

Jewelry: The New Online Valentine

(NAPSA)—If you dislike competing against crowds of shoppers eager to prove their love, this Valentine's Day is for you. Taking a page from top couturiers like Bottega Veneta, who until recently shied away from selling their lines on the Web, some of the hippest jewelry designers are now making their baubles available to anyone with a computer.

Why it's taken designers this long to embrace the Web—jewelry is, after all, one of the most popular gifts for any occasion—has everything to do with consumers having reached “a comfort zone” when it comes to buying higher-end goods online, according to Milton Pedrasa, chief executive of the Luxury Institute. “There isn't that hesitation that used to exist a couple of years ago,” he says.

Many of these designers work in Platinum, which is a popular choice with consumers because it lasts a lifetime and holds gemstones securely. One of the best examples of the trend is Manhattan designer Karen Karch. Known for having created the Platinum and ruby “Inner Circle” earrings that triggered all those memories in the Denzel Washington film “Déjà Vu,” her easy-to-navigate Web site (KarenKarch.com) features sections like “Word of Mouth.” It's a great way to search for jewelry worn by celebrities.

How hot are consumers to spend on wrist, neck and finger candy? A recent comScore survey

found that online jewelry and watch spending increased by 24 percent around Valentine's Day in 2006.

And sites that have long sold jewelry have likewise responded to that demand. BlueNile.com, for example, lets you shop by specific categories and price points, while Tiffany.com offers a huge selection of Platinum necklaces, rings and bracelets, starting as low as \$325.

If you're shopping for him, try visiting ChrisAire.com. It offers distinct Platinum cufflinks and watches. All the site's items are designed by Chris Aire, a nationally acclaimed designer whose clientele includes Muhammad Ali, Justin Timberlake and Jamie Foxx.

Whatever your choice, according to jewelry and style expert Michael O'Connor, “the most important piece of information to note when purchasing a gift online is to keep it personal and pick a design that reflects your significant other's personality.”

“If they're down-to-earth,” he adds, “stick to smaller, more versatile designs. If they're outgoing and fashion-forward, you can be a little more daring.”

Of course, those who'd rather see the jewelry in person before buying can visit the “Find a Retailer” section found on www.preciousplatinum.com and www.engagementguide.com.



Platinum heart locket by Chris Aire



Platinum and ruby “Inner Circle” earrings, as seen in “Déjà Vu”