



ARTIST LEGACY ADVANCEMENT PROJECTS: FAQs

Q: I manage the estate of a deceased parent. He/she was a packrat. After a long and notable career, they left no plans regarding what to do with a home and studio full of artwork, a filing cabinet full of paper. Where do we begin?

A: Break up the work into different tasks. Set priorities and goals, based on your resources.

Q: What's of paramount importance? We want to move all this material into storage.

A: The number one task is to organize a biographical archive, and after that an inventory of the subject's papers and artworks.

Q: What constitutes an archive?

A: Any documents that are not considered finished artworks, such as correspondence, financial records, press clippings, photo albums, sketchbooks, unpublished manuscripts and so forth. Go to the Smithsonian Archives of American Art website and click on "Donate." That will give you a breakdown of what constitutes an archive.

Q: What constitutes an inventory?

A: An inventory is a descriptive list of whatever personal property is in the estate, such as papers, artworks, etc. related to the creative life and career of the person in question.

Q: It sounds like we might need an appraisal.

A: The IRS requires an appraisal to be performed by an accredited appraiser, based on an opinion of *Fair Market Value* at the deceased's date of death.

Q: What's an accredited appraiser? Are they those people we see on TV?

A: Yes and no. What you see on TV is a *valuation*. *Appraisal* is a legal term, as defined by the Appraisal Foundation, which is authorized by the U.S. Congress, is an opinion of value, developed by a trained, qualified professional acting as an appraiser according to USPAP, or the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice. Valuation is not the same as appraisal, but appraisal is a form of valuation.

Q: I want to insure this material, just in case. What do I need to do?

A: You will need a detailed inventory, ideally with photos of each object, and a credible valuation of the property to be insured. It is possible to include the creation of an inventory within the scope of work of an insurance appraisal for *Retail Replacement Value*. To learn more, send us an email to appraisals@needlewatcher.com.

Q: What about storage? We want to sell the house. In order to do that we must first empty it.

A: Papers can be moved into archival cardboard file boxes. Artworks need to be properly packed and stored in a secure, climate-controlled facility, according to *best practices*. Failing to do so can lead to damage, and costly restoration. Even slight damage will diminish the value of artworks.

Q: What are “best practices” for storage of artworks.

A: Best practices are guidelines for the secure storage of objects in environments that are unlikely to expose them to damage from a variety of causes, such as excessive heat, cold, dampness, mold, insects, rodents and thieves. The American Alliance of Museums has published a set of guidelines for its member institutions to follow. Because each situation, and each client’s needs and resources will be different, it’s best to develop a specific storage plan under professional guidance. Let us know how we can help: legacy@needlewatcher.com

Q: What’s an oral history? Why is it worth investing in one?

A: An oral history is a conversation between an interviewer and a narrator, that can exist both as an audio recording, and verbatim transcription. Its value as a primary document is similar to that of a legal deposition except that it is not sworn testimony. If the subject is still living, commissioning an oral history is definitely worth considering. If the subject is deceased, collecting narratives from a spouse, children or former associates can add significant research value to the archive.

Q: Some of this stuff looks like junk to me. Why can’t I just put it out on the curb?

A: No. You might be discarding potential revenue, or research value. When in doubt, seek help.

Q: What do you mean by “research value?” Why is that so important? Why can’t I just go find somewhere to sell all this artwork?

A: The demand for artwork is based on any number of factors, one of which is the artist’s reputation. Works by artists with long track records of exhibitions, publications, prizes and honors are liable to be deemed of greater value than less recognized artists. In considering works for exhibition, or for purchase, the backstory matters. Making that backstory accessible to researchers, curators, dealers and buyers is what is meant by “reference value.”

Q: Let's say we have assembled an archive, produced an inventory, and moved the papers and artworks into storage, according to *best practices*. Now what do we do? How can we find a home for the papers? How can we find a market for the artwork?

A: The answer to those questions fall within the scope of work of an assignment. Let us know how we can help by writing to us at: legacy@needlewatcher.com

Q: What will Needlewatcher LLC be able to do for me?

A: Following a review of the information you supply, we provide you with a free 30-minute consultation. Should you engage our services, Needlewatcher develops a written or verbal *Plan of Action* that describes and prioritizes specific tasks, directs you to resources, provides you with referrals and identifies potential venues for donation and sales. Should you require assistance with any or all of these tasks, Needlewatcher can help with services billable hourly, or for a project fee, to be negotiated.

Please let us know if you have any other questions that we can answer *outside of* the scope of work of an assignment.

Let's get started by filling out a confidential worksheet. Your information is secure. Should you engage the services of Needlewatcher LLC, the completed form will be kept in your work file. Should you decline to use our services, the form will be deleted and destroyed.

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