

Dartmouth Regional Seminar in Jewish Studies, May 6, 2001

=====

**Performing the State:
The Jewish Palestine Pavilion at the New York World's Fair,
1939/40¹**

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett

New York University

bkg@nyu.edu

World's fairs became a prime site for transforming the Holy Land into the Jewish homeland. For most of the history of world's fairs, Jews were defined as religious group and included in parliaments, halls, temples, and exhibitions of religion. This was by no means the only context in which Jews might be found at world's fairs, but it was a particularly hospitable one because it let them perform an ideal of citizenship predicated on religious liberty.² With the rise of Jewish national aspirations, Zionists seized the opportunity afforded by the world's fair to promote a Jewish homeland in Palestine. If, in earlier fairs, the contest for Palestine was a struggle between Christians and Jews for the Holy Land, the competition for Palestine in later fairs was between Jews and Arabs for national sovereignty. How world's

¹ Illustrations for this essay are online. <http://www.nyu.edu/classes/bkg/nywf>

² Jews could indeed be found elsewhere within world's fairs. Even when the grounds for their inclusion was religion, they defined themselves in broader cultural and historical terms. On the history of Jewish participation in world's fairs, see Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Exhibiting Jews," in *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 79-128. On Holy Land displays at world's fairs, see Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *A place in the world: Jews and the Holy Land at world's fairs*, " *Encounters With the "Holy Land": Place, Past and Future in American Jewish Culture*, eds. Jeffrey Shandler, and Beth S. Wenger, (Philadelphia, PA: Published by the National Museum of American Jewish History; the Center for Judaic Studies, University of Pennsylvania; and the University of Pennsylvania Library. Distributed by University Press of New England, 1997), 60-82.

fairs were used to define those contests and alter their terms is the subject of this paper.

I will focus on the most ambitious and successful example of Jewish Palestine displays at world's fairs, the Jewish Palestine Pavilion at the New York World's Fair, 1939/40, which expressly defined itself as a national, not religious, exhibit. This essay is part of a larger project that explores Jewish participation in world's fairs from 1851 to 1940 in the context of how a diaspora negotiated the transnational space of an international fair.³ The Jewish Palestine Pavilion occupies a critical place within a history of Jewish participation in such events.

By bringing together visual culture and performance studies, I hope to illuminate the distinctive nature of world's fairs--and the national pavilions that figured so prominently in them--as a distinctive medium. In what ways were these pavilions not only performances but also performative within and outside the world of the fair? By "world of the fair," I mean both an envisioned totality and the idea of bringing the entire world into one space. The world of the fair could help or hasten or even bring about that which it postulated--or so it seemed. In the space of postulation afforded by the world of the fair, "as if" can acquire performative force. It is in this respect that the Palestine Pavilion attempted to perform the state into being. How the Jewish Palestine Pavilion tried to do this is the focus of the larger project for which this essay serves as an introduction.

³ Several pavilions at the New York World's Fair 1939/40 have been studied in detail. They include the British Pavilion, the Soviet Pavilion, and the Jewish Palestine Pavilion. Each study, as might be expected, offers a political analysis of these national pavilions as instruments of diplomacy and propaganda on the eve of World War II. See Nicholas J. Cull, "Overture to an Alliance: British Propaganda at the New York World's Fair, 1939-1940," *Journal of British Studies* 36, July (1997): 325-54; James L. Gelvin, "Zionism and the Representation of 'Jewish Palestine' at the New York World's Fair, 1939-1940," *International History Review* 22, no. 1 (2000): 37-64; and Anthony Swift, "The Soviet World of Tomorrow at the New York World's Fair, 1939," *Russian Review* 57, July (1998): 364-79.

In this introduction, I explore how the Jewish Palestine Pavilion exploited the slippage between the world itself and the world of the fair to perform *de facto* statehood. That nations at war would keep their pavilions open for a second season, in 1940, suggests that they attributed considerable power to the world's fair as a space of projection and medium of diplomacy and propaganda. The international character of the world's fair created a highly charged space for the negotiation and enactment of mutual recognition, which can be taken as fundamental to national claims. I then relate the Jewish Palestine Pavilion to Palestine exhibits created by the British for their British Empire exhibits and by Jews both at world's fairs and in Palestine itself, as well as to other ways that Jews participated in the New York World's Fair. Finally, I turn to the Jewish Palestine Pavilion proper, which I conceptualize as an event.⁴ A detailed analysis of the Pavilion as architecture and exhibition will be taken up elsewhere.

It is no accident that world's fairs, for all their rhetoric about peace, often take place in the context of war.⁵ The New York World's Fair 1939/40 is one of the most dramatic cases because it took place on the eve and during a world war that affected most, if not all, of the foreign governments and international bodies participating in the fair. However closely the world of the fair was aligned with the world outside the fair at the time that foreign participants had signed up, the gap between them only widened as war approached.

⁴ On architecture as event, see Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1994) and Neil Harris, *Building Lives: Constructing Rites and Passages* (New Haven: Yale University press, 1999).

⁵ Given the many wars that took place during the history of world's fairs, from 1851 to 1940, world's fairs could not but take place before, during, or after wars--to mention only the Crimean War, American Civil War, the series of wars relating to German unification, Philippine-American War, Russo-Japanese war, Boer War, Russian Revolution, World War I, World War II, and the armed conflicts in the various colonial empires throughout this period.

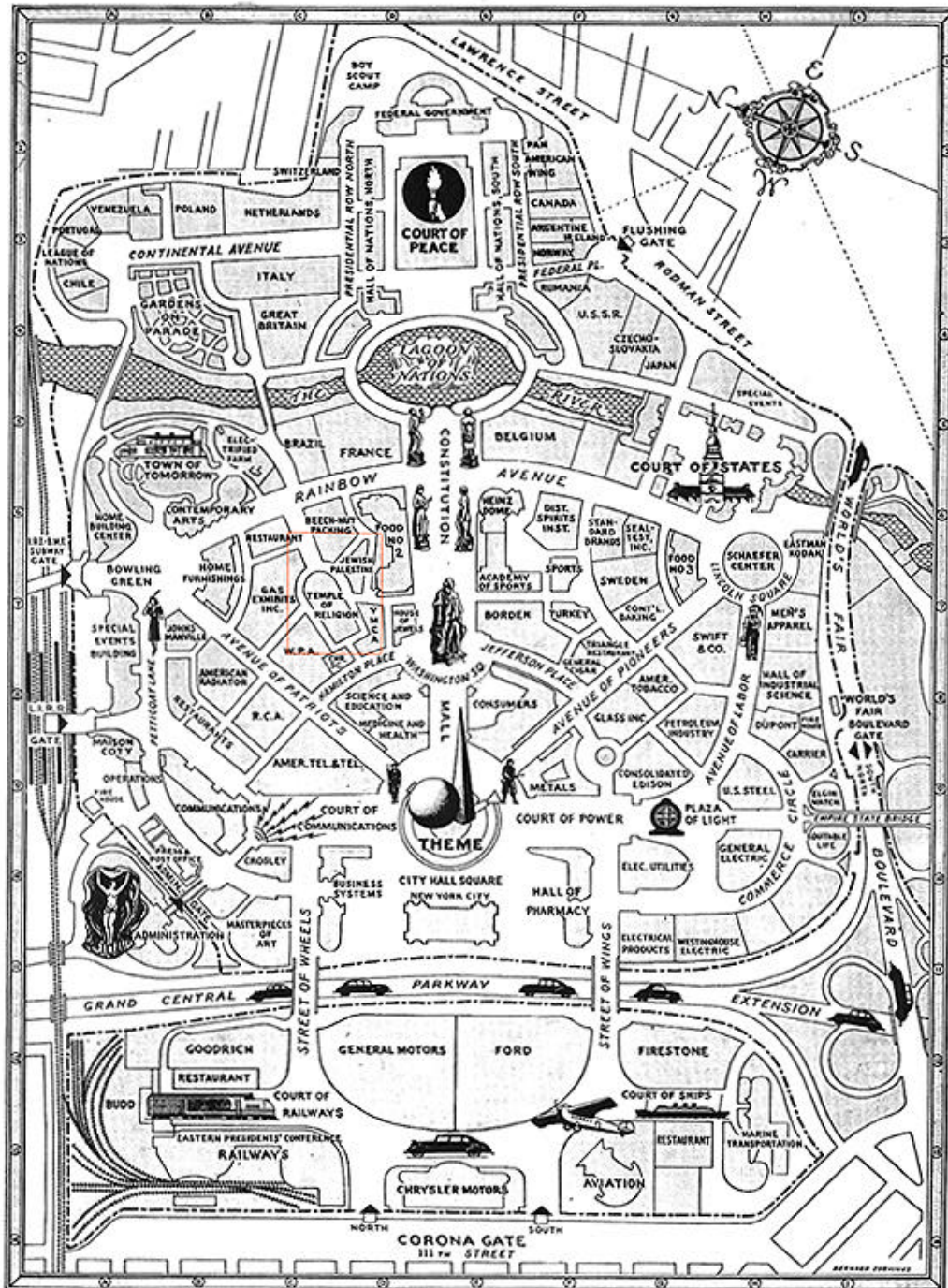
Planned in the mid-1930s, during the Great Depression and rise of fascism in Europe, the Fair could barely keep up with changes in the geopolitical map. On New Year's eve, 1938, five months before the fair opened, a press release billed the Fair as a "peace table of the world."⁶ The Fair put itself forward as evidence of the American policy of neutrality, although the organizers did not invite Germany to participate in the 1939 fair and the Soviet pavilion was demolished before the 1940 fair opened. No wonder those wanting to make national claims would take the world of the fair as seriously as they took the world itself. They used the world of the fair--a utopian space in any case--to sustain a world order as it should be, not as it was becoming. The Jewish Palestine Pavilion took take advantage of the increasing slippage between the world itself and the world of the fair.

From the outset, the Jewish Palestine Pavilion, as a national pavilion without a government, was operating in the gap between the world of the fair and the world. The hope was that success at the Fair, in the sense of international recognition of Jewish Palestine as a *de facto* state, would help bring about statehood *de jure*. However, the Fair Corporation insisted that since the Jewish Palestine Pavilion was not sponsored by a government, it was not an official national pavilion and refused to give it space in the Government Zone or treat it as an official national pavilion.

The thematic organization of the Fair was expressed spatially in zones, each of which was to be "devoted to the exposition of some highly important phase of modern life."⁷

⁶ [c]

⁷ Frank Monaghan, *Official Guide Book, New York World's Fair, 1939* (New York: Exposition Publications, Inc, 1939), 40. Monaghan, a Yale professor, was the Fair's director of research and official historian.



Plan of the New York World's Fair, 1939/40

The Jewish Palestine Pavilion and the Temple of Religion are located to the left of the center of the map in the triangular area defined by Rainbow Avenue and Constitution Mall.

Characterized by the 1939 *Guide to the Fair* as "smaller fairs within the great Fair itself," most of the zones had focal exhibits setting out their general theme. Two additional focal exhibits were not associated with zones.⁸ The zones included, in alphabetical order, amusement, communications, business systems, community interests, food, government, medicine and public health, production and distribution, science and education, and finally, transportation. It was not a perfect arrangement. Sweden and Turkey ended up in the Food zone, Florida in the Amusement zone, and Masterpieces of Art ended in the Communication and Business Systems Zone.

Territory was no less important in the world of the fair than it was in the world at large. Try as he might, Weisgal failed to situate the Jewish Palestine Pavilion in the Government Zone, around the Lagoon of Nations. The Fair organizers allocated the Pavilion a plot of land in the Community Interests zone of the Fair, right next to the Temple of Religion. The Community Interests zone was thematized as follows: "Visitors will understand that in the broad sense, much of the entire Fair is devoted to Community Interests. But here in this Zone are found many of the exhibits which treat more directly with Man's life in the group and his communal interests."⁹ Other exhibits included American Radiator Corp., Christian Science, Contemporary Art, Electrified Farm, Gas Exhibits, Inc., House of Jewels, Medicine and Public Health, Town of Tomorrow, WPA, and YMCA among others.

The New York World's Fair had abandoned the traditional classification of many of the earlier fairs--raw materials, machinery, art, national pavilions, and amusement area--in favor of an integration of these areas around a set of ideas, stated as themes, and set out in designated zones. The ostensible occasion for the New York World's Fair was the 150th anniversary of the inauguration in New York City of George Washington. But, the 1939

⁸ Monaghan, *Official Guide Book* (1939), 41.

⁹ Monaghan, *Official Guide Book* (1939), 89.

Guide hastened to add, the fair was about more than a commemorative theme. Rather, "the future, pregnant with high destiny, seemed even more meaningful than the past with all its fateful achievements."¹⁰

The Fair philosophy was not unrelated to Zionist ideals in its conviction that the visitor would discover what he "could attain for his community and himself by intelligent coordinated effort and will be made to realize the interdependence of every contributing form of life and work."¹¹ The future was not viewed through a crystal ball, but "in the sense of presenting a new and clearer view of today in preparation for tomorrow."¹² This could have been the byline for the Jewish Palestine Pavilion. Indeed, the Jewish Palestine Pavilion adopted the Fair rhetoric and used it for its own purposes. While the Jewish Palestine Pavilion lost the zone war, which was considered critical to acceptance within the international national landscape of the world of the Fair, it proved very adept at appropriating the ideological, thematic, and rhetorical aspects of the Fair itself.

The thematic organization of the New York World's Fair--and of the Jewish Palestine Pavilion itself--were consistent with what came to be known in Disney-speak as imagineering--that is, the engineering of imagination to materialize fantasy as a total world. Critical here is the convergence of imagination and engineering, envisioning and planning, as preludes to building. This conjunction of concepts was central to the New York World's Fair's overriding theme, "Building the World of Tomorrow." The New York World's Fair gave form to the engineering of the world of tomorrow, understood as a collaboration of social/urban planners and engineers. Visitors experienced both what engineers could do and what they would do if given the chance to build the

¹⁰ Monaghan, *Official Guide Book* (1939), 35.

¹¹ Monaghan, *Official Guide Book* (1939), 36.

¹² Monaghan, *Official Guide Book* (1939), 36.

world of tomorrow. Industrial designers gave that world its distinctive look, which for the New York World's Fair was streamlining.

By the 1940 season, the principle for determining what counted as an official national pavilion became harder to apply. The Jewish Palestine Pavilion was no longer such an anomaly. The war had compromised the sovereignty of other national pavilions, for example, Czechoslovakia and Poland, so that by 1940 the Jewish Palestine Pavilion was not alone. Other national pavilions were also being supported through private and commercial interests, rather than governments. That alone did not level the playing field, of course, but it did make it harder to maintain the principle of government backing as the basis for national recognition and may have made it easier for the Jewish Palestine Pavilion to prevail in its demands. The Jewish Palestine Pavilion did manage to get included in the lineup of flags, *Book of Nations*, and other national contexts even during the first season, though not without considerable wrangling.

Moreover, despite all the efforts to insulate the Fair from the war, the war made it more acceptable for national pavilions to address their national interests more explicitly, whether in the form of protests or appeals for support. Fair policy had emphatically stressed that there was to be no propagandizing or evangelizing. This policy became more difficult to enforce when war directly affected participating nations. Mayer Weisgal's contribution to the Jewish Palestine Pavilion souvenir booklet was a preemptive strike. Entitled "Truth and Propaganda," this statement acknowledged American antipathy to propaganda, defined propaganda as "a message of truth," and boldly stated that "In this sense the Jewish Palestine Pavilion at the New York World's Fair is propaganda."¹³

¹³ *Jewish Palestine Pavilion, New York World's Fair, 1939*. No other publication information is indicated. The pages are not numbered.

In retrospect, it is difficult to understand how the New York World's Fair could have opened for a second season in the midst of a major war and even more difficult to fathom why nations at war would have put any resources into maintaining their pavilions. That they did so can be taken as a measure of how much was at stake not only in the world, but also in the world of the fair.

The Fair Corporation, while announcing the fair as a one-season event, had always hoped that it would run for several seasons and even for as many as five seasons. When war was declared in September 1939, even a second season was in question. Some of the exhibitors who had expended vast sums of money on their displays managed to recoup their costs during the first season and counted on a second season to actually make something of a profit. Others, especially those in the Amusement area, needed a second season just to recover from the losses of the first season.¹⁴

The fair having lost money in the 1939 season, Grover Whalen, former Commissioner of the New York City Police, was replaced as President of the Fair Corporation by Harvey D. Gibson, who became the chief operating officer of the Fair as the chairman of its board.¹⁵ While trying to make the 1940 fair more popular by expanding the Amusement area and more accessible by lowering the admission price. Gibson had to walk a fine line between insulating the Fair from the war and acknowledging the crisis.¹⁶ The fair's theme was changed from "Building a World of

¹⁴ Gibson, *Harvey Dow Gibson*, 324-325.

¹⁵ Gibson had been a charter member of the 1939 Fair Corporation, served on its Board of Directors, and chaired its Finance Committee. Gibson was president of the Manufacturers Hanover Trust bank. He describes his efforts to make the 1940 season a success in Harvey Dow Gibson, *Harvey Dow Gibson: an Autobiography* (North Conway, N.H: Reporter Press, 1951), 313-337.

¹⁶ In his view the admission price had been too high (75¢ instead of 50¢) and the image of the fair too "high hat" for the masses. (Gibson, *Harvey Dow Gibson*, 323) He lowered the admission price and enlarged the Amusement area. He

Tomorrow" to "For Peace and Freedom." The title page of the *Guide* showed an American flag, not the official New York World's Fair flag. The 1940 opening ceremonies featured military air displays.¹⁷ A World War Museum was added to the Amusement Zone, renamed the Great White Way. The World War Museum was described as follows: "One of the largest presentations of its kind in America, this is a comprehensive exhibit of relics and trophies gathered from the battlefields of Europe--thousands of souvenirs brought back from war-torn areas by soldiers who served there. With each article of war equipment is an interesting history."¹⁸

A major challenge was how to ensure that national pavilions would stay open for a second season. The Fair records make clear that the show had to go on no matter what was happening in the world and Fair officials were intent on the participation of as many foreign governments as possible no matter how hard hit they were by war. However reluctant the United States might have been to enter another world war, the Fair Corporation did not hesitate to pressure nations already at war to keep their pavilions open for a second season. Grover Whalen traveled throughout Europe in the months between the closing of the 1939 fair in October and the opening of the 1940 fair in March, to appeal directly to heads of state, including Mussolini.

Many, though not all the national exhibitors, returned. Several national pavilions incorporated displays relating to the war. Czechoslovakia's pavilion reflected "the proud independence and industry of her people," if not her government, while updating the displays to show "with impressive clarity the drastic changes in the Czecho-Slovak [sic] way of life since the

also issued a leaner *Official Guide Book* for the 1940 season, which described the exhibits in breezier language.

¹⁷ Lesley C. Wright, "Show of Force: New York World's Fair 1939-40, Opening Ceremonies," Masters Thesis, Department of Performance Studies, New York University, 1993.

¹⁸ Kathryn Maddrey, ed., *Official Guide Book: the World's Fair of 1940 in New York* (New York: Rogers, Kellogg, Stillson, Inc., 1940), 146.

invasion of her country over a year ago."¹⁹ Denmark's continued presence "in the face of recent tragic events in Denmark" was made possible thanks to "Americans of Danish descent and Danes living in the United States."²⁰ Finland featured a "modest memorial to the thousands of Finnish soldiers who fell in action while resisting Russian forces" and "stirring photographs of fighting on several Finnish fronts" as evidence of "the indomitable courage and fierce patriotism of this restrained, quiet people."²¹ The pavilion description for Poland, which featured painted miniatures by Arthur Szyk in a section devoted to the contributions of Poles to American history, was also recast in terms of the war:

EVERY EVENING at dusk, a horn call sounds out loud and clear above the tumult of the Fair--then stops suddenly on a broken note. This is the "Hejnal," blown from the top of Poland's golden Pavilion tower, commemorating the death of a Polish watchman who, centuries ago, saved the city of Krakow from invaders by blowing the "Hejnal". Inside the Pavilion, Poland's national banner flies at half mast as a sign of a Nation in exile, a testament to the most recent invasion of her country.²²

The invader, the Soviet Union, had been the first foreign government to sign on for the 1939 Fair. On November 11, 1939, about two weeks before invading Finland and almost a month before

¹⁹ Maddrey, *Official Guide Book* (1940), 36. The 1939 *Official Guide Book* had made no reference to Munich Pact, concluded between Germany, Great Britain, France, and Italy on September 29, 1938, which required that Czechoslovakia cede the Sudetenland to Germany. Two weeks before the fair officially opened on April 30, 1939, the Germans had invaded Czechoslovakia.

²⁰ Maddrey, *Official Guide Book* (1940), 37.

²¹ Maddrey, *Official Guide Book* (1940), 46. The only reference to war in the pavilion description for Great Britain is in connection with a display of rare stamps that could not be shown in London as planned, in 1940, and was being exhibited in the British Pavilion instead. (62) The 1940 *Guide* makes no reference to war in the pavilion descriptions for the following European countries: France, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Romania, and Switzerland. Nor did the description of the League of Nations pavilion mention war.

²² Maddrey, *Official Guide Book* (1940), 99.

it was expelled from the League of Nations, it decided not to return for a second season.²³

The gaping space left by the demolished Soviet Pavilion, the largest national pavilion at the Fair and the most popular, was filled by the hastily created American Common:

EXPRESSIVE of the Fair's theme--"For Peace and Freedom"--is American Common, a two-and-a-half acre square dedicated to the perpetuation of a democratic idea. Round the Fair clock it is alive with colorful fetes, paying tribute to the richness of the cultures which the various nationalities have brought into the American picture. Located on the former site of the Soviet Pavilion, it is a veritable market-place of the American people. From a liberty pole flies one of the highest American flags on the Fair grounds.

Probably in no other country do the magic words--peace and freedom--mean as much as they do in America today for here you find the greatest variety of peoples living in peace. It was a fusing of bloodstreams that begot the Union and continues to keep it a reality.

In American Common none by American flags are displayed and groups of American citizens honor their "national" origin in a series of fetes presented under Fair Corporation auspices. A Gallery of Honor fences in the area. It lists the names of American citizens of every national origin who have made great contributions to our

²³ In his 1951 autobiography, Gibson represented Soviet withdrawal as follows. They made unreasonable demands, would not play by the fair rules, insisted that their flag fly highest, used their own accounting methods, and threatened to demolish their pavilion if their demands were not met. Much had been conceded to get their participation for the 1939 fair, in the hope that other countries would follow the Soviet lead. Since Fair officials and records studiously avoid the mention of anything "political," it is not surprising that Gibson would attribute Soviet withdrawal to a disagreement over the terms of their participation. Writing more than a decade after the Fair closed, he does allow himself to say that "In the light of what has transpired since then," his firm refusal to give in to their ultimatums was the right approach. (Gibson, *Harvey Dow Gibson*, 326)

democracy in science, education, and the arts. A music shell and amphitheatre, accomodates 3,500 persons.²⁴

The American Common was the perfect expression of the inverse internationalism of an immigrant society. It is a perfect example of what Philip Gleason characterizes as the ideological phase in the history of what came to be known as American "identity."²⁵

Many of the foreign pavilions that did remain for the second season became a haven and diplomatic weapon for nations whose sovereignty was threatened, already compromised, or even lost.²⁶ Not surprisingly, the two recurring themes of the national pavilions were friendly relations with the United States and military preparedness, expressed indirectly through displays of economic and technological strengths or through heroic resistance, as the case might be.

Within the world of the fair, countries that had been invaded could maintain the appearance of "sovereignty" in protest against the abrogation of their borders. During the 1939 Fair season (April 30 to October 31), the Nazis, and then the Soviets, invaded Poland. Between the two fairs (November 1, 1939 to May 10, 1940), the Soviets invaded Finland, were expelled from the League of Nations, and bombed Sweden. The Nazis invaded Denmark, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. During the 1940 fair (May 11-October 27), Italy declared war on Britain and France and invaded Egypt and Greece. The Soviets took Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. The Nazis bombed Britain, attacked Norway

²⁴ Maddrey, *Official Guide Book* (1940), 14.

²⁵ Philip Gleason, "Americans All: World War II and the Shaping of American Identity," *Review of Politics* 43, no. 4 (1981): 483-518. Jews participated in the American Common and individuals were listed on the Wall of Honor, not as Jews, but according to where they were born or spent their formative years. I explore their participation in this area of the fair elsewhere.

²⁶ Those so affected, even before the 1939 Fair opened, included Austria and Czechoslovakia. Austria was invaded by Germany in March 1938 and did not participate in the Fair. Czechoslovakia, which had lost Sudetenland as a result of the Munich Pact of September 1938, was persuaded, and assisted financially, to take part in the Fair. Czechoslovakia's situation only got worse. On March 15, 1939, two weeks before the 1939 Fair officially opened, the Germans had marched into Prague.

and entered Romania. How, in light of these events, could a world's fair reopen for a second season?

Germany and China had been conspicuous by their absence from the 1939 Fair.²⁷ By 1940, the autonomous world of the fair was harder to sustain.²⁸ To insulate the Fair from the war, no war news was to be radio broadcast on its grounds and the bar of McGinnis's fairground restaurant banned any "war talk."²⁹ Nonetheless a bomb did go off at the fair on July 4, 1940.³⁰

The Fair as a space of appearance was real enough for, within it, a world order, as it should be or once was, could be figured forth and alliances cultivated that would serve as the foundation for future action, or so it was hoped. The 1939 fair was in itself a performance of American neutrality--what Great Britain called American isolationism. That neutrality became harder to maintain by the 1940 season. Alliance with the United

²⁷ China had been invaded by Japan in December 1937. Based on sources in the Public Record Office for the British Pavilion, Cull reports that "In the course of 1938, the Germans withdrew from the fair in protest at Roosevelt's embargo on the sale of helium to the Reich. Berlin made a half-hearted bid to revise this position, but the fair authorities refused to allow a 5,000 square-foot concrete platform and proportionally giant swastika banner in lieu of a 'prestige' building." (Cull, "Overture to an Alliance," 340) Even earlier, The *New York Times* had reported in 1937 that La Guardia pressed for a Chamber of Horrors, exposing Nazi Germany, to be included in the fair. The Germans protested, whereas a group of Germans living in the United States, together with several Americans, proposed a Freedom Pavilion. This pavilion would show the "true Germany" through the achievements of Germans that had fled the Nazis. While this proposal was not finally accepted, various ways were found to acknowledge the war. See David Hillel Gelernter, *1939, the Lost World of the Fair* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 291-292. Gelernter cites "Religious Center at Fair Proposed," *New York Times*, 4 March 1939, 25; Thomas Kessner, *Fiorello H. La Guardia and the Making of Modern New York* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989), 403; and Laura Z Hobson, "The Freedom Pavilion," *The Nation* (April 1939): 494-98.

²⁸ Intimations of war could be discerned even at a preliminary opening ceremony for the 1939 Fair on April 30, 1938. The British consul general in New York, Sir Gerald Campbell, "noted that the parade of commercial exhibitors was led by a series of army trucks, each laden with American soldiers grimly arrayed in the latest design of gas masks." (Cull, "Overture to an Alliance," 334) There were also military displays at the official opening of the 1939 Fair. Although such displays were a fixture of world's fairs, they carried an added charge in a wartime context. (Cull, "Overture to an Alliance," 326)

²⁹ Cull, "Overture to an Alliance," 352. He cites the *New York Times* 22 May 1940.

³⁰ Cull, "Overture to an Alliance," 352.

States and the possibility that alliance might help end American neutrality, were critical factors in decisions to stay in the Fair for a second season. Participation in the fair was, as Cull aptly phrases its significance for Britain, an "overture to an alliance" at a time when such alliances were most needed.³¹

Critical to the agency of world's fairs as a space of appearance was consent and a major task of the exhibitions was to engineer that consent. While Britain wanted the United States to join forces with it in the emerging war, while the creators of the Jewish Palestine Pavilion were making a bid for *de jure* statehood. As Michael Billig argues in *Banal Nationalism*, "The nation is always a nation in a world of nations."³² It is at once like all other nations and unique. David Ben Gurion made just such a statement with respect to the establishment of Jewish state: "Two basic aspirations underlie all our work in this country: to be like all nations, and to be different from all nations."³³ It is the task of world's fairs to create a virtual world of nations that not only incites the imaginative energies of nationalism, but also offers greater control over how nations present themselves to each other. If, as Roland Robertson claims, "the idea of nationalism (or particularism) develops *only* in tandem with internationalism,"³⁴ then the agency of world's fairs

³¹ Cull characterizes British participation in the 1939 New York World's Fair as "the first salvo in what became a desperate British diplomatic struggle to draw the United States into World War II." He adds that, "In retrospect, the British contribution to the New York World's Fair stands as the high point in Britain's interwar policy of national projection. It was the single greatest effort made in the single most important struggle to overcome the forces of U.S. isolation." (353) It "played shamelessly to a mass audience," and laid the foundation for pro-British feeling. (353) He attributes considerable importance to such exhibitions within the history of propaganda.

³² Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London, Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage, 1995). 83.

³³ Cited by Daniel Shimshoni, *Israeli Democracy: the Middle of the Journey* (New York, London: Free Press and Collier Macmillan, 1982), xxx.

³⁴ Roland Robertson, "Social Theory, Cultural Relativity and the Problem of Globality." In: *Culture, Globalization, and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, ed. Anthony D. King (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 78.

lies precisely in how they configure and perform internationalism, understood as a "system, in which each state officially recognizes the internal sovereignty of its neighbours."³⁵

Central to the internationalism of world's fairs is the "imagined universal code of nationhood,"³⁶ a modular system of pavilions, flags, anthems, insignia, uniforms, and the like. Arranged in their own Government Zone, the states participating in the 1939/40 New York World's Fair were arrayed, for the most part, around a Lagoon of Nations and in a Hall of Nations. They took their turn in a calendar of national days and weeks. Their co-presence in the world of the fair, a highly charged space of diplomacy and propaganda, signaled their mutual recognition of each other's legitimacy. The issue of legitimacy became increasingly fraught with the widening gap between the status quo of the fair and the upheavals of the war. The presence of the League of Nations, in its own pavilion, was a reminder of its role in constituting a status quo that was represented in the world of the fair, not without difficulty, even as it dissolved in the world itself. It is in this context that nations aspiring to statehood sought the recognition of other states. The Jewish Palestine Pavilion was neither the first nor the last to use the world's fair in this way.

Although the Fair Corporation was a non-profit educational organization that defined itself as a "civic undertaking," the government of the United States was the official convener of this international gathering. Only the governments with whom the United States had diplomatic relations could be invited to the Fair and it was President Roosevelt himself who issued the formal

³⁵ Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 83. On the notion of mutual recognition, see Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1990). Consider, for example, that the Soviet Union was the first government to sign up for the 1939 New York World's Fair in March 1937. The United States had only just recognized the Soviet Union in 1933. (Swift, "The Soviet World of Tomorrow," 365)

³⁶ Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 83.

invitation after the Congress of the United States, on June 15, 1936, authorized him to do so.³⁷ Three traveling commissioners, working with the State department and through diplomatic representatives, went abroad to meet personally with representatives of invited governments in the hope of getting as many governments as possible to sign on. At home in the United States, Fair representatives cultivated foreign diplomatic agents, ambassadors, consuls, and commercial attaches.³⁸

Consistent with the regulations of the *Bureau International des Expositions*, the Fair Corporation had to allocate 10,000 square feet of space, without charge, to each participating government and did so in the Hall of Nations. Governments could also lease land and build their own pavilions, with no restriction on how much they spent.³⁹ In contrast with European world's fairs, which were state supported, American ones had to raise their own finances. The only government support they received was generally for city, state, and federal buildings and for public works and improvements. For all its private enterprise, educational mission, and non-profit claims, the New York World's Fair was both a highly charged diplomatic arena and an unabashedly commercial affair.

The 1939 *Official Guide to the Fair* states that "Fifty-nine countries were thus invited; and invitations were later extended to eleven additional foreign nations." The final tally of foreign participants, according to the *Guide*, was "sixty foreign governments and international bodies."⁴⁰ This figure, which is at variance with the *Guide's* maps, descriptions, and index, as well

³⁷ It was not until May 1937 that the *Bureau International des Expositions* "recognized the New York World's Fair as the one international exposition for 1939." In fact, the Golden Gate Exposition in San Francisco, while not as big as the New York World's Fair, took place at the same time.

³⁸ Francis Edmonds Tyng, *Making a World's Fair: Organization, Promotion, Financing, and Problems, With Particular Reference to the New York World's Fair of 1939-1940* (New York: Vantage Press, 1958), 38.

³⁹ Tyng, *Making a World's Fair*, 37.

⁴⁰ Monaghan, *Official Guide Book* (1939), 123. The number, composition, and nature of foreign participation in the 1940 season changed, as detailed below.

as with other accounts.⁴¹ How it was arrived at is not clear. The *Guide* identifies only twenty-two national pavilions, including that of the United States.⁴² Another twenty-two governments, as well as the Pan American Union, appeared only in the Hall of Nations. The Pan American Union featured nine of its twenty-one member republics. Some governments who built pavilions also took space in the Hall of Nations. In all thirty-six foreign governments, plus the Pan American Union, took space in the Hall of Nations.⁴³

France and Great Britain, focused their national pavilions on themselves, while presenting their overseas possessions, protectorates, dependencies, and colonies in the Hall of Nations. The Republic of Lebanon appeared in the Hall of Nations as a government that had been organized in 1920 and was a mandate of France at the time of the fair.⁴⁴ Flags of the participating

⁴¹ These figures are also at variance with Tyng, *Making a World's Fair*, 43. Tyng was a business reporter. Published eighteen years after the Fair closed, his report stated that fifty-eight of the sixty-five nations who had diplomatic relations with the United States agreed to participate. Twenty-three of them agreed to build pavilions on leased land. Forty-five (including some who also built their own pavilions) took space in the Hall of Nations. [check]

⁴² They included Belgium, Brazil, *Canada*, [Chile], *Czechoslovakia*, *France*, *Great Britain*, *Ireland* [eliminates pavilion in 1940, but is still present in Hall of Nations], *Italy*, *Japan*, [Netherlands], *Norway*, Poland, [Portugal], *Romania*, [Sweden], *Switzerland*, *Turkey*, United States, [U.S.S.R.], and [Venezuela]. Those in italics also had displays in the Hall of Nations. Those in brackets appeared in the 1939 fair but did not return for the 1940 fair.

⁴³ They included [Albania], *Australia*, *Canada*, [Cuba], *Czechoslovakia*, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Finland, *France*, *Great Britain*, [Greece], Hungary, Iceland, Iraq, *Ireland* [eliminates pavilion in 1940, but is still present in Hall of Nations], *Italy*, *Japan*, Lebanon, [Lithuania], Luxembourg, Mexico, [Morocco], [Netherlands], New Zealand, [Nicaragua], *Norway*, Peru, [Portugal], *Romania*, [Siam], [Spain], [Southern Rhodesia], *Switzerland*, *Turkey*, [U.S.S.R.], [Yugoslavia], [Pan American Union (Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay)]. The Pan American Union display featured the transportation and communication services that connected the countries. Those in italics also had national pavilions. Those in brackets appeared in the 1939 fair but did not return for the 1940 fair. Sweden did not return as such, but a Swedish-American Pavilion was created for the 1940 fair, "a bit off the beaten path to the foreign exhibits." (Maddrey, *Official Guide Book* (1940), 117)

⁴⁴ Fifty-nine countries were originally invited and invitations were later extended to another eleven, for a total of seventy invited governments. (Monaghan, *Official Guide Book* [1939], 123) By my own count, fifty-six governments, including the United States, created their own exhibits at the

governments were lined up along the bridge to the foreign buildings.⁴⁵

There were, in addition, several international bodies, most prominent among them the League of Nations, which was described in 1939 *Official Guide Book* as follows: "The Exhibit makes no false claims, issues no progaganda or false pleadings; if confines itself to objective portrayals and panoramas of what has been achieved in the fields of economics, finance, communication, health, nutrition, housing, drug control, cultural advancement, even mediation and disarmament," replicated many of the thematic zones of the fair itself.⁴⁶

By the time the of the New York World's Fair, Jews could bring considerable exhibition experience to world's fairs. Sol Bloom (1870-1949), a Democratic Congressman since 1923, had been organizing exhibitions for world's fairs since the 1880s and, in the course of his life, attended eight world's fairs.⁴⁷ As a new congressman, he was immediately assigned to the Industrial Arts and Exhibitions committee, thanks to which President Herbert

1939 Fair, either self-standing pavilions and/or sections of the Hall of Nations. An additional nine countries were represented in the Pan American Union display in the Hall of Nations. Included in the Fair's own count of foreign participants in 1939 was the League of Nations, an international body.

⁴⁵ For a photograph of the flags along the bridge, see Maddrey, *Official Guide Book* (1940), 9. Check if this was also at the 1939 fair.

⁴⁶ Monaghan, *Official Guide Book* (1939) 143. Private entrepreneurs created additional "national" and "international" attractions in the Amusement Area, including a Cuban Village and Merrie England, as well as such international attractions as the Cavalcade of Centaurs, featuring men and horses from "nearly every country on the globe" and a Congress of World's Beauties. (Monaghan, *Official Guide Book*, 50, 53)

⁴⁷ See Sol Bloom, *The Autobiography of Sol Bloom* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1948), 119, 133-140. At the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1889, Bloom bought the right to exhibit the Algerian Village for two years in North and South America. (107-108) By his own account, he was asked to take charge of the entire Midway Plaisance, the amusement area, at the 1893 World Columbian Exhibition in Chicago, where he found the opportunity to present the Algerian Village. Bloom not only brought the Algerian Village to the Midway of the World Columbian Exhibition in 1893, but also produced a guide to that fair. (Sol Bloom. *Bloom's Directory to Chicago and the World's Columbian Exposition: a Complete and Reliable Book of Reference for Tourists and Strangers Visiting the Great City of the West and the World's Fair Grounds* [Chicago: Siegel, Cooper & Co., 1893])

Hoover made him the director of the Washington Bicentennial Celebration of 1932, a task he undertook on with great enthusiasm.⁴⁸ It was this work that brought Bloom to the attention of the British when they were planning their pavilion for the New York World's Fair. He was on the Board of Directors of the New York World's Fair Corporation and advised the British on their pavilion for that fair with respect to what Americans would find appealing or offensive.⁴⁹

Meyer Weisgal (1894-1977), who headed Palestine Exhibit, Inc., which was responsible for creating the Jewish Palestine Pavilion, made his world's fair debut in 1933. He produced a highly successful pageant, *The Romance of a People*, on Jewish Day at the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago.⁵⁰ With the waning of support for Zionism in the thirties, Weisgal believed that the way to revivify the Zionist movement in the United States was not through speeches (an exhausted genre) and not through a building (too static), but through an awe inspiring spectacle. Three years later, he would embrace the idea of a building. Indeed, he would make architecture a theatre for the enacting of Jewish statehood within the world of the New York World's Fair. Not only would this be the first Jewish Palestine Pavilion at a world's fair in the United States, but also the

⁴⁸ Bloom, *Autobiography*, 214 -224.

⁴⁹ Cull, "Overture to an Alliance," 333-334 .

⁵⁰ This pageant traveled to New York, Philadelphia, Detroit, and Cleveland. It had been preceded by his Hanukkah pageant in 1932 in Chicago, and was followed by *The Eternal Road* in 1937, grandiose biblical epic that lost money. Weisgal's repeated proposals for a pageant at the New York World's Fair, preserved in the records of the Fair at New York Public Library, were never accepted. On the pageants that Weisgal did produce, see Atay Citron, *Pageantry and Theatre in the Service of Jewish Nationalism in the United States 1933-1946* (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Performance Studies, New York University, 1989); Stephen J. Whitfield, "The Politics of Pageantry, 1936-1946," *American Jewish History* 84, no. 3 (1996): 221-51; Arthur Goren, "Celebrating Zion in America," in *Encounters with the "Holy Land": Place, Past and Future in American Jewish Culture*, 41-59; the Center for Judaic Studies, University of Pennsylvania; and the University of Pennsylvania Library. Distributed by University Press of New England, 1997); Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Exhibiting Jews."

this fair would be located in New York City, home of the largest Jewish community in the United States.

Not since 1853 had there been a world's fair in New York City. By the mid-thirties, when New York was selected as the site for 1939/40 fair, Jews in New York had become an increasingly confident and successful immigrant community. Jewish businessmen and politicians, many of them from New York, were on the various boards and committees of the Fair. They formed a veritable Who's Who of national and international figures. Many of them were also active in Jewish communal affairs.⁵¹ Several of them were men of such enormous wealth that any one of them could have underwritten the cost of the Jewish Palestine Pavilion, much as Baron de Rothschild had done for the Palestine Pavilion at the 1931 International Colonial Exposition in Paris.

Palestine exhibits intended to spur trade and investment, as well as Jewish colonization, were appearing since the 1890s in Germany, England, France, and Palestine itself. They accompanied the early Zionist Congresses, became world's fairs in their own

⁵¹ Charter Members of the New York World's Fair 1939, Inc. included the following luminaries. Unless otherwise indicated, they were American born. Harry F. Guggenheim was an aviation pioneer and founder of *Newsday*. Arthur Lehman, an investment banker and art collector, played a leading role in the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York and the Joint Distribution Committee. His brother Herbert was governor of New York State during the thirties. Henry Morgenthau, Sr., a real estate lawyer and agent, philanthropist, and diplomat. Morgenthau came to the United States from Germany in 1866. He served as ambassador to Turkey between 1913 and 1916, during which time he raised money to help Jewish settlers in Palestine. President Wilson sent him to Poland in 1919 to investigate atrocities committed against Jews. A Reform Jew, he helped found and then served as president of the Free Synagogue. His son Henry Morgenthau, Jr., was Secretary of the Treasury under Roosevelt. David Sarnoff, who arrived in the United States from Russia in 1900, played an instrumental role in the development of radio and then television as mass media. He became president of RCA in 1930. RCA was represented at the New York World's Fair by its own spectacular building. From that building, in April 1939, Sarnoff "conducted the first public television broadcast." Percy S. Straus was president of Macy's at the time of the Fair and Felix M. Warburg, who was born in Germany, was an investment banker, philanthropist, lover of art, and leader in the Jewish community. He helped establish the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Federation for the Support of Jewish Philanthropic Societies in New York, the Jewish Agency, and the Palestine Emergency Fund. He was an active force in providing relief and to Jewish communities in Europe and Palestine during and after the two world wars. He supported Jewish settlement in Palestine, but not a Jewish state. Robert D. Kohn, the architect for Temple Emanu-El (built in 1929), chaired the Theme Committee and served on the Board of Design. Albert Einstein chaired the Local Advisory Committee on Science.

right, and were soon incorporated into world's fairs. Before World War II, Jews saw the possibilities and seized the opportunity to use Palestine exhibitions to support the Yishuv, the Jewish community in Palestine, and the upbuilding of a Jewish national home. While Great Britain did organize a Palestine exhibit as part of its Empire Exhibition, the real impetus to exhibit Palestine at world's fairs came from Jews who supported Jewish resettlement in Palestine and the creation of a national Jewish home.

Just how much had changed since the early years of the Mandate can be seen in the Palestine display at the British Empire Exhibition in Wembley in 1924/25. According to Cull, "Following the First World War, exhibitions formed a crucial component of the initiative to reinvigorate the Empire, most notably through the Wembley Empire Exhibition of 1924-25."⁵² Palestine was included in the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924 and the focus was commercial. The Palestine display was divided into two parts. Jews took responsibility for their part, while Britain took responsibility for exhibiting the Arabs.

The Palestine Pavilion at this fair shared a building with Cyprus for economic reasons. It combined "government stalls" showing the accomplishments of the Palestine government under the British Mandate (railway, post office, schools, public health, natural resources and investment opportunities) with "Zionist stalls" devoted to Jewish efforts to build a Jewish homeland, including agriculture (Arab agriculture was exhibited by the government), manufacture and trade, industry and commerce, as well as arts and craft. The Bezalel School had a stand and two Yemenite craftsmen demonstrated silver filigree work in an annex to the pavilion. A second annex featured "large models of the

⁵² Cull, "Overture to an Alliance," 331. See also John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: the Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester, U.K. and Dover, N.H., U.S.A: Manchester University Press, 1984) and Thomas G August, *The Selling of the Empire: British and French Imperialist Propaganda, 1890-1940* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1985).

Tabernacle of the Exodus, the Temple, and the Dome of the Rock," courtesy of the Pro-Jerusalem Society. One reporter complained that the models were "somewhat shoddy in appearance, and it is a pity that one of the lecturers on the Temple appears in Eastern costume with a very occidental collar and tie," his khakhi trousers and boots also showing from beneath his flowing burnoose.⁵⁴ Tours by costumed lecturers of such models, as well as of dioramas and panoramas of Jerusalem or the Holy Land, were a popular genre during the nineteenth century.

Though recognizing that Palestine under the Mandate was not technically part of the British Empire and that Palestine Pavilion itself left much to be desired, *The Jewish Chronicle* proclaimed the larger implications of the display in terms of a rapprochement of British and Jewish interests:

The inclusion within the Exhibition of a Palestine Pavilion is...a token that, albeit embryonically, the Jewish nation has become part of the British Empire....It were well for Great Britain to understand, and for the British Empire to appreciate, the immense moral gain they have acquired...in thus enfolding the Jewish nation within their bosom. With a proper understanding of the true position on both sides, there is room ample and to spare for the development to the fullest degree of Jewish National aspirations consistent with the very best interests of the British Empire....Thus the great Exhibition, which has drawn together representation from every corner of the Empire upon which the sun never sets, by the inclusion within it of the Palestine exhibit makes manifest to all the new relation that now subsists between the British Empire and the Jewish people.⁵³

Between Wembley in 1924 and the New York World's Fair in 1939, the British relationship to the Mandate changed.

⁵³ *The Jewish Chronicle*, 25 April 1924.

Conflicts between Arabs and Jews prompted the British to restrict Jewish land purchases and Jewish immigration and to modify its policy on statehood. By 1937, when invitations to participate in the New York World's Fair went out, Britain had no interest in including Palestine in its British Empire exhibits at the New York World's Fair.⁵⁴ A comment to the press by Sir William McLean at the time of the Fair captures the frustration of the British with Palestine. An expert on the Empire, Sir William was sent on an American lecture tour to encourage American investment in Britain's colonies. The *Seattle Times* reported "Palestine is a costly hobby says noted Briton in Seattle...an expensive hobby of the British Government which costs \$5,000,000 a year and 'returns nothing but trouble,' pointing out that these were purely his personal views, Sir William said that England took over Palestine under a League mandate because nobody else wanted it."⁵⁵

Given Britain's concerns at the New York World's Fair, Palestine was nothing but trouble. Their first priority was winning the hearts of the American public. Emotional and psychological factors were understood as essential to political gains.⁵⁶ Second, the "American prejudice" against British imperialism and the likelihood that Hitler would demand that Britain turn its colonies over to Germany made it unwise to focus on the strictly commercial aspects of the colonies, as they had done at previous fairs.⁵⁷ Instead, the British Colonial Empire

⁵⁴ An internal memorandum dated October 7, 1937, indicated that "Palestine received an invitation to participate through the British Government, the invitation being presented by the American Ambassador at London to present the invitation for Palestine's participation to the appropriate British authorities, for India, New Zealand, Australia, and Palestine" and that, according to a representative of the American Economic Commission for Aid to Palestine, "Palestine's authorities were exceedingly anxious to have an exhibit," but were short on funds. (NYPL, NYWF, Box 535, Palestine, Memorandum from W.H. Stanley to J.M. Killeen, 7 October 1937) The invitation had been issued on June 3, 1937 and was declined November 17, 1937. (NYPL, NYWF, Box 535, Government Participation, Palestine, Form)

⁵⁵ Cull, "Overture to an Alliance, 345. Quoting *Seattle Sunday Times* (6 August 1939).

⁵⁶ Cull, "Overture to an Alliance," 335.

⁵⁷ Cull, "Overture to an Alliance," 344.

component needed to be "an exhibition of the humanitarian and social services aspect of our Colonial Empire" in order to stress the "morality of the Empire."⁵⁸

Once the British refusal was official, the way was cleared for Jews to go forward with a Palestine exhibit that was not government sponsored. That did not stop the organizers for presenting the pavilion as if it were an official presence, as can be seen from repeated objections on the part of Arabs, the State Department, the British, and the Fair Corporation to the building being called Palestine Pavilion. The agreement between the Fair Corporation and Palestine Exhibits, Inc., the production unit of the American Committee for Jewish Palestine Participation at the New York World's Fair 1939, stated that the "The building will be known either as "Land of Israel" or "Jewish National Home in Palestine," or some other name indicating Jewish Palestine participation. The project quickly became known as the Palestine Pavilion, to repeated protests.⁵⁹ In fact, until the protests, Palestine Pavilion was the name. Weisgal assured the Fair Corporation that the exhibit would thenceforth be identified clearly and consistently as Jewish Palestine Pavilion. However, even Fair officials themselves would revert to Palestine Pavilion, short for Jewish Palestine Pavilion, in public speeches.

The real laboratory for developing concepts and techniques for "exhibiting Palestine" came with the creation of Mischar v'Taasia (Commerce and Trade) in 1926. This organization, based

⁵⁸ Cull, "Overture to an Alliance," 344. Without a state and an army, the only authority that the Jewish Palestine Pavilion could put forward was moral authority. Precisely how the exhibitors did this will be taken up elsewhere.

⁵⁹ The agreement was signed on April 14, 1938. [c] The American Consul General at Jerusalem alerted the Department of State in Washington "the strongly nationalistic 'Arab Women's Committee'" sent a letter to the High Commissioner on August 13, 1938 "protesting against the use of the term 'Palestine' to describe the pavillion in question, i.e. 'one purely Jewish in character'. Such a use, it said, 'would be a gross abuse of the word 'Palestine', a violation of the international status of the country and calculated to excite the feelings of the Arabs.'" (Letter from Frederick B. Lyon to Julius C. Holmes, 16 September 1938. Palestine, Government Participation, Box 535, NYWF, NYPL)

in Tel-Aviv, dedicated itself to diversifying the economy of the Yishuv, encouraging industry and trade, and supporting urban development. It realized the power of sophisticated marketing, advertising, and promotion techniques and transferred them from the economic realm to the political one in order to "sell" the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Recognizing that importance of economic viability to statehood, their goal was to make Palestine the hub of communication and trade in the region. They organized trade fairs in Tel-Aviv and, by the thirties, had created a permanent exhibition ground for The Levant Fair on the outskirts of Tel-Aviv, as it was now called. The Levant Fairs of the thirties became world's fairs in their own right, with international participation. Mischar v'Taasia took their exhibits and fairs on the road and made their most spectacular showings at two Paris world's fairs in the thirties--the Palestine Pavilion at the 1931 Paris International Colonial Exposition and the Pavillon d'Israel en Palestine at the 1937 Exposition internationale des arts et techniques--and, above all, at the New York World's Fair in 1939. The Levant Fair even exhibited itself, in the form of a glass model, inside the Jewish Palestine Pavilion at the New York World's Fair.

There were many proposals for Jewish participation in the New York World's Fair. Most of them were referred to the Temple of Religion because the Fair Corporation had decided that there would be no separate denominational displays.⁶⁰ All exhibits representing religious groups and themes were under the purview of The Temple of Religion.⁶¹ What came to be known as the Jewish Palestine Pavilion won out over other proposals. Rejected proposals are instructive for understanding why the Jewish

⁶⁰ The most ambitious study of The Temple of Religion is Jesse T. Todd. "Imagining the Future of American Religion at the New York World's Fair, 1939-40," PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1996.

⁶¹ (How the Christian Scientists managed to create their own display I do not yet know.) See also religion in the various national pavilions.

Palestine Pavilion was a better fit for this fair. First, national Jewish organizations in the United States competed with each other for leadership. One of the first up to the plate was the Synagogue Council of America, which had made a resolution by February 1936 to invite all national Jewish organizations to take part in "The Jewish Exhibits at the World's Fair, Jews of All Nations, Their Contribution to the Making of America."⁶² Here is what they had in mind for a nationally coordinated official Jewish exhibit:

Just as the history of the United States is the sum total of...contributions of all people on the earth, just so is the history of the Jews in the United States a chronicle of Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, German, Austrian, Hungarian, Polish, Russian, Belgian, Jugoslavian, French, Latvian, Lithuanian, Palestinian, Swiss, Czecho-Slovakian and Roumanian Jews. Each of these groups has enriched not only Jewish life but American life as well.⁶³

The brochure enjoined "every American Jews and organization of Jews to assist in this important project in the life of our people." There followed a list of possible topics and invitation for suggestions. The topics ranged from "Jews as American pioneers" and "Colonial Patriots and Soldiers" to "Lands of Origin," "Philanthropy," "Great Jews of the Present," and "Synagogue--The History of its Development." One can only wonder if this proposal might have been received more sympathetically in the context of the 1940 fair, where a similar approach to immigrant groups informed the performances on the American Common, which replaced the Soviet Pavilion.

This proposal is noteworthy for two reasons. First, it identified the diversity of Jewish immigration, a function of the Jewish diaspora, with American diversity, itself a function of

⁶² Their approach was consistent with a long history of immigrant homelands exhibitions. It was in the spirit of the American Commons and the ideological approach to American "identity" discussed by Gleason above. They also floated the idea of recreating the Newport Synagogue on the fairgrounds.

immigration. It follows from this characterization of Jews that they could have created a Jewish world's fair of their own. Indeed, they did just this in 1913 in Cincinnati, where the Settlement House sponsored Exposition of the Jews of Many Lands. Second, the proposal followed a model that gained popularity after World War I, namely, the celebration of immigrant gifts to America in the form of pageants and what were called homeland exhibitions. Finally, as other such proposals to the Fair organizers made clear, during the thirties such affirmations of Jewish contributions were also defensive. Some proposals, including the one for the Jewish Palestine Pavilion, stated explicitly that they were intended to counteract the "vilification" of the Jews.

Before their proposal could be fully considered, the proponents of the Jewish Palestine Proposal had succeeded in getting approval for their project. The Jewish Palestine Pavilion was also more in keeping with the Fair's futuristic theme. "Building the World of Tomorrow." By 1939, a fair dedicated to "Building the World of Tomorrow" was less inclined to support commemorative projects--even the Fair's use of the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Washington's inauguration was recast to fit in with the Fair futuristic theme. Projects that looked to the future, like the Jewish Palestine Pavilion, were received more sympathetically than ones that looked to the past. Not everyone agreed with such strict adherence to the theme. Dr. S. Margoshes, editor of *The Day*, wrote to the Fair organizers that if there were going to be a "Temple of Religious Liberty," why not a "Building of Jewish Achievement." He would later sign on to the Jewish Palestine Pavilion, which in its own way became an exhibition of Jewish achievement--not in the context of American history and not on the world stage, but specifically in relation to creating a Jewish national home in Palestine, That said, immigrants were a prominent feature of the fair, in the national

⁶³ [c]

pavilions representing their homelands, on the American Common, and in the Temple of Religion.

Whereas the Jewish Palestine Pavilion was specific and concrete in articulating its message, the Temple of Religion was an exercise in strategic vagueness--that is, it was to be a Temple to Religion without referring to any religion in particular. The challenge was to give architectural form to an abstract concept and create an open space both for individual groups to create their own programs and for groups to come together in an interfaith spirit. Many Jewish groups found The Temple of Religion a hospitable setting for their own programs. The Temple of Religion invited broad participation, as long as the programs were to be appropriate to the theme and there were no proselytizing or religious services. In contrast, the organizers of the Jewish Palestine Pavilion exercised tight central control over what would be shown and done there. The Temple of Religion was more flexible.

In many ways, the proximity of the Jewish Palestine Pavilion and the Temple of Religion was fortuitous. Jewish groups took advantage of their closeness to create programs that started in the Temple of Religion and moved to the Palestine Pavilion, as can be seen from the program for B'nai B'rith Day on September 8, 1940. At 6:45 pm, members of the organization gathered at the Temple of Religion for a program that began with Wagner's Fantasia and the Star Spangled Banner. An address entitled Religion and the Bill of Rights was followed by Handel's Largo, God Bless America, and a Benediction. Officiating were Dr. Harry D. Gideonse, President of Brooklyn College, and Reverend John W. Houck, Pastor of Pilgrim Congregational Church, Bronx. The program continued, without a break, as the group processed to the Jewish Palestine Pavilion for ceremonies there: "Mr Monsky will place a wreath at the The Eternal Light in commemoration of those who made the supreme sacrifice that Palestine might continue to

be a living symbol of Hope."⁶⁴ (The Eternal Light had been lit in a formal ceremony at the Western Wall and brought to the New York World's Fair.) There was a response by Meyer W. Weisgal, Director-General of the Jewish Palestine Pavilion, followed by the Academy Choir singing Hatikvah and America the Beautiful.*

If, in 1933 at the Century of Progress Exposition, Weisgal turned to mass spectacle in the form of a pageant, why did he advocate for a pavilion for the New York World's Fair? In his memoir, published in 1971, Weisgal described the situation he faced at the time of the Century of Progress Exposition:

The Zionist field in Chicago was strewn with dry bones and a thousand speeches were not going to revive them. The leadership was confined to two or three men, and they were powerless against the inertia of the community. I realized at once that in these circumstances pedestrian Zionist propaganda and routine education, however well intentioned, would produce no effect. There had to be, first, a reawakening, and I turned to the performing arts--music, drama, spectacle.⁶⁵

The pageant would tell the story of the ancient struggle of the Jews, using the machinery and properties of the Chicago Opera House, which had recently produced Aida. According to Weisgal, "The highlight of the evening was to be: *no speeches!* The spectacle would deliver its own message. This was an unheard of proposal: a great Zionist affair at which the local Zionist orators would keep their mouths shut."⁶⁶

Weisgal had three goals: to further the Zionist cause by gathering support and raising funds; to amplify the voice of protest against Hitler and raise money to help Jews leave

⁶⁴ [c]

⁶⁵. Meyer Weisgal, *...So Far: An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1971), 106-107.

⁶⁶. Weisgal, *...So Far*, 107.

Germany; and, at the same time and through these efforts, to stage a strong show of American Jewish solidarity. These goals had not changed when he was invited to lead the effort to create a Jewish Palestine Pavilion at the New York World's Fair three years later. But the strategy for how to achieve them had. The idea of building, which he had rejected for the Chicago fair, emerged here not as an inert edifice but as a way to materialize the state--literally, in terms of all the material metonyms that were used (plants, stone, and wood, all brought from Palestine). A pavilion would make it possible to enact statehood using every protocol for doing so that the Fair could provide. The Fair Corporation resisted these efforts at every turn, while the Weisgal took advantage of the social dramas that erupted with each rebuff.

Weisgal answered the question why a building and not a pageant in a chapter of his autobiography appropriated titled "A Jewish State in Flushing Meadows," where he characterized the Palestine Pavilion as "showmanship of another kind."⁶⁷ The major bone of contention was its location on the Flushing Meadows fairgrounds: "One section had been set aside for the national pavilions, and that is where I wanted us to be. There was of course no Jewish State as yet, but I believed in its impending arrival on the scene of history, and I wanted the idea of Jewish sovereignty to be anticipated there, in Flushing Meadows."⁶⁸ The design of the Palestine Pavilion and its contents was in accord with Weisgal's desires, which was "something authentically Palestinian" to show that "in 1938 Jewish Palestine was a reality; its towns, villages, schools, hospitals and cultural institutions had risen in a land that until our coming had been derelict and waste....I wanted a miniature Palestine in Flushing Meadows."⁶⁹ Insisting--with no trace of irony--that the pavilion

67. Weisgal, *...So Far*, 142.

68. Weisgal, *...So Far*, 149.

69. Weisgal, *...So Far*, 150.

should steer clear of politics, Weisgal applied himself to the "construction of the Jewish State under the shadow of the Trylon and Perisphere, or, as the Jews were fond of calling it, the Lulav and Esrog."⁷⁰ Winning the battle over location at the Fair was critical to the success of Weisgal's construction: "Located as we were on the borderline of the National Pavilions, there was always some question as to whether or not we really 'belonged.'"⁷¹ The exhibits in the Palestine Pavilion, by following the model of national buildings, simulated the state before it was legally formed.

The name of Norman Bel Geddes, a brilliant American stage and industrial designer, was put forward for the design commission. Bel Geddes, the chief exponent of streamlining as the look of the future, created the single most popular exhibit at the Fair, Futurama, in the General Motors Building. Weisgal and his team rejected his candidacy on the grounds that everything about the Jewish Palestine Pavilion had to be Palestinian, to be Palestinian down to the last stone, the designer included. Their choice was Arie El-Hanani (Arie Sapoznikov), who had immigrated to Palestine from the Ukraine in 1922, where he studied at the Kiev School of Art and Architecture in 1917.⁷² His Jewish Palestine Pavilion at the New York World's Fair tied for third prize with Oscar Niemeyer's Brazilian pavilion.⁷³ What might the Jewish Palestine Pavilion looked like had Bel Geddes received the commission? Nothing like the Bauhaus inspired International Style building created by Arie El-Hanani of the Levant Fair Studios in Tel-Aviv.

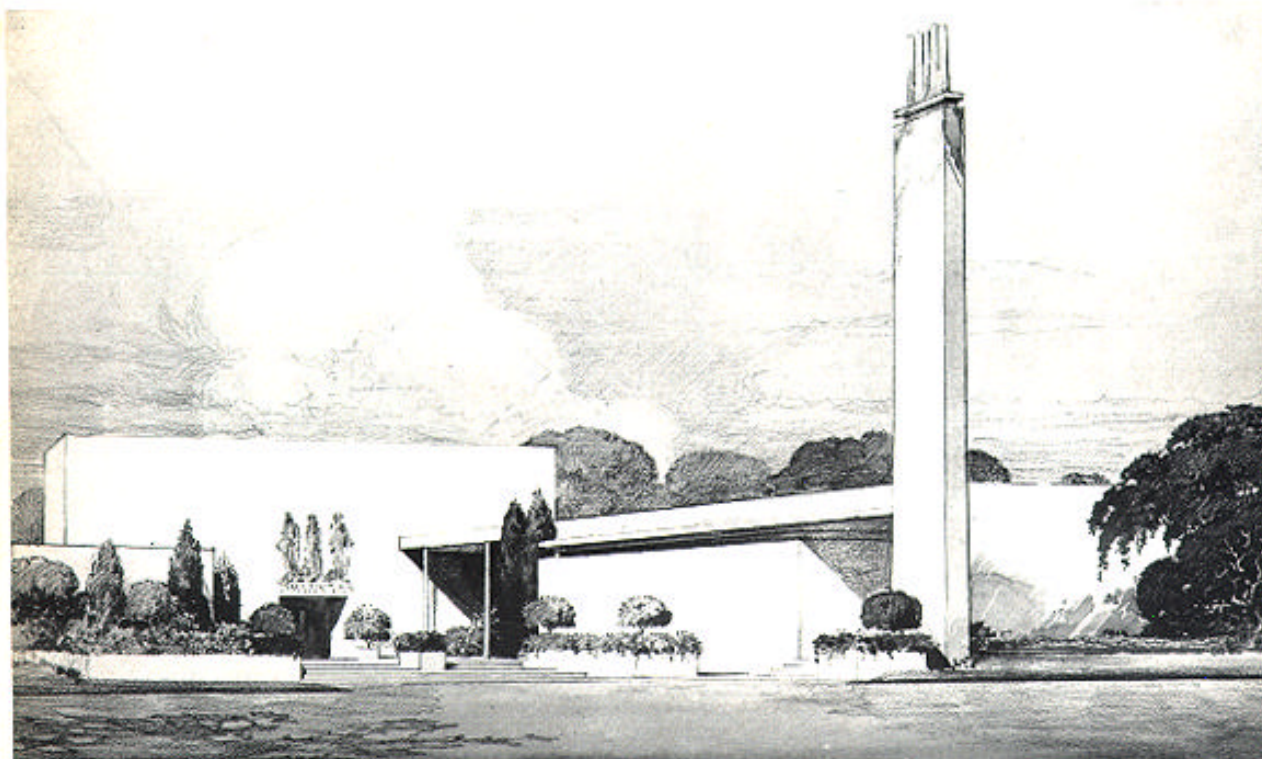
As was to be expected the Jewish Palestine Pavilion thematized Zionist ideology in its programmatic architecture,

⁷⁰ Weisgal, ...*So Far*, 158, 161.

⁷¹ Weisgal, ...*So Far*, 161.

⁷² Rubin and Levin, *Arie El-Hanani* (Amsterdam: Rubin Museum, 1993). [c]

⁷³ Rubin and Levin, *Arie El-Hanani*. [c]



Conceived in the age-old Mediterranean tradition yet executed in a straightforward modern technique, with a simple white building group centering about a landscaped courtyard, the Jewish Palestine Pavilion is the creation of four men: Arieh El-Hanani, Chief Architect and Designer; the late Norvin R. Lindheim, Associate Architect, who died while engaged in this work; Lee Smunson, Consultant Designer; and J. J. Levison, Consultant Landscape Forester. The exhibits were built at the Levant Fair Studios, Tel Aviv, Palestine.

Architectural rendering of the Jewish Palestine Pavilion. From *Palestine Book: Jewish Palestine Pavilion, New York World's Fair, 1939* [New York: Palestine Exhibits, Inc.], 18.

including "a tower symbolic of those that guard the water supply and lives of Jewish colonists in Palestine."⁷⁴ Everything about the pavilion was intended to transport the visitor into "the atmosphere of Eretz Israel." The Cedars of Lebanon in the garden recalled the Temple of Solomon. The eucalyptus used for the main doors to the pavilion called to mind their role in drying the malaria swamps. Palestinian marble lined the walls of the Memorial Hall, which was dedicated to those who gave up their lives in the building of a Jewish national home.⁷⁵ Each major theme was developed in its own hall: Transformation, Agriculture and Resettlement, Hall of the Cities, Hall of Industry, Culture and Education, Hall of Health, and Labor and New Social Forms. There were also a Gallery of Arts and Crafts, which included a shop, as well as dioramas of "The Holy Land of Yesterday and Tomorrow" and scale model of the ancient Temple.

The Jewish Palestine Pavilion, by dint of the massive organization effort to mobilize American Jewry to support it, is part of a process of transformation that David H. Shpiro describes in his study of American Zionism. He delineates the conversion of American Zionism from "an apolitical, philanthropical entity into a powerful, well-organized political influence group that had adopted many of the methods inherent in the American democratic process and had learned to manipulate the diverse forces at play on the American scene."⁷⁶ Making no mention of phenomena like the Jewish Palestine Pavilion, Shpiro observes that "The Zionist movement totally lacked organizational tools;

⁷⁴ Meyer [Weisgal. ...*Facts About the Jewish Palestine Pavilion at the N. Y. World's Fair-1939* ([New York]: [Palestine Exhibits, Inc.], [1939]), 6. On the significance of this architectural icon, see Tamar Katriel, and Eliza Shenhar, "Tower and Stockade: Dialogic Narration in Israeli Settlement Ethos," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76 (1990): 359-80.

⁷⁵ ...*Facts About the Jewish Palestine Pavilion*, 6.

⁷⁶ David H. Shpiro, *From Philanthropy to Activism: the Political Transformation of American Zionism in the Holocaust Years, 1933-1945* (Oxford, N.Y.: Pergamon Press, 1994), xi.



Dedication panel, with quotation from Chaim Weizmann. Jewish Palestine Pavilion, New York World's Fair. Weizmann Institute of Science Archives, Rehovot, Israel. 12/90:455

it had no department of information and propaganda, no public relations section, no regular means of feeding news to the press or radio."⁷⁷

However, by searching for the strategic approach that only an established organization could sustain, he overlooks the kind of tactical approach that someone like Weisgal would seize as opportunities arose.⁷⁸ Indeed, the Jewish Palestine Pavilion is a prime example of tactics, from beginning to end. Once the Pavilion was up and running, Weisgal made every effort to convert tactics into strategy. That is, he pressured the Fair Corporation to recognize the Pavilion as a national entity on a par with the other national pavilions so that he would not have to proceed tactically, opportunity by opportunity, to fight for this recognition. Even with limited resources, the Jewish Palestine Pavilion organized a systematic campaign, involving information services, public relations, publicity, and propaganda on behalf of the Zionist cause.⁷⁹

The tactic, in Palestine and on the grounds of the Fair, was to make facts. The Jewish Palestine Pavilion played a vital role in projecting statehood as "fact." As I have argued here, this was done not only through displays of Jewish Palestine as if it were already a functioning state, a *fait accompli* awaiting

⁷⁷ Shpiro, *From Philanthropy to Activism*, 19.

⁷⁸ On the difference between strategy and tactic, see Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

⁷⁹ Only recently has attention turned to such tactical phenomena. Arthur Goren has lead the way with his work on Jewish public culture in the United States. See Arthur A. Goren, "Celebrating Zion in America," in *Encounters With the "Holy Land" Place, Past and Future in American Jewish Culture*, eds. Jeffrey Shandler, and Beth S. Wenger (Philadelphia, PA: Published by the National Museum of American Jewish History; the Center for Judaic Studies, University of Pennsylvania; and the University of Pennsylvania Library. Distributed by University Press of New England, 1997), 41-59 and Arthur A Goren, *The Politics and Public Culture of American Jews* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999). James L. Gelvin (Zionism and the representation of 'Jewish Palestine' at the New York World's Fair, 1939-1940) analyzes the Jewish Palestine Pavilion at the New York World's Fair as a window on a critical moment in the history of American Zionism.

ratification, but also by using the world's fair itself as a stage for performing statehood--that is, as a series of occasions for international recognition. For the Jewish Palestine Pavilion to convey the actuality of *de facto* statehood, it had first to envision, then visualize, and finally project the "fact." A pavilion was better suited for the purpose than the kind of pageant Weisgal had produced for the 1933 Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago. A pavilion was more "strategic" than a pageant because it occupied a nationally defined territory on the fair grounds from which it could project its messages in a sustained and systematic way for the entire duration of the Fair.

Why did the Palestinians did not create their own national exhibits at world's fairs until recently?⁸⁰ The vital importance of projection is captured by Edward Said in his analysis of what he characterizes as Palestinian powerlessness to claim Jerusalem:

It is a sign of Palestinian powerlessness and, it must be said, collective incompetence that to this day the story of Jerusalem's loss both in 1948 and 1967 has not been told by them, but--insofar as it has been told at all--partially reconstructed either by Israelis sympathetic and unsympathetic or by foreigners. In other words, not only has there been no Palestinian narrative of 1948 and after that can at least challenge the dominant Israeli narrative, there has also been no collective Palestinian projection for Jerusalem since its all-too-definitive loss in 1948 and again in 1967. The effect of this quite extraordinary historical and political neglect has been to deprive us of Jerusalem well *before* the fact.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Any effort to answer this question cannot be separated from the process of their disenfranchisement. See Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: a History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1998* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999) and Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: the Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

⁸¹ Edward Said, "Projecting Jerusalem," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no. 1 (1995): 5-14. The quotation appears on p. 8.

The Jewish Palestine Pavilion was precisely about projecting statehood before the fact. Said attributes considerable agency to such projections. Referring to Israel's projection of Jerusalem as "an 'eternally' unified, principally Jewish city under exclusive Israeli sovereignty," Said cautions, "Only by doing so first in projections could it then proceed to the changes on the ground during the last eight or nine years [prior to 1995], that is, to undertake the massive architectural, demographic, and political metamorphosis that would then correspond to the images and projections."⁸² Would that it were that simple. The Jewish Palestine Pavilion is an ideal site to examine the interaction of facts, as understood here, and projections. A critical aspect of projection is, of course, its capacity to activate the mutual recognition that international events like world's fairs structure.

⁸² Said, "Projecting Jerusalem," 7. This passage has been quoted by critics of the ineffectuality of Arab and Arab-American reactions to Israel's claims to Jerusalem in its recent Epcot pavilion. See, for example, [Editor], "Framing Jerusalem," *Jerusalem Quarterly File 6* (1999) <http://www.jqf-jerusalem.org/journal/1999/jqf6/journal.html#notel>. As with the 1939 New York World's Fair, Israel projects and the Arabs react. Thus, Khaled Turaani, executive director of American Muslims for Jerusalem, stated, "if the Arab League can not stand up to Micky Mouse, how can they stand up to Israel's attempts to annex Jerusalem?" He called on "Saudi Arabia and Morocco to use their exhibits to right the wrongs committed by the Israeli exhibit." (quoted by Rasha Saad, "Dealing With Disney," *Al-Ahram Weekly Online* (Cairo), no. 449 (30 September-6 October, 1999), <http://www.ahram.org.eg/weekly/1999/449/re3.htm>). Expo 2000 in Hanover, which included Palestinian and Israeli exhibits, would be worthy of study in this context. The Palestinian exhibit was enclosed within the walls of Jerusalem. The Israeli exhibit, hastily assembled, was entitled "Isr@el from Holy Land to Whole-E-Land" and featured computer terminals. The website is still "under construction." <http://www.isralexpo.net/>.