished account of a Vodou-related crime: the often cited 'Congo Pelle' or 'Bizoton' case of child abuse and murder committed thirty years earlier, in 1863, and duly prosecuted through the Haitian legal system under President Geffrard.[37]

The lurid tone of the article was established from the outset by the image of a clenched fist holding a dagger aside a plethora of sensationalist sub-headings, beginning with, "Voudoo

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[35] See also two editions of *Puck*, America's first comic magazine. *Puck* had its own building within the White City that also singled out the Dahomeans for especially virulent attacks. The first presents five images alongside a rhyming "tale … of a Dahomey Chief" living on the fairgrounds who sets out to steal an Orangutan he mistakes for a chicken [Figure 12]. This cartoon not only suggested the Dahomeans were thieves who lacked intelligence, but also asserted racist ideologies by implying likeness between the Dahomey Chief and Orangutan. The second depiction presents one image of a grass-skirted, open-mouthed native below a sign stating "Cannibal Exhibit" and was accompanied by the caption "An Opening on the Plaisance: 'Step right in Ladies and Gentlemen!'" [Figure 13]. Though the Dahomean exhibit is not referred to directly, this image resembled billboards hanging outside the Dahomean concession, in which "Dahomeyan Amazons" were shown holding decapitated heads [Figure 14]. 'He Was No Chicken' *World's Fair Puck*, 6 (12 June 1893) n.p., Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress; 'An Opening on the Plaisance' *World's Fair Puck*, 23 (9 October 1893) n.p., Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

[36] 'Back to Savagery' *Chicago Daily Tribune,* 21 May 1893, p.33

[37] For an overview of representations of the Bizoton case see, for example: M. Dash, 'The Trial that Gave Vodou a Bad Name' *Smithsonian.com*, 29 May 2013 <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-trial-that-gave-vodou-a-bad-name-83801276/?no-ist> [accessed 10 November 2014]; M. Smith, *Liberty, Fraternity, Exile: Haiti and Jamaica After Emancipation* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014) pp.106-108

Worship Fast Becoming Common in Hayti" and continuing with "Bloody and Barbaric Rites Practiced by Devotees"; "Human Beings Sacrificed"; "Authorities Intimidated by Fear of Assassination"; and "New Evidences of Cannibalism".[38] The main-body text opened with an accusatory association that Haiti was "slowly dropping backward into a state of semi-African barbarity". This intended racial slur through association with Africa was repeated throughout and significantly, in light of the contemporary representation of Dahomeans at the Chicago World's Fair, was in one place directly made through Dahomey:

> Despite every civilizing element with which they have been brought into contact the Haytian of today is more African than were his Dahomeyan forefathers …[39]

Throughout, the various rituals and beliefs described as "voodooism" were constantly derided as "disgusting", "dangerous" and "foolish" yet the author's obsessive fascination with Haitian culture could not be concealed.[40] Using anything from pseudo-scientific racial theory to outright insults and fabrications we see the frenzy of imperial lust displaced onto the desired territory and culture, and manifested as hysterical fictionalised stories for the American masses to consume. Building on a century of vilification, Vodou was described in this article as a disease rapidly "infecting" and "tainting" the country and was used in this guise to undermine Haitian sovereignty particularly through a discrediting of its political leaders.[41] Both historic and contemporary heads of state were singled out, and their ability to govern was conveniently discredited through religious association. Contemporary President, Florvil Hyppolite, features heavily here. It is stated, for example, that he:

> takes part in ["voudoo" dances], and maintains the Papalois from the national treasury as a kind of secret police or as political under-heelers.[42]

National, and African diasporic, hero Toussaint L'Ouverture was also not exempt from this political smear campaign as we are told in the final sentence of the article that he "was Archpapaloi of the ["voudoo"] order when the war of independence commenced".[43] The

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[38] 'Back to Savagery' p.33
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.

barely disguised proposition made throughout was that Haitians are irrational, superstitious, even dangerous and ultimately unable to govern themselves with any stability.

The parallels between this defamatory account of Haitian society, people and culture and the descriptions and depictions of the Dahomean exhibit at the fair are striking. In these accounts both are clearly pejoratively portrayed as exemplars of cultural and racial alterity. However, at the fair Haiti was represented through a dignified, state-curated exhibition of nationhood within the White City in the vicinity of the pavilions of New South Wales, Germany, East India and Sweden [Figure 15]. This was a sharp contrast to the exoticised, commercial display of Dahomeans by a French explorer on the Midway near an ostrich farm, a Chinese Theatre, a captive hot air balloon and a concession owned by a beer brewing company. Considering factors that contributed to the spatial organization of the Columbian Fair, and particularly the differential display of Dahomey and Haiti within its landscape, will direct the next section of this chapter.

HAITI'S POSITIONING ON THE FAIRGROUNDS

In seeking to try and understand the ideological forces that shaped the layout of world's fairs and international expositions of the late nineteenth century and defined their overarching "lessons", a number of scholars have convincingly focussed on the economic concerns and worldviews of Euro-American host nations. For example, Timothy Mitchell in analysing the ideologies underpinning Britain's Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851, which is often seen to be the prototype of such events in this era, argues:

> what was on exhibit was the conversion of the world to modern capitalist production and exchange … It was the representatives of these commercial and manufacturing interests who organised the participation of non-European nations at the exhibitions, to draw them into modern capitalism's 'vast scheme of human labour'.[44]

In a similar vein Curtis Hinsley's examination of the Columbian Fair concluded by asserting that "[this event] was in the final analysis a celebration of market flow … that the world, no

[44] Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, pp.16-17

matter how bizarre, is reducible to cash terms".[45] Ultimately Hinsley suggests that the judgment of peoples exhibited as cultural and racial others, "was levied not on aesthetic or cultural grounds but on economic ones: *Do these people know their price? Can we do reasonable business with them?* Status followed the answers to these questions".[46]

Mitchell's and Hinsley's analyses suggest those nations that showed themselves to be willing to integrate into global economic systems, structured around European and U.S. centres, were displayed in a more favourable light. In contrast, those perceived to be at the peripheries showing no interest or understanding of this market's measurement of value, or whose who were resistant to integration into such systems, were identified as irrational and so were humiliatingly displayed as such. Notably, at the time of the Columbian Fair the Fon people of Dahomey were engaged in a series of wars with the French state in an attempt to resist colonisation. This aggressive French invasion had been sparked a couple of years earlier when the Fon, under newly enthroned King Béhanzin, challenged French control of the city and port at Cotonou (an important economic centre in West Africa).[47] Therefore the demeaning display of a "Dahomey Village" replete with living "Dahomeyans" at the Columbian Fair, staged by a French explorer, can be understood as a manifestation of the unleashing of imperial power onto a people who sought to resist an international economic system that was ordered by and privileged European interests.

An article published in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* a month before 'Back to Savagery' reveals that Haiti had similarly disregarded U.S. political and economic interests when negotiating an agreement with its island neighbour the Dominican Republic. The article was printed on 24th April and titled "Hayti and Domingo at Peace". It briefly outlines the terms of a treaty recently agreed between the two often-conflicting nations following a conference at Manzanillo Bay.[48] More significantly however, the article was subtitled: "The Amicable Arrangement, However Costs Uncle Sam a Coaling Station". It stated:

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[45] Hinsley, 'World as Marketplace', p.362
[46] Ibid.
[47] J. Coradin, *Béhanzin, la Résistance Dahoméenne, ses Antécédents Historiques* (Port-au-Prince: Impr. des Antilles, 1981) pp.138-139
[48] 'Hayti and Domingo at Peace' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 24 April 1893, p.9

> Under the agreement all hope of the United States securing Samana Bay or the Mole St. Nicolas as a coaling station has vanished … the Presidents of both republics are bound not to cede either port without the consent of the other.[49]

This article is referring to the United States continued attempts to acquire either Samaná Bay in the Dominican Republic or Môle St Nicolas in Haiti as a strategically placed coaling station for its naval fleet. The U.S. also sought to secure these coastal locations in order to prevent European powers from obtaining them and extending their influence in the region through a strategically located foothold within the Windward Passage (between Haiti and Cuba) or the Mona Passage (between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico) en route to the Panama Railroad and planned Canal.[50]

In a bid to acquire these positions and greater influence over each nation's domestic governance, successive U.S. governments had employed divisive foreign policy towards Haiti and its island neighbour. During the nineteenth century this had fomented much political turmoil within and between the two. These policies ranged from genuine diplomatic negotiation to punitive duties, demonstrations of military force in the form of gunboat diplomacy and support of U.S.-friendly political insurgents.[51] The ascendency of Florvil Hyppolite, Haitian head of state at the time of the Columbian Fair, to the presidency provides a notable example of the latter. In 1888 (then General) Hyppolite was engaged in a fraught campaign to become Haiti's premier. The opposition candidate, F.D. Legitimé, had already secured European backing. Therefore in order to have a chance of succeeding, Hyppolite sought the support of the U.S. government. To achieve this, Hyppolite sent a representative (the merchant Charles Frederick Elie) to meet with U.S. envoys. Beforehand Hyppolite sent a letter to Elie giving him instruction about what "advantages" he may offer the U.S. government to encourage their support. The final point states:

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[49] 'Hayti and Domingo at Peace' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 24 April 1893, p.9
[50] Salt, 'Haitian Question', pp.38-9
[51] D. Healy, *James G. Blaine and Latin America* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2001) pp.176, 184-201; 'Expect Uncle Sam to Show Force' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 26 September 1893, p.5

> The right of a maritime station granted to the Navy: with liberty of entrance and exit, the privilege of establishing coal stations and depots without expense or formality in conformity, however, with the local police laws.[52]

Though unnamed, it seems clear that Hyppolite was using the Môle as leverage here. In doing so he succeeded in gaining U.S. support and not just in the form of rhetoric. The U.S. aided Hyppolite with supply of soldiers, arms and ammunition via the American steamer the *Haytian Republic*.[53] Yet once in administration Hyppolite was not so acquiescent to U.S. negotiations for the Môle. Throughout his presidency negotiations were conducted by a number of diplomats, including Frederick Douglass (U.S. Minister Resident and Consul General to Haiti from 1889 to 1891), but to no avail.

Therefore, in April 1893, when reports broke of the treaty between Hyppolite's government and that of Dominican President Ulises Heureaux, it seems the U.S. media portrayed (and perhaps also perceived) a politically dangerous, culturally strange and economically irrational nation-state on its doorstep. This was excessively conveyed in the article 'Back to Savagery' which not only revelled in a sensationalist account of Haitian culture, but systematically suggested that this was a nation either in need of a new leader more acquiescent to American demands or perhaps even direct American rule.[54] Ten days later the *Chicago Daily Tribune* went on to publish an article directly concerned with Haiti's presence at the fair, titled "Dilatoriness of Hayti". It sarcastically reported:

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[52] F. Hyppolite, 28 December 1888, General Correspondence, Frederick Douglass Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

[53] *Haiti: An Island Luminous:* <http://islandluminous.fiu.edu/learn.html> [accessed 10 July 2014]; J.N. Léger, *Haiti: Her History and Her Detractors* (New York and Washington, DC: Neale Publishing Co., 1907) pp.243-248 <http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Haiti:_Her_History_and_Her_Detractors/Part_I:_Chapter_XXI> [accessed 8 November 2014]

[54] This sudden change is characteristic of erratic reporting on Haiti in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* throughout the period of the Fair. In early April an article in support of Hyppolite's administration had been published, but before and after a number of articles were printed suggesting that political unrest, insurgency and revolution were imminent. See for example: 'Hyppolite Has Hayti Well in Hand' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 9 April 1893, p.9; 'Battle in Hayti' *Chicago Daily Tribune,* 26 March 1893, p.9; 'Revolution is Rife' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 17 July 1893, p.2; 'Revolution Feared in Hayti' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 7 September 1893, p.5; 'Threatened Revolution in Hayti' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 21 September 1893, p.5; 'All the Banks at Rio are Closed' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 12 November 1893, p.2

> The next foreign building to be opened, if reports may be believed, will be that of Hayti … The building was finished long ago, and the cases containing the exhibits have been lying around on the floor for perhaps weeks. But there does not seem to be energy enough to get the lids off the boxes. … The grounds in front of the building are in a neglected and dirty condition.[55]

There is an evident racist undertone to this text's referencing of traits stereotypically associated with pejorative perceptions of blackness in the U.S. such as laziness and lack of cleanliness. It therefore seems to indicate that the *Tribune*'s journalists were poised to transfer their more general defamations of Haiti onto their reporting of the Haitian presence at the Columbian Fair.

It was in this context, in June 1893, that Haiti's "object lesson" was presented at the World's Fair in Chicago. Within ephemera printed to support this display, the Haitian pavilion's commissioning body (whom I will detail below) expressed a hope that this exhibition would provide a means to respond to "all kinds of attacks from the foreign press".[56] Clearly the Haitian government had no desire to see the kind of debasing portrayal of Haiti found in 'Back to Savagery', which was circulating within U.S. popular culture at the time, amplified and exported globally through the World's Columbian Fair. Instead it was hoped this national display would show to "the eyes of the civilized world the undeniable progress [Haiti] had made".[57] Following the dedication of Haiti's pavilion on 2nd January 1893 a number of articles were published in the Haitian newspaper *Le Moniteur* about preparations for the Columbian Fair's opening.[58] On the 1st February an account of the dedication ceremony was printed. The article concluded by informing its readers of another motivation for the Haitian pavilion in Chicago: "to develop more and more the industrial and commercial resources of the country".[59]

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[55] 'Dilatoriness of Hayti' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 1 June 1893, p.9
[56] Gentil and Chauvet, *Haiti à l'Exposition*, p.11
[57] Ibid., pp.8-12
[58] See for example: 'L'Exposition de Chicago' *Le Moniteur*, 11 February 1893, pp.2-3; 'L'Exposition de Chicago' *Le Moniteur*, 15 February 1893, pp.1-2; 'World's Columbian Exposition' *Le Moniteur*, 25 February 1893, pp.1-3; 'World's Columbian Exposition' *Le Moniteur*, 1 March 1893, p.3
[59] 'Inauguration du Pavillon d'Haïti' *Le Moniteur*, 1 February 1892, pp.3-4

The Haitian government was given the chance to realise both of these aims at the fair, by being invited to curate a vision of Haiti and its economic potential for the international community. Yet why was Haiti given the opportunity to do what Dahomey was not? Historian Robert S. Levine suggests that negotiations over the Môle may have been a direct factor in encouraging the U.S. to invite the Haitian government to stage a national pavilion at the Columbian Fair.[60] This is a possibility as the invitation made to Haiti's government certainly predated Hyppolite's signing of the above mentioned treaty with Ulises Heureaux.[61] Yet, as suggested by the article printed in *Le Moniteur* on the 4th February 1893, there was a broader regional drive to increase inter-American commerce at this moment, which Haiti subscribed to. As I will demonstrate in the following section, the U.S. displayed a keen interest in developing and shaping Pan-American trading relationships in the late nineteenth century and this was a primary motivation not just for the host nation issuing invitations to Central and South American governments, but also for organising the event itself. I would therefore argue that Haitian leaders' expression of willingness to integrate into such an economic system contributed significantly to the favourable position Haiti was granted on the fairgrounds.

The opportunities that this event offered, for promoting a positive and prosperous national image to foreign governments and private investors, was not underestimated by the Haitian government. As an article published in *Le Moniteur* in early 1893 tells us, a bipartite commissioning body was put together for the purposes of representing Haiti at the Fair.[62] There was an internal commission made up of nine individuals and an external commission consisting of just two co-commissioners. The internal commission consisted of men from Haiti's socio-political elites: past and present Haitian politicians including M. Fabius Ducasse (then Secretary of State in the Department of Public Works and Agriculture), a government engineer, a lawyer, and the head of a seminary.[63] The external commission,

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[60] R.S. Levine, *Dislocating Race and Nation: Episodes in Nineteenth-Century American Literary Nationalism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008) p.232

[61] As a letter, dated 8th February 1892, accepting the United States invitation and naming Frederick Douglass as commissioner demonstrates: F. Hyppolite, 8 February 1892, General Correspondence, Frederick Douglass Papers, Manuscripts Division Library of Congress

[62] 'Exposition de Chicago et le Pavillon Haïtien' *Le Moniteur*, 4 February 1893, pp.3-4

[63] By name these were: M. Fabius Ducasse; M. Dulciné Jean Louis; M. Jean Joseph; M. Jérémie; M. Stephen Lafontant; Pére Jaouen; Me. Karnès Gourgue; M. F. Cauro; M. T. Mirambeau. Renée Larrier has a shorter list and also names "Dr. Dehoux a former director of the Ecole de Médecine":

too, was made up of ex-politicians who had experience of living and working within the United States. The first was Charles A. Preston, a Haitian who had served as the country's minister in Washington D.C. following in the footsteps of his father.[64] The second, in contrast with the rest, was not a native Haitian but was none other than famed African-American activist Frederick Douglass, who (as noted above) had recently served as the U.S. Minister Resident and Consul General to Haiti.

The external commission was tasked with representing Haiti on the fairgrounds and overseeing the day-to-day running of the pavilion for the duration of the event. Douglass played a high-profile role (which I will focus on in the final section of this chapter) in representing Haiti at public functions associated with the pavilion and the fair. Meanwhile, a contemporary newspaper explained, it was upon Preston that "most of the work of installing the exhibit has devolved".[65] The internal commission was therefore tasked with the selecting, collating and contextualising of objects to be presented within the pavilion. It follows then that focussing on analysis of the Haitian pavilion's "object lesson" provides an opportunity to explore the agency and agendas of the elite Haitians who shaped the vision of Haiti broadcast at this event. Remarkably, this vision was met with surprise and delight by many reviewers in the contemporary U.S. press, suggesting that Haiti's commission did succeed (if temporarily) in contesting negative images of their nation in U.S. popular culture.

HAITI AMONG AMERICAN REPUBLICS

On the 24th June, the day of the Haitian pavilion's opening, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* told its readers "the interest of the [Haitian] exhibit more than atones for the delays". Though the following day's much-extended article had begun with a jibe about the pavilion's lateness in opening, no criticisms were made of the display.[66] In fact this article, subtitled 'The Black Republic's Interesting Building', was very positive in its description of the

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'L'Exposition de Chicago' *Moniteur*, 4 February 1893, pp.3-4; Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines',pp.39-59

[64] Ballard, 'African-American Protest', p.117; Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines', p.45

[65] 'Hayti and Ceylon Open Up Today' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 24 June 1893, p.2

[66] Ibid.

"immense display of coffee, hides, liquors, saddles, woods …" and other commodities for export.[67]

Though widely enthusiastic, reviews printed in the *Tribune* were of short length and so only provide scant information about the Haitian pavilion's display. A much more comprehensive source in this regard is an official Haitian publication titled: *Haïti à l'Exposition Colombienne de Chicago.* This document outlines a rationale for the building and a catalogue of its contents, yet it has been only minimally mined for information about the Haitian presence at Chicago.[68] Robert Gentil and Henri Chauvet (the former was given an award by the Sorbonne for his outstanding work on the geography of Haiti and the latter was a former teacher of history and geography in Port-au-Prince) were the authors of this document. The publication begins with an introductory statement that sets out the organising committee's motivations for participation; and three further sections of text were clearly intended to contextualise the display.

The first section of this document, and by far the largest, focussed on Haiti "in economic terms". It gives an overview of the country's natural and manufactured resources (including a listing of wild birds and marine life living around Haiti's coast), its main agricultural products and industries, and its export and import networks. Comparing the latter to Saint Domingue's colonial era trade networks, the authors demonstrate potential for expansion at the outset of the twentieth century.[69] The second section of this document, about half the size of the first, was titled "Haïti au Point de Vue Moral". This contained excerpted quotations about the significance of Haitian independence from notable contemporary speakers, including the French abolitionist Victor Schoelcher, the American abolitionist Wendell Phillips and the aforementioned Frederick Douglass (whose speech at the pavilion's inauguration was excerpted here).[70] The third section of text at just five pages long gave a historical overview of Haiti's relationship with the Dominican

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[67] 'Hayti's Doors Open' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 25 June 1893, p.8
[68] Gentil and Chauvet, *Haiti à l'Exposition*; For scholarship using this source see for example: Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines', pp.39-59; C. Forsdick, 'Exhibiting Haiti: Questioning Race at the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893' in N. Bancel, T. David and D. Thomas (eds) *The Invention of "Race": Scientific and Popular Representations* (London: Routledge, 2014) pp.233-246
[69] Gentil and Chauvet, *Haiti à l'Exposition*, pp.15-38
[70] Ibid., pp.39-52

Republic.[71] Finally, the bulk of pages were then dedicated to a fourth section. This contains a dry listing of the objects displayed noting who contributed each from the Haitian government, to private organisations, to merchants and to members of Haiti's social elites.[72] Though somewhat monotonously laid out the combination and balance of objects listed in this section infers much about the agendas and national image aspired to by the Haitian government, businessmen, and elite individuals who contributed to Haiti's pavilion display.

Both the state-sponsored exhibits and objects contributed by private individuals were heavily weighted towards displaying the country's tradable commodities. These included raw materials, manufactured goods and most extensively varieties of coffee as well as sugar-cane and related products (including an array of syrups, liquors and rums).[73] Further, to complement the visual display of coffee, Haiti like a number of other exhibiting nations served freshly ground coffee within its pavilion. This caused one Chicago reporter to excitedly inform his readers that "genuine Haytian coffee will be sold in the east wing of the building. It is claimed that this coffee sells the best of any in Paris, and that Delmonico in his lifetime would use no other in his restaurant".[74]

Through such displays, Haiti's Internal Commission presented a vast advert aimed at attracting international trade and investment into the country and at opening up new markets for Haitian products. This strategy was in line with the traditional purposes of world's fairs that, as Erik Mattie asserts, were a "particularly important place for the advertising of industry before the turn of the century and the rise in specialised trade fairs".[75] Indeed Haiti's display of commodities closely paralleled that of five other Latin American Republics (Brazil, Costa Rica, Colombia, Guatemala and Venezuela) who, as mentioned above, also paid to have their own pavilions within the fairgrounds [Figures 16 – 20].[76] In their recent publication, *Designing Pan-America*, Robert Rydell and Robert

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[71] Gentil and Chauvet, *Haiti à l'Exposition*, pp. 53-58
[72] Ibid., pp.63-112
[73] Ibid.
[74] 'Hayti and Ceylon' *Tribune*, p.2
[75] *World's Fairs* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998) p.7
[76] Gonzalez and Rydell mistakenly claim that there were eight Latin American pavilions at the fair, including Ecuador and Nicaragua alongside the six I have listed above. Some early maps of the

Gonzalez have presented evidence to show that promotion of Pan-American trading relationships and a shared continental heritage were in fact key incentives for the staging of the World's Columbian Exposition.[77] They reveal that in 1888, when Perry Belmont submitted a bill to the U.S. Congress proposing an event be staged to celebrate the quatercentenary of Columbus landing in the Americas, he suggested this major international exposition be used as a way "to stimulate more intimate commercial and social relations" within the Americas.[78] His reasoning behind this was expressed with force as he noted that it was "astonishing and disgraceful that the commerce of the various American nations and colonies South of the U.S. is mainly with Europe".[79] Another consistent theme running throughout these early proposals was the suggestion that "shared Pan-American heritage" should be on display through "representations of the indigenous people of the Americas … [or] a pan-native theme".[80] As a result strands of Pan-American display focussed on shared commerce and heritage were both present within the landscape of the Columbian Fair in 1893.[81]

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fairgrounds mark on plots set aside for the construction of pavilions for Nicaragua and Ecuador, but maps drawn later, once all of the buildings had been completed, no longer marked on separate structures or plots for these two nations. Compare for example earlier and later maps produced by Rand, McNally & Co.: *Indexed Standard Guide Map of the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago*, Special Collections, Newberry Library, Chicago: <http://dcc.newberry.org/collections/chicago-and-the-worlds-columbian-exposition#the-map-of-the-fair> [accessed 10 November 2014]; S.C. Wade, *Rand, McNally & co.'s A Week at the Fair: Illustrating the Exhibits and Wonders of the World's Columbian Exposition* (Chicago: Rand, McNally & company, 1893) n.p. reproduced at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World's_Columbian_Exposition#mediaviewer/File:Map_of_1893_World%27s_Columbian_Exposition.jpg> [accessed 10 November 2014]; R.A. Gonzalez and R.W. Rydell, *Designing Pan-America: U.S. Architectural Visions for the Western Hemisphere* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011) p.47; Bancroft, *Book of the Fair*, pp.913-917; Handy, *Official Directory,* pp.108, 127-128

[77] This has also been observed by Karen Salt. Gonzalez and Rydell, *Designing Pan-America*, pp.32-49; Salt, 'Haitian Question' pp.12-53

[78] Perry Belmont quoted in Gonzalez and Rydell, *Designing Pan-America*, p.36

[79] Ibid., p.36

[80] Ibid., p.37

[81] There were also a number of individual displays submitted by Latin American republics housed in central buildings. Brazil, for example, submitted self-contained exhibits to the following buildings: Agricultural, Forestry, Fines Arts, Machinery Hall, Mines and Mining and Viticulture: Handy, *Official Directory*, p.108

Firstly there was a display of the "nineteen independent nations of the American continents" in the "east gallery of the [U.S] Government Building" [Figure 21].[82] Secondly there were a series of exhibits staged by the Ethnology Department in an Anthropological Building [Figure 22] and in a replica of the Spanish Convent of La Rabida (where Columbus had stayed whilst seeking support for his historic voyage to the New World).[83] On the grounds surrounding these structures there was an "ethnographical exhibition of native people of America, … living in their native habitations". This, it seems, was where the intended display of shared American heritage found its place on the Columbian Fair's map, doubling as a vivid expression of racist ideologies.[84] The Latin American display housed in the U.S. Government Building was referred to as "the commercial exhibit" by contemporary sources.[85] This was described as containing samples of, and information about, the staple crops and manufactures produced in the countries of this region, as well as "articles of import into Latin American countries".[86]

Though these displays were made under the guise of Pan-American unity, both were curated under the auspices of the U.S. State Department by W.E. Curtis, the U.S. director of the Bureau of American Republics (which later became the Organisation of American States).[87] Handy's *Directory* noted that this organisation was, at least in the eyes of its U.S. contingent, "for the purpose of making known to the world, and particularly to the people of the United States the resources, industries, progress and commercial advantages of the Republics of Mexico, and Central and South America".[88] Therefore, Handy perceived that the Bureau's commercial exhibit at the Columbian Fair demonstrated the "great and growing market for American goods that lies to the south of the United States".[89]

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[82] Handy, *Official Directory*, p.154
[83] Ibid., p.1091
[84] Ibid., pp.1091-1092
[85] See for example: Ibid., p.154-155
[86] Ibid., p.155
[87] Sometimes referred to as the "Latin American Bureau" at the fair. The nations comprising this organisation were: Haiti, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Venezuela, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Salvador, and Uruguay: Ibid., p.154
[88] Ibid., p.154
[89] Ibid., p.155

In preceding decades, the U.S. had already shown great interest in, not only developing, but also dominating commerce among the American nations. In the run-up to the Columbian Fair, this was demonstrated in the U.S. government's hosting of the First International Conference of American States in Washington D.C. in 1889 (at which Curtis' *Bureau* was formed). This initiative had been the long-held idea of then Secretary of State James G. Blaine, whose vision for development of the region was Pan-American in the sense that he sought diplomatic and peaceable relations that would increase inter-American commerce through reciprocal trade agreements. However, though Blaine claimed he was only interested in extending U.S. trade, many Latin American countries were wary that his motives tended towards an extension of the Monroe Doctrine in the form of U.S. expansionism. Indeed Blaine did privately express his aspirations to annex territory to the U.S. to then President Benjamin Harrison, and in 1898 when Hawaii became a victim of these ambitions President McKinley used the Monroe Doctrine to justify the government's actions.[90] Therefore building upon the 1889 Conference of American States Blaine allocated Curtis a budget of $100,000 and charged him with mounting a campaign to encourage participation, seek out exhibits, and ensure the financial support of Latin American nations for the World's Columbian Fair.[91] The result was that all seventeen American Republics that had been represented at the Conference, as well as the Dominican Republic, participated at the fair in some form.

In his revealing study of the African and American black presence at the Columbian Fair, Christopher Reed observed these Latin American nations "showing their wares and culture to the scrutiny of their avaricious industrializing neighbor". He argues that in presenting such exhibits to U.S. audiences, these nations "expose[d] themselves unwittingly for future exploitation".[92] Undeniably neocolonial aspirations to some extent underpinned the United States' efforts to stage this international exposition and ensure an economically revealing

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[90] In fact the process of Hawaii's annexation already had already begun before the start of the World's Columbian Fair with the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893: E.P. Crapol, *James G. Blaine: Architect of Empire* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2000) pp.122-124

[91] R.W. Rydell, K.D. Pelle and J.E. Findling, *Fair America: World's Fairs in the United States* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000) pp.40-1; 'William Eleroy Curtis' *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated*, 1.5 (June 1891) p.7: The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA

[92] C.R. Reed, *All the World is Here! The Black Presence at White City* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000) p.173

and enthusiastic display of its continental neighbours. However, it is also clear from the extent and focus of each of the invited American Republics' own government sponsored displays that these nations were actively, not unwittingly, participating in the fair's mechanisms of display. They demonstrated real interest in developing competitive Pan-American trading networks, and in fact, as noted above, Haiti's commission explicitly stated as much in its own pavilion catalogue.

By highlighting the display of Haiti's tradable commodities at the Columbian Fair, I have demonstrated that a central motivation behind this national presence was to promote Haiti as a lucrative site for private investment and bi-lateral trade, particularly to audiences within the United States. Yet this is not a surprising feature of the display considering the traditional purpose of world's fairs. However Haiti's pavilion also contained an array of objects of a different kind from historical relics and an assortment of books and journals to a collection of artworks. These objects account for around thirty percent of the pavilion's display and were not being displayed as sample commodities or symbols of the nation's natural riches awaiting economic exploitation. These articles had different roles to play within Haiti's "object lesson" and it is to these that I now turn.

ARTWORKS IN HAITI'S "OBJECT LESSON"

In one of a handful of texts that have used Haiti's pavilion catalogue as a basis for exploring the Haitian presence at the World's Columbian Fair, literary scholar Renée Larrier provides an overview of the array of objects exhibited within this site. She noted that these included a sword belonging to Toussaint L'Ouverture, a life size portrait of then Head of State Florvil Hyppolite, and a collection of journals, newspapers and books "on politics, history, economics, law, and geography".[93] Using the latter display of publications to reflect on the intended purpose of Haiti's "object lesson", Larrier highlighted that most of these texts were printed in French and so, she surmises, would have been inaccessible to a large proportion of the Anglophone audience in Chicago. Yet she argued that "the materiality of

[93] Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines', pp.46-47

the books, however, articulated Haiti's mission at the fair: to change its negative image to one of erudition, maturity, and productivity".[94]

Larrier's conclusion seems sound, particularly given the context of the denigrating depictions of Haiti in U.S. press coverage at the time of the fair explored in the opening sections of this chapter. However, there were also more than sixty artworks displayed which, perhaps due to their lack of impediment by language barriers, certainly seem to have made a greater impact in conveying an image of Haiti at the fair among authors of guidebooks and local reporters.[95] In the description of Haiti's pavilion published in Bancroft's *Book of the Fair*, for example, the books Larrier lists were not referenced at all. In contrast, the first object mentioned was an artwork: a sculpture titled *La Rêverie* (to which I will return below).[96] Similarly, a reporter for the *Tribune*, writing on 25th June about the Haitian pavilion's opening, exclaimed that the Haitian pavilion contained "an art exhibit that will make some people open their eyes".[97] As I hope to demonstrate below, a close analysis of these art objects and their significance within the context of Haiti's pavilion display and the wider exhibitionary universe of the fair are crucial to understanding the agendas behind the Haitian presence at this event and nuancing our awareness of the Haitian national image being portrayed here and by whom.

Artworks I: Panoramic Visions of Haiti's Economic Potential

As mentioned in my introduction to this chapter, in order to structure my examination of these artworks I have divided them into four groups. The first of these was a series of over thirty "crayon views" or panoramas of Haiti's major cities, their infrastructure and attractions submitted by a private individual named Watson, which were billed as among "the articles that attracted most attention" by a contemporary reviewer of the newly opened pavilion. It is unclear whether Watson created or owned these images as no other information about contributors to the display was recorded in the catalogue. Yet it seems likely that this is the same Watson who operated a photographic studio in Port-au-Prince in

[94] Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines', p.47
[95] Larrier did also list many of the artworks displayed within Haiti's pavilion, but these were only referenced in her study. Ibid., p.45-46
[96] Bancroft, *Book of the* Fair, p.918
[97] 'Hayti and Ceylon' *Tribune*, p.2

the 1880s and 1890s, whose "views of town scenes … and political personalities" have been regarded as of excellent quality.[98] This term "crayon views" then likely refers to a practice of image production that augmented early photographic technologies through the application of crayon or pastel either during processing or to finish a processed print.

Watson's images were listed by subject within the Haitian pavilion's official catalogue, in a section titled "Beaux-Arts".[99] They comprised over fifteen "Panoramas de Port-au-Prince", including works depicting the National Palace, the National Bank, the Chamber of Deputies, a number of churches, a seminary, the villas of five elite individuals, a central market, a customs-house, a flotilla of Haitian vessels and a wharf in the capital city.[100] These were accompanied by a further set of thirteen crayon views of towns and cities outside of the capital, focusing particularly on depicting infrastructure, picturesque scenes and economic and military capabilities. This set of images included "Panoramas des villes du Cap, des Gonaives, de Jacmel, des Cayes et de Jérémie", vistas of the historic Palace of San-Souci at Milot, and Citadelle Laferrière as well as artilleries at the latter and Môle St. Nicolas. Finally also depicted were a coffee factory at Petit-Goàve, a bridge, a cathedral and a hospital in Cap Haïtien.[101]

The little we can glean from the artworks' descriptions in contemporary newspaper accounts and from the pavilion's catalogue suggests that these artworks were straightforward depictions of Port-au-Prince landmarks and rural landscapes. Using these sources also demonstrates that there was significant interest in this "extensive series of crayon views of [Haiti's] buildings, scenery, and great men" from visitors to Haiti's pavilion, and it seems that this interest was not due to the formal or stylistic qualities of the artwork but rather the subjects they depicted.[102] All of these views represented aspects of Haiti's society and main centres that reflected modern western-style (Euro-American) cityscapes,

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[98] M. Ayre, *The Caribbean in Sepia: A History in Photographs 1840 – 1900* (London: Every Generation Media, 2012) pp.286, 299
[99] Gentil and Chauvet, *Haiti à l'Exposition*, p.97
[100] The number of views is not entirely clear from the list printed in the catalogue, as some subjects are pluralised suggesting that they may have been represented by more than one image. Gentil and Chauvet, *Haiti à l'Exposition*, p.97
[101] Gentil and Chauvet, *Haiti à l'Exposition*, p.97
[102] 'Hayti and Ceylon' *Tribune*, p.2; 'Hayti's Doors Open' *Tribune*, p.8

and an orderly and productive modern country represented by its civic buildings, its places of trade, manufacture, import and export, its capacity to defend itself militarily and its infrastructure within and outside of the capital. Historian Marc Péan highlights that when President Hyppolite came to power in 1891 he embarked on a massive programme of urban renovation in Haiti's cities. Hyppolite improved the quality of life for many in Port-au-Prince and Cap Haïtien by investing in new architecture and providing utilities such as water and markets to some areas for the first time. Still standing as evidence of these programmes today is the capital city's famous Moorish style Marché en Fer (or Iron Market) newly restored in the post-earthquake era [Figure 23].[103]

Hyppolite was clearly keen to demonstrate to the outside world the programmes of urban regeneration that his government had been pursuing in recent years and therefore visually express the social "progress" that Haiti had made under his leadership. When considered in the context of the Columbian Fair, and particularly in the context of the Pan-American displays introduced above, it becomes clear these "views" of Haiti were also the counterparts of the regional displays of infrastructure and trade capacity displayed collectively within the Bureau of American Republics' display in the U.S. Government building and within the five other Latin American nations' pavilions. Within Costa Rica's exhibits, for example, Bancroft observed that there were views of the mountain ranges, dubbed "scenic wonders" or "cordilleras", which bisect the country.[104] This was surrounded by information about this nation's excellent postal and telegraph systems the railroad connections Costa Rica offered between the Atlantic and Pacific and comments that observed this was an "enterprising and prosperous nation".[105] Therefore, I would suggest that these mountain views were present as more than just aesthetically-pleasing images. Rather I would argue these images doubled as informative depictions of the topography of Costa Rica, which could prove useful for any international merchants and businessmen interested in transporting products across the country or indeed constructing transport to traverse the country. Similarly, Watson's views of Haiti would have been more than just

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[103] Hyppolite purchased this structure from the French, which was originally intended for a railway station in Cairo, in 1891: M. Péan, *L'Illusion Héroïque* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie H. Deschamps, 1977) reproduced at: *Haiti: An Island Luminous:* <http://islandluminous.fiu.edu/learn.html> [accessed 10 July 2014]
[104] Bancroft, *Book of the Fair*, pp.913-914
[105] Ibid.

interesting depictions of a small Caribbean island-nation to visitors at the Columbian Fair; these were image's advertising a stable nation-state that could be traded with and a country full of commercial potential ripe for private investment.

As noted in the opening sections of this chapter, recent scholarship has made much of hosting nations' use of visual technologies within the landscape at late nineteenth-century world's fairs. Where these observations are made within work seeking to critically analyse the presence of, for example viewing platforms, dioramas and panoramas, it has often been suggested their purpose was to communicate imperialist desires and racist worldviews.[106] Here, within Haiti's pavilion, we have an example of such visual technologies being employed by the government of a foreign nation to present their own society and landscape as desirable, yet autonomous. I argue this because it was not just the selection of views displayed within the Haitian pavilion and the fact that they were titled "panoramas" that was significant. As one small image of a room in this pavilion's interior [Figure 5] shows, these views of the Haiti's leading towns, cities and rural attractions were also arranged very precisely. They were collected and organised to appear in a single horizontal line around the room, together forming an unceasing panorama of Haiti surrounding many natural and manufactured products of the nation. Undoubtedly the scent of freshly ground and brewed coffee was also constantly passing through from the adjacent serving station. [107] Collectively then, these sights and aromas would have created a multisensory representation of Haiti designed to immerse the viewer and bring them closer to a positive personal experience with a place that the Haitian Commission felt was "unknown to most, or what is worse, poorly understood by others".[108]

Yet this was not just a display focussed on encouraging increased entrepreneurial activity in Haiti by conveying images of social progress and economic opportunity to international and particularly American audiences. These images of Haiti curated for the Columbian Fair also subtly expressed Haiti's sovereignty and Haitian society's cultural parity with respectable bourgeois or middle-class society in the U.S. and Europe. The former was most

[106] Bennett, 'Exhibitionary Complex', pp.73-80
[107] Bancroft, *Book of the Fair*, p.915
[108] Gentil and Chauvet, *Haiti à l'Exposition*, p.11

notably conveyed here, through the above listed images of artillery at Môle St. Nicolas, an imperially desired territory, and Citadelle Laferrière, a historic Haitian symbol of resistance to invasion. Meanwhile the latter was suggested, for example, through the privileging of representations of Christian religious sites, while in contrast there was no mention whatsoever of venues for the practice of Vodou being depicted.

In Haiti, Christianity, and specifically Roman Catholicism, is a belief-system associated with French heritage and the ruling French colonials who practiced it and established its material culture in pre-independence Haiti. Due to its more informal structure, unregulated by a central set of institutions or governing body, Vodou's historical development as a key aspect of Haitian culture is less easily delineated. However, most scholars would agree that it is a syncretic religion also practiced since the colonial era, largely associated (at least in 1893) with Haitian society's African heritage and enslaved ancestors. By the time of the Columbian Fair both Christianity and Vodou were religions actively practiced in Haiti, with deep and intertwined roots in Haitian culture. Yet, as we have seen in analysis of the article 'Back to Savagery' above, Vodou was much maligned and misunderstood internationally as a cultural practice associated with barbarism, backwardness and cultural alterity. Conversely, Christianity was an established belief-system widely practiced in Europe and North America, and so culturally familiar to audiences there as a mark of rational and respectable society. Clearly then Haiti's internal commission seems to have made a very deliberate decision to omit references to Vodou, and so elements of Haiti's African cultural heritage and its masses living cultural present, from this panoramic vision of late nineteenth-century Haiti. However, I would argue that these assertions of Haiti's sovereignty and cultural parity with European and North American bourgeoisies were secondary functions of this set of images, whose prime role was to portray a place of viable economic opportunity. Yet this was not the case throughout Haiti's object lesson. Within it was an array of objects that drew out these messages about Haiti's cultural identity and political autonomy and placed them at the fore.

Artworks II: Exhibiting Female Industries

Listed within a section of Haiti's pavilion catalogue titled "samples of national industries" were a variety of embellished works in and on textiles made at "specialised schools for

young women".[109] Unfortunately there are no known images of these objects on display, but using the information available in reviews, guidebooks and the pavilion catalogue I suggest that these objects picked up on a number of the "lessons" that I have begun to outline in my analysis above, which I argue were being projected by the Haitian commission through the Columbian Fair. Most relevant in this case was the assertion of Haiti's cultural parity conveyed through representation of a modern, familiar and respectable female educational practice, but also I contend there was suggestion of a potential investment opportunity in textile manufacturing.

In total three girls' schools, the national girls' boarding-school and two private institutions run by the Sisters of Saint-Joseph de Cluny and Madame Vve. B. Lépine, respectively, exhibited just under thirty hand-manufactured textile items made by their pupils.[110] These ranged from home furnishings (such as crocheted curtains, table mats, embroidered cushions and coverings "for an American armchair") to both everyday and luxury apparel (including a pair of babies shoes, a silk shirt, embroidered handkerchiefs, a wedding-dress and a veil). A reviewer for the *Chicago Daily Tribune* enthusiastically received this exhibit within the Haitian pavilion, declaring it to be a "wonderful display of embroidery and needlework … second to almost none in the Exposition".[111] Notably there was a similar response printed within Bancroft's *Book of the Fair* to "a silk-embroidered portrait of Director-General Davis [of the Fair]... by a female artist of the Quimbaya Indian tribe" that was exhibited within the Colombian pavilion. This item was singled out for commendation as "at least one article, which is proof of native skill in the line of fancy needlework".[112] Yet as with responses to Watson's Haitian panoramas above, I suggest that there was more significance to such reviews than aesthetic appreciation of the objects on show.

These samples of Haitian girls' needlework and embroidery appear to have been the main representation of female creativity presented within Haiti's national display. Yet as the above quote, with its comparative praise, suggests this was only one of many very similar

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[109] Translation by the author from the French original: Gentil and Chauvet, *Haiti à l'Exposition*, pp.69, 84-5; 'Hayti's Doors Open' *Tribune*, p.8
[110] Gentil and Chauvet, *Haiti à l'Exposition*, pp.84-85
[111] Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines', p.47; 'Hayti's Doors Open' *Tribune*, p.8
[112] Bancroft*, Book of the Fair*, p.915

exhibitions by women displayed across the fairgrounds. Guidebooks and directories for the fair show that many foreign nations and territories (including Colombia, Curaçao, Denmark, Ecuador, France, Great Britain, Haiti, Jamaica, Italy, Japan, Siam, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and the United States) exhibited embroideries, needlework, lacework and painted fabrics by women either within their own pavilions or within the significant display of this kind presented in the Women's Building.[113]

In nineteenth-century Europe and America needlework, embroidery and the like were gendered practices that increasingly came to signify modern female skill and education as they were integrated into the still nascent formal education systems provided for women at that time. As a number of scholars have shown, in this period of European Imperialism these practices, values and expectations were both taken up voluntarily by women in non-western societies as a desirable symbol of cultural parity, or were imposed upon many others through educational (and usually also religious) institutions, as practices and evidence of Europe's "civilizing mission".[114] Silke Strickrodt's study, for example, analyses a number of needlework samplers stitched by African girls in CMS mission schools in the British colony of Sierre Leone in the 1830s and 1840s, which are now in museum collections in the U.S. and Europe.[115] Taking account of the religious subject-matter of many of these samplers and the fact that they have ended up within the archives of the Church Mission Society, rather than the homes of their African makers, Strickrodt draws a number of instructive conclusions as to their purpose from the point of view of CMS.

Strickrodt highlights that many of these samplers were sent to supporters of the Mission Society in Europe and were therefore produced as evidence of mission schools' "dissemination of craft skills and practices" as well as the "transfer of knowledge … and the inculcation of particular values" to local girls.[116] Highlighting again the important issue of

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[113] Bancroft, *Book of the Fair*, pp.906, 915; Handy, *Official Directory*, pp.114-115, 118, 126, 131-2, 139-140, 144

[114] M.E. Fraser, 'With My Needle: Embroidery Samplers in Colonial Australia' (University of Melbourne: unpublished master's thesis, 2008); P. Chatterjee, 'Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonialized Women: The Contest in India' *American Ethnologist*, 16.4 (November 1989) pp.622-633

[115] CMS stands for Church Mission Society, a UK-based charity founded at the end of the eighteenth century: S. Strickrodt, 'African Girl's Samplers from Misson Schools in Sierra Leone (1820s to 1840s)' *History in Africa*, 37 (2010) pp.189-245

[116] Strickrodt, 'African Girl's Samplers', p.210-211

cultural parity Strickrodt suggests that this medium of needlework was chosen as evidence because it "closely corresponded to European expectations and taste".[117] Yet Strickrodt also points out that these samplers are evidence of training local girls and women in much needed textile manufacturing skills as demands for clothing in the colony increased with the influx of recaptives during this period.[118] Though the objects of Strickrodt's study do not map directly onto my own, I argue they still offer some illuminating parallels that support my own analysis here. For example, in light of the final point taken from Strickrodt's analysis above, it is notable that the Haitian pavilion's own catalogue presented the painted silks on show among this collection of girls' handiworks as a specialist and very marketable skill, by exclaiming that they were so excellent "the work of their brushes gives the impression of mechanical printing".[119]

More importantly though, I suggest, were these items' role in the Haitian pavilion's "object lesson" as expressions of parity with European social practices, education and culture. Notably, almost half of the examples of female skill and industry exhibited in this section were contributed by a Catholic school run for Haitian girls by an order of French nuns.[120] They therefore provide a parallel to the samplers in Strickrodt's study in the sense that their production in this setting echoed the power dynamics in imperialist social structures that embedded gendered European values and practices into colonised societies. Yet Haiti was at this point an independent nation, and so the internal commission's decision to include such works again highlights a privileging of European, and particularly, French socio-cultural heritage and values within the vision of Haitian nationhood being projected within this exhibition site. In such curatorial decisions, it becomes clear that Haiti's internal commission for the Columbian Fair, rather than seeking to subvert prevailing imperialist attitudes, practices and values to challenge international perceptions of Haiti, sought to

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[117] Strickrodt, 'African Girl's Samplers', p.209
[118] Ibid., p198
[119] This point is also notable given the prominence of manufactured textiles among the goods most exported to the U.S. from Haiti in the contemporary era: Gentil and Chauvet, *Haiti à l'Exposition*, p.85
[120] L.C. Lhérisson, *Les Écoles de Port-au-Prince: Historique, Organization, Statistique* (Port-au-Prince: H. Amblard, 1895) p.40 <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00078319/00001/citation> [accessed 20 November 2014]

embody them in order to gain recognition, acceptance and a political and economic footing within the current world order.

Artworks III: Neoclassical National Heroes

The third grouping of artworks I have identified that were displayed within Haiti's pavilion at the Columbian Fair were a bust of Toussaint L'Ouverture and a painted portrait of Alexandre Pétion: "great men" or founding fathers of Haiti.[121] Haiti's pavilion catalogue tells us that the Haitian-born and Paris-trained sculptor Louis-Edmond Laforesterie created the bust of Toussaint, while the artist Colbert Lochard painted the portrait of Alexandre Pétion. These were two of Haiti's national heroes, both of whom had been involved in the fight for Haitian independence at the beginning of the century. Toussaint was its most celebrated leader, a literate ex-slave of military and diplomatic genius who admired French culture and the ideals of its Enlightenment thinkers; and Pétion the first President of Haiti, who had been born in the era of slavery but as a free *gens de couleur* and had been educated in France. Alongside the entries for these two portraits, Haiti's pavilion catalogue listed a collection of other objects on display that related to the country's revolutionary history and particularly to Toussaint. These included a sword and a wallet belonging to Toussaint and "facsimiles" of a "collection of documents relating to the recognition of the independence of Haiti".[122] Through this array of objects it is clear that Haiti's commission was seeking to assert the nation's sovereignty through an idealised display of revolutionary heroes. Yet notably the documents presented were not those produced domestically to declare the nation's independence, but rather papers presented by external governments through the course of the nineteenth century in official recognition of Haitian sovereignty: a subtle, but significant difference in an era of imperialist aggression, when Haiti was the only independent nation in the Caribbean existing in the shadow of a growing hemispheric power.

These depictions of Haiti's revolutionary heroes had their counterparts within the displays of other Latin American Republics on the fairgrounds. It was noted, for example, that

[121] Gentil and Chauvet, *Haiti à l'Exposition*, pp.69, 81; 'Hayti and Ceylon' *Tribune*, p.2; 'Hayti's Doors Open' *Tribune*, p.8
[122] Gentil and Chauvet, *Haiti à l'Exposition*, pp.69, 81

within the Bureau of American Republics' display in the U.S. Government building, Latin American nations presented "photographs of their noted men, heroes of more than local celebrity [and] … fac-similes of their declarations of independence".[123] Descriptions of the displays mounted by the governments of Venezuela and Brazil also give more detail in this regard. It was noted, for example, that situated atop a tower on the exterior of the Venezuelan pavilion was a bronze statue of Simón Bolívar, "the hero of South American independence". Inside hung a portrait of Bolívar by the Venezuelan-born and Paris-trained painter Arturo Michelena, while among other relics on display was a sword belonging to Bolívar.[124]

Significantly also, each of the pavilions belonging to the six foreign American Republics participating at the fair appear to have included decorative embellishments on their façade that asserted their independence, such as national symbols or the dates of independence. Placed just above the entrance to Haiti's pavilion, for instance, was the national coat of arms and the date of Haitian independence (1804) flanked by the date of Columbus landing in the Americas (1492) and the year of the Columbian Fair (1893).[125] Yet aside from this, the architectural design of foreign pavilions at the Columbian Fair was not under the control of foreign commissions, but rather the event's central authorities, and so tells us little of the national images each republic was seeking to assert.[126] Similarly it was noted that among a group of 100 artworks presented by Brazil within a national display housed in the central Fine Arts Building was a painting entitled *Proclamation of Brazilian Independence* as well as a painted portrait of Tiradentes, and a sculpture of José Bonifácio (two heroes of Brazilian independence).[127] Also present within the fairgrounds were numerous sculptural and painted representations of the United States' founding father George Washington as well as "various Washington relics".[128] It seems then that the

[123] Handy, *Official Directory*, p.155
[124] Ibid., p.144; Bancroft, *Book of the Fair*, p.915-917
[125] Handy, *Official Directory*, p.128
[126] Haiti's building, for example, was in the "Southern Colonial Style" and was designed and constructed by Brooklyn-based architect E.S. Childs (or S.S. Child) and contractor John H. Kelley. See for example: E. Sandweiss, 'Around the World in a Day: International Participation in the World's Columbian Exposition' *Illinois Historical Journal*, 84.1 (1991) p.10; Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines', p.43
[127] Handy, *Official Directory*, p.929
[128] See for example: Ibid., p.153

Haitian commission's inclusion of these artistic renderings of national heroes was part of a much wider pattern of Pan-American display at the fair.

Unfortunately, there are no known images of either Laforesterie's bust of Toussaint or of Lochard's painting of Pétion on display at the fairgrounds. The latter is also unknown outside of this context, although Lochard has been remembered amongst a number of notable nineteenth-century Haitian artists who "contributed to the development of a sense of national identity" through "European-style portraiture … of national leaders and heroes".[129] A bust of Toussaint L'Ouverture by Laforesterie is, however, known outside of the context of the Columbian Fair. The Haitian pavilion's catalogue indicates that this sculpture was within the national collection when it was exhibited in Chicago in 1893. It is therefore notable that much more recent source material, produced by the Haitian Institute for the Protection of National Heritage (ISPAN), reveals that a "bronze bust of Toussaint L'Ouverture, the work of Edmond Laforesterie" was recovered from the rubble of the National Palace in the aftermath of the earthquake that hit Haiti in 2010 [Figure 24].[130] ISPAN's article also informs us that this same sculpture had been recovered from the ruins of a previous version of the National Palace that burnt down after an explosion in 1912. Significantly, Haitian historian Georges Corvington also notes that previous to the destruction wrought by this fire in the early twentieth century among the objects near which Laforesterie's bust had been on display were "a sword of Toussaint L'Ouverture … [and] *La Rêverie* a marble masterpiece by Edmond Laforesterie".[131] Due to this bronze bust having a prominent place within the national collection previous to the 1912 fire, and existing alongside other objects that had appeared at the Columbian Fair (including another sculpture by Laforesterie that I will consider in the following section), it seems very likely that this is also the same artwork listed in the catalogue.

Aesthetically Laforesterie's Toussaint is also an example of "European-style portraiture" in the neoclassical style, reflecting the artist's Parisian training (to which I will return to

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[129] A. Juste, 'Haitian Art' in K.A. Appiah and H.L. Gates, Jr., (eds) *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999) pp.125-127
[130] ISPAN stands for Institut de Sauvegarde du Patrimoine National: 'Chronique des Monuments et Sites Historiques d'Haïti' *Bulletin de l'ISPAN*, 18, 1 November 2010, p.11
[131] 'Chronique des Monuments et Sites Historiques d'Haïti' *l'ISPAN*,p.11

below).[132] In fact this sculpture (in terms of subject, form, pose, costume, tone and finish) strongly resembles the defining neoclassical image of George Washington, created by the notable French sculptor Jean-Antoine Houdon. This latter work was first created in the late eighteenth century, but in the mid-to-late nineteenth century casts of the sculpture were produced to adorn public and private spaces across the U.S. [see for example Figure 25] including a version displayed at the Columbian Fair.[133] Post-independence, for both Haiti and the United States, neoclassicism had proved a powerful vehicle through which to construct their national image. In fact, in his study of the development of Haiti's national "system of symbols", art historian Carlo Célius asserts that "heroism" or "heroization" of revolutionary figures, which he regards as synonymous with nationalism in Haiti, is fundamentally "linked to neoclassicism".[134] Yet this is an aesthetic that emerged in Europe in the eighteenth century and centres on celebrating and mimicking the historical art of Western Europe (whilst also seeking to embody the enlightenment values of "freedom, heroism, civic virtue and an idealized beauty", which at that time were also traced back to the societies of ancient Greece and Rome).[135] Therefore, far from complementing the Pan-American project of shaping republics independent of Europe, the deployment of the neoclassical aesthetic as a mainstay of nationalist envisioning in nineteenth-century America betrayed these new nations' reliance on European cultural values and their desire to emulate these in their quest for political legitimacy. By the time of the fair neoclassicism certainly was no longer an innovative aesthetic, but organisers seeking to position the U.S. as heirs to the grand narrative of Western Civilisation created the event's landscape in the neoclassical style. Therefore the artistic visualisation of Haiti's national heroes as displayed at the Columbian Fair complemented rather than challenged the wider landscape of the event.

This correspondence between artworks representing Haiti's revolutionary heroes at the Columbian Fair and the wider landscape of the event has significance beyond aesthetics. As

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[132] For example, this work presents Toussaint in a static but imposing position, the surface of the work has a very smooth finish, and Laforesterie has enveloped Toussaint – at the base of his shoulders – in draped cloth akin to classical dress: all characteristics of neoclassical sculpture.
[133] H.W. Janson, *Nineteenth-Century Sculpture* (Thames and Hudson, London: 1986) p.42; Handy, *Official Directory*, p.153
[134] Célius, 'Neoclassicism', p.367
[135] Janson, *Nineteenth-Century Sculpture*, p.14

noted in the introduction to this thesis, Haiti's revolutionary history and the terms of its independence as an anti-slavery, racially 'black' postcolonial republic was the site of the nation's "contestatory potential".[136] Haiti's ability to symbolise a radical challenge to white supremacist and imperialist ideologies through its revolutionary history has made it significant for anti-racist and black activists including those active at the Columbian Fair, as we will see below. Yet it was not these aspects of Haiti's revolutionary history that the Haitian commission sought to evoke when presenting its national heroes at the Columbian Fair.

Indeed, it is particularly notable that Haiti's commemoration of its national heroes at this event seems to have omitted Jean-Jacques Dessalines, the nation's first ruler following independence. In fact it seems that Dessalines was not mentioned in association with any object listed in the Haitian pavilion's catalogue. At that time Dessalines, of all Haiti's revolutionary leaders, was (and to some extent still is) most associated with African ancestry and violent resistance. Indeed historian Lindsey Twa asserts that for nineteenth-century writers, such as the British Minister-Resident Spenser St. John, Dessalines "provided the most direct and titillating example of exotic barbarity".[137] Furthermore, the comments of nineteenth-century Haitian historian Thomas Madiou demonstrate that this view was not exclusive to foreigners. At a national commemoration of Haiti's leaders in 1875 Madiou stated: "shuddering with horror and admiration, we do not know whether to condemn or absolve him … he was barbaric in the face of colonial barbarism".[138] It seems that this radical revolutionary force and Pan-African identity was not what Haiti's late-nineteenth-century leaders wanted to evoke through their "object lesson" at the Columbian Fair. Instead they opted for a commemoration of Haiti's more European-associated founding fathers: a display that was comparable to those of the other American republics represented and one that would have been more palatable to the fair's U.S. organisers, and the elites representing European nations.

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[136] Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, p.37

[137] L. Twa, 'Jean-Jacques Dessalines: Demon, Demigod, and Everything in Between' in P. Youngquist and F. Botkin (eds) *Circulations: Romanticism and the Black Atlantic* (October 2011) <http://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/circulations/HTML/praxis.2011.twa.html> [accessed 26 November 2014]

[138] Thomas Madiou quoted in Célius, 'Neoclassicism', p.381

With reference to the work of Sibylle Fischer and Carlo Célius I have sought to demonstrate that in representing Haiti's revolutionary heroes, more than anywhere else in Haiti's "object lesson", the Haitian commission had an opportunity to assert an exceptional national identity. There was a clear opportunity here to subvert the imperialist and racist values embedded within the wider landscape of the fair, yet Haiti's internal commission chose not to do so.[1] The presence of Laforesterie's bust of Toussaint and Lochard's painting of Pétion (alongside associated historical relics and documents) did express Haitian sovereignty. However, this was not a project of national representation that sought exceptionality to or subversion of the world order enshrined within the grounds of the Columbian Fair, but rather conformity to it.

In her doctoral thesis Karen Salt has also highlighted the complementarity of the Haitian pavilion to the wider landscape of the fair as a key issue in understanding its historical significance. However, rather than articulating this point in terms of cultural parity, Salt expresses this compliance by invoking a racial analytical framework. This means that rather than noting the absence of objects relating to Haiti's African heritage in the pavilion's display she highlights, for example, the presence of "doric columns and neo-classical design features" in the pavilion's façade, referring to these aesthetic embellishments as "visual cues" of "whiteness".[139] Salt then seems to suggest that because these architectural features were in "continuity with the other U.S. exhibition sites" and did not resemble "the kind of racialized primitivism or violence signified by the [images of] … severed heads and blood-thirsty warmongering black Amazons" that surrounded the "Dahomey Village", Haiti's pavilion disavowed the nation's blackness. Instead, she argues, these embellishments or "cues" demonstrated significant U.S. control of the Haitian national display and portrayed Haiti as a "(pseudo) white nation", "a white nation-space" or a "white Atlantic nation".[140]

I find the articulation of this argument problematic for three reasons. Firstly it conflates race and nation as well as race and aesthetics in an argument that seems to reiterate the racially-defined hierarchies of the fair by suggesting that neoclassical aesthetics (in

[139] Salt, 'Haitian Question', pp.121-123
[140] Ibid., pp.89, 121

contradiction of Célius) can only signify whiteness. Secondly it therefore obscures issues of class (and to a lesser extent gender) bias that also undoubtedly shaped Haiti's representation at the fair. Haiti's display was largely curated by men amongst the country's social and political elites, which also made it comparable with the displays of other nations including the United States. Finally I think that Salt over-emphasises the extent to which U.S. organisers of the fair controlled Haiti's national display leaving little space for Haitian agency.

Artworks IV: A Diasporan Design of Haitian Nationhood

The final artwork displayed within Haiti's "object lesson" to which I now turn was a white marble sculpture titled *La Rêverie* (or *Daydream*) representing a reclining male nude of Caucasian appearance [Figure 26], created by Paris-trained, Haitian diaspora artist Louis-Edmond Laforesterie who had also produced the bust of Toussaint discussed above.[141] The Haitian pavilion's catalogue shows that Laforesterie's portrait bust of Toussaint was contributed to the display in Chicago by the Haitian government, demonstrating that this work was within the national collection at the time of the fair. In contrast, Laforesterie himself was listed in the same catalogue as the private owner and exhibitor of *La Rêverie*. Yet, as we know from the ISPAN article referenced above, the latter had become an acclaimed part of the national collection by the early twentieth-century, being exhibited among artworks on display within Haiti's own National Palace by 1912.[142]

It seems likely that the positive reception *La Rêverie* received at the Columbian Fair, which will be explored below, went some way to prompting its acquisition by the Haitian government. Yet rather than speculate on this, not insignificant, point what I want to focus on in this section is a demonstration of the extent to which Laforesterie's training as a sculptor in France had an impact on the creation of this work, which was then taken up as a symbol of Haitian-ness at the Columbian Fair. I will then go on to suggest that the selection of this work for display at the Columbian Fair and its prominence within that exhibition establishes two points. First it reinforces my assertion that expression of cultural parity with European societies was a central object of this projection of Haitian nationhood. Then

[141] Gentil and Chauvet, *Haiti à l'Exposition*, p.97
[142] 'Chronique des Monuments' *l'ISPAN*, p.11

secondly it demonstrates the influence that Haiti's Francophile elites, in the diaspora as well as those domestically situated, had over the image of Haitian nationhood projected internationally in the late nineteenth century. It certainly seems that with *La Rêverie* in particular the Haitian commission succeeded in striking a chord of cultural resonance with audiences in the United States.

Notably, the review of Haiti's pavilion (already referenced above) that was published in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* on the 24th June following the site's opening, described *Le Rêverie* in far more detail than any other object. It noted:

> In the center of the main hall is a marble statue called "La Reverie," [*sic*] by a Haytian sculptor named La Forrestrie [sic]. It represents a youth nude, and seated on the ground, with his hands locked in front of one of his knees. It was exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1874 and took the second gold medal. It is obviously a work of great merit.[143]

Indeed great skill is shown in the carving, contrasts, expression and finish of this marble sculpture which Laforesterie shaped to depict a day-dreaming youth of Caucasian appearance, positioned to allow the artist to represent the developing musculature of an ideal male physique in the neoclassical style. In direct contrast to the attention given to Watson's "crayon views", the interest expressed in Laforesterie's figurative work, as it was displayed in Chicago, was not due to its subject's optical depiction of Haiti, but rather in its artistic quality and past accolades.

Another review from the *Chicago Daily Tribune* demonstrates this, as the reporter refers to "the splendid marble statue called "La Reverie" [*sic*] by a native artist" which it was again noted "…was on exhibition at the Paris Salon in 1874 and 1875 and took the second gold medal there" [Figure 27].[144] This past mark of esteem specifically from the Paris Salon shows was clearly of significance in terms of *La Rêverie's* reception, but was not so extraordinary an accolade for the Haitian artist when we discover that Laforesterie was from a privileged Haitian family with deep connections in Parisian society. His brother was

[143] 'Hayti and Ceylon' *Tribune*, p.2
[144] 'Hayti's Doors Open' *Tribune*, p.8

the musician and composer Charles Laforesterie, whose Opera the *Chicago Daily Tribune* noted had "often been sung in Paris" and among his ancestors were Haitians who had held governmental and diplomatic roles including the Minister of Finance under President Lysius Saloman and the Haitian Minister in Paris.[145] Though indeed a "native" of Haiti, Louis-Edmond had trained as a sculptor in Paris and had evidently spent most of his life living and working there. It is therefore through the Parisian milieu that we can locate what inspired the creation of this work.

In Paris, Laforesterie had trained under Charles-Auguste Lebourg and parallels can be drawn, in terms of subject, form and aesthetic, between *La Rêverie* and a number of Lebourg's earlier works [See for example Figures 28 and 29]. Yet more significant still are the similarities that can be found between *La Rêverie* and a much-celebrated sculpture by François Rude, the mentor of Lebourg and an important figure in French art history. Rude is perhaps now best-known for his creation of *La Marseillaise* [Figure 30], the highly visible sculptural group decorating the *Arc de Triomphe de l'Etoile* (and the title of the French national anthem) a globally recognisable Parisian landmark and symbol of French nationhood. However it is Rude's earlier work *Neapolitan Fisherboy* [Figure 31] to which Laforesterie's *La Rêverie* bore striking resemblance. *Neapolitan Fisherboy* was a sculpture for which Rude was awarded the cross of the Legion of Honour by the French government, and this undoubtedly influenced the decision to grant him the *Arc de Triomphe* commission. Rude's *Fisherboy* was a marble statue depicting a nude youth sitting on the ground, leaning gently forwards to play with a tortoise. The work had been a sensation at the Paris Salons of 1831 and 1833 and was of landmark importance due to its various controversial departures in form from strict classicistic parameters. Due to its success and innovation it has been noted that "countless imitators" created works derivative of Rude's *Fisherboy*.[146] Undoubtedly Laforesterie's *La Rêverie* was one of these imitators. In sources related to the Salon of 1875, such as the short lived periodical *L'Art Moderne*, *La Rêverie* was described as depicting a melancholic, yet proud and careless Italian shepherd, while

[145] 'Théatre des Bouffes-Parisiens' *Le Ménestrel*, 24 January 1858, p.2; 'Hayti and Ceylon' *Tribune,* p.2; 'Chronique des Monuments' *l'ISPAN*, p.11
[146] Janson, *Nineteenth-Century Sculpture*, 112

another review listed this work under the title *Greek peasant dreamer*.[147] Notably this earlier title was dropped when the sculpture was displayed at the Columbian Fair in favour of the geographically anonymous *La Rêverie*.

This formal analysis and tracing of French art historical influences has been highlighted because it demonstrates the deep influence that French cultural forms had on the construction of a national image and aesthetic by the still fledgling Haitian elite, especially those situated among its diasporas in Paris. It also demonstrates the important role that elite diasporans had to play in the shaping of Haiti's national image abroad in the nineteenth century. Finally, and specifically in terms of this case study, the above analysis provides a context for Laforesterie's Francophile art practice, which played a key role in conveying an unexpected vision of Haitian nationhood at the Chicago World's Fair. Indeed the significance of *La Rêverie* within the Haitian pavilion display extends beyond mere presence. From amongst the hundreds of objects available, including over sixty artworks, it was this sculpture that was singled out to appear in a very conspicuous position on a pedestal in the centre of the Haitian pavilion's central hall or reception parlour.[148] A simple line drawing printed to accompany a review in a local newspaper [Figure 32] depicts the sculpture in this prominent position surrounded by fluted columns, festooned decorations in the national colours, and framed artworks. Although *La Rêverie* did not in any way literally depict Haiti, in this position surrounded by the national colours as the primary object of focus it would have made a no less revelatory statement about the cultural identity which the internal Haitian Commission wanted to project.

Collectively the artworks on display within Haiti's pavilion at the Columbian Fair demonstrate that, at the turn of the twentieth century, Haiti sought a position in communion with the dominant economic and political systems ordering global interactions. This is in deep contrast with Haiti's position at the turn of the preceding century when, deep in the throes of slave insurrection and pursuit of national independence, it was regarded internationally as a revolutionary pariah state. In 1893,

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[147] 'Chronique: Gravures du Numéro' in M. de Montifaud (ed.) *L'Art Moderne* (Librairie Moderne: Paris, 1876) p.24; 'La Semaine' *Paris à l'eau-forte. Actualité, curiosité, fantaisies,* 7 (July 1875) p.67
[148] Bancroft, *Book of the Fair*, p.918; 'Hayti and Ceylon' *Tribune*, p.2

Haiti's pavilion unswervingly asserted the country's proud revolutionary history, economic potential, political stability and autonomy, and so challenged popular perceptions of its own national identity and history circulating internationally. Yet its challenge reached little further. It certainly did not seek to directly confront the imperialist and racist worldviews that shaped the fair. The Haitian commission's method of achieving this balance was to present a glorified national history comparable to that of its "sister republics" in the Americas. In-line with their "object lessons", this was communicated through a conservative display of cultural parity with Europe.

Indeed Renée Larrier, in her attempts to explore the significance to Haiti's presence at the Columbian Fair, also asserted that the pavilion's "museum-like" display expressed an "identity rooted in the European culture of the tiny elite … which modeled itself after the French".[149] Yet, despite extensively outlining and interpreting the objects on display, Larrier ultimately sidelined the significance of this "object lesson", leaving unrealised the opportunities it offers for understanding Haitians' political practice, self-perception, agency and projection of nationhood in an international context in the late nineteenth century. Like the vast majority of other scholars who have explored this Haitian presence at Chicago's Fair of 1893, she drew her overarching conclusions about the significance of this Haitian presence from the rhetoric, activism and actions of a handful of notable U.S. African Americans who used Haiti's pavilion as a site from which to pursue their own projects.

"HAYTI'S EXALTED PRESENCE IN THE DIASPORAN CONSCIOUSNESS":[150] RACE PRIDE AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN ACTIVISM AT THE FAIR

As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, much of the extant secondary literature analysing Haiti's presence at the Columbian Fair, like Larrier's study, tends towards a reading of its significance with reference to speeches, texts and actions associated with U.S. African Americans who found in the Haitian pavilion a space to be present at this event and further their own agendas. In the final section of this chapter then, after exploring the visions of Haitian nationhood projected by the pavilion's internal commission through

[149] Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines', p.43
[150] Reed, *All the World is Here!*, p.172

Haiti's "object lesson", I will go onto juxtapose readings of the Haitian pavilion such as Larrier's against my own. In contrast to much of this extant secondary literature, I suggest that there is a significant distance between the aims and objectives pursued by Haitians and U.S. African Americans at the Columbian Fair despite both finding in the Haitian pavilion a site of legitimation of their presence at the event. In order to demonstrate this, I will highlight a number of specific texts and actions upon which arguments that characterise the Haitian pavilion as a site of shared diasporic action and aspiration have hinged. I will then go on to demonstrate that these conclusions have largely been based on assumption rather than evidence of collaboration or co-production. Further taking into account the evidence and arguments I have made in the preceding sections of this chapter, I will seek to demonstrate that in some respects these supposed evidences of "diasporic re-connection" often, in fact, reveal a diasporic disconnection between the aims and agendas of Haitians and U.S. African Americans active at the Columbian Fair.[151]

Assumptions that Haitians and U.S. African Americans shared common goals in being present at the Columbian Fair have stemmed from the above-noted appointment by President Hyppolite of eminent orator and activist Frederick Douglass to be External Co-Commissioner of Haiti's pavilion. In the context of the wider event, this appointment was very significant. In the run-up to the fair there had been an ongoing struggle domestically to achieve African-American representation within the United States' exhibits and within the fair's domestic commissioning bodies. Though some concessions were eventually made in this regard, U.S. African Americans were widely marginalised at the event, and issues such as the African-American fight for Civil Rights in the face of increasing violence were silenced, leading critics to brand the exposition "literally and figuratively a 'white city'" a symbol of racist ideologies.[152] Due to this domestic discrimination, Haiti's appointment of

[151] Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines', p.40

[152] Rydell presents an overview of the ongoing tussle within the U.S. between fair officials, the African-American press, and certain prominent African-American individuals in the lead up to the launch of the Columbian Fair. A prime example of contentious issues here was the exposition managers' refusal to find $2000 for the transportation of African-American exhibits, while spending $90,000 on floats for the fair's dedication that were never used. To try and allay public criticism fair officials organised a "Colored Day" celebration within the fairgrounds. The response among African Americans was mixed, many were wary of the organisers' motives suspecting that those who attended would be derided and demeaned. Puck magazine, true to form, printed a racist centrepiece to mark this event entitled 'Darkies Day at the Fair'. It depicted "a Georgia coon, named

Douglass made him one of the highest-ranking African-American officials on the fairgrounds.

It is not clear whether Hyppolite and his colleagues were aware that in appointing Douglass they would be contrasting with the actions of central fair officials so drastically, but it was widely regarded at the time that Douglass had been given the position because of his former role as U.S. Consul to Haiti.[153] During his time as U.S. Consul to Haiti, Douglass had used his oratorical skill to defend Haiti, perhaps most notably when the U.S. Government sought to use him as a channel to put inordinate pressure on Haiti during the above mentioned negotiations for Môle St. Nicolas.[154] Indeed the letter that offered Douglass the position as Commissioner, penned by the Haitian Secretary of State on-behalf of President Hyppolite, supports this idea as Douglass' "eloquence" in publicly defending Haiti through his "rigorous word" is noted as a key factor in the decision. Yet, it is also here that we get the most direct and only real statement from Haitian quarters of a joint racial purpose in participation at the fair. It is suggested to Douglass in this letter, that in taking up the position of Commissioner:

> …you will be prepared to realize one of your dreams … and the ardent desire of the PRESIDENT OF HAITI and of the country which he so worthily governs; of seeing our common race definitely rehabited in numerical considerations through the invitation of Haiti.[155]

This private expression of a joint transnational racial goal is not loudly or clearly repeated in any of the public statements, texts and expressions of intent made by Haitian politicians

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Major Moon" serving hundreds of ripe water-melons to black people from all nations [Figure 33]. What was objected to most though among the African-American press as the opening of the fair approached was the absence of any African-American officials, which effectively barred the way for representation of non-whites at the fair. As an appeasing afterthought Hale G. Parker, a black school principal from St. Louis, was appointed by Congress as an alternate Commissioner but his impact was limited. Yet these protests did have an effect on the level of African-American representation at later fairs in the U.S. and elsewhere. Rydell, 'Cultural Frankenstein', pp.144-150; 'Darkies Day at the Fair' *World's Fair Puck*, 16 (21 August 1893) n.p., Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress; M.O. Wilson, *Negro Building: Black Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012)

[153] W.S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: Norton, 1991) p.367

[154] Levine, *Dislocating Race*, p.232

[155] Haitian Secretary of State to Frederick Douglass, 2 February 1892, General Correspondence, Frederick Douglass Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress

or organisers involved in staging Haiti's presence at the Columbian Fair. I would therefore suggest that this point was made to appeal to Douglass, encouraging him to accept the role by emphasising the opportunities it would offer him to further the Pan-Africanist ideals he was already well-known for internationally. In contrast, where we see Haitian agency and agendas expressed publicly, particularly through the pavilion's "object lesson", any Pan-Africanist or transnational race agendas remain secondary to national goals. As detailed above, I argue that the prime objectives of this project, from a Haitian perspective, were for Haiti to be fully accepted and respected by the U.S. and the wider international community as a sovereign nation-state with potential as a trading partner and site of investment.

Notably, in the early days of his appointment as Haiti's External Co-Commissioner, Douglass expressed these national agendas in his statements about the intended function of the Haitian display. An 1891 article in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* for example quotes Douglass focusing entirely on the commodities that would be displayed in the Haitian pavilion.[156] Like Haiti's pavilion catalogue, Douglass placed a particular emphasis on Haitian coffee exports, noting that the U.S. lagged behind France and would be well advised to "come in for its share" and in conclusion the article stated that this display would "show something of that country's wealth and will induce investments".[157] Yet on 2nd January 1893, when then Haitian pavilion was dedicated, Douglass gave two speeches in which his assessment of the significance of Haiti's presence at the fair altered dramatically from the above.

Each of these speeches was given at a different venue: the first on the fairgrounds at the Haitian pavilion during the day and; the second at Quinn Chapel, a Methodist Episcopal Church and "home to the oldest African American congregation in the city", that same evening.[158] Manuscripts of both speeches survive to the present, and in a recent study Glen McClish has compared the two, noting differences in subject and tone between that given

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[156] 'Not Subject to the Labor Law: Foreign Exhibitors may bring Aids And Employees with them' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 18 July 1891, p.12
[157] Ibid.
[158] M.J. Clavin, *Toussaint Louverture and the American Civil War: The Promise and Peril of a Second Haitian Revolution* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010) p.181

by Douglass during the day and that in the evening.[159] In both speeches, Douglass moves away from a focus on Haiti's investment potential. In the first, as McClish notes, Douglass discusses Haiti's standing within the "sisterhood of nations" by invoking universalist ideals to assert Haitian sovereignty and legitimacy.[160] These assertions were in line with some of those expressed within Haiti's pavilion catalogue. Indeed, among the texts printed in that document was a short dedicatory text from President Hyppolite, in which he invoked similar ideals to express the hope that this Haitian pavilion would secure Haiti's place among the comity of progressive nations.[161] In contrast Douglass' second speech placed much more emphasis on the racial significance of Haiti's existence as a sovereign state known as "the Black Republic" and its presence on the fairgrounds as such.[162] Yet despite the latter having less resonance with the aims and objectives expressed by Haiti's "object lesson" and Internal Commission, it is this speech and the ideals expressed in it that have remained more enduringly associated with the Haitian pavilion in extant secondary literature.

Christopher Reed, for example, introduces this case by stating "[i]f there was anywhere on the fairgrounds that diasporans could familialy call home and meet, it was the Haytian Pavilion".[163] Larrier in turn tells us that this pavilion "functioned as a site of resistance and diasporic reconnection".[164] Ballard also singled Haiti out as the "bright and shining exception" to imperial discourses at the World's Columbian Fair, but each of these conclusions seem to be more wishful thinking than anything else.[165] In terms of the latter point, for example, Haiti itself had invaded and occupied the Dominican Republic, its

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[159] Douglass, 'Lecture on Haiti'; F. Douglass, 'Dedication Ceremonies: Of the Haitian Pavilion' (speech given at the dedication of the Haitian pavilion, World's Columbian Exposition, Jackson Park, Chicago, 2 January 1893) reproduced at *Bob Corbett: Haiti 1844-1915* <http://www2.webster.edu/~corbetre/haiti/history/1844-1915/douglass.htm> [accessed 1 May 2012]; G. McClish, '*"The Spirit of Human Brotherhood," "The Sisterhood of Nations," and "Perfect Manhood": Frederick Douglass and the Rhetorical Significance of the Haitian Revolution'* in M. Jackson and J. Bacon (eds) *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010) pp.123-140

[160] F. Douglass, 'Dedication Ceremonies: Of the Haitian Pavilion'; McClish, '*"The Spirit of Human Brotherhood,"* pp.129, 133

[161] Gentil and Chauvet, *Haïti à l'Exposition*, p.3

[162] Douglass, 'Lecture on Haiti'

[163] Reed, *All the World is Here!*, p.172

[164] Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines', p.43

[165] Ballard, 'African-American Protest', p.120

neighbouring nation on the island of Hispanola, earlier in the nineteenth century demonstrating that imperialism was certainly not incompatible with Haitian nationhood. In terms of Haiti's stance in response to the expression of imperialist ideologies at the Columbian Fair, as I have argued above, I suggest Haiti's governing powers did not seek to challenge imperialist ideologies *per se* on the fairgrounds, but rather their damaging portrayal of Haiti as a place of barbarism and savagery in need of imperial instruction. Therefore, once it appeared that this kind of denigrating portrayal of Haiti had been avoided at the Fair, there is little evidence to suggest that Haiti's Internal or External Commission sought to publicly challenge or undermine the exhibition of non-white or non-western peoples and cultures as "primitive" on the Fairgrounds.

Reed in fact lamented the "ideological chasm created by the Haytian elite" between their representation and that of the Dahomeans due to the Haitian pavilion's "Euro-oriented" object lesson which sought "Western capital".[166] The clearest objection made to this display in relation to the Haitian pavilion was, in fact, that made by Frederick Douglass. In a pamphlet printed and distributed at the pavilion, Douglass stated, "as if to shame the Negro, the Dahomians [sic] are also here to exhibit the Negro as a repulsive savage".[167] Yet even this objection seems more concerned with how the exhibition of "Dahomeans" reflected badly on African Americans in the U.S. rather than with this concession's vilification of the African people displayed and the society they were purportedly representing. Larrier also notes with frustration that conspicuously absent from Haiti's "object lesson" were all those cultural practices, now synonymous with Haitian identity, that would have represented the majority of Haitians such as "vodun religion, popular music and self-taught art".[168]

It seems that, as with the Haitian Commission's response to the denigrating display of people within the Dahomean Village, the decision was made to remain mute about those aspects of Haitian culture that had been vilified internationally rather than seeking to

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[166] Reed, *All the World is Here!*, p.174
[167] F. Douglass, 'Introduction' in R.W. Rydell (ed.) *The Reason Why the Colored American is not in the World's Columbian Exposition: The Afro-American Contribution to Columbian Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999 [1893]) p.10
[168] Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines', p.43

directly challenge, undermine or subvert these perceptions. Yet, though Reed, Larrier and others have noted these nationalist and Francophile agendas expressed through the Haitian pavilion at the Columbian Fair, these are side-points within texts that have instead place emphasis on highlighting U.S. African Americans' presence and activism at the Haitian pavilion site. At times these scholars then draw conclusions that assume African Americans and Haitians expressed shared diasporic aims through the Haitian pavilion, but more often than not an exclusive concentration on African-American source materials overshadows Haitian agency altogether.[169]

For example, Douglass provided space for a number of African-American activists and performers to present themselves and their causes at the Haitian pavilion and notable amongst these was Ida B. Wells' campaigning for African Americans' Civil Rights in the United States. To do so, Wells gathered a small group of activists, including Douglass, who together produced a pamphlet titled *The Reason Why the Colored American is not in the World's Columbian Exposition*, which was then distributed from the Haitian pavilion. This pamphlet included essays by Wells on Lynch Law and the Convict Lease System. These essays provided qualitative, quantitative and graphic visual evidence of racism ingrained across U.S. society and within its institutions, such as the justice and penal systems, which resulted in the systematic infliction of violence on African Americans at the time.[170] Other supporters also contributed short texts on the educational and cultural "progress" African Americans had made since emancipation and on their systematic exclusion from exhibits and organising bodies at the Columbian Fair.[171] This document forcefully presented a challenge to racist ideologies expressed at the Fair and so in using the Haitian pavilion as a place of distribution made it a site of protest. Like Douglass' speeches this pamphlet has become one of the most cited documents when exploring the significance of Haiti's presence at the Columbian Exposition.[172] Yet again this is no indication of Haitian agency or

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[169] Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines', p.48; Reed, *All the World is Here!*,p.172; Ballard, 'African-American Protest', pp.119-20

[170] I.B. Wells, 'The Convict Lease System' in Rydell (ed.) *The Reason Why*, pp. 23-28; I.B. Wells, 'Lynch Law' in Rydell (ed.) *The Reason Why*, pp.29-43

[171] I.G. Penn, 'The Progress of the Afro-American Since Emancipation' in Rydell (ed.) *The Reason Why*, pp.44-64; F.L. Barnett 'The Reason Why' in Rydell (ed.) *The Reason Why*, pp.65-85

[172] J.C. Davis, '"Stage Business" as Citizenship: Ida B. Wells at the World's Columbian Exposition' in A.L. Ardis and L.W. Lewis (eds) *Women's Experience of Modernity, 1875-1945* (Baltimore, MD: Johns

objectives as there is no evidence to demonstrate that the Internal Haitian Commission was aware the pavilion site was being used in this way as it was Douglass who provided Wells with a platform for protest at Haiti's pavilion.

As Levine notes, Douglass also made the Haitian pavilion "into a site for the display of recent African American writing" and the distribution of a young Paul Laurence Dunbar's first volume of poems, *Oak and Ivy*, providing at least a small space for those exhibits of African-American culture omitted elsewhere. Levine also reveals that Dunbar played the lead role in a play that was written especially for performance at the Haitian pavilion by the African-American playwright William Edgar Easton.[173] Larrier pinpoints Easton's play as a "quite fitting" site of "diasporic reconnection" between African Americans and Haitians because she suggests that this text and its performance at the pavilion demonstrated a parallel commemoration of Haiti's "heroic past".[174] Yet Easton's play was titled *Dessalines, A Dramatic Tale: A Single Chapter from Haiti's History* and as highlighted above this particular chapter seems to be one that Haiti's Internal Commission decided to omit from their "object lesson". Therefore in direct contrast to Larrier, I would suggest that this in fact is one of the clearest instances through which we can discern a distinct sense of diasporic disconnection between Haitians' and African Americans' uses of Haiti's revolutionary history to assert differing agendas at the Columbian Fair. Indeed while Easton tells us that in writing this play he took "liberties" with history to help "build up a healthy and substantial race pride", it seems Haiti's Internal Commission also edited national history, but precisely to avoid narratives that emphasised race and violence, issues that could alienate potential investors through suggestion of cultural alterity and social instability.[175]

It is clear then that Haiti's pavilion at the Columbian Fair was used as a site of protest against racism in the U.S., but by African Americans rather than Haitians. There is little evidence to show that this protest function was objected to Haitian organisers, but there was also no public endorsement of Wells' pamphlet or Easton's play by Haitian politicians

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Hopkins University Press, 2003) p.201 Rydell, 'Cultural Frankenstein', p.147; Ballard, 'African-American Protest', p.117; Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines', p.42

[173] Levine, *Dislocating Race*, pp.232-3

[174] Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines', p.50

[175] W.E. Easton, *Dessalines, A Dramatic Tale: A Single Chapter from Haiti's History* (Galveston, TX: J.W. Burson-Company, 1893) p.vii

at the time. As Larrier notes, "naming Frederick Douglass as External Co-Commissioner empowered Haiti to capitalize on the leader's international reputation guaranteeing the republic a higher profile".[176] This did not, however, mean that the Haitian government intended their pavilion to express the diasporic ideals that Douglass did in his own speeches. In fact, Haiti's Pan-American-focused exhibition of commodities and Francophile portrayal of national culture demonstrate how far the objectives sought by elite Haitians departed from the transnational Pan-Africanist ideals expressed by Douglass through this national pavilion.

CONCLUSION

In December 1893, after the Columbian Fair's six-month duration had come to an end, an article published in the *Washington Bee* recorded Frederick Douglass' reflections on Haiti's presence at the event. Reinforcing the timely notion of the transformative potential of object lessons, Douglass recalled the subjects of key artworks displayed at Haiti's pavilion to explain how perceptions of Haiti had been altered by the nation's representation at Jackson Park. He stated:

> Haiti was a surprise to those who visited her pavilion. The American people had been led to believe that Haiti … was descending deeper and deeper into barbarism. When they say [*sic*] pictures of her towns and cities; the dwellings of her people; the public buildings, such as the bank of Port-au-Prince and the great iron market … the surprise and admiration increased.[177]

The sense of surprise that Douglass describes here has not been limited to fair-going contemporaries. Haiti's much admired display at the Columbian Fair has also puzzled many scholars since, who have struggled to understand and explain the Black Republic's presence in the White City.

[176] Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines', p.56
[177] Douglass quoted in the *Washington Bee*, 16 December 1893: Quote taken from Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines', p.40

This is because much of the current literature on historical representations of Haiti has centred on delineating a steady flow of derogatory portrayals of Haitian-ness.[178] Mirroring this contemporary historiography, a century ago, the authors of Haiti's pavilion catalogue for the Columbian Fair explained the importance of the Haitian presence by suggesting it was needed to combat a similar stream of slander. The catalogue highlighted the false impression of Haiti that had developed internationally due to "the erroneous assertions of a handful of foreign publicists," who were accused of unfairly maligning Haiti in "all kinds of attacks".[179] This negative publicity, exemplified in the chapter above by the article 'Back to Savagery', centred on attacks of Haitian society's African heritage and aspects of the nation's culture, most notably Vodou.

Haiti's representation at the Columbian Fair is important because it contrasts with this narrative. At Jackson Park, Haiti was not disparagingly portrayed by outsiders as a symbol of alterity. Instead Haitian politicians were given the opportunity to curate a vision of Haiti for international audiences. In line with the conventional functions of world's fairs, this resulted in a representation of Haiti largely comprising commodities for trade, particularly designed to appeal to potential investors or trading partners. The above chapter corroborates the notion that the Haitian government was invited to utilise the platform created by U.S. Congress in Chicago because, in advance of the fair, leading figures in Haitian politics and commerce had indicated their willingness to align domestic policies to a Pan-American trading arrangement favoured by the United States. In demonstrating its will to conform to a global capitalist economy the Haitian government was able to avert the degradation of objectified display, which at the Columbian Fair was most notably inflicted upon the Kingdom of Dahomey.[180]

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[178] See for example: P. Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1994); M.A. Sourieau and K. M. Balutansky (eds) *Ecrire en pays assiégé Haiti – Writing Under Siege* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004); Cosentino, Donald J., *Divine Revolution: The Art of Edouard Duval-Carrié* (Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum, 2004); Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed;* D. Jenson, 'The Writing of Disaster in Haiti: Signifying Cataclysm from Slave Revolution to Earthquake in M. Munro (ed.) *Haiti Rising: Haitian History, Culture and the Earthquake* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010) pp.102-111

[179] Gentil and Chauvet, *Haiti à l'Exposition*, p.12

[180] See for example: Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, pp.16-17; Hinsley, 'World as Marketplace', p.362; Gonzalez and Rydell, *Designing Pan-America*, pp.32-49; K. Salt, 'Haitian Question' pp.12-53

Once at the fair, effectively communicating Haiti's ability to integrate into a hemispheric economic system was not achieved through display of commodities alone. An array of other items, including national relics, notable publications and over sixty artworks, were displayed as symbols of Haiti's history and culture and these accounted for around thirty percent of the objects housed inside Haiti's pavilion. These objects were strategically selected to counteract the "attacks" of "foreign publicists" but not by recuperating Haiti's African heritage or practices associated with Vodou. In fact these maligned facets of Haitian culture, understood to epitomize its alterity, were largely omitted. Instead, the objects displayed as symbols of Haiti's history and culture at the Columbian Fair expressed parity or conformity to the norms and aspirations of bourgeois Euro-American audiences.

The array of historical and cultural artefacts exhibited within Haiti's pavilion was selected and arranged by the Haitian commission to augment its display of tradable commodities by expressing conformity in three key ways. Firstly, by portraying Haiti as a capable trading partner with a recognizable commercial infrastructure. Secondly, by inspiring amongst Euro-American audiences at the fair a sense that Haitians were culturally familiar and shared aspects of their heritage as well as their social values. Finally, by commemorating a narrative of national independence that paralleled those of the United States and a number of Latin American republics represented at the Fair, thereby evoking a sense of Pan-American affinity. These expressions of conformity were nowhere more visibly demonstrated than in the range of artworks displayed.

Watson's "crayon views", for example, depicted modern sites of trade and manufacture, national infrastructure and civic buildings mainly in Haiti's capital city, which would have been comparable to places found in major cities across the globe. This collection of images also represented numerous sites of Christian worship in Haiti, but none explicitly related to Vodou. This selective representation of religious traditions accentuated aspects of Haiti's heritage and Haitians' cultural practices shared by, rather than distinct from those of, Euro-American audiences at the fair. Therefore, Watson's images emphasised both the familiarity of Haiti's commercial spaces and cultural practices.

Many reviews, guidebooks and commemorative albums printed at the time of the fair focussed on artworks as a particular highlight of the Haitian display. Often featured prominently in these glowing reviews was *La Rêverie*: a sculptural work by Paris-based, Haitian artist Louis-Edmond Laforesterie. This representation of a daydreaming Caucasian youth in white marble exemplified the Francophile neoclassicism that featured centrally within Haiti's art display. This aesthetic was pivotal to the pavilion's projection of a culturally conformist vision of Haiti's history and culture as it mirrored the style in which the fair's U.S. organisers opted to create the most prominent architecture and landmarks of the White City. Like their counterparts throughout America's nascent republics, many amongst Haiti's social elites revered French culture. Therefore, the Haitian commission's decision to showcase Laforesterie's *La Rêverie* within their pavilion at the Columbian Fair demonstrated their efforts to exploit the French-ness of this Haitian artists' practice for the cultural capital it offered as an artwork with international appeal. This exhibition occurred long before works identified as "Haitian art" became highly valuable commodities in the international domain by virtue of displaying markers of a distinct cultural Haitian-ness. Therefore at this international exhibition no discernable claim was made, by the Haitian pavilion's commissioning body, to an aesthetic or cultural Haitian-ness.

Displaying *La Rêverie* was not the only place that an aesthetic neoclassicism was showcased within the Haitian pavilion. The selective commemoration of Haiti's national heroes at this site was also in the form of neoclassical portraiture. Yet while the form and style of these artworks may have leaned heavily on French cultural heritage, the revolutionary history they conveyed venerated a pantheon of founding fathers and thus paralleled the commemoration of revolutionary history presented by the host nation. Other American republics represented at the fair also displayed neoclassical artworks that commemorated their founding fathers and national narratives. Notably, in the case of Venezuela at least one of these portraits was created by an artist trained in Paris. Therefore, in matching this trend, Haiti conformed to a Pan-American mode of narrating an autonomous national identity on the cusp of the twentieth century.

Recognising the significant role that Haiti's resident social and political elites played in shaping the "object lesson" housed inside the Haitian pavilion is highly revealing for two

main reasons. Firstly it is critical to understanding the conformist, rather than contestatory, vision of Haiti presented at the Columbian Fair. Then secondly, this case also provides a vital example of an event, which could contribute to a more nuanced literature on historical representations of Haiti. Its inclusion within this historiography would offer a notable historical instance in which Haitians have successfully exercised agency to shape international perceptions of their nation. Therefore instead of being cast as helpless recipients of, or disgruntled protestors against, all too familiar portrayals of Haiti as an exemplar of irrational alterity or dangerous barbarity, in this case Haitians are actively present as effective agents of change. Additionally, recognising how substantially the aspirations of Haiti's social and political elites shaped this display of nationhood undermines any assumption that the only, or even the primary, forces shaping Haiti's display were the imperialist and racist ideologies underpinning the wider event. Acknowledging that Haiti's domestic politics also played a key role in shaping this display allows us to perceive that internal class and gender biases also significantly affected the version of Haiti presented at the Columbian Fair.

Yet beyond these domestic concerns, it is also important to note that resident political figures were not the only ones who held sway over the representation of Haiti at this event, or how it has been subsequently remembered. Despite no direct mention being made in contemporary sources of the roles non-resident Haitians played in shaping Haiti's pavilion, and indeed the nation-state itself at that time, we can readily find at least two key examples of such individuals influencing the "object lesson" presented. As noted above, the work of Paris-based sculptor Louis-Edmond Laforesterie was positioned prominently within the pavilion, and received a good deal of praise and admiration amongst American reviewers for the awards it had received in Paris. Yet Laforesterie's residence in that city and his family connections to diplomats and other notables also living in Paris were not acknowledged.

The much more substantial role of Charles A. Preston, Haitian-born diplomat to the U.S., was also little recognised by contemporary sources. Not much is known of the details of Preston's role or background, yet we do know that he was a Haitian diplomat based in the United States, whose father had also been a Haitian diplomat based in the U.S. capital. At

the Columbian Fair Preston took up the role of external co-commissioner, alongside Frederick Douglass, and was in charge of the logistical elements of setting up Haiti's "object lesson". Preston's part was therefore highly significant to the envisioning of Haitian nationhood at the Columbian Fair as his role was the closest to what we might today call an exhibition curator. Yet in spite of this his involvement has largely been forgotten. Following the examples of Laforesterie and Preston, it also seems likely that a range of other individuals involved in staging Haiti's presence at the fair may also have been diasporic Haitians, and a systematic study of the pavilion catalogue with the aim of measuring this involvement would be a useful addition to existing scholarship.

Specifically in the case of Preston, it is clear that his contribution has not been well remembered in large part due to the significant contemporary and subsequent interest in Frederick Douglass' appointment, which almost entirely overshadowed Preston's assignment to the same role. Douglass' involvement gives us the most notable example of the prominent role African-American activists played in envisioning Haiti at Jackson Park. Indeed, once at the fair Haiti's pavilion became a vehicle for the Pan-Africanist rhetoric and representation of black citizens from the U.S. that Douglass promoted. Over time, Douglass' actions and rhetoric became the most influential frames by which historians have gained insight into Haiti's presence at the Columbian Fair. Yet the agendas Douglass was endorsing were decidedly different to the nationalist objectives pursued by Haiti's internal commission through the "object lesson" they assembled. The distance between these groups' agendas, and the eclipsing of Haitian agency by that of African-American activists, has been obscured in surrounding historiography by an expectation or desire to find African diasporic solidarity at the centre of the collaboration of convenience between Haitian politicians and Douglass in Chicago in 1893.

The Haitian pavilion's catalogue explained that "Haiti had to take part in the Great Exhibition … were it only to attract universal attention to a country hitherto unknown to most, or what is worse, poorly understood by others".[181] Therefore aside from its conventional function as a trade fair of sorts, the Columbian Fair was clearly seen by Haiti's politicians to offer a much-needed international platform upon which the Haitian

[181] Gentil and Chauvet, *Haiti à l'Exposition*, p.11

government could redress perceptions of Haiti. At the time of the fair, Haiti's conformist pavilion display did impact and alter perceptions of the nation amongst audiences in the United States. Yet it seems that once the White City was torn down and memories of Haiti's much-admired object lesson faded, familiar stereotypes resurfaced. Over time the Haitian state again lost control over Haiti's national image abroad, both to the powerful rhetoric of black activists in the United States and to the denigrating depictions of foreign publicists. Indeed, just over two decades later, based once again on accusations of barbarism, savagery and political instability, Haiti would be invaded and occupied by U.S. Marines.

HISTORICAL INTERLUDE I

Following Haiti's presence at the World's Columbian Fair in 1893, the Haitian government acquired a number of the artworks that had appeared in the Haitian pavilion at that event. These included Laforesterie's 'La Rêverie', which was subsequently displayed within the Presidential Palace. Yet aside from sporadic acts of state patronage, such as this, national infrastructure to support artists in Haiti was scant at the turn of the twentieth century. Indeed, in 1904 commemoration of the centenary of Haitian independence prompted government celebrations; "a few historical items were displayed in a building that was called a 'museum'. However it only existed for the duration of the celebrations".[1] Haiti was also represented at Brussels' Exposition Universelle in 1910 and its display included Haitian artworks, most notable amongst these being Numa Desroches' painting of Sans Souci Palace, the former residence of King Henri Christophe. Yet aside from such temporary displays, there was a continued lack of national institutional support for artists in Haiti. Artists among the elites therefore continued to be taught abroad, mainly in Paris, while some others practiced informally in Haiti or were taught in church schools.[2] However collecting and exhibiting institutions remained absent. Therefore comparatively little is known about Haitian artists' works from this period, though it seems European-style fine art, and particularly portraiture of elite figures, remained an important genre of practice at that time.

In the first decade of the twentieth-century French influence in Haitian politics and society also remained strong, as controversy at Haiti's National Bank revealed during the presidency of Pierre Nord Alexis. In the wake of a weakened economy due to over-dependency on coffee exports, the government wanted to lend money in order to develop alternative industries, yet the consortia of French and German administrators at the National Bank refused these requests, purportedly in order to manipulate the situation to their own benefit.[3] Yet the balance of international influence in Haiti was to shift in the coming decades. A number of American businesses, including The National City Bank of New York, purchased substantial shares in the Haitian National Bank in 1911. Throughout the coming years these private investors constantly petitioned U.S. government officials about protection against competing French and German interests in the country, as well as political instability.[4] Therefore, with the U.S. government's continued interest in extending its influence over neighbouring territories, when the First World War broke out in Europe, Woodrow Wilson authorised a military occupation of Haiti by U.S. Marines.

The occupation began in 1915 under the guise of protecting private and national interests in Haiti during the war, yet it extended far beyond this into the 1930s. During the occupation years the Haitian state was substantially brought under the control of the U.S. government. For example, then Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin D. Roosevelt,

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[1] G. Alexis, 'Contemporary Haitian Art: Private Collection- Public Property' *Museum International*, 62.4 (2010) p.57
[2] Ibid.
[3] F. Marcelin, 'The Battle with the Bank' *Haiti: An Island Luminous:* <http://islandluminous.fiu.edu/learn.html> [accessed 10 December 2014]
[4] M. Krenn, 'National City Bank in Haiti' *Haiti: An Island Luminous:* <http://islandluminous.fiu.edu/learn.html> [accessed 10 December 2014]

rewrote elements of Haiti's constitution in favour of American interests. Yet local resistance to this politically damaging invasion among Haitians also provided a significant impetus for the development of a new cultural movement and artistic styles in Haiti. Influenced by Indigéniste movements sweeping through Latin America at the time a politically-engaged group amongst Haiti's intelligentsia began to take a sustained and serious interest in Haitian folkloric cultural forms that had previously been repudiated by the Haitian elites. One such manifestation of this was the development of the culturally active Pont St. Geraud group. This Haitian salon comprised a heterogenous mix of individuals from many professions including a number of novelists, writers and poets, past and future politicians, political activists, academics and painters. Among these were Jacques Roumain, Philippe Thoby-Marcelin, Pétion Savain, Georges Remponneau and (later President) Dumarsais Estimé.[5]

With a change in presidency in the United States in 1933, the decision was made to end the Marine Occupation of Haiti the following year. Yet the intensified contact between the two nations over the previous decades prompted Haiti to become an object of cultural fascination in the United States. Among those who were intrigued by the neighbouring island nation were a steady stream of African-American artists and other cultural professionals who began to visit Haiti from the 1930s. For example, Aaron Douglass, Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes all visited Haiti and interacted with the country's cultural vanguard professionally and socially. Perhaps the most significant exchange, in terms of the visual arts, to arise from these transnational engagements was that between U.S. African-American artist William Edouard Scott and Haitian artist Pétion Savain. The latter was inspired by Scott's work formally as well as his dignified portrayals of the everyday lives of ordinary Haitians, and this had an impact on his own practice and that of his contemporaries. Like other early-twentieth-century Modern art movements, this era of Haitian art marked a rupture with past works and practices as folkloric culture became a subject-focus of many artists' works. Meanwhile in terms of form, recognised Modern art styles also began to filter into Haitian artists' practices including, for example, impressionistic, cubist and fauvist elements.

As noted at length in Chapter 2, the following decade marked the establishment of the Centre d'Art, under the patronage of the Haitian and U.S. governments and led by Haitian artists and U.S. art patrons. This was a significant event in the history of art infrastructure in Haiti given that the centre is still active to the present day and so is the longest-standing arts institution in existence in Haiti. The launching of this institution, as noted previously, prompted the somewhat unexpected influx of amateur or part-time artists from lower socio-economic backgrounds who swiftly became the focus of international media attention, while their art became a product marketed to international consumers. From as early as the later 1930s president Stenio Vincent began to explore the possibility of using folkloric culture to stimulate the formation of a tourist industry in Haiti. Yet efforts in this direction were significantly slowed by the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 and the realisation of such ambitions would have to wait until the ascendency of Dumarsais Estimé to the Haitian presidency. The latter, as will be detailed at length in the following

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[5] M.P. Lerebours, 'The Indigeniste Revolt: Haitian Art 1927-44' *Callaloo*, 15.3 (Summer 1992) pp.711-725

case study, staged a large-scale international exhibition entitled the Exposition International du Bicentenaire de Port-au-Prince. This event, which aimed to launch a fledgling tourist industry in Haiti, was realised in 1949 with mixed results for Haiti and Estimé.

CHAPTER 4

HAITI'S 'LITTLE WORLD'S FAIR': THE BICENTENAIRE DE PORT-AU-PRINCE OF 1949-50

INTRODUCTION

From December 1949 to June 1950 Haiti hosted an International Exposition to mark the bicentenary of the founding of Haiti's capital by the French in 1749.[1] The event was known locally as the *Bicentenaire de la Fondation de Port au Prince*, but was also dubbed "Haiti's Little World's Fair" by the international press. The project was the showpiece of Dumarsais Estimé's presidency, and was given an official theme of a tribute to the works of Peace and Progress in the heart of America.[2] This reflected the postwar era broadly, but specifically the Haitian state's desire to promote respect of Haiti's autonomous status within the international community in the aftermath of its occupation by United States' Marines from 1915-1934. Employing a strong rhetoric of international brotherhood, Haiti's government published an "invitation" to participating countries that articulated lofty diplomatic aims in line with their stated exposition theme, including Haiti's "fervor … to help rebuild peace and the greatness of the world".[3] Yet beneath this first layer of official rhetoric, as contemporaries and scholars since have highlighted, Haiti's government pursued a number of other objectives aimed at both foreign as well as domestic audiences.

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[1] See for example: 'Little World Fair Haiti 1949' *British Pathé* <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/little-world-fair-haiti> [accessed 12 December 2014]; E. Bogat, 'Haiti's Own World's Fair' *New York Times*, 4 December 1949, p.23; 'Opening Exposition in Haiti' *New York Times*, 20 December 1949, p.24

[2] This is the largest of only three BIE (*Bureau International des Expositions*) recognised international exhibitions recorded to have taken place in the Caribbean. The two others recorded are: the Kingston Jamaica International Exhibition of 1891; and 'The Fair of Peace and Fraternity of the Free World' held in neighbouring Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic just 5 years after the Haitian edition, in 1955-56. The BIE is the intergovernmental body appointed by a Paris Convention of 1928 to be in charge of overseeing and organising World and International Expositions: *Bureau International des Expositions* <http://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/library-a-publications/document-library/doc_details/214-port-au-prince-1949-french.html [accessed 31 August 2012]

[3] Author's translation from the French original, *Exposition Internationale 1949-1950: Bi-centenaire de Port-au-Prince 1749-1949* (Port-au-Prince: Imp. des Antilles, 1948) pp.6, 20: Digital Library of the Caribbean <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00010663/00001/1> [accessed 10 December 2014]

A handful of scholars have touched upon this event in broader studies of mid-twentieth century Haiti, but little has been done to explore this event in the context of world's fair history.[4] How, for example, did Haiti's government seek to reshape the exhibitionary conventions of a traditionally imperialist model of display imported from Euro-America? Did it deliberately echo or inadvertently repeat any elements of that model? How did the Haitian state use the post-war context and international platform provided by a world's fair to meet its needs in the post-occupation era? and how, when catering to both foreign and domestic audiences, was Haiti represented? Paralleling Andrew Apter's ground-breaking study of the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (also known as FESTAC) that was staged in Nigeria in 1977, this case study explores how and why Haiti's government went about adapting the world's fair format to stage an international cultural extravaganza in a postcolonial society.[5] Much like the national cultural display presented at FESTAC, core attractions at Haiti's *Bicentenaire* traded on cultural distinctness, or specifically a sense of Haitian-ness.[6] This deeply contrasted with the cultural display that Haiti's government presented around 60 years earlier at the World's Columbian Fair (the subject of the previous case study). This chapter will therefore seek to understand what prompted this shift and also whether we can find any continuity between the Haitian cultural displays presented at this event and in Chicago's Jackson Park in 1893.

As ever, Haiti's international exposition or world's fair acted as a vehicle for the host nation to display national commodities and investment opportunities, whilst also providing space for foreign nations and private businesses to exhibit their products. In the post-war era the possibilities of mass tourism to the Caribbean were opening up, particularly to consumers in the United States and Europe, as air travel became accessible and affordable for more people. The Haitian state's determination to use the *Bicentenaire* as a vehicle for

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[4] See for example: B.G. Plummer, 'The Golden Age of Tourism: U.S. Influence in Haitian Cultural and Economic Affairs, 1934-1971' *Cimarron,* 2 (Winter 1990) pp.50-53; K. Ramsey 'Vodou, Nationalism, and Performance: The Staging of Folklore in Mid-Twentieth-Century Haiti' in J.C. Desmond (ed.) *Meaning in Motion* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997) pp.345-378; M. Smith, *Red and Black in Haiti: Radicalism, Conflict, and Political Change, 1934-1957* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); G. Averill, *A Day for the Hunter a Day for the Prey: Popular Music and Power in Haiti* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997); L. Twa, *Visualizing Haiti in U.S. Culture, 1910-1950* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014)

[5] A. Apter, *The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005)

[6] Ibid., pp.47-48

promoting Haiti's tourist industry was reflected in the geographical spread of the sixteen foreign nations that took part in the event and the allocation of government funds to it.[7] Aside from building a "Palace of Tourism" to showcase this industry at the exposition, the state also sponsored construction of all the routine amenities that would attract holidaymakers. New hotels, casinos, nightclubs and bars were built in and around the fairgrounds, whilst state resources were also dedicated to publicising national heritage sites, marketing the local landscape and establishing new transport routes into Haiti. Yet, all of this was not only done to attract international audiences.

Some sources estimate that Estimé's government dedicated as much as a third of the annual national budget to this event, but the potential benefits to be secured for the domestic economy through successful promotion of Haiti's fledgling tourist industry were also considerable.[8] These included job creation, development of national infrastructure, urban redevelopment, economic growth and, in consequence, improved popularity among the electorate. To make these plans successful the Haitian state needed attractions that would prove a strong pull for international consumers. With reference to Krista Thompson's concept of "tropicalization", this chapter will highlight how the Haitian state pursued the tourist agenda by producing visions of Haiti that echoed already lucrative images of the wider Caribbean created to cater for the tastes of international travellers.[9] Yet to successfully market Haiti as a tourist destination, replicating what other Caribbean islands offered was not enough. To compete, the Haitian state needed distinctive attractions. Therefore, to successfully market Haiti through his "little world's fair" Estimé could not trade on cultural conformity. Instead, at the *Bicentenaire*, the Haitian government made a bold claim to distinct cultural Haitian-ness through some of its most popular attractions.

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[7] Outside of Europe and the Americas only the Middle Eastern region was represented (the latter through a pavilion listed as "Pavillon du Proche Orient et de la Colonie Syrienne"): A. Mathurin, *Bi-centenaire de la Fondation de Port-au-Prince, 1749-1949* (Port-au-Prince: Impr. des Antilles, 1975) pp.209-211

[8] See for example: Smith, *Red and Black*, p.144; Averill, *Day for the Hunter*, p.66

[9] K.A. Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006) p.5

A key example of this was the showcasing of folklore- and specifically Vodou-inspired dance performances by Haiti's newly formed Troupe Folklorique Nationale at the fairgrounds' Théâtre du Verdure. As existing scholarship on Haiti's *Bicentenaire* has recognised, though these shows were marketed on claims to cultural authenticity, they were very much an invention of tradition: the creation of exotic, stylised and commercialised versions of "sacred dances" to satisfy outsider audiences.[10] The invention and staging of apparently authentic Vodou-related performance for curious travellers was nothing new in Haiti.[11] Yet what was significant about the performances of the Troupe Folklorique Nationale at the *Bicentenaire* was the fact that these were not peripheral attractions presented by local opportunist entrepreneurs to coincide with a larger international event. These were core attractions directly sponsored by the state and thus marked the Haitian government's claiming of cultural assets associated with the nation's African heritage and popular culture.

A number of noted scholars of Haiti, who have touched on the *Bicentenaire* in broader studies, have also importantly pointed out that the Haitian government's claiming and promotion of Haiti's folkloric culture at this time was a significant expression of nation-building and therefore substantially meaningful for domestic audiences too. Kate Ramsey, in particular, has argued that governmental sponsorship of the Troupe Folklorique Nationale's prominent presence at the *Bicentenaire* should be understood as an expression of the "folkloricization" of Haitian national identity by the state. Ramsey explains folkloricization as processes by which the state sought to reclaim Haitian sovereignty and rehabilitate elite and middle-class Haitians pride in folkloric culture in the face of religious persecution and neocolonial domination in the post-occupation era.[12]

State promotion of these folklore-inspired attractions may have been an expression of effective attempts to rehabilitate the image of popular cultural practices among domestic audiences. Employing a marketing strategy of "tropicalization" may also have been a

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[10] Smith, *Red and Black,* p.107; M. Polyné, *From Douglass to Duvalier: U.S. African Americans, Haiti and Pan Americanism* (Gainsville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2010) pp.154-157; Twa, *Visualizing Haiti*, p.210

[11] See for example: M.B. Bird, *The Black Man: Or Haitian Independence* (New York: M.B. Bird, 1869); S. St. John, *Hayti or, the Black Republic* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1884)

[12] Ramsey 'Vodou, Nationalism, and Performance', pp.345-378

shrewd post-occupation approach to piquing the interest of foreign tourists with representations of an alluring exoticism. Indeed it certainly appealed to key U.S. media outlets that reviewed the fair with much excitement.[13] Yet this was also a risky strategy because those same folkloric practices and exotic images had featured strongly within long-standing and damaging imaginaries of Haiti particularly potent in the United States during the occupation era. These presented Haiti as a politically incompetent, culturally strange and ultimately dangerous neighbouring state that necessitated intervention. The below chapter will therefore seek to examine how distinctively Haitian cultural attractions presented at the *Bicentenaire* simultaneously resisted and appealed to popular perceptions of Haiti potent in the United States. Yet, it will also consider how the Haitian state responded to the risk of evoking negative associations with Haitian folklore by echoing the displays presented at previous world's fairs. This balance was nowhere more clearly demonstrated than through the wide-ranging array of visual arts displayed at the fair.

The visual arts displayed at Haiti's *Bicentenaire* ranged from Modernist architectural showpieces, sculptures and murals largely commissioned from non-Haitian artists, to neoclassical sculpture and, what was widely billed in international reviews at the time as, Haitian "primitive" art.[14] A formal analysis of prominent architectural landmarks created for Haiti's *Bicentenaire* will demonstrate the extent to which the design of these showpiece Modernist structures was influenced by previous world's fair. Indeed, from the 1930s, Modernist architecture expressing a future-oriented optimism had become the conventional aesthetic-style in which to create world's fair landscapes and Haiti's edition was no exception. To demonstrate the Haitian government's awareness of and adherence to these conventions particular parallels will be drawn between architecture at Haiti's *Bicentenaire* and that at the New York World's Fair of 1939-40. Similarly an examination of a group of neoclassical sculptures loaned from a prominent North American art institution will reveal how the Haitian government, when selecting art to display at the *Bicentenaire*, also drew on aesthetic models and conventions popularised at late nineteenth century world's fairs. Together these sections of the below chapter will illuminate how and why,

[13] See for example: Bogat, 'Haiti's Own World's Fair', p.23
[14] See for example: E. Bogat, 'Exposition in Haiti: Port-au-Prince Prepares for 200th Anniversary' *New York Times*, 23 October 1949, p.xxii

alongside the state's sponsorship of culturally distinct attractions, a level of cultural conformity was still expressed by the visual arts display at the *Bicentenaire*.

Sources of information for this event are fragmentary, but there are a number of primary documents that can be used to explore this event from a Haitian perspective. Particularly notable is a commemorative album entitled *Exposition Internationale*, which was published by the state in 1948, a year before the exposition was due to open. This album contains rich visual illustrations that make clear the importance the *Bicentenaire*'s organisers attached to the display of Modernist architecture that they presented. This album also crucially reveals that a commissioning body of eleven men, current and former politicians drawn from Haiti's urban middle classed and social elites, were appointed by the state to oversee this event. The below analysis will therefore seek to explore how the class, racial and gender biases of these individuals had an impact on the images of Haiti represented through the *Bicentenaire*. A variety of other primary source materials, from first person accounts of visitors to the *Bicentenaire* to U.S. press reviews and retrospective histories of the event, suggest Haitian artists practicing in a variety of styles were also included in this display. Yet it seems that domestic hierarchies of class and aesthetic value influenced the selection and reception of these works by the Haitian state at the time, and also their place within the archival record of this event.

Finally, as an examination of contemporary responses to the visual arts display presented at this event also demonstrates, the Haitian state was not the only agent shaping the image of Haiti projected through this event, influencing how the *Bicentenaire* would be remembered, or trading on distinct cultural Haitian-ness at this time. As noted above so-called Haitian "primitive" art received a great amount of press attention, particularly in U.S. media reviews of the fair. This chapter will seek to demonstrate how this coverage reflected the promotional campaigns and opinions of key actors involved in opening the Centre d'Art in Port-au-Prince in 1944. The response of Haitian artist Geo Remponeau will be explored as will that of American Art dealer Selden Rodman. These responses will be considered in the context of the emerging international market in Haitian art that was flourishing in North America at the time. At its emergence this market in Haitian "primitive" art had both overlapping and conflicting relationships to state-sponsored

visions of Haitian-ness. Highlighting these emergent mechanisms for the marketing of Haitian art at the time of the *Bicentenaire* and recognising their potency will set up a place from which to understand how these dynamics developed and then went on to influence Haiti's representation at the Venice Biennale over sixty year later in 2011 (which is the subject of my third and final case study).

MAPPING THE FAIR

The site of the Haiti's *Bicentenaire* consisted of a large strip of land stretching along the Port-au-Prince waterfront. This site was divided into three main sections: a western, a central, and an eastern third each of which had an edge along the waterfront.[15] The western third was the most densely packed area in terms of new structures on the fairgrounds. It mainly contained the pavilions of foreign nations, concessions of multinational corporations and intergovernmental organisations, a number of buildings to house central exhibits (many of which would be converted into municipal buildings in the event's aftermath) and outdoor spaces that were concerned with diplomatic activities during the fair. It was intended that the central third of the fairgrounds would contain pavilions exhibiting foreign industries on one side and right on the waterfront at least five new hotels. This area was made up of a long thin strip of land on either side of the site's main thoroughfare named Boulevard Harry Truman after then U.S. President.[16] Finally, the eastern third of the site seems to have been chiefly set aside for exhibitions of national culture, entertainments and amenities, which were also planned to carry over onto a small island in the adjacent bay, called *L'île des Attractions*.[17]

This information about the layout of Haiti's International Exhibition has been gleaned from the above-mentioned album *Exposition Internationale*: a short but richly illustrated volume published by Estimé's government to commemorate the *Bicentenaire*. This publication included a map of the fairgrounds, striking artists' impressions of new buildings to be constructed for the event, and a perspective view across the fair's landscape [see for

[15] *Exposition Internationale*, p.20
[16] It is not clear whether the area set aside for "foreign industries" was intended to serve national or private exhibitions.
[17] *Exposition Internationale*, p.20

example Figures 34-37]. No photographs of the exposition, its buildings, or the internal exhibits housed within them where printed in this album. This is due to the fact that it was published in 1948, a year before the fair was due to launch, and it is therefore likely that the fairgrounds and new buildings were not yet completed. This publication therefore presents us with an important document that represents the curators' and designers' intentions rather than end results. Yet, as I will demonstrate below, this means that some of the information presented in this commemorative album differs to that given by sources produced at the time of, or after, the event.

Another commemorative text focussed solely on Haiti's International Exposition, entitled *Bi-centenaire de la Fondation de Port-au-Prince*, was authored by Augustin Mathurin and published much later in 1975.[18] This text also lacks images depicting exterior or interior views of buildings on the fairgrounds, though it does present us with a variety of text-based information including details about buildings that were present on the fairgrounds, foreign nations that took part in the event, the opening ceremonies that took place in February 1950 and various awards presented to exhibitors at the *Bicentenaire*.[19] Further to this, Mathurin's volume also includes a map of the fairgrounds [see Figures 38-40], although unfortunately elements of this image seem to have been impaired or soiled during the printing process making some areas of the fairgrounds illegible [see especially Figure 40].[20] Yet we can see from what is clear of this image that there are a number of differences between this map and that presented in the 1948 commemorative album. Specifically, a number of buildings present in the 1948 map are absent here and the mapping of certain areas are also altered.

Mathurin's volume provides scant indication of the archival or anecdotal sources of information upon which it is based and it is therefore difficult to test the veracity of his account. However there are a number of areas of overlap between these two sources, and beyond this there are fragments of evidence about the fairgrounds and the artworks

[18] Mathurin, *Bi-centenaire*
[19] For example Mathurin includes a list of fifty-seven buildings which were inaugurated on the fairgrounds in February 1950: Mathurin, *Bi-centenaire*, pp.209-211
[20] I have accessed copies of this text held at both the Library of Congress and Yale University Library, and each had the same impairments.

exhibited within them scattered across an array of primary and secondary sources.[21] When grouped together this collection of source materials provide us with a substantial overview of the layout and content of the *Bicentenaire de Port-au-Prince*. Therefore, before I go on to identify and consider specific aspects of the version of Haitian nationhood performed and presented at Haiti's International Exhibition of 1949-50 and international representations of this event, I will briefly outline here the areas and buildings constructed within the three sections of the fairgrounds mentioned above, highlighting where known artworks featured in each.

Western and Central Sections

The western third of the fairgrounds [see Figures 37 and 38] was made up of an area crisscrossed by numerous avenues named after figures of historical importance in neighbouring American nations (such as Símon Bolivar, Antonio Maceo and Juan Peron), the Haitian revolutionary hero Marie-Jeanne, the contemporary head of the Roman Catholic Church Pope Pius XII and contemporary President of the U.S., Harry S. Truman. This area contained a number of Haiti's central showpiece buildings, which were presented as full-page spreads in the government sponsored *Exposition Internationale* album. These were the Entrée Principale, the Pavillon de la Poste and Pavillon du Tourisme [see Figures 35, 36 and 41]. On the façade of the latter two were murals created by Pierre Bourdelle (a French-born artist who emigrated to the U.S. in 1929).[22] An article advertising the fair also presented a photograph of a mural depicting a slave breaking his chains and situated "in … [the] Exposition's main entrance" [see Figure 42]. Though the artist who rendered this mural for Haiti's fair remains unidentified, it is notable that in style this image strongly resembles that of figurative murals painted by Bourdelle for the New York World's Fair of 1939. Particularly comparable is the use of line to render the musculature of this self-

[21] These include: accounts on preparations for the fair and reporting on events occurring during it printed in *Le Nouvelliste* (Haiti's oldest daily newspaper still in circulation); U.S. press reviews from a number of sources; and histories of the period authored by a variety of scholars.

[22] J.R. Dautruche, 'Re-construire la destination touristique: Penser aux festivals et aux grands événements' *Le Nouvelliste*, 30 May 2014 <http://lenouvelliste.com/lenouvelliste/article/130346/Re-construire-la-destination-touristique-Penser-aux-festivals-et-aux-grands-evenements.html> [accessed 10 December 2014]; *Clara Salander's adventures in 1947* (2 June 2011) <http://www.gavledraget.se/A2/Clara_Salander_Vaggmalningar_lostander.htm> [accessed 10 December 2014]

liberating slave and that employed by Bourdelle in New York to depict *The Sower* [see Figure 43]. The subjects of the murals painted onto the Pavilion of Tourism are unknown but the two murals by Bourdelle on the exterior of the Post Pavilion have been described as:

> a man riding an eagle with a heart in hand, bringing the message of love; the other a woman mounted on a winged horse, brandishing the "torch that brings light to all".[23]

A contemporary review of the *Bicentenaire* also depicts a large mural or canvas by Haitian artist Castera Bazile inside the Pavilion of Tourism that depicts a street procession [see Figure 44].

Elsewhere in this section of the grounds were the pavilions of all foreign nations, states and participants. The most prominent and central of these belonged to the U.S.A., Venezuela, Guatemala, Mexico, Italy, Cuba, the Vatican and France.[24] Mathurin's text tells us that the latter contained sculptures depicting Joan of Arc, the three Dumas, and another titled *La France* by "Bourdelle" (though this is likely Pierre Bourdelle's father Antoine).[25] Aside from this, little is known of the interior exhibits in these buildings. In this section of the fairgrounds, a variety of national and multinational corporations also presented small concessionary spaces. These included: Westinghouse, Pan American Airways, Texaco, Shell, Esso, Chanel and Curaçao Trading. Finally prominent buildings representing a variety of intergovernmental organisations and agencies were also present in this area. Included among these were: the UN, the Pan-American Union (referred to in the previous chapter and now known as the Organization of American States), and UNESCO. Central to this western third of the fairgrounds there was also an outdoor space named "Place des Nations Unies", the most dominant feature of which was an illuminated fountain (known

[23] The translation presented here is mine. See the French original at: Dautruche, 'Re-construire', n.p.
[24] We can see from Mathurin's map that there were also pavilions representing: the Near East and Syria, Belgium, England, Puerto Rico, Salvador and San Marino [see Figure 38]. A list within the text of this volume also informs us that there were pavilions belonging to: Florida, Argentina, Chile, Spain, Jamaica and Canada (Quebec). Mathurin, *Bi-centenaire*, pp.109-201
[25] Ibid., pp.174, 246

as Fontaine des Nymphes d'Ebène or Les Grandes Eaux Lumineuses) which contained sculptural works again designed by Pierre Bourdelle.[26]

There were many fewer buildings within the long strip that made up the central third of the fairgrounds. Aside from a building labeled "National Casino" all of these were situated on the opposite side of Boulevard Harry Truman to the waterfront. Mathurin's map [see Figure 39] shows a central group of nine buildings. Though the labels given to some of these are illegible it is clear that five buildings were used to house manufactured products such as furniture and furnishings and pottery and ceramics, though it is not clear whether these contained only Haitian products or foreign manufactures as well. However the largest and most central building constructed on this section was the Hotel Beau Rivage, with adjoining plots labeled swimming pool and tennis. From a first-person account of the Swedish artist, Clara Salander, who was involved in beautifying newly built structures for the fair, we have an image of the brightly-coloured touristic murals that she was involved in painting on the exterior of this hotel [see Figures 45 and 46].

Eastern Section and Parallel Projects

As we can see from plans laid out in the government's commemorative album of 1948, the eastern third of the fairgrounds was dedicated to display of national culture, entertainments and amenities. This preparatory map shows buildings intended to house displays related to the heroes of Haitian independence, a *Palais de l'Agriculture et des Provinces*, a *Palais des Beaux Arts* and two groups of smaller structures labeled *Eglise – Art – Religion* [see Figures 47-49]. Additionally there were areas containing an array of small structures labeled as *Zone du Folklore et de l'Art Paysan* and *Parc des Attractions*, and finally plots of land were set aside for more hotels, a tower and a stadium.[27] This layout suggests that in original plans there was an intention to separate art exhibitions into two or three different streams.[28] However the map enclosed in Mathurin's *Bi-centenaire* shows a number of alterations to this eastern area of the fairgrounds including the apparent absence of a set of buildings labeled *Eglise-Art-Religion*, though a directory of buildings a

[26] D. Seurin, *Haiti* (Montreal: Ulysse, 2001) p.80
[27] *Exposition Internationale,* p.20
[28] The peasant art and folklore "zone" may have referred to planned performances of the Haitian National Folklore Troupe which proved a very popular attraction.

few pages later in this same book lists a *Pavillon des Arts Religieux*.[29] Similarly Mathurin's map does not explicitly designate any area as the *Zone du Folklore et de l'Art Paysan* and no *L'île des Attractions* is included. Yet this later representation of the fairgrounds does retain a building labelled *Pavillon des Beaux Arts*. There is scant information known about the exhibits housed inside the *Palais* or *Pavillon des Beaux Arts*. However, a number of contemporary and secondary sources provide snippets of information about both Haitian and foreign artists and occasionally specific artworks, which they relate to the "Beaux Arts" section of the fairgrounds. This area will be explored in a later section of this chapter.[30] Mathurin's rendering of the eastern section of the grounds also retains a building adjacent to the Fine Arts pavilion dedicated to agriculture and between these two is a particularly poorly printed area of this map. However Clara Salander's account of the fairgrounds informs us "modernist sculptures" created by the U.S. artist, Jason Seley [see Figures 50 and 51] were displayed here "on each side of a shallow pool".[31]

Mathurin's map of the grounds also includes an area labelled *Ross Manning Attractions* (a set of sideshows imported from the United States) an aquarium, a cock-fighting stadium and a floating casino. Contemporary articles in the *New York Times* and *Américas* magazine refer to an amusements section of the grounds and more often name this area as *Les Palmistes* [see for example Figure 52]. Here they describe buildings and attractions similar to those marked on Mathurin's map. *New York Times* journalist Edith Bogat, for example, noted:

> the aquarium of tropical fish, the botanical tropical garden, the modern cockfight stadium, the model banana and sisal plantations … ritual dances, songs, and the drum music of the primitive religion which still survives in Haiti.[32]

While her colleague Paul J. C. Friedlander highlighted:

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[29] Mathurin, *Bi-centenaire*, p.50
[30] V.S. Nyabongo, 'Impressions of Haiti' *The French Review*, 25.1 (October 1951) pp.23-30; 'Caribbean Carnival: "Little World's Fair" is Haiti's big bid for tourists' *Life*, 13 March 1950, p.101; Mathurin, *Bi-centenaire,* pp.251-2
[31] *Clara Salander's adventures in 1947* (2 June 2011)
[32] Bogat 'Haiti's Own World's Fair', p.23

> a section known as Les Palmistes … centered around the Museum of Haitian People, where the country's art and history are on display, and the open-air theatre where Haiti's exotic dancing and exciting music are presented nightly.[33]

Though there is clearly some confusion about the precise names or labeling of areas and attractions presented within this section of the fair among contemporaries, what these descriptions do demonstrate clearly is that this space was being perceived and promoted as an entertaining amusements area centred on exhibitions of Haitian culture, including artworks.[34]

Finally, aside from these internal displays there were artworks situated in unknown spaces throughout the fairgrounds. These included a collection of eighteen sculptures loaned from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and another newly commissioned work of a *Mother and Child* created by the Finnish artist Arvi Tynys [Figure 53].[35] Meanwhile at the time of the fair two other high profile artistic commissions were completed, though it is unclear how closely these projects were aligned with Haiti's World's Fair. The first was the state-sponsored installation of an over-life-size statue of Toussaint L'Ouverture by the African-American artist Richmond Barthé at the gates of the nearby Presidential Palace [Figure 54].[36] The second was the completion of the first set of murals created for the Cathédrale Sainte Trinité by a group of Haitian artists associated with the Centre d'Art [Figure 55].[37] Each of these artworks will also feature to some extent in my analysis of the performance of Haitian nationhood at Estimé's *Bicentenaire*, either as exemplifications of state-sponsored visions of Haitian-ness, or notions of Haitian-ness that exceeded state control.

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[33] P.J.C. Friedlander, 'Haiti's Exposition: Bicentennial World's Fair is Attracting More Tourists to the Caribbean' *New York Times*, 25 December 1949, p.13
[34] Averill, *Day for the Hunter*, pp.63-65
[35] G.S. Schuyler, 'Haiti Looks Ahead' *Américas* (December 1949) p.6
[36] M.R. Vendryes, *Barthé: A Life in Sculpture* (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2008) pp.148-150
[37] Apse murals by Philomé Obin (Crucifixion), Castera Bazile (Ascension) Rigaud Benoit (Nativity) and Gabriel Leveque (Angels) were completed in March 1950: 'Murals of Holy Trinity' *Bob Corbett: Haiti*, <http://www2.webster.edu/~corbetre/haiti/art/holytrinity.htm> [accessed 9 December 2014]

The Haitian Commission: Shaping the Fair's Landscape

Indeed we know that the display of Haitian-ness presented within the landscape of the *Bicentenaire* was an expression of the state because it was overseen by a commission made up of eleven men drawn from Haiti's socio-political elites, ten of whom were depicted on the opening pages of the 1948 commemorative album.[38] It is clear that nine of these eleven were current or former Haitian politicians and diplomats, a number of them holding high offices at the time of the fair. These included: N. Edme Th. Maniget, Secretary of State for Foreign Relations, M. Emmanuel Thezan, Secretary of State Finances, M. Robert Baussan, Undersecretary of State for Tourism and M. Antoine Bervin, former Minister of Tourism and a Representative of Haiti to the United States.[39] It is also notable that at least a handful of these men had either been educated in France or had lived there, or in the U.S. for an extended period of time. Included among these were: Baussan, an architect who had trained in Paris under Le Corbusier (and whose contribution to the fair I will discuss further below); Bervin who had lived in Washington D.C. while being Haiti's representative in the U.S.; and Roussan Camille, who had been Secretary of Haiti's Legation in Paris in the 1930s.[40] As we shall see in the following sections of this chapter the *Bicentenaire de Port-au-Prince* was shaped by these elite Haitians' understandings of international perceptions of Haitian-ness, as well as their knowledge of international expectations of a nation-state and of a world's fair.

The world's fair spectacle was, of course, by 1949 a well-established institution with recognised exhibitionary norms and structures, which by now were focussed on projecting not only the progress, but specifically the modernity of host nations. One place where this desire to live up to international expectations when staging Haiti's world's fair becomes clear, was in the commission's contracting of Manhattan-based firm August Schmiedigen

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[38] *Exposition Internationale*, p.5

[39] The other members of this committee were: M. Paul Pereira, Secretary of State for Public Works; M. Gaston Margron, Director of the Haitian National Bank; M. Henri Deschamps, President of the Chamber of Commerce; M. André Louis, President of the Municipal Committee; M. Roussan Camille, poet, journalist and diplomat; M. Jean Fouchard, historian, journalist and diplomat; and author M. André F. Chevalier: *Exposition Internationale*, p.5; L. Twa, *Visualizing Haiti*, p.218

[40] Jean Fouchard, who had served in Stenio Vincent's government, also lived in France for a number of decades and it is likely that many of the others on this committee also studied, lived or worked in Europe or North America.

Associates to design the grounds.[41] This was a design agency that planned and constructed numerous buildings at previous world's fairs: most notably the Paris Exposition of 1937 and the New York World's Fair of 1939-40. As we shall see in a number of sections below, what was produced architecturally for Haiti's event by Schmiedigen Associates echoes the structure of previous world's fair and at times particularly resembles the architecture presented at the New York World's Fair of 1939.

That the *Port-au-Prince Bicentenaire* was shaped to some extent by the format of earlier world's fairs is unsurprising given that this event marked Haiti's importation of a Euro-American exhibition format to which were attached certain expectations among viewing international audiences. Yet what is particularly significant to explore is the way in which Haiti's commission sought to translate the traditional imperialist ideologies embedded within this exhibition format to their display of postcolonial nationhood. As Andrew Apter expected in his exploration of FESTAC, Nigeria's postcolonial, Pan-African extravaganza staged in 1977, I anticipated demonstrating how Haiti "inverted the conventions of imperial expositions … through a series of significant contrasts and reversals".[42] Yet much like Apter, I found that Haiti's exposition presented a much more complex envisioning of Haitian nationhood that did pointedly subvert and subtly adapt aspects of the wider world's fair format, whilst ambivalently upholding others.

As noted in my introductory chapter, at the 1889 Exposition Universelle de Paris a substantial colonial-ethnological village was included as a popular part of the event's landscape for the first time. From then on this became an established part of the World's Fair spectacle prompting a division of exhibition spaces for the display of the civilised and the exotic. This had a similar separating effect on the display of artworks within world's fairs, a reference point that is particularly important for my study of the placement of art within Haiti's own world's fair. Indeed while works of Euro-American fine art were displayed, without their makers in palatial settings, removed from commercial interests, and as the highest expressions of civilised culture, 'primitive' art objects were incorporated

[41] See for example the name of this company on many of the artists' impression printed in *Exposition Internationale*, pp.19, 21, 24, 25 [see for example Figures 34, 36, 47 and 49]
[42] Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, pp.4-5

into living ethnographic displays, labeled as 'fetish' objects and used as props to support a highly lucrative, sensationalised, visual exemplification of the exotic and uncivilised.[43] These segregated displays of art were structured in a way that encouraged spectatorial juxtapositions that would echo and assist the taxonomic and spatial separation of peoples and cultures in a "classically imperialist" exhibitionary order.[44]

For the 1949-50 Port-au-Prince World's Fair it seems this division of central art exhibits was, at least, incorporated into the planning of the *Bicentenaire*. This is demonstrated by the map printed in the government sponsored *Exposition Internationale* album, which marked out three separate spaces for the display of arts: the *Zone du Folklore et de l'Art Paysan;* the set of buildings alternately labeled *Pavillon des Arts Religieux* or *Eglise-Art-Religion*; and the above mentioned *Palais des Beaux Arts*. As I will demonstrate below, it seems that the latter two of these (the intended *Pavillon des Arts Religieux* and the *Palais des Beaux Arts*) were spaces envisioned for the display of differentiated streams of visual arts. Though both featured prominently within the above discussed *Exposition Internationale* album, as two of the new Modernist showpiece buildings designed for the fair, neither have been prominently explored in current readings of the event. These buildings will be a central focus of my chapter. From my analysis of these sections I will hope to nuance understandings of the visions of Haitian nationhood being projected for both international and domestic audiences through Estimé's *Bicentenaire*. Moreover, through this analysis I will also hope to present a clearer picture of where visual art created by Haitian and non-Haitian artists factored into this display.

Yet in order first to outline what I hope to complicate I will turn in the next section of this chapter to consider the display of Haitian-ness presented within the intended *Zone du Folklore et de l'Art Paysan*. Once constructed this area was popularly known at the time as *Les Palmistes* or the amusements section. *Les Palmistes* was not visually represented within the commission's commemorative album yet, as noted above, it featured prominently among international reviews of the event due to the popular concerts and

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[43] J.C. Davidson, 'The Global Art Fair and Dialectical Image' *Third Text*, 24: 6, p.725

[44] C.M. Hinsley, 'The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893' in I. Karp and S.D. Lavine (eds) *Exhibiting Cultures* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press), p.345

performances housed within its state-of-the-art open-air Théâtre du Verdure. Most popular among these were the dance and music concerts staged by the recently formed National Folklore Troupe. These concerts drew on Afro-Haitian and Caribbean folkloric forms and specifically aspects of Vodou ceremonial performance. Due to their distinctively Haitian flavor these performances became central to efforts that sought to launch a tourist industry focussed on Haiti. As contemporary press coverage often concentrated on this area of the grounds and its attractions, subsequent historiographic readings of this event have also chiefly focussed on this section of the fairgrounds when trying to understand the objectives of this event and decipher the vision of Haitian-ness being projected through this state-sponsored display of nationhood.[45] Outlining readings of Haiti's "Little World's Fair" based on this section of the fairgrounds, will provide the backdrop against which I will go on to contrast the picture of Haitian-ness conveyed by the Modernist architecture and fine art display staged at this event.

TOURISM AND NATION-BUILDING: FOLKLORIC PERFORMANCE AND HAITIAN VISUAL ARTS AT THE FAIR

Contemporary advertisements of Haiti's "Little World's Fair" in the U.S. press routinely summarised it as a "big bid for tourists" or a "major bid for tourist traffic".[46] Undoubtedly this was a prime objective of the event as the pursuit of, what Krista Thompson has called the "tropicalization" (a process of "imaging" for tourist consumption, now familiar across the Caribbean region) of Haiti, and the presence of a pavilion dedicated to tourism, at this event demonstrate.[47] Subsequent historiography has therefore often summarised as central to the significance of this event its role in the launching of a Haitian tourist industry. Yet in the following two sections I hope to demonstrate that such a reading, though valid in part, only interprets the event and its attractions from the point of view of U.S. audiences using representations of the event designed to cater to them. I will instead seek to demonstrate that this event was also an expression of what Kate Ramsey has termed the "folkloricization" of Haitian national identity in this period.[48] Following Ramsey, I will note

[45] See for example: Plummer, 'Golden Age', pp.50-53; Ramsey, 'Vodou, Nationalism, and Performance' pp.361-366
[46] 'Caribbean Carnival' *Life*, p.98; Bogat, 'Exposition in Haiti', p.xxii
[47] Thompson, *Eye for the Tropics*, p.5
[48] Ramsey, 'Vodou, Nationalism, and Performance', p.346

that folklore-inspired performances (particularly the "stylized sacred dances" staged by Jean-Léon Destiné and the newly formed Troupe Folklorique Nationale) featured centrally at the *Bicentenaire*, but not only as tourist attractions.[49] These were part of internally focussed nation-building initiatives that asserted political autonomy and rehabilitated Haitians' cultural pride in folkloric practices. The state therefore sought to simultaneously celebrate and regulate these practices, sanitising and reshaping them to their own ends.

Alongside this I will seek to consider why the practices of artists involved in the "renaissance" in Haitian visual arts, largely channeled through the Centre d'Art, did not feature more centrally as a medium for state-sponsored nation-building at the fair. This level of exposure given to various styles of visual art by Haitians at the fair has implications for understanding their place within state-sponsored visions of nationhood in the period more broadly. I will suggest that key to this difference, in the use of performance and visual arts by the state, was the extent of control that U.S. patrons, dealers and the U.S.-centred art market (explored in chapter 2) exercised over creating the Centre d'Art. Further the brand by which it became popular internationally, was also largely under the control of these agents, which severely limited its potential as a site for projection of a vision of nationhood that the state could model and manipulate.

Haitian and U.S. Representations of the Bicentenaire I: Launching Haiti's "Golden Age of Tourism"

In an article published just over a month before the *Bicentenaire's* December opening, U.S. journalist Edith Bogat commenced by describing the picturesque scene in which the exposition was to be situated, including the "rugged blue mountains … the bay front of Port-au-Prince … and a broad boulevard lined with tall coconut palm trees". After briefly describing some aspects of the foreign and industrial sections, she went on to spend the bulk of her article describing the amusements section, or what came to be known as the "*Palmistes*".[50] This was the area of the grounds that most promotional U.S. press coverage focussed on. It was surrounded by Royal palms situated on the edge of winding tributaries that radiated out from a central artificially created "lagoon" and it was designed to contain

[49] Ramsey, 'Vodou, Nationalism, and Performance', p.363
[50] Bogat, 'Exposition in Haiti', p.xxii

attractions such as performances by the national folklore troupe at the Théâtre du Verdure and an open-air nightclub.[51] In an article published in the *New York Times* on Christmas day 1949, P.J.C. Friedlander noted that beyond the palm-shaded nightclubs and restaurants "a genuine American midway is operating, featuring the Ross Manning Shows".[52] These comprised concessions, rides and a display of the absurd including: an "Unborn" show (a display of deformed human fetuses), a "Monkey Speedway", "Bearded Lady", a horse that could dance the tango and a "Midgets" show.[53] As Friedlander noted, this was an attraction "fresh from the county fair circuit" in the U.S. and designed to cater to American rather than Haitian audiences.[54]

Life magazine published an article in March 1950 that similarly described the "opulent setting the tourist may wander through". It suggests they might:

> inspect [the] latest works of Haitian primitive painters, watch native dances, attend cockfights and gamble in a trim little government-sponsored casino or gambling ship nearby. At night he may sip rum punches, dance the *meringue* and watch the moon peeking through the palm fronts at the Simbie, an open-air nightclub.[55]

This account was accompanied by rich full-colour photographs of the Vodou-, carnival-, peasant- and slavery-related dances of Jean-Léon Destiné as well as a page depicting three works by Haitian painters, referred to as "primitives" [Figures 56 - 60]. Two smaller images reproduced works depicting subjects (places of Vodou worship and Edenic paradises) as well as styles firmly associated with the Centre d'Art. The captions printed next to these images employed the pseudo-aesthetic terminologies that would prove limiting to the development of Haitian visual arts in the long-term.

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[51] 'Haitian Holiday', *Américas* (December 1949) pp.2-5; O.E. Boline, 'Exposition in Haiti' *New York Times*, 10 October 1948, p.18; Friedlander, 'Haiti's Exposition', p.13; Bogat, 'Exposition in Haiti' p.xxii; Bogat, 'Haiti's own World's Fair', p.23

[52] Friedlander, 'Haiti's Exposition', p.13

[53] 'Exposition International and Bi-centennial', *The Billboard*, 29 October 1949, p.81

[54] In fact Manning's shows received such a dearth of interest among local audiences, due in part to their lack of disposable income, that a number of concessionaires and shows opted to depart for the U.S. before the fair run had come to an end: 'Haiti Expo Biz Hits Skids; Indie Ops Headed for Home' *The Billboard*, 7 January 1950, p.54

[55] 'Caribbean Carnival' *Life*, p. 98

The first painting depicted [Figure 58] was by "Primitive Wilson Bigaud" and was described in a sensationalist manner as depicting "patient before Voodoo altar" and then, drawing out minor details of the image, notes a "skull and sacrificial pig".[56] The second [Figure 59], entitled *Garden of Eden* was by Toussaint Auguste, and again drawing out minor, but exotic, elements the caption notes that the depicted "tree of knowledge" bears tropical fruit.[57] A third painting by Castera Bazile, of the fair's opening-day parade [Figure 60], was printed with a caption including the following statement "Haitian painting flourishes around the busy Art Center which is directed by American Artist DeWitt Peters and is as big an attraction for many visitors as the fair itself".[58] This statement seems to suggest that the Centre d'Art, and so this image by association, was an attraction existing parallel to, rather than integrated within the fair itself. However this is merely an implication and what is clear is that these artworks and their creators were being presented as tourist attractions to U.S. audiences through sensationalist vocabularies focussed on primitivism and tropicality.

Bogat, in the article already mentioned above, similarly announced that:

> Among the biggest points of native interest will be murals and paintings by the Haitian primitive artists… [and] exhibitions of voodoo art…[59]

The separation of "voodoo art" from "painting by the Haitian primitive artists" is a somewhat unclear division as the former was not a term commonly used to specify a stream of Haitian art even in the 1940s. However it seems fairly apparent that, as with the *Life* magazine article above, Bogat is not really concerned with describing a specific aesthetic or set of works but rather with employing the terms "primitive" and "voodoo" as liberally as possible to increase hype around the soon to open *Bicentenaire* among U.S. audiences.

Prompted by this U.S. press coverage, overviews of this event in current scholarship tend to repeat the focus of these articles, detailing the various attractions on offer and

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[56] 'Caribbean Carnival' *Life*, p.101
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Bogat, 'Exposition in Haiti', p.xxii

asserting, for example, that the event was "primarily a project of tourist development", that it was "intended to build an infrastructure for tourism", or that it was "a concentrated effort to attract tourists".[60] Indeed Brenda Plummer situates this event at the climax of a period in Haiti that she has called the "golden age of tourism".[61] Such summaries also consistently note as an aside that Haiti's latest wave of new painters (associated with the Centre d'Art) also featured in this scheme, often equating their presence to that of folklore-inspired performance arts. Ramsey, for example, asserted "the by then internationally recognised Haitian "primitive" painting movement provided cultural content", while Lindsay Twa suggested the event "brought … Vodou and folkloric dances … and Haitian art solidly before the international public", and finally Gage Averill stated "the exposition showcased Haiti's pictorial and performance arts".[62]

The second point being made here, that Haiti's "renaissance" artists were being showcased by the government, is a presumption that I argue is not substantiated by the available evidence. Though I agree that work by these artists was present, and was indeed mentioned regularly by U.S. media coverage of the event, I do not agree that Haiti's state was prominently promoting Haiti's newest wave of internationally recognised visual artists at the *Bicentenaire*. In what follows, I draw out why I think that is the case, by noting overlaps, but crucially also subtle differences in the ways in which Haiti's state and the U.S. press marketed this event for tourists. Then as I go onto consider the nation-building and urban redevelopment aspects of this event, and the state's deployment of popular cultural forms to those ends, I will present a number of arguments as to why I think the state did not promote visual arts as actively as it promoted performance arts.

However, returning to the first point above, we can see from ephemera produced by the Haitian commission for the fair, that as the above U.S. press sources suggested the *Bicentenaire* was indeed being marketed as a tourist attraction by the Haitian state. In the commemorative album *Exposition Internationale* sponsored by the state to celebrate this

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[60] Ramsey, 'Vodou, Nationalism, and Performance', p.361; Averill, *Day for the Hunter*, p.63; Twa, *Visualizing Haiti*, p.210
[61] Plummer, 'Golden Age', pp.49-63
[62] Ramsey, 'Vodou, Nationalism, and Performance', p.362; Twa, *Visualizing Haiti*, p.210; Averill, *Day for the Hunter*, p.65

event, tourism was prominently promoted. For example, printed at the outset of this publication, immediately following the Haitian commission's invitation to the countries of the world to take part, was a large full colour "Carte Touristique" that illustrates Haiti's major attractions for the holidaymaker [Figure 61]. It draws attention to scenic landmarks including numerous grottos, waterfalls, hot springs and sites of historical importance such as King Henri Christophe's citadel. A brightly striped umbrella seems to denote the best beaches near Port-au-Prince, while small boats seem to suggest the possibility of fishing and leisurely yachting trips. Numerous images of planes also connote current and newly planned flight paths into Haiti from the U.S. and neighbouring Caribbean islands, laid on especially both by Pan American Airways and Haitian International Airways.[63] In fact its iconography quite closely resembles the mural Clara Salander was involved in painting onto the exterior of the Hotel Beau Rivage, built especially for this event [Figures 45 and 46]. Add to this the suggestive titles and content of the subsequent articles published in *Exposition Internationale,* including "Pleasures of Haiti" and "Enchantment of the Ocean", and the tourist agenda is firmly asserted.

In fact before directly referencing Estimé's International Exposition, Haitian anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot aptly described this period as "the decade of government display, of picture-postcard projects".[64] This is a particularly shrewd title for the projects being pursued by Estimé's (and later Magloire's) government through the *Bicentenaire*, given some of the other images presented within the above-mentioned commemorative album. For instance, a set of photographic images did not depict the event itself, but rather reproduced scenes now recognisable worldwide from Caribbean postcard imagery. These were a mix of colour and black and white photos of the picturesque and exotic. Sweeping views of Henri Christophe's Citadel and the Sans Souci Palace were featured in rich colour photographic prints as was a now classic scene of beach framed by palm trees, and there was also a particularly symbolic image of a white woman in chic travel-dress viewing a

[63] *Exposition Internationale,* p.8; Plummer, 'Golden Age', p.53; 'Une Grande Ligne d'Aviation Haitienne Vient d'être Créée' *Le Nouvelliste*, 4 February 1950, p.1
[64] M.R. Trouillot, *Haiti State Against Nation: The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990) pp.141

mountainside scene absent of any local inhabitants [Figures 62 and 63].[65] These visual representations of what Haiti had to offer international audiences are typical examples of what Thompson terms "tropicalization": the use of "visual systems" to produce the Caribbean for tourist consumption. Specifically she explains this was a process by which "certain ideals and expectations of the tropics informed the creation of place-images".[66]

It is clear that through the photographic depictions of Haiti described above, the fair's commission was idealising Haiti's landscape as a timeless Edenic paradise for tourist consumption, by building upon the familiar expectations of Haiti within U.S. popular culture. This familiarity was gained by the Haitian state through the years in which Haiti had been occupied by United States Marines (1915-34) and the subsequent period during which all things Haitian captivated American audiences as titillating amusements that stirred deeper psychological impulses. Indeed, as noted in chapter 2, Mary Renda has demonstrated that Haiti during the occupation era and beyond functioned as a site through which Americans refracted, reflected on and reimagined their own nation, the racial structures of its society as well as their own lives and identities within those constructs.[67] This spawned a lucrative whole industry in Haiti-related entertainments. Edna Taft's *A Puritan in Voodoo-land* is a typical example of post-occupation era literature in this vein. As suggested by her title Taft used all the sensationalised language one might expect to relay to her audience the goriest details of "the blood bespattered story of the black republic", whilst also referring to Haiti as an "enchanting island". Further by racialising Lewis Carroll's imagery, she presented perhaps the most direct articulation of the sense that Americans were reflecting as much on their own their own society when they travelled to Haiti by describing her journey there as going "through the black looking-glass".[68]

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[65] For discussions of the significance of this absenting of local people from tourism imagery see, for example: M. Sheller *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), pp.36-70; E.M. James, 'Re-Worlding a World: Caribbean Art in the Global Imaginary' (Duke University: unpublished phd thesis, 2008) pp.25-26; *Exposition Internationale*, pp.17, 28

[66] Thompson, *Eye for the Tropics*, p.5

[67] M.A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001) pp.17-20

[68] E. Taft, *A Puritan in Voodoo-Land* (Philadelphia: Penn. Publishing, 1938) pp.235-273

Haiti's Ministry of Tourism was set-up in 1928 during the occupation. Seeking to capitalise on the fascination with Haitian-ness back home, the U.S. government assigned officers in the Foreign Services department to consult with American businessmen about the feasibility of launching a successful tourist industry.[69] Among those consulted were Nelson Rockefeller and Juan Trippe, the founder of Pan American Airways. Indeed Plummer, and more recently Ramsey, Polyné and Twa, have revealed that U.S. stakeholders and politicians (including a significant number of African Americans) were invested in marketing campaigns and business opportunities aimed at developing such an industry from the mid-1930s until well beyond the era of the *Bicentenaire*.[70] The U.S. government invested in such enterprises for the economic gains it might stimulate, and therefore recoup the outlay and more that the U.S. had ploughed into the occupation, which was becoming increasingly unpopular among Americans. Yet as Ramsey has suggested, their motivations were also focused on longer-term economic benefits sought through "link[ing] Haiti more closely with North American corporate capitalism".[71]

Indeed, aside from tourism Estimé also sought to stimulate economic growth in Haiti through other collaborative initiatives set-up during these periods of U.S. colonial and neocolonial domination. For example, the *Bicentenaire* included a building for the exhibition of financially promising agricultural projects such as the Dauphin Sisal Plantation pursued through SHADA (Société Haitiano-Américaine de Développment Agricole) [Figure 64]. This was a national corporation set-up in 1941 under the previous Haitian president Elie Lescot with a $5 million loan from the U.S. and a board of directors led by American businessman T.A. Fennell. Unfortunately for both Lescot and Estimé these initiatives proved damaging socially and environmentally for Haiti, and politically for themselves in

[69] Plummer, 'Golden Age', p.50
[70] Ramsey, 'Vodou, Nationalism, and Performance', pp.356-372; Polyné, *From Douglass to Duvalier*, pp.131-153; Twa, *Visualizing Haiti*, pp.201-246
[71] Haiti's constitution had also been rewritten under the U.S. by non-other than soon to be President Franklin D. Roosevelt. A number of articles had been altered in order to open up property ownership to non-resident foreigners, and to allow the U.S. to assert neocolonial control over Haiti once the Marine's withdrew. This manifested itself in, for example, U.S. control and directorship of Haiti's National Bank until 1947: Ramsey, 'Vodou, Nationalism, and Performance', p.358

the long term.[72] As noted in a previous chapter, it was also during the Lescot era, and under a similar dynamic of U.S. neocolonial sponsorship, that the Centre d'Art was founded with backing from both the Haitian government and the U.S. State Department. A point which, I argue, would prove crucial in the Estimé government's lukewarm attitude towards the potential of this institution and the artists it nurtured to act as a cultural channel through which to promote Haitian nationhood domestically and sovereignty abroad.

A number of scholars have criticised the Haitian state's employment of "tropicalization" mechanisms and discourses of exoticism to advertise the International Exposition on precisely these grounds. Millery Polyné, for example, has suggested that the "emphasis on the folkloric" in the performances of Destiné and his troupe, which were showcased at the exposition "perpetuated elitist notions and racist images of Haitian culture as exotic and primitive",[73] while Lindsay Twa has asserted that marketing campaigns surrounding the *Bicentenaire,* which used such discourses of the exotic, picturesque and paradisal to tap into American fascinations, also had the potential to "reinforce older tropes" that portrayed Haiti as a savage, untouched and backward place.[74] However I would suggest that there were a number of subtle differences between the marketing mechanisms used in U.S. and Haitian representations of the *Bicentenaire*, which denoted the additional objectives that the Haitian commission and Estimé's government sought to achieve through this event. Indeed, a rich scholarly literature has demonstrated exoticism or exoticisation is not a one-dimensional process that only ascribes pejorative qualities to others. Since the nineteenth century its use has also denoted mysterious, thrilling and even reinvigorating connotations of difference particularly to modernity. These dynamics have also been integrally bound up with the display of other cultures and peoples at world's fairs and, as noted above, these connotations of difference or distinctness have more recently fed into the profitable marketing of the Caribbean as a tourist destination for international

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[72] 'Haitian Rubber Timeline' *Bob Corbett: Haiti* <http://www2.webster.edu/~corbetre/haiti/misctopic/leftover/rubber.htm> [accessed 10 December 2014]
[73] Polyné, *From Douglass to Duvalier*, pp.154-157
[74] Twa, *Visualizing Haiti*, p.210

audiences.[75] It is these representations and objectives that I will now examine in the following section.

Haitian and U.S. Representations of the Bicentenaire II: Nation-building and Assertion of National Autonomy

The first place that we can find a notable departure between Haitian and U.S. representations of attractions on offer at Haiti's World's Fair is in contrasting references to the *Pavillon du Tourisme* in the *Exposition Internationale* album with those in the *Life* magazine article already mentioned above. This building was represented within the commission's commemorative album by an artist's impression printed in sepia tones [Figure 35]. This image showed the design of a Modernist or *Moderne* style building and was made up of clean straight horizontal and vertical lines, with built in viewing platforms. The majority of the façade was made up of plain clean surfaces, but this design was embellished in two particular areas: first by the conspicuously placed moniker, hung from an uppermost balcony in large art deco style lettering and; second by two sizeable impressions of Haiti's landmass each flanking the central section of the building's main outlook.[76]

Though this *Moderne* architectural style was an innovation in Haitian civic design, it was closely akin to early-twentieth-century Euro-American architectural styles (such as Bauhaus and late Art Deco or Streamline Moderne). Haitian architect Robert Baussan, who was both Undersecretary of State for Tourism and serving on the *Bicentenaire's* commission, created this design.[77] Baussan, like his father before him (Georges H. Baussan designer of Haiti's 1912 National Palace [Figure 65]), had been integrally influenced by his French education and architectural training. Indeed, Baussan junior studied at the Université de Paris and trained under the famed French-Swiss modernist Le Corbusier. This building and the image of it presented in *Exposition Internationale* therefore expresses the still strong Francophile

[75] See for example: C. Forsdick, 'Revisiting Exoticism: From Colonialism to Postcolonialism' in C. Forsdick and D. Murphy (eds) *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical Introduction* (London: Arnold, 2003) pp.46-55; V. Segalen, *Essai sur l'Exoticisme: une Esthétique du divers* (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1978) translated into English by Y. Schlick as *Essay on Exoticism: An Aesthetics of Diversity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*
[76] *Exposition Internationale,* p.23
[77] Ibid., p.5

sentiments among Haiti's elites in the mid-twentieth century, whilst also conveying through its Art Deco influenced aesthetics a very American optimism for future prosperity, significantly used here to adorn the *Pavillon du Tourisme*, an industry which was being positioned as the country's means to a bright, economically prosperous, future. Meanwhile this new building and much of the rest of the waterfront area, which had been redeveloped for the fair, were designed to be permanent additions to the Port-au-Prince cityscape. They therefore stood as a symbol of urban redevelopment: a certain brand of Modernism and state power for domestic audiences.

In contrast, as noted above, *Life* printed a photograph of the *Pavillon du Tourisme* that overlooked its exterior architecture, and instead looked out from inside of the building [Figure 44]. It depicted a Caucasian man and woman, representatives of Euro-American tourism, standing outside on a balcony looking down over the fair below. They are visible through a pair of French doors on the right and left of the picture, whilst in the centre we see an interior wall upon which was hung a large mural "of a religious procession by Castera Bazile".[78] The work shows a crowd following three robed altar boys through a narrow street lined with small yet colourful, single-storey houses, and the caption below this image tells us that the "walls inside and out" of the *Palais du Tourisme* "are splashed with such colorful murals".[79] The different perspective that these Haitian and U.S. representations present of the Tourism Pavilion is significant, it demonstrates that while Estimé's government was seeking to present a future-focussed, Modernist vision of Haitian nationhood supported by a tourist industry, U.S. media outlets were little interested in this. Instead such U.S. accounts of the fair centred their visions on attractions that they perceived to be expressive of a picturesque, other-worldly Haitian-ness. They sought images of attractions that did not resemble the U.S. but rather were different and exemplified the "black looking-glass" that fascinated them and that they expected.[80]

More significantly for my study of the place which Haitian art had within this expression of Haitian nationhood is the disjuncture between representations of the Centre d'Art and the

[78] 'Caribbean Carnival' *Life*, p.104
[79] Ibid.
[80] Taft, *Puritan in Voodoo-Land*, p.235

artists becoming internationally popular through that institution in the *Exposition Internationale* album in contrast to those in the U.S. press accounts examined above. In the *New York Times* Edith Bogat employed exoticist vocabularies to represent these arts practitioners as "primitives" whose "voodoo art" was portrayed as an unmissable attraction, while *Life* magazine also printed a full page spread of examples of artworks by the Centre's "primitive painters".[81] In contrast, in the commission's commemorative album there were no visual representations of works produced by these artists. There were, however, a few lines of text dedicated to this institution. It read:

> Thanks to the truly apostolic zeal of Mr. DeWitt Peters, who founded the Centre d'Art in Port-au-Prince, where many young artists are working with fever, Haitian painting has undergone a major expansion. The Centre d'Art is open daily to the public. You can admire and buy very original and beautiful works.[82]

The language used here is significant. It is both clearly influenced by, but subtly differs from, the above press accounts and from the language and narratives being used more widely to publicise the Centre d'Art and its artists in the United States during this period, which was examined in some depth in chapter 2.

Firstly we can see that this text is picking up on the popular narrative of the Centre d'Art's founding by DeWitt Peters, without mention of any key Haitian figures also involved in this process. In this vein, it is also notable that the "young artists" practicing at the Centre are said to be "working with fever", a subtle though noticeable allusion to marketable notions, popular internationally, of these artists working in a frenzied "state of religious ecstasy" to produce Vodou-inspired artworks.[83] Yet noticeably this text does not directly refer to Vodou or even religion. It also does not employ the words "primitive" or "native" to refer to the artists or their works, but rather suggests they are "original and beautiful". Further, in a subtle alteration of the popular narrative being broadcast in the U.S. about DeWitt Peters' "discovery" or "invention" of Haitian art, this text merely attributes him with the "expansion" of Haitian painting. These differences in describing the Centre d'Art and the

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[81] Bogat, 'Exposition in Haiti' p.xxii; 'Caribbean Carnival' *Life*, p.101
[82] Translation by the author: *Exposition Internationale*, p.27
[83] See comments about the practice of Hector Hyppolite in: 'Haitian Painting: American Helps Island Natives Develop a Primitive Folk Art', *Life*, 1 September 1947, p.58

painters being nurtured there are perhaps not very bold, but they are, I argue, significant in their suggestion of an art history in Haiti previous to DeWitt Peters, and in their refusal to deploy terminologies of "primitivism" despite their popularity and marketability.

Directly following the above sentences about the Centre d'Art was a description of the founding of the Haitian Bureau of Ethnology, another cultural institution established in the 1940s, which had become an important advocate of cultural artifacts and practices associated with Vodou including folkloric dance and performance. It read:

> The Bureau of Ethnology of the Republic of Haiti – founded very little time ago by the late great Haitian writer Jacques Roumain – is already of great interest. Visitors can admire and study beautiful pre-Columbian works as well as pieces for understanding the survival of some African customs in the lives of the Haitian masses whose art and culture are a charming blend of Latin finesse, malice, nostalgia and African sweetness.[84]

This text reveals that while the cultural forms associated with the Centre d'Art and the Bureau d'Ethnologie were both regarded by the fair's commissioning body to be beautiful, important and interesting attractions, these institutions' different histories of establishment were significant for the state and impacted upon its differential utilisation of Haitian visual arts and performance arts as tools to express national political sovereignty and cultural autonomy. Indeed, as the latter text suggests, the establishment of the Bureau in 1941 under Roumain was an important event in the domestic cultural domain. It occurred as a Haitian-led retort to the anti-superstition campaign of which Roumain was a prominent critic. This campaign was a violent and systematic persecution of Vodou beliefs, practices, material culture and adherents by the Catholic Church with backing from the state in 1941.[85] In response to this destructive force, Roumain's Bureau sought to reposition Haitian folklore and its material products (particularly items relating to Vodou ritual and ceremony) as central to Haitian national heritage and identity. This built upon a longer history of Haitian folklore's significance in relation to resistance. Haiti's intelligentsia began to take a keen and sustained interest in folkloric practices during the years of the

[84] Translation by the author: *Exposition Internationale*, p.27
[85] Ramsey, 'Vodou, Nationalism, and Performance', p.351

U.S. Occupation as *Indigéniste* movements were sweeping through Latin America. At this time folklore gained importance among some of Haiti's elites and urban middle classes as a site and expression of Haitian sovereignty and cultural autonomy in the face of colonial domination. Yet even beyond this, of course, many folkloric practices associated with Vodou were forged as a means of resistance during years of colonial enslavement under French rule, and were a catalyst for Haiti's revolution and thereby independence.

Kate Ramsey has termed this programme of cultural recuperation that the Bureau and other state-sponsored and private projects pursued, as the "folkloricization" of Haitian national identity. She describes this as comprising processes of rehabilitating interest and pride in popular cultural practices through education, institutions and sponsorship, all of which were both backed by and exceeded the state.[86] Ramsey stresses the importance and even privileging of folkloric and folklore-stylised or -inspired performance within this project of nation-building. Indeed it was encouraged, examined, celebrated, commercialised, at times sanitised, but importantly officially recognised by the state and newly established institutions as of national importance.[87] Yet simultaneously in the post-occupation period, as noted in my second chapter, interest in Haiti was piqued among a specialised intellectual audience from the United States. As such the country gained importance as a site of cultural and anthropological field research, with Haitian rural life, folklore, and Vodou becoming key focuses of such studies.[88]

Therefore, when Dumarsais Estimé's government staged the *Bicentenaire,* folklore (and particularly dance, music and performance which drew from Vodou ceremony) offered both a cultural resource asserting national sovereignty through its multi-layered history of interrelation with resistance and a site of fascination among international audiences. As such, a number of scholars have noted that "the showcase of the Exposition was the folkloric performance that took place in the newly erected Théâtre du Verdure" or that

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[86] Ramsey, 'Vodou, Nationalism, and Performance', p.351

[87] Ramsey highlights that the Bureau of Ethnology and a parallel organisation, the *Institut d'Ethnologie* set up by Jean-Prices Mars in 1941, supported and developed folkloric performers including Jean-Léon Destiné and sponsored performances by newly formed folklore troupes: Ramsey, 'Vodou, Nationalism, and Performance', pp.353-356.

[88] See for example: M.J. Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley* (Knopf: New York, 1937); Z.N. Hurston, *Tell my Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica* (Harper: New York, [1938] 1990)

"the Troupe Folklorique Nationale and other folkloric choirs and dance troupes were cultural centerpieces of the exposition".[89] Certainly performances at the Théâtre du Verdure took up a lot of column-inches in *Le Nouvelliste*, Haiti's leading daily newspaper, throughout the duration of the fair.[90] A still from British Pathé footage of the *Bicentenaire's* opening also shows that official banners produced to advertise the event and decorate the grounds featured an image of a topless Jean-Léon Destiné poised above a tall drum with chains binding his hands: costume and props which were associated with his famed 'Dance of the Slave' performed on the fairgrounds [Figure 66].[91]

Ramsey, Durkin and other scholars have shown that the actions and voices of U.S. African Americans were prominent in the promotion and development of these performative Haitian cultural forms internationally.[92] For example, images of Destiné in this costume continued to feature in marketing campaigns surrounding Haiti that were initiated by NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) Executive Secretary Walter F. White in 1947 and continued by his wife Poppy Canon White well in the 1950s.[93] Yet long before he became an emblem of the Troupe Folklorique Nationale, Destiné had performed as a dancer within the troupes of African-American choreographer and anthropologist Katherine Dunham. The latter had conducted field research into Afro-Haitian dance forms in the late 1930s, which influenced her development of a "modernist concert dance idiom" that in turn influenced Destiné's Haitian folkloric performances.[94] This transnational cultural exchange between African diasporic groups in the U.S. and Haiti was also an important distinguishing feature for the Haitian state, between the channels and rhetorics through which folkloric performance and the newest wave of Haitian visual arts were being circulated internationally. Indeed during the *Bicentenaire*, Haitian Minister

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[89] Smith, *Red and Black*, p.107; Averill, *Day for the Hunter*, p.65
[90] See for example: 'Ce Soir au Theatre du Verdure' *Le Nouvelliste*, 5 January 1950 p.4; 'Les Places au Théâtre du Verdure' *Le Nouvelliste*, 17 January 1950, p.1; 'Plus de 6000 personnes au Théâtre du Verdure, *Le Nouvelliste*, 4 February 1950, p.1
[91] 'Little World Fair Haiti 1949' *British Pathé*
[92] H. Durkin, 'Dance anthropology and the impact of 1930s Haiti on Katherine Dunham's scientific and artistic consciousness' *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, 14.1 (2011) pp.123-142
[93] See image reproduced in: Twa, *Visualizing Haiti*, p.219
[94] Ramsey, 'Vodou, Nationalism, and Performance', p.359

of Tourism, Jean Brierre, received a bronze cast of the feet of Katherine Dunham in a ceremony at the Pavilion of Tourism.[95]

Certainly, there is no doubt that there was a notable amount of short-term artistic exchange between U.S. African-American artists and Haitian artists in parallel to and in collaboration with the Centre d'Art.[96] Yet when it came to the promotion of the Centre's popular wave of "primitive" painters internationally, the key figures remained Selden Rodman, DeWitt Peters and their contacts in art institutions in the United States and beyond (such as René d'Harnoncourt at New York's Museum of Modern Art). Therefore, despite its international popularity this body of Haitian visual art and its makers did not offer the Haitian state the same opportunities to shape and project certain aspects of the vision of Haitian nationhood that they desired. In contrasting the state's use of mid-twentieth-century Haitian visual arts with folkloric performance in nation-building and international marketing schemes, the culmination of which was the *Bicentenaire*, we tease out a reticence and wariness that Estimé's government had about fully integrating certain streams of Haitian visual art into this showpiece project of national exhibition.

Yet despite the strides made in terms of the repositioning of folklore at the centre of government-backed programmes to rebrand Haitian nationhood, there were still fractures and hierarchies within this vision expressed by the fair's attractions and landscape. Reporters excitedly noted that to make way for the sleek Modernist architecture of the fair and its picturesque grounds:

> a swamp has been drained and filled in. Thirty acres have been reclaimed from the harbor … As many as 630 tropical trees have been planted, and the whole thing has been integrated into a shimmering fairy city with a distinctive Haitian flavor.[97]

Yet indifferently mentioned in a number of accounts was the fact that "the slums have gone and the people who lived in them have been removed".[98] In fact, Matthew Smith

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[95] 'Une Belle Ceremonie au Palace du Tourisme' *Le Nouvelliste*, 13 January 1950, p.4
[96] In my second chapter I provide more detail in this area. See also: Twa, *Visualizing Haiti*, pp.220-228; K.A. Thompson, 'Preoccupied with Haiti: The Dream of Diaspora in African American Art, 1915-1942' *American Art*, 21.3 (Fall 2007) pp.74-97
[97] Schuyler, 'Haiti Looks Ahead', p.7
[98] Ibid.

asserts "scores of beggars and vagrants were rounded up and sent to the remote [island of] La Gonâve".[99] This was a redevelopment strategy that rendered the capital's urban poor invisible to international visitors and absent from the fair commission's vision of nationhood. Further, while the folkloric practices, lifestyles and costumes of Haiti's rural masses proved a successful point of international interest and a site for the expression of a history of resistance, resilience and national sovereignty, the new *noiriste* state still seemed unsure about how to reconcile these aspects of Haitian nationhood with the image of a modern nation-state. As noted at the outset of this chapter, the fairgrounds were spatially separated mainly into an eastern and a western third. While the performative attractions discussed above filled the eastern third of the grounds, the diplomatic centre of the fair was situated in the western third. This area presented a cityscape in line with the Modernist visions of Euro-American architects. It was expressive of the international and internationally-oriented lifestyles of Haiti's elites and growing urban middle classes. Therefore the fairgrounds conveyed a fuller picture of Haitian society than Estimé's government may have intended as it also embedded class and racial hierarchies into its landscape. Having explored the commission's curation of the cultural resources of Haiti's masses above I will now turn to consider their Modernist and diplomatically-focussed vision of Haiti conveyed through showpiece architecture and fine art.

CONSTRUCTING A MODERNIST FACADE:

New Architecture and Art Displays at the Fair

As noted above, an array of Modernist style constructions were designed for locations across the fairgrounds from the clean-cut block-like *Palais de la Poste* [Figure 41] and the stark vertical thrust of *L'Entrée Principale* [Figure 36] in the western third of the grounds to the set of three buildings ambiguously identified as *Eglise-Art-Religion* [Figure 49] situated along the main asphalted thoroughfare in the eastern section of the site.[100] The colour plate that represented this latter set of buildings within the *Exposition Internationale* album depicted a long eye-catching structure in the foreground, almost entirely glass-fronted, with a barrel-arched roof and a side doorway situated below a large jutting tower. Above its small and simple portico, the façade of this tower was also filled with, possibly

[99] Smith, *Red and Black*, p.107
[100] *Exposition Internationale,* p.25

stained, glass panels. Each of these adjoined structures was surmounted in this artist's impression by a simple cross, which suggests that together they formed the church (or *Eglise*) component of this group as a main congregational hall and bell tower. At its right-hand side the tunnel-like element of this building was connected by a roofed outdoor space to an adjacent building: the *Musée d'Art Religieux*. This structure is shown in the background and was a much more modest, one-storey, cuboid building with clean-white exterior. Its minimalist, possibly glass-fronted, portico was surmounted by the moniker 'Museum' and decorated by a row of simple rectangular windows to its right and left.

Only one exterior wall space among this group of structures, at the base of the church's protruding bell tower, seemed to be indicated as a place set aside for an artwork of some kind. A vague embellishment on the artist's impression suggested an artwork here, but beyond this no other clear indication was given of exterior decoration. Yet it is not insignificant that the design for the portico of the final building, on the far left, was surmounted by the English word "Museum" rather than the French "Musée" as it suggests that the primary audience for this building and its contents was anticipated to be international, and likely Anglophone North American, rather than domestic.[101] I would further suggest, due to the Centre d'Art's success (demonstrated in chapter 2) in engaging the interest of a U.S. audience in, what was then increasingly known as, "naïve" Haitian art, it is possible this building was conceived of as a national institution. In the long-term it may have been envisioned that it would house exhibitions of Haitian artists' increasingly popular and valuable works. However no documentation has yet been located which definitively reveals the layout and design of the interior spaces within this structure or the exhibits that it was to house.

However, we can turn to a different aspect of these building's functions to draw out further significance from their presence within the *Bicentenaire's* landscape: their provision of a space for representation of religions. The inclusion of a pavilion or building solely for the representation of religions was a fairly recent, and particularly American, addition to world's fair exhibitionary practice. The Chicago Century of Progress exposition of 1933-34, for example, incorporated a *Hall of Religion* among its central buildings, while the New

[101] *Exposition Internationale*, p.25

York World's Fair of 1939-40 also included a building of this nature, entitled the *Temple of Religion* [Figure 67]. Notably, the latter was the last BIE-recognised world's fair that immediately preceded the Exposition held in Port-au-Prince and its *Temple* shared a number of architectural design elements in common with the church designed for Haiti's *Bicentenaire*. The *Temple of Religion* presented in New York was similarly made up of a vertically-orientated, semi-cylindrical tower with a rectangular section behind. Like the church at the Port-au-Prince exposition the exterior surfaces of this building were mostly smooth white surfaces without embellishment. Almost the only decorative elements were the intricately patterned inlays of numerous large rectangular bay windows stretching up the main trunk of the tower. This window detailing was a decorative focal point within the interior of the building, which was also a largely minimalist space of bare light walls [Figure 68].

It is possible that the interior layout of the New York Fair's *Temple of Religion* also had an influence on the design of the Haitian Fair's church, though these buildings did differ in two crucial aspects, both of which would have affected the internal display. Firstly the New York temple was not linked in concept or physical space to an art exhibit which the latter was, though it is unclear how the relationship of the planned adjoining exhibitionary spaces was conceived, whether there were artworks to be housed within the church as well as the museum building or vice-versa, whether there were religious artifacts such as relics or ritual objects of aesthetic value or otherwise envisioned for display in the museum. Secondly, and perhaps more crucially, the New York temple was explicitly designed as an interfaith space. Though its Haitian counterpart was also ambiguously labeled as a space for the representation of "religion", the cruciform iconographies displayed on its exterior, and inclusion in its title of the specific term "church" suggests that at least one of the structures in this group was intended as a Christian and likely Roman Catholic space. Therefore, if it was envisioned that Vodou-related works were to be housed in this complex, it seems likely that they would not have been contained within this building. It is difficult to go any further into this enquiry without additional evidence. However, it is clear that the state-led committee in charge of the fair and the designers with whom they worked were here presenting a version of Haitian nationhood rooted in western cultural forms and traditions. We can deduce this from the commission's intention to create a

church, rather than any other religious space, on the fairgrounds and the Modernist architectural aesthetic used to house that space.

As we can see from a simple two-point perspective line-drawing within the *Exposition Internationale* album [Figure 48] the designer of the *Palais des Beaux Arts* for Haiti's *Bicentenaire* used a similar vocabulary of Modernist architectural elements.[102] Buildings designed to contain the Fine Arts display at world's fairs had moved on significantly from the neoclassicism and revivalism of late nineteenth-century expositions and so had the artwork housed inside. Following the lead of earlier Euro-American expositions (for example those held in Barcelona in 1929, Paris in 1931, Chicago in 1933 and New York in 1949), the architectural *Moderne* became the new archetypal style in which to create the entire landscapes of these events.[103] Importantly, this shift did not just signal aesthetic innovation, but symbolised the reorientation of the central focus of world's fairs from a commemoration of the past and current progress of various nations, cultures or civilisations, to a future-focused celebration of potential and technological innovation.

By the mid-twentieth century Modernism in its multiplicity of forms was the pre-eminent contemporary aesthetic at the height of its cultural value, and so Haiti's *Palais des Beaux Arts,* tracking this trend, was designed in a *Moderne* style. Its simple architecture made up of long horizontal lines, curved roof, flat forms and plain surfaces was closely akin to the *Streamline Moderne* Contemporary Arts Building at the preceding major World's Fair held in New York [Figure 69]. There is suggestion in Schmiedigen's line-drawing of a few embellishments on the Haitian *Beaux Arts* building: most notably what appears to be a stark Modernist style sculpture in the centre of the *Palais'* roof and also what may have been some art deco or abstract motifs in relief on the large rectangular entranceway. Yet as with the *Musée d'Art Religieux* there was no information given in the *Exposition Internationale* album about the type of artworks, or nationality of artists to be housed within the *Beaux Arts* building. However, there are a small number of primary and

[102] It is likely that the designer was Schmiedigen Associates as this artist's impression was rendered in the same style, and printed on the same page as a graphical projection of *Le Palais de l'Agriculture et des Provinces* signed by this New-York based firm: *Exposition Internationale,* p.24
[103] Take Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion, the Cactus Building at Paris' Colonial Exposition or the Modernist cityscape created for the Century of Progress Fair held in Chicago.

secondary source materials that provide partial information about the display of *Beaux Arts* on the grounds.

As noted above, three artworks by Haitian artists practicing at the Centre d'Art were printed in a March 1950 edition of the U.S. magazine *Life* [Figures 58-60]. Alongside these was printed an image of a fourth artwork. This was a work of Modernist aesthetic and composition created by Chicagoan artist Eldzier Cortor titled *Haitian Couple* [Figure 70], which the accompanying caption tells us "[w]ith other works by members of the Art Center and by independents, it hangs in the fair's fine arts building".[104] Further, in 1951 Virginia Simmons Nyabongo, a U.S. African-American College Professor from Baltimore, published a short first-person account of her "captivating" visit to the "enchanted land" of Haiti and specifically, under the patronage of various Haitian dignitaries, to the *Bicentenaire de Port-au-Prince*.[105] The opening pages of her account are taken up with overviewing Haitian history and much of her account of the fair details information about various attractions and soirées she visited, mainly in the eastern section of the fairgrounds. However, she does include a few sentences in her article that refer directly to "the arts exhibit". Here she tells us:

> could be seen mostly paintings, recent works since 1946, of a number of Haitian artists and foreign artists living in Haiti: surrealistic, non-objective, as well as more traditional creations; such work as Remponeau's "Bel-Aire", the "Self-Portrait" of the woman artist Luce Turnier, Jaegerhuber's "Paysage" (Kenscoff), and Hector Ambroise's "Serment des Ancétres".[106]

None of the works Nyabongo lists are now in known public or private collections making it difficult to assess the aesthetics, styles and forms of these works. However some of the titles she mentions, and a number of the artists specifically listed, do suggest that this exhibition (or at least Nyabongo's selective representation of it) focussed on Modernist practices and conventional subjects. Although the lives and practices of Jaegerhuber and Ambroise are not well-documented, Remponeau and Turnier are familiar names of the period, both of whom were associated with the Centre d'Art. Yet as artists of elite or

[104] 'Caribbean Carnival' *Life*, p.101
[105] Nyabongo, 'Impressions of Haiti', pp.22-30
[106] Ibid., p.27

bourgeois backgrounds, influenced by their respective educations in the United States, they practiced in impressionistic styles not characteristic of the internationally popular aesthetics now commonly associated with that institution. More broadly Nyabongo's account also suggests that this was a display of contemporary, rather than historical art. It also suggests that the exhibition contained the work of both Haitian and non-Haitian artists though the latter, she suggests, were only foreign artists resident in Haiti.

Lastly Mathurin's commemorative text presents a list of forty-two artists who received gold, silver or bronze medals at Haiti's International Exhibition.[107] Mathurin does not state for which works these awards were made, and he also does not make it definitively clear where works by these artists were actually displayed on the fairgrounds, though this list was printed under the heading "Section des Beaux-Arts". A handful of those named were non-Haitian artists, but the majority (thirty-five or more) were Haitian.[108] Notably the latter included artists of the elite or bourgeois classes who largely practiced in internationally-influenced Modernist styles and artists of the lower classes, the majority of whom were formally training for the first time through the Centre d'Art. This first group included Turnier, Remponeau, Pétion Savain and Roland Dorcely, while the second comprised Hector Hyppolite, Philomé and Sénèque Obin, Castera Bazile, Préfète Duffaut and Wilson Bigaud. Yet it must be noted that lower class Haitian artists were poorly represented among gold medal winners. These were reserved for foreign artists, elite Haitian artists who practiced in Modernist styles and Hector Hyppolite, who though emblematic of the Centre d'Art had recently died after already gaining a high profile among niche art audiences in the United States and Europe.[109] This bias implies that a hierarchy of aesthetic value that prized international-style Modernism above more local aesthetics was in force at the fair.

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[107] Mathurin, *Bi-centenaire*, pp.251-252

[108] The lists of artists receiving medals were as follows. Gold Medal: Hubermann Charles, Danial Coppjans, Mme. Vonik Destouches, Roland Dorcely, Enguerrand Gourgues, Werner Jaegerhuber, Vergniaud Pierre-Noel, Max Pinchinat, Pétion Savain, Mia Steiner, Hector Hyppolite; Silver Medal: Hector Ambroise, Xavier Amiama, Castera Bazile, Maurice Bien Aimé, Wilson Bigaud, Maurice Borno, Dieudonné Cédor, Lucienne Carrié, Spencer Depas, Daniel Lafontant, André Lévèque, R.P. Parisoo, Geo Remponeau, Eugène Léo Roy, Luce Turnier, Emmanuel L. Michel; Bronze Medal: André Dimanche, Préfète Duffaut, Georges Durand, René Exumé, Frantz Gaspard, Gabriel Lévèque, Louverture Poisson, Philomé Obin, Sénèque Obin, Jean Vilaire, Simon Fabien, André Boucard, Bérard Blanchard, Mme. Franck Chenet, Anne-Marie Mews.

[109] Mathurin, *Bi-centenaire*, pp.251-252

What is strikingly clear therefore from this analysis of the planned *Musée d'Art Religieux* and the *Palais des Beaux Arts* is that new architectural structures created for the Port-au-Prince fairgrounds were designed to make a striking and lasting Modernist statement. Yet crucially, based on the fragmentary but suggestive information known about art exhibits at the fair, this Modernist exterior was not necessarily perceived to be incompatible with the display of works by a range of Haitian artists. However, there does seem to have been an ambivalence among those in charge of planning the layout of the fairgrounds about whether to segregate the display of fine art into a hierarchy of aesthetics based on subject, style and class (particularly in distinguishing between Haitian artists) as well as nationality, the residue of which was expressed in the distribution of awards to various artists represented on the fairgrounds.

Public Sculpture: Loans and Commissions

Aside from the above-explored display of painting within buildings newly constructed on the fairgrounds, an array of sculptural works were also installed on the site of Haiti's *Bicentenaire* to project aspects of Haiti's nationhood. What is particularly notable about these artworks though, is that in every known case these sculptural works were designed and largely created by foreign artists. Numerically prominent among these were a collection of eighteen, mostly neoclassical, sculptures loaned by the Haitian government from the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art (hereafter Met. Museum) to beautify the fairgrounds. The archives of the Met. Museum show that of these eighteen, seven were returned to the museum in 1978, while eleven works were deaccessioned by the Met. and remained in the Haitian national collection.

Those remaining included classical replicas such as a *Copy of Kleomene's Venus* [Figure 71] (better-known as the *Vénus de Medici*) created by Pietro Barzanti in the nineteenth century and a *Copy of Tacca's Boar Fountain* (1891) by Longworth Powers [Figure 72] following Pietro Tacca's Florentine *Porcellino*.[110] The majority of the other loaned sculptures were

[110] The specific date of this copied Medici Venus is unknown but it can be dated pre-1881 when Barzanti died: *Loans granted: Haiti Government*, Office of the Secretary Records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives

marbles created in the mid to late-nineteenth century by male Euro-American artists and all firmly neoclassicial in style, mainly depicting classical and biblical characters or Renaissance masters at work. These included: one of William Wetmore Story's biblical heroines, *Salomé* (1871) [Figure 73]; Giovanni Maria Benzoni's depiction of characters from Greek mythology in *Hector and Andromache* (1871) [Figure 74] and Roman history in *Flight from Pompeii* (1868) [Figure 75] and; Emilio Zocchi's *Michelangelo* (c.1862) and *Raffaelo* [Figures 76 and 77].[111]

Among these loaned works there were a couple of exceptions to the neoclassical rule, though each of these were still relatively conservative figurative sculptures. Most notable were *Columbus Unveiling America to the Countries of the World* by A. Contoli [Figure 78] and a bronze cast of *Universal Peace* (c.1909-10) by Jules Leon Butensky [Figure 79]. Contoli's *Columbus* presented a marble group that recalled much of the monumental sculpture of the World's Columbian Fair of 1893. It depicted Columbus peering down on female figurative representations of Europe and the Orient while revealing a crouching personification of America and so, at least historically, its subject was modern rather than classical. Yet by 1950 the aesthetics exemplified in this work were no more innovative than the Pan-American sentiments expressed through them. Meanwhile Butensky's allegory of *Universal Peace* depicted a wizened old man precariously stood above the rear end of a sleeping lion, whilst straining to hammer swords into the tools of peaceful labour. This work, whose symbolism was based on a biblical text, had the clearest connection to the exposition's official post-war theme of 'Peace and Progress' and was the only twentieth century sculpture loaned from the Met. for this event.[112] This later date was reflected in the aesthetics of the work, such as its Rodin-like roughness of surface, or its depiction of a less than ideal male body. Yet when we consider the Port-au-Prince fair actually took place in the mid-twentieth century long after the emergence of Cubism, Futurism or Surrealism this group of loans remained a very conservative representation of sculptural work struggling to move beyond the nineteenth century.

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[111] *Loans granted: Haiti Government*, Office of the Secretary Records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives

[112] This work was based on biblical verses in the book of Isaiah, 2.4: "They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore".

It is unclear where these sculptures were positioned as there are no known images of them *in situ* during the fair or afterwards in Port-au-Prince. They may have been displayed as a collective historical exhibit in the *Palais des Beaux Arts* though Nyabongo's comment, noted above, about the contemporary nature of the works housed here suggests not. Alternatively, they may have been dispersed throughout the fairgrounds both indoors and outdoors. Wherever these works were situated, the substantial presence of a conservative neoclassical sculptural aesthetic within the fairgrounds strongly echoes elements of the visual arts display and the expression of nationhood staged at Haiti's Pavilion within the World's Columbian Fair. Over fifty years later it seems that the Haitian curatorial committee still felt a need to appeal to the neoclassical aesthetic as a mechanism of postcolonial nation-building and assertion of Haiti's sovereignty. Association with neoclassicism was an expression of elite visions of Haiti's cultural identity that emphasised French roots and selectively omitted Haiti's non-European heritage. It had historically been perceived to subvert stereotypical assumptions made about Haiti as an exemplar of savagery and a society fundamentally oppositional to ideas of "civilisation". This subversion was supposedly achieved by demonstrating Haitian society's understanding and appreciation of classically inspired art, European antiquity and the associations of both with the birth of western society and culture. However, as suggested when discussing the display of Laforesterie's *La Rêverie* [Figure 26] in the previous case study, the challenging of stereotypical perceptions of Haiti through neoclassicism significantly diminished the radical "contestatory potential" of Haiti in 1893, due to the deeply conservative nature of the aesthetic and its ideological associations. Therefore even more so, the decision to embed this aesthetic centrally within the *Bicentenaire's* landscape through display of imported, rather than any Haitian-made, sculptural works seemed conservative, underwhelming and certainly not challenging by 1950.

Art historian Carlo Célius has shown that neoclassicism was the aesthetic of choice for Haitian nation-building projects pursued by successive governments since the era of revolution, which commemorated and valorised Haiti's revolutionary ideals and heroes.[113]

[113] C. Célius, 'Neoclassicism and the Haitian Revolution' in D.P. Geggus and N. Fiering (eds) *The World of the Haitian Revolution* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009) pp.353- 383

This tradition continued at the time of the fair as the Haitian government commissioned the U.S. African-American artist Richmond Barthé to create a public monument to Toussaint L'Ouverture that was installed in 1950. Barthé created a towering figurative Toussaint [Figure 54], notably inspired by James Earle Fraser's huge neoclassical figure of George Washington installed on the grounds of the New York World's Fair of 1939-40 [Figure 80].[114] From the available source material, it seems that this was the only public representation of Haiti's revolutionary heroes commissioned by the state in 1949 or 1950. Yet it appears that this project was not directly integrated into planning for the fair as Barthé's Toussaint was not installed within the *Cité de l'Exposition*, but rather outside the gates of the Presidential Palace a number of blocks away from the site welcoming international visitors. It seems significant that this prominent commemoration of a Haitian revolutionary hero in 1950 was outsourced to an African-American artist from the United States. Indeed, it is notable that paralleling this in the previous case study, a play commemorating Haiti's revolutionary history staged within the Haitian pavilion at the World's Columbian Fair was the work of U.S. African-American playwright William Edgar Easton.

Yet Haiti's *Exposition Internationale* album did also dedicate two pages to recounting Haiti's revolutionary history, picturing aside a short text four portraits of Haiti's most prominent "founding father" figures: Toussaint L'Ouverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Alexandre Pétion and Henri Christophe.[115] Further to this, reviews of the exhibition both in the Haitian and U.S. press mentioned a Museum of the Haitian People. Though neither source mentioned the contents of this venue, it seems likely any national museum would have included a display related to the country's revolutionary heroes.[116] However, it remains significant that at the *Bicentenaire* Haiti's commission chose to adorn the exterior spaces of the fair's Modernist cityscape with neoclassical symbols of European antiquity and Columbian conquest rather than portraits of one or more of Haiti's revolutionary

[114] Vendryes, *Barthé*, p.150
[115] *Exposition Internationale*, pp.9-10
[116] Friedlander, 'Haiti's Exposition', p.13; 'Autour du Musée du Peuple Haitien' *Le Nouvelliste*, 25 January 1950, p.1

heroes.[117] Though an exhibition of this nature may have been present within the museum referred to by a number of contemporary sources, this would still suggest that Haiti's revolutionary history was being confined to a space of historical narration, commemoration and nation-building, but was not being centrally positioned within the future-focussed vision of Haitian-ness projected to domestic and international audiences through the fair's public spaces.

Indeed, Barthé's *Toussaint* was not the only sculptural commission made by the state in this period. At least two more major sculptural projects were sponsored by the state at the time of the fair: both were commissioned from foreign artists and both were installed within the grounds of the exposition. The first was given to the Finnish artist Arvi Tynys, who produced an elegant elongated figurative sculpture titled *Mother and Child* [Figure 53].[118] The exaggerated lines, particularly of the mother's arched body, add a certain energy and expressiveness to the work that would have contrasted with the more staid and static forms of the mostly nineteenth-century Met. Museum loans. However, though this was a modern artwork, for the mid-twentieth century it was still a fairly conservative figurative work. Its exact location within the fairgrounds is not known, but a photograph published in an issue of *Américas* magazine depicted the sculptor finishing this work *in situ*. This image shows that the sculpture was positioned outdoors on the edge of a fountain, likely the Fontaine des Nymphes d'Ebène [Figure 81].

The second sculptural commission was a contract for multiple works also to be located outdoors and created by a contemporary non-Haitian artist, in this case Jason Seley of Newark, New Jersey. Originally Seley was commissioned to create, "a massive 4½-ton woman standing 12½ feet high, bearing a torch in her left hand" and "four … reclining figures on the border of a reflecting pool".[119] A deeper exploration of Seley's sculptures

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[117] Indeed, it is somewhat surprising that Columbus was commemorated at all at this event given his symbolic value as an icon of European imperialism, which was already under scathing critique. See for example the first two panels and accompanying captions of Jacob Lawrence "Toussaint L'Ouverture" series which link Columbus' conquest in Hispanola to the plunder and death of the island's Taíno inhabitants [Figures 82 and 83].
[118] Schuyler, 'Haiti Looks Ahead', p.6
[119] 'Newark Artist's Work in Haiti Show' *Newark Evening News,* 3 January 1950, n.p.: Printed Materials (1949-75) Jason Seley Papers, 1928-1984, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution (hereafter JSP, AAA) 31027000452199

and their implications is possible because of the availability of information on this artist through the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. Collected within the Jason Seley Papers are a variety of materials related to the Port-au-Prince Exposition including: press clippings; working drawings for Seley's commission and photographs of the completed works *in situ* as well as Seley's correspondence with A.F. Schmiedigen Associates.[120]

With August Schmiedigen, Jason Seley first of all signed a contract in which he agreed, for the sum of $1000, to "execute the statue symbolizing the Flame of Freedom" for the exposition [Figure 50].[121] What resulted was a kind of latter-day Statue of Liberty in reinforced concrete, whose outstretched arms sit atop a block-like body made up of strong curved lines and planar surfaces: an abstracted form reminiscent of art deco figures. Dynamically posed, this kneeling female figure with upward pointing arms and knees forging forwards connotes progress. Then oddly perched between those broad shoulders is a slightly undersized head with a much more defined face akin to the female portraits of Jacob Epstein showing a somewhat cold ambivalent expression, perhaps betraying Seley's emotional disconnect from the exposition and its symbolism. Seley was also commissioned to produce four smaller sculptures. Each became a reclining semi-abstract figure in slightly varied poses [Figure 51]. This second group of sculptures, it has been noted, was strongly influenced both formally and thematically by the work of Henry Moore, whose sculptures began to adorn public spaces globally in the post-war era.[122] Seley's sculptures, as Swedish muralist Clara Salander informs us, were placed next to a shallow pool between the Beaux Arts and Agriculture Buildings and, supporting this anecdotal account an invoice from Seley to Schmiedigen Associates of March 1949 refers to "four figures in Palmiste", the nickname acquired by the eastern section of the fairgrounds.

Yet it seems that in the early months of 1949, discussions about Seley's commission intended that his *Flame of Freedom* would adorn a fountain, with some idea of his four

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[120] JSP, AAA
[121] J. Seley to A. Schmiedigen [Contract] 8 August 1949: Subject File: Haitian Art 1949-83 JSP, AAA, 30127000452181
[122] Printed Materials: Exhibition Catalogues *(1972-84)*: JSP, AAA, 31027000452199

additional sculptures in the same setting, projecting flows of water.[123] Indeed working drawings for a "Grand Fountain" among the Jason Seley Papers, stamped by Schmiedigen Associates, appear to show very rough sketches of Seley's Flame of Freedom featuring at the centre of a three-tiered circular setting [Figure 84].[124] These most contemporary of commissioned works then, it would appear, were envisioned at some stage to be an integral part of the much celebrated "super-electric-musical-luminous fountain" which the *New York Times* excitedly reported "according to Westinghouse experts, will have the New York World's Fair fountain beat for impressive "integrated" effects".[125] The historical fetishisation of electricity as the most modern of technologies, more than any other, was intimately intertwined with the history of world's fairs: from its early tentative appearance through Edison's incandescent lightbulb at the 1879 London Exposition to its swift adulation through vast, delicately ornamented Palaces devoted to its display.[126] The intended union of Seley's works with this illuminating technology would have made a powerful statement of modernity at the centre of the exposition's *Place des Nations Unies*, but as *in situ* photographs and anecdotal accounts referred to above show this was not, in the end, the case.

Nevertheless, in January 1950 the *Newark Evening News* proudly reported: "the dominant statuary in Haiti's International Exposition … was executed by a Newark artist".[127] Though this was the subjective suggestion of a local magazine about a native-son of Newark, it seems a deep irony that this large public commission, containing a piece titled the *Flame of Freedom,* was created for the Haitian state by a U.S. artist. The United States, as mentioned above, had only recently occupied Haiti and still held a strong neocolonial hold over the national economy. Further to this, in terms of the sculpture's artistic significance the irony continued as formally and stylistically Seley's commission displayed a slavish resemblance to Euro-American trends with little aesthetic reference to Haitian culture, to such an extent

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[123] J. Seley to A.Schmiedigen, 7 March 1949, Subject File, 1949-83: Haitian Art, JSP, AAA, 30127000452181
[124] Oversize Folder, JSP, AAA 31027000561098
[125] Bogat, 'Exposition in Haiti', p.xxii
[126] Early Palaces of Electricity were featured at the Exposition Universelle de Paris of 1900 and the Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904: S. McQuire, 'Immaterial Architectures: Urban Space and Electric Light', *Space and Culture*, 8.2 (2005) pp.126-40
[127] 'Newark Artist's Work', n.p.

in fact, that one later biography noted that within this work there was "no injection of Haitian art style".[128]

However, Seley himself contradicted this sentiment a few years earlier. When asked in a 1947 interview for the *Newark Sunday News* about his influences during his time working in Haiti, he emphasised the humanity and dignity of the Haitian people as a significant factor.[129] Further to this, when asked to author an article about his experiences of sculpting and teaching in Haiti by *Américas* magazine in 1953, Seley highlighted the role that an emerging Haitian sculptor, Odilon Duperrier, had played in the creation of the *Flame of Freedom*.[130] Having seen the creativity and success of Duperrier's early carvings in wood, Seley asked him to be his assistant for the Haitian Exposition project. This recognition of Duperrier's role provides another important, if frustratingly vague, reference to the involvement of Haitian artists in producing art displayed at the exposition. Similarly, a short biography of the Modernist Haitian artist Antonio Joseph mentions that he "worked with Pierre Bourdelle on a mural painting project for Port-au-Prince's bicentennial" though no further detail is given about this project.[131]

It is notable that in the only two references I have located to Haitian artists being involved in creating commissioned works for the *Port-au-Prince Bicentenaire*, they seem to have been positioned in assisting roles to more experienced Euro-American artists rather than leading such projects. In the case of these two Haitian artists this may have been for pragmatic reasons, such as a dearth of experience in creating works on a monumental scale, exacerbated by the lack of formal art institutions in Haiti in the twentieth century, before the opening of the Centre d'Art.[132] However, international artists such as Seley and Bourdelle could have been brought in as consultants charged with supporting the

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[128] *Jason Seley* (Ithaca: NY: Office of University Publications, Cornell University, 1980) n.p.: Printed Materials: Exhibition Catalogues (1972-84) JSP, AAA, 31027000452199

[129] D. Steinberg, 'Haitian Models: Newarker Captures Dignity of Creoles' *Newark Sunday News*, 8 June 1947, n.p.: Printed Materials (1949-75) JSP, AAA, 31027000452199

[130] J. Seley, 'A Sculptor in Haiti', *Américas* (November 1953) pp.20-23

[131] 'Antonio Joseph' in M. Nadal and G. Bloncourt (eds) *La Peinture Haïtienne* (Paris: Editions Nathan, 1996) n.p.

[132] Indeed the state's lack of confidence in its homegrown sculptors was given by Lindsay Twa as a likely reason why Barthé was commissioned to create a monument to Toussaint rather than a Haitian artist: Twa, *Visualizing Haiti*, p.221

translation of Haitian artists' designs into the larger scale formats of monumental sculpture and murals, but the works created were not remembered as the handiwork of Duperier and Joseph, but rather of Seley and Bourdelle. This could indicate one of two scenarios: either these were collaborative enterprises and the works produced through them were merely selectively remembered as the creations of Euro-American artists; or the balance of power in these collaborations was indeed weighted towards the foreign artists involved. One contemporary observer, as least, believed the latter to be the case, as he condescendingly suggested the role of foreign artists in these situations was to help their Haitian counterparts, "distinguish the good from the bad and the mediocre from the polished".[133]

From what we currently know of the public sculpture displayed within the landscape of Haiti's world's fair then, it presented a selective picture of Haitian-ness that venerated Euro-American histories and aesthetics, and privileged the practices of artists from Europe and the United States. Significantly this largely mirrored the scope of foreign participations at the *Bicentenaire*, which were almost exclusively drawn from Europe and the Americas.[134] Indeed just as we find no prominent artistic representation of Haiti's African cultural heritage in the public art displayed within the fairgrounds, so we find no pavilions representing nations from the African continent. Of course in this period much of the African continent was under the colonial rule of one European government or another, but there were a handful of independent African nations at this time, such as Ethiopia and Egypt, and these were not represented within Haiti's international exposition, neither were any new boulevards or avenues named after African independence heroes. It is not clear whether such nations were invited or not, yet it does not seem that politicians or audiences in these countries were the target audiences for this event. Indeed, as the above-explored display of public sculpture suggests, this event aimed to present a display of visual arts that was culturally resonant with Euro-American nations in order to forge stronger diplomatic, trading and consumer connections in those parts of the world. Further, as the power dynamic between collaborating Euro-American and Haitian artists

[133] See: Averill, *Day for the Hunter*, p.64

[134] All but one of the foreign participants' buildings was dedicated to European and American nations, the exception being a "Pavillon du Proche Orient et de la Colonie Syrienne", and notably no African nations took part.

epitomises, this was also a project of nation-building, that sought to teach domestic audiences a certain vision of modernity and thereby a Modernist version of Haitian nationhood. Yet how was that vision received? In the final section of this chapter I will briefly explore a few examples of Haitian, U.S. and more recent scholarly responses to this display, including an extended look at the strongly critical voice of U.S. art dealer Selden Rodman, in order to consider how the *Bicentenaire*'s display of Haitian-ness compared with other contemporary visions of Haitian nationhood as well as that explored in the previous case study.

CONCLUSION: "A NEW HAITI"?

Haiti's *Bicentenaire* of 1949-50 was a landmark event in Caribbean history as the first world's fair to be held in the region by an independent postcolonial nation. It was also a particularly notable event in national history because it marked a prominent post-occupation claiming and promotion of distinct cultural Haitian-ness by the state, through attractions such as the Troupe Folklorique Nationale. This claiming of local cultural forms with links to Haiti's African heritage, was then placed somewhat uneasily next to neoclassical sculptures and Modernist architecture that matched the conventions of earlier world's fairs. Media outlets in the U.S. reacted with excitement to this multivalent cultural extravaganza, though it is clear that cultural alterity was the crucial draw for these international reviewers. In contrast, for the state-appointed commissioning body claims to modernity and progress through architectural display were particularly prized. Yet the legacy of how and why this event was remembered, amongst both local and international audiences, reveals much about attempts to manipulate or control the cultural value of modernity in Haiti in the mid-twentieth century and the rising value of distinct cultural Haitian-ness internationally at the same time.

In the December 1949 issue of *Américas* magazine (a publication of the Organization of American States) an article authored by African-American journalist George Schuyler recounts the reactions of a number of Haitians whom he met when visiting the exposition. An immigration official, who had formerly lived in Brooklyn, "proudly" declared, "[w]e have

a new Haiti … Look at all the hustle and bustle, all the new buildings, all the progress!".[135] Schuyler, as was his practice, also quoted his taxi driver who expressed similar sentiments. ""You must see the exposition!" he announced … "Wonderful, it is. Big buildings. Pretty. Much work for many people. Very smooth road"".[136] It is significant in both these statements that the "new", "big buildings" featured prominently alongside enthusiastic statements of "progress". It seems that certainly for these two local men there was sense of pride and excitement about the show that Haiti and Estimé were putting on for international visitors, but also an expectation that this would have a longer-term impact in increased employment and improved prospects. There is therefore an indication that among some Haitians the state's conveyance of a Euro-American vision of modernity through stark new architecture had the desired effect.

More broadly, Estimé's *noiriste* administration is remembered fondly by many Haitians for its policies that promoted the cultural forms of Haiti's masses, which were prominently expressed at the International Exposition. Matthew Smith for example, draws attention to a *Vodou-djazz* song released in the late 1940s by Luc Jeanty, which celebrates the election of Estimé, and echoes the future-focussed optimism of one of Schuyler's sources above:

> Our hearts are truly happy, we've been asking for President Estimé for a long time. The country is coming out of its darkness. I can tell you now with a guarantee, we are going to have a new Haiti.[137]

Life magazine also mentions a similar musical tribute paid to Estimé by Haitian "peasants" in direct relation to the new buildings constructed for the fair. This reference states that "a lilting little creole song called *Estimé, le Bâtisseur Atomique* (The Atomic Builder)" was the result.[138]

Based on an interview with Jean-Léon Destiné, Kate Ramsey also states of the *Bicentenaire* and its vision of Haitian-ness: "public opinion towards the project, particularly among

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[135] Schuyler, 'Haiti Looks Ahead', p.6
[136] Ibid., p.7
[137] Smith, *Red and Black*, p.106
[138] 'Caribbean Carnival' *Life*, p.108

urban middle classes, tended to be positive".[139] Yet Smith, in contrast to the above, notes that some among Haiti's intelligentsia were more cynical about the domestic effects of the "promotion of a commercialized form of Vodou" that the *Bicentenaire* celebrated. In fact, quoting Geo Remponeau, notable Haitian "artist and [co-]director of the Centre d'Art", Smith provides another view.

> Ramponeau [*sic*] argued that the significance of [vodou] ceremonies was lost on a young generation that only viewed vodou rhythms, music, and dance as fashionable and paid little attention to the significance of the ceremonies. Even worse, this new interest in vodou culture encouraged commercial exploitation of vodou priests and "primitive" artists.[140]

This final comment is particularly significant in light of U.S. press coverage of the *Bicentenaire* and the branding and marketing mechanisms by which Americans involved with Centre d'Art were promoting Haitian art internationally, from a man who was very aware of this institution's projects domestically and abroad. This comment's significance will be further highlighted when we compare it below to Selden Rodman's critical response to the exposition. This comparison will very starkly demonstrate the gulf that existed between U.S. and Haitian perspectives on how the surge in visual arts practice facilitated by the Centre d'Art should be promoted internationally.

However, I first want briefly to consider broader responses to the exposition as a whole in order to give context to the grounds upon which Rodman made his criticisms. Contemporary Haitians have expressed different perspectives about what the exposition and the Estimé administration achieved for Haiti. For Destiné, this resulted in a positive memory of the state's sponsorship of Haiti's culturally distinct art forms. For Remponeau, on contrast, this led to a critical evaluation of the state's deployment of the cultural capital of Haitian-ness. In contrast, many secondary sources have consistently assessed the achievements of the *Bicentenaire* mainly in terms of its fiscal outlay and subsequent economic and political returns.[141] For example, Canadian ethnomusicologist Gage Averill

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[139] Ramsey, 'Vodou, Nationalism, and Performance', p.361
[140] Smith, *Red and Black*, p.108
[141] Such criticisms bear striking resemblance to comments made about FESTAC, as Andrew Apter's research reveals. This was also a postcolonial state spectacle, but on a much larger scale, which

states of the event, "having cost over $6 million, the exposition attracted no more than 4,000 extra tourists (for a total of a little over 9,000 that year); by any accounting, a spectacular financial failure".[142] Quoting a different figure, but to similar effect, Matthew Smith states

> [g]ood international press could not camouflage the economic damage the Exposition wrought … over $4 million of a national budget of $13.4 million was appropriated … [and] public opinion was harsh and unforgiving in its condemnation of the state's misguided and wanton expense.[143]

Looking back after the Duvalier years many have retrospectively suggested that it was irresponsible or foolish for a country of Haiti's size and means to dedicate such large sums to something as frivolous as a World's Fair. In David Nicholls' large and in-depth exploration of Haitian history, for example, this event merits only one dismissive comment, "…the international fair organized in celebration of the bicentenary of Port-au-Prince had cost much more than it was worth".[144] In contrast, Brenda Plummer persuasively argues that despite low gate receipts "the event gave Haiti an unprecedented amount of international publicity".[145] Yet unfortunately for Estimé, it was not he but rather his successor Paul Magloire who was able to capitalise on the event's promotion of Haiti to international audiences through the development of Haiti's tourist industry.[146] In the short term, the large amounts of state money that Estimé had dedicated to the fair added to existing political and economic tensions within the government, and led to the abrupt

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centred on culture and adapted the international exposition format. Like Estimé's *Bicentenaire* it sought to convey "heroic narratives of progress and modernity" through showpiece architecture, such as the state-of-the-art National Theatre, where attractions including stylised "traditional dances" were performed to both evoke national pride and entertain international audiences with "commodified and fetishized" culture. While some praised it as "a great cultural awakening" and others perceived it to be "a deplorable spectacle of primitive self-glorification", its economic value seems to have been a constant point of concern amongst critics. In fact Apter notes that for many Nigerians "FESTAC was nothing more than an extravagant potlatch" or "a wasteful venture … symptomatic of conspicuous spending during the oil boom". Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, pp.109-120, 200-202

[142] Averill, *Day for the Hunter*, p.66

[143] Smith, *Red and Black*, p.144

[144] D. Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti* 3rd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press: [1979] 1996) p.192

[145] Plummer, 'Golden Age', p.53

[146] See for example: Twa, *Visualizing Haiti*, pp.202-212

termination of his administration with his exile in May 1950, a situation that also brought the exposition itself to a premature end.

In the aftermath of the *Bicentenaire* and Estimé's presidency, Selden Rodman utilised the event's and this premier's legacy to assert his own agendas. Rodman's criticisms of the *Bicentenaire* were predicated upon charges of Estimé's extravagance and irresponsibility with public funds, as well as suggestions that he betrayed the *noiriste* political agenda. Yet the real focus of Rodman's indictments was the event's selective display of visual arts. In one of his most cited overviews of postwar Haitian art, Rodman alleged that close to a million dollars was dedicated to artistic commissions for the fair, yet "not one cent went to Haitian artists".[147] Throughout his career, he built up an increasingly critical and detailed narrative about his own struggle to secure commissions at the exposition for the Haitian artists working at the Centre d'Art, which usually ended with President Estimé ignoring his appeals.[148] In 1951 he recalled:

> President Estimé's government in a desperate move to endear itself with the masses … appropriated … millions of dollars it was to squander on the abortive Bicentennial Exposition.[149]

Then again in his 1974 book *The Miracle of Haitian Art* Rodman, recounting his deliberations with DeWitt Peters at the time of the fair, states:

> … Surely, we supposed, the first black President since the Occupation would not import white academics to decorate this prideful "Bicentennial" monument to Haiti's independence? Surely such an avowed nationalist and Africanist as Dumarsais Estimé would not be turned off by charges that the artists were propagandists for voodoo! And yet, unbelievable as it seems in retrospect, Estimé did exactly what we had thought unthinkable.[150]

Rodman's charge here was clearly a reaction to the high volume of commissions and exhibitionary space that were given to Modernist artists from Euro-America, or to classical

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[147] S. Rodman, *Where Art is Joy: Haitian Art: The First Forty Years* (New York: Ruggles de Latour, 1988) pp.105, 110.
[148] S. Rodman, *Murals for Haiti* (n.p. 1951) p.189
[149] Ibid.
[150] S. Rodman, *The Miracle of Haitian Art* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1974) p.49

and neoclassical sculptural works from collections in the United States. Yet this biting critique of the exposition by Rodman is misleading. As we know from the evidence presented above an array of contemporary Haitian artists were represented through the exhibition of their work on the fairgrounds. Indeed, at least two Haitian artists, if not more, were involved in producing newly commissioned works. Of course the nature of the power relations involved in those commissions is not known, nor is the level of recompense that artists such as Duperrier and Joseph received. However, it seems strange that such an avid supporter of Haitian art, who was incidentally listed as a co-director of the Centre d'Art at the time of the fair, could have missed these works.

It is also notable that in the above quote Rodman accuses Estimé of failing to commission Haitian artists because he was "turned off by charges that they were propagandists for voodoo!". In contrast to this assertion, we know from the above examination of the fairgrounds and its display of national culture that folkloric performance including stylised dance elements inspired by Vodou ceremonies, were presented as attractions at the exposition. Rather than being a reason for omission then, as Rodman suggests, associations with Vodou or "voodoo" were utilised by the exposition committee to appeal to Euro-American tourists. Admittedly the commission's *Exposition Internationale* album is careful not to use the word Vodou directly, and this is significant. Yet Rodman does not seem to recognise, or value and agree with, the commission's attempts to tap into, yet alter not reinforce, international fascinations with Haitian cultural forms based on associations with primitiveness.

Indeed Rodman remained resolutely scathing about the exposition. Many years later he published another version of this story in his sizable and well-cited 1988 work *Where Art is Joy*. What becomes gradually clear in examining Rodman's numerous accounts of this affair is that in referring to the state's neglect of Haitian artists, he is actually referring to a more specific group of artists whom he was integrally involved in marketing internationally as "popular" or "primitive" painters. It seems "a hurried note" penned by the Centre d'Art's director DeWitt Peters, around two months before the exposition's planned opening in September 1949, had first roused Rodman's concerns in this vein. In this letter Peters urges Rodman to write to "well known names" in the art world:

> We are in a fight trying to get some commissions for the popular artists in the Exposition. As you know, they have been completely ignored to date. I think it would help greatly if you could get one or two well known names to write me saying they are looking forward to seeing the Exposition and particularly the popular painters' contribution to it. Perhaps … d'Harnoncourt?...[151]

Peters' suggestion was taken up by Rodman as a copy of this letter now appears in the Museum of Modern Art's archives alongside another short letter by Rodman addressed to René d'Harnoncourt in which Rodman assumes the support of the former by suggesting: "…it might be a good idea to send a letter airmail to Jean Brierre, Minister of Tourism…" Though it is not clear whether d'Harnoncourt did send the requested note, Rodman took up the cause of publicising what he presented as the Haitian state's neglect of Haitian artists at the *Bicentenaire* for many years to come.

Yet it seems odd that after so many decades, Rodman still felt it necessary to recount this story and critique of the exposition. Particularly because the group of artists whom Rodman so passionately supported and claimed was overlooked at the exposition, succeeded in gaining wide and increasing international acclaim after the exposition. That is until we see that Rodman was consistently positioning this as a preamble, his dramatic introduction, to the story of his success in acquiring space for a group of the Centre d'Art's leading artists to create the famed (and now sadly largely destroyed) murals of Sainte Trinité Episcopal Cathedral [Figure 55].[152] The Sainte Trinité murals have quite rightly been internationally recognised as historically important works of art and Selden Rodman was indeed centrally involved in acquiring the commission for these works from Bishop Alfred Voegeli. However, Rodman made sure that the narrative of these murals' creation and his role within the project was a repeated component of the much broader metanarrative of Haitian art, which he constructed over many decades. In these accounts he always cast the success of these murals supported by himself, Peters and Bishop Voegeli (all natives of the U.S.) against the backdrop of the state's lack of sponsorship for these artists' practices at the *Bicentenaire*. Subsequently the murals created by Haitian artists for the *Bicentenaire*,

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[151] DeWitt Peters to Selden Rodman, 16 September 1949, René d'Harnoncourt Papers, II.16. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York

[152] Sainte Trinité Cathedral was almost completely demolished during the earthquake that hit Haiti in 2010.

as well as other works by Haitian artists displayed at this event, have been forgotten. Indeed, Castera Bazile, who was acclaimed as a master of Haitian art by many, including Rodman, produced murals for both occasions.

At the time of the International Exposition and through the legacy of that event, it has not only been the state seeking to shape and produce a vision of Haitian-ness expressed through cultural forms to promote to international audiences. Rodman too, at the time of the fair, was seeking to shape and promote a specific version of Haitian-ness that would best market a body of work being produced within an institution he was integrally involved in supporting. Therefore, where his vision clashed with that of the Haitian state Rodman sought to discredit the latter with charges of the elite's political incompetence and cultural betrayal. Yet considering Haiti's elite cultural representation just over fifty years earlier on the global stage at the World's Columbian Fair of 1893, the display of Haitian art staged at the *Bicentenaire* shows significant progression in Haitian leaders' acceptance of mass cultural identity, though the inclusion in any form of folkloric practices and performance. Similarly, though it was peripheral to the *Bicentenaire* itself, the state's commissioning of U.S. African-American artist Richmond Barthé to create works that commemorate Haiti's revolutionary heroes at this time was significant as it demonstrated a level of active interest in encouraging African diasporic connections.

However, there was still a lack of direct reference to Haitian culture's African heritage, particularly in terms of the new architecture constructed for the fairgrounds and the array of public sculpture chosen to adorn the event's landscape, which venerated neoclassical and Modernist Euro-American art. These biases towards emphasising Euro-American cultural connections reflected the diasporan experiences of the Haitian commission's individual members, many of whom had been educated in France or had been posted on diplomatic service in Europe or the Americas. It also reflected the geographical scope of foreign representations and expected audiences at the event as well as echoing the conventions of the world's fair format. In fact the neoclassical sculpture and Modernist architecture displayed at the *Bicentenaire* represent some of the clearest signs of continuity with Haiti's representation at the World's Columbian Fair, as it is here that we find cultural conformity in the Haitian commission's envisioning of Haiti. These elements of

the visual arts display, like those within Haiti's pavilion at the Columbian Fair, conveyed a sense of shared social and cultural values with European and North American investors and audiences. The objective of such displays was to present Haiti as both a safe tourist destination and a viable trading partner that was familiar and future-oriented.

Yet, official statements from Haiti's government accompanying the 1949 exposition did not chastise the international community for creating false or unattractive impressions of Haiti, as Hyppolite's had in 1893. Instead Estimé's commission greeted foreign participants warmly and assumed their support. In place of trying to resist negative associations with Haiti's folkloric culture and particularly Vodou by omitting them, Estimé's administration airbrushed and redeployed these distinctive cultural forms within a co-ordinated international marketing campaign. Finally, a particularly significant shift marked by this event was the recognition and increased valuation of practices noted for their distinctly Haitian styles, both by the Haitian government and international audiences. This was a notable departure from the previous case, which had prized most highly the work of Haitian artists whose practices closely resembled French styles and aesthetics.

Yet what Rodman's clashes with the state-sponsored version of Haitian-ness presented through the *Bicentenaire* also demonstrate is that in this period both Haitian-led and internationally-led infrastructures for the nurture, circulation, commodification and marketing of Haitian art were emergent. These were not completely distinct streams, but overlapped and at times clashed and competed with one another in their promotion of various version of Haitian-ness. Key issues of tension between the two included: to what extent international fantasies about Haiti as a site of primitive and exotic appeal should be indulged or resisted in order to market Haitian art? How damaging are such marketing mechanisms? Should Haitian-ness be used as a prime marketing factor when promoting the practices of Haitian artists? These dynamics, dilemmas and divisive issues that can be seen here in nascent form through the lens of this event and its aftermaths, have continued to concern those involved in marketing Haitian art ever since as we will see in the following and concluding case study.

HISTORICAL INTERLUDE II

Though Dumarsais Estimé's Bicentenaire drew to an untimely close with his premature exit from the presidency, an era of relative prosperity and political stability followed. Colonel Paul Magloire took over as Head of State and it was during his administration that the infrastructure set-up under Estimé burgeoned into a thriving tourist industry. The art market surrounding the Centre d'Art continued to develop an international audience for what was termed Haitian "primitive" art. Exhibitions of such works toured venues across the United States and Europe and gained in commercial value. Meanwhile, following the landfall of Hurricane Hazel in 1954 large swathes of Haiti's export crops were destroyed having a destabilising impact on the domestic economy and the Magloire government. Unable to recover and decreasing in popularity due to the disappearance of international relief funds, Magloire stepped down from the presidency two years later.

After just under a year of provisional state leadership, Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier was sworn in as Haiti's new President establishing a despotic regime that was to last, father and son, for three decades. Duvalier's political career was rooted in a branch of the Noiriste movement that had led to the Estimé presidency, and so he too supported the promotion of Haitian folkloric culture. It was in the 1960s that domestic markets opened up for artworks in the style promoted by the Centre d'Art. At this time the stigma previously attached to these works, due in large part to their classification as "primitive" abroad, lessened. From the late 1960s onwards a number of other centres, groups or movements also began to form, some notably led by Haitian artists and dealers. The Poto-Mitan Cultural Centre, for example, was created in 1968 and "contributed greatly to the promotion of folk culture".[1] Yet in the same era, encouraged by the increasing influx of tourists, a highly commercialised trade in standardised tourist art developed. Many have since critiqued these tourist-oriented products for their tendency to perpetuate stereotypical perceptions of Haitian art amongst international audiences.

Meanwhile François Duvalier continued to consolidate his presidency by neutralising threats from any possible centres of opposition. He violently removed and exiled political opponents whilst promoting a reactionary political ideology that focussed on racial authenticity and authoritarian leadership.[2] He also created a voluntary militia, the infamous Tonton Macoute, which he deployed to subdue the Haitian populace.[3] This domestic context goes some way to explaining the abstracted forms and apparent apolitical, mystical subject matter that focussed the work of individual artists and new art movements that developed in Haiti during Duvalier's presidency, such as the Saint Soleil group. Moreover, many of Duvalier's opponents from the middle and upper classes went into exile during the 1960s and 70s substantially enlarging Haitian diaspora communities in the U.S., France, Canada and other Caribbean islands. These communities became

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[1] G. Alexis, 'Contemporary Haitian Art: Private Collection- Public Property' *Museum International*, 62.4 (2010) pp.55-64

[2] M. Smith, *Red and Black in Haiti: Radicalism, Conflict and Political Change, 1934-57* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009)

[3] D. Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti*, 3rd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996)

important alternative channels for the development and diversification of networks circulating and promoting Haitian artist's practices internationally.

Upon Papa Doc's death in 1971 his son, Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier, was sworn in with the support of the United States. Baby Doc's administration marked an era in which the effect of his father's presidency and his own abuses, including the consistent misappropriation of public funds, brought the Haitian state to breaking point. Yet conversely the 1970s is generally regarded as a boom period in the Haitian art market. Indeed an important collecting and exhibiting institution, the Musée d'Art Haitien du Collège St. Pierre was set-up as a private enterprise, established under the patronage of Episcopal Bishop Alfred Voegeli, and remains an important institution to the present. There was also a landmark show, entitled Haitian art, staged at the Brooklyn Museum in New York in 1978. Yet the latter was still largely centred on limited perceptions of Haitian art that excluded practices in the western Modernist style.

The 1980s marked an era of political rupture. As widespread discontent with the Duvalier regime came to a head in 1986 Baby Doc was ousted from power. The country had been branded, by American researchers, as a source of HIV/AIDs in the early 1980s, tourism had all-but-disappeared, and successive droughts and deforestation caused many Haitian's to move to the capital, swelling its slums and unskilled labour force. Yet this shift also laid the groundwork for the emergence of an urban arts movement in metallic sculpture, which was to develop over the coming decades and continues to thrive, most notably with the work of the "Atis Rezistans" in the contemporary era.[4] *This development was supported by a stimulation of international interest in Haitian metalwork sculptures following the display of works by three artists creating in this form within the "Magiciens de la Terre" exhibition held in Paris in 1989 (though metalwork sculptures by a handful of Haitian artists had been exhibited internationally from the 1950s).*

A period of political upheaval and widespread reprisals, known as the "dechoukaj" or uprooting, followed Baby Doc's ousting. The 1990s saw the ascendency to power of former priest and liberation theologian Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was democratically elected to office on a wave of popular support. Yet in the intervening period, provisional governments, violent military rule and international exploitation converged to further destabilise the Haitian economy and wider society. These developments laid the groundwork for Haiti's accelerated dependency on foreign governments and NGOs, which increased dramatically from the 1990s.[5] *Meanwhile new networks set-up to support the practices of Haitian artists' developed. The Fondation AfricAmericA, for example, was established under the leadership of artist-curator Barbara Prézeau-Stephenson in 1999, with the aim of supporting "radical transformation of the Haitian art scene" through "international activities".*[6] *Virtual networks facilitated by the development of the Internet also proved an*

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[4] B. Prézeau-Stephenson, 'Haiti Now – The Art of Mutants' in D. B. Bailey et al (eds) *Curating the Caribbean* (Berlin: The Green Box, 2012) pp.63-84

[5] See for example: A. Dupuy, *The Prophet and Power: Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the International Community and Haiti* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); P. Hallward, *Damning the Flood: Haiti, Aristide and the Politics of Containment* (London: Verso, 2007)

[6] B. Prézeau-Stephenson, 'Contemporary Art as Cultural Product in the Context of Haiti' *Small Axe*, 12.3 (October 2008), p.104

important new tool for the dissemination of Haitian artists' works and the establishment of broader perceptions of Haitian artists' practices internationally. An interest in links between art produced in Haiti's urban slums and Vodou also emerged among a group of international academics and curators in the 1990s; marked most notably by the staging of the exhibition Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou at the Fowler Museum, UCLA in 1995 and the establishment, in the following decade, of the Ghetto Biennale.

Meanwhile, following the controversial departure of Aristide from his third term as president in 2004, successive U.N. peacekeeping missions were implemented in Haiti with the official purposes of helping to maintain civil order and aid in the nation's development. However from inside and outside of Haiti critics voiced concern that these missions, alongside professionalised NGOs operating in the country, furthered foreign government interests rather than helping to enhance the Haitian state's own capacities.[7] *With the earthquake of January 2010, the state's autonomy was further reduced and the nation's reliance on private and third sector organisations increased. Therefore Haiti's dependency on international aid and support systems seemed at an all time high in 2011 when Haiti was represented through a national pavilion at the Venice Biennale.*[8]

[7] See various chapters in: K. Quinn and P. Sutton (eds) *Politics and Power in Haiti* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

[8] See various chapters in: M. Schuller and P. Morales (eds) *Tectonic Shifts: Haiti Since the Earthquake* (Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press, 2012); M. Munro (ed.) *Haiti Rising: Haitian History, Culture and the Earthquake of 2010* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010)

CHAPTER 5

HAITI AT THE VENICE BIENNALE OF 2011 SPECTACULAR PRESENCE OR SPECTACLE OF PRESENCE?

INTRODUCTION

This third case study will examine the representation of Haiti through two exhibitions at the Venice Biennale in 2011, which together formed the country's first national pavilion at that event. Curators and commissioners of these exhibitions included a mix of cultural professionals and politicians drawn from Haiti, Haiti's diaspora, and elsewhere. These key individuals spoke of Haiti's exhibitions at Venice as a vital opportunity to: reassess Haiti's "foundational myths", address international perceptions of Haiti and Haitian art, and contribute to transforming the country's international relationships "by presenting its creative spirits to the world".[1] Yet behind this overarching rhetoric of transformation, we find a discontinuous variety of concerns and aspirations being articulated to the Venice Biennale's international audiences. Under a legitimising banner of national art representation, two separate groups were involved in organising this bipartite Haitian pavilion, each motivated by a variety of agendas. These include various state-level political causes such as: strengthening public and private support of Haiti's post-earthquake recovery; encouraging sponsorship of cultural programmes in Haiti and among Haiti's diasporas; and consolidating transnational diplomatic ties. Meanwhile a cohort of contemporary Haitian artists was negotiating the terms of their presence within a major exhibiting event under the sign of postcolonial nationhood. The Venice Biennale may not be an overtly commercial venture, yet it is deeply and centrally interwoven with mainstream marketing systems of contemporary art. Therefore the curatorial framing of this project was also being driven by a host of artists' and curators' marketing agendas and their perspectives on pressing national issues, which at times conflicted with those of the politicians involved. Key issues of contention included: post-earthquake media attention; humanitarianism in Haiti; and diasporan experiences.

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[1] G. Bouchotte, 'Haïti Royaume de ce Monde/Haiti Kingdom of this World' in *1ER Pavillon d'Haïti: Dossier de Presse/1st Haitian Pavilion: Press Kit*, (Paris: Service Culturel de l'Ambassade d'Haiti, 2011) pp.6-7; D. Geminiani, et al., 'Death and Fertility' in *1st Haitian Pavilion,* pp.20-2

This chapter will focus on examining these co-existing, and often competing, efforts to promote the Haitian state and Haitian artists to a global audience through national display in Venice. Analyses will be driven by three lines of questioning: (i) How was Haiti, and the artists represented in its pavilion, marketed for an international audience through the Venice Biennale? How does this compare with the historical instances of marketing Haitian art, or Haiti through its art, explored in previous chapters? (ii) How significant was the divergence between: projected image of an official national pavilion and the 'politics behind the pavilion'? i.e. How key were the roles played by diasporic Haitians, French, U.S. and U.K-based organisations? (iii) Should this Haitian pavilion then be perceived as projected, the transformative presence of a renascent nation, or, as a 'spectacle of presence:' the hallucinatory projection of a fragile state?

With these questions in mind this chapter will explore the ways in which the two exhibitions, entitled *Death and Fertility* and *Haiti: Kingdom of this World*, comprising this national pavilion project were used as political and marketing vehicles by both Haitian and non-Haitian stakeholders. It will identify the array of individuals from different sectors and international contexts involved in the organisation of each and how the exhibitionary conventions of the Venice Biennale impacted upon the exhibitions they staged. Analysis will then focus on an identification and examination of agendas behind: the selection of artists chosen to represent the nation; the selection and the contextualisation of artworks presented; and the curatorial statements provided as context for each exhibition across a variety of printed and online media. The second of these sections, focussing on the *Kingdom of this World* exhibition, will be the longer of the two reflecting the larger scope of the latter site, which displayed the work of eighteen artists as opposed to the *Death and Fertility* site's three.

Analysis of each site will pay particular attention to the branding and marketing strategies being employed across this national pavilion project, which like the exhibitions studied in the previous two case studies was a vehicle for promotion of individual and collective interests to international investors and consumers. Graham Huggan's examinations of the

promotion of postcolonial cultural products will be an important reference point here.[2] His discussions will help me to tease out a range of ways in which the artists represented and their works were differentially positioned in relation to commercially advantageous notions of Haitian-ness. *Death and Fertility* [Figure 85] housed an exhibition of sculptures by members of the collective *Atis Rezistans* (translated as *Resistance Artists*). The works produced by artists within this group have acquired an international audience in recent years by being contextualised, via the artists' local cultural milieu, as challenging responses to the poverty and economic exploitation of Haiti and Haitians that results from global Capitalist and neo-liberal systems of exchange. As such their works have undoubtedly operated within a "booming alterity industry". Huggan demonstrates that this industry rests upon a system of meaning-making that he terms "the postcolonial exotic", in which marginality, resistance and authenticity "circulate as valuable commodities".[3]

Yet the *Atis Rezistans* and their international advocates are certainly not alone in engaging in the operations of "strategic exoticism". In his delineation of the postcolonial exotic in action, Huggan also points towards writers who "despite their cosmopolitan background, [are seen] as representatives of Third World countries".[4] *Haiti: Kingdom of this World* site [Figure 86], the second exhibition comprising Haiti's pavilion at the Venice Biennale, contained works by numerous artists who either had diasporic ties to Haiti, or transnational lifestyles, yet all were featured within this exhibition as parallel representatives of Haiti. Curatorial statements surrounding each of these exhibitions also strategically deployed references to concerns and key concepts within the work of Martinican intellectual Édouard Glissant. At first glance these references to the Enlightenment, globalisation or the notion of chaos seem to be notable points of synergy between the two sites.[5] Yet in each case these engagements remained passing references,

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[2] G. Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001)
[3] Huggan, *Postcolonial Exotic*, pp.vii-viii, xvi.
[4] Ibid., p.vii
[5] See for example: É. Glissant, *Poétique de la Relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990): translated into English by Betsy Wing, and hereafter cited, as *Poetics of relation* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997); É. Glissant, *Le discours antillais* (Paris: Seuil, 1981): translated into English by J. Michael Dash, and hereafter cited, as *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1989); C. Britton, 'Globalization and Political Action in the Work of Edouard Glissant' *Small Axe*, 13.3 (November 2009) pp.1-11; C. Forsdick, 'Late Glissant: History,

rather than substantial theoretical or aesthetic engagements, suggesting Glissant was deployed in order to gain intellectual credibility, rather than deepen understanding of the works on display.

Aside from this exploration of marketing strategies surrounding each site I will also consider the significance of an array of other contexts given for each of these exhibitions by their curators. Both those involved in organising the Haitian pavilion at Venice and reviewers of it interpreted it with reference to the magnitude 7.0M earthquake that struck Haiti, between the town of Léogâne and the capital city Port-au-Prince, on January 12, 2010 to devastating effect. Against this backdrop Haiti's presence in Venice in 2011 was celebrated as a spectacular achievement, a "strong symbol" and a "sign of hope", for a country that had suffered this adversity only eighteen months earlier, the aftermath of which still posed significant challenges to the Haitian state at the time of the Biennale. But how relevant was this as a context for the art on display? Certainly a couple of the artworks exhibited within Haiti's pavilion addressed this recent event: most directly Roberto Stephenson's photographic series *Haiti, The Earthquake City*. Yet the prominence of the earthquake in commentaries surrounding the *Kingdom of this World* site can also be read as a strategic deployment. The pavilion's printed ephemera demonstrates that the earthquake provided an impetus for sponsorship of a number of cultural initiatives, including this one, by both private and public French organisations.[6] Here, it seems, was a Haitian cause behind which international supporters could gather without having to engage with politically sensitive histories and contemporary circumstance that might implicate them in a more negative neo-colonial light. Does this utilisation of the earthquake as context, then, become an ethical issue, and if so whose ethics should we question? Or was it just a pragmatic and resourceful response to the circumstances at hand, which would have likely been employed by the international media regardless? Answering such questions in a comprehensive way is not feasible in the below chapter, but

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"World Literature," and the Persistence of the Political' *Small Axe*, 14.3 (November 2010) pp.121-134; Édouard Glissant in Conversation with Manthia Diawara (trans. Christopher Winks) "One World in Relation" *Journal of Contemporary African Art*, No.28 (Spring 2011) pp.4-19

[6] 'Les Opérateurs du Pavillon d'Haïti/The Operators of the Haitian Pavilion' in *1st Haitian Pavilion,* pp.24-32

a consideration of these issues will inform my discussion of the *Kingdom of this World* site's curation, sponsorship and marketing.

A related issue, directly mentioned in supporting statements for *Kingdom of this World*, was of the power relations involved in humanitarian aid and the position in which they place contemporary Haiti and Haitians. In the years preceding the earthquake of 2010, the stability of the Haitian state had been constantly called into question, and in its aftermath discussions of state destabilisation and even de facto dissolution of the polity's sovereignty have only proliferated. Innumerable examples of the Haitian state being bypassed by external initiatives whether effective, ineffective, well meant, unwitting or insidious have led to the country acquiring a new alias: "Republic of NGOs".[7] Yet the incapacity of Haiti's state structure, revealed by the earthquake of 2010, had not been reached in a matter of years. As the historical interlude preceding this chapter demonstrates, the earthquake intensified existing internal fractures and external pressures that had been ailing Haiti for much longer. Reflecting this, the final case study in this dissertation, presents an examination of a national representation that highlights the incapacity of the contemporary Haitian state. Indeed the power to manipulate the cultural capital of Haitian-ness in this case was all but completely exercised by private individuals and organisations, and largely at a multi-layered geographical remove from Haiti via Paris, Miami, and London. This case study therefore marks a significant level and moment of international involvement in the staging of a Haitian national exhibition. Yet, paradoxically, the projection and claiming of Haitian national identity at these sites remained tenaciously strong.

Choosing to examine Haiti's presence at the Venice Biennale as the final case study of this dissertation represents a shift in focus away from state-led national displays. However, this case offers a useful new perspective on the intersection of art, national identity and state politics in the context of international exhibitions. Despite the limited capacity for state involvement within Haiti's display at Venice, promotion of the nation-state was still at stake within this event's nationally defined spaces of art exhibition. Therefore exploring the

[7] M. Schuller and P. Morales (eds) *Tectonic Shifts: Haiti Since the Earthquake* (Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press, 2012), pp.57-8

mechanisms by which these displays were instrumentalised to state-led narratives of nationhood will still feature in the below chapter. Yet, more substantially, this event allows a closer consideration of how curators and artists have sought to negotiate exhibition sites where art, national identity and state politics collide.

As noted in the opening chapters of this dissertation, since the Bicentenaire (1949-50) an international market in Haitian art for both exhibition and sale has been firmly established.[8] Art has therefore significantly increased in importance as a medium for circulating visions of Haiti internationally. Indeed this was demonstrated by reactions to the significant loss of art in the 2010 earthquake. UNESCO deployed special envoy Bernard Hadjadj to assess damage to cultural heritage and many international news outlets published stories on this theme.[9] In one such article Joseph Gaspard, a member of the board of directors of the Collège Saint Pierre art museum in Port-au-Prince, explained this loss by stating "Haitian art is what makes the international eye see us".[10]

Therefore, rather than limiting myself to a close analysis of display of individual art objects within these two exhibition sites, I will allow my analysis of each site to expand and touch on broader international marketing strategies surrounding the practices of a selection of the Haitian artists who were represented. Broadening this chapter's analytical focus will enable a deeper examination of the positioning of Haiti's artists at the Venice Biennale through comparative analysis with their representation via other international platforms. Further, it is also a strategy selected in recognition of the fact that many of the artworks displayed within Haiti's pavilion sites at the Venice Biennale were newly commissioned

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[8] See for example: B. Prézeau-Stephenson, 'Contemporary Art as Cultural Product in the Context of Haiti' *Small Axe*, 12.3 (October 2008) pp.94-104; G. Alexis, 'Contemporary Haitian Art: Private Collectives – Public Property', *Museum International*, 62.4 (2010), pp.55-64

[9] See for example: M. Lacey, 'Cultural Riches Turn to Rubble in Haiti Quake' *New York Times*, 23 January 2010 <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/24/world/americas/24heritage.html> [accessed 10 October 2014]; P. Bhatia, 'Top Art Trove Among Haiti's Losses' *Wall Street Journal*, 25 January 2010 <http://online.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703837004575013022647688144> [accessed 10 October 2014]; T. Phillips, 'Celebrated Art of Haiti is Buried Under Rubble' *The Guardian*, 15 February, 2010 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/feb/15/haiti-earthquake-art-destroyed> [accessed 10 October 2014]

[10] T. Wilkinson, 'A Cultural Agony in a Nation Where Art is Life' *Los Angeles Times*, 24 January 2010 <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/jan/24/world/la-fg-haiti-artists24-2010jan24> [accessed 10 October 2014];

works created for these exhibitions. Therefore the curators' and commissioners' processes of selection were more centrally concerned with choosing an array of artists and aesthetics to represent Haiti at Venice, rather than a collection of specific objects. Through this wider-ranging analysis I will seek to illuminate what was beneath the veneer of official Haitian national display at the Venice Biennale: what was at stake for curators and artists, but also for the Haitian and non-Haitian politicians, as well as private and third sector sponsors who were responsible for projecting this twenty-first-century image of Haitian postcolonial nationhood.

PREPARING HAITI'S PAVILION: FROM WORLD'S FAIR TO ART BIENNIAL

June 2011 marked the launch of the 54th edition of La Biennale di Venezia (hereafter the Venice Biennale), the oldest and most prestigious event on the contemporary art biennial circuit. At this 54th edition Haiti was represented as a national entity in its own temporary pavilion for the first time.[11] This 'pavilion' presented two curatorial projects organised separately and housed at two different sites situated over a mile apart. The first was titled *Death and Fertility* and it was housed in two conjoined shipping containers on the Riva dei Sette Martiri [Figure 87], a strip along the Venetian waterfront. It presented works by three artists, all of whom have Haitian nationality and reside in Port-au-Prince. The second exhibition was named *Haïti: Royaume de ce Monde* (translated *Haiti: Kingdom of this World*) and presented the work of eighteen artists within the third floor galleries of the Palazzo Querini Stampalia, a privately-owned museum and library [Figure 88]. Two artists had works in both sites and so altogether these two exhibitions of Haitian art presented the work of nineteen contemporary practitioners, though the relationship of artists represented in the *Kingdom of this World* site to Haiti varied significantly from place of birth, residence or nationality to place of a parent's birth. Therefore for a number of artists

[11] In 2007 André Juste and Vladimir Cybil Charlier represented Haiti alongside representatives of fourteen other Latin American nations within the pavilion organised by the Istituto Italo-Latinoamericano (IILA), while Mario Benjamin's work was exhibited in the African Pavilion the same year. Other Haitian artists have also exhibited individually at the Venice Biennale before 2011. V.C. Charlier and A. Juste, '"Peddler's Romance" at Venice Biennial' *The Politics of Paradise*, 4 February 2008 <http://thepoliticsofparadise.blogspot.co.uk/2008/02/peddler-s-romance-at-venice-biennial.html> [accessed 1 August 2014]; A. Lockwood, 'In the Eternal Present with Mario Benjamin' *Uprising Art*, 29 December 2012 <http://www.uprising-art.com/exclusive-intro-itw-mario-benjamin-alanna-lockward/> [accessed 1 August 2014]

whose work was presented within this exhibition and billed as representative of "contemporary creativity in Haiti" their relationships with that country were much more distant than suggested.[12]

Conceptually these two Haitian art shows were combined under a rubric of singular national display in order to correspond to recognised modes of exhibition well established at the Venice Biennale. The exhibitionary conventions at Venice have built upon a longer history of national pavilion display at World's Fairs and International Exhibitions. Yet, despite appearances, I argue that Haiti's national display at the Venice Biennale actually marks a significant point of departure from the exhibitions that were the focus of the preceding case studies within this dissertation, because of the decreased level of state involvement in, and so control over, the image of Haiti projected through the two Haitian pavilion sites at the Venice Biennale. Haiti's displays at each of the events that were the focus of my preceding case studies had the direct involvement of key contemporary figures from within the country's central domestic government.[13] In contrast, Haiti's pavilion at the Venice Biennale had little more than a stamp of approval from the state administration of the time.

There are a number of possible reasons why this was the case. Firstly it is likely that there was less central government involvement in Haiti's Venice Biennale project because this latter exhibition was of more specialised cultural interest than the previous two. That is, the Venice Biennale's chief purpose is to provide a platform for exhibition of contemporary art. Unlike the earlier two events, this was not a chance to stage a broad display of national produce and resources, and therefore did not offer the same potential for attracting major international investment into the country. Secondly Haiti's current President, Michel

[12] Filmmaker Michelange Quay, for example, was born in New York to Haitian parents who have now moved back to Haiti in retirement, yet he holds U.S. citizenship and has never resided on a permanent basis in Haiti. Bouchotte, 'Haiti Kingdom of this World', pp.6-7

[13] Haiti's projection of nationhood staged at the Chicago World's Fair, for example, had organisational input from then President Florvil Hyppolite and offered opportunities for the state to advertise its national resources, thereby encouraging international investment and the strengthening of diplomatic relationships. Meanwhile the Bicentenaire de Port-au-Prince was conceived as a showpiece for the government and Dumarsais Estimé, head of state at that time. This event provided a platform for improving the image of the nation abroad and a vehicle for encouraging investment into the country, particularly to modernise and improve infrastructure within an area of the country's capital city.

Martelly, had only been installed into office the month before the Venice Biennale of 2011 was opened, therefore he had little chance to become directly involved in the organisation of this display, though there is little evidence that his predecessor René Préval took any active involvement in the project either. Thirdly the aftereffects of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti remained, and still remain, a significant challenge to the functionality of the Haitian state. Therefore, as one of the pavilion's commissioners remarked, "Haiti's national participation in the 54th Venice Biennial could not be a priority".[14] Perhaps this final point also goes some way to explaining the lack of significant involvement of then Haitian Minister of Culture and Communication, Marie Laurence Jocelyn Lassègue, in the pavilion project. She was in post long before Martelly and had approved the project put forward by the cultural service of the Haitian embassy in Paris in late 2010, but there is little evidence that she had involvement beyond this. In fact, notably, Lassègue did not attend the opening of Haiti's art exhibitions at the Venice Biennale, while the French Minister of Culture and Communication, Frédéric Mitterrand, was in attendance alongside representatives of an array of other public, private and third sector organisations, based in various locations overseas, each of whom were involved in producing these displays of Haitian art.[15]

Significant in number among these were diasporic Haitians. I suggest that the substantial presence of diasporans among Haiti's national pavilion organisers for the biennial is indicative of the increasing influence and legitimacy that Haiti's diasporas have as representatives of their homeland in international contexts, particularly in the wake of power vacuums opened up by the weakening of the Haitian state. Their positioning outside of the state's domain at once expands the definition of the nation, whilst providing the privileged among them preferential access to external platforms for dissemination of visions and versions of Haiti and Haitian art. Therefore despite the absence of references to Haiti's diasporas within ephemera printed to contextualise this national pavilion at the Venice Biennale, an omission that I will question and interrogate, I argue that their organisational role was unquestionably key here. Moreover I would argue that this lesser

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[14] R. Estimé, 'Edito' in *1st Haitian Pavilion,* pp.4-5

[15] Service Culturel de l'Ambassade d'Haïti (ed.) *Revue de Presse du premier pavillon d'Haïti à la Biennale de Venise 2011*, n.d. <http://www.edouard-duval-carrie.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Revue-de-presse-Biennale-de-Venise.pdf> [accessed 2 September 2014]

involvement of the state, while diaspora-based Haitians were crucially involved, reveals a shift in power over representations of the national image abroad. Further, the crucial involvement of various private, third sector and foreign government sponsors is indicative of a real decrease in state power over domestic governance of Haiti in the contemporary era in comparison with the era of the Bicentenaire explored in the previous case study. These non-Haitian individuals representing and working with the organisations who helped to produce Haiti's art exhibitions at the Venice Biennale had varied agendas for doing so. This case study will therefore seek to illuminate the varied visions of Haiti expressed through these displays, due to the diverse motivations of its organisers.

Indeed, each of the two art exhibitions representing Haiti were organised by a separate commissioning body consisting of curators, commissioners, scientific committee and sponsors. *Death and Fertility* was organised by a group of cultural and academic professionals, with the support of organisations based in Europe and North America. The exhibition was commissioned and curated by Italian artist-curator Daniele Geminiani who at that time directed a small artist-led initiative in London called *The Island*, which had previously collaborated with André Eugène, Celeur Jean Hérard, and Jean Claude Saintilus: the members of *Atis Rezistans* whose work was exhibited in *Death and Fertility*.[16] The London-based artist-curator Leah Gordon was credited as deputy curator of the *Death and Fertility* exhibition and member of the exhibition's scientific committee. Gordon has a long-standing collaborative relationship with the *Atis Rezistans* since being contracted as a freelance curator by Christian Aid to commission an artwork for the opening of the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool.[17] She was also notably involved in launching the Ghetto Biennale with Hérard and Eugène in 2009, which has become a major platform for the dissemination of *Atis Rezistans'* work.[18] For the *Death and Fertility* site Gordon's role included providing context for the works displayed: in verbal form at events launching this exhibition in Venice and in written form within the supporting promotional materials for

[16] 'Radical Relations: Ghetto Biennale' *The Island*, n.d. <http://www.islandtheisland.org/page_1/s_pg_1249234878224/index.php> [accessed 19 July 2014]
[17] This resulted in the *Freedom! Sculpture*. 'Freedom! Sculpture' *National Museums Liverpool*, n.d. <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ism/collections/freedom_sculpture/> [accessed 10 October 2014]
[18] Gordon has also developed a close relationship with Eugène, which she explored in a recent work titled *The Caste Portraits* [Figures 89 and 90].

the site. In this latter responsibility Professor Donald J. Cosentino, who has had a particular interest in Haitian art and its connections with Vodou since the 1990s, also supported her.[19] Also listed as supporting this exhibition on the project website were: the Paris-based contemporary art museum *Fondation Cartier*; *Afrika Museum* an ethnological institution based in the Netherlands; and organisations involved in logistical support and financial backing of the wider event.[20] Together this commissioning body put together a small, thematically focussed exhibition, which purportedly presented an inward probing exploration of the relations between poverty and culture in contemporary Haitian society.[21]

Haiti: Kingdom of this World was also managed by cultural professionals and organisations based outside of Haiti, mainly in Paris, though the commissioning body for this exhibition did seem to have more of a direct connection to the Haitian government via the Haitian Ministry of Culture and Communication, which was credited with "patronage" of the pavilion.[22] This site's commissioner was Haitian diplomat Régine Estimé who was Chargé d'Affaires at the Cultural Service of the Embassy of Haiti in France (and daughter of the president that organised the Bicentenaire explored in the previous case study). Estimé led discussions with the domestic Haitian government, through Marie Laurence Jocelyn Lassègue, to gain approval of this project, whilst she also secured sponsorship for the pavilion from the French Ministry of Culture and Communication through the Institut Français (the French government's platform for promoting French and Francophone culture worldwide since 2011), hence Frédéric Mitterrand's attendance at the Haitian pavilion's opening.

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[19] For more of Donald Cosentino's work in this area, some in collaboration with Leah Gordon, see: D.J. Cosentino (ed.) *The Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou* (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Fowler Museum, 1995); D.J. Cosentino, *Vodou Things: The Art of Pierrot Barra and Marie Cassaise* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1998); D.J. Cosentino, *Divine Revolution: The Art of Edouard Duval Carrié* (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Fowler Museum, 2004); D.J. Cosentino (ed.) *In Extremis: Death and Life in Twenty-first-century Haitian Art* (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Fowler Museum, 2012)

[20] These were: Venezia Terminal Passeggeri; Crown Fine Arts; C-41 and Puma.Creative. It is also notable that the Afrika Museum was originally founded by a group of Catholic missionaries to support their activities. For more information see: *Haiti Pavilion: Riva Sette Martiri - Support,* n.d. <http://www.deathandfertility.org/page_1241001505024/index.php> [accessed 20 July 2014]

[21] Geminiani, et al., 'Death and Fertility', p.21

[22] D. Geminiani, 'Participating Countries: Haiti' in B. Curiger and G. Carmine (eds) *ILLUMInations: 54th International Art Exhibition* (Venice: Fondazione La Biennale de Venezia, 2011) p.368

Aside from managing these diplomatic relations Estimé played a crucial role in promoting and providing context for the pavilion through written and verbal statements distributed to the international press and so the wider public. Yet more significantly still, Estimé was central to defining the image of Haiti projected at the Venice Biennale in 2011. In correspondence with the author, Estimé recounted that in October 2010 *The Island* approached the cultural service of the Haitian Embassy in Paris to acquire support for the staging of *Death and Fertility* as Haiti's representative at Venice. Estimé explained that she "did not validate this project, [as] it was not representative enough of contemporary creation in Haiti [and] knowing that a group exhibition of work by Haitian artists … was to be held in Paris in May I asked them to combine the two and propose them as a pavilion together".[23] This politician's concern to shape and control the Haitian pavilion at the Venice Biennale demonstrates the significance these art exhibitions were perceived to have, beyond display of contemporary art practice, in influencing international perceptions of the nation-state. Estimé gave no further explanation as to her motivations for preventing the *Death and Fertility* site from representing Haiti alone, though Leah Gordon suggested, "they did not like ours because we were referencing slavery, poverty and Vodou".[24] Gordon's thoughts on the unstated but implicated motivations behind this decision underline again the political significance of these exhibitions. As Auerbach memorably said of much earlier international exhibitions, displays such as Haiti's at the Venice Biennale act as "cultural battlefields" upon which "visions and versions" of a national identity, supported by different factions within and outside of a society, grapple with one another.[25]

It further transpires from Estimé's comments that the *Haiti Kingdom of this World* exhibition was not initially conceived for the Venice Biennale. It was, in fact, first displayed in 2010 in a gallery space belonging to the Fonds de dotation agnès b. in Paris. This initial host and sponsor was an endowment fund set-up by the French designer agnès b. to promote and underwrite cultural activities. It then also provided private sponsorship for

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[23] Régine Estimé, e-mail message to author, October 23, 2013

[24] L. Gordon, 'Intervolved Histories: Liverpool, Manchester and Haiti … another triangle' (paper presented at the conference: *History and Public Memorialization of Slavery and the Slave Trade: Liverpool – Nantes*, Liverpool, UK July 2–3, 2014)

[25] J. Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (New Haven, Ct: Yale University Press, 1999)

the exhibition's staging in other international locations including the Venice Biennale. This exhibition was curated by Giscard Bouchotte, a Haitian-born cultural professional, introduced in ephemera relating to *Kingdom of this World* as a curator living in Haiti, though he studied in Paris, has lived in New York, and this seems to have been his first major curatorial role.[26] Bouchotte put together a broad survey of contemporary Haitian visual arts that was outwardly focused emphasising its diversity and celebrating Haitian artists' creativity, resourceful vitality and place within cultural exchange on a global scale. He then somewhat tenuously, as I will demonstrate below, linked this exhibition to the oxymoronic literary genre of magical realism and specifically to Alejo Carpentier's irresolute retelling of the nation's revolutionary history in his 1949 novel *The Kingdom of this World*, hence the exhibition's title.[27]

Listed as this second site's scientific committee were art historian Carlo A. Célius and Haitian-American artist and curator Edouard Duval Carrié. As with the *Death and Fertility* site their roles appear to have been the provision of context and logistical support. Duval Carrie's credit here was no doubt in recognition of his significant role in bringing about another international initiative called *Global Caribbean*. This initiative was directly sponsored by the French Ministry of Culture and *Global Caribbean* then supported the *Haiti: Kingdom of this World* exhibition.[28] This initiative sought to promote contemporary Caribbean art and offer its practitioners opportunities to "meet and share ideas about their work".[29] The central output of this has been the staging of exhibitions of contemporary Caribbean visual art at multiple locations internationally since 2009. Up until 2014 four such exhibitions have been held, each travelling to at least two different international locations. The third such event listed in this series is *Kingdom of this World,* which apart

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[26] R. Estimé, 'Yes We Can' *Edito du Service Culturel: Special Biennale de Venise 2011*, Lettre Trimestrielle, 3-11.8 n.d. p.1; 'Biographie - Giscard Bouchotte' *Africultures*, n.d. <http://www.africultures.com/php/?nav=personne&no=6939> [accessed 10 October 2014]

[27] A. Carpentier, *Le Royaume de ce Monde* (Paris: Gallimard, 1954): translated into English by Harriet de Onis, and hereafter cited, as *The Kingdom of this World: A Novel* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux [1957] 2006)

[28] The project was begun in 2009 through the programme Caraïbes en Créations initiated by Culturesfrance, the predecessor to the international network now known as Institut Français.

[29] *Global Caribbean – about*, n.d. <http://theglobalcaribbean.org/about.php> [accessed 1 August 2014]

from Paris and Venice was exhibited in Miami in the United States, Sainte Marie in Martinique and Jacmel in Haiti.

This international planning and afterlife of the *Kingdom of this World* exhibition is significant for two reasons. Firstly it highlights Duval Carrié's multifaceted role in relation to this and other recent exhibitions of Caribbean art, which I will explore in more detail in the final sections of this chapter. Secondly the international movement of *Haiti Kingdom of this World* through the *Global Caribbean* initiative is significant because it brought this display of Haitian art to a Haitian audience at the Halle Vital in Jacmel. Notably President Michel Martelly finally viewed the exhibition in Jacmel two years after it appeared at the Venice Biennale. Viewing the exhibition seems to have provoked a sense of national pride in the premier, who commented: "Je suis vraiment impressionné par la richesse, la profondeur de cette exposition: Vive la Culture Haïtienne, Vive Haïti" ("I am really impressed by the richness and depth of this exhibition. Long live Haitian Culture, long live Haiti").[30] Aside from inspiring this outburst of nationalist sentiment from the Haitian president it is significant that *Kingdom of this World* was exhibited in Jacmel for two reasons. Firstly it was very clearly given a platform and level of backing that was notably not bestowed on the *Death and Fertility* site. Secondly this domestic display alters a key function of the exhibition. When displayed in Haiti, this envisioning of the nation through contemporary visual art became a nation-building project. It gave shape and form to a sense of national identity, as the premier's comments demonstrate, which in this instance had been significantly constructed via feedback loops from Haiti's diasporas.

POSITIONING HAITI'S PAVILION WITHIN THE VENICE BIENNALE'S UNIVERSE

At the Venice Biennale, Haiti's two art exhibitions became outward-facing projections of nationhood that collapsed varied visions of Haiti behind the sign of national identity. These visions were rendered in many aesthetic forms, from abstract painting to sculptural assemblage, as well as emerging from diverse subject positions. Contemporary editions of the Venice Biennale contain within them three main strands or categories of contemporary

[30] Comment quoting Michel Martelly: 'Haiti Royaume de ce Monde' *Facebook* (fan page) 9 May 2013 <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Haïti-Royaume-de-ce-Monde/608568275835756?fref=nf> [accessed 1 August 2014

art display. Firstly, the national pavilions separate out and display contemporary art production in competing exhibitions defined by nationality. This is the strand in which Haiti's pavilion was situated. Secondly, collateral events present either solo or group shows entirely conceived and sponsored by non-profit organisations from across the globe that take place at the time of the Venice Biennale in locations across the city and are endorsed by that year's central committee. Thirdly, the central international exhibition presents one large display directed by a single curator who "is specifically requested to create an exhibition "without borders"" that will show the work of artists from all over the world and since the 1970s this central exhibition has also been focussed on a certain theme.[31]

Taking up this mantle of central exhibition directorship in 2011 was Swiss curator Bice Curiger, who settled on the theme: ILLUMI*nations*. Her central exhibition presented works by eighty-three international artists displayed over two huge sites: the Padiglione Centrale (Central Pavilion) [Figure 91]; and the Arsenale [Figure 92], a complex of converted shipyards and workshops.[32] She explained that her chosen theme of ILLUMI*nations* was intended to engage interpretations of the dual themes of light and nationality. With regards to the former, Giovanni Carmine wrote in his essay for the Biennale's catalogue that the Enlightenment was "a historical epoch to which we owe many of the philosophical and theoretical foundations like equality and rationalism based on empiricism that underpin the modern epoch…"[33] Carmine's comments were of particular note because of his prominent roles as Curiger's co-editor of the Biennale catalogue in 2011 and as artistic coordinator of the central exhibition. His interpretation of the ILLUMI*nations* theme was a point of departure for the statement written by Daniele Geminiani to contextualise both of Haiti's biennial exhibitions, which was printed in the 2011 Venice Biennale catalogue. At each edition of the Biennale national pavilion curators are informed of the central international exhibition's planned theme and rationales. It is then at the discretion of national pavilion curators how and to what extent they respond to this theme, if at all.

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[31] P. Baratta, 'La Biennale is like a Wind Machine' in Curiger and Carmine (eds) *ILLUMInations*, p.32
[32] *La Biennale di Venezia: Venues – Arsenale*, n.d. <http://www.labiennale.org/en/venues/arsenale.html> [accessed 1 August 2014]
[33] G. Carmine, 'Where is Ai Weiwei' in Curiger and Carmine (eds) *ILLUMInations,* p.62

Geminiani chose to position Haiti's pavilion in polemic response to the Enlightenment connotations of the ILLUMI*nations* theme by quoting an excerpt of text from an interview with Édouard Glissant that opened "when the West conquered the world, it kept repeating 'we bring civilization, we bring the light,' but it was not true".[34] Glissant's words here point to his wider anti- and postcolonial critiques of the universalising, or perceived universal relevance, of any knowledge or culture. Though Glissant is particularly responding to the overextension of systems from the western world. In referring to western conquest and civilisation, Glissant's words also specifically evoke the era of the western Enlightenment and place that thinking into the context of European imperialism. Using Glissant to allude to these less high-minded aspects of Enlightenment thinking, Geminiani gestured towards a body of literature that has sought to expose and critique the profoundly problematic thinking that underpinned many Enlightenment philosophes perspectives on the world. Louis Sala-Molins' *Dark Side of the Light* is a particularly notable example among this literature, which highlights such Eurocentric and virulently racist ideas often at the core of Enlightenment thinking. His research reveals the complicity of Enlightenment discourses and scholars in the transatlantic slave trade, slave-based societies and empires by exploring, for example, theories put forward about the incomplete humanity of 'Negro slaves' in the work of Diderot, Montesquieu and Rousseau.[35] Remembering these disremembered limitations to European Enlightenment thinking both exposes its less than laudatory links to racialised hierarchies, inequality and oppression, and questions western society's exclusive claims to conception of modern ideals in the way that Carmine expresses above. In recent years scholars of Caribbean thinking, such as Nick Nesbitt, have demonstrated, for example, the radical rethinking and expansion of the concepts of freedom and equality through principles embodied in the Haitian Revolution and its aftermath, which have laid the groundwork for contemporary human rights thinking.[36]

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[34] Taken from an interview with Glissant in 2009 and cited in Geminiani, 'Haiti', p.369

[35] L. Sala-Molins, *Les Misères des Lumières: Sous la raison, l'outrage* (Paris: R. Laffont, 1992): translated by John Conteh-Morgan, and hereafter cited, as *Dark Side of the Light: Slavery and the French Enlightenment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006)

[36] N. Nesbitt, *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2008); N. Nesbitt, *Caribbean Critique: Antillean Critical Theory from Toussaint to Glissant* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013)

In terms of the theoretical relevance of this excerpted quotation from an interview with Glissant to the *Death and Fertility* site, its oppositional implications tied in well to the tone of the wider project. Geminiani's display like the texts of Sala-Molins and Nesbitt, sought to be bold and challenging to existing systems of international exchange whether that be economic, political or intellectual. However, though we can read this postcolonial challenge into the Glissantian quotation used by Geminiani, these anti-imperialist theories were not drawn out by his commentary. In fact his rationale was really no more than a vague polemical positioning of the *Atis Rezistans* sculptures and of this exhibition, which mirrors wider strategies for marketing these artists' works internationally. The tone of postcolonial challenge, was similarly evoked by Bouchotte's utilisation of the name of Carpentier's magical realist novel as the title for Haiti's second pavilion site. Indeed there are some close synergies between the postcolonial critique of western thought's hegemony evoked through the words of Glissant that were used in Geminiani's catalogue essay and the irreverence expressed towards French Enlightenment thinking in Carpentier's *Kingdom of this World*.[37] Yet as with Geminiani's use of Glissant above, Bouchotte's reference to Carpentier's novel was little more than a pointer in a postcolonial direction, rather than a close engagement with this work's critical appraisal of the value of enlightenment thinking in French colonial and Haitian postcolonial societies.

As noted above, Bice Curiger decided to also have the Venice Biennale's central exhibition theme in 2011 examine the contentious issue of Venice's national pavilion structure itself. In 2011 eighty-nine nations took part in the Venice Biennale through this strand of display, though not every one had its own venue. In total that year there were seventy-four pavilions, some sites therefore housed the exhibits of more than one nation in regional groupings, such as the Central Asia Pavilion.[38] Yet the terminology of national pavilions glosses over a wealth of variables from number of venues to location, longevity, style of architecture and type of exhibition. Historically all of Venice's national pavilions were

[37] See for example the episode in which Carpentier's protagonist, a former Haitian slave called Ti Noël, is positioned atop "three volumes of the *Grande Encyclopédie* on which he is in the habit of sitting to eat sugar cane". A suggestion perhaps of this apparent universal thought-system's irrelevance in the context of a largely illiterate postcolonial Caribbean society. Carpentier, *Kingdom of This World,* p.164

[38] See also the Italo-Latin American Institute (IILA): Curiger and Carmine (eds) *ILLUMInations*, pp.470-483

permanent, free-standing architectural structures located within the Giardini, each owned and administered by a national government that bi-annually staged an exhibition of contemporary art production from their country within that space. At the time of the 2011 Venice Biennale thirty-odd such pavilions populated the Giardini [see for example Figure 93]. This means that over fifty, more than half, of the nations represented at the event that year staged their shows in gallery spaces elsewhere in the city, or within purpose-built ephemeral structures as Haiti did.[39] There also seems to be an increasing trend, as we have seen with Haiti's pavilion, of vicarious international organisation of national presences via diasporas and non-nationals living in Europe. For example, resident Middle Eastern artists and cultural professionals expressed considerable discontent about the 2011 Syrian pavilion, which was organised exclusively by an Italian team. Though the site did display some work by resident Syrian artists, with little, if any, explanation why it also exhibited work by a handful of European artists with no apparent connection to Syria.[40] These adaptations of the national pavilion sites at the Venice Biennale bring to the fore two key issues. Firstly they reveal how contingent, disparate and provocative understandings or definitions of national identity can be. Secondly, these developments lead us to reconsider to the purported global reach of the Venice Biennale, which has been much publicised in recent years.

There are numerous ways that an art exhibition defined by nationality could make a connection to that identity including through the subject of the works displayed. In the context of the Venice Biennale and its national pavilions it seems that legitimating connections to nationhood are usually made through nationality or residence of the artists and curators represented and through the involvement of the state. Clearly, the

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[39] There are contradictory listings of how many pavilions actually exist within the Giardini. Paolo Baratta states that "there are 28 permanent pavilions inside the Giardini used by 30 owner countries" while the Venice Biennale's website states that there are 29 pavilions, though it does not list all of these. Finally in 2013, based on a photographic exhibition curated by Diener & Diener Architects, a book was published on "the Venice Biennial's 29 national pavilions". Baratta, 'La Biennale' in Curiger and Carmine (eds) *ILLUMInations:* p.31; *La Biennale di Venezia: National Pavilions*, n.d. <http://www.labiennale.org/en/biennale/venues/pavilions.html?back=true> [accessed 4 August 2014]; G. Basilico and Diener & Diener Architects (eds) *Common Pavilions: The National Pavilions in the Giardini in Essays and Photographs* (Zurich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2013)

[40] See for example: 'Syrians not too happy with the art in the Syrian pavilion' *ArtInfo.com*, 2 June 2011 <http://blogs.artinfo.com/artintheair/2011/06/02/syrians-not-too-happy-with-the-art-in-the-syrian-pavilion/> [accessed 10 July 2014]

representation of non-national artists with the Syrian pavilion in 2011, and its curation by European professionals with only nominal involvement of the Syrian state and limited display of works by Syrian-resident practitioners, led some to question the legitimacy of this exhibition. The point of contention seems to have been that this was perceived to be a platform and an international opportunity to represent contemporary Syrian art praxis, yet the majority of artists represented were not Syrian nationals, or artists resident in Syria. As a result there was a sense that ownership of Syrian nationhood had been compromised. Clearly there is little consensus on these issues and where diasporas or particularly where those of other nationalities have been largely in control of, or exhibited within a national site at the Venice Biennale, there have been objections raised about the representativeness of the exhibition, which also implicate debates around identity and authenticity.[41]

Given what we know of the level of international involvement in the Haitian pavilion's organisation it is feasible that similar accusations could have been made. Objections could have been raised about a lack of local curatorial involvement in the conception and organisation of these two exhibitions and, in the case of the *Kingdom of this World* site, an over-representation of artists not resident in Haiti. However, such objections have not been forthcoming and this lack of protest is significant. Undoubtedly the specific context of increased recognition of Haiti's diasporic communities in Haiti in recent decades, and the significant economic contributions of these international communities over the same period, has impacted upon perceptions of Haitian national identity as a status that can stretch beyond state borders.[42] Yet despite diasporic Haitian artists and curators being easily integrated into Haiti's national pavilion project at the Venice Biennale, no direct mention was made in the pavilion's catalogue of their diasporic status, or of Haiti's significant diasporas. This is a point I will return to consider in later sections of this chapter.

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[41] See, for example, essays in E. Filipovic, M. Van Hal and S. Øvstebø, (eds) *The Biennial Reader: An Anthology on Large-Scale Perenial Exhibition of Contemporary Art* (Bergen and Ostfildern: Bergen Kunsthall and Hatje Cantz Verlag [2005] 2010); Curiger and Carmine (eds) *ILLUMInations*

[42] Though notably out of step with this thinking, at the time that Haiti's pavilion was staged at the Venice Biennale, was the Haitian state's stance on disallowing dual-citizenship past the age of 18.

Turning to reconsider the much promoted global reach of the Venice Biennale, it seems particularly notable that many of the more recent non-western additions to the event's national line-up have in fact been conceived by and represent groups of either diasporic or foreign artists and curators based in Europe and North America. Perhaps, then, this apparent global network of national exhibitions including Haiti's site is more representative of contemporary art scenes in western metropoles and of market networks largely centred on those same locations. In a related vein, in recent years there has also been an increase in multi-site national pavilions. In 2011 there were a handful of nations represented in this way, one of which was Haiti.[43] Some commentators have seen this addition as recognition of many contemporary artists' itinerancy, trans-nationality or diasporic identities.[44] However in some cases, as we have seen with the Haitian pavilion, the reasons for presenting more than one exhibition site are less theoretically concerned that it might seem. Instead, key motivating factors appear to include: splintered and fragmented national identities, competing commercial interests, or conflicting attempts to lay claim to the cultural capital that goes along with national representation.

The national element of the Venice Biennale's exhibitionary structure and particularly its sporadically constructed permanent pavilion landscape, have been the focus of much criticism in the latter half of the twentieth century.[45] Particularly since "the 'post-colonial' decade of the 1990s" these exhibition sites have been characterised as at least benignly, if not insidiously, anachronistic.[46] Such accusations have been levelled on many grounds ranging from charges of the permanent pavilions' out-dated architecture to criticisms of the imperialist connotations of the Giardini's selective pan-European internationalism. Many of these issues are embedded in the very foundations of the event, which (as explained in my introduction to this thesis) was founded in the late nineteenth century

[43] Others included: Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia; Republic of Moldova; Norway; Romania; and Switzerland.

[44] Curiger referenced this and tried to call further attention to it by creating a new set of spaces for transnational exhibition and exchange within her central exhibition, which she called Para-pavilions.

[45] The earliest pavilion (belonging to Belgium) was constructed in the Giardini in 1907. It was not until the 1950s and '60s that the Giardini became host to pavilions from Middle Eastern, African, Asian, Central and South American nations, and its contemporary landscape still presents a very unbalanced picture of global realities.

[46] M. Pastor Roces, 'Crystal Palace Exhibitions' in E. Filipovic, M. Van Hal and S. Øvstebø, (eds) *The Biennial Reader: An Anthology on Large-Scale Perenial Exhibition of Contemporary Art* (Bergen and Ostfildern: Bergen Kunsthall and Hatje Cantz Verlag [2005] 2010) pp.50-65.

concurrent with the staging of World's Fairs and Expositions Universelles across Europe and the United States. However the connections between these grand imperialist spectacles and the Venice Biennale stretch beyond simultaneity. As a number of scholars have begun to demonstrate, the national pavilions and the imperialist vision of a hierarchy of nations that they collectively exemplified are a key site of continuity between these two international exhibition forms.[47] Most recently Joel Robinson has argued that:

> … the Biennale took after … the universal expositions that were then being staged throughout Europe … The first Biennale pavilions were those of Europe's chief powers, many of whom had already hosted their own grand expositions, and were thus very aware of the capital to be gained by building national pavilions at these kind of events.[48]

Yet a key difference between the Venetian-based institution and World's Fairs was that the latter were and are ephemeral and itinerant events and their appearance therefore remains adaptable and able to respond to the global realities of the moments in which they are staged. In contrast, because the Biennale was to remain in Venice, its organisers made what art historian Caroline A. Jones has described as, "the logical error of populating [the Giardini]… with pavilions that fixed spatial relations in a world picture doomed to anachronism" by building permanent pavilions.[49] Therefore once the Biennale's national pavilions were inscribed on the Venetian landscape, they became unpliant expressions of the eras in which they were constructed. However, despite such far-reaching criticisms, appearance at the Venice Biennale remains a much sort after rite of passage and commercial "legitimator" within the career of many successful contemporary artists.[50] Its national component too, continues to be a highly prestigious site of exhibition. Presenting work for a national display at the Venice Biennale is perceived to increase (market) value

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[47] See for example: J. Chin Davidson, 'The Global Art Fair and the Dialectical Image' *Third Text*, 24.6, pp.719-734; B. Wyss and J. Scheller, 'The Bazaar of Venice' in Curiger and Carmine (eds) *ILLUMInations*, pp.112-129; J. Robinson, 'Folkloric Modernism: Venice's Giardini Della Biennale and the Geopolitics of Architecture' *Open Arts Journal*, 2 (2013) <http://dx.doi.org/10.5456/issn.2050-3679/2013w04jr> [accessed 10 October 2014]

[48] Robinson, 'Folkloric Modernism', p.7

[49] C.A. Jones, 'The Historical Origins of the Biennial' in Filipovic, Van Hal and Øvstebø (eds) *The Biennial Reader*, p.78

[50] S. Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World* (London: Granta Books, 2009) pp.45-6

and international reputation and not only for individual artists but also for the nations represented.

These pavilion sites, then, function on many levels, but we can perhaps broadly marshal their contemporary use into two main strands of purpose. Firstly they function as pop-up pavilions for the artists and nations represented within them. By this I mean that these sites utilise many of the strategies of commercial advertising embodied in the late '90s initiative of flash retailing through pop-up shops. This has become an international trend where sales space in a prominent place is rented on a short-term basis from a matter of weeks to months. The aim of such short-term retail spaces is to raise brand visibility and attract intensified media coverage through spectacular display of the product on offer. In the last decade many civic bodies have integrated this model into revitalisation and development strategies for their city centres, in much the same way that host cities have used world's fairs.[51] Secondly pavilion sites at the Venice Biennale are utilised as ephemeral embassies. Indeed, the permanent pavilions are politically activated every other year through the staging of a national art exhibition. Yet this transient politicisation also applies to the impermanent pavilions, which are constructed on a temporary basis, but also with this function of national display in mind. These are spaces in which artists and curators interrogate the contemporary politics of art exhibition, but they are also political spaces through which state bodies: define and project a national image to international audiences; grapple with pressing socio-political issues of domestic and international importance pertaining to the nation; and above all advertise and promote their national brand. Both of these functions were grasped and utilised by the commissioning bodies in charge of Haiti's two pavilion sites at the Venice Biennale in 2011 and I will now move on to survey each of these in turn, contrasting the differing curatorial approaches to global exhibition of Haiti through Haitian art employed at each.

[51] See for example: R. Varley and M. Rafiq, *Principles of Retailing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillian, 2014) pp.29-31; Department for Communities and Local Governments UK, 'Re-imaging Urban Spaces to Help Revitalise Our High Streets' (July 2012) <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5987/2185491.pdf> [accessed 7 April 2015]; K. Cochrane, 'Why pop-ups pop up everywhere' *The Guardian*, 12 October 2010 <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2010/oct/12/pop-up-temporary-shops-restaurants> [accessed 7 April 2015]

SITE ONE – DEATH AND FERTILITY: MARKETING, AUTHENTICITY AND CURATORIAL CONTROL

The Haitian pavilion's *Death and Fertility* site comprised ten sculptural works by three artists: André Eugène, Celeur Jean Hérard and Jean Claude Saintilus. Each of these three artists are key figures within the collective *Atis Rezistans* [Figure 94]. As highlighted above, the exhibition of these artists' works at the Venice Biennale was accompanied by interpretation from a team of European and North American curators: Geminiani, Gordon and Cosentino. The latter two of these interlocutors, alongside the artists themselves, have been centrally involved in interpreting and marketing the works of the *Atis Rezistans* for international audiences since the mid-2000s. The contextual discourse that these curators and artists have developed focuses on the collective's local socio-economic and cultural milieu: their sculptural assemblages are presented as both politically-charged responses to their experiences of living and working in material poverty in a "slum neighbourhood" in Port-au-Prince and expressions of Haiti's and their rich cultural heritage of Vodou.[52]

After presenting a critical overview of the artworks within the *Death and Fertility* site I will therefore go on to consider how the curatorial team's positioning of these artists works' as "challenging" and "shocking" objects related to Vodou and poverty impacted upon international reviewers perceptions of these artists, their artworks and Haiti in the context of the Biennale's world picture.[53] Then secondly, I will consider these responses comparatively against other recent reactions to the exhibition and circulation of the *Atis Rezistans*' works internationally. Thirdly I will go on to use these analyses as a lens through which to consider how the international marketing of these artists' practices in relation to poverty, resistance and Vodou leans upon strategic mechanisms of a global alterity industry, thereby paralleling the marketing structures that Graham Huggan has explored in the literary world.[54] These considerations will demonstrate that despite their rhetoric of challenge and of oppositionality that seeks to "repoliticise … the cultural other as an unsettling force" these interlocutors position the *Atis Rezistans'* works to take advantage of

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[52] Leah Gordon quoted in: Geminiani et al., 'Death and Fertility', p.21

[53] Leah Gordon quoted in: G. Harris and C. Burns, 'Newcomers make their mark at Venice' *The Art Newspaper*, 3 June 2011 <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Newcomers-make-their-mark-at-Venice/23956> [accessed 14 August 2011]

[54] Huggan, *Postcolonial Exotic*

an institutionally accepted and commercially lucrative notion of 'otherness'.[55] Taking my examination in this direction leads me to touch on two contentious debates that have surrounded these artists' works as they have been increasingly exhibited outside of Haiti. The first of these implicates questions about the authenticity or value of these artists' works in light of their complicity with an international alterity industry. Then finally the second brings us back to the specificities of these artists' representation of Haiti at the Venice Biennale. It considers the uneasy relationship that the images of contemporary Haiti utilised to market these works' abroad have with those deployed by the state, which in this case is exemplified by the relative lack of Haitian and French government support for this exhibition in comparison with the *Haiti: Kingdom of this World* site.

The *Death and Fertility* site at Venice presented provocative, figurative assemblages typical of the *Atis Rezistans* eye-catching aesthetic. These works were made from discarded materials and scrap metal gathered in the vicinity of the Grand Rue, a major thoroughfare in Haiti's capital city, adjacent to which the artists live and work. The curatorial team related these assemblages to a family of "rowdy and raunchy" Haitian Vodou spirits known as the Gédé who "represent both eroticism and death".[56] As mentioned above this exhibition was housed within a space created out of two repurposed freight containers, which were positioned perpendicularly to each other, "following the phallus anatomy", an emblem of the Gédé.[57] Dominating the small space inside were Eugène's *Dokto Zozo* (trans. *Doctor Penis*) (2010) [Figure 95] and Hérard's *The Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (2010) [Figure 96]. Both were works consisting of figures made up of motorbike chassis, topped with human skulls and dominated by phallic forms, which bristled with aggressive masculinity. Yet for all their similarities of form these dominant works differed in tone. For example, Eugéne's irreverent *Dokto* coursed with dark humour. The central figure was positioned to listen intently through his stethoscope to an oversized penis protruding from the black sheets of a coffin below, and was perhaps casting a wry glance at the large, yet arguably impotent humanitarian presence in Haiti. Hérard's trio of *Horsemen*, meanwhile, glared out at passers-by with an altogether more acerbic anger befitting the "triple

[55] Huggan, *Postcolonial Exotic*, p.264
[56] Geminiani et al., 'Death and Fertility', p.22
[57] *Haiti Pavilion: Riva Sette Martiri - Framework*, n.d. <http://www.deathandfertility.org/page_1296675097088/index.php> [accessed 20 July 2014]

tragedies of AIDS, political oppression and poverty" that we are told the figures represent.[58] Images of this latter work featured centrally among promotional material for the Haitian pavilion, including its notable appearance as the only work depicted on Haiti's designated pages within the official ILLUMI*nations* catalogue.[59]

Receiving much less press attention were a number of smaller bricolage sculptures: a couple of relic-like crosses [Figure 97] and a male and two female figurines [see for example Figures 98 and 99]. These were much less imposing figures that drew on cruciform and mother and child iconographies familiar to both Vodou and Christianity. Finally Saintilus' presented a work called *Gran Brijit* (2010) [Figure 100]. A mother figure amongst the Gédé, Gran Brijit was here represented through assemblage consisting of an ironing board and various tattered textiles topped with a human skull. Recalling similar religious iconography, Saintilus' figure held a worn out child's doll draped with rosary beads, had a rough metal cross at her feet and was crowned with a halo formed from a tattered umbrella. It is notable in all cases that these works are contextualised by the site's curators as examples of "the Vodou-inspired arts of Haiti" with their religious symbolism and iconographies read as "reflecting the complexity of Vodou" yet nowhere is there a mention of the intriguing overlap with Christian iconographies that are also patently present here.[60] Christianity, and particularly Roman Catholicism, has historically played a crucial part in shaping Haitian society and culture in complex relationship with Vodou and continues to do so. This role is acknowledged by a popular Haitian saying with many variants, along the lines of "Haitians are 90% Catholic and 100% Vodou" (some more recent variants factor in the aggressively increasing protestant Pentecostal sector of the population).[61] *Death and Fertility's* curatorial team would certainly not have been unaware of the intertwined nature of Vodou and Christian symbolism in Haiti, yet they have chosen to omit this latter context in their framing of the *Atis Rezistans* artworks in Venice. Instead this exhibition focused exclusively on Vodou as context for these sculptural works: a less familiar belief-system

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[58] 'Jean Hérard Céleur - Les Artistes/The Artists' in *1st Haitian Pavilion,* p.22
[59] Curiger and Carmine (eds) *ILLUMInations: 54th International Art Exhibition,* Venice: Fondazione La Biennale de Venezia, p.368-369
[60] Geminiani et al., 'Death and Fertility', p.21
[61] R.C. Brictson, 'Voodoo: Spirits in Haiti [sic] Art' *Bob Corbett: Haiti*, 2001 http://www2.webster.edu/~corbetre/haiti/voodoo/brictson.htm [accessed 14 August 2014]
J. M. Dash, *Culture and customs of Haiti* (London: Greenwood Press, 2001) p.51

among audiences in Europe, and one with a history of exoticised and sensationalised international portrayals.[62]

Certainly the curatorial team behind the *Death and Fertility* exhibition intended this Haitian display to be a stark intervention, positioned as it was on the Venetian waterfront between a landing area that served the yachts of millionaires and the entrance to the Biennale's Giardini. As hoped, reviewers characterised the site as boisterous and bizarre, yet candid and authentic. One commentary opened by describing the exhibition as "counterposed against the conceptual excess and indulgence of the Venice Bienniale" and closed by asserting that the art contained is "critical, nuanced and alive. It probably means more than most".[63] Another article asserted, "of all Venice's surreal juxtapositions, none beats the fragile Haitian pavilion, housed in shipping containers. … Three artists … show raucous sculptural collages … with a vigorous expressiveness standing out from the Biennale's slick, well-rehearsed ironies".[64] In emphasising the *Death and Fertility* site's earnestness in the face of the Venice Biennale's glitzy overindulgence, these critics successfully use the *Atis Rezistans* display as an opportunity to sneer at this event's rampant posturing and pretensions. Yet, ironically, in doing so they overlook performative aspects of the exhibited works. The site may indeed have been absent of "conceptual excess and indulgence" yet excessive, immoderate and exaggerated posturing is what the Gédé and these artworks are all about, and there was certainly more than a whiff of the sensational about this selection of sculptures toting their giant penes and grinning human skulls.

In 2012 similar works by the Aits Rezistans featured in the exhibition *In Extremis*, which was staged in Los Angeles, and was again co-curated by Cosentino and Gordon [Figure 101]. Haiti scholar and journalist Amy Wilentz highlighted the flamboyant performativity of

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[62] See for example, the links made between Vodou and Christian symbolism referenced in this teaching resource to accompany an exhibition curated by Leah Gordon and Donald Cosentino: 'In Extremis: Life and Death in 21st-century Haitian Art, Lesson Two: Gédé and the Cemetry, n.d. p.19 <http://www.fowler.ucla.edu/sites/default/files/curriculum/InExtremis_CRU_Lesson2.pdf> [accessed 14 August 2014]

[63] 'Death and Fertility – The Art of Haiti' *Art Culture*, 10 June 2011 <http://artculture.com/contemporary-art/venice-biennale-2011/death-and-fertility-the-art-of-haiti> [accessed 14 August 2014]

[64] J. Wullschlager, 'Breadth in Venice' *Financial Times*, 3 June 2011 <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/c1478138-8d55-11e0-bf23-00144feab49a.html#axzz2OeWP21Mq> [accessed 20 August 2011]

the sculptures on show and thereby questioned the curatorial rationale's focus on the works' cultural authenticity through Vodou.[65] *In Extremis* also read the works on display as Vodou-inspired, and prominently Gédé-related, artworks that represented wider cultural responses to life's extremes among the Haitian masses. Wilentz, in contrast, asserted:

> …let's not pretend that the show says much about the heart and soul of Haiti, or about Death and Life in Haiti in the 21st Century. It's a very small part of Haiti's art world and says more about outsider perceptions of Haiti and voodoo than it does about the real Haiti and Vodou.[66]

Leaving aside the problematic implications of Wilentz's commentary, i.e. that there is a "real" Haiti and Vodou rather than competing visions or perceptions of the country and its state religion, she highlights and critiques implicit claims about the cultural representativeness of the works on show. Then, emphasising their knowingly "grandiose", "shocking" and "very other" appearance she surmises that the motivations behind this aesthetic and claims to its authenticity are tied up with their international marketing. On this point she asserts "there was no question for me about who was the target consumer for these sculptures: outsiders".[67]

In a recent essay entitled 'Atis Rezistans: Gede and the Art of Vagabondaj' Katherine Smith has also noted the excessive, shocking and forcefully masculine aspects of the *Atis Rezistans* works.[68] Like the curators of *In Extremis* and *Death and Fertility*, whom she has worked with on a number of occasions, Smith also interprets the collectives' sculptural works in relation to Vodou and primarily the Gédé.[69] Yet, unlike Wilentz, Smith interprets this intertwining of Vodou, masculinity and "orchestrated excess" as an expression of social

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[65] Cosentino (ed.) *In Extremis;* A. Wilentz, 'When Art and Voodoo Mix in L.A.' *Amy Wilentz*, 17 January 2013 <http://amywilentz.tumblr.com/post/40768129878/when-art-and-voodoo-mix-in-l-a>[accessed on: 20 March 2013]
[66] Wilentz, 'Art and Voodoo' *Amy Wilentz*
[67] Ibid.
[68] K. Smith, 'Atis Rezistans: Gede and the Art of Vagabondaj' in D. Paton and M. Forde (eds) *Obeah and Other Powers: The Politics of Caribbean Religion and Healing* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2012) pp.121-145
[69] See, for example, Smith's essays in the following: L. Gordon (ed.) *Kanaval: Vodou, Politics and Revolution on the Streets of Haiti* (London: Soul Jazz Publishing, 2010); Cosentino (ed.) *In Extremis*; A. Farquarson and L. Gordon (eds) *Kafou: Haiti, Art and Vodou* (Nottingham: Nottingham Contemporary, 2012)

realities being experienced by those residing in downtown Port-au-Prince in the twenty-first century. Focussing particularly on the works of André Eugène, Smith suggests his stark masculine figures reflect recent demographic shifts in the Haitian population since Aristide's exile, which has seen an influx of male youth to the capital's urban areas. In recognition of this significant "domestic diaspora" Smith labels the post-Aristide era as the "age of vagabondaj".[70] She explains that vagabondaj is a kreyol term referring to vagrancy and misbehaving, which can express both positive and negative connotations in contemporary usage. It can connote sexual desire, humour and roguish playfulness as well as fearful destructiveness, danger and disregard, but is almost always gendered, being most readily applied to male behaviour or action. It is these kinds of complex reactions to new social realities in downtown Port-au-Prince that Smith suggests the *Atis Rezistans*, and particularly Eugène, are reflecting through their sculptural works. Yet notwithstanding this insightful analysis, Smith does not address the issue of intended audiences for these artworks, which, as Wilentz highlights, have garnered a growing international following in recent years. Wilentz is also not the first to draw such conclusions about the target consumers of the *Atis Rezistans*' works.

In 2009 Scottish artist Bill Drummond was invited to participate in the first edition of the Ghetto Biennale, an international art event conceived and directed by Eugène, Hérard and Leah Gordon and situated in the Grand Rue neighbourhood of Port-au-Prince [Figure 102].[71] On encountering sculptures by the *Atis Rezistans* Drummond somewhat uncomfortably admitted, "I could not stop myself thinking that they were using the Vodou imagery not because these sculptures were going to be used in Vodou ceremonies, but because … Vodou and zombies equal Haiti, it is their one unique selling point". In asking himself the question, "'what is this [art] for?'" he, like Wilentz, concluded, "… the loudest of the answers that came back to me in my head was – 'This is to sell to wealthy Americans.'"[72] There are two interlinked points Drummond makes here to articulate his discomfort with these works, both of which seem to imply that there is something

[70] Smith, 'Atis Rezistans', p.137
[71] *1st Ghetto Biennale 2009* <http://www.yoonsoo.com/ghetto/2009/files/call.html> [accessed 14 August 2014]
[72] B. Drummond, 'What is this Earthquake for?' in M. Munro (ed.) *Haiti Rising: Haitian History, Culture and the Earthquake of 2010* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010) pp.180-181

disingenuous about these objects and their production. Firstly he highlights that though these works use "Vodou imagery" they are not intended for ritual use in "Vodou ceremonies".[73] Then secondly, echoing the sentiments of Wilentz above, Drummond suggests that this imagery is instead being used for its international marketability. Though Drummond's first point is, as far as I am aware, accurate, I think the important issue here is not whether these objects are in fact intended for ritual use or not in Vodou ceremonies, but why they are expected to be.

Plenty of contemporary artists use religious imagery in their works without any intention that they would have a ritual function. The crucial difference here of course, which Drummond does not mention above, is curatorial context. As Wilentz observed of the *In Extremis* exhibition, the *Atis Rezistans'* works have been suspended within a discourse that confounds "ethnography with fine arts" a situation aided and abetted by the influence and involvement of ethnographic research as a basis for the development of Haitian art historical narratives in the mid-twentieth century, which I explored in a previous chapter.[74] The result for the *Atis Rezistans*' works is that audiences are left with a sense of these sculptures' cultural representativeness and embeddedness, and a host of additional unspoken and unreasonable expectations that hinge upon broader notions of what non-western cultural authenticity consists of, including rituality distanced from and uncontaminated by commercial influences, which brings us back to Drummond's second point about the knowing use of internationally marketable imagery by the *Atis Rezistans*.

As highlighted above we can certainly see such marketable contextualising in action through the *Death and Fertility* exhibition at Venice. The curatorial team's decision to omit any references to the Christian iconographies relevant to these sculptures is one such example of this. Here is an aspect of the exhibition where the operation of marketing through the postcolonial exotic, as Graham Huggan conceives it, becomes clear. At this point it is important to clarify what I mean by using the terms "marketing" and "exotic". In referring to the marketing of these works or the marketability of certain of their aspects I am not just discussing their commercial sale and value on the art market. I am also

[73] Drummond, 'What is this Earthquake for?', pp.180-181
[74] Wilentz, 'Art and Voodoo' *Amy Wilentz*

indicating a broader range of interconnected processes, including means of distribution and strategies for promotion, that seek to establish these objects' cultural as well as commercial value in international settings, particularly as signifiers of a certain 'Haitian-ness'. Meanwhile in referring to the "exoticism" of these works or their marketing through the "postcolonial exotic", in this context, I take my lead from Graham Huggan who explains in his own exploration of "marketing the [postcolonial] margins" that this is not a quality inherent in an object, person or place, but rather "exoticism describes … a particular mode of aesthetic perception [and value] – one which renders people, objects and places strange even as it domesticates them…"[75] Certainly for the majority of spectators among the audience of an international art event held in Europe, Christian symbolism would not hold the same aura of strangeness that Vodou does, because of historically-rooted perceptions and its unfamiliarity to most. This emphasis distances the exhibited sculptures, and so Haiti (which they here represent), from European and Christian cultural heritage, which is also interwoven into the fabric of Haitian society, culture and Vodou itself. More broadly such strategies for promoting the *Atis Rezistans'* works, which focus on their marginality and exoticism, conceptually distance and detach these artists from transnational systems of cultural and commercial exchange even as it offers them up for consumption as a cultural product at the Venice Biennale: an event which is situated at the very centre of commercial and exhibiting circuits for contemporary art.

Yet not only the designated curators involved in the *Death and Fertility* site and other recent exhibitions are responsible for curating the identity of these artists and the associations made with their works. Other agents are involved in this process, some of the most crucial being the artists themselves. The *Atis Rezistans*' by virtue of their name, meaning *Resistance Artists*, have styled themselves as struggling against, challenging, or in opposition, but to what? Their website focuses on positioning their practice as a "transformative act" of "survivalist recycling" or "junkyard make-do" in the face of "a failing economy" that could be conceived as having a national, transnational or even global scope, but beyond these broad strokes what exactly they are resisting has not been clearly

[75] Huggan, *Postcolonial Exotic*, p.13

defined.[76] Significantly though, Huggan lists "resistance" alongside "marginality" and "authenticity" as examples of a handful of terms that "circulate as commodities available for commercial exploitation" within the larger marketing systems he has dubbed postcolonial exotic.[77] Huggan posits that such commodification can be observed when ostensibly anti-imperial ideologies are mobilised to position a postcolonial artist as resistant while that same artist is simultaneously entangled and operating within "a global economy that often manipulates them to neo-imperial ends".[78] As a means of concluding my examination of the *Death and Fertility* site here I will explore how such a dynamic can be seen at play in statements made by Eugène and Hérard which were printed in the Haitian pavilion's press dossier as a context for *Death and Fertility*.

A small biography of each artist represented within the Haitian pavilion's two sites was printed in the project's press dossier. As noted above, Eugène and Hérard were the only two artists to have works present in both of the Haitian pavilion's exhibition sites at Venice in 2011, which resulted in these two artists having two biographies apiece printed.[79] Yet one element that remained constant in all of these biographies was that both artists were positioned as struggling against something. In Eugène's case, his short texts both ended with the following Marxian-style quote, which sought to give an explanation as to why he opened up his art studio in the Grand Rue neighbourhood as a site of exhibition for his art: "[i]t's usually always the bourgeoisie who own the galleries. But I wanted to have a gallery".[80] This quote positions Eugène as seeking to resist the control of exhibiting art institutions, whose structures he suggests are disproportionately under the jurisdiction of a bourgeois class of stakeholders. It is not made clear whether he is positioning his endeavour in contrast to a domestic or broader international situation of bourgeois control, though his statement rings true in either context, and I think perhaps this is the point. I would argue that this statement is not particularly about domestic, international or, for that matter, postcolonial specifics, but again about a broad strokes positioning of

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[76] See for example the collective's website: 'Atis Rezistans: The Story of the Grand Rue Sculptors' *Atis Rezistans*, n.d. <http://www.atis-rezistans.com/about.php>[accessed 20 August 2014]
[77] Huggan, *Postcolonial Exotic*, p.xvi
[78] Ibid., p.ix
[79] 'The Artists' in *1st Haitian Pavilion*, pp.22-23; 'Les Artistes et leur Oeuvre/The Artists and their Work' in *1st Haitian Pavilion,* pp.8-19
[80] See 'André Eugène - Les Artistes/The Artists' in *1st Haitian Pavilion,* p.23

Eugène in resistance to those in power. Here then we see Eugène himself interpreting his own practice in ways that parallel patterns of marketing through the postcolonial exotic that have already been observed above in curatorial framing of the *Atis Rezistans* works abroad.

Similarly within the context given to Hérard's works in his biography for the *Kingdom of this World* exhibition, he is quoted explaining that a recently created work of his titled *Zonbi* articulates a struggle in which he is engaged. The *zonbi* of Haitian folklore has been linked, as a source, to the Hollywoodized figure of the mindless, flesh-eating zombie popularised by filmmaking and literature of the horror and fantasy genre. Yet the folkloric version has a depth of historical significance in Haitian society beyond this, as it is thought to be a reminder or cultural remembrance of the socially (and politically) dead position of the enslaved in pre-independence Haiti. Explaining his use of this allegorical figure in his art Hérard states, "[i]n the case of this series, I use it to represent the common point of view that large artistic institutions have of the artists in Third World countries".[81] Here, as with Eugène above, we see Hérard making a bold statement about the asymmetrical power relationships that exist within and across the structures of art institutions. Yet going a step further than Eugène, Hérard specifically refers to the instrumentalisation of "artists in Third World countries" thereby making clear that his critique is pitched at an international level, towards "large artistic institutions" such as the Venice Biennale, yet ironically while he is taking part in their event.[82] As I have demonstrated above, this tension between resistant critique and complicity through presence mirrors Geminiani's use of a polemical statement by Glissant to contextualise Haiti's pavilion in the Biennale catalogue. Both could be considered as marketing features of the postcolonial exotic. Yet, crucially, highlighting both Hérard and Eugène's statements in this vein demonstrates their role and agency as articulate and strategic mediators of their own practice and thereby their awareness of the international systems of marketing within which their works circulate.

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[81] 'Jean Céleur Hérard – Les Artistes et leur Oeuvre/The Artists and their Work' in *1st Haitian Pavilion,* p.9
[82] Ibid.

Yet being exhibited within a national pavilion at the Venice Biennale made these works more than just representatives of the *Atis Rezistans* and their practices. In this context they became emblems of national identity and positioned in this role, we can see from reviewers' responses that commentary about the lives and works of *Atis Rezistans* relating to poverty and Vodou were easily transferred onto the nation as a whole. Take for example the summarising statement of one online reviewer, who it seems did not realise there were two Haitian exhibitions and so saw the *Death and Fertility* site as, "the platform upon which the identity of disaster-ravaged Haiti presents itself".[83] As Wilentz explained above, because of the way in which these artists' works have been curatorially positioned by themselves and others, "you feel … that you are seeing something made by Haitians within their own culture, but much of the time, that's not the case".[84] Due to this ethnographic suggestion within curatorial framing of the *Atis Rezistans* work, though also because of that framing's particular focus on Vodou, these strategies are not unlike the "folkloricization" and "tropicalization" policies explored in the previous case study. These were marketing processes employed by the Haitian state to promote the nation as an international tourist destination in the mid-twentieth.[85] Though the *Atis Rezistans'* trade on an altogether grittier vision of Haiti, they might also be recognised as tapping into a vicarious variant of the increasingly internationalised, though historically rooted and ethically-complex, trade in "poorism" or poverty tourism popular among elite- and middle-class audiences.[86] Further, as we will see in the following section, this resistant, poverty- and Vodou-focussed promotional strategy, which surrounded the *Death and Fertility* site and so the projected image of Haiti at Venice in 2011, did not sit easily alongside the alternate image of Haiti sketched, marketed and more heavily state-endorsed via the pavilion's other exhibition site, though it is possible to discern processes of legitimation, valuation and marketing of the artists represented at this second site via parallel discourses of the postcolonial exotic.

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[83] 'Death and Fertility' *Art Culture*

[84] Wilentz, 'Art and Voodoo' *Amy Wilentz*

[85] K. Ramsey, 'Vodou, Nationalism and Performance: The Staging of Folklore in Mid-Twentieth-Century Haiti' in J.C. Desmond (ed.) *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*, pp.345–378; K. Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006)

[86] See for example: P. Dyson, 'Slum Tourism: Representing and Interpreting 'Reality' in Dharavi, Mumbai' *Tourism Geographies: An International Journal of Tourism Space, Place and Environment,* 14.2, (2012) pp.254-274; F. Frenzel, K. Koens and M. Steinbrink (eds) *Slum Tourism: Poverty, Power and Ethics* (London: Routledge, 2012)

SITE TWO – HAITI KINGDOM OF THIS WORLD: INTERNATIONAL PROMOTION VIA DISASTER AND THE HAITIAN DIASPORA

The second exhibition comprising Haiti's national pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2011 was titled *Haiti: Kingdom of this World* and presented quite a different view of contemporary Haiti and Haitian artists' practices from that conveyed through the *Death and Fertility* site. This second exhibition was not so tightly structured around one thematic concept but was promoted by its curator, Giscard Bouchotte, as a "laboratory": a site introducing work by a developing generation of Haitian contemporary artists alongside works by some more experienced compatriots.[87] What resulted was a wide-ranging display of over thirty artworks that selectively surveyed contemporary Haitian visual art. This display comprised sculptural, installation, painting, photographic, mixed media and multimedia work by eighteen different artists [see for example Figures 88, 103 and 104].[88] This less coherent conceptualising of the *Kingdom of this World* site is no doubt a consequence of the fact that this exhibition, as highlighted above, was not originally conceived for the Venice Biennale's vast extravaganza of competing, contemporary art exhibitions. It was instead designed to be an itinerant survey show introducing these contemporary Haitian artists to a variety of audiences and markets across the globe.[89] It was intended that the tour would begin in Paris then move to the United States, the Caribbean, Asia and Africa (though the latter two did not in the end materialise).

In Venice this exhibition was housed within ubiquitous white-walled gallery spaces at the Palazzo Querini Stampalia, a venue that suited the exhibition's sense of portable pre-packaging for multiple international audiences. In line with its promotional function, the tone of the rationale behind this exhibition was upbeat and celebratory emphasising the

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[87] Bouchotte, 'Haiti Kingdom of this World', pp.6-7

[88] The artists represented were: Sergine André, Élodie Barthélemy, Mario Benjamin, Celeur Jean Hérard, Maksaens Denis, Edouard Duval Carrié, André Eugène, Frankétienne, Guyodo, Sébastien Jean, Killy, Tessa Mars, Pascale Monnin, Paskö, Barbara Prézeau Stephenson, Michelange Quay, Roberto Stephenson and Hervé Télémaque. See more installation shots at: 'Un Premier Pavillon d'Haiti a la Biennale de Venise' *Chantiers du Sud*, n.d. http://www.chantiersdusud.org/pavillonvenise.html [accessed 7 September 2011]

[89] 'Un Pavillon d'Haïti à la Biennale de Venise - Fondation Africamerica' 6 June 2011, reprinted in: Service Culturel (ed.) *Revue de Presse*, p.29; 'Haïti Royaume de ce Monde à la 54ème Biennale d'Art de Venise' *Agnès b.*, n.d. <http://europe.agnesb.com/fr/bside/section/chez-nous/activites/haiti-royaume-de-ce-monde-a-la-54eme-biennale-dart-de-venise> [accessed 7 September 2014]

"creative vitality", contemporaneity and 'Haitian-ness' of the artists' practices represented.[90] Yet as this exhibition's presence at the Venice Biennale was at the request of Régine Estimé, Haiti's Cultural Chargée d'Affaires in Paris, who later became the site's commissioner it also became a vehicle for the promotion of state-level political concerns. Therefore, just behind the buoyant discourse celebrating Haitian artists' collective presence at the Venice Biennale there was a sense of straining to crystallise a critically engaged and engaging conceptual framework for the exhibition, which would in some way synthesise these promotional and political agendas.

These unevenly interwoven agendas can best be discerned within statements made by the show's two main spokespersons, Estimé and Bouchotte, as well as through an analysis of the self-promotion of artists represented within this site.[91] My explorations into the context presented by each of these agents will structure the following analysis. The first section focuses on the contextualising statements of Estimé, which centred on disaster and catastrophe as socio-cultural contexts that contemporary Haitian artists inhabit in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake. I argue she deployed these contexts as a politically-neutral narrative that could be utilised as a vehicle for promoting diplomatic agendas. Exhibition curator, Bouchotte, addressed the closely connected, though broader issue, of humanitarian control in Haitian society. In the analysis that follows I will explore his critique in a second section followed by an examination of his attempts to redirect chaotic associations made with Haiti pre- and post-earthquake towards a perception of it as an energetic hub of artistic creativity. I suggest that he does so through the strategic deployment of references to the voices and visions of cosmopolitan Caribbean thinkers and theorists, thereby hoping to persuade that disastrous socio-cultural context can be seen as a conceptual opportunity for transformation of the national image. Lastly in a third section I will focus on the emphasis given to transnational or cosmopolitan aspects of the identities, practices and exhibition histories of the artists represented, within biographies printed in the pavilion's press dossier. Through a comparative perspective I will then use

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[90] Bouchotte, 'Haiti Kingdom of this World', pp.6-7

[91] See for example: *1ER Pavillon d'Haïti: Dossier de Presse/1st Haitian Pavilion: Press Kit* (Paris: Service Culturel de l'Ambassade d'Haiti, 2011) <http://www.francophonie.org/IMG/pdf/biennale-de-venise-juin-2011-dossier-de-presse-pavillon-d-haiti.pdf> [accessed 31 August 2014]; Service Culturel (ed.) *Revue de Presse*

this analysis as a standpoint from which to consider how a cohort of internationally well-connected and transnationally mobile artists are seeking to strategically position and promote their own identities and their practices in relation to cultural notions of 'Haitian-ness' in the contemporary era. Yet as we will see below, this cosmopolitan positioning of artists through ephemera supporting *Kingdom of this World* at Venice existed in an unresolved and, at times, seemingly antagonistic relationship with simultaneous claims to these artists' representative Haitian visions.

With this focus on promotion, or strategies of marketing, ideas from the work of Graham Huggan will again provide crucial analytical tools for my enquiry.[92] Indeed, the below section will seek to understand this exhibition, at least in part, as a platform for establishing the cultural, commercial and political value of a cohort of artists' practices and products via simultaneous claims to their "worldly postcoloniality" and peculiarly Haitian visions. Against the backdrop of the previous section in this chapter, this reading of Haiti's second art exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 2011 with reference to mechanisms of marketing via the postcolonial exotic will reveal perhaps unexpected parallels between the processes of promotion employed within two seemingly very different art exhibitions. Lastly my analysis of this site offers an opportunity to explore the ways in which contemporary state level political concerns have been overlaid onto and interwoven within the frameworks and agendas shaping nationally-defined exhibitions of Haitian culture and visual arts. Thereby, in a much more direct way than was the case with the *Death and Fertility* site, the *Kingdom of this World* exhibition will provide a case study that is comparable with the state-endorsed and state-led projects that were the subject of previous chapters.

Curatorial Contexts I: The Distorting Lens of Disaster and Diplomacy

In reviews of the *Haiti: Kingdom of this World* exhibition as staged in Venice, one of the recurrent features is a focus on the earthquake that had hit Haiti eighteen months earlier. The cultural service of Haiti's embassy in Paris, led by the site's commissioner Régine Estimé, put together a "revue de presse". From this document we can see that the vast majority of French-language reviews contextualised their (generally cursory) glance at the

[92] Huggan, *Postcolonial Exotic*, pp.4-13

artworks displayed with reference to post-earthquake devastation.[93] Perhaps the most extreme example of this was published in *Aujourd'hui Le Maroc*. Here a short review included as an accompanying image: not of one of the artworks exhibited, or even a related image of the Venice Biennale, but a journalistic photograph of a street in one of Haiti's urban centres showing collapsed buildings hit by the earthquake.[94] Yet only two out of the eighteen artists' whose works were in the show directly addressed this subject in their exhibited artwork. The most direct connection was with a small number of photographic prints taken from two series by Roberto Stephenson: *Haiti: The Earthquake City* (2010); and *Earthquake Tents* (2010) [see for example Figures 105 and 106].

Stephenson's collection of documentary-style photographs depicted depopulated post-earthquake scenes of crumbling architecture and the interiors of individual dwellings among the post-quake tent camps in Port-au-Prince. A couple of reviewers have read these images as optimistic or defiant attempts to show order in Haiti despite the devastation caused by the earthquake and as a rebuke to the proliferation of chaotic images of the earthquake's traumatised survivors, which flooded most international media outlets in the quake's immediate aftermath.[95] Indeed with their complete absence of people, Stephenson's prints displayed at Venice depicted an internationally familiar event through a new lens, contrasting sharply with the photographs of distraught Haitians that had saturated the wider media eighteen months before [see for example Figure 107].

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[93] See for example: G. Le Roux, 'Haïti défie le destin et va pour la 1ère fois à la Biennale d'art de Venise' *AFP Mondial*, 3 June 2011; 'Haïti défie le destin: La Perle des Antilles va à la Biennale d'art de Venise pour la première fois' *Le Devoir*, 4 June 2011; H. Joseph, 'Haïti, un trésor dans le berceau de l'humanité' *Le Matin*, 8 June 2011; G. Le Roux, 'Haïti défie le destin et va pour la 1ère fois à la Biennale d'art de Venise' *La Nouvelliste*, 3 June 2011; 'L'Exposition Haïti Royaume de ce Monde présentée à la Biennale de Venise' *Africultures*, 2 June 2011. All of the above are reprinted in: Service Culturel (ed.) *Revue de Presse*; See also: 'Un Premier Pavillon d'Haiti a la Biennale de Venise' *Chantiers du Sud*, n.d. <http://www.chantiersdusud.org/pavillonvenise.html> [accessed 7 September 2014]; 'A Feast for the senses on the Venice lagoon' *The Independent*, 6 June 2011 <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/a-feast-for-the-senses-on-the-venice-lagoon-2293806.html> [accessed 7 September 2014];

[94] 'Biennale d'art de Venise: Haïti défie le destin,' *Aujord'hui le Maroc*, 6 June 2011, reprinted in: Service Culturel (ed.) *Revue de Presse*, p.7-8

[95] J. Kay, 'Haiti Kingdom of this World' *Chantiers du Sud*, n.d. <http://www.chantiersdusud.org/edito_haitiroyaumedecemonde_anglais.html> [accessed 7 September 2014]; A. Biedrzycki, 'The Optimism of Order in Photography After Disaster' *Reading Disaster Through Art*, n.d. <http://readingdisasterthroughart.weebly.com/photography.html> [accessed 7 September 2014]

Therefore these photographs confronted and challenged the damaging images and perceptions of Haiti that were created both wilfully and unwittingly by ill-informed and sensation-seeking international media sources in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake.[96]

Estimé's editorial statement for the Haitian pavilion's press dossier was the first text presented to readers of the document. This editorial seemed to convey sentiments that paralleled Roberto Stephenson's photographs, stating that all who had collaborated on this venture were "expressing a desire that we all share to see Haiti speak in some way other than through the distorting lens of disaster".[97] Yet despite her own assertions, the opening sentences of her editorial cast this exhibition against the backdrop of disaster, by noting that it appeared "eighteen months after a devastating earthquake…"[98] Other sections of her statement, too, were prefaced both with direct references to "the quake …" and with more general mentions of a "string of disasters the country has experienced and their far-reaching consequences…"[99] In an apparently contrary gesture then, Estimé front-loaded references to Haiti's recent natural disaster and its consequences in her own statement. Notably also, in almost every case, it is statements made by Estimé that provide francophone press reviewers with the device by which they focus on the earthquake as a context for Haiti's presence at the Venice Biennale.[100] One of the most repeated of these quotations from Estimé was "[p]aradoxically, disaster and thousands of deaths have awakened interest in our country (...) We had a string of disasters but we are still there and that is a strong symbol…"[101] Given the prominent presence of references to the earthquake

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[96] Élodie Barthélemy was the other artist who linked her work *Terre Nourricière* (2011) [Figure 88] to international media reports following the 2010 earthquake, as a critique of sensationalised representations of Haitians trading in mud cakes out of desperation. See: Centre des Cultures & des Arts de la Caraïbe (ed.) *Saison Culturelle Octobre-Novembre 2012 Programmation*, n.d. <http://site.ac-martinique.fr/daac/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/DOSSIER-DEF-FSJ-HAITI2012.pdf>[accessed 12 December 2012]

[97] Estimé, 'Edito', pp.4-5

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Contrast this for instance with a number of English-language reviews chiefly concerned with the *Death and Fertility* exhibition which make knowing, but more implicit references to Haiti's post-earthquake context. See for example: Le Roux, 'Haïti défie le destin' *AFP Mondial*; 'Haïti défie le destin' *Le Devoir*; N. Calvi, 'Haiti, Iraq show for the first time at political Venice Biennale' *CNN World*, 2 June 2011: All of the above are reprinted in: Service Culturel (ed.) *Revue de Presse*; 'Death and Fertility' *Art Culture*

[101] Author's translation from the French original, which appeared in many francophone press accounts reprinted in: Service Culturel (ed.) *Revue de Presse*, pp.5, 7, 10, 24, 35

in Estimé's contextualising statements it seems appropriate to view these comments as a strategic and considered deployment of contemporary social context on her part, which sought to convey a politically-loaded subtext about the Haitian state's resilience and ability to proactively respond against the odds to the very difficult circumstances it found itself in.

Yet beyond projection of positive political rhetoric for the Haitian state, I would argue that Estimé's references to the earthquake and its aftermath had both pragmatic and diplomatic functions that were indicative of the state's dependencies on foreign governments and international NGOs. Indeed a section of the pavilion's press dossier focussed on the involvement of sponsors and supporting organisations, including the Institut Français. This section highlighted the increased channeling of resources into initiatives to benefit Haiti and Haitians post-earthquake. For example, it is noted that under the banner of "cultural reconstruction" an "institutional steering committee [was] created after the earthquake … for the development of the new cultural cooperation agreement signed between France and Haiti", which included "training scholarships in restoration, heritage and museography" and "solidarity projects … in the form of … organizing artists' residences [sic], and supporting the publishing of texts…"[102] In total about a third of the dossier's pages, including Estimé's editorial, are dedicated to detailing information about broader cultural and humanitarian programmes and initiatives that some of the organising bodies behind this pavilion were involved in pre- and post-earthquake.[103] In recognition, Estimé referred to these organisations as "partners, and especially friends". What becomes clear through such statements is the extent to which this exhibition became a political vehicle via which Estimé could perform diplomatic functions in her professional capacity as Cultural Charge d'Affaires. In doing so she used this exhibition as a platform to elicit further support for Haiti's reconstruction post-earthquake. As a result this social context became a

[102] 'The Operators' in *1st Haitian Pavilion*, pp.24-29

[103] These included: the agnès b. Endowment Fund, the Institut Français, The Island and the City Hall of Paris. Listed as "in Haiti" were "the Embassy of France in Haiti, and the Cultural Office of Haiti's Embassy in France" as well as "the Fondation Connaissance et Liberté (FOKAL)" an NGO working in "education, arts, culture and development" and mainly underwritten by the *Open Society Foundations* a worldwide NGO network created by American philanthropist Georges Soros: Estimé, 'Edito' in *1st Haitian Pavilion*, pp.4-5; *Fondasyon konesans ak libète – FOKAL*, n.d. <http://www.fokal.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=58&Itemid=27> [accessed 11 September 2014]

key interpretative basis for reviews of the exhibition itself irrespective of its relevance to the artworks on display.

Curatorial Contexts II: Critiques of Humanitarianism and Creative Chaos

Yet notably deflected by Estimé's neutralised narrative of international support was a persuasive strand of critique which argued that the devastation suffered by Haiti in the wake of the earthquake was better understood as a man-made, rather than a natural, disaster in which NGOs and foreign governments were implicated. One of the most prominent proponents of this view was Haitian scholar Patrick Bellegarde-Smith.[104] In an article published three months before the Biennale Bellegarde-Smith pointed to high-levels of privatisation both pre- and post-earthquake as a force destabilising Haitian politics and society. He and others highlighted, for example, the damaging groundwork laid by private construction companies operating in Haiti pre-earthquake. Bellegarde-Smith pointed to their widespread flouting of building codes and regulations, which any public organisation would have had to adhere to. The result being that much of Port-au-Prince's infrastructure and buildings were vulnerable to the effects of a natural disaster.[105]

Yet, like many others, Bellegarde Smith, did not see the damaging effects of NGO presence in Haiti as a set of issues related only to the 2010 earthquake.[106] Instead, pointing to a much longer problematic history of foreign and private intervention in Haiti, he asserted: "[t]he very presence of 11,000 largely American NGOs – the highest such concentration in the world … impedes the proper development of state structures and the healthy evolution of national institutions and the growth of Haitian "agency" in the first place".[107] Operating outside of state structures, these organisations have the power to not only undermine

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[104] P. Bellegarde Smith, 'A Man-Made Disaster: The Earthquake of January 12, 2010 – A Haitian Perspective' *Journal of Black Studies*, 42.2 (March 2011), pp.264-275

[105] Ibid.; See for example: J. Tulloch 'Haiti earthquake: Natural disaster, of man-made?' *Open Knowledge*, 11 March 2010 <http://knowledge.allianz.com/environment/natural_disasters/?566/haiti-eathquake-natural-disaster-or-man-made> [accessed 11 September 2011]

[106] Aside from Bellegarde Smith, see for example: P. Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1994); T. Rall, 'Haitian Earthquake: Made in the USA' *Common Dreams,* 14 January 2010 <http://www.commondreams.org/views/2010/01/14/haitian-earthquake-made-usa> [accessed 11 September 2014]

[107] Bellegarde Smith, 'Man-Made Disaster', p.266

national policy but also state sovereignty, hence Haiti's alias "Republic of NGOs".[108] Yet, as noted in an earlier chapter, long before this pseudonym was popularised in the '90s, American art dealer Selden Rodman referred to Haiti as a place where "the efficiency-minded American, frustrated in his will to reform at home" could have a "field-day".[109] Yet these historically-rooted problems of private international intervention in Haiti were glossed over by Estimé, whose diplomatic agendas precluded her from making any such observations.

This is one of the points at which the political imperatives behind the staging of this exhibition jarred with its curatorial framing and at least one of the artworks on display. Michelange Quay's film *Mange, ceci est mon corps* (2007) was selectively represented in the exhibition through the playing of short excerpts from this nearly two hour feature. Various scenes within this work quite clearly offer a forceful critique of foreign intervention in contemporary Haiti. Even a glance at the poster image and DVD cover [Figure 108] of a naked Sylvie Testud waste-deep in mud, cradling a crying black baby in her arms might allow an observer to guess at the postcolonial critique of a western 'white saviour complex' housed inside. There is barely a plot-line to this film, which hinges more upon symbolic interactions of the characters. For example, Sylvie Tested as the pallid and dazed 'Madame' seems to portray the contemporary humanitarian or neocolonial presence in Haiti. In a number of scenes she appears alongside a small group of local black boys, apparently an embodiment of Haiti. Their allegorical, postcolonial relationships are clearly conceived along racial lines, and in terms of asymmetrical power relations, with intermittent suggestions of erotic desire on the part of Madame for the local boys and a black manservant [See for example Figure 109].

Though the film is therefore more of a psychological exploration into motives for white (here a visual synonym for foreign) intervention into Haitian society than an incisive

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[108] *Haiti: An Island Luminous:* <http://islandluminous.fiu.edu/learn.html> [accessed 10 July 2014]; See also: M.J.A. Chancy, 'A Marshall Plan for a Haiti at Peace: To Continue or End the Legacy of the Revolution' in C. Calargé et al. (eds) *Haiti and the Americas* (Jackson, Ms: University of Mississippi Press, 2013) pp.199-217; M. Schuller and P. Morales (eds) *Tectonic Shifts: Haiti Since the Earthquake* (Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press, 2012)

[109] S. Rodman, *Haiti: The Black Republic: The Complete Story and Guide* (New York: Devin-Adair Company, 1954) pp.xiv-xv

critique of humanitarianism's damaging structural effects in Haiti, there are points at which Quay's film makes quite clear critiques of the powerful international presence in contemporary Haiti. Perhaps the most obvious of these is a scene in which the nine Haitian boys are pictured around a table and are presented with a large white cake. They begin slowly by dipping their fingers into the icing to have a taste. This soon escalates into the gleeful grabbing of mouthfuls to consume [Figure 110] and once satisfied in the throwing of handfuls around the room with reckless abandon. In an online interview Quay makes the symbolism of this scene unmistakable by describing it as "black children wolfing down the cake of humanitarianism".[110] It therefore becomes very clear that Quay is portraying humanitarianism and the relations that underpin it in contemporary Haiti as not lacking in benefits, yet ultimately infantilising for domestic governments. Further he points towards the resultant destabilisation of the state, as well as hotly debated issues of internal corruption and reckless asset-stripping of the state not only by international organisations but also by opportunist elites in Haiti.[111] Clearly Quay's film offers up a more critical eye on these dynamics than was conveyed by Estimé's contextualising comments. Notably though the above-described scene did not appear within the excerpts played at Venice, nor did any that showed Sylvie Testud interacting with the group of boys.[112] It is unclear whether this was a decision made by the artist or the exhibition's organisers, however the absence of these scenes in the context of a nationally-defined site of display at an international event, which clearly had diplomatic functions, is telling in either case.

Like Estimé, Bouchotte also attempted to find a positive way of engaging Haiti's contemporary associations with disaster in the post-earthquake era. Therefore in his curatorial statement for the *Kingdom of this World* exhibition Bouchotte sought to present chaotic contemporary realities in Haiti as an opportunity for reconceptualisation and transformation of the nation's image. He conveyed this by focussing on a resignification of

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[110] A. Nayman, 'Me and My Shadow: Michelange Quay's Eat, for this is my body' *Cinema scope*, n.d. <http://cinema-scope.com/cinema-scope-magazine/interviews-me-and-my-shadow-michelange-quays-eat-for-this-is-my-body/> [accessed 14 September 2014]

[111] See for example the conversations between Bill Drummond and his translator Rodrigue in: Drummond, 'What is this Earthquake for?", pp.177-179. See also: F. Pierre-Louis, 'Earthquakes, Nongovernmental Organizations, and Governance in Haiti' *The Journal of Black Studies*, 42.2 (March 2011) pp.186-202

[112] I also visited this exhibition when displayed at the Little Haiti Cultural Centre in Miami and again none of Sylvie Testud's scenes with the Haitian boys were played.

the term 'chaos'. In his statement he offered optimistic readings of this term that shifted its connotations from socio-political disarray in Haiti to the generative creativity of Haitian artists. He uses the term three times in his text. Firstly he refers to those whose works were presented in the exhibition as "artists who, every day, question the chaos" and thereby gives his project of resignification an increased air of legitimacy by suggesting that it has been inspired by the practices of the artists themselves.[113] He then asserts more directly that this art exhibition was conceived of as a way of "sublimating Haiti's chaos and its possibilities" by moving away from "the fatal nature of misery and offer[ing] another view of Haiti through the eyes of its creative spirits".[114] Then lastly he suggests the phrase "wonderful chaos" designates a genre of the arts among Haitians that has superseded magical realism. The latter is a literary and broader arts genre popularised in Latin America and the Caribbean from the mid-twentieth century. As mentioned above, this is the genre of which Alejo Carpentier's novel (after which the exhibition is named) is an exemplification. Bouchotte's redeployments of the term chaos in this way are clearly loosely based on the rich theoretical and aesthetic explorations of established Caribbean thinkers.

Though he does not state this directly it is implied throughout and it is particularly notable that after the last of the three statements above, he moves straight into referencing the work of writer, poet, musician and visual artist Frankétienne who has focussed on the notion of the spiral throughout his decades long body of work in many media. Within his Spiralist oeuvre the notion of chaos has an important place, as something both uncontrollable and foreboding as well as generative and exhilarating.[115] The three new artworks Frankétienne displayed within this exhibition embodied this chaotic mix. In his trademark fast and fluid style each presented a face with eyes glaring out, enveloped by strangely positioned limbs and swirls of colour and then surrounded by enigmatic phrases and chunks of text [see Figures 111-113]. Further Frankétienne's biography for this exhibition linked the two concepts by explaining, "the spiral is the aesthetic of chaos, the

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[113] Bouchotte, 'Haiti Kingdom of this World', pp.6-7
[114] Ibid.
[115] See for example: K. Glover, *Haiti Unbound: A Spiralist Challenge to the Postcolonial Canon* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010); R. Douglas, *Frankétienne and Rewriting: A Work in Progress* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009)

unforeseeable, the unexpected, of diversity…"[116] Bouchotte may have avoided the darker foreboding and frenetic elements of Frankétienne's interpretation of chaos, but certainly his statement resonated with the generative and dynamic aspects of the latter's multimedia aesthetic.

Bouchotte then also goes on to mention Martinican writer Édouard Glissant in his last paragraph, alongside Aimé Césaire, Maryse Condé and Graham Greene. This idiosyncratic collection of internationally recognised authors are introduced by Bouchotte as "illustrious ambassadors and thinkers" inspired by the Caribbean.[117] Again Bouchotte goes no further in highlighting that Glissant's writings have underpinned his deployment of chaos as a site of generative diversity, but the latter's influence is clear in the former's curatorial texts. This can be most clearly discerned in one of the wall texts displayed within the exhibition itself. Here Bouchotte refers to "this *new region of the world*, all these scattered little islands, all these migrations, [which] have invented a new form of *creolisation*" in the face of "enforced globalisation" [see Figure 114]. This sentence reverberates with Glissantian theory throughout. Firstly the italicised phrase (Bouchotte's emphasis) "new region of the world" was the title of Glissant's penultimate book of essays published in 2006.[118] Glissant's entire body of work was arguably concerned with exploring cultural and political modes of inter-relation in a globalised world. In its earliest form, post-1946, this was spurred by the specificities of the repressed Martinican experience in the face of encroaching French assimilation. As Bouchotte suggests one of the earliest ways in which Glissant conceived of this global relation was via the concept of creolisation (Bouchotte's other italicised term here) a notion of socio-cultural and linguistic hybridity and inter-mixture, which provided a stimulus for many theorists globally, including the more conservative Creolité group.[119] Yet in his later work Glissant shifted to focus on a much more geographically decentred and euphoric conception of global inter-relation (though not one absent of violent clashes) which Caribbeanist Celia Britton has described as a

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[116] 'Frankétienne – Les Artistes et leur Oeuvre/The Artists and their Work' in *1st Haitian Pavilion,* p.11
[117] Bouchotte, 'Haiti Kingdom of this World', p.7
[118] É. Glissant, *Une nouvelle région du monde: Esthétique I* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006)
[119] Glissant's inspiration of the Creolité group was acknowledged in their dedication to him (alongside Césaire and Frankétienne) in their manifesto: J. Bernabé, P. Chamoiseau and R. Confiant, *Éloge de la Créolité/ In Praise of Creoleness* (Paris: Gallimard [1989] 1993)

conception of "a dynamic totality of interacting communities, all aware of each other and all constantly changing".[120] This later theorisation of global interactions focussed on the creative, transformative potential of a world experienced and envisioned in this way. Notably one of Glissant's "more of less synonymous names for this phenomenon" aside from creolisation was "chaos-monde".[121]

I would argue then, that the optimistic way in which Bouchotte was redeploying the term chaos in the context of his curatorial rationale for the *Kingdom of this World* exhibition quite clearly stemmed from the work of Glissant.[122] Yet even if Bouchotte's conceptual backdrop for this art exhibition did hang closely on the coattails of prominent Caribbean theorists, his efforts to redirect inevitable associations of chaos with Haiti in the post-earthquake era into a more positively focussed framework, presented a refreshing take on this contemporary context. Moreover, it resonated with wider post-quake assertions of the need for a transformation in international perceptions of Haiti in order to improve its political, economic and cultural inter-relations globally. It also notably mirrored reawakened calls for a 'refoundation' of the Haitian state constitutionally.[123] Lastly, which leads us onto the final section of this analysis, Bouchotte's efforts to redirect perceptions of Haiti through a redefinition of terms associated with the country operated alongside a variety of marketing strategies surrounding the work of each artist represented within the site. Some of these utilised and manipulated existing perceptions of 'Haitian-ness', while others sought to broaden and redirect notions of Haitian culture and so contemporary Haitian art practice.

Strategic Cosmopolitanism: Haitian Artist-Curators and International Audiences

In his discussion of the mechanisms of marketing postcolonial cultural products, Huggan uses the term cosmopolitan to refer to a group of postcolonial "writers" or "artists" who "are, or present themselves as, socially mobile and multiply affiliated" at an international

[120] Britton, 'Globalization and Political Action', p.1
[121] Ibid.
[122] Bouchotte, 'Haiti Kingdom of this World', p.7
[123] Chancy, 'Marshall Plan', pp.199-217; P. Sutton 'Postscript' in K. Quinn and P. Sutton (eds) *Politics and Power in Haiti* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) p.185-192; Deshommes, 'The 1987 Constitution', p.245-252; G. A. Ulysse, 'Why Haiti Needs New Narratives Now More Than Ever' in Schuller and Morales (eds) *Tectonic Shifts*, pp.240-244

level.[124] With reference to the work of cultural theorist Kwame Anthony Appiah, Huggan describes the position of this group within international marketing networks by highlighting their ability to "operate as latter-day culture brokers, 'mediating the international trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery.'"[125] Among the artists represented at the *Kingdom of this World* site were a number of individuals who have been active as cultural brokers for their own and their peers' art practices in recent years. Edouard Duval Carrié and Barbara Prézeau-Stephenson, both of whom have taken up curatorial roles alongside their own practices, positioned themselves in varied relation to cosmopolitanism and notions of Haitian-ness for international audiences at the Venice Biennale. With specific reference to these two individuals I will demonstrate how knowledge of demands for cultural otherness from Haitian artists impacted upon their differential packaging of themselves and their practices.

Further, in the opening lines of his monograph on the subject of marketing via the *postcolonial exotic*, Huggan states:

> …when creative writers … are seen, despite their cosmopolitan background, as representatives of Third World countries … these are instances of the *postcolonial exotic*, of the global commodification of cultural difference.[126]

If we replace the term "creative writers" above with the broader term "artist" then we have an insightful commentary on the mechanisms of promotion and marketing surrounding over half of the artists who displayed works within the *Kingdom of this World* site, who despite their residence in metropolitan centres in Europe, North America or Africa, or their transnational lifestyles, were presented as representatives of Haiti within the Venice Biennale's metonymic world picture. [127] Yet, because of the large number of artists represented within this site, it will not be possible for me to explore the packaging of each for the Venice Biennale. Therefore, out of necessity, my discussions will be selective. As I have already extensively explored the promotion of the *Atis Rezistans*

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[124] Huggan, *Postcolonial Exotic*, p.26
[125] Ibid., p.viii
[126] Ibid., p.vii
[127] See for example the biographies of: Sergine André, Élodie Barthélemy, Maksaens Denis, Edouard Duval Carrié, Tessa Mars, Pascale Monnin, Barbara Prézeau-Stephenson, Michelange Quay, Roberto Stephenson, Hervé Télémaque: 'The Artists and their Work' in *1st Haitian Pavilion*, pp.8-16

collective through claims to local embeddedness in my discussions of the *Death and Fertility* site above. Here, instead, I will examine claims made about the identities and practices of two of the most transnationally mobile and curatorially-active practitioners.

As noted above, artist Edouard Duval Carrié was not only a member of the scientific committee for this site, but also had his work exhibited within it. He has also recently been curatorially involved in a multi-exhibition project called *Global Caribbean,* which financially and logistically supported the *Kingdom of this World* show as its third project. In December 2009, Duval Carrié curated the first exhibition in this series, which contained works by contemporary artists from across the Caribbean and its diasporas. Providing context for that exhibition, he questioned "the validity of regional identity" by stating,

> Though most of the art world seems to find comfort and sound commercial directives in having a common and easily identifiable definition (i.e. Latin American art), this is exactly what many artists find too tight a shoe …[128]

Yet it seems that Duval Carrié is very much speaking here with regards to other contemporary Caribbean artists' concerns as within his own practice he has never shied away from being defined by national regional or diasporic identity. In fact his entire oeuvre is suffused with culturally specific references to: Haitian history, folklore and Vodou; events in Haiti's recent past; Caribbean landscapes; and the particularly the migratory experiences of Caribbean and particularly Haitian diasporas [See for example Figures 115-118]. When commissioned to produce work for the *Kingdom of this World* exhibition, Duval Carrié chose to present a large shimmering portrait titled *La Promenade du Grand Baron* (2010), which similarly featured at its centre culturally specific references to iconographies of Haitian folklore interpreted through his own unique vision and aesthetic [Figure 119]. Here Duval Carrié depicted Baron Samedi, a Haitian Vodou spirit of the Gédé family associated with death, taking a night-time stroll through a lush landscape, using paint, glitter and resins on aluminium. Notably he is engaging with a figure from the same "family of spirits" that were the curatorial inspiration for the *Death and Fertility* site. Yet in deep contrast to the rough, stark sculptures of the *Atis Rezistans* and their political commentary on poverty

[128] E. Duval Carrié, 'Global Caribbean I' *Global Caribbean*, n.d. <http://theglobalcaribbean.org/gc1.php> [accessed 12 September 2014]

in contemporary Haiti, his vision and materials present an interpretation of Haitian folklore that drips with baroque excess. His work therefore presents audiences with a very different, though certainly not apoliticised, window on Haitian society and culture. Duval-Carrié's folklore-inspired practice is informed by colonial history, but also his much more economically comfortable upbringing within a family that owned its own construction and automotive parts business in Port-au-Prince.[129] However, there is no doubt that in an international marketplace a work like this trades on similar claims to cultural difference or otherness. Indeed his whole oeuvre, with its central use of Haitian folklore given a Miamian twist, appeals to appetites for cultural distinctness.

The version of Duval Carrié's biography printed in the Haitian pavilion's press dossier for the Venice Biennale's international audience described him as "the bard of Haitian culture and voodoo". Going one step further than interpretations of the *Atis Rezistans*' sculptures for the *Death and Fertility* site, the products of his practice are also explicitly described in this biography as "voodoo ritual objects and Haitian folk art".[130] These descriptions, using signifiers such as "folk art" and "voodoo", emphasise his practice's closeness to conventional aspects of an exoticised cultural 'Haitian-ness'.[131] Yet, as we have seen in the introductory chapters to this dissertation, these have been the focus of much criticism since they have severely limited interpretations of Haitian art following their popular association with a group of artists' practices that became highly marketable internationally in the mid-twentieth century. However Duval Carrié is clearly not afraid of exploiting and using this institutionally-accepted 'other' status and its marketability. He is adept at negotiating the market forces that surround his work in international contexts and knows, in Huggan's words, "how to use them judiciously to suit [his] own, and other people's ends".[132]

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[129] J. Cantor, 'Painting the Body Politic' *Miami New Times*, 20 July 1994 <http://www.miaminewtimes.com/1994-07-20/news/painting-the-body-politic/> [accessed 24 September 2014]

[130] 'Edouard Duval Carrié – Les Artistes et leur Oeuvre/The Artists and their Work' in *1st Haitian Pavilion*, p.10

[131] It is particularly notable here that Duval Carrié's biography uses the spelling voodoo rather than Vodou. The latter is now usually the preferred spelling of scholars and Haiti advocates, because the former has been so associated with a history of lurid and denigrating outsider accounts of Haiti's national religion.

[132] Huggan, *Postcolonial Exotic*, p.11

Firstly, it becomes very clear that this biography is knowing and deliberate when we consider the description of his works. Though they are inspired in part by folk art and ritual objects from Haiti and elsewhere, the products of his practice are certainly not produced with utilitarian or ritual purposes in mind.[133] Instead, Duval Carrié's works are produced for their aesthetic value on the international art market and for exhibition within art institutions. Secondly, when we consider that Duval Carrie is in fact a diasporic Haitian who has been educated internationally (in Puerto Rico, France and Canada) and has lived in Miami for over two decades, it becomes clear that his biography for Haiti's pavilion at the Venice Biennale is selective and, I would argue, strategic.

When we compare his Venice Biennale biography to other résumés that he and others have authored to appear within catalogues that accompany previous exhibitions or installations of his work (including other iterations of the *Kingdom of this World* exhibition), we see that the transnational aspects of his background are given much more emphasis. For example in a catalogue printed to accompany the solo exhibition *Divine Revolution,* displayed in Los Angeles in 2004, Duval Carrié was described as "one of the Haitian diaspora's preeminent voices in the visual and expressive arts".[134] Similarly, in a retrospective publication of Duval Carrié's work up to 2007 editor Edward J. Sullivan described his practice as "a product of a truly trans-national formation".[135] These heterogenous descriptions of Duval Carrié's background, accounting for a much more eclectic array of international inspirations, were notably reflected in a completely altered version of his biographical statement printed in a brochure that was made to accompany *Kingdom of this World* as it was displayed in Miami about four months after it was exhibited in Venice.[136] His biography was notably the only one to be altered in transference

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[133] Cantor, 'Painting the Body Politic' *Miami New Times*, n.p.
[134] M. Nooter Roberts, 'Introductory Note' *Divine Revolution: The Art of Edouard Duval Carrié* (Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum, 2004) p.8
[135] E. J. Sullivan 'Introduction' in E. J. Sullivan (ed.) *Continental Shifts: The Art of Edouard Duval Carrié* (Miami: Diego Costa Peuser, 2007) p.5; See also his biographies printed in: É. Duval Carrié and F. Rivera (eds) *Haiti: History Embedded in Amber* (Durham, NC: John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute, 2011) p.61; É. Duval Carrie and I. M. Lippman (eds) *The Indigo Room or Is Memory Water Soluble?* (Fort Lauderdale, FL: Museum of Art Fort Lauderdale, 2004) p.36
[136] 'Edouard Duval Carrié' *Global Caribbean III: Haiti Kingdom of this World*, n.d., n.p. <http://theglobalcaribbean.org/sg_userfiles/gc3_brochure.pdf> [accessed 29 September 2014]

from the Haitian pavilion's press dossier for the Venice Biennale to this small brochure.[137] Here his family's exile to Puerto Rico during the Duvalier regime is included alongside his education in Quebec and Paris. The exhibition of his work in locations across the globe including "the Venice, Beijing, Sao Paolo and Havana Biennials" is noted, and the inspirations for his practice similarly take on a much more international scope encompassing, "African fables, Haitian classical mythology, and contemporary world events", as well as "French heritage … in Haiti" and "the migration of vodou … towards distant shores".[138]

Finally, Duval Carrie's current "artist's statement" published on his own website positions him in a global framework, with no specific reference to Haiti at all:

> I personally believe that most artists are in one way or another reflections of their immediate surroundings ... But with the advent of a rapid globalization and the proliferation of information at all levels, this permits everyone, and particularly artists, to take their ideas from a global well.[139]

There are a number important issues raised by the different descriptions of Duval Carrié's artworks, practice, and personal life in his biography printed for the Venice Biennale in comparison with those printed elsewhere. Firstly there is the inconsistency of explicit references to him as a representative of Haitian diasporic experiences. Though his biography for the Venice Biennale press dossier mentions his residence in Miami, the term "diaspora" is not used at all. In contrast, in many of his other biographies, his diasporic identity appears as a crucial and even defining reference point. This therefore seems a significant omission. Yet, as noted above, this specific term was not used once within the Haitian pavilion's press dossier suggesting that its absence from Duval Carrié's biography was linked to a broader decision made about the contextualising of the national pavilion as a whole. I will therefore leave it to one side for the moment and return to it within my

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[137] This is aside from a few mistakes that were made, for example, Guyodo's biography was mistakenly replicated as Sébastian Jean's biography.
[138] Notably the spelling of 'vodou' is altered here from version included in the Venice Biennale catalogue. 'Edouard Duval Carrié' *Global Caribbean III,* n.p.
[139] *Art of Edouard Duval Carrie – Résumé*, n.d. <http://www.edouard-duval-carrie.com/resume/> [accessed 29 September 2014]

concluding remarks below. Secondly there is a question of authorial control. It could be questioned whether Duval Carrié was in fact involved in the writing of each of these varied biographies. Yet, because of his logistical involvement in the Global Caribbean project and the consistency with which his biographies are tailored to different exhibition contexts, it seems most likely that he is the key driver behind this change. Further in an article printed in his retrospective catalogue of 2007 one author quotes him "playfully" referring to his knowing positioning of himself and his practice in order to exploit shifts in international promotional directives and commercial markets. Here Duval Carrié explained, "Have you heard of World Music? There is World Painting now and I think I am playing the part quite well!"[140] At the Venice Biennale, Duval Carrié continued to carefully package himself and his practice for international markets, yet here the role he chose to play was "the bard of Haitian culture".[141]

In contrast, many of the other artists represented within the *Kingdom of this World* exhibition did not selectively omit references to their cosmopolitan backgrounds and lifestyles. In fact some actively asserted these elements of their personal history, and particularly stressed their participation in international networks of exhibition and promotion. A key example here is Barbara Prézeau-Stephenson.[142] Within the biography printed to accompany her work's presence at the Venice Biennale what we find is a selective itinerary of places, spanning three continents, in which she has practiced and exhibited over the last two decades. Following this a list of international initiatives for the dissemination of contemporary art (such as the AfricAmericA Foundation) is also detailed, each of which Prézeau has been involved in setting up.[143]

Similarly in an almost inverse process of selection to that demonstrated by Duval Carrié, Prézeau exhibited works within the *Kingdom of this World* show that emphasised her cosmopolitan lifestyle and contemporary brand of creativity. These were two digital

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[140] Edouard Duval Carrié quoted in C. H. Middelanis, '"Worldpainting", Vaudou-Art, and/or Neo-Baroque – The Art of Edouard Duval Carrié" in Sullivan (ed.) *Continental Shifts*, p.51
[141] 'Edouard Duval Carrié – The Artists and their Work' in *1st Haitian Pavilion*, p.10
[142] In the press dossier she is listed as Barbara Prézeau, though within others sources, including her own website, she is named as Barbara Prézeau-Stephenson.
[143] Barbara Prézeau – Les Artistes et leur Oeuvre/The Artists and their Work' in *1st Haitian Pavilion*, p.15; Prézeau-Stephenson, 'Contemporary Art' *Small Axe*, 12.3 (2008) pp.94-104

recordings of performance works titled *Le Complexe de Cendrillon* (2008) and *Deuil* (2011) (*The Cinderella Complex* and *Mourning*) [Figure 104]. She has described these works as explorations of gender roles in society, but I would add to this that they present to audiences her own cosmopolitanism.[144] In each she sits carefully sewing artificial flower petals onto a sheer piece of netted fabric. In the former she features alone, positioned centrally in a gallery window in Paris, wearing a beautiful white wedding dress, while in the second she wears a simple black vest and trousers and sits amongst a group of women similarly attired in an indistinct room in Barbados as they all perform the same delicate task.[145] Further her biography for the Venice Biennale notes that she has performed a similar work called *Soie, Fleurs et Mistral* (2005) in Marseille.[146] These works are in contrast to the broader body of her practice, which has made significant use of ritualistic object-forms and iconographies. Particularly represented among her earlier oeuvre (1986-2006), but still existent in her more recent practice are works inspired by and associated with the material culture of Haitian Vodou: such as vévé, paquet congo and figurative icons associated with Vodou lwa [See for example Figure 120].[147] Significantly, for the iteration of *Kingdom of this World* staged in Jacmel in 2013, Prézeau performed a live version of the work that she had displayed at Venice, this time titling it *Le Cercle de Freda* (2013) thereby making specific links to Haiti and Vodou in this context via reference to the *lwa* Erzulie Freda.[148]

Like Duval Carrié, Prézeau has been increasingly active as a curator, art historian and lead figure of various initiatives that have provided not only herself but also her Haitian peers with international opportunities for collaboration, exhibition, and promotion. Among those

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[144] B. Prézeau-Stephenson, 'The Cinderella Complex' *Small Axe*, 14.3 (November 2010), pp.146-151

[145] For excerpts of these performance works see: *Uprising Art – Barbara Prézeau-Stephenson: Haiti*, n.d. <http://www.uprising-art.com/portfolio/barbara-prezeau-stephenson-haiti/> [accessed 4 October 2014]

[146] 'Barbara Prézeau – The Artists and their Work' in *1st Haitian Pavilion*, p.15

[147] Such works were produced in many media including ironwork sculptures, 3D collage, installation and mixed media on canvas and plywood, an overview of which can be seen in a video of her retrospective exhibition being installed at the Musée du Collège Saint-Pierre in Port-au-Prince in 2007. For her work up to 2003: *Prézeau*, 2003 <http://www.prezeau.com> [accessed 4 October 2014]; For more recent works see: *Uprising Art – Barbara Prézeau-Stephenson*; 'Prezeau Retrospective' *Vimeo*, n.d. <http://vimeo.com/64012259> [accessed 4 October 2014]

[148] For images of the performance see: '"Le Cercle de Freda" Performance de Barbara Prézeau' *AfricAmericA*, 30 March 2013 <http://www.africamerica.org/Le-cercle-de-Freda-Performance-de-Barbara-Prezeau_a260.html> [accessed 4 October 2014]

represented within *Kingdom of this World* that includes Maxence Denis, Tessa Mars, Paskö, curator Giscard Bouchotte and many more. Her online biography reveals that in taking up this role she is following in the footsteps of her mother who also has an active role in the marketing of Haitian art for domestic and international audiences as the director of Le Coin d'Art gallery in Pétionville.[149] Finally, through the publication of a number of articles in recent years Prézeau has demonstrated that she is a well-informed observer as well as participant in international market networks surrounding contemporary Haitian art.[150] These articles demonstrate her depth of knowledge of how domestic and international art markets have developed around Haitian art from the early twentieth century to the contemporary era, including: an acute awareness of the development of new forms and aesthetics among Haiti-resident and diasporic artists over the last two decades; the commodification of various art styles including 'naïve' art, 'art brut' and figurative sculpture in many media; and the relative international marketability of works by certain artists.[151] Indeed she is cognisant of the success which Duval Carrié's practice and his strategic international promotion of it has brought, and she has celebrated his as a model case, noting, "Duval Carrié remains the only Haitian artist comfortably earning a living from his activity as a visual artist alone. His career is an extremely rare success, an exemplary case".[152] However, at the Venice Biennale she chose to negotiate the expectations and promotional mechanisms surrounding Haitian art in a quite different manner to Duval Carrié. It seems likely that Prézeau's choice to display an aspect of her own practice with less culturally specific references to her Haitian background at the Venice Biennale was a considered decision, informed both by her knowledge of the marketability of various works in different locations internationally, but also by an awareness of the long-term effects for Haitian art, as well as an individual Haitian artist, of being associated with a certain content or aesthetic. Though packaged in a very different way to Duval Carrié, Prézeau's representation at the Venice Biennale by virtue of its appearance within the Haitian

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[149] *Barbara Prézeau Stephenson*, n.d. <http://www.prezeau.com/bps_eng.htm> [accessed 2 October 2014]

[150] See for example: Prézeau-Stephenson, 'Contemporary Art', pp.94-104; B. Prézeau-Stephenson, 'Haiti Now – The Art of Mutants' in D. B. Bailey et al (eds) *Curating the Caribbean* (Berlin: The Green Box, 2012) pp.63-84

[151] Prézeau-Stephenson, 'Contemporary Art', p.98

[152] Ibid., p.99

national pavilion, nevertheless positioned her as a Haitian artist and thereby also presented her practice as a postcolonial cultural product from the peripheries.

CONCLUSION

In a review of the Haitian pavilion printed in the French weekly news magazine *L'Express,* curator Giscard Bouchotte explained the political significance of this presence by asserting:

> The power of a state is no longer measured today only by the force of its army, but by the image it conveys...[153]

Here Bouchotte is highlighting that at a fundamental level these art exhibitions are soft power initiatives, they are an important expression of a state's ability to mobilise its nation's cultural capital and are an indication of state stability and sovereignty. As noted above many international reviewers of this Haitian pavilion at the Venice Biennale characterised it as a spectacular national presence: a "defiance of destiny", a "sign of hope" and so of state power for a country recently devastated by an earthquake and its aftermaths as Haiti had been in 2010.[154] Yet throughout this chapter I have sought to illuminate that collapsed, or folded-in, behind this veneer of state-endorsed national display of Haiti at the Venice Biennale were the projects and agendas of a wide array of factions, groups or individuals including: Haitian and non-Haitian politicians based in France; private and NGO sponsors; international curators; and Haiti-resident as well as diaspora based artists. In fact the least involved "partner" among these it seems was the domestic government, which leads me to conclude that this was not a spectacular expression of state power at all, but rather a spectacle or illusory suggestion of Haitian state representation through national framing.

As explained above, at an organisational level the key originators and supporters of these two Haitian art exhibitions presented at Venice were: a London-based curatorial initiative (The Island); a French-based NGO (The Agnes b. Foundation); a branch of the French state

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[153] Giscard Bouchotte quoted in A. Colonna-Césari, 'Venise pour tout l'art du monde' *L'Express*, 30 June 2011, Service Culturel (ed.) *Revue de Presse*, 2nd ed., p.9 <http://www.chantiersdusud.org/workshop_image/Revue-de-presse-Biennale-de-Venise.pdf> [accessed 14 October 2014]

[154] Service Culturel (ed.) *Revue de Presse*, pp.2-5, 7, 9, 22, 23, 25

(The Institut Français); and the Cultural Service of the Haitian Embassy in Paris. For each of these organisations there was an overlapping interest in investing in the development and dissemination of Haitian and Haitian diasporan arts. Yet as I have sought to demonstrate in the body of this chapter, there were also an array of additional agendas driving the involvement of each of these organisations, which shaped the images of Haiti and Haitian art being projected through this nationally-defined display. These were organisations in a position to sponsor the Haitian pavilion and therefore, in reference to Bouchotte's measure of state power, these were the agents able to direct the image of Haiti and its socio-political realities conveyed abroad. The increased level of international involvement, and particularly the significantly decreased level of domestic state involvement, in the staging of this national exhibition marks a significant departure from the previous two case studies examined in this dissertation. Yet despite the diminished participation of the Haitian state there was still a clear desire, among the varied agents involved in this project, to claim Haitian national identity and utilitse the culturally and politically valuable platform granted on this premise to further an array of agendas.

For example, Régine Estimé, the Cultural Chargée d'Affaires at the Haitian Embassy in Paris, used this pavilion as an ephemeral embassy. Under her influence this site became a platform for performing diplomatic tasks such as gestures of gratitude to sponsoring NGOs and foreign government partners in the post-quake era, or the strengthening of ties between Haitian state representatives in Paris and French government agencies. In order to fulfil these tasks and gestures Estimé's contextualising statements presented Haiti as a space in which private and public sector international support was being implemented in politically neutral solidarity and with success. However, this obscured a wealth of politically sensitive issues such as the power dynamics within bilateral, humanitarian and development projects in Haiti. Many Haitians and international onlookers, including some of the artists represented, argue these power dynamics unwittingly and systematically undermine the sovereignty of the state and therefore damage Haitian society in the long-term.

Yet the images of Haiti being projected to complement these political agendas were not operating alone at the Venice Biennale. Alongside, and at times in conflict with these, were

visions of Haiti and notions of 'Haitian-ness' conveyed by the artists represented and the curatorial teams working with them. *Death and Fertility,* with its focus on the work of members of the *Atis Rezistans* collective, exploited international notions of 'Haitian-ness' that centre on cultural otherness, mainly expressed through links to Vodou. In line with the collective's own brand, whose exaggerated aesthetic is knowingly "shocking", their works are consistently framed in international contexts through a curatorial lens that confounds ethnographic exploration with fine art display and is defined by the marketable motifs of poverty, oppositionality and authenticity. *Death and Fertility* was no exception to this rule, and thereby presented an eye-catching and conceptually coherent exhibition via use and conveyance of a highly marketable image of Haiti. However this was not favourably received or subsequently sponsored by prominent funding networks channelled through diasporic representatives of the Haitian state based in Paris and their French counterparts.

In contrast the hazily conceptualised *Haiti: Kingdom of this World* exhibition went on to tour a number of international locations under the patronage of public and private funding sources based in France and with the logistical assistance of diaspora-based Haitians in the U.S. and France. This second art exhibition presented a broad array of artworks, using a variety of aesthetics and media, from a group of artists united by their variously formulated and distanced claims on Haitian identity. These works were contextualised through an optimistic curatorial framing that sought to positively redirect post-earthquake associations of chaos with Haiti towards perceptions of these artists "creative vitality", contemporaneity and cosmopolitanism, whilst all the time seeking to retain an authenticating link to the specific Haitian-ness of their visions.[155] Yet as with the *Death and Fertility* site this notion of Haitian-ness was defined, shaped and deployed in different ways by artists represented within the site in order to better complement the international display and promotion of their practices at the Venice Biennale. To highlight this, I explored two examples of this strategic positioning in action by examining the artworks displayed and selective biographical information presented by two curatorially-active and internationally mobile artists: Edouard Duval Carrié and Barbara Prézeau Stephenson. While the former made use of internationally recognisable tropes of an exoticised Haitian-ness to market his works in this context, the latter distanced her practice from such

[155] Bouchotte, 'Haiti Kingdom of this World', p.7

notions. Instead she presented work that spoke to more universal themes of gender roles in society and emphasised her transnational mobility, but crucially whilst being exhibited within an exhibition site defined by Haitian nationhood.

In order to give wider context to my reading of these two sites I demonstrated resonance between Graham Huggan's research into the marketing mechanisms that surround postcolonial cultural products as they circulate in international contexts, and the strategic positioning of artists through these two exhibitions to capitalise upon their claims to Haitian identity. Huggan's study, of course, focuses on the market in postcolonial literature and so explores the circulation of mass produced products to international audiences, while this case study centres on the marketing of postcolonial artists who create visual artworks: luxury one-off products. Yet my study is not concerned with presenting a detailed examination of the distribution and interaction of these products with individual consumers, but rather in the broader mechanisms surrounding the marketing of images or perceptions of postcolonial artists. Therefore whilst I do not seek to suggest that Huggan's analysis could be transferred wholesale to examine the entire marketing network that surrounds the promotion of Haitian artists' and their works, Huggan's broader frameworks have provided useful analytical tools for my study.

For example, though I found a variety of images of Haiti and notions of 'Haitian-ness' being deployed between and across the two exhibition sites examined above to promote the practices of the artists represented, in each case I could discern their exploitation of marketing systems that Huggan terms the *postcolonial exotic*, or "the global commodification of cultural difference".[156] In highlighting these 'strategies' I am not trying to suggest a lack of integrity in the practices of these artists, or their positioning of themselves. Yet, like Huggan and many others, I seek to move away from totalising views of commoditisation as "a necessary evil" or patronising conceptions of the global trade in cultural commodities as an exclusively western system "sucking in its victims…"[157] Instead, through this case, I hope to have highlighted the active roles and agencies of Haitian artists, curators and politicians within processes of international circulation and marketing

[156] Huggan, *Postcolonial Exotic*, p.vii
[157] Ibid., p.12

that exploit the cultural capital of their own and their artworks' links to Haiti. The agencies revealed through this case, as I have also tried to intimate throughout, are indicative of much broader trends of self-curation and promotion that many Haitian (and Caribbean) artists have been pursuing in recent years in order to better control the circulation of their works abroad. These agencies have taken the form of exhibition curation and staging, gallery ownership and the establishment of foundations for international exchange through residencies, partnerships and other activities. Further, in the age of global interconnection via the internet, online digital platforms have featured significantly in these processes, which have the potential to empower the previously dispossessed.

Yet having made this last point, it is important to underscore the fact that those who are physically mobile at an international level, or those who are situated within first world metropoles remain key interlocutors or mediators of this trade in cultural commodities from the peripheries. The increased prominence of Haitian diasporans as mediators of Haitian-ness has been widely contextualised with reference to specific histories of exile and migration from Haiti prompted by particular events and periods of social and political significance. Yet it is important to note that this shift towards diasporan influence or control over the cultural capital of Haitian-ness also reflects wider shifts in the global political economy that have seen centres of political and cultural power shift in favour of those who can mediate between the local and global, at times circumventing the national entirely.

Indeed, Haiti's vast and vastly dispersed diasporas, and particularly those of higher social status amongst them, have played crucial roles in both the processes of projecting visualisations of Haitian nationhood and of Haitian art internationally in recent decades. This was very much exemplified by the group of individuals and organisations involved in the staging of Haiti's pavilion at the Venice Biennale, though it was notably unacknowledged within the press dossier published to publicise this national presence. Nowhere within this document were the relevant practitioners, over half of those taking part, referred to as Haitian diaspora artists. Further, there was in fact no direct reference whatsoever to the Haitian diaspora within this booklet. But why this was the case, especially when transnational mobility was being so strongly emphasised within the

curatorial framing of one of these exhibition sites? Perhaps an assertion of diaspora within the context of this nationally-defined exhibition in the context of the Biennale's world picture was considered a delegitimising association. Alternatively diaspora may have been seen as a homogenising term that would compromise individual cosmopolitan identities and practices. Or possibly this was just a pragmatic reflection of the socio-political realities of the time. Indeed, under Haiti's constitution (before its alteration in 2012) dual-citizenship past the age of 18 was not lawfully allowed, which legally distanced diasporans from their homeland.

Despite the absence of reference to diasporan involvement in the Haitian pavilion at the Venice Biennale, this case demonstrates the increased influence and levels of control that artists, as well as curators and politicians, based among Haiti's disaporas are able to exercise over the international marketing of both their own and their peers' practices as well as over projected visions of Haitian nationhood. This situation, as noted above, reflects broad shifts in the global political economy, but also parallels David Scott's more specific recent observation of "…postcolonial theory's [increasing] estrangement from Third World contexts towards understandings of the colonial and postcolonial condition based almost entirely on the experiences of metropolitan diasporas".[158] Though this case demonstrates that this process of estrangement is not limited to the realms of academic theory, but is also active in the wider context of global mass-market consumption of postcolonial cultural products. Yet significantly, as the case of the Atis Rezistans demonstrates, not all marketing networks for postcolonial products operate via, and with reference to, these diasporan agents. This Haiti-based collective's works, as Prézeau has highlighted, have found routes around this "tight network of Haitian gallerists and art dealers". [159] Yet, this rerouting has only been accomplished by aligning themselves with a number of curators based in western metropoles who have mediated the positioning of their practices internationally. It is clear then, that the Haitian state had little involvement in, or control over, the exploitation of its own cultural capital, or soft power at this event, which was instead the domain of foreign governments and curators, private initiatives and

[158] D. Scott, *Refashioning Futures: Criticism After Postcoloniality* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), p.197
[159] Prezéau Stephenson, 'Haiti now', p.79

internationally based diasporas. Crucially then, whether organised via diasporic networks or systems of circulation that included foreign curators as advocates, what these two exhibitions of contemporary Haitian artists' practices through a Haitian national pavilion at the Venice Biennale illuminated was a shift in control over the curation and projection of the Haitian national image abroad.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

At the outset of this study I sought to open up a new perspective on Haitian art history, and more specifically on exhibition histories of works by Haitian artists in international contexts from the late nineteenth-century to the contemporary era. Through a cultural studies approach, I have explored the display of works by Haitian artists outside conventional museums and galleries. Through three case studies, I have focussed on the presence of Haitian artists' works within the transitory sites of national cultural display at two world's fairs and an art biennial. The events around which this study pivots took place across a time period of 118 years: the first, Chicago's World's Columbian Fair, occurring on the cusp of the twentieth century; the second, Haiti's *Bicentenaire de Port-au-Prince*, in the aftermath of the second World War; and the third, the Venice Biennale, at the outset of the twenty-first century. Each was also staged in a different geographical context: the first in North America; the second in the Caribbean; and the third in Europe. The displays presented at each site have therefore differed significantly, catering to different audiences, as well as to varied geographical and temporal contexts. Across the course of this dissertation we have therefore seen the substance of these Haitian cultural displays, and the artworks presented within them, shift from a *fin-de-siècle* expression of Francophile neoclassicism, through an uneasy post-war coupling of folkloric exoticism and western modernity, to a fragmented picture of contemporary Haitian-ness articulated with reference to poverty and cultural otherness as well as cosmopolitanism. Yet these exhibitions have also overlapped, most importantly for this study, in the sense that they all claimed to present an official representation of the Haitian nation-state and therefore an authoritative and formally endorsed vision of Haitian culture.

However, when we peer behind this veneer of official national rhetoric it becomes clear that at each of these sites there were numerous images of Haitian nationhood, as well as notions of a national cultural essence (referred to throughout as 'Haitian-ness') being produced by various agents. These images were then projected via reference to the

standardising and legitimating vocabulary of nation-state representation. To summarise my findings from this research, I will therefore compare and contrast the main agents involved in constructing these three sites of Haitian national display, the types of artworks selected and presented, and the central agendas driving both. Through this comparative perspective, a number of shifts or patterns will emerge as we look back across the three case studies. For example, the change and continuity in agents controlling the visions of Haiti presented at these sites, the fluctuating involvement of Haitian and African diasporic individuals and groups, and the rise in recognition and use of a distinct notion of Haitian-ness to promote and market artworks produced by Haitian artists.

In my introduction to this dissertation I referenced Jeffrey Auerbach's insightful analysis of the ways in which displays presented within Britain's Crystal Palace exhibition could be understood to represent British national identity. He asserted that this event and its component parts would be best conceived of as a "cultural battlefield" upon which "visions and versions" of national identity were being asserted by a variety of agents with overlapping, competing and conflicting agendas. This, Auerbach suggested, resulted in a display that contained fluid and restive elements, which had the potential to alter and even subvert the intentions of the event's organisers.[1] These arguments remained a crucial interpretative basis for my examination of the exhibitions of Haitian nationhood and displays of Haitian art, which were the subject of the three case studies at the core of this dissertation. Drawing on Auerbach's premise I sought, in each case, to tease out the visions and versions of Haitian-ness, as well as agents and agendas, shaping and driving these displays defined by the singularity of national framing.

THREE CASES: AGENTS, ARTWORKS AND AGENDAS

Within each case I began by considering what the stated or principal motivations were for the organisers of the Haitian national representations staged at these events. Both cases one and two were conceived of as state-sponsored projects that would encourage investment in, and so provide a boost to, the Haitian economy in line with the conventional purposes of world's fairs and international expositions. The first case, Haiti's pavilion at the

[1] J. Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), pp.1-5, 228-231

World's Columbian Fair or Exposition (held in Chicago in 1893) consisted of an array of artworks and other objects. These items were selected and arranged by a commission, mainly made up of Haitian politicians, to present a broad advertisement of trading and investment opportunities. Artworks displayed ranged from culturally conformist neoclassical portraiture, needlework and embroidery, to economically informative Haitian landscapes and cityscapes. I have argued that collectively these art objects presented within Haiti's pavilion at the World's Columbian Fair expressed a vision of Haitian-ness that served the economic ends of Haiti's socio-political elites. Yet this was not the limit of their significance, nor does it encapsulate the entirety of the agents and agendas, or visions and versions of Haitian-ness represented through this display.

Indeed the Francophile image that emerged from the Haitian commission's preparations closely paralleled the national cultural identities, similarly conveyed through art objects, that were presented by other Latin American nations and the United States at the Columbian Fair. This homogeneity demonstrates that internationally admired visions of nationhood, centred on notions of "progress" and "civilisation" and conveyed through neoclassical aesthetics, also played a crucial role in the shaping of this late-nineteenth-century representation of Haiti.[2] Centrally positioned within that vision, in Haiti's case, was the Parisian art practice of Haitian diaspora artist Louis-Edmond Laforesterie. His role within this display was not as a curator of the exhibition staged; yet as the producer of a component part of this "object lesson", he was involved in shaping the image of Haitian nationhood presented within it. Notably, whilst his diasporan identity was left unacknowledged, the pavilion's commissioning body exploited the French-ness of his work, in terms of form, aesthetics and exhibitionary provenance, for the cultural capital it offered to the Haitian state.

In contrast, subsequent historiographic understandings of the version of Haitian nationhood presented at the Columbian Fair have largely bypassed the state's envisioning of Haiti via Francophile ideals, exemplified in objects such as the artworks on display. These

[2] See for example: 'The World's Progress as Shown at the Exposition' *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated*, 3.12 (February 1894) p.337: Rare Books Collection, The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA; R. Larrier, 'DuSable, Douglass, and Dessalines: The Haytian Pavilion and the Narrative of History' in M.A. Sourieau and K.M. Balutansky (eds) *Ecrire en pays assiégé Haiti – Writing Under Siege* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004) p.43

accounts have instead focussed on a Pan-Africanist vision of Haitian-ness filtered through the perspectives of U.S. African-American activists who were promoting the Civil Rights cause of black Americans at the event. It is significant that this racially defined version of Haitian nationhood advocated by individuals such as Frederick Douglass and Ida Wells has been more widely remembered for two reasons. Firstly it presents us with an example of international and diasporic intermediaries playing a crucial role in the shaping of notions of Haitian-ness, and secondly it represents the first indication of a decline over time in the state's ability to control visions of Haiti's national identity projected abroad.

The subject of my second case study was Haiti's *Bicentenaire de Port-au-Prince* of 1949-50. Paralleling the organisational model observed in the above case, Haiti's representation at this event was also conceived of and principally shaped by a commissioning body made up of current and former Haitian politicians and diplomats. These curators of Haiti's post-war nationhood put together a multivalent cultural extravaganza that uneasily incorporated Euro-American Modernist and neoclassical aesthetics alongside Haitian folkloric practices within a complex vision of Haitian-ness staged in the nation's capital city for both international and domestic audiences. The *Bicentenaire* was staged for its catalytic potential as a platform on which Haiti's tourist industry could be launched, and thereby the nation's economy boosted. This event offered the opportunity to increase government popularity by creating jobs, funding urban and rural development projects and attracting international sponsors and domestic backers of the infrastructure needed to establish Haiti as a site of tourism, whilst simultaneously presenting an international stage upon which the nation and its attractions could be advertised to foreign consumers. Consequently, even from the point of view of its commissioning body, the artistic displays created for this event needed to function on multiple levels.

Works of visual art incorporated into this event were therefore wide ranging in terms of both forms and aesthetics. These included newly constructed Modernist buildings scattered across the fairgrounds, Modernist murals and sculptures commissioned from Euro-American artists (some with the assistance of Haitian contemporaries), and neoclassical sculptures loaned from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. From a purely pragmatic point of view, it is clear that these elements of the *Bicentenaire's*

landscape were both part of the state's urban redevelopment projects and their attempts to create the infrastructure that would support a national tourist industry. However, it is also through these elements of the *Bicentenaire's* visual arts display that we find evidence pertaining to the involvement of Haitian and African diasporic artists, as well as indications of the influence of international conventions or expectations, in the shaping of visions of Haitian nationhood produced and projected through this event. For example, we know that Robert Baussan, the architect of at least one of the showpiece Modernist buildings created in a recognisably Euro-American style for the fair, was educated in Paris. Much like Haitian diaspora artist Louis-Edmond Laforesterie, Baussan was from an elite Haitian family with multifarious connections to the Francophone metropole of Paris. Indeed, he studied architecture there and later trained under the tutelage of Le Corbusier. Yet unlike Laforesterie who lived the majority of his adult life in Paris, Baussan was living in Haiti at the time of the *Bicentenaire,* serving as the Haitian Undersecretary of State for Tourism and as a member of the event's commissioning body.

Baussan's temporary diasporan experience was mirrored in the lives of many of the individuals who made up Haiti's commissioning body for this event. Most, if not all, of these men had lived over a number of years in Europe or North America during a period of international education, diplomatic posting or both. At the time of the *Bicentenaire,* each were, or had formerly been, members or affiliates of the Haitian government. The influence of those short-term diasporan experiences on the vision of modern Haitian nationhood conveyed through the landscape of the *Bicentenaire* was significant. Indeed it is present in this event's emulation of expressions of modern nationhood conveyed through starkly remodelled urban cityscapes constructed to house world's fairs staged in Paris and New York in the late 1930s and 40s. Further, it is also manifest in the commission's decision to include artistically conservative neoclassical sculptures loaned from the collections of a prominent New York art institution. Yet what is particularly important to note here is that the men who made up this event's commissioning body, including architects such as Baussan, had to return to Haiti and take up positions of power within the domestic government in order to shape this cultural spectacle. In contrast there is little evidence of diaspora based Haitians, whether living in Paris, the United States or

elsewhere, making a prominent or vital contribution to the shaping of the *Bicentenaire* and its representations of Haitian-ness.

In this vein, it is notable that the U.S. African-American artist Richmond Barthé was invited by the Haitian government to make an artistic contribution to the remodelling of Port-au-Prince at the time of the fair in the form of a sculptural monument to Toussaint L'Ouverture. This sculptural representation of Toussaint presents, on the surface, a point of continuity between the artworks created for this event and those displayed within Haiti's pavilion at the Columbian Fair, which included a bust of Toussaint created by Laforesterie. Yet as the most prominent indication of the level of African diasporic (and specifically U.S. African-American) involvement in this spectacle, in comparison with that at the World's Columbian Fair of 1893, Barthé's monument marks a significant departure. I argue this because, despite the latter commission representing a notable government invitation to a prominent African-American artist, this celebration of Haiti's Pan-Africanist significance was peripheral to the staging of the *Bicentenaire* and has remained so in retrospective accounts of the event. This is in direct contrast to the evidence presented within the previous case, where the perspectives of U.S. African Americans proved effective in shaping versions of Haitian nationhood projected at the World's Columbian Fair. As noted above, Frederick Douglass, in particular, played an influential role in projecting notions of Haiti at the fair alongside the "object lesson" collated by Haitian elites, while in retrospect Douglass' vision has proved much more potent than state-led versions.

However, at the mid-twentieth-century *Bicentenaire*, notions of an exotic Haitian-ness that permeated U.S. popular culture appear to have been far more influential upon the representations of Haitian national identity presented at this event, and how it has been subsequently remembered, than the contributions of black American activists or artists. As mentioned above, a primary motivation for the staging of the *Bicentenaire* was the launching of a Haitian tourist industry. This prompted the event's state-led commissioning body to promote the transformation of various folkloric practices common among Haiti's masses, such as ritual dance at Vodou ceremonies, into products that catered to foreign consumers. Significantly for my study, it is in relation to this aspect of the state's cultural display that the presence of artworks produced by Haitian painters has been remembered. Yet I suggest that this retrospective association of the art displays at the *Bicentenaire,*

exclusively, with the broader celebration of folkloric cultural forms is a misleading effect of U.S. press representations of the event. These sources catered to notions of an exotic Haitian-ness popular amongst their readerships. However I would suggest this automatic association of the visual arts displays at the *Bicentenaire* with state-led promotion of a tourist industry centred on folkloric cultural forms is not reflective of the exhibitions staged at the event.

As noted in my second case study, the practices of an array of contemporary Haitian artists were represented on the fairgrounds. These included Modernist works, mainly produced by elite and bourgeois artists such as Luce Turnier or Roland Dorcely, in styles influenced by international educations and the practices of foreign contemporaries. Yet, they also included the diverse works produced by Haiti's newest wave of internationally popular painters. The latter, whose practices were primarily being promoted to foreign audiences via the Centre d'Art, included artists such as Castera Bazile and Hector Hyppolite. These artists were drawn from Haiti's less mobile and often informally educated lower classes, resulting in the production of works focussed on local subjects and in distinct styles and aesthetics. It is only artists and works in this latter category, who were publicised as "Haitian primitive artists" and "voodoo art", which were mentioned as attractions in contemporary U.S. media reviews.[3]

This is notable for two reasons. Firstly, because it demonstrates the state's lack of control over images of the *Bicentenaire*, and specifically of its cultural attractions, circulating internationally at the time of the fair, despite its curation and sponsorship of the event. Then secondly, it reveals that perceptions of Haitian art circulating in the U.S. at the time of the fair were drawn from visions of a national art practice being deployed by U.S. art dealers working with the Centre d'Art, such as Selden Rodman, rather than from state-curated notions of Haitian nationhood or Haitian art. These art dealer-led visions of Haitian art were predicated upon deeply rooted notions of Haitian-ness equated to primitivism, voodoo and distance in time and space from the modern western world. This suggests that only five years after the opening of the Centre d'Art, the notions of Haitian art, and indeed

[3] E. Bogat, 'Exposition in Haiti: Port-au-Prince Prepares for 200th Anniversary' *New York Times*, 23 October 1949, p.xxii

of Haitian-ness, being disseminated via the art market surrounding this institution were more influential and resonant among international audiences than those promoted by Haiti's government. Yet more significantly, the substantial rise in the influence that a nascent international art market had over foreign audience perceptions of Haitian art (and a supporting notion of Haitian-ness) continued to increase and overtake the state's control of the cultural capital associated with these, as my final case study demonstrated.

The subject of this third and final case study was Haiti's dual-sited pavilion at the Venice Biennale of 2011. As noted within that chapter, this Haitian exhibition marked a significant departure from the previous two case studies for two main reasons. Firstly because state involvement in this third Haitian display was minimal and secondly because the Venice Biennale, though containing a strand of national exhibition originating in the era of imperialist world's fairs, is an event centred solely on the display of artworks. Reflecting the more specific focus of this event, the primary function of both of Haiti's national displays in Venice was the international promotion of the practices of the artists represented within them. Yet through these two quite separate exhibitions, entitled *Death and Fertility* and *Haiti: Kingdom of this World*, respectively, numerous disparate notions of Haitian national identity were projected to market the works contained.

For example, *Death and Fertility* was constructed by an Italian curator, with the support of a British curator and American academic, to showcase the work of three members of the *Atis Rezistans* collective by employing notions of Haitian-ness that centre on poverty and cultural otherness. In contrast, *Haiti: Kingdom of this World* was curated by transnationally mobile Haitian diasporans living and working between locations including Paris, Miami, Port-au-Prince and New York. It represented eighteen artists' practices through works created using a broad array of aesthetics, forms and media and individual artists conveyed varied visions of Haiti through their works and to promote their practices. Reflecting this survey style exhibition, the curatorial team's framing of *Haiti: Kingdom of this World* was somewhat hazier than *Death and Fertility*, yet deploying overarching notions of Haitian-ness remained a key feature. The curatorial vision of Haitian cultural identity projected here pivoted around notions of contemporaneity, cosmopolitanism and uncontainable

creativity. The latter particularly being motivated by attempts to rebrand negative post-earthquake associations of chaos with Haiti as something generative and optimistic.

Yet the variety of images of Haiti and notions of Haitian-ness being deployed between and across these two exhibition sites were not only shaped by the artists represented or in order to promote their practices. Additionally shaping this bipartite national art display were a variety of other agents pursuing a disparate array of projects and agendas. Indeed the range of individuals who made up the commissioning or curatorial bodies that organised each exhibition, as well as the sponsors who backed them, reveals this. Between the two exhibitions these curators, commissioners and sponsors included Haitian and non-Haitian politicians based in France; private and NGO backers; international curators and academics; and Haiti-resident as well as diaspora based cultural professionals. Needless to say, this group of individuals represented a much broader array of interests than the predominantly state-led commissioning bodies that produced the national exhibitions examined in the first two cases of this dissertation. In fact the presence of domestic state representatives had receded completely, leaving the Paris-based Haitian diplomat Régine Estimé as the closest comparable agent. However this did not mean that the Haitian national exhibitions staged at the Venice Biennale lacked political purpose. Indeed Estimé, together with branches of the French government, as well as international NGOs ensured that this Haitian representation at the Venice Biennale functioned as a site of political value through which the cultural capital of Haitian-ness could be mobilised, to consolidate transnational diplomatic ties, promote bilateral development policies or encourage investment in private humanitarian projects. To summarise then, we can see that diasporan Haitians, as well as government and NGO sponsors situated within first world metropoles, played a key role in the staging of the *Kingdom of this World* exhibition. They were thereby pivotal to the promotion of certain images of Haitian nationhood or citizenship associated with positive creativity and development, elite cosmopolitanism and transnationally inspired creativity through this exhibition.

In contrast, the work of the *Atis Rezistans* has proved less palatable to some of Haiti's domestic and diasporan elites because of the collective's associations with an image of Haiti centred upon poverty and cultural otherness. Therefore, at the Venice Biennale the

work of the *Atis Rezistans* was curatorially-supported by an alternate network of Euro-American curators and academics. Yet these agents were also based in first world metropoles. Aside from highlighting class-based division within the market surrounding Haitian artists practices (notably a point of continuity with the nascent market observed through the previous case study), the curation of Haitian artists' practices within a national pavilion at the Venice Biennale of 2011 demonstrates two important points in the context of this dissertation. First, that the Haitian state had little involvement in, or even control over, the exploitation of the cultural capital of Haitian-ness at this high-profile international event. Then secondly, that internationally based individuals and organisations nevertheless wanted to stage, and were able to sponsor, a pavilion billed as a Haitian national display at this event.

SIGNIFICANT SHIFTS

Through the comparative overview above of the three case studies at the centre of this dissertation, I have highlighted various shifts or changes over time that can be tracked throughout the course of this study. In this final summarising section, I will now draw out the three most significant of these and consider how we can understand these from local, transnational and international levels. First, it is clear that over the course of these three cases there has been a gradual decline in the Haitian state's and domestic elite's control over the visions or images of Haitian-ness conveyed through, or under a banner of, national art display. Simultaneously, we have also seen that centre of power dispersed most notably amongst international agents. These have included: U.S. African-American activists, foreign cultural or art professionals, NGOs and, foremost amongst these in the contemporary era, elites among Haiti's diasporas.

Secondly, the role of artworks within the exhibitions I have examined has shifted significantly. In 1893, inline with the conventions of world's fair display, artworks were included in Haiti's pavilion display as a component part of an exhibit conveying Haitian national identity to support the state's political and economic agendas. Yet in contrast, at the outset of the twenty-first century, Haitian artists' works were the central focus of two exhibitions within a prestigious international event, where notions of Haitian-ness or Haitian national identity served as supporting tools. Thirdly the international recognition

of, as well as the cultural and political value of the notion of Haitian-ness or Haitian culture, has increased dramatically across the three case studies examined. Within Haiti's pavilion at the World's Columbian Fair there is little if any claim to a distinct cultural Haitian-ness via the object lesson assembled. Indeed we can see in the artworks displayed that there was in fact an emphasis on expressing what could be described as an aesthetic French-ness. In contrast, at the *Bicentenaire de Port-au-Prince*, cultural forms and artistic practices specifically identified as Haitian played a crucial role within the event's attractions. Whilst within Haiti's pavilion at the Venice Biennale, notions of a distinct cultural Haitian-ness were central throughout to the framing of the artworks displayed.

There are a number of perspectives from which we can attempt to understand the significance of these three changes. On a local level, for example, we can see the decline in state power across these cases in the context of histories that have charted the Haitian government's systematic destabilisation, both unwittingly and insidiously, by national and international powers. The United States, and more recently, private organisations and international humanitarian or development missions have been centrally implicated in such histories. Indeed over a similar period we can see that Haiti's educational and health systems have increasingly been separated from state power to the extent that it has been estimated in the first decade of the 21st century, 90 percent of schools and 80 percent of clinics in Haiti were run by NGOs.[4] Alternatively we can contextualise this shift away from centralised state power towards transnational networks in relation to wider shifts in this direction within the international political economy. For example, the NGO sector has become increasingly professionalised worldwide over the latter half of the twentieth century, and particularly in recent decades. This has had an impact on levels of state stability, power and control over the national image in many developing countries, prompting some scholars to see in these organisations, and their advancement of neoliberal policies, a new form of imperialism.[5] Similarly we can understand the increase of Haitian diasporans power over the image of Haiti circulated internationally within the wider context of the roles that other national, ethnic and continental diasporas have taken

[4] M. Schuller, *Killing with Kindness: Haiti, International Aid, and NGOs* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012)
[5] See for example: I.G. Shivji, *Silences in NGO Discourse: The role and future of NGOs in Africa* (Nairobi and Oxford: Fahamu, 2007)

up in an era of increased globalisation when, "capable of bridging the gap between global and local tendencies, diasporas [have been] able to take advantage of the economic and cultural opportunities on offer".[6]

Correspondingly we can better understand the increased importance of Haitian artists' works within international exhibitions, and the increased value of notions of Haitian-ness across the period studied within this dissertation in relation to the emergence and development of a robust market of international scale surrounding Haitian art from the mid-twentieth century. Yet, as I detailed at length in the second chapter of this dissertation, this network of artists, curators, dealers, critics, art historians and gallerists is more fully understood when placed into the context of the much wider modern and contemporary art markets to which it was, and to which it remains, connected in a relationship of mutual definition. Further, in my final case study, I examined some aspects of the contemporary international promotion of the works and practices of Haitian artists with reference to Graham Huggan's research into the marketing of postcolonial cultural products. Huggan's study explores "the global commodification of cultural difference" but uses specific, and locally-rooted, examples to sketch a model for understanding these transactions at an international level.[7] I would therefore suggest that reaching beyond the specificities of the Haitian case to broader theoretical frameworks can support a deeper understanding of both the specific case and the wider context.

Therefore through this dissertation I have offered a new perspective on exhibition histories of Haitian art, which has attempted to integrate analysis at the level of the specific case and the wider context throughout. I have presented one new approach by examining how perceptions of Haitian art have been linked to notions of Haitian national identity in international contexts across three case studies spanning the last century. Yet it is hoped that I have also opened up new perspectives on a number of other histories: of national representation and art exhibition at world's fairs and art biennials; of the mechanisms by which markets in modern and contemporary art have interacted with postcolonial

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[6] R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1987) p.176
[7] G. Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001) p.vii

products; of the role of art in postcolonial nation-building; and of the intersections of national identity and art in exhibitions across the long twentieth century.

APPENDIX

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Figure 119: Edouard Duval Carrié, *La Promenade du Grand Baron* (2010)

Figure 120: Barbara Prézeau-Stephenson, *Série Freda* (2008)

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