

DIVERSIONS

THE GENTLEWOMAN'S SIX

A peerless insight into the world of the glamorous and the divine.

BY LUCIA VAN DER POST

1 Wrap up for Scotland

Begg & Co is one of those enchanting Scottish companies rooted in the history of that romantic land. It was founded in 1866 in Paisley, and for many years its main business was making ineffably beautiful scarves for other designer labels. Recently, the company decided to put its own name to the fore and launched a series of immensely chic and divinely soft shawls and scarves. Lambs wool, angora and merino wool are used, but it's the cashmere items that most enchant. They are soft as a cloud, warm as the sun's rays and come in the most fashionable of colors – lots of subtle khakis, grays, slubby blues and greens, as well as checks and color-blocks. Some items are in brighter colors but the more sober, elegant shades and the tartans appeal the most.

beggandcompany.com



2 Sophisticated adventure

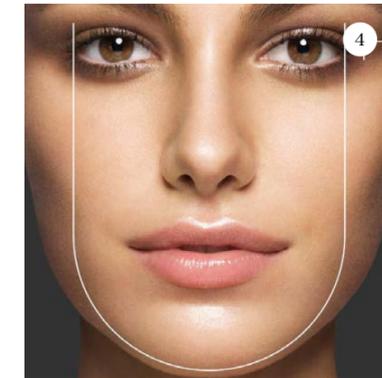
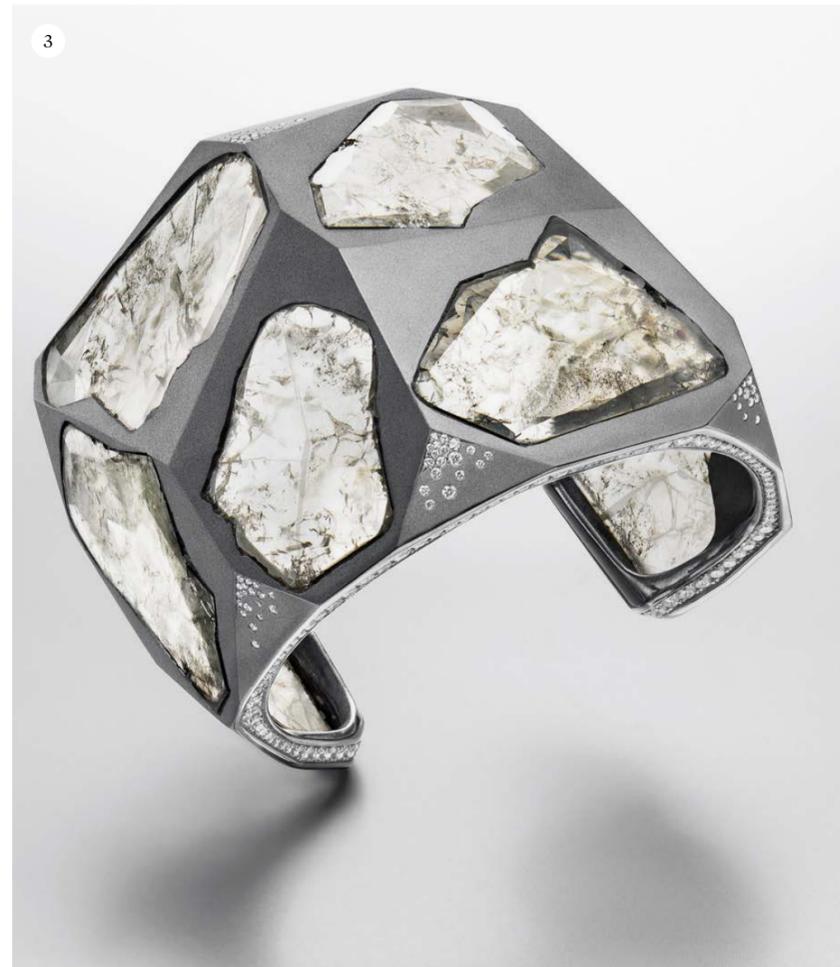
The modern traveler wants more than just a swanky bed and fancy food. She desires life-enhancing, transformative experiences – to learn, to be moved and engaged. This is where Karen Talwar Stone's Adventures in Art comes in. The company takes small groups of like-minded people to thrilling destinations and arranges for them to go behind the scenes to view private collections, mostly of art and jewelry (pictured), accompanied by distinguished experts and curators. Locales this year have included Havana and Rome, where the group visited the Castellani collection of 19th-century jewelry. A trip to Istanbul in September is up next, with India's Rajasthan on the agenda for next year.

adventuresinart.com



3 Defiant take on jewelry

Suzanne Syz imbues jewelry with a sense of fun and wit. The designer takes the most precious of materials – diamonds, gold, sapphires and emeralds – but sees no reason to treat them with undue solemnity. She creates pieces that seem to be made of colored candy, or sport a frog sitting inside a crown; earrings that resemble fallen leaves or miniature chandeliers, and bracelets of 'barbed wire'. She can also make out-and-out glamor –



huge stones beautifully set in rings, for instance – with each piece a one-off. Syz lives in Switzerland where all her jewelry is made, and she only sells a few times a year at very specialist fairs such as London's Masterpiece.

suzannesyz.com

4 Personalized beauty

It's not often that something truly groundbreaking arrives in the world of beauty. Geneu is the first company to tailor-make skincare products based on customers' DNA. The brainchild of Christofer Toumazou, Regius professor of engineering at Imperial College London and fellow of the Royal Society, the products follow the notion that our skin reacts differently to drugs, creams and potions. A DNA profile is required, taken using a simple mouth swab. In 30 minutes the lab analyses the antioxidant protection of a person's skin, working out how fast it can break down collagen and its ability to repel free radicals. Based on the results each customer is given two personalized formulated serums. This patented technology is available at Geneu's New Bond Street store in London.

geneu.com

5 Paris treasure trove

In the center of Dior's flagship store in Paris is a little gem that has almost nothing to do with handbags and beautiful clothes – Art de la Maison, a small collection of interior accessories curated by Doris Brynner, the widow of Hollywood actor Yul Brynner. Madame Brynner has a deep knowledge of artisanal ateliers where fine and beautiful things are made. There is porcelain from Limoges, handmade vases from Germany (pictured), lovely glassware from small workshops on Murano in Venice, linen from the South of France, silverware from a range of workshops and other idiosyncratic charmers.

Dior, 30 Avenue Montaigne, Paris (no website)

6 Villas with a view

The winelands of South Africa's Cape Province are some of the most heart-stirring landscapes anywhere, and of all the picturesque valleys the Franschhoek is for many the loveliest. But where do you stay? For a hotel there's no contest – La Residence. Every room is a joy, the views are to die for and the service is legendary. If you prefer the peace and privacy of a villa, none are more beautiful than those at La Clé des Montagnes. Four wonderful villas (two sleep four, one sleeps six and the other sleeps eight), including La Galerie (pictured), are tucked away a few minutes from the high street's buzzy restaurant scene. They have spacious en-suite bedrooms, large living rooms and are set amid a working vineyard with views of the surrounding mountains. Each comes with its own swimming pool and a butler, who does everything from cleaning, cooking breakfast and sorting the evening braai (barbecue) to filling the fridge and freezer. It's hard to imagine a more beautiful way to experience the valley.

lacle.co.za