



FACTUM
FOUNDATION
FOR DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY
IN CONSERVATION

Facsimiles at Masterpiece

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The Foundation was at the Masterpiece event in London during July and its stand was rather different from the others who clustered around it - they were there to present some of the wonders of our heritage and they were wonders - for sale.

The diversity of objects, the levels of opulence of some and the nihilistic blankness of others presented a marvellous journey through what the world's collectors want to see and own. The quality of all the works was breathtaking - the details of marquetry, painting, gilding, polishing, carving, engineering, metalwork and, of course artistic skill were tremendous and the sheer scale of the event and of its contents was breathtaking.

Quietly placed between two of the world's great antique dealers was the [stand for the Foundation](#). Designed by Charlotte Skene Catling and Adam Lowe it was a discrete theatre, dramatically and beautifully exhibiting some of the work of the Foundation and its aims. The Teschen Table (now in the Louvre) facsimile enticed visitors past the Cluny Christ - created in Madrid and which baffled every inspection - and through a series of monochrome flats secreted behind which were shelves and boxes and openings containing objects that represented the variety of work of the Foundation.



All the objects were facsimiles - and they all had an important place in the story of preservation.

That was the play that was being performed - it was the physical proof that technology now allows us to do things we only dreamed of until recently. When Henry Cole wrote the 'Convention for Universally Reproducing Works of Art for the Benefit of all Museums' in 1867 - 150 years ago and the basis for the creation of the V&A - what we can do now was not even a dream, but it was anticipated.



The work of the Foundation places the emphasis on recording, using highly advanced technology (much developed in house) sufficient to make an exact physical copy. The recording is deeply important - recording in as much detail as can reasonably be done. The creation of facsimiles like those tiny examples hiding behind the flats of the Foundation exhibit at Masterpiece - can then be a choice. What is important and what is unique about the Foundation is that the single criterion used for recording is matched with a profound desire to find ways to re-create where it is needed and that is what the Foundation does daily in its workshops.



So, surrounded by objects that have been cherished and polished and burnished and restored to a brilliance only dealers in antiques and works of art can do, the facsimiles in their little theatre told their story eloquently and forcefully and truthfully to the often bemused visitors.

[James Macmillan-Scott](#)

calle Albarracín 28 - 28037 Madrid, España +34 91 5500978 fax +34 91 5495935

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44 Lexington Street London W1F 0LP - United Kingdom +44 (0) 7896908838 - info@factumfoundation.org