



**Name:** Tibor Kalman

**Years:** 1949- May 2, 1999

**Residence:** Poughkeepsie, NY

**Brief Biography:**

Tibor Kalman, a noted graphic designer, was born in Budapest in 1949. However, in 1956, when Kalman was only 8 years old, his family was forced to flee due to the Soviet invasion. Upon moving to America, the Kalman family decided to settle in Poughkeepsie, NY. Kalman began attending school in Poughkeepsie, but having not yet learned the language he was often mocked by his peers. Kalman often noted that the isolation he felt as a child inspired his designs later in life. Because American culture was foreign to him, he noticed and played upon things in his work that most Americans overlook. Kalman attended New York University for one year. However, always the radical, Kalman ended up leaving school to move to Cuba in order to support the Communists. Kalman returned to NYU in 1971 where his passion for design blossomed. He began doing window displays for the Student Book Exchange at NYU. The owner of the store at that time later went on to buy Barnes & Noble, and made Kalman the company's first creative director.

Having found success as a creative director he was hired in 1979 by E.J. Korvettes, a discount department store. Though the job paid well, Kalman was not satisfied. He soon decided to create his own design company and within a year, opened M&Co. (named after his wife Maira), operating out of his New York apartment. Much of his early work involved designing logos for department stores, but he soon realized that he longed for more exciting projects. Kalman found that his design dreams had been answered when he was asked to create an album cover for the Talking Heads. The cover featured digitally manipulated pictures of the band, as well as upside down type. From that point on, Kalman and M&Co. became noted for their unconventional take on design. As his success continued Kalman saw M&Co. as his road to social commentary and change. In one of his most noted efforts, Kalman sent out boxes of food typically served at homeless shelters to clients one Christmas in effort to convince them to donate to the cause.

In addition to running M&Co. Kalman also began working in editing and creative direction for magazines like Art Forum and Interview. When he was asked to take the position as editor in chief at Colors, an Italian fashion magazine, he decided to put M&Co. on hold and pursue it. The magazine appealed to Kalman, because besides its traditional focus on fashion it also dealt with social issues like racism and AIDS. He believed it was “the first magazine for the global village”. Kalman returned to New York in 1997, after being diagnosed with cancer. He re-established M&Co, this time only designing exhibits, videos and books with social relevance. Kalman passed away two years later, but his legacy as a social activist and unconventional designer lives on.

**References:** <http://www.salon.com/people/obit/1999/05/19/kalman/>

**More Information:** Tibor Kalman: Perverse Optimist, by Peter Hall

Books by Tibor Kalman: Unfashion, T.Bor, Chairman Rolf Fehlbaum