Listening In

Conversations on Architectures, Cities and Landscapes 1700-1900

Programme and abstracts

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ETH Zürich

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Maarten Delbeke Chair
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SESSION 4
Domesticities

Chair Anne Hultzsch

Architectural Critique over Coffee and Tea: Reflecting on Female Architectural Agency in the 1800s.
Laura Hindelang

Luxurious Mansions, Spirited Dwellers: Bahariye Coast at the Golden Horn as a Suburban Retreat for Late-Ottoman Sultanas.
Alper Metin

The Meaning of Architecture: Victoria Welby's Approach.
Michael Gnehm

Luxurious Mansions, Spirited Dwellers: Bahariye Coast at the Golden Horn as a Suburban Retreat for Late-Ottoman Sultanas.

Throughout the 18th century, Istanbul witnessed an unprecedented sprawl towards the pleasing shores of the Bosphorus Strait and the Golden Horn, inaugurating a new suburban lifestyle. Accessible in most cases only by the water, these opulent residences configurated an urban reality which was far from the consolidated habits of the compact intramural city, both in formal and social terms. This novelty coincided with another phenomenon: the intense emancipation of Ottoman women, especially those of the upper classes. Therefore, in this period, we observe the emergence of the first royal women who established an independent life from their husbands, living in luxurious residences called by their own names.

The most significant concentration of these residences was at the Golden Horn, between the piers of Defterdar and Eyüp. Taking its name from a "spring palace" of Sultan Ahmed III (r. 1703-1730), the Bahariye Coast became a sumptuous retreat, especially for royal women. Starting from the same emperor's daughter, Esma Sultan the Elder (1726-1788), multiple generations of Ottoman princesses have settled down on these shores, building and re-building numerous 'sahilsaray' (waterside palaces). This district was at the same time highly representative for the Ottoman capital, since the sultanic enthronement ceremonies took place at the nearby Eyüp Sultan Mosque.

This research aims to discover the history of the Bahariye Coast from the early-18th until the mid-19th century, and of how Ottoman princesses selected and configured it as a new, women-led suburban reality. Buildings and their dwellers will be the main focus of interest while the changing social and urban dynamics of the period will provide the framework.

Dr Alper Metin - University of Bologna

Alper Metin is an architectural historian based in Rome. His research focuses on the transformation of Ottoman architectural culture which generated the so-called Ottoman Baroque. In 2022, he obtained his PhD degree with honors at Sapienza University of Rome, and in 2023 he was appointed as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Bologna (Department of the Arts). One of his main research areas is Ottoman female patronage in Istanbul. In 2022, he published an essay in Italian on the elementary schools built by the 18th-century royal women. In 2024, a book chapter dealing with the urban aspects of female patronage will appear in *Women as Builders, Designers, and Critics of the Built Environment, 1200 – 1800.*

Who do we listen to when we write histories of architectures, cities, and landscapes? How many women authors can we find among our sources? How many of them are cited by those whose research we read? We argue that women and other marginalised groups have always been part of conversations on architectures, cities, and landscapes - but we have not had the space to listen to them. This conference is an invitation to reconstruct such conversations, real, imagined, and metaphorical ones, taking place in the 18th and 19th centuries, in any region, in order to diversify the ways we write histories. Taking the art of conversation, integral as both practice and form to the period in Western thought, and repurposing it to dismantle the exclusivity of historiography, this conference calls for contributions which bring women into dialogue with others.

Listening In proposes a new approach to the 'canon' and its protagonists. Rather than either fighting its existence or expanding it by means of 'exceptions to the rule', we call for the setting up of productive conversations. We acknowledge that the canon never exists on its own; instead, it is shaped by what Griselda Pollock has called 'that which, while repressed, is always present as its structuring other' (1999, 8). This conference is envisaged as a listening exercise. We regard a conversation as both codified practice as well as a specific act of verbal exchange, spoken or written, on a particular subject – here architectures, cities, and landscapes – occurring in a specific site, from street to salon, kitchen to court, construction site to theatre, field to church, or book to newspaper, to name but a few.

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