

POP Profile:
Miuccia

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BEFORE MIUCCIA

CONFESSION. You were my gateway. I didn't know your first name then. But I knew your nickname. I didn't know you inherited and then went on to own your company. But I knew you liked skirts, socks and sandals. I didn't know a lot. But I knew I LOVED.

When people talk about the reason why they fell in love with fashion, it usually runs along the banal lines of 'I loved the way my mother/grandmother dressed impeccably in pearls' or 'I was obsessed with fashion magazines and I tore out all the adverts and editorials and stuck them to my walls.' If you were born after 1990 then you might add trawling extensively through old catwalk shows on YouTube to that narrative. If I'm being brutally honest, my stock answer has never involved a mother's pearls (she had none) or the tears of a magazine. In fact, I never 'fell' in love with fashion as such. I dressed myself. And I just wanted to look different. Because different was my way of reconciling with the inferiority complex feelings of muddled youth; the notion that I wasn't as smart/pretty/verbose/sparty as my class mates at the all girl's secondary I went to. It was going into a small boutique called Stitch Up on Parkway in Camden and discovering the joys of a hand-dyed slip dress and thinking if I wore this over flared jeans, it didn't matter if nobody asked me to dance at Natalie's birthday party. Or going into overpriced Rokit and seeing what I could actually afford before trying my luck at a charity shop. It was personal





style and expression over Fashion with a capital F... 14-year-old me wanted to try and find and express Silverchair-listening, ME in a £5 bin of silk scarves and old band T-shirts. Fuck the high street. I was going to be be INDIE goddamnit.

HIGH fashion, was in my early teens simply that. HIGH. Lofty. Untouchable. Not my thing. All of the images were quite literally, glossy and scarily shiny. The models, golden-hued and sexy. The body dressed to seduce. Intimidating. Expensive. FASHION as I naively understood the world to be, didn't include weird layers, legwarmers and chunky heeled shoes. Or kooky skirts over funny trousers. I was looking to Japanese and Hong Kong teen magazines for my vaguely misguided style guidance, not knowing that the root of all of this lay elsewhere that I just hadn't tapped into yet.

I've forgotten which old tattered fashion magazine was being passed around the sixth form common room. It was supposed to be something vacuous to flick through after the repeated read of cheesy YA fiction about girls falling for the local lad at the swimming pool. But there the ad campaign was... SSO1 Miu Miu. Wait, I wouldn't even have known what seasons were back then. Ok then, just the image. Checkered leather pumps with ruched-up socks. Mohair boob tube worn with a pocketed skirt. London bus going past in the background. Real life all around. This looked familiar. I knew this girl crouching down on the pavement. She didn't look that purposeful. Even retrospectively I can't quite remember the ins and outs of the collection. In truth, it wasn't a particularly memorable one. But I just remember the FEELING. The thought of, 'WHAT IS THIS' and 'WHO MADE THIS?' Reeling off the name in my brain. MIU MIU. Which to me sounded, not of this country. Or world. Not English, French or Italian like the other houses and mega brands I vaguely knew. More like onomatopoeia. A cute sound you'd make if you were coo-ing at a close friend. Yoo-hoo! Meow you! Miu you! Miu Miu! In a font that didn't look like HIGH fashion. Stencilled red lettering. Rounded. Playful.

Back then, I didn't even know what the relationship was between Miu Miu and her more serious older sibling. I just knew I wanted to see more. It

wasn't the only catalyst but that common room magazine accident coincided with my newfound waitressing income to fund what became a real mag habit. The good stuff. *The Face*, *Dazed*, *i-D* – the London style title trifecta. Alternative worlds. Funny visions. Fashion that you could get high on (literally.) From then on, I fell into nerding about fashion all the way and CONSUMING images and knowledge as much as I could whilst not being able to buy into the labels themselves. The history, yes and then all the contemporary greats of the day. So many names, collections, seasons, being stored up and committed to memory like a GCSE pass note mind map. I did eventually become that person sticking up ad campaigns on the wall – often laminated with plastic because I wanted to preserve them (and because my dad had a machine at home for making menus for his restaurant.) Version 1.0 Style.com became the place to click through new collections on my dial-up connection with their accompanied 250 word review.

Miuccia (indirectly) started it all. The process that I naively thought I was resisting but in the end becomes pervasive for so many of us. And denying that process in the end is futile. Image as fuel. Desire to own. Buy for pleasure. Wear for wearing's sake. And above all, wear to please oneself – always the SELF. Repeat repeat. I gave in willingly.

AFTER MIUCCIA

Pleasing who? Not the guy I thought I was in love with at uni. Nor the hack at the graduate recruitment agency. Nor my friends, who headed to the club hoping to pull. Pleasing ME.

Little by little I learnt the formidable aura surrounding Miuccia and her world that renders every article about her overstuffed with superlatives, and quite often the same universally held truths. So many of the interviews I've read with Miuccia Prada often like to emphasise and compartmentalise her and her work into an almost impenetrable intellectual bubble. She was a Communist. She studied political science and mime at university. She is a feminist. She was a radical. She likes art – the challenging kind. All of this serves to put her work within an 'othering' context. One that seems a bit intangible.

BUT Miuccia Prada, and thus by association Miu Miu and Prada, were names I was finally really BOTHERED about. Even if my finances definitely would not have facilitated it, I did end up WANTING what either her nickname or her surname bore. And I mean that in the most primal 'I WANT TO WEAR YOU' sense, which isn't necessarily the most journalistic or clever way of framing Miuccia and her universe. In today's vernacular, you would say 'I die!' Or hashtag #Obsessed. Or 'I'm here/living for this.' Pre social media, it was more convoluted. A gushing of desire and admiration played out in your head. The thing is... I just wanted to BUY the things. WEAR and inhabit the clothes and therefore tap into her world. Prada and Miu Miu credit lines in the small print of editorials in magazines left me running to the back page brand list indexes only to find Sloane Street store phone numbers that would have been far too sniffy to take calls from my pink fascia-ed Nokia 3310. So my entry level in was through a humble pair of socks. Grey knee-highs slouching around the ankles from Prada SS07. They cost more than any item of clothing in my uni wardrobe back then. I hand washed them. Darned the holes once I had overworn them. But there's something precious about the whole ceremony – from being seduced by an image to nervously entering the shop to carrying the paper bag home to trying them on at home (can't try on hosiery before you buy obv's) and then testing them with your own shoes and clothes and then gingerly wearing, re-wearing, repairing and caring.

There's something in that step-by-step that I will never really want to let go of. It's the process that you'd hope everyone experiences with every single item in their closet, except that's not how fashion or what we wear functions today. It's all so throwaway. When people talk about sustainability, rather than bombarding people with jargon, stats and technicalities, what I so often want to ask is... but do you REALLY want this? How BADLY do you want it? How MUCH do you desire this? And then I think of Miuccia Prada's clothes, shoes and accessories in my wardrobe, each piece with its own intangible and unquantifiable value.

Whilst it's important to take in all

of that background and narrative surrounding *THE GREATEST DESIGNER OF ALL TIME*, it's the pure earnest desire that her clothes instil in you that has kept me onboard for my entire adult life. It's untainted pleasures. Untainted by the need to use clothes to impress other people as is so often the case. Pure, because it's for you and you only. And it's often inexplicable to others.

At Miu Miu specifically, you can tell those design decisions were especially swift. They often are at a brand that Miuccia herself admits has more immediacy than its big sister and where the collections are often dreamed up in less than a month. Instinctive. Not discussed or moodboarded to death. Miuccia wants a spongy texture like cotton candy floss. A harlequin illustration. A necklace that jangles with geometric shapes cut oddly out of leather. A shoe that hybridizes a sports shoe and an office heel. Why? Why not! Just make and then the WANTING will come later!

Here are a handful of personal Miuccia Miu Miu fan-tales that are a bit cringe but I DON'T CARE. Nothing really came easy. But nothing ever does when DESIRE makes you work for the things you WANT.

FAKE not FAKE SS05

In those early days of eBay, it was a realllll treat to trawl. I would spend hours on the site in my university dorm room, with a supercharged broadband connection, refreshing search terms, and repeatedly misspelling 'Balenciaga' or 'Marc Jacobs' to see if it yielded any hidden gems. Sadly though, the early to mid-noughties was also the era of the fake flooding the internet. Miu Miu being a prime target. SS05 with its blown-up geometric prints in muddied blues, reds and oranges. Its art teacher oversized hoop necklaces. Its tees with fruit or clouds. Perhaps the start of Miuccia's more decorative and ornate period at Miu Miu. I kept seeing and saving listings at their suspiciously low prices. In the end, I resisted the fake, as jolly and tempting as it was. The REAL thing would have to wait. I'd learn to yearn.

POP goes the SS06 shoes

SS06 popped and banged with its explosion starburst graphics on crumpled dress lining fabrics. More immediate and covetable were the shoes with their black cartoon edged straps and gemstone embellishments that remains part

of the Miu Miu vocabulary to this very day. POP had done a Miu Miu pop-up in Selfridges and whilst I had stalked its opening, my then meagre part-time job earnings from waitressing at Arsenal football club wouldn't have bought anything full price. More waiting. More patience. And then! SALE. #SorryNotSorry maybe it's not 'chic' to say. But what else was a fashion fan on tight purse strings supposed to do. To this day, these are the shoes that I've walked/danced/jumped the most in. The heel, pleasingly chunky. The straps, still stubbornly sturdy. The pink, hot. Very very hot.

DIY SS07

Remember Li-lo with her red hair before she went off the rails. Miu Miu was on a roll with their ad campaigns featuring young ingenue actresses. After all they were the perfect foil. You could never truly grasp who they really were hence why they inhabited those clothes. Played a role. The Miu Miu collections did indeed become more like characters. SS07 in particular was vamp Miu Miu. Graphic and direct in her blue and red satin. I loved this so much I attempted to make my own colour blocked shirt out of some subpar fabric shop satin and my rudimentary dressmaking skills. The results were... best left unworn. At least I tried.

Texture Pleasure AW08

Ah... the fake/real, synthetic/natural contrast cannon of Miuccia is vast. Explored extensively in both Prada and Miu Miu, AW07 had a pointed singularity to it with its A-line silhouette and strictly fleshy colour palette, which was supposedly a commentary on the perma-tanned reality TV stars of the time. The fabrication that really got to me was a lurex-shot quilted polyester, reminiscent of 1970s flammable dressing gowns. In later years through hunting down vintage stores in Tokyo, I managed to find a full ensemble from that collection that is defiantly marked in my wardrobe in the DO NOT SELL category.

SS10 A Blogger's Catnip

This one goes down as a Miu Miu turning point goodie. Not least because it's stuffed full of prints and motifs that have since been resurrected time and time again by Miuccia but because it was so rich, so full. Almost runneth over with its questions about youth, girli-

ness and innocence. Read deep, or just look at the pretty surfaces. Not so innocent you might say with its nude figure prints, provocatively placed cut-outs and conspicuous embellishment for the sake of conspicuouity. This was the collection that had us I.O bloggers agog. We'd create collage homages. We'd pen love letters. We'd daydream about owning a piece only to find that Miu Miu was actually growing out of its sister brand status. It was coming into its very own. Essence of Miuccia distilled and made delectable. Maybe it was a bit blogger bait. But we took it anyway and lapped it up. Meow!

I'm skipping all the seasons thereafter (every one pretty much) where I've had the privilege and more stable finances to partake as a real customer, so much so the SA from Bond Street and I have a WhatsApp thread going on. But that's between me and him...

LOVING MIUCCIA, LOVING ME

UGLY? To whom? To you? But not to me? Chic? What's chic? An empty word. Means nothing to me.

To REALLY love what Miuccia does and to wear her clothes wholeheartedly is a form of self-acceptance and perhaps self-love in itself. No, not because you've earned and treated yourself in the store. It's easy enough to buy into the perfumes, the cute shoes, the simple sweater or the many MANY bags both Prada and Miu Miu do grand trade in. That's easy brand flexing. But can you do the clothes. Can you get stuck into the things that raise eyebrows or don't come in easy-to-buy categories?

The reason why I've often found the term 'ugly-chic' to be trite when talking about Miuccia Prada's life's work, is because it makes the clothes sound like a challenge to wear. Difficulty level 10. For me, they're anything but. When people use the word 'ugly' in womenswear and then hyphenate it with -chic to create an oxymoron, it immediately puts a barrier up around the aesthetic and then apologises for it with the meaningless word of chic.

When speaking with CIS hetero males about the appeal of Prada and Miu Miu and when terming it 'ugly-chic' they almost immediately ask, but why would you want to look like that? And so that term inadvertently becomes an au-

tomatic deterrent. Because the function of clothes still for many centres around making an impression on other people – to attract, to be seen as professional, to appear neat, to be fit for society, to fit into society, to send other people a message about you. The personal expression part in that narrative primarily functions to express to onlookers. To people looking at you.

But what about expressing for yourself only. What about the act of wearing for you and you only? It's something that I've thought about A LOT in the past year. I've had plenty of time. Sitting in my little overstuffed walk-in, looking at the mirror, looking at me. Nobody in the house. Wearing things that don't get seen even on social media. Then Miu Miu came out with their twentieth *Women's Tales* directed by Mati Diop, whose moving ghost story debut *Atlantics* bowled me over. Diop in her room, in a small outer-Parisian apartment, having conversations with her grandmother. Miu Miu's frocks glinting in isolation with nowhere to go. Clothes that have enough heft and weight in them, despite the sugary appearance to please oneself in privacy.

And when we do venture out. Will we think about that feeling again? Wearing things on our own terms, and our own terms only? And REALLY not caring? Will we? Can we?

TOUCHING MIUCCIA

What do you drink? What do you eat? How is that wallpaper? Taste, taste and more taste. Neither good, nor bad. Just endless amounts of taste. But what if surfaces could touch. Really touch.

SPECIFICS matter. Idiosyncrasies matter. The extraneous stuff – even the smallest details makes the word 'brand' possible. And that REALLY matters. I'm sure there's a mathematician out there that can extrapolate a formula that works out exactly what the value of using a certain drinks glass for wine at a Prada or Miu Miu event is, in relation to Prada Group's revenue. The same can be said for the type of food they decide to serve. The exact shade of pistachio of the brocaded changing rooms in a Miu Miu store. Two tones out and perhaps it would have the opposite effect of someone (ok, me!) spanking a mini fortune on the latest collections.

What if that pink on the shopping bags wasn't slightly muddied (only to be co-opted by *ahem* other brands subsequently.) What if the carpet was short instead of deep pile? What if the sunglasses cases weren't made out of velvet? I'm always fascinated by these details. I've come to collect them in my head over the years because those sense-based memories build a different kind of Miuccia Prada mind map to the one I had before I worked in fashion. But what about when surfaces communicate something more universal, something that really touches you. I refer again to Miu Miu's *Women's Tales* only because lockdown afforded me the time to digest the films properly without distraction. The latest film was directed by Philippines-born trans filmmaker Isabel Sandoval. Her protagonist played by Sandoval herself is set against the anti-miscegenation background of Depression era America – the supposed promised land of *Shangri-La*, the title of her film. To her forbidden white lover she expresses her desires and a sensual inner self.

It ends with a powerful affirmation. 'I'm magnificent, invincible, sublime. I will love who I want to and I'll be loved right back.' When Sandoval was explaining the film in a film preview Zoom, she said that her central character had to learn to love herself first before being able to love others. Her film dealt with the hopes and dreams of an immigrant, coming to a new foreign land to find love amidst being marked out by her 'otherness.' That final sentiment was so touching, and almost too painful a truth, that I choked back a little. It takes a lot for a supposed fashion film to do that. Sandoval floating in a gem-encrusted sky in her crystal-laden dress therefore isn't just pure surface. Even as Miuccia and co have spent years cultivating these surfaces, objects, interiors, and taste decisions, in the end they all matter. They become the vehicle to carry something infinitely more powerful and instantly recognisable, whether you're into fashion or not. When I finished watching *Shangri-La*, I looked down on the pink sheer Miu Miu dress I was wearing from the SS21 collection, and thought... 'Wow, this dress is somehow connected to what she just said. Even if the link is tenuous. That affirmative truth, which I've been trying

to teach myself all my life was given to me by a fashion brand.' Thank you Miuccia. Thank you.

MEETING MIUCCIA

Never meet your heroes. Just Zoom with them instead.

I'm never really stumped for words in a professional capacity. I've done the brazen going up to designer/celebrity thing at events and shows with my phone to get a quick bolshy soundbite. I've been scathing when provoked. I've riled when I've needed to. The more years you build up in the industry, the more assertive you become about what you like. What you dislike.

Miuccia is that Achilles heel of a subject though that was always going to turn back the clocks to an uninitiated pre-industry me. Writers are allowed to be cowered. Especially when they wear their heart and enthusiasm quite literally on their sleeve. When it comes to Miuccia, even as I've applauded her front of house and backstage countless times. Shaken her hand. Lifted a glass of prosecco to congratulate her. Seen her grapple with cutlery to eat langoustines (there's always something fishy at a Prada dinner) and a pink blancmange (supplied by Pasticceria Marchesi of course.) It's always been *distanced*.

Then out of the blue came the text from Ashley. 'How about Miuccia next week?' As if he was saying 'Fancy a walk in the park? A drink at the pub?' ERM MMMMM. Silence. 'Tell me Susie!' My head screamed 'Yes!' My heart cautioned over meeting heroes. Let alone speaking at length with them. But it's NOW OR NEVER.

And this is undeniably a fascinating juncture for Mrs P. As we write this, Prada Group has just financially rebounded post Covid slump. Raf Simons is bedding in with Miuccia as co-creative directors, going from having an Impossible Conversation to manifesting Possible Feelings. Miuccia can now turn a fuller attention to Miu Miu – her spirit and conviction, stronger than ever and thus encapsulated within the brand that began as 'sister' and now stands as equal. It feels even more like her personal playground and private-made-public domain. Important!

According to Miuccia's legendary right hand woman Verde Visconti,

she also happens to be quite eager to speak. That's how I found myself on Zoom, shoving that crusty POP x Miu Miu SS06 shoe for closer inspection by Miuccia herself. 'I have them too,' she remarks. Of course she does. Her Miu Miu navy sportif skirt suit that she was wearing was straight off the SS21 court-side collection, shown as a pre-recorded film, where my head was also floating amongst a virtual audience of celebrities, artists and friends of the brand. Fans, fangirling collectively. We did wave and clap enthusiastically. As she emerged to take a bow in head to toe dusky pink, I wonder if she actually saw us. Or was she looking at a greenscreen? Such is the surreal nature of pandemic era fashion show set-ups, which we'll look back on in ten years time and either wonder why in-person physical shows ever existed or why Zoom was a vehicle for fashion show attendance. Either. Or. Time will tell.

Same goes for the way this interview was conducted. Her face and details of a green-walled office are pixelated by Zoom. A break of Wi-Fi connection occasionally disturbs her speech. A few 'Sorry I couldn't hear you just then' and 'Can you repeat that?' And me looking at me, inching closer and closer to my MacBook webcam, straining to see Miuccia speak. Then maybe all she could see was my nose pressed up against a screen. No question then that I'm a fan.

In the end Miuccia did talk, speak and freely it flowed. And the best part about doing it on Zoom? That she couldn't see my hands shaking ever so slightly as they hovered above the keyboard.

Maybe down the line, post Covid, we will speak in person. Maybe we'll sit in our skirts on very deep pile carpet, inches away from one another and speak female fan to female icon. Laughing IRL, as I gush about 17-year-old me finding her through Miu Miu. She may not care. These tales are a dime a dozen. I'm one of many all over the world. But she'll still make you feel like you're the one in the room who shares her affinity with whatever hidden desire/pleasure she has unearthed in clothing form.

The most burning question perhaps is best left unanswered. What IS the secret? How DOES it? And by IT, I mean DESIRE. She'll never answer fully. She's keeping it to herself. For

her many selves. But she will pass on the bi-products of her thought process through her universe. We'll be there to watch, want and wear. Always. Forever.

SUSIE LAU Where to begin... First of all, thank you so much for giving me your time. I really had trouble trying to find a starting point...

MIUCCIA PRADA Me too. I'm lost in so many thoughts at the moment. It might take me a bit of time to concentrate. We'll get there at some point...

SL So I thought I'd start with a bit of fangirling. These [gestures to shoes]... I was waitressing in football clubs to save up for them. My first designer shoes!

MP You were wearing these at a football club?

SL No, I was waitressing at the club - Arsenal - to make money.

MP Then you understand the spirit of Miu Miu!

SL I thought it was interesting, because the last show was about that passion of real fans reacting to their teams.

MP Except I hate the umbrella girls at sports events!

SL What's an umbrella girl?

MP At motor races, they are standing there in revealing clothes holding an umbrella for the champions to protect them from the sun or rain. I thought it was so terrible... now I've discovered they've stopped doing it. Now, actually men are doing it instead.

SL Oh great, they're being objectified too! There's justice in the world...

MP Yes, exactly.

SL So Miu Miu... The foundation of Miu Miu literally is YOU. What you want, what you immediately want and desire. Maybe more earnest than what you do at Prada?

MP Did you say honest?

SL Earnest... but honest too!

MP I have been asked many times, my relationship between Prada and Miu Miu. I don't even know myself. For me, they are the same thing. I'm the same person doing both. It is strange, though, when I switch floors between the brands, I change mentality. As much as I'm severe and a thinker, the moment I enter into the Miu Miu room, I'm more light and in a different spirit.

SL Some heaviness is removed?

MP Yes. It's a lightness that makes all

the difference. In the beginning, I did at Miu Miu what I wasn't allowed to do at Prada. It's funny, in commerce, people want you to be precise, which is something that I actually hate. I personally have so many multiple identities. I do it very often actually... I want to do at Prada what I should do at Miu Miu. Or I go to Miu Miu and do what I should do at Prada. No one knows that because if I say it out loud they will kill me. I talk about this only with my closest group.

SL The people who call you Miu Miu?

MP Miu Miu has been my nickname forever. What I mean is I don't believe in a fixed identity. I have doubts with my own identities. I suppose everyone has so many identities, desires and wishes. You have so many different situations in your life so to talk about one concept is a bit rigid. I feel perfectly comfortable being myself and doing both. It's a flow from Prada to Miu Miu. I don't keep ideas strictly for each brand. For sure it's more light, fashion and daring. I strongly believe in the fact that if you are a feminist and you care about women, it's not that you're obliged to be serious. I dream of the moment that you can go into work dressed exactly as you like, not being obliged to have a perfect performing dress. The moment you walk into a meeting half naked and you're the boss would be the dream. I could do it of course...

SL Would you actually do that?

MP Yes! What counts is the mind of course... you can have command over a big company, but it's not necessarily that you should adhere to rules. I think that the way you dress SHOULD have nothing to do with the work you do. Of course it's true we dress how we want to be seen. Now that I'm older, there are a ton of things that I wouldn't wear anymore. But I did it enough in the past.

SL Surely age isn't a boundary for you?

MP Golden panties? [Laughs] No, for sure. But more importantly, you dress because of how you feel, for yourself, to lift yourself emotionally, conceptually and for what you have to do. When I dress to go out, I in the last minute because I want it to be instinctive. I want to feel good/well, to perform, to do whatever. I don't want to think twice. I have to hold myself together.

SL That made me think about the last *Women's Tales* film that Mati

Diop did for Miu Miu. There was a girl dressing within an enclosed space, and it was about this private communion with clothes.

MP I dress more or less how I dressed before. This is my new suit for Miu Miu for example, from the new collection. A lady's suit but sporty. I didn't just put it on because I'm talking about Miu Miu. Newness excites me but I don't change my habits very much.

SL We call that fashion dopamine, a hit of a fashion drug. We've needed that this year for sure without external pleasures. What have you been doing in lockdown? Are you on the exercise bandwagon?

MP I hate gyms! I do everything by myself every morning. Since I was very young, my mum taught me to exercise.

SL What's your routine?

MP Very classic.

SL This has been a time for small pleasures, things that aren't grand. What are yours?

MP Those are private! [Laughs]

SL But that's what Miu Miu is about... private pleasures... things that are unspoken. So... tell me!

MP Can you imagine if I told you my private pleasures?!

SL Even your guilty pleasures, yes!

MP Pleasures are never guilty. I never think that!

SL I know you said before that you don't believe there is a post-pandemic theory about how everything will change after this. Buuuuut... this has been such a strange year for fashion. Everything is so far removed. How do we reignite our desires?

MP Actually I've changed my mind. After the first lockdown, I thought once it was over there wouldn't be much affect. Now with the second wave, there will be changes. Not the fundamentals. If you're clever, you stay clever. If you're stupid, you stay stupid. If you're superficial, you stay superficial. In fashion, with remote shows, you miss the people of your industry, your colleagues. You miss the rest of the world. I was obliged to confront technology. I changed my mentality drastically towards the web. Before I've always said I'm internet shy. I had a lot of intellectual fun thinking of these changes. To try and really understand the possibilities. It was an opportunity to explore all of this. I re-

alised you could have discussion, communication and it was so refreshing. Not sophisticated. But you have contact with your clients, the people who like you instead of being isolated.

SL Haven't you realised you could have millions fangirling you?

MP Not at all! Now I'm experimenting with an exhibition that starts from the relationship between people and the web. Now I see it as much more. For sure, it's a job. After this is all over, we will go back to having real shows but I want to carry on those conversations. There's been an addition. The traditional system of fashion shows dated from the 1950s. I've discovered a new way of engaging with it all.

SL What's the funniest thing you've seen on the internet?

MP There's everything and nothing. The whole world is there. From the super intellectual to super superficial. It's another instrument to allow you to communicate. To use, according to your ideas. My son told me, 'Mamma, you take care of everything except for the two things that people care about - the shops and the internet.'

SL But fashion is predicated on tactile desires. Things that you can touch physically. How do we get back to that?

MP It's not that people have forgotten about touching things. For sure, in the beginning that's why I always thought real life was better. In my life I even criticise people taking pictures. Let's say, 'how do you enjoy the sunset if you're too busy taking a picture of it?' But I guess it's about memory making. After of course, when someone shows me the picture I love it! I never do it though. For me it's important to retain an impression of a moment. You reference yourself and re-reference yourself. Tapping into memories and impressions. I have many discussions about nostalgia. Is it new-old? Is it old-new? Etc etc. For sure we are defined by our memories, studies and experiences. Ideas that we formulated in the past. But possibly taking them into the future.

SL How do you tap into that and keep it fresh? Or maybe that's not even the goal? To tap into newness...

MP I am always into the new new new. I get bored so easily. As soon as I finished thinking about it, I move on. What interests me, is my next curiosity. Some-

times it's instinctive. Sometimes I have to search for it. The moment I've found it, for me, it's already over. Of course I have to execute it. For myself, I want to learn more. To actually translate it into something real is very complicated and very difficult. Sometimes you get there. Sometimes the translation is not easy

SL At Miu Miu, when you come out to walk, you look like you're questioning what you showed. Your look is never self-satisfaction.

MP Haha, that never happens. You are afraid of the judgement. I'm afraid of what people think.

SL Even after all these years?

MP That's actually a good thing. I have the same attitude. The exact same fear as I did 20 years ago.

SL So why do it to yourself still?

MP Because I like my job! I'm not afraid to be judged, if I do it, I'm convinced. I'm more or less satisfied. When I'm happy about something, if someone says it's bad, then it doesn't bother me. Also you want people to appreciate what you do for the sake of the company. Sometimes I'm less sure of what I did, whether it was good, half good or very good. If I'm convinced of something, I'm not fearful of judgement for myself. Maybe for the company. It's like a movie, a song, a play. Every creative person is afraid of judgement. Journalists are too. One time I said to a journalist who I didn't like much, 'Listen you can criticise us but behind the scenes we criticise you too.'

SL You're giving us your time and creativity. You have that right.

MP I put my job to the public. You put your job to the public. Of course we can both judge. Maybe judging is a bad word. The beautiful part of it is at least we're curious about each other's work.

SL You probably hold very high standards for yourself, so the criticism extends to yourself.

MP I ask a lot of myself. But it's also a pleasure. I don't like doing something just for the sake of it. When I do something, I put everything into it. I would never do a job half-heartedly. I put all my effort, passion and ideas into it.

SL The brilliance of what you do, is that every detail is not left untouched. Even the glasses you use to serve prosecco at a Miu Miu show. Those minute details. It's a lot of you. Is it difficult to give or

expose yourself in that way?

MP I never found that a problem because the company is mine. In my case, I invented my job with my husband. It's our creature. It's my name on the door. If I worked for someone else, maybe it would be different but I do not think so.

SL Does that ever feel tiresome? Maybe you don't leave enough for your own private life.

MP This year, yes. I was so fearful of not holding things together. Being at home working through video, I've felt like I've been working three times as much. Normally people would come into my office by appointment and I would take very few appointments each day. Now that access is easy, I'm taking on more.

SL I want to ask you about women and how they want to be seen. It's such a lifelong work of yours.

MP I don't know if I've answered your question but I tell you anyway. It all depends on how sure of yourself you are. The more you know, the more you learn, the more you see, the more you discuss, the more you feel comfortable with yourself. I always see at the table that there are girls that don't speak up. When I was young, I would always be with more people that were more cultivated than me. The more I knew, the more I expressed myself, the more I was confident. Learn, learn, learn. You can own that conversation in the end.

SL To be fair, there are also people that are powerful in their silence.

MP The more you know, the more you have a voice! Miu Miu is exactly like Prada except it could look 'more superficial.' It doesn't mean that you don't think, study, learn and are political. It's even more daring because you dare to be very quirky in the way you dress but it doesn't mean you're less serious.

SL I think when Miu Miu uses actresses in the campaigns it gives a façade of passiveness and shallowness... but actually beneath that, it's much deeper. By using actresses, they play lots of different characters. You never know exactly who they are.

MP I'm not saying every person can be an actress in their life. But sometimes I am. I like to do that. I think the actress is, yes, a symbol of playing different roles. And the richness of those roles.

SL And for women we do that all the

time! We play up to that. You want to be powerful. You want to be desirable. You want to be heard!...

MP You want to decide your own life. I always like to say - women have a double strength. Of course you have to work and be empowered. But you also have to enjoy the pleasure of being a woman. I never wanted to give that up. The tradition of women being maternal. It is a value that shouldn't be thrown away.

SL I do want to define motherhood on my own terms maybe...

MP Because of our long past of being dependent, it's not that we can negate that immediately. To be a mother is a pleasure. Behaving womanly, it's also an important pleasure...

SL I think women think it.

MP I think it's actually something very serious to be discussed. I was a feminist and part of a political movement. I don't say these things lightly. I say it as a serious consideration that should be debated. Otherwise we are saying we want to be men. But for sure we need to gain power.

SL Have there ever been times when you weren't listened to in a room?

MP In my life, I never felt I was treated poorly. I never felt that kind of submission. I created this situation of which I'm always in control of. I have always thought this way, I did not want to ask my mother for pocket money. I would do something to earn it myself. If you don't earn your life, how can you be independent. First, earn your own life! And that's my real advice to anyone.

SL When you buy something from Miu Miu, what values are you aligning yourself with?

MP To be loud politically without looking opportunistic is very tricky. I'm very careful about that. I hate to do it just to sell more. But I think we should speak more. Or I should speak more. People always say I could go into politics. My resistance is always about the fear of looking opportunistic.

SL You're sharing Prada with another. Miu Miu is your baby again.

MP Miu Miu is becoming more important really. Instinctively, it's where I'm going to put more of myself. Miu Miu is more about women. I want to go deeper within that. Hopefully I have more time. I want to concentrate more and see how much progress I can do in terms of myself as a fashion designer. For Miu Miu

to really be a place where creative women can both be frivolous and intelligent. As an example when we work with the Directors of *Women's Tales*, we want to talk about vanity, femininity and what that means today. It's my excuse to bring women together, to propose ideas. A place where women can find space for bringing their ideas to life and about life. Yes, we still need to sell clothes...

SL But the clothes are deeply related to tapping into those vanities.

MP In principle I would rather go out naked than wear something that doesn't relate to me. But I want to create a balloon where fashion can exist with these ideas. To be active through the clothes. Miu Miu should be a centre of initiatives for possibilities and conversations.

SL You're one of the few brands that can go into that conversation activism space without feeling like it's a marketing exercise.

MP I want to be more free to express myself in that way.

SL It's an ongoing conversation. What is right or appropriate?

MP I find myself in this moment less and less sure of anything. Me?! Yes, I feel free! That's not the problem. The problem is on so many questions I don't have clear answers. We have so many cultures, so many religions. All together. Before you were dictating from a Eurocentric vision. We're not in a white catholic European bubble anymore. This is my new challenge. Find new answers for this worldwide community. It is obvious that we are here all together. What do we do? How do we behave?

SL Maybe there's also a strength in not pleasing everyone?

MP The pleasing that I know of is about seduction. Like pleasing a boyfriend. I've been there, done that. I don't want to please anybody. Respecting is different. I want to EARN the respect of people. That's fundamental. Every other existing person on earth. Oh, I wanted to have this super frivolous conversation but in the end we came to a serious, important place!

SL You can't build a brand like Miu Miu based on aesthetics, surface and artifice. So this makes sense. In the end though, it's all desire.

MP That's instinctive to me. When you have desire, you are alive. Desire is a symptom of life, of energy, of wanting. Yes, desire is everything.