

## Cultures of Tourism: Expositions, Fairs, Museums

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### The Cosmopolitan Museum: Representing the Foreign in Paris in 1830

Late in 1829, a new (and hitherto unstudied) museum opened its doors in Paris at 18 Rue de Provence, near the boulevards in today's ninth arrondissement. The *Musée cosmopolite* proclaimed its intent to bring to the curious Parisian the spectacle of the world's great cities, or at least those visited by its owner, a certain Louis Mazzara. Like the panoramas then coming into vogue for the second time in the nineteenth century, the *Musée cosmopolite's* exposition consisted of very large painted canvases displayed under dramatic lighting in darkened spaces, and culminated in a painting some 40 feet long, displaying the city of Alexandria in a technically innovative perspective that caused much comment among visitors. Although it does not seem to have lasted long, the existence of the new museum and the descriptions of it in the press suggest a desire or search for novel urban spectacles on the part of artists, journalists, and at least a portion of the general public. Articles in the press coverage of Mazzara's enterprise demonstrate a receptiveness for what authors perceived as new means of representing urban space, and new perspectives for presenting the built environment.

In addition to innovation in visual representation, the *Musée cosmopolite* also suggested to visitors a narrative model for appreciating the views it offered them. The narrative came from several sources: the museum published a guide, included in the admission price, and also endorsed the narrations provided by journalists when it chose to promote itself by publishing a collection of their articles. In the way it represented Alexandria both all at once and progressively, the *Musée cosmopolite's* painting suggests the function of both metaphor and metonymy. I will argue that the *Musée cosmopolite* represented a turning point in the techniques and reception of visual representation and textual description, and that the movement from metaphor to metonymy coincided with and reflected a new urban sensibility in nineteenth-century France.

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### An Enemy of Progress: Supernaturalism and Anti-militarism in Baudelaire's Art Criticism

Baudelaire disliked militaristic themes that expressed no "aspiration vers l'infini" (*Salon de 1846*). Because the officially commissioned military paintings of Horace Vernet lacked "supernaturalisme," they were the "antithèse absolue" of art. Against Vernet, Baudelaire, proclaimed his generation the "ennemie de la guerre et des sottises nationales." Nine years later, his review of the Exposition universelle attacked the very spirit of progress that had given birth to the Exposition. Baudelaire sited his esthetics in opposition to the Second Empire's triumphalism, as evidenced by his mirroring of key passages from Gautier's review of the Exposition, *Les Beaux-Arts en Europe*. Chapters 12-14 of this work deal with the Chinese collection, Ingres and Delacroix—an order exactly followed by Baudelaire's review. But where Gautier celebrates "la beauté suprême" of Ingres' *Apothéose de Napoléon* at the expense of the Chinese who "cherchent

## Cultures of Tourism: Expositions, Fairs, Museums

le laid idéal,” Baudelaire denounces Ingres’ work for the absence of “le sentiment surnaturel” while praising “un produit chinois, produit étrange, bizarre” as “un échantillon de la beauté universelle.” In this implicit reproof to his mentor Gautier, Baudelaire locates the value of “surnaturalisme” in a cosmopolitan, trans-national esthetic opposed to ideologies of progress, prosperity and military might. In the *Salon de 1859* he pronounced Vernet’s military painting a genre requiring “la fausseté ou la nullité.” How then could Baudelaire praise Constantin Guys’s sketches of war and soldiers? In these works, with their qualities of “bizarreness, exaggeration, explosion” (J. A. Hiddleston), Baudelaire found the “détails douloureux” and “sinistre ampleur” that affirmed his criterion of supernaturalism: an art “suggestive et grosse de rêveries” celebrating the “beauté passagère” of modern life.

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### Baudelaire and Photography: The Iconic Unconscious

In 1936, Giseèle Freund quoted a passage of *Le Peintre de la vie moderne* in which Baudelaire depicts a museum-goer whose appreciation of the paintings there is limited and corrupted by his insistence on viewing those works he has already seen as engravings. Her use of the passage was apposite, except for one detail: she referenced not the essay on Guys, but Baudelaire’s *Salon de 1859* and the poet’s tirade against photography. For Freund, the damage done by engraving to aesthetic sensibilities was identical to that done by photography. It would be possible to criticize Freund for sloppy scholarship, but a more suggestive conclusion springs to mind: is there something in common to Baudelaire’s criticism of photography and his praise of Guys’s drawings? Are the speedy images Guys creates somehow related to photographs? At first glance, this would not seem to be the case: photography, he wrote, is not imaginative; photography duplicates trivial appearances; photography is the servant of narcissism. Guys, on the other hand, is an artist, one whose predatory search for modernity excused any number of failings: an uncertain command of perspective, poor grasp of anatomy, etc. But what if Freund’s typo was not a typo, but the recognition of an inescapable analogy between the sketches of Constantin Guys and the legions of photographers who were just starting to multiply in 1859? This paper will ask whether Baudelaire’s contempt for photography masked an understanding that this was, indeed, the picture of modern life, and that his strange choice of Guys as modern life’s “painter” results from his struggle to repress that knowledge.

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### ‘L’Empire du décor’: Bibelot, Art and the Nation at the 1878 Paris World Fair

This paper explores the impact of ‘exotic’ objects and their installations at the 1878 Paris Exposition Universelle in terms of spectacles of ‘décor’: tendencies, indeed, highlighted in 1878 by the staging of a selectively globalizing ‘rue des Nations.’ Closer scrutiny of this idea, despite its conception as an architectural and ethnographic display, reveals more about the preoccupations of contemporary French culture than those of the ‘nations’ and their artefacts it

## Cultures of Tourism: Expositions, Fairs, Museums

purported to showcase and disclose. This is especially marked in the extensive commentaries by the period's prominent and influential art critics generated by these 'exotic' displays. Taking two examples by Charles Blanc and Louis Gonse, the paper considers their responses as key attempts to turn the exotic consumable and spectacle – especially of Middle- and Far-Eastern architecture and artefacts – towards a broader reengagement with contemporary French art and, indeed, to an amplification of its cultural underpinnings. Where Blanc uses 'décor' to create an extended colonialist project for French culture, shown in particular through his nuanced contrasts between Middle-Eastern and Japanese décors, to advance French aesthetic and design tastes and consumption, Gonse takes the far-Eastern artefact as a point of re-entry into a vanished and 'exotic' past of late nineteenth-century French art and culture. If both responses formed part a 'revivals' industry revealing and frustrating in its cultural implications (from the 'foiresque' Oriental décors deplored by Edmond de Goncourt and Jean Lorrain to the medieval bric-à-brac excoriated by Huysmans), Blanc's and Gonse's contrasting approaches to the exotic consumable also provided significant new ways of appropriating its 'exoticism' within an expanded *fin-de-siècle* discourse and symbolism of 'nation,' through its potential to enrich both cultural memory, and 'l'empire du décor.'