Konak and Villa (Sarajevo, 15-17 Sep 22)

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sep 15–17, 2022
Deadline: May 29, 2022

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Konak and Villa: Convergences and transmutations of the representative residence in 19th century Southeast Europe

The villa as we know it was born in an age of pandemics and epidemics. The patricians' withdrawal from the congested cities of Tuscany, the Veneto, and Rome to their environs helped establish the design of representative country houses as a reputable artistic task. Later, improved communications made possible the villa's reinvention as a place of permanent residence on the fringes of Europe's industrializing cities. Its erstwhile seclusion was exchanged for a clustering in emerging neighborhoods of the middle and upper classes. Such zonings had become part and parcel of 19th -century urbanization. In the continent's southeast, the modern-age villa of Western provenance encountered and consecutively transmuted (but not necessarily supplanted) traditional forms of elite habitation. Of the many terms associated with such, konak was by far the most commonly used. Beyond its broader meaning, this term also designated more specifically the residence of the provincial administrator (and, eventually, of provincial administration). In their most typical variants, villa and konak shared many features – notably their detached standing, the elevated socio-economic status of their owners, and the refined interiors and gardens in which this status was echoed. The two types also markedly differed in other aspects – notably the typical (modern) villa's conspicuous visibility from the public street, contrasting with the konak's traditional concealment behind walls.

Our conference seeks to bring together current research on representative residences in Southeast Europe. It focuses on works of the 19th century and aims to document various stages and phenomena, while recognizing the singularity of each object. We are particularly interested in discussing how the architecture of elite habitations corresponded to functions (such as co-use as workplace) and desired qualities (such as the ability to survey the surroundings, with elements like verandas and towers as interfaces); how ambitions of distinction were communicated (e.g. through symmetry or other markers of monumentality); and how the residence communicated with the city's core area and outskirts as well as with their surrounding public space. We also invite the addressing of issues of preservation and rehabilitation for public uses, as well as questions of interior design and landscaping.

Please submit proposals for contributions (including information about institutional affiliation) by May 29, 2022, to ajla.bajramovic@univie.ac.at. Invited speakers' costs for travel and accommodation will be covered by the organizers. On account of constraints sustained by the ongoing pandemic, the number of listeners will be limited and contingent on registration.

The conference is organized by European Research Council project no. 758099 at the University of Vienna in cooperation with the Cantonal Institution for the Protection of Cultural, Historical and Nature Heritage (Sarajevo)

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