



'A woman designer's perspective really hits different': First reactions to Louise Trotter's Bottega Veneta

Carine Roitfeld, Edward Buchanan and more weigh in on Trotter's debut for the Italian house.

By Luke Leitch



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"I see fashion less as an art than as something to bring joy," Louise Trotter told *Vogue* earlier this year. And while her debut collection for Bottega Veneta seems to have brought joy to its audience, for the designer, the quest for it began from within.

"I wanted to talk about Bottega Veneta as a living person and the journey that the house had been through," said the designer following Saturday's runway show. "There is also a little accent of my own journey, coming into Milan and of how I arrived in this city that I find quite grey and austere and brutal from an architectural visual viewpoint, and slowly, slowly I started to discover the beauty inside — and that was something that I really wanted to express with this show. I spent time in the region of Veneto in Venice, I spent time with our artisans. I spent time looking through the archive and the early period, sort of '66 to '67 is a good starting point for me. I discovered this soft functionality in bags, a liberation of women at the time... There was this bold confidence — to wear a bag without a logo you have to be confident."

Alongside Rachel Scott of Proenza Schouler, Trotter is one of only two women in this season's record-breaking reshuffle of design leads across 15 fashion houses. She was headhunted by Kering to succeed Matthieu Blazy following his recruitment to take the big gig at Chanel. Trotter won the Bottega job thanks to a runway record that includes several standout shows for Joseph and Carven. She also served a valiant tour of duty at Lacoste despite the brand's constricting commitment to its tennis-cum-crocodile codes.

A proud Mackem (a native of Sunderland, England), she studied fashion at Northumbria University before landing a job at UK high street stalwart Whistles. She moved to New York to work for Calvin Klein, Gap and then Tommy Hilfger, all in senior womenswear design roles before returning to the UK in 2007 to take on the creative directorship of Jigsaw, another premium high street retailer of its time. Two years later, she stepped across to Joseph, where she remained for nine years before moving to Paris





in 2018 to deliver her spin on the Lacoste job. She switched to Carven in early 2023, where she stayed for nearly two years before Bottega came calling.

Although taking up the role has obliged Trotter to commute to Milan from Paris, where she continues to live, the appeal of a house so firmly positioned at the apex of craft proved impossible to resist.

Founded in 1966 by Renzo Zengiaro and Michele Taddei, the leather goods house has always leaned into discretion, a value best epitomised by its famous slogan: “When your own initials are enough.” It was mid-1996 that the company first moved into ready-to-wear, hiring Edward Buchanan in the role of design director. By the time Gucci Group (now Kering) added Bottega Veneta to its stable for \$156 million during its Tom Ford and Domenico De Sole buying spree at the turn of the century, Giles Deacon had also consulted for the house.

Following the Gucci Group’s acquisition, German designer Tomas Maier served as creative director from 2001 until 2018, during which time he applied the house’s philosophy of craft to ready-to-wear in a spectacularly beautiful fashion. Maier’s tenure was so long, however, that fashion consensus somewhat took him for granted, and in 2018, he was succeeded by Daniel Lee.

The young Englishman restored sizzle to the house by imposing the ‘Bottega green’ colour code, and by designing viral accessories and campaigns before his sudden exit in 2021. Into the breach stepped Blazy, whose wonderful work at the house justly earned him the biggest job in fashion: Chanel.

Blazy’s were always going to be huge shoes to fill. Here is what other industry insiders have to say about Trotter’s first show as his successor.

Carine Roitfeld, founder of *CR Fashion Book*

When the show started, what you felt immediately was the impression of luxury — the good way of luxury. What could be an Italian Hermès in a way. There was a lot, *a lot* of leather. The first outfit was, I would not say commercial, but for the clients: wearable, simple, beautiful. But quite clientele. Then, slowly and steadily, it became more and more creative. It was really brilliant, and I think she succeeded very much.

It is a bit more feminine. There were amazing colours. Each look has a bag. What is a good thing I think is that the girls and the boys both looked very luxury and good in their outfits: the boy was not like a handbag, you know what I mean? And what was fun, and you always need something strange at Bottega, were the shoes: there were a lot of clogs, mostly in white, and this gave the bad taste but made it more interesting. It was a very good show.

Edward Buchanan, former design director of Bottega Veneta (1996 to 2000)

This collection was so sensual and so full of curious textures. My head was spinning back and forth trying to catch all of the intricate details flying past. A woman designer’s perspective really hits different. There was a nice, somehow-continuation of Bottega Veneta’s past, but Louise’s stamp was also omnipresent and tangible.

Nicole Chapoteau, fashion director at *Vanity Fair*

Louise feels like the perfect fit to develop from what Matthieu built. I saw chic tailoring, playful textures and colours with joyful movement. Louise has bridged her sense of colour and tailored silhouettes with the artistic world that the Bottega client lives in.

Bosse Myhr, director of womenswear and menswear at Selfridges

Louise Trotter’s debut at Bottega Veneta was a confident and elegant collection overall. The ready-to-wear was especially strong, balancing chic sophistication with standout fashion pieces that felt soft yet powerful, and highly desirable. Some of the pieces carried beautiful movement, adding a sense of





fluidity. Craftsmanship came through in every detail, underscored by a refined feminine sensibility. The bags were another highlight. Altogether, a really strong beginning that sets the tone for an exciting new chapter at the house.

Laura Ingham, deputy director of *Vogue* global fashion network

It felt like the strongest debut of Milan Fashion Week. Louise presented her new vision of Bottega and it was a really great fresh start. We were expecting to see the head-to-toe intrecciato, which was beautiful. Then, there were the liquid silver clogs, which felt very modern. The really precise tailoring, the styling touches, and then the unreal fabrications of the tinsel skirts and tops. The pieces came to life on the runway. They became an organic kind of matter, like a jellyfish. It was all so chic. I can't wait to buy into it.

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