Helen Conybeare Williams in Spears: Art Investment 101: An Expert's Guide

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Buying art is often described as a passion investment. The famous Catalan artist Joan Miró expressed the emotions that art inspires so well when he said: ‘You can look at a picture for a week and never think of it again. You can also look at a picture for a second and think of it all your life.”

But the art market can seem like an intimidating world, particularly for first-time or would-be investors. Naturally, the first challenge is finding a piece that you like. But aside from matters of taste and aesthetic value, once you’ve found ‘the one,’ there are three words to keep in the mind to make sure that the piece’s intrinsic value is good and that your investment is secure – namely provenance, attribution and authenticity.

Provenance

In the art world provenance means ‘a record of ownership of a work of art or an antique, used as a guide to authenticity or quality.’

Establishing ownership can sometimes be problematic, particularly with historical art and artefacts as this evidence is not always available, having been misplaced or destroyed during the passage of time.

Gaps in collecting history can be a red flag that the piece may not be what it seems or it might mean that the piece has been stolen or looted. Indeed, there are many infamous cases of stolen art and still many claims arising out of the systematic looting by the Nazis of occupied countries during the Second World War and modern trafficking of looted art and artefacts.

It is important to ensure that your piece has demonstrable provenance and is accompanied by reliable documentation charting previous ownership and transaction history.

Excerpted from *Spears*. To read the full article, click here.

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