



Gustav Karlsson Lectures on Byzantine Culture and Literature

The 2025 Gustav Karlsson Lecture

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Once and Future Ruins

Constantinopolitan Afterlives in the
Fifteenth-Century Italian Imagination

This talk traces the networks and motivations through which the Byzantine tradition of urban ekphrasis was transported to and practiced on the Italian Peninsula, creating the foundation for the invention of a new form of depiction, the city portrait. The city portrait was not a utilitarian map. It was a highly selective and often glorifying or nostalgic depiction, serving as material for humanist contemplation and political rhetoric. This was particularly true when its iconographic elements were recycled in contemporaneous and later artworks to decorate the spaces of Christian history, thereby producing visual agendas concerning both the past, contemporary theology and politics, and future aspirations. This talk draws on Reinhart Koselleck's concept of *Vergangene Zukunft* (Future Past) and Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood's *anachronic*, or *plural temporality*, to argue for the Byzantine elements in the historicism of the fifteenth-century city portraits and Christian paintings.

Friday, November 21, 2025

19:00 (Istanbul), 18:00 (Athens), 17:00 (Stockholm)

To attend in person at the Swedish Research Institute in
Istanbul (Istiklal Caddesi 247) or receive a Zoom link,
register at event@sri.org.tr before November 20

