



NATIONAL
CRAFT
GALLERY™

DCCI
Design & Crafts
Council Ireland



Object Conservation

The National Craft Gallery and the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCol) have developed this leaflet to support good conservation practice for objects in the home environment. This is aimed at helping you to take care of your domestic craft and design objects that have a heritage value.

Objects of heritage value are all around us, giving us insight into the past. They can be simple household items or works of art and craft. History is informed by the continued existence of such objects, what we save now will describe our heritage to future generations.

DCCol is currently working to establish a permanent collection of works created in the Kilkeny Design Workshops (KDW), which promoted and elevated design in Ireland between 1965 and 1988. Partly commercial, many KDW objects now reside in homes across Kilkeny, Ireland and abroad. DCCol acknowledges the heritage value of objects in domestic environments and encourages good care of privately owned cultural objects.

Advice when caring for heritage objects

Note: Appropriate care can be tricky. Some materials degrade in strange ways and some cleaning products do more harm than good. The following points are broad guidelines. If in doubt, contact a professional conservator.

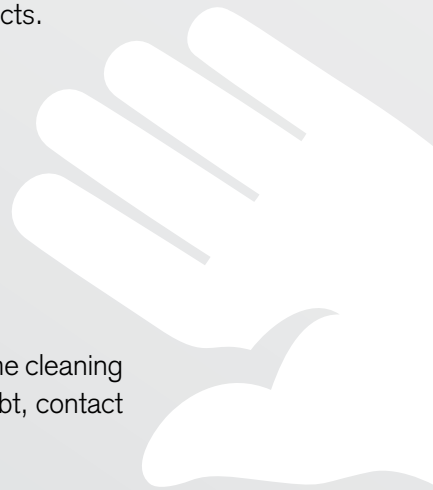
Environment

Paying attention to the environment in which collections are held is probably the most helpful strategy for preserving objects. The main factors are **temperature, humidity, light** and **pests**.



Temperature

This can speed up chemical reactions like metal corrosion. Temperatures between 15°C and 25°C are generally acceptable. Usual room temperatures are fine for most objects. Related to temperature is humidity, the amount of moisture in the air. Higher humidities can promote rot or mould while low humidities can cause objects to dry out. Rapid changes in temperature or humidity can crack and distort objects. Such changes often occur because of temperature fluctuations (attics, basements, and near radiators are not ideal for this reason). Domestic Hygrometers (which often refer to humidity as 'comfort') can indicate the general recommended range of 35% to 60%.





Light

The effects of light include fading, discolouration and structural weakening. These effects cannot be reversed but can be prevented. Keep objects out of direct light, especially sunlight, and install lower wattage bulbs where possible. The darker, the better.



Pests

Rodent, woodworm and clothes moths are common examples of such pests which can eat and burrow into objects. Insect infestations are common in warm, damp, dark conditions. Frass (the powdery excretions of insects) or casings can indicate infestation. Some proprietary pesticides can be effective but seeking advice from a conservator is recommended.



Object Handling

Handling and moving objects is when the most damage occurs (drops, breakages, wearing, etc.) It is important to be mindful when picking up or moving an object.

- Handle with clean, dry hands (remove rings, bracelets, etc. first)
- Lift objects by their strongest points
- Examine over a table or other surface
- Create barriers between object and surfaces with cushioned supports
- Place only on level surfaces
- Do not prop or balance



Storage

Objects, ideally, should be sealed in inert plastic bags or padded boxes to protect them from the environment.

- Do not pile, stack or cram into containers
- Do not wrap in such a way that requires them to be unrolled or turned when unpacking
- Objects should not project over the edge of a surface in case of knocking or catching



Cleaning and repair

Do not attempt haphazardly. The gentlest means are generally the best ("Blot, don't rub. Brush, don't scrub").

- Dust with a soft, clean brush
- Use a vacuum to draw away loosened dust
- For larger objects employ a soft cloth, wiping in circular motions

Wet-cleaning is not generally recommended to non-professionals. Generic cleaning products should not be used. If wet-cleaning is appropriate, dust first.

- Change water frequently
- Rinse away any detergents or solvents
- Treated areas should be blotted dry