

VITA

YOUR LIFESTYLE SUPPLEMENT FROM VITADAILY.CA • DECEMBER 2018

25 *Days of Beautiful* **GIVEAWAYS!**

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Seasonal
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GOOD INFLUENCE
How (*and Why*) Brands
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Bloggers

CHRISTMAS SPIRITS
Yuletide Tipples to
Give *and* Get



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SELENA GOMEZ
The PARKER Bag
coach.com

EDITOR'S DESK



editor's letter

It's the most wonderful time of year, right?! Even if you're not 100 per cent sold on that fact, this issue of *VITA* could help convince you. This month, we've decided to limit our gift suggestions to beauty—and the best part? We're contesting every single pick in our guide, pages 4 and 5, off! How's that for a festively fabulous start?!

Also included in these merry pages: our annual Christmas "spirits" guide (page 13), a party cheese board how-to (page 11) and, on page 14, a sleigh-full of great reasons to stay home (or at a local hotel) this holiday season.

Fashion-wise, we're looking at the growing trend toward customized, from handmade-right-here garments to concocted-just-for-you fragrances to one-of-a-kind eyewear (page 6). Plus, two global jewelers who have brought the art of DIY design right to Vancouver (page 7). As for makeup, we're talking to cosmetics brands—and the social-media stars they team with—to find out how those partnerships benefit consumers like you and me (pages 9 and 10).

Since we don't publish a January issue (making the month of December a true break for our team), I'll take this opportunity to not only wish you a happy holiday, but a wonderful New Year, too. See you in February 2019!

Noa Nichol
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



GUCCI GIFT

I feel like I may be a little late to the Christmas party on this one, but man-oh-man do I want a Gucci belt of my very own. The best place to get this iconic accessory? **Colton's Couture**, carrying various styles and with locations in Richmond Centre, Oakridge and, most recently, Metrotown (read all about the newest store on page 12). **4700 Kingsway. Coltonscouture.com**



UNDER-THE-TREE WEAR

Victoria's Secret recently released its \$1 million fantasy bra for 2018 but, budget or not, I'd much rather don this Marie Jo set (\$211 at **Diane's Lingerie**) with won't-break-the-bank-but-still-gorgeous details like shimmery ribbon on the underwire, a feminine bow and a velvety and slightly abstract floral pattern. **2950 Granville St., 604-738-5121. Dianeslingerie.com**



JOLLY JACKET

With an aim to jolly jump on the current-coat-trend bandwagon, I'm hoping someone, anyone, gifts me this vegan Sherpa **Wilfred Free "The Teddy"** jacket (\$198 at **Aritzia**). It's cosy, plush and comes in six colours (can I request one of each, please)? I love the product description on the website: "It makes you feel like a toasty little marshmallow." My exact goal throughout the holiday season. **1100 Robson St., 604-684-3251. Aritzia.com**



CHRISTMAS CROSSBODY

First introduced in 1973, "the little bag that could" is a longtime **Coach** favourite (and a longtime personal fave of mine) thanks to its minimalist crossbody-to-clutch design. Crafted in textured crinkle leather with a brilliant metallic sheen, you (and, hopefully, I, if Santa reads this) can instantly change the look of this metallic Dinky (\$375) with an interchangeable strap. **650 W. 41st Ave., 604-266-1214. Ca.coach.com**

FESTIVE FENDI

It may be winter, but I'm looking ahead to summer—and seeing myself rocking a pair of **Fendi** shades. These sunglasses (\$460) are purr-fect for that future pursuit, with acetate cat-eye frames and an exclusive all-over "FF" motif. **Fendi.com**



SEASON SQUARED

We've got—and are giving away!—a plethora of beautiful suggestions in our holiday gift guide (just turn the page), but topping my personal "get gorgeous" list this Christmas is a lovely set by **Estée Lauder** (\$232 at **Nordstrom**) that includes not one but two full-size bottles of **Advanced Night Repair Synchronized Recovery Complex II** for the most exquisite Xmas skin (and doubly so!). **799 Robson St., 604-699-2100. Shop.nordstrom.com**



VITA

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MOOR-Y CHRISTMAS

The best way to get familiar with the best of Hungarian beauty this holiday season? This **Omorovicza Introductory Set** (\$120), including the brand's award-winning Moor mud products, Queen of Hungary Mist and more! Omorovicza.com



SAINT NICK

More like saint or sinner; this four-piece **Kat Von D** lip and fragrance set (\$83), with two glass travel sprays and two exclusive full-size Studded Kiss Crème lipsticks in shades created to honour the scents, lets you choose (or be both). Katvondbeauty.com



HAPPY GOLDEN DAYS

This **Charlotte Tilbury Bar of Gold Trio** (\$75) combines tones of one of the world's most precious minerals into a portable palette so you can dress your skin in gold this season any way you choose, from your eyes to your cheeks—even pressed onto your lips! Charlottetilbury.com



MISTLETOE MUST

Get your pucker perfect for Christmas kissing with **Kat Von D's Best of Nudes Mini Studded Kiss Crème Lipstick Set** (\$53), bursting with a range of six tones from fawn nude to blush to a rich chocolate-box-worthy brown. Katvondbeauty.com

ALMOND JOY

From **L'Occitane**, this Delicious Almond Collection (\$79), packed with products made from sustainably sourced drupes from the South of France, could make you consider roasting something other than chestnuts on an open fire. Ca.loccitane.com



MISTY & BRIGHT

Bastide's multi-tasking dry oil face and body mist (\$68 at **Holt Renfrew**) outshines the rest (even Rudolph's nose) thanks to deeply hydrating linoleic acid and vitamin E. It creates a nourishing protective barrier for your skin—and boasts a seasonally appropriate orange scent, too. Holtrenfrew.com



BRUSH BRILLIANCE

Called **Brilliance**, **Nude by Nature's** holiday set (\$60) is a stunner, packed with the ultimate collection (read: 15) of cruelty-free complexion, eye and lip brushes—perfectly packaged in an elegant roll, to boot. Nudebynature.ca



TEA SET

AmorePacific's Green Tea Me Gorgeous Set (\$130 at **Sephora**) includes a trio of products—like this **Essential Crème Fluid**—containing the brand's very own green tea, garden grown and hand harvested on a beautiful island in South Korea. Sephora.ca



SHIMMER TIME

Share some shimmer this holiday season with a deluxe-size trio (\$33) of **Stila's** long-wearing lustrous shadows in **Kitten** (a vibrant nude pink), **Cloud** (cool lavender gray with gold pearl) and **Twig** (a warm chestnut brown). Stila.ca

SHINE SO BRIGHT

Offering the gold standard in holiday hair care, **Kérastase's Elixir Ultime Holiday Gift Set** (\$112) includes everything needed—shampoo, conditioner and a beautifying oil (pictured)—for fa-la-la-la-fabulous locks. Kerastase.ca



FESTIVE FRESH

Not sure what to give? This set (\$76 at **Sephora**) features **Fresh** faves for beautiful, healthy skin and lips. From the **Soy Face Cleanser** to the latest antioxidant hero, **Glow Water**, this collection is perfect to gift ... or to keep for yourself! Sephora.ca

EVERYTHING IL-LUMI-NATED

Inspired by the unique Nordic lights of Finland, this lovely **Lumi** set (\$225) includes a serum for cellular regeneration and an Arctic superfruits-packed cream to keep skin balanced and healthy—in frosty weather and beyond. Jbskinguru.com



FESTIVE FACIALS

This glowing (vegetarian!) gift set features five favourite facial masks from **The Body Shop** (\$86) informed by beauty cultures and rituals 'round the world—talk about peace on earth! Thebodyshop.com



HOLIDAY HAIR

A festive gift set for all hair types, this **Cleansing Oil Collection** from **Shu Uemura** (\$154) includes shampoo, conditioner and the **Wonder Worker**—no, not Santa Claus, but a luxe leave-in mist that's pretty perfect for holiday party prepping. Shuueamura.ca



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GIFTS & GIVEAWAYS



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INFLUENCER PICK

"I love Benefit Cosmetics' Gimme Some Sugar Set (\$59) because it has my all-time fave bronzer, Hoola, which I like to bathe in on the daily. Top that off with some High Beam highlighter and rockin' lashes, and you've got yourself a dream Xmas gift!"

CREATIVE CLAU

Laura Mercier's limited-edition Master Class Artistry in Light Holiday Illuminations Collection (\$160 at Sephora) boasts a dozen eye colours, three cheek shades, three eye liners and two brushes (the only thing missing: a partridge in a pear tree!).
Sephora.ca



TIED WITH A RIBBON
Inside this beautiful Shiseido set (\$68 at Sephora): five unique shades of ModernMatte Powder Lipstick. Outside: the work of Japanese artists Baku Maeda and Toru Yoshikaw—together Ribbonesia—decorating a keepsake box. *Sephora.ca*



PARTY PALETTE
Beautycounter's Iconic Velvet Eyeshadow Palette (\$65) is the perfect holiday helper, with nine long-wearing shades that transition effortlessly from day to night. *Beautycounter.com*



SEASON'S SCENT
For the holidays, Tiffany Eau de Parfum is surrounded by an intricate paper design of the New York flagship store and Tiffany Blue diamonds in this lovely, limited-edition box (\$150). Tip: personalise this bottle with custom engraving to make it the perfect gift! *Tiffany.ca*



FROST BITES
Rihanna's got a lock on staying ice-queen-chic this winter, with Fenty frosted eye and lip crayon sets (three to choose from, \$48 each) including a trio of creamy metallic crayons in a portable mirrored case. *Fentybeauty.com*



GLOW HO HO
This limited-edition offering (\$115 at Holt Renfrew) features two Sulwhasoo masks—one overnight, one peel-off—formulated to deliver a glowing, clear complexion. Also included: deluxe stocking-stuffer-sized samples of a start-to-finish skin-care regime. *Holtrenfrew.com*

16 BUON NATALE
Inspired by Venice, Valmont's Gaggia Medio I (\$550)—a sensual, mysterious scent featuring cardamom, sandalwood and amber—is one of a series of five fragrances in bottles adorned with a Murano glass mask. *Storievenesiane.valmontcosmetics.com*



17 WONDER FULL
Part of Elizabeth Grant's Wonder Effect Collection (we're giving away the range), this Wonder Effect Night Concentrate (\$70) is a beauty award winner for good reason, saturating deep into skin while you sleep (and while Santa visits) to minimize signs of aging. *Elizabethgrant.com*



GREEN CHRISTMAS
Recently launched Veriphy Skincare offers three products—an eye cream (\$82) and a facial serum (\$105) and moisturizer (\$85)—that harness the power of a breakthrough plant extract called phytyglycoen. The best part? It's Canadian—and cruelty-free! *Veriphyskincare.com*

18 GORGEOUS GIFT
SkinCeuticals's Lipid Correction Kit (\$260) gives the gift of a glorious complexion, thanks to products bursting with ingredients and technology that refill cellular lipids to help support skin's natural self-repair and nourishment. *Skinceuticals.ca*



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BY RACHEL JOHNSTON

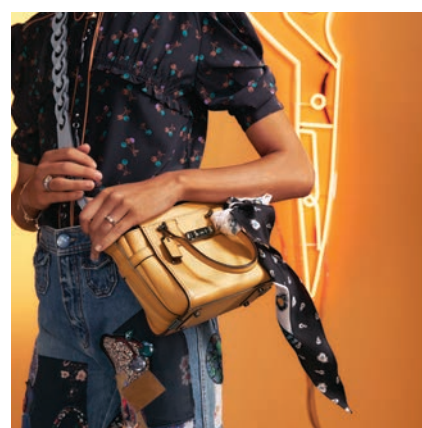
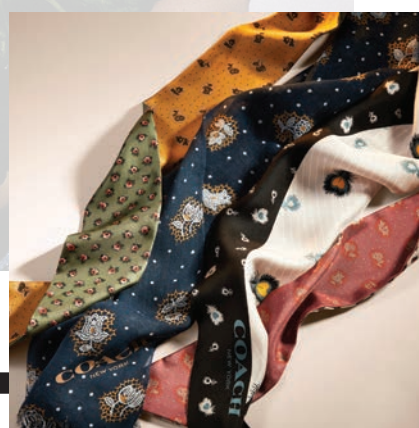
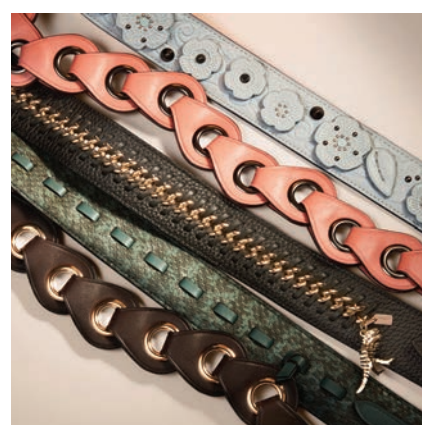
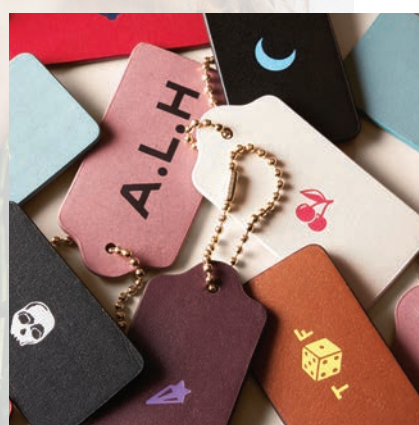
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For some, the desire to be considered unique starts early. Maybe it's wearing a quirky pair of tights and a tutu on the first day of school or adding a streak of neon hair colour during those rebellious teenage years (sorry, mom). For others, it shows up in subtler ways: a devoted search for a beautiful, one-of-a-kind piece of jewelry or patiently testing an array of fragrances to find one's signature scent. Indeed, being admired for something rare and exclusive cultivates a sense of pride and identity. While cities like New York, Paris and London have been happily obliging for decades with atelier fashion and beauty, Vancouver is relatively new to the game. And locals are eating it up.

Inspired by the chinoiserie art form, Vancouver label **Grandi** incorporated graphic prints into its spring-summer 2019 demi-couture collection, *Prismania*. During a trip to Malaysia and Singapore, designer-dressmaker Grandy began to sketch the bananas, taro and magnolia growing thick in the lush tropical zone. The hand-drawn elements were then painstakingly pieced together to form the prints used in the collection.



“For some, the desire to be considered unique starts early”




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“The final result is something beautiful, bold and provocative,” Grandy says. “Unlike most patterned fabric used in fashion, the prints are about four-by-five feet so [they] rarely repeat on a single piece of garment. Each article is handmade and only available in limited quantities.”

Local perfume-maker **Ayala Moriel** was ahead of the city's bespoke curve, crafting custom fragrances as early as 2001 from natural, raw materials like essential oils and plant extracts. Her secret ingredient? Moriel knows her clients intimately and concocts perfumes based on what she learns about them.

“The connection between personality and perfume always fascinates me,” she says. “It seems that each one of the essences I use has a life and character of its own. How each individual interacts with the scent is very telling of their internal world, their dreams and desires.”

Turning to a global brand, late last year **Coach** launched its design-it-yourself experience, **Coach Create**, allowing customers to individualize everything from bags to wallets to sneakers. Vancouver's Burrard Street store now boasts a dedicated workshop area where a craftsman helps shoppers customize their new items with Coach tea roses, rivets, souvenir pins or a snazzy strap or charm.

And then there's Sara Moshurchak, owner of **Mosh Framemakers** and one of only three female eyeglass frame-makers in the world. In a workshop behind her Gastown shop's showroom, she and her team craft bespoke eyewear for both local and international clients.

Those lucky enough to snag a pair are encouraged to choose shape, size and lens colour—precious materials can even be implemented into the frames. Her most unique request? A beloved pet's fur! Now that's made-to-order. 🐾



Be Dazzled

TWO BESPOKE JEWELRY EXPERIENCES THAT TAKE
DIY DESIGN TO GLITTERING NEW HEIGHTS
BY NOA NICHOL

The idea of customization has long existed in the jewelry industry (where the image of a nervous young groom-to-be working with a goldsmith and diamond setter to create a one-of-a-kind engagement ring for his beloved is easily conjured up), but two international brands are now taking the idea of DIY design to new heights—and right here in Vancouver, to boot.

TIFFANY & CO.

Enter this world-famous purveyor of bling's Burrard Street boutique, head up the sweeping staircase (either side) to the light-filled second floor and behold a very special tool called a Gravo Touch (informally, the "doodle machine") that will custom engrave with symbols, letters, numbers and even your own hand-drawn sketches virtually any piece (with a flat surface) in store for you. From the brand's iconic heart tag bracelet to cuff links and dog collars, the beautiful thing about this process, according to staff members who have been specially trained to operate the machine and its connected interface, is that "it becomes the customer's piece and stops being Tiffany." Want a curved surface DIY-ed? No problem. Requests for hand-engraved work are sent straight to New York, where a master artisan will create, for a price, a one-of-a-kind piece. And that's not all: **Tiffany & Co.** leather goods can be custom embossed, glassware can be custom etched and fabric-based offerings, like baby blankets, can be custom stitched to give a perfect, personal touch. **723 Burrard St., 604-630-1300. Tiffany.ca**



LINKS OF LONDON

Did you know that the Sweetie bracelet was modelled after a kids' candy necklace (hence its looks, and delicious name)? We learned this on a recent trip to **Links of London's** Pacific Centre store—and were also educated on the fact that this iconic piece of jewelry is pretty much a custom piece through and through. From the bracelet's links (your choice of finishes, including sterling silver, gold vermeil, rose-gold vermeil and rhodium, plus a selection of diamond and gemstone rondelles) to its charms (these are nearly as numerous as the emojis on your iPhone, and reflect personal hobbies, passions and memories galore; there are also some limited-edition holiday offerings, like a snowman, available now), no two Sweeties are alike (unless you want them to be!). The best part: engravable charms, including hearts, discs and keepsake lockets, can be personalized right in store, and the eternal option of adding extra links means a Sweetie can grow with the lucky giftee. **701 W. Georgia St., 604-669-8801. Linksoflondon.com**

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A Good Influence

MORE THAN A DECADE AFTER THE FIRST YOUTUBE MAKEUP STARS ARRIVED, AND EIGHT YEARS AFTER INSTAGRAM, WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN INFLUENCER LAND?
BY AILEEN LALOR

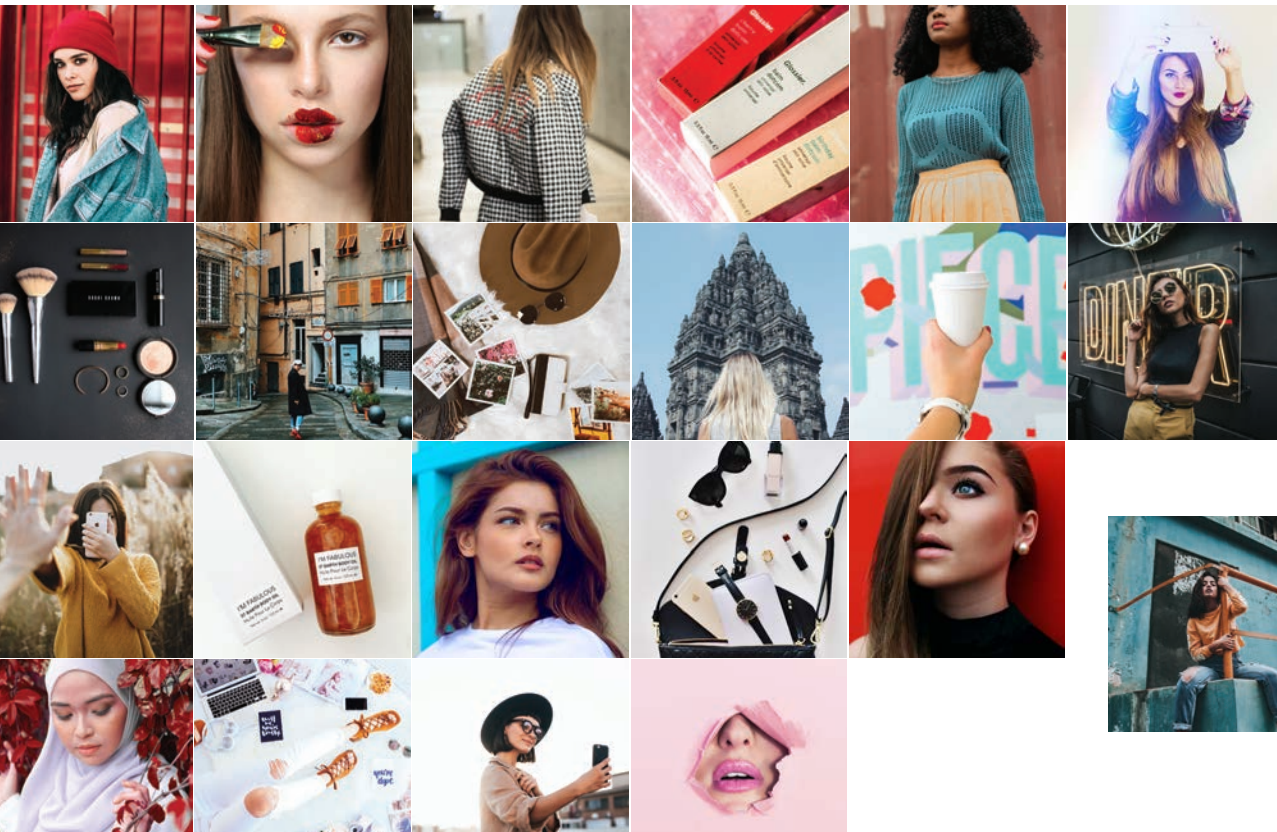
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Ask a beauty industry insider what makes a great influencer and the same word will crop up over and over again: authenticity. Real women in their homes, sharing their experiences trying products or techniques, using layman's language. They're a million times more relatable than the models, actresses or dermatologists who were sharing brand stories a decade ago. It's been the case since 2007, when the names to know were Boston-based Michelle Phan, then a part-time waitress, and Brit Lauren Luke, famous for the snoring dog in the background of her YouTube videos.

"I got into vlogging through selling makeup on eBay. I had a huge customer base who wanted to know how I'd created certain looks so I decided to do video tutorials and it went from there," says Luke. "It was so innocent and fun—there was no money to be made and everyone was filming raw, just having fun in their bedrooms sharing makeup tips."



"When you ask a beauty industry insider what makes a great influencer, the same word will crop up over and over again—AUTHENTICITY"



Brands, keen to access those captive audiences, were quick to develop relationships with YouTubers and, later, Instagrammers. Phan became a spokesperson for Lancôme and her most popular video, where she transforms herself into Barbie, has garnered 66 million views. Luke was a household name in the U.K., with a column in *The Guardian* and a makeup line at Sephora. "My makeup launch was advertised in the middle of Times Square ... I even met the Queen," she says.

Eventually, there *was* money to be made; Luke recalls turning down a \$12,000 offer because she didn't believe in the product. Now, that seems like peanuts; those with the biggest followings can make thousands per post, and there's a quid pro quo. An endorsement of your product or a collab with brow queen Desi Perkins or smoky-eye expert Jaelyn Hill, both with millions of followers, can lead to an immediate bump in sales (when Becca launched Hill's Champagne Pop highlighter in 2015, 25,000 units were sold in 20 minutes).

To identify the next big star, brands keep their ears to the ground. "There's no real method; we do read the requests we get and end up working with a lot of influencers from there. For others, we might stumble on their profile or find them through influencers we're working with," explains April Lockhart, brand marketing manager for Caudalie.

The most important criteria: they must be an existing user of the product and know their stuff. "They should be passionate and interested in a topic, with their own point of view and style," says Benefit Canada marketing director Hayley Shay. "They have to be making great content, too—content they care about."

Great brows are another must for Benefit, which has partnered with Perkins on Bomb Ass Brows—a limited-edition curation of her favourite brow products, dressed up in rose-gold packaging. Perkins is known for her makeup transformations, and it's easy to see how those translate to a visual medium like Instagram or YouTube. For skin-care brands, though, things can be tougher.

"Skin care is more about creating a lifestyle through content. It can be a challenge to physically see how skin care looks on someone's skin, so you have to be slightly more creative," says Lockhart. However, today's millennials are obsessed with skin care and a brand like Caudalie, traditionally known for luxe, clean anti-aging, resonates.

"It's definitely a changing audience. There's a whole segment of skin-care users who weren't familiar with Caudalie and have fallen in love with it," she says. "It's one of those timeless brands that truly has something for everyone. Over the last year I've seen the word spread like wildfire across Instagram."

So, brands get recognition and influencers get cash, products and luxury junkets, but what does all this bring for customers? Digital marketing expert Erin Sousa of Sparkle Media says it's a great way to discover small brands.

"Consumers benefit from Instagram marketing because they're exposed to options," she says. "It's cool to see an outlet that's accessible to brands that may have not been large enough to afford traditional marketing."

Then there are tips: influencers who, perhaps, don't have the symmetrical features of a model

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

BEAUTY & BITES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

or the skill set of a makeup artist can show how a product really performs. In some cases, they're even educating the brand.

"They have a different take on our products," says Shay. "For example, we spoke about Precisely My Brow as a tool to get a more defined brow, but we found from our influencers they were using it to get a softer look."

These days, of course, influencer authenticity means more than just complaining about the occasional zit or announcing your divorce. Customers know that influencers are paid for coverage, and they're suspicious.

"Blogging began as a place of truly honest consumer-driven reviews and, though we all still want it to be like that, influencers are receiving free product from brands, money, sponsorships, trips to the Caribbean, and we would be naive to say that doesn't taint the consumer value of an 'honest review,'" says Jayne Lim, who has written the blog *Cosmeticproof.com* since 2011 and brings a science background to her beauty reviews. "Now there are posts that actually state 'honest' or 'unsponsored review' in the title when this is what they were supposed to be to begin with."

Lim's approach: sponsored content should be an extension of the things you were talking about anyway, and good influencers shouldn't be afraid to say bad things. "There is a diplomatic way to review a product negatively and I have done so with some cult products that everyone else has seemed to rave about. I still work with most brands to this day, even if my review of their product is not completely positive. If anything, these types of reviews strengthen my relationship with my audience."

The other struggle for the most successful influencers is, when they become famous, they lose that girl-next-door vibe that attracted their fans in the first place. "Do what you love and you'll never work a day in your



"The other struggle for the most successful influencers is, when they become FAMOUS, they lose that girl-next-door vibe that attracted their fans in the first place"

life' and 'live out your dreams,' they say ... until you actually do and then you aren't relatable anymore. #YouTubelife," Perkins tweeted recently.

Some believe brands would be better served working with micro-influencers, who have less than 100,000 followers—though Sousa says, since Instagram changed its algorithms to reduce the number of people who see your posts, anyone with under 25,000 followers falls into that category.

"A true influencer has an engaged following," she says, adding, "Metrics like how many people swipe up on a story, how many views a story gets and how many saves on images are happening are much more powerful metrics than followers, likes and comments, since those can all be purchased or faked."

Shay says that Benefit is always monitoring micro-influencers and giving them opportunities to grow. Another trend she's identified: brands recruiting influencers from within.

"An example of that is our own national brow artist Maddox Lu, who has his own following," she says.

It's a similar story at Caudalie, where founder Mathilde Thomas is a social media star who "gives an inside look into the brand that you don't get to see on our main channels," says Lockhart.

"It's so special that she's still so involved in the brand ... that I think people are interested in seeing what her life is like. She's the most hard-working woman, but looks effortlessly graceful doing it. It's inspiring to be around her."

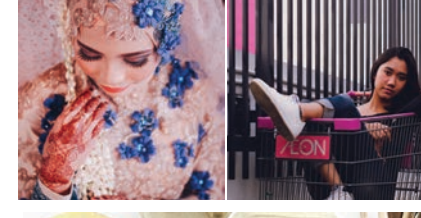
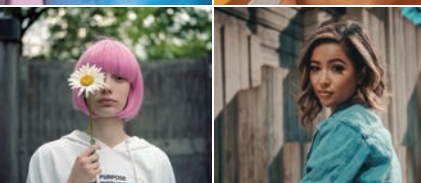
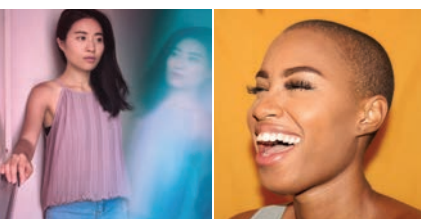
Other possibilities for the market to develop include via nano-influencers—regular people with a few hundred followers or friends (agencies like Vancouver's *Social Nature* distribute product samples on the basis that those very nano-influencers will review them within their own circles, replicating traditional word-of-mouth as closely as possible)—and even CGI influencers like Lil Miquela, who has already partnered with Prada and posed in *Moncler*.

But Lockhart isn't keen. "It's wild to think about that existing in the market. I think Caudalie is such an authentic brand that we value the real opinions of our customers and want to keep our relationships genuine," she says.

And what of the original influencers? Phan has managed to parlay her early success into a lasting career, but Luke's story is different. She dropped out of the vlogging world because of a dispute with the agency she was working on makeup palettes with and was virtually silent for four years, until this October. In her first video, she talks more about what happened while away: she had anxiety, panic attacks and a relationship breakdown. She's been busy with her family and her 9-5 job. She moved house. It's a far cry from trips to the Caribbean. It feels real. The dogs are still present and, while she's now in her kitchen, not her bedroom, there's no ring light or expensive, studio-style production values—just Luke, talking softly into her camera, a little nervous.

She explains why she shared details about her personal life: "I've never hidden anything ... and have always worn my heart on my sleeve. There are so many people suffering with anxiety, depression ... I want to tell them my story so they know they're not alone. I used to receive so many emails from people who had watched my videos when they were in dark places. They told me my videos helped them more than I could imagine. I owed them my story."

A recent video sees her attempting the OTT looks most of today's influencers specialize in. She giggles as she tries to remember how to apply false lashes and wonders if she can leave the house with so much makeup on her face. And the first comment speaks a thousand words: "I'm so happy you're making videos again. You were the first person I subscribed to ... you started my makeup obsession and taught me so much! With how the beauty community has been lately, it's refreshing to see a genuine, down-to-earth person." 🙌



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Mac 'n' Cheese

A HOLIDAY PARTY JUST ISN'T COMPLETE WITHOUT
A GREAT CHEESE BOARD—OR A GREAT SCOTCH



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This Christmas, we're planning to make our cheese board sing (carols and all) by pairing artisanal selections with a fine, single-malt Scotch—The Macallan, made from 100 per cent barley and matured in oak casks, is an excellent choice—to create the grown-up version of “Mac ‘n’ Cheese.” Here's how.

PERFECT PAIRINGS

Start with The Macallan Double Cask 12 Years Old: a fully rounded single malt that boasts notes of creamy butterscotch, candied orange and vanilla custard. Pair it with a young manchego—a rich, mellow sheep's milk cheese that cuts through the spice and citrus notes of the Scotch while enhancing its notes of honey and vanilla custard. Another option: pick up a bottle of The Macallan Rare Cask and bring out its hint of maple syrup and candied nuts by pairing it with a soft and creamy camembert. The Macallan Rare Cask's notes of vanilla and citrus also help to cut through the cheese's richness, making this duo a match made in festive foodie heaven.



PRESENTATION MATTERS

A careful arrangement will make everything look and taste its best. Start with cheeses that complement your spirit selection; aim for multiple styles and flavours. Include three to five non-cheese accoutrements that add a variety of colours and textures to the plate. Pick flavours that either complement each other or are opposites. Think in terms such as “salty and sweet” or “acidic and fatty.”

PREPPING & PLANNING

Cheese is best served at room temperature, so prep your plate at least one hour before serving. Also, every guest should receive around an ounce of each cheese type. No cheese board? No problem! Presentation is an opportunity to show your personality. Try creating your own board with a piece of reclaimed wood, vintage ceramic tiles or a unique stone slab.

SLICE IT RIGHT

Fine cheese deserves to be sliced with care. For firm wedges, slice the rind on the side, then continue slicing to create easy-to-eat triangular portions. For blue and aged cheeses, chunk along the natural breaks by positioning your knife perpendicular to the cutting board. A soft wedge with a bloomy rind should be sliced from the side and then portioned into smaller pieces. And a slab of hard cheese is easy to portion: cut straight across the width of the slab and then in half again.

TAKE NOTES

Have pens and paper readily available for guests to capture their preferred Scotch and cheese combinations – not to mention, which The Macallan expression was their favourite dram of the evening! Themacallan.com



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Hot Shops

VANCOUVER'S GREATEST AND LATEST RETAILERS



GUCCI DÉCOR

If wearing Gucci's bright, vibrant, sometimes (OK, often) outlandish styles on your person isn't enough, you can now outfit your house in the designer brand, too. Presented as an exclusive installation at **Holt Renfrew** (on the skybridge), discover an eclectic and romantic world of furniture, furnishings and decorative items to dress your home—but only for a limited time, until January 10th, 2019. Before then, look for Gucci's Chiavari chair (with an embroidered tiger head on which to rest your tushy; \$3,095), 3-D Bees Jacquard separé (that's fancy for a room-dividing screen; \$33,420), Soave Amore Pantera (not made of actual panther) scented candle (\$750) and any of an array of whimsical cushions (one features the faces of Orso and Bosco, the Boston terriers of Gucci creative director Alessandro Michele, another a needlepoint teddy bear above the word, "Guccy"—a play on the House name influenced by tags found on Instagram). **737 Dunsmuir St., 604-681-3121. Holtrenfrew.com**

NOA NICHOL



COLTON'S COUTURE

It seems only natural (and most certainly fitting) that **Colton's Couture**—purveyor of the finest fashion brands—has situated its third boutique in B.C.'s largest mall. Following in the stylish footsteps of its sister stores, the new Metrotown locale, at 2,100 sparkling square feet, may be the largest, but maintains the same client-focused philosophy: "You're not sold to, you're listened to." Boasting marble, stainless-steel and glass fixtures, this latest (and, we're told, not last) iteration includes an eye-

popping rolling display to showcase its **Canada Goose** offerings (it is the exclusive retailer of the outerwear brand in Burnaby). Beyond its usual roster of luxe labels (**Gucci, Dior, Miu Miu** and more), Colton's has, with this shop's launch, added a new in-house line, **Liv and Addie**, to the mix. Named after the founder's granddaughters, we're lusting after the range's first release: a pared-down motorcycle jacket in butter-soft black leather with chunky zippers and clean lines. **4700 Kingsway, Burnaby. Coltonscouture.com**

NOA NICHOL



INDIGO

One of Canada's best-loved retailers is back on Robson Street and we couldn't be more thrilled. A shop-within-a-shop concept, **Indigo** is practically heaven when it comes to holiday gift-giving, with two levels packed with sections for home, wellness, baby, kids, art and, of course, books! Grab something yummy from **Starbucks** (there's one right inside the store) and search out the perfect read before getting lost in the candles, decorative pillows, toques, stationery and games—pretty much anything you can think of, it's here! We spotted Vancouver brands **Herschel** and **Vancouver Candle Co.** in the mix—and the local collabs don't end there, with a gorgeous installation by Canadian photographer Edward Burtynsky showcasing the ancient forests of Pacheedaht First Nation on Vancouver Island. This one's definitely in our good books. **1033 Robson St., 778-783-3978. Indigo.ca**

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PHOTO: STEPHANIE LAMY

OLIVER PEOPLES

It may sell eyewear, but the luxurious **Oliver Peoples** boutique on Alberni fits right in with the upscale jewelers and watchmakers occupying adjacent retail spaces. Done up in tones of green and gold (to mimic the foliage of Stanley Park) and designed with the utmost attention to detail (from its logo door handle to walls covered in ribbed walnut wood and sage suede), the shop—one of just two in Canada for the California-based brand—carries current and custom styles, plus collaborations with the likes of American fashion house **The Row**. One pair to keep an eye out for: the limited-edition OP-505. One of the first OP frames released, this exclusive-to-Vancouver style is featured in a washed teal acetate, 18-karat gold metal and mirrored gold-tone lenses. **1061 Alberni St. Oliverpeoples.com**

NOA NICHOL



FAO SCHWARZ

It's a highlight of many a trip to the Big Apple, and now you don't have to travel further than any Lower Mainland **Hudson's Bay** location to get your **FAO Schwarz** fix. From now until the end of the year, the Bay will host, in all of its stores, the famed New York-based toy company as a pop-up featuring everything from oversized plush animals to classic train sets to the iconic dance-on piano (complete with light-up keys). A must-shop wonderland for kids from four to 94, we have our own stuffie-loving eye on the gigantic teddy bear (\$600) that's become somewhat of a mascot for the brand (naughty or nice, we may or may not share it with our littles). **674 Granville St., 604-681-6211; 650 W. 41st Ave., 604-261-3311. Thebay.com**

NOA NICHOL

Making Spirits Bright

RICH, RARE AND DELICIOUS, OUR TOP FESTIVE DRINK PICKS ARE PERFECT FOR HOLIDAY TOASTING—AND GIFTING

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1. GIN JOY

In choosing libations for the season, don't forget about clear spirits, which make a wonderful base for timeless (read: year-round party-perfect) drinks like martinis. Other winter-worthy uses for gin? How about a hot cocktail or two? We've got recipes for a warming Sipsmith G&T on Vitadaily.ca! Sipsmith.com

2. SEASON'S SCOTCH

The Macallan Double Cask 12 Years Old (\$86 at BC Liquor Stores) is matured in a combination of 100 per cent sherry-seasoned American and European oak for a balanced profile of dried fruit and light oak spice. It offers a creamy palate with honeyed flavours carrying marmalade and baking spices, followed by a lengthy, fruity finish. Pair it with pumpkin pie for a perfect finish to your holiday feast. 768 Bute St., 604-660-4572. Beliqorstores.com



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3. CHRISTMAS GOOSE

Not the bird you cook but, rather, the brand you drink when you want to elevate a holiday gathering. From Grey Goose Vodka come several gifting options, including a flour tin, an espresso martini pack and a "twist and reveal" box that lets you choose from eight festive greetings. Greygoose.com

4. BRANDY OBSESSION

We can barely think of a more perfect-for-the-holiday-season sip than a smooth and balanced signature French brandy—specifically, Marquis de Villard VSOP, presenting aromas and flavours of Christmas (think baked apples, butterscotch, pear, dark chocolate and a hint of maple sugar). Marquisdevillard.com

5. BLUE CHRISTMAS

We're doubling up on this drink, thanks to Bombay Sapphire's gift pack, designed to illuminate when a candle is placed inside and perfect for holiday entertaining. Bombaysapphire.com

6. RUM PUM PUM PUM

This limited-edition Appleton Estate 15-year-old Jamaican rum—full bodied with orange peel, vanilla, toasted oak and subtle hints of coffee, nuts and molasses—is exclusively available in Canada (talk about adding a special touch to our eggnog!). Appletonestate.com

Happy holidays from VITA and please remember to enjoy these recommendations responsibly!



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TRAVEL

Home for the Holidays

THREE HOTELS. COUNTLESS REASONS
TO SPEND CHRISTMASTIME IN THE CITY
BY NOA NICHOL



THE WESTIN BAYSHORE
Vancouver's iconic Coal Harbour hotel and its restaurants—**H2 Rotisserie & Bar** and **H Tasting Lounge**—are getting festive this season with special offers, holiday menus and family-friendly fun. Staycation wise, the **Westin Bayshore** is offering, till December 23rd, a rejuvenating stay for two at the hotel plus a pair of complimentary passes to the **Vancouver Christmas Market** (including its beautiful holiday-themed carousel) in nearby Jack Poole Plaza. Other seasonal specials: a holiday baking master class on December 13th with H2 chef Caitlin Mark (you'll make and take home oatmeal pumpkin cookies

with a cranberry maple glaze, sugar cookies, thyme scones and orange marmalade), a weekend-only festive afternoon tea (in the lounge, featuring fresh-baked scones, apple fritters and pancetta bread pudding alongside seasonal **Tealeaves** loose-leaf selections like Nutcracker Black Tea and Sugar Plum Fairy) and, for merry (read: stress-free) meal prep, a turkey takeout package of a slow-roasted **Rosdown Farms** free-range turkey with traditional accompaniments and desserts cooked up by the pros at H2 for you to enjoy at home with family and friends (we won't tell them who cooked if you don't). **1601 Bayshore Dr., 604-682-3377. Westinbayshore.com**

THE SHANGRI-LA HOTEL
Making merry is easy at this downtown Vancouver property, which includes the exquisite **Chi Spa** and a restaurant, **Market by Jean-Georges**, bursting with holiday fare. Steps from retail-heavy Robson Street (and tonnes of special holiday events), the hotel is offering a “shop and stay” package with room rates (until December 20th) starting from \$250, with the option to add on breakfast for two and—likely the greatest gift of all—parking. Not an overnigher? No problem. All are invited to access two exclusive-for-the-festive-season spa treatments at Chi: an anti-aging **Caudalie Premier Cru** facial to target fine lines, and a “sense of adventure” package featuring an ancient Ayurvedic detoxifying ritual that combines the use of hands, heated coconut stems and essential oils to release toxins and ease muscle tension (useful during a can-be-stressful time of year). And let's not forget holiday dining at Market: whether you book a seat for a Christmas Day brunch or dinner or Christmas Eve dinner (or all three; no judgement), savour mouthwatering executive-chef-Ken-Nakano-made creations like winter squash salad, heritage Angus beef tenderloin, brioche pain perdu and eggnog cheesecake. **1128 W. Georgia St., 604-689-1120. Shangri-la.com**

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THE FAIRMONT PACIFIC RIM
Speaking of staying put this holiday season, the **Fairmont Pacific Rim** offers a plethora of Yuletide activities for all to enjoy. Gin-gle, for starters, your bells at the hotel's **Botanist Bar and Lobby Lounge**, where a number of winter-inspired tipples are up for grabs (try a hot buttered rum, Scandinavian Glögg, mulled cider, spiked eggnog or festive punch). The lounge also boasts live music by local artists seven days a week (and a roaring fire to curl up to, too). Peckish? Botanist is serving up a variety of festive meals, including Christmas Eve and Day dinners and a New Year's Day “resolutions and remedies” brunch that begins with a celery, green apple, ginger, kale and spinach “revitalization shot” (just in case you need it). Know someone who deserves to be pampered? The ultimate holiday gift, available at the **Willow Stream Spa**, includes a year of treatments, a plush Fairmont robe, exclusive gifts and access to VIP perks and events for \$2,500. Finally, Fairmont Pacific Rim offers several seasonal packages that let you stay the holidays in style. Choose from a Take the Elevator Home, Holiday Hangover or Glitz, Glam and Gold package and save Santa the trip to your house this Christmas. **1038 Canada Pl., 604-695-5300. Fairmont.com**





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