

Restoration Restoration



by DiAnna Tindell

DiAnna Tindell is an internationally trained restoration specialist and the founder of Tindell's Restoration Studios, a school for training in restoration. She is the author of a book on restoration soon to be published. E-mail her at tinrestore@aol.com; phone (615) 885-1029; check the Web at www.collect.com/tinrestore; or write to 825 Sandburg Place, Nashville, TN 37214. Your comments and/or inquiries are welcome. Questions will be printed as space allows and at the columnist's discretion. Due to volume of mail, personal replies cannot be guaranteed and a published response may take months. *Antique Trader* is not responsible for letters or materials sent through the mail to our columnists. We cannot give out personal phone numbers or addresses of our columnists; any original or follow-up correspondence to them must be sent in care of *Antique Trader*.

Clean Breaks

A prized porcelain collectible has just been accidentally knocked off the mantel over the fireplace. Luckily, it looks like a clean break and you've recovered all the pieces. The pieces seem to fit nicely. Unfortunately, repairing a clean break involves more than simply gluing the pieces back together. There are other things to consider.

Preparation

Prior to actually bonding pieces together, it is advisable to practice the sequence in which the pieces will be bonded to avoid "locking out" a section. You don't want to paint yourself into a corner. Where numerous pieces are involved, it may be wise to number them in the proper sequence and to mark the corners that connect. A marker should be used that can easily be erased afterwards. It may be best to bond the pieces together a section at a time to allow each section to cure properly. In this way, it is much easier to avoid a lock-out and should provide better alignment. Each section that is attached to the next will have pressure applied to obtain the best fit. If these joining sections have not set long enough to cure, the joins may break under the strain of more pressure.

The adhesive

Once you have determined the proper order in which to join the pieces, an adhesive must be selected. If the damaged surface is porous (e.g., ceramic or

soft paste porcelain), it would be best to use a gel-type adhesive. A gel prevents the porous texture of the joins from absorbing the adhesive into the body. Should the damaged surface be dense and non-porous (e.g. hard and almost glass-like), a wiser selection would be a thin liquid adhesive. Sometimes an adhesive etching product should be applied to hard surfaces first. When the surface of the object is a mix of textures, the adhesives of gel and liquid can be mixed.

Most individuals have a tendency to apply too much adhesive material to the pieces being joined in the belief that this will make the bond between the pieces stronger. This, however, is not true. When too much adhesive is used, the surfaces of the pieces will not join properly and, over the course of time, will begin to separate. Of additional note, some bonding agents will brown or yellow with the passing of time. Be sure to select a non-yellowing or crystal clear adhesive.

To apply the adhesive, place a small amount on only one of the two surfaces being joined. Do not apply the adhesive all the way to the ends if another part is to be placed at that point, because excess adhesive will seep out and distort the fit of your next piece. If you practiced the fit prior to adding the adhesive, you stand a better chance of avoiding movement of the surfaces after they are joined together. Should some of the adhesive seep out of the area being joined, allow it to dry before removing it. After it has dried, the residue can be removed with an X-acto-type knife. Caution must be

exercised so that only the excess adhesive and not the original surface is removed. If a solvent is used to wipe off any excess before curing, it usually leaves a smeared residue over the original surface and the solvent may seep into the newly joined areas, weakening their hold.

Reinforcement

Often, a clean break can only be repaired properly with some sort of reinforcement added to the damaged area. For example, a break to the handle of a soft paste porcelain pitcher or the stem of a porcelain candlestick would need additional support beyond the adhesive used to bring the pieces together. Damaged objects which must withstand stress—such as an item with a broad surface (a platter, for instance) or an item that supports weight (a pedestal, for example) will also require some form of reinforcement.

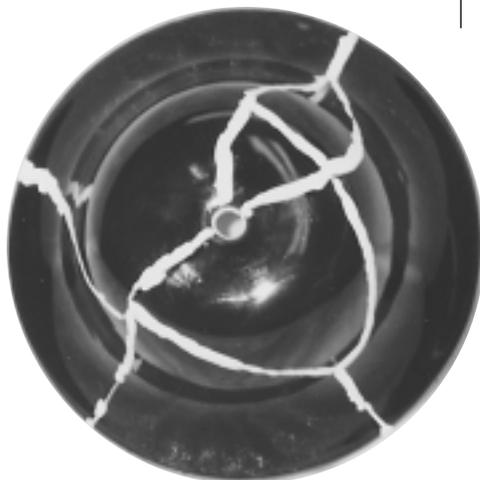
The reinforcement of a damaged area might be accomplished by the insertion of "v-grooves" (carved into the object as hidden staples), metal braces or staples. These particular techniques, however, require that parts of the object which were previously undamaged be damaged in order to cut out the "v-grooves" or insert the metal braces and staples. This was done many years ago in restoration practices and some restorers still use this method today. Because this adds damage to the item, at least initially, this method is not usually recommended as a good method of reinforcement.

There are techniques available which can be used to reinforce without the need of further damage to the col-

lectible. When the proper adhesive has been used and a good fit of the pieces has been maintained, all that may be needed is the addition of a layer of stronger material in the damaged area. This can be clear or may need to be painted and glazed to match the original finished surface of the object. Materials used to add strength and support should be consistent with the body type of the item being restored so it retains the same feel, texture, weight and resonant "ring" after the repair. The material should remain stable over the course of time without changes such as shrinkage.

If your damaged collectible has considerable monetary or sentimental value, you would be wise to consider contacting a professional restorer. All too often, the restorer sees the object after someone has made a poor attempt at gluing it together. Additional time and expense is required to undo the damage that was done to the object the first time it was "repaired." Often the interior of an object such as a tall pitcher, ewer or vase, needs to be more accessible for a detailed invisible restore. Some work, therefore, would be done to that area as two half sections before completing the item as a whole. Once the object is totally glued back together, it is more difficult for the inside to be painted correctly. The two half sections can be refined first; then there is only one "join" line on the inside to restore from the top.

The professional restorer has access to the right equipment and products and also the patience and expertise to do the job right.



Prior to actually bonding pieces together, it is advisable to practice the sequence in which the pieces will be bonded (left) to avoid "locking out" a section. Where numerous pieces are involved, it may be wise to number them in the proper sequence (right) and to mark the corners that connect. A marker should be used that can easily be erased afterwards.

