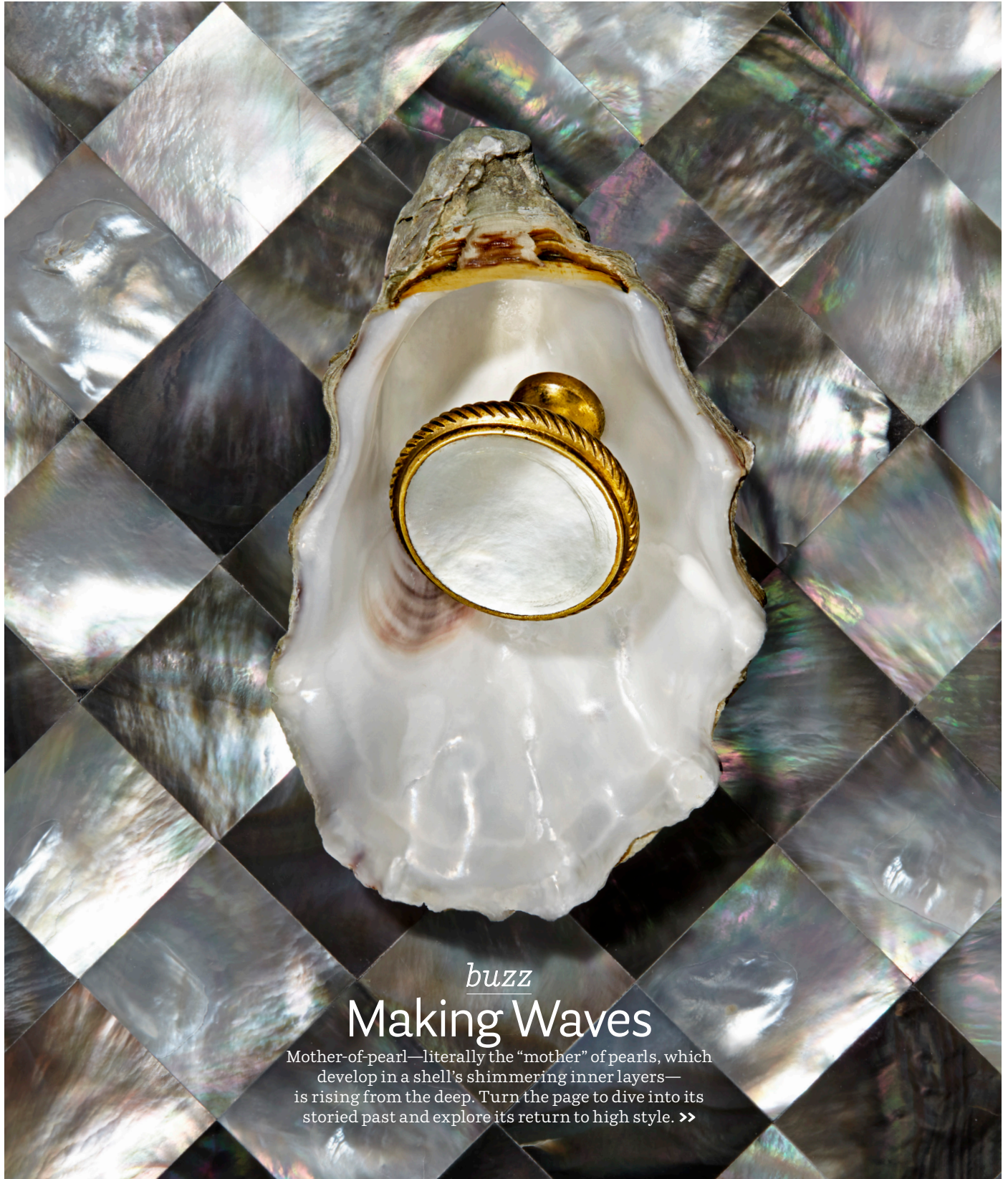


THE BEST

Ideas to Try & What to Buy

STYLIST CATHERINE LEE DAVIS PHOTOGRAPHER STUART TYSON/STUDIO D KNOB P.E. GUERIN BACKGROUND TILE SHELLSHOCK DESIGNS. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES



buzz

Making Waves

Mother-of-pearl—literally the “mother” of pearls, which develop in a shell’s shimmering inner layers—is rising from the deep. Turn the page to dive into its storied past and explore its return to high style. >>

Sea Changes

Mother-of-pearl has an illustrious (and lustrous) history in craft.



A ROYAL SECRETAIRE

Marie Antoinette's gilded bronze-and-mahogany writing desk proves that the humble shell is hardly demure.

ORNATE TABLES

Made in Morocco at the dawn of the 20th century, this walnut side table adds a major graphic and geometric statement with teeny, tiny pieces of shell.

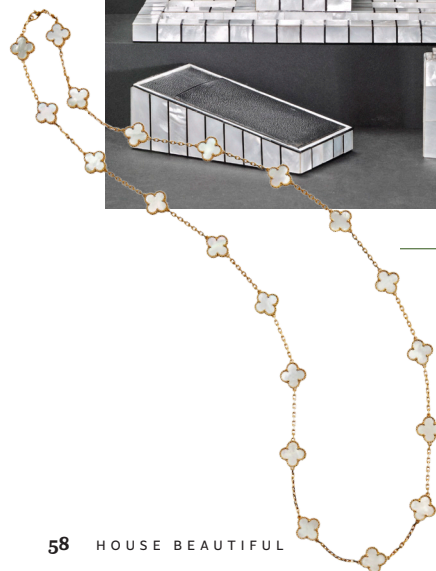


CUBIST COOL

In Vienna, Josef Hoffmann veneered a desk set with mother-of-pearl and ebony. Makes you want to get to work, doesn't it?

A TREND BEGINS

Grace Kelly loved Van Cleef & Arpels's Alhambra necklace; today, the mother-of-pearl version is still a classic go-to for posh ladies.



3000 B.C.



ANCIENT INLAY

Spotted: a mother-of-pearl mosaic of worshippers approaching a goddess, made some 5,000 years ago (!) in the Syrian city of Mari.

960 A.D.

ASIA'S INFLUENCE

By 960, Chinese craftsmen were inlaying lacquer with mother-of-pearl, such as in this 17th-century chest. (Chinoiserie fan Coco Chanel owned 32 screens that were similarly lacquered.)



1786

1850s



ON THE BUTTON

In the U.S., entire town economies sprung up around mother-of-pearl button manufacturing, thanks to mussels from the Mississippi River.

1900s

OPERA FAN

French artist Georges Bastard designed fans for Tiffany & Co.; "Barley Ears," right, is horn and mother-of-pearl.



1910

1911

1968

TODAY



A wall that glimmers naturally? Shell yes!

WALL OF WONDER

Designer David Linley made this London bedroom really sparkle. The trick? A mother-of-pearl wallcovering and plenty of light to show off its sheen.

PRODUCER: KATHRYN O'SHEA-EVANS; PHOTOGRAPHERS: MOSAIC: DEAR PICTURE LIBRARY/THE GRANGER COLLECTION; CHEST: COURTESY OF CHRISTIE'S IMAGES LTD.; 2016; DESK: RHM; GRAND PALAIS/ART RESOURCE, NY; BUTTONS: NECKLACE: PAMELA COOK/STUDIO D; TABLE: COURTESY OF ISTIDIBS; DESK SET: V&A IMAGES, LONDON/ART RESOURCE, NY; INTERIOR: DAVID CHURCHILL/COURTESY OF DAVID LINLEY

Girl with a Pearl Everything

Once cherished more than actual pearls, this fuss-free, all-natural material is back.

Mother-of-pearl spoons maximize caviar's flavor.

We love this for a powder room.



1. Mother-of-Pearl Caviar Spoons in White with Blue Inlay Tip. \$130 for set of six. petrossian.com

2. Jean Striped Clutch in Nude/White. \$1,195. edie-parker.com

3. Banks Wall Mirror. By Surya. \$256. burkedecor.com

4. Sarri Tile in Bianco (left) and Gazebo Tile in Thassos. From \$90 per square foot. artistictile.com

5. Natural River Convex Design Mother-of-Pearl Tile. \$27 per square foot. shellshockdesigns.com

6. Natural Shell Mosaics Hexalagon

Tile in Thassos and White Shell. \$55 per sheet. completetile.com

7. Rory Table in Soft Pink. \$950. madegoods.com

8. Mother-of-Pearl Flatware in Light Grey. \$58 for five-piece setting. anthropologie.com

9. Seychelles Wallcoverings in SEY10 (left) and SEY12. Available through a designer. nobilis.fr

10. Mother-of-Pearl Chevron Tile Wallcovering in Natural Pearl. \$110 per tile. mayaromanoff.com