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**P R E S S   R E L E A S E**

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**August 7, 2020**

## **Meşher's second exhibition *Alexis Gritchenko: The Constantinople Years* reopens on September 1**

*Temporarily closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Meşher reopens on September 1 after fully taking the required public health measures.*

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### ***Alexis Gritchenko: The Constantinople Years* reopens**

Meşher continues to present the *Alexis Gritchenko: The Constantinople Years* exhibition showcasing works of the Ukrainian artist who lived in Istanbul between 1919 and 1921. Talks organized in parallel with the exhibition can be accessed online.

For this exhibition more than 150 works by Gritchenko, in mediums as diverse as watercolor, gouache, drawings and oil, have been brought together at the centenary of the artist's visit to Istanbul. With this exhibition, Meşher aims to provide an opportunity for the visitors to rediscover Istanbul with the details hidden in colors and forms.

*Alexis Gritchenko: The Constantinople Years* can be seen until November 1, 2020 everyday between 11.00-17.00 except for Mondays.

### **Istanbul from Gritchenko's perspective**

A selection of Gritchenko's Istanbul-themed works, where he lived between 1919 and 1921, are brought together at Meşher, located on İstiklal Street. In these works, spanning from his favorite Hagia Sophia to Üsküdar, from Galata to Büyükdada, Gritchenko depicts Istanbul from his unique perspective and color palette.

*Alexis Gritchenko-The Constantinople Years* is curated by Ebru Esra Satıcı and Şeyda Çetin, while the scope of the exhibition was determined by the academic research of 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 artist's footsteps in the city and provide a unique insight into the excitement, longing, hope and despair he experienced during his stay in Istanbul.

Regarding the exhibition, curators Ebru Esra Satıcı and Şeyda Çetin say, "The two years Gritchenko spent in Istanbul coincided with the Armistice and 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. Acquaintances with painters of the 1914 generation, namely İbrahim Çallı and Namık İsmail, and other figures of the intelligentsia, obviously 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 works 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 works 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 invites its visitors to see Istanbul through Gritchenko’s eyes.

## **Exhibition publications**

### **I. Exhibition book**

The exhibition book includes a presentation by curators Ebru Esra Satıcı and Şeyda Çetin as well as recent research by art historians Vita Susak and Ayşenur Güler. The exhibition book is published in English and Turkish in separate volumes.

### **II. *Two Years in Constantinople***

During his time in Istanbul, Gritchenko recorded his experiences in notebooks, which later in Paris, published as memoirs in 1930 with the title *Deux ans à Constantinople* [Two Years in Constantinople]. These memoirs served as a guide while forming the exhibition’s framework. A Turkish translation of the 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](#).

## **Sanatçı hakkında**

The Ukrainian artist Alexis Gritchenko (b. 1883, Krolevets - d. 1977, Vence) was a practitioner of modern art in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Moscow, which was 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 the civil war that followed 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 featured in many exhibitions 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 and in 2006, the works in this collection were handed over to the National Art Museum of Ukraine as per the artist’s will.

## **Meşher**

An initiative of the Vehbi Koç Foundation (VKV), Meşher was conceived as an exhibition space that would organize comprehensive exhibitions on topics ranging from contemporary art to historical ones, as well as a variety of events such as workshops and conferences. Meaning “exhibition space” in Ottoman Turkish, Meşher aims to provide an inspiring platform of dialog 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 activity area dedicated to events, Meşher will continue to contribute to the arts and culture scene through 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. Located on Istiklal Street, Meşher's exhibitions, events and guided tours are free of charge. Meşher is open six days a week except Monday, between 11.00-17.00.

**Information on public health measures in effect can be obtained via [www.mesher.org](http://www.mesher.org).**

#### **Meşher on social media**

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