

## LEARNING UNIT

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# EXPERIMENTS IN INJECTING CRITICAL READINGS OF THE HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN EDUCATION INTO AN INTRODUCTORY COURSE ON PUBLICATION DESIGN

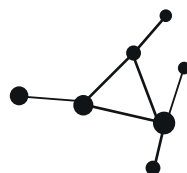
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Working Group: Kampala

Authors: Wolukau-Wanambwa, Kitto Derrick Wintergreen

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- # DESIGN
- # COLONIALISM
- # AFRICANNESS
- # CREATIVITY
- # CURRICULUM
- # CRITICAL LITERACY
- # MISSIONARY DIMENSION



**intertwining hi/stories**

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## ABSTRACT

This Learning Unit was designed for use by 1st year diploma level visual communication students at a tertiary-level art and design school in Uganda.

Its aim was to introduce the students to publication design (as specified in the curriculum) while at the same time engaging them in critical readings of the history of art and design in Uganda.

We hoped to increase their ability to question the status quo in the fields of culture, society, politics and education; to assess and manage their own learning; and to engage with others outside the project with this work.

Students were introduced to the writings of Margaret Trowell (1904-1989). Trowell founded the first formal European-style school of Art and Design in the Uganda Protectorate in the 1930s. (Supplied separately.)

The publication design module, into which the Learning Unit was embedded, was delivered in two 2-hour lessons per week over 15 weeks between September 2017 - May 2018.

## ABOUT THE STUDENTS

Our 1st year visual communication diploma students arrived with some very basic knowledge of the principles of art and design, e.g. colour, typography, layout, visual understanding and visual representation.

The languages of instruction were English and Luganda. The language of examination was English. (For most of our students, English is a 2nd, 3rd or even 4th language).

Even though secondary education in Uganda is largely conducted in English, the language itself is generally not taught very well. Therefore we assumed that the students would find it challenging to engage with the historical material.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The Kampala Working Group is currently researching the impact of British colonial governmentality and "imperial epistemologies" on the establishment and development of formal visual arts and visual arts education in Kampala in the first half of the twentieth century, and seeking to identify strategies to incorporate knowledge of this history into art and design education in Uganda in the present-day.

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## ADDRESSEES

This Learning Unit was aimed primarily at students and teachers of visual communication and graphic design in Uganda, but can be used in any situation where teachers want to encourage their students to engage creatively and critically with historical texts. It is not necessary to use our chosen historical material - you can pick your own!

## WEEK 5

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### LESSON 1 - PUBLICATION DESIGN

Content, message.

### LESSON 2 - INTRODUCTION OF THE HISTORICAL MATERIAL

The teacher should choose three or more texts from the introductory anthology of Trowell's writings on art and design in Uganda provided. These you will distribute in three learning events.

#### TITLE OF ACTIVITIES: READING AND DEBATE

DURATION: 2 hours

MATERIALS/TOOLS: Sheets of paper (in different colours if the class can afford it), scissors or Stanley knives, Pins, Markers, an English dictionary.

AIM OF THE ACTIVITIES:

- To break down the text into manageable, easy to read, easy to discuss sections.
- To make a list of terms of terms, phrases, sentences and ideas, which students may use as a base to press their points after reading the text.
- Create a mind map to further deconstruct the text for students so that they can easily connect and disconnect the author's arguments in the text.
- Allow students to relate with the text by introducing their own experiences, and realities.
- Learning to think about a written idea in a visual form. Train students to make written descriptions of ideas gained from a reading session, which they might later transform into visual representation.

#### ▶ ACTIVITY 1. READ THE TEXT

Make a brief introduction of the material which the class will be working with for the next 5 weeks.

The teacher may give reasons as to why they are introducing this material, but they don't need to defend these. S/he ought not to foreground her/his own opinion about the material from the start. The students can figure this out over time.

However the teacher should provide an introduction to the texts' origins and historical context, e.g. a short biography of Margaret Trowell, her role in the development of art and design education in Uganda, her academic background, where and why where she started teaching and writing about art.

The teacher should choose one text (NOT the questions or prompts – they are for you) and distribute copies to each student.

Students should read the text and then physically cut it into sections or paragraphs. Next they should place the sections on the table face down, and move them around so that they are mixed up. Lastly, they should choose one section, until all papers are gone from the table.

(More than one learner will chose the same section of text. This is ok.)

All the texts are reproduced with line numbers.

Read the text collectively out loud in class, in chronological order (i.e. lines 1 – 5, lines 8 – 10, etc.).

As they read, the students should underline the words which they do not understand and highlight sentences, phrases or words which they may find to be problematic, interesting to them, not true or no longer applicable, need clarification about etc. They can also make notes of their comments and questions for later.

After reading the text collectively, the students should compile a list of the words with which they are unfamiliar, and use a dictionary to identify their meaning.

Create a glossary of these words and pin it to the wall.

With this new knowledge, the students should re-read the text, focusing this time on its meaning. After each section which is read, they can pause to summarise or discuss what the section they have just read might mean.

The teacher can use the prompts and questions supplied to support the discussion.

Next, the students should write down their ideas and questions about the text on separate pieces of paper (one per idea/question) and pin these on the wall as well.

Where the teacher sees students struggling or losing interest, the teacher may try some of the following exercises help them understand and engage:

Look at the ideas and questions the class has already formulated and use them to generate questions directly related to them, or to the historical material, or to the content of the lesson more generally.

Invite them to generate a visual response to what the class has read and discussed (e.g. image, drawing, painting, typography design etc.). Briefly write down the function which your visual output would serve. If you cannot draw it, use words to describe it.

Leave this exercise on the wall for now, the class will return back to it later.

## ► ACTIVITY 2. DEBATE

The purpose of the debate is to generate and share ideas about the themes/issues raised by the text (i.e. its underlying meanings.)

Divide the class into two groups. The purpose is that these two groups will debate the text. One group to speak in support of motion and the other group to speak against it.

Within each group, there should be someone in charge of recording/making notes for group. They put these notes on the wall too. The teacher may also be part of this group.

E.g. (with reference to Margaret Trowell, "The School of Art" in *African Tapestry*, London: Faber, 1957, Section 2), a motion could be, "This House shares the belief that it is dangerous for Africans to copy". For tips on using debating in class, see "Rules for the Daily Debate" from *Decolonizing Arts Education: A Manual*. (Supplied.)

Hold a post-match discussion, encouraging the students to share any insights they have gained into the historical material and its contemporary relevance, and also to give an assessment of their debating technique (e.g. use of relevant examples, citing the text, etc.).

## WEEKS 6 - 7

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### LESSON 1 - PUBLICATION DESIGN

Formulating a concept: deciding on visual sources, identifying the target audience, approach to the subject matter)

### LESSON 2 - 2ND READING OF THE HISTORICAL MATERIAL.

The teacher may decide to introduce additional extracts from the historical material or continue to work with the material already in class and the ideas from last week.

#### TITLE OF ACTIVITIES: GIVING TEXT A VISUAL FORM

DURATION: 4 hours

MATERIALS/TOOLS: The students decide on the tools and materials they want to use

AIM OF THE ACTIVITIES:

- To give ideas a visual form (meaning).
- To examine forms of typography and images that can best support a subject matter.
- To work as a group and produce a unified outcome.

#### ▶ ACTIVITY 1

The class is divided into three groups. These three groups should not come into contact with each other until their task is completed.

If the class is reading a new text, follow the first part of Week 5 Lesson 2. If the class is not reading a new text, then the groups can work with the information and ideas generated the previous week and re-read the text to come up with more ideas.

After each group develops its response to the historical material, the three groups will come together to present their work and discuss the ideas behind it.

TASK:

The three groups are each given the same historical text. (e.g. Margaret Trowell, *African Tapestry*, London: Faber, 1957, Section 2.) They read this text and discuss it for 30-45 minutes.

The teacher can use the prompts and questions supplied to support and generate discussion.

The groups should then try to identify the ideas that underlie the text and/or that arise for them as a result of reading it. (In the latter case, they must be able to demonstrate the connection).

Examples could be:

- Who decides whether the work of African artists and designers is good and/or African?
- Have older forms of art and design in East Africa disappeared? If so, why? If not, why not?

Once they have formulated something like a consensus about their group response to these ideas:

- Group one will respond to the text with images, (stage or take photographs, use an already existing image or a set of already existing images).

- Group two will respond to the text by writing a text e.g. a letter, poem, a collection of words relating to the text etc. (consider typography design and using type as content).
- Group three will respond to the text graphically (graphic design) using poster colours and markers, etc. (can make drawings, painting, structures, patterns, graphs...).

At the end, the groups come together to present their work and discuss the ideas that informed it.

Then the class should discuss how they might combine their various ideas to produce one publication-based outcome with a common subject matter.

They should develop ideas on how to package the final combined work, and identify a target audience. (e.g. other students, art and design teachers, their parents, etc.).

Before the end of the lesson, all of the questions, ideas, images and works generated by the groups should be pinned up on the wall.

## WEEK 8 - 9

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### LESSON 1 - PUBLICATION DESIGN

Formulating a concept: deciding on visual sources, identifying the target audience, approach to the subject matter.

### LESSON 2 - 3RD READING OF THE HISTORICAL MATERIAL.

The teacher may decide to introduce new historical material for the class to read (using the strategies outlined above), or continue to work with the material already in class and the ideas which are already on the wall.

#### TITLE OF ACTIVITIES: ORGANISING A WORKSHOP/TALK

DURATION: 4 hours

AIM OF THE ACTIVITIES: 3rd Reading of Historical Material.

The purpose of this lesson is to give students experience in the planning and organizing of events; the seeking of outside views on their research; and the collecting, compiling and analysis of data.

After (re-)reading and discussing the historical materials, the students should choose a day, time and theme for the event during which they will they share their research with other staff and students in the school.

From the material and ideas they have already generated, they should create a list of questions and points for discussion. (e.g. Africanness, colonialism, pre-colonial cultural production, etc.) and identify activities that they think might encourage their audience to engage, e.g. performance, talks, debates, presentation, etc.

They should then generate strategies to attract their target audience to attend the event, i.e. give it a title and think up some slogans, create a poster, design social media adverts, etc.

The class should then assign roles for the preparation and delivery of the event, e.g.:

- Documentation (recordings and taking notes).
- Contacting discussants. (Our class took a collective decision about who they wanted to invite as discussants. They choose 2 students from each study programme, one male and one female. They shared the historical material and their research with the discussants in advance of the event – see below).
- Sending out invitations.
- Appointing a moderator for the discussion.
- Time-keeping.
- Securing a location and preparing it for the event, e.g. sound system, lighting, seating arrangement, etc.
- Moderation and coordination (write and send invitations to persons the class will have decided to be on the panel of discussants, time- keeping and managing the program, MC, etc.).

#### **THE EVENT (3 HOURS)**

Our event was a combination of public reading of the historical material, performance (by our students), and a panel discussion.

About the Discussants:

Share the historical material and the classroom research with the discussants in advance of the event. (We asked our discussants to read one text for our event: Margaret Trowell, "The Kampala Art Exhibition: A Ugandan Experiment", *Oversea Education*, Vol. 10, No. 3, April 1939, pp. 126-131, pp. 131-3.)

You may propose questions which they might wish to address.

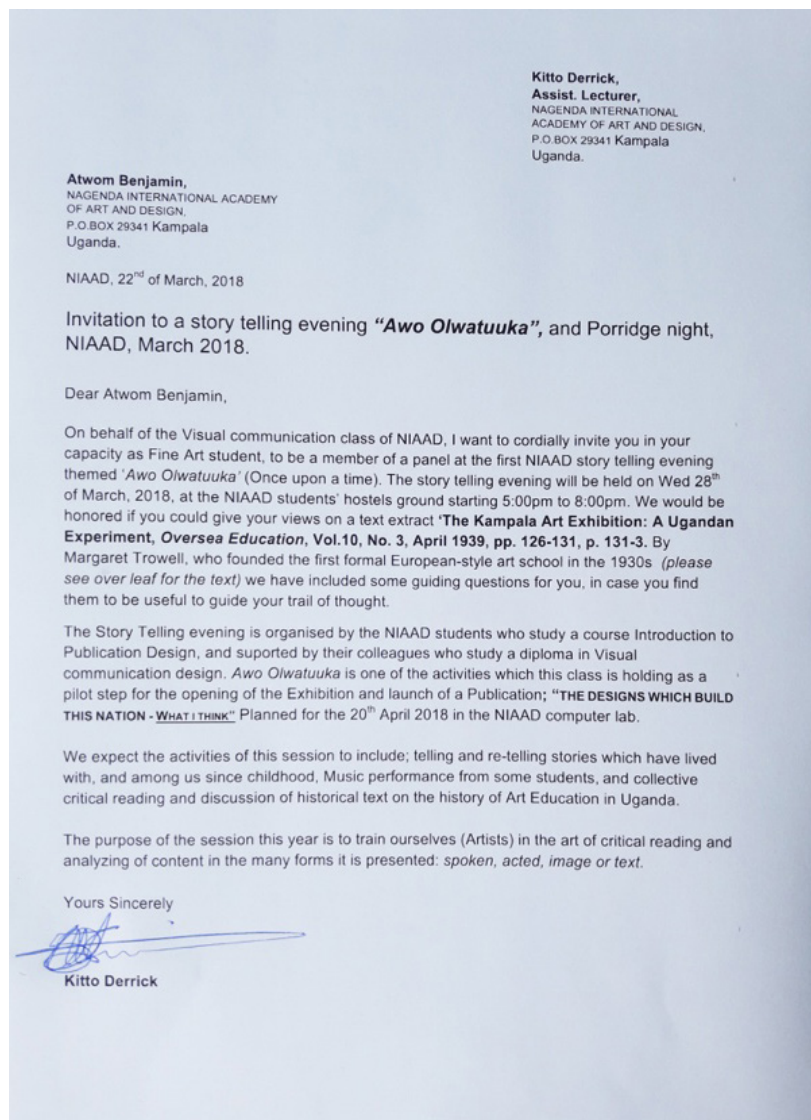
To engage the audience, the moderator may refer to terminology or phrases in the text and ask the audience to respond to what the author is saying (using the techniques employed in class).

There is a section missing here which indicates how the students document what they learned from the event, and how they incorporate elements of what they learned into their work on the publication project.

After the event, the class meets to discuss how it went. They write down any new ideas, questions or images that were generated during the event (especially quotes) and pin them on the wall.

They also evaluate how they managed the event, and make a list of things they would do differently next time to make it even more successful.

They also review their documentation of the event and make a plan for producing an edited version (incorporating text, image, video, audio), and agree among themselves how to compile this during class time. Our class elected to make a short video.





## WEEK 10

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### LESSON 1

Publication Design.

In this and the following 3 weeks, students are being introduced to:

- Typography for publications.
- Positioning text in space.
- Developing information hierarchies.
- Text interpretation and analysis.
- Working with paragraphs and composing text.
- Structure and Integration.
- The public face of publications (concepts about covers and jackets).

### LESSON 2

Documentation and compilation of all material from the 5 weeks into a publication. (e.g. a simple book, video, or photo journal, etc.).

Students put together all the ideas, questions and images which they will have collected in the past four weeks in response to the historical material and the questions generated by it.

The class can work together to produce a single publication, or they can work in smaller groups to address different questions and/or explore different approaches.

Our students worked on this for the rest of term.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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IMAGES



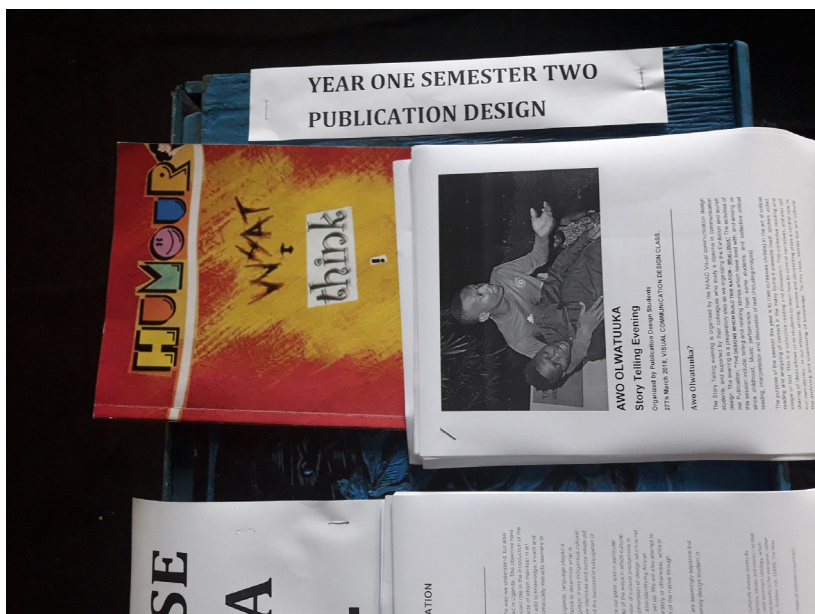
Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Art, Makerere



Collective reading of historical material



Casual reading and sight seeing



A book published by the students (an examination script)



A student performing his composition during the reading session which is organized by publication design students

Margaret Trowell, "Suggestions for the Treatment of Handwork in the Training of Teachers for Work in Africa", *Oversea Education*, Vol. 7, No. 2, January 1936, pp. 78-84, pp. 78-9.

1 The value of 'handwork' is being more and more realized in the school curriculum both at  
home and abroad. Whole tomes have been written on the importance of 'learning by doing'.  
In all but the most antiquated type of school or that in which the size of the class makes the  
supply of adequate material impossible, history and geography are now made intelligible and  
5 interesting to the pupil through modelling and drawing. All the subtle training in accuracy,  
of hand and eye, precision of mind, an appreciation of a standard of good honest work as  
well as the joy of craftsmanship, be it in such things as bookbinding for older pupils or only in  
paper-cutting and plasticine modelling for the tinies, are given their due importance in our  
scheme of education for the English child.

10

But in more primitive countries these values, essential though they be, are almost  
overshadowed by more urgent ones. No one needs this discipline in accuracy and working to  
a high standard more than the African child fresh from the easy-going life of the goat-herd  
wandering through the bush, but he needs more if he is to have a full and rich understanding  
15 of life.

Much has been said, though little has been done, about the spiritual value of conserving and  
developing the art of a people, along its own lines. Let it suffice to say here that unless this is  
more generally realized one whole side of the life of the African people will, at the best, be  
20 submerged under western materialism for several generations; at the worst it may even go  
altogether.

Two other aspects must be considered. First let us take the more sophisticated native  
who has had some education, has drifted to the towns, and has begun to use the material  
25 comforts provided by the white man. A short conversation with such a boy or girl will reveal  
an extraordinary lack of imagination or wonder; an acceptance of the achievements of the  
white man as something obtained without struggle or perseverance by the superior race. An  
aeroplane is just the white man's bird which he has in all probability always possessed, cotton  
piece-goods may have grown in bales for all he knows and cares, and the solution of the  
30 problem of a rainproof roof will always be satisfactorily met by a sheet of corrugated iron.

The serious results of such a blind leap from the primitive to twentieth-century life can be  
easily seen. Amongst native women in towns, once they have left behind the old manual toil  
in the gardens, there seems to come an overpowering laziness and a desire for nothing more  
35 than to sit about and do nothing. This is only natural. They have known no other type of work  
than labour in the fields, they have no housewife's pride, of the new world their chief desire  
is for gay clothing, and like the poor all the world over they are content with the cheapest and  
shoddiest cloth. The trader will run up a dress for sixpence, so why worry with this difficult  
business of learning to sew? Even when caught young in mission dormitory life these town  
40 girls will often only do the minimum permitted them in sewing their own clothes. The African  
boy seems definitely to have more desire to improve his way of living than the girl, but for  
him this lack of appreciation of the worth of doing, as apart from accumulation of theoretical  
knowledge, results in a superabundance of clerks and teachers and an abandonment of all  
the vigorous craftsmanship of a healthy peasant population.

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**EXERCISE**

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Margaret Trowell, founder of the art school at Makerere University, wrote this text at the time when she had started giving art lessons on the veranda of her house in Kampala.

Some questions you could ask about "Suggestions for the Treatment of Handwork in the Training of Teachers for Work in Africa" (1936):

- ▶ What do you think that Trowell means by "handwork"? (1)
- ▶ What do you think Trowell sees as the function of handwork in the education of children? (3-15).
- ▶ Why do you think Trowell thinks that African children did not acquire a "full and rich understanding of life" at the time that she was writing? (11-15) Do you agree with her reasoning? If not, why not? Please give reasons to back up your argument and provide examples from your own knowledge and experience.
- ▶ What do you think Trowell means by "along its own lines"? (18)
- ▶ Who do you think that Trowell wrote this text for?
- ▶ Make a list of the way that Trowell characterises Africans in this text (1-44). Overall, what do you think is her impression of African people?
- ▶ Bearing in mind that she wrote this text over 80 years ago, do you agree with Trowell's assessment of Africans in this text? Give reasons and provide examples to back up your argument from your own knowledge and experience.
- ▶ Do you think that what Trowell says here still has any impact in the present day? Give reasons and provide examples from your own knowledge and experience
- ▶ What does Trowell argue, that in this text about what she calls "handwork" (1), can do to help Africans? Do you agree or disagree with her argument? Give reasons and provide examples from your own knowledge and experience

Margaret Trowell, "Arts and Crafts in Africa", *Oversea Education*, Vol. 5, No. 4, July 1934, pp. 202-205.

5 At the moment, I am working chiefly along two lines; I am collecting the various traditional patterns of plaited palm mats made by the Soudanese and most coastal tribes, and taking them down on a kind of "knit one, purl one" pattern-book system; many of these patterns are extraordinarily complicated and interesting, consisting of twenty or more different lines to the pattern unit, and probably will not get passed on verbally to many of the younger generation; but what seems to me even more important than a mere anthropological record is that a golden opportunity of teaching design through their own crafts is being missed in the schools; and I am hoping to analyse the different types of pattern and suggest lines for school work.

10 The other thing in which I am very interested is in thinking out some sort of cottage vocations for the landless detribalized women who sit about doing nothing all day in the town locations. They should have some crafts to occupy them which are useful and yet hold artistic possibilities (my great object is to let 'art' come naturally or we shall get the fussy arty stuff termed handwork which is the bane of most efforts of this kind). I am putting up a very  
15 primitive loom with the wives of some of the Jeanes teachers here, and am hoping to turn out rugs of sisal or coconut fibre on the lines of the mats from Samoa sold in England. We have not got far yet as there has never been weaving of any kind here and the whole process is new to them.

[...] It seems to me that what is needed is first a loan collection of photographs and original  
20 works of the best African art, which may be borrowed for schools; and next a well illustrated book which should help us to appreciate the greatness of African art and also deal in a very practical way with the teaching of drawing and design and the various natural crafts of the African, so that at any rate we may not hinder him in the development of his own art forms.

I want photographs of anything - carving, drawing, pottery - which you feel has a real beauty.  
25 I want descriptions of local crafts - the way in which your tribe fire their pottery, the kind of loom they use for their weaving, the dyes they use in their basket work. I should like to hear of any experiments you have been trying in teaching along these lines, and points which you think a really useful book ought to include.

30 ,People are continually asking for pictures for African schools - reading sheets, health posters, Bible stories in African settings, and so on. These can only be produced from the point of view of the cost of printing, if they meet a demand over a large area; here again you could help tremendously if you would send me snaps of local types of face, clothing, and houses, so that we may try to evolve a 'typical' African.



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**EXERCISE**

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Margaret Trowell, founder of the art school at Makerere University, wrote this text when she and her husband were living in Kenya, a few years before they moved to Kampala.

Some questions you could ask about "Arts and Crafts in Africa" (1936):

- ▶ Based on your knowledge of East African history, what do you think might make Trowell believe that what she calls Sudanese mat-making techniques "probably will not get passed on verbally to many of the younger generation"? (6)
- ▶ What do think Trowell means by "teaching design through their own crafts"? (8)
- ▶ How does Trowell define craft in this text? (1 – 18)
- ▶ How does Trowell define the difference between craft, handwork and art in this text? (1-18) Compare and contrast her use of these 3 different terms, and use quotes to back up your argument.
- ▶ Who does Trowell think should be involved in making crafts, and why?
- ▶ What do you think makes the craft/handwork/design/art "African" for Trowell here? What do you think are her criteria for Africanness?
- ▶ What do you think Trowell means when she writes "so that we may try to evolve a 'typical African'"? (33)
  - ▷ How does she say that a "typical African" can be evolved?
- ▶ What do you think Trowell mean when she writes "your tribe"? (25)
  - ▷ Who is the imagined reader of this text?
- ▶ Do you sense in this text any connection for Trowell between the development of design education and the development of Africans as people? Note any phrases which either state or hint at this.
  - ▷ What kinds of personal attributes does Trowell wish Africans to acquire?

**Margaret Trowell, "The Kampala Art Exhibition: A Ugandan Experiment", *Oversea Education*, Vol. 10, No. 3, April 1939, pp. 126-131, pp. 131-3.**

At the first glance East Africa is probably one of the most disappointing parts of the world from the point of view of the student of indigenous art. Negro sculpture, which in West Africa and the Congo commands the admiration of Europe and America, is almost non-existent; a few tribes such as the Wakamba in Kenya, the Wachigga and Wasaromo in Tanganyika, carve figures, but these are mostly for sale to Europeans and have nothing of the vitality of the ceremonial masks and figures of the other side of the continent. Culture contact with early European exploration and with the East did not result in the introduction of new crafts; there is no metal casting, no loom, no potter's wheel. A few tribes, such as the Bahima of western Uganda, decorate the interiors of their huts with symbolic patterns in coloured clays; a few, such as the people of Usukuma in Tanganyika, make wall paintings connected with religious cults. Yet on the whole East Africans seem to have been curiously apathetic and lacking in any desire for plastic art.

Yet when all this has been said one has only to go a little deeper to find much in the everyday things of the people that show them to have a real feeling after form and design. The everyday things of life, the woven palm-leaf matting and fine papyrus baskets, the big round water-pots, and the small delicate 'black pottery' drinking vessels of the Bunyoro, the stools and wooden pillows, spears and shields; chiefs' head-dresses and bead-work made by chiefs' daughters, all these things, whether they be simple or ornate, have that inner quality which we call beauty; and although the modern young African may pose as being too superior to appreciate the peasant craftsman's work, the interest which was immediately aroused at the suggestion of collecting such crafts for exhibition in England showed that pride in their own work was by no means dead. [...]

But this pride in their own crafts exists in spite of, rather than because of, education. In Uganda there is a definite native aristocracy, and crafts are considered to be the work of the peasants. There are certain exceptions; bead-work was only done by girls and women of royal blood, and the potters, blacksmiths, and so on, who worked for the kings and greater chiefs were held in respect and had many privileges. Yet on the whole to make things with the hands is peasants' work. Blue blood, riches, education, and sophistication go together, with the result that the educated young man is inclined to look down on indigenous crafts both as a crude survival of his people's primitive past and as work which is beneath his dignity. It is difficult therefore to arouse creative interest by an appeal to the arts of their own people.

Although the desire to imitate and assimilate the culture of the West is stronger at the moment than the desire to develop along their traditional lines, the East Africans have very little to go on as far as art is concerned. Fortunately hoardings and posters are still unknown throughout the greater part of East Africa, illustrated books are expensive to buy, and the number of Europeans who will ask Africans to their houses is regrettably small, so that beyond house-boys few Africans have cast more than a nervous glance at the pictures with which the European is wont to adorn his wall.

This is all to the good; even if we have no great traditions, we have almost unspoilt virgin soil in which to plant seed and watch it grow, and there could perhaps be no more interesting place in which to attempt the building up of an indigenous art than here. The game, of course, is full of pitfalls and problems. Should one show the African all one can of the art of other cultures, and if so, what? The writer's solution of this particular problem at the moment is to give educated Makerere students, who will certainly be influenced by 'bad' art in books and other pictures, a rather spasmodic course of history of art, showing them anything good - Japanese, Indian, European, medieval, and modern alike - while others who are not likely to have much contact with even poor European art are shown nothing

but encouraged just to paint as the spirit moves them. This is resulting in two distinct  
50 schools going on simultaneously, and gives interesting grounds for comparison [...]

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## EXERCISE

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Margaret Trowell wrote this text in 1939, a few years after she had started teaching arts and crafts in Kampala.

Some questions you could ask about "The Kampala Art Exhibition" (1939):

- ▶ Can you put into your own words the definitions of "plastic art" (13) and of "crafts" (24) that Trowell offers in this text?
  - ▷ What do you think differentiates art and craft in Trowell's opinion? Give examples to back up your argument.
- ▶ Why do you think Trowell describes East Africans as "apathetic and lacking in any desire for plastic art"? (13-14)
- ▶ What do you think Trowell means by education? (24)
  - ▷ Why does Trowell characterise "education" as problematic for Africans in the 1930s when it comes to the development of indigenous arts and crafts? (24-32)
- ▶ Based on your own knowledge and experience, do you think it is realistic of Trowell to say, in 1939, that most East Africans have had little contact with images? (33-39) Give reasons and examples to back up your argument.
- ▶ Based on your own knowledge and experience, do you think it is fair of Trowell to describe East Africa as "almost unspoilt virgin soil" (40-41) for planting the "seed" of arts and crafts education 1939? Give reasons and examples to back up your argument.
- ▶ Why do you think that Trowell describes teaching arts and crafts in East Africa as "the game"? (42)
- ▶ What do you think of the experiment that Trowell sets up with her students? (40-50)?
- ▶ In your opinion, are the arts and/or crafts in Uganda today associated with particular social classes? Give reasons and examples to back up your argument.

K. M. Trowell, "Modern Art in East Africa", *Man*, Vol. 47, January 1947, pp. 1-7

[...] The rapid development of the African to take his place in the modern world has meant concentration on the purely utilitarian school-subjects, and one cannot blame the overworked, underpaid, and understaffed mission schools, who coped so magnificently with education, if they cut out art altogether as a luxury, or allocated the teaching of drawing to non-specialists who had neither the time nor the understanding to develop the aesthetic sensibility of their pupils.

The battle for the modern approach to the teaching of art was begun more than twenty years ago in England; we are still at its beginnings in Africa, and the old conservative obstructionist attitude still holds good among some educationalists, who have been cut off from the flow of modern educational thought. Yet at the same time the need for a considered policy in the development of art and music in Africa is recognized and supported strongly by many educational authorities, who realize the dangers of an educational system that stresses the absorption of knowledge rather than the development of original creative energy; and who are distressed by the African's attitude towards education as a means to a higher wage rather than a doorway to a wider life.

Two other aspects seem to me to need more stress. One is the deep psychological need of the African to exercise his emotional and instinctive faculties through the practice of the arts, an aspect of development which is acknowledged in every stage of civilization but which would seem to be of special urgency in the transition of the African from the old primitive instinctual response to life to the new intellectual and rational approach. The other aspect is that every culture worthy of the name has developed its own particular and peculiar art, differing from the art of other ages and civilizations although conforming to recognized aesthetic values, so that if we believe in the capacity of the African to produce a civilized culture of his own he must be given every encouragement to develop the arts in his own way. [...] (p.4)

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**EXERCISE**

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Trowell wrote this essay for the Royal Anthropological Institute in London. The previous year, she had given a speech to the Uganda Society in which she had argued strongly that Ugandans were not yet ready for self-rule.

Some questions you can ask about "Modern Art in East Africa" (1947):

- ▶ What do you think Trowell means by "original creative energy"? (14) What does she think such an energy contributes to a student's educational outcomes in an African colony?
- ▶ What do you think Trowell means by "a wider life"? (16)
- ▶ Based on your own knowledge of Ugandan history, why might Africans be pursuing education "as a means to a higher wage" in the years after World War II? Why might Trowell think that this is a bad thing?
- ▶ In this text, Trowell divides African into two: an "old world" and a "new world". Can you put into your own words her description of the differences between the two? Do you agree or disagree with the distinctions that Trowell draws here? Give reasons and examples from the text, your own knowledge and your experiences.
- ▶ What do you think Trowell means here by "civilised"? (24) In your opinion, does Trowell think that Africans are "civilised"? Give examples from the text to back up your argument.
- ▶ In your opinion, how does the contemporary Ugandan education system compare with the colonial mission schools that Trowell describes? Is the comparison favourable or unfavourable? In what respects? And why? Draw on specific examples from the text, and from your own knowledge and experience.
- ▶ What contribution do you think art and crafts could make to a young person's education today? If you don't think they add anything, could you explain why?

Margaret Trowell, "From Negro Sculpture to Modern Painting", *Uganda Journal*. Vol.6, (41), 1939, pp. 169-175, pp. 174-5.

5 Achimota College on the Gold Coast, which is extraordinarily lucky in having Mr. Meyerwitz [sic] as its Art Superintendent, is now planning the same sort of thing. He has been studying crafts in the villages and hopes to start at the college an Art and Crafts Library with reproductions of the best in the art of every country and every age, together with a collection of African crafts. He hopes not only to teach the students of advanced education but, after study of native technical methods and tradition, to develop indigenous art through the training of members of the local craftsmen's guilds, working at crafts, music, drumming and dancing. In other words to preserve and develop a real African culture.

## EXERCISE

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This extract is from an essay that Margaret Trowell wrote for the *Uganda Journal* in 1939, which was the year that the Second World War began.

Herbert Meyerowitz was one of a group of European teachers working at Achimota College in the Gold Coast colony (modern-day Ghana). Achimota College was, like King's College Budo, modelled on the boarding schools of the British elite.

Some questions you can ask about this extract from "From Negro Sculpture to Modern Painting" (1939):

- ▶ Can you describe in your own words Meyerowitz's twin-track approach to art education in Ghana? Who are his pupils and what kinds of education is he offering them?
- ▶ Why do you think Meyerowitz might try to develop art education in West Africa in this way?
- ▶ How would you describe the differences between the two kinds of education that he is offering? Give examples from the text to back up your argument.
- ▶ Why in your opinion does Trowell describe the culture that she claims Meyerowitz is preserving and developing as "real"? What makes that culture "real"? What makes that culture "African"? Give examples from the text and draw on your own experience and knowledge to back up your argument.
- ▶ Do you agree with Trowell's assessment about the positive benefits of Meyerowitz's teaching strategy? If so, why? If not, why not? Give examples from the text and draw on your own experience and knowledge to back up your argument.

Margaret Trowell, "The School of Art in African Tapestry", London: Faber, 1957.

## SECTION 1: THE BEGINNING

*In this section, Trowell describes how she first started teaching art at her house in Mulago*

[...] So, on the verandah of our house and in a thatched hut in the garden, great activity  
5 began, and primitive painting, carving, and modelling began to take shape. The work was completely unsophisticated, with a freshness and vigour which was quite unique, resulting from a group of grown men coming together to do something which was quite new to them, with no complications or pre-conceived ideas of what a picture ought to look like, for they had seen practically none before. They obviously got tremendous pleasure out of their work, and one hospital dresser voiced the attitude of them all when he said to me with awe,  
10 'Mother, it could not have been my hand which made that beautiful thing.' Perhaps we all feel like that once or twice in a lifetime of painting, but not many of us have the courage to say it in public!

It was interesting that the only one to find difficulty in this free approach was the most  
15 talented and experienced, for I had to battle with Gregory Maloba to counteract the plaster saint influence; so I put him on to making life-studies of hospital patients. I also started him on wood carving, as his previous work in clay tended to be facile and slick. As I had done no carving myself, and there was no tradition of carving among the local tribes, I decided to keep my eyes open for one of the Akamba tribesmen from Kenya who from time to time  
20 passed through Kampala selling small carved figures typical of the work of their tribe. I saw one a few weeks later walking through the town, and practically captured him physically and put him into my car. When we got home I gave him a few shillings and asked him to show Gregory how to carve. We also bought from him a beautifully balanced little adze) with the blade set in a rhino-hide socket, for the princely sum of fifty cents, or about sixpence. He  
25 stayed with us for nearly a day before he ran away, and that was the sum total of Gregory's actual technical training in carving until he went to England. During that same week another landmark in Gregory's career occurred. He found Epstein's illustrated biography on my bookshelves and looked at it one day when I was out. When I returned he burst out, 'At  
30 last here is a European whose work I can understand. I didn't know you could say ideas like this, I thought you could only say people.' I explained solemnly that art was normally used to 'say ideas' and that I had only made him 'say people' in order to make him stop saying ideas which were not his own, and so not real ideas. From now on he should say ideas as much as he liked. I suggested he might start by saying Death, using a well-seasoned tree trunk from the garden. [...]

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**EXERCISE**

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- ▶ Based on your knowledge of Ugandan history and your own experience, do you think it is reasonable of Trowell to say here that, in the late 1930s, her students had “no complications or pre-conceived ideas of what a picture ought to look like, for they had seen practically none before”? (8-9) Give reasons for your opinion, backing up your argument with examples.
- ▶ How well do you think Trowell treated the Akamba carver? (17-25) Give reasons for your opinion, backing up your argument with examples.
  - ▷ How might the Akamba carver tell the story of his encounter with Margaret Trowell and Gregory Maloba from his own point of view?
- ▶ The Akamba carver who taught Gregory Maloba was not born, living or working in what is now central Uganda, where “there was no tradition of carving among the local tribes”. (18) Do you think that matters in terms of the curriculum that Trowell was trying to develop?
  - ▷ How does taking such an approach relate to Trowell’s goal of developing a “true” or “authentic” tradition of African art at Makerere?
- ▶ What do you think Trowell and Maloba mean then they talk about “saying people” and “saying ideas”? (29-32) Put these concepts into your own words.
  - ▷ Do you agree with Trowell that if a person is “saying ideas” which are not their own that means that they are not “real ideas”? If so, why? If not, why not? Give reasons, drawing on your own knowledge and experience.



## SECTION 2: COLONIAL OFFICIALS GIVE THEIR OPINIONS

5 *In April 1939, Trowell exhibited her student's work at the Imperial Institute in London, UK. The Imperial Institute was opened in 1893 as "a permanent showcase" for the British Empire in the heart of the imperial capital. Following the Second World War and the intensification of anti-colonial independence movements across the world, the Imperial Institute was renamed the Commonwealth Institute (just as the British Foreign and Colonial Office was renamed the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office). Sir Philip Mitchell, then the Governor General of the Uganda Protectorate, wrote the foreword to the exhibition catalogue, from which Trowell*  
10 *quoted:*

"Drawing and painting, like modelling and wood carving, are, of course, not new to the Africans. From the earliest Bushman drawings, to the elaborate ornamentation of hut walls or household innate appreciation of line and colour; in colour, indeed, they seem to have a particularly happy instinct.

15 "But they are today being brought at breakneck speed into contact with our so-called civilization, and their sense of values must be continuously put to severe strains. They have, moreover, a special aptitude for imitation which may be a great danger to them in the realm of art and aesthetics.

20 "In addition important developments are now taking place in the field of education, and a new higher college is being established which we hope may become the centre and inspiration of a new – or at any rate a newly developed – African culture...You will see that we are showing not only pictures, a relatively new departure, but some examples of old-established crafts as a setting for them. It is in that setting, as part of a genuinely African art, that I hope these young artists will develop the talent and aptitudes which they undoubtedly possess."

25 *Lord Hailey, a senior British colonial administrator [?] gave a speech at the opening of this exhibition. Trowell quoted from it here:*

30 "Hitherto artistic expression in Africa has largely taken the form of the traditional crafts – the crafts of the potter, the carpenter and the smith. Now these are doomed inevitably to disappear. It is of no value to attempt to retain the form when the whole spirit which animated it has passed away. But though much of the old type of craftsmanship must disappear, it is certain that Africans will have some form of expression of their own.

35 "Though it is difficult to be certain exactly what form of guidance should be given by those who set themselves to instruct people so different from ourselves, it is clear that we should not satisfy the African's desire for self-expression if we merely set out to teach him to imitate our own culture. I think that we should give to the African all that we have in our experience – the principles of art, the use of material, and the like, but that we should leave him as far as possible to express the African spirit in the product. We may then establish in time a true African tradition of Art."

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**EXERCISE**

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- ▶ What do you think Sir Philip Mitchell means when he says that Africans have a “happy instinct” for colour? (13) How would you characterise this comment – is it positive or negative?
- ▶ Why might Mitchell imagine the encounter with Western civilisation under colonialism as “strenuous” for Africans? (14-15)
  - ▷ Based on your knowledge of Ugandan history, why do you personally think that Africans might have found the colonial encounter strenuous?
- ▶ Why might Mitchell say that imitation could be “a great danger in the realm of art and aesthetics”? (16-17) To whom might Africans’ skill at imitation pose a danger or threat? Do you agree with Mitchell? If so, why? If not, why not? Give reasons, backing up your argument with examples drawn from your knowledge of East African histories and cultures.
- ▶ How does Mitchell imagine African art developing? (20-23) Do you personally find his vision restrictive or liberating? Give reasons, backing up your argument with examples drawn from your personal knowledge and experience of East African cultures and histories.
- ▶ Why might Lord Hailey imagine – or indeed even want – Africa’s “traditional crafts [...] to disappear”? (27-29)
  - ▷ Why do you think he uses the adjective “doomed” here? (28) What effect does this word have on the sentence?
  - ▷ It is now 2018. Has “much of the old type of craftsmanship” disappeared? (30) Which of these activities are still pursued in present-day Uganda, and why?
- ▶ In your opinion, are Europeans and Africans as different as Hailey makes them out to be in his speech? (32-37)
  - ▷ In your opinion and experience, what could be (a) the positive aspects and (b) the negative aspects of cultural difference in teaching situations?
- ▶ What do you think Hailey means by “the African spirit”? (37)
  - ▷ In your opinion do you think it would be realistic for the European colonisers to teach colonised Africans “all that [they] have in their experience – the principles of art, the use of material”, etc. – but without influencing the “spirit” of their students’ work?
  - ▷ Why might Hailey believe that such a separation between form and content is possible?
- ▶ When Hailey says, “we may [...] establish [...] a true African tradition of art” (37-38):
  - ▷ Who do you think is included in the “we” that he is part of?
  - ▷ What is he arguing would make this tradition of art “true”?
  - ▷ What is he arguing would make this tradition of art “African”?

### SECTION 3: 1939-1945

*In this section, Trowell related the severe challenges that her art school faced in the late 1940s once Makerere College School began the process of becoming a college of the University of London, because art was not considered to be a "proper" academic subject:*

Prospects now seemed rather grim. The only possible opening for African art students at the time was teaching, and no school was prepared to employ a whole-time art specialist. If then art as one subject in a general course was out, it was sheer stupidity and, what was even worse, grossly unfair to the men themselves, to admit any more students to the School. But art was something that mattered, something that had got to be put back into African life. [...]

*This excerpt comes from a section where Trowell argued for the importance of ensuring that Africans are taught art by Africans:*

[...] I was sure then, as I am now, that we cannot entirely successfully teach art to a people of another race. We can open the door for the few stalwarts who are strong enough to resist our impact, taking only the nourishment they need. But for the greater number we may so easily impress our outlook on them too much; judge their work by our standards; misunderstand both their subject matter and method of expression; and, because we cannot contact the heart of the matter in them, concentrate far too much on the only possible common ground - technique. Until these few who have survived our training without losing their own souls take over the teaching themselves, we shall not do much to develop a genuine African tradition; we must only hope we shall do less harm than good, and humbly attempt to enter with them their great inheritance of African sculpture through our own honest study of it. This we need together with an equally patient study of what they are trying to say themselves, especially if it does not seem to coincide with our own ideas. [...]

### EXERCISE

- ▶ What do you think Trowell means when she says that "art [...] had got to be put back into African life"? (9-10)
  - ▷ Where do you think art might have "gone", and why?
  - ▷ Do you agree or disagree with this assertion. If so, why? If not, why not?
- ▶ Who is the "we" to whom Trowell refers in this paragraph? (14-25)
- ▶ Do you agree or disagree with Trowell's argument that racial difference is a barrier to teaching in art within the context of colonialism? (14-15)
- ▶ What does Trowell mean when she says that "we cannot contact the heart of the matter in them"? (18-19)
  - ▷ Why do you think that Trowell might feel this way, even though by the time she wrote this book, she had been living in East Africa for over 25 years (over half her life)?
- ▶ Why do you think Trowell describes sculpture as East Africa's "great inheritance" (23) – given that there are no pre-colonial sculptural traditions in the region? Do you agree or disagree with this assertion? If so, why? If not, why not?

## SECTION 4: FORM AND CONTENT

*Here Trowell described the status of the visual and material arts in East Africa prior to the colonial encounter:*

5 [...]Even in the many tribes where the work of the potter and blacksmith was a specialized occupation the level of craftsmanship was of a poor standard both aesthetically and technically. Geographical conditions also contributed to this cultural poverty, for on every side the people were cut off for many centuries from the stimulus of outside ideas by waterless semi-desert, tropical forest, or the Nile sudd. Chronically poor nutrition produced a race which seemed apathetic to the normal desire of mankind to create things of beauty and worth [...]

15 [...] It has often been said, and I have sometimes said it myself, that the African has no appreciation of natural beauty; that, once you have released him from animistic fears, the world is his cabbage patch, and a very prosaic cabbage patch at that. I think we must now admit that many Africans have as deep a response to nature as poets and artists of other races.

20 [...] We only had to convince [the students] that this was something which educated people felt was worth doing and give them the necessary enthusiasm to slog through the difficulties of putting down on paper what it was they wanted to say. They were, of course, very annoyed that I would not teach them the way. They have told me since that they felt I was lazy because I would never take a brush and show them how. We had many serious arguments as to whether six artists painting the same scene from life would or would not produce six identical paintings only varying in skill. They could not at first understand the value of the artist's individual approach. Slowly they learnt that eyes, brains, and a heart could produce something of more worth than the lens of a camera. As I picked out and praised pictures for other qualities than photographic slickness they began to let themselves go and produce work of real value. A tradition was beginning to form.

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## EXERCISE

- ▶ What reasons does Trowell give to support her argument that the peoples of what is now Uganda suffered from "cultural poverty" (5-11) Use your knowledge of East African history to assess whether her argument is or is not reasonable. Give reasons based on evidence to support your answer.
- ▶ What do you think Trowell means when she says that "once you have released [the African] from his animistic fears, the world is now his cabbage patch, and a very prosaic cabbage patch at that?" (13-15)
  - ▷ Do you think she makes a fair point?
  - ▷ If so, why? If not, why not?
- ▶ Why do you think Trowell refused to "teach them the way"? (18-26)
- ▶ What do you think Trowell means by "photographic slickness"? (25)
  - ▷ Why do you imagine she thinks it is a bad thing?
- ▶ What do you think Trowell means by "tradition"? (26)

## SECTION 5: THE LATEST PHASE

*Trowell described life at the art school her day:*

I must admit to being allergic to visitors, for they can waste such an enormous amount of  
 5 time. Of course there are visitors and visitors, but the trouble is that you cannot always  
 classify them on sight. Visitors who bring real knowledge and understanding of art, or at least  
 a genuine desire to understand what it is all about, are always welcome and their criticisms  
 are most helpful. It is the person who has ‚heard all about your wonderful work` but who,  
 when it comes to the point, has not the faintest glimmering of what we are really after, and  
 10 who is simply sight-seeing, that we try to avoid. For it takes about half an hour to show people  
 round the studios; and when, as sometimes happens, we have five or six tours in a day, it  
 leaves little time for teaching. I sometimes wish we worked in a more orthodox building, with  
 closed doors and a secretary’s office through which the visitor has to pass before being  
 ushered into the Presence. But, alas, all the studios open on to a long verandah, and the  
 15 Presence herself is usually working in a very grubby apron among the students; while, when  
 our part-time secretary is not in the office, our old hall porter is quite incapable of doing  
 any filtering, for he knows no English. [...] The worst kind of visitors are men with determined  
 jaws and a battery of cameras slung round their chests. They always insist on having pictures  
 taken down, and even large pieces of modelling carried outside by teams of students into  
 20 the sunlight to be photographed. If, as has happened more than once, the work is damaged,  
 it is just too bad. Equally trying are the large groups of tourists “doing Africa” who arrive in  
 motor-coaches, and start going round the studios without attempting to contact the staff  
 and seek permission to do so, apparently regarding us as some sort of offshoot of the game  
 park. I came in one day to find one such party enjoying itself thoroughly and saying, in front  
 25 of a self-conscious and furious group of English-speaking students, “Say, aren’t these nigs’  
 paintings just too quaint!”

[...] In the old days the students had something to say in their painting. They said it sincerely  
 even if clumsily. What they said was concerned with their old way of life, and I had had  
 30 to search diligently for the key words to awaken their enthusiasm. Cultivation, fire, famine,  
 dance, these were the things which mattered. It was narrative painting but it spoke with  
 feeling and conviction of the things they knew. And surely that is the root of all painting  
 whatever form it may take, from Byzantine art, speaking of the power and wealth of the  
 Caesaro-papacy, right though all other styles and formulas down to Picasso’s “Guernica”?  
 35 The form grows from the content, the content is not invented as an exercise for form. Now  
 it was more difficult to find the key words to set them on fire. Only a few years ago most of  
 them came from a home life which, if poor in material goods, was rich in colour and action,  
 tied to the soil and to the fundamentals of life. Essentially paintable in fact. Now most of these  
 more educated lads carne from homes in or near the towns and so often these towns were  
 40 shabby imitations of the new Western background, only partially assimilated by the people  
 themselves. They had practically left the old ways of life but had not yet found real riches  
 in the new. The surge of life had shifted from cultivation, fire, famine, dance, to the struggle  
 for secondary education, to the squalor of shanty towns on the fringe of official townships,  
 to awakening political desires, to bicycles, motor-cars, and newspapers. All this was really as  
 45 vital and stirring as the old world, but less paintable and more difficult for the young African  
 to express in front of European teachers.

Yet a growing appreciation of form and texture was no substitute for zest and life. We had to  
 help them unite art and life once more. [...]

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**EXERCISE**

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- ▶ Where do you think the visitors that Trowell is complaining about come from (4-26)?
- ▶ What does Trowell find problematic about them? (4-26)
- ▶ Jot down what you consider to be the similarities and differences between the kinds of people who “visit” NIAAD today and the kinds of people who visited the Makerere School of Art in the 1940s and 50s.
- ▶ What problems does Trowell claim that life in the 1940s and 50s posed for the creative expressions of her students? (28-46)
  - ▷ Do you consider her argument reasonable or unreasonable? Please give reasons and give evidence to back up your answer.
- ▶ Why might Trowell say that she felt her students found it difficult to express contemporary life in their art “in front of European teachers? (44-46)
  - ▷ Discuss this statement with your colleagues. Do you consider her opinion fair or unfair? Give reasons and provide evidence to back up your answer.
- ▶ Why might Trowell claim that art and life were not united for her students during this period (28-48)?
  - ▷ Do you think that what she is saying here is fair?
    - If so, why? If not, why not?
    - Give reasons and provide evidence to back up your answer.

Margaret Trowell, *African Arts and Crafts: Their Teaching in the School*, London: Longmans and Green, 1937

*Trowell wrote this book in 1937 for (white) European teachers working mostly in mission schools in Britain's African colonies. The book argues for the value of teaching arts and crafts to the colonised, and also provides an introduction to the various art forms and to how they could be taught. (It does not assume that the (white) European reader has undergone teacher training in the subject.)*

## SECTION 1

Sometimes I have visited a bush school and asked the teacher what crafts are being taught there, and he has proudly led me in to watch a drawing class at work. Rows of small black  
 5 urchins sit huddled together on benches, each with his small slate and squeaking pencil; some with furrowed brow and tongue thrust hard against cheek strive desperately to copy from the board a queer conglomeration of lines labelled "BOX"; others have obviously given it up and have lost all interest in this queer pastime. I have no interest in it either; I want to see carving, basket-work, or the rich patterns with which the African knows so well how to  
 10 decorate his shields and stools. But when I ask for these I am told almost contemptuously that the children do not come to school to learn that; they come to learn the skill of the European.

## EXERCISE

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► Think back on the art and design classes that you attended at primary and secondary school. List the similarities and differences between the kind of art and design education you received and that which Trowell describes here.

▸ How does your education at NIAAD compare with the kind of education which Trowell describes?

► Trowell says that she was told that indigenous Africans went to school during the colonial period "to learn the skill of the European".

▸ Why do young Ugandans go to school today? What, in your opinion, has changed since Trowell's day, and why? What, in your opinion, has stayed the same since Trowell's day, and why?

## SECTION 2

Many of my friends teaching in missions and schools all over the country are awake to the danger of African art being temporarily swamped beneath the inrush of Western goods and Western teaching, and they would be only too eager to do something for it if they could. But  
5 they are busy people, and for them it is only one subject to be fitted in somehow between hygiene and arithmetic, or geography and mothercraft. They say, "I know nothing about teaching drawing, but I feel it ought to be done. I'd like to keep the children's work really African, but I don't in the least know how to set about it. Tell me what to do, but don't forget I've no money for materials and very little time for preparation." It is for them and others like  
10 them that this book is being written.

## EXERCISE

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- ▶ What influence do you think that foreign goods and foreign teaching have on art and design in Uganda today?
- ▶ What do you think Trowell's correspondent means when she says "I'd like to keep the children's work really African"? (7-8)
  - How do you imagine Trowell's correspondent might define or measure the "Africanness" of his/her students' work?
- ▶ Do you think, given the influence of the British at the time, that "keeping the children's work really African" was a realistic goal for British teachers in the colonial period?
- ▶ How important do you feel Africanness is in design education in Uganda today?
  - How is that Africanness defined, and by whom?



### SECTION 3

Three main ideas lie behind what thought and study have gone into the making of this book. The first was to put the question, "What does the African mean by beauty?" and to try to answer it in a way which would create enthusiasm for his artistic expression. The second was to take various African crafts and study them not as interesting anthropological relics, but as the occupations of a peasant community, crafts which could be done at home and used at home in their daily lives; for it is only out of the homely crafts of weaving, carving, and modelling that great art and great artists have arisen. And the third point was to rethink in the light of the African's needs, methods of training observation and the imaginative faculty in drawing which are used by many modern teachers to-day. My chief concern is to make it plain that art is of the people and natural to the people, and that it is only by understanding this we can hope to do good and not harm in our efforts to teach.

### EXERCISE

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▶ Do you agree or disagree with Trowell that "it is only out of the homely crafts of weaving, carving, and modelling that great art and great artists have arisen"? (6-7) Give reasons and back up your arguments with evidence.

### SECTION 4

Art is absolutely necessary to religion. It is necessary as an expression of the feelings of the worshippers, and it is necessary as an instrument of education. It is far more important in the education of the child or convert than is argument, because it appeals to our subconscious emotions which lie deeper than our rational mind. The only art which easily moves a people is its own.

"If Christianity is to appeal to the best in Africans it must at some period inspire the artists of the community." Many people are ready to agree with such a statement, but so often their agreement is but pious lip service. They are not ready to give the African artist a free hand, nor to accept his representation of Christian truth as he sees it. It needs courage to scrap the traditional English Church ornament and symbolism and allow the African to find his own, yet anything else is artificial to him, for the people's art is, and always must be, in the vernacular.

### EXERCISE

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▶ "[Art] is far more important in the education of the child or convert than is argument, because it appeals to our subconscious emotions which lie deeper than our rational mind". (4-6). Can you think of any reasons why it might be problematic for a coloniser to deliberately set out not to engage with the rational mind of the colonised when trying to "convert" them to the coloniser's religion and encourage them to adopt the colonised cultural values?

▶ To what extent do Christian churches in Uganda today "accept" Ugandan (or African) representations of "Christian truth"? (12) How influential do you consider traditionally European Church "ornament and symbolism" (13) to be in the present day?

▶ Why do you think that is?

▶ What effect do you think this has?

## SECTION 4

- Can we try to sum up some of the most important points for us to remember as teachers? First and foremost, the choice of what is and what is not beautiful is so wrapped up in our upbringing and general likes and dislikes that we must be very slow in condemning or even approving the art of a people of an entirely different background by our own standards; rather we should try to understand and appreciate their standards. We cannot tell which way African art will go; it certainly will be largely influenced by what it sees from the West, but there are great hopes that their own strong sense of form and design may win through. There is certainly no need to foist our own conventions, such as perspective, on them in the name of art; rather we should show them the best we can of forms of art more nearly akin to their own, such as peasant pottery, good weaving, medieval carving, and so on; and, what is even more important, by collecting and encouraging the best that we can find in their own art teach them to have a pride in it instead of despising it as a thing of the past, which is their chief danger to-day.
- 15 Somehow, in the schools we must retain the importance of the craftsman's skill. The old religious ceremonies will go; the sacrifice of fowls upon the tools before work begins will be forgotten; but is it too much to expect of Christianity that, rightly taught, it could not call out as much of the artist's sense of the greatness of his calling as mere paganism has done? Somehow Christian art should mean at least as much to the simple craftsman as does the making of fetishes – it did in the Middle Ages. At any rate, we must keep that sense of the importance of work well and properly done and loved for its own sake which is the essence of all art.

## EXERCISE

- ▶ To what extent is contemporary Ugandan art "influenced" by Western art? (7)
  - ▷ What forms do these influences take?
  - ▷ Do you think Western influence is a good thing or a bad thing for art and design in Uganda today?
  - ▷ What problems might arise if a society tries to obstruct or prevent external influences?
  - ▷ What practical steps could artists, designers and other knowledge producers take in Uganda today to strengthen the Ugandan (or, indeed, African) influence on art and design – nationally, regionally and internationally?
- ▶ To what extent does Trowell, in this extract, allow the colonised to decide what kinds of external (foreign) influences they wish to absorb in the development of art and design? Cite specific words and phrases in the text to substantiate your answer.
- ▶ Why do you think Trowell suggests showing the colonised "forms of art nearly akin to their own"? (10)
  - ▷ Can you think of any objections to this approach?
- ▶ To which religions is Trowell referring with the phrase "mere paganism"? (18)
  - ▷ Why does she refer to paganism as "mere"? What justification does she offer for that?
- ▶ Which period in Western history do you think Trowell most admires in terms of culture, art and society? Use quotations from this excerpt to back up your argument.
- ▶ How "modern" do you think Trowell thought Britain's African colonies were in 1937 when she wrote this book?
  - ▷ Do you agree or disagree with her assessment? Explain your reasons.

## SECTION 5

In Mr [Harold] Jowitt's chapters on craftwork in African schools [in *Suggested Methods for the African School*] he states:

- 5 "It should be readily recognised, however, that as far as possible the materials used should be locally obtainable; that the tools used should be those which can be obtained without difficulty by the local African; that the articles made should be of service in village life and that the methods should be suitable for the locality concerned."
- 10 If that dictum were followed we should avoid all the pitfalls into which the enthusiastic teacher of crafts often crashes. There would be no superficial "arty-ness", because "arty-ness" consists in meaningless ornamentation and does not consider the function of the article; there would be no break with traditional methods, and therefore no break with traditional modes of expression; there would be no time wasted in the making of useless
- 15 objects, because what was made would have to pass the test of use in a real home and the scrutiny of older craftsmen. The pupil, on the other hand, would learn the pride of good workmanship; he would learn to value the old traditional skill and yet to improve upon it; he would learn to experiment with his local materials instead of expecting them to be provided by a benevolent education department or bought from the nearest store.
- 20 Although as a general rule I would endorse Mr Jowitt's point that the articles made should be of service in native village life, and equally deplore with him the making of „delicate lace toilet mats which have no place in an African home," I think a case can be made for definitely seeking and serving a European market. The argument that craft if commercialised must therefore cease
- 25 to be art is unsound, although it does need discipline to put art first and not pander to the, unsound popular taste of the day. After all, art for arts sake is, unfortunately, simply not true, and even the greatest artists, although they may have had an inner urge to create something, were ruled as to what that something should be by the demands of the patrons of their day.

## EXERCISE

- ▶ How are arts and crafts "traditionally" taught in Uganda?
- ▶ How involved are traditional craftsmen in formal art and design education in Uganda today?
  - ▷ Do you find the level and the quality of their involvement positive or negative?
  - ▷ If you feel that they are not involved enough, how could this be improved?
  - ▷ If you feel that they are too involved, why do you think they should be involved less? Who else should students be learning from?
- ▶ If you think about contemporary Uganda, which of the skills that students are taught in school could equally be taught by older "traditional" craftsmen? Give reasons for and against this.
- ▶ Reading this text in 2018, to what extent do you agree or disagree with Trowell's and Jowitt's proposed curriculum for arts and crafts in schools in Britain's African colonies? What do you find positive? What do you find problematic?
- ▶ To what extent does the contemporary curriculum differ from that which Trowell and Jowitt propose in this text?
  - ▷ How do you think the curriculum at NIAAD should be improved? What would make the curriculum more relevant – nationally, regionally or internationally?
- ▶ List reasons for and against protecting design students from "foreign influences".

## SECTION 6

[...] The people are no longer fully occupied in winning their bread from the soil. They have grown away from the simple life. The boy's one aim is to become a clerk or a teacher, the girl in the town location has no garden to cultivate and often nothing better to do than to gossip and get into mischief. Yet at the same time they realise the need for money to buy books and fine clothes, and many of the other things of civilisation.

The psychological need for teaching good craftsmanship here is obvious. To leap straight up from the barrenness of a primitive hut to modern town life with cheap stores filled with cotton piece goods and enamelware, with motor-cars in the roads and aeroplanes overhead means an absence of any historical sense of the achievements and discoveries of the past. All these things are accepted as something which the white man must have always possessed without any labour. It is obvious that we cannot expect such townfolk to make things for themselves as they would in more primitive parts. The cheap stores with their shoddy goods have come to stay, and it is hard enough to persuade the girls to sew their own dresses. [...]

## EXERCISE

- ▶ What does Trowell mean here by "the simple life"? (3) What does she find good or bad about it?
- ▶ Does Trowell have a favourable or unfavourable opinion of urban African life? (1-15) Use quotations from the text to back up your argument. In your opinion, how far is she being fair? How far is she being unfair?
- ▶ What kinds of ambitions do young urban Africans have in the 1930s, according to Trowell? (2-6) Do you detect a difference in terms of gender? What is your opinion of what Trowell writes here – from the perspective of 2018?
  - ▷ Do you think that the condition of being colonised might have affected the ambitions and prospects of young urban Africans during the 1930s? If so how?
- ▶ What does Trowell argue is the "psychological need for teaching good craftsmanship"? (8)
  - ▷ Do you agree or disagree with her argument? Draw on your own knowledge and experience as well as the text to provide evidence and examples.
- ▶ Do you detect in Trowell's argument any connection between the goals of British colonialism (i.e. to maintain control over the colony) and the purpose of art and design education in African schools? Jot down any phrases or sentences that might hint at this.
  - ▷ In your opinion, how does government policy influence art and design education in Uganda today?

## SECTION 7

This brings us to a most important point - to wit, the co-operation of local craftsmen. The real teacher should be the old man or woman who is considered to be most expert in the neighbourhood; not only will he pass on the essential soul of the matter in a way we cannot possibly hope to do, but, to be quite frank, his work will probably be far better than we or our pupils can produce without his help, and he will know the possibilities and limitations of his own local materials. It is unfortunately true that work produced in schools is usually far inferior to that produced outside in the villages, both in spirit and in workmanship. Like all craftsmen, the African does not easily give away the secrets of his trade, but he can usually be won through his personal pride, and by making him a teacher or asking him to judge the schoolwork, or by holding exhibitions of local as well as school craftwork the interest of the countryside will be roused. At first the European should be content to learn, slowly he can introduce better technique and new forms.

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## EXERCISE

- ▶ Based on this extract, would you say that there are any craftswomen or females in Trowell's vision of Africa? Give evidence from the text to support your answer. Is there any irony in this for you, given that Trowell is a woman, and that most European mission schools were run by women?
- ▶ In your opinion, would it matter if the crafts produced in schools are "inferior" (9) to the work produced in villages? Discuss.
- ▶ What is your opinion of the approach Trowell proposes for involving local craftsmen (and women) in the curricula of European-controlled schools? Who has power? Who has authority? Has the most powerful party in the relationship between the school and the "village" earned their authority and their power? Pick out the sections of the text that point to the identity of the powerbrokers.

## RULES OF THE DAILY DEBATE

1. As a group, agree on a clear but contentious motion. Even if the issue is not clear-cut in real life, the motion must be formulated to provide two clear opposing positions for the teams to argue. (E.g. "This house believes that European colonialism caused irreparable damage to the cultures of the people of Uganda".)
2. Split into two teams. One team must argue in favour of the motion, the other against it.
3. In your teams, brainstorm the motion, possible arguments and evidence.
4. Nominate two speakers from your team.
5. The first speaker for the team proposing the motion argues in support of her/his team's position for five minutes. While s/he is speaking the other team makes notes of the key points of her/his argument.
6. The opposing team has five minutes to confer and amend their arguments in order to deliver a clear and strong rebuttal.
7. The first speaker of the opposing team puts forward an argument against the motion for five minutes. Her/his speech must begin with a concise and accurate one-minute summary of the first proposer's argument. While s/he is speaking the other team makes notes of the key points of her/his argument.
8. The proposing team has five minutes to confer and amend their arguments in order to deliver a clear and strong defence of the motion.
9. The second speaker for the team proposing the motion argues in favour of the motion for five minutes. Her/his speech must begin with a concise and accurate one-minute summary of the first opposer's argument. While s/he is speaking the other team makes notes of the key points of her/his argument.
10. The opposing team has five minutes to confer and amend their arguments in order to deliver a clear and strong rebuttal.
11. The second speaker for the team opposing the motion argues against the motion for five minutes. Her/his speech must begin with a concise and accurate one-minute summary of the second proposer's argument.

**\*\*No interrupting\*\*No bad language\*\*No violence\*\***