

# **Klein, Calvin (1942-) Encyclopedia Article**

## **Klein, Calvin (1942-)**

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# Contents

|   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| <a href="#">Klein, Calvin (1942-) Encyclopedia Article.....</a> | <a href="#">1</a> |
| <a href="#">Contents.....</a>                                   | <a href="#">2</a> |
| <a href="#">Klein, Calvin (1942—).....</a>                      | <a href="#">3</a> |



## Klein, Calvin (1942—)

More than any other designer, Bronx-born Calvin Klein has rendered fashion as popular culture. Long an elite and "trickle-down" phenomenon from most privileged clothes to least, fashion is wholly democratic for Klein beginning with his success in Calvin Klein jeans in the 1970s, continued through massive advertising, and sustained in such forms as designer underwear. He is now the designer fashion students aspire to emulate; the designer whose name appears on innumerable T-shirts and underwear waistbands. He was the first designer to invade and conquer popular culture. Since Brooke Shields seductively uttered "nothing comes between me and my

Calvins" in a memorable advertising campaign in 1980, Klein's edgy ads have been the forefront of contemporary visual culture defining sexual limits, the spirit of the young, and cultural provocation. In design sensibility, austere, reductive, and modern, Klein's ubiquitous name is synonymous with fashion as media and mass culture.

### Further Reading:

Gaines, Steven and Sharon Churcher, *Obsession: The Lives and*

*Times of Calvin Klein*, New York, Birch Lane Press, 1994.