Forbes

Gallerist Isabelle Bscher On Karl Lagerfeld's Photography And The Met Gala

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I write about the crossover between fashion and pop culture.

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NEW YORK, NY – MARCH 08: Isabelle Bscher attends Karl Lagerfeld 30 Years Of Photography at Galerie ... [+] PATRICK MCMULLAN VIA GETTY IMAGES

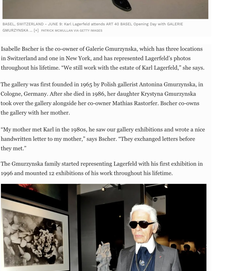
Karl Lagerfeld was not only a fashion designer who helmed legendary fashion houses like Chloé, Chanel and Fendi. He was also a photographer.

Not any kind of photographer. The Kaiser of fashion loved photography so much that he told *ELLE* in 2007 that if he wasn't a designer, he would just be "a photographer or a publisher, which I am, too."

He photographed everything from celebrities, like Nicole Kidman to Pamela Anderson and Ryan Gosling, as well as bouquets of flowers, and eerie shots of the Eiffel Tower. He shot his own fashion campaigns editorials for *Interview Magazine*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue Germany*.

Now, a series of Lagerfeld's top 15 photos are going to be on view at Galerie Gmurzynska in New York, for an exhibition opening May 10. Entitled *30 Years of Exhibiting Karl Lagerfeld*, the gallery exhibition coincides with the Met Gala and Costume Institute exhibition dedicated to the famed fashion designer. His photographic works will also be on view at the Treasure House Fair in London from June 22 to 26 with Galerie Gmurzynska.

BASEL, SWITZERLAND – JUNE 19: Karl Lagerfeld attends ART 43 BASEL Opening Day with GALERIE GMURZYNSKA ... [+] PATRICK MCMULLAN VIA GETTY IMAGES



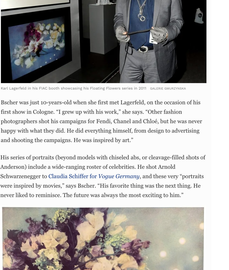
Karl Lagerfeld in his PVC North Wonderwall by Floating Flowers series in 2001 - GALERIE GMURZYNSKA

Isabelle Bscher is the co-owner of Galerie Gmurzynska, which has three locations in Switzerland and one in New York, and has represented Lagerfeld's photos throughout his lifetime. "We still work with the estate of Karl Lagerfeld," she says.

The gallery was first founded in 1965 by Polish gallerist Antonina Gmurzynska, in Cologne, Germany. After she died in 1986, her daughter Krystyna Gmurzynska took over the gallery alongside her co-owner Mathias Rastorfer. Bscher co-owns the gallery with her mother.

"My mother met Karl in the 1980s, he saw our gallery exhibitions and wrote a nice handwritten letter to my mother," says Bscher. "They exchanged letters before they met."

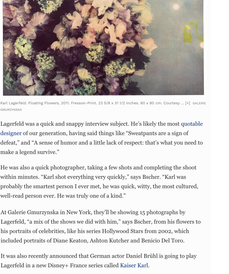
The Gmurzynska family started representing Lagerfeld with his first exhibition in 1996 and mounted 12 exhibitions of his work throughout his lifetime.



Karl Lagerfeld in his PVC North Wonderwall by Floating Flowers series in 2001 - GALERIE GMURZYNSKA

Bscher was just 10-years-old when she first met Lagerfeld, on the occasion of his first show in Cologne. "I grew up with his work," she says. "Other fashion photographers shot his campaigns for Fendi, Chanel and Chloé, but he was never happy with what they did. He did everything himself, from design to advertising and shooting the campaigns. He was inspired by art."

His series of portraits (beyond models with chiseled abs, or cleavage-filled shots of Anderson) include a wide-ranging roster of celebrities. He shot Arnold Schwarzenegger to Claudia Schiffer for *Vogue Germany*, and these very "portraits were inspired by movies," says Bscher. "His favorite thing was the next thing. He never liked to reminisce. The future was always the most exciting to him."



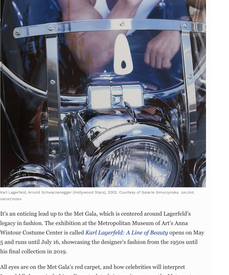
Karl Lagerfeld, Floating Flowers, 2011, Fresson Print 25 5/8 x 31 1/2 inches, 65 x 80 cm. Courtesy ... [+] GALERIE GMURZYNSKA

Lagerfeld was a quick and snappy interview subject. He's likely the most quotable designer of our generation, having said things like "Sweatpants are a sign of defeat," and "A sense of humor and a little lack of respect: that's what you need to make a legend survive."

He was also a quick photographer, taking a few shots and completing the shoot within minutes. "Karl shot everything very quickly," says Bscher. "Karl was probably the smartest person I ever met, he was quick, witty, the most cultured, well-read person ever. He was truly one of a kind."

At Galerie Gmurzynska in New York, they'll be showing 15 photographs by Lagerfeld, "a mix of the shows we did with him," says Bscher, from his flowers to his portraits of celebrities, like his series Hollywood Stars from 2002, which included portraits of Diane Keaton, Ashton Kutcher and Benicio Del Toro.

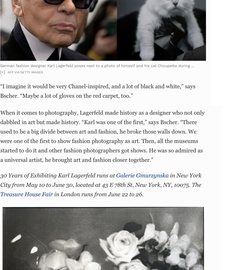
It was also recently announced that German actor Daniel Brühl is going to play Lagerfeld in a new Disney+ France series called Kaiser Karl.



Karl Lagerfeld, Arnold Schwarzenegger (Hollywood Stars), 2002. Courtesy of Galerie Gmurzynska. GALERIE GMURZYNSKA

It's an enticing lead up to the Met Gala, which is centered around Lagerfeld's legacy in fashion. The exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Anna Wintour Costume Center is called *Karl Lagerfeld: A Line of Beauty* opens on May 5 and runs until July 16, showcasing the designer's fashion from the 1950s until his final collection in 2019.

All eyes are on the Met Gala's red carpet, and how celebrities will interpret Lagerfeld's legacy in fashion. Expect a lot of vintage items, says the Met curator, Andrew Bolton. There will also be a cat on the red carpet, namely Lagerfeld's own cat Choupette, who received a VIP invite to the Met Gala, according to the *New York Post*.



German fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld poses next to a photo of himself and his cat Choupette during ... [+] AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

"I imagine it would be very Chanel-inspired, and a lot of black and white," says Bscher. "Maybe a lot of gloves on the red carpet, too."

When it comes to photography, Lagerfeld made history as a designer who not only dabbled in art but made history. "Karl was one of the first," says Bscher. "There used to be a big divide between art and fashion, he broke those walls down. We were one of the first to show fashion photography as art. Then, all the museums started to do it and other fashion photographers got shows. He was so admired as a universal artist, he brought art and fashion closer together."

30 Years of Exhibiting Karl Lagerfeld runs at Galerie Gmurzynska in New York City from May 10 to June 30, located at 43 E 78th St, New York, NY, 10075. The Treasure House Fair in London runs from June 22 to 26.

Karl Lagerfeld, Floating Flowers, 2011 Fresson Print 25 5/8 x 31 inches. Courtesy of Galerie ... [+] GALERIE GMURZYNSKA