Hadassah St. Hubert

A New Departure: The 1949 Bicentennial International Exposition

This article is an account and analysis of the 1949-1950 Bicentennial International Exposition held under Dumarsais Estimé's presidency (1946-1950). The Bicentennial International Exposition transformed a portion of the capital of Port-au-Prince into a visionary "modern" city that celebrated the culture and production of the Haitian masses in order to draw tourists. In mounting it, Estimé brought to fruition former president Sténio Vincent's long-held ambition to host an international exposition in Haiti to attract foreign visitors and expand tourism. The Estimé government's efforts to rebrand Haiti was also shaped by the involvement of Pan American Airways. This article also examines the tensions and seeming contradictions of this project, wich celebrated Haitian "folk" culture even as thousands of working-class Haitians were displaced in the construction of Cité de l'Exposition and delves into both the positive and negative critiques from some observers with regard

to the International Exposition, on one hand as an eloquent testimony to Haiti's place in the world, and on the other, as a misuse of public funds.

> *"Today, on this lovely morning of December eight, ornate with color, with sound, and enthusiasm, I feel, as each of you must feel, rising strongly over the music of the church bells and the throbbing of the Haitian drums, the pride of a new departure toward greater beauty, toward true culture, and civilization."*
>
> Excerpt from Dumarsais Estimé's speech delivered upon the inauguration of the Bicentennial International Exposition, 8 December 1949
> Translated by Edith Efron

World's Fairs and Expositions are international public events that celebrate the achievements of nations. These achievements could be in technology, industry, architecture, and arts and culture. Nations often showcased their industrial and agricultural exports as well. World's fairs and expositions were frequently mounted in Europe and North America in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries as showcases of national progress as well as imperial reach and power. On one hand, they brought people together and promised a better future; on the other, they reinforced existing class, political, economic, cultural, and racial hierarchies. Within these international displays, Haitian governments sought to demonstrate that they, and by extension other people of African descent, were capable of attaining Western standards of "civilization." For Haitian governments, participation in and mounting of exposition displays became a means for Haiti to demonstrate its progress and counter the negative stereotypes of the country created by foreigners while seeking foreign trade and investment.

This article is an analytical account of the 1949-1950 Bicentennial International Exposition held under the presidency of Dumarsais Estimé (1946-1950). The Bicentennial International Exposition transformed a portion of Port-au-Prince, the nation's capital, into a visionary "modern" city that celebrated the culture and production of the Haitian masses in

order to entice tourists.[1] In mounting it, Estimé brought to fruition former president Sténio Vincent's long-held ambition to host an international exposition in Haiti to attract foreign visitors and expand tourism. The efforts of Estimé's government to rebrand Haiti was also shaped by the involvement of Pan American Airways. This article further examines the tensions and embedded contradictions of this project, which celebrated Haitian "folk" culture even as thousands of working-class Haitians were displaced in the construction of Cité de l'Exposition. It also delves into critiques from some observers that the International Exposition was a misuse of public funds, while situating the event in the larger context of World's Fairs and Expositions.

Brief background to the Exposition

The Bicentennial International Exposition of Port-au-Prince, held from December 8, 1949 to June 8, 1950, was the first World's fair held after World War II. Many nations were still recovering from the war and the next officially recognized world exposition was not held until 1958 in Brussels (known as Expo '58). Prior to Haiti's Exposition, very few expositions had been held in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the majority of internationally recognized world's fairs were still mounted in France, the U.S., and the United Kingdom.[2] Haiti was ahead of its time by holding its own exposition in the mid-twentieth century and is the only predominantly

1 Hereafter, the article will use International Exposition or Exposition to refer to the Bicentennial International Exposition.

2 Expositions held in the Caribbean and Latin America included: the 1891 Jamaica International Exhibition, the 1897 Central American Expo in Guatemala, the 1908 Exhibition of the centenary of the opening of the Ports of Brazil, the 1915 Panama-California Exposition, the 1922 Independence Centenary International Exposition of Brazil, and the 1955-1956 Fair of Peace and Fraternity of the Free World *(Feria de la Paz y Confraternidad del Mundo Libre)* in the Dominican Republic. There were attempts to mount expositions in Mexico, Colombia, and Ecuador, but they were ultimately not held. Note that none of these events were recognized by the BIE even though the organization retroactively lists earlier expositions held in Europe and the U.S. on the BIE's exposition timeline http://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/expo-timeline.

Black nation to have mounted an officially sanctioned world exposition.[3] In fact, the 1949 International Exposition held in Port-au-Prince was and remains the only world exposition in Latin America and the Caribbean that was officially sanctioned by the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE), of which Haiti was a member since its creation in 1928.[4]

World's fairs historically sought to present images of a better future to attendees, and in this case, the intent of Dumarsais Estimé's government was to spotlight the Black middle class as a symbol and beacon of progress, first by modernizing parts of the capital and then by expanding international tourism and attracting investment opportunities for other nations. As a politician known for his *noiriste* sympathies and as a moderate, he had support from the Black middle class.[5]

---

3 Augustin Mathurin, *Bi-centenaire de la fondation de Port-au-Prince, 1749-1949* : *Exposition Internationale, 8 Décembre 1949-8 Juin 1950, à la mémoire du grand Président Léon Dumarsais Estimé,* Port-au-Prince, Imp.des Antilles, 1975, pp. 1-25; Paul Greenhalgh, *Fair World*: *A History of World's Fairs and Exposition from London to Shanghai 1851-2010*, Windsor, Papadakis, 2011, pp. 28-29. The BIE stipulated that the duration of international expositions could not exceed six months and guaranteed the participation of its member nations during such events.

4 Mathurin, *Bi-centenaire de la fondation de Port-au-Prince;* Greenhalgh, *Fair World,* pp. 28-29; Stephen P. Ladas, *Patents, Trademarks, and Related Rights,* Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 1975, p. 548. The first thirty member nations of the BIE were: Austria, Belgium, Byelorussia, Bulgaria, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Demark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Haiti, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, Monaco, Norway, New Zealand, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Rumania, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Ukraine, U.S.S.R.

5 *Noirisme* as an ideology, however, did not begin with Estimé. It drew largely from the literary and cultural movement of *indigénisme* that emerged in response to the U.S. occupation from 1915 to 1934 by celebrating the roots of Haiti's African heritage and culture, particularly through the work of Haitian ethnographer Jean Price-Mars (1876-1969). By the 1940s, *noirisme* had evolved into a political ideology advocating for Black leadership, seen as more representative of the emerging Black middle class and the overwhelmingly Black peasantry. *Noirisme* had by now radicalized key cultural tenets of the earlier *indigénistes* to propose a primarily political project aimed at promoting the dominance and values of the Black majority population in opposition to the historical dominance of the *milat* elite. The presidency of François Duvalier (1957-1971) is widely regarded as the most significant manifestation of *noirisme* in power. See Matthew J. Smith, *Red & Black in Haiti: Radicalism, Conflict, and Political Change, 1934-1957,* Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2009, pp. 97, 104, 109; Matthew Smith, "The Revolution of 1946," *Island Luminous*, Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC), 2014. See also, Valerie Kaussen, "Race,

Estimé channeled his mandate into modernization efforts throughout the country. As the Secretary of Agriculture under Sténio Vincent, Estimé had been the guest of honor at the New York World's Fair luncheon organized in August 1939.[6] Following the example of previous Haitian governments, his administration saw expositions as an opportunity to remake Haiti's image abroad, and beyond this, to fulfill Vincent's dream of holding an international exposition in Haiti.

Celebrating the founding of Port-au-Prince, the Bicentennial International Exposition, held from December 8, 1949 to June 8, 1950, continued Haitian government efforts to make Haiti, a nation that was proud of its independence and its contributions to world history, better known to the international community. This in itself was not a departure from previous administrations that had used participation in world's fairs to demonstrate Haiti's progress and modernity. What had shifted was the extent to which the Estimé government used the occasion of the International Exposition to undertake infrastructural changes and commodify Haiti's cultural traditions to attract international tourism. Launching what scholars and U.S. based newspapers have called the "Golden Age of Haitian tourism," the International Exposition codified new ways for the Haitian government to respond to and challenge the many decades of negative representations rooted in notions of savagery and the alleged inability of Blacks to govern themselves.

Estimé is known for the modernization projects taking place throughout the country, as in the Marbial Valley, the town of Belladère, as well as for those undertaken during the International Exposition itself.[7] The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Nation, and the Symbolics of Servitude in Haitian Noirisme," in *The Masters and the Slaves: Plantation Relations and Mestizaje in American Imaginaries,* Springer, 2005, 68-69. In the present article, I use the Kreyòl term "*milat*" instead of "mulatto" or "mulâtre" in reference to the predominately light-skinned Haitian elite and others that compose this social class.

6 "15 Hours of Gayety to Touch off Fair," *The New York Times*, April 10, 1939; "Official of Haiti Is Guest," *The New York Time*s, August 16, 1939.

7 Chantalle Verna, *Haiti and the Uses of America*, New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 2017, p. 123; UNESCO; *The Haiti Pilot Project: Phase One (1947-1949)*, UNESCO; Paris, 1951), 11.

projects in the Marbial Valley and the Haitian government's re-construction of the town of Belladère, in the Centre department of Haiti, were modernization efforts that sought, in part, to change Haiti's image abroad. Modernization under Estimé was embodied in new buildings, new roads, curated parks and landscapes that catered to those of the Haitian middle class and to foreigners. The International Exposition, commemorating the bicentennial of the capital's founding embraced Estimé's vision for what he described as Haiti's "perfection and total renewal."[8] This world's fair created an opportunity for the Haitian government to transform a portion of Port-au-Prince into a visionary "modern" city with better infrastructure and one that catered to foreign travelers. The Estimé government, supported by the Black middle class did not, however, resolve the historical marginalization of the Haitian masses. Instead, it sought to use Haitian rural culture derived from the peasantry to solve Haiti's "image problem." Although distortions of Vodou had long been part of Haiti's "image problem," the government turned to Haitian popular culture to renovate the nation's image. Influenced by the *Indigéniste* movement that emerged during the U.S. occupation of Haiti (1915-1934), [9] racial pride deepened, the country's African heritage and folklore was valorized, and "notions of Haitian identity" were redefined.

Rebranding Haiti

The International Exposition spotlighted the ascendance of Black middle-class politicians to the highest offices of government, and their political legitimacy was reinforced through the negotiations with domestic elites and foreign investors involved in planning the Exposition. However, the official goal of attracting large-scale tourism to Haiti was longstanding. When Pan American Airways landed its first flight in Port-au-Prince on January 29, 1929, the Haitian government under Vincent "foresaw the creation of a resort and travel industry which would attract American visitors of 'the better class,' and was willing to facilitate the legalization of

8 Excerpted from a speech by Dumarsais Estimé on December 9, 1949, at Cité de l'Exposition, in Estimé Dumarsais, Harry S. Truman and William E. De Courcy, *Haiti and the U.S.A.*, Port-au-Prince, Henry Deschamps, 1949, p. 16.

9 Smith, *Red and Black in Haiti*, 59.

casino gambling."[10] Both Vincent and Élie Lescot had made attempts to bring Haiti into ~~enter~~ the tourist market, but it was during the remainder of Estimé's administration, and especially that of his successor, Paul Magloire, that Haiti would eventually enjoy a post-WWII tourism boom.[11] The increasing popularity of Haitian art, along with a trend for acquiring "'Haitian resort clothes [that] erupted on the New York fashion scene," coupled with international fascination with Haiti that had been amplified by U.S. occupation through publication of Haiti-focused articles, travelogues, novels, memoirs, theater productions and films, as well as the expansion of the Caribbean tourist industry more broadly, all converged to make Haiti into an attractive tourist destination.[12]

An important step in the process of advancing an alternative narrative about Haiti was the creation in 1947 of a Department of Tourism, responsible for "initiating a broad public relations campaign in the United States and across Latin America."[13] The Haitian government commissioned books and pamphlets to appeal to a U.S. audience to highlight the development of the nation as a democracy.[14] As Chantalle Verna notes, "despite noiriste efforts to distinguish themselves as establishing a new era in Haitian politics and foreign relations, the agenda set forth by Estimé did not necessarily reduce American involvement in Haitian affairs."[15] While Vincent's earlier attempt at creating a tourism industry in Haiti tried to lure travelers from Europe, the priority of the Estimé government was to appeal to potential tourists in the Americas, and especially from the United States.

Walter White, Executive Secretary for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), described the challenges in 1947, stating that "most of what has been published in the United States

10 Gayle Plummer, *The Golden Age of Haitian Tourism,* New York, Columbia University/ New York University Consortium, 1989, 2.
11 Ibid., 6-7.
12 Gayle Plummer, *Haiti and the United States: The Psychological Moment,* Athens, Ga., University of Georgia Press, 1992.
13 Smith, *Red and Black in Haiti*, p. 107; J. Michael Dash, *Literature and Ideology in Haiti, 1915-1961,* Totowa, N.J., Barnes & Noble Books, 1981, p. 45.
14 *Haiti and the U.S.A* [a booklet published by Haiti's Department of Tourism in 1949], p. 14.
15 Verna, *Haiti and the Uses of America*, p. 126.

pictures Haiti as a poverty-stricken, illiterate, hopelessly backward country whose people are little removed from the jungle and practically all of whom practice voodoo. Ninety-nine out of every one hundred Americans who know of Haiti at all think of it in such terms."[16] Descriptions of Haiti in occupation-era literature tended to emphasize unhealthiness, backwardness, and poverty, and also negatively framed the practice of Vodou. The construction of the "Cité de l'Exposition" (also called "Cité Dumarsais Estimé") was the centerpiece of the government's campaign to physically modernize Haiti and revise its image.

As a modernization project closely tied to tourist development, the Exposition provided an opportunity to construct and repair roads, increase air travel and build new hotels. The extensive infrastructure development aided the flow of North American tourists to Haiti, and the Exposition took center stage in Haiti's bid to attempt to become a leading tourist destination in the Caribbean. In the 1940s and early 1950s, the Caribbean tourist industry was dominated by Cuba, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico.[17] In addition, the Bahamas, Bermuda, the Dominican Republic, and other islands sought, along with Haiti, to compete for American tourist travelers. As Rosalie Schwartz notes, all of these vacation destinations featured comparable attraction with "tropical climate, sandy beaches, and warm, blue sea."[18] With so many competitors, the Haitian government had to create a unique image through its tourist campaigns. But paradoxically, in doing so, Haiti also drew upon narratives once used to malign the nation. Lindsay Twa states:

> For Haiti, primitivist discourses already dominated [foreign] preconceptions. Haiti's nascent tourism industry had to engage these long-standing tropes, which presented Haiti as exotic, extreme, dangerously mysterious, by turning Haiti's 'image

16 Letter from Walter White to Joseph D. Charles, Ambassador of Haiti to the U.S. based in Washington D.C., NAACP Papers, September 20, 1947, Box II A295, Folder 6- Haiti General 1943-49, Library of Congress.

17 Reinhold P. Wolff and Robert J. Voyles, *Tourist Trends in the Caribbean, 1951 to 1955,* Coral Gables, Fla., Bureau of Business and Economic Research, University of Miami, 1956, pp. 4-6; John Andrew Gustavsen, "Tension under the Sun: Tourism and Identity in Cuba, 1945-2007" (Open Access Dissertations, 2009, Paper 298), p. 23.

18 Rosalie Schwartz, *Pleasure Island: Tourism and Temptation in Cuba*, Lincoln, NB, University of Nebraska Press, 1997, p. 109.

> problems' into positives. Haiti's tourism marketing strategy needed to create a place-image of Haiti as typical as any other Caribbean destination, and also remake primitivist Haiti as excitingly (but safely) exceptional.[19]

With the help of foreign journalists, scholars, and artists, travel to Haiti was already becoming "en vogue" in the mid-1930s onwards. As Twa discusses, the promotion of Haitian visual art became part of the movement to make Haiti an exceptional tourist location during the 1940s. DeWitt Peters, a U.S. visual artist, Selden Rodman, a U.S. writer, and several Haitian intellectuals co-founded the Centre d'Art in 1944 to promote local Haitian artists.[20] According to historian Matthew Smith, "[m]ost of the paintings produced during this period [the mid to late 1940s] were stirring visual records of peasant life, Vodou iconography, and traumatic episodes in the history of the country's long independence… . Haitian artists were acclaimed for their work overseas and the appreciation of indigenous art locally was strengthened."[21]

Pan American Airways, which became the major airline to Haiti, used Haitian art and the country's new healthier image in a bid to attract first-time U.S. tourists to the country.[22] Starting in the late 1940s, Pan Am spent $50,000 on sales, promotion, and advertising campaigns for travel to Haiti. These advertisements appeared in 93 U.S. newspapers and in thirteen national magazines to promote the "Switzerland of the Caribbean."[23] The slogan promoted the idea that Haiti was safe, peaceful, and a potential tax haven. Pan Am anticipated that more tourism would

---

19 Lindsay J. Twa, *Visualizing Haiti in U.S. Culture, 1910-1950,* Farnham, Surrey, Ashgate Publishing, 2014, p. 207.

20 *Le Centre d'Art,* Haitian Art Society, https://haitianartsociety.org/le-centre-d-art.

21 Smith, *Red and Black in Haiti*, p. 59.

22 "Yaws Stamped Out Haitian Agency Says," *The New York Times*, April 23, 1950; Dolph Green, "Americans Just Beginning, to Learn about Beauty and Worth of 'Republic of Haiti,'" *New York Amsterdam News*, May 6, 1950; Milton M. Levenson, "All Haitians to Get Penicillin in Battle to Eradicate VD," *New York Times*, April 13, 1950.

23 Pan American World Airways, Inc. records, 1902-2005, Series 1: Corporate and General, 1920-1994, Box 357, Folder 6, University of Miami Special Collections. The advertisements were featured in *Time*, *Life*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *The New York Times*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Holiday*, and *Glamour*. Today's approximate equivalent of US $50,000 in the 1940's is now over US $600,000, according to: 2013dollars.com and amortization.org.

come to the island especially when the exposition was being planned, since their public relations department took credit for "this lucrative new 'industry.'"[24] Pan Am aided and cooperated with the Haitian government in planning and promoting the Exposition.

Through tourist advertisements, Pan Am promoted Haitian cities, including Port-au-Prince, Kenscoff, Cap Haïtien and Jacmel. They highlighted the nation's history, boutique hotels, beaches, picturesque landscapes, and local products. Rather than representing Haiti through generic images of tropical beaches, Pan Am's advertising campaigns highlighted Haiti's uniqueness, featuring the many distinct attractions and diversions available across the country, including "voodoo" dances at hotels, cockfights and local architecture and scenery,[25] such as the Citadelle in Cap Haïtien, the mountain views of Kenscoff and Pétionville, and the newly renovated harbor. Pan Am's touristic images of Haiti also focused on historical figures such as King Henry Christophe.[26] The Haitian government and Pan Am consistently employed key words such as "tropical" and "unique" in tourist-oriented advertisements, emphasizing Haiti's claim to "civilization" through its history, valorizing Vodou-inspired folklore performances and promoting Haitian *art naïve.* Haiti was reimagined "into spaces of touristic desire."[27] As Krista Thompson notes regarding the marketing of the Caribbean, "pictures were instrumental in imagining the islands as tropical and picturesque tourism destinations."[28] Newspaper and travel advertisements featuring hotels with mountain views and outdoor terraces.

---

24 Pan American World Airways, Inc records, 1902-2005, Series 1: Corporate and General, 1920-1994, Box 357, Folder 6, Letter dated April 1952 from Public Relations-Latin American Division.

25 Pan American World Airways, Inc records, 1902-2005, Series 16: Photographs, 1918-1990, Box 77, Folder 7, University of Miami Special Collections.

26 Ibid. NDLR: Henry Christophe, president of Haiti (1807-1811) and King Henry (1811-1820).

27 Krista A. Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2006, p. 4.

28 Ibid., p. 5.

Figure 1- Sketch of the International Exposition of Port-au-Prince. Courtesy of Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC)[29].

The high altitude of these hotels provided a cooler location for travelers unaccustomed to the tropical climate. They were places where tourists, who socialized at the bars and watched performances at these locations, came into contact with middle class and elite Haitians. Travel brochures, postcards, newspaper advertisements, and the Negro Motorist Green-book aided the Haitian government in redefining Haiti's image as "safe" and "friendly" for tourist travel.

Haiti's New Departure

Expositions usually require several years of planning, however Estimé's government began to make preparations only in March 1948, leaving little over a year to change the landscape of Port-au-Prince.[30] Given the signifi-

29 « Exposition Internationale, 1949-1950. Bi-Centenaire de Port-au-Prince, 1749-1949 », Port-au-Prince, s.n.1948, http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00010663/00001, [page 19].

30 Georges Corvington, *Port-au-Prince au cours des ans : la ville contemporaine (1934-1950)*, Montréal, Les Éditions du Cidihca, 2003, tome IV, p. 459.

cant funds already expended to rebuild Belladère, public criticism against the plan to mount an exposition began to emerge. Haitian historian Georges Corvington notes: "President Estimé who himself had conceived the idea of the Exposition and considered this as an occasion to provide Port-au-Prince a waterfront worthy of a capital city, resolutely turned his back on critics and decided to begin work."[31]

The Exposition was Estimé's personal project that he hoped would be the highlight of his political career and show what was possible under Black middle class governance. His term as president was due to expire in 1951, which may have been behind his decision to rush the plans to hold the Exposition. The 150th anniversary of the Haitian Revolution was coming up in 1954, but Estimé, unsure whether he would be elected by the legislature for another term, decided to launch the Exposition in commemoration of the bicentennial of the founding of Port-au-Prince. Matthew Smith notes that the International Exposition was "the greatest symbol of the government's commitment to the promotion of Black consciousness on a social level, and one of Estime's lasting legacies."[32]

Because the Exposition was designed to attract foreign tourists, the infrastructure modernization of the capital was largely confined to areas frequented by international visitors, especially the Cité de l'Exposition along the waterfront. According to Smith, these parts of the capital "received a new urban look."[33] The exposition area featured the work of foreign and Haitian architects; however, the head architect was August F. Schmiedigen from New York, who had experience "with fairs in the United States, France, Spain, and Rumania [sic] behind him."[34] Schmiedigen later reported that Haitian workers were "congenitally incapable of building in a straight line."[35] Despite his lack of confidence in the ability of

31 Ibid., p. 458. My translation. In French : « …le president Estimé qui avait lui-même conçu l'idée de cette Exposition et envisagé à cette occasion de doter Port-au-Prince d'un front de mer digne d'une capitale, tourna résolument le dos aux critiques et décida d'entamer les travaux ».

32 Smith, *Red & Black in Haiti*, p. 107.

33 Ibid.

34 George S. Schuyler, "Haiti looks Ahead," *Americas* 1 (10) December, 1949: 7.

35 "Caribbean Carnival: 'Little World's Fair is Haiti's big bid for Tourists,'" *Life Magazine*, March 13, 1950: 105. Albert Mangonès is also known for sculpting the statue of the

Haitian workers, Schmiedigen worked with Cornell University trained Haitian architect Albert Mangonès to design and construct the Haitian pavilions and Théâtre de Verdure, a new national theater. Schmiedigen and Mangonès transformed the area into "a shimmering fairy city with a distinctive Haitian flavor" through the labor of 1,500 Haitian workers.[36]

The Haitian government took over about thirty acres along the capital's shoreline to construct the Cité de l'Exposition. To rebuild this waterfront on the Baie de La Gonâve, a swamp was drained and the people living in what could be described as a nearby "slum" were displaced.[37] Estimé presented himself as a leader representing the peasant masses, the Black middle class and urban workers, yet he displaced approximately 15,000 people to create Cité de l'Exposition.[38] According to Selden Rodman, most of the residents were sent to the island of La Gonâve, "where they were stranded with a pick and shovel."[39] However, Walter White, Executive Secretary of the NAACP, provided an alternative account, insisting that "unlike some American cities, the Haitian government has provided homes elsewhere for those who had to be moved."[40] The Cité de l'Exposition became a space where people were not allowed to enter without what was considered to be "proper" attire. Estimé's government had enacted a law requiring Haitian peasants to wear shoes when they visited the capital city in order to contribute to the hygiene, orderliness, and beautification of the city's landscape.[41]

Marron Inconnu [Nèg Mawon], or the unknown maroon, which was completed in 1967 during the Duvalier dictatorship.

36 Schuyler, "Haiti looks Ahead," p. 7.

37 Plummer, *The Golden Age of Haitian Tourism*, p. 7; Smith, *Red & Black in Haiti,* p. 107.

38 Schuyler, "Haiti looks Ahead," p. 7. Smith, *Red and Black in Haiti*, p. 103.

39 Selden Rodman, *Haiti: The Black Republic – The Complete Story and Guide*, New York, Devin-Adair Co., 1954, p. 27.

40 Walter White, "Says Haitian Exposition Should be a Must for All," *Chicago Defender,* July 23, 1949.

41 Rodman, *Haiti: The Black Republic*, p. 27.

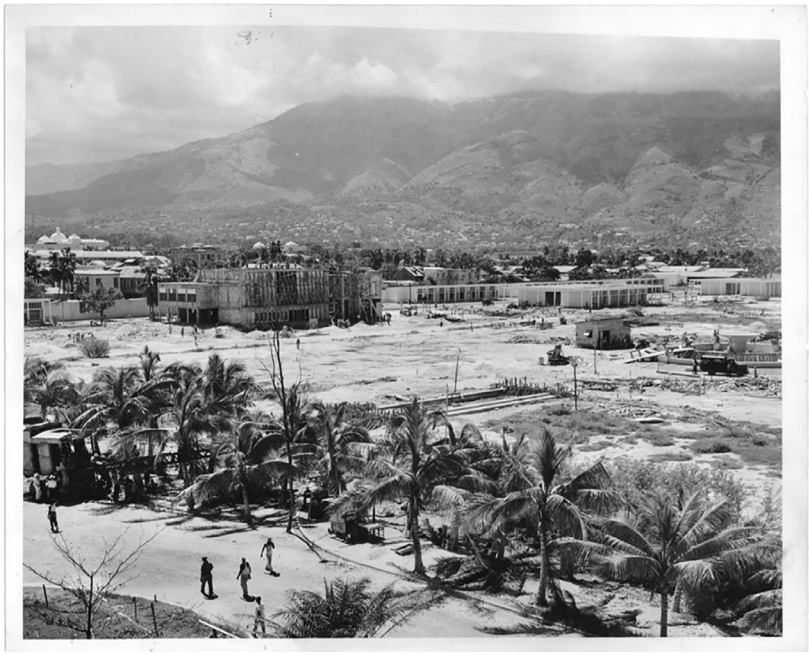

Figure 2 - Views of the Cité de l'Exposition during construction. Dated October 17, 1949. Image from author's collection.

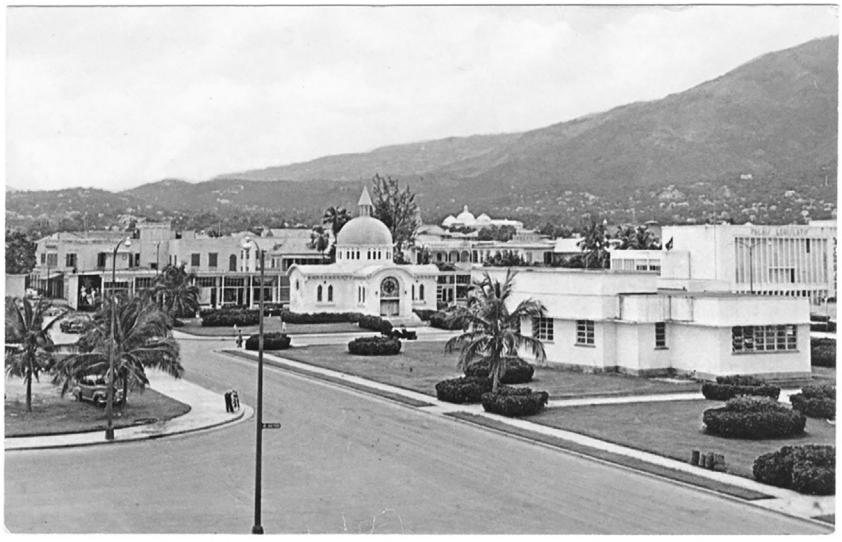

Figure 3 - Sixtine Chapel donated by Vatican City. Guatemala's pavilion was situated in front of the chapel. Postcard in author's collection.

Estimé justified these measures as part of a larger sanitation campaign. Smith notes that "street cleaning and sanitation projects were initiated and scores of beggars and vagrants were rounded up and sent to the remote island of La Gonâve."[42] Estimé's vision of "modern" nationhood was not so much about the social uplift of the Black masses. Rather he sought to create a "picturesque" image of Haiti by refurbishing tourist areas of the capital and allowing the selective participation of Haitians.

While the exposition area catered to locals as well as foreigners, evidence suggests that middle class and elite Haitians were essential to its success.[43] Haitian citizens from these social classes were encouraged to participate not just as workers and performers, but also as visitors to spectacles designed for tourists. About 10,000 predominately Haitian spectators attended the first inauguration on December 8th, 1949, which celebrated the opening of the Haitian pavilions. In addition to listening to Estimé's inaugural speech, they heard a message from Pope Pius XII, delivered by Cardinal Arteaga, archbishop of Havana, accompanied by eight bishops, as they viewed U.S. marines and sailors from the USS Salem marching down Harry S. Truman Blvd.[44]

U.S. presence was always close even in the post-occupation period, as reflected through the participation and investment by U.S. based businesses such as Pan Am, cultural exchanges with the Smithsonian, and involvement in Haiti's military. A second inauguration, this time for the international pavilions[45], was held on February 12, 1950, featuring another

42 Smith, *Red and Black in Haiti*, p. 107; U.S. National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, RG 59,838.504/1-1648. Letter from Harold Tittman to Secretary of State, January 16, 1948, Port-au-Prince. 48.

43 National Archives and Records Administration, Office of the U.S. Commissioner to the International Exposition for Founding of Port-au-Prince, RG 43 Box 3 F12 and Box 3 F9.

44 Dantès Bellegarde, *Histoire du peuple haïtien, 1492-1952*, Port-au-Prince, 1953, p. 325; National Archives and Records Administration, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59 Box 5618 F4- 838.607 Port-au-Prince/12-149.

45 Eighteen participating countries and territories constructed their own buildings and statuary. These countries included the United States, France, Italy, Belgium, Spain, San Marino, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Canada, Venezuela, Mexico, Argentina, Guatemala, Chile, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Jamaica. The United Nations, the Organization of American States (OAS) and Vatican City participated as well.

U.S. military display. In this case, an Air Force F-80 jet fighter flew over the city for the celebration.[46] The records noted that 97 percent of the visitors to the U.S. pavilion were Haitians, including school children, teachers, and well-to-do residents of the capital.[47] Although the fair was a bid to attract tourists, it contributed to Estimé's larger mission of envisioning a "greater destiny" for Haitians, one symbolized by a modern capital.[48]

From December 26th to the second inauguration on February 12th, Estimé granted free entry to the exposition on weekdays with an entrance fee imposed on the weekends.[49] This points to a distinctive feature of the International Exposition: the government's aim was not primarily to generate revenue from admissions as with other world's fairs, but rather to strengthen Haiti's tourist industry and potentially find new trading partners for the country's products.[50] While Estimé wanted to demonstrate his commitment to the masses by enabling them to enjoy the newly created Cité de l'Exposition in the early weeks of the fair, it is notable that the February 12th cut-off date for free entry coincided with the opening of the international pavilions. Haitian residents who attended the exposition during the earlier time frame only had access to the local Haitian pavilion displays. With the international inauguration, general entrance fees of $1 for adults and 50 cents for children were charged throughout the week.[51] These fees made most of the attractions unavailable to the Haitian masses. Undoubtedly, from that point on, the Haitian middle class and elite frequented the Exposition more than the masses simply because they could afford to attend the two inaugurations, nightclub performances, and other forms of entertainment.

---

46 National Archives and Records Administration, General Records of the Department of State RG 59 Box 5618 F2- 838.191PO/1-350.

47 National Archives and Records Administration, Office of the U.S. Commissioner to the International Exposition for Founding of Port-au-Prince, RG 43 Box 3 F12 and Box 3 F9.

48 Estimé, Truman and De Courcy, *Haiti and the U.S.A*., p. 16.

49 « L'entrée libre à L'Exposition du Lundi au Vendredi », *Le Nouvelliste*, 26-27 décembre, 1949.

50 Rydell, *Fair America*, pp. 85- 96.

51 « Les Prix à L'Exposition », *Le Nouvelliste*, 21 décembre, 1949.

Figure 4 - "Haitian Exposition" image by Gordon Parks for Time Magazine, 1950. Features Jean Léon Destiné of the Troupe Folklorique Nationale.

At times, the Estimé government could also profit from foreign fascination with Haitian culture as "uncivilized" and "primitive," due to its African roots. In particular, Estimé sought to capitalize on foreign interest in the Vodou religion.[52] Kate Ramsey notes that during and after the U.S. occupation, "Vodou was the object of intense fascination," and that during the 1930s and 1940s, "Haiti was also becoming the site of intensive foreign anthropological interest…, and Vodou was the primary ethnographic object of North American and Western European researchers who traveled there."[53] The work of foreign scholars, such as Melville Herskovits and

52 Kate Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law: Vodou and Power in Haiti,* Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2011, p. 250. Ritual practices involving animal sacrifice were still prohibited during Estimé's administration.

53 Ibid., pp. 248-249.

Alfred Métraux, writers and artists such as Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, DeWitt Peters, Selden Rodman, and Jason Seley, as well as choreographers such as Katherine Dunham and journalists such as Edith Efron, served to heighten foreign interest in Haitian art, culture and society. Haitian ethnological work and the earlier emergence of *indigénisme* in the late occupation period had by now paved the way for the staging of folklore as "national culture" at the Exposition.[54]

A particularly important vehicle for attracting tourists was the Troupe Folklorique Nationale, led by Jean Léon Destiné and Lina Mathon-Blanchet. In fact, Destiné[55] was featured in Pan American Airways advertisements for the Exposition. Across the Americas during these years, as Ramsey notes, "[w]hether packaged as tourist attractions on the national stage or exported abroad for displays for hemispheric unity, national ballets and folklore groups became a key currency of inter hemispheric relations and diplomacy, to be circulated and exchanged much in the same spirit as reciprocal trade."[56]

Haitian folklore choreography drew on various sources, including colonial *contredanses* and the ritual dances of Vodou. Although Estimé used these staged performances to promote the cultural content of Haiti's nation, he was not a defender of the practice of Vodou. In fact, as Katherine Dunham notes, Estimé "hated the vaudun, or I should say held it in ridicule, feeling that the worship of African gods tied the people to ignorance, diverting them from recognition of their immediate and real problems."[57] It is notable that while the Estimé government promoted

54 Ibid., p. 217. Zora Neale Hurston, Katherine Dunham and Melville Herskovits traveled to Haiti as ethnographers.

55 Léon Destiné, featured in figure 4, later went on to headline "Haiti Week" with the Troupe Folklorique Nationale at New York's Ziegfeld Theatre. The Haitian government sponsored "Haiti Week" and continued to support folkloric performances to increase tourism even after Estimé left office.

56 Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law,* p. 230.

57 Katherine Dunham, *Island Possessed*, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1969, p. 26. See Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law*, particularly chapter 4: "Cultural Nationalist Policy and the Pursuit of 'Superstition' in Post-Occupation Haiti."

folklore performance based, in part, on ritual dances during the Exposition, the Vodou religion remained officially prohibited in Haiti during his years in office.[58]

Beyond Estimé's own ambivalence regarding the representation of Vodou at the Exposition, the Catholic church made clear its own opposition to the government-sponsored staged performances of Vodou as folklore and a form of artistic production representing Vodou as religion. The travel writer, Patrick Leigh Fermor, reported the view of a local Roman Catholic priest who stated: "Worst of all, the practice of Voodoo is becoming rationalized, codified almost," for which he blamed scholars such as Melville Herskovits and Selden Rodman.[59] In addition, the Catholic Chapel, donated by the Vatican, refused to have Haitian artists paint murals at their building.[60] Yet despite the controversy, the Episcopal Cathédrale St. Trinité invited artists, such as Wilson Bigaud, Philomé Obin, Castera Bazile, Rigaud Benoit and others from the Centre d'Art to cover its interior walls with painted murals of Biblical scenes.[61]

Although folklore was indeed used in advertisements to lure tourists, Haitian visual art with Vodou themes was confined to very limited spaces at the exposition. The Haitian art industry thrived due to foreign patronage, and Estimé capitalized upon this interest by showcasing the work of a few *naïve* artists in order to motivate "trips to Port-au-Prince."[62] Wilson

58 Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law,* p. 250.

59 Patrick Leigh Fermor, *The Traveller's Tree: A Journey Through the Caribbean Islands*, London, UK: Penguin Books, 1984, 268.

60 Interview by author with Bernard Diederich, May 11, 2016, Miami, FL.

61 Selden Rodman, *The Caribbean*, New York, Hawthorn Books, 1969, p. 296; Interview by author with Bernard Diederich, May 11, 2016, Miami, Fl.

62 Polly Pattullo, *Last Resorts: The Cost of Tourism in the Caribbean*, London, Latin America Bureau, 2005, p. 195. It was during this period that painters such as Hector Hyppolite and Philomé Obin became internationally recognized artists. In 1948, Selden Rodman, a co-founder of Centre d'Art, published a book entitled *Renaissance in Haiti: Popular Painters in the Black Republic,* which focused on their work and that of other Haitian artists. For more on Haitian art history, see Carlo A. Célius, *Langage plastique et énonciation identitaire. L'invention de l'art haïtien,* Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 2007; Philippe Lerebours, "The Indigenist Revolt: Haitian Art, 1927-1944," *Callaloo* 15 (3) Summer 1992 and "A History of Haitian Painting," in Cécile Accilien, Jessica Adams and Elide Mélange, eds., *Revolutionary*

Bigaud's and Castera Bazile's murals were featured in Cité de l'Exposition.[63] However, Selden Rodman, who promoted the Centre d'Art, contended that beyond Bigaud and Bazile, few local Haitian artists were featured at the International Exposition and that the four million dollar budget did not include much investment in the work of such artists.[64] The Estimé government had delegated control of public art displays and architecture during the exposition to August F. Schmiedigen. According to Rodman, while a few of the non-academically trained artists affiliated with the Centre d'Art were able to exhibit, it appears that Haitian artists from the Black middle class were featured primarily. Victor Nevers Constant, a *noiriste* and later supporter of François Duvalier's dictatorial regime, created the ceramic sculpture that appeared on the façade of the legislative building in Cité de l'Exposition.[65]

Art installations by foreign artists also comprised a significant part of the Exposition. The American artist Jason Seley (along with Haitian architect Albert Mangonès), was commissioned by Schmiedigen Associates to create several large sculptures of reclining figures on the border of a reflecting pool in the Cité de l'Exposition.[66] Arvi Tynys, a Finnish sculptor, created the "mother and child" sculpture on the edges of the Fontaine Lumineuse. Mia Steiner, an Austrian artist, had her murals featured at the Palace of Tourism.[67] The names and works of these foreign artists were promoted in international newspapers. Although Estimé's objective for holding the Exposition was to demonstrate Haitian talent, this goal fell short in terms of highlighting Haitian artists within various media outlets.

Freedoms: A History of Survival, Strength, and Imagination in Haiti, Coconut Creek, FL, Caribbean Studies Press, 2006, pp. 151-174.

63 Dorothy Williams, "Haiti's New Look: On a Mountain Roadway in Haiti," *New York Times*, April 26, 1950.

64 Selden Rodman, *Where Art Is Joy: Haitian Art: The First Forty Years,* New York, Ruggles de Latour, 1988, p. 103.

65 Victor Nevers Constant, *Souvenir d'une campagne*, reprint ed., l'État, 1958.

66 Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Jason Seley Papers, 1928-2013, bulk 1929-1983, Box 1: Biographical Material: Correspondence, Subject Files. Jason Seley and Albert Mangonès were classmates at Cornell University.

67 "Haiti's Exposition Ready Soon; Harlem Labor Protests," *New York Amsterdam News*, October 15, 1949.

On the entertainment scene, Haitian businesses set up diverse forms of cultural entertainment for tourists, as well as locals heading to the Exposition. The local nightclubs charged a fee of one to two dollars to attend performances and dances. Simbie Night Club, located in the Palmistes area of the exposition, opened every evening and featured famous Haitian performers such as the well-known drummer, Ti-Roro, and singer Lumane Casimir, known for her luminous voice.[68] Bands played in picturesque palm groves "on the edge of an indirectly lighted pool."[69] The night club printed its advertisements in French, English and Spanish in the Haitian newspapers, indicating that they expected to attract an international crowd. Bernard Diederich, a journalist based in Haiti at this time who attended the Exposition, also mentioned that the Palmistes area featured poetry sessions by local writers, such as Jean F. Brierre, poet, journalist and Assistant Secretary of State for Tourism in Haiti during these years.[70]

Haitian hotels such as Ibo-Lelé, Quisqueya, La Belle Créole and Damballah capitalized on foreign interest in Haiti's history and culture through their very names while promoting a commodified version of Vodou. Beyond the Cité de l'Exposition, nightclubs such as the Vodoo-Club in Carrefour catered to interest in Haiti's folklore and religious practices and even printed their newspaper advertisements in English to try to attract tourists.[71]

---

68 "Simbie Night-Club," *Le Nouvelliste*, 6 décembre,1949. Dr. Pierre-Michel Fontaine remembers the career of Lumane Casimir, whose career started during the Exposition and reached new heights during the presidency of Paul Magloire (1950-1956).

69 "Caribbean Carnival: 'Little World's Fair is Haiti's big bid for Tourists,'" *Life Magazine:* 108.

70 Interview by author with Bernard Diederich, May 11, 2016, Miami, FL; « Le tourisme en Haïti et son avenir », *Le Nouvelliste*, 1er mars, 1950. The pavilion for Rhum Barbancourt, the premiere Haitian rum producer, was shaped as a wooden barrel and became a popular leisure venue for tourists, the Black middle class, and elites. In Cabane Choucoune, a club frequented primarily by the Haitian elite, popular Haitian musicians such as Issa El Saieh and the band Jazz des Jeunes performed. Cabane Choucoune featured a beauty pageant to crown the Exposition's "Miss Commerce and Industry," with the winner, Caridad Apollon, traveling to Cuba to promote trade between the two countries.

71 Interview by author with Bernard Diederich, May 11, 2016, Miami, FL.

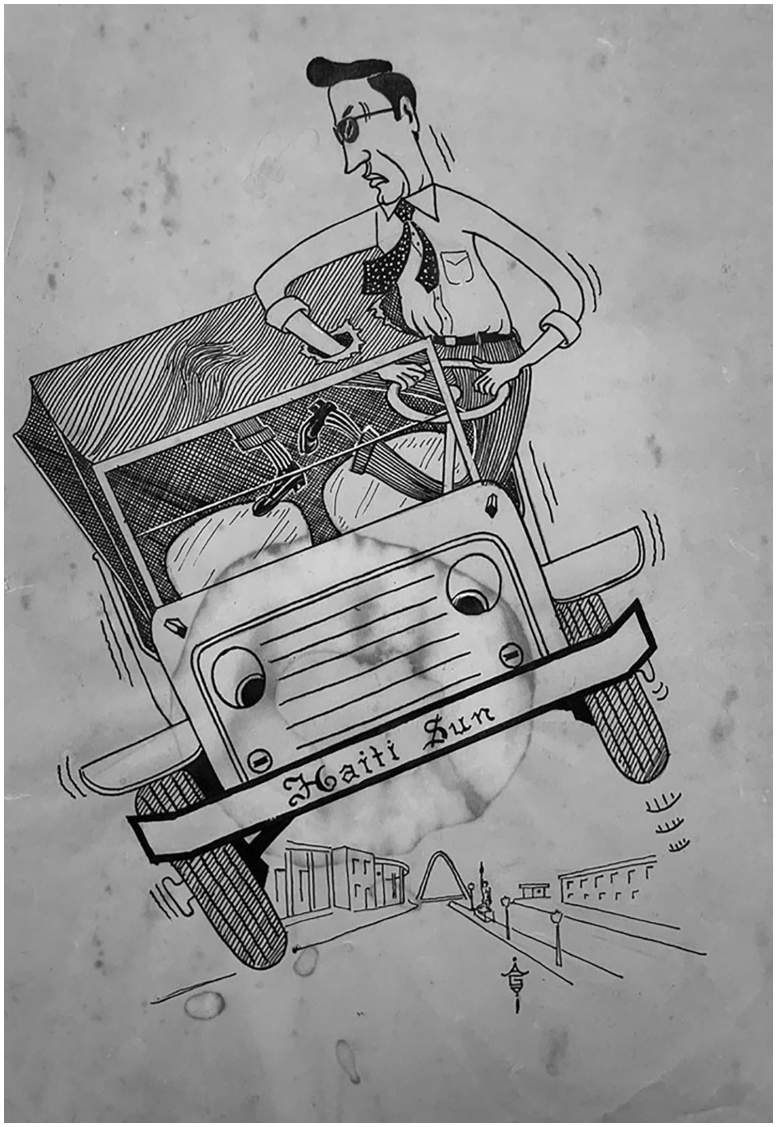

Figure 5 - From Bernard Diederich Collection. Cité de l'Exposition in the background. Florida International University Special Collections.

Pan American Airways noted how "originality and spontaneity make Haitian night club performances different than those seen any place else in the world. At Port-au-Prince, served from Miami and New York by Pan Am jets, the Cabane Choucoune is a favorite spot with merengue-dancing tourists."[72] Haiti was being cast as a rare and "exotic" location compared to the rest of the Caribbean and the Exposition facilitated this process.

But beyond the promotion of local entertainment for foreign tourists, the International Exposition was a cosmopolitan event that featured musicians and performers from across the Caribbean, Latin America and the United States. The Théâtre de Verdure presented performances by Irene Umilta McShine, a musician from Trinidad, Spanish choirs and dancers, Cuban pianist Rosario Franco, Etta Moten, an African American concert singer, and African American opera luminary Marian Anderson.[73] Anderson's performance at the Théâtre de Verdure attracted more than 3,000 people including Estimé and his wife. George Corvington states that Marian Anderson sang "the interpretation of the great classics by Schubert, Faure, Scarlatti, and executed moving negro spirituals…. At the end of the recital, the audience gave endless standing ovations to the brilliant artist…."[74]

The International Exposition's Impact

The Haitian government sought coverage of the Exposition in U.S. media outlets to highlight the infrastructural changes in the nation, improve Haiti's image, and continue to attract tourists. *Life* magazine featured a ten-page article about the exposition on March 13, 1950 with photos of performances by the Troupe Folklorique Nationale, the newly constructed

72 Pan American World Airways, Inc. records, 1902-2005, Series 16: Photographs, 1918-1990, Box 326, Folder 3, University of Miami Special Collections.

73 « Les choeurs et dances d'espagne à L'Exposition », *Le Matin*, 30 novembre, 1949 ; « Une grande musicienne de Trinidad », *Le Nouvelliste*, 13 décembre, 1949.

74 Corvington, *Port-au-Prince au cours des ans,* t. 4, p. 483 ; « Au Théâtre de Verdure », *Le Nouvelliste*, 10 avril, 1950. Other U.S. entertainers who attended the Exposition included boxer Joe Louis.

waterfront, Haitian art, nightclubs, and cockfighting.[75] Describing the International Exposition as "lavish," the *Life* coverage termed it "Haiti's bravest adventure."[76] The French newspaper, *Le Monde,* observed that the Exposition was celebrated with "great pomp."[77] *The New York Times* covered the world's fair as well, and commented on "Haiti's new look."[78] The largely positive foreign accounts often paid particular attention to the modern buildings and renovated waterfront. An article in *Time* magazine remarked that "a modern city bloomed on swamps."[79] Ruth Wilson, a U.S. traveler to the Exposition, stated: "The clearing of slums and filling in of swamps to create the beautiful ground and buildings of the Exposition are proof of existing ability" in Haiti.[80]

Spending over $4 million on the Exposition was a huge risk for the Haitian government. Estimé's infrastructural development of Cité de l'Exposition became a focal point of local newspaper coverage, as did the fair's reported cost, especially given the annual national budget of $13.4 million.[81] Since the Haitian Exposition did not charge fees on weekdays during the first few months, the nightclubs and hotels earned most of the revenue during that period. Augustin Mathurin, author of *Bi-centenaire de la fondation de Port-au-Prince, 1749-1949,* provides figures for the Exposition's expenses drawn from *Le Moniteur*, the official government newspaper. Most of the funds went to the *Département des Finances* for the construction and upkeep of Cité de l'Exposition and to the *Département des Travaux Publics*, which was in charge of the infrastructural changes in the capital, including work on drainage, roads, canals, electricity,

75 « Deux Redacteurs de "Life" arrivent le 10 déecembre », *Le Nouvelliste*, 5 décembre, 1949.

76 "Caribbean Carnival: 'Little World's Fair is Haiti's Big Bid for Tourists,'" *Life Magazine:* 105.

77 Auguste Viatte, « Le Centenaire de Port-au-Prince », *Le Monde*, 10 décembre, 1949. My translation of « Cette commémoration sera fêtée en grande pompe ».

78 Dorothy Williams, "Haiti's New Look: On a Mountain Roadway in Haiti," *The New York Times*, April 16, 1950; Paul J.C. Friedlander, "Haiti's Exposition: Bicentennial World's Fair Is Attracting More Tourists to the Caribbean Area," *The New York Times*, December 25, 1949.

79 "Unparalleled Fair," *Time* 54 (16), October 17, 1949: 42.

80 Ruth Danenhower Wilson, *Here Is Haiti,* New York, Philosophical Library, 1957, p. 198.

81 Smith, *Red and Black in Haiti*, 144.

telephones, the Hôtel de Ville in Cité de l'Exposition, and hydraulics for other new hotels.[82] In addition, Estimé "remodeled the business district and built some housing for the urban underprivileged."[83]

The International Exposition provided a beautiful waterfront with modern buildings, but the event's success — at least by certain measures (including attendees, hotel and entertainment infrastructures built, and increase in tourists to Haiti post-Exposition) — has often been overshadowed by the large government expense. British historian David Nicholls asserts that the Exposition "had cost much more than it was worth."[84] Michel-Rolph Trouillot characterized this period somewhat critically as a moment of "picture-postcard projects," but also remarked that "many foreigners and Haitians alike shared the impression of real and imminent progress."[85] Kate Ramsey notes that overall, "public opinion toward the project, particularly among urban middle classes, tended to be positive."[86] This assessment is consistent with accounts by Pierre-Michel Fontaine, Michel Hector, as well as Bernard Diederich, who all remember the era as providing hope to Haitians generally. However, it is clear that this was true primarily for Haitians of the middle and upper classes.[87] Pierre-Michel Fontaine stated that "even though Estimé was only in power for four years, there were various concrete things that he did [for Haiti] and, of course, the Bicentenaire's [construction] is the most evident example of

82 Mathurin, *Bi-centenaire de la fondation de Port-au-Prince, 1749-1949,* pp. 69-142. Also, *Memento du Moniteur; Contenant le budget, 1948-49; Les lois sur les taxes nouvelles; Les lois, arêtes sur l'exposition 1949; Et la loi sur le Don National,* Port-au-Prince, Imp. de l'Etat, 6 août, 1948.

83 Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, p. 141.

84 David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers University Press, 1996, p. 192.

85 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation: The Origins & Legacy of Duvalierism*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1990, p. 141.

86 Kate Ramsey, "Vodou, Nationalism and Performance: The Staging of Folklore in Mid-Twentieth Century Haiti," in Jane Desmond ed., *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance,* Durham, Duke University Press, 1997, p. 361.

87 Interviews by author with Pierre-Michel Fontaine, May 2, 2012, Miami, FL, Michel Hector, July 9, 2012, Pétionville, and Bernard Diederich, May 11, 2016, Miami, FL. NDLR: Positive views of hope for Haiti's future and recognition on the world stage were also shared by Haitian writer Émile Olliver and historian Claude Moïse.

his contribution."[88] Hope was part of the "new departure" Estimé heralded during the inauguration of the International Exposition, and this rhetoric was continued under the government of Paul Magloire.

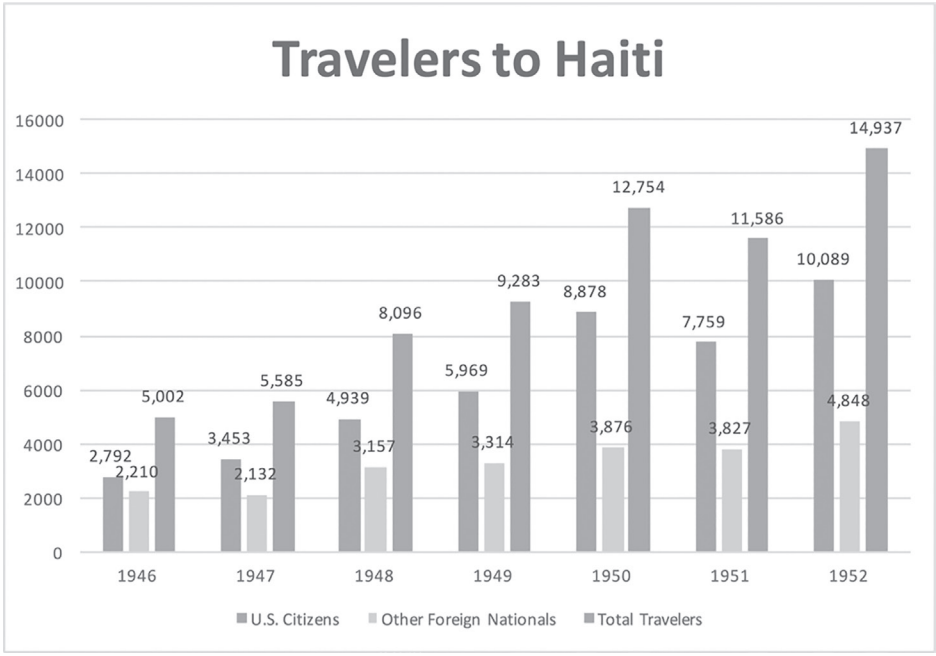

Figure 6 - Data gathered from Pan American World Airways Records, University of Miami's Special Collections.

The Haitian government expected 60,000 foreign visitors to attend the Exposition.[89] In early March 1950, three months before the fair ended, *Le Nouvelliste* provided figures on foreign tourism since its opening, projecting that the Haitian tourist industry would grow due to the exposition. The Bureau International des Exposition (BIE) reported that the

88 Interview by author with Pierre Michel Fontaine on May 2, 2012, Miami, FL.

89 Pan American World Airways, Inc. records, 1902-2005, Series 1: Corporate and General, 1920-1994, Box 357, Folder 6 and Series 8: Legislation and Regulation, 1920-1993, Box 281, Folder 4, University of Miami Special Collections. Letter dated May 10, 1950; « Le Tourisme en Haiti et son Avenir », *Le Nouvelliste*, 1 mars, 1950.

total number of foreign and Haitian attendees was 250,000.[90] It seems that Estime's International Exposition was on the scale that the spread in *Life* magazine described: it was a "Little World's Fair." Unlike other world's fairs, it did not attract millions, but nor did the Haitian government expect such numbers. Tourism was still a nascent industry and the Exposition was meant to bring Haiti positive international attention.

Tourist numbers rose from 9,283 in 1949 to 12,754 in 1950, representing about a 33 percent increase. Rosalie Schwartz notes that "Cuba's share of the Caribbean market actually declined between 1949 and 1954, from 43 percent to 31 percent. [Still], Cuba doubled and Haiti quintupled the number of their respective visitors. Tourist income expanded, but too many of the dollars sailed past Cuba's shores."[91] Haiti entered the tourist industry as a strong competitor.

Pan American Airways advertised modest fares for traveling to Haiti, and also the availability of Haitian and foreign goods at discounted costs in Haiti. In fact, the interest generated by the Exposition motivated the airline to increase its service from the U.S. to Haiti. According to a public relations officer from the Pan Am Latin American Division writing in May 1950, "[m]uch of the increased air traffic at Port-au-Prince is resulting from travel to and from Haiti's Bicentennial International Exposition. To handle this growing travel Pan Am has doubled its service between Haiti and the United States."[92] Although some critics have seen the exposition as a waste of public funds, it is significant that a major air carrier had to double its service.

The same month that Pan Am reported this dramatic expansion in its flights to Haiti and only weeks before the Exposition closed, Estimé was forced out of office in a military coup led by the same junta that had

90 National Archives and Records Administration, General Records of the Department of State, RG59, Box 5618 F2 838.191, November 20, 1950; « Expo 1949 Port-au-Prince », Bureau International des Expositions, http://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/1949-port-au-prince.

91 Rosalie Schwartz, *Pleasure Island*, University of Nebraska Press, 1999, p. 115.

92 Pan American World Airways, Inc. records, 1902-2005, Series 8: Legislation and Regulation, 1920-1993, Box 281, Folder 4, University of Miami Special Collections. Letter dated May 10, 1950. Bowen Field was a former U.S. Marine Corps base and was also a golf-course.

ended the presidency of Élie Lescot. In ousting Estimé, Franck Lavaud, Antoine Levelt, and Paul Magloire overturned "the most *noiriste* regime the republic [had] ever experienced," as Matthew J. Smith put it.[93] In light of the apparent continued success of the Exposition in drawing tourism to Haiti, why did Estimé's presidency end in its overthrow? To understand this, it is crucial to remember that Estimé's government was closely identified with the interests of the Black urban middle classes. The *milat* elite felt alienated by his administration, and so increasingly did working class people and the urban poor. Accusations of corruption on the part of officials combined with ongoing criticism from opponents regarding the public expense of the Exposition to weaken support for his government. Smith notes that "Estimé was unable to come to terms with growing alienation of his regime. In the face of mounting popular protest from the Marxist left and independent labor, the state responded with repression "in the midst of the Exposition."[94] His government was incapable of controlling the Haitian army, which was courted by "bourgeois factions that played a role in the May 1950 coup."[95] The members of the junta thereafter announced to the international press that the political transition would be peaceful and sought to reassure potential tourist travelers to Haiti. According to Colonel Levelt, "'if some adventurous tourists come to Haiti to look for street disturbances they will be disappointed…. If they are looking for relaxation and night life, they will be satisfied.'" The *New York Times* article in which this quote appeared noted that "Colonel Levelt insisted that the junta, which also includes Brig. Gen. Frank Levaud and Col. Paul Magloire, does not constitute a military government in the American sense of the word."[96] The coup leaders also presided over the scheduled closing of the fair on June 8, 1950, the formal ceremony on this occasion ending with champagne flowing after cannons were fired and the flags of the participating nations were lowered.[97] October 8, 1950,

93 Smith, *Red and Black in Haiti*, p. 147.
94 Ibid., p. 148.
95 Ibid., p. 145.
96 Nancy and Horace Sutton and Hamilton Wright, "All Quiet in Haiti: The Waterfront Marketplace at Port-Au-Prince," *New York Times*, May 28, 1950. https://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/111449203/abstract/7DA608093CFB4CE2PQ/5.
97 « Cérémonie de fermeture de l'Exposition », *Le Nouvelliste*, 8 juin, 1950. http://dloc.com/UF00000081/07287/1x?search=nouvelliste.

Paul Magloire, one of the junta members, was elected president of Haiti. Thereafter, he followed in the footsteps of the government that he had helped to overthrow, continuing the state's promotion of the tourist industry in collaboration with Pan Am.[98] In many ways, his administration can be seen as the beneficiary of Estimé's Exposition. Magloire was able to build on the structural changes in the capital and the international publicity of the "Little World's Fair" to advance the burgeoning tourist industry, with the number of foreign visitors to Haiti tripling during his years in office (1950-1956). In fact, the Magloire administration has been credited with launching Haiti's "Golden Age of Tourism," even though, in fact, this clearly began during Estimé's government.[99] The Cité de l'Exposition continued to be the center of entertainment for tourists and Haitians. Hotels such as El Rancho, the Roosevelt and others opened up during and after the Exposition, which increased Haiti's capacity to host larger numbers of tourists.[100] Many cruise ship lines also added Port-au-Prince, located at the Cité de l'Exposition, also known as the Bisantne (or Bicentenaire), to their destinations.

The International Exposition was a catalyst that helped alter negative images about Haiti among foreigners and locals during that time, providing a different vision of Haiti from those that had long circulated in the media, while ensuring that the Black middle class had a permanent seat in Haitian politics. In addition, performances featuring folklore dances continued to grow in popularity under Magloire. A travel guide to Haiti published during Magloire's regime states: "There is no doubt that the International Exposition of 1949 has produced a tremendous effect on the Americas and the entire world…. If you visit Port au Prince now, you will have a true idea of the considerable work which was under way…. Visitors will learn about…the most beautiful ornaments of the Caribbean Civilization."[101] Magloire later celebrated the Tricinquantenaire (150th)

98 Smith, *Red and Black in Haiti*, p. 153.

99 Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, p. 137.

100 Dorothy Williams, "Haiti's New Look: On a Mountain Roadway in Haiti," *New York Times*, August 16, 1950. https://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/111447913/abstract/7DA608093CFB4CE2PQ/1.

101 Haiti Tourist Information Bureau, *Travel Guide to Haiti,* New York, Haiti Tourist Information Bureau, 1950, p. 28.

anniversary of the Haitian Revolution in January 1954 in a similar fashion to that of the 1949-1950 Exposition, signaling that his administration saw value in the International Exposition and sought to recreate it despite the public criticism to which Estimé had been subject over its cost.[102] Magloire even invited Marian Anderson back to mark the celebration.[103] The Cité de l'Exposition continued to be frequented by tourists until the 1980s. The launch of the International Exposition had continued the efforts of previous governments to "fix" Haiti's image problem, yet in so doing also embraced the commodification of Haitian folk culture, including elements of Vodou. But for both Estimé and his political successor Paul Magloire, expositions were a means to increase recognition of Haiti's contributions on the world stage, promote its capability as a Black nation to achieve modernity through its infrastructural improvement and signal its potential for growth in exploiting its own cultural capital to increase tourism. More than that, the world historical importance of Haiti in its struggle for freedom and peace, a message that had particular resonance in the wake of the Second World War, was reinforced during the first inauguration of the Exposition on December 8th, 1949.

Sources and References

Archives and Libraries

Archives Nationales d'Haïti

Archives nationales d'Outre-Mer (ANOM)

102 Smith, *Red and Black in Haiti*, p. 167. Rafael Trujillo, dictator of the Dominican Republic from 1930 to 1961, also realized the benefits of launching an international exposition, and his government held its own. Launched in 1955, La Feria or the Free World's Fair of Peace and Confraternity in Santo Domingo, commemorated the 25th anniversary of Trujillo's rule in the Dominican Republic. This event was not officially recognized by the BIE., University of Miami Special Collections, Caribbean Collection. La Feria was held from December 20, 1955, to August 16, 1956. See Lauren Derby, *The Dictator's Seduction: Politics and the Popular Imagination in the Era of Trujillo,* Durham, Duke University Press, 2009, pp. 109-134.

103 Rodman, *The Caribbean*, p. 287.

Archives nationales Pierrefitte sur Seine
Bibliothèque nationale de France
Bibliothèque Haïtienne des Frères de l'Instruction Chrétienne
Bibliothèque Nationale d'Haïti
Bureau International des Expositions (BIE)
Centre International de Documentation et d'Information Haïtienne, Caribéenne et Afro-Canadienne (CIDIHCA)
Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC)
Library of Congress (LOC):
NAACP Records
Prints and Photographs Division
National Archives and Record Administration (NARA), Washington, D.C. and College Park, MD
New York Historical Society
New York Public Libraries (NYPL):
Library for the Performing Arts
Manuscripts and Archives Division
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture
Smithsonian Institution:
Archives of American Art
National Museum of Natural History
Queens College and Queens Public Library (NY):
Queens Memory Project
University of Miami Special Collections:
Pan American Airways Archive
Wolfsonian-FIU Museum

Printed Sources

Accilien, Cécile, Jessica Adams and Elide Mélange, eds. *Revolutionary Freedoms: A History of Survival, Strength, and Imagination in Haiti.* Coconut Creek, FL, Caribbean Studies Press, 2006.

Bellegarde, Dantès. *Histoire du peuple haïtien, 1492-1952* [1953], Port-au-Prince, Éditions Fardin, 2004.

Bellegarde-Smith, Patrick D. "Dantes Bellegarde and Pan-Africanism." *Phylon (1960-)* 42 (3) 1981: 233-244.

Blanchard, Pascal. *Human Zoos: Science and Spectacle in the Age of Colonial Empires*. Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2008.

Bulletin de la commune de Port-au-Prince. Port-au-Prince, Imprimerie du Service national de l'enseignement professionnel, 1932.

Constant, Victor Nevers. *Souvenir d'une campagne,* Port-au-Prince, Imp. de l'Etat, 1958.

Corvington, Georges. *Port-au-Prince au cours des ans,* 4 tomes, Montréal, Les Éditions du Cidihca, 2003.

Dash, J. Michael. *Literature and Ideology in Haiti, 1915-1961*. Totowa, N.J, Barnes & Noble Books, 1981.

Daut, Marlene L. "What the French Really Owe Haiti." ***The Nation,*** 13 June 2022, https://www.thenation.com/article/world/haiti-france-reparations-slavery/.

_____. "When France extorted Haiti – the greatest heist in history." ***The Conversation***, June 30, 2020, https://theconversation.com/when-france-extorted-haiti-the-greatest-heist-in-history-137949.

Desmond, Jane, ed., *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*. Durham, Duke University Press, 1997.

DesRosiers, Steve. "American Painter Brought Haiti to Art World's Attention." *Boston Haitian Reporter,* September 2005.

_____. "Eye on Haitian Art: The "Pre-Dewitt" Era." *Boston Haitian Reporter,* November 2004.

Dunham, Katherine. *Island possessed*. Garden City, N.Y, Doubleday, 1969.

Estimé, Dumarsais. *Message to the People, December 16, 1946.* Port-au-Prince, 1946.

Estimé, Dumarsais, Harry S. Truman and William E. De Courcy. *Haiti and the U.S.A*., Port-au-Prince, Éditions Henri Deschamps, 1949.

Estimé, Lucienne H. *Dumarsais Estimé: dialogue avec mes souvenirs,* Port-au-Prince, Éditions Mémoire, 2001.

Fermor, Patrick Leigh. *The Traveller's Tree: A Journey Through the Caribbean Islands*. London UK, Penguin Books, 1984.

Fick, Carolyn E. *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*. Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1990.

Gentil, Robert et Henri Chauvet. *Haïti à l'Exposition Colombienne de Chicago,* Port-au-Prince, Vve. J. Chenet, 1893, http://www.dloc.com/AA00007509/00001?search=exposition.

Georges-Pierre, Anthony. *Sténio Vincent: à la découverte d'un pan de l'histoire d'Haïti*, Miami FL, Educa Vision, 2013.

Greenhalgh, Paul. *Fair World: A History of World's Fairs and Exposition from London to Shanghai 1851-2010*. Windsor, Papadakis, 2011.

Gustavsen, John Andrew. "Tension under the Sun: Tourism and Identity in Cuba, 1945-2007." Open Access Dissertations, Paper 298, 2009.

Haiti Tourist Information Bureau. *Travel Guide to Haiti.* New York, Haiti Tourist Information Bureau, 1950.

Hodeir, Catherine et Michel Pierre. *1931* : l'*Exposition coloniale*, Bruxelles, Éditions Complexe, 1991.

Hoffenberg, Peter H. *An Empire on Display: English, Indian, and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001.

Kaussen, Valerie. *Migrant Revolutions: Haitian Literature, Globalization, and U.S. Imperialism*. Lanham, MD, Lexington Books, 2008.

Laffitte, Sartony. "Exposition Coloniale de Paris, 1931: Projet pour la Cité internationale des Informations [Photographie] : Photos et images. Exposition coloniale, Paris, 1931.

Léger, Jacques Nicolas. *Haiti, Her History and Her Detractors*. New York, The Neale Publishing Company, 1907.

Lerebours, Philippe. "The Indigenist Revolt: Haitian Art, 1927-1944." *Callaloo* 15 (3) Summer 1992.

Mathurin, Augustin. *Bi-centenaire de la fondation de Port-au-Prince, 1749-1949: Exposition Internationale, 8 Décembre 1949-8 Juin 1950, à la mémoire du grand Président Léon Dumarsais Estimé*, Port-au-Prince, Imp. des Antilles, 1975.

Mattie, Erik. *World's fairs*. New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 1998.

Memento du Moniteur; Contenant le budget, 1948-49; Les lois sur les taxes nouvelles; Les lois, arrêtés et avis sur l'exposition 1949; Et la loi sur le Don National, Port-au-Prince, Imp. de l'Etat, 6 août, 1948.

Morton, Patricia A. *Hybrid Modernities: Architecture and Representation at the 1931 Colonial Exposition,* Paris. Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 2003.

Nicoll, Edna L., Suzanne Flour et Hubert Lyautey. À *travers l'Exposition Coloniale,* Paris, Nicoll, 1931.

Nicholls, David. *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti*. New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 1996.

Pamphile, Léon Dénius. *Haitians and African Americans: A Heritage of Tragedy and Hope*. Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2001.

Pan American Union. *Bulletin of the Pan American Union*, 1939. Vol. 73.

Pattullo, Polly. *Last Resorts: The Cost of Tourism in the Caribbean*. London, Latin America Bureau, 2005.

Plummer, Brenda Gayle. *Haiti and the Great Powers, 1902-1915*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1988.

_____. *Haiti and the United States: The Psychological Moment*. Athens, Ga, University of Georgia Press, 1992.

_____. *The Golden Age of Haitian Tourism*. New York, Columbia University-New York University Consortium, 1989.

Polyné, Millery. *From Douglass to Duvalier: U.S. African Americans, Haiti, and Pan Americanism, 1870-1964*. Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2010.

Price-Mars, Jean. *So Spoke the Uncle*. Washington, D.C.,Three Continents Press, 1983.

Ramsey, Kate. *The Spirits and the Law: Vodou and Power in Haiti*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2015.

Renda, Mary A. *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of US Imperialism, 1915-1940*. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

Rigaud, Milo. *Vè-Vè: Diagrammes Rituels Du Voudou.* New York, French and European Publications, 1974.

Rodman, Selden. *Haiti: The Black Republic; The Complete Story and Guide*. New York, Devin-Adair Co., 1954.

_____. *The Caribbean*. New York, Hawthorn Books, 1969.

_____. *Where Art Is Joy: Haitian Art: The First Forty Years.* New York, Ruggles de Latour, 1988.

Rydell, Robert W. *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984.

_____. *Fair America: World's Fairs in the United States*. Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000.

_____. *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Salt, Karen. "The Haitian Question". Ph.D. dissertation, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, 2011.

Schmidt, Hans. *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*. New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 1995.

Schwartz, Rosalie. *Pleasure Island: Tourism and Temptation in Cuba*. Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska Press, 1997.

Smith, Matthew J. *Red & Black in Haiti: Radicalism, Conflict, and Political Change, 1934-1957*. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

_____. "The Revolution of 1946." *Island Luminous*. Digital Library of the Caribbean [dLOC], 2014.

St. Hubert, Hadassah. "Visions of a Modern Nation: Haiti at the World's Fairs." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Miami, FL, 2018.

_____. "We are Part of the Civilised World." Caribbean Quarterly 64 (2) 2018: 229-253, DOI: 10.1080/00086495.2018.1480314.

St. John, Spenser. *Hayti or the Black Republic.* London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1884, http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00076088.

Thompson, Krista A. *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque*. Durham, Duke University Press, 2006.

_____. "Preoccupied with Haiti: The Dream of Diaspora in African American Art, 1915–1942." *American Art* 21 (3) Fall, 2007: p. 74-97.

Time, Inc. *Official Guide, New York World's Fair, 1964-1965*. New York, Time, Inc, 1964.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Haiti, State against Nation: The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism*. New York, Monthly Review Press, 1990.

Twa, Lindsay J. *Visualizing Haiti in U.S. Culture, 1910-1950.* Farnham, Surrey, Ashgate Publishing, 2014.

Ulysse, Gina Athena. *Why Haiti Needs New Narratives: A Post-Quake Chronicle.* Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 2015.

UNESCO. *The Haiti Pilot Project: Phase One (1947-1949).* UNESCO, Paris, 1951.

Verna, Chantalle F. *Haiti and the Uses of America: Post-U.S. Occupation Promises*. New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 2017.

Vincent, Sténio. *La République d'Haïti telle qu'elle est. Aperçus*, Bruxelles, Société anonyme belge d'imprimerie, 1910.

William, Bernbach. *Book of Nations: New York World's Fair*. New York, Winkler & Kelmans, 1939.

Wilson, Ruth Danenhower. *Here Is Haiti*. New York, Philosophical Library, 1957.

Wolff, Reinhold P. and Robert J. Voyles. *Tourist Trends in the Caribbean, 1951 to 1955*. Coral Gables, FL, Bureau of Business and Economic Research, University of Miami, 1956.

Magazines and Newspapers

Americas
The Atlantic
Chicago Defender
Cosmopolitan
Courier
Glamour
Harper's Bazaar
Haiti-Journal
Holiday
La Presse (France)
Le Devoir
Le Figaro
Le Matin
Le Monde
Le Nouvelliste
Life Magazine
New York Amsterdam News
The New York Times
Time MagazineWall Street Journal

Audio-Visual Sources

British Movietone. "Haiti's World Fair." YouTube Video, 1:03. July 21, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_JRYa1t-UrQ&feature=youtu.be.

Fox Movietone News. Moving Images, NARA, 1963.

HaitianToday. "Port-au-Prince, Haiti - 1940s." YouTube Video, 9:59. November 20, 2010. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6qXlKkjivM.

Haiti Opens International Section of Bicentennial Exposition--Port-Au-Prince. UCLA Film and Television Archive, Hearst Vault Material, 1950.

Les chemins de la mémoire: Haïti avant Duvalier. 52 minutes. CIDIHCA, 2002.

Little World Fair Haiti. British Pathé, 1949. http://www.britishpathe.com/video/little-world-fair-haiti.

Paramount News. Vol. 9, No. 53. Moving Images, NARA, 1950.

Personal Interviews

Diederich, Bernard, May 11, 2016, Miami, FL

Fontaine, Pierre-Michel, May 2, 2012, University of Miami

Hector, Michel July 9, 2012, Pétionville, Haiti

Joseph, Raymond, March 16, 2015, Montréal, Canada

Voltaire, Frantz, July 26, 2013, Montréal, Canada

Hadassah St. Hubert is a historian, preservationist and independent scholar. Her experience includes digital humanities, archival preservation, collaborations across cultural institutions, digitizing endangered collections, programming assessments, as well as nurturing emerging scholars and artists. She obtained a Ph.D. in history from the University of Miami specializing in Caribbean, Latin American and African Diasporic studies. Her dissertation, *Visions of a Modern Nation: Haiti at the World's fairs*, focuses on Haiti's participation in World's Fairs and Expositions in the twentieth century. She held a Council on Library Information Resources (CLIR) postdoctoral fellowship in Data Curation for Latin American and Caribbean Studies with the Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC) at Florida International University and also served as assistant editor for *Haiti: An Island Luminous*, a tri-lingual website dedicated entirely to Haitian history and Haitian studies with commentary by more than 100 authors at 75 universities around the world. Her research has been featured in *Caribbean Quarterly: A Journal of Caribbean Culture* and *Archipelagos: A Journal of Caribbean Praxis*. She is also the creator of Mapping the Bicentennial International Exposition: Port-au-Prince, Haiti (1949-1950), a Google map project which contains archival images of the Bisantné area. She currently serves on the Board of Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator, an organization that promotes diverse talents of emerging artists from the African, Latin, and Caribbean diasporas through an artist-in-residence program, international exchanges, community arts events and a dynamic exhibition program collaborating with art spaces.