



Yves Klein (Critical Lives)

Nuit Banai

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Among his many captivating exploits, the French artist Yves Klein (1928–1962) invented his own brand of colour: the inimitable International Klein Blue. Denounced as a charlatan and feted as a mystic, Klein scandalized the art world with his enthusiastic embrace of the highs and lows of post-war mass culture and his exploitation of controversial publicity tactics. Today it is clear that Klein was not only one of the most radical artists of the post-war period but an iconic role model for contemporary practices: he reinvented abstract painting, conceived new horizons for performance art and was a trailblazer in the interdisciplinary realm of land, body and conceptual art.

Nuit Banai examines the relationship between Klein's brief but incandescent life and his wide repertoire of artistic practices. The book establishes that Klein's brilliance was above all performative, as he created and inhabited a cast of public identities: avant-garde artist, bourgeois, judo expert, painter, charlatan, collaborator, politician, middle-class mystic, fascist and showman. With each persona, Klein invented new ways to communicate his paradoxical message of spiritual enlightenment and Dada iconoclasm to an unsuspecting, bemused and entranced audience.

This new critical biography illuminates Klein's influential and multifaceted artistic career. Alongside contemporaries like Andy Warhol and Joseph Beuys and postmodern chameleons like Cindy Sherman, Klein's protean performance of multiple roles stands as a landmark example of the artist's transformational status. An invaluable introduction to the life and work of this flamboyant individual, Yves Klein will appeal to students and scholars of Klein as well as those interested in contemporary art and twentieth-century culture.

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