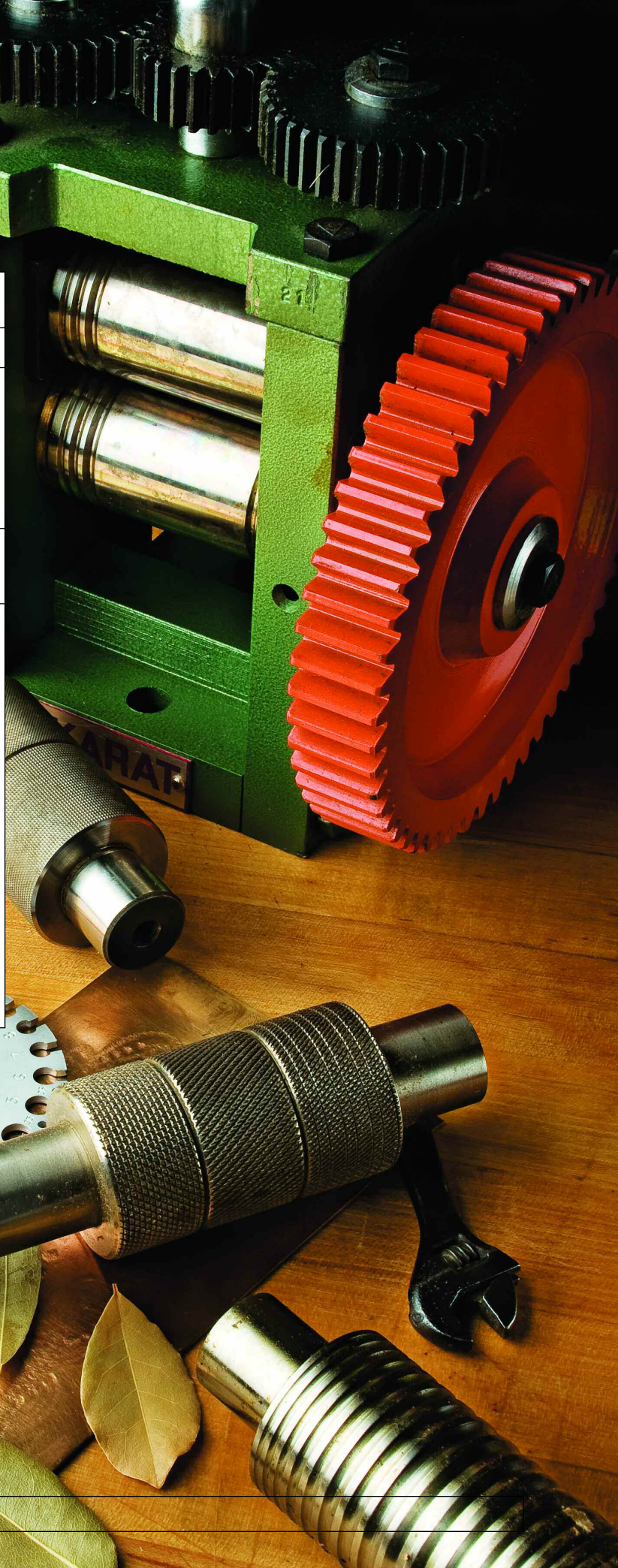


ROLLING MILLS

Texture and gauge your sheet

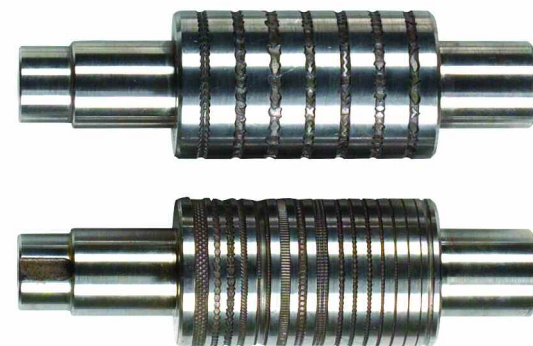
A rolling mill is something of the holy grail of the workshop. Buying one is a quest — it takes some time to find the right one, with the right features, at the right time, for the right price. There are tradeoffs with any rolling mill purchase — and everyone wants the one that will give the most versatility for the typically large investment. I bought a small used one for a very good price from a friend, and I take great care to keep it clean, protected from dust, and most importantly, protected from moisture. Since there are zillions of things one can do with the rolling mill, I've called in some tips from our crew of experts. Try some of these yourself, once you've brought home your very own holy grail of a mill.



KENNETH SINGH is the owner of 46 Jewelry Supply, Inc., and he carries a great selection of rolling mills. Recently, I discovered that he has interchangeable, prepatterned rollers available for two of his mills — and one of them is the model I own. To use them, you simply unbolt the top roller, slide it out, and insert the patterned roller.

The roller patterns include both sheet and wire designs. He's also created custom pattern rollers.

Here are some samples of the different roll textures: bracelet patterns, wire patterns, florentine pattern, diamond cut pattern, half-round wire pattern, floral wire pattern.



HAROLD O'CONNOR Last summer I took a workshop with Harold, and for two days the studio rolling mill was in constant use. One of my favorite demos from that workshop was of rolling 26-gauge reticulation silver (which has had the silver raised) through the mill with a "spiderweb" of stainless steel binding wire sandwiched in between the sheets. The gullies created by the wire in the surface of the silver cause the reticulation to move toward them under the torch — an interesting way to "steer" retic-

ulation toward an area of metal surface. Harold takes this technique even further by fusing gold granulation into the gullies as well.

In the workshop, I also did an informal poll on favorite things to use to create texture in the rolling mill — try these items on dry, annealed 26-gauge sheet the next time you're looking for a cool pattern: index cards, crêpe paper, file folders, feathers, bay leaves, nylon lace, rice paper.

AND ANOTHER THING Two-inch-wide, patterned brass sheet is available from several suppliers. To transfer the pattern from the brass to silver, use it for about six to 10 passes with annealed silver. After that many passes, the sharpness of the brass pattern will begin to degrade, and you won't get a clean impression — plus, the brass will become so stiff and work-hardened, it will be hard to use, anyway. At that point, just anneal it and use it for a project!

When you use patterned brass, remember to protect your mill by encasing the receiving sheet/patterned brass in a plain paper

"sandwich" — something I do whenever I'm using the mill, because I don't want to damage my rollers, or take the chance of transferring any oil residue from the rollers onto my silver.

When you're done with your mill, separate the rollers by about 1/8 of an inch, and drape a lint-free cloth over them to protect them from dust. You can also give them a thin coat of light machine oil (I use sewing machine oil) to create a moisture barrier. Be sure to roll an absorbent strip of blotter paper through the mill several times to remove the oil before using the mill again.