

Spike Island

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
PRESS RELEASE

Asmaa Jama with Gouled Ahmed
Except this time nothing returns from the ashes
Saturday 10 June to Sunday 10 September 2023



This summer, Spike Island presents a new exhibition by artist and poet Asmaa Jama in collaboration with artist and costume designer Gouled Ahmed.

Exploring self-portraiture, archive and memory, 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 in the margins of the city. Combining a poetic narrative with spoken word 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 exhibition 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 decorated with cut outs of simple designs combining triangles, rectangles and circles, reminiscent of the bright colours and patterns found on East African doors.

– Ends –

For further information and high-resolution images please contact Niquita Munowenyu, Communications Manager at Spike Island on niquita.munowenyu@spikeisland.org.uk

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

- ASMAA JAMA

Asmaa Jama is a Somali artist, poet and filmmaker based in Bristol. As a poet and writer, Jama has been commended for the Brunel African Poetry Prize, shortlisted for the Wasafiri Writing Prize, the New Poets Prize and James Berry Poetry prize. They have also been longlisted in the National Poetry Competition. Their work has been published in magazines and journals such as Poetry Review, The Good Journal, Ambit, Ballast and Magma. In 2021, Jama was a Cave Canem Fellow. As a filmmaker, Jama was commissioned by BBC Arts to make the interactive film *Before We Disappear* (2021), and by Bristol Old Vic to make *The Season of Burning Things* (2021) which was screened at the 17th Venice Biennale of Architecture (2021) as part of *100 Ways to say We*. Both films were made with artist and costume designer Gouled Ahmed, as part of an ongoing creative collaboration. Jama is a Film London FLAMIN Fellow (2022) and a resident artist at Somerset House Studios.

- GOULED ABDISHAKOUR AHMED

Gouled Abdishakour Ahmed is an artist, stylist, costume designer and writer. Their work explores themes of memory, belonging and futurity using self-portraiture and self-fashioning as a tool to challenge traumatic histories and interrogate how structures of power have created meaning in how the 'other' is seen and understood in the Horn of Africa.

They collaborated with Asmaa Jama on *Before We Disappear* (2021), and *The Season of Burning Things* (2021), an experimental film commissioned by Bristol Old Vic (2021). Abdishakour Ahmed features in the documentary *The Ones Who Keep Walking* (2021), commissioned by Johnnie Walker. Their work has been shown at V&A Museum, London (2022); Alliance Ethio-Francaise, Addis Ababa (2021); Beursschouwburg, Brussels (2021); Northstar Church of the Arts, Durham (2019); ZOMA Museum, Addis Ababa (2018); Guramayle Art Center, Addis Ababa (2018); Asni Art Gallery, Addis Ababa (2018); Lela Art Gallery, Addis Ababa (2018); and Africa Center, London (2017).

Ahmed graduated with a degree in History from Bard College, New York (2015) and received the Prince Claud Fund's Seed Awards (2022) and the African

Cultural Fund's Visual Arts Grant, Bamako, Mali (2020). In 2022, Ahmed was artist-in-residence at Black Rock Senegal.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

- This commission was made possible by the West of England Visual Arts Alliance (WEVAA) programme, supported by Arts Council England.

IMAGE:

Asmaa Jama, *Except this time nothing returns from the ashes* (2022), production still.
Courtesy the artist.

Thank you,
Niquita Munowenyu
Communications Manager