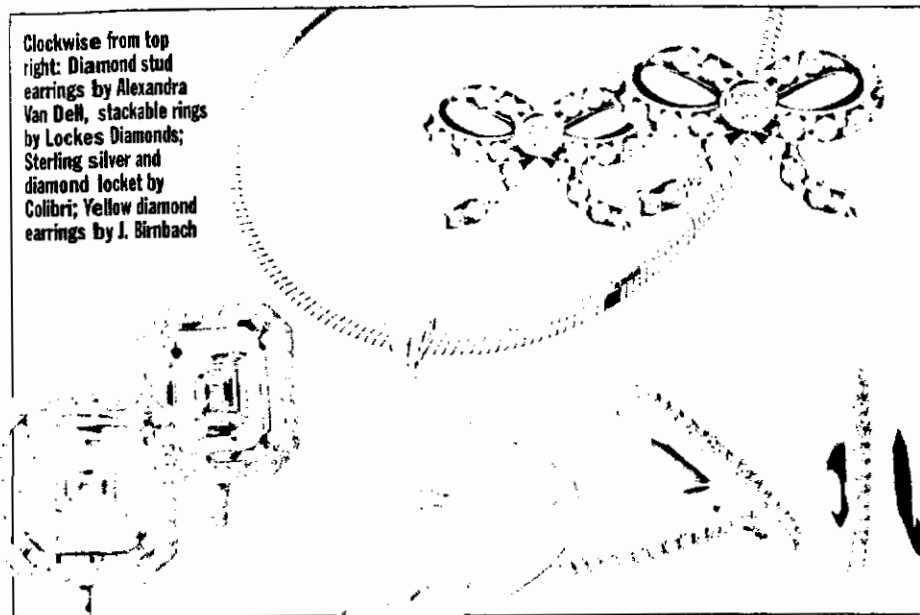


fashion

BY BETH CRAVETZMAN

BIRTH OF A TREND?

Custom creates profitable push for U.S. jewelers



Clockwise from top right: Diamond stud earrings by Alexandra Van Dell; stackable rings by Lockes Diamonds; Sterling silver and diamond locket by Colibri; Yellow diamond earrings by J. Birnbach

NEW YORK—New mothers may leave the hospital with more than one bundle of joy, thanks to a growing gifting trend that could create major opportunities for retailers.

"Push presents," a piece of jewelry given to a woman to celebrate the birth of her child, has roots in European and Indian traditions, but U.S. retailers say it's caught on here, too amid national media reports.

"This is a trend we've seen significantly increasing over the past few years," said Lockes Diamond Marketing Director Jodi Moss. "It has become a society thing, and women are starting to expect them."

Jewelry push presents allow new fathers or grand parents to both salute a mother's journey through pregnancy and labor, and create an instant family heirloom.

"It's a good trend from a retailer's perspective, because if you think about how many births happen every year, it's a huge opportunity," Moss says. "And it's an occasion that's not always associated with jewelry."

Birthstone jewelry, diamonds and lockets are strong push present categories, but stacking rings—one for each child—show perhaps the most promise.

"[Stacking] rings are great, because they're not that expensive, but they're still a substantial gift," Moss says. "And you can build on them."

Diamond studs have become a popular push gift for women giving birth to twins.

Numerous retailers who spoke with NATIONAL JEWELER say they plan to create

advertising campaigns promoting the push presents.

The Tanzanite Foundation has launched an advertising campaign promoting tanzanite as a gift to be given at birth, and SoulMate Diamonds has created a line especially for new mothers.

"In the past six months, the term 'push present' and the trendiness of the custom has become much more pervasive," says Jason Burdeen of Burdeen's Jewelers in Buffalo Grove, Ill.

Retailers say the designs and price points for the gifts run the gamut.

"It's a great trend, because it can be something simple and sentimental or it can be something extravagant," says Helena Krodell, media liaison for the Jewelry Information Center. "There aren't really any rules."

Marc Stiglitz, owner and designer of Hand in Hand Custom Jewelry Design in San Francisco says that push presents make up 30 to 40 percent of his business, ranking second only to the bridal category.

"[It's] an opportunity for men to step up to the plate and be creative and surprise their wives with something really special and personal that tells the story about how their family came to be," he says.

Stiglitz works with gift givers to make a custom piece of jewelry to commemorate the milestone. He has also created presents that put a spin on the traditional push present, such as gifts for couples adopting a child or for same-sex couples either adopting or having a child.

"You want to give not only a thing, but a thing that represents a moment in time that can be remembered," Stiglitz says.