stressed in the Czech and Slovak people in the context of world's fairs. Yet none was fully comparable to the exoticism of African and other indigenous villages and their "native" inhabitants in the colonial displays.

While indigenous people from outside of Europe were shown as *exotic* through their native attire and dwellings, the same attributes applied to Europeans had different meanings. Dressing female attendants in folk costumes was a common trope not only for the Czechoslovak pavilion but for other European exhibits too, including Poland, Sweden or Italy. The main reason for the inclusion of such attire was to bring up the country's historicity as well as authenticity, which folk art indicated to many, with the added value of attractiveness. Individuals and groups in native costumes had been included from the onset of these events and provided the markers of ethnic origin and difference.[83] Placed in a juxtaposition with the attributes of progress and modernity, ranging from scientific and technological inventions, man-made building materials, to hygiene displays, they were more than an attractive spectacle. They also showed human evolution from the somewhat primitive origins of local cultures to civilized modernity.

Yet as I have discussed in the chapter on Art and Design, folk culture held this position of ambiguity when it came to international displays and representation of Czechs and Slovaks abroad. While folk culture had played a major role in the late 19th century exhibitions that took place in Prague, during the interwar period, it was often maneuvered into a manifestation of lost traditions and nostalgia in the interwar period. As such, folk culture stayed an important and integral part of émigrés' expression of belonging to the home country articulated in special events at world's fairs. This included official openings and closures of national pavilions, parades, Sokol gatherings and national days, which I will explore in more detail.

Gendered fairs

First, however, I would like to address the issue of gendered culture that I have mentioned a few times and place it in the context of the more general questions of gender presence and absence at world's fairs. Recently, scholars of world's fairs and large exhibitions have been paying more attention to gender, with publications focusing on women's roles and spaces in individual case studies, and those

83 Sadiah Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire and Anthropology in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Chicago–London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 119.

that integrate gender into their broader narratives.[84] Women held a wide range of roles at world's fairs, not always visible or acknowledged. They were waitresses and sales attendants, they were performers and objects of display through their products or bodies, they came as visitors and in a few cases, they were also organizers and designers. In Czechoslovak pavilions, women's presence beyond the services like sales and waitressing was marginal.

As I have mentioned earlier, the original concept of the national pavilions was devised in Prague by cross-ministerial committees that consisted exclusively of men. The architecture of the Czechoslovak pavilions was also designed solely by men, with only one known entry from a female architect, Marie Jansová, into the competition for the 1937 pavilion in Paris. Some female artists and designers, like Minka Podhajská, Helena Johnová, and Emilie Paličková Milde did appear in the Czechoslovak displays throughout the interwar period, most prominently as part of the decorative displays in Paris in 1925.

Paličková Milde was, in fact, one of the most successful designers judging from the number of prizes her lace received at the fairs. Interwar exhibitions also included a few female artists, e.g., the painter Linka Procházková and the sculptors Mary Duras and Marta Jirásková appeared in the modern arts exhibit at the 1937 exposition in Paris. In the larger scheme of the Czechoslovak displays in this period, though, their total number and representation was miniscule. On top of that, there were also women artists and designers whose level of involvement has been difficult to unfold because they cooperated with their husbands or partners, and this would overshadow their contribution. This was the case of the previously mentioned Eva Štrimplová, who collaborated with Krejcar on parts of the Czechoslovak pavilion in 1937, or the case of Charlotte and Antonín Heythums. In their case, the extent of the contribution of Charlotte to the designs bearing the name of her husband Antonín Heythum is still unknown today.

This invisibility of women in Czechoslovak displays at international fairs seems to contradict the political climate in the new republic that was favorable to women's emancipation. Already before the war, there had been various liberal women's societies and clubs that called for gender equality and suffrage, which women gained in 1920. In the interwar period, the Women's National Council

84 The first group is represented, for example, by Myriam Boussahba-Bravard and Rebecca Rogers, eds., *Women in International and Universal Exhibitions, 1876–1937* (London: Routledge, 2018); T. J. Boisseau and Abigail M. Markwyn, eds., *Gendering the Fair: Histories of Women and Gender at World's Fairs* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010) , the second by for instance Ganz, *The 1933 Chicago* and Greenhalgh, *Fair World.*

was established as the central body in which various women's rights organizations were united and fought for further rights for women.[85] They were supported also by President Masaryk who often lectured and published on the topic of gender and women's rights, therefore being seen as a promoter of feminism.[86]

Masaryk called for equality and the removal of privileges as a feature of humanity and modernity because being modern for him was being equal.[87] His appeals, however, did not translate universally to all aspects of social life. While soon after the end of the First World War and the collapse of the old monarchic order, women's access to education and employment in Czechoslovakia was set to improve, prevailing views still operated within the mindset that women belonged to the domestic sphere. And women as independent earners were exceptions. Even Masaryk did not go as far as to claim that women could do the same jobs as men and recognized a level of biological determination in gender roles.[88]

Melissa Feinberg has identified this contradiction between the government's official stance and the reality, as the right to vote did not come with the right to work.[89] During the interwar period and more markedly in the 1930s, married women were discouraged or often prevented from working in civil service, and this limited their access to decision making. The reason for this exclusion was framed as economic fairness; within a family unit, one earner should suffice and that should be the man. As much as during the Habsburg monarchy prior to 1918, individual rights in Czechoslovakia were suspended in favor of women's "responsibilities to their families and by extension to the nation."[90] And this included being part of teams that organized participation at international exhibitions.

The committees responsible for international exhibitions, women in Czechoslovakia most often developed spaces separate from the main exhibition realm. Women's organizations put together many exhibitions of women's art for national and international audiences in, for example, The Exhibition of Czech Female Painters in Paris (1927), The Exhibition of Czechoslovak Women's Art

85 Jana Burešová, *Proměny společenského postavení českých žen v první polovině 20. století* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2001), 42.

86 T.G. Masaryk, "Moderní názor na ženu," in *Masaryk a ženy* (Prague: Ženská národní rada, 1930), 63–64.

87 T.G. Masaryk, "Modern opinions about women," quoted in Melissa Feinberg, *Elusive Equality: Gender, Citizenship, and the Limits of Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 1918–1950* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 11.

88 Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*, 18. Masaryk, "Dodatek k Několika poznámkám o práci československých žen," in *Masaryk a ženy* (Prague: Ženská národní rada, 1930), 22.

89 Feinberg, "Women in the Civil Service," *Elusive Equality*, 99–128.

90 Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*, 126.

in Buenos Aires (1929) or The Exhibition of Modern Art of the Czechoslovak Women in Sofia (1936).[91] These efforts often received official political backing that promoted women's exhibitions as a sign of the country's democracy.[92] On a national level, two exhibitions that focused on women that took place in Brno between 1929 and 1930 can be seen as part of this trend. The Exhibition of Modern Woman and the Civilized Woman centered around women and modernity.[93] They challenged in their own ways the existing image of women and suggested improvements to various areas of women's lives, including dressing, home interiors and work. Yet in the end the exhibitions had no larger impact on translating this message into the Czechoslovak pavilions abroad where women continued to play a peripheral role.

Outside the Czechoslovak pavilions, women at world's fairs occupied separate spaces that were inhabited and/or organized by women. These only slowly developed into their more integrated involvement in the exhibitions. From the 19th century, many fairs included women's buildings and women's pavilions which showcased women's work across professions, from material production to philanthropic deeds.[94] Most prominent of these were the Woman's Building at the Columbian Exhibition in Chicago 1893. In the USA, seven woman's buildings had been built at world's fairs by the beginning of the Second World War, and fourteen appeared in the main European fairs.[95]

In Europe, women's buildings and exhibitions were also many and date back to the end of the 19th century. They included the "Pavillon der Frauenarbeiten" in Vienna, in 1873, that was proposed by Rudolf von Eitelberger, whose activities as the director of the Kunstgewerbemuseum and elsewhere aimed at improving the taste of middle-class women, partly by promoting their work in applied arts.[96] One of the largest events for women's exhibitions was the Werkbund Exhibition in Cologne in 1914 which featured the Woman's House (The Haus der Frau) by Margarethe Knüppelholz-Roeser. Set amongst the buildings by Walter Gropius, Peter Behrens and Henry van der Velde, for instance, the pavilion

91 Martina Pachmanová, *Z Prahy až do Buenos Aires: "ženské umění" a mezinárodní reprezentace meziválečného Československa* (Prague: VŠUP, 2014), 63.

92 Pachmanová, *Z Prahy*, 60.

93 Martina Pachmanová, *Civilizovaná žena: ideál i paradox prvorepublikové vizuální kultury* (Prague: VŠUP, 2021).

94 Myriam Boussahba-Bravard and Rebecca Rogers, "Introduction. Positioning Women in World's Fairs," *Women in International and Universal Exhibitions, 1876–1937* (London: Routledge, 2017), 3.

95 Mary Pepchinski, "Woman's Buildings at European and American World's Fairs, 1893–1939," in *Gendering the Fair. Histories of Women and Gender at World's Fairs*, eds. Tracey Jean Boisseau and Abigail Markwyn (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 187–207.

96 Pepchinski, "The Woman's Building," 194.

tried to emphasize women had an important role in design and the design reform.[97] In the same year, Emilie Winkelmann designed her own Woman's House with 25 rooms at the International Book and Graphic Exhibition in Leipzig.[98]

After the First World War, like the Exhibition of Contemporary Culture in Brno in 1928, the Polish General Exhibition (Powszechna wystawa krajowa) commemorated ten years of the existence of the Polish republic. It took place in Poznań in 1929 and with 112 exhibition buildings it became the largest fair in Poland.[99] Here, the Pavilion of Women's Work was initiated by the journalist Maria Ruszczyńska with the first lady, Michalina Mościcka, as the patron. The women involved here were connected with the progressive circles of Poland and their pavilion aimed at showing the various activities of Polish women, regardless their class, profession or religion.[100]

Designed by Anatolia Hryniewicka-Piotrowska (1896–1989), a modernist architect, color played an important role here as the façade was a striking combination of yellow and grey.[101] Yet in the same exhibition, women oversaw another pavilion, the Pavilion of Female Farmers. It was put together as an alternative to the Pavilion of Women's Work which the female farmers saw as initiated by "sisters from cities" who pursued different goals.[102] The female farmers pavilion was therefore based more around the traditional values related to living in the countryside. The reductive construction of identity in exhibitions and fairs therefore applied to women's spaces too. This was the case of the Polish pavilions, as much as of the Czechoslovak national presentations which gave women a very specific role.

The interwar period therefore opened new questions that concerned women's roles in society and hence at world's fairs. These could be the recognition of the advantages of modernity, that included consumerism; adherence to traditions whether found in the countryside or the family, activism in politics and cultural life. All of them were addressed at four consecutive Woman's World's Fairs which were held between 1925 and 1928 in Chicago, were organized by women

97 Despina Stratigakos, "Women and the Werkbund: Gender Politics and German Design Reform, 1907–14," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 62, no. 4 (2003): 499.

98 Mary Pepchinski, "Women's Buildings," 194.

99 *Przewodnik po Powszechnej Wystawie Krajowej* (Poznań: Biuro Ogłoszeń "PAR," 1929), https://cyryl.poznan.pl/katalog.php?baza=obiekty&id_obiektu=83563.

100 Magdalena Heruday-Kiełczewska, *Wystawa Pracy Kobiet na Powszechnej Wystawie Krajowej*, https://tytus.edu.pl/2018/09/23/wystawa-pracy-kobiet-na-powszechnej-wystawie-krajowej/ and *Przewodnik*

101 Olgierd Czerner and Hieronim Listowski, eds. *The Polish Avant-garde: Architecture and Town Planning, 1918–1933* (Paris: Editions du Moniteur, 1981), 86.

102 Rada Naczelna Ziemianek, eds., *Pawilon Ziemianek i Włościanek na Powszechnej Wystawie Krajowej w Poznaniu 1929 r.* (Warszawa: Komitet Pawilonu Ziemianek i Włościanek, 1930), 5.

and showcased women's ability to free themselves through work.[103] They were held on a small scale in comparison with the grand world's fairs that lasted several months, but their ambition was to provide women's view of women's work.

During the four years, however, the fairs increasingly moved away from putting emphasis on modern technology and its potential to liberate women towards more conservative displays of home improvements, decoration and traditional crafts.[104] The 1927 instalment of the Woman's World's Fair also contained The Czechoslovak Folk-Art Exhibit, which firmly aligned material culture of the homeland with peasant and female production. It indicates the move of the women's event to more traditional displays, as well as the persisting embrace of folk art as a reminder of the "ancestral home" amongst the Czechoslovak émigré women.

The Exhibit consisted of a display of costumes, folk products and techniques that were recognized as disappearing in Czechoslovakia. A brochure with articles and pictures was also published, acknowledging that many folk practices were dying out in a process that was seen as an inevitable result of progress and the change of lifestyle.[105] One of the texts reminded the reader that "cooperative societies have been organized [in remote areas of Czechoslovakia] to foster the making of laces and embroideries and to find markets for them as a means of livelihood to women who… produce delicate ornaments for the dresses of American ladies."[106] One way of preserving folk culture was thus to turn it into a commodity produced for national and international markets, with a potential to inform the American public (and markets) of the existence of Czechoslovakia. In the Czechoslovak Folk-Art Exhibit, the question of female involvement in world's fairs was successfully merged with the practical issues of preserving folk cultures in a modern world.

National days

The examples of the gender imbalance, the lack of recognition of casual workers, and the marginalized involvement of the external Czechs and Slovaks have a common denominator in othering the aspects of Czechoslovak identity that

103 Tracey Jean Boisseau, "Once Again in Chicago: Revisioning Women as Workers at the Chicago Woman's World's Fairs of 1925–1928," *Women's History Review* 18, no. 2 (2009): 265–291.
104 Boisseau, "Once Again," 268.
105 Vojan, "Lidové umění československé," in *The Woman's World's Fair, Coliseum – Chicago – May – 1927. The Czechoslovak Folk-Art Exhibit*, The University of Chicago Library, 8.
106 "Folk art of Czechoslovak Women," *Czechoslovak Folk-Art Exhibit,* 9.