

The Conservation of Ancient Vases from the Diniacopoulos Collection

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An extraordinary collection of ancient Greek vases was amassed by Vincent and Olga Diniacopoulos prior to World War II. The vases, now housed at three Canadian institutions, present a range of conservation challenges. The oldest restorations, which were carried out in Europe, provide evidence of practices now fallen from favour including the assembly of fragments with shellac. In contrast, vases treated in Canada from the mid-1980's to the present have been reassembled utilizing modern materials and techniques. Selected examples will illustrate both approaches. One of the most significant treatment challenges was the presence of shellac on the pottery surfaces. This paper will present the results of tests carried out at Queen's University to determine the most effective methods and materials for the removal of aged shellac. Difficulties in reconstructing the vases and associated fragments, scattered between three locations in Ontario and Quebec, will also be discussed. The use of digital technology to exchange information and to compare images has proved to be a key component in the process. The reconstruction of this group of ancient vases, carried out by conservation professionals and conservation students, emphasizes the increasingly important contribution of art conservation to the academic studies of art historians, archaeologists and classical scholars.

