

DEPARTURES

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2012

**THE
HOLIDAY
ISSUE**

**ONE
NIGHT**
AT BERGDORF'S

**OFF TO
ST. BARTHS
PATAGONIA
BERLIN**

**THE BEST
LITTLE
RESTAURANT IN
SWEDEN**

**FAST TIMES AT
PORSCHE
DRIVING
SCHOOL**

winter thrills!

BOOKS

PAGE TURNERS

Who still reads actual books? Anyone who can't imagine going to some teeny electronic device to discover the world's beauty. **Fred Bernstein** sticks up for the coffee-table book through the best of the new.

While doomsayers have been proclaiming the digital age as the end of printed matter, the truth is, there exists no electronic equivalent to the pleasures of the coffee-table book—from the satisfaction of lifting something with true weight to the visual feast of paging through lush imagery on glossy, heavy paper stock. Show us an e-reader that wouldn't render flat the rooms of **Ann Getty: Interior Style** (Rizzoli), a trip through houses filled with the world's finest objets, or turn the homes of Tino Zervudachi, the Paris-based designer whose clients include rock stars and royalty, in **A Portfolio** (Pointed Leaf Press) into razor-sharp (read: lifeless) backlit images. Try to go back in time with **Slim Aarons: La Dolce Vita** (Abrams), with his photographs of Italy bathed in the warm light of the Magnani-Mastroianni era, or **Classical Chinese Furniture** (Vendome Press), Marcus Flacks's catalogue of 52 pieces from the 16th to 18th centuries, on the distinctly 21st-century iPad. For the romantically nostalgic content housed in these tomes, ink on paper is the way it was meant to be enjoyed.

In other cases, coffee-table books represent the closest analogue we can find to a cabinet of curiosities, as in **Contemporary Follies** (The Monacelli Press), a compendium of small, experimental buildings that punctuate landscapes; **Wendell Castle: Wandering Forms** (Gregory R. Miller & Co./The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum), in which surrealist etchings are realized as startling furniture; or **Norman Bel Geddes Designs America** (Abrams), a chronicle of

the visionary designer who streamlined everything from radios to typewriters.

In the realm of coffee-table cookbooks, form triumphs over function—certainly, wiping away the melted Valrhona chocolate called for in Thomas Keller's **Bouchon Bakery** (Artisan) or the tamarind pulp required by Naomi Duguid in **Burma: Rivers of Flavor** (Artisan) would be much more feasible on a tablet than a hardcover, but one could hardly share a Nook with the image of freshly baked Nutter Butters the way one could display the same arresting shot in a gorgeously bound book.

And as for titles that give us a tour through nature, what could be more fitting than reading on paper fibers? Travel with George Steinmetz by paraglider over the world's driest places in **Desert Air** (Abrams), or embrace **Magnificent Trees of the New York Botanical Garden** (The Monacelli Press), Larry Lederman's photos of limbs, leaves, boughs, branches and buds that expose precedents in nature for Pollock's splashes, Rothko's color-fields and even Haring's doodles. Follow photographer Alain Le Toquin's nose as he discovers **Flowers in the World's Most Beautiful Gardens** (Abrams); it's yet another reminder of the importance of the well-made coffee-table book in a digital era: A rose in any other format might not look as pink.

