

David M Bowman Studio

About the Studio

May 2006

David M Bowman Studio consists of two people: David Mills Bowman and his son, Reed Christopher Bowman.

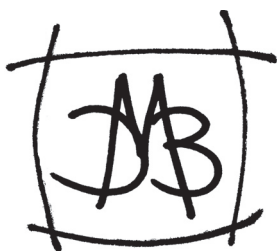
We produce most pieces together. David is the principal designer, though Reed often has input on wallpiece designs, and does most of the work to execute the wallpieces. Reed's own designs are indicated by his initials, RCB, in the name or number of the piece.

We construct all pieces by hand, with hand tools and simple machines. No part of the production is ever hired out, nor does the studio take in work to produce or patina parts for other people's designs. Wallpieces are one of a kind.

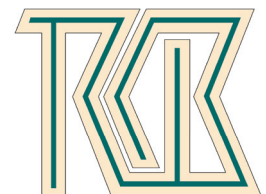
All the work is produced from brass sheet and rod, formed into shape, and brazed together using an oxyacetylene welding torch. We mix patina chemicals from scratch and apply them by hand.

David began working in metal in 1971, near the time Reed was born; he first made silver jewelry, later moved on to brass belt buckles, then to larger pieces in patinaed brass. Over the years David has worked alone or with different assistants, but he has worked exclusively with Reed since the mid-1990s.

We show in person only twice a year, generally at the American Craft Council's Baltimore Winter Market in February and their San Francisco Craft Show in August. Our work is sold primarily through craft shops and galleries across the country and overseas. Wallpieces are sold or consigned to galleries, or designed on commission for corporate and private spaces. The studio—located in a WWII-era warehouse complex in Berkeley, California—is a workshop only, without real display space, though visitors are welcome by appointment.



David M Bowman Studio
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David M Bowman

Artist's Statement

May 2006

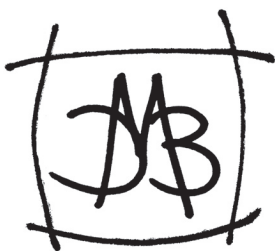
I have worked in metal for more than thirty-five years, starting with silver jewelry and working my way up in size through belt buckles, candlesticks and vases to abstract wallpieces in patinaed brass. I am largely self-taught as a metalworker, learning from books, a few classes, and mostly from working on my own pieces in the studio.

In the early 1980s I developed my own idiosyncratic method of fabricating vases from heavy sheet brass. After a few years of building polished brass vases I began learning about sculptural patinas. I have spent the years since then experimenting with many patina recipes and combining them for different effects. Since discovering their potential, I have worked with patinas almost exclusively as the surface treatment for my work.

In 1990 I worked out a technique that allowed me to build wallpieces composed from many parts, to juxtapose many patinas next to one another. In the years since then my son, Reed, has worked with me and together we have refined the process considerably. Currently I design most of our wallpieces and work on surface texturing, and he does most of the engineering, assembly, and patination, occasionally designing and building his own pieces. We have sold nearly five hundred wallpieces, both through galleries and on commission, in the sixteen years we have been making them.

My sense of form and composition comes from long and close study of natural forms, architecture from all periods, and the work of other contemporary and ancient artisans.

My work with wallpieces particularly reflects my interest in achieving balance in asymmetrical forms. I enjoy the challenge of working with our simple tools and limited palette of patinas and surface textures.



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Reed C Bowman

Artist's Statement

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I have worked for my father, David M Bowman, on his brass designs since I was four years old. After graduating in History from the University of California at Berkeley in 1993, I have worked at the studio full time, except for a year I took off to take a Master's Degree in Medieval Studies at the University of York in England.

Although the majority of my interests are focused in the world of academia and of words, I cannot imagine not working with my hands. Archeological study of artifacts has always been integral to my study of history, and though I enjoy writing and even editing, the physical craft of making books—right down to setting lead type—is also a passion. I have studied and practiced calligraphy, especially in the medieval modes, and have done bookbinding by hand following the full medieval technique. I have long been interested in book conservation, as well as museum conservation of other artifacts. I have also studied, in a small way, the more modern book arts: book design, printing, and modern binding. Someday I hope to own a press and produce fine press books.

My study of historical books and objects has informed my own designs, though our medium has left me small scope for this, and pushed me into a more modern mode. The only direct influence can be seen in my use of my own original Celtic knotwork designs in a few of the wallpieces and tables. I have learned a great deal in this mode by executing, often from start to finish, my father's designs. Beyond this, however, many of my designs arise from realization of possibilities of engineering or construction that David has not pursued, or as experiments to see if certain new directions can be made to work. I try to avoid designs that I find too similar to his style or established patterns.

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