

# Curating and Coalition

Challenging and Expanding the Art World  
in the Wake of Nnena Kalu's Turner Prize Win

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Thursday 26 March 2026

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A one-day symposium on inclusive curatorial  
practice, facilitation, and representation.  
Town House / Kingston University London KT1 2EQ



ActionSpace, Stanley Picker Gallery and Kingston School of Art PhD candidate Lisa Slominski present *Curating and Coalition: Challenging and Expanding the Art World in the Wake of Nnena Kalu's Turner Prize Win*, a one-day symposium critically exploring the potential of expanding roles and responsibilities of cultural intermediaries within contemporary art in the wake of Nnena Kalu's Turner Prize Win.

Bringing together curators, researchers, supported-studio practitioners, academics, and arts organisations, the symposium will examine agency, representation, facilitation, and coalition in relation to artists working from supported studio contexts. It responds to the growing visibility of learning disabled and neurodivergent artists, in particular those with complex needs and whose communication is considered non-normative, within the contemporary art world, and asks how this visibility can be accompanied by more equitable, accountable, and sustainable curatorial and institutional practices.

*Curating and Coalition* is supported by Arts Council England.

Above: Installation view of Nnena Kalu's presentation at the Turner Prize 2025, Cartwright Hall Art Gallery. Photo ©David Leven  
Below right: Nnena Kalu. Courtesy of the Artist and ActionSpace  
Cover: Nnena Kalu, *Drawing 74*, 2024. Photo: Tom Carter. Courtesy of the Artist, ActionSpace, and Arcadia Missa, London.

## CONTEXT

Framed by Nnena Kalu's 2025 Turner Prize win—a landmark moment for learning disabled artists working within supported studio models—*Curating and Coalition* opens a space for critical reflection on how artistic practices that are challenged by normative modes of communication are curated, interpreted, and advocated for.

Writer-curator Lisa Slominski convenes the symposium as part of her PhD research within Kingston School of Art's Department of Critical and Historical Studies. Her interdisciplinary research examines how agency, identity, and representation intersect within existing artworld structures, with sustained engagement with the practice of artist Nnena Kalu and the evolving curatorial and critical methodologies that shape its reception. Drawing on this research, the panel discussions will examine the dynamics of representation, the politics of interpretation, and how difference is mediated within curatorial and critical practice.

## NNENA KALU

Nnena Kalu has developed her artistic practice at ActionSpace's studio in Studio Voltaire since 1999.

Her practice is rooted in two-dimensional works, sculptures and installations. Through binding, layering and wrapping materials, Nnena explores space, scale and materiality with repetitive sculptural processes. Her installations often begin with multiple compact 'cocoons' or 'boulders' of textiles and paper tightly packed in cellophane and tape. Nnena's energetic installations become an extension of her physical movements, focusing on an important relationship between the artist's body and her sculptural forms. Nnena's two-dimensional works are also viewed as sculptural explorations of space dictated by the length and reach of Nnena's arms, as well as the size of the paper. Drawings and paintings are frequently produced in pairs, the second an echo of the first. Process, repetition and material are pivotal to Nnena's practice. The energy and passion Nnena emits through making, her methodology and the complex and ambitious work she creates are fascinating.

In 2025, Arcadia Missa announced their representation of Nnena Kalu. And in ground-breaking news, Nnena was announced as winner of the 2025 Turner Prize.



## PROGRAMME

10:00–10:15	Welcome Guests
10:15–10:30	OPENING REMARKS • David Falkner, Director, Stanley Picker Gallery • Peter Heslip, Director of Visual Arts, Arts Council England
Panel #1:	CURATORIAL METHODOLOGIES Expanding Strategies and Representation, chaired by Lisa Slominski
10:30–11:45	INTRODUCTION & PRESENTATIONS Linsey Young, Lou Mensah, Michael Richmond, Jes Fernie
11:45–12:00	Break
12:00–13:00	Discussion
13:00–13:45	Lunch
Panel #2:	CULTURAL INTERMEDIARIES Facilitation, Coalition, and Advocacy, chaired by Lisa Slominski
13:45–15:00	INTRODUCTION & PRESENTATIONS Charlotte Hollinshead, Rózsa Farkas, Tom di Maria, Gabrielle Mordy
15:00–15:15	Break
15:15–16:15	Discussion
16:15–16:30	CLOSING REMARKS Sheryll Catto, CEO & Artistic Director of ActionSpace Lisa Slominski
17:00–18:00	RECEPTION Stanley Picker Gallery <i>Attack Decay Sustain Release:</i> Experiments in Sound with Sophie Huckfield, Nnena Kalu & Rebecca Kressley, Abbas Zahedi & more

## PANELLISTS

Rózsa Farkas / Founder and Director, Arcadia Missa

Rózsa Farkas (b. 1987, London, UK) is the founding director of Arcadia Missa, a London-based gallery representing emerging and mid-career artists including Rene Matić and Nnena Kalu, both of whom were shortlisted for the 2025 Turner Prize. Arcadia Missa was established as a commercial gallery in 2015 after running as a project space for several years. As well as its gallery programme, Arcadia Missa has been an active publisher of journals and artist books. Farkas is a former lecturer and researcher and much of the gallery programme promotes artwork that critically engages with the social and political conditions of our time.

Jes Fernie / Curator, Writer and Lecturer

Jes Fernie is an independent curator, writer and lecturer. She works with galleries, visual arts organisations, universities and artists to make exhibitions, public artworks, residency projects and public programmes across the UK and abroad. She is interested in the ways that artworks are viewed, positioned, and transformed by a live relationship with audiences, contexts and conditions. She launched the Archive of Destruction in 2021.

Jes is currently Course Leader, MA Culture, Criticism and Curation at CSM and visiting lecturer at universities including the RCA, Royal Academy Schools, the Slade and Goldsmiths College. She is Chair of the Board of Trustees at Matt's Gallery, London.

Charlotte Hollinshead / Head of Artist Development, ActionSpace

Charlotte Hollinshead, Head of Artist Development, has worked with ActionSpace for 30 years and has led the ActionSpace South London Studio at Studio Voltaire since 1999. She supports artists with complex disabilities in developing their individual art practice and delivers an extensive range of commissions, residencies, projects, live events, and exhibitions. Charlotte also devised and manages ActionSpace's innovative participatory, live art programme 'Make It Live'.

Outside of ActionSpace, Charlotte has her own participatory practice, devising and delivering inclusive projects with SEN schools and community organisations, galleries and museums.

Tom di Maria / Director, Arts Access for All

Tom di Maria is the Director of Arts Access for All, a non-profit project that supports the advancement of art practices for people with disabilities. Prior to this, he served as Director of Creative Growth Art Center for 25 years. As Director, he worked with museums, galleries and international design companies to help bring Creative Growth's artists with disabilities fully into the contemporary art world. He speaks around the world about artists with disabilities and their relationship to both Outsider Art and contemporary culture. Prior to this position, he served as Assistant Director of the Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archive, at UC Berkeley. He holds a B.F.A. from Rochester Institute of Technology and a M.F.A. from Maryland Institute, College of Art. He was recently awarded the Visionary Award by the American Folk Art Museum in New York for his work supporting artists with disabilities.

Lou Mensah / Founder, Shade Media

Lou Mensah is a photographer, educator, and founder of Shade Media, home to Shade Art Review and the Shade Podcast: award-winning independent audio and publishing platforms amplifying the work of Black artists. Established in 2019, Shade has partnered with Tate, British Council, Hauser & Wirth, Frieze, and Bloomberg Connects, commissioning work with artists including Liz Johnson Artur, Amy Sherald and Ming Smith. Mensah teaches at Central Saint Martins and continues her photography practice.

Gabrielle Mordy / Co-Founder and Artistic Director, Studio A

Gabrielle Mordy is the Co-Founder, CEO and Artistic Director of Studio A, a leading Supported Studio in Sydney Australia providing career development for artists with intellectual disability. Her proudest moments include seeing Studio A artists' work recognised in major art and design platforms, opportunities that artists with intellectual disability have previously been excluded from.

Gabrielle holds a Masters of Fine Arts & a First Class Honours degree in Anthropology. She has received several awards including a Churchill Scholarship, Westpac Social Change Fellowship and an Australia Council Career Development Award to undertake international research into the Supported Studio sector. She is also a practising artist and writer.

Michael Richmond / Curator at Yorkshire Contemporary

Michael Richmond is Curator at Yorkshire Contemporary, where he recently co-curated the Turner Prize 2025 at Cartwright Hall Art Gallery and *Our Turn: Practice Bradford* at Loading Bay. Prior to this, he was Curator, International Art, at Tate Modern, where he worked on acquisitions, collection displays, community programmes and exhibitions. In his six years at Tate, he co-curated the touring exhibitions *Cezanne* (2022) and *Philip Guston* (2023), as well as collection displays including Vivan Sundaram, Martin Kippenberger, Rosa Barba and Monster Chetwynd, among others. Michael has previously worked as a freelance curator and coordinated the British Museum's Asahi Shimbun Displays.

Linsey Young / Curator and Writer

Linsey Young is a curator and researcher who has previously held curatorial positions at Inverleith House, Scottish National Gallery and Tate. Young was lead curator of the Turner Prize in 2016, 2018 and 2024. In 2019, during a sabbatical from Tate, she commissioned and curated Charlie Prodger's solo exhibition SaF05 at the 58th Venice Biennale. In 2023, she curated the major exhibition and publication project *Women In Revolt! Art and Activism in the UK 1970–1990* at Tate. Young began a LAHP funded PhD at the Royal College of Art focused on British feminist art practice in September 2024 and is a member of New Curators external faculty and a trustee of ActionSpace.

## CONTRIBUTORS

Partner / ActionSpace

Formally incorporated as a charity in 1984, ActionSpace has its origins as an artist-led collective founded in late 1960's London, dedicated to championing the role of arts and creativity in driving social change and in transforming how art is created, presented and experienced. They remain committed to the radical social and political vision of our founders.

ActionSpace breaks down the barriers that prevent learning disabled people from taking part in arts and culture. They support learning disabled adults across London, providing access to creative studios, professional guidance, and the support they need to develop and grow as artists. They ensure learning disabled artists are seen, heard, and fully included in the creative and cultural sectors. They provide them with the same opportunities enjoyed by their peers; opportunities to develop their skills and capabilities, for their work to be seen and better understood, for them to gain employment and be represented in the leadership of the sector. By seeking out and nurturing talent, creating opportunities, and championing their work, ActionSpace supports learning disabled artists to thrive.

ActionSpace is an agent for change, challenging and disrupting the cultural sector. Nnena Kalu's nomination for the 2025 Turner Prize, the UK's highest accolade for visual artists, is a testament to the effectiveness of their work.

Partner / Stanley Picker Gallery

Stanley Picker Gallery at Kingston University is one of the leading university galleries and commissioning venues in the UK, working with artists, designers, students, academics and members of the local community to encourage creativity, learning, research and innovation.

Established in 1997 with the ongoing support of the Stanley Picker Trust, the Gallery forms part of Arts Council England's National Portfolio and is a principal cultural interface between Kingston University and its civic communities in South-West London and beyond. From its island location on the Hogsmill River, the Stanley Picker Gallery operates as an "expanded studio" dedicated to commissioning and curating contemporary art and design practice, generating a dynamic programme of exhibitions, events and participation activities staged onsite, offline and online.

Appointed each year through a public open call, the Stanley Picker Fellowships in Art & Design support a diversity of contemporary practitioners to research, create and premiere ambitious new work, by providing generous grants, free studio space, professional expertise and valuable access to the world-class workshop facilities at Kingston School of Art. Current Fellows include Kat Anderson, FRAUD, Emma Hart, Sophie Huckfield and Abbas Zahedi.

The Gallery's Participation Programme involves working collaboratively with schools, colleges, community groups and local residents of all ages, to deliver a range of creative activities and shared learning and professional development opportunities for students, that engage everyone in the life of the Gallery, its partner venue Dorich House Museum and the wider University.

Chair / Lisa Slominski

Lisa Slominski is a writer-curator and PhD candidate at Kingston School of Art. Her practice-based research examines the role of cultural intermediaries in shaping agency, identity, and representation within contemporary art, with particular attention to artists who communicate outside normative verbal frameworks. Titled *A Liminal Site*, her doctoral project develops an original liminal methodology informed by María Lugones' concept of the limen as a relational threshold, foregrounding coalition, practical awareness, and interpretive responsibility.

Alongside her research, Slominski has an extensive curatorial and editorial practice spanning exhibitions, publishing, consultancy, and public programmes. She has worked with artist Nnena Kalu since 2018, curating her work in exhibitions including *Spring Syllabus* (J Hammond Projects, London, 2018), *Fair Vanity* (Summertime, New York, 2020), and *Attack Decay Sustain Release* (Stanley Picker Gallery, 2026). Kalu's work also features in Slominski's book *Nonconformers: A New History of Self-Taught Artists* (Yale University Press).

Recent research dissemination includes 'Curating Difference' in Art Monthly (November 2025), an article for The Conversation (December 2025), and a paper presented at the College Art Association 114th Annual Conference, Chicago (February 2026). Slominski is also Senior Art Producer at Contemporary Art Society and a co-founder of Art et al.

## SUPER TROUPER

*Curating and Coalition* coincides with *Attack Decay Sustain Release* at Stanley Picker Gallery, including Slominski's evolving curatorial project *Super Trouper*, featuring Nnena Kalu and Rebecca Kressley. Developed through Slominski's curatorial practice-as-research, *Super Trouper* grew out of open-ended studio sessions between Kalu and Kressley that began in 2024. It explores a creative liminal space where artistic and cultural practices meet on fluid, non-hierarchical terms. It embraces agency, joy and intractability in experimenting with non-directive modes and meanings of transcreation. Pop music serves as a shared and prominent anchor for both artists: Kalu's process is consistently accompanied by particular tracks – including by ABBA, Donna Summer and the Bee Gees – while Kressley's work often incorporates sampled pop songs, such as "Take My Breath Away" in GLOSS (2024) and "Your Cheatin' Heart" in TONGUES (2024).

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