



The granddaughter of a French fashion luminary is rethinking weekend wear for the next generation.

**CLOSE-UP**

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# Lola Rykiel

BY JESSICA IREDALE

READING TIME: 3 MINUTES

Lola Rykiel is the granddaughter of the late designer Sonia Rykiel, a figure so renowned in France, where fashion is as hallowed a national tradition as labor strikes, that she is the only designer—before Chanel, Dior, and Saint Laurent—to have a Paris street named after her. The Allée Sonia Rykiel was dedicated in 2018, two years after the designer passed away at age 86. That is one of the reasons why Lola, who was the last family member actively working at the brand, was sad to see the iconic 51-year-old house liquidated last summer after Fung Brands, which acquired the label in 2012, failed to steer it toward profitability.

But you can skip the condolences. Lola isn't interested in perpetually mourning Sonia Rykiel's demise. She has moved on. Within a few months of leaving her post as public-relations director at Rykiel last March, Lola was hard at work on the launch of Pompom Paris, a small collection of athleisure-wear that plays to her own love of dance and Pilates by way of her grandmother's signature velour jogging suits, an uncredited predecessor to the Juicy Couture rage of the early aughts. On the runway, Sonia Rykiel was known as the queen of knits, but on the street, rainbow-bright velour was the brand's bread and butter. "It was the thing we were selling the most," says Lola. "Women were crazy about it. Even today when I meet some women, they're like, 'Oh, the velour! I still have my outfit from the 80s.'"



*From left: Pompom Paris's cropped velour hoodie; loungewear-inspired looks from Sonia Rykiel's spring 1982 collection, which featured pom-poms on the hats; Pompom's Danseuse zipped jacket and Deux Minutes sweatpants.*

Now they can have the original 80s velour updated in shapes that don't look 40 years old. Lola found a dead-stock supply of her grandmother's original fabrics sitting in one of her former factories. "It's so cozy and lustrous. It looks luxurious, but it's dressed down," says Lola, who got her start in design by creating juvenile sketches of "big, disgusting Cinderella dresses ... the opposite of my grandmother," which she gently rebuffed. Fashion is in the family on both sides—Lola's paternal grandmother is Joan Burstein, the pioneer of English luxury retail behind the institution Browns of London—and a strong sense of style is in her blood.

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It comes through in Pompom Paris, named for the miniature puffballs and tassels that were the only overtly feminine flourish Sonia Rykiel, an icon of female liberation in terms of dress (pants, sweaters, no bra!), permitted on her granddaughter's clothes. The collection is a blend of Parisian girly girl and tomboy integrated with the distinctive style of professional dancers. There are stirrup leggings and a wrap top in black jersey, as well as tracksuits, cropped hoodies, and baggy drawstring Bermuda shorts that come in bright red, green, lilac, and devoré velour.





Stripes are a recurring theme in the work of both Lola Rykiel and her grandmother.

A childhood ballerina, Lola took dance seriously, working up to a two-year program at the Martha Graham School in New York when she was 20. There, she was struck by the difference in the way the dancers dressed — layered up like Baryshnikov in Paris; loud and proud in America. “The girls were wearing super-tight, superbright colors because the whole point for them was to come to the front and be noticed at auditions,” says Lola, who found that

sense of eagerness to dress the part lacking in current workout-wear options, particularly in Paris, where she's based. "When I started to do dance class, my motivation was that I was excited to wear the pink tights and the pink tutu. I thought Pompom could be the same thing. 'Yes, I'm going to wear my really nice outfit for Pilates.'"

Pompom's Web site launched several weeks ago, the home page gyrating with a video of Anna G., a French pole dancer cast from Instagram. (She does a fireman spin in a devoré hoodie and nothing else.) The tension between beauty, a touch of tackiness, and, yes, searing core strength was exactly what Lola was going for. Plus, Anna G.'s fiery red hair is the same shade as Sonia Rykiel's famous mane. "It's just a hint," says Lola. Point taken.

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Lorie Reilly (Lola Rykiel)