



Ornamental alabaster object. During conservation treatment.

Introduction to the care and repair of artefacts

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Alabaster object. On Completion.

This is the first in a series of articles about caring for your antiques and collectables. In future editions I will be highlighting a specific group of artefacts, and explaining how to look after them, and where if necessary to find suitably qualified professional conservators to repair and restore your objects. I shall also list some of the courses available for those of you who may be interested in pursuing conservation either as a hobby or as a career.

Most people have something in their care which will require some attention, even if this is simply to insure it! If you have a treasure or an object that you think may be of value but aren't sure, then make every effort to find out. It has never been easier to find information to help you make a decision about whether or not your object is worth the attention of a professional valuer. Let's look first at some general points, which apply to all groups of artefacts including metals, plastics, ceramics and glass, furniture and wooden objects, textiles, paintings and works of art on paper.

General good housekeeping

Don't keep light-sensitive objects such as photographs, drawings, watercolours, fabrics etc in direct sunlight.

Don't keep fragile objects in vulnerable places such as a window-sill near an open window.

Do keep objects in an environment that has a relatively constant temperature, and away from damp conditions.

Dust objects regularly with suitable dusting cloths. (e.g. Sylvet cloths). When dusting vulnerable objects such as glass or ceramics with bocage, remove them from the display area, place on a cushioned secure surface and dust with a large soft squirrel hair artist's brush.

Inspect furniture, frames, textiles etc regularly for signs of deterioration or insect infestation. If suspicious, seek advice and ensure the materials are professionally treated immediately.

Don't try to remove stains yourself, particularly from vulnerable groups of objects such as textiles or works of art on paper.

Seek advice on the correct storage of objects. Use acid free tissue for wrapping. For archival material such as paper or old photographs use acid free archival storage boxes or envelopes.

If you need to transport objects ensure that they are correctly wrapped and securely stowed during transportation.

These points may seem obvious, even trivial, but as a conservator much of the work carried out by our Company is the conservation and restoration of objects that have been subjected to avoidable damage. This includes incorrect handling, inadequate packing, bad storage or 'good intentions'. Spend a few moments thinking about what is in the best interests of your object, and plan ahead!

Architectural structures and features, whether interior, exterior, removable or static, are a group of artefacts that often get over looked. They include a variety of materials including marble, plaster, alabaster, wood, ceramics, stone and metals. Objects fashioned from these materials may include such diverse structures as mausoleums, garden statuary, fireplaces, or even door furniture and old sanitary ware. They may be susceptible to many types of damage. However, sympathetic restoration will help to prolong their life; as well as retaining their aesthetically pleasing appearance. Restoration and/or conservation of the objects may include services such as cleaning, corrosion control, graffiti and stain removal, replacement of missing parts, polishing, and re-fixing of gilt elements and decorative features. It is often possible for a specialist conservator to work away from the studio to carry out work in-situ.

Disaster planning

Many prized objects may be part of a collection held either in the home, or as part of the heritage of both large and small commercial organisations. Custodians of such collections, however small, should always have a plan of action in place to reduce the risk of damage to these collections in the event of a disaster. Key issues covered by such a disaster plan will include:

- Appropriate insurance cover.
- Everyday risk assessment.
- Disaster prevention and damage reduction.
- Immediate response activities.
- Recovery and salvage procedure.
- Acclimatisation, stabilisation and reclamation.
- Full documentation and conservation report.
- Practical conservation and restoration prognosis.

The following articles will take a more in-depth view of various group of artefacts and how the above points relate to their care.

1. Disaster planning, transportation, insurance and documentation.
2. Ceramics. Architectural features. Glass and stone.
3. Metal and composite objects.
4. Painting and works of art on paper.
5. Furniture and wooden objects.
6. Ethnographic and archaeological materials and textiles.

**Caring
for your
antiques**



Treatment of composite objects. Treatment of this object was carried out by both a ceramic and metal conservator.



Polychrome sculpture. Treatment and conservation of water-logged and damaged sculpture.



Repair of in-situ architectural features.



Careful and correct handling of objects. Do not lift valuable objects by their handles.



Repair of jade bowl.