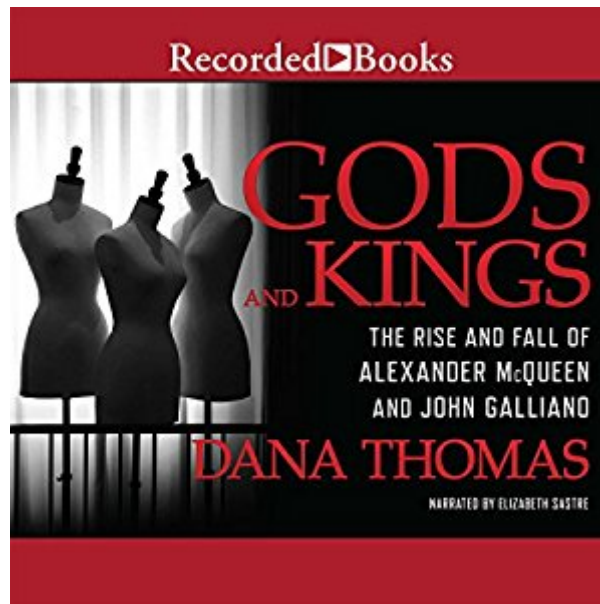


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# Gods And Kings: The Rise And Fall Of Alexander McQueen And John Galliano



## Synopsis

In February 2011 John Galliano, the lauded head of Christian Dior, imploded with a drunken, anti-Semitic public tirade. Exactly a year earlier, celebrated designer Alexander McQueen took his own life three weeks before his women's wear show. Both were casualties of the war between art and commerce that has raged within fashion for the last two decades. In the mid-1990s, Galliano and McQueen arrived on the fashion scene when the business was in an artistic and economic rut. They shook the establishment out of its bourgeois, minimalist stupor with daring, sexy designs and theatrical fashion shows. They had similar backgrounds: sensitive, shy gay men raised in tough London neighborhoods, their love of fashion nurtured by their doting mothers. By 1997 both had landed jobs as creative directors for couture houses owned by French tycoon Bernard Arnault, chairman of LVMH. Galliano's and McQueen's work not only influenced fashion; their distinct styles were reflected across the media landscape. With their help luxury fashion evolved from a clutch of small, family-owned businesses into a \$280 billion-a-year global corporate industry. Executives pushed the designers to meet increasingly rapid deadlines. For both Galliano and McQueen, the pace was unsustainable. The same week that Galliano was fired, Forbes named Arnault the fourth richest man in the world. Two months later, in the wake of McQueen's death, Kate Middleton wore a McQueen wedding gown, instantly making the house the world's most famous fashion brand, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art opened a wildly successful McQueen retrospective, cosponsored by the corporate owners of the McQueen brand. The corporations had won, and the artists had lost. In her groundbreaking work *Gods and Kings*, acclaimed journalist Dana Thomas tells the true story of McQueen and Galliano. In so doing she reveals the relentless world of couture.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 15 hours and 47 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Recorded Books

Audible.com Release Date: February 17, 2015

Language: English

ASIN: B00TQ9FDLC

Best Sellers Rank: #27 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Arts & Entertainment > Design #79 in Books > Business & Money > Industries > Fashion & Textile #113 in Books > Audible

## Customer Reviews

This is not a book to be breezed thru in an afternoon or two. In fact, I spent a good two and a half weeks with it, as I kept having to put it down and hit my computer to look up who people were and spent hours on youtube watching Galliano and McQueen shows, which thank Heaven nearly all the shows described in such wonderful detail in the book are archived there. Dana Thomas does the customary dedication to her folks and gives a gracious thanks to all who helped her with resources and interviews, but she has not turned out a dry report on how fashion has become big business with no patience for artists, but a true and dedicated labor of love. She writes so that we know who these men are, what inspired them, who they liked, who they hated, what they drank, ate and ultimately what they put up their noses. And they are presented, truthfully yet raw and with respect. She presents Galliano and McQueen, so well that I found myself developing full on opinions and even taking sides. Halfway thru the book I found myself loving one collection over another even before I logged on to see it just because I was either intrigued or moved by the details that developed them. Being a child of the 80's I reflected fondly on the New Romanticism of Gallianos work and the dreamy fantasy in his illustrations (Had to look those up too.) and then I was won over by the proud, no-shame working-class attitude of McQueen and his remarkable structure of his Goth/Rock aesthetics. Her anecdotes, trivia and behind the scenes details are colorful and engaging. And she writes also of the history of fashion design and their famous houses: Givenchy, Dior, Yve Saint Laurent, Chanel, Louis Vuitton, etc. French fashion houses that have been around for decades and are institutes unto themselves.

I must confess, I'm really not much of a fashionista, but I am interested in people who are self made successes (as well as those who self-destruct). It is on this basis that I was interested in this book. First of all, the author: Dana Thomas. I don't know that I've ever read anything by her before, but if something else of hers strikes my fancy, you better believe I'll read it, because her writing style is very engaging and involving. She starts the book off by hitting us with the two tragedies that (in all likelihood) are the basis for her writing the book about these two kings of the European fashion world. From there she regales us with first hand and second hand accounts of these two designers' rise and fall and rise and implosion. Gods and Kings is covered up in "names" - I don't know, nor do I care to know who most of them are. I find that lot to be a bore and very self involved as well as egotistical. However, Ms. Thomas does do a fine job of parsing the individuals out so that you can

keep track of who's who. That is a feat unto itself. Furthermore, she was able to engage me in the world of Parisian and New York fashion which typically leaves me cold. Oh, I know it's high paced and high stakes - and frankly until I'd read this book I didn't realize HOW high paced and how high the stakes are (even though I have seen *The Devil Wears Prada*). Alexander McQueen and John Galliano are young designers from desperately common, poor backgrounds. They don't know each other at first, but they come to rise to the height of the fashion world very quickly by their radical designs. These two British boys quickly go on to head two of the biggest Paris fashion houses, which causes quite a rift in the industry.

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