

## Photography Museums in Türkiye on the 100th Anniversary of the Republic: Hamza Rüstem Photograph House and Museum

Cumhuriyetin 100. Yılında Türkiyede Fotoğraf Müzeleri: Hamza Rüstem Fotoğraf Evi ve Müzesi

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### Abstract

Regardless of the field they focus on, museums provide tangible evidence of the technical and aesthetic development of human history. Through their chosen themes, visual object collections, and cognitive data, museums not only preserve the past but also facilitate connections with the present and envisioning the future. Invented in 1839, photography gained significant attention due to its power to rapidly record existing reality. The intersection of technology, chemistry, and physics led to the invention of the camera and image production, which continues to evolve today with its commercial success and artistic identity. Photography, an integral part of our social life, has created its own history since its invention. Therefore, collectors and museums consider it both a means of preservation and a central theme.

The first photography museum in the world was established in 1947. In Türkiye, in 1997, Hilmi Nakipoğlu's personal initiative transformed his camera collection into the first museum. Throughout Türkiye, there are six museums dedicated to photography equipment and cameras: Nakipoğlu Camera Museum, Balıkesir National Photography Museum, Osman Yaşar Tanaçan Photography Museum, Mysia Photography Museum, Malatya Metropolitan Municipality Camera Museum, and Hamza Rüstem Photography House and Museum. Additionally, the Ara Güler Museum was established to commemorate the photographer Ara Güler.

This article briefly discusses the concept of museums and examines photography museums in Türkiye, primarily focusing on the Hamza Rüstem Photography House and Museum. The Hamza Rüstem Photography House, which was established in 1925 and still operates in the same building, served as a school where the younger generation of photographers in İzmir received their training. In light of these characteristics, Hamza Rüstem, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Republic, was discussed and portrayed through a conversation with his grandson, collector Mert Rüstem.

**Keywords:** Museum, photography history, photography museum, camera.

**Academical Disciplines/fields:** Photography, plastic arts, contemporary art.

### Özet

Müzeler hangi alanla ilgili olursa olsun, insanlık tarihinin teknik ve estetik gelişiminin somut kanıtlarını sunarlar. Müzeler seçtikleri temalar, görsel obje koleksiyonları ve bilişsel veriler sayesinde geçmişi korumanın yanı sıra bugün ile bağlantıların kurulmasına ve geleceğin kurgulanmasına aracı olurlar. 1839 yılında icat edilen fotoğraf, var olan gerçeği hızlı bir şekilde kayıt altına alma gücü ile büyük ilgi görmüştür. Teknoloji, kimya ve fizik bilimlerinin keşimi ile ortaya çıkan fotoğraf makinası ve görüntü üretimi, ticari başarısı ve sanat kimliği ile bugün de gelişimini sürdürmektedir. Sosyal yaşamımızın ayrılmaz bir parçası olan fotoğraf, icadından bugüne kendi tarihini de oluşturmuştur. Dolayısı ile koleksiyonların, müzelerin hem koruma araçlarından biri hem de ana temasıdır.

Dünyada ilk fotoğraf müzesi 1947 yılında açılmıştır. Türkiye'de ise 1997 yılında Hilmi Nakipoğlu'nun kişisel girişimi ile fotoğraf makinesi koleksiyonu ilk müzeye dönüşmüştür. Türkiye genelinde altı adet fotoğraf makineleri ve ekipmanı müzesi: Nakipoğlu Fotoğraf Makineleri Müzesi, Balıkesir Ulusal Fotoğraf Müzesi, Osman Yaşar Tanaçan Fotoğraf Müzesi, Mysia Fotoğraf Müzesi, Malatya Büyükşehir Belediyesi Fotoğraf Makinası Müzesi, Hamza Rüstem Fotoğraf Evi ve Müzesi ve fotoğrafçımız Ara Güler anısını yaşatmak adına kurulan Ara Güler Müzesi'dir.

Makale kapsamında müze kavramı kısaca ele alınmış, genelde Türkiye'deki fotoğraf müzeleri internet olanakları ile incelenmiş ve özel olarak Hamza Rüstem Fotoğraf Evi ve Müzesi analiz edilmiştir. Müzeye adını veren, 1925 yılında kurulduğu anda hala çalışan, İzmir'in ilk Türk ve Müslüman fotoğrafhanesi Hamza Rüstem Fotoğrafhanesi, aynı zamanda genç kuşak İzmir'li fotoğrafçıların yetiştiği bir okul işlevi görmüştür. Bu özelliklerinden dolayı Cumhuriyetimizin 100.yılında Hamza Rüstem, torunu koleksiyoner Mert Rüstem ile görüşülerek anılmış, anlatılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Müzecilik, fotoğraf tarihi, fotoğraf müzesi, fotoğraf makinesi.

**Akademik Disiplin(ler)/alan(lar):** Fotoğraf, plastik sanatlar, çağdaş sanat.

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## 1. Introduction

Collecting forms the foundation of the museum phenomenon. In this context, we need to examine both concepts in terms of their etymology and historical development. Etymologically, *collection* is defined as the entirety of homogeneous or similar things that are gathered, accumulated, and classified based on the desire to utilize leisure time, derive pleasure, learn, or gain benefits. It is derived from the French word *collection* meaning gathering, accumulation. The French word is borrowed from the Latin word *collectio*, which is derived from the verb *colligere* meaning to gather and the suffix *-tion* (etimolojiturkce, 2023). In Turkish, the word *koleksiyon* is defined as the entirety of objects gathered and classified according to their characteristics for the purpose of learning, benefit, or pleasure (Türk Dil Kurumu, 2023).

The term *museion*, which is a product of the Hellenistic Age, referred to a place where contemplation and philosophical discourse took place in ancient Greek culture; it was a temple dedicated to the inspiration muses. Between 306 and 285 BC, a *museion* (museum) was built in the middle of the palace garden in the city we know today as Alexandria in Egypt. The museum was surrounded by a library, amphitheater, observatory, dining and study rooms, botanical and zoological gardens. This museum, which functioned as a university, academy, and monastery, collected, documented, and preserved ancient and contemporary artworks from Greece and eastern countries. In this sense, the Alexandria Museum laid the foundation for the modern understanding of museums. The Romans initially used the word *museum* to refer to a place of philosophical discussions. It is known that museums were later established in Bergama, Antakya, Rome, and Athens.

The collections of princely, royal, and imperial treasures from the Renaissance form the core of the 18th-century museums, which are considered the golden age of museumization. In the 18th century, museums evolved into institutions accessible to everyone. In 1746, a general collection of historical artworks was established from the treasures of the Kingdom of France, and the idea of exhibiting these works to the public was proposed. In 1750, the Luxembourg Museum was founded, realizing this concept. The Luxembourg Museum is recognized as the world's first official museum. In England, the foundations of the British Museum were laid in 1759. The Louvre, established in 1793, was created by taking possession of royal collections, treasuries, and aristocratic collections. In 1863, a British collector donated his collected works to the University of Oxford, marking the first time a collection was opened to the public for viewing and use. This donation led to the establishment of the first modern museum in England ("Museum", 2023). The Berlin Museum (1828) was initiated by King II. Frederick of Prussia. The Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum (1891) was established during the reign of II. Rudolf and by other members of the Habsburg dynasty. The Prado Museum (1819) was founded by the Habsburg and Bourbon dynasties and rulers. The Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg (1853) and the State Russian Museum were organized around the cabinets of Peter the Great. Wendy Shaw (2004, p.42) argues that while museums in Europe emerged from the rare cabinets of Renaissance-era nobles, the museums of the Ottoman Empire were born from pieces not included in the Sultan's private collection.

The origins of Ottoman museology are assumed to have begun in 1846 when the collections of *Mecmua-i Ešliha-i Atika* and *Mecmua-i Asar-ı Atika* from Topkapı Palace and Hagia Irene were merged. However, even with the partial merging of these two collections, the resulting Hagia Irene remained far from the modern museum appearance. In 1869, when it was renamed the Imperial Museum (*Müze-i Hümayun*), it remained closed to the public and had an atmosphere resembling cabinets. (Edhem, 2019, p. 26)

During his visit to European countries in 1867, Sultan Abdulaziz's exploration of the Abras Gallery and his examination of Greek and Roman artifacts, as well as his efforts to integrate with European culture, contributed to an increased interest in archaeological objects. In 1869, Prime Minister Ali Pasha changed the name of *Mecmua-i Asar-ı Atika* to *Müze-i Hümayun* (Imperial Museum) (Shaw, 2004, p.102). The *Müze-i Hümayun* became a European-style venue where the Ottoman Empire's power could be perceived through meticulously arranged historical artifacts. The *Mecmua-i Ešliha-i Atika* (ancient weapon collection) at Hagia Irene was closed in 1877 after the Ottoman-Russian war defeat, as an attempt to erase the memory of the defeat and due to decreasing interest in weaponry.

In 1881, Osman Hamdi Bey, a member of an important bureaucratic family in the Ottoman Empire, was appointed to manage the *Müze-i Hümayun*. Educated in law, art, and archaeology in France, he aimed to enhance public interest in art and archaeology and educate the youth in these fields. Consequently, in 1883,

he founded the Sanayi-i Nefise (Academy of Fine Arts) and the Istanbul Archaeology Museum, taking on their directorships (Shaw, 2004, p.122-126).

Today, a museum is defined as a permanent, non-profit organization that serves society and works for its development, revealing, studying, evaluating, collecting, preserving, introducing, continuously and temporarily exhibiting the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of humanity, educating, and influencing the development of cultural and artistic taste and worldview, open to the public, using scientific methods (Kültür Varlıkları ve Müzeler Genel Müdürlüğü, 2023). Ali Artun defines *museology as an institution that is managed continuously for the benefit of society with the aim of preserving, studying, evaluating, and exhibiting a whole consisting of elements carrying cultural value* (Artun, 2007). According to Güneröz;

Since the 19th century, when museums began to evolve into institutions that share research and findings related to different scientific fields, they have been recognized as the key to the development of disciplines such as art history, archaeology, geology, and paleontology. (2022, p. 170)

As emphasized by Prof. Dr. Filiz Yenişehirlioğlu in the Preface of Ayaokur's book on Information Management in Museums,

In the twentieth century, differences in museum contents began to emerge. Museums became places that not only showcased objects from the history of civilization but also all material culture examples that enter our daily lives, contemporary artworks, and specialized collections focused on specific subjects. (Ayaokur, 2014, p.10)

In the present day, *the cultural and social contributions of museums to human existence have come under scrutiny, emphasizing the importance of museums from pedagogical, sociological, psychological, educational, and economic perspectives* (Okan, 2018, p. 189). Like in all areas around the world, there is a transformational shift occurring in the field of museology. The social role of museums was brought back to the agenda and reflected in the new museum definition during the meeting of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) held in Prague in 2022:

A museum is a permanent institution that investigates, collects, preserves, interprets, and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage for the benefit of society, without pursuing profit. With their open, accessible, and inclusive structures, museums promote diversity and sustainability. Shaped by ethical and professional understanding and the participation of communities, they offer various experiences that encompass education, enjoyment, contemplation, and the sharing of thoughts and knowledge. (Güneröz, 2022, p. 172-173)

As a critical look at the definition of contemporary museum accepted by ICOM, Huyssen quotes Artun's first article of Andreas Huyssen's *Twilight Memories: Determining Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, from *The Museum as a Mass Media*:

In the culture of consumption that has rendered everything disposable, an irreparable museum mania has emerged. The museum, once the stronghold of selective preservation, tradition, and high culture, has given way to the mass media of spectacles, setups, and excess... The temple of museums has crumbled, replaced by a hybrid space between fairgrounds and shopping malls. While visiting museums used to be an experience related to time and history, it has turned into a form of entertainment related to space. (Artun, 2017, p. 181)

In contemporary modern museology, *there are four important approaches: Virtual Museum, Touchable Museum, Mobile Museum, and Foundation Museum* (Keleş, 2010, p. 6). *Virtual Museums are evolving as a type of museology that best reflects the appearance and content of modern museology* (Okan, 2018, p. 191). In Türkiye, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism categorizes museums into five different structures: *Official Museums, Foundation Museums, Personal Museums, Institutional Museums, and University Museums*. *Due to these different structures, it becomes challenging to establish a functioning and sustainable system* (Kültür Varlıkları ve Müzeler Genel Müdürlüğü, 2023).

## 2. Photography Museums in Türkiye

The world's first-known photography museum, the George Eastman Museum, is located in George Eastman's mansion in Rochester, New York, known as the pioneer of popular photography and cinema. Established in 1947 as a nonprofit independent institution, this museum is the oldest photography museum and one of the oldest film archives in the world. The institution houses unique collections, including several million objects in the fields of photography, cinema, and photographic and cinematographic technology, as well as illustrated photographic books. The institution has also been a leader in film preservation and photography conservation for a long time (eastman museum, 2023).

Institutions referred to as Photography Museums exhibit printed photographs as their content. These establishments showcase a wide perspective ranging from prints of iconic artists that have shaped the direction of photographic art to the visions of contemporary artists, creating exhibitions and establishing archives. As examples, we can mention some of the most renowned photography museums in the world: the International Center of Photography Museum in New York, USA (founded in 1974), and the Tokyo Photographic Art Museum in Tokyo, Japan (founded in 1990). Within photography museums, exhibitions and collections encompass various genres of photographic art such as portraiture, landscapes, and fashion.

Museums referred to as Camera Museums exhibit photography cameras and equipment. These museums display their collections of cameras and photographic equipment in chronological order, from the invention of photography to the present day, highlighting the development processes of leading brands in the photography industry. Some museums, on the other hand, showcase both photography cameras and equipment, as well as feature prints of artists.

The establishment of photography museums in Türkiye is relatively recent. It involves individual collections being transformed into museums through the efforts of individuals themselves or with the support of local municipalities. Individual collections can obtain the status of private museums by fulfilling the conditions stipulated in the Regulation on Private Museums and their Audits by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums. As of March 10, 2023, there are 366 private museums operating under the supervision of the ministry (Kültür Varlıkları ve Müzeler Genel Müdürlüğü, 2023).

In Türkiye, there are seven photography museums that were established, and are currently open, with the first one established in 1997. Personal collections take the forefront in museum establishments. The photography camera collections transformed into museums with the support of municipalities are located in Istanbul (1), Izmir (1), Bursa (1), Balıkesir (1), Eskişehir (1), and Malatya (1). The Ara Güler Museum, opened in Istanbul in 2018, was established with the aim of preserving the artist's name and protecting his photographs.

### 2.1. Nakipoğlu Camera Museum

(1997) It is the first and still active private photography museum in Bakırköy, Istanbul, Türkiye. The founder of the museum, Hilmi Nakipoğlu, explains the establishment story as follows:

Until '97, especially every weekend, Saturday and Sunday, sometimes two or three, I started collecting cameras through purchases. I was buying cameras from the vicinity of the city walls, Beyazıt Istanbul University square, Beyazıt Mosque and bookstores, antique shops, street vendors, Hayyam Passage in Sirkeci, antique shops in Bahariye, and the Tuesday Market. In this way, I accumulated 900 cameras through purchasing. I am still continuing to collect. (kameramuzesi.com, 2023, May 10)

The museum's website provides detailed information about the museum and its collections, allowing individuals who cannot visit the museum to learn about the development of cameras from the beginning to the present day in a detailed manner. The museum also includes special galleries dedicated to Prof. Dr. Güler Ertan, İbrahim Zaman, and İlteriş Tezel, who have made significant contributions to Turkish photography.

### 2.2. Balıkesir National Photography Museum

Located in the historical two-story building in Dumlupınar District Ulus Street, Karesi District, and the adjacent three-story new building, the museum was inaugurated on May 19, 2006. The museum consists of two exhibition halls, a camera technology hall, a library, a darkroom, a hall displaying photographic equipment and artifacts, and a hall showcasing historical and technically valuable cameras

(etkinlik.balikesir.bel.tr,2023). The establishment of the museum and library was carried out through the collective effort of the members of Balıkesir Photography Art Association (BASAF), including Altuğ Oymak, Ömer Gemici, Yakup Özkul, Yusuf Hocaoğlu, and Bahar Öztunç, along with the participation of all association members, photography enthusiasts from Balıkesir, and participants from across the country. The library was inaugurated on May 3, 2004, and it contains 2000 signed books on photography. After the opening of the Balıkesir National Photography Museum, it was honored with awards from the Türkiye Photography Art Federation, Balıkesir Unity of Citizens, and Istanbul Photography and Cinema Amateurs Association (İFSAK).

### 2.3. Osman Yaşar Tanaçan Photography Museum

(2017) The Municipality of Odunpazarı in Eskişehir transformed the area formerly used as a wedding hall in the historical Odunpazarı district's Kurşunlu Complex into the Osman Yaşar Tanaçan Photography Museum. The museum houses 372 cameras, photographs, and other photography-related equipment (Osman Yaşar Tanaçan Fotograf Müzesi, 2023, May 10).

### 2.4. Mysia Photography Museum

Opened for visitation on October 7, 2017, in the village of Misi, Bursa Nilüfer Municipality, the museum embodies a contemporary understanding of museum practices through its library, collection, publications, exhibitions, workshops, and educational activities. 435 photographic material, 276 photographs, 124 films, negatives, photo cards are on display. The ground floor of the museum hosts temporary exhibitions, while providing black and white darkroom training and workshops to take visitors into the enchanting world of photography ("Mysia fotoğraf müzesine özel muze statusu verildi", 2019). The website of Nilüfer Municipality features information about the museum and a 360-degree virtual tour.

### 2.5. Malatya Metropolitan Municipality Camera Museum

Established on September 30, 2017, by the Malatya Metropolitan Municipality, the museum is located at Şehit İbrahim Tanrıverdi Art Street, İnönü Neighborhood, İnönü Avenue, 44070 Yeşilyurt. The museum exhibits 2,023 cameras spanning from 1876 to the present day, displayed in 44 different showcases, along with over 3,000 accessories showcased in 55 separate compartments. The museum also displays spy cameras. With its capacity, the museum holds the distinction of being the third-largest camera museum in the world and the largest in Asia and Europe. The museum premises include a cinema and projection hall, a darkroom, and two photo shoot corners for both indoor and outdoor settings ("Fotograf Makina Müzesi yüzbinleri ağırladı", 2020). Despite garnering significant media attention due to its size and variety of materials, it does not have a dedicated website.

### 2.6. Ara Güler Museum

The *Ara Güler Archive and Research Center* (AGAVAM) was established in 2016 through a collaboration between Doğu Group and Ara Güler with the aim of preserving and promoting the 70-year career of our renowned photographer, Ara Güler. In 2018, the museum was inaugurated in the restored premises of Şişli Bomonti Brewery, resulting from the foundation's efforts (t24.com.tr). The museum opened to visitors on Ara Güler's 90th birthday, August 16, 2018, with the exhibition *The Whistling Man* (www.cumhuriyet.com.tr) compiled from Ara Güler's archive. It was honored with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's Special Award. The museum's second exhibition, themed *Aphrodisias*, was unveiled in 2019. Although there are numerous websites mentioning the museum, the official website <https://aragulermuzesi.com> is not currently active. However, the *aragulermuzesi* Instagram account is active.

**Table 1.** Photography museums in Türkiye

Name	Year and place of establishment	Ownership Public/Private/foundation	Posibilities	Number of Documents
Nakipoğlu Museum of Cameras	1997 Bakırköy, İstanbul	Private, Hilmi Nakipoğlu	3 private galleries	900 Cameras.
Balıkesir National Museum of Photography	2006 Karesi Balıkesir	Balıkesir Municipality	Dark room, library, 2 exhibition halls	

Hamza Rustem Photography House and Museum	2007 Karşıyaka-İzmir	Karşıyaka Municipality	Darkroom, Studio, Panorama Presentation room, Camera Obscura, 1 Exhibition hall	550 Cameras, Accessories
Mysia Photography Museum	2017 Bursa	Nilüfer Municipality	Dark room, Exhibition hall	435 photographic material, 276 photographs, 124 films, negatives, Photo cards
Malatya Metropolitan Municipality Camera Museum	2017 Yeşilyurt-Malatya	Malatya Metropolitan Municipality	Dark room, Exhibition hall, Cinema, Presentation Room	2023Cameras 3000Accessories
Osman Yaşar Tanaçan Photography Museum	2017 Odunpazarı Eskişehir	Odunpazarı Municipality		372 Cameras Accessories
Ara Güler Museum	2018 Şişli-İstanbul	Ara Güler Doğu Sanat ve Müzecilik A.Ş. (AGAVAM)		

The names of the museums, their establishment years, the cities they are located in, museum facilities, and the number of exhibited artworks are included in the organized table 1. It can be observed that the museums are established in the cities of Istanbul (2), Izmir, Bursa, Balıkesir, Eskişehir, and Malatya. In terms of distribution, the Marmara and Aegean regions are densely populated, Eskişehir stands alone in the Central Anatolia region, and Malatya stands out as the only city with a photo museum in the Eastern Anatolia region. The first opened Nakipoglu Photography Cameras Museum dates back to 1997, the second opened Balıkesir National Photography Museum was established in 2006, and the Hamza Rustem Photography Museum was opened in 2007. There is an approximate ten-year time span between them. The Malatya Metropolitan Municipality Camera Museum was opened in 2017, the Osman Yaşar Tanaçan Photography Museum in 2017, and the Ara Güler Museum in 2018, repeating the ten-year time span interestingly. Balıkesir National Photography Museum, Hamza Rustem Photography Museum, Mysia Photography Museum, and Malatya Metropolitan Municipality Camera Museum have darkroom, studio, and exhibition hall facilities. The Ara Güler Museum has only exhibition halls, and the Nakipoglu Camera Museum has three private galleries. In terms of exhibited cameras, the Malatya Metropolitan Municipality Camera Museum ranks first, followed by the Nakipoglu Camera Museum in second place, and the Hamza Rustem Photography Museum in third place. While the Nakipoglu Camera Museum is established and managed by a foundation, the Ara Güler Museum, and the other museums are under the administration of local municipalities.

### 3. Hamza Rüstem Photography House and Museum

is located at Yalı Mahallesi, 6522 Street No:8, Karşıyaka-İzmir (Hamza Rüstem Fotoğraf Evi Özel Müzesi, 2023). Within the green area owned by Karşıyaka Municipality, the museum features a Camera Obscura<sup>1</sup> (Image 1) of a size suitable for a few people to comfortably enter, a Panorama<sup>2</sup> building (Image 2), and an exhibition hall.

<sup>1</sup>Camera Obscura: It means *dark room* in Latin. It involves the formation of an image through a box and a light passing through a hole on one of its surfaces. The image is formed in perfect perspective and with original colors, but it appears inverted. (Frizot, 1998, p. 18).  
<sup>2</sup>Panorama: It means *an extensive view visible from a high point*. In 1789, Robert Barker covered the walls of a cylindrical building with finely painted and colored canvases depicting a 360-degree panorama, which was illuminated from behind to create a vivid effect. This allowed viewers to observe the panorama from a certain distance (Hyde, 1988, p. 13).



**Image 1.** Hamza Rüstem Photography House Museum, Camera Obscura, Photo by Işık Sezer



**Image 2.** Hamza Rüstem Photography House Museum, Panorama building, Photo by Işık Sezer

Hamza Rüstem Photography House Private Museum is the first and only photography museum in İzmir. Opened in 2011 with the support of Karşıyaka Municipality in İzmir, the museum exhibits a collection of approximately 550 pieces, including the family heirlooms of Hamza Rüstem, who established İzmir's first photography studio, as well as various photographic equipment and materials. Although the collection is owned by Mert Rüstem, the grandson of Hamza Rüstem, the museum bears the name of his grandfather. The museum actually preserves and shares two historical legacies. The first is the history of Hamza Rüstem Photography Studio, which was the first photo studio opened by a Turkish and Muslim entrepreneur in İzmir in 1925 and is still active today, including the photographic materials and printings from the first studio. The second is a general history of photography through Mert Rüstem's collection of cameras dating from the 1870s to the 1970s. Thus, a visitor to the museum learns about the development of photography through the cameras, and also gains insights into how İzmir appeared from the early years of the Turkish Republic until the 1970s through the photographs taken by Hamza Rüstem Photography Studio. They can also understand the concept of a photo shooting studio, the meaning of a darkroom, the fashion of the era, and how posing for a photographer was done, among other examples.





**Image 3.** Hamza Rüstem Photography House Museum, Darkroom, Photo by Işık Sezer



**Image 4.** Hamza Rüstem Photography House Museum, Studio, Photo by Işık Sezer



**Image 5.** Hamza Rüstem Photography House Museum, Retouching device, Photo by Işık Sezer



The museum has reconstructed the darkroom (Image 3) of Hamza Rüstem Photography Studio using original materials. Additionally, the photo shooting studio (Image 4) showcases the original studio-type folding camera used by Hamza Rüstem, various photo card boxes used until the 1970s, and a retouching device (Image 5) that facilitated the retouching process. The background painting on the studio wall has been recreated accurately by graduate students Kıvanç Şen and İsmail Birlik from Dokuz Eylül University Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Photography. The museum's presentation and meeting room is called Hamza Rüstem Memorial Room (Image 6). In the presentation room, Hamza Rüstem's personal belongings are displayed in glass compartments (Image 7), while the walls feature family photographs and landscapes taken in Crete and İzmir. The design of the seating area and the selection and placement of the photographs on the walls in the presentation room were done by Mert Rüstem.



**Image 6.** Hamza Rüstem Photography House and Museum, Memorial Room, Photo by Işık Sezer



**Image 7.** Hamza Rüstem Photography House and Museum, Hamza Rüstem's personal belongings, Photo by Işık Sezer

The donated collection by Mert Rüstem consists of original cameras classified according to their brand, year, and country of origin. To gain more space and surface inside the museum, a steel construction with three rows of partitions was built, resulting in the creation of six additional walls. These walls are equipped with 38 glass cabinets of various widths (Image 8). These cabinets display the development of cameras from wooden box cameras to Rolleiflex, from Polaroid cameras to instant cameras, covering the period from 1870 to 1970. The collection also includes retouching kits, developing formulas, examples of photo albums and frames from that era, as well as lenses. Notable examples among the collection are the Kodak stereoscopic device, stereoscopic photo cards, and underwater cameras. The museum walls feature posters introducing the invention of photography, the definition of Camera Obscura, the historical development of cameras, the life of Hamza Rüstem, and some photographic equipment. Three large panels display glass negatives taken at Hamza Rüstem's photography studio, arranged side by side and illuminated from behind with LED light strips (Image 9). This presentation technique not only makes the material visible but also contributes to the identity of the museum.



**Image 8.** Hamza Rüstem Photography House and Museum, interior, Photo by Işık Sezer



**Image 9.** Hamza Rüstem Photography House and Museum, glass negative panels, Photo by Işık Sezer

The house allocated by the municipality to be used as a museum has the characteristics of a typical three-bedroom and one living room house, which makes it a relatively small area for a museum. To overcome this issue, glass partitions were added to the front and side facades to create an expansion. Approximately 120 x 260 cm in size, there are 25 glass partitions covered with reproductions of large-format prints of photographs taken at the photography studio until the 1970s. Through these photographs, visitors can journey through a timeline and gain insights into the social and cultural structure of the early years of the Republic (Image 10). In the backyard of the museum, there is a statue of Hamza Rüstem next to the pool.



**Image 10.** Hamza Rüstem Museum, exterior

### 3.1. Establishment of Hamza Rüstem Photography House and Museum

The text below is an excerpt from an interview conducted on March 9, 2023, at Mert Rüstem's office in Hamza Rüstem Passage.

**Işık Sezer:** Who is Mert Rüstem and how did he start with photography?

**Mert Rüstem:** I was born in 1969, and I studied mechanical engineering in Türkiye. Due to family reasons, I had to abandon my master's studies in London in 1991 and returned to Türkiye to take over the family business. My father and uncle had separate shops in the marketplace. I joined my father's shop and started selling color prints, color and some black and white films, so as not to compete with my uncle. My uncle, Mazhar, fell ill, and in 1993-94, he handed over his shop to me along with the employees. We merged the shops and expanded the business.

**Işık Sezer:** How did the camera collection begin?

**Mert Rüstem:** I will never forget the year 1997. It's autumn, and I'm in the same shop. A man came in and asked who the Rüstems were. I said, *That would be me.* He asked, *Are you Hamza Rüstem's grandson? Well, let's see those old cameras, show me what you have.* I was shocked and didn't know what to say. I had never thought about it from that perspective. He said, *Doesn't the great Hamza Rüstem even have his own photograph in Izmir? Doesn't that suit the great Rüstem?* I felt embarrassed. That day, I saw a truth I hadn't seen before. It was a moment of realization. I immediately went down to the storage and found 5-10 cameras. After that incident, I started collecting photographic equipment, especially Hamza Rüstem's sealed photographs, from various sources, including the popular online marketplace Gitti Gidiyor.

**Işık Sezer:** How did the idea of the museum come about and become a reality?

**Mert Rüstem:** Since I'm a member of IFOD (Izmir Photography Art Association), I frequently visit the association, and my collection is known. The idea of an exhibition and a museum came up during our conversations. During the mayoral term of Ahmet Piriştina (1952-2004) in Izmir Metropolitan Municipality (1999-2004), in August 2002, the Izmir Photography Art Association (IFOD) and Hamza Rüstem Photography Studio Camera Collection exhibition was held at the Izmir Fair. Along with the president of IFOD, Tayfun Kocaman, and the association board member Murat Çakıl, we explained our museum idea to Ahmet Piriştina and requested a meeting. Before the meeting, I had a special plaque made, and I presented it to Piriştina along with a photograph of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and İsmet İnönü together. Tayfun Kocaman and Murat Çakıl were also present at the meeting. Piriştina said, *I can provide you with the Eşrefpaşa marriage registration office for the museum, and you can operate the café on the ground floor to support the association.* Tayfun Kocaman objected, saying, *Our members won't go there; they are used to Alsancak.* The meeting ended without a resolution. Our first museum attempt was unsuccessful.

Later on, we formed a commission at IFOD to discuss the concept of the museum, but when it turned into an IFOD museum idea, I stepped back. My friend from the association, İpek Cabadak, helped me a lot in preserving, categorizing, and archiving my collection. I learned a great deal about collecting from her.

**Işık Sezer:** How did the second initiative for the museum come about?

**Mert Rüstem:** During the exhibition we held in 2010 at Alsancak Türkan Saylan Cultural Center, I met the Mayor of Konak (2009-2014), Hakan Tartan, and the Culture Director, Ms. Tülay, and we discussed the museum idea. Tartan was very interested in the idea, but it was rejected in the municipal council. Our second attempt also ended without success.

**Işık Sezer:** I guess the final move established the museum?

**Mert Rüstem:** The Karşıyaka Ege Art Center Photography Club, founded in 1997, was transformed into the Aegean Photography and Cinema Amateurs Association (EFSA) in 2003, thanks to the efforts of Bülent Güzay, an IFOD member (efsa.org.tr,2023). Bülent asked me to contribute an award for a competition organized by the association and said, *You can present the award and use it as an excuse to meet the Mayor.* Thanks to the *Hamza Rüstem B&W Award*, I got to meet Cevat Durak, the Mayor of Karşıyaka, and Ms. Şebnem, the Director of Culture. We invited Ms. Şebnem to our office in Kemeraltı and showed her the collection, and she was very impressed. Later, we heard from the media that a photography museum would be opened in Karşıyaka, and we were surprised. It turned out that Cevat Durak gathered journalists at the end of each year to announce their plans for the following year, and he announced the news of the museum. The process took a while, and they couldn't find a suitable location. Eventually, the model house on the land owned by Soyak was allocated to us as the museum. We said that three rooms and a salon were not enough for a museum, so the municipality added the glass partition that forms the front façade.

**Işık Sezer:** How did the progress of the work unfold?

**Mert Rüstem:** We signed a protocol with the Karşıyaka Municipality on August 20, 2010, and started the work. The municipality assigned an architect for the interior design of the museum, and a commission was formed. The commission included the individuals appointed by the municipality, as well as myself, İpek Cabadak, and Prof. Dr. Simber Atay. Cabadak and Atay opposed the idea of the Hamza Rüstem Photography Museum, citing a shortage of materials, and managed to convince the municipal authorities to add the idea of Hamza Rüstem Photography House to the protocol. After a controversial and contentious process, the Hamza Rüstem Photography House, which was completed, was opened in 2011 by the Karşıyaka Municipality and received great interest. In 2011, the Photography House, which won the Local Government Awards given by Özel Kalem Dergisi in the category of *Culture and Art Activities* ("Tarihe Saygı Ödülleri", 2011), was also awarded the Contribution Award in the *Field of Protecting Historical Environment and Cultural Assets* by İzmir Metropolitan Municipality (Hamza Rüstem Fotoğraf Evi Özel Müzesi, 2023).

**Işık Sezer:** When and how was the museum identity established?

**Mert Rüstem:** I was very uncomfortable with the term *Photography House*. I felt that Hamza Rüstem's contributions to İzmir and photography were being underestimated. So, in 2014, I applied to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and managed to register the Hamza Rüstem Photography House as Hamza Rüstem Photography House and Museum under the status of a private museum.

**Işık Sezer:** Although you are the owner of the collection, all the exhibitions and the museum itself carry the name Hamza Rüstem. Why?

**Mert Rüstem:** Hamza Rüstem is our family name. My grandfather came from Crete to İzmir and opened the first photography studio, laying the foundation for what we have today. His sons, Hüseyin, Nuri, and Mazhar, used variations of the name *Nuri Hamza Rüstem* in their trade and personal lives. I insisted on the name *Hamza Rüstem* for the museum to preserve my grandfather's place and importance in Turkish photography and to keep our family name alive.

**Işık Sezer:** Can you tell us about Hamza Rüstem?

**Mert Rüstem:** Hamza Rüstem is the son of a Cretan family. He was born in 1872 in Candia. His father, Mustafa Hoca, was also born in Candia. Mustafa Efendi, who was a teacher and school owner from 1831 to 1837, provided him with education in Persian, French, English, and their native languages, Greek and Turkish. At the end of the 19th century, there were events in Crete similar to those in Cyprus. The conflict between Greek and Muslim communities started. During that period, the Muslim population on the island was forced to seek refuge in the relatively safer cities and predominantly Muslim towns. To defend Muslims and his family, Mustafa Hoca joined the militias. The island became very unsafe for the family, so they crossed to Anatolian lands through Bodrum and settled in Uşak by land. Hamza Rüstem received his primary education from his father and later attended Bursa Military Junior High School. After completing his junior high education, he continued his studies at Istanbul Kuleli Military High School. He then started his engineering education at Beyrû Hümayun Engineering School. During those years, he joined the opposition movement, the Young Turks. One day, while he was having his friends write a play by Namık Kemal, they were reported to the palace, and it was revealed that he was a Young Turk. He was arrested and thrown into prison. In those years, military students were not executed but sent into exile to avoid causing reactions. He was sent into exile to Fizan, located on the Arabian Peninsula, under the supervision of gendarmes. They set sail from Istanbul. When the ship, which Hamza Rüstem was also on, arrived at İzmir Harbor, the family became aware of the situation, and they contacted prominent Young Turks of that period. A plan was made to rescue their son. While the ship was in İzmir Harbor, a Cretan boat approached, and Hamza Rüstem jumped into the sea and got on the boat. The gendarmes did not interfere, and he was put on the first departing ship from the harbor. The ship coincidentally went to his birthplace, Crete. With only the clothes on his back, he arrived in Candia and unknowingly returned to his homeland.

While trying to make a living as a street vendor near the English camp, Hamza Rüstem, who caught the attention of Bahaeddin Bey, who came to the camp to take photographs, started his apprenticeship at Bahaettin Bediz Photo Studio (1897), seeing a future in photography instead of accepting the offered municipal engineering position. His hard work, love for the profession, technical skills, and knowledge of multiple foreign languages helped him progress in his career. He quickly rose to the rank of journeyman. When his master, Rahmizade Bahaeddin (Bediz), went to Istanbul, he handed over the photo studio to Hamza Rüstem, who continued the business under the name *Photographer Bahaeddin, Owner Hamza Rüstem*. In this way, he also honored his master's name. After purchasing the company (1909), Hamza Rüstem entered a busy work pace. He married Zehra Hanım from Hanya for a while (1912). He had a

telephone both at home and in his workplace (telephones started to be used in cities in the 1900s). To avoid being a Greek soldier, he obtained an Italian passport. After the surname law was passed, Hamza Rüstem officially adopted the surname Rüstem, which was taken as Hamza Rüstem in Crete. In Crete, families also had nicknames, and the nickname of the Rüstem family was Lagudaki (Ada Tavşancı- Island Hare).

After the exchange agreement, Hamza Rüstem thought logically and made the necessary preparations. It is difficult to embark on such an adventure when it is uncertain where you will live and what you will do. Hamza Rüstem led his employees, and together they chose Izmir to continue their lives. The answer to the question *Why Izmir?* is commercial. Uşak, where the family lived for a while, was not preferred. Izmir, an important port city of the period with intense commercial activities, was chosen. The company's employees were also part of the family. Hasan Demren, Hüseyin Rüstem, Cafer Bey, Ali Balım, and Fikri Göksay, who worked at the photo studio, migrated to Izmir with their families (Rüstem, 2019, p. 207). He returned to Izmir in 1925 and opened his photo studio with the title *Bahaettin Photo Studio Owner Hamza Rüstem*. In 1927, he influenced his master Bahaettin Bediz's move to Izmir and changed his title to Hamza Rüstem (Sezer, 2019, p. 71).

The state of the art technology used in the photo studio proved to be effective, and the customer base quickly expanded. Hamza Rüstem made significant contributions to the promotion of Izmir. He documented the archaeological sites of the Aegean region, including the Ephesus excavations, which were important indicators of the modernization and Europeanization of the Republic of Türkiye. He also prepared postcard series, just like in Crete. During those years, postcards were more commonly prepared with photographs than by printing presses. Therefore, prints in the size of 9x13 were called postcards.

The 1900's were the years when photography started to be used in newspapers. Unlike today, there were no photographers on the staff of newspapers. Local photographers in provincial provinces would do this job, and the photos they sent would be published. Shortly after arriving in Izmir, Hamza Rüstem started working as a press photographer. He took photographs of statesmen, celebrities, and ceremonies, especially Atatürk, who came to Izmir.

World War II was a difficult period for photography. Not only photographers but the entire country suffered. During this period, sales of imported products became very difficult. Towels were brought from Bursa and attempted to be sold to fill the empty shelves. Formulas were developed to use expired films and cards, and expired materials were utilized. Also, during this period, card sizes were reduced to save costs.

Hamza Rüstem also employs female photographers at the photo studio. In the 1950s, events such as parties, meetings, births, postpartum periods, birthdays, and more, which took place in homes, were captured by female photographers.

In 1944, Hamza Rüstem established the İzmir Photographers Association and served as its president for many years. He was also among the founders of the Istanbul Photographers Association. The unity among colleagues facilitated imports, and Hamza Bey, through his import activities, provided his colleagues with the necessary materials. He personally designed the newspaper promotional announcements for Hamza Rüstem's company, just like the one in Ulusal Gazete on February 2, 1935 (Image 11). He realized the idea of the first mobile advertising billboard at the Izmir Fair. The photo studio had a dedicated telephone and telegraph line.

After 1950, Mr. Hamza slowed down his active work life and handed over the photo studio to his middle son, Nuri, and the sales department to his younger son, Metin. Despite his advancing age, he couldn't stop working completely and occasionally engaged in active projects. He passed away at the age of 99 in 1971.





Image 11. Advertisement for Hamza Rüstem Photo Studio, Ulusal Birlik, February 2, 1935.

#### 4. Conclusion

While the world's first photography museum was established in 1947, in Türkiye, it was opened in 1997 as a personal initiative. The Hilmi Nakipoğlu Camera Museum continues to exist as a personal endeavor, but the Balıkesir National Photography Museum, Osman Yaşar Tanaçan Photography Museum, Mysia Photography Museum, Malatya Metropolitan Municipality Camera Museum, Hamza Rüstem Photo House and Museum were brought to life with the support of local municipalities. The Ara Güler Museum, on the other hand, was established by the Doğuş Group and the Ara Güler Research Foundation.

The promotion of these established photography museums is done through the websites of the respective municipalities they are affiliated with. While the introductions of the museums are provided through photographs on the websites, only Mysia Photography Museum and Hamza Rüstem Photo House and Museum offer a 360-degree virtual tour option. The Nakipoğlu Camera Museum has the most effective website for online promotion. The website provides images and technical specifications of all the cameras in the museum.

Among the mentioned museums, Balıkesir National Photography Museum holds a privileged position with its collection of 2,000 original signed books with photography content. All the museums have exhibition halls, and representative darkroom and studio spaces have been established. It is known that workshop activities are only conducted in the Malatya Metropolitan Municipality Camera Museum and Mysia Photography Museum.

Although the collection of Hamza Rüstem Photo House and Museum belongs to Mert Rüstem, it carries the name of his grandfather, Hamza Rüstem. Hamza Rüstem, who is the first Turkish and Muslim photographer in İzmir, is known to this day thanks to this museum. In addition, Mert Rüstem conveys his grandfather's contributions to photography to the younger generation through interviews, exhibitions, writings, and photographs of the Hamza Rüstem family and photo studio included on his website. The administrative responsibility of the museum belongs entirely to the Karşıyaka Municipality. Due to limited space, interactive activities such as photography courses for the public cannot be held within the museum; only the exhibition hall is actively used. The museum has an official website and virtual tour applications established by the promoting municipality. The company website, <https://www.hamzarustem.com.tr>, also has a dedicated section for the museum and provides comprehensive information about it.



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