

A WOMAN AT THE HEAD OF
DIOR

A 52' documentary

Directed by Loïc Prigent

Produced by France 5 and Bangumi

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Pitch

It is the middle of June 2021 in Athens. It is time for the final preparations for the Dior Cruise show. The couture dresses are being fitted to the models, the teams are busy making sure that everything is perfect, despite the heat. The Cruise show is an important event in the fashion calendar: it is the moment for the biggest Houses to bring their most important customers, the top press and the muses friends of the House, in order to present the collection to its most important economic stakeholders. This year, however, the challenge is daunting: to create a breathtaking show in a mythological city, while the world is still living with the Covid 19 pandemic and the public will not be able to attend.





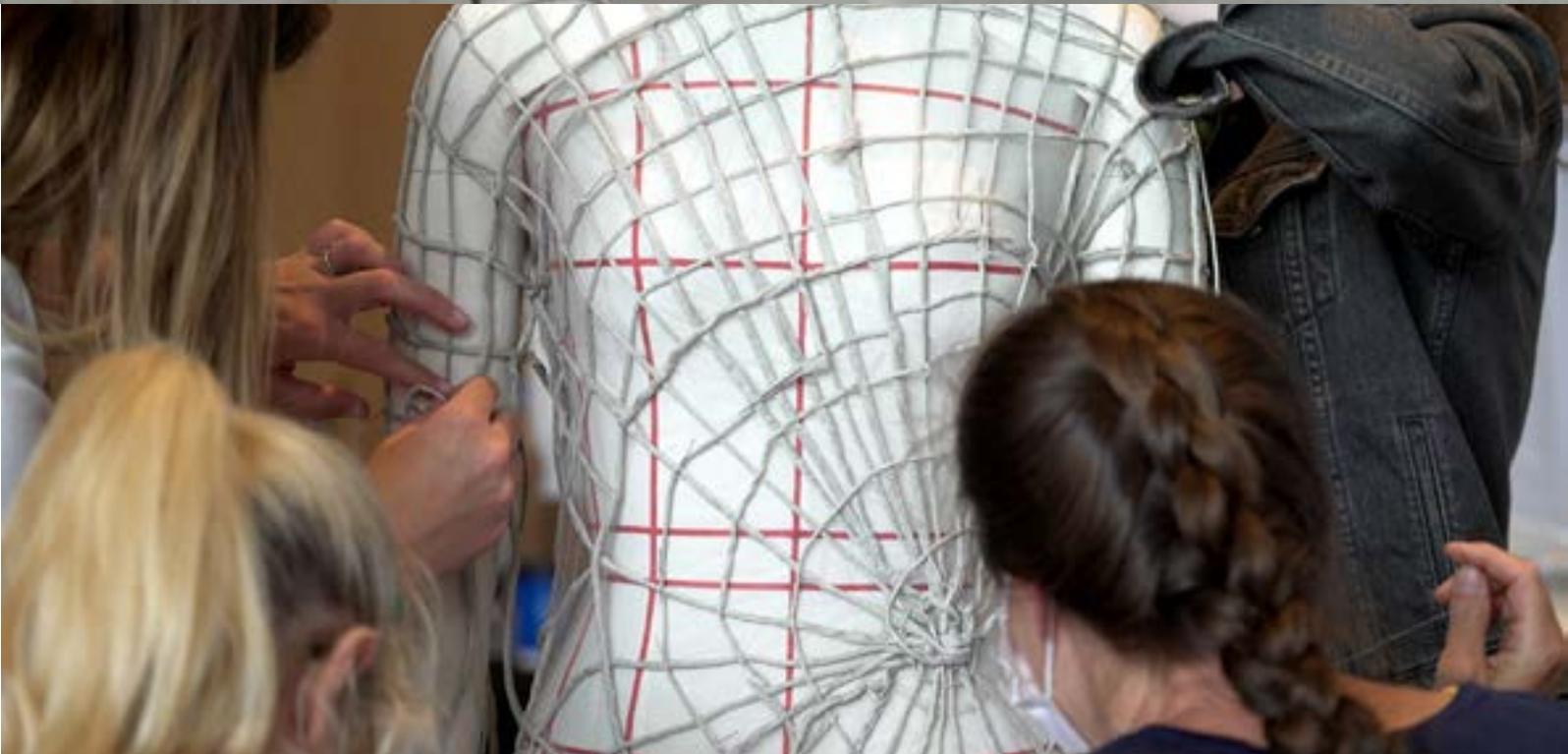
Summary

In 2016, Maria Grazia Chiuri became the first woman to be appointed head of the Dior luxury fashion House. It is now a tradition for Dior and its creative director Maria Grazia Chiuri to rediscover ancestral know-how on the occasion of its "Cruise" collection. The idea is not only to broaden the House of Dior's artistic language, but also to highlight and even save local craftspeople. Dior has become one of the frontrunners of French luxury – one of the only brands to have managed to post a positive turnover and profits for the year 2020, a phenomenal commercial success. Dior is a very big business, a large and complex machine. Showcased once a year, the Dior Cruise collection was initially an excuse for travel. The House of Dior has thus visited the Californian desert, Marrakesh and Lecce in Puglia, among others. This year it will be Athens, Greece.

Maria Grazia Chiuri is managing the Dior ready-to-wear workshops, with their legendary meticulousness. And she calls on several local craftsmen. It could be a 90-year-old lacemaker who is the last to master a crochet stitch that is literally thousands of years old and who takes months to make a single dress. A collective of women who weave a particular type of tapestry in the old-fashioned way, which will be used to make coats. A local fabric mill to commission them with traditional designs but revisited for the occasion. Stephen Jones, the House's milliner, creates special hats for the Cruise collection.

On the day of the show, the entire Dior machine makes the trip, with a cast of international models, journalists from Paris Match and Vogue USA, and some of the brand's muses.

The decor, the music, the dancers, everything is a pretext to involve local artists. Maria Grazia Chiuri is also keen to get feminist artists to work for Dior, asking them to write slogans on the structure of the set, or to produce a work that will be the setting for the show. An epic of craftsmanship, luxury, artisans and artists, feminism and commerce on a grand scale unfolds over the event. Maria Grazia Chiuri and Dior give us full access to their creative process. Discover a well-oiled big French luxury machine, and how it cleverly values its products by valuing the simple craftsmen and craftswomen, last practitioners of gestures on the verge of being forgotten – all while the coronavirus pandemic is still present and upsets the organisation of the fashion shows. All this work, all these stories, then come together in the great puzzle that is the Dior fashion show, and for which Maria Grazia Chiuri alone holds the reins. Amidst the Greek landscape, the documentary promises to be astonishing, moving and amusing, a balance between grand spectacle and intimacy.



Director's note

The camera: witness to all the preparations

The House of Dior gives us access to the preparations for this large-scale fashion show, from the very first stages. Indeed, we will have unprecedented access to document the construction of the collection. We will film the collection's first creations in the workshops with two cameras. One camera reports on the action, in a single sequence, so as not to miss anything of the seamstresses' work, their difficulties in making a dress, their know-how, but also their exchanges from one table to another in the workshop. We thus capture the studious but at the same time warm and often playful atmosphere that reigns in the Parisian workshops. The chirping of a sewing anthill. The other camera focuses on the details, in order to pay tribute to the incredible beauty of the fabrics and embroidery, and to show the richness of the couture work as closely as possible to the general public.

Similarly, during the fittings, two cameras allow us to follow Maria Grazia Chiuri, her reactions, her moments of doubt and her moments of excitement as she discovers her creations on a model for the first time; while at the same time being able to film the model in the cabin, the fall of her dress, the movement of her trousers as she walks in front of the designer and her team. In order to report on the whole event and avoid missing anything backstage or in the showroom, we will have 3 film crews present on the catwalk. 3 on-board and subjective cameras, accompanied by 2 sound engineers, to be able to report as faithfully as possible on the excitement and tension in the air. One camera remains backstage throughout the show, another stays close to Maria Grazia Chiuri, who adjusts a belt, replaces a jacket lapel, before the model steps out onto the catwalk. The third camera is in the main room and shows the titanic set-up required for a fashion show of this scale.

In the editing, we favour the sequence shot, in order to show the evolution of the sewing work, which is a meticulous and long job that can take a turn for the unexpected at any moment. A loose thread, a broken heel, we are spectators of the seamstresses' daily life. The sequence shot also allows us to see how such a hive of activity is organised, what each person's role is and to feel that we too are part of this general frenzy.

Slow-motion shots and close-ups add aesthetics, soften the narrative and allow the viewer to discover beauty in the middle of the battlefield.

Inside the world of Maria Grazia Chiuri

Maria Grazia Chiuri allows us to follow her in the final weeks before the show in Athens, giving us unique insight into her life. This is an unprecedented access, as it is the first time that a film crew is allowed to follow the creative director.

This privileged access is an opportunity to discover the profession of creative director in a fashion House. We follow her on her morning commute from her Paris flat to the avenue Montaigne. This is an opportunity for us to discuss with her her vision for the Dior woman, her journey from her childhood in Rome to the jewel of French couture. We discover how this woman managed to juggle an impressive career and two children.

When she arrives at her office, she tells us about the day's programme: problems to be solved with a few models, an embroidery to be validated, prints that have just arrived from Italy, a meeting with the communication team and then one to validate the decor in Athens. During the fittings, the camera is discreet, so as not to disturb the creative process, the reflection and the moments of grace that shine through during fittings. Like a fly on the wall, we observe the evolution of the fittings and how her vision gradually takes shape. We see the evolution of the dresses, a button that changes place, an embroidery that is extended to the whole skirt, etc.



Note d'intention de l'auteur

The Cruise show: the fruit of a collective labour

It is therefore with particular interest that I approach this documentary: the incredible opportunity to enter one of the most historic fashion Houses in France, to present its workshops, to follow its creative director over the long term in an unprecedented way, and to film the preparation of the Cruise fashion show in Athens as close as possible to all the teams.

The Cruise show is the most decisive show for Dior: the Cruise collection is the collection that will remain in the shops the longest. It is therefore the one that must sell the most. Between the need to convince the fashion critics from a creative point of view and the colossal economic stakes, the House of Dior must rise to the challenge with each new Cruise show. In recent years, Cruise shows have only become more spectacular. Each House wants to find the most impressive destination, to create the most magical show, a brand experience to seduce the public. All of Dior's teams are mobilized to create an extraordinary event: from the workshops, which will have to put their incredible know-how into practice, to the press teams, which will be busy making sure that the show gets maximum coverage.

That also includes the studio – the people closest to Maria Grazia Chiuri. This documentary is therefore also an opportunity to showcase the great team behind the mythical name that is Dior. To make the audience understand just how many people work on the creation of such a show. They will be able to discover the different talents and how many hours of work it takes for the director's vision to be realized. The more or less ancestral French know-how that endures thanks to the monumental resources of the LVMH group. The hours of fittings where every detail, every seam and the slightest shade of colour are questioned, to hone their craft and get as close as possible to perfection.

Maria Grazia Chiuri: The first woman to head Dior

We have exclusive and unprecedented access to the creative director, who lets us in both her creative studio, fittings, backstage at the fashion show, but will also grant us privileged interviews at her home and allow us to follow her daily life in this frenetic period.

When Maria Grazia Chiuri arrived at Dior in 2016, she had to face several challenges. That of being a woman at the head of one of the biggest fashion Houses – the first one at that. But also that of being an Italian, coming straight from Rome, with strong political convictions and a progressive vision of the contemporary woman. Maria Grazia Chiuri has succeeded in imposing her feminist vision in one of the jewels of the LVMH group; in combining political activism with luxury creations. The journey has not been easy, so it is with all the more interest that I want to discover her way of working, of thinking and that I want to understand the Dior woman she wants to create.

A special time: fashion shows during the Pandemic

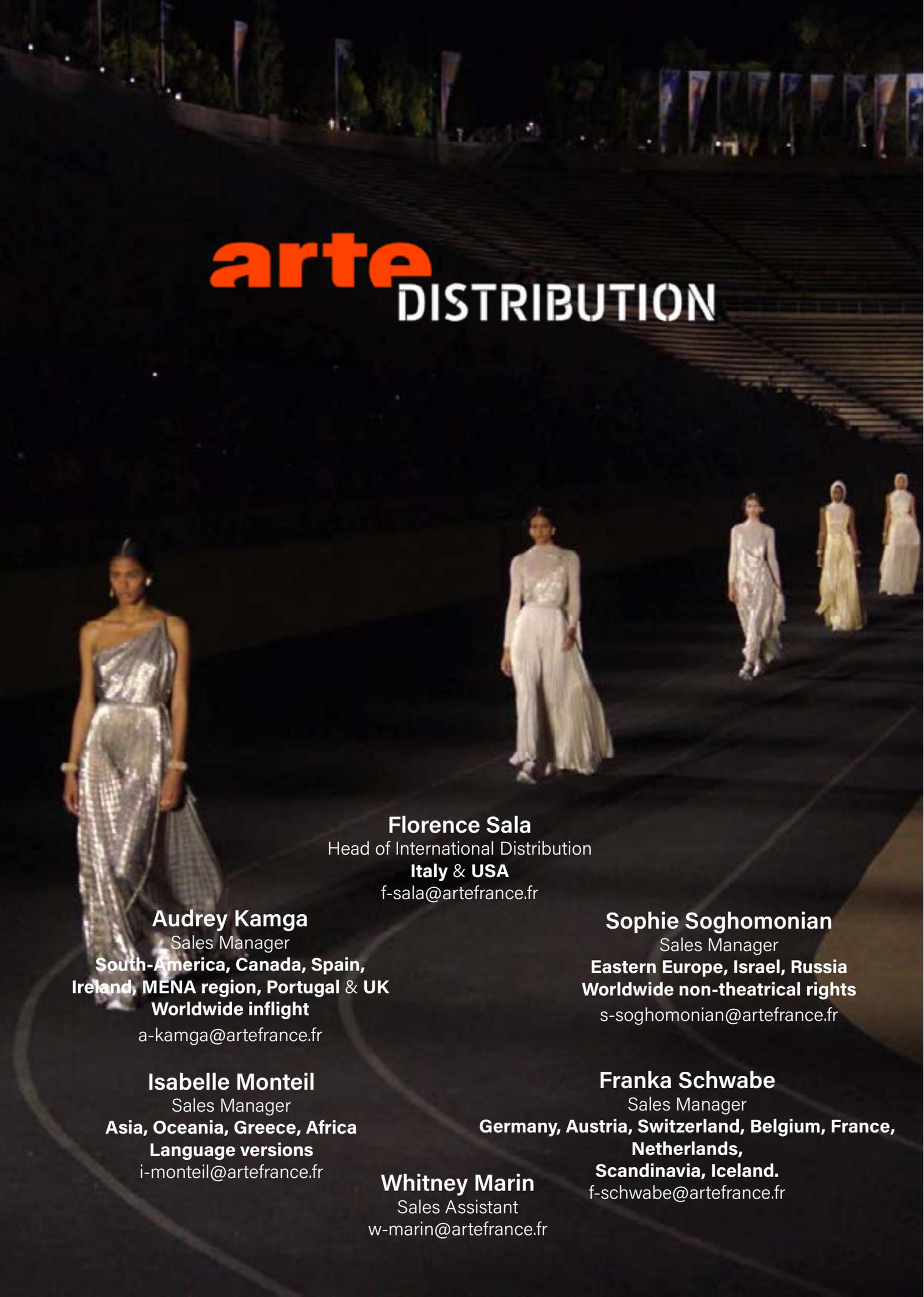
For a fashion House, a fashion show is an opportunity to present its new collections, but it is also an incredible showcase for communicating its vision, its identity and, in the case of the greatest French Houses such as Dior, the means of establishing its global influence. A fashion show is also a decisive economic stake, the event that regularly punctuates the year's fashion calendar and allows for very important sales spin-offs. This is especially true for its key target group of wealthy customers but also the general public, through perfumes, make-up, accessories, shoes, glasses and bags.

These events are challenging to organise in this pandemic. The biggest celebrities known as "friends of the House", the editors of the main newspapers and magazines, and VIP clients cannot travel. So the Houses have resorted to communicating through video. We follow the progress of a particular fashion show, without the usual large, privileged audience.

This fashion show is a strong testimony to the reality faced by the fashion Houses. We discover what Dior has set up to compensate for the lack of fashion influencers and journalists and to ensure international media coverage, using drones and cameras worthy of the greatest Hollywood productions.

Loïc Prigent





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