

# What's It Worth?

## Researching Your Artwork and Collectibles

Do you have artwork or collectibles that have been in your family for years? Did you discover a masterpiece hidden in the attic? Is this yard sale piece the find of the century? We all know art and collectibles are most valuable when you enjoy them, but how do you determine what it's really worth?

The Akron-Summit County Public Library and the Akron Art Museum have resources that can help you determine if your art and collectibles are trash or treasure. While the staffs of the library and the art museum are prohibited from providing appraisals, we can direct you to resources that will help you decide if an appraisal is worthwhile. We also have extensive resources for you to conduct your own research.

So, before you sell your collectibles or put that painting in the garage, take advantage of this information to help you make the best decisions about your art and collectibles.

### Should I have this appraised?

The best way to find out the value of your artwork or collectibles is to have them appraised. This is a service that you often pay for and most appraisers charge by the hour so it is a good idea to do some research ahead of time. By using the resources available at the Akron Art Museum and the Akron-Summit County Public Library, you can gather information that will help the appraiser you hire do their job.



Here are five things you should be prepared to discuss with your appraiser so that they can assist you:

Is it original?

Can the artist be identified?

What condition is it in?

How was it acquired?

What other details do you know?



## Is it original?

Are you certain you have an original painting or sculpture? An original work is often signed and/or numbered.

## Can the artist be identified?

Thoroughly examine the collectible or artwork for any signatures, initials, inscriptions or other markings that indicate the name of the artist (or maker in the case of decorative arts). This information is not always front-and-center; check the bottoms and back sides as well. You may wish to get the assistance of a framer or conservator to look under linings and frames, if that's possible to do without causing damage.

With the artist identified, there are several resources, both online and off, which you can consult to learn more about him or her and get a rough idea of their work's importance, including recent sales of the artist's work, museums and galleries with the artist's work in their possession, etc.

## What condition is it in?

Is there any visible damage? Are there any areas of visible repair? Is the color strong or faded? Is it dirty or clean? Again, you may wish to get the opinion of a conservator. (DO NOT ATTEMPT TO DO ANY RESTORATION/CONSERVATION WORK YOURSELF.) Often, works that have never been touched, though dirty and in need of repair, have more value than ones that have been.

## How was it acquired?

Did you obtain it directly from the artist or from a dealer/gallery/auction house? Was it inherited? Do you have any documentation to verify how it was acquired?

## What other details do you know?

Dimensions, date, title, medium (the materials it's made of), historical provenance (chain of ownership), etc. are all facts which, when documented, can help determine the value of an artwork or collectible.

Work from a certain period in the artist's life, for example, might be more valuable than that from other periods; the same could be said for working in a medium or size that was not the norm for the artist.



## How can I find out more?

There are books, magazines and electronic resources that can help you research your collectibles and artwork. The Akron Art Museum and Akron-Summit County Public Library offer access to a wide range of information and assistance.

## Resources available at the Akron Art Museum

The Akron Art Museum's Martha Stecher Reed Library is a treasure-trove of information about modern art and artists. Here is a description of some of the information that is available. How can you find out more? Just call or visit (online or in person).

The Akron Art Museum's collection focuses exclusively on art produced since 1850 in the Western tradition. The collection has four main areas of strength: American Impressionist and Tonalist paintings; regional art from around 1910 to mid-century; national and international painting and sculpture since 1960; and American and international photography. The museum is one of only a handful of modern art museums seriously collecting the work of self-taught (also known as outsider or contemporary folk) artists. The museum's mission is "to enrich lives through modern art." The Akron Art Museum's Martha Stecher Reed Library complements the museum's focus in its collection. The library is primarily a research library and is a non-lending closed stack facility. A reading room is available for research.

The Martha Stecher Reed Library has in its collection over 5,000 artists' files. Artist files are valuable and often used resources in art research. These files provide critical documentation about well established artists, as well as lesser known artists that are not well documented.

Artist files do not circulate due to their unique and irreplaceable nature. The artist files collection has regional strengths that make it particularly essential for our community.

## Books, Magazines, Databases and Web sites

There are thousands of titles about collectibles and art available at the Akron-Summit County Public Library and the Akron Art Museum. Here is sample of the titles that will help your research be successful.

How can you find out more? Just call or visit (online or in person).

**Collectible resources** (available at Akron-Summit County Public Library)  
*The Kovel's Antiques & Collectibles Price List*  
by Ralph and Terry Kovel

*Warman's Antiques and Collectibles Price Guide*

Maloney's Antiques & Collectibles Resource Directory

**Art resources** (available at both the Akron Art Museum and Akron-Summit County Public Library)

*Davenport's Art reference & Price Guide*

*Dictionary of Artists / Benezit*

*The Dictionary of Art / Grove's* (available at the Akron-Summit County Public Library only)

*Who's Who in American Art*

*Art Market Research: A Guide to Methods and Sources*  
by Tom McNulty

*The Art of Buying Art* by Alan Bamberger

*The Art of Buying Art: An Insider's Guide to Collecting Contemporary Art* by Paige West

*The Intrepid Art Collector: The Beginner's Guide to Finding, Buying, and Appreciating Art on a Budget*  
by Lisa Hunter

*The Visual Index of Artists' Signatures and Monograms*  
by Radway Jackson

**Magazines** (available at both the Akron Art Museum and Akron-Summit County Public Library)

*Artforum International*

*Art in America*

*Art Journal*

*American Artist* (available at the Akron-Summit County Public Library only)

*ARTnews*

*American Art Review*

*Art & Antiques*

*Art & Auction*

*Folk Art Messenger* (available at the Akron Art Museum only)

**Databases** (available through [www.akronlibrary.org](http://www.akronlibrary.org))

*Biography Reference Bank*

*Biography Resource Center*

## Web sites

Antiques Roadshow

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/tips/index.html>

Artcyclopedia: Fine Art Search Engine

<http://www.artcyclopedia.com/>

Artifact: find, price and research antiques and fine art

<http://www.artifact.com>

Ask Art

<http://www.askart.com/AskART/index.aspx>

Heritage Auction Galleries

<http://www.ha.com/c/index.zx>

History Detectives

<http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/techniques/appraising.html>

National Gallery of Art

<http://www.nga.gov/help/faq.shtm>

SIRIS – Smithsonian Institution Research Information System <http://www.siris.si.edu/>

## What do I do next?

Once you've completed some research and are ready for the next step in the appraisal process, the Akron Art Museum has information on their web site that can help you choose an appraiser.

<http://www.akronartmuseum.org/appraisals/>

Akron Art Museum

One South High, Akron, OH 44308

Phone: 330.376.9185

Martha Stecher Reed Library

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 11 am - 4 pm

<http://www.akronartmuseum.org/>

Akron-Summit County Public Library

60 South High Street, Akron, OH 44326 , 330-643-9000

Monday – Thursday, 9 am - 9 pm, Friday, 9 am - 6 pm,

Saturday, 9 am - 5 pm, Sunday, 1 pm - 5 pm

<http://www.akronlibrary.org/index.html>

