

Acaye Kerunen: Neena, aan uthii

January 15 – March 1, 2025

5 Hanover Square
London

Opening Reception: Tuesday, January 14, 6 – 8pm



Acaye Kerunen, *Aleng 2 (I am Beautiful)*, 2024 © Acaye Kerunen, courtesy the artist and Pace Gallery

Pace is pleased to announce *Acaye Kerunen: Neena, aan uthii*, the artist's first-ever solo exhibition in the UK. On view from January 15 to March 1, 2025, the exhibition will feature a new body of sculptures, sound installations, and performance that interlace living forms of knowledge embedded within Ugandan communities. Translated from Alur as *See me, I am here*, this show marks Kerunen's debut presentation with Pace since joining the gallery's program in 2022.

Based in Kampala, Uganda, Kerunen's multidisciplinary practice encompasses visual and performance art, curation, and activism. The sculptures Kerunen has created for *Neena, aan uthii* are vivid tapestries of embodied knowledge, incorporating a diverse range of natural materials and techniques that demonstrate her ongoing commitment to climate-conscious practice.

Kerunen often collaborates with artisans from across Uganda's sixty-five primary communities who source materials including palm leaves, sorghum and millet stems, sisal, raffia palm, grass, banana fiber and rinds, and barkcloth from their natural habitats. They prepare these by stripping, dyeing, braiding, weaving, tanning, or crocheting. These essential components—each imbued with cultural, sociological, and ecological significance—form the basis of her sculptural assemblages. Transformed from their organic or functional origins, they undergo a conceptual reimagining that celebrates material, process, and surface as a unified whole.

The artist likens her finished works to "simultaneous equations," intricate systems requiring the precise coordination of countless variables to achieve balance. The language of mathematics permeates her sculptures and performances, evident in the numerical precision of weaving patterns and the harmonic structures underlying her sung sound works. Across artisan communities and individual textile practices in Uganda, intricate configurations of pattern, number, and form are passed down as living, embodied knowledge. While grounded in universal principles, this knowledge remains dynamic, evolving as it interacts with new makers and ideas. Kerunen's installations knit together examples of these sophisticated mathematical processes, subverting their traditional harmonies to highlight their timeless ingenuity.

Deep indigos, tangerines, fuchsias, and greens illuminate the works in *Neena, aan uthii*. Kerunen's use of color reflects her deep engagement with the chemistry of natural systems. Eschewing the partitioning of colors into primary or secondary categories, she works with dyes derived from a rich palette of roots, flowers, grasses, and ash, sourced from across Uganda's diverse ecological regions. The resulting hues carry layered contexts, their subtle variations revealing the environmental and chemical conditions of their making.

Time emerges as both a medium and a thematic element in Kerunen's work, interwoven through the tactile acts of knotting, threading, sewing, and weaving. These processes not only document the temporal rhythms of their making but also embody collective memory, passed down through generations. Dependency on such mercurial factors as climate, harvest yields, and supply chains imbues her work with an awareness of temporal fragility. Raffia and thread become tools for recording lived experiences, capturing the nuanced relationship between human labor and the natural world. Through these acts, Kerunen offers an alternative archive—one that honors impermanence and transformation while reclaiming time as a space for reflection, healing, and resistance to colonial and patriarchal temporalities.

Accompanying the sculptural installations on view, Kerunen has composed and created sound and video pieces that continue and relate to the storytelling of each work. The artist will perform a selection of these in the gallery during the opening reception of the exhibition on January 14, 2025.

Acaye Kerunen's (b. Kampala, Uganda) multidisciplinary practice, spanning visual and performance art, sound, film, movement, poetry, curation, activism, and therapy, has established the artist as a leading voice in contemporary artmaking. She has created music, film, and theater productions and has been published in multiple international outlets.

The processes of deconstruction and reconstruction are central to Kerunen's practice. Her work seeks to disassemble the colonial and patriarchal structures that have long inhibited women's freedom and artistic expression in East Africa and the Great Lakes region. Through her practice, Kerunen investigates the impact of colonialism on African women's artistry, which historically confined practices like weaving to functional purposes rather than recognizing their potential as expressions of artistic creation. Kerunen actively disrupts these narratives by recontextualizing traditional artistic techniques within contemporary art spaces. She works collaboratively with communities of women across Uganda to produce the handcrafted, woven, and dyed, and materials that appear in her installations and sculptures.

Kerunen was selected to represent Uganda at the 2022 Venice Biennale alongside Collin Sekajugo, resulting in Uganda's inaugural pavilion receiving a special mention for best national participation. Kerunen returned to Venice in 2024 to curate Uganda's pavilion for the 60th edition, presenting a kaleidoscopic view of sculpture, architecture, art, and artisanship. Her first solo exhibition in the United States, called *A NI EE (I AM HERE)*, was presented by Blum Gallery, Los Angeles (2023). Her work has also been selected for group exhibitions at Ars Belga, Brussels (2023); and the Barbican Center, London (2024), which showcased the intricate installation, *Ayelele* (2023).

Pace is a leading international art gallery representing some of the most influential artists and estates of the 20th and 21st centuries, founded by Arne Glimcher in 1960. Holding decades-long relationships with Alexander Calder, Jean Dubuffet, Agnes Martin, Louise Nevelson, and Mark Rothko, Pace has a unique history that can be traced to its early support of artists central to the Abstract Expressionist and Light and Space movements. Now in its seventh decade, the gallery continues to nurture its longstanding relationships with its legacy artists and estates while also making an investment in the careers of contemporary artists, including Torkwase Dyson, Loie Hollowell, Robert Nava, Adam Pendleton, and Marina Perez Simão.

Under the current leadership of CEO Marc Glimcher and President Samantha Rubell, Pace has established itself as a collaborative force in the art world, partnering with other galleries and nonprofit organizations around the world in recent years. The gallery advances its mission to support its artists and share their visionary work with audiences and collectors around the world through a robust global program anchored by its exhibitions of both 20th century and contemporary art and scholarly projects from its imprint Pace Publishing, which produces books introducing new voices to the art historical canon. This artist-first ethos also extends to public installations, philanthropic events, performances, and other interdisciplinary programming presented by Pace.



For immediate release

Today, Pace has eight locations worldwide, including two galleries in New York—its eight-story headquarters at 540 West 25th Street and an adjacent 8,000-square-foot exhibition space at 510 West 25th Street. The gallery’s history in the New York art world dates to 1963, when it opened its first space in the city on East 57th Street. A champion of Light and Space artists, Pace has also been active in California for some 60 years, opening its West Coast flagship in Los Angeles in 2022. The gallery maintains European footholds in London and Geneva as well as Berlin, where it established an office in 2023. Pace was one of the first international galleries to have a major presence in Asia, where it has been active since 2008, the year it first opened in Beijing’s vibrant 798 Art District. It now operates galleries in Hong Kong and Seoul and opened its first gallery in Japan in Tokyo’s Azabudai Hills development in 2024.

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