
P R E S S R E L E A S E

October 26, 2020

Last days to see
Alexis Gritchenko: The Constantinople Years
at Meşher

Meşher's second exhibition Alexis Gritchenko: The Constantinople Years will stay open until November 1, 2020.

The works selected for the exhibition comprise mostly watercolors as well as gouache, charcoal drawings and oil paintings the artist made during his stay in Istanbul between 1919-1921. More than 150 works themed around Istanbul are brought together for the first time for this exhibition which takes place 100 years after his stay in the city.

Istanbul from Gritchenko's perspective

A selection of Gritchenko's artworks of Istanbul, where he lived between 1919 and 1921, are brought together at Meşher located on Istiklal Street. In these artworks Gritchenko depicts Istanbul from his unique perspective and color palette; his passion for the Hagia Sophia, the city walls, from the Golden Horn to Galata and even to Büyükkada.

Alexis Gritchenko: The Constantinople Years is curated by Ebru Esra Satici and Şeyda Çetin, while the scope of the exhibition was determined by the research of the academics and exhibition consultants Vita Susak and Ayşenur Güler. The exhibition, accompanied by letters, publications, photographs and videos from various archives, sheds light into the lives of the artist and his associates.

After leaving Istanbul for Paris, Gritchenko published his memoirs in 1930 titled *Deux ans à Constantinople* (Two Years in Constantinople). The memoirs have been utilized as a guide for the exhibition, allowing us to trace the painter's footsteps in the city and provide a unique insight into the excitement, longing, hope and despair that he experienced during his short time in Istanbul.

Regarding the exhibition, curators Ebru Esra Satici and Şeyda Çetin said: "The two years Gritchenko spent in Istanbul coincided with the Armistice and the occupation of the city. Although he lived in poverty and faced numerous difficulties, he remained committed to his art and enjoyed a highly productive period which was to prove a turning point in his career. Gritchenko unremittently continued to explore the backstreets, mosques and coffee shops of the city, and was inspired by his discoveries. His works skillfully depict the urban landscapes and historical buildings of Istanbul and the lives of its inhabitants. Paintings of boatmen, street peddlers, porters and others provide a window into the life of the city during that period. Through a chance meeting with İbrahim Çallı, he made friends and contacts with artists and writers from the circle of intellectuals of the period. In particular he associated with painters from the 1914 Generation and his friendships with İbrahim Çallı and Namık İsmail had a positive impact on his personal and professional life."



Among the archive documents and publications included in the exhibition is an edition of *Deux ans à Constantinople* from Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's private collection of books. Furthermore, the exhibition gathers and showcases artworks loaned from over 20 museums, archives and private collections from seven countries including the National Art Museum of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Museum New York, the Centre Pompidou, and Collège de France. Offering the most comprehensive selection compiled from Gritchenko's artworks on Istanbul to date, the exhibition pays homage to the artist's dedication to work and enthusiasm for life.

With *Alexis Gritchenko: The Constantinople Years* exhibition, Meşher is inviting the visitors to see Istanbul through the eyes of Gritchenko, who was a foreign refugee artist in a city under occupation 100 years ago.

You have a limited time to visit the *Alexis Gritchenko: The Constantinople Years* exhibition, which closes on **November 1, 2020**.

Exhibition publications

I. Exhibition book

The exhibition catalog includes a presentation by curators Ebru Esra Satıcı and Şeyda Çetin as well as current research by art historians Vita Susak and Ayşenur Güler. The catalog is published bilingually, in English and Turkish.

II. *Two Years in Constantinople*

During his time in Istanbul, Gritchenko recorded his experiences in notebooks. Later, in Paris, these were collated and published as memoirs in 1930 under the title *Deux ans à Constantinople* (Two Years in Constantinople). While the exhibition showcases the artist's Istanbul artworks, these have been correlated with the corresponding accounts in his memoirs and notes to further inform and orientate the viewer. A Turkish translation of his memoirs was also prepared for publication simultaneously with the exhibition by Yapı Kredi Publications, which details Gritchenko's experience and his passion for work.

III. Meşher Podcast

Talks organized in parallel with the exhibition are broadcast online. The episodes are accessible via Meşher's [Spotify](#) account with video version available on Meşher's [YouTube channel](#).

About the artist

The Ukrainian artist Alexis Gritchenko (b. 1883, Krolevets-d. 1977, Vence) was a practitioner of modern art in the early 20th century in Moscow; Moscow being one of the major art centers of the time. He participated in exhibitions that also included avant-garde painters Kazimir Malevich and Wassily Kandinsky. He also published books as an artist and art critic and taught at the art school. Gritchenko fled the October Revolution of 1917 and subsequent the civil war and arrived in Istanbul in November 1919. The city provided a relatively safe haven for the artist between 1919 and 1921. Gritchenko settled in Paris in 1921, and then in Southern France after 1924. His works were included in many exhibitions held in Europe and America and notably at the Salon d'Automne (Autumn Salon) in Paris. The Alexis Gritchenko Foundation was established in New York in 1958. In 2006, fulfilling the artist's bequest, the artworks in this collection were handed over to the National Art Museum of Ukraine.

Meşher

Initiated by the Vehbi Koç Foundation (VKV), Meşher was conceived as an exhibition space that would hold a wide array of exhibitions with a range of subjects as well as organizing a variety of activities such as workshops and conferences. With a name that means "exhibition space" in Ottoman Turkish, Meşher



aims to provide an inspiring platform of dialogue across time and cultures and has been welcoming visitors since its inauguration in September 2019. With an exhibition area of 900 sqm on three floors and an additional 100-sqm space dedicated to events, Meşher will continue to contribute to the arts and culture scene through hosting exhibitions, organizing various programs on a wide range of subjects both historical and contemporary and act as a reference point with its research-oriented academic stance and publications.

Information on public health measures in effect at Meşher and visiting hours can be obtained via www.mesher.org

Meşher on social media

[Instagram](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Spotify](#)