

RESTORING CERAMICS

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Various types of restoration exist: architectural, furniture, paintings, frescos... But one of the most complex and fascinating is the restoration of ceramics. Restoration, in a way, is an art. The art of restoring old, but also modern works to their original beauty. The restorer uses his imagination for his work because restoration is not only what he/she learns at school or in an artisan workshop, it is also creativity – creativity to overcome the problems associated with each restoration job, because the object being restored presents a series of different aspects to be studied on the spur of the moment and which, to be solved, call for intuition and a passion for the job.

The restoration of ceramics first of all consists in studying the object: its glaze, whether fired or cold, whether porcelain or majolica ware, whether gloss or matt, whether thin or thick, in how many parts it is broken, whether the pieces have pointed or rounded edges, whether there are very small or very large fragments, in order to understand which have to be glued first and which after. Just one mistake in selecting a piece and the whole job is ruined.

First of all, the remains of the glue must be removed from the fragment (if it has already been glued), together with the dust and the stains, naturally using products compatible with the material from which the object to be restored is made. The next step is putting all the various pieces together, trying to fasten them using adhesive paper, to find the right composition.

Next, a drill is used either to adapt the various parts so they fit together better or to make holes and then insert pins, if the pieces to be fastened together are heavy or protruding. Afterwards, the pieces are fastened using special glues.

Gluing is a high-precision operation, otherwise the fragments will no longer coincide and performing the operation over again is difficult. The remains of the glue must be removed using a scalpel, before starting to fill. If any areas are missing, these must be recreated using bodywork plaster or filler.

If large areas are missing, templates and lathes are used for modelling.

Sometimes, instead of filler or plaster, the missing areas can be recreated in terracotta and fired, so the object acquires greater strength.

The filler or other materials are then rubbed down and using different kinds of sandpaper, these are made as smooth as glass to the touch and naturally without any disparities.

The next to the last step is glazing, meaning reproducing the same colour and decoration. Absolute precision is required and this is not at all easy, especially for some very difficult colours that are hard to reproduce cold.

The last step is the application, by spraying or by hand, of a protective transparent film, which can be gloss or matt.....and the object is again as good as new!

Touch-ups or supplements cannot be made to antique objects, as they can in the case of modern ones. Reversible techniques must be used so that, in future, the restoration can, if necessary, be removed without damaging the work.