Dedicated to the religious art of Mali, the book reveals the variety and expressive power of the art of the Bamana peoples.

The Bamana (or Bambara) are members of the Mande culture, a large and powerful group of peoples in West Africa. The artistic tradition of the Bamana is rich, filled with pottery, sculptures, beautiful bokolanfini cloth, and wrought iron figures fashioned by blacksmiths. They also have extensive masking traditions, which are used as a form of social control and community education.

This volume focuses on the aesthetic qualities of the masterpieces of Bamana religious art in Mali and re-situates them in their social, aesthetic and cultural context. The emphasis is on pieces used in rites of passage (Ntomo, funerals), or by agricultural cooperatives (ton, démè), and initiation societies (Korè, Jo, Kono, Kono, Tyiwara, Namakoro). The pieces whose beauty is sublime to Western eyes are just as marvelous in the field, precisely because they stand at the crossroads of religion, aesthetics and politics.

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