



Bottega Veneta

Louise Trotter has fallen in love with Bottega Veneta's signature Intrecciato leather weave, celebrating its 50th anniversary this year and winning a starring role in the British designer's solid debut.

"The most beautiful thing about Bottega Veneta is that it's really a workshop," she said during a preview ahead of her fashion show Saturday afternoon. "Craft has been the way we innovate... Artisans and creatives working together to find solutions."

And no shortage of dazzlers. These included a regal cape that wore its labor lightly: 4,000 hours to hand-weave the 3-mm strips of brown leather.

Trotter and Bottega's artisans also found a way to assemble colorful strands of recycled fiberglass into otherworldly furry chubbies – they seemed lit from within – and fuzzy skirts in magnified butterfly patterns that shuddered and swished in mesmerizing ways.

The designer did not stray far from the grown-up chic and textural wizardry plied by her predecessor Matthieu Blazy, who faces his own debut at Chanel on Oct. 6 during Paris Fashion Week.

Yet she brought her knack for austere yet voluptuous tailoring, and fresh appreciation for Milanese style, having moved to the Italian fashion capital with her family over the summer.

Since taking up her role last January, she's also been spending time in the Venice and Veneto regions, letting "the feeling" of the area seep in, along with its colors and legacy of glassmaking on the small island of Murano.

"A slight feel of dolce vita. But my version of that," was how Trotter described her approach in her studio, packed yet tidy – a signifier of her work ethic, and a meticulous approach to design.

The show unfurled in a minimalist set bifurcated by arches, the guests settling in on colored glass stools after inspecting the woven leather sculptures suspended here and there.

The collection's loose narrative was the story of Bottega Veneta itself, told via some of the prominent female protagonists.

First up was Lauren Hutton, who famously carried one of its leather clutches in "American Gigolo," the 1980 film that also famously put Giorgio Armani on the map by dressing Richard Gere. ►

Trotter paid homage by reworking the Lauren bag, and by revisiting a moment in fashion history when Italian and American sportswear enjoyed a strong complicity.

She also invited Hutton to attend the show, the veteran actress gamely opening her clutch to show its contents, including a powder compact from her short-lived namesake cosmetics line, which she launched in 2002 at the age of 58.

Why did she stop? "I hated business," she said, waving her hands.

Trotter also acknowledged Laura Braggion, described in press notes as Bottega Veneta's first female creative lead from the 1980s to the early 2000s.

While founded in Vincenza by Michele Taddei and Renzo Zengiaro in 1966, by the late '70s Taddei handed over the company to his ex-wife Braggion, who traveled regularly to New York, famously becoming an assistant of Andy Warhol.

"Letting go, and freedom," is how Trotter sums up this period, her colorful fiberglass designs the kind of thing you could imagine strolling into Studio 54.

But mostly, the designer elaborated on the "classicism of Milanese style," riffing on white shirts, handsome coats and full-legged trousers.

It must be said that many of Trotter's designs seemed heavy, especially for spring, which was also often the case when Blazy was leading the house.

But this is no doubt the product of her zeal for the intense craftsmanship capabilities at her fingertips.

Trotter rose to prominence helming Carven and Lacoste in Paris in recent years, but gained her reputation in the industry as creative director of Joseph from 2009 to 2018. A fashion design graduate from Newcastle University, she also worked at contemporary British label Whistles before moving Stateside to design for Calvin Klein, and later Gap and Tommy Hilfiger.

During the preview, she spoke of her affinity for the "soft functionality" that Bottega pioneered in handbags, and admiration for past designs like the Lauren, which she enlarged and stretched.

She's also celebrating one from the Tomas Maier era, the Cabat, which she re-proportioned and added a zippered pouch, and introduced a clutch version with a zipper.

Now that she's proven her mastery with Intrecciato, it would be great to see Trotter elaborate more on soft functionality in the ready-to-wear, and indulge herself more with playful designs, like her injection-molded clogs and those fiberglass coats, as much fun as a mirror ball. – *Miles Socha*











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