

## Air Chasing demonstration by Dan Hunt

This is a free demo.

I first encountered air chasing, also called "chasing on air," after I bought the book Foldforming in 2013. This technique is similar to traditional chasing but without the pitch. The level of control in traditional chasing does not exist with air chasing because of the lack of pitch. But air chasing is a fun technique which results in interesting organic looking textures on sheet metal.

Like a number of the techniques introduced by Charles Lewton-Brain, air chasing does not involve precision. You can relax with this process. Just don't punch through the sheet.

In this demo I will air chase a sheet of 22 gauge copper, anneal it once or twice and with the help of anyone interested in wielding the hammer complete the air chasing on the sheet.

In the interest of enticing attendance to this free demo, I'm going to put the completed airchased sheet up for a drawing of attendee names. An attendee will win the piece. The winner will still have to turn it into jewelry or do with it what they wish. I would encourage making jewelry with it.

During the demo it will definitely be possible for all attendees to get some hands on, which I strongly encourage. I will explain what I'm doing and what's happening and encourage questions.

Air chasing involves very few tools: A vice, a couple hammers, a few chasing punches or similar tools, a torch and pickle pot and some tools you probably have around the shop.

I predict it will take about two hours to complete air chasing on the sheet. After a sheet is air chased one would begin making a jewelry object with it. The air-chased sheet is a raw material.

A lot of people are using copper pipe and getting nice results. Pipe has its own virtues. I prefer sheet because I am able to do some repoussé and I decide on the gauge and how wide the completed air-chased sheet will be. With sheet you can also see the reverse texture on the back of the piece.

Suggested reading: Foldforming, Charles Lewton-Brain, section on chasing on air. There are a lot of pictures and videos on Google and Youtube.

I encourage you to stick around for this demo after the meeting. Everyone interested will get some hands on. I think you'll find the technique interesting, fun and easy.

My Tool List: Some of these tools are not essential.

Medium to large vice bolted to a table or stump Air-chasing jig consisting of hardwood or plastic (not essential) Steel pipe cheater bar Cylinder about the diameter of the shape you want to start with (not essential) Brass hammer or any old hammer Rawhide mallet or plastic hammer A few chasing tools, dapping punches or home-made similar tools Sharpie Scribe Dull, strong knife, short blade (for prying open hammered sheet) Any old pair of pliers (for opening hammered sheet) Equipment for annealing and pickling Pliers or tongs (for picking up annealed sheet and quenching) Nylon jaw pliers (not essential, for refinements without marring the sheet) Firm rubber pad (not essential, for use in doing some repoussé) 12 inch ruler Paper (for modeling the size of sheet to start with)

My loose procedure:

Decide on size of sheet. This requires some consideration. Use paper to model. Cut sheet to size. Anneal, pickle and clean up Form bends in the sides for insertion into the vice. Bend round shape Put in vice. Do some rawhide mallet hammering to form a pillow shape Commence chasing. Work the sides some before working the middle Chase until ready to anneal. Take care not to punch too hard and tear through. Anneal, open, pickle. Repoussé some of the raised lines to bring them up Close form and continue chasing, tightening up the lines Repeat chasing, annealling, repoussé as needed.

Considerations, tips, etc., from my experience:

You won't need actual chasing tools. You can make your own tools out of tool steel or even cold-rolled steel. A few dapping punches work well.

It takes at least a couple cycles of chasing, annealing, and maybe some repoussé to get the raised lines tight.

22 gauge works well. 24 gauge would require extra care not to tear. 20 gauge results in more rounded ridges and jewelry of more heft, good for bracelets and pendants, not for earrings.

Deciding on the size of sheet to start with requires some consideration. The size of your vice or a jig you build dictates the start shape. You don't want the collapsed pillow to go over the edges of your vice or jig. What you intend to make is also important in deciding on the start shape. It's good to model with paper or wire.

You'll need at least a Prestolite torch with a large tip to anneal. A kiln can be used if it's big enough to accommodate the sheet. I use the Harbor Freight "weed burner" torch with a propane tank. You know. The one that sounds like a jet engine. That's a big, loud torch but anneals very quickly. Take extreme care with something like that.

The above is a cursory description of the tools and process. I've only done a few pieces. This technique could be highly refined, improved, sped up, made easier and so on. The bottom line is it's fun, relaxed and easy and the results are very cool.

Have fun.

Dan Hunt