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TRENDS & ANALYSIS

Sentiment Sells

Kick off the year with meaningful styles

BY JEWELRY INFORMATION CENTER

Enter January. The holidays are over and shoppers coming off their spending highs are nursing spending hangovers. With consumers tightly clutching their wallets, what is a retailer or manufacturer to do?

The upcoming Valentine's Day sales boost, combined with a more sobering sense of uncertainty spawned by recent world events, are two key factors fueling a trend toward meaningful jewelry.

The essence of jewelry is the story that it tells—the heartfelt remembrance of how, when, and why a piece was acquired. Manufacturers and retailers should look to January and February as a time to push sentimental styles, including:

Stacking rings. An evolution of Mother's Rings, which hold the birthstones of each family member housed in a simple precious metal band, stacking rings fit a variety of categories. They make great "push presents"—gifts given to new mothers after the birth of a child, typically featuring the child's birthstone. As anniversary bands, stackables with diamonds are especially hot, but they can also feature the wearer's favorite color or gemstone. And for the self-purchaser who needs a "me" gift after all the holiday giving, fashion stacking rings offer a host of options. Popular styles feature charms, champagne or brown diamonds, and interesting finishes such as hand hammering.



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Charms. "Charm bracelets are 'history on a wrist,'" says fine jewelry designer and charm bracelet expert Tracey Zabar of New York City. "Charm bracelets chronicle small moments in a life lived. Truly, to wear one is to wear history upon your sleeve."



But charms adorn much more than bracelets. Manufacturers are adding them to rings, necklaces, and even earrings. To put a new spin on your charm line, try the following hot looks: Add delicate hanging briollette gemstones, tiny symbols, or one large charm to rings. Pepper charms on stationed necklaces or cluster many charms on one chain. Make your charms with lobster claws; the younger set loves attaching these fun dangles to zipper pulls or shoelaces.

Monograms and initials. Celebrities, socialites, and slick city folk have made ID bracelets, crests, and signet rings popular once again. Although monogram jewelry may evoke memories of 1980s preppies, it is still timeless enough to appeal to the masses. An overwhelming number of celebrities have been spotted sporting their favorite letters and numbers. For example, *Desperate Housewives'* Eva Longoria wears New York City-based designer Alex Woo's number "9" necklace in honor of fiancé Tony Parker, who plays basketball for the San Antonio Spurs.

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Journey Diamond Jewelry. The Diamond Trading Co.'s newest marketing campaign fits the sentimental jewelry trend to a T. Early market research showed that the term "journey" evoked emotion about a couple's personal story or shared relationship in which love is a progression or evolution that grows stronger as the couple stays together. Journey Diamond Jewelry expresses that concept with designs featuring four diamonds arranged in a graduated pattern from smallest to largest—a metaphor for love that grows over time. Jewelry categories that best lend themselves to Journey pieces include brooches, pendants, bracelets, and earrings. ♦

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: (R) CHARM BRACELET BY MELISSA LUTZ; (L) MONOGRAM NECKLACE BY ALEX WOO; (R) CHARM BRACELET BY MELISSA LUTZ; (L) MONOGRAM NECKLACE BY ALEX WOO



Collection: Orbit, 2006
Rings (18ct gold, Rose cut diamond)