



Seeing History Through Artists' Eyes

Judy Scott Feldman

Wednesday, February 26, 2025 - 6:45 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. ET

Session 4: The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition and the New American Century

- I. The 1893 World's Columbian Exhibition (Chicago World's Fair), May 1 – October 30, 1893**
 - a. American identity at the 1893 World's Fair: architecture, science, technology, art, Ferris Wheel, women, African Americans, ethnology, Parliament of Religions
 - b. Legacy in the 1902 McMillan Commission Plan for the National Mall in Washington DC

- II. Historical background: Age of Empire in Europe and America – Manifest Destiny, the Closing of the Frontier, Massacre at Wounded Knee, the Gilded Age, Empire**

- III. The 1893 Fair “The White City”: Daniel Burnham (1846-1912); Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903)**
 - a. Cf. 1889 Paris Exposition (Exposition Universelle), Eiffel Tower; Baron Hausmann & Napoleon III Plan for Paris (1853-70)
 - b. Designing the White City: Neo-Classical (Beaux-Arts) architecture, landscape, art
 - c. The Court of Honor vs. the Midway Plaisance
 - d. Dissent
 - i. Modern architect Louis Sullivan
 - ii. The Women's Building by Sylvia Hayden; Mary Cassatt, Modern Woman
 - iii. Frederick Douglass and Ida B. Wells: “The Reason Why The Colored American is not in the World's Columbian Exposition”
 - iv. The new “science” of Ethnology

IV. Washington DC: City as Symbol, 1791 – today

- a. 1791 L'Enfant Plan and the US Constitution: Capitol, White House, Washington Monument, public open space
- b. 1902 McMillan Plan and The City Beautiful
- c. Mall evolution in 20th and 21st century: evolving story of American history
 - i. New Smithsonian museums?: Women's History; American Latino

V. Reconsidering American identity on the Mall and in Public Architecture today

- a. Who decides? Is there a better way?
- b. Can there, should there, be a shared national identity, mythology?
 - i. Controversies over Civil War statues, the Lost Cause
 - ii. Cf. Richard Slotkin, A Great Disorder: National Myth and the Battle for America (2024): a new national myth?
- c. An idea: a new McMillan-type Plan for the National Mall in the 21st century?
- d. What stories to tell? What kind of art and architecture? (cf. Exec. Order: Promoting Beautiful Federal Civic Architecture)

Recap: Seeing History Through Artists' Eyes – Constantine, Luther, Napoleon, the National Mall