

SIMPLICITY +UTILITY

Lili T California jewelry and leather goods are must-have spring accessories.

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The moment I walk into Lili Tanner's Twentynine Palms studio, my eyes zero in on a bronze ring. It looks almost prehistoric, hand-shaped into an organic pinnacle. I must have it.

"It surprises me that when you truly follow your instinct and what you like, there will be somebody who likes that, too," Tanner will say later as we sip coffee from Dust Ceramics mugs in her adjoining living room. "Because it's so personal, you'll find that it will find its way to somebody who really likes it for exactly that."

For the last five years, Tanner has made jewelry and leather goods with this approach: first and foremost for herself. But it's an aesthetic that's resonating. Her pieces, under the brand Lili T California, are simplistic and utilitarian but quirky in their own one-of-a-kind way. "In this reduction, there's a playfulness coming into it," Tanner describes.

She makes all rings, bracelets and necklaces from precious metal bronze clay. Stunningly chic bangles, for examples, are shaped then dried, fired in a kiln, tumbled and polished. "Their charm is that they're all slightly different and irregular," Tanner told me when I first stumbled across her line. "I want them to look like they'd been made 2,000 years ago."

Tanner is as charming as her handiwork, no fluff with a grounded sense of humor. Born and raised in Switzerland,

she bought her 1950s ranch house on a whim in 2001 during a successful career as an advertising director and writer. (She also ran a contemporary art gallery, Hot Coco Lab, on Abbot Kinney Boulevard in Venice, Calif.) But after attending a wire-wrapping class at Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles in 2013, her creativity turned to her California-inspired line that takes on the organic shapes of the desert. She starts with classic silhouettes

then makes them her own, getting down to the essentials – capturing the rawness.

For Tanner, California embodies open-mindedness. Her ideas don't happen at the drawing board, but during the making. Just recently, she became frustrated with a bulky fanny pack and created the Sling, a leather cross-body bag with a key ring that molds to your body. Being a desert artist, for her, "is the freedom

this place brings, that you live your own life [influenced] as little as possible from the constraints of city life."

In the end, Tanner's pieces are subtle statements for all ages and genders – she intentionally strives for a unisex aesthetic as an indicator of functionality. Because what is fashion in this environment if not utilitarian?

And Lili Tanner is ahead of the curve. 🌱

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