

Taking a look at life through Karl Lagerfeld's lens

At this year's Art Basel contemporary art fair in Miami Beach there will be a mini retrospective of Lagerfeld's work

Charlotte Cripps



Nicole Kidman photograph by Karl Lagerfeld

The German fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld is best known for his trademark white hair, leather gloves and high-collared shirts, and as the head designer and creative director of Chanel, where he also takes all the photographs for its advertising campaigns. Less is known about his creative photography, though his stylish images sell for up to £50,000.

This year's Art Basel contemporary art fair in Miami Beach, which opens next week, will host a mini retrospective of Lagerfeld's work. The Zurich-based Galerie Gmurzynska, which has represented him for 25 years, will exhibit his photographs in

a museum-quality, salon-style hanging for its booth, curated by Germano Celant, which also includes work by Pablo Picasso and Francis Bacon.

“Karl Lagerfeld has a professional life as a fashion designer and an artistic life as a photographer,” says Mathias Rastorfer, the CEO of Galerie Gmurzynska. “The inspiration comes from his life. He is very much in charge of the subject matter he chooses, from landscape to architecture, art and celebrities. There is no advertising background behind it. Photography has always been his creative outlet, away from the professional career as a designer.”

Photographs include one of Nicole Kidman in 1995, lying across a decadent pink canopy bed in a corset and heels. It was taken at Lagerfeld’s former chateau in Paris, which he had filled with items from the 17th century.

Arnold Schwarzenegger is seen posing on a motorcycle in 2002 in the courtyard of his mansion in Los Angeles, where he has a collection of cars and bikes.

There is also a portrait of Lagerfeld’s great friend Jeff Koons, in 2008, standing in front of a sculptural self-portrait at the Palace of Versailles, where he had a show.

A photograph entitled *Gone With The Wind* (1996) is a play on the film that shows a black couple in a romantic embrace. “It’s a little remark about issues of colour,” says Rastorfer.

Karl Lagerfeld’s photography is exhibited at Galerie Gmurzynska, Art Basel Miami Beach, 3 to 6 December (artbaselmiamibeach.com)