



Smithsonian American Art Museum

## **Staging Modernism at the 1915 San Francisco World's Fair**

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Viewed as the last great fair in the tradition of the comprehensive, universal events of the long nineteenth century, the 1915 San Francisco Panama Pacific International Exposition (PPIE) demonstrates how the American artistic establishment incorporated modernism into the conservative framework of the international exposition by promoting a broader definition of “modern” art, one that focused on works and artists that today are not typically regarded as up-to-date for 1915.

My study of the PPIE will situate the exhibition within the history of world's fairs, and the specific context of American expositions, which performed the role of temporary survey museums during a period and in regions where such institutions were still rare. I will consider how the fine arts exhibition at the PPIE responded to the Armory Show of 1913 as well as other exhibitions of contemporary art in America. The study will include an analysis of the Palace of Fine Art guidebooks and how they organized, controlled, and encouraged certain kinds of viewing experiences; an examination of the Sargent and Bellows galleries as studies in how the one-man rooms were organized and received; and finally, an exploration of the commercial aspects of the art exhibition at the PPIE and the exposition's influence on the collecting and exhibition practices of American museums.