

Press kit

Melike Kara

Whispers

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Press release, 13.5.2026

Melike Kara
Whispers
5.6.–23.8.2026

Press conference at Deichtorhallen Hamburg: Thu, 4.6.2026, 11 am

Press preview at Kunsthaus Hamburg: Thu, 4.6.2026, 1–3 pm

Exhibition opening at Kunsthaus Hamburg: Thu, 4.6.2026, 6 pm



Studio shot, 2025, © Melike Kara; Photo: Şirin Şimşek

For her solo exhibition at the Kunsthaus Hamburg, the artist 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. At the Kunsthaus 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 the expansive installation created specifically for the Kunsthaus Hamburg is Melike Kara's intensive engagement with her Kurdish heritage, which she has been researching, archiving and artistically processing for many years. In this exploration, the artist deliberately focused her gaze on the beauty of Kurdish traditions – beyond pain, persecution and political attribution. *Whispers* 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. What remains when the stories we have told about origin and belonging lose their contours? What form of perception emerges when cultural attributions are no longer at the centre?

Melike Kara translates these questions into a garden, laid out in the exhibition hall of the Kunsthaus. Ashes from the photographs are incorporated into the installation. Paintings are strewn across the floor; images made from coffee grounds permeate the space like sedimented traces of the past. In some places, plants are growing. Coffee oozes out of the walls, spills over the surfaces of the images and collects in basins or puddles. As a result, a vibrant yet fragile environment emerges, oscillating between evolution and dissolution. Through the interplay of water and fire, continuity and change, *Whispers* opens up a sensory space of experience which – rather than isolating individual memory – places it in a broader context. The installation asks less about identity than about shared conditions – and the possibility of co-existence 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.

Under the artistic direction of Mark Sealy, the 9th Triennial of Photography Hamburg is dedicated to the significance of photography in our time and reveals that the medium can do more than just observe. Considered in the light of the Triennial of Photography, Melike Kara's exhibition underscores the central themes of this year's festival concept: *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.

Running concurrently with Melike Kara's exhibition, the Kunsthaus Hamburg presents an installation by Andrey Klassen at the Admiralitätstraße 75 project space as part of this year's summer project by the City Curator Hamburg on the theme of fire. The exhibitions by Melike Kara, Andrey Klassen and *FIRE. From the Cosmos to the Commons*, all of which address the destructive as well as regenerative forces of this element, will be explored in relation to one another during joint guided tours on 27 June and 25 July.

Curated by Anna Nowak

Kindly supported by



Biography

Melike Kara (*1985, Bensberg, DE) is an artist working across various media with a particular focus on painting. In her practice, she engages with questions of perception, materiality and transformation in the interplay between image and space. In addition to painting, Kara works with fragments of photography, organic materials and installation-based arrangements, assembled into multi-layered, spatial constellations. She studied under Rosmarie Trockel at the Düsseldorf Art Academy. Her works have been exhibited internationally, among at Yuz Museum, Shanghai (2018); Wiels Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels (2020); Kunstverein Göttingen (2020); Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne (2021); Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (2022); Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen (2023); Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf (2023); Museum De Fundatie, Zwolle (2023); Philara Foundation, Düsseldorf (2023) as well as Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt (2024). She lives and works in Cologne.

Accompanying programme

Thu, 4.6., 6 pm

Opening

Introduction: Anna Nowak

Panorama XXIII with Jeannel & Sofía Catalán

Fri, 5.6., 12 pm 6 pm

To the Rottenness I Say You Are My Father. And to the Worms My Sister and My Brother

Performance by Toni Ehrhardt

Thu, 2.7., 6 pm

Panorama XXIV with 23qs & Laetizia

Sat, 25.7., 5 pm

Sus viejas manos aún sabían cómo re-volver con un cucharón de palo, los sonidos de café

Performance by Daniela Zambrano Almidón

Thu, 6.8., 6 pm

Panorama XXV with jinO.o & Charlie Spiegelfeld

Wed, 19.8., 9 pm

WHEN BOUGAINVILLES WILL HAVE TAKEN OVER

Short film programme curated by Maïke Mia Höhne (Artistic Director, Kurzfilm Festival Hamburg)

In the backyard of fux eG

In cooperation with fux Lichtspiele

Holiday workshops for children and teenagers

Wed, 15.7., 11 am–2 pm (ages 7–12)

Wed, 22.7., 11 am–2 pm (ages 13–18)

Participation: 12 €

Registration: register@kunsthaushamburg.de

Guided tours

Thu, 11.6., 6 pm, with Anna Nowak

Thu, 2.7., 6 pm, with Jaana Heine

Sun, 23.8., 3 pm, with Anna Nowak

Joint guided tours with the City Curator Hamburg

In the context of *FIRE. From the Cosmos to the Commons*

Sat, 27.6., 2 pm

Sat, 25.7., 2 pm

Further information on the accompanying programme at www.kunsthaushamburg.de

General information

Opening hours

Tuesday–Sunday 11 am–6 pm

Closed on Mondays

Admission fees

Regular: 6 €

Reduced: 4 €

Groups: 2 €

Admission to the events and participation in guided tours are free of charge.

Admission for refugees is free.

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