

THE
ELEGANT
TRUMP



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OXBOW CREATIVE, LLC

THE ELEGANT TRUMP

by Claudia B. Logan

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Dust Jacket Cover: A daytime view of the Donald J. Trump Gold and White Ballroom at the Mar-a-Lago Club in Palm Beach, Florida, which is setup for Republican presidential candidate, Donald J. Trump, to speak after the Florida primary, March 13, 2016. Trump won the primary garnering 99 delegates on 1,079,870 (45.72% of the total) votes.

PHOTO: Brooks Kraft / Getty Images

Dedication

FOR MY MOTHER, RUTH LOGAN

(b. 1923–d.2019)

Whose love and strength has been my guide for most of this book's journey.

This book is lovingly dedicated to her.

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Introduction

THE ELEGANT TRUMP IS ABOUT THE SOMEWHAT intangible yet lovely story of President Donald J. Trump's commitment to aesthetics which has played out in surprising ways throughout his career beginning with architecture. Before the Trump era, any discussion of aesthetics would have been classified as apolitical. It is treated as such to the extent possible in this book.

This book supposes Donald Trump is an aesthete. We know this because he uses the word beautiful to describe everything from the terms of a trade deal to the design of the wall at our southern border to the people at his rallies. Trump will say, "We'll make it beautiful" almost as much as he says make America great again, and promises made, promises kept—his top two slogans.

Using artistic metaphors in his 2020 State of the Union Address to Congress, President Trump proudly declared, "This Nation is our canvas, and this country is our masterpiece. We look at tomorrow and see unlimited frontiers just waiting to be explored . . . the American Adventure, has only just begun!"

A few days after the address, the White House announced that the president had drafted an executive order tagged, "Making Federal Buildings Beautiful Again." We cover this news in Chapter 9.

Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy dating back to the ancient Greeks. It is classified as a sensori-emotional value and it is a subjective not objective realm of study that deals with the ideas and principles surrounding the nature of beauty. This is the main theme of this book and it is discussed in some detail particularly in

Chapter 1—Trump the Builder, and Chapter 9—The Trump Brand and, Chapter 10—The Trump Movement.

One has to allow that Trump's aesthetic is not everyone's cup of tea even though he has signaled a return to building any new federal buildings in the classical style of the founders who designed Mount Vernon, Monticello, and the Virginia State Capitol.

It is simply not true, however, that Donald Trump has not been engaged with the nature of beauty in his work first as a Manhattan real estate developer and in significant ways since. He has. Publicly declaring that Donald Trump is elegant is anathema to the politico-media. Even skeptics might see in this book that Donald J. Trump is anything but the vulgarian the media has portrayed him to be.

Since June 2015 when Donald Trump rode down the golden escalator of his own skyscraper, Trump Tower, to launch his campaign for president, millions of overwhelmingly negative media articles and other media artifacts have been produced containing his name. A cursory review of Google search page results using any permutation of Trump-related search strings easily attests to the hysteria over anything Donald Trump that exists in the media. We catalog this phenomenon and counter some of the more outrageous claims with evidence to the contrary.

The hysteria contained in these articles has become so prevalent that it has acquired the label Trump Derangement Syndrome. People who oppose this president are frequently described as



unhinged or as having been triggered by the president's actions but particularly, as we know, due to his tweets. TDS has been expressed in the culture-at-large in what can only be called the political pornography of lurid memes, increasingly vulgar 'protests' aka street art, and R-rated tweets that would make Attila the Hun blush.

The purpose of *The Elegant Trump* is to bring to light some of the facts surrounding this president's personal style, but also to explore the president's aesthetics in many areas of his life. In Chapter 4—The Hair, we defend Donald Trump's personal hair style choice for the obvious reason that it is a personal choice, but there is more to the story than mere self-expression. We will just say that Trump has good reason to stick with what one critic called his *blancmange coiffure*. Chapter 5 covers personal style choices like his red tie as well as other staples of his attire. Believe it or not, his cufflinks are controversial. His body language and his signature have been put under the microscope by a media intent on peering into the president's psyche. The conclusions drawn by these armchair psychologists are beauts as Trump would put it.

Donald Trump's humor is a subject covered in Chapter 3—He Tweets and Chapter 8—Did We Mention He's Funny? As is the case with his aesthetic sensibility, he also displays great humor on a daily basis. This might be particularly instructive for readers as ancient philosophers through the ages have known that humor is an essential part of leadership as did Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th President of the United States, who is quoted as saying, "A sense of humor is part of the art of leadership, of getting along with people, of getting things done."

The last two chapters are a long-overdue love letter to the 45th President of the United States. He has not been credited for his

marketing chops or a rock star for his charisma but only because it is not Politically Correct to compliment the president.

Chapter 9—The Trump Brand is a discussion of the Trump aesthetic that finds expression in more recent projects, namely the Trump International Washington D.C. Hotel and Turnberry Golf Resort in Scotland. The branding components of Donald Trump's big, beautiful campaign for president is covered here too along with an update on the pandemic.

Chapter 10—The Trump Movement chronicles the 'big, beautiful love fest' that is the story of Donald J. Trump's ascendance to the White House. The special interaction that takes place between this president and his supporters who come 'out of the hills' by the tens of thousands to attend one of his rallies is unprecedented in American politics. This has prompted the media to label him a populist leader albeit delivered at every turn within a negative context. To date the media has not given the Trump movement the attention it deserves. Here you will find a glowing photo essay of his rallies, Trump movement activists including Trump family members, and the endearing high points of the Donald Trump 2016 campaign.

I was driven to write this book because the journalistic record regarding Donald Trump had become either woefully negative or simply absent. We know from several recent major studies that front page news is almost entirely negatively slanted against the president. Perhaps even worse than the existence of negative hard news is the paucity of feature stories or soft news about the president and his family which are by definition permitted as benign portraits of public figures. What a tragedy it has been for this country to see that our First Lady, Melania Knauss Trump, a former fashion model and arguably one of the most beautiful

women in the world, has not yet appeared on the cover of a women's fashion magazine!

The illustrated coffee table book format was deliberately chosen to tell the story of *The Elegant Trump* because it has not been done. Amazon is chock-full of political books written by our top pundits who are proponents or opponents of this president, but how many books unabashedly sing the praises of what We the People find fun and beautiful and inspiring and just plain delightful as we witness President Trump go about his daily activities? Indeed, as he makes it apparent that he is making America great again? America deserves to hear the whole story of our presidents including the little-known facts, the DidYou Know-type biographical details, and the delightful anecdotes every bit as much as the facts surrounding front-page headline making events. In yet another instance of using the word beauty, President Trump will often say, "We are going to turn around this big beautiful ship." *The Elegant Trump* is a humble reprise in what one hopes will be a long conversation about @realDonaldTrump.

JULY 2020

CHAPTER ONE

A Builder by Trade



PALM BEACH, FL—March 13, 2016: The stage is set in the Gold and White Ballroom at Mar-a-Lago where Donald Trump will speak when the results of the Florida primary come in.

PHOTO: Brooks Kraft / Getty Images

Thumbnail Opposite: The corner of Fifth Avenue and East 56th Street, Manhattan in August 1981 during the construction of Trump Tower.

PHOTO: Barbara Alper / Getty Images

Most of Donald Trump's professional life has been dedicated to building buildings. A builder by trade, it is his obvious first love.

Early Trump buildings were notable additions to the Manhattan skyline. *The Art of the Deal* provides us with the backstory of how a young Donald Trump broke into the exceptionally close-knit Manhattan real estate business.

His first major proposal at age twenty-nine was to transform The Commodore Hotel, a staid 65-year-old structure at the corner of Forty-Second Street and Lexington Avenue next to Grand Central Station, into a swank luxury hotel property. The completion of the Grand Hyatt New York launched Donald Trump's real estate career when it opened in 1980.

The project was risky. In 1975 New York City was on the brink of bankruptcy. The most famous headline that encapsulated those dark days appeared in *The New York Daily News* on October 30th of that year: "Ford to City: Drop Dead." It came on the heels of the city's efforts to obtain federal funds to stay afloat.

Four decades later *The New Yorker* revisited the crisis in a lengthy piece by Jeff Nussbaum that lays out the complex details of the high-wire negotiations. Nussbaum writes:

On October 16, 1975, New York City was deep in crisis. At 4 P.M. the next day, four hundred and fifty-three million dollars of the city's debts would come due, but there were only thirty-four million dollars on hand. If New York couldn't pay those debts, the city would officially be bankrupt. ¹

Naturally, banks were not lending to real estate developers much in those days, and Donald Trump was no exception. Given his youth and inexperience, the odds were against him. Nevertheless, he persevered, obtained the property, and ultimately built what became The Grand Hyatt New York. Some say it marked the beginning of the New York real estate boom, a boom that continues to this day.

Trump Tower New York, now the flagship of the Trump Organization, soon followed in 1983. A unique mixed use 58-story skyscraper with offices, shops, restaurants, a public atrium, and luxury condominiums located next to Tiffany & Co. at 725 Fifth Avenue, Trump Tower was emblematic of 1980s New York glamour. It has become a representative symbol of both the Trump Organization and Trump the man since.

Reviews for Trump Tower started to pour in. *The New York Times* review on April 4, 1983 by Paul Goldberger, its architecture critic, said, "In fact, the atrium of Trump Tower may well be the most pleasant interior public space to be completed in New York in some years. It is warm, luxurious and even exhilarating—in every way more welcoming than the public arcades and atriums that have preceded it in buildings like Olympic Tower, the Galleria, and Citicorp Center."²

He went on to say:

The credit for this success goes in part to the architects, Der Scutt and the firm of Swanke Hayden Connell; in part to the developer, Donald Trump, but most of all to a stone. For what is truly remarkable about this six-story atrium is the Breccia



Perniche [sic] marble that covers its walls and floors, a rich, lush Italian marble with an absolutely exquisite color that is best described as a mixture of rose and peach and orange. It is not like any stone that has been used in such quantity anywhere else in New York, and it gives off a glow of happy, if self-satisfied, affluence.³

It is hard to believe that a reporter for the *Times* would say something remotely positive about a Trump building.

Goldberger was not the first *Times* architecture critic to gush about Trump Tower. Prior to Goldberger's review of the finished product, Ada Louise Huxtable, his predecessor and highly respected architecture critic at the *Times*, previewed the plans for the building at Trump's invitation. She praised the plan for the building saying, "A great deal of care has been lavished on its design. It is undeniably a dramatically handsome structure."⁴

Trump had apparently won Huxtable over, an influential architecture critic who was also hostile to skyscrapers and who Trump said preferred "old and classical to new and glitzy." As a brand, the Trump Organization entered the New York real estate market with some fanfare. Trump has iterated the architectural grammar of "happy, self-satisfied affluence" that Goldberger described decade after decade since.

Positive press alone did not account for the success of Trump Tower. Trump crafted a marketing strategy that drew his target audience—the wealthy who could afford to buy a luxury residence in Manhattan—to Trump Tower.

Of his marketing plan for Trump Tower, he said, "We positioned ourselves as the only place for a certain kind of wealthy person to live—the hottest ticket in town. We appealed to certain categories

of wealthy people—in show business, wealthy foreigners—Europeans, Asians, Arabs, and South Americans—who wanted to buy an apartment and all they needed was the purchase price."⁵

Prior to purchasing a residence in Manhattan these wealthy jetsetters had to submit to an arduous, intrusive, often disdainful co-op building board to be accepted into a prestigious building. Co-op boards proudly discriminated against these wealthy outsiders and Trump knew it.

For the trendy sophisticates who did not have the patience to undergo an iffy time-consuming co-op application process, Trump offered thirty-eight stories of residential condominiums whereby potential buyers could purchase a unit outright, like a home, while sharing in joint ownership of any common areas of the building. The condominium had technically been in existence since the early 1880s but as a form of residential ownership, condos did not take off until the 1960s when state and federal legislation clarified its legalities.

Trump popularized the use of condo residential ownership that radically changed the real estate market in New York. Barbara Corcoran, herself now a billionaire, said of Trump on the *Larry King Show* in June 2008, "How can I possibly compete with Donald Trump? Thanks to him I sold more property in Manhattan. He single handedly turned the whole image of Manhattan around in the 1980's when nobody wanted to live in New York."⁶ Best-selling *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* author, Robert Kiyosaki, said of Donald Trump during this period, "Donald is the smartest man in real estate—no one else even comes close."

Well-known developer, Arthur Zeckendorf once said, "Donald Trump basically started the high-end condo business." Zeckendorf, owner, founder, and co-chairman of Zeckendorf Development,



The Grand Hyatt Hotel photographed at night in 2017 with the Chrysler Building in the background. The Hyatt was Donald Trump's first major project as a real estate developer. The renovation was completed in 1980. A group of investors purchased the property in 2019 and will redevelop it.

PHOTO: R. J. DiBella



A view of the unusual sawtooth set-back feature of Trump Tower's upper floors, a feature that impressed architecture critics.

PHOTO: Nino Marcuti / Alamy Stock Photos



The six-story atrium at Trump Tower was clad in 240 tons of breccia pernice, a pinkish-orange Italian marble. The atrium, described as giving off a “glow of happy,” was conceived as a privately operated public space. It connects a two-block pedestrian plaza between Fifth and Madison Avenues with 550 Madison Avenue to the south in Manhattan.

PHOTO: Classic Image / Alamy Stock Photos