Pendants that Please
Archaeologists have concluded that the ruling classes of West Africa were using large amounts of gold for personal adornment as far back as the first century. Among these items were pendants.

Very versatile pieces of jewelry, pendants were worn by both men and women around the neck and waist, suspended over the forehead, attached to clothing, hair, sandals, hats, and helmets. Although they adorned the body, they also denoted one’s social, political, and economic status. Their designs ranged from very simple, stylized geometric forms to very intricate, organic, and highly decorated items.

There are many techniques—including lost-wax casting, repoussé, wire drawing, filigree, granulation, and gold plating—for working gold. Early goldwork may have been hammered or cut.
Today, we will focus on filigree (gold or silver drawn into thin wire with a drawplate) and granulation (soldering tiny globules to a backplate).

We will use a technique known as quilling or paper lace to reproduce the beautiful filigree and granulation seen in the museum’s pieces. Quilling is a process of rolling or coiling, twisting and bending strips of flexible material into shapes that will be placed together to create a design.
Visit the museum’s website at africa.si.edu, click on Browse the Collection under Collections and look at the following objects.

**Object name:** object number

- Wolof necklace: 2012-18-4
- Tukulor hair ornament: 2012-18-77
- Asante soul washer’s badge: 2008-3-1
- Stylized butterfly necklace: 2012-18-40
- Wolof necklace: 2012-18-19
- Senegal ring: 2012-18-125

Have you found some ideas for your pendant? Sketch them.
Let's Get Started

First, cover your workspace

Then, gather your materials

- Scrap lightweight cardboard
- Scrap gold or silver gift wrap or cardboard
- Heavy duty aluminum foil
- Small plastic container
- Pencil
- Eraser
- Elmer’s glue
- Drawing paper
- Scissors
- Toothpicks
- Ruler
- Black or dark construction paper
- Scrap gold or silver gift wrap or cardboard
- Heavy duty aluminum foil
- Small plastic container
- Pencil
- Eraser
- Elmer’s glue
- Drawing paper
- Scissors
- Toothpicks
- Ruler
- Black or dark construction paper
**Instructions**

**STEP 1**

1. Cut two squares no larger than 3 x 3 inches or two rectangles 2 x 3 inches from your tagboard or lightweight cardboard.
2. Glue the two pieces together to make a sturdy backplate.
3. Place the backplate onto your black or dark construction paper and trace around it.
4. Cut out and glue the construction paper shape on top of your backplate. Set backplate aside to dry (place under a book or weighted object to flatten)
**STEP 2**

Referring to your sketches, now draw the contour of the basic shape of your pendant onto metallic paper or cardboard. It can be a simple geometric shape or something more ornate and organic.

Keep in mind the available working area on your backplate. The dark construction paper on your backplate must not be completely covered as it is also part of your design.

**STEP 3**

Cut out, arrange, and glue the pendant shape(s) to the backplate. Place the backplate under the weighted object to continue to dry.
**STEP 4**

1. Cut a piece of aluminum foil that is 3 1/2 x 18 inches.
2. Cut it in half (3 1/2 x 9 inches) to handle more easily.
3. Cut at least 20 strips that are 3 1/2 x 1/4 inches.
STEP 5

Using a toothpick, create

1. **coils**: strips wound into concentric rings,
2. **cones**: tightly wound coils that form a round geometric shape rising to a point, and
3. **spirals**: strips that are curled in a long vertical roll

Wrap the strip around the toothpick once or twice, holding it with your thumb and forefinger; continue rolling the strip until you come to the end.

Gently remove the coil from the toothpick, place a little glue at the end to hold coil and place in a small container for later use.

Try some cones and spirals also and experiment with bending and twisting.
STEP 6

1. Take out your backplate with the metallic pendant shape glued on top.

2. Place your coils, cones, and spirals onto your pendant shape to make an intricate design similar to those from the museum collection.

3. Once satisfied, glue each piece into place. Let dry for an hour or so.
WITH CAREFUL OBSERVATION YOU HAVE DISCOVERED...

with careful observation you have discovered...

various materials can emulate the qualities of another

once a process is mastered, the possibilities are limitless

scrap items can be given a new life through art
Share your creations!

Send your creations to NMAFA-Workshops@si.edu to post on the museum’s website

NOTE: We will make every effort, but cannot guarantee, to include your artwork.
Thank you!

**Wolof artist**
Dakar, Senegal
Necklace
Mid-20th century
Gold-plated silver alloy
Gift of Dr. Marian Ashby Johnson, 2012-18-4

**Tukulor or Wolof artist**
Dakar, Senegal
Hair ornament
Mid-20th century
Gold-plated silver alloy
Gift of Dr. Marian Ashby Johnson, 2012-18-77

**Asante artist**
Ashanti Region, Ghana
Soul washer’s badge (akrafo konmu)
Late 19th to early 20th century
Gold alloy, plant fiber, metal
Museum purchase, 2008-3-1

**Unidentified artist**
Senegal
Stylized butterfly necklace (papillon)
Early 20th century
Gold-plated silver alloy
Gift of Dr. Marian Ashby Johnson, 2012-18-40

**Wolof artist**
Dakar, Senegal
Necklace (bount u sindone)
Mid-20th century
Gold-plated silver alloy
Gift of Dr. Marian Ashby Johnson, 2012-18-19

**Unidentified artist**
Dakar, Senegal
Ring
1930s–1940s
Gold-plated silver alloy
Gift of Dr. Marian Ashby Johnson, 2012-18-125

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