Environment and Building Systems Workshop
Part A
Cleaning Stations Activity

Inorganic Objects
Glass
Stone
Ceramics
Metal
Minerals
Man-made Materials (i.e. plastics)

General Tips and Guidelines:

1. Always carefully assess your object before beginning cleaning. Observe the object from multiple angles and always practice good object handling skills that we have discussed in previous workshops.
2. Always use clean hands, and wear nitrile gloves
3. Mentally list (and/or jot down) the components of your object. For example: If you have a glass object, that is only made of one material throughout, focus on noting vulnerabilities, whether that is through handling or previous wear. Note the significance of the object and any of its previous deterioration.
4. Assess the level of soiling. If the object is not in need of cleaning, then do not attempt to clean the object. If the object cannot be cleaned safely with the tools you have, then do not clean the object. Remember: Do no harm
5. If cleaning, test a small, inconspicuous part of the object with your cleaning tool (i.e. cosmetic sponge, soot sponge, swab). Determine the best method and proceed with caution.
6. Avoid using tools that may abrade the surface. A seemingly soft bristle brush can leave micro scratches on the surface of an object, even if the scratches are not easily visible.

Additional Guidelines for Cleaning by Material Type (Guidelines from Museums and Galleries of New South Wales: "Cleaning in Museums Helpsheet" from History SAs)

Metal (such as irons, blacksmith tools, plated metals)
-Dust left on metal surfaces can cause corrosion, especially in humid environments. -Vacuum cleaning with micro-attachments is the most effective method for removing

dust on stable, non rusted surfaces. Alternatively you can wipe stable surfaces with a soft cloth. -Watch out for rusted, corroded and unstable surface areas. Avoid lifting metal items by their handles as the joint between the handle and the object may be weak.

-Clean silver objects only when really necessary, not as a matter of routine. Wipe gently with a silver cloth, if required. Each time an object is polished, small amounts of silver are removed. Excessive cleaning or use of abrasive cleaners wears down silver plating and can cause scratching.

-Watch out for patina and other decorations that are part of the object. Light tarnish can often be removed by gently rubbing with a cotton cloth.

Glass, ceramics

-Wipe with a micro-static cloth, cosmetic sponge, swab or soot sponge

-Stable, intricate surfaces may be vacuumed with micro-attachments. Soft brushes can also be used. Clean thoroughly only if the item is sturdy, glazed and has no chips or cracks.

-Avoid cleaning areas that are extremely fragile or brittle

Reflections on Inorganic Objects:

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