

ILLUSTRATED BOOKS

Gift books for procrastinators

MAGIC

1400s-1950s

By Mike Caveney, Jim Steinmeyer and Ricky Jay, edited by Noel Daniel, Taschen, 650 pages, \$225

Amazing, stupendous, astounding – the superlatives used by practitioners of magic are equally appropriate to describe this 650-page visual celebration of the art of magic. Packed with more than 1,000 vintage posters, photographs, handbills, engravings and other ephemera, this tome explores the evolution of the magician's craft, from medieval street performers to groundbreaking daredevils such as Houdini. The lavishly laid-out volume, with its arresting images and incisive text from scholars and professional magicians, is a homage to the glory and form of print. It will delight those who thrill to the word "abracadabra," and to those who revel in the beauty and luxury of books.

MARIO DE JANEIRO TESTINO

By Mario Testino, Taschen, 200 pages, \$49.99

At 55, Peruvian-born Mario Testino is one of the most sought-after fashion photographers of the age. Images of clothes, however, are few and far between in this salute to the sexy, sensual, sunny, surf side of Brazil's largest metropolis. Nudity and semi-nudity rule, with page after immense (25-by-34.6-centimetre) page of young female (mostly) and male flesh looking fit and fabulous. Brazilian supermodel Gisele Bündchen shows up in a bikini and pens a tribute to Testino – who perhaps should

think of changing his surname to Testosterone.

LOS ANGELES

Portrait of a City

By Jim Heimann and Kevin Starr, Taschen, 570 pages, \$77

It's the city everyone loves to hate, or at least disparage. Home of Hollywood glitz, celebrity worship, freeways, beach bunnies, surfer dudes and cars, cars, cars. It's superficial and narcissistic, true. But it's also futuristic, fascinating and fun, as this lavish photographic compendium makes abundantly clear. Here are starlets of the Sunset Strip, ultra-modernist houses in the Hollywood Hills, far-out diners, noiresque murder sites (the Black Dahlia), beautiful landscapes and, yes, celebrities. Love it or hate it, La-la Land is all here.

HELMUT NEWTON

Edited by June Newton, Taschen, 464 pages, \$165

When this book was issued a number of years back, as *SUMO*, a spectacular book by the spectacular, controversial and influential photographer Helmut Newton (1920-2004), the edition of 10,000 (weighing in at 35.4 kilos) sold out, at a hefty price. Now, here is an edition for everyman, if that term can properly be applied to Newton. This is still a gorgeous volume, with splendid reproductions of some of Newton's most famous (and infamous) photos: the brilliant and shocking Salvador Dali portrait, Marianne Faithfull in a cloud of smoke in Monte Carlo, Catherine Deneuve threatened by a revolver, and a

bounteous bevy of nude and clad models and celebrities. Oh, and it comes with a reading stand.

WALTON FORD

Pancha Tantra
Edited by Benedikt Taschen, Taschen, 320 pages, \$80

Walton Ford, who lives in Massachusetts, has been exhibited around the world. His life-sized, highly detailed watercolours of animals recall the work of such 19th-century illustrators as John James Audubon and Edward Lear. But on closer examination they are complex and anthropomorphic allegories, full of symbols, jokes and allusions: A wild turkey crushes a parrot in its claw; monkeys wreak havoc on a dinner table: a buffalo is surrounded by bloody white wolves. The book's title derives from *The Pancha Tantra*, an ancient Indian book of animal tales. This large-format edition includes an exploration of Ford's work, a biography and excerpts from his textual inspirations. Bill Buford provides an informative and thoughtful introduction.

20TH CENTURY FASHION

100 Years of Apparel Ads
By Jim Heimann and Alison A Nieder, Taschen, 462 pages, \$49.99

More than 500 fashion advertisements from 1900 to 1999, from Jim Heimann's collection, give readers a stylish and fun retrospective on the century that redefined and reinterpreted fashion as we know it. Arranged by decade, the book's introduction, text and year-by-year timelines explore trends in fashion, from its beginnings as a couture business to today's mass market. Highlighted throughout are historical events, key magazines, movies and pop culture, as well as important trends and brands.