

"The details are not the details. They make the design." – CHARLES EAMES

ET Panache variety

Adding finesse to the finish

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A New York-based interior stylist once made an observation about Hollywood star Gwyneth Paltrow's living room. "She has the most beautiful onyx bar floating in the middle of her living room," Colin King was quoted saying.

It's easy to see why onyx, a translucent semi-precious stone created naturally over thousands of years, is popular with Paltrow, cricket phenom Virat Kohli and reality-TV celebrity Kim Kardashian.

A rare type of marble, with a rich texture, unique coloured finish and veined patterns, its pink version has been used in a powder room of Kohli's Alibaug holiday home, giving the space a delicate but detailed look.

"The popularity of onyx has noticeably surged in India and worldwide, with approximately 20 to 30 per cent of clients expressing keen interest," shares Devika Khosla, creative director at The Works Interiors.

Rachna Agarwal, founder, Studio IAAD, shares that she gets four to seven requests annually for the use of onyx in homes, reflecting "a growing preference for luxurious and visually striking interior design elements."

Tarak Shah, MD of luxury Italian furniture brand Minotti, says that the interest in onyx has increased manifold in India. "Customers and the design community with whom we interact prefer onyx due to its lack of opacity in marble which creates a glow and highlights the patterns. Its colour is neutral, so it blends with other materials in the palate," he says.

Luxe look

Luxurious pieces featuring onyx offer a functional and decorative element to a home. Beyond countertops and statement

The use of onyx, a semi-precious stone, in statement wall-panels and bespoke furniture pieces, lends a touch of subtle sophistication to a well-appointed home

privy league



Last year, Kim Kardashian splashed almost \$1,500 on a rough-hewn table carved out of onyx for her living room

One of the powder rooms in Virat Kohli's holiday home in Alibaug is adorned with pink onyx marble

wall-panels, this stone is often utilised in bespoke furniture pieces such as dining tables, coffee tables and sideboards. "It can also be seamlessly incorporated into elegant lighting fixtures, including chandeliers, sconces and pendant lights, casting a warm and inviting glow — adding a touch of glamour and refinement," shares Agarwal.

The use of onyx ranges from ₹1,000 to ₹3,000 per square foot, with varieties

like white crystal onyx and white onyx commanding higher prices. "It (onyx) is definitely priced higher than the other marbles in general. But you can choose a Himalayan onyx, which is rather strong to look at. If used correctly, it can make a statement for sure," shares Ashiesh Shah, founder, Atelier Ashiesh Shah, whose style can be seen in actor Hrithik Roshan's sea-facing apartment and actor Ranbir Kapoor's penthouse.

Sumesh Menon, principal designer, Sumesh Menon Associates, says the market is flooded with a variety of onyx, ranging from very expensive to medium range. "Of course, quality and its natural look are deciding factors of cost," he says. Italian brands Roberto Cavalli and Longhi make fantastic furniture pieces with onyx, he adds.

Tarak Shah shares that their Huber coffee table designed by Rodolfo Dordoni, which retails for ₹2,10,000 to ₹5,27,000 is a popular choice among Minotti's clients.



Trend alert

Ashiesh Shah says that while the major trend is to use onyx backlit, it can sometimes look overbearing. He suggests using onyx's translucent quality differently, to give a more luxe look. "Generally, it is mostly used in bathrooms and bars, especially when backlit. But I feel this is done to death. We try to use onyx as a painting, rather than something that can just be lit from behind."

Menon shares, "Requests that come in for onyx have changed from large backlit wall panels before to an iconic bar design or a small focal furniture piece, etc."

Khosla says, "Materials often used alongside onyx include wood for warmth, handwoven tapestries and hand-knotted carpets. These elements are chosen to complement and balance the presence of onyx, creating a harmonious and visually appealing space."

Maintaining the exquisite beauty of onyx requires regular care to preserve its longevity and stunning appearance. Khosla recommends that to clean, use a soft cloth or sponge with a mild detergent and warm water, avoiding abrasive cleaners that could scratch the delicate surface.

"Consider applying a polyester finish to protect its natural grain structure, similar to using melamine on wood," she suggests.

"Swiftly blot spills to prevent staining. Be cautious of direct heat, using coasters or trivets under hot items to prevent damage. Additionally, felt pads or protective mats should be employed under objects prone to scratching," Agarwal adds.

New kids on the block

While onyx has a firm following in luxury interiors, there are also a few other trends that can add to the plush feel of a home. Another material that Ashiesh Shah loves to use is alabaster for the "visual texture it provides".

Menon adds that of late, onyx walls and countertops are giving way to exotic quartzite stones sourced from South America.

Privy league is a series on how to map and navigate top-notch experiences in a rarefied world

Phone anxiety: Is a notification detox the answer?

With people seeking more measures to limit screen time, the 'Do Not Disturb' setting has grown increasingly popular

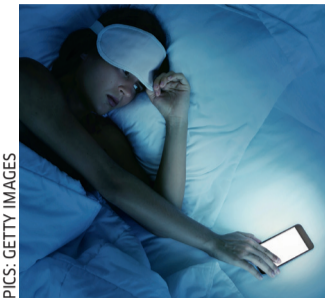
The modern phone seems to never stop vibrating, pinging and lighting up in an unending quest for our attention. Short of turning the phone off and rendering it a useless brick, there's little one can do to get distance from a device. That's where the Do Not Disturb mode comes in.

When the setting is enabled on an iPhone, any would-be texters see a disclaimer that the person they are trying to contact has notifications silenced. Beneath that is a tempting offer: "Notify Anyway". If clicked, the notification will go through as it normally would, but the message seems clear enough: Don't expect an answer, at least not right away.

Limiting access

Apple introduced Do Not Disturb in 2012 but the setting seems to have become more popular lately, as people seek more measures to limit screen time or ditch their devices altogether. After more than a decade of being bombarded by smartphone notifications, some users are now looking to establish boundaries.

"There's an assumption that because we have our phones with us all the time, there is an entitlement to people's time," said Zoe Marzo, a doctoral student in the US who is researching the use of technological devices in everyday life. "We need to have our own personal space."



Sean Grover, a New York-based psychotherapist, sees Do Not Disturb as the virtual version of the signs that people choose to hang outside their hotel doors. "It's like putting a hand up and saying, 'Don't enter'," he said. "I like the firmness of that."



On/off mode

Do Not Disturb can be a way of navigating the feeling of being stretched too thin by the demands of life — which often arrive in the form of infinite phone notifications, says Nicholette Leanza, a clinical counsellor in Ohio, US. But if patients have the Do Not Disturb mode on all

the time, she would want to explore why they felt the need to be constantly unreachable. "For some people, it is avoidance," she said. "It's 'I don't want to be connected at all, to anyone'. So, I would have them dive deeper, like what's that about? When you're isolating yourself, that could be indicative of other stuff going on, too."

— The New York Times

What goes into making a Birkin?

French luxury house Hermès, which began in 1837 as a saddle maker, is a name that comes with intimations of money (bags often sell for more than \$10,000), craftsmanship (each is handmade by a single craftsman) and scarcity (a recent antitrust lawsuit in California, US, highlighted the barriers to purchase coveted Birkin handbags).

But what really goes into making Hollywood's favourite accessory?

Borrowing from the past

Priscila Alexandre Spring, the 43-year-old creative director of leather goods at Hermès, likens the design process to a ping-pong game: A dialogue between her fellow designers and artisans.

First, she'll do a sketch, which she takes to prototype makers, whose workshop is just a few

steps away. They discuss size, functionality, even things like the sound the hardware makes when the bag closes.

For the Arçon bag, Alexandre Spring was inspired by the shape of the flap of a saddle. But then another inspiration came to her. "I was looking at a book that was talking about pockets in the 19th century, how men had about seven pockets in their jackets, pockets in their little vests and pockets in their pants, and women could have only one pocket that they had to hide under their skirt. And that was kind of the beginning of emancipation of women. When skirts became smaller and tighter to the body, they just took the pocket up from under the skirt and put it outside. That's how this pocket came here," she said, pointing to the angled zip pocket, reminiscent of a slash pocket on trousers. A hook was added for keys or gloves.

It can take between six months to six years to create a new design. Once Alexandre Spring and her team are satisfied with a design, they make it out of salpa, a material that is similar to leather. The bag is then produced in one of 22 Hermès leather workshops in France.

The next Birkin

In one corner of one of these workshops is a decades-old doctor bag that Alexandre Spring took from the Hermès archives for potential inspiration. Elsewhere, ropes lie coiled on a table.

Asked about potential designs on the horizon, Alexandre Spring demurred. "Everything is work in progress," she said. "But, yeah, we're trying a new thing with ropes, but we don't know if it's going to work."

— The New York Times



Carl F Bucherer heritage bicompass annual ₹12,17,160



Casio Edifice chronograph ₹10,495



Daniel Wellington arctic chronograph ₹21,199

Time keepers

Leather watches are a worthy investment that won't go out of style etpanache@timesgroup.com



Kenneth Cole automatic green dial watch ₹21,595



Versace hera printed alligator watch Price on request



Fossil carraway croco leather watch ₹13,495



Frederique Constant classic index automatic ₹93,100

HOW TO

- Keep it classic and opt for a traditional leather watch, that is a black or brown strap with a muted but clean face framed in silver or gold metal. This style is ideal for a first-time buyer looking for a long-term investment.
- If you're looking to add

to your collection, mix it up with colours and shapes. Opt for a square dial, coloured face (blue and green are good options) or consider textured or coloured leather, even suede.

- When pairing a leather watch with clothes, make sure the strap matches your shoes and belt for a put-together look.

my picks



Advaitesha Birla founder, Ujaas, loves her camera, Sudoku and her furry friends

Book

WHAT CAPTIVATES ME THE MOST ABOUT HARPER LEE'S TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD IS ITS EXPLORATION OF PIVOTAL THEMES SUCH AS JUSTICE, EQUALITY, GENDER, IDENTITY AND EMPATHY THROUGH THE LENS OF A YOUNG GIRL. IT MAKES YOU THINK HARD ABOUT LIFE.

Gadget

I'M DEVOTED TO MY CAMERA. I LOVE CAPTURING CANDID SHOTS OF FAMILY, FRIENDS AND BEAUTIFUL PLACES.

Movie

ZINDAGI NA MILEGI DOBARA IS SUCH A FUN, RELATABLE FILM, BUT IT ALSO DELVES DEEP INTO SO MANY IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF LIFE.



Unwind

BEING WITH MY DOGS IS MY FAVOURITE THING. I AM HAPPIEST WHEN I AM WITH SKAI, SNOOPY AND SPENCER WHO ARE THE MOST INTEGRAL PARTS OF MY LIFE.



Restaurant

MY FAVOURITE CUISINE IS ASIAN, SO IT WOULD HAVE TO BE YAUATCHA IN MUMBAI.

Apps

APPLE MUSIC IS MY ABSOLUTELY FAVOURITE APP. I LISTEN TO MUSIC ALL THE TIME — WHEN I'M RELAXING, WHEN I'M WORKING OUT, TRAVELLING OR FEEL THE NEED TO BE INSPIRED. I ALSO LOVE SUDOKU APPS.

— As told to glynda.alves@timesgroup.com

summer forecast

Package holidays see upswing in demand

Flights, hotel, transfers and food in a few clicks: The package vacation is this summer's hottest travel trend across Europe

Once seen as an outdated niche appealing mainly to baby boomers, the humble holiday bundle has mounted an unlikely comeback after almost being wiped out during the pandemic.

Demand for all-inclusive packages is surging as younger travellers warm to an increasingly sophisticated offering of affordable and hassle-free holidays. Growth is forecast to surpass 11 per cent globally this year, with Western Europe approaching pre-pandemic levels, according to market research firm Euromonitor International.

"We all thought it was dead, because of the Internet allowing people to put their own packages together," said Carsten Spohr, CEO, Lufthansa. "But with all these interruptions in Covid, people now love to have

everything secured in one package."

More varied offerings

German travel company TUI and others have evolved their offerings to cater to a younger, more Internet-savvy crowd. The choices are more varied with experiences that go beyond the traditional sun-and-beach trip, said Caroline Bremner, senior head of travel research at Euromonitor.

EasyJet Holidays, for example, offers guests a 162-pound (\$206) add-on — a guided tour of Iceland's Thingvellir National Park, where the American and Eurasian tectonic plates meet, followed by a visit to a volcanic crater and a dip in the steaming Blue Lagoon. TUI recently added an 11-night tour of Kenya,



where elephants and hippos are on display.

Travel companies are also tailoring packages to extended families with a range of interests,

while customer-friendly options like installment payments, amenities for children and all-inclusive food plans represent a "safe bet" for consumers

squeezed by rising prices, said Bremner. "They offer a value for money option where costs are fixed up-front."

Back in vogue

The segment first gained popularity in the 1960s, when vacationers sought an affordable way to sightsee or visit the beach. The market slowed in the 1990s, when holidaymakers started surfing the web to book their own flights and accommodation separately. Heavy competition led to the collapse of package-tour stalwarts such as Thomas Cook just before the pandemic.

However, with renewed demand for the segment, package-tour revenue is forecast to reach \$280 billion this year, or 86 per cent of 2019 levels.

— Bloomberg