



Staten Island Advance

Baubles, bangles and big mistakes

Men shopping for jewelry for wives or girlfriends often go awry

Friday, December 14, 2007

By ANDREA BOYARSKY
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE -- We wouldn't call it every women's worst nightmare -- but it's close.

It's Christmas morning, a little box with a bow is under the tree. She looks at it, her heart all aflutter. Her husband eyes her with anticipation; It's perfect, he thinks. She gently unties the bow, opens the box and wants to scream.

What was he thinking?

What should she do now?

"The biggest mistake men make is buying impulsively -- buying last minute and having a very limited selection," said Susan Eisen, author of "Crazy About Jewelry! The Expert Guide to Buying, Selling and Caring for Your Jewelry" (Full Circle International Publishing).

She added, "Another big mistake is not taking into consideration what they [women] wear and like on a regular basis."

SHOW HIM

So what's a girl to do when her husband's tastes make her want to gasp?

Show him, advises Ms. Eisen, but do it in subtle way.

"The first hint I give is to go window shopping together," said Ms. Eisen, president and designer with Susan Eisen Fine Jewelry and Watches in El Paso, Texas.

But don't tell him it's jewelry browsing -- he may not want to go -- look for something else and just happen to pass by a favorite jewelry store.

"Some people think this is being forward or pushy," she said. "But what it's really doing is saving you lots of time, money and grief."

Another way for women to get their point across is to tear out or circle pictures in magazines. Leave them around the house, maybe one on his desk, another in his briefcase.

Staten Island jewelers interviewed have seen this course of action many times. Joe Marino, owner of B and A Jewelers in New Dorp, said men often bring pictures from different magazines that have been strategically placed by their significant others.

He also agreed that many men are last-minute shoppers. They will come into his shop on Dec. 23 or 24, looking for a gift with magazines in hand. For custom-made gifts, this is a big no-no, Marino said, because it leaves the jeweler little time to make the piece.

MAKE A LIST

One way to help gift givers is with a wish list. At B and A, women can tell the jeweler what items they like and they'll keep a record of it. When their other half comes in, they'll have an easier time choosing a gift.

Casale Jewelers in Dongan Hills also keeps a wish list for individual women.

"A lot of women will come in and say what they like. We put it in a file with their name on it," explained manager Laura Puglisi.

She said one common mistake men make is forgetting what their wife or girlfriend already owns. This could make it tough to pick out matching earrings or something she didn't already buy herself.

Another jewelry faux pas made by men -- buying what they like, not what their wife wants.

"When they come in and choose, sometimes they say, 'oh my wife will like this, but I don't, so I won't get it,'" Ms. Puglisi said.

So what's a man to do when he doesn't know what to do?

Listen, says Ms. Eisen, and do it whenever you can.

FIND HER STYLE

When a woman makes a comment about jewelry, whether it's looking through a magazine or complimenting a friend, men should make a mental note.

Men also need to determine whether their significant other is conservative or contemporary. Conservative women like smaller, more traditional jewelry -- nothing too bright or flashy. Contemporary types like things that are different, in interesting shapes, colors and styles.

To find out her style, first look through her jewelry box and then, in her closet. If you see a lot of blacks, grays and navy blues, she may be conservative. But if her wardrobe resembles a rainbow, she probably opts for a more contemporary look.

At B and A Jewelers, Marino will ask customers certain questions to help determine what a woman might like. He'll ask how long her hair is, -- hanging earrings can look good with long hair, while studs work well with short -- what her personality is like and whether she'll be wearing it for dressy or casual occasions.

But for those who are still unsure of what to get, going with the latest trends could work in their favor. Ms. Eisen said jewelry in a mix of gold and silver is trendy and works well with all kinds of pieces. Another always-popular item is the diamond.

"You can never go wrong with diamond studs," she said.

INCORPORATE COLOR

For a contemporary look, try large colored gemstones with accent colors or diamonds to make a statement. Pearls in different colors are also en vogue, in hues such as pink, green, purple and beige.

A watch makes for a nice traditional gift, Ms. Eisen said, adding that it could incorporate different metals or have diamond accents.

"You needn't always wear the same watch," she noted. "People now have a dress watch, a casual watch, a silver watch. The wardrobe for watches has really expanded."

Ms. Puglisi said men often come in looking for anniversary pieces that have three stones representing the past, present and future. They also look for journey pieces, five or more stones symbolizing how their love grows with each step.

IF SHE HATES IT?

No matter how thoughtfully the gift is purchased or lovingly given, she still might hate it. Then there are basically two options for women: Lie, or tell the truth.

Marino said that oftentimes the woman exchanging the gift is a wife who feels comfortable enough with her husband to tell him what she thinks.

Girlfriends tend to leave things alone. "A wife would [exchange it], if anyone would," he said.

If the gift isn't quite right, Ms. Eisen suggests trying to find out how important this purchase was to him. Did he go to a lot of trouble to find it or did he go to the store last minute and pick it out? It's OK to return a gift if it's not your taste, she said, but you have to be tactful about how you do it. Go into the store with him and see if there's anything you like better. Constantly ask his opinion to show him you care about what he thinks.

"Men come in all the time and say, 'Every time I get her something, she doesn't like it,'" Ms. Eisen said.
"Don't say you don't like it. It's all about the communication and the words you use."

TAG: For more information, visit www.susaneisen.com or crazyaboutjewelry.net.

Andrea Boyarsky is a features reporter for the Advance. She may be reached at boyarsky@siadvance.com.

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