

# WWD TUESDAY

Global Edition



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## New Book Delves Into Beene's Rebel Yell

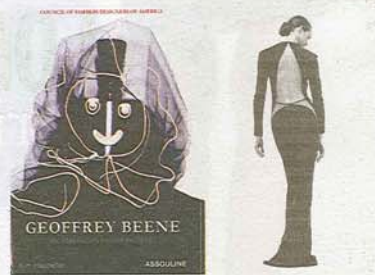
WHEN THE CFDA CAME CALLING WITH A BOOK deal about Geoffrey Beene, Kim Hastreiter went straight to it.

"Geoffrey Beene: An American Fashion Rebel" is a valentine of sorts to the late designer, who befriended the Paper magazine editor more than 20 years ago by writing a fan letter. Clearly, the feeling was mutual, judging from said fan letter, personal snapshots of the pair together, a heartfelt prologue and the poem Hastreiter wrote and read in honor of Beene's 1998 CFDA Lifetime Achievement Award — all of which are published in the book.

There are also personal tributes from Alber Elbaz, the Met's Harold Koda, Isabel and Ruben Toledo, Tom Ford, Narciso Rodriguez, film director Tom Kalin, Vogue's Sally Singer, former assistant Doo-Ri Chung and choreographer Martha Clarke, among others. Elbaz, who worked as Beene's assistant for seven years, said the design dialogue he shared with Beene was like Ping-Pong without a ball, with each continually resketching the other's work. "The way I work today is exactly the way he worked then," Elbaz writes.

"Some people ask me, 'Did Mr. Beene leave anything to you when he died?' He left me everything I have, everything I know, everything I learned. He taught me his world," Elbaz continues.

Before writing the 160-page book, Hastreiter sifted through thousands of pictures, gave Beene's desk a good once-over and tracked down his various friends and mentees. Having complete creative control, not just writing the text, was her one caveat for doing the Assouline-published tome. Her personal touch can be seen in the book's polkadot interior lining, the picture of Beene's monogrammed eyeglass case and Joe Eula's sketch of Beene in his favorite chair silk-screened on a sweatshirt, a wardrobe staple. The book also is laden with scores of images — full-length and close-up shots of his intricate creations that illustrate such recurring themes



The book's cover and a cutout gown featured inside.

as high and low; modernity; Pop; wit and mischief; comfort and ease, and sexuality and sensuality.

During an interview last week, Hastreiter said, "He was truly a rebel. He was not one to go to big parties. He was much too singular-minded. He figured out how to get all these licenses early in his career and he bought his partners out. He couldn't stand having partners, answering to anyone else or making clothes for editors. He didn't really care about becoming the next young hot designer. That allowed him to experiment and explore his work as a true designer. He didn't answer to anyone. That's why he was such a free designer."

As for his prickly reputation, Hastreiter said: "Mr. Beene had a temper and he was difficult. He was not easy — believe me, I know. If he felt dissed or that someone disrespected him, he wasn't having it."

She said she also felt his fondness for Paper was in some way like throwing a glass of cold water at the other fashion magazines.

Hastreiter also marveled at how Beene, who died in 2004, left his sizable assets in newly created foundations for various causes about which he cared. The CFDA commissioned the book as part of its partnership with the Geoffrey Beene Foundation and its \$5 million endowment to support the CFDA's fashion design education.

CFDA executive director Steven Kolb said, "We established the Geoffrey Beene Fashion Design Scholarship, which is awarded to one student each year who excels in women's wear design. The book will become part of the curriculum on Mr. Beene that design schools teach connected to the scholarship."

—R.F.