

ADVISORY

Engaging an Art Specialist

Most collectors never think about bringing in a specialist until a moment forces the question. In our experience, six moments come up again and again. Knowing them in advance — for yourself, or for a client — is what keeps a collection from becoming a rushed decision.

\$20,000+

The threshold above which the IRS requires a qualified, independent appraisal for a single work of art claimed on an estate or gift tax return — and can refer it to its own Art Advisory Panel.¹

+30% / -86%

Old Masters values rose roughly 30% from 2021–2025 while contemporary works over \$10M fell from 21 sales to 3, per the Art Basel & UBS Global Art Market Report 2026.²

Six moments that call for one

01

An estate is being settled.

The art needs appraisal, division among heirs, or sale — handled quietly, and on the record.

Estate and gift tax returns claiming art above the IRS's qualified-appraisal threshold can be flagged for review by the agency's Art Advisory Panel — an independent appraisal done up front avoids a dispute later.

02

An owner needs to monetize their art.

There are times when art must be used in the grander scheme of tax strategy, estate planning, and liquidity of funds.

Art-secured lending has grown into an established liquidity tool over the past decade, per the Deloitte Private & ArtTactic Art & Finance Report — collectors increasingly borrow against a collection rather than sell it outright.

03

A client is downsizing or relocating.

The collection no longer fits the walls, and decisions have to be made about what goes.

This is the same dynamic behind the broader wealth transfer already underway (see our companion briefing, *The Wealth Transfer & the Art Market*) — as collectors downsize, the collection is often the single hardest asset to right-size for a smaller home.

04

A divorce is underway.

The collection has to be appraised by an independent party and divided fairly between both sides.

Art is consistently one of the hardest marital assets to value fairly — two independent appraisals of the same piece can differ meaningfully, which is exactly why a neutral, specialist appraisal matters here.

05

A client wants to acquire.

A particular artist, or a whole category, and no idea where to start. We find it, vet it, and negotiate it.

The market itself is telling buyers where to look: scarcity value in Old Masters and Impressionist & Modern work is climbing while the speculative contemporary tier cools, per the Art Basel & UBS 2026 report.

06

A collection has become concentrated.

Weighted to one artist or one market. The client wants to take some risk off the table.

The same logic applies here as to an over-concentrated stock position: protecting value often means finding buyers proactively, before single-name risk forces the timing.

In every case, the work is the same: an honest appraisal, a discreet process, and a sale or purchase on the client's terms. Every conversation with us is confidential.

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1. Treasury Regulations § 20.2031-6 / IRS Publication 561 — qualified-appraisal requirement for donated or estate-reported art; figure should be reconfirmed against current IRS guidance before wide circulation. 2. Art Basel & UBS, Global Art Market Report 2026. 3. Deloitte Private & ArtTactic, Art & Finance Report. Prepared by Fine Art Partners for private circulation; not for redistribution.