

The fashion set's favourite tarot card reader — at £1,500 a session

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Dr Kate Tomas's journey with tarot started at the age of 17 when she dreamt of walking down Glastonbury High Street, turning onto a dark alley and heading down some stairs to a tarot reader's shop. She retraced this route when she woke up, found the shop and had her first reading. She was so taken with the experience that she bought a pack of tarot cards and starting offering readings in a tiny room above a crystal shop in Glastonbury. Today Tomas uses the same pack of cards, but commands £1,500 for a 45-minute reading (plus two days of WhatsApp support). Meanwhile, her spiritual mentorship packages start at £4,000 per month with a six-month minimum. Her devotees include actress Megan Mullally and New Look CEO Tom Singh.

"My clients expect uncanny accuracy, a succinct grasp of their situation and specific and empowering guidance," says Tomas, who has a PhD in Theology and is reportedly the girlfriend of the actor Andrew Garfield. "The relationship I have with the cards is one of symbolic language; they trigger emotional shortcuts to my own library of associations, which allow me to speak to the specificity of my client's situation."

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Tarot is having something of a rebirth. In early 2025, it will be the subject of an exhibition at the Warburg Institute in London. *Tarot: Origins & Afterlives* will explore the evolution of tarot from its earliest days as a 15th-century courtly card game to its modern adaptations. Next month the actress and goth poster-girl Christina Ricci will release her first tarot deck, *Cat Full of Spiders*, which she has designed with her husband Mark Hampton and tarot expert Minerva Siegel. Featuring whimsical designs and an accompanying guidebook, it is “a passion project” explains Ricci. “It is filled with references to moments in my life. I hope that it introduces people to the wonder of tarot.”



One of the pieces from Colleen Allen's collection, inspired by Leonora Carrington

Meanwhile, at New York fashion week in February, designer Colleen Allen's collection was inspired by the figures of the Empress and the High Priestess from a set of tarot cards designed in the 1950s by Surrealist artist, Leonora Carrington. Furthermore, Chanel has just released a range of cosmetics inspired by the cosmic mysteries, including 'Les Tarots de

Chanel', two powder blushes, in orange and lavender, imprinted with a set of tarot cards. Coco Chanel was intrigued by occult symbolism, as is Dior's Maria Grazia Chiuri, who used imagery from the tarot in her AW 2021 collection.



Dr Kate Tomas

“There is a huge, growing interest in tarot, along with the other psychic healing arts,” says Dante Sabatino, a tarot reader whose clients include designer Gabriela Hearst, as well as executives at Chanel, Saks Fifth Avenue, Soho House and L’Oreal. Sabatino, a former New York PR-executive, is a second-generation tarot reader, who owes his talent with the cards to his mother. Following self-guided study, including mentorship from experienced readers, Sabatino started reading the cards professionally alongside his day job in 1995. Sessions start from around \$250 (£192) and are about empowerment rather than prognostication. “People want to know more as their lives are challenged more than ever, and they are open to new possibilities.”





The 1909 Rider-Waite-Smith deck of tarot cards

The earliest known tarot decks were created in Italy for the Milanese and Ferrarese courts, where they were used to play a game called *tarocchini* (derived from the Arabic, *turuquin* or 'wayfarers'). These decks featured four suits similar to modern playing cards, along with a set of 22 illustrated trump cards, known as the Major Arcana. The cards had different point values and the winner had the most points. It was only later, in the 18th century, that tarot cards began to be associated with mysticism, particularly in France. Figures like Antoine Court de Gébelin and Jean-Baptiste Alliette (also known as Etteilla) were instrumental in transforming tarot into a tool for divination. They linked the tarot's imagery to ancient Egyptian mysteries, Kabbalah, and alchemical symbolism, even though these connections were largely speculative. By the 20th century, the tarot gained widespread popularity, particularly with the publication of the Rider-Waite-Smith deck in 1909, designed by Arthur Edward Waite and illustrated by Pamela Colman Smith. This deck standardised the symbolic meanings of the cards, making them accessible to a broader audience.



Pamela Colman Smith

Tarot readings involve using a deck of 78 cards, each with its own symbolism, to gain insight into personal questions or situations. The deck is divided into the Major Arcana, which represents significant life events or themes, and the Minor Arcana, which deals with day-to-day issues. A reader shuffles the cards while focusing on the question or topic at hand. The cards are then drawn and laid out in a specific spread, with each position in the spread representing different aspects of the question or situation. The reader interprets the cards based on their imagery, position in the spread, and relationship to each other. Cards include The Fool, The Lovers, The Tower and that most familiar of tropes from horror movies, Death. However, the tarot reader's interpretation is not about predicting the future with certainty but rather offering a perspective or guidance that can help the client reflect on their life and make informed decisions. The cards are thought to tap into the subconscious mind or a higher spiritual guidance, offering insights that might not be immediately apparent.

"It can be useful to think of the tarot deck as we know it as an unbound book of life, each page representing either an archetypal energy or experience," says Kate Tomas. "When we shuffle the cards with intention, even if that intention is to gain more clarity about what is happening to us in that moment, the pages of the book, of the story, get rearranged. It has an ability to speak to the very nature of human experience at the same time as the unique specificity of real circumstances that are personal and particular to us. There's no tool of self-awareness like it."

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Salvador Dali cast his wife Gala as the Empress in his 1984 deck of tarot cards

By the mid and late 20th century, tarot had started to inspire a new generation of artists. Leonora Carrington, who escaped the confines of her aristocratic background to become an artist, created her deck in 1955. In 1984 Salvador Dali cast himself as the Magician and his wife, Gala, as the Empress. The Thoth Tarot deck, designed by the notorious occultist Aleister Crowley and painted by Lady Frieda Harris, was created in the 1940s. This deck is known for its complex symbolism and vivid, intricate artwork. The original paintings for this are held at the Warburg Institute and some will be featured in the new exhibition.

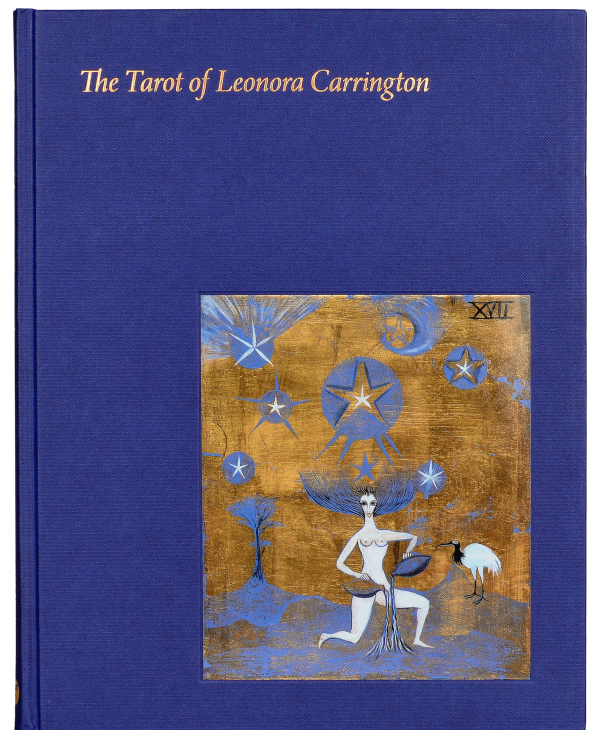
Despite the associations with Crowley (who was called the “wickedest man in the world”), both Sabatino and Tomas agree that the biggest misconception that people hold about tarot is that it is in some way ‘evil’. Instead, they see it as a tool, much like astrology, that has endured for centuries, allowing users to explore all areas of their lives, both the tangible and intangible.

Seven Suggestions for Exploring Tarot Further



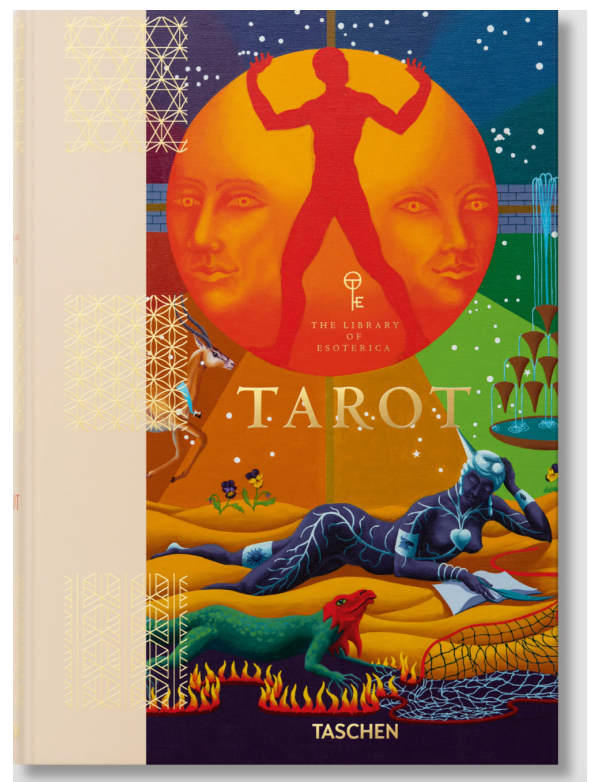
Dior playing cards case

Store your deck in style in this calfskin case, available in red or powder pink. Details [here](#)



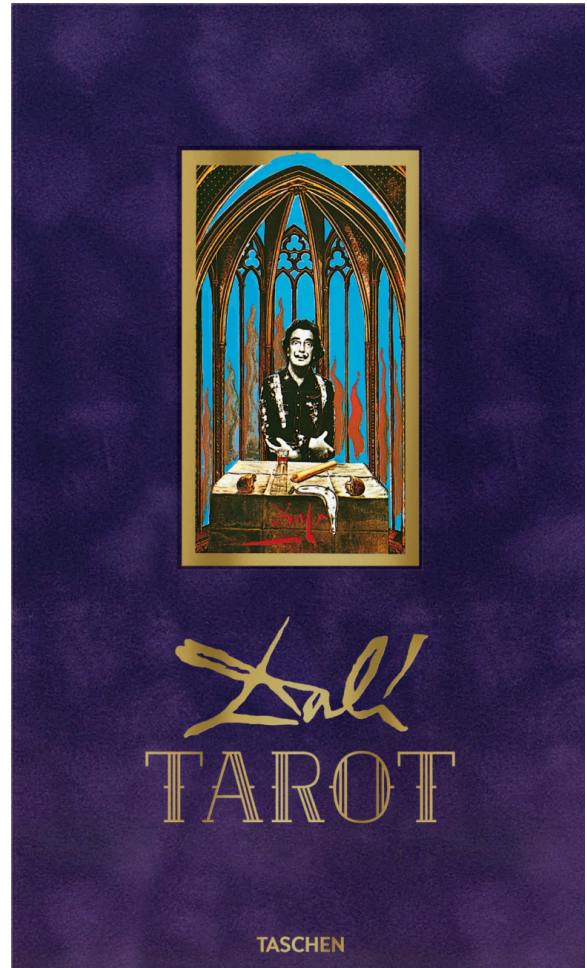
The Tarot of Leonora Carrington at Fulgur Press

Fully explore the legendary artist's take on tarot in the first full-size facsimile of her Major Arcana deck. Details [here](#)



Tarot from Taschen's The Library of Esoterica series

This compendium covers more than 500 tarot-related artworks from around the world.
Details [here](#)



Dali. Tarot from Taschen

This box set reproduction of Dali's 1984 set and accompanying book fully explores the artist's tongue-in-cheek vision. Julius Caesar as the Ten of Swords, anyone? Details [here](#)



Artisan jewellery from Wolf & Badger

Tarot-inspired pendants featuring sapphires and diamonds, including the Mop & Sapphire Diamond In Gold Moon Star Tarot Card Pendant, pictured, for £2,706. Details [here](#)



Restored and hand-painted tarot decks from Tarot Sheet Revival

Custom-restored historic decks, costing up to around €500. Details [here](#)



Chanel's mystical powder blush

Should you choose the lavender or the orange shade — why don't you let the cards decide for you? Details [here](#)