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Thematic Session: Food and Architecture

Title: Architectural dimensions of Karen Blixen's feasts and food spaces

“There is a particular happiness in giving a man whom you like very much, good food that you have cooked yourself.” These words were written by the Danish author Karen Blixen in the novel *“Out of Africa”* in 1937 and opens a door to the spectacular food spaces and magical feasts surrounding this famous *storyteller*. With this paper, we ask if these feasts and food spaces of Blixen - both as physical interior architecture and imaginary scenography carried out in the storyteller's life - can help us explore the connection between food and architecture?

In our search we pursue Blixen's *writing place*; the physical design of “Ewalds Stue” (Ewalds Sittingroom) in Rungstedlund in Denmark where she, with a view over Øresund at one side and into the garden and forest on the other, wrote many of her novels and found inspiration to the famous story *“Babettes' Feast”*. Further, we pursue the Manor house at the African Farm in Kenya; the great nature and interior with the folding screen decorated with Chinese figures which shaped the tales Blixen spun Scheherazade-like for her lover, Denys Finch Hatton while they were dining.

In these two places, she not only shaped her magic tales, but also shaped the myth; the myth about herself, the myth that enclosed several spectacular feasts and the myth about a lost Paradise. Thereby, the architecture of the farm in Kenya and of the home in Rungstedlund not only became physical frames for her everyday life, but simultaneously a significant stage which placed sensory delight, exceptional entertainment and seduction at the center of both food and architecture. Consequently, in our opinion, also pointing to how the element of *storytelling* is perhaps the magic that connects food and architecture.