

The New Criterion

Art

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Exhibition note

by [Anthony Daniels](#)

On "Black Is Beautiful" at De Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam.

"Black Is Beautiful"

De Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam.

July 26-October 26, 2008

As you enter the "Black Is Beautiful" exhibition in the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam, the first words that you read are "Black people are attractive." These words produced in me, at any rate, a reaction akin to that I used to have when my teacher's chalk squeaked on the blackboard, or he ran his nail down the blackboard because his chalk had dwindled away to nearly nothing.

Methinks the curator doth protest too much. After all, would he have have written "Slovaks are attractive" or "Amputees are attractive"? There is a whistling-in-the-dark quality about the words that would not entirely have pleased or convinced me if I had happened to be black. The next words are, if anything, even less reassuring: "Artists have known this for a long time."

This im ...

Anthony Daniels's most recent book is *In Praise of Prejudice* (Encounter Books). Hewas born in 1949. After qualifying as a doctor, he worked in what was then Rhodesia, followed by South Africa, before returning for three years training as a psychiatrist in London's East End. Three and a half years in the Gilbert Islands were interspersed with some South American wandering, and then between 1984 and 1986 he worked in Tanzania. His first book, *Coups and Cocaine*, was followed by *Fool or Physician*, subtitled 'the memoirs of a sceptical doctor.' *Zanzibar to Timbuktu*, his trek across Africa by public transport was published to great acclaim in 1988, and was a runner-up in the Thomas Cook Travel Book Award.

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