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Cover image:

Categories and contemporaries: African artists at the Slade School of Fine Art (c.1945–65)

by Gabriella Nugent • November 2022

Introduction

Artists from all over the world studied at the Slade School of Fine Art, London, but the categories of art history and the organisation of museums have rarely allowed them to be studied, taught or exhibited alongside each other. Their separation and dissociation can be attributed to art history's strong attachment to national narratives. The nation state has operated as the epistemological framework through which artists are grouped and works of art are examined. Even as the 'global turn' has sought to combat the Eurocentric assumptions of modernism, it has often perpetuated the discipline's methodological nationalism, obscuring the cosmopolitan networks to which artists belonged.¹ These national narratives contribute to larger continental frameworks that exacerbate divisions between artists who often sat side by side together in the same classroom.

The Slade was an important site of convergence for many African artists central to modern art movements tied to decolonisation between 1945 and 1965. With the aim of proposing new ways of writing histories of modernisms, Liz Bruchet and Ming Tiampo have conceived of the Slade as a contrapuntal node that connects multiple people and histories.² From its establishment within University College London (UCL) in 1871, the Slade admitted students to its programme regardless of gender, race or religious belief, an attitude in direct opposition to the racial supremacism of British colonial ideology. In comparison to artists who were born and trained in Europe, African artists from British colonies who studied at the Slade were compelled to know multiple worlds, often working between Africa, Europe and North America. However, the categories of art history have not been designed for the capacious lives led by these artists, or indeed the entanglements wrought by colonialism. The discipline tends to marginalise transnational experiences, preferring, especially in the case of African artists, essentialised notions of identity premised on difference.³ These artists are often separated out from their peers and placed in continental isolation. This isolation can be traced back to the emergence of the category of 'African art' in the late nineteenth century when objects of ritual or ceremonial purpose entered the European market. Their artistic forms were subsequently adopted

by modernist painters, leading to the prominence of 'African art' in the Western world. The construction of 'African art' was mobilised thereafter to group together artists from across the continent, even if they were operating in Europe or North America. The study of these works of art, otherwise known as the field of 'African art history', was largely the purview of anthropologists and gallery professionals, and for a long time it was performed outside the realm of art history proper.

Bearing this past in mind, art history has had much to answer for in recent years, from calls to address the legacies of slavery and colonialism prompted by such movements as Rhodes Must Fall and Black Lives Matter to concomitant surveys of decolonisation published in some of the discipline's foremost journals.⁴ However, the demand to expand art history beyond its Eurocentric matrix has largely taken an 'additive' approach – new classes, new textbooks and new hires – rather than an essential integration of what was once deemed periphery to a mainstream art history. Bringing together unpublished archival material from UCL Special Collections, London, and works of art from the UCL Art Museum, London, and other collections based in the United Kingdom and abroad, this article proposes a new methodological framework that situates the selected artists alongside their contemporaries, challenging the categories and interpretative frames that have been imposed onto their work. It seeks to demonstrate the entanglement of modern art movements globally by examining the works of art and correspondence of such artists as Ben Enwonwu, Ibrahim El-Salahi, Sam Joseph Ntiro, Paula Rego, Patricia Gerrard, Margaret J. Rees Menhat Helmy, Michael Tyzack and Amir Nour.

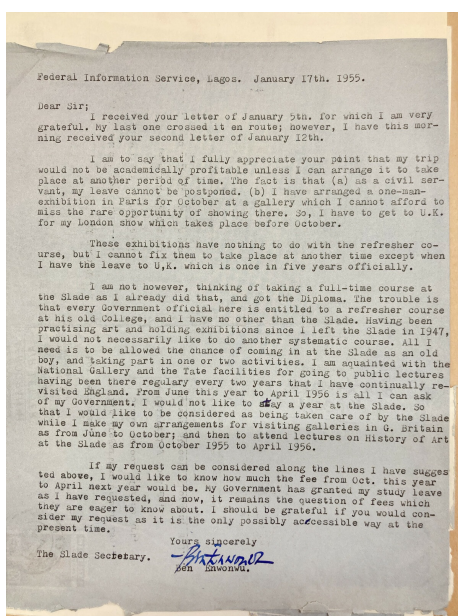


FIG. 1 Letter to I.E. Tregarthen Jenkin from Ben Enwonwu. 17th January 1955. (UCL Special Collections, University College London).

Before, during and after the Slade

In January 1955 the Nigerian artist Ben Enwonwu (1917–94), who had received a Fine Arts Diploma from the Slade in 1947, petitioned the school's secretary, I.E. Tregarthen Jenkin (1920–2004), for a refresher course **FIG. 1**. He wrote: 'Every Government official here is entitled to a refresher course at his old College, and I have no other than the Slade'. This request does not suggest that Enwonwu so relished his time at the Slade that he wished to repeat his education. As detailed by Bruchet and

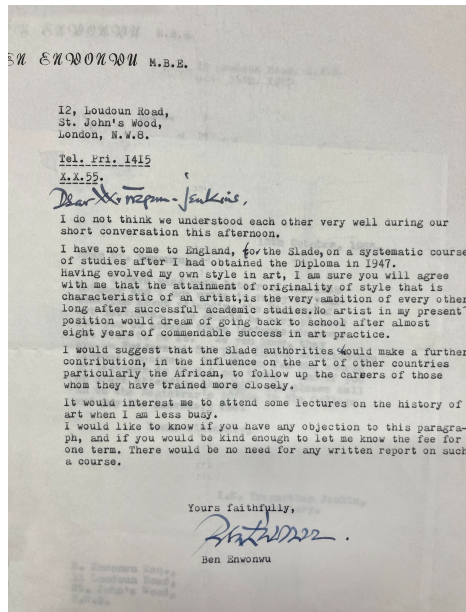


FIG. 2 Letter to I.E. Tregarthen Jenkin from Ben Enwonwu. 10th October 1955. (UCL Special Collections, University College London).

Tiampo in their discussion of the pedagogy at the Slade, the curriculum that Enwonwu was taught was based on a Beaux-Arts model, which followed a progression from drawing Antique plaster casts to life drawing, before taking up painting and sculpture at more advanced levels.⁵ This methodology stressed the superiority of European models of artmaking, both visually and ideologically, and left little space for other modes of representation. Enwonwu's response to this curriculum was one of rejection, emphasising the status of the Slade as a contact zone between imperialism and decolonisation. Enwonwu even supplemented his Slade degree with a postgraduate

year studying West African ethnography at UCL.⁶ He also later repudiated the Slade's intervention into the Nigerian art school system in 1958, when Coldstream was consulted regarding the development of art institutions in the country.⁷

When his demands were not met, Enwonwu admonished the Slade authorities for not keeping up with his success and urged them to follow more closely the careers of those whom they have trained, especially those from African countries **FIG. 2**. Enwonwu took several months to respond to Tregarthen Jenkin's answer to his letter, finally writing from his London address in October 1955. Earlier that year Enwonwu was awarded an MBE for his contributions to art and culture, and his new letterhead bears this insignia.



FIG. 3 Ben Enwonwu with Elizabeth II and his bronze statue of her at the Royal Society of British Artists, London. 1957. (Courtesy Ben Enwonwu Foundation, Lagos).

In 1956 Enwonwu was commissioned to create an official portrait of Elizabeth II **FIG. 3**. This originated with the artist himself, who contacted Alan Lennox-Boyd, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, with the intention of creating a sculpture to mark the queen's visit to Nigeria in 1956. The queen sat for him a dozen times, including at Buckingham Palace, and the bronze sculpture was completed in 1957. It was then shipped to Lagos, to be displayed at the entrance to the Nigerian House of Representatives, in preparation for independence in 1960.⁸

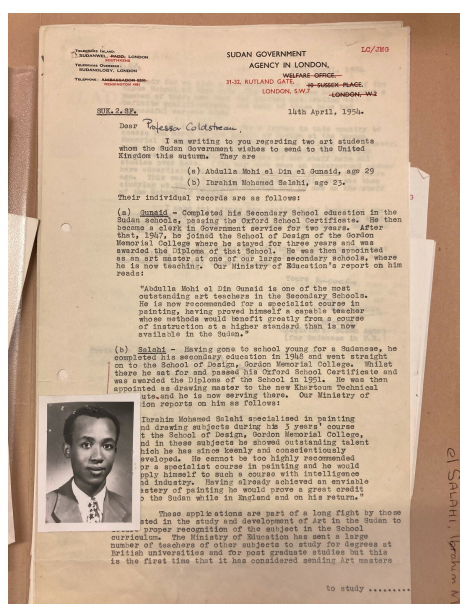


FIG. 4 Letter to William Coldstream

A year prior to Enwonwu's request to attend a refresher course at the Slade, Ibrahim Mohamed El-Salahi (b.1930; known today as Ibrahim El-Salahi), along with Abdullah Mohi Din el Gunaid, won a scholarship courtesy of the Sudanese government to study at the school for a three-year course from 1954 to 1957 **FIG. 4**.

In his application to the Slade **FIG. 5**, El-Salahi expresses his desire to study in London: 'It has always been my wish to get myself in the line of

[illegible]

A portrait painting of an elderly woman, likely a study for a larger work. She is shown from the chest up, turned slightly to her right. Her hair is dark and pulled back into a bun. She has a green collar visible under a red and green patterned jacket. The background is a solid green color. The painting style is visible, with brushstrokes and a focus on color and form.

As previously mentioned, the Slade curriculum had been based on a Beaux-Arts model, however this changed with the appointment of William Coldstream (1908–87) in 1949.¹⁰ Coldstream reorientated the school's focus towards methods of enquiry, moving away from Antique models and idealised aesthetics. Based on his experience with the Euston Road School, which sought to create works that were accessible to a larger public through observational realism and engagement with

social issues, Coldstream established an environment where representation and form were aligned with research and society.¹¹ In the wake of the Second World War, these reforms pivoted students away from the history of continental European art as the model for artmaking. They were encouraged to articulate their own vision of the world.

After graduating from the Slade in 1957, El-Salahi returned to Sudan to teach at the College of Fine and Applied Arts. He became a key member of the Khartoum School, a group of artists formed in 1961 that sought to develop a new visual vocabulary for the independent nation. Although some scholars argue that El-Salahi overthrew his academic training from the Slade, one could argue that Coldstream's example had taught him that there was more than one way to be modern.¹²



FIG. 7 *They Always Appear*, by Ibrahim El-Salahi. 1964. Oil on canvas, 610 by 460 cm. (© Ibrahim El-Salahi; Tate, London; courtesy Vigo Gallery, London; all rights reserved, DACS, London).

El-Salahi's *They Always Appear* **FIG. 7** is part of a series of eight paintings that he began in 1961. Despite complaining about 'the blazing sun' in his application to the Slade, El-Salahi adopts Sudan's sun-baked earth tones in this work. The painting combines mask-like figures, a well-known trope of artistic modernism, with the curved lines, spheres and crescents of Arabic calligraphy and Islamic art. Although El-Salahi's work fulfilled the expectations of a nationalist art in Sudan, it is a mistake to understand it purely in these terms. El-Salahi's work transcends national bounds, exemplifying a postcolonial aesthetic in dialogue with metropolitan developments, while also taking account of regional and national specificities.¹³

S Surrey Spencer	T T. J. Fehsen R. F. N. Baylton	H H. H. H. H. H. H. H. H. H. Donald Hope.	R R. H. H.
U U. H. H.	C C. H. H. C. H. H.	I I. H. H.	S S. H. H. S. H. H.
T T. H. H.	D D. H. H.	L L. H. H.	T T. H. H.
U U. H. H.	E E. H. H.	M M. H. H.	U U. H. H.
W W. H. H.	F F. H. H.	N N. H. H.	W W. H. H.

In his application to the Slade **FIG. 9** **FIG. 10**, Ntiro states that he 'did Art for the first time' while studying at Makerere University College in Kampala between 1944 and 1947. Ntiro belonged to the Chagga people, who lived on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, and his father was a coffee farmer. Ntiro completed primary and secondary education in Moshi, a municipality on the lower slopes of Kilimanjaro, before leaving the country for tertiary education in Uganda. At Makerere, Ntiro was taught by Margaret Trowell (1904–85), a Slade alumna who had established formal art education in Uganda in 1937. Upon graduation in 1947, Ntiro was invited to join the school's teaching faculty. With Trowell's encouragement, he applied to the Slade in 1951

El-Salahi and Ntiro were classmates of the Portuguese-born artist Paula Rego (1935–2022). In 1954 they competed against each other in the Slade's Summer Composition Competition. Rego's painting *Under Milk Wood* FIG. 11 won joint first prize with works by Patricia Gerrard (1935–2000) and Margaret J. Rees. In 1954–55, Rego also shared the prize for a painting of a head with the Chinese artist Tseng Yu (b.1923). Like Rego, Gerrard FIG. 12 and Rees FIG. 13 depicted passages from *Under Milk Wood* by Dylan Thomas, which was first broadcast as a radio play in the same year as the competition. In addition to *Under Milk Wood*, students had the option of choosing from either the biblical scene of Jesus raising Jairus's daughter or the myth of Apollo and Daphne from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. As a student of Trowell, Ntiro would have been familiar with the representation of biblical scenes, as his former teacher believed in spreading the gospel through visual arts.¹⁴ Ntiro often portrayed these Christian themes in an African setting. Only the winners of

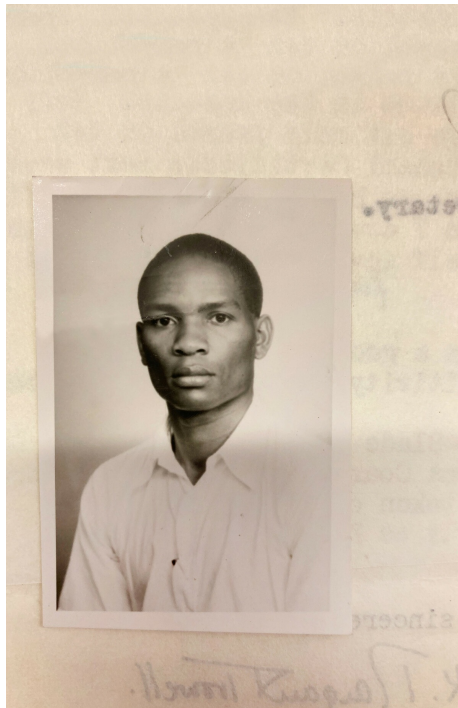


FIG. 9 Photograph of Sam Ntiro included in his application to the Slade School of Fine Art, London. 22nd November 1951. (UCL Special Collections, University College London).

the Slade prize system were acquired by the UCL Art Museum, London, so it is only possible to speculate on the work submitted by other students.

FACULTY OF ARTS
SLADE SCHOOL OF FINE ART
Application for Admission
PART TWO

N.B. You are asked to complete one copy only of PART TWO and to return it together with two copies of PART ONE to the Secretary, The Slade School of Fine Art, University College London, Gower Street, W.C.1.

You are asked to give here a short account of yourself and of your activities and special interests both in and out of school. You should add anything about yourself which you may feel to be of general interest.

NAME (in full) Mr. SAM JOSEPH NTIRO.
(Give whether Mr., Mrs. or Miss.)

I am a Chaga from Kilindinyo, Tanganyika. My father has 8 children and I am the first-born. My father is a coffee farmer. Having had my primary education in two schools I went to B.L.S. (Secondary School) where I spent one year before I came to Makerere College. I did not for the first time when I came to Makerere. My interest in Art was not kindled as I did more painting & modelling during my last year. I did more Art than before while working for my diploma in Education. I then started working in the Art School as a junior member of the staff.

During the last year I exhibited my work in England in a lecture. ~~After that I spent my time~~ I have been commissioned by the architect, Dr. C. May, to paint a mural in 5 panels on a large assembly hall being built in Tanganyika.

Most of my work hours are spent in sketching, gardening, playing on the piano, singing and reading. I read novels, biographies, plays, poetry, history, journals and any books with interesting accounts about people of other countries.

On my return from England I wish to take part in the development of East Africa as a whole through my work & other opportunities. In future development the initiative must come from the willingness of the educated young to co-operate with the world. I hope to help in the development of African Art through my own painting and my part on the staff of the Makerere College School of Art.

ATTACHED

NTIRO Sam Joseph

FIG. 10 Sam Ntiro's application to the Slade School of Fine Art, London. 22nd November 1951. (UCL Special Collections, University College London).



FIG. 11 *Under Milk Wood*, by Paula Rego. 1954. Oil on canvas, 109.3 by 109.3 cm. (UCL Art Museum, London).



FIG. 12 *Welsh Interior (Under Milk Wood)*, by Patricia Gerrard. 1954. Oil on hardboard, 91.5 by 122 cm. (UCL Art Museum, London).



FIG. 13 *Under Milk Wood*, by Margaret J. Rees. 1954. Oil on canvas, 102.3 by 127.7 cm. (UCL Art Museum, London).

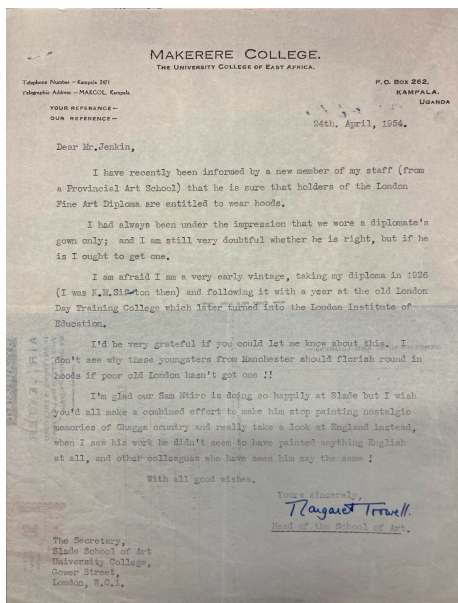


FIG. 14 Letter to I.E. Tregarthen Jenkin from Margaret Trowell. 24th April 1954. (UCL Special Collections, University College London).

On 24th April 1954 Trowell wrote to Tregarthen Jenkin **FIG. 14**, commenting on Ntiro: 'I'm glad our Sam Ntiro is doing so happily at Slade but I wish you'd make a combined effort to make him stop painting nostalgic memories of Chagga country and really take a look at England instead, when I saw his work he didn't seem to have painted anything English at all, and other colleagues who have seen him say the same!'. Ntiro's favoured subject matter was scenes of everyday life in Chagga country. Based on this choice, there was an assumption that the artist's references were limited to this world. On the occasion of Ntiro's debut show at

Piccadilly Gallery, London, in 1955, the British press celebrated him for having been 'untouched' by his exposure to Western art education.¹⁵ The artist was praised for his 'obstinate refusal to pick up painterly hints from Western civilisation. He could have

easily done so and it would have destroyed him as an artist'.¹⁶ On the contrary, Ntiro only started to paint Chagga country in Kampala under the training of Trowell and subsequently in London at the Slade, collapsing the easy divide of 'West' and 'non-West' sought by critics. Moreover, in adopting painting to his own ends, Ntiro deliberately subverted the history and connotations of this long-standing 'Western' medium.

While at the Slade, Ntiro travelled to Italy and France, exposing himself to centuries of Western art history. In Paris, Ntiro sent a postcard to Coldstream FIG. 15, followed up by a letter on 26th April 1954, in which he stated: 'On the whole I liked the pictures in the French Impressionist Gallery best, especially H. Rousseau, Renoir and Van Gogh'. Ntiro described being 'completely captivated' by two paintings: *The martyrdom of St Sebastian* by Piero del Pollaiuolo (after 1475; National Gallery, London) and *Joseph the Carpenter* by Georges de La Tour (1642; Musée du Louvre, Paris). Indeed, the illumination of the candle in the latter work brings to mind Ntiro's later renderings of Chagga country by firelight.

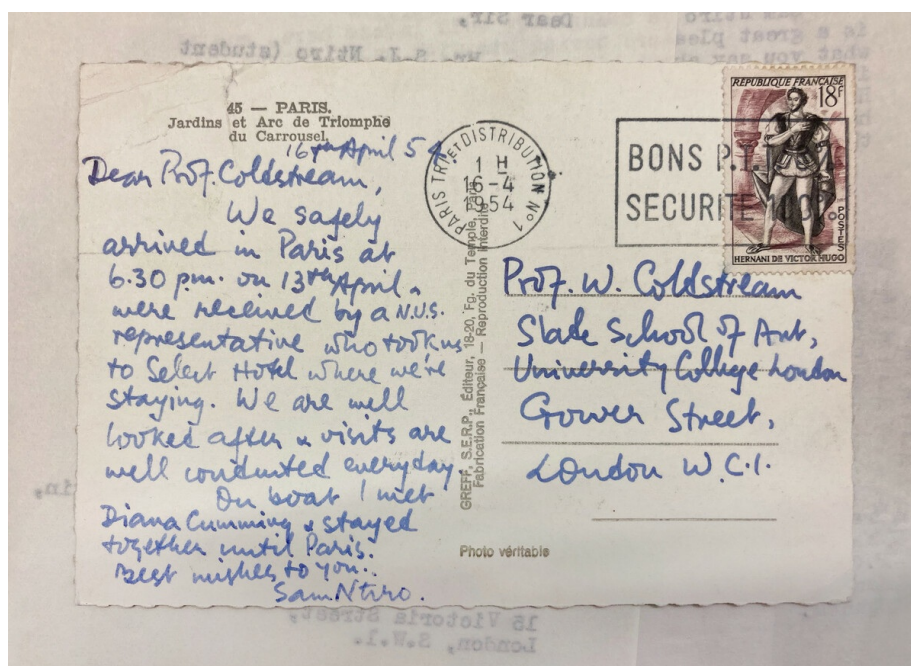


FIG. 15 Postcard to William Coldstream from Sam Ntiro. 16th April 1954. (UCL Special Collections, University College London).

Ntiro was commissioned to create three paintings for the 1962 opening of the new Commonwealth Institute building on Kensington High Street, London. The resultant works – *Banana Harvest* FIG. 16, *Village Gathering* FIG. 17 and *Cattle Drinking* FIG. 18 – create a subversive vision of the Commonwealth for British audiences, one premised on Tanzanian self-government. There is a sense that for colonial, and subsequently postcolonial artists, the Western construct of the nation state mattered up until its achievement, i.e. the attainment of an independent state free from foreign rule,

and yet it endures as the interpretative frame of art history. Upon graduation in 1955, Ntiro returned to teach at Makerere University College, leading classes on perspective.¹⁷ Writing to Tregarthen Jenkin on 16th October 1958, Ntiro expressed his hopes for self-government. He also responded to an inquiry about the Capricorn Africa Society, stating: 'You asked me about Capricorn Africa Society. It is regarded by Africans in East Africa as a means of pacifying Africans and keeping from attaining self-government'. The society was founded in Southern Rhodesia in 1948 by David Stirling, a Scottish officer in the British Army and the founder of the Special Air Service. Led by Europeans, the group believed that the countries of southern and eastern Africa could prosper if all races shared common loyalty to their countries, one based on belief in a shared future. Their proposals were rejected by white settler opposition and the rising tide of African nationalism to which they objected.¹⁸ After Tanzania gained independence in 1961, Ntiro returned to London to serve as the first East African High Commissioner to the Court of Saint James in London from 1961 to 1964.



FIG. 16 *Banana Harvest*, by Sam Ntiro. 1962. Acrylic on canvas, 120 by 120 cm. (Bristol Museum and Art Gallery).

Of note in the paintings made for the Commonwealth Institute is the attention to detail Ntiro paid to the flora and fauna of Chagga

country. Calling to mind Ntiro's reference to Rousseau in his 1954 letter to Coldstream, his plants are rendered with an intricate care for botany. He appears to use a variety of brushes and strokes to depict the leaves on the trees, varying from bulbous and round to loose and wispy. Contrary to the impression of Trowell and British critics, Ntiro adopted the techniques of Western painting to preserve his memories of Chagga country.¹⁹



FIG. 17 *Village Gathering*, by Sam Ntiro. 1962. Oil on canvas, 120 by 120 cm. (Bristol Museum and Art Gallery).



FIG. 18 *Cattle Drinking*, by Sam Ntiro. 1962. Oil on canvas, 120 by 120 cm. (Bristol Museum and Art Gallery).

The Egyptian artist Menhat Helmy (1924–2005) studied at the Slade from 1952 to 1955. Her classmates included El-Salahi, Ntiro and Rego. Her work *Landscape* FIG. 19 was awarded the prize for etching and engraving in the 1954–55 session alongside a print by the British artist Michael Tyzack (1933–2007) FIG. 20. With Tyzack and Helmy's similar treatment of plants, it is easy to imagine these works being completed in the same classroom.

After receiving her diploma FIG. 21, Helmy returned to Egypt. Through her newly developed skills in etching honed at the Slade, she documented the changes in the country spurred by the Egyptian Revolution of 1952 and the ascent of the Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. One of Helmy's etchings depicts the construction of the Aswan High Dam FIG. 22.

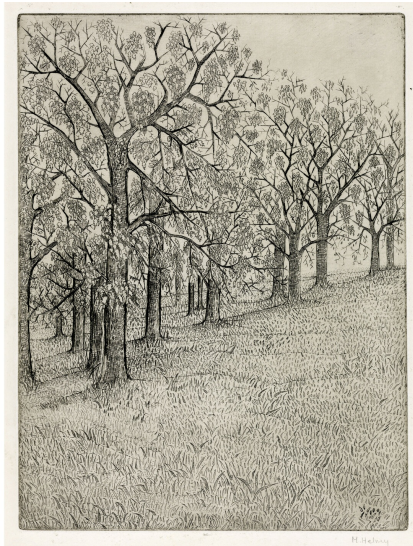


FIG. 19 *Landscape*, by Menhat Helmy. 1954–55. Etching, 24.4 by 18.2 cm (platemark). (UCL Art Museum, University College London).



FIG. 20 *Still-life with tulips*, by Michael Tyzack. 1955. Etching, 19.9 by 10.1 cm (platemark). (UCL Art Museum, University College London).

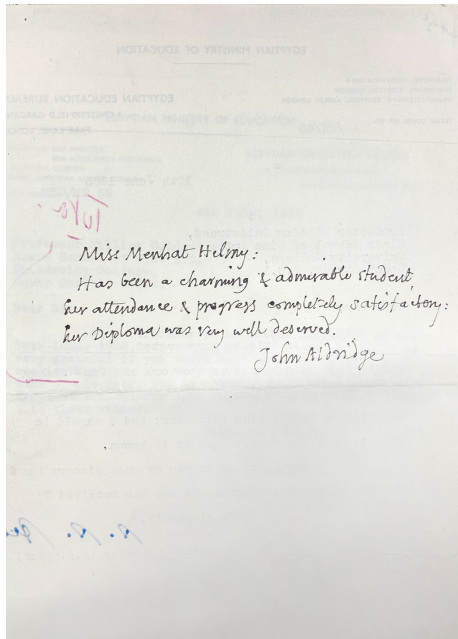


FIG. 21 Note from the Slade School of Fine Art tutor John Aldridge commending Menhat's work and the achievement of her diploma. 1955. (UCL Special Collections, University College London).

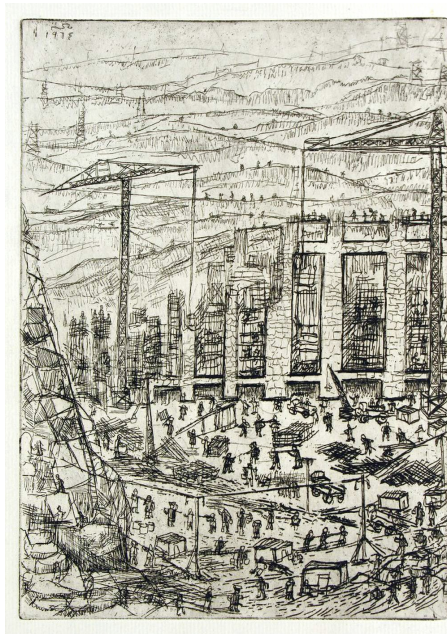


FIG. 22 *High Dam: The Deal*, by Menhat Helmy. 1964. Etching on zinc paper, 17.5 by 24.5cm. (Private collection).

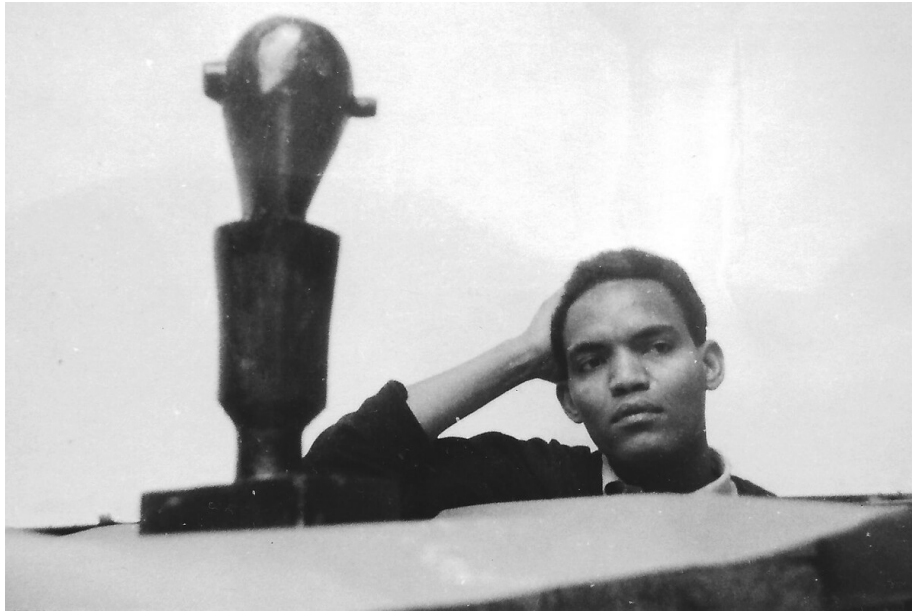


FIG. 23 *Self-portrait at the Slade School of Fine Art*, by Amir Nour. 1962. Black-and-white photograph. (© ARS, New York and DACS, London; Sharjah Art Foundation).

Supported by a grant from the Sudanese government, Amir Nour (b.1939) studied at the Slade for a Diploma in Fine Art between 1959 and 1962 **FIG. 23**. In his application, Nour states that he wished to see the wider world, 'a world of Michael Angelo [*sic*], Rodin and Henry Moore'. One of the referees for his application was El-Salahi.



FIG. 24 *Landscape: Black and White*, by Amir Nour. 1961. Lithograph, 35.3 by 48.2 cm. (© ARS, New York and DACS, London; UCL Art Museum, University College London).

Although Nour specialised in sculpture under the Slade tutor Reg Butler (1913–81), he also excelled in printmaking **FIG. 24**, winning the

prize for lithography in the session of 1961–62. He petitioned to remain at the Slade for a further year after taking his diploma, but his request was rejected by the Sudanese government.

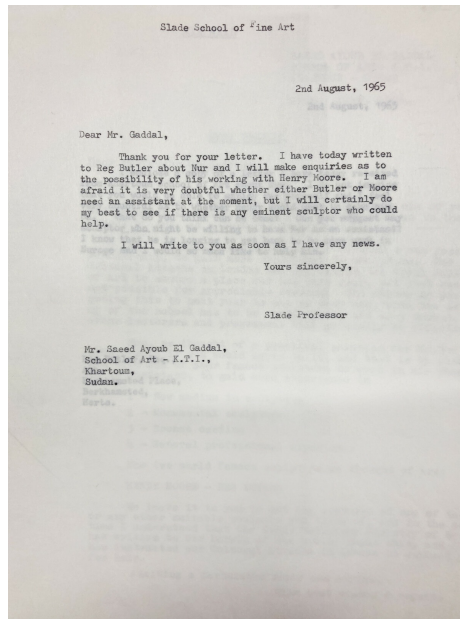


FIG. 25 Letter to Saeed Ayoub El Gaddal from William Coldstream. 27th July 1965. (UCL Special Collections, University College London).

After graduation, Nour returned to Khartoum to teach for three years before he was awarded a one-year scholarship by the Sudanese government for postgraduate work. Nour wanted to study at the Slade, but the school did not yet offer a postgraduate course in sculpture and bronze casting. An alternative was proposed for Nour to seek out professional experience with either Butler or Moore **FIG. 25**. Instead, he completed a postgraduate course in sculpture at the Royal College of Art from 1965 to 1966.

In 1967 Nour was awarded a Rockefeller Fellowship to study at Yale University where he completed a two-year BFA

course before moving onto the one-year MFA degree. At Yale, Nour continued to take classes in Western art theories and philosophies while expanding his studies in African and Islamic art.²⁰ African and Islamic art had been absent from the curricula at the College of Fine and Applied Arts in Sudan as well as at the Slade. As Nour recalled:

The first time I heard any formal lectures on African art, particularly Yoruba art, was at Yale University in 1967. To learn about African art in a context other than ‘primitive art’ had a significant impact on me [...] It was inspirational to hear Professor Robert F. Thompson lecturing on Yoruba art.²¹

This telling account of a Sudanese artist exposed to the study of African art only in the United States speaks to the complexities of lives lived and subsequently reduced by the categories of art history, which supposes innate knowledge on behalf of the artists. Nour was also exposed to Minimalism and its debates as part of a larger discussion emerging at the time around the work of such artists as Carl Andre (b.1935), Dan Flavin (1933–96), Donald Judd (1928–94), Sol LeWitt (1928–2007) and Robert Morris (1931–2018).²

During his third year at Yale, Nour wrote to Coldstream on 6th March 1969 **FIG. 26**, expressing a sense of frustration with identity-based understandings of his work. He stated: 'the important consideration now is to further the development of my work beyond the boundaries of nationalism or race'. He described his plans to stay in the West, declaring that 'Sudan lacks an intellectual art life'. Over the course of the following years, Nour would request several references from Coldstream as he applied for teaching posts at various institutions in the United Kingdom and the United States.

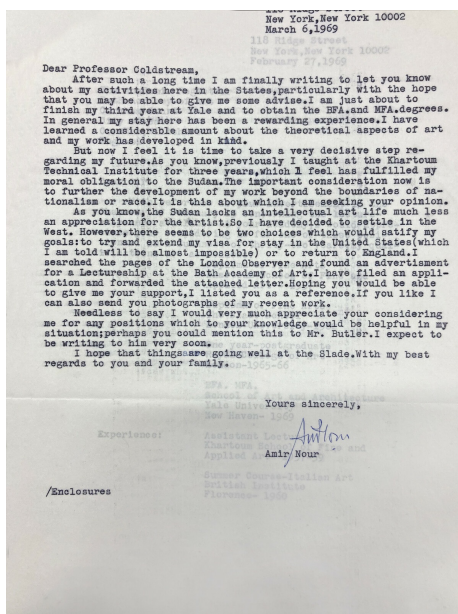


FIG. 26 Letter to William Coldstream from Amir Nour. 6th March 1969. (UCL Special Collections, University College London).

Nour eventually found success teaching 'African Art History' at the City Colleges of Chicago **FIG. 27**. He was encouraged to pursue this area of research by the College of Fine and Applied Arts and applied to join the African Department at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. In Chicago, Nour benefited from artistic exchange with the African Commune of Bad Relevant Artists (AfriCOBRA), a collective made up of artists who had found a new resonance in their African ancestral heritage following the global decolonisation movement, as well as with other sculptors, such as Richard Hunt (b.1935) and Melvin Edwards (b.1937).²³

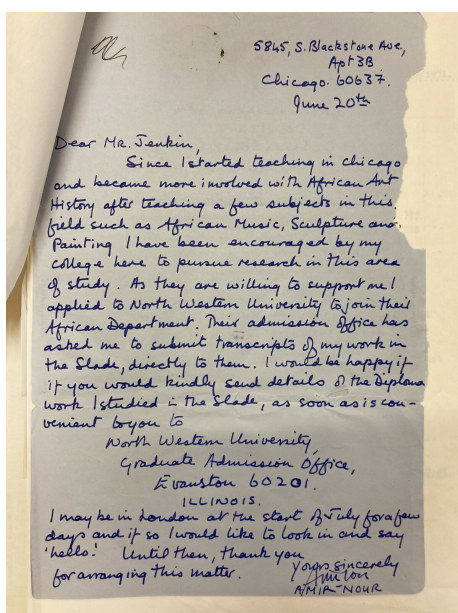


FIG. 27 Letter to I.E. Tregarthen
Jenkin from Amir Nour. 20th June
1972. (UCL Special Collections,
University College London).



FIG. 28 *Grazing at Shendi*, by Amir Nour. 1969. Steel, 305 by 406 cm. (© ARS, New York and DACS, London; courtesy Sharjah Art Foundation).

In the 1969 letter addressed to Coldstream, Nour expressed a desire for his work to escape the confines of nationalism and race. An artist who straddled multiple worlds, Nour appears to have been met with a limited capacity for understanding the transnationalism of his work at the time – a limitation that arguably still affects the contextualisation of his work. In 1974 Nour was interviewed by *Africa Report* and photographed alongside his stainless-steel sculpture *Grazing at Shendi* **FIG. 28**, which comprises 202 semicircles of varying sizes. The work is based on the artist's childhood memories of watching sheep graze on the hillside near his hometown of Shendi, an ancient city on the bank of the Nile River. In the interview, the reporter immediately attempts to situate Nour's work in an African context to which the artist responds: 'That's a difficult question; I really can't answer that'. Conversely, when *Grazing at Shendi* was first exhibited the critical reaction deemed it 'too Western' for an artist of African descent.²⁴

Nour lamented being labelled as 'Western', noting that Western artists who borrowed from African art were never labelled as 'African'.²⁵ In reality, *Grazing at Shendi* is a work that transcends these cultural distinctions: it is based on the domes and arches, cattle horns, calabashes and sand hills of Nour's homeland and combined with the visual vocabulary and materials of Minimalism. To adopt the headline from *Africa Report*, the case of Nour demonstrates the entangled 'place of the African artist' and the ways in which these labels derived from national and continental

frameworks obfuscate more than they reveal about artmaking and identity formation – both then and now.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, London, for funding this research.

Footnotes

- 1 See, for example, A. Kwami: *Kumasi Realism, 1951–2007: An African Modernism*, London 2013; C. Okeke-Agulu: *Postcolonial Modernism: Art and Decolonisation in Twentieth-Century Nigeria*, Durham and London 2015; and E.W. Giorgis: *Modernist Art in Ethiopia*, Athens OH 2019. Elizabeth Harney similarly takes aim at the tight nationalist focus of modernisms; see E. Harney: 'Constellations and coordinates: repositioning postwar Paris in stories of African modernisms', in *idem* and R.B. Phillips, eds: *Mapping Modernisms: Art, Indigeneity, Colonialism*, Durham and London 2018, pp.304–34.
- 2 L. Bruchet and M. Tiampo: 'Slade, London, Asia: contrapuntal histories between imperialism and decolonization 1945–1989 (Part 1)', *British Art Studies* 20 (July 2021), doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-20/tiampobruchet/000.
- 3 See O. Oguibe: *The Culture Game*, Minneapolis 2004.
- 4 See C. Grant and D. Price: 'Decolonizing art history', *Art History* 43 (January 2020), pp.8–66, doi.org/10.1111/1467-8365.12490; and H. Copeland, H. Foster, D. Joselit and P.M. Lee: 'A questionnaire on decolonisation', *October* 174 (Fall 2020), pp.3–125, doi.org/10.1162/octo_a_00410.
- 5 See Bruchet and Tiampo, *op. cit.* (note 2).
- 6 S.O. Ogbachie: *Ben Enwonwu: The Making of an African Modernist*, Rochester NY 2008, p.84.
- 7 Coldstream was often consulted by colonial universities when they sought new faculty. Enwonwu wrote to Coldstream in his role as an art supervisor in Nigeria's Information Services Department, taking umbrage at his plans. He believed that the Western system of art education was not helpful to Nigeria's rebirth. See Bruchet and Tiampo, *op. cit.* (note 2); and letter to William Coldstream from Ben Enwonwu, 24th September 1958, UCL Special collections, University College London.
- 8 For an analysis of Enwonwu's sculpture of Elizabeth II see Ogbachie, *op. cit.* (note 6), pp.132–41.

- 9 See A. Malik: 'Transnational Slade: Ibrahim El-Salahi', Slade Archive Project (17th June 2014), available at blogs.ucl.ac.uk/slade-archive-project/2014/06/17/transnational-slade-ibrahim-el-salahi, accessed 26th October 2022.
- 10 See Bruchet and Tiampo, *op. cit.* (note 2).
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 See, for example, I. Dadi: 'Ibrahim El Salahi and calligraphic modernism in a comparative perspective', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 109 (2010), pp.555–76, doi.org/10.1215/00382876-2010-006. The present author borrows here from Courtney J. Martin, who argues for the significance of Coldstream to the Pakistani artist Anwar Shemza: 'The Euston Road example would also have showed Shemza that there was more than one way to be modern'; see C.J. Martin: 'Anwar Jalal Shemza's art world in London: 1956–60', in I. Dadi, ed.: *Anwar Jalal Shemza*, London 2015, pp.26–31, at p.28.
- 13 See Dadi 2010, *op. cit.* (note 12); and S.M. Hassan: *Ibrahim El-Salahi: A Visionary Modernist*, London 2013.
- 14 On Trowell's curriculum, see E. Wolukau-Wanambwa: 'Margaret Trowell's school of art, or how to keep the children's work really African', in A.M. Kraehe, R. Gaztambide Fernández and S.B. Carpenter II, eds: *Palgrave Handbook on Race and the Arts in Education*, London 2018, pp.85–101. Whereas Wolukau-Wanambwa contends that Trowell's pedagogy propagated colonial subject formation, the present author believes that this line of argument overlooks the agency and subjectivity of her pupils, including Ntiro.
- 15 E. Newton: 'Sam Ntiro exhibition', *The Guardian* (18th November 1964).
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 M. Pissarra: 'Re/writing Sam J Ntiro: challenges of framing in the excavation of a "lost" pioneer', *Third Text Africa* 4 (2015), pp.25–60, at p.30, available at asai.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Rewriting-Sam-J-Ntiro, accessed 5th November.
- 18 See R. Hughes: *Capricorn: David Sterling's Second African Campaign*, New York and London 2003; and C. Gabay: *Imagining Africa: Whiteness and the Western Gaze*, Cambridge 2018, pp.144–81.
- 19 On the role of memory in Ntiro's practice, see G. Nugent: 'Memories of Chagga Country: Sam Ntiro', *post* (23rd March 2022), available at post.moma.org/memories-of-chagga-country-sam-ntiro, accessed 28th October 2022.
- 20 S.M. Hassan: 'Brevity is the soul of wit: Amir Nour between Minimalism and Africanism', *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art* 41 (November 2017), pp. 84–107, esp. p.87, doi.org/10.1215/10757163-4281788.

- 21** A. Nour: 'Developing African art: innovation and tradition seen through the work of two artists: Lamide Fakaye and Ahmed Shibrain', unpublished PhD thesis (University of St Andrews, 2006), pp.xv-xvi.
- 22** Hassan, *op. cit.* (note 13), p.95.
- 23** *Ibid.*, p.90.
- 24** *Ibid.*, p.98.
- 25** *Ibid.*, p.98.

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