

SHOP

SHOE OF THE WEEK

Rockport has a solid reputation for footwear of a supportive nature. And indeed, this women's Truwalkzero Welt Boot (\$200 at Rockport.ca) is made with ADIPRENE, a trademarked Adidas Sport technology insole for extra comfort. Check out the just-opened location in the Eaton Centre. **Leanne Delap**



> STYLE CZAR

Exclusive shopping a unique experience



'Locked in' at Barney's after store's closing an eerie but wonderful adventure

Karen Von Hahn

One of my all-time favourite books when I was a girl was E.L. Konigsburg's wonderful *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*. In the book, 12-year-old Claudia runs away from home with her little brother to live in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. After closing, the pair turn in for the night in various silk-curtained beds in historical dioramas and survive by gathering pennies from the fountain, which always sounded like a fantastic adventure to someone who is inordinately fond of museums.

After all these years, I finally got the opportunity to be "locked in" after hours at a museum (of sorts). This courtesy of a superpremium travel outfit based in Denver called Exclusive Resorts, which specializes in creating one-of-a-kind "experiences" for its members, and which has just expanded its membership here in Canada. I was locked in after hours with a bunch of super shoppers at Barney's New York, with none other than legendary window dresser, author and fashion wit Simon Doonan as our genial host.

The night began with champagne, as many good nights do, as Simon entertained our intimate group of shut-ins over a light supper of grilled salmon (after all there was still trying on to do) in the store's typically bustling upper-level restaurant, Fred. After a brief and witty introduction to what was currently hot in the store, everybody was off with their personal shoppers onto the cleared-out shop floor. Unsure whether I should take the opportunity to search out something eminently practical (a perfect fitted black jacket) or just blow it on something fun (another pair of shoes), I hung around for a moment for a personal consult with Doonan. Peering at me over his glasses, Doonan took one good look — apparently at my rather utilitarian accessories — and said, in the voice of an old-fashioned elevator operator: "Main floor, handbags."

Susan Wegner, an environmental attorney and mother of two from Chevy Chase, MD, had flown up specifically for the lockdown. "I'm a big fan of Simon Doonan's so when I read that he was going to be here, I just knew I had to sign up," said Wegner, who has been an Exclusive Resorts member for nearly 10 years. "I love Barney's, but being here after hours, walking around after it's closed — this is a unique thing."

D.J. Duckworth, a television journalist, style blogger and long-time Exclusive member, was similarly enthusiastic. "If I could be locked in here forever, I



ANGELA PHAM/BFANYC.COM

Fashion wit Simon Doonan hosted a 'locked in' event of shopping at luxury department store Barney's New York.

say sign me up and shackle me," said Duckworth.

I have to admit I found it a tad eerie to have the entire store all to ourselves. As I have long suspected, I am way too opinionated to enjoy the assistance of a personal shopper.

And yet it was amazing to have all those electronic security tags opened up, leaving the wares available to try on at will. Perhaps that's how I ended up walking out with an adorable, if wildly impractical, lambskin jacket with short sleeves that looks like something Wilma might have worn to go to the Rockadero on *The Flintstones*. "What a fantastic experience," said Duckworth,

who, with Doonan's help, left the store with a new Marni handbag and a pair of Chanel boots.

Of course what we really left with were the memories of a unique experience. Which is precisely the point, according to Exclusive's senior vice-president of sales, Dan Zuch.

"The idea behind these member-only events, alongside our five-star properties around the world and full concierge service, is to give people access to 'money can't buy' experiences," says Zuch. "Our members are CEOs who work 100-hour weeks. Time is of the essence. There's a recognition that they have to seize the day. They have seven spring breaks left

with their kids, they haven't ever been to the Kentucky Derby. They want to elevate their interactions and experiences."

Becoming a member of this club of A-types will set you back upwards of \$200,000, plus annual fees of approximately \$20,000. Some 150 Canadians have already joined, proving that for those who can afford it, luxury today is a roving target of needs — some as whimsical as the fulfilment of a children's adventure — and constantly being redefined.

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