

THE BLUE BOX

The gift that will make her heart beat faster this holiday season, **L4**



WOMEN

Rock of ages

Topping women's wish lists everywhere — a signature engagement ring from Tiffany & Co., which celebrates its 175th anniversary this year



The classic Tiffany diamond engagement ring starts at \$1,650 (blue box included).

LEANNE DELAP
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Nothing says Christmas like a little blue box. And nothing says nervous more than the legion of young men carrying two months of their salary out of a Tiffany store.

Fully one-third of engagement rings are purchased in the lead up to the Christmas holidays. The classic: A round-cut solitaire engagement ring from Tiffany & Co., which celebrates its 175th anniversary this year.

"(Christmas) is a time so associated with celebration, and that little blue box evokes such strong emotions, and a sense of awe," says Andrea Hopson, the vice-president of Tiffany & Co. Canada. "It is actually the exact colour of a robin's egg."

That romance has been intertwined with the company since it introduced the very idea of an engagement ring to North American fiancés in 1886, along with the Tiffany engagement setting — revolutionary at the time, and the most popular to this day.

With the Tiffany store opening at Sherway Gardens in October, the classic — and trademarked — setting will now be available at three Toronto locations. The recently updated Yorkdale store and the Bloor St. flagship store are the other locations.

The setting, one of the brand's most powerful symbols, remains the most popular to this day. It holds a round-cut solitaire diamond on six prongs, which increases the sparkle. By raising it, "you let the light in," says Hopson. "Before that innovation, stones were always set deep into metal, where their internal fire was hidden."

The company is known for its collaborations with thoroughly modern artists — from Jean Schlumberger's Deco enamel and joyously coloured stone pieces to Paloma Picasso's bold '80s Xs and Elsa Peretti's undulating organic body sculptures.

Shoppers needn't be concerned about conflict diamonds and how diamond mining affects the environment: Tiffany diamonds come from all over the world but they're guaranteed not to be blood diamonds and to have been sourced in an environmentally responsible manner, says Hopson.

Tiffany engagement rings start at \$1,650, and of course there is no upper limit. This will be the last Christmas that the current Bloor St. flagship store will be minting new fiancés — a new nearly 10,000-square-foot store will rise on the north side of Bloor St. closer to Avenue Rd. next summer.

But the nervous fiancés — they'll remain the same.

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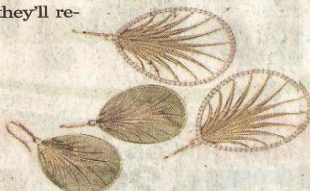
ANDREA HOPSON
VICE-PRESIDENT
OF TIFFANY & CO.
CANADA



Jewelry designer Elsa Peretti



Jean Schlumberger enamel bangles



Villa Paloma earrings for Tiffany



Cabochon rings by Elsa Peretti for Tiffany & Co.