The porous deposit of candle soot can be used as a template for a super oil- and water-repellent coating. The soot is coated with a thin silica shell to form a replica and is then removed by calcination. The silica is treated with a fluorosilane, yielding a transparent, stable coating. This cheap and easily upscalable approach may inspire the design of anti-fingerprint coatings, which are desirable for touchscreens or glasses. See page 67.

* Photo illustration: Bricelyn Strauch and Yana Hammond/Science; candle image: Fotosearch

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