

# The *Butterfly Effect*: Missed Opportunities for Progressive Change at the Columbian World's Exposition of 1893

*The Butterfly Effect*, first mentioned in Ray Bradbury's 1952 sci-fi short story *The Sound of Thunder* is a theory about how a single event regardless of how small can bring about great change. The Columbian World's Exposition of 1893, in Chicago, was one such event that had both progressive and regressive consequences for architecture and social justice. Architect Louis Sullivan is often quoted for his criticism of the fairs Neo-Classicism and how its stylistically regressive aspects had set technological progress in architecture back fifty years. The fair also propagated the biases of the Western Canon, marginalizing women, cultures, and races. Former slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass, on invitation from Haiti, was only allowed to speak from the peripheral Midway. Despite these injustices, it contradictorily offered a myriad of progressive advances in other disciplines. The overall message of the fair was to encourage national unity for the betterment of humanity in a time of great change. The loftier premise was admirable, but the implementation and progressive promise of the fair was far from the truth. We still live in the shadow of the legacy of the fair, and yet it continues to shape and color every aspect of our world today.

**Keywords:** architecture, marginalization, social justice, the *Butterfly Effect*, and World Fairs

## Introduction

According to German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), all moments are connected, and every small moment and the memory of its past moments, influences the actions of the future. Sadly, and as contradictorily future forward his general ideas were for the time, he still believed that "active citizenship, civic freedom, and even property rights should be withheld from women".<sup>1</sup> Sometimes while looking back in history one can observe both progressive ideas coupled with regressive ideas, with no resolution. If only small moments could create future memorable and sustainable change, this would be beyond the ideal. Quite often there are visionaries who dream quite large, but perhaps it is not always the larger gestures that are important, but the smaller ones that are necessary to invoke the sustainable change we desire.

Quite simply this is the analogy of the *Butterfly Effect*, a theory that a single event, regardless of how small, can potentially change the trajectory of history. It has become synonymous with small gestures that can bring about great change, both positive and negative. The parallels speak to how one

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<sup>1</sup>Christopher M. Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600-1947*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 2006, 377.

single solitary idea generates an outpouring of creativity, the so-called *generative spark*, which can affect subsequent lasting change. What if these changes touched more than the immediate situation of the individual and considered the larger effect on other communities?

The ramifications of these potential directions should affect a multitude of ideas and consequences without marginalizing or suppressing others for the gain of any individual or group. The Columbian World's Exposition of 1893 in Chicago, Illinois, was one such influential event that had both progressive and regressive consequences that affected the direction of architecture and equity in society. It was a paradoxical cultural statement and "a reflection of the confusions, fragmentations, and hopes of a transitional age"<sup>2</sup> in America, and a clear demonstration of the *Butterfly Effect*. We still live in the shadow of the legacy of the fair, but at the same time it continues to shape and color every aspect of our world today.

### **The *Butterfly Effect***

Edward N. Lorenz is often credited with the first use of the term *Butterfly Effect* and his exploration of chaos theory at his presentation to the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1972. This was in response to chaotic patterns and systems he observed related to various environmental issues and weather models. The concept most associated with the *Butterfly Effect* goes back twenty years earlier to Ray Bradbury's science-fiction short story *The Sound of Thunder*, first published in *Collier's* magazine in 1952.<sup>3</sup> It depicted a time traveling dinosaur hunter who returned to an altered present due to a seemingly insignificant event. Ray Bradbury's pivotal moment comes toward the end of the story:

Embedded in the mud, glistening green and gold and black, was a butterfly, very beautiful and very dead. "Not a little thing like *that*! Not a butterfly!" cried Eckels.

It fell to the floor, an exquisite thing, a small thing that could upset balances and knock down a line of small dominoes and then big dominoes and then gigantic dominoes, all down the years across Time. Eckels's mind whirled. It *couldn't* change things. Killing one butterfly couldn't be *that* important! Could it?<sup>4</sup>

It did change things! Because of that seemingly insignificant event, Eckels returned to an altered and frightfully dystopian and fascist world. It was a clear reference to and a reminder of the atrocities of World War II, and it was

<sup>2</sup>Julie K. Rose, *The Legacy of the Fair*, <https://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA96/WCE/legacy.html> 2013, August 1, 1996, (accessed on April 12, 1956)

<sup>3</sup>Ray Bradbury, "A Sound of Thunder", *Collier's*, June 28, 1952, 20.

<sup>4</sup>Ray Bradbury, *A Sound of Thunder*, (Logan, IA: Perfection Learning Corporation), 2002, (originally published 1952), 23.

1 a timely reminder of how fragile the post-war recovery was and the need for  
2 perseverance in light of continuing world events and troubles in the 1950's.

3 The idea of an altered timeline is a fascinating concept for artists and  
4 historians in search of creative sparks and origination theories that try to  
5 connect humans, especially when tracing the lineage of ideas and where they  
6 are derived from. The *what if* and *what could be* consideration of that  
7 aspiration postures nostalgic ideations and creative connective threads that fuel  
8 speculation, inspiration, and imagination. Consider the proliferation of  
9 Classicism, in the arts and architecture, and its various applications and  
10 symbolic interpretations throughout history, which became the sustained focus  
11 of many historians and creative practitioners.

12 To solidify that justification, and assumed hereditary superiority (or  
13 perhaps insecurity), the Western Canon came about to define a body of high  
14 culture and academic training, often at the exclusion of other cultures. In many  
15 respects, the Western Canon corresponded to and continued the established  
16 principles of the ancients for many academicians in Europe.

17 The Western Canon built and expanded upon the established Canon of  
18 Polykleitos, the ancient Greek “treatise on creating and proportioning  
19 sculpture.”<sup>5</sup> Similarly, from ancient Rome, Vitruvius’ ideas on architecture  
20 also contributed immensely to the reification of Western thought and the  
21 Western Canon, and often at the exclusion and expense of others.

## 22 23 24 **The Bias of the Western Canon**

25  
26 The Western Canon has for centuries dominated much academic thought  
27 and research, and is a constructed narrative, excluding many alternative  
28 cultural and architectural voices. Above all, it has also come to mistakenly  
29 define a specific timeline and lineage in the development of architecture, from  
30 Ancient Greece through to various later Neo-Classical interpretations. This  
31 narrative and architectural vocabulary continued unbroken for centuries, with  
32 few deviations, until the Modernist movement. Antiquity was a dominant  
33 aesthetic and cultural overlay, and a symbolic ideal difficult to break away  
34 from, in which any alternative forms were relegated to a derogatory status.  
35 Take for example Renaissance architect, painter, and historian Giorgio Vasari’s  
36 negative description of the Gothic as “barbaric,”<sup>6</sup> opposed to the ideals of the  
37 Renaissance. This return to the *purser styles*, tried to ignore the “barbarous”  
38 forms of the Middle Ages, and in effect solidified the hold Neo-Classicism  
39 would have in architecture for centuries to come.

40 The dominance of the collective cultural works produced in Greece, Italy,  
41 France, and England has typically come to define the Western Canon (though  
42 many would even object to this selective geographic categorization). Despite

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<sup>5</sup>Hugh McCague, *Pythagoreans and Sculptors: The Canon of Polykleitos*, Rosicrucian Digest, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin), Vol. 1, 2009, 23.

<sup>6</sup>Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, (London, UK: George Bell and Sons), 1900, (originally published in 1550), 24.

1 this tradition, there are many critical dissenters. Bernard M. Knox, in *The*  
 2 *Oldest Dead White European Males and Other Reflections on the Classics*  
 3 offers objections against the perceived universality of the Western Canon:

4  
 5 Advocates of multiculturalism and... feminism... have denounced the  
 6 traditional canon..., repudiating it not only as sexist and racist but even as  
 7 the instrument of... a ruling class to impose conformity.<sup>7</sup>  
 8

9 The Western Canon, as defined by the *classics*, has come to reframe  
 10 architecture and its history. This is at the exclusion and expense of the East  
 11 and its corresponding narratives. Yet, even the terms East, West, as well as the  
 12 Western Canon, are extremely Eurocentric by their geographic reference, in  
 13 denoting an authoritative *religious* overtone in what is deemed to be of  
 14 universal importance to all. Ultimately, the Western Canon is just another  
 15 form of cultural privileging and exclusion in which sociologist Kenneth  
 16 Gergen, in *An Invitation to Social Construction*, notes that “all competitive  
 17 voices are either suppressed, or shown to be wrong.”<sup>8</sup>  
 18

19 Neo-Classicism has also come to symbolize a pseudo-colonizing force as a  
 20 closed system of signs in the realm of an invented tradition. For those  
 21 countries outside the Western Canon, it reduces cultural issues to a series of  
 22 foreign signs overlayed on existing cultural signs in which one assumes Neo-  
 23 Classicism has existed universally, relying on *taken-for-granted* assumptions.  
 24

## 25 **The Narrative of Neo-Classicism**

26  
 27 Neo-Classical architecture in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries was particularly  
 28 popular in the West and was applied to many civic buildings, due to its grand,  
 29 sophisticated, and imposing forms inspired and adapted from antiquity. It  
 30 emphasized the graceful lines, scale, and proportioning systems that embraced  
 31 the symbolism and grandeur of ancient forms derived from the rules of the  
 32 Greek Orders. Neo-Classicism was the choice of many designers who aimed  
 33 to employ the associated symbolism of power over society, and colonialism,  
 34 which came to represent superiority, much in the same way that the ancient  
 35 Greeks utilized the Orders in temples.

36 The appeal of Neo-Classical architecture in America and Europe  
 37 expressed new democratic ideals and the rationalism of the Enlightenment,  
 38 following devastating monarchical rule. Its main expressions were Georgian,  
 39 Greek Revival, and Renaissance Revival forms, all based on the white marble  
 40 ruins of antiquity. The appeal of an ideal beauty in both art and architecture  
 41 was heavily propagated and romanticized in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by the German art  
 42 historian Johann J. Winckelmann. Winckelmann, who had visited several

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<sup>7</sup>Bernard M. Knox, *The Oldest Dead White European Males and Other Reflections on the Classics*, (London, England: W. W. Norton and Company, Ltd.), 1993, 12.

<sup>8</sup>Kenneth J. Gergen, *An Invitation to Social Construction*, (London, England: Sage Publications, Ltd.), 2009, 66.

1 ancient sites in Italy (and none in Greece), personally saw color fragments and  
 2 had selectively glossed over the knowledge that Greek and Roman art and  
 3 architecture had color,<sup>9</sup> in favor of the idealistic purity that white offered to  
 4 support the changes coinciding with the Enlightenment. Even though the  
 5 knowledge of color had inspired relatively few architects to incorporate color,<sup>10</sup>  
 6 its appeal fell out of favor primarily because of Winckelmann's fetishization  
 7 and promotion of white marble.

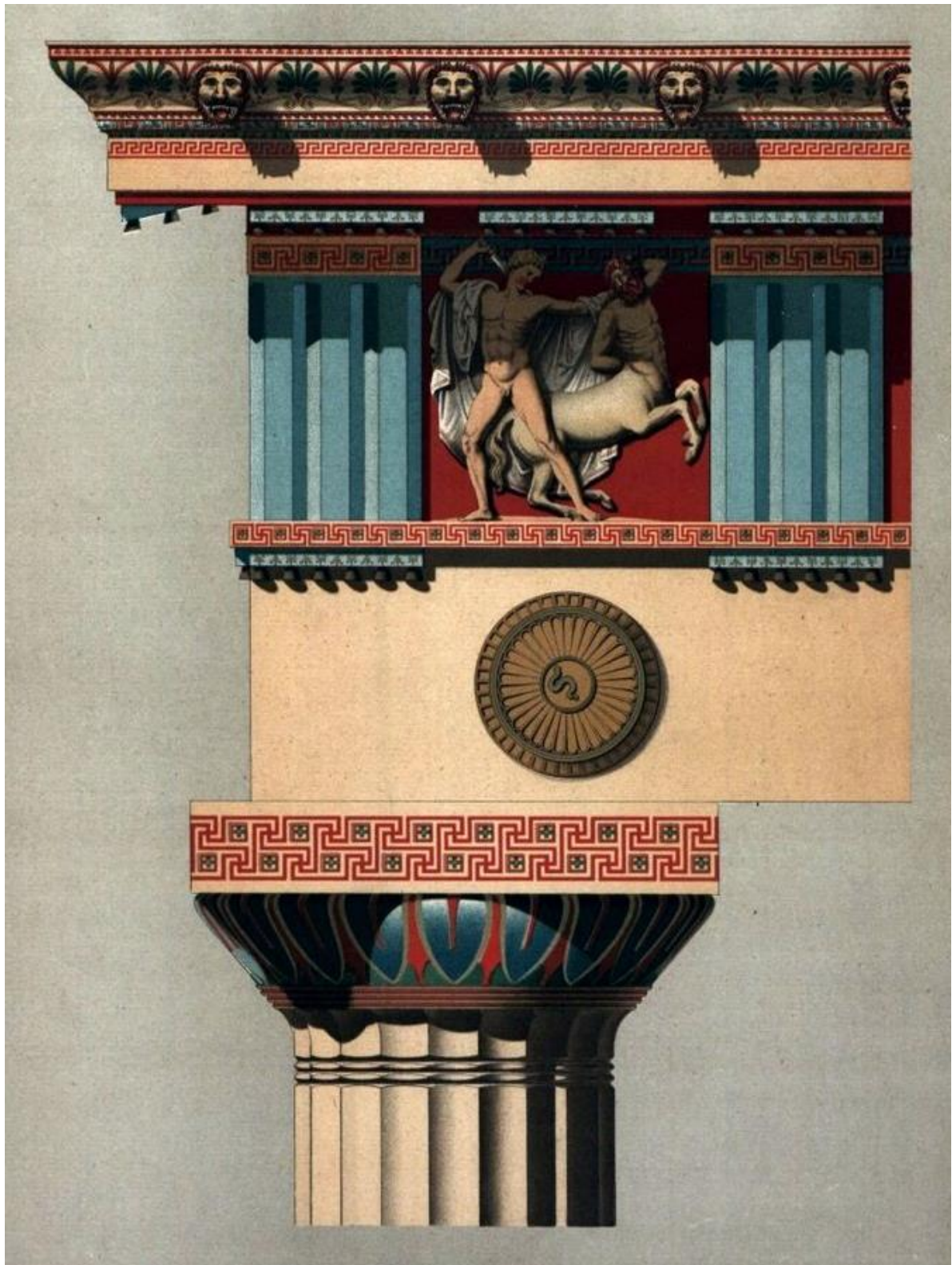
8 For example, in New England and throughout the United States, as well as  
 9 in many parts of Europe, we often romanticize the town green or common  
 10 space surrounded by white picket fences and white painted wooden churches in  
 11 the *Greek Revival Style* (ca. 1830). As a still fledgling and insecure democracy  
 12 in the 1830's, the United States looked back to the temples of ancient Greece,  
 13 the first democracy, for association, prowess, and architectural inspiration. At  
 14 this same time in Europe, much of the ancient world was also being  
 15 rediscovered and analyzed and adapted to a host of Neo-Classical buildings.

16 Jump ahead to the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when various scientific  
 17 investigations into the original colors of ancient architecture were once again  
 18 revealed by microscope in the pores of these stone buildings. For centuries,  
 19 archaeologists and architects assumed that buildings such as the Parthenon in  
 20 Athens were as white as the stone they saw on the ruins. However, many  
 21 academic texts of the period knew about the colors (*see Figure 1*), as did  
 22 Winckelmann, but yet still contributed to the myth of whiteness in architecture.

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<sup>9</sup>Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, translated by Harry Francis Mallgrave, (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute), 2006 (originally published in 1764), 195.

<sup>10</sup>Nicole Neuenfeld, "The Colouring of Ancient Greek Sculptures: The Driving Force of Expression?", *Fresh Perspectives on Graeco-Roman Visual Culture*, proceedings of an International Conference at Humboldt-Universität, Berlin, 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2013, (Berlin, Germany: Humboldt-Universität), 2015, 68.



**Figure 1.** *Kunsthistorische Bilderbogen*, “Reconstruction of the colors on the entablature of the Parthenon,” Germany, 1883, Public Domain

1 According to F. S. Laurence, Executive Secretary for the National Terra  
 2 Cotta Society, in *Color in Architecture: The Basic Principles of Its Application*  
 3 *in Available Mediums*, published in 1922, it was suggested that “in any use of  
 4 the classical orders... we should turn to bright colors and shades of colors  
 5 employed by the Greeks and apply them in the same way.”<sup>11</sup> Yet they did not.  
 6 Many scholars also conjectured that if Michelangelo’s sculptures during the  
 7 Renaissance were not painted, then classical architecture must follow the same  
 8 constructed logic of being pure white.<sup>12</sup> Clearly this was mistaken! As a result  
 9 of this assumption, the proliferation of Neo-Classicism outshone other styles in  
 10 the West and became more symbolic and representative of a pure and  
 11 disciplined style. Deep down, it also was also one of the many latent aspects  
 12 of colonialism and a form of culturally derived superiority and dominance.

13 In New England, much architecture followed the accepted pre-existing  
 14 Neo-Classical narrative, with scant thought to the idea that buildings did not  
 15 have to be only in white. Therefore, re-imagine a New England town green,  
 16 flanked by buildings with the re-discovered colors of antiquity. A different  
 17 constructed narrative and architectural history would certainly have pervaded.  
 18 Therefore, universal truths, like the Western Canon, have to be challenged.

### 19 20 21 **1893 Columbian World’s Exposition: Both Progressive and Regressive**

22  
23 The Columbian World’s Exposition in Chicago was the first world’s fair  
 24 outside of Europe<sup>13</sup> built to commemorate Christopher Columbus reaching the  
 25 New World in 1492. The fair was seen “as symbolic of the achievements of  
 26 the new nation and of one of its newest cities, and was thus a gesture of  
 27 national and civic pride.”<sup>14</sup> The ambitions of the fair were to exceed “the fame  
 28 of the 1889 Paris World Exposition, in physical size, scope of  
 29 accomplishments, attendance, and profitability... [and] they exceeded the Paris  
 30 Exposition in all accounts.”<sup>15</sup> Keep in mind that it was competing with the  
 31 advancements and image of the Eiffel Tower in Paris. To accomplish these  
 32 goals, many architects and business leaders looked to the technological  
 33 innovations they saw in the rebuilding of Chicago after the Great Fire of 1871,  
 34 but now in the guise of a Neo-Classical fantasy that was to be the *White City*.

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<sup>11</sup>F. S. Laurence, *Color in Architecture: The Basic Principles of Its Application in Available Mediums*, (New York City, NY: Boni and Liveright Publishers) 1922, 21.

<sup>12</sup>Lasse Hodne, “Winckelmann’s Depreciation of Colour in Light of the *Querelle du coloris* and Recent Critique”, *Journal of Art History*, 89: 3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00233609.2020.1788636>, 2020, 191-210.

<sup>13</sup>James V. Strueber and Ati Johanna Hays, “The Invisible Triumph: The Woman’s Building of the World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893”, *Encounters/Encuentros/Recontres*, 2005, 362.

<sup>14</sup>Stephen J. Whitfield, “Frontiers of the World’s Columbian Exposition”, *Meet Me at the World’s Fair: A World’s Fair Reader*, (Pittsburgh, PA: ETC Press), January 2014, 83.

<sup>15</sup>James V. Strueber and Ati Johanna Hays, “The Invisible Triumph: The Woman’s Building of the World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893”, *Encounters/Encuentros/Recontres*, 2005, 362.

- 1 This fantasy city had deeper connotations and narratives that designers wanted
- 2 to draw upon, and the impact of the fair had far greater implications beyond the
- 3 symbolism associated with the Neo-Classical style.

ONLY FOR REVIEW

1 Construction of the fair began in 1891 with the design focused on Jackson  
2 Park on the southside of Chicago (*see Figure 2*). The overall landscaping was  
3 determined by landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted<sup>16</sup> and master  
4 planning and layout by architect Daniel Burnham, who focused on a return to  
5 Neo-Classical architecture to bolster the country's image on the world stage.  
6 This was due in part to the establishment and popularity of the American  
7 Academy of Fine Arts in Rome in 1897, which played upon its connection to  
8 the ruins of antiquity, the principles of Alberti, as well as with Palladio during

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<sup>16</sup>Rebecca S. Graff, "Dream City, Plaster City: World's Fairs and the Gilding of American Material Culture", *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 16, No. 4, December 2012, 703

1 the late Renaissance and Mannerist period. The greatest proponent of these  
2 classical principles, in the United States, was the World's Columbian  
3 Exposition of 1893 in Chicago.<sup>17</sup>



**Figure 2.** Hermann Heinze, "Souvenir Map of the World's Columbian Exposition at Jackson Park and Midway Plaisance," US, 1893, Public Domain.

4  
5 The choice of Neo-Classicism, for the *White City* (as the fair came to be  
6 known) was also determined for its clarity and associated symbolism.

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<sup>17</sup>David P. Handlin, *American Architecture*, (New York City, NY: Thames and Hudson), 1985, 134.

1 According to Joseph Well, the chief designer for the architects McKim, Mead,  
2 and White:

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4 The classical ideal suggests clearness, simplicity, grandeur, order, and  
5 philosophical calm - consequently it delights my soul. The medieval ideal  
6 suggests superstition, ignorance, vulgarity, restlessness, cruelty, and religion -  
7 all of which fill my soul with horror and loathing. The Renaissance ideal  
8 suggests a fine and cultivated society, with its crowds of gay ladies and  
9 gentlemen devoted to the pleasures and elegances of life.<sup>18</sup>

10  
11 The main buildings of the fair that framed the lagoons of the *Court of*  
12 *Honor* were cohesively designed to a unified look by ten architects,<sup>19</sup> around a  
13 series of biaxial lagoons and connected to Lake Michigan (*see Figure 3*).  
14 Additional fair pavilions, which did not adhere to Daniel Burnham's strict Neo-  
15 Classical guidelines,<sup>20</sup> were relegated to the peripheral edge of the fair, away  
16 from and out of sight from the messaging and image the fair organizers wanted  
17 to promote. It worked!

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<sup>18</sup>Charles C. Baldwin, *Stanford White*, (New York City, NY: Dodd, Mead, and Company), 1931, 363.

<sup>19</sup>James V. Strueber and Ati Johanna Hays, "The Invisible Triumph: The Woman's Building of the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893", *Encounters/Encuentros/Recontres*, 2005, 362.

<sup>20</sup>Rebecca S. Graff, "Dream City, Plaster City: World's Fairs and the Gilding of American Material Culture", *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 16, No. 4, December 2012, 703.



**Figure 3.** Smithsonian Institution Archives, “The Palace of Mechanic Arts and the Lagoon in Front,” US, 1893, Public Domain

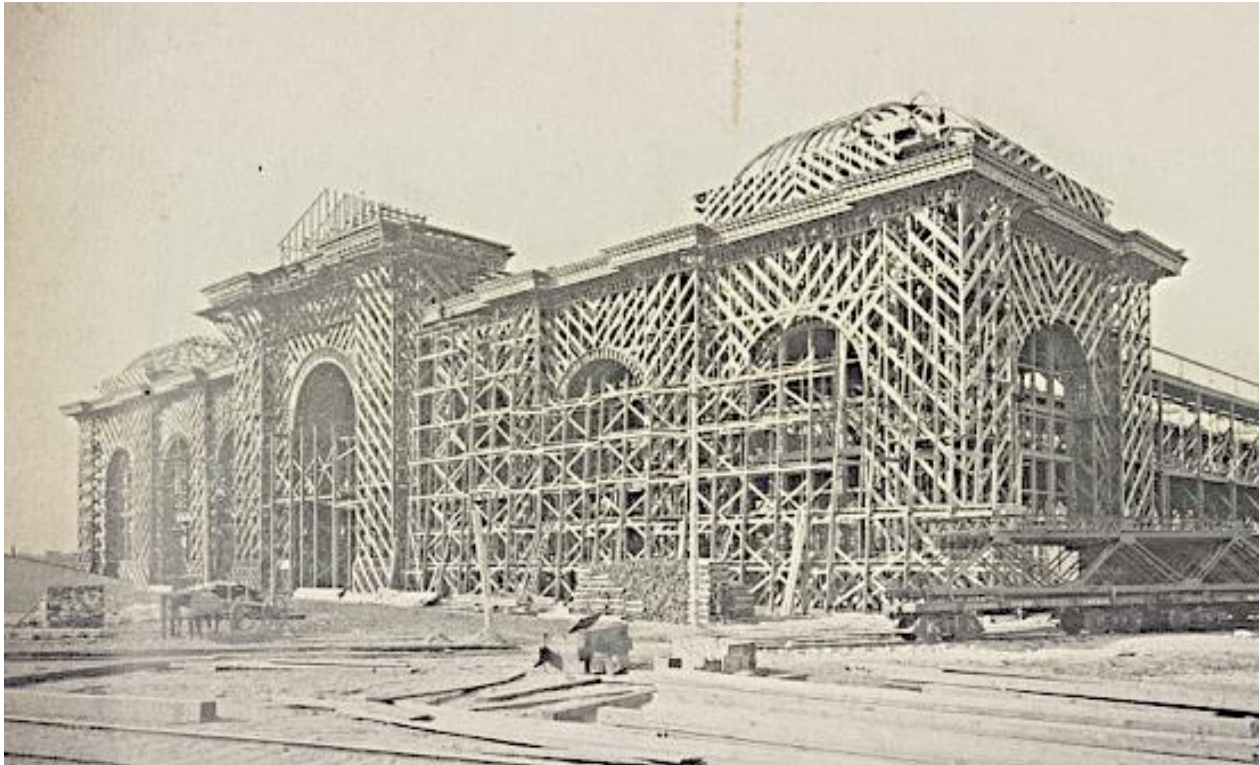
The public and various academic circles invested heavily in the fantasy of the *White City* becoming the primary progenitor for the popularity of style,<sup>21</sup> and the public was clearly looking for an escape. However, something was deeply amiss at the fair.

The splendor of the *White City* was hailed for introducing the *City Beautiful* urban design movement in America, the foundations for modern city planning. Its identifiable components were closely related to Neo-Classicism, an overwhelming but cohesive scale, symmetrical and axial plans, as well as picturesque views tied to the ideas of both John Nash and landscape designer Frederick Law Olmsted. It fueled a rash of civic centers and buildings throughout the country. While the exteriors of the fair buildings gave the impression of being permanent and solid, due to their massive shape and size, surprisingly they were only built as temporary structures to be demolished at the close of the fair in six months. The exteriors were crafted only from *staff*, a

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<sup>21</sup>David P. Handlin, *American Architecture*, (New York City, NY: Thames and Hudson Inc.), 1985, 134.

1 form of plaster, and painted white, and then laid over a steel skeletal structure  
2 (see Figure 4).  
3



4 **Figure 4.** Unknown photographer, “World’s Fair, Chicago, Frame for Mines  
5 Building,” Chicago, IL, 1892, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2002707105/>, (accessed  
6 April 15, 2022), Public Domain  
7

8 The advances in steel construction were comparable to the coinciding  
9 developments in Europe in both bridge construction as well as with the stylistic  
10 and technological developments of Art Nouveau. The boom in construction in  
11 Chicago, following the Great Fire of 1871 coincided with the fair, and brought  
12 about many new innovative construction techniques in the use of steel. In fact,  
13 the application of *staff*, a form of “plaster, jute fibers, and horsehair”<sup>22</sup> over a  
14 steel structure with wood lathe was quite progressive, but yet the exterior style  
15 and look of the buildings did not reflect the stylistic advances, was often  
16 described as counterfeit marble.<sup>23</sup> In actuality, the various fair buildings, with  
17 their innovative construction practices, were both regressive and progressive at  
18 the same time.

19 The fact that they were temporary structures and technologically deceptive to  
20 the viewing public made them more aligned with the ideas and criticism

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<sup>22</sup>Rebecca S. Graff, “Dream City, Plaster City: World’s Fairs and the Gilding of American Material Culture”, *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 16, No. 4, December 2012, 706.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

1 associated with the *architectural deceptions*<sup>24</sup> of John Ruskin's seminal 1849 work  
 2 *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. While the fair buildings of the *Court of*  
 3 *Honor* clearly gave off a vision of solidity and permanence, what lie  
 4 underneath the surface was far from the truth.

5 The stylistically regressive aspects of disguising the steel structure, was  
 6 most famously criticized by architect Louis Sullivan, in his 1924 book *The*  
 7 *Autobiography of an Idea*. His concerns were more about public perceptions.  
 8 Sullivan described that while the "crowds were astonished" by the architecture,  
 9 their imaginations for urban spaces were being slowly poisoned by a virus  
 10 called Neo-Classicism.<sup>25</sup> Sullivan further notes:

11  
 12 The damage wrought by the World's Fair will last for half a century from its  
 13 date, if not longer. It has penetrated deep into the constitution of the American  
 14 mind, effecting there [*sic*] lesions significant of dementia.

15  
 16 Meanwhile... we have now the abounding freedom of Eclecticism, the winning  
 17 smile of taste, but no architecture. For Architecture, be it known, is dead.<sup>26</sup>

18  
 19 The long-term effect of the fair's Neo-Classical messaging for future  
 20 architects was of far more concern to Sullivan. To Sullivan, all the engineering  
 21 advances in architecture were slowly being displaced by the populism of  
 22 stylistic tastes, a clear criticism of the regressive position of many architects  
 23 who were still churning out variations of Greek and Roman temples applied to  
 24 current buildings with more complex and contemporary uses.

25 Interestingly, Sullivan's Transportation Building (*see Figure 5*) was  
 26 relegated to a peripheral site at the edge of the fair, because it did not comply  
 27 with the Neo-Classical directives, as it was painted with various colors, derived  
 28 mainly "from red and mixed with lesser amounts of blue, orange, and dark  
 29 green."<sup>27</sup> According to David P. Handlin, in *American Architecture*:

30  
 31 His Transportation Building, if not completely [exuberant and] original in  
 32 conception... stood out from the sobriety of the white buildings that surrounded  
 33 it.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>This is in reference to John Ruskin's *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), where he argues that there are three types of architectural deceptions: structural deceit, surface deceit, and operative deceit. Structural deceit is when a structural form, such as a column, is hidden or appears to serve a structural role but does not; Surface deceit occurs when one material is painted to look like another; and Operative deceit occurs when hand-made works are substituted by cast or machine works.

<sup>25</sup>Louis S. Sullivan, *The Autobiography of an Idea*, (New York City, NY: The Press of the American Institute of Architects, Inc.), 1924, 323-325.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup>Lauren S. Weingarden, "The Colors of Nature: Louis Sullivan's Architectural Polychromy and Nineteenth-Century Color Theory", *Winterthur Portfolio*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), Vol. 20, No. 4, Winter 1985, 254.

<sup>28</sup>David P. Handlin, *American Architecture*, (New York City, NY: Thames and Hudson Inc.), 1985, 134.



**Figure 5.** Charles S. Graham, “The Gilded Entrance to the Transportation Building,” US, 1893, *The Field Museum Library*, No Restrictions

To Sullivan, the fair organizers tried to stifle alternative voices and new ideas at the fair, by forcing them to areas outside the *Court of Honor*. Beyond the peripheral area a strip of land heading west was established, called the Midway Plaisance, primarily reserved for carnival attractions (including the first Ferris Wheel) and many pavilions for invited nations and cultures.

Also at the periphery, but at the immediate entrance to the Midway, was one of the smallest buildings at the fair, the Woman’s Building (*see Figure 6*). It was also the only building at the fair designed by a woman, Chilean-American architect Sophia G. Hayden (the first female graduate of MIT’s architecture program),<sup>29</sup> a token gesture by the fair organizers to avoid giving fair goers the image that the “progress of civilization”<sup>30</sup> was only defined by the achievements of men.<sup>31</sup> In light of this attempt to address the contributions

<sup>29</sup>Kimberly Kutz Elliott, *The World’s Columbian Exposition: The White City and Fairgrounds*, presented by Khan Academy, Smart History, <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-americas/us-art-19c/xf20f462f:a-beginner-s-guide/a/the-worlds-columbian-exposition-the-white-city-and-fairgrounds>, (accessed April 5, 2022).

<sup>30</sup>Luz Mercedes Hincapie, “Race and Gender at the Chicago Columbian Exposition, 1893: A Cuban Woman’s Perspective”, *Kunapipi* Vol. 26, No. 1, 2004, 234.

<sup>31</sup>Carolyn Kinder Carr, *Revisiting the White City: American Art at the 1893 World’s Fair*, (Washington, DC: National Museum of American Art and National Portrait Gallery), 1993, 81-82.

of women, the fair still offered an objectified image with the World Congress of Beauty, advertising “40 Ladies from 40 Nations.”<sup>32</sup>



**Figure 6.** C. D. Arnold, “Woman’s Buildings,” US, 1893, Public Domain

### The Spectacle of the Midway Plaisance

The *White City*, with its vision of future perfection and of the advanced racial power of manly commerce and technology, constructed civilization as an ideal of white male power... an implicit comparison between the White City’s self-controlled civilized manliness and the inferior manhood of dark-skinned primitive men who solicited customers for belly dancers or wore skirts and danced like women. Yet the Midway also allowed American men to play at being masculine barbarians themselves, savoring the visual pleasures of semi clad exotic dancers while simultaneously and inconsistently relishing their sense of superior, civilized, white manliness.<sup>33</sup>

- Gail Bederman

Overall, there were forty-six nations represented at the fair, and many countries from outside the West were congregated in the area of the Midway Plaisance away from the *White City*. According to Stephen J. Whitfield, in *Frontiers of the World’s Columbian Exposition*, it was here that the Midway “marked the emergence of mass culture, [which]... would eventually permeate

<sup>32</sup>Stephen J. Whitfield, “Frontiers of the World’s Columbian Exposition”, *Meet Me at the World’s Fair: A World’s Fair Reader*, (Pittsburgh, PA: ETC Press), January 2014, 87.

<sup>33</sup>Gail Bederman, *Manliness of Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States*, (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press), 1995, 40.

every aspect of society in the coming century.”<sup>34</sup> This spectacle of popularism was Louis Sullivan’s objection as well. While Sullivan’s objection to the dominance of Neo-Classicism in architecture was understandable, it can also be construed that his objection was in capitulating to the spectacle of foreign culture, or eclectic and exotic styles, with the masses.

Erik Larsen, in his very popular novel *Devil in the White City*, offered the following description of the Midway:

On paper at least, the fair’s Midway Plaisance began to take shape... to provide an education about alien cultures... [and] to be fun... [to] thrill, titillate, and if... perhaps even shock... [and] was to be an exotic realm of unusual sights, sounds, and scents.<sup>35</sup>

Of note were the seventeen villages representing non-Western peoples to convey the message of an uncivilized and colonizing world view outside of America and Europe and against the back drop of the *White City*. Among the *villagers* were the Dahomeyan (from present-day Benin), Chinese, Javanese, Soudanese, Alaskan, Arab, South Sea Islanders, Algerian, Brazilian, and American Indians.<sup>36</sup> It seemed that the more foreign and exotic, the better to bolster the Fair’s symbolic point. The negative connotation, blatant xenophobia, and racism did not go unnoticed to some. In fact, former slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass contemptuously objected to the Dahomeyan village of primitive thatched huts. Fair organizers, he argued, clearly wanted to offer a false impression of Black lives<sup>37</sup> in the staged display of “barbaric rites”.<sup>38</sup>

These displays were similar to carnivalesque *freak shows*, and purely for entertainment value. According to Paul Greenhalgh, in *Ephemeral Vistas: The ‘Expositions Universelles’, Great Exhibitions, and World’s Fairs, 1851-1939*,

Each day, the people from the villages, accompanied by various Arab groups from other exhibits, were paraded up and down the Midway Plaisance before returning to their display areas to commence their day of public living. The humiliating racism of this spectacle, apart from fulfilling a propaganda role for the co-operating foreign nations, had a distinct purpose for reactionary elements within American society.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup>Stephen J. Whitfield, “Frontiers of the World’s Columbian Exposition”, *Meet Me at the World’s Fair: A World’s Fair Reader*, (Pittsburgh, PA: ETC Press), January 2014, 83.

<sup>35</sup>Erik Larson, *Devil in the White City*, (New York City, NY: Crown Publishing), 2003, 159-160.

<sup>36</sup>Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The ‘Expositions Universelles’, Great Exhibitions, and World’s Fairs, 1851-1939*, (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press), 1988, 97.

<sup>37</sup>Stephen J. Whitfield, “Frontiers of the World’s Columbian Exposition”, *Meet Me at the World’s Fair: A World’s Fair Reader*, (Pittsburgh, PA: ETC Press), January 2014, 88.

<sup>38</sup>Elliott M. Rudwick and August Meier, “Black Man in the ‘White City’: Negroes and the Columbian Exposition, 1893”, *Phylon*, (Atlanta, GA: Clark Atlanta University), 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter, Vol. 26, No. 4, 1965, 359.

<sup>39</sup>Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The ‘Expositions Universelles’, Great Exhibitions, and World’s Fairs, 1851-1939*, (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press), 1988, 98.

1        Additionally, “racial compartmentalization reflected the intended  
2 organization of the Midway Plaisance”<sup>40</sup> and soon thereafter the Midway was  
3 derogatorily referred to as a “sliding scale of humanity.”<sup>41</sup> While the fair’s  
4 goals sought to emphasize the progress of civilization, the outward image still  
5 fostered a xenophobic and racist public attitude.

6        While the majority of Midway villages were non-Western, there were a  
7 few Western countries relegated to the periphery due to contentious issues  
8 associated with the various immigrant waves in the US. They included the  
9 Irish Village, the German Village, the Austrian Village, the Lapland Village  
10 (the indigenous Sami people in Scandinavia), and the Hungarian Café, all  
11 replete with depictions of primitive rural life and peasants in native costumes.

### 14    **The Indignant Truth of the Fair**

16        The overall message of the Columbian World’s Exposition was to encourage  
17 national unity for the betterment of humanity in a time of great change. From  
18 the outset, the premise was admirable, but the implementation and progressive  
19 promise of the fair was far from the truth, but it was the Native American  
20 encampments on the Midway that seemed to escape the irony of the Christopher  
21 Columbus theme of the fair.

22        Fair organizers wanted to portray a very distinctive imagery of how Native  
23 Americans were to be viewed. According to Melissa Rinehart in *To Hell with*  
24 *the Wigs! Native American Representation and Resistance at the World’s*  
25 *Columbian Exposition*:

27        Native performers became iconic trophies of colonialism... their lives compared  
28 to fairgoers, although intentionally created, ultimately demonstrated the  
29 imperialistic nature of the exposition and European American sociopolitical  
30 domination over indigenous peoples.<sup>42</sup>

32        As with other cultural groups, on the Midway, Native Americans  
33 vehemently tried to use the fair as an opportunity to reject inauthentic and  
34 malicious portrayals of American Indians.<sup>43</sup>

35        The spectacle of the Midway also reinforced negative and ignorant  
36 stereotypes. One such account brings up the concerns that many Native  
37 Americans had with the uneducated fairgoers:

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<sup>40</sup>Robert W. Rydell, “The World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893: Racist Underpinnings of a Utopian Artifact”, *Journal of American Culture*, Vol. 1, Issue 2, 1978, 269.

<sup>41</sup>Denton J. Snider, *World’s Fair Studies*, (Chicago, IL: Sigma Publishing Co.), 1895, 256.

<sup>42</sup>Melissa Rinehart, “To Hell with the Wigs! Native American Representation and Resistance at the World’s Columbian Exposition”, *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 4, Fall 2012, 405.

<sup>43</sup>Emily Sanders, “The 1893 Chicago World’s Fair and American Indian Agency”, *Cultural Survival*, <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/1893-chicago-worlds-fair-and-american-indian-agency>, Cambridge, MA, (accessed March 26, 2022), February 11, 2015.

1 Professor Frederic Ward Putnam, director of the Department of Ethnology and  
2 Archaeology at the [fair], asked his young Native American assistant, Antonio  
3 Apache, to organize an Indian pageant. Apache promptly recruited twenty-four  
4 men, and while he was pleased with his newly formed troupe, he thought that  
5 their short hair made them look too “civilized” [and]... decided to secure an  
6 assortment of wigs for the men to perform in and stored the wigs in his tent. The  
7 following morning, as he was standing outside his tent, some fairgoers...  
8 discussed whether he was “really very ugly” or... looked like a “savage.”  
9 Disgusted with their smug and presumptuous comments, Apache scowled,  
10 stormed into his tent, and threw out the wigs. Thinking Apache was throwing out  
11 scalps instead of wigs, the tourists fled in fright.<sup>44</sup>  
12

13 Unfortunately, the stereotypes surrounding hair would be how the  
14 American public would continue to portray Native Americans for decades  
15 thereafter, and in fact many such inaccuracies continue to the present day,  
16 marginalizing various cultures through entertainment.

17 The largest objections for how Native Americans were represented came  
18 from several Native Territories who rejected “the perpetuation of any Wild  
19 West shows at the expense of the dignity and interest of the Indian Nations.”<sup>45</sup>  
20 Wild West Shows were travelling vaudeville shows that exploited Native  
21 Americans in a sensationalistic manner, thus romanticizing the cowboy.

22 What infuriated Native Americans most was that the fair commemorated  
23 Columbus and his colonization of Native lands and that these shows were so  
24 soon after the painful memory of the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre, which  
25 resulted in the death of nearly 300 Lakota Native Americans by the United  
26 States Army.<sup>46</sup> While genuinely hailed as a progressive themed fair  
27 technologically, one had to question the cultural progressiveness and  
28 sensitiveness towards those who were not white or of European origin.

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<sup>44</sup>Melissa Rinehart, “To Hell with the Wigs! Native American Representation and Resistance at the World’s Columbian Exposition”, *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 4, Fall 2012, 403-442.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid, 406.

<sup>46</sup>Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, (New York City, NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston), 1970, 178.



**Figure 7.** Unknown photographer, “Street of Cairo Section of the Midway at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, Illinois,” Chicago, IL, 1893, photograph, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2014645370/>, (accessed April 15, 2022)

### The Arab World on the Midway

The Midway also included a few Middle Eastern nations, including the Ottoman Empire (current day Turkey) and Egypt (*see Figure 7*). However, separate from other nations of the Midway, the Turkish Village was able to wrest control from organizers over imaging. According to Celal Emanet in *A Glimpse of Turkey from the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893*, officials from Turkey were extremely apprehensive of the ethnological framework of the Midway, so the:

Turkish Building and its exhibits were designed to try to dispel the pervasive image of Turkey as a nation of languorous men and women.<sup>47</sup>

Furthermore, according to Ussama Makdisi in *Ottoman Orientalism*, Turkish officials of the Ottoman Government deliberately:

sought to avoid objectionable (that is to say, unregulated) displays of things Oriental - from dancing girls to dervishes to wild Arab Bedouin. Moreover, a "Turkish village" was placed at an intermediary point at the Chicago Midway Plaisance, between the central "White City" and the allegedly most "savage" examples of humanity.<sup>48</sup>

Ottoman officials had created exacting conditions for the design and scheduling of programs at the Turkish theatre to assure that performances were not "injurious to the honor and modesty of Muslim women or damaging national honor and prestige."<sup>49</sup>

### **The African-American on the Midway**

Whereas many nations with the political will and financing could control the narrative against the intended imaging of American fair organizers, the same was not true for American people of color who were barred entirely from participating in the organization of the *White City*. As with the Native Americans, they were only given access to the Midway Plaisance where Gail Bederman in *Manliness of Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States* demonstrates the extant segregation of the fair, in that:

Guidebooks advised visitors to visit the Midway only after visiting the White City, in order to fully appreciate the contrast between the civilized White City, and the uncivilized native villages.<sup>50</sup>

As one can imagine, many civil rights leaders of the day rightfully protested this assertion.

The primary protest over the lack of representation<sup>51</sup> came in the form of a privately printed and distributed book titled: *The Reason Why the Colored*

<sup>47</sup>Celal Emanet, "A Glimpse of 'Turkey' from the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893", *Maydan*, (Fairfax, VA: Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies at George Mason University), September 6, 2017.

<sup>48</sup>Ussama Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism", *American Historical Review*, Vol. 107, June 2002, 789-790.

<sup>49</sup>Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protects Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1909*, (Istanbul, Turkey: I. B. Tauris), 1999, 155.

<sup>50</sup>Gail Bederman, *Manliness of Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States*, (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press), 1995, 35.

<sup>51</sup>Ida B. Wells, *The Reason Why the Colored American is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition: The Afro-American's Contribution to Columbian Literature*, (Chicago, IL: Privately Printed), 1893, 1.

*American is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition: The Afro-American's Contribution to Columbian Literature*, written by Ida B. Wells with contributions by Frederick Douglass, Ferdinand L. Barnett, and Irvine Garland Penn, among others. Wells and Douglass had argued that the fair's organizers had deliberately excluded people of color from participating in the planning of the *White City* in order "to shame"<sup>52</sup> and "to exhibit [them] as a repulsive savage"<sup>53</sup> who also faced employment discrimination in the staff-hiring process.<sup>54</sup>

Wells and Douglass felt that if it was not for the Haitian Pavilion and its government circulation of the ten thousand printed copies of the book,<sup>55</sup> many African-Americans would have had no say at the fair.<sup>56</sup> According to Barbara J. Ballard in *A People Without a Nation*:

The Haitian building provided black visitors a place where they could not only feel at home, but could protest black Americans' exclusion from the exposition and identify with the march of "civilization" in the Western world.<sup>57</sup>

While not fully within the guidelines of the ordained Neo-Classicism at the fair, Haiti's building (see Figure 8) "was constructed in a Greco-Roman style reminiscent of colonial buildings... topped with a dome."<sup>58</sup> It was based on the Massachusetts State House in Boston by Charles Bulfinch, and situated at the periphery of the fairgrounds. Its inclusion was more of a political and diplomatic move by the US to recognize Haiti as a potential new ally and neighbor in the Caribbean.

It was thanks to Haiti that well-known abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglass was even allowed to speak on various issues facing Blacks at the time. "In one of his many public speeches, Douglass established a link between Haiti's successful revolution against France and the freedom of people of African descent."<sup>59</sup> For many Blacks, the Haitian Building represented more than strength and independence, it also became their primary cultural role model and a point of racial identity at the fair apart from the racist displays of the Midway.<sup>60</sup>

Apart from the Haiti Building, most African-Americans were also restricted from other opportunities to engage with the ceremonies of the *White City*.

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid, 9.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Anna R. Paddon and Sally Turner, "African Americans and the World's Columbian Exposition", *Illinois Historical Journal*, Vol. 88, No. 1, Spring 1995, 22.

<sup>55</sup>Gail Bederman, *Manliness of Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States*, (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press), 1995, 35.

<sup>56</sup>Barbara J. Ballard, "A People Without a Nation", *Chicago History*, Summer 1999, 40.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

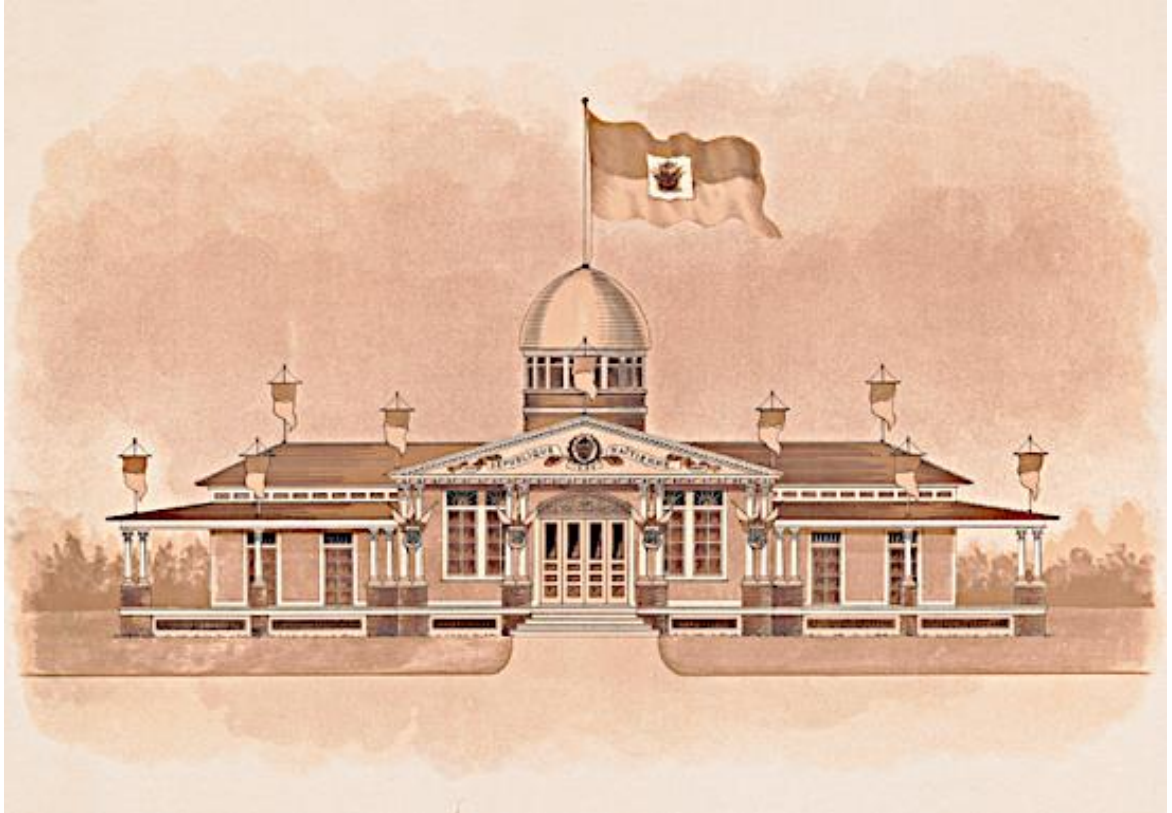
<sup>58</sup>Hadassah St. Hubert, "Visions of a Modern Nation: Haiti at the World's Fair", *University of Miami*, [https://scholarship.miami.edu/discovery/delivery/01UOML\\_INST:ResearchRepository/12355420920002976?l#13355515330002976](https://scholarship.miami.edu/discovery/delivery/01UOML_INST:ResearchRepository/12355420920002976?l#13355515330002976), (accessed March 26, 2022), 2018, 54.

<sup>59</sup>Barbara J. Ballard, "A People Without a Nation", *Chicago History*, Summer 1999, 39.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid, 38-39.

Barbara J. Ballard further notes the blatant discrimination of fair organizers with regard to the opening of the fair:

    Their failure to invite even one African American leader - not even... Frederick Douglass, who was seventy-six in 1893 - to appear at the opening ceremony among the hundreds of white notables illustrated the fair's deliberate exclusion of blacks.<sup>61</sup>



**Figure 8.** Unknown lithograph artist, “Pavilion of the Republic of Haiti at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893,” Chicago, IL, 1893, photograph, <https://www.loc.gov/item/99471617/>, (accessed April 15, 2022).

    Again, it was thanks to Haiti, for later allowing Douglass to speak on various issues facing blacks in the US at the time.

### **The *Butterfly Effect* of the Fair on Disney and the *Emerald City***

    Apart from the disturbing racial discrimination and segregation issues at the Fair, the utopian image of the *White City* was heavily juxtaposed against the crime, soot, and deplorable working and living conditions in Chicago,<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup>Ibid, 28.

<sup>62</sup>Donald L. Miller, *City of the Century: The Epic of Chicago and the Making of America*, (New York City, NY: Simon and Schuster), 2003, 423-424.

which also came to be known as the *Black City*. While the moniker was not initially driven by racial disparities it did indirectly speak to the unresolved social and racial issues in America where the Fair acted as a collective amnesia and distraction. According to Meisje Conor in *World's Columbian Exposition 1893: Architecture and Innovation in Context*:

But outside the gates of the *White City*, many of Chicago's inhabitants lived a much darker existence... who labored in the yards [and] continued to live nearby... in crowded tenement buildings and worked long hours, six days a week; the average wage for a meat-packer was less than 20 cents an hour, and many... made far less.<sup>63</sup>

Therefore, the same people who built the fair never experienced the promise of the fair.

However, there is a potential *Butterfly Effect* built into this dismal scenario. According to Stephen J. Whitfield in *Frontiers of the World's Columbian Exposition*:

Other ordinary men and women... helped construct the World's Columbian Exposition, which was built with such speed and frenzy that accidents were inevitable. Indeed they were common - about one per ten workers was seriously injured or killed. A carpenter who survived such mayhem was Elias Disney. A little over half a century later, his son Walt would reinvent and expand the amusement park.<sup>64</sup>

Walt Disney was literally born into the world of Expositions and one just has to imagine the Fair stories he heard as a child from his father.

While the inspiration is clear in Walt Disney's life path, this same line of associative reasoning can also be applied to the *White City* as a possible inspiration for L. Frank Baum's *Emerald City* in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. According to Hélène Valance in *Dark City, White City: Chicago's World Columbian Exposition*:

The *Emerald City* is really a *White City* seen through green glasses, an illusion only an innocent child like Dorothy would not perceive.<sup>65</sup>

The only possible connection to this inspiration stems from the fact that the fair took place shortly after Baum moved to the nearby Humboldt Park area of Chicago and that his family had reportedly made "frequent visits to the fair."<sup>66</sup>

<sup>63</sup>Meisje Conor, "World's Columbian Exposition 1893: Architecture and Innovation in Context", <https://1893fair.weebly.com/chicago.html>, (accessed March 24, 2022).

<sup>64</sup>Stephen J. Whitfield, "Frontiers of the World's Columbian Exposition", *Meet Me at the World's Fair: A World's Fair Reader*, (Pittsburgh, PA: ETC Press), January 2014, 89.

<sup>65</sup>Hélène Valance, "Dark City, White City: Chicago's World Columbian Exposition", *Caliban*, 25, <https://doi.org/10.4000/caliban.1726> (accessed March 24, 2022), 2009, 431-443.

<sup>66</sup>Fiona Maxwell, "All the Window's a Stage: Theatricality and Show Window Display, 1897-1917", *Ezra's Archives*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Historical Society), Vol. 8, No. 1, Spring 2018, 5.

Baum (then 43 years old) was confirmed living in Chicago at the time of the Fair<sup>67</sup> but there is no proof of the Fair's direct influence on his work. There is circumstantial evidence to suggest that the balloon ride of the Midway was perhaps "the main source for the Wizard's... way he travels to and from Oz"<sup>68</sup> and that the cabins on the Ferris Wheel (which were as big as a house) possibly inspired the house falling on the Wicked Witch of the East.<sup>69</sup> Adding to this is Baum's use of the last name Gale for the protagonist Dorothy referencing a tornado victim in Kansas, also named Dorothy Gale,<sup>70</sup> but some scholars suggest that the name actually came from the inventor of the Fair's Ferris wheel G. W. Gale Ferris of Galesburg,<sup>71</sup> Illinois. Both plausible!

### Ho-o-den as a Chrysalis for the *Butterfly Effect* in Architecture

As to other *Butterfly Effects*, Japan was offered two positions at the fair. One was a small bazaar directly on the Midway that sold tea and wares, but the primary pavilion was the Ho-o-den temple on isolated Wooded Island and sited perhaps as a metaphor for the island nation's traditional isolationist policies. Ho-o-den (see Figure 9) was designed by Masamichi Kuru and constructed in Japan in 1892 by "Japanese craftsmen out of imported materials"<sup>72</sup> before being shipped to and constructed at the Fair. It was a scaled replica of the original 11<sup>th</sup> century Buddhist temple in Uji, Japan (near Kyoto), and commissioned and paid for by the Imperial Japanese family.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>67</sup>Michael Riley, "The Great City of Oz: L. Frank Baum at the 1893 World's Fair", *The Baum Bugle: A Journal of Oz*, (Kalamazoo, MI: The International Wizard of Oz Club), Vol. 42, No. 3, Winter 1998, 38.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid, 36.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Michael Pollak, "Where Twisters Dug In, So Did They", *The New York Times*, (New York City, NY: The New York Times), May 27, 2013.

<sup>71</sup>Michael Riley, "The Great City of Oz: L. Frank Baum at the 1893 World's Fair", *The Baum Bugle: A Journal of Oz*, (Kalamazoo, MI: The International Wizard of Oz Club), Vol. 42, No. 3, Winter 1998, 36.

<sup>72</sup>William A. Gleason, *Sites Unseen: Architecture, Race, and American Literature*, (New York, NY: New York University Press), 2011, 156.

<sup>73</sup>Okakura Kakuzo, "The Decoration of the Ho-O-Den", *The Decorator and Furnisher*, Vol. 23, No. 5, 1894, 181.



**Figure 9.** Unknown photographer, “The Japanese Pavilion Ho-o-den, World's Columbian Exposition, 1893,” Chicago, IL, 1893, Public Domain

The building was not easy to get to being isolated on an island in the very center of Jackson Park, obscured by trees and accessible only by bridges, and completely overwhelmed “on all sides by a sea of pure white Graeco-Roman forms.”<sup>74</sup> While initially fair organizer Daniel Burnham had wanted to keep the island free of pavilions and had turned down many proposals to build on it, upon seeing the drawings from Japanese officials he was convinced of its appropriateness and wrote to Frederick Law Olmsted in support of its siting, and enthused that “They propose to do the most exquisitely beautiful things... and desire to leave the buildings as a gift to the city of Chicago.”<sup>75</sup> This was a stunning exception by Burnham to the design of the *White City* and it was to be one of only two buildings not dismantled after the fair.

According to William A. Gleeson in *Sites Unseen: Architecture, Race, and American Literature*, the design of the Ho-O-Den temple:

featured a cruciform-plan central hall whose rooms were divided not by walls but instead by [shoji] screens, several of which were removed during the fair to

<sup>74</sup>Kevin Nute, “Frank Lloyd Wright and the Ho-o-den Revisited”, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, September 1, 1997, viii.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid, viii-ix.

1 provide a better view for visitors, who were only permitted to look in from the  
2 veranda.<sup>76</sup>

3  
4 It offered a lot of elaborate architectural detailing<sup>77</sup> with symbolic imagery  
5 on the walls and screens, but instead of hiding the structure the building  
6 emphasized the rawness of the materials.

7 The newness of the architecture, though familiar and different at the same  
8 time, along with the clarity of its materials and construction was a clear  
9 hallmark at the infancy of the developing ideas in Modernist architecture to  
10 come. It was something that was missing from the fair thereby making it  
11 appealing to many architects including Frank Lloyd Wright.

12 It is well documented that Wright had a strong interest in Japan and had  
13 visited the fairgrounds often while still working for Louis Sullivan on the  
14 Transportation Building and he most certainly would have witnessed the  
15 construction of the Ho-o-den temple. Furthermore, according to Wright,  
16 Japanese prints had always been of interest to him and he describes the  
17 Japanese process of simplification as the “elimination of the insignificant,”<sup>78</sup>  
18 which easily parallels the appeal of the Ho-o-den temple to architects in much  
19 the same way that Austrian architect Adolf Loos criticized excess decoration in  
20 his pivotal and influential architectural treatise *Ornament and Crime*.

21 As to whether or not Wright was inspired by Japanese architecture in his  
22 earlier works, William Gleeson asserts that:

23  
24 The precise influence of Japanese architecture on Wright’s designs is difficult to  
25 identify. While Wright openly acknowledged debts in his aesthetics... he  
26 frequently... denied that Japanese architecture had guided his work in any formal  
27 way - even though the structural massing and roof forms... appear to mine... Ho-  
28 o-den for inspiration.<sup>79</sup>

29  
30 Wright’s denial of influence is fully contradicted in a work completed just  
31 3 years after the Fair. According to Kevin Nute in *Frank Lloyd Wright and the*  
32 *Ho-o-den Revisited*:

33  
34 Indeed, there would seem to have been little *external* evidence of its influence  
35 until the Goodrich house of 1896, in which Wright appears to have reproduced  
36 the roof and elevational treatment of one of the smaller side pavilions of the Ho-  
37 o-den.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>76</sup>William A. Gleason, *Sites Unseen: Architecture, Race, and American Literature*, (New York, NY: New York University Press), 2011, 156.

<sup>77</sup>Okakura Kakuzo, “The Decoration of the Ho-O-Den”, *The Decorator and Furnisher*, Vol. 23, No. 5, 1894.

<sup>78</sup>Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography*, (London, UK: Faber and Faber Limited), 1943, 175.

<sup>79</sup>William A. Gleason, *Sites Unseen: Architecture, Race, and American Literature*, (New York, NY: New York University Press), 2011, 156-157.

<sup>80</sup>Kevin Nute, “Frank Lloyd Wright and the Ho-o-den Revisited”, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, September 1, 1997, xii.

1 This is a clear and damning rebuttal of Wright's refusal to admit the  
2 inspirational impact of the Ho-o-den temple in his work (*see Figure 10*).  
3



4 **Figure 10.** © 2022 / James Caulfield Archive, “Exterior Shot of the H. C.  
5 Goodrich House (1896), by Frank Lloyd Wright,” Oak Park, IL, 2016. Note the  
6 porch on the left side of the Goodrich House, inspired by a wing of the Ho-o-  
7 den Pavilion  
8

9 Ho-o-den is arguably the most important building at the Fair for architects  
10 as it came to inspire many future developments in the Modernist Movement  
11 and is a clear depiction of the *Butterfly Effect* and how one seemingly  
12 insignificant event affected generations of future architects. This one planning  
13 decision, of siting the temple on Wooded Island, could have easily relegated  
14 the Japanese pavilion to the stereotypes and carnivalesque of the Midway but  
15 instead was a catalyst and chrysalis of inspiration.  
16

### 17 **Conclusion: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow**

18  
19  
20 There is a conflicting message between the outcomes and the promise of  
21 the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. While promoted as a utopian  
22 dream to encourage national unity for the betterment of humanity it was

1 disingenuous in light of the various contentious issues around race and gender  
 2 equality demonstrative of the continuing divide in society that persist to this  
 3 day. So much more could have been achieved had organizers and the public not  
 4 perpetuated the stereotypes, discrimination, and divides between the Midway  
 5 and the *White City*. Obversely, the perseverance of Ida B. Wells and Frederick  
 6 Douglass and their ideas offering hope to African-Americans would not have  
 7 been heard had it not been for the Haitian government. Their generosity in  
 8 hosting Wells and Douglass was the stimulus needed in the enduring fight and  
 9 struggle for equality.

10 Feigning no understanding of the social issues presented by the contrasts  
 11 and associated symbolism of the Fair, developers and promoters still thought  
 12 the fair was an immense success. What accounted for success were the many  
 13 new products and innovations, which are still with us today and first introduced  
 14 at the Fair including: the Ferris wheel, moving sidewalks, the dishwasher,  
 15 incandescent bulbs, the clasp locker (a forerunner to the zipper), aerosol spray  
 16 paint, squashed penny souvenirs, picture postcards, brownies, Cracker Jack,  
 17 Shredded Wheat, carbonated soda, and the hamburger, among many other new  
 18 products.<sup>81</sup> It was a demonstration of both innovation and convenience as well  
 19 as the potential of consumerism. For entrepreneurial dreamers it also offered  
 20 possible inspiration for Walt Disney and L. Frank Baum.

21 For architects the Fair also offered much inspiration via technology and  
 22 new construction practices. While the *White City* and the Midway Plaisance  
 23 were stereotypically and stylistically regressive, being made temporarily of  
 24 *staff*, the underlying steel structure provided a glimpse into the future and  
 25 potential of new building methods such as curtain walls. More importantly  
 26 was the catalyzing effect of the Japanese Pavilion, providing the most  
 27 refreshing opportunity for change and prompting architects to reexamine their  
 28 understanding of space. This new understanding would profoundly change the  
 29 field of architecture with its ramifications on style and construction felt to this  
 30 day.

31 But have we learned anything? While the Fair has been inscribed in our  
 32 collective memories it is similar to the idea of an architectural palimpsest, both  
 33 regressively and progressively. As a metaphor, the palimpsest is an ongoing  
 34 process of inscribing, writing, erasing, and rewriting subsequent layers of  
 35 information over time linking the past with the present and also toward the  
 36 future.

37 Take for example the work of German architect and industrial designer  
 38 Peter Behrens (1868-1940) tied to the catalytic ideas embedded in the *Butterfly*  
 39 *Effect*. In the context of Modernist architecture Behrens had hired and  
 40 mentored LeCorbusier, Walter Gropius, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, three  
 41 very significant Modernist architects who apprenticed in his office in Berlin,  
 42 Germany<sup>82</sup> and which contributed to the blossoming of Modernist architecture.

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<sup>81</sup>Julie K. Rose, *The Legacy of the Fair*, <https://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA96/WCE/legacy.html> 2013, August 1, 1996, (accessed on April 12, 1956).

<sup>82</sup>Jan Otakar Fischer, "A Berlin Landmark Keeps On Keeping On", *The International Herald Tribune*, (New York City, NY: The New York Times), January 9, 2010.

While Behrens' work promoted Modernist designs, his later Neo-Classical works are more curious interpretations that relied on a more formal vocabulary of antiquity, which Adolph Hitler "thought well of"<sup>83</sup> thus fueling a conservative and Nazi taste for Neo-Classical designs promoted by Albert Speers. It was the popularity of Speers' work that had eventually erased many of the advances of Modernism in Germany (championed by Gropius and the Bauhaus School of Design), and subsequently resulting in the closure of the Bauhaus by Nazis in 1933. Propagandistically accused of "being leftist and unpatriotic"<sup>84</sup> the closure of the Bauhaus dispersed its members to various parts of the world most notably to England and America.

As a final parallel example of concern in America was the Trump Administrations executive order of December 18, 2020, titled *Promoting Beautiful Federal Civic Architecture*, which mandated a return to Neo-Classicism in all new federal buildings and "specifically praised Greek and Roman styles of architecture."<sup>85</sup> It was to be a return to the values of the *White City!* According to Bennett Capers in *The Racial Architecture of Criminal Justice*:

Members of the non-profit Architecture Lobby, anticipating this order... had already issued a statement making clear their disapproval and noting, among other things, that Neoclassicism in the US is directly related to the construction of whiteness.<sup>86</sup>

Thankfully this regressive policy was overturned by the Biden Administration returning the freedom of creative decisions to the architect.<sup>87</sup>

The memory of the Columbian World's Exposition has repeatedly imprinted itself over time confronting both the regressive and progressive ideas in the face of new opportunities for change. Why is change so difficult? We tend to gravitate toward comfort and the familiar often making change difficult. The *Butterfly Effect* is an opportunity to creatively reflect on the ramifications of that change and the *what if* potentials of paths to that change.

For Ray Bradbury in *A Sound of Thunder* the butterfly represents freedom from the constraints of the chrysalis in the protective cocoon of a narrow world view. You can't become a butterfly without moving beyond the shell of the cocoon. The actions of the self-absorbed protagonist Eckels changed both his present and future when he inadvertently killed the butterfly thus killing his freedom. He couldn't see beyond the self-created shell of his world.

<sup>83</sup> Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich: Memoirs*, (New York City, NY: Simon and Schuster, Inc.) 1970, 145.

<sup>84</sup> Esther Zandberg, "The "Bauhaus" school was accused of being leftist and unpatriotic. Sound familiar?", *Haaretz*, (Tel Aviv, Israel: Haaretz), 1970, 1.

<sup>85</sup> Bennett Capers, "The Racial Architecture of Criminal Justice", *SMU Law Review*, Vol. 74, No. 3, 2021, 406.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> India Block, "Biden Revokes Trump's "Beautiful" Architecture Executive Order", *Dezeen*, February 25, 2021, [www.dezeen.com/2021/02/25/biden-revokes-trumps-beautiful-architecture-executive-order/](http://www.dezeen.com/2021/02/25/biden-revokes-trumps-beautiful-architecture-executive-order/) (accessed on March 6, 2022).

Eckels moaned. He dropped to his knees. He scrabbled at the golden butterfly with shaking fingers. "Can't we," he pleaded to the world, to himself, to the officials, to the Machine, "can't we take it back, can't we make it alive again? Can't we start over?"<sup>88</sup>

Perhaps we can't start over, but we can begin to address and eventually overcome the hopelessness that Eckels experiences of a changed world.

We only have one chance at this life and sometimes small events do bring about great change and help to make a big difference. We need to leap beyond our prescribed comfort levels and aesthetics to envision a better future. While perseverance is important, we should also pay more attention to the small things as they might just be trying to tell us something beyond ourselves and the moment. If only Eckels could have seen beyond the moment to the larger picture of time.

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<sup>88</sup>Ray Bradbury, *A Sound of Thunder*, (Logan, IA: Perfection Learning Corporation), 2002, (originally published 1952), 23.

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