

RETAIL

## Demand for secondhand Chanel rises after designer's death

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*Karl Lagerfeld was the creative director at Chanel and Fendi. Image credit: LVMH*

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By SARAH RAMIREZ

Following last week's unexpected passing of Chanel creative director Karl Lagerfeld, interest and demand for the French fashion label has grown.

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As with other high-profile fashion deaths, curiosity for designers' works can lead to an increase in sales, and changes in value are first reflected on resale and secondhand sites. Searches for Chanel on the secondhand luxury market jumped 30 rankings overnight, according to auction platform Barnebys.

"It's normal to see an increase in the market just after a famous designer has passed away," said Pontus Silfverstolpe, cofounder of **Barnebys**, Stockholm. "Even though the boom for fashion and vintage goods took place in 2014, when the Chinese market was at its hungriest, in general we have seen an increase in interest and prices for fashion and vintage over the last few years.

"In particular, handbags have increased in price as well as bijouterie from the biggest fashion houses like Chanel, Herms, Dior and Gucci," he said.

Interest ignites

Mr. Lagerfeld, who passed away on Feb. 19 at the age of 85, held the simultaneous roles of creator and fashion personality. From reviving Chanel to blockbuster brand status to modernizing fur at Fendi, Mr. Lagerfeld was a rare talent in his ability to steer multiple houses in different directions at the same time over the course of several decades ([see story](#)).

After news of Mr. Lagerfeld's death became public, Chanel became the eleventh most popular search term in the secondhand market, per Barnebys' global analytics.



*Demand is up for Chanel clothing and handbags. Image courtesy of Tulerie*

"We have seen an increase in sales from the week prior to Karl Lagerfeld's passing to the week after," said Charles Gorra, founder and CEO of [Rebag](#), New York. "Customers are purchasing staple pieces and iconic Lagerfeld designs, such as styles from the Pavement, PVC and Cambon lines."

Luxury consignment platform The RealReal similarly experienced an increased demand for Chanel clothing and handbags, based on internal search and sales data.

Among the most sought-out apparel styles are classic tweed jackets and dresses. Vintage, novelty and staple handbags have all proven popular, including Chanel Boy Bags and its Lego clutch.

Last year, The RealReal reported that Chanel was the most popular brand that millennial women were consigning and buying on the platform ([see story](#)).



*Chanel Lego clutch handbag. Image credit: Rebag*

Even before Mr. Lagerfeld's death, Chanel was enjoying a period as one of the more in-demand luxury labels.

Chanel items, particularly handbags, were among the most in-demand gifts for affluents this past holiday season, according to Altiant ([see story](#)).

Mr. Lagerfeld was also the creative director for Fendi for several decades. The Italian fashion label has similarly been enjoying recent success on the resale market ([see story](#)).

"There haven't been any notable changes in Fendi sales, but we're watching closely for any other trend developments," Rebag's Mr. Gorra said.

#### Luxury legacies

Other fashion labels have dealt with commercial consequences following the deaths of high-profile designers.

Despite Kate Spade's long absence from her eponymous label, stock in Kate Spade owner Tapestry dipped after the news of her death broke.

Ms. Spade was known for her significant legacy in design, and went on from the Kate Spade company to create the label France Valentine with her husband. She died by suicide in the summer of 2018 ([see story](#)).

Resale platforms such as Tradesy and ThredUp saw prices of Kate Spade handbags spike up to seven times the average in the aftermath of her death, as reported by [Reuters](#).

British fashion label Alexander McQueen celebrated the "Savage Beauty" retrospective of its late eponymous founder with a series of limited-edition silk scarves.

Held at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, the retrospective traced Mr. McQueen's career from his graduate collection in 1992 to his unfinished line for fall/winter 2010. Due to Mr. McQueen's popularity and untimely death, the limited-edition scarves allowed attendees to have a take-away whether they were able to attend the exhibit or not.

Each scarf was available in limited run of 100 per design and sold at the price \$595 ([see story](#)).

"We do acknowledge a few interesting consumer behaviors at other brands where a creative director either passed away or left the brand," Mr. Gorra said. "Since Judith Leiber's passing, we've found that her unique, one-off minaudieres the clutches shaped like animals, hearts, seashells, etc. sell quickly on the site.

"We see a similar behavior with 'old Celine,' bags under Phoebe Philo's creative direction," he said. "After her departure from Celine was announced in 2017, there has been a notable spike in old Celine sales at Rebag."

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