

Reviews: Foldforming

Guild of Jewellery Designers (UK)

Reviewer: Dianne Sandland

Overview

The term foldforming refers to a collection of procedures that generate a wide range of metal forms. And who better to write the book on the subject than the man who developed and refined the technique? By taking advantage of the inherent qualities of metal, this is a technique that gives sinuous forms with relative ease and one which can be exploited by metalsmiths of all abilities.

Audience

Anybody who works in metal, whether on a large or small scale, can learn something from this book, because foldforming is a process that relies on the inherent qualities of the metal and how it reacts to various forces and pressures. Even if you never produce a foldformed piece, reading this book will give you a better understanding of what happens when you apply hammer to metal.

Content

As the author says, 'the bulk of this book is devoted to the process, procedures, and results of foldforming.' However, there are a few words on how the process came to be - part serendipity and part tradition - as well as some useful appendices in the form of conversion charts for temperature and metal gauges, and vital health and safety information.

Introduction

This book has been on my wish list since I started working with metal because, it seemed to me, the techniques within it were within everybody's ability, even the complete beginner's. Ownership of the book hasn't changed this viewpoint, if anything, it has strengthened my view that indulging in a bit of basic foldforming can only be confidence building. The other selling point, as far as I was concerned back then, is that there is no need for expensive tools or materials. A bench block, a hammer and a piece of copper are all you need to get started. And, for those of you who are well versed in the arts of metalsmithing, or who are well stocked with tools, are equally well served, with chapters on hydraulics and rolling mills, as well as samples of foldforming in precious metals.

I've searched, unsuccessfully, for books on the topic by other authors although of the 'big names' I know Robert Dancik is fan and teacher of the technique. There are plenty of basic guides to foldforming to be found on the internet too.

Illustrations

This is a photo-rich volume: techniques are clearly illustrated photographically and, where appropriate, the photographs are supported by clear line-drawings. Each technique is accompanied by clear photographs of the results and, for inspiration, there are some stunning, full-page masterworks by the likes of Cynthia Eid and Nick Grant Barnes.

Other

This is a book for adventurers! Although you will find step-by-step instructions for each type of fold, you will not find projects; foldforming doesn't lend itself to that, it is far too organic a process.

If you like formulae and rigidity, walk on by, there is nothing to see here. If, you are fascinated by metal as a material though, and with how it moves and 'breathes' this is a volume that might just change the way you work with your chosen medium. Yet, despite all that, this is a

very approachable work; Mr. Lewton-Brain doesn't talk in jargon-riddles and he doesn't talk down to you - he just points you in the direction of discovery.

I haven't done much foldforming yet - despite gazing longingly at the examples here - however, I have learned more about how the metal will move under my hammer than from anything else I have read.

I do have one, teensy-weenie complaint - no guide to metal gauge is given. This is, I suppose, in line with the general adventurousness of the book, but metal thickness does make a difference, not least in terms of the sharpness you can obtain with your folds.

In the scheme of things, I think that is a very small complaint indeed. In the UK, this book is available from several Amazon merchants and only the Kindle version from Amazon itself. Your best bet is to get it from Brynmorgen Press; my experience in ordering is that delivery was within a week, despite coming all the way from Maine, USA.

Tom and Kay Benham
Lapidary Journal Jewelry Artist
July 2008

Charles Lewton-Brain has a wonderful new book, *Foldforming*. If the jacket cover doesn't grab your interest, wait until you open the book. More than 450 color photographs and the elegant hand-drawn illustrations further enhance the step-by-step text. As usual, Charles has included helpful hints and tips for metalworkers throughout. We especially appreciate his chart on the ways to read annealing temperature, as proper annealing is essential for successful foldforming.

Charles studied classic metalworking in Pforzeim, Germany, with Professor Klaus Ullrich who first exposed him to the idea of "forming using metal characteristics." Charles says, "Klaus Ullrich, my German teacher, taught me that the marks of process are compositional design choices. Every hammer or file mark is a design decision as well as a part of a process. This emphasis on watching process and truly seeing the metal led directly to foldforming." Later he attended the State University at New Paltz, New York, where, with the support and encouragement of Professor Kurt Matzdorf, he began his long journey to study and organize these concepts into the system of foldforming. He's spent the past three decades investigating, experimenting, and inventing, as well as teaching, organizing, classifying, and naming the various aspects of foldforming.

We've personally received many hours of enjoyment in reading and viewing this book and look forward to many more hours in our workshop duplicating many of the intricate foldform shapes shown in this comprehensive volume. We predict that his new book will send large numbers of metalsmiths to their workshops to learn these new techniques and figure out how to apply them to their fine jewelry.

Overall we're delighted with the book; however, we couldn't help but notice that the specific gauge of metal and its effect on the final shape or form isn't mentioned. Also, we would have loved to have had even more photographs of finished jewelry that demonstrate the transition from copper exercises to precious metals. Thank you, Charles.