

Design books that speak volumes

Decorative, and with a certain cachet, some books are the last word in style, says **Holly Thomas**

A coffee table should offer as much eye candy as your dressing table or mantelpiece. Quality hardback books look stylish when strategically stacked in neat piles. However, choosing the right books is essential. We ask five interior designers for their coffee-table essentials:

CLASS ACT *Class Act — William Haines: Legendary Hollywood Decorator* by Peter Schifando and Jean H Mathison (Pointed Leaf Press, 224pp, \$95) Martin Kemp, creative director of Martin Kemp Design, says: "Class Act is a rewarding book, not least because it captures many facets of design together with an insight into the designer's life — William Haines. He was originally a silent movie star, renowned in the genre, however with the onset of 'talkies' — and rumours about his private life — he realised he had to diversify and entered set design. This eventually led him to cross paths again with the movie stars who took to his eye for detail and characterful personality, subsequently employing him to design their homes. Haines was given the outlet to produce some of the design world's most iconic interiors and furniture pieces, many now deemed timeless and 'classic', and used in my work today. "His work has a huge variety of style, from the ebullient and decorative to streamlined deco. His attention to detail is to be respected as a lesson in restraint as well as elegance. I refer to this book on many occasions and salute the great author of its works within."



A William Haines horse-head lamp, above, as featured in the book *Class Act*

HOME FOR NOW *Home for Now* by Joanna Thornhill (CICO Books, 176pp, £16.99) Andrew Dunning, of the APD interior design consultancy, says: "Sometimes I need an interiors book that doesn't just inspire me but also shows me how to do certain projects. We all love to improve our homes but this can be especially challenging if you have a landlord or are short of funds. *Home for Now* by Joanna Thornhill is the perfect book if this is your home life. "It is packed full of inspiration but also shows you how to achieve the style without breaking the bank. Working through the home, there are styling and decorating tips for every room. It shows you how to easily transform a simple wooden fruit crate and hooks into super-stylish kitchen storage space. The section on seating areas helps you to refresh your upholstery, and there is a whole section dedicated to plants, such an important aspect of any interior. I can't recommend this book highly enough — you don't just dream with this book, your dreams become reality."



An interiors shot from *Home for Now* by Joanna Thornhill, above. Andrew Dunning, a designer, says that the book is inspiring for those on a budget

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POOLSIDE WITH SLIM AARONS *Poolside with Slim Aarons* by Slim Aarons (Abrams Books, 240pp, \$85) Sam McNally, design director for Echlin, the prime central London design and development firm, says: "This is an inspirational coffee-table book for luxury living. It is the definition of classic luxury lifestyle and a global photographic time capsule of a special era of true exclusivity before mass tourism. Slim Aarons is one of the most influential magazine photographers of our time and this particular book is a

rare behind-the-scenes glimpse of the alluring lives of the rich and famous in their luxury villas and residences throughout the Fifties, Sixties and Seventies. "The photographs inspire beyond well-curated or 'static' images of beautiful rooms and architecture, they whisk you away to exclusive homes and private retreats where dreams become realities, and taste, style and grandeur prevail. They show the properties and hang-outs of the 'jet-set', perfectly poised and brought to life. For the aspirational, there are few better guides for classic good taste."

ANDREW MARTIN INTERIOR DESIGN REVIEW *Andrew Martin (volume 18, teNeues, 496pp, £45)* Laura Hammett, director and co-founder of the luxury London interior design and interior architecture studio that bears her name, says: "The stunning photography in the annual compendium allows readers access to the most spectacular designs across the globe, providing insight into international style and the opportunity to see inside incredible homes."

THE IMPOSSIBLE COLLECTION OF DESIGN *The 100 Most Influential Objects of the Twentieth Century* by Frédéric Chabre (Assouline, 144pp, \$845) Dara Huang, creative director and founder at Design Haus Liberty, says: "There are many inspiring interior design coffee-table books but one that really stands out for me is this book by Frédéric Chabre. It offers an incredible overview of some of the most valuable pieces of furniture of the 20th century. "I sometimes use it for a quick historical reference to some key pieces of furniture that would mix really well in a modern household. It also looks well on my coffee table due to its bright and bold yellow colour and luxurious materials used throughout, thereby adding a fun and positive vibe to the living space."

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