

**Friday, 15 June**  
**15.15-18.00**

Track: Discovery and Persistence  
Room: *National Library, Cupola Hall*

### **THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE ORIENT BEFORE ORIENTALISM**

**Session chair:** Anne-Françoise Morel, KU Leuven

This session seeks to create a new understanding of the visualization and conceptualization of the architecture of the Orient and its introduction in architectural theory and practice in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, before the era that architectural historiography traditionally associates with Orientalism. The aim of this session is to improve our understanding of the ways in which eastern architecture was perceived, historicized, and conceptualized before a more generalized (if always problematic) notion of 'oriental' architecture emerged.

We are interested in the different channels through which knowledge of eastern architecture was obtained, communicated, and conceptualized (travelogues, diaries, collections of engravings, etc.). From the early eighteenth century onwards, the Grand Tour became more accessible to an ever larger group of travellers. Its circuit expanded beyond the Mediterranean, opening up a new world of architectural forms. This expansion coincided with a renewed critical scrutiny of the canon, and the introduction of new aesthetic notions such as 'taste' in the architectural debate.

This session seeks to investigate if, how, and why the Early Modern imagination of the Orient transformed into an architectural imagery that would resonate with contemporary architectural debates, and eventually stimulate the emergence of Orientalism. Particular attention is due to the ways in which eighteenth-century sources associated eastern architecture with moral connotations, and construed its relation with European architecture: between assimilation into a general architectural history (with emerging notions of the oriental origins of the Gothic) and the definition of a distinct 'otherness' (i.e. non-western, non-classical, non-Christian) of eastern architecture.

The questions we wish to raise include:

In what terms were the non-classical architectural forms described, and what referents were used? How exactly did the acquaintance with eastern architecture affect the interpretation of the Greco-Roman canon? How was oriental architecture defined, characterized, or categorized? How did new knowledge of eastern architecture recast deeply engrained Early Modern notions of the Orient as the site of architectural opulence and wonder, vanity and idolatry? Where and how did new notions of oriental architecture emerge, and how were they communicated? What exactly was the role of descriptions by travellers? How did travelogues filter moral, religious, and political connotations? How were their architectural descriptions mediated in design? Did the description of eastern architecture coincide with a renewed architectural attention for medieval architecture? What was the role of the emerging bourgeois class in making a supposedly 'barbaric' style socially acceptable? Which buildings and architects adopted or pioneered forms taken from oriental architecture before the emergence of Orientalism?

**PAPERS:**

#### **Spatial Narratives on Ottoman Architecture: Aegean Port Cities through the Eyes of Western Travellers**

Çağla Caner Yüksel, Başkent University  
Ceren Katipoğlu Özmen, Çankaya University

This paper aims to discuss spatial narratives on Aegean ports by European travellers during the seventeenth century. The seventeenth century was a significant time period, particularly with the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, which was a turning point in Ottoman history. The geographical focus of this study comprises the Western Anatolian territories

of that time period, including newly developing and favoured settlements, as well as gradually abandoned former settlements. For instance, İzmir was a newly emerging overseas port accommodating noteworthy trade activities, which, in turn, had an influence on the shaping of the architecture of the city. In contrast to İzmir, ancient Ephesus, the once-proud hub of the Aegean and later the holy centre for Christians and a significant port of the Middle Ages, had shrunk into a deprived village by the seventeenth century, as has been revealed by travel accounts depicting these cities.

Among these accounts were those of French botanist Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, French traveler Jean Thévenot, British clergyman and scientist John Covel, and Armenian priest Simeon of Poland, who passed through Western Anatolia and are some of the names this paper will address. This study attempts to understand how the architecture of the seventeenth century Ottoman port cities along the Aegean Sea was mentioned, defined, and characterized by the western travellers through their textual and visual depictions. In the end, it questions whether it is possible to detect any architectural imageries relating to the soon-rising 'oriental image' in the multiple narratives of the travellers.

### **The Spectator and the Orient: The Case of William Chambers**

Sigrid de Jong, Leiden University

'I cannot conceive why it should be criminal in a traveller to give an account of what he has seen worthy of notice in China, any more than in Italy, France, or any other country; nor do I think it possible that any man should be so void of reason as to infer that an Architect is ignorant in his profession, merely from his having published designs of Chinese buildings.'

William Chambers, while writing these words in his *Designs of Chinese Buildings* (1757), was well aware of the problematic nature of publishing on oriental architecture. In a period when the Orient was seen as inferior to classical architecture, while at the same time offering tantalizing new visions for contemporary building projects, Chambers was the first European architect to travel to China, return with measured drawings, and publish his findings. His publications reveal, however, a paradoxical approach to the Orient.

My paper proposes an exploration of this paradoxical attitude in Chambers' treatment of the Orient, in his publications, and in his unpublished lecture notes for the Royal Academy of Arts. It analyses how Chambers, while judging the architectural language of China as second-rate to the classical, exposes a fascination for the way the Chinese orchestrate their gardens, and the buildings situated in it, as spectacles. His fascination extended to the implementation of his ideas in stone, in his major building, Somerset House in London. The designs for this building, at first sight merely influenced by classical architecture, reveal the complex process of appropriating elements of Oriental architecture and culture. I argue that this can only be understood when analysing Chambers' writings and designs from the viewpoint of his focus on a moving spectator. The paper aims thus to expose the multifaceted dynamics of appropriating the Orient in both text and design.

### **Reception and Dissemination of Oriental Imagery in the Eighteenth Century through Fischer von Erlach and Piranesi Architectural Plates**

Elisa Boerie, Politecnico di Milano

When, in 1757, William Chambers designed his *Alhambra* with the pagoda and mosque for Kew Gardens, he knew very well the architectural drawings of Fischer von Erlach's *Entwurff einer historischen Architektur* (1721). The first study of world architecture entirely made by images, the *Entwurff* included several buildings belonging to the imagination of the oriental and Islamic world, which were mostly unknown in Europe at that time. The book's architecture, which included Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Egyptian,

Chinese, and Japanese examples, circulate in the cabinets of artists and architects, as well as among collectors. Together with the *Diverse maniere d'adornare i cammini*—Giovanni Battista Piranesi's neo-Egyptian engravings—Fischer's plates contrast the totalistic adherence to hellenistic cult suggested by Johann Joachim Winckelmann.

This paper aims to examine that particular historical moment in which oriental architecture, narrated and imagined, became an ideal world of 'purity' for European architects intent on achieving their architectural visions. With particular reference to the work of Jean Jacques Lequeu in the revolutionary years, we will analyse the connections between some drawings inspired by the plates of Fischer and Piranesi (eg. the *Indian Pagoda*, the *Turkish house*, the *Orangerie of delights*, the *Gothic House*) and other references belonging to the literary world. Among them is *Séthos, histoire ou vie tirée des monuments et anecdotes de l'ancienne Egypte*, written in 1731 by Abbé Jean Terrasson. It was the source of inspiration for more than one architectural composition in Lequeu's *Architecture Civile*, which saw in oriental architecture's forms an initiatory path for the salvation of The Modern Man, morally corrupted in the years of Revolutionary Terror.

### **Shifting Perceptions of the Orient: Pococke, Dalton, and Hope**

Lobke Geurs, KU Leuven

In the eighteenth century, the Grand Tour guided travellers through Europe culminating in a sojourn in Rome. Few, however, extended their Tours beyond the beaten path. Exceptions were Richard Pococke (1704–1765), Richard Dalton (c. 1715–1791), and Thomas Hope (1769–1831). They widened their scope and included the Ottoman Empire and were, moreover, connected to architects/craftsmen/designers. Current research has mostly consisted of gathering data on and completing the biographies of these explorers. However, the impact of their encounters with 'modern' Greece and the Ottoman Empire on the formation of architectural taste in England has been neglected.

Through a comparative analysis of the drawings by Pococke, Dalton, and Hope, I show the evolution in the perception of Greece/Egypt: from motives to uncover the region's ancient past (Pococke and Dalton) to the re-evaluation of the Ottoman Empire as a gateway to the remains of ancient Greece/Egypt (Hope). Pococke, guided by personal motives, was one of the earliest travellers to the Middle East. He published his travels in two volumes. Instigated by the Society of Dilettanti, James Caulfeild (Earl of Charlemont), and Richard Dalton (draughtsman-engraver), Pococke embarked in 1749 on a Tour of Greece/Egypt. Both Pococke and Dalton had an 'antiquarian-archaeological' approach towards Greece/Egypt and paid only marginally attention to the culture/architecture of the Ottoman Empire. At the end of the century, Thomas Hope ventured into Greece/Egypt. Although inspired by earlier travelogues, he displays a different approach, leaving antiquarian attitudes aside and paying particular attention towards the influence of the Ottoman Empire on ancient Greece/Egypt.

The drawings made by Pococke, Dalton, and Hope will be (a) part of a comparative analysis on style, representation, and themes, (b) connected to the narratives constructed through the travelogues and letters, and (c) evaluated with regard to the architectural production in England.

### **Egypt and the Interior: Thomas Hope and 'Interior Decoration'**

Tim Anstey, Oslo School of Architecture and Design

The interior, as a conceptual category applied to architecture, can be seen as an emergent feature of early nineteenth century European culture. After 1800, in England and in France, interior/intérieur began to be used to describe the domestic spaces inside buildings where society was performed. During the same period, however, interior had another significance. From the 1780s, interior was used to denote the geographical expanse of a country that lay inside its well charted coastline. This geopolitical interior represented the unseen and partially known; a space removed from the realm of the

domestic. These simultaneous new significances for the interior seem paradoxical. Resonant with the idea of wide spaces of geopolitical significance partially known, the interior began to be associated with small spaces of social significance that could be wholly known. This paper considers how the spatial conceptualisation of the geopolitical interior was implicated in this development of the interior as an architectural category.

The paper considers Thomas Hope's *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration*, published in London in 1807. The architectural interiors described in that text, designed for Hope's own house, can be mapped onto the geography of his own travels. Focussing particularly on his encounter with Egypt and the interior of Africa, the paper reveals how Hope characterised rooms through objects and designs plucked from this geopolitical space, highlighting parallels between Hope's habits of representation and those used to communicate geopolitical interiors to domestic audiences during the first years of the nineteenth century. Further, the paper considers how Thomas Hope's activities as a collector and designer were financed by a spectacular series of trades involving geopolitical interiors, including the orchestration by Hope and Barings banks of the Louisiana Purchase during 1803. Such transactions indicate that the significance of the geopolitical interior was itself interiorised in Hope's close family context.