Sonja Rykiel AW16, and cut-out portrait of house's founder by **Maggie Cardelús**

# SONIA RYKIEL + MAGGIE CARDELUS

A chameleon figure, who has authored four novels and directed and acted in numerous films, Chemin's studied style was an easy fit for Prada. Layering together photographs, ink and pencil drawings to create a 3-D effect, the compositions readily acknowledge "the language of Prada" via trompe-l'oeil details, pins ("Prada loves a pin") and even the occasional banana (an allusion to the earrings Mrs Prada wore as part of her ode to Josephine Baker for spring 2011).

Things moved rapidly, even by fashion's standards: Chemin delivered his women's designs in under three weeks, starting work on the imagery immediately after the men's show. "The UPS man was literally standing at the door of my studio waiting to take the artworks directly to the factory," explains the artist. "It's such a fast way of creating. It's insane, but it's also interesting – it pushed me to urgency."

Chemin is clearly enamoured with the results: "It's something quite beautiful and different from other brands," he says. He's intrigued too by what he calls the "next chapter" – how women will wear and live in his work. Chemin certainly softened some of the more violent imagery that often features in his art, and he's clear that these Prada prints should be seen as being utterly distinct from his personal work. And for now he's happy return to creating under the radar.

"It's been an experience," he says. "This was a good way for me to put my work out there in a very mainstream way. But I did this out of respect for the brand because I love Prada. It's a one shot thing."

Above from left: Christophe Chemin's **Vendémiaire** (colour ink, colour pencil on paper and collage, 2016) and **Nivôse** (black ink on paper, collage and metal pins, 2016); and Prada AW16 *courtesy of Christophe Chemin*

Julie de Libran, the artistic director of French house Sonia Rykiel, first encountered the ethereal collages of Maggie Cardelús in the late 1990s. "I saw her in the gallery of my friend Kaufmann Repetto in Milan. I've loved her creative process from the start," explains Libran. "Her work with memory and photography, and all her cut-out figures, are incredible. I was particularly attracted to a cut-out book she created as a single art piece."

Hence, when Libran discovered that the 54-year-old American Cardelús had relocated to Paris, she quickly invited her to the Rykiel studio. What started out as a conversation between the two creatives about "women and their thoughts, dressing and thinking and working together" quickly evolved into a collaborative journey through the house's archive.

For her collaboration with Libran for Sonia Rykiel AW16, Cardelús produced a series of spliced portraits of the brand's founder Sonia Rykiel, her daughter Nathalie and granddaughter, Lola, all cast into a pleasing, freehand print with an energetic tribal feel. Then, as the project progressed, and the artist returned to the studio, the "Le Visages" prints included portraits of the collaborators themselves too.

"I've loved seeing how Maggie develops her ideas as an artist," says Libran. "To me the prints represent the notion of women dressing to think, have conversations and exchange ideas." The cloth also serves as a neat visual reminder of the house's familial, female roots.