

The New Status Symbol: Buying By the Book

Brass monkeys, Gucci cars and elephant ice tubs are just a few of the offbeat gifts still available through this year's crop of Christmas catalogues.

By Karen Feld

It's not too late. If you hurry, you can still place your order for a credit card pillow.

But, perhaps a sterling silver bottle opener is more your style? Or how about a genuine brass monkey complete with trapeze?

Oh wait, we've got just the thing — a limited edition Cadillac Seville designed by . . . Gucci, of course.

These are just a few of the offbeat — and, in some case, downright outrageously expensive — gifts available this year through Christmas catalogues.

Museums, specialty stores, mail order houses, and just about any other merchant willing to pay today's exorbitant mailing costs has probably already sent you one. And, if your credit is good, you've probably gotten at least ten. To some, the number of catalogues received has become the new status symbol. (By the way, most of the catalogues are free, and the ones that aren't can usually be obtained for a nominal \$2 or \$3 fee.)

Because the mail order business has grown so rapidly in the past five years, there's heated competition among catalogue merchants to out-class, out-price and out-chic each other. Each season, it seems, the books become more artistic, better designed and photographed, while the products inside grow more costly, wildly imaginative and more wonderfully impractical.

Perhaps the best of the crop this year is the first annual Rodeo Drive Catalogue. Only 100,000 copies have been printed, available throughout the world on a mail order basis for \$4. The 40-page book, with items ranging in price up to a \$443,000 diamond necklace, was introduced at a party at — where else — the Beverly Hills Post Of-

fice. Forty merchants of one of the world's most renowned shopping streets are represented. And,

Neiman-Marcus enlisted the talent of Hollywood cartoon creator Chuck Jones to design their Christmas book. It pictures Wile E. Coyote, finding innovative solutions to his shopping problems at N-M, of course.

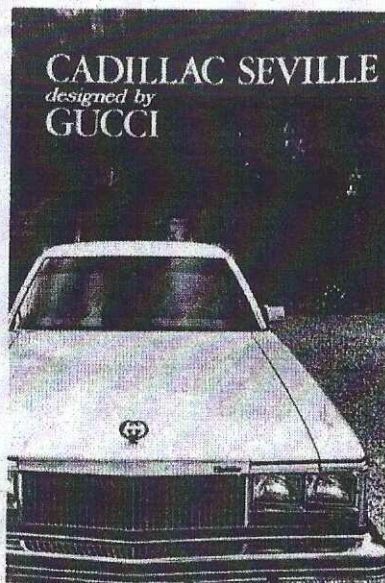
But, without further ado, here's an imaginative sampling of what you can buy for that impossible-to-shop-for-person without ever once having to battle traffic and fight the crowds from Chevy Chase to Tysons Corner:

- **Queen Victorian Desk.** This desk was originally commissioned by Queen Victoria I of England for her personal use and was reproduced faithfully by William S. Wooton. It is in Renaissance Revival Style of carved walnut inlaid trimmed with satinwood and ebony. Neiman-Marcus. \$150,000.

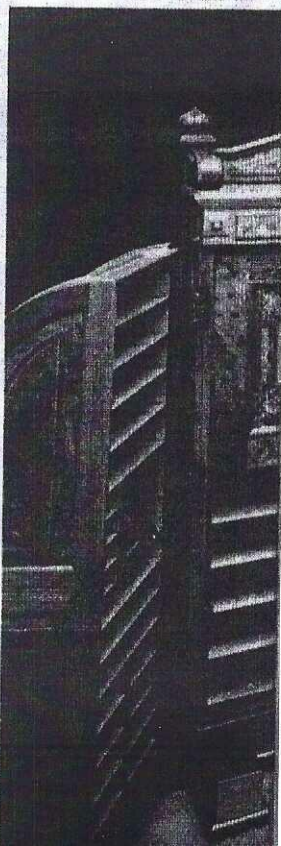
- **Brass Monkey.** The limited edition gift is by Bustamante and comes complete with trapeze, ready to hang in any room. Rodeo Drive Catalogue, from Knights Ltd. \$1,560.

- **Clayjeans.** The jeans that never wear out have two back pockets and come in faded denim. The ceramic derriere measures 11½ inches by 10½ inches. The sculpture can be mounted on any wall. The Paragon, Westerly, Rhode Island. \$30.

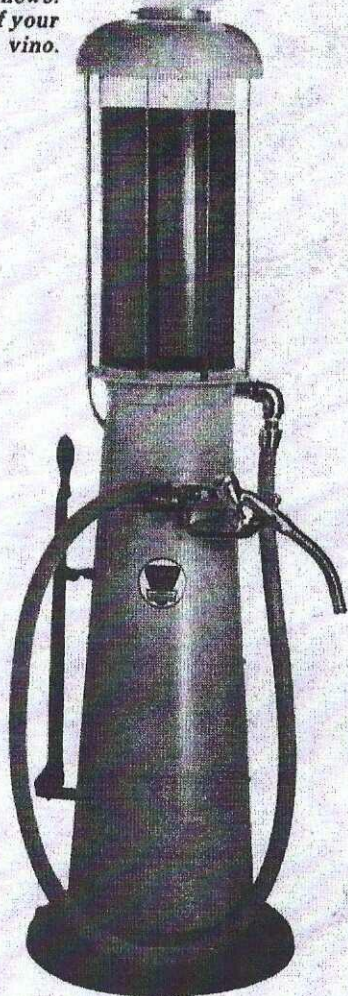
- **Anklung, an unusual looking bamboo sculpture.** This is not only a fascinating art object, but also a real musical instrument. It is handmade in the forests of Java and serves as accompaniment to native folksong fests as well as a solo. The sound is similar to a xylophone or vibraharp, and is to remind you of water trickling down



Yes, it's a bit expensive, but Gucci's limited edition Cadillac Seville (above) may be just the thing for that impossible-to-shop-for person on your gift list. And just think, there's a matching five-piece set of luggage already in the trunk . . . by Gucci, of course. Not to be outdone, Neiman-Marcus has something for those of you who



You can say fill 'er up and mean it with this old-fashioned pump wine dispenser from American Express. It measures seven feet tall and one foot, 11 inches at the base, has solid brass fittings and a handblown glass cylinder. Now the good news: it holds 20 gallons of your favorite vino.



a mountainside. It's tuned to Western music scales so you can play it by grabbing the appropriate tubes and shaking. Twenty-seven inches high. Adam York, Hanover, Pennsylvania. \$65.

• **Credit card pillows.** Master Charge and VISA pillows created in satin to look like the real thing. Never be without your plastic. Twelve inches by 20 inches each. Geary's, Beverly Hills. \$25.

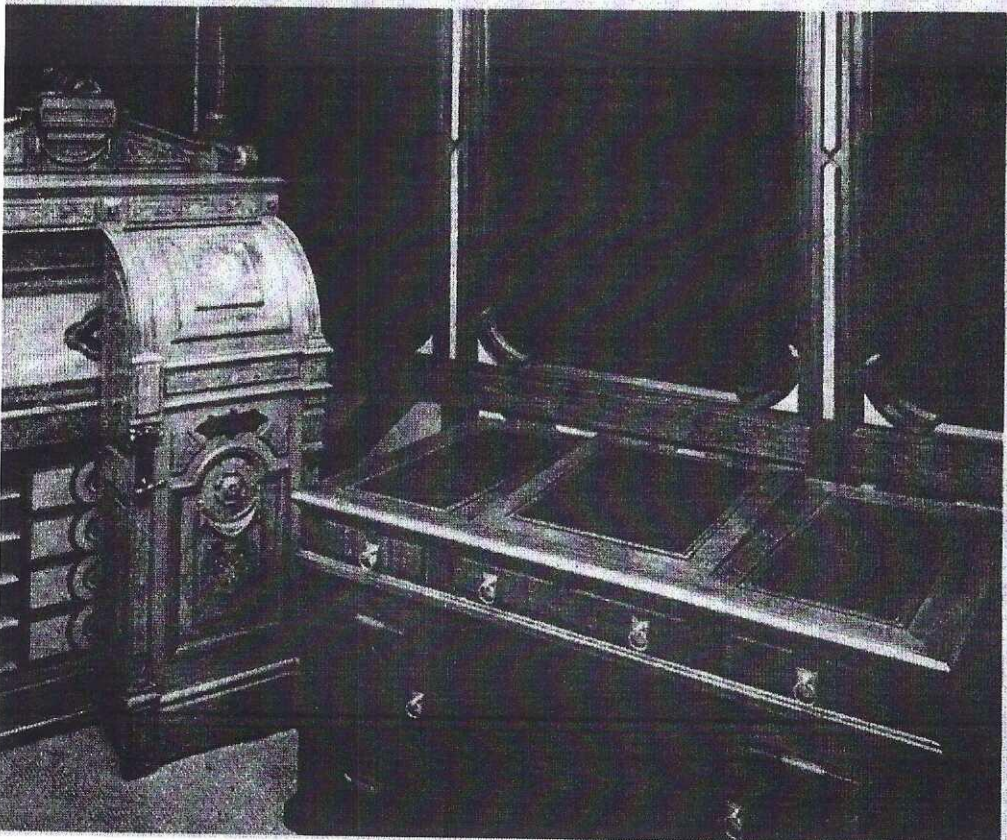
• **Sterling silver bottle opener.** A perfect gift for you Perrier lovers. Set also includes two caps that fit perfectly, of course. From Cartier. Reflections, I. Magnin, Set \$45.

• **Library of leather bound books.** The catch here is all will bear your name as author. You don't even have to write the first word. In this case, you can judge a book by its cover.

Inside the gold inscribed covers is nothing but blank paper. A perfect gift for the aspiring writer. Sakowitz, Houston, Texas. One book, \$43.75; ten books, \$312.50; 100 books, \$2,500; 1,000 books, \$25,000.

• **Bath tub and shower in the round.** A combination of a cylindrical see-through shower atop a circular bath. Incorporated into the back wall of the shower cabin are compartments for bath accessories, a full length mirror, hand controls, coiled chrome towel holders, and warmer that serves as a hot water pipe. A see-through sliding panel keeps towels dry. The circular bath has a comfortable contoured seat, anti-slip bottom and deluxe controls. Available in white, red or black. Seventy-nine inches in diameter, six feet, 10½ inches tall. Prepiped

Continued on page 24



Continued from page 15

for easy installation. Hammer Schlemmer, New York. \$4,200.

• 1979 *Cadillac Seville* designed by *Gucci*. This limited edition includes the distinctive GG hood ornament, the gold-lettered Gucci name across the rear deck lid, vinyl roof with GG design, 24-carat, gold-plated metal pieces imported from Florence, Italy, GG on all four wire wheel covers, GG and horse bit design on front fenders, the Gucci green-red-green stripe along both sides of the automobile and across the rear deck lid. The interior is ap-

pointed with armrests, headrests, and headliner, all featuring the Gucci design. A matching five-piece set of Gucci luggage is already in the trunk. White, brown, or black exterior. Gucci. \$19,900.

• **Old-fashioned gas pump wine dispenser.** Realistic detail and personalized with your choice of name on the sign. Holds 20 gallons. Measures seven feet, ten inches tall, and one foot, 11 inches at the base. Fittings are solid brass on heavy handblown glass cylinder. Yellow or red. American Express Company. \$12.95.

• Japanese Money Boxes.

Decorative wooden boxes from a collection three quarters of a century old. Some have drawers and keys. All are about 12 inches to 15 inches long and eight inches to nine inches tall and eight inches deep. They can be used

"To some, the number of catalogues received has become the new status symbol."

as desk-top organizers, sewing boxes or object d'art. Horchow Collection, Dallas, Texas. \$150 each.

•*Carousel Music Box.* This eight-inch high music box contains two rows of animals with horses going up and down. Battery powered lights provide the glitter. It's red and white with imaginative detail. Based on a carousel at the Smithsonian. The Smithsonian Catalogue, \$1,200.

• *Elephant Ice Tub.* This decorative ice tub measures 22 inches long and 26 inches high. It can be used for chilling a bottle of wine. Hand-crafted of silver plate with ivory tusks in Florence, Italy. Plummer-McCutcheon, New York. \$1,495.

• A bushel of popcorn. A wooden basket packed with three pounds of pre-popped butter popcorn, sealed in a plastic bag for freshness. Eighteen inches in diameter, 13 inches tall bushel basket. The Horchow Collection, Dallas, Texas. \$16.50. ☆

1. A Bushel Of Popcorn.
Enough for a party of 4.
wonderful family gift. A new
wonder bushel is packed
with 3 pounds of buttery
already popped corn. No
chances for oil burns
bushel with popcorn perfect
in a playful bag to keep it
fresh. \$4.99/ea. 16.55 ea. 15.99

Our Dozen Cakes:
We're scrumptious
cakes, including
velvety buttermilk,
peanut pound and
in delight, vacuum
in individual cans.
A delicious treat
Wishes an ideal gift
of great to have on
hand, too. Twelve
per cake. **1997**
27.50/1.95

Ice Crystal Candy
Sugar in pure form,
just how it tasted
you're a child?
You can enjoy it
again. One pound.
Source: **1997**
13.50/1.95

1350/195/10



Here's a page out of the Horchow catalogue dieters should avoid. The Dallas-based company suggests a dozen different cakes, hard rock candy and a bushel of popcorn as three completely edible gifts.