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ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIORS OF THE HAREMS IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ISTANBUL

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Architecture and Interiors of the Harems in Eighteenth-Century Istanbul

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Abstract: This Element centers the architectural and material worlds created by Ottoman imperial women, foregrounding their decisive role in shaping Istanbul at the end of the eighteenth century. Focusing on Mihrişah Valide Sultan and the sultan's sisters and female relatives, it examines how their patronage transformed the imperial harem at Topkapı Palace and extended into a network of waterfront mansions, charitable complexes, and suburban estates. Drawing on poetic inscriptions, archival correspondence, and visual sources, the study reconstructs the collaborative processes linking these women to stewards, builders, and artisans. It argues that their domestic and architectural interventions constituted powerful expressions of authority, visibility, and political agency within the empire.

Keywords: Istanbul, royal women, Ottoman history, palaces and gardens, Ottoman architecture

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