

LUXURY WITHOUT COMPROMISE

Robb Report

THE ADVENTURE ISSUE

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sail, and fly into your next
great escape

The Answers with... **JAMES DE GIVENCHY**

James de Givenchy might be the greatest American jewelry designer of his generation, but the founder of New York's Taffin jeweler doesn't share his treasure chest with just anyone. Rather than display his rare pieces in a big window on Fifth Avenue, he hosts visitors by appointment only at his private atelier. It's all part of his charm—something he might have inherited from his uncle, Givenchy founder Hubert de Givenchy—and a testament to his obsession with the finer things.

BY JILL NEWMAN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK MANN





What have you recently mastered?

I have a paralyzing fear of public speaking, so when I had to read something at my uncle's funeral, I went for hypnosis. It worked for a time, but I think the spell is wearing off.

First thing you do in the morning?

I have breakfast: whole-wheat toast, avocado, and an egg. Then I take my dog Lucy for a walk in Central Park for 30 minutes. She seems to like to stay out longer when it's raining or snowing.

What's your most annoying quality?

I'm obsessive; I can't let go of things. I suppose that can work to my advantage when creating jewelry because I never give up on something.

Do you have a uniform?

I wear mostly white shirts, sometimes a blue shirt, and jeans. Ascot Chang has been making my shirts for about 15 years. It's so easy to get going in the morning with a uniform.

What calms you?

I started meditating about a year ago. It helps me find balance, focus, and calms me down. I try to do 20 minutes before bed.

What's the most recent thing you've added to your collection?

A Mark Tobey¹ calligraphic painting from 1968. I like his technique and style, and I already have two of his paintings.

How often do you train?

For seven years now, I have religiously met with a trainer twice a week at the Ultimate Training Center where I do SuperSlow weight training² for 30 minutes. If I miss a session, I feel horrible.

What does success look like to you?

Where I am today: I'm doing what I really want and what I like. It seems 99 percent of people don't like what they do.

How do you unplug?

When I'm in Paris, I walk aimlessly and, next thing you know, four or five hours have passed. I look at buildings, and it brings back memories. I imagine my dad at war chasing the Germans. It's all a dream.

What do you have your eye on right now?

Light-brown Type IIa diamonds.³ I love the warm color of the brown stones, and you can buy big stones for a fairly good price.

Where do you want to go?

Skiing in Sapporo, [Hokkaido], Japan. It has the largest amount of powder in the world,⁴ amazing culture, and my favorite food.

Do you have a particular hotel that you return to?

Le Saint, a small boutique hotel in Paris in the 7th arrondissement on a very quiet street near the Sorbonne. It's like a hideaway. I always stay in the same corner room overlooking the street.

And a restaurant you're into right now?

I love Torishin.⁵ The omakase at the counter is the highlight for me, but I like everything on the menu.

What do you crave most at the end of the day?

Like everyone else, a glass of wine. I like a Domaine de la Romanée-Conti Corton Grand Cru.⁶

If you weren't a jewelry designer, what would you be doing?

Racing motorcycles. I've been riding since I was 14 and love it. I have a Ducati 1198S BMW R90 in the city—but it's hard to ride around here—and a Ducati Monster in Los Angeles.

Bowie or Dylan?

Definitely Bowie.

2 Developed by Ken Hutchins in 1982, the SuperSlow method of resistance training calls for fewer repetitions at a slower pace.

4 Hokkaido receives an average 123 inches of snowfall every year thanks to cold air blowing over the Sea of Japan from Siberia.

6 Cheers to Burgundy's finest.

1 Art historians have argued that Mark Tobey's all-over paintings using calligraphic strokes influenced Jackson Pollock's famous drip paintings.

3 Considered the purest of diamonds, Type IIa stones have no measurable nitrogen or boron impurities, and they make up less than two percent of all natural diamonds.

5 Torishin specializes in authentic Tokyo-style yakitori, hence the name: Tori translates to "bird" and shin means "spirit."

Read the full interview online at robbreport.com. 