



# Spike Island

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GOULED AHMED  
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RETURNS FROM THE ASHES*  
10 JUNE TO 10 SEPTEMBER 2023

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This collaboration between Asmaa Jama and Gouled Ahmed explores self-portraiture, memory and the archive. The exhibition is inspired by African photography studios; places of self-expression that are at once political and historical, fictional and intimate.

Central to the exhibition is a new film commission, *Except this time nothing returns from the ashes*. Shot on location in Addis Ababa, the film follows the ghostly, glitchy presence of those who exist at the margins of the city. Combining poetry and music, the film explores how national canons are constructed and can be corrupted.

Stemming from the artists' interactions with their families' photographic collections and archives, the film opens a portal to memory, for those who otherwise would be forgotten. For both Jama and Gouled, self-portraiture becomes an act of resisting erasure, demonstrating the potential of photography and the archive to remember.

The film is surrounded by a colourful octagonal wall, creating a space to hold the audience. Decorated with cutouts of geometric designs, reminiscent of the patterns found in the film, this structure is a homage to East Africa's built environment.

In the back perimeter, the installation *Ash is our inheritance* comprises a poem written directly on the wall, a line of charcoal, and a black and white chequered vinyl floor that evokes the interiors of African photography studios. In the text, Jama explores the notion of the aftermath, and how to understand the past when all that is left is ash and ruins.

*Except this time nothing returns from the ashes* is commissioned by Spike Island and is part of the West of England Visual Arts Alliance programme, supported by Arts Council England.

This exhibition contains some flashing images.

Large print guides are available in the gallery and to download at [spikeisland.org.uk](http://spikeisland.org.uk)

Spike Island is an international centre for the development of contemporary art, located in Bristol's harbour area.

Admission to the gallery is free.

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