



steel appeal

The angular pieces of Australian jeweler Mari Funaki may appear cold and detached, but they aim to arouse the fondest of memories

When donning the pieces of gallerist and designer Mari Funaki, it's easy to imagine oneself navigating a monumental Richard Serra sculpture or an imposing Donald Judd aluminum box. Even Funaki's material of choice, mild steel (which she likes for its matte-black color, malleability and durability), has more in common with art than the precious stones and polished metals typically associated with fine jewelry.

The Japanese-born, Sydney-based Funaki approaches her work much as a sculptor would, beginning with multiple studies before bringing her ideas to life as bracelets, rings and cryptically shaped containers. She then adapts or refines the studies depending on her emotional responses to them, placing an emphasis on intuition and improvisation. In turn, her final pieces

often evolve drastically from their initial sketches. "I work with shapes that possess an emotive quality. Because as soon as you distort a circle or square, it starts to represent something else," she says.

Funaki hopes that by wearing these pieces, her clients will create emotional associations with them, which stands in contrast to the unaffected appearance of her work. To her, an imperfectly circular ring can trigger a memory of a pebble found on the beach or a bracelet can recall an unusual leaf discovered in a forest. So while her work may resemble the cold forms of Minimalist sculpture, her reliance on the wearer's emotions gives her work a distinctly human touch. Besides, wearing a Serra can really weigh you down. **SM** galleryfunaki.com.au

