

# ÇİNİLİ HAMAM

ZEYREK

Zeyrek ÇiniLi Hamam presents Margaret R. Thompson's first solo exhibition in Türkiye  
*Temenos: The Inland Sea*



From left to right: *The Invitation* (2026); studio portrait of the artist; *Touching Infinity* (2025)

Zeyrek ÇiniLi Hamam presents *Temenos: The Inland Sea*, the first solo exhibition in Türkiye by Santa Fe-based artist Margaret R. Thompson, curated by Anlam de Coster. Composed of site-responsive works, the exhibition examines containment as a condition for transformation, bringing together never-before-seen paintings, works on fabric, sound, and scent conceived for the Byzantine cistern beneath the historic 16th-century hammam.

The work draws on the ancient Greek term *temenos*, which designates a sacred precinct set apart from ordinary life, a sanctuary offering protection and passage between human and divine realms. In psychological terms, the word also refers to an inner shelter: a contained space in which one may safely encounter the unconscious. Here, beneath the hammam, these meanings converge.

Historically, the hammam itself functioned as a *temenos*: a threshold space set apart from everyday life, where social hierarchies temporarily dissolved and purification rituals transformed body and mind within a shared sanctuary. The Byzantine cistern extends this passageway into the subterranean. Within Byzantine culture, cisterns formed part of the city's essential infrastructure: enclosed bodies of water designed to gather, hold, and circulate what sustained life beneath the surface. Thompson envisions the cistern as an inland sea and proposes descent into this space as a conscious act, a movement toward inward attention and depth. Her paintings and textile works function as perceptual fields, inviting sustained attention and sensory attunement. Drawing on archetypal forms and primordial elements, they evoke depth of time and origins while offering a quiet refuge for the mind.

Thompson's paintings are structured through axial compositions, often organized around a central spine that reads as a conduit or passage. Vessel-like forms recur alongside spirals and vortices, suggesting cycles of purification, and rebirth. Seen within a Byzantine cistern that once held the city's lifeline, these motifs frame the inland sea not as a landscape, but as a life-giving process of circulation and transformation – a rhythm of ebb and flow contained within permeable boundaries. Winged chimeras and mythological beings surface intermittently, yet Thompson's visual language resists fixed narratives. Her material vocabulary incorporates oils, spices, waters, and silks sourced in Istanbul, alongside natural pigments and earth gathered from different geographies.

The introduction of scent and sound further deepens engagement with the work and environment. In collaboration with Istanbul-based aromatherapy brand Homemade Aromaterapi, Thompson developed a custom scent for the space, a gesture directly linked to the original meaning of *temenos*. In Ancient Greece, fragrance was not ornamental but fundamental to the experience of sanctuaries; it defined sacred space and rendered the presence of supernatural forces perceptible. Burnt offerings, perfumed oils, aromatic plants, resin, and incense marked a sensory threshold between the

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everyday world and divine territory. Like scent, sound operates as an atmospheric threshold: an invisible yet enveloping presence that reshapes spatial perception and attunes the body to subtle rhythms of flow and resonance. Composed of recordings from springs around Santa Fe, where Thompson is based, the installation links these disparate locations and cultures through the primordial element of water.

*Temenos: The Inland Sea* ultimately attempts to recreate a form of "cultural synesthesia," in which smell, sound, image, and gesture converge to shape collective perception. In this multisensory field, the sacred is not represented but experienced. The exhibition invites visitors to undertake a literal and metaphorical descent, encountering the cistern as both refuge and inner landscape – a foundational space of containment and transformation where the boundaries between sensory modalities blur, communal cohesion is strengthened, and the atmosphere of the sacred extends beyond the limits of architecture.

**Margaret R. Thompson**

***Temenos: The Inland Sea***

Curated by Anlam de Coster

Zeyrek Çinili Hamam, Istanbul

17 April – 30 August 2026

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### Notes to Editors

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### Opening Hours

Cistern: Tuesday–Sunday 10.00–18.00. (Free admission)

Bathing: Tuesday–Sunday 08.00–22.00.

Museum: Tuesday–Sunday 10.00–18.00. (Free admission on Thursdays.)

The complex is closed on Mondays.

### About Zeyrek Çinili Hamam

Zeyrek Çinili Hamam, located in Istanbul's historic Zeyrek neighborhood—a UNESCO World Heritage Site—reopened in 2023 as both a traditional bath and a vibrant cultural complex, following thirteen years of meticulous restoration led by The Marmara Group.

Originally commissioned by Barbaros Hayreddin Pasha and designed by Mimar Sinan in the 16th century, the hamam is recognized as a masterpiece of Ottoman architecture. Its name derives from the exquisite İznik tiles (*çini*) that once adorned its interiors, specially crafted for the space.

Named among National Geographic's "Best of the World" wellness experiences for 2026 and TIME Magazine's "World's Greatest Places" in 2024, Zeyrek Çinili Hamam stands as a landmark of cultural preservation and innovation. It offers a refined hammam experience with separate sections for men and women. The complex also includes a tranquil garden for special events, overlooking the majestic domes of the bathhouse.

Today, Zeyrek Çinili Hamam offers more than a bathing experience. It houses a purpose-built museum that guides visitors through time, featuring Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman artifacts unearthed during the restoration process. Objects and tiles related to bathing culture are exhibited in the museum building, while the site's newly revealed Byzantine cistern hosts

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a dynamic program of contemporary art exhibitions, offering visceral encounters that resonate with the hammam's enduring ethos of community.

The series began with the group exhibition *Healing Ruins* (2023), followed by solo shows dedicated to Alekos Fassianos (2024), Anousha Payne and Juliette Minchin (2025) curated by Anlam de Coster.

Bringing heritage and contemporary design together, the hamam's shop features exclusive collections by leading designers and artists inspired by the site's architecture and rituals.

### About Margaret R. Thompson

**Margaret R. Thompson** (b. 1990, Washington, D.C.) explores the intersection of nature, mythology, and the human spirit. Working primarily with oils, wax, sand, ash, mica, earth pigments, and plant materials, she creates layered paintings that reflect a deep relationship with wild, remote landscapes and probe universal truths woven through our shared human experience.

Her process is intuitive, guided by texture, memory, light, and materials gathered from the land. In each work, figures dissolve into their surroundings, symbols surface and fade, and natural forms hold equal weight to human ones. Her compositions feel like dream-spaces—part narrative, part elemental—inviting viewers into a quiet, contemplative encounter. Thompson's paintings act as windows, mirrors, and myths in motion, offering moments of recognition between body, earth, and the mystery that binds them.

Thompson was named one of the **Top 100 Early-Career Artists** in *Artcube's 2024 Discoveries Report* and is a **2025 Hopper Prize** grant recipient. Upcoming exhibitions are scheduled in Utah, Chicago, and New York. She lives and works in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

### About Anlam de Coster

Anlam de Coster is a curator, writer, and consultant, and currently serves as the Artistic Director of Zeyrek ÇiniLi Hamam. With over 18 years of experience, she has led curatorial and strategic programs across museums, art fairs, and cultural institutions in Paris, London, and Istanbul.

Her recent exhibitions include *The Volcano Lover* at Galerist (2025), as well as *Juliette Minchin: Where the River Burns* (2025), *Anousha Payne: Murmurations* (2025), *Alekos Fassianos: Sailing to Byzantium* (2024), and *Healing Ruins* (2023), all at Zeyrek ÇiniLi Hamam. She is also the founder of Fairplay, a strategic consultancy operating at the intersection of art and design.

Previously, de Coster worked with leading institutions such as Istanbul Modern, SALT, and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, and managed large-scale international projects for the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (İKSVA) in collaboration with Christie's and the Institut de France. She has also regularly collaborated with galleries, publications, and fashion brands.

She has played a central role in the global art fair ecosystem, leading global strategic partnerships at Artsy and contributing to the digital transformation of major international fairs. Her past fair leadership and advisory roles include PAD London, NOMAD, ARTINTERNATIONAL, and FIAC.

Anlam de Coster holds a BA in Economics from Galatasaray University and Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, and an MA in Arts and Media Management with *Cum Laude* honors from Sciences Po Paris. She is currently based in Paris.