GENERAL EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Imperialism was more than a set of economic, political, and military phenomena. It was a habit of mind, a dominant idea in the era of European world supremacy which had widespread intellectual, cultural, and technical ramifications. The 'Studies in Imperialism' series is designed to explore, primarily but not exclusively, these relatively neglected areas. Volumes are planned on the scientific aspects of imperialism, on education, disease, the theatre, literature, art, design, and many more. But in redressing the balance in favour of these multi-disciplinary and cross-cultural studies, it is not intended that the economic, political, and military dimensions should be ignored. The series will contain books in these fields too and will seek to examine colonial and imperial developments in a variety of periods and in diverse geographical contexts. It is hoped that individually and collectively these works will illumine one of the most potent characteristics of modern world history.

Paul Greenhalgh's book illustrates the breadth and depth of the imperial idea extremely well. The international exhibitions examined here were a product of the European and American sense of being involved in a mighty global enterprise. In concentrating on the progression from raw materials to manufactured goods (via technical processes and the application of design values) the exhibitions reflected the economic geography of imperial specialisation. In displaying the marriage of scientific advance to manufacture, trade, and transport, they were affected by and in turn influenced the contemporary traditions of spectacular theatre, architectural eclecticism, and showmanship arising from a fascination with human and natural historical taxonomies. They offered a racial commentary on the alleged superiority of European civilisation, produced spectacular displays associated with conquest and frontiersmanship, and stimulated the appearance of commemorative ephemera, bric-à-brac, and music. As well as touching on every aspect of the industrial and imperial system, they provide insights into domestic developments in art and design, the status and self-assertion of women, the expression of national character, and the articulation of both private and governmental agencies in planning and funding. They were at the same time global and local, reducing complex sets of economic, scientific, and cultural interactions to one vast display.

As Paul Greenhalgh shows, they were both magnificent and disappointing, progressive and reactionary, sometimes fostering misunderstanding and aggression rather than conciliation. They became entrammelled in an

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overblown grandiloquence, a riotous eclecticism that led the public to regard them as little more than gigantic funfairs. Disentangling intention and effect is always problematical and this is particularly true of the exhibitions. Their treatment of Asian and African peoples neatly illustrates the point. People from Asia and Africa were used for racial display bordering on the peep-show. Yet the influence of Asian music (principally through Indonesian gamelan players) reached European composers through exhibition performances, while displays of African art, treated as no more than 'ethnic' curios, had a profound effect on post-impressionism. The exhibitions sucked the world into patterns of dependence, dominance and subjection on one great site, but they also permitted unexpected contacts to take place and mutual influences to flourish.

John M. MacKenzie