

CFP: GSA 2022: Karl Lagerfeld: Exploring a Lingering Enigma, Houston (14.03.2022)

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All the biographies and memoirs published since Karl Lagerfeld's death three years ago reinforce his legendary dimension by turning him into a fictitious character. More than ever, the man with the high collar, the ponytail, and the sunglasses, Hamburg born resident of Paris, trilingual and erudite, sharp-tongued and authoritative, queer and chaste, remains an enigma.

The seminar takes on the impossible challenge to pin down the identity of a man who spent his whole life refashioning couture houses, remodeling his homes, restyling his appearance, and retelling his own biography. We will look at Lagerfeld as a fashion designer, an illustrator, a collector, a photographer, a publisher, an epistolist using fax machines, an iPhone artist, a talk show philosopher, a celebrity, and a cat owner. For only an interdisciplinary approach to his creative work may provide a key to his multitalented and multifaceted personality.

We will discuss Lagerfeld's oeuvre, study him as subject/object of fiction, and engage with scholarship about him, adopting a transdisciplinary and transnational approach across media. Both Haute Couture Kaiser and Pop Culture Celebrity, Lagerfeld challenges us to go beyond the dichotomy of high and low culture.

A fashion theory reader and a portfolio of materials to facilitate the seminar discussion will be provided in June to all participants. We expect pre-circulated 5-page papers by mid-August, ask for a short oral presentation on selected materials and encourage active participation.

To apply to the seminar, please send a CV and a short abstract stating the reason and nature of your scholarly interest in Karl Lagerfeld through the GSA submissions portal by March 14, 2022, 11:59 EST.

Feel free to get in touch with the seminar conveners Christophe Koné (cak4@williams.edu) and Stefan Boernchen (stefan.boernchen@uni-koeln.de).

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