

From Miklagard to
Istanbul:
Moving the Senses

Istanbul,
24 – 25 October 2024

From Miklagard to Istanbul: Moving the Senses

Both modern and ancient, Istanbul is unique. A megacity of almost 18 million people, Istanbul for centuries has been a nexus for diverse encounters and exchanges with Northern Europe, encompassing throughout time the artistic and cultural arenas, migration, tourism, and trade. Centered on this city of manifold encounters, the international and interdisciplinary workshop focuses on how Istanbul has informed and been informed by these artistic, cultural, and material exchanges through the lens of sensory and material expressions as examples of early globalism.

Cultural and commercial exchanges as well as tourism and migration between Istanbul and Northern Europe can be traced back to as early as the year 839, when as mercenaries Vikings from Scandinavia came to Istanbul, which they termed “Miklagard” (“The Great City”). Traces of this can still be found in artifacts such as coins, textiles, and other objects. Artifacts and trading were also at the heart of the relations between the Ottomans and the Dutch. Even before the establishment of the official diplomatic relations between the Netherlands and the Ottoman Empire in 1612, contacts between the Dutch and Ottomans occurred on various occasions: Dutch pilgrims travelled through Ottoman lands on their way to the Holy Lands, merchants (under foreign flags) used Ottoman ports in the Levant, and already in the 16th century artists, diplomats, travelers, and scholars from the Netherlands visited diverse areas within the Ottoman Empire playing a crucial role in exchanges between these cultures.

Istanbul has, both culturally and topographically, always appealed to forms of exploration and collaboration. We will address encounters, transfers, movements, and visual reflections in fields and disciplines including and not limited to art, architecture, culinary history, culture, linguistics, literature, and patronage charting how cross-cultural exchanges operated at the intersection of these diverse cultural spheres extending from Istanbul to countries including the Netherlands, Germany, Norway, and Sweden throughout different periods.

Organizers

Prof. Ayhan Kaya, Director, European Institute, Jean Monnet Chair, Istanbul Bilgi University
Dr. Anje Müller Gjesdal, Associate Professor of French Language, Østfold University College
Dr. Lora Sariaslan, Assistant Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art, Utrecht University
Dr. Camilla Skalle, Associate Professor of Italian Literature, University of Bergen



Utrecht
University



Østfold University College



Istanbul
Bilgi University



Kingdom of the Netherlands



Netherlands Institute in Turkey

Program

24 October 2024, Swedish Institute, Istiklal Caddesi 247, Beyoglu

<https://srii.org/pages/information-for-visitors>

10 am-10:30 am Welcome and Introductions

Lora Sariaslan (Utrecht University), Anje Müller Gjesdal (Østfold University College), and Camilla Skalle (University of Bergen)

10:30 am-12 pm Mobilities and Istanbul

10:30am Prof. Ayhan Kaya (Director, European Institute, Jean Monnet Chair, Istanbul Bilgi University)

Finding refuge in Istanbul: From the Vikings onward

11 am Dr. Josephine Munch Rasmussen (The Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research, NIKU)

Cultural artefacts en route: Biographies of trade, trafficking, and refuge

Respondent: Dr. Claske Vos (Assistant Professor of European Studies, University of Amsterdam)

12–1:30 pm Lunch in the Swedish Institute

1:30 pm Istanbul in Literature

2 pm Prof. Helena Bodin (Professor of Literary History at the Department of Culture and Aesthetics, Stockholm University)

“I am at home here”: Constantinople before 1928 as a literary world of languages, sounds and scripts

2:30 pm Dr. Anje Müller Gjesdal (Associate Professor of French Language, Østfold University College)

“Love in the North and in the South”: Translingualism and cultural encounters in Amalie Skram’s *Fru Inès*

3 pm Dr. Camilla Skalle (Associate Professor of Italian Literature, University of Bergen)

Travelling Heroines in Constantinople and Rome: The City and the Other in Skram and Undset

3:30 pm Dr. Natalia Igl (Associate Professor in German Literature, Østfold University College):

Vanishing points: Istanbul as a space of unknown pasts and possible futures in contemporary postmigrant German literature

7 pm Dinner at Asmalı Cavit, Asmalı Mescit Cd. 16/D, 34430 Beyoğlu

25 October 2024

11 am-12:30 pm A walk through Beyoğlu through senses and histories
Meet at 11 am in front of the Taksim Republic Monument and walk to Palais de Hollande

12:30-13:30 pm Lunch at Palais de Hollande hosted by Consul General Arjen Uijterlinde

3 pm Public event in the Anamed Auditorium, İstiklal Caddesi No:181 Merkez Han 34433
Beyoğlu

The event includes talks by Prof. Ayhan Kaya and Prof. Helena Bodin, followed by a round table discussion moderated by Dr. Lora Sariaslan.

Finding refuge in Istanbul: From the Vikings onward

Prof. Ayhan Kaya, Istanbul Bilgi University

Istanbul has long stood at the intersection of various tribes, cultures, religions, empires, and traditions. This presentation seeks to provide a historical overview of immigration to Istanbul, beginning in the 7th and 8th centuries, when large migrations of Slavs, Arabs, Turks, Vikings, and others took place. Arabs from the Middle East and Moors from al-Andalus sought to spread Islam in and around Constantinople, dramatically altering the city's demographic landscape. In addition to the ethno-cultural diversity shaped by wars and invasions, historical records indicate that in the 10th century, the Byzantine emperor forcibly relocated hundreds of thousands of Slavic warriors from the Balkans to Constantinople and Asia Minor to defend the Empire against Arab incursions. Byzantine efforts to strengthen the city against Arabs, Turks, and other tribes also included welcoming Viking warriors into the city during the same period. This pattern of migration continued during the Ottoman Empire, with Istanbul serving as a refuge for various groups fleeing persecution by neighboring imperial powers, such as the Romanovs and Habsburgs. Over the centuries, Istanbul became a city that hosted an array of ethnicities, cultures, and religions—including Crimeans, Circassians, Bosniaks, Poles, Pomaks, and, more recently, Syrians. After the Ottoman conquest, Istanbul maintained its multicultural and cosmopolitan character until the late 19th century, when it gradually became more Islamized. Against this backdrop, this paper aims to illustrate how Istanbul has consistently served as a *Third Space*—a place where diverse traditions, histories, and religions have merged into a rich amalgamation of cultures.

Ayhan Kaya is Professor of Politics and Jean Monnet Chair of European Politics of Interculturalism at the Department of International Relations, Istanbul Bilgi University; Director of the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence; a member of the Science Academy, Turkey (since 2012); and a member of the British Academy (since 2024).

Seclusion versus accessibility: The harems of Constantinople in stories by Elsa Lindberg-Dovlette

Prof. Helena Bodin, Stockholm University

This talk focuses on stories by the Swedish writer Elsa Lindberg-Dovlette (1876–1944), in which life in the harems of Constantinople in the early twentieth century is portrayed from the perspective of female insiders. In 1902, she married a Persian diplomat and prince, Mirza Riza Khan Arfa, and lived in his harem in Constantinople as his sole wife, where she gave birth to two children. The harem as a cultural space in Lindberg-Dovlette’s stories is distinctly hybrid, combining Parisian fashion, European languages, and Ottoman traditions. The “world-making” of her stories is informed by the limited and distorted perspective both from inside the harem and from behind the veil, but simultaneously also by the distinctive perspective of a young and—as it seems—emancipated Swedish woman, voluntarily living in a traditional harem.

Helena Bodin is Professor of Literature at Stockholm University. Her research focuses on the functions of literature at the boundaries between languages, nations, arts and media. In particular, she has studied modern literature’s engagement with the Byzantine Orthodox Christian tradition and been engaged in literary multilingualism studies, with a special interest in issues of heterographics or multiscriptism.

Moderator:

Lora Sariaslan is Assistant Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art at Utrecht University.

She previously taught at the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Amsterdam. In addition to being an academic, she has been a curator in different institutions globally. She was assistant curator at the Dallas Museum of Art in Texas and curator at Istanbul Modern.

7 pm Dinner at Eleos, İstiklal Cd. No:231, 34421 Beyoğlu

<https://www.eleosrestaurant.com/beyoglu/>