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TOPIC: Criteria for evaluation of faithful hand-made copies of vessels to be sold in museum shops



Original



Copy by Vassilis Politakis

There cannot be a 100% faithful hand-made copy.

The accuracy is usually based on the basic characteristics of ancient artefacts, most important of which are size, shape, proportions, motifs, while the rest of the elements (damage, preservation) ought to exude a general ancient feel.

In order to define the evaluation criteria of a vessel copy, we need to analyse the characteristics of the ancient artefact and to define their significance:

1. Clay vessel body

1. Shape of vessel



Original



Copy by Vassilis Politakis

2. Dimensions: the size of the exact copies should be at least 95% of the original

3. Proportions of additional parts (e.g. handles, spouts)

4. Colour hue of vessel body.

Because of the fact that many serendipitous factors influence the body of a vessel during firing (e.g. contact with coal, interaction with nearby objects within the kiln), we ought to create a general picture of the shades of colour which exist on the vessel surface.

5. Nature of clay – vessel surface.

If there is burnishing or if the clay of the ancient vessel is particularly coarse, it is desirable to create this sensation. It is almost impossible, for practical reasons, to faithfully recreate the hue of the clay. It is advisable that clay somewhat similar to the ancient clay be used.

2. Decoration

1. Rendering of motifs Because of the fact that an absolute standardisation in the hand-made rendering of motifs is not possible, we give greater attention to the basic motifs of the vessel.

2. Rendering of style - expression

It is very important to render as accurately as possible the elements that define the style of expression of the ancient artist (like asymmetries, placing of designs, movement – plasticity of curves).



Exact copy by V. Politakis , emphasizing on the free style and the movement of the Minoan decoration

3. Rendering of decoration

The general sense of the hues of the decoration ought to be rendered as much as possible, but it is practically impossible to render with accuracy every little surface which presents colour variation, due to the firing. The reason is again serendipitous factors in the production of the ancient object.

For example, during the decoration of the original vessel, the ancient potter may have applied the decoration paints in different thicknesses.

The result after firing is the differential paint coverage in places, to a greater or a lesser extent.

The general sense of colour changes is to be rendered in copies.

The same ought to happen in the reproduction of blackening decorative effects due to a reductive atmosphere in the kiln.

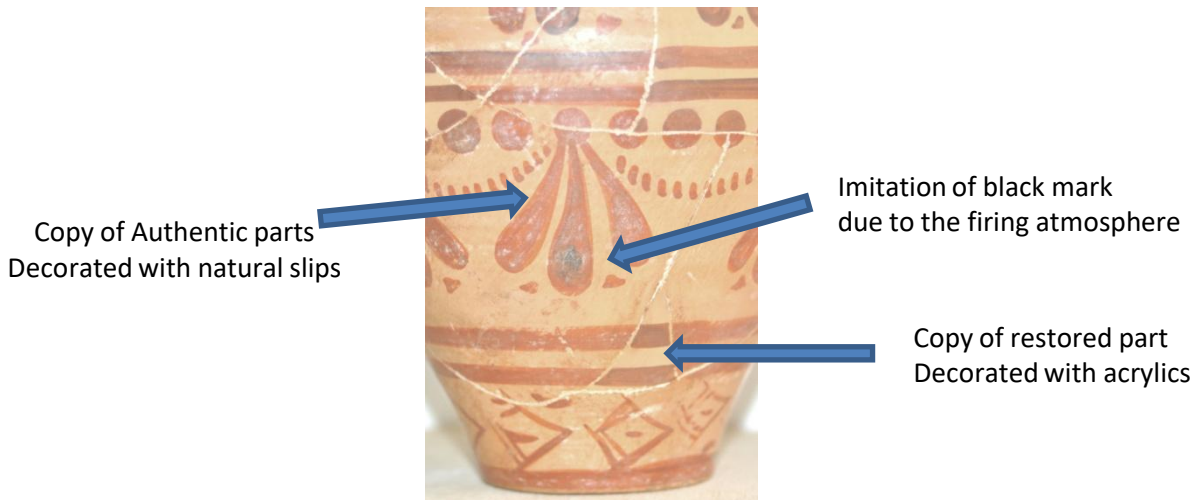


Imitation of the different colorings in the inside of this Kamares cup , which were produced during firing.

Exact copy by Vassilis Politakis

4. Quality of materials – decoration method

It is preferable to decorate in permanent materials, similar to the ancient paints, while the rendering of the restoration should be with water colours.

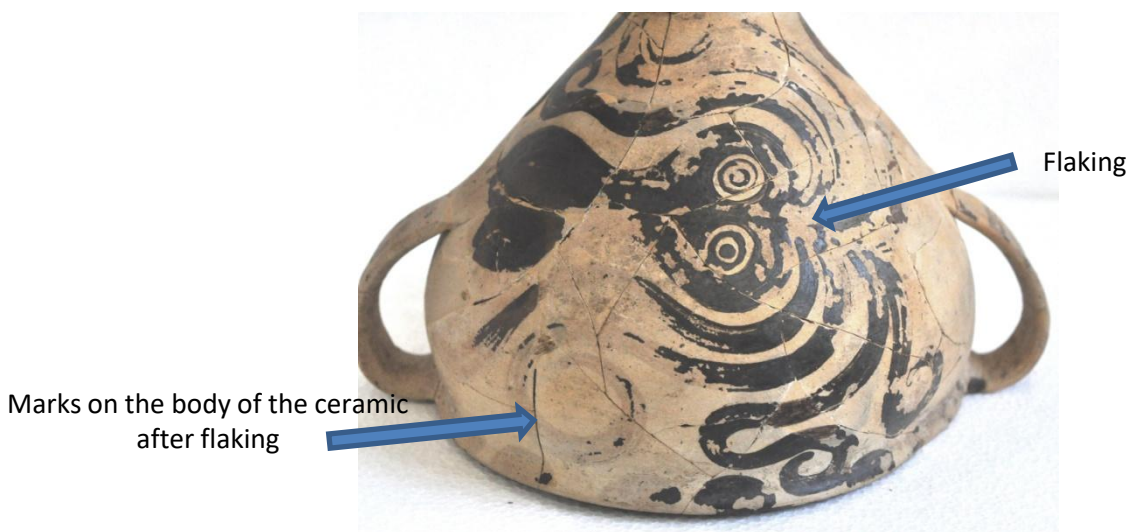


Part of an exact copy by V.Politakis

3. Damage

1. Paint flaking

We can approximately render the percentage of flaking that manifests on the ancient vessel, without, again, the possibility of absolute accuracy. We simply reproduce a general characteristic.



Part of the ancient pot

2. Breaks- joins of the vessel sherds

We can show if the vessel was found broken to a smaller or greater degree by reproducing the most obvious breaks and by giving a general feel for the rest of the joined sherds.

3. Marks on the vessel

It is important to show if the vessel was carefully created or if it had imperfections to a greater degree.

4. Warping of vessel

Some ancient vessels were not perfectly made on the wheel, resulting in some shape asymmetries. The general feel of the vessel can be created. In some cases, there was some warping due to the firing or the placing of heavier objects on top of a vessel within the kiln. We ought to render this characteristic by approximation.



Original



Exact copy by V. Politakis
Covered with a slip of a lighter clay,
Before firing

3. Reconstruction – restoration

Mistakes are obvious in the method of many ancient vessels' restoration and reconstruction. These mistakes are due to the different approach that conservators employed 50-60 years ago.

As far as copies are concerned, these mistakes will be corrected to some degree, therefore giving a clearer picture regarding what is authentic and what is not on the vessel. However, this intervention will not change significantly the impression that the observer has when looking at the original artefacts in a museum case.



Restoration on the ancient ceramic
Which tries to imitate the colorings
as found on the original parts