

## How does jewellery make *you* feel?

*'I fell in love with the necklace as soon as I opened the gift box. Then when my partner put it around my neck I felt this glow. And I still feel it every time I wear it.'* (Jenny, 32)



For many women, jewellery evokes strong emotion: happiness, passion, love. Wearing something gorgeous can't fail to feel like a treat. It's the ultimate guilty pleasure.

Lately, though, treating yourself – or someone else – seems to involve more guilt than pleasure. Grim news headlines reinforce the feeling that anything more extravagant than getting the car serviced or buying second-hand socks on eBay is beyond the pale.

### *An investment in quality jewellery doesn't have to be guilt-edged*

But online fashion shopping has moved way beyond eBay – and savvy shoppers are now discovering the next wave of web businesses that combine luxury with value.

Which is where Precious Monkey comes in.

'We want to bridge the gap between fashion and bespoke jewellery,' explains Design Director Liz Clothier, who brings executive experience from Top Shop and Debenhams to the emerging jewellery brand. 'Precious means realness and specialness – this is not throwaway

jewellery. At the same time, the monkey shows we are not overly serious – there's a lightness in the design, too. It has a mix of cheekiness and high quality.'

Even five years ago, launching a collection entirely online would have been a gamble – just as the idea of selecting and buying quality jewellery from an online store might have seemed risky to the buyer. But as technology has advanced to allow virtual boutiques to offer what feels like a 'hands on' experience, stylish consumers are powering up their laptops. On Precious Monkey's site, buyers can zoom in incredibly closely and examine every detail of a piece. And they're not just discovering new designs – they're also making very significant savings.

'If you were to try to buy this quality of jewellery on the high street, it would cost you a third more, and in some cases even more than that,' says Liz. 'We can do this because we don't have retail outlets and also we make most pieces to order, so we avoid waste.'

But today's consumer won't compromise simply to save money. Precious Monkey also taps into the increasing desire for

authenticity – the knowledge that you're buying from people with values you share: sourcing the best, fairly-traded raw materials, avoiding damaging processes and minimising waste. Companies like Innocent have built their reputations on making the connection between their smoothies, and the people and ideas behind them.

And that connection is even more relevant to an investment purchase, like jewellery. We want to understand what the designer and jeweller is aiming for.

At Precious Monkey, Liz works in close partnership with master jeweller Nigel Townsend, who designed his first piece of jewellery at the age of eight.

'I'll take an idea, do a sketch and then Nigel applies his expertise to produce a cast which he'll hand carve until the design is just right. That attention to detail and quality gives a beautiful finish. All our pieces are handmade here in Britain and finished to order, and Nigel checks each one before it goes out.'

### *"We want to bridge the gap between fashion and bespoke jewellery"*

The people behind Precious Monkey have also responded to the demand for value by offering items from silver pendants at £35, up to a top-of-the-range chunky gold charm bracelet at £1370. Consumers can begin ordering a pair of earrings, and then move onto the higher priced items for special occasions with complete confidence.

'We've deliberately included lower priced pieces so customers can try out our products and experience the quality. When we set up, we knew every detail counted, and so everything from the luxury packaging to the personal letter from Nigel has been carefully thought out. New buyers contact us afterwards to say how impressed they've been at those additional touches.'

### *Wearing something gorgeous can't fail to feel like a treat*

And there's another way to experience on-trend gold glamour without breaking the bank.

The 'Hint of Gold' range, introduced in December 2008, also hits the mark, by offering fashionable pieces that combine silver and gold – at a fraction of the cost of pure gold jewellery.

Like many web-based businesses, Precious Monkey is already experiencing the passion that consumers feel when they've found a brand they believe in. And the word on the web is that an investment in gorgeous jewellery doesn't have to be guilt-edged – so long as you know the right place to buy.

