

Press kit**Yalda Afsah**
Temper**Content**

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Press release, 4.8.2026

Yalda Afsah
Temper
5.9.–8.11.2026

Press preview: Fri, 4.9.2026, 11 am
Exhibition opening: Fri, 4.9.2026, 7 pm



Yalda Afsah, *HEAT*, 2026, film still, © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2026

At the Kunsthaus Hamburg, artist Yalda Afsah presents her new film *HEAT* for the first time in an institutional context. As part of a large-scale installation, the work enters into dialogue with two other films from her latest series, which explores collective rituals and their social dimensions.

With her current body of work, the German-Iranian artist Yalda Afsah explores ritual ceremonies and their role as social and physical choreographies, in the scope of which universal questions of power, identity and community come to the fore. In her solo exhibition at the Kunsthaus Hamburg, the films *JARRAMPLAS* (2025, 15:30 min), *PAN* (2026, 20:06 min) and *HEAT* (2026, 21:00 min) are shown together for the first time. Based on research into local ritual practices in Spain, Bulgaria and Taiwan, they examine how societal orders and collective experiences manifest themselves in performative acts.

In her film *JARRAMPLAS*, Yalda Afsah traces a custom celebrated in the Spanish village of Piornal every year. We see young men throwing turnips with remarkable physical intensity at a target which initially remains out of view. The question of who or what this collective aggression is directed at is deliberately left unresolved. The artist works with intentional restraint in terms of contextual information, thus shifting the focus from the specific event to the dynamics of the group. Her careful observation of this unfolding spectacle – equally menacing as it is theatrical – draws the audience into a reflection on the role of the spectator.

PAN is devoted to Paneurhythmy, a spiritual dance ritual for which thousands of people gather in the Rila Mountains in Bulgaria every summer. In an atmospherically dense composition, Yalda Afsah works with circular camera movements and visual overlays to render a multi-layered choreography of unified movement. With images oscillating between quiet meditation and collective ecstasy, the piece inquires into the relationship between spirituality, physical discipline and community-building. As in her earlier works, Yalda Afsah also addresses humanity's dependence on nature and its simultaneous alienation from it.

HEAT, the artist's most ambitious project to date, led her to Asia for the first time. There, she witnessed a ceremony considered one of the most dangerous in the world: the Taiwanese Bombing of Master Handan Festival. During these festivities, crowds of people in protective gear move through the night, surrounded by a cacophony of exploding bangers. In this physically demanding parade, which is an affirmation of faith, a test of courage and a spiritual purification all at once, light, sound and movement merge into a complex dramaturgy. Trust and fear, resistance and devotion all seem to blend into one another. The custom can be traced back to the end of the cholera epidemic in the 19th century, when the residents of Taitung set off fireworks all night long, whereupon the epidemic subsided. In her portrayal, Yalda Afsah focuses on the visual impact of the event while reflecting on the collective willingness to endanger oneself and others, and on the normalization of violence within ritualized practices. The striking, at times hypnotic images appear to absorb the energy of the swaying masses. The scenes are underpinned by a richly layered soundscape that allows intimate moments to emerge from the overall noise of the crowd.

The exhibition demonstrates Yalda Afsah's ongoing engagement with performative social structures and her rigorous artistic exploration of the role of customs in the present day – as practices that shape a sense of belonging and identity and, at the same time, as orchestrated outlets for collective, at times, brutal affects. Approaching these subjects with great intimacy yet critical distance, she reveals how fragile and contradictory the systems are that produce communities.

Curated by Anna Nowak

Supported by Kemmler Foundation [Kemmler Kemmler GmbH]



Biography

Yalda Afsah (born 1983, Berlin) is a German-Iranian artist and filmmaker. She studied at the Berlin University of the Arts, Burg Giebichenstein in Halle and the California Institute of the Arts. With her films, she operates at the intersection of documentary and staged narrative. Her precisely composed images condense social power dynamics, forms of care and questions of intimacy, control and vulnerability.

Her works have been presented in numerous exhibitions and at international film festivals, including the Locarno Film Festival, CH (2018 and 2020); the New York Film Festival, US (2018); Manifesta 13, Marseille, FR (2020); Kunstverein München, DE (2022); JOAN, Los Angeles, US (2023); HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark, Graz, AU (2022); Between Bridges, Berlin, DE (2023); Mönchehaus Museum Goslar, DE (2025); and CCA Berlin, DE (2026). As part of the 2026 Biennale, she presented a solo exhibition at the Palazzo Ca' Bucciari, Venice, IT. In June 2026, her latest work *HEAT* premiered at Art Basel Statements, CH.

Since 2025, she has been Professor of Time-Based Media at the University of Fine Arts, Hamburg. She lives and works in Berlin.

Accompanying programme

Fri, 4.9.2026, 7 pm

Exhibition opening

Introduction: Anna Nowak

DJ set: F0vian

Thu, 17.9.2026, 7 pm

Through the Fourth Wall

Lecture by Prof. Dr. Thorsten Logge (Professor for Public History, University of Hamburg) on performativity and community in history-making

Thu, 1.10.2026, 6 pm

Panorama XXVI with blowjobjobs are realjobs & DJ Schmalz

Thu, 5.11.2026, 6 pm

Panorama XXVII with Emil Saiz & Hye-Eun Kim

Guided tours

Thu, 17.9.2026, 6 pm, with the curator Anna Nowak

Thu, 1.10.2026, 6 pm, with Jaana Heine

Sun, 8.11.2026, 3 pm, with Anna Blahaut

Further information on the accompanying programme at www.kunsthamburg.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.

Press contact

Lea Ziegler

presse@kunsthausehamburg.de

+ 49 40 335803

Kunsthause Hamburg

Klosterwall 15

20095 Hamburg

<https://kunsthausehamburg.de>