

Antiquers and Collectors Information Guide

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China: Total Restoration or Not?

By DiAnna Tindell

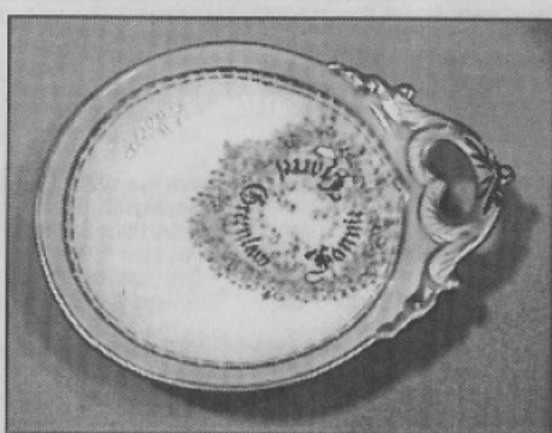
The first question I ask clients with china pieces needing repair is whether, after their restoration, they plan to use them for utilitarian purposes. If they are, I often advise that it's preferable to locate replacement pieces rather than to pursue a total restoration of the damaged ones. Our studio has had great success in locating old, discontinued, unusual and retired china pieces. This advice, however, would also take into account the extent of the dam-

age to the individual pieces. Sometimes, a partial restoration of a damaged piece is recommended when the china would only be used for display purposes or as a future source of salvageable parts.

On countless occasions, clients with damaged china have asked me to affect a "permanent" restoration that would render their pieces "food safe" for future use. Unfortunately, these clients have failed to consider that their pieces were crafted well before the advent of modern appliances and, as a

result, were never intended to withstand the abuse that a microwave oven, dishwasher or electric oven can "dish out". Many china pieces are damaged by this abuse.

So can damaged china be permanently restored in such a way that its surface will be scratch- and fade-resistant, long-term durable and food safe? The short answer is yes, but with a caveat. There are scientifically improved products available to the restoration specialist that will provide some measure of permanence. These products, however, can be very expensive and would significantly increase the cost of restoration. Even in those cases where the damaged china has great sentimental value, the cost



In this case, total restoration was called for.

of these products combined with the complex techniques needed to ensure their proper application can make the cost prohibitive.

Cost, though, is not the only factor to consider when deciding whether to have a damaged piece of china permanently restored. China is made in various shapes, of various grades and quality, and for several different purposes. To illustrate this point, one need only remember that china has come to us from countless manufacturers in a number of different countries. A non-exhaustive list of manufacturers would include:

Adams,
Adderley, Aynsley,
Belleek,
Bernardaud, Block,
Blue Ridge, Bristol,
Buffalo, Cauldon,
Ceralene, Christian
Dior, Churchill,
Coalport, Copeland,
Crown Derby,

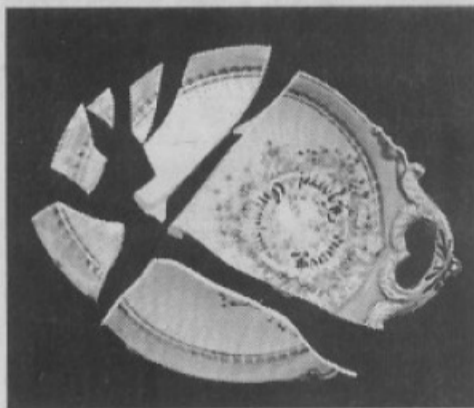
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Crown Staffordshire, Dansk, Doulton, Dresden, Easterling, English Ironstone, Faberge, Fiesta, Fire King, Foley, Franciscan, Frankoma, Furnivals, Goebel, Gorham, Hall, Haviland, Herend, Hutschenreuther, Imperial, Iroquois, Johnson Brothers, Kaiser, Kent, KMP, Ralph Lauren, Lefton, Lenox, Limoges, Masons, Meakin, Meissen, Metlox, Mikasa, Minton, Nippon, Noritake, Oscar de la Renta, Otagiri, Oxford, Paragon, Pickard, Pirkenhammer, Queen Anne, Quimper, Red Wing, Ridgway, Rosenthal, Royal Bayreuth, Royal Chelsea, Royal Copenhagen, Royal



75% damaged nut bowl; China-commissioned for founder of Memphis, Tenn.

Winton, Russel Wright, Salisbury, Schumann, Sheffield, Shelley, Spode, Staffordshire, Steubenville, Syracuse, Thomas, Tiffany, Tirschenreuth, Tuscan, Universal, Villeroy & Boch, Warwick, Waterford, Wedgwood, Worcester, Yamaka, Z.S. & Co., and Zrike.

Various styles and qualities that show that what is acceptable for one piece of china can often be destructive to another. Many old manufacturing recipes may no longer be allowed due to governmental restrictions of products deemed environmentally unsafe or hazardous to individual health. Once a piece has been restored, the restorer has no control over how the client will employ the piece.

Another issue is, as a master restoration specialist, is there a level of liability placed upon the restoration if efforts are made to make the china "permanent" based on product claims and safety data listings? There are products that claim to be extremely permanent, but is this claim made based on the type of daily use china may demand with those

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modern appliances? Or is the permanence claimed on the products based on other lab testing that would only include more natural environmental elements. Thus, the restorer can not and should not guarantee a "permanent" restoration.

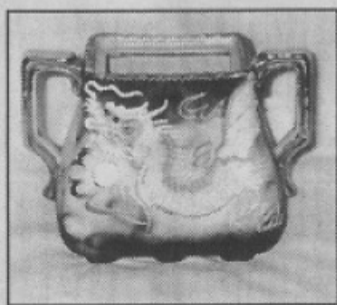
As they leave the factory, most pieces of china have been rendered somewhat fragile by virtue of the resources, processing techniques and special finishes (e.g., cobalt, gold or other metallics, dyes, hand painting) used in their manufacture. Some china is offered for the limited purpose of collection and decorative display. The cost of a restoration should be relative to the value of the item being restored.

Some china may be better suited to a partial rather than a complete restoration. To determine which would be preferable for your damaged china, try having the restoration done in stages, with the first step being to just make the piece whole again. From that point, it would be much easier to decide whether a complete restoration should be attempted.

In those instances when restoration of damaged china is not possible, keep in mind that the piece may still have value for its parts. Some parts such as a lid or a handle may later be cannibalized for use as an add-on or duplication to another piece. There are other items that can be created from damaged china with little imagination and effort. For example, broken

pieces of china are extremely decorative as inlays for table-tops. Such inlays could be a perfect compliment to a matching service of china placed on that table.

Another more detailed use for damaged china would be in creation of individualized nameplates to identify seating assignments at special events. Some very exciting and unusual jewelry can also be created from damaged china. What about the cutaway of a lady's portrait fashioned into a cameo brooch or pendant? The point is to give it some thought before simply throwing away your china. For more suggestions,



The sugar bowl restored.

please free to contact us. You won't regret it!

DiAnna Tindell is a master restoration specialist and founder of Tindell's Restoration Schools in Nashville, Tenn.