Anglo-Turkish Society hybrid lecture, 27 May 2025, 6.00 pm (UK time)
Speaker: Andrew Finkel
Venue: Royal Anthropological Institute, 50 Fitzroy St, Fitzrovia, London W1T 5BT
Title: 'Constantinople in Olympia: How the nineteenth century Eastern Question was transformed by spectacle, song and dance'

On Boxing Day 1893, 32,251 travellers descended on Constantinople, not Istanbul's historical peninsula, but rather a colossal replica of the city, constructed under the vast glass-and-iron canopy of Olympia in West London. For a multitude unlikely to make the journey across Europe, Constantinople in London represented the real thing. Passengers alighting at Addison Road station were invited to board a caique to ferry them down an imitation Bosphorus, through a torch-lit Byzantine cistern, into an ersatz Golden Horn. Twice daily for nearly a year, a cast of 2,000 performed *Constantinople or The Revels of the East – A Grand Terpsichorean, Romantic and Lyric Spectacle, and Aquatic Pageant, in Two Acts and Six Tableaux.* Orientalist for sure, the extravaganza helped reshape the popular image of the Ottoman empire at a time when the reputation of Abdülhamid II was at a low and Great Game machinations at their height. It also gave birth to other 'Constantinoples', from Buffalo to Budapest, and while few traces of these simulacra remain, they arguably created an exotic, indelible, fairy-tale image of the city in the Western imagination. Shaped by commerce and love of spectacle, the performances at Olympia also blazed an all too curious trail to today's mass tourism.

Booking essential: https://andrew-finkel-presentation.eventbrite.co.uk

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Based in Istanbul since 1989, Andrew Finkel has corresponded for international media including *The Times*, *The Economist*, *TIME*, CNN and for the Latitude section of *The New York Times*. He is also a contributing editor and restaurant critic for *Cornucopia* Magazine. His articles, editorials and broadcast commentaries have appeared in an equal variety of media that includes *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, *Observer*, *Financial Times, The Art Newspaper, The Spectator* and the BBC. His experiences of working in the Turkish language press, in newsrooms, as a columnist and on television, prompted him a decade ago to co-found Platform24 (P24) a human rights NGO that supports independent journalism and free expression. Among its projects is the popular Kıraathane, the Istanbul Literature House. He is the author of scholarly articles on press capture and media integrity as well as the Oxford University Press handbook, *Turkey, What Everyone Needs to Know*. His recently published debut novel *The Adventure of the Second Wife* revolves around the well-documented obsession which Abdülhamid II, the last great Ottoman Sultan, had for the stories of Sherlock Holmes.