

## From the *Rue des Nations* to the *Rue aux Lèvres* The 1938 International Surrealist Exhibition Parody of the 1889 and 1900 World Fair Cityscapes

Lauren Walden  
(University of Coventry, UK)

**Abstract** The International Surrealist Exhibition of 1938 is viewed as a foil to the *fin de siècle* world fairs of 1889 and 1900, which created taxonomies of nations, promoting colonial exoticism. The cosmopolitan tenet of perpetual peace was present at the latter events but this was subordinated to an imperialist agenda. Surrealist subversion of world fairs stems from the exhibition *La Vérité sur les Colonies*, a riposte to the official *Exposition Coloniale* of 1931. I argue the 1938 surrealist exhibition goes further to subvert the entire legacy of the world fairs as an unwanted *fin de siècle* hangover rather than bolster traditional views that envisage surrealism as a postmodernist precursor to installation art. Indeed, the political teleology of surrealism and the *Expositions Universelles* is completely polarised but both exhibitions employ similar themes and techniques of sensory immersion. The 1938 International Surrealist Exhibition in Paris concocts a prolifically photographed cosmopolitan cityscape brimming with culturally-hybrid scenography and artworks. Marcel Duchamp creates the space of *La Ville Surréaliste* with suggestive streets such as the *Rue des Lèvres*. Leaves, flowers and sand are strewn on the floor creating a multi-sensory appeal alongside fetishized mannequins, furniture and ponds. This is a potential parody of the 1889 World Fair, which created the *Rue des Nations* and similarly functioned as a miniature town. A *Rue de Caire* was also constructed to promulgate stereotyped oriental sexualities of belly dancing. Similarities between architecture, dance, mannequins and the domestic space are explored. Ultimately, the *Exposition Universelle* emphasises alterity for colonial gain whilst the surrealist exhibition employs curatorial cosmopolitanism to injure the impending threat of fascism.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Exhibition Design and Contrasting Cityscapes. – 3 The Body Politic: The Danse du Ventre and the Danse Hystérique. – 4 Mannequins and Automatism. – 5 Domestic Space. – 6 Conclusion.

**Keywords** World Fairs. Surrealism. Avant-garde Exhibitions. Cosmopolitanism. Colonialism.

### 1 Introduction

At first sight, the 1938 International Surrealist Exhibition appears anathema to the world fairs of the 19th century. Surrealism's vehement anti-colonialism counters France's sense of imperialist triumph which typified the *fin de siècle* imaginary of the Third Republic. Instead of looking back to the 19th century, the surrealists are widely considered to be postmodernist promontories. For Lewis Kachur, the International Surrealist Exhibition exemplifies a "postmodern confrontation" (2001, 211) whilst for Alice Mahon "the 1938 exhibition is an important model for what would become installation art" (2005, 32). Indeed, the organisers Marcel Duchamp and André Breton stimulated all the senses, partaking in an "assembling of environments" as Bruce Altshuler puts it (1994, 122). Yet, is a postmodern antecedent the correct prism through which view this enterprise granted its associated white cube aesthetic? The same immersive traits adopted by the surrealists could be found at the 1889 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, a beacon of populism and

officialdom attended by over 32 million visitors. Given the surrealists' prolific knowledge of *fin de siècle* art and literature, they appear engaged in parody rather than novelty in 1938. Surrealist torchbearers were certainly well acquainted with the spurious, quasi-nationalistic politics of world fairs. Empirically speaking, subordination of these events stems from their 1931 riposte to the *Exposition Coloniale* of the very same year, also held in Paris. This was entitled *La Vérité sur les Colonies*, organised by Louis Aragon and André Thirion. Notwithstanding, the 1938 Surrealist Exhibition goes further to subvert the entire legacy of the *Exposition Universelle* as an unwanted *fin de siècle* hangover. The Kantian cosmopolitan tenet of perpetual peace was advocated through world fairs with the explicit aim of fostering trade between nations in order to subdue belligerence. However, this aim was thoroughly subordinated to an imperialist agenda. Therefore, one should distinguish between the seminal museological trope of a 'Universal Survey Museum' and what I term 'curatorial cosmopolitanism'. For Duncan

and Wallach (1980) the Universal Survey Museum displays international collections and “evokes the Roman tradition of triumphal display”, something enacted by the colonial looting lauded at world fairs. Conversely, curatorial cosmopolitanism embodies comparative juxtaposition between multiple cultures and media which the surrealists achieve with aplomb.

This article is divided into four different sections. Firstly, comparative analysis detailing the architectural spaces of both exhibitions occurs. Duchamp’s 1200 coal sacks are contrasted with the 1889 *Palais des Machines* and the *Exposition Militaire* which connote the interstices between industrial progress and preparation for war. The surrealists also gesture to war in Duchamp’s display by playing recorded German marching songs in tandem with hysterical cries. Next, treatment of the body is contrasted between fetishized surrealist mannequins and highly popular performances by belly dancers at the World Fair. Next, the 1938 vernissage dance performance by Hélène Vanel, *L’Acte Manqué*, will also be contrasted with these exotic dancing spectacles. Subsequently, I turn to the domestic space: surrealist furniture such as Kurt Seligmann’s *Ultrameuble* and Breton’s *Object-Chest* are contrasted with the 1889 pavilion *L’Histoire de L’Habitation*, of which the latter emphasises an historical development of non-western civilisations. Ultimately, the Surrealist Exhibition strives to subvert this very taxonomic universe by recreating diverse facets in their own guise. The political teleology of surrealism and the *Expositions Universelles* could not be more different but their techniques of engagement are remarkably similar. Historically speaking, a fight between cosmopolitanism and nationalism dominates the fin de siècle through to the eve of World War Two, the period which these two exhibitions demarcate.

## 2 Exhibition Design and Contrasting Cityscapes

Both the 1889 *Exposition Universelle* and the 1938 International Surrealist Exhibition erect displays that supersede the traditionally neutral space of the art gallery or museum. Installations and architecture overwhelm individual artworks. Arguably, the most immersive installation of the Surrealist Exhibition was Marcel Duchamp’s 1200 coal sacks. Protruding from the ceiling, a sense of claustrophobia ensconced the viewer in a nightmarish industrial underbelly. Parisian

elites were thrust into a coal mine-cum-war-time underground bunker, viewing artworks by torchlight as the sacks blocked pre-existing sources of luminosity. According to Chapman (2009,72) “The very real risk of explosion and flammability added to the heightened sense of spatial disorientation”. Coal is perhaps the iconographical reference *par excellence* for the industrial revolution which reached its apogee in the 19th century. Yet, such iconography is completely absent from the 1889 World Fair. Instead, the aesthetically clean, diaphanous by products of coal such as electricity and steam are foregrounded. The apotheosis of industrial advancement at the *Exposition Universelle* resides in the construction of the *Palais des Machines* envisioned by Ferdinand Duterte (fig. 2). Continuing the trope of transparency, the *Palais* was constructed from iron and glass, designed to showcase industrial progress as portending to peace among nations. The *Palais* was also built at a time of economic growth encapsulated by its grandiosity, the “largest wide-spanned iron framed structure ever built” (Stamper,1989). Conversely, the Surrealists exhibit their art at a time of international turmoil catalysed by the rise of fascism, unaided by an erstwhile government in France. Accompanying Duchamp’s darkened installation was the smell of Brazilian coffee, cries of sojourners in a psychiatric ward and the ominous sound of German marching band songs. The *Palais* had no less of an immersive effect upon visitors, albeit much more ontologically positivist. Spectators were greeted with a “flood of light” (1989) eschewing the traditionally hermetic exhibition space, hence conveying an interstitial zone between representation and the world at large. Furthermore, visitors were able to interact with the machinery on display with frequent demonstrations. Equipment for generating electricity was particularly prominent and travelling walkways dubbed ‘Ponts Roulants’ enabled visitors to navigate the buildings labyrinthine expanse. A viewing tower was erected in the middle of the *Palais* in order to grant a panoramic panopticon of this extraordinary totality, gesturing towards a synthesizing of reality.

Whilst the spaces of the *Exposition Universelle* were clearly delineated, Duchamp’s section boasts an intermixing of different disciplinary paradigms. Here, fine art and coal coexist without contradiction whereas the *beaux-arts* were taxonomically segregated in the 1889 exposition. It was through architecture that these two disparate worlds would collide, the *Palais* simultane-



Figure 1. Anonymous, *Visitors with Flashlights at the Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme*. Paris, 1938



Figure 2. *Vue d'ensemble de la Galerie des Machines*. M. Glücq, *L'Album de l'Exposition 1889*, vol. 1. Paris: Ch. Gaulon, 1889

ously inspired by Gothic architecture and Classical Greek interiors. Indeed, Stuart Durant notes of the gothic inflections behind the *Palais* allow architects to “defer to science” (1994, 26). The Gothic was also an internationally recognisable style that had propagated across Europe from the northern countries. Duterte’s wrought iron functionality contrasts strongly with a lavishly decorated interior inspired by antiquity with a resoundingly dramatic cupula. This eclectic style was perhaps intended to traverse social class as much as to invoke cosmopolitanism. By commingling two traditional exposition environments, Duchamp also questions traditional boundaries of taste. André Breton commented that he wanted to create “an atmosphere as remote as possible from that of an art gallery” in 1938 (Mahon 2005, 32). Similarly, Silverman (1977) views the 1889 exhibition as torn between “a solemn *musée* or a fantastic, bustling *foire*”. Indeed, both exhibitions incite a sense of performativity in their display spaces and negate curatorial neutrality.

In 1889 the overwhelming narrative stemming from the *Palais* was technological progress over belligerence. Innovations from countries other than France took up a quarter of the *Palais* in ersatz diplomatic spirit. However, glass had pioneering connotations in terms of social class as Elkadi notes it hosts “no relation to wealth” (2016, 9). Furthermore, the semantic connota-

tions of the word *palais* are transformed from the exclusive domain of the aristocracy to that of the citizenry. In stark contrast, the surrealists adopt a more pessimistic view and seem prepared for war. An element of class-based social commentary does seem present in Duchamp’s installation, a proletarian environment containing aristocratic pleasures. The surrealists make their inevitably elitist audience as uncomfortable as possible, the coal sacks (fig. 1) nearly touching their heads. The surrealists further parodied their own audience through Dali’s *Rainy Taxi* wherein lies a sodden, dishevelled mannequin dubbed ‘Madame Snob’. Yet, instead of trying to appeal to the working class, the principal surrealist prerogative seems to be to alienate the cultural elite, which inevitably were a rather cosmopolitan coterie.

Despite contentions of inspiring peace amongst nations, some of the most popular exhibits in the *Palais* were those that inferred the opposite. Durant notes that in 1889 “prominent displays of heavy artillery by armament manufacturers drew large crowds of visitors” (1994, 13). Indeed another section, the *Exposition Militaire*, was designed to reaffirm France’s military prowess in the wake of its defeat in the Franco-Prussian war of the 1870. The tagline “Cent Ans de l’Armée Française” clearly invokes the French revolution and republican spirit (fig. 3). Counterpoised

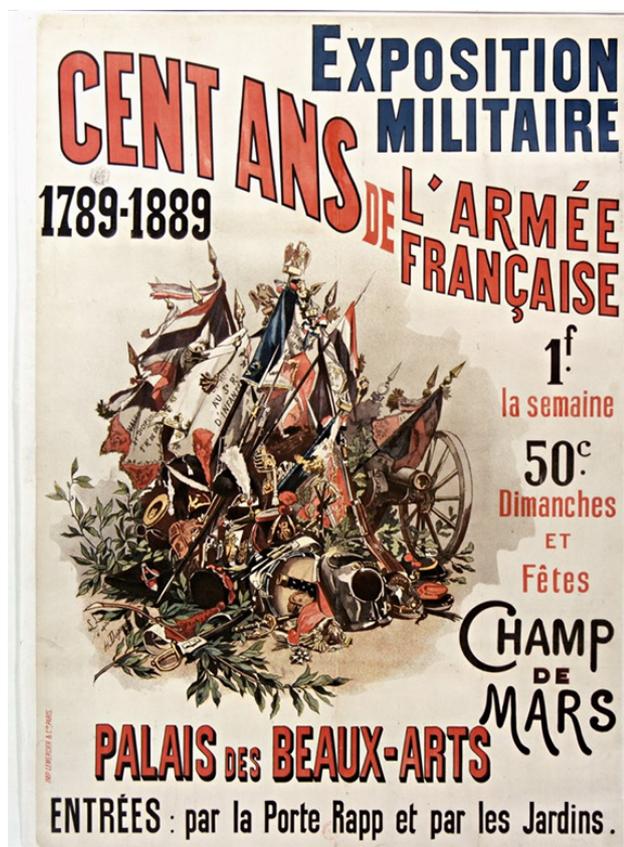


Figure 3. Poster for *L'Exposition Militaire*, 1889. Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de La France

to untrammelled patriotism, cosmopolitan surrealist artworks were displayed in Duchamp's space. Decalcomania was particularly prevalent at the Surrealist Exhibition. Invented by Oscar Dominguez, the artist would spread gouache onto glass before subsequently printing it onto the canvas. The abstract shapes would often invoke chaos resembling explosions and foreshadow the detonation of the atomic bomb (fig. 4). Duchamp's sacks also spewed dust onto the visitors, creating a sense of a society already *in media res* of armed conflict. Ultimately, the surrealists are ahead of their epoch by configuring the devastating sequelae of bombardment. Conversely, the *Exposition Universelle* deals with war from a distance, creating categories as armed conflict itself were part of history. The *Exposition Militaire* delineated between the armoury of modern conflict and weapons of the past. Industrial advances were portrayed as something that would enable military success, advancing battlefield technology. Naturally, no mention of the mass devastation these devices could cause was narrated. In 1889 with a relatively stable French government, war was



Figure 4. Oscar Dominguez, *Untitled*, 1936. Decalcomania (© ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2016)

a merely conceptual state of affairs which led to public fascination. The two exhibitions propose strikingly different ontologies of combat: we are confronted with a patriotic display of progress versus a cosmopolitan plea to perpetual peace in the midst of a nationalist epidemic.

### 3 The Body Politic: The *Danse du Ventre* and the *Danse Hystérique*

Another thematic tie between the 1889 *Exposition Universelle* and the 1938 Surrealists Exhibition is the corporeal realm. The surrealists select dancer Hélène Vanel to perform at the 1938 vernissage attended by the Parisian elite. This choice is significant given the propagation of the belly dance at the world fairs and the surrealist reputation for exoticism. In 1889 "the number of spectators who came to watch the Egyptian belly dancers averaged two thousand per day" (Celik, Kinney 1990). This engendered a cosmopolitan sense of "virtual travel" (Szerszynski, Urry 2006). Remaining in Paris, one is visually



Figure 5. Anonymous, *Interior view of the Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme with Hélène Vanel*, 1938. Paris: Galerie des Beaux Arts



Figure 6. *La Rue du Caire*. M. Glücq. *L'album de l'Exposition 1889*, vol. 1. Paris: Ch. Gaulon, 1889

transported to the Orient. The *danse du ventre* is designed to seduce and mystify the audience. In stark contrast, Vanel's dance is a highly modernist European manifestation of hysteria. The dance is thoroughly contemporaneous, a stark contrast to the *danse du ventre* which typified "the inert and timeless status of the dominated entity" (Celik, Kinney 1990). In fact, Egypt, an Islamic country, had tried to curb this traditional practice as it predated Islam. The Egyptian government even attempted "to counteract the promotion of the belly dance in French painting and travel literature" (1990). Consequently, the World Fair of 1889 did not depict the actuality of Egypt as a semi-autonomous Islamic republic but as a chimerical harem (fig. 6). Although her torso is nude and her dress torn (fig. 5), the surrealists do not ascribe an erotic value to Vanel's dance whilst the *danse du ventre* conflates the orient with the exotic. Indeed, Edmond de Goncourt's recollections of the 1889 exposition reveal that he "treat the Rue de Caire virtually as a red-light district" (1990), conflating performance with sexual transgression. Whilst the surrealist mannequins could be said to have similar connotations, situated as they are on different 'rues', Vanel's dance is too imbricated in politics to be viewed as such.

In the above photograph of Vanel, her nude torso mirrors a mannequin placed at the right side of her bed. Many political connotations to this

photograph go unnoticed. Appallingly, Vanel was ultimately murdered in Auschwitz by the Nazi regime. Her dance assumes the form of an erotic, corporeal protest against fascism. Here, dance is not a form of entertainment but a conceptual social commentary. Indeed, her performance was commented on by an Austrian Nazi Newspaper whereby it was sardonically dismissed as "an only too-realistic impression of a hysterical fit" (LaCoss 2006) which, in turn, perversely conveys the global reach of the Surrealist Exhibition. Lacoss comments that at the time of Vanel's performance "lawless flesh and undisciplined minds were being harshly policed throughout the Northern hemisphere". Indeed, even the Nazis had kept up to date with surrealist happenings. Furthermore, Lacoss (2006) states "in one sense, hers was a hysteria that challenged the other forms of hysteria that were convulsing Europe and the Soviet Union in the late 1930s". In stark contrast to this political analysis of a surrealist dancer, Annagret Fauser (2005, 221) laments the academic treatment of the belly dancers at the *Exposition Universelle* of 1889 as "extras". Yet, the body is a prime site of political praxis. Due to the *Rue de Caire's* appeal to veracity or "vérité scrupuleuse" (Bourde 1889, 77) analysis beyond the limits of western mediation is scarce. The significance of this dance to its indigenous culture has evaded research.



Figure 7. *Salambo*, 1900. Postcard. Palais du Costume, Project Felix, La Samaritaine. Paris: Imprimerie Lemercier

Figure 8. Anonymous, *Vue de l'Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme*, 1938. La «Rue surréaliste»

The belly dancers, like Vanel, would enact movements of convulsion as part of religious rituals. The official revue of the exhibition describes Egyptian women as “captives ennuyées” (Bourde 1889, 74), labelling the dance as hysterical release much like Vanel. The conflation of indigenous rituals and madness carries forward into Freud’s premise for *Totem and Taboo* (1913), who visited the *Expositions Universelles* from 1878 onwards, rather unimpressed. Perhaps his racist theory was partially to blame for contemporary attitudes towards indigenous ceremony. Despite Freud’s influence upon the Surrealists, exoticism connotes freedom from the nation state, not madness for these artists. Conversely, Waller describes the *danse du ventre* as “fundamental to the formation and maintenance of colonialist discourses” (2015, 141). Indeed, alterity propagated a sense of distance between spectator and performer. The *danse du ventre* was a highly politicised entity. Yet, this spectacle was confined to a stage whilst Vanel would touch spectators, even “splattering and soaking the unsuspecting by-

standers” with water from an artificial pond created by Wolfgang Paalen (Lehmann 2014), which belied any distancing. She mingled throughout the audience whereas belly dancers performed in ‘café-concerts’, dance becoming a commodity fetish to induce sales. Furthermore, dance anthropologist Anne Decoret-Ahia (2004, 28) notes “*la danse du ventre*, cette dénomination proprement occidentale, forgé par la soldatesque coloniale, induisait l’idée d’une essence chorégraphique commune à tout l’orient et à tous les femmes orientales”. Indeed, Decoret-Ahia recognises the multiple different varieties of belly dancing that fail to be noticed and nuanced by contemporaneous commentators. Whilst Vanel’s dance is inherently political, the *danse du ventre*, primarily a spiritual expression, is politicised for colonial gain.

#### 4 Mannequins and Automatism

Notably, the *Exposition Universelle* predominantly used live performers whilst the surrealists embellished mannequins. Lehmann (2014) comments that the Surrealist Exhibition was “one of the most evident precursors to performance art”. Yet, wasn’t this performative trope already present at the *Exposition Universelle*? Live performance was not confined to the *Rue de Caire*, there were Senegalese villages, Javanese dancers and a street resembling Algiers. That said, Mannequins did feature at the 1889 and 1900 *Expositions Universelles*. Saroli (2004, 25) comments: “in a note in *Das Passagenwerk* Benjamin states that during the 1900 *Exposition Universelle* there was a *Palais du Costume*, where wax dolls wearing the clothes of populations from all over the world and from different ages, moved in front of artificial backdrops”. Even clothes are signifiers of nationhood, categorized accordingly. In stark contrast, accoutrements of the surrealist mannequins served to complicate identity. Marcel Duchamp’s mannequin is dressed in an androgynous style with the artist’s own attire. Masson’s mannequin, dubbed the ‘Femme Maison’, also parodies gender stereotypes. The model’s head is trapped in a house whilst hair explicitly marks the taboo of genitalia, something unsurprisingly missing from the *Exposition Universelle*. The surrealist mannequin creates “a caricature” (Nixon 1999, 65) of woman’s status in society, something that the performers at the exposition were accustomed to, viewed as ephemeral fetish. Whilst the mannequins at the *Palais du Costume* were designed to provoke alterity in terms of dress and accessories, the surrealist mannequin serves to create a distancing from eroticism; it is merely spectacle. Unlike the 1889 exhibition, where colonies had their own area, the *Palais du Costume* induced comparisons between western and non-western attire. Clothing became a synecdoche for civilized and primitive peoples, the wealth of the west embroidered into lavish renaissance frocks. The mannequin of *Salammbô*, a fictional tale by Flaubert set in Carthage, shows that oriental costume was literally a figment of the organizers’ imagination. Yet, an appeal to verisimilitude is still rather comically asserted by the exposition (fig. 7).

Another technological advancement in the 1900 Fair was a moving mannequin, a dystopian version of surrealist automatism. For André Breton the mannequin is a symbol of the marvelous, as he states in the surrealist manifesto of 1924. Invented by Pierre Imans, the 1900 auto-

matic mannequin through “An invisible mechanism allowed her to move her head and eyes, fan herself and powder her nose” (Parrot 1983, 44). And yet, despite technological advances, woman is confined to standardized feminine tasks. The surrealist mannequins visualize reprehensible acts of violence committed towards women that would otherwise remain ineffable (fig. 8). As Richard Martin (1987) puts it “the object could be the surrogate of the figure, and it could be the powerful expression of all that is unseen and/or unexpressed in a given image”. Indeed, the *Palais du Costume*, by using artificial mannequins, did not have to stay as ‘authentic’ to history as it attempts to do in other exhibits, using live performers. The mannequin represents in both exhibitions a site predicated on imaginative whimsy, eschewing the realms of historical accuracy. Pierre Imans’ automatic mannequin appears as the apotheosis of testosterone-driven fantasy; an ability to literally control the movement of the opposite sex. In stark contrast, the surrealists did feature one mannequin designed by a female artist, Sonia Mosse. Mosse’s mannequin, quasi-nude, appears to be wearing a funeral veil in place of a wedding veil for the consummation of a marriage, implying that the institution signifies literal bondage. Similar associations of the female mannequin and automatism ensue. Mosse’s mannequin is decorated with “wires connected to an extension” (Kachur 2001, 45). This implies, much like Imans’ mannequin, that woman is viewed by society as mere automata powered by electricity, that one can turn off and on again at whim.

#### 5 Domestic Space

The *Exposition Universelle* of 1889 presents the genesis of domestic space through three tropes; prehistoric housing, historic housing and primitive contemporaries. Thus, non-western societies are semantically equated with prehistory. Bouvier (2005) comments that for the creator, Garnier, “L’habitation peut être considérée comme un miroir qui montre, fidèlement, la physionomie de l’habitant”. Racial stereotyping was not confined to the corporeal. In total 44 houses were built along the Quai d’Orsay, each expressing a nationality, whilst postcards contrasted a country’s architecture with an inhabitants’ clothing (fig. 9). A sense of timelessness is created as the third category of houses is dubbed the “civilisations contemporaines des civilisations primitives”

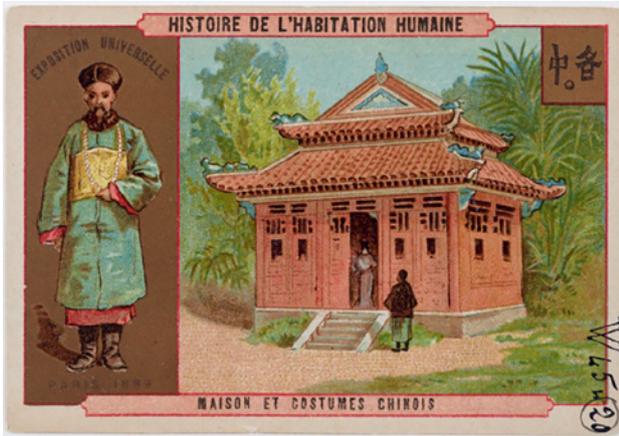


Figure 9. *Histoire de l'habitation humaine, Maison et costumes chinois*. Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1889. Vingt-cinq vignettes scolaires représentant l'histoire de l'habitation humaine. Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France.



Figure 10. Anonymous, *View of André Breton's Object Chest at the Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme*. Paris: Galerie des Beaux Arts, 1938

(Frantz, Garnier 1890, 17). Similarly to the Surrealist Exhibition's pond, a lake features prominently as Garnier views "les cités lacustres tiennent, selon lui, une grande place dans l'histoire du développement de l'humanité et anticipent d'une certaine façon sur la société industrielle" (Bouvier 2005). Naturally, this is portrayed as a western innovation from the Bronze Age. Indeed, a lake invokes vastness, strategic town building and an abundant food source. In stark contrast, the surrealists only create a pond (indoors) which symbolizes stasis, stagnation, interiority in an enclosed space.

Reviews of the 1889 exhibition tend to make derogatory social commentary rather than focus on architectural details. Indeed, the goal appears to be to imitate all indigenous peoples: Inuits and Africans produce the same types of buildings. Private property is equated respectively with intelligence: "la chaleur de l'Afrique orientale amènent des résultats identiques avec ceux qui le froid produisent au pôle nord. L'un et l'autre s'engourdisent et ankylosent les facultés intellectuelles de l'homme" (Frantz, Garnier 1890, 18). The house is viewed as an extension of man in a highly racist manner. Moreover, house building is equated with the capabilities of creation accorded to us by God. Garnier also com-

ments: "dans un élan de viril orgueil comme dieu il veut faire œuvre de créateur", by proxy implying that Europeans had greater creative prowess when in fact architecture was simply adapted to one's environment in a purely utilitarian manner in all cases. Western man enjoys a 'période historique', whilst the oriental simply doesn't follow 'man's' passage of time. Time and chronology are henceforth defined in a purely western sense.

In stark contrast, Dali creates an "antique style bed with rumpled sheets" (Downing 2011, 274). Naturally this accompanies the mannequins' libidinous connotations. Kurt Seligmann fashions an *Ultrameuble*, supported by three woman's legs and two arms ensconced in a cage. This deprives furniture of its use-value, yet is fashioned in 19th century art nouveau style. Indeed, Pass (2011, 308) comments that "Throughout the second half of the 1930s, nostalgia was becoming increasingly important to visual culture in the United States and Western Europe, particularly in fashion. This nostalgia, which was the result of the impending war, was a longing for an imagined idea of the 19th century". Indeed, surrealist furniture aesthetically appears as a nostalgic parody of the world fairs grandiosity amidst contemporary political turmoil. The surrealists focused on creating "objects of symbolic function", to use

Dali's terminology. It would seem that the colonialist *Exposition Universelle* also cast a symbolic decorative function onto the home. This trope is used to incite racial difference when in fact non-western homes designs were largely empirical in use-value. Perhaps surrealist furniture can be criticised for its lack of use-value necessitated by design. Indeed, André Breton's Object Chest is flippantly supported by two sets of mannequin's legs (fig. 10). Paradoxically, this seems to tie into Garnier's belief that the house is an extension of man's physiognomy, mere interior furniture belongs to the female gender. By elaborating a synecdoche, the surrealists convert racialized physiognomy into erotic fetish. In other words, racism becomes sexism as one type of discrimination is substituted for another.

## 6 Conclusion

In conclusion, I have identified several points of convergence between the 1938 international Surrealist Exhibition and the fin de siècle Parisian world fairs. Both attempt to reach diverse social strata but the ontological positivity and copious technological exhibits of the *Expositions Universelles* garnered a far greater plebiscite. An aesthetic mix of industrial scenography and *beaux-arts* pervades both cityscapes. The *rayonnement* of French culture reaches its apotheosis in the theatrically illuminated Eiffel tower of 1889. Conversely, the surrealists portray an ontological abyss in the darkness of their underground bunker. War is a mere concept in the fin de siècle, musealised as nostalgia dating back to the French Revolution. In stark contrast, war becomes an immersive omen that pervades the Surrealist Exhibition of 1938. The body is also a battleground at the *Exposition Universelle*, where the oriental dancer is defeated by the homogenising colonial gaze, choreography reduced to a repetitive synecdoche of culture. In surrealist dance, the psyche is bullet-ridden, unable to cope with the hysteria of the world outside. Whilst world fairs constantly appeal to verisimilitude, nascent pre-surrealist features abound. Clothing exhibitions incorporated mythical oriental personae as mannequins, belittling verisimilitude. The homestead is a staple of the two exhibitions. In both cases, the home is simply an extension of the corporeal realm. The surrealist home is erotic whilst the *Exposition Universelle* racially segregates the 'primitive' into a different time zone. Interestingly, the surrealists were banned from exhibit-

ing at the world fair entitled *Exposition des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne* of 1937. Mahon (2005, 31) comments "the surrealists were not given any space in the exhibition, not even in the French pavilion". Their work evades taxonomy, a possible catalyst for parodying the world fairs legacy. Prominent discourses of colonialism, war and the body resonate between both exhibitions to create a *mise-en-abyme* of life as spectacle. Ultimately, the ideological fight between cosmopolitanism and nationalism is what merits contrasting these exhibitions in an inter-epochal context. The legacy of the fin de siècle world fairs continued far well into the 20th century as did poisonous nationalist rhetoric.

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