



BEENE THERE

BY MELISSA SELEY

A New Book By PAPER's Kim Hastreiter Celebrates the Brilliance and Eccentricity of Late Designer Geoffrey Beene

"I am compelled to begin this book with my own very personal snapshot of the designer Geoffrey Beene, because I knew this complex man in a slightly different way than most of the world did," writes Kim Hastreiter in *Geoffrey Beene: An American Fashion Rebel*, her intimately replete record of the designer, culled from memories, photos and interviews with his colleagues from Alber Elbaz to Agnes Gund to Tom Ford. Beene, who defied fashion etiquette by rejecting mainstream media and refusing to show anywhere other than in America, was something of a misleading figure in the fashion world. Most thought he designed clothing "for fancy ladies who lunch," Hastreiter says, when in reality, "he was a hero for young and underground designers because of his rule-breaking, anti-establishment streak."

After Beene sent Hastreiter a fan letter in response to a quirky "Teen Loves Beene" Paper article, the two began a 20-year friendship. Hastreiter recalls that she was "constantly stunned by Beene's genius and his radical ideas both in life and in fashion." Adding, "He'd attack an idea, resolve it and as soon as it was perfect, he would destroy it. He was an artist who never, ever repeated himself." Flipping to one of her favorite Beene designs, an apparent little black dress on model Anh Duohng, that was designed to be off-kilter, Hastreiter marvels, "This came from a collection where everything was lopsided, as if models were put through a vacuum-seal and blasted out of a canon into space."

Geoffrey Beene: An American Fashion Rebel is out this month from Assouline in conjunction with the CFDA.

This story was published on October 14, 2008.