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PIERRE DARTEVELLE ET LES ARTS PREMIERS

MÉMOIRE ET CONTINUITÉ

TEXTS BY VALENTINE PLISNIER AND VALÉRIE DARTEVELLE

The two volumes dedicated to Pierre Darteville and his collection tell a story and create a context, as well as describe relations between men and their bonds with objects. "Les arts primordiaux," as the author himself defines them, have been the cornerstone and passion of his life. And everything about his daily life expresses just this: the bookshelves overflowing with books and catalogues on extra-European art, the statues, the masks, and the way all this material is piled up in no particular order, blocking our view in every direction and preventing us from seeing any sort of background in the rooms. There is no doubting what makes Pierre Darteville get up in the morning.

He has devoted fifty years to getting African art's status recognized in Brussels, where in 1967 he opened a gallery in impasse Saint Jacques at the Grand Sablon, which soon achieved international renown. A lawyer by training and a great traveller by inclination, he abandoned law to give free course to his personal passion, in the footsteps of his father, Edmond Darteville, an explorer in his own right and scientist, whose finds in the Congo built the collection of the Musée d'Afrique centrale, in Tervuren. Viewed today by his followers and peers as an "icon," Pierre Darteville has always taken an active interest in preserving the artistic and ancestral heritage of Africa. He has built or expanded some of the most important private and public collections of tribal art known to this day, such as the Musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac (Paris) and the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

Valérie Darteville, Pierre's daughter, has played a key part in this publication, as, besides being the custodian of the collection and of its history, she is also present in the book through her distinctive eye as a portrait photographer with a passion for Surrealism. This visual stance is reflected in the narrative structure of the publishing project, which is not coincidentally built around a series of interviews giving privileged access to one of the most famous collections of tribal art in the world, as well as previously unpublished documents.

Specialists and lovers of tribal art will find in the first volume, dedicated to the figure of Pierre Darteville, and in the second, on the illustrious collection, a wealth of pictures and accounts that are sure to satisfy their curiosity, arouse fresh interest, and answer many of their queries.

Valentine Plisnier lives and works in Paris and is a naturalized Frenchwoman, being Belgian by birth. She is a researcher in the history of art and author. Her books include: *Le Primitivisme dans la photographie. L'impact des arts extra-européens sur la modernité photographique de 1918 à nos jours / Primitivism and Photography: Non-Western Art and Modern Photography: from 1918 to the Present*, 2012; with Michel Boulanger, *Art lega. Grandeur et humilité*, with a preface by Pierre Darteville, 2016; with Patrick Caput, *Arts d'Afrique. Portraits d'une collection / African Art. Portraits of a Collection*, 2016. Together with Ralf Burmeister, Michaela Oberhofer, and Esther Tisa Francini, she was awarded the International Tribal Art Book Prize in 2016 for the catalogue of the *Dada Africa* exhibition. Valentine Plisnier has also organized several exhibitions: with Christophe Flubacher, at Fondation Pierre Arnaud, Lens – Crans-Montana (Switzerland), *Surréalisme et arts primitifs – Un air de famille* 2014; then *Curiosités. Le jardin secret d'un collectionneur*, at Musée du président Jacques Chirac (Sarran); and *Arts d'Afrique. Portraits d'une collection – 7 objets / 7 photographes*, at Galerie



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Bernard Dulon (Paris), in 2016.

Valérie Dartevelle trained as a photographer and obtained diplomas at the École supérieure des arts de l'image in Brussels, "Le 75," at the Académie de dessin et des arts décoratifs (Watermael-Boitsfort) and at the École de photographie et techniques visuelles Agnès Varda (Brussels). Her work has appeared in numerous exhibitions and was awarded a prize by the Musée de la Photographie, Centre d'art contemporain de la fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, in Charleroi, as well as winning the Ilford Jury Prize and the Galerie Croiseregard prize (Vincent Verhaeren), at Boitsfort. In addition, her photo features have been published by numerous newspapers and magazines. In 1996, Valérie Dartevelle created a poetic fresco, *Pays, paysage, écriture (dans la littérature belge)*, which was the subject of a travelling exhibition that visited various libraries of the French-speaking community in Belgium. For the past twenty years she has helped her father run Galerie Dartevelle.

The publication is a limited and numbered edition.