



INTERFACES BETWEEN CRAFT  
KNOWLEDGE AND DESIGN:  
NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR  
SOCIAL INNOVATION AND  
SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE

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making  
FUTURES

**Plymouth  
College  
of Art**

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## *New Technologies for Restoration: The Meissen Fountain Project*

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This paper describes the practicalities and key theoretical issues relating to the restoration of a historically-significant, mid-eighteenth century porcelain table fountain. The fountain was hand modelled by Johann Joachim Kaendler, from which complex moulds were cast to allow for the many elements to be press moulded at the Meissen manufactory in the mid-eighteenth century. When the fountain was acquired by the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1870 it had eleven missing elements; these are now being recreated by staff at The Royal College of Art with support from members of the conservation team at the V&A. The fully restored fountain will be a centrepiece of the V&A's "New Europe 1600-1800" Galleries scheduled to open in 2014.

The V&A's staff decided that the authenticity of the restoration would partially rest on material properties: the reconstructed elements should be made of porcelain. This decision entailed significant practical issues, including matching the clay body and glazes and the problem of shrinkage during firing. Whilst the material was to be closely duplicated, the processes of production were not; in contrast to the hand modelling of the extant elements, 3D scanning and printing technologies were employed to map the spaces and comparable surfaces in order to create the missing pieces. This approach offered extreme flexibility of scaling, countering the shrinkage problems.

The deployment of these new technologies entailed new issues relating to replication and authenticity on top of recognised ones. The level of detail the digital processes could capture and retain blurred the line between original and copy in unexpected ways, with Kaendler's original hand modelling replicated in the new replacement elements. By considering how such digital technologies disrupt conventional restoration practices and approaches by challenging established conventions and the expectations of those involved, the paper offers a distinctive contribution to on-going debates over authenticity, the notion of the original artwork and the value(s) of craft practice in the wider sense.