CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa: Disposable memories in Uganda
Authors	Garrido Castellano, Carlos
Publication date	2020-11-01
Original Citation	Garrido Castellano, C. (2020) 'Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa: Disposable Memories in Uganda', Nka: Journal Of Contemporary African Art, 2020 (47), pp. 68-81. doi: 10.1215/10757163-8719656
Type of publication	Article (peer-reviewed)
Link to publisher's version	10.1215/10757163-8719656
Rights	© 2020 by Nka Publications
Download date	2026-11-05 09:04:08
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/10841

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa

Disposable Memories in Uganda

Carlos Garrido Castellano

This article's main concern is with memory and amnesia, the overlapping of both through the transition from anticolonial expectations to postcolonial and neocolonial policies in contemporary Uganda, and the flow and relocation of displaced experiences and bodies associated with that transition. My intention is to relate two seemingly unconnected histories located in contemporary Uganda: the privatization of public education and the conjuring of colonial cultural formations within an African neoliberal nation-state, and the global consequences of the Second World War and its East African aftermaths. Two sets of works by the United Kingdom-born artist Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa (b. Glasgow, 1976) will be considered. The first includes the 2012 photographic installation *The Margaret Trowell School of Art (Study for Video) and The Story of the School of Art* (2013), a three-part multimedia performance in which each component provides a different lens on the first European-style art institution of higher education in Anglophone East Africa, now integrated into Makerere University.[1] The second work analyzed here is the artist's ongoing project titled *Paradise* (2012), which concerns the Kojja refugee camps created in East Africa in the late colonial period to house Eastern European refugees during the Second World War.[2] These works are part of Wolukau-Wanambwa's *Uganda in Black and White* (2010–14) collection, through which the artist explores issues and examines histories that cannot be resolved into a single narrative.[3]

Deeply concerned with history and the way it shapes everyday experiences and spaces, Wolukau-Wanambwa began conducting research in Uganda in 2010 and interacting regularly with the Ugandan visual arts community, paying special attention to present-day conditions of art education and, more broadly, to the social relevance of art and culture in Ugandan society.[4] Through an experimental, research-based process, she inquired into the missing pages of Ugandan history at a moment when the country, which had gained its independence from Britain in 1962, seemed to be finally coming to terms with its traumatic history, including the troubled dictatorial period of Idi Amin (1962–66) and Milton Obote (1966–71 and 1980–85). The country's democratization and path toward stability has produced a problematic relation with memory and history, which arises as both contested and disposable, a relation that has left the contradictions of colonial domination and neoliberal violence out of focus and yet still at work.

Produced around 2012, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Uganda's independence, Wolukau-Wanambwa's artistic projects analyzed here echo a general public concern in Uganda with renarrating and redefining the nation. These works emerge from the artist's interest in exploring the role of public memory and the historical record of the construction of the Ugandan nation-state. Over the past six years, she has pursued that inquiry through the examination of places, institutions, and events that are not easily incorporated into anticolonial epics or deemed compatible with Uganda's current, mainstream political aspiration of coming to terms with the country's traumatic legacy of colonialism and dictatorship. As Wolukau-Wanambwa states, the present times seem to offer fertile ground for "a particular kind of historical amnesia."

Wolukau-Wanambwa's artwork examined here reflects her interest in the status and "use value" of the colonial legacy in the contemporary postcolony. *Paradise,* which first took the form of a photo/text series, is the result of archival and quasi-anthropological research,

filming, and community engagement the artist has pursued on and off since 2012. The work relates a fragment of the little-known story of the seven thousand Eastern European refugees whom the British sent to live in refugee camps in Uganda between 1941 and 1953. *Paradise* engages with at least three of the major critical traditions of recent decades: the "postcolonial turn" in Holocaust studies (that is, the idea that the singularity of the Final Solution occludes the magnitude of similar episodes of violence and mass encampment), the lack of accountability of the postcolonial African nation-state, and the existence of overlapping and conflicting memories and identities at play in the construction of that nation-state. Similarly, Wolukau-Wanambwa's work on Trowell offers a highly eloquent examination of the state of art education and artistic labor in Uganda; the creation of identities, sensibilities, and subjectivities through modern aesthetics; the impact of external interferences and foreign models on the definition of Ugandan contemporaneity; and the importance and vulnerability of public institutions. Trowell's activities constituted a cornerstone in the development of African modernisms (and post-modernisms) that Wolukau-Wanambwa's work confronts and updates. Touching on all these issues, this article examines how the creative work and research pursued by the artist open up new questions concerning the confluence of these complex issues while, at the same time, offering sagacious clues to critically address them.

Wolukau-Wanambwa on Margaret Trowell's Legacy

In 2011, Wolukau-Wanambwa started researching technologies of remembering that were introduced to the Ugandan Protectorate during the period of British rule (1894–1962). She paid special attention to the figure of Margaret Trowell and her role in the concurrent creation of the Uganda Museum and the first European-style professional art and design school in Anglophone East Africa in the 1930s, both in Kampala. After studying painting at the Slade School of Art and art education at the Institute of Education in the 1920s in London, Trowell

emigratied to Kenya and afterward to the Uganda Protectorate in order to "teach Africans how to live better."[5] She started teaching art in her private house in Kampala in 1936.[6] Reacting against a colonial educational policy that considered Africans incapable of learning any artistic practice, she encouraged the preservation of local art techniques and motifs.[7] Her position, however, evolved not out of an aesthetic concern, but rather as a key medium for ensuring the civilizational role of British colonialism in Africa. Trowell argued that since Africans had not fully assimilated Western industrialization, they would benefit through learning local craftmanship, which could offer them a means to improve their lives.[8]

In Wolukau-Wanambwa's approach to Trowell, arts and crafts are not just ideas: they are directly embedded in the social and economic contradictions fostered by colonial policies in East Africa. The several projects she has produced on Trowell do not simply address political or problematic issues; they also open up debates about the function of art in a broader social sphere.[9] Wolukau-Wanambwa's *The Margaret Trowell School of Art (Study for Video)* contains nearly four hundred photographs portraying an empty Makerere University campus populated only by concrete sculptures. After spending several weeks on the campus researching the role of arts and design education in the country in past and present times and asking about the development of the art school, Wolukau-Wanambwa decided to focus her camera lens on the sculptures on the campus grounds rather than on the people who work and study there. The sculptures, produced by former fine-art students, had been allowed to remain onsite to decorate the campus, serving as both a memory of the art school and as an outdoor museum that could be inspirational for successive generations of students. Overall, the artist's work on this topic reinforces a sense of historical ambivalence, delving into the materiality of the passing of time in the space of the campus while also reflecting on the influence of Makerere University on conditioning the practice of generations of artists.

A similar concern with the role of education in contemporary Uganda is evident in Wolukau-Wanambwa's *The Story of the School of Art*, her reading of an excerpt of Trowell's essay "African Tapestry," which was written in 1957 and contains a description of the establishment of the art school.[10] A straightforward seated reading of the text is subtly underpinned musically by a performance of Gavin Bryars's composition "Jesus's Blood Never Failed Me Yet" (1975) and (from its second incarnation) visually by the overhead projection of excerpts from Roland Barthes's essay "African Grammar." Each of these elements complement the other while also troubling the stability of each individual piece. Bryars's song rescues a popular religious motto and provokes a sense of humbleness and solemnity through repetition of the mantra that gives title to the song. At the same time, the endless repetition of the titular phrase, and specifically of the word "blood," insinuates a sinister underside. Undercutting the song's deeply felt tone, excerpts from Barthes's essay insert a meticulous explanation of how meaning is socially constructed through communication acts. First published in 1957 in *Mythologies*, a collection of Barthes's essays that analyze how bourgeois consumerism becomes naturalized and its ideology hidden in small gestures of everyday life, "African Grammar" is a semiotic analysis of the here and now of French colonialism in Morocco and Algeria. The text's main concern is how official French government representations at the time eschewed the reality of colonial violence.[11] Through analyzing fragments of speeches by French high-rank politicians and military, Barthes composes a glossary of expressions and words that frequently appear without meaning in order to uncover the ideological charge of their usage. The "grammar of colonialism," Barthes argues, is full of mythologized and naturalized—therefore, emptied—words and ideas. In that sense, for instance, he recalls how "population" stands for "classes"; "peace" and "pacification" for "war" and "subjugation."

Together, Wolukau-Wanambwa's performative reading, the sung hymn, and the visual Barthes excerpts reveal the distance between ideas and reality and transmit an uncanny sense of stagnation. The three interwoven elements emphasize the greater relevance of external forces and the incapacity of individuals subjected to them to perceive these forces as something other than acts of providence, thereby suggesting that resignation and immobility are the preferred responses to a given situation. The artist's choice to read from Trowell's autobiographical "African Tapestry" reinforces this idea. The essay transmits Trowell's Christian belief in art as a force of personal betterment and fulfilment and discloses her preconceptions on Africans. The emancipatory tone of the book is "brought back to reality" by Barthes's essay and Bryars's meditative song. When read alongside these two elements, "African Tapestry" becomes a prolongation of the grammar drawn by Barthes, a code purporting to provoke a transformation into African society that is actually an ideological tool of colonial expansion. The effect creates a tension between individual and collective discourses. Trowell's ideas not only articulated her view on Africa and African art; they also served as an influential model whose ramifications continue to shape contemporary Uganda's educational institutions and public sphere. Barthes's "African Grammar" also arises from the ambivalent position of a Western interpretation of the lack of agency of the subaltern colonial subject while also serving as a critique of the language that uncovers and makes this situation natural. Put together, then, Trowell's ideas—read by a UK-born descendent of Ugandan parents—harmonize with the Christian hymm performance while reinforcing Barthes's Eurocentrism and exposing the continuities and ramifications of similar ideas in the formation of the sociopolitical horizon of African communities.

Paradise

Paradise is an installation of four light boxes hung in a row[12]. From left to right, the first three boxes contain photographs of the place where the Kojja refugee camp stood, while the final box contains a text that contextualizes the images and narrates how the artist learned about the history of the camp. *Paradise* arose out of the confluence of Wolukau-Wanambwa's interest in exploring how colonial and postcolonial socioeconomic dynamics altered the relationship between the land, architecture, and human bodies in central Uganda. Most central Ugandans are still buried on family-owned land. Because of this, public cemeteries in that country are markedly exogenous spaces and, therefore, exist in a complex relation to the country's colonial history and to indigenous politics and practices of remembering. Cemeteries, Wolukau-Wanambwa argues, hold a complex yet eloquent position within contemporary Uganda, portraying a partisan approach to the colonial past that is at the same time affected by gentrification and the real-estate appetite.[13] "The few existing [cemeteries]," she told me, "are colonial legacies and quite interesting spaces, because they are largely not practiced, but they can't be demolished because they contain the remains of Europeans, mostly soldiers who died during the world wars."[14]

It was while looking for public cemeteries that Wolukau-Wanambwa learned about the previous existence in the Uganda Protectorate of two refugee camps for European refugees during the Second World War. Her photographic series depicts three views of Kojja, the site of one of the former, geographically remote camps (which is now mostly farmland), alongside a fragment of the artist's account of her first meeting with an elderly man named Kasule, who worked at the camp in the 1940s when he was a young man. In *Paradise,* Wolukau-Wanambwa draws from Kasule's narration to focus not so much on the histories of survival and the resilience of the communities of European refugees, but rather on the complex and perverse economy established among them, the British authorities, and the Ugandan population living near the camps. The refugees were confined to the camps and prohibited

from integrating with both the indigenous population and the small, white settler community in the area. After the end of the war in 1945, the refugees were not allowed to stay in the protectorate. They were mostly either sent back to Poland or resettled in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, or New Zealand. The text by Wolokau-Wanambwa accompanying the photographs does not focus on the camp, but instead on the intimate and forbidden relations between Polish women and local men. Wolukau-Wanambwa recounts the story that Kasule told her about the babies that were born out of these illicit interracial relationships and then secretly killed in the camp hospital. In 1952 the camp was completely dismantled.

Part of the research Wolukau-Wanambwa undertook involved interviewing historians, schoolteachers, and local citizens. Kasule's voice, however, remains her main source for reconstructing the history of the Kojja refugee camp. In *Paradise,* Wolokau-Wanambwa addresses the recovery of the history of the refugee camp and the fragmented information that even those who lived near the camp had. In doing so, she examines what such an interest in history represents within a predicament where there is no space for that kind of memory. Wolukau-Wanambwa approaches Kojja to examine "the way history has transformed the relation between those people [and that location]. It was a very complicated event,;former refugees have come back to remember a place that is no longer visible, they are coming back to remember a place that is no place, even locals had a very limited knowledge of it, deliberately, because it was demolished in 1950 and everybody was meant to go away. Communities around are also not well versed in this history."[15]

The photographic series, consisting of three views of the mostly fallow farmland at Kojja where the camp once stood, challenge the possibility of constructing any coherent narrative of what once took place there. "Besides an empty field, there is nothing to point at," Wolukau-Wanambwa argues. "How do you tell the story of this place?"[16] Not only do the

camps have little to no place within Ugandan recent history, they also did not fit in the official narratives of British colonialism in East Africa. Former refugees have expressed interest in laying claim to the place, but this is awkward due to the virtually nonexistent physical traces and local memories of the refugee camp. What happens in Kojja in relation to its history as a former refugee camp for white Europeans illustrates the process of simultaneous "celebration and silencing of the past" that Jean and John Comaroff argue constitute a distinguishable feature of the African postcolony.[17] The absence of architectural remains, as depicted in the photographs, is evidence of the violence at play in the colonial interest in secluding and distancing these European refugees both from local white settlers and African communities.

Paradise conflates the multiple silences at play in Kojja in order to ask about the relevance of remembering in contemporary (central) Ugandan society and the complex relation between local realities and broader colonial and postcolonial articulations. Wolukau-Wanambwa's hesitations are eloquent on that sense:

> My initial intention had been to make a documentary about this reunion of East Africa's forgotten European refugees, but the series of events [that unfolded during the course of the reunion of the refugees in October 2012] was much stranger and more complex than I had envisaged. Looking back at the images and thinking through the experience since, I no longer think that this piece can be resolved in a documentary form. This is partly to do with the nature of the story itself, and the way it challenges key aspects of the contemporary world order. But it also to do with the complexity of the reunion itself, during which, through a series of acute oscillations, that world order was both reasserted and undermined, and the history of East Africa's European refugees was both present and absent. [18]

Several points of interest converge here: the incapacity to frame all the elements of the history in a narrative form; the impossibility of choosing a single community to account for what happened in the camps; the discontinuities between history and remembering; and the oscillating relation between the memories gathered around Kojja's refugee camp and contemporary redefinitions of Ugandan history. These elements mark Wolukau-Wanambwa's artistic meditations on history and memory and will be analyzed in the following sections.

Weaving and Worlding Memories

Considered separately, *The Margaret Trowell School of Art (Study for Video), The Story of the School of Art* and *Paradise* address partial and peripheral segments of Ugandan history. Taken together, however, they eloquently convey how struggle and memory are depoliticized and repoliticized in the post-independence era. In both cases, an interest in problematizing histories, which cannot be subsumed under straightforward accounts of a particular postcolonial African nation-state, coexists with an intent to universalize these histories by granting them a worldly dimension. At the center of these histories lies a matter of accountability: Who are the heirs of those sites of memory? In what way does memory matter when uprooted from historical causality and direct identification? How can we approach history and memory when their physicality is fatally threatened?

Regarding *Paradise*, it is impossible not to note that Kojja enacts a continuity between European and African violence, between transcontinental and transhistorical traumatic histories. It also anticipates the nuances and the administered logic haunting more contemporary refugee crises. In that sense, *Paradise* provides a clear example of how the processes of violence and mass confinement that occurred in Europe in the mid-twentieth century were expanded outside the continent in multiple ways: through the continuation of genocide and also through the establishment of complex tactics of categorization and governmentality.[19] Under

that perspective, Wolukau-Wanambwa's photographs bear witness to the lacunae surrounding contemporary refugee crises and the disjointed landscape it enacts that were common in the administrative horrors of late colonialism. The images of *Paradise* impel us to think about how life can be administered, yet in this case the conditions were different than those of the Holocaust concentration camps. *Paradise* produces a revealing inversion of the present situation by telling the story of European (mostly Christian) populations who were refugees in Africa. The series, however, does not draw simplistic conclusions from this inversion but rather locates it within the complex transnational fluxes of colonial memory with regard to the founding of Kojja and how memory works in relation to the Ugandan present.

Similarly, Wolukau-Wanambwa's interest in Trowell's role in the establishment of the Uganda Museum and the development of a colonial art education curriculum in Makerere University has gained a special relevance in recent years[20]. One of the longest strikes in the institution's history took place in 2016, when students and professors protested against tuition fees and unpaid wages, respectively. The background to this strike is the demise of public funding for culture and education in Uganda and the emergence of private undergraduate institutions. Makerere University was from the beginning intensely international and played a decisive impact in the spread of emancipatory politics and the development of anticolonial independence movements throughout Africa. When I interviewed Wolukau-Wanambwa, she clarified that her intention in her work on Trowell was not to offer an image of a process of postcolonial institutional decline, but rather to reflect on the material consequences of a specific program of cultural and educational policies, in which art and humanities are losing ground in favor of technical and pragmatic courses.

The privatization of public education reinforced the commercialization and professionalization of artistic practice that had begun in colonial times. In *Scholars in the Marketplace* (2007), Mahmood Mamdani dissects the reforms and the turn toward privatization that

Makerere University underwent from the early 1990s, when the World Bank aimed to "professionalize" higher education by asserting private investment as African universities. Involved for a long while in teaching and researching at Makerere University, Mamdani has been an eye witness to the devaluation and commoditization of higher education in East Africa, first, he argues, as a result of the government's fear that these institutions could become breeding grounds of political and ideological dissent, and, from the 1990s onward, the belief that public-funded institutions are unproductive.[21] That last idea countered the prevailing logic emerging out of the sixties, when the colonial, elitist institution of Makerere was from its foundation transformed and put at the serve of the recently created independent Uganda. The "reform" undertaken in the 1990s was a compulsory measure implemented to secure Makerere's funding, consisting of introducing privately sponsored students alongside government-funded ones, a practice that had both positive and negative effects. In any case, Mamdani argues, the result established a dangerous precedent of commercialization, a term he distinguishes from privatization in the sense that the former alludes to a process in which public institutions are driven by private goals, whereas in the latter objectives are publicly defined.[22]

Erasures and Identification

Paradise raises the question of who are the true repositories of the experience of mass confinement. Michael Rothberg warns about the danger of conceiving the public space where collective memories are articulated as a space of competition between different traumatic memories where "a zero-sum struggle for preeminence" takes place.[23] A similar concern can be found in *Paradise,* where interest in the nuances surrounding life on the colonial-era refugee camps (themselves a perfect example of the linkages between the Holocaust and decolo-

nization that center Rothberg's work) is manifest. Wolukau-Wanambwa's interest lies in determining "how public institutions edit the truth for their own political expediencies."[24] To this we must add two crucial elements regarding the display of the photographic series: the individuals and groups involved in commemorating the camp at Kojja are part of a officially sanctioned policy of incorporating heterogeneous memories of confinement into national narratives; in the case of Kojja, this process takes place in a context where the material remains of these memories are almost invisible. Forgetting and remembering can be productive forces mobilized in the present for very different purposes.

A similar process of "editing" takes place in Wolukau-Wanambwa's Trowell projects. By paying attention to the evolution of artistic practice in what is now Uganda, these works explore how memory enlists and reawakens "specific historical and political contexts of struggle and contestation."[25] The juxtaposition of the past and the present of Makerere University, presented by both the photographic installation and the staged reading, work in that sense. In the photographic installation *The Margaret Trowell School of Art,* Wolokau-Wanambwa depicts the art school through sculptures produced by successive generations of students during colonial rule and afterward. This choosing destabilizes the idea of a clean genealogy of artistic practice. Both the staged reading and the photographic installation demonstrate the multiple and conflicting understandings of art at play in present-day Uganda, revealing how the material remnants of former "social formations" can constitute both a burden and a source of agitation.

Repoliticizing and Reterritorializing Memory

By critically addressing narratives and events outside mainstream Ugandan society's current narrations of its past, Wolukau-Wanambwa's work evidences how the depoliticization of

memory and the decline of public education are deeply embedded in the core of the contradictions that structure those contemporary narratives. Exploring processes where research, creativity, and interaction come closer, *Paradise* and the Trowell projects reveal the complex and heterogeneous continuities of colonial domination within post-dictatorship, post-independence Uganda. More important, these works suggest how memory sites and educational institutions be complicit in the reproduction of unequal relations of power.

One of the main contributions of both projects lies in their capacity to transcend national boundaries when recovering problematic memories from the past. In both projects, there is an interest in engaging memory in ways that are not straightforward in order to make it problematic and pressing. Both *Paradise* and the works on Trowell reveal the weakness of any position incapable of critically taking into account the complex articulations between place, collective memory, and subjectivity. Wolukau-Wanambwa makes straightforward approaches to places of memory problematic. At the same time, however, she stresses the centrality of these histories in the configuration of contemporary policies of forgetting, allowing a reading that allows for action and experience without relying on any teleological logic of retribution or appropriation. Both *Paradise* and the Trowell series are about the appropriation of memory, about the disastrous consequences of monopolizing and concealing memory. While Wolukau-Wanambwa makes no argument against any specific interpretations of the past, assuming that they are unavoidable and thus rejecting any competition among European and African "sufferers." she places emphasis on the productive side of the contradictions behind these appropriations—namely, "what people do, or do not do, with memory." [26]

Wolukau-Wanambwa's artistic research into the contradictions of Uganda's colonial history can be related to other recent work focusing on the use of documentary and artistic means to destabilize historic verisimilitude. Ângela Ferreira's interest in colonial architecture developed through many installations, Fernando Alvim's exploration of the site of Cuito

Cannevale in the *Memórias-Íntimas-Marcas* [*Memory-Intimacy-Traces*] collaborative artistic project (1996-1997), Renzo Martens's recent concern with plantation sites in the problematic *Institute for Human Activities*, and Jo Ratcliffe's photographic series exploring civil war and trauma in Angola, are just some of the examples that delve into African history. Wolukau-Wanambwa demonstrates a clear interest in dislocating the memories of Kojja, provincializing and envisaging them as multidirectional processes with complex and diverse consequences.[27] Kojja emerges in *Paradise* not so much as what Pierre Nora calls a "*lieux de mémoire*" (place of memory), but rather as part of a dense network of visible and hidden relations spanning different continents and chronologies.[28] In fact, *Paradise* contradicts Nora's idea of *lieux de mémorie* on several points. First, it lacks the materiality attributed by the French philosopher to places where memory "crystallizes and secretes itself."[29] The intentional erasure of memory, which was present in the original configuration of the camp, impedes any clear identification with the spatial coordinates laid empty in the present. Second, there is no substantial local community interested in exploring further their link with Kojja's past life as a refugee camp for Europeans; as invisibility and secrecy were crucial elements in the creation of the camp, this lack of spatial empathy was already absent and intentional from the moment the camp was built. Third, the refugee camp at Kojja was initially conceived as a place of transit, where persons would wait until moved to another place. If, as William F. S. Miles affirms, "the Holocaust has meaning from a Third World perspective principally when placed in the global context of the history of racism," the relations at play in *Paradise* challenge any accumulative understanding of that "history of racism," stressing the interconnectedness of the episodes of racial violence and human confinement across the twentieth century.[30]

Similarly, Wolukau-Wanambwa's work on Trowell also makes problematic the relation between memory, social change, and place. The installation depicts the art school campus empty in 2012, a landscape that since has become strongly evocative of the present situation of public academic institutions and, specifically, of the erosion of the traditional role of Makerere University as a space of dissent and collective action. Although an important dimension of both Wolukau-Wanambwa's photographic installation of the Makerere campus and the staged reading has to do with revealing how ideology works in the configuration of art historical narratives, these works can also be interpreted as touching contemporary transformations of the art system. Addressing art education, then, becomes an effective mode of dealing with the epicenter of the contradictions surrounding Uganda's desire for modernization and neoliberal marketization development. The accumulation of temporalities and modes of understanding art's agency generate a sort of archive that allows comparative explorations of failures and successes, but more than that, it discloses the present situation of crisis as one subjected to transformative action. In that sense, the staged reading reinforces this multitemporal overlapping, establishing a distance between discourse and reality that puts into question the roles of art and art education in contemporary Ugandan society.

Carlos Garrido Castellano *is a lecturer of Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin American studies at Cork University, Ireland, and a researcher at the Centro de Estudos Comparatistas, University of Lisbon, Portugal.*

Notes

This article is the result of fieldwork research conducted in Kampala in 2016. It benefited from critical exchanges with Margaret Nagawa, Angelo Kakande, and the team of 32º East Ugandan Arts Trust. The final form of the article, however, owes much to the attentive and patient collaboration of Emma Wolokau-Wanambwa. Hers are the strongest points of this essay; all the possible inaccuracies or errors of judgment this article might have are my responsibility only.

[1] The art school is currently known as the Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Arts, Makerere University, in Kampala, Uganda.

[2] Commissioned by KLA ART 012: Kampala Contemporary Art Festival 2012, Kampala, Uganda. Between 2012 and 2017 it has been exhibited at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Harare; Makerere University Art Gallery, Kampala; and Städtische Galerie Bremen, Germany; and Savvy Contemporary in Berlin.

[3] Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa, *Uganda in Black and White: 2010–2014*, khib.azurewebsites.net/media/3226969/ew_portfolio_public_141126sm.pdf, 49 (accessed **May 4, 2020**).

[4] In that sense, she argues that "it has been important to me to situate my own practice in relation to that of my Ugandan contemporaries. Learning about them has involved learning about East Africa's art histories." Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa, "A Lot Has Changed in the Four Years since I Started Visiting Kampala," C&, www.contemporaryand.com/magazines/a-lot-has-changed-in-the-four-years-since-i-started-visiting-kampala (accessed **May 4, 2020**).

[5] Margaret Trowell, *African Arts and Crafts*(London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1937), 39, quoted in Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa, "Margaret Trowell's School of Art. A Case Study in Colonial Subject Formation," in *Wahrnehmung, Erfahrung, Experiment, Wissen Objektivität und Subjektivität in den Künsten und den Wissenschaften*, ed. Susanne Stemmler (Zurich and Berlin: Diaphanes, 2014),109.

[6]Trowell, *African Arts and Crafts,* quoted in Wolukau-Wanambwa, "Margaret Trowell's School of Art", 109.

[7] See Margaret Nagawa, "Ugandan Art: From Galleries to Green Lawns and Red Roads," *Start Journal of Arts and Culture* 27 (2012): 2.

[8] Wolukau-Wanambwa, "Margaret Trowell's School of Art," 103.

[9] Wolukau-Wanambwa's 2014 *essay* "Margaret Trowell's School of Art—A Case Study in Colonial Subject Formation" introduces the artist's interpretation of Trowell discussing how

the art school was created and articulates the artist's view of the relevance of Trowell's ideas in art education in East Africa. See Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa, "Margaret Trowell's School of Art. A Case Study in Colonial Subject Formation," in *Wahrnehmung, Erfahrung, Experiment, Wissen Objektivität und Subjektivität in den Künsten und den Wissenschaften*, ed. Susanne Stemmler (Zurich and Berlin: Diaphanes, 2014),101-122; see also Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa, "Margaret Trowell's School of Art or How to Keep the Children's Work Really African," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Race and the Arts in Education*, ed. Amelia M. Kraehe, Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, and B. Stephen Carpenter II (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 85–101.

My intention is not to determine whether Wolukau-Wanambwa's research on the history of what is now known as the Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Arts at Makerere University is correct or false. The point, as her work eloquently reveals, is that the consideration of the school's legacy must take into account the complex amalgam of elements raised by both Wolukau-Wanambwa's photography installation and staged reading.

[10] The work was first created for *Re-Lay*, a durational performative installation created by Claudia del Fierro at Inkonst, Malmö, Sweden, in May 2013. It was also presented for the Graduate School at the University of the Arts Berlin in October 2013, at Les Complices in Zurich in October 2014, and at the Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig in December 2014.

[11] The essays published in *Mythologies*, it is worth remembering, were written after the beginning of the Algerian War of Independence (1954–62). See Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957).

[12] Wolukau-Wanambwa displayed the installation in Kampala in 2012, as part of the Kampala Contemporary Art Festival.

[13] Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa, email message to author, November 25 2016.

[14] Wolukau-Wanambwa, Skype conversation with author, December 15, 2016.

[15] Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa, email message to author, November 25 2016.. The artist makes specific reference here to a group of former refugees who returned in 2012 with members of their extended families to visit the camps. The meetings were organized, in Wolukau-Wanambwa's words, "by Waikiku Edward of the Uganda-Poland Friendship Foundation, Don Bosco, a Polish Catholic NGO very active in Uganda, and scholars from the Pedagogical University of Krakow who are investing massive time and energy in documenting the history of what they call "Polish exiles." The artist attended and filmed these meetings and conducted interviews. Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa, email message to author, November 25 2016.

16 Wolukau-Wanambwa, Skype conversation with author, December **15**, 2016.

[17] Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America Is Evolving toward Africa* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 134.

[18] Wolukau-Wanambwa, *Uganda in Black and White*, 49.

[19] See Casper Erichsen and David Olusoga, *The Kaiser's Holocaust: Germany's Forgotten Genocide and the Colonial Roots of Nazism* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010.)

[20] The Uganda Museum, the main public institutions of this kind in Uganda, was created in 1908 by the British Protectorate in the country. It contains valuable collections of archaeology and ethnography.

[21] Mahmood Mamdani, *Scholars in the Marketplace: The Dilemmas of Neo-Liberal Reform at Makerere University, 1989–2005* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007), x.

[22] Mamdani, *Scholars in the Marketplace,* 5.

[23] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 3.

[24] Wolukau-Wanambwa, Skype conversation with author, December **15**, 2016.

[25] Rothberg, *Mutidirectional Memory*, 4. It will be crucial to conceive these oppositional values as complementing, and not simply replacing, dialogical and negotiational ones. Rothberg has urged for an understanding of memory capable of "encourag[ing] us to think of the public

sphere as a malleable discursive space in which groups do not simply articulate established positions but actually come into being through their dialogical interactions with others; both the subjects and spaces of the public are open to continual reconstruction." Rothberg, *Multi-directional Memory,* 5. This asseveration particularly suits the current Uganda government's commitment to the present and the official politics of forgetting.

[26] Wolukau-Wanambwa, Skype conversation with author, December 15, 2016.

[27] William F. S. Miles has stated that "indigenization of Holocaust study, at any rate, is not only inevitable but, conducted with the appropriate caveats and sensitively, ought to be welcomed." Miles, "Third World Views of the Holocaust." *Journal of Genocide Research* 6, no. 3 (2004): 389.

[28] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire." Representations* 26 (1989), 7-24. Nora's *Lieux de Mémoire* are places that condense memory, making visible specific historical turning points.

[29] Nora, "Between Memory and History", 7.

[30] Miles, "Third World Views of the Holocaust", 376.