

Mariko Kusumoto: Fragility and ambiguity

What inspired you to make jewellery with textiles?

Encountering different types of materials in daily life is important to me. Sometimes I'll come across a material that I find mesmerizing, and it will draw me in and stir my imagination.

Fabric is one of the most familiar of everyday materials. Even though the word "fabric" sounds straightforward enough, the range of different fabrics is broad, with unique characteristics that can draw out a variety of sensations or emotions. Some fabrics imply the cool feeling of moisture, others have a fluffiness that is comforting; there are fabrics that invoke the mysterious or the ethereal; there are fabrics that inspire tranquility; and some fabrics suggest fragility, subtlety, etc.

I develop fabric pieces that reflect my strong interest in the material itself, how fabric is inherently the opposite of metal, which is the material that I previously worked with exclusively for many years. I strive to bring out the fabric's inherent characteristics and beauty. By using a heat-setting technique, I give it a new identity through re-shaping it into three-dimensional forms. When heated with different shapes of molds, the fabric can 'remember' the shape permanently.

I love the translucency of fabric. Through working with layers and adding or moving parts I can create playful, mysterious, and ethereal atmospheres.

Besides being inspired by the material itself, I am also motivated by the process. Almost half of my creative time is spent experimenting. During the experimental process, there is sometimes a breathtaking moment. I pay attention to these accidental discoveries, capture those moments and develop new ideas from that point.

The full potential of what I can do with fabric is still unknown to me. I'm on a journey to explore the endless, unlimited possibilities of this material.

What materials do you use?

I use polyester fabric, nylon, cotton and silk

What are the properties that you love about it?

I especially like the translucency and the lightness of the fabric. The sensibility, subtlety, ethereality, fragility and ambiguity are the essential part of my work and the fabric can achieve these elements.



Blue Flower



Sphere pins with display stands

Red Coral brooch

I am interested in the different scales you work in. How do your sculptural pieces relate to your jewellery?

Large size sculpture and installation can be overwhelming and you might feel like you are a part of it. By contrast, jewelry piece can embrace personal memories or be something meaningful like a talismanic amulet. It could also suggest sensibility, subtlety, fragility, intimacy...but if it's too big it might lose those kinds of qualities. Different sizes have different roles and purposes. It's a very different experience. I believe large size sculpture and small scale jewelry can be equally powerful.

I love your colours - please talk about this if you wish!

Harmony is very important for me, so I try not to have a certain color stand out too much. When I use bright warm colors such as red, orange, pink, neon, yellow, white, people have mentioned that it makes them feel energized, lighthearted, positive, uplifted, and happy, bringing joy and conveying possibility and hope.

When I use cool colors such as blue, green, emerald, or beige, they are described as tranquil, calming, soothing, contemplative of beauty, etc.

It's interesting to see how the colors affect people's emotions and minds.



We would be interested to hear about your concept

You can not wear large paintings and sculptures. Because of the smaller scale, there are things that only contemporary jewelry can achieve and this is an interesting thing about it.

The thing I like about my work is it's not hard to understand. I want to create something that is simply beautiful which speaks directly to the viewer regardless of their age, race, gender, etc. I want the pieces to be able to stand up by themselves without needing explanation.

"Simply beautiful" sounds straightforward and easy to say but it's not necessarily easy to do, I think. But, needless to say, it's the most powerful and universal thing. I am always surprised by how strongly people react to my work.

The owners of my work often say that people always talk to them whenever they wear my pieces.

It may just be an object but I like the way that it connects people. It's interesting to see how the object positively affects people's emotions and minds.

Every time I hear those comments, I feel like what I'm doing is meaningful. ¶

Gathering White

