

ARTS



**Starck -
Taschen 25 -
Special Edition**
edited by Mae
Cooper et al
Taschen
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★★★★☆
Tessa Chan

As a child, Philippe Starck spent hours under his father's drawing boards, cutting, gluing, dismantling objects and learning how they were made. Today the 62-year-old Frenchman is one of the world's most celebrated designers, boasting a career that spans more than 40 years.

Taschen's anniversary edition charts this prolific career, from his architectural works and interiors to his furniture and quirky home products. Starck fans can flick through page after glossy page of iconic designs, from the transparent Louis Ghost Chair (2000) to the sci-fi inspired Juicy Salif lemon squeezer (1990). Included is the Restaurant

Felix in Hong Kong's Peninsula hotel from 1994 – where men can enjoy urinating over a stunning view of Kowloon – and New York's Royalton Hotel (1988), which has been credited with sparking the explosion in designer boutique hotels over the past two decades.

Love him or hate him, his objects are never conventional, and consistently express a wry sense of humour. Though he likes to define them as “good” before being beautiful, their practicality is often called into question.

Part of what defines Starck is his considerable ego. His image pops up everywhere in this book from the front cover to the back cover, not to mention a final photograph where he dresses up as a cheeky Napoleon. But then he adores being controversial, it's part of his celebrity persona. He baffled designers across the world when he announced his famous epiphany: “Design is dead.”

“Design is a dreadful form of expression,” he said in a 2008 interview with German newspaper *Die Zeit*. “In future there will be no more designers.” Apologising for all the material waste his design career

had caused, he promised to give up in two years' time, and turn his creativity to nobler causes. At the beginning of last year he turned his attention to sustainable energy with the design of the “Revolutionair” micro wind-power turbines, aimed at domestic use. More clues to his often contradictory philosophy are given towards the end of the Taschen tribute, where extracts from a 2002 conversation with journalist Pierre Doze appear. Design students seeking a clear mandate to follow will be disappointed by this collection of philosophical musings though: “These are patterns, conclusions that I have reached but they don't amount to a system.”

Instead, he rambles about diverse topics such as science, the evolution and fate of human beings, and our duty to contribute something to our civilisation.

Whatever you think of Starck the man, his impact on the design world is immeasurable. This collection has all the features of a Taschen classic: a comprehensive compilation of works packaged within pages of stunning, uncluttered visuals and, as always, at an accessible price.