

## Jala Wahid: „Smile maniacally we're alive“

Duration: 4 October 2026 — 16 January 2027, Opening: 3 October 2026, 6 pm

### Short Version

Jala Wahid works across sculpture, installation, film, sound and writing. Her practice investigates the legacies of imperialism and colonialism through systems of authority, knowledge and politics. Drawing on contested histories, archives and personal experience, she brings together forms of knowledge that are often kept apart: institutional research and lived experience, scientific technologies and embodied memory, political structures and intimate family history.

At the centre of her exhibition at DOCK 20 is a sustained interest in the physical body – as evidence, as a site of knowledge production, as an object of surveillance, but also as something that exceeds attempts at classification. In her video work "ungovernable" (2026), Wahid places technologies of AI-driven lie detection alongside the story of her parents' escape from South Kurdistan to the United Kingdom, via Iran and Austria. The video connects military and scientific research with archaeological imagery, questions of colour and personal migration history – fragmented and resisting explanation.

Archaeology serves as a method for reflecting on how history is constructed and made visible. The work is underpinned by a cyclical understanding of time: technologies and borders change, yet the power structures that produce displacement and exclusion persist. Wahid's work does not position viewers outside these systems, but instead asks how we are already entangled in them – and how alternative forms of knowledge might challenge their authority.

### Long Version

Jala Wahid is a London-based artist working across sculpture, installation, film, sound and writing. Her practice investigates the legacies of imperialism and colonialism through systems of authority, knowledge and politics. Drawing on contested histories, archives and personal experience, she brings together forms of knowledge that are often kept apart: institutional research and lived experience, scientific technologies and embodied memory, large political structures and intimate family histories.

Research is central to Jala's practice. Working across institutional and personal archives, she examines the material traces of colonial histories and their ongoing repercussions. Her research has encompassed archaeology as a colonial endeavour, military research into stealth technologies, and the development of AI systems designed to detect deception at European borders. Rather than treating these subjects as distant technological phenomena, Jala uses personal and familial narratives to reduce the distance between seemingly disparate systems and the bodies that are affected by them.

At the centre of this approach and her upcoming show at DOCK 20 is a sustained interest in the physical body: as evidence, as a site of knowledge, as something to be monitored and interpreted, but also as something that exceeds attempts at classification. In her video work, this tension becomes particularly pronounced through her engagement with AI lie detection and the scientific study of facial expression. Technologies developed to quantify emotion and identify concealed intentions are placed alongside the story of her parents' escape from Kurdistan to the UK, a journey that took them through Iran and Austria. Their experience of crossing borders, through uncertainty, fear, improvisation and intimacy, offers another, fundamentally embodied form of knowledge. It suggests a kind of stealth that cannot be reduced to a formula, diagram or technological system.

The video „ungovernable“ (2026) moves between these different forms of knowledge, connecting military and scientific research with archaeological imagery, questions of colour, and the personal history of migration. Its fragmented and associative structure resists becoming explanatory. Instead, it creates a space in which historical events, technological developments and individual experience begin to implicate one another. Questions are posed without always making clear who is being addressed, unsettling the presumed position of the viewer as an outside observer. The work asks what it means to produce knowledge about bodies, who has the authority to do so, and what happens when systems designed for border surveillance extend into other areas of everyday life. Archaeology functions within the video not simply as a reference to the past, but as a method for thinking about how histories are constructed, preserved and made visible. Excavation, archival research and technological analysis all share a desire to reveal what is hidden. What cannot be measured, classified or fully known remains still significant. Personal memory, emotion and lived experience complicate the supposedly objective facts through which bodies and histories are read.

Underlying the work is an awareness of time as cyclical rather than linear. Technologies change, borders are reorganised and methods of surveillance become increasingly sophisticated, yet the structures of power that produce displacement and exclusion persist. By placing experiences separated by decades into the same field, Jala reveals continuities between past and present, while asking what forms of agency might emerge from them. The resulting encounter is less an act of instruction than of implication. Jala does not position the viewer outside the systems she examines; instead, the work asks us to consider how we are already entangled in them. Questions of surveillance, migration, knowledge and authority extend beyond their immediate contexts, while even seemingly abstract subjects such as colour become politically charged through their different uses and meanings. In this way, her work opens onto a broader investigation of how power is produced, embodied and experienced—and how alternative forms of knowledge might challenge the authority of the systems that seek to define us.

### Biography

Jala Wahid lives and works in London, UK. She has had solo exhibitions at venues including the GAK Bremen (2023), the Kunstverein Freiburg (2023), the Tramway, Glasgow (2023), and BALTIC, Gateshead (2022). Her work has most recently been featured in group exhibitions, including at the MK Gallery, Milton Keynes (2024), the Stavanger Art Museum, Norway (2023), Goldsmiths CCA, London (2022), the CAPC Musée d'art contemporain, Bordeaux (2020), the SculptureCenter, New York (2019), the Arnolfini, Bristol (2019), the De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill (2019) and Nottingham Contemporary (2018). From 2012 to 2019, Wahid was co-editor of SALT Magazine. Her works are held in private and institutional collections worldwide, most recently including Lafayette Anticipations, Paris, and FRAC Grand Large, Dunkirk.

## Accompanying programme for the exhibition

### 3 October 2026, 6.00 pm: **Opening reception**

We are opening Jala Wahid's exhibition with a conversation with the artist and invite you to join us for drinks and snacks. Please note: The opening is taking place as part of the 'Long Night of Museums'. Admission to the opening at DOCK 20 is free; tickets for the 'Long Night of Museums' can be purchased on the door.

### 3 October 2026, 6 pm–midnight: **Long Night of Museums**

As well as the opening of Jala Wahid's new exhibition, there will be short guided tours, insights into the historical collection centred on Stephanie Hollenstein, and music from vinyl DJ Evil Yvy.

### 10 October 2026, 10.30 am: **Children's programme with Christa Bohle**

Following a playful tour of Jala Wahid's current exhibition, children can experiment with various materials and create their own works of art. For children aged 5 and over; duration approx. 2.5 hours. Registration: [christa@bohle.co.at](mailto:christa@bohle.co.at)

### 10 December 2026, 6.00 pm: **Guided tour of the current exhibition**

Curator Anne Zühlke leads a tour of Jala Wahid's exhibition, offering insights into her artistic practice and situating her work within the context of contemporary art. Duration: approx. 45 minutes, free admission.

### 12 December 2026, 10.00 am: **Family programme: What happens actually in a museum?**

A journey through the workings of an art museum! Artist Pirmin Hagen has created a 'hidden object' picture for children and adults that explains the magic of art. We invite you to come and search, discover, enjoy breakfast and do some crafts with the whole family. Free admission.

### 26 November 2026, 3.00 pm: **Guided tour of the Hollenstein Collection**

We're opening our storage gallery, and Gabriele Bösch will provide insights into the collection and the work of Lustenau-based artist Stephanie Hollenstein. Duration: approx. 60 minutes, free admission.

## General Information

### **Opening hours during the exhibition period:**

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday: 10.00–13.00; Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday: 14.00–18.00

**Opening hours for the collection:** By appointment. Admission to the exhibition and events at DOCK 20 is free.

**Educational programmes:** Special guided tours and free visits for school groups are available by arrangement at any time during the exhibition periods, including outside opening hours. For further information and to book a date, please email [dock20@lustenau.at](mailto:dock20@lustenau.at)

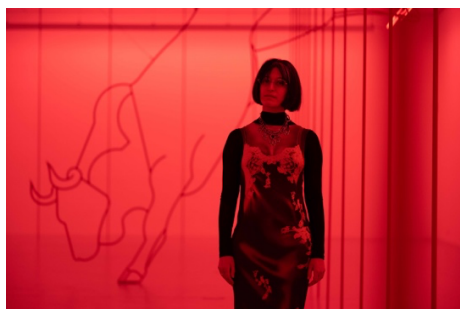
### **Address**

DOCK 20 – Hollenstein Art Space and Collection  
Pontenstraße 20, 6890 Lustenau, [dock20@lustenau.at](mailto:dock20@lustenau.at), [www.lustenau.at/dock20](http://www.lustenau.at/dock20)

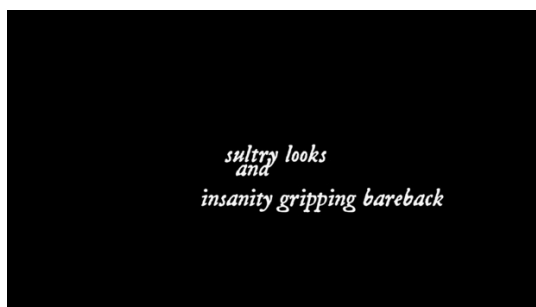
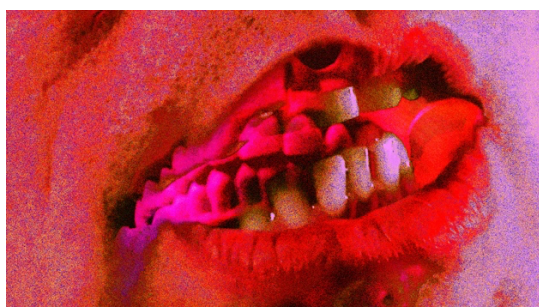
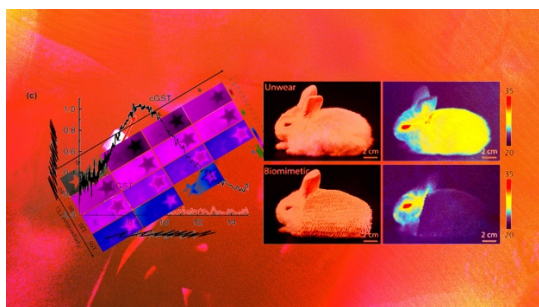
### **Contacts**

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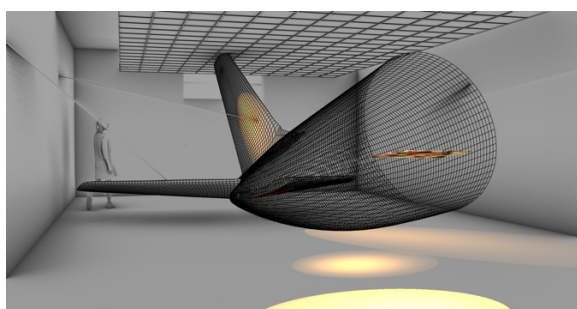
## Press images



Portrait Jala Wahid: © Marc Doradzillo



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