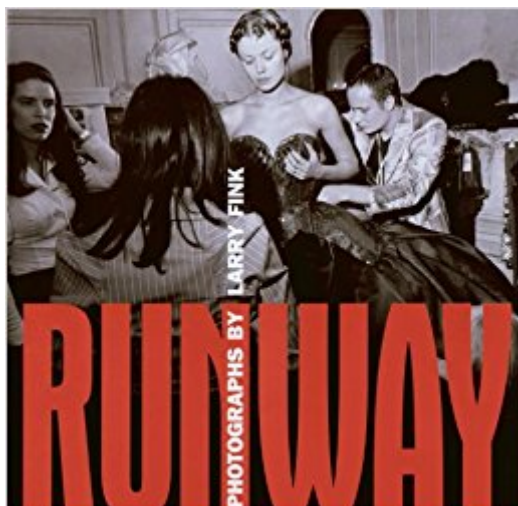


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# Runway



## Synopsis

Acclaimed master photographer Larry Fink's behind-the-scenes photographs from the world of fashion and couture have graced the pages of America's top beauty, style, pop culture and literary magazines (W, GQ, Detour, Vanity Fair, The New Yorker, Vibe) and his inimitable take on the biz has resulted in special commissions by the likes of Gianni Versace, Christian Lacroix, and Donna Karan, offering Fink carte blanche front row and backstage access. The seemingly surreptitiously captured dioramas in Runway of fashion week worldwide, special collection debuts, and industry functions provide a surreal glimpse of the famous players, the dutiful minions, and the style czarinas at work in the 90s' most dynamic celebrity-driven industry. Glomming looks and gleaning style from the shows in Milan, New York, and Paris, Fink's distinctive take of the perversely unusual world of fashion teases, baits, and whets our morbid fascination with its glamour with humorâ and styleâ like no other photographer possibly could. Runway, along with his well-received book Boxing, comprise a visionary bipolar look at power in America: the brutish and the polished, the transparent and the multilayered, the vulnerable and the commanding. Guess which is which.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Larry Fink is a two-time National Endowment for the Arts Fellow, a Guggenheim Fellow, and a professor of Photography at Bard College. His book Boxing, with text by Bert Sugar, was published by powerHouse Books in 1997; his monographic classic Social Graces was re-published by us in 2001. Fink lives on a farm in Martins Creek, Pennsylvania. Guy Trebay, a Pulitzer Prize nominee

and CFDA award winner for his work on fashion, has been a columnist for The Village Voice for twenty years. Born in the Bronx, Trebay has published his work on politics, fashion, and culture in The New York Times Magazine, The New Yorker, Details, Vibe, Condé Nast Traveler, Harper's, Esquire, Grand Street, and Vogue among other national publications.

It's something of a misnomer, the title of Larry Fink's hilariously gruesome portrait of the fashion world. In *Runway*, his latest and most spectacular book of photographs, the much-celebrated "catwalk" barely figures at all. Fink's much more interested in the backstage drama, and in this behind-the-scenes record of the culminating moments in the seasonal paroxysms devoted to ready-to-wear and haute couture, he finds theater aplenty. A pitiless and perceptive social critic, Fink previously documented the brutal heroics of boxing and the bizarre social customs of New York's Upper East Side. Here his camera captures, in unflattering close-up, the unguarded moments of some of fashion's biggest stars. And while he frequently focuses on instantly familiar supermodels, his most memorable pictures tend to be of the designers themselves. Many of them are more recognizable than their mascots, bagged like so many trophies under Fink's unremitting gaze. Isaac Mizrahi strikes a characteristically self-mocking, histrionic pose; a wolfish Oscar de la Renta glares at us suspiciously; Calvin Klein, caught in mid-sentence, could be having a cardiac arrest. In another supremely chilling image, Gianni Versace gazes heavenwards, looking horror-struck; it's almost as if the slain designer's having a premonition of his gruesome fate. Fink's corrosive visual style derives from influences as diverse as Weegee and Diane Arbus (he studied with Lisette Model, the legendary French photographer who made a habit of the grotesque). He's obviously well aware that his hand-held flash - usually held aloft and angled down - freezes the scene like a diorama, turning humans into statues and vice versa (in one delicious moment captured at a society benefit, we see the lower halves of a line of partygoers filing past a comparatively lively pair of sarcophagi). In page after uncaptioned, full-bleed page, Fink hammers home a harrowing glimpse of a grandly dysfunctional world. But Fink has a love-hate relationship with this strange and contorted show of human frailty; he glamorizes and demonizes its insanity at the same time. He's abidingly curious about the backstage talents, with their fanatical devotion to craft, who feverishly toil to create the designer's illusions. In one tightly cropped shot, makeup whiz Kevyn Aucoin, with total concentration, grasps a model's head in a vice-like grip (significantly, her face is hidden from us). And always, there are the fashion paparazzi, hovering (like Fink) on the sidelines, getting it all down on film so we can devour it. "When substance is dead, style lives on," Fink writes in an afterword. Rest assured, both substance and style are alive and well in this damning - and damn amusing -

book.

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