

argentium silver for mount fabrication

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For the Field Museum's Grainger Hall of Gems renovation, Argentium Silver was selected to create the small mounts, as opposed to using traditional materials such as brass or steel. Argentium Silver contains germanium, which resists tarnishing and firescale by preventing oxygen from penetrating the surface of the metal. Although Argentium Silver is resistant to ordinary tarnishing, it is highly recommended to coat the final mount with an acryloid such as B-72, since any possible sulfur content in a sealed case may affect the finish.

advantages of the material

- very ductile and malleable
- minimal clean up and finishing
- resistance to firescale and ordinary tarnishing
- can be worked longer than other metals before needing annealing

applications for argentium

- small to medium-sized mounts
- mounts with difficult bends
- gemstone and jewelry mounts
- mounts where a silver-colored metal is desired, and stainless steel would be too brittle

working with argentium

- when soldering, whole piece does not need to be heated
- can be heat-hardened, but for mountmaking purposes, work-hardening is recommended
- can be bent and formed easily, and small gauges can sometimes be "squished" with pliers
- has a lower melting point than traditional sterling
- although traditional solder can be used, it is recommended that argentium silver solder is used, since it contains tarnish-resistant germanium and matches argentium's color better

where do i find argentium?

Argentium Silver is available from many vendors such as Rio Grande. For more vendors and further resources, visit www.argentiumsilver.com and www.silversmithing.com/1argentium.htm.