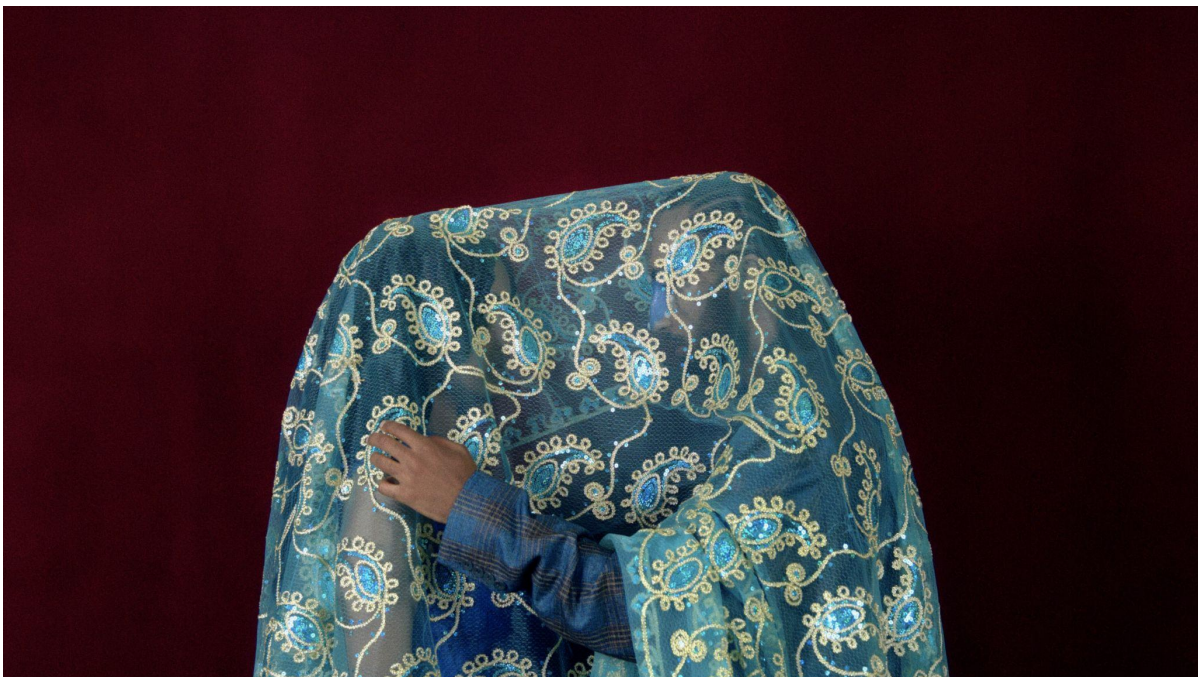


THE AFRICA CENTER

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**The Africa Center Announces Asmaa Jama and Gouled Ahmed,
'Except this time nothing returns from the ashes,'
Reimagining African Identity and Historical Memory**



On view June 14, 2024 - September 1, 2024

NEW YORK, NY - The Africa Center today announced *Except this time nothing returns from the ashes*, a North-American premiere of the short film and exhibition by East African artists Asmaa Jama (United Kingdom/Somalia) and Gouled Ahmed (Ethiopia) opening on June 14, 2024 at The Africa Center.

Inspired by African photography masters such as Samuel Fosso, Malick Sidibé and Seidou Keïta, paralleled with an exploration of Jama and Ahmed's personal family archives, *Except this time nothing returns from the ashes* invites viewers through a journey of self-expression, that is at once political and historical, fictional and intimate. Through a poetic narrative, spoken word and music, the work investigates how personal identity and collective narratives are both constructed and corrupted by technologies that determine who is remembered and who is forgotten as the historical cannon is formed.

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Shot on location in Addis Ababa in 2022, the film follows the ghostly, glitchy presences of individuals who exist in the margins of a city. Developed from Jama and Ahmed's interactions with their families' photographic collections and archives, *Except this time nothing returns from the ashes* opens a portal to memory for those who have been systematically rendered peripheral. For the artists, self-portraiture becomes an act of resisting erasure, demonstrating the power of photography and the archive to remember and to force retrospection and reflection.

Except this time nothing returns from the ashes is presented in an octagonal structure, an interpretation of the photo studio, creating a space that insulates the viewer. The patterns and colors are an homage to those found across East Africa's built environment, many of which are also found in the film, questioning Jama and Ahmed's personal desire for resurrection, memorialization, and a tangible inheritance.

In the back perimeter, the installation *Ash is our inheritance* comprises a text painted in black directly on the wall outlined with charcoal powder. This is a more direct reference to ashes, of which Jama explores the notion of aftermath and excavating the past through ruins.

Asmaa Jama said, "The photographic legacy of Black image-makers and artists in Harlem and in New York are undeniable. And it is a great honor and privilege to be opening the work in this new context, and at The Africa Center. I hope it is a site for exchange, transmission, and a space for collective re-membering."

Gouled Ahmed said, "As an artist whose primary medium contends with the practice of self portraiture, and who uses the photography studio as an architecture of remembrance, it is an honor to show our film at The Africa Center in Harlem. This community is a site that has brought us photographers the likes of James Van Der Zee whose practice of memorializing and monumentalizing the everyday quotidian lives of black Harlemites has left a lasting impact on the cultural zeitgeist of Black global diasporas and is very much in conversation with the studio photographs from 1970s and 1990s Somalia and Ethiopia found within the film. It is my express hope that through this film we are able to forge new connections, new histories and new futures between the Horn of Africa and Harlem, New York City."

Dr. Uzodinma Iweala, CEO of The Africa Center said, "The Africa Center is excited and pleased to debut *Except this time nothing returns from the ashes* at our home in Harlem. There is a history of African people and those of African descent being defined through film and photography, not through our own gaze, but through the lens of the other. This has resulted in misrepresentation and a severely distorted understanding of our narratives, our identities, and our collective histories. With a careful sensitivity and engaging, inviting approach, Asmaa and Gouled address this issue in this work. I look forward to its reception in Harlem and to the conversations it will inspire on how we, as a global African community, continue to preserve and present our images of the past and shape our identities of the future through the archive."

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Except this time nothing returns from the ashes will be open June 14 through September 1, 2024. For more information, visit theafricacenter.org/exhibitions.

The exhibition is made possible at The Africa Center with support of General Electric.

Except this time nothing returns from the ashes was co-commissioned by and first presented at Spike Island, Bristol, United Kingdom in 2023.

Exhibition Dates and Hours:

Friday, June 14, 2024—Sunday, September 1, 2024

Thursday—Sunday, 11am—5pm

Related Programs

In Conversation: Asmaa Jama and Gouled Ahmed with Serubiri Moses

Saturday, June 15, 3PM-5PM

Join us for artist talk from Asmaa Jama and Gouled Ahmed and hear about their collaborative exhibition. The conversation is moderated by independent writer and curator Serubiri Moses.

Ash is our inheritance

Museum Mile

Tuesday, June 18, 6PM-9PM

Join us for an evening of experimental sound and spoken word performances by Asmaa Jama, Ladan Osman, and Caleb Giles. This program is part of the annual Museum Mile Festival, a celebration of art and culture at New York City cultural institutions along Fifth Avenue's Museum Mile.

Location:

The Africa Center

1280 Fifth Avenue

New York, NY

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About The Africa Center

The Africa Center is a multidisciplinary 501c3 nonprofit institution helping to shape a vision of Africa's future. Serving as a gateway to engagement with contemporary Africa, and as a platform for the exchange of ideas around culture, business, and policy as related to the African continent, The

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Africa Center advances thought and action around Africa's global influence and impact on our collective futures. Learn more at www.theafricacenter.org. Follow The Africa Center on X.com, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube @TheAfricaCenter.

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