

**SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND THE UGANDAN HAUTE COUTURE VISUAL
AESTHETIC: ARTICULATING THE CONTEMPORARY VALUE OF PAST
TRADITIONS**

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Declaration

I Nakisanze Sarah, declare that the contents of this dissertation represent my own work, and that the dissertation has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of Makerere University.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my children, Serunkuuma Solomon, Nalugwa Emmanuella, and nephew Zenda Mugwanya whose presence in my life has kept the fire burning, and to my Parents Justina and Scofield Muyingo who nurtured me to what I am today.

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DECLARATION.....	II
APPROVAL BY SUPERVISORS.....	III
COPYRIGHT STATEMENT	IV
DEDICATION.....	V
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	VI
ABSTRACT.....	XIII
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY.....	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.2 FRAMING THE CONTEXT.....	8
1.2.1 <i>The Perspective of the Late 20th and Early 21st Century Modernism in Uganda</i>	9
1.2.2 <i>Past Traditions and the Art Workshops: Globalization and Sustainability</i>	14
1.2.3 <i>Fashion Movements in Uganda: The Kings Dress Garb, Modernity, Globalization and the African-ness, the Gomesi Trend, Sustainability, and the Nationalism Agenda</i>	16
1.2.4 <i>The African Traditional Aesthetic Turns International</i>	30
1.2.5 <i>Ugandan Haute Couture Aesthetic in the 21st Century</i>	33
1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.....	40
1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	41
1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES.....	41
1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	42
1.7 RATIONALE.....	42
1.8 SIGNIFICANCE.....	42
1.9 SCOPE OF STUDY.....	455
1.10 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	46
1.11 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS	50
CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW	51
2.0 INTRODUCTION	51
2.1 PAST TRADITIONS REINVENTIONS: RELATING TO SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY.....	51
2.1.1 <i>Past Traditions through Piety: Articulating Social Cohesion and Participation</i>	52
2.1.2 <i>THE EVOLVING PAST TRADITIONS: NURTURING WELLBEING, EQUITY AND SOCIAL COHESION</i>	55
2.1.3 <i>Experiential Knowledge, Traditional Knowledge and Skills towards Equity, Wellbeing and Sustainability Awareness</i>	59
2.2 FASHION AS A VISUAL LANGUAGE.....	63
2.2.1 <i>The Concept Haute Couture in the Contemporary Fashion Discourse</i>	64
2.2.2 <i>Mellisa Smith's Semiotic Scrutiny of Elsa Schiaparelli's Couture</i>	64
2.2.3 <i>Susan Earle's Semiotics Shadow in Mimi Smith's Couture</i>	66
2.2.4 <i>Jarred Johnson's Merger of the Constructionist and Transportation Theory of Meaning</i>	67
2.2.5 <i>Victoria Rovine and Strangelove's SaartjeBaartman Icon</i>	69
2.3 PAST TRADITIONS REINVENTION: A 21 ST CENTURY CULTURE AESTHETIC	71
2.3.1 <i>Past Traditions Reinventions for the Globalized Space</i>	71
2.3.2 <i>Reinventing the Past Traditions towards Preservation for Contemporary Relevance</i>	74
2.3.3 <i>The African Past as a 21st Century International Fashion Aesthetic</i>	75
2.4 CONCLUSION.....	77
CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY	78
3.0 INTRODUCTION.....	78
3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN.....	78
3.2 STUDY POPULATION.....	80

3.3	SAMPLE POPULATION AND STRATEGY	80
3.4	DATA COLLECTION METHODS	81
3.4.1	SECONDARY RESOURCES SURVEY	82
3.4.2	Observation	82
3.4.3	Participant Observation	83
3.4.4	Interviews	84
3.4.5	Audio, Video and Photography Recording.....	84
3.5	BIAS MANAGEMENT	85
3.6	DATA ANALYSIS	85
3.7	ETHICAL ISSUES	86
3.8	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	86
CHAPTER FOUR PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS		87
4.0	INTRODUCTION.....	87
4.1	SELECTED CONTEMPORARY UGANDAN HAUTE COUTURE SHAPED BY PAST TRADITIONS AND REPRESENT SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY	87
4.1.2	QUALITIES OF THE PAST TRADITIONS SHAPING CONTEMPORARY UGANDAN HAUTE COUTURE	97
4.2	HAUTE COUTURE SHAPED BY PAST TRADITIONS: REPRESENTING SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY.....	122
4.2.1	Reinvention and Integration of Past Traditions: Representing Cultural Vitality and Coexistence.....	123
4.2.2	Conceptual Intrigue as an Artistic Tool towards Cultural Vitality	125
4.2.3	Aesthetic Mix of Past Traditions for Cultural Diversity	126
4.2.4	Destabilizing the Past to Cultivate Social Participation	127
4.2.5	Deconstruction of Modernity's Bark-cloth Relegation: Engendering Sustainability Awareness.....	129
4.2.6	Past Traditions Restructured: A Reinterpretation of Equity and Wellbeing	132
4.3	THE REINVENTION OF PAST TRADITIONS TO SHAPE HAUTE COUTURE THAT REPRESENTS ISSUES OF SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY	133
4.3.1	Past Traditions are Inspirational: the Aesthetic Shapes Visual Art.....	133
4.3.2	Traditional Cultural Events Engender the Reinvention of Past Traditions to Shape Visual Art.....	150
4.3.3	Creative Practitioners' Networking Meetings: The Reinvention of Past Traditions	151
4.3.4	Patronage and Art Marketing Facilitating the Reinvention of Past Traditions	156
4.3.5	Past Traditions: The Contemporary Global Agenda Value Attributes	164
4.3.6	Past Traditions Deconstruct Inhibitive Narratives and Environments	169
4.3.7	Past Traditions Construct Identities in Globalized Spaces	174
4.4	CONCLUDING THE CHAPTER	178
CHAPTER FIVE ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIVE DISCUSSION		180
5.0	INTRODUCTION.....	180
5.1	PAST TRADITIONS AND SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY: ENGENDERING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE 21 ST CENTURY CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY	181
5.1.1	Past Traditions are an Inclusive and Reliable Equity Resource: A Socio- Economic Support in Contemporary Society.....	183
5.1.2	Contemporary Evolution of Past Traditions Fosters Wellbeing towards a Good Quality of People's Lives.....	187
5.1.3	Past Traditions as Creative Manifestations Engender Social Cohesion and Integration towards the Progression of Societies	192
5.1.4	The Reverence of Past Traditions: A Vehicle for Social Participation in the Globalized Contemporary Society.....	197
5.1.5	Past Traditions Provide Sustainability Awareness Pathways: Environmental Protection in the Contemporary Times.....	200
5.2	PAST TRADITIONS SHAPE HAUTE COUTURE AS SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE KNOWLEDGE	

DISSEMINATION PLATFORMS.....	204
5.2.1 <i>Past Traditions: An Inclusive Livelihood Resource (Equity)</i>	209
5.2.2 <i>My Granary My Home: Past Traditions Engender Wellbeing</i>	212
5.2.3 <i>Together It Lights (Social Cohesion)</i>	214
5.2.4 <i>Amazing Protest: Our Voices Matter (Participation)</i>	215
5.2.5 <i>The Cracked Sustainability Shield (Sustainability Awareness)</i>	217
5.3 PAST TRADITIONS: AN AGENTIAL AESTHETIC FOR CREATIVE PRACTITIONERS THE 21 ST CENTURY	220
5.3.1 <i>Past Traditions Liberate and Practitioners through Aesthetic Stimuli towards Cultivation of Creative Abilities and Capacities</i>	223
5.3.2 <i>The Traditional Aesthetic: Beyond Ethnicity towards Individual Identity and Global Positioning</i>	228
5.4 CONCLUDING THE CHAPTER	235
CHAPTER SIX STUDY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	238
REFERENCES.....	244
APPENDICES	258
APPENDIX 1: OBSERVATION GUIDE (HAUTE COUTURE ARTEFACT)	258
APPENDIX 2: OBSERVATION GUIDE (FIELD SITES)	259
APPENDIX 3: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION GUIDE	260
APPENDIX 4: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE SELECTED FASHION DESIGNER-ARTISTS ...	261
APPENDIX 5: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FINE ARTISTS USING PAST TRADITIONAL AESTHETIC..	263
APPENDIX 6: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FASHION DESIGNERS	264
APPENDIX 7: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR VISUAL CULTURE PROMOTERS AND SCHOLARS	265
APPENDIX 8: INVITATION LETTER TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY	266
APPENDIX 9: CONSENT LETTER.....	267
APPENDIX 10: LETTER TO CONDUCT FIELD RESEARCH	268
APPENDIX 11: INTRODUCTORY LETTER TO UVADA	269
APPENDIX 12: DATA ANALYSIS EXAMPLE DATA CODE ASSIGNMENT AND CODE CATEGORY	270
IDENTIFICATION BY COLOUR.....	270
APPENDIX 13: DATA THEMES GENERATED FROM THE CODE CATEGORIES IDENTIFIED IN TABLES 3.1 ..	272

List of Figures

Figure 1.1	Chief Oliab of Acholi (1930), Photo – Courtesy of Pinterest	17
Figure 1.2	King Daudi Chwa II of Buganda [1897-1939], Photo-Courtesy of Nile Post.....	17
Figure 1.3	Nakisanze Sarah (2003). Reinvented Gomesi design [Series in cotton]. (Photograph by researcher)	20
Figure 1.4	Nakisanze Sarah (2003). Reinvented Gomesi design [Series in cotton]. (Photograph by researcher)	21
Figure 1.5	Beatrice Iga, <i>Queen of Buganda Sylvia Nagginda Wedding gown</i> Courtesy of 'How Kabaka Wooded Queen Sylvia Nagginda' by Nabbanja Rashim, (August 28 ^h 2019). [Fashion]. Retrieved from www.mywedding.co.ug	22
Figure 1.6	Samson Senkaaba (2004). Questioning the East African Union [Bark-cloth and Reeds] (Photography. Courtesy of Artist.	23
Figure 1.7	Mudaka Antony (2009). MTSIFA.....	25
Figure 1.8	Kyemwa Denis (2010). MTSIFA.....	25
Figure 1.9	Joyce Aisha (2015). Nkumba University.....	26
Figure 1.10	Biira Edlyna (2017) Nkumba University	26
Figure 1.11	Nabatanzi Sybella (2015). Nkumba University.....	27
Figure 1.12	Namazi Brenda (2017) MTSIFA.....	28
Figure 1.13	Nakimuli Esther (2017). MTSIFA	28
Figure 1.14	Sekigabo David (2017). MTSIFA	29
Figure 1.15	Ajilong Irene (2017). MTSIFA	29
Figure 1.16	Fabric enhanced with Metallic threads; Sequins; Studs (Photos by Researcher)	34
Figure 1.17	Synthetic fabrics, Embellished with beads and cords, Chains and studs (Photos by Researcher.....	34
Figure 1.18	Red Synthetic feathers enhanced with a cord of glitter studs; (Photos by researcher)	34
Figure 1.19	Metal plates carefully patterned on synthetic leather (Photos by researcher).....	35
Figure 1.20	Margaret Trowel School of Industrial and Fine Arts Students' fashion work, 2017 fashion Parade (Photos by researcher)	35
Figure 1.21	Kansiime Monica Kasyate (2018). Photos by Juls Photography	36
Figure 1.22	Monica Kasyate (2018). Photos by Juls Photography	37
Figure 1.23	Study Theoretical Framework	50
Figure 4.1	Atal S., (2004). <i>Uganda Martyrs</i> [Bark-cloth, palm leaves reeds, bamboo, bark-cloth beads and paper beads]. (Photo by Giulio Molfese).....	88
Figure 4.2	Atal, S., (2010). <i>Shame on You</i> [Bark-cloth, sisal, cowrie shells, razor blades, cotton yarn and sisal stringed cords]. (Photo by Farantini Lemario)	89
Figure 4.3a	Atal, S., (2006). <i>Roots</i> [Bark-cloth, cowries, paper beads and palm leaf plait trim] (Photo by ELK Arne Clausen) blades,	91
Figure 4.3b	Detail of body painting.....	92
Figure 4.4	Senkaaba, S. (2016). <i>Baroque Afrique</i> [Bark-cloth and rubber]. (Photo by David Wasswa) ..	92
Figure 4.5	Jose Hendo, (2004/5). <i>Resonance</i> [Bark-cloth]. (Photo by Jan Donahue and Dale Rollings)	94
Figure 4.6	Jose Hendo, (2014). <i>Contact Deep</i> [Bark-cloth]. (Photo by PLitz).....	94
Figure 4.7	Jose Hendo, (2014). <i>Spontaneous</i> [Bark-cloth and silk]. (Photo by Bojider Chkorev and Giulio Molfese)	95

Figure 4.8	Sanaa Gateja (2004). <i>Poncho Dress Detail</i> [Bark-cloth, Paper beads, Raffia]. Right: Collected by the Uganda Museum in 2007. (Photo by researcher) 96
Figure 4.9	Sanaa Gateja (2014). <i>Bead Shawl with Head gear</i> [A mixture of Bark-cloth and paper beads]. (Photo by John Collins)..... 97
Figure 4.10	Bark-cloth in natural terracotta brown (Photo by Researcher) 99
Figure 4.11	Palm leaves, coloured plaited palm leaves panels (Photo by Researcher)..... 99
Figure 4.12	Raffia fibre (Photo by Researcher)..... 99
Figure 4.13	Sisal fibre (Photo by researcher) 100
Figure 4.14	Reeds, collection of the Uganda museum (Photo by researcher) 100
Figure 4.15	Bamboo (Photo by Researcher)..... 100
Figure 4.16	Cowry Shells; Right: <i>Cowrie Collection</i> Kampala, Uganda: of the Uganda museum (Photo by researcher)..... 101
Figure 4.17	Cowry shells décor collection in the Uganda Museum, (Photo by researcher) 103
Figure 4.18	Cowry shells, in basket on the left and on head gear on the right, IHCR-MAK, 2019 (Photo by researcher)..... 103
Figure 4.19	The ‘Gomesi’ (Photo by Researcher) 105
Figure 4.20	Bark-cloth colour and pattern variations in the Uganda museum, (Photo by Researcher) 107
Figure 4.21	“Peru – Selling ponchos (blankets) ...in a native market, Cerro de, Peru” Card by Aussie-mobs (CC PDM 1.0) 108
Figure 4.22	Representation of a Zimbabwe batik wall hanging (Photo by researcher) 109
Figure 4.23	Paper beads (Photo by researcher)..... 112
Figure 4.24	Bark-cloth beads. Sanaa Gateja (Photo -Courtesy of Sanaa Gateja) 112
Figure 4.25	Mutyaba, Mark (Late 1970s). <i>Malwa Drinkers</i> [Batik]. (Photo by Wasswa Katongole)..... 135
Figure 4.26	Kabiito Richard. (1997). <i>Birds in Camouflage</i> [Mixed Media]. (Photo by Kyeyune George) 136
Figure 4.27	Rose Namubiru, Kirumira (1998). <i>Altar Table</i> [Wood & copper pipes]. (Photo by Rose Namubiru Kirumira) 137
Figure 4.28	Sengendo, Pilkington (2005). <i>Abaana n’Abazukulu Omuziro Ffumbe</i> [Oil on Board].....137
Figure 4.29	Nakisanze Sarah (2017). <i>Traditions on the Move</i> [Mixed media also including bark-cloth, paper imprinted with basketry patterns and raffia]. (Photograph by researcher) 153
Figure 4.30	Yakuze, Ivan (2006). <i>Uganda</i> [Mixed media also including Bark-cloth, cowrie shells, banana fiber, palm leaves mat swatch]. (Photography by researcher) 154
Figure 4.31	Enyonu, Pamela (2019). <i>Everyday Queens</i> [multi-media including Palm leaves mat plait panel]. (Photograph by researcher) 155
Figure 4.32	Aminata Najjingo (2019). <i>Disruption</i> [Mixed media including cowrie shells and basketry ware]. (Photo by Researcher)..... 158
Figure 4.33	Eric Tamale and the Style line Team (2019). <i>Inclusion</i> [Mixed Media]. (Photo by Researcher) 158
Figure 4.34	Kajebe, Jacob Joshua (2019). <i>Intervention</i> [Mixed media]. (Photo by Researcher)..... 159
Figure 4.35	Mugisha, Peter (2019). <i>Intervention</i> [Bark-cloth]. (Photo by Researcher) 159
Figure 4.36	Rodney Lugobe (2018). <i>The City Cleaner</i> [Mixed media]. (Photo by Researcher) 162
Figure 5.1	Nakisanze, Sarah (2020) <i>Past Traditions: An Inclusive Livelihood Resource</i> [Mixed media]. (Photo by Hector Mutebi Mulwana) 209
Figure 5.2	Nakisanze, Sarah (2020). <i>My Granary My Home: Past traditions engender Wellbeing</i> [Mixed media]. (Photo by Hector Mutebi Mulwana)..... 213

Figure 5.3	Nakisanze, Sarah (2020). <i>Together It Lights</i> [Mixed media]. (Photo by Hector Mutebi Mulwana)	214
Figure 5.4	Nakisanze Sarah (2020). <i>Amazing Protest: Our Voices Matter</i> [Mixed media]. (Photo by Hector Mutebi Mulwana)	216
Figure 5.5	Nakisanze, Sarah (2020). <i>The Cracked Sustainability Shield</i> [Mixed media]. (Photo by Hector Mutebi Mulwana).....	219

Abstract

The stride backwards to move forward exhibited by contemporary Ugandan haute couture artefacts amidst modern fashion aesthetic innovations, has repositioned past traditions as constructive in the contemporary 21st century. The study argues that traditional cultural heritage aesthetic is imbued with value that instigates contemporary society to persistently reinvent and reconstruct itself. The aesthetic has shaped haute couture artefacts into socially constructive objects representing the global and current notion of social sustainability. However, Scholarly literature on African fashion and dress does not articulate Ugandan haute couture in this global value reach. The interrogation of nine Ugandan contemporary haute couture shaped by past traditions, aimed at generating insight into the contemporary and global manifestation of a local and past traditional aesthetic. The process motivated the emergence of a discourse that articulates the nexus between haute couture, past traditions and social sustainability in the 21st century.

Data for this study was attained, mainly underpinned by the theoretical grounding of the ‘Circuit of Culture’ supported by Shils’ Theory of tradition, Ferdinand Saussure’s ‘Constructionist theory of representation’, Baudrillard’s ‘Liberation of the Object’ and Pierre Bourdieu’s ‘Theory of Practice’. The process was guided by the Focused Ethnography research design supported by a narrative inquiry. Through a qualitative examination, the cultural trajectory of nine haute couture artefacts revealed that: the haute couture are a contemporary visual aesthetic shaped by an evolutionary traditional cultural heritage that is embodied with ecological, socio-cultural and economic significance; secondly, that through creative and innovative reinvention and disposition of selected traditional cultural heritage materials, the haute couture artefacts were transformed into a visual language representing the notion of social sustainability; lastly that the reinvention of past traditions has been influenced by the constructive nature of the traditional aesthetic, the contemporary discourse of sustainable development, and the dynamics of globalization. The study interpreted these findings to mean that: Past traditions are an engender of sustainable development, meeting Sustainable Development Goals 8, 12 and 16; that haute couture shaped by societies’ traditional cultural heritage aesthetic is an inclusive knowledge dissemination platform; and that the traditional aesthetic is an agential tool that facilitates creative practitioners to negotiate contemporary global society dynamics.

The study has contributed original knowledge in various ways: First, it has articulated how the past traditions work in the 21st century, and enriched scholarship on African fashion with a Ugandan perspective. Secondly, it has established the social sustainability conceptual framework through which creative practitioners contribute to the sustainable development agenda. The framework also asserts social sustainability as the ideological structure for the inclusion of community social aspects in the global discourse. Thirdly, the study has demystified the Western world aura of the haute couture fashion genre, locating it as a socially inclusive knowledge publication platform. Fourth, it has remodelled the ‘Circuit of Culture’ theory, by supporting its tenets with other theories when applied to explore the cultural trajectory of a visual aesthetic in the contemporary 21st century. Lastly, it has been established that a creative practical engagement can support a meaning making argument during data interpretation within a study of visual art as a language. As such, the traditional aesthetic has emerged as constructive and progressive facilitating sustainable existence in the 21st century. It should thus be protected and archived for present and future use, and its value repeatedly published and pronounced such that society can embrace it towards socio-cultural and economic development.

Keywords: Past traditions; Social sustainability; Ugandan Haute couture; Fashion

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The study interrogates haute couture which exhibits Uganda's traditional cultural heritage aesthetic fused with aspects of contemporary dress to produce haute couture as a visual language representing the present-time and global notion of social sustainability. The manifestation is a significant interpretation of traditional cultural heritage as contemporary and global. The haute couture artefacts portray creative and persistent reinvention and reconstruction of contemporary society. Although reviewed literature on African fashion and dress does not exhibit Uganda in this salient global reach (Gott & Loughran, 2010; Jennings, 2011; Prince Claus Fund, 1998; L. V. Rovine, 2010), and the popular fashion scene in the country portrays a replete of foreign aesthetic notions, there is a minimal array of haute couture shaped by the aesthetic and represents aspects related to social sustainability. As such, the study claims that creatively re-enacted societies' past traditions, embody significant elements that constructively facilitate contemporary society. It argues that haute couture shaped by past traditions represents social sustainability, and the traditional aesthetic framing it embodies value relevant to contemporary society. Thus the study sought to establish haute couture embodiment of the social sustainability notion and to articulate the contemporary value of the traditional cultural heritage. Haute couture is originally a French fashion genre reinterpreted in a Ugandan context and herein shaped by the country's traditional cultural heritage. The manifestation has transformed it into a language representing the social sustainability dimension of sustainable development. A contextual detail of these three overarching notions of haute couture, past traditions and social sustainability is presented as this section unfolds.

The point of departure for the study is the selection of nine haute couture artefacts. They include: *Uganda Martyrs* (2004), *Shame on You* (2010) and *My Roots* (2006) by Stella Atal; *Baroque Afrique garb* (2016) by Samson Senkaaba popularly known as Xenson; *Resonance* (2004/2005), *Contact Deep* (2014) and *Spontaneous* (2014) by Josephine Kyomuhendo, popularly called Jose Hendo; *Poncho* (2004) and *Bead Shawls with Head gear* (2014) by Sanaa Gateja. The artefacts were selected because of their intriguing representation of aspects related to the contemporary and global notion of social sustainability, as experienced by the researcher. It is a display of a past and local expression, as contemporary and global. The study

investigation revealed that haute couture shaped by societies' traditional heritage is a visual language and thus, a socially inclusive communication platform in the globalized 21st century society. However, conscious of the researcher's subjective interpretation, and the ability of creative expressions to attain new meanings in varied cultural contexts, the study was further challenged to defend the inclusivity of the haute couture artefact as a communication tool. The argument required the support of literal articulation of implicit and procedural knowledge insights, which could only be generated by a reflective practical engagement. The researcher as a practitioner engaged in the production of haute couture shaped by traditional cultural heritage, encoded with the notion of social sustainability. The expressions supported the role of the traditional aesthetic in shaping inclusive visual language. Following is the contextualization of these key notions.

1.1.1 Contextual Definitions

Haute Couture. In its conception in France in the late 1860s, the term haute couture referred to custom-tailored clothes produced by couture houses which were certified by the Chambre Syndicate de la couture Parisienne in Paris (Gwilt, 2012). An English Fashion Designer Charles Frederick Worth (1825-1895), is largely recognised as the originator of the haute couture genre. The unique fashion design genre was characterised by highly innovative and exceptionally creative fashion artefacts identifiable with his signature (Chadwick, 2004). Labelling of the fashion object with the creator's signature set the work as exclusive with high-society value. The practice was cemented in France, situating the country as a mark of high value fashion. Welters (2011) adds that the genre is characterised by use of extraordinary and valuable fabrics, high-styling and handcraft proficiency, and the genre exclusively produced in Paris, France. However, by the turn of the century, waves of globalization spread the haute couture culture and its design approach beyond Paris restriction through the rest of the Western world and into Africa (Malcolm, 2002; Prince Claus Fund, 1998; Welters & Lithethun, 2011), The course propagated new approaches in haute couture styles that referenced new spaces, forms and ideas.

In Uganda, the haute couture notion within the conventional fashion terrain is liberated from its 19th century certification conventions, although it maintains the high-styling, handcraft proficiency and the use of unique materials. It is reinterpreted in exotic exquisite readily available fabrics majorly intended for clothing. Herein the study further liberates the haute

couture from the clothing function, reinterpreting the cultural style in a new context as a visual aesthetic. It frames haute couture as fashion exploring local traditional cultural heritage, and transformed into a language representing the global contemporary Social sustainability notion.

Haute couture as a popular culture phenomenon in the fashion domain and as a visual communication object has transcended basic representation of cultural artistry towards reinterpretation as a framework of intellectual visibility. The study claims that creatively re-enacted societies' past traditions, embody significant value for the contemporary global society. It argues that past traditions are a constructive aesthetic embodied with value that repositions contemporary society through tradition reinvention, reconstruction and transformation. As such, the study aimed at investigating the selected contemporary Ugandan haute couture artefacts that are shaped by past traditions, to establish their embodiment of social sustainability and to articulate the contemporary value embodied in the traditional aesthetic. Broadly, the study expounds the materiality discourse, articulating the valuable role of past traditions, unveiled through the social sustainability pillar of sustainable development. The study responds to the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) global agenda where culture attained a pivotal role in the development of society. At this point it is also crucial to understand the technical application of the term 'value' herein contained in the traditional aesthetic. Following is the contextualization of all significant terms used in the study, unveiled with the value terminology.

Value. Dragouni & Fouseki (2018) have defined value as that element of usefulness or importance inscribed on things or persons. (Mason 2002) also defined the term as socially constructed meanings and as actual or potential qualities attached to heritage assets. The two definitions support the study context and therefore, frame contemporary value as the importance of the socially constructed meanings of the revalued and reinvented past traditions, and the embodied attributes that are constructively pragmatic in contemporary global society. The study also analyzes contemporary global society through an object-trajectory that springs from the last decade of the 19th century into the millennium present times. Notably, the path of the object is carrying a temporal aspect from a previous century. Similarly, Smith (2010) cautions that although the word contemporary is popularly used to refer to the present, it is also variedly applied to mean modern, and same time, age or period. So, with such a manifestation, particular definition of the term contemporary was necessary. Considering significant study aspects, the term 'contemporary' will refer to the period encompassing the root located from

the last decade of the 19th century until the present times of the 21st century. So, the studied period will be referred to interchangeably as the contemporary, Contemporary 21st century or the present.

It is also worth noting that the manifestation of a society within that contemporary temporal is characterized by increased human interconnection, the impact of technological innovation, changing human ways of living, and, the magnitude of anthropological and ecological change, a phenomenon referred to as globalization. The notion has also been referred to politically, socially and economically but here critical attention is inclined to the socio-cultural although it is seemingly powered by the political and economic aspects (Hong & Cheon, 2017; Dimova & Gillen, 2017 and (Obioha, 2010). Indeed, the various nuances and interpretations reveal interaction and integration of people and nations into a common system (Obioha, 2010), which is as a result of the worldwide flow of information, capital, people, goods, services and cultures aided by technology. Therefore, for this study, *globalization* or the *global* affiliation is understood as a process that has linked people, goods, services and cultures of varied contexts facilitated by the flow of information and people migration, towards a connectedness of the world, and eventual influence on the cultures of contemporary societies. As such and for this study, the contemporary global society is also herein referred to as the contemporary society.

Past Traditions. Past traditions referred to herein include the traditional cultural heritage material such as beliefs, practices, artefacts, claims and materials nurtured through past centuries and passed on from generation to generation. The study also embraced the meaning with Edward Shils' theoretical strand that the materials become a tradition when re-enacted by agents through a period of three generations (Shils 1981, 12-17). It is a traditional aesthetic that includes the tangible and intangible traditional material culture referred to by UNESCO (2005). 'Aesthetic' herein is also applied beyond visual beauty to encompass an understanding and experience of the nature of matter which formulates materials (materiality), and material relations - symbolic and sensory (Nijssse, 2005; Abbink, 2015 and Beckera & Schulzb, 2017). Thus, past traditions are the society's traditional cultural heritage embedded in the cultural fabric of communities, and in this study also used interchangeably as traditional aesthetic. The traditional aesthetic has been reinvented by the selected designer-artists to shape Ugandan haute couture subsequently representing issues of social sustainability in

contemporary society. Therefore, the haute couture materiality in this study is framed by a reinvented past located in a contemporary stance.

Materiality. Understanding the notion of materiality, as a concept of aesthetic, is underpinned by the 21st century ‘Material Turn’; an agency position that objects and materials have acquired in social theory, as contributors to the constructions and changes within the social worlds (Mills, 2009; Rubio & Silva, 2013 and Aditi et al., 2016). As such materiality in contemporary art study and as components through which social worlds are constituted and known, has moved beyond the physical properties of matter and contexts, to encompass connections assembled around the physical properties. That is, the spatial-temporal relations and identities that introduce the symbolic and representational meanings of materials. The contemporaneity of materiality as present time herein is underpinned by the post-modern theoretical discourse on contemporary materiality which acknowledges what Mills (2009) explains as “the relative nature of truth. Materiality provides a theoretical approach that is time and situation-based. It is a means for understanding the wide scope of contemporary art production and the function of contemporary art ...” in the 21st century. And intriguing in this study is the past traditions material aesthetic representing a trending sustainable development global agenda, social sustainability and its related dimension.

Social Sustainability. Social sustainability is one of the dimensions of Sustainable Development through which the United Nations can engage societies to change their existence approaches towards saving humanity and the environment. Other dimensions are the environmental and economic. Sustainable Development is a notion that was developed and published in “Our Common Future” by United Nations World Commission of Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987, as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The notion of sustainable development was conceived as a result of the environmental and humanity challenges of industrialization and economic growth of the early 20th Century. It dates as far back as 1962 with Racheal Carson’s ‘Silent Spring’ that enlightened the world about the interconnection between the environmental, the economic and social wellbeing (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2012).

Attention was mainly directed to the environmental and the economic dimensions of Sustainable Development neglecting the social dimension, which referred to the sustainable

continuity of man in the environment agenda. It was only in the late 1990s that the social dimension was integrated into the conversation of sustainability. Reason is attributed to the absence of sociology in professional circles and the focus on climate change and sustainability; saving endangered species and unique ecosystems (Colantonio, 2008; Murphy, 2014 and Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017). The insight on the critical need for man to exploit resources for sustenance of life while protecting the environment and reversing climate change introduced necessary change. It was the Eco-feminists, Eco-socialists and indigenous movements that shifted the narrative to incorporate the social (Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017). The narrative was an enlightenment about humanity and how vulnerable at the interface with environmental and climate externalities, coupled with eventual social polarization. The negative eventualities led to the rethinking and reverse of plans to include the social perspective.

At its conception, the social perspective seemed vague and unclear, with similar and, or interrelated individual conceptual frameworks, and scholars had not agreed upon a concrete definition of the dimension (Rasouli & Kumarasuriyar, 2016). However, the critical social sustainability discourse of the second decade of the millennium accords it a workable frame with applicable concepts. A review of six analytical literature relating to the frame, role and position of the social sustainability dimension in various contexts herein lays a foundation of contextual grounding for this study. Axelsson et al., (2013) search for the dimension identifiers deduced that social sustainability is shaped by four concepts. First is participation, portrayed through the democratic civil society, followed by living environment composed of sustainability consciousness and social cohesion. Human development as third, covers society wellbeing, and lastly equity. Murphy, (2014), on a similar footing, echoes the above concepts though bundles wellbeing with equity, and separates sustainability awareness and social cohesion. Boström et al., (2015) who focused on the nature of the dimension and its attainment process considers all the earlier mentioned concepts and emphasizes the social role of participation to the sustainability dimension. Boyer et al. (2016) analysis views the dimension through social issues considering various aspects that facilitate a community's effective interaction and relationships. Hence, equity, social cohesion and participation emerge as the valued concepts. Underpinned by the relationship between social sustainability and the wider sustainability framework, Eizenberg & Jabareen (2017) regard the dimension's frame as an integration and therefore an interrelation of all conceptual values highlighted by others, but repackaged in equity, physical safety, eco-production and consumption, and sustainable urban

forms. Lastly, Kriznik, (2018) urban development exploration regards participation and social cohesion as the two major dimensions of social sustainability.

The synthesis portrays an array of concepts with an overlap of critical social aspects that also resonate with the social elements embodied in the haute couture under exploration. As such, and in order to streamline the conceptual framework for effective contextual application, concepts with distinct social value aspects and those with a consistent conceptual pattern have been adopted. Therefore, underpinned by that establishment, this study contextualized social sustainability as the state of good quality of life enabled by constructive valuable societal relationships and good sustenance systems. The state of good quality of life is in reference to people's position in life in the context of their value systems and in relation to social welfare. As a dimension of sustainable development, it was thus viewed through five concepts namely: wellbeing, equity, participation, social cohesion and sustainability awareness. Wellbeing refers to a state of a comfortable quality of life and human development, with access to social welfare needs and desires like food, health, housing, education, safety and employment. Equity encompasses social aspects including: equal distribution of welfare goods, services and life chances recognition of different identities and consideration of human rights and social justice. Participation is the goal of including all social groups in the decision-making processes, to enhance inclusivity, cohesion and security. Social cohesion is a fundamental concept since it creates a base for all the others. It refers to development of social capital which embeds aspects of social integration, minimizing social conflict and promotes cultural vitality and diversity that enhances a sense of community belongingness to support wellbeing. Finally, sustainability awareness which is a call for social change covering aspects like sustainability awareness raising events, behavioural change towards ecological production and consumption, and environmental educational programmes.

Thus, the study asserts that the Ugandan contemporary haute couture shaped by past traditions represents the global issue of social sustainability, positing past traditions as a constructive aesthetic of contemporary cultural society. To support the assertion, the study proposed an inquiry towards insightful articulation of the value embodied in the traditional aesthetic. Articulation refers to an act of forming, organizing and giving expression to thoughts and social actions, and the ability to make connections by using language (Kortesoja, 2016). The choice is founded by Laclau and Mouffe's post-marxist discourse theory which posits that articulation is a discursive practice that fixes the free-floating signifiers to form meanings. The

inquiry was done through a method of studying the artefact frame and the disposition of the traditional aesthetic, breaking all down into comprehensible forms through analytical reasoning. The study researcher aimed at articulation of the value embodied in past traditions.

Pagán et al. (2020) and the Uganda National Cultural Policy (UNCP, 2019) define creative practice, also sometimes termed the culture or creative industry, as the non-traditional activities instigated by individual creativity, skill, and talent, with the potential to economically empower creative practitioners. They list the following sectors: advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, visual arts and crafts, design, designer fashion, film, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, Technology advancement, television and radio in close inter-relationship with tourism, hospitality, museums and galleries and the heritage sector. Some others have also referred to them as the convergence between medial information services and cultural sectors for societal development (ibid). The definitions are inclusive of what the study analysed, facilitating the construction of a working definition as those practices encompassing individually initiated creative activities that facilitate expression towards economic and socio-cultural benefits. The major study focus, the haute couture design practice belongs to this category of artistic practice, and more of which is portrayed in the following section providing the contextual setting of the inquiry. It is followed by an elaboration of the research problem and its guiding field research questions, the rationale and significance of study, scope, and finally discusses the theoretical domain underpinning the inquiry.

1.2 Framing the Context

Before the advent of modern art development in Uganda, past traditions were the creative aesthetic in Uganda for household items, human body decoration, habitat construction and warfare armoury. Historical accounts reveal that the aesthetic was introduced in the Makerere art School for visual art resource between the 1940s and the 1960s, although there was no significant impact on the nature of the art produced then (Kyeyune, 2003; Nakazibwe, 2005). The scholars attribute the lacuna to the lack of interest in the past traditional materials by the art school administrators at that time. Nevertheless, the 21st century overturned the events with a manifestation of the past traditions as a significant aesthetic in the progression of art beyond the renowned traditional art cannons into the development of a visual culture. The aesthetic contributed to the fusing of art related stereotypical binaries, such as art and craft, and

design and fine art. The account is presented under topical issues including: 1) The Perspective of the late 20th and early 21st Century Modernism in Uganda, 2) Past traditions and the Art Workshops: Globalization and Sustainability, 3) Fashion Movements in Uganda: The Kings garb, Modernity, Globalization and the African-ness, the Gomesi trend, Sustainability, and the Nationalism agenda, 4) The African Traditional aesthetic turns International, and 5) Ugandan Haute couture Aesthetic in the 21st Century

1.2.1 *The Perspective of the Late 20th and Early 21st Century Modernism in Uganda*

The late 20th and early 21st modernism in Uganda presents an array of a new art vocabulary that blurred the line between the conventional visual art and the applied design. The terrain features visual art forms examples of tapestries and fashion art, and the canonized painting and sculpture have embraced found and traditional aesthetic as subject matter and medium. Further, the artists display an assertion of their self-identity both national and artistic through their methodological and medium choices. This echoes Okeke's (2001) annotation that African modernism cannot be referred to as a show case of 20th Century European art because it is imbued with an identity of locality merged with what Enwezor (2001) refers to as features of western values of progress, originality, artistic freedom and individualism. The work is a hybrid modernity that would challenge Trowell's (1957) judgement of the East African aesthetic as a disinterested one in regard to creations of beauty and worth. The works reveal a trajectory of a blend of individual ideologies, western art educators' influence and an exploration of traditional aesthetic against the notion that the Ugandan traditional art productions lacked intellectual input.

Trowell's art foundation thread is spun beginning with the encounter of modernity values through art education in Uganda with unbalanced grounds which ironically favoured the introduction of the traditional cultural heritage as art material in Uganda. It was provoked by confusion, conflict and dependency. The eventuality was a liminal status that located a third space of enunciation through the peripheralized traditional aesthetic. Although the divergent ideologies of the colonial art educators are the major focus in enabling this eventuality as portrayed in what follows, there are other factors that have facilitated the process including: Trowell's archival of the past traditions to security in the Uganda museum, the rise of the African identity on the African continent and the shortage of art materials in Uganda during the brawny politics of the 70s and civil war of the 1980s. The modernism perspective is viewed

through two topical aspects: the Divergent Art Education Ideologies – Local Vs Colonial that nurtured agential actions, and the Local Politics that paved way for the traditional aesthetic to shape art in the 1990s.

The introduction of foreign modern visual art methodologies, instead enabled a culturally inspired visual art modernism in the assertion of an artistic agency. The colonial art educators exhibited divergent methodologies which led to a state of confusion, conflict and ambivalence. Sanyal (2000) and Kyeyune (2003) reported that although Margaret Trowell encouraged the development of Ugandan art from the traditions, her successors, Cecil Todd and Jonathan Kingdon (1959 and 1960 respectively) were not interested in her approach and dismissed it introducing the western methodologies. This act of devaluing and failure to accommodate each other's approaches seemed to have caused conflict and confusion that challenged the colonial art educators, their students and successors, further disrupting the flow of the student's learning processes. In such an environment, trust is killed and student's responses and actions to those presentations within and after school are detrimental to art development. The histories of the set of the first (1940s – 1950s) students Maloba, Ntiro and Elimo Njau who later became art instructors in the same school represent the inherited conflict and confusion. Their relations were marred with hatred, disregard and abuse of each other when some of them became instructors after the departure of their western educators.

Further, in the 1960s, the general perspective in the continent was the rise of the African-ness spear headed by the literature writers. As an art subject, it provoked the necessities of the visual arts to support the rhetoric through art. Discontented former art teachers, confused graduate artists and continuing graduate students did not miss the point. They found the content of the rhetoric and communication platforms a remedy path to the confusion, conflict and ambivalence prevailing in the art school environment. They lay in between a space of their African cultural and that of the imposed foreign art grounding structures. They joined the struggle protesting through both art and music to spread the gospel of cultural identity and the African spirit.

Kyeyune (ibid) further reports that after independence towards the 1970s, students demanded to study histories of Ugandan art instead of European art. However, their request would not be met because the teachers appeared to lack a way forward. This led to further risings and this time by younger artists Fabien Mpagi, Expedito Mwebe and Romano

Lutwaama. The frequent risings reinforced the signal of discontent. They were also fuelled by the African and national political strength of independence which was still fresh in the minds of the people. The risings were not only indicative of the absence of material culture in the local art world of study but instability in the art production systems in regard to selection of the most appropriate and therefore worthy methodology for modern art development. It therefore accounts for the ambivalent environment subjected to the students hence the urge for individual aspirations and the search for selfhood towards liberation, a position that many took at that time hence the rise in artistic liberation strategies of various forms including the use of a local material aesthetic. The negative sparks of the varying ideological challenges in the liminal space would not have flamed if they were not fuelled by some catalysts that naturally strayed in the path towards liberation from the ambivalent. A liberation in the 'third space of enunciation'. Bhabha (1994) contends that all cultural ethos is created in a "third space of enunciation" the "liminal", or "in between", and from this ambivalent stems the notion of hybrid identity. The identity was nurtured in new ways of expression, an artistic agency asserted into the third space imbued with an aesthetic appeal of wholesome freshness through subject matter and medium. It founded the Ugandan modernism of the late 20th and early 21st Century.

Trying to understand the prevalent environment, Okeke (2001) claims that the art educators were focused on fulfilling their colonial agenda, and therefore could not have impacted positively to the African modernism agenda because art education was introduced on demand by the educated Africans. That resonates with Kakande's (2008) annotation that education was a passage into the colonial capitalistic economy, using a pedagogy geared to destroy the local arts of Uganda that Trowell wanted to see embedded into Uganda's modern art. Relatedly, Trowell seemed to be tied down by her western orientation because her methodological practice betrayed her conviction in the development of a modern African Art. However, the situation contributed to the foundation of the late 20th and 21st Century African modernism rooted in a Ugandan traditional cultural heritage aesthetic revealed in the subsequent local trajectory.

The 1970s to the 1980s, saw the greatest negative effects of the colonial pedagogy. The political environment in Uganda was not conducive due to the brawny politics. The period witnessed the departure of the colonial teachers and importation of art materials for the school

became a hassle for art instructors and students (Sanyal, 2000). Further, the school was equally conflicted between the question of art and craft. The colonial pedagogy had not nurtured the use of local materials and knowledge to fill the gap of imported materials, leading to school dropouts. There was instability everywhere and the disruption of the art practice within the Makerere art school led to the decline of interest even in private studios. This evoked the struggles of the earlier explored artists: Maloba, Njau, Ntiro, Kyeyune, Kamulegeya, Mpagi, Lutwaama and Mwebe who had set an artistic liberation mark.

The young ones had watched their predecessors struggle, and seemed to roll silently and slowly gathering moss for the structures that nurtured their models had crushed but the spirit rooted in their past had been secured. And it is those very structures, the ideologies of Trowell and Todd, as lead instructors, grounded in confusion, conflict and ambivalence became the foundation for their search for a selfhood. The selfhood to determine a third space within the mix. Gidden's (1979) conception of agency through the theory of structuration, asserts the duality of structure, both inhibitive yet enabling. Indeed, as analysed above, the composition of the divergent ideologies; confusion, conflict, and ambivalence as the cause of the stagnant environment as well as the drivers to leap frog out of a challenged environment. Thus, the artists realized their own interests against the challenges; the crack in the structure revealed past traditions as the art resource readily available. With insight attained the artist's location in the field of struggle was elevated to resist confusion, ambivalence and conflict.

As such, Margaret Trowell's early 20th Century collection and storage of the Ugandan material culture will always be commendable (Nakazibwe, 2005). Although she minimally explored this material to inform art, ironically it may have been her efforts that saved the traditions from contamination and loss, and later to be valuable in the creation of Ugandan modernism and contemporary art. These past tradition artefacts, are archived in the Uganda museum in Uganda and documented in the 'The Tribal Crafts of Uganda (Margaret Trowell, 1957). The Artist in Uganda has used the material culture in order to interrogate and negotiate the mixed genres and identities prevailing on the global art terrain to establish their agency as key-players. The artworks are endowed with a cultural meaning that blurs the limitations of the existing boundaries (Zubair, 2012) and can further transcend their cultural referent and assert their space in the global village.

It was in 1978 when Francis Nnaggenda, one of the renowned Ugandan sculptors, trained in Germany joined Makerere art school that the results of agency took shape. He found the place affected by the general political, economic and educational challenges and in need of materials and teachers for continuity. Nnaggenda explored the advantage of his experiences and introduced the use of found materials and innovation (Sanyal, 2000; Kyeyune, 2003 & Nakazibwe, 2005). His swiftness and ease in embracing and manipulating new local materials for art production is indicative of a masterly of skill probably enabled by his earlier training in Germany and work away from home. He seemed to avoid the past traditional materials, possibly because of the experience and belief in the West African sculptures through his previous study and work. But his engagement manifests in the early 1990s when the Makerere art school got a glimpse of hope with the introduction of local material resource searching that equally encompassed the traditional cultural heritage resource.

Among the art educators at the school that time was Ssendo Pilkington who had earlier experienced found and cultural material exploration for art with Elimo Njau. He added his artistic touch and together with Nnaggenda's found love for tradition, material culture was developed as an aesthetic for art in the school. This led to various art works reflecting both subject matter and material culture of mainly Buganda in central where the Makerere art school is located and Southern Uganda. The restoration of the kingdom of Buganda in 1993 and other kingdoms raised the value of the traditional cultural materials further shifting especially the bark-cloth aesthetic from the coffin, revaluing it as a possibility for visual application. It was embraced by many artists in shaping (the modernisms of the centuries) a traditional art milieu. This is supported by Nakazibwe's (ibid) argument, that through art education, bark-cloth was fetishized and elevated to a fine art status because of its aesthetic qualities and its cultural significance especially in Buganda. Further still, artists at Makerere developed a sense of cultural consciousness leading to several undergraduate and postgraduate researches based on traditional material culture.

In addition, the modernisms were also enhanced by the economic environment in the world at that time where neoliberalism aroused economic innovations. The neoliberal policy that influenced the whole world beginning in the early 1970s aftermath of the economic and social crisis of capitalism (Flew, 2014), proposed that human wellbeing can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private rights, free markets and free trade (Harvey, 2005). The

Government of Uganda embraced the change coupled with the IMF's 1980s conditional lending Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) that influenced the limitation of finance in the education system of the country. The decrease in funding for higher education in Uganda in the 1990s provoked innovation in the Makerere University Art and Design School leading to the transformation and introduction of the design art forms including textiles, fashion and jewellery into expressions worthy of academic research (Mamdani, 2007). Further still in the Makerere Art School, the Bachelor of Arts in Fine Art (BAFA) programme curriculum was extensively revised in 1995 and replaced with a Bachelor of Industrial and Fine Art. The curriculum review was deemed necessary to take on board the new innovations.

With the existence of a culture traditional heritage to fall back to, students found aesthetic agency. Empowered with the acquired skills and like Kingdon observed "without censors, critics or entrepreneurs" (as cited in Kyeyune, *ibid*) the artists explored the local materials creating yet new modernisms far from the traits of Trowell and Todd. The shortage of materials in the 70s contributed to the rebirth of tradition because tradition was not taken away. Further, the cultural traditional root had not been uprooted and Trowel had equally played a big role in archiving the intangible aesthetic. In fact, Kasfir (2012) remarks that the critical lack of resources may have been a blessing for artistic development. Artists explored the material culture in the introduction of new mediums and forms of expression in the visual art terrain. Coupled with other platforms of engagement such as the Triangle workshops explored in next section, the practice of exploring the traditional aesthetic expanded beyond the borders of the Makerere art school through workshops, exhibitions and conferences as the section that follows presents.

1.2.2 *Past Traditions and the Art Workshops: Globalization and Sustainability*

Art Workshops, exhibitions and symposiums of late 20th and early 21st centuries that created an environment that led to the development of art collectives in the practice also contributed to the progression of the past aesthetic in the visual arts. Workshops referred to as formative spaces where artists converge and work following set principles. In this case, artists with differing practice, experience and backgrounds in a wide range of geographical, political and socio-economical spaces converge to work together within an artistically and socially constructed environment. The 'Triangle Arts Trust' workshops (1997-2008) are exemplified in this instance. The trust was founded by an art patron Robert Loder, who realised the need

for art in Africa and beyond to adopt a language that could tell a local story. His initiative saw three Ugandan artists participate in the workshops in Zambia, Botswana and the United Kingdom. Characterised majorly by 'Freedom of Practice' the workshops nurtured an appreciation of the past traditions as a visual aesthetic by the artists. Namubiru (2009) reports on aspects that seemingly contributed to the use of past traditions for art production in Uganda including: Artist exchanges in various spaces ranging from national, regional to international; exposed artists to local material appreciation; working from localized and away from home places challenged artists into thinking beyond the conventional. Conversations about experiences, knowledge, aspirations and focus on national, regional and international levels enlightened many about various platforms of engagement towards personal artistic growth. Lastly, the networks built exposed the artists to valuable audiences, networks and markets. One of the major outcomes of the workshops and residencies was the development of local artistic collectives in Uganda that engaged in an array of art material experimentation including the traditional aesthetic, enhanced art production, studio exhibitions and critical art talks.

Along that development of the artistic practice, the Ugandan artist did not miss out on the globalization themed trend. The workshops exposure and associated benefits that repeatedly took place in different countries were highly significant because they became interaction platforms for artists from various nations in the global south and north. The interaction nurtured artists to engage in various disciplines, material and styles, shifted the African practice into the global conversations and relayed knowledge about the art market places and dynamics (Namubiru & Kasfir, 2013) and (Forster, 2013). Although Namubiru (2009) also reports that the workshops environment did not startle some artists out of their private studio routines regarding materials, tools and styles, what the scholar referred to as 'Comfort Zone' which was one of the agenda, there was a general change in the attitude towards artists relationships and communication skills which is evident in the 'collectives' spirit that emerged within the Ugandan fine art industry later on.

Noteworthy for this study however, is that the platform encouraged the use of materials found within the workshop's geographical environment, which created a leverage to the use of societies' heritage aesthetic. The outcomes of the material manipulation empowered many to engage their own aesthetic upon return to their countries. Further, artists built relationships and joined networks that exposed them to more international fora encompassing new mediums

and styles. In addition, artists rediscovered their varied potentials in different fields of artistic practice (Foster, 2013) which further gave rise to fashion designer-artists among others as presented in what follows.

1.2.3 Fashion Movements in Uganda: The Kings Dress Garb, Modernity, Globalization and the African-ness, the Gomesi Trend, Sustainability, and the Nationalism Agenda

The consciousness of fashion in Uganda gained an international platform at the clock of the millennium, despite the prevalence of local stylistic dressing and fashion shows in the past. The millennium era increased visibility of trends and self-consciousness by society. However, creativity in the country dates as far back as man's creation and in what follows, is the trace of haute couture through history, the assertion of the Africanness, the gomesi trend, the global sustainability agenda and patriotism through dress.

The Ugandan reinterpretation of the haute couture genre beyond the restriction of its France inception as earlier seen, takes us back into history reflecting the dressing garb of the late 19th and early 20th century kings and chiefs in the country. The spectacle of the royal garbs herein exemplified by Chief Oliab of Acholi in (Fig 1.1) and King Sekabaka Daudi Chwa II [1897-1939] of Buganda (Fig 1.2) explicitly portrays that the ensemble's creation process involved highly creative styling, exclusive craftsmanship, great fabric patterning, interesting disposition of the ensemble accessories, and regarding the epoch, it was the use of distinct locally availed aesthetic. The composure of the expressions accords them elegance and a captivating stature that matches the creations of African haute couture of contemporary 21st century. We may therefore not wonder much where 21st century inspiration that echoes the past comes from.

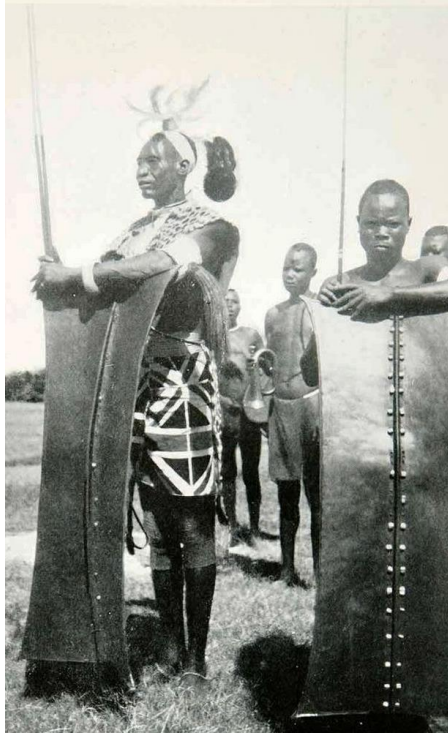


Figure 1.1
Chief Oliab of Acholi
(1930), Photo - Courtesy
of Pinterest



Figure 1.2
King Daudi Chwa II of
Buganda [1897-1939],
Photo-Courtesy of Nile
Post

Otherwise, the relegation of the traditional aesthetic at the inception of modernity in the early 20th century witnessed the introduction of cotton as modern, into the country to shape clothing. Other modern aesthetic followed suit including wool, nylon and velvet fabrics, introduced midway of the century, and the satins and silks amidst other foreign fabrics came on to the scene in the late 20th and the early 21st century. These exotic materials styled the fashion terrain in the country. It was globalization of the late 20th and early 21st century that rekindled the traditional aesthetic back on to the fashion form.

Globalization as explored in the previous section, nurtured fashion designer-artists who reinvented and merged societies' past traditional aesthetic with aspects of modernity. This emerging category of artists who were also able to design works came in at a time when fashion in Uganda was blossoming with the African-ness and the Ugandan identity. Indeed in 2003, the Uganda International Fashion Week (UIFW) was launched by renowned Ugandan fashion designer Santa Anzo after her experience of the global fashion scene through working with the Ziper modelling agency in the late 1990s. UIFW was a new platform of fashion showcase with a global stance because the fashion presentation approach reflected the styles

of showcases in the international fashion cities. Currently Santa Anzo is the proprietor of Arapapa Fashion House and she is a renowned award-winning designer who has exhibited locally, regionally and internationally. Significant at the UIFW show was the conceptual haute couture shaped by past traditions, presented by foreign designers. The style inspired Ugandan designers and in the years that followed, renowned fashion designer-artist Senkaaba Samson popularly known as Xenson presented a conceptual haute couture framed by bark-cloth and reeds, which are part of the traditional aesthetic of Uganda. It is however, not surprising that Senkaaba quickly took that conceptual direction. Senkaaba holds a Bachelor of Arts in Fine Art from Makerere University, and guided by his motto 'Creativity is Limitless', he had acquired knowledge and skill in many creative engagements including fashion design. Today he is repeatedly referred to as a multi-talented artist by journalists. More about Senkaaba is presented in chapter 4 section 4.1.3.

Relatedly, it can be argued that the curriculum reforms in the education programme of major art institutions in Uganda during the mid-1990s led to the development of fashion studies in the Universities, fashion exhibitions, and the use of the local aesthetic to produce fashion. It offered an opportunity for students to acquire knowledge in both the fine art and applied design disciplines thereby nurturing designer-artists. Therefore, the versatility enabling approach empowered the students to explore both the fine arts and design-related disciplines in order to cope with the changing socio-cultural and socio-economic developments that marked the beginning of the 21st century. As such, artists of the 21st century were able to translate their design creations into conceptual artefacts, or the fine art into exclusive objects of the applied design. Nakazibwe (2005) also explored the appropriation of past traditional materials for fashion expression during the last decade of the 20th century. The researcher presented the new fashion modernism of the 21st century in Uganda through Magoba Sarah's 2002 fashion design work at the Makerere University art school. Nakazibwe re-interpreted the fashion design work made out of a traditional aesthetic, bark-cloth and decorated with cowrie shells as a conceptual artefact, embodied with symbolic economic, cultural and social value to the Buganda Kingdom. Senkaaba's haute couture and Nakazibwe's analysis unfold the 21st century transcendence of fashion design into a visual aesthetic. The Makerere art school paved the way and other art schools in the country followed suit to make curricula reforms that led to the birth of a new generation of students who are able to merge

the fine arts and design for conceptual representation using a range of locally sourced materials.

The fashion studies in the Makerere art school explored the designer-artist approach for conceptual fashion, engaging the sustainability theme and it was realised that past traditions were the major medium of representation. The pattern unveiled a nexus between past traditions and sustainability, an issue under inquiry in this thesis. The sustainability global movement that began as an ecology concern in the 70s grew to embed the economic and social elements and became of global interest by the 21st century, influencing all aspects of life including the creative practice (Welters, 2011). In Uganda, the cultural renaissance of the 1990s was very crucial for the articulation of the notion of sustainability which was majorly anchored on the traditional aesthetic. As such, since the early 21st century, the past traditions have been explored for sustainability interpretations through fashion in the Ugandan art and design schools. This was long overdue since the aesthetic had reached the global stage, embraced by visual artists like Pablo Picasso and American and European fashion designers in the early and later 20th century respectively.

Indeed fashion movements of the first decade of the millennium indicate the reinvention of past aesthetic to meet the trends of the 21st century. The African theme was trending in Uganda, and the West African boubou dress style was popular in the country, embraced by the people to assert their African-ness (Nakisanze, 2004). The boubou dress design is a robe made from a rectangular fabric with an opening in the centre for the neck. The researcher as a fashion instructor in the art school at Makerere University, and conscious about the trends in fashion in the country was challenged by the prevalence of the West African boubou dress style. In 2001 the researcher embarked on a Master's degree research towards contributing to the construction of a Ugandan fashion identity. Nakazibwe (2005) also reports of a 2002 design by Magoba Sarah then a student of the Makerere art school whose fashion design work was made out of bark-cloth and decorated with cowrie shells.

The consciousness of fashion in Uganda was growing fast that the Uganda International Fashion Week (UIFW) series introduced in the previous section, was conceived as a new platform of fashion showcase with an international ambience in the country. The researcher, Nakisanze Sarah exhibited the collection from her master's degree research, and it featured a

range of reinvented 'Gomesi' designs. The gomesi as explained earlier is a traditional dress design of the Baganda people in Uganda. The design gesture was for the preservation and promotion of Buganda's cultural value as an identity of ethnicity among the youths in a bid to provide an alternative fashion style to the West African Boubou in Uganda in 2003.



Figure 1.3
Nakisanze Sarah (2003). *Reinvented Gomesi design* [series in cotton]. (Photograph by researcher)



Figure 1.4
Nakisanze Sarah (2003). *Reinvented Gomesi design* [Series in cotton] (Photograph by researcher)

Relatedly, in early 1999, Iga Beatrice, a Ugandan designer living in the diaspora had also replayed the gomesi dress design as a wedding garb for Nabagereka Sylvia Nagginda Luswata, the queen of Buganda. Like Nakisanze above, Iga also maintained the square neckline, but lowered the sleeve puff, and further lessened the bottom of the dress, turning the wrap into a round skirt with a sustained floor length. This was an iconic gesture that led to many reinventions by Ugandan designers among which was Christine Luboga’s “Gomesi 2000”. Luboga’s gomesi maintains the significant features and look of the dress, but introduces a straight skirt fastened with a zipper for the bottom, replacing the wrap. Other re-inventers of the gomesi in the period are Nalwoga Susan and Wavamunno Gloria.



Figure 1.5
Beatrice Iga, *Queen of Buganda Sylvia Nagginda Wedding gown*
Courtesy of ‘How Kabaka Wooded Queen Sylvia Nagginda’ by Nabbanja
Rashim, (August 28th 2019). [Fashion]. Retrieved from
www.mywedding.co.ug

The UIFW 2003 was significant because among the African guest designers was, Tanzanian Mustafa Hasan Ali who exhibited a spectacle of his Tanzanian cultural wealth through fashion. This inspired many that in the year that followed, the UIFW 2004 series featured Ugandan Samson Senkaaba, an alumnus of the Makerere University art school with a captivating haute couture of the bark-cloth and reeds (Fig. 1.6).



Figure 1.6
Samson Senkaaba (2004). *Questioning the East African Union [Bark-cloth and Reeds]*. (Photography, Courtesy of Artist).

The haute couture artefact is a bark-cloth ensemble by three ladies concurrently set in a frame of reeds. On the catwalk, the stronger of the ladies would lead and the rest would struggle to follow. In this work, the designer-artist intended to present the irony of the East African Community in regard to the region's political and economic development. He also defended the bark-cloth as a choice of material, for its unique aesthetic, and its suitability to communicate the cultural relationship in the region.

With such progression into critical embodiment, Senkaaba's haute couture became an object with intellectual value, introducing the sustainability theme into this presentation. Towards the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the sustainability theme had become a global concern and fashion was key in the intervention plan. The Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Art (MTSIFA), Makerere University, Kyambogo University art school, Nkumba University art school and Tina School of design and beauty are among the pioneers in the fashion education agenda. Only MTSIFA, the Makerere University art school and Nkumba University art school had some accessible and usable archives. Reasons for the absence of fashion data from other schools varied. During a phone

conversation with the Director of Tina School of design and beauty, Mrs Kibirige informed the study that a service provider who was developing a data base for the school mis-handled and lost their visual collection of over 15 years. Mr. Kimani Muturi a lecturer in the Kyambogo University at the Department of Art and Industrial Design also confessed that the art department had not carefully documented and secured visual representations of the students' fashion work. Thus, the Makerere University and Nkumba University art schools offer an account of students' fashion shaped by past traditions.

The researcher as a fashion instructor at MTSIFA together with the students, had in the past explored the sustainability theme at a broader level during their fashion study sessions. Among other aspects of fashion and sustainability discovered, and for this particular section, the findings indicated that the fashion object had become a communication vessel, of the need for sustainability consciousness. The students' research work portrayed haute couture garments and wearable art by international fashion designers illustrating the need for sustainability consciousness in the world. This inspired the students to echo a similar voice which further augmented the reinvention of the Ugandan past traditional aesthetic. Until today, students select past traditional cultural aesthetic to express the sustainability theme. On inquiry about that recurrence, one of the research participants of the MTSIFA Students' Fashion workshops stated that "Nature seems to be full of our past heritage and the past seems to be made out of nature ..." (MFDS #4, 2017). Section 4.1 in this chapter portrays an array of natural past traditions and supports the manifestation with the finding that nature provided support for the sustenance of lives since mankind. The students' reinvention of the past traditions for fashion is their pronouncement of the awareness of the need for sustainability and their role towards the agenda. Research findings also indicated that the traditional aesthetic was explored beyond sustainability into the Nationalism theme, which is equally relayed by the array of fashion works presented in this section. The fashion collection from Nkumba University art school relates to that of MTSIFA in regard to materials and design approaches, and is thus presented together.

In the year 2009 Mudaka Anthony from MTSIFA replayed the animal skin combined with plaited palm leaves, further accessorizing the attire with an ancient spear (Fig. 1.7). In 2010 Kyemwa Denis, from the same institution styled the plaited palm leaf mat to fully dress the human body as shown in figure 1.8.



Figure 1.7
Mudaka Anthony
(2009). MTSIFA



Figure 1.8
Kyemwa Denis
(2010). MTSIFA

In 2015 at Nkumba University, gourd pieces were matched with bark-cloth adorning a black lycra dress (Fig. 1.9), and in 2017 the gourds were replayed and styled intricately to form a crop top, shorts and head gear (Fig. 1.10).



Figure 1.9
Joyce Aisha
(2015).
Nkumba University



Figure 1.10
Biira Edlyna
(2017)
Nkumba University

However, earlier in 2015 bark-cloth was printed and complemented with exotic fabrics at Nkumba University (Figure 1.11).



Figure 1.11
Nabatanzi Sybella
(2015).
Nkumba University

Further still, other 2017 productions exhibit transition beyond sustainability to include nationalistic sentiments. Figure 1.12 symbolizes the love for Uganda through raffia as a fashion accessory (head gear and anklets) with cowries as necklace, décor on the bark-cloth robe and the black, yellow and red Ugandan colour theme to brand the Ugandan-ness. This is supported in the collection in Figure 1.13 where the designer made the top garment and creatively painted it with animal motifs representing the popular animals which attract tourist to Uganda. For the bottom garment, the student designer

simply used a material in the colours and pattern of the Uganda Flag. The traditional gomesi reinvented into a 21st century bifurcated fashion line secured with a sash, all made out of bark cloth.



Figure 1.12
Namazi Brenda
(2017).
MTSIFA



Figure 1.13
Nakimuli Esther
(2017).
MTSIFA

The garment featured in Figure 1.14 typically exemplifies the 2017 fashion trend for women wear and finally, the raw material and facilitating tools of a traditional brew, ‘Malwa’, became fabric décor material to illustrate the resilience of an Itesot woman in North East Uganda (Figure 1.15).



Figure 1.14
Sekigabo David
(2017).
MTSIFA



Figure 1.15
Ajilong Irene
(2017).
MTSIFA

The account has indicated how the early millennium's fashion movements including the African-ness, the gomesi trend, sustainability and nationalism led to the reinvention of past traditions for fashion development. The students' explorations are very insightful and have indicated the transition of the fashion object into a visual aesthetic and illustrated the potency of past traditions in the representation of contemporary notions. Notable, the student fashion design works presented herein above are one-off endeavours purposely made for school assignments. However, the study also noted that the fashion students do not use the traditional aesthetic in their local employment practice after study completion. One of the renowned fashion designers explained that the use of past traditions towards framing clothing is not a financially sustainable option locally (Personal interview with Brenda Maraka, 2018). It however, evokes a question as to why the Ugandan fashion designer-

artists, the creators of the haute couture herein interrogated have persistently embraced the traditional aesthetic (See section 5.3).

1.2.4 *The African Traditional Aesthetic Turns International*

Embrace of the African aesthetic in early 20th century by Pablo Picasso seemed to be of great impact to the value of African culture. Later decades of the 20th century witnessed the growth of the fame of European and North American fashion designers relying on the African aesthetic as source of design inspiration (V. Rovine, 2006). In 1907, the famous fine artist Pablo Picasso introduced the African traditional cultural aesthetic as an inspiration resource on the international scene when he painted the ‘Les Demoiselles d’Avignon’ (ibid). The work referenced the traditional African masks and the art of ancient Egypt. More non-African designers continued to draw from the African visual culture into the early 21st century gaining international acclaim. Ike Ude, an artist and visual culture scholar referred to the paradigm as a “tabula rasa for a radically new kind of modernism with an African foundation (Jennings, 2011)”. The global recognition of value embodied in the African aesthetic was a wakeup call for African designers who infiltrated the terrain in response to their cultural wealth in the subsequent years (Gott & Loughran, 2010; Jennings, 2011; Prince Claus Fund, 1998; L. V. Rovine, 2010). Fashion literature indicates the creative reproduction of past traditional cultures of the African societies embodied with utmost significance in the following ways: it portrays the extent of the indigenous cultural traditional aesthetic as a unique and distinct fashion design resource for clothing and costume items; it illuminates the authorities in the African fashion design arena; it highlights the ethnic heritage aesthetic as a niche for global reach; and further reveals the role of fashion in the progression of societies and cultures on the African continent (Ibid). Six prominent fashion personalities who have exhibited unique and inspiring past tradition reinventions were identified and their expressions are intelligibly illustrated below.

Critical embodiment of Nigerian historical events and situations is articulated by the Nigerian storyteller fashion designer-artist Buki Akib. Most famous of her designs are the ‘Fela’ design ranges, through which she told the 1970s story of extravagance, polygamy and social disorder, through the famous musician of the times ‘Fela Kuti and the Afro beat movement’ (Matsinde, 2014; Bidouzo-Coudray interview, 2012 and Jennings 2011). Buki enhanced the Nigerian traditional hand-woven Yoruba ‘Aso Oke’ fabrics with her knitting knowledge, and fused it with modernity. The result was a reconstructed heritage, telling a

Nigerian story, and underpinning the designer's reflection that "being an African designer should simply be about where you are from (Bidouzo-Coudray interview, 2012)." The collection received global attention at the Central Saint Martins prestigious L'Oreal press show 2010 (Jennings, 2011).

The restoration of a traditional practice of handmade fabrics through practice transmission in the present introduces Amaka Osakwe of the Maki Oh fashion brand in Nigeria. Osakwe uses Adire traditional Nigerian textiles with raffia and silk for her fashion works. Adire is a resist-dyed indigo cloth (hand painted or stencilled patterns) developed by Yoruba women in the 1800s (Jennings, 2011). "With her 100% 'Made in Nigerian' fashion line, she is helping to keep centuries-old traditions alive and kicking, and that's hardly child's play", states Chioma Nnadi, (Vogue magazine reporter on 16th September 2017 in NewYork). Further still, Maki Oh has dressed famous persons and celebrities including Michelle Obama, Lupita Nyong'o, Kerry Washington...and Arden Wohl, who have raised Osakwe's flag of conservation and preservation of her traditions (Ron Mwangaguhunga (letter, 29/1/2019).

Osakwe's role also evokes accounts of a fellow country designer, Nkuso Onwuka of the Nkwo fashion brand. Nkuso called upon African fashion designers to save their cultures. At the international platform of a TEDx Talk while dressed in her designed outfit, embellished with bronze cast ornaments, reproduced by artisans (7/3/2014), the designer advised her fellow practitioners. She urged them to collaborate with artisans in their communities in order to revitalize the traditional practices so that they are replayed and archived in the 21st century before they are extinct.

Heeding to the call, I further relay the appreciation of cultural diversity through fashion. Thabo Makhetha, a Lesotho born South African designer has taken the Basotho blanket to the next level paying homage to the iconic cultural blanket, and aiming at creating blankets with a diversity story of Southern Africa (Taahirah Martin for Design Ndaba, 12th July 2018). The approach seems to be of great social cohesion value to the rainbow nation. The diversity theme reminisces Atal Stella and her global haute couture showcase as a representation of African cultural heritage (reference in previous section).

The gesture rekindles South African Craig Jacobs, who chose to restore and revalue heritage through its visibility. The designer believes that clothing should be an image of your

principles: “Sustainability not only through materials and design approach but in every aspect of work (Fundudzi by Craig Jacobs, n.d., Para. 1). Through the Youth Village South Africa’s Youth Portal, the designer expounds the notion: “I wanted my label to help bring about change in a small yet palpable way, by trying to use eco fabrications, reduce waste and help preserve energy” (Fashion Designer Craig Jacobs”, Para. 8). In order to pronounce the cause, the label carries an eco-cultural story that revitalizes a cultural heritage of Lake *Fundudzi*. The Lake is perhaps one of our most unrecognised ecological treasures – it is the largest freshwater lake in southern Africa and is the only lake in the world created by a landslide, thousands of years ago. Intriguingly, it is a sacred site for the Venda, who believe that they can hear their ancestors drumming beneath its waters at night. “The opportunity to tell the story of this amazing ecological treasure is the reason why I named my label after it.” (Fashion Designer Craig Jacobs, para 6). The story resonates with the *Jose Hendo* bark-cloth cultural story in the next section.

Further, re-establishment of sustainable archives of historical value is displayed by the Lalessa African fashion brand, whose sustainability awareness cause manifests through the replay of the East African traditional Khanga patterns in organic bamboo fabrics for slow fashion. (Jennings, 2011). The designers are also exploring the timelessness of the traditional khanga patterns, for value addition in the bid to reduce waste. Finally, Ethiopian Liya Kebede, a famous model, actor and fashion designer in the 21st Century, carries the “Lemlem” International fashion brand which empowers artisans in Ethiopia. The brand sources-Ethiopia for traditionally hand-woven fabric that is translated into unique contemporary clothing and sold in New York and beyond (ibid). Kebede through her video talk, ‘Liya Kebede introducing Ethiopia traditionally hand-woven clothes to NewYork’s fashion market’ on the 16th January 2016, the designer expressed her emotions about the artisan/designer collaboration model as the only way fashion designers can contribute to the welfare of people in their home countries in a big way.

The presence of the past traditions as a frame of fashion at the global stage is also inspirational to other African fashion designers. African designers showcase at prestigious global spaces, they dress international celebrities and high-profile personalities, produce international brands, and receive applaude and accolades. Crucial about the fashion is its positive impact on the social and environmental concerns of the African communities, more so

fashion framed by the traditional aesthetic of societies. Uganda is however, insignificantly represented and the popular scene in the country is a global modernity.

However, there are nine haute couture artefacts that indicate a continuous reinvention of past traditions in Uganda. The expressions represent aspects with contemporary global significance that reposition the past tradition materiality. The haute couture transcends basic aesthetic reinvention to illustrate the nexus of past traditions and social sustainability. The connection asserts a salient value of the past traditions, their capacity to shape haute couture into artistic representations that meaningfully reconstruct culture in the present times. The position of haute couture shaped by the traditional aesthetic is not popular on the 21st century mainstream fashion terrain in Kampala, Uganda. Kampala is popular with an exotic international modernity.

1.2.5 *Ugandan Haute Couture Aesthetic in the 21st Century*

21st Century Uganda is flamboyant with haute couture composed of an exotic international modernity, and possesses a popular aura that keeps the masses anxious for the next fashion and style event. The popular exotic aesthetic is composed of modern fabrics that are of soft to sturdy matting and weave, graded from light to heavy weights. It is also, an embellishment range of rich lace, sequins, stones, networked cords, colour plated metal and plastic studs, beads and ornamental brocades, all shimmering and glittering (Figures 1.16 – 1.19).



Figure 1.16 Fabric enhanced with Metallic threads; Sequins; Studs (Photos by researcher)



Figure 1.17 Synthetic fabrics, Embellished with beads and cords, Chains and studs (Photos by researcher)



Figure 1.18 Red Synthetic feathers enhanced with a cord of glitter studs; (Photos by researcher)

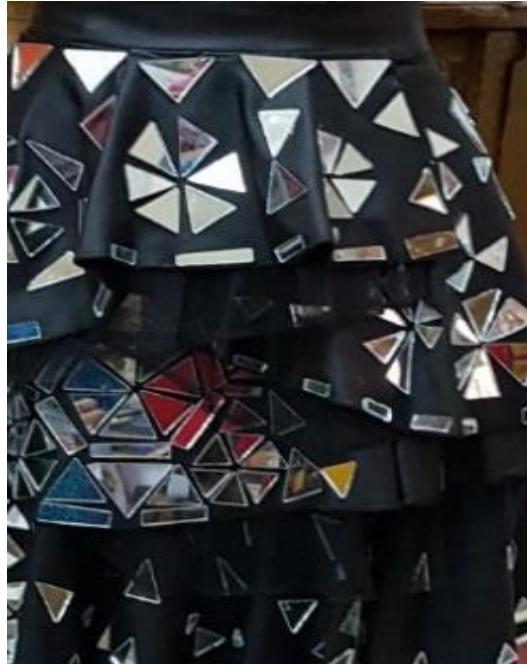


Figure 1.19 Metal plates carefully patterned on synthetic leather (Photos by researcher)

The haute couture silhouettes and style-lines are a high fashion elegance that is not distinct from international trends, also remodelled in a mix and match of quintessential African fabric, the ‘Kitenge’ and the exotic textures (Figures 1.20 – 1.22) to meet a contemporaneity that sustains a desired 21st century Africa look.



Figure 1.20
Margaret Trowel School of Industrial and Fine Arts Students’ fashion work, 2017 Fashion Parade (Photos by researcher)



Figure 1.21
Kansiime Monica Kasyate (2018).
(Photos by Juls Photography)



Figure 1.22
Monica Kasyate (2018). (Photos by Juls Photography)

The haute couture aesthetic overtly manifests at the popular annual fashion and style acknowledgment events, where fashion designers showcase their creations in addition to fashion celebrants who add aesthetic flavour to the events. Figures 1.16 to 1.22 reflect the haute couture materials at those events for a comprehensive array of the aesthetic. The events are usually hosted in various spaces like ambient hotel halls, and creatively transformed ordinary public spaces in Kampala, the capital city of Uganda situated in Kampala district. The district also hosts the major political, economic and social hubs in the country, positioning the city as the most accessible, and with favourable services and facilities to host the fashion and style events. The most prominent annual events are: the Abryanz Style and Fashion Awards (ASFAs) that has lasted since 2013, the creative and eclectic Kampala Fashion Week (KFW) which has prevailed since 2014 and the Bride and Groom Expo since 2008. In 2017 and 2018 the high end and classy haute couture ASFAs event was hosted in one of the most luxurious hotel halls, the Serena International conference hall. ASFAs guests who usually dress to sustain the mood include regional and international fashion personalities and a local guest list composed of high end and middle high personalities in the corporate and business world, celebrities, the publicist, fashion designers, and socialites. The KFW show differs in some

instances. The eclectic and artistic smart casual numbers are normally 200 guests made up of expatriates, visual artists, and similar to the ASFAs, also regional and international fashion personalities, a local high end and middle class of the corporate world and the publicist. During a conversation with Lucy Parwot, a Bride and Groom magazine editor, it was revealed that the Bride and Groom Expo registers over 10,000 guests, ranking it the most highly attended of the fashion showcases in Kampala. The show is a three days event, with booth displays and holds runway fashion shows per day. Although the main purpose of this relatively affordable event is business promotion other than mere celebration of fashion and style, the minimal beauty and glamour created through booth displays in addition to the artistry of the haute couture, creates a spectacle that is pleasurable. As such, it is attended by the majority of social categories of people in the country.

Runways are also a planned display, coordinated with stylistically matching choreography. The ASFAs' shows, often tend to echo platforms in the fashion cities of Paris, New York, London and Milan. KFW runways are always thematic, highly innovative and artistic in consonance with selected venue architecture. The Bride and Groom Expo runways are rather toned down, often enhanced by the haute couture pieces. The popular media including newspapers, television, internet and social media, portray the popular fashion culture features of the events. In Kampala like elsewhere, the media is often quick at adding hype to the event and stirring a sensation in the larger public domain because fashion is the predominant visual and pleasurable culture phenomenon as deduced by both (Lillethun, 2011) and Giuntini, (2008). This is so because the glamour, glitz and style accorded to the events links the fashion spectacle with a set of qualities, values, outcomes and perceptions that meet the desires of the masses (Giuntini, Ibid). Thus, associating all this artistry with pleasurable entertainment, positions the kind of fashion with an aura, and shapes the object as popular. Beyond the runway, the fashion clout revellers and the celebrities further display their haute couture material culture through their luxurious daily lifestyle and stage garb.

However, this exotic Ugandan aesthetic manifestation does not compete favourably on the international stage when applied by a Ugandan fashion designer. The hegemony of the international space is not penetrable with an aesthetic that is global yet lacks an identity or cannot be explained by the user. As such it is rare to find Ugandan fashion designers applying exotic fabrics for the global stage. But amidst that local popular trend of the exotic materials including the kitenge fabric, and the modernity of the contemporary times, there exists a

minimal category of the haute couture aesthetic shaped by Ugandan past traditions. It conjures questions of manifestation amidst a popular contemporaneity. It is works by fashion designer-artists Atal Stella, Sanaa Gateja, Senkaaba Samson and Jose Hendo, who have persistently reinvented their traditional aesthetic to shape haute couture that meets the stance of the global space. The fashion designer-artists are selected for exploration in this study. By fashion designer-artists, or designer-artists herein, reference is to creative practitioners who engage the fashion design practice towards the creation of visual aesthetic.

For the last 20 years, the researcher, as a fashion designer-artist, has also explored past traditions towards the creation of haute couture as a visual language in Kampala, Uganda. Although has not been the central figure on the visibility platform of the fashion genre. The researcher has also promoted the practice through fashion teaching in the Makerere University art school in the country. Her identity and sense of self is thus intensely connected with the philosophical stance of this research not only geographically but also socio-culturally. She is also intrigued by the contemporary constructive impact on the meaning and application of indigenous cultural traditions beyond fashion and clothing. As such, the study is not merely a work of scholarship but rather a career trajectory growing the researcher's understanding and commitment to the materiality of the past traditions. However, insignificant representation of the role of Ugandan haute couture shaped by past traditions, by scholarship on African fashion was also an abiding urge. She thus also aimed at illuminating the empowering element embodied in the progressive traditional aesthetic through haute couture.

The fashion designer-artists have repeatedly moved back into their traditional cultural heritage and explored the aesthetic for the present, intricately interweaving high fashion as object and as a visual aesthetic. The aesthetic is an intriguing spectacle, loaded with conceptual connotations beyond status and beauty. It is a cultural trajectory that defines haute couture as contemporaneous global manifestations.

In Kampala, it is a minimal array of the fashion style with limited and irregular public presentations but with a major presence in visual art spaces like the museums, art galleries and other fine art critique arenas, spaces not spontaneous with popular culture. The visual art spaces do not bestow the glamour and style found in the popular culture spaces earlier explored, and thus lack the pleasurable aura associated with those spaces. Thus, the popular media need some persuasion to capture and anxiously publish the presentations in the art spaces that assert a

calculated ambience. Further still, scholars of fashion who are not locally based, often miss the events happening in the visual art spaces. The audience in these spaces mainly constitutes visual artists, lovers of visual art (local, expatriates and visitors) art critics, scholars, academicians, and visual art patrons. Among the most active visual art spaces, is Afri Art gallery and the Institute of Heritage Conservation and Restoration (IHCR), Makerere University. However, on occasions where fashion framed by past traditions, is presented as a visual aesthetic in the popular runway style, the public attendance is always a big commendable number. Some of the past presentations include fashion students' work at the 2009 and 2010 MTSIFA Fashion Blast, the 2017 and 2018 MTSIFA Fashion Parade, and Samson Senkaaba aka Xenson's, fashion shows, examples of which are the 2011 'Futuristic Past' and the 'Baroque Afric' in 2016. Thus, the study asserts that the traditional aesthetic shaping haute couture investigated herein is a representation of salient issues of global society.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

In the early 20th century, visual art studies were introduced into Uganda in favour of modernity's foreign art methodologies, relegating the traditional creative approaches. However, the political instability of the 1970s and 1980s in the country inhibited the continuity of the foreign art education, and engendered the traditional esthetic as an art resource. Use of the aesthetic was heightened by the excitement of African Nationalism, the restoration of monarchies in the country and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) declaration of the 1980s that limited financial support to the country. This also led to the introduction of design as a research study. In addition, globalization through the international cultural mix of the art and design fora also enhanced the embrace of the traditional aesthetic, further facilitating the progression of fashion design in Uganda.

Within the globalization agenda, the haute couture fashion genre shaped by past traditions equally took shape. The traditional aesthetic was elevated into the fashion design arena throughout the African continent, further onto the international stage amidst new and modern fabric innovations. However, scholarly literature on African dress and fashion indicates a lacuna about Ugandan fashion in this aesthetic embrace and global reach, and the situational study of the popular contemporary Ugandan fashion scene portrays an exotic and foreign modernity. Conversely, the situational research in Uganda also revealed that there exists an

array of haute couture referencing past traditions of Uganda, further merged with features from other cultures. The haute couture artefacts are loaded with meaning on issues related to the global social sustainability agenda. As such, the study claims that creatively re-enacted societies' past traditions, embody significant social elements that constructively facilitate contemporary society. It argues that past traditions embody contemporary value that instigates 21st century society to persistently reinvent and reconstruct itself in the new times. Thus, this study sought to examine and bring to light fashion's representation of social sustainability and the contemporary value that is embedded in the applied past traditions. It also sought to portray the reason for the reinvention of past tradition in the present time, thereby leading to an emerging creative discourse that articulates the nexus between fashion, past traditions and social sustainability, using haute couture as a point of departure.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the selected contemporary Ugandan haute couture artefacts that are shaped by past traditions, to establish their representation of the notion of social sustainability and to articulate the contemporary value embodied in the traditional aesthetic.

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To examine the selected contemporary Ugandan haute couture artefacts in order to understand their aesthetic composition.
2. To identify how the notion of social sustainability has been visually represented by the contemporary Ugandan haute couture shaped by past traditions.
3. To analyze aspects that have influenced the reinvention of past traditions that shape contemporary Ugandan haute couture which represents issues of social sustainability.
4. To articulate the value embodied the traditional aesthetic shaping the contemporary Ugandan haute couture.

1.6 Research Questions

- 1) What characterizes the selected contemporary Ugandan haute couture shaped by past traditions and represents aspects related to social sustainability?
- 2) How does the contemporary haute couture shaped by past traditions represent the notion of social sustainability?
- 3) What aspects have influenced the reinvention of past traditions to shape contemporary Ugandan haute couture that represents social sustainability?
- 4) What is the embodied value found in the traditional aesthetic shaping the selected contemporary Ugandan haute couture?

1.7 Rationale

Previous scholarly research on African fashion in the global context has highlighted the heritage aesthetic as a niche for global reach; several researchers have examined the extent of traditional aesthetic as a unique fashion design resource for clothing and costume items and presented authorities in the African fashion design arena. Research has also revealed that Uganda has a marginal representation. The accessible scholarly literature thus denotes a knowledge gap about Ugandan contemporary haute couture inspired by past traditions and represents issues related to social sustainability. But more importantly, Uganda's political history which can be described as rocky and brawny has engendered a certain kind of strained environment from which a Ugandan brand of haute couture has emerged. This Ugandan haute couture merits a closer look.

1.8 Significance

By examining the various and varied contexts and views, the study has generated an understanding of the contemporary locus of the traditional aesthetic and the conceptions held about its constructive power in engendering social sustainability. Past traditions are a resource with distinct elements that are unique to societies. The inexhaustible value of the traditions enables societies to repeatedly explore the resources and distinctively reproduce them over and

over again through time and space in the dynamic world. One way through which the longevity of traditions has been articulated is through critical fashion expressions by fashion designer-artists whose creative practice focuses on diverse contexts and views, and in this particular study, on the issue of social sustainability albeit in the backdrop of cultural, economic, political and environmental sustainability values and principles. Following are the significant aspects.

1. The study responds to the Uganda Cultural policy (2019) objective that encourages development of the country's cultural heritage through the creative industries. By exploring how African fashion designers have valuably reinvented their traditions, the study illuminates both a gap in, and an opportunity for the Ugandan fashion industry. Ugandan fashion researchers and practitioners have a basis and probable standards for reference when remodeling the indigenous cultural traditional knowledge for applicability in contemporary times. The study has identified that ethnic past traditions are a niche and dynamic aesthetic for the global fashion market. Transforming the traditional aesthetic for application in contemporary fashion can boost the fashion industry in Uganda through the export target. With an international acclaim, the designs can challenge the poor mindset of the local consumers that local products are inferior. This will boost the appeal of local products in the country. Reinvention of past traditions will also be facilitated by the rising fashion platforms with over ten annual fashion shows of locally created designs. In addition, the activities can be supported by the 'Buy Uganda Build Uganda' (BUBU) initiative and policy by the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives, which is targeting the development and marketing of Ugandan brands.

2. The study also publishes the array of Ugandan fashion filling the lacuna in the prevailing literature on African fashion. Although the identified Ugandan conceptual fashion is currently not a saleable functional object, rather as an intellectual aesthetic it significantly portrays the capacity of the object as a communication platform and illuminates the role of past traditions in the sustainability agenda through social sustainability. This is because it transcends the preservation and promotion of culture, and particularly highlights and communicates development of the creative sector and artisanal communities towards the global agenda. The study has exhibited the traditional aesthetic as an inclusive welfare resource that facilitates livelihoods in contemporary society.

3. The study reinforces the role of communities' heritage resources, in the construction of subjective identities to negotiate inhibitive environments and the dynamism of the globalized contemporary society. Thus, the study highlights and emphasizes the need to conserve and preserve indigenous cultural traditions for utilization in the reconstruction and transformation of society.

4. The study further reintroduces fashion as an inclusive communication tool with a high impact value that organizations can explore to reach out and communicate critical and subdued issues to society. It articulates that fashion possesses an aura, a power that appeals to sensations of people. This is so because fashion events are associated with a set of qualities, values, outcomes and perceptions that meet the desires of the masses. The use of fashion, a human body manifestation, as both clothing and communication tool shaped by the social cultural contexts of communities reinterprets the form of expression as a productive social phenomenon located within societies. As such it attracts the masses and, in the process, communication is delivered.

5. Thus, the study not only redeems the art and design studies but broadens research discourses into popular and visual culture studies. It also reinterprets the haute couture artefact as an intellectual work worthy of critical scrutiny and use in the development of societies. In here, the object of fashion asserts as a scholarly platform of knowledge that is discernible to a broader populace.

6. Past traditions as a cultural aesthetic play a crucial role at the bottom of the social economic pyramid, in regard to aspects of social cohesion, equity, participation, sustainability awareness and wellbeing serves towards general economic development. As such, art and cultural activities should not be underestimated and therefore should be considered towards effective development planning for the country through cultural tourism and exploring the development of cultural capital.

Therefore, the study exhibits the need for the creation of a dynamic creative sector to foster the development of culture in the ever-dynamic cultural world.

1.9 Scope of study

The study focused on the reinvented past traditions that shape identified 21st century contemporary Ugandan haute couture which amplifies social sustainability issues in contemporary society. It also aims at articulating the contemporary value of the traditional aesthetic. The haute couture artefacts selected as the main unit of analysis included: *Poncho* (2004), and the *Bark cloth and Paper bead Shawls* (2014) collection by Sanaa Gateja, embodying Equity, *Baroque Afrique* (2016) collection by Senkaaba Samson, embodying Social Participation; *Uganda Martyrs* (2004), *My Roots* (2006) and *Shame on You* (2010) collection by Stella Atal, embodying Social cohesion; and *Resonance* (2004/2005), *Contact Deep* (2014) and *Spontaneous* (2014) collection by Jose Hendo. These artefacts were identified because during the study situation analysis they appeared to be conceptually loaded with the social sustainability indexes, a cultural progression in the fashion arena that merited scholarly interrogation. The study also explored the socio-cultural and economic milieu of the fashion design and visual art practice in Uganda within which the past traditions attain newness and vitality that further shape haute couture artefacts as visual languages. As such, scholarship on Past traditions and their role in society was explored, fashion as a visual language equally analysed, the relationship of past traditions and the creative practice was reviewed.

The theories included the ‘Circuit of Culture’ sculpted by Paul Du Gay, Stuart Hall, Linda Janes, Hugh Mackay and Keith Negus in 1997 as the main supported by: Shils’ theory of tradition; Ferdinand Saussure’s Constructionist theory of Representation; Baudrillard’s ‘Liberation of the Object’; and Peirre Bourdieu’s theory of Practice.

In addition, the study lasted for five years, and was located in Kampala central division of Kampala district in Uganda. The locality had to be the path of the fashion designer-artists and the haute couture artefacts, such as the showcase platforms, hence Kampala central. Because two of the key informants, the fashion designer-artists of the haute couture are also settled in the United Kingdom and France respectively, through virtual access, the study extended to those artists’ spaces. The art galleries, museums, patronage cultural institutions and temporary workshop formations in Kampala were the design and visual art spaces selected as the main setting for the study because the nature of fashion under scrutiny manifests strongly in those particular spaces. The spaces also hosted the population that participated in

the study including: four (04) renowned fashion designer-artists who are the creators of the haute couture artefacts under investigation; three (03) fashion design practitioners, four (04) visual artists, four (04) visual culture promoters, and two (02) visual culture scholars. In addition, the researcher participated in two (02) fashion workshops and six (06) cultural events related to fashion and visual art.

1. 10 Theoretical Framework

The study was mainly underpinned by the ‘Circuit of Culture’ theory. This theory is concerned with the articulation of all the cultural aspects of the haute couture trajectory, to understand the cultural meanings of commodities. The aspects also referred to as the tenets of the theory form the principles that constitute the frame of cultural analysis. They include: identity, representation, production, regulation and consumption. The component of cultural progression exhibited by the phenomenon asserts a process that requires culture location and articulation for better understanding. As such, the theoretical tenet composition embedded in the ‘Circuit of Culture’ was introduced. This perspective sculpted by Paul Du Gay, Stuart Hall, Linda Janes, Hugh Mackay and Keith Negus in 1997 (Leve, 2012; Nakazibwe, 2005) offers an opportunity to explore the major sites of information, influence and action in the replay of past traditions in contemporary times. The circuit of culture tenet frame also regarded as the cultural analysis processes is responsible for the creation and transmission of meaning. The two scholars, Annabelle M. Leve and Venny Nakazibwe contend that these processes are interrelated, and no individual process is most important, rather, they rely on each other for cultural meaning to fully emerge, which was realised through the practical exploration.

However, the phenomenon under exploration is shaped by various perspectives and contexts which challenged the tenets of the circuit of culture theory. The tenets lacked grounding explanations for the nature of the phenomenon. To support the ‘Circuit of Culture’ theory, four theories were introduced including: Baudrillard’s theory of ‘liberation of the [fashion] object from commercial and symbolic relations, Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice, the theory of tradition by Edward Shils and the constructionist theory of representation by Ferdinand Saussure. The relationship of the ‘Circuit of culture’ theory and the other theories is explored through the following tenets supported by the theoretical framework. The framework in figure 1.23 indicates the relationships of the theories. The blue arrows is the original framing is the ‘Circuit of Culture’ theory, which indicates that the tenets rely on each other to make

meaning. The maroon arrows are the new relationship connecting the supporting theories to the tenets of the Circuit of Culture. Below is an explanation of the relationship.

Identities as the first explored process in this circuit of culture, are a category of relations that refer to ways a phenomenon meaningfully manifests, and the related positioning of constituents making up that phenomenon. In this case, the haute couture made up of past traditional materials and objects with social identities tagged to them. These social identities are so crucial in the culture construction process because they are not fixed and define ideologies through time, and thus meaning (ibid). The past traditional aesthetic manifests as the composition of constituents on the present-time haute couture, which created a need to understand the significant position of the past aesthetic in contemporary culture. Thus, Edward Shils' theory on tradition was introduced to support the identity tenet of the circuit of culture and it provided a productive strand to understanding the nature of the traditional aesthetic and thus its contemporary stance. The theory refers to any strand of the past practices and beliefs that are transmitted by any authority, and which are re-enacted by agents through a period of three generations (Shils, 1981). The theory was identified because of two aspects: it encompasses the past traditional aesthetic that shapes the haute couture artefacts in this investigation, and it explains the fundamentals of the valuable power of traditions. Shils, (ibid) regards tradition to be responsible for the patterns of thoughts and actions of the people through life. The theorist envisaged tradition as playing multiple roles, and as a realistic phenomenon that supports agents to realise their goals: by way of embodiment of the sacredness of the past, serving as preserver and conveyer of great body of knowledge and skills, imbued with experiential wisdom, and as flexible in adapting to new environments. Through identity tenet of the circuit of culture theory, enabled by the tradition theory, the study investigated the haute couture, its creators' perspectives and paths, and further explained the significance of past traditions as *representational* signs within the progressive cultural phenomenon.

On the other hand, *Representation* as a cultural process, was examined through the constructionist theory of representation based on Stuart Hall's perspective (S. Hall, 1997). The theory posits that, meaning is constructed using a representational system made up of signs and concepts; and whose relationships require placement into a cultural context for social coding into meaningful representation. This was introduced because of the ambiguity of the representation tenet. This theory was used throughout the study because it creates room for understanding how the language of haute couture shaped by past traditions (an ensemble of

signs) can be used to convey meaning pertaining to aspects of social sustainability. The haute couture transcends literal and conventional clothing communication because it interacts with its environment and evokes critical thoughts that generate other modes of interpretations which impregnate the haute couture artefact with new meaning. That dialogic nature of some haute couture attracted Roland Barthes' semiotics into the study through the denotative and connotative approaches to cater for that nature of language. Roland Barthes expands the constructionist theory arguing that since all cultural objects embody and transfer meaning, they should be subject to extended analysis that places them into wider ideological levels (Barthes, 2013).

To be effective, *representation* is buttressed by other theoretical underpinnings including *production*, *regulation* and *consumption* which are equally ambiguous in this examination hence the adoption of other theoretical support. *Production*, entails the procedure through which creators of cultural artefacts infuse them with representational meaning. The creator does not exist outside culture and therefore, to produce and make meaning for that society, the cultural norms and values of that society are always considered. Production involves the encoding of objects with cultural indexes for effective representation and to facilitate decoding by society. The theoretical perspective has facilitated examination of the haute couture object through its conceptualization and production processes. One of the crucial processes was to translate the conventional clothing function of the haute couture into a visual language. Baudrillard's theory of 'liberation of the [fashion] object from commercial to symbolic relations, was used in the examination, because of the stance it endows the fashion object. Jean Baudrillard's postmodern notion of 'release or liberation' posits that when a fashion object is relieved of its commercial relations and conventional functional duties, it becomes a sign rendered free to combine with all other signs in the logic of differentiation, to generate a language that produces meaning (Baudrillard, 1981). The stance assigns the fashion object with the language role, and therefore a transmitter of messages. Notably, effective decoding is attained with prior knowledge about the receiver or interpreter which drew in the consumption process.

Consumption is a decoding process where messages are interpreted into meaning by audiences. At this point, semantics emerge because differing social backgrounds lead to different interpretations (S. Hall, 1997). An object becomes meaningful when appreciated and interpreted by a consumer. This is the progression of culture because at this point it is also an

influence of identities. Products are embodied with social identities that draw consumers. However, the cultural processes of production, circulation and consumption are not independent of controls on cultural identities. It is the regulation process, the social structures within which the artists operate in form of policies, laws, trends, markets, organization systems, and inadvertently as norms engrained in society that influence artistic practice. Consumption and regulation are related in such a way that they both influence production. Regulations contribute to shaping what is to be consumed or interpreted. Society as the consumer is therefore the major regulator of production through social structures listed above. However, this regulation is also not independent of the actor's disposition in the production process, which also refers to the artist's practice and agency. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice explains the relationship between production, regulation and eventual consumption. It is a model of three founding elements of *social field*, *capital* and the *habitus*.

Asimaka & Koustourakis's (2014) explication of the model's three founding elements was adopted to locate the model with the phenomenon in order to facilitate comprehension. In this regard therefore, the *social field* refers to the social structures, the space where both the artist's habitus as the system of permanent dispositions (including perception, representation, thought, and assessment and evaluation of world order), interact with Capital, the valuable resource founded by social, cultural, economic and symbolic aspects. The model reveals that practice stems from the relationship of the artist's habitus and their position (which depends on the amount and structure of their capital) within the social field. The relationship determines the position of the artist in the field so as to frame expressions. As such, there are possible chances of influence from the social field, upon execution of the practice, towards a desired outcome.

It is a cycle of processes and Paul Du Gay's comment that any analysis of a cultural artefact must engage the 'Circuit of Culture' to be successful (Leve, 2012) was worthy advice. The representation of the haute couture under investigation transcends the contemporary fashion conventions, back to the past and forward into the future, in form of a visual language with signified meaning which was created through processes of influence and reinventions.

Circuit of Culture Theory

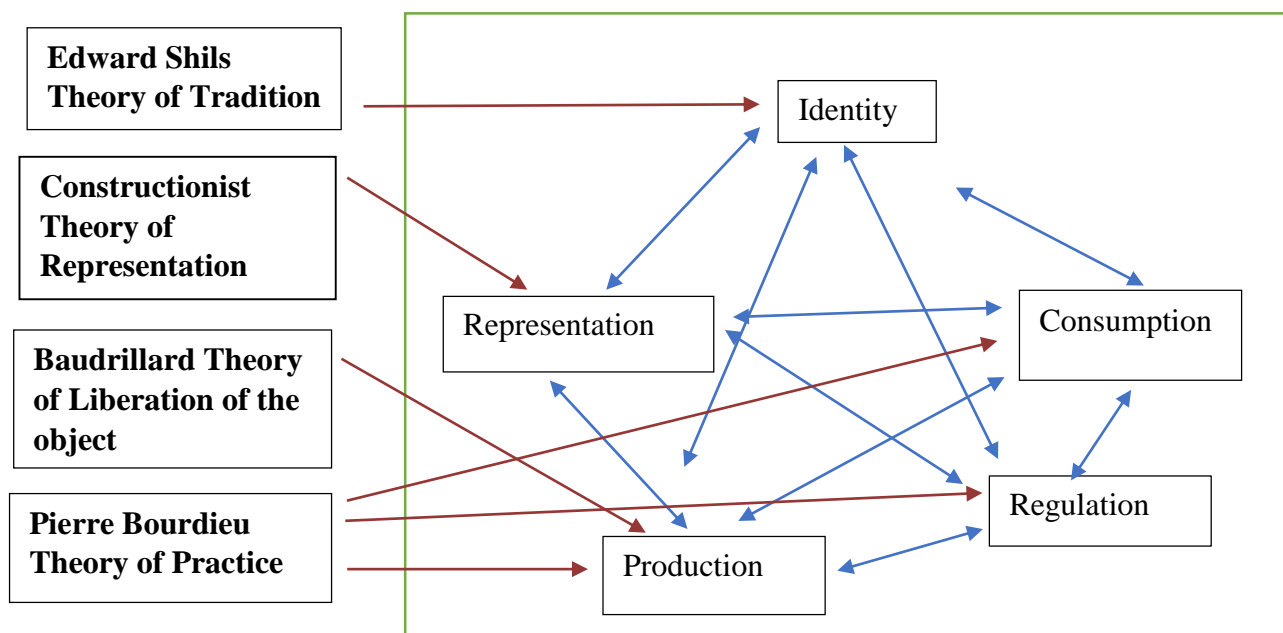


Fig 1.23 Study Theoretical Framework

1.11 Structure of the Thesis

The structure of the thesis is shaped by the themes that emerged from the study data collected. The thesis comprises of six chapters. Whereas chapter one sets the scene of the study, defining terms and indicating circumstances that facilitate the understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, chapter 2 proceeds with a review of literature on three major dimensions. They include: a review of the relationship between past traditions and social sustainability, it relays the analyses of how the haute couture has been interpreted as a visual language and the transition of past traditions into a 21st century cultural aesthetic within the creative practice. Chapter three provides the methodology employed to collect data for the study and it includes the research design with its data collection tools and analysis approaches. It also highlights the study limitations.

Chapter 4 illustrates the findings comprised of 5 sections portraying the contemporary value embodied in past traditions. This is what frames the discussion in chapter 5. Thus, the discussion is an analysis and interpretation of the findings. The chapter synthesizes the findings unveiling its meaning in the current broad ideological realm. Finally, chapter 6 concludes the thesis showing how the study aims were addressed, contribution to knowledge, the study limitations and proposes areas for further research.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The study aimed at establishing the representation of social sustainability by contemporary Ugandan haute couture shaped by past traditions and the articulation of the value embodied by the traditional aesthetic. Although the study mainly focuses on fashion, literature exploring haute couture framed by past traditions is limited, and does not provide a resourceful breadth of expressions that exhaustively explain the prevalence of the past in contemporary times. Therefore, literature exploring other contemporary cultural practices shaped by the past has been incorporated. It aimed at analyzing the representation of social sustainability and articulation of the value of past traditions, through cultural materials, objects, environments, and activities. The review thus, spans from socio-cultural, economic to environmental aspects and covers a breadth of selected nations across the globe. It is presented under sections namely: 1) Past traditions reinventions: Relating to Social sustainability, 2) Fashion as a Visual Language, and 3) Past traditions: The 21st century culture aesthetic

2.1 Past Traditions Reinventions: Relating to Social Sustainability

This section reviewed the reinvention of past traditions in contemporary society and their relations with aspects that exhibit social sustainability. Social sustainability manifests through the discernible cultural practice aesthetics and outcome, as expressions of thoughts, ideas and feelings that create a positive quality of life within societies. This study regards social sustainability as the state of good quality of life enabled by valuable societal relationships and sustenance systems. As a dimension of sustainable development, herein social sustainability was viewed through its concepts of wellbeing, equity, social cohesion, participation and sustainability awareness.

The reinvention of past traditions in the 21st century is an intriguing phenomenon challenging the prominence of the 18th century science and rationality project that professed relegation of the past for the progression of human life. The presence of past traditions in contemporary society positions them as resilient and valuable in the present. To understand the value embodied in the past traditions and how social sustainability manifests, the study has reviewed scholarship on past traditions in social action. In his theory on tradition, Edward Shils

deduces that patterns of the past are sacred and protected by society (Jacobs, 2007). Edward Shil's theory posits that traditions serve societies, assisting adherents to attain their goals relying on the inherent value and power through its principles including: traditions as an aesthetic of piety with revered powers, traditions possession of an evolutionary quality, and, traditions embodiment of experiential wisdom and knowledge (ibid). The study reviewed the value and power embodied in the past traditions envisaged through the social sustainability conceptual frame made up of namely: wellbeing, equity, participation, social cohesion and sustainability awareness concepts. The concepts are explored further in the following subsection.

2.1.1 *Past Traditions through Piety: Articulating Social Cohesion and Participation*

Past traditions as an aesthetic of piety lead to the resilience of past beliefs, practices values and patterns thereby nurturing a state of life that appears to proclaim the attainment of social cohesion and participation in contemporary society. Social cohesion is the positive attitude towards cooperation by members of a society to nurture productive social wellbeing. It is supported by the various social aspects and activities that enhance a sense of community belongingness such as mutual social integration, cultural vitality and diversity (Kriznik, 2018; Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017; Boyer, Peterson, Arora, & Caldwell, 2016; Boström et al., 2015; Murphy, 2014; Khovanova-Rubicondo, 2012 and Axelsson et al., 2013). Further, participation also refers to the goal of including all social groups in the decision-making processes, to enhance inclusivity, cohesion and security (Kriznik, 2018; Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017; Boyer et al., 2016; Boström et al., 2015; Murphy, 2014 and Axelsson et al., 2013).

For instance, Nwankwo, Agboeze & Nwobi (2018) assert that the wind of modernity in rural Nigeria, and for some urban dwellers still holds their traditional belief and value systems in high esteem, regarding it as the integral part of the culture to assist in crisis management. The scholars' exploration of a range of intangible heritage aesthetic at work, coupled with a review of similar scholarship revealed that the highly regarded rituals and inclination of heritage resources deter misbehavior by communities due to perceived implications. Societies believe that abuse of the social system, subjects one to severe punishment by the divine. It was also noted that the traditional value systems of societies are recognized by security government agencies and its actions justified by community members (Ibid). Such reverence across all social authority structures is what asserts the power and influence of tradition upon

contemporary societies, thereby nurturing peace and security due to peaceful integration. Thus, contemporary society responds positively to the traditional belief which eventually leads to mutual social integration, an aspect of social cohesion.

A similar conflict resolution context in Ghana was explored in early 2011. The argument was that mediation and peace creation through societal sacred institutions with a traditional flavor was important (Ahorsu & Ame, 2011). Reason being that relations in society are governed by rules embedded in local traditional cultures, often directed by normative reverence for kinship solidarity, age, seniority, traditional customs and authorities (ibid). The approach presented a synergetic nature maintained by Idang (2015), UNESCO (2013), Nitzky (2012) and McNiven (2013) who equally argue for the role of heritage tradition in regarding beneficial conflict resolution among different African societies. The power of tradition as an element of piety that facilitates desired living is expressed by the sustenance of the past. By deterring crime, minimizing social strife and promoting inter personal relations in the present, the past traditions assert the constructive power in enabling the creation of mutual social integration.

The review has identified the literature as a building block on to the social sustainability global agenda because the revealed social actions that nurture mutual social integration are descriptors of the social cohesion concept of social sustainability. They facilitate the attainment of a good quality of life. However, the literature denies the social actions the necessary ideological stance for critical consideration at a broader global conversation.

Also evoked is the indigenous modernity imbued in the tradition of the masquerades. Rea (2008) illustrates that, in the modern society the young became the authority of a past practice, introduction of the rural masquerade festivals into the towns, and influenced by modern commodity markets, and the old-age practice - formally manned by elders in society-attains a commendable following by the young people. The scholar acknowledges the emerged context of the masquerades practice as a new local form of modernity. The participation of the youth and the relocation into the urban space is an inclusive invention and reinvention of the given in new times. The power of tradition as an element of piety that facilitates desired living is expressed by the sustenance of the past through the incessant replay of the masquerade performances, the spiritually symbolic costumes, and the effect of perceived implication of the masquerade. Participation, herein asserts as a catalyst of social integration through an

intangible heritage resource in some urban towns of Nigeria. Indeed, Shils (1981, p. 206) expressed as follows,

“Muteness of sentiment and unthinking acceptance of a model visible in conduct of others, the recognition of convenience and the acceptance of results at an expected level of satisfactoriness, are sometimes infused with an element of piety towards the past. The pastness of a model of action or belief may be an object of reverence. Not givenness, and not convenience, but its sheer pastness may commend the performance of an action or the acceptance of a belief.”

The expression lays claim to the great influential power embodied in tradition, explaining how tradition works as an expression of attachment infused with aspects of piety. Thus, the inevitability and acceptance of tradition without questioning, because it is the organic way of doing things. The phenomenon is highly visible in the perceived past of intangible heritage resources of beliefs, practices, and community value systems that have also transgressed into the contemporary environments.

However, Idang, (2015) notes the discontinuity of some traditions which are non-influential in the present, because of their negative and dehumanizing aspects. The negative disposition challenges the givenness, unquestionable acceptance and transmission of ways of life that profess tradition. In reference to Shils, theoretical tenet that traditions correspond to reality, such a turn of events is deemed necessary because the spatial-temporal contexts of the contemporary society acknowledge rationality and sustainability which demand relevant, satisfactory and tolerable results valid for social consumption.

As such, for a comprehensive understanding of the past traditions in new environments, and for sustainable and applicable knowledge generation, there is need to study the nature of the given in order to get insight into the aesthetic properties. This is because different societies have distinct aesthetic that further possess strict, stringent or particular application approaches. Thus, there is need for a critical analysis of the traditional aesthetic materiality to understand factors that facilitate their beneficial manifestation in new environments.

Similar to the ‘mutual social integration’, the ‘inclusive social engagement’ literature denies the social actions the necessary ideological stance for critical consideration at a broader

global conversation. The two issues contribute to the contemporary currents of sustainable development through the social sustainability dimension and thus require a global ideological categorization for critical articulation. This current study then sought to cover those identified gaps.

2.1.2 *The Evolving Past traditions: Nurturing Wellbeing, Equity and Social Cohesion*

Through eras man has managed the interface of past traditions with new times and contexts, by introducing new forms and meanings as society recreates itself to prevail in the environments. This evolutionary nature of the past into new expressions is helping ends meet far from the original but with salient features of historical reference. In this section, the literature asserts aspects portraying wellbeing, equity and social cohesion. The social sustainability concept of wellbeing refers to the comfortable quality of life and human development generated by adequate access to livelihood resources (Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017; Boström et al., 2015; Murphy, 2014; and Axelsson et al., 2013). Equity refers to the inclusive distribution of a livelihood opportunity for people in society (Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017; Boyer, Peterson, Arora, & Caldwell, 2016; Boström et al., 2015; Murphy, 2014; and Axelsson et al., 2013), and as earlier mentioned Social cohesion is the positive attitude towards cooperation by members of a society to nurture productive social wellbeing. It is supported by the various social aspects and activities that enhance a sense of community belongingness such as mutual social integration, cultural vitality and diversity.

While in the foreign land, America, the Hmong societies living in the diaspora of the western world, remembered and nurtured their intangible Asian heritage and reinvented it through music, video and fiction (Lee, 2007). Nostalgia, tradition continuity, trauma of escape from the homeland war and modernity in the new locality facilitated and accelerated the evolution of the heritage to generate comfortable social economic positioning in the new space. The reliance on the craft and hope to achieve a desired position in life, denotes the capacity of the traditional practice as a source of wellbeing. Lee indicates that it is the people who initiated change; their creative ability met with the potential of the past and together created a desired change to prevail in the new environment. Through innovative and creative ways, they attained a state of comfort due to access to welfare needs.

Similarly, the authentic Samoan traditional handicrafts of the century also have a two-fold economic story; the natives produce different crafts, for the domestic and commercial

economies (Lucas, 2009). In the Afro Columbian community in South America, the symbolism of the Palenquera artefact though challenged by commodification and merchandizing (Camargo & Lawo-Sukam, 2015) has economically supported communities. Further still, through that handicraft practice, societies have relied on the past traditions reconstructing it as an economic resource to sustain wide-ranging community lives, thereby fostering inclusive distribution of a livelihood opportunity which relates to the social sustainability concept of equity. In addition to what has been explored earlier, there is a myriad of handicraft initiatives in developing countries that contribute to socio-economic development of societies (Mukamana, 2012; Bano, 2016; Bhat & Yadav, 2016 & Abisugu-Oyekunle & Fillis, 2017). The practice presents a wide-ranging prevalence because it is traditionally engrained within societies, and thrives on local resources and knowledge. Shils (1981) explains that traditions embody great bodies of knowledge and skills which societies can rely on exclusively. They are patterns of action from the past which are inadvertently protected by societies, and readily available for new generations to easily embrace.

Although the literature reveals factors influencing the reinvention of tradition and how the reinvented past has supported societies, similar to the previous section, it is crucial to communicate the nature of the reinvented traditional aesthetic to reveal other enabling factors. Also, significant here is the mention of the value of past traditions conveyed, and the need to recognize and articulate it through the social sustainability conceptual frame of wellbeing, equity and social cohesion. This emphasizes the missing link earlier observed and augments the need for critical visibility.

Similarly, the fashion industry in Africa asserts the embrace of patterns from the past, coupled with the valuable evolutionary nature of the past. The fashion exhibits the return to, and reinvention of traditional fabrics, fibres, patterns and dress styles for the global fashion stage. Designers picked up, replayed and transformed their heritage in new ways, according to the aesthetic new roles in the present. In the last decade of the 20th century Senegalese fashion and costume designer Oumou Sy innovated the cloth traditions; using African materials to create modern styles and traditional weaving techniques to explore modern yarns (Mustafa, 2010). Twenty first century Ghanaian Amaka Osakwe, has also shifted the traditional floor mat onto the human body creating artisanal employment like designer Kebede Liya, the Edun and Suno brands (Jennings, 2011). By replaying traditional knowledge in new ways, the designers are creating jobs for artisans at home. To this, Jennings (*ibid*, p. 14) commended as follows,

“It is those designers who collaborate with African artisans in order to harness authentic materials and techniques ... by basing socially responsible production on the continent, who create the most meaningful results”. Although the evolutionally nature of traditions seems to have majorly targeted the economic element for wellbeing, the social practice of tradition reinvention also nurtured cultural vitality, a social aspect of social cohesion. The aspect refers to societies’ actions and thoughts that work towards preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, which is significantly exhibited in this section.

Further, Jennings (ibid) also communicated significant issues attained through this reinvention for fashion such as: the development of African fashion, developed relationships between designers and artisans, and the archive of African history. However, the literature does not feature Ugandan fashion designer-artists albeit engagement in positive social action and the constructive global presence. Further still, a situational analysis of the current study’s primary research indicates that the work of the Uganda fashion designer-artists represents issues of social sustainability.

In another study, AL-Solaiman, (2016) expressed cultural vitality through architecture, in the evolution of tangible traditions. The study critically highlights the influence of globalization in the restoration of the historical architectural heritage at Saudi Arabia’s ‘King Abdulaziz Historical Centre’. Although at a loss of some historical narrative, there are claims of a guaranteed permanence of cultural reference. The expression reminisces the Macedonian architectural traditions that instead were transferred and reinvented in new spaces invoking questions of appropriation (Ivkovska, 2016). However, occupation of new spaces is a critical and dynamic cultural phenomenon. It is controversial for traditions because new spaces are new contexts that may accord the traditions new meanings that are ascribed to the contexts. Such a situation calls for an understanding of the materiality of the traditions for cultural sustainability, an issue missing in this review. The reason for materiality exploration is because change in globalized spaces is inevitable.

In a similar event, Nettleton (2010) criticized the new spaces, regarding the location of reinvented traditional Zulu baskets in industrial market spaces because the baskets were imbued with a narrative of traditional Zulu heritage in South Africa. The scholar expresses as follows, “... these objects belong within a particular space of production denoted (and fenced off) as authentically African, because it is not industrialized and therefore not modern” (ibid,

p.56). Nettleton is passionate about the heritage resource, challenging the commodification of tradition, and conscious about the nature of evolution and eventual new tradition; also referred to as neo-tradition by Kwami Anthony Appiah (Rea, 2008) and, local forms of modernity in Demmer (2008). Unlike Nettleton, Demmer embraces the term modern and its meaning in reference to the new invented traditions. The scholar deduces that at the advent of modernization the indigenous people reinvented their traditions to form local forms of modernity. In addition, these new local forms of modernity are symbols of cultural growth, the recreation of societies, and further create room for cultural integration that nurtures cultural diversity, a social cohesion aspect necessary in the inevitable globalized contemporary world.

Like Nettleton (2010), the museum curators in Romania are disgruntled about the evolutionary nature of past traditions, challenging the artisans' reinvention of the Romanian folk pottery that responds to demands of tourist markets, and referring to it as new tradition. The curators see the departures as catapulting the practitioners out of the authorized community of traditional craftsmanship (Buchczyk, 2015). However, Buchczyk (ibid) challenges the claim arguing that craftsmanship continuity operates alongside innovation and historical rupture and that such manifestation is inevitable in a globalized environment of low and developing economies that do not often meet socio-economic needs effectively. Shils (1981) further explains this expression that the present is also lacking. The theorist argues that given the deficiencies of imaginative powers of human beings, the need to act effectively requires readily accessible models of action from the past that have been tested and passed as effective.

The theorist further defends the evolutionary argument stating that "the rules which survive as traditions are those which have made the most successful adaptations to change in the environment. As such, tradition is relevant, it has to be working for its value to be sustained in the dynamic world. Therefore, modifications are necessary for tradition to suit new environments towards good quality of lives within societies. That is why there are various adaptations in traditional knowledge to facilitate contemporary applicability.

A review of accounts in this section unveiled scholarly articulation of the evolutionary element of the traditional aesthetic in varied spaces, which facilitates the progression of the traditional cultural heritage of societies, and the critique of the change by some stake holders. The evaluation of the role of past traditions against the social sustainability concepts was instructive because it offered a methodological frame for the current research. Further still, it

reiterated and augments the role of the reinvention of past traditions towards socio-economic development and the progression of societies and individuals.

Although the reinvention and appropriation of past traditions has been challenged by some scholars herein, similar to the previous section, the critique evokes the issue of ‘traditional aesthetic materiality at the encounter of new environments. This literature supports the human evolutionary process as a response to a need; however, it does not mention about the role of the intrinsic materiality of the traditional aesthetic at the interface of a new space, yet it is critical for substantive understanding of the eventual outcome. Shils, (1981, p.213) proclaimed:

“Traditions are indispensable, they are also very seldom entirely adequate ... New possibilities previously hidden are perceived when a tradition enters into a new state ... A tradition does not change itself. It contains the potentiality of being changed; it instigates human beings to change it.”

Recapping the issue, it is crucial that the evolutionary nature of traditions is explored to establish materiality elements that support the evolution process. Perhaps this understanding can also serve to settle the query of appropriation of traditions highlighted in the literature. Further still in this era where sustainable development is a critical global agenda that requires the action of the whole world, contributions to the agenda require visibility. Thus, the portrayed quality of lives that asserts as social sustainability concepts of wellbeing, equity and social cohesion require current and broad ideological framing to get the appropriate articulation. Further, as the section that follows explicates, the past traditions also embody experiential wisdom, knowledge and skills developed and improved through generations hence, their exceptional relevance in new environments.

2.1.3 Experiential Knowledge, Traditional Knowledge and Skills towards Equity, Wellbeing and Sustainability Awareness

According to Shils (Ibid), experiential wisdom is the accumulated experience and knowledge attained over time of trials and tests by generations of societies. The attribute gives traditions an advantage over the new. And the theorist reiterates that, just as experience in life gave the older persons advantage over the inexperienced young, so generations of experience

enriched the spiritual and social life of a society. It is partially because of this wisdom, that the past traditions have prevailed in contemporary times (Beninger & Francis, 2015). The wisdom is rooted in the traditional knowledge system, also referred to as community knowledge (ibid), which is resident in the heritage resource of beliefs, practices, objects, materials and claims; developed by communities during environmental experience. Kabiito, (2010) defines the traditional knowledge as old data handed down from generations to generations, composed of skills, capabilities and problem-solving techniques that vary according to societies and which change over time depending on testing and environment. It is an integral part of culture, and the scholar stresses that the knowledge is valuable because it is responsible for man's mutual learning and adaptation to environments in addition to empowering local communities towards life and environment sustenance.

Shephard (2010, p.629) confirms when he stated that “Over the last few decades, we have witnessed the meteoric rise of a category of local or indigenous knowledge that has entered the lexicon of International cooperation for conservation and development.” The development is clearly exhibited by the economic sector which impacts on the social lives of communities as seen in the previous section. Translation of the knowledge into economic value involves conscious exploration of the environment hence a relationship between the development and environmental conservation; a critical need in the contemporary world, and hence their study as key elements in this value analysis. The value is evaluated through the social sustainability concepts of equity, wellbeing and sustainability awareness. Equity refers to the inclusive distribution of a livelihood opportunity for people in society (Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017; Boyer, Peterson, Arora, & Caldwell, 2016; Boström et al., 2015; Murphy, 2014; and Axelsson et al., 2013). The livelihood opportunity in this case, is the free access to the available array of past traditional cultural materials, skills, knowledge, and models of action which have been exploited through generations, and translated into value. Sustainability awareness is herein explored for its reference to the need for behavioural change towards ecological production and consumption (Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017; Boström et al., 2015; Murphy, 2014; and Axelsson et al., 2013). Lastly, Wellbeing is the comfortable quality of life and human development generated by adequate access to livelihood resources (Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017; Boström et al., 2015; Murphy, 2014; and Axelsson et al., 2013).

In relation to development, Beninger & Francis (2015) expound that traditional knowledge is a resource that provides communities with tangible economic value through

objects and services. The Namibian communities' economic gain from the tradition of the Marula (*Scelerocarya birrea*) tree for skin care and food products is an example. The prevalence of the knowledge in contemporary societies lays claim to the value bestowed as a worthy and relevant resource. It is a treasure and seen as a point of view which people can live with and by (Idang, 2015). Thus, the value is that element of usefulness or importance of the wisdom, and therefore the traditional knowledge, occupying a pivotal place in contemporary societies. Other scholars including Pullanikkatil & Shackleton, (2019), also present an array of artisanal communities across six continents, with eighteen countries exploiting traditional non timber forest knowledge as an economic resource towards poverty alleviation, and thus wellbeing, critical for the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. The economic products include healthcare, cosmetics, food and utility ware. Stupples (2014) focuses on the development of art including the fine art and highlights the underestimated economic value of the traditional resource. Similar studies by Matsenjwa & Musiiwa (2016), Mukamana (2012), Buchczyk (2015) and Vallard (2011) all explicate the development of the creative industry to support the quality of lives of communities in the 21st century resident in traditional knowledge.

In addition to the development through objects and services, the resource also caters for the tourism industry through Eco museums; “representing and repackaging local cultural traditions as living cultural heritage, iconizing cultural villages creating new cultural economics for rural development” (Nitzky, 2012). This intangible nature of heritage packaging further includes the cultural routes, example of the Council of Europe cultural routes extending from the Atlantic to the Southern Caucasus and from the Baltic to the Mediterranean; which currently serve as a source of innovation, small business creation, local income generation, and cultural tourism products and services (Khovanova-Rubicondo, 2012). This builds on to the wellbeing concept.

Value also lies in the sustainability awareness attributes seemingly embodied in the traditional knowledge systems. Modernization and capitalism negatively explored the evolutionary nature of past traditions and witnessed the challenge ensued on the traditional knowledge systems. Alidri (2016) illustrates the claim through the overexploitation of the cultural Shea tree and general abuse of land in Northern Uganda among the Lugbara community, which necessitated a return to the past. In order to save the tree, there was a call to return to the past traditional tree harvesting methods in addition to informing the consumption. Several other scholars including Bit & Banerjee (2013); Tacoral, Atik, Yilmaz, Aslan, &

Altunkasa (2017); Thornton & Scheer (2012); Turner & Spalding (2013); Adams et al., (2014); Sangha & Russell-Smith (2017) and Mowo et al., (2013) reflect on the sustainability awareness concept through forest mismanagement activities by societies in the developing world, at the interface of modernity. Significant is their appreciation of community participation, a return to the past gesture, for a remedy.

Reflecting the previous sections, the literature relays the embrace of past traditions in the present, contemporary value of the past traditions and their contribution to environmental protection. But also relays the gap and need to apply an inclusive approach that involves all stakeholders especially the bearers of the traditional knowledge, the local communities, together with the environmentalists and the scientists. This fallback to old knowledge conjures Shils' (1981, p.204) statement,

“Experiences do instruct, and what is learned from experience leads both to confirmation and revision of what was previously believed. ... Learning how the system works means learning how to live in it by observing and assimilating what others do and have done in it. Each generation thinks that it is doing what is reasonable and it pays little attention, usually, to the fact that it is reiterating patterns recurrently reenacted in the past”.

It echoes the missing link in the previous literature, for the need to understand the nature of the knowledge which herein involves the bearers. For that matter, it explains the contemporary reference to the past for efficacy because the present is from the past, and old-age societies developed survival systems through experiencing the environment and circumventing challenges accordingly.

Despite that possibility, Beninger & Francis (2015) report that traditional knowledge is not seen as novel, therefore, not protectable because of its communal and old-age elements. Although the claim can be countered by the evolutionary nature of the traditions, a study and report about the nature of traditions is crucial to also counter such. The reinvention of traditions explored in the previous section, accords the traditions new forms and roles hence the meanings to prevail in new environments and times, and thus acquire a novelty status.

In general, the literature has relevance to the current study and is valued for augmenting the role of the past traditions through social actions towards the progression of societies.

However, there is a highlighted gap about past traditions aesthetic study, required for a holistic understanding of the factors enabling the aesthetic to prevail in new environments. It therefore became critical for this study to consider the aspect for the current research. Further still, the prevalence of commendable value attained from the reinvention of past traditions seems not to be accorded the sustainability global visibility hence unveiling a gap about current ideology articulation. The new significance of past traditions requires placement within acknowledged forms of common life such as equity, wellbeing, social cohesion, social participation and sustainability awareness. This kind of categorization of the identified value into the broader realm of contemporary global currents accords the social actions pertinent consideration at the critical global discussion. As such, the analysis of the prevalence of reinvented past traditions in contemporary society basing on the current global social sustainability agenda was a worthwhile exercise because it shaped a nexus research frame for the present study between past traditions, haute couture and social sustainability. The literature studies also elevate the point of society as the owner and protector of traditions and therefore, the critical need to engage the communities concerned or stakeholders in the processes of cultural phenomena analysis. Since the springboard of this inquiry was fashion shaped by the past traditions representing the social sustainability notions, it was also worthy to understand fashion as a visual aesthetic.

2.2 Fashion as a Visual Language

In this study, scholarly literature on intellectually meaningful haute couture, has been selected for exploration targeting fashion embodied with meaning. It moves beyond the repeatedly and widely explored haute couture representing the popular commercial, status and beauty fashion themes (Davis, 1992; Malcolm, 2002; Giuntini & Hagen, 2008; Welters & Lillethun, 2011); attention has been put on conceptual haute couture which embodies discourses on cultural trajectories and in line with the conceptually grounded study focus. Identified literature has varied haute couture interpretations which have been explored, their similarities and differences noted and accorded due attention towards a critical review. Significant is that the literature heavily draws on the semiotic approach to show the relationship between the haute couture artefacts and culture embodied. Although focus is on the fashion language, it is also worth noting that some scholars highlighted the incorporation of other languages to facilitate the meaning making process.

As a way of doing things, fashion applies to many facets of life. In this exploration, focus is on the fashion artefact as a meaningful visual cultural phenomenon. Paulicelli (2009) defines the concept of fashion as an assumed meaning clothes attain in a given historical, cultural, and political context, and in both private and public spaces. In Malcolm (2002) fashion refers to the changes that happen to clothing styles over a period of time. Malcolm relates the change aspect to the fluidity of culture and the temporal and spatial aspects of existence in a global society. Thus, fashion as a formation by social actors, is a component of culture since culture embodies a whole range of everyday life experience including social cultural practices, values, beliefs, and artworks.

2.2.1 *The Concept Haute Couture in the Contemporary Fashion Discourse*

The haute couture style of fashion involves a creation process through innovative and creative processes involving materials, imagery, objects and all that creates required effects. As Malcolm (ibid) observes, the fashion product is an art work with a distinct aesthetic coherence which takes precedence over function. How then does the fashion language construct meaning, engage a social interaction with effective reciprocation? Theorist Stuart Hall expresses that, “like spoken language, the fashion industry uses items of clothing to say something (S. Hall, 1997)”. They function as signs to enable decoding or interpretation of meaning. Language thus posits as a signifying practice exploring various materials and forms as signs and symbols to represent ideas and concepts in culture. The following section reviews fashion as a language focusing on the conceptual haute couture style that embodies idiosyncratic critical cultural narratives.

2.2.2 *Mellisa Smith’s Semiotic Scrutiny of Elsa Schiaparelli’s Couture*

Smith unveils the literature review with Schiaparelli’s ‘Tear Dress’ describing it as follows, “... It is in the detail where Schiaparelli subverts expectations. In the system of the 1930’s couture, the Trompe-l’oeil tears are shocking with their references to nakedness and savagery and set the dress outside the boundary of traditional couture” (Smith, n.d.). The description matches further revelations by Smith that the designer was influenced by the socio-cultural environment then; the surrealist artists whose era was famous for transcending cultural boundaries, deconstruction and sexual displacement. Smith expressed a challenge in reading the designer’s work, but knowledge about the artist’s conceptual mind grounding; interests, era

of existence, affiliates and associates, general context and material aesthetic, portrayed a considerable level of success. Smith further applied Saussure's model of semiology in the analysis of the 'Tear Dress' although extended examination for meaning generation beyond Saussure's signified 'Couture garment' to Barthe's connotation level of signification, towards the 'Savagery of fashion' meaning. Smith did not mention the level at this point, but illustration of knowledge about it in other works indicated the informed position of the scholar. The connotation level moves beyond the obvious to uncover reading located in the wider realm of ideological understanding, critical in conceptually conceived works of art and featured by the 'Tear Dress'.

Smith also explored another interesting Schiaparelli haute couture entitled 'Lobster Dress' that maintains surrealist influence but created in collaboration with designer Dali, who was obsessed with phallic imagery and impotence. The lobster image was strategically placed at an erogenous zone on the garment. In reading the haute couture, the Smith explains the connotation level of signification unlike in the previous haute couture, and deduces that the dress "manages to reference penis envy, vagina dentata and castration anxiety, all in one whimsical garment" (n.d, p.6). It is clear that the reading was influenced by Smith's exploration and collation of knowledge on the signifiers, a set of signs, (artist's conceptual mind grounding; interests, era of existence, affiliates and associates, and general context and material aesthetic) that enabled meaning generation.

At a secondary point of the haute couture reading, the scholar introduces another semiotic growth of the approach by Fiske and Hartley (1978) that posits that ideology is no longer static, presenting what they referred to as the 3rd order of signification whereby the meaning invoked at the connotation 2nd order changes depending on the wearer. In other words, fashion can mean differently in different contexts, growing Barthe's approach that ideology is also not static. The position contributes to the fashion/culture binding stance of change, and strengthens the constructionist theory of meaning making. The constructionist theory applied in this analysis, recognizes "the public social character of language. It acknowledges that neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning in language... We construct meaning using representational systems to make the world meaningful..." (S. Hall, 1997).

The analyses of the above artefacts by Smith reveal an employment of a combination of meaning making tools including, the semiotics supported by the conceptual map, and the denotative and connotative approaches. They illuminated the metaphoric nature of the artefacts, an element that is significant and relevant for this current study. The scholar exhibited another meaning construction enabler as the recognition of the social and cultural conditions of the times through its influence on the artefact. A missing link is the views of other stakeholders. Although the ‘Tear Dress’ and the ‘Lobster Dress’ are 20th century creations and not a 21st century cultural aesthetic, consideration of the views of stakeholders within the creative practice –missing herein– to cater for the complexities of socio-cultural constructions is necessary.

2.2.3 *Susan Earle’s Semiotics Shadow in Mimi Smith’s Couture*

The constructionist theory evokes Susan Earle’s analysis of Mimi Smith’s ‘Steel Wool Peignoir’ (1966), made in sheer pink nylon and eggshell laced edges with thick bands of steel wool. Earle (2011) informs us of the conceptual mapping of Mimi as an interrogation of the pressing social and political concerns of the times, including women’s work and social conformity to nuclear holocaust. Unlike Mellisa Smith in the previous analysis, Susan Earle does not overtly mention the signification approach applied to read Mimi’s sculpture fashion (as she refers to it). It is however evident that semiotics is employed when the scholar states that, “Then and now, her own life {referring to designer} and world events inform her production, often furnishing the subject matter as well as the materials of the work that she makes (Earle, *ibid*).” Earle further mentions that the work is exquisitely clear that there is a merger of form and concept and also reads the sculpture fashion as follows, “its boudoir elegance is undone by the clear association of the steel wool not with a fantasy wife but with the drudgery of house work” (*ibid*, p.14).

At this point is where Barthes signification level is unveiled at work. By referencing the ‘Boudoir¹ Elegance’, Earle is at the denotative level. With critical sign aesthetic merger, the connotation signification takes shape transforming the “flimsy night gown ... into a protective gear”. Earle (2011, p.14) reads the sculpture fashion as a “protective” gear, “a kind of armour for the bedroom”, and notes that to the designer, the piece signifies, the realities of

¹Merriam Webster defines ‘Boudoir’ as a woman’s dressing room, bedroom or private room. Inhere ‘boudoir elegance’ reference is to the graceful style of the bedroom attire.

marriage in contrast to its illusions. Earle further mentions that at one presentation the designer encouraged viewers to imagine themselves clad in the garment and what it would mean to them. By this, the constructionist cultural stance seems to be acknowledged, when the scholar states that the fashion functions on a number of levels, including metaphoric consideration of violence against women (domestic and sexual). Despite that and with the belief that Mimi Smith's work was exquisitely clear, the scholar still wondered why it was not adequately understood. Earle seems to have forgotten her acknowledgement that the work functions on various levels of signification and that it can be interpreted in different ways by different persons. However, meaning does not depend on material properties only, but rather on its symbolic function (Hall, 1997), which is even culturally constructed. In addition, designers and artists are more focused on expression of their inherent sensibility unconscious about the audience. Therefore, the public may not interpret the artwork as per the intent of the artist.

The literature offers a good conceptual map reading and sign relations that constructed a possible meaning. This enabled the treatment given to the aesthetic framing the artefact, a smooth relation with particular meaning making theories by this review. Although Earle was also able to explain the artefact manifestation, theoretical inclination for objectivity is missing. This renders the literature lacking in guidance because the data analysis process employed is not replicable knowledge to facilitate understanding for the current research. It is crucial that theories are relied on because their successful use increases their applicability and ability to facilitate challenges in new researches.

2.2.4 *Jarred Johnson's Merger of the Constructionist and Transportation Theory of Meaning*

Jarred Johnson's analysis of designer Alexander McQueen's 'Highland Rape' (1995) also introduces new meaning making approaches. McQueen's haute couture assemblage is a narrative of the mid-18th century historical suppression of the Scottish culture by the British. Whereas the previous scholars' meaning making tools were limited to the fashion garment ensemble, Johnson considered a performance set as part of the representation system: an intriguing and theme suggesting invite, show title, fashion runway setting, venue, music soundtrack, props and accessories, model appearance and behaviour (Johnson, 2016). The scholar argues that the performance set was supposed to elucidate the clothes meaning as

created by the designer. The set as a meaning making tool is composed of other languages assisting the fashion language to generate and transfer meaning.

Hall (1997, pp. 4-5) states that,

“... all these practices work like languages ... because they all use some element to stand for ... what we want to say, to express ... a thought, concept, idea or feeling. ... But their importance for language is not what they are but what they do, their function. ... They construct meaning and transmit it”.

At this point, noteworthy in the analysis is Johnson’s defence of the 1949 transportation theory by Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver as another meaning making approach in fashion. Although negated by visual cultural scholars (Johnson, 2016), this review appreciates otherwise, that meaning can be transported from sender to receiver. In exploring the theory’s structure, the scholar explains its application on the fashion object illuminating the role of the designer in the transmission of messages. Since the designer has a message to relay, he endeavours to identify and apply a culturally recognizable system for execution. Indeed, the fashion system in this case should be made up of parts that constitute it, such as fabrics and clothing accessories. The 21st century has moved beyond to augment the system by combining with technologies of text, light and sound as representative parts in the transportation theory structure.

I thus reinforce that the designer can intentionally express their ideas and thoughts with a purpose of communication. As such, they use materials that are socially coded to effect intended interpretation. It is also true that the designer’s message may be misinterpreted due to the unfixed public social character of language in the varied contexts. However, designer can target societies that recognize the shared codes and conventions for effective interpretation. Hence the theoretical stance as the ‘intentional approach of representation’ (Hall, *ibid*).

Johnson’s reading of Mcqueen’s ‘Highland Rape’ elucidates the intentional approach of representation, also facilitated by the constructionist grounding which appreciates social coding of language. The scholar’s theoretical vantage recognizes both cultural constructions, and the designer’s purpose to imbue the fashion with the intended message. Reference is to Macqueen’s use of the renowned traditional Scottish tartan and argyle to connect and locate meaning (Johnson, 2016). And here, the designer echoed Charles Sanders Pierce’s semiotic

approach; the icon classification, as a type of sign, to meaning making. The Scottish traditional fabric patterns as an icon of Scottish culture.

In regard to Pierce,

“An icon is a sign in which the thing serving as expression is, in one or other respect, similar to, or shares properties with, another thing, which serves as its content. ... Not only should the relation connecting the two things exist independently of the sign relation, ... but in addition, the properties of the two things should inhere in them independently” (Lund University, 1989, para. 1).

Although not mentioned, Pierce’s semiotic analysis is the tool Johnson employed to relate fabric and designer’s intended message. Thus, it appears that semiotics actually caters for the transportation theory tenants. However, Johnson’s analysis is quite explorative and instructive because of the acknowledgement of the new forms of languages and the application of the sign disposition approach. However, this is discredited because failure to explain it using a theory discredited its sustainability and thus application in new research. The employed transportation theory also required a contemporary support which was identified as Hall’s Intentional representational theory for future researches.

2.2.5 *Victoria Rovine and Strangelove’s SaartjeBaartman Icon*

Strangelove’s 2002 haute couture featured in a show entitled ‘They Look at Me and That’s All They Think’ is significant with the iconic of black womanhood exploitation. It was inspired by a historical figure whose life became a symbol of a terrible history of white prejudice against South Africa’s indigenous culture. SaartjeBaartman, an indigenous South African woman was taken to Europe in 1810 and featured in side shows because of her distinct body physiognomy. She died in 1815 and her remains were only returned to South Africa in 2002 at the insistence of President Nelson Mandela (Rovine, 2010a).

Like Johnson, previously explored, Rovine (ibid) alludes audience comprehension at the show to designers’ composed organization of the language aesthetics; the title of the show, the performance with dancer, and the show timing (2002) that corresponds with the return date of the remains of Baartman. Rovine meaningfully states that, “This garment, made for a performance context, evokes the distinctive body and the tragic story of SaartjeBaartman. The

same shape, characterized by its bustle-like extensions – beautiful forms with an underlying sense of foreboding and discomfort”.

The literature analyses have exhibited that cultural aesthetic material, context, various language effects, and the fashion form, all applied together can facilitate a meaning making process. However, it is also true that in varied context, comprehension of designer’s intent would be missed. Throughout the analyses there is a pattern that conceptual haute couture meaning is contextually grounded, with effective scrutiny through the constructionist’s approach of representation.

However, it is also clear that an amalgamation of various models of semiotics is highly significant in facilitating the meaning making process. But like Earle’s analysis of Mimi’s artefact, the lack of theoretical grounding of phenomenon explanation in this literature is not sustainably instructive for the present research.

The analysis indicates that fashion is constitutive of social relations and therefore, an embodiment of a cultural aesthetic, and signifiers or representations of the social order. It portrays that a contemporary product explores cultural aesthetic for meaning construction through the following aspects: social aesthetic identity and relations, aesthetic disposition and assemblage study, text and form constructions, social contextual order knowledge and conventions. However, it does not give a hint on the progression of the fashion form beyond mere society reflection. This challenges the study; the role of fashion in 21st century contemporary society! Highlighting a crucial role of the need to analyse materiality in the shaping of society progression. Significantly, the illumination of fashion as a language through which society can make meaning of things highlights an opportunity for the fashion object to play a role in the general social development of societies. The study sought to explore that possibility; beyond visual pleasure to social development leveraging over the potency of past traditions to encode the fashion form and for the form to decode issues of social concern. The analysis also indicated that theories organize knowledge and construct objectivity through shaping observations, and therefore an analysis of fashion artefacts herein should consider the engagement of theories.

2.3 Past traditions Reinvention: A 21st Century Culture Aesthetic

The section presents an analysis of literature on the reinvention of past traditions in the 21st century. The century is experiencing a continuous return to the traditional aesthetic within cultural practices although through are invention of the aesthetic exploring techniques, materials, structures, form, colour, sound, and all possible principles and elements of expression. Abioha (2010) acknowledges that it is an inevitable change because of the assertive emergence of globalization. But critics of the reinvention of past traditions argue that it can lead to the loss of cherished heritage into extinction and therefore, there is a critical need to preserve the heritage of societies in its authentic forms (Well, 2006 cited in (Fenn & Blandy, 2012; Sanya, 2013, and Squire, 2016 cited in Carr et al., 2016).

However, the literature also indicates that much as societies are positive to retain their ways of life in their authentic profiles but the waves of change are beyond their control. Rather, communities have embraced change beyond heritage preservation and restoration for the sake of history and nostalgia; to preservation because of socio-economic value contained, the shaping of subjective identities and definition of spaces in the globalized environment, and the appreciation of new unique aesthetic on the international scene. As such, the traditional aesthetic reinvented and embodied with new meaning is produced through the cultural practices, distributed and embraced for the new environments. The literature analysis is presented thematically as follows: Past traditions Reinventions for the globalized space, Reinventing the past traditions towards preservation for contemporary relevance, and the African past traditions as an international fashion aesthetic.

2.3.1 *Past Traditions Reinventions for the Globalized Space*

In this section, tradition reinvention is valued for the shaping of subjective identities and definition of spaces in the globalized environment. "... As elsewhere in Africa since around 2000, there is a trend towards a broader reinvention and new aesthetic of African traditions among young urbanites (De Witte & Meyer, 2012)." This emerged at a time when the progressive promise of modernity had become a conflict of the hasty innovativeness, the economic change and the western norms of life. Hence the desire for people to run home to the familiar environments, the past traditions, a zone that provides a space in the conflicted globalized space. In fact, Tuchman-Rosta, (2014) argues that heritage becomes integral in an

incessantly homogenous world of globalization. Ogude (2012) exemplifies the claim presenting 21st century Kenyan traditionally oriented and originally rural based multi-ethnic music. Coupled with ethnic specialty dance styles and cuisines, the music features in the urban night spaces of Kenyan cities. The scholar refers to it as "... a performance that signals competing fluid, and mobile identities at play ... defined by cultural experimentations and a simultaneous violation and affirmation of a tradition that is constantly plagued with leaks and change". It is an expression of liberation from strings of both the modernity upheaval and the essence of traditions, strongly asserting the use of material culture to negotiate a position, and define a different and desired contemporaneity amidst a cultural mix.

Here, we are reminded of the South African dancer, Gregory Maqoma and his cultural cocktail of dance styles; a multi-South African ethnic mix with global insinuations. Maqoma expressed, "I have freed myself from demanding traditional values and cultural identities ... I have allowed other cultures, traditions to inform part of my anthropological cocktail" (Maqoma, 2011). The disposition affirms temporal and spatial positioning that creative minds occupy as culture evolves. The modern wave and globalization unsettled traditions introducing an array of conflicting cultures that had no firm roots thus, invoking agential means for the artist to prevail.

Although the energy indicates artistic aspiration as a source of power, the potency of the African traditional aesthetic in the shaping of contemporary thoughts and ideas appears to be present and active. In here, modernity and globalization have been strongly held liable for the past traditional change supported by artistic aspiration playing a critical human agential role. The materiality of past traditions is not identified as crucial in this transformation. Maqoma contributes to fueling the contemporaneity of tradition through the urge to artistically express from within, asserting a personal distinctiveness, although embodied with, and framed by socio-cultural trajectories equally framed by the past.

Further still, the reinvented tradition obviously manifests, or can be interpreted subjectively as a social representation due to the socially grounded frame. This is because human action carries elements of society's past, a partial social identity that Shils, (1981) regards as society property. However, artists reproducing tradition may not necessarily intend to archive cultural heritage, or reproduce prevailing environments. Rather in need of new

experiences and inventions as individual artistic explorations that can portray individual progress and identity within a practice. Maqoma (ibid, p.71) affirms when he expresses that,

“My recent work in collaboration ... tends to override the ‘African Formular’ and stereotypical expectations. It is a work that fuses mud huts, internet, and globalization; It focuses on silence, tolerance and honesty. In our quest to express our true identities, we searched for the real reflection of our identities, searching inside rather than outside where everything else is happening in isolation”.

Arguably, artists’ inherent capital resource is engrained in past traditions and together with their disposition the artist locates a position in the 21st century socio-cultural milieu. Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice model explains the root of practice and the nature of outcomes. The model reveals that practice strongly stems from the relationship of the individuals’ habitus and the quality of their capital. In this regard, the habitus predisposes the artists to frame their expressions in desired ways. As such, this literature reveals and supports a significant aspect for this current study on contemporary artefacts. It is crucial to consider that there are chances of relative independence of the artist in execution of the practice, towards individualistic outcomes. In this case and despite the habitus influence, Maqoma, employs past traditional materiality to express inherent experiences hence expressions embodying both an individual identity, and that of society.

Maqoma’s analysis evokes the Mexican cinema comics, ‘Tin-Tan’ and ‘Cantinflas’ that reflected the Mexican reaction to foreign influence and globalization. The natives reinvented the Mexican past traditions with a purpose to free themselves from mind subjugation and supremacy of foreign cultures in their communities. They aimed at creating an environment where they can prevail with a belonging and identity that they relate to.

The literature further portrays critical aspects that are a pattern in 21st century society, such as the homogeneity of globalization and the search for a self-identity, liberating one from both past traditions and modernity confinements. Specifically, the contemporary dance practice approach by Maqoma appears to be insightful into understanding the manifestation of past traditions in new environments and its use to shape subjective identities.

It is an indicator of the progression of tradition; construction of individual identities, and identification of modernity and globalization, as catalysts of the advancement of the works of past traditions in contemporary society. Significant is the resilience of the traditional aesthetic and its' pragmatic potency in contemporary dynamic environments, an element that warrants an investigation. Otherwise, replay of traditions for identity assertion inadvertently leads to the restoration and preservation of heritage.

2.3.2 Reinventing the Past Traditions towards Preservation for Contemporary Relevance

There are also those artists and designers proclaiming the restoration of old traditions and not challenged by the temporal factor and its assertions of change. Thailand visual artist Dani Iswardana is passionate about the past and conscious of the values ensued by the global agenda. The artist looks for themes that are not only timely but also interesting to the audience (Lis, 2014)" in his venture to save heritage. Lis expounds that the artist replays Thailand tradition of the Wayeng Beber old scrolls representing contemporary social challenges through a dialogic artistic style with ecological consciousness in regard to material selection and production process; which are part of the critical global conversations of the 21st century. Zhimo (2011) supports the artist's introduction of the conversations into the heritage restoration, arguing that "the reinterpretation of the past would be possible only through justifying it in a new frame of reference according to the need of the present time".

The above analysis highlights the relevance of past traditions in the 21st century, denoting their progression beyond the cultural heritage preservation essence, and further into the recreation sector as a pleasurable aesthetic as well as one responding to the sustainability agenda. That is the development of societies as they assert in new environments. The stance is equally supported by Shil's thought on traditions which states that, "The rules which survive as traditions are those which have made the most successful adaptations to changes in the environment; the rules have shown their efficacy".

It should also be noted that the reinventions should sustain a distinct and obvious connection with societies. Malian fashion designer, Kandioura Coulibaly illustrates the strand through an agenda to preserve and perpetuate the cultural heritage of Mali (Goldner, 2010). In an interview with Goldner, Coulibaly stated that,

“I do not make fashion for money. I make fashion because I think ... I work for my thoughts and these thoughts are not for me. It is for humanity its self ... I am only a pipe ... I want to recreate a museum for humanity” (ibid, 2010).

This echoes the cultural vitality aspect within the social sustainability frame of the global agenda. Cultural vitality is important for the recreation of society to nurture social integration which ensures peaceful societies in the world. In addition, the Senegalese costume designer Oumou Sy sustains the social strand with her collection of haute couture; a spectacle reinventing traditional material culture accorded with an aura of supreme presence, amidst modernity material waste in an urban landscape (Mustafa, 2010). The scholar referred to the designer’s work as “visual and sensory feasts as well as platforms for the articulation of an Africinity which mines the past and present to produce a future that is in constant dialogue with origins”. The designers’ vast heritage inscribed expressions are beyond ordinary clothing, rather exceptional garb embodied with historical narratives, and thus, archives of the progression of societies thereby promoting cultural vitality, a social cohesion aspect building social sustainability, one of the conversations of the present global order.

Although the literature above relays a constructive approach to the restoration and preservation of heritage through valuable currents; the mentioned nexus between past traditions and the aspects related to the current global sustainability agenda or social action, requires critical pronouncements of the relevance of the traditional aesthetic. As such, the current study on past traditions is challenged to articulate the link and further explore how the traditional aesthetic relates to the global currents for relevance. This argument is supported by the ‘Circuit of Culture’ theory that posits that, for the understanding of contemporary cultural phenomenon, more so located at an international stage, the study of contemporary power and ideologies among other theory-principles is recommended. Otherwise, the past traditions have clearly manifested as a 21st century international fashion aesthetic

2.3.3 *The African Past as a 21st Century International Fashion Aesthetic*

The 21st century global theme of African fashion is underpinned by the past traditions. It seems to have begun in 1907 when the famous artist Pablo Picasso introduced the African aesthetic on to the international scene as an inspiration resource. The later decades of the 20th century witnessed the growth of the fame of European and North American fashion designers

relying on the African aesthetic for new and extraordinary design (Rovine, 2006). More non-African designers continued with the source into the early 21st century gaining international acclaim and Ike Ude, an artist and visual culture scholar referred to the paradigm as a “tabula rasa for a radically new kind of modernism with an African foundation” (Jennings, 2011).

The global recognition of value embodied in the African aesthetic was a wakeup call for African designers because amidst the past African aesthetic celebrations, there were intimations of the reclamation of a lost property. Jennings (2011) expressed that position stating, “African designers have mixed feelings about the way western designers adopt the visual language of Africa. Besides, while it keeps the continent in style, clichés are inevitable”. Moreover, Sudanese designer Omer Asim defends the above position arguing that “the Africans want to wear things expressing their identity” (Jennings, 2011). The assertions seem to be expressions of the aspiration to repossess that which has gained international acclaim, yet credit is given elsewhere.

In the 21st century the African designers bombarded the local and global terrain asserting ownership of their cultural wealth (Rovine, 2010 & Jennings, 2011). An analysis of the work of the young fashion designers at the 2009 FIMA fashion festival in Niamey, Niger, illuminates the struggle and artistic aspiration (Rovine, 2010). Basing on the prominent design features rooted in African culture, the scholar inferred that the designers surpassed the African identity and attained a global representation, further referring to it as the complex, multi-layered field of African fashion design. The African past traditions contemporaneity is further maintained by Jennings' (2011) array of 21st century African fashion exploration illustrating how African designers have repossessed their past, reinvented and positioned it on the global stage as an African production by Africans.

The literature has revealed issues about the values attached to the reinvention of past traditions and how communities are using the aesthetic to negotiate the challenges of globalization. Unveiled is the role of the traditional aesthetic in shaping of alternative identities for prevalence in the conflicted contemporary times. The preservation of past traditions has moved beyond history and nostalgia, to apply the value contained in the aesthetic in order to negotiate the ills of humanity and environmental abuse. Further still, there is a revelation that the African past traditions gained acclaim on the international fashion scene. However, the literature does not critically articulate how the past traditions work at that global stage, despite

the progression of contemporary society with new material innovations. The prevalence of the traditional aesthetic alongside the 21st century state of the art technology innovations challenges this study to establish how the materiality of the traditional aesthetic prevails in the present.

2.4 Conclusion

The scholarship analyzed is a segment of more related literature because the study is exploring cultural phenomena characterized by fluidity and dynamism, yet expansive and with depth. However, there is limited literature on the contemporaneity of the past traditions through haute couture representing social sustainability. The review augmented the importance of nomenclature in research communication, an element that frames the social sustainability scope of the present study. It is thus crucial for this study to frame the value of the traditional aesthetic in the broader realm of contemporary global currents, such as the social sustainability notion. It also exhibited the relevance of holistic research and theory in exploring cultural construction and meaning making by cultural objects, supporting comprehension of contemporary issues under investigation and the insightful role of theory towards the generation of objective explanations of phenomena. Also notable is the illumination of the gap in scholarly literature about Ugandan fashion shaped by the traditional aesthetic, and its progression into an intellectual sight of cultural transformation. Significant is the pragmatic potency of past traditions in contemporary society which exposed a lacuna in regard to past traditions materiality analysis. How does the traditional aesthetic as a matter facilitate communities to attain their goals in conflicted globalized environments? The gap presented a research area for this study to explore.

3.0 Introduction

The study investigated contemporary Ugandan haute couture that are shaped by past traditions and representing the notion of social sustainability, to identify the contemporary value of the traditional aesthetic in the construction of a global social sustainability discourse. In seeking to understand the nexus between haute couture, past traditions and social sustainability within the African context and taking Uganda as a point of reference, the study addressed 3 research questions: a) What characterizes the selected contemporary Ugandan haute couture shaped by past traditions and represent aspects related to social sustainability? b) How does the contemporary haute couture shaped by past traditions represent the notion of social sustainability? c) What aspects have influenced the reinvention of past traditions to shape contemporary Ugandan haute couture that represents social sustainability?

The chapter describes the study's research methodology presenting rationale of the choices made for the research process, theoretical grounding including research design and approach, research population and sample, methods of data collection, analysis and synthesis of data, ethical considerations and limitations of the research.

3.1 Research Design

The research was majorly exploratory facilitated by descriptive aspects. It was a focused ethnography design supported by the narrative inquiry, and it applied a qualitative research approach. The sociocultural stance of the haute couture artefacts constituted the haute couture artefacts, the haute couture practice, and the socio-cultural institution through which the artefact formation traverses. Understanding it required both an ethnographic experience and story generation, and thus mandated the qualitative approach because of the constructivist philosophical stance. The position offers room for the researcher's penetration into the world of {things and} others for a holistic contextual and temporal understanding (Maxwell, 2005), that provides a methodology for investigation of individualistic opinions towards meaningful interpretations of the situation. The focused ethnographic research design suited the exploration because the study required the researcher's immersion in the social context of the researched. This facilitates experiential collection of valuable primary data for the research focus towards

a descriptive understanding of the culture under investigation (Hogan et al., 2009). Further, focused ethnography as the research design strategy was applied particularly because of the nature of the sociocultural context under investigation. The haute couture artefacts shaped by past traditions, make up a very small socio-cultural scope, defined by a distinct and culturally differentiated genre in the Ugandan fashion industry. Knoblauch (2005) and Kühn (2013) argue that a situation of this nature requires a focused ethnography strategy because of its contemporary and differing complexity in a wider social locality. In addition, and reflecting Wall's (2015) assertion, the research situation presented problem focused research questions, formulated before going to the field, and targeted data collection in which the fields reflected particular situations relevant to the research. Also, some valuable data fields (the phenomena construction field sites) were characterized by limited time frames. The research employed the narrative inquiry procedures for story construction from identified key persons. This is because the narrative inquiry not only focuses on individual experiences, but also socio-cultural perspectives within which the phenomenon is shaped (Clandinin, 2016). The phenomenon also asserted a relegated aesthetic confronted by power dynamics, which required support from a research design that would offer an insight into both individual, and collective identity experience. Narrative inquiry offers a valuable insight into the complexity of a phenomenon because it allows researcher to attain the quality data in stories. In addition, it takes account of the relationship between individual experience and the wider social and cultural contexts (Squire et al., 2014). This was enabled by the utilization of a wide range of data sources including stories from people, biographies, published interviews, personal websites, in addition to the haute couture artefacts.

The situation under investigation, involved 9 haute couture artefacts as the unit of analysis herein identified by their titles and the creators, fashion designer-artists including: Figure 4.1 *Uganda Martyrs* (2004), Figure 4.2 *Shame on You* (2010) and Figure 4.3a *My Roots* (2006) by Stella Atal; Figure 4.4 *Baroque Afrique garb* (2016) by Samson Senkaaba popularly known as Xenson; Figure 4.5 *Resonance* (2004/2005), Figure 4.6 *Contact Deep* (2014) and Figure 4.7 *Spontaneous* (2014) by Josephine Kyomuhendo, popularly called Jose Hendo; Figure 4.8 *Poncho* (2004) and Figure 4.9 *Bead Shawls with Head gear* (2014) by Sanaa Gateja. Within the fashion industry in Uganda, these contemporary haute couture artefacts are shaped by past traditions and they represent the global social sustainability notion. An intriguing phenomenon worthy examining.

To ably analyse and interpret the reinvention of past traditions in contemporary societies, the study adopted the socially constructed approach to knowledge generation. It stipulates that “meanings are constructed by individuals as they engage with the world they are interpreting”, and that “humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspective”; and key theoretical notions facilitated understanding by specifying relating conditions towards an explanation of the situation. They included: the Stuart Hall et al (1997) ‘Circuit of Culture’ which facilitates the examination of the haute couture trajectory and the ‘Theory of Traditions’ by Edward Shils (1981), because it explains the fundamentals of the valuable power of traditions. In addition, the constructionist theory of representation, theory of practice and the post-modernist theory of ‘Object Liberation’ from commerce were employed because they offered an opportunity to critically analyse the major sites of action, and the influencing factors in the replay of past traditions for contemporary society.

3.2 Study Population

The general study subjects included the male and female population in the fashion design and visual art practices, visual culture scholars, promoters and advocates who are acquainted with the visual art and design practice in Uganda. From this broad population a sample population that participated in the study was selected.

3.3 Sample Population and Strategy

The sample population aimed at maximising credibility of the study results, and reminiscing Asiamah et al., (2017) the most appropriate sample for research participants was constituted by the individuals with the ability and opportunity to provide the most accurate information. As such, the purposive sampling strategy was applied for this study, facilitated by the researcher’s familiarity in the field. Identification of research participants was based on possession of authoritative knowledge about the haute couture practice under investigation, as well as authoritative knowledge in the fashion and visual art practices framed by past traditions of Uganda. Besides, the researcher selected social and cultural sites that reflected the study subject and were scheduled to gather observable population.

Applying Higginbottom et al. (2013) advice regarding sample size, data saturation dictated the sample size when new possible participants failed to generate new interpretations. The sample population was thus made up of various participants including: four (04) renowned fashion designer-artists who are the creators of the haute couture artefacts under investigation; three (03) fashion design practitioners, four (04) visual artists, four (04) visual culture promoters, and two (02) visual culture scholars. In addition, the researcher participated in two (02) fashion workshops and six (06) cultural events related to fashion and visual art where the study examined the visual manifestation of past traditions in the contemporary haute couture and in the broad art and design landscape in Uganda. The six events included: *The Chombretrope Show* (2018) hosted by Goethe Zentrum, Kampala; *Everyday Queens Exhibition* (2019) at the Institute of Heritage Restoration and Conservation, Makerere University; *Fashion designer Gloria Wavamunno's Presentation at 32 Degrees East* (2018); *The 2018 International Cultural Tourism Fair Dialogues* at the Uganda Museum; *The Traditional Artefact: Contemporary Art Symposium* organized in (2018) by Goethe Zentrum , Kampala and *The ASFAs 2018 Fashion Symposium* held at Stylz Hotel, Kampala.

Following the above events, and using a purposeful sampling approach, the researcher went ahead and selected three (03) FAVT fashion designers and seven (07) MTSIFA fashion design students. The choices were guided by the workshop structure approach and participants' themes of work respectively.

The field research was undertaken majorly across Kampala District central division and Wakiso Makindye-Sabagabo division. Kampala district featured greatly because it is the hub of the fashion and visual art activities in the country. One of the fashion designer-artist is located in Wakiso district another in Kampala districts. Two others live and work in Paris and London respectively although they occasionally visit Uganda.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Data was acquired with the application of various methods to facilitate triangulation and for an in-depth understanding of the situation under investigation as well as attaining the value of rigour and breadth, and for corroborative evidence of the data obtained. Therefore, the methods included: Observation, interviews, participant observation, document survey, photography, audio and video recording and field notes.

3.4.1 *Secondary Resources Survey*

Secondary sources such as books, scholarly articles, internet resources (websites) and other published information on the contemporary and historical nature of past traditions, fashion as a visual language, perspectives on the relationship between pastness and social sustainability, and the visual aesthetic, were consulted to aid understanding, and further substantiate the research process. This method was relevant because it provided information which was not accessible through observation and interviews. It also offered an opportunity to survey fashion designer-artists' past engagements, recorded narratives, and on-going researches in the area beyond Uganda. The exploration and identification of research support resources offered a springboard that also firmly situated the study.

3.4.2 *Observation*

Observation as a research method is rich in providing information about researched contexts and the understanding of participants' worlds as noted by Kawulich (2012) and Ciesielska et al., (2018) et al., 2017. As such, it was found relevant for this study that critically required that understanding. Specifically, the method was used to understand the nature of the nine (09) haute couture artefacts under investigation, participant behaviour during interviews and, during the study of the six (06) socio-cultural events at the field sites. The physical works could not be accessed so the researcher explored visual representations of the works which were availed by the designer-artists. So, examination of the artefacts began by observing and studying physical properties to understand the manifest and latent contents embodied in the compositions of materials used to make the artefacts. Haute couture content observation was guided by the nature, type and style of materials, their cultural-social contexts, their application in artefact composition, and assemblage style. In trying to understand the nature of the past traditions shaping the artefact, researcher engaged theory and methodology. In the search for creation dates, purposes of the objects, and also in order get information about the creators, the data collection process employed support from other methods including interviews and document survey.

Observation was also applied during in-depth interviews and the socio-cultural event study. The researcher observed participants' expressions, listened to experiences and opinions in reaction to situational contexts through responses to question-and-answer sessions, and

views were captured through note writing. In addition, the researcher also strategized through identification of key informants from the social gathering. These were engaged through in-depth interviews for deeper resourceful views.

3.4.3 *Participant Observation*

Participant observation focuses on the behaviour and processes within the situation under scrutiny (Ibid). There was need to understand how the past traditions are framed to shape haute couture through an observable process in a particular context. It was selected because the method is effective since the researcher gets involved to internalize the processes, and the involvement also establishes a normal role for the researcher lessening conspicuousness, and eliminates outsider caused stigma in the environment (Johnson et al., 2006). It targeted the process of haute couture conception and production for a hands-on experience from relatively similar sub-cultural groups involved in the creation of haute couture framed by past traditions. These groups were the purposively selected fashion workshops as controls. The MTSIFA 2017 fashion design students' projects, and the 2019 FAVT- Intervention fashion workshops. They were the best choices because the groups' projects of conceptual fashion design development themes resonated with the nature of haute couture under inquiry.

Within the MTSIFA fashion group projects seven (07) designers were purposively selected. The researcher interacted with them individually and as a group for a period of two months keenly observing and examining their creative choices through content and contextual analysis of significant aspects of their haute couture concept and design development processes during the course of their studies at Makerere University. Being a Fashion design instructor of the cohort of student participants in this study, the researcher had great advantage to easily access the students and to closely observe their individual creative paths and the extent to which they referenced their past cultural traditions in their haute couture fashion concepts. Conversational interviews and focus discussion sessions, were also applied to qualify the expressions, perspectives, beliefs and perceptions that influenced their creative choices which had been previously noted by the researcher through their brief fashion statements. Also, the FAVT fashion workshops offered the researcher opportunity to analyze the students' haute couture concepts from the lenses of an independent practicing fashion designer in business perspective. The researcher joined the team as a mentor of one of the workshops which created an opportunity for participant observation over a period of one month (in six sessions spending

two to three hours per session). The students' haute couture development process was subjected to observation, analytical assessment and the researcher engaged the participants using a conversational interview approach.

3.4.4 Interviews

This method was thought to be valuable because it has the potential to elicit rich, dense descriptions and offers the researcher an opportunity to clarify statements, and probe for more information. Further still, the study required that participants' opinions and experiences are captured. The interview method offers a good opportunity if the nature of research requires critical understanding of the worlds of people for valid interpretation of situations. Patton (1990) argues that researchers can favourably assume reliability of participants' perspectives as meaningful and intelligible, with chances of clarification, which was mainly done through probing. The process availed data and it is a legitimate one.

The researcher engaged semi-structured in-depth interviews with 17 participants. The audio recorded interviews had open-ended questions based on the study research themes earlier re-introduced at the beginning of this section. 10 of them were key informants made up of the following: 04 fashion designer-artists of the haute couture under investigation, 04 authorities in visual culture promotion, and 02 visual culture scholars. The rest were 03 authorities in fashion design and 04 in fine art. The engagement aimed at the collection of a breadth and depth of specialized knowledge and particularly informed perspectives about the investigation.

3.4.5 Audio, Video and Photography Recording

Audio and visual recording of data was a valuable tool because it backed up the notes and memory of the explored social fields that discussed the phenomena and the haute couture production processes. The recordings offered a secondary audio and visual illustration of information gathered that later on aided the researcher's memory and facilitated the data analysis process. This method also became very valuable because the identified social events were purposeful short-lived sessions, happened between 3 to 5 hours and not replicable. The methods therefore, offered an opportunity to revisit the events through photography, video and audio, a secondary observation opportunity.

3.4.6 *Validity and Reliability of Instruments*

To ensure validity of the research, the researcher engaged a heterogeneous set of participants. These were engaged with probing questions that generated comprehensive narratives, and prolonged inquiries repeated in new formats. Observation involved analytic examination. Interviews were scrutinized with deep insights of the contextual factors and influences. Reliability was ensured by the transparency of the researcher's position, the relevant record of verbatim accounts, the engagement of test cases, and triangulation of instruments.

3.5 Bias Management

As a practicing fashion designer-artist, who is also interested in past traditions, the researcher was confronted with bias implications. To avoid the position and to ensure objectivity, researcher constantly reflected on own choices of knowledge and interpretation which are further verified by other sources. There was also an engagement of variedness of the data source hence the heterogeneous sets of participants, use of open-ended questions for detailed records, and considered all findings for analysis, even those that seemed less valuable. Further still, interpretations similar to the researcher's preconceived hypothesis were verified by varied reasons from the collected data.

3.6 Data analysis

Data analysis process was facilitated by the thematic and content analysis processes employing both the deductive and inductive approaches. Analysis of data began in the field and continued after all the field investigations had been concluded. Some infield analysis was done during the data collection sessions. These preliminary field analysis sessions raised new questions and highlighted study gaps that guided the researcher in identification of other data collection sources and sample population compositions. Before the general analysis, all data collected was transcribed and explored for the researcher to familiarize with the material gathered. Collected data including significant quotes, notes, information, and visual ethnographic material was coded and later organized according to emerging content and thematic areas and categories which were supported by theory from the available literature (See Appendices 10 and 11).

In addition, triangulation of data considering the heterogeneous population and the varied data tools facilitated understanding of the phenomenon, and further supported the inductive research approach towards the generation of the themes explaining the phenomenon. Further still, a secondary and in-depth analysis process was engaged towards meaningful interpretations of the findings. The whole process was facilitated by applying both the deductive and inductive approaches to analysis. Noteworthy is that analysis continued even during the thesis write-up period to ascertain on a few issues through reviewing the collected textual, visual materials and interview transcriptions, towards effective assemblage and synthesis of the report. Three interpretive categories emerged and are critically discussed in chapter five.

3.7 Ethical Issues

The researcher sought permission from participants to have their consent for research participation, and promised to use the data obtained for this particular research purposes only. The identity of the creators of the artefacts under investigation, was sustained throughout and their artworks were credited. All sources and individuals who have contributed to the study have been acknowledged.

4.8 Limitations of the Study

This study encountered some limitations. One of the researcher's data collection schedules relied on events which the researcher could not control. Although the event theme related to the study focus, the researcher had no power over any eventuality in regard to event dates, content, seminar procedures and participants. Researcher did not get enough time to critically participate in the event session. In order to get access to possible valuable data, the researcher identified informants within the event participants and incorporated them in the study for an interview sessions. Finally, during the analysis and interpretation of data, the researcher realised that the voice of the final consumer of the haute couture artefacts was missing. The study cultural trajectory exploration stopped at the promoter of the haute couture artefact as market yet there was a final consumer. So, the study analysis and interpretation frame lack the voice of the actual consumer.

CHAPTER FOUR PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter illustrates the processes and procedures described in the previous methodology chapter that was concerned with the field research engagement for data generation and collection. The goal for the research was to establish the embodiment of social sustainability by contemporary Ugandan haute couture shaped by past traditions and to articulate the contemporary value embodied in the traditional aesthetic. The field research was guided by the following three research questions: 1) what characterizes the selected contemporary Ugandan haute couture artefacts shaped by past traditions and represent aspects related to social sustainability? 2) How does the contemporary haute couture shaped by past traditions represent the notion of social sustainability? 3) What aspects have influenced the reinvention of past traditions to shape contemporary Ugandan haute couture that represents social sustainability?

The collected data was sorted and organized in thematic categories. The emergent themes and patterns of the study findings sequentially revealed, explained and presented as topical issues in three thematic areas including: 1) Particulars of the Contemporary Ugandan Haute couture Shaped by Past traditions and represent Social Sustainability 2) The Haute couture Visual aesthetic: Representing Social Sustainability, and 3) Aspects influencing the reinvention of past traditions to shape haute couture in contemporary times

4.1 Selected Contemporary Ugandan Haute Couture shaped by Past Traditions and Represent Social Sustainability

The investigation required information about the selected contemporary Ugandan haute couture artefacts that represent aspects related to social sustainability. The artefacts were selected because of their intriguing representation of aspects related to the contemporary and global notion of social sustainability, as experienced by the researcher. It was a manifestation of a past and local expression, as contemporary and global. Nine (09) haute couture artefacts were selected and they include: *Uganda Martyrs* (2004), *Shame on You* (2010), *My Roots* (2006), *Baroque Afrique garb* (2016), *Resonance* (2004/2005), *Contact Deep* (2014) and *Spontaneous* (2014), *Poncho* (2004) and *Bead Shawls with Head gear* (2014). Information about the haute couture artefacts was collected and it is composed of aspects that clearly

characterize the haute couture including: the title, fashion designer-artist, date of production, materials used to make the artefact and the social sustainability concept the artefact relates to. All the haute couture artefacts selected as key objects for critical analysis were shaped using past traditions reflecting issues of the social sustainability pillar of sustainable development. As previously noted, social sustainability is defined as the state of good quality of life enabled by constructive societal relationships and valuable sustenance systems. Within the social sustainability frame, the good state of life is cultivated by five social concepts namely: wellbeing, equity, participation, social cohesion and sustainability awareness. The subsequent sections characterize the haute couture artefacts through the following themes: 1) The Haute Couture Manifestation 2) Qualities of the past traditions shaping contemporary Ugandan haute couture; and 3) Creators of the contemporary Ugandan haute couture shaped by past traditions.

4.1.1 *The Haute Couture Manifestation*

First, the study examined three haute couture artefacts entitled: ‘Uganda Martyrs’, ‘Shame on You’ and ‘My Roots’. All the artefacts represented aspects related to the social cohesion concept of social sustainability and are created by Atal Stella.



Figure 4.1
Atal Stella (2004). *Uganda Martyrs* [Bark-cloth, palm leaves reeds, bamboo, bark-cloth beads and paper beads]. (Photo by Giulio Molfese)

The 'Uganda Martyrs' haute couture in Figure 4.1 is one of the first pieces that Atal created at the turn of the 21st century. The artefact is made of past traditions including: bark-cloth, palm leaves, reeds, bamboo, bark-cloth beads and paper beads. Discernible, is the creative reinvention of the traditional aesthetic and its integration to create haute couture that represents the 19th century Christian holocaust that happened in Buganda between 1885 -1887 a result of the religious political tensions that ensued between the Western Christian missionaries and the Buganda monarchy (www.ugandamartyrsshine.com). The peaceful ensemble reflects an integration of traditionalists and Christians. As such, the artefact relates to the social integration aspect of the social cohesion concept. The concept refers to the development of social capital which embeds aspects of social integration and promotes cultural vitality and diversity that enhances a sense of community belongingness to support wellbeing. The concept is fundamental as a base for all other haute couture herein examined because of the social integration element.

The second haute couture artefact, 'Shame on You' in Fig. 4.2 was created using bark-cloth, cowrie shells, razor blades, cotton yarn and sisal stringed cords was complemented with a poem, and also relates to the aspect of cultural vitality.

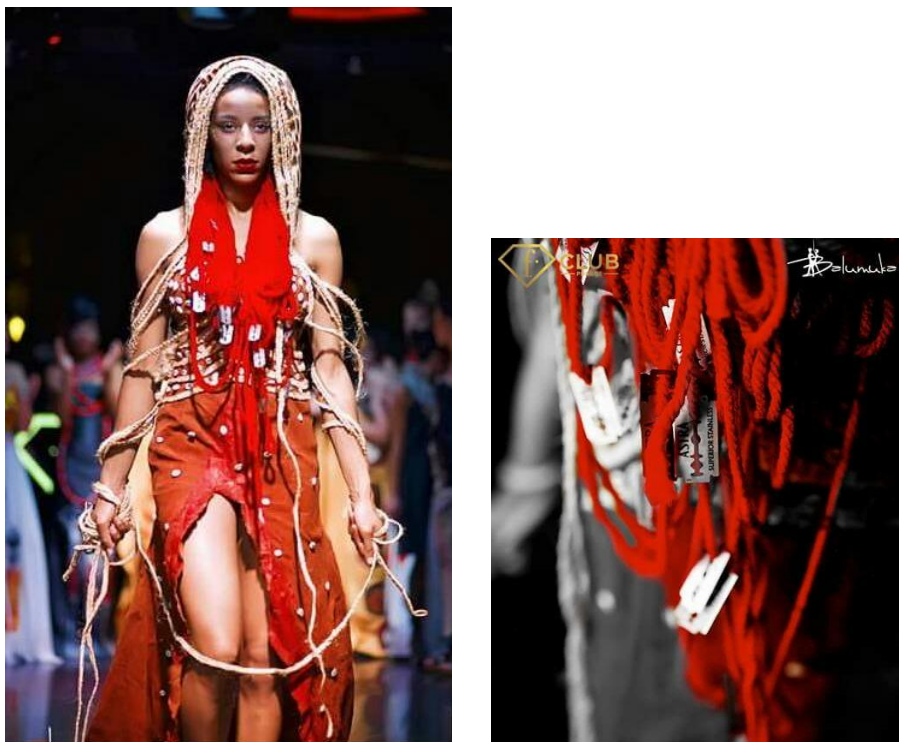


Figure 4.2
Stella Atal (2010). *Shame on You* [Bark-cloth, sisal, cowrie shells, razor blades, cotton yarn and sisal stringed cords]. (Photo by Farantini Lemario)

The haute couture artefact was designed with the poem below:

I know it's a must to do IT
but do you know how my body reacts to IT
Cut, shaved, ashamed, beautiful must I not have
the right to shape my body the way I want?

OR I know it's a must to do IT
because it is a tradition written on the mouth of my sister, my mother
must I not have the right to the joy I
perform myself saved to self by others
Beautiful red lips swollen
opening for you with a false generosity
If I am not allowed to keep myself, how can I give?
cut me, the source of my all-life trembling, fierce, warm, walking...
shame on you

The armoured yet defeatist artefact visual impression which is complemented with a poem entitled "Shame on You" denotes a fight against the traditional practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Female Genital Mutilation /cutting is a tradition rooted in culture and involves the partial or total removal or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons (Mwendwa et al., 2020). It is estimated that at least 200 million girls and women in 30 countries have been subjected to the practice, the majority of cases found in sub-Saharan Africa (UNICEF, 2017). In Uganda, FGM/C is prevalent among some pockets of communities in Eastern Uganda, especially among the Sabiny (UNICEF, 2021). Of late several social change interventions are ongoing to address this deep-seated cultural practice. In this haute couture artefact, Atal exhibits a provocative and energetic stance of womanhood accessorized with defensive tools and locks of rootedness, in a way that connotes a consciousness to question some of the deep-seated cultural traditions that are not socially progressive and thus require social cohesion in order to turn them extinct. Atal used the symbolic representations of cultural vitality as visual narrative to confront and challenge the traditional practice of FGM/C. The accompanying poem serves as point of emphasis visually expressed in 'Shame on You' haute couture aesthetic.

Atal's third artefact 'My Roots' follows suit with cultural diversity. 'My Roots' in Fig. 4.3 is the last impression associated with social cohesion artefacts by Atal, framed by a traditional aesthetic including: bark-cloth, cowries, paper beads, palm leaf, and the chest and facial painting. The traditional aesthetic is reinvented and stylized to assume the contemporaneity of the times. In this work, Atal uses a *mélange* of symbols sourced from different cultures in East, west and Southern Africa to affirm her deeply entrenched roots in Africa. The haute couture characterises the social cohesion aspect of cultural diversity because its' materiality is an assemblage of multi-cultural ethnicities. Following, is the 'Baroque Afrique' participation expression.



Figure4.3a

**Atal Stella (2006) *Roots* [Bark-cloth, cowries, paper beads and palm leaf plait trim].
(Photo by ELK Arne Clausen)**

Detail

Background: Bark-cloth, cowries shells, paper beads strand

Foreground: palm leaf plait trim



Figure 4.3b
Detail of body painting

Fashion designer-artist Senkaaba Samson's aka Xenson is the creator of the bark-cloth garb entitled 'Baroque Afrique' in Fig. 4.4



Figure 4.4
Senkaaba Samson, 2016, 'Baroque Afrique', Bark-cloth and rubber (Photos by David Wasswa)

The 'Baroque Afrique' is a composition of two haute couture artefacts (a gomesi artefact and double suit artefact made out of mud-dyed bark-cloth as a main material) which are complemented with a poem similar to Atal in the previous sections. Senkaaba's poem reads as follows:

I am his Kafuluness Xenson Zinja the 1st
Custodian of the Intrinsic Invisible ancestral philosophies
Connoisseur of the universal concept of Ubuntu (obuntu bulamu)
I 'm the embodiment of Humanity
Ooh human unity or community or common unity

From deep in the village, for long I've been the village
And I know that we in the village
And you in the city,
We wear the same shoes,
Share the same views of office donor fund misuse
We suffer the same consequence
Like if you lost a son
In the state hospital...

You go on seeing sad days reminiscing...

So, do not preach to me peace,
Coz peace, peace prevails only when guns go silent...

An examination of the reinvented past traditions complemented with the poem generated meaning towards social participation. The intriguing 'gomesi' designs drew attention to the poem and together a call for engagement, participation into socio-political affairs was delivered. Participation as a social cohesion concept is the goal of including all social groups in the decision-making processes, to enhance inclusivity, cohesion and security.

The Baroque Afrique haute couture is followed by Sustainability awareness expressions including 'Resonance', 'Contact Deep' and 'Spontaneous' by Jose Hendo. The haute couture collection exhibits the social sustainability concept of sustainability awareness. An experience

of Jose Hendo's haute couture artefacts (Figure 4.5, 4.6, & 4.7) portrayed a consciousness of behavioural change about ecological production and consumption to challenge fast fashion using the bark-cloth traditional aesthetic. The haute couture exhibited two issues; a return to the instructive past in the history of Uganda, an intriguing perspective, and the innovation of the creative sustainable design strategies towards bark-cloth styling which indicated the existence of an informed agenda. Each of the three haute couture portray the embrace of the value embodied in the bark-cloth to meet the sustainability agenda.



Figure 4.5
Jose Hendo (2004/5). *Resonance*
[Bark-cloth]. (Photo by Jan
Donahue and Dale Rollings)



Figure 4.6
Jose Hendo (2014) *Contact Deep* [Bark-
cloth]. (Photo by PLitz)



Figure 4.7
Jose Hendo (2014) *Spontaneous* [Bark-cloth and silk]. (Photo by Bojider Chkorev and Giulio Molfese)

The two last haute couture studied are created by Sanaa Gateja and they are ‘Poncho’ and the ‘Bead Shawl with Head gear’ Representing equity and wellbeing. The haute couture artefacts are indicative of the transformation of bark-cloth into a new structure, and its insightful incorporation of the paper material.



Figure 4.8
Sanaa Gateja (2004) *Poncho Dress Detail* [Bark-cloth, Paper beads, raffia]
Kampala, Uganda: Uganda Museum. (Photo by researcher)

Sanaa Gateja's 'Poncho' and the 'Bead Shawl with head-gear' artefacts indicate the transformation of the bark-cloth into a new form, the bead structure, which he also applied to make accessories for his haute couture aesthetic using paper material. The researcher learnt that the designer-artist traversed communities training people how to make the beads, growing the practice into a tradition and offering welfare chances to members in the communities. That way, Gateja's artworks echo equity which herein encompasses social aspects of equal distribution of welfare goods, services and life chances to people. The 'bead Shawl and head gear' further enhance the story with the amassed collection of beads. The research revealed that many bead makers are involved and that the production of beads to meet the artist's need and the general market, became lucrative business towards socio-economic empowerment for all involved. As such, the artefacts further resonate with aspects of wellbeing in reference to the state of a comfortable quality of life and human development, with access to social welfare needs and desires like food, health, housing, education, safety and employment.



Figure 4.9
Sanaa Gateja (2014) *Bead Shawl with Head gear* [Bark-cloth and paper beads]. (Photo by John Collins)

The revelation in the above section has identified the haute couture artefacts by their titles the works, the creators, the materials used to produce the work and the meaning of the works as per the creators. It was also established that the past traditions are a reinvention of the traditional aesthetic and bark-cloth has emerged as popular to the contemporary fashion designer-artists. Significant about the haute couture is that the stories framed by the re-enacted past traditions embody social aspects that relate to the social sustainability notion of the global agenda of sustainable development. Section 4.2 of this chapter analyses how the haute couture translates into a visual aesthetic representing notions of social sustainability. Thus, it is a highlight of the possible contemporary value embodied in past traditions, instigating the need to analyse the traditional aesthetic.

4.1.2 *Qualities of the Past Traditions Shaping Contemporary Ugandan Haute Couture*

The investigation identified the characteristics and qualities of the past traditional aesthetic that shape contemporary Ugandan haute couture representing social sustainability. It was found crucial because the traditional aesthetic is shaping haute couture that is asserting global and contemporary relevance. Observation of the haute couture artefacts revealed the aesthetic as a combination of both natural matter, and cultural materials made up of expressions, practices and beliefs including: bark-cloth, palm leaves (*phoenix reclinata*), sisal, bamboo, reeds, cowries, raffia, bark-cloth beads, paper beads, the gomesi dress design, the

Latin American inspired poncho dress design, the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and the Zimbabwean influenced cassava batik painting style.

Thus, past traditions materiality was examined to understand the physical properties of the traditional aesthetic and its symbolic meanings. Past and present identities of the haute couture aesthetic were analysed for the understanding of their physical properties, and their temporal and spatial relations and identities. Other characteristics explored were the values associated with the traditional aesthetic. A content and thematic analysis of gathered observational, interview data and literature generated three thematic findings including: 1) The past traditions are a natural aesthetic that embodies ecological attributes, 2) The physical distinctness of past traditions and the embodied historical value, 3) Past traditions are versatile and imbued with economic, social and cultural significance. The themes are presented in the sections that follow.

Natural Aesthetic and Ecological Attributes. It came to the researcher's attention that many materials shaping the haute couture are natural materials (animal and plant matter). Trowell & Wachsmann, (1953) substantiate the account of the natural and abundant source of these cultural materials, further revealing that the natural character is acquired from the foundation of the material, which is the living organisms of plants and animal substances. That natural provision supports societal subsistence freely and inclusively, because the knowledge of resource value exploitation was generated by fore fathers who passed it on from generation to generation (Trowell & Wachsmann, 1953). The Uganda museum archive located in Kampala district also offers a physical resourceful collection of material culture that represents the past traditions examined in the study.

Beginning with the bark-cloth, knowledge of its making unveils the natural quality and ecological values of the cloth. The haute couture artefacts under investigation portrays the bark-cloth as the most popular cultural artefacts explored in the study. The material is made out of the bark of the *Ficus Natalensis* fig tree, called 'Mutuba' in Luganda language of the Baganda of Central Uganda, and knowledge about its making is embedded in society. Through times, when harvesting the bark, the tree is never cut, rather the bark is carefully protected to be able to yield yet another bark (Nakazibwe 2005). The ecological approach of harvesting bark-cloth is supplemented by the no-chemical use in the making of the cloth.

Rather, simple hand mallets employed and the bark is beaten and graded to produce the required cloth texture (ibid).



Figure 4.10
Bark-cloth in natural terracotta brown
(Photo by Researcher)

Related to bark-cloth, is the plaited palm leaf panels made out of palm leaves locally known as ‘Nsansa’ in Figure 4.11 and acquired from the wild date palm plant known as phoenix Reclinata, and the raffia fibre strands from the *Raphia Ferinefara* plant in Figure 4.12. These appear in the haute couture artefacts of Atal Stella and Gateja Sanaa. The materials have a wide and wild growth rate in the jungles of the tropics, and favourable harvest schedules. By the time the fibres and leaves are ready for harvest, young ones are already in place since the trees are not cut. This experiential wisdom of harvest schedules and the harvesting skill that permit continuity of the ecosystem is what facilitates sustainable development. It is knowledge embodied in the ecological system thus its value attribute.



Figure 4.11
Palm leaves, coloured plaited palm leaves panels (Photo by Researcher)



Figure 4.12
Raffia fibre (Photo by Researcher)

The study also identified that Atal's haute couture was adorned with sisal in Figure 4.13. Historically, sisal was a chief cash crop in Tanzania in the late 19th century (Lock, 1962), later to be introduced in Uganda, and to become part of the Ugandan cultural aesthetic. Its natural quality accords the plant material an ecological element with favourable soil regeneration elements. The plant-sourced past traditions embellishing Atal's haute couture artefacts were complemented with the reeds (Figure 4.14), and bamboo (Figure 4.15) also locally grown in Uganda.



Figure 4.13
Sisal fibre (Photo by researcher)



Figure 4.14
Reeds, collection of the Uganda museum
(Photo by researcher)



Figure 4.15
Bamboo
(Photo by Researcher)

Finally, the animal sourced past traditions only featured the cowrie shells (Figure 4.16), locally referred to as ‘Ensimbi’ in Luganda. The cowrie shells naturally formulate from snail calcium and are collected from the sea shores. Until the end of the 19th century, cowrie shells were used as currency in East Africa.



Figure 4.16
Cowry Shells; Right: *Cowrie Collection* Kampala, Uganda: of the Uganda museum (Photo by researcher)

The study has established that some of the material culture that were used in the creation of haute couture artefacts under investigation were natural materials including both plant and animal resources. Among all cultural resources examined, bark-cloth emerged popular to the contemporary fashion designer-artists. Significant about this natural traditional aesthetic is its sustainability value, which it continuously offers to societies. Thus, it is an embodiment of valuable histories as the paragraph reveals.

Distinctness of Past Traditions and the Socio-cultural, Economic and Political

Value. Some of the past traditions are endowed with physical qualities that define their unique appearance, and embody an associated value that further locates the physical aesthetic into a socio-cultural space. Although some of the traditional aesthetic may not have originated from communities where they are located, acquaintance through generations renders them a past tradition of the communities. As such, communities beyond their borders of settlement may share the same traditional aesthetic by physical appearance. However, the ways societies apply and manipulate the traditional aesthetic, coupled with particular tactile and the eventual visual manifestations, cultural distinctness occurs within these different societies. Friedman (2006) defines culture as a specific set of practices of human society, where specific is the alternative way of doing similar things by society. Stuart Hall (1997) complemented the expression when he argued that the practices should carry meaning and value for the society. Further, these practices are the spiritual, intellectual and emotional features, and the distinct materials that characterize a society, and are thus embedded with meaning and value of that society. This renders the past traditions as repositories of culture, becoming an archive to consult when in need of historical reference to facilitate contemporary understanding and eventual application.

The bark-cloth manifests with a rare muddled yet levelled grain structure, in a terracotta shade, popularly developed in Uganda since over six centuries ago. It is an intriguing aesthetic that conjures information about its formation, application and meaning. As such, the reinvention or representation of bark-cloth through visual expressions relays an existence trajectory of the past aesthetic. In this case, the haute couture artefacts evoke the historical and contemporary socio-economic and cultural meaning of the bark-cloth to societies in Uganda. Nakazibwe (2005) substantiates that the traditional veneration of the bark-cloth due to its ritualistic, commercial and utilitarian functions among some Ugandan communities, exists to-date; the relegation of this historic tradition in the mid-19th century, and its 20th century rejuvenation, invested in the production of handicrafts and visual art, articulated issues of ethnic nationalism and identity.

The fabric also represents the international acknowledgement of indigenous knowledge value. Bark-cloth making in Uganda was proclaimed a ‘Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in the world by UNESCO in 2005. This aimed to safeguard the heritage. The historical stance coupled with the physical rarity of the fabric positions the aesthetic with cultural and socio-economic symbolism to Uganda, which is distinct to date.

Another historically symbolic material featured is the cowrie shell, the ‘Nsimbi’ in figure 4.16. It is not unique to Uganda but highly significant because of its role in the economic and socio-cultural history of the country. The shell is an ancient Ugandan legal tender introduced into the country in the 17th Century by the Arab traders to facilitate trade of local produce and slaves. It was embraced by the communities that at its abolishment in the late 19th Century, the value laden material had become part of the cultural fabric as an artefact decoration material as indicated in Figure 4.17. The artefact is located in the Uganda Museum and in Figure 4.18, as a cultural sacred tool. The visual was captured at Dr. Kekimuli Joan’s PhD study exhibition (IHCR-MAK, 2019).



Figure 4.17
Cowry shells décor
collection in the
Uganda Museum,
(Photo by researcher)



Figure 4.18
Cowry shells, in basket on the left and on head
gear on the right, IHCR-MAK, 2019 (Photo by
researcher)

The 'Nsansa' palm leaves plait earlier seen in figure 4.11 is the other traditional aesthetic. It carries an associated significance as a repository of historical accounts, and thus a reference resource for understanding eventual and linked contemporary situations. The material is recognized as a Ugandan aesthetic equally revealing the historical account of Arab occupation in Uganda. The plait structural formation of the *mukeeka* (mat) as referred to in Luganda dialect, is a unique mathematical structural construction technique believed to have been introduced into the country by the coastal Swahili-Arab traders in the mid-19th century. It was embraced by the indigenous people and currently deeply ingrained into their social-cultural fabric. The panels are sewn together to make large mats formally used for bedding, as room dividers, seat material, wrapping fabric and as a surface for grain drying, among many ethnic groups in Uganda (Trowell & Wachsmann, 1953). Currently, the mat mainly serves as a seat surface on the ground and as a decoration among various communities.

Though minimally used, probably because of its rough texture coupled with its external origin (Tanzania), sisal (figure 4.13) historically provided an alternative to fastening fibres, used to tie animals safely in spaces, and as a housing construction material since mid-twentieth century. The raffia fibre (figure 4.12) from a leaf of the *Raphia Ferrinafera* palm tree was also used to fasten items and material, string beads, as decorative fibre and for sewing spiral coils in traditional basketry (ibid). The reeds (Figure 4.14) and bamboo (figure 4.15) were applied in the construction of housing structures, making of big domestic containers and musical instruments by the communities. Researcher also observed that currently, the sisal, reeds and bamboo plant materials still serve as building and housing structure aid and material, and the raffia and 'Nsansa' palm is still a primary material in the making of basketry.

Further, among the past traditions shaping the contemporary haute couture in Uganda is the 'gomesi dress design in figure 4.19. The gomesi dress design of the Baganda people in central Uganda, echoed in designer-artist Samson Senkaaba's haute couture, is a unique garment design which features a shoulder raised puffed sleeve, a floor length sash and its general assuring and collected composure, promising a revealing trajectory of dress design development in the country.



Figure 4.19
The 'Gomesi' (Photo by
Researcher)

The design was developed in early 20th Century from the ancient traditional 'Suuka' design that wrapped around the body from the armpits to the ankles. To make the gomesi, the Suuka was fitted with a yoke and sleeves, which endowed it with dignity and grace (Trowell & Wachsmann, 1953), a feature it has carried to the present day. The design has been embraced by other ethnic groups in the country and on various events at the global stage, it has been coded, a Ugandan identity de facto. Until today, the garment design is a highly respected garb that graces socio-cultural events especially among the Baganda in Uganda.

Last among the tradition aesthetic shaping haute couture herein investigated is the female genital mutilation (FGM) past traditional practice prevalent mainly in the eastern parts of Uganda especially among the Sabiny who regard the practice as a rite of passage to womanhood, a symbol of ethnic cultural identity, and as an ancestral divination ritual (Namulondo, 2009). The practice is not distinct to Uganda but also prevalent in some areas of the East African region as well as other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, and in the Middle East (UNICEF, 2016). In addition, the 2020 UNICEF report on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

in Uganda indicates that 95% of women in Eastern Uganda support abandonment of FGM but strong social influences and peer pressure limit women's ability to abandon the practice and influence others against it (UNICEF, 2020). Currently, it is a controversial practice challenged by contemporary society as a human rights abuse of woman but intriguingly protected by the woman thought to be its victim (ibid). Moreover, Atal Stella, one the designer artists could not resist representing the gruesome practice through her haute couture visual expression.

The study therefore noted that physical distinctness of the traditional cultural forms and materials were sustained and shaped by their functions and associated value through socio-cultural encounters of communities over the centuries. The lasting impressions of traditional aesthetic innovations are those which had great impact on the people and have framed history that is still handed down from generation to generations. The history is embodied in the traditional aesthetic that carries it through spaces and times. Sustenance of this working element through centuries posits the traditional aesthetic as contemporaneously valuable, an aspect that has rendered the traditional aesthetic to be regarded as evolutionary as the following section unveils.

Versatility of Past Traditions and the Cultural, Social and Economic Significance.

The researcher's examination of the past traditions and how they are used to shape contemporary Ugandan haute couture, also revealed the versatility of the traditional aesthetic within the scope of contemporary visual cultural practice.

Regarding cultural Significance, Hall (1997) defines culture as the widely distributed forms of societal practices which make up the lives of people with similar identities and in the same locality. Thus, past traditions as part of the cultural fabric embody meanings to societies. It is noteworthy that bark-cloth as the most popularly featured traditional aesthetic had been adapted much earlier before the 21st century as indicated by the Uganda museum collection in figure 4.20, and by the designer artists to attain desired artistic outcomes. Haute couture artefacts by designer-artists Senkaaba (Fig. 4.4), Sanaa (Fig. 4.8) and Hendo (Figures 4.5, 4.6 & 4.7) in section 4.1 of this chapter equally showcase the evolutionary quality of the bark-cloth aesthetic. Atal haute couture in figure 4.3 and Sanaa in figure 4.9 show that it can also be bleached and painted with coloured pigment. Designer-artist Sanaa's haute couture further portrays a restructuring of the bark-cloth to create beads, which Atal used to further embellish

her bark-cloth haute couture. This bead structure is examined in detail as an economic value later in this section.



Figure 4.20
Bark-cloth colour and pattern variations in the Uganda museum, (Photo by researcher)

The 21st century has also witnessed the raffia fibre, as another past traditional material replayed. In figure 4.3, Atal applied the aesthetic as bead stringing aid for garment decoration and as a sewing material. The observation also revealed that forms and functions of the other traditional materials equally evolved. The ‘Nsansa’ palm leaf plait panel originally used in domestic functions among various communities in the country, was redirected to garment trimming in a similar way as the ancient cowries, reeds and bamboo were introduced in haute couture by different designer-artists.

On the other hand, the study also examined the sacred yet controversial ritual of female genital mutilation, as a past tradition that warranted scholarly investigation using a visual cultural lens, through haute couture. Atal represented the ancient practice controversy in a new format (Fig. 4.2). The designer-artist reproduced the past aesthetic as a dramatic visual intrigue through a combination of reinvented traditional aesthetic and as an artistic interpretation through the fashion form. The title of the haute couture, “Shame on You” supports the visual protest against the practice which is enhanced by the poem, and illustrates a woman’s cry against the dreaded traditional practice. Moreover, the charged womanhood in a contemporaneous garb that is secured by wound strings and adorned with an armoury illustrates

the extent to which FGM is jealously guarded among some pockets of traditional communities in Uganda and the neighboring regions.

Another practice is poetry, a traditional oral communication artistry, popular in the history of Buganda (Kabiito, 2010). Like Atal, the study also reports its application by designer-artist Senkaaba Samson to support the reinvention of the gomesi dress design (Fig. 4.4). The haute couture artefact portrays the reinvented ‘gomesi’ assuming another role, and the change of its self-assuring design features, suppressing the respectful stature of the garment design, introducing a perplexing and clumsy look that asserts the evolutionary character of the traditional aesthetic. Senkaaba informed the researcher that he aimed at communicating instability in Africa (Personal interview, 2018). The new look transformed the dress design into a visual language.

In addition, the researcher noted that Gateja’s bark-cloth Poncho (Fig. 4.8) was a reinvention of the Latin American traditional Poncho garment style (Fig. 4.21), reinvented in bark-cloth, even though the designer-artist did not allude to any previous connection with Latin America. Further research may be required in exploring the trans-cultural connections of people through dress.

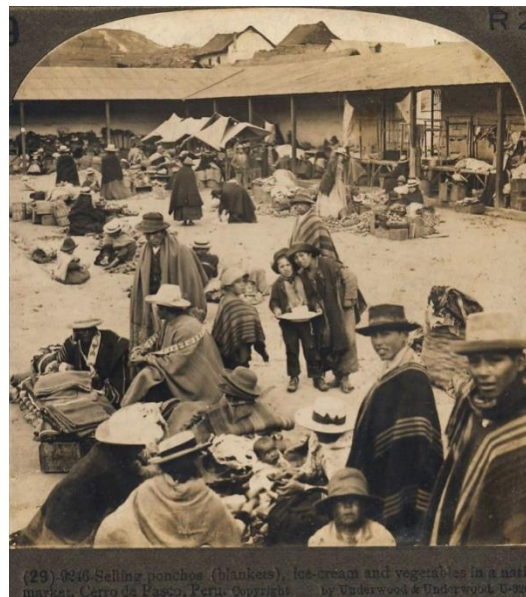


Figure 4.21
“Peru – Selling ponchos (blankets) ...in a native market, Cerro de, Peru” Card by Aussie-mobs (CC PDM 1.0)

From the researcher's interpretation, Sanaa maintained the fashion line of the garment and made it using Ugandan bark-cloth, embellished with paper beads and raffia. The reinvention of past traditions from other cultures is sustained by Atal Stella through the body painting in (Fig. 4.3a & b), which reflects the Zimbabwean traditional batik artwork style (Fig 4.22).



Figure 4.22
Representation of a Zimbabwe batik
wall hanging (Photo by researcher)

The examination unveiled that the evolutionary nature of past traditions rendered the traditional aesthetic versatile and therefore the designer-artists have been able to manipulate the materiality since the 1990s to achieve desired ends. Culturally, the versatility of the traditional aesthetic led to its progression to suit changes in the ways of lives. It was also noted that the change is beyond expressions, materials and objects to include practices, and the reinventions have also extended to embed traditional aesthetic from cultures beyond Uganda. As such, the versatility of the past traditions has changed the cultural life thereby impacting on both the social and the economic environments.

By social significance, reference is made to the social worthiness invested in the reinvented aesthetic towards community social integration. A study of the haute couture shaped by the reinvented past aesthetic indicated a relationship between designer-artists and

their communities, because past traditions explored are known to be socially rooted materials and practices. Indeed Shils (1981) deduced that, “patterns of the past are sacred and protected by society.” The study revealed that the past traditions are indeed rooted in societies. Three (3) of the key informants, who are also creators of the haute couture under investigation sustain the observation, when they expressed as follows:

“I work with people in the communities where bark-cloth is made (rural) because that is the hub of the traditional knowledge. I buy the material from the men and they work together to ensure that I get the quality and the quantities that I need. In the process we build relationship networks that keep the society together. Similar with the women bead makers, they supply me with beads they make in their communities. They always pull together the efforts to meet the numbers that I require (Sanaa Gateja Interview, 25th June 2018).”

Another expressed saying,

“Our ancestors did what they could, created their material innovations and managed to engrain them in society. The master would teach the village about the material work and the whole community would learn. Nothing to do with copyright (Samson Senkaaba Interview, 2018)!”

Designer-artist Jose Hendo also added,

“I am excited about ... something that matters with the communities, like my bark-cloth tree planting campaign in the rural is intended to sustain the traditional practice of bark-cloth making at its root (Jose Hendo Interview, 14th February 2018).”

This is substantiated by the account of Trowell & Wachsmann, (1953) on the traditions of Uganda, that the past is a bond of societies where they are practiced. During an observation session at one of the cultural events, the dialogue on ‘Culture Heritage and its Conservation’ on the 21st September 2018, researcher learnt that, reintroduction of past traditions in new formats, among societies resettled in new spaces was a bondage tool for the people in the community (CE-Um, 2018). This resonated with what designer-artist Sanaa revealed about the community resettlements in Bwindi forests in Uganda, and how the reinvented practice of traditional basketry successfully enabled communities to reconnect in the area (Personal Interview, 25th June 2018).

The researcher noted that the above expressions were all rural community contexts, a hub of past traditions. However, during a participant observation session in Makerere, an artistic narrative by a fashion student revealed that the past traditional value was also situated in the urban space (MFDS #3, 2017). A traditional beverage, the ‘Malwa Beer’, often taken by people originating from eastern Uganda was reinvented, styled and relocated in the urban space. It became a source of integration of the varied social categories of people in the urban spaces, under what the participant referred to as ‘Embooji za Malwa’ in vernacular, interpreted as ‘The conversations of the Malwa beer Session’. The participant further expressed that the people of high status who joined the team would dress-down to match the style of the gathered members and discuss current critical issues concerning their communities. As such the drink asserts as a unifier of all social classes of people in the space.

The versatility of past traditions is imbued with a social value seen through the relationship between designer-artists and the communities they value, and people in a community and their cultural aesthetic. Since past traditions are engrained in society, communities have strong bondage with the traditional aesthetic that reinventions of the aesthetic in new times and spaces rekindles the bond. This is because of the new inclusive value, and the embodied history that evokes nostalgia further strengthening social integration. Substantial is the perseverance of the past traditions through times and spaces, credence given to its versatile character that facilitates the sustenance of the bond of society through times and spaces. This character also facilitates societies economically.

Versatility of Past Tradition and Economic significance. It also emerged from the study that the versatility of the past traditions is coupled with economic values. The value significantly first emerged when the latent content of the bark-cloth and paper bead past aesthetic, and the eventual interview with artist Sanaa Gateja were carried out. The haute couture by Sanaa displays a unique, new and intriguing structure of the bark-cloth and paper that invoked a study. It was followed by an interview where the artist explained that the bark-cloth bead is a late 1990s innovation of bark-cloth structural reinvention that transcended into a new traditional handicraft in Uganda, the bead craft.

The artist expounded that bark-cloth bead making began as a source of material for his jewellery, later to also introduce recycled paper material to complement the bark-cloth for jewellery haute couture making (Sanaa Gateja, Interview, 5th January 2018). This raised the demand for beads.



Figure 4.23
Paper beads (Photo by researcher)



Figure 4.24
Bark-cloth beads
Sanaa Gateja (Photo -
Courtesy of Sanaa Gateja)

Consequently, Gateja engaged women in various different communities in the country and to produce beads, thereby growing the craft into a household engagement for economic gain. As a result, the craft practice transcended into the commercial market place in all regions of the country. When I asked the artist about the number of people that are empowered by the practice, Gateja had this to say: “We carried out a head count in 2015, but they are now slightly over 50,000 people (ibid).”

Other designer-artists equally benefited economically from their traditional aesthetic reinventions. During the interview with Jose Hendo, she said ‘... I am earning a living out of it (Personal Interview, 14th February 2018)’. Atal Stella who lives in Paris shared that the majority of her clients are from other African countries and African embassies (Personal Interview, 25th March 2019). The visual art promoter, also added a voice to the expressions and informed the study that Sanaa Gateja and Senkaaba Samson made good sales whenever they were promoted in South Africa and Europe (Personal Interview, 16th October 2018). Visual artists who also participated in the study revealed that they explored the past traditions and reinvented them into visual art, designed products and visual art material as commercial items.

The economic value was also relayed by some participants during the ‘Cultural Heritage Conservation’ dialogue (CE-Um, observation, 21stSeptember 2018). When the participants expressed their role in traditional cultural heritage promotion and preservation, they revealed the economic benefit imbued in the aesthetic (Ibid). They informed the audience that they reinvent materials such as bark-cloth, raffia, palm leaves, and the baskets into curios for sale to tourists and to the local population as home decoration and functional items. At the same event, the researcher also noted that the visual artists equally benefited from the aesthetic. The artists explore the materials to shape fine art which they sell in private and public art galleries (Ibid).

Further, observation was at the Chombo trope Fashion Concert by the Jitta Collection, held on 9th November 2018 at One Ten Studios in Kampala. The researcher noted that bark-cloth and banana fibre past traditional materials were among the aesthetic used to make the costumes for the fashion show. The materials were designed in a contemporary and dramatic style far from the renowned ancient toga bark-cloth drape. The reinventions applied on to the aesthetic turned the costumes into an intriguing visual spectacle that contributed to the total show extravaganza (CE-Ch Observation, 9th November 2018).

The versatility of the past traditions generated economic benefits for the creative practitioners and all stakeholders in the creative practice. Past traditions reinvention into new forms with contemporary relevance equally added an economic value onto the aesthetic. The economic value as a source of income trickled down through the chain of the art and design production and marketing community, positively impacting all. Captivating however, is the capacity of the past tradition’s gain of contemporary economic value despite their past disposition. Generally, past traditions are an embodiment of raw materials, skill, and indigenous knowledge which are intrinsic, readily available, inexhaustible, and an inclusive new knowledge resource that is distinct to societies. As such, the examination of the nature of past traditions has indicated that the aesthetic is imbued with valuable aspects that the present society relates to. The aspects concern the cultural, social and economic elements that facilitate communities, and are foundations of the people’s ways of life. Further, the traditional aesthetic has shaped contemporary Ugandan haute couture thus representing social sustainability.

4.1.3 *Creators of the Contemporary Ugandan Haute Couture Shaped by Past traditions*

The study has identified that the creators of the haute couture artefacts under investigation are fashion designer-artists namely: Atal Stella, Senkaaba Samson, Jose Hendo and Sanaa Gateja. As such, it is crucial to examine their cultural accounts in regard to the artefacts. What follows is a profile of each of the designer-artists.

Atal Stella. Although based in Paris, France since 2016, Ugandan fashion designer-artist Atal Stella, still strongly asserts her Ugandan descent through her highly conspicuous fashion in this international fashion capital. Atal is a fashion designer-artist practicing both fashion design including the haute couture style, and painting, and on several occasions integrating the two. Herein focus is on the aesthetically adorned haute couture cultural spectacles. Atal has created and showcased her haute couture locally, regionally and internationally and she has been internationally applauded with accolades. The designer-artist has had a firm and clear artistic foundation from her childhood because she learnt to sew through apprenticeship at home and was exposed early to commercial creative environments while in secondary school. During the school holidays she worked in an art gallery and became famous for the female figurative and the cassava batik painting style on pots and wall hangings (Researcher's past observation). The figurative female images were highly stylized and Atal configured the art with her sewing skills and design education to create haute couture for both the local and foreign markets. Otherwise, Atal who is now in her early 40s, holds a diploma in graphics from the Academy of Printing Technology in Nairobi, Kenya (1999) and a post graduate diploma in art and design from the United Kingdom (2003). On completing her studies, Atal embarked on haute couture production in 2004 and 'The Uganda Martyrs' in Figure 4.1 was one of her first pieces. Since then, she has been very active both in the fine art and fashion design spaces. In an interview, the designer-artist expressed,

“Since 2006 when I launched my fashion label, in Uganda, I have been showcasing my haute couture creations production which began in 2003. Then I got on the international level in 2008 when I featured in the Ethical fashion showcase in London and was even nominated for the African designers' award of the year. In 2009 I was the official designer for Miss Uganda Beauty Pageant and for Miss Africa USA in Maryland in 2012. Earlier in 2010 I also won the Africa collection fashion award in Douala,

Cameroun, and in 2011 I received the ‘Controversial Art’ award by the Ugandan Dutch Embassy and Afri Art Gallery in Uganda ...” (Stella Atal Interview 27th November 2017).

Under the support and patronage of organizations such as UNESCO, Brussels Airlines Uganda, Ugandan Arts Trust through 32 Degrees East and Afri Art gallery in Uganda, the designer-artist has earned access to creative forums, workshops/residencies, festivals and exhibition opportunities. Atal also worked with the popular style icon Franca Sozzane of Vogue Italia (Atal interview, March 25th 2019) and the Kampala Contemporary Art Festival, 2012 hosted by 32 Degrees East. Atal is strongly attached to and uses natural heritage materials such as bark-cloth, raffia, cowries, sisal, palm leaf mat, and beads, and incorporates other African patterns.

At the time of completing her studies, the fashion scene in Uganda was also up scaling, courtesy of the Uganda International Fashion Week (UIFW). The researcher participated in the UIFW 2003 and vividly recalls that Atal was one of the guests of the UIFW 2003 shows. Indeed in 2004, Atal created ‘The Uganda Martyrs’ haute couture (Fig 4.1), one of her first pieces. Since then, she has been very active both in the fine art and fashion design spaces. Under the support and patronage of organizations such as UNESCO, Brussels Airlines Uganda, Ugandan Arts Trust through 32 Degrees East and Afri Art gallery in Uganda, the designer-artist has earned access to creative forums, workshops/residencies, festivals and exhibition opportunities. Atal also worked with the popular style icon Franca Sozzane of Vogue Italia (Atal Interview, March 25th 2019).

The designer-artist has also participated in many other shows including the International Women Museum in California in 2007, Africa Fashion week in New York in 2010 and in 2011 the ‘Green fashion’ in Switzerland, and also exhibited in many countries namely: Germany, Kenya, Guinea, Denmark, Holland, Norway, Netherlands, France, United Kingdom and Spain. Further still, in 2016 her art work featured in the two issues of the prestigious Italian Vogue magazine. Atal’s haute couture artefacts are usually representative of socio-cultural narratives and together with the properties of the traditional aesthetic, there is resonance with both cultural and environmental sustainability. The identified aspects are critical elements in the global sustainable development agenda, and with such an array that

locates one in an acclaimed position, indeed, Atal Stella is at the global stage within the art and fashion design arena.

Samson Senkaaba. Samson Senkaaba aka Xenson, is a fashion designer-artist whose art practice domain has steadily grown to include performance, music and poetry. Like Atal, Senkaaba echoes the cultural value embodied in the bark-cloth, mentions its organic element but moves deeper to strongly credit the innovation of the unique technology of bark-cloth making. These aspects are reflected in the values of global concern and given Senkaaba's knowledge background and aspiration, his choices seem informed. Exploring selected haute couture collections presented in Uganda and beyond can also attest to his probably calculated agenda further augmented by the cultural environment.

Popularly known as Xenson, a visual artist who graduated from Makerere University in 1999. Three years later he strongly asserted himself as a fashion designer with majestic grandeur haute couture, and his art practice domain has progressively grown to include performance, music and poetry. Although he is a multi-disciplinary artist, this study focuses on his designer-artist haute couture creations in which he predominantly uses bark-cloth, a historic fabric commonly associated with Buganda. The multi-discipline stance exhibited by the designer-artist throughout his engagement is a reflection of his unlimited aspiration to move forward. This is exhibited by his variously expressive productions in an interview. Senkaaba posited that society should stop looking at bark-cloth (the material he frequently uses) in a stagnant way clinging on what he referred to as a "cliché 'UNESCO Gazetted eco-fabric and Cultural thing'". His argument is, at that point culture ceases to make positive meaning, regarding it as a blockage to new creative energy. He exclaimed referring to it as an "Old narrative So how do you move something forward? People are coming up with new materials, polymers, light weight polymers, lighter than aluminium. The kind of transition necessary for flipping the page ..." (Senkaaba interview on 19th June 2018).

Senkaaba's aspiration seems to have earned him opportunities through the past, because the designer-artist has been supported through various artistically insightful programs (ibid). At the time of his graduation from art school in 1999, the visual art scene in Kampala, Uganda was experiencing a revamp courtesy of the late 1990s 'Triangle International Workshops' and the 'Ngoma Artists' Studios' thereafter (Kyeyune, 2012). The workshop and studio philosophy

of ‘experimentation and exploration’ as Kyeyune termed it liberated, inspired and empowered upcoming artists at that time. Kyeyune further states “The new direction in experimental art ignited a new movement in the new millennium, which for its freshness and energy captured the imagination of art collectors.” Senkaaba also engaged and participated in various art workshops/residencies locally, regionally and internationally.

First is the 2012 ‘Futuristic Past’ haute couture collection also showcased in Uganda and Scotland (2014) that featured the creative merger of bark-cloth and reeds. Significant of the artefacts was one dressed by three models at a go. The models were each clad in a bark-cloth shift dress, and the dresses sewn together and further reinforced by reeds creating a cage like structure. Senkaaba informed the study that the idea was a trope critiquing the East African Community, although in the Scotland terrain similar creations told a different story. Back to the East African representation the designer-artist informed the researcher that although the three countries Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania were professing togetherness through various aspects including trade, governance and security, the meagre conflict of trade at the borders at that time in Uganda indicated failure of the union. As the models strolled down the runway, the researcher who also attended the show observed that the stronger one would pull the caged assemblage to her side, which connoted a possible challenge faced when the need to break away arose. The insinuated challenge relayed by the artefact is a contemporary geopolitical concern because it destabilizes peaceful coexistence. Second is the 2016 ‘Baroque Afric’, Gomesi designs (Fig. 4.4) that represented the disorder in many African countries between the years 2015 and 2016, including the February 2016 post elections situation in Uganda (Senkaaba interview on 19th June 2018). This places the collection into a destabilized political context. Although Senkaaba intended to represent turmoil, the haute couture also embodies freedom and liberative connotations that the designer-artist earlier supported as the transformation of past traditions.

Senkaaba had many other shows including the ‘Gun Flower mask’, at Afriart Gallery, Kampala in 2017; the mobile Kabbo ka Muwala, that travelled to Zimbabwe, Uganda and Germany in 2016; Johannesburg Art Fair in 2015; ‘The Lubaale and the Boat’, Scotland in 2014; at the Institute Buena Vista, Curacao in 2014; Future of Africa Summit in Paris and, Africa Now: Fashioning Person Hood, Minneapolis Institute of Art in 2014 and Brazil in 2016. His works are also located in various public and private spaces including the Scottish Museum. In addition, Senkaaba had prior attained recognition that earned him support to participate in

the earlier mentioned showcases, and also won awards such as the 2010 Fibre to fashion context in Nairobi, the 2009 Futuristic past fashion competition by Redds and in the same year was featured by global style platform MNET's Studio 53.

Lastly, the researcher also experienced the multi-cultural 2017 'Chombotrope' performance that travelled in two continents, with actors adorned in Senkaaba's haute couture artefacts made out of bark-cloth, banana fibres, recycled tyres and other materials. The eclectic performance through culture and discipline connoted agentic assertions against culture stereotyping, augmented culture diversity, show-cased the progression of the past traditions and the reconstruction of a new self in a globalized society. The haute couture collections are representations of elements within the context of global value, a position which resonates with Senkaaba's haute couture concepts.

A reading of Senkaaba Samson's haute couture creation trajectory highlighted above, embodies an aesthetic that reflects global ideological issues of governance and security, cultural progression, humanity and, environmental protection. The aesthetic responds to the requirements of the 21st century critical issues of the global agenda. In addition, the designer-artist's presence on the international space further receiving recognition locates him at the global stage. As such, the designer artist acknowledges the past traditional aesthetic as a contributor to his valued position on the global stage, hence his persistent reinvention of the traditional aesthetic.

Jose Hendo. Jose Hendo is the other fashion designer-artist famous for her bark-cloth fashion which is underpinned by sustainability. Jose Hendo is a British fashion designer-artist of Ugandan descent and practicing in London now, for 29 years. The designer-artist studied fine art at the secondary level of education in Uganda and supplemented it with two rounds of the fashion design study at the London College of Fashion majoring in sustainable fashion. Jose Hendo's sustainability agenda rhymes with the critical global agenda and her hard work to deliver, as seen through her collections earns her a position on the global stage. Since then, Jose Hendo has only produced haute couture that tells a story of sustainability. The sustainability theme is what influenced her choice of materials hence the exploration of her home heritage, bark-cloth. In an interview with Jose Hendo, she stated thus:

“Everything had to be sustainable so I had to think about the material you are using. It had to be organic ... recycled or upcycled. I also do use other fabrics, organic cotton, hem and end of line ... I chose to use bark-cloth mainly because there is a story that needs to be told and by using it, it is encouraging the people that make it to keep on doing it because it is purposeful” (Jose Hendo Interview, 14th February 2018).

Knowledge about the price of getting some exquisite fashion materials and the stories about what happens to humanity, underpin her decisions. When the researcher asked the designer-artist how she has managed to avoid the spectacular modern materials, Jose Hendo responded, “Yes, they are beautiful, but that is not for me ... the spectacle is brilliant, the ‘montez’, and flames, I cannot justify, it would not work with who I am, my thought, process, design and ideas”. The designer-artist opted for the alternative, and the collections reflect reduction of energy consumption and resource exploitation, through identification of eco-fabrics like bark-cloth, application of design strategies that minimized energy consumption, the reuse of old clothes, translation into other items or giving them out, the upcycling of clothes, making them new and use of end of the line fabrics. Jose Hendo further communicated that one other reason that took her to that path was to break the cycle of the throw away culture, the obsolescence of fashion. She said,

“I am against the throw away culture, against obsolete fashion, against all those things that are reaping the world of all the good that is there in terms of labour, material and the processes, all these things we have to think about when we are designing. Who is going to make your clothes, where is the material coming from, how many hours does somebody spend making your clothes? How do you make it to use less energy, you know, all these” (Jose Hendo Interview, 14th February 2018)?

Similar to the previous scholars, Jose Hendo employs the bark-cloth because of its embodied value aspects earlier mentioned. Since the early 2000s, the designer-artist has registered over eleven haute couture bark-cloth collections. Jose Hendo’s agenda is sustainability awareness; promoting environmentally and humanity safe production and consumption. With such ethos, that meet contemporary global currents, the designer-artist appeared to have been enabled further to present at national and international platforms (Jose Hendo Interview, 14th February 2018). An experience of Jose Hendo’s haute couture artefacts

(Figure 4.5, 4.6, & 4.7) portrays a consciousness of behavioural change about ecological production and consumption to challenge fast fashion using the bark-cloth traditional aesthetic.

With such ethos, that meet the advocacy of the contemporary global notions, the designer-artist appeared to have been enabled further to present at national and international platforms. Jose Hendo has showcased her sustainability haute couture at various platforms including: Ecoluxe Exhibition, Vauxhall Fashion Scouts, Fashions Finest, Ethical Fashion Showcase, Kampala Fashion, Vancouver Fashion Week, Lisbon Fashion Week, New York Fashion Week, Africa Fashion Day Berlin, Mercedes Benz Berlin Fashion Week, Mayor of London Fashion Showcase, Passion for Motherland Fashion Showcase, and Cambridge Style Fashion Week. Her projects are also exhibited permanently in museums including: B2TR Fashion Showcase at the Uganda Museum; World Culture Museum, Stockholm; British Museum, London; Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising, Los Angeles; both Weltkulturen Museum, Frankfurt and, Bark cloth Reinvented: B2TR, in London, Dublin and Harrogate in 2017 and the Victoria and Albert (V&A) Museum in 2014. The designer-artist has also received various accolades including: the award for Best in Colour Co-ordination in school, the Radical Designer Award, the Sublime Magazine Good Brand Award in 2016 and the MOGA Innovation award.

Sustainability awareness is one of the concepts of the social sustainability dimension of sustainable development. By embracing it, Jose Hendo is participating in attaining the agenda and thus it is not surprising that she is located on the global stage.

Sanaa Gateja. Lastly is Sanaa Gateja known for his social impact and environmentally friendly aesthetic choices for haute couture. The designer-artist's haute couture assembled in reinvented past traditions asserts in spaces with great international acclaim laying a global profile mark on Sanaa Gateja. The haute couture features in permanent collections among which include: Paper beaded full length Shawls of 2006 at the Tropical Museum in Amsterdam, and another produced in 2014 at the National Museums, Scotland, the 'Woman ahead – Woman on the move' produced in 2010 at the Museum of Art and Design, New York and in 2007 his Dress 'Poncho, 2004' was collected by the Uganda Museum (Sanaa Interview, 26 July, 2017).

The haute couture artefacts reveal a creative approach that is underpinned by the aspects of social equity and environmental concerns. The creative approach was a pragmatic one because it responded to the sustainability global agenda call for participation of all people of the world for a positive cause. The response elevated Sanaa to a position on the global stage.

In addition, is 'The Lubaale and the Boat' performance programme that happened in 2014 and 2017 in Scotland and Uganda respectively, significantly shows the elevation to support the claim. The story of the programme is about the entrepreneur legacy of the Scottish Missionary Alexander Mackay who was famous for the introduction of the printing press in Uganda and died and was buried in the country. He was also an engineer who helped in the building of roads, boats and houses in Uganda. So, Sanaa was the lead in the artistic project that also included Xenson, all performing the return of the spirit of Mackay to Scotland. The performance took place between Scotland and Uganda, engaging audiences of both the countries.

Like Xenson, Sanaa designed costumes for the performance and presentation in Uganda which included the LaBa Arts Festival of 2015, the Makerere art gallery display of 2015 and a final exhibition was held in the Uganda Museum that further included Sanaa tapestries. He also participated in other workshops including the 32degrees residency in 2016.

As such, the exploration of Sanaa Gateja's designer-artist trajectory that is adorned with an international visibility relays him as placed at the global stage. The acknowledgement thus placement appears to be founded by Sanaa's ecologically conscious choice of material aesthetic and the social enterprise engagement of communities through poverty alleviating initiatives. These aspects resonate with the sustainable development agenda dimensions.

As the previous trajectory relays, the fashion designer-artists are popular within the visual art circles and located at the global stage. The stage is a visibility platform where presence is located in various recognized spaces of the world. The position is reached when an international applaud and celebration of practice achievements is attained considering distinct and individualistic artistic skill, knowledge and prowess, unique aesthetic, and the intellectual engagement and embodiment of global concerns in artwork (Mbabazi Elizabeth interview, 16th October 2018). In addition, the designer-artists' representation of current global ideologies and narratives that positively impact contemporary society, and a continuous showcase of the

innovative and creative work at markets and patronage platforms has positioned them globally. At the market and patronage platform is where the buying, investing, and appreciation of art and design happens. The global stage is also characterized by periodical international networking forums, workshops and, art and design exhibitions and fairs. The fashion designer-artists have secured a place on the stage presenting haute couture that has transited the clothing domain into the visual art realm. The designer-artists seem to have realized that the aesthetic of the past is pragmatic in contemporary society, and a gate pass to sustain their positions at the global stage. Nagawa Margaret explained about the placement as follows,

“The four artists are offering something different. Not only with the material, but with the ideas. Xenson’s work is very different multi sensuous, it’s more, poetry, music, drama, it’s ‘Kibuuka Omumbaale’ and the Mythology attached to it. It all feeds the creativity and goes through the finished products to the peoples who experience it. The extravagant designs, the colour and being on the world stage and offering this new material is fantastic and Atal and Sanaa with the bark cloth and the beads, both are unique and it’s not that they are looking exotic on the international scene or anything they are just committed to their work and the research that goes in and that shows ... On the international scene, they are offering something different” (Personal Interview, 16th October 2018).

As a visual art scholar, Nagawa qualifies the position of the fashion designer-artists as located at the global stage.

4.2 Haute Couture Shaped by Past Traditions: Representing Social Sustainability

The study examined how haute couture shaped by past traditions represents social sustainability. The study focused on the manifestation of predominant aspects that related to issues of social sustainability. Reason being that the study aimed at exhaustive understanding of how haute couture shaped by a past aesthetic represents an aspect of the present times. Further, the approach provided a systematic and comprehensive presentation of how each of the haute couture artefacts in this study, significantly represented a particular social sustainability concept. As earlier mentioned, social sustainability is the state of good quality of life enabled by valuable society relationships and sustenance systems. The relationship is

cultivated by five social aspects including social cohesion, participation, sustainability awareness, equity and wellbeing; which posit as key concepts for the exploration. The study revealed that the haute couture artefacts by the selected designer-artists represented four concepts including: Social cohesion exhibited by three Stella Atal's haute couture works: *Uganda Martyrs* (2004), *My Roots* (2006) and *Shame on You* (2010), Participation by Senkaaba Samson's *Baroque Afrique* (2016) collection; The Sustainability awareness concept by Jose Hendo through *Resonance* (2004/2005), *Contact Deep* (2014) and *Spontaneous* (2014); and Equity and Wellbeing by Sanaa Gateja's *Poncho* reinvention series of (2004) and the *Bark cloth and Paper bead Shawl* (2014).

Following, is an illustration of how the haute couture shaped by past traditions articulates the contemporary social sustainability notion, delivered through six themes as follows: i) Past tradition reinvention and integration: Representing Cultural Vitality, ii) Conceptual Intrigue as an artistic tool towards Cultural Vitality, iii) Aesthetic Mix of Past Traditions for Cultural Diversity, iv) Destabilizing of the past to cultivate Social Participation, v) Deconstruction of Modernity's bark-cloth relegation narrative: Engendering Sustainability awareness, vi) Tradition Conservation and Invention: Representing Equity and Wellbeing.

4.2.1 *Reinvention and Integration of Past Traditions: Representing Cultural Vitality and Coexistence*

"The Uganda Martyrs" haute couture artefact (figure 4.1), portrays a woman wearing a bark-cloth dress with a cage-like floor length overtop garment and in retrospect made out of reeds and bamboo used for constructing houses, plaited palm leaf strips which served as household room divider panels, and wild beads used cultural rituals. The nature of the traditional materials indicates that they have acquired new forms far from the past and assumed new functions as fashion dress items that visually connoting cultural vitality and coexistence. Cultural vitality as an aspect of social cohesion refers to the actions and thoughts of preservation and promotion of cultural heritage towards social integration of communities. Coexistence in this case is the prevalence of past traditions alongside Christianity in the same space.

Relating the title 'The Uganda Martyrs' to the artefact, the study locates the artefact in the historical context of Christianity in Uganda during the reign of Kabaka Mwanga II. The

artefact reminds us of the rise of the traditionalists against Christianity, reminiscing the Christian holocaust that took place in Buganda between 1885 and 1887 during the reign of Bassamula Mwanga II, the 33rd Ssekabaka (king) of Buganda. On the 3rd of June 1886 is the day when Mwanga II ordered the execution of 45 of his royal pages who had converted to Christianity. These were burnt alive en-masse at two locations (some at the Catholic Shrine, and others at the Anglican site) in Namugongo. One of the reasons among other ascribed versions for the death is that Mwanga feared he had lost the allegiance of his people due to the risen numbers of Christian converts (Kassimir, 1991). Up till today 3rd June is celebrated in commemoration of Uganda Martyrs.

The artefact also reminded Ugandan viewers of the violent and horrific historical event and that is why the designer-artist entitled it *Uganda Martyrs* (Atal Interview). However, the ensemble is rather calm and peaceful with a woman introduced into the narrative of male martyrs. An analysis of the haute couture, connecting the historical event with the frame of a reinvented past traditional aesthetic, that is contemporaneously integrated, connotes otherwise. In addition to archiving history, the idea by Atal to have a woman, instead of a man clad in this haute couture artefact as a Martyr was loaded with meaning. The woman in history is symbolic of a gift to the world seen through the works of three artists: Jean Baptist Carpeaux and the 'The Four parts of the world, Holding the Celestial (1872) which depicts four holding the world on their shoulders; Frida Kahlo's 'Henry Ford Hospital' (1932) which represents a woman as a symbol of life; and Edvard Munich's 'Woman', (1925) which portrays woman as a symbol of freedom (artsandculture.google.com/usergallery). As such, the replacement of man for a woman in the artwork replaying a horrific event is symbolic of life and freedom. Today in Uganda, Christianity is practiced along-side the indigenous religions. The woman in the 'Uganda Martyrs haute couture artefact, is symbolic of the change towards peace. Thus, the calm and peaceful ensemble is a reflection of the coexistence of the beliefs, the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, and the archive of history which can inform and instruct the present. Rose Kirumira's Alter Table (See figure 4.27) lays credence to this coexistence. The intriguing replay of a past traditional cultural aesthetic for a Christian liturgical environment raises questions of the source of comfort between a blend of the past traditions and Christianity. Until today, this particular Alter Table is an embodiment of historical narratives read through material reinvention and artistic archive which connotes the coexistence of both the traditionalists and Christian beliefs in Uganda. The gesture is symbolic of cultural vitality and coexistence, aspects of social cohesion.

4.2.2 *Conceptual Intrigue as an Artistic Tool towards Cultural Vitality*

The “Shame on You” artefact explored in this theme is a trendy haute couture that portrays an ironical beauty with hopeless and seemingly defeatist insinuations. It is complemented with Atal’s poem excerpt that reads as follows:

“I know it’s a must to do IT
but do you know how my body reacts to IT
Cut, shaved, ashamed, beautiful must I not have the right to shape my body the way I want?
... because it is a tradition written on the mouth of my sister, my mother
must I not have the right to the joy I perform myself saved to self by others”.

And relating the conceptual mapping drawn by the haute couture assemblage, to the title and poem signs, the ensemble denoted a controversy. A counter against the historical cultural practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) which is an engrained cultural tradition among some ethnic groups in Eastern Uganda. Although the designer-artist intended to pronounce that agony, in yet another contextual analysis, the charged artefact also projected otherwise. Atal stated as follows when asked whether she planned to portray a protest against FGM: I planned it but the challenge I got with it actually, at a UNESCO event when I exhibited the work, the UNESCO authorities thought it was me coming up to oppose a people’s culture, yet I was expressing some girls’ agony (Atal Stella Interview, 25th March 2019).” Inadvertently, the portrayed womanhood asserts a prevailing energy that contends the critical and contentious fight against a centuries old and deep-rooted cultural practice.

Although Atal was sensitive to the claims of past traditions and conscious of the controversy, the designer-artist creatively defended both parties in the cultural terrain thereby producing an intriguing effect for the viewer. Conversely, the reinvention of past traditions in an authoritative, energetic, vibrant and firm creative visual format, despite its intended counter of a tradition, resonates with the prevalence of the practice among contemporary communities in Uganda (Nantume, 2019). As such, the ensemble equally signifies the preservation of a binding element of society, a cultural vitality sign, representing social cohesion. Atal’s culture vitality advocacy is also visible through her vision of museum installations. The designer-artist expressed, “I would like to set up a museum of my fashion. What I have made and more to create, is all not for sale and one day I will set up a museum (Atal interview, March 25th 2019)”.

The connection between Atal's heritage fashion and the museum transmits strong cultural preservation and promotion undertones.

4.2.3 *Aesthetic Mix of Past Traditions for Cultural Diversity*

Another of the social cohesion artefacts is "My Roots", a 21st Century look, in bark-cloth embellished with cowrie shells, paper beads and palm leaf trimming, all, reinvented and stylized to evoke contemporaneity. The dress is completed with a chest body painting in a style that is similar to the cassava resist painting art tradition of Zimbabwe which was introduced in Uganda in the late 20th century. It was also seen in the artist's earlier work, the decorative pots. During a chat, Atal commented, "Body painting is something commonly used by people of different cultures ... and I am an artist who loves learning about different cultures and try to put them in my own understanding through clothing and painting (Atal, 25th September 2017)". Therefore, her choice of mixing cultural aesthetic was a result of rich interpretations of various African cultures and their placement in contemporary society. Atal does not stop at tapping into other African cultures to create, unique haute couture works, but has also explored other cultural spaces beyond the African continent. During an interview the designer-artist expressed her views on this when she said,

"'My roots' has on several events featured as a garb in the "Balumuka Kizomba" with the "Angola Roots" cultural festivals, printing the rebirth of African kingdoms, and in 2017 the same dress moved to Holland for the "VOODOO" cultural festival organized by people from Togo. My work has also featured among cultural lovers from Cameroon and Benin. "My Roots" haute couture has also featured in various exhibitions, locally, East Africa, West Africa, Europe, England and the USA, promoting a cultural heritage" (Atal Stella Interview, 25th September 2017).

That mobility sign exhibited by 'My Roots' in relation with its conceptual revelation of a multi-cultural heritage bearing, signify cultural diversity an aspect of social cohesion.

4.2.4 *Destabilizing the Past to Cultivate Social Participation*

Exploring Senkaaba's haute couture collection, entitled 'Baroque Afrique', a bark-cloth 'gomesi' traditional dress design reinterpreted as a social participation vessel aiming at inclusivity of all social groups in the decision-making processes towards cohesion in the community. The gomesi is the noun for the woman's traditional dress design in Buganda. It is a garment of great composure, elegance, grace and stylized drape. Based on post-colonial historical generation of the dress as a reference to hierarchical power and sexuality connotations, Tumusiime (2012) regards the dress as a confinement of the woman. As such, a normative dress style based on gomesi may imply constriction and could be read as a construct for decency, humility, submissiveness and subservience of woman in Uganda. Senkaaba has crossed the borders of tradition and reinvented the normative composure introducing a graceless, charged and carefree look. The distortion is the captivating black bark-cloth gomesi in figure 5(a), also styled for men in figure 5(b). The design transformation critically destabilizes the confinement of the gomesi to traditional standards.

The designer-artist revealed that the collection reflects the disorder in many African countries between the years 2015 and 2016, including the February 2016 post elections situation in Uganda (personal interview, 19th June, 2018). This places the collection into a destabilized political context. Although Senkaaba intended to represent turmoil, the haute couture also embodies freedom and liberative connotations reiterating Barthes' second level signification. Senkaaba has loosened the tension of the normative gomesi style, deconstructing the submissiveness and subservience characteristics as symbolic of change. The new firm and charged look of lumpish and bulky fabric drape, adorned with extravagant recycled matt rubber accents is a bold statement that alludes to freedom. Together with a man dressed in a gomesi style the haute couture stirs sensibilities. Relying on Shils's perspective that traditions are sacred, worthy of reverence and acceptance in society (Shils, 1971 & 1981), the artist has teased people's loyalty to traditions. The destabilized gomesi elegance, yet in the heritage acclaimed bark-cloth, is intriguing and intends to provoke and draw attention of the audience and the community towards the designer-artist's creations, thoughts and communications.

In concert, Senkaaba presented the Baroque Afric haute couture collection with a poem concurrently, reminiscing what Atal earlier did. The poem reads as follows:

I am his Kafuluness Xenson Zinja the 1st
Custodian of the Intrinsic Invisible ancestral philosophies
Connoisseur of the universal concept of Ubuntu (obuntubulamu)
I 'm the embodiment of Humanity
Ooh human unity or community or common unity

From deep in the village, for long I've been the village
And I know that we in the village
And you in the city,
We wear the same shoes,
Share the same views of office donor fund misuse
We suffer the same consequence
Like if you lost a son
In the state hospital...

You go on seeing sad days reminiscing...

So, do not preach to me peace,
Coz peace, peace prevails only when guns go silent...

Relating the haute couture to the poem, Senkaaba's signs seem to aim at inspiring the audience to comprehend the prevailing situation and to awaken their consciousness. Further supported by Shils' perspectives that traditions support agents to achieve their goals (Shils 1981, 203-205), Senkaaba creatively surpassed dress function to artist intellectualism. The artist complemented the haute couture with poetry to make the meaning more accessible. Senkaaba's poem performance was a call towards engagement by all, reinforced by his strong mention and position of the pronouns 'I, You, and We'. The artist was communicating the value of humanity, the need for all human beings to have kind feelings towards each other, such that peace can prevail. During the simultaneous presentation/performance, the audience periodically and spontaneously applauded in comprehension. This affirmed that the generation of meaning relies on the language of communication and that meaning finds root in the social

fabric. Further still, Senkaaba seemed to count on the past traditions to nurture and encourage social participation. The designer employed the traditional aesthetic as a vessel to reach and communicate to the audience in order to generate understanding and a sense of identity, towards social participation, a concept of social sustainability.

Senkaaba's social activism approach mirrors the path to freedom by the 5th edition "Fashion Week Tunis, 2013". The event featured globally situated Tunisian designers and artists with their controversial dress artistry of the Tunis tradition reinventions. The fashion employed imagery and style that challenged the country's Islamic social-cultural order. The artistry intellectually engaged locally placed designers, invoking a comprehension of religious repression, need for fashion design freedom and artistic expression, and socio-economic development opportunities ("The Clamouring Whispers of a Revolutionary: Fashion Week Tunis," 2013).

Although the Tunisian designers were successful, Soini & Birkeland, (2013), anticipated that society might fail to generate that intended meaning from the artistic representations. This is because of the difference between the mental representations or conceptual mapping of society and the designer-artist, lead to different interpretations (Hall 1997). Thus, intended communication may not be delivered. Kabiito (2010) affirms and suggests a redefinition of new artistic representation to enhance meaning. Senkaaba sealed the gap with a poem.

4.2.5 Deconstruction of Modernity's Bark-cloth Relegation: Engendering Sustainability Awareness

Haute couture artefacts in this section declare the bark-cloth as a traditional aesthetic for sustainability awareness, an aspect of social sustainability. The artefacts are creations by Jose Hendo, also known as Josephine Kyomuhendo, a British fashion designer of Ugandan descent, living in the United Kingdom. The haute couture artefacts represent behavioural change about ecological production and consumption to challenge the fast fashion movement in the global fashion industry. Fast fashion is a business model in the fashion industry that has a very fast trend cycle. Apparel by this business is usually of low quality, cheap and with planned obsolescence. The life span of such fashion from raw material processing to apparel discard has led to major negative environmental and social impacts (Kozlowski et al., 2012).

The researcher examined the haute couture artefacts to understand how they represent sustainability awareness through three value attributes including: the natural regeneration of the tree bark, the eco-friendly production method of bark-cloth and the preservative quality of bark-cloth.

Beginning with the “Resonance” artefact (Fig. 4.5), the highly creative bark-cloth fashion in a hip-hop avant-garde of the early 21st century, is a sculptural silhouette shaped by versatility to enable the wearer generate a new desired look at any time. ‘Design Regeneration’ as a creative strategy applied reflects the value attribute of tree bark natural regeneration. Positing Pierce’s signification system, the design regeneration approach is iconic of the regeneration of the bark on the tree. During bark-cloth harvest, the tree is not cut down; rather, its bark is carefully removed using a blunt knife and banana leaf stalk to avoid causing injury to the tree bole. A new bark regenerates naturally for yet another cloth. In an interview, the researcher asked Hendo why she selected bark-cloth for her eco-fashion. Her response relayed her strong passion and concern for the environment, relating it to the value bestowed in the bark-cloth (Personal Interview, 14th February 2018). Empowered by that value, the artist has a strong will for a significant impact that challenges fast fashion and its eventual negative environmental impact. The process resonates with the artist’s strong passion and concern for the environment, reflecting it to the regeneration value bestowed in the ‘Mutuba’ tree bark.

Introducing the second attribute, the eco-friendly making of bark-cloth, for sustainability awareness, is “Contact Deep” in (Fig. 4.6). Bark-cloth is hand processed through fabric beating using hand mallets, to make a thin fine felt material (Nakazibwe, 2005). The process is non-mechanized and does not involve the application of chemical substances (See pg. 91). The process is reflected by garment design generation through fabric drape as opposed to pattern drafting, fabric cutting and garment assembling. Here, Hendo reduces the energy consumed, the production time and human resource. She structured the garment bodice to fit, and left the bottom fabric of the garment free hanging for the wearer to quickly and creatively wrap it to fit.

Hendo’s adoption of the technique for her contemporary approach to garment creation is another of the rebellions against the conventional fast fashion industry. In support of the value ingrained in past traditions, the approach is iconic of the ethnic past traditional dress designs in Africa like the Gomesi and Ssuuka in Uganda, and the Mushanana in Rwanda. The

designs are mainly formed by fabric wrapping and drapery and thus require minimal production time and energy (See Gomesi design on Pg. 98) The style also dates back to 800 B.C, before flat pattern drafting for three-dimension garment making (Pistoiese & Horsting, 1970). Hendo's innovation extends the life of the new garment as well as minimizing the production time and human energy. The innovative approach curbs the negative environmental and social impact of fast fashion alluded to by Kozlowski et al. (2012). It also recalls the 24th April 2013 day in the history of fashion that reaped Bangladesh of over 1000 nationals, in a fire at a fashion factory in Dhaka. Seam stresses working to meet a tight garment production lead time under poor conditions (Burke & Hammadi, 2013). The calamity correspondingly prompts Hendo's last explored value attribute, 'the preservative quality of bark-cloth' through 'Spontaneous' in figure 4.7.

The quality of preservation imbued in the bark-cloth, serves to maintain and save valuables. Bark-cloth in the past served for the storage of valuable cultural objects like preservation of the umbilical cord of every newly born, and embalming for the dead (Nakazibwe, 2005). The attribute is reflected by the 'Spontaneous' artefact founded on the ethos of reduce, reuse and recycle (3Rs), against the throw away culture or obsolescence of fashion. The researcher asked the designer-artist about how the artefacts reflect the 3Rs, Hendo maintained that,

"Sustainable by design is the approach. The processes and materials have to be either organic, recycled, up-cycled or not wasteful. That is why I redeemed the old silk skirt by attaching a bark-cloth top, and using the bark-cloth off cuts as trimmings for a new garment" (personal interview, 14th February, 2018).

The current study deployed Pierce's perspective on signification to relate Hendo's approach to the ancient preservative quality of bark-cloth, as a symbol of the value of preserving, which is to maintain and save. Thus, the quality of bark-cloth that maintains and saves valuables resonates with Hendo's design approach of material reduce, recycle and reuse strategies that aim at saving the valuable environment and humanity through waste reduction and responsible resource exploitation. Underpinned by the need to maintain and save, Hendo reinvents the old silk skirt, with bark-cloth beyond beauty to advocate for waste reduction and responsible resource exploitation. It is clear that the designer-artist is in support of the sustainability agenda and the haute couture as a vessel of 'sustainability awareness'.

4.2.6 *Past Traditions Restructured: A Reinterpretation of Equity and Wellbeing*

Herein, equity refers to the inclusive distribution of welfare goods, services and life chances, and the recognition of different identities. Wellbeing refers to a state of a comfortable quality of life and human development, with access to social welfare needs and desires like food, health, housing, education, safety and employment. The section presents Sanaa's Poncho series representing the socio-economic empowerment initiative that focused on the aspect of inclusive distribution of welfare chances nurturing both equity and wellbeing. Sanaa's beadwork exhibits past traditions, first, with the value to change to suit new environments and the needs of its agents, and secondly, traditions as an embodiment of knowledge and skills that have been developed through the ages.

The "Poncho Dress" in figure 4.8, also hanging in the Uganda museum since 2007 relays the story of that cultural progression. Made out of bark-cloth, paper beads and raffia, Sanaa's garb is replaying and transmitting traditional cultural transformation. The dress is a multi-narrative which harbours the history of the bark-cloth, and its transition into the bead tradition embodied with aspects of social equity and wellbeing.

Echoing the constructionist theory of representation, the "Poncho" haute couture's transition into the "Shawl and Head-gear" haute couture in figure 4.9 presented in section 4.1 exhibits the reinvention of past traditions and style development, further connoting community engagement and economic empowerment. The traditional bark-cloth offered the best choice to Sanaa's quest for material for his fashion jewellery, as revealed by the designer-artist: "I love interacting with memories of my youth, seeing people working with the same natural heritage materials which I strongly believe have a prominent place in today and the future world ... bark-cloth was the right choice" (Sanaa interview, 25th June 2018).

Sanaa's growing need for bark-cloth beads led to the engagement of women in the communities, hence a surplus of bark-cloth beads transcending beyond Sanaa fashion into the commercial market place. While there, the bead was confronted by market demand. There was need to lower the market price, introduce new textures in the bead, and increase capacity, which culminated into the introduction of used paper as a complementary material. Sanaa defended the paper innovation: "paper is the best complement since it is a by-product of trees, when

thrown as waste I recycle it, and using it with the bark-cloth is symbolic of taking it back home (Personal Interview, 25th June, 2018)”. Therefore, the designer-artist’s choice to reinvent past traditions was equally an economic activity to sustain a life chance for the people reflecting the wellbeing concept of social sustainability. This was enabled by the evolutionary property of traditions in response to new environments. Sanaa trained women to produce the beads growing the practice into a household economic activity. Asked how far he spread the craft skill, Sanaa responded “I have taught in Kampala, Gulu, Busoga, Toro, Bwindi, Kisoro ... (ibid)” By cardinal direction, the craft was introduced to all regions in Uganda, hence his tag name ‘Bead King’. And with such an expanse for three decades, according to Shils’ traditions, the bark-cloth and paper bead craft had transited into a tradition (Jacobs, 2007).

As such, Sanaa’s initiative facilitated an economic environment that rippled into the formation of income generation networks across the country symbolic of equity. It is explained by Shils notion that traditions are an embodiment of knowledge and skills which society can rely on inclusively, because models of action from the past are available for new generations to easily embrace (Shils, 1971). Thus, Sanaa’s socio-economic empowerment initiative portrays wellbeing as a social sustainability concept prevalent through the equitable distribution of a livelihood opportunity.

4.3 The Reinvention of Past Traditions to Shape Haute Couture that Represents Issues of Social Sustainability

In the previous section, the role of past traditions in shaping social sustainability has been portrayed through the haute couture artefacts, further turning the objects into a visual aesthetic. This indicated that the traditional aesthetic embodies the capacity to represent situations and environments. However, the reinventions of the past traditions in the studied contexts also shows that the capacity of the aesthetic to change is influenced by other factors. The subsequent section relays the agents of traditions reinvention.

4.3.1 *Past Traditions are Inspirational: the Aesthetic Shapes Visual Art*

Art works framed by past traditions embody aspects that stir objective reasoning and understanding when experienced by a viewer. A visual art is an abstract image or object created using aesthetic that is composed of a particular materiality and conceptual framing. The

integration of the materials and concepts form the creative work representing cultural thoughts and ideas in abstract, expressed through images and objects. Albeit knowledge of the intent of the artists, (Milam & Maddox, 2017) add that the art works convey a coherent treatment of an idea which is susceptible to systematic analysis. The analysis depends on the viewers' experience of the art. As such, the expression renders the nature and disposition of the past traditional aesthetic in the creative assertion fit to evoke intellectual analysis. It is loaded with elements that translate into art materials, and also shape visual subject matter. The elements are presented under the titles: 1) Materiality of Past traditions embody Socio-cultural and historical accounts that inspire Visual art expression and, 2) Past traditions embody elements that frame contemporary visual art

Historical Accounts Inspire Visual art Expression. A cultural and historical trajectory encompassed by thoughts and ideas are activities, practices, patterns, objects, materials and images of the ways of life in a society in a given time and context. Reference to Ugandan art, modernisms of the last decade of the 20th century and the post modernism of the 21st century in the region present a historical socio-cultural representation. The artists explored past traditions beyond utility to conceptual representations. Sculpture, painting, collage, batik, printing and ceramics were the major areas of exploration (Kyeyune 2003, Nakazibwe 2005 & Kakande 2008,). In what follows is an array of visual aesthetic exemplifying the claim through both figurative and non-figurative art. They exhibit the creative potency of the past traditions through the development of art in Uganda.

The first figurative is presented by a 1970s, batik by artist Mutyaba Mark entitled 'Malwa Drinkers' (Fig. 4.25), reinventing the traditional practice as a visual art aesthetic. The kanzu and gomesi dress garb, the pot and straws and the circular sitting and drinking style, imagery representations denote a cultural practice, the traditional cultural brew, 'Malwa' drinking occasion typical of people from Teso in North Eastern Uganda. The artwork is an archive of the history of the past traditional cultural practice of society, further offering a subject content for art production.



Figure 4.25
Mutyaba Mark (Late 1970s). *Malwa Drinkers* [Batik]. (Photo by Wasswa Katongole)

In what follows, is a 1997 non-figurative collage by Kabiito Richard, 'Birds in Camouflage' (Fig. 4.26). The artwork is made using a blend of acrylic paint and a past traditional aesthetic: the palm leaf mat, bark-cloth, raffia fibre, banana straws and basketry ware. The 1997 artwork was produced at the school of art in Makerere University at the time of the decade when monarchies had been newly reinstated in Uganda, and societies were celebrating the rejuvenation of their past traditional cultural materials. The reading of the work 'Birds in Camouflage' connotes a liberation of the past traditional aesthetic as a medium shaping intellectual visual expression alongside traditional oil and acrylic paints. The works exhibit a resilience of the past traditional cultural aesthetic and its assertion of new value in the visual art terrain.

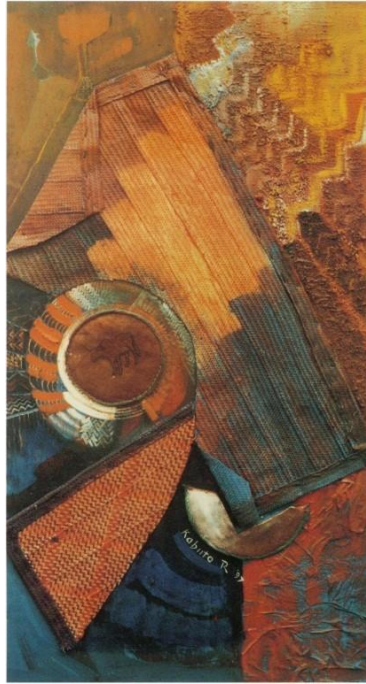


Figure 4.26
Kabiito Richard (1997). *Birds in Camouflage* [Mixed Media].
(Photo by Kyeyune George)

In addition, Rose Kirumira's 'Altar Table sculpture (Fig 4.27) produced in 1998 is another figurative art work denoting inspiration from an 'Adungu' Ugandan traditional musical instrument, and other Ugandan material culture imagery inscribed on the surface of the table edges. The intriguing replay of a past traditional cultural aesthetic for a Christian liturgical environment evokes intellectual scrutiny. It raises questions of the source of comfort between a blend of the past traditions and Christianity, and further reflects on the historical introduction of Christianity in Uganda and the position of the traditionalists. Until today, the table is an embodiment of historical narratives read through material reinvention and artistic archive which connotes the coexistence of both the traditionalists and Christian beliefs in Uganda which began at the end of the 20th century.



Figure 4.27
Rose Namubiru Kirumira (1998). *Altar Table* [Wood & copper pipes]. (Photo by Rose Namubiru Kirumira)

Painting was one of the popular art disciplines in the Makerere art school and herein Sengendo Pilkington's '*Abaana n'Abazukulu Omuziro Ffumbe*' (2005) (Fig. 4.28), an early 21st century oil on board visual representation of a cultural genealogy, critically exhibits an intellectual history signified by the relationship between title, imagery and painting text. Indeed, Kasfir (2012) noted that artist Sengendo saw the proper role of the series of his work shaped by the traditional aesthetic as a vessel of cultural knowledge in which the aesthetic is treated as an inexhaustible source of imagery.



Figure 4.28
Sengendo Pilkington (2005). *Abaana n'Abazukulu Omuziro Ffumbe* [Oil on Board].

The traditional aesthetic is an embodiment of historical trajectories and the study has portrayed that the aesthetic is artistically inspirational. The account portrays a reflection of past traditions in form of expressions, practices, beliefs, objects and structural surfaces.

Subsequently, the visual art manifests as an archive of histories of societies, more so, are presentation of the in new formats and times which livens the salient features of communities as identities of those particular communities in globalized spaces. It is no wonder that the aesthetic frames contemporary visual art.

Past Traditions: Embody Contemporary Art Values. The valuable nature of past traditions as seen in section 4.2 of this chapter resonates with the aspects that frame contemporary visual art. It is art of the 21st century featuring at the global stage. It is characterised by new, unique innovative and individualized genres and materials, expressed in varied art mediums, further defining new times, identities and reflecting a concern for global issues (Dimova & Gillen, 2017; Mead et al., 2017; Appert, 2016 and Lossgott, 2017). As such, the designer-artists have explored the aesthetic through reinventions so as to produce art that meets the value of the contemporary times. The study revealed that the elevation of African art to the global stage manifested at the break of the 21st century when African diasporic curators thought it valuable to be relevant to the African visual art terrain on the African continent (Kasfir, 2013). Currently, Uganda is present at the global stage represented by individual artists and art promoting organizations. The study noted that Ugandan visual artists, including the ones explored herein as designer-artists, are located at the global stage and explore past traditions among other aesthetic for their artistic expressions. The profiles of the designer-artists herein studied (See section 4.1) indicate that they have been exposed to the global platform since the break of the millennium and have thus attained knowledge about its anatomy. Although the designer-artists did not openly mention that their choice of aesthetic was to meet the criterion of the global contemporary art during the study, an analysis of their work indicates that their intuition is partly influenced by the environment they traverse, and thus the global contemporary visual art terrain. It was thus crucial to identify the elements that inform the aesthetic choices framing contemporary visual art in Uganda.

Elizabeth Mbabazi, the manager of Afri Art gallery in Uganda, who is also active in global visual art promotion, revealed that the international market and patronage define the nature of contemporary art. During an interview she stated:

“We have grown from just being a commercial gallery in Kampala to being an art space that takes part in Art Fairs in Johannesburg, Paris, Lagos. So, you open the market out

and you need to have conversations that speak to the world about who you are and where you are coming from. ... So, we had to graduate from the art we were selling when the gallery started out, beautiful pictures that are great in someone's home like the 'Market'! When we moved to the world stage, it was [like], what are the artists saying to the world! ... So, we had to look out for artists whose messages were strong both in practice and in expression. Messages that talked significantly to the world. ... The market is not buying what the work is, but what it communicates" (Personal Interview, 16th October 2018).

The view is maintained by the activities of the internationally renowned African contemporary art curator Simon Njami, who practically supported the intellectual growth of Ugandan artists through critical art workshops in the country. He is known for his commitment towards the development of recognized contemporary African art. As such, he is traversing the African continent contributing tremendously to lifting up the level of African art, Uganda inclusive, through the critique of art, supporting cultural institutions and networks, and getting art on to the global scene ([artreview.com/artist/simoom-njami] 2018). Examples of his initiatives is the development of the Kampala Art Biennale in August 2018, and the setup of mentoring studios for Ugandan artists. George Kyeyune, the visual art scholar participating in this study added that the curator had expressed the need for artists who think and can question the world (Personal Interview, 24th October 2018). The study also learnt that Simon Njami is also a writer, art critic and essayist who has edited a number of art works, co-founder of the first journal of contemporary African and extra ordinary art and director of the biennale global art exhibitions ([artreview.com/artist/simoom-njami] 2018).

In addition, the study discovered that the creation of contemporary art is also informed by the narrative on global issues within the broader world. The 21st century inception of the Sustainable Development Goals brought to light the need for societies in the world to understand the issues that affect the world universally. Attainment of sustainable development requires the participation of all countries in the world. The United Nations 2015 universal strategy for global action entitled "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development", lists 17 goals that can guide the action of society, and provide an engagement platform for over 15 years in the areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet. As such, various societal organizations including education, socio- economic, cultural and

political organizations seem to have embraced the strategy turning the 17 goals (sdgs.un.org) into global issues to be acted upon.

Focusing on the visual art study, the artists engaged through formal and informal art education, marketing and promotion programmes to express and represent the sustainability agenda (global issues) in all possible ways such as: highlighting both engendering and constrained status quo, and reprimanding or providing solutions to challenged environments. African fashion designers have significantly reflected issues among which are; sustainable production and consumption, social entrepreneurship, and cultural vitality and diversity (Jenkins, 2011). Exceptional also is Alphadhi's 2013 fashion for peace: "Fashion is a vehicle to promote African autonomy, more equitable standards of living, and the beautification of diverse human bodies (Gilvin, 2014). In addition, Mead, et al., (2017) lists art projects that relate to the global issues including; environmental degradation, urbanization, social justice, homelessness, identity, socio-economic inequality, hunger and law manipulation. The promotion of cultural vitality and diversity is also seen through music and dance (Appert, 2016) and (Maqoma, 2011). All the environmental and humanity issues mentioned above are aspects of the sustainable development goals concerning the whole world. They are also referred to as global issues of sustainability and they inform art creation. As such, contemporary art is identified with the following aspects: Originality, Uniqueness, Engagement of the intellect, and Location of identities, and the Reflection of sustainable development goals.

Some of the identified aspects above resonate with findings in this chapter, namely: the nature of past traditions presented in section 4.2, Contemporary Ugandan haute couture representation of social sustainability in section 4.3 and materiality of Past traditions and how they embody historical accounts that inspire visual art expression (See section 4.4.). As such, materiality of past traditions is symbolic of uniqueness, engagement of the intellect, location of identities and reflection of global issues of sustainable development. The identified aspects were framed into topical themes to facilitate their presentation including: a) Distinctness of the Past traditions towards traceability of the art, b) Versatility of the Past traditions supports the development of new, unique and individualistic art styles, c) Materiality of Past traditions embodies socio-cultural and environmental symbolism that engages the intellect d) Materiality of Past traditions embodies socio-cultural and environmental symbolism that frame issues of global concern. Following is the presentation of the contemporary art distinguishing aspects allotted to the past traditional aesthetic.

Distinctness of the Past Traditions towards Traceability, and Identity of Contemporary Art. The global stage requires that the origin of art should be clear. As such, traceability of art which reflects the identity of being is met by the distinctness of materiality. Past traditions are an aesthetic engrained in society and thus embody aspects that define those societies. In this chapter, section 4.2 presents an array of the past traditions and how they define and locate societies, individuals and consequently the artwork. Therefore, use of particular aesthetic can place the art work and artists to a referenced locality or individual. Elizabeth Mbabazi professed to the perspective as follows:

“I would say it still comes out of the need to be original. Most of them (referring to artists) especially when they venture in markets that are outside Uganda should want something that may speak of who you are and where you are from, so most of them go back to their costumes and materials that resonate with their country as a place ... When you go to a world stage, people want to know who you are and where you are coming from, it ceases to be Sanaa, rather Sanaa from Uganda ... So, we looked out for artists and what they are saying and which artists are practicing what. Being a self-defining profession, it was almost easy to pick out who is doing what in the small art community. The first art fair that the gallery did, the artist represented were Sanaa Gateja, Senkaaba Samson and Eria Nsubuga ...” (Interview, 16th October 2018).

Ronex Ahimbisibwe explained the return to past traditional bark-cloth by the fashion designer-artists as follows,

“Identity at the international platform stage. They know they have the material others do not have. Like Kente in Ghana. The Artist and their inspiration. That is something that gives them an identity in a way. It is an advantage that is what I believe. You also want something that is unique to Uganda” (Interview, 20th February 2019).

Responding to a similar question, George Kyeyune stated,

“... They are seeking for {pauses}, they are trying to become engaged again in their traditions that they inherited from the past. So, they are creating an identity. They are going through an identity crisis and trying to rediscover themselves, by going back and reviewing their past and renewing it along modern lines, what they are trying to say is that we have been cheated of over inheritance for a long time. And we have something

positive and remarkable in our history. We are picking it and running with it in our own way. First of all on a local scene then international. Yes, they are, that's I think what they are doing and also it can be combination with other materials. But I think it is about asserting yourself as an African using your, the materials around you, what you inherited from the past and creating an identity" (Interview, 24th October 2018).

Margaret Nagawa reiterated,

"Again, I might return it back to what gives people a certain degree of authenticity, agency in what they do, where are they staying; ok this is a material stamp. I am putting this on the international stage and it comes from my people in a way. So, it's valuing an art form that has been perhaps ignored for so long or not valued as much as it needed to be. And with the focus of UNESCO on to this material, I think a lot of people returned to it. There is a certain value maybe it's out of UNESCO, maybe it's the return of the Kabaka, 1993 people revaluing their culture, belonging and just having that sense of who we are so it might be from there, you cannot pin point" (Interview, 25th October 2018).

Therefore, past traditions may construct identities of the artists and their work in contemporary times. As such, contemporary visual art can be framed by the traditional aesthetic for identity construction and to assume a contemporaneous stance. This stance is also featuring new, unique and individualistic art styles as the following section unveils.

Versatility of the Past Traditions Support New, Unique and Individualistic Art

Styles. In addition to distinctness, new, unique and individualistic art styles seem to be required features of 21st century visual art, and past traditions are a versatile aesthetic endowed with the potency to transform into desired frames. As such, different artists have manipulated the aesthetic variously to create new, unique and varied manifestations which define new environments, individuals, are pleasurable and exhibit progression. In addition to the uniqueness and individualistic approach exhibited by the designer-artists in section 4.1 of this chapter, study participants also lay credence to the claim. During an interview Elizabeth Mbabazi, a gallery manager who features at the major international visual art platform said,

"I think there is now audience for a lot of experimental, non-conventional art forms ... Because we have moved from selling traditional paintings. Both even in style of expression and in concept to more contemporary unusual forms of art and that has been

for the last several years (been in gallery for 8 years and over that period a lot has changed” (Personal Interview, 16th October 2018).

Teesa Bahana, who is also manager of another visual art promoting organization complemented stating,

“... Just from what I have seen I think a lot of artists are really in like an explorative phase whether or not that means in their own work and the kind of materials that they use. A lot of artists are sort of using different materials that maybe they have used for while or had not previously considered and potentially because of influence from what they have observed online, or just in their environment, and want to sort of play with it a little bit or explore different concepts as well. There are quite a few artists who are really diving deep into particular like defused framed concepts as opposed to just producing work for a commercial audience or for a market. They are more like exploring a theme like ‘feminism’, ‘the body’, ‘I am, Adam and Eve’. When it comes to materials as well, Ronex for a while has always explored different materials. I think a lot of artists who showed at Kampala Biennale 2018 as well were using varied mediums and materials. Also, there not as many boundaries as previously they might have found in their education systems. Quite a few artists are like let’s see what is up, let me experiment!” (Personal Interview, 18th October 2018).

Probably that is why the four designer-artists explored herein have translated fashion into a visual art. When the study inquired about the fashion medium in the visual art terrain, the visual art scholar commented,

“I see also Senkaaba who is using that language in a way that is beyond a dress that you can wear on the street. What he is doing, he is making the equivalent of a painting. ... When Senkaaba is using a bark cloth to make a dress used in a catwalk, he is saying with that dress, he is saying something about the entanglement, a bizarre political scene in Uganda, and once that is done, end of story. What his intention is, is for you to be confronted, to have a dialogue with that moving object. ... And fashion today, the one that am talking about, is beginning to make us aware that art is not just about sculpture and painting, but that art is much beyond these confines and you can say so much in fashion that you cannot say in painting. So, we are using all sorts of media, not just fashion; poetry, a combination of music sound, video and so on. So, I think as well

as fashion becoming detached from the stiff traditional role of dressing up a fashion, to becoming more expressive and exploitative” (George Kyeyune Interview, 24th October 2018).

George Kyeyune’s expression unveils another contemporary art feature that moves beyond the surface to engage the intellect, so as to understand the underlying meaning of things. The section that follows details that intellectualism requirement.

Materiality of Past Traditions Embodies Socio-Cultural and Environmental

Symbolism that Engages the Intellect. The research discovered that the art market prefers contemporary art that engages critical thought, and the past traditions seem to enable that quality. Chapter sections 4.3 and 4.4 reflect the account showing that the materiality of the past traditions embodies the potency to frame the traditional aesthetic into formats that can stir objective reasoning and understanding when experienced by a viewer. The potency of the aesthetic in the embodiment of meaning leads to the creation of artistic expressions that render the frame of the past fit to evoke intellectual analysis. Because the traditional aesthetic, embodies aspects that shape cultural, social, political and environmental situations of society, it has been employed to articulate the past in varied contemporary environments. In addition to earlier report about the international curator, Simon Njami’s contemporary visual art requirement of intellectual art, that which engages critical thought, visual art scholar Kyeyune adds,

“... It is not about a beautiful painting at some time but with a sculpture that is making you think and raise questions, make you wonder, and when you wonder you begin to look for answers, within answers are usually not in one particular form or shape but a multiplicity of them. So, it is about thinking. It is what Njami (the curator) brings back to the table, ‘I want to create artists who are thinkers.’ Biennale (global stage exhibitions) is with thinkers” (George Kyeyune interview, 24th October 2018).

Elizabeth Mbabazi who manages a gallery that sells art work on the international stage also shared,

“We had to graduate from the art we were selling when the gallery started out, beautiful art, beautiful pictures that are great in some one’s home like ‘The Market’. And when

we moved to the world stage, it was what are the artists saying to the world ... So, we had to look out for artists whose messages were strong both in practice and in expression. Messages that talked significantly to the world. Sanaa (who has frequently used the past tradition bark-cloth) has always stood out with his work ... And he has done an amazing job.”

Margaret Nagawa the visual art scholar supplemented the significance of artwork message content saying,

“In subject matter there is change and people are focused on the political which is also much around the world; it’s no longer, there is a nice flower, I am going to paint a nice flower. So even if it’s a flower, there is usually something more beyond it. The work of Xenson (who has also embraced the bark-cloth repeatedly) is very political and yet you can look at it as very playful at the same time” (Personal Interview, 25th October 2018).

By ‘much around the world’ above, Nagawa referred to ‘global narratives’, conversations denoting the theoretical perspectives that are culturally important aspects of the global community. They are ideologies of the people, their thoughts and discourses about critical global situations basing on current facts and experience. The visual art scholar thereby introduces the new contemporary art feature of art reflecting critical global issues in the following section.

Materiality of Past Traditions Embodies Organic and Socio-Cultural Symbolism that Frame Issues of Global Concern (Sustainability). To portray the character of 21st century contemporary art, Nagawa went ahead to highlight its subject matter as notions shaping the narratives of the critical global issues stating that,

“I think people are returning to local materials. There is a big upsurge in the use of visual bark cloth from fashion designers to visual artists to performance. I think bark cloth had a revival and I think from the UNESCO recognition of it (2005) it really bestowed people’s interest in it and the PhD researchers that have gone around it e.g., Nakazibwe Venny and P.K. Sengendo, all those show that there is a return to the local with regard to materials. ... I have also seen Jose Hendo’s work online, it’s

extravagant! It's couture such that it makes huge statements that makes people want to know more. What are those materials, how is it made? So, the ecological and environmental factor is really- really big. Knowing that it is a tree bark in Uganda just draws in a whole area of conversation especially at the time when we are looking at climate change deniers, I think it's really crucial, it broadens the conversation" (Ibid).

That representation of the consciousness about salient global issues is equally maintained by the art and design creation perspectives expressed by other study observations as follows; "Everything you do, have a point, what is it you want, who are you impacting?" Renowned South African fashion designer David Tlale who wants to be a game changer told fashion designers at the ASFA 2018 fashion symposium in Kampala ("Observation at CE-Fs, 26th October 2018).” Also, earlier during a visual art sales promotion seminar at 32 Degrees East in Kampala, fashion designer Gloria Wavamunno advised, "Introduce sustainable systems because they are trending and significant. We are moving away from unconscious consumption. Always have a philosophy or purpose for the practice, some guiding principles that are relevant; think locally, inspired by nature" (Observation at CE-Wv, 6th March 2018). In the same regard fashion designer-artist Jose Hendo added value,

"When I went back to study, you had to think differently, out of the box and have a positive impact and one of the things during my research was the impact of the fashion industry on the environment, so I decided that the best thing for me was to make my journey going forward in the fashion industry, something that was positive. And if it was not then I would walk away. And in my 4 years, everything I did had to be worthy doing. So, I let art influence my design and with a process sustainable by design. Everything had to be sustainable so I had to think about the material, cloth you are using had to be organic. It had to either be recycled or up-cycling; mixing it all up and getting end of line. And try to use end of line and avoid being wasteful and to be creative and obviously through that earn a living. I also do use other fabrics, organic cotton, hem, bark cloth end of line and I up-cycle. But I chose to include bark cloth because there is a story that needs to be told and by using it is encouraging the people that make it to keep on doing it because it is purposeful" (Personal Interview, 14th February 2018).

And designer-artist Sanaa Gateja reinforced the issues saying,

“I am a Pan Africanist and love the interaction and memories of my youth seeing people working with the same materials which I strongly believe have a prominent place in today and the future world. Secondly, we are killing this planet by ignoring nature and we are heading to hell when we could live in Heaven right here!” (Interview, 15th March 2018).

The above expressions globally situate the narratives and introduce the global issue of sustainability as a subject matter of contemporary art with reference to social impact, environmental concern and politics. Significant also is that all the authors of the expressions have embraced the past traditions and taken them as currents in the global stage conversation chat rooms.

An interview with fashion designer Brenda Maraka added great value, when the designer reiterated,

“Because honestly away from Uganda, internationally people need fabrics that tell stories, sustainable fabrics, beyond just making, looking for eco-fashion, renewable, how are you impacting communities ... Everything about Xenson is his work. His conversation is art creating impact renewability, sustainability and even remember the first time I met him, someone wanted to buy a T-shirt from him and he refused to sell the T-shirt to him, I asked why and he was like, ‘that man thinks he has money. I want to sell this T-shirt to someone who understands, appreciates art and knows why they are buying this T-shirt’” (Personal Interview, 6th March 2019).

Fred Mutebi a visual artist supported saying,

“Xenson’s work always promotes something. The work always has a message. I do not know whether he even writes but I have watched his presentations fully loaded with messages. The messages are highly emotional. Even me, if you are careful, you can see my emotions in my work” (Personal Interview, 25th March 2019).

Fred Mutebi is also one of the contemporary visual artists who frequently presents his artwork at the Famous Afri Art gallery in Kampala. He equally uses bark-cloth as a medium

for art expression, in addition to developing the fabric as a quality and viable material for other artists and designers. The study has also observed that past traditions bear the potency to frame contemporary art in regard to the features that define the art. The bark-cloth material is exemplified to reinforce the claim. It is selected because all the study examined designer-artists in this study embraced it as a significant aesthetic shaping their agendas.

In 2005, the traditional technology of bark-cloth making in Uganda was recognized as a masterpiece of oral and intangible heritage of humanity by UNESCO. This value was based on the sustainability value embodied in the technology and the bark-cloth fabric. The international recognition revalued the bark-cloth aesthetic both within Uganda and on the international scene, which rippled into actions by multiple organizations towards the revitalization of the bark-cloth making practice and bark-cloth reinvention for socio-economic benefits. At the time when this was happening, the world was also working towards meeting one of the Millennium Development Goals, ‘Assurance of Environmental Sustainability’ by 2015. As such, the sustainability value attribute that contributed to the recognition of the past traditional aesthetic resonates with the value notion required by contemporary visual art representation.

In that regard, the nature of the past traditions, connotes undertones on environmental protection, identity, globalization, peace and security, and politics, which are critical 21st century global issues mentioned by visual art promoters herein. As explored above, they unanimously commented that the era of contemporary art promotion encouraged artists who researched their cultural heritage and further critically engaged their audiences on issues of global concerns through their visual creations. In addition, the revelation by a British Council sponsored research on the visual art scene in East Africa, carried out between 2012 and 2014 supported the stance. The researcher reported,

“There is a growing interest in practice that combines and crosses over between art forms and different media. New Trends are being set by organizations (and here reference is to Marketing and Patronage organizations) ... raising the standards of debate and promoting critical thinking” (Standing, n.d.).

The assertion was also maintained by the incessant reproduction of the past traditional aesthetic across the years of the 21st century decades by the fashion designer-artists under

exploration. The study revealed that each of the designer-artists have in the near past repeatedly articulated issues of sustainable development and national politics through their visual art expressions. Mbabazi Elizabeth, the manager of Afri art Gallery commented about the subject content of the contemporary visual art in that regard:

“There were always topics that were hot on the international conversation space. So, artists who were quick to pick up on that and exploring deeper were able to think and easily connect. I could probably give you an example of Sane Eria Nsubuga who explored a lot of narratives and discourse regarding race and black and white spaces and the whole context of what it meant to be African and he explored this in different diversities. I do not think as a gallery we pre-empted him to do that, it was purely informed by his intrigue as an artist following what was happening on the international scene. ... Sanaa, I think for a long time he was exploring mediums and he was able to connect the dots on how this transcended into the different spaces on how this transcended into the different spaces of African-ness and in the traditional themes, different community engagement, community and cultural engagement of the paper bead. ... Xenson has always been a prolific artist and the different themes that he works on will always be speaking to a bigger African and global conversation. So, as a gallery we did not pre-empt that. He was always interrogating something. On the commercial scene, our space was to make that comprehensible to the buyers” (Interview, 16th October 2018).

Mbabazi highlights an important aspect that keeping abreast with global currents was the game of the artist, the designer-artists are alert on issues of global concern and therefore engaged them in their work for contemporary relevance. Teesa Bahana, the manager of 32 Degree East, another visual art promoting organization that offers art workshops, residencies and an art library for artists, confirmed, stating that artists are researching the art world. She said,

“There is a current need to embed your practice and concept in work that people have been exploring for years and years and have access to that information. We also have the internet for your research and a team that can also encourage you, and push you and question you and help you question certain things to see things differently. So that is the residency. But then if you are not applying for it, may be at a different stage then you still have access to the research centre and being a member for that wealth of

information which is easy to access. ... Then also for artists to be able to connect to each other. When you come into the space then you know this is a home of artists. Introduction to personalities. For the people you reach out to as well have a level of credibility with you and then too because if the organization '32 Degrees East' has asked them to meet this person then it should be worth my time."

Regarding fashion's entry into the visual art terrain, Teesa's opinion was,

"I think it is a global thing because of international social media. Everyone is influenced by each other and observing what is going on in different places. If you are a contemporary visual artist, a contemporary fashion designer you are going to pick up on different trends happening in your field and other fields" (Personal Interview, 18th October 2018).

The potency of the traditional aesthetic to frame contemporary visual art located at the global stage led to its reinvention into new forms. The aesthetic is versatile and provokes artistic activity. As such, the designer-artist used it towards artistic expression. In addition, the materiality of past traditions embodies contemporary value attributes that shape contemporary art. These attributes are framed by an organic and socio-cultural grounding of the past traditions which facilitates the articulation and interpretation of issues of global concern. Noteworthy however, is the role of the traditional aesthetic in the framing of contemporary visual art at the global stage. As such there was need for an expansive examination of the cultural trajectory of the traditional aesthetic and its reinvention accounts, hence the sections that follow.

4.3.2 Traditional Cultural Events Engender the Reinvention of Past Traditions to Shape Visual Art

The restoration of monarchies in Uganda in 1993 (Kyeyune 2003) revived the Past traditional cultural heritage and cultivated the potency of the traditions for visual expression. Monarchies are the custodians of the past traditional cultural heritage of societies in the country, and as such, all kingdom events embraced the preservation and promotion of their cultural aesthetic. The action led to the revitalization of the past traditions of societies. The Buganda Kingdom exhibits a more discernible and accessible manifestation and therefore, was examined in this search. Further because it is centrally located in the hub of the main political,

social and economic activities of the country, and where the development process of the past traditional aesthetic had an impact on various aspects of life including the visual art practice. Restoration of the monarchies provided various artists and designers with inspiration for creative practice using bark-cloth (Nakazibwe, 2005). Examination through the century indicates the use of aesthetic beyond the bark-cloth as portrayed by artworks in section 4.3.1 of this chapter. It presents a replay of the gomesi and kanzu dress designs in a painting, the reinvention of the ‘Adungu’ traditional music instrument, inspiring a sculptural table, and the Ganda clan genealogy practice represented in a painting among others.

Noteworthy also is that through the years that followed, the Kingdom introduced annual cultural events that have established a platform for the replay of the past traditions. John Sebbi a visual culture promoters revealed that, the annual events aimed at inculcating a regard for cultural heritage among the Buganda people, and shared a list of some notable events as follows: The annual Buganda cultural exhibition, the Kabaka’s Coronation anniversary, the Kabaka’s birthday celebrations, the Nabagereka’s Kisaakate and the Kabaka’s Masaza visits and the Sports competitions (Personal interview 2018). The participant expounded that the activities on these events were designed to embrace all aspects adding value to the preservation and promotion of the past traditions through their incessant occurrence. The cultural events are vessels through which the past traditional cultural heritage is reinforced, preserved and promoted. In addition, the researcher observed that some of the events exhibited the impact of the evolution of times and ways of living on the nature of the traditional aesthetic because the aesthetic had assumed new looks and assumed new functions.

Visual art scholar, Kyeyune George commented about the development and said, “It was a culturally reloaded and renewed interest in the past with a redefined unique layer of material resource (Personal interview, 24th October 2018). Indeed, the new value bestowed onto the aesthetic endowed it with the potency to inform, shape visual expression in new genres for the contemporary society.

4.3.3 *Creative Practitioners’ Networking Meetings: The Reinvention of Past Traditions*

Creative practitioners’ networking meetings including: workshops, residencies, symposiums and Conferences have contributed significantly to the reinvention of past traditions. This was revealed during an interview with the visual art scholar, Kyeyune on 24th

October, 2018. The scholar referencing the 1999 Ngoma art workshops in Uganda, exemplified the ‘locality thematic’ symposium programmes as an approach applied by the artists to explore their vicinity or practice environment, for concepts and materials, in addition to focusing on nurturing individuality in artistic styles. Namubiru and Kasfir (2013) complement that the workshops were also globally inclusive which flavoured the new artistic approach and a shift in the Ugandan practice to embed global art market conversations that favoured uniqueness and critical thinking.

Relatedly, the same meetings also meaningfully supported the introduction of critical thinking in the visual arts. The visual art scholars and some visual art promoters, participating in the study unanimously mentioned the need for visual artists to embed critical thinking in the 21st century art practice. They stressed the need for art to communicate to societies and also be relevant (Personal interviews, 2018). The scholars linked the artists’ return to the past aesthetic as a means to become relevant and purposeful to contemporary society. The need to be relevant to contemporary society, echoes the 2018 fashion symposium that took place at Stylz hotel in Kampala. The guest speaker, also a renowned South African fashion designer, Ttale David advised and encouraged the participating designers to always think about the purpose of their practice and relevance in contemporary society (Observation at CE-Fs, 2018). Ttale mentioned the value of having a social cause or positive impact in society, evoking the notion of conscious fashion designing, and therefore material sourcing and exploration, thus advocating for a return to the designer’s past traditions for relevance. The study also identified the handicraft sector further taking the lead traditional aesthetic exploration.

The reinvention of traditional handicraft techniques by visual artists in art expressions, attributed to the development of handicrafts in Uganda through training workshops and conferences. In Uganda, popular craft organizations, such as, the National Association of Women’s Organization of Uganda (NAWOU), National Association of Cultural Arts in Uganda (NACAU), Uganda Crafts 2000 and Exposure Africa provide a visible case. The researcher is familiar with the sector and for over a period of about 20 years; observation reveals that the artisans affiliated to these networks have reinvented the past traditions as a source of income, and in the process have preserved and promoted the traditional aesthetic. Across the period, tastes and desires of people have changed nurturing the need for new looks framed by the past. In search for the new and unique patterns, shapes and coloration to meet market demands, the handicraft artisans have been able to acquire necessary knowledge and

ideas through training workshops and conferences on product development and marketing. During a participant interview, the cultural promoter, Sebbi John reiterated that the trainings have led to the reinvention of the past aesthetic to suit new environments (Personal interview 2018). Examples include basketry ware, the mukeeka and the bark-cloth. Sebbi also mentioned that contemporary artists and designers have been inspired by the artisanal reinventions of the past traditions for visual expression, which is confirmed by the visual representations in figures 4.29, 4.30 and 4.31 below.



Figure 4.29
Nakisanze Sarah (2017). *Traditions on the Move*
[Mixed media including bark-cloth, paper
imprinted with basketry patterns and raffia].
(Photograph by researcher)

'Traditions on the Move' (Figure 4.29) by Nakisanze Sarah entitled 'Traditions on the Move' is a visual aesthetic framed by past traditions and representing the commercial trajectory of the Ugandan basket through the 20th and the 21st century. The doll represents the trader on a

stand with wheels to indicate mobility. The bark-cloth inner garment is adorned with a paper (imprinted with basketry patterns) whirling upwards around the garment, representing the reinvention of the basketry patterns, materials and coloration through the ages to to-date. The artwork is symbolic of the resilience of past traditions evident through the socio-cultural history embodied in the traditional aesthetic, and the salient physical features that define the basket. Another visual art inspired by the handicraft of past traditions is entitled ‘Uganda’ in Figure 4.30.

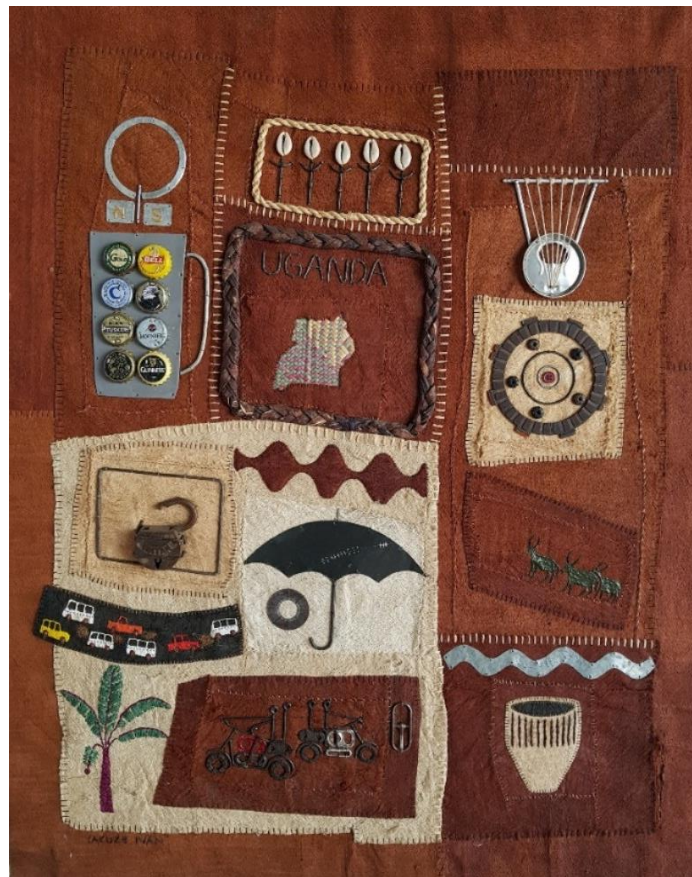


Figure 4.30
Yakuze Ivan (2006). *Uganda* [Mixed media including Bark-cloth, cowrie shells, banana fiber, palm leaves mat swatch].
(Photography by researcher)

‘Uganda’, a mixed media artwork by Ivan Yakuze is a representation of some of the key natural and cultural features of Uganda. Yakuze is a multimedia artist who is known for making artefacts using bark-cloth as a main material in its various types, textures and hues. He blends bark cloth with other natural fibers as well as other natural and man-made objects easily accessible from his immediate environment. In "Uganda", the artist used bark-cloth, cowrie shells, banana fiber, palm leaves and off-cuts from a woven mat as well as symbolic

representations of the daily life in Uganda. His artworks are usually simple semi-abstract, stylized compositions in graphical approach. When the researcher interviewed him about the concept behind the artwork, 'Uganda', Yakuze explained: "... because I was interpreting things that make up Uganda; cattle, drum, equator, musical instruments – it is not commissioned and since I have mainly produced for the Bazungu (the European or American), I also included the traffic, boda boda and pot holes and the ups and downs of Uganda." said Yakuze (Personal Interview, 18th February 2019). A visit to the urban areas of Uganda, would indeed introduce you to Yakuze's representation of the life in Uganda, a mixture of reinvented past traditions and modernity. Yakuze replays the techniques of craft production and objects through imagery. Like Nakisanze's 'Tradition on the Move' in figure 4.29, the resilience of past traditions is pronounced through artwork materials and imagery. Next is Enyonu Pamela's 'Everyday Queens' series in Figure 4.31. Enyonu is another multi-media artist, although up-coming, who equally uses accessible and affordable materials, mainly fibres including the natural and past traditions, to make art assemblages or installations. Her art work is often embodied with stories of her experiences or encounters focusing on the woman, and has exhibited in some other African countries.



Figure 4.31
Enyonu Pamela (2019). *Everyday Queens*
Series [multi-media including Palm leaves mat
plait panel]. (Photograph by researcher)

During an interview, about her artwork in the ‘Everyday Queens’ series exhibition, the visual artist informed the study:

“I was inspired by a lady who works from near my home. She sells vegetables and also weaves the ‘mukeeka’ in a very intricate way and creates her own designs. I wanted to pay homage to her crafts, so I order her mats for my art. I built a cordial relationship with her just like several others, in addition to representing many of her kids in my art works. So, it’s all these women that I represented in my art. Their everyday life that they share with me in my conversations with them, sparked the nature of material to use. They also share their pain and resilience and I thought that by using the material and their craft products, I will sort of tell their story”

In celebrating the woman in her story, and the title ‘Everyday Queens’, Enyonu was also celebrating the women who are always behind the curtain of situations and events such as house-keeping and nursing. Further still, like all the other artists in this section, there is portrayal of past tradition reinvention, and the traditional craft skill of mat in visual art production. The role of traditional craft skills and objects examined above, and the replay of the fashion forms rekindled the 21st century fashion movements in Uganda and their influence on the reinvention of the traditional aesthetic in the ensuing section.

4.3.4 Patronage and Art Marketing Facilitating the Reinvention of Past Traditions

Patronage. Patronage is the support (financial or otherwise) given to a person or organization or towards a cause. The study found out that reinvention of past traditions was equally influenced by the patronage support system, through programs including: Artist Residency, Symposiums, Exhibitions, and Community projects. Through this support system the artists have been able to identify artistic contemporary valuing the past traditions.

Art Residency. Although many organizations have offered art residency opportunities to artists both locally and internationally, Ugandan Arts Trust organization at 32 Degrees East is exemplified for this examination because of its traceable consistency in that regard, in the country. The organization is a non-profit one conceived in 2011, and focused on the development of contemporary art in Uganda. The director, Teesa Bahana, informed the study that the organization consistently offered professional development to artists through various

programs and projects (Personal interview, 18th October 2018). The Art Residency program was explored to portray the support, but the study was informed that the organization offers the artist more including: an internet connected resource centre, access to advise and positive critic, participation in intellectual conversations, financial facilitation of art projects, and an opportunity to connect with various artists. With such an insightful package, at the end of one to three months, an artist would come out positively different. Among the designer artists critically explored in this study, Senkaaba Samson and Sanaa Gateja are beneficiaries of the residency program at 32 Degrees East. They both had this to share:

“It is a unique experience when you work while interacting with other artists, varied persons, and new environments are contributing to your creation. It is not obvious but new aspects are introduced into your work, which makes them unique and different from the usual. Also, you get to be known by significant people in the art world” (Sanaa Gateja Interview, 5th January 2018).

Samson Senkaaba had this to say:

“Usually working in solitude brings out something, so I got to compare. Obviously, the narrative broadens to include many perspectives. At the end the outcome has various interpretations symbolic of how varied we are and see the world. It is a good experience that introduces something in the moment. But it could influence change. And doing things differently is also important, to get influenced by new dimensions opens up the realistic space of art worlds” (Senkaaba Samson Interview, 19th June 2018).

Symposiums. Symposiums have also contributed to the reproduction of the past traditional aesthetic for haute couture as a visual language, and the researcher witnessed two in 2018. The ‘Abrynz Styles and Fashion Awards’ (ASFAs) 2018 Fashion Symposium that took place in Kampala on 26th October 2018, and the ‘Learning from Fashion: Marketing Skills for the Fine Artists’ at 32 Degrees East on 6th March 2018. Both these events were among the identified study field sites expected to contribute data about the role of patronage in the development of the visual aesthetic in Uganda. ASFAs promotes fashion in Uganda and the ‘Learning from Fashion: Marketing Skills for the Fine Artists’ symposium was organized by 32 Degrees East. Significant about the two meetings was that their facilitators offered similar advice, encouraging artists and designers to reflect on socially relevant issues and their distinct

identities, during their creative processes (CE-Wv & CE-Fs, 2018). The facilitators believe that the advice would contribute to the development of concepts that represent sustainability issues because of a purposefully oriented design brief.

Cultural Projects. Development engendered by the art and cultural research and development projects is herein represented by the Goethe Zentrum, Kampala support. For example, in 2018 a call went out for applications from the organization for small grants targeting 3 locally based cultural projects in the different fields of art and culture. It was entitled ‘SMALL GRANTS FOR CULTURAL PROJECTS’, and successful applicants’ projects were funded. Again in 2019, the same organization funded the ‘Future for Africa Visions in Time’ fashion workshops. The FAVT project, ‘Future for Africa Visions in Time’, aimed at exploring visions of the future, emerging from Africa and its diaspora in the existent global context for the development of fashion. Three themes guided the project, namely: Disruption, Inclusion and Intervention’ and young fashion designer-artist participants were identified to participate in the project. Further one of the FAVT fashion workshops by the theme ‘Intervention’ was identified as a field site for the study. As such, the researcher was able to experience the development of fashion as a visual aesthetic. Below are the outcomes from the general project (Figures 4.32 to 4.35) under the above three themes.



Figure 4.32
Aminata Najjingo (2019). *Disruption*
[Mixed media including cowrie shells and basketry ware]. (Photo by researcher)



Figure 4.33
Eric Tamale and the Style Line Team, (2019). *Inclusion*
[Mixed media]. (Photo by researcher)

Figure 4.32 is the ‘Disruption’ haute couture inspired by the bee. Najjingo aimed at illustrating the valuable disruption of the bee. During the presentation of the haute couture at the FAVT fashion show held at MTSIFA in 2019, the researcher learnt that despite the bees 'destabilization of the natural system there is a need to treasure its contribution to the same ecosystem. It is a call towards humanity, to always find something restoring or rejuvenating from an inevitably disrupted environment. It is also a call for resilience.

On the other hand, ‘Inclusion’ in Figure 4.33 reflects the brilliance of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) whom the designer-artist represented using a white cane, a guiding tool for those who are visually-impaired, and a heap of boxes in various colors and sizes, to express the level of brilliance referred to in the haute couture. Through this work, the designer-artist is calling upon inclusion and recognition of the potential that lies beneath the facade. Broadly, it is a pronouncement of the need for social inclusion in society for the attainment of sustainable development. It challenges the deep-seated stereotypes that foster social discrimination of PWDs in society.



Figure 4.34
Kajebe Jacob Joshua (2019).
Intervention [Mixed media]. (Photo
by researcher)



Figure 4.35
Mugisha Peter (2019). *Intervention*
[Bark-cloth]. (Photo by researcher)

Finally, is 'Intervention' through sustainable fashion reflected in figures 4.34 and 4.35. The haute couture artefacts visual messages calling upon change of the ways of material sourcing and disposal as an intervention to curb global warming and thus advocating for sustainability in the world. The two who worked on the intervention theme designer-artists explained their choices. Kajebe Jacob informed the study that his choice of material for haute couture in Figure 4.34 was framed by the subject content and thus the design structure. He introduced an African pattern for a unique design among many others through which he echoed the global warming effect. Mugisha Peter's bark-cloth past tradition in Figure 4.35 was to support the sustainability theme knowing the socio-cultural and ecological story of the bark-cloth. Noteworthy, the fashion designer-artists who participated in the FAVT fashion workshops minimally used the traditional aesthetic. The researcher found the manifestation intriguing, and in need for interrogation. The next chapter provides an explanation. Although the designer-artists did not explore the traditional aesthetic, they however, expressed their themes through subjects that can be represented using the past traditions. Therefore, patronage affiliation offers insightful opportunities for the exploration of various materials including the traditional aesthetic. In addition, community projects also enhanced the exploration of the aesthetic.

Community Projects. For the community Projects attention is given to the Fine artist and bark-cloth development advocate Mutebi Fred and the Bukomansimbi Organic Tree Farmers Association (BOTFA). Since 2007, Artist Mutebi Fred has sought to revitalize the making of bark-cloth in his home district Bukomansimbi-Masaka in Southern Uganda. During a meeting, he explained,

“The concern developed when I started travelling the continents as an artist ... Seeing other artists' initiatives applied in their local materials, I developed a quest for Ugandan bark-cloth. Coming from a bark-cloth producing village when I returned, I engaged the makers. I got so embedded with the makers and that is when I realised that the cloth and practice was in danger of extinction. In 2012, I formed an association for the purposes of tree planting and the making of the bark-cloth” (Personal Interview, 25th February 2019).

When researcher inquired about the use of the fabric, Mutebi communicated that he was also targeting other Ugandan creative practitioners, to show them the possibilities of the bark-cloth He expounded,

“The world is at a stage where so many people have branded themselves. ... So, in the process of reinventing African art, I am trying to redeem the lost time ... Rebrand Ugandan Art. Bark-cloth was demonized in the past by the colonial master, but now, like a blessing, UNESCO awards it value as a wonderful innovation and should therefore be preserved. ... When you show artwork made out of bark-cloth, it will be Ugandan and that is a score. So, I have encouraged its production and I am selling it to designer-artists like Atal Stella and Jose Hendo” (ibid).

Indeed, researcher’s interviews with the designer-artists Jose Hendo and Atal Stella, confirmed that the artist supplies them with the bark-cloth material. Therefore, reinvention of the bark-cloth, its accessibility and affiliation with the community has rendered the bark-cloth worthwhile for use in contemporary society.

Finally, patronage also offered visibility opportunities. In addition to supporting creative production, the organizations also fund the public presentations of culture and art project outcomes through exhibitions, catalogues and social media platforms. The study noted that 32 Degrees East, Goethe Zentrum and the Makerere Institute of Heritage Conservation and Restoration (MIHCR) offer free exhibition spaces for the artistic initiatives. A glimpse of the MTSIFA fashion parade, a show case of fashion design students’ work and young fashion designers’ projects is exemplified below (Fig. 4.36), at the MIHCR, Makerere University.



Figure 4.36
Rodney Lugobe (2018). *The City Cleaner* [Card board, paper maché and paper]. (Photograph by researcher)

Since 2009, MTSIFA has been supporting the young fashion designers, sustaining and inspiring creativity and the development of fashion design as a visual language (Section 4.4.4 of this chapter). The fashion discipline aims at organizing annual public presentations to inspire upcoming designers and to publish critical thoughts, creations and innovations. In the process the past traditional aesthetic is equally promoted.

Art Marketing. Art marketing is the other art and culture support approach involving the promotion and sell of art for a financial gain. The researcher noted that art promoting organizations such as Afri Art Gallery, Makerere Institute of Heritage Conservation and Restoration (MIHCR) and Abraznz Styles and Fashion Awards (ASFAs) are engaged in the art and fashion promotion business. As a result, they have promoted art and the materials that frame it including the past traditions.

The trends and tastes of the current art market have contributed to the nature of contemporary visual aesthetic. The current market place is interested in art that evokes critical thought, art that provokes questions, and engages the viewer (George Kyeyune Interview, 24th October 2018). The participant further mentioned that renowned art curators like Simon Njami (earlier introduced in section 4.3.1) are contributing tremendously to lift up the level of Ugandan art through intellectual art workshops. In 2015, the curator expressed that there is

need for people who think and can question the world. Mbabazi Elizabeth, the art promoter at the global stage complemented that the art audience has grown from one that simply appreciates beautiful pictures, but rather what art communicates, further stating,

“We have grown from just being a commercial gallery in Kampala to being an art space that takes part in global art fairs. So, the artist needs to embody conversations that will speak to the world about who they are, where they are coming from and what they want to say through their art “(Personal Interview, 16th October 2018)!

The global stage is a visibility platform that is attained as an international applaud and celebration of practice achievements. Applaud and celebration is attained considering distinct and individualistic artistic skill, knowledge and prowess, unique aesthetic, and the intellectual engagement of artwork (Elaine Mateega Interview, 16th October 2018). In addition, the practitioner’s representation of current global ideologies and narratives that positively impact contemporary society, and a continuous showcase of the innovative and creative work at markets and patronage platforms. At the market and patronage platform is where the buying, investing, and appreciation of art and design happens. The global stage is also characterized by periodical international networking forums, workshops and, art and design exhibitions and fairs.

When the study engaged Lara Buchmann, another German art promoter at Goethe Zentrum -Uganda and scholar of African art, she supplemented saying “there is a current need, rethinking the past for the contemporary, and focus for support is targeting projects that have messages beyond beauty, those looking at social engagement (Personal Interview, 16th October, 2018).” The expression also echoed designer-artist Jose Hendo who supports the ideology of social engagement when she set up a 'Back to the Roots B2TR community initiative. The designer-artist said that B2TR aims at supporting the planting of trees, making of bark-cloth and general sustainability within the bark-cloth making communities in Uganda (Personal Interview, 14th February, 2018). Jose Hendo is globally positioned as a lead sustainable fashion designer, and her venture reflects Sanaa Gateja’s bark-cloth and paper bead initiative. In the process of acquiring material for his art and fashion, Sanaa engages women in the various communities in Uganda (Personal Interview, 25th June 2018). The two designer artists exhibit their role in social development through their conceptual haute couture. The art promoter of Afri Art gallery in Uganda further informed the study that Sanaa is one of the leading

contemporary artists promoted by the Gallery (Elizabeth Mbabazi Interview, 16th October, 2018). The disposition of the two designer artists herein explored resonates with the trends of the contemporary visual art market, art embodiment of critical global concerns (See section 4.4.1.2 of this chapter). In addition, at the 32 Degrees East study field site (CE-Wv, 2018), the advice by the meeting facilitator, to incorporate trending global conversations such as the notion of sustainability to guide creativity in order to be relevant in the present, equally resonated with the previous submissions.

Patronage and marketing of art not only led to the development of the traditional aesthetic as an art material but it also gave it a platform of visibility and applause. That way, the value attributes embodied in the aesthetic are appreciated and elevated. Significant is the insight about the position of the traditional cultural heritage as a visual aesthetic resource (art material) in the contemporary.

4.3.5 *Past Traditions: The Contemporary Global Agenda Value Attributes*

For the ‘Contemporary global issues’ the study identified the United Nations 2030 Global Agenda for global action entitled ‘Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ with the 17 SDGs. It was selected because of its’ universal engagement and the pertinent social, political, economic and environmental global concern. In the agenda declaration, 193 global countries agreed to work together to meet their cause, guided by shared principles and commitments that focus on the immense sustainable development challenges of contemporary society amidst innovation towards societal progression. The agenda embodies 17 SDGs with 169 associated targets which are integrated and indivisible, and it recognizes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Further, the agenda’s ambition and magnitude require a revitalized global partnership for success hence the call for action throughout the world to change, and through the embrace and implementation of the 17 SDGs. In addition, it encourages the inclusion of all member governments for follow-up at all governance levels (National, Regional and International).

By value attributes, reference is to those qualities that facilitate the attainment of the contemporary global agenda. The study discovered that the global stage stance of the designer-artists and their persistent reinvention of the past traditions for contemporary haute couture

indicated their knowledge about the value attributes of global issues, and the significant relationship between the traditional aesthetic and the attributes. The global stage position of Atal Stella, Senkaaba Samson, Sanaa Gateja and Jose Hendo indicates that they have gained insight over the years of their visual art practice through interaction and collaboration with visual art patronage, participation in art educative and networking environments, and examination of art ideas, ideologies and materials at the national, regional and international platforms (Personal interviews) supports the view. The designer-artists have used the past traditions incessantly and the praise and accolades they have attained through the aesthetic is associated to the aesthetics' embodiment of value attributes that facilitate the attainment of the contemporary global within society. Although the artists often instinctively create art, they are also inadvertently experiencing an environment that they traverse (the contemporary global humanity and environmental agenda). As such, they are not free from influence by the paths they take and this contributes to the frame of their art.

An examination of the global issues was carried out to identify value attributes that shape them. So, the study examined the agenda declaration basing on its global inclusivity of 193 countries of the world and its relevant focus in influencing the actions of many. According to the United Nations organization (sdgs.un.org), the agenda for sustainability is the plan of action for people, planet and prosperity including the strengthening of universal peace in the world. The examination of the agenda in relation to the traditional aesthetic, for the identification and selection of value attributes was also based on aspects that incessantly underpinned the formation of the agenda declaration, and how the traditional aesthetic could support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. During the examination process, some elements resonating with the potency of the past traditions persistently featured, thereby forming a coherent pattern that rendered the elements essential and valuable across the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Consequently, three (3) value attributes were identified including: Participation, Inclusivity and Sustainable systems, followed by an account of their identification path.

Participation. Beginning with Participation, it literally means the action of taking part in something. Similarly, in this study it refers to the call by United Nations towards all nations and individuals to play a role in attaining the SDGs. The agenda states as follows,

“All Countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan. ... We are determined to mobilize the means required to implement this agenda through a revitalized global solidarity ... with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people”

Declaration 51 of the same agenda also reiterates,

“... Children and young women and men are critical agents of change and will find the new goals a platform to channel their infinite capacities for activism into the creation of a better world.”

Further, UNDP professed saying,

“The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is one of the leading organizations working to fulfil the SDGs by the year 2030. Present in nearly 170 countries and territories, we help nations make the Goals a reality. We also champion the Goals so that people everywhere know how to do their part”.

The statements above exhibit a call to, and an opening for the world to participate in the designed universal agenda. In this study, the nature of the past traditional aesthetic, as belonging to societies because it is created, nurtured, protected and developed by societies in the world, offered the designer-artists herein explored, a basis for participation in the global action. Chapter 4 Section 4.3 presents how each of the designer-artists have engaged through their haute couture creations representing social sustainability. Atal Stella’s haute couture exhibits social cohesion initiatives, Senkaaba Samson’s social participation advocacy, Jose Hendo, sustainability awareness strategies and Sanaa Gateja equity and wellbeing endeavours.

The research also found out that the designer-artists have the knowledge about the critical issues of global concern, and have repeatedly explored the past traditional aesthetic at their disposal (See Chapter 4 section 4.1 and 4.3). As such, they are aware of its embodiment of sustainability value, and the visual power to stir objective reasoning and understanding when a viewer experiences an art work framed by the aesthetic.

Inclusivity. Plainly referring to the practice of including all, during the examination of the sustainability Agenda, the aspect of ‘Inclusivity’ strongly underpinned the formation of the SDG goals throughout. This is exemplified herein by a few statements. The element No.3 of the Agenda Declaration states as follows,

“We resolve, between now and 2030, to end poverty and hunger everywhere; to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; ... inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities”.

It is supplemented by element No.55 which relays that,

“The Sustainable Development Goals and targets are integrated and indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities.”

In addition, throughout the agenda, the goals repeatedly assert commitment towards inclusivity which is expressed through the goal target towards all men, women and girls; by all ages and for all people of all ages, and everywhere in the world and for all countries through all forms, a universal action.

The nature of inclusivity referencing humanity reflects the inclusive nature of the past traditions. Shils (1981) deduces that past traditions embody great knowledge and skills which societies can rely on exclusively. The knowledge is engrained in society and available for all and new generations to easily embrace to facilitate existence. This is because patterns of action from the past are sacred and protected by societies. They bind the people together (ibid) and therefore, can be explored to rally all towards a common goal; for life and environmental sustenance. In the process there is reinforcement of its inclusive value.

That inclusive quality embodied in the traditional aesthetic, is what inadvertently transforms the haute couture shaped by past traditions into a significant aesthetic which the designer-artists employ to make global relevance. Sanaa Gateja and Samson Senkaaba in Section 4.3 critically articulate the value aspect. Gateja explored the socially rooted and inclusive nature of the past traditional bark-cloth and paper bead innovation that turned into a

tradition, and economically empowered women of various communities. Senkaaba intriguingly reinvented the bark-cloth and the gomesi, the ‘Ganda’ traditional dress design in order to effectively capture the attention of the audience so as to deliver his call for social participation. Because the gomesi is inclusively a property of society, Senkaaba startled the people with the destabilized traditional dress design, thereby getting attention to his social participation call. Jose Hendo, explored the intriguing materiality of the bark-cloth to promote sustainability awareness. She devised strategies that can inclusively engage categories of fabric manufactures, fashion designers and consumers for adoption and adaptation towards sustainable production and consumption in the fashion industry. Lastly Atal Stella has critically explored the traditional aesthetic through the merger of different cultural aspects into a single artefact thereby creating a liminal environment that accommodates diverse cultural dimensions in one shell. The artefacts are endowed with a cultural meaning that blurs the limitations of the existing boundaries (Zhubair, 2012) and can further transcend their cultural referent and assert their new inclusive space of enunciation in the globalized contemporary society. The environment creates social cohesion that creates peaceful societies.

Sustainable Systems. Sustainable systems are mechanisms designed to ensure safe exploration and protection of resources for future generations and the environment. Throughout, the Sustainable Development goals emphasize the assurance of the application of sustainable systems towards the attainment of the global agenda of sustainability. The goal strategies focus the sustainability agenda through the following systems namely: implementation of basic infrastructure development, the production and consumption patterns, resource exploitation, quality living spaces, disaster management and peaceful societies among others.

The approach to embed sustainable systems was equally adapted by the designer-artists, exhibited by their social sustainability endeavour using their past traditions, presented in section 4.3 of this report. The designer-artists contributed through an array of sustainability system approaches and exclusive initiatives. Jose Hendo contributed to the production and consumption patterns through the sustainable design pathway approach for sustainable fashion design and production, by exploring the ancient bark-cloth making practice. Through a multiplicity of traditional cultural heritage aesthetic reinventions Atal Stella nurtured vitality and diversity both at home in Uganda and the diaspora for social integration towards peaceful

societies. Senkaaba Samson explored the reverence of the past traditions which lured society into necessary participation towards an understanding of human rights in order to strive for equality and peaceful societies. Through the inclusivity and resourcefulness of the past traditions, Sanaa Gateja mobilized societies across the country, Uganda, into socio-economic sustainable networks for resource exploitation towards poverty alleviation.

4.3.6 *Past Traditions Deconstruct Inhibitive Narratives and Environments*

The study also discovered that the designer-artists reinvented the past traditions because the aesthetic facilitated the progression of the designer-artists in challenging spaces. That is the capacity of the past traditions to assist the designer artist to attain a desired outcome.

“... Every day I keep thinking how the ancestors came up with something like bark-cloth, it looks very simple, but I relate it to the aeroplane. In fact, beyond bark-cloth, take for example the medicine, ‘emumbwa’. How did they know that when you mix these plants and put them in clay you can treat pregnant women! These knowledge are beyond academic stance but rather deeply rooted” (Personal Interview with Senkaaba Samson, 2018).

The designer-artist’s expression attests to his current belief in the value laden past aesthetic, yet tormented and haunted by its relegation by the colonialists. It was in the late 19th Century with the advent of Christianity that the past traditions including the bark-cloth fabric were mystified as “satanic” (Nakazibwe 2005).

Further Margaret Trowell the first art educator in Uganda, equally Western, contended that, Ugandan past traditions cannot inform visual art production (Trowell, 1957) although together with her colleague Klaus Waschmann she went ahead and archived it in the Uganda Museum, and further encouraged its use. Although liberated in the 1970s, and continuously today, the study found out that few artists continuously apply the physical past traditions cultural artefacts in their work (Personal Interviews, Brenda Maraka, 2018 and Teesa Bahana, 2018). However, Senkaaba asserted,

“For me I use the bark-cloth because there is a certain aesthetic with it ... obviously also the fact that it was demonized. When I use it, I am tying into the psych of someone

demonizing it, and also trying to create beauty with it” (Personal Interview, 19th June 2018).

The designer-artist challenged the colonial narrative and took responsibility to free the past aesthetic from the fringes of relegation. Through a poem, he declared,

“... I am the custodian of the intrinsic, invisible ancestral philosophies,
Connoisseur of the Universal concept of Ubuntu
... I am a Pan Africanist,
I walk the footsteps of Steve Biko,
I Celebrate, I Toast to the activist sentiments of Kwame Nkrumah,
I denounce, I detest the neoliberal tendencies ...”

Notable however, is the designer-artist’s intriguing attitude towards the ecological and cultural story of the bark-cloth fabric. When he was asked why he repeatedly reinvents the bark-cloth, Senkaaba replied, “

“I do not even know actually. ... The experiences, inspirations, concepts metaphors that are in them [the past traditions] cannot just be deciphered in 2 pages. There are many layers of meaning which I also sometimes forget ... it [interest in bark-cloth] is not even attached to cultural or the perceived meaning, but it’s inherent for me, and that is what am saying that there are many layers. Part of it could be for instance wealth in the past, belief in old knowledge. ... I use bark-cloth because it is my culture ... Yes, we all know that it was gazetted by UNESCO and yet for me increasingly every day I keep thinking how these guys came up with something like this...With bark cloth there is something deeper beyond historic culture [historic cultural traditions]; the way of living e.g., we use bark cloth in 2018 and we are making contemporary items. ... But in essence we are creating our own culture, own material, our contemporary way and bark cloth is just a material we are using.

Nevertheless, the designer-artist’s perspective towards the past traditions is a progressive one. He advocates for the development of the traditional aesthetic and exploration in the evolving culture.

Senkaaba is not alone, Ronex Ahimbisibwe, the visual artist participant informed the study that he regards bark-cloth as one of the best materials for its texture, nature and as a symbol of Ugandan identity. When asked why he repeatedly uses bark-cloth, the artist said that he wanted to change the negative perception some Ugandans have about bark-cloth, to the extent that some people even think that they would die if they touched it or used it because of its historical function as a burial cloth (Personal Interview, 20th February 2019). Further information on the historical functions of bark-cloth can be obtained in Roscoe 1911; Semakula Kiwanuka 1970, and Nakazibwe 2005.

Through participant observation sessions of one of the MTSIFA fashion design students' show that took place between Mid-August to Mid-November 2017, student (MFDS#2) indicated the use of the past traditions to deconstruct a situation. Using haute couture titled 'The She Itesot' (Figure 4.44) and framed by the past asserting power, the fashion student aimed at challenging gender inequality prevailing within the past tradition of 'malwa' (beer) brewing, an activity executed by women in Teso, Uganda. Interestingly, the fashion student used past traditions to challenge a past tradition that subjects the Teso women to exploitation by their husbands and the general male gender. The designer-artist informed the study that in Teso, the woman is the bread winner in a home, yet after work her husband takes away all the money made. Further still, she is supposed to dress enticingly such that she lures male customers to her business. In the process, she is sometimes abused. Using haute couture, the fashion student visually articulates how the woman has navigated her inhibitive tradition and turned it into a tool of financial power. It is also a call to society alerting about the prevalence of such in contemporary society and a need to challenge the vice that comes with it.

Further still, the exhibition "Everyday Queens" (20th August 2019) by artist Pamela Enyonu portrayed the reinvention of the 'Mukeeka' past traditional aesthetic into women's head gears (See Figure 4.31). The exhibition which was supported with literature relayed the celebration of unsung heroes – the ordinary men and women who serve society in various capacities at lower levels, including master crafters who use natural materials to make artefacts for everyday use yet they are hardly recognized as making an important contribution in society for sustaining the age-long tradition; the re-invention of tradition, and craft work crossing into the high art terrain (also highly exhibited by the designer-artists explored herein). Enyonu used the mukeeka, a representation of past traditions to make an elegant head-gear. The use of a

stylized head-gear was an intent to deconstruct an attitude society holds towards vocational skills. During an interview with the artist, she mentioned,

“The maids, nurses, drivers, gardeners, cooks, and cleaners who never get the direct praise of enabling environments. Inspired by a lady who works from near my home. She sells vegetables and also weaves the ‘mukeeka’. She weaves in a very intricate way and creates her own designs. I wanted to pay homage to her crafts so I order her mats for my art. I built a cordial relationship with her just like several others, in addition to representing many of her kids. So, it’s all these women that I represented in my art. Their everyday life that they share with me in my conversations sparked the nature of material to use. They also share their pain and resilience. I thought that by using the material, I will sort of tell their story” (Pamella Enyonu Interview, 20th August 2019).

Fashion designer-artist, Sanaa, who had lived in Europe for over 15 years as a gold smith, equally revealed his employment of the aesthetic as a liberative tool. In one of the meetings, he mentioned as follows,

“I withdrew from the fashion cities; Paris, Italy, Tokyo, London and New York; from the international fashion show business. I even became political when I started to read about Africa and realized that fashion in Africa was a tale. Anyway, I am not competitive in that sense because it was the sale of ideas to manufacturers and I did not see myself put designs on the catwalk for that end. I am more of an artist doing fashion for art, for occasional instances, one offs that stay pleasurable throughout” (Personal Interview, 5th January 2018).

Sanna returned home in Uganda in 1990, to his youth passion for craft, art and design that he had experienced in the local East African environment in the 1960s. While at home, Sanaa developed his art and fashion exploring local materials such as bark-cloth, raffia and cowrie shells, and the 21st century portrays his redirection to the fashion cities in a home grown aesthetic and genre. Some of his haute couture include: the ‘Paper beaded full length Shawls of 2006 which are part of the permanent collection at the Tropical museum in Amsterdam, also in Permanent collection is the *Paperbead Shawl, 2014* at the National Museums, Scotland and the “*Woman ahead – woman on the move*”2010 with the Museum of Art and Design, NewYork. When asked about the nature of materials, the designer artist responded saying,

“I am a Pan Africanist who loves the interaction and memories of my youth; It is pleasurable and encouraging seeing people work with our local natural materials which I now strongly believe have a prominent place in today and the future world. We are killing this planet by ignoring nature and we are heading to hell when we could live in heaven right here” (Personal interview, 15th March 2018)

The uniqueness of the traditional aesthetic gave Sanaa Gateja leverage as a Ugandan fashion designer-artist at the global stage. He changed his narrative that Ugandan/African fashion designers cannot engage fashion design, later on feature on the global stage. In fact, it is the uniqueness that asserts a distinct originality which in a similar way challenged Atal’s conscience while on the global stage. During an interview, the designer-artist mentioned that at international forums, people from the Masai and the Zulu African ethnic groups always dressed in their traditional garb. The designer artist compared the experience with the voice of a fellow artist who said that bark-cloth was too complicated to paint on and even sew (Personal Interview 2019). She further commented,

“Indeed, I have heard so much about the bark-cloth fragility and demonic associations, but I do not find it an issue now ... So, I just wanted to take up the challenge because I personally liked the cloth much as people feared it. I find its colour and nature unique and special. It is also my heritage.”

Despite the inhibitive narratives, Atal was aware of the value laden in the fabric and chose to listen to her inner voice. “I want to be original” she expressed. The traditional past aesthetic provided the solution.

Indeed, the aesthetic potency also paved way for Jose Hendo’s fine art passion deconstructing her secondary school thought that art is not a worthy study discipline. Having been frustrated by the secondary school she attended, for failure to submit her final National A-Level Art examination for marking, Jose Hendo left Uganda for the United Kingdom to pursue her fine art dream.

“I decided to study fashion, completed, and worked in fashion factories for three years but I felt something was missing as an artist. I felt a strong urge to express myself better. So, I went back to study a course ‘Beyond fashion Designing’, and this time I wanted

to do something that would impact my career and bring out this artist in me that was desperate to express herself. ... When I went back to study, you had to think differently ...” (Personal Interview, 2018).

The bark-cloth offered the necessary qualities for Jose Hendo’s art and design innovation. The designer-artist’s artistic passion took advantage of the bark-cloth aesthetic for effective creative structural expression. As such, the visual aesthetic articulation, and the fabric’s ecological value met the sustainability agenda. As such, Jose Hendo employed past traditions and flipped the narrative to credit the fine art subject through design. On the other hand, Mutebi Fred, the visual artist whose love and belief in the bark-cloth has taken him to the garden to cultivate it, and to the industry to make eco-canvases proclaims the aesthetic possibilities of the bark-cloth to the artists,

“The world is at a point where so many people have branded themselves ... we did not paint on bark cloth as a canvas. We didn’t ... I am trying to rebrand Ugandan art in a situation where you buy a canvas from China and paint, the content not African, so I ask myself, at a time like this if Africa is to rebrand rightly, we need to pick up where we got disoriented. Our ancestors did art and bark-cloth was discovered before the colonialists. If bark-cloth was a Chinese craft, it would have been at a different level. But because it was demonized and side-lined it was not given the due research. But now as blessing in disguise! UNESCO accords it value as a wonderful innovation and should be preserved” (Fred Mutebi Interview, 25th 2019).

Today, Mutebi Fred has developed the bark-cloth to produce what he refers to as eco-canvases, paper and all sorts of grades of bark-cloth. He supplies other artists including Atal Stella, Jose Hendo, and many other foreign art practitioners (ibid).

4.3.7 *Past Traditions Construct Identities in Globalized Spaces*

Although the past has been reinvented to incorporate new features, and acquire new shapes and meanings, the study revealed that the traditional aesthetic is still employed and applied by societies and regarded as a representation of the society and the heritage of people. During the examination of the haute couture, the researcher noted a deliberate continued application of the past traditional aesthetic in old and new forms by the selected fashion

designer-artists. They mentioned the titles and purposes of the different haute couture production, and the critical observation of the haute couture. It was also noted that the reinvention of the traditional aesthetic was a pattern of the haute couture works by the designer-artists through a period of close to two decades, and therefore, the past traditional aesthetic had become a descriptor of the haute couture framing an identity of the work and the creator.

In addition, construction of an identity by the past aesthetic has been observed by many others in the society. In an interview with Kyeyune Goerge, a visual art scholar and study participant said, “the designer-artists are going through an identity crisis and trying to rediscover themselves ... to assert as Africans on the international scene (Personal Interview, 24th October 2018)”. With that, Kyeyune believes the traditional aesthetic can construct an identity. The scholar was also supported by an art promoter who said,

“When you go to the world stage, people want to know where you are coming from. It ceases to be Sanaa, rather Sanaa from Uganda. So, most of the artists use materials that resonate with their country or place” (Personal Interview with Elizabeth Mbabazi Interview, 16th October 2018).

Margaret Nagawa, a visual art scholar added her voice echoing the previous participants,

“Again, I might return it back to what gives people a certain degree of authenticity. Agency in what they do, where are they staying; ok this is a material stamp. I am putting on this international stage and it comes from my people in a way” (Margaret Nagawa Interview, 25th October 2018).

At this point we are reminded that Sanaa is one of the designer-artists of the haute couture under exploration herein, and the expression attests to what was earlier noted in Section 4.1 of the chapter, that the designer-artist returned home to recharge in an original frame that is unique. He is also one of those promoted at the global platform by the Afri Art Gallery.

The claim that the designer-artists actually use the past traditions to construct identities is further maintained by another visual art promoter from the Goethe Zentrum art promoting Institute who stated, “I think I see the reuse of the past materials in many art rooms, ... It has to do with identity, where you belong, how to negotiate your space in a place but also in the

world (Personal interview with Lara Buchmann, 2018).” In reference to that global location, renowned fashion designer Eugene Baine, who explores the Kitenge fabric locally had this to say when asked for his comment about the use of past traditions by the study explored designer-artists,

“I think it is inspirational and most of our inspiration is local (Ugandan) and as people from that country bark cloth was their choice. I think it’s because of designers’ inspiration and brand aesthetic and setting of the brand Ugandan culture. Even when you are Ugandan living abroad, you get to appreciate your Ugandan culture more. Things you do not see every day. Like bark cloth is very rich and unique but also, I think it is tied to own brand aesthetic and signature, Ugandan centric” (Eguana Bagwana Interview, 7th March 2019).

Brenda Maraka, a fashion designer who has worked with Senkaaba Samson and is aware of Jose Hendo endeavours had this to say, “Sometimes when you go international and use your local materials, you appear unique and recognizable. That could be the reason why the globally placed Ugandan designer-artists opt for their traditional heritage resource” (Personal interview, 6th March 2019). Paula Butagira, another fashion supported the claim,

“They want to remain unique, first and foremost they are artists. Xenson gets a lot of attention from fashion capitals like Milan, Paris because of what he does. Stella can even let go of her art, It’s like an identity. Hendo sustainability as uniqueness. It is about preserving their art” (Personal Interview, 5th March 2019).

In consultation with the visual artist participants for an inclusive finding, they unanimously added value that the designer-artists’ global placement requires the application of the Ugandan past traditional aesthetic for recognition at that platform (Personal Interviews with Ahimbisibwe Ronex, Enyonu Pamella, Yakuze Ivan & Mutebi Fred; Personal Interviews, 2018).

Further still, observed perspectives from the study field sites were interestingly complementary. Although not focused on the haute couture under exploration herein, three of the sites equally substantiated the previous findings because the event conversations, discussions and teachings, revealed that there is a current need for the artists and designers to

assert an identity in the contemporary globalized space (CE-Ch, CE-Wv & CE-Fs, 2018). The sessions reinforced the value of the past traditions in facilitating the identity construction process.

The participant observation sessions at the FAVT fashion project workshops introduced something new about the past aesthetic in regard to identity assertion. The concept of the fashion project was globally oriented although the participants were not globally positioned. Further, the study portrayed that although the past traditional aesthetic was used to shape fashion for the project, the young designer-artists explored it mainly for its aesthetic and other associated value other than global identity construction. “I like the African patterns because of the exclusive beauty they add to things” Kajebe Joshua expressed. Mugisha Peter complemented saying, “My choice of the barkcloth is due to its sustainable story which resonates with my focus on the ‘Intervention theme’. Bark-cloth is the material I wish to promote in order to challenge environmental pollution.” (Mugisha’s gesture strongly qualifies the value embodied in the bark-cloth ... because his focus is not self-proclamation but rather application of an aesthetic that resonates with his sustainability agenda.

Relatedly, the young fashion designer-artist participants at the Margaret Trowell art school field site did not select the past traditional materials for their fashion production to assert an identity at the global stage. However, they applied the aesthetic for ethnic identity at home. Participant MFDS #5 from the MTSIFA field site is exemplified to build on the claim when she expressed that her use of the bark-cloth fabric was to represent her mother (originally from Rwanda), and further emphasize her Buganda and Ugandan current positioning. Another Participant MFDS #7 who also explored the bark-cloth complemented with raffia in red, yellow and black colours said that she wanted to encourage the Ugandans to appreciate their identity. Bark-cloth is identifiably Ugandan, and the colours she used are of the Ugandan flag and part of the country’s brand identity.

The section has revealed that fashion designer-artists persistently reinvented past traditions to shape haute couture in contemporary times. It is the case because the past traditions have engendered various agendas of these creative practitioners. Through various creative paths, the traditional aesthetic has located a position at the global stage, it has shaped subjective identities in challenged environments and negotiated alternative action paths and directions for

them. Significantly, the traditional aesthetic has been presented as a working aesthetic for designer-artists in Uganda, and has thus proved to be valuable in the 21st contemporary society.

In account of the haute couture explored in this section, the constructive value embodied in the past traditions drew the fashion designer-artists, to embrace the resource that engendered issues established to be social sustainability. Through the fashion language, past traditions portrayed their evolutionary and pragmatic qualities exhibiting relevance to societies in contemporary times. More significantly though, the haute couture articulated social sustainability through an interpretation of a society's traditional aesthetic, indicating that creative re-enactment of a community's traditional aesthetic revalues the aesthetic through new roles and thus appropriate for contemporary times. It is however, worthy noting that interpretation is based on conceptual framing and contextual aesthetic reference. Therefore, the haute couture artefacts are subject to various interpretations. As such, there was need to further examine society's cultural contexts through an extensive cultural trajectory that studies aspects that influence the reinvention of the traditional aesthetic.

4.4 Concluding the Chapter

By interrogating selected contemporary Ugandan haute couture artefacts that are shaped by past traditions, the study has established that the artefacts embody the notion of social sustainability. It has also articulated the role of past traditions, as a working aesthetic that enables constructive and sustainable progression of global societies in contemporary times. The study revealed that the haute couture artefacts frame aspects that relate to the social sustainability notion of the global agenda of sustainable development. Further still, the creators of the artefacts are renowned designer-artists located at the global stage. The significant position was investigated and it was discovered that the nature of natural and symbolic elements of the traditional aesthetic framing the haute couture, is shaped by valuable qualities that the contemporary global society relates to. The valuable qualities include symbolic histories, a distinct aesthetic, and the beauty and versatility of the traditional aesthetic. This contributed to the environmental need of the contemporary global society, and their political and socioeconomic factors which engender the sustainability agenda.

The analysis of the haute couture artefacts framed by the aesthetic portrayed the social sustainability notion through an interpretation of a society's traditional aesthetic, indicating

that a creative re-enactment of a community's past traditions revalues the aesthetic through new roles and looks suitable for contemporary times. Further still, the haute couture artefacts were reinterpreted as visual expressions or visual art. However, the return to the past yet during an era of modernity located at the global stage was intriguing. It provoked further inquiry that unveiled that the haute couture frame having crossed over into the terrain of the intellectually analyzed creations, had repositioned itself as an object of inquiry. As such, the haute couture was viewed as contemporary art works, an aspect that the artefacts took on inadvertently because of the trajectories of the fashion designer-artists.

Further investigation revealed that the global ideologies that framed the sustainability agenda and shaped the contemporary art, equally influenced the haute couture, in addition to the global art market dynamics. Then the study confirmed that past traditions embody qualities that shape contemporary visual art. The study also portrayed African designers specializing in the application of their traditional aesthetic showcased on prestigious global spaces, having dressed international celebrities and high-profile personalities, produced international brands, and received applauds and accolades in praise of their fashion achievements. Illuminated by fashion, is the positive impact of the traditional aesthetic to the social and environmental concerns of the African societies. The prevalence of the traditional aesthetic in the visual arts and at the global stage stirred a check on the players themselves, and it unearthed three crucial aspects. Past traditions are used to navigate challenging spaces, environments and narratives; to construct identities in the globalized terrain and to retain the global stage positions attained by the designer-artists.

As such, through interrogating the cultural trajectory of the study selected haute couture artefacts shaped by past traditions, the representation of social sustainability by the contemporary Ugandan haute couture was established and the contemporary value of past traditions articulated. The study revealed the role of past traditions in the attainment of social sustainability positioning the traditional aesthetic as constructive and sustainably progressive and working within contemporary society. That embodiment of contemporary value is the significant revelation that locates an important position for the traditional aesthetic in the present. The stance required a deeper analysis and interpretation towards the emergence of the significant meaning of the constructive position of the past traditions in the present. The next chapter five presents further analysis of the findings and the significant meanings.

5.0 Introduction

This chapter is an analysis and interpretive discussion of the findings of the study. Through a qualitative examination, the cultural trajectory of nine haute couture artefacts framed by past traditions and exhibiting aspects related to social sustainability revealed the following issues: that the haute couture are a contemporary visual aesthetic shaped by an evolutionary traditional cultural heritage that is embodied with ecological, socio-cultural and economic significance; secondly, that through creative and innovative reinvention and disposition of selected traditional cultural heritage, the haute couture artefacts were transformed into a visual language representing the notions of social sustainability; lastly that the reinvention of past traditions has been influenced by the pragmatic and constructive nature of the traditional aesthetic, the contemporary discourse of sustainable development, and the dynamics of globalization. Alluding to that contemporary stance of the traditional aesthetic, the study interpreted it to mean that the value embodied by the traditional aesthetic has the capacity to engender fashion designer-artists towards culture reinvention and reconstruction to attain their creative agenda, and to prevail in the globalized 21st century space.

During the analysis and interpretation process, the researcher identified connecting patterns across all the research findings. As such, this chapter articulates the contemporary value of past traditions and each of the interpretive categories that frame it is built by sections from the data themes. The analysis also involved comparison with relevant theory and literature towards an interpretive narrative synthesis of the significance of the data. It argues that the traditional aesthetic engenders sustainable development within the contemporary global society through the social sustainability dimension, it frames a language that supports socially inclusive knowledge dissemination, and, it is an agential tool for creative practitioners within globalized spaces. The discussion that follows supports these arguments.

While this study mainly focused on the haute couture artefact, the research found complementing value from other creative practices. As such, the thesis drew on a broad range of the creative practices, also referred to as creative industries in here to attain an empirical breadth and theoretical nuance to the understanding of the significance of past traditions in contemporary society. The section highlights the entry point and role of the creative practice

in the sustainable development agenda. In 2015, the United Nations developed the contemporary agenda for global action titled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. It calls upon the embrace of the agenda by societies, through the three dimensions of Sustainable Development including the social, economic and environmental dimensions, to change ways of global exploitation. That positions social sustainability as critical for analysis, more so where it manifests, through the creative practice.

Herein, the creative practice exhibits its intervention to frame, name and position the status quo, concurring with Dimova & Gillen (2017, p.60) who assert as follows, “Today when communities strive to find meaning and dignity in the face of conflict, displacement and deep social, economic and technological changes, art as a creative practice can again help us imagine the common future”. Thus, what follows is the understanding of the assertion of past traditions as valuable in contemporary times, in the following interpretive categories including: 1) Through the Social perspective Past traditions engender Sustainable Development within the 21st century contemporary society, 2) Past traditions shape Haute couture as socially inclusive knowledge dissemination platforms, and 3) Past traditions are an Agential aesthetic for creative practitioners in the globalized 21st century space and global stage.

5.1 Past Traditions and Social Sustainability: Engendering Sustainable Development within the 21st Century Contemporary Society

The researcher’s interpretation of contemporary Ugandan haute couture shaped by past traditions as a manifestation of issues of social sustainability in the 21st century, challenged the study towards establishment of the phenomenon. The study findings revealed that in the late 20th century and over the early 21st century, traditional cultural heritage and sustainability concepts have been entangled and are influential within the creative practice. Traditional cultural heritage also referred to as past traditions and traditional aesthetic herein, have prevailed adding value to contemporary times. In 2017, the United Nations recognized the cultural heritage component of culture as crucial for the current sustainable development process (Ruhanen & Whitford, 2019 & Pagán et al., 2020). Although the past traditions have been active and working in the present, its contribution to society within the creative practice had not been significantly pronounced and articulated in relation to sustainable development (See Chapter 2 section 2.1). Further still, the discourse of social sustainability is lagging behind that of the other two sustainable development dimensions of economic and environmental

(Colantonio, 2008; Murphy, 2014 and Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017). This study also aimed at filling that lacuna. In addition, the limited literature on the nexus between the haute couture practice and the social sustainability notion, has been substantiated by the discourse on other creative practices to facilitate the thesis discussion. All the creative practices equally originate from that individual expressive ability that generates a cultural manifestation aiming for socio-cultural and economic gains in contemporary society. As such, contemporary society represents the impact of globalization on the cultural terrain, equally portraying the return of traditional cultural heritage amidst technological development and embrace. The representation of globalization is a package of development within contestations (Hong & Cheon, 2017; Dimova & Gillen, 2017 and Obioha, 2010) and the traditional aesthetic is present to facilitate the negotiation of the situation. The study thus, asserts a nexus between the past traditions and social sustainability articulated through haute couture as a creative practice engagement. It claims that through the creative practice, past traditions have asserted their role in sustainable development through the attainment of SDGs 8, 12 and 16. This has rendered social sustainability a salient platform that supports the 2030 sustainable Development agenda.

As such, the study posits that, past traditions are a pragmatic aesthetic that constructively facilitates the attainment of sustainable development within contemporary society towards economic, social, political and environmental benefits. It thus, proposes a significant sustainability reference stance for the social sustainability dimension. The meaningful regard of the past traditions as a possible constructive social sustainability resource within contemporary society is built by the analysis and interpretive discussion of the study findings. It is later framed under a social sustainability framework. The Social Sustainability notion as earlier contextualized, is that state of good quality of life enabled by valuable societal relationships and sustenance systems cultivated by five social concepts including; equity, wellbeing, participation, social cohesion and sustainability awareness.

The analysis and interpretation of the data aspects produced interpretive categories that establish the traditional aesthetic as a plausible engender of sustainable development in contemporary society through the creative practice, further framing the first section of the discussion chapter. The interpretive categories are framed under the social sustainability conceptual framework and they include: 1) Past traditions are an inclusive and reliable equity resource that supports the socio- economic factors in contemporary society, 2) Contemporary evolution of past traditions fosters wellbeing which leads to a general good quality of people's

lives, 3) Past traditions as creative manifestations engender social cohesion and integration nurturing peaceful societies and eventual development and progression of culture, 4) The Reverence of past traditions is a vehicle for social participation which nurtures good governance towards the attainment of peace and security in the globalized contemporary society, and 5) Past Traditions Provide Sustainability Awareness Pathways that ensure Human and environmental protection in the present and for future times.

5.1.1 Past Traditions are an Inclusive and Reliable Equity Resource: A Socio- Economic Support in Contemporary Society

Unwrapping the role of past traditions in contemporary society through the creative practice is the equity concept. Equity, encompasses social aspects of equal distribution of welfare goods, services and life chances, recognition of different identities and consideration of human rights and social justice (Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017; Boyer, Peterson, Arora, & Caldwell, 2016; Boström et al., 2015; Svara et al., 2015; Murphy, 2014; and Axelsson et al., 2013). This concept supports the agenda of Sustainable Development Goal No. 8. The goal aims at the ‘Promotion of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full of productive employment and decent work for all’. The study posits that past traditions can distribute life chances and livelihood opportunities reliably and inclusively thus supporting contemporary societies both socially and economically. The social benefit is attained through the inclusive nature of past traditions since they are a resource for the whole community. The embodiment of material, skill and knowledge turns the traditional aesthetic into a socioeconomic resource. This manifested through an analysis and interpretation of observation, interviews and literature survey when the past traditions incessantly manifested as raw materials, knowledge and skills in the present (See chapter 4 section 4.2).

The researcher noted that the past traditional aesthetic used in the production of haute couture under exploration, is a resource provided by nature, with a natural and organic regeneration system, fostered by society. The noted elements support reliability and inclusivity of the past tradition resource and one of the research participants expressed their thoughts in that regard asserting that ancestors innovated materials and managed to engrain them in society through teaching communities in the villages with no concern about ownership or copyright (Interview Senkaaba Samson, 19th June, 2018). This was substantiated by Trowell & Wachsmann, (1953) in their account of the natural and abundant source of the cultural

traditional materials used in making of the ethnic crafts of Uganda. The information resources indicate that while in search for subsistence during the past, man translated the aesthetic into valuable materials that members of society have used. As such, the materials embody knowledge, skill and models of action that have been tested through time by society forefathers, who have also continually passed on the knowledge to new generations in a row. The past asserts as naturally offered, organically renewable, rooted and protected for all people in a society for future generations to use.

Further still, fashion designer-artist Sanaa Gateja's haute couture 'Poncho' (See figure 4.8 & 4.9) illustrates the inclusivity value of the past traditions in contemporary society through the co-creation craft of bark-cloth and paper bead making. In the 20th century, the fashion designer-artist restructured the 13th century innovation of bark-cloth into a bead, later replaying the approach using recycled paper. The fashion designer artist reported that towards the end of the first decade of the 21st century, he had engaged societies across all regions of Uganda and beyond, and successfully replayed the bead making tradition. Shil's (1981) theoretical tenet, explains this inclusivity as the quality of tradition to embody great knowledge and skills which societies can rely on exclusively. This is because patterns of action from the past are sacred and protected by society. Further still, it is an outward orientation, an equitable action, by artist Sanaa to get out of his solo studio into the community, facilitated by his art practice and the natural default that communities of the world are shaped around heritage and handicraft. As such, the materials, skills and knowledge are engrained in societies which protects them through patterns and mastered models of action to enable the present society.

In addition, all the main case studies of fashion designer-artists, contemporary creative practitioners, including fashion and textile designers and visual artists reflected in the study, have found value in the materials. They are a freely exploited traditional aesthetic for art and design expressions and as an innovation resource for societal intervention towards contemporary wellbeing facilitation (see chapter 4 section 4.2.6).

The reliability of the traditional aesthetic is also exhibited by its artistic potency which is enabled by the versatile nature of the aesthetic. The study portrays past traditions transformed into art and design material formats applicable in contemporary times (See chapter 2, section 1.2.3 and chapter 4 section 4.3.2). Observation of all the haute couture explored in the study relays an array of past tradition transformation through shape, colour, structure and function.

Document and field survey also portrayed that the aesthetic is explored by practicing visual artists, fashion and textile designers, and art and design schools for inspiration and materials. The reinvented works by the designers and artists articulate new looks and meanings of the traditional aesthetic which accord the traditions significant value in the present. Analysis of the works, revealed that the reinvented past traditions, have translated into art and design materials articulating narratives beyond conventional traditional uses and meanings, into contemporary notions including: nationalism, sustainability, African-ness, gender, identity construction and cultural trajectories (See Chapter 1 section 1.2.3). Interviews with art promoters, visual culture scholars and practicing fine artists during the research also revealed the incessant embrace of the traditional aesthetic by artists and designers in the present to artistically communicate trending critical global issues (See chapter 4 section 4.3.1). This reinforces the reliability of past traditions through development, progression and for contemporary relevance. The aspect also frames the past aesthetic as a probable repository of society evolutionary accounts, an issue explored in the next section.

Like the visual artists, the handicraft practitioners as relayed by Sanaa's bead craft, equally exhibit their reliance on the past traditions for craft production, further inspiring the visual artists. First of all, the handicraft sector is renowned for the exploitation and application of cultural expressions, materials, skills and indigenous knowledge from generations to generations, and thus a repository of society cultural heritage. Since the mid-20th century, the discourse on handicraft trading and tourism development portrays the social and economic empowerment role of the past traditions through the handicraft sector (Fichtl, 2007; Feldman, 2016; Ruhanen & Whitford, 2019; Khaire, 2011 and Richards, 2011).

As such, the promotion of equal access and the inclusivity of the past traditional aesthetic and its translation into contemporary art and design material, connotes the evolutionary nature embodied in the traditions which lies in the potency of the aesthetic to assert in new environments. This quality of past traditions alludes to Edward Shils (1981) theoretical tenant of tradition resilience; the reinvention of traditions towards new identities and meanings. The theorist postulates that 'traditions are flexible and adapt to new environments', which augments the resilience of the traditions and their ability to fend for society as it evolves.

However, Squire (2016) cited in (Carr et al., 2016) cautions that the multi-dimensionality of language might distort the significant meaning embodied in the past traditional aesthetic. Squire is further supported by ethnic communities in Peru, South America, who expressed worry about their indigenous Shipibo art, textile and design transformations into new systems of value and cultural dialogues in contemporary urban Peru, questioning culture continuity (Feldman, 2016).

Nevertheless, the continued reproduction of past traditions keeps them alive and inadvertently, new cultural environments influence the outcome; which is due to new encounters and evolution of life. It is an opportunity for a physical, tangible repository of a traditional craft that can be referred to in the present and future. Feldman (Ibid, p.53) reinforces the perspective exemplifying textile, stating that, “Pattern in woven, stitched and painted textiles serve as a visual form to document cultural community knowledge, an approach distinct from that of recording knowledge in written textual form.” Shils’ explains this through the tenet that traditions are capable of assimilating memories. The perspective resonates with the incessant reproduction of the past relying on experiential wisdom, and memory that enables societies to reproduce themselves as they change in order to assert in new environments.

In addition, Pagán et al., (2020, p.2) also give credence to the inclusivity and reliability cultural heritage legacy perspective, basing on the European silk cultural heritage. They state as follows,

“... Cultural heritage is understood nowadays as a variable set of the cultural legacy that links us with our past. It is also a catalyst for innovative economies, through its connection with local and sustainable development and the promotion of creative industries (Practices). European history is woven in silk. Few materials have had such an economic, technical, functional, cultural and symbolic presence throughout our past and present: we can find silk in innumerable contexts, during most of the last 2000 years. However, its properties continue to be relevant for audiences that experience vivid, personal and social connections to this heritage, linked to other life stories and collective narratives, but, at the same time it offers an important flow for reflection and artistic creativity and design.”

The heritage is an inspiration resource associated with trendy European fashion material as an inclusive bridge of the past, present and future in the region through the development of creativity and design. Ugandan studied cultural heritage is not silk, however it is portrayed that the two geographical past traditional aesthetic trajectories are similar, and 21st century societies are benefiting mainly because of the rootedness and availability of the knowledge. The availability of the traditional aesthetic, knowledge and skills in the present, and the free use by contemporary society indicates that the past is a progressive material, reliable as a source of raw material and skill for the continuity of society.

But also, reinvention of past traditions is crucial for their continuity such that they are not abandoned in the past, rather reshaped to be relevant in the present. If abandoned, the fluidity of culture due to foreign cultural influence can erode traces of identity yet a key aspect in the differentiation of societies. The social cultural fabric of societies which includes past traditions is thus important because it facilitates sustainable community development processes. In 2017, the United Nations recognized indigenous knowledge systems as crucial for sustainable development (Ruhanen & Whitford, 2019) and thus, past traditions are an embodiment of raw materials, skill, and indigenous knowledge which are intrinsic, readily available, inexhaustible, and an inclusive new knowledge resource that is distinct to societies. As such through the evolution of culture over time, the past traditional aesthetic incessantly offers a new range of creative and innovative ideas that meet the peculiarity of different communities towards the attainment of sustainable development. It is also worth noting that in 2017, the United Nations recognized indigenous knowledge systems as significant for sustainable development (ibid).

This positions the past traditional heritage of societies as an inclusive reliable raw material, knowledge and skill resource for people in contemporary society, facilitating the development of a new knowledge base through reinventions and innovations towards social sustainability in the present and for future times.

5.1.2 *Contemporary Evolution of Past Traditions Fosters Wellbeing towards a Good Quality of People's Lives*

Wellbeing refers to the comfortable quality of life and human development generated by adequate access to livelihood resources including: education, income, habitat, water access,

healthcare, clothing and community integration (Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017; Boström et al., 2015; Murphy, 2014 and Axelsson et al., 2013). The study findings portray past traditions in the direct support of the attainment of three of the livelihood resources including source of income, community integration and education. Although these are only three components of the resources mentioned above and visible through the creative practice, the integrative nature of the resources enables the attainment of all the others when the key resources like income and community integration are acquired. Income as a regular remuneration for work is the purchasing power of goods and services which can facilitate the acquisition of clothing, healthcare, education and supporting utilities. Community integration is a social connection and networking capital, and education is the process of acquiring or giving instructive information and knowledge towards development. The livelihood resources identified are discussed through an exploration of the creative practice where they were identified. This concept also supports the agenda of Sustainable Development Goal No. 8. The goal aims at the 'Promotion of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full of productive employment and decent work for all'.

Once again in the study, Sanaa Gateja's 'Poncho', exhibits the traditional bark-cloth and paper beadwork craft for haute couture production, which appears to be asserting the role of past traditions as an income resource for craft communities against a background of globalization. Gateja informed the study that, while on the market, the bark-cloth bead was challenged to respond to global tastes hence its design adaptations to suit new environments (See chapter 4 section 4.2.6). The designer-artist revealed that the reconstruction of tradition as an economic novelty was enabled by the evolutionary element of traditions. The nature of the element is explained by Edward Shils' theory that traditions are flexible and adapt to new environments. As earlier mentioned, Gateja's bead had adopted new material, shape, colour and function transforming the practice into an income source.

The study also revealed that income was gained by visual artists (See chapter 4 section 4.1.2). This was confirmed by Art promoting organizations who added their voice unanimously saying that the contemporary art market encouraged artists who reinvented their cultural heritage and critically engaged their audiences on issues of global concern (See Chapter 4 section 4.3.4).

However, the environment of reinventing past traditions has through the century been seen as responsible for the homogenization of culture and a threat to authenticity (Sanya, 2013) and (Well, 2006 cited in Blandy & Fenn, 2012). But I counter the position underpinned by the potency of Edward Shils' traditions, 'Traditions assimilate chains of memories (Jacobs, 2007)'. I argue that these memories enable society to shape a perceived past in thought and action. There may be changes to suit the new demand, but the materials and processes of the traditionally inspired object can be sustained because they rely on inherent knowledge. Further still, newness rhymes with uniqueness which can only be attained with the maintenance of the distinct features of societies. The inherent knowledge is imbued with a distinct traditional aesthetic, resonating with Johnson's (2005) assertion that traditions adapt to change but hold onto what it perceives as salient in the face of modernity. I further agree with Askegaard & Kjeldgaard (2007) who maintain, that 'when the aim is to generate regional development and strengthen local culture and industry, in the face of globalization ..., one must start with culture as a resource.' This is because culture embodies the principles of social existence, which are responsible for guiding society into collective engagement towards contemporary sustainability" (Duxbury & Jeannotte, 2010).

Gateja also mentioned that the bead craft initiative facilitated an economic environment that rippled into the formation of income generation networks - the 'community integration' resource - across Uganda and beyond. The researcher's observation at the Uganda museum field site supported the information when a participant at the site reported that reintroduction of past traditions in new formats among societies resettled in new environments, was a bondage tool for the people (CE-Um, 2018). This was also complemented by the Bwindi forests community settlement agenda (Personal Interview with Sanaa Gateja, 2018), whose integration was enabled by the common past tradition.

The bonding value embodied in the past tradition is supported by Edward Shils' theory that postulates that patterns of action from the past are sacred and protected by societies. They are a binding element and the pattern is also exhibited by other African societies as relayed by the fashion designers (See chapter 1 section 1.2.4). Ethiopian Liya Kebede, a model, actor and fashion designer in the 21st Century supports the assertion. Basing on a past traditional practice, Kebede successfully organized artisanal communities in Ethiopia, and through a designer/artisan collaboration revitalized and reinvented the Ethiopia traditional hand weaving craft towards the production of clothes for the NewYork's fashion market. Eventually this

contributed significantly to the welfare of many people in Ethiopia. The socio-economic success of the community organization was facilitated by the traditional weaving knowledge base which is engrained in society but evolved to suit new times.

In fact, the 2nd decade of the 21st century discourse on traditions evolution at the inevitable global encounter, maintains the obvious evolution of cultural heritage aesthetic but unveils a new bottom-up intervention component of community participation for sustainable development, and domineered by the tourism craft practice (Ruhanen & Whitford, 2019; Zhan & Walker, 2019; Feldman, 2016; Khaire, 2011 and Richards, 2011). As earlier mentioned in previous section, handicrafts are an embodiment of cultural heritage and are thus a visual manifest of culture in transition. The decade's agenda does not seem to eliminate the adaptation of past tradition to suit new environments and market needs, rather advocates for a community participation through exploitation of the socio-economic value embodied in past traditions, because of its pivotal role in sustainable development of ethnic contemporary societies. By community participation, inclusive exploitation is ensured, and reference is made to an organic transformation of past traditions into new forms conscious of the intrinsic (social, cultural and spiritual) value of the past aesthetic, its locality and its implications for society continuity. The argument here is to keep distinct cultural values alive through continuous development of the past traditions towards possible relevance in the present life (Ruhanen & Whitford, 2019 and Zhan & Walker, 2019). And like Bennett et al. (2014, p.4 as cited in Lovell 1999) state, to sustain "a crucial component of identity and self-understanding that links a community to its past."

In addition, the visual arts explored, also illustrate another contribution to the argument; the evolutionary value of past traditions towards the education livelihood resource. Indeed, reinvented past traditions manifest as archives of socio-cultural trajectories and thus assert as repositories of history and a link to the community's past. They are possible contemporary informers or education archives of the progression of culture through time and space that societies can use for reference towards development. The study exemplifies this, beginning with a historical socio-cultural, political and economic account of the Ugandan visual art works of the late 20th and early 21st centuries (See chapter 2 section 1.2.1 and 1.2.3). An analytical study of the works presents an educative social cultural archive of the history and progression of society, and two related visual art works were isolated to demonstrate the education aspect. First is Stella Atal's haute couture artefact entitled, 'Uganda Martyrs', framed in a reinvented

past traditional aesthetic of Uganda (See figure 4.1). Prominent of the narratives it relays is the account of the Christian holocaust, a history of the late 19th century in Uganda. Produced in the 21st century, the artwork is a living record of the reaction of a Ugandan society at the encounter of Christianity. The second one, is Artist Rose Namubiru Kirumira's 1997 sculptural design set for Don Bosco Chapel alter in Kamuli (Figure 4.27). The artwork relays an account of pre-colonial Ugandan music instruments, and it reveals the eventual and significant harmonization of traditionalism and Christianity in Uganda in the 20th century. The artworks weave together cultural materials, objects, symbols, images and beliefs, and educate the viewer through a visual narrative acquired through reports, experience and reflection. Feldman, (2016, p.52) sheds more light saying,

“... figurative or patterned, painted, stitched, sculpted, (art)... has the power to transform or shift the way in which its viewers and producers engage the world. Its presence is a form of action and discourse by the artists and beholders that raises social and cultural awareness ... In recent years, one sees a visual expansion of both traditional and new forms ... ”.

The display in cultural institutions invites dialogue, although the dialogue could have various interpretations due to the varied perceivers. That is when Squire (2016) cited in Carr, Ruhanen & Whitford (2016) cautions that the multi-dimensionality of language [and therefore the artefacts under question] might distort the significant meaning embodied in the past traditional aesthetic. The researcher acknowledges the caution but argues that the mighty dimensionality should not inhibit the instructive process, but rather should add value to understanding the fluidity of culture and the variedness of society. Value is attained through the perspective of cultural progression and continuity in contemporary society. Replay of the past traditional aesthetic in new environments using existing styles and approaches accords the cultural works a significant contemporaneity. This is because culture is not static and is constructed by man who interfaces with the new environments. Often, the works are imbued with a true prevailing cultural fabric of the spatial and temporal accounts inadvertently representing and archiving the present which can later inform the future as a past account. In addition, observation of the artworks throughout the study, revealed that production of art basing on past traditions often retains salient features of the past. It is the replay of materials, techniques, retention of unique features that possibly locates the created work, thereby informing the viewer of the possible culture of origin.

Relatedly, all the fashion designer-artists explored in the study have showcased the possible role of past traditions beyond material resource to instructive articulation of current critical social, economic and political issues of the world for the present and the future. As such, the past traditional aesthetic asserts as a resilient cultural aesthetic that embodies an intrinsic evolutionary quality that further repeatedly adapts to new contexts to offer a reliable wellbeing opportunity for contemporary societies.

5.1.3 Past Traditions as Creative Manifestations Engender Social Cohesion and Integration towards the Progression of Societies

Social cohesion is a concept of social sustainability referring to the development of social capital which embeds aspects of social integration, promotes cultural vitality and cultural diversity, that enhance a sense of identity and community belongingness towards wellbeing (Kriznik, 2018; Eizenberg & Jabereen, 2017; Boyer et al., 2016; Bostrum et al., 2015; Murphy, 2014; Axelsson et al., 2013). The aspect of integration is the cordial mixing and relating that prevails within a society, facilitated by cultural vitality and diversity. Cultural vitality embodies the actions and thoughts that result into preservation and promotion of cultural heritage. Cultural diversity is the co-existence of multi-cultural populations within a society. This concept supports the agenda of Sustainable Development Goal No. 16. The goal aims at the ‘Promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.

In the study, the past traditions seem to engender social cohesion and Atal creatively attests to the claim through the haute couture artefact “Shame on You” in Figure 4.2. The haute couture replays the traditional cultural heritage through conceptual intrigue made up of the past in new shapes, colour and function. The haute couture pronounces the resilience of the past tradition of female genital mutilation prevalent in Eastern Uganda, illustrating cultural vitality. The vitality reflects the earlier reviewed ‘Poncho’ by designer-artist Sanaa Gateja. The Poncho embodies a narrative of the tradition of bark-cloth structure reinvention and, the bark-cloth and paper bead making craft. Similarly, Atal’s ‘Uganda martyrs’ in the previous section relays the account of the Ugandan Christian holocaust, a history of the late 19th century. In addition to being past tradition (historical) narratives that are recognized by various populations across Uganda, the narratives are creatively framed in reinvented past traditional aesthetic, a manifestation that reinforces interpretation and locates the works in a cultural context. Relatedly, the study presents a Nigerian haute couture storyteller, designer Buki Akib. Most

famous of her fashion creations are the ‘Fela Kuti’ design ranges (Chapter 1 section 1.2.4), through which she told the 1970s story of capitalistic power. Buki replayed the Nigerian traditional hand-woven Yoruba ‘Aso Oke’ fabrics and raffia to reflect power connotations.

Arguably, the artists’ expressions illuminate the archives of the history of society through creative reinventions of the past into constructive contemporary contexts. This renders the materials and their meanings accessible in the present and for the future to provide a sense of identity through animated cultural dialogs that construct people’s self-awareness of belonging, and collectively build trust and binds them to a particular community.

However, in 2014, Scholars Bennet, Reid and Petocz highlighted an argument that individual visual expressions framed in cultural heritage aesthetic would exclude and marginalize other layers of meaning, locking out communities’ access to the preserved heritage thus affecting their identity. Although such a scenario may occur, the power of past traditions and their rootedness in society cannot be underestimated. One of Edward Shil’s tenet on traditions posits that ‘Traditions are capable of assimilating memories’. Relying on this, the study argues that the viewer may first perceive meaning referring to their conceptual frame of memories built on an engrained socio-cultural code – the first meaning before placing the manifestation in a new context. The creation may denote the known before connoting a contextualized meaning. Such a situation locates individuals to the known towards expression of an identity and nurturing a sense of belonging.

Relatedly, the study found that designer-artist Atal, like the Malian costume designer, Kandioura Coulibaly intended to amass their artefacts towards the development of local museum installations for the celebration of heritage by communities in the present and for future meaning making (See chapter 4, section 4.1). Researcher also noted that designer-artists Sanaa Gateja and Jose Hendo have contemporary artefacts hanging in the Uganda museum. The Uganda museum like all other museums is a historic repository where people go to learn about the history of their cultures. Although the designer-artists intuitively create their art, they are aware of the cultural vitality value embodied in the past traditions and thus celebrate the heritage by the conservation and preservation of their evolving cultures in some permanent space. The initiative evokes the cultural significance assessment by the charter on cultural heritage, (ICOMOS Australia 1999) that states: “places of culture significance enrich people’s lives, often providing a deep and inspirational sense of connection to community and landscape

and to lived experience” (S. Jones, 2017). Murzyn-Kupisz & Dziasek (2013, p.39) maintain the argument,

“... Museums, libraries and heritage sites may function as community hubs – spaces where trust is built and social networks are created. Visiting museums with family and friends, participating in group events during museum visits or consuming their supplementary services results in enhancing and initiating links between individuals ...”.

Such historical spaces are loaded with value that deepens and strengthens understanding and ties between individuals, family members and community towards harmonious relations while in the contentious globalized spaces, that may challenge identity and belonging. Contemporary creative practitioners who artistically express using heritage also use the museums as visual platforms for a complementary background of a historic account; after all new creations have a past springboard which may facilitate visual comprehension towards location of a cultural linkage within a globalized frame.

However, a negative outcome regarding the cultural institutions seems to prevail;

“Strong bonding capital [people with the same cultural inclination] in traditional communities may make them avoid external contacts and inspirations, distrustful and even hostile towards outsiders. Heritage institutions may promote the values of prominent social, economic or political groups, becoming tools of domination and control rather than social inclusion” (Ibid, 2013, p.45).

The above counter of the role of heritage aesthetic at the interface of a foreign culture introduces the cultural diversity aspect of social cohesion which is key in the contemporary society. Atal's haute couture artefact entitled, “My Roots” (See Figure 4.3) a 21st century cultural elegant multiplicity look framed in Ugandan and Zimbabwe past traditions, challenges the counter through the creative practice. Atal's haute couture artefact “My Roots”, appears to cultivate cultural diversity. While in Europe, the artefact fostered social inclusion because at its presentations, it was embraced in varied cultural spaces, an aspect that leads to harmonious coexistence of varied cultural people. The artefact embodies complementary visual value created by a combination of disparate cultural heritage aesthetic. The outcome is an innovative

visual narrative, representing two or more cultural groups in a single artwork, all contributing to the artefact value, and symbolic of flexibility, positivity, inclusivity and tolerance nurtured by a creative cultural mind.

Atal's creative intervention further gives form to the supportive argument by Hong and Cheon (2017, p.814) that states:

“... different racial ...groups can have different shared knowledge systems. Exposing individuals to multiple cultures that could increase their cognitive repertoires so that they have ideas from multiple cultural perspectives. Research on creativity has shown that many creative ideas are combinations of seemingly unrelated concepts”

And this is the creative potency embodied in the past traditions, further explored by the 21st century creative practitioner to negotiate challenging environments in the globalized space. In fact, (Bennett et al., 2014, p.11) sum it up saying: “Culture has a curious dynamic that flows from individual representation to group activity. Urban societies can embrace eclectic cultural practices and transform them into both generic and homogenized cultural output, or emphasize the diversity.” Again here, ‘My Roots’ reemphasizes the point when the haute couture artefact featured on various platforms representing and replaying the African (Angola, Cameroon, Togo and Benin) culture in Europe. Another aspect of tolerance of culture mix was also exhibited, which is also explained by the European context – Africa in Europe. That is, resisting influence from a foreign power, cultural mixing of the minorities, or embrace of one minority group’s culture may be tolerated and even encouraged because it bolsters the perceived status of the group’s world view (Hong & Cheon, 2017).

However, Soini & Birkeland (2013) had earlier claimed that the dynamics of mobility and globalization challenge the authentic sustenance of heritage. They further assert that the translations, inventions and transmissions pose possible damage on the cultural continuity or identity of cultural capital. The study’s view on this, is that culture is by nature dynamic, and it is a fallacy to speak of authenticity in terms of cultural fixity. Further, in agreement with Jacobs, (2007), the preservation of cultural heritage depends on the constant replay of its patterns; and that is what the creative practice engages. Lossgott (2017) gives Credence saying:

“What we can learn from art’s relationship to globalization [that which has influenced contemporary society] is that there are no static communities, no fixed identities and no “authentic” cultures. Art promotes new forms of cultural identities on the basis of cultural specificities and history, but with a focus on flexibility in view of bigger, common goals.”

The study recounts Amaka Osakwe of the Maki Oh fashion in Nigeria to frame the integration reality through art and tradition. Osakwe reinvents the Adire traditional Nigerian textiles with raffia in new ways to dress 21st century international famous persons and celebrities, including Michelle Obama, Lupita Nyong'o, Kerry Washington, and Arden Wohl (See chapter 1, section 1.2.4). The famous yet varied culture persons seem to have raised the fashion designer’s flag of cultural vitality and diversity through the reproduction and reintroduction of her heritage to other societies through creativity. The designs have been recognized as Nigerian creations suitable for the global market, and the designer praised for the role in the preservation and promotion of her heritage. It is similar to what Atal’s art does and the achievement added value to the stakeholder’s lives beyond income and pleasure to peaceful existence and self-actualization in a multicultural space. Pagán et al. (2020, p.4) add their thoughts stating,

“... Cultural vitality of a society or territory has a clear impact on the improvement of the quality of life of the population, a quality that must be appreciated in aspects that go beyond short-term economic benefit, and that focus on elements that are difficult to quantify, such as personal satisfaction and happiness. These elements are drivers of creativity and innovation, consolidating local social capital based on shared leadership and governance that give rise to a beneficial circle which, in turn, generates a greater appreciation of culture and heritage.”

Therefore, through the creative practice, past traditions have been reinvented and they have taken on new cultural roles and socio-cultural manifestations, as tools enabling the following social aspects; the creation and identification of identities that connect those alike, nurturing a sense of place and belonging, and the facilitation of social inclusion and integration of varied cultural populations, towards harmonious co-existence in contemporary society.

5.1.4 *The Reverence of Past Traditions: A Vehicle for Social Participation in the Globalized Contemporary Society*

Participation as a social sustainability concept is the goal of including all social groups in the decision-making processes concerning their society, to enhance inclusivity, cohesion, peace and security (Kriznik, 2018; Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017; Boyer, Peterson, Arora, & Caldwell, 2016; Boström et al., 2015; Murphy, 2014; and Axelsson et al., 2013). The concept is key in the development of society because it contributes to the generation of socially legitimate decisions that are relevant, representative and of desired outcome towards an intended development agenda. It is highly significant in contemporary society where cultural identities are entwined in a mix of a local and global manifestation that call for peace and security strategies in political governance. This concept supports the agenda of Sustainable Development Goal No. 16. The goal aims at the ‘Promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development’.

The study proposes that past traditions play a positive role in influencing social engagement in contemporary society, and reveals accounts of this through various participants. First it presents Fashion designer-artist, Senkaaba Samson who explored the power of the past in order to attract attention of people, so as to deliver his creation and thoughts to them. The designer-artist engaged the people through teasing their loyalty to past traditions that they identify with. In 2016, Senkaaba disrupted one of the traditional dress designs in Uganda, the *gomesi*, shaped in traditional bark-cloth, and provoked society attention towards his presentations. He represented the *gomesi* designs entitled “Baroque Afrique” (See figure 4.4) on promotion posters, and successfully lured participation of the society. At the show, he communicated his message about the socio-political environment of the country and the need for people to engage. The designer-artist influenced society to participate through the people’s allegiance towards the past traditional ‘*gomesi*’ design as the site of presentation. The *gomesi* design is renowned in Uganda as a traditional ethnic garment of the ‘Baganda’ people in Uganda, and due to its popular cultural position, it has been embraced by other Ugandan cultural ethnic groups and also serves as a Ugandan identity at the global stage.

The study also found a similar artistic path to participation by the 5th edition “Fashion Week Tunis, 2013”. The event featured globally situated Tunisian designers and artists with their controversial dress artistry of the Tunis tradition reinventions. The fashion employed

imagery and style that challenged the country's Islamic social-cultural order. The artistry intellectually engaged locally-placed designers, invoking a comprehension of religious repression, and the need for fashion design freedom and artistic expression, and, socioeconomic development opportunities (See chapter 4, section 4.3.6)

The expressions lay claim to the great influential power embodied in tradition, explaining how tradition works as an expression of attachment infused with aspects of piety. Thus, the inevitability and acceptance of tradition without questioning further, because it is the natural way of doing things. The phenomenon is highly visible in the perceived past of intangible heritage resources of beliefs, practices, and community value systems that have also transgressed into the contemporary environments. Edward Shils (1981, p.206) explained the expressions as follows,

“Muteness of sentiment and unthinking acceptance of a model visible in conduct of others, the recognition of convenience and the acceptance of results at an expected level of satisfactoriness, are sometimes infused with an element of piety towards the past. The pastness of a model of action or belief may be an object of reverence. Not givenness, and not convenience, but its sheer pastness may commend the performance of an action or the acceptance of a belief.”

And in that regard, the study also exemplifies both fashion designer-artist Sanaa Gateja's Bwindi community resettlement basketry project, and Jose Hendo's B2TR bark-cloth providing Mutuba tree growing project, that were founded on the basis of past traditions that are engrained and protected by society. Both the designer-artists relied on the power of the past traditional heritage, the regions' ancient basketry and bark-cloth making technology, to ably get the communities participate into the contemporary development projects. The designer-artists are aware that the heritage is engrained and protected by society, and its re-enaction links the community to its past. The artist is underpinned by that trust, people's firm belief in the reliability of their past, hence the willingness to participate.

A study observation at one of the cultural sites, the dialogue on 'Culture Heritage and its Conservation' reinforced the perspective, when a participant mentioned that reintroduction of a familiar past traditional cultural practices in new formats, among societies resettled in new spaces was a bondage tool for the people in the community (See chapter 4, section 4.1.2). As

such, through the lens of social practice, artistic projects and exhibitions framed in a past tradition medium become sites of social dialogue and participation. It manifests that way because the Past traditions are an instrumental heritage that materializes a society's story, and in the process strengthens social identities and a sense of belonging.

However, it has been observed that the past traditions may have negative impact on other persons who do not subscribe to a particular heritage, especially where the artists promote popular traditions of dominant social groups. Murzyn-Kupisz (2013, p.49) attests saying,

“At times, heritage becomes a bone of contention rather than a reason for community integration. It is a key cause of fierce local conflicts over what should be remembered, preserved and promoted as heritage. Such tensions may lead to a weakening of trust, local ties and networks of corporation or even break them up totally.”

But the study addresses the challenging observation with a possible intervention through Atal Stella's earlier analysed 'My Roots' (See chapter 4, section 4.2.3) haute couture. The artefact is framed in a diverse cultural mix and represents the environments where it is presented.

The mixed aesthetic applied by Atal is a heritage unifying manifestation that was interpreted in all the mentioned spaces satisfying ways that strengthened identities and a sense of belonging for the diverse communities. The study also revealed that the Ugandan past traditional aesthetic shaping the haute couture relates to the aesthetic of many other African communities, which further explains its appreciation and embrace across all other African societies in the diaspora.

The nature of community contrary to Senkaaba's "Baroque Afrique" discussed above, is explained by the locality of the presentation. Senkaaba's show was framed in a Ugandan traditional aesthetic and presented in Uganda. Atal's 'My Roots' was framed in a multi-cultural aesthetic although explicitly Ugandan before the Ugandan. It was presented at various exhibitions located in the European diaspora, a space where minority African cultures tolerated and merged their different identities for a strong position against the dominant European culture. Infact, Hong and Cheon (2017, p.814) give form to this when they express as follows:

“... The shared knowledge system of a foreign culture can provide a different, yet broader worldview from one based solely on an individual’s own familiar cultural knowledge system. As a result of multiple cultural exposure, individuals are motivated to unfreeze their epistemic representations and become receptive to new ways of thinking. Because stereotypes and intergroup biases are often part of the shared knowledge system of one’s own culture. Multiple cultural exposure will encourage individuals to be more open-minded, thereby reducing their endorsement of stereotypes and intergroup biases.”

As such, where participatory strategies regard and represent the existing community multicultural identities, knowledge systems, and expressions, there is a chance of full engagement and involvement by the community towards a common goal in the globalized space of the 21st century.

5.1.5 Past Traditions Provide Sustainability Awareness Pathways: Environmental Protection in the Contemporary Times

‘Sustainability Awareness’ is the last discussed social sustainability concept in this section, and it refers to the advocacy for social behavioural change towards ecological production and consumption to support the attainment of sustainable development. This is explained further as raising awareness about the possibility of challenging environmental abuse in all possible ways through inventions and reinventions of ways of doing things. It was conceptualized to promote the counter of the negative effects of industrialization such as the fast fashion movement in contemporary society. Fast fashion is a global trend within the creative industry that refers to the ability of fashion companies to respond quickly to fast-changing fashion trends and consumer tastes while maintaining low prices (Hall, 2018). It is characterized by labour abuse and adverse environmental impact which have challenged the global sustainability agenda. In response, the United Nations through the concept of Social Sustainability calls upon education of the masses (Sustainability Awareness) about the need for sustainable behaviour to save the world. This concept supports the agenda of Sustainable Development Goal No. 12. The goal aims at ‘Ensuring the adoption of sustainable consumption and production patterns by societies’.

The study has disclosed that the Past traditions are embodied with insightful knowledge, skills and materials that can be applied to support the promotion of change in production and consumption behaviours within the creative practice. The haute couture artefacts by fashion designer-artist Jose Hendo, namely: “Resonance”, “Contact Deep” and “Spontaneous” offer an explicit illustration of the perspective. The artefacts’ disposition demonstrates the potential of past traditions as part of the intervention strategy to support sustainability awareness, through revitalization of the past, exploring material and haute couture artistic-design. The two elements offered a framework of articulation beginning with material.

Bark-cloth fabric is the main material used to shape all the three artefacts critically explored in this section. An analysis of the bark-cloth aesthetic, and haute couture disposition revealed that the fabric is imbued with value aspects that can support sustainability awareness (See chapter 4 section 4.2.5). The aspects include: versatility, anti-fray, natural regeneration, the eco-friendly bark-cloth making process, and the symbolic value. As a versatile fabric, through shape, form and colour the bark-cloth offered an opportunity for the artistic creation of haute couture design with a regenerating style. The style enables the wearer to generate a new desired look at any time. Although all artefacts may contribute to this, the ‘Resonance’ haute couture (Figure 4.5) best illustrates the feature. The bulky fabric feature can be repositioned variously at will to create a new fashion design. This sustainability strategy proposes the extension of a garment life span, due to the probable never-ending visual appeal created. Renewing optimizes garment life time, and lowers the demand for new clothing, further lowering energy use at the material exploration and manipulation phases. This energy saving strategy within the sustainable production agenda is also facilitated by the anti-fray value aspect of bark-cloth.

It is further showcased by all haute couture artefacts, but with significant exploration by ‘Spontaneous’ (Figure 4.7). The haute couture appears to support the energy saving strategy through optimum use of energy. Zero-energy waste by translating fabric off-cuts into carnations making the floral decorative accents on the recycled silk bottom of the dress, and the bark-cloth dress bodice. The bark-cloth fabric is a matting with an anti-fray edge that may not require finishing. It is an option for saving energy resources for present sustenance and future use.

A resourceful digress in regard to the anti-fray aesthetic of the bark-cloth is necessary at this point. The study observed that the nature of the aesthetic is created naturally during the beating process of bark-cloth making. During the process, the flattening of the beaten tree bark fibres creates a rare muddled yet levelled grain matting that is held in place by the plant sap. The interlocked fibres marred with sap is what keeps the grains from fraying at the edges and also gives the cloth a unique and distinct texture on the surface. Secondly, the texture can be artistically explored without any additional finishing applications which minimizes both human and material energy use. The revelation was substantiated by Venkatraman et al. (2019, p.7) saying "... the use of environmentally friendly and sustainable materials such as bark-cloth in the mainstream fashion will certainly reduce the impact on the environment as it can be used without any major finishing or processing".

The third value aspect is the natural regeneration of the bark-cloth. This past traditional value, positions the bark-cloth as a renewable material with low negative impact on the environment. The study unveiled that during bark-cloth harvest, the tree is not cut down; rather, its bark is carefully removed using a blunt knife to provide cloth. A new bark regenerates naturally for yet another cloth and this cycle carries on for about 20 years, after which the tree is left to thrive (Nakazibwe, 2005). Therefore, the tree is never cut down but rather let to serve its ecological purpose. The organic process also seems to offer a quality option for the negative impact on resources.

The fourth bark-cloth material value aspect is the eco-friendly nature of the making of the material. The fabric is hand processed through beating using hand mallets to make a thin fine felt material. The traditional eco-friendly process does not involve any chemicals, but rather the use of simple hand tools. The raw material resource exploitation process thereby asserts as a clean energy and a safe process because it minimizes harm to humanity and the environment. In fact, Ives et al., (2018) cited in Zhan & Walker, (2019, p.496) supports the return to a working local past saying, "By reconnecting people materially to local ecosystems ... any impacts to the environment will be recognized more easily, thus decoupling human activity from degradation elsewhere".

The last value is the symbolic value. To date, the study sustains that bark-cloth is revered because of its valuable past service to the people of Buganda. The fabric served as material for the storage of valuable cultural objects like the umbilical cords of newly born

babies and the embalming of the dead. Because of that, the fabric was regarded as ordained with spiritual power that protected the items from damage. Symbolic of the ancient preservation attribute, the bark-cloth serves to ‘maintain and save’ as pronounced by the Hendo’s “Spontaneous” design founded on the ethos of reduce, reuse and recycle (3Rs), against the throw away culture or obsolescence of fashion. The haute couture artefact is sustainably shaped by an up-cycled silk skirt, attached to a bark-cloth bodice which is further decorated by bark-cloth off-cuts, and total garment enhanced by varied sized floral carnations as bust accent and head gear. The choice of materials, garment design approach and techniques reflect, and are symbolic of protecting the environment and humanity through waste reduction and clean sourcing by the choice of renewable bark-cloth. This with such an emotional attachment, Hendo’s sustainability imbued story can appeal to various consumers thus positively informing their choices.

The other frame of articulation through which the potential of past traditions as support towards sustainability awareness is demonstrated is the wrapping and drapery dress styles portrayed by the haute couture artefacts. Artefacts ‘Contact Deep’ and ‘Spontaneous’ showcase the replay of the past traditional garment dress styles. The ancient styles date as far back as 800 B.C before flat pattern drafting for three-dimension garment making (Pistolesse & Horsting, 1970), further replayed as traditional dress styles by some African nations including Uganda through the Gomesi and Suuka traditional designs. Hendo’s reverse in time, is a garment design reinvention approach, not only to extend the life of the new garment through creation of varied wrapping designs at different times, but to also minimize production time and human energy resource in the making process. The innovative approach limits waste production thereby curbing the negative environmental impact, and lessens production stages hence time and energy, also curbing possible negative social impact, known challenges of fast fashion. The gesture recalls the 24th April 2013 day in the history of fashion that reaped Bangladesh of over 1000 nationals, in a fire at a fashion factory in Dhaka. Seam stresses working to meet a tight garment production lead time under poor conditions (Burke & Hammadi, 2013).

The haute couture artefacts framed in the past yet imbued with contemporary value, seem to be asserting and pronouncing pragmatic pathways to engage sustainability interventions offered by the traditional cultural heritage in the present. But Stahl (2001) cited in (Stump, 2013) challenges the assumption that “the histories of local resource use strategies are well understood, long lived and hence both economically and environmentally sustainable.”

Stump (ibid) supports questioning the possibility of successful application of the knowledge of the past in different contexts.

In this scrutiny, Hendo seems to understand the histories of local resource use and their contemporary application, because the fashion design approaches exhibited by the haute couture further substantiated by the designer-artist during an interview, relate to those listed in the current scientific fashion production sustainable approaches. Research on sustainable fashion production (Gwilt, 2012; Deniz, 2016; Hall, 2018; Venkatraman et al., 2019) and Dissanayake et al., 2017) advocates for the integration of strategies that embed sustainable elements such as low impact materials (renewable and recyclable), imbued with a positive social impact; cleaner energies; and the optimization of design and production and use techniques, approaches exhibited by the haute couture artefacts as revealed above. Like the designer-artist's way, the fashion sustainable production approach is also applied from product design conception to product disposal. In addition, the nature of the haute couture artefacts exhibits the embrace and appreciation of traditional craftsmanship; the relationship between man and his environment; and the continuity of life, which resonates with the contemporary sustainability agenda. In fact, the articulation recounts Shepherd's (2010) plea against the underestimation of traditional knowledge, arguing that the knowledge can recreate the disconnect between modern and tradition and also negotiate differing contexts in constructive ways when knowledge value attributes are analysed.

Thus, the past traditions are part of a cultural fabric and a crucial aspect in the attainment of Sustainable Development because culture embodies the principles that control behavioural change within society. In what follows, the traditional aesthetic transcends the generation of sustainability knowledge towards its role in the shaping of inclusive communication platforms in society.

5.2 Past Traditions Shape Haute Couture as Socially Inclusive Knowledge Dissemination Platforms

In the 21st century visual culture has globally asserted itself as an information transmission platform in the era of dynamic visual media practices (Mirzoeff, 2013& Supsakova, 2016). Relatedly, haute couture as a fashion domain and visual communication aesthetic has transcended basic representation of cultural artistry towards reinterpretation as a

framework of intellectual visibility. Focusing the study, the shaping of haute couture artefacts with past traditions locates the artefacts in a social cultural context that imbues the artefacts with piety. With such a disposition, the haute couture can be used to mobilize society towards a common cause or attention. As a constructive aesthetic, the past traditions have redefined and reinterpreted the exclusive and ‘high-society’ haute couture artefact into a meaningful and inclusive cultural vessel with societal relevance. Thus, the study argues that haute couture shaped by past traditions, is a constructive knowledge dissemination platform with the potency to relay predetermined critical social notions, increase social inclusion, demonstrate pragmatic creative possibilities and create memorable tropes.

The haute couture artefacts by selected fashion designer-artists in this study exhibit credence to that effect. Samson Senkaaba with his ‘Baroque Afrque’ (See chapter 4, section 4.2.4) unfolds the manifestation. Full of piety, and thus revered for their symbolic social roles, the bark-cloth and gomesi traditional aesthetic in reinvented intriguing formats lured the community to attend the designer-artists’ fashion show. At the show, Senkaaba delivered his advocacy for social participation to the audience. The experience evokes Jose Hendo’s bark-cloth related agenda. Jose Hendo’s haute couture artefacts shaped by bark-cloth (See chapter 4, section 4.2.5) gained acclaim in various spaces because of the ecological and ethnic story of the bark-cloth in addition to her framing of the cloth. The embodiment of cultural and environmental sustainability value, imbued the traditional aesthetic with a power of reverence. With that power leverage, Jose Hendo has been able to showcase her visual expressions and gathered people who have talked about the global and contemporary relevance of the haute couture in various places of the world (See chapter 4, section 4.1.1). Consequently, the designer-artist has been able to deliver the message about the need for sustainable production and consumption to many.

Sanaa Gateja’s bark-cloth and paper bead practice was equally facilitated by the piety of the bark-cloth. As a sociocultural traditional material, the bark-cloth was a familiar aesthetic to the people and so Sanaa was able to rally people towards its embrace as an economic material through the development of the bead. The bead practice rallied communities in all regions in Uganda and beyond, turning the engagement into a tradition of the country (See chapter 4, section 4.1.3). The symbolic springboard of Atal Stella is not any different. Although the designer-artist’s haute couture creations were instinctively charged, their culturally symbolic disposition communicated to many African communities in the diaspora. Atal’s ‘My Roots’

rallied many African communities towards social integration and bonding. Further still, the haute couture artefact has symbolically graced various non-Ugandan cultural events, thereby serving as a signifier of the cultural bond between Africa and the Diaspora (See chapter 4, section 4.2.3).

As such, haute couture artefacts shaped by past traditions have the potency to convey information to communities. The potency is further enhanced by the social disposition of the haute couture in the fashion realm. As a fashion expression, the visual aesthetic penetrates marginalized spaces and facilitates wider and target audience reach, because the object and its presentation style are imbued with glamour. The appealing style links the spectacle with a set of qualities, values, outcomes and perceptions that meet the desires of the masses (Giuntini, 2008), Ibid). Thus, the haute couture shaped by past traditions is an inclusive visual expression that can translate into a cultural vessel articulating embodied notions. As such, the study posits that haute couture shaped by past traditional aesthetic, is a constructive knowledge dissemination vessel. Notable is that tropes can be subjective and therefore, it is crucial to define targeted contexts in order to facilitate materiality choices towards purposeful information encoding and decoding.

However, literal articulation of implicit and procedural knowledge towards the production of knowledge embodied tropes, required support of a reflective practice engagement to facilitate the explanation of the new insights and understanding. In addition, the exploration was significantly profound in regard to knowledge dissemination through a socially inclusive platform. As such, the practice was also a means of communication in the dissemination of generated knowledge. The targeted knowledge recipient encompassed academics and researchers, non-academic and non-research audiences such as creative entrepreneurs and practitioners, and policy informers. Therefore, the study acknowledged the need for generated knowledge to be accessible, visible and understandable by all. Recalling the claim herein, the study argues that haute couture shaped by past traditions, is a constructive knowledge dissemination platform that can be employed to relay predetermined critical social notions, increase social inclusion, demonstrate pragmatic creative possibilities and create memorable tropes.

To illustrate the claim, in 2018 the researcher embarked on a visual exploration towards the representation of the state of *social sustainability* within the commercialized past traditional Ugandan basketry practice in Kampala and Wakiso District. Through a creative practical

inquiry, the researcher analyzed different concepts which underpin the notion of social of social sustainability including: *Equity, Wellbeing, Social Cohesion, Participation and Sustainability awareness*. These were eventually translated into five haute couture artefacts, each representing the status of a specific social sustainability concept. The contextual definitions of the concepts are presented within their analytical components that follow are supported by several theoretical underpinnings.

Jean Baudrillard's postmodern notion of 'liberation of the [fashion] object' (Baudrillard, 1981), underpinned the choice of selected inquiry and the modality. The notion posits that when a [fashion] object is relieved of its commercial relations and conventional functional duties; it becomes a sign. As a sign, it is free to combine with all other signs to translate into a language that produces meaning. However, language only makes meaning when the signs composing the haute couture object are recognized by society. In addition, interpretation is subjective because of varied cultural contexts. Relatedly, Ferdinand Saussure's constructionist theory posits that contexts frame meaning through the social code or linguistic of cultural materials as cited in (Hall, 1997). Therefore, the dialogic nature of cultural materials subjects the shaped objects to varied interpretations by people from different contextual backgrounds.

As such, to effect message decoding, the creation process relied on the 'Intentional theory of representation' which holds that the creator or artist imposes his or her unique meaning of the world through language (Hall, Ibid). In that regard, the theory was supported by two other theories. The Gestalt sensual theory of grouping principles, with visual perception that results from grouping forms (Overvliet et al., 2012), and the semiotics theory which depends on prior learning and understanding of the meaning behind any sign (Sant'Anna, 2017).

How then was the social sustainability notion embodied into haute couture artefacts towards effective interpretation? The artefacts were assembled with an integration of both visual experiences, and the re-enactment of a contextualized socio-cultural and traditional cultural aesthetic and context. The approach was employed throughout the social sustainability representation process aimed at restricting the context of interpretation to enable the predetermined cognition process (Marshall, 2007). Advanced by Baudrillard's theoretical premise mentioned above, the haute couture artefact in concert with other signs, namely: the

artefact title, the exegesis and mood imagery, took on the embodiment and dissemination aspect to relay the social sustainability stance. Noteworthy, is that giving the haute couture a title at the start was meant to initiate the construction of meaning, in order to capitalize on the value imbued in words as conventional signifiers. In support Parsa (2005) substantiates that the most powerful messages are combined with words because words are universally conventional and highly discernible. The field research data collected both in Kampala and Wakiso Districts formed the basis for a visual reflection on, and haute couture interpretation of the past traditions of Uganda as an inclusive livelihood resource; a granary of cultural knowledge; social well-being; social participation and social cohesion; but also symbolizing the social impact on the environment thereby highlighting the need and urgency for social sustainability awareness, which this scholarly study has contributed to. The titles of the five haute couture herein created exemplify the meaning construction initiation.

5.2.1 *Past Traditions: An Inclusive Livelihood Resource (Equity)*



Figure 5.1
Nakisanze Sarah, (2020) *Past Traditions: An Inclusive Livelihood Resource* (Photo by Hector Mutebi Mulwana)

The Equity illustration in Fig. 5.1 unfolds the social sustainability conceptual analysis with the haute couture entitled, 'Past Traditions: An Inclusive Livelihood Resource'. In the instance, equity refers to the inclusive distribution of a livelihood opportunity for people in a society. The livelihood opportunity in this case, is the free access to the available array of past traditional cultural materials, skills, knowledge, and models of action which have been exploited through generations, and translated into value.

The materials include but not limited to: bark-cloth, cowries, raffia fibres, banana fibres, and straws. Basketry as a traditional handcraft practice which dates as far back as the history of mankind's need for containers, reflects some of the materials used by all interested members of society (FGD, 2018, April 24).

Underpinned by the semiotic theory, Charles Peirce's, unambiguous iconic, symbolic and indexical signage system was employed to enable the conception of meaning. Iconic signs closely resemble what they represent, symbols, have to be learnt and indexes have a common-sense link to, rather than resemble the represented (Chandler, 2007). Interpretation tends to rely on prior acquaintance with the sign systems. The meaning behind any sign must be learned, understood and experienced. Regarding the equity artefact described above, the inclusive attribute is symbolically alluded to by the arrows directing movement to a mother womb imagery, and all together indexically representing the productiveness embodied in past traditions. The blossoming head gear composed of the basketry ware, depicting fruits on a tree, further iconic of the renowned 'Tree of life', augments the productivity. In fact, during the research, one of the participants confessed that the basketry skill and business knowledge had been handed down to them from their mother, who had equally acquired it from her mother (FGD, *ibid*). Seemingly through the mammary gland, the pattern sustains that indeed past traditions fend for, and are engrained in society (Jacobs, 2007). The root-like garb tail is equally indexical of the rootedness and deep-seated position of the past traditions. It is then possible that the practice is taking care of multiple generations, which illuminates its abundance.

Throughout the social sustainability conceptual representation venture I relied on the cultural context to evoke conception, by applying universal and renowned signs and symbols. However, Jay (1993) cited in Marshall (2007) critiques the theory as limited, with no visual experience rigor that is open to natural ways of perception without a cultural context influence. The criticism did not deter the creative process, rather it offered options for integration to yield

interpretation enhancement. Jay (ibid) suggests a co-existence with the cultural-linguistic perspective, and Rudolf Anheim's Gestalt theory of grouping which offers visual experience (Cupchik, 2007) was identified for the intervention. The theory posits that perception precedes conception, hence regards seeing as visual thinking through materiality and form. It introduced a pragmatic aspect which was explored through the grouping principles of similarity, proximity, continuity and common fate, theory tenets explored throughout the social sustainability conceptual representations. Overvliet et al., (2012) Illustrates the principles; visual perception recognizes likeness and quickly links the similar forms into a unit. Similarly, when objects are close to each other, they tend to become a collection. Continuation is also realized to inform grouping when perception smoothly moves without sudden disruption, and common fate is when the smooth movement is interrupted creating tension. The principles were applied both as individual and integrated aspects.

Exploring that possibility, the Gestalt theoretical tenet of proximity was employed to complete the frame of the haute couture in Fig 1. It was done through the grouping of the three significant components of the artefact. The seemingly blossoming basketry ware head gear, the mother womb and the root-like garb tail. Their close conventional disposition enabled an association which suggested an artefact stance representing past traditions as a productive, abundant and inclusive life supporting material resource. As such, the haute couture seems to communicate past traditions as an open resource for societies to freely exploit for the sustenance of life in the present and the future. Even when the doors to popular sources of materials are unpassable, the local past traditional aesthetic will always be available.

The reinvention of the past aims at reaping from the yield of the inclusive resource as exhibited by the 'Wellbeing' Social sustainability concept articulated by the following haute couture "My Granary My Home: Past Traditions engender Wellbeing".

5.2.2 *My Granary My Home: Past Traditions Engender Wellbeing*

Wellbeing is the comfortable quality of life and human development generated by adequate access to livelihood resources. “My Granary My Home” haute couture artefact in Fig 5.2, bears the account of wellbeing created by the traditional basketry practice. First, the artefact top is a traditional “mukeeka” accessorized with ribbons imprinted with universal symbols of the wellbeing resources. The symbols signify; education, income, habitat, water, health care, clothing and community integration. The repetitive array of the symbols integrating the Gestalt theory principles of both proximity and continuity aimed at the creation of a smooth movement around the form enabling cognition of shape. The symbols’ strategic disposition is to facilitate visibility, comprehension and relation to the total ensemble. The bottom, is a bark-cloth decorated with raffia, seemingly a containing garb. Grouping the garb pieces locates the arrangement in a cultural context that visualizes both a hut and granary, historical containers for the security of life, valuables and foodstuff respectively. Adorned with the wellbeing symbols “My Granary My Home” is suggestive of basketry as a life fulfilling practice that stores and provides for society. During a focus group meeting with the women, I asked about the benefits of the traditional practice. One participant asserted,

“When I supply baskets, I get money and contribute to household needs like food, medication and scholastic materials especially when my husband is away or not in position to”. Majority of the participants were in agreement, and one interjected, that even without a husband she has taken full charge of the household needs. “I ensure that I produce more whenever there is a big order and commit to quality craftsmanship to avoid penalties of non-payment. At the end I get a good lump sum of money to cater for various needs. I am also hard working” (2018, April 24) she added.

The positive impact of traditional basketry on livelihoods, denotes the life assurance attribute embodied in the traditional resource. Broadly, the metaphor of a granary connotes a bank of traditional knowledge, which is readily available and accessible. Exemplifying the decades’ mobility challenged *new normal*, the knowledge can be rethought to build a sustainable welfare domestic economy to support the commercial economy. However, the welfare status is engendered by the relationship among the stakeholders, as portrayed in the next section.



Figure 5.2
Nakisanze Sarah (2020). *My Granary My Home: Past traditions engender Wellbeing* [Mixed media]. (Mood Imagery by Nalunkuuma Martina
Photo by Hector Mutebi Mulwana)

5.2.3 *Together It Lights (Social Cohesion)*

‘Together It Lights’ haute couture in Fig 5.3 represents social cohesion within the traditional basketry practice in central Uganda. The concept of social cohesion refers to the positive attitude towards cooperation of members of a society in order to nurture productive social wellbeing. As an aesthetic engrained in society, past traditions inevitably engender social relations and integration which enhance a sense of community belongingness.



Figure 5.3
Nakisanze Sarah (2020). *Together It Lights*
[Mixed media]. (Mood Imagery by Nalunkuuma
Martina

An exploration of the sensual grouping tenets including; similarity, proximity and continuation, and integration with socially corded imagery, facilitated haute couture assemblage towards *social cohesion* embodiment. As such, the dyed bark-cloth cape adorned with images of hand gestures, and networked by plaited coloured raffia cords, suggests an encompassing and connected structure. The network mirrors the grouping and relationship within the explored basket making community. When asked about the benefits of togetherness, one of the participants was quick to respond. “That is the only way we are able to acquire and successfully meet orders for basket production (FGD, 2018, April 5).” Another validated, saying that successful management of the basketry business requires organized grouping with a substantial size that can ably meet set production capacities and lead times.

The revelation was insightful, illuminating a likely value that lies in working together. The artefact relays this through the coloration of the cords iconic of the electricity wire transmission system that yields connectivity value when efficiently linked. The value is portrayed by the radiating star-lit sunrays headgear that indicates a connectivity, symbolic of success and life. Thus, the lighting trope implies that togetherness, a pattern prevalent within past traditional practices, yields required results.

I learnt that many social benefits beyond business, accrued from the networks leading to personal, family and general social wellbeing (ibid, 2018). That is, the social capital of networks, collaboration and partnerships, is a key integration aspect equally significant in the contemporary world. I also noted that, social cohesion is supported by effective participation of members in all areas of relationships. Following is the haute couture relaying a participation account.

5.2.4 *Amazing Protest: Our Voices Matter (Participation)*

Participation is the goal of including all social groups in the decision-making processes to enhance inclusivity, cohesion and security. The concept is a necessary component in attainment of social sustainability and herein signified by the haute couture entitled “Amazing Protest: Our Voices Matter” in Fig 5.4.

The haute couture artefact is a composition of Ugandan traditional ethnic dress designs; the toga, common in western Uganda, kanzu, embraced by all regions and gomesi from the Baganda in the central region. The fabric used is strategically decorated with a print of the

“Ganda” mat, “mukeeka” pattern overlapped with images of the universal interrogative symbols of the question, exclamation and cross marks. The highly stylized replay and merger of the past garment designs is destabilized by those interrogative fabric pattern marks and hands symbolism, which express surprise emotions and negation.



Figure 5.4
Nakisanze Sarah (2020). *Amazing Protest: Our Voices Matter*
[Mixed media]
(Mood Imagery by Nalunkuuma Martina)

In order to advance signification to the second level, visual stimulation through Gestalt's theoretical tenet of proximity was applied. The strategic placement of the raised hands imagery pattern and the interrogation marks, was meant to create a relationship that can conjure comprehension of a protest. As a garment trimming feature, the marks prints are positioned like banners, high on the head and bust, and another draping by the hip side, to communicate the feelings of the people (represented by hand symbols). The fabric patterns in concert intended to relay undertones of dissatisfaction and protest. The tones of dissatisfaction were unveiled in one of the research discussions when in a lowered voice one of the women stealthily expressed,

“For sure when you cost, you realize that the profit margin is too small. But when one introduces the subject for discussion with our trading partner, we are silenced and reminded that working with the partner is a choice. Often, we continue, settling for the small return because of lack of a better option” (FGD, 2018, April 5).

Although the expression was affirmed by another group of weavers, what intrigued the inquiry was the persistence of the basketry practice. The weaver had negotiated and surmounted the challenge. On consultation, I learnt that the weaver had opted for cheaper materials in order to minimize the cost of production. An action that appeared to compromise quality! The situation further illuminated a power challenge and deployment of a human agency tool, critical subjects worthy highlighting, although beyond the scope of this issue. Thus, the situation connotes consequential negative impact across the supply chain and a caution to trading partners. A similar trait is exhibited by “The Cracked Sustainability Shield” hereafter.

5.2.5 *The Cracked Sustainability Shield (Sustainability Awareness)*

“The Cracked Sustainability Shield” haute couture artefact (Fig 5.5) represents the Sustainability awareness question within the basketry practice. The social sustainability concept is herein explored for its reference to the need for behavioral change towards ecological production. In addition to the use of iconic and symbolic signifiers, the haute couture artefact is also composed of grouped pieces: a human simulation dressed in a poly-viscose fabric print adorned with raffia fringes; a bark-cloth garb printed with a leaf motif symbolic of a sustainability shield, and lastly, a basketry ware globe embellished to reflect the environment.

Gestalts' theoretical tenet of proximity, facilitated wholeness indexically shaping the shield as the defender of humanity and the planet.

Disrupting the ensemble is the crack in the sustainability shield. As a representation of the commercialized traditional basketry practice, Gestalt's theoretical principle of 'common fate', informed the introduction of the crack effect alluding to the sustainability gap between the basketry practice and the environment. The gap was exposed when a raffia dyeing observation session revealed a dyestuff challenge. Although the fibres used to make the baskets are natural, the quality and safety of the colorants are questionable. The dyestuff is renowned for toxic compositions and lacks provenance (Personal communication, 2018, April 24). Subsequently, its application and disposal methods embody possible negative and detrimental impact to both humanity and the environment. Interaction with a dye trader did not yield reassuring results, because the environmental and human safety dyestuff product certificates were missing.

Prevalence and continuity of the practice revealed a possible misconception and underestimation of the 'natural material' element, and its role in sustainable development within commercialized past traditional practices. It also exposed a likely sustainability-standards gap within the value chain, necessitating academia and government intervention through research, trade regulations and restrictions.

Despite that environmental sustainability gloom, there is need to look back and rethink the past, present and future. Where is the sustenance of life? What do I know, and how else can I utilize it for new relevant value for both home and beyond? Herein, the haute couture artefacts illustrate the situation. They have been reloaded with new value, as intellectual knowledge transmitters with both a national and global stance. The artefacts are innovative repositories of culture experience, development, and society trajectories. They carry a story of material evolution that can inform or frame the future. They also are a possible income resource for a culture archiving institution (museum), through both local and foreigner tourism. Further still, the framing of the artefacts, demonstrates pragmatic creative-enterprise pathways for fabric decoration, fashion, gift and décor items.



Figure 5.5
Nakisanze Sarah (2020). *The Cracked Sustainability Shield*
[Mixed media]. (Photo by Hector Mutebi Mulwana Mood
Imagery (infernal) Photo by Brent Keane from Pexel)

5.3 Past traditions: An Agential Aesthetic for Creative Practitioners the 21st Century

The 21st century contemporary Uganda fashion designer-artist has persistently reinvented the past traditions to shape haute couture. Amidst access to modern fashion notions and aesthetic, the designer-artists have moved back to their traditional aesthetic, drawing us to attend to their intriguing choice. However, the study revealed that the designer-artists are located at the global stage (Chapter 4, section 4.5.1) a space confronted by globalization and therefore requires a particular aesthetic to negotiate its dynamism. Thus, the past traditions materiality embodies the potency to navigate the globalized spaces because it embodies contemporary value attributes that resonate with the global agenda value aspects. The traditional aesthetic deconstructs inhibitive environments and narratives that hinder attainment of creative aspirations and, it shapes individual identities and social practices within globalized spaces. Despite its past stance, the traditional aesthetic is enabling progression in the present because it is a living value, a space where futures are assembled (Kuligowski, 2014 & Harrison, 2015).

Equipped with such valuable materiality, the designer-artists as actors in the creative field have embraced the past traditions and negotiated the stringent structures of 21st century contemporary society confronting it with the traditional aesthetic to locate in the space. The study claims that the past traditions are a powered vehicle through which the fashion designer-artists have enacted their agency to assert in that contemporary space featuring the shifting role of the traditional aesthetic. It argues that the materiality of the traditional aesthetic is an agential force negotiating an alternative living disposition by: liberating and empowering creative practitioners, through the provision of aesthetic stimuli towards the cultivation of creative abilities and capacities; and, turning into a symbolic capital that facilitates the retention of global stage positions for the practitioners. Thus, the traditional aesthetic is framing the present and future through the construction and transformation of culture.

Like all societal existence and engagements (a social system), the creative practice under exploration is not independent of the system elements such as the field of operation, social structures, resources and actors. In the study, the agential aesthetic which is the past traditions resource, relates to all the other field elements including; the designer-artists as actors, and the social structures including: the socio-economic and cultural structures as the practice regulators. The relationship within the field of operation provoked the rise of agency in

response to a challenged environment, and the past traditions negotiated a pathway for the designer-artists. As such, the study claims that the materiality of the past traditions is endowed with qualities that engender an agency enaction process.

An understanding of agency is crucial at this point because it paves a way into establishing how materials relate to actors in a challenged field. The concept of agency has been defined variably, although relatedly, easing its application. It has been referred to as “the capacity of actors to critically shape their own responsiveness to problematic situation (Beşpınar, 2010). Further, agency is formed by a specific range of cultural schemas and resources available in a person’s milieu and entails actors’ abilities to transpose or apply their structurally formed capacities to new circumstances in creative and innovative ways (Berger, 2008). The definition recognitions materiality as a resource in the field with capacity to facilitate an agential action.

However, Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1993 & 1996 cited in Rubio & Silva, (2013) and Alfred Gell (Jones, 2015) regard materiality as mere vessels of agency. Alfred describes the artwork {and therefore its constitution, materiality} as simply a trace of human agency with no agential force of its own. Bourdieu’s field is a social space between humans with no attention to the relationship between humans and objects and between objects and objects, which omits the attention to how materials affect field dynamics, relations and the output (Rubio & Silva, *ibid*).

The study argues otherwise, positing social relations as an aesthetic of materiality embedded in artworks and objects. Therefore, materiality is a construct of a society’s social fabric thereby symbolic and representational of the society through how it is experienced and its inherent qualities. As such, through the Actor-Network theory (ANT) lens, materiality is constitutive of the agential process and therefore embodies an agential force. The study is thus underpinned by the theory because it subscribes agency to other things and objects beyond the human (Bencherki, 2017). It regards all field stakeholders as actors and posits that a single actor is already a network of many others that act as well. This is because the capacity to act lies on the actions or being of the others. The theory further acknowledges the role of any being that affects the situation irrespective of its nature.

Although the theory is criticized for the subtle mention about power issues yet they appear to be critical in this study, it explains the position of power within the network. The

theory postulates that power does not explain reality; but it is important to understand the making of power without assuming its' source, and that society cannot be organized in only one way (Ibid, 2017). As such, power is also regarded as an action in the actor-network, and can affect another actor thereby enacting agency. However, and without undermining the ANT lens, to critically insert power into the picture, the study is supported by Bourdieu's perspective on this particular aspect because it provides a valuable stance to the understanding of the power relations in the field. The perspective holds a strong consideration of the human and structure field agents and it describes fields as social spaces, structured around objective relations and propelled by the ongoing power struggles of agents as they strive to occupy different positions and to mobilize different forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1993 & 1996 cited in Rubio & Silva 2013). Relating the two lenses facilitated the analysis of how the actors also referred to as agents in the field related and, particularly why and how materiality manifests as an agential force towards the construction and transformation of social worlds.

In addition, the study benefits from the century's significant discourse on the 'Material Turn', that strongly defended materiality as an agential force with the potency to construct social worlds within the field of action (Rantisi & Leslie, 2010); (Rubio & Silva 2013 & Jones, 2015). This is because of the bearing of materiality as a social construct, an aesthetic engrained in the social fabric of society. In such a position, it becomes representational and symbolic because it is experienced. As such, the study acknowledges the achievement by the discourse on materiality as an agential force, but expounds it to reinforce attention to the aspect of the 'past traditions' as a significant agential stance of the materiality to effect stability in the 'present'. Thus, the study further argues that the materiality of past traditions is an agential force embodied with pragmatic and constructive contemporary value. Despite its past orientation its' value permeates contemporary society flaws, challenging existing boundaries to stabilize the present with new culture definitions, and further offer a promise for the future. The past tradition materiality has exhibited the potency to evolve with the changing natural contexts, in possession of great contemporary symbolism. The traditional aesthetic is a tool challenging domination and subjugation but engendering inclusivity in contemporary society towards the attainment of sustainable development. The Materiality of the traditional aesthetic is made up of physical and symbolic qualities including: the natural, a biodiversity for aesthetic and life support value; and the cultural encompassing the distinct and versatile aesthetic values, the scientific, spiritual, and the socio-cultural values.

In regard to this study, materiality of the past traditions was creatively merged with contemporary dress styles to frame haute couture artefacts that have assumed new meanings and positions in the globalized contemporary society. As such, the study trajectory of the haute couture artefacts indicated that fashion designer-artists employed the past traditions and manipulated the materiality to negotiate the contemporary 21st century society space. Two interpretive categories offer particular instances in which the trajectory of the haute couture under investigation in this study mediate the dynamics of space location within contemporary society. The categories include: Materiality of the Past traditions; 1) liberates and empowers creative practitioners through the provision of aesthetic stimuli towards the cultivation of creative abilities and capacities, 2) is a symbolic aesthetic that facilitates the retention of global stage positions for creative practitioners. Herein, the study exemplifies haute couture artefacts and the fashion designer-artists as the creative practice explored.

5.3.1 *Past Traditions Liberate and Practitioners through Aesthetic Stimuli towards Cultivation of Creative Abilities and Capacities*

Materiality qualities of the past traditions facilitate the creative process evident through an analysis of the traditional aesthetic herein studied. The aesthetic exhibits qualities including: the natural, a biodiversity for environmental sustainability value; and the cultural encompassing the distinct and versatile aesthetic values, and the historic and social values, which offered fashion designer-artists as the creative practitioners herein studied, aesthetic stimuli that facilitated the cultivation of creative abilities and capacities. These qualities have liberated and empowered the designer-artists herein studied thereby enabling them to navigate inhibitive narratives and environments as the findings indicate. The crucial roles of the materiality qualities are presented through the perspectives of the fashion designer-artists further framing the discussion of the agential role of materiality. The designer artists include Atal Stella, Senkaaba Samson, Jose Hendo and Sanaa Gateja, whose liberative pathway unveils the discussion.

Intimidated by the notions and aesthetic of the global fashion and art industry in the 1970s, and despite his will to engage, Sanaa Gateja left Europe and returned home in Uganda in the 1990s, (See Chapter 4, Section 4.1.3). While desperate at home yet with a strong passion for artistic experience and showcase, childhood memories of past traditions and the handicraft practice, reengaged Sanaa's fashion and art approach through the natural and local traditional

aesthetic that he strongly believed had a prominent place in the present and the future. Sanaa also acknowledged that if nature is ignored, the planet will be destroyed.

Sanaa conjures a twofold stance; ‘the natural local past’ which echoes the past traditions and ‘the acknowledgement of the planet destruction if nature is ignored’, which evokes the sustainability notion. With such a stance, the designer artist draws our attention to his affiliations. Since his return to Uganda, the designer-artist has not been working in isolation. He has related with other artists and art promoting organizations locally, regionally and internationally (See chapter 4, sections 4.1.3) thus, Sanaa is aware of the century’s critical global issues and the aesthetic that interprets contemporary visual expressions (See Chapter, Sec 4.3.1). For placement in that contemporary socioeconomic terrain of visual art, that is even globalized and with global placement it is crucial that visual expressions or art communicate global issues of concern. These issues include: the sustainable development goals referring to aspects such as environmental degradation, global warming, urbanization, social justice, homelessness, identity, socio-economic inequality, hunger, law manipulation, sustainable production and consumption, social entrepreneurship, cultural vitality and diversity, in addition to expression of an artistic style exhibiting originality and individuality, uniqueness, locating identities and engagement of the intellect.

As such, the bark-cloth materiality quality resonated with Sanaa Gateja’s agenda. The natural quality imbued with the beauty and environmental sustainability values responded to the designer-artist’s sustainability conscience, and the cultural quality encompassing, the distinctness and versatile aesthetic values, and its social and historical values, catered for his nostalgia for the local materials.

Explicating the significant resonance, the natural quality of the bark-cloth offered Sanaa a ground to assert his affiliation to sustainability. Bark-cloth, ecologically made from tree bark is a UNESCO proclaimed International cultural heritage material, currently a symbol of sustainability (See Chapter 4, section 4.1.2). Sanaa’s association, embrace and use of such a material puts his production at a recognizable stage in the 21st century. The cultural quality has the distinctness and versatility values. The distinct value of bark-cloth renders the traditional aesthetic unique and valuable because it tells a story about a particular community of people, locating them on the world map, hence recognition at a time when globalization is creating a homogeneous community.

Further still, the versatility value of the bark-cloth supported the designer-artist through the transformation of the bark-cloth into a new structure, the bead structure. Sanaa, alternated the bark-cloth with paper, producing an array of bark-cloth and paper beads. With the same bead structure supported by the social and historical value of bark-cloth, the designer-artist was able to positively impact on his society. Bark-cloth is a traditional aesthetic and thus embedded in the social fabric of the people therefore, historically significant in society. So, it was relatively easy for Sanaa to infuse the aesthetic as a new form of a bead into the social fabric of communities in Uganda. Using the bark-cloth the designer-artist liberated members of his community from poverty, by empowering them with the bead making knowledge and skill. This socially founded innovative approach was the distinctness required of the century's art. A distinct fabric, bark-cloth, innovatively manipulated in yet a distinct way rendered Sanaa individually unique as an artist. Consequently, the activities translated into work opportunities for the communities engaged, and also capacity building for bead material for his art and fashion artefacts which are unique and identifiably from Uganda in East Africa. (Chapter 4, section 4.3.4).

Thus, exploring the bark-cloth aesthetic qualities, Sanaa's artistic passion was rekindled equipped with a stimulus to shape haute couture artefacts. The haute couture artefacts (See Figures 4.8 & 4.9) connote significant contemporary global issues such as the transformation and growth of culture, and social equity and wellbeing. Further still, Sanaa was able to go back to the fashion continent and his haute couture features in permanent collections among which include: Paper beaded full length Shawls of 2006 at the Tropical museum in Amsterdam, and another produced in 2014 at the National Museums, Scotland, the 'Woman ahead – Woman on the move' produced in 2010 at the Museum of Art and Design, New York and in 2007 his Dress 'Poncho, 2004' was collected by the Uganda Museum (See chapter 4, section 4.1.3). The experience echoes fellow designer-artist Jose Hendo who was denied to embrace her artistic potency at the secondary level of education while in Uganda. Jose Hendo negotiated it later in the United Kingdom with her eco-fashion design agenda, when the potency of bark-cloth materiality stirred and equipped her artist capacity. The designer-artist let art influence her design agenda with the process 'Sustainable by design'. By this she decided that all materials she used had to be organic, and bark-cloth came in handy mainly because of its cultural and environmental story (See chapter 4, section 4.2.5)

The study revealed that the bark-cloth fabric offered Jose Hendo a solution. The aesthetic qualities inherent in bark-cloth nurtured her artistic insight, because "... the aesthetic experience allows us to "apprehend" the ideas art points to (Mills, 2009, p.15)". As such, the natural quality of the fabric catered for the organic attribute she required for her sustainable fashion agenda. The distinct nature of the fabric together with the socio-cultural heritage significance; all added great unique value to her sustainability story. Hendo also variedly exploited the versatility of bark-cloth, and her three haute couture artefacts portray her liberated artistic passion through haute couture expressions as follows. They exhibit the coloration potency of the bark-cloth given the different array of colours, and also show the possibility to create intrigue through shape, form and structure creation. The artefacts majorly in bark-cloth include: Resonance, 2004 (See figure 4.5) and the sculptural planes, enabled by the bulky bark-cloth; Contact Deep, 2014 (See figure 4.6), the creatively muddled drapery aided by the hard grain fibre structure, and Spontaneous, 2014 (See figure 4.7) fabric restructuring facilitated by the anti-fray feature, cut and styled to interpret targeted contemporary looks. With that haute couture collection, materiality of the bark-cloth appears to have "shaped human practice (Rantisi & Leslie, 2010, p.2826)", by offering a direction to the designer-artists and a frame to their expressions.

In addition, narratives which hindered the use of bark-cloth were defied by the aesthetic. Both Senkaaba Samson and Atal Stella attest to the claim having employed the aesthetic qualities to challenge society and fellow artists who discredited the bark-cloth fabric and other past traditions as material with the potency to shape visual art because of its fragility and "demonic" associations (See chapter 4, section 4.3.6).

Senkaaba is intrigued by the traditional bark-cloth making knowledge, its deeply rooted locality in the social fabric and the physical aesthetic qualities. Although the designer-artist refers to the bark-cloth UNESCO cultural recognition and sustainability story as a 'cliché', he fails to de-touch his fascination for the cloth from its social-cultural realm: "I love my culture ... Anyway, for me, bark-cloth is what I have to contribute to the world" (Senkaaba Interview, 19th June 2018). Seemingly knowledgeable about the power of the past traditions, including: society's guarded socio-cultural symbolism and the versatility qualities, Senkaaba equipped himself with the qualities to meet his social and artistic agenda. Relying on Shil's perspective that traditions are sacred, worthy of reverence and acceptance in society, the designer-artist teased people's loyalty to traditions by reinventing the norm. He dyed the terracotta bark-cloth

black, and used it to transform the graceful elegant woman's Buganda traditional dress, the 'gomesi', into a clumsy, charged and carefree look, facilitated by the bulky character of bark-cloth. The gomesi-like garb also featured on a male figure in 4.4. The creative destabilization of the normative of tradition created an intriguing effect that captured community attention. The socio-cultural symbolic power of past traditions and the versatility quality of the bark-cloth stimulated the creative aesthetic assemblage further transforming it into a communication vessel on interaction with analysis. The study reveals that the designer-artist was successful in capturing attention of his community towards the call for social participation in the governance of society, a gesture that exhibits the agential role of past traditions in triggering creative expression.

Senkaaba's creative expression as an agential effect from the experience of traditional aesthetic qualities equally reflects Atal Stella's contribution to free the aesthetic from its inhibitive dual chain - narrative and environment confrontation: "Bark-cloth was too complicated to paint on and even sew", she recapped a fellow artist; and "At international forums, people from other regions, the Masai and the Zulu African ethnic groups always dressed in their traditional garb", she expressed in envy. Atal who was captivated by the traditional aesthetic and believed in it, equally challenged herself to change the narratives and environments. She embraced the inspiring traditional aesthetic qualities; the socio-cultural symbolism offered her an authentic stance for the desired originality and uniqueness and the versatility enabled her to manipulate the materials into desired forms. The values enabled Atal to shape haute couture expressions that earned her the desired identifiable position at international forums. Atal Stella is one of the recognized and globally acknowledged contemporary Ugandan designer-artist who artistically uses her traditional aesthetic for art further presenting it in many spaces, local, regional and international. The study found that Atal got on the international level in 2008 when she featured in the Ethical fashion showcase in London. In 2009 the designer-artist was the official designer for Miss Uganda beauty pageant and for Miss Africa USA in Maryland in 2012. Earlier in 2010 she also won the Africa collection fashion award in Douala, Cameroun, and in 2011 she received the Controversial Art award by the Ugandan Dutch Embassy and Afri Art Gallery in Uganda (See chapter 4, sections 4.1.3).

The agential process of aesthetic experience and creative stimulation evoked by structure appears to be collaborative, dialogic and responsive between the fashion designer-

artists and the traditional aesthetic. It gave rise to creative expressions that mediate spaces and time, and are thus, vessels of the socio-cultural environments of their creators and makers seemingly constructing new cultures and traditions. Further still they assert as buffers of the currents of the contemporary moment. As such, it posits that the past traditions materiality embodies an agential force, that constructively evolve in spatio-temporal contexts enabling humanity to prevail in constraining spaces. Notable, the agential force of the traditional aesthetic also facilitates the retention of global stage positions for creative practitioners.

5.3.2 The Traditional Aesthetic: Beyond Ethnicity towards Individual Identity and Global Positioning

Although inhibitive narratives and environments at home redirected the fashion designer-artists' herein studied and their haute couture visual art material choices as seen in the previous section, the motivation was also fuelled by the designer-artists' location on the global stage. The stage is a contemporary global platform with a special international acclaim, attained at the acquisition of recognition and applaud. The space is also occupied by a noteworthy visual art market, patrons, art curators and critics, and internationally renowned artists. The designer-artists and their haute couture visual art featured on the stage at the break of the 21st century, a time when the global space was infiltrated with a homogenized culture that favoured the developed world (Biehl et al., 2015). As such, and in addition, there lay a challenge of invisibility within that socioeconomic field signalling a need for the designer-artist to embrace an aesthetic that would earn their haute couture recognition and a position at the competitive global stage. Having attained that global stage position, the Ugandan visual art promoters indicate that retaining it required use of an aesthetics that represented required value attributes (See chapter 4, section 4.1.3).

The past traditional aesthetic was the best choice because it shapes expressions that represent the attributes required of the contemporary visual art featuring at the global stage. As laid out in the previous section, contemporary visual art or visual expressions should communicate global issues of concern including the SDGs, in addition to expression of an artistic style exhibiting originality and individuality, uniqueness, ability to locate identities and engage the intellect. The Ugandan fashion designer-artists are not the first in this venture, the study indicated that African fashion designers have applied the aesthetic for their creations and are also located on the global stage within that socioeconomic field (See chapter 1.2.4). The

past traditions choice also embodies the quality to create a difference in the globalized space because the aesthetic maintains an inherent distinct and identifying character of ethnic locality.

The designer-artists have associated with the value and moved beyond national identity construction by the traditional aesthetic towards individual identity assertion. This relates to, and introduces the process of individualization in a conflicted space, which implies the strategic weakening of emotional attachment with reality [past traditions in this case], the use of time rather than space contexts as sources of identity, the increased use of metaphors and abstract forms for representing identities and explaining social realities (Hernando, 2002 cited in (González, 2015). It further induces Bourdieu's theory of practice to facilitate the understanding of the designer-artist's reaction in the globalized space and on global stage.

Bourdieu's theory of practice is modelled with three founding elements of social field, capital and the habitus. Asimaka & Koustourakis's (2014) explain that the social field refers to the social structures, the space where both the artist's habitus as the system of permanent dispositions (including perception, representation, thought, and assessment and evaluation of world order), interact with capital, the valuable resource founded by social, cultural, economic and symbolic aspects. The model reveals that practice stems from the relationship of the artist's habitus and their position (which depends on the amount and structure of their capital) within the social field. It determines the position of the artist in the field so as to frame expressions. Therefore, there are possible chances of influence from the social field, upon execution of the practice, towards a desired outcome.

As such, the designer-artists herein studied strategically exploited their cultural capital, which is knowledge of the materiality of the traditional aesthetic, using it as a tool of difference to create individualized identities. With the logic of knowledge, and equally challenged by the dynamics of the global landscape, the habitus of the fashion designer artist was instigated to act. The fashion designer-artists established the link between the past tradition materiality and the symbolic elements that can create metaphors of global contemporaneity. They then transformed their cultural capital, which is information about the materiality of the traditional aesthetic, into symbolic capital. However, the disposition raises a question of how the past traditions embodied with society's heritage symbolism turns out to appropriately represent the present. The study further argues that it is the agential force embodied in the traditional aesthetic, responsible for the phenomenon. As symbolic capital, it has constructed subjective

identities and shaped contemporaneity for the fashion designer-artist and their expressions to prevail in the globalized contemporary space and to retain their position at the global stage. The aesthetic is framed by the natural and cultural qualities embodied with values that have enabled the construction of individualized identities and facilitated the production of contemporary visual expressions that have also enabled the designer-artists to locate and retain positions at the global stage. The crucial role of the materiality qualities, that is the agential force of the past traditions, is the translation from cultural capital into symbolic capital. Herein, the argument is discussed further through the framework of the value attributes embodied by the qualities of the traditional aesthetic, against the globally acknowledged contemporary visual art criteria.

The traditional aesthetic is framed by qualities including: the natural and the cultural qualities. The natural quality with the environmental sustainability value; and the cultural encompassing the distinct and versatile aesthetic values; and the historic and social values. For a visual expression to qualify as a global stage aesthetic it should be able to communicate contemporary global issues including the sustainable development goals with aspects such as environmental degradation, global warming, urbanization, social justice, homelessness, identity, socio-economic inequality, hunger, law manipulation, sustainable production and consumption, social entrepreneurship, cultural vitality and diversity among others, in addition to expression of an artistic style exhibiting originality and individuality, uniqueness, ability to locate identities and to engage the intellect (See chapter 4, section 4.3.1). Hence, the discussion further aligns the value attributes with the contemporary global issue it symbolizes and the artistic quality it shapes.

As a natural materiality, the traditional aesthetic of bark-cloth, raffia, reeds, palm leaf plaits, cowrie shells, sisal and bamboo are indeed symbolic of the environmental sustainability value. This is possible because the traditional aesthetic is an organic material that does not harm the environment but rather conserves the ecological system. As such, it is symbolic of the contemporary 15th sustainable development goal that seeks for the protection and conservation of biodiversity. The bark-cloth past tradition is exemplified for explication of the symbolic value, towards materiality agential force illumination, because the value is exploited by all designer-artists herein studied. The bark-cloth is symbolic of cultures in Uganda because traditionally, it served various purposes including the ritualistic, commercial and utilitarian functions among some Ugandan communities, which exists to-date. As such bark-cloth is

revered to-date. The use of the bark-cloth by all designer-artists is connotative of significant relevance and timely value embodied. Certainly, the traditional aesthetic is a renowned UNESCO recognized international cultural heritage because of its ecological-ethnic story; that is, the bark-cloth making a contemporary theme of eco-technology innovation. The designer-artists are not mistaken by that unanimous choice, and are not taking it for granted. Their embrace of the traditional aesthetic is a calculated move because the eco-ethnic story of bark-cloth making resonates with the designer-artists' agenda of contemporaneity and global stage positioning.

Although Senkaaba Samson claims that his continuous use of the bark-cloth is purely its unique physical nature and beauty, and not heritage inclinations and its UNESCO international recognition status, the timing, context, incessant use and his global stage location indicate his tacit awareness of the trajectory of the bark-cloth (See chapter 4, section 4.1.3). Further still, when he appreciated that it is his culture, and that it is an innovation he has to contribute to the global industry of fabrics, the designer-artist recognises the international status of the bark-cloth. To further excruciate this point, young designer-artists and fashion designers who have no claim at the global stage, do not persistently use the past traditions. When the study engaged a renowned fashion designer about the issue, the designer informed the study that the fabric is not commercially viable on the local market despite its unique and interesting aesthetic. This indicates that the sustainable market of the traditional aesthetic is located at the international stage and the key fashion designer-artists studied herein know where the aesthetic plays a critical and necessary role. Bark-cloth is not only symbolic with the sustainability value but it is also distinct.

The distinct value is experienced through the physical nature and historical symbolism of the traditional aesthetic. The physical distinctness of the bark-cloth has been exploited by the studied fashion designer-artists to create uniqueness and individualistic visual expressions. Of all the analysed past traditions, bark-cloth is unique and distinctively Ugandan. As such, the designer-artists took advantage of that aesthetic value to visually identify themselves within the global homogeneity. In addition, physical distinctness coupled with historical symbolism significantly define and locate expressions as distinct. One of the aspects of significant contemporary visual art is the potency of the art to portray uniqueness and originality (See chapter 4, section 4.3.1). This is symbolic of the contemporary global concern of promotion of cultural vitality, diversity and nurturing progression in societies. A physical aesthetic of past

traditions coupled with history of a particular community relays particular stories defining that particular community. In the globalized contemporary society, past traditions can offer a difference. Although present society claims of hybridity of the traditional aesthetic and hence authenticity loss, the salient and inherent features that define communities coupled with historical accounts, do not change because they are usually the frame of the traditional aesthetic. As such in a globalized space they are still discernible and can therefore assert a distinctness which can support assertion of a position at the global stage.

Further still, the designer-artist herein is not promoting a national identity but rather constructing their own individual identity. They are however, using a familiar traditional aesthetic engrained in their community, and of which they are part, because of the reliable distinct agential force with a potency to assert a difference. However, sometimes they borrow past traditions from other cultures to build the individual frame and Atal Stella herein notably portrays it. The designer-artist merged aesthetic from different cultures to create the individual identity. Consequently, the visual of the new traditional aesthetic ensemble although distinct, ceases to communicate its original cultural affiliation but rather, the merger that undertakes a symbolic identity of the meaning it has assumed, in addition to defining the creator. Atal's exemplifies this in the haute couture, 'My Roots' (Figure 4.3) which is symbolic of cultural diversity and peaceful societies. In addition, this distinct quality is also enhanced by the versatility of the traditional aesthetic.

The versatile nature of the past traditions also accords the aesthetic an agential force that facilitates and completes their transformation into working formats for compromising environments. In what follows, the designer-artists Atal Stella, Samson Senkaaba, Jose Hendo and Sanaa Gateja exhibit how versatility of the traditional aesthetic facilitated the creation of metaphoric haute couture artefacts that visually express the contemporary social sustainability notion. The visual expressions further contributed to the fashion designer-artists' prevalence in the globalized space and retention of a position at the global stage. Social sustainability is framed by five concepts namely: Social cohesion, Participation, equity, wellbeing and sustainability awareness. The social sustainability notion is one of the pillars of sustainable development and thus embodies issues listed in the contemporary global agenda of the 17 SDGs for attainment by contemporary society. As such, it informs the criteria that shapes contemporary visual art. The haute couture artefacts under analysis are mainly framed in the bark-cloth which traditionally featured in the Toga dress style for men and 'Suuka' for women,

but herein ingeniously reinvented by all the fashion designer-artists to echo the present. In addition, some designer-artists have strategically accentuated the bark-cloth garbs with other reinvented traditional aesthetic.

Atal's three artefacts unveiled the discussion in the section. Although the 'Uganda Martyrs' (See figure 4.1) haute couture bark-cloth shift dress has an overtop garment that intriguingly denotes an act of hindrance which critically echoes the 1886 horrific Uganda martyrs' scene, the neat, calm and thought-provoking structural pattern of the garment, intriguingly calms down the tension. It subdues the dreadful history about the struggle between past traditions and Christianity, and projects the current peace between the two beliefs. The assemblage contemporaneously becomes a trope of both cultural vitality and coexistence. Another trope is by the dramatic 'Shame on You' (See figure 4.2) artefact also in a traditional aesthetic, that boldly asserts a stylish trendiness. In consonance with the accompanying poem, the artefact unfolds a counter against a traditional practice, and with the title comprehension, the controversial traditional female genital mutilation (FGM) practice is evoked. Womanhood asserts with energy that contends the critical and contentious fight against a century's old and deep-rooted cultural practice. However, the dynamic framing of the traditional aesthetic archives the traditional practice in the present. The outcome is a cultural vitality metaphor of tangible past traditional materials and the female circumcision practice. Lastly is the cultural mix imbued in 'My Roots' (See figure 4.3). The artefact is located in the diaspora and traversing African cultural platforms. Through the trajectory, the visual expression is recognized and embraced by various Africans irrespective of their ethnic affiliations, claiming that it relates to their roots. As such, in that diaspora space, the artefact assumes a new being filled with an African nostalgic power that however, detaches it from Uganda to an individualized Atal Stella creation. It then becomes a symbol of unity and cultural diversity promoting harmonious coexistence for different African ethnicities in subjugating spaces.

Senkaaba Samson's 'Baroque Afrique' (See figure 4.4) is the traditional gomesi and bark-cloth satirically transformed into tropes of social mobilization towards participation. The traditional aesthetic is imbued with piety, worthy of reverence and acceptance. As such, when destabilized, society's attention is drawn. With such a quality, coupled with the potency to evolve, the designer-artist was instigated to destabilize their normality for use as public mobilization tools towards a social participation advocacy agenda. Senkaaba reinvented the past traditions, crafted them in a way that transcended cultural society significance and owned

them with new meaning. The artefacts became tools of mobilization riding on the potency of the traditional aesthetic to assume other meanings.

Jose Hendo is not different, because the designer artist accorded the bark-cloth traditional aesthetic a stylish trendy frame that delivers a contemporary advocacy for sustainable production and consumption in the world. The evolutionary nature of bark-cloth together with its eco-making story instigated the designer-artist to colour the bark-cloth and manipulate its' tactile quality to shape sustainable trendy fashion (See Figures 4.5 &4.6). The visual uniqueness of the aesthetic together with its versatility facilitated change. Change manifested through the production processes of the garment items, whereby the new style engages the consumer to complete the garment making process. The process reduces energy consumption and minimizes humanity and environmental abuse. With the new frame albeit the traditional aesthetic, the haute couture artefacts became visual expressions of the contemporary sustainability awareness agenda, and further identified as creations by Jose Hendo. Although originally past traditions and the aesthetic identified as Ugandan, in the new frame and context, the aesthetic has acquired new meaning and is identified with its creator. This is an assertion of the agential force, the potency to maintain the difference through the traditional aesthetic while constructing new identities.

Finally, Sanaa Gateja went further to create yet another bark-cloth structure, the bark-cloth bead (See figure 4.24). It is the versatility of the bark-cloth that enabled its reshaping in yet another frame. However, this versatile quality was supported by the symbolic quality. Bark-cloth is a revered aesthetic to-date embodied with piety because of its traditional ritualistic role in society. Further still, it is rooted in society and therefore people are familiar with it and respect it, rendering it important and valuable. Sanaa explored this quality by turning bark-cloth bead making into a community practice, further into the nation's tradition (See chapter 4, section 4.2.6). He also complemented it with paper as another material for the production of commercial beads, claiming that paper is a by-product of bark-cloth since it is sourced from trees. He targeted used paper to add value to the global agenda of sustainability through recycling. By this innovation, Sanaa empowered communities that produced beads for his haute couture artefacts. The haute couture artefacts then became metaphors of first, equity because the material and practice were socially inclusive, and wellbeing, because the practice became economically beneficial to communities. Subsequently, the new bark-cloth and paper frames,

the bark-cloth and paper beads haute couture visual expressions became synonymous with Sanaa Gateja.

Through the versatile value, the past traditions cultural capital innovatively translates into metaphors of contemporary societal concerns. The national traditional cultural heritage is witnessed shaping individual identities leveraging over its value of difference in the globalized contemporary space. This emphasises the agential force embodied in the traditional aesthetic and responds to the reason as to why the designer-artists return to the past in the present.

Reiterating, the haute couture artefacts as visual expressions of the social sustainability notion reminisce the distinct value earlier discussed because they shape the individuality aspect required of contemporary visual art. Although the haute couture is framed by materials from identifiable cultural communities, the reinventions, combinations and disposition indicate a progression of culture further connoting the agenda of the designer-artist to explore the value of the materiality towards defining themselves. Also, some haute couture artefacts are coded with titles that do not relate to the historical meaning of the past traditions. The new meanings interpret contemporary contexts further reinforced by the symbolic assemblage framed. As such, distinctness enables identity assertion further engendering the development of individuality expressions by designer-artists.

5.4 Concluding the chapter

Throughout, the discussion presents the nexus of past traditions, social sustainability and the haute couture fashion style in the bid to understand the return to the past in the present. The study thesis argues that the traditional aesthetic is an embodiment of contemporary 21st century global value seen through haute couture shaped by past traditions and representing social sustainability. As such the study findings, analysis and interpretation lay credence to the thesis argument basing on the data collected from various primary and secondary sources that moved beyond the fashion realm to encompass the broader creative practice.

The study clearly illustrated the representation of social sustainability by the contemporary Ugandan haute couture and articulated the contemporary value of past traditions. It has been revealed that the past traditions enabled the realization of social sustainability concepts of equity, wellbeing, social cohesion, participation and sustainability awareness through the creative practice. Equity has manifested through the traditional aesthetic as an

inclusive reliable raw material, knowledge and skill resource for people in contemporary global society because it is instructive of current critical social, economic and political issues of the world for the present and the future. The aesthetic also embodies an intrinsic evolutionary quality that repeatedly adapts to new contexts to offer a reliable wellbeing opportunity for contemporary societies. That way, it takes on new cultural roles and socio-cultural manifestations, as tools enabling the following social aspects; the creation and identification of identities that connect those alike, nurturing a sense of place and belonging, and the facilitation of social inclusion and integration of varied cultural populations, towards harmonious co-existence in contemporary society. In addition, existing community multicultural identities, knowledge systems, and expressions, are a traditional aesthetic that can lure full engagement and involvement by the community towards a common goal in the globalized space of the 21st century, thereby nurturing participation towards sustainability awareness. Thus, the past traditions are part of a cultural fabric and a crucial aspect in the attainment of sustainability because culture embodies the principles that control behavioural change within society.

In addition, the traditional aesthetic has facilitated the progression of the haute couture artefact into a knowledge dissemination platform, in the era of dynamic visual media, offering an inclusive pathway towards the realization of global agendas. Through intellectual engagement fashion designer-artists assert as possible partners, and haute couture artefacts as potential sites for critical socio-cultural intervention initiatives. Significantly, the inquiry portrays an array of the social sustainability value embodied in material culture including; the shaping and archival of cultural accounts and thoughts to facilitate society development, the advancement of material through reinventions, rethought processes and alternative sourcing. Through the centuries, the inevitable change in cultural environments has facilitated the transcendence of the fashion object into an intellectual object archiving social cultural narratives and capable of bridging information gaps.

Finally, in the global arena of the 21st century, the past traditions have constructed individual identities and located positions for creative practitioners at the global stage. This is enabled by the aesthetic materiality qualities embodied with value. The agential force of the past traditions through the materiality qualities, translates the traditional aesthetic cultural capital into symbolic capital. Consequently, facilitated the production of contemporary visual expressions. Further still, through its evolution the traditional aesthetic acquires new relevance. Exploring versatility, the distinct traditional aesthetic has progressed and ceased to represent

ethnicity, to frame unique and individualistic art styles that define individuals, and also express global concerns and shape contemporary global art. As such, the emergence of the past traditions as an engender of sustainable development, a materiality that responds to the 21st century visibility era to shape inclusive knowledge dissemination platforms, and is an agential force that enables its agents to prevail in constrained contemporary global spaces; the discussion reframes the traditional aesthetic as a progressive and working aesthetic in the contemporary, and thus significantly valuable.

CHAPTER SIX STUDY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of the study was to investigate the selected contemporary Ugandan haute couture artefacts that are shaped by past traditions, to establish their representation of the notion of social sustainability and to articulate the contemporary value embodied in the traditional aesthetic. The chapter summarizes all the contents of the previous chapters of the thesis to reconfirm its significance and contribution. It also discusses the limitations and direction for future investigations.

It is hoped that the study will benefit, the creative industry by providing a pathway through the insightful articulation of the value of the traditional aesthetic both locally and globally. Through the provision of the conceptual and theoretical value it will also support the creative practitioners and other socially oriented researchers with documented practical solutions as regards the findings, their meanings and the research methodologies. Policy makers will also use the knowledge to plan towards development of both the creative industry, art education and the cultural institutions. It is believed that through the study, creative practitioners, policy makers and other research disciplines will change their attitudes towards the traditional cultural heritage aesthetic.

The purpose of the study was addressed through an investigation that sprang from the haute couture artefacts that represented aspects related to social sustainability. The study found it crucial to approach the phenomenon by examining the cultural trajectory of the artefacts. This guided the research strategically with the application of both the focused ethnography and the narrative inquiry research designs. Focus on a small scope of fashion, haute couture, facilitated the elimination of irrelevant scopes through target data collection processes guided by the research question. The identification and selection of relevant field research sites and valuable population that supported the haute couture under investigation was also enabled.

The examination of the path of the haute couture artefacts was guided by the theoretical underpinning of the 'Circuit of Culture' supported by Shils' theory of tradition, Ferdinand Saussure's representation theory, Baudrillard's 'Liberation of the Object' and Peirre Bourdieu's theory of Practice, to facilitate the interrogation of all the agents affiliating with the haute couture artefact and the spaces they traverse. The process served to reveal that: the haute

couture are a contemporary visual aesthetic shaped by an evolutionary traditional cultural heritage that is embodied with ecological, socio-cultural and economic significance; secondly, that through creative and innovative reinvention and disposition of selected traditional cultural heritage, the haute couture artefacts were transformed into a visual language representing the notions of social sustainability; lastly that the reinvention of past traditions has been influenced by the constructive nature of the traditional aesthetic, the contemporary discourse of sustainable development, and the dynamics of globalization. Employing the thematic analysis, the study interpreted these findings to mean that: Past traditions are an engender of sustainable development, meeting Sustainable Development Goals 8, 12 and 16; that haute couture shaped by societies' traditional cultural heritage aesthetic is an inclusive knowledge dissemination platform; and that the traditional aesthetic is an agential tool that facilitates creative practitioners to negotiate contemporary global society dynamics.

In conclusion therefore, the traditional cultural heritage of societies is a constructive and progressive aesthetic within contemporary 21st century society that it should be protected and archived for present and future use. Its value should be repeatedly published and pronounced such that it is accessible. This way, society can get to understand its contemporary relevance and thus, continue to embrace it towards development of nations and culture itself. As an agential tool embodied with the contemporaneity of the 21st century, the aesthetic asserts as a weapon against the hegemony of global gate keepers. The study has revealed how those who have embraced it have gained access to significant global stages. At the global stage, creative practitioners get an opportunity to develop their personal and creative abilities further, as well facilitate the progression of the cultural aesthetic. As such, the creative industry in Uganda should indeed embrace the past traditions to tap the socio-cultural and economic benefits accrued from their application.

The study also demystifies the existing general undervaluation of past traditions as ancient in regard to socio-cultural construction, economic growth, and, peace and security in Uganda. The study has exhibited this through three aspects: the attainment of sustained inclusive and sustainable economic growth full of productive employment, creation of peaceful and inclusive societies, and the advocacy for sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Further still, the manifestation of haute couture shaped by societies' past traditions as an inclusive knowledge dissemination tool is highly significant. As a fashion object, haute

couture is a spectacle embodied with power and aura and thus, can lure society towards attending to critical issues. As such, in this visual era, when the artefact is shaped by past traditions, it can be employed as a communication tool for social intervention.

Thus, the traditional aesthetic is an evolutionary aesthetic that reinvents and reconstructs through ages and as such a reliable resource for societies towards development because of its cultural stance. The aesthetic is a cultural property of its people, free and accessible for all to use through the assignment of new looks and roles. Significantly, past traditions embody the capacity to respond to aspirations of, and parameters encountered by society, progressively giving shape and relevance to expressions and existence.

6.2 Implications of the Study

The study makes noteworthy contribution through theoretical, conceptual and practical frameworks towards the cultural studies, art studies, the creative industry and Uganda at large.

6.2.1 Theoretical Contribution

Fundamentally, the study has articulated and published the value of past traditions in 21st century contemporary society. Through the analysis of historical data, it was revealed that literature on how the traditional aesthetic works to support society in contemporary society was missing. The study found out that the aesthetic works as an agential tool for globalized spaces. The study also contributed to the scholarship on African fashion with a Ugandan perspective. Literature on significant African fashion is replete with various African nations but Ugandan is carelessly represented. In addition, the study it has remodeled the ‘Circuit of Culture’ theory, by supporting its tenets with other theories when applied to explore a cultural trajectory of a visual aesthetic in 21st century contemporary society. The theories included: Shils’ theory of tradition, Ferdinand Saussure’s representation theory, Baudrillard’s ‘Liberation of the Object’ and Peirre Bourdieu’s theory of Practice. The outcome can serve as a model for any new related research.

Conceptually, the study extends knowledge on social sustainability.

It has established that creative practitioners contribute to the sustainable development agenda through the social sustainability conceptual framework. The framework also asserts social sustainability as the ideological structure for the inclusion of community social aspects in the global discourse. It has been established that a creative practical engagement can support

a meaning making argument during data interpretation within a study of visual art as a language.

Further, the study has located haute couture shaped by past traditions as a socially inclusive knowledge dissemination platform. Coupled with the 21st century visuality, and the aura, and power possessed by haute couture as a popular culture object, the haute couture fashion artefact as a knowledge dissemination tool can reach marginalized spaces. The spaces are occupied by people who do not access knowledge publications in conferences, journals and books. Further still, through intellectual engagements fashion designer-artists can partner with other social researchers and use the haute couture artefacts as platforms for socio-cultural intervention initiatives. This is a magnitude tool for bridging information gaps. This has redefined and demystified the Western world aura of the haute couture fashion genre. The genre is a renowned exclusive and personal ‘high-society’ style reinterpreted into a meaningful and inclusive knowledge dissemination vessel with contemporary global social relevance.

6.2.2 *Practical implications*

The process of re-enacting conceptualized socio-cultural contexts to further interpret them in physical material contexts, leads to rethought creative processes and development of materials in new formats. The new formats are a progression of culture and a value addition that fetches higher returns. Thus, the experience provides important insight for pragmatic artistic possibilities towards the development of the creative industry.

The nexus of past traditions, haute couture and social sustainability has further fused the binary between visual arts and the popular culture. In addition, the haute couture is opening the high society platform to becoming relevant to the greater population further luring the usually disinterested masses into the visual art terrain.

6.3 *Limitations of the Study*

However, there prevailed some limitations. During the analysis and interpretation of data, the researcher realised that the cultural trajectory interrogation missed the incorporation of the final consumer’s opinions and experiences. Although this reveals a gap in the study, it does not discredit the perspectives of the other actors in the cultural field, because the promoter and, or representative of the visual art market, is also a voice of the final consumer.

6.4 Recommendations

The scope of the study did not have room to interrogate the final consumer of the haute couture shaped by past traditions, and relied on the representative. The perspective of the final consumer could be explored to expand the discourse. Also, the study only examined the fashion object and therefore, it does not claim to have exhaustive perspectives about the contemporary value of past traditions. Other creative forms could also be explored.

There is need to subject haute couture embodied with predetermined notions to a targeted population to evaluate its communication performance. Then creators of knowledge to consider the haute couture language as a tool for dissemination.

The reinvented aesthetic is inspirational for a practitioner to engage a practice-based research towards the transfer of the developed haute couture visual aesthetic knowledge, into applied arts.

The study is insightful about sustainability awareness, as such recommends for further research in the area towards consumers and producers behavioral change.

In conclusion, the study indeed did achieve its objective of establishing that haute couture shaped by past traditions represented social sustainability. In the process, the contemporary value of past traditions was articulated.

In quest of understanding the value of past traditions, the study established a conceptual framework through which creative practitioners could assess their contribution to sustainable development. The social sustainability conceptual framework is made up of equity, social cohesion, wellbeing, participation and sustainability awareness. It is also a significant framework through which the value of the traditional aesthetic can be reviewed during debates of global concern.

Further still, the study realized that there could be further researches that could spring from the study in regard to further interrogation of the phenomenon from other perspectives and the exploration of other creative objects.

6.5 Personal remark

The search for answers about the intriguing phenomena of the stride backwards into the future has inspired the researcher to become a better visual culture researcher, creative practitioner and educator. The trajectory has generated insight into the materiality of the past

facilitating aesthetic appreciation towards significant application and archive. Similarly, is that knowledge generated and acquired will benefit many and enrich the creative industry as well as other disciplines. Lastly, the study has revitalized the researcher's faith in the traditional aesthetic triggering various insights towards scholarly research, publication and aesthetic reinventions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Observation Guide (Haute Couture Artefact)

The list of the features to be observed during data collection

1. Identification of haute couture artefact to be observed.
2. Title of the artefact if any.
3. Artefact production date and context.
4. Type of materials used to produce the artefact.
5. Nature of the materials.
6. Techniques, methods and style of material application
7. Organization of the materials on the artefact.
8. Presentation style of artefact.

Key Issues of interest to note

- 1) Material relationships and meanings generated
- 2) Visual impression created

Appendix 2: Participant Observation Guide (Field Sites)

Observation Event (Tick type): Workshop Conference. Exhibition

Title of Event:

Site:

Date:

Start and stop time:

Area of Observation (Reference to the Type of Event)

1. Context of event
2. Note any principal artist/guest/participant
3. Type of other guests/participants
4. Content of event
5. Art processes and works
6. Guests/participants and/or exhibiting/presenting/participating artists/designers

Key Issues of Interest to Note through Observation

1. Nature of art work
2. Essence of art processes, work and or event
3. Insights, Opinions, perspectives and perceptions about/of event
4. Relationship of fashion/art and past traditions
5. Role of the principal artist/guest/participant in the cultural enterprise
6. Role of culture advocates

Appendix 3: Participant Observation Guide

Observation Event (Tick type): Workshop Conference. Exhibition

Title:

Site:

Name of participant:

Gender:

Age Bracket: (19 – 25) (26 – 30) (31 – 40)

Education background:

Occupation:

Years in the Practice:

Exposure:

PO Date:

Start and stop time:

Area of Participant-Observation (Reference to the Type of Event)

1. Context of haute couture production project
2. Type of participants
3. Design and art concept development process
4. Art works produced
5. Conversation
6. Comments

Key Issues of Interest to Note through the Observation

1. Contextual Frame
2. Nature of concept inspirational aesthetic
3. Framing of haute couture
4. Purpose and meaning of haute couture
5. Insights and perspectives
6. Aspects that influence the choices (haute couture style and materials)

Appendix 4: Key Informant Interview Guide for the Selected Fashion Designer-Artists

Section A: Participant Information

Name:

Gender:

Age Bracket: 31-40 () 41- 55 () 56 – 65 ()

Nationality:

Fashion Education background (Institution and levels if applicable):

Section B: Interview Guide Questions

Fashion designer-artist practice

1. How would you describe yourself?
2. How did all this fashion innovation and creation begin?
3. What traditional materials do you use?
4. How have you managed to shape an authentic modern dress using traditional materials yet amidst notions of modern world fashion?
5. What inspires you to create the kind of fashion?
6. Where do you work from?
7. How long have you been working from there?
8. What is the impact of your work place and area on your work?
9. Why are you using past traditional materials?
10. How many collections or ranges have you released to-date?

Fashion designer-artist and the Public

1. What is the purpose of your work?
2. How would you describe your work to the audience?
3. What kind of market do you target?
4. How do you get your work to the market place?
5. Where have you exhibited your fashion (local and International), and what has been the public response?
6. What kind of market has collected your work?
7. How does the public perceive your work?

Success Story

1. Have you attained any awards?
2. What do you attribute your success to?
3. What keeps you going on?

Start time:

End time:

The End - Thank you

Appendix 5: In-depth Interview Guide for Fine Artists Using Past Traditional Aesthetic

Section A: Participant Information

Name:

Gender:

Age Bracket: 31-40 () 41- 55 () 56 – 65 ()

Artistic Practice:

Section B:

1. How would you describe yourself?
2. What kind of art do you create?
3. What inspires you to create that kind of art?
4. How long have you been creating art?
5. What is the impact of your work place and area on your work?
6. Why are you using past traditional materials?

Artist and the Public

1. What is the purpose of your work?
2. What kind of market do you target?
3. How do you get your work to the market place?
4. Where have you exhibited your art?
5. What kind of market has collected your work?
6. How does the public perceive your work?

Fashion and past traditions

1. What is your comment on the reproduction of fashion using past traditions?
2. What is your comment on the style of fashion they are producing?
3. What do you think determines their choice of materials, themes and style?
4. Why do you think the fashion designers have gone back to the past?

Start time:

End time:

The End - Thank you

Appendix 6: In-depth Interview Guide for Fashion Designers

Section A: Participant Information

Name:

Gender:

Age Bracket: 31-40 () 41- 55 () 56 – 65 ()

Nationality:

Fashion Design label:

Section B:

1. How long have you engaged in the fashion industry?
2. How would you describe the fashion scene in Uganda today?
3. What is your comment on the market place?
4. What is your comment on the nature of materials?
5. What is your comment on the styles of fashion?

The fashion designer-artist and past traditions

1. What is your comment on the reproduction of the past traditions for fashion?
2. How would you describe the following fashion designers?
 - Sanaa Gateja
 - Senkaaba Samson
 - Hendo Jose
 - Atal Stella
3. How would you particularly describe their fashion?
4. What is your comment on the kind of fashion they produce?
5. What do you think determines their choice of materials, themes and style?
6. Why do you think the fashion designers have gone back to the past for inspiration?

Start time:

End time:

The End - Thank you

Appendix 7: In-depth Interview Guide for Visual Culture Promoters and Scholars

Section A: Participant Information

Name:

Gender:

Age Bracket: 31-40 () 41- 55 () 56 – 65 ()

Institution (If Applicable):

Section B:

1. What is your comment on visual art development in Uganda?
2. How would you describe the visual art scene or movement in Uganda today?
3. What is the relationship between your organization and the artists?
4. What is your comment on the nature of materials used to produce contemporary art?
5. What is your comment on the styles and approaches applied in art today?

The fashion designer-artist and past traditions

1. What is your comment on the transition of fashion into the visual art terrain?
2. What is your comment on the reproduction of the past traditions for fashion creation?
3. How would you describe the following fashion designers?
 - Sanaa Gateja
 - Senkaba Samson
 - Hendo Jose
 - Atal Stella
3. How would you particularly describe their fashion?
4. What is your comment on the kind of fashion they produce?
5. What do you think determines their choice of materials, themes and style?
6. Why do you think the fashion designers have gone back to the past for inspiration?

Start time:

End time:

The End - Thank you

Appendix 8: Invitation Letter to Participate in the Study

15th March 2018

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Nakisanze Sarah, a PhD candidate at the Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Art, College of Engineering, Design Art and Technology, Makerere University. I am engaged in research for the establishment of the contemporary value of past traditions as seen through haute couture artefacts, as the visual aesthetic.

Your artisanal group has been identified as one of the most active groups in Fair trade basketry. I am therefore, seeking your permission for the group to participate in my study and requesting for your consent to take part in the study in 2018. My study intends to explore the Fairtrade story of the artisans and translate it into fashion expressions. As one of the most active groups your input in this research will be significantly respected. This research will not only function as a scholarly material but will also illuminate the role of basketry in socio-economic development. Secondly, the findings from this research may have implications on the policy on women in artisanal practice.

I will be grateful for your positive response and promise that all information shared will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Sincerely,

Nakisanze Sarah

PhD Student,
MTSIFA, CEDAT,
Makerere University
0772439767

Appendix 9: Consent Letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am requesting for your consent to take part in a PhD research study about haute couture and the past traditional aesthetic in Uganda. I am a PhD candidate from the Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Art, Makerere University Uganda, and conducting the study under the guidance of Dr. Nakazibwe Venny and Dr. Sengendo May from Makerere University.

Your participation in the study is voluntary which means that you have the right to withdraw from participation at any time during the study, without providing any reason and without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, and that any identifiable information that you will have provided will be erased from the research records. There are no probable risks or discomforts associated with the subject of my study; however, the nature of the research requires me to gather personal information related to your life and career, which at times may include sensitive instances. If at any time you become uncomfortable with the discussion, you have the right to choose not to answer any questions. It is your right to choose a convenient time and place for the one-time interview which should take 45 to 60 minutes. However, I may request for subsequent interviews if the need arises. I will audio record the entire interview, take pictures where necessary and will occasionally take notes. To ensure confidentiality of the shared individually-identifiable information, pseudonyms will be used, and all data will be securely kept not to be used for any other endeavor. If any questions about the research arise, I am accessible on telephone No. 0772439767.

By signing this form, you agree that you understand the study procedures described above, and to voluntarily participate in this study. Please keep a copy of this form.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Appendix 10



COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING, DESIGN, ART AND TECHNOLOGY(CEDAT)

THE MARGARET TROWELL SCHOOL OF INDUSTRIAL AND FINE ART

13th June 2017

OFFICE OF THE DEAN

Thru: The Dean
Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Art
College of Engineering Design Art and Technology
Makerere University

Dear Sir/Madam,

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

RE: CONDUCT FIELD RESEARCH

This letter introduces Nakisanze Sarah, a PhD student as well as an Assistant lecturer of Makerere University in the Department of Industrial Art and Applied Design, at the Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Art-CEDAT who intends to embark on her field research.

Her study is about the role of the traditional aesthetic in shaping modern fashion. It aims at examining why fashion designer-artists have explored tradition for contemporary fashion development and as wearable art.

The purpose of this letter therefore, is to kindly request you to render the student necessary support to enable her carry out the field research in your organization and area of operation.

Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,



Assoc. Prof. Kizito Maria Kasule
Dean, MTSIFA



Appendix 11



7th September 2017

Dear Sir / Madam,

CREATIVE PRACTICE ASSOCIATIONS AND GROUPS,
CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS,

RE: INTRODUCTION OF NAKISANZE SARAH (UVADA MEMBER)

I hereby introduce to you one of the Uganda Visual Arts and Designers Association (UVADA) member, Nakisanze Sarah, who is a female fashion designer-artist and educator. Currently, she is engaged in a doctoral study that requires to research both the visual art and design practices, and all the other artisanal practitioners involved, for collection of data for her study. The study is entitled as follows "Social Sustainability and the Ugandan Haute Couture Visual aesthetic: Articulating the Contemporary value of Past Traditions". Collected data will be used to write a dissertation that is in partial fulfilment for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in visual culture from Makerere University.

You are kindly requested to cooperate in providing required information which will be treated with utmost confidentiality and your name will not be mentioned except in honour of artwork authorship.

Thank you for your positive response.

Yours sincerely

.....
UVADA president

Waddimba Edward

Appendix 12: Data Analysis Example Data Code Assignment and Code Category Identification by Colour

Exemplified research question 5: Why have the contemporary Ugandan fashion designer-artists persistently reinvented the past traditions to shape haute couture in contemporary times?

INTERVIEWS(Significant data quotes)	CODES
Stella Atal – Fashion Designer-artist	
Everyone feared bark cloth so I took up the challenge	agency
People did not find material easy and interesting to explore	Deconstruct Narrative
Bark cloth aesthetic is so natural and stands out when you do something out of it.	unique
I want to be original	Unique
I want to promote our culture	Contemporary notion
Others weave their traditional heritage while in foreign land, so why not us	Identity
The unique fabric	Unique
The nature of the fabric (sustainability)	Contemporary notion
Identified by UNESCO (Eco-friendly)	Contemporary notion
Identified by other Africans living in diaspora as their designer	Agentic aesthetic
Established global aesthetic lovers	Global market
Margaret Nagawa – Visual Art Scholar	
UNESCO recognition of bark cloth	Ecological Value in the past
I think I might return it to what gives people/artists a degree of authenticity	Available, belongingness and identity
Agency in what they do; where are they staying, material from my culture, my people, this is a stamp I am putting on the international stage	Position on stage
Revaluing an art form	Agency valuable art aesthetic
Many scholars return to the past material exploration	Available aesthetic
Restoration of the monarchy	Culture promotion
Artists are on the international scene and engaging contemporary global issues	Global location Global themes
Elizabeth Mbabazi – Visual Art Promoter	
The new/contemporary art work demand non-traditional approaches	Unique artaesthetic
Aggression in art on the African continent due to change in the art economy (openers)	Individualistic styles
Afri Art a representation/tive of Xenson and Sanaa is globally informed/oriented therefore demands art that locates the artists	identity
The trend on the art scene, what has Africa got to offer therefore with the artists that we represent we have tried to get that out of them. Thus, Sanaa and Xenson	African identity new ideas, individuality
When at the world stage, it ceases to be Sanaa, rather where you are coming from, your role in society	Global social impact
What you are putting up, needs to speak and speak relevantly look for work/artist who were strong in practice and expression	Strong identity valuable
The audience is buying what art communicates	Unique and valuable
The need to be original while on global stage	Unique and new
The need to identify with whom you are and where you are from especially when you attain certain levels	identity
Bark cloth excites the international platform	Unique/ sustainable
Xenson and Sanaa exposed internationally	Global space
Readers market and audience	Unique aesthetic
Butagira Paula – Fashion Designer	
They want to remain unique	identity
They are artists (passionately presently)	Contemporary Artistic aspiration
They also with with communities	Social impact
They are internationally located	Global space
Ronex – Visual artist	
Bark cloth of other some of the best materials due to their Ugandan-ness	unique
I also use it to change people’s perception about it	Agency
Identity at the international stage	
But also, as a fashion designer, you may not miss bark cloth	Artistic aesthetic
That is something that gives them an identity at international stage	identity
Something unique	identity culture
Fine/visual artists promoting culture	Culture promotion
The bark cloth aesthetic is rich and artistic spectacular	Contemporary Art aesthetic
Identity is also key here	identity

Table: 3.1(a) Interview: Data Code Assignment and Code Category Identification by colour

LITERATURE (Significant Information)	
Pagán et al. (2020, p.2)	CODES
<p>“... cultural heritage is understood nowadays as a variable set of the cultural legacy that links us with our past. It is also a catalyst for innovative economies, through its connection with local and sustainable development and the promotion of creative industries (Practices). European history is woven in silk. Few materials have had such an economic, technical, functional, cultural and symbolic presence throughout our past and present: we can find silk in innumerable contexts, during most of the last 2000 years. However, its properties continue to be relevant for audiences that experience vivid, personal and social connections to this heritage, linked to other life stories and collective narratives, but, at the same time it offers an important flow for reflection and artistic creativity and design.”</p>	<p>Global Sustainability</p> <p>Identity construction</p> <p>Identity</p> <p>Uniqueness</p>

Table: 3.1(b) *Literature*: Data Code Assignment and Code Category Identification by colour

OBSERVATION NOTES	CODE
Fashion premiership Symposium	
Look for an identity, a Uganda niche	Identity construction
Who are you impacting	Contemporary notion
The world is embracing Africa	Agency
Tell the African story when at the global stage	Global stage location
Tradition is valuable as an art and design aesthetic	Identity construction

Table: 3.1(c) *Observation*: Data Code Assignment and Code Category Identification by colour

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION NOTES	CODES
MTSIFA	
Ugandan local materials	Inspirational material
Materials represent cultural story effectively	Culture promotion
Ugandan brand	Identity
Tradition is dissolving	promote heritage
For Eco-fashion	Sustainability
FAVT	
Bark cloth is aesthetically rich	unique
Sustainability theme communication	Sustainability
Promoting culture	Global notion
African patterns unique	identity

Table: 3.1(d) *Participant observation*: Data Code Assignment and Code Category Identification by colour

Appendix 13: Data Themes Generated from the Code Categories Identified in Tables 3.1

THEMES	Embodiment of Contemporary Global issues	Deconstruction of inhibitive Narratives and Environments	Construction of Subjective Identities	Fashion designer-artists are on the Global stage
CODES	<p>Sustainable systems (Economic, Social, Cultural & Environmental)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Art aesthetic -Unique art aesthetic -Contemporary art aesthetic -Ecological aesthetic - Culture promotion <p>Inclusive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - African aesthetic available for all <p>Participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Artistic Agency - Unique and new - Belongingness and identity - Material agency - Cultural agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Identity -Belonging & identity -Unique 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - global market - Exhibitions - Material - Global notions as art aesthetic

Table 3.2: Data Themes generated from the Code Categories identified in Tables 3.1