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The Marchesa Casati: Portraits Of A Muse



Synopsis

"I want to be a living work of art."--The Marchesa Luisa CasatiÂ During the first half of the twentieth century, the Marchesa Luisa Casati (1881-1957) was Europe's most notorious celebrity. Her extravagant lifestyle, eccentric personality, and scandalous escapades captivated and inspired some of the most influential artists of her time. She was painted by Boldini and Augustus John, sketched by Drian and Alastair, and photographed by Man Ray and CecilÂ Beaton, among others. Jean Cocteau praised her strange beauty; Jack Kerouac dedicated poems to her; Fortuny, Poiret, and Erte dressed her. She continues to inspire top designers today, including John Galliano and Karl Lagerfeld.Â The Marchesa Casati is a visual biography, telling Casati's captivating life story alongside the art and designs she has inspired, featuring 200 images covering her lifetime and beyond. Personal family momentos, paintings, sculptures, and photographs, some never before seen, illustrate the artistic and cultural legacy she left behind. Runway images, sketches, and advertorials show her continuing impact on the present-day fashion community.Â "The Marchesa Casati: Portraits of a MuseÂ explores Casati's heart and soul. It's a wonderfully complete portrait of a style icon, during her life and afterward, lavishly illustrated with more than 200 images, including personal mementos, and the art and designs she has inspired even today."–Booth Moore, Los Angeles Times, September 13, 2009Â "The story of the Marchesa Luisa Casati's life resembles a fable for our times. Ryersson and Yaccarino present a compelling collection of images to tell the story of Italy's richest heiress at turn of the last century, whose married aristocratic life and progeny were cast aside to indulge in a dramatically theatrical existence...She emerges a heroine, living the fantasy, all the way to the end."–Glass MagazineÂ "With incredible passion for the Marchesa Casati, Scot D. Ryersson and Michael Orlando Yaccarino have worked tirelessly to create a stunning homage and a visual biography to this legendary woman who continues to inspire fashion and style." --Diane von Furstenberg

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As a bedtime reader, it is easy to tell when I am into a page-turner - I go to bed early. A few years ago when reading "Infinite Variety", the authors' first offering on Casati's life and times, I remember announcing to my husband that "I think I'll go and see what the Marchesa is up to tonight", whereupon he gave me that "you're going to bed at 8:30 look?" Unlike "Infinite Variety", "The Marchesa Casati Portraits of a Muse" is not a book to be hungrily devoured. It is more like fine dining - one wants to savor every bite! It is important to understand both what this book is and what it is not. It is a picture book. But unlike so many of today's pictorial offerings, it is definitely not a poorly researched and bunged-together doorstop. This book was more curated than written. It was done so with so much obvious attention to detail that one can easily imagine its contents on display at a blockbuster National Portrait Gallery show. From the high production values to the tasteful and varied graphics and the clever construction that sets out the Casati legend in dramatic phases, this is a beautiful book. Two things shine through on every page - the passion the authors have for their subject matter and the care they take to ensure their many pictures appear alongside the corresponding text. This latter point is not a minor one - so many authors of illustrated books bend to publishing economics by binding in picture "sections" which require the reader to madly flip back and forth through many pages in order to relate textual and graphic elements. In this book the echoes of argument between the authors, editors and layout artists ("no, the Van Dongen portrait stays right where it is.... you move the D'Annunzio photo over my dead body".... etc.) are visceral.

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