

**Melike Kara**

***Whispers***

**5.6.–23.8.2026**

**For her solo exhibition at the Kunsthau s Hamburg, Melike Kara has burnt parts of her photographic archive and incorporates the remains into a large-scale installation. Conceived as a garden landscape, *Whispers* – created as part of the 9th Triennial of Photography Hamburg – focuses on the act of letting go and the sensory experience of eternal transformation.**

Melike Kara's artistic practice has for years been situated at the intersection of personal archival work, collective historiography and painterly translation. In her new installation created specifically for the Kunsthau s Hamburg, she radicalizes this approach by, for the first time, burning photographs from her own archive and rendering them to ashes. What remains are traces: fragments, condensations, material relics of images eluding fixation. In doing so, she follows an expanded understanding of photography: not as a static image or repository of the past, but as a process – as a circulating and evolving medium of memory, identity and transformation.

Starting point for *Whispers* is Melike Kara's intensive engagement with her Kurdish heritage, which she has been researching, archiving and artistically processing for many years. In this inquiry, she deliberately focused her gaze on the beauty of Kurdish traditions – beyond pain, persecution and political attribution. The exhibition marks an unprecedented shift in this examination: rather than representing a sense of identity, the artist asks how it can be embedded or even dissolved.

Melike Kara translates this exploration into a garden, laid out in the exhibition hall of the Kunsthau s. Ashes from the photographs are incorporated into the installation. A frieze made from coffee grounds permeates the space like a sedimented trace of the past. In some places, plants are growing. Water oozes out of the walls and collects in basins. As a result, a vibrant yet fragile environment emerges, oscillating between evolution and disintegration. Drawing on the ritual of reading coffee grounds as practised by her grandmother, Melike Kara lets the material's socially and culturally embedded meanings dissolve. Coffee no longer serves as a means of divination. Rather, it is part of a process that invites questions about presence, perception and identification. Through the interplay of water and fire, continuity and change, *Whispers* opens up a sensory space of experience which places individual memory in a broader context. The installation asks less about identity than about shared conditions – and the possibility of coexistence beyond cultural attributions. Particularly in light of current political and social turmoil, consciously breaking free from fixed images becomes a liberating act of self-reflection and self-empowerment.

Considered in the context of this year's Triennial of Photography, Melike Kara's exhibition underscores the central themes of the festival concept *Alliance, Infinity, Love – In the Face of the Other: Alliance* as a fluid, ever-evolving relationship between images, bodies and stories; *Infinity* as an unresolved, ongoing process of memory and change; and *Love* as a delicate form of closeness and belonging that requires care and openness.

The exhibition is curated by Anna Nowak and kindly supported by the Ministry of Culture and Media Hamburg as well as Claussen-Simon-Stiftung.

**Press contact:** Lea Ziegler | [presse@kunsthau shamburg.de](mailto:presse@kunsthau shamburg.de) | +49 40 33 58 03