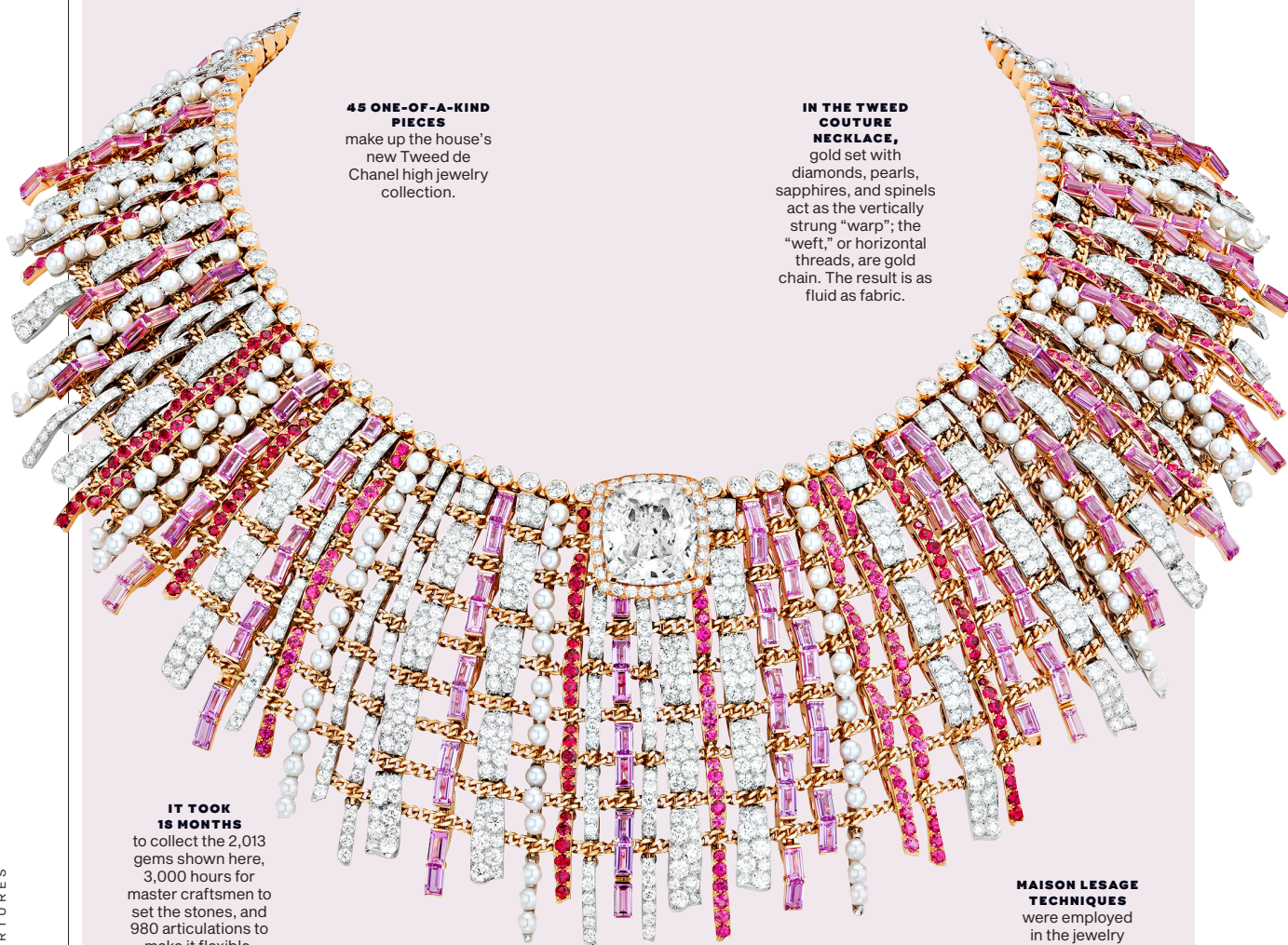


Boss

How did Chanel turn gold, diamonds, and pearls into its iconic fabric? *by Jill Newman*

Tweed



45 ONE-OF-A-KIND PIECES make up the house's new Tweed de Chanel high jewelry collection.

IN THE TWEED COUTURE NECKLACE, gold set with diamonds, pearls, sapphires, and spinels act as the vertically strung "warp"; the "weft," or horizontal threads, are gold chain. The result is as fluid as fabric.

IT TOOK 18 MONTHS to collect the 2,013 gems shown here, 3,000 hours for master craftsmen to set the stones, and 980 articulations to make it flexible.

A 10-CARAT CUSHION-CUT DIAMOND is joined by 1,286 round diamonds, tailor-cut to add the rich texture, complexity, and volume of an iconic weave.

MAISON LESAGE TECHNIQUES were employed in the jewelry assembly: different shades of precious metals and stones were selected in the manner weavers pick thread.



At the Chanel Jewelry Creation studio, a craftsman carefully assembles the Tweed Couture necklace.

IN THE 1920S, Gabrielle Chanel started a minor sartorial revolution, taking up tweed—the English gentleman’s hacking classic, favored by her then-beau, the Duke of Westminster—for her stylishly sporty women’s jackets and suits. In the century since, the brand she built has kept with her tradition: Karl Lagerfeld featured tweed in his first Chanel collection in 1983 through to his last, in everything from neon-pink suits and thigh-high boots to status handbags. His successor, Virginie Viard, used it in her debut couture collection in July 2019, showcasing elegant coats and evening gowns.

Tweed is, in fact, so much a part of Chanel’s DNA that in 2002 the house purchased legendary French embroiderer Maison Lesage to preserve the *métier d’art* behind its best-loved fabric. But the fabric is not merely a part of Chanel’s history; it’s also a part of its future. This past January, the house unveiled Tweed de Chanel, a 45-piece high jewelry collection that has transformed one of the brand’s most beloved style signatures into one of its most precious offerings.

The result of centuries-old metalworking techniques, the Tweed de Chanel designs are surprisingly supple, with strands of gold, diamonds, and precious gemstones that have been interwoven to give the effect of fabric. The man behind this feat of engineering is Patrice Leguéreau, the director of Chanel’s Jewelry Creation studio, who has spent the past decade translating the house’s signature motifs (lions, sheaves of wheat, camellias) into jewels. It was a visit with François Lesage nearly a decade ago that sparked a fascination with the art of weaving. “François shared with me the techniques and complexities of making Chanel’s tweed,” he says. Turning that tweed into gold (and diamonds, and pearls, and more) was Leguéreau’s greatest challenge to date.

“My priority was to make sure the jewelry was flexible,” Leguéreau says. He also wanted to ensure that what he calls the “wealth and femininity” of tweed came through in the handi-



work. In Chanel’s Place Vendôme workshop, craftsmen studied the techniques used by Maison Lesage so they could mimic tweed’s irregular weave. They selected different shades of precious metals, stones, and pearls in the same way weavers pick thread, with an eye for richness and texture.

Among the dozens of these one-of-a-kind adornments, the showstopper is the Tweed Couture Necklace, shown on these pages. Interwoven strands of gold set with diamonds, pearls, sapphires, and spinels drape like a swath of fabric around the neck. Just consider the numbers: 18 months to collect 2,013 gems (including a 10.2-carat cushion-cut diamond and 1,286 round diamonds); 3,000 hours for master craftsmen to set the stones and make the piece; and over 980 articulations to make it flexible. “This,” says Leguéreau, “is a new language in jewelry.” But it’s signature Chanel. *At select Chanel fine jewelry boutiques.*