

**Topics:** Art Techniques,  
Decorative Arts, Art  
History

## Materials List

- ✓ Foil for embossing:  
art foil, disposable  
aluminum bake  
ware, or heavy duty  
aluminum foil (four  
layers)
- ✓ Pipette tip or ball  
point pen
- ✓ Mouse pad or  
magazine
- ✓ Cardboard shapes,  
stencils or die cutter  
and dies
- ✓ Crochet thread or  
ribbon for hanging
- ✓ Optional: Stencils  
or designs on paper
- ✓ Optional:  
Temporary double-  
stick tape

This activity can be used  
to teach:

- Experiment w/ forms,  
structures & materials  
(National Visual Arts  
Standards: Creating,  
Grades K-8)

# Repoussé Ornaments

Make an Impression!



Create attractive ornaments in your classroom using common household products and/or recycled materials.

## Assembly

1. Determine the design and size of the ornament you wish to create. Create a paper pattern of the design, if desired.
2. Cut or fold foil to size:
  - If using adhesive-backed art foil, cut to size, remove protective backing and press two layers of material together.
  - If using heavy duty aluminum foil, use four layers.
  - A single layer of bake ware may be used.
3. Using a pattern or a die cutter, cut the foil into the desired shape.
4. Place the foil shape on the mouse pad (or magazine) and use the pipette tip or ball point pen to draw (or trace) the design on the back of the foil. If a paper pattern is used for the design, use a small amount of double-stick tape on the back of the paper pattern and adhere it to the back of the metal to be embossed.
5. Make a small hole at the top of the ornament and attach thread or ribbon for hanging.

## The Content Behind the Activity

Repoussé is a metalworking technique in which a metal surface is decorated or shaped by hammering or pressing from the reverse side. The word repoussé is French and literally means “pushed up”. The technique dates from antiquity and has been widely used to ornament gold, silver, copper, tin, and bronze. As early as 4000 years ago, craftsmen in the Middle East developed a number of semi-mass production methods so that artists could avoid the repetitive work of creating designs by hand. In the simplest of these techniques, metal sheets were pressed into designs carved from stone, bone, metal and other materials. Repoussé has been used throughout history and in many cultures to create jewelry, plate armor, decorative architectural panels, and even sculptures. A famous contemporary sculpture created with this technique is the Statue of Liberty which was formed from sections of copper repoussé using wooden structures to shape each piece.

## Taking it Further

- Students can experiment with metal foils of various thicknesses and qualities.
- In addition to ornaments, many other items such as greeting cards, boxes, frames, and book marks can be embellished using this technique.

**Web Resources** (Visit [www.raft.net/raft-idea?isid=354](http://www.raft.net/raft-idea?isid=354) for more resources!)