Lecture summary:

One of the central aspects of Enlightenment thought to express the principles of an emerging cosmopolitanism was the search for the foundations of a shared humanity across the boundaries of different cultures. Similar ideas transformed the traditions of European garden design in the second half of the eighteenth century with William Chambers’ writings on Chinese gardens suggesting aesthetic values that both paralleled and rivaled those found in the English gardens of his contemporaries. In 1771 Catherine the Great translated Chambers’ Designs of Chinese Buildings into Russian, which led to the creation of the largest complex of chinoiserie in any eighteenth-century European garden. Taking as its focus the gardens of Tsarskoe Selo, this article explores the tensions between cosmopolitanism, exoticism and imperialism in Russian garden design under Catherine the Great.

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Reference:


Vladimir Borovikovsky, *Catherine the Great walking in the Gardens of Tsarskoe Selo*, 1794 (The Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow).
View of a part of the Cameron Gallery at Tsarskoye Selo. Ychitelev Pavel. 1780s. Pen and Indian ink, brush and Indian ink and watercolour
Giacomo Quarenghi. Big Caprice, Tsarskoe Selo 1780s

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