



JULIA FRAKES SAID HER FIRST WORD AROUND THE SAME TIME MAEVE WOODHOUSE TOOK HER FIRST BREATH

Julia Frakes is bewitching. The slight redhead is sipping tea at a café in New York's Flat Iron district, trying to warm her toes. Socks slipped her mind in the shoe change between a prior meeting and ours – and I found her shivering in a pair of bright yellow wellies.

Socks aside, not a thread is out of place, although Frakes' signature hair ribbon is hidden beneath a twee black trilby. Known for her self-confessed 'sort of *Alice in Wonderland* aesthetic', the petite writer comes across as both vulnerable and highly intuitive. She's confident yet bashful, hesitant to talk freely lest she be pegged a brag. At times though, excitement overrules caution, spurring her to talk of visits to A-listers' showrooms, fashion weeks in Paris, jaunts to Japan, and mixing with the likes of Ikram Goldman and Moses De La Renta.

She's a little girl in a big world, and it hasn't seemed to faze her one bit. In the year and a half Frakes has been keeping Paper Magazine's Fashion Schmashion online blog, the 19-year-old has become known in fashion circles as a 'bit of an It girl', according to the social pages of New York's the Times and Observer. Having also fielded less generous slurs, Frakes is dubious about the attention.

"I don't really like the whole idea of labelling things, and when people don't really know the whole story about something they sort of like making up their own stories, and then that sticks with you... you just have to separate what you do every day with this crazy idea people have [about you]."

It started so sweetly. Paper's founders – Kim Hastreiter and David Hershkovits – found a then 16-year-old Frakes through Facebook, and were so impressed by her knowledge of the industry they invited her to join their team of contributors. That was December 2007. Six months later, half a year out of high school, Frakes relocated from Scranton, PA (the little-known town recently risen to pop-culture status as hometown to America's take on *The Office*, as well as to America's new Vice President, Joe Biden), to a two-storey apartment in Chelsea, which she shares with a friend and her white fluffball cat, Daisy.

As well as her work with Paper, Frakes maintains her own blog, Bunny Bisou – a collection of interviews, links and ponderings related to her love affair with fashion – and is kept increasingly busy with offers from potential collaborators, press and her growing legion of fans. Asia is a huge market for her.

A volunteer with the US Democratic party since the age of 15, Frakes also lends her time to a number of charities, including Charity Water, and Russian supermodel Natalia Vodianova's The Naked Heart Foundation, a non-profit that builds 'play parks' for children in Russia. "A lot of people say that's a luxury, kids need food, water, but the truth is, otherwise they'd just be on the streets and getting into trouble. Everyone deserves at least one luxury."

And Frakes knows a thing or two about perks. Alongside her colleague, and mentor of sorts, the inimitable Mickey Boardman, Frakes has already crossed paths with many of fashion's elite. Her work, as well as all that simmering hype, opens doors internationally, and – in wide-eyed wonderment – the unassuming protégé finds herself ever planted in "super fantastic" situations. Industry chatter has its upside.

"I sort of feel silly rattling off names, but I've been enormously blessed to have met almost every single one of my [fashion] idols, really, growing up," she effuses, citing a front row seat at Sonia Rykiel's 40th anniversary tribute alongside Ikram Goldman – stylist to Michelle Obama and owner/namesake of Chicago boutique Ikram – as her greatest highlight thus far. "[It was] the one moment where I actually just started crying, because I was so overwhelmed."

Rykiel aside, Frakes adores, "creative types that don't really let other people box them in..." and favours "a fairy, faded, floral aesthetic, which is very nymph-like." For these reasons, Rodarte, Charles Anastase, Emma Cook and Karen Walker list among her favourite designers. A strict raw food vegan, 'for health reasons', Frakes counts Stella McCartney as another of her heroes. The designer's vegan-friendly shoes are the only kind she can wear. "There's no death in anything she does," she says of McCartney. "Not only is [her work] completely ethical, she has a beautiful organic line that is just stunning, and super in touch with the earth, and kind."

Despite the opposite being obviously true, Frakes is adamant she's "probably one of the most massively boring people you'll ever meet!" Her schedule looks set to become even more chaotic in 2009, meaning the self-confessed history and politics buff must delay study plans for now. Perhaps one day she'll get there, but Frakes' immediate destiny appears to lie not in theorising about the past, but in offering her commentary on the present. Interview Sarah Illingworth Image Mark Hunter



ABOVE JULIA WEARS SONIA RYKIEL BOUCLE SWEATER, VINTAGE HEADBAND & LANVIN/ACNE NECKLACE BELOW PETER PILOTTO DRESS, BOY BY BAND OF OUTSIDERS VEST, BAILEY OF HOLLYWOOD HAT, CHANEL PIN & SATIN BAG