Alex Baine’s Women’s Emancipation in Uganda

A Visual Archive of the History of a New Generation of Women in Uganda

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all photos by author except where otherwise noted

Alex Baine is a contemporary Ugandan artist who graduated from the Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Art (or MTSIFA) in 1989. During her final year, she painted a large work, Women’s Emancipation in Uganda (Fig. 1) (1989), in which she represented women in domestic and nondomestic (conventional and unconventional) economies, spaces, and histories. Baine has not produced any other painting since her graduation. It is evident that Baine’s art career, like those of several other female graduates of the Art School, has been interrupted by many issues including family, business, further education, and diversion into other professions. However, in this article I acknowledge that she championed women’s emancipation in Uganda’s contemporary art in the 1980s, a debate that I trace in her work.

Baine painted Women’s Emancipation in Uganda under the instruction of Francis Musangwogwantamu (1923–2007), who himself was a student of Margaret Trowell from 1954 to 1958. Baine explains that:

Most of the time he would set topics [for us], however during our third year we were told to choose our favourite topics and this is how I chose to paint Women’s Emancipation in Uganda as an important history in women’s lives.

Her explanation is revealing. First, Uganda has a rich tradition of craft-making. However contemporary art is not directly related to this tradition. Instead it is a product of formal education. This is why most of Baine’s work was done under the supervision of Musangwogwantamu—a leading artist and art educator. Secondly, it follows logically from the artist’s statement that, although done under supervision, the work was based on personal choice and an individual reading and interpretation of history—it is an individual’s artistic expression. Thirdly, Baine allows us to understand the fact that, beyond the satisfaction of academic requirements, the artist used her work to archive changes in the plight of women in Uganda—a record which is important to this article as well as to contemporary art in Uganda.

THE DOMESTIC ECONOMY CANNOT BE EMANCIPATIVE: BAINÉ’S POSITION ON WOMEN IN A DOMESTIC SPACE

Baine leads the viewer into the painting through a mundane domestic economy in which women perform chores such as mat-making, basketry, food preparation, and child-nurturing. She based her choice of subjects and activities on certain traditional conventions which gender domestic chores and responsibilities. Three women sit in the foreground. To the left, two are involved in mat-weaving and basketry. To the right, a woman is cooking food in front of another woman, who raises a pestle to pound dry ration in a mortar with a baby strapped on her back. Unlike the women in the foreground, who are wearing busuuti, she is wearing a ssuuka. She, like the other three, is thus identified as “traditional,” using traditional dress codes. A little girl sits next to the mortar. Without interrupting, she observes, and learns, the different activities that the older women perform. Another older woman walks past her, balancing a pot on her head and carrying a baby in her left hand.

Critics view these as perfunctory chores grounded in the belief that women’s contribution to the rural/domestic economy has no monetary value. The patriarchal society in Uganda perceives and applauds women who do domestic chores as wives and mothers who produce food and care for their households, nothing more (Bantebya and McIntosh 2006:1). Society takes them for granted. The mentoring cited here, which assumes that girls inherit their mothers’ trades, is a process of socialization that marks, maps, and appropriates gender roles while marginalizing women in Uganda (Matembe 2002:4). Socialization then becomes a powerful device used to counter women’s claim for equality and self-actualization. Thus Baine, like the wider society, alludes to the widely held view that traditions are passed on from old to young...
young, mother to child. She gives visual expression to child-mentoring, an important form of informal education and transfer of indigenous knowledge which has kept many traditions in Uganda alive. Many women do these things in the countryside. During periods of low agricultural activity, women make crafts as recreation and also to produce household items. Baine is aware of this reality and the way it confines a woman to the domestic economy where a woman’s role is, saying:

[E]ntirely based on housework and apart from housework, a woman was seen as a caretaker in an African setting. She provided food in a home as well as utensils. So that is why you see women involved in basketry and pottery. Also she is required to pass that knowledge on to her daughters....

Such confinement is often legitimated, socialized, and propagated across generations. It highlights the assumption that women are valued for their contributions within the family and perceived and applauded as wives and mothers who produce food and care for their households (Bantebya and McIntosh 2006:1). In the process, women are taken for granted and viewed as “passive sexual objects, as devoted mothers, and dutiful wives” (Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974:1).

However it is also known that historically some women in Uganda have refused to be marginalized. For example, in 1892 Sir Henry Edward Colville, a military and a commissioner of Uganda, signed a protectorate agreement. The document outlawed slavery. It also set in motion a process of negotiations that culminated in the signing of the 1900 Buganda Agreement—
missionaries regretted the effects of freedom on women, when women of the household of Kaggo, a county chief ... refused to cook.” As a result, the missionaries turned around and accused women of misusing freedom and of being lazy. Waliggo cites a missionary named Walker, who argued that:

... there is danger of the freedom and liberty granted to the women becoming licence and laziness ... There must be some control over the women, they cannot be allowed to wander about from home to home just as they like. When a woman is married, the husband looks after her, but there are numbers of women who refuse to be ‘married’ just for this very reason. If a man brings any pressure to bear on the women of his household, he is afraid of being charged with introducing slavery again (Walker 1896 in Waliggo 2002:29).

In other words, the new freedoms engendered inherent contradictions and invited a new set of gendered negotiations and colonial ordinances to police women. Clearly Musisi (1991) traces the early gendered struggles against nonconforming women in Uganda and the issues which informed such struggles. She shows how the early attempts to control women’s rights forced a coalition of the State, the Church, and traditional institutions—a coalition which became even harsher in the 1970s when Field Marshal Idi Amin Dada enacted decrees to remove women from the public space.

Intriguingly, Baine is aware of this history. She therefore did not seek to propagate this domestic economy in her artwork. For example, her representation of child nurturing is not conventional. The women she portrays carry one child each, and as such, the artist’s notion of motherhood appears to contradict Uganda’s conventional wisdom, which defines the fertility of a woman in terms of the number of children she produces. Explaining her symbolism and its sources, Baine narrates that, during her education at secondary school, she participated in a “Family Planning Competition” and won a prize:

We were required to sensitize the public about family planning and I painted a woman who was pregnant, carrying a baby on her back, carrying another at her chest, and pulling another with the right hand. All in all she was having four children including the unborn. The campaign for family planning was very intense. So that is why I gave each woman one baby, because with women’s emancipation women don’t need so many children.

This recollection helps us to see how her participation in discussions on women’s reproductive rights sharpened and shaped **Women’s Emancipation in Uganda**. Tripp contends that discussions on women’s “reproductive rights” (2002:4), which started in the late 1980s, became very relevant to women’s lives. Through them, Tripp adds, women’s groups emerged in order to lobby against female circumcision, domestic violence, and rape, while promoting sex education and family planning. In the work discussed here, Baine archived this women’s lobby, its intentions and its successes. Baine’s representation of one child per mother thus becomes emancipative. Furthermore, the craft-making portrayed in Baine’s work is an economic activity through which women have improved their lives (Snyder 2000).

**WOMEN AND WAR: ASSERTING WOMEN’S AGENCY**

In **Women’s Emancipation in Uganda**, behind the women engaging in a domestic economy there is portrayal of a woman clad in military fatigues carrying a baby and holding a rifle in her right hand. In 1981, women joined a rebellion through which the
National Resistance Movement took power in 1986. This participation in a political struggle was a path to self-discovery, better rights, and power (Byanyima and Mugisha 2003:118) and, for Gertrude Njuba, a decorated female officer in the Uganda Peoples’ Defence Forces, “revenge” against Obote’s injustices. This is the radical story Baine locates in the center of her painting, using a powerful woman clad in military uniform. She carries a baby and frees the other hand to hold an assault rifle—a Kalashnikov. A gun in Uganda is a weapon whose possession gives one immense power. Many presidents have relied on their monopoly over the gun to claim and assert their power, which has affected women in specific ways. For example, during the 1981–1986 rebellion, government soldiers opened the wombs of pregnant women and indiscriminately raped in a manner that artist Muwonge Kyazze depicts in his painting Misfortune (1985) (Fig. 2).

Baine’s representation is therefore a giant step in the visual representation Uganda’s sociopolitical negotiations using the mother and child symbolism. She—unlike Kyazze, and Maloba in his Independence monument (Fig. 3)—makes women possessors of the instruments of coercion, power, and authority. The child in this case has become subordinate. Baine’s woman is active in national politics and not passive like the one in Semulya’s Nation Building (1987) (Fig. 4), where children and mothers dominate a starving postwar public being served with relief supplies by energetic, industrious men. Baine does not want to take women’s agency away from them.

Baine’s work draws heavily from the 1981–1986 rebellion during which several women combatants actively participated in gathering intelligence and at the frontlines. This account is often underestimated. For example, Kenneth Kakuru is a Judge in Uganda’s Court of Appeals. At a recent symposium at the Uganda Museum, he argued that men make wars and go to wars to protect women. Gertrude Njuba would object to Kakuru’s argument. During our interview in 2006, she told me that she went to war to protect her husband, who was being hunted by the soldiers of the Uganda Army because he was a member of National Resistance Movement, supported the rebellion. She left her children with her sister to join the National Resistance Army (NRA) in 1981. Joy Mirembe was the “lady who braved the dangerous route of taking the [NRA] fighters to the bush” (Kutesa 2006:168). She died in the war zone while giving birth. Dora Kuteesa was another female fighter, married to Pecos Kuteesa, who narrated in his autobiography that Dora gave birth to a daughter, nicknamed “Sergeant,” who almost lost her life in the middle of heavy gunfire (Kutesa 2006:160). As such, in Women’s Emancipation in Uganda Baine records and acknowledges the role of mothers in Uganda’s radical political history—a role which is often downplayed.

**Baine’s Women Doctors and the Nurses: A New Generation of Womanhood**

Behind the female soldier in Women’s Emancipation in Uganda, the artist presents a medical facility with a patient lying in bed. A woman is portrayed wearing a white coat with a stethoscope around her neck, which indicates that she is a doctor. She takes notes in a book in front of a patient assisted by a male nurse. Baine’s hospital scene recalls the painting Harvesting Cotton (1988) (Fig. 5), by Francis Ifee, who was one of her lecturers. Ifee presents a mother and a sick child seated on a bed. The mother who is wearing a busuuti, looks down on the sick, naked child.
where they were few by the late 1980s. Although the graduation of the first woman medical doctor in Uganda took place in the 1940s, the medical profession has more female nurses and midwives than doctors. This is because these low-level categories of medical practice have been preserved for women since the colonial days of Sir Albert Cook.

In 1897, Albert Cook and Katherine Thompson (later Mrs. Cook) arrived in Uganda as Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionaries to establish a medical structure. Bantebya and McIntosh (2006:61) observe that “midwifery was the first medically related career to open to African women” following the 1915 smallpox epidemic. The midwife later assumed additional responsibilities as religious conservatism, morality, and fertility became important pillars behind an interesting colonial policy framework that prioritized the link between women’s health and education (Summers 1991:806). This policy shift was a veiled attempt to politicize women’s reproduction. It however resulted in the training of midwives and, through them, mothers, in an effort to improve the health of Uganda’s population (Summers 1991:796). Hence the midwife was placed at the center of a public health campaign to educate Ugandans about safe motherhood (Cook 1940:325).

As a result, the Maternity Training School (MTS) was founded in order to train young girls from all over Uganda as midwives and to prepare them to care for women and their babies. Alongside providing essential healthcare, the MTS acquired an official role as the only trainer of midwives, under supervision from London. This training was restricted to women because local customs prohibited male involvement in the delivery of babies (Bantebya and McIntosh 2006:61). Recent attempts to change this practice have attracted resistance, with women rejecting male nurses in labor wards.

I concede that the MTS was an agency for colonial cultural imperialism. Summers would agree, writing that “The MTS was rooted in a more profound European desire to transform African society … since from the beginning of the twentieth century Europeans perceived Ugandan mothers as incompetent … and less fully human” (1991:799–800). Inscribed in colonial language, this reasoning was condescending.

However I also argue that the MTS played a positive role in the improvement of maternal health. It supported Ugandan mothers and designed appropriate programs to improve essential health care. To celebrate its contribution, it published progress reports with touching narrative accounts of “happy mothers who survived childbirth and whose babies lived saved by the midwives” (Summers 1991:804). The midwives were portrayed as prototypes for a “new African womanhood,” one “doing yeoman service to their country women and children,” as each maternity center

Regis Semulya

*Nation Building* (1987)

Oil on board, 197.5 cm x 191 cm

IHCR collection, Kampala.
became “a potential center of light and learning” (Summers 1991:804–805). Put differently, unlike her sister, the wanderer in the city who was a product of colonial policies of socioeconomic engineering, the midwife was a fine product of missionary education, a life raft, a gift to society. This development informed three subtexts: First, the midwife gained respect in the local community which she still has today. Secondly, given her high status in the African community and her access to medical knowledge, she demanded more rights and aggressively fought for her position in the social and medical domains. Thirdly, she refused to act as an agent of colonial morality and moreover rejected the British policy on “women as spiritual, and moral, and reproductive centers of families” (Summers 1991:806).

As a result, Uganda’s new breed of “African womanhood” soon found itself at the center of controversy and suspicion. First, it was alleged that midwives did not always possess the most stable moral character. Many of them came from homes of doubtful virtue. Thus “missionaries and [government] officials alike saw midwives not as rational adults, but as fragile, morally suspect, impractical girls” (Summers 1991:805).

The cause of this backlash was political. The midwife’s clamor for equality upset the status quo built on an asymmetrical colonized power matrix. It upset normative standards of professional practice in which the African had to unquestioningly obey her Caucasian master. Midwives asked questions and “talked back to the Europeans”; they “took vacations from their stations … they were seen as rejecting the tight, narrowly prescribed role of the...
deferential, self-denying professional imagined by the program's sponsor" (Summers 1991:806).

Consequently, missionaries, and even the more sympathetic MTS committee, were appalled and forced to take decisive action. First, a policy was enacted to the effect that, following conviction on any malfeasance, the midwife would either lose her professional status or, if suitably repentant, be suspended for a year, retained at the MTS, and reassigned with a lower salary (Summers 1991:806). Secondly, the Native Government was tasked to provide midwives with male guardians who were to protect them; midwives “were supposed to defer to European missionaries.” Missionaries complained when the midwives proved difficult to dominate, requesting official MTS scolding for the offenders. However, censure and subsequent expulsion were the most powerful tools available to the MTS in its attempt to ensure that midwives continued not merely as competent medical practitioners but also as moral models. As such, the freedoms of the midwife were curtailed. The nurse in the 1970s was seen in a similar manner and hence despised. Baine brings to the fore a very important history in the medical practices in Uganda by visually carving space for the woman doctor and the nurse.

**WOMEN IN THE OFFICE, WOMEN TAILORING: BAINÉ AND THE WOMAN AS A CITY DWELLER**

In *Women's Emancipation in Uganda*, to the right of the treatment facility, other women serve in a busy office space: one is taking a telephone call, the other is placing files in a filing cabinet, and another is working on a computer as a man (probably her office messenger) waits as if to take instructions from her. This could be a representation of a woman manager and her office assistants; she works in an office for a salary, not in a home.

The history of women in office spaces, commonly associated with white-collar jobs in Uganda’s urban (and peri-urban) spaces, has been very complicated since 1900, when the colonial administration introduced a new tax regime called the hut tax. The law made it mandatory for all heads of huts, these being the mud and wattle grass-thatched houses where most natives lived, to pay hut tax. This tax obligation was unprecedented; it raised the tax burden for polygynous families where men had to pay a tax equivalent to the number of huts (and thus women) they possessed. Unable to shoulder the new tax burden, some men were forced to adopt monogamy. As a result, some women who would have been married found themselves without a “husband.” Some returned to their relatives while others migrated to the city—the *kibuga* or royal capital of the Buganda kingdom, which has morphed into Uganda’s capital city Kampala—as free women who took control of their mobility.
There are intriguing negotiations over race, imperialism, sexuality, and power that shaped the emergence of the city of Kampala in the Buganda kingdom, and how it overtook and consumed the old kibuga while shaping the lives of women. He argues that although the Luganda14 word kibuga meant the royal capital of the Buganda Kingdom when Speke visited it in 1862 at the advent of colonialism (Southall and Gutkind 1957:3), by 1906 it had acquired multiple meanings. On the one hand, it meant a space dominated by Europeans and characterized by the concepts of “residential” and “administration” (Southall and Gutkind 1957:1—15), imperialism, modernity, politics, and power. On the other hand, the noun kibuga is derived from the Luganda verb okwebuga, meaning “to walk about, to and fro” (Gutkind 1963:9). Okwebuga implies “high mobility,” a notion which is fundamental to the understanding of the link between an archetypal city (kibuga) and the resident male. Implicit in the notion of kibuga, therefore, are issues of sexuality and power (Musisi 2001:178). It is in this context that the kibuga changed the lives of the women who migrated to the city of Kampala, where they dwelled, worked, and claimed “freedom of movement and acquisition of property, with its potential for sexual autonomy” (Southall and Gutkind 1957:36–52, 158–69). Under these circumstances, confusion over sexual boundaries and functions, and other social roles, all combined to open up spaces for contradiction and ambiguity (Musisi 2001; Gutkind 1963:9–257), struggle, and conflict.

As a result, by 1906 Kampala had become a cosmopolitan space in which “a gradual but threatening change in the status of women was taking place” (Musisi 2001:178). For example, “missionaries and the Baganda men attributed the shortage of agricultural labor and resulting food crisis to a decline in the country's morality, unnecessary female migration from rural areas, and a decline in marriages” (Musisi 2001:177). This rhetoric was consistent with the colonial economy, designed to export agricultural produce to the metropolis and import finished goods from there under the theme: “export to the metropole! export, and import finished goods from there under the theme: “export to the metropole and import finished goods from there under the theme: “export to the metropole and import from the metropole!” (Mamdan 1976:33).

However, it is also important to see how the discussion was woven into the wider debate on how to control urban “women [who] contravened some if not all patriarchal codes. They started to sit otherwise, eat poultry, eggs, mutton, fish, or grasshoppers; some did not have homes, husbands, or children; avoided male control ...” (Musisi 2001:175). They aroused the resentment and disapproval of most men and good women. Later their behavior provoked negative labelling by the Buganda Kingdom, whose status had been preserved under the British Protectorate; it inspired discourses on morality, forced the creation of new colonial regulations, and elicited social stigmatization (Musisi 2001:175) with the effect of limiting women's access to Kampala during colonialism.

There was a temporary relief for women in the 1960s as the postcolonial government deliberately encouraged Africans (including women) to come to the city. However, as seen in Laban Nyirenda's print In the Bar (1964), and later in Okot p’Besike's poem “Song of Malayma” (1988), traditional conservatives continued to conflate women's presence in a male-dominated urban, public space with immorality and slothfulness. As such, during the 1970s Idi Amin pushed women out of cities using draconian, moralist decrees constraining women's dress and movement in the city. These remained in force until the collapse of Amin's regime in 1979.

And yet Amin’s regime—and the political turmoil that followed its collapse in the period 1981–1986—led to economic hardships that rendered men in Uganda unable to fend for their families. Women had to fill the gap. They migrated to the cities, where they engaged in commercial activities ranging from roadside markets and tailoring on verandas to international trade (Snyder 2000). Baine's visual strategy of placing a tailor engaging in a vocational activity at the same level as her sisters in the white-collar professions (medicine and management) resonates with this long and complicated history spanning decades of women's struggle to access the urban space and paid labor. In addition to improving life in the medical facility (where she has provided blue curtains), Baine's female tailor also performs another critical role.

She sews graduation gowns which flow into, and thus link, her professional sisters to a key development in 1989 that improved women’s access to the urban and public space: access to university education.

**Baine on Women and Higher Education**

In the top left corner of the painting, Baine renders a scene which portrays women graduates dressed in lavishly flowing academic gowns. They stand against the backdrop of a symbolic piece of architecture representing Makerere University, which by 1989 was Uganda's only university and thus the apex of its education system. Yet Uganda's traditions do not encourage women to pursue higher education; women are thus denied access to modern professions (Kivubi 1995; Kivuga 1993). Baine makes reference to for which higher education is a prerequisite.

Baine's visual narrative taps into a long history stretching back to the missionary education that offered opportunities to women in Uganda and created a new generation of career women. For example, the Mill Hill Fathers established Nsube School for the girls in Mukono district. The White Fathers established St. Mary's High School and Bwanda School for girls in Masaka district (Ssekamwa 1997:220). The Church Missionary Society set up Gayaza High School. These schools trained women for careers in the colonial public service. In fact, by the late 1950s graduates from such schools had entered Uganda's late colonial legislature (the Legislative Council); they had nurtured Uganda's first female doctor, Josephine Nambooze.

However, generally the education offered in girls' schools through these missionary institutions was not the same as that offered in Namilyango College, King's College Budo (McGregor 2006), St. Mary's College Kisubi, and other missionary-led boys' schools. The curriculum for girls' education fused traditional and Christian ideologies: Boys were prepared for the public space while girls were trained for the private space. The desired position was to maintain a distinctive status of men as elite public figures who have dominated all layers of government in post-colonial Uganda.

Interestingly, this gendered colonial education policy left a lasting legacy which permeated Uganda's post-independence education curricula and professional sectors until the 1990s, when the National Resistance Movement reversed it through deliberate policy and legislation. This change increased women's enrollment at the prestigious Makerere University and the other universities that had been created, starting with Kyambogo University in 1989. Baine's all-women graduation procession
Uganda is a patrilineal society in which boys, and not girls, inherit and continue the family lineage. Family treasures and privileges are passed on to boys—and this includes education. Girls, on the contrary, must be prepared for marriage. This is the set of expectations which almost blocked Baine’s access to education. However it is clear that some men do not subscribe to this normative position. These include Baine’s father, who paid for his daughter’s education. In 1986, Baine joined Makerere University and pursued a Bachelor of Art (Fine Art) degree, then returned to complete a master’s degree. This is the second milestone Baine celebrates in her work.

Thirdly, the artist insists that her painting was based on the belief, backed by her personal biography, that higher education emancipates women. This is why she projected her women against the backdrop of Makerere University. Kept in the university archive, her work will always speak to ways in which the female public speaker painted by Baine both affirms and represents this increased access and the role of higher education in freeing women from the shackles of domesticity. In doing this, she invites us to reflect on this long battle for women to access higher education. She deliberately contradicts the normative expectations placed in the foreground of the painting while alluding to important milestones in her life and the lives of other women in Uganda in the following ways.

First, Baine confronted her own history:

I remember my own grandfather telling my father that: “You know what? Don’t waste your money educating the girls … this money is supposed to educate boys, because for them they are going to continue our legacy and women are not meant for us; they are going into other homes and besides, they are meant to work in the kitchen.”

The female public speaker painted by Baine both affirms and symbolizes the emergence in Uganda of this new generation of women and their activism. During our interview in 2009, Baine called her the “woman on a pedestal.” Pointing at this woman, Baine narrates that:

 […] in the African set up, women were denied … to sit where men sit discussing issues of the society. But now we see women have been liberated …. a woman discovers that she is not supposed to be only in the kitchen and in the garden, but she is supposed to do other roles which were originally meant for men.

This narrative is instructive. It confirms that Baine’s woman on a pedestal recalls what Silvia Tamale (1999:1) calls the “crowning hen,” referring to the woman who entered Uganda’s political landscape as a result of the affirmative action policy and legislation and the new set of gendered negotiations she provoked. Tamale reveals that, in the mid 1990s, when a woman took up the political platform to canvass for votes, a male observer posed a Luganda proverb, “Wali owulide ensera ekokolima?” (“have you ever heard a hen crow?”). Using the metaphor of the crowing hen, Tamale argued, was meant to remind the woman that “women have no business standing for political office … women were relegated to the domestic arena of the home and family” (Tamale 1999:1). Tamale is important here because she discusses the ingredients that made the crowing hen, which are similar to what Women’s Emancipation in Uganda is, despite the fact that the challenges, consequences, and implications the crowing hen encountered after taking the political platform are not seen in Baine: probably a point that was not necessary by the time she did her work. Although Tamale’s study is grounded in the field of law, she helps us to know what happened to the woman in the political office after she was installed. Her realization is important and it forces me to look for a closer example in the field of art history to be able to understand the responses Baine’s woman on the pedestal confronted.

Baine’s Women’s Emancipation in Uganda both shapes and is shaped by issues that informed the evolution of the new generation of women in Uganda. The artist visualizes salient issues, located in Uganda’s sociopolitical history, necessary to free Ugandan women from domesticity, namely: women’s activism, access to higher education, birth control, and direct participation in politics. Thus, the woman placed by Baine on a podium in a public domain represents what Silverman (in another context) calls the “new woman” (Silverman 1991:44–63). In summary, Baine’s Women’s Emancipation in Uganda is a visual archive of the history in which the “new woman” emerged in Uganda’s politics; the artist poignantly illustrates issues important for the liberation of Ugandan women from domesticity.
Constitution of the Republic of Uganda in which the National Resistance Movement (NRM). In 1995 the NRM promulgated a new constitution: the National Resistance Army (NRA), which was the armed wing of the ruling National Resistance Movement. By 1986 the army was called the Uganda Army, a change in name from the previous Uganda People’s Liberation Army (UPLA). It was extrajudicially disbanded and replaced with the Uganda People’s Defence Forces (UPDF).

Notes

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1 By 1985 this school was called Makerere Art School. Currently both names are used, with artists who graduated before 1995 preferring Makerere Art School while those who graduated after 1995 prefer MTSIFA. MTSIFA is used in this article because it is the official name.

2 When Baine left the Art School, she got married and raised her children. In 1998 she was recruited by the New Vision as a graphic artist, subsequently resigning in 2003 and returning to Makerere University to pursue a master’s degree in Peace and Conflict Resolution in 2005–2008. She currently runs her own company.

3 For further discussion, see Nagawa (2008:152), who argues that “there are fewer Ugandan women artists than men, not because they are marginalized but for a multitude of reasons mainly family.”

4 Alex Baine, interview with the author, April 1, 2009, Makerere University, Kampala. All quotes from Baine in this article derive from this interview.

5 Soukua derives from the Swahili word shuka, which means cotton cloth. The bausutu has a square neck, but both are regarded as traditional dresses (see Tumusiime 2014:49–98).

6 Gertrude Njuba, interview with the author, November 5, 2006, President’s office, Kampala.

7 On September 10, 2016, Goethe-Zentrum Kampala (UGCS) and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) organized a symposium titled Rethinking Feminism and Black Womanhood. One of the panellists, Kenneth Kakuru, a judge at the high court, argued in his paper, “Men’s Role in Promoting Rights and Opportunities for Women,” that “men go to wars to protect women.” By saying this he seems to assume that women are passive beings who need protection, and as such he robs women of their agency. This contradicts the fact that historically women have been involved in wars.

8 By 1986 the army was called the Uganda Army, a name it acquired in 1962 at the time of independence. Before then the national army was called the Kings African Rifles (KAR). In 1986 the Uganda Army (UA) was extrajudicially disbanded and replaced with the National Resistance Army (NRA), which was the armed wing of the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM). In 1995 the NRM promulgated a new Constitution of the Republic of Uganda in which the NRA was renamed the Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF).

9 For more information on medical history in Uganda, see Cook (1940).

10 These three aspects were part of the Social Purity Campaign which Cook and his wife later headed (Cook 1940:325).

11 For further discussion of how women’s reproduction is used as a site of political struggle in and about Africa, see Thomas (2003).

12 I say “essential” because the CMS played a key role in the provision of health care. For example, Dr. (later Sir) Albert Cook founded the first hospital in Uganda in 1897 on Mengo Hill in Kampala with support from his wife Katharine Thompson Cook. However, it must be emphasized that Africans could not qualify as medical practitioners. In fact, by 1912 the medical workers in Uganda consisted of a handful of European doctors and nursing sisters, some Indian assistants, and an unremunerated group of “native attendants” (Neema 2002:59).

13 The Buganda Kingdom is particularly important for my discussion. It was the strongest kingdom in the region at the time and had a “special” relationship with the British as a result. Uganda was a “Protectorate” and not a “Colony.” Most importantly, the formal art education that produced Baine (and other artists in East and Central Africa) started here.

14 Luganda is the language spoken by the Baganda people of the Buganda kingdom. It is also the most widely spoken indigenous language in Uganda.

15 Musisi (1992:173) gives details on precocious education where “boys were often sent to prominent chiefs’ courts (ebisakaate) for political education as prestigious students in waiting” whereas “the courtly schools (kijiragala) prepared boys for their future roles in the public sphere.” On the other hand, in the biswaate “girls were trained for their future roles in the nation as wives and mothers of the elite.” Musisi further explains that girls were called “bakembuga in keeping,” that is, wives-to-be of the aristocracy; they could not be referred to as abagulugala.

16 Karen Tranberg Hansen (1992:3) observes that in the Western tradition, domesticity is a set of ideas that over the course of nineteenth-century Western history have associated women with family, domestic values, and home and took for granted a hierarchical distribution of power favoring men.

17 A “crowning ken,” according to Tamale (1999:1), is derived from an African apothegm to define women who were defying customs, culture, and discrimination to join formal politics in Uganda.

References cited


