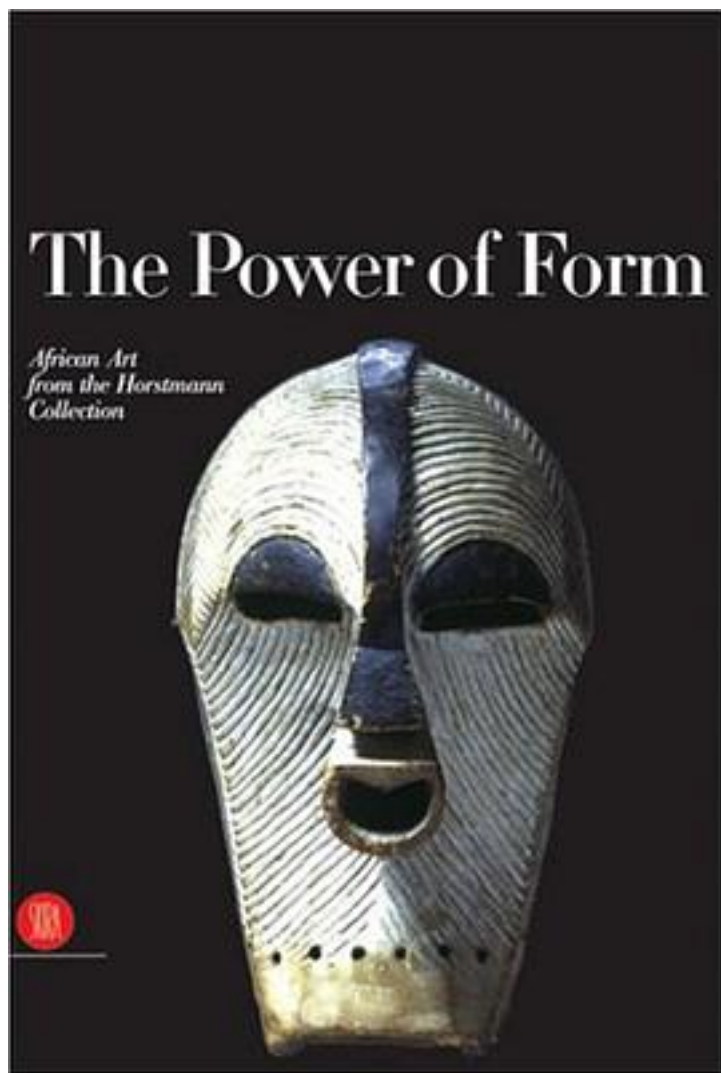


The Power of Form



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Many elements converge in the construction of a high-quality art collection, making it a fascinating, intellectual and emotional adventure, a journey of discovery and a labour of love. Formed over the course of thirty years by Udo Horstmann and his wife, the Horstmann collection is rather exceptional inasmuch as it offers a captivating vision of the variety of solutions adopted by black artists over the course of the centuries: nearly 120 extraordinary sculptures, figures, masks, household objects and weapons from Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabon, Congo, Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Swaziland, Mozambique, Kenya and Sudan. The origin of the artworks-- selected for their perfection transcending the mere utilitarian function-- touches all of the lands of the continent, including the southern and eastern lands rarely so authoritatively represented in other collections, and their execution covers an arc of time of several millennia. The presence of ancient works contributes to the demolition of the preconception that has weighed unfairly until recent years on African art, and that is the absence of evolution in the artistic creation of Black Africa, and therefore of any historic quality. This is a difficult negation to cancel if African sculpture is still often labeled as "primitive." Another meritorious quality of the Horstmanns lies in the fact that they chose the sculptures in their collection, not out of any generic passion for the exotic and neither for any abstract demand for representativity of ethnicity or significance or destination, but for their quality, for the enchantment of the "form," or better, of the "forms." Paging through the book, the reader will discover that the artistic creation, that is, the need to give "form" to the formless, is a common heritage of mankind, shared by the artists of Black Africa.

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