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**Press Release**

**The Four-Legged Municipality**

**“Street Dogs of İstanbul”**

**Exhibition**

27 October 2016 - 11 March 2017

İstanbul Research Institute presents ***The Four-Legged Municipality: Street Dogs of İstanbul***, an exhibition that sheds light on street dogs, who were an integral part of Istanbul’s daily life in almost every period of the city’s transformation through the political, religious, and sociological cultural values.

The exhibition, curated by Ekrem Işın with advisor Catherine Pinguet, follows the history of these fellow Istanbulite dogs as they played an integral part in the city’s social life through the centuries. This gallery exhibition retraces this history through photographs, travel journals, postcards, magazines and engravings from the 19th to the early 20th centuries.

The curator of the exhibition, Ekrem Işın underlines the role of these street dogs in particular as guards or watchmen in ensuring neighborhood security: “*The western observer, assuming that dogs had the job of cleaning the streets in Istanbul, where modern municipal government was as yet non-existent, was in a sense stretching the rational molds cut out for the East.”* The fact that Istanbul’s streets were sparsely occupied by the public until mid-19th century is in itself a phenomenon that instigated these animals into the city’s everyday life. This project advisor Catherine Pinguet comments, *“Why should there be so much care and consideration for an animal, some might ask. That is the never-ending reproach directed at those who take the animal issue seriously, a commonplace question that friends and protectors of the street dogs in Istanbul know only too well.”* She replies to this by quoting Romain Gary’s novel *Les Racines du ciel (The Roots of Heaven)*: *“Because their freedom is the guarantee of mine.”*

The fate of street dogs, these guardians of public property, began to change with the development of a more civil society. As İstanbul’s geographical boundaries expanded, the newly established quarters became the units of settlement that wove the positivist fabric of everyday life. While the four-legged municipality of the Ottomans was being transformed into the two-legged municipality of the Republic, the positivist concept of life was also expunging dogs from İstanbul’s history starting with these districts. When the notion of exterminating the dogs with poison gas was advanced in 1927 by some experts who had been to Europe, not a single person, with the exception of Ahmed Rasim who was a throwback to the period of the four-legged municipality, stepped forward to defend these abandoned animals.

The exhibition **The Four-Legged Municipality: Street Dogs of İstanbul** is on show at the İstanbul Research Institute, between 27 October and 11 March 2017.

**İstanbul Research Institute is free of admissions and can be visited Mondays through Friday from 09:00 to 17:30 and on Saturday between 10:30 – 17:00. Wednesdays are longer at the Institute! On “Long Wednesdays,” İstanbul Research Institute is open until 20:00.**

**Press Enquiries**

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