

Antiquers and Collectors Information Guide

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Restoring Boehm Porcelain

By DiAnna Tindell

Porcelain created by Boehm is available in various forms and sizes. Exceptionally life-like birds and florals may be considered the most prominent pieces produced by Boehm. But Boehm creations also include animals and other figurals, plates, Tutankhamun, bas reliefs and paintings.

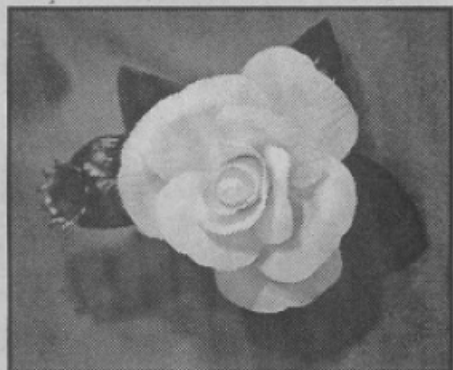
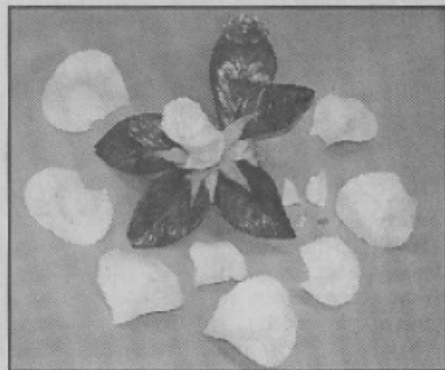
Boehm porcelain is coveted for its great detail and craftsmanship. It is this attention to detail and craftsmanship that makes a quality restoration of a Boehm piece so difficult. Boehm porcelain is often shapely and highly detailed. While these features make it very attractive, they also make the handling and restoration of a damaged object very difficult. Quite often, it is not easy to simply handle or position a Boehm piece during

restoration due to its balance of weight, size or detailing.

A good bit of practice is needed to properly reattach a broken piece to the main

body of an object. Many areas on a Boehm piece are as thin as an eggshell. Normally, a strong bonding is difficult to achieve because

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the areas to be connected consist of thin surfaces that must be "locked" exactly into place. The best bonding process to use is one that is fairly quick and results in a strong and secure joining of the pieces. Any residue from a bonding agent that shows or drips will be difficult to remove.

Many standard processes for removal are too harsh for the surface of Boehm porcelain. For example, most cleaning solvents

will damage the surface of a Boehm piece. It is best to select a removal process that will avoid contact with non-damaged areas. In other words, restrict the removal process to the bonded areas only. Any mess that develops during removal should immediately be rinsed off so as to avoid exposure to an undamaged area. Remember, any solvent strong enough to remove glue could easily remove the paint or design from an undamaged area of the piece, increasing the work to restore the item.

Sometimes, it will not be enough to bond Boehm pieces together with an adhesive. In addition to the bonding agent, more support may be needed to stabilize the bonded parts. To provide this support, a synthetic dental acrylic can be applied with a special brush in a thin, controlled application to key areas to reinforce the sections being joined. If the reinforcing product is applied as a matching color smoothly and precisely, additional painting and glazing may not be necessary. This technique takes experience. It should first be tested on other objects before trying it on a Boehm

piece, because once the synthetic dental acrylic has been applied, it cannot be removed easily.

The initial bonding and reinforcing should give you the best surface texture possible in preparation for any painting that may be necessary. In addition, any new parts should be created with a similar thin, translucent porcelain-type material. Any mold product must offer release to fragile parts without threat of damage. There are great dental products that can be poured into the correct mold type to produce a compatible new part.

If your efforts thus far have not yet produced an invisible finished area, you might consider using an airbrush to further level, fill or color the damaged area. But keep this warning in mind: Boehm porcelain can have translucent areas that will be distorted if airbrushing is too heavy. For optimal results, all airbrush applications should be made in very thin layers to avoid a thick, opaque coverage. It would also be wise to protect undamaged parts of the piece during airbrushing to avoid the over spraying of paint onto these areas.

As mentioned earlier, Boehm porcelain can be very fragile. As a result, it is important to be extremely careful with Boehm, even to the point of following the unpacking instructions for a new Boehm piece. For example, you should slide it out from the side opening of the box rather than lifting it up from the top of the box, and blow the packing peanuts off the piece rather than pulling them off by hand.

Boehm porcelain is a quality product whose value justifies the cost of using an experienced restoration specialist.

