

# Those who shop, read

Vanessa Friedman and Edwina Ings-Chambers give the low-down on high-fashion literature gift options for people who care about style

## Reads

One of the problems with putting fashion into fiction is that any attempt to exaggerate, imagine, satirise or plain-old embroider an industry that is already filled with colourful characters is very difficult because the raw material is already so extreme, there's almost nothing anyone can add. Think of designer Karl Lagerfeld, with his penchant for a white, powdered pony tail, black leather fingerless gloves and black shades; or Andre Leon Talley, the six-

footed, flamboyant American Vogue editor-at-large who likes to wear floor-length sable; or Kate Moss, the beautiful, silent model who has come to symbolise all our fantasies, good and bad. Unfortunately, this doesn't seem to stop numerous fiction writers trying, and so this Christmas we have *Remedy* (Portobello Books, £12.99) by Anne Marsella, the annoyingly over-arch adventures of a young American girl working at

an anonymous contribution: "Next to mental improvement, shopping is now the business of life, and a most bewildering and exhausting business it is... Strong is the character demanded for wise shopping!" Or this, from Linda Grant: "No outing can offer more escape from the nightmare of her present reality than shopping."

ing for clothes, the easiest means we know of becoming our fantasies and generally cheering ourselves up all round." At 250 pages such musing might get weary but for two paragraphs, it feels most companionable and witty. Those who shop, read.

That gem comes courtesy of Rachel Zoe's *Style A to Z* (Corgi, £12.99) by Eileen Ashcroft. This is a reprint of a book first published in 1988, now reissued with an introduction by Joanna Lunney. It is, appropriately, thoroughly charming with lines such as: "Some women think it is a waste of time or pandering to vanity to spend too much time on their faces. How wrong they are! The world needs beauty and charm."

Another tip for movie and history buffs is *The Trench Coat* (Assouline, £22.95) by Nick Foulkes, peppered as it is by lots of glossy film-stills

they're not really supposed to transform our lives; they're reading-lite, a sort of grazing activity that isn't intended to be too nutritious - just fun.

Refine your choice according to what the recipient likes to flick through the rest of time. So the Grazia reader who enjoys ogling red-carpet dressers will love Zoe's mix of celebrity snaps, fashion designer chats and reading all about her. Missions bed throws. *Harper's Bazaar Great Style: Best Ways to Update Your Look* (Aurum, £14.99) by Jenny Levin flags up its provenance on the cover, strong on pictures and low on text. *Things I Wish My Mother Had Told Me: Lessons in Grace and Elegance* (John Murray, £16.99) by Lucia van der Post benefits from the author's chatty writing style and covers everything from dress (every woman should own a pair of red shoes) to make-up, plastic surgery and modern etiquette.

## How-to books

How did we cope with fashion dilemmas before the avalanche of style guides provided us with such pearls of wisdom as: "Style is more about your eye than your bank balance?"

World (Cultureshock Media) and two books about a pair of the most secretive, jewelers working today: the fabulously imaginative *Dictionary of Lorenz Bäumer* (Editions de la Martinière); and the minimalist luxury of *Jewels Today: Seen by Stefan Hermmerle* (Collection Rolf Heyne).

Those who would rather emphasise a healthy scepticism about the fashion industry while still indulging a surreptitious girly side

to better memento. Those less enamoured of the specific designers might feel a bit overwhelmed by the sheer amount of space these books take up. For them, there is the smaller *Christian Lacroix On Fashion* (Thames & Hudson, £23); Larvin (Rizzoli, £45), a beautifully juxtaposed combination of original work from the time of Jeanne Albar, Elbaz, and The Golden Age of Couture: Paris and London 1947-57 (V&A, £35), a record of the gorgeous, glossy history of the French couture house from its postwar birth to today, and the 5.35kg *Ralph Lauren* (Rizzoli), the first designer coffee-table book written - though there is a lot less writing than photography - entirely by the designer.

Along similar lines is *Glamour Girls* by Patrick McMullan (PMC Publishing, £75) is an album of glamorous women on the party circuit today - McMullan is a night-life photographer. His images are all about capturing what it takes to be a modern-day glamourpuss. You could even try giving the book with a magnifying glass for extra detail-spotting fun.

Old-movie lovers will enjoy browsing *The Magic Key to Charm: Instructions for a Delightful Life* (Vintage,

## Coffee table

The enormous fashion tomes have landed and the question is not so much which ones are better but rather which are heavier. In the brand monument category, the winner, hands-down, is Taschen's *Valentino* (£600), a 9kg homage to the permantanned, now-retired, Roman-born designer. Second place is a close race between the 5kg *Dior* (Assouline, £90), a gorgeous, glossy history of the French couture house from its postwar birth to today, and the 5.35kg *Ralph Lauren* (Rizzoli), the first designer coffee-table book written - though there is a lot less writing than photography - entirely by the designer.

All three brands are celebrating a significant anniversary this year and fans of the labels will find

more benefit from two books which emphasise the more analytic, if not academic, side of the style business. *Vogue Covers* (Little, Brown £40) allows you to make cool cultural observations about the evolution of feminism while *Stylist* (Rizzoli, £40) is a smart examination of the work of 16 influential stylists. It is illuminating to find the reason Joe Zee shot model Nadja Auermann isolated in a sterile office in a suit for W magazine was because he was thinking about Edward Hopper paintings, and that Carolyn Carl de Dudzeel's penchant for realistic couple shoots in Elle is a comment on our paparazzi culture.

After you're done, you'll find you've learnt a number of interesting facts.

## 'No outing can offer more escape from the nightmare of reality than shopping'

No wonder that the most successful of all the fashion storybooks is actually a book of excerpts: *The Vrago Book of The Joy of Shopping*, edited by Jill Foulston (£14.99). Shopping and fashion is a part of life, after all, and when authors focus on that, as opposed to the life of style, it springs from the page in all its complicated, guilty, seductive glory. Consider, for example, this anonymous contribution:

It would be easy to be sarcastic about this book genre but they are fun

be mercilessly

and images of movie stars sporting trenchcoats.

Along similar lines is *Glamour Girls* by Patrick McMullan (PMC Publishing, £75) is an album of glamorous women on the party circuit today - McMullan is a night-life photographer. His images are all about capturing what it takes to be a modern-day glamourpuss. You could even try giving the book with a magnifying glass for extra detail-spotting fun.

Old-movie lovers will enjoy browsing *The Magic Key to Charm: Instructions for a Delightful Life* (Vintage,

## VF

VF

VF

VF

VF

VF

VF

VF

VF



EIC