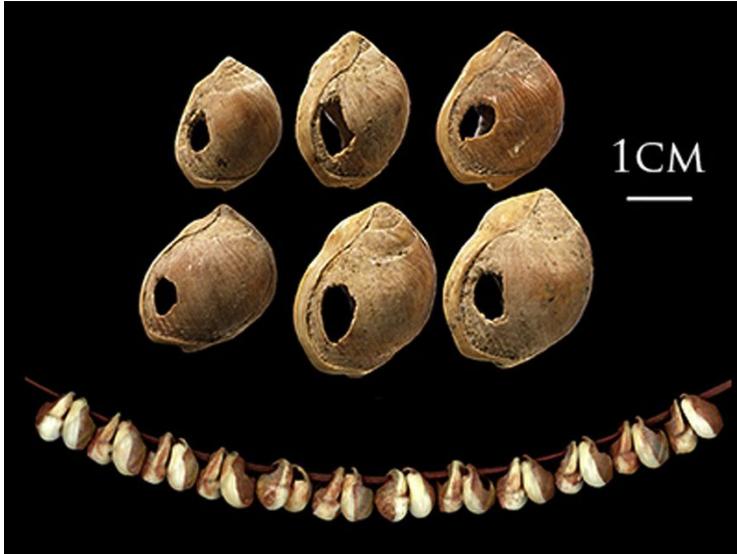


A History of Jewelry: The Beginning

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Blombos Cave Nassarius kraussianus marine shell beads.

Jewelry design has always fascinated me. What's so amazing to me is how long the desire to adorn oneself with jewelry has been around. Clothing is one way to express or differentiate yourself, but I think jewelry takes it a step farther, offering even more detail to your ensemble. Ancient people knew this too, and the trend of expression through jewelry has lasted until today. I've decided to explore the history of jewelry further, diving into different time periods and cultures to investigate how it has evolved (or has stayed the same). Hopefully this will serve as a source for my own inspiration, and help you appreciate the art of choosing your own jewelry for self-expression.

First, the origin of jewelry... Where did it all begin?

Jewelry is estimated to have been in use for 100,000 years. Since none of us were around then, who really knows? It's likely that people have been adorning themselves to feel better about their appearance since the beginning of mankind. Jewelry has also been frequently used for symbolism, such as marriage, wealth, and religion.

Early materials used in jewelry included:

- bones (such as antlers, tusks, fish bones, teeth)
- feathers
- stones

- sea shells
- egg shells
- berries
- wood
- hair
- animal skins

These findings date from 110,000 B.C. - 28,000 B.C. – also known as the Stone Age, or the time of the Flintstones. Wilma Flintstone wore a large beaded necklace, probably made of pebbled rocks, and her daughter, Pebbles Flintstone wore a bone in her hair. They were glamorous cave girls.



The earliest pieces of jewelry ever found were from Africa, dating to 110,000 B.C. Holes were pierced into sea snail shells for stringing. Beads made from ostrich eggs have also been found. In Southern Russia, mammoth tusk jewelry is another discovery dating from very early times.

Since we know so little about these early jewelry wearers, there is little speculation what their intended use for wearing jewelry was. Did they wear it to look good? Trade?

Give as gifts? As a status symbol? Maybe all of the above. Or perhaps they were just bored, it was a rainy day, and they wanted to work on some crafts.

Why do *you* wear jewelry?