



12 days of beauty gifts

Whether you're shopping for a skincare beginner or a makeup artist in the making, one thing's for sure: a beauty gift never disappoints. From shine-enhancing hair care to skin-quenching hand creams and the coziest winter candles, these thoughtful finds are sure to bring a smile to their face. Here, 12 of the best beauty gifts to spoil your loved ones with.

Tender loving comfort

After a year that saw us coming apart at the seams, Olivia Stren launches a cozy offensive



My bed became HQ, a tiny country of comfort—and denial—in a global storm.

Last week, I saw a good friend I hadn't seen in more than a year, not since Everything Changed. I had missed her and thought of her often, but while we exchanged the occasional text flurry I had failed to find the energy to arrange a proper rendezvous—what with work, parenting and the rumblings of a total nervous collapse keeping me pretty busy. When we finally met up for coffee, she told me a few significant things had changed for her and her family since March 2020: They'd bought a boat and taken up a greater interest in religion. I loved that while some people got into sourdough starter or watercolours, she went for luffing mainsails and Judaism. I scanned my own memory of the past 20 months, trying to remember what new pastimes I had cultivated while locked down with a young child in the nine circles of Hell (I mean, Zoom kindergarten). Sure, I had dabbled briefly in duck husbandry (we fostered two tiny ducklings early in the pandemic), but mainly I dabbled in depression and took up a greater interest in lying in bed. A lyric from Paul Simon's "Slip Slidin' Away" insisted on floating through my mind: "A bad day's when I lie in bed and think of things that might have been."

I've never been particularly adept at channeling my personal despair into productivity; rather, I tend to launch a cozy offensive to a crisis. As national borders closed and the borders of our lives kept shrinking, I used whatever little free time I had to retire to my room, lie under a blanket and stare at my phone, usually at photos of other people's perfectly styled bedrooms. Thus layering escapism onto coziness, like heaping fluffy shams and Euros over cloud-soft duvets, bed became HQ, a tiny country of comfort—and denial—in a global storm. In the Before Times, I preferred to take my avoidance in the form of air travel, dreaming of sun-drenched beaches and unaffordable hotels. But COVID compelled me to set my sights on more intimate landscapes: bedrooms bathed in buttery morning light and cotton-voile coverlets, mapped with reversible muslin quilts in life-affirming shades of watermelon and peony from Milanese designer Lisa Corti, or delicately screen-printed bedcovers made from vintage cotton saris by designer Jeannette Farrier. I curled up in their beauty, insulating myself from reality.

As the state of the world sent us all to our rooms, to our lonesome silos of loss and anxiety, I thought of how my silo might in fact benefit from some new block-printed bed linens. The more I felt deprived of rest, the more I gazed, covetously, jealously, at hand-stitched quilts and jubilantly colourful Kanthas that seemed to tease me with the ultimate fantasy of real peace and quiet. And as almost everything became virtual, not tactile, the fantasy of all things soft and hand-worked grew ever more enticing. It reminded me of the time I went on the Paleo diet for a story about 10 years ago—after several low-carb weeks, I found myself flipping lustfully through Italian cookbooks, gently touching photos of linguine alle vongole.

If long-haul COVID has left life feeling flattened and muted, this gluttony of colour and texture has an almost defibrillating effect, reupholstering my interior world. And I don't think I'm alone in my new quiltly pleasures. Fashion has lately been, well, blanketed in all things quilted and patchwork. While the look is an obvious commitment to upcycling and sustainability, it's also a literal looming together of the disparate and discarded, a repairing of things that seem broken. In Carolyn Murphy's fall capsule

collection for Mother Denim, distressed jeans are adorned with patchworks of vintage bandanas and quilts sourced from rag houses. And given our dystopic reality, where you need to deal with contact-tracing to buy a flat white, patchwork evokes the fantasy of simpler times. A pioneer-chic quilted jacket from Ulla Johnson, made from recycled materials, has a certain *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman* vibe—if Jane Seymour lived in Fort Greene, made her own kefir and hosted a podcast. Meanwhile, beloved L.A. brand Doen is divining patchwork frocks of prairie-girl dreams, boldly coloured pieces designed for frolicking in meadows and the Santa Monica farmers market. The Great features models in baby-wale corduroy patchwork outfits with names like The Bonnet Dress, standing in mottled afternoon sunshine by unfenced wilderness and bottle-green ponds. This blanket-adjacent bounty is all-consoling nostalgia, a kind of protective cotton batting against the assaults of the news ticker. But it also reflects an optimism, a belief that what's torn or injured can be mended and given a fresh shot at life.

As much as quilts have been in vogue, so has, alas, an awareness and discussion of collective grief and trauma. To varying extents, most of us have spent the past year and a half quietly coming apart at the seams in a sort of universal psychic shattering. Patchwork literalizes our efforts, and need, to put the pieces back together and reimagine the remnants into something new—and, even, maybe, beautiful. There is nothing, it turns out, as unsettling as being confronted with life's utter randomness. Perhaps a quilt represents our longing for control and order on a chaotic storyline.

I know something about grief and trauma, about loss—enough to know that it can feel like a rupture, a severing, delineating your life according to the Before and the After. All lives, of course, are shaped according to Befores and Afters, both good and bad: meet-cutes, breakups, marriages, children, divorces, diagnoses, deaths. Or global pandemics that hit everyone at the same time. Part of survival is about integrating the Before with the After, weaving it all together into a new narrative using whatever comforting tools we have at our disposal.

Therapists often talk about grief work in terms of sewing a quilt: Consolation comes from integration, from collecting all the broken bits and stitching together the Before and After of it all. The etymological root of the word "consolation" is to "combine into one body" or "make whole." (There's a reason that quilting itself is considered a form of therapy.) The patchwork quilt is "post-traumatic growth" set to thread.

I've often resisted, and even resented, the (now fashionable) idea of "post-traumatic growth," the concept—the pressure!—that awful experiences bring meaning or wisdom or enlightenment. This from-hardship-comes-strength algorithm seems facile and suspiciously tidy. I just don't think good always comes from bad (I know, it's no wonder I need to soothe myself with quilts!). But one thing I do find comfort in is that consolation can come from all kinds of sources. One person's toss cushion is another person's Talmud. Whatever floats your boat.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES



GET GREEN

With soothing oat as the primary ingredient, this volumizing and thickening hair duo also includes refreshing ingredients like cucumber, rosemary and peppermint. Think of it like a green smoothie for hair.

AVEENO FRESH GREENS BLEND SHAMPOO & CONDITIONER, \$12.99 EACH, SHOPPERSDRUGMART.CA



SKIN SAVER

With ingredients like skin-barrier-repairing Bioceramides and probiotic-rich Life Plankton™, this restorative formula from Biotherm calms irritation, strengthens skin and locks in moisture as we head into frosty temperatures.

BIOOTHERM CERA REPAIR BARRIER CREAM, \$59, BIOOTHERM.CA



GENTLE WASH

Soap up sans the waste with this water-activated and plant-based waterless body wash concentrate from Everist. Pair the bergamot, orange and peppermint-scented paste with the compostable konjac sponge for a sumptuous lather and ultra-hydrated skin.

EVERIST WATERLESS BODY WASH CONCENTRATE & KONJAC SPONGE, \$28 AND \$14, HELLOEVERIST.COM



PEARLY WHITES

Available in two limited-edition shades—cobalt blue and magenta—this sleek toothbrush offers six cleaning modes, a built-in timer, super-soft bristles and replaceable heads for a seriously chic dental hygiene upgrade.

BRÜUSH ELECTRIC TOOTHBRUSH, \$99, BRÜUSH.COM



DEEP CLEAN

This nourishing and cleansing shampoo and conditioner set from Neutrogena includes moisture-locking hyaluronic acid to keep the scalp's natural barrier in tip-top shape.

NEUTROGENA HEALTHY SCALP HYDRO BOOST MOISTURIZING SHAMPOO & CONDITIONER, \$16.99 EACH, SHOPPERSDRUGMART.CA



HANDS ON

Thirsty hands are no match for this hydrating 4-piece hand cream set, which includes irresistible scents like lime zest and cypress, coriander and olive tree, sea salt and amalfi lemon and sanguinelli orange and fennel. Slather on and breathe in the magic.

FRUITS & PASSION CUCINA REGENERATING HAND CREAM SET, \$20, AVON.CA



LUSH LOCKS

Coconut and macadamia oils join creamy whipped shea butter in this hydrating hair formula that leaves strands looking softer, shinier and healthier than before.

MAUI MOISTURE HEAL & HYDRATE + SHEA BUTTER SHAMPOO & CONDITIONER, \$13.49 EACH, SHOPPERSDRUGMART.CA



COZY TOWN

Transform any space into a winter wonderland with these seasonally scented soy blend candles that deliver up to 30 hours of burn time. Choose from Maple Latte, Pumpkin Pie and Frosted Balsam, light one up and enjoy the jolly vibes.

LYRD CANDLES, \$35 EACH, AVON.CA



EYE CATCHING

Put all the focus on the eyes with this 2-in-1 shadow and liner set from NYX. Featuring 16 highly pigmented hues and the brand's iconic That's The Point Liner, this festive kit is the go-to for every holiday soirée look.

NYX SHADOW & LINER KIT, \$30, NYXCOSMETICS.CA



FRESH FACED

Renew winter-worn skin with this glow-boosting gift set from Isa Knox. Including a full-size oil serum, plus a travel-sized day and eye cream, each product is infused with skin-firming hibiscus extract, soothing cica and rejuvenating peptides to deliver a lifted and refreshed complexion.

ISA KNOX LXNEW PLATINUM SERUM GIFT SET, \$115, AVON.CA



BERRY MERRY

Why choose one lip colour when you can have three? This berry-toned trio offers 16 hours of wear and mattifies lips without cracking, fading or transferring. Gift a kit, keep a kit.

NYX LIP LINGERIE XXL TRIO KIT, \$30, NYXCOSMETICS.CA



PUCKER UP

From delicate pinks to rich chocolate hues, this celestial-themed lip gloss set has everything you need to create high-shine looks that leave a lasting impression.

NYX BUTTER LIP GLOSS VAULT, \$75, NYXCOSMETICS.CA

THE KIT

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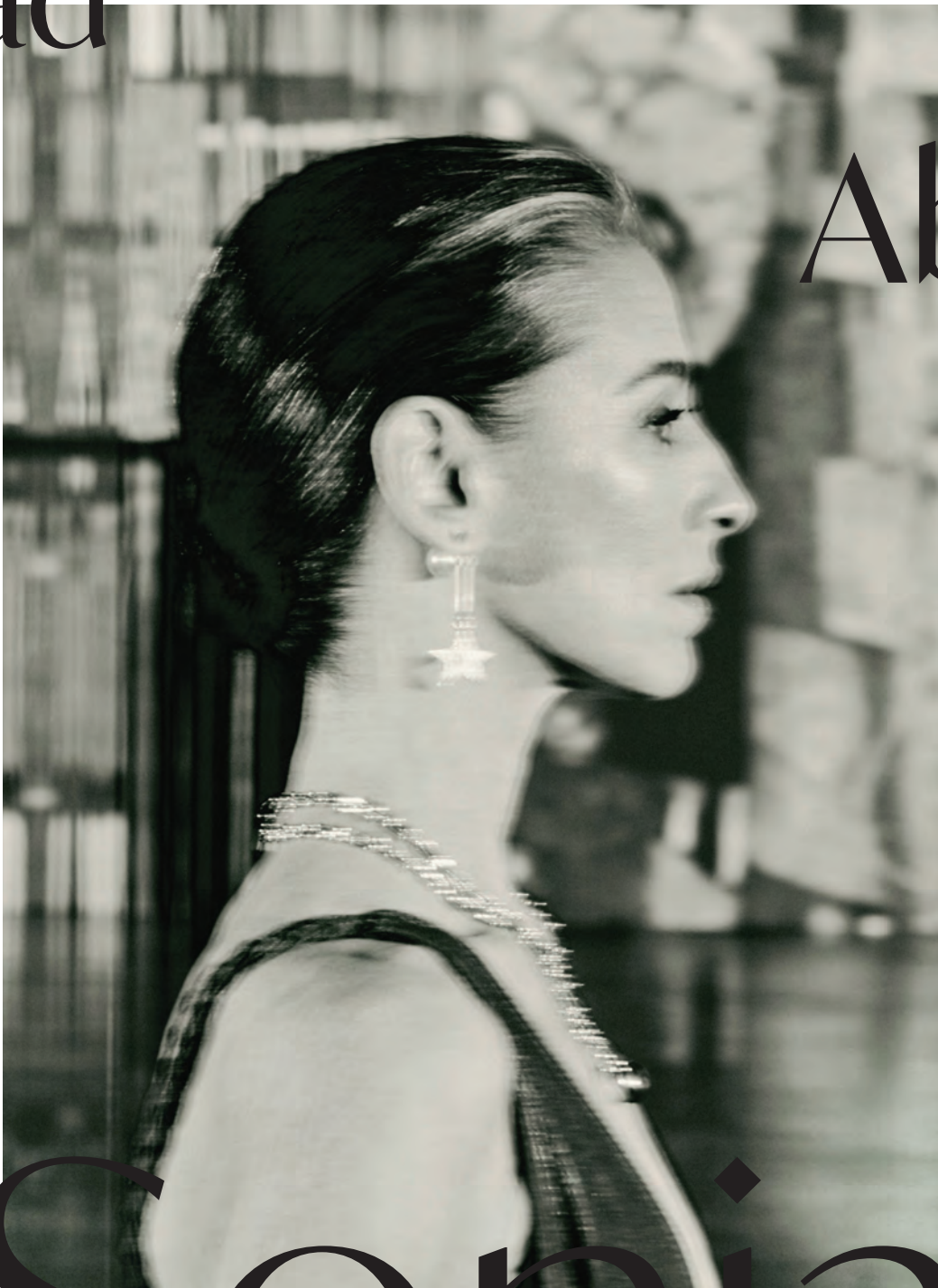
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Mad About Sonia



Photography by
Ted Belton

Principal dancer Sonia Rodriguez danced her heart out for 32 years. As she gets set to retire next spring, what will she miss?

You can tell she's a dancer from the way she rounds a corner or enters a room. It's in the confident tilt of her head, the queenly posture. Still, that grace merely hints at the force of nature that Sonia Rodriguez becomes onstage. Having tirelessly prepared and perfected her technique, she lets go a little and then a little more, bringing her characters to life with ferocity, humility, emotion. She makes mythic figures like Sleeping Beauty and Blanche DuBois deeply human. Rodriguez doesn't just mesmerize audiences—she makes them believe in art.

When Rodriguez retires next March, she will have been a professional ballerina for 32 years, all of them with the National Ballet of Canada. "I'm so happy, so full and so grateful," she says by phone from her home in Toronto, about her decision to hang up her pointe shoes. "I don't want to go out compromising. I want to go feeling on top."

Rodriguez's path to ballet stardom started early. Born in Toronto, she moved with her family to Spain as a child. At 5, she saw *Swan Lake* on TV and fell in love. "The women seemed so otherworldly, like they were floating on stage, moving in space," she recalls. "They were free." Rodriguez's entrée into dance was humble: She took lessons at a local gym that also offered martial arts. A few years later, a ballet teacher with an international reputation came to town, noticed her natural talent and became her first mentor. Dance consumed her life.

Then, as a teenager, Rodriguez won an international competition. The head of the jury was Betty Oliphant—the co-founder (with Celia Franca) of the National Ballet of Canada—who invited Rodriguez to audition for the company. That Valentine's Day in 1990 set the course for the rest of Rodriguez's career. Surrounded by red paper hearts in the auditorium, she took the stage, showed her stuff and received an offer to join the company as a member of the corps. She had just turned 17. In a serendipitous twist, *Swan Lake* was her first ballet as a pro.

Those were exhilarating years. Rodriguez, who lived with her godmother and family in Toronto, came home with headaches from concentrating so hard during practice. When, at 23, she landed the titular role of Sleeping Beauty, she recog-

nized the enormity of the opportunity. "I wanted to prove that I deserved to be there," Rodriguez says of the ballet she calls "Beauty." "There's no hiding in that role—it's ballet at its purest. A few moments define a career. For me, that was one of them."

Originating the title role of James Kudelka's new *Cinderella* was another major moment. "Cinderella has spunk to her; she's not a laidback kind of girl," Rodriguez says with a laugh. "She's feisty. I saw a lot of myself in that." Rodriguez brought a similar understanding to originating the role of Blanche DuBois, a Southern belle on the brink, in John Neumeier's *A Streetcar Named Desire*. "It helps to have some life experience behind you to have a true grasp of that character. She takes the reins of the whole ballet."

When Rodriguez steps out on stage for the final time as a principal dancer, it will be in *Streetcar*. This, to her, is perfect. "With [choreographer Neumeier's] ballets, you tap deeper into discovering dancing through an emotional point. You're not moving from A to B. Every step has an emotional intent. It's beyond steps, beyond technique—it's visceral. You see yourself as really strong and powerful." Rodriguez also wanted her last ballet to be as full-length as possible so that she would have most of the company (whom she calls her "beautiful peers") with her: "I want them to share that moment—and that stage—with me."

She knows how much she'll miss performing—"It's one of those rare spaces where you can be fully present"—but the future looks strewn with stars. The pandemic offered a glimpse at a quieter life, unconsumed by the obsession that has driven her for so long. Rodriguez says she looks forward to small-scale dance collaborations and acting ("if it came my way"). Mentorship is another passion: "Discovering what someone can become is so beautiful."

Now, Rodriguez is focusing on her final months with the company she loves so much. "I've been so fortunate to have the space to develop so much as an artist. I'm always exploring, always discovering." She pauses, thinking. "I can't ask for anything more than what I've been given."

—Laura deCarufel



NARCES DRESS, \$2,995, NARCESOFFICIAL.COM



GRETA CONSTANTINE DRESS, \$1,395, GRETAConstantine.com. VINTAGE EARRINGS AND BRACELET, PRICE UPON REQUEST, @NOAHNOAHNOAH.SHOP

Performing is one of those rare spaces where you can be fully present.



Two artists, two legends: Sonia Rodriguez strikes a pose at the Immersive Klimt exhibition in Toronto, which runs until March 24, 2021. Known for his opulent use of colour and pattern, Klimt—like Rodriguez—was also a master of technique.



FACING PAGE (TOP) AND ABOVE: DIOR DRESS, \$8,400, EARRINGS, \$710, DIOR BOUTIQUES, TIFFANY & CO. NECKLACE, \$22,600, TIFFANY.CA
HAIR AND MAKEUP: LEANDRO AVANCO FOR PIM. STYLING: CHRISTAL WILLIAMS FOR PLUTINO GROUP. FASHION EDITOR: RENEE TSE

THE KIT X ANCESTRY



Get personal

This year, let them explore their family history

What do you get for the person on your list who seems to have everything? Using advanced DNA science coupled with the world's largest online family history resource, an AncestryDNA® kit can help your loved ones trace their heritage, bringing the whole family closer together—even after the decorations come down.

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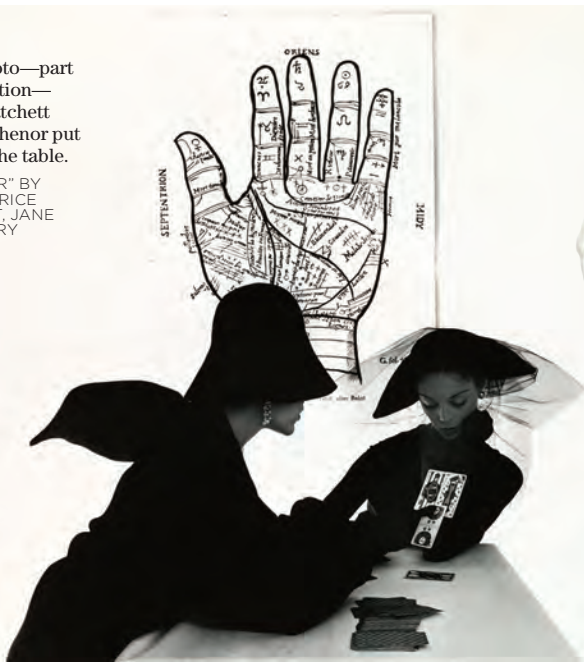
Spark conversation
Whether you're gathering around the holiday table or celebrating virtually this year, share your DNA results with family and friends to spark meaningful conversations about where your families once lived. AncestryDNA provides ethnicity estimates from more than 1,500 regions around the world. The kit helps reaffirm those special family stories of generations past that make our history unique.

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Uncover something new
Now available in Canada, AncestryDNA + Traits takes the discovery one layer deeper, combining cutting-edge science with data to discover up to 36 attributes influenced by your DNA. Ever wondered what eye colours are common in your family? Or if you have the sprinter gene? AncestryDNA + Traits can help you find out.

The Kit created this content; Ancestry funded and approved it.

In this 1949 photo—part of a new exhibition—models Jean Patchett and Bridget Tichenor put their cards on the table. "TAROT READER" BY IRVING PENN. PRICE UPON REQUEST. JANE CORKIN GALLERY



The blue-red shade is perennial perfection, while the creamy, hydrating formula is as modern as it gets.

CHANEL ROUGE ALLURE LIMITED-EDITION LUMINOUS INTENSE LIP COLOUR IN EMBLEMATIQUE. \$58. CHANEL BOUTIQUES



A cult favourite, this silky face oil is fortified with 22 active botanicals and makes taking off your face at night a treat.

F. MILLER SKINCARE FACE OIL, \$118 (30 ML), FMILLERSKINCARE.COM



Look fresh with this Canadian-made eye cream, which can be used to treat all signs of aging on the face and neck.

RADFORD BEAUTY VISIBLY BRIGHT HYDRATING REPAIR CREAM, \$49, RADFORDBEAUTY.COM



Nothing says glamour like four-inch patent pumps adorned in leather scales.

CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN SHOES, \$995, HOLT RENFREW



Possibly the ideal stocking stuffer for our topsy-turvy times?

10 CORSO COMO TAROT CARDS, \$22, FARFETCH.COM

The freshwater pearls are hand-cast and the 14-karat gold plating is hand-polished, but it's the sensual shape of these earrings that makes them so desirable.

BIKO EARRINGS, \$145, ILOVEBIKO.COM

The American photographer Irving Penn (1917–2009) was an expert at capturing women as many dream of being seen. In his photos, glamour is a given, as is elegance, which his subjects exude even while larking about reading tarot cards. There is a sense of intrigue, mischief and a very cold martini being expertly prepared somewhere outside the frame. But beyond their beauty, Penn's images—which are the subject of a new exhibition at Toronto's Jane Corkin Gallery—are a fascinating document of how dramatically our culture's visual codes have loosened up.

Penn became a star in the 1950s, an era of nipped waists, hats and gloves. Now, it's casual comfort that rules, an aesthetic entrenched by the pandemic. While we're all certainly extremely comfortable in our flats and fleeces, this holiday, I'm nostalgic for something more exciting. Unzipping a garment bag to reveal a dress that thrills you, and the smile you give yourself in the mirror on your way out

the door. Clicking down the street in four-inch heels, the swing of an earring against a bare neck. Fashion, like Penn's camera, can help us see ourselves in new ways. It can also be an indelible part of our memories—and I'm ready to make some new ones. You?

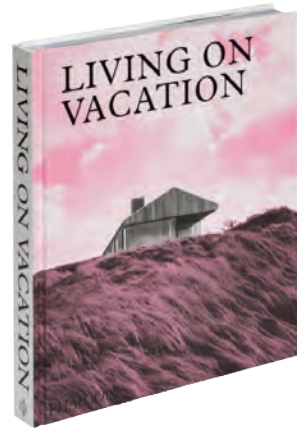
Elegance above all

We've been shaken, now it's time to be stirred. Editor-in-chief Laura deCarufel makes the case for dressing up



Makeup artist Gucci Westman embodies effortless elegance, and I'd like to channel it with her sheer get highlighter.

WESTMAN ATELIER HIGHLIGHT STICK IN NECTAR, \$64, SEPHORA.CA



There are plenty of jaw-dropping getaway spots to ogle in this transportive volume.

LIVING ON VACATION BY PHAIDON, \$65, AMAZON.CA



The angles of this steel tray (from a dreamy Danish shop) call to mind the Fogo Island Inn's architectural precision.

HAY TRAY, \$50, HAY.COM

Rugged beauty

Fogo Island's weathered landscape and rustic luxury inspires executive editor Rani Sheen's wish list

Fogo means "fire" in Portuguese, but I think of quite the opposite when I picture the silver waves, craggy rocks and earthy moss of this 25-kilometre-long island, the largest one off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador. Possibly, it got the name after 16th-century European explorers spied the warming fires of the Indigenous Beothuk people, who lived on nearby islands, and were declared extinct in 1829. Fogo Island is a place that's as harsh as it is beautiful, with a subarctic climate, hair-whipping winds and the feeling of being located in the middle of the Atlantic. This makes the sharp lines and cantilevered structure

of its crown jewel property, the Fogo Island Inn—just a few months reopened to guests after a 16-month COVID closure—all the more astounding. Founded by a local woman, the daughter of a fisherman who made it big in the oil industry, the inn is an initiative of the local charity Shorefast; all profits support the environmental, cultural and economic preservation of its remote home. Staying at the hotel couldn't be more luxurious. I was lucky, so, so lucky, to visit a few years ago, and after the five-leg journey to get there (plane, minuscule plane, car, ferry, car), I was left with lasting, visceral memories: sitting on a perfect wooden chair in a quilt-strewn guest room watching roiling surf crash

directly below the window; bundling up in chunky knits to explore the lunar-like stony shore dusted with algae; sinking into a steaming saltwater-filled wooden hot tub on the rooftop at dusk; sitting down to an elegant dinner as the moon glinted across the bay. And while a return visit tops my wish list, obviously, I'll settle for recreating a bit of its magic at home.

I'd like to traverse wintry landscapes in these sturdy Chelsea boots.

MAGUIRE BOOTS, \$290, MAGUIRESHOES.COM

PHOTOGRAPHY: FOGO ISLAND INN BY BENT REINE SYRNEVAG



The gravity-defying Fogo Island Inn.



A weighted organic cotton blanket for more relaxing naps? Sign me up.

BEARABY BLANKET, \$309, BEARABY.CA



This pine, balsam and cypress-scented candle is skincare wizard Tata Harper's attempt to capture her Vermont farm's wooded beauty.

TATA HARPER X NETTE INTO THE FOREST CANDLE, \$99, TATAHARPER.COM



Glowing emerald-cut mother of pearl studs that seem plucked from a woodland sprite's lair.

LAURIE FLEMING EARRINGS, \$235, LAURIEFLEMINGJEWELRY.COM



It doesn't get more classic than a pair of Italian-made Persols. This retro style recalls the shape of old-school ski goggles.

PERSOL SUNGLASSES, \$331, SUNGLASSHUT.CA

Slim Aarons made his name "photographing attractive people doing attractive things in attractive places," as he put it. His images make you want to pack up your bags and head somewhere wonderful.

"SNOWMASS VILLAGE" BY SLIM AARONS ART PRINT, \$139 (30 CM X 20 CM), PHOTOS.CA

Snow days

Beauty & lifestyle director Katherine Lalancette pays homage to that most pleasurable of winter rituals: the art of après-ski



A glossy shell in the most divine shade of olive, a waist-cinching belt (so chic!) and insulation fill entirely made from recycled plastic bottles.

NOIZE PUFFER, \$265, NOIZE.COM



A comforting blend of cacao, turmeric (said to soothe the body), ashwagandha (purported to calm the mind), cinnamon, ginger and nutmeg. It's hot chocolate with a side of wellness.

BLUME CACAO TURMERIC BLEND, \$20, ITSLBLUME.COM



Snow is highly reflective of UV rays, which means SPF is a must in winter. This sunscreen smells incredible (like childhood summers) and rubs in fast on all skin tones.

VACATION CLASSIC LOTION SPF 50, \$25, VACATIONJINC.COM



Leave the TV off and gather for a little game of trivia by the fire instead. Category is...everyone's favourite topic these days: travel.

RAINCOAST TRAVEL TRIVIA, \$17, HOLTRENFREW.COM

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

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