

A Traveling Exhibition Brings Van Gogh to Life

By [Christopher Brennan](#)

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Van Gogh projections dominate the dark space of Artplay's exhibit hall. **Christopher Brennan**

Some artists take on personas and meanings that are larger than life after their deaths. Vincent Van Gogh is one of those artists, and Muscovites have recently gotten a chance to surround themselves with larger-than-life images of the painter and his work at the traveling exhibition "Van Gogh Alive."

Installed at the Artplay Design Center until March 26, "Van Gogh Alive" immerses audiences in a rotating selection of images projected onto walls, including self-portraits, quotations, photos and paintings from the Dutchman's life.

The show, billed as "a grandiose multimedia exhibition" that will let viewers "throw away the traditional notions of visiting museums," consists of a 30-minute loop of works from various stages of Van Gogh's life set against classical music stalwarts like Antonio Vivaldi's "Winter." The exhibit is organized by the Grande Exhibitions company, which has

previously displayed the show in Singapore, Istanbul, Phoenix, Ankara, and Tel Aviv, among other international cities.

Beginning with his time in the Netherlands and going through different stages of Van Gogh's career, the exhibition attempts to show the artist's "downward spiral into mental illness," drawing largely on quotations from his letters and showing his most well-known paintings like those from his almond blossoms and sunflowers series. Aside from the odd inclusion of video elements such as a rotating Parisian windmill or flying crows, however, the half-hour video loop looks a lot like an elaborate slideshow and viewers will most likely leave with their notions about visiting museums and Van Gogh largely unchanged.

That being said, Van Gogh Alive is not really trying to compete with the State Tretyakov Gallery. The event's structure and admission price at 550 rubles (\$16) for adults on weekends, may not appeal to everyone, but the setup is perfect for one type of exhibition-goer: people in groups who want to take lots of pictures of themselves next to giant versions of classic works of art. A viewer's time at the show will most likely include seeing hip, young Muscovites changing colors in the projectors' lights as they scurry to pose in front of Starry Night before the picture flits away.

The paintings may only be video reproductions, but Artplay succeeds at making the art-viewing experience more casual than a museum where someone would usually go to see Van Gogh's work. Though cell phone selfies and comfy chairs may not match the intense music and the artist's descent into despair, a small army of beanbag chairs and a photo booth on the space's upstairs balcony are welcome additions. Staring into the 10-meter high face of a depressed genius may be intimidating. Ultimately, though, the exhibition creates a relaxed environment for those who want to sit and watch a swirling series of Van Gogh paintings.

Van Gogh Alive is on display until March 26 at the Artplay Design Center, 10 Nizhnyaya Syromyatnicheskaya Ulitsa, Bldg. 3. For more information, see the [Grande Exhibitions website](#).

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