

## **Five Centuries of Istanbul on Display at Meşher**

**Meşher invites visitors to see Istanbul from end to end and top to bottom with its new exhibition, *Istanbul as Far as the Eye Can See*. Presenting a visual cross-section of the city across five centuries, the exhibit features panoramic and wide-angle depictions, some of which are being shown in Istanbul for the first time. More than 100 works ranging from engravings to rare books, oil paintings, and photographs are on display.**

Meşher, Istanbul's leading interdisciplinary exhibition space, is pleased to introduce *Istanbul as Far as the Eye Can See: Views across Five Centuries*, a new exhibition curated by Şeyda Çetin and Ebru Esra Satıcı that will open on 20 September 2023.

Based on a selection of more than 100 rare works from the Ömer Koç Collection, the exhibition spans 500 years, from the 15<sup>th</sup> century – when Istanbul became Ottoman Empire's capital – to the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Paintings and engravings showing wide-angle views, together with rare books, albums, panoramic photographs, and even souvenirs of Istanbul, offer visitors a richly varied visual record of the city.

The many producers of these works are also very diverse, including a ship captain, travellers, soldiers, ambassadors, writers, photographers, architects, and city planners; many of them are Westerners with agendas ranging from political to military to aesthetic, and the medium they used varied. Their work reveals both diplomatic relations and the city's multi-cultural structure and social life; they also trace the major changes that have taken place in the city over time.

Quotations from written sources accompany the visual representations, creating a dialogue between Western perspectives and 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Ottoman/Turkish literature. Rather than being yet another ode to the city, the exhibition encourages reflection on the diversity of its narratives and the differences in its many depictions.

### **Istanbul as seen through Western eyes**

Henry Aston Barker's panorama of Istanbul, which he made from the top of the Galata Tower in 1800; an engraving after Philipp Franz von Gudenus's drawing from the roof of the Swedish Embassy in 1741, sketched when he was stationed in Istanbul; and Joseph Schranz's panorama from the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara: these are only some of the images now showcased at Meşher. The works of James Robertson, known to have taken the earliest 360-degree panoramic photographs of Istanbul, are also on display, including his panorama taken

from the Bayezid Tower in May 1854 and presented in an album that bears the artist's signature.

The panoramic views that enable us to see Istanbul from end to end and top to bottom in *Istanbul as Far as the Eye Can See* contain many interesting details as well. Shopkeepers in local dress, women making excursions in ox-drawn carriages, Europeans distinguishable by their hats, children, and four-legged friends of the city complete Istanbul's historical silhouette.

### **The oldest work is from 1493**

Curators Şeyda Çetin and Ebru Esra Satıcı shared the following about the exhibition spread across Meşher's three floors: "We aimed to include works depicting as many vistas as possible, from different points of view and of different neighbourhoods across the city. We display over 100 works across three floors of Meşher, the oldest being the *Liber chronicarum* (1493) by Hartmann Schedel; among the most recent is an album (1922–1924) of original designs and drawings by Alexandre V. Pankoff. The themes and stories that come to the fore are not separated by sharp boundaries; on the contrary, they nourish and complement each other. We believe that revealing the relationships between the works, rather than classifying them

according to period or medium, will contribute to our understanding of this multi-layered city.”

Meşher’s director Nilüfer H. Konuk stated that the exhibition team seeks to reach a wide audience. Konuk added, “Some of these exhibits are the earliest printed edition of a work or the sole surviving copy, while others are pioneering examples of their period. Some are being exhibited in Istanbul for the first time. We are delighted to bring these rare works from Ömer Koç’s precious collection to a wide audience at Meşher.”

### **Exhibition catalogue**

Published both in English and Turkish, the exhibition catalogue draws attention to the diversity of Istanbul’s representations with contributions from experts in the field. Catalogue entries are written by Sven Becker, Briony Llewellyn, Bahattin Öztuncay, and Claude Piening. Beginning with a preface by Ömer M. Koç, the book contains an introduction to the exhibition by the curators Şeyda Çetin and Ebru Esra Satıcı, as well as an essay by Prof. Zeynep Çelik entitled “We, the city of Istanbul, we are beautiful.”

*Istanbul as Far as the Eye Can See* will be open until 26 May 2024. The exhibition is accompanied by a programme of events, including workshops for adults and children organised by the curators and the Meşher team. The full up-to-date

event programme can be accessed on the Meşher website and through its social media accounts.

## **About Meşher**

Initiated by the Vehbi Koç Foundation (VKF), Meşher advocates the creation of new dialogues across time and cultures, not only through its exhibitions ranging from historical research to contemporary art but also its comprehensive array of parallel activities such as publications, workshops, and conferences. With its overall interdisciplinary approach, Meşher, which takes its name from the Ottoman Turkish word meaning exhibition space, has been active since September 2019. Meşher presents exhibitions on a wide range of subjects, across a time span ranging from the Middle Ages to the present. With its versatile program, research-based academic aspect, and publications, Meşher continues to act as a reference point for Istanbul's arts and culture scene.

Located on İstiklal Street, Meşher welcomes visitors with free access to exhibitions, events, and guided tours. It is open six days a week, being closed on Mondays.

[www.mesher.org](http://www.mesher.org)

[https://www.instagram.com/mesher\\_official/](https://www.instagram.com/mesher_official/)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSnhkBrS7JzKHWKVfHvHkGw>

<https://www.facebook.com/mesherofficial/>

<https://open.spotify.com/show/6rFwanCXAYKbH1TjEZYibE?si=d43b6899a364aab>

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