

CIM Productions presents

Dior and I

a film by Frédéric Tcheng

World Premiere - Tribeca Film Festival 2014

World Documentary Competition

2014, 89 minutes, France

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SHORT SYNOPSIS

Dior and I brings the viewer inside the storied world of the Christian Dior fashion house with a privileged, behind-the-scenes look at the creation of Raf Simons' first haute couture collection as its new artistic director—a true labor of love created by a dedicated group of collaborators. Melding the everyday, pressure-filled components of fashion with mysterious echoes from the iconic brand's past, the film is also a colorful homage to the seamstresses who serve Simons' vision.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Dior and I is a feature-length documentary that takes the viewer behind the scenes of the creation of designer Raf Simons' first haute couture collection for the legendary Christian Dior fashion house in the spring of 2012. Granted unprecedented access, the film documents the eight stressful weeks that Simons had to complete his debut collection. Revealing the inner workings of the design house, from the creative processes of its artistic director to the tireless seamstresses of the atelier, the film explores the personal bonds that form between the collaborators, their work, and the legacy of Christian Dior.

In 2012, when the French fashion house announced that Raf Simons would fill the vacant seat of artistic director, many commentators were surprised. Simons, a Belgian native whose previous credits included a namesake menswear line and who had been perceived by many as a "minimalist," had always kept a low public profile and, most importantly, had never before worked in haute couture. To create his first collection for Dior, he had only eight weeks, as opposed to the usual five or six months.

Sixty-five years prior, in 1947, designer Christian Dior exploded onto the fashion scene at the age of forty-four, with his "New Look" collection, a sensational homage to femininity after five years of wartime. He instantly became a household name and an arbiter of style. Yet he was a very private man, who preferred the company of his friends to the noise of the social scene. In his 1956 memoirs, written one year before his sudden death from a heart attack, he addresses his public persona: "this Siamese twin who precedes me everywhere since I've become Christian Dior. He and I have score to settle."

Today the world that Christian Dior created lives on in the ateliers (workrooms), where a hard-working group of dedicated seamstresses still hand-sew clothing in the great tradition of haute couture. Dior is one of the last houses that still keep such ateliers in-house: *atelier tailleur* (for suiting) and *atelier flou* (for dresses). As Raf Simons discovers when he first visits the light-filled rooms tucked away on the top floor of the historic building, many seamstresses have worked here for more than 40 years. The film closely follows Florence Chehet, the dynamic and upbeat *première* for the *atelier flou*, and Monique Bailly, the anxious and quick-witted *première* for the *atelier tailleur*. "For me, they are the two most important people in the house," says Pieter Mulier, Raf Simons' right hand at Dior and longtime collaborator. "Because they have everything in their hands."

In one of the more creatively revealing storylines of the film, we watch Simons bring his passion for art into his work. Discovering a mid-century weaving technique called *imprimé chaîne*, in which the thread is printed before it's woven, Simons has the idea to recreate the paintings of abstract American painter Sterling Ruby on cloth. However, the fabric suppliers

have never taken on a print of this scale, and given the time constraints, the dresses are a significant challenge for even these, the most experienced of craftsmen.

Although Christian Dior only helmed his house for ten years, his impact on the fashion world was considerable. *Dior and I* follows Raf Simons as he explores Dior's archives for inspiration. "I find it quite challenging to work with a legacy that is so gigantic and so sublime," says Simons as a model puts on the iconic Bar jacket from 1947. With a tight waist, large shoulders and emphasized hips, the silhouette was such a departure from the boxy wartime outfits that Harper's Bazaar dubbed it the "New Look" and it instantly became the style reference for the following decade.

Dior and I is therefore also the intimate story of a dauphin confronting the towering shadow of his predecessor. In one of the most personal moments, Raf Simons visits Christian Dior's childhood home in Granville, Normandy. He reveals that he started reading Dior's memoirs but couldn't get through them because of the uncanny parallels between Dior's experience and his own. "I had to stop. It was weird," says Simons. "I thought I'd better not [continue reading], until the first show is done." With an empathetic sensibility and a thoughtful patience, the film explores the challenges of finding one's own voice while under enormous pressure.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Cinema, ghosts and mirrors

"One is in danger of not being oneself when one lives at a reflective distance

from oneself." J. M. Coetzee

When I sat down with Raf Simons to discuss the project for the first time, I was struck by his palpable reticence. It's understandable that anyone might be reluctant to let a camera crew shadow them relentlessly for three months, but Raf's concern seemed to run deeper. I sensed that the vulnerability he was showing would become central to the film. In his 1956 memoir "Christian Dior & I," Dior discusses at length his own feeling of alienation through media exposure. "There are two Christian Diors—Christian Dior, the man in the public eye and Christian Dior, the private individual—who seem to get further and further apart." As Raf got to know me better, he became less intimidated by the presence of the camera, but I knew that he remained quite apprehensive about the level of publicity that would come with his first Dior show. I set out to film his transformation into a camera-mobbed public figure. The motif of the camera flash—intrusive, blinding and exposing—kept on coming back to me. Maybe the camera does steal the soul.

The mirror, and the double it inspires, were also recurring themes that emerged during filming. If there had been a double Dior (the public and the private man), one could imagine Raf as an uncanny reincarnation of Dior himself. He shared the same intense guarding of his private life, the same background in the arts... As I continued to read Dior's memoirs, I realized that the past also mirrored the present—and vice-versa. Everything that was happening in front of my lens matched, almost to the last detail of character or emotion, what Christian Dior had described in long chapters about the making of a collection. Here I recognized this seamstress; there I recognized that tense situation. It is certainly a testament to the power of traditions. History repeats itself.

But then I thought: what a scary feeling this must be for Raf. How could he be expected to change the course of history while at the same time channeling the past? How would he impose his own mark? At Dior's headquarters in Paris, it is impossible not to feel the presence of the founder. His picture is everywhere. I started imagining that Raf must feel like Mrs. De Winter in Hitchcock's *Rebecca*, overwhelmed by the ghostly presence of the past occupant of the house. Raf's story would be one of emancipation.

With these feelings, I wanted to further explore the dialogue between the past and the present through cinematic means, and the voiceover of Christian Dior became an important narrative tool. I used it conventionally in the beginning of the film to narrate archival sequences, but as the film progresses, it shifts from the past to the present and becomes a commentary on Raf's experience. The line becomes blurred. The audience peers through the looking glass. This mysterious connection to distant moments in history also inspired my desire to give the archival sequences a spectral quality. What else are movies, if not apparitions of ghosts long passed away? In haute couture, the first mock-ups of dresses are called *toiles*—which, in French, is also the colloquial word for movie screen. In order to conjure the persistence of Dior's designs, I decided to literally make them appear on the toiles. At night, shadows of its heritage come to haunt the house.

This contrasts with the daytime energy of the atelier, a dynamic space filled with light and bustling with activity that exists as an extraordinary microcosm. It is a place suspended

between past and present, and home to a collection of dedicated and endearing personalities. When I worked with Matt Tyrnauer on the Valentino documentary, my only approximate command of Italian made my interaction with the seamstresses somewhat limited. But on this film, working in my native French, I was able to delve deeper into the personal connection these artisans' share with their work. Tucked away on the top floor of the house's historic building, the atelier is Dior's "soul," as Catherine Rivière explains in the film.

The house of Dior is a storied world where managers, artists, and workers collaborate on a daily basis to create a vision and I consider the film to be an ensemble piece. Through immersing the viewer in the world of Dior and revealing the extraordinary effort required to produce a collection, I hoped the film would ultimately reveal a cross section of Parisian life, in the tradition of great French social realists like Renoir and Zola.

Who is the "I," in the title *Dior and I*? I strived to keep the answer open to many possibilities.

- Frédéric Tcheng, Brooklyn - March 1, 2014

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Frédéric Tcheng, Director, Writer, Producer

Frédéric Tcheng is a French-born filmmaker. Originally trained in civil engineering, he moved to New York City in 2002 to attend Columbia University's film school, from which he obtained a Masters of Fine Arts in 2007. He co-produced, co-edited and co-shot *Valentino: The Last Emperor* (directed by Matt Tyrnauer), the 2009 hit documentary shortlisted for the Best Documentary Oscar. He is the co-director (with Lisa Immordino Vreeland and Bent-Jorgen Perlmutt) of *DIANA VREELAND: THE EYE HAS TO TRAVEL*, a Samuel Goldwyn release. His collaborations include such varied personalities as the poet Sarah Riggs and the fashion photographer Mikael Jansson. He works as an editor on commercials for brands such as H&M, Jimmy Choo and Ferragamo. He is currently developing a fictional screenplay.

Guillaume de Roquemaurel, Producer

Guillaume de Roquemaurel graduated from Columbia University's film school. He has directed several award-winning shorts. Based in Paris, he is the owner of media startup CIM Productions, which produces film, video and photography for various French and international clients.

Juliette Lambours, Executive Producer

For the last 7 years, Paris-based Juliette Lambours has worked as a line producer and production manager for independent production companies and such directors as Lodge Kerrigan. The films that she has worked on have premiered in such festivals as Cannes, Locarno and Venice.

Chiara Girardi, Executive Producer

Italian-born, Chiara Girardi lives in Paris and works as a line producer and assistant director. Along with line-producing many shorts and documentaries, she worked as assistant director on the ARTE documentary *Callas Assoluta* and André Téchiné's *Impardonnables*. She also contributed to the development of the feature film *TIR* by Alberto Fasulo, awarded Best Film at the 2013 Rome Film Festival.

Julio C. Perez IV, Editor

Los-Angeles-based Julio C. Perez was the editor of *The Myth of the American Sleepover*, which premiered in Cannes in 2010 and won the best ensemble cast award at SXSW. He has also edited *This is Martin Bonner*, which won the Best of Next award at Sundance and the Cassavetes award at the Independent Spirit Awards.

Gilles Piquard, Director of Photography

A Graduate of ENS Louis Lumière in 2001, Gilles Piquard has photographed many documentaries, fiction films and music videos. His last feature film as cinematographer, *WTF*, will be released this year in more than 30 countries. He lives in Paris.

Virgile van Ginneken, Sound

Virgile van Ginneken works as a sound engineer and composer in France for narrative and documentary films. His work has been selected for a number of film festivals and he has participated in masterclasses with such well-known composers as Dr L. Subramaniam, Raphael Imbert and Jean-Claude Vannier.

Omar Berrada, Voice of Christian Dior

Omar Berrada is a writer and translator living between Paris and Marrakech, where he co-directs Dar al- Ma'mûn, a library and residency center for artists and writers. He previously hosted shows on French national radio and public programs at the Centre Pompidou. He is on the artistic steering committee of the Marrakech Biennale, and a co-director of Dubai's Global Art Forum.

Ha-Yang Kim, Composer

Based in New York, Ha-Yang Kim is a composer- cellist who creates music in multiple mediums, collaborating with a wide variety of artists and performing in venues worldwide. Drawing from a breadth of musical genres, from American experimentalism to rock to non-western sources, Kim's music is inspired by acoustic phenomena, ritual ceremonial processes, and characterized by an organic visceral lyricism of sound influenced by the East Asian sense of space and emptiness. She has released two albums of her compositions.

Michael Galbe, Music Supervisor

Michael Galbe is the owner of New York -based startup agency, Signal Surge. Michael was Head of New Business Development for Trendrr.tv, which was acquired by Twitter in the fall of 2013. He served as VP of Music & Talent for MTV Tr3s, where he was in charge of the music programming rooted in the fusion of American and Latino music, cultures, lifestyles and languages.

CREDITS

Written, directed and produced by Frédéric Tcheng

Editing Julio C. Perez IV
Frédéric Tcheng

Cinematography Gilles Piquard
Frédéric Tcheng

Sound recordist Virgile van Ginneken

Original score Ha-Yang Kim

Voice Omar Berrada

Producer Guillaume de Roquemaurel

Line Producer Juliette Lambours
Chiara Girardi

Assistant editor Nora Tennessen

Music supervisor Michael Galbe

Post-production manager Joedan Okun

Post-production by Gloss Studio, nyc

Production manager Maya Haffar

Production assistant Christine Mace

Runway cinematography Léo Hinstin

Additional editor Tristan Meunier
Joe Murphy

Media manager Mona-Lise Lanfant
Iona Sidi

Additional sound recordist Yves Bagot

New York camera operator Nelson Walker III

New York sound recordist Spencer Moore

Runway camera operator Pierluigi De Palo

Jean-Baptiste Chesnais

Runway camera assistant Julien Veron

Show production manager Lucile Jacques

Show production assistant Charles Poitevin

Italy camera operator Daniele Serio

Italy production manager Elia Romanelli

Italy sound recordist Alessandra Romano

Editing consultant John Northrup

Archival Researcher Géraldine Valbon

Emma Kadar-Penner

Translator Sébastien Mignot

Stéphanie Landouer

Jessica Deraus

Post-production facility Gloss Studio, nyc

Post-production director Magnus Andersson

Raja Sethuraman

Conform editing Josh Laurence

Colorist Sean Ross

Technical supervision Dan Coathien

Sound mixing facility Dig It Audio (NYC)

Sound supervision Tom Efinger

Sound mixing Tom Efinger

Sound editing John Moros

Legal counseling Emilie Navarin

Caroline Henry

Matthieu Mélin

Original score composed and arranged by Ha-yang Kim

Recorded at Far Eastern (nyc)

Sound engineer Hahn Rowe

Flute Jessica Schmitz

Clarinet Alicia Lee

Bassoon Brad Balliett

Guitar Hahn Rowe

Cello & Piano Ha-yang Kim

"Pakard" - Plastikman
Produced by Richie Hawtin
Administered by Budde Music
(P) 1998 Minus Inc.

"Dimension Intrusion" - F.U.S.E.
Produced by Richie Hawtin
Published by Plus 8 Music
Administered by Budde Music
(P) 1993 Plus 8 records Ltd.

"A New Day" - F.U.S.E.
Produced by Richie Hawtin
Published by Plus 8 Music
Administered by Budde Music
(P) 1993 Plus 8 records Ltd.

"Girl/Boy" - Aphex Twin
Performed by Aphex Twin
Courtesy of Warner Bros. Records
/Sire records
by arrangement with Warner Music Group
Film and TV licensing.

"Jynwythek Ylow" - Aphex Twin
Performed by Aphex Twin
Courtesy of Warner Bros. Records
/Sire records
by arrangement with Warner Music Group Film and
TV licensing.

"Of The Mountains" - Dan Deacon
written and performed by Dan Deacon
courtesy of Carpark Records
and Domino publishing

"Reunion (Âme remix)"
Performed by The XX
Licensed courtesy of Young Turks
By arrangement with XL Recordings Ltd/
Beggars Group Media Ltd
www.theyoungturks.co.uk/
www.xlrecordings.com

"Chunkhung" - Biosphere
Written and performed by Geir Jenssen
Taken from the album 'Substrata 2'
(P) by Touch Music [MCPS]

"Lalibela" - Caribou
Perf0rmed by Caribou
Written by Dan Snaith
(P) Chrysalis Music Ltd/BMG
Merge Records

"Sonata for Violin and Piano/ II. Blues/
Moderato" by Maurice Ravel
Performed by Renaud Capuçon
& Frank Braley
(P) 2001 EMI Records Ltd./Virgin
Classics

"Prayer" - Burial
Performed by William Bevan
(P) Domino Publishing Company of
America Inc.
Courtesy of Hyperdub Records

"Silent Shout" - The Knife
Written by Karin Dreijer Andersson and
Olof Dreijer
Performed by The Knife
(P) 2009 Rabid Records
Courtesy of Rabid Records and universal

music
"A Huge Ever Growing Pulsating Brain That Rules From The Centre Of The Ultraworld: Loving You"
Performed by The Orb
(Alex Paterson / Bruce Woolley / Minnie Riperton / Richard Rudolph / James Cauty / Simon Darlow / Stephen Lipson / Trevor Horn)
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