

ARA GÜLER

A Play of Light
and Shadow

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→ Old Galata Bridge, Istanbul 1954

↓↓ Ayvansaray, Istanbul, 1969





The Iconic



With a career spanning over seventy years, Ara Güler (1928–2018) is one of Turkey's most revered photographers. His expansive body of work pertaining to the modern photographic canon has been published and exhibited extensively, both nationally and internationally. Ara Güler started as a photojournalist in the Turkish press. A few years later, from the end of the 1950s, he worked for prominent Western media outlets such as *Time*, *Life*, *Paris Match*, *Stern*, and joined the American Society of Magazine Photographers. Eventually he became a representative of Magnum. Since then, Ara Güler's photographic legacy has been shaping how we perceive the world today, especially his homeland of Turkey and his beloved city of Istanbul.

Between the 1950s and 1960s, the photographer created a unique visual language that presented Istanbul's cityscapes and inhabitants in a new light. His black-and-white photography, with stark contrasts and strong compositions, produced iconic images of the daily life in the cosmopolitan city. The city of Istanbul that is depicted in his images belongs to a different era. Here, time passed slowly. As such, shadows, light, and silhouettes are recurring elements of his photographic style and pillars of Ara Güler's powerful aesthetics.

At the same time, we also witness Ara Güler's documentary approach with a subtle poetic, capturing the fragility of ordinary lives in the face of the rapid urban transformations; for example, the series of the Armenian fishermen at Kumkapı in the early 1950s display intimate portraits of a close community. In addition to the strong portraiture, we notice a tendency towards abstraction where fishermen's tools such as nets and buoys become artistic objects in a quiet black-and-white composition.



↑ Karaköy, Istanbul, 1950s

→ The Golden Horn, Istanbul, 1950s

↓↓ Caulking Yard, Karaköy, Istanbul, 1956







↓ Kumkapi, Istanbul, 1950s

→ The Golden Horn, Istanbul, 1958



↓ The Golden Horn, Istanbul, 1960

→ Karaköy, Istanbul, 1959

