Sonia Rykiel bids final farewell to historic boutique on Boulevard Saint-Germain in Paris

By Triana Alonso  -  February 13, 2022

A new chapter closes in the history of Sonia Rykiel. The iconic Parisian maison founded in 1968 will leave the Boulevard Saint-Germain indefinitely this February. After two years of having its shutters down, the Sonia Rykiel boutique located at number 175 of the boulevard will put an end to its idyll with the 6th arrondissement of Paris through a charity event next Tuesday, February 15.

Nathalie Rykiel, daughter of the fashion designer who died in August 2016, organizes a bittersweet farewell for the boutique that makes up part of the Rive Gauche’s history: an exceptional evening coinciding with the end of her 550 square meter store lease at the end of February. As confirmed by FashionNetwork.com, the store located on the corner of Boulevard Saint-Germain and Rue des Saints-Pères, and a few steps away from other luxury boutiques such as Brunello Cucinelli, Moncler, Gucci and Emporio Armani, remained under the control of Rykiel despite having been inactive since its liquidation process.

The store will not be used by Sonia Rykiel's new owners, the American group G-III, to continue the brand's historic presence in this location. It is yet to be confirmed whether another fashion brand will decide to occupy this privileged space, which draws on the artistic and fashion history of the Saint-Germain-des-Prés district.

To say her goodbyes, Rykiel has chosen to organize a charity event together with the NGO, Bibliothèques Sans Frontières dedicated to the development of access to education for disadvantaged groups. Each of the guests, including journalists, celebrities, and friends of the maison, will be able to purchase one of the 40,000 books that are part of the collection of the famous boutique’s library. All proceeds from this event, entitled "La bibliothèque solidaire Sonia Rykiel" to be held between 7pm and 9pm, will go to the association chaired by political scientist Patrick Weil.

The store, characterized by its immense shelves filled with books, was renovated together with Thomas Lenthal and André Saraïva in March 2015 in parallel with Paris Fashion Week. The intimate and original interior design was inspired by the atmosphere of the 6ème arrondissement’s literary cafés, an aesthetic which the creative dubbed the “queen of knitwear” always stayed true to. The store was also home to the brand's apparel, footwear and accessories offerings. At the time, the French was creative director of Sonia Rykiel's collections, a position she abandoned in March 2019 to devote herself to her couture creations.
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A benchmark in French fashion, the maison Sonia Rykiel experienced tumultuous times since the spring of 2019, when the ready-to-wear company declared itself in judicial liquidation and went on the search for a new owner to take over the business. Family-owned and independent in its origins, Sonia Rykiel went under the control of the First Heritage Brands group in 2012, founded by the Hong Kong Fung family along with Jean-Marc Loubier and Singapore fund Tomasek. Up to the year of the firm's 50th anniversary in 2018, the group would have invested up to 200 million euros in the project.

A new chapter under G-III

This remarkable investment, however, did not prevent the liquidation of the company three years ago in July, which was due to the lack of candidates. In December 2019, the rights to the Sonia Rykiel brand were acquired by Eric and Michael Dayan, who founded Showroomprivé in 2006, with the aim of relaunching the maison both in France and internationally. However, the project did not last long, just 18 months to be exact.

After launching its new online store in October 2020 and returning to Paris Fashion Week in March 2021, the fashion house was acquired in September of that same year by the American conglomerate G-III (owner and licensor of DKNY, Donna Karan, Vilebrequin, Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger and Karl Lagerfeld Paris). The transaction, which concluded in October 2021, should "accelerate the relaunch of the brand" and conquest international markets. For the moment, however, there has been no news on the US-based group's plans.

The Boulevard Saint-Germain shop will close its doors next week around a literary event. Farewell to Sonia Rykiel... at least for the moment.