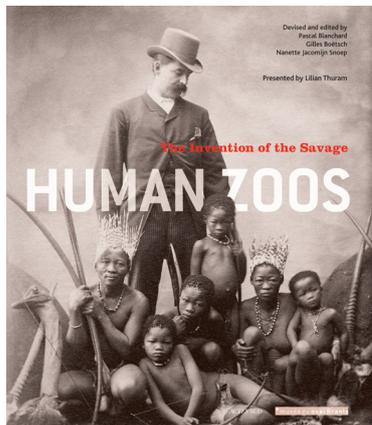


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HUMAN ZOOS

THE INVENTION OF THE SAVAGE

PASCAL BLANCHARD, GILLES BOËTSCH AND NANETTE JACOMIJN SNOEP
INTRODUCTION BY LILIAN THURAM

PUBLICATION : NOVEMBER 2011

The West invented the “savage.” It did so in a huge spectacle, with its performers, its stage sets, its impresarios, its dramas and its incredible narratives. This story has been forgotten, and yet it stands at the intersection of colonial history, the history of science and the history of the world of spectacle and of the grandiose world’s fairs that shaped international relations for over a century. This was the age of human exhibitions, the time of “scientific racism,” a time when men came to see “monsters” or “exotics,” not for what they did, but for what they were thought to be. These popular events produced a multitude of images designed to fascinate and persuade the public. Published on the occasion of a major exhibition at the Musée du Quai Branly, this anthology brings together some five hundred remarkable documents and items from this period, taken from public and private collections and in many cases never previously shown, which it presents alongside analyses by seventy specialists from around the world.

Organised in three sections, the twelve chapters in this book take readers through the history of human zoos. With over a billion visitors coming to see tens of thousands of human exhibits, this international phenomenon which began in the 16th century reached its apogee in the first third of the 20th, accompanying the growth of empires and affecting people all around the planet as it manufactured a single, universal model of the “savage” in a kind of early version of globalisation, a model applied from Tokyo to Hamburg, from Chicago to London, from Paris to Barcelona and from Basel to Johannesburg. By exploring the many traces of this forgotten past, we can observe how the idea of domination spread through the world in a relatively short space of time.

This book explores the sometimes porous frontiers between “exotics” and “monsters,” science and voyeurism, exhibition and spectacle, and challenges readers to reconsider the images through which they view today’s world. If human zoos disappeared in the 1930s, they were nevertheless effective in dividing humanity into two categories, and we are only just beginning to understand the power of what, at the time, was merely curiosity.

PASCAL BLANCHARD, a historian, specialist in colonialism, associate researcher at the CNRS, and co-director of the ACHAC research group, has published several dozen books on the body, and the histories of colonialism and immigration.

GILLES BOËTSCH is an anthropologist and director of research at the CNRS and director of the mixed international unit Environnement, Santé, Société (Dakar). He specialises in representations of the body and alterity.

NANETTE JACOMIJN SNOEP is an anthropologist and head of the history collections heritage unit at Musée du Quai Branly. She teaches the history of African art at the École du Louvre, has curated many exhibitions and edited several catalogues.

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