

Helen Conybeare Williams Offers Tips for Would-be Art Investors

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PRACTICES Family Wealth and Estate Planning, Litigation, Private Clients and Estate Planning

Finding a piece of artwork or a collectible that you enjoy is only one side of the purchase process as it is important to ensure that the purchase is safe and without risk so that the financial investment you are going to make in the artwork is secure. There may be traps for the unwary.

Provenance

When buying art, it is important to ensure that the object has demonstrable record of ownership, or provenance. Establishing the ownership history can sometimes be problematic especially with historical art and artifacts as documentary evidence is not always available. Are there gaps in the collecting history? Is the title at risk because it might have been stolen or looted? These can be important questions as there are many infamous cases of stolen art and still many claims arising out of Second World War looting.

Attribution

Ascribing a work to a named artist can be fraught with difficulties. The art world uses a range of terms to attribute artworks to an artist. These are commonly 'painted by,' 'by the hand of,' 'studio of,' 'circle of,' 'style of,' 'copy of,' which describe by different degrees the certainty that a work is by the artist. It is important to understand what each attribution means, as it goes hand in hand with an artwork's value, unless you are expert enough in such matters to bet against the market.

[Excerpted from the Spring 2019 edition of The French Chamber of Great Britain's *INFO Mag*.](#) The article can be found at page 55.

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