

“Adventures at the Bench”

BY JURGEN J. MAERZ (Platinum Guild International USA), MJSA Press, Providence, U.S.A., 2006, 112 pages, ISBN 978-0-9713495-7-5, U.S.\$34.95

Reviewed by Christopher Corti

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This is the second book on platinum jewellery smithing (see also (1)) from Jurgen Maerz, Director of Technical Education, Platinum Guild International USA and a certified Master Goldsmith. It is also the latest in a series of practical softback jewellery handbooks published by MJSA Press (2). Aimed at the practising bench jeweller, this lavishly illustrated book is a compilation of a number of practical articles published in the *MJSA Journal* with some additional material.

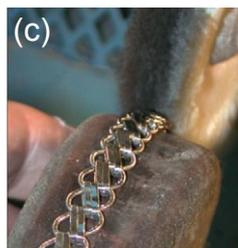
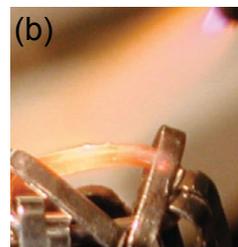
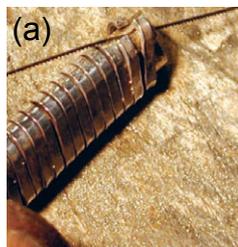
Tricks of the Trade

Subtitled “Tricks to Overcome a Jeweler’s Daily Challenges”, Jurgen shares many of the tricks of the trade from his own extensive experience that will enable a jeweller to make platinum jewellery without too many tears. As well as his tricks and some projects (I counted about thirty-nine in all), Jurgen also relates some tales of working at the bench and the pitfalls that have befallen him in the past. This account serves as invaluable advice and helps to make this book such an enjoyable read as well as a useful tool. Jurgen’s bright personality shines throughout the book from cover to cover.



Jurgen Maerz

Each trick or project that he describes teaches the jeweller how to perform tasks through a series of step-by-step instructions, amply illustrated by colour photographs taken at the bench. ‘A picture speaks a thousand words’ goes the adage. In this case it is undoubtedly true. The projects are practical approaches to aspects of platinum jewellery manufacture and include topics as diverse as channel setting, platinum chain manufacture and making a heart pendant. A number of techniques involving the use of a laser are described, and the book finishes with a useful section on bench resources, a series of advertisements for platinum materials, services and equipment suppliers.



Making a platinum bracelet (Courtesy of MJSA Press): (a) sawing the flat links after winding the wire on a mandrel; (b) soldering the round links; (c) polishing the assembled bracelet

Work Smarter

This book will be very useful to both the novice and seasoned jeweller alike. As that expert goldsmith and author, Alan Revere (3), says in his Introduction to the book, “Jurgen’s tricks will cause even the seasoned goldsmith to slap their (now balding) head and ask themselves, ‘Why didn’t I think of that before?’”. I am sure that even

Alan found much to learn and enjoy from reading this book. I certainly did, even though I am not a practising bench jeweller. It is a great tool to have on the bench and I commend it to any bench jeweller working with platinum.

As Alan says in his Introduction, “This book is full of clever tips, shortcuts and homemade tools to help jewellers work smarter, by being more efficient and economical”. I could not put it better myself. Those who know him personally will be aware that Jurgen’s hobby is performing magic tricks in front of his friends and colleagues. He has certainly conjured up some good ones here! Sponsored by Johnson Matthey NY, this book is a first-class and unique addition to any bench jeweller’s bookshelf and will provide much inspiration, invaluable advice and considerable enjoyment.



Using a clothes peg as a multipurpose vice to assemble a pearl to its post (Courtesy of MJSA Press)

References

- 1 Jurgen J. Maerz, “The Platinum Bench”, MJSA Press, Providence, U.S.A., 2002
- 2 Manufacturing Jewelers & Suppliers of America, MJSA Press: http://www.mjasa.org/info_press.php
- 3 Revere Academy of Jewelry Arts, San Francisco, U.S.A.: <http://www.revereacademy.com/>

The Reviewer



Christopher Corti holds a Ph.D. in Metallurgy from the University of Surrey, U.K., and is currently a consultant for the World Gold Council and the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths in London. He served as Editor of *Gold Technology* magazine and currently edits *Gold Bulletin* journal and the *Goldsmiths’ Company Technical Bulletin*. A recipient of the Santa Fe Symposium® Research Award, Technology Award and Ambassador Award, he is a frequent presenter at the Santa Fe Symposium® on Jewelry Manufacturing Technology.