

Malls & Mainstreets

Nicole Stafford, Editor 248-901-2567 nstafford@ec.homecomm.net on the web: http://observer.eccentric.com Sunday, February 27, 2000

Merchandise returns, like credit cards, are source of trouble

SHOP TALK



NICOLE STAFFORD

I've discovered yet another dark side of shopping.

No, I'm not talking about impulse-buying or buying too much or buying to make yourself feel better or just plain spending too much money, although these measures are not advised.

I'm referring to a component of shopping we all dread - returning merchandise.

At the moment, I'm overwhelmed with the number of returns I need to make, so my feelings on the subject are probably a bit intense.

I have, for example, an entire shopping bag of items that need to be returned at the Somerset Collection in Troy. I have a smaller, but still large, plastic bag of goods for return at Great Lakes Crossing in Auburn Hills. Downtown Birmingham is another place I need to go for the sole reason of returning stuff.

I, even, have one, OK two, Christmas gift returns to make.

Even more embarrassing is the fact I have merchandise that can no longer be returned. I've waited, or should I say, procrastinated, an entire year, and the retailer, understandably, will not accept returns after 12 months.

And, hey, I don't blame them. It wouldn't be fair of me to return merchandise in this case, window blinds, after they've spent a year collecting dust in the back of my bedroom closet.

I can only blame myself, and I accept that responsibility. However - and here's where the dark side of shopping comes in - time is required, if I am to make timely merchandise returns. And, as we are all aware, time is in short supply these days.

Besides, returning merchandise is, for lack of a better phrase, a negative use of time.

In contrast to buying merchandise, making returns only begets loss. There's no sense of accomplishment, progress or gain when you take something back to the store. And, I think that's particularly difficult for Americans.

No doubt we are avid consumers, if not obsessed with obtaining things in variety and quantity. But we're also acutely focused on achievement and betterment. And, returning merchandise, well, it sure isn't any of those things. I'd even wager to say stepping up to the return counter constitutes a kind of failure in our minds.

Think about it. You're in the market for a new purse, one for everyday use that fits your needs, style and budget. You begin your search intently; you browse catalogs and store windows. You ask a friend with a purse you adore where she bought hers.

Then, whenever you're out shopping, you take a good, hard look at what's available. You expend time. And although we're talking about small chunks of time, the minutes add up.

At this point, you become frustrated. You'd like the right purse to fall into your lap from the sky, but reality dictates you'll have to find it.

Determined and motivated, you shop and shop and shop some more. Your efforts are fruitless. Eventually, you give up for a month or two.

Then, one day, you find a suitable, but not ideal, purse and buy it because, says the voice inside your head, you can always return it.

For me, the same holds true with merchandise that's on sale.

Well, I don't really need another black top but it's on sale, the voice tells me. Or, I don't know about this sweater, but ...the voice says, I can always return it.

This is not to say that being able to return merchandise - even small stores and boutiques have very liberal return policies today - is bad.

It's just that in our fast-paced, on-the-move, never-enough-time world, we need to remember money isn't the only thing we spend when we go shopping.

Nicole Stafford is the editor of *Malls & Mainstreets*. Comments and questions can be directed to her at *Eccentric Newspapers*, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, Mich. 46009 or by phone at (248) 901-2567.



Healing: Bloomfield Hills resident Rita Greenapan, center, relaxes while receiving a hydrotherapy treatment at Tamara Institut De Beaute In Town Spa in Farmington Hills. Owner Tamara Friedman adds mineral-rich mud to the bubbling tub while the spa's newest speciality therapist, Rudolf Mesicek, formerly of Utah's Green Valley Spa and Tennis Resort, does some beneficial shoulder work.

Centers for wellness

Holistic approach embraced by day spas to fight woes of technology

BY NICOLE STAFFORD
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Holistic: A new wave of treatments aimed at overall wellness are being offered at area spas, like hot stone massage at Tamara Institut De Beaute.

As spa services get more and more extraordinary, trips to the spa just become, well, plain ordinary.

"People are saying I need to change my life," Tamara Friedman, owner of Tamara Institut De Beaute In-Town-Spa, said of the trend. "Life has changed so much with technology, an unbelievable monster that is going to kill everybody, if we let it. You can't even drive a car today and hear the music and relax. We have to do our work in the car now."

People are aware technology has negatively affected their bodies and overall health. And, that's why a growing number of them - ordinary, working people, not just the rich and famous - are budgeting money and time for massage, facials and other services offered by spas, and increasingly, by beauty salons.

"The biggest misconception about spas is that they're just for the rich and famous," said Friedman, whose Institut De Beaute has been in operation for over a decade.

True, athletes, celebrities and wealthy individuals frequent spas, but "people come here from all walks of life," said Friedman.

The reason - greater use of computers, an increased dependence on automobiles and, overall, a more sedentary lifestyle as a result of technology.

"Society is changing. We are more sedentary. Work has changed, and with that, changed all our habits," said Rudolf Mesicek, who Friedman recently lured from Utah's Green Valley Spa and Resort to provide an intensive body analysis and therapy program at her salon.

"People, today, are open to try anything that is going to help them," said Mesicek. "People are finding out that prevention is the most powerful thing they can do." And, that involves massage and other services that benefit muscles and relieve stress, in addition to exercise and good nutrition, said Mesicek.

Going holistic

Once more, local spas are embracing a holistic, almost clinical, approach to the services they provide.

Mesicek will, for example, add neuromuscular therapy and posture alignment, which includes body analysis, stretching, massage and exercise programs, to the already extensive list of health-enhancing services available at Friedman's spa.

The spa currently offers such treatments as hot stone massage, reflexology - massage of the feet and hands - and shiatsu - a form of acupressure massage - among a host of more traditional services.

And, Friedman is not alone; many of the same services and others are offered at a variety of area spas and beauty salons, from the well-established Capelli Salon in Bloomfield Township to relative

newcomer Salone Nadwa and Day Spa in Novi.

"Holistic is a good way of describing it, it's more like taking care of yourself, not from just the outside, but of your inner self," said Nadwa Yono, owner of Salone Nadwa, which offers several "ayurvedic" treatments, which are based on East Indian healing practices.

An ayurvedic shirodhara treatment, for example, involves running a fine stream of warm sesame oil on to the middle of the forehead for 10 to 15 minutes along with an acupuncture-style massage. At a cost of \$100, the treatment reduces stress and relieves muscle tension.

Transformations - A Holistic Spa in West Bloomfield, also relatively new in the area, fully embraces a holistic approach to beauty and health. Their services include several massage programs for pregnant women, cranial-sacral therapy, pre and post-surgery facials and monthly educational lectures.

"Gone are the days when you could only have a nice Swedish rub-down," said Jennifer LaRiviere, co-owner of the spa. "The consumer is becoming more sophisticated."

In LaRiviere's opinion, the emphasis on health-related, rather than aesthetic, spa services, though directly connected to technology's impact on our physical and mental well-being, stems from the awareness and information technology has brought us.

"There are no longer the secrets of skin care," LaRiviere said, citing an example. "People are definitely more informed and just smarter," as a result of the information that's available to them and the technological environment in which they live.

"That's the trend in the industry from a grass-roots point of view, from our clients' point of view," she said. "It approaches clinical."



Tried and true: Tamara Institut De Beaute's Rudolf Mesicek performs a hot stone massage, an old practice that's today promoting wellness.

Retail, style and special events are listed in this calendar. Please send information to: Malls & Mainstreets, c/o Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 East Maple, Birmingham, MI 46009. Fax: (248) 644-1314. Information must be received by 5 p.m. Monday for publication the following Sunday. TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 29

CHILDREN'S GARDENING SEMINAR
Borders Books & Music in Farmington Hills resumes its gardening series for kids, ages 5 and up, with a session of decorating terra cotta pots, 7 p.m. For information, call (248) 737-0110.

SKIN CARE CLINIC
Learn about Natura Bisse's skin care products at a clinic at Neiman Marcus, the Somerset Collection in Troy. Cosmetics department, first floor. To schedule an appointment, call (248) 643-3300, ext. 2102. THURSDAY, MARCH 2

SPRING TRUNK SHOW
Hersh's in The Boardwalk, 6901 Orchard Lake Road in West Bloomfield, hosts a trunk show of women's suits, separates and sportswear from Garfield &

ADDED ATTRACTIONS

Marks and Womyn through March 4. For hours and other information, call (248) 626-7776. **friday, march 3**

WILLIAM PEARSON TRUNK SHOW
View the spring and summer collection of William Pearson at Rox & Sherm, 6538 Telegraph Road in Bloomfield Township, through March 4, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. For more information, call (248) 856-8855.

GIORGIO ARMANI FOR MEN
Neiman Marcus, the Somerset Collection in Troy, hosts a trunk show of the Giorgio Armani Le Collezioni Caravan for men through March 5, 10 a.m.-6 p.m., The Man's Store, first floor. **SATURDAY, MARCH 4**

NIPON TRUNK SHOW
View Nipon's latest suit collection for women at a trunk show presented by Neiman Marcus, the Som-

erset Collection in Troy, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Galleria, third floor.

SUNDAY, MARCH 5

CHILDREN'S READING PROGRAM
Art Van Furniture in Novi and Warren celebrates "March is Reading Month" by having employees read to children who visit the store on Sundays through March 26, Kids Castle area. For additional information, call the Novi store, (248) 348-8922, or Warren store, (810) 939-2100.

MAGIC SNOW
The Livonia Mall, at 7 Mile and Middlebelt roads, hosts a magic and comedy show, 1 p.m., Sears Court. For additional information, call (248) 476-1160. **THURSDAY, MARCH 9**

ST. JOHN STOCK SHOW
Hudson's, the Somerset Collection in Troy, presents an informal showing of the best looks from St. John's spring collection, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Oval Room, second floor.