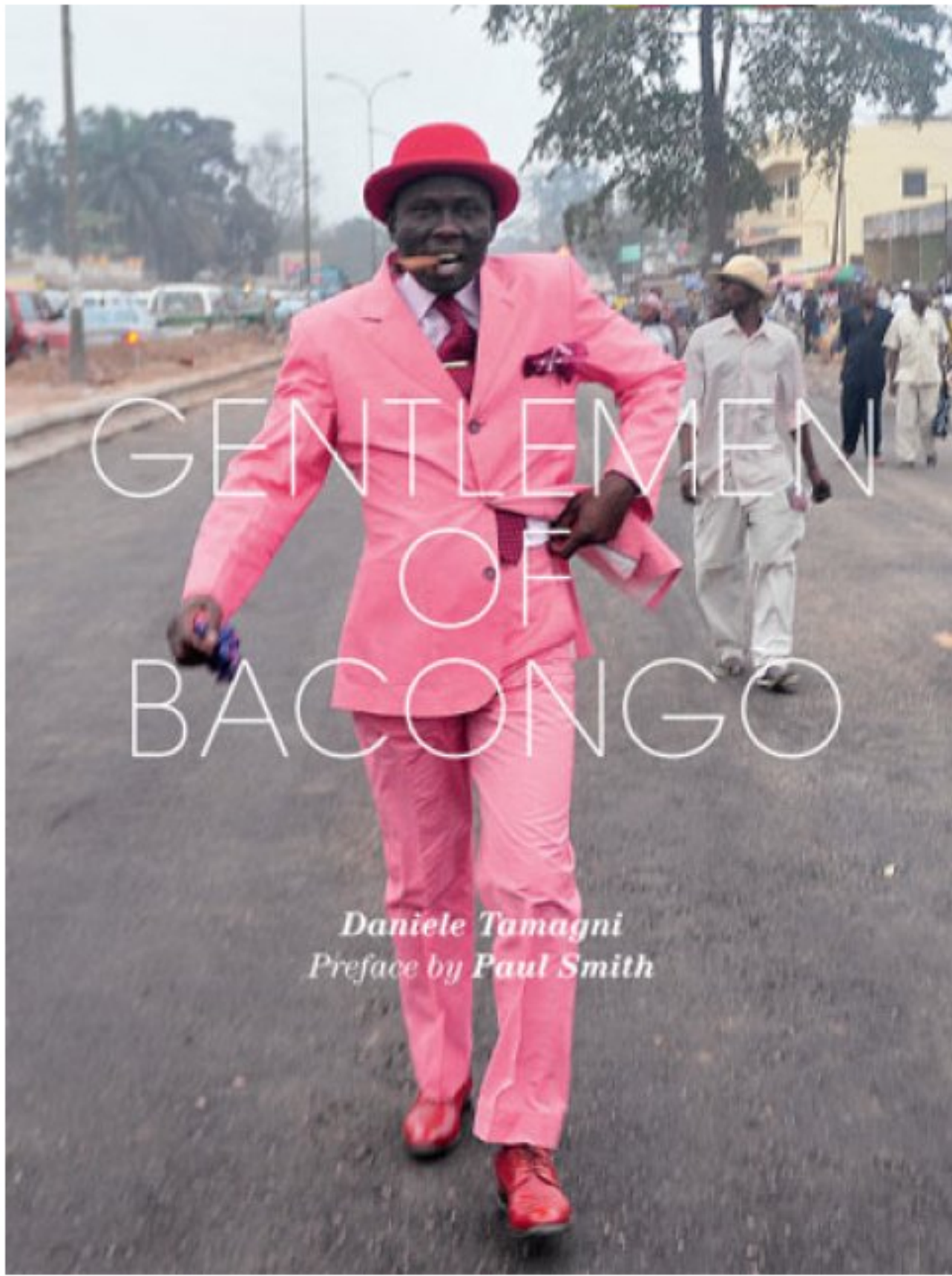




Photography 2009: Favourite Books

Wednesday, 23 December 2009 13:00
Written by Sue Steward

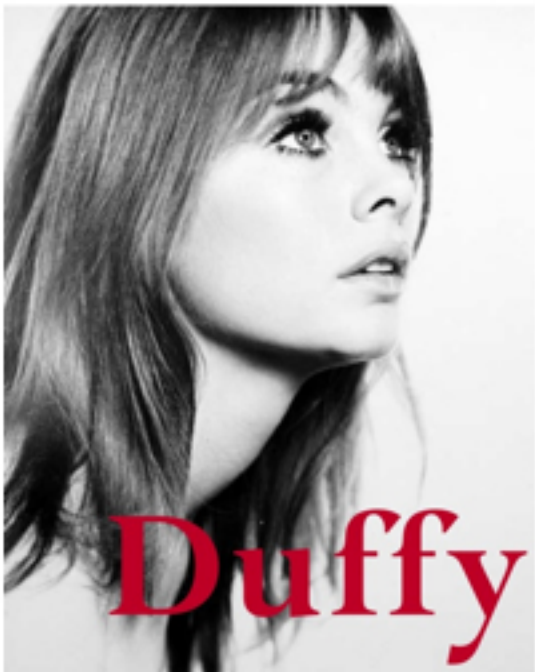
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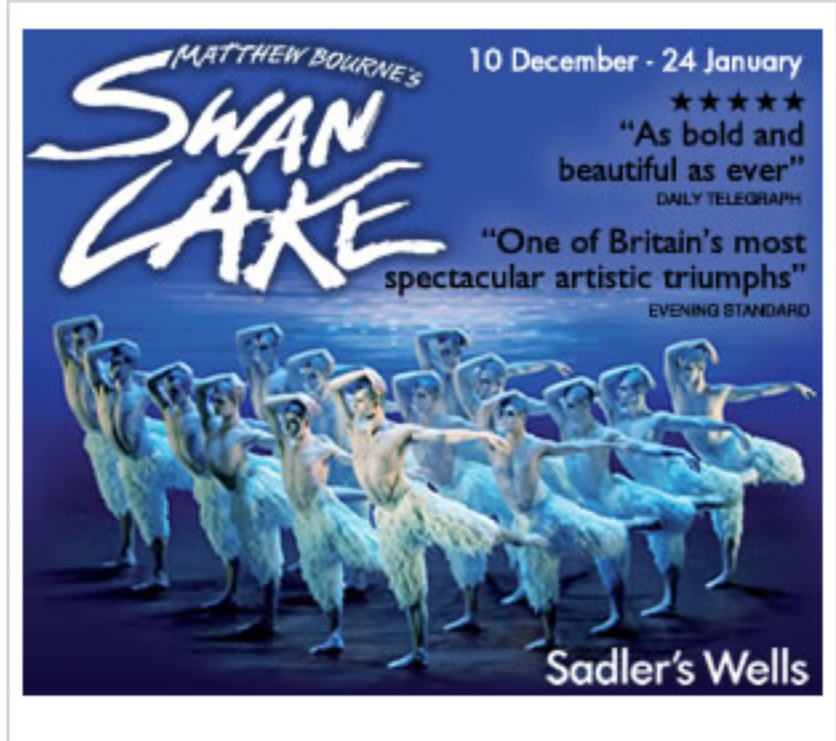
L R Gent Bacongo: 'Sapeurs spend fortunes on their outfits in poverty-riddled Congo' Daniele Tamagni

Pulling the focus far back, Brighton photographer Simon Roberts presents the results of a two-year road journey around England, in the exhibition and book titled *We English*. His large format colour prints of epic scenes resonate with blurry memories of classical landscape paintings, but are actually built around the theme of the English at leisure today (and bear no relation to Martin Parr's now world famous close-up, colour-drenched probing of similar subjects). Roberts' anonymous people are scattered in what resemble staged tableaux, around beaches, fields and golf courses, and they possess a surprising calm. Mostly distant, the people appear to inhabit a landscape of infinite space unrecognisable in our overcrowded land. [Find *We English* on Amazon](#)

Returning to Swinging Sixties London, the elusive photographer Brian Duffy, third member of "The Black Trinity" with David Bailey and Terence Donovan, reappeared after vanishing in 1979 when he made a pyre of negatives. A recent exhibition led to this small welcoming book, *Duffy* (www.chrisbeetles.com), which relocates him in Sixties history and highlights his personal take on celebrity portraiture (from John Lennon to Sammy Davis Junior and the Kray twins). What separates Duffy from the others is his experimental approach to advertising shoots (in cool, pre-Mod, "Madman" mode), and the obvious cinematic influences which pervades his work and also suggest Russian Constructivist lighting and geometry.



One of the most alluring and little-known London galleries is the Estorick Collection in Islington. Their 2009 exhibition of 100 images from the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) Photography Collection, illustrated Italian Modernist architecture under the title *Framing Modernism: Architecture and Photography in Italy, 1926-1965* (www.estorickcollection.com). Schools, private houses, railway stations, factories and swimming pools were models of cool elegance with sensual geometry and plastic curves constructed with concrete. But the collection also included the starker, more austere but not always unattractive geometry of Mussolini-directed communal architecture which matched his social policies. Photographed with large format plate cameras, these photographs rely for their beauty and perfection on the anonymous printers who perfected the intense contrasts in lighting and shadows which epitomise the era.



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Paul Merton in Europe, Five



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