



The House of Gucci: A Sensational Story of Murder, Madness, Glamour, and Greed

By Sara G. Forden

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Did Patrizia Reggiani murder her ex-husband, Maurizio Gucci, in 1995 because his spending was wildly out of control? Did she do it because her glamorous ex was preparing to marry his mistress, Paola Franchi? Or is there a possibility she didn't do it at all?

In this gripping account of the ascent, eventual collapse, and resurrection of the Gucci dynasty, Sara Gay Forden takes us behind the scenes of the trial and exposes the passions, the power, and the vulnerabilities of the greatest fashion family of our times.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

A world-famous luxury brand, financial skullduggery, vicious family quarrels ending in a sensational murder: the Gucci story just couldn't be juicier, and former *Women's Wear Daily* correspondent Sara Gay Forden does full justice to its gossipy appeal. Guccio Gucci opened his first leather-goods store in Florence in 1921, but it was his son Aldo who expanded the company overseas and made products like the Gucci loafer and the Flora scarf international symbols of status and affluence. Aldo's sons, his brother Rodolfo, and Rodolfo's son Maurizio, all of whom also worked in the family business, didn't always appreciate Aldo's imperious ways, and corporate board meetings often ended with ashtrays and Gucci handbags flying. Things got so bad in the early 1980s that Aldo's renegade son Paolo made public financial documents that very nearly sent his father to jail for tax fraud. Even more lurid was the 1995 execution-style murder of Maurizio, followed by the conviction in 1998 of his ex-wife Patrizia for ordering the hit. Meanwhile, CEO Domenico De Sole and creative director Tom Ford were transforming Gucci from a family-run company into a modern corporation once again on the cutting edge of fashion and marketing. Forden makes the business story as dramatic as the Guccis' personal squabbles (and of course the two were often interconnected) in a highly entertaining family biography that doubles as a savvy business history. --Wendy Smith

From Publishers Weekly

The brutal 1995 murder of Maurizio Gucci, the grandson of the Gucci company founder, serves as entree into the history of one of the world's most glamorous fashion houses. The author, a longtime fashion writer for *Women's Wear Daily*, wonderfully describes how Guccio Gucci learned, as a low-level employee at London's Savoy hotel in the 1890s, that luggage functions as a symbol of "affluence and taste," and then went on to create opulent leather goods that caught the world's eye. Forden traces how Guccio and his descendants used charisma and intuition, rather than trained business acumen, to create the handbag dynasty. The "Gucci concept," a group of colors and designs largely derived from horse stables, didn't hurt either. But much of the book is devoted to the in-fighting that developed among Guccio's sons and grandsons. This in-fighting as well as the Guccis' inability to adapt to increased competition, professionalize their management and maintain the value of their brand name eventually caught up with them. In fact, Maurizio, having risen to the top of the company in the 1980s by using outside investors to depose his uncle, was eventually bought out in 1993, leaving no family members in the company's top management. (Forden does explain how the Gucci company has since made a comeback.) The book is, at times, too detailed about fashion history and techniques, and some may find the author's use of dramatic re-creations annoying. Nevertheless, he offers an intriguing view of one of the families that helped to create 20th-century style and business. Photos not seen by PW. (Sept.)

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From Library Journal

For this cautionary tale about the Gucci dynasty, former journalist Forden (*Women's Wear Daily*) draws on numerous interviews, articles, and books, in particular Gerald McKnight's *A House Divided* (LJ 12/87). She opens with a history of the company, a Florentine "mom-and-pop" leather-goods shop started by Guccio Gucci in the early 1900s that evolved into a global fashion empire. Over the years, the Guccis had their ups and downs. In the company's heyday of the 1950s and 1960s, products bearing the Gucci name were status symbols. But the family was plagued by infighting, lawsuits, product imitations, mismanagement, greed, and tragedy. By the late 1980s, the business was in a slump, and 50 percent of the company was sold to a Bahrain-based investment group. Forden's story ends with the trial of Patrizia Reggiani, accused in a plot that

killed her ex-husband, Maurizio Gucci, in March 1995. Forden is a skilled researcher and a good storyteller. Recommended for fashion collections. DBellinda Wise, Nassau Community Coll. Lib., Garden City, NY Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Users Review

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Fred Swett:

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