



ARTS LEGACY PROJECTS

When an artist reaches the end of his or her working life, their family, friends and heirs are often uncertain about how to manage papers and artworks that represent their career in art. The following is a roadmap for how to organize and deploy these holdings in order to assure a durable presence that preserves and promotes the work of visual artists, writers, musicians, performing artists, collectors, patrons, curators, arts administrators and others within the community of creative professionals. Needlewatcher LLC can provide expert guidance and skilled assistance in reaching these goals.

ESTABLISH AN ARCHIVE

Donate papers to a major research-oriented library or archive. There is a widely held misconception that major foundations, universities and government repositories are paying large sums for artists' papers. The demand for artists' papers is based on the impact of an artist's career on the art of their time, the magnitude of their influence and the significance of their contribution to art and culture, on an international, national, regional and local level.

Positioning an artist's papers in an appropriate repository will make the details of an artist's life more accessible to researchers, journalists, art historians and biographers and add potential market value to their remaining artworks. The contents of such an archive are specified below by the Archives of American Art.

- Personal letters from colleagues in the arts, family and friends covering a wide span of years.
- Professional correspondence with galleries, dealers, collectors, critics, institutions, and organizations, including drafts or copies of outgoing letters
- Diaries or journals giving a day-by-day view of the subject's ideas and activities, travels, sales, exhibitions, and options
- Sketchbooks, loose sketches, and studies
- Photographs, slides, film, audio and video not only of work, but of the subject's family, friends and studio
- Lectures, addresses, and unpublished articles
- Scrapbooks, clippings, exhibition catalogs and announcements
- Teaching material, including lecture notes, reports, and comments
- Research files
- Financial papers, including bills, receipts, lists, and ledgers

CREATE A CATALOGUE OF ARTWORKS

Artworks should be divided into separate categories:

- Major works: paintings or sculpture
- Painting studies and sculpture maquettes
- Prints; intaglio, lithography, woodcuts, serigraphy, linocuts, collotypes, etc.

- Drawings, excluding sketchbooks and loose sketches placed in the archives.

All artworks should be photographed. Initially, this need not be done by a professional photographer. All that is required would be a snapshot for identification purposes. The image should be legible and it would be advisable to place some measuring device in the frame for scale, such as a 12-inch or 20-centimeter ruler, plus a photographer's gray scale and color bar. If the decision is made to assemble a catalogue raisonné of the artist's work, we recommend that a professional photographer who specializes in works of art be engaged to shoot high-resolution images.

CREATE A REGISTRATION RECORD AND INVENTORY OF ARTWORKS

Follow these steps:

- Note the title, if known.
- Note the date
- Note size in inches or centimeters by height, width and thickness
- Note the medium, materials and technique
- Create a registration number. Use the artist's initials, followed by the date or the artwork, followed by a code for the medium used. Please refer to *catalogues raisonné* for other models.
- Attach or insert a registration photo into the document.

CONDUCT A TRIAGE

Consult experts. Consider engaging the services of a suitable artist, scholar or critic free of vested interests. You are not looking for market valuations at this point but for someone with a refined critical knowledge of the medium, genre and subject-matter. You might also engage an appraiser, or consult an art dealer, but market values are subject to fluctuation and may have little correlation to the artistic value of specific pieces. To be safe, do both.

- Conduct an evaluation of all inventoried artworks
- Rank the pieces according to ambition, significance to the artist's *oeuvre*, body of work, level of completion, and artistic success. Many artists will keep less successful works for research value. These should be ranked lowest, along with works from student days.
- When the above tasks have been completed, an appraiser might be consulted to establish insurance values

REVISE THE INVENTORY

- Note the outcome of the evaluation on the inventory. This might be done in any number of ways such as color coding, using special symbols or numbers such as A, B & C as in *A-list*, etc.
- Hire a professional art photographer to create high resolution images of A-list works, suitable for publication.
- Create a photo archive. Use the registration number from the inventory as the filename for the digital photographs.

Once you have taken steps many questions will remain. Is it appropriate to create a trust, nonprofit, or foundation to manage the artist's estate? This is a question for your accountant and lawyer. The next question will be how to promote the artist's work through galleries, museums, scholarship and publications. This should get you started. If you have any questions, please visit our website www.needlewatcher.com and contact us at

Info@needlewatcher.com

Needlewatcher LLC. PO Box 142, West Haverstraw, New York. 10993-0142. Tel: (347)-515-2606

NOTES