



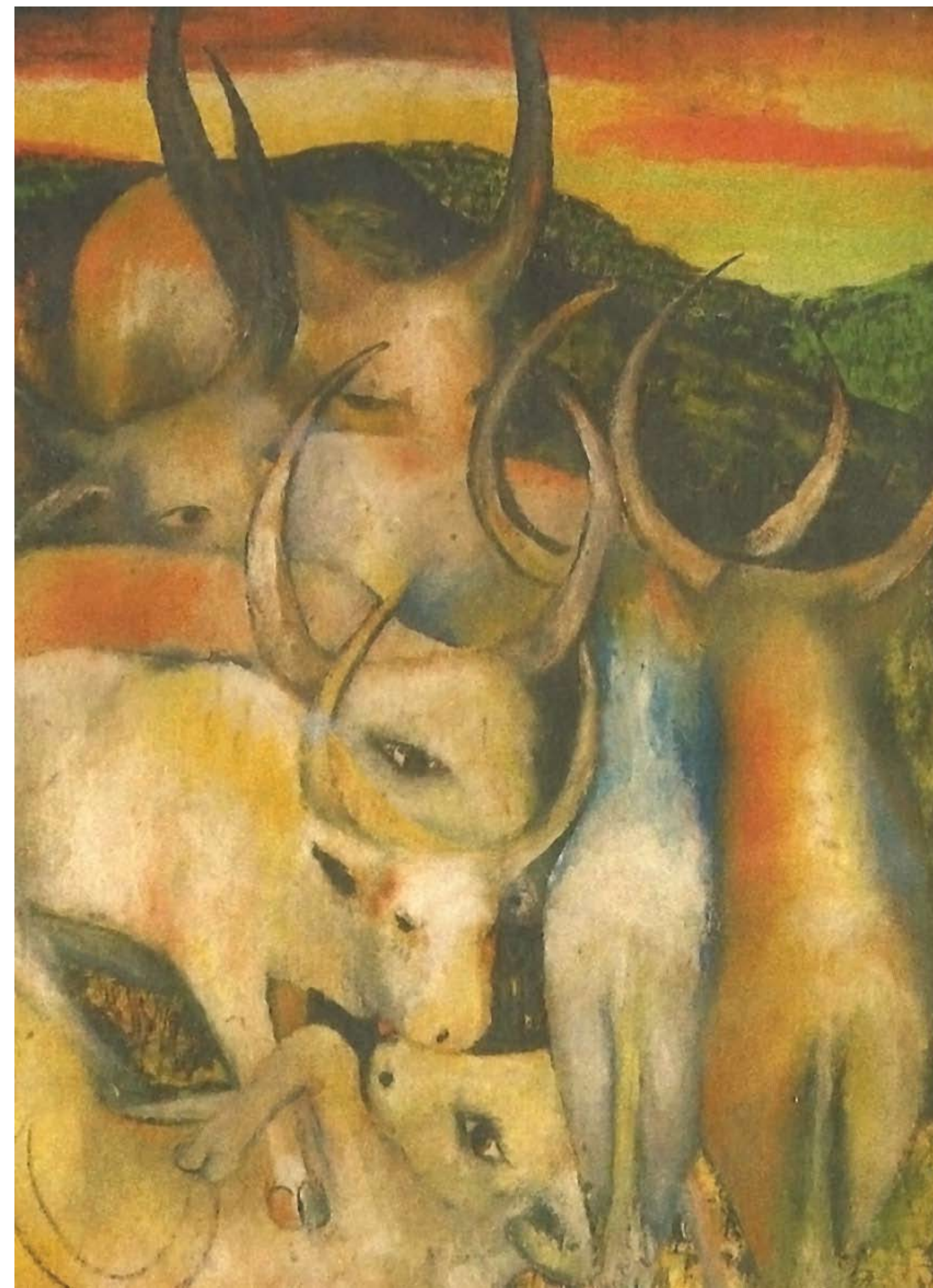
THE
NAIROBI
GALLERY

AT

The Old PC's Office next to Nyayo House
Special Preview July 6th 2:30pm
July 7th 2014 - October 15th 2014

Private Entry and ample free parking
open daily 8.30am - 5.30pm

JAK KATARIKAWA



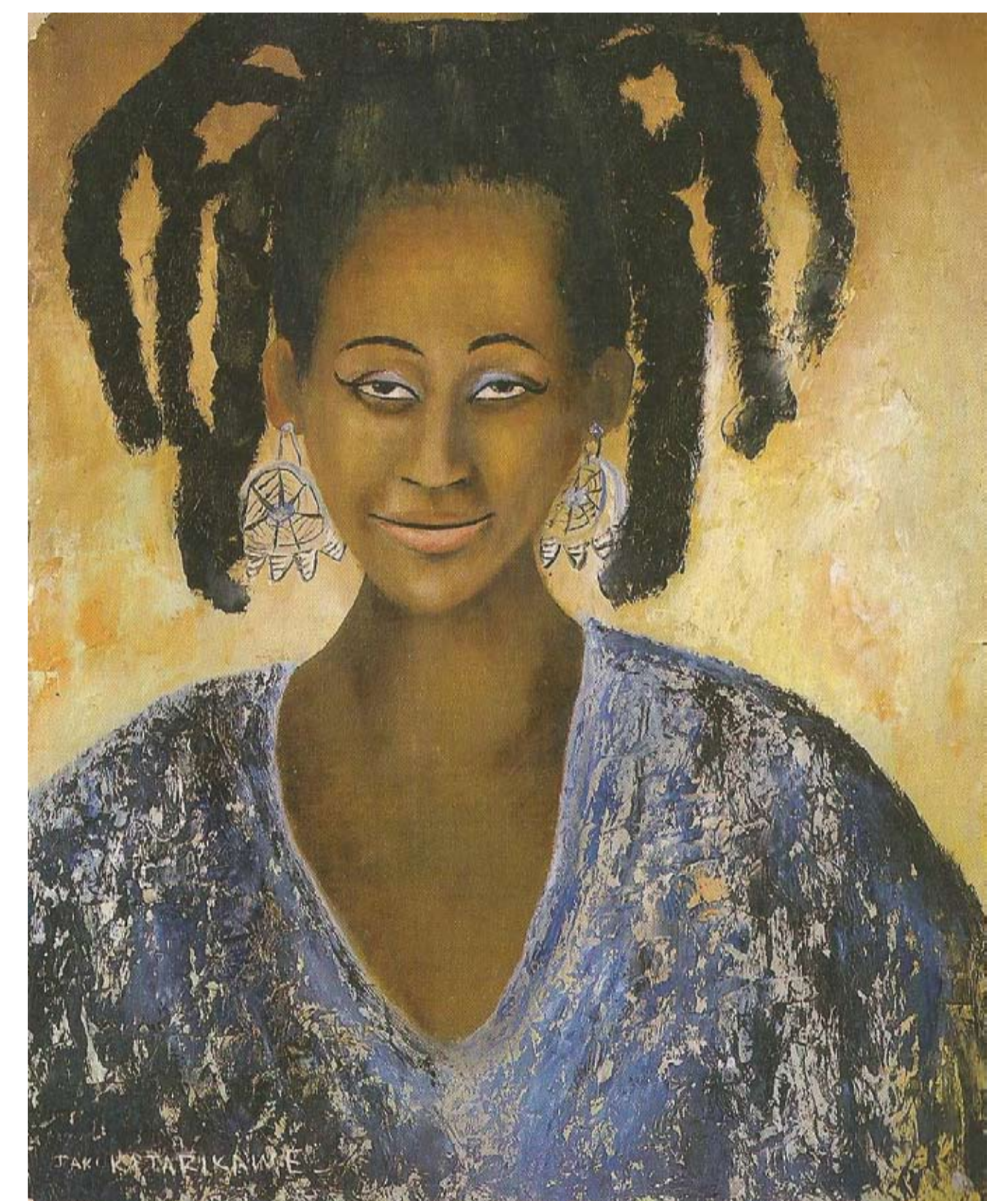
Excerpts and information from Dreaming in Pictures by Johanna Agthe and Elsbeth Joyce Court, 2001

Jak Katarikawe is one of East Africa's most famous pioneer artists. Often called 'Africa's Chagall', he has been a central figure in the development of East African modern art for a half century. Since 1966, his works have been shown in over 80 exhibitions worldwide.

Jak does not know his exact age, but it is thought he was born about 1938 near Kabale, Kigezi, in Southwest Uganda. His father was a blacksmith and had eleven wives of which his mother, Damare Keumbura, was the second youngest. Jak observed other children at play as well as cattle for inspiration for his early drawings. He used to draw on the earth with a stone or chalk while herding cattle. Kigezi and Kabala encompass Katarikawe's homeland and identity, including the culture, dancing, drumming, festivals, and the ever present long-horned cattle that he herded as a boy. As a self taught artist, his paintings are based on stories, dreams and visions. More and more he used animals to show sexual subjects in his paintings and his mating cattle and besotted elephants are among his most famous works. Jak has his own strict quality criteria and often reworks his paintings until they satisfy him. Anything which does not meet his demands may be destroyed without hesitation. He was very fond of the young US President, John F. Kennedy, and took special pains to paint his portrait from tv images, as well as Princess Bagaya of the Kingdom of Toro (see right).

The fact that Jak could neither read nor write was noteworthy in his development and caused him much embarrassment. However, it was a mural of Jesus he saw in a church that was an epiphany for Jak. He thought it was a photograph. But to his astonishment, he found out it was made with a brush and paint.

Searching for a better life, Jak went to Kampala in the 1960s and tried



Princess Bagaya
Prinzessin Bagaya



Kigezi

various kinds of employments such as baker, dental assistant and finally, taxi driver. It was then he offered his services to English lecturer David Cook who taught literature at Makerere University. Cook bought him his first set of water colours. He saw his first art works at Makerere University, and then he "painted, painted, painted". Cook was impressed with Jak's early works and invited the artist and lecturer George Kakooza and Sam Ntiro, respectively, from Makerere University to look at his paintings. Both recognized his talent and offered technical advice. Michael Adams, the British artist, became Jak's next mentor and donated some oil paints to him. One of the first paintings he sold at an exhibition for young artists was a painting of the Beatles, which brought him an

"unbelievable" sum when compared to his driver's salary. He then decided to give up his position as a driver and started painting intensively. He began using Sam Ntiro's studio at Makerere University and took on a part time job demonstrating and playing local African instruments like the "zither" from Kigezi.

At his next exhibition, Jak sold nine paintings. He used the proceeds to build his mother a house. He got married and built himself a house. His wife, Beatrice, bore him two children. He also started painting batik materials for a time. In 1967, it was on a journey to Dar es Salaam to participate in a regional exhibition that his watercolours got ruined on top of the bus in which he was travelling, so he never painted with water colours again. At a workshop in Dar that year he won first prize. It was about that time that David Cook taught him to sign his name to his art works which was a laborious process for him. In 1971, his wife, Beatrice, died. It was that same year that Cook sent some of his paintings to the prestigious "African Arts" magazine in California, and the magazine featured three of his works.

During the early 1970's, he exhibited at Gallery Watatu and he also created paintings for Alan Donovan, who had just opened the pan African Gallery, African Heritage, in Nairobi, with the former Vice President Joseph Murumbi and his wife Sheila.

Highlights of 1975 were three London exhibitions of which one was a solo exhibition. Back in Uganda, when trouble spread during Idi Amin's regime, Jak slipped away to Kabale for about three years. He married his second wife, Florence. He painted only about 20 paintings during this time from 1978-80.

Later, he moved back to Nairobi and again worked together with Elimo Njau at his Paa ya Paa art centre and exhibited together with the Kenyan sculptor Samwel Wanjau. He also continued to exhibit at Gallery Watatu, African Heritage, the French Cultural Centre and the National Museums of Kenya.

It was in 1984 that he agreed to be represented by Gallery Watatu after it had been taken over from the original owners by Ruth Schaffner, who rented him a studio apartment where he remained until 2001.

Schaffner died in 1997 which was a blow to Jak. Osei Kofi became Katarikawe's international agent in 2000 and funded Katarikawe's exhibition in Beijing in 2009 and as well as the Joburg Art Fair in 2010. Jak worked more closely with Kofi when the latter joined Gallery Watatu as manager/partner in December 2009. Unfortunately, owner Adama Diawara died in August 2011 and the gallery had to close.

Jak now lives on the top floor of an apartment building in Nairobi, with his son, Sande Lucas, who is also showing two of his own works in this exhibition. Although Jak's health has deteriorated and it has become painful for him to walk, Jak continues to put his visions on canvas and he has created this collection for the Nairobi Gallery, 2014.

