

COUNTRY & TOWN HOUSE

SEPTEMBER 2013 £3.60

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cooks up a storm
in the field*

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FRENCH LESSONS

Annabel Davidson goes back to school

I've been itching to attend a class at the Van Cleef & Arpels Ecole ever since it opened in Paris three years ago, and this year I got my chance. I'd seen the space (an airy 18th-century townhouse) on previous trips to the epicentre of Parisian high jewellery, Place Vendôme, and wondered whether taking a course run by one of the most iconic and revered jewellery brands in the world would actually be educational or just an expensive indulgence. It was definitely the former. There are currently 13 courses on offer, each taking four hours, and having done one, I'm eager to do several more. Firstly, this is no remedial trudge through the basics. In the 'Interpreting the Gemstones' course, we discussed, handled and examined everything from malachite to amethyst under magnification, juggled rough diamonds and raw quartz, and received a truly enlightening crash course on the geology behind the birth of gemstones. The course was led by Dominique Dufermont, who is both geologist and geographer, and charmingly obsessed by his subject. The 'classrooms' are exquisitely decorated and they serve berry juice and tiny hors d'oeuvres during the break, but I still I walked away armed with a gleaming new knowledge of the subject I love. This is the perfect girls' day out for those who are passionate about jewellery and who are willing to spend a bit more than a day at a high-end spa for a truly memorable experience. lecolevancl leefarpels.com



OPPOSITES ATTRACT

Mismatched earrings are nothing new, but often the asymmetry is just a gimmick. At Nourbel & Le Cavalier, a fascinating new jeweller housed in London's Burlington Arcade, there's a very good reason for these ornate earrings being a little lop-sided; they're made from antique Venetian glass micro mosaic and this stuff doesn't

come in handy matched sections. Mounted in white gold and finished with diamonds, they're gloriously unique. nourbel-lecavelier.com



HOOPLA!

Hoop earrings swing in and out of favour constantly but they're always chic, and no more so than in Sloane Square jeweller Kiki McDonough's new Lola collection. This very British fine jeweller takes the classic gold hoop and makes it extra special by layering it up, studding it with diamonds, or dotting it with amethysts. Double diamond hoops, £3,300. kiki.co.uk

PEARLS ON PARADE

The V&A's Pearls exhibition opens soon, and as with everything the museum does, it promises to be unmissable. Pearl jewellery owned by Mary Queen of Scots, Elizabeth Taylor and European royalty will be on display alongside rare natural specimens of every colour and size. Art deco and art nouveau pieces will jostle for space alongside modern masterpieces, not least among them pieces by Yoko London (pictured), a generations-old family company that specialises in rare, natural coloured pearls and has an inventory the envy of the world. 21 Sept to 19 Jan; vam.ac.uk

