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THIS WEEK'S JEWELLERY PICK

I recently finished the multiple award-winning show *The Marvellous Mrs Maisel*. And if you haven't seen it yet, you know what you'll be doing straight after reading this article!

The main character, *Midge Maisel*, played to perfection by Rachel Brosnahan is based on Joan Rivers.



Joan Rivers and Mrs Maisel

Other characters are real, such as Lenny Bruce, others fictional. Created by Amy Sherman-Palladino, it portrays women's experiences in the mid-20th century, focusing specifically on a young Jewish woman trying it to make it on the comedy scene.

The series is mostly set in the late 50s and 60s and the costume and jewellery are divine. Costume designer Donna Zakowska created a dream wardrobe for all the characters, earning her awards for her creativity.



Donna Zakowska and Mrs Maisel

Not only are the dresses and jewels visually stunning, they add and carry the story, they are a story of their own. Today I will look at the pearls used in the series and especially one set of double-strand cultured pearls which Mrs Maisel wears for her first official stand-up at the Gaslight Café (a sticky downtown New York club where the great Joan Rivers also performed).



Black dress with a pearl necklace

In this moment she experiences great success, slightly undermined by some misogynistic remarks, then put to right by her estranged husband, and the outfit is perfect and effective. A black dress complemented by a pearl necklace.

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The double-strand is strung and knotted with 6mm peach cultured pearls. The pearls appear to be uniform in shape, colour and lustre.



Double strand necklace

And when looking to purchase pearls, these are the most determining factors in assessing pearl necklaces. In this scene, the choice of colour sends the message of softness, being peach and not gold, and also lets us extrapolate that she could become very successful in the future, the pearls being almost golden. Mrs Maisel and her success shine thanks to the peachy colour and also due to the pearls' lustre. Lustre measures the rate of light reflecting off the surface of the pearl and the sharpness of reflection visible on its surface. We often describe these as poor, fair, good and excellent. The better the lustre, the more radiance and glow they emit.

The pearls are also well matched and round. Their shape in this scene is key. She is trying to make a name for herself in a male dominated industry, all the while maintaining and celebrating her femininity and exposing her marital instability and struggles as a mother. The roundness works brilliantly.



Baroque pearl necklace

Though the above baroque pearl necklace comes with a generous price tag of £7,500 they would have sent a very different message than perfectly round pearls.

It was common practise to have faux pearls at the time and they were very effective. In today's market they do not have any value. The costs of cultured pearls vary greatly depending on the factors mentioned above, amongst others. But essentially, their value depends on what they mean and signify to the wearer.