

# Nnena Kalu: Creations of Care

Exhibition Guide  
English

20.03. – 03.08.25

Kunsthall Stavanger is proud to present *Creations of Care*, the first solo exhibition of British artist Nnena Kalu outside the UK.

Kalu's work takes the form of large-scale sculptures and a series of drawings. At Kunsthall Stavanger, Kalu takes over all galleries in her largest exhibition to date. Here, she presents a new series of sculptures created specifically for the space and finished on-site. Her practice is a dynamic interplay of expressive gestures, explosive energy, and meticulous care. Through their immediacy and approachability these works invite audiences to engage, encouraging personal interpretations and introspection. As viewers, we are generously offered a window to contemplate the world through her unique perspective.

In the kunsthall's main gallery, a striking series of sculptures fills the space. These large-scale installations resemble enormous, pregnant cocoons, brimming with colour and enveloping forms—hallmarks of Kalu's practice. Upon closer examination, layers of textiles reveal themselves, some tightly wrapped, others pleated together with precision. Her signature neon pinks and yellows dominate the sculptures, interspersed with a vibrant mix of other colours.

Kalu's sculpting process begins with urgent, frenzied wrapping: fast, intense, instinctive—before transitioning into a more deliberate, measured approach. In the early stages, artist and material seem to merge as she rapidly builds, models, and makes intuitive decisions on form and colour. As the initial burst of energy subsides, she shifts to careful consideration of how the materials work together. Her sculptures incorporate everyday, often discarded materials such as Blockbuster videotapes, textiles, fabrics, tape, and drainage pipes. While their affordability plays a role in their selection, every material is deliberately chosen and their abundance aligns with Kalu's energetic and prolific process.

The act of binding, pleating, and layering speaks to Kalu's process of creation: a balance of urgency and care, of instinct and intention. Her sculptures appear to nestle, nurture and protect. Kalu's creations are a loving manipulation of materials, through the binding and pleating of fibers she brings and holds them together. The concept of care sits at the heart of her practice, seen in the careful cultivation of something until it is ready to enter the world. This notion may resonate with the experience of motherhood—the devotion poured into nurturing an idea, a concept, or a life.

Kalu's works are visually distinct, yet they are not created in order to achieve a specific aesthetic. Rather, they are physical responses—intuitive, immediate, deeply personal. Each work captures a moment, a state of being, an imprint of time in the artist's studio. The momentary

nature of her work is particularly evident in her drawings, displayed in the smaller galleries.

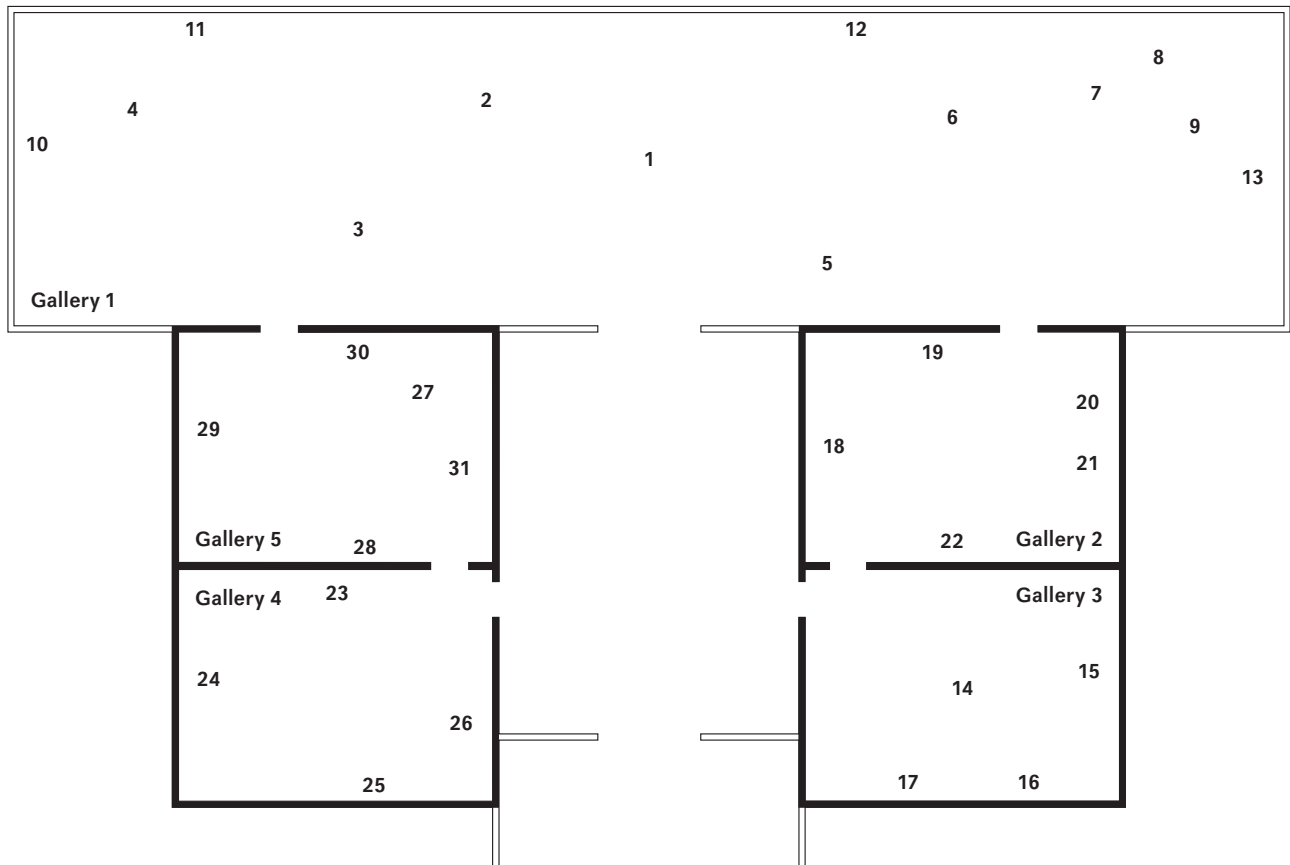
The sophistication in her drawings are defined by expressive, rhythmic lines. Kalu often draws with her eyes closed, responding mainly to the sound of the pen, pencil, graphite, oil pastel meeting the paper. Here, an almost internal rhythm drives her. These works speak to presence, each mark existing as a record of the moment it was created.

Her drawings, often created in sequences of two, three, or more panels, may appear identical at first glance, but each contains subtle differences. Kalu exhausts a form through repetition, then moves on, rarely returning to a previous motif. Repetitive motion, often associated with autism, is a defining element of her sculptures and drawings. For viewers, this repetition can be meditative, inducing a sense of calm and focus. Some works evoke the warmth and security of the womb, while others explode outward, reaching beyond their confines. The layering of colours and forms invites us to experience the work through sensation rather than analysis.

Kalu's practice is inextricably linked to her unique perspective and experience. As a Black woman with limited verbal abilities and a learning disability, her work offers visitors an opportunity to see the world through a different lens. For 25 years, she has been supported by ActionSpace, a UK-based organisation that provides learning disabled artists the resources, opportunities and studio assistance to develop their work. However, Kalu's works do more than offer a window into her world—they challenge us to reconsider how we navigate our own. They pose questions about perception, movement, and act as an invitation to reflect on how we move through life, how we care for ourselves and others. The beauty of these works lie in their generosity, the offering of participation they extend to us.

When encountering Kalu's work, viewers are often met with a feeling of joy. Her sculptures exude freedom of movement and an electric interplay of colour. They are inherently related to her body, shaped by the reach of her arms and her movement around them. At Kunsthall Stavanger, Kalu's sculptures are suspended from the ceiling, mirroring the way she constructs them in her studio. This setup allows her to work from all angles—inside and out, her arms continuously enveloping the form. As viewers, we too are invited to move around and within the sculptures, to experience the embrace and care infused into them.

Kalu's works offer a rare generosity: A space for participation, interpretation, and immersion. In experiencing Kalu's art, we do not just witness a moment of creation; we step into it, bringing our own presence, our own moment, into conversation with hers.



## GALLERY 1

- 1 *Hanging sculpture 11. Norway (2025).*  
Plastic tubing, fabrics, tapes, VHS tapes, various plastics, paper, rope. 233 × 110 × 180 cm
- 2 *Hanging sculpture 9. Norway (2025).*  
Plastic tubing, fabrics, tapes, various plastics, VHS tapes, paper, rope. 90 × 100 × 200 cm
- 3 *Hanging sculpture 6. Norway (2024).*  
Plastic tubing, fabrics, tapes, VHS tapes, rope. 70 × 170 × 50 cm
- 4 *Hanging sculpture 10. Norway (2025).*  
Plastic tubing, fabrics, tapes, various plastics, VHS tapes, paper, rope. 100 × 180 × 160 cm
- 5 *Hanging sculpture 8. Norway (2024–2025).*  
Plastic tubing, fabrics, tapes, VHS tapes, paper, rope. 100 × 110 × 40 cm
- 6 *Hanging sculpture 4. Norway (2024).*  
Plastic tubing, fabrics, tapes, VHS tapes, paper, rope. 170 × 200 × 65 cm
- 7 *Hanging sculpture 2. Norway (2024).*  
Plastic tubing, fabrics, tapes, paper, rope. 100 × 110 × 40 cm
- 8 *Hanging sculpture 3. Norway (2024-2025).*  
Plastic tubing, fabrics, tapes, VHS tapes, paper, rope. 90 × 170 × 70 cm
- 9 *Hanging sculpture 5. Norway (2024-2025).*  
Plastic tubing, fabrics, tapes, VHS tapes, paper, rope. 70 × 80 × 240 cm
- 10 *Drawing 53 (2022).*  
Ink, pen and graphite on paper. 170 × 136 cm × 2
- 11 *Drawing 63 (2023).*  
Acrylic pen, pen on paper. 150 × 100 cm × 3
- 12 *Drawing 70 (2023).*  
Acrylic pen and pen on paper. 170 × 91.5 cm × 3
- 13 *Drawing 72 (2023).*  
Acrylic pen and pen on paper. 170 × 90.2 cm × 3

### GALLERY 3

- 14 *Hanging sculpture 7. Norway* (2024).  
Plastic tubing, fabrics, tapes, VHS tapes, paper, rope.  
170 × 130 × 80 cm
- 15 *Drawing 10* (2021).  
Acrylic pen, graphite, chalk and pen on paper.  
186 × 135 cm × 2
- 16 *Drawing 4* (2021).  
Pen on paper.  
198 × 102 cm × 2
- 17 *Drawing 7* (2021).  
Pen and graphite on paper.  
197 × 102 cm × 2

### GALLERY 2

- 18 *Drawing 67* (2023).  
Acrylic pen, pen, graphite and oil pastel on paper.  
149.5 × 101.4 cm × 3
- 19 *Drawing 12* (2021). Acrylic pen, pen, graphite and soft pastel on paper.  
196 × 136 cm × 2
- 20 *Drawing 17* (2021).  
Acrylic pen, pen, chalk pen, graphite and oil pastel on paper. 199 × 101 cm × 2
- 21 *Drawing 68* (2023).  
Pen and oil pastel on paper.  
170 × 92.2 cm × 3
- 22 *Drawing 41* (2022).  
Acrylic paint stick, pen, pastel on paper.  
186.5 × 135 cm × 2

### GALLERY 4

- 23 *Drawing 60* (2023).  
Pen and graphite on paper.  
84 × 59.2 cm × 4, double sided.
- 24 *Drawing 29* (2022).  
Acrylic pen, pen and graphite on paper.  
169 × 136 cm × 2
- 25 *Drawing 43* (2022).  
Acrylic pen, pen, chalk and graphite on paper.  
178.5 × 135 cm × 2
- 26 *Drawing 58* (2022).  
Acrylic pen and pen on paper.  
150 × 100 cm × 3

### GALLERY 5

- 27 *Hanging sculpture 1. Norway* (2024).  
Plastic tubing, fabrics, tapes, VHS tapes, various plastics, rope. 110 × 70 × 70 cm
- 28 *Drawing 47* (2022).  
Ink, oil pastel, graphite, oil stick on paper.  
178 × 134.5 cm × 2
- 29 *Drawing 38* (2022).  
Pen, pencil, graphite and pastel on paper.  
170 × 271 cm
- 30 *Drawing 46* (2022).  
Pen, graphite and oil sticks on paper.  
170 × 136 cm × 2
- 31 *Drawing 65* (2023).  
Pen and graphite on paper.  
42 × 45 cm × 6, double sided.

Nnena Kalu (b. 1966, Glasgow) lives and works in London, UK. Her practice is rooted in two-dimensional works, sculptures and installations. For 25 years, she has been supported by ActionSpace, a UK-based organisation that provides learning disabled artists the resources, opportunities and studio assistance to develop their work. Kalu has grown her practice at ActionSpace's studio at Studio Voltaire and is an important member of both Studio Voltaire and ActionSpace's artistic communities.

Kalu work was included in the 2024 edition of Manifesta 15. Other recent exhibitions include *Conversations*, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, UK (2024); *Arcadia Missa*, London (2024); *Infinite Drawing*, Deptford X, London, UK (2022); *Studio Voltaire Elsewhere*, London, UK (2020); *Wrapping*, Humber Street Gallery, East Yorkshire, UK (2019); *Allied Editions*, House of Voltaire, Frieze, London, UK (2022); *To all the Kings who have no Crowns*, Carl Freedman Gallery, Margate, UK (2022).

Kalu's work is included in the collections of Tate (UK) and the Arts Council (UK). Kalu is the winner of the Mosaic Art Award 2025.

The exhibition is curated by  
Kristina Ketola Bore, Senior Curator.

The exhibition is generously supported by  
Arts and Culture Norway, Bergesenstiftelsen,  
and The Norwegian Association of Art Societies.

Kunsthall Stavanger would like to thank ActionSpace.

Hours:  
Wednesday 11 AM – 4 PM  
Thursday 11 AM – 7 PM  
Friday–Sunday 11 AM – 4 PM

Madlaveien 33, 4009 Stavanger

Instagram: @kunsthall\_stavanger  
kunsthallstavanger.no

# Kunsthall Stavanger