



DOUBLE ELEVEN FOUNDER & DESIGNER NATHAN BOGLE

By JANET MERCEL Photographed by NICHOLAS ROUTZEN

For the last two decades, Nathan Bogle has been a fashion industry trailblazer, founding major labels like Rag & Bone and Double Eleven, and breaking new ground in sustainable production. Now, he's returned to the land and tells us where he feels most comfortable: with his hands in the dirt.



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WHILE GETTING TO KNOW Nathan Bogle, clothing designer, former model, permaculture enthusiast, I realized I was waiting for the other shoe to drop. It’s easy enough to read in the press about his life as an industry veteran — in the early aughts, as one half of fashion’s golden boy pair that founded the brand Rag & Bone; and about his romance with a Big Time Movie Star, in which he somehow, for the most part, managed to avoid being tabloid fodder. The rabid following in fashion journalism of his every independent venture since going solo in 2006 — denim, men’s luxury sportswear, a different kind of denim, with an increasingly prevalent role as a forerunner of sustainable practices.

He is so pleasant and easygoing in such a genuine way I found myself wondering how someone this good-looking could be so nice. It’s not my habit to do take-down profiles on people; I was just afraid I was missing something. So I did what any person naturally suspicious of human nature would do—I asked around. People that met Bogle twenty years ago when he walked the runway for Dolce & Gabbana and Gucci told me, “Nathan was so kind to me and humble. I was surprised because you’re used to people being assholes in the industry,” and, “He is what he appears to be.” “I remember him as a model first, a designer second,” an

industry veteran told me. “I used to see him walking DKNY; it was a very distinctive walk. Purposeful, confident.” When I missed the accompanying photoshoot for this story, I asked the team about the day and heard things like “genuine connection.” And so, I embraced the fact that some people are undoubtedly authentic and that this is a nice story about a nice man.

Bogle moved to Woodstock full time a few months ago after years of flirting with upstate to a converted 1920’s artist’s studio owned by his dear friend. It’s a sun-dappled, sanctuary space, surrounded by woods, meadows, mountain creeks, and wildlife while still maintaining the easy proximity to the village so characteristic of Woodstock properties. “It’s close to town and has everything I need,” he says, the exemplification of a man embarking on his own personal Walden. “I moved up here solo, but I keep bumping into people at farmer’s markets or around town that I haven’t seen for years.”

It’s from his cottage that he remotely runs the daily operations of Double Eleven, his menswear line since 2015. The concept comes from WWII-era rationing programs in Britain: CC41, short for ‘Controlled Commodity 1941,’ limited fabric, detailing, and labor and ensured the highest quality and construction to avoid waste. The post-war effort,



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Double Eleven, maintained the level of craftsmanship. Bogle's logo is a clever riff on the original motif, famously resembling a little dinner plate with two utensils on either side or two “elevens.” To him, the combined effort of government mandate and civilian compromise to create more sustainable, longer-lasting garments is a beautiful thing. “There are obvious parallels for today. While we don't have a war conflict on our doorsteps, we certainly have an environmental one.”

His utilitarian menswear staples are, by nature, limited edition, as they're all made from upcycled materials. “Why not use that which is already there? It's former waste as opportunity. Warehouses full to the rafters of premium-quality Japanese, Italian and American twills and denim, disposed of by big mills or brands.” Repurposing vintage military materials is his calling card and a recognizable one. “It definitely makes it more challenging to build collections around surplus and deadstock fabrics,” he says. “You have to get creative. This collection is expensive because of how things were sourced, made, cut, and sewn. It's all done one at a time, all by hand. I want them to be mass, which comes with its own set of issues.”

Despite living almost entirely in cities as an adult, with a family lineage in the fashion business for more than a hundred years (his great grandfather worked in textile mills in Northern England in the early 20th century, down to his mother, who produced fashion shows and worked for Harvey Nichols and Charles Jourdan in the 1970s), it is here he feels most at home, in no small part because of how and where he was raised—eating vegetables and fruit from his parents' home, lots of gardening, with enough exposure to the city to create a bit of inner conflict on where one should land. “Living in harmony and respecting Nature was seeded in me at a young age, but without my knowing. She leaves an imprint on your soul that never goes away.”

It's not unlike his life growing up in the countryside outside Reading, England. “Big fields bordered our home, my sister and I loved it,” he remembers. “I spent a lot of time outside, building camps and helping my step dad in the garden. It's a really beautiful part of England; the county is Berkshire.” An adulthood later, while he's happily settled not far from an entirely different Berkshires, I tell him his childhood sounds a lot like...mine. In an idiosyncrasy of my parents I never thought to question growing up, the majority of their friend unit was English ex-pats. Young and old, they had moved upstate to do things like breed posh dogs and restore vintage race cars for whatever members of the rural community required these services in the 1980s and '90s, rearing offspring born or raised in the U.S. who often naturally held onto their parents' British accents without it being weird.

Listening to Bogle talk about acclimatizing to life in Ulster County, I realize that for all the grumbling, mild or otherwise, I've heard in my life about outsiders, the one demographic that seems largely welcome and uncriticized is people from the U.K. Why is that, I ask him. Why are you so physically and emotionally natural to this space? He thinks for a moment. “I think it's a respect thing, the manners, and civility,” he says. “Not that Americans are disrespectful, but the English tend to be

more polite and reserved in their mannerisms, and to non-city folk with a level of protection about their community, it's more acceptable.” Maybe also, I suggest, more naturally easygoing than some of the formerly metropolitan-based communities.

“Respect is the key bit,” he agrees. “It's important to be receptive, to roll with the rhythm, and understand this isn't supposed to be New York or L.A. It's wonderful and deeply inspiring to be around a community rich with innovators, creatives, craftsmen, and powerful women. Being in the Catskills has awoken a part of me that was dormant for many years, opening up the channels to collaboration and community living. It's echoed in how we treat our local environment, all the plants, woods, forests, rivers, and animals that we live with.”

Circularity is not a new concept for Bogle, personally or professionally. He studied Permaculture in Australia, and lived on a practicing farm in Spain. While his immediate concern is to introduce a wildflower meadow and vegetable garden to his new home, it is also to continue implementing and expanding the philosophy into his business, that of producing clothes. “The world doesn't need another clothing brand, but it does need alternatives, unless we all want to go back to Adam and Eve wardrobes.”

So how does someone who began their career in denim, a product generally made from one of the world's thirstiest crops, in one of the industry's most hyper polluting methods, become the founder of brands known as an imprimatur of responsibility? “I started thinking about recycling waste back in 2005 when I was getting Rag & Bone going. I thought maybe there's a way of doing something with it rather than just disposing of it. The intent was certainly there.” The penny dropped in 2014 while working on a subsequent brand when a terrifying moment of waste awareness came over him while in a factory observing manufacturing. “I couldn't look at clothes or even think about making them until I figured out how to radically reduce the impact on the environment. There was no turning back at that point.”

At home in Woodstock, Bogle is itching to get his fingers back in the dirt. While Permaculture sounds like a complicated buzzword, it is intuitive and straightforward; a worldview and system in which flora and fauna, crops, and agriculture exist within a closed-loop, circular-sustaining ecosystem. “It's never left my heart,” he says, “and now more than ever, it seems to be the philosophy to adopt and to incorporate into my life up here.”

He has reminded me once again of my home, my parents' land, the soul of an earth I am never without, no matter where in the world I am at the moment. On a trip to Britain a few years ago, I drove past Reading on my way out of London to see friends in Oxford. At one gas station in the countryside, I was strongly reminded of my favorite roadside stop on the Taconic Parkway, the one with the little market that always registers in my brain as the moment I've finally made it out of the city to upstate. At the time, it didn't make sense that a highway rest stop in Southern England would give me intense déjà vu for the Hudson Valley, but now that I think about it, it doesn't seem so crazy after all.