

Angelo Kakande: Contemporary Art in Uganda: A Nexus Between Art and Politics

Abstract

The nexus between Uganda's contemporary art and politics forms the overarching theme of this thesis. The trajectory of Uganda's contemporary art as a political expression has been retraced. The different political dispensations which have shaped Uganda's political art have been analyzed. The political postures and visual symbols Uganda's contemporary artists have engaged have been analyzed in the context of the wider socio-political discussions which have shaped, and been shaped by, the country. It has been contended that different political epochs have invited response from Uganda's artists since the early- 1940s. Where as this debate has been attempted by varied scholars, it has not been rigorously pursued. Formalist discourses seeking to prioritise formal aesthetics have been engaged; conclusions that after 1986 contemporary Ugandan art[ists] became apolitical have been made. With emphasis on two contemporary artists—Fred Kato Mutebi and Bruno Sserunkuuma—this formalist reading has been decentred; the socio-political relevance of Uganda's contemporary art has been retraced and prioritised. It has been argued that although initially depoliticised through colonial modernity, Uganda's contemporary artists have been sensitive to the socio-political conditions affecting their space and time; issues of governance and service delivery have preoccupied them albeit in different but often complementary ways.