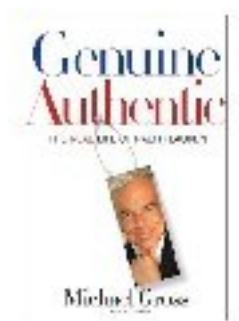


Ralph Lauren的真实生活



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Everyone knows the name Ralph Lauren. Many people know that he was born Ralphie Lifshitz. But not even Lauren himself knows the extra-ordinary history of his ancestry. And until now, no one really knew how this pint-size nebbish rose from the Jewish ghetto of the Bronx and turned himself from a yarmulke-topped yeshiva boy into the world's leading purveyor of old-money-WASP style. *Genuine Authentic* is that story.

Horatio Alger, step aside. Lauren, the descendant of generations of eastern European rabbis, is the embodiment of modern ambition. He stands as a symbol of the awesome rewards of self-invention -- and not just because he turned a talent for designing ties into a ten-billion-dollar international business. He also demonstrates how precarious success is, how hard a road life can be even for the driven.

Lauren is considered by many to be a phony and a copycat. Yet even though he made up his name and nearly went bankrupt trying to live up to it, he can't be dismissed as a mere fake. His products have revolutionized the way almost everything is sold and the way great brands are built. Like Henry Ford and Walt Disney, he's also a real American authentic. And his business is a stunning American success.

There are at least two Ralph Laurens. To the public he's a gentle, modest, yet secure and purposeful man. Inside the walls of Polo Ralph Lauren, though, he's seen by some

as a narcissist, an insecure ditherer, and at times a rampaging tyrant.

Michael Gross, author of the bestseller *Model*, lays bare the truths of this fashion emperor's rise, and reveals not only the secrets of his stunning success in marketing our shared fantasies but also the darker side that's hidden behind the shiny patrician image.

Gross uncovers the essence of Lauren's carefully cultivated mystique: how he has turned his back on his own surprisingly aristocratic heritage to embrace another, more commercially viable, one; how he's built an image of luxury and wealth on a foundation of almost anonymous commodities, basic items of clothing like polo shirts and khaki pants, sold mostly in low-priced outlets, and seen everywhere from the subway to the world stage.

It wasn't easy. Along the way, Lauren conquered self-doubt and survived business reverses, even several brushes with bankruptcy. *Genuine Authentic* follows Lauren through an unhappy childhood and confused adolescence -- torn between an immigrant culture and his material desires -- to fame as a gray-haired thirty-something, and, finally, to the man he is today.

In recent years, after surviving brain tumor surgery, Lauren suffered from a massive midlife crisis, finding solace with a beautiful blond model. He survived that, too, and in the nineties took his company public, making him a billionaire but creating a whole new set of challenges to confront, new horizons to conquer, starting with Wall Street, and then on to the rest of the world.

Phony? Or the real thing? It's all here. You decide.

Like his previous book, *Model*, Gross's new work will undoubtedly be mined for the more gossipy nuggets embedded in his meticulous research and artful prose. This is a shame, because the crackerjack journalist simultaneously tells a compelling story and gives it meat enough to be satisfying. It does help, however, that his subject is intriguing enough to fill multiple volumes. Lauren (ne Lifshitz) embodied a certain kind of American dream from early childhood, a kid who didn't just want to be rich, but to be of the rich, a Jay Gatsby made manifest who didn't have a penny, but fantasized about expensive cars, lush vacation spots and preppy girls in loafers. Gross details Lauren's story chronologically, and with a resolute pace: the icon's tale of ambition and meteoric rise unfolds smoothly as the awkward Jewish boy grows into the personification of grim determination. Gross provides surprisingly little commentary, given the book's slightly bitter introduction about Lauren's ping-ponging relationship to the project. What Gross does offer is a rich portrait not just of Lauren, but of the Bronx in the early and mid-20th century, the type of class clash that transcends time or place and the effects of ambition on a teenager who hates his name and burns with desire whenever a Rolls-Royce cruises by. There are passages that will delight the celebrity-obsessed, but the full story is much richer. Most importantly, and delightfully, Gross delivers a portrait of a man who's constructed a flawless image, but whose real self is far more fascinating and deeply human. Photos.

The author of *Model: The Ugly Business of Beautiful Women* explains how little Ralphy Lifshitz came to create the ultimate in WASP stylishness.

Imagine an unauthorized biography that, nonetheless, caused author and potential interviewee to negotiate for a long 10 months. Picture an eastern-European-by-descent Jewish boy from the Bronx who changes his last name

from Lifshitz to Lauren. Think about a man who alternately seduces then abuses his followers and employees. Enter New York Daily News journalist Gross, with high-visibility columns and well-regarded books (including Model: The Ugly Business of Beautiful Women, 1995) to his credit, who captures the contradictory personality of Lauren. Those not aware of Lauren's non-WASP upbringing will be regaled with tale after tale, from his father's influence as an entrepreneurial home-decorating painter to his ascent to Forbes ' ninety-seventh richest man, with a \$2 billion fortune. The anecdotes are substantiated, attributable to the 850 interviewees. Though a fascinating study in what some call pathological narcissism, established via a never-ending parade of intriguing stories, Lauren, from all appearances, created a fantasy style that, ultimately, became his not-so-happy life.

Barbara Jacobs

length: (cm)23.6 width:(cm)16.2

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