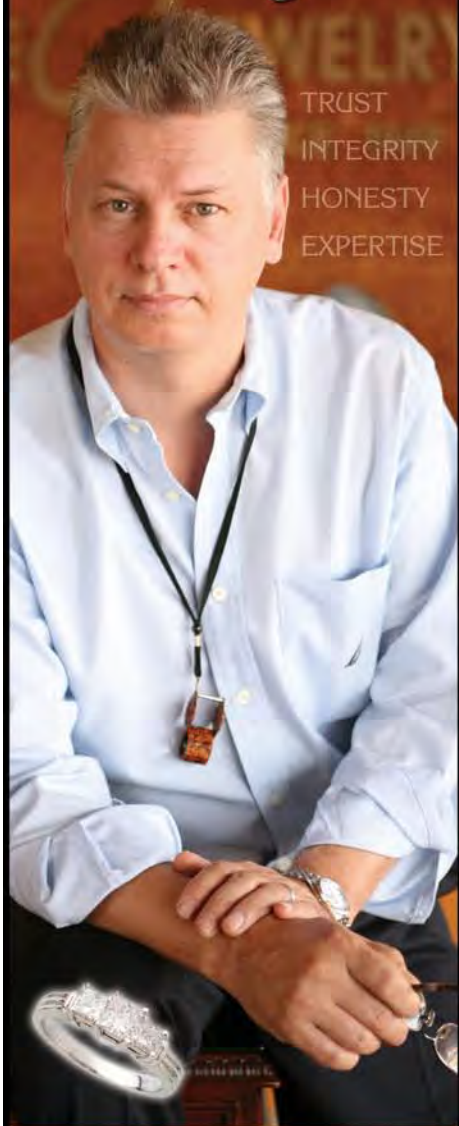


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JEWELS

# Jewelry Trends 2006

By Andrew Z



"...quality  
is always in  
fashion"

As I'm writing this, we are almost into the fourth quarter of 2006 and I have completed most of my analyzing, planning, and ordering of some beautiful fine jewelry for the Christmas season and the rest of the year. This means that I've analyzed the micro- as well as the macro world of fine jewelry and gemstones and their trends over the past year, as well as the previous years. The following is a summary of the interesting things that I've found to be hot, as well as certain trends that have recently come into being.

#### Diamond Size: Is Bigger Better?

There has been a steady and definite trend over the past five to ten years toward bigger diamonds, particularly in engagement rings. The one-carat ring now seems to be the starting point, with two carats become more common and three carats now the size toward which to aspire. This trend is not just for the first-timer, either. Many married women are trading up their diamonds for more carats, as well as updating their mountings into platinum or white gold from the older yellow gold, and choosing mountings that are covered with diamonds, such as the pavé-set style.

#### Journey Diamond Jewelry

This is a completely new category of jewelry that features a series of diamonds that graduate from smallest to largest as a metaphor for ever-growing love. This category will be the main focus of the Diamond Trade Council's holiday advertising for

2006. If you liked the concept of the three-stone past-present-future diamond jewelry, then you will also appreciate the sentiment behind journey jewelry. Look for the ads coming soon featuring this style.

#### Diamond Circles

These deserve a separate mention. Circle of Love, Circle of Life, Oprah's O—whatever you choose to call it, as long as you also call it hot! These pendants, earrings, and other baubles were on the top of everyone's wish list last Christmas and Valentines Day and are still desired by those who haven't gotten one yet. Some new variations include adding another circle within a circle for a layered look or mixing a yellow-gold circle with a white one.

#### Link Bracelets

Bracelets such as the popular Pandora have become a very wearable and affordable fashion statement that is spreading fast. These are the new charm bracelets with charms that cleverly screw onto the snake chain bracelet.

#### One-of-a-Kind

Custom designed one-of-a-kind pieces make a very personal statement that more and more women are looking to achieve. Jewelry that sets someone apart from the crowd and expresses individuality has become a growing trend. Within this concept, women are also resetting diamonds and gems that they've accumulated through the years, creating updated keepsakes.

#### Men's Jewelry

Titanium, tungsten carbide, and stainless steel are three industrial-grade metals that designers are using in men's jewelry, with phenomenal success. These are materials that men are familiar with—think titanium golf clubs and tungsten drill bits. Compared with traditional precious metals, these alternative metals are very affordable.

#### Gold Color—Yellow or White?

White gold has been the dominant trend over recent years and will continue to be strong for the foreseeable future, especially with bridal rings. Yellow gold is also slowly working its way back into fashion jewelry and is often accompanied by colored gemstones. The good news is that mixing jewelry with both the gold colors is very fashionable and acceptable.

#### Conclusion

It's always fun to look at trends and see how our own personal likes and dislikes compare with others. Sometimes trends can help us make fashionable decisions for ourselves or when buying gifts. Fine jewelry trends tend to move slowly and consistently, and quality is always in fashion. My recommendation to anyone considering a special jewelry purchase is to consider solid trends as a guideline, give a lot of weight to what you really like, and review your thoughts and expectations with a qualified jewelry professional. Don't skimp on quality. When you've done all this, let your heart guide you to your final decision. ■