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BAULE

Alain-Michel Boyer

A fascinating and essential overview of the Baule people and their art through fifty exemplary pieces.

The Baule descend from the Akan peoples who inhabit Ghana and the Ivory Coast. Three hundred years ago the Baule people migrated westward from Ghana when the Asante rose to power. The Baule now reside at the center of the Ivory Coast and possess one of the most diversified of arts. They use media, including wooden sculpture, gold and brass casting, similar to their Asante ancestors, and mask and figure carvings. Their art is so varied that it might be thought that some of their works originate from different cultures: what is there in common between a flat mask-disc and an idealized face mask which nevertheless come from a single ceremony? Or between a glazed statuette of a man or woman, and a monkey figure with the head of a dog, coated in coagulated blood? Their art encompasses every form of creation: not only masks and statuettes, but also sculpted doors, decorated divination boxes, and gold jewelry. Often the works that appear to be the most humble reveal themselves as the most forceful aesthetically.

Alain-Michel Boyer, professor of African art, became a member of the Conseil National des Universités in Paris after teaching at a number of American universities. He lived in a Baule village for three years and spends several months a year in Africa. He is the author of several books, including *Les Arts d'Afrique* (2006).