

Callas Kissed Me...Lenny Too!



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From his extraordinary beginnings—his mother went into labor while gambling at a French casino—to escaping Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and ultimately hoping to

conquer New York City, John Gruen writes a subtly revealing self-portrait in *Callas Kissed Me...Lenny Too!*

As a boy unable to speak a single word of English, Gruen was determined to make a successful life for himself in America. Anxious to know what his adopted country was truly about, he ventured to the Midwest to attend the University of Iowa, where he emerged, five years later, as a more-or-less Americanized graduate student on his way to a PhD scholarship to the prestigious Institute of Fine Arts at New York University, and as the 20-year-old husband of ravishing fellow student and painter Jane Wilson. The story of the Gruens' life in New York City, from the 1950s to the present, explores a complex marriage and two parallel journeys of artistic growth. Gruen worked as a composer, photographer, and journalist; Wilson developed as a distinguished painter, though often supported the two with work as a fashion model.

Life was always on the move for the couple. Though hardly well-connected and certainly not wealthy, the Gruens knew everyone during their many years in the artistic milieu of which they were an active part. From the many apartments they occupied in New York City to the countless dinner parties, nights at the Cedar bar, and weekends at their Hamptons barn, their life was a nonstop social whirlwind. There were chance encounters with Salvador Dalí, evenings spent pretending to be Chekhov characters at home with E.E. Cummings and Marion Morehouse, working vacations to Italy with the Leonard Bernsteins, and a long working visit to Gian Carlo Menotti's baronial Scottish estate. Their ever-expanding circle of acquaintances and friends also included Rudolf Nureyev, Maria Callas, Willem De Kooning, Francis Bacon, Judy Garland, Tennessee Williams, Bette Davis, Samuel Beckett, Lucien Freud, Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, and so many others. It was all quite head-spinning, at times producing hugely complicated situations, but throughout it all, John Gruen and Jane Wilson built successful careers based on hard work and a steady conviction that life should be lived to the fullest.

作者介绍:

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