



BEHIND THE VEIL
Oscar de la Renta's
polkadot veil on the
SS14 runway

Is mystery dead?

A few years ago, Banksy, the British provocative artist/activist/director, displayed a bright-pink television at an art show that read, "In the future everyone will be anonymous for 15 minutes." It was an allusion to Andy Warhol's oft-quoted pronouncement, from almost 50 years ago, that in the future each of us would have 15 minutes of fame.

Now everyone *is* famous. Twitter, Facebook and YouTube have helped everyone from New York to Toyko open up the most private moments of their lives to everyone else. We are bombarded with exposure: wardrobe slips, stars caught in embarrassing scenes, viral videos of mundane moments. Anyone can grab a spot on the spectrum of fame. It makes mystery more elusive, and therefore more desirable, than ever.

Mystery is seductive and intangible. It is a glimpse, a flash of color, the back of someone weaving through a crowd. Take the SS14 collections. Legs and décolleté are for the most part covered up, but with sheer diaphanous fabrics, hinting not exposing the beautiful form of a woman's body. There is an artful interplay between the reveal and the conceal.

Part of the Kennedys' inner circle and now a Real Housewife of New York, author *Carole Radziwill* examines whether mystery can still hold power in today's social media-dominated world

In our own lives, though, is it possible to retain a sense of mystery? How much should a woman reveal? It depends.

Consider dating. There is so much information a prospect can gather before

you've even met for a drink. A quick Facebook search, a scan through Instagram and he knows what you eat for lunch, how often you do or don't work out, the weird face you make in pictures. So many of us reveal more than we intend to, thanks in part to the ease of social media.

In *The Godfather*, Don Corleone, one of the most enigmatic characters in all of film, said of his children, "They talk when they should listen." This is the very essence of mystery. I've never heard Kate Moss speak one word, even in the face of scandal. She steps past them with indifferent nonchalance. No Oprah confessions, no press conference, no carefully worded statement. The girl wears mystery like a Diane von Furstenberg wrap dress. The Duchess of Cambridge, who may now be the most photographed woman in the world, is also one of the quietest. She's elusive. My very close, and late, friend Carolyn Bessette-Kennedy was the most mysterious woman in the universe. After she married my >

porter asks

late husband's cousin, John Kennedy Jr., it seemed half the world's photographers were paid to trail her. But even with a ravenous entourage of cameras stalking her 24/7, she maintained mystery. She didn't speak to the press. She rarely gave interviews. She kept her friends close and her family intimate. She didn't talk, she listened.

Lee Radziwill, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis's sister and my mother-in-law, has lived much of her life in the public sphere, amid gossip, scandal, tragedy and endless speculation, yet she possesses a rare and timeless mystique. She communicates with people the old-fashioned way – one on one, by landline telephone from her home in Paris or apartment in New York. She writes correspondence on Tiffany paper. She has lived one of the most interesting and varied lives of the past century, yet has given only one interview in two decades. She is a woman who knows how to leverage the power of mystery.

When I was young, everything was a mystery. I reveled in it. I grew up in a large family, but not an open one. There were secrets beckoning from every corner of the house. There's nothing more thrilling than a concealed drawer, a locked closet, a dark attic.

I grew up to be a journalist: my role was to unravel mystery. I interviewed politicians, dictators and movie stars; people who controlled their exposure with crafted narratives. The best among them offered an illusion of access while saying very little. I learned to coax out their stories. A few years ago I made a radical move. It went against my personal philosophy and my comfort zone. I had always worked behind the camera, in the editing room at ABC News. But when a longtime friend, the TV producer Andy Cohen, asked if I'd join the cast of *The Real Housewives of New York City*, he said they were looking for a 'voice of reason'. I accepted, to the great surprise of my family and friends.

As a journalist, by nature and training, I'm drawn to spectacle. I said yes for the same reason I have always raced off to far-flung places to cover wars and divisive political issues. My mother-in-law was bemused when she first learned of my new venture. She was curious, and considered it a potentially interesting ride, but also warned me to be smart about what I revealed. Sometimes

you have to say yes to what the universe puts in front of you even if it seems counterintuitive.

All of a sudden there were cameras in my apartment and following me down my street. They were there at lunch in restaurants, in hotel rooms at night and when I woke up with tired eyes. Cameras as my castmates cried, guzzled wine, stumbled and fielded come-ons – and, always, trained on me, trying to catch me in awkward or embarrassing moments.

It may seem impossible to cultivate mystery while appearing on a reality-television show. But mystery is strategy, too. Can you be a public figure and still be mysterious? Paradoxically, mystery sells. Greta Garbo declined all but a handful of interviews and stood up the Oscars her entire career. It drove the studio bosses crazy, until they got smart and marketed her as a glamorous recluse. The Pope is mysterious, even while tweeting sound bites to his 10-million followers on Twitter. Anna Wintour is mysterious, but to me it's more to do with the sunglasses she wears indoors than her absence from social media. As the writer Anaïs Nin once wrote, "The possession of knowledge does not kill the sense of wonder and mystery."

Now, although I rarely discuss intimate relationships, millions of viewers have seen my bedroom, my kitchen, my lingerie. I tweet the details of my life to 125,000 strangers. I was uncomfortable with this at first, but now find myself enjoying it. I can't deny the power of social media as a marketing tool. When I tweeted quotes from my books, I saw sales increase. But even people with nothing to sell enjoy it, trading snaps of their lunch. I may not understand the need for constant chatter, but it does feed our desire to be connected to people, real or imagined.

Today, anonymity is bad for business, but mystery is a tricky balance. Just remember that everyone has a camera in their pocket. Whether you are famous or anonymous, don't take chances. Leave the house with good hair. The collective thirst for exposure isn't fading anytime soon. Fame – for better or worse – is just around the corner, for anyone. While mystery, the flirty tease, lures us toward the shadows.

The Widow's Guide to Sex and Dating by Carole Radziwill (Henry Holt and Co) is out February 11 ■



“*Lee Radziwill, my mother-in-law, has lived much of her life in public, yet she possesses a rare mystique*”



PRIVATE LIVES

Top: Jackie Kennedy (left) with her sister – and Carole's mother-in-law, Lee Radziwill, in 1961
Bottom: Carole's friends John F. Kennedy Jr. and Carolyn Bessette-Kennedy in 1999, sharing a personal moment despite the camera's glare