

Restoration

When to restore a collectible

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If you have a collectible that is damaged, you must decide whether it would be worth your time and expense to have it restored.

In reaching such a decision, there are many factors to consider. For example, what gives this item its value? A collectible may derive its value as a marketable asset (if it has a high resale price). But marketability is not the sole indication of value. A collectible may be valuable because it gives you a great deal of personal satisfaction. This satisfaction may come from the beauty of the piece or some sentimental connection you

might have with it. The collectible could also be prized for its historical value or because it's part of a set of other collectibles. Whatever the reason, the value of the collectible will most certainly be an important factor to consider when deciding whether to have it restored.

To be worthwhile, a professional restoration should retain at least 80 percent of the collectible's market value for resale. Therefore, another factor to consider is whether a restoration will accomplish this goal. Initially, you should research the value of your piece based on information found in books and on the Internet and from inquiries made at galleries,

antiques malls and auction houses. Can your collectible be easily replaced or is it "retired" and/or simply no longer readily available?

You should also consider just how extensive the damage is to your collectible. Even if it can be restored to your satisfaction, damage to more than 50 percent of the item may make it impossible to restore the collectible to 80 percent of its resale value.

A third factor in your thinking should be how you intend to use the collectible after it has been restored. In some instances, a plate that has been restored may no longer be used to serve food, for example, or the item may not allow display in a stressful environment. Most restored items will, to some degree, be somewhat fragile. They may no longer be useful for anything other than decorative display.

The value of an item versus the cost of restoration is relative to many of the areas already discussed. In addition, keep in mind that the more processes needed in the restoration—design work, variations of color, relief or sculpted work, enameling, metallics (gold, silver, etc.), needed replacement areas, the medium makeup, number of breakage areas, braces of reinforcement and overall size of the item—the greater the ultimate cost. Even a clean break, hairline or spider crack or small chip can involve a great deal more work to restore than most individuals realize.

Some collectibles may be better suited for partial rather than complete restoration. Sometimes it may be possible to nego-

tiate with a professional restorer to work on the item in stages, with the first step being to make the item whole again. This would be coupled with an option to return the item for a complete restoration at a later date with the cost to be prorated accordingly.

Is time a consideration in your decision to restore? Depending on the level of damage, the restoration of your collectible may take six months to two years to be completed. Therefore, if you intend to transfer ownership of the collectible within a relatively short time, you may consider leaving the decision to restore to the new owner. Many items can be transferred "as is" with the research attached that determines the total cost and overall value after restoration.

Should the collectible be considered unrestorable and/or totally wasted, please keep in mind that your collectible may retain some value for its parts. Some parts, such as handles, finials, flowers, feet, hands, heads, etc., may be just what is needed on a duplicate item. Many restoration services will consider the purchase of those parts. Moreover, a restoration school might take interest in your piece as a student practice project. There are other items that can be created from the same object with a little imagination and effort. For instance, a compote could be designed into a bowl, or a flower could be made into a brooch. There are many possibilities, and a restoration service can often give you alternatives. ❁



From Left: Royal Vienna vase, a part missing from the lid only (minor restoration). Rare Boehm cactus hummingbird piece missing parts on bird and reattachment to cactus (average restoration). R.S. Prussia pitcher, cracked and with many broken pieces (major restoration).

