

Hugo d'Alesi's  
*Maréorama*:

Recapturing  
& deconstructing  
the spectacle of  
the Mediterranean

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The word *Maréorama* is derived from the Latin word for sea (mare) – referring to the Mediterranean Sea – and the ancient Greek word (horama - ὄραμα), meaning spectacle. The present thesis aims to analyse how Hugo d'Alesi's *Maréorama* offered the crowd of the 1900 World's Fair in the industrial city of Paris, a Mediterranean retreat.

### III THE MARÉORAMA

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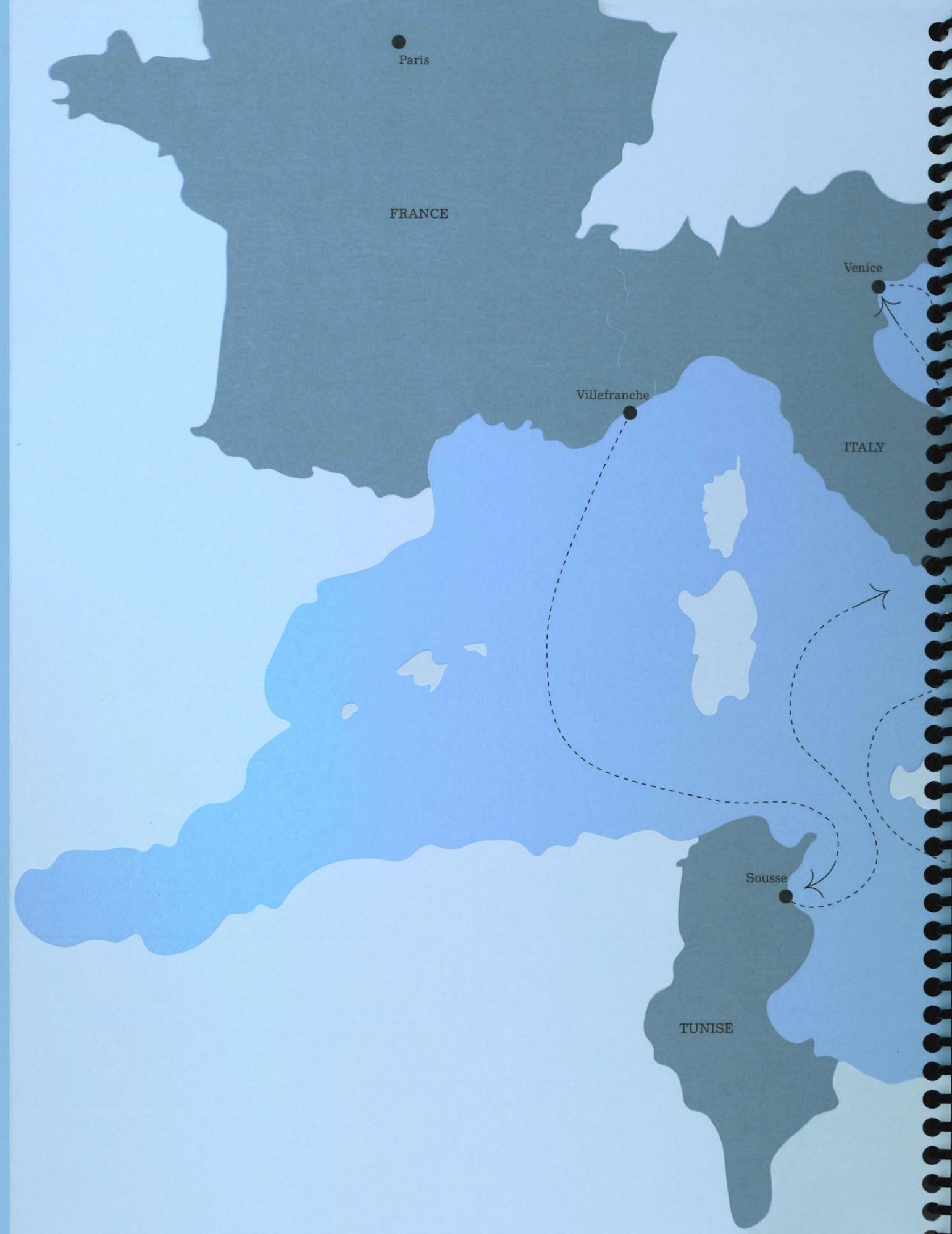
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# PROLOGUE

Born as Frédéric Alexianu in 1849, Hugo d'Alesi was a graphic designer based in Paris. His Italian artist name d'Alesi (derived from the Greek word *Alexandros*: defender of men), portended a spectacular undertaking.

In the late-nineteenth century, d'Alesi's large format travel posters, commissioned by the French railway companies, brightened up the grey walls of the urban landscape with their sensational colours and seductively sold the world outside the dreary and industrial cities of France. Remarkably, many of the advertised destinations were situated on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Hugo d'Alesi's posters displayed a variety of non-quotidian settings, such as cloudless rural coastlines at the *Côte d'Azur*, folkloric scenes of the regional Mediterranean populations, romantic displays of the untainted Berber civilisations in the French North-African colonies, mythological shores of Italy adorned with traits of the rich Roman empire, and the magical seashores of the sensual Orient. For city-dwellers, his posters appeared as a window to another world. They sparked their imagination and addressed a nostalgic sentiment for authenticity and sensuality which increasingly seemed to disappear in a hyper-rationalized and industrialized society. They engendered the yearning to escape the city right away and to travel to these Mediterranean destinations of desire. His posters seem to have appeared as a prelude of the *Maréorama*: the voyage on the Mediterranean Sea he would stage during the 1900 World's Fair in Paris.

The analysis of Hugo d'Alesi's *Maréorama* consist of two perspectives. First, I aim to recapture the *Maréorama* as an active passenger of the ship during the illusionary sea voyage. In doing so, I attempt to reconstruct an overall view of this subjective multi-sensorial experience. Therefore, I consulted several written and visual sources. First, I made use of the original description of the itinerary<sup>1</sup> that was handed out to the passengers when they boarded the *Maréorama*. Additionally, I drew upon multiple sensationalized accounts of the voyage on the *Maréorama*, which were published in the French newspapers<sup>2</sup>. Further than that, I relied upon travel reports and postcard messages, written by travellers who went on a real journey across the Mediterranean. Finally, I also enriched this reconstruction to some extent with my own imagination: as Hugo d'Alesi intended to capture the imagination of his spectators, I also allowed myself to be caught up in the voyage, as if I personally attended the 1900 World's Fair and became an active passenger onboard of the *Maréorama*.

Secondly, in order to better understand the intentions of Hugo d'Alesi, as well as the different actors involved in the

construction of the *Maréorama*, I deconstruct Hugo d'Alesi's *Maréorama* by putting the designer and his project within its larger socio-historical context.

The recapturing and deconstruction of the *Maréorama*, will be structured as a fictional visit to the 1900 World's Fair in Paris. In PART I, the focus lies on the World's Fair generally, in order to contextualise the *Maréorama* as a product of the specific socio-economic context of France in the late-nineteenth century. In PART II, I contextualise the *Maréorama* as part of the Amusement Section of the World's Fair. In this sensational and commercial environment, I retrace how Hugo d'Alesi acted within the context of a burgeoning entertainment industry. In PART III, I outline the voyage that crossed the Mediterranean Sea from the Western pole of the Mediterranean to the Eastern pole of the Mediterranean. By analysing the itinerary in relation to the geo-political context of the Mediterranean region, I try to comprehend the underlying considerations behind the voyage that appeared as a quest in the search for what has been erased by the process of industrialisation. Moreover, to comprehend the various influences that affected the *Maréorama*, I will link the various disciplines of which it is composed with some artistic and technological trends of the epoch. The analysis of the *Maréorama* will correspond with the analysis of some of Hugo d'Alesi's travel posters. These posters provide us today with substantial information about the travel interests and possibilities of European tourists at that time as well as the current tourism representations of the destinations visited by the *Maréorama*.

This thesis has been an enriching process for me, since I trace parallels between Hugo d'Alesi's undertaking and my own design practice. As a student in the Master *Space and Communication*, I wish to develop my practice in an expanded field of design in which traditional disciplines collide and blur, which allows me to explore the possibilities for the interaction between, graphics, space, narrative, performance, photography, video, et cetera. With a background in graphic design myself, I am particularly fascinated by how Hugo d'Alesi – the graphic designer who visualised the Mediterranean as a destination of desire through his travel posters – subsequently staged the Mediterranean. It is as if he had unfolded his flat printed travel posters in a spatial multi-sensorial environment in which different disciplines came together.

- 1 Huhtamo, E. (2011). *Maréorama Resurrected: An Illustrated Lecture*. (online) Available at: <https://vimeo.com/53533579> (viewed July 2019).
- 2 For the references of these periodicals, see p.49

# THE WORLD'S FAIR

## *The World's Fair*

Imagine: it is the first summer of the twentieth century and you are in Paris. In your hands, you hold a ticket to the World's Fair, valid from the 15<sup>th</sup> of April until the 12<sup>th</sup> of November. As you arrive at Place de la Concorde, you are completely blown away by the overwhelming colourful main entrance: *La Porte Monumentale*. Just as the other 51 million visitors that year, you walk under the three tremendous iron arches, looking up at a 36-meter-high golden dome that is accompanied by two side minarets. After having shown your ticket at one of the 76 counters, you excitedly enter the marvellous site...

## *The World's Fair*

Your visit to the 1900 World's Fair in Paris driven by a clear objective. As you open the practical guidebook<sup>1</sup> of the World's Fair, you let your eyes scroll over the alphabetical table of contents:

*Machines Agricoles*

*Machines à Vapeur*

*Madagascar*

*Maison du Thé*

*Maisons ouvrières*

*Maladie (en cas de)*

*Marchés*

*Maréorama*

there it is: page 270. A voyage along the Mediterranean, by Hugo d'Alesi. Hugo d'Alesi is not unknown to you, since you have already read his name many times at the bottom of his seductive travel posters, which brighten up the grey walls of the city. You had no idea that the landscapes of your dreams existed, until d'Alesi's travel posters visualised these destinations of desire on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. His marvellous posters appear as a window to another world: they appeal your senses and spark your imagination. They engender the desire to immediately jump on a train to leave the city and travel to the Mediterranean.<sup>2</sup>

It would appear that the *Maréorama* is heading there. Only this time, there is no need to take a luxury train. On board of the *Maréorama*, the Mediterranean becomes reachable, for the meager price of 2 francs.

<sup>1</sup> This practical travel handbook gave information and advice on visiting Paris: the arrival in the city, the search for a hotel, information on tickets and opening hours, descriptions of the different pavilions, sections, palaces, attractions, etc. *Exposition internationale (1900). Paris Exposition 1900 - Guide pratique du visiteur de Paris et de l'exposition.* Paris: Hachette.

<sup>2</sup> *Le XIXe siècle*, Paris, 16/11/1906.

### A showpiece of the Third French Republic

It was only against the backdrop of the World's Fair in 1900 – a gigantic, memorable event, temporarily staged in Hugo d'Alesi's home base Paris – that the wild imagination of this graphic designer could turn into reality. Hugo d'Alesi had been meticulously planning his *Maréorama* for years, and it was already safely patented in 1894, six years before the opening of the World's Fair. Convinced of the great value and future success of his *Maréorama*, he had presented his project with conviction to the fair's direction and the stockholders<sup>1</sup>. Accordingly, the *Maréorama* became one of the first accepted attractions for the World's Fair.

This large-scale international exhibition hosted in the capital of France, was not the first of its kind. The first World's Fair "The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations" was held in The Crystal Palace in London in 1851. It was no coincidence that the first world's fair took place in Great Britain, as the industrial revolution arose around the middle of the eighteenth century in Great Britain. Whereas in previous eras, the first ships symbolised the glorious conquest of the sea and embodied splendour and strength, the World's Fairs in some way represented the ships of the industrial era<sup>2</sup>: nations used them as monumental political ventures for demonstrating their power, strength and inexhaustible wealth to the rest of the world.<sup>3</sup>

The Industrial Revolution in France proceeded remarkably slower. As an agricultural nation with very strong traditions, France had more difficulties adapting to the new, industrial systems than its powerful neighbours Great Britain and Germany. Additionally, the absence of large and accessible natural supplies, such as of coal and iron, slowed down the process of industrialisation, and explains why France further lagged behind for many decades<sup>4</sup>. And yet, France managed to catch up slowly but surely by the end of the nineteenth century, the Paris-based World's Fairs were the perfect occasion for the Third French Republic to put themselves back on the map. The 1900 World's Fair was the fourth world's fair held in Paris<sup>5</sup>, and it was even bigger and more spectacular than the previous editions, attracting an even larger audience. Financial backing was provided by governments, corporations, and stock companies, and so the fair knew no financial limitations.<sup>6</sup>

The *Maréorama* possessed the right ingredients to serve as a showpiece for the Third French Republic in their attempt to impress the rest of the world: the *Maréorama* was an illustration of their effort to demonstrate their ingenious and artistic superiority over the other nations (and, most likely, their British opponent in particular). At the same time, it reinforced a sense of nationalism within the country, as the *Maréorama* could acquaint the French population with the progress of their country while simultaneously valorising the educational and democratic republican values.

### An educational voyage

The *Maréorama* fitted well in the policy of the Third French Republic that had ranked education as a top priority<sup>9</sup> for the 1900 World's Fair, since education is the source of all human progress<sup>10</sup>. A journalist in *Le Temps* described the *Maréorama* as a *pittoresque*<sup>11</sup> geography class, which facilitated school children to learn about the Mediterranean and its shores with great pleasure.<sup>12</sup> In response, Hugo d'Alesi wrote a letter that was published in *Le Temps* one week later, in which he recognized the educational value of the *Maréorama* and committed to reserve two free shows per week for school children<sup>13</sup>.

It was not the first time that Hugo d'Alesi offered a service for the education policy of the French Republic. For many visitors of the World's Fair, the name Hugo d'Alesi already rang a bell. Among the general public, Hugo d'Alesi was renowned for his travel posters commissioned by the French railway companies. His large-format colour posters did not depict their trains as such, rather, they seductively sold the privileged destinations where the trains were heading. Consequently, Hugo d'Alesi nourished a desire, reachable for the few who could afford it, and he sparked a dream for the simple passers-by. However, apart from appealing, his posters had an informative function as well, since these idyllic landscapes visualised places that most people had never seen before. The posters taught the general public about the world outside their own immediate environment. This had not gone unnoticed for Jules Ferry, the French minister of education, who consequently commissioned Hugo d'Alesi to design educational posters<sup>15</sup>. As a result, d'Alesi's imagery which already enlightened the crowd, was introduced into French classrooms.<sup>16</sup>

### A democratic voyage

Similarly, the *Maréorama* promoted one of the underlying democratic principles of the World's Fair, namely that it was organised for all layers of society, *pour tous et pour toutes*. This principle was very much in line with the democratic ideology of the Third French Republic. Moreover, by simulating a voyage, the *Maréorama* particularly democratised travelling, and more specifically, travelling to the Mediterranean, which in reality was solely a leisure activity for the aristocracy and the emerging high bourgeois. However, a cruise on the Mediterranean became suddenly accessible for the diverse crowd of the World's Fair, which was made up of the upper class, who could compare the illusion with the real experience, but also the middle class, as well as the working class, who often had never set foot outside Paris, not least set foot on a ship. With the *Maréorama*, one no longer had to leave Paris to enjoy the Mediterranean Sea and its shores: you could do so in Paris, at a price that was affordable for everyone.<sup>17</sup>

As a showpiece of the The Third French Republic, the *Maréorama* aspired to educate the diverse crowd of the World's Fair. However, these educational and democratic-republican values that undergirded the *Maréorama*, cannot be dissociated from a paternalistic attitude of the French Republic towards the masses that needed guidance and direction<sup>18</sup>. Thus, rather than stimulating critical thinking, through the *Maréorama* d'Alesi educated the common people about what the French Republic believed was good for them.

- 3 Huhtamo, E. (2011). *Maréorama Resurrected: An Illustrated Lecture*. (online) Available at: <https://vimeo.com/53533579> (viewed July 2019).
- 4 Mabire, J. C. (Ed.). (2000). *L'Exposition universelle de 1900*. Paris: Editions L'Harmattan. p.7
- 5 "une collosale entreprise politique, qui montre au monde, la force, la vitalité, l'activité et la richesse inépuisables." De Maupassant, G. (1890). *La vie errante*. Paris: P. Ollendorff. p.4
- 6 *Industrial history of France*. (online) Available at: <https://www.erih.net/how-it-started/industrial-history-of-european-countries/france/> (accessed August 2019).
- 7 Previous expositions were hosted in Paris in 1855, 1867, 1878 and 1889.
- 8 Huhtamo, E. (2013). *Illusions in motion: media archaeology of the moving panorama and related spectacles*. London: the MIT Press.
- 9 A classification was made for every World's Fair and played an important role in determining the goals and aspirations of the World's Fair. Schroeder, B., & Rasmussen, A. (1992). *Les fastes du progrès: le guide des expositions universelles 1851-1992*. Paris: Flammarion. p. 21
- 10 "c'est par là que l'homme entre dans la vie: c'est aussi la source de tous les progrès." République française, Ministère du commerce, de l'industrie, des postes et des télégraphes. (1896). *Actes organiques: exposition universelle internationale de 1900 à Paris*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale. p.77 (online) Available at: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k377715m/f83.item.r=education.zoom> (accessed August 2019).
- 11 This term will be discussed in greater detail at a later point (i.e., *A pittoresque voyage*).
- 12 *Le Temps*, Paris, 12/01/1898.
- 13 *Le Temps*, Paris, 20/01/1898.
- 14 *Le XIXe siècle*, Paris, 16/11/1906.
- 15 Hugo d'Alesi's educational posters were were also exposed during the World's Fair in 1900.
- 16 Hanus, P. (2017). *Les affiches de la Belle Époque et le tourisme ferroviaire*. (online) Available at: <https://www.traverse-patrimoines.com/2017/03/les-affiches-de-la-belle-epoque-et-le-tourisme-ferroviaire/> (accessed September 2019).
- 17 *Petit Parisien*, Paris, 9/07/1897.
- 18 Hazlett, J. S. (1973). *Conceptions of Democratic Education in the Founding of the French Third Republic (1870-c. 1890)*. Austen: University of Texas. p.79

# THE AMUSEMENT SECTION

## *The Amusement Section*

The location of the *Maréorama* is indicated on the map of the World's Fair that is attached on the practical guidebook.<sup>1</sup> You can spot Hugo d'Alesi's *Maréorama* in the Amusement Section of the World's Fair at the Champ de Mars, right next to the Eiffel Tower. The guidebook offers you detailed descriptions of how to reach the Amusement Section. The train is likely the most convenient, as it drops you off at Gare de Moulineaux, right next to the *Maréorama*. However, other forms of transport seem tempting as well. The boat on the Seine, for instance, can get you in the mood for the forthcoming sea voyage, or you can take the "moving walkway"<sup>2</sup>, which seems to be an adventure in and of itself.

While strolling along the Champ de Mars, it is hard to decide where to look first. A seemingly uncountable number of attractions are gathered, all trying to capture your attention. This overwhelming and disorienting feeling is intensified by the vast crowd of visitors, which is excited and looking for amusement. In search of the *Maréorama*, you might notice that Hugo d'Alesi was not the only one who has created a panorama, as you pass by the *Cinéorama*, *Stéréorama*, *Panorama du Tour du Monde*, *Panorama de Madagascar* and *Panorama Transsibérien...* Obviously, you have seen already some panoramas before, but never have you seen so many of them together!

- 1 Exposition internationale (1900). *Paris Exposition 1900 – Guide pratique du visiteur de Paris et de l'exposition*. Paris: Hachette.
- 2 The moving walkway was a 3370 m long electric walkway that consisted of two parallel moving platforms: one running at 4km/h and the other at 8km/h. Mabire, J. C. (Ed.). (2000). *L'Exposition universelle de 1900*. Paris: Editions L'Harmattan. p. 86

# THE AMUSEMENT SECTION

- 3 Huhtamo, E. (2011). *Maréorama Resurrected: An Illustrated Lecture*. (online) Available at: <https://vimeo.com/53533579> (viewed July 2019).
- 4 Mabire, J. C. (Ed.). (2000). *L'Exposition universelle de 1900*. Paris: Editions L'Harmattan. p.7
- 5 "une collosale entreprise politique, qui montre au monde, la force, la vitalité, l'activité et la richesse inépuisables." De Maupassant, G. (1890). *La vie errante*. Paris: P. Ollendorff. p.4
- 6 *Industrial history of France*. (online) Available at: <https://www.erih.net/how-it-started/industrial-history-of-european-countries/france/> (accessed August 2019).
- 7 Previous expositions were hosted in Paris in 1855, 1867, 1878, and 1889.

## *The Amusement Section*

The number of panoramas at The Amusement Section on the Champ de Mars is too abundant to visit each one of them. However, the choice is easy to make: the notorious *Maréorama* is on the top of the list! The many French newspapers<sup>3</sup>, and even the international press, have been speculating for years about this monumental undertaking of Hugo d'Alesi - this excellent artist, famous for his seductive travel posters. The word-of-mouth publicity has spread the word among those who hadn't read about it in the newspapers.

You have read that the *Maréorama* is one of the most wonderful things of the World's Fair. It is not a typical panorama as almost of us have already seen several times before; the *Maréorama* contains a new kind of spectacle that we never believed to be possible. Instead of a rather mundane trip, merely appealing to the visual sense, the *Maréorama* would trigger all of our senses: apparently, visiting the *Maréorama* would be as realistic and appealing as a voyage on a real steamship on the Mediterranean Sea.

At this very moment, the crowd flocks together in front of the palace of this marvellous attraction, that is so bold and innovative, so artistic and amusing. They gaze upon the gigantic, newly invented machinery, the enormous, moving canvases, painted with the greatest talent by Hugo d'Alesi. The speed at which the canvases move around the ship provide a breath-taking illusion, which is simultaneously amusing, thrilling and dramatic. According to public opinion, this perfect illusion might as well be real and it is the most interesting centrepiece of the World's Fair!

<sup>3</sup> This text is based on the sensational articles that have been published on the *Maréorama* in: *Gazette de France*, Paris, 12/01/1897. *Petit Parisien*, Paris, 09/07/1897. *Le Monde Artiste*, Paris, 29/07/1900. *Gaigaro*, Paris, 30/05/1990.

### The panorama: from an ingenious English invention...

*Maréorama* is a pun on panorama, an ingenious creation that could only have been invented in England, where industrialisation had made the greatest progress in the mid-nineteenth century<sup>4</sup>. The word "panorama" was originally a technical term, composed of the Greek words (παν *pan*)= all and (οραμα *horama*)= spectacle, created for a specific type of landscape painting. This new type of painting, which encompassed different technical challenges, was realised for the first time in 1787 by Robert Barker (1739-1806). The Irish-born painter from Edinburgh realistically depicted the enormous city view of Edinburgh in a full circle that produced a 360-degree "total view".<sup>5</sup>

When Barker opened the first permanent panorama rotunda at Leicester Square in London in 1793, this 360-degree landscape painting turned into a true commercial visual spectacle. In order to provide an entire pictorial environment, a new type of building had to be designed for this purpose specifically. The rotunda was a two-level cylindrical hall, in which two panoramas were exhibited simultaneously, one above the other. An inventive roof structure comprised of a double set of skylights that provided light for both panoramas. For the considerable price of one shilling<sup>6</sup>, the city dwellers could leave the busy London streets to walk through an entrance above which the brand-new word "panorama" was displayed in large letters. After a disorienting passage through dark corridors and staircases, the visitors emerged in the very centre of the cylindrical space. In the upper panorama, they could overlook the city of London as if from a viewpoint on top of a small hill. However, the talk of the town for almost a year was the lower panorama, which transported the spectators to a ship right in the middle of the British Grand Fleet<sup>7</sup> in Spithead. Thus, the panorama marshalled vision to transport spectators in time and space through the visual illusion of a realistic representation<sup>8</sup>. This evoked an overwhelming, almost magical experience and immediately erased the memory of the bustling city outside. As a result, it made the spectators feel as if they were really on the very spot.<sup>9</sup>

Soon after the great success of Barker's panorama at Leicester Square, this optical machine was installed in several important cities in Europe and the United States. Simultaneously, the word "panorama", introduced with the invention of the technical form, became increasingly used in a broader metaphorical sense. At the same time, puns ending with "-orama" became fashionable as well in order to suggest that something is gigantic, sensational, and grandiose, an allusion to the bombastic advertising for these spectacles.<sup>10</sup>

### to a popular, affordable mass spectacle in Paris

The arrival of the panorama in Paris did not go unmentioned in the French press. In 1882, the French newspaper *La Lanterne* reported on Paris as a city under the spell of a true *panoromania*, where panoramas popped up all over the city. The journalist claimed that Paris would soon turn into one large panorama englobing everything; it would become a city where one would no longer sleep in a normal house, but in a housing panorama with painted canvases displaying furniture<sup>11</sup>.

This Parisian panorama craze can be understood in the context of a burgeoning entertainment industry, transforming the daily lives of Parisians in the late-nineteenth century. The demand for organised free-time entertainment arose from the emergence of the modern notions of working hours and free time. As a growing social class of workers received a monthly wage, it became suddenly possible for an ever-increasing number of the population to spend their income at an expanding number of sites of entertainment all over the city.<sup>12</sup> As a consequence, the panorama developed into a popular, affordable mass spectacle that flooded the urban landscape of Paris and became abundantly present during the World's Fair in 1900 as well.

The previous World's Fairs mostly focused on industrial innovations and were primarily directed at an audience of professionals and experts. However, the focus of the 1900 World's Fair shifted to the entertainment of a diverse crowd, composed of all classes. This shift in focus was especially apparent in the Amusement Section, which turned the Champ de Mars into a true *fête foraine* (fun fair), and where the *Maréorama* was one of the major attractions.

### A realistic and sensationalised voyage

Hugo d'Alesi's ambition was not limited to the mere visual representation of a sea voyage on the Mediterranean. To please the crowd of the World's Fair in search for realistic entertainment, his spectacle aimed to reproduce a voyage on the Mediterranean to such an extent that it became indistinguishable from reality. D'Alesi attempted to completely immerse the spectators in the experience of a voyage on the Mediterranean Sea by engaging their different senses. Derived from the Latin word *spectare* (to view), a spectacle refers to "that which is seen" and is contained in the name *Maréorama*, since *horama* is the ancient Greek word for spectacle. To reach the highest sense of realism, the panoramas at the end of the nineteenth century increasingly aimed to go beyond the visual illusion of a spectacle. Hence, the *Maréorama* had to compete against the many other panoramas at the Amusement Section that benefited from the latest technologies and endeavoured to simulate entire bodily experiences.<sup>13</sup> In search for "the most realist experience", the evaluation of the spectators was not based on the quality of the realistic representation of the Mediterranean (the majority of the spectators could not judge the quality of the copy since they had never travelled to the Mediterranean), but in the technological ingenuity with which it substituted reality<sup>14</sup>.

The experience of a voyage on the *Maréorama* itself was spectacularised in the burgeoning press as well. Steam-powered journalism informed everyone about this promising attraction that was touted in advance as the centrepiece<sup>15</sup> of the World's Fair: the most impressive and astonishing attraction, which you absolutely had to visit. Three years before the opening of the World's Fair already, Parisians could read rhapsodic descriptions of the *Maréorama*, featuring engraved illustrations<sup>16</sup>, in the many mass printed dailies, which one could purchase for a cent from a street crier or in one of the numerous Parisian kiosks<sup>17</sup>. Similarly, excitement was ignited among international tourists about a trip to the Parisian World's Fair as well by reading the laudatory articles on the *Maréorama* in the main international press. After the opening, the "actual" voyages on the *Maréorama* were elaborately discussed in the newspapers. Hence, spectators compared their personal experiences and evaluated the realistic quality of the *Maréorama*, in relation to the written accounts of the *Maréorama*.

- 4 Oettermann, S. (1997). *The panorama: history of a mass medium*. New York: Zone Books. p. 99
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 One shilling equals today approximately 3,5 euro. This admission price was more than a worker's daily wage.
- 7 traditional gathering of ships from the British navy
- 8 Schwartz, V. R. (1998). *Spectacular realities: Early mass culture in fin-de-siècle Paris*. Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press. p. 151
- 9 Huhtamo, E. (2013). *Illusions in motion: media archaeology of the moving panorama and related spectacles*. London: the MIT Press.
- 10 Oettermann, S. (1997). *The panorama: history of a mass medium*. New York: Zone Books. p.6
- 11 La Lanterne, Paris 14/03/1882.
- 12 Syrjämaa, T., Borsay, P., Hirschfelder, G., & Mohrmann, R. E. (2000). *New directions in urban history: aspects of European art, health, tourism and leisure since the Enlightenment*. Münster: Waxmann.
- 13 For more information on the new taste for realist entertainment in the spectacularised city life of Paris, see: Schwartz, V. R. (1998). *Spectacular realities: Early mass culture in fin-de-siècle Paris*. Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Schroeder, B., & Rasmussen, A. (1992). *Les fastes du progrès: le guide des expositions universelles 1851-1992*. Paris: Flammarion.
- 16 Photography would not be easily reproduced for newspapers until the twentieth century.
- 17 The late-nineteenth century has been called the "golden age of the press" in France. Between 1880 and 1914, the overall circulation of Parisian dailies increased by 250 percent. Schwartz, V. R. (1998). *Spectacular realities: Early mass culture in fin-de-siècle Paris*. Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press. p. 27-28

# THE MARÉORAMA





# Devices

On the intermediate floors (f) different theatre assistants operated several devices to create sound, light and scent effects.

1  
A theatre assistant would vibrantly shake this wire plate by means of a handle in order to simulate the sound of thunder.

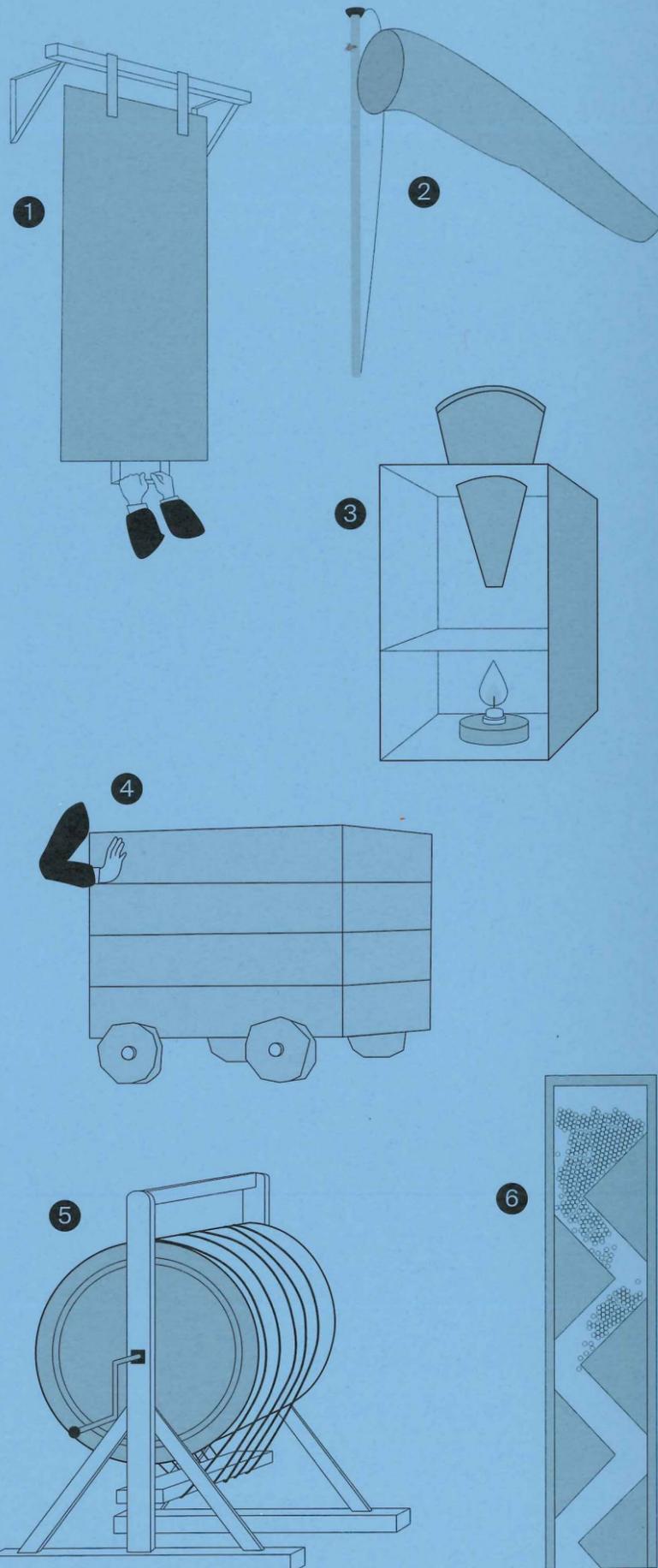
2  
Several of these windsocks provided a sea breeze on the deck. Turned into the direction of the spectators, the wind would pass through a layer of seaweed, infusing the smell of the sea.<sup>1</sup>

3  
Lightning was simulated by adding flash powder (magnesium powder mixed with the oxidising agent potassium chlorate) into the flame of an alcohol lamp. The theatre assistant who was in charge of these blinding flashes as a result of this chemical process, needed to protect the eyes.

4  
A theatre assistant would walk over the floor with a large trunk with polygon-shaped wheels, filled with rocks or scrap metal in order to simulate the sound of thunder.

5  
A theatre assistant would rotate a large wooden cylinder made up of several wooden slats by rotating a crank handle. The cylinder was covered with a piece of silk that was held in a fixed position. The friction between the wood and the covering fabric created the sound of wind.

6  
A theatre assistant would tilt this long wooden box, that was divided in different compartments and filled with an abundant number of dry peas. Hence, the peas would move from one compartment to the other and simulate the sound of rain for several minutes.



It is not certain that these exact devices were used in the *Maréorama*. However, these devices were regularly used in (French) theatre during that time and described and illustrated in:  
Moynet, G. (1893). *La machinerie théâtrale. Trucs et décors*. Paris: La Librairie illustrée. p. 263-269  
(The drawings of the theatre devices on this page are based on the illustrations of the book.)

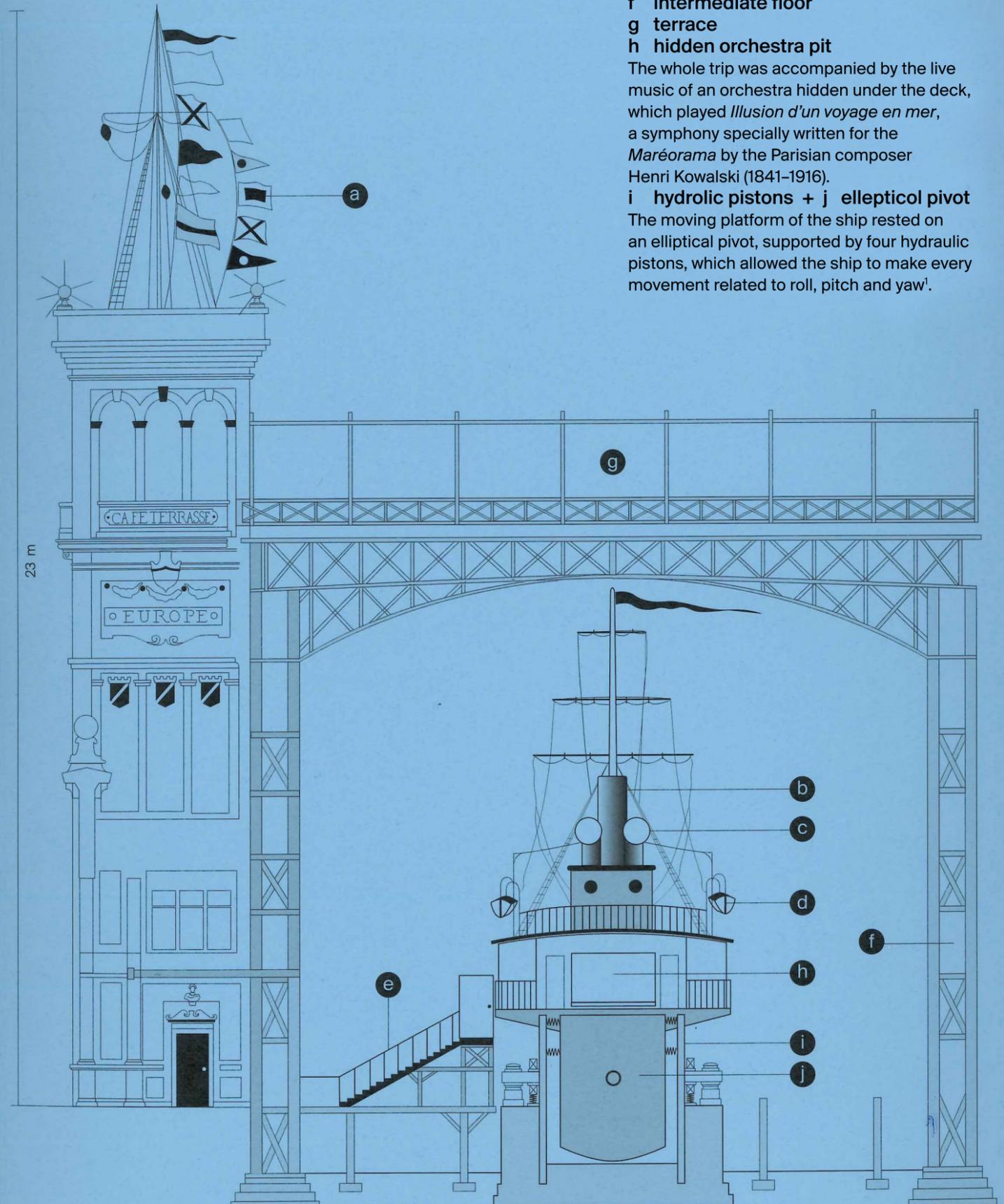
<sup>1</sup> *La vie Parisienne*, Paris, 14/01/1899.

# Cross section

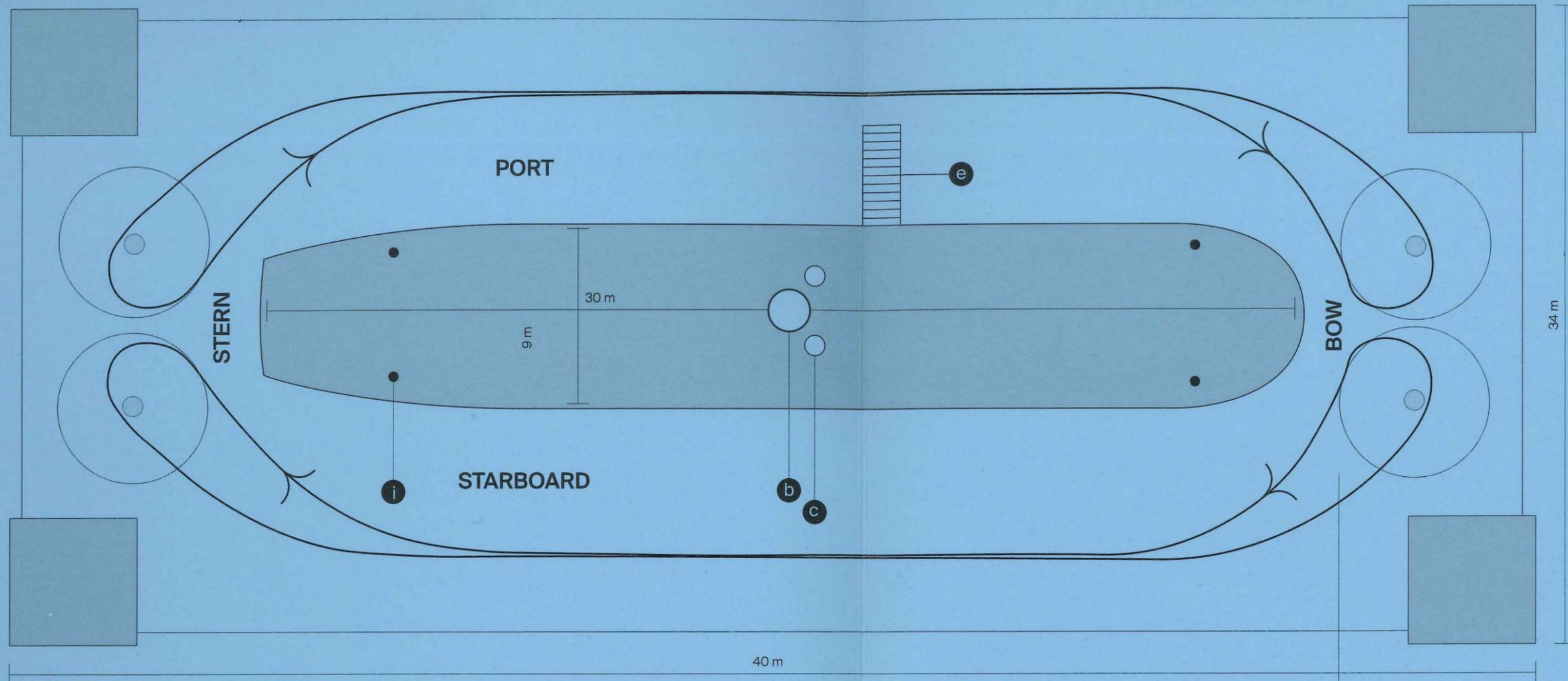
- a maritime signal flags
- b chimney
- c funnel
- d life boat
- e the gangplank
- f intermediate floor
- g terrace
- h hidden orchestra pit

The whole trip was accompanied by the live music of an orchestra hidden under the deck, which played *Illusion d'un voyage en mer*, a symphony specially written for the *Maréorama* by the Parisian composer Henri Kowalski (1841-1916).

i hydrolic pistons + j elliptical pivot  
The moving platform of the ship rested on an elliptical pivot, supported by four hydraulic pistons, which allowed the ship to make every movement related to roll, pitch and yaw<sup>1</sup>.



# Floor plan



The drawings of the cross section and floor plan of the *Maréorama* are based on the technical drawings of the original patent: d'Alési, Hugo. (01.08.1894). *Brevet d'invention de 15 ans n°1BB240472. Système de panorama à déplacement, dit Maréorama.* Archives de l'INPI and on the outline of the *Maréorama* as a project for the World Fair: d'Alési, Hugo. (01.07.1895) *Exposé d'un projet de panorama mobile dit Maréorama.* Archives Nationales. Catalog no. F/12/4355.

- 1 The solution used existing stagecraft technology and is described in more detail in: Moynet, G. (1893). *La machinerie théâtrale. Trucs et décors.* Paris: La Librairie Illustrée.
- 2 *L'Hebdomadaire Illustré*, Paris, 25/12/1898, p. 126
- 3 Beckett, Derrick (2006). *Brunel's Britain.* London: David & Charles.
- 4 *Scientific American*, New York, 29/09/1900.
- 5 *La Petite presse*, Paris, 25/11/1899.
- 6 Huhtamo, E. (2013). *Illusions in motion: media archaeology of the moving panorama and related spectacles.* London: Mit Press. p.314
- 7 Port and starboard are nautical terms that were also used in the detailed itinerary of the *Maréorama*, they refer to the left and the right side of the ship when you are looking towards the front of the ship.

## The Palace

The *Maréorama* was housed in a monumental palace that had a typical nineteenth century eclectic and excessive appearance and was constructed according to the plans of architects L. C. and A. Lacey. The spectators could enter through the large entrance gate at the centre of a 40-meter-wide principle façade bookended by two towers. On the right tower, the French flag was proudly raised, while maritime signal flags hung from the left tower. With its 34 meter width and 23 meter height, the palace was covered with an immense terrace that converted into a hanging garden and that could be reached through two wide stairways and two large elevators.<sup>2</sup>

## The Ship

The auditorium of the *Maréorama* was a replica of a passenger's steamship that could transport 700 passengers at the same time.

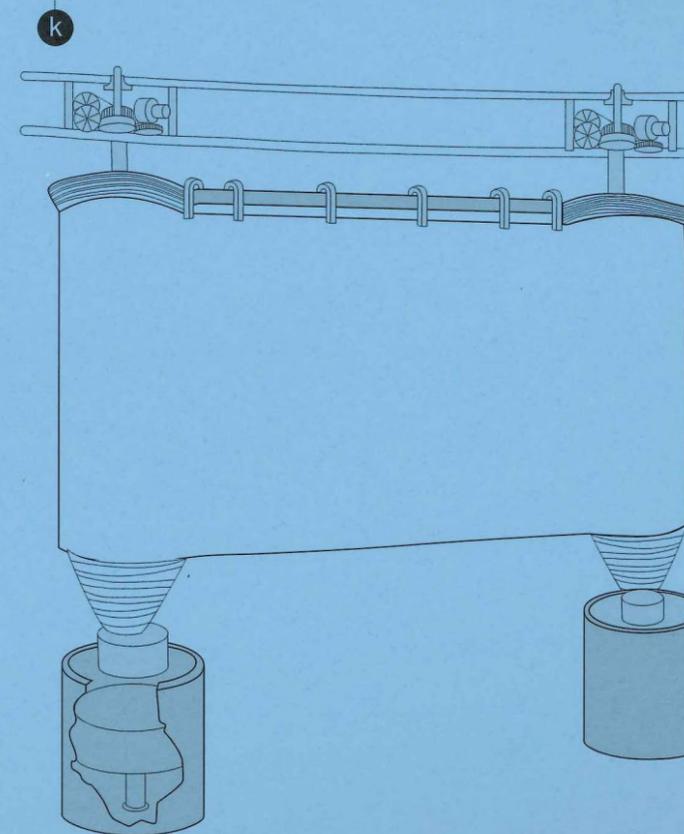
### — the first steamship of this type

The Englishman Isambard Kingdom Brunel designed *The Great Britain*, the first passengers' steamship that would cross the Atlantic Ocean in 1843. It took two weeks of travel to cross the Atlantic Ocean from Bristol to New York with 120 crew members and 360 passengers. The same trajectory by sailing vessel would take two months.<sup>3</sup>

— the first French steamship of this type  
*La Touraine*, built in 1891 for La Compagnie générale transatlantique.

## The painted canvases

Based on the sketches of Hugo d'Alési, drawn during a real voyage to the Mediterranean Sea, many scene painters painted for eight months<sup>4</sup> under the watchful eyes of the meticulous master. A gigantic atelier in Rue de la Convention was specially constructed<sup>5</sup> for the realisation of two enormous painted canvases, each 13 meters high and 750 meters long. The canvases passed in synchronization across the two sides of the ship thanks to an ingenious mechanism. Mounted on large cylinders, they rolled from one cylinder to the other by hydraulic motors. The cylinders were supported by spools that floated in gigantic water tanks, a solution that permitted them to move in a vertical direction but also balanced their weight, kept them straight, and protected them from being torn apart.<sup>6</sup> From the deck, the passengers had a clear view on the two canvases, whereby one unwinded to the starboard and the other to the port side of the ship<sup>7</sup>.



### A multi-sensorial voyage

By combining different art and design disciplines and bringing together knowledge from various fields of science, Hugo d'Alesi's spectacle of the Mediterranean stimulated all of the spectators' different senses. The stage of the *Maréorama* served as the deck of the ship and the moment the spectators set foot on the stage/boarded the ship, they became active passengers who would feel the same sensations they would feel during a real ocean voyage.<sup>1</sup> By creating this multi-sensory spectacle, Hugo d'Alesi created an experience that aligned with the sensibility of the Romantic movement, which exalted the sensory experience over the rational in order to engage the spectator's imagination and create an emotional experience. Mentioning the different disciplines and senses individually seemed pointless to d'Alesi who preferred to approach his *Maréorama* as a holistic work of art.<sup>2</sup> In order to emphasise the totality of Hugo d'Alesi's spectacle, Part III is structured according to the itinerary of the illusionary voyage on the Mediterranean Sea.

1 Barbosa S. H. (2015). *The 1900 World's Fair or the Attraction of the Senses: The Case of the Maréorama*. *The Senses and Society*, 10:1, 39-5. (online) Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2752/174589315X141614601600> (accessed July 2019).

2 Ibid.

### embarkation — morning VILLEFRANCHE (France)

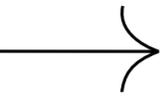
#### *A privileged voyage*

The ship is anchored at one of the most beautiful bays of the Mediterranean, in the port of Villefranche, close to Nice. As you walk across the gangplank, you are greeted by the friendly captain in uniform. After a short walk on the large deck, you find a great spot at the bow of the ship from where you have a wonderful view of the painted canvases depicting this charming port under the radiant Mediterranean morning sun. Smoke is rising from the funnels and the siren cheerfully whistles, the ship is ready to go offshore! You can feel the slight movement of the waves, smooth and harmonious. A few minutes ago, you were still sweating on the crowded Champ de Mars, but this memory fades away like snow in the sun as you become fully engaged in this immersive sea voyage. A soft, cool sea breeze blows through your hair, which feels particularly pleasant during this very hot summer day.

On starboard side you notice that the characteristic village of Villefranche was built on a steep slope, richly vegetated with palm trees and agaves. It appears as a natural amphitheatre facing the eternity of the sea, with Mont Boron in the west, Cap Ferrat in the east, and the Alps as a backdrop. On port side, you see multiple ornate villas popping up, with exuberant flower-decorated balconies. These winter palaces belong to the aristocratic families who have chosen the idyllic bay of Villefranche as the perfect location to spend their winters. As we smoothly sail along the breath-taking shores of the *Côte d'Azur* that appear as postcard images, you start wondering what you will write on the postcard you will send home as you want to share this great Mediterranean adventure with the home front.

embarkation — morning  
VILLEFRANCHE (France)

*A privileged voyage*



1 Poster designed by Hugo d'Alesi  
for Chemins de fer P. L. M.  
(Hiver à Nice  
1892)

Hugo d'Alesi had selected the privileged *Côte d'Azur*<sup>3</sup>, the popular winter stay amongst the aristocracy located at the most North-Western point of the Mediterranean basin, as the *Maréorama's* point of departure. The radiant morning sun symbolised the beginning of the voyage and continuously further guided the passengers through the continuation of the trip.

Ever since the eighteenth century, European doctors have spoken of the virtues of the mild winter climate of the Mediterranean<sup>4</sup>. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the *Côte d'Azur* saw a burgeoning trend for winter retreats in a temperate climate along with medical treatments, like the trend established by the English<sup>5</sup>. This development was powered by the extension of a rail line from Paris to Nice in 1864 by the French railway company PLM (Compagnie des Chemins de fer de Paris à Lyon et à la Méditerranée), for which Hugo d'Alesi created the advertising posters in between 1890 and 1904. Several French Mediterranean Sea towns, such as Hyeres, Cannes, Menton, Nice and Villefranche, represented non-quotidian settings where the aristocracy could go for recovery and to retreat from the dreary, grey industrialised cities in a beautiful environment and under the mild Mediterranean sun.

The exotic representation of the *Côte d'Azur* was intensified by the tropical vegetation that started to dominate the region during the nineteenth century. Stimulated by the increasing attention of tourists, plants and trees with the greatest decorative interest were introduced from warmer areas of the colonial empire<sup>6</sup>. Along the French *Côte d'Azur*, tourists could enjoy the exoticism of the colonial environment in a nearer, more controlled scenery, which was ostensibly less dangerous than the colonised territories overseas. Even today, agaves, cactuses, aloe veras, palm trees and bright fragrant flowers like roses and jasmine, grace the shores of the *Côte d'Azur* and have transformed into symbols of wealth, health and good weather<sup>7</sup>.

The brightly-coloured poster (figure 1), designed by d'Alesi in 1896, demonstrates a conventional representation of the aristocratic winter stays at the *Côte d'Azur* during that era.<sup>8</sup> This poster promoted PLM's *Trajet Rapide*, for crossing the distance between Paris and Nice in only 18 hours by *train de luxe*. *L'Hiver à Nice* is gracefully written in eye-catching letters against the background of a cloudless blue sky. The feminine charms of two elegantly dressed women, sitting on a terrace that is overlooking the coastline of Nice, are meant to further sell this exotic and erotic dream to male financiers<sup>9</sup>. Surrounded with lavish bunches of cut flowers, this poster is reminiscent of the seductive art nouveau posters; it aims to persuade the consumer with graceful female figures amongst stylised plants and flower motives. The maid is elegantly holding a parasol for her mistress while her white gloves emulate the graceful curls of the typography. Her seated mistress is watching the horse drawn carriages on the lively *Promenades des Anglais* flanked

with palm trees. Furthermore, the poster features a miniature image, which is a technique frequently used by d'Alesi to portray different sceneries within one poster. In this case, the miniature image depicts the pier and the casino of Nice. The illuminated crystal casino seamlessly floats out in the sea and is decoratively integrated in the form of a hand fan<sup>10</sup>.

Suddenly these privileged French shores were accessible for the many passengers on board of the *Maréorama*. To complete the illusion of the voyage, Hugo d'Alesi provided illustrated postcards depicting passengers on the *Maréorama*. Around the end of the nineteenth century, the popularity of the postcard rose in parallel with the flourishing winter holidays in the Mediterranean; the increased popularity of both was in part because of the advertisement through travel posters. Adapted to a postcard format, d'Alesi's sceneries were not only displayed on the PLM posters, but also on souvenirs of another world. Many postcards were sent from the *Maréorama*, and several were likely written aboard the ship, just like the postcards of those who had taken a real trip across the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>11</sup> These postcards would advertise both the region and the *Maréorama* to those who could not take part of the voyage, allowing them to drift away to the Mediterranean by reading a tempting message from a family member or dear friend.

3 The *Côte d'Azur* is the Mediterranean coastline of the southeast corner of France. The term was first used by Stéphane Liégeois in: Liégeois, S. (1887). *La Côte d'Azur*. Paris: Maison Quantin. Lee, E. (1865).

4 *The healthy resorts of the south of France*. London: Lee. W.J Adams.

5 The concept of spa resort was invented in the eighteenth century in the British city Bath. English aristocrats were already visiting Nice at the end of the eighteenth century, before Nice developed into a popular aristocratic winter stay. Grasse, M. C. (1997). *Coups de soleil et bikini*. Toulouse: Milan. p.10

6 France dominated the research and exchange in tropical vegetation at that time, a process that was facilitated by the French colonisation. Gade, D. (1987). "Tropicalisation" de la végétation ornementale de la Côte d'Azur. *Méditerranée: Revue géographique des pays méditerranéens*, 62(4), 19-25. (online) Available at: [https://www.persee.fr/doc/medit\\_0025-8296\\_1987\\_num\\_62\\_4\\_2487](https://www.persee.fr/doc/medit_0025-8296_1987_num_62_4_2487) (accessed September 2019).

7 Ibid.

8 Dymond, A. (2011). *Advertising Provence: Tourism, the PLM and the Regionalist Movement*. Nottingham French Studies, 50(1), 44-56. (online) Available at: <https://www.eupublishing.com/doi/abs/10.3366/nfs.2011.005> (accessed September 2019).

9 Férol, M. E. (2017). *Lust, tranquillity and sensuality in French spa towns in the heyday of balneotherapy (the belle époque and the roaring twenties)*. *Tourism Review*, (11-12). (online) Available at: <https://journals.openedition.org/viatourism/1763> (accessed September 2019).

10 a practical accessory of the high-born

11 Huhtamo, E. (2011). *Maréorama Resurrected: An Illustrated Lecture*. (online) Available at: <https://vimeo.com/53533579> (viewed July 2019).

## first stop — noon SOUSSE (Tunise)

### *A pompous voyage*

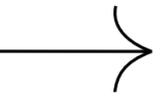
Leaving the *Côte d'Azur* behind, the ship crosses the Mediterranean basin to the Tunisian shore in the South. Around noon the ship arrives at the recently inaugurated port of Sousse, where the strong midday sun is burning, and both sea and sky seem crystal blue. You discern a couple of smaller local fishing boats that are anchored in the port. However, the huge steamers of the French Mediterranean squadron<sup>12</sup> particularly steal the show in this Tunisian port, which is under French control. The ship gloriously salutes the squadron by firing a salvo of canon shots, while the onboard orchestra celebrates de French colonial empire by playing *La Marseillaise*.

Higher up on starboard side, there are good views over the old city that is characterised by a number of fascinating buildings erected in an Islamic architectural style, such as the impressive kasbah. Built in harmony with its surroundings, the massive tan-coloured outer walls seem to blend smoothly into the dusty background. Further away, you spot a couple of olive oil mills, a testimony to the blossoming oil industry in Tunisia. All of a sudden, tension is rising! A band of barbarian pirates appears on the deck and tries to hijack the ship... Like most other passengers, you become frightened, and start screaming. However, the ship's crew acts as a well-oiled machine and has the situation quickly back under control. Calmness returns as they manage to chase the pirates away; the first obstacle of this exciting adventure has been overcome...

12 *L'escadre française de la Méditerranée*: a unit of military boats

first stop — noon  
SOUSSE (Tunise)

*A pompous voyage*



2 Poster designed by Hugo d'Alesi  
for Chemins de fer P. L. M.  
(1891)

By mooring in the Tunisian harbour town Sousse, where the strong midday sun shines on this most southern destination of the voyage, Hugo d'Alesi **acquaints** the passengers of the *Maréorama* with the second French colonial empire. Although French Tunisia was established only in 1881, the foundations of their empire in North-Africa were already laid in 1830 with the establishment of French Algeria. Under French control, the development of railways and seaports in the North-African colonies advanced quickly and the connections between the ports of France and North-Africa were largely extended. The Mediterranean Sea, in earlier days a dividing border between Europe and Africa, now became a junction sea connecting France with its conquered territories.<sup>13</sup>

Hugo d'Alesi's representation of Tunisia on the painted canvases of the *Maréorama* is reminiscent of the large academic paintings that populated the European art academies during the nineteenth century. Academic art was an eclectic synthesis and revival of different previous styles that were practiced under the movements of Neoclassicism and Romanticism. In France, the art scene was subject to comprehensive and widespread government involvement.<sup>14</sup> As a result, French academism, also known under the pejorative term *art pompier*<sup>15</sup>, patriotically depicted uplifting, moralising subjects such as glorious episodes from mythology and French civil, military and religious history as well as idealised landscape scenes.

In the wake of Napoleon's expedition to Egypt<sup>16</sup>(1798-1801), many French painters became entranced by what they identified as the "Orient"<sup>17</sup>. Attracted by the overwhelming desert landscapes still untainted by industrialisation and the Berber culture, still in harmonious coexistence with natural environment, these painters travelled to the conquered North-African territories throughout the nineteenth century. As a result, this exotic destination under French domination became an important source of inspiration for their Orientalist paintings, which acquainted the French population with life in the French North-African colonies. Once back home, these artists produced detailed, colourful, polished painted scenes, whereby they drew upon their albums full of sketches of busy bazars, voluptuous harems, sensual odalisques, mysterious snake charmers and barbarian hunting and pirate scenes.

The depiction of a Tunisian daily scene on the poster (figure 2), designed by d'Alesi in 1891, is very much in line with the pomp of the Orientalist paintings and provides us today with a good impression of the rhetorical representation of this former French colony. This poster promoted PLM's *Voyages Circulaires* (round trips) for Tunisia, a 55 hour long trajectory from Paris to the Tunisian capital of Tunis<sup>18</sup>. Painted in dominating ochre tints, the poster portrays a camel caravan in the Tunisian Sahara, with the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea in the background. The camel in the foreground, guided by a bearded man, is adorned with colourful and ornate fabrics and carries two

elegantly veiled women. The decorative elements are painted with great detail and a strong contrast of light and shadow, creating a sense of dusty heat. The same dustiness is also present in the angular, shaded ochre-letters displaying *Tunisie*. This fanciful typography regenerates primitive influences of the old Latin alphabet and smoothly integrates into this exotic imagery. Just as the painted canvases of the *Maréorama* characterised the Tunisian port city by displaying the Islamic architecture and Tunisian olive oil industry, the miniature image in the bottom right corner of the poster promotes this exotic destination by rhetorically displaying a typical alley in an old Islamic town, which is dominated by a souq in the foreground and with the minaret of a mosque in the background.

Aboard the *Maréorama*, passengers could catch a glimpse of a Tunisian coastline that adhered quite closely to their preconceived notions, which were influenced by stereotypical representations of French Tunisia, such as the French Orientalist paintings, as well as the travel and educational posters, and illustrated atlases of that time. The desire to represent the untainted authenticity of these North-African littoral countries cannot be considered separate from a colonialist desire for domination over these uncivilised societies.<sup>19</sup> These existing stereotypical representations were clearly reinforced during the voyage on the *Maréorama*. Berber barbarism<sup>20</sup>, which was on grand display in the staged pirate attack on the *Maréorama*, supposedly demonstrated the danger of these north-African colonies, which were always prepared to rise up against their French overlords. The staged attack and the swift successful response of the crew, then reinforced the power of the French colonialists.

Furthermore, the unexpected pirate attack illustrates the immersive nature of the *Maréorama*. By staging a scenario in which pirates tried to forcefully board the ship, a direct interaction was created between the spectators and the performers, which in turn reinforced the immerse character of the experience. This sudden performance is reminiscent of the *tableau vivant* performances that were a popular form of entertainment around Europe during the nineteenth century. Although the performers on the *Maréorama* were more active and invasive than the generally silent and immobile *tableau vivant* performers, they created a comparable kind of ambiance. Similar to a *tableau vivant* that was suddenly, theatrically unveiled during a party while guests are chatting in the parlour<sup>21</sup>, the performers also suddenly appeared on the scene of the *Maréorama*, dressed in pirate clothes and equipped with the appropriate attributes. The performers only stayed on-stage for a few minutes, commanding complete attention, before disappearing backstage again, most likely to get changed for the next performative intervention on the *Maréorama*.

13 Blais, H., & Deprest, F. (2012). *The Mediterranean, a territory between France and Colonial Algeria: imperial constructions*. European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire, 19(1), 33-57. (online) Available at: DOI:10.1080/13507486.2112.643608 (accessed September 2019).

14 White, H. C., & White, C. A. (1993). *Canvases and careers: Institutional change in the French painting world*. University of Chicago Press. p.16

15 The term *Art pompier* literally means "fireman art". It was used as a mocking term and most possibly derived from the helmets with horse-hair tails, worn at the time by French firemen, that referred to the gleaming helmets often worn by historical heroes and gods, depicted on these large pompous paintings. Harding, J. (1979) *Artistes pompiers: French academic art in the 19th century*. New York: Rizzoli.

16 The French invasion and occupation of Egypt was not merely a military one. Napoleon brought along scientists, archaeologists, artist and writers who documented the conquest and studied the history and culture of Egypt. Cole, J. (2007). *Napoleon's Egypt: Invading the Middle East*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

17 This geographically vague term, which largely refers to the North-African shores and the whole eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea will be discussed in greater detail at a later point along this voyage (i.e., in Constantinople). in collaboration with La Compagnie générale transatlantique, this trajectory proposed transportation links between railroads and passenger ships. Gill, H. (2003).

18 *The language of French orientalist painting (Vol. 6)*. Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press.

19 The word Barbarian is not a name one gives to oneself, rather it is given to others. The Berbers received the name *Berber* from the Roman term *barbara* or *barbarian* when they first encountered Romans. *Barbarian*. In: New World Encyclopedia. (online) Available at: <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Barbarian> (accessed September 2019).

20 Chapman, M. (1996). *Living Pictures: Women and Tableaux Vivants in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction and Culture*. *Wide Angle*, 18(3), 22-52. (online) Available at: [https://www.academia.edu/1567684/Living\\_Pictures\\_Women\\_and\\_Tableaux\\_Vivants\\_in\\_19th-century\\_America](https://www.academia.edu/1567684/Living_Pictures_Women_and_Tableaux_Vivants_in_19th-century_America) (accessed October 2019)

## second stop — *afternoon* NAPLES (Italy)

### *A mythological voyage*

You feel like you want to further discover the small alleys of the mysterious old town of Sousse; however, the ship has a tight timetable. Right on schedule, the *Maréorama* leaves the Tunisian shore behind, and passes from the wild southern side of the Mediterranean back to the tamed north, with Naples as the next destination. Out in the open sea, the afternoon sun softens and colours the sky with a pastel lightness. While slowly approaching the coast of Naples, you decide to take a rest in one of the rocking chairs on the deck, enjoying the sun in your face, bouncing on the rhythm of the waves... From below the deck, you hear the sound of the orchestra that is traveling along... But all of a sudden, this divine moment is disturbed by a rude wake-up call. “*The Vesuvius!*” shouts the captain.<sup>22</sup> Several passengers point with astonishment to this sublime volcano, which we can distinguish in the far distance. You are emotionally moved by this natural wonder that spectacularly releases plumes of smoke drifting towards the Apennine Mountains.<sup>23</sup>

It feels as if we are thrown far back in time along these Neapolitan shores adorned with traces of a western history that goes back many centuries. Naples was established by the Greeks around 800 B.C., who named their “new city” *Nea Polis*. Around 400 B.C., this Mediterranean city was conquered by the Romans at a time when the Mediterranean Sea was called *mare nostrum*<sup>24</sup>. Already at that time, the area around Naples was a favourite retreat, as you can discern the ruins of villas of elite Romans. Dating from the same era, you can behold an old tomb integrated in one of the giant rock formations. It is supposed to be the final resting place of Vergilius, the great Roman poet and author of the legendary Aeneid. It makes you dream of other times, when mythological heroes crossed the same sea on their quest to discover new territories, or to find their way back home.

### *A mythological voyage*

You feel like you want to further discover the small alleys of the mysterious old town of Sousse; however, the ship has a tight timetable. Right on schedule, the *Maréorama* leaves the Tunisian shore behind, and passes from the wild southern side of the Mediterranean back to the tamed north, with Naples as the next destination. Out in the open sea, the afternoon sun softens and colours the sky with a pastel lightness. While slowly approaching the coast of Naples, you decide to take a rest in one of the rocking chairs on the deck, enjoying the sun in your face, bouncing on the rhythm of the waves... From below the deck, you hear the sound of the orchestra that is traveling along... But all of a sudden, this divine moment is disturbed by a rude wake-up call. “*The Vesuvius!*” shouts the captain.<sup>22</sup> Several passengers point with astonishment to this sublime volcano, which we can distinguish in the far distance. You are emotionally moved by this natural wonder that spectacularly releases plumes of smoke drifting towards the Apennine Mountains.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> The sudden encounter with the Vesuvius is based on an article in *Gil Blas*, Paris, 14/07/1900, p.1

<sup>23</sup> The Mount Vesuvius demonstrated the sublime power of nature in combining both beauty and danger and was therefore a cherished subject for Romantic painters. Heguiaphal, M. (2019). *When Romanticism meets Eruptions: volcanoes in Paintings*. (online) Available at: <https://www.dailyartmagazine.com/when-romanticism-meets-eruption-volcanoes-in-paintings/> (Accessed November 2019).

<sup>24</sup> Starting to extend at 600 BC, the empire became so powerful that it included all the countries around the Mediterranean Sea. This Mediterranean domination made that the Romans called the sea *Mare Nostrum* (Latin for our sea).

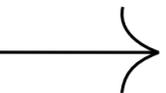
<sup>25</sup> Blackstone, L. (2017). *Global Tarantella: reinventing southern Italian folk music and dances*. London: Routledge.

3  
Poster designed by Hugo d'Alesi  
for Chemins de fer de l'Est  
(L'italie par le St Gothard  
1904)



second stop — afternoon  
NAPLES (Italy)

## *A mythological voyage*



By mooring in the port of Naples under the afternoon sun, Hugo d'Alesi familiarized the passengers of the *Maréorama* with the rich ancient history of the Greek and Roman empire, which left important traces on the shores of this Italian coastal city. Already during the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the rich history encouraged young aristocratic European men to travel to Naples during their “Grand Tour”. Naples became an important stop on their educational voyage, which often took several months to years and which brought them around Europe in pursuit of the discovery of the archaeological sites like Pompeii and Herculaneum<sup>26</sup>. During their visit, these young men were exposed to the roots of Western civilisation, frozen in time by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in the year 79.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, as a generation of students returned home from their Grand Tour, Greco-Roman ideals spread all over Europe.<sup>28</sup>

The notorious Mount Vesuvius is depicted on the poster designed by d'Alesi for Chemin de Fer l'Est in 1904 (figure 3), that promoted *Billets d'excursions* in Switzerland and Italy at reduced prices. The poster depicts a Neapolitan couple captivated by the smoking crater, while in the foreground a woman in traditional Neapolitan clothing is holding a basket of mandarins<sup>29</sup>. This folkloric scene advertising Naples for future travellers and the performance of a Neapolitan *Tarantella* on board of the *Maréorama*, demonstrate a nostalgic value attached to the traditional local cultures as well as simple customs from a time before mass industrialisation. This recognition of folklore and folk art as a special category came about, not by chance, during the modern climate of Europe in the late nineteenth century.<sup>30</sup>

The scene is assisted by flower-ornamented miniature images of the Swiss *Lac des quatre cantons* and the Italian *Lac Majeur*. A small framed map displays the railway possibilities from London, through France and Switzerland (through the Gothard Tunnel), to the Mediterranean shores of Italy. In the age of the Grand Tour, travellers took more or less the same itinerary, despite the fact that travelling was far from easy at that time, and considerable amounts of time and money were required to make these trips enjoyable. However, in the nineteenth century, because of the rise of steam-driven transport, these regions became increasingly accessible for a growing number of people, and simultaneously lost some of their novelty for members of the aristocracy.<sup>31</sup>

Along the Neapolitan shores, which are full of history, Hugo d'Alesi transported the passengers back to ancient times. Most likely, the designer of the *Maréorama* was strongly inspired by the classical civilisations that flourished around the Mediterranean Sea. After all, the word *Maréorama* is a composition of Latin and Greek, the two main languages of the classical antiquity. Neoclassical influences infiltrated the canvases of the *Maréorama*, as several Roman ruins appeared on the painted Italian sceneries. At the same time,

this adventurous sea voyage had a strong mythological dimension, as it summoned the symbolic meaning of a Mediterranean Sea voyage, which was the common theme in both Homer's *Odyssey* and Vergilius's *Aeneid*, two of the oldest and most significant works of classic Western literature. Just like the passengers of the *Maréorama*, the Greek hero Odysseus and his Roman counterpart Aeneas crossed the Mediterranean Sea some two millennia ago – the primary difference being that their voyages were in opposite directions; Odysseus travelled from Troy in the East, to return home to Ithaca, whereas Aeneas left Troy to establish Rome in the West.

This trip back in time was accompanied by the live orchestra of the *Maréorama*, hidden under the deck, which was directed by the Parisian composer Henri Kowalski. The descriptive symphony *Illusion d'un voyage en mer*, especially written for the *Maréorama*, endorsed the romantic belief that music should aid in the rendering of the extramusical narrative of the sea voyage.<sup>32</sup> All the scores of *Illusion d'un voyage en mer* were named after the different moments during the trip.<sup>33</sup> As if penetrated by the soft colours of the sky, *Chanson Napolitaine* accompanied the Neapolitan shore moving by on the painted canvases, while the stirring rhythm of *Tarentella* supported the *tableau vivant*-like performance on the deck.

By the way d'Alesi endeavoured to transform passive spectators into active passengers who physically and emotionally engaged with the voyage, we can assume he was influenced by the Wagnerian concept of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* that had become commonplace in the late-nineteenth century.<sup>34</sup> The German Romantic composer Richard Wagner (1813-1883) emphasised the subjective and emotional experiences of his audiences in his aim to completely immerse them in his operas. He believed that the only way to achieve this complete immersion was by unifying different art forms, catering to the different human senses, and letting them interact in perfect harmony with each other. According to Wagner, the tragedies of the Ancient Greeks, were the closest example of such a total artistic synthesis.<sup>35</sup>

*Chanson Napolitaine* and *Tarentella*, as well as the other scores played during the voyage, were adapted for the piano and sold as sheet music with a chromolithographic print of the Neapolitan shore as the sheet cover. By purchasing the music and its evocative cover, the passengers could recapture the experience of Naples once they had returned home from their voyage on the *Maréorama*.

26 Trease, G. (1967). *The grand Tour*. London: Heinemann.

27 Scandone, R., Giacomelli, L., Rosi, M., & Kilburn, C. (2019). *Preserve Mount Vesuvius history in digging out Pompeii's*. *Nature*, 571(7764), 174. (online) Available at: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-02097-3> (accessed October 2019).

28 *Art pompier*, the pejorative term for the pompous academic art that played a dominant role during the nineteenth century, suggest as well a pun with Pompeian (relating to Pompeii). Today, mandarins are widely grown around the Mediterranean. They were imported from South-eastern Asia in the eighteenth century. Morton, J. (1987). *Fruits of warm climates*. Miami: Florida Flair Books. p. 142-145.

29 Harmon, M. (2005). Folk art. In: *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. (online) Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/art/folk-art> (accessed November 2019).

30 Trease, G. (1967). *The grand Tour*. London: Heinemann.

31 Pujandas, M. P. (2016). *Pure and Programme Music in the Romanticism*. Santander: Cantabria University Press. p.145

32 Kowalski, H. (1900). *Illusion d'un voyage en mer*. (Score. Reduction for piano). Paris: (n. e.).

33 Barbosa S. H. (2015). *The 1900 World's Fair or the Attraction of the Senses: The Case of the Maréorama*. *The Senses and Society*, 10:1, 39-5. (online) Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2752/174589315X14161614601600> (accessed July 2019).

34 Lajosi, K. (2010). *Wagner and the (Re)mediation of Art. Gesamtkunstwerk and Nineteenth-Century Theories of Media*. *Frame*, Vol. 23, No. 2, p.42-60. (online) Available at: <http://www.tijdschrift-frame.nl/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/03-Krisztina-Lajosi-Wagner-and-the-Re-mediation-of-Art-Gesamtkunstwerk-and-Nineteen-Century-Theories-of-Media-main.pdf> (accessed July 2019)

35 Lajosi, K. (2010). *Wagner and the (Re)mediation of Art. Gesamtkunstwerk and Nineteenth-Century Theories of Media*. *Frame*, Vol. 23, No. 2, p.42-60. (online) Available at: <http://www.tijdschrift-frame.nl/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/03-Krisztina-Lajosi-Wagner-and-the-Re-mediation-of-Art-Gesamtkunstwerk-and-Nineteen-Century-Theories-of-Media-main.pdf> (accessed July 2019)

## third stop — evening VENICE (Italy)

### *A pittoresque voyage*

As the sun is slowly setting, the day of travel comes to an end. Although it feels as if time stands repeatedly still during this voyage on the mythic Mediterranean Sea, this suspended time continuously progresses. The *Maréorama* continues on in the direction of Venice, the legendary city built on water. When the ship smoothly slides into the Venetian lagoon, orange-coloured gradients appear in the Venetian sky, creating a sensational play of light and shadow while the orchestra starts playing *Soleil Couchant* at a slow tempo. Under the theatrical light of the setting sun, the sight of Venice appears as a truly *pittoresque* scene, worthy of being painted.

The lavish architectural mix is impressive and it clearly reflects the former wealth and power of this prosperous port city that once dominated the entire Mediterranean Sea. The ship first passes along the entrance of the arsenal, which is an enormous complex of construction sites where the huge fleets of the Venetian crusade were built.<sup>36</sup> You can then admire the elegance of the rose marble Ducal Palace, built in the Venetian gothic style, and the enchanting Byzantine Basilica of San Marco with its high bell tower, once used as a lighthouse for ships, dominating the cityscape.

Meanwhile, gondolas move swiftly along, followed by tracks of light which gleam and play upon the lagoon water. Further on, you behold the triumphal baroque facade of the Basilica of Santa Maria della Salute reflected in the waters of the Grand Canal. Right next to it, upon closer inspection, you discern the gleaming bronze globe that crowns the Punta de la Dogana. Held up by two Atlases, the globe carries the statue of Fortuna, the Roman goddess who acted as weathervane and who will bring you either good luck or bad luck for the continuation of the trip.<sup>37</sup> Just before the sun completely disappears behind the horizon, we catch a glimpse of the sublime golden beaches of Lido.

*A pittoresque voyage*

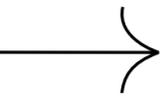
- 36 Constructed around 1104, the Venetian Arsenal was the largest industrial complex in Europe before the Industrial Revolution. It was the maritime centre of power of the Venetian republic. The Venetian Crusade of 1122–24 was a military expedition for recovery of Holy Land from Muslims, launched by the Republic of Venice.
- 37 Venice was once one of Europe's busiest ports during the fifteenth century, and ships from all over the world docked at the Punta della Dogana, while awaiting clearance from customs to unload. *Punta della Dogana* (online). Available at: <https://www.palazzograssi.it/en/about/sites/punta-della-dogana/> (accessed September 2019).

4 Poster designed by Hugo d'Alesi for Chemins de fer de l'Est (1899)



third stop — evening  
VENICE (Italy)

*A pittoresque  
voyage*



With a stop in the Venetian lagoon, Hugo d'Alesi exposed the passengers of the *Maréorama* to the rich architectural landscape of Venice that emerged as a creative cross-pollination of Western and Middle Eastern architecture.<sup>38</sup> The setting sun guided the passengers through the continuity of the voyage that was drawing to an end. The sunset can also be interpreted metaphorically as a transition, as the *Maréorama* arrives at the border between the former Western and Eastern Roman Empires, and will soon leave the Western side of the Mediterranean basin to enter the Eastern side.

Aboard the *Maréorama*, learning about the architecture and tourist stereotypes of Venice became an enjoyable activity. Controlled by the Eastern Roman Empire until the eighth century, Venice contains multiple traces of Byzantine architecture. Later, from the thirteenth until the fifteenth century, the republic of Venice became the most powerful port city of Europe. Their domination of trade on the Mediterranean Sea enabled a continuous exchange of building materials, engineering innovations and aesthetic ideals, which explains the vivid, eclectic architecture of the city.<sup>39</sup> The passengers of the *Maréorama* could also see Lido, the sandbar that separates the Venetian lagoon from the open sea, where in 1857 the first sea bathing facility in Europe was established. During that era, luxurious hotels in art nouveau style popped up regularly, transforming Lido into one of the most exclusive bathing resorts of Europe<sup>40</sup>.

The Venetian scenery by sunset invites to briefly elaborate on the *pittoresque* character of the scenes depicted on the painted canvases of the *Maréorama*. The French term *pittoresque* (derived from the Italian *pittresco*), is defined as a scene *worthy of being painted*. This aesthetic was introduced at the end of the eighteenth century, during the Romantic era, when rationalist ideas about aesthetics were being challenged by considering beauty as an emotional experience that cannot be captured or understood through reason. The description of a scene of nature as worthy of being painted, suggests the perception of an observer who is affected by painted representations of these natural sceneries.<sup>41</sup> In preparation for the *Maréorama*, Hugo d'Alesi himself made an actual voyage across the Mediterranean, following the path of the many other travelling painters who preceded him during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During their voyage, these painters (as well as d'Alesi) were influenced by a conception of ideal scenes, which were derived from paintings, which they in turn wanted to discover, further reproducing these *pittoresque* representations.<sup>42</sup>

Derived from *pittoresque*, the English term “picturesque” refers to the same non-rational beautiful quality of a scene. However, instead of referring to the painted representation, picturesque refers to its suitability for a picture. The invention of the daguerreotype simplified the work of the panorama artists of that time<sup>43</sup>. Therefore, one may wonder whether d'Alesi

himself also used photographs as models for the painted canvases. However, there are no traces mentioning the use of photographs.

Similar to the *pittoresque* scenery of Venice represented on the painted canvases of the *Maréorama* is the Venetian scenery displayed on the poster that promoted trains rapides from Paris to Venice (figure 4), designed by d'Alesi for Chemin de Fer l'Est in 1896. The bold coloured poster portrays a gondola that carries two elegant ladies in white dresses who are decorating a harbour light with bouquets of flowers, while in the background the architectural skyline is depicted at sunset.

This poster is a good illustration of how d'Alesi mastered chromolithography<sup>44</sup> (lithography in colour), a printing technique that allowed him to reproduce coloured paintings and facilitated the rise of the illustrated advertising poster in France. According to the same process as lithography, d'Alesi could paint directly on the printing stone, which ensured that brushstrokes remained clearly visible in his printed posters, which gave them a painted character.<sup>45</sup> In order to obtain the detailed colour range, noticeable in the various shades of blue and green of the lagoon water in combination with the reflection of the orange setting sun and the shadow of the gondola in the water, a separate stone was prepared for every colour. By using a large number of stones, sometimes up to twenty,<sup>46</sup> d'Alesi overlaid many coloured layers to arrive at these *pittoresque* representations. This chromolithographic printed evening scene beckons the viewer to take the train from Paris to Venice. On board the *Maréorama*, one no longer need to leave Paris to enjoy Venice.

38 *Architecture in Venice* (online). Available at: <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/italy/venice/background/other-features/54ec250d-0106-4c85-be50-5839851b2550/a/nar/54ec250d-0106-4c85-be50-5839851b2550/360029> (accessed September 2019).

39 Ibid.  
40 Lido's strong reputation of seaside resort for the wealthy, turned the word lido (Italian for shore) into a general name for any Lido-esque beach. *Lido*. In: Merriam Webster dictionary. (online) Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/lido> (accessed September 2019).

41 Hussey, C. (2019). *The Picturesque: studies in a point of view*. London: Routledge.

42 Ibid.  
43 Oettermann, S. (1997). *The panorama: history of a mass medium*. New York: Zone Books.

44 This English invention was introduced in France in 1866 by the French poster designer Jules Chéret, who was famous for his colourful illustrated posters for the spectacles in Paris.

45 It was the painterly quality of chromolithography as well as its ability to retain the artist's hand that also attracted French painters as Pierre Bonard and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec to this medium that offered them artistic experimentation and helped to establish the hybrid position of the *l'affiche de peintre à la française* as something between fine art and commercial advertisement.

46 Weill, A. (2011). *Encyclopédie de l'affiche*. Paris: Hazan Editions.

### *A ground-breaking voyage*

On the slow notes of *Venise la Nuit*, the ship leaves the Venetian lagoon. Night falls and the ship continues its voyage in the frightening darkness, to the unknown territory of the open sea. This peaceful voyage comes to a sudden end as a fierce Mediterranean storm breaks out in the middle of the night! Is this storm over the inland sea due to a collision of the hot and dry winds from the Sahara, blowing up from the South, and the cold winds blowing from the Alps in the north?<sup>47</sup> Or are we just unfortunate, at the mercy of the whims of Fortuna? Did we elicit the wrath of Neptune (god of the sea and the storms)? Or is the storm the consequence of the boredom of Jupiter (god of the sky and thunder)? No one knew better than Odysseus that the unleashed forces of the sublime nature pose a continuous hazard during long journeys on the Mediterranean...

A violent wind blows over the deck, diffusing a strong sea smell. While you hear the wind whistling in the rigging, you hold your hat tight to make sure it doesn't blow away. The ship starts to move brutally due to the heavy swings and water begins to flood the ship. You consider the possibility of sheltering under the deck where you can still see the painted canvases through the portholes. Flashes of lightning briefly illuminate the deck and the canvases, followed by the rumble of Jupiter's thunder. The ship is in total chaos. Several passengers become seasick and the lady next to you even has to vomit<sup>48</sup>. Luckily, she is quickly assisted by one of the helpful crew members. The other members of the crew are rushing around on the deck, preparing to launch the lifeboats... Eventually, however, the captain shouts new orders: the storm is finally laying down and the sea is calming down again. People start to cheer and applaud enthusiastically, relieved and proud of having overcome this challenging sea!

— *night*  
at open sea

*A ground-breaking voyage*

- 47 Johnson, C. D., & Johnson, V. E. (2003). *Understanding the Odyssey: a student casebook to issues, sources, and historic documents*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, p. 62
- 48 Huhtamo, E. (2013). *Illusions in motion: media archaeology of the moving panorama and related spectacles*. London: Mit Press.

*A ground-breaking  
voyage*



Aboard the *Maréorama*, passengers could behold the maritime horizon, the line where water and sky seem to meet, which represents the limit of our eyesight. Metaphorically, the horizon divides the world into the known world that is contained within the horizon, and the unknown world that begins beyond the horizon. It was the awareness of possibilities beyond the horizon that fuelled European exploration and colonization. In the age of the Grand Tour, a person “whose horizons are limited” referred to someone with narrow experience and little education; traveling, by contrast, was seen as a way “to broaden one’s horizons”.<sup>49</sup> According to Stephan Oettermann, the panorama was a result of the discovery of distant lands beyond the horizon, as well as a way to surpass this horizon. Thus, Hugo d’Alesi broadened the horizons of the many passengers of the *Maréorama*, by bringing the distant lands of the Mediterranean into the French metropole.

Accordingly, feeling dizzy and nauseous on board of the *Maréorama* was not an unfortunate side-effect, that should be prevented. On the contrary, this unpleasant feeling of *mal de mer* manifested the limits of the human body and was therefore an integral part of this multi-sensorial spectacle, which was sought voluntarily and eagerly<sup>50</sup>. On the *Maréorama*, not only geographical horizons were crossed: the horizons of the body were challenged and conquered as well, whereby seasickness created a tinge of excitement in this safe environment staged by Hugo d’Alesi.

49 Oettermann, S. (1997). *The panorama: history of a mass medium*. New York: Zone Books. p.12

50 Ibid. p.13

## final destination — dawn CONSTANTINOPLE (Ottoman empire)

### *A voyage to the self*

As a serene new day is about to begin, the boat slowly approaches our very last destination: Constantinople<sup>51</sup>, the capital of the mythical Orient<sup>52</sup>. The sun rises and softly colours the sky in pink and the shore appears as if in a dream.<sup>53</sup> From a distance, you already notice the high fire-watch tower, the notorious Beyazit Tower. The sun glistens on the golden spires of the minarets that crown the numerous mosques, which are spread across this fairylike urban landscape. The colossal dome of the Byzantine Hagia Sofia towers above the city, and the neighbouring lush green gardens are filled with large Oriental plants. As the ship glides along this magical shore, you are seduced by the smells of eastern perfumes, and you become captivated by the everyday hustle and bustle in the lively port crowded with porters, merchants and marines. Their different skin tones, languages, cloths, dresses, heads and turbans hint at their various backgrounds from the different corners of Europe and Asia. Here at the Bosphorus, the continental boundary between West and East, these different worlds dissolve in the intriguing melting pot that is called Constantinople.

After docking, a group of *Almah*<sup>54</sup> boards the ship and you become instantly enchanted by this oriental curiosity as these women start the most unusual dance you have ever seen. On voluptuous rhythms, they move their breasts and shoulders while shaking their bellies as if completely separate from their bodies. Their golden anklets tinkle on the rhythm, a sound which is accompanied by a continuous clinking of the brass castanets they wear around their fingers.<sup>55</sup> Surprised, you notice that these women are not wearing a corset; the few clothes they wear, made from transparent silk, hardly cover their stomach. Astonished, you further observe their abdominal muscles that move in an extraordinary manner. You feast your eyes on these exceptional bodies and you sense a strange mixture of outrage, desire and excitement.

*A voyage to the self*

You are completely overwhelmed by this evocation of the sensational Orient; it is almost exactly as you imagined it, as a scene of *Les Mille et une Nuits*. The rising of the sun, after the turbulent storm of last night, elicits the feeling of something rising within yourself: an inner awareness of a tension between the triumphant western reason you left behind in Paris and this mystical revelation of the East. This sea voyage that brought you from one pole of the Mediterranean to the other, has the allure of a true catharsis and takes the form of a purifying inner journey. Just as the mythologic heroes, you find a harmonious connection between mind and soul after this this voyage full of wonder, sensational emotions and challenging events.

51 Constantinople is the historical Roman name of the city that is today known as Istanbul.

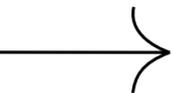
52 The word Orient derives from the Latin *Oriens* and has synonymous denotations: the eastern part of the world; the sky whence comes the sun; the east; the rising sun.

53 This subjective experience of the arrival in Constantinople is inspired by the travelogue of the French writer Chateaubriand, who travelled to Constantinople in between 1806 and 1807. His travelogue is considered to be the first "journey to the Orient" of French literature in the nineteenth century. Berchet, J. C. (1997). *Le voyage en Orient: anthologie des voyageurs français dans le Levant au XIXe siècle*. Paris: R. Laffont.

54 Originally, the *Almah* were Egyptian dancers noted for their skill in improvised dancing and chanting. By the mid-nineteenth century the term had come to refer to any female dancer and generally, in the West, carried sexual overtones. Lewis, R. (2013). *Gendering orientalism: Race, femininity and representation*. London: Routledge. p. 173

The description of the *Almah* is inspired by a personal testimony of an *Almah* performance of a visitor of the World's Fair in 1889 in Paris, that is used in a video reportage of the National Museum for Women in the Arts in Washington D.C. (2003). *Exposition Universelle 1889: Rue du Caire & les Almees*. (online) Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yf5SkqGDfM&list=PL-CB0A314C2D5B3460> (viewed September 2019).

*A Voyage to the self*



Hugo d’Alesi decided to end the sea voyage under the rising sun in Constantinople, the capital of the Ottoman empire, satisfying the prevalent French fascination for the Orient that increasingly grew during the nineteenth century.<sup>56</sup> Constantinople is today known as Istanbul but it carried at that time, as a former capital city of the Roman empire, its historical Roman name.

The itinerary of the *Maréorama*, from West to East, from France to Constantinople, was already travelled during medieval ages, when large fleets manned by European Christian knights crossed the Mediterranean basin during the crusades.<sup>57</sup> Strikingly, the word “cruise”, which refers to the journey of pleasure on board of the *Maréorama* during which one visits several Mediterranean destinations, descends from the same etymological meaning as the word “crusade”. This military expedition by European Christians for recovery of the Holy Land from Muslims is a respelling of the French word *croisade*, which is in turn derived from the latin word *cruciare* (mark with a cross).<sup>58</sup> However, this offensive encounter between West and East turned into a more fruitful interaction as the East turned into an intriguing destination of travel during the nineteenth century.<sup>59</sup>

In his book *Orientalism*<sup>60</sup>, Edward Said defined the “Orient” as a system of representations of the East constructed by and in relation to the West. The European fascination for the Orient during the nineteenth century was based on the supposed representation of the Orient as Europe’s deepest counter pole. As opposed to the rapid progression, rational thinking, and increasingly urban West, the Orient stereotypically embodied a trip back in time to a mythical destination of splendour and sensuality. However, this contrasting image was fuelled by an exaggeration of difference and the presumption of Western superiority.<sup>61</sup>

The travel posters of Hugo d’Alesi did not extend to the Middle East. However, the passengers’ collective imagination of the Middle East was most likely nourished by the influential stories of *Les Mille et une nuit*. This French translation of Middle Eastern folktales, published between 1704 and 1717 by Antoine Galland, played a crucial role in the construction of the Orient in the collective imagination of the Western reader.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, the mythical representation of the Orient was backed in numerous travelogues by French artists who, facilitated by steam driven transport, travelled to the Middle Eastern region during the nineteenth century.

On board of the *Maréorama*, the passengers could behold a dancing performance of *Almah*. These Oriental women were identified through a stereotypical gaze, charged with Western (and mostly male) projections. The uncorseted bodies of the *Almah*, for instance, were in contrast to the long dressed European women on board of the *Maréorama*. Consequentially, the female bodies of these oriental dancers appeared as unlimitedly sensual, pleasurable and willing.

Hence, this perception seems to tell us more about the Western view of the passengers of the *Maréorama*, than about the Oriental woman as such.<sup>63</sup> Thus, for the passengers of the *Maréorama*, the performance of these oriental women served as a contrasting mirror-image that made them rather look at themselves.

Further, with the Orient as the final destination of the *Maréorama*, we could assume Hugo d’Alesi’s implicit intention was to give this voyage a spiritual dimension. Derived from the Latin word *oriens* (rising, appearing, originating), the word Orient also implies a possibility of rebirth.<sup>64</sup> By bringing the passengers from West to East, the *Maréorama* endorsed the belief that, by leaving behind the familiar environment of everyday life, by broadening your horizons, by facing your counter pole on the other side of the Mediterranean basin, you could rediscover yourself.

In other words, it seems that Hugo d’Alesi had similar ambitions as the ancient Greek playwright Aristoteles, who aimed to generate a *catharsis*<sup>65</sup> – a purifying impact of self-interrogation – among the audience of his tragedies. This parallel brings us back to the *Gesamtkunstwerk* of Richard Wagner, who believed that a total artistic synthesis, of which the Greek tragedies were according to him the closest example, was the only way to achieve a complete emotional immersion of the audience.

Therefore, with his multi-sensorial approach, Hugo d’Alesi followed in the footsteps of Aristoteles and Richard Wagner, aiming to elicit strong emotions of wonderment, fear and confusion. This strong outlet of emotions would lead the passengers back to themselves, which subsequently would generate a purifying impact. At the end of the voyage on the *Maréorama*, the passengers might have experienced the same *cathartic* effect that the Greek mythologic hero Odysseus experienced at the end of his turbulent sea voyage. Similar to Odysseus, at the end of their journey, the passengers of the *Maréorama* found their very self.

<sup>56</sup> Yang, J. H. (2012). *L’Orient de Saint-Simon et des Saint-Simoniens: une étude du discours, 1825-1840* (Doctoral dissertation, Paris 8). (online) Available at: <https://octaviana.fr/document/168727323#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0> (accessed September 2019), p. 22

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>58</sup> *Crusade*. In: Online etymology dictionary. (online) Available at: [https://www.etymonline.com/word/crusade?ref=etymonline\\_crossreference#etymonline\\_v\\_414](https://www.etymonline.com/word/crusade?ref=etymonline_crossreference#etymonline_v_414) (accessed October 2019).

<sup>59</sup> Yang, J. H. (2012). *L’Orient de Saint-Simon et des Saint-Simoniens: une étude du discours, 1825-1840* (Doctoral dissertation, Paris 8). (online) Available at: <https://octaviana.fr/document/168727323#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0> (accessed September 2019), p.22

<sup>60</sup> Said, E. W. (2003). *Orientalism: western conceptions of the Orient*. 1978. London: Penguin.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Yang, J. H. (2012). *L’Orient de Saint-Simon et des Saint-Simoniens: une étude du discours, 1825-1840* (Doctoral dissertation, Paris 8). (online) Available at: <https://octaviana.fr/document/168727323#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0> (accessed September 2019), p. 162

<sup>63</sup> Belly dance was first introduced to the West at the series of World Exhibitions in the late nineteenth century. Lewis, R. (2013). *Gendering orientalism: Race, femininity and representation*. London: Routledge. p. 173

<sup>64</sup> Berchet, J. C. (1985). *Le voyage en Orient: anthologie des voyageurs français dans le Levant au 19. e siècle*. Paris: Laffont. p. 14

<sup>65</sup> *Catharsis*. In: encyclopaedia Britannica (online). Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/art/catharsis-criticism> (accessed October 2019).

# EPILOGUE

The Mediterranean began to establish itself as a tourist destination at the second half of the nineteenth century. Fuelled by the rapid expansion of the French railways, boat companies, and the development of chromolithography, the travel posters of graphic designer Hugo d’Alesi’s lay at the foundation of tourism advertisement in France and helped to establish the representation of the Mediterranean as a seductive tourist destination. Nowadays, the Mediterranean region has become the most popular tourist destination in the world. The sunny climate, bright blue sea and sky, beautiful coastlines, exotic vegetation, rich history and various cultures speak to the imagination of one third of the international tourists that annually visit the region.<sup>1</sup>

However, when travelling to the Mediterranean was still solely a leisure activity for the aristocracy and the emerging high bourgeoisie, Hugo d’Alesi offered the diverse crowd of the 1900 World’s Fair a retreat from the increasingly industrialised society by means of his *Maréorama*. It was only by the end of the fifties that the masses could make the real voyage to the Mediterranean when the region turned into a popular middle and working-class holiday destination due to the reduced rates on the railways, the emergence of passenger flights and the establishment of paid holidays.<sup>2</sup>

The analysis of the *Maréorama* in relation with the 1900 World’s Fair in Paris, demonstrates that Hugo d’Alesi’s shaped his *Maréorama* on the basis of the political agenda of the Third French Republic. The *Maréorama* aimed to impress the rest of the world and acquaint the French population with the progress of their country. Simultaneously, the *Maréorama* valorised the educational and democratic republican values related to a paternalistic aspiration of the French Republic to uplift the diverse crowd of the World’s Fair.

Accordingly, the analysis of the *Maréorama* in relation to the Amusement Section of the World’s Fair, demonstrates how Hugo d’Alesi’s spectacle of the Mediterranean followed the tendencies of a burgeoning entertainment industry in late-nineteenth century Paris. The *Maréorama* was a variation on the panorama, a popular, affordable mass medium that marshalled vision to transport spectators in time and space through the illusion of a realistic representation. Hugo d’Alesi’s spectacle had to compete against the many other panoramas located at the Champ the Mars that in order to reach the highest realism, increasingly aimed to go beyond the visual illusion. By engaging the different senses of the spectators, this spectacle of the Mediterranean endeavoured to immerse its spectators into a total illusion of a voyage on the

Mediterranean Sea.

Subsequently, the analysis of the voyage on the Mediterranean Sea in relation with the geo-political context of the Mediterranean region, shows that this voyage was imbedded in the conventional Western constructed representation of the Mediterranean region at that time. In this dynamic, the West symbolised the powerful pole that has always dominated the region. This representation starts with the notion of the powerful Greek and Roman empires that form the basis of Western civilisation and dominated the Mediterranean Sea during antiquity. During the Middle Ages and the crusades, the Mediterranean Sea was crossed by the large fleets of Christian knights intent on recovering the Holy Land in the East from the Muslims. In the era of Hugo d'Alesi, European industrial innovation enabled steam driven transport and facilitated colonial conquest of the East by the West, as well as the possibilities for Western tourists to travel to the Mediterranean.

As a result of this fraught history, the narration that guided the voyage on the Mediterranean Sea endorsed the belief of the West as the powerful pole of the Mediterranean that symbolised progress, rationality, masculinity and refinement. As a consequence, the voyage on the *Maréorama* appeared to be in search of scenes and experiences that were in contrast to this Western image. Fuelled by an exaggeration of difference, the East embodied the supposed counter pole of the West that was in contrast: closer to nature, sensational, female, backward, primitive and untamed. Notwithstanding, this fascination for the East was influenced by a presumption of Western superiority and the colonial desire of Western domination.

The recapturing of the *Maréorama* as an active passenger shows that although the majority of the passengers on board of the *Maréorama* had never actually travelled to the Mediterranean, the voyage nevertheless met the passengers' expectations. This demonstrates that the collective imagination of the passengers was nourished by the different realistic, powerful representational practices that increasingly developed during the nineteenth century.

It is certainly possible that the passengers of the *Maréorama* had already seen similar coastal scenes in other panoramas since the panorama flooded the urban landscape of Paris and simulated "realistic" representations of distant lands were quite popular. In addition, the development of lithography enabled the appearance of colour-printed travel posters in the public space and made illustrated books, post-cards, as well as the illustrated press accessible and cheap. Furthermore, many French artists travelled to the Mediterranean shores during the nineteenth century. They shared their Mediterranean impressions on large pompous academic paintings and described their Mediterranean experiences in travelogues.

Altogether, this led to an influential circulation of visual and written representations that contributed to the foundation of a strong stereotypical representation of the Mediterranean region. These representations expose the imbalance of power between the Western and Eastern pole of the Mediterranean basin and the East as the supposed contrasting pole of the West.

To summarize: by combining popular commercial mass culture with the political agenda of the Third French Republic, the *Maréorama* appeared as an educational, democratic and amusing voyage for the crowd of the World's Fair. As the designer of the *Maréorama*, Hugo d'Alesi appropriated the large and complex Mediterranean region by staging an illusionary voyage that was completely embedded in the existing stereotypical representations of the Mediterranean region at that time. As a result, it seems as if d'Alesi had unfolded his travel posters and staged the Mediterranean destinations of desire that were displayed on his posters into a rhetorical, immersive setting that fulfilled the longing that these travel posters addressed.

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- 2 Grasse, M. C. (1997). *Coups de soleil et bikinis*. Toulouse: Milan.

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## Iconography

1  
Hugo d'Alesi  
*Affiche, Chemins de fer P. L. M. L'Hiver à Nice* (1892) chromolitography (format: 105 x 54 cm) (online) Available at: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9015998z.r=alesi%20nice?rk=85837;2> (accessed at September 2019).

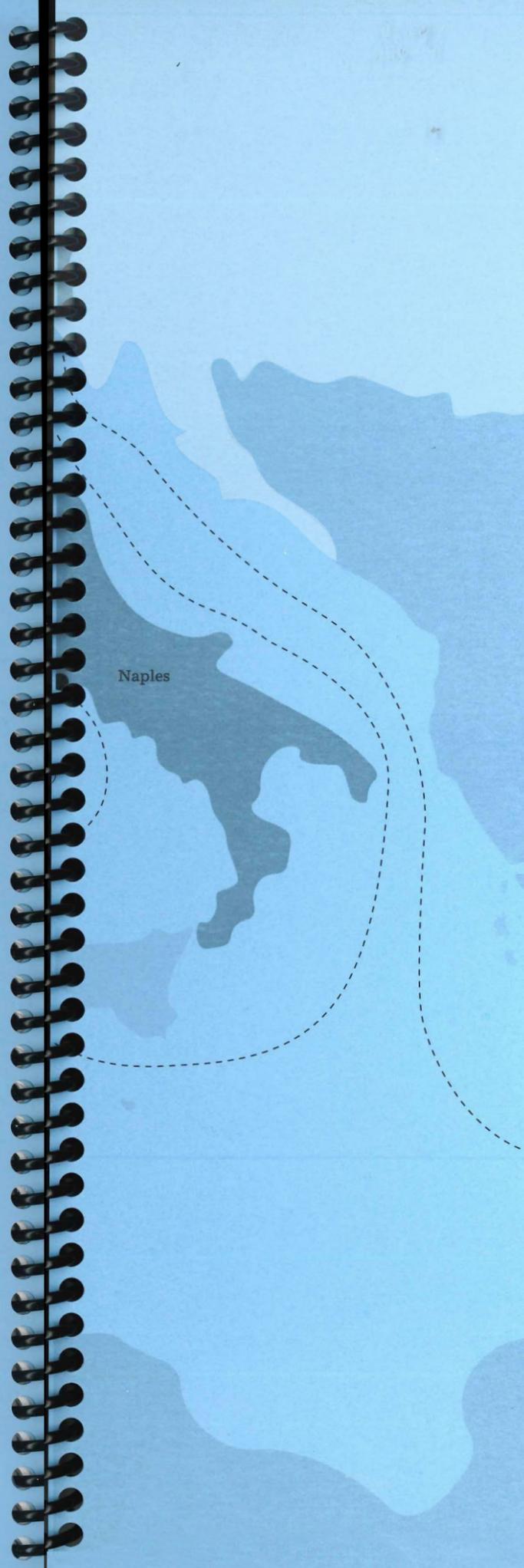
2  
Hugo d'Alesi  
*Affiche, Chemins de Fer P.L.M. Tunisie* (1891) chromolitography (format: 105 x 75 cm) (online) Available at: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9009194h.r=alesi%20tunisie?rk=64378;0> (accessed September 2019).

3  
Hugo d'Alesi  
*Affiche, Chemins de fer de l'Est L'Italie par le St Gothard* (1904) chromolitography (format: 110 x 70 cm) (online) Available at: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9015968t.r=alesi%2italie?rk=21459;2> (accessed at September 2019).

4  
Hugo d'Alesi  
*Affiche, Chemin de fer de l'Est De Paris à Venise* (1896) chromolitography (format: 106 x 76 cm) (online) Available at: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b90159786.r=alesi%20venise?rk=21459;2> (accessed at September 2019).

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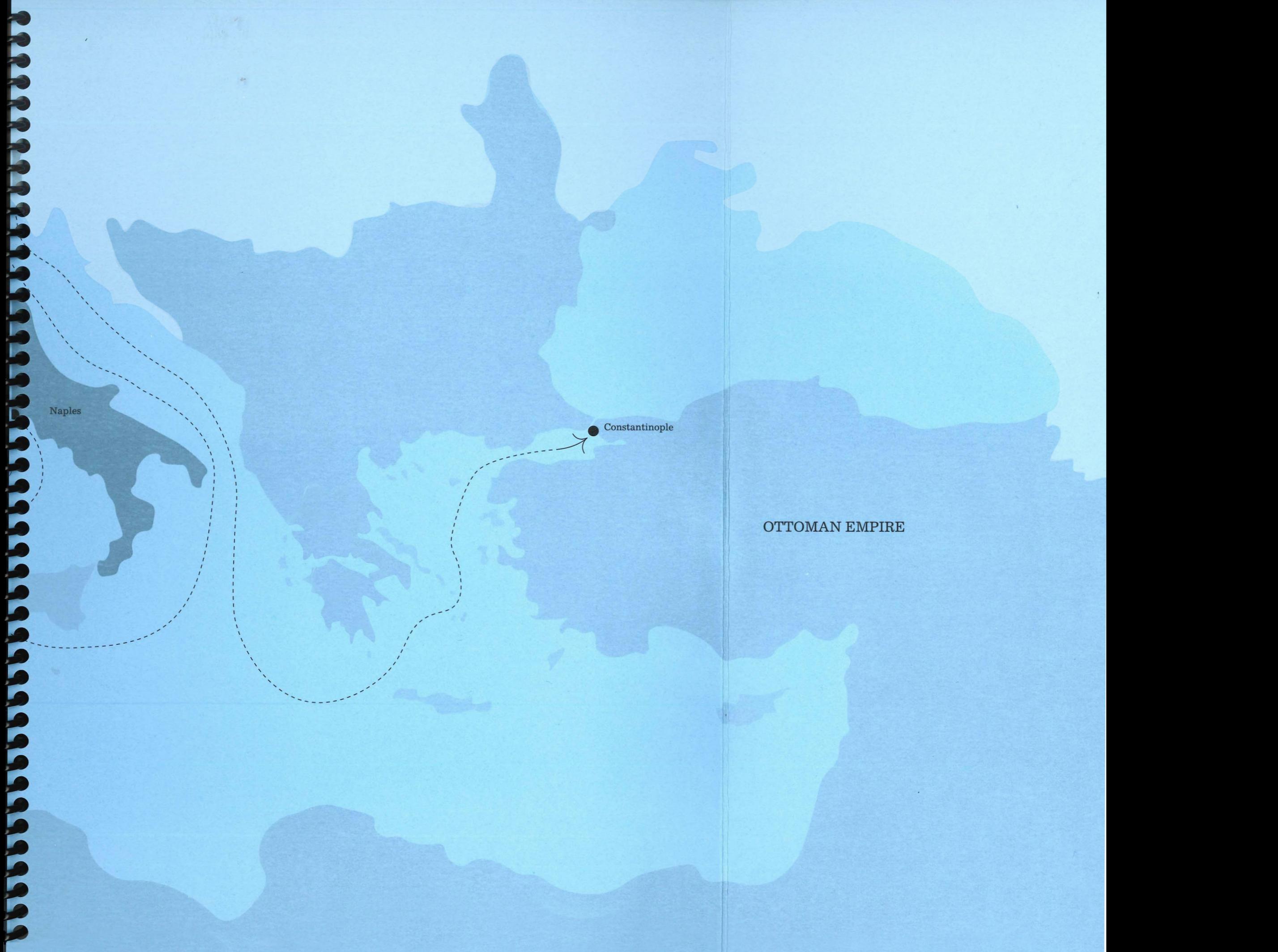


A warm thank you for my travel companions who accompanied me during this turbulent voyage and made it worthwhile: My supervisor Thierry de Chacogne whose valuable insights and advice navigated me in the right direction and made sure I didn't get lost along the way – Oliver Graney for his watertight editing work – Erkki Huhtamo whose overseas directions helped me in tracing original sources – The archive of INPI (The National Industrial Property Institute of France) for providing me the original patent of the Maréorama – Stijn, for his shoreless support and my dear friends who cheered me from the quay with their interest and encouraging words.

The “spectacular” booklet you are holding in your hands is one of the ten copies printed in January 2020 at HEAD in Geneva. To set the mood of Hugo d'Alesi's *Maréorama*, little spectacles pop-up while browsing through these pages. In exploring the spatial dimension of this three-dimensional object, I was inspired while scrolling through the lifting flaps and fold-out pages of historical atlases. Thereby, It seems as if these mapped territories, needed more space than the convenient form and size of an atlas could provide them. Just as the atlas is a way to appropriate the world into an understandable, manegable form, the *Maréorama* was Hugo d'Alesi's aspiration to appropriate the complex Medditerranean region.

**Typefaces**  
Excelsior  
*C. H. Griffith, 1931*  
Suisse Int'l  
Swiss Typefaces, 2011

**Paper**  
Keaykolour Baltic Sea 120 gr and 300 gr  
Daunendruck Natural, 120 gr



Naples

Constantinople

OTTOMAN EMPIRE

In the year 1900, the French graphic designer Hugo d'Alesi staged a voyage on a steamship that crossed the Mediterranean Sea from the French port of Villefranche to Constantinople, the capital of the Ottoman empire. On board the *Maréorama*, the diverse crowd of the World's Fair in Paris experienced a retreat from the increasingly industrialised society. By both recapturing the voyage as an active passenger aboard the *Maréorama* and deconstructing the *Maréorama* in relation to its historical and socio-economical context, this thesis aims to analyse Hugo d'Alesi's immersive multi-sensorial spectacle, which combined commercial mass culture with the political agenda of the Third French Republic. It demonstrates how the voyage on the *Maréorama* was strongly embedded in the stereotypical Western constructed representations of the Mediterranean region at that time. These representations expose the imbalance of power between the Western and Eastern poles of the Mediterranean basin and the authentic and sensual East as the supposed contrasting pole of the industrialised West.