



ART DUE DILIGENCE GROUP

Interview with Art Consultant and ADDG Member Pandora Mather-Lees on management and care of fine Art for collectors



Pandora is currently leading the way in training programmes on the care of Fine Art at Sea with partners in France, Spain and The National Maritime Museum. Her career spans 20 years of working for many significant art companies at board level. She worked as VP, Global Sales at Artnet, as MD of Bridgeman Art Library, as a consultant for specialist art logistics companies Hedley's and more recently, MOMART and Art Analysis and Research Inc.

Q: Pandora you have just launched a unique arts education and training programme for the yacht industry. This seems unusual, why this sector and how did it come about?

A: Through consulting in art logistics on the Cote d'Azur, I became aware of the amount of high value art transported and housed on yachts and discovered a lack of awareness of how to care for fine art, even though there were many courses for crew and captains on other subjects. The absence of training created significant issues for owners, crew and third parties as many artworks were needlessly damaged. This led me to develop a course in partnership with JJ Yonnet Formations in Nice, then with ACREW globally. *The Art World Revealed* is a multi-module course, part of which is the *Practical Care of Onboard Art Collections*. For more details about the training course see here:

<https://acrew.com/partners/pandora-matherlees-art-consultancy/>

Q: You have recently set up a symposium on conservation and preservation of art at sea in partnership with the National Maritime Museum. How did this develop, what is the scope and what does the conference hope to achieve?

A: I work with Helen Robertson, Senior Preventive & Organic Conservator at the National Maritime Museum. Whilst I offer a certificated 'primer' for crew from an art historical and handling perspective, the Museum provides fully accredited conservation packages taught by museum experts. We decided to put on an academic symposium to look at the conservation issues in a wider context incorporating input from professional service providers on relevant areas such as tax, insurance, responsible building and law. (For more details about the Art at Sea Symposium on 2nd May 2018 - See: <https://www.rmg.co.uk/see-do/exhibitions-events/art-sea-symposium-2018.>)

Q: For the ADDG, you recently helped organise a round table discussion panel on Security and Logistics for the arts sector. Can you tell us about the round table, the participants and objectives? The ADDG has prepared a market intelligence report arising out of this event. Who should benefit from this?

A: Having organised round tables in a luxury commerce capacity, I found these could be effective forums for bringing experts together to tackle problematic areas by establishing common ground, crystallising ideas, leading to solutions and enhanced knowledge. We brought together leaders across the arts, security and logistics sectors who examined the complexities of moving very high value art from a high-risk environment such as a superyacht to some distance away. The ADDG Market Intelligence Report covers the process required and the development of some optimum strategies, which we hope will be useful to collectors and their professional advisers.

Q: As someone who is an active educator within the arts sector in due diligence, care taking and management of art - what key areas do you think collector clients and their advisers need to develop further?

A: I have seen best practice documents put in place, training undertaken and 'signed off', however without any review, updating or supervision, mistakes happen.

Failing to follow due process, not understanding the true value of artefacts and not managing the damage effectively when it first occurs exacerbates an already tense situation. It hampers any insurance claim and can increase premiums.

On the training side, one of the problems is staff turnover. Training needs to be ongoing as otherwise, when staff leave their employer, a knowledge gap can arise.

Q: What are the greatest risks to fine art? Is it accidental damage, damage in transport, incorrect climatic conditions, cleaning or conservation issues?

A: The main risks are simply moving and cleaning works of art. For transport, a common problem is time-pressured situations. Where there has been a lack of planning damage is most likely to occur. Also, a lack of accountability in looking after an artwork, can lead to a variety of problems if there is damage. For this reason, I recommend condition reporting throughout the transportation process, to minimise risks and to be able to pinpoint where a problem originated, which is significant for insurance claims and future prevention.

Overzealous cleaning and use of the wrong cleaning materials can cause irreversible damage. For example, one should not clean alabaster objects with water, as alabaster can be dissolved by water. Whereas marble should not be cleaned with bleach, acids or strong alkalis amongst other things.

Q: What do you find are the weaknesses in protecting and preserving art? (is it a lack of understanding about artistic mediums and climates etc.)

A: Different art and design materials are vulnerable to different climates and environmental conditions. Even picture frames are susceptible to damage and are often overlooked. They can be valuable and difficult to clean if they have ornate carving. Some may have water or oil based gilt wood frames and staff can damage them if they use household cleaners.

Climate is always an issue for maintaining and preserving art and needs to be properly regulated for the specific type of medium of the artwork.

Environmental conditions within a venue should inform placement of art, for example keeping artefacts away from harsh light, windows, cooking areas, water and fireplaces and where people can adversely have contact with the art. I am aware of case where even a rogue champagne cork damaged a painting on a superyacht.

Q: Your client base for your art consultancy services includes Family Offices. What tips do you have for Family Offices in respect of high value fine art? What systems would you recommend?

A: For Families with a valuable collection of art and design, I recommend retaining a dedicated art manager, so the artwork can be professionally overseen and there is continuity and accountability for the long-term management of the collection. This does not have to be a full-time role, but it demands ongoing professional management covering everything from record keeping, due diligence on title, provenance, authenticity, attribution, condition and value, to long term maintenance with effective management systems, valuations, conservation, restoration and staff training on art handling, cleaning and installation issues.

These elements require specialist expertise. As an art consultant and member of the ADDG, we can handle these specialist elements and organise any additional expert input depending on the period, medium and materials of the artwork. Where there is an art advisor or interior designer already hired by a client, it is important that relevant art specialists (in the areas mentioned above) are consulted where appropriate to ensure the client is getting the best advice.

It is also worth remembering that an art portfolio can be an appreciating asset if you are on top of maintaining, preserving and conserving the asset. Failure to do so can have the reverse effect and jeopardise the investment.

Interview by Jessica Franses, Director of the Art Due Diligence Group Ltd, MD of Vitruvian Arts Consultancy Ltd. (April 2018).