

Theresah Ankomah

The Lore of Care: Maternal Acts of Devotion

Thursday, 29th October 2026

Gallery I, Accra



Theresah Ankomah, *The hands that hold*, 2026, Thread, crocheting yarn, acrylic paint, and screen print on canvas, 77 x 107 cm. Courtesy of the Artist and Gallery 1957.

Gallery 1957 is proud to present *The Lore of Care: Maternal Acts of Devotion*, a solo exhibition by Theresah Ankomah, winner of the 2025 Yaa Asantewaa Art Prize, curated by Kezia Ouomoye Owusu-Ankomah.

Following an eight-month residency with Gallery 1957 in Accra, Theresah Ankomah presents a new body of work exploring motherhood, care, and the forms of knowledge carried across generations. Her multidisciplinary practice engages with locally sourced and repurposed materials to examine craft economies, material histories, and the politics of labour. In *The Lore of Care: Maternal Acts of*

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Devotion, these longstanding concerns take on a more intimate dimension, drawing on the artist's experience of pregnancy and motherhood, alongside her encounters with other women, to consider care as a sustained practice of attention, labour, and devotion. Through familiar domestic gestures, Ankamah reveals how seemingly ordinary acts become forms of authorship, connecting personal experience to the wider histories of materials, women's work, and collective care.

As part of this exploration, Ankamah examines the material histories of bedsheets sourced from Kantamanto, Accra's vast second-hand market. Bearing institutional stamps from warehouses, orphanages and hospitals, these textiles trace global networks of trade connecting places such as Bangladesh, the United Kingdom and the United States. By cutting, stitching, crocheting and weaving them into new forms, Ankamah preserves their histories while transforming their function. Through works such as *Looming slumber*, she connects the global circulation of materials to the intimacy of domestic life, revealing the histories and labour embedded in everyday objects.

In Ankamah's screen prints, reproduction forms part of the photographic process of the image but it is the way it is handled, interrupted and rebuilt that establish repositories of committed labor, relation, care and devotion. The process across all disciplines depends upon rhythm and precision. The women in Ankamah's visual presentations, such as *Shared knowledge*, are not isolated figures but participants in shared activities. Their presence evokes experiences that have made visible forms of labor which are often overlooked because they occur within everyday life. Her research into time spent with mothers in postnatal settings, exposed her to the physical and emotional realities surrounding childbirth. The general anticipation of expecting mothers, exhaustion, loss, vulnerability and the sudden responsibility of caring for another life.

In *The hands that hold*, the focus turns inward to a deeply personal moment in Ankamah's first pregnancy. Based on a photograph taken two weeks before her due date, the screen print depicts two hands gently clasping the sides of her belly, forming a grounding embrace between the artist and her growing child. The physical realities of childbirth become more explicit in *The sound of a broken womb*, a visceral sculptural bust that centres on the female midsection. A jagged scar marks the site of a caesarean section, revealing the lasting traces of pregnancy on the body. Cast from the artist's body one week before the birth of her first child, the work captures a moment of transition, holding the anticipation of birth alongside the vulnerability and endurance it entails.

This personal experience is inseparable from the collective care Ankamah received from her mother, sister-in-law and other women, whom she describes as "many mothers cheering me on." This understanding of motherhood as a shared responsibility emerges in *A village of care* and *In gentle hands*, through gestures of assistance, reassurance and tenderness. It also informs her collaboration with women weavers in Dabala, in Ghana's Volta Region, where weaving becomes a living practice of skill, endurance and intergenerational transmission. Through this exchange, Ankamah foregrounds not only the objects produced but also the relationships through which knowledge is sustained, adapted and passed on.

Through *The Lore of Care: Maternal Acts of Devotion*, Ankamah presents care as an embodied practice enacted through hands and bodies, sustained through time, patience, and continuous attention. Her approach to making becomes an act of tending, reflecting the ongoing commitment required to nurture motherhood, engage with materials, and sustain relationships. The exhibition invites us to reconsider the often-overlooked labour of care, not as a series of obligations, but as a practice through which knowledge is transmitted, relationships are maintained, and devotion is carried across generations.

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The Lore of Care: Maternal Acts of Devotion, Theresah Ankomah by Kezia Ouomoye Owusu-Ankomah

Care across cultures has often been understood intrinsically as an intentional action. Although its value has often been overlooked and simply regarded as something ordinary and mundane, it is a sustained respectful connection amongst people. The Lore of Care: Maternal Acts of Devotion delves into Theresah Ankomah's artistic exploration and nuances of care from a maternal perspective.

Ankomah's multidisciplinary practice relies on locally or market-sourced materials like kenaf fiber, palm leaves and repurposed materials. What is fascinating about Ankomah's practice is the consistent and sustained inquiry into craft economies, material histories and politics of labor. The visual narratives in her work present materials that are not neutral but carry with them the evidence of circulation, consumption, use and human contact. A cycle, a ritual and a routine are tantamount to repetition; washing, changing, folding and ironing bedsheets acquire significance beyond household maintenance. The same gestures performed again and again are a way of marking the rhythm of domestic hood, what ordinarily may be dismissed as routine becomes a form of authorship. A repetitive domestic labor is given an alternate perspective, a sustained aesthetic and intellectual practice.

During her residency, Ankomah explored material histories in a more intimate way by engaging with bed sheets purchased from Kantamanto, Accra's vast second-hand market. These bedsheets have travelled through global systems of trade and circulation and arrive with histories already embedded in them. As they travel along routes connecting Bangladesh, the United Kingdom, the United States, and beyond, these bedsheets retain the distinct institutional stamps of the warehouses, orphanages, and hospitals they once belonged to. The intriguing part of the bedsheets journey is that they pass through unfamiliar hands and spaces before entering Ankomah's domestic and artistic world. Ankomah skillfully cuts the sheets apart, joins them, stitches them, crotchets them and weaves them into new forms. This enables the material's previous existence to remain present even when its function changes.

In Ankomah's hands the materials are associated with protection, vulnerability and the development of new life. A bedsheet is a private object which covers us while we sleep, it becomes an intimate part of domestic architecture and is a meeting point between the personal and the economic.

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Among the many stories she encountered are sobering testimonies that left a lasting impression, mothers who had died during childbirth and mothers who had lost their children. The harrowing accounts strip away the romanticized veneer of motherhood, revealing the stark, existential vulnerabilities inherent to childbirth. Celebration can no longer be associated with giving birth alone;

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it also involves risk, uncertainty and the awareness of mortality. For Ankomah, these profound testimonies about motherhood have left her deeply moved and overwhelmed with gratitude.

Ankomah presents a self-portrait torso, which acts as a visual record of the permanent changes of pregnancy. The sculpture piece focuses entirely on the maternal midsection, documenting the reality of surgical incision and postpartum marks that pregnant women endure. The work was created from a lifecast and molded in Plaster of Paris (PoP), from which a silicone rubber negative mold was pulled and supported by a fiber-reinforced jacket. The completed form was cast in a resin- plaster composite and finished with a bronze metallic coating.

Her own pregnancy journey was supported by her mother, sister-in-law and other women who had already experienced childbirth. She describes this network of women as her having many mothers cheering her on. The concept of many mothers expands the exhibition beyond the individual maternal experience. A beautiful example of collective and communal knowledge shared rather than solitary identity. One generation makes a point to assist another to navigate what it has already encountered. This philosophy also informs Ankomah's collaboration with women weavers in Dabala. Weaving to the Dabala women is not simply a decorative tradition detached from everyday life, but their practice is deeply rooted in required skill, endurance, repetition and transmission. This positions Ankomah's material investigations alongside knowledge held by women whose tradition of weaving has gone on for generations. She is not just learning or burrowing a technique, but she is joining a conversation about how knowledge is survived, demonstrated, repeated, adapted and passed on. A conscious effort to appreciate not only what the object produces but the exchange that occurs during collaborations.

Through this exhibition we understand that care is not abstract. It is performed through hands and bodies. It reoccurs throughout generations, and requires time, patience and constant commitment and responsiveness. This also shifts Ankomah's understanding of making toward an act of tending. The ability to remain attentive to motherhood, her craft and materials over time. We are invited to look at the actions surrounding motherhood not only as obligations but as practices through which relationships are continually maintained.

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About the Artist

Theresah Ankomah

(b. 1989, Accra, Ghana. Lives and works Accra, Dabala and Kumasi, Ghana)

Theresah Ankomah, awarded first place in the fifth edition of the Yaa Asantewaa Art Prize in 2025, is a multidisciplinary Ghanaian artist, who lives and works between Accra, Dabala and Kumasi. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Art and a Master of Fine Art in Sculpture from the College of Art and Built Environment, from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana. Ankomah's socially engaged practice extends into sculpture, installations, weaving, fashion and printmaking. She uses her work to interrogate the politics of materiality, everyday objects, and women's labour. At the center of her work is a sustained engagement with weaving, particularly with kenaf basket and palm leaves. This practice is rooted in Ghanaian communities and has a long association with domesticity and subsistence.

In 2021, Theresah won the second runner-up for the Inaugural Yaa Asantewaa Art Prize in Ghana by Gallery 1957 and the 2017 first runner-up for the Kuenyehia Art Prize for Contemporary Art in Ghana respectively. Theresah's work was featured in Hammer Museum's curator Erin Christovale's Top Ten 2021 highlight for Art Forum's December 2021 issue. She has also participated in major group shows in Brazil, Germany, Switzerland, France, United Kingdom, South Africa, Denmark, Ghana, Australia, Dubai, Nigeria, and the United States.

Her work has been included in publications and exhibitions such as the installation What Do You See...! during the 36th Bienal de São Paulo, Brasil (2025), the MasterCard Foundation's Art Book on Hope, Energy and Ingenuity: Voices of African Youth (2018), Erin Christovale Top Ten Best of 2021 in the December issue of Art Forum, How I Made This: Theresah Ankomah's Repurposed Produce Baskets, 2021, ART news, Ghanaian Artisanal Design Rewoven (2021), Atmos. Women as the Centre: Art X Feminism, Nubuke Foundation, Accra (2020), Urban Future, Nubuke Foundation, Accra (2020), In Dialogue, Alliance Française Accra (2021), Ruins, Space and Expression: The Ruins of Our 'Self', Notre Galerie, (2021), Look at We, Nubuke Foundation (2021), Atrium Installations, Wood Society of the Art, Dubai Expo (2021), All Africa Festival by Efié Gallery, Burj Plaza, Dubai Expo (2021), Monologue of Voices, Takoradi, Ghana (2021).

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About Gallery 1957

Gallery 1957 is a contemporary art gallery with spaces across Accra, Ghana and London, UK.

It dedicates its programme to spearheading international exchanges between art practices from these communities and the rest of the world, presenting artists who interrogate concepts of belonging and identity, cultural exchange, and social history beyond Western narratives.

Launched by Marwan Zakhem in 2016 on Ghanaian Independence Day, Gallery 1957 has since expanded across three gallery spaces in Accra. Originally set up to promote Ghana and West Africa's presence in the arts scene, it now encompasses the Global South and its diaspora. Gallery 1957's London space opened in October 2020, providing a further platform for artists to build dialogues with its growing network of international collaborators.

Gallery 1957 presents exhibitions, installations, and performances by celebrated artists, fostering connections between local and international audiences. The Gallery's global gallery partnerships and ongoing artist residency program have attracted numerous international artists and arts professionals to Ghana. The Gallery's annual Cultural Week in September serves as a platform for encouraging deeper engagement with Ghana's vibrant contemporary art scene.

In 2021, Gallery 1957 launched the Yaa Asantewaa Art Prize for female Ghanaian artists, the first ever dedicated art prize of its kind. The prize aims to further strengthen the gallery's commitment to supporting and promoting emerging and established artists. On the occasion of the 2026 edition of the prize, it was extended to Senegal, marking an important expansion of its scope within West Africa.

Gallery 1957's work expands beyond the gallery walls through a public programme that includes local and international art fairs, talks, off-site projects, and site-specific installations as well as the publication of books and catalogues – continuously supporting cultural initiatives in Ghana, Africa and beyond.

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PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Artist: Theresah Ankomah

Title: *The Lore of Care: Maternal Acts of Devotion*

Opening Date: Thursday, 29th October 2026

Exhibition Dates: Thursday, 29th October - Saturday, 5th December 2026

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