BRITISH ART STUDIES
Issue 24 – March 2023 – March 2024

Oil Aesthetics and Imperial Violence

Artist Collaboration interview between **Edwin Coomasaru**Artist Collaboration and **Jala Wahid**
WORD COUNT:4,411

This interview is based on a public conversation that took place at Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, in February 2023, which coincided with Jala Wahid's exhibition *Conflagration* (22 October 2022–30 April 2023). It is presented in tandem with the Conversation Piece feature "Monuments Must Fall" in this issue of *British Art Studies*.

Edwin Coomasaru: It's a real honour and a privilege to be in conversation: a chance to consider your work and the politics that underpin it. Our discussion will cover oil aesthetics, imperialist violence, apocalyptic images, monumental conflict, questions of time, and the politics of nationhood. We will trace relationships between climate change and colonialism, and think about the way art can picture other possibilities for being in the world by drawing on its speculative and imaginative potential. To begin, it would be great if you could introduce the work on display here at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead.

Jala Wahid: The exhibition, *Conflagration*, comprises three main elements: a single sculpture in the centre of the room titled *Baba Gurgur*; a light sculpture titled *Sick Pink Sun (03:00 14.10.1927–)*; and a 55-minute sound piece, *Naphtha Maqam* that was performed by Amal Saeed Kurda, a contemporary Kurdish singer, and produced with my long-time collaborator Owen Pratt (fig. 1). The exhibition is the result of a lengthy period of research on the historical relationship between Britain and Kurdistan, starting in the 1910s and 1920s. British imperial decision-making processes in Mesopotamia omitted Kurdistan as an independent state and established the new nation states of Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. For *Conflagration*, I was specifically interested in this moment of the discovery of the Baba Gurgur oil field in 1927. From a more personal perspective, this was because my father is from Kirkuk, which is the province in which Baba Gurgur, a natural fire, has been burning for thousands of years (fig. 2). I visited only after the Iraq War (2003–2011), because before, my father's exile prevented us from travelling to that region of Kurdistan.

I was really interested in the mythology of Baba Gurgur, what it represented, and how it could materially, culturally, or symbolically embody a sense of Kurdishness. Striking oil there in 1927 became this pivotal moment when Britain realised that the region was oil-rich, and this spearheaded what came after in terms of British interest in oil (figs. 3 and 4). I was interested in the singularity of that moment, and thinking about time and its repercussive effects. My approach to working is that history is a lens with which I can examine the present and the future. So, thinking about time was something that was really important for the exhibition. I produced this large-scale sculpture of the *Salvia spinosa*, a species of flower which grows on shale rocks between the Baba Gurgur oil wells. It's a very abundant and prolific plant, which grows from

North Africa all the way to Afghanistan. I really enjoyed that it wasn't this scarce or rare flower, but that it grew in abundance, just like the amount of oil that was believed to exist underground. In my research, I also came across a lot of imagery of industrial oil landscapes in Iraq and Kurdistan, such as when ISIS bombed the Qayyarah oil fields in 2016, which produced thick plumes of toxic smoke that covered the sky for several months. As it was really difficult to put out these fires, the sun was always a strange orange colour behind the clouds. I was interested in the singular force and energy of such an image, just as I was interested in the singularity of the moment of discovering oil at Baba Gurgur.

Then the sound piece was a way for me to go back and forth in time—to think about and move between the perspectives of the landscape, the flower, the sun, and my own position in a flexible way. I see these three elements in *Conflagration* as distinct, but for me they are also all sculptures. The sound piece immaterially pervades the space; it's inescapable. There is also the materiality of the light as a sculpture in *Sick Pink Sun (03:00 14.10.1927–)*, and then the "obvious" sculpture which is the flower.

Figure 1

Installation view, *Jala Wahid: Conflagration*, 22 October–30 April 2023, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead. Digital image courtesy of Jala Wahid, Photo Rob Harris © 2022 BALTIC (all rights reserved).

Figure 2

Oil wells and camp of the Iraq Petroleum Company, Kirkuk, Iraq, 'Gehenna', perpetual fires caused by constant escape of natural gas, 1932. Collection of the Matson (G. Eric and Edith) Photograph Collection, The Library of Congress (LC-M33-14440 [P&P]). Digital image courtesy of The Library of Congress (public domain).

Figure 3

Baba Gurgur oil well, Kirkuk, Iraq, 1927. Digital image courtesy of BP Archive (all rights reserved).

Figure 4

Khanuqah exploratory geophysical seismic study team, Iraq, 1920s. Digital image courtesy of BP Archive (all rights reserved).

EC: I would love to talk a bit about time, which I think you touched on very eloquently there. On the one hand, European imperialism narrated time as linear and progressive to claim "modernity" was produced through empire, and brought to people who were claimed to be "backwards" in that framework.[1] That racist rhetorical device has recurred repeatedly, most recently as part of the so-called "war on terror": including UK military interventions or occupations, domestic policies, and media moral panics. But there are also other theories of time that are non-linear, and there's something interesting in the exhibition that you've alluded to already: thinking about time in ways in which the past, present, and future cascade against each other.[2] There is also something particularly apocalyptic about such a conception of time and *Sick Pink Sun (03:00 14.10.1927–)* brought to mind the famous saying that "the sun would never set over the British Empire" (not only because of its geographic spread but also its imagined longevity). Yet, to my

reading, your exhibition seemed to evoke what looked like a setting sun. Could you say something more about how time operates in the show?

JW: I think about time a lot. From a personal perspective, I am always trying to understand the relevance of looking back at past events, or moments which we perhaps don't know have happened. For me, Kurdish histories feel like they're buried. But, at the same time, we are all living the consequences of the decisions that were made remotely in different parts of the world. Such decisions were made here in Britain, but about other places, and the people who made them didn't necessarily visit or know their people. I'm interested in the longevity that a decision has and how, like I said, we are living out the repercussions of those decisions; they have unknowable futures, which might outlive us as well. So I like thinking of time as something that stretches, irrespective of us. The particular moment that I am interested in was something that happened before I was born, which will have effects that will continue long after I die. I think for me it's kind of incomprehensible that someone can make a decision that will outlive them but that will have such catastrophic effects.

So I really like thinking about a moment determining not just the present but the future as well and, at the same time, being a result of the past. In that way, time can conflate and it doesn't necessarily have a linearity. This was important for me to explore in the sound-piece, *Naphtha Maqam*, whose parts go back and forth in time. It is composed using six *maqam*s—a *maqam* being a melodic mode, with a distinct set of notes like a scale. In the sound-piece, the first *maqam* is based on the Hijaz *maqam* and you might sing in an improvised form but it has to remain within the framework of the notes of this scale. In the installation, each *maqam* is melodically Kurdish or Middle Eastern but lyrically English, and refers to a different time in the history or speculative future of Baba Gurgur. For example, the first one is from the perspective of the flower, awaking in a post-apocalyptic landscape. The second refers back to 2016, and another goes back in time to 1927, when oil was struck at Baba Gurgur. The final one speaks from the perspective of the oil itself and is set in the future, in a physically impossible landscape. There are other ones in between: one is from my perspective, from when I first visited Baba Gurgur. There are other ones in between: one is from my perspective, from when I first visited Baba Gurgur, and the other explores oil as a futile symbol.

EC: I think there is also something about apocalypticism that plays with time in interesting ways. Apocalypticism as a cultural discourse has its roots in the ancient Middle East, and is often associated with conflict or war.[3] On the one hand, there is a before, during, and after an apocalypse, which is a kind of linear structure. But if everything ends at the end of the world, then so too does time and, therefore, also its linearity—which means it was never linear to begin with. So time begins to shatter and splinter around such an event. I think it's really interesting that your exhibition—from the setting sun to the flower speaking from the perspective of a post-apocalyptic landscape—is so attentive to the world's ending.

JW: But for me that feeling of the world ending is sort of continuous. I feel like the world ended when Britain landed in Kurdistan. That was more than a hundred years ago. So I feel like it's a series of moments where the world is ending because people are making decisions or things are happening in a landscape or there's conflict and war. I feel like it's not a single moment, it's just an ongoing thing.

EC: Absolutely. War and archaeology are of interest to you: particularly the way historical artefacts might be unearthed as a result of war and then change how the past is perceived. Could you say something about the relationship between archaeology and conflict in your work?

JW: What's interesting about Mesopotamia is that it's an incredibly archaeologically rich region, but it is also one of the most under-researched regions because of continual political turmoil. Every time someone starts an archaeological project, as soon as conflict or war breaks out, they have to stop. So it happens in fits and starts. And then you have other things like the relationship between looting and war. A lot of archaeological discoveries have also been made because of war. When Saddam Hussein drained the marshes in the south to prevent water reaching the southern Iraqis, it revealed ancient settlements. Building new roads can also expose ancient sites. The starting point for my current work and research is the 1920s, when Britain politically occupied Mesopotamia. Looking at colonial archaeology in that region, I found enough material to underpin several exhibitions. My exhibition *Mock Kings* (31 March–14 May 2023) at Kunstverein Freiburg responds to both the annual performance Mirmiran which was banned in the 1920s in Kurdistan and the pack of playing cards created by the US military during the Iraq War, which featured heritage sites to discourage their soldiers from destroying them (fig. 5). I've created an alternative deck of aluminium-cast cards, *Metaphysical Reunification* (2023), that portrays real or imagined ancient Mesopotamian artefacts, some currently held in Western museums, or looted, lost, and those yet to be discovered (figs. 6 and 7).

I think the feeling of discovery is quite pervasive throughout my work and practice. For the last few years, a lot of the research that I have been carrying out has begun in archives, like the British Petroleum Archives, which are in Warwick. The reason why I had to go to the British Petroleum Archives is because the early British company that was established in Iraq was called the Iraqi Petroleum Company, and later became BP (British Petroleum). So all these old documents, all these old memos regarding Baba Gurgur and photographs of Baba Gurgur first being struck—all this archival material—is in the British Petroleum Archives now. I also went to the Herbarium in Kew Gardens to do research into the flora and fauna around Baba Gurgur, which has its own colonial history. I'm currently doing a lot of research at the British Museum, exploring the history of European archaeological interest in Mesopotamia.

I carry out a lot of research in UK institutional archives, and it is really important to note that, even though my work is about this relationship between Britain and Kurdistan, all the documentation of that is here, because that history was made here. The reason why European archaeologists were so interested in Mesopotamia was because they saw it as proof of the Bible being a factual document. They didn't see the people that lived there as their descendants. They didn't see that history as belonging to them or local objects as belonging to that place. So they had no qualms about bringing things back to Britain, or, for example, to France; a lot is also in the Louvre because France and Britain drew up those borders together. Archaeology has long been a device for ideas around nationalism and statehood.

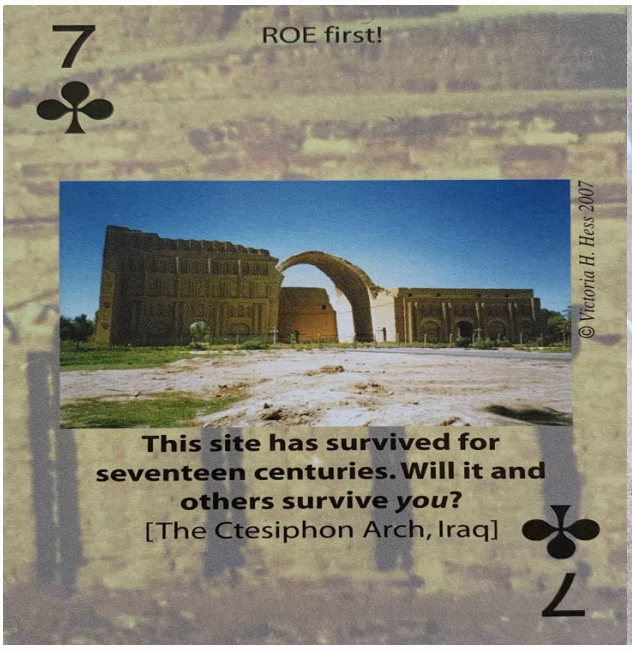

Figure 5

Heritage Resource Preservation 7 of Spades Playing Card, 2007, one of a set of playing cards developed as part of the 'In-Theater Heritage Training for Deploying Personnel' programme by the Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands (CEMML) at Colorado State University and the Fort Drum Cultural Resources Program, with support provided by the US Department of Defense. Digital image courtesy of Victoria H Hess / US Department of Defense (all rights reserved).

Figure 6

Jala Wahid, *Modelling of 9 of Diamonds playing card before aluminium casting*, February 2023. Digital image courtesy of Jala Wahid (all rights reserved).

Figure 7

Jala Wahid, *7 of Hearts depicting a right-hand lion paw from Persepolis*, the left paw of which is in the collection of the Oriental Institute of Chicago; 8 of Clubs depicting a pair of bull ears, from Achaemenid period, also in the collection of the Oriental Institute of Chicago, March 2023. Digital image courtesy of Jala Wahid (all rights reserved).

EC: What's it like engaging with those institutions, working with and against them? As in a museum whose collection has been created through an imperial framework or colonial theft. What's the experience like when you arrive at the British Museum and you're looking at these ancient Mesopotamian objects, and thinking about their makers?

JW: I personally love being in an archive, honestly, I'm never happier. I feel like it's just pure learning, pure discovery. Archives are, by nature, very quiet because there are people researching and it's like a library. I find that moment of discovering something—for example, a really damning handwritten note, or a picture of an object—very valuable. That moment of discovery is amplified by the fact that I can't speak or immediately tell anyone. For me, it's another lesson about time as well. Sometimes, even if an object is thousands of years old, I feel like the person who made it is literally handing it to me (fig. 8). There's a real immediacy to it. For me, those feelings are incredible and are difficult to translate into art.

Those moments remind me of how I felt when I first saw Baba Gurgur, or a natural fire in Kurdistan. Or how I felt when I saw those images after ISIS had bombed the Qayyarah oil fields, looking at the destruction of the landscape. Or how I felt when I read casually racist things about Kurdish people written in the UK National Archives. Those are strongly emotionally charged moments and that's how I see all this material: oil, archaeology, political history is almost incidentally emotionally charged. When I read in the archive about how civil servants and politicians wanted to carve up the Middle East, driven by their interest in oil among other agendas, it's not intentionally emotively written, but it almost gives itself away, in a very confessional way. Those moments, for me, are very interesting. That emotional charge is what I really want to be present in *Conflagration* and in my work in general. I feel like that's the potential of material and sculpture, and when I say "sculpture" I'm including sound in that as well.

Figure 8

Mesopotamian figurine of a couchant bull with bearded human face, held by Jala Wahid, 2000–1000 BCE, carved and engraved lapis lazuli, 3.90 × 5.10 × 1.50 cm. Collection of The British Museum (1908,0416.2). Digital image courtesy of The Trustees of the British Museum (CC BY-NC-SA 40).

EC: Recently you said to me that some of the ancient Mesopotamian objects you encountered in the British Museum had a monumental feel, and *Conflagration* itself has been described in one review as a "monumental exhibition".[4] Your installation certainly does feel quite monumental, particularly the *Baba Gurgur* sculpture. Could you say something about monumentality in your work?

JW: I do think about monumentality a lot, in relation to the singularity of the moment when oil was discovered at Baba Gurgur. That moment when it gushed out is very singularly one thing but also generative of a lot of others. I'm really interested in the didactic quality of that singularity. That's what monumentality is to me: the power that an image may hold or that a single structure may have. For me, it is again about emotional charge, and it's about directness, being sublime and overwhelming. It's also about an immaterial quality that is irrespective of scale. Sometimes when I look at a really small artefact, when I'm holding it at the British Museum, it carries a very monumental nature, in the same way that I might feel about a really big sculpture or a war memorial. It's also about how persuasive an object might be, and what it's convincing you of. Or how engaging a moment might be. It's kind of difficult to pin down, but it is something that has a very direct quality, yet also allows space for other things to occur.

EC: With a lot of monuments, there can be something contentious built in from the very beginning: monumentality is an aesthetic form of social antagonism, implicitly or explicitly.[5] I think it's very important that colonial violence and that particular moment in the 1920s are both at the core of *Conflagration*—not just the monumental form it takes, but also its monumental potential conceptually.

JW: Something else about monumentality, which really interests me and influences how I like to approach making exhibitions or work in general, is finding the least number of decisions needed to make something the most effective, or the most generative that it can be. So what is the least amount of fuss? What essentially needs to be there? What is the distillation of that feeling or that emotion, or that charge that I want to exist? There comes a time in the production where I need to be brutal and just take away what isn't necessary. For example, the whole time I was modelling the *Salvia spinosa*, I didn't want it to represent or resemble the flower as it was (figs. 9 and 10). I wanted it to be a stylised version.

Figure 9

Salvia spinosa, The Jerusalem Botanical Gardens, Israel. Digital image courtesy of Ori Fragman-Sapir, Jerusalem Botanical Gardens (all rights reserved).

Figure 10

Installation view, *Jala Wahid: Conflagration*, 22 October–30 April 2023, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead. Digital image courtesy of Jala Wahid, Photo Rob Harris © 2022 BALTIC (all rights reserved).

EC: I think what's really interesting about *Baba Gurgur* is the way it plays with the visuality of something that sometimes escapes sight. I would love to ask you about oil particularly. Oil is interwoven with time in really complex ways, partly because ancient fossilised organic materials like zooplankton and algae were compressed at high pressures under the earth, only to be released in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries along with the tremendous amount of energy they contained. As political theorist Timothy Mitchell observes: fossil fuels "made available stores of energy equivalent to decades of organic growth and acres of biomass in compact, transportable solids and liquids".[6] Oil has subsequently shaped the UK and the world profoundly.[7] Writer Amitav Ghosh, citing Mitchell, reflects that the very "material characteristics of oil make it even more potent than coal in its ability to reinforce structures of power".[8] He is referring to the labour practices specifically, but beyond energy production, oil has been used to create a myriad of modern materials like plastics. Oil runs deeply through the very fabric of our societies, often in a way that is hard to see. Could you say something about the sculpture's colour, its sheen, or if there's a kind of oil aesthetics that you're working with?

JW: I like that question. When I was invited to make the show at the Baltic, I came for a site visit and loved the gallery because there are no divisions. It's inescapable: wherever you stand, you can see the whole space. I wanted the installation to have that same feel of being inescapable. Again, I wanted to make something that played with or alluded to monumentality: something that felt, at times, quite relentless. I wanted every position in the exhibition to be just as optimal as any other position. When I was modelling the flower, I was constantly rotating it—

it was very important that even though there was a front and a back or two sides, every single viewing angle had to be perfect; all the curves had to be exactly how they were meant to be. Every time I turned the model, I pretended that a fresh view was the first thing you would see. I wanted each view to have the same power as a different angle. I wanted it to almost be a very democratic sculpture where it didn't have a good side and bad side. I also wanted the sound to be pervasive throughout the space as well and "democratic" in a similar sense.
In terms of colour, the show is called *Conflagration* and I wanted it to feel like an inferno. Colour became important and I really enjoy colour. I never think about the colours that things are in the world; I think about how they should be in the work or for that space, idea, moment. For *Conflagration*, I was thinking a lot about the colour that things might be underground, where we can't see them. The colour of the sun in this landscape, as you said, was like a setting sun (fig. 11). The thing that was really interesting to me in these images from 2016—these incomprehensible burning images—is that even when the sun was at its zenith, it always looked like a sunset. What ISIS had done didn't seem like a crime that was just against the people that lived there and the landscape of that place, it seemed like a crime of cosmic proportion. These actions even reached space and actually NASA recorded satellite images of the burning oil fields (fig. 12). So I was thinking about colour in terms of toxicity, and about the colour of the *Salvia spinosa*, which is white.

Figure 11

Installation view, *Jala Wahid: Conflagration*, 22 October–30 April 2023, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead. Digital image courtesy of Jala Wahid, Photo Rob Harris © 2022 BALTIC (all rights reserved).

Figure 12

NASA Satellite images of a fire in the Qayyarah oil field 50 miles south of Mosul, Iraq, taken by Landsat 8 from 14 June to 17 August 2016. NASA Earth Observatory images by Joshua Stevens, using Landsat data from the US Geological Survey. Digital image courtesy of Earth Observatory (public domain).

Colour was a way for me to deal with all the ideas I've been talking about. So wanting the colour of the sun to be this toxic pink. Wanting the internal light of the flower to be red, and bring out the tones of the red in the wall. Then also wanting these blues and greens, which are reminiscent of colours that might exist in a landscape, or an oil slick. Actually, what was really fun in terms of making the sculpture was how I layered these paints together. To get a bit technical: I worked with car paints and played around with metallic car paint and then with shimmer paints, which are colourless and transparent but have a shimmer to them under light.

I also worked with clear tints, putting a clear lacquer that has red tint. It was very important for me to be able to introduce depth of a certain kind, for example, the sculpture's leaves are green with a pink, pearly shimmer on top. Then the front, like a petalled collar, has a red tinted lacquer on it. This was again playing with ideas around toxicity—the colours that things *aren't* meant to be. The *Salvia spinosa* shouldn't be that colour; it should be white. What has happened in this landscape where a flower exists that is this colour or a sun exists that is that colour? Then, thinking overall: what does that palette look like, for example, a green when a pink sun is reflecting off it? Or what does a blue section of the flower look like against a red wall? These colours are choreographed together, based on how they reflect off one another. Crucially, I decided early that even though the show was about the history of oil, it was important that oil itself wasn't materially present but was felt through its traces, echoes, and repercussions. In this way, the "aesthetics" of oil were rarely to do with the materiality of oil itself.

EC: I love hearing you talk about the work; you're so eloquent. As we are approaching twenty years since the invasion of Iraq, recently leaked memos revealed that in 2002 the UK government had made plans with BP to divide up oil assets post-invasion, before the public had been told that occupation was the policy.[9] Such talks follow a twentieth-century tradition, before and after the British Empire's formal end, where corporations like BP collaborated with the UK state to intervene in what were or had been colonies to capture and extract oil.[10] I think your exhibition connects two things which are fundamentally entwined: the history of climate change and the history of colonialism. You also are absolutely right when you say that so many of the objects and archives you are working with are here because of those histories.

The final question I would really love to ask you is about nationhood and nationality as a frame because it is something that you are very self-reflective about in your work. Your engagement with institutional archives critically examines national frameworks: from sculptures like *This Is Your Salvation, My Silent Warfare* (2021) (fig. 13) which investigates political iconography and symbolism in activist paraphernalia held at London's Kurdish Cultural Centre, to *Metaphysical Reunification*, inspired by ancient Mesopotamian artefacts collected by the British Museum (which is currently reviewing its sponsorship by BP, under pressure from activists).[11] Yet, you make a real insistence that what's happening over there is intimately connected to what's happening here. Could you say something about nationhood?

Figure 13

Installation view, Jala Wahid, *Sophie Tappeiner* (detail), Frieze London Booth H03, Focus Section, October 2021. Digital image courtesy of Jala Wahid (all rights reserved). Photo by Edwin Coomasaru."

JW: I'm forever undecided about nationhood and how I feel about it. I mean, obviously I'm Kurdish and Kurdistan is not an independent state. A really interesting thing I came across in the UK National Archives was actually one of the main reasons why Kurdistan didn't become its own country: because it never fit into this tidy, Western, nation state ideal. It was divided into self-governed tribes or clans and it was very difficult to get one single leader who all Kurds could stand behind. It was interesting that for hundreds of years they were self-governed but they never had a single leader. For me, that really points to a different way of a state existing, for example, like what might be happening in Rojava now, which is self-governed.
Also, the fact that decisions made in Britain remotely affected the politics of different places distinguishes a different kind of border, or a different sort of link and relationship. I'm really interested in how borders are drawn up, and not just the borders of nations but also the borders of oil-rich regions, or the borders of past civilisations. In a way, borders are really so superfluous: they expand, contract, and sometimes exist irrespective of us. Boundaries and borders are not just human made either. I hope my work also deals with how boundaries might exist irrespective of geography or how they might exist immaterially. I think that's why looking into the future is also important for me: the imagination and speculation, or things existing in a fictive realm, are a way of defying boundaries which might exist today—to point out how superfluous they are and how they might not exist in the future.

About the authors

Dr Edwin Coomasaru is a historian of modern and contemporary British, Irish, and Sri Lankan art; his research considers the politics of gender, sexuality, and race. Coomasaru is an editor of the journal *Visual Culture in Britain*. He has been awarded Postdoctoral Fellowships at the University of Edinburgh, The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, and The Courtauld Institute of Art (where he earned his PhD and co-convened the Gender & Sexuality Research Group). He previously worked as a Research Assistant on the Association of Art History's anti-racist and decolonial

resource portal. Formerly a Contributing Editor at *British Art Studies*, Coomasaru has also co-edited a book on *Imagining the Apocalypse: Art and the End Times* (Courtauld Books Online, 2022). He has written articles and book reviews for peer-review journals (*Art History*, *Third Text*, *The Irish Review*, *Irish Studies Review*, *Oxford Art Journal*), alongside exhibition essays for museums and galleries (Barbican Centre, Autograph, Jhaveri Contemporary, Saskia Fernando Gallery, Belfast Exposed, Townhall Cavan).

Jala Wahid works across sculpture, film, sound, writing, and installation. She is interested in the emotive potential of archives, music, literature, dance, theatre, and fashion to reveal the poetics and performativity of politics, while articulating the colonial and interregional politics that shape diasporic Kurdish identity. She considers how politics and poetic expression interweave and looks to embody this intertwining, exploring their urgency, defiance, euphoria, and violence by suggesting ways of being that belie essentialist definitions of identity. Her recent work has been rooted in various archives such as the British Museum, British Petroleum Archives, National Archives, Kew Gardens, and London Kurdish Cultural Centre. She sees drawing on both community and institutional archives as a way of going beyond binary understandings of colonialism, instead, articulating the complexities of nationalism, history, and undetermined futures. Recent exhibitions include solo institutional shows at Kunstverein Freiburg (2023) and BALTIC (2022–2023). She has also had solo exhibitions at CAS Batumi, Georgia (2021) and Two Queens, Leicester (2022); and group exhibitions at Goldsmiths CCA, London (2022), SculptureCenter, New York (2019), Nottingham Contemporary (2019), and Arnolfini, Bristol (2019).

Footnotes

1. Priya Satia, *Time's Monster: History, Conscience and Britain's Empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2020), 3.
2. Satia, *Time's Monster*, 43.
3. Edwin Coomasaru and Theresa Deichert, "Art in Apocalyptic Times", in *Imagining the Apocalypse: Art and the End Times*, ed. Edwin Coomasaru and Theresa Deichert (London: Courtauld Books Online, 2022), 3.
4. Alex Hull, "Profile: Jala Wahid", *Art Monthly* 462 (December 2022–January 2023): 13.
5. "Monuments Must Fall", *British Art Studies* 24 (March 2023). https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-24/mmfconversation.
6. Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (London: Verso, 2011), 15.
7. See James Marriott and Terry Macalister, *Crude Britannia: How Oil Shaped a Nation* (London: Pluto Press, 2021).
8. Amitav Ghosh, *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis* (London: John Murray, 2021), 102; and Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy*, 29, 236–37, and 252–54.
9. Paul Bignell, "Secret Memos Expose Link Between Firms and Invasion of Iraq", *The Independent*, 10 May 2016, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/secret-memos-expose-link-between-oil-firms-and-invasion-iraq-2269610.html; and Marriott and Macalister, *Crude Britannia*, 188–89.
10. Kojo Koram, *Uncommon Wealth: Britain and the Aftermath of Empire* (London: John Murray, 2022), 53–54 and 60–62; Marriott and Macalister, *Crude Britannia*, 136; and Mitchell,

Carbon Democracy, 64–67, 86–87, 91–94, 96–98, 103, 107–8, 114, 145, and 210.

11. Esther Addley, "Fresh Doubts Raised Over Future BP Funding of British Museum", *The Guardian*, 28 February 2023, https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2023/feb/28/fresh-doubts-raised-over-future-bp-funding-of-british-museum.

Bibliography

Addley, Esther. "Fresh Doubts Raised Over Future BP Funding of British Museum". *The Guardian*, 28 February 2023. https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2023/feb/28/fresh-doubts-raised-over-future-bp-funding-of-british-museum.

Bignell, Paul. "Secret Memos Expose Link Between Firms and Invasion of Iraq". *The Independent*, 10 May 2016. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/secret-memos-expose-link-between-oil-firms-and-invasion-iraq-2269610.html.

Coomasaru, Edwin. "Monuments Must Fall". *British Art Studies* 24 (March 2023). https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-24/mmfconversation.

Coomasaru, Edwin, and Theresa Deichert. "Art in Apocalyptic Times". In *Imagining the Apocalypse: Art and the End Times*, edited by Edwin Coomasaru and Theresa Deichert, 1–13. London: Courtauld Books Online, 2022.

Ghosh, Amitav. *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis*. London: John Murray, 2021.

Hull, Alex. "Profile: Jala Wahid". *Art Monthly* 462 (December 2022–January 2023): 13–14.

Koram, Kojo. *Uncommon Wealth: Britain and the Aftermath of Empire*. London: John Murray, 2022.

Marriott, James, and Terry Macalister. *Crude Britannia: How Oil Shaped a Nation*. London: Pluto Press, 2021.

Mitchell, Timothy. *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*. London: Verso, 2011.

Satia, Priya. *Time's Monster: History, Conscience and Britain's Empire*. London: Allen Lane, 2020.

Imprint

Author	Edwin Coomasaru Jala Wahid
Date	31 March 2024
Category	Artist Collaboration
Review status	Peer Reviewed (Editorial Group)
License	Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0)
Downloads	PDF format
Article DOI	https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-24/jwahidecoomasaru
Cite as	Coomasaru, Edwin, and Jala Wahid. "Oil Aesthetics and Imperial Violence." In *British Art Studies*. London and New Haven: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and Yale Center for British Art, 2024. https://britishartstudies-24.netlify.app/oil-aesthetics-and-imperial-violence/.