

# Comments on the Art Market

B Y R E H S G A L L E R I E S

## Volume 290

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### **BIG NEWS!**



### **The Catalogue Raisonné for Daniel Ridgway Knight is now LIVE!**

We are proud to announce the launch of the Daniel Ridgway Knight Online Catalogue Raisonné - [www.ridgwayknight.org](http://www.ridgwayknight.org), a comprehensive and continuously updated digital resource dedicated to the life and works of the celebrated 19th-century American artist.

This scholarly effort, which had been underway for over 30 years, began as Howard's side project in his early days with the gallery. After graduating from NYU in 1981, he immersed himself in the British Victorian art market. But, he quickly developed a profound appreciation for French 19th-century academic artists.

In the course of his research, Howard met Dr. Janet Whitmore, an art historian and adjunct professor in the Art + Design Department at Ohio University. She holds a Ph.D. in art history and has significantly contributed to the field through teaching and research. This project is their second scholarly work together; their first was the publication of the catalogue raisonné for French painter Julien Dupré.

With the project now live online, we invite everyone to explore the website. If you have additional information about any of the entries, we encourage you to reach out and share your insights. One of the most rewarding aspects of creating this digital resource is its dynamic nature. The catalogue allows for immediate updates to images and critical details about each artwork, including ownership history, exhibitions, publications, and more. Even better, newly discovered works can be added immediately without waiting for another printed volume to surface decades later.

Access to the site is entirely free, though we kindly request that those interested in viewing the full data for each artwork create a free account. Please note that this project is an ongoing endeavor. We estimate there may be an additional 300–500 works by Daniel Ridgway Knight that have yet to be identified and documented.

We are excited to hear your feedback and contributions to this project. Together, we can continue to uncover and preserve the legacy of this extraordinary artist.

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## Upcoming Fair

### The Palm Beach Show

February 13-18, 2025

#### Opening Night Preview Party

Thursday, February 13, 2025 | 4:00 pm – 9:00 pm

#### General Show Dates

Friday: February 14 - Tuesday: February 18, 11:00 am – 6:00 pm

#### We only have a limited number of tickets left

If you would like to attend, please email us  
(be sure to include the number of tickets you would like)

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## Stocks & Crypto

I'll be honest: it feels difficult to write this one without getting into my personal feelings on politics... There are countless policies being thrown around that directly impact the stock market and the overall state of our economy. On top of that, there's just the general whirlwind of news that we are inundated with.

First things first, as I write this, it is becoming increasingly clear that the US will move forward with implementing tariffs on some of our closest trading partners – Mexico and Canada. It appears there will be a flat 25% tariff on imported goods, along with a 10% duty on goods from China. I'll do my best not to give my personal feelings on the matter, but I know plenty of people think the other countries pay these costs. I'll just say this, if the policy goes into effect, we (Rehs Galleries) will personally be required to pay the tariff on paintings coming in from our Canadian artists, and that additional cost will be reflected in the price that collectors pay for the artworks. To be perfectly clear, the American people will ultimately bear the burden of these tariffs. In other notable news, it seems a small startup in China is making some nauseating waves in the AI world with DeepSeek, a rival to OpenAI's ChatGPT. So much so, that stock darling Nvidia has shed more than a half trillion dollars in market cap this past Monday with a 17% slide – that was the biggest single-day drop in market cap for any stock in history. To pile on top of that, this week, Alibaba released their AI model that they claim surpasses DeepSeek... this might all get interesting really quickly.

In any case, let's get into the numbers this month... despite some of the seismic losses this week, it was still a strong January. The Dow finished up about 4.5%, while the S&P gained about 2.5%. The slacker of the bunch was the NASDAQ, which traded roughly even for the month, finishing up just 0.7% - hey, still better than a loss. Remember, Nvidia trades on the NASDAQ, which weighed heavily on the final numbers. Some other big movers include Constellation Energy (CEG), which was the best-performing stock on the S&P with a 34% month; GE Aerospace (GE) and Meta (META) topped the charts for "mega-cap" companies with a 22% and 18% month, respectively.

Looking at currencies and commodities... the Pound and Euro both weakened relative to the dollar, though the Pound's movement was more substantial – down 1.25%, compared to just 0.4%. With chatter around the possibility of tariffs expanding soon to hit the EU, I'd imagine we'll see some impact on the exchange rates in the coming months. Crude is up nearly 4% through January, while gold is again pushing record numbers... gold is up about 8% for the month and almost 40% over the past year! The recent gold rally is also likely a product of tariff uncertainties (or, I guess, certainties).

Turning to crypto, we saw some big moves... it seems that the current administration will be incredibly friendly to crypto, so I'd think we're in store for some big gains in this realm. I mean, nearly instantly after taking office, Trump debuted his own meme coin, followed by Melania's meme coin. The Trump coin rocketed up more than 1,000% within a day of trading... since then, it has given up more than two-thirds of its value. No further comment on these meme coins – enter at your own risk. As for the staples, Bitcoin seems to have consolidated

above the \$100k threshold... it was up roughly 10% this past month. Conversely, Ethereum gave up about 1% for the month. It started off hot, but in the first week of the year, it fell off a cliff by more than 10% in just one day. Oddly, Litecoin was the one to own this month... it turned in a 23% gain for January.

Frankly, there is so much uncertainty that I have no real thoughts on what it all means. On one hand, I think Trump will do everything he can to prop up the economy and stock market (remember, those are two separate things) ... but at the same time, his policies don't give a clear picture of the path forward. I know not everyone will agree with that sentiment, so I'll just speak for myself... I'll be closing my eyes and holding on tightly.

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## Really!?

### Thou Shalt be Auctioned



Yavne Tablet

Recently, the Yavne Tablet, a remarkable relic from the late Roman-Byzantine era (circa 300–800 CE), was auctioned off. It is the oldest surviving complete stone inscription of the Ten Commandments. The tablet features twenty lines of Paleo-Hebrew text carved into a piece of white marble weighing 115 pounds. The use of Paleo-Hebrew and the omission of the third commandment (prohibiting taking God's name in vain) led specialists to determine that this version came from the Israelite Samaritan community. The Samaritans omit the third commandment in favor of an additional commandment to worship at Mount Gerizim, their holy site. The Paleo-Hebrew script also points to it being a Samaritan

creation, as most Israelites had been using classical Hebrew script for centuries. Only the Samaritans continued to use the Paleo-Hebrew alphabet. The tablet's concise format, necessitated by the difficulty of carving marble, keeps the commandments brief while still conveying their spiritual significance.

The Tablet was discovered in 1913 near Yavne, an ancient cultural hub for both Jews and Samaritans. For decades, it served as a paving stone until it was identified in 1943 by archaeologist Jacob Kaplan. In 1947, Kaplan published his findings in the *Bulletin of the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society*, linking the artifact to the Samaritan community during the Byzantine era. The tablet was uncovered near what used to be a Samaritan synagogue. It later had a church built on top of it by European crusaders, followed by a mosque a century after that. The tablet changed hands in 1995 when an Israeli antiquities dealer acquired it and eventually became part of [Brooklyn's Living Torah Museum](#). In 2016, collector Mitchell S. Cappell purchased it for \$850,000 and it had not been seen until it was presented for auction.

The lot was estimated to fetch between \$1 million and \$2 million at auction. After 10 minutes of intense bidding from collectors worldwide, the Yavne Tablet sold for an astonishing \$4.2 million (\$5.04 million with the buyer's premium), securing its status as one of modern history's most extraordinary religious artifacts. The anonymous buyer intends to donate it back to Israel for public display.

### Rick Hendrick And The First 2025 Corvette ZR1 Set A New Record

[Rick Hendrick](#), a man whose name is synonymous with automotive racing, owns Hendrick Motorsports, an American professional car racing organization founded in 1984. He has built a dynasty in NASCAR, with over 250 wins and 14 Cup Series championships to his team's name. But beyond the track, Hendrick's passion for cars is matched by his commitment to philanthropy—a value that took center stage at the 2025 Barrett-Jackson Scottsdale Auction when he secured a historic vehicle with an even greater purpose.



2025 Corvette ZR1

The highlight of the auction was the first retail production of the [2025 Chevrolet Corvette](#) ZR1, VIN 001—a car that represents the pinnacle of American automotive engineering. With an astonishing 1,064 horsepower, the ZR1 is the fastest and most powerful production Corvette ever built. When the car hit the auction block, the energy in the room was electrifying. Collectors and enthusiasts recognized the significance of owning the first model off the production line, but for Hendrick, the moment meant so much more.

After an intense bidding war, Hendrick claimed the car for \$3.7 million, setting a new record for a first-production Corvette at auction. However, this purchase was about far more than exclusivity or personal collection—100% of the proceeds went directly to the [American Red Cross](#) to support disaster relief efforts, aiding communities affected by hurricanes, wildfires, and other crises across the U.S.

After the auction, Hendrick stated, “I’ve been blessed with success, but I’ve always believed that it’s important to give back.” “The Corvette ZR1 is a testament to the great work of American engineers, and it’s an honor to own such a piece of history. But what makes it even more special is knowing that this car will help people who are facing some of the hardest moments of their lives.”

This is not a first for Hendrick. He has turned his love for cars into an opportunity for philanthropy. In 2022, he was the winning bidder at Barrett Auction when he purchased the first retail 2023 Corvette Z06 70th Anniversary Edition for \$3.6 million. At that time, the funds benefited the charity [Operation Homefront](#). Hendrick now owns the two most expensive first-production Corvettes ever sold, setting records on and off the racetrack.

And if you are interested in the new Corvette ZR1, prices start at \$175,000 and go up to \$196,000 depending on options and trim!

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## Tales From The Dark Side

### Aaron de Groft, Disgraced Former OMA Curator, Dies at 59



The Orlando Museum of Art (photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons user [MrX](#))

Aaron de Groft, the former museum curator at the center of the Orlando Basquiats scandal, died at age 59.

I have written extensively about the scandal of which De Groft was at the center. On June 24, 2022, the FBI [raided the Orlando Museum of Art](#) to confiscate twenty-five newly discovered works by the American painter Jean-Michel Basquiat. OMA decided to fire its curator, De Groft, and eventually sued him because of evidence that he likely knew that the Basquiats were forgeries. The evidence indicates he had made a deal with the paintings’ owners, withholding his authentication unless he got a cut of the profits from any future sale. Though he denied these accusations, there was certainly a pattern of behavior that indicates otherwise. Previously, De Groft served as director of the College of William & Mary’s Muscarelle Museum of Art. There, he made it a

habit of buying inexpensive, unattributed works at auction, then [later claiming them as rediscovered works by great masters](#).

De Groft passed away on January 18th due to an unspecified illness. At the time of his death, he was still in the process of suing OMA for wrongful termination, breach of contract, and defamation. He claimed that his dismissal and the information brought to light were part of a public relations campaign by the museum to save face in the wake of the FBI raid. Florida law allows that should a party to a lawsuit die before its conclusion, a family member of the deceased may decide how to continue. His death also comes shortly after the owners of the Basquiat forgeries [had their \\$19.7 million insurance claim denied](#). Liberty Mutual Insurance and Great American Insurance have even brought the matter before a court to enforce their decision. They state they rejected the claim because of the owners’ “intentional or negligent misrepresentations” about the works’ authenticity.

[De Groft’s obituary](#) does not mention the Basquiat scandal or the curator’s subsequent legal battles. It mentions his work at the Muscarelle Museum, the John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, Florida, the Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens in Jacksonville, Florida, and describes his time at the Muscarelle Museum as “marked by his visionary leadership”. It further says that at OMA, De Groft “worked tirelessly to expand the museum’s reach and inclusivity. He championed diverse exhibitions, broadened membership, and advocated for improved employee benefits and wages, all while maintaining his focus on the arts as a force for education and community connection.” An OMA representative commented on De Groft’s passing, “Our thoughts are with his family at this time of loss”.

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# The Art Market

## NPG Nepotism?



National Portrait Gallery, London

London's National Portrait Gallery is coming under fire after some realized that the photographer behind a current exhibition is a donor who significantly contributed to the museum's recent renovations.

Zoë Law is a London-based photographic portraitist who recently opened a new show at the NPG. The exhibition, known as *Legends*, features more than a hundred black-and-white photographs, including those of actors and music icons like [Orlando Bloom](#), [Rod Stewart](#), and [Kim Cattrall](#), as well as art world giants like British Museum director [Nicholas Cullinan](#) and former Christie's global president [Jussi Pykkänen](#). The NPG announced that Law gifted her [portrait of Noel](#)

[Gallagher](#) to the gallery shortly before opening the exhibition. The show initially opened on November 29th and is set to close on March 2nd. Despite the hype the gallery generated, some reviews were pessimistic, calling the portraits mundane or mediocre. One Turner Prize-nominated artist referred to Law as "basically an unknown practitioner," whose work is "pedestrian at best." This rings true since Law has not been working as a photographer for long. She first became known as a make-up artist. How she secured a major museum show can be confusing. That is, until you bring nepotism into the picture.

In recent days, the NPG has faced accusations of nepotism after learning about Law's status as a museum donor as well as her relationships with other donors. Her ex-husband, Andrew Law, is a major hedge fund manager. While married, the couple operated the Law Family Charitable Foundation, which provided considerable funds to the gallery as part of its £41 million renovation. Zoë Law is no longer on the foundation's board since last year as part of the couple's divorce proceedings. The gallery was closed for three years during the renovations, [finally reopening in June 2023](#). On top of her ex-husband, Zoë Law's other friendships and acquaintances may have influenced the NPG to approve her show. She is known to have helped organize the 2015 Black & White Ball, a major annual event for Britain's Conservative Party. Having these ties, it may surprise no one that the gallery board of trustees includes several prominent Conservative Party members, including wealthy party donors and former members of cabinet.

Maurice Davies of the consultants Cultural Associates Oxford, commented, "It can be difficult for museums to respond to the expectations of major donors, who may informally anticipate favours in return for their generous gift." Jesse Darling, the winner of the Turner Prize in 2023, criticized the decision to give Law her own exhibition as reinforcing negative stereotypes about the art world; that to many, art is "a rich man's game made up of rich hobbyists who keep their money circulating among themselves." Similarly, the organization Museum as Muck commented, "Relying on additional funds from the affluent can skew the priorities of these institutions, granting undue influence on a select few."

The Law Family Charitable Foundation has not commented, nor has Nicholas Cullinan, the NPG's director at the time of the renovations and the Laws' donation.

## 2024 Art Market: Doomed or Dormant?

In 2024, I collected data on the art market, recording over two hundred auctions. I do so to keep a record of the areas of the secondary market relevant to our gallery. We can also use them to pick up on certain trends. On my 2024 spreadsheets, I listed the data for two hundred eleven sales. In looking at the numbers, it wasn't very reassuring to see that 59.7% of all the auctions documented failed to reach their total estimates. Seventy-four sales made their estimates, with only eleven surpassing them. The average sell-through rate at the sales covered was 79%. Christie's seems to have done relatively well, though. The 71 Christie's sales I recorded in 2024 produced an average sell-through rate of 85%. The average hammer prices at their New York, London, and Paris locations exceeded their average estimates. Other than this, many of the major auction houses performed relatively poorly last year. But it may not be so terrible when you consider the context.

ARTIST'S 2024						
8.1.2024	Sotheby's, New York	Modern & Contemporary Art, Asian	\$1,289,000	\$1,584,000	81.4%	Under 10% Within 20% Over 15%
9.7.2024	Sotheby's, London	Contemporary Discourse	£1,414,000	£1,370,000	95.5%	Under 20% Within 10% Over 20%
8.8.2024	Sotheby's, New York	American Art Online	\$464,300	\$701,400	66.2%	Under 10% Within 20% Over 20%
OFFERINGS 2024						
8.2.2024	Phillips, Christy's	Modern & Contemporary Art, Asian	HK\$4,546,000	HK\$6,914,000	65.7%	Under 10% Within 10% Over 15%
8.28.2024	Sotheby's, Hampt	American Art	\$678,100	\$969,000	70.5%	Under 10% Within 10% Over 21%
8.18.2024	Phillips, London	Direct Hackberry Sale	£1,460,000	£1,300,000	89.7%	Under 10% Within 10% Over 20%
8.18.2024	Phillips, London	Ernsting & Uwe Ribbans	£2,223,700	£3,257,800	68.3%	Under 7% Within 10% Over 20%
8.29.2024	Sotheby's, New Bond Street	19th Century & British Impressionist Art	£2,718,200	£1,006,000	37.0%	Under 20% Within 10% Over 11%
9.26.2024	Christie's, Hong Kong	19th-21st Century Chinese Sale	HK\$821,000,000	HK\$1,220,000,000	67.3%	Under 20% Within 10% Over 10%

A segment of the 2024 auction records' table of contents

But it may not be so terrible

[Daniel Cassady of ARTnews wrote](#) (I think rather sensibly) that the 2024 market was not a slump but rather “a return to, and acceptance of, reality.” With the blockbuster sales that the major auction houses have hosted in the recent past, the art world’s expectations of perpetual growth may have been unrealistic. The collections of Paul Allen ([sold at Christie’s in 2022](#)) and Emily Fischer Landau ([sold at Sotheby’s in 2023](#)) may have set the bar too high. Therefore, anything that doesn’t live up to these gargantuan standards is considered a flop when it would be perfectly normal at any other time. At the end of the day, people will always buy and sell art regardless of the ebbs and flows of the market. Some commentators have remarked that the ‘worst’ is behind us.

### Rediscovered Turner Consigned to Christie’s



*The Approach to Venice*  
by J.M.W. Turner

Someone recently got quite a surprise when Christie’s told them that their old watercolor is likely by the British master J.M.W. Turner.

Turner created *The Approach to Venice*, also known as *Venice from the Lagoon*, around 1840, in the last decade of his life. Since 1930, the watercolor has been owned by the family and descendants of Haddon C. Adams, an engineer who was chief bridge engineer for the British transport ministry for over thirty years. While in Adams’s possession, the watercolor was attributed to the art critic John Ruskin. The family submitted the painting to Christie’s online appraisal service. After requesting to see the work in person, Christie’s specialists verified the work as by Turner. Rosie Jarvie, who specializes in British drawings and watercolors, remarked that the work’s “strong brushstrokes, economy of line and the palette” tipped off Christie’s that they may be dealing with something else. When inspecting it up close, experts observed that not only was the style consistent with Turner’s Venetian watercolors, but it was on the same kind of paper Turner used for such works.

J.M.W. Turner made many watercolors in his lifetime, most of which remained in his possession when he died in 1851. Therefore, these watercolors were part of the Turner Bequest, which the artist left to the British state and now remains in Britain’s major museums. Some watercolors, though, were not part of Turner’s estate at the time of his death. Works by Turner, especially drawings, sketches, and watercolors, are rare among private collections and often fetch impressive prices at auction. For example, the Turner watercolor [Sunrise over the Sea](#) became the star of a 2023 Christie’s sale, selling for £820K (or £1.03 million w/p) against an £800K high estimate. *The Approach to Venice* will be featured in an upcoming February 4th Old Masters & British Drawings sale in New York with an estimate range of \$300K to \$500K.

### The American Sublime at Christie’s, New York

The 2025 auction season is now starting to kick off. While there have been a smattering of assorted sales earlier in the month, the first sale in the section of the art market relevant to Rehs Galleries took place on Thursday at Christie’s New York. The *American Sublime* sale comprised a collection of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American paintings from a single collection. The sale did moderately well, yet serves as another example of how a single painting can make or break an auction.

The top lot, the image of which was used by Christie’s for marketing the sale, was Thomas Cole’s 1827 landscape *Mount Chocorua, New Hampshire*. The mountain was a popular subject for Cole and other Hudson River School painters. The painting last sold at Sotheby’s in 1995 for \$277.5K w/p (or roughly \$571K in 2025). Not only was it the most highly valued painting in the sale, but it perfectly encapsulates the overall theme of the auction. As I’ve noted in previous articles (about [J.M.W. Turner](#) and the French [Barbizon school](#)), the fixation on ‘the sublime’ was a key component of Romantic art. Cole achieves this not only by expertly depicting the untamed wilderness of New England but also by capturing its enormity with the inclusion of a fisherman dressed in red in the foreground. It’s not just a landscape, it is a work that conveys the physical and spiritual greatness of the natural world, which makes human achievement seem insignificant by comparison. The Cole, predicted to sell for between \$800K and \$1.2 million, hammered slightly above its estimate at \$1.3 million (or \$1.6 million w/p). This set a new auction record for the artist, displacing the painting [Catskill Mountain House](#), which sold at Christie’s in 2003 for \$1.4 million w/p.



*Mount Chocorua, New Hampshire*  
by Thomas Cole



*Still Life with Raisin Cake*  
by Raphaelle Peale

From the enormous to the intimate, the second place lot at Christie's on Thursday was Raphaelle Peale's *Still Life with Raisin Cake*. Peale was part of a large family of professional artists: his father, Charles Willson Peale, was one of the first prominent portraitists in the revolutionary and post-independence periods of the United States. Raphaelle and many of his siblings became involved in the arts as well. Peale carved out a niche for himself as one of the most prominent American still-life painters of the early nineteenth century. Despite his success, only about fifty of his paintings survive today, making them incredibly desirable for collectors. *Still-Life with Raisin Cake* was estimated to sell for no more than \$350K. However, a bidding war broke out, and the hammer came down at \$450K (or \$567K w/p). Finally, there was *Winter Evening in the Country* by Jasper Francis Cropsey, another example from the Hudson River School. William Henry

Vanderbilt was likely the painting's first owner, and was kept in the Vanderbilt family until 1942. The work, created in 1865, shows children playing on a frozen lake. In the foreground, a young boy pretends to be a Union soldier since the American Civil War was in its final months at the time of the painting's creation. Cropsey was an enthusiastic Unionist and conveyed optimism through his use of color and light despite showing a cold winter scene. Like the other two top lots, the Cropsey sold slightly above its estimate, selling for \$320K (or \$403.2K w/p) against a \$300K high estimate.

Several of the lots sold for more than double their high estimate, with the most notable of the surprises being the very first lot of the sale: [Adirondack Lake](#) by Homer Dodge Martin. The 1863 Hudson River school landscape sold for \$140K (or \$176.4K w/p), approximately 2.8 times its \$50K high estimate. However, as I mentioned earlier, the top lots and the surprises were insufficient to completely rescue the sale, as several highly-valued lots went unsold. The biggest disappointment was Winslow Homer's 1880 watercolor [Boy with Blue Dory](#). The painting last sold at auction at Sotheby's New York in 2003 for \$859.2K w/p. Christie's specialists believed it would achieve a similar price, assigning it an estimate range of \$700K to \$1 million. However, interest began to dissipate after a few bids, and the Homer was bought in. Similarly, the Martin Johnson Heade painting [River at Twilight](#) and the William Merritt Chase work [Flower Beds, Central Park](#) (both valued at \$300K to \$500K) also went unsold. Five works of the total forty-three went unsold at Christie's on Thursday, giving the sale and overall sell-through rate of 88%. Of the paintings that sold, ten (23%) sold within their estimates. Fourteen paintings (33%) sold below, while the same amount sold above. Though the total low pre-sale estimate amounted to \$5.42 million, the lots bought in brought the total down to \$5.41 million, only \$10.2K short.



*Winter Evening in the Country*  
by Jasper Francis Cropsey

### Sotheby's Art of the Americas



*Hummingbirds and Gold and Purple Orchids*  
by Martin Johnson Heade

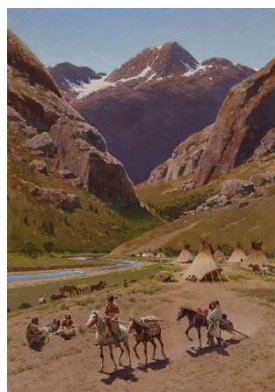
The New York auction houses recently concluded a week of American art sales, including [the American Sublime sale at Christie's](#). Sotheby's also had its own auction the following day called Art of the Americas. The star of the sale, used by Sotheby's in their promotional material, was *Hummingbirds and Gold and Purple Orchids* by Martin Johnson Heade. After returning from South America in 1870, Heade embarked on a painting series combining elements of landscape and still life, as well as pulling from illustrations common in natural history books. He tried to depict various examples of native flowers and animals against the lush backdrop of a rainforest. Heade originally intended to create a book of lithographs on Brazilian hummingbirds. However, when this fell, he opted for the series of paintings instead. The titular orchids are

cattleya dowiana, considered one of the most prized cultivars of the flower in the nineteenth century. Heade only created three paintings with this specific orchid variety. The painting had been in the same private collection for nearly thirty years before its sale at Sotheby's — first time it ever crossed the block at auction. With a high pre-sale estimate of \$1.8 million, Sotheby's expected the orchids and hummingbirds to become one of the most valuable Heade paintings ever sold. The results exceeded their expectations, as bidders drove the hammer price beyond the estimate, hammering at \$2 million (or \$2.08 million w/p). This made it the fourth most valuable work by the artist sold at that auction.

Next up was Albert Bierstadt's *Yosemite*, one of the German-born American artist's famous Western landscapes. Bierstadt frequently accompanied surveyors and other exploration parties into the West. He would make studies and sketches there, which he would later use as the basis for large landscapes. In 1863, Bierstadt spent seven weeks in the Yosemite Valley, resulting in many paintings, including the one offered at Christie's on Friday. This is also likely the same trip that resulted in his monumental 1868 landscape [Among the Sierra Nevada](#), now at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. The Yosemite painting is a more manageable size, about 20 by 30 inches, and is likely one of the earlier paintings finished after returning from the West. Predicted to sell for between \$700K and \$1 million, *Yosemite* by Albert Bierstadt sold slightly below estimate at \$650K (or \$780K w/p). Also selling for the same hammer price was Henry François Farny's *The Happy Days of Long Ago*. The 1912 painting shows an indigenous settlement in the West: a collection of teepees clustered together beside a riverbank in the background while a mother, father, and child seem to be packing up and moving out. It's meant to be somewhat of an allegory about a balanced relationship between nature and humanity. The painting was originally owned by a family in Cincinnati before donating it to the Cincinnati Art Museum in 1955. Later, in the 1980s, it found its way into the collection of renowned test pilot Darryl Greenamyer, who decided to loan it to the White House between 1981 and 1986. Though the Farny sold for the same as the Bierstadt, unlike *Yosemite*, it sold within its pre-sale estimate range, which was \$500K to \$700K.



*Yosemite* by Albert Bierstadt



*The Happy Days of Long Ago* by Henry Farny

The Sotheby's Art of the Americas sale contained its fair share of surprises, with five of the ninety-three available lots selling for more than double their high estimates. The most notable of these surprises was a pair of Mexican oil paintings showing scenes of rural life. One is called *Seis jinetes lanzando toro* (*Six horsemen pursuing a bull*), while the other is titled [El ganado](#) (*The Livestock*), showing a cattle drive. Both paintings are by Ernesto Icaza, a Mexican painter and horseman, depicting scenes of ranch life in Mexico in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Sotheby's only expected the paintings to sell for no more than \$15K. However, interest was greater than anticipated, resulting in the duo selling for \$65K (or \$78K w/p), about 4.3 times the high estimate. Similarly, there was [Still Life with Fish](#) by William Merritt Chase. The jet-black background seems unusual for a nineteenth-century American still-life painting. It looks like someone tried to emulate the chiaroscuro of Caravaggio. Predicted to sell for \$8K at the most, the fishy painting hammered at \$32K (or \$38.4K w/p), exactly four times the high estimate.

Of the ninety-three available lots, twenty-five sold within their estimates, giving Sotheby's a 27% accuracy rate. An additional thirty-six lots (39%) sold below estimate, while twenty (22%) sold above. This left twelve lots unsold, resulting in an 87% sell-through rate. Against a total low estimate of \$6.8 million, Sotheby's brought in \$7.5 million hammer, or \$8.7 million w/p.

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## Deeper Thoughts

### Stolen Caravaggio Reimagined



*Nativity with St. Francis & St. Lawrence* by Caravaggio

Michelangelo Pistoletto, one of the greatest living Italian artists, has unveiled a new work that pays homage to Palermo's stolen Caravaggio nativity painting.

In March, I wrote a series of short articles about famous art thefts that have gone unsolved. The stories range from [Nazi loot](#) to [secret tunnels in Paraguay](#). One of the entries concerned a nativity painting by Michelangelo da Caravaggio [stolen from a chapel in Palermo in 1969](#). Caravaggio created *Nativity with Saint Francis & Saint Lawrence* sometime in the last decade of his life. The painting shows Mary and Joseph accompanied by, anachronistically, two saints several centuries before their time, all gazing upon the baby Jesus. The figures stand out in front of pitch dark, one of Caravaggio's hallmarks. Above them, an angel carries a banner reading *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, or *Glory to God in the highest*. On October 17, 1969, two men broke into the Oratorio di San Lorenzo, the church in Palermo where the painting hung, and cut



the Caravaggio from its frame. They put it on a carpet, rolled it together, and took off. In 2009, specialists valued the painting at around \$20 million. Investigators now widely accept that the Sicilian mafia most likely perpetrated the theft. In 2015, the British broadcasting company Sky commissioned a replica of the Caravaggio unveiled on December 12th of that year. However, one Sicilian cultural organization, not satisfied with just having a Caravaggio replica in the church, sponsors an initiative where contemporary artists give us their own take on the painting.

The Amici dei Musei Siciliani, or the Friends of Sicilian Museums Association, hosts an annual exhibition called *Next*. Every Christmas since 2010, the association invites a new artist to reimagine Michelangelo's *Nativity*. The only rule is that the new work must maintain the original painting's dimensions. According to its organizer, Bernardo Tortorici di Raffadali, the initiative's purpose is to provide the church and the city of Palermo with "an act of ethical compensation" in place of the painting that has been missing for fifty-five years. Previous artists include [Emilio Isgrò](#) and [Francisco Bosoletti](#). For the fifteenth edition, the Italian *arte povera* artist Michelangelo Pistoletto gives us his own reinterpretation of the work called [Annunciazione Terza Paradiso](#). Pistoletto erases everything from the original painting except the angel, replacing everything with a mirror. Pistoletto has [used mirrors and other reflective surfaces in his work](#) since 1961. Instead of a banner, the angel is holding a symbol. According to Pistoletto, this is a reimagination of the infinity symbol and represents [the Third Paradise](#), a conception of harmony between the natural and artificial worlds. Pistoletto commented, "This vision invites collective responsibility, transforming conflict into a new horizon of civilization, where creation prevails over destruction." The Pistoletto was unveiled in the church on Christmas Eve, a fitting time given the original painting's subject.

Pistoletto's work will remain behind the church's altar until January 8th. It will then be relocated to a different part of the church, remaining on exhibition until the anniversary of the theft on October 17, 2025.

### Queen Elizabeth Monument in the Works

The British government is now in the initial stages of holding a competition among artists and architects to design a new monument in honor of the late Queen Elizabeth II.

A monument for Queen Elizabeth is certainly fitting. She was the longest-reigning British monarch in history and will certainly be remembered as one of the country's most influential figures. So, nearly two-and-a-half years after her death in September 2022, the British government has called upon artists to submit their designs for a monument dedicated to the late queen that will be erected in Saint James Park. Anyone can submit designs until January 20th, after which the government will narrow it down to a short list of finalists to choose from. Soon after Queen Elizabeth's death, some suggested that the empty fourth plinth at Trafalgar Square, which has been used for years [to showcase contemporary British art](#), should be the location of the late queen's monument.



Queen Elizabeth II

Even though things are still in the early stages, reports indicate that up to £46 million in government money may be spent on the project. Of course, large sums spent on royal monuments are nothing new in Britain. One of the most prominent monuments that comes to mind is the Victoria Memorial, which stands outside Buckingham Palace's gates. In 1902, when the project got off the ground, the construction had a budget of £200,000 (or just over £20 million in today's money). While such an important figure as Queen Elizabeth may deserve an impressive monument from the perspective of those who loved and admired her, many have also noticed that the lavish budget contrasts with the state of Britain's economy and cultural sector. Some question whether the government, regardless of leadership, has its priorities in order.

Between 2010 and 2022, funding for arts and culture decreased by 29% in Scotland, 40% in Wales, and 48% in England. In that time, total funding provided by the Department of Culture, Media, and Sport decreased by 18%. Meanwhile, the Arts Councils of the United Kingdom's constituent countries [all decreased](#), ranging from 18% in England all the way to 66% in Northern Ireland. In an extreme case publicized last year, Suffolk County Council [proposed cutting all arts funding](#) starting in April 2025, much to the horror of local theaters and museums. In a time when cuts are being made to arts budgets at both the local and national level, some may be frustrated by the thought of thinking it necessary to shell out millions of pounds on a single monument in memory of a single person, money that could have been appropriated for any of the deserving museums, galleries, and other cultural organizations that provide an important but underappreciated service to society.

Of course, the £46 million number is the high end of a provisional budget, described by the government press office as "a guide for designers to develop proposals." However, some commentators have remarked that the

underfunded and undervalued nature of Britain's cultural sector seems even more pitiful when compared to the amount of money doled out for programs and projects like the future Queen Elizabeth memorial. George Nelson of ARTNews asked, "Is it fair that millions of pounds are now earmarked for a statue of a dead monarch when many art institutions across the UK are struggling to survive?"

### Sargent's Dollar Princesses

An upcoming exhibition at one of London's manor houses will delve into the fascinating history of the American portraitist John Singer Sargent and his relationship with the American socialites known as the "dollar princesses".

Starting around the mid-nineteenth century, it became common for the daughters of wealthy American families to marry British aristocrats. These British lords would get the cash they needed, while the Americans would gain prestige in return. The most famous of these dollar princesses, as they came to be known, include Consuelo Vanderbilt, who married the Duke of Marlborough in 1895, and Jeannette Jerome, who married the Duke's uncle Lord Randolph Churchill. This union resulted in the birth of a son, Winston, in 1874. John Singer Sargent became known for his portraits of high-society women in the 1880s. Though much of his other work shows signs of Impressionism, Sargent's portraiture is far more conservative, drawing on eighteenth-century British masters like Sir Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Gainsborough.



*Portrait of Margaret Leiter (later Margaret, Countess of Suffolk) by John Singer Sargent*

In honor of the one-hundredth anniversary of his death, Kenwood House, a London manor home and museum bordering Hempstead Heath, will host an exhibition called *Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits*. The exhibition's centerpiece will likely be Sargent's [portrait of Margaret Leiter](#), part of Kenwood House's permanent collection. Sargent created the painting in 1898 when the sitter was 19 years old. A few years later, Margaret would marry Charles Howard, Earl of Suffolk. The portrait is part of the Suffolk Collection at Kenwood House, gifted to the British nation by the Howard family in 1994. *Heiress* will also include the portrait of [Mary Endicott](#) (wife of politician Joseph Chamberlain and stepmother to future Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain), as well as the portrait of [Edith Russell](#), who married Lord Lyon Playfair (a chemist and politician who helped found the Royal College of Science). Eighteen of Sargent's portraits in total will be on display, some of which are loans from American institutions like the National Gallery of Art and the Museum of Fine Arts Boston.

Writing for the Guardian, Esther Addley remarks that these Sargent portraits have never really been exhibited together under the dollar princess unifier. Wendy Monkhouse, a curator for English Heritage, stated that the title of 'dollar princess' was derisively given to these women by British aristocrats, and the stereotypes surrounding this image may need to be explored and dismantled. According to Monkhouse, these women were "extremely wealthy and married into the aristocracy, [but] there is actually very little known about them today." Much of this has to do with the misogyny of decades and centuries past,

where little attention was paid to the lives, accomplishments, and passions of women married to prominent men. Even their names are sometimes erased, with the Endicott portrait still often known as *Portrait of Mrs. Joseph Chamberlain*. The Kenwood exhibition will present new research into these women, their lives, achievements, and the place their portraits have in their stories.

*Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits* will open at Kenwood House starting May 16th and run through October 5th.

### California Wildfires Threaten Getty Villa

On the afternoon of Tuesday, January 7th, the grounds of the Getty Museum in Los Angeles caught fire as part of the series of wildfires sweeping through Southern California.

The Getty Villa in the Pacific Palisades of Los Angeles is one of two campuses comprising the J. Paul Getty Museum. The Villa is dedicated to ancient art and is the home of around 44,000 antiquities. The structure itself, opened in 1974, is based on [the Villa of the Papyri](#), a ruined villa in Herculaneum buried by the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD. The museum's collection includes several well-known works of Greek, Roman, and Etruscan art. They include the [Lansdowne Heracles](#), a second-century AD



The Getty Villa

Roman marble sculpture; the [Victorious Youth](#), a Greek bronze possibly by the master Lysippos; and the [Beauty of Palmyra](#), a female bust noted for having some of its original paint relatively intact.

Earlier in the week, dry conditions plus winds from the interior caused wildfires to spread and affect about 1,200 acres of coastal land in the Los Angeles area. Emergency services evacuated nearly 30,000 people from the area. Thus far, two people have died as a result. On Tuesday, shortly before 5:00 PM, fire department radio announced that the wildfires were approaching the Getty Villa. Not long after, videos on social media showed some of the land surrounding the Villa in flames. This is not the first time California wildfires have endangered Getty Museum properties. Most recently, in 2019, [fires came close to the Getty Center](#), the museum's location in the Brentwood neighborhood. Katherine Fleming, president of the J. Paul Getty Trust, commented that the museum had prepared for this situation by clearing out much of the brush on the property. Furthermore, the museum's air filtration system and double-walled structures prevented the museum's collection and staff from being harmed by the fire and smoke. We would expect nothing less from the most well-funded museum in the world. Thankfully, Tuesday is also the day of the week that the Villa is closed to the public, meaning no visitors were put in danger by the fires. Another museum in the area, the Eames House, [closed on Tuesday because of the nearby fires](#). Like the Getty Villa, it has remained safe from the blaze.

The Getty Museum has closed the Villa for the remainder of the week. The Getty Villa will reopen on Monday, January 13th.

### Italian Museums Offer Free Dog-Sitting



Travis

As part of a promotional campaign, Italian museums are offering a new service to make their visitors more comfortable: [free dog-sitting](#).

The pet company BauAdvisor began its service two years ago. Dog owners drop off their furry friends at the entrances of participating museums. For €10 per hour, the dogs will be looked after, walked, and fed while their owners spend time inside. The service has since spread to several hundred museums and cultural sites across Italy. However, starting on January 11th, BauAdvisor launched the Dog&Museum Road Show, a new program where services are free for one day a month in a different city. To kick things off, BauAdvisor offered their services free of charge at four of Rome's major museums, including the MAXXI and the Castel Sant'Angelo. The free program will run one day a month in a different Italian city until April 2026. BauAdvisor plans to offer this free service at the Uffizi Gallery in Florence and the National Archaeological Museum in Naples. The next date will be February 2nd when they will provide their free dog-sitting services for museum-goers in Venice. Participating institutions will include the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, the Correr

Museum, the Ca' Rezzonico (which houses Venice's eighteenth-century art museum), and the Ca' Pesaro (home to the International Gallery of Modern Art).

BauAdvisor says they launched the initiative to benefit pets and pet owners, providing them with the freedom to visit Italian cultural institutions without worrying about leaving their dog at home. Italy is home to roughly 8.8 million dogs, translating to one dog for every seven people. According to BauAdvisor's director, Dino Gasperini, many pet owners (dog owners in particular) refrain from pursuing leisure activities because they don't want to leave their dogs home alone for an extended period. Going out and visiting cultural centers is one such activity that can take a good deal of time out of one's day, hence their focus on museums and other related sites. This initiative has allowed dog owners to enjoy their leisure activities without the burden of pet care. Meanwhile, their dogs are receiving loving care and not left lingering in an apartment. Outside of Italy, some similar services exist. In France, for example, a company called PatchGuard offers dog-sitting services, with a specific program for both French people and foreign tourists to watch after your pet while you go off and sightsee.

### The Art World's Response to the California Wildfires

With some of the recent wildfires in California still blazing, many are now recognizing their devastating impact on the arts in the Los Angeles area.

Despite the devastating impact of the Southern California wildfires, the art community in the Los Angeles area has shown remarkable resilience. The fires have affected over 40,000 acres and led to the evacuation of over 200,000 people. Of the thirty fires that broke out last week in the Los Angeles area, only four remain, including the largest. AccuWeather has predicted that the fires have caused [nearly \\$250 billion in damages](#), making it one of the costliest natural disasters in history. At the beginning of the fires, I wrote about how the Getty Villa, located in one of the areas greatest affected by the blaze, [successfully took precautions to protect the buildings and their contents](#). Other Southern California cultural centers and significant buildings spared by the fires include the Eames House and the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Newman House. However, the same cannot be said of about 12,000 structures in the area, including [the Freedman House](#), [the Will Rogers House](#), and other buildings designed by [Robert Bridges](#), [Ray Kappe](#), and [Richard Neutra](#). Even [the Zane Grey Estate](#), said to be completely fireproof when first built in 1907, was destroyed.



The Southern California wildfires have affected 12,000 structures

One of the most poignant losses was the personal library of the artist Gary Indiana. After his passing in October 2024, his books, which included signed copies and rare art books, were transported to Altadena, California, from his apartment in Manhattan's East Village. They arrived on January 7th, the day the fires started. Indiana's personal papers, however, are safe at the Fales Library and Special Collections at New York University. The homes of several prominent collectors were also affected, destroying many artworks. Ron Rivlin, who had a collection of over two hundred works by Warhol, Haring, and Hirst, had his Pacific Palisades home burned to the ground.

On Wednesday, January 15th, several organizations announced the foundation of the L.A. Arts Community Fire Relief Fund. These groups, including the J. Paul Getty Trust, Gagosian Gallery, Hauser & Wirth, and the foundations of Willem de Kooning, Sam Francis, Helen Frankenthaler, David Hockney, Ellsworth Kelly, Joan Mitchell, Robert Rauschenberg, and Andy Warhol, have come together to support local artists affected by the fires. They aim to provide \$12 million in grants, to be distributed by the Center for Cultural Innovation. Applications for these grants will open on January 20th. Other organizations are already appropriating funds to support artists in the area, including the Gottlieb Foundation, the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, Qatar Museums, and the Ford Foundation. Many Southern California artists have also started collecting donations through crowdfunding sites.

### Hockney Retrospective at the Fondation Louis Vuitton



Foundation Louis Vuitton

Later this year, the prestigious Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris will host a new retrospective exhibition dedicated to the great British artist David Hockney.

David Hockney got his first retrospective in 1970 and has been the subject of many more since then. The Fondation Louis Vuitton plans to open the exhibition *David Hockney 25* on April 9, 2025, featuring over four hundred works by the artist. Many of these works come from Hockney himself, while others will be on loan from several private and museum collections. Taking up eleven galleries, the show is, according to Hockney, by far the largest exhibition he has ever participated in.

The show will feature some of Hockney's earlier works, including [A Bigger Splash](#) (1967), [Portrait of an Artist](#) (1972), and [A Bigger Grand Canyon](#) (1998). But most of the exhibition will focus on the art created in the twenty-first century. It will be an opportunity to show how the artist has readily incorporated new media and technologies, including digital drawing and immersive video experiences. However, the organizers also intend to show the influences Hockney has drawn from over his career. His iPad drawings, for example, show the same landscapes in different seasons, providing opportunities to play with light and color. The subjects range from [Normandy](#) to the artist's native [Yorkshire](#). It's not difficult, therefore, to draw parallels to the series created by French Impressionists like [Monet's Haystacks](#). Other exhibited works show traces of Van Gogh, Picasso, and the Old Masters. Hockney plans to unveil several new works as part of the exhibition, including [After Blake: Less is Known than People Think](#). It is an acrylic painting based on a watercolor by the British poet and printmaker William Blake, with the original titled [Dante and Virgil Approaching the Angel Who Guards the Entrance of Purgatory](#).

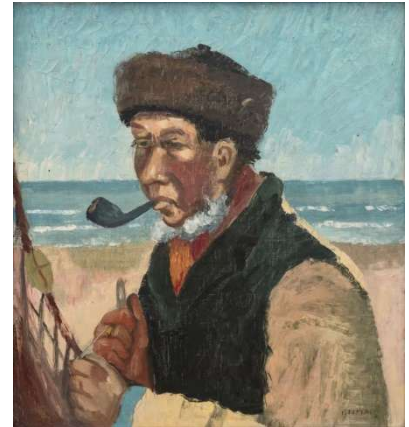
The David Hockney Foundation has its work cut out for them. On top of the *David Hockney 25* retrospective in Paris, the organization is also hard at work putting out the first volume of the artist's catalogue raisonné. Last year, [the foundation announced they are nearing completion](#) of the project, with this first volume dedicated strictly to paintings. It will contain about 35,000 entries and will be available online starting in 2026. As part of the project, Hockney is writing essays to accompany some of the works. It is unknown how long the remaining volumes will take, as they will contain thousands of Hockney's prints and digital works.

*David Hockney 25* will run at the Fondation Louis Vuitton from April 9th to September 1st.

### Garage Sale Van Gogh: Real Or Not?

Some are convinced that an odd-looking painting found at a garage sale in Minnesota might be a lost work by Vincent van Gogh worth \$15 million.

Around 2016, an individual bought a painting at a Minnesota garage sale for \$50. The work is a portrait of a fisherman mending a net while smoking a pipe, likely a copy of [Portrait of Niels Gaihedede](#) by the Danish painter Michael Ancher. The word *Elimar* is written close to the subject's sleeve in the bottom right-hand corner. While it is unknown if the buyer had some expertise or connoisseurship of post-Impressionist art, they later approached the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam to authenticate the work. In the end, the museum refused to grant their seal of approval. Undeterred, the buyer approached the data science company LMI Group, which purchased the painting and began a thorough analysis of the work. The organization eventually released [a four-hundred-fifty-page report](#) detailing its analysis and affirming the work's authenticity as an "orphaned" work by Vincent van Gogh.



*Elimar*, possibly by Vincent van Gogh according to LMI

The report spends a hundred pages placing the painting in the context of Van Gogh's career as if the work's authenticity is a foregone conclusion. The report mentions Van Gogh's history of creating copies of other artists work, how he likely got access to a reproduction of the original Ancher painting, Van Gogh's history of painting the daily lives of working people, the possible literary references contained within the painting, and the idea of the work being a sort of veiled self-portrait. However, once you get past that, LMI dedicates sixty pages to actual evidence-based analysis. Their specialists have pointed out stylistic similarities between *Elimar* and Van Gogh's portraits. According to the LMI report, Van Gogh created the work around 1889 while living in an asylum in southern France. LMI notes that Van Gogh made copies of other artists' work, often using his own style to create something more distinct. *Elimar* is, therefore, according to the report, not a copy but a "translation" of Ancher's original. Testing done on the pigments shows they date to the nineteenth century, and that the work was varnished with egg white, something that Van Gogh sometimes did to protect the canvas. LMI specialists even analyzed the word *Elimar*, comparing the handwriting to samples found in the verified Van Gogh work [Still Life with Bible](#). They even tried to run DNA testing on a loose hair they found trapped in the paint. However, the only conclusion one can reasonably draw from these tests is that the painting was made around when Van Gogh was alive, using materials available to him. A subject's wrinkles or the use of a palette knife can't definitively prove a painting's authorship to the degree LMI is asserting.

Of course, \$30,000 worth of tests is more credible than a random hunch. However, would we be talking about this painting if someone in the Midwest didn't have a possible delusion of grandeur fueled by too many episodes of Antiques Roadshow? It's possible, but who knows? Personally, I've been skeptical of all this since I first heard the story. This may be because I was taught to be suspicious of stories that seem too good to be true. I also think another strike against *Elimar's* authenticity is from an aesthetic viewpoint. I just don't like the painting. It's not what comes to mind when I think of Van Gogh. Christa Terry, writing for *The Observer*, remarked something similar; that the portrait "doesn't have any of the dynamism and vibrancy and movement that define this artist's work".

As of writing, the Van Gogh Museum has not responded to LMI's report.

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# Four Oldies, But Goodies

## How To Safely Navigate The Art Market: Framing (2020)

Finding an appropriate frame for a work of art is very important. The right frame can greatly enhance the look of your artwork, while the wrong frame can detract from its overall appearance. Having said that, please keep in mind that framing is a matter of personal taste. One person may like a more ornate frame while another might prefer a much simpler frame – in the end, there is no real right or wrong.

In general, galleries that deal in historical paintings will frame their works in the original frame, a period frame, or a reproduction frame done in the style of a period frame. Now I am sure you want to know what the difference is.



Original Frame

**Original frames** – those selected by the artist, or his dealer/agent, for the painting when it was first created — in some instances, the artist may have created the frame. These frame styles can range from very simple to extremely ornate. But what if you do not like the original frame? Then reframe it; but, I always recommend storing the original in a safe place and when you decide to sell the work, put it back in its original frame – in certain instances, it will add a lot of value to the work

**Period frames** – produced during the era when the work was first created and may be similar to, or even the exact frame style, that the artist used to frame his/her work. While this is an excellent option, looking

for a period frame is time consuming and when you find the right one it may need to be restored, enlarged, or even cut down ... this will add to its cost. Of course, you may get lucky and find an exact fit that is in perfect condition! The frame illustrated here (left) is a late 19th century frame – a style that was used on other [Daniel Ridgway Knight](#) paintings.



Period Frame

**Reproduction frames** – frames that are made today to look like the old frames. What is nice about this option is that the frame will be in perfect condition and an exact fit (as long as you measure correctly). Also, you can choose the finish – from painted, to metal leaf, to gold leaf, and a host of others.



Reproduction Frame

Today, some framer's websites allow customers to upload images of their works and then place different frames on them so you can see the finished look before you buy. This takes a lot of the guesswork out of the 'picture'.

Now you may be wondering: what is the cost to frame a work? That all depends on the type of frame (carved wood, composition, cut and join, resin, etc.) and finish (painted, metal leaf, gold leaf, etc.). Your local shop may have ready made for \$25 to a few hundred, whereas having a reproduction frame may start at several hundred and run into the thousands. From there, period frames will have the greatest range. Prices depend on many factors (condition, period, size, etc.) and start as little as a few hundred dollars all the way into six figures for others.

If you buy a painting from a gallery that deals in historical works of art, the painting should come framed – so there is no additional cost (assuming you like the frame style). At the higher end of the contemporary art world, many artists choose to have their works unframed — if this is the case, then there is no additional cost (unless you want it framed). If you are purchasing a work of art from a gallery that specializes in decorative works of art, then the frame might be an 'extra'. These galleries often have frame samples on hand and will help you choose the one that is right for you.

If it turns out that you need to purchase or restore a frame, finding the right framer is similar to finding the right art dealer or conservator ... do some research. Learn about the different types/styles that are available and most appropriate, then determine which framers offer the widest selection and/or have the best restoration facilities. If you decide to buy a 'period' frame, you need to concern yourself with condition, quality, style, and size – they all factor into the final price. If you choose to buy a reproduction frame then you will need to find

framers that offer the widest choices of styles, finishes, and quality. Keep in mind that in the reproduction world, the finely carved wood frames, finished in real gold leaf, will probably be the most expensive ... while less detailed carved frames with metal or painted finishes will be more affordable; but remember, like most things in life, you get what you pay for.

In the end, as with any work of art you purchase, buy what you like. You are going to live with it and really, who cares what the neighbors think!

### How To Safely Navigate The Art Market: Dusting Your Works (from 2020)

A question that often comes up is – Can I clean/dust my painting? The answer to this is yes, but you need to know how to do it safely.

If you acquired the work from a gallery, they should have had a conservator take care of any ‘major’ cleaning that was needed. This would include the removal of any surface dirt and old, discolored, varnish. Once cleaned, a new layer of varnish would then be applied — to help seal the original paint surface. If, on the other hand, you acquired your work from some other source (i.e., inherited a work that has been in the family for many years), you may want to have a conservator look at it to determine if it needs to be professionally cleaned. Once completed, the work will have a bright /fresh appearance and is ready to be displayed in your home.



Compressed Air – NO!

Paintings, unlike other items in your home, need very little day-to-day care; however, after the work has been hanging in your home for an extended period, you may feel the desire to dust it. Years ago, I was speaking with two – longtime – clients and friends. Each of them had decided that it was time to dust their works. The first, jokingly, asked if he could use his leaf blower ... we both laughed, and I told him it would be fine, but I could not guarantee that the painting would still be on the wall when he finished!! The second, in a more serious tone, asked if they could use a can of compressed air? My immediate response was you could, but you may end up blowing some, if not all, of the paint off the surface. We both laughed, and I went on to explain that what they needed to keep in mind is that the upper paint layer of a work of art is just one of many layers. Before an artist begins to paint, they cover the canvas with a layer of gesso, and some artists use more than one layer. Then a base color is added on top

of the gesso, and then the artist begins to paint. Some artists will even go over areas several times – creating thicker layers in certain areas. As time passes, some of these layers may become loose or unstable, and a strong blast of air can cause them to peel away from the canvas, leaving you an area of paint loss ... something we should all try and avoid.

While living in London during the early 1980s, I heard a fascinating story from a friend at one of the European auction houses. A dealer had attended a poorly publicized country estate sale and purchased a large Old Master painting. After the sale, the dealer wanted the painting examined as soon as possible, so he tied it to the top of his car and drive to London. Well, as I am sure you can guess, after arriving at the saleroom, he was horrified to see that the canvas was stripped of all the paint, leaving an old blank canvas ... yes, somewhere along the M5 all the paint was blown off!!! It is a shame that no one will ever know if it was a long-lost masterpiece, or some sort of copy. While this is an extreme example, it does illustrate the point that strong gusts of air can cause damage to a work of art.



Makeup Brush – YES!

In a typical home, a painting should not be dusted more than once or twice a year and when you decide that now is the time, please make sure you use a sable (makeup), badger-hair, or soft white bristle Japanese brush. You should never use a feather duster as it can scratch the surface of the painting. Also, before starting, examine the paint surface. You want to make sure that there are no “active” areas ... spots where the paint appears to be lifting or peeling. If you see areas that look unstable or notice an area where the paint has come off, do not touch the work ... your next step is to contact your dealer or a conservator. As paintings age, they begin to dry out and crack (much like human skin), and there will be times when professional help is needed. There is no need to panic since most problems, when caught early enough, can be corrected with little effort and expense.

I want to stress that unless you are a conservator, never try to clean your paintings with water or household chemicals. As I mentioned earlier, most oil paintings contain a layer of gesso – many of which are water-based. If you were to use water to clean the picture, you run not only the risk of discoloring the paint surface but also reactivating the gesso, and this can cause the paint to fall off the canvas. The use of household chemicals is also a big No, No! Over the years, we have seen many works where parts of the paint surface were wiped away – something referred to as skinned or abraded. There was one instance where we had the opportunity to question the owner of a ‘skinned’ painting, and they mentioned that the housekeeper would often use one rag to dust the furniture and then wipe down the paintings. Over time those rags, soaked with furniture polish, removed layers of paint from the surface. Not a pretty sight!! Oh, and most of the work’s value was lost.

I also suggest that if you plan on renovating your home, at the very least, cover your works of art with plastic or drop cloths. It is even better if you wrap them up and place them in a closet. You will not only avoid the need to dust the works repeatedly but might even prevent any severe damage from occurring. At times, we have seen paintings that were accidentally damaged by construction workers ... a ladder in the wrong place can make a BIG mess!!

Over time, you will find that the one item needing the most attention is the frame. Typically, the top and bottom edges of a frame will catch most of the dust, and this can be cleaned when need be; but again, please do this only occasionally. I suggest that you either use a very soft dry cloth or the same brush you would use on the front of the painting — a light dusting is all it should need. Never use water or household chemicals when cleaning/dusting the frame. If your frame was water-gilded, using a cloth with water can remove the gold, and using the wrong chemicals can have a similar effect. I probably should not say this, but if you are very careful, a can of compressed air will help remove dust from the hard to reach places. If you do decide to use compressed air, be sure to attach the extension tube, use very short blasts, and stay away from the work of art.

In closing, I will say that we rarely touch the works hanging in our home. We do not regularly dust the paintings, and only occasionally dust the frames. As they say, sometimes less is more!

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