

**NOTES  
ON  
THE  
CULTURE**

# T Introduces



"Sunrise on the Matterhorn", after 1875, by Albert Bierstadt

## The Top of the World

Literally. The mountains are calling, especially to the millennial set.

EARLIER THIS YEAR, a queue was reported on the route leading up to Mount Everest's summit. The tallest mountain in the world, standing at 29,035 feet high (according to National Geographic) has long been considered a climbing feat. The journey to the top is an approximately two-month long expedition — a journey so precarious, the mountain is also dubbed the largest open graveyard in the world. The human traffic jam along the arduous incline then raises the question: Just how many people are attempting the climb to the top of the world?

IMAGE COURTESY OF MET MUSEUM

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The numbers are astounding and far surpass the previously held record highs. This year, Nepal's tourism ministry issued permits to 381 climbers, the highest since 1953 when the first pair of climbers reached the summit of the mountain. As the reported numbers are independent of those who have attempted the ascend through the northern route from China, the actual numbers are even higher. This year, the population of climbers atop Mount Everest has reached its saturation point.

Elsewhere around the world, conquering mountains has gained traction in different capacities — from leisurely pursuits to serious conquests. The allure of the mountainous terrain is personal and largely variant from one trekker to the other. "It was a calling to go beyond well-travelled itineraries and the need to see beyond the concrete and do more than shopping and dining," says 36-year-old Yap You Min, who embarked on a career discourse in tree therapy post-hike at Mount Kenya.

For seasoned climber Wei Chong, who has clocked seven climbs across the globe, it is as simple as "the scenery and the serenity that it offers". The vast mountainous terrains have much to offer, most of which seems to hold a gravitating pull amongst the millennial set. To a generation that fervently pursues "wanderlust", "Instagram-worthy" and retrieves inspirational quotes from the aughts, nothing checks off all of its baseline of needs like mountain climbing does.

At press time, the gallery of images on Instagram tagged "mountain climbing" counts more than half a million posts. On the grid are faces plastered with toothpaste commercial-worthy smiles set against awe-inspiring landscapes — if carpe diem were a visual, I was looking at it. Not pictured, are the rigorous climbs to the top.

Just like the 'It' bag or accessory that makes its rounds on the social media circuit, mountain climbing and hiking of sorts has risen in popularity to trending status — and the inhabitants of social media have jumped on the bandwagon. "There was always an increase in the number of climbers coming from many countries including China, Malaysia and Singapore," says Taufik Iswara, a trekking organiser on expeditions at Mount Rinjani, on the Indonesian island of Lombok.

Much like how the millennial set is lured by novelty in their purchases, the experiences that call out to them too are of the same nature. Mountain climbing resonates to the generation as a rare adventure away from the stereotypical vacation destination. The formidable giants, which are nature's work of splendour, present earthly beings an opportunity to realign the mind, body and soul and disconnect with all else.

While the aforementioned are plausible explanations for the fad, much of what the mountains have to offer an individual is deeply personal like a mystery box awaiting to be opened.

Perhaps, the pursuit is best summed up by Australian writer and mountaineer Greg Child, "Somewhere between the bottom of the climb and the summit is the answer to the mystery why we climb." — Kames Narayanan



CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN MAY be known as a master of stilettos and for his signature red-soled shoes that have been immortalised in popular culture but his makeup line has been carving a niche for itself since its launch in 2015. Gorgeously opulent, the packaging is inspired by Middle Eastern antiquities and the Art Deco period. The range, which includes, eye colours, nail lacquers and lipsticks will be available in Singapore this month. In the hands of Louboutin, even the humble nail polish has been transformed into a dazzling objet d'art. The signature of the line is Rouge Louboutin, a singular red shade inspired by the aforementioned soles. Now, five, new reds are available in its iconic, Velvet Matte texture. Intensely pigmented and lush, the new shades, Jackie, Justine, Goyetta, Dramadouce and Triluna will be subtle reinterpretations of Rouge Louboutin, allowing women of all skin tones to find their perfect red. — Renée Batchelor

## Paint Job

## AN ODE TO CRAFT



From left: "Funeral Clothes for the Women" by Minhee Kim; "Blue Velvet" from the "Soft Accent" series by Michal Fargo.

PAYING HOMAGE TO Loewe's roots as a collective craft workshop, which was set up in 1846, the annual Loewe Foundation Craft Prize returns for the third edition to celebrate innovation, novelty, and artistic merits in the realm of contemporary craftsmanship. This exhibition, set within the revered late Japanese American artist Isamu Noguchi's indoor stone garden ('Heaven') in Tokyo, Japan, showcases handsewn masterpieces from the 29 finalists. The exhibition illustrates the artists' technical virtuosity over a spectrum of mediums and techniques, from granite infused basket bag to works of ceramic to lacquer coated structures, and more. "Craft is the essence of Loewe," says Loewe's creative director Jonathan Anderson. "As a house, we are about craft in the purest sense of the word. That is where our modernity lies, and it will always be relevant." — Sng Ler Jun

*Loewe Foundation Craft Prize will run at Sogetsu Kaikan in Tokyo, Japan from 26 June to 22 July.*



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN; LOEWE FOUNDATION CRAFT PRIZE (2)

ON TREND

# Forward Thinking

AT ZAFFERANO ITALIAN RESTAURANT & LOUNGE, leftover bits from food preparations are given a new lease of life as umami-packed seasonings. Beyond possessing a deft palate and refined culinary expertise, more chefs are imbuing their dishes with environmental consciousness. Head chef Emanuele Faggi's strong interest in sustainability stems from his earlier years at the Michelin-starred Cracco Ristorante in Milan, where renowned chef-owner (and Faggi's mentor) Carlo Cracco would inspect bins every night to ensure food wastage is kept to a minimum at his restaurant. At Zafferano, Faggi ingrains the same mentality in both his and his staff's practices in the kitchen. Take for instance, the powdered seasonings used in the kitchen. Derived from skins



of onions, tomato, potato, used coffee beans, and at times, corals from lobster heads, unused ingredients are gathered on alternate days to be dehydrated, toasted, and blended into powder. These powdered seasonings are incorporated into dishes to deliver a pleasant umami profile. Raw rice used for storing truffles is transformed into crispy rice crackers, while the rind of parmesan cheese is topped with uni (sea urchin) cream and nori and offered as a pre-starter snack. "Customers are often awed by how we plate their dishes," says Saroza Willis, marketing executive of Zafferano. "Some even say that it is very clever, interesting and flavourful." — Sng Ler Jun

From left: Rice chips; sous-vide and pan-fried lamb loin with roasted eggplant purée, sautéed bok-choy, and coffee powder.



From left: Eres's repertoire of swimwear sculpts the body in a way that flatters the feminine form; the capsule holiday collection draws its inspiration from a myriad of inspiration, particularly activewear.



# Second Skin

IN THE LATE 1960S, when women would buy swimsuits only during summer, French swimwear and lingerie label, Eres, made a bold decision to proffer swimsuits throughout the year. The label's first invention, the super-lush, almost-snuggly *peau douce* (French for soft skin) fabric — an exclusive blend of polyamide jersey that sculpts and heightens the natural feminine lines of the female body — would grow to become the label's iconic trademark. Eres's newly launched holiday capsule collection combines the house's expertise in activewear, ready-to-wear, and beachwear into a singular, cohesive line-up. Sporty yet sensual, the pieces, accentuated with the house's signature earthy tones and occasional pop of colour are structured to feel like a second skin. — Sng Ler Jun