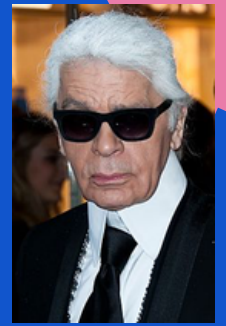


# KARL LAGERFELD



## Karl Lagerfeld: trendsetter in life and beyond.

*Karl Lagerfeld's ongoing memorialization has been the subject of many news cycles since he died in 2019. Just as his fashion choices influenced our collective consciousness, here is how Karl Lagerfeld's pre-need funeral planning can serve as an inspiration for us all.*

According to the tabloids, Lagerfeld left a memo outlining how his stores should mark the event of his death. He instructed his employees to [create a single bouquet of white roses, with stems trimmed to 120 centimeters](#). The designer stated that they should be purchased locally, placed in a transparent or white vase, and displayed along with a prewritten statement in the center of the main store window.

*What Karl cleverly outlined in this memo is a type of altar which folks could visit and pay their respects.*



photo source [People Magazine](#)

Karl got ahead of any uncertainty about how to publicly acknowledge his death by outlining; where he wanted to be commemorated, what specific florals / props should be used, and a script to follow.

**Now it's our turn to imagine...**

**Take a moment to answer the following questions.**

*Don't worry, although this may feel a little strange you're not going to call in any evil spirits by completing this exercise.*

- **Is there a location where those who survive you might visit to pay their respects?**

Karl knew that his stores would be beacons for those who were searching for connection to his legacy. Think about where you spend time with those you love. This should be a public place that holds memories like; your favorite park, a bar or restaurant you're a regular at, or a beloved bookstore.

- **Are there specific florals or props you would like used to evoke your spirit?**

Karl chose traditional white roses to stand in tribute. He unabashedly specified the presentation and procurement he desired. Think about what holds value in your life; will the folks visiting your memorial recognize the items presented there and associate them with memories of you? You might choose sunflowers from your garden in a favorite vase, a disco ball hung above a tarot deck, or perhaps a painting or piece of art you created.

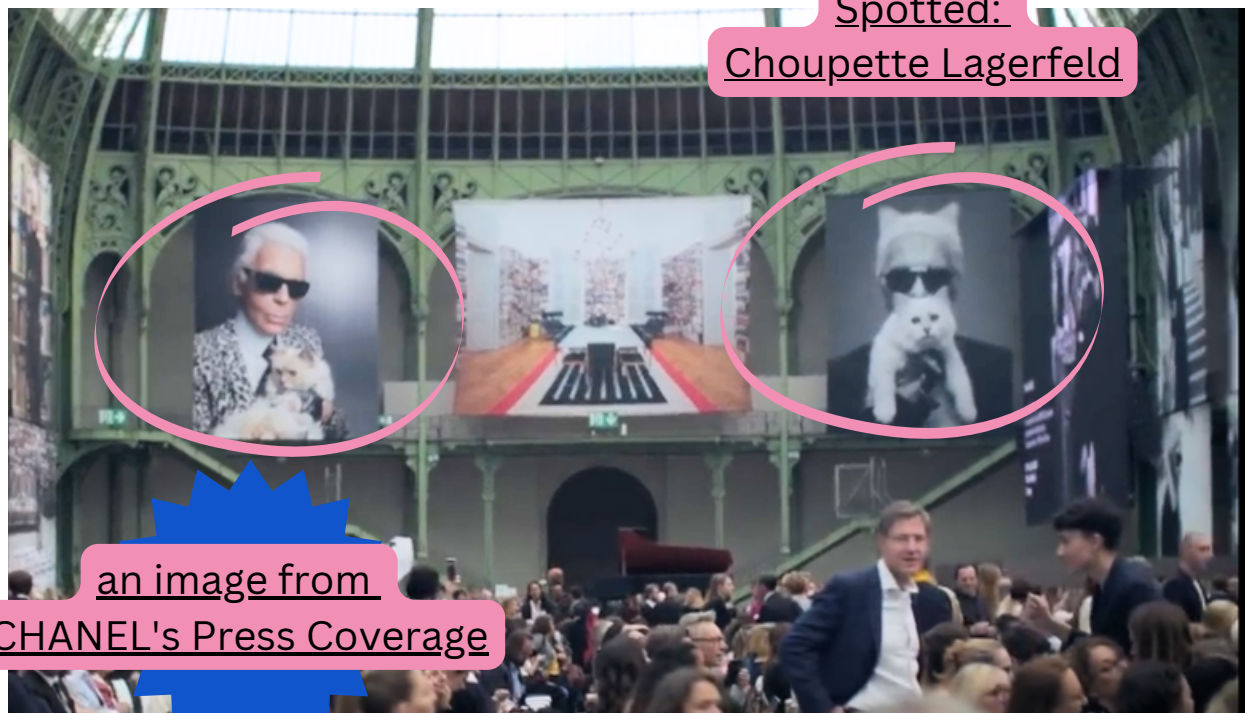
- **Is there specific verbiage or images you would like shared at your memorial?**

Traditionally, the script for a memorial was given by a religious institution. Perhaps this is a legacy you would like to carry on, or maybe it's something you'd 'rather die' than be affiliated with. Brainstorm meaningful poems and quotes, save favorite photos and videos on a USB or shared Drive, and tag songs which evoke the sentiment you'd like to be remembered by.

## Veto power from beyond.

Karl communicated clearly what he absolutely didn't want after his death. It was widely reported that Karl Lagerfeld did not want to be buried. Instead, he was cremated after an intimate ceremony. Several public events planned by colleagues and friends have highlighted his legacy since his death. These events have been remarkably devoid of religious symbolism, so we can speculate that Lagerfeld made it clear to his survivors that referencing any church would be 'off brand'.

The first event was an [invite-only tribute show](#) hosted by the House of Chanel. The space was decorated with portraits of Karl from different eras of his life. Notably, there were no images of any human family members, although, of course Choupette Lagerfeld was featured front and center.



We can create a list of No-Go's that will provide clarity and empower those who host your memorial event in the knowledge that they are embodying your authentic vision. Having studied Karl's memorization, the following No-Go list outlines items which don't appear. These exceptions are notable because they break from the existing standard of how funeral rites are celebrated.

# How would you like to exercise veto power from beyond?

- **Would you like to have religious symbolism as a part of your memorial?**

Karl's memorialization was remarkably devoid of religious symbolism. These events stand as perfect reflections of modernity because they were entirely secular. Within the funeral industry, people who are not religious are called 'Nones'. This term was [created in 1968](#) by a sociologist who aimed to describe the social neglect of this group.

For those of us who identify as Nones, have no fear! Secular celebrations can be deeply moving and powerful. Just look at the majesty and impact Karl, the None, had.

- **Would you like to have your family of origin as a part of your memorial?**

Karl's family of origin did not play a role in his public life while he was alive, and his memorials reflect that absence. The designer was famously private and maintained the utmost discretion regarding his familial relationships. So, while the images shown at his memorial featured Karl as a child and with collaborators, muses, and his beloved cat Choupette, no images of his family of origin were published.

Only you know what is an appropriate boundary to hold regarding your family of origin. However, the default for funeral directors is to center the cishet narrative of the nuclear family. Your funeral is about your legacy and the life you shared with those who survive you. Karl provides an example of excluding individuals to accurately reflect his lived experience.

- **Would you like to have your memorial open to the public?**

All of Karl's events have been invite-only, not allowing the general public to attend. These events have been very well documented by the press and enjoyed by the masses from a distance.

Think about those people you'd expect to be at the celebration of your life. This guest list is very similar to those invited to your wedding! These are the people who have been part of your life at different stages and who will feel the impact of your death. You might take a broad approach and list groups and social circles to disseminate the event details amongst their members. Alternatively, you can make it clear that the 'public' is not invited and only notify specific individuals as Karl did.



## An enduring celebration

Every individual has an enormous impact in the lives we live and we deserve to be celebrated in magnificent ways! The late Karl Lagerfeld had an enormous life, so it is only fitting that his legacy is celebrated proportionally. This was simply not possible with an isolated event. In the years since his death there have been many gatherings each increasing in scale to include more participants.

Initially, there was a very intimate cremation ceremony and public visitation alter. Then a group of [2,500](#) people gathered to mourn in Paris at the tribute show. To mark the four year anniversary of his death Vogue published an issue dedicated to Karl and the Met opened an exhibit of his work with the 2023 Met Gala.



photo source People Magazine

Cremation Ceremony



photo source: Azyaamode.com

Tribute Show



© Getty Images

Visitation Alter



photo source NYTimes

Met Gala 'In Honor of Karl'

## Preplanning provides a blueprint.

The Met Gala's 2023 theme was "[in honor of Karl](#)" and this event was the most extravagant memorial that we have seen for him.

Leaders at Vogue and the Met were Karl's dear friends and contemporaries, so this tribute served to validate the ongoing experience of grief several years after their friend's death. The event also provided a platform for more artists who worked alongside him and those who have been inspired by the designer to voice their sadness at the passing of this great man.



Karl himself likely had no hand in planning this Gala. Instead, we can draw inspiration from those who continued celebrating the enduring legacy of their friend several years after his death. This tribute was a successful container for mourners to express collective loss and connect through remembrance.

Preplanning your celebration alongside those who will implement it will encourage loved ones to replicate elements of the memorial that resonated most with them over the years of grieving to follow. For example, they might continue to gather year after year at your favorite bar if you've expressed how meaningful that would be for you. Ultimately, it is those who live through our death who carry on our stories.

Talk to your friends and family about how you want to be celebrated after you die. Pre-need planning takes away the guesswork that might be paralyzing. As Karl did, we can communicate our wishes to provide necessary structure. This is especially important for the initial period of loss when the bereaved might feel totally overwhelmed by their grief. This frees our loved ones to continue connecting with us in creative ways as they continue living.