

Catherine Nankya,
Youth, 1965



Who is the artist?

Catherine Nankya Katonoko Gombe is an artist who was born in **Uganda**. She is a **Professor at Entebbe University**, which sits on the shores of **Lake Victoria**.

Catherine studied to become an artist at **Makerere University** which is in Uganda's capital city, Kampala.

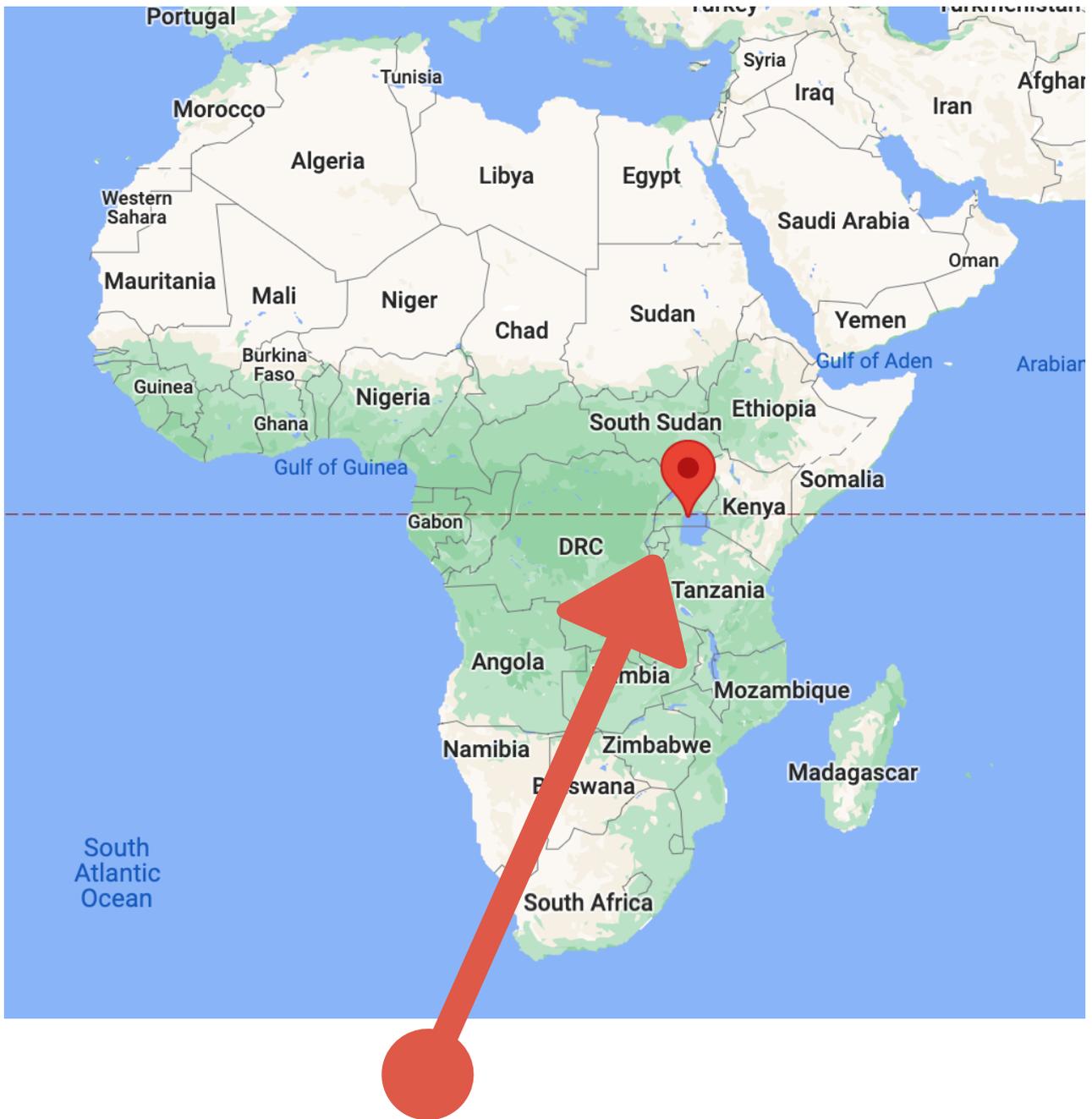
Makerere is a very important school and Catherine was one of the very first students to learn **printmaking** there.



Making prints

A print is a type of picture that you can make lots of copies of. There are different ways to make a print. The basic idea involves a base 'plate', like a piece of metal, into which you scratch a picture. Ink is then added to the plate. Finally, you place a piece of paper on top and put it under something very heavy to make a copy. You can use your plate to make lots of copies.

Catherine's print is called **Youth**, and it is all about her experience of growing up..



This is Uganda, with **Entebbe**, where Catherine lives marked. The big blue patch is **Lake Victoria**, a very large lake, which is also in **Tanzania and Kenya**.

Uganda is also on **the Equator**, that dotted line which is halfway down the globe, between the North and South poles. On the Equator the weather is usually very hot and rainy.

Close looking

Catherine's picture is full of interesting details, and by **looking closely** we can learn a lot about the things that are important to her.



Can you see a star? It marks Uganda. **What is the line that runs through it?**

The map of Africa looks a bit different. This is because it is **reversed**. Catherine made the design on a plate before she made this print. On the plate she drew Africa facing the other way. When the print was made, it produced the mirror image (see the activities at the end for ideas on to make your own reverse print!)

Catherine also includes a **special plant** in the print. **Can you spot it?**

This is a **banana leaf**. The banana is a food that is eaten everyday by almost everyone in Uganda. The banana leaf is also cooked for food. Bananas are such an important food there that its local name, *matooke*, literally means 'food'.



In Catherine's picture the leaf does not look as healthy as these leaves, does it?

Catherine shows a banana leaf that looks rather ragged. Catherine includes it because bananas are so familiar in Uganda, but seeing a leaf like this is unusual. When people in Uganda think of bananas they think of food and comfort. In Catherine's picture, the banana leaf is not comforting. It is torn. Catherine says she did this **to show how she was feeling at the time: nervous** about finishing school, **unsure** about her future.

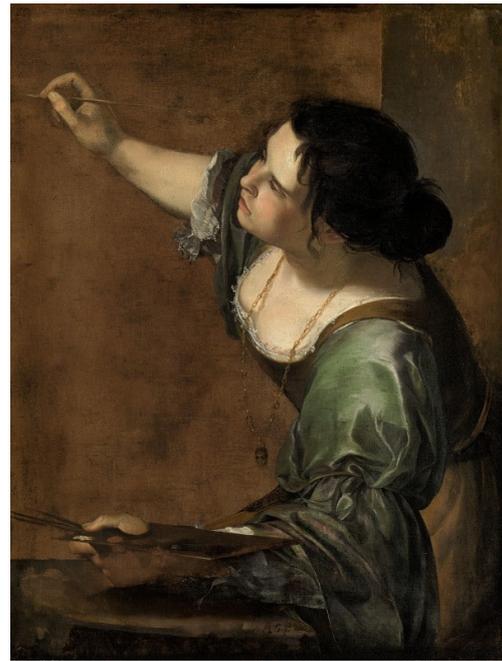
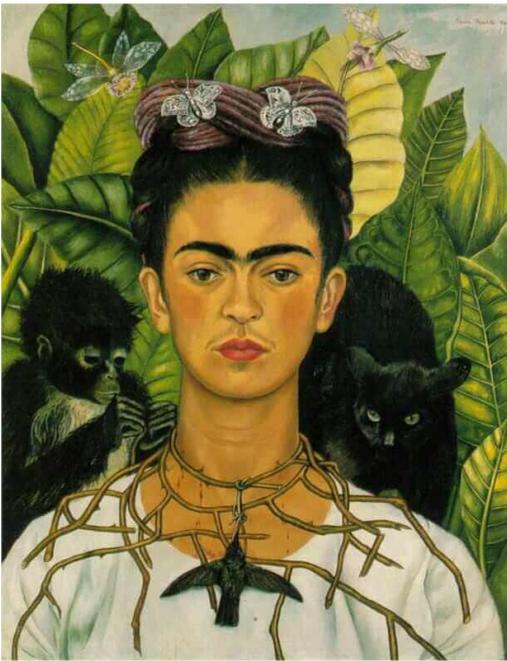
The banana leaf is a symbol: an object that stands for something else, like a feeling.

Where else in Catherine's picture is she showing her feelings of being nervous and unsure? What objects and details does she use?

A Self-Portrait

A **portrait** is a picture of a person. A **self-portrait** is a picture made by an artist, of themselves.

Self-portraits show what an artist thinks they look like, and include **details and symbols** (animals and objects) that show more about who they are and what they are interested in. Here are two examples by Frida Kahlo (*Self Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird*, 1940) and Artemisia Gentileschi (*The Allegory of Painting*, 1638). Can you spot things that might be **symbols** in these paintings?



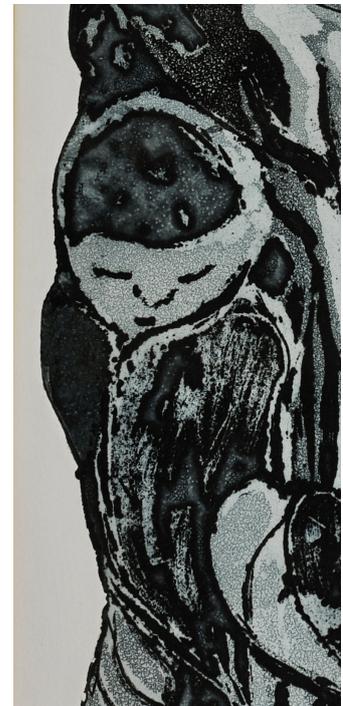
What do you think these artists want you to know about them from the way they show themselves?

Catherine's print is a kind of self-portrait. It is a collection of things that tell us about her. **Can you spot two people in her print?** Both of these are examples of how Catherine feels.



Here, Catherine shows herself, on top of the world after finishing school, but nervous about what is next.

Here, she looks sad and thoughtful. She has worked very hard to get to this point, but she does not know what is next.



Portraits don't only record what someone looks like. They can include other details and tell you many other things about a person.

Catherine uses **maps, banana leaves, plants growing like she grew,** and **different textures** to create a **self-portrait** that shows **where is she from, what she thinks is important** and **how she feels at this point in time.**

What is an Aquatint?

Catherine went to an important school called **Makerere University**.

Her mother told her to work hard and she would be successful. At Makerere she decided to learn how to make prints.

Youth was one of the last prints she made as a student. It is a type of print called **aquatint**.

Aquatint requires special skills and tools to make. Catherine needed a teacher to show her how to make a print like this.

Unlike other types of print, which look like pen drawings using lots of lines. Aquatint uses a powder called **resin** and this lets the artist create soft, grainy sections.

Can see this in different places in Catherine's picture?



What do these soft, grainy sections add to Catherine's picture? Do they make it look like a dream? Do they make it look like we are seeing inside Catherine's thoughts?

Now that you have learned all about how portraits and how they can contain so many different details, here are some ideas for things you can do:

1. Make a **reverse** print. Remember how Catherine's map of Africa looks backwards because it is a mirror image? You can create this effect by folding a paper in half, painting a design on one side (a picture of a tree, a house or an animal perhaps) and then pressing the paper together. If the paint is still wet, it will print a mirror image version of your design on the opposite page.
2. Make **a picture of how you feel right now**. Catherine's print is called **Youth**. It was made 55 years ago, and it captures the way she was feeling at that point in time. Think about how you feel: are you happy, nervous, excited? How could you make a picture that showed those feelings? What objects would you include so that in the future you could look back and remember how you felt?
3. Explore **portraits!** Can you make a portrait of your friend? What would you choose to show about them? For example, do they have a lovely smile or amazing hair? What about what they are like? Do they make you laugh or make you feel better when you are sad? How could you show these things in a picture about them?