

WEST AFRICAN COMBS

MINA & SAMIR BORRO COLLECTION

Edited by Najwa Borro, Sarah Boukamel, Faouzi Borro, and Valentine Plisnier, with an essay by Alain-Michel Boyer

This book is put together like a jewel and contains a carefully chosen selection of around one hundred West African combs from one of the world's largest and finest private collections of sub-Saharan African art. Featuring a hitherto unseen assortment of pieces assembled over a period of more than sixty years, the book also includes an authoritative analysis by Alain-Michel Boyer, who approached this rarely addressed theme in what was his final work, begun almost ten years ago.

As well as offering us valuable insights into the cultures that produced these miniature sculptures (Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria), he explores the way the form itself is approached. These creations transform what is in principle a plain accessory and in the effort to attain pure beauty, they display an aesthetic awareness that raises the adornment of the body to the level of fine art.

Alain-Michel Boyer (9 May 1949 - 27 March 2025) was an anthropologist and art historian. He held an agrégation in literature and a BA from the Institut d'études politiques, as well as two doctorates (Sorbonne, Paris). Following his Fulbright Scholarship (United States), he taught at several American universities. After serving as a member of the Conseil national des universités in Paris, Alain-Michel Boyer then became emeritus professor of African Art. In 1974, he published one of the first books on Michel Leiris. He lived for several years in Ivory Coast, particularly among the Baule and Yaure peoples. He also carried out several research missions in Mali, Liberia, Ghana, Tanzania, Malawi, the Omo Valley, southern Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho and South Africa. He carried out definitive research, particularly in the field of the arts of Ivory Coast. He authored around twenty books, including *Comment regarder les arts d'Afrique* (Hazan, 2017), *Baule* (5 Continents Editions, 2008) and *Le corps africain* (Hazan, 2006). He published the only books on the masks and figurines of two peoples hitherto neglected by art historians: *Les Yohouré de Côte d'Ivoire. Faire danser les dieux* (Ides et calendes, 2017) and *Les figurines kulango. Les esprits mystérieux de la brousse de la collection Pierluigi Peroni* (5 Continents Editions, 2017). Alain-Michel Boyer was an Officier de l'ordre national du Mérite de la République de Côte d'Ivoire.

Najwa Borro is an independent researcher and exhibition organiser specialising in African art. She has worked with numerous galleries, auction houses and museums. As scientific assistant to Yves Le Fur, director of the Heritage and Collections Department at the musée du Quai Branly - Jacques Chirac, she worked on the design of the "Les forêts natales. Arts d'Afrique équatoriale atlantique" exhibition (2017).

Sarah Boukamel is a graduate of the École du Louvre, an art historian and teacher specialising in the history of African art. She has made a significant contribution to recording the works in the Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière bequest to the musée du Quai Branly - Jacques Chirac.

Valentine Plisnier is a researcher in art history, an exhibition organiser and author. Her books



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include *Le primitivisme dans la photographie. L'impact des arts extra-européens sur la modernité photographique de 1918 à nos jours* (Trocadéro, 2012), *L'Art lega. Grandeur et humilité*, in collaboration with Michel Boulanger (Galerie Valois, 2016), *Arts d'Afrique. Portraits d'une collection* (5 Continents Editions, 2016), in collaboration with Patrick Caput and Pierre Darteville et *les arts premiers : mémoire et continuité* (5 Continents Editions, 2020).