

Collections Care

Glass, Ceramics and Stone

Glass, ceramics, and stone have been used by humans for thousands of years to make everything from art and food vessels to building and finishing materials. Plastic, a manmade late-comer to the group, offers an inexpensive, supremely-shapable alternative to these traditional materials and is now finding its way into museum collections worldwide. The main causes of deterioration for glass, ceramic, and stone objects are breakage and internal flaws that are either inherent or originating in an object's past use, which can make it more susceptible to damage from heat, moisture, or fluctuating humidity levels. As with any museum or personal collection, appropriate handling techniques and storage are the first line of defense in the preservation of objects made from any of these materials. For glass and ceramics, use only nitrile gloves or clean hands due to their slippery surfaces (unglazed ceramics should be handled with nitrile gloves only). For stone objects, either nitrile or cotton gloves may be used. Minimize handling of all objects and never pick up by handles or decorative motifs. Always support the object with both hands and practice general good housekeeping in storage and exhibition areas. Further tips on caring for glass, ceramics, and stone can be found below.

Glass and Ceramics

- American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works (AIC): [“Caring for Your Treasures – Glass and Ceramics”](#)
- [Canadian Conservation Institute: “Care of Objects Decorated with Glass Beads”](#) (CCI notes 6/4)
 - See also “Caring for Your Collections” toolkits for various base materials to which glass beads may be attached, such as “Historic Textiles” and “Animal Materials”.
- Henry Ford Museum: [“Glass and Ceramics”](#) (by Mary M. Fahey, Chief Conservator)
- National Park Service:
 - [Museum Handbook: Appendix P, “Curatorial Care of Ceramic, Glass, and Stone Objects”](#)
 - [“Preservation of Low-Fired Ceramic Objects”](#) (Conserve O Gram Series, September 2002, 8/3)
 - [“Removing Dust from Ceramic and Glass Objects”](#) (Conserve O Gram Series, July 1993, number 8/1)
- Victoria and Albert Museum (London, UK):
 - [“Caring for Your Ceramics”](#)
 - [“Caring for Your Glass”](#)

STONE AND PLASTER

- National Park Service:
 - [“Care of Alabaster”](#) (Conserve O Gram Series, September 2000, number 15/1)
 - [“Dusting Guidelines for Stone Objects and Interior Architectural Features”](#) (Conserve O Gram Series, December 2000, number 15/2)
 - [Museum Handbook: Appendix P, “Curatorial Care of Ceramic, Glass, and Stone Objects”](#)
- [Minnesota Historical Society: “Stone”](#)

- Nebraska Educational Telecommunications: [Saving Your Treasures: Other Organic and Inorganic](#) (video series)
 - Scroll to the bottom of the page for links to videos about stone and caring for stone objects.
- Victoria and Albert Museum (London, UK): ["Caring for Plaster"](#)