

Melike Kara***Whispers*****5.6.–23.8.2026**

Melike Kara's solo exhibition *Whispers* was developed as a part of the 9th Triennial of Photography Hamburg entitled *Alliance, Infinity, Love – In the Face of the Other*. It is based on an expanded concept of photography: understood not as a static image, but as a process – as a circulating and evolving medium of memory, identity and 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 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. Photography, rather than representing a stable repository, appears here as a state of continual dissolution and reconfiguration.

Starting point for the new expansive installation 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, she 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 form of perception emerges when cultural attributions are no longer at the centre?

Melike Kara translates this engagement 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 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 ongoing process of memory and change; and *Love* as a delicate form of closeness and belonging that requires care and openness.

Curated by Anna Nowak

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