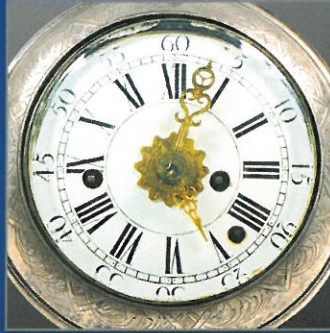


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16 Unique Gifts

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The Season of Giving

BY SHAUN TOLSON AND KAREN CAKEBREAD

Be the hero this holiday season with a gift that's as meaningful as it is memorable.

LAST SPRING, the Savoy hotel in London unveiled a new shopping service with a variety of programs designed to help guests “uncover the hidden treasures” of the city. With a team of private shoppers at a guest's beck and call, the hotel aimed to introduce its patrons to the best of London's retailers through customized shopping days or in-room meetings with artisans and designers ready to create bespoke merchandise.

The Savoy's shopping service reinforces the notion that people want the unusual and the unique, and at no time is that demand stronger than during the holidays, when gift-giving drives the season. According to Sean Devoren, the Savoy's head butler, most people enjoy giving more than receiving, but that doesn't mean finding the perfect gift is easy. Ultimately, it requires time, patience, and a good deal of thought. “It's the



act of customizing something to the individual to know what they like,” Devoren explains. “When someone gives you a gift, you know the thought that went into it because you'll feel it.”

However, as Devoren often has witnessed, discovering such a memorable item can be a daunting task. “It's really hard to find

that ‘wow factor’ gift for somebody who has everything,” he says.

Fortunately, we've made it easy. What follows is a collection of items crafted for enthusiasts and overflowing with features and components that make them unique. Consider it your guide to finding the perfect gift for that special someone on your list. While only suggestions, these ideas are sure to inspire, and they're guaranteed to remind you of how and why giving can be the best part of the season.

A Superior Shave

A Parisian grooming brand combines old world craftsmanship with new age material.



WHEN BUSINESSMAN Tom Wilsam and industrial designer Wolfgang Joensson founded Hommage, a Paris-based grooming products brand, in 2004, they did so to address a growing need for high-performance, luxury tools and treatment experiences tailored to men. The company turned heads—literally—when it unveiled a \$30,000 straight-edge razor made from Damascus steel—the same material used to make swords during the Middle Ages. However, it was the company's original design, a high-gloss, polished chrome razor plated with copper and nickel (and compatible with Gillette Mach3 blades) that, combined with a polished chrome and silvertip badger hair brush, became the company's signature shave set.

Since then, the company has rolled out four variations of that original design, incorporating texturized

chrome with zinc alloys, red lacquers, black lacquers, and water-resistant, hand-stitched calf leather. However, the latest iteration pays tribute to high-performance industrial engineering and will tug at the heartstrings of most racing enthusiasts. Incorporating hand-woven carbon fiber, Hommage's latest shave set costs \$600 and is the product of 18 months of research and development. "Carbon fiber has been used on everything from high-end race bikes used in the Tour de France to Formula One racecars and luxury watches," says Wilsam, Hommage's CEO. "The material has been chosen for its outstanding performance and weight-sturdiness ratio, and it symbolizes Hommage's quest for excellence."

To create the razor and brush handles, Wilsam explains, the carbon fiber is hand-woven, similar to a fabric, and put into molds to create the

necessary shapes. But it's not a simple process, nor is it one that is easily replicated. "The process takes as long as needed to be perfect," he says. The brushes themselves are the handiwork of Plisson, a French company that has been fashioning shaving brushes by hand for more than a century. When both the razor and brush are finished, they're fitted to a magnetized, polished chrome presentation stand that allows for easy access.

The complete set is packed in a gift box made of Tanzania wood, accented with rhodium hinges and finished with a gray Italian lacquer that matches the color of the carbon fiber. Each box also is equipped with an accessories tray capable of holding cuff links, glasses, tie clips, rings, and the like, or an insert designed to display wristwatches. —S.T

Hommage, www.hommage.com