

Spike Island

OLUKEMI LIJADU *FEEDBACK*

31 January to 10 May 2026



Olukemi Lijadu, *Feedback* production still (2025). Courtesy the artist

Feedback is the first institutional solo exhibition by Nigerian-British artist, filmmaker and DJ Olukemi Lijadu (b.1994, London). Centred around a new film, it traces the legacy and influence of West African sonic traditions on house music, investigating feedback, loops and drum rhythms as metaphors for the circulation of memory and cultural codes within the African diaspora.

Developed through extensive research in Chicago, Detroit, Lagos and Bristol, *Feedback* follows the artist's quest for echoes and links across the cultures of the Black Atlantic. A throbbing collage of found and original footage, the film moves between three continents, between family memories and collective histories.

Inspired by early abstract cinema, *Feedback* embraces repetition, musical and visual rhythms as cinematic devices. It also complicates and subverts this vocabulary, allowing the artist to reclaim and rework the legacy of a Western-centric art history.

The film installation is partly powered by a sound system sourced from local crew Ramsham Hi-Fi, paying tribute to Bristol's renowned sound system culture and the Black communities that have founded and sustained it.

The installation will also form the set for Lijadu's new performance, merging the virtual space of the film into the physical architecture of the exhibition. It will be presented at Spike Island on 23 April in partnership with Bristol New Music.

FEEDBACK

By Camille G. Bacon, with poetry* by Olukemi Lijadu

‘Growing up I had this common misconception, because of how [musical] genres are racialised, that black people were not a part of electronic music,’ recalls Olukemi Lijadu. *Feedback* revises the family tree of sonic innovation and repatriates, re-situates, and remembers the Afro-diasporic origin story of electronic music by positioning it as a descendant of West African percussive traditions. A heart transported – even across the expanse of an ocean – refuses to leave its music behind.

**Lagos, Chicago,
Detroit, Bristol,
Taken, moved,
Migrated, returned,
African time is
Somewhere outside of
The past and the future,
The drum makes
This zig zag of a
Timeline,
Do I remember?
How to speak my language,
I don't but maybe
I can find language
In this other mode,
You see anything can
be a drum if it beats?
Our hearts are the first
Drums we ever felt.*

If the heart is a drum, when the body encasing it is ‘taken, moved, migrated, returned’, its rhythm too must follow. *Feedback* follows a beating organ as it embarks on a wavering journey and returns to the shore of Badagry with both ears attuned to a Black world.

Rhythm not only rouses the body, but directs it. ‘The voice of the drum is employed to communicate a piece of news or to send a message from one village to another’ writes Francis Bebey. The drum, then, is an open mouth that summons the chorus into a crucible of shared feeling. Drawing cues from *Rhythmus 21* by Hans Richter, Lijadu diverges from the recurrence of rectangles (which signals control, foreclosure, and limitation) and opts instead for the circle: a geometry of gathering, a configuration of connection, a morphology of togetherness. *Feedback* remains faithful to the wisdom of the curve, and both aesthetically and conceptually (by positioning itself ‘somewhere outside of the past and the future’) traces a continuum between the Middle Passage and the development of electronic music.

**Distant cousins
Twice removed
On these shores
Echoes linger
And show up
When we meet
Behind closed doors
In church
They think it's just a dance*

*But it's a memory
It is a call,
It is a communion,
Just like the drum
Told stories,
Our music,
Sounds a signal,
A code that is
Deciphered through
Feeling, feeling, feeling...*

Electronic music is a Black metronome with an aqueous backbone. ‘The water is important in terms of endless repetition,’ Lijadu tells me. Waves transfer energy to one another, influencing the amplitude, force, and scale of their neighbours. *Feedback*, like waves, is another process where ‘endless repetition’ calls home: a sound emerges, changes shape as it cascades through space, loops back to its origin, and invariably sculpts the form of sounds that are henceforth uttered... A talking drum in Lagos influences the emergence of House music in Chicago, which influences the birth of Techno in Detroit, which influences the inception of Drum & Bass in Bristol, which influences the innovations in contemporary West African sonic tradition...

Feedback also asserts that not only have Afro-diasporic artists been at the forefront of the evolution of electronic music, but they have historically been pioneers in the technologies of sound transmission too. The score for Lijadu’s film will emanate from speakers constructed by local fabricators who carry forth the tradition of sculpting sound systems, which was catalyzed by Caribbean communities in Bristol throughout the 1970s. Within the film itself, Lijadu is pictured listening to music with her father. The pair sits before a futuristic object whose shape recalls an altar, thereby positioning speakers as a portal that connects the diaspora to its natural rhythm.

**I feel it,
I feel it,
I felt it,
We felt it,
We feel it,
And it moved me,
And it moves us,
And I move,
And we move,
And it starts,
It can't stop,
We don't think about such feelings,
We are lost,
In the sound,
Together,
a reminder
No matter how far
Again + again +
Again...*

To position electronic music as an inheritor of sonic traditions that sit at the inner sanctum of West African rituals (like masquerade ceremonies and drum circles) is also to understand the form as a technology of surrender.

Just as in the case of such rituals, the accumulation of percussive pressure inherent to electronic music can deliver those who allow the beat to bend them into a state of shared ecstasy in which we are set adrift and get 'lost in the sound together.' The momentum of the music carries with it a collective consciousness, an invitation to slide from 'I' to 'us' that hinges upon a plummet into pure instinct. *Feedback* emphasizes the role of affect and intuition through an editing strategy inspired by filmmakers like Kahlil Joseph, John Akomfrah, Steve McQueen, and Ja'Tovia Gary that embraces a philosophy of pandemonium: to let rhythm conduct the body is not a cerebral act but, rather, requires a willingness to capitulate to the intelligence of entropy.

Camille Gallogly Bacon is a Chicago-based writer and the co-Founder/Editor-in-Chief of *Jupiter Magazine*.

CREDITS

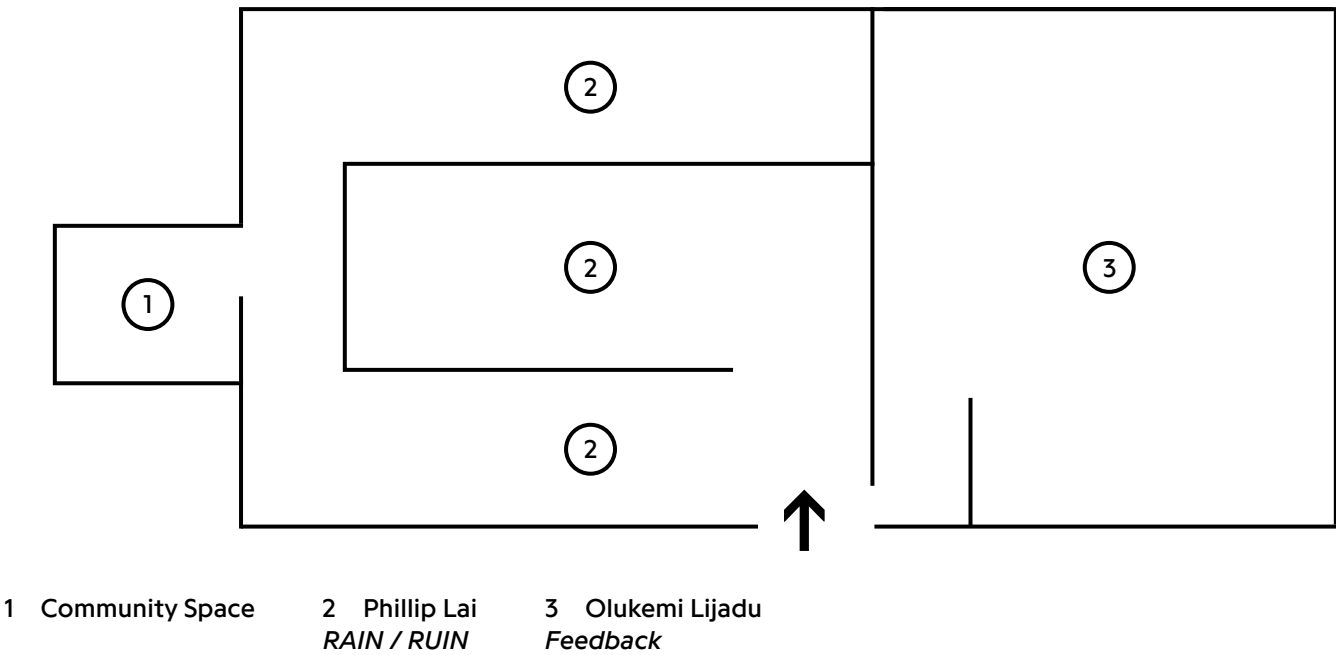
Feedback is generously supported by The Elephant Trust and the Olukemi Lijadu Commissioning Circle: Frank Dupuis and Ms. Bimpe Nkontchou.

Director Olukemi Lijadu	Production Assistants Olutomi Lijadu Ovie Dominic Asagba
Assistant Director Adedapo Adeniyi	Production Coordinator Ikeorah Chisom Chi-FADA Aima Lijadu
Executive Producer Laetitia Walendom	Cinematography Olukemi Lijadu Granville Wilson
Producer/Production Designer Jeremy Mbu	Analogue Cinematography Rowland Olamide
Researcher Sope Soetan	

Editors Rick Sims Ekene Amaonwu Olukemi Lijadu	Sound Recordist Ekene Amaonwu	Costume Olagbaiye Ayomide Daniel
Animators A Third World Tamika Batalova	Grip Aiden George	Cast Olufemi Lijadu Olukemi Lijadu Aima Lijadu Musa Toyib Babatunde Omotoso Oriniyi Tobean Oke Abiodun aka Wura Samba Wura Samba Ensemble (Oke Abiodun, Oke Temitayo, Ayanyemi Jelili, Samuel Idowu, Gbadebo Olayemi) DJ Duane Powell Jada-Amina Harvey Amani Olu
	Curator Clementine Proby	Assistant Curator Diana Lage

Head Technicians Olivia Jones Jackson Bateman	Spatial Sound Design Harry Ovington	Spatial Design Annelise Agossa	Special Thanks Nicole Yip The Spike Island Team Ramsham Hi-Fi Olufemi Lijadu Aima Lijadu Jada Amina Harvey Jamilah Abu Bakare Kesswa Wanogho Camille Bacon Laetitia Walendom OTO Projects Ben Broome St Saviours School Ikoyi Asmaa Jama Dare Dada Al Cameron Dr Michele Curtis Owen Lloyd John Lawrence Bristol Sound Archive Paul Purgas Theaster Gates Rebuild Foundation Frankie Knuckles Archive Villa Albertine
---	--	-----------------------------------	---

FLOORPLAN



EVENTS

SPOTLIGHT TOURS

Every Friday and Saturday, 3pm

RELAXED EXHIBITION HOURS

Last Sunday of each month, 12–2pm

DIASPORAS NOW

Performances by Hannan Jones, Emma Korantema and Hongxi Li

Thursday 26 February, 6–10pm

BSL EXHIBITION TOUR

Saturday 7 March, 2–3pm

BEHIND THE SCENES

Building tour and studio visits with Harriet Bowman and Max Naylor
Saturday 21 March, 11am–12.30pm

VERSIONING THE CITY

Live audio essay by Ashley Holmes
Saturday 28 March, 12–1pm

PHILLIP LAI: ARTIST TALK

Wednesday 1 April, 6–7pm

OLUKEMI LIJADU: *FEEDBACK*

Performance as part of Bristol New Music

Thursday 23 April, 7–8pm

CREATIVE WORKSHOPS

DREAM AND MAKE: MATERIAL PLAY

With Laura Phillimore
Workshop (5–11 years old and carers)
Tuesday 17 February, 10.30am–12pm

I AM A STRANGE LOOP

With Kathy Hinde
Workshop (all ages)
Saturday 21 February, 11am–1pm

I AM MAKING ART

With Plenderleith Scantlebury
Workshop (all ages)
Saturday 18 April, 11am–1pm

Visit our website for more information
on the events programme

INFORMATION

Spike Island

133 Cumberland Road
Bristol BS1 6UX

0117 929 2266

admin@spikeisland.org.uk
spikeisland.org.uk

Instagram: @SpikelIsland

Facebook: SpikelIsland

OPENING HOURS

Gallery: Wednesday to Sunday, 12–5pm

Café: Monday, 9am–3pm

Tuesday and Sunday, 10am–4pm

Wednesday to Saturday 10am–5pm

SUPPORT US

DONATE

Help shape the future of contemporary art by making a donation today:

spikeisland.org.uk/support-us



BECOME A PATRON

Join a passionate group of patrons who amplify the voices of artists and support our pioneering ecosystem of creative communities.

Starting at £25 a month, become an Artist Champion or member of our Director's Circle to enjoy unparalleled access to our work: spikeisland.org.uk/support-us

Spike Island is a registered charity (no.1003505)



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



**THE
elePHANT
TRUST**