

David M Bowman Studio

About the Studio

May 2018

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

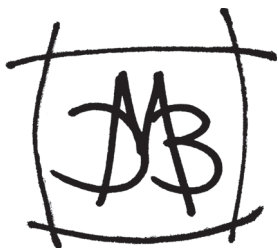
We produce most pieces together. Most designs are David's, though Reed has input on many of David's wallpieces. The table designs are Reed's, and Reed has his own set of wallpieces with his initials, RCB, prefixed to the wallpiece numbers, and his own set of vase, candlestick, and menorah designs.

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 and copper sheet and rod, formed into shape with shears, hammers, sanders and grinders, and brazed together using an oxyacetylene welding torch. We do not cast work or use cast parts. 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.

Apart from small local art evenings and farmers markets, we generally show in person only twice a year, 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. After 25 years in a WWII-era warehouse in West Berkeley and a sojourn at American Steel Studios in West Oakland, we have finally built a new space (with our own hands) behind our houses back in West Berkeley. The studio is primarily a workshop, with little in the way of display space, but visits are welcome by appointment.

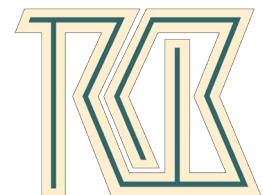


David M Bowman Studio

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David M Bowman

Artist's Statement :: January 2019

I have worked in metal since 1971, 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.

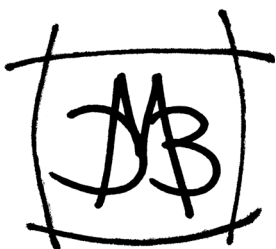
In the early 1980s I developed my own idiosyncratic method of fabricating vases from heavy sheet brass. After a few years of building polished brass vases I began learning about sculptural patinas. I have spent the years since then experimenting with many patina recipes and combining them for different 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. We have sold over six hundred wallpieces, both through galleries and on commission, in the nearly thirty years we have been making them.

Reed and I have been exploring the technique of foldforming for the past decade. We started with designs for a whole range of jewelry, then he developed a beautiful foldformed vase. I have begun using the foldforming process to make what I call 'sketch pieces' as small wall art and now as vases as well. I call them sketches because they remind me of sketching abstract designs on paper: starting with some bold strokes and then working in more details and color until I finally have a finished piece.

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 :: January 2019

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.

My design sense in metal and love of working with my hands started from working on my father's designs, but also derives from my study in the worlds of medieval archeology, art, and architecture, calligraphy, book arts (medieval and modern), and graphic and typographic design.

My study of historical books and objects has informed my own designs, though our medium has pushed me into a more modern mode. The only direct influence of medieval design can be seen in my occasional use of my own original Celtic or Islamic style knotwork designs in a few of the wallpieces and tables.

I have learned most by executing, often from start to finish, my father's designs, and expanding, improving, and extending the techniques he devised. 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 what can be achieved.

In this way I both extended the wallpiece box-construction technique to make it free-standing and sturdy enough to make tables, but also got away from boxes in my newer wallpieces, and started using overlapping plates and freer shapes to enable a whole new range of compositions. I try to avoid designs that I find too similar to his style or established patterns, and to take our techniques and practice in new directions.

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