



## THE FASCINATOR

A royal accessory.

While many follow in fascination the impending nuptials of Prince William and Kate Middleton, fashionistas are watching the fascinators, those cute, not-so-dainty, not-quite-hats that so coyly not-quite-crown the future queen-consort to Canada. Since the 16th century, the fascinator has flirted in the shadow of fulsome hats, but with Kate's face-forward fashion example, it is poised to be *the* sans-hat of the season.

Fascinators (from the Latin *fascinare*: to enchant or charm) are whimsical confections commonly made of ribbons, beads, organza, and feathers that elegantly clip, rather than perch, and often sit askew to one side of the head. "A fascinator is sort of a timid step toward wearing a hat," says milliner Sherri Hrycay of Sová Design in Saskatoon, who handcrafts hats and fascinators for all seasons at her studio. "It's testing the waters before you take the plunge."

Originally, the term *fascinator* referred to a lace or knitted shawl worn over the hair for special occasions. By the time Marie Antoinette started sitting for portraits, fashionable women preferred wigs. But as purse strings grew tighter following the French Revolution, hair adornments grew more petit. A feather and a string of beads. A flower and some lace. And the flirty fascinator was reborn. About that same time, in 1784, the British government imposed a "hat tax", which inspired creative means of tax evasion. A hat is not a hat when it's a fascinator.

Like many fashions, it has come and gone and come again. "Girls and women are obsessed with their hair. Heaven forbid they get hat head," says Hrycay. "With a fascinator, they can feel their outfits are complete without messing up their crown-glorious." **AMY JO EHMAN**

## THE ART OF BATHING

Baden-Baden's ritual baths.

The Germans sure know how to take a bath. In the spa town of Baden-Baden, one hour west of Stuttgart, 800,000 litres of hot, mineral-rich water bubble up daily from 12 thermal springs. It is here that the bathhouse Friedrichsbad elevates the simple act of getting clean into a decadent three-and-a-half hour ritual. It was built at the end of Baden-Baden's *belle époque* as the summer capital of Europe, when Queen Victoria, Dostoevsky, King Ludwig of Bavaria, and Brahms would stroll its leafy Lichtentaler Allee park. Baden-Baden's famous casino (described later by Marlene Dietrich as the most beautiful in the world) had closed, and the town needed a new attraction. Hence the Friedrichsbad—an enormous neoclassical palace—opened in 1877, dedicated to the art of bathing.

Today, bathers pass through 17 stages. First you get naked (swimsuits are verboten); then you walk from one opulent tiled room to another. The rooms are filled with clouds of steam, hot dry air, or pools of varying temperatures. Signs along the way indicate the recommended time to spend in each room.

But leave your modesty outside. Most days are coed, and even on days when men and women enter separate dressing rooms, everyone comes together for the middle four stages. The Germans are quite used to this; it's only the tourists who look sheepish.

In the first stage, a white-garbed attendant guides you to the shower room for a strong, hot dunk under showerheads as big as dinner plates. Stages two and three involve reclining on teak loungers in a vaulted sauna room while staring up at decorative tiles of peacocks, flowers, and lily ponds. After another shower, stage four is the optional soap-and-brush massage—lie

down on a white marble bed in a white marble room, and a masseuse lathers you like a baby and scrubs you with a stiff brush. And yes, she slaps you on the backside when done.

Then it's on to a thermal steam room, with massive, mysterious-looking copper pipes coiled around exposed rocks. Grab a clean white fanny pad and sit on a stepped, pyramid-shaped block in the centre. The higher you sit, the hotter the steam (which gets up to 48°C). Next, statues of a Roman god and goddess greet you at a warm pool, which is followed by a cooler whirlpool bath. You then reach a large swimming pool, encircled by gold columns, with an elaborately painted, domed roof and stucco cupids. I half-expected servants to emerge and feed us grapes. From here, a freezing cold plunge awaits.

The journey ends with another shower and a gigantic warm towel, followed by getting your skin moisturized with lotion. And then the best part: "Are you ready for bed?" an attendant asked as I was led to a heavily draped room, where she wrapped me up in blankets and offered to wake me 30 minutes later.

Underneath the Friedrichsbad are the ruins of 2,000-year-old Roman baths. The Romans also liked bathing in stages, and the on-site museum has artifacts showcasing their bathing culture, like a strigil, a sickle-shaped tool used for scraping the skin after sweating in the *caldarium*. Steps away, there's also the modern Caracalla Spa, with more than 3,000 square metres of pools. But it's without the gawk factor—bathing suits are worn there. **JANICE MUCALOV**

FROM LEFT: The town of Baden-Baden, Germany; the neoclassical Friedrichsbad bathhouse.

