



The House of Klein: Fashion, Controversy, and a Business Obsession

By Lisa Marsh

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A fashion world insider and journalist reveals the secret world of Calvin Klein. The House of Klein for the first time tells the inside story of the rise of a fashion legend and the mammoth empire he built. Calvin Klein is the world's most well-known (and successful) fashion designer and has created one of the most recognizable brands in existence, but the tale of his ascendancy to the top of the fashion industry has never been fully told. The House of Klein is the warts-and-all exposé of a boy from the Bronx who made his name synonymous with high fashion by making his brand synonymous with sex. This book offers an informed, insider's account of the defining moments of a fashion legend's life, a life circumscribed by personal and professional struggle. Fashion writer Lisa Marsh pulls no punches in presenting the true story of this mammoth of the clothing industry, complete with corporate battles, lawsuits, petty personal vendettas and backroom dealings. Marsh reveals the underbelly of the glittering world of high fashion—a world characterized not so much by beautiful people and wild parties, as it is by money and power, above all else. The House of Klein brings to life this compelling figure through the author's own research and interviews with the man himself, as well as with other figures in the industry—such as Isaac Mizrahi—who finally come clean about the man behind the brand. Lisa Marsh (New York, NY) focused on the bottom line instead of the hemline while working at the New York Post covering the fashion and retail beat. A veteran of the fashion industry, she began her career in journalism writing financial news stories for the fashion industry bible Women's Wear Daily.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Throughout American fashion designer Calvin Klein's 35-year career, he has been "dogged by rumors about his sexuality, illnesses, illicit drug use and shady business dealings," writes New York Post fashion reporter Marsh, who presumably had a front-row seat. Nevertheless, this unauthorized book, which the author refers to as a "business biography," offers little inside information about any of these issues as it tracks Klein and his partner Barry Schwartz's success in creating and transforming Calvin Klein Inc. from a manufacturing company to a design, licensing and marketing firm, which in its last years was averaging earnings of about \$3 billion annually. (The company was sold to Phillips-Van Heusen in early 2003.) Marsh presents her material about the company's evolution in chronological order, exploring how it either tapped into or redirected American fashion trends over the past 30 years-including, of course, the placement of logos on everything from T-shirts to underwear. But she explains little about the man behind the initials-and even less about the people he interacted with. All the major players, in fact, are described in tabloid terms. Klein and Schwartz, for example, are repeatedly described as either the "scrappy" or "street-savvy" "duo from the Bronx." Rapper Marky Mark, who was featured in Klein's print advertisements for underwear and jeans, is "the boyish man." And Klein foe Linda Wachner, former CEO of the Warnaco Group Inc. (which licensed Calvin Klein underwear) is described as "the ball-busting blonde." Business readers looking for a quick history of the American fashion scene since 1970 may find this book appealing. However, general readers looking for lifestyles of the rich and famous will be disappointed.

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Review

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"...your going to love the House of Klein..." (*Harpers & Queen*, September 2003)

"...it captures beautifully the long hours of hard work and the joy of success..." (*Management Today*, September 2003)

"...this book offers an informed, insider's account of the defining moments of a fashion legends life..." (*Luton News*, 10 September 2003)

[the book] "reveals fashion's bottom line". (*USA Today*, September 29, 2003)

"...this investigation of the controversial New York designer focuses on the business dealings..." (*Hot Stars*, 11 October 2003)

From the Inside Flap

The House of Klein tells the inside story of the rise of a fashion legend and the business empire he built from the ground up. Calvin Klein is perhaps the world's best-known fashion designer and creator of one of the most recognizable brands in the global marketplace. At the forefront of fashion for more than thirty years, Klein has been no stranger to controversy—yet his continued success and profits always seem to answer his critics for him.

In *The House of Klein*, fashion writer and industry insider Lisa Marsh offers a warts-and-all exposé of the kid from the Bronx who rose from copy boy at *Women's Wear Daily* to the head of a \$3 billion corporation built on the power of sex. First grabbing attention in the 1970s, Klein revolutionized the industry by offering designer jeans at affordable prices. But it was his advertisements, more than his designs, which would land him on the front page.

In the early 1980s, ads featuring teenage beauty Brooke Shields making provocative statements including "Do you know what comes between me and my Calvins? Nothing." brought charges of sexual exploitation of a child, but the resulting maelstrom only garnered more attention for the thriving brand. Klein followed by introducing his *Obsession* fragrance in 1985 which was accompanied by an ad campaign that featured the naked arms, legs, and torsos of several unidentifiable models.

In the 1990s, Klein's use of the famously thin "it girl" Kate Moss, prompted more criticism. Her gaunt, boyish features and vacant stare hinted at child pornography, sexual ambiguity, anorexia, and even heroin use, but again Klein managed to leverage the brouhaha to further boost his brand recognition.

Attacked from all sides—by conservative pro-family groups and feminist organizations, among many others—Klein continued to question American taste and morality. But his success eventually led to scrutiny of his personal life, and rumors sprung up about his sexuality, as well as alcoholism and his petty personal vendettas. Marsh uncovers the truth and the fiction behind these claims, revealing Klein as a more complicated figure than both his detractors and supporters would have us believe.

Much like the affecting yet disturbing images associated with his brand, Klein is a contradictory figure capable of both warm charm and icy wrath. As a businessman, he is either a calculated genius or a lucky bumbler whose company succeeds despite his meddling. Above all, he is an entrepreneur who knows that sex sells. *The House of Klein* presents a revealing portrait of the man behind the brand—an inscrutable giant of the fashion industry whose influence continues to shape the American cultural landscape.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Robert Thomas:

Nowadays reading books be than want or need but also work as a life style. This reading addiction give you

lot of advantages. Associate programs you got of course the knowledge even the information inside the book which improve your knowledge and information. The info you get based on what kind of book you read, if you want drive more knowledge just go with education books but if you want truly feel happy read one having theme for entertaining for example comic or novel. The The House of Klein: Fashion, Controversy, and a Business Obsession is kind of guide which is giving the reader erratic experience.

Brenda Lewis:

Spent a free time for you to be fun activity to accomplish! A lot of people spent their sparetime with their family, or their very own friends. Usually they accomplishing activity like watching television, planning to beach, or picnic from the park. They actually doing same task every week. Do you feel it? Will you something different to fill your own personal free time/ holiday? Could possibly be reading a book is usually option to fill your free of charge time/ holiday. The first thing that you will ask may be what kinds of publication that you should read. If you want to consider look for book, may be the reserve untitled The House of Klein: Fashion, Controversy, and a Business Obsession can be great book to read. May be it can be best activity to you.

Robert Ford:

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