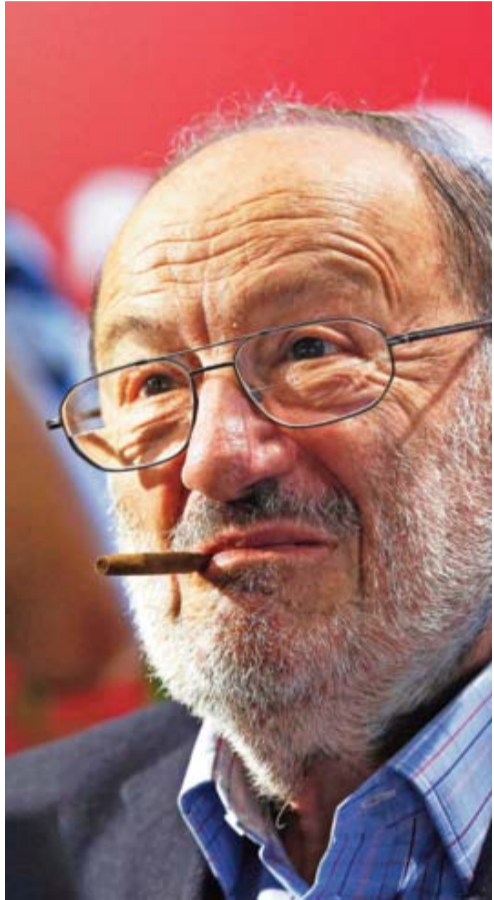


# Umberto Eco: From philosophy to bestsellers

Umberto Eco started working a novel that set the world's imagination on fire "prodded by a seminal idea: I felt like poisoning a monk." The Italian author/academic who intrigued, puzzled and delighted readers worldwide with his best-selling historical novel "The Name of the Rose" died at home in Milan on Friday evening after a battle with cancer, according to a family member who asked not to be identified.

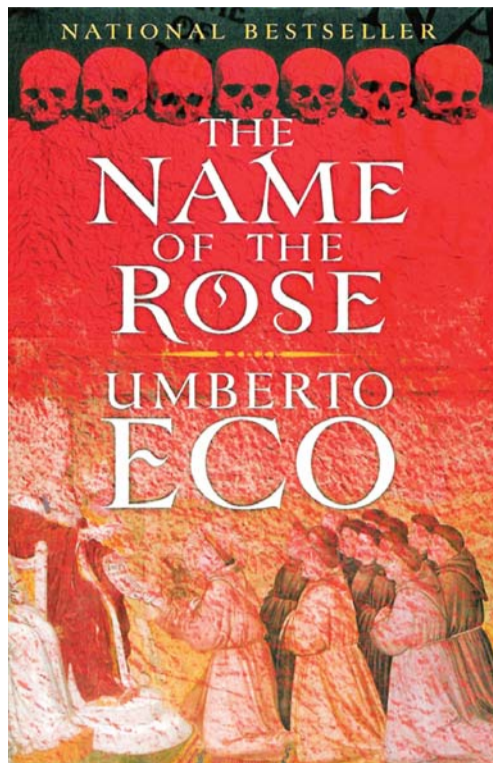


Umberto Eco

His death was also confirmed by his American publisher, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Author of a wide range of books, Eco was fascinated with the obscure and the mundane, and his books were both engaging narratives and philosophical and intellectual exercises. The bearded, heavy-set scholar, critic and novelist took on the esoteric theory of semiotics, the study of signs and symbols in language; took on popular culture icons like James Bond; and took on the technical languages of the Internet.

#### Academic to celebrity

"The Name of the Rose" transformed him from an academic to international celebrity, especially after the medieval thriller set in a monastery was made



into a film starring Sean Connery in 1986. "The Name of the Rose" sold millions of copies, a feat for a narrative filled with partially translated Latin quotes and puzzling musings on the nature of symbols.

His second novel, the 1988 "Foucault's Pendulum," a byzantine tale of plotting publishers and secret sects also styled as a thriller, was successful, too - though it was so complicated that an annotated guide accompanied it to help the reader follow the plot. In 2000, when awarding Eco Spain's prestigious Prince of Asturias Prize for communications, the jury praised his works "of universal distribution and profound effect that are already classics in contemporary thought."

Eco was born Jan 5, 1932, in Alessandria, a town east of Turin. He said the reserved culture there was a source for his "world vision: a skepticism and an aversion to rhetoric." He received a university degree in philosophy from the University of Turin in 1954, beginning his fascination with the Middle Ages and the aesthetics of text. He later defined semiotics as "a philosophy of language." He had always loved storytelling and as a teenager wrote comic books and fantasy novels.

"I was a perfectionist and wanted to make them look as though they had been printed, so I wrote them in capital letters and made up title pages, summaries, illustrations," he told The Paris Review in 1988. "It was so tiring that I never finished any of them. I was at that time a great writer of unaccom-

plished masterpieces."

Eco remained involved with academia, becoming the first professor of semiotics at the University of Bologna in 1971. He also lectured at institutions worldwide and was a fellow at elite colleges like Oxford University and Columbia University. Twenty-three institutions had awarded him honorary degrees by 2000. But Eco was also able to bridge the gap between popular and intellectual culture, publishing his musings in daily newspapers and Italy's leading weekly magazine L'Espresso.

#### Varied career

Eco started in journalism in the 1950s, working for the Italian state-owned television RAI. From the 1960s onwards, he wrote columns for several Italian dailies. He also wrote children's books, including "The Bomb and the General" ("La Bomba e il Generale").

In 2003, Eco published a collection of lectures on translations, "Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation," and a year later he wrote the novel "The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana," a story about an antiquarian book dealer who loses his memory.

Recent works include "From the Tree to the Labyrinth," an essay on semiology and language published in 2007 and "Turning Back the Clock," a collection of essays on various subjects, ranging from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to anti-Semitism and to staunch criticism of Silvio Berlusconi's conservative government in Italy. His most recent novel, "Numero Zero," came out last year and recalled a political scandal from the 1990s that helped lead to Berlusconi's rise.

In a 2011 interview with the Guardian newspaper, Eco explained how someone as "strongly anti-intellectual" as Berlusconi could become a political force in Italy, a cradle of Renaissance culture. "There was a fear of the intellectual as a critical power, and in this sense there was a clash between Berlusconi and the intellectual world," he said. "But Italy is not an intellectual country. On the subway in Tokyo everybody reads. In Italy, they don't. Don't evaluate Italy from the fact that it produced Raphael and Michelangelo."

In the same interview, Eco shrugged off critics who found him "too erudite and philosophical, too difficult," saying he wrote "for masochists." "It's only publishers and some journalists who believe that people want simple things," Eco said. "People are tired of simple things. They want to be challenged." — AP

## Key works by Umberto Eco

Academic and novelist Umberto Eco, whose death at the age of 84 was announced by the Italian media yesterday, wrote many philosophical books and essays but is best known for his novels. Here a list of his main books published in English. Dates given are for the original publication in Italian.

- 1980: "The Name of the Rose" (Il nome della rosa)
- 1988: "Foucault's Pendulum" (Il pendolo di Foucault)
- 1994: "The Island of the Day Before" (L'isola del giorno prima)
- 2000: "Baudolino" (Baudolino)
- 2004: "The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana" (La misteriosa fiamma della regina Loana)
- 2010: "The Prague Cemetery" (Il cimitero di Praga)
- 2015: "Numero zero"

He wrote dozens of essays on semiotics, of which he was a specialist, mediaeval aesthetics, linguistics and philosophy. Notable among them are "History of Beauty" (2004), and "On Ugliness" (2007) explorations of what we consider to be physically attractive or repellant, and why. —AFP



Jeff Hemenway, left, plays Fox Innovation Lab's 'The Martian VR Experience' and receives game instruction from Harrison Muecke at the D.I.C.E. Summit.

## Virtual reality promises to transform film

Chris Milk stepped onto a TED Conference stage and took the audience on an awe-inducing trip into the future of movies. While much of the early attention on virtual reality has focused on use of the immersive technology in video games, Milk and his US startup Vrse are using it to transform storytelling and filmmaking.

"We have just started to scratch the surface of the true power of virtual reality," Milk said. "It's not a video game peripheral. It connects humans to other humans in a profound way... I think virtual reality has the potential to actually change the world." He had everyone in the Vancouver audience at TED, which ended Friday, hold Google Cardboard viewers to their eyes for what was billed as the world's collective virtual reality experience.

Google Cardboard gear is literally that-cardboard with a slot for holding smartphones at act as screens for viewing. Ear buds plug into smartphones to tune into soundtracks. Audience members gasped collectively at times as they found themselves virtually transported in front of an oncoming locomotive, the sky above a city, a stage with a rock band and elsewhere.

"It is the first medium that actually makes the

jump from the author's expression of an experience to our experiencing it first hand," Milk said. Vrse has made more than a dozen virtual reality films in the past year and Milk said peers in the industry are tremendously interested in the technology.

#### An empathy machine

"It is amazing that you can just take a cardboard box and add it to someone's smartphone and have an experience like that together," Milk said after his TED talk. "Virtual reality is not just a social experience, but a collective experience."

Milk sees virtual reality as bringing people together instead of isolating them in fantasy worlds disconnected from what is going on around them. "I can connect you not just with someone across the aisle from you, I can connect you to someone across the world," Milk said.

He referred to virtual reality as "an empathy machine" capable of making people better relate to the lives of others by sharing places and experiences in such a manner that comes powerfully close to walking alongside them.—AFP

## Tissot introduces Virat Kohli as its Indian male brand ambassador

Tissot, famous Swiss watch brand, known for its spirit of innovation by tradition announced ace cricketer Virat Kohli as the brand ambassador today in Mumbai. The cricketer, who mirrors the Swiss brand's mastery for breaking new ground and its uncompromising commitment to excellence, also oozes style and confidence that makes him a youth icon.

Owning various records in the cricketing genre, Virat Kohli went on to become an exemplary batsman and won the historic 2011 World Cup with his teammates. He now leads the Indian test cricket team and is a trendsetter, both on and off the field.

Speaking at the announcement, Virat Kohli expressed his excitement of coming onboard. "It is an honour to be chosen by Tissot. Tissot is a brand that is recognized for its precision and I also hold that very close to my performances. A watch is about the only accessory I love wearing and I am so happy that Tissot is what I will be wearing now. I am looking forward to our journey together."

François Thiébaud, President of Tissot said "I am very happy to welcome Virat Kohli in the Tissot family. Tissot is a brand with strong heritage just like the Indian culture. In addition, we have a deep connection with sports. Therefore, Virat, who is one of the best cricketers in the world, is the perfect ambassador for us. We wish for him and his team to win the next Cricket World Championship."

On this occasion, Virat was presented with Tissot's classic collection - Chemindes Tourelles. It takes its name from the street in Le Locle, Switzerland, where the Tissot manufacture was established in 1907, and where the company can still be found today. The watch compliments the company's vast years of expertise with a contemporary design with an elegant case that comes in a variety of different finishes, including polished and brushed, perfectly demonstrating the technical know-how Tissot puts into every piece.

Virat Kohli joins reigning Bollywood actress Deepika Padukone in being the face of the brand, who has been representing Tissot since 2007. Welcoming Virat into the Tissot world from Toronto, Deepika said, "I would like to welcome Virat to the Tissot family! I think he completely defines the Tissot man and I look forward to our association together as Tissot Ambassadors."

On this occasion, Tissot unveiled its first ever campaign with Virat Kohli, where he is seen in his cricketing gear flaunting Tissot's latest T-Touch Expert Solar, the first tactile watch to be powered by solar energy. Tissot T-Touch Expert Solar is coolly edgy with 20 tactile essential functions for everyday use, including weather forecast, altimeter, chronograph and compass. An iconic watch for an iconic man.



## Massimo Dutti launches SPRING SUMMER 2016 in Kuwait

Colour and a combination of lines could well be considered the stars of this new season in the Dutti Women's Collection. Articles that overflow with their own style, which separately create concepts brimming with expressiveness and trendiness, and that combined make up the style of a true woman, neutral while original in turn.

Ranging from olive greens to the khaki and petroleum blues of the Industry collection, in which the front pocket on the jackets and the skinny look of the trousers take on an important role, right through to the arabesque airs and reddish tones of the Asilah Collection in which a nod to Northern Africa is made with the free-flowing shirts and long blazers.

Ikat motifs, prints and earthy colors all make up this small Atlas Collection, in which linen is of utmost importance to cool down the warmest summer afternoons. Beautifully worked leather accessories, esparto for shoes, even the total look of mustard, Burgundy and natural hue prints presage the seasonal changes, leaving the cold winds of winter behind.

And even more refreshing, there are the cold blues with greys making up the Saint Malo Collection, in which the shirts highlight the beginnings of a very important and well-worked part of the Dutti tailoring craft. In the men's collection we find ourselves with a wide ranging variety of neutral shades that clash with the appearance of different colors such as currant red or earth oranges.

Earthy shades, indigos and beiges recalling the wondrous decade of the fifties in Cuba, country that holds the starring role in the entire Spring Summer Dutti Collection for men. Herringbone blazers in natural colors, ethnic trends and striking use of linen with ethnic, geometric and tribal print shirts, all under the influence of a certain vintage look, which on occasion is combined with sports accessories such as glasses, satchel bags and pocketbooks.

The B&G Collection is represented by colors such as yellows, greys and the novelty of black tones for the girl's collection. All this treated with romantic nuances in blouses with embroidery, tweed sweaters and cardigans. Crochet is also to be highlighted, combined with free-flowing trousers and light-weight fabrics in which fringes are to be found on leather jackets.

In the boy's collection we have to underscore the denim shirts and light-weight feather parkas as essential accessories for casual and laid-back looks. Also included in the collection are trainers for boys and perforated sneakers with satin laces for girls.

