

SIGHTS_{of} WONDER

HOME ACTIVITIES

WAYS OF SEEING:

A POST-COLONIAL TOOLKIT



Francis Bedford (1815-1894), *Chapel of Horus on the north side of the Great Court of the Temple of Isis*
Philae, Egypt, 13 March 1862. Albumen print, 240 x 294 mm. Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2020

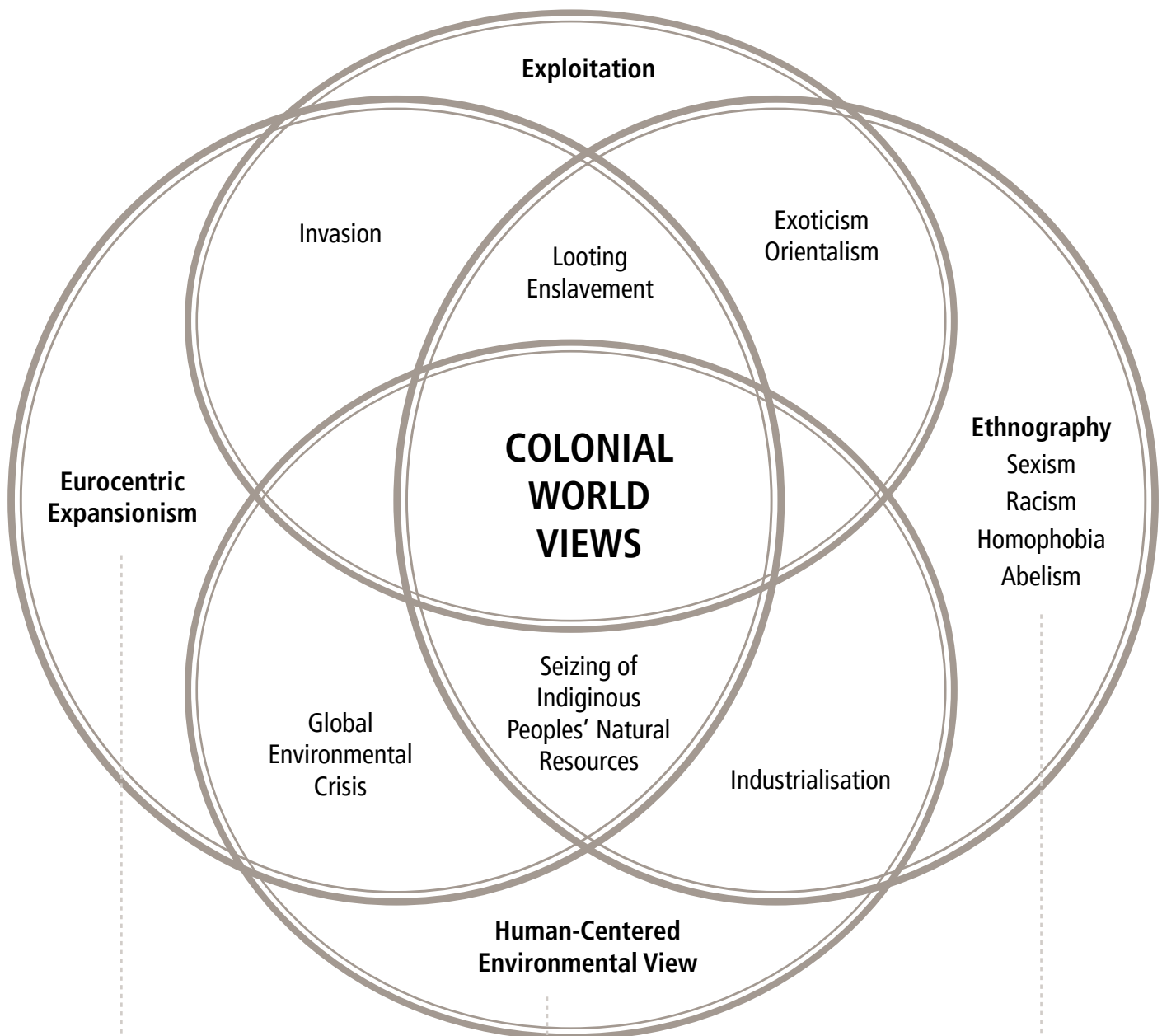
Art history has many different theories or lenses through which we can look at artworks and artefacts. In more recent times revisions to art history theory have grown from a need to search for the hidden or 'subaltern' histories of marginalised peoples. This is true for theories such as Marxism, Feminism and Post-colonialism.

Post-colonial theory arose from a need perceived by many to critique the legacies of European empire building. The theory addresses the time before, during and after colonial rule to interrogate the human consequences of controlling a country in order to exploit the native people.

Central to this theory is analysing how non-European peoples were seen from the perspective of Western societies and addressing the pervasive identities of 'coloniser' and 'colonised'.

In more recent years, Post-colonial theory has given rise to a movement labelled **decolonisation**.

Decolonisation looks to challenge and dismantle opinions and practices considered to be central to colonial world views. Some of these interconnected world views and their consequences are described in this diagram:



The belief that European peoples should dominate and acquire lands outside of Europe.

The idea that the natural world and its resources exist to support human needs.

The study of peoples. In the colonial era ethnographic studies were built upon the presumption of the natural dominance of those who were white, male, heterosexual and without perceived disability.

With Post-colonialism and decolonisation in mind, how might we analyse Francis Bedford's Victorian images of what was then termed 'The East'?

Let's take a look at this photograph of the Prince of Wales and party among the ruins in the Hypostyle Hall, Temple of Amun, Karnak, 1862:



Francis Bedford (1815-1894), *The Prince of Wales and party among the ruins in the Hypostyle Hall, Temple of Amun, Karnak* Luxor, Egypt, 16 March 1862. Albumen print, 219 x 293 mm. Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2020

Reflecting what you've read about Post-colonialism so far, consider the prompts below to engage with this photograph through a Post-colonial lens.

1

Imagine witnessing this photograph being taken as a local resident. What might you think, how might you feel?

2

Does this image say anything about how the British viewed themselves in 1862? Does this image say anything about how the British see themselves today in the 21st century?

External Resources



**Decolonizing Art History,
Catherine Grant**



**Orientalism
Edward W. Said**



**Home is the place...
Subhadra Das, TEDx UCLWomen**



**The Museum will not be Decolonised
Sumya Kassim**



**Ecological Imperialism, The Biological
Expansion of Europe, 900–1900,
Alfred.W Crosby 1986.**



**The Sexual Politics of Victorian Social
Anthropology Author(s): Elizabeth Fee**

Source: Feminist Studies, Vol. 1, No. 3/4,
Special Double Issue: Women's History (Winter
- Spring, 1973), pp. 23-39



Share your responses with us at #sightsof wonder