

Wearable Heirlooms: Fine Jewelry Unites Past, Present and Future

(NAPSA)—Today's most fashionable fine jewelry finds inspiration from the past—and previously taken-for-granted tokens of family sentiment have become meaningful heirlooms to be treasured.

Fine jewelry need not be passed down to have meaning, however. Many self-purchasing women or gift-giving men have initiated new traditions and begun purchasing jewelry gifts they know will last. In fact, according to a recent survey, many married couples are choosing to commemorate special anniversaries by buying a piece of fine jewelry or a watch that would remain in the family and be enjoyed for generations to come.

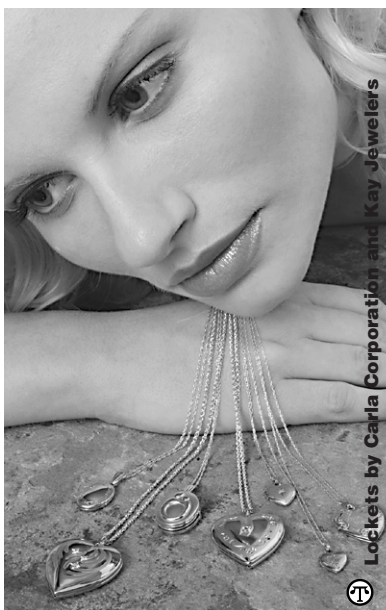
"If well taken care of, fine jewelry will endure throughout generations, remaining a lasting symbol of love," notes Elizabeth Florence, executive director of the Jewelry Information Center, a nonprofit trade association.

Sarah Jessica Parker, who plays Carrie on the groundbreaking show "Sex and the City," has proven that people are also seeking out meaning from things once seen as frivolous. The actress has been spotted onscreen and off donning the freshest accessory of the season—a gold locket.

Locketts in the shape of a heart or those that contain the photo of a loved one have special meaning. Prevalent during the Victorian era (1837-1901), locketts were once used to hold a lock of hair from a deceased loved one; hence the name "loocket." Typically used as pendants on necklaces, locketts hang, by no coincidence, close to the heart of the wearer.

Also spotted on trendsetting television shows, in fashion magazines and on the runways this season are cameos. For example, in the film *Possession*, actresses Jennifer Ehle and Gwyneth Paltrow wear the same spectacular carved onyx brooch in scenes that take place in differing eras.

Cameos from years past once portrayed the carved profile of a god or goddess, religious theme or hero. This season, cameos are not



Gold locketts formed in the shape of hearts, circles and ovals, and specially engraved with initials or a personal message, are the perfect nesting place for a favored photo of a loved one.

only romantic, but also chic, in the more traditional coral and cream colors.

Wearing the initials of a loved one is not only fashionable but fun; it prompts others to inquire about your significant other. A traditional option includes 18 karat gold signet rings engraved with family crests. Or, take a cue from a pair of Hollywood stars: Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston, who've been seen wearing bracelets sporting the other's name.

A piece of fine jewelry is one of the most emotional gifts a person can purchase or pass from one family member to another. The first step in selecting any piece is to shop at a reputable and professional jeweler. Look for a jeweler who is a member of a professional trade association, such as Jewelers of America (JA), which requires high ethical standards of members and provides ongoing education.

For more information on fine jewelry and to find a list of professional jewelers near you, visit the Jewelry Information Center's Web site at www.jewelryinfo.org.