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The Congo line

by Anthony Daniels

On “Beauté Congo 1926–2015” at the Fondation Cartier pour l’art contemporain, Paris.

When Ghana achieved its independence from Britain in 1957, I was in my stamp-collecting phase, and for me the most important consequence of that momentous event was the issue of garishly multi-colored stamps by the newly independent country to celebrate it. Until then, the stamps of the Gold Coast (as Ghana had been known) were typical of those of all British colonies: a little oval in the right-hand corner with the reigning monarch’s portrait, accompanied by an engraved scene of the territory’s daily life—cocoa-farming, fishing, basket-weaving—or of its flora and fauna. They were either monochrome or, at the most, of two colors, and were objects of a restrained finesse.

I was reminded of all this at the exhibition “Beauté Congo 1926–2015” at the Fondation Cartier pour l’art contemporain...

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