

Press release

Jala Wahid
Mock Kings
1 Apr–14 May 2023

Press meeting
Fri, 31 Mar 2023, 11 am

Opening of the exhibition
Fri, 31 Mar 2023, 7 pm

How can history be told and preserved if it intrinsically eludes the Western idea of nation-statehood? How can events be depicted that remain largely invisible (and deliberately so) in the present? With her first institutional solo exhibition in Germany, Jala Wahid builds on her previous research on the pernicious ramifications of colonial occupation and seeks answers to both a supposed speechlessness and the challenges of inconsistency in the context of Western and Kurdish politics.

The site-specific jailed bull sculptural installation “Mock Kings” (2023) housed in the Kunstverein exhibition space refers to the Kurdish performance of Mîrmîran. Involving the election of a mock king instating mandatory laws, Mîrmîran was considered politically subversive by British occupation forces and subsequently banned in 1922. In the gallery above, the work “Metaphysical Reunification” (2023) is presented. It’s a deck of aluminium-cast playing cards that respond directly to the equivalent deck created by the Department of Defense, encouraging the U.S. army’s preservation of archaeology during the Iraq invasion. Artefacts from Mesopotamia, and modern-day Greater Kurdistan, now on display in London or Paris or still missing after the US military invasion of Iraq, are some of those that Wahid now re-collects and expands upon in direct opposition to the illegal excavations and looting of archaeological finds.

Both an early form of Kurdish art performance and artefacts from former Mesopotamia serve as starting points for Wahid to counter-draft Western historical narratives and, in doing so, reflect on theatrical and performative forms of political subversion. Which media might aid in criticising and ridiculing colonial power relations, or what’s more, distorting, inverting and temporarily suspending them? What potentials are offered by carnivalesque aesthetics, play and dance, parody and humour? And what happens when political and theatrical action can no longer be clearly distinguished?

In the context of political, geographical and linguistic fragmentation and unresolved questions of belonging and permanence, Wahid takes on the contradictions, diffuseness and complexity of diasporic reality and develops alternate techniques of remembering and preserving that can be transformative and playful, that testify to resilience and self-positioning.

Jala Wahid (b. 1988) lives and works in London, GB.

Selected solo exhibitions: *Conflagration*, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, GB, 2022; *Aftermath*, Niru Ratnam Gallery, London, GB, 2022; *Rock Fortress*, CAS Batumi, Batumi, GE, 2021; *Cry Me A Waterfall*, Two Queens, Leicester, GB, 2021; *Rock Fortress*, E.A. Shared Space, Tbilisi, GE, 2020; *Newroz*, Sophie Tappeiner, Vienna, AT, 2019; *Akh Milk Bile Threat*, Seventeen Gallery, London, GB, 2017.

Selected group exhibitions: *Testament*, Goldsmiths CCA, London, GB, 2022; *Re-configured*, Timothy Taylor Gallery, New York City, US, 2021; *Searching the Sky for Rain*, SculptureCenter, New York, US, 2020; *Being Towards The World*, SOPHIE TAPPEINER, Vienna, AT, 2019; *Still I Rise: Feminisms, Gender, Resistance, Acts 1, 2, and 3*, Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham, GB, 2018.

Programme

Fri, 31 Mar 2023, 7 pm

Opening Night with an Introduction by Theresa Roessler

Thu, 13 Apr 2023, 7 pm

Curator's Tour with Theresa Roessler

Wed, 19 Apr 2023, 7 pm

Junge Kunstfreund*innen

Resistant Bodies

Workshop with Fatma Sagir

Thu, 20 Apr 2023, 7 pm

die verbrechen

Lecture and Talk with Ronya Othmann

Thu, 27 Apr 2023, 7 pm

Theatrical Forms of Political Resistance

Lecture and Talk with Hawre Zangana

Sat, 6 May 2023, 2–5 pm

I Have Something Important to Tell

Workshop with Feministische Geschichtswerkstatt

Sun, 7 May 2023, 2–5 pm

Telling Magical Stories as Animated Films

Workshop with Fanny Kranz for Children 8–12 Years

Thu, 11 May 2023, 7 pm

Guided Tour with Heinrich Dietz

Contact

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Opening Hours:
Wed–Fri, 3 pm–7 pm
Sat–Sun, 12 am–6 pm
Open on 7 Apr, 9 Apr

Entrance: 2 €/1.50 €
Thursdays free
Members free

With special thanks to Sophie Tappeiner Gallery, Vienna and Niru Ratnam Gallery, London.

The exhibition is generously supported by:



The accompanying programme takes place in cooperation with:



Kunstverein Freiburg is sponsored by:

