

See the light

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An exhaustive guide to interior lamps is a dazzling achievement, says Katy McAulay

Question: How can you breakfast with Tiffany (Studios) and go to bed with Verner Panton? Beginning with Joseph Swan and Thomas Edison, and rounding off with the great Dane, Panton, Charlotte and Peter Fiell's heavyweight volume should keep even the most avid fan of illumination well into the moonlit hours.

What with the plethora of top 100 books/ films/ comedians/ things to do on a rainy Tuesday afternoon programmes around at the moment, it appears that chart shows are the new Countdown. 1000 Lights, however, shies away from trying to shoehorn the angular, rounded, wonderful and weird creations into some kind of order, preferring to offer up the promised number of illuminators in a more or less chronological format that spans the historical development of lighting design from 1879 to 1959. It's history, Jim, only with fewer battles and

church reforms, and more chandeliers and tungsten.

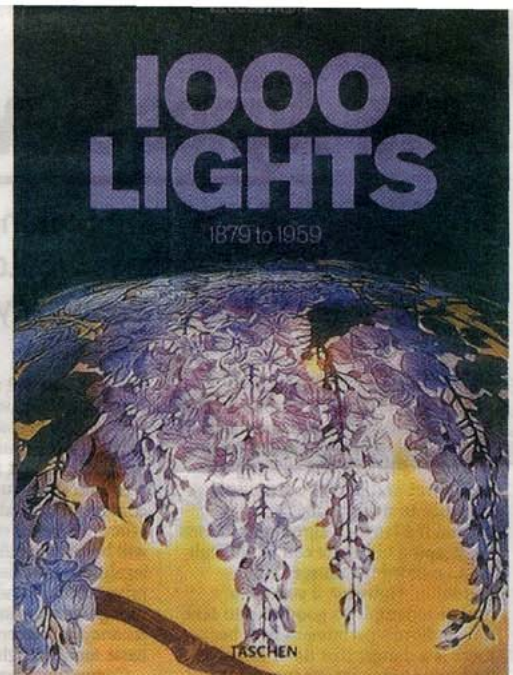
Bulbous, sleek, curvaceous, enticing – and that's just the first 100 pages. The book is, in fact, the first of two volumes, the second of which takes the reader on from 1960 to the LED gadgets of the present day. Pocket-sized it's not, but its 575 pages cover a comprehensive range of designers, including Emile Gallé, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Arne Jacobsen, with information about each in English, French and German. So if you ever wanted to know that Tiffany Studios' Lotus table light was the second most expensive model produced by the firm, retailing in 1906 at a cool \$750, this is the text for you.

Ultimately, however, it's the stream of glossy full-colour pictures of wall lights, table lights, not-so-standard standard lamps and hanging lights in a mind-boggling array of shapes, sizes and colours that will hold the interest

of those who do not possess the title of lighting aficionado.

Highlights include a delicate seagull detail gracing the aquamarine domed shade of a Gallé table light; the spiky icicle star-shape of a hanging light by an unknown Czech designer; the mysterious suspension of metal flowers from a chandelier by Paavo Tynell; or the satisfyingly globular form of a simple white bubble hanging light by George Nelson. Slightly more (cruel and) unusual are Italian designer Gio Ponti's patriotic red, white and green hand-blown glass chandeliers and La Société Jumo's Bolide desk light, which resembles a shiny, black beetle when closed, and a stapler poised to pounce on unsuspecting fingers when opened.

The editors, Charlotte and Peter Fiell have impressive credentials for this kind of project, having been responsible for such previous volumes as Design of the 20th Century, Industrial Design



A-Z and 1000 Chairs. As possibly the best use of 1000 Lights seems to be as coffee table display fodder, perhaps the couple should let life imitate art with their next volume and publish the definitive 1000 Coffee Tables. ■

● 1000 Lights (vol 1: 1879 to 1959), edited by Charlotte and Peter Fiell, is published by Taschen, priced £19.99