



THINGS SINGAPORE

“I’M BOTH HONOURED and excited to continue the legacy that has been created at Bottega Veneta over the last five decades. Maintaining the ingrained codes of the house, craftsmanship, quality and sophistication, I look forward to evolving what has gone before, while contributing a new perspective and modernity,” said British designer Daniel Lee in one of his earliest statements to Women’s Wear Daily.

Lee’s enlistment as creative director followed the departure of German-born designer Tomas Maier who had previously been head of the house for 17 years. The 32-year-old Lee had his work cut for him — when he assumed the helm at Bottega Veneta, the maison was falling behind in fashion’s relentlessly

changing consumer base and its desired brand of luxury.

The expectations for Lee were set. “He will bring the Bottega Veneta a new distinct creative language that will continue building the house’s success based on the ambitious foundations already developed over recent years,” established the brand’s chief executive officer Claus Dietrich Lahrs in a statement announcing Lee’s appointment released last year.

Lee’s appointment was momentous, beyond the heritage leather house, to the industry at large. Having cut his teeth during Phoebe Philo’s tenure at Celine (what has been befittingly coined Old Celine since the designer’s exit), Lee was the glimmer of hope the rest of the industry held onto to bring back Philo’s

The final walk at Bottega Veneta’s Fall/Winter ‘19 show reinstated Daniel Lee’s vision for womenswear — feminine with a show of skin yet empowered by structure and utilitarianism.

At Bottega Veneta, designer Daniel Lee drives the maison’s heritage-focused design vocabulary forward with contemporary propositions for women of the now.

By Sng Ler Jun

A New Era Defined

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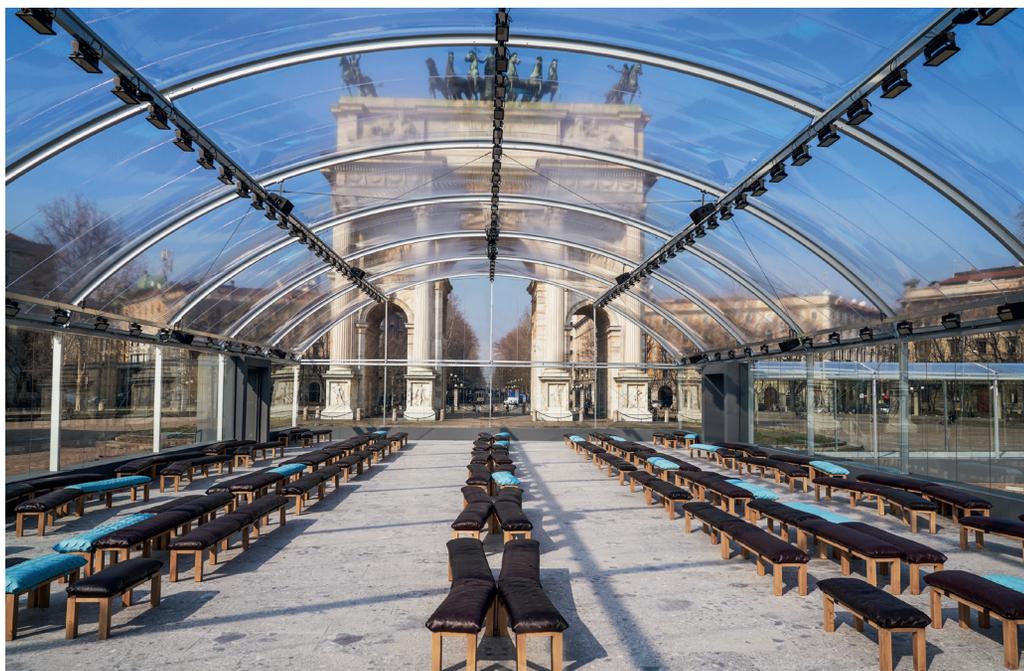
proclivity for creating a quiet, yet powerful wardrobe for women.

The stage was set for Lee's runway inauguration at Milan Fashion Week's Fall/Winter '19 presentations. The showcase set within a clear glass tent underneath the Arco della Pace (or "Arch of Peace") awash with natural light signalled a distinct move away from the dimly lit runways of the house's previous seasons.

At first encounter, many proclaimed the ghosts of Lee's past aesthetic were rendered into Bottega Veneta's DNA, with some christening it the second coming of Celine. But on closer inspection, his vision at Bottega Veneta spoke otherwise. Lee had proven to agitate the time worn codes of the house, distinguishing the dawn of a new era through his design tropes.

The collection's ready-to-wear pieces imbued with a sharp sense of modernity, moved the house along with the times. On display was a womenswear line-up that saw the juxtaposition of delicate femininity against unabashed masculinity. A case in point: a structured coat layered over a chest-baring key-hole blouse. Lee cut his clothes to empower the modern day woman. She was a woman who dared to bare and tease, revealing just enough skin to embrace her innate sensuality all while dressed for the "combat" in her daily life. If clothes maketh the man, Lee's army of women make a statement on the ongoing conversations about feminine equality above all else.

Delving into his approach of the house's timeworn codes of leather-making, Lee looked at history through a fresh-eyed perspective. The iconic leather intrecciato weaving techniques of the house were rendered onto structured blazers, skirts and coloured knee-length coats. The latter, reinterpreted with squarish quilting resembled chainmail armour, evoked a sense of protective allure — a common thread that grounded much of the collection.



Clockwise from top: The show's venue was set within a clear glass tent, in view: the Arco della Pace (or "Arch of Peace"); dresses spliced with cut outs are layered over contrasting hues, painting a visual narrative of the duality observed throughout the collection; the collection's knitwear was cut precariously low, teasing the décolletage; jackets were cut to rigid structure, a sense of vulnerability evoked in the prominent cut-outs.

The brand's line-up of notable carryalls was also further expanded — building on the successes of Lee's Pre-Fall accessories. He consciously steered clear of conspicuous logo-branding, instead tapping on the distinct intrecciato weaving technique to showcase the house's identity.

Elsewhere in the collection, Lee took to knitwear with a heavy hand. He presented knitted separates, amongst which were sweater dresses and scoop-neck sweaters that cut dangerously low to reveal a woman's clavicle. Much of the collection was filled by statement pieces that bordered on the abstract, and bore evidence that Lee was a man with vision: silhouettes were cut boxier with sleeves extending longer; structured jackets were fit with sloping shoulder lines, with some arriving without a lapel to elongate the neck.

Lee's debut showcase went beyond highlighting his train of thought — the initial contemplation of heritage, later turned into new fangled modus operandi. As the fashion set remains hawk-eyed for Lee's next move in the checkerboard, his subsequent collections will surely be ones to watch. ▣

