

Zim teen the new face of Louis Vuitton

By [Ray Maota](#)

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Zimbabwean-born Nyasha Matonhodze, 16, is turning heads on high streets across the world after being chosen as one of the faces of Louis Vuitton's 2011 Autumn/Winter campaign.



Nyasha Matonhodze, featured here, in the Louis Vuitton 2011 Fall/Winter Campaign, shot by world renowned fashion photographer, Steven Meisel. (Image: [SA-People.com](#))

Matonhodze, who was one of the finalists in the UK Elite Model Look in 2009, had been toying with the idea of modelling since she was 12, but was eventually convinced after watching the TV show America's Next Top Model.

"Since I was 12 I have been tall and thin, so I would always get the whole 'you should be a model', but I never really developed a serious interest about it until the TV show America's Next Top Model," said the 5ft11in (180cm) teen.

"Seriously, that's when it all changed for me. Everything I wanted was pretty much based on that show."

The Zimbabwean beauty follows in the footsteps of pop queen Madonna and movie star Scarlett Johansson, who have both previously represented the French fashion label.

The 2011 campaign visuals were shot by world-renowned fashion photographer Steven Meisel at a disused aerodrome in Brooklyn, New York, inside a vintage Rolls Royce.

"It didn't actually hit me until I was sitting in a Rolls Royce with Mr Meisel. He is a wonder to work with - he and Marc Jacobs made me feel beautiful," said Matonhodze.

Marc Jacobs is Louis Vuitton's creative director.

"My eyes filled up with tears and I thought 'Lord you are lucky'," Matonhodze added.

Zimbabwean roots

Matonhodze was born and raised in Zimbabwe by her grandmother until she was eight years old.

"I was raised in a very cultural, traditional household. It's very different to the British culture where my mom lived. I moved to England when I was eight, so I do still have memories of Zimbabwe - like falling asleep in the sand, bathing outside, the warmth of the sun and just the way of living," she said.

Matonhodze's last visit to Zimbabwe was in 2009.

"Moving to England, I saw their perspective on Africa and what they think it's like, and it's completely the opposite. I went back to Zimbabwe three years ago and it's so lovely; they're happy with who they are and their traditions. I love going back home," said Matonhodze.

She credits her mother as her inspiration, who at the age of 18 went to live and work in London.

"She was a single mother at 18 who moved to London without knowing anyone. She's always worked hard and seeing her overcome so much in life has been an inspiration for me."

Matonhodze also credits her father for instilling a Christian way of life in her.

Catwalk and magazine appearances

Matonhodze has walked for various fashion houses and appeared in several glossy magazines since her recruitment into Elite Model Agency in 2009.

She was the feature in *Wonderland* magazine in November 2010 and recently appeared on the covers of *LOVE*, *V*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *Teen Vogue* magazines.

In 2010 she walked for Louis Gray, Loewe, Jonathan Saunders, Ungaro and Louis Vuitton, and so far in 2011 she has walked for Halston, Marc by Marc Jacobs, Michael Kors, Ungaro, Loewe and Louis Vuitton.

Not so much of a 'discovery'

Matonhodze is quick to point out that she wasn't "discovered" at a shopping centre as gossipmongers say. She says her parents went with her to an agency when she was 14 to enquire about modelling opportunities.

"My discovery wasn't so much of a discovery. At 14 my mum and my stepdad went into Elite Models to see if I could actually model."

In a recent interview in *New York* magazine Matonhodze said: "If you're not strong-minded, modelling can knock your confidence quite harshly. Every day you're judged on your looks, and more so today you're judged on your personality."