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THE WORLD FAIR
A TRANSMEDIAL THEATER

Multiple

The 1930s saw the final flourishing of world and national fairs, events that could draw up to forty million visitors (according to ticket sales). Even a partial list of such fairs during this decade runs long: the Exposition internationale coloniale, maritime, et d’art flamand in Antwerp and the Stockholm International Exhibition in 1930; the Exposition coloniale internationale in Paris in 1931; the Century of Progress International Exposition in Chicago in 1933; the Colonial Exposition in Oporto, Portugal, and the Levant Fair in Tel Aviv, Palestine, in 1934; the Exposition universelle et internationale in Brussels, the California Pacific International Exposition in San Diego, and the Exposition du Centenaire Farroupilha in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1935; the Empire Exhibition in Johannesburg and the Texas Centennial Central Exposition in Dallas in 1936; the Greater Texas and Pan-American Exposition in Dallas and Miami, the Pan-Pacific Peace Exhibition in Nagoya, Japan, and the Exposition internationale des arts et techniques dans la vie moderne in Paris, all within a few months in 1937; the Empire Exhibition in Glasgow in 1938; and finally the New York World’s Fair, the Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco, the New Zealand Centennial Exhibition in Wellington, and the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition in Moscow in 1939. For the new nation-states and developing nations, these expositions were intended as promotion; for the established democracies of Europe and the United States, they were compensatory, a means of dispelling geopolitical and economic anxiety during the Depression years. For totalitarian regimes such as the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, the international exposition fulfilled a craving for legitimization. ¹

We find all these elements compounded in the final sequence of world’s fairs, taking place just months before the deflagration of a second world war. The All-Union Agricultural Exhibition, autarchic and allegedly pastoral, was the Soviet Union’s answer to the 1937 and 1939 international expositions of Paris and New York, respectively. With

¹ See, for example, Martha Stone, The Patron State: Culture and Politics in Fascist Italy (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), which, while focusing exclusively on exhibitions, covers the full arc of Mussolini’s regime.
monumental pavilions wreathed in cornucopias of ceramic fruit, here was a consummate fiction of abundance; in reality, Soviet agriculture would not regain its pre-revolutionary level of agricultural productivity until 1953, the year of Stalin’s death, so battered had it been by brutal and mismanaged collectivization.²

**Ephemeral**

Any attempt to put these world’s fairs on exhibit is hampered by the massive disconnect between the scale of those events and the surviving material. The painter Fernand Léger, interviewed five months after the opening of the 1937 Paris Exposition des arts et techniques dans la vie moderne (International Exposition Dedicated to Art and Technology in Modern Life), observed: “What are the current art forms? There are two of them, each in the process of rejuvenation: mural art and the great popular spectacles. Mural art, as we see at the fair, is regaining its place in the city.”² The number of mural commissions for that exposition—³⁴⁵ murals by ⁴⁶⁴ artists selected from ⁷¹⁸ submissions—was indeed spectacular. But these murals, produced for the express purpose of decorating a temporary building or selling a product, were considered media rather than artworks—more like billboards than paintings—and most were slated from the start to be destroyed.

Reviewers, especially art and architecture critics, repeatedly bemoaned the use of ersatz materials and what they called the “isolated,” “exiled,” and “homeless” art “made expressly for exhibitions.” But this was, of course, the very nature of such time-based events, as modernists well recognized. In a special double issue in ¹⁹⁴¹ of the architecture magazine *Casabella* devoted to the history of exhibition design—from Joseph Paxton’s Crystal Palace for the ¹⁸⁵¹ London exposition to the present—the Rationalist architect Giuseppe Pagano wrote:

Exhibitions are the most efficacious vehicles for the knowledge, the diffusion, and the theorization of the concepts that dominate the modern sensibility. It would seem that, from an art-historical perspective, one would want to focus on more important, less transitory things, and yet it is a fact that when man wants to experience the new, he prefers to do so in *corpo reale.*⁴

Otherwise, he argued, exhibitions would be nothing but banal imitations of architecture.

In this context, it is revealing that the painter Mario Sironi worked to preclude the destruction of his *Fascist Labor*, a huge mosaic (eight meters high and more than twelve meters wide) created for the Hall of Honor in the Italian pavilion at the ¹⁹³⁷ Paris fair. Designed on the traditional basis with the use of large preparatory cartoons for each individual grouping of figures, this charismatrical image is characterized by a bizarrely battered surface, made to look like an archaeological find, a large fragment wrested from the penumbra of a remote ancient site, perhaps a Late Roman or Early Christian church. Despite its cumbersome size, the mosaic was made in a portable (and thus salvageable) format: ninety-six separate panels cast in a cement-based material reassuringly called “eternit.”⁵ Each panel—one square meter in size and set with hundreds of pieces of colored glass, semiprecious stones, and enamels—could be readily mounted and dismantled and thus relocated at will: a paradoxical format for a mosaic, a medium believed for centuries to be the most stable in its relation to architecture.⁶

**Temporal**

Though ephemeral, every world’s fair projected a distinct temporality. The ¹⁹³¹ Paris Exposition coloniale internationale (International Colonial Exhibition) was intentionally anachronistic, turned toward a past (nineteenth-century) colonial grandeur. Its most well-known poster, designed by Victor-Jean Desmures, illustrated the organizers’ attempt to present colonialism in a beneficial light as a uniting of the various different races under the “civilizing mission” of the West, and promised a “pictorial” “around-the-world-tour in a single day.” Set in the Bois de Vincennes on the eastern outskirts of Paris, next to a working-class neighborhood that had been planted with palms and date trees to simulate a tropical environment, the fair presented an idyllic escape from domestic tedium and economic gloom, just as Europe was being hit by the effects of the Wall Street crash of ¹⁹²⁹.

Visitors were enchanted to take long promenades on *grands boulevards* flanked with pavilions built in every imaginable colonial vernacular and to admire the elaborate reconstructions of African huts and Indo-Chinese temples, most of which were blown completely out of proportion to fit the monumental scale of the exhibition’s layout. On display were thousands of artifacts gathered in recent ethnological missions, especially “imported” tribesmen, and even a permanent zoo. Supporting such slogans as “la plus grande France” and “France of one hundred million souls,” the exhibition took place in a context blissfully dominated by a France unrivaled by the world’s de facto premier colonial empire: Britain, after much organizational bickering, had withdrawn from the fair.
The 1937 Paris fair, set on the Champs de Mars below the Eiffel Tower, was anchored in the present. The sprawling space, dominated by the forbidding neoclassical architecture of the brand new Trocadéro complex, spoke of monumentality, totalitarianism, and military might. Few views can be said to have been more ominous than that offered to the fair’s visitors as they queued up on the Trocadéro’s parapet. In front of them, towering over the other national pavilions and facing one another on either side of the Eiffel Tower (itself a remnant of a past fair), were the two marble Molochs of the Soviet and Nazi pavilions. Critics did remark on the overpowering nature of the German pavilion’s exterior—a stark, streamlined Doric box surmounted by a massive square tower, designed by Hitler’s favorite architect, Albert Speer—and also took note of its equally aggressive counterpart, the Soviet pavilion with its stepped profile, designed by Boris Iofan, Stalin’s preferred architect. While hoping that France, like the new Trocadéro with its long curved arms, might succeed in a strategy of political containment, critics and viewers alike failed to read the script of what this face-off meant, with disastrous consequences. Max Eduard Lieburg, a Swiss journalist, was one of the few who recognized the realpolitik of this exposition for what it was; he observed:

Instead of being an apotheosis of art and technology breaking down national barriers, this exhibition became a feast of national vanities, of each nation’s desire to dominate, a field of national propaganda-pavilions. This “League of Nations” has degenerated into a gathering of propagandists ministers where each in his own way is trying to get a hearing. Anyone who wants to know how each nation regards itself and how it would have the rest of the world regard it, can now save themselves the trouble of a world cruise.

The 1939 New York fair was the perfect reflection of a mindset obstinately tuned to “the bright tomorrows.” In contrast to the escapism of the Parc de Vincennes and the stateliness of the Champs de Mars, this exposition was built on a vast empty lot, a marshy landfill in the still largely undeveloped area of Flushing, Queens, over what was once a garbage dump. Soon enough, in the spirit of urban renewal, that space would be dotted by 375 structures (if one includes the smaller information booths), 100 of which were large pavilions. Built in a streamlined Art Deco style, as we see in George MaLaughlin’s seductive pastel renderings, these pavilions were painted in creamy colors graded from soft white to rosy gray. Contrasting with the mute, opaque, Neoclassicism of 1937, this fair marked the triumph of a friendly, bubbly “architecture parlante”; buildings that spell out their function and identity through their form. Broadcasting the fair’s unabashed branding, here was architecture-as-packaging. A giant teller, “the world’s tallest cash register” more than forty feet high, set on a revolving platform so that one could see it from any part of the surrounding area, computed the daily attendance at the exposition. Inside, playing on the dramatic jumps in scale that were popular at such fairs, the 7,857 parts of a normal-sized cash register were exhibited under glass. Elsewhere, visitors could view a huge Underwood Master Typewriter, the largest in the world at 700 times normal size: its typebars weighed 45 pounds each, the carriage weighed 3,500 pounds, and the ribbon, a hundred feet long and five inches wide, actually typed letters on stationary measuring nine by twelve feet. In the Wonder Bakery, which was shaped like a loaf of bread, animated characters from Alice in Wonderland—a little happy wonder bakers—showed every step involved in the process of baking bread.

Place/No-place

In Paris in 1937, the sumptuous interior of the German pavilion, intended to function as a rarified jewel case cut off from the hustle and bustle of the fair, produced an almost eerie effect. Adopting a romanticized approach, the Germans also made sure to distance their display of mechanical apparatuses from both openly military and capitalist concerns, elevating them to a quasi-mystical realm. Samples of the country’s vaunted high-tech production, such as a Mercedes-Benz Zeppelin diesel motor, foundry equipment, medical devices, and a phenomenal array of lenses, were placed on pedestals or encased in elegant free-standing glass vitrines similar to those used in nineteenth-century art museums.10 Rows of monumental paintings faced one another along the walls of the pavilion’s main hall, all adamantly academic in style. The most striking thing about these paintings, as Karen Fiss has remarked, was the elision of human labor: the factories and the Autobahn were depicted as if they were building themselves, emerging from immense quarries as if willed by a supernatural force, the invisible hand of Hitler, the form-giver of the new German nation.

While the Nazis may have felt that the subject of work was best left to the Soviets, it turned out that the Soviets had themselves decided to forsake the topic in their pavilion. This edifice was dominated by mural-size Socialist Realist paintings by Alexander Deyneka and Alexander Gerasimov, in which exultant collective farmers, valiant workers, and other motley crowds forsake their tasks to gather joyfully around their beloved leaders.
In marked contrast to these, the most popular attractions at the New York fair—the Perisphere and General Motor’s Futurama—were what Marc Augé has called “non-places” or sites of “sur-modernity”: spaces conceived as networks, nodes, points of exchange of people, merchandise, and vehicles; places where everybody is moving, seeming to know where they are going, yet leaving no traces, true sites of passage where everyone is in transit and no one dwells. Inside the Perisphere was the “Democracy City,” a sprawling model of a megapolitan that connected the skyscrapers of the “Centertron” with several suburban “Pleasantvilles” via a maze of superhighways. Futurama, a forecast of what a thoroughly motorized America would look like in the year 1960, was to be experienced as a “ride.” Visitors were ushered into moving chairs, each equipped with an individual speaker. Projected images, sound (a dramatic symphony rising, in the words of the official guidebook, to “diaphanous volume”), and a narrator’s voice describing each scene were all automatically synchronized. 

Tactile/Dissolve

As Jacques Soulillou explains in his book Le Décoratif, three peripheries are at work in the genesis of the decorative: the quantitative (sucumbing excess as opposed to tasteful decorum), the feminine (desire as opposed to male control), and the exotic (the subordinate relation of the colonies to the colonizing nation). All three factors motivate the horror vacui of the decoration of the Palais de la Porte Dorée, the only permanent building of the 1931 Paris Exposition coloniale internationale. Running the full length and height of its four exterior walls is an immense frieze in bas-relief executed by the sculptor Alfred Janniot, who, six years later, in 1937, would carve the sparser and more harmonious reliefs that adorn Paris’s first national museum of modern art. Entitled The Colonies’ Contribution to France, the 1931 relief is replete with thongs of half-naked bodies of indigenous people from the four corners of the globe, immersed in jungle scenes with flora and fauna of every imaginable variety, carrying loads of natural goods to be shipped from the quays of France’s main colonial harbors. Accordingly, most of the materials used for the artworks at the world’s fair were artisanal: made of terracotta or imported exotic wood, or else of bronze, as for example in imitation of organic texture in a most fantastic bearess. Contemporary reviewers tellingly described Janniot’s bas-relief as an immense “stone tapestry.” Indeed, nowhere was the promotion of the colonies as an organic part of the body of France more evident than in the commission to the centuries-old Manufacture nationale des Gobelins for a series of tapestries depicting North Africa: Algeria, its oldest and most “faithful” colony, whose conquest had just been celebrated with a centennial exhibition in 1930, and its protectorates of Morocco and Tunisia. Woven in sumptuous greens, pinks, and oranges were scenes from an Algerian souk and a Tunisian dancer performing in a lush desert oasis, her multicolored traditional outfit set off by the white burnouses of her male onlookers.

In the aforementioned interview with Léger at the time of the 1937 fair, he was asked, “Are you reconnecting with the past tradition of fresco painters?” to which he responded, “Yes, but with those that came before Michelangelo.” Mechanical as it looked, it did not take much imagination to view The Transmission of Energy, Léger’s depiction of a hydroelectric plant for the entry hall of the Palais de la Découverte (the science pavilion housed in the Grand Palais), as a modernist translation of French frescoes of the Middle Ages. While the preparatory watercolor features the bright primary colors (red, yellow, and blue) characteristic of his work, the ochre ground, wine reds, and ultramarines, as well as the motif of a rising sun in the final work, recall the color schemes and the central motif of the orb and mandorla commonly found in the apses of twelfth-century churches. The oblong format, color palette, and serpentine pattern formed by the thick black lines of intertwining railway tracks of the panels executed by Robert Delaunay and Felix Aublet for the decoration of the façade of the Palais des Chemin de Fer (Railway pavilion) similarly echoed the “cloisonné” effect of the stained-glass windows of Gothic churches. So too the large circular patterns in the mural-scale works by Robert and Sonia Delaunay. While their four surviving (and now very fragile) vertical friezes for the Palais des Chemin de Fer were painted on wood, they also experimented with mixing paint with casein, powdered cork, and sawdust to produce grainy amalgams closer to the texture of the modern cement wall. There was, however, an inherent contradiction in their core concept for these murals. Dedicated to the experience of simultaneity produced by the latest technological advances in transport and communications, their aspiration to be amalgamated with the wall can be read as a betrayal of their embrace of motion and change. Most striking visually in the Palais de l’Aéronautique (Aeronautics pavilion) was not the murals but the theatrics of airborne suspension employed in its Hall Tronconique, where airplanes were displayed next to a double spiral ramp under a conical glass dome; this spectacle was rendered in a watercolor by the same Robert Delaunay.
This eclipse of the hand-painted mural by dematerialized, purely optical media was consummated in New York. Of the 105 painted murals commissioned for the fair, most were executed in the Realist style characteristic of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) artists. Of the handful of murals that were assigned to modernist artists belonging to the American Abstract Artists association, all that survive are a handful of preparatory watercolors. While the nautical forms in Arshile Gorky’s mural for the Marine Building were clearly indebted to Léger (who painted a mural for the Consolidated Edison Pavilion at the New York fair) and to Joan Miró, Ilya Bolotowsky’s biomorphic forms floating over monochrome fields of blue in the Hall of Medical Sciences were more abstract than anything to be seen in 1937 in Paris. While these artists deserve credit for introducing to a large public a language of abstraction that was still considered radical at that point in US history, no way could they compete with the visual extravaganzas offered by the Hall of Color in the Eastman Kodak Building. There, projected on the walls of a huge semicircular auditorium, were two thousand 35mm changing transparencies, each illustrating eminently photogenic subjects such as flowers, animals, and scenery, synchronized into a cycle lasting just ten minutes. Before exiting, the visitors were reminded, in a final participatory sales pitch, that this “greatest photographic panorama on earth” was made of myriad slides such as one could make oneself with any camera, as long as it was loaded with Kodachrome.

**Medial Switches**

For the Socialists in Paris in 1937, the photomural was the medium of choice. One might even posit that it was the photomural that allowed the French and Spanish Popular Fronts to declare—visually—their status as political fellow travelers. This was all striking in view of the fact that the totalitarian nations appeared to have decided, as if by a common accord, to forsake photo-based agitprop and instead to adorn their pavilions’ walls with age-old media such as monumental paintings, tapestries, and mosaics. Photomurals could be made fast and on the cheap. For the French Left, which had only a short window of time between the Socialist Leon Blum’s election and the fair’s opening, the medium was a panacea. For Republican Spain, suffering the brutal economic shortages and overall chaos of a civil war, the fact that photomurals could be put together on site, without having to be pre-assembled in Spain, proved to be providential.

“Photomontage can move you” and “Polychromy = Joy,” declared Le Corbusier, and so it seemed to be. In dynamic compositions like

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“Traveller and Recréer, Léger and the talented Lucien Mazenod were able to create eye-popping effects by juxtaposing close-ups of mechanical parts and large biomorphic forms accented by color (bright red, yellow, and blue). For the decoration of the French agriculture pavilions, Léger teamed up with designer Charlotte Perriand—a pairing that calls to mind the famous Soviet photomonteur couplees of Alexander Rodchenko/Varvara Stepanova and Gustav Klutsis/Valentina Kulagina—to produce a rarity in interwar France: a truly revolutionary elan. In a wonderful mix of the epic and the whimsical, one of their photomurals shows a fisherman sitting next to a trio of Breton women, dressed in the local costume and headdress of the Pays Bigouden, next to a jazz saxophonist, while in the middle—in a more lyrical vein—several hands are holding up a red carnation in front of a target-shaped rainbow, both emblems of the utopian union of city and country envisioned by the Front Populaire.”

*Transmedial*

“The ‘content’ of any medium is always another medium,” posited Marshall McLuhan in the introduction to his well-known book *Understanding Media* in 1964, and this is how Picasso approached Guernica, the great masterpiece to come to us from the Paris fair. Contemporary critics and later writers have noted the fact that Guernica was surrounded by photomurals executed by Josep Renau, Spain’s foremost photomonteur. But what has been overlooked by both groups is the compelling visual homology between the painting and the photomurals: they both reached from floor to ceiling and were of equal width; they featured the same black-and-white tonal range; and they were both conceived in the structural form of montage. The one-way circulation for the public devised by the pavilion’s architect, Josep Lluís Sert, meant that Picasso’s painting, though it was not hung adjacent to the photomurals, was experienced as part of a visual continuum with them, as visitors traveled the prescribed route from entry to exit. The production sequence of Picasso’s painting is crucial in this respect: he knew that the Spanish pavilion would be largely devoted to photomurals, and because the pavilion opened seven weeks late, due to the Civil War, and because Picasso is known to have visited the fair soon after its opening.
must also surely have noted, while he was still working on Guernica, the profusion of photomurals in the pavilions of the Front Populaire. The fact that he sent Guernica on the road after the fair closed in January 1938—it traveled to over twenty cities before it was finally installed in a special room in the Museum of Modern Art, New York, at the end of 1940—certainly indicates that Picasso wanted his painting to function as political propaganda. But Picasso clearly also expected that, while Renau’s photomurals might not be preserved for posterity, anything he created in any medium would be; and so it has proved. Guernica now hangs in the Reina Sofia, both as supreme icon and as agitprop.

Defamatory

The relentless anesthetization of politics and instrumentalization of art in the 1930s gave birth to a particular type of exhibition: the defamatory one. First, in a perverse twist on the earlier Dada fairs, there appeared what art historian Adam Jolles has called “Stalin’s Talking Museums.”32 Art in the Capitalist Era, which opened in 1931, was hosted by Moscow’s Tretyakov Gallery, the very institution that had promoted avant-garde art in Russia in the immediate aftermath of the revolution. There, a selection of exceptional works by Wassily Kandinsky, Alexander Rodchenko, Kazimir Malevich, and others were hung in an intentionally careless, chaotic manner, next to text banners exorcising the works as “bourgeois art in the blind alley of formalism and self-negation.” A few months later came Art from the Age of Imperialism at the State Russian Museum in Leningrad, and soon thereafter The Art of the Great Industrial Bourgeoisie on the Eve of the Proletarian Revolution, again at the Tretyakov. Another such perjury was the systematic transformation of hallowed places of worship (churches) into anti-religious museums. As a visiting French critic noted in 1932, these were more than museums, they were shrines, supplanting past creeds with the State’s new anti-religious doctrine, the nefarious Soviet spirit of “scientific materialism,” which was illustrated by a series of thematically arranged vitrines.33 Closer to Dada but inevitably tainted by these Soviet exhibitions was a small counter exhibition organized by the Surrealists under the sponsorship of the Anti-Imperialist League, at the request of the Comintern. Entitled La Vérité sur les colonies (The Truth About the Colonies), the 1931 exhibition took place in the former Soviet pavilion of the Paris 1925 Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels moderne (International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts), which had since been relocated to the ninth arrondissement. On the ground floor, the ideological section, curated by

the historian André Thirion, featured maps, documents, photographs of the indigenous way of life, and charts recording the abuses committed by imperialism, next to an array of text panels celebrating the “good life” in the USSR with its “wonderful ethnic diversity.” The second floor, furnished by the painter Yves Tanguy and the poets Paul Eluard and Louis Aragon, featured trinkets and tribal art juxtaposed with “European fetishes” — objects of church propaganda brought in by missionaries — to the sound of Polynesian music. 24 And yet the fact that it only managed to attract five thousand visitors in eight months speaks volumes about the public’s imperviousness to the communist cause at that point in history. Most interesting, once viewed through the lens of defamatory exhibition, was the 1932 Mostra della rivoluzione fascista (Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution) marking the tenth anniversary of Mussolini’s regime. Housed in a monumental enfilade of Beaux Arts rooms in Rome’s Palazzo delle Esposizioni, this installation came closest, although clearly unintentionally, to the mock-Celtic effect fostered by the anti-religious museums in the USSR. Most ironic is the fact that it was largely in order to avoid too overt an indebtedness to the photographic artifacts they had seen, and greatly admired, at the Soviet pavilion at the 1928 Pressa exhibition in Cologne (an accusation that ended up being made against the Mostra in any case), that its organizers, Dino Alfieri and Luigi Preddi, had attempted to give a “Roman” stamp to their installation. The black-and-white photomurals originally conceived by El Lissitzky in Cologne were thus pumped up and transfigured, to bombastic effect. Photomurals were combined and fused with dummy walls that intruded and jutted out at odd angles, beneath ceilings that dropped vertiginously, overlaid with chunky Fascist insignia, offering the visitors glimpses at the terrors of a primordial underworld. 25 In “Room E,” which covered the period from World War I to the formation of the Fasci italiani di combattimento (Italian “Groups of Combat”), pictured in monstrous fashion the “red peril” that had been averted in 1917. “Suffocated by a red flag strangling it at the neck,” read the official catalogue, “is the subversive Bolshevik beast raising its head.” 26 Next in this lineage of exhibitions — preludes to the largest, most visited, and most infamous of them all, the Entarte Kunst (Degenerate Art) exhibition in 1937 — were Kulturholschwistische Bilder (Images of Cultural Bolshevism) in Mannheim, Regierungskunst von 1918 bis 1933 (Government Art, 1918-1933) in Karlsruhe, Novembergeist: Kunst im Dienste der Zersetzung (November Spirit: Art in the Service of Subversion) in Stuttgart, and others, commonly described in the daily press as Schreckenskammern der Kunst (chambers of horrors in art) or Schandausstellungen (abomination exhibitions). 27


26. Alfieri and Preddi, Mostra della rivoluzione fascista, 118.


A further link in this chain of distance and memory was the postage stamps issued at the time of the fairs. The stamps depicted the pavilions. To affix one of these stamps to a postcard from the fairs was to create a mise en abyme in which one miniature nests inside another.

The 1930s marked the concomitant dwindling of the three media I have treated here: the world’s fair, the mural, and the postcard. Fairs, born out
of the commodification of culture in the nineteenth century, decreased significantly in number after World War II: there were eight in the 1940s, five in the 1950s, six in the 1960s, three in the 1970s, and five in the 1980s. Traffic in postcards similarly began to fade around 1940.30 For both, the reasons must have been the boom in tourism and air travel, the telephone, and the color-illustrated magazine. The reasons for the waning of the mural-sided image, by contrast, were political. A concerted attempt was made after the war to shed the ominous overtones that the mural had acquired in the 1930s. The modicum of figuration that had been necessary for the mural's delivery of a progandistic message was largely forsaken for abstraction, while the desire to wed art to monumental architecture was abandoned in favor of a new poetics of heterogeneity, precariousness, and impermanence.