

Caring for your Ceramics

Cleaning

Do not use a dishwasher to clean valued ceramics. High temperatures, high-pressure water and aggressive detergents can permanently damage glazes and coloured enamel decoration.

Avoid using household bleaches or proprietary cleaning products because they can cause irreversible damage. Cleaning liquid can penetrate the ceramic, taking dirt with it. This can cause new stains or make old stains worse. Often the effect is not noticeable until the object has dried.

Abrasive creams and cleaners will damage delicate decoration such as gilding, lustre or enamels and in the worst case, dull the glaze itself.

Dry clean unglazed earthenware, unglazed stoneware and biscuit porcelain with a brush, rather than expose the surface to liquids, which can leave watermarks on the surface or lead to staining. This also applies to objects with metal mounts, unfired or painted decoration, flaking glaze or any other type of damage.

Handling

Avoid picking up pieces by their handle, rim or any parts that stick out, such as finials, spouts, knobs and the limbs of figures. These areas are weaker than the body and are the parts that are most likely to have been repaired in the past.

When moving objects support them evenly, with both hands and have a prepared area to set them down again.

Remove jewellery that might scratch or catch on the object.

Packing

Wrap each piece separately in acid free tissue, not newspaper. Place the largest, heaviest object at the bottom and pad with bubble wrap or wads of tissue paper.

Do not place sticky labels or tape directly onto the surface, as this can lead to damage when removed or cause staining.

Display

Use mounts appropriate to the size of the object.

Metal hangers should be coated with plastic to avoid staining and not used on repaired or damaged plates.

Do not display in areas of direct sunlight or above a heat source and avoid extreme fluctuations in temperature and relative humidity.

Place away from windows where flapping curtains may unbalance the object and the edge of tables and shelves.

Damaged Objects

Collect all the pieces and wrap in acid free tissue or place tiny fragments in self-sealing polythene bags.

Do not attempt to re-assemble the pieces unless you have the correct materials and skills. This could cause further damage and will increase the work of a professional conservator.

Conserved and Restored Objects

Do not keep restored items in the dark for long periods of time, as the materials used may discolour.

Do not attempt to immerse or soak restored objects in water, as this may remove any re-touching media or dissolve water-soluble adhesives.

Objects that have been conserved or restored are not suitable for general domestic use.

Follow the guidelines above and the object should remain stable and not require further treatment for many years to come.

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