

Benin Bronze Plaques

art activity

Benin is an African kingdom in Nigeria. The people are known as Edo and are ruled by a king who is called the Oba. The art of Benin is made to praise the Oba. Exemplary of Benin art are bronze relief plaques which hang on the walls in royal palaces and houses. The plaques are made of cast bronze in the lost-wax technique. The plaques often show scenes of palace life, royal family members, warriors and of course, the Oba. Animal designs featuring wild and domesticated beasts are popular as well. Leopards, mudfish, and elephants are symbols of royalty. Typically plaques are decorated with patterns, texture and intricate line work.

Materials

tooling foil in brass or copper 6" x 8" piece per child
cardboard 5" x 7" piece per child
ball point pens
masking tape
stacks of news paper



Procedure

Step 1. Draw a picture with a contour line on a 5" x 7" piece of paper. Create your drawing to fill the page. Your design should touch at least two sides of the paper. Use another piece of paper if you make a mistake.

Step 2. Fill in and around your drawing with some simple line designs or patterns. Don't make them too busy!

Step 3. Once you have the drawing you want, place the drawing on top of the foil, center it, and tape down the corners. Place the foil on top of a stack of newspapers and trace over the drawing through the paper to transfer the design.

Step 4. Remove the drawing, turn the foil over and place it back on the newspaper. Use the wooden tools to push out the surface of the metal. Add small textures with ball-point pens.

Step 5. When finished place a piece of cardboard on the back of the foil. Fold the excess foil around to the back of the cardboard making neat corners. Add a loop of string on the back with tape for hanging.

Step 6. At home you can paint your plaque with brown acrylic paint and then wipe to give it aged look. This will also emphasize your line work.

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