

Silver Huon pine and paint neckpieces (\$730).



Gold rings (white gold \$850 each; yellow gold \$870).



NOT long ago, there were few outlets for independent, locally made and designed jewellery in Melbourne. Now there are half a dozen scattered around the city. There is a buoyant exhibition scene, too, for local jewellers such as Michelle Cangiano, whose show *New, Used and Fused* is at Pieces of Eight Gallery in Fitzroy North.

"Australia has such a young contemporary jewellery history," says Cangiano. "Since I graduated in 2001, when there was hardly anywhere to show, it has shifted from being an apprenticeship or craft to being a fine art."

Cangiano studied painting at the former Phillips Institute and engineering at Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE before undertaking gold and silversmithing at RMIT. She is part of a growing band of independent Melbourne jewellers who create work that crosses the boundary of craft and art.

She was strongly inspired by natural geometries in her work, thanks in part to years of bushwalking and a recent foray into diving. "I think the (diving) influence is bigger than I imagined," she says. "People point out that (my works) look like clam shells or underwater objects. Generally, I am fascinated by plants, but I think it has shifted. For me the show is more sculptural."

Made from sheets of fine 0.4 millimetre silver, Cangiano's necklace components and brooches are gently architectural and reminiscent of indeterminate natural objects such as shells, wings and cocoons. She scores the sheets on the inside, which makes an indentation, then creates the sculpted form by using an old-fashioned fly-press. Each reacts differently in the press and so has a unique character that Cangiano describes as "architectural but botanical".

The show's title refers to Cangiano's use of new and used materials, including donated broken gold chains or orphaned earrings. Rather than soldering, she uses the old method of fusing: the metal is heated sufficiently so that the pieces melt into each other. "It is so nice to work with gold," says Cangiano. "It's so soft. It's like butter when you cut through it."

Her designs also incorporate non-precious elements such as mild steel, Huon pine, wooden beads, zinc, bone and buffalo horn. "The materials have a (different market value) but the work of the piece creates the value," she says. "To me the gold and buffalo horn have exactly the same value. It has become really precious."

Conversely Cangiano sometimes disguises the preciousness of the silver by oxidising it. "I like making things look like something they are not."

New, Used & Fused at Pieces of Eight Gallery, 635 Brunswick Street, North Fitzroy, until September 1. Open: Tuesday-Friday, 11am to 6pm; Saturday, 11am to 5pm. Telephone: 9497 8121.

ICA LEDWICH

ns that
ainters.
lan
turing
across
sses
d key
how
ed *The*
unch.
chni-
asure
n for
s 1920s-
suing.

G

y and
y
ners
8,
tral,

mber
go
or.
ys will
Eduardo
ar It,
co,
sarva,
incess.
er 3,
ba-
e de la
aged
Grand
all,

au
au

PIECES
OF EIGHT

