

Like Jewelry?
Here are some opinions to think about
the next time you make a purchase.
Kristina Malcolm

Jewelry is a beautiful, mysterious thing. I've been recently struck by the notion that most girls in the United States, no matter the income bracket, at some point, own jewelry. Wow. That makes it a very universal product. So I asked myself, with all of these women owning jewelry out there, what message would I personally want give them regarding jewelry? The first answer that came to me was to educate people about purchasing it. OK, it's a big stretch but the point is, it's a huge demographic and I've always wanted to educate the public about jewelry and now I have a chance. Having over 15 years of jewelry making experience makes me very passionate about the subject. So with all of that in mind, I would love to encourage people to be slightly more product conscious, we are all trying to be more green, right? One way you can do this is to know where your jewelry comes from. Is it from China or a designer in California? If it's a jeweler in California, who is he/she and does he/she have a website? Or maybe you are purchasing your piece from the artist him/herself. If you have the artists' attention, take advantage of it. We love to talk about our work! Ask about the materials or what is it made from (people should be aware if jewelry contains base metal, lead, pewter, copper and many other things due to allergic reactions and care of the piece). Ask about the stones as well; opals need special care, as do many other stones. Also maybe ask about the life expectancy of the piece, you may be surprised by the answer. And finally ask about how to care for it, some artists may even offer to regularly clean and polish a higher end piece that you purchase from them.

I was curious to see what kind of things other people in my field would say so I posed this query to my colleagues "what points should people ponder when purchasing jewelry?". The resulting comments were surprisingly very diverse.

Edy Seaman, owner of Edybeay's in Canton, Ohio says the most important thing to consider when purchasing jewelry is its functionality. Does it function the way it is intended to function? That means no awkward twisting, the clasp works, it is easy to take on and off, it doesn't fall open, and so on.

Jason Adams, a jewelry historian from Akron, Ohio says that four things need to be considered when purchasing any type of jewelry. The first is size. Does it fit and is it a size you will wear. The next thing is comfort. Do not buy something that is not comfortable to wear or you will never wear it. The next suggestion is color. Make sure it matches the majority of the colors in your wardrobe. And lastly he encourages you to investigate how well is it crafted. Be sure to look for soldered jump rings on clasps and earmarks that make it a quality piece. If you are unsure what makes a quality piece of work, ask the artist.

Eva Sherman, owner of Grand River Beads and Gifts in Rocky River, Ohio recommends to first consider the price point. If it is under \$70, consider it a fun, knock-around piece of jewelry and buy it. If it is over \$70 then consider it an heirloom or art piece and judge it against higher standards. Locally, there are many jewelers that want and need your patronage so look to them first before buying from big box stores where their pieces could have come from conflict zones, where they could be made with materials that are unethically sourced or not part of a fair-trade organization.

And just an aside, when you're on vacation, consider instead of purchasing mementoes from a gift shop, visiting a local artists studio or art gallery. Do some research before you leave to find out if there are any indigenous precious or semi-precious stones in the area, if any local jewelers use that stone in their work, and where their work can be purchased. You will be doing their local economy a huge favor and have a great piece of art that will undoubtedly increase in value.

No matter what it is, jewelry should make you feel good. It should brighten your spirit and strengthen your soul. It should help define you as an individual person. So above all ask, "Do I love it?" A piece of jewelry should enliven your spirit and inspire love. After all it is not called adornment for nothing.

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