

The New York Times

2015 Holiday Gift Ideas and Guide – Books ART

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HEFTY AND BULKY, these are not books that travel well. But that doesn't mean they won't transport you to places you will want to visit time and again. This year's crop of art books includes a detailed analysis of Picasso's sculptures, an examination of Africa's early cultural exchanges with Renaissance Europe and handy volumes on two American originals, Helen Frankenthaler and Agnes Martin. The New York Times's art critics weigh in about these and other gift ideas.

BY HOLLAND COTTER AND ROBERTA SMITH

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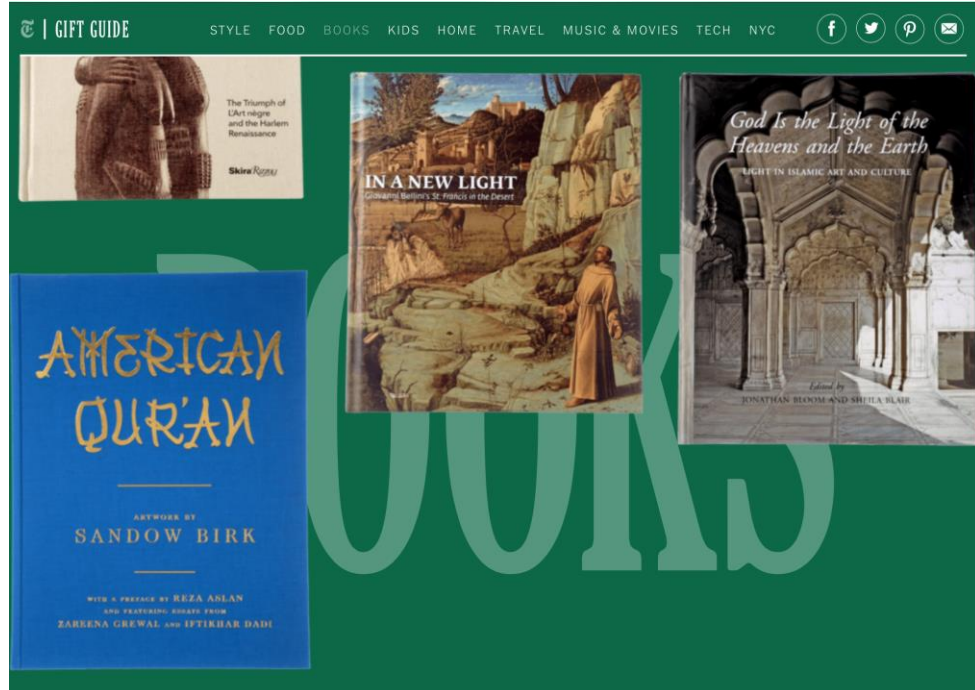
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+ 415 399 1439

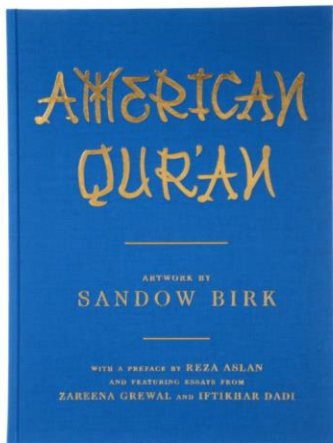
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American Qur'an

BY SANDOW BIRK

\$100 | WWW.NORTON.COM



No book on my list comes close to the sheer heft of this one. Over nine years, the California-based artist Sandow Birk hand-transcribed the entire text of an English translation of the Muslim holy book, using a lettering style based on graffiti tagging. He illustrated the margins of each page with ink-and-gouache images of American life: family dinners, surfers, supermarkets, slaughterhouses, bodies afloat during Hurricane Katrina. It's quite a panorama, this labor-intensive version of a major historical book embedded within a massive contemporary one. Scholarly essays by Reza Aslan, Zareena Grewal and Iftikhar Dadi provide vital backup information. All of the book's original pages will be on view at the Orange County Museum of Art in Newport Beach, Calif., through Feb. 28. — HOLLAND COTTER

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/multimedia/2015-holiday-gift-guide-books.html>