

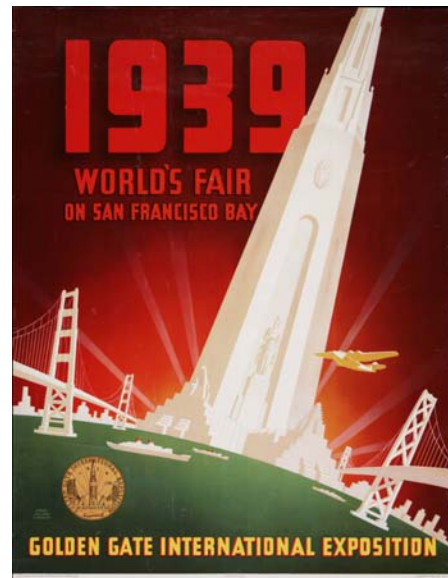
*News Release*  
*January 5, 2007*

## ***The World's Fair Comes to New Haven***

The Chicago World's Columbian Exhibition of 1893, to quote Erik Larson, author of *The Devil in the White City*, was a "Fair That Changed America." That event and others, from the London exposition of 1851 in the Crystal Palace through the 1939 World's Fairs on New York's Flushing Meadows and San Francisco's Treasure Island, are among dozens of momentous international expositions featured in the new Beinecke Library exhibition, *World's Fairs and the Landscapes of the Modern Metropolis*, on view from January 16 until the end of March.

The exhibition, based on a major World's Fair collection recently purchased by the Library, includes posters, photographs, pamphlets, commemorative books, maps, government reports, and a rich array of colorful vintage ephemera covering a century of world expositions.

Exhibition gallery hours are Monday through Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.; Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; and Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



To mark the opening of the exhibition, Alfred Heller will present introductory remarks on January 19 at 5:15 at the library. The author of *World's Fairs and the End of Progress* (1999) and editor of *World's Fair* magazine, Mr. Heller originally formed the collection now at the Beinecke Library. The Beinecke Library is located centrally on the Yale campus at 121 Wall Street. The exhibition and Alfred Heller's remarks on January 19 are free and open to the public. Meet us in New Haven for a historical World's Fairs tour!



Beguiling in and of themselves, the World's Fair posters and other memorabilia on view at the Beinecke Library tell a deeper story. The exhibition shows how the fairs influenced and intersected with modern architecture, transforming urban landscapes and stimulating progress in city planning and transportation.

Sculpting with color and light, with glass and steel and reinforced concrete, the World's Fairs of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries transformed the emerging metropolitan landscapes of Europe and America into dream cities, fantasies, scenes from *A Thousand-and-One Nights*. The exhibition charts this transformative process that marks the contours of our cityscapes to this day. Glass houses and towers, the use of color and light as architectonic elements, the dialogue between Europe and America, and the political dimensions of the fairs are among the highlights. Paris serves as a particularly illustrative example of a European metropolis forever changed by its fairs. Not only the Eiffel Tower, but such familiar features of the Parisian landscape as the stone embankments of

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the Seine, central bridges and railway stations, major boulevards, and metro stations can all be traced to the fairs of the nineteenth century.

From their birth in the Industrial and French Revolutions, the small technical exhibitions that evolved into the mass spectacle of the World's Fair played an integral part in the economic and political realities of the modern world. Sparse catalogs and lists of local manufacturers quickly grew into detailed surveys of regional, national, and international development. Intricate administrative networks emerged to organize the fairs, producing the first comprehensive mapping of industrial societies in weighty government reports.

By the mid-nineteenth century, railway lines and steamships were conveying crowds of spectators from all classes to the exhibitions, driving their rapid expansion. The growing size and changing complexion of the fairs posed other challenges as well: the need for architectural spaces suited for the

effective presentation of visual information; for effective systems of traffic flow and crowd control; for infrastructure capable of providing water, power, and sanitation on unheard-of scales. The technical challenges of putting on a World's Fair both anticipated and mirrored those faced in building modern cities, and it should come as no surprise that the history of the fairs is thoroughly intertwined with the emergence of contemporary city planning.

Seeking to entertain as well as to instruct, organizers and exhibitors produced masses of promotional material—guide books, commemorative albums, postcards, posters, and peepshows—which added significantly to the enormous mountain of paper left behind by the fairs and document in increasingly colorful fashion the hopes, fears, and obsessive fascinations that accompanied the rise of modern consumer culture. A vivid cross-section of this material is on display at the Beinecke.

#### ☞ Highlights:

- Daniel Burnham's "White City" and the Chicago World Exhibition of 1893
- The Eiffel Tower in construction
- The first moving sidewalks
- Thomas Alva Edison's triumph in the "City of Light"
- A "Trip to the Moon" at the Buffalo Pan-American Exhibition of 1901
- The building of three palaces in downtown Paris
- "Rome on the Sea" and the ill-starred World's Fair of 1942

☞ *For more information, please contact:*

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