

Layer 5 (top layer) Stratigraphy Card

Plastic Jewelry

While the desire for personal ornamentation, such as jewelry, remained unchanged for thousands of years, the materials used to create it changed drastically. Natural plastic substances have been used since ancient times, but the majority of synthetic plastic materials used today date from after 1920. The availability of low cost, quality resins and compounds resulted in an expanded array of plastics after 1950. Today materials such as Polystyrene, PVC, Polyethylene, and Polypropylene often replace more traditional materials such as timber, glass, ceramics, and steel.

This piece of jewelry is probably made of Polyethylene, a material invented in 1933. Polyethylene can be injection molded, extruded, cast, and powder coated (colored). Today it is used to make such common items as soda bottles, milk jugs, food storage containers, grocery and dry-cleaning bags, and jewelry. By studying jewelry styles over time, a more exact date for this piece could be established than one that relies solely on its manufacture.

