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Cleopatra's Nose: 39 Varieties of Desire

By Judith Thurman



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A New York Times Notable Book of 2007

Cleopatra's Nose is an exuberant gathering of essays and profiles, representing twenty years of Judith Thurman's writing, particularly her fascination with human vanity, femininity, and "women's work"--a term that, in her definition, encompasses haute couture, literature, and ruling empires. The subjects are varied--Cleopatra, Jackie Kennedy, Anne Frank; tofu, performance art, pornography--but as a whole these essays hint at the central preoccupations of a uniquely inquisitive mind.



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Cleopatra's Nose: 39 Varieties of Desire By Judith Thurman Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

While this delightful new collection of essays is culled from 20 years at the *New Yorker*, most have appeared since 2000. Thurman's writing in the past seven years, despite a tangent or two, displays the qualities that best serve a cultural critic: intelligence, curiosity, sharp wit and little tolerance for fools. There's an edge of imperiousness about Thurman, which is reflected in many of the people she writes about, such as the Italian performance artist Vanessa Beecroft, designers Elsa Schiaparelli and Rei Kawakubo, and Madame de Pompadour. Thurman writes primarily about fashion, its personages, trends and history, but there is room in this collection for some extracurricular interests, too; in addition to some fine book reviews and historical pieces, we get personal looks at the art of making tofu, the history of New York row houses and a lovely vignette of an evening spent with Jackie Onassis, smoking cigarettes and talking about men. Fashion, no longer ghettoized as a trifling women's concern, has grown increasingly popular in our cultural imagination, but it is ephemeral, dependent upon seasonal change. It is to Thurman's credit that she not only celebrates the creative exuberance of fashion but, in her intellectual probing, considers its lasting significance, too. (Oct.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From [Booklist](#)

As intimated by the title of this collection of 40-plus essays originally written for the *New Yorker* between 1987 and 2006, Thurman, a biographer of Isak Dinesen and Colette, finds the union of the regal and the commonplace alluring. Guided by her fascination with portraiture and image, she is drawn to influential and controversial artists, photographers, and fashion designers. Taking their measure with droll insight and wry empathy, Thurman profiles Vanessa Beecroft, a performance artist who choreographs troupes of naked women; Diane Arbus; and Coco Chanel. But she is also dazzling in her inquisitive, witty, and companionable essays about Charlotte Brontë, Flaubert, Jacqueline Kennedy, Richard Avedon, Japanese culture, and, yes, Cleopatra. Because her erudite and earthy essays are often jump-started by an exhibition or the publication of a book, they have journalistic valence. But because Thurman's essays are so deeply felt and arc so elegantly from the uniqueness of each individual to the greater conundrums of humankind, they are, indeed, exquisite works of art deserving a book's more lasting embrace. Seaman, Donna

Review

"Blessed with intellectual curiosity, a sharp wit and unwillingness to receive opinions, Thurman seems unlikely to produce anything less than a feat of style. . . . An excellent book." ?*The New York Times Book Review*

"Elegant yet casual, knowledgeable without being intimidating, self-revealing but never self-indulgent . . . Open the cover and drop in anywhere. You'll find Thurman's crisp intelligence always at home." ?*The Boston Globe*

"Thurman's essays are so deeply felt and arc so elegantly from the uniqueness of each individual to the greater conundrums of humankind, they are, indeed, exquisite works of art deserving a book's more lasting embrace." ?*Booklist*

"When paired with her ability as a biographer to peel layers and put a life into context, Thurman's grasp of global politics, history, and language can be astounding. . . . But what fun we have when the self-professed shoe addict writes about clothes and the people who worship them." ?*Austin American Statesman*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Kathleen Owen:

Do you have favorite book? For those who have, what is your favorite's book? Book is very important thing for us to understand everything in the world. Each book has different aim or maybe goal; it means that guide has different type. Some people truly feel enjoy to spend their the perfect time to read a book. They are reading whatever they acquire because their hobby is reading a book. How about the person who don't like studying a book? Sometime, person feel need book once they found difficult problem or maybe exercise. Well, probably you will require this Cleopatra's Nose: 39 Varieties of Desire.

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A lot of people said that they feel bored when they reading a publication. They are directly felt that when they get a half elements of the book. You can choose typically the book Cleopatra's Nose: 39 Varieties of Desire to make your own personal reading is interesting. Your skill of reading ability is developing when you like reading. Try to choose very simple book to make you enjoy to see it and mingle the impression about book and looking at especially. It is to be very first opinion for you to like to open up a book and learn it. Beside that the guide Cleopatra's Nose: 39 Varieties of Desire can to be your new friend when you're feel alone and confuse with the information must you're doing of the time.

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