Colored-Pencil-on-Metal Earrings

Use colored pencils to add color and contrast to textured copper drops.

by Annie Pennington

I used colored pencil on my first-ever piece of jewelry I made in college, and ever since then, I’ve been hooked. Experiment with the size and shape of the dangles to create a striking pair of earrings that are all your own.
COPPER TEARDROPS

Cut out the teardrops. Use rubber cement to adhere the Template (opposite page) to a 1 x 2-in. (25.5 x 51 mm) piece of 24-gauge (0.5 mm) copper. Stack it on top of a second piece of 24-gauge copper, and use packing tape to secure them together. Use a jeweler’s saw with a #2 blade to cut out two teardrops [1].

Use a half-round needle file to remove all saw marks from the edges of each teardrop. Sand the front, back, and edges with 100-grit or coarser sandpaper in a circular motion.

Form the teardrops. Place a teardrop front-side down on a wood block, and use an automatic center punch to create dimples in the bottom three-quarters of the teardrop [2]. Repeat for the second teardrop.

NOTE: When used on the back of the piece resting on a wood block, the center punch creates small domes on the front of the teardrop.

If the teardrop doesn’t sit level after texturing, set it on a steel bench block and use a rawhide mallet to lightly tap around the edges.

Grasp the tip of the teardrop with a pair of bail-forming or roundnose pliers, and form the teardrop around the 2 mm jaw, forming a loop [3]. Ensure that the loop is straight across the teardrop, and make adjustments as necessary.

Add colored pencil. Clean the copper, and use colored pencils to color the teardrop [4]. Use 400-grit sandpaper to sand the edges of the teardrop and the tops of each dome created by the center punch. Seal the color, and let it dry.

U-SHAPED DANGLES

Cut the wire. Flush-cut two 4-in. (10.2 cm) pieces of 14-gauge (1.6 mm) sterling silver wire. File the ends flat, and remove any burrs. Sand the wires with 400-grit abrasive paper to create a satin finish.

Forge the paddle ends. Place one end of a wire on a steel bench block, and use the slightly domed face of a planishing hammer to forge the end into a paddle at least ¼ in. (3 mm) wide [5]. Flip the wire back and forth to forge each side evenly. Repeat to forge both ends of each wire, keeping them parallel to each other.

materials

- Copper sheet: 24-gauge (0.5 mm), 1 x 2-in. (25.5 x 51 mm), 2
- Sterling silver wire:
  - 14-gauge (1.6 mm), round, 8 in. (20.3 cm)
  - 14-gauge (1.6 mm), twist pattern, 3 in. (76 mm)
  - 20-gauge (0.8 mm), half-hard, round, 6½ in. (15.2 cm)

tools & supplies

- Rubber cement
- Jeweler’s saw frame with #2 and 2/0 blades
- Lubricant
- Half-round needle file
- Sandpaper: 100-, 400-, and 600-grit
- Wood block
- Automatic center punch
- Steel bench block
- Hammers: Rawhide mallet, planishing, chasing, narrow cross-peen
- Pliers: Stepped bail-forming or roundnose; nylon-jaw flatnose
- Black gesso
- Prismacolor colored pencils
- Clear aerosol sealant
- Scribe
- Flex shaft or drill press
- Drill bit, #46 (0.081 in./2.06 mm)
- Mandrels: 11, 17–18 mm
- Masking tape
- Annealing station
- Cup bur (optional)
- Liver of sulfur
- Pumice powder (optional)
- Brass brush
- Dish soap
Twist the wire as needed to ensure the forged ends are parallel.

Use the ball-peen end of a chasing hammer to texture one side of each paddle. File and sand the ends of each paddle.

**Drill the holes.** Use a scribe or the center punch to make a divot approximately \(\frac{1}{8}\)-in. (3 mm) from the end of one paddle. Use a \#46 (0.081-in./2.06 mm) bit to drill a pilot hole at the divot [6]. Repeat to drill a hole in each paddle end, and remove the burr.

**Form and forge the wire.** Center one wire on a 17–18 mm mandrel (I used a dapping-punch shank), and form the wire around it until the ends are even and approximately \(\frac{1}{4}\) in. (6.5 mm) apart [7]. Use nylon-jaw flat-nose pliers to adjust the paddle ends until the holes align. Repeat to form the second wire.

Hold the forged ends with your fingers, maintaining the spacing between them, and rest the curved end on a bench block. Use the planishing hammer to forge the curve, tapering it up the sides toward the paddle ends [8].

Choose which side you want to be the front, and texture the curve with a narrow cross-peen hammer [9].

**JUMP RINGS AND EAR WIRES**

**Make the jump rings.** Wrap 3 in. (76 mm) of 14-gauge (1.6 mm) twist-pattern sterling silver wire around an 11 mm mandrel [10]. Remove the coil, wrap masking tape around it, and thread your saw blade through the center of the coil. Rest the coil at the V-groove in the your bench pin, and use the jeweler’s saw with a 2/0 blade to saw through the bottom of the coil at a slight angle until you cut two jump rings. Remove the tape and blade from the jump rings.

Sand and file the ends to remove any burrs and ensure the ends meet flush.

**Ball up the wires.** Use a torch to ball up one end of two \(3\frac{1}{4}\)-in. (76 mm) pieces of half-hard 20-gauge (0.8 mm) sterling silver wire. Pickle, rinse, and dry the wires.

Pull the wire between the jaws of the nylon-jaw pliers a few times to straighten and slightly work-harden the wire.

**Form the ear wires.** Grasp the wire \(\frac{1}{2}\) in. (6.5 mm) above the ball with a pair of roundnose pliers, and make a wrapped loop [11]. Repeat for the second wire, but wrap the end of the wire in the opposite direction.

Grasp the wire above the wrapped loop with largest part of the roundnose pliers, and wrap the wire around the jaw until the end of the wire crosses the wrapped loop. Use your fingers to make a slight outward bend in the wire aligned with the loop [12]. Use a cup bur or sandpaper to smooth the end of the wire.

Repeat to form a second ear wire.

**ASSEMBLY**

**Test the earrings.** Thread the U-shaped wire, teardrop, and ear wire onto a jump ring. If needed, adjust the U-shaped wire so that it dangles and allows the teardrop to hang freely.

**Apply a patina.** Disassemble the earrings, and apply a liver of sulfur patina to the silver components. Use pumice powder or 600-grit sandpaper to remove the patina from the high points to highlight the texture. Scrub the components with a brass brush with soapy water to create a gentle sheen.

**Assemble the earrings.** Reassemble the earings, and close each jump ring so the ends meet flush. Rotate the jump rings so the join is hidden underneath the teardrops’ loops.