

Mikolaj Getka-Kenig (Courtauld Institute of Art)

## **Beyond the Picturesque – Sezincote House and the Cultural Meaning of Indian Exoticism in Late Georgian England**

In my paper I would like to present the results of my research on Sezincote House in Gloucestershire (designed by Samuel Pepys Cockerell, built 1805 for his brother). This extraordinary orientalisising manor house (adjoined by similarly fashioned outbuildings and pavilions), whose external architecture brings to mind the monuments of Mughal India, is generally framed by architectural historians as an example of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Picturesque design. However, this viewpoint appears to be quite reductive. My study tends to throw a new light on this structure by placing it in the context of the late Georgian colonial/imperial discourse. I argue that the house can be interpreted as a specific visual and spatial statement about its owner's self-fashioned public persona as a retired colonial official who after many years spent in India decided to settle down in England to lead a life of a country squire. Drawing on the archival material concerning the house as well as recent historical studies about the contemporary cultural image of the nabob (like Tillman W. Nechtman's *Nabos: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 2010) I am presenting Cockerell's invented Indian idiom as an attempt to express the sense of socio-cultural otherness such people experienced in their homeland.