



EXHIBITION

The invention of the savage

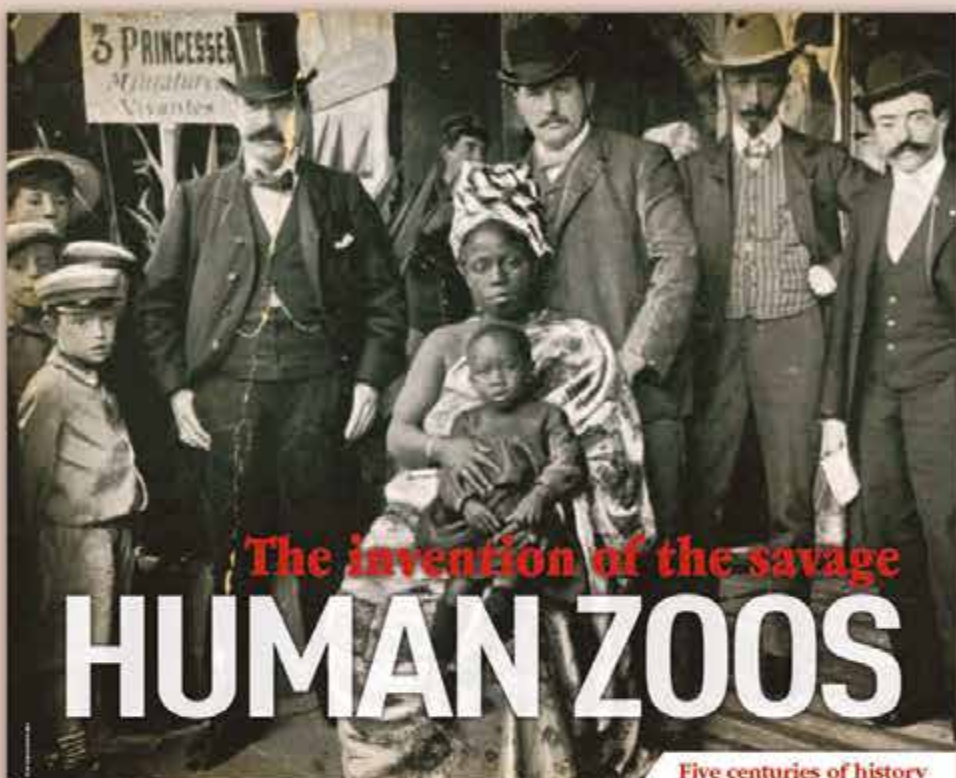
HUMAN ZOOS

Five centuries of history

HUMAN ZOOS

THE INVENTION OF THE SAVAGE

This exhibition tells the story of women, men and children from Asia, Africa, Oceania, the Americas and in some cases from Europe who were displayed in the West and elsewhere at universal and colonial exhibitions and fairs, in circuses, cabarets, and zoos, as well as in traveling “exotic” villages. For almost five centuries (1490-1960) these people were exhibited as “savages” in Europe, the United States and Japan. The shows were impressive “spectacles”, theatricalizations, with performers, stage sets, impresarios and riveting storylines. However, colonial and scientific history, the history of race, the history of entertainment, of world fairs and universal exhibitions has been somewhat overlooked... Western promoters actively recruited troupes, families or performers from all over the world, at times coercively, but usually by offering contracts. These large-scale exhibitions of human beings were specific to the West and to colonial powers and served to reaffirm a hierarchy between people according to skin color, the legacy of which can still be felt today.



The invention of the savage

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Photo: Royal Dutch Shell/ Getty Images

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International Exhibition of London (1851) at the Crystal Palace, London, 1851.



Indian troupe and family, 1878, Exposition Universelle, Paris (reproduction by Getty Images)



The Reception of "Woman of the Day" (Pauline Baker) at the Exposition Universelle, 1904



Exhibition of Human Races, 1904, Exposition Universelle, Paris



The Human Races, 1904, Exposition Universelle, Paris



Black & white reproduction of a photograph of a family, 1904



One billion four hundred million visitors...

For over three centuries (from the first Great Exhibition in 1851 to the World War II in 1939), the exhibitions attracted over one billion human visitors (men, women and children) to see the "savages" and to see the "exotic" and to see the "strange" and to see the "other". The exhibitions were a place where people could see the "other" and to see the "strange" and to see the "other". The exhibitions were a place where people could see the "other" and to see the "strange" and to see the "other".



The Exhibition of Arabism, 1904, Exposition Universelle, Paris

“The concept of the ‘human zoo’, in the broadest sense of the term, serves to describe the transition from an exclusively scientific racism to its more widespread and popular form.”

Le Monde diplomatique (2000)



The Exhibition of Arabism, 1904, Exposition Universelle, Paris



The exhibition was organized by the British Museum (London) and the Ethnographic Museum (Paris) and was held in the Crystal Palace (London) in 1851. The exhibition was held in the Crystal Palace (London) in 1851. The exhibition was held in the Crystal Palace (London) in 1851. The exhibition was held in the Crystal Palace (London) in 1851.

FIRST CONTACTS, FIRST EXHIBITS

Knowledge about the world changed dramatically around 1492 when Europe discovered the figure of the “savage” in the guise of the Amerindian. Christopher Columbus returned from one of his earliest expeditions and presented six Amerindians to the Spanish royal court, thereby triggering widespread fascination for everything that was considered remote. In 1528, Hernán Cortés exhibited Aztec performers at the court of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. In 1550, a royal procession in Rouen before the French King Henry II featured Tupinamba Indians from Brazil. It was at this time that the *Valladolid debate* took place concerning the treatment of natives from the New World. Hierarchies based on skin color became commonplace and the transatlantic slave trade would later impact millions of Africans. “Monsters” such as Antonietta Gonsalvus (who suffered from Hypertrichosis, a condition characterized by excessive hair growth) were also exhibited, just like her father Petrus had been when he was offered at age ten to King Henry II. Alongside these humans, exotica displayed in cabinets of curiosities were also coveted by monarchs and aristocrats throughout the sixteenth century. In 1654, three female and one male Eskimo, abducted in Greenland, were exhibited in Denmark (where they would die five years later) and introduced to King Frederick III, thereby reinvigorating a newfound “passion for exotica”. A clash between two types would emerge during the following century, that of the “noble savage” and the “bloodthirsty savage”, curiosity for human exhibits displayed in taverns and at fairs continued to grow, and by the end of the eighteenth century to capture the attention of learned scientists. By this time, some “human specimens” had achieved celebrity status, such as the Polynesian Aotourouv who was brought to Paris in 1769 to meet King Louis XV. A similar fate awaited the Polynesian Omaï in London 1774. The entertainment and scientific world thus intersected, and the nineteenth century would gradually yield a hierarchized view of these questions. The increasing popularity and prevalence of “ethnic shows” thus played an important role in disseminating these views.



From 1492 to the Enlightenment

FIRST CONTACTS, FIRST EXHIBITS



Illustration of the harbor of Barcelona, Spain, 1492

Knowledge about the world changed dramatically around 1492 when Europe discovered the figure of the "savage" in the guise of the Amerindian. Christopher Columbus returned from one of his earliest expeditions and presented six Amerindians to the Spanish royal court, thereby triggering widespread fascination for everything that was considered remote. In 1520, Hernán Cortés exhibited Aztec performers at the court of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in 1520, a royal procession in Mexico before the French King Henry II featured Tupac Katari Indians from Brazil. It was at this time that the Galápagos debate took place concerning the treatment of Indians from the New World. Hunters based on skin color became administrators and the transatlantic slave trade would later impact millions of Africans. "Mestizo" such as Antonietto Gusmano (who suffered from nigro-leucism, a condition characterized by excessive hair growth) were also exhibited, just like her father Pálmar had been when he was offered as a gift to King Henry II. Anecdotes about humans, customs displayed in cabinets of curiosities were also created by Europeans and aristocrats throughout the sixteenth century. In 1554, three female and one male Eskimo, abducted in Greenland, were exhibited in Denmark's Isbena before they would die five years later and introduced to King Frederick II, thereby reintegrating a new kind of "savage spectacle." A clash between two types would emerge during the following century, that of the "noble savage" and the "bestiality savage", courtesy for "human exhibits" displayed in towns and at fairs continued to grow, and by the end of the eighteenth century to capture the attention of learned scientists. By this time, some "human specimens" had achieved celebrity status, such as the Polynesian Ananoo who was brought to Paris in 1774 to meet King Louis XV. A similar fate awaited the Polynesian Omai in London 1776. The entertainment and scientific world thus intertwined, and the nineteenth century would gradually shed a hierarchical view of these specimens. The increasing popularity and presence of "savage shows" thus played an important role in disseminating these ideas.



Mannequins of indigenous costumes at the Musée de l'Homme, Paris



Illustration of the face of a Polynesian Omai, 1776



Portrait of a young child, 1776

The Polynesian Omai (1774-1776)

In 1774, a young Polynesian nobleman named Omai arrived in Great Britain for a year-long diplomatic mission with Captain Cook. He was received with great interest and curiosity, and he became a sensation in London. He was exhibited at the Royal Society and the Royal Academy of Arts, and he was the subject of many paintings and plays. He was also a popular performer in the theaters, and he was the subject of many songs and poems. He was the first Polynesian to visit Europe, and his visit was a landmark event in the history of Polynesian-European relations.



Models of anatomy, 1776



Illustration of a Polynesian Omai, 1776

“From the Renaissance and the conquest of the Americas on, racism is to be found everywhere. In the colonized regions of the world, it serves to discredit the majority, whereas among the colonizers, it marginalizes minorities.”

Edouard Glissant (2005)

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NEW KINDS OF EXHIBITIONS

During a forty year period that stretched from 1800 to 1840, in both the United States (New York) and in Europe (Paris and London), exhibitions underwent significant transformations, evolving from curiosities reserved for a societal elite toward a popular form of entertainment. “Exotic” exhibitions in Paris and London of Hottentots between 1810 and 1820, of Indians in 1817, Laplanders in 1822 or Eskimos in 1824 point to the scale of the phenomenon. European curiosity for the exotic became more varied, and in 1827 spectators were able to gaze admiringly upon Zarafa, the giraffe given to Charles X by the Ottoman Viceroy of Egypt. The same year, four warriors and two female Osage Indians came to Paris and were welcomed by Charles X, only to die shortly thereafter while in Europe. However, it was Saartjie Baartman, the famous **Hottentot Venus**, that was to have the most lasting impact on this transitional period. After having been exhibited in London and Paris (1810-1815) where she attracted vast audiences eager to observe her « anomalies » (known as *steatopygia* - enlarged buttocks and thighs, as well as elongated labia), her body became an object of scientific study. London was at the time the European capital of “human zoos”, hosting exhibits of Fuegians in 1829, Guyanese in 1839, and Bushmen in 1847 on the eve of the inaugural Universal Exhibition of 1851. These events coincided with the American painter **George Catlin’s** attempts at popularizing the figure of the Native American throughout Europe. In the United States, Indian “shows” and “freak” shows (that featured “monsters”) proliferated, before spreading to Europe. This was also the era when the famous showman Phineas Taylor Barnum began his long career with the African-American slave Joice Heth (whom he exhibited), before setting up his American Museum in New York city in which Siamese twins, bearded ladies, “skeleton man”, and other “exotic savages” from around the world were displayed over the years. From what had initially been restricted to a handful of exhibited individuals, one witnessed the emergence in less than a generation of a popular and lucrative industry with its organized troupes, choreographed and staged productions, elaborate costumes, impresarios, contracts, recruitment agents...



The early nineteenth century

Illustration: P. Bouché & Bouché, France, c. 1820-30. Musée de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France.

NEW KINDS OF EXHIBITIONS



The illustration shows a performance of the 'Moulin à Vent' at the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris, 1820.

The Hotentot Venus (1810)

In 1810, the African slave woman Sarah Baartman was exhibited in the Museum of Natural History, London. She was the first African woman to be exhibited in Europe. Her body was displayed as a 'freak' and she was treated as a curiosity. She was exhibited in London from 1810 to 1815, and then in other parts of Europe. Her body was eventually buried in an unmarked grave in 1825.

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The illustration shows a performance of the 'Moulin à Vent' at the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris, 1820.



Illustration: Hippodrome Les Vrais Chinois, 1820.



From the illustration of the interior of the Museum of Natural History in London, 1810.



George Catlin

In 1819, the American painter George Catlin began his travels in the United States, where he painted and collected ethnographic information. He traveled to the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains, where he painted and collected ethnographic information. He traveled to the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains, where he painted and collected ethnographic information.



George Catlin, 'The Indians of the Great Plains', 1820.



The illustration shows a performance of the 'Moulin à Vent' at the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris, 1820.

“Today [thanks to these exhibitions], we no longer need to brave the high seas or contend with the dangers over land in order to learn about about the variety of human races.”

Illustrated Magazine of Art (1853)

SCIENCE AND THE INVENTION OF “RACE”

During the eighteenth century, scientific theories focused predominantly on the cultural and physical characteristics of different populations. But in the nineteenth century, this attention shifted toward the invention of “races”: American Indians, Africans, Asians, Europeans, and so on... The work of the Englishman Edward Tyson (1650-1703), who studied resemblances between men and apes, was a precursor to this new approach. Later, in his *Natural History of Mankind*, Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon (1707-1788) placed Man at the very center of the animal kingdom. The great scientific contribution of the Swede Carl Linnaeus was to establish a hierarchical classification that made it possible to divide mankind into four “varieties” (1758). From these studies, conclusions pertaining to the intellectual and moral aptitude of different populations were reached on the basis of cranial measurements or skin color. In 1795, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach would be the first natural scientist to actually classify the human species according to “race”. That same year, Georges Cuvier (1769-1832) and Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (1772-1844) would claim that facial structure determined cerebral development. Categorization followed, based on skin color and certain physical traits, yielding a discourse that would furnish the “scientific” justification for slavery and colonialism. At the mid-point of the nineteenth century, Charles Darwin would introduce in his book *On the Origin of Species* (1859) the idea of a “missing link” in the great chain of being between man and ape, where as anatomy museums (such as Dr. Spitzer’s traveling anatomical museum from 1856 on) served to bring science to the masses at various fairs. Relying on the work of scientists, polemicists such as Gobineau (*An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*, 1853-1855) in France or Houston Stewart Chamberlain (*The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, 1899) in England contributed to bringing racialized thinking to the mainstream at the very moment of colonial expansion. Others, however, such as the Haitian anthropologist Joseph Anténor Firmin, published works such as *On the Equality of Human Races* (1885) in which they critiqued these racial hierarchies.



SCIENCE AND THE INVENTION OF "RACE"



The Natural History of Man, 1782



The History of the Human Race, 1800



Museum of the Human Race, 1854

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Prince Roland Bonaparte, 1859



Human Races, 1854



“I have the right to say to this lying anthropology that it is not a science!”
Joseph António Formis, *On the Equality of Human Races* (1885)



The Equality of the Human Races, 1853



Portrait of a Fuegian, 1845

“Viewing such men [the Fuegians], one can hardly make oneself believe that they are fellow-creatures, and inhabitants of the same world.”
Charles Darwin, *Journal* (1845)

THE SPECTACLE OF DIFFERENCE: FROM THE ZULUS TO BUFFALO BILL

The middle of the nineteenth century saw the birth of new forms of mass entertainment culture in the United States, marked by extravagance, sensational spectacles, and an insatiable appetite for the unusual. In New York, *Barnum's American Museum*, devoted to the exhibition of «freaks», opened in 1841 and soon became the most popular attraction in the country, seen by some forty million visitors by 1868. In 1871, Barnum created *P.T. Barnum's Grand Traveling Museum, Menagerie, Caravan, and Circus*, and started touring the world, with colossal success in Europe. After collaborating with Barnum, Buffalo Bill launched his *Wild West Show* in 1882, exploiting this mythology through life-size performances that included Red Indians, cow-boys, horses and buffalos. These grandiose shows contributed to the ways in which Europeans perceived of Indians. Among the "star" performers one could find Calamity Jane, Geronimo and Sitting Bull, as well as several Moroccan, African, and Japanese actors, and even a French infantryman... By 1889, a new level of showmanship had been attained, with the *Wild West Show* sweeping through Europe. After London, Buffalo Bill made his way to Paris for the Universal Exhibition, accompanied by two hundred and fifty Indians, two hundred horses and twenty bison, before heading to triumphant shows in Lyon and Marseilles. The show was attended by over fifty million spectators in the two thousand towns and cities in which it stopped, across a dozen countries. The figure of the African warrior also proved an important one as a result of the *Zulus European Tour* in 1853. At the same time, the first universal exhibitions were being held, in London 1851 and 1862, New York in 1853, Paris in 1855, then Metz in 1861, and Paris again in 1867, marking the advent of a new dimension in the exhibition process. Henceforth, human beings would play a key role in all efforts at representing the diversity of human life, and the "savage" would be there to entertain and attract audiences.



From 1840 to 1914

THE SPECTACLE OF DIFFERENCE: FROM THE ZULUS TO BUFFALO BILL



The Zulus European Tour (1853)

When the Zulus arrived in London in 1853, they were the first non-white group to be exhibited in a public museum. The Zulus were exhibited in the Crystal Palace, London, in 1853. The Zulus were exhibited in the Crystal Palace, London, in 1853. The Zulus were exhibited in the Crystal Palace, London, in 1853.



Illustration of the ship that brought the Zulus to Europe.

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Illustration of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show performers.



Illustration of a Native American man in a large feathered headdress.

Barnum and his museum (1841-1860)

Barnum's American Museum opened a new world of scientific and educational exhibits to the public. The museum was located in the 'old city' of New York. The museum was located in the 'old city' of New York. The museum was located in the 'old city' of New York.

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Illustration of a Native American man in traditional dress.



Small illustration of a museum building.



Oval illustration of a Native American man in traditional dress.



Illustration of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show poster.

“It is not only entertaining because of its novelty, but is paramourly instructive, and no one who has read the history of the Western States for the last past quarter of a century can fail to appreciate the object lessons of the Wild West Show.”

The Evening Citizen, Glasgow (1891)

From 1850 to 1914

THE DIVERSITY OF EXHIBITION SITES: FROM ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS TO THE STAGE

From the middle of the nineteenth century onward, exhibitions could be found everywhere (theatres, fairs, public gardens, zoos, circuses, cabarets...) and attendance rates were consistently high. By the second third of the nineteenth century, the emphasis shifted towards human exhibits. This phenomenon could be observed throughout Europe (notably in Switzerland, Great Britain, France, Spain, and Germany), and the *Jardin Zoologique d'Acclimatation* in Paris welcomed more than thirty-five "ethnic shows" between 1877 and 1931. In this context, Carl Hagenbeck opened his new zoo in Hamburg in 1907 in order to provide permanent display space for troupes and exotic animals. Much in the same way as zoological gardens were receiving visitors and scientists eager to meet "savages", theatres and cabarets also provided indispensable outlets for these shows. From this moment on, Australian Aboriginals in London and Berlin rubbed shoulders with Zulus at the *Folies-Bergère*, Indians in Brussels and Hamburg with Dahomeyans at the *Casino de Paris*, Japanese acrobats criss-crossed Europe all the way to Saint Petersburg and back, alongside snake charmers, belly-dancers, body-builders on the Italian stages or in Dutch circuses. The line between ethnic show and theatrical performance was a tenuous one at best, and several troupes were able to jump seamlessly from one genre to the other, as exemplified in the performances given by the impresario **Guillermo Farini**. An impressive range of artists were thus able to impose themselves - the African-American actor Ira Aldridge, the Cuban clown Chocolat, the Japanese dancer Hanako, the Three Striped Graces performing at *l'Olympia*, the Royal Cambodian dancers that so enthralled Auguste Rodin, as well as *black face minstrels*.

MONSTERS AND FAIRGROUND PHENOMENA...

Throughout history, monsters and people with physical abnormalities have been the object of fascination. Much in the same way as « exotic animals », people who are visually different have captivated the public's imagination in novel ways. Aristotle, Cicero, Saint-Augustine and Montaigne had recourse to science or the divine in their attempts to explain physical differences. As early as the sixteenth century, cabinets of curiosities served as receptacles and display cases for "strange" objects from around the world. Later, "monsters" became regular features of itinerant circuses before entering the realm of cabarets, fairs, and being seen on the streets in large cities. Maximo and Bartola are examples of these developments, indicative of the *imagination* of the organizers of *freak shows* who presented for years at *Barnum's American Museum* in New York these young micro cephalic Mexicans as the "*the last Aztec children*". In 1860, a year after the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, Barnum exhibited a black-skinned "freak" in his show entitled "*What is it?*" or "The Ape Man". Of course, these were "inventions", in which the line between reality and the imaginary was blurred. Monsters became major attractions in the theatrical world, such as in *Bartholemew Fair* in London, and then later in anatomy museums. The Bearded Lady and the Savages of Borneo (in actuality the Davis brothers, born in Ohio) were the star attractions in 1852, the Siamese Twins Chang & Eng Bunker (born in Siam in 1811) were billed as Chinese "giants" or as "savages" by the showman Cunningham... In a similar vein, "The Ape Woman Krao" (whose body was covered in hair due to a condition known as hypertrichosis), born in Laos in 1872, was acquired by Barnum from Karl Bock the infamous "species catcher" and exhibited the world over until 1926 as Darwin's "missing link" in the evolution from ape to man. Around this time (1886), John Merrick, nicknamed the *Elephant Man* (brought to the big screen in 1980 by David Lynch) was exhibited in Great Britain by Sir Frederick Treves. Finally, from 1887 on, a mother and son (with the medical condition congenital hypertrichosis) were exhibited in Europe as the "hairy family of Burma" and were a popular attraction. Indeed, if today *freaks* are the subject of history, they nevertheless remain an important component of contemporary popular culture, taking on new forms with each passing era, notably our very own as their omnipresence on the internet serves to confirm.



From Barnum in 1841 to Krao in 1926

Image © Getty Images, London. Reprinted and corrected from *History*, photograph 100

MONSTERS AND FAIRGROUND PHENOMENA...

Throughout history, monsters and people with physical abnormalities have been the subject of fascination. Much in the same way as exotic animals, people who are physically different have captivated the public's imagination in novel ways. Aristotle, Democritus, Saint Augustine and Montaigne had theories as to why or the cause of their attempts to explain physical differences. As early as the sixteenth century, cabinets of curiosity served as repositories and display cases for "strange" objects from around the world. Later, "monsters" became regular features of fairs and carnivals before entering the routes of sailors, kings, and being seen on the streets in large cities. Madame T and Barnum are examples of these entrepreneurs, indicators of the imagination of the organizers of fairs who presented for years at Barnum's American Museum in New York, those going into captivity, Mexicans, as the "The Last of the Mohicans" in 1840, a year after the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, Barnum exhibited a "Muck-skinned" "Hawk" in his show entitled "What is it?" or "The Ape Man" Of course, these were "inventions", in which the line between reality and the imaginary was blurred. Monsters became major attractions in the theatrical world, such as in *Bamboules* Fair in London, and then later in academy museums. The Bearded Lady and the Savages of the Sea (usually the Davis brothers, born in Ohio) were the star attractions in 1812, the Chinese Siamu Chang & Eng Bunker Born in Siam in 1811 were killed as Chinese "twins" or an "exception" by the physician George Hayward. As a human eye, "The Ape Woman Krao" (her body was covered in hair) came to a condition known as hypertrichosis, born in Laos in 1872, was acquired by Barnum from Karl Beck the infamous "ape-like mother" and exhibited the world over until 1926 as Darwin's "missing link" in the evolution from ape to man. Around this time (1884), John Merrick, nicknamed the Elephant Man (originally the boy written in 1880 by Bernard Shaw) was exhibited in Great Britain by Sir Frederick Treves. Finally, from 1887 on, a monster and with the medical condition congenital hypertrichosis were exhibited in Europe as the "Apey family of Borneo" and were a popular attraction. Indeed, if today there are the subject of history, they nonetheless remain an important component of contemporary popular culture, taking on new forms with each passing era, finally not only as a thrill or entertainment in the circus, but as a symbol.



John Merrick, the Elephant Man, in a photograph from 1884.



Barnum's general exhibition (1841) in New York City, photograph 100



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What is it? (1860)
 Barnum's "What is it?" was a famous exhibition in New York City. It featured a variety of "monsters" and "curiosities" from around the world. The most famous of these was a young boy named John Merrick, who was born with a severe facial deformity. Barnum presented Merrick as a "missing link" between man and ape. The exhibition was a huge success, drawing large crowds of people to the museum.



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“ I'm not an animal! I am a human being!
 I am a man! ”

John Merrick, in the film *The Elephant Man* by David Lynch

”

ORGANIZING THE WORLD: THE ERA OF UNIVERSAL EXHIBITIONS

The very first universal exhibition took place in London in 1851. However, it was not until the Universal exhibition held in Paris in 1867 - and even then their presence was somewhat discreet - that one could find pavilions in which men and women, wearing traditional clothing, could be found. Having said this, these pavilions enjoyed immediate success and the model was adopted in 1876 at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, then at the Paris Exhibition of 1878 and the Colonial Exhibition in Amsterdam in 1883, prior to becoming a permanent fixture following the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1889, itself a symbolic turning point at which one could find a typical street from « Cairo » and six colonial villages. The 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition, with its palaces of "Civilization", George Ferris's enormous evolving wheel, and ethnological villages that presented various "races" according to their level of « civilization », were met with the admiration of visitors. Switzerland integrated this approach as early as 1896 with the National Exhibition in Geneva and its "negro village" and "Swiss village". The Brussels Exhibition in 1897 (following that of Palermo in 1891, Anvers in 1894 and Barcelona in 1896), set up its colonial wing in Tervuren and featured a new development by staging a "Congolese savage". In Great Britain, the importance of Empire was growing, reaching its apogée at the turn of the century and bolstered by the ambitious stagecrafts of Imre Kiralfy under the aegis of the Greater Britain Exhibition of 1899. A year later, the Paris Exhibition of 1900 introduced a fifty million strong exhibition-going audience to Spahis and Cambodian dancers, whereas the **1904 World's Fair in St.-Louis**, organized entirely around anthropological themes, brought in one thousand two hundred Filipinos and installed them on a vast "Reservation" covering almost fifty acres. Indeed, if the staging of the "savage" lasted all the way up to Great War (1914), in Liège in 1905, Milan in 1906, and Brussels in 1910, Gand in 1913 and lastly San Francisco in 1915, the three decades that ran from 1885 to 1915 were witness to the most significant presence of colonial worlds as essential components of the exhibitions' decor.



From London in 1851 to San Francisco in 1915

ORGANIZING THE WORLD: THE ERA OF UNIVERSAL EXHIBITIONS



Congo Village, Exhibition in Chicago (1893), publisher: 1893



Congo Village, Exhibition in Paris (1889), publisher: 1889

The very first universal exhibition took place in London in 1851. However, it was not until the Universal Exhibition held in Paris in 1867 – and even then their presence was somewhat discreet – that one could find pavilions in which men and women, wearing traditional clothing, could be found. Having said this, these pavilions enjoyed immediate success and the model was adopted in 1876 at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, then at the Paris Exhibition of 1878 and the Colonial Exhibition in Antwerp in 1885, prior to becoming a permanent feature following the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1889, itself a symbolic turning point at which one could find a typical street from – Cairo – and six colonial villages. The 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition, with its pavilions of "Delaware", George Ferris's innovative rotating wheel, and ethnographic villages that presented various "types" according to their level of "civilization", were more than the admission of visitors. Such a feat brought this approach to early in 1894 with the National Exhibition in Geneva and its "negro village" and "louis village". The Brussels Exhibition in 1897 following that of Palermo in 1891, Antwerp in 1895 and Barcelona in 1892, set up its colonial wing in Havana and featured a new development by staging a "Complete village". In Great Britain, the rapid pace of Empire was growing, reaching its apogee at the turn of the century and bolstered by the ambitious strategies of Lord Kitchener under the aegis of the Greater Britain Exhibition of 1893. A year later, the Paris Exhibition of 1894 introduced a fifty million strong exhibition-going audience to Spanish and Caribbean dancers, whereas the 1906 World's Fair in St. Louis, organized entirely around anthropological themes, brought in some thousand two hundred Filipinos and installed them on a vast "Reservation" covering almost fifty acres. Indeed, if the staging of the "village" lasted all the way up to Great War (1914), it Lige in 1906, Milan in 1905, and Brussels in 1910, such in 1913 and lastly San Francisco in 1915, the three decades that ran from 1865 to 1915 were witness to the most significant presence of colonial worlds as essential components of the exhibition's decor.



Mrs Kibalee, India, Exhibition in London (1884), publisher: 1884

More Airily

In the end of the nineteenth century, the United States demonstrated, and surpassed, Great Britain. As early as 1876, the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia was held in a building that was twice as large as London. In the previous days of London's Exposition Universelle between 1869 and 1874, it staged and published the world's first ethnographic exhibition, with the aim of presenting the human species.

The Anthropology Days at the World's Fair in St. Louis (1904)

The Anthropology Days at the World's Fair in St. Louis, which lasted for two weeks through June and July, "gave a look" into the past. Several anthropologists, including the ethnologist and linguist Franz Boas, were invited to give lectures on their "primitive" studies, "allowing visitors the opportunity to examine their collections. Many of the "good people" had been taken from the remote portions of the extensive United States territories by "the soldiers".



The opening scene of the Anthropology Days at the World's Fair in St. Louis (1904), publisher: 1904



The opening scene of the Anthropology Days at the World's Fair in St. Louis (1904), publisher: 1904



Village of the Congo, Exhibition in Chicago (1893), publisher: 1893



Village of the Congo, Exhibition in Paris (1889), publisher: 1889



The opening scene of the Anthropology Days at the World's Fair in St. Louis (1904), publisher: 1904



The opening scene of the Anthropology Days at the World's Fair in St. Louis (1904), publisher: 1904



The opening scene of the Anthropology Days at the World's Fair in St. Louis (1904), publisher: 1904

“Never before have natives been so prodded, handled, and scrutinized.”
Henry de Yriarte, *La Nature* (1889)

EXHIBITION CONDITIONS: THE FATE OF PARTICIPANTS

Beyond the official statements, distorted images, and untrustworthy interviews, a few accounts given by exhibits have survived. They provide us with insights on the conditions under which they were exhibited, their feelings, and the ways in which they perceived the culture and lifestyle of Europeans. These accounts – as for example those provided by the Indian impresario Maungwudaus, one of the Zulus in the troupe that arrived in London in 1853, the “travel diary” kept by the Eskimo Abraham Ulrikab –, but also in the numerous stories that have been pieced together – such as Ota Benga’s, Krao’s (“the missing link”), William Henry Johnson’s (“*What is it?*”), or that of the “Hottentot Venus”, or the Indians in the *Buffalo Bill Wild West Show* – allow us to cast a quite different look on this “spectacle of savagery”. Perspectives varied considerably, such as that of the Eskimo Zacharias who, after completing an American tour in 1893, positioned himself as the “spokesperson” for the exhibited by claiming: “*We are happy to have recovered our freedom and to no longer be exhibited as if we were animals.*” The evidence points to harsh and inhuman treatment, such as the presence of enclosures that separated and « protected » visitors (like those found in zoological gardens in Paris and Basel); the use of bodies for scientific studies (such as those conducted in St.-Louis in 1904 or with the Galibi people in 1892 in France); the death of participants (such as the Congolese deaths in Brussels-Tervuren in 1897 or the Filipinos in Spain in 1887); the deplorable living conditions (like those in Chicago in 1893 or those provided the Eskimos in 1900). Early on, the decision was made to vaccinate participants (a publicity campaign that included postcards announced the vaccination of natives prior to their arrival in new cities), contracts were drawn up, and the colonial authorities increasingly prohibited “savage” recruitment tactics and set up specific organizations charged with overseeing the recruitment of troupes. Between 1890 and 1900, being a “savage” was now professionalized. Participants were henceforth actors who adhered to scripts written by organizers that imposed a standardized view of bodies and of difference in general.



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EXHIBITION CONDITIONS: THE FATE OF PARTICIPANTS



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Ota Benga's story (1904)

Malikene, a young Malinke girl from Senegal, was taken to the United States in 1904 as part of a group of people to be exhibited and later became known as Ota Benga. He was exhibited in the 1904 World Fair in St. Louis, where he was displayed in a cage with various animals. Ota Benga was a young man from Senegal who was taken to the United States in 1904 as part of a group of people to be exhibited and later became known as Ota Benga. He was exhibited in the 1904 World Fair in St. Louis, where he was displayed in a cage with various animals.

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Ota Benga
Height: 4 feet 11 inches. Weight: 103 pounds
Age: 23 years
Exhibited every afternoon during September

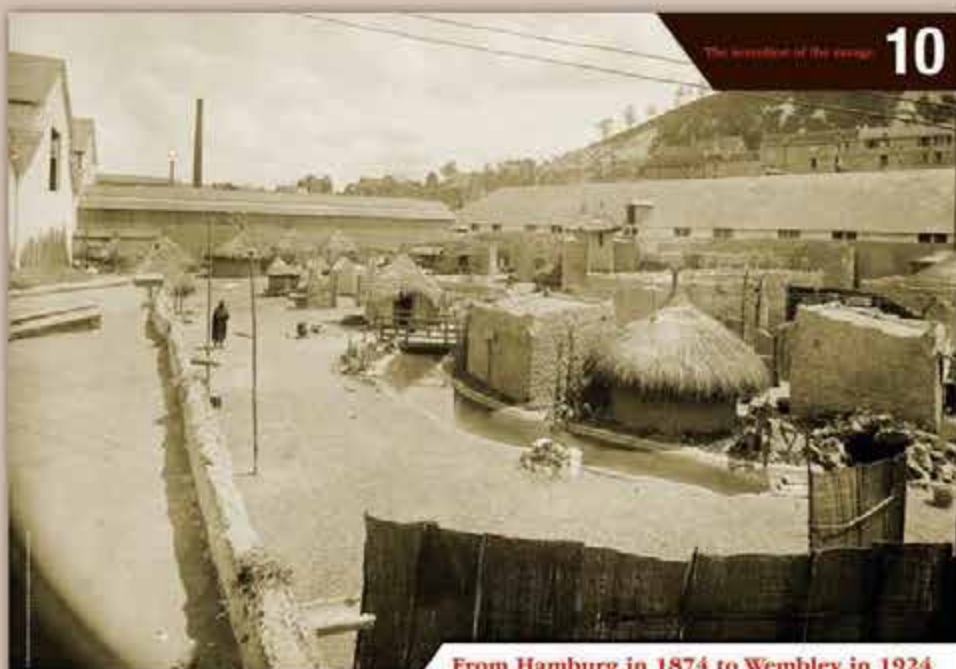


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From Hamburg in 1874 to Wembley in 1924

MASS PRODUCTION: ITINERANT ETHNIC VILLAGES

Concurrently with the universal and colonial exhibitions, itinerant “ethnic” and “colonial” villages became increasingly widespread, winning over new audiences in the best part of the Western world, but also in Japan. **Carl Hagenbeck**, the director of the Hamburg Zoo developed the prototype in 1874, adapting grand shows to provincial exhibitions and offering new ways of exhibiting « savages ». Hagenbeck recognized very early on the tremendous appeal of these shows and exported his concept and troupes throughout Europe and the United States. Numerous European, American, and Japanese impresarios adopted the model, and their specialized “villages” offered the public the opportunity to “travel” to exotic destinations while observing the “authentic daily lives” of “Senegalese”, “Ceylonese”, “Indian”, “Sudanese” or “negro” exhibits. The illusion of a journey coupled with immersion in a strange universe amplified the genuine fascination experienced by the public before the meticulously choreographed spectacles. Visitors were even able to touch exhibits, and could take home memories of these « exchanges » in addition to souvenirs (such as postcards produced for the occasion). The Eskimo village presented in Madrid in 1900 soon became the most popular attraction in the capital, while in France, the “negro villages” became unavoidable stops at provincial exhibitions and the specialty of French impresarios. French and German impresarios emerged as the European leaders of the genre (including **Nayo Bruce**, who came from what is today Togo), taking on tour to over twenty countries their very own “Dahomeyans”, “Algerian Arabs” and “Egyptian caravans”. These troupes were at times presented as circus tours (by Hagenbeck for example), as part of official exhibitions (such as in Dresden in 1911) or commissioned by colonial powers (as in Lyon in 1894). The sheer number of itinerant villages and the geographic scale of the phenomenon were remarkable, and no matter where they went, in France, Belgium, Italy, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Great Britain, the Nordic countries, or the United States, they were met with large audiences that numbered in the millions.



From Hamburg in 1874 to Wembley in 1924

Source: *Open-StreetMap* (© OpenStreetMap contributors, CC-BY, Imagery © Mapbox)

MASS PRODUCTION: ITINERANT ETHNIC VILLAGES



Photograph of 1890s troupe of 'Negro' dancers, possibly from 1891

Concurrently with the universal and colonial exhibitions, "oriental" "african" and "coloured" villages became increasingly widespread, serving ever more audiences in the best part of the Western world. But also in Japan. **Carl Hagenbeck**, the director of the Hamburg Zoo developed the prototype in 1874, adapting grand shows for provincial exhibitions and offering new ways of exhibiting - villages - Hagenbeck recognized very early on the tremendous appeal of these shows and exported the concept and troupes throughout Europe and the United States. Numerous European, American, and Japanese entrepreneurs adopted the model, and their specialized "villages" offered the opportunity to "travel" to exotic destinations while observing the "authentic daily lives" of "Tanzanians", "Egyptians", "Indians", "Samboues" or "Negro" exhibits. The fixation of a genre was coupled with immersion in a strange context: amplified the genre's fascination experienced by the public before the meticulously choreographed spectacles. Visitors were even able to touch exhibits, and could take home mementos of these - exchanges - in addition to souvenirs, such as portraits produced for the occasion. The Eskimo village presented in Madrid in 1902 soon became the most popular attraction in the capital, while in France, the "Negro villages" became unavoidable stops at provincial exhibitions and the specialty of French impresarios. French and German impresarios emerged as the European leaders of the genre including **Maya Black**, who came from what is today Japan, taking on tour in most leading countries their very own "Subanigans", "African Arabs" and "Egyptian peasants". These troupes were of times presented as circus tours by Hagenbeck for example, as part of official exhibitions, such as in Dresden in 1911 or commissioned by colonial powers like in Paris in 1874. The sheer number of itinerant villages and the geographic scale of the phenomenon were remarkable, and no matter where they went, in France, Belgium, Italy, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Great Britain, the Nordic countries, or the United States, they were met with large audiences that numbered in the millions.



Scene from the 'Nigger Show' at the 'Nigger Show' in London, 1891



Scene from the 'Nigger Show' at the 'Nigger Show' in London, 1891



Scene from the 'Nigger Show' at the 'Nigger Show' in London, 1891



Scene from the 'Nigger Show' at the 'Nigger Show' in London, 1891

Nayo Bruce

Nayo Bruce, of 'Nayo', an American in the United States, had established a 'Nigger Show' in 1874. In 1874, he had a troupe of 'Nigger Show' in London, 1891. He had a troupe of 'Nigger Show' in London, 1891. He had a troupe of 'Nigger Show' in London, 1891.



Scene from the 'Nigger Show' at the 'Nigger Show' in London, 1891

Carl Hagenbeck (1874)

Carl Hagenbeck and his troupe of 'Nigger Show' in London, 1891. He had a troupe of 'Nigger Show' in London, 1891. He had a troupe of 'Nigger Show' in London, 1891.



Scene from the 'Nigger Show' at the 'Nigger Show' in London, 1891



Scene from the 'Nigger Show' at the 'Nigger Show' in London, 1891



Scene from the 'Nigger Show' at the 'Nigger Show' in London, 1891

“ Find the time to go and visit the negro rillage and observe those Blacks living just like they do back home, in the state of nature. Go and see them like you would a strange tourist attraction. ”

Goide Blix, Colonial exhibition in 1904

COLONIZATION & EXHIBITIONS: TWO PARALLEL PHENOMENA

The period after 1815 saw the rise of the British Empire (1814-1914), the French conquest of Algeria (1830), the starting point to an analogous history of colonial *grandeur* (1830-1931), and to a lesser extent the entry of the Belgians, Dutch, Portuguese, Americans (notably in the Philippines), Germans, and later the Japanese into the colonial fray. This newfound expansionist drive came on the heels of the end of Western slavery with the outlawing of the slave trade in Great Britain in 1807 and its definitive abolition in France in 1848, a time when ethnographic exhibitions started to appear. By the time the great colonial empires were delineating territorial boundaries, the phenomenon of “human zoos” had reached its apex. The two were symbiotically linked as the prominence of human exhibits in the most important colonial exhibitions (from 1883 on) or in the colonial pavilions at the universal exhibitions confirmed. These exhibitions provided the colonial powers with the opportunity to showcase the richness of colonized lands while staging in an entertaining manner the fundamental principles of “racial hierarchy”, and simultaneously reinvigorating exhibitions at the service of propaganda and justifying colonialism by highlighting the contrast between the “civilized” visitor and the “savage” exhibit, the native and the colonizer. The British Empire Exhibition in Wembley in 1924-1925 and Glasgow in 1938 and the International Colonial Exhibition in Vincennes in 1931 were the most emblematic of these during the interwar years, emulated by exhibitions in Italy (Naples) and Portugal (Porto) in 1940, and in spite of its having lost its empire after the Great War, in Germany as well with the *Deutsche Kolonial* in Dresden in 1939. It was in this context that reconstituted colonial villages and exhibitions incorporated into the major international exhibitions participated in colonial domination.



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© Photo: Musée de la Ville de Paris, France, photograph by Louis J. M. de la Roche

COLONIZATION & EXHIBITIONS: TWO PARALLEL PHENOMENA

The period after 1815 saw the rise of the British Empire (1815-1914), the French conquest of Algeria (1830), the starting point to an analogous history of colonial grandeur (1830-1914), and to a lesser extent the entry of the Belgians, Dutch, Portuguese, Americans (mainly in the Philippines), Germans, and later the Japanese into the colonial fray. This repeated expansionist drive came on the heels of the end of Western slavery with the outlawing of the slave trade in Great Britain in 1807 and its definitive abolition in France in 1848, a time when ethnographic exhibitions started to appear. By the time the great colonial empires were denouncing territorial acquisitions, the phenomenon of "human zoos" had reached its apex. The two were symbiotically linked as the grimace of human exhibits in the most important colonial exhibitions (from 1883 and on) in the colonial pastimes of the universal exhibitions confirmed. These exhibitions provided the

colonial powers with the opportunity to showcase the richness of colonized lands while staying in an entertaining manner the fundamental principles of "racial hierarchy" and simultaneously propagating exhibitions at the service of propaganda and justifying colonialism by highlighting the contrast between the "civilized" state and the "savage" exhibit, the nation and the colonizer. The British Empire Exhibition in Wembley in 1904-1905 and Glasgow in 1908 and the International Colonial Exhibition in Vincennes in 1909 were the most emblematic of these during the interwar years, emulated by colonies in Italy (Naples) and Portugal (Lisbon) in 1942, and in spite of its having lost its empire after the Great War, in Germany as well with the Deutsche Kolonial in Dresden in 1913. It was in this context that reestablished colonial villages and exhibitions incorporated into the major international exhibitions participated in eternal domination.



© Photo: Musée de la Ville de Paris, France, photograph by Louis J. M. de la Roche



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The world's 200 major exhibitions



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“ I repeat that the superior races have a right because they have a duty. They have the duty to civilize the inferior races... ”

Jules Ferry (1885)

AN OFFICIAL DRAMATIZATION: THE ERA OF COLONIAL EXHIBITIONS

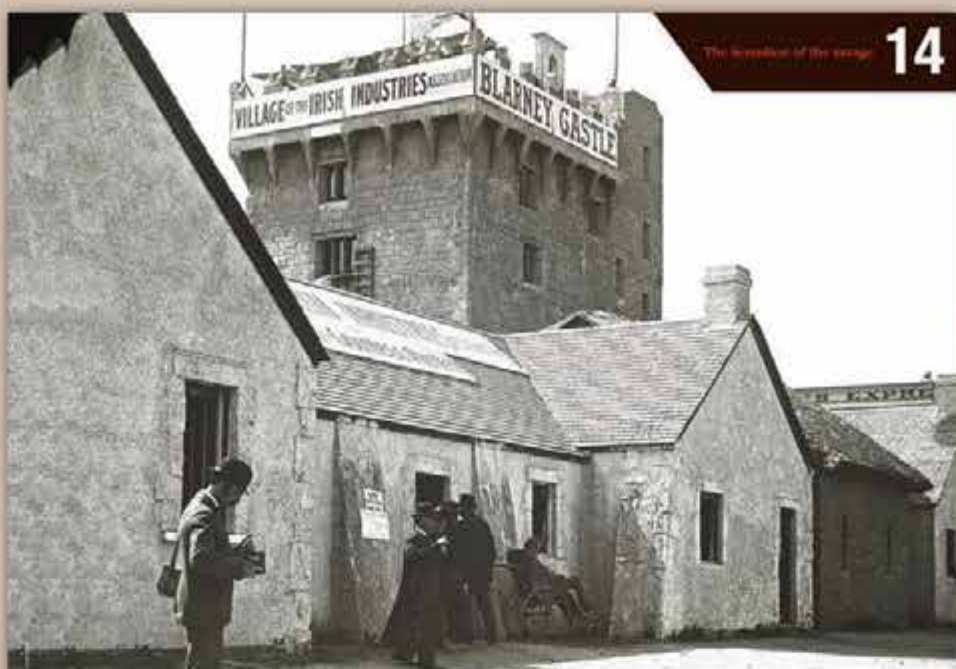
Colonial pavilions were initially included in universal exhibitions because of their “exotic” quality, but by the end of the nineteenth century specifically colonial exhibitions grew exponentially. In fact, they soon became privileged spaces in which the contrast between the “civilized” and the “savage” could be made evident and the importance of the “civilizing mission” underscored, thereby justifying colonial expansionism. Presages of colonial exhibitions were to be found overseas in the British Empire at the four Intercolonial Exhibitions of Australasia held between 1866 and 1876. The inaugural colonial exhibition in Europe was held in Amsterdam in 1883 (*Internationale Koloniale en Uitvoerhandel Tentoonstelling*) and included indigenous villages from South-East Asia and the Caribbean. There would subsequently be three successive waves. The first (1883-1899) involved solely Europe with a dozen exhibitions, mainly in France (Lyon [1894], Bordeaux [1895], and Rouen [1896]) and Great Britain (the *Colonial and Indian Exhibition* in London in 1886, and then the Colonial Exhibitions of 1894 and 1899), but also in Madrid in 1887 and Porto in 1896, in addition to the Kyoto industrial exhibition of 1895. Propaganda was pervasive, as in the case of the Berlin exhibition in 1896 on which occasion the “natives” paid homage to the Emperor. In certain cases these spectacles were also produced within the empires themselves, such as in Calcutta in 1883 or Hanoi in 1902-1903. The second wave (1900-1914) was geographically more open and expanded to include national exhibitions such as the Japanese National Industrial Exhibition held in Osaka in 1903. France, Italy and Great Britain were by now stepping up the number of colonial exhibitions: Marseilles in 1906, Paris and Nogent in 1906-1907, Lyon in 1914, London in 1908, 1909 and 1911, Milan in 1906 and the **Turin International Exhibition of Industry and Labor** in 1911. After the First World War, the third and last wave spanned two decades (1921-1940) involving the most popular exhibitions thus far in terms of attendance in France, Great Britain, Portugal, Belgium, Germany, Italy and South Africa (see panel n°17).

BETWEEN PUBLICITY AND PROPAGANDA: THE FASCINATION WITH IMAGES

Images played a major role in promoting human exhibitions, as the thousands of iconographic vestiges of the “exotic performance industry” and the remarkable sales figures for postcards made for the occasion confirm. Striking promotional posters attracted visitors while postcards provided them with a **souvenir** of what they had observed, but they worked together in representing the same archetypes. The golden rules of imagery are animality, nudity and sexuality, and these captured the public’s attention. Filmmakers immediately grasped the appeal of “human zoos” and incorporated its techniques of representation and theatricalization. As early as 1896 the Lumière Brothers captured on film the exotic spectacles at the *Jardin d’Acclimatation* in Paris; in the United States, W. K. L. Dickson pioneered the cylinder Kinetoscope and started filming Buffalo Bill’s Indians in 1894. In addition to these, visitor guide books, illustrated articles in the mainstream media, advertising brochures, chromolithographs, paintings, drawings, and a vast array of other materials contributed to creating an impressive album of images that popularized and widely disseminated accepted image of the “savage”. Photographs played a key role in constructing these representations: providing scientific evidence for researchers, pictures to be used on postcards and in newspapers, promotional materials for exhibition organizers... In Europe, Roland Bonaparte specialized in “portrait” photography and photographed up until 1892 hundreds of people exhibited in “ethnic shows”, leaving behind an unmatched collection. In Holland, Pieter Oosterhuis et Friedrich Carel Hisgen produced a photographic record of the *Internationale Koloniale en Uitvoerhandel Tentoonstelling* held in Amsterdam in 1883. Further afield in the United States, the influential American photographer Gertrude Käsebier was known for her powerful and moving portraits of Native Americans. No matter where one looked, images of “savages” were captured on camera.

EXHIBITING LOCAL POPULATIONS

Exhibited populations were on some occasions “closer” to the visitors since they were recruited regionally. In fact, several countries exhibited their own national minorities such that the “savage” could now be found in close proximity rather than in distant lands. “Natives” from the various Indian nations were first exhibited in large popular shows in the United States and Canada in the early part of the nineteenth century before being exported to Europe. Some regional populations were also exhibited in Europe. In 1874, Hagenbeck presented a family from Lappland along with thirty or so reindeer in Hamburg. In 1908, during the *Franco-British Exhibition* in London, an Irish village stood next to a Senegalese one, and at the Nantes exhibition in 1910 one could find a Breton village side by side with a “negro village”. Elsewhere, the French were treated to villages of people from Flanders, Savoy, and Alsace, while Germans could enjoy Bohemians, “Swiss villages” for the Swiss, Scottish ones for the British, or people from Cherkessia or Caucasus for the Russians. The aim was not so much to associate them with “savages” but rather to depict regional particularities as *archaic* remnants at a time when the imperative was to consolidate unified national identities. As far as Japan was concerned, whether with Aborigines from Taiwan, Ainu from Hokkaido, or Okinawans, the goal was the same. However, descriptions of these populations as inferior and backward did mean that they could potentially be civilized. In 1903, the exhibition of Koreans as cannibals at the **Osaka exhibition** served to justify Japan’s colonization of Korea in 1910. National, colonial, scientific and political concerns all intersected at these human exhibitions.



The Irish Village, Thomas Fortune and Emory Douglas, 1915. Photo by G. G. Smith & S. J. Spangher, 2012

EXHIBITING LOCAL POPULATIONS



Children of Bretons live with their friends (1911)



Exposition de la France et des Villages d'Alsace (1911)

Exhibited populations were on some occasions "staged" to the visitors since they were recruited regionally. In fact, several countries exhibited their own national minorities such that the "savages" could now be found in close proximity rather than in distant lands. "Natives" from the various Indian nations were first exhibited in large popular shows in the United States and Canada in the early part of the nineteenth century before being exported to Europe. Some regional populations were also exhibited in Europe. In 1874, Nagayevsk presented a family from Lapland along with thirty or so reindeer in Hamburg. In 1904, during the Franco-British Exhibition in London, an Irish village stood next to a Senegalese one, and at the Nantes exhibition in 1910 one could find a Breton village side by side with a "hugbo village", Stauwahn. The French were treated to villages of people from Flanders, Savoy, and Alsace, while Germans could enjoy Bohemians, "Swiss-villages" for the Swiss, Scottish ones for the British, or people from Dnieprkazala or Caucasus for the Russians. The aim was not so much to assist into them with "savages" but rather to depict regional particularities as archaic remnants at a time when the imperative was to consolidate unified national identities. As far as Japan was concerned, whether with Aborigines from Taiwan, Ainu from Hokkaido, or Okinawans, the goal was the same. However, descriptions of these populations as inferior and backward did mean that they could potentially be civilized. In 1903, the exhibition at Yokohama as a corollary to the Osaka exhibition served to justify Japan's colonization of Korea in 1910. Regional, national, scientific and judicial concerns all intersected at these human exhibitions.



The "Anthropological Pavilion" at the Osaka Exhibition (1903)

Exhibition pavilions and their organization were subject to the whims of the "architectural committee" who had to convene in 1901 to plan what the Osaka Exhibition would look like. The pavilions were designed to be a mix of traditional Japanese architecture and modern Western styles. The Anthropological Pavilion was designed by the architect and painter Tadao Ando. It was a large, open-air pavilion with a central stage and several smaller rooms. The pavilion was used to display the bodies of various ethnic groups from around the world.



Exhibition pavilion for the Eskimos (1903)



The Scotch National Exhibition (1903)



Children of Bretons live with their friends (1911)



Exhibition pavilion for the Eskimos (1903)



The Scotch National Exhibition (1903)

“ Bretons and Irish were stigmatized as being more akin to ‘savages’ than to ‘civilized people’.”

Sandra Lamine (2011)

EXHIBITIONS DURING THE INTERWAR YEARS

In the wake of the First World War, the model of the « savage » would evolve towards that of “natives” in the process of being civilized, and the emphasis shifted toward underscoring colonial triumphs, the “benefits” and positive aspects of colonialism, and how the “civilizing mission” was firmly underway. A new model was ushered in, and “ethnic villages” were now replaced by the spectacle of modernity and the promise of the future, as epitomized by the New York World’s Fair in 1939 that promoted the idea of “*building the world of tomorrow*”. Specifically colonial exhibitions held during the interwar years – such as those in Marseilles (1922), Wembley (1924), Liège and Anvers (1930), Paris (1931) or Chicago (1933), and the « national » Japanese, Italian, and German between 1922 and 1940 - continued to attract sizeable audiences, but the display aesthetic was gradually changing. The “savage” now stepped aside and the “native” took center stage at the service of promoting “colonial humanism” and showcasing the benefits of civilization. The *Wembley Exhibition* in 1924-1925 (twenty seven million visitors) and the *International Colonial Exposition in Vincennes* in 1931 (for which over thirty three million tickets were sold) were clearly the high-points of European imperialism, but the overriding image was of a conquered empire and of pacified populations. In the colonial exhibitions that came later, such as the *Universal and International Exhibition in Brussels* where the theme was « *Peace Through Competition* » (1935), the *British Empire Exhibition* (Glasgow, 1938), the *Deutsche Kolonial* (Dresden, 1939) or the *Mostra d’Oltremare* (Naples, 1940), colonized people were presented less contemptuously. In fact, they were relegated to a position of secondary importance when compared to the place granted to artisanal stands, reconstitutions, and demonstrations of the economic might of participating nations. In Dresden, in 1939, the Nazi authorities affirmed the “*efficiency of the German model of colonization*” and in Naples Mussolini celebrated the “recapture” of a colonial Empire in the tradition of the previous Roman Empire, examples of the increased politicization of the rhetoric. The last “ethnic show” of any significance during the interwar years was the *Exhibition of the Portuguese World* in 1940. Henceforth, references to the archaic nature of “natives” served to bolster nationalist discourse.



From 1920 to 1940

EXHIBITIONS DURING THE INTERWAR YEARS



The International Colonial Exposition in Vincennes (1931)

World leaders interrogated the International Colonial Exposition in Vincennes (1931) through all kinds of "exhibits" on what is being presented by the label of "colonial exposition". They were not, following the world's understanding the rights of "colonial residents" in the context of the exhibition in Vincennes. The exhibition of Vincennes ultimately became the representation of colonial history to the world's eyes. What the French intended to show to the world was not a true representation of colonial history, but a representation of the world's eyes on the French colonial empire.

In the wake of the First World War, the model of the « savage » would evolve towards that of "natives" in the process of being civilized, and the emphasis shifted toward understanding colonial triumphs, the "benefits" and positive aspects of colonialism, and how the "civilizing mission" was firmly underway. A new model was adopted, and "savage villages" were now replaced by the spectacle of modernity and the promise of the future, as epitomized by the New York World's Fair in 1939 that promoted the idea of "building the world of tomorrow". Specifically colonial exhibitions held during the interwar years – such as those in Marseille (1922), Wembley (1924), Liège and Antwerp (1926), Paris (1931) or Chicago (1933), and the « national » Japanese, Italian, and German between 1922 and 1940 – continued to attract visible audiences, but the display aesthetic was gradually changing. The "savage" now stepped aside and the "natives" took center stage as the service of presenting "colonial harmonies" and showcasing the benefits of civilization. The Wembley exhibition in 1924-1925 drew over seven million visitors and the International Colonial Exposition in Vincennes in 1931 (for which over thirty three million tickets were sold) were clearly the high-points of European imperialism, but the prevailing image was of a conquered empire and of pacified populations. In the colonial exhibitions that came later, such as the Universal and International Exhibition in Brussels, where the theme was « Peace Through Civilization » (1935), the British Empire Exhibition (Wembley, 1938), the Deutsche National (Dresden, 1939) or the Mostra d'Impero (Naples, 1940), colonized peoples were presented less controversially. In fact, they were relegated to a position of secondary importance when compared to the plans granted to African islands, reconstructions, and demonstrations of the economic might of participating nations. In Dresden, in 1939, the Nazi authorities affirmed the "affinity" of the German model of "civilization" and in Naples Mussolini celebrated the "psychology" of a colonial empire in the tradition of the previous Roman Empire, examples of the increased political of the rhetoric. The last "ethnic show" of any significance during the interwar years was the Exhibition of the Portuguese World in 1940, in which the references to the ethnic nature of "natives" served to bolster nationalistic discourse.



World Exhibition in Vincennes (1931)



World Exhibition in Vincennes (1931)



World Exhibition in Vincennes (1931)



World Exhibition in Vincennes (1931)



World Exhibition in Vincennes (1931)



“No matter how you choose to look at it, the conclusion remains the same. There is no colonialism without racism.”

Aimé Césaire, *Le Nègre de la Martinique* (1950)



VIÈME INTERNATIONALE COLONIALE EXPOSITION PARIS 1931

DENUNCIATIONS OF “HUMAN ZOOS”

During the early years of the nineteenth century, in Europe and the United States, opposition to “human zoos” could be heard and these displays were banned by missionaries and other religious organizations. For example, the exhibition in 1810 of the “Hottentot Venus” was deemed unacceptable by abolitionist leagues in London, as indeed it was by the African Institution (a humanitarian and anti-slavery association) when it called for an end to this “shameful exploitation” and the arrest of its impresario. In 1880, a local Berlin newspaper criticized the exhibition of Eskimos (specifically of a troupe which included the Eskimo Abraham Ulrikab) at the Berlin zoo. In 1906, Louis-Joseph Barot, the future Mayor of Angers, denounced the ways in which “ethnic shows” served to convey “*gross caricatures*”. In August 1912, in an article in *La Grande Revue*, Léon Werth evoked the mockery that was being made of these men “*disguised as negro-clowns*”. Participants also complained, and on occasion even rebelled, as was the case when Africans from the “negro village” left the National Exhibition in Geneva in 1896. In 1930, the Martinican intellectual Paulette Nardal was outraged by the exhibition of African women with lip plates at the Jardin d’Acclimatation in Paris. A number of African intellectuals spoke out against this theatricalized presentation of a “*falsified Africa*” that had become so “*dear to onlookers*”. In Great Britain, the *Union of Students of Black Descent* protested against the presence of ethnic troupes at the British Empire Exhibition in Wembley (1924-1925) and Glasgow (1938), along similar lines to the criticism made at the Century of Progress Chicago International Exposition in 1933. In 1931, the French Communist Party joined forces with the Surrealists and staged an “anti-Imperialist exposition” (attended by a mere 5,000 visitors), while others protested the exhibition of Kanaks as “cannibals” at the *Jardin d’Acclimatation*. In general, objections to these exhibitions were heard throughout Europe, in Japan and the United States, with the notable exception of Switzerland where the model of the “ethnic village” continued to be displayed.



British Museum, Paris Exhibition (1889), photograph, 1889

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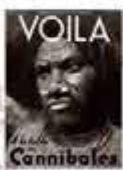
British Museum, Paris Exhibition (1889), photograph, 1889

Switzerland, a long tradition

From the beginning of the 19th century, Switzerland developed a tradition of displaying people from other countries. The country was divided into several cantons, each with its own traditions. The first 'human zoo' was set up in 1810 in the town of Aarau. Other 'human zoos' were set up in Lucerne, Zurich, and Basel. The first 'human zoo' in Switzerland was set up in 1810.



British Museum, Paris Exhibition (1889), photograph, 1889



British Museum, Paris Exhibition (1889), photograph, 1889



British Museum, Paris Exhibition (1889), photograph, 1889

Commandants
leur impérialiste
sition colonialiste
de Vincennes!
épendant
coloni

l'ultionnaire des ouvriers
paysans dans les colonies!



British Museum, Paris Exhibition (1889), photograph, 1889

“When will the happy time come when modern anthropological philosophers [...] will desist from fabricating in their studies the most egregious calumnies on the race already sufficiently downtrodden.”

James Arkassa Horton, politician and intellectual from Sierra Leone (1866)

From 1930 on

THE DEMISE OF “HUMAN ZOOS”

The gradual disappearance of colonial and ethnic spectacles in Europe, Japan, and the United States occurred throughout the course of the 1930s. Three reasons explain the speed with which this transformation took place: the loss of public interest, despite a greater emphasis on the notion of alterity and the shows’ increasingly spectacular displays; the colonial powers’ desire to present the process of colonization as being firmly underway by excluding the “savage” de facto from representations of colonial triumph; and the development of new media supports such as the cinema which captivated the public’s imagination in novel ways. Other factors may be helpful in explaining these changes and in rendering the exhibition of these populations anachronistic, such as the increased familiarity people had with outsiders as the result of the presence in Europe of almost one million foreign combatants during the Great War and the influx of non-European migrants. The very last of these manifestations was held at **Expo 58: The Brussels World’s Fair** in 1958 on the eve of political Independence. However, criticism was such that the organizers were compelled to close the Congolese village. The “human zoo” was finally extinct, ushered in almost one hundred and fifty years earlier by the tragic and singular fate of the “Hottentot Venus”.



From 1930 on

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Black female bodies (Paris, 1931) exhibition (Globe-Action/Photo) - private collection



Black women at Expo 58, Congo (Globe-Action/Photo) - private collection (Globe-Action/Photo) - private collection



Expo 58: The Brussels World's Fair (1958)
 Brussels took the role of European capital and the World's Fair to promote its position in front of Europe's nations in a country where the economy was stagnating. The exhibition was held in a park, outside the city of Brussels, in the Bois de la Cambre. It was the largest exhibition ever held in Belgium. The exhibition was held in a park, outside the city of Brussels, in the Bois de la Cambre. It was the largest exhibition ever held in Belgium. The exhibition was held in a park, outside the city of Brussels, in the Bois de la Cambre. It was the largest exhibition ever held in Belgium.



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Black female bodies (Paris, 1931) exhibition (Globe-Action/Photo) - private collection

“ The exhibition in the Jardin d'Acclimatation of women with lip plates strikes me as an initiative that at best could be described as [...] unfortunate. People living in mainland France hardly need new excuses to amass false perceptions concerning colonial natives. **”**

Pauline Nash, Le Soir (1930)

From the *Elephant Man* in 1980
to the return of the Fuegians in 2010

HERITAGE AND MEMORY

What are the vestiges today of human exhibitions? In spite of the sheer scale of the phenomenon in terms of attendance rates and the millions of images produced, the subject itself had not received the critical attention it deserves. The work undertaken by various artists and the restitution of the remains of exhibits have made it possible to rediscover some of these stories. Thanks to the initiative of historians, novelists (such as Didier Daeninckx's *Cannibales* or Rachel Holmes' *The Hottentot Venus. The life and death of Saartjie Baartman*), documentary films (*Boma Tervuren, On l'appelait la Vénus hottentote, Calafate zoológicos humanos, The Return of Sara Baartman* or *Zoos Humains*), full-length feature films (*Vénus Noire* by Abdellatif Kechiche in France, *Man to Man* by Régis Wargnier in Great Britain or *Elephant Man* by David Lynch in the United States), the subject is better known today. The most recent development was the exhibition *Human Zoos: The Invention of the Savage* at the Quai Branly Museum in Paris in 2011-2012, visited by more than forty-five thousand people a month. The study of "human zoos" helps us improve our understanding of the ways in which "scientific racism" gradually transformed itself into a "popular racism" during the nineteenth century, while also explaining the origins of contemporary stereotypes. Today, artists have taken possession of this past and made it possible for us to deconstruct its legacy. The performances of Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña come to mind, who famously displayed themselves in *The Couple in the Cage* as "Amerindians" as an artistic parody in 1992, or for that matter the work of Kara Walker that has explored stereotypes about the black body. Similarly, French artist Orlan drew inspiration from George Catlin's portraits of Native Americans for a series of photographic portraits she completed in 2005. And finally, a series of "happenings", notably in zoos, have served to denounce the long history of exhibitions and their contemporary incarnations, as for example with the Bamboula Village in 1994, where the Saint-Michel biscuit company worked with the management of a wildlife park in Port-Saint-Père near the city of Nantes to reconstitute an "authentic African village", the "African village" at Augsburg Zoo in Germany in 2005, or the Baka Pygmies exhibited in the *Rainforest* natural park in Yvoir (Belgium) in 2002.



From the *Elephant Man* in 1980 to the return of the Fuegians in 2010

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What are the vestiges today of human exhibitions? In spite of the sheer scale of the phenomenon in terms of attendance rates and the millions of images produced, the subject itself had not received the critical attention it deserves. The work undertaken by various artists and the redistribution of the remains of exhibits have made it possible to rediscover some of these stories. Thanks to the initiative of historians, now lets touch on Didier Dornic's *Genealogy of Rachel Holroyd*, The *Historical Venus*. The life and death of George Baurman, documentary film *Mona Tavarous*, *On Appeal to Prince Norodom*, *Catalan zoological humanism*, The *Return of Sorol Barmann* or *Zoe Hamman*, *Full-length Holroyd Venus*, *Shower*, *Nava* by *Abdellatif Kechiche* in France, *Alma* by *Diogo Wangerin* in Great Britain or *Elephant Man* by *Daniel Lynch* in the United States, the subject is better known today. The most recent development was the *in-Etelle/Mama-Zoe*. The invention of the *Savage* at the *Grand Palais* Museum in Paris in 2011-2012, visited by more than forty-five thousand people a month. The study of "human zoos" brings an important understanding of the ways in which "scientific racism" gradually transformed itself into a "popular racism" during the nineteenth century, while also explaining the origins of contemporary stereotypes. Today, artists have taken possession of this past and made it possible for us to deconstruct its legacy. The *gambartarians* of *Clodo Frantz* and *Suzanne Garma* (she came to mind, who famously depicted them in *The Couple in the Dunes*, "Amoroso" as an artistic parody in 1992, or that of *Flatten* the work of *Kaia Walker* that has explored stereotypes about the black body. Similarly, French artist *Brian* drew inspiration from George Catlin's portraits of Native Americans for a series of photographic portraits she completed in 2005. And finally, a series of "topographies", notably in 2006, have served to denounce the long history of zoos and their contemporary incarnations, or her example with the *Bamboula Village* in 1995, where the *Saint-Michel* biscuit company worked with the management of a wildlife park in Port-Saint-Pierre near the city of Nantes to reconstitute an "authentic African village", the "African village" in Augsburg Zoo in Germany in 2006, or the *Black Pygmy* sculpture in the *Recreational* natural park in Ivry (Belgium) in 2002.



Historical Venus (2011) Didier Dornic, photograph by the artist. Photo by Didier Dornic, 2011



The *Historical Venus* (2011) Didier Dornic, photograph, 2011



Alma (2011) Diogo Wangerin, photograph, 2011



The restitution of the remains of exhibits and opening the past

The first exhibits were the bodies of African individuals who were exhibited in the zoos and in the streets. The quest for these bodies - or certain representations - has been a long and difficult one. In 1987, the *Historical Venus* was exhibited in Paris. In 2002, the *Historical Venus* was exhibited in Paris. In 2002, the *Historical Venus* was exhibited in Paris. In 2002, the *Historical Venus* was exhibited in Paris.

The *Historical Venus* (2011) Didier Dornic, photograph, 2011



The *Historical Venus* (2011) Didier Dornic, photograph, 2011



The *Historical Venus* (2011) Didier Dornic, photograph, 2011

“ In the United States and Europe as well, the police track down stereotypes, victims of racial profiling. Every non-white suspect serves to confirm the rule, inscribed as it is with invisible ink deep in the recesses of collective consciousness: crime is either black, or brown, or at the very least yellow. ”

Edurno Galarraga (2015)

THE LILIAN THURAM FOUNDATION: EDUCATION AGAINST RACISM

Lilian Thuram had a distinguished international soccer career, winning the World Cup (1998) and European Championship (2000) with the French national team. He created the *The Lilian Thuram Foundation: Education against racism* in 1998. The cornerstone of this organization is to be found in the statement “*One is not born a racist. One becomes racist*”, the goal being to show how racism is above all an intellectual and political construct. We must realize that History has conditioned us, from generation to generation, to think of ourselves first and foremost as Black, White, Maghrebi, Asian... Thanks to the work of sociologists, psychologists, philosophers, historians, and geneticists, we are better equipped to understand how our prejudices and beliefs have developed and therefore able to deconstruct them. It is with this objective in mind that this exhibition on “human zoos” was conceived. We are all different and unique, whatever our skin color or gender may be. The Foundation therefore aims to promote these values in schools and in sporting activities by developing a broad range of pedagogic tools and resources (a multimedia education programme against racism, *Us Others*, was designed for primary school teachers and pupils), activities in schools, organizing events, through publishing (such as Thuram’s 2010 book *My Black Stars, from Lucy to Barack Obama* which was awarded the Seligmann Prize for the fight against racism, or the 2012 *Manifesto for Equality*), and by enlisting the support of parents. With all these activities in mind and following the publication of the book *Human Zoos*, the Foundation teamed up with the Quai Branly Museum and the Achac Research Group to create the exhibition *Human Zoos: The Invention of the Savage*.



Small portrait of Lilian Thuram in the context of a French exhibition with the title of the exhibition: Lilian Thuram Education against racism (2018)

THE LILIAN THURAM FOUNDATION: EDUCATION AGAINST RACISM



Exhibition space in the context of the exhibition: Lilian Thuram Education against racism (2018)

Lilian Thuram had a distinguished international soccer career, winning the World Cup (1998) and European Championship (2000) with the French national team. He created the Lilian Thuram Foundation Education against racism in 1998. The cornerstone of this organization is to be found in the statement "We are not born a racist, the soccer racist", the goal being to show how racism is above all an intellectual and political construct. We must realize that history has conditioned us, from generation to generation, to think of ourselves first and foremost as Black, White, Maghrebi, Arab... Thanks to the work of sociologists, psychologists, philosophers, historians, and geneticists, we are better equipped to understand how our prejudices and beliefs have developed and therefore able to deconstruct them. It is with this objective in mind that this exhibition, "Human Zoo" was conceived. We are all different and unique, whatever our skin color or gender may be. The Foundation therefore aims to promote these values in schools and in sporting activities by developing a broad range of pedagogical tools and resources (a multimedia education programme against racism, an album, was designed for primary school teachers and pupils), activities in schools, organizing events, through publishing leaflets. The album "2012 book by Black Star & Rose-Lyly & Karim Obama" which was awarded the Solignac Prize for the fight against racism, or the 2012 Manifesto for Equality, and by offering the support of parents. With all these activities in mind and following the publication of the book Human Zoo, the Foundation teamed up with the David Brody Museum and the Active Research Group to create the exhibition Human Zoo: The Invention of the Savage.



Foundation Lilian Thuram Education Centre is online www.thuram.org

“The analysis of history is absolutely crucial to the process of understanding the multiple layers of racist culture which from one generation to the next we have inherited...”

Facil Haxhad, www.thuram.org (2009)

The exhibition Human Zoo: The Invention of the Savage (2011-2012)

For Lilian Thuram, the concept of the exhibition Human Zoo: The Invention of the Savage (2011-2012) was the result of the work of the Lilian Thuram Foundation Education against racism, which was created in 1998. The aim of the exhibition was to explore the history of racist discourse and representations in the exhibition. The book Human Zoo: The Invention of the Savage (2011) is a book about the history of the book and the exhibition to create French racism was a significant work of art.

Human Zoo: The Invention of the Savage (2011-2012) exhibition space (Lilian Thuram Foundation Education against racism, 2011)



Le Petit Journal (1904)



Le Petit Journal (1904)



Le Petit Journal (1904)



Human Zoo: The Invention of the Savage (2011-2012) exhibition space (Lilian Thuram Foundation Education against racism, 2011)



Lilian Thuram (2009)

“Our societies must integrate the simple idea that the color of one's skin or the sex of a person does not in any way determine their intelligence, the language they speak, the religion they practice, their physical capacities, or what they love or hate.”

Lilian Thuram (2009)



An exhibition proposed by the Achac Research Group (www.achac.com)
and the Lilian Thuram Foundation: Education against racism (www.thuram.org).