



East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences

eajass.eanso.org

Volume 8, Issue 2, 2025

Print ISSN: 2707-4277 | Online ISSN: 2707-4285

Title DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37284/2707-4285>



EAST AFRICAN
NATURE &
SCIENCE
ORGANIZATION

Original Article

Nostalgia as a Source for Creative Emanation of Subject Matter in Painting: Analysis of Paintings of Students of Fine Art at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya

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Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.8.2.3321>

Date Published: ABSTRACT

14 July 2025

Keywords:

*Nostalgia,
Elements,
Principles,
Painted
Composition,
Recollection,
Memory.*

When artists create artwork, they always have an intent, whatever the description it may bear. At times, this intent is used to express a point of view as social commentary, or to express personal emotions, upheavals, triumphs, or other experiential oscillations such as joy or sadness. A significant segment of this intent is based on the concept of nostalgia, where artists tend to recall certain important occurrences that significantly impact their lives and psyche and subsequently could be of visual essence to audiences. The intent of an artist is in itself motivated or informed by various factors, depending on the type of art. The intent to show natural beauty in a landscape painting, for instance, may be motivated by outdoor observation of unique scenery; the intent to highlight a certain social phenomenon as social commentary may be motivated by the profoundness of its occurrence in a given setting. The intent to show certain perils may be triggered by experiential occurrences that culminate in specific inherent emotions. From a preliminary enquiry, this paper determined that one such factor that motivates an artist's intent in painting is the concept of nostalgia. The study sought to examine varied paintings of students of Fine Art to determine whether nostalgia features as a major motivating factor in their expressive work and whether or not it is indeed possible to identify the visual permeation of nostalgia in the paintings. The study featured 28 paintings selected from several painting units where students were expected to produce work based on their own generated subject matter and preferred personal style. Ideally projected to produce certain outcomes, but students were free to create paintings that featured a variety of themes. The selected paintings were mainly realist in execution, and it was deduced that students felt more at ease expressing their innate nostalgic feelings using this style since it resonated better with the audience. The paintings were analysed through formal analysis through the use of elements and application of principles of art, which addressed the visual elements of the paintings themselves as works of art, but particular attention was also paid to the visual indicators of the manifestations of nostalgia. The elements included the use of line, shape, colour, texture, light and shade as well as mass and space. The principles included the use of balance, proportion, harmony and

rhythm. Descriptive analysis of the paintings in terms of their content and contextual setting was useful in helping to determine the intent of the artist, his or her motivation and the efficacy of the paintings as works of art to elicit some emotive reaction related to nostalgic recollection of an event or an occurrence in time or place as a result of direct visual resonance with the audience. It can be deduced from this study that paintings bear a significant manifestation of nostalgia both in their contextual setting as well as in their content and style of execution. The study posits that artists often deliberately feature a considered aspect of nostalgia as part of their intent, which is a result of an array of images.

APA CITATION

Wango, K. (2025). Nostalgia as a Source for Creative Emanation of Subject Matter in Painting: Analysis of Paintings of Students of Fine Art at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya. *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 8(2), 670-706. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.8.2.3321>

CHICAGO CITATION

Wango, Kamau. 2025. "Nostalgia as a Source for Creative Emanation of Subject Matter in Painting: Analysis of Paintings of Students of Fine Art at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya". *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences* 8 (2), 670-706. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.8.2.3321>

HARVARD CITATION

Wango, K. (2025) "Nostalgia as a Source for Creative Emanation of Subject Matter in Painting: Analysis of Paintings of Students of Fine Art at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya". *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 8(2), pp. 670-706. doi: 10.37284/eajass.8.2.3321

IEEE CITATION

K., Wango "Nostalgia as a Source for Creative Emanation of Subject Matter in Painting: Analysis of Paintings of Students of Fine Art at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya". *EAJASS*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 670-706, Jul. 2025.

MLA CITATION

Wango, Kamau "Nostalgia as a Source for Creative Emanation of Subject Matter in Painting: Analysis of Paintings of Students of Fine Art at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya". *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, Vol. 8, no. 2, Jul. 2025, pp. 670-706, doi:10.37284/eajass.8.1.3321

INTRODUCTION

The fundamental quest for Artists in any genre of art is either to express a certain phenomenon. The observations of that phenomenon are emanative from thought patterns, opinions, conversations and points of view that are profoundly set or manifested in certain environments. These expressions of emotions are themselves motivated or are consequent upon certain specific underlying factors that become the preoccupation of an artist's heart and mind. A brief overview of these factors is derived from the fact that artists are fascinated by the dynamics that characterise their environments and the visual dynamism that is emanated and offers extensive creative opportunities within the context of those environments.

In painting, a beautiful scenery becomes the motivational basis of a landscape study; a set of objects placed, arranged and organised together

becomes the motivational basis of a still-life composition. In addition, the observation or witnessing of the unfolding of various social phenomena, whether spontaneous, incidental or recurrent, becomes the motivational basis of a painting as social commentary. The internalisation of how people conduct their lives within their environments becomes a motivational basis for recording their triumphs or highlighting their plight. Embedded within these motivational factors are aspects of nostalgia that may influence the intent of the artist. Nostalgia is regarded as the tendency to have dream-like fond recollections of times gone by and is often accompanied by the futile yearning to reconstruct, relive or replicate those times. This is usually experiential and often in regard to a specific event, a series of occurrences or a defined space in time within which a memorable phenomenon took place.

Nostalgia also encompasses fond memories, particularly of specific people, events and times associated with them that bring about a sense of joy and longing. At other times, though, it elicits a deep sense of melancholy when the people associated with the nostalgia are obviously absent, and there exists no possibility of the replicability of time. From the foregoing, since an artist often engages his or her emotions as a reservoir or repository for creativity, it is possible to create a painting that evokes nostalgia. Jenkins (2023) notes that, “One essential aspect of art, especially painting, is the opportunity for personal expression. Artists can convey their deepest feelings and thoughts through colour, form, and composition. This outlet can be essential for artists seeking to explore, process, or communicate their internal experiences and emotions.” Nostalgic undertones can be visually identifiable by the viewer by carefully studying the content and context of the painting. Through this, the viewer can ultimately derive a viable interpretation of the work that aligns itself to the intent of the artist, even though the viewer is not a ‘partaker’ of the feeling of nostalgia itself. In isolating this segment of creativity, Luka (2024) observes that “Nostalgia is a complex emotional response that blends fondness for the past with a sense of longing. In the context of art, nostalgia serves as a powerful tool that evokes memories and feelings associated with previous eras.”

Artists often harness this emotional response to connect with their audience, creating works that resonate deeply on a personal level.” In this regard, this paper posits that it is envisageable for the audience to view a work of art and extract the existent element of nostalgia that is visually evident. They should subsequently determine the efficacy of this nostalgia as a tool for helping both the artist and themselves to reminisce, internalise and synchronise with their psyche, joy, melancholy, regret or any other underlying emotion that may be embedded in their mind. This is perceived, in the context of this study, to be the contribution of Art, through painting, to this endeavour.

THE ESSENCE OF NOSTALGIA IN ART

Art as an avenue for human expression has been practised for ages. Painting, amongst other artistic genres, remains one of the oldest and most celebrated in this regard. Artists have used painting to express, record, highlight or propagate a certain phenomenon of interest for purposes of enlightening their audience and seeking not only their indulgence but also their intervention. They have also used painting to express their own individual feelings and emotions in whatever style or medium they deemed appropriate. It has already been noted that these expressions, whatever their nature, always emanate from or are triggered or influenced by certain factors which are observational, reflective or experiential. These factors then become the motivational basis upon which artists draw artistic cognisance and hence create their work.

It can be said that one of these factors from which artists draw their inspiration is contained in the concept of nostalgia. A state of nostalgia can be described as a wistful state of mind where one yearns for times gone by, memorable events or situations that are, however, irrecoverable. Often, nostalgia is accompanied by a joyful feeling of bliss, but may also have its share of melancholy. In the formulation of ideas, creation and composition of art, sentimentality and other emotions manifest themselves in the form of images in the mind. Chan (2023) notes that “Nostalgia is a sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past, typically for a period or place with happy personal associations.” When people are in a wistful state for a period of time, they are full of images flowing in their minds, which could constitute their expression through the process of composition. Nostalgia can be deeply personal and experiential or can be shared, particularly when people remember certain memorable collective or communal experiences emanating from definable events in their lives. By its nature, it is also associated with the culture of commemoration, remembrance and sentimentality.

From the foregoing, there can be derived a plausible reason to posit that art can play a significant role as an avenue through which the notion of nostalgia can be packaged into artistic ideas through reflections and creativity. Although some writers have cautioned against the effect of sentimentality in overriding the aesthetic quality of a painting, it is in this context that it is unlikely that an artist trying to express this nostalgic phenomenon can entirely avoid the visual imagery contained in his or her nostalgic reverie. There are situations where paintings depict memories associated with certain objects, which the artists deliberately feature in paintings that elicit fond reflections or even anecdotes that are reminiscent of certain memorable moments in time that are unique to the artist. These may not be embodiments of intellectual artistic ideas, but they still matter as aspects of self-expression. This overt perspective of applying nostalgia in a painting is recurrent and often resonates with audiences. There are others who hold the view that the effect of an artist's nostalgic reverie should not be seen merely on its own and must be juxtaposed with other objects in order to create new ideas and reflections. This implies that the concept of nostalgia is complex and is interrogated from different perspectives and levels of interpretation for the purposes of artistic quest.

Theoretical Basis

This paper outlines the theoretical basis of nostalgia in terms of three theories. Abed (2024) mentions these theories as: cognitive theories, psychological theories and social cultural theories. The emotional content of nostalgia within the cognitive mode underpins the concentration upon the bright side, which also de-emphasises the grim side when dealing with the manifestation of nostalgic memories. Psychological theories are based on the ability of individuals to develop a coping mechanism based on moments that are generally individually cherished, emphasising the unique effects of positive emotions. Social cultural theories posit that nostalgia is embedded in culture and

social context. These have a bearing upon the way in which people view their current dispensation from the perspective of the past. This paper posits that these theoretical approaches are juxtaposed and their strengths are intertwined in the way they explain nostalgia. Aspects of these explanations are compatible with the nostalgic paintings in this study and the way they were presented and analysed.

Analytical Framework

Since this paper dwells on paintings as the focal point of the derivation or determination of nostalgia, the analytical framework is based on the formal approach to artistic analysis. Hence, formal analysis as described in the use of elements and principles of art is important in determining the compositional essence and strength of the paintings, which are important in the visual determination of the possible presence of nostalgia. Nostalgia itself is a 'felt phenomenon' usually related to the feeling of joy and positivity. Nostalgia can be evoked through the use of colour palettes, light and shadow, textural effects, illumination and application of certain techniques. Mäus (2024) notes that, "By thoughtfully selecting and applying these visual elements, artists can create works that not only depict a specific era but also evoke the associated emotions and memories." From an artistic point of view, when viewing a painting, no continuum can place nostalgic feelings within a certain level of measurement from one extreme end to another. In this regard, the evocation of nostalgia is ultimately determined through the artist's or the viewer's description. Hence, the artist's role is to create a painting through which these nostalgic feelings can be best elicited and described.

The paintings featured in this paper show the work of students as they deemed necessary to depict the subject of nostalgia, which they described accordingly. They were therefore purposively selected to emphasise the narrative of nostalgia as intended by the artist, since each selected painting carried this narrative to a significant extent. Although nostalgia is broadly divided into reflective

and restorative nostalgia, this study delved into other related approaches that helped peer into the nature, quality and motivation of the paintings presented. However, for clarity, Payne (2024), referring to the earlier work of Boym (2001), notes that, “Restorative nostalgia looks back at the past with a desire to re-create it and to relive special times. When people are restoratively nostalgic, they focus on re-creating what they perceive to be an idealised golden age of their lives.’ Restorative nostalgia is therefore about hope, optimism and a sense of revival

Reflective nostalgia is generally associated with feelings of sadness, regret, and longing.” Payne continues that, “When people are reflectively nostalgic, they do not attempt to re-create the past; rather, they take pleasure in experiencing the emotions that are tied to happy memories. Reflective nostalgia is frequently associated with warmth, comfort, and joy.” People tend to reminisce about the past and subsequently feel that nothing ahead could possibly be comparable to what

they have already missed out on. Taking cognisance of the above, this study incorporated certain other perspectives; that the derivation of nostalgia is in itself essentially *descriptive* because it is based on the description of feelings that emanate from a person, which are either participatory, observational or narrative in nature. It is also singularly *contextual* because something that is nostalgic is based on the context of its occurrence, which relates to the experience of the individual artist. Nostalgic paintings are, therefore, also *experiential* in their creation since artists derive their imagery from their personal experiences. Ultimately, nostalgic work is perceived within the realm of positive memories. Nostalgia can also be *associational*; in this regard, it can be derived through association. When a viewer sees a painting, the respective subject matter and the nature of the composition can lead to the extraction or elicitation of associated feelings and emotions, even though the viewer is not the originator of the painting itself.

Analysis of Work

Plate 1: Zephania Lukamba, 'Habari ndio hio' Oils on Canvas, 2024

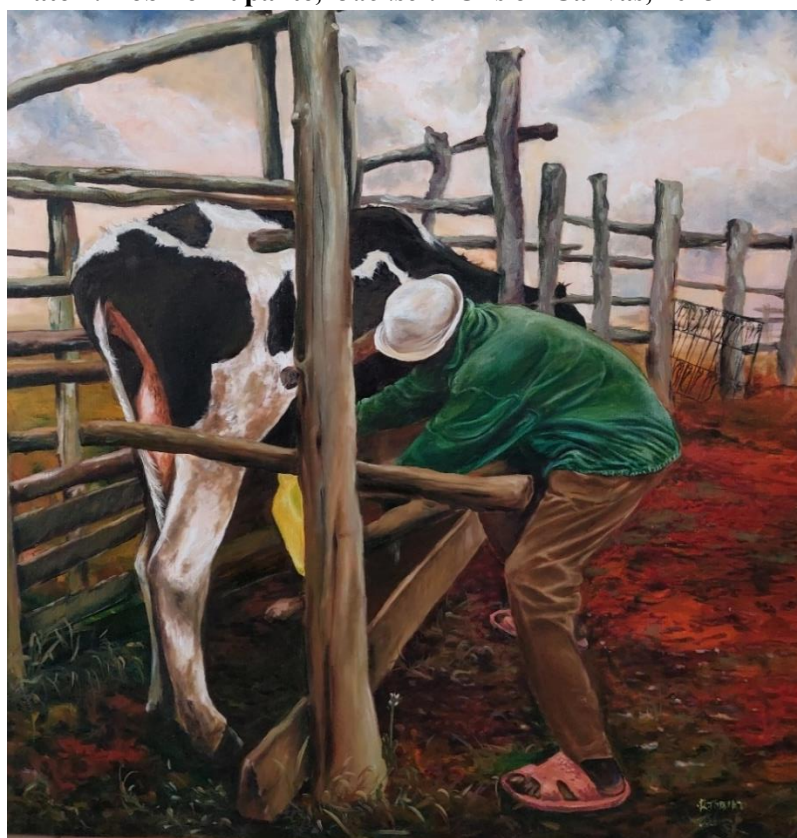


(Source: Department of Fine Art)

Nostalgic feelings are derived from fond memories of certain happenings, activities, occurrences and events that define society. Since they are human feelings, they are contained within the holistic behavioural tendencies of people. Nostalgic paintings are therefore often motivated by these events, activities or occurrences as the case may be. This is the kind of nostalgia that artists often endeavour to capture. In Plate 1, the artist depicts the activity of ferrying sacks of farm produce in a tractor; it would not attract much attention if it were

not for the overloading and the precarious perch of the two people on top of the load of sacks, denoting the nostalgic uniqueness of the scene that makes it fondly memorable. It can be said in retrospect that the sheer element of risk at the time of occurrence stirs nostalgic memories of wistful longing for dangerous escapades. As a painting, the artist executes it with admirable accuracy using minute details as a style in realism. This is important in enhancing the essence of the scene itself and hence underscoring why it is so memorable.

Plate 2: Tobiko Rupante, 'Jackson' Oils on Canvas, 2023



(Source: Department of Fine Art)

Plate 2 is a simple depiction of a farmer milking a cow. It is well executed, showing the gestural pose of the action of milking a cow in the village. Colour, colour tones, shadows, folds and textural effects are all used to show the holistic composition and nature of the action in the image. The nostalgic effect, according to the artist, is that "It reminds me of the quiet life in the village where everything happened by the design of daily needs and subsequent

routine." If a person is living in an environment where this activity no longer occurs, then that circumstance translates into nostalgia through fond recollection. Nostalgic memories are often so strong and etched in the mind that they can easily be narrated and converted into visual interpretations even by those who have not necessarily experienced them.

Plate 3: Zephania Lukamba, Oils on Canvas, 2024

(Source: Department of Fine Art)

Paintings are often motivated by the nature of certain regular occurrences or activities that are testimony to how segments of society respond to specific challenges in life. These occurrences and activities ultimately become the hallmarks of how people internalise and therefore remember their circumstances and environments over time. In solving their predicaments, responding to constant challenges and even celebrating their triumphs within these circumstances, people discover and appreciate their own resilience and even develop a

modicum of joyfulness. In Plate 3, the artist depicts a rider undertaking his daily chore of transporting his merchandise. The sense of nostalgia that motivates such paintings is hence derived from observing society and its resilience, and the fondness for the memories that denote such resilience. When such incidents of resilience are ultimately recalled or narrated, the artist celebrates them with a vivid visual depiction of their energy and humanity.

Plate 4: ‘Tuk-Tuk’ Zephania Lukamba, Oils on Canvas, 2024



(Source: Department of Fine Art)

The ‘Tuk-Tuk’ is in itself just a means of public transport, but it draws its reputation perhaps from its scrubby physical appearance, crumpled interior space, noisy diesel engine and notoriously slow speed. Despite this, it can be viewed, in essence, as part of the urban pop culture because of its bizarre popularity. Subsequently, it tends to inspire a strange feeling of subdued fondness as well as

eliciting a significant element of nostalgia from those who have previously experienced its ride, as well as those who became tolerant of its irritating omnipresence. The artist writes, “The *Tuk-Tuk* reminds me of the hustle and bustle of the city and its suburbs and its unique ability and usefulness in navigating the narrow street alleys and other spaces.”

Plate 5: Jeff Muriithi Maina, Acrylics on Canvas, 2024



(Source: Department of Fine Art)

Artists often paint sceneries, locations and even particular venues that bear some memories or carry specific meanings. Painting provides the opportunity to recreate these locations even though they may no longer exist or the artist may no longer be able to revisit them. These painted recreations, therefore, become akin to a visual pilgrimage full of nostalgic feelings of what may have transpired there, bound in images that become etched in the mind. Plate 5 depicts a desolate place that is visually described in good detail, including the presence of

an electric pole, suggesting that it was an active or inhabited location. The artist, however, instead prefers to capture this strange but lighted emptiness. There are no human forms included, and hence no obvious human activity, and viewers may wonder what the creative purpose of the painting was. Only the artist, perhaps, harboured the motivation of painting this particular location. This paper contends that it is not unusual for artists to paint such paintings as recreations of physical locations that carry certain nostalgic significance.

Plate 6: Jeff Muriithi Maina, Acrylics on Canvas, 2024



(Source: Department of Fine Art)

As observed in Plate 5, artists often recreate in their paintings locations or venues that bear some relevant meaning to them. Artists, like all other people, tend to reminisce about joyful moments and specifically where those moments occurred. The

sentimentality of the location of occurrence is adequate motivation for artists to recreate that location, at times with intricate details, through the use of visual construction of images that flow in their minds. This enables them to create a painted

composition that the viewers are able to connect with. In Plate 6, the artist recreates a painting of a location featuring an individual seated in the foreground as if in deep reflection. This is suggestive of an element of nostalgic motivation since nobody reflects upon or recalls a place that bears no significance. The painting is done with

adequate details that enable the viewer to peer into the visual description of the location. It is noted in this paper that viewers may not necessarily comprehend the sentimentality of the location since they are not privy to what transpired there, but they can relate to the beauty of the painting itself or rely on the explanation of the artist.

Plate 7: ‘Traditional musical instruments’ Oils on Canvas, 2024



(Source: Department of Fine Art)

Music by its own nature is often nostalgic; traditional music as a genre is perhaps more fondly identifiable and describable because of the uniqueness of its composition, instruments, vocals and even attire. Communities all over the world have different ways of presenting their traditional music, making it not only memorable but fondly emotional. In plate 7, the artist presents a visual

composition of traditional instruments that depict and suggest the role they play in a traditional ensemble. The nostalgia in the painting is contained in the memorable way in which the instruments were played, the sound they produced and the circumstantial memories they elicited. The artist executes the painting articulately, studying each instrument, showing its size and physical

appearance. These realist details are part of what inspires the sense of nostalgia. The artist also uses well-thought-out colour contrasts and shadows in

the background to enhance the instruments in the painting.

Plate 8: Zephania Lukamba, 'Jogoo V' Oils on Canvas, 2024



(Source: Department of Fine Art)

There may not be much to be said about the mundane face of a cockerel, but to some people it may underscore some nostalgic connotations. Such depictions of objects and even animals are often reminiscent of life within a defined period of time, particularly in reference to village life. The presence of a cockerel and its posturing of dominance in the environment of a rural homestead may very well be associated with the calm sleepiness and simplicity

of village life that people recall and long for as a complete contrast to the stressful life of the city. The artist writes, "The cockerel reminded me of my rural upbringing and the joyfulness of almost stress-free life; the face of the cockerel itself is symbolic of its own complete freedom and dominance within the confines of its existence. The indomitable cockerel is, by extension, symbolic of my own freedom in the setting of my environment and personal space."

Plate 9: Zephania Lukamba, 'Eastleigh Mwisho' Oils on Canvas, 2024

(Source: Department of Fine Art)

The 'Matatu' (see also Plate 23) is a celebrated means of transport in Kenya. Subsequently, over decades of evolution into modern vehicles with unique decorations, they have established their own sub-culture generally referred to as the 'matatu culture'. The experiential description of this culture is varied and spurs controversy in equal measure. It is, however, unequivocally memorable. In Plate 9, the artist depicts one of the older versions of the

mini-bus vehicles as a nostalgic tribute to their longevity of service as well as their inherent physical characteristics. The painting is an accurate depiction of the vehicle in terms of appearance, structural form and colour, although the newer versions are even more colourful and decorated with captivating graffiti, the kind of which is unique to Kenya.

Plate 10: ‘Empowered’ Dennis Kamau. Acrylics on Canvas - 2023



(Source: *Department of Fine Art*)

Beauty and love, depending on their description, both have deep nostalgic connotations. This is because of their unique ability to elicit deep feelings wrapped up in memories of an intriguing concoction of joy and pain. In Plate 10, the artist uses vivid realism to portray the image of an African girl with indubitable beauty. It is through this skill that he visually depicts the beauty of his ‘friend’ as unforgettable and captivating. The painting is executed with enchanting detail, including its

setting in water that makes the female form bear an alluring character. The nostalgic feeling is made potent by the suggested character of the girl; charming and engaging. The painting is, therefore, an intriguing combination of the nostalgic joy of knowing a beautiful girl and yet the pain of losing her. This paper contends that images in the mind can remain extremely vividly etched depending on the degree of emotional attachment and subsequent memory and recollection of certain intimate details.

Plate 11: Tamanda Nhlane, ‘The grace of femininity’ Oils on Canvas, 2024



(Source: Department of Fine Art)

The nostalgia of times gone by and the almost tragic irretrievability of beauty are a potent fodder for the composition of paintings and the development of subject matter. The exploration of the feminine figure as an anchorage of the concept of beauty within the realm of Art, particularly in painting, has been there for centuries. It is inevitable that beauty as described through the female form undergoes a transformation from captivating youthfulness to old age; from the incontrovertible fullness of form, like a fully blossomed flower, to the withered outcome

of the ravages of time. Nostalgia of beauty is, therefore, a description of the epitome of beauty during the period of time when it was at its pinnacle. Plate 11 depicts a female nude form in a gestural pose that is symbolic of the tantalising allure of youthful beauty. In retrospect, it is a dreamlike recollection and longing of a bygone era. In this regard, Bishop (2024) observes that Nostalgia can be described as a bittersweet state of mind because remembering the ‘good old days’ also reinforces the fact that they are gone.”

Plate 12: Tamanda Nhlane, ‘The turmoil of beauty’ Oils on Canvas, 2024



(Source: Department of Fine Art)

In Plate 12, the artist continues with her visual narrative of the paradox of irretrievable beauty. Through the use of a reclining gestural pose, the artist depicts a woman who is fully aware of her physical beauty and is depicted as cherishing the physical attractiveness of her body. Since this is a painting, the nostalgic connotations are embedded in the recollection of memorable times, which appear in the form of dreamlike images which the artist exploits in her composition. Such flashing self-images enable the artist, through the painting,

to allow the audience to peer into the glorious past and to reflect upon the inevitability of the impending physical decline of beauty within the natural sequence of time. The two paintings underscore the assertion that the nostalgia of lost beauty still remains an interesting discourse that artists are able to visually render, and although the beauty cannot be retrieved, the paintings serve to rekindle moments of grandeur that have irrevocably transitioned into the realm of fantasy.

Plate 13: Alex K. Kariuki 'Mother and Child' Acrylics on Canvas,



(Source: Department of Fine Art)

Paintings can tell a nostalgic story. Beyond the regular mother and child narrative, an artist can depict emotion and be able to visually suggest a certain bond through the expressions in the human faces in their compositions. Nostalgic inspirations play a significant role in the generation of subject matter and overall pictorial composition. In Plate 13, the artist depicts a vivid expression of the obvious bond between the boy and his mother, where the unique support and love of the mother is visually irrefutable. This is further suggestive of

circumstances that were memorable and culminated in emotions and feelings that are evocable and therefore emanative of images in the conscious mind that developed into a painting. In extracting this sense of nostalgia, the artist focuses on the faces in a style and execution of details, use of colour, tones and gestural pose that appeal to the audience and resonate with those from whom such similar feelings of nostalgia are elicited.

Plate 14: Aggrey Agwata, Oils on Canvas,

(Source: *Department of Fine Art*)

Nostalgia is at times contained in and ultimately derived from the underlying meaning of a 'moment'. It is possible for people to recall certain moments within the unique contexts of the times in which they occurred. Plate 14 is a painting of two individuals who seem engaged in their own quiet personal intrigues; a viewer can tell that there appears not to be any conversation going on by the expression on their faces. The artist pays great attention to facial expressions and residual details such as the bottles of wine and the half-filled glass, as well as the plaiting of hair by the woman and the

grasping of the hood by the man. The artist contends that the nostalgia is derived from what ultimately transpired, what was said, disclosed and determined in this intriguing moment of encounter. That encounter was indeed a nostalgic moment. The painting is an interesting testimony of the power of facial expressions and other accompanying visual cues in expressing a phenomenon. It was as if the two individuals posed for a moment for a certain distraction to pass before resuming their bizarre interaction.

Plate 15: Tobiko Rupante Oils on Canvas, 2024



(Source: Department of Fine Art)

Ageing certainly bears its defined sense of nostalgia; not necessarily through the process of ageing itself, but through the memories it carries, inspires and elicits along the way. In Plate 15, the artist depicts the face of an old woman who is exalted for her righteous qualities as a human being. The nostalgia is derived from her memorable life and the value of her matriarchal prowess. In such paintings of remembrance of a person and his/her deeds, it is of vital importance that the artist captures

the portrait as accurately as possible, since that forms part of the concept of commemoration. The concept of 'likeness' is extremely critical in portraiture. Nostalgia itself becomes the perfect vehicle through which an individual is idolised and commemorated. The depiction of accurate physical likeness, personal paraphernalia, facial expression, attire and other personal details contributes to this quest for this nostalgic commemoration.

Plate 16: Kamau Dennis ‘Golden Ages’ Oils on Canvas, 2022



(Source: Department of Fine Art)

There are types of paintings which portray the sense of nostalgia in an overt and admirable way; they tell a beautiful story of youthful friendship. Even when people have outgrown their youthful days, the hallmarks of those days are already deeply ingrained in their psyche and memories. In Plate 16, the artist portrays two young school girls standing next to each other with a suggested feeling of youthful inquisitiveness. The painting is well executed with colour, tones and folds on the dresses as well as expressions on their faces. Expressions

can carry certain meanings, like the suggestion of youthful thoughtfulness as contained in the gestural pose of each of the girls. Images flowing in the mind are at times quite vivid, allowing the artist to recall occurrences with adequate details that resonate with the viewers. For example, the presence of plastic containers and basins may not immediately strike a chord until the audience themselves recall the intricacies of school life and what it meant to have a close confidant, as portrayed by the camaraderie of the two girls.

Plate 17: Karen Atieno Oils on Canvas, 2024

(Source: Department of Fine Art)

In Plate 17, the artist depicts an informal street in the outskirts of town where people are engaged in a myriad of daily survival activities. In particular, the painting features the ‘Tuk Tuk’, a small but iconic three-wheeled means of transport that is the only one able to penetrate these streets (see Plate 4). The artist executes the well-composed painting with details and colour that demonstrate a unique captivation with the goings-on in the street, which denotes nostalgic underpinnings. The artist observes, “The *TukTuks*, a cornerstone of Kenyan urban transport, weave through the scene, symbolising the rhythm and connectivity of the community. Stalls filled with wares, locals interacting, and the dynamic energy of commerce reflect the resilience, vibrancy, and spirit of Kenyan

life. The bright, textured brush strokes mirror the pulse of a society always in motion, embracing both tradition and modernity.” Nostalgia can be a strong motivation for painting a pictorial composition, often based on recollections of minute details of particular locations and happenings, which make a particular disposition holistically memorable. These kinds of paintings are based on fond recollections that are often experiential, where one actively embeds, participates and engages with people in a defined environment and circumstances. When they vacate the environment, they are left with residual feelings of nostalgia. In this regard, artists in particular attempt to fill this void by painting compositions that are a re-creation of their experiences and observations.

Plate 18: Wabwire Masai Oils on Canvas, 2024



(Source: Department of Fine Art)

Paintings can bear an element of nostalgia that is based on the nature of a specific activity that spurs unique memories. Among the fishing communities, the activity of fishing in all its description bears a specific impact, meaning and fondness for the people. In plate 18, the artist depicts a scene at the lake shore showing the selling and collection of fish. Since this activity is so intertwined with people's lives and livelihoods, the images of the same are

forever etched in their minds and later recalled as glimpses of infinite fondness for the unyielding resilience of people, each in their prescribed role. The artist contributes to this sense of nostalgia by rendering the painting in accurate detail, depicting the people in their element and the legendary boat as their main tool of trade. He keenly studies the waves in the water, folds, attire, gestural poses, as well as the local colours.

Plate 19: Karen Atieno, Oils on Canvas, 2024

(Source: Department of Fine Art)

Nostalgia can emanate from the profoundness of objects and their recurrent usefulness and impact on one's individual life or collective experience in a given dispensation. A person's ability to internalise the cumulative impact of an object and to create an emotional or fond association with the object leads to a significantly memorable attachment. In both Plate 17 and 19, the artist features the *Tuk Tuk* as an integral part of the composition, suggesting that it is an iconic object. The same object is described by a

different artist in Plate 4, indicating its strange omnipresence as a public transport commodity. The prolonged interaction and association with the *Tuk Tuk*, hence, makes it a worthy nostalgic tool. In this case, the artist may harbour nostalgic feelings derived from specific personal experiences of interacting with the *Tuk Tuk* or the cumulative observation of its essence in a given environment within which the artist is embedded.

Plate 20: Wabwire Masai Oils on Canvas, 2024

(Source: Department of Fine Art)

Nostalgic feelings may often constitute the motivational basis for subject matter in paintings to a more significant extent than previously thought. In Plate 20, the artist portrays a scene of the interactive activities of fishing and the collection of fish at the lake shore. But it is his attention to meticulous detail, colours, light and shadows, textural effects and holistic composition that underscores his nostalgic attachment to this particular activity. The visual description of aspects of the scene and their presentation in meticulous detail demonstrates the

usefulness of skill in underscoring the essence of nostalgia. This level of recollection of activities cannot merely be some narrative; it is experiential in nature. It can be asserted that without this strong nostalgic feeling, the artist would not have the same level of motivation to undertake the painting. It can also be asserted in equal measure that the execution of realism as a style and the level of rendered details are also important in eliciting the same nostalgic effect among the viewers.

Plate 21: Whitney Patience - Oils on Canvas, 2024

(Source: Department of Fine Art)

Nostalgic undertones can be the motivating factors in certain paintings. The paintings then serve as important memory conduits for audiences who, by association, resonate with their content. Plate 21 depicts a set of objects fondly associated with certain sequential periods of time. The small tin lamps were operated using an open flame fueled by kerosene. They produced much-needed light but emitted irritating smoke. The blue kerosene lamp that used a wick placed in a glass compartment was a popular source of light at night in the villages at a

time when there was no electricity. The spirit lamp produced bright white light and preceded the onset of electricity. The depiction of objects can be used to elicit nostalgic feelings because they are embedded within memories that are reminiscent of certain periods of time or are associated with specific activities that have been relegated to the periphery of history. The artist depicts the objects with adequate accuracy in order to demonstrate their nostalgic value.

Plate 22: Edgar Keng'ara, Oils on Canvas, 2024

(Source: Department of Fine Art)

Images that manifest in the mind can be fitting testimonies to the ability of the mind to bear specific recollections within certain environments that spur those recollections. Artists are then able to render these images into a visual composition that audiences can view and decipher. Plate 22 depicts two young girls exchanging a lantern in what appears to be dusk. The activity, location and time suggested by the illumination in the painting show that it is spurred by a specific recollection of a past occurrence within the realm of childhood memories that bears some isolated meaning. It is unlikely, then, that such an unusual image will manifest in the mind without some underlying motivation. The artist executes the painting with convincing accuracy of form, showing the two girls in a gestural

pose that underscores the intended action. He uses good textural effects to show the illuminated grass in the foreground as well as the dominating object of a tree. The illuminating effect created by the lantern and the sunset contributes to the mystery of the moment. He observes, “The lantern, both a source of light and a symbol of the past, illuminates their faces with a soft glow suggesting the warmth of memories that linger long after the moment has passed.” In underpinning the contextual value of the painting, the artist further observes, “This painting invites viewers to reflect on the bittersweet nature of nostalgia; the longing for a time when life was simpler, yet the understanding that these moments, though gone, continue to shine brightly in our hearts like the last rays of a sunset.”

Plate 23: Zephania Lukamba, 'Ndio huyu mimi' Oils on Canvas, 2024

(Source: Department of Fine Art)

Artists often use specific objects in their compositions that are a visual testimony of regular occurrences or features that are unique and memorable, and may very well constitute a description of a potent sub-culture. Plate 23 depicts a 'Matatu', a popular means of public transport in Kenya, which in this painting is depicted as a regular van. The painting is done with accurate details and captures the *matatu* in its unorthodox element. These licensed vans have a mixed reputation of notoriety, yet remain useful for their efficient practicality in transporting commuters to

their myriad destinations. Since they are so intertwined with the livelihoods and daily lives of people, it is imperative that they become a nostalgic feature despite their operational faults. In this case, a person develops a sense of nostalgia through the intricate experiences gained from interacting with the *matatu culture*, such that one ultimately internalises its holistic value, which is quantifiable and appreciable. In retrospect, when circumstances occur where the vehicles are absent in a person's social environment for a significant period of time, then the feeling of nostalgia manifests itself.

Plate 24: Ng'ang'a Muiruri, 'Swinger Iron box' Oils on Canvas, 2024

(Source: *Department of Fine Art*)

As observed, nostalgia can be associated with particular objects that elicit specific memories that can turn out to be vivid and descriptive of a certain era. That memory lane can lead to a recollection of a specific set of images, which can in turn be presented visually as a pictorial composition. Since these objects are time-specific, they bear certain nostalgic significance to the artist and to the viewer to whom they may bear similar significance by association or related experience. In Plate 23, the artist depicts a celebrated old vintage metal torch

which was known for its handy practicality and was used in villages all over the Country. He also depicts its equally memorable accessories; the battery and the bulb. The artist writes: “The torch was an asset in every home in the village. Only the men would be allowed to handle it since it was used in the dark of night. There was also the culture of letting the batteries bask in the sun in order to rejuvenate them! The first time I used it, though, I walked around pointing it at the faces of the people I encountered to their chagrin.”

Plate 25: Karen Atieno, Oils on Canvas, 2024



(Source: Department of Fine Art)

In capturing the essence of nostalgia, the artist writes, “This painting captures a nostalgic African homestead scene, evoking warmth, a sense of community, and tradition. The abundance of food, including fish, reflects a time of celebration and togetherness, reminiscent of cherished family

gatherings in African culture. The huts and open-air setting highlight a simpler, rural way of life, stirring memories of family bonds, cultural pride, and the joy of collective living. This painting becomes a heartfelt tribute to the beauty of tradition and the timeless spirit of home.”

Plate 26: Ng'ang'a Muiruri, 'Swinger Iron box' Oils on Canvas, 2024



(Source: Department of Fine Art)

As already observed, specific objects can spur both commemorative and nostalgic feelings and are, therefore, often a part of considered subject matter in a painting. In Plate 26, the artist features an old charcoal iron box that had one hand to swing back and forth in order to keep the charcoal cubes aglow and sustain the level of heat needed for ironing. The artist observes, “This is the ultimate throwback box. If you saw this charcoal iron box you knew

someone’s hand had swung it hot. It took strength and stamina to get it to the right temperature. Even then it took an expert to keep the charcoal burning at the right temperature to ensure even ironing and didn’t spark some stray ambers that would cause some burn holes on the garment. The bottom line contained small holes that served as air outlets that funned the charcoal as the iron box moved back and forth.”

Plate 27: Ng'ang'a Muiruri, 'Dad's shaver' Oils on Canvas, 2024



(Source: Department of Fine Art)

The original stainless steel manual shaver was a coveted piece of equipment for those who owned one during that defined period in time. Objects, depending on their symbolism at the time of use, can be useful sources of nostalgia since they can be equated with certain occurrences, attitudes, descriptions and symbolisms. For example, a stainless steel shaver may have been seen as

symbolic of sophistication or modernity within the context of a simple village life, just like owning a gramophone or transistor radio immediately elevated one to a certain level of adulation. The artist uses colours in the background and highlights the shaver itself and the stainless razor blade that was used along with it.

Plate 28: Karen Atieno Oils on Canvas, 2024

(Source: Department of Fine Art)

Some nostalgic paintings are based on recollections of certain memorable events or scenes, images of which are transferable to the canvas as a pictorial composition. In Plate 28, the artist depicts a busy street in a market area. It features the celebrated hand cart, which is an object of nostalgia. The painting also shows glimpses of the activities that take place, as well as the regular movement of people. It is executed with adequate detail and colour, which helps to enhance the underlying nostalgic imagery. The artist writes, “A handcart

loaded with goods dominates the foreground, symbolising the industrious spirit of traders and labourers. The sky, vast and filled with dynamic clouds, mirrors the boundless energy of the scene below. Stalls brimming with colour and activity appear on either side of the unpaved road, where people move with determined intent and the community thrives. The artwork captures the essence of resilience, connection, and the everyday hustle that defines Kenyan market life.”

Plate 29: Zephania Lukamba, ‘Makhese tulipita’ Oils on Canvas, 2024

(Source: Department of Fine Art)

Some paintings may depict subject matter that is perplexing or intriguing to the viewer, which may ostensibly not fit well within the wider context of nostalgic thinking. Nostalgia is ideally anchored within the context of what is perceived as acceptable and just in society, which, by extension, celebrates the best behavioural traits in people. The concept of nostalgia is based on *memorable* events, occurrences and times that are impactful, meaningful and joyful and hence bear a modicum of desirable positivity. In Plate 29, the artist depicts an old dilapidated vehicle carrying passengers and overloaded with goods. By description, the experience of this scene cannot be said to be ‘memorable’. However, in retrospect, in other schools of thought, nostalgia can be elicited by way of reverse psychology; people can fondly remember how they successfully navigated situations that

were not necessarily pleasant at the time of occurrence but culminated in positive outcomes. This is akin to how people have the tendency to remember certain struggles that ultimately culminate in some measure of success.

OBSERVATIONS AND OVERVIEW

It was observed in this study that in describing their work, which they were required to do, students readily identified the nostalgic elements in their work and related them to the overall meaning of the paintings as they perceived them. It was also observed that students tended to readily develop subject matter in their compositions, which would not ordinarily be the case with other expressive endeavours. This was attributed to the likelihood that they already had the kind of images that gave rise to their compositions already etched in their

minds about a given nostalgic phenomenon. For example, in Plate 26, the composition of a family gathering in a festive moment of celebration and the commensurate activities that takes place in an African homestead is a scene that carries nostalgic connotations. Going by the compositional setting and sense of detail, it is likely that those images had remained engraved in the mind of the artist for a period of time. It was observed that the nature and description of the paintings gravitated around reflective nostalgia rather than restorative nostalgia. The paintings demonstrated that students preferred joyous and happy memories rather than melancholic or sad undercurrents.

Use of ‘Realism in Nostalgia’

In this study, the concept of ‘realism in nostalgia’ is developed from the observation that there is an almost symbiotic relationship between the use of realism on one hand and the expression of nostalgic feelings on the other. Since the use of realism is constantly present in the expression of nostalgia in the featured paintings, then, it can be argued that it is a pertinent vehicle through which the propagation and elicitation of nostalgic feelings is manifested, such that nostalgia itself is significantly embedded in realism. In a holistic overview of the use of realism in Art, Haider (2023) observes that, “Realism places a premium on objectivity and accuracy in portraying the external world. It aims to represent reality faithfully without distorting or romanticising it. Realist artists and writers pay attention to detail, everyday life, and ordinary people, reflecting the complexities and nuances of the human experience.” It is notable that all paintings in this study were executed using realism. This is an indicator that the individual artists found it visually necessary to render their paintings in this style. From this perspective, it can be argued that realism bears a visual correlation with the kind of images that flow in an artist’s mind, particularly those that are emanative from or underscore fond memories or recollections. It can further be argued that images of this nature manifest themselves in the

mind as real and not abstract or surrealist occurrences.

Use of Details in Realism

It can be observed that the paintings in this study were executed with varying levels of detail, which helped to underscore the subject matter and which, in turn, helped to elicit aspects of nostalgia as contained in the content of the particular painting. In this regard, Kheder (2024) observes that, “The roles of detail and precision in oil painting are multifaceted and profound. They contribute to the realism, emotional depth, and viewer engagement of a painting, while also posing challenges that require technical mastery and artistic sensitivity. By understanding and harnessing these elements, artists can create works that resonate deeply with audiences, bridging the gap between representation and expression.” In some paintings, nostalgia is elicited among the audience by the use of recognisable objects around which certain fond memories are specifically embedded. These paintings of objects were not executed in intricate details since the recognisable object itself was adequate to elicit nostalgic feelings. In plates 24, 26 and 27, for instance, the types of objects featured are enough to elicit nostalgia among the audience who are familiar with the generation within which the objects were used and celebrated. In other paintings, nostalgia is elicited by the use of pictorial compositions that are executed with minute details. While this can be said to be just a stylistic preference by the artist, it can also be argued that certain levels of detail and accuracy (Plates 18, 20) help to focus the viewers’ attention to pertinent aspects of the composition, which then elicit a nostalgic reaction. In this regard, the artist endeavours to capture the ‘action’ or ‘scene’ as it would have unfolded at that point in time, thereby creating a recollection of the particular circumstances that underscore nostalgia.

How Students Showed the Relationship between Nostalgia and Realism in Their Paintings

It can be observed that although students had the freedom to express their nostalgic feelings in whatever sub-genre of painting that appealed to them, all of them tended to gravitate around the use of realism to execute their paintings. This can be attributed to the possibility that related images in their minds manifested themselves in the realism of their occurrence. In extracting the feeling of nostalgia from the work of students and their reactions to their own paintings, it can be deduced that both the artist and the audience tend to deconstruct the content and context of the paintings from a realist perspective and it can also be concluded that there is a relationship between nostalgia and realism as an avenue for nostalgic interpretation. This study categorised the work according to the analytical framework, which formed the basis of the discussion. Subsequently, for the purpose of clarity, the study presented these categories as outlined below in order to demonstrate the specificity of intent in each painting and perhaps what motivated each student artist to undertake and describe his or her painting with the passion that they did. The study, however, reiterates that all these categories are intertwined and are appreciated holistically.

Descriptive Nostalgia

Students tended to describe their work in a passionate and spontaneous way, describing the composition and derivation of subject matter as well as the nostalgic connotations. In this regard, this study contends that these *verbal* descriptions are connected to the kind of images that flow in the mind and which are describable in the sense that they manifest in dreamlike dispensations. With this in mind, the students were able to make their compositions purposeful and relatable to the audience. It can further be said that paintings can be *visually* descriptive on their own; that a story can be told within this visual description. For example, in Plate 25, the nostalgic connotation of the 'joy of

family gathering' just like it used to happen, can be emanated just by viewing the activities featured in the painting since the painting is done in adequate realistic detail and carries no distortion or romanticising. When the artists tended to describe their work, the sense of nostalgia became more apparent to the viewer, making the painting more potent. Chhapekar (2024) observes that, "Whether it be any form of art, an artist's depiction and the viewer's perspective are what matter most. Even some of the realistic paintings are wrongly understood, but when you learn about them in depth, it decodes the real deal."

Experiential Nostalgia or Participative Nostalgia

Experiential nostalgia is one where the feeling of nostalgia is extracted from actual experiences that are often joyous, positive, impactful and therefore memorable. It is these images of experiential participation in an event that remain etched in one's mind. Some paintings depicted events that clearly indicated experiential participation of the artist and were described accordingly. In plate 26, the student artist reminisces about memorable family gatherings that were joyful and bonded the family in what she describes as 'the joy of collective living'. The painting is composed and executed with adequate detail, as it would have most likely occurred at the time. This demonstrates that the generation of subject matter and composition of a painting can be directly linked to nostalgic memories and recall of detail. Chan (2022) observes that, "Every scene, narration, and action from earlier times retains residual content that helps evolve our sense of identity and familiarity in the present. This idea explains that current familiarity with something could evoke recollection and memory as we immediately recognise that our past experiences belong to us."

Contextual Nostalgia

In delving into the paintings, this study observed that students subsequently described their work in the context of their occurrence. This implies that

nostalgia is essentially contextual and that when this context is well understood, the occurrence of euphoric nostalgia, as may be described by the artist is better appreciated. The extraction of content in nostalgia is no different from contextual application in regular painted work. In this broad perspective, Down (2025) notes that, “Connecting with art through its context can transform how we perceive and appreciate it. By uncovering the historical, cultural, and societal influences behind a piece, you can gain a deeper understanding of the artist’s intent and the work’s significance.” In plate 17, the depiction of an elderly woman is not the fundamental source of nostalgic feeling, it is the context of its motivation; that the elderly woman was of great significance to the life of the artist and was a great matriarch. In plate 18, the painting of two young school girls is important as a regular visual presentation of subject matter but the essential motivation of the painting is that it is reminiscent of a particular occurrence in time; the nostalgic years of growing up in school in a defined context of ‘*the innocence of youth*’, its vibrancy and boundless possibilities. In Plate 22, the nature and setting of the painting suggests a defined contextual connotation. The recreation of this image as a painting is a pointer to a clear nostalgic disposition; a recollection of a specific period of time with an almost mystical meaning.

Associated Nostalgia

In observing the paintings, the study contends that in viewing particular paintings and internalising the subject matter, audiences can elicit certain nostalgic feelings that are resultant from a significant measure of association with the particular subject matter featured in the paintings. Associated nostalgia hence deviates from experiential nostalgia since the particular occurrences were not necessarily experienced by the viewer, *but* the viewer can relate to the subject matter and content of the painting. By extension, the painting triggers aspects of similar or related recollections which are relatable to similar experiences. Beach (2024) notes that, “To some

degree, we all have similar exposure to images that evoke nostalgic feelings. These images tap into similar experiences and memories, like an unspoken language that can bridge individual experiences from the broader cultural context.” The term recollection is singularly important to nostalgic undercurrents because the element of *recall* is the basis for any associated or experiential memory. Recall, in this context, refers to the ability to bring something back from the past, to the realm of consciousness that resonates with the present. Associated nostalgia can only occur where there exists a factor in the composition that bears significant similarity, which triggers related recollection in the viewer. Luka (2024) writes, “The emotional resonance of nostalgic art can foster a sense of community and shared experience. When viewers engage with artworks that reflect their own memories or cultural background, it can lead to a deeper appreciation and connection with the piece. This emotional connection is essential for understanding why artists often choose to revive the past.”

Expressive Nostalgia

Although most art is based on the concept of personal expression as a principle intent, the idea of nostalgia forming the basis of this expression is particularly fathomable because of its motivational value. When artists use nostalgia as an integral avenue for recollection and synchronisation of their memories in the composition of their work, then it can be argued that a significant measure of expression is achieved through that work. In Plate 13, the nostalgic recollection of the artist’s childhood and particularly the close relationship with the mother is presented as being extremely vivid. The execution and visual appeal of the painting itself is not only expressive of the broader context of the uniqueness of a mother’s love for a child that resonates with the audience, but suggests a more intricate bond that is memorable and enduring. Ultimately, in describing the essence of nostalgia, Weber (2024) observes that “Nostalgia

isn't just about missing the past - it's about the meaning we attach to those memories. It reminds us of who we were, where we came from, and the people we shared these memories with."

Narrated Nostalgia

This study posits that an artist can develop a painting from a narration that spurs nostalgic feelings even though the artist himself or herself was not a participant in a given occurrence and therefore bears no direct experience. This is closely related to how viewers themselves are able to associate with nostalgic feelings expressed in a given painting by the artist. For example, a detailed nostalgic narration of a memorable event or occurrence can lead to associative thinking where the artist can link their own experiences with the narration since there exists significant similarity. A narrated story of a nostalgic friendship that led to a positive outcome can spur the same sense of nostalgia in a different person who also has fond recollections of a similar friendship that culminated in a related outcome. In addition, in storytelling and other narratives, artists are able to create paintings based on certain narrated imageries that strike the imagination of audiences even in mythical dispensations. Images in the mind, then manifest, that enable the artist to create a painting that elicits the same kind of nostalgic feelings in the audience. The subject matter in Plate 13, for instance, is often presented as a narrated story of mother and child, but is also easily visually constructible depending on the level of description. Paintings can, therefore, tell a narrated story that encompasses pertinent tenets of nostalgia.

Level of Knowledge of Elements and Principles

In this study, there was a skilful demonstration of the use of elements and how they are applied in painting. The use of line, shapes, colour, textural effects and light and shade was used effectively in helping the artist to demonstrate how nostalgia can be elicited through realism. As observed before, it is through the use of realism that nostalgic feelings

were determined to be significantly elicited. For example, in Plate 20, the vivid use of light and dark areas, illumination, shadows, textural effects, colour, folds on clothes, intricate clarity of the scene and other relevant details helped the artist to show the essence of the scene and hence the obvious sense of nostalgia. The students also demonstrated adequate knowledge of the use of principles in the organisation of their work. In this regard, the composition of each painting fitted well within the picture plane; there was balance in the application of principles, rhythmical effects and the holistic presentation of form. This study found that the accurate presentation of subject matter had a direct positive effect on the effectiveness of the painting in portraying a sense of nostalgia.

How Nostalgia is Elicited in a Painting Composition

Nostalgia, by its own nature and description, embodies the constant celebration of positivity; a person recalls or fondly remembers only what was positively impactful and memorable at a given point in time. If a person's memory is cluttered with feelings of melancholy, despondency and even fatalism, it is unlikely that that individual would be capable of eliciting even a modicum of nostalgic feelings. Nostalgia can be evoked by the use of visual cues that are embedded in certain imagery. Nostalgic feelings can be triggered by the depiction of iconic objects that are associated with or are symbolic of a given period of time. For example, Plates 21, 24 and 26 feature objects that evoke nostalgic feelings because they are associated with a certain period of time and were singularly memorable because of the nature of their usage. Some artists derive their nostalgic motivations from narratives and storytelling since these are strong avenues for conveying emotions and experiences based on actual occurrences. When these emotions and experiences are adequately recreated in a painting, they can evoke nostalgia that significantly resonates with the viewers. Luka (2024) contends that "The emotional resonance of nostalgic art can

foster a sense of community and shared experience. When viewers engage with artworks that reflect their own memories or cultural background, it can lead to a deeper appreciation and connection with the piece. This emotional connection is essential for understanding why artists often choose to revive the past.” This ‘emotional resonance’ is a key factor in how artists compose paintings and create other art with the quest to evoke or elicit nostalgic feelings. This is also based on the notion that experiences, though often individual and deeply personal, also bear a certain element of universality through shared experiences.

CONCLUSION

This study posits that nostalgia still plays an important role in the generation of expression in many artistic genres, particularly in painting, because of its significant inspirational value. The term ‘inspirational’ is critical because it intertwines with or is embedded within the intrinsic desire of artists to respond to given phenomena from an artistic or expressive perspective. It can also be concluded from this study that in this intrinsic disposition in artists, nostalgia plays a much more pertinent role than previously thought; that in the composition of paintings and development of subject matter, artists rely significantly on inspirations and motivations that are inherently nostalgic. They then combine this imagery with their inherent skills in painting to produce a painting that resonates with the audience. In this regard, within the realm of expression, students tended to express what was engraved in their minds in terms of flowing images that triggered hidden curiosity, joy, sentimentalities, amusement and reflection in their attempt to comprehend the disparities between times gone by and contemporary dispensations. This study did not dwell in earnest on the implication or influence of nostalgia upon contemporary thinking, which is contained in elements of restorative nostalgia or wanting to restore what has been lost. However, from the foregoing, it can be concluded that students in their

nostalgia neither dwelt on images nor created paintings that depicted restorative nostalgia since they were not melancholic, sad, longing or sought to reconstruct lost times. They were instead expressive of the beauty and joy of indelible times gone by, irretrievable but infinitely memorable.

Recommendations

Since this paper dealt with paintings that focused on realism as a style, there are many other styles that can be explored in order to further interrogate the concept of nostalgia. In addition, there are also three-dimensional presentations, such as sculptures, that can be used as an avenue for nostalgic visual conversation. This continued investigation into the visual essence of nostalgia will remain a fundamental interest since the tenets of nostalgia, as outlined in theories as well as individual artistic motivation among artists, will remain a pertinent source of potent subject matter.

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