



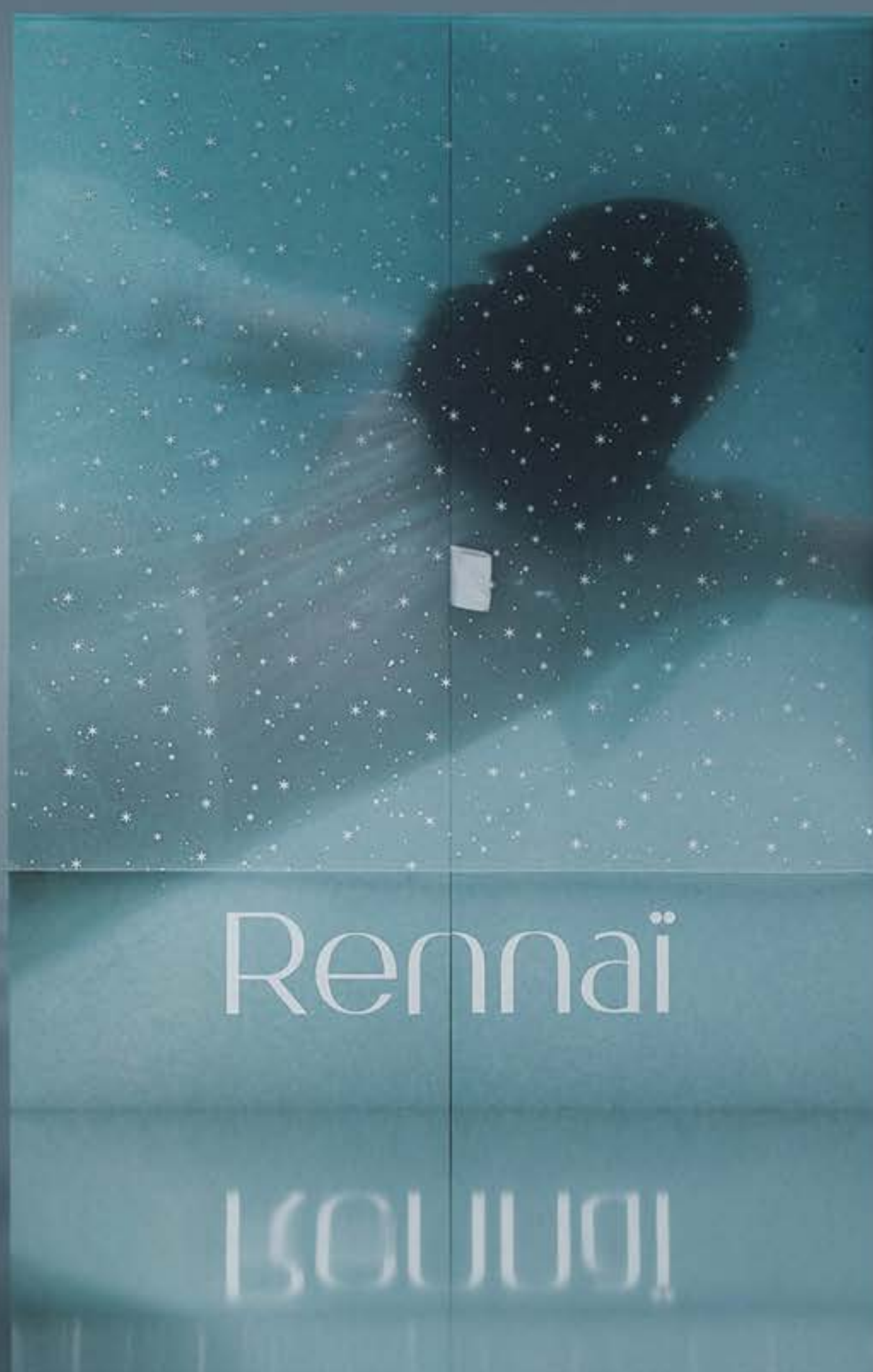
## MEGA WATTS

There's nothing more luxurious than feeling at ease in your own skin, alive to experience and possibility. A-lister Naomi Watts tells us about her mission to ensure women feel that way throughout their menopause journey. Plus: What goes into making the designer bag of the season, seeking out the big-city delights of Hong Kong and editor-selected luxuries

*Photography by Norman Wong*

# Experience 25 Days of Self-Care with Rennai

Celebrate the season with Rennai's limited-edition Advent Calendar, filled with luxurious deluxe and full size products.



Available starting November 1st at [rennai.com](http://rennai.com) and in-store at [Royalmount](http://Royalmount.com).



LOEWE BAG, \$6,050. LOEWE.COM

It's no easy feat to dream up a bag that is both innovative and timeless. And in recent years, it's an assignment that's become more and more challenging, with savvy consumers who are choosy about which accessory is worth the significant investment.

Jonathan Anderson is one of the rare designers who seem to have landed on the magical formula, continuously sending out new Loewe handbag silhouettes we never knew we needed.

Ever since the Irish designer put his creative touch on the Spanish house with his first ready-to-wear women's collection in 2014, his creations in the accessory department have swiftly garnered It bag status. Cases in point: the Flamenco pouch, the Hammock crossbody, the Pebble bucket bag and his debut bag, the Puzzle. We're forecasting that the Spring 2025 minimalist carryall, Madrid, is going to be a covetable addition to this list next season.

What makes loyal Loewe handbag enthusiasts keep coming back for more is not just that the team consistently launches pieces in seasonal colours and textures. They also push the envelope by reinterpreting current styles in different formats, whether it's turning a cuboid shape into a foldable tote or iterating a drawstring pouch into a bucket bag, giving the signature styles new life.

This fall, all eyes are on the Squeeze, which was originally introduced on the Fall 2023 runway. At first glance, it's an unconventional silhouette, but upon closer inspection, it's an original design that will withstand the test of time.

Crafted in a buttery smooth nappa leather with ruched detailing in the collar, the Squeeze is named after its ergonomic "squishy" leather handle that can be comfortably carried by hand or sit on the shoulder. And the adjustable doughnut chain system cleverly changes the look of the purse as well as serving as an on-trend bag charm. It's no surprise it has racked up stylish fans including Jennifer Lawrence, Emily Ratajkowski, Sofia Richie Grainge and Aimee Song.

With its special details and heavenly leather texture, the Squeeze will likely invite both the wearer and onlookers to gaze at it in close proximity. You've been warned.

## MAIN SQUEEZE

What makes an It bag? Renée Tse dissects the elements of the season's most covetable contender, the Loewe Squeeze

Photography by Graydon Herriott

### It's in the details Breaking down the Squeeze's hit-making ingredients



A single interior zipped pocket embossed with the logo in gold foil can store your most personal items, still easily accessible with a zip of the gold hardware.

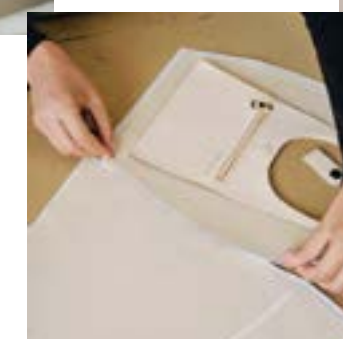


The gold-plated doughnut chain is a customizable moment. Instead of a typical removable leather strap, you can expand the adjustable system to create a shoulder bag or crossbody by attaching the clips to any link for your preferred length.

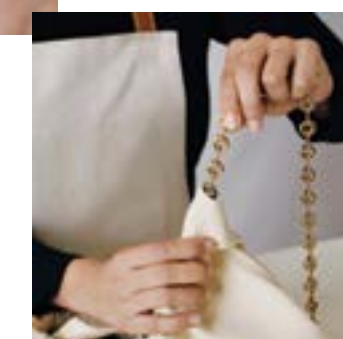


While the body of the bag is generously soft and slouchy, the leather piping at the bottom lends structure to the base to keep it from "bottoming out," which is not a good look for a luxurious hobo bag.

The bag's interior is unlined, which was intended to keep the piece light and durable, but it also means you experience the silky-soft texture every time you take out your day-to-day essentials.



The namesake "squeeze" handle was thoroughly researched and tested by the team and designed to ensure tactile comfort when carried in the hand or held on the shoulder for long periods of time.



PHOTOGRAPHY: LOEWE (BAG CONSTRUCTION); STYLING: ERICA MORGAN/CADRE ARTIST MANAGEMENT

### THE KIT

Editor-in-Chief  
Laura deCarufel

Creative Director  
Elena Viltovskaia

Features Director  
Ruth Shoen  
Production Director  
Eden Balleau  
Shopping Editor  
Renée Tse  
Art Director  
Briannah Daniel

Direct advertising  
Inquiries to  
General Manager  
Evie Begy,  
eb@thekit.ca  
Operations Director,  
Digital Media  
Kelly Matthews

Collab Specialist  
Millicent Hoang  
Project Manager &  
Marketing Specialist  
Loren Amaral



© 2024, The Kit,  
a division of Toronto Star  
Newspapers Limited.

Publisher, Toronto Star  
Jordan Blowe  
Chairman, Torstar  
Hon. David R. Peterson

# N°5





# She's the change

Naomi Watts is a movie star of the most glamorous order. She's also leading the charge to normalize menopause. Rani Sheen sits down with her

Photography by Norman Wong

At 56, Naomi Watts is doing quite a few things she's never done before. She was recently nominated for her first Emmy; she's publishing her first book based on her experiences with early menopause; and she's launched her first line of products, the pro-aging beauty brand Stripes. She's also unofficially leading a growing movement of voices acknowledging that menopause exists—absurdly, this is groundbreaking territory—and that women shouldn't be counted out once they've reached midlife.

"We're not done. We don't want to sit in the corner with our knitting needles. Although sometimes I like to do that, too," says Watts when we sit down in the private styling suite at The Room at Hudson's Bay, where Stripes is now available, a few hours after she posed fluidly, elegantly, like the seasoned pro she is for *The Kit's* cover shoot. "I want a woman to feel seen and deserving and vibrant—and unapologetically so."

Watts is certainly doing her part. The projects she's chosen lately portray grown women in all their fascinating facets. In *The Friend*, a meditation on loss and comfort based on Sigrid Nunez's bestselling novel, Watts plays a writer who inherits a massive Great Dane from a friend who has died. "It's a lovely, gentle movie that I think is the kind of nectar we all need right now," says Watts. "It's about that feeling you get when you're with a dog, which is just unconditional sweetness." You may have seen a TikTok clip of Watts walking the enormous pup (whose name is Bing) around Manhattan during filming, or snaps of them both at this year's TIFF. "He is one of my finer co-stars," she says, laughing. "I could fall in love with pretty much any dog, but his disposition was just wonderful."

In spicier fare, Watts appears in a new rendition of the 1974 French erotic classic *Emmanuelle*, reimagined by director Audrey Diwan. "I was excited by the thought of rethinking that narrative entirely about a woman's desire," says Watts. She points out that she doesn't play the lead, the woman exploring her desires. Would she? "Yeah! If the script was good and I liked the character and all the other elements, it would be amazing."

For *Feud: Capote Vs. the Swans*, Watts embodied the socialite Babe Paley, immaculate queen bee of the Upper East Side ladies who lunched with gossip writer Truman Capote in 1960s Manhattan. Her performance unearthed the vulnerability beneath the glittering facade that so many women have maintained to survive in a harshly judging world, and earned Watts her first Emmy nomination, for outstanding lead actress. "It does feel like a very special moment, and I'm very proud of this particular piece of work," she says (we spoke a few weeks before the awards show). "My husband is also nominated, so it'll be a nice evening to spend together." That's another new adventure

STYLING: JACLYN BONAVIDA, CADRE ARTIST: MIGHT, HAIR: JUSTIN GERMAN, PH: MAKEUP: SABRINA RINALDI, PH



COVER AND FACING PAGE: BRANDON MAXWELL. DRESS AT THE ROOM AT HUDSON'S BAY. TIFFANY EARRINGS, \$9,250, RING, \$5,850, TIFFANY.CO. THIS PAGE: GIAMBATTISTA VALLI JACKET AND SKIRT, AT THE ROOM AT HUDSON'S BAY. BULGARI EARRINGS, \$18,700, BULGARI.COM

I want to speak to a woman who has been left on the sidelines, especially in the beauty industry.

Watts has embarked on: She married fellow actor Billy Crudup in a Manhattan courthouse ceremony in 2023, complete with bodega flowers, followed by a destination wedding in Mexico City this June.

Watts was born in England but moved to Australia as a teenager, where she burst onto screens in 1991 in a pair of legendary coming-of-age stories, both set in 1960s boarding schools and both of which still really hold up. There was the miniseries *Brides of Christ*, set in a convent school, and the film *Flirting*, which also starred her longtime peer and friend, Nicole Kidman. Both explored themes of navigating feminine identity and sexuality, rebellion against imposed roles and expectations and the experience of living in a changing body amid hormonal upheaval. Sound familiar?

It's not lost on Watts that the teenage girl experience has been much more thoroughly investigated than later stages in women's lives. "Stories of identity, coming of age, have always been interesting," she says. "I've always said that menopause is like an adult puberty. When our teenagers slam the door or roll their eyes or look at you like, 'What are you still doing here?'" we understand what is going on. It's been well studied. We've also been there ourselves. Yet for women during this time, when our hormones are plummeting, not surging like theirs, but altering our mood and our biological makeup and everything is changing, there is no empathy, there's no real education and no conversation." On screen, menopausal women have fared even worse. "In terms of storytelling, it was the crazy ladies barking and screaming in the background somewhere, kind of a caricature. But that is changing. I think it's up to all of us to find a way to represent it better."

One of the ways she's endeavoring to do that is with her brand, Stripes. It's tailored to the needs of women going through perimenopause and menopause, with products such as The Cool Factor, a cooling mist designed to soothe hot-flash-heated skin, and The Crown Pleaser, a densifying mask for thinning hair. "I want to speak to a woman who has been left on the sidelines, especially in the beauty industry. In fact, she's kind of been [told to] anti-age, which is just not possible," says Watts. "And on the packaging, you'll see a woman who's 28, who could be your child. It doesn't feel great. We don't want to try and promise that you can look 25

again. We want to meet you where you're at and address the symptoms that you're experiencing."

Watts was thrust into this experience earlier than most. "I heard the word 'menopause' come out of my doctor's mouth at 36 when I was waiting to get blood results, because I was wondering why I wasn't getting pregnant," she says. "I basically panicked and retreated and felt very ashamed, and thought, well, this is probably the end of everything. Certainly my fertility and probably my career." She had been experiencing night sweats, migraines and irregular menstrual cycles, but hadn't put those symptoms together. Also, her skin freaked out. "I certainly didn't know that skin was a big thing [in menopause]. I noticed that it was dry and irritable. I always had sensitive skin, but it was suddenly very reactive to things I'd been using successfully before."

That's why calming hydration is a focal point of Stripes—the Dew As I Do moisturizer is a creamy, softly illuminating delight—and not just for face: There's both a gel and an oil for addressing vaginal dryness. "I knew that the hydration loss was at all points, from scalp to vag," Watts says. "So I wanted to also launch things like moisturizers and lubricant and play oil for down there." This phase, after all, isn't short. "It's like a full third of life. And sensuality is still a part of that."

Watts will share more of her story in her book, *Dare I Say It*, coming in January, which features a foreword by the OB-GYN turned menopause influencer Mary Claire Haver, and tips and stories from experts and friends. "I learned so much," Watts says of the writing process. "It also touches on conversations she's had with her teenaged kids, Sasha and Kai. "Through COVID, when we were all locked in, they heard me on many, many Zooms talking about menopause. Eventually I said, 'Hey, do you know what menopause is?' And they both gave me some pretty good answers of what they thought it was," she says, chuckling. "You'll have to wait and see."

There's still so much more to say, but for now Watts is glad to be getting the conversational ball rolling about the joys and challenges of this phase of life. "Hopefully there's hope, laughter, authenticity and sharing that it's not all doom and gloom but addressing that—it's a part of it," she says. "There's that sense of, Oh my God, have I disappeared? Am I now supposed to be invisible? And then, how do I return to myself?"

## Hydrating heroes



As Watts puts it, we need hydration "from scalp to vag." So this fragrance-free, hypoallergenic gel is designed to be applied externally "down there" to soothe dryness, discomfort and irritation with hyaluronic acid and anti-inflammatory ectoine.

STRIPES VAG OF HONOR INTIMATE HYDRATING GEL, \$72, THEBAY.COM



Many women experience hair thinning and texture changes; this five-minute mask aims to boost shine and softness and reduce breakage with strengthening amino acids, hydrating ectoine and squalane. Swap it in for your conditioner a couple times a week.

STRIPES THE CROWN PLEASER ECTOINE DENSIFYING & HYDRATING HAIR MASK, \$56, THEBAY.COM



A rich and glow-inducing moisturizer that lasts all day and never feels greasy, this cream is packed with hydrating squalane and Stripes' hero ingredient ectoine, along with vitamins B, C and E. It has a subtle floral-woody scent.

STRIPES DEW AS I DO BRIGHTENING & HYDRATING FACIAL CREAM, \$112, THEBAY.COM



# MaxMara

TORONTO: 151 BLOOR STREET W 416 928 1884  
MONTREAL: ROYALMOUNT MALL  
MAXMARA.COM

# THE KIT



## *a Thing of Beauty*

A breathtaking new fragrance collection manages to transcend the usual perfume tricks

*By Jillian Vieira | Photography by Graydon Herriott*

In an ever-crowded market, fragrances from high-end houses tend to lean on a luxury-signalling bag of tricks to set themselves apart. A strictly minimalist bottle (ooh!), a fanciful story inspiring the emotive “juice” (ahh!), a no-doubt-about-it logo announcing that this perfume was indeed costly (of course!) But much like its elegant yet relatable runway offerings, Bottega Veneta’s new fragrance collection, the first under creative director Matthieu Blazy, breaks entirely new ground.

This five-scent curation closely follows the Belgian-French designer’s specific brand of modern luxury. His creative output is not quiet per se—he tends to reject the inherent rigidity of minimalism—nor is it flashy or logo-forward in any sense. Instead, Blazy’s perspective runs right down the middle, a sweet spot that’s been informed by his diverse history of design posts: a sense of tongue-in-cheek playfulness from Maison Martin Margiela, that completely crushable covetability of Celine and a knack for restraint under Raf Simons for Calvin Klein.

It’s all reflected in Blazy’s first foray into fragrance. Grounded in Bottega’s home city of Venice, these olfactory wonders tell a global story, zigzagging across countries and continents in their natural-origin ingredient synthesis. All five scents are offered in the spirit of everyday wearability—you might choose a rousing option today, a more subtle, sophisticated one tomorrow—rather than relying on signature scent viability, like so many perfumes are.

There’s Colpo di Sole, a warm, sun-kissed scent that marries French angelica oil with Moroccan orange blossom absolute; the fresh, Italian bergamot-spiked Come with Me, finished with the powdery violet of French Orris butter. Acqua Sale is an oceanic water-adjacent fragrance anchored by woody laudanum absolute from Spain and Macedonian juniper oil. Seductive Déjà Minuit weaves geranium from Madagascar with the spice of Guatemalan cardamom; while Alchemie is an opulent blend of Brazilian pink pepper with precious myrrh from Somalia.

It’s the bottle, though, that has everyone talking. Marked by organic undulations and tiny bubbles formed from a centuries-long Murano glass-blowing technique, the tactile treasure comes perched on a block of Verde Saint Denis marble, the same captivating material found in Blazy-designed Bottega boutiques. The brand’s insignia and fragrance name are inconspicuously engraved into a metallic ring below the cap, so as not to steal the bottle’s thunder. It’s a marvel, really, capturing the objet status that so many strive for but few achieve.

Ask anyone who follows fashion: Only three years into his tenure at Bottega and Blazy has solidified his position in the upper echelon of this generation’s design talent. Turns out, he’s coming for the title of brilliant perfume creator, too.

BOTTEGA VENETA ALCHEMIE EAU DE PARFUM, \$580, BOTTEGA VENETA STORES OR BOTTEGAVENETA.COM

THE KIT X LONGINES

# STYLISH LUNCHEON TAKES FLIGHT

Longines celebrates Canadian women in film and television at their "Time To Watch Us Fly" luncheon

Longines, the Swiss watch brand established in 1832, hosted over 80 women from Canada's film and television industry at a downtown Toronto hot spot, for the first ever Longines "Time to Watch Us Fly" luncheon. The event was co-hosted by Amanda Brugel and celebrated the accomplishments of women from all aspects of the industry. Guests enjoyed sophisticated cocktails like the Paper Plane inspired by Longines' longstanding aviation history, which includes the watch worn by Amelia Earhart on her Transatlantic journey. Cozy banquets created an intimate atmosphere as guests dined on lobster agnolotti and sipped prosecco. Attendees were gifted with a sterling silver bracelet featuring a pendant engraved with the word "ROAR", capturing the strong voices of this group of accomplished women.

Photography by George Pimentel.



From left: Lisa Berry, Olunike Adediji, Amanda Brugel and Ever Carradine  
Lily Yange and Samantha Guerrero



Natalie Brown  
Tamara Podemski  
Amanda Brugel



Lisa Berry and Samantha Walkes



From left: Kristin Booth, Chloe Wilde, Laura Vandervoort, and Caitlin Cronenberg



OverCat PR Team - Mirissa Valenti, Audrey Hyams Romoff, and Thalia Policicchio



Longines Canada Brand President Romina Di Pasquale and Amanda Brugel



Robyn Alomar and Vinessa Antoine



From left: Kristin Booth, Amanda Brugel, and Caitlin Cronenberg



Karen Robinson  
Torri Webster



Liv Judd  
Sasha Leigh Henry

Content supplied by Longines.

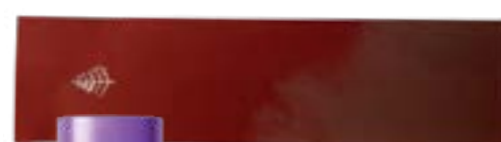


## Living luxe

It's such a lovely, specific feeling, isn't it, the moment that you decide to treat yourself? Since indulgences needn't necessarily be investments, we asked the Kit team to share their wish lists, from a crisp lemon cookie to a hand-embroidered cashmere to blanket

### Rani Sheen

Features director



"I was lucky enough to stay at the Four Seasons Hong Kong recently, and when I left a novel splayed face down by the bed, I returned to find my place marked by a red bookmark. Every time I sit down to read, I'm reminded of my dreamy trip. A thoughtful service touch that's enduringly useful—that's hospitality."

BOOKMARK, FREE WITH STAY, FOURSEASONS.COM



"Mineral sunscreen is a non-negotiable for me, but I've never enjoyed putting it on, until now. The milky texture and tiny nozzle let me draw pointillist dots and lines that blend in seconds, invisibly. It's...not cheap. But to me, it is perfect."

TATCHA THE SILK SUNSCREEN SPF 50, \$86, TATCHA.COM



"Guests at the Bottega Veneta runway show were invited to park their well-dressed behinds on animal-shaped leather beanbags—Jacob Elkordi folded his 6-foot-5 frame into a bunny with pink ears. Bottega commissioned them from Zanotta, maker of the 1968 Sacco beanbag; there's a ladybug, elephant, panda, fox and whale."

BOTTEGA VENETA CHAIR, \$12,600, BOTTEGAVENETA.COM

### Laura deCarufel

Editor-in-chief



"I've grown to love my morning coffee so much that my first cup feels almost sacred. I'm building a rainbow of Le Creuset mugs—elegant yet sturdy, the ceramic retains heat and feels wonderful in the hands and against the mouth. This sage shade is the perfect autumnal addition to my collection."

LE CREUSET MUG IN SAGE, \$25, LECREUSET.CA



"Simone Rocha is peerless at making romantic things cool. She adds tulle to parkas, lace to sweatshirts and ribbons to crystal earrings—all wishy Victorian glamour. She's my pick to fill the most important role in fashion: the top post at Chanel."

SIMONE ROCHA EARRINGS, \$845, SIMONEROCHA.COM



"The new fragrance from Aesop is a study in olfactory complexity: fresh yet woody, citrusy yet heady, it combines bergamot, fig and green tea. The result is an intriguing scent that brings joy with every spritz."

AESOP VIREUR EAU DE PARFUM, \$190 (100 ML), HOLTRENFREW.COM

### Renée Tse

Shopping editor



"This sleek vegan leather pouch from Canadian stationary brand Acoshia literally keeps every little thing (that's why it's called the E.L.T. pouch) in my bag organized in one place. Plus, I love how it's transparent on both sides of the pouch, so I can easily spot my charging cord, earbuds, lipstick or whatever I need."

ACOSHIA POUCH, \$50, ACOSHIA.COM



"This set of side plates from Australian tableware brand In The Roundhouse features iconic Italian phrases and is the definition of joy. They add a merry pop of colour to my tablescapes no matter the meal, whether it's dinner with the family or dessert for one."

IN THE ROUNDHOUSE PLATES, \$80 (SET OF 4), HOLTRENFREW.COM



"Italian artist Nicolas Aguzzi reinterpreted the classic Avalon grid design with bright, contrasting colours enhanced with hand-embroidered round glass beads. I'd like to wrap myself in this 100 per cent cashmere blanket with a good rom-com book or enjoy it as a design piece in my home when it's not in use."

HERMES BLANKET, \$11,400, HERMES.COM

### Briannah Daniel

Art director



"Walking around with a really good lip gloss or balm in my bag always makes me feel put together. This is one of the best I've tried: It has the perfect amount of tint for makeup or no-makeup days."

NATURIUM PHYTO-GLOW LIP BALM IN CHAI, \$14, NATURIUM.COM



"Interesting glassware is such a beautiful addition to a someone's space, and this set of coloured wine glasses would look perfect on display in any home. I'm also a believer that gorgeous glassware could make even drinking a glass of sparkling water feel like a moment."

ESTELLE STEMWARE IN AMBER SMOKE, \$130 (SET OF 2), ESTELLECOLORED-GLASS.COM



"I'm typically a mini-bag type of girl, but lately I've been getting into larger bags—which I attribute to my love of the Musubi tote from Acne Studios. It feels classic and luxe but with the right amount of subtle visual interest. Not to mention, it's a perfectly sized carry-all tote that would fit just nicely into my wardrobe."

ACNE STUDIOS BAG, \$2,650, ACNESTUDIOS.COM

### Eden Boileau

Production director



"These little wafer cookies flavoured with Sicilian lemon oil are tiny squares of sunshine. They're great because you can just have a couple...but I never can."

LOCKNER LEMON WAFERS, \$6, EATALY.CA



"We see a lot of beauty products in this business, but only a handful are memorably effective. Advanced Night Repair is a classic that's worth the splurge."

ESTÉE LAUDER ADVANCED NIGHT REPAIR SERUM SYNCHRONIZED MULTI-RECOVERY COMPLEX, \$110 (30 ML), ESTEELAUDER.CA

"A rose coloured velvet couch to go with my existing teal blue velvet accent chairs seems a bit wild—but amazing! Why fight my innate love of anything candy coloured?"

CRATE & BARREL COUCH, \$4,300, CRATEANDBARREL.CA



### Elena Viltovskaia

Creative director



"Notice Hair Co. is a Canadian woman-owned company that offers the best haircare in minimal plastic-free packaging. I stumbled upon its products while looking for a solution for my postpartum hair loss and never looked back. The citrus-scented Daytona duo is my latest obsession."

NOTICE HAIR CO. SHAMPOO & CONDITIONER SET, \$32, NOTICEHAIRCO.COM

"Is there a better feeling than getting into a beautifully made bed after a long day? Tuck brings you the bedding of your dreams."

TUCK THE CLASSIC BED BUNDLE IN PEARL, \$358 (KING), TUCK.CA



"As Coco Chanel once said, 'The best things in life are free. The second best things are very, very expensive.' To this, I would add: The time we have together with those we love is priceless."

CHANEL PREMIÈRE ÉDITION ORIGINALE WATCH, \$8,200, CHANEL.COM

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

Publisa Etbout

# BARÉNIA



SKIN IS A SCENT



REFILLABLE OBJECT

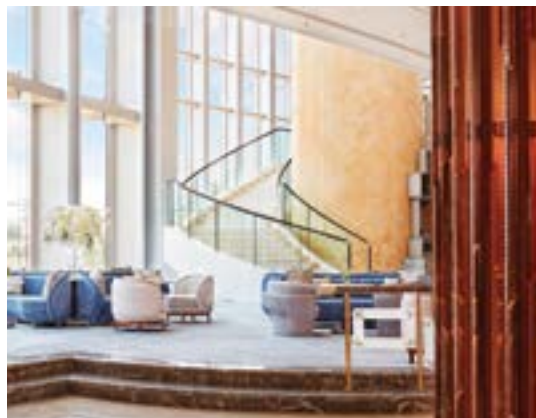




Hong Kong's epic skyline, seen from Victoria Peak.

# Bright lights, electric city

There's nothing like the pulsing energy of a world-class city. In search of great food, shopping, spas and culture, Rani Sheen dives in and seeks out Hong Kong's hidden gems and glossy grand dames



The Four Seasons Hong Kong lobby; Argo bar; and seafood delicacies.



A ham and scrambled egg sandwich at Australia Dairy Company.



Bluefin tuna with beetroot and ikura at Veà.



The street-food-inspired dining hall Ladies Street Sikk Faan.

## WHERE TO STAY

There is no shortage of luxe accommodation options in this city, from the Rosewood Hong Kong in Tsim Sha Tsui with its impressive contemporary art collection and spectacular harbour-facing restaurant, to the hip boutique hotel Upper House in Admiralty with its complimentary rooftop meditation classes and designer kids playroom, to the grand dame Peninsula in Kowloon, rich in its 100-year history and fleet of Rolls Royces.

If you're a pool person, you can't beat the Four Seasons: Often cited as the best pool in the city, it's an infinity-edged beauty that looks out over the harbour from the 6th floor, a serene spot to cool off from the heat. There's a separate lap pool (with underwater speakers!) where business travellers pound out the metres at dawn, and what has to be one of the most scenic cold plunges in the world—just the thing for a wellness-lover's energy jolt after a long flight. There are also no less than eight Michelin stars contained in the dining options onsite, and a very fun bar called Argo, which sends out a complimentary mini glass of bubbles garnished with tiny gummy bears on arrival. The hotel is in a dynamite location, part of the 55-storey story IFC tower, the second tallest in the city, which connects directly to a glossy shopping centre and myriad public transit options.

On the 45-minute drive from the airport, winding along the water past ports stacked with colourful shipping containers, barges bobbing beyond, I learn the astounding fact that more than 70 per cent of Hong Kong is undeveloped rural land. As a first-time visitor, it's surprising because when I think of this place, I think of towering skyscrapers, bustling markets and one of the busiest harbours in the world. And as an avowed city lover, that's what I came for—to be immersed in one of the most dynamic, fast-evolving cities in the world.

Turns out it's there, it's just crammed into a relatively tiny area. Emerging from the underwater Western Harbour Crossing tunnel and pulling into the Central district, I'm plunged right into morning rush hour. I drop my bags and head straight out into the stickily humid air for a jet lag-busting stroll. I join people streaming out of MTR subway stations and power walking to work on raised concrete walkways, heading for gleaming office buildings that sit side by side with ancient-looking apartment buildings. I peel off and head down to the ferry pier. There, gazing out at Victoria Harbour, deep teal water streaked with ferries, with the bustle of Central at my back and equally busy Kowloon on the other side, I feel it, the city's electric energy crackling all around.

In search of the city's most exciting eateries, galleries, spas and shopping, I set out to wander, hopping on a double-decker historic "ding ding" tram to explore the Hong Kong island side, wandering Wan Chai's chic boutiques and cafés on steep terraced streets punctuated with old-growth banyan trees.

I ride the famed mid-levels outdoor escalators in Central, browse produce markets piled high with greens and tropical fruits, and take the Star Ferry from Central across to Kowloon, where ultra-modern waterfront art galleries and shopping malls make way for busy street markets and hyper-densely populated residential blocks.

Here's the best of what I found, from handmade velvet slippers by a third-generation shoemaker to a spectacular Michelin-starred restaurant helmed by a chef who grew up in Toronto.

## WHERE TO EAT

**THE NOSTALGIC BRUNCH** For a delightful—not to mention affordable—breakfast or lunch, it's essential to eat at one of the many cha chaan tengs. Hong Kong's take on an American retro diner or British greasy spoon. Standout spots like the legendary hole-in-the-wall Lan Fong Yuen or the brightly lit, fast-moving Australia Dairy Company serve comfort food like thick slabs of French toast stuffed with peanut butter and drizzled with sweet condensed milk, or bowls of creamy macaroni soup with sliced ham. Wash it down with milk tea (I'm partial to the iced version)—strong black tea made with evaporated milk, a holdover from when this was a more affordable version of the fresh milk British colonizers put in their tea, or yuenyeung—a blend of coffee, tea and evaporated milk.

**THE CASUAL DINNER** After shopping souvenirs and accessories at the Ladies' Market in Mong Kok, grab dinner at the Ladies Street Sikk Faan, an indoor recreation of traditional dai pai dong food stalls with cool neon signage and colourful decor. Try Cantonese specialties like shrimp toast, clay pot eggplant and salted fish and pork, and crispy salt and pepper tofu, alongside beer served in blue and white patterned bowls.

**THE FINE DINING SPLURGE** For a showstopping dinner, book a table at Veà, helmed by Hong Kong-born chef Vicky Cheng, who grew up in Scarborough and trained in Toronto and New York. In the plush but intimate dining room—choose the counter for a front-row view of the chefs in action—you'll be treated to a parade of French-meets-Chinese dishes that both taste incredible and tell a fascinating story. Many of them nod to nostalgia, like a salted fish and bok choy sabayon starter inspired by an '80s Hong Kong pop song, and fruity Haw Flakes candies served as palate cleansers. It's a world-class meal very much rooted in place, and you won't soon forget it.



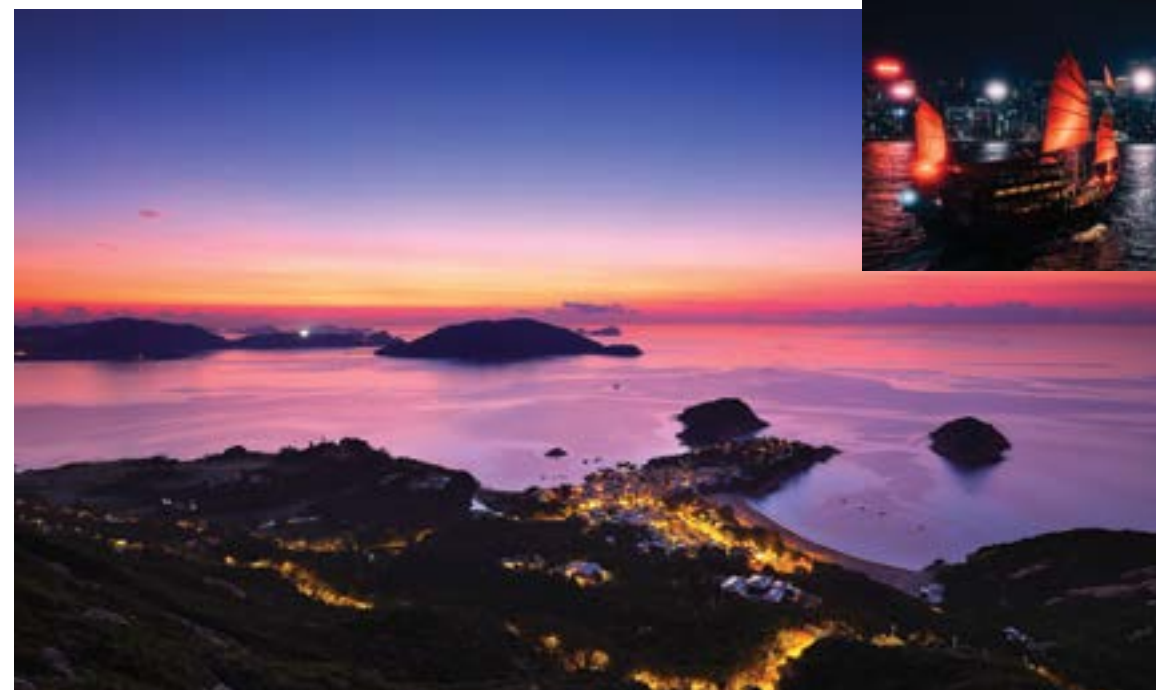
The Big Buddha statue on Lantau Island, accessible from the city by bus or aerial cable car.



A view of Victoria Harbour from Lagard Road on Victoria Peak.



Temple Street night market in Jordan.



The Dragon's Back hiking trail is under an hour from Central.



Take a harbour cruise (with cocktails) on the red-sailed Chinese junk boat Aqua Lana.

The art-filled K11 Musea shopping centre.



## WHERE TO SHOP

**THE MAGICAL SLIPPERS** Shoemaker Miru Wong's grandfather founded Sindart in 1958; she grew up in his workshop, learned to embroider at six years old and eventually took over the business in her 20s. She runs it from a tiny shop in a commercial building in Jordan, where the walls are covered in an array of colourful slippers, from fuchsia velvet to lemon yellow satin to silver mesh, hand-embroidered with chrysanthemums, peonies or butterflies. With most priced around \$50, these are a steal, and the chicest house slipper you can imagine (she ships worldwide). I bought a fuchsia velvet pair embroidered with peonies and wore them straight out to dinner.

**THE MODERN WORKWEAR** Hong Kong has a strong tradition of tailoring, mostly in menswear—if you want to get a shirt or suit made, there's no shortage of options. But the three-year-old brand Frey brings that expertise together with an eye for stylish womenswear. It's helmed by women who are part of the city's stylish expat scene, and they use mostly Italian deadstock fabrics from suppliers to the top fashion houses. You'll find sleek, relaxed separates like a coral boxy blazer in ultra-light tropical wool, a hip-length double-breasted pinstripe vest and flowing wide-leg trousers in olive viscose made of bamboo: Everything is designed to look equally effortless with heels or sneakers. Prices hover between \$200 and \$600, and for 30 per cent extra, you can get a body scan taken of your measurements and have a piece made to measure (and shipped to you at home).

**THE LOCAL DESIGN HUB** I like to check out local independent creators wherever I travel, and PMQ is like a design incubator meets shopping destination set in a former police school in Sheung Wan. Rows of small studios surround an open-air courtyard, filled with emerging talent like Edmund Ip of Bathe to Basics, who studied perfumery but uses essential oils to craft a beautiful hand sanitizer spray in a flat circle bottle, roll-on perfume oils and haircare. Taste Library is a kitchen lab offering cooking workshops, author talks and a wide range of culinary books to bring food traditions and stories to life.

**THE ICONS** Hong Kong has some iconic shopping destinations, like the glossy department store Lane Crawford and the discerningly curated boutique Joyce, whose buyers scour the collections to offer the latest from Alaïa, Yohji Yamamoto and emerging stars like New York-based Chinese designer Caroline Hu. Shanghai Tang, founded in Hong Kong in 1994, offers classic pieces with traditional Chinese details, like a silk column dress with tiny jade buttons on one shoulder, a nod to the qipao dress. (The candles in ginger flower or longjing dew scents make lovely gifts.) You'll find all of these at the gorgeous K11 Musea mall on the Kowloon harbourfront. If you're a bargain hunter, make the longer journey to the Horizon Plaza outlet mall, where these stores and more offer designer wares marked down from 50 to 90 per cent off.



Indie brands abound at incubator meets shopping destination PMQ.

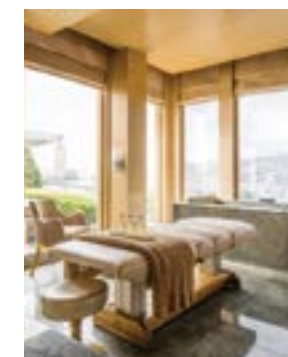
## WHERE TO SPA

**THE FOOT TREATMENT** If you're doing it right, you will spend a lot of time walking in Hong Kong, up plenty of steep, windy streets. Treat your feet to a dose of reflexology, a traditional massage technique that targets pressure points, dating back thousands of years in China. At Tai Pan Reflexology Parlour in Tsim Sha Tsui, you'll descend from busy Nathan Road into a dimly lit 1940s-inspired space decorated in black and red. If you book a foot massage treatment (\$50 for 50 minutes), you'll change into an oversized black T-shirt and shorts and start in an old-fashioned barber chair as your feet soak and cleanse, then head to a room of lay-flat loungers where you'll lie under a cozy blanket as a therapist massages your soles, ankles and shins with sweeping, firm strokes. Breathe through the tender points (there are many) and you'll feel tension release and energy flood up your legs. Add on an herbal foot steaming session (\$30), and you'll sit on a bench with your legs in a bamboo steamer infused with detoxifying Chinese herbs as everything below the knee heats and sweats, a strangely relaxing and invigorating sensation.

**THE RED CARPET FACIAL** The most opulent, skin-reviving experience is the Triple Crown facial at the Four Seasons spa, the signature treatment of celebrity facialist Joanna Vargas, who cares for the complexions of Naomi Watts, Julianne Moore and Keri Russell (her facials aren't available in Canada, yet). It's 90 truly transcendental minutes (\$845) that will leave you looking as if you definitely didn't just spend 15 hours on a plane. Gentle exfoliation and hydrating masks and serums bookend the powers of microcurrent, using a proprietary device Vargas developed with a biochemical engineer. After finishing the right side, the therapist shows me a mirror and half of my face is noticeably sculpted and lifted—it looks like I had a brow lift! Take your time in the hydrotherapy area afterwards, steaming, sauna-ing and lying in bubbling water on a curving structure of warm metal pipes.



Have your feet massaged amid 1940s decor at Tai Pan Reflexology Parlour.



A serene treatment room at the Four Seasons spa.

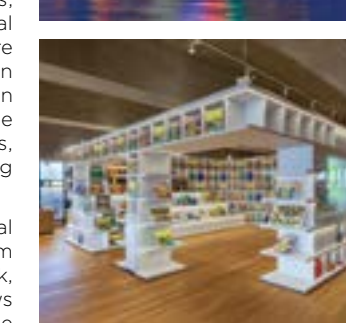
## WHAT TO DO

**THE ART DESTINATION** Like the MoMa, the Tate Modern and the Pompidou, the three-year-old M+ in the West Kowloon Cultural District is a must-visit modern art and visual culture gallery in a spectacular building (the exterior becomes a giant LED light screen you can see from across the harbour). This fall, the fashion-as-art work of Beijing designer Guo Pei (she of Rihanna's much-memed yellow Met Gala gown) is on display, while the ongoing Things, Spaces, Interactions is a fascinating collection of influential graphic art, furniture and design from across Asia. Be sure to catch the trippy, colourful album covers artist Alan Chan created for 1980s Hong Kong pop star Anita Mui, known for her bold androgynous style. The gallery shop on the way out is a prime spot to pick up souvenirs like posters, books and tiny hand-crafted pins and magnets featuring city icons like egg tarts and milk tea.

**THE VIEWS** For a bird's-eye view over the city, it's essential to sit back (almost 90 degrees back) as the Peak Tram funicular railway trundles up the steep hillside to The Peak, the highest lookout point in the city with spectacular views across the harbour. Pop a coin into a telescope on the Sky Terrace at the top and you'll be able to peer into the massive mansions perched on the hillside, imagining the opulence within. On the way back down, stop for snacks, a coffee at % Arabica and souvenirs (I bought a noodle box made of gummy candy).

**THE TOUR** Vancouver-born Virginia Chan of Humid with a Chance of Fishballs offers personalized, ultra-organized and really fun tours. She specializes in food, like an "off the eaten path" exploration of mom-and-pop street food vendors or a nighttime eating tour of Kowloon City, but can put together an itinerary of exactly what you want to see and who you want to meet. Her "Is this a tourist trap?" Instagram video series on famous spots like the Temple St. Night Market or the Aqualuna dim sum cruise is a great resource for deciding your own itineraries.

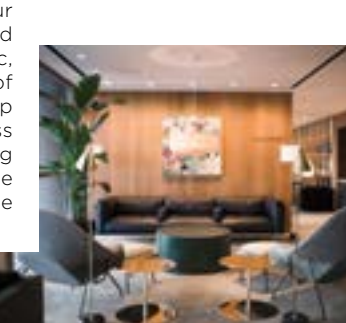
**THE AIRPORT** To scratch that last-minute gift or souvenir itch, head to G.O.D. (Goods of Desire) on your way to your gate, for cool printed Ts and design-forward games and puzzles. If you're flying Hong Kong's own Cathay Pacific, know that its airport lounges are worth a few hours of pre-departure exploration in their own right. The flagship Pier Business lounge has its own tea house serving glass teapots of jing green tea with walnut cookies and egg tarts, and a made-to-order noodle bar where I had noodle soup, smashed cucumber salad and dumplings, one of the tastiest meals of my trip.



The M+ museum's exterior becomes a giant LED screen at night; the shop is a great place to grab gifts.



Ride the ultra-steep Peak Tram up to the spectacular lookout.



Cathay Pacific's next-level Pier lounge.

# HardWear by Tiffany

A design from 1962 inspired  
by New York, a city in flux.

An expression of love's  
transformative strength.



Tiffany.com © 2024 T&CO.

*With love, Since 1837* **TIFFANY & CO.**