

Adding Ethnic Jewelry to your Wardrobe

Ethnic jewelry is as unique as you are. Humans all over the world have worn jewelry throughout the ages. An unusual ethnic piece worn with a simple tee shirt and pair of jeans brings a completely different perspective to your own unique style. An ethnic piece worn with a skirt and blouse makes a memorable fashion statement.

Ethnic jewelry is an expression of the individual's creativity filtered through tradition and culture. The technique is usually passed from hand to hand through a culture and the pieces are often created of local materials. Ethnic jewelry is frequently symbolic relating to either the culture, the religion, the local industry or family relationships. Some ethnic jewelry is a talisman or worn to bring a certain outcome such as good fortune, strength, protection or courage.

Ethnic can be either contemporary or rare antique jewelry. Some pieces have great value and are great investments. An example of this is the old pawn native American pieces available as signed pieces by the artisans who created them. With modernization in the far flung regions of the world, some of the techniques used by certain tribes or ethnic groups is dying out and as this happens, these pieces become even more collectible. The turquoise found in some of the older native American jewelry is rare in itself because it comes from mines that have been closed to commercial mining, which makes these pieces quite valuable.

You can find symbolism in many different jewelry pieces. The Ankh is the Egyptian symbol of life. The Celtic Cross symbolizes the universe cut in quarters. The Chinese Ming Knot symbolizes cause and effect. And, most of us know the crow's foot as the Peace Symbol.

Some ethnic pieces are created to be worn as a talisman to provide protection or good fortune or other benefits to the person wearing the jewelry. An example of a talisman piece is the traditional African elephant hair bracelet. This bracelet is said to protect the wearer. The Scarab was worn in ancient Egypt for energy, courage and protection.

Some ethnic jewelry is helping the cultures that created it. The Bead for Life project in Africa helps the Ugandan women reach out of poverty and provide for their children by making beautiful paper beads. They recycle magazines by cutting long thin triangles and rolling them into paper beads. These beads are then chosen for color coordination and strung into necklaces and bracelets.

Caring for ethnic pieces is different from caring for contemporary jewelry. Many of the materials are not waterproof or stable in a cleaning solution, so cleaning can damage them. Some of them are made of wood or seeds and plant oils, not mineral based oils can be helpful in protecting and preserving them. If jewelry made of plant materials is shipped from outside the country it may have been sprayed with insecticide or other materials that can cause allergies.

Imagine how a Chinese Cinnabar bracelet, a Navajo squash blossom or hand carved scarab earrings can accent your basic wardrobe pieces with an expression of your own unique personality and style.

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

About the Author

Louise Coulson has had a checkered career as a teacher, weaver, jewelry artisan and website developer. She and her husband have moved from one construction project to another for 38 years, hence the checkered career. She uses her background as a weaver as the basis for her jewelry designs. The wire is woven, twisted, coiled and braided to create one-of-a-kind or limited-edition pieces. Her eBook, Website ShowCase is an artisan's guide for website development, maintenance and marketing. She is webmaster for the wireweavers.com and the jewelryspectrum.com websites.