Do You Love Vintage Jewelry?

by John Francies

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Vintage jewelry has been highly desired over the years because it has played many significant roles. Believe it or not, some people believe that antique jewelry can bring good luck or serve as a way to repel negative energies. Others believe that vintage jewelry, such as old rosaries or pendants have religious significance. Of course, many people are attracted to old jewelry simply because itâ€™s beautiful. Collectors like to purchase old jewelry because it has unique designs that reflect various times in history. Today many jewelry designers find a great deal of inspiration from vintage jewelry designs of the past.

In almost every culture, the upper class have always purchased and collected beautiful jewelry. However, regardless of oneâ€™s class or social status, there is a common desire to own beautiful objects. During the eighteenth century, glass was often used to create imitations of diamond and emerald jewelry. Much of the costume jewelry we buy today is due to the demand and rise of middle class consumers.

If you are interested in collecting vintage jewelry, itâ€™s probably a good idea to educate yourself about some of the more significant eras of the past. This can be very helpful in determining which vintage jewelry design style will appeal to you the most.

Jewelry in the Victorian Era

The Victorian era was a time when the number of people entering middle class prosperity began to rise. A great influence on style and fashion during that era was Queen Victoria, who ruled the British Empire. Women all over the world wished to imitate her style and this was particularly true for jewelry.

Queen Victoria is predominately remembered for the long period of mourning she entered after the death of her beloved husband, Prince Albert. The jewelry she wore during her time of mourning was often very dark in color that reflected her period of grief. The materials that tended to be used were jet, bog oak and even human hair.

During the time of Queen Victoria, human hair was used for a number of purposes. During this era, women often braided their own hair to create keepsakes for their families. The hair might be woven into elaborate rings, bracelets, or brooches. Women who had the means to afford it would add tiny gemstones and bits of real gold to accent the pieces.

Jewelry in the Art Nouveau Style

The Industrial Revolution was a period when many people became very enamored with industry, machines, and mass production. At the same time, there was also a reaction against industrial production, with some artists advocating a return to nature in their artwork. The Art Nouveau Movement is characterized as a return to using very organic, sensual lines in art and jewelry. Art Nouveau pieces feature curving lines inspired by such natural influences as flowers, and flowing hair. Art Nouveau was a major force in the art world and in society in the period from 1890 until 1920.

Art Deco Jewelry and its Influence

After the Art Nouveau period waned, the next major influence on jewelry styles came from the Art

Deco period. This was a style that incorporated design motifs based on Egyptian and Asian art, and influenced the design of buildings, appliances, and jewelry. The jewelry produced in the Art Deco era consisted of defined angles and sharp, geometric designs. At this time, costume jewelry became more widely available to new consumers in the growing middle class.

In the thirties, mass-produced jewelry was created to be affordable and easy to acquire. Those who could afford it would wear a piece of jewelry one or two times, and then get rid of it. At this time, a form of hard plastic named Bakelite was used to create jewelry. Coco Chanel, for example, often created Bakelite jewelry for her clothing collections.

World War II

The coming of the second World War had another significant effect on costume jewelry. Patriotic symbolism became very common, in addition to more traditional themes, such as hearts and lockets. During the war period, jewelry designs became more and more simple, perhaps in reaction to the difficult times that people were experiencing. Materials were in short supply and approaches to jewelry making became quite creative. During this era, jewelry was often constructed out of wire, mother of pearl or wood.

The Post War Period

After the end of World War II, America entered a period of unprecedented economic prosperity. Once again, women wanted to look glamorous, and jewelry designers started to create large pieces that were meant to attract attention. The sixties decade was the era of flower power and peace symbols. Jewelry was often bold and clunky, and made of new types of acrylic.

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