Lola Rykiel opens debut store in St Germain

By Godfrey Deeny - May 31, 2021

You can’t keep a good family down, especially one with such strong DNA as the Rykiel clan, whose scion Lola Rykiel debuts her first boutique in Paris on Tuesday, June 1.

Entitled Pompom Paris, Lola’s first store is located, *mais bien sûr*, in the spiritual heart of her late grandmother Sonia Rykiel, on the Left Bank on Paris, in Saint-Germain-des-Prés. Her granny used to have a store in the same space.
A blend of French insouciance and New York downtown style, the 30-meter-square boutique is located at 8 rue de Grenelle, around the corner from the historic headquarters of Sonia Rykiel on boulevard Saint-Germain.

“Everything here is almost like the clothes I would have wanted my grandmother to design. I was often with her and saying, ‘why don’t you do pink, more sequins or add crystals?’ But she was so sophisticated and would say, ‘no no no’ to my ideas of adding a little Juicy Couture to the mix!” laughs the latest brand builder in clan Rykiel.

During the pandemic, blond Lola became a mum, with the arrival of her baby girl Billie, now nine months old. Mum Nathalie is a brunette, and Sonia was Paris’ most famous redhead.

The second child of Sonia’s daughter Nathalie, Lola is very much a local, having studied at L’Ecole Alsacienne, the famed lycée for la jeunesse dorée or caviar gauche – meaning golden youth or pinstripe socialists.

Two years ago, Lola debuted her first collection – with an emphasis on wit and attitude and tops bearing phrases like Fragile et Forte and Spiritual Bimbo. Her grandmother is generally credited with being the first designer to weave script into runway fashion collections.

Velour track pants retail at around 250; sweatshirts at 310 and rhinestone tops or sequined zebra-style jackets at 700.

“The DNA is a French girl, who travels – or used to – and doesn’t take herself too seriously. Not a victim; not afraid to shine, but also prepared to dress little masculine,” explains Lola, who even dreamed up some velour shorts modelled on a pair she borrowed from her husband.

After high school, she spent 10 years in New York, living on the Bowery, and studying dance at Martha Graham, no less. Later, she became the house of Rykiel’s PR director in the USA. To prepare herself, in 2011 Lola did one-month internships in multiple Sonia Rykiel departments – design, accounting, production and PR, honing her entrepreneurial skills.
Now, back home in France, she lives behind Café Flore, where Sonia even had a sandwich named after her. Following Sonia’s death in 2016, the house slumped into losses under Chinese investor control, before being shuttered; its brand name eventually sold to local French investors, who have quietly relaunched Sonia Rykiel, though without an established creative director.

Moreover, the brand’s former townhouse headquarters on boulevard Saint-Germain is still owned by Lola’s mother, though currently closed. However, Lola is clearly enthusiastic about being back in the 6th arrondissement.

“It feels very nice to be attached to this neighbourhood. And it feels like I am continuing something that was stopped but in my own way, and with my own means,” she smiles.

In the end her fashion icons are both the ladies in her family and often her best pals in New York, who wore lots of layers and tops and sweatshirts going to yoga and dance classes - knowing little about fashion yet exuding lots of style.