



## **House of Versace: The Untold Story of Genius, Murder, and Survival**

*Deborah Ball*

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*Versace*. The very name conjures up images of outrageous glamour and bold sexuality, opulence and daring. All of course true, but only half the story. Versace is also the legacy of a great creative genius from a poor, backward part of southern Italy who transformed the fashion world through his intuitive understanding of both women and how a changing culture influenced the way they wanted to dress. The first book in English about the legendary designer, **House of Versace** shows how Gianni Versace, with his flamboyant sister Donatella at his side, combined his virtuosic talent and extraordinary ambition to almost single-handedly create the celebrity culture we take for granted today.

Gianni Versace was at the height of his creative powers when he was murdered in Miami Beach. The story was front page news around the world and the manhunt for his killer a media obsession. His beloved sister Donatella demanded no less than a funeral befitting an assassinated head-of-state to be held in Milan's magnificent cathedral. In what was the ultimate fashion show, the world's rich and beautiful – Princess Dianna, Elton John, Carla Bruni, Naomi Campbell, Carolyn Bessette-Kennedy, Anna Wintour and others – gathered to mourn a man already considered one of fashion's great pioneers.

Deborah Ball, a long-time Milan correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal*, conducted hundreds of interviews with Versace family members, Gianni Versace's lovers and business rivals, models such as Naomi Campbell whom he helped shoot to international stardom and fashion industry icons, including Anna Wintour, the legendary editor of *Vogue*.

Ball vividly recounts the behind-the scenes struggles – both creative and business – of Donatella as she stepped out of her brother's long shadow and took control of the House of Versace. The book offers the first inside look at the enormous challenges Donatella faced in living up to Gianni's genius, her struggle with a drug habit, her battles with her brother Santo and the mystery of why Gianni left control of his house to Donatella's young daughter, Allegra. **House of Versace** is a compelling, highly readable tale of rise from obscurity, a painful fall and ultimate redemption as the Versace empire returned to health – for now.

Bringing together fashion, celebrity, business drama, jet-set lifestyles, and a notorious crime, **House of Versace** is an old-fashioned page-turner about a subject of enduring fascination.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

## House of Versace: The Untold Story of Genius, Murder, and Survival Details

Date : Published (first published December 29th 2009)

ISBN :

Author : Deborah Ball

Format : Kindle Edition 354 pages

Genre : Couture, Fashion, Biography, Nonfiction, Business

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## **From Reader Review House of Versace: The Untold Story of Genius, Murder, and Survival for online ebook**

### **Becky says**

I'm torn between the utter frivolity of the subject, and interest in the behind-the-scenes information on a business about which I previously knew almost nothing. The book isn't about the Versace murder, but about the fashion house itself, and its birth and near-death as a family concern. The author had the cooperation of everyone in the family except Allegra, the young heiress, which makes me wonder how honest it really is. On the one hand, she constantly raves about Gianni's genius (and maybe he was, but his genius wasn't fashion so much as marketing - but then, what is fashion, really?), but on the other, she actually owns that Donatella, originally Gianni's "muse," now resembles no one so much as Janice from the muppets--which, while true, is hardly the sort of thing a PR mouthpiece would say.

Mostly, it's a wonderful lesson on how not to run a business, but she does make Donatella especially come to life, so that in the end you're rooting for the company to survive, even though it couldn't matter less if there were one couture house fewer in the world.

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### **Sandy Priester says**

Very interesting, a detailed insight in to the wild 90's.

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### **Kodiaksm says**

SUPER - The author, Deborah Ball, did an outstanding job of organizing the story of the expensive fashion industry and the House of Versace. This 2010 book described the "World of Versace" from so many perspectives: business, family, art, architecture, addiction, mental health, and culture (Italy, New York City, and Miami)--so much more. I felt like I traveled the world with people I have never experienced.

The only thing lacking was more pictures of the family, office locations, Versace fashions etc. -- A search on the internet for these pictures may cure my curiosity.

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### **Briana says**

I picked this up on a whim, having been in Miami when Gianni Versace was murdered I remember so clearly the chaos that erupted while the manhunt was underway. It was enjoyable and seemed to cover all sides while bringing a good level of drama, which I imagine is quite a feat when you're researching and speaking with top tier celebrities. I particularly enjoyed the portrayal of Donatella Versace, who has been such a huge camp figure for decades, as a strong woman with her own struggles over which she emerged triumphant.

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### **Alex Hughes says**

Meticulously researched and crafted, this book covers a huge topic--the man Gianni (?) Versace, the fashion business and brand, his family and legacy and the changing winds of the fashion industry of the day, not to mention high powered celebrity culture and fashion intersecting. The writer has an amazing research emphasis, and brings out a lot of significant detail along the way. In the end, I took off two stars however for the tone, which felt more historical / biography textbook in nature than it felt narrative. For a book that advertises Genius, Murder, and Survival, I felt few of those emotions and the sensational parts of the story were handled very evenly and factually. The book suffers from too many emphases, and the writer's knack for research and varied approach made the text sprawling and a bit unfocused. That being said, the research was extraordinary, and her skills in this area are so good that I found she cut through a lot of controversy in a way that made me trust the final factual answer. The story is very interesting, if winding, and worth the time. So in the end I added a star back. If you're interested in fashion or celebrity culture of the 1990s and thereabouts--or just like a good, well-researched biographical account of an interesting person and his creative business through good times and bad--check this one out. You will enjoy.

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### **Beth says**

I know I just started this, so a rating may be premature and will likely get changed later. Initial thoughts are that this isn't a bad read. The subject matter is intriguing and the writing flows and is easy. But maybe too easy - a lot of short sentences and very factual. Not a lot of visionary phrases which I find disappointing since it's about the House of Versace and there's so much to envision. But I am enjoying it and plan to finish it. I barely remember the event and the story promises to be interesting.

I finished this, finally, last night. While a good read and lots of interesting information it didn't grab me or make me want to stay up all night to finish it. I'm glad I read it but also glad it's over. If you're interested in how the fashion industry became what it is today or about Versace in particular, this is the book for you. If you want to see pretty fashion or learn how to design skip it.

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### **Louise says**

This is an intriguing story told in a compelling way. I couldn't put it down and finished it in a few sittings in a 24 hour period. The story is sensational, stranger than fiction but Deborah Ball keeps it on an even keel. This book is for readers interested in the company and its people, not for those who are interested in the prurient aspects of this drama.

The beginning pulls you right in. Ball starts with the drama of the Miami shooting. Then, she takes you back in time to Calabria with a short history of Nino and Franca and more on their four children. You see how roles of the three surviving siblings, set early on, created the synergy for success. While each member was important, only one was necessary, as was learned not long after that fatal day in Miami.

This appears to be the first book for the author, a reporter who has covered luxury goods for 12 years. She has relied on over 200 interviews which include all principal players with the exception of Allegra Beck.

Ball maintains a high level through most of the book. The last 50 or so pages could use a bit more clarification and more detailed editing both in the "big" story, and in bits of detail.

For instance, the coming of Allegra is foreshadowed with rhetorical questions asking if she will "exercise her power", "allow her mother..." "take her rightful role", but these questions are not clearly answered. Allegra attends a few board meetings, she seeks the advice of her father, goes to Brown and drops out then lives somewhat reclusively in California. For the "new" Versace it seems that Santo willingly steps down, but it's hard to tell how this came about. Did Allegra do this? Did her lawyer(s) do it with or without her involvement? Maybe Santo, himself, did it, since he was active in finding successor personnel.

An example of one of the little things needing clarification is on p. 310. In discussion of the Rodeo Drive Walk of Style Award it says "Sharon Stone ran the auction...". Did this award ceremony have an auction with it? Maybe it did, but a general reader will go back to see if there is a second event, since awards ceremonies usually don't include auctions.

The photos match the text, but it would be wonderful to have more of them.

For a first time author this is a great effort, mostly a smooth read. Hopefully she will tackle another family business in transition, and it seems, from this book, that Italy is full of them.

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### **Bitia says**

I read this book at the same time I read the Story of Stuff. Wrong books to read together!! One tells you not to waste and the other about the excesses of the rich and famous...

I read this after I watched the FX series. It was ok.

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### **Hope Smash says**

To be honest I picked this book up because I have an interest in fashion and I had no idea that Gianni Versace had been murdered. I was hoping the book would be an exploration into his murder and the hunt for the killer, but in reality it was more of a biography focusing in Gianni and Donatella. At first it was interesting to learn about his background, but about halfway through it started to get repetitive. There were only two chapters devoted to his murder and the search for the killer. After that the author focused on Donatella's quick decline into drug use and the trouble this caused the company. Again, lots of repetition in this bit, and I admit I began to skim some sections. The last chapter was bit more intriguing discussing Allegra and the companies climb out of debt, but it left me feeling unsatisfied. It was an interesting look at the early life of Versace, but not exactly what I was expecting.

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### **Lisa says**

Fascinating look into Gianni Versace's genius and the fashion industry in the 90s and 00s. This is also a study on grief and resulting drug addiction suffered by Donatella Versace in particular. I remember her being the subject of ridicule in the 90s and 00s, and now I feel so sorry for her and what she went through. Losing her beloved brother to such a violent death and being expected to fill such large shoes in such a short time. She didn't have time to properly grieve and I imagine anyone would suffer a similar fate. I cheered her on as she overcame her addiction with intense focus. I also have such respect for Elton John for stepping in and offering his help and money to help Donatella get well. Others were content to laugh her or ignore her into

an early grave. Still an incredibly sad story. So much would have been different without the tragedy of Gianni's murder. His was a genius that will forever be unmatched.

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### **Max Soto says**

Have you ever wondered what it's like to run a multi-million dollar company? Or perhaps be head of one of the most well known fashion companies around? My interest got the best of me which led me to read the Biography/ Non Fiction book "House Of Versace" By Deborah Ball. This Book tells the story of Gianni and Donatella Versace and their daily life as the top of their Italian empire Versace.

Being one of the most well known brands Donatella and Gianni were always traveling although Miami was Gianni's Favorite where he owned a home called The Villa Casa Casuarina. It was as if they were on top of the world until on July 15, 1997, on the steps of The Villa Casa Casuarina; that Gianni Versace was shot dead. The book tells how everything almost falls apart after Gianni's death. After reading that his siblings Donatella and Santo took management over the company is when things started to fall apart. Drugs got the best of Donatella after the death of her brother and led her to almost put the company in bankruptcy.

With the help and support of her relatives, she agreed to be transferred to a rehabilitation center or her family would abandon her (Including her kids). After she agreed to go to rehab she comes back clean and healthy again. She too Versace in a new direction and lead the company to one of the most influential fashion brands in the world. I'm giving this story a 5 stars because i really enjoyed it. It was very interesting and kept me wanting to know what was going to happen next. I believe the audience is intended to be those who are fans of Versace's work and those who are interested in the fashion industry. Although i do recommend this story to everyone based on the interesting story it tells.

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### **Cheryl Long says**

#### **Volatile Versaces**

A fast-paced biography of Gianni and his genius, not just a tell-all about the lifestyle that led to his death. Quick read about the whole design house and the challenges it faced to survive without him.

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### **Andra says**

Lots of great details about Milan and the different place where Giani Versace lived and worked. Interesting insights about building a fashion brand and the controversies a fashion designer is going through.

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### **Rissa1516 says**

I really enjoyed reading this book. I am not at all knowledgeable about the Fashion World except that some of my guilty pleasures are watching reality shows like America's Next Top Model and Project Runway. I thought this book was very detailed and thorough while documenting the Versace family and its story in the fashion world. not only did I find it informative but I was interested in the story and the people in it. I would recommend this book.

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## **Marcos Tavares says**

Versace é uma das principais marcas do mundo da moda atualmente. Com um império poderoso, tendo como garotas propaganda artistas como Lady Gaga, essa loja deixou de ser apenas de roupas para ser lembrada como uma das maiores marcas do século. Suas coleções são disputadas por diversos consumidores ao redor do planeta e seus vestidos estão sempre presentes no tapete vermelho das principais premiações do mundo. Mas, o que poucas pessoas sabem, é que por trás de tudo isso há uma história de assassinato e de superação como poucas na ficção.

Para começar, conheceremos Gianni Versace, o grande nome por trás da marca. Ele sempre desenhou e pensou todas as coleções, pensou nos desfiles, administrou a marca atévê-la em um patamar global. Ao lado de seus irmãos, Donatella e Santo, ele teve uma infância pobre, mas usou de sua inteligência para crescer e brilhar. Mas uma tragédia lhe ocorreu no dia 15 de julho de 1997: ao sair para comprar os jornais, como fazia todas as manhãs, Gianni levou dois tiros a queima-roupa em frente sua mansão. Após todo o choque de tamanha tragédia, a marca foi administrada por Donatella.

Mas o que há por trás desse assassinato? Quem foi e por quais motivações o assassino agiu? Essas e muitas perguntas permeiam a história da família Versace por anos, o que leva a inúmeras teorias da conspiração sobre o que realmente possa ter acontecido: até um programa que não foi pago (uma vez que o assassino era um garoto de programa que tinha ficado com Gianni no passado) até uma conspiração dos outros irmãos, Santo e Donatella, para assumir a marca.

O livro, que mistura uma linha biográfica com investigação policial, traz não só essas como várias outras facetas e momentos da família. Nele veremos como tudo começou, como era o relacionamento de Gianni com seus irmãos, como foi o funeral dele e como a Versace revolucionou o mundo da moda como jamais se viu igual.

Eu sempre gostei de estudar sobre a história da moda pois, ao meu ver, esse é o formato de arte que é mais acessível a todas as pessoas. Já conhecia a história do assassinato de Gianni, em virtude da grande divulgação da mídia que esse fato teve. Mas, sempre quis saber mais a fundo sobre as teorias que foram criadas em cima disso. E quando comecei esse livro, esperava que isso me fosse elucidado, mas não foi o que aconteceu.

A autora é muito ágil na linha temporal, apenas pinçando muitos dos eventos da família, sem se aprofundar em muitos casos. Nos capítulos sobre o assassinato, ela passa muito superficialmente sobre os fatos, sem aprofundá-los ou debatê-los. Entendo que, por ser um assunto muito conhecido de uma família muito poderosa ela deva ter sido comedida em muitos aspectos da escrita, mas esperava um pouco mais de coragem, que é o que se deve ter ao se escrever a biografia de alguém.

Recomendo a quem queira saber mais sobre a história da família, mas ressaltando que não vá para a leitura com as expectativas altas em relação ao citado acima.

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