

# THE KIT

Menopause spotlight: Sex, hot flashes and mourning the end of an era PAGE 5

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## The rebel issue

Roz Griffith-Hall, Toronto stylist and fashion world truth-teller, kicks off our celebration of boundary-pushing women PAGE 6

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RILEY STEWART

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on pigeonholing PAGE 7

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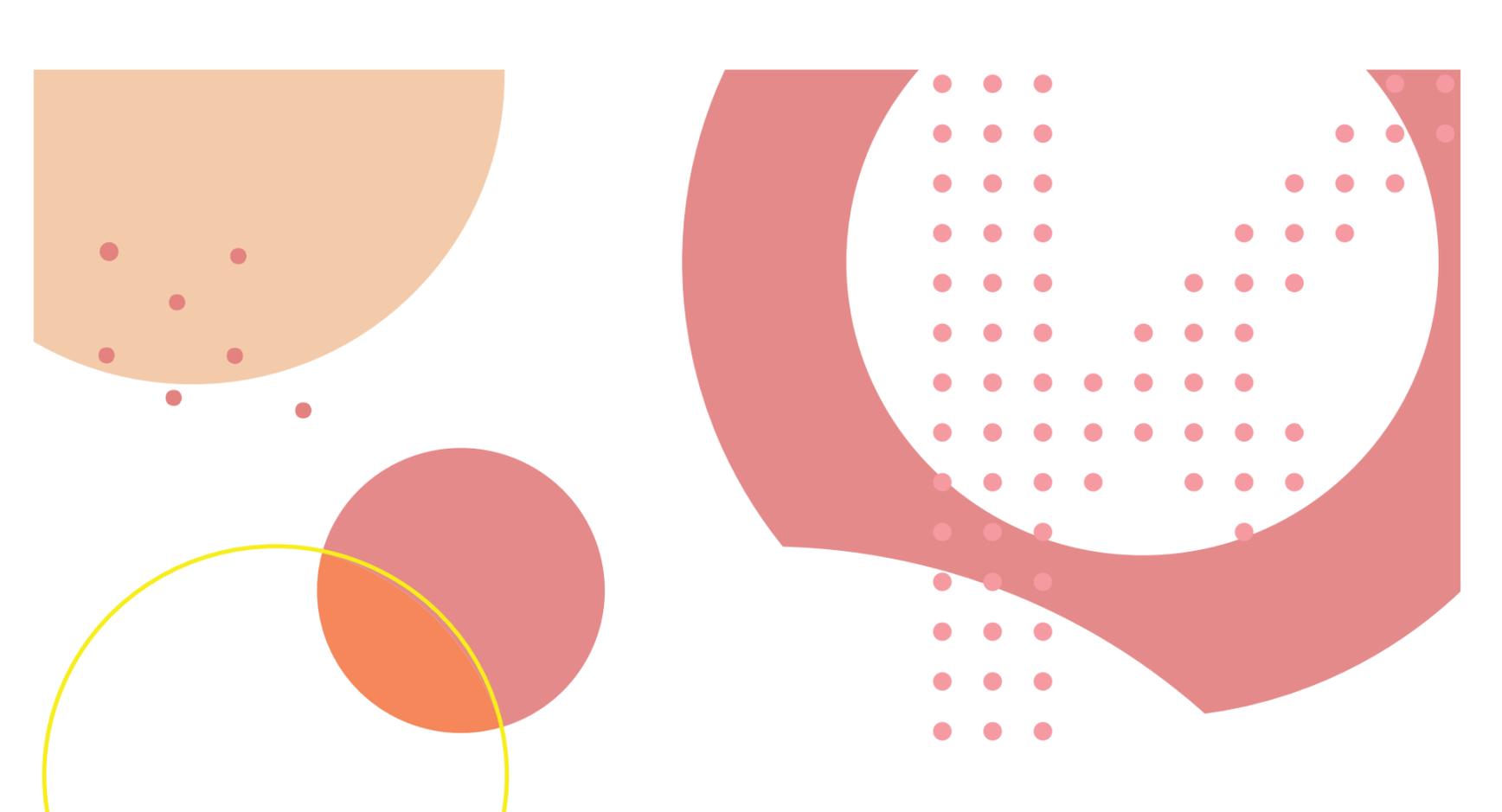
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# Colour my world

What do you get when a perfumer and a colour designer embark on an inspiration-finding road trip?

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARIAH HAMILTON

Issey Miyake is no stranger to working with artists, but the creative process for the house's new limited-edition fragrance series, Shades of Paradise, was truly unique.

The brand's long-time perfume collaborator Aurélien Guichard (he created Pleats Please) and colour designer Mai Hua (tasked with conceptualizing the bottle), travelled to Zamami Island, a tropical jungle at the southern tip of Japan, to conjure up ideas. "This approach was a complete experiment; it's the first time I've ever worked like this," says Guichard during our interview on the bullet train from Tokyo. "We were basically put on this island to create something amazing and surprise Issey Miyake."

Hua and Guichard worked together day and night to interpret the sensations they experienced. "We wanted to create a door of emotions for people via colour, from a world of thinking to a world of feeling," says Hua.

The pair toured the island, discussing ideas like what colours make up a sunrise? What would pink smell like? "People notice the colours of an object before its shape," says Hua, who started out in architecture, but has specialized in colour design for 15 years. "In a fragrance, there is a complexity with a beginning, a middle and an end. But with colour, it's instant: Do I like it or do I not like it?"

Back in Paris, Guichard reminisced about the way the sun felt against his skin at sunrise and found ingredients that recreate that sensation and also match the structure of the original L'Eau d'Issey. While Shade of Sunrise contains floral notes like jasmine and almond accents to represent the warm tones, Shade of Flower features hibiscus petals, freesia and raspberry floral notes.

As for the colour, the fuchsia on the bottle was inspired by flowers found on both land and in sea, says Hua. "I had to choose colours that I know would smell good." —*Renee Tse*

ISSEY MIYAKE L'EAU D'ISSEY PURE SHADE OF FLOWER EAU DE TOILETTE AND L'EAU D'ISSEY PURE SHADE OF SUNRISE EAU DE TOILETTE, \$85 EACH (90 ML), THEBAY.COM



## Gold medal goals

Ice dancing champion Tessa Virtue shares her tips for reaching the top

BY RENÉE TSE

If you're ever in need of inspiration or want to get out of a rut, we highly recommend talking to Tessa Virtue to cure your woes. With five Olympic medals and a Barbie under her belt, the 29-year-old is kind of a pro when it comes pursuing dreams and making them come true. Recently, we got to witness that drive first-hand when we visited Virtue on the set of Nivea's #NoLimits campaign shoot. It features the skater as we've never seen her before, performing in nothing but feathers, knickers and body paint. "It's about feeling really comfortable with who you are in your skin—with your own colours and feathers—which is so liberating," explains Virtue. "I like to do that through movement and dance, but everyone has that within them. It's about being uninhibited and allowing yourself to explore that." Here, the Olympian shares how she cultivates that self-confidence and goes after her goals.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

### 🏆 AIM HIGH

"Since the Olympics, I've talked about the feeling of being limitless, and it's something I think I took for granted because I was raised by a very strong mom and an independent, fierce grandma. I think they just instilled that in me, and I can equate it to almost a physical burning fire within me. I always felt I could do or be anything. But I didn't realize until fairly recently that not everyone has that luxury of growing up with that ideology, and that kind of broke my heart. I think everyone should embrace that in their own way and in their own fields. It's about setting your bar high, having standards for yourself and being committed to work for what you're passionate about."

### 🕒 STAY FOCUSED

"Part of being an athlete is constantly striving for more. We're looking for perfection in a world where that doesn't exist. No matter what we do and what we accomplish or how we perform, we're always looking at areas we can improve upon. I think it's easier to stay grounded when we're constantly critiquing our work and dreaming bigger and bigger. I'm very task-oriented. The idea of constantly pursuing something with purpose helps me to stay focused. You don't really get lost in the other noise when you are committed to following a passion so fully."

### 🧰 EMBRACE THE CHALLENGES

"When you stop competing, it's a tough transition for any athlete because every decision in the day used to revolve around winning. That's the singular driving force, which makes things easier in a way. It simplifies your life. I was floundering a little bit afterwards because the world opened up, and I was no longer in this protected, insulated bubble. I think that's the beauty of this stage in my life and career. It's also a wonderful challenge to embrace and try to apply the skills I learned as an athlete into the business world or to different aspects of my life. The possibilities are endless, which is exciting when you trust yourself and have the confidence to embrace the challenge of it."

### 🧘 STAY TRUE TO YOURSELF

"Throughout a competitive career, you can certainly lose yourself trying to please the judges. But [Scott Moir and I] had our best moments, our best seasons and our best performances when we were doing things in our own way and on our own terms. I faltered, I fell and failed multiple times, but it brought forth this confidence in knowing who I am and what I stand for and what I'm looking for. I trust my voice, and I think that's very powerful, especially as a woman today. To be able to stand behind that and own it. Own who you are, your quirks, your abilities, your flaws. I think there's nothing more beautiful that."

### 📦 DON'T BE AFRAID TO MAKE MISTAKES

"Scott and I practised failing in order to be the best at the Olympics. We would purposefully fall and practise regrouping. We learned our biggest lessons when we faced obstacles. When we showed up at training and were sick or injured, or the ice was bad or whatever it was, we knew that was preparing us in a more complete way than those training sessions where everything came easily. Because nothing of substance comes easily. Commander Chris Hadfield said something that resonated with me about this in his book. He's obviously dealing with things on a totally different scale, but his approach to being an astronaut was, 'How can I die next?' And then he'd work backwards and devise a plan. We thought of our career that way. What's the worst that can possibly happen, and how do we combat that and how do we prepare better than any of our competitors?"

### 🧠 BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

"Olympic Rower Marnie McBean once told us that 'Someone's going to go out there to win the Olympics and someone's going to be the next Canadian to fly into space. And someone's going to create the next big tech thing. So why not you?' What she was saying was, 'Why can't you be the ones to take home the gold medal?' It sort of jolted us into this moment of realizing, 'Sure why not.' It's important to continue to challenge ourselves and push ourselves, so we have something to be proud of. I promise, all that extra work makes it so much more fun."

### 🕒 PLAY THE LONG GAME

"It's that delayed gratification that we just don't have anymore. I used to approach every training session thinking, 'How do I want to feel at the end of this day?' And I would feel anxious and sick driving to the rink because I knew I was in for a gruelling and demanding training day. But then I started seeing it differently. I wanted to know I'd given it my all, so that four years from now, it would pay off. It was about embracing that delayed gratification and playing that long game, which is so much more rewarding."

### 🧘 RECONNECT WITH YOURSELF

"For 20 years, I would wake up every morning and do a head-to-toe scan of 'How do I feel and what's tense? What do I need to work on?' Now, I've started to disconnect from that because it's not an instrument the same way it once was. I'm trying new things like boxing, yoga and cycling and workout classes where you can turn the lights off and blare music. I've never experienced that before. Everything was so functional, so this is really fun for me. As women, we're busy. We're under stress and under pressure, and the expectations are so high for us, so the first thing to go is self-care. A priority for me for the next while is just to really reconnect with myself."



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# Changing the game

Watch out world, Reese Witherspoon is on a mission

BY KATHERINE LALANCETTE

You might be surprised to learn Reese Witherspoon was a bit of a rebel growing up. Behind that angelic face and molasses drawl, America's sweetheart had a thing for questioning the status quo. "I spoke up when I wasn't supposed to, and in high school I'd get in trouble for challenging authority figures," she says. "I just always believed that pushing the edges of things is what moves society forward."

That rebellious streak is still alive and well today. Whether it's her involvement in the #MeToo movement (she's been outspoken about sexual abuse in Hollywood) or the founding of her media company, Hello Sunshine, which is all about celebrating women (think the star-studded female cast of *Big Little Lies*), Witherspoon isn't one to stand back and watch.

Even her beauty contract with Elizabeth Arden breaks the mould. The actress decided to partner with the brand as its "storyteller-in-chief" rather than its face when she learned about its namesake's suffragette past. "We both started businesses, we both advocate for women's rights. She loved beauty and making women feel good, and I really relate to that," she says. "A big mission of mine is for women to feel seen and beautiful just the way they are."

Here, Witherspoon talks lipstick, activism and why Elle Woods is her forever inspiration.



**You've played such powerful women in your career, from Tracy Flick (in *Election*) to Elle Woods (in *Legally Blonde*) to June Carter Cash (in *Walk the Line*). Do you have a favourite?**

"I like all of those girls! I think Elle Woods is an incredible role model for self-confidence and believing in yourself, no matter what the outside world tells you you're capable of. She has this great internal drive. I would think about her whenever I'm trying to get motivated about things."

**You've been creating and producing a lot of your own projects. Why was it important for you to take control of the narrative?**

"I was just tired of seeing women not being repre-

sented accurately on film. So many of the roles that I was reading weren't reflective of the female experience. I wasn't seeing female relationships, I wasn't seeing women at the centre of storytelling that looked the way women look in the world. It was really important for me to take an active role and start developing projects that put women, all different kinds of women, in the forefront. And that also meant hiring more female directors and female writers, because the architects of those stories should be the women who live and experience those lives. It's been enormously gratifying to wake up every day with such a mission."

**Who are some rebellious women you admire in the real world?**

"There are so many! I love Mindy Kaling. She breaks a lot of rules. She's like 'Why not me? I never see myself in films so I'm just going to write a television show for myself.' People don't do that a lot. They complain a lot, but they don't do a lot, so I'm really inspired by her. I also like Jameela

Jamil. I think she's really inspiring in the way she talks about body image and body positivity. I mean, I can go on and on. There are so many incredible women in the world!"

**Feminism and beauty are often seen as antithetical, but characters like Elle Woods show that both can totally co-exist. What's your take?**

"I think caring for yourself is another way to feel confident. When you take care of your skin, or you feel like you put yourself together in a way that makes you feel beautiful, it gives you a confidence to face the world. The world's tough; it's important to feel like the best version of yourself, whatever that looks like."



**What's your go-to makeup look when you're looking for a confidence boost?**

"I really like a strong lip colour. It pulls me together and makes me feel confident. I always have a bunch of lipsticks at the bottom of my bag. I especially like bright pinks and reds. They just make me happy."

**What's the most Southern thing about you?**

"My love of makeup. Southern women love makeup. I can spend hours at the beauty counter just looking at all the different colours and textures. I find it very creative and relaxing. And I love anything monogrammed. Right now, I'm talking on my monogrammed phone, which I carry in my monogrammed purse [laughs]!"

**"I think caring for yourself is another way to feel confident. The world's tough; It's important to feel like the best version of yourself."**

**What are your beauty must-haves?**

"I'm really enjoying the new Elizabeth Arden White Tea Vanilla Orchid fragrance. It's got hints of vanilla, but it's also very refreshing and contemporary. And then because I wear a lot of makeup for work and my face is on film every day, it's important that I take care of my skin. I've started using retinol capsules, and they've really changed the tone of my skin."



ELIZABETH ARDEN RETINOL CERAMIDE CAPSULES, \$106, WHITE TEA VANILLA ORCHID EAU DE TOILETTE, \$65 (100 ML), ELIZABETHARDEN.CA

## The new work staples

Whether your work wardrobe is built around a corporate suit, creative separates or casual jeans, spring's fresh new takes on the trench coat, mini-bag and shoe will elevate any office uniform

BY RENÉE TSE

### Cool corporate

The heritage trench coat we know and love gets a modern update with the addition of silver ringed push buttons and a nod to logo-mania.

BURBERRY COAT, \$3,690, BURBERRY.COM



With a sleek, unusual pyramid shape and serious designer cred, this mini-bag will effortlessly take your look from work to happy hour.

SAINT LAURENT BAG, \$2,050, YSL.COM



A little height, tough grommeting details and multi-texture black on black: These shoes mean business.

ALEXANDER WANG SHOES, \$1,070, FARFETCH.COM

### Chic casual

Wear it cinched up or leave it undone—this relaxed jacket is a practical and stylish cover-up for chillier spring days.

ARITZIA COAT, \$298, ARITZIA.COM



This on-trend clear plastic bag with practical top handle and crossbody straps will force you to pare down to the essentials—which can be a very good thing.

MICHAEL KORS BAG, \$228, MICHAELKORS.CA



If you typically stick to neutrals, consider bringing a whimsical animal print into play. They'll bring you joy, whether you're walking to the office or sauntering off to get that second coffee.

CALL IT SPRING SHOES, \$50, CALLITSPRING.COM

### Unique creative

Add some drama to your work wardrobe with this romantic, puffy-sleeved silhouette.

MONCLER X SIMONE ROCHA COAT, \$2,050, MONCLER.COM



A splash of citrus colour, unusual hardware and a sparkling silver chain strap will take your look to the next level.

HERMÈS BAG, \$9,100, HERMES.COM



Yellow is the colour du jour, and these sunshiney mules will put a spring in your step.

PRADA SHOES, \$825, SSENSE.COM

# Period, the end

One woman on why menopause means mourning the end of an era

BY LIZ ATKINSON\* | PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARIAH HAMILTON

Four years ago, I missed my period and I thought, “Oh my God, I’m going to be 47 years old with a baby.” But it wasn’t that. How it happens is you’ll miss one month and then you’ll get it for eight months, and then you miss a couple months, and then you’ll have it for three months and then you’ll miss a month, and it keeps going like that. This month is going to be a year that I’ve missed it, and they say that once you miss it for a year, that’s it.

I used to know my moods by my periods. I would know I was having PMS, and then when I had my period, the day or two after I’d feel this complete relief. Now I don’t really have PMS, but I also don’t have that release anymore. When I’d ovulate, I would always feel it happening. I don’t feel that anymore, but I do still get other signs that I’m supposed to be ovulating, like bloating or a bit of pain, but

weeks I’ll have them twice a day, other times I’ll have them three times a week. You know in the movies when you see a car blow up and it goes *whooo*—that’s what it feels like. It feels like you’re on fire. I’ll be in the kitchen and I’ll just throw my shirt off—I would love to do it at the office, too. At night you get sweaty and you have to throw everything off. I find that stress makes it worse. I’ve talked to women who are older than me and they say, “Oh I still have them.” I read up on it and the hot flashes could last for another 10 years. It’s so wonderful being a woman!

There’s fogginess as well—brain fog, like trying to think of a certain word. I get dizzy spells, too. Also I had post-partum depression really badly and I started to get some of that depression again during menopause. I’ve gone back to exercising and even trying a little bit of

the egg doesn’t come anymore.

When you get your period, it’s a rite of passage—“I’m a woman now, right?” You talk about it with your friends. It’s not like I don’t feel like a woman anymore but I am sort of mourning the loss of it. I would never want another child, but the fact that I really can’t have kids anymore is sad, even though if I was pregnant tomorrow I would be like, “Oh my God, I’m gonna die.”

Everybody is different. My sister-in-law didn’t start menopause until she was 58, which is quite old. I was 46 when it started and now I’m going to be 52 this month, and it’s finally happening. But I was perimenopausal at 42—that’s related to your hormone levels. You know you’re perimenopausal from a blood test. I got my test back recently, and my doctor said, “Okay, now you’re post-menopausal.”

The hot flashes are brutal. Some

meditation for the depression, just counting my blessings. I feel like it’s all placebo, but it works. I was thinking about going on hormone replacement, but my doctor was dead set against it because of the risk of stroke.

It affects your sex life, too. My husband is old-fashioned, so I’d be like, “I’m on my period,” and he was like, “Okay, fine.” So it was like, I don’t have to do it for seven days. It was my monthly break, and it sounds awful but I don’t think I’m the only woman who feels that way. I couldn’t have cared less about sex when I was on my period. And now that I’m in menopause my libido is low as well. I told my husband that this is the way I’m feeling and there’s not much I can do about it. But he’s 55, so he has some other issues himself. We’ve been together for a long time, so we’re good.

At the time when you’re dealing with menopause, your appearance starts to change as well—you look older, and people respond to you in different ways. I really couldn’t care less that fewer men are paying attention to me. What bothers me is that, mostly in business, people gravitate toward what the younger person says—even if it’s something I’ve said five minutes ago. It’s hurtful because I have all this wisdom. I’m just as smart as anybody else. I feel ignored, and I don’t think it’s neurotic, I can see it. We value youth and vibrancy and beauty so much. What is wrong with getting older?

I’m really trying to be extra strong, so no one notices I’m going through this—like, don’t notice I’m older, please, and please take me seriously. Mind

you, I’ve always been nervous to speak my mind in an office setting but I don’t care as much anymore. I feel free, and that’s also happened in the last couple of years.

Sometimes I look around me at younger women and I think, “Oh God, in 10 years they’re going to start this.” When my daughters go through it, at least they’ll have someone to come to and talk about it—I really didn’t. My mom had a hysterectomy when she was young, so she never went through this. My grandmother would yell, “Ohh, I’m having a hot flash!” and then run to the other side of the room, and I would just think it was hilarious. So that was the only experience of menopause I had to go by.

People don’t talk about it that much, so you just have to go through it. I joke and say it’s wonderful being a woman but it really is because we are so strong. With everything we have to deal with every day, it’s amazing what we do. *\*Name has been changed*

**“The hot flashes are brutal. You know in the movies when you see a car blow up and it goes *whooo*—that’s what it feels like.”**

# Psst, have you tried the menstrual cup yet?

After 20 years of tampons, I tried something new. It was about bloody time

BY JENNIFER BERRY | PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARIAH HAMILTON

I recently discovered I was one of the last women on Earth who hadn’t tried a menstrual cup. First, it was the yoga-loving hippie in my friend group who evangelized about the magic of the DivaCup. It had a name that sounded like a battle between famous female singers (“Cher and Céline go head to head in shot put, javelin and discus throw—who will be winner of the Diva Cup?”) and apparently, you could stick the funnel-shaped silicone cup in your vagina during your period and pluck it out 12 hours later without spilling a drop of blood. “Yeah-bloody-right,” I’d always thought, picturing something more like the *Kill Bill* blood shower Amy Schumer describes in her latest stand-up comedy special, *Growing*.

But soon enough, my work wife and my best friend both casually mentioned they’d switched to menstrual cups when I asked in a whisper if they had a tampon I could “borrow.” Then, before I knew it, I was sitting in a work meeting and realized I was one of the only women on the team still sticking a tampon up my sleeve every couple of hours during my monthly cycle. Was everyone secretly running home and rinsing out their menstrual cups? Were tampons retro?

Web searches for menstrual cups have grown year over year since 2016, according to a recent BBC story. And a 2011 Canadian study showed that 91 percent of its subjects would continue to use a cup after the trial ended and would recommend one to their friends. I’d like to meet a gal who feels as strongly about a pad or tampon.

Passionate about them or not, I’ve always been a tampon girl. I can count on tampons. I know instinctively before my vagina does when it’s time to change one. Everything from my taste in dudes to my hairstyle has evolved in the 20 years I’ve relied on them but my standing tampon order (plastic applicator, unscented, mixed-size party pack), hasn’t.

There have been leaks here and there that left me cursing my go-to. But until recently, I thought my 36-pack of Tampax and I were stuck together—not a happy marriage, per se (or period, as advertised), but a solid one. Despite the advancements in feminine hygiene products—from applicator-free tampons to free-bleeding period panties—I certainly didn’t expect to be trying a new period product approximately 240 periods after my first. Yet here I am, sweating and deep breathing in a sumo squat in my bathroom, rereading the

tiny type on the instructional leaflet whilst attempting the origami required to get the fold on the little silicone vessel just right before inserting my first menstrual cup.

I might have been reticent but the need for a change to my monthly routine was actually a long time coming. While panicking about whether everyone at the co-ed pool party would see my tampon string escaping from my swimsuit was priority number one when I was a teen, the impact

tampons are safe, and that the levels of potentially harmful chemical by-products of bleaching are so low that they pose no risk, there’s lots of unsettling chatter online about the potential harm to our health. And just picture all those applicators ending up in landfills or floating in the ocean. Not exactly sustainable.

While Canadian company DivaCup has had a monopoly on the menstrual cup biz for about as long as I’ve been faithful to tampons (and been quite successful with it: Its parent company has been named one of the 500 fastest-growing Canadian businesses for the past two years, with annual revenue reportedly exceeding \$20 million in 2018), the makers of my tampon of choice have entered the cup game.

Tampax is launching its own version this month, with notable differences from the cups already on the market—extra grips for easy removal and two sizes related to your flow, not your age or whether or not you’ve had a baby.

So, how did my cup trial go, you’re dying to know? Well, it wasn’t unlike the first time I tried a tampon: It was awkward, I worried I was doing it wrong and I was hyper aware of the foreign object all day long. I didn’t love it, but I’m committed to working at it. I’m fairly certain I chose the wrong size of cup (turns out after years of *Mean Girls*-induced curiosity about the relative size of my lady parts due to the famous “wide-set vagina” scene, mine is actually quite narrow), so I’ll need to size down next time that wicked Aunt Flo comes to town.

On the upside, there were no leaks, and the cup’s removal was surprisingly uneventful—not even a drop of spillage, let alone a crime scene. Like the first time you locked eyes with a menstrual-blood-soaked tampon, a Texas shot glass’s worth of uterine lining isn’t the most pleasant to look at, but you get used to it. And I break into a sweat at the mere thought of having to empty, wash and reinsert the cup in a public washroom.

I haven’t tossed my tampons just yet, but the promise of not having to trudge to the ladies’ room a million times on my heaviest days makes my cup runneth over with joy, as does the knowledge that it’s reusable medical-grade silicone taking residence in my vagina every month instead of potentially harmful materials. The price is also right—around \$40 for a cup that lasts about a year instead of the \$150 I would spend on cotton and cardboard. It’s time for my menstrual product of choice to be as evolved as I am.



all that bleached cotton, cardboard and plastic has on my body and the environment has become a growing concern as an adult. According to scientific journal *The Lancet*, a woman has an average of 450 periods in her lifetime—that’s a uterus load of chlorine-disinfected fibres going in your body. While governing bodies like the FDA say that

# A sharp eye

Canadian stylist Roz Griffith-Hall has a singular point of view on fashion—and how it needs to change

BY RANI SHEEN | PHOTOGRAPHY BY RILEY STEWART

Roz Griffith-Hall is a creative force to be reckoned with. She's a stylist, a TV and film costume buyer, a street-style photographer, a painter and sculptor and a jewellery designer. Her energy fills a room, her personal style is distinctive and her point of view is thoughtful and considered. The way she shops is nothing short of inspirational. "I love uniforms," she says. "I'm known to buy seven pairs of the same jeans. Last year, Acne Studios made this oversized white men's shirt. I got the 48, 50, 52 and 54, so I have varying degrees of large." She wears more men's clothes than women's clothes, for the proportions and the ease ("so I can be free to expand or express"). And she eschews trends for timeless pieces—but not timeless like an LBD, timeless like a Rei Kawakubo for Comme des Garçons exaggerated silhouette or a Kenzo colourful animal print. "I find I don't fit into the box," she says. "So I make my own box—a really big one."

She applies this shrewd and non-conformist perspective to the fashion world at large, too. Griffith-Hall has been attending fashion weeks both international and local for more than a decade and has seen the trends—both clothing-wise and cultural—come and go. With the recent spate of racist images coming to the fore—Prada and Gucci's designs that resemble blackface, Grace Coddington being photographed with her collection of Mammy jars—we asked Griffith-Hall for her thoughts on fashion's problem with racism.

## ON PARIS FASHION WEEK

"I started going to Paris Fashion Week in 2008. I decided to go and shoot street style, and I have been lucky enough to go to shows, parties, boutique openings and showrooms through my Toronto connections. I've created a community of global fashion friends. But Paris is a funny place—sometimes you're embraced, and sometimes I wonder, 'Are you looking at me with fascination while you're shooting daggers at me?' I was on the Metro with Derick Chetty, who was the fashion reporter at the *Toronto Star*, and we had a situation like that. Derick kept repeating, 'Don't look at him, don't look at him, don't look at him.' Sometimes I joke about it: 'I'm a tourist in your town. I'm a Canadian of West Indian background. Let's just make a distinction that I'm not the African that you think I might be.' But then, of course, when you go back to the history of it all, I am from Africa. These are the things that I think about when I'm there."

## ON DIVERSITY IN CASTING

"Back in the day, Yves Saint Laurent had a crew of Black models on the fashion week circuit. The rumour was that some people felt Paris was getting too Black, so they had a kind of moratorium on Black models. In the '90s, [Jamaican-Canadian model] Stacey McKenzie went to Paris on her own. She broke out with the Jean Paul Gaultier show in 1994, but she almost didn't get a chance to do it because almost all of the agents she met with said, 'No, no, no, you're not what we want.' Gaultier said, 'She is exactly what I want.' Recently,

the outcry for more diversity in fashion has really kicked off. For instance, Vetements got some pushback because they had no models of colour at all. The designer, Demna Gvasalia, had that whole Eastern European look down. Now, most designers throw in a smattering of people of colour just to get the balance right. Last haute couture season, Pierpaolo

Piccioli designed the Valentino collection as a tribute—42 out of 65 models were Black, and Naomi Campbell closed the show. He chose vibrant colours that intensified next to their skin. It was a truly beautiful collection, but I wasn't blown away, I wasn't brought to tears like many people were. I

**"In fashion, there's not enough diversity at the top in the design houses to know when their products have crossed the line."**



"This is a Dries Van Noten coat and Philip Sparks pants," says Griffith-Hall. "Believe it or not, the shirt isn't Celine; it's a Simons men's shirt. I love a French cuff and the powerful stripe. There was a crazy sale on these Brixton Limited hats at Simons, like \$350 down to \$9.99, so of course I bought them all. These boots are Alexander McQueen but I painted them white."

get it: Haute couture has been primarily the realm of the rich white woman. But inclusivity should have happened a long time ago. It's like, 'Let's pat these guys on the back because they're finally recognizing what should have been part of the mix the whole time.'"

## ON TOKENISM

"Now, everyone is so conscious of having all the boxes ticked off, whether it's a transgender, Black, Asian or older model. When I'm looking at magazine covers and ads featuring a cast of diverse models, it almost seems forced. Are those Black models who look quite similar in that Louis Vuitton ad, are they bookends for the red-haired model? I'm seeing way more people of colour on magazine covers—and that's a good thing. But before, I would have just said, 'Oh, great, Rihanna is on the cover, Beyoncé's on the cover.' I feel like there's a backlash coming. Almost like affirmative action. People saying that the only reason why the Black woman is on the cover is because of the colour of her skin, as opposed to seeing the beauty. I don't usually talk like this. This whole thing, it makes you talk like we're on different teams."

## ON HOW RACIST DESIGNS MAKE IT TO MARKET

"In fashion, there's not enough diversity at the top in these design houses to know when their products have crossed the line or to recognize when the aesthetic has become problematic. There's no sensitivity to these issues. The recent Prada monkey key fob, Gucci blackface turtleneck and Burberry

noose hoodie somehow passed inspection from the get-go. I wonder if the designers were, like, 'We just thought it was really cute.' It's not cute."

## ON GRACE CODDINGTON'S MAMMY JARS

"In a recent photo shoot, [Vogue creative director at large] Grace Coddington is shown in her kitchen surrounded by her collection of cats—and Mammy jars. What's the problem? I watched this documentary, *Black Memorabilia*, where the director talked about the racist, demeaning images of African-Americans we grew up with, like Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben. Grace probably thinks these items are kitschy collectibles like Russian nesting dolls and not racially charged symbols."

## ON WHAT IT WILL TAKE TO MAKE PROGRESS

"There should be more visionaries like Franca Sozzani [the late editor-in-chief of *Vogue Italia*] who put out the all-Black issue. Maybe someone like Edward Enninful, who's now the editor of British *Vogue*, will shake things up, make real change. He put Naomi Campbell on the cover for the first time in 17 years [his predecessor Alexandra Shulman said she didn't feature Black models because the issues wouldn't sell]. He put model and activist Adwoa Aboah on the cover, too, and now she's been honoured with her own 'shero' Barbie doll. The changing of the guard needs to include new diverse voices that reflect the current mood."

## Four Black fashion designers you need to know

And the beautiful pieces worth investing in now

BY AMANDA DEMEKU

### FE NOEL

Brooklyn-based Grenadian designer Felisha Noel launched her label, Fe Noel, eight years ago with a goal to shift the Eurocentric narrative of beauty. With a penchant for vibrant colours, prints and diverse casting, Noel's resort-inspired collections are influenced by travel and her Caribbean heritage. Her designs are seriously cool, so much so that she was tapped to design LeBron James's first women's sneaker for Nike, the HFX x LeBron 16. Talk about slammin' dunks.

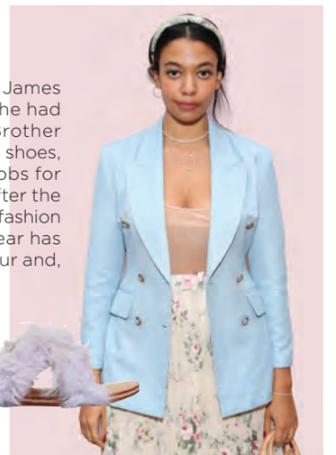
FE NOEL DRESS, \$1,598, FENOEL.COM



### BROTHER VELLIES

After a life-changing trip to Morocco, Toronto's Aurora James (right) was so inspired by local artisans that she felt she had to share the joy of African artistry with the world. Brother Vellies, her contemporary collection of dreamy bags and shoes, is both sustainable and ethically produced, creating jobs for local creatives in Kenya and Ethiopia. In 2015, shortly after the brand's inception, James won the coveted CFDA Vogue fashion fund award, and since then her signature furry footwear has been worn by fellow boss ladies Eva Chen, Anna Wintour and, yes, Beyoncé Knowles.

BROTHER VELLIES SHOES, \$421, BROTHERVELLIES.COM



### AAKS

Growing up in Ghana gave Akosua Afriyie-Kumi a bright and energetic sensibility that she infuses into her luxury accessories. Her colour-soaked bags immediately elicit an "OMG, where is that from?" reaction. AAKS designs are handcrafted in Ghana using traditional weaving techniques and provide jobs for local artisans—sustainability at its finest. "Being able to connect with individuals around the world due to the work I'm doing in Ghana is very inspiring," she says.

AAKS BAG, \$225, AAKSONLINE.COM



### CUSHNIE

If you haven't heard about bomb brand Cushnie yet, let us introduce you. British-Jamaican designer Carly Cushnie is a woman of international sophistication. With a breadth of internships at Donna Karan, Proenza Schouler and Oscar de la Renta already under her belt, the Parsons fashion school alum's modern womenswear label was born in 2008. Known for her form-fitting, bold aesthetic, Cushnie's designs boast an impressive fan base ranging from Rihanna to Michelle Obama.

CUSHNIE DRESS, \$2,133, CUSHNIE.COM

# No apologies

Olivia Wilde pushes back against pigeonholing with her directorial debut

BY RANDI BERGMAN

Olivia Wilde has been pushing boundaries since before it was something Hollywood stars were expected to do. As an actress, she advanced LGBTQ representation in mainstream TV back in 2003, playing Marissa Cooper's love interest Alex Kelly on *The O.C.* As an activist, she's campaigned for Time's Up, Planned Parenthood and the American youth vote. And as a first-time director, she brings us *Booksmart*, a completely new kind of buddy comedy that has all the ingredients of a high school classic, minus the tropes. Molly (Beanie Feldstein) and Amy (Kaitlyn Dever) are two overachieving best friends who, on the night before graduation, decide to pack four years' worth of fun into one evening. Hijinks ensue, but along the way, they revisit their preconceived notions about their fellow students. We chatted to Wilde by phone from Los Angeles about why *Booksmart* represents the next frontier of feminism in film.

**“I spent my entire 20s with people being surprised that I wasn't stupid. People would say, ‘You're actually smart!’”**

**Booksmart is pegged on the idea that women can be a multitude of things. Why is this still such a novel concept?**

“I think people are still struggling with the idea of nuance with femininity. We've worked so hard to prove that women can be strong and smart that we forget that they can also be sexy and beautiful in the same package. It doesn't need to be one or the other. We lose nuance when we oversimplify

human behaviours. There have been a lot of great movies and TV shows that show smart and funny women, but I often find that they accentuate the intelligence of those characters by pitting them against someone who is stupid or crazy, and this oversimplification doesn't further the conversation in society.”

**Have you ever felt pigeonholed?**

“I spent my entire 20s with people being surprised that I wasn't stupid. People would say, ‘You're actually smart!’ At what point was that okay to say to somebody? Somehow, women allow for it. There's this sense of, ‘Gee, thanks for recognizing I'm not an idiot.’ I got sick of that.”

**Do you notice the tides turning at all?**

“I actually do notice a change in the way actresses are treated, particularly because of the Time's Up movement. There's a shift happening because of the demand of the younger generation who see things differently. They want to create a much more nuanced, fluid society, and I think that's affecting older people now because they're responding to the desires of the young consumer. So that's allowing for a shift in the conversation around women in Hollywood. For me, becoming a director was also a chance to say, ‘I want to be valued for my mind. I want my ideas to be more valuable than my physical appearance.’ I have to say it's pretty f—ing satisfying.”

**Have you always wanted to direct?**

“It has always been a secret part of my plan. I was eagerly pursuing this acting career, but [also] chatting with the directors I was working for, asking a lot of questions and really trying to gain the amount of knowledge that would supplement the film school education I'd never had. Once I got to the point where I felt like I could confidently lead a crew and tell a story, then I declared that I wanted to direct. I was met with a lot of support—I believe that if you have a lot of passion and good ideas, this industry is actually really supportive of those ideas. You just have to have a lot of energy to put into them.”

**You started out directing music videos, for Red Hot Chili Peppers, Daft Punk and 30 Seconds to Mars. How did that help prepare you?**

“Music videos are where I cut my teeth and I



hope to continue doing them. They're a playground with total creative licence and that's where I discovered that this is the only thing I ever want to do!”

**The only thing?**

“I mean, I do want to keep acting because acting is catharsis, and it's incredibly fun, but I know that I want to keep directing. Directing fulfills me in a different way.”

**Why did this feel like the right movie for your directorial debut?**

“When I first read the screenplay, it was a very different version of the script and what exists on screen today, but it had the basic concept of best friends who were incredibly smart in an apologetic way. I was really moved by the notion of celebrating female intelligence and comedy without homogenizing it, without making all the female characters smart and funny in the same exact way.”

**Whether or not we were exactly like these characters, I think everyone, especially women, can relate to this movie. Was that your aim?**

“I wanted the movie to encourage people to strip away their judgements of others and themselves, this habit we have of categorizing others out of fear. By introducing the stereotypes right off the bat—the nerd, the jock, the mean girl—I wanted to introduce you to the tropes and then pretty quickly flip them so that you question your own judgement of them and consider how you've judged people in your life, and perhaps even yourself.”

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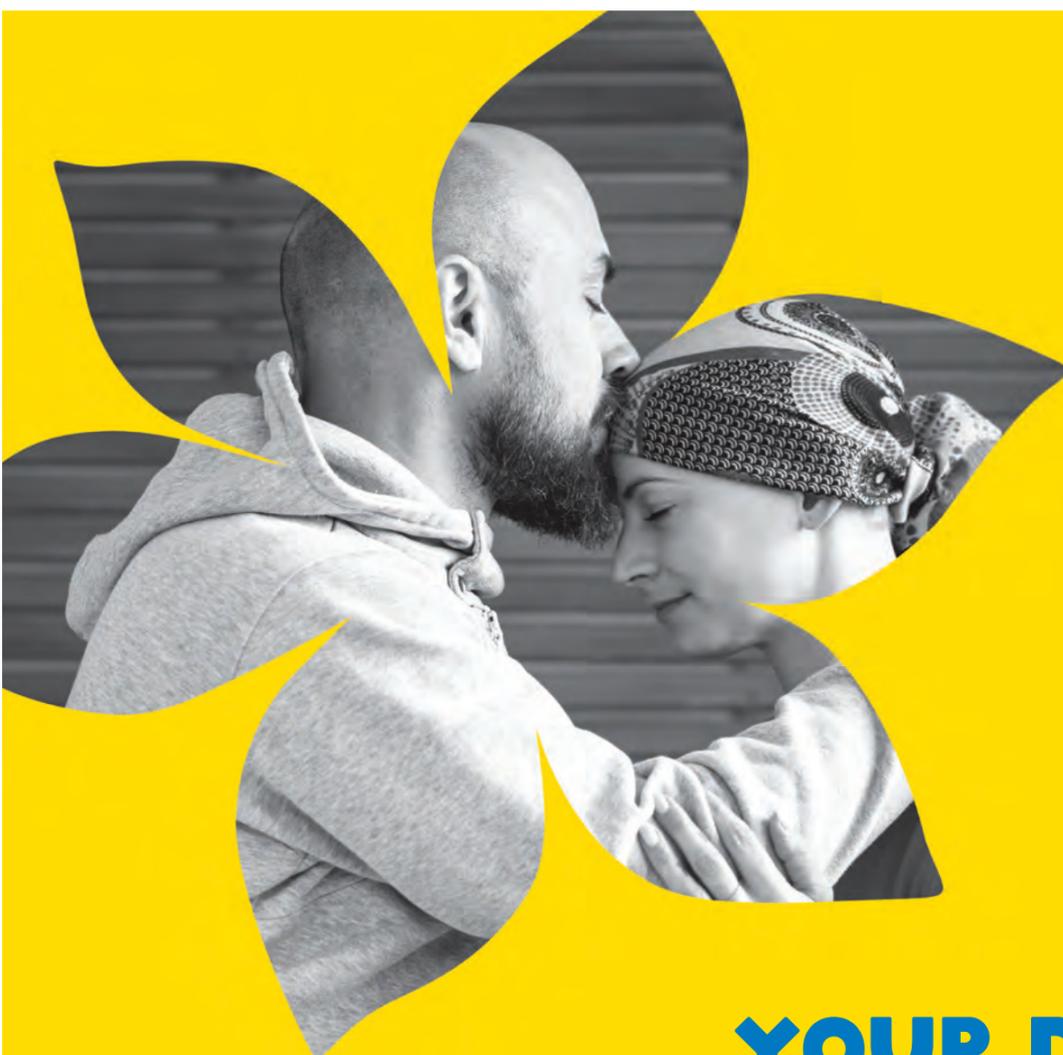
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**QUESTION**

I'm an Aries and my partner is a Scorpio. Do we have a future?

**ANSWER**

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