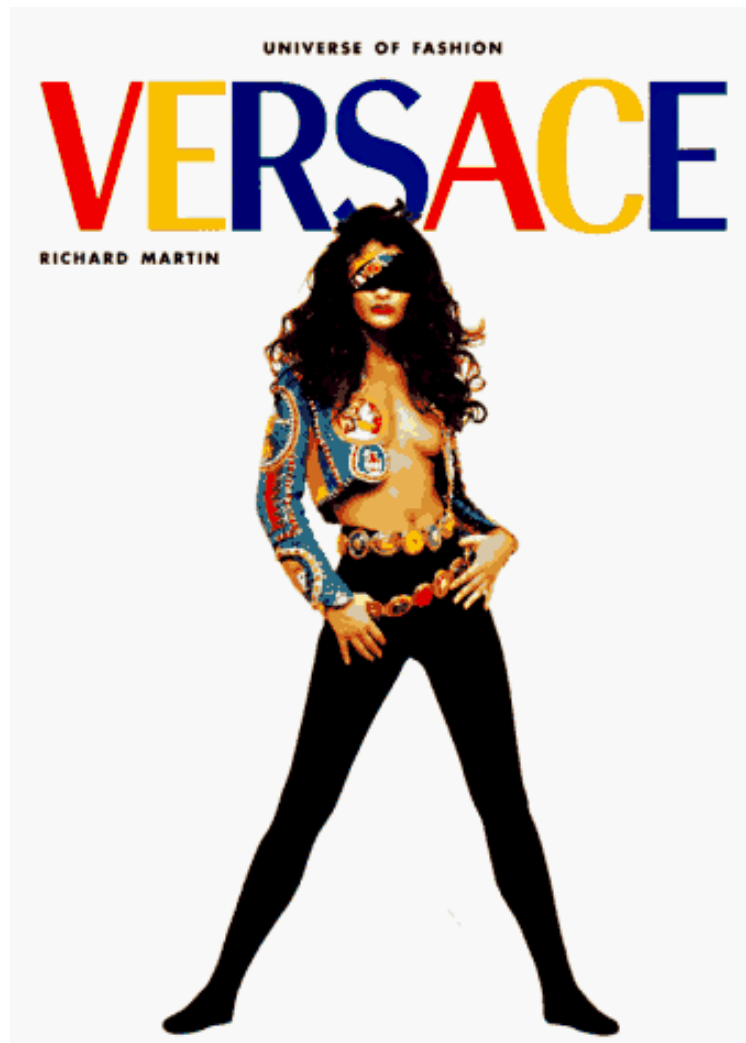


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Richard Martin

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Richard Martin : Versace (Universe of Fashion) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Versace (Universe of Fashion):

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Versace is quite amazing, as is this book!

Gianni Versace has said of himself, "I don't care for half-measures. I believe in making clear-cut choices." Versace's fashion is about such bold and unequivocal choices. Unafraid of being denounced by those less daring and more fearful than himself, he makes fashion meant to be worn by those who share his desire for risk--who share his honesty about sexuality and his self-confidence in aesthetic choice. Traditionally, fashion designers begin with innovations in their first collections, develop fans and followers, and ultimately settle into a style that is the designer's trademark, with modest adaptations to the season and fashion currents. Gianni Versace is different. The New York Times remarked on a 1996 showing: "Gianni Versace ended the day with his collection, dedicated to 'a woman who listens to classical music but enjoys rock, who reads *The New Yorker* and *Calvino* but can have a laugh at gossipy chronicles, who adores wearing Versace with Calvin Klein jeans or Versace jeans with a Chanel jacket.' If that sounds like a personal ad . . . it could be, because Mr. Versace is not setting up housekeeping with clients who have married him in the past; he is always courting someone new." Indeed, Versace is an uncompromising designer--one who develops and expands not only in the public arena of fashion but also in the even larger area of popular culture. Versace's energy has become famous; he makes it clear both as a designer and as a human being that he prizes life. Already by the late 1970's, Gianni Versace was in command of his distinctive style. He was able to combine absolute power and authority with comfortable materials and a relaxed silhouette. Even then he was designing the most confident clothing of his time. Who else, after all, would combine silk and leather with the panache of American sportswear? Who else would have let the pleats in the silk blouse become the center of ever-widening ripples that make troughs in the soft leather skirt? While Versace's designs are celebrated as unabashedly sexual, they nonetheless possess a strong sense of personal grace. Versace shows an unerring talent for bringing from the street those extravagant and graceful elements that represent the best in contemporary style. No major designer living today has more successfully transfigured the street's reality into convincing style--all the while keeping in sight the extravagant possibilities of Baroque and Renaissance motifs. Versace understands, perhaps better than any designer of his time, that fashion's place in the world is at the center of visual spectacle. With intelligent commentary and celebrated photographs of Versace designs, this book presents the Versace spectacle in all its boldness and sensuality. In this volume, we see Versace at once as the designer of the Byzantine Madonna, of the performer of Madonna, of modern sportswear infused with Italian Renaissance pageantry, of 1930's-inspired slinky gowns, and of an entirely new 1990's couture vision.

From *Library Journal* These small (6 1/4" x 8 1/4") books, the first in a new series, offer capsule introductions to the achievements of three of the most important designers of this century. Berge, Saint Laurent's partner since the couturier's sensational 1962 debut, writes a brief seven-page homage to Saint Laurent's artistry, followed by 52 photographs of his most significant designs, which changed women's fashions. Carefully selected, the illustrations also show the artworks and the environment that inspired Saint Laurent. Martin, curator of the Metropolitan Museum of Art Costume Institute, offers an insightful analysis of recently deceased Italian designer Versace's eye-opening fashions, which juxtapose silk with leather, street style with couture, in an unmistakable signature. Forty-nine photographs illustrate representative works of the last 15 years. Tretiack manages to summarize the house of Cartier's 150-year history into a succinct 16-page essay. While Cartier designed fancy clocks and desk accessories as well, it is the fabulous jewels that are featured here and that the reader will recognize. Certainly, these books do not approach some of the serious, in-depth publications of recent years (e.g., *Yves Saint Laurent: Images of Design, 1958-1988*, 1988. o.p.) or the weighty and expensive coffee-table tomes (e.g., *Versace's Men Without Ties*, Abbeville, 1996), but for libraries with small budgets, these quality publications can provide economical introductions to designers with whom most readers should be acquainted. Therese Duzinkiewicz Baker, Western Kentucky Univ. Libs., Bowling Green
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