

Free art appraisals not so free after all

Free appraisals are offered by auction houses and some antique dealers or galleries. But be aware that they may be not so free !

In reality, they are never free, and it could cost you sometimes a lot of money. Here is why:



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1/ Free art appraisals given by auction houses, why they are not so free. Auction houses want to attract people to consign artwork with their auction houses.

The best way to attract owners of art is to offer y a free appraisal. An auction house makes on average 20 % on the sale of an item for the small auction house up to 30% for auctions houses like Sotheby's and Christie's. They charge the seller a premium from 10% up to 30 %, and they charge the buyer the same range of premiums. A painting sold at the hammer 1 Million \$, will give an average of \$ 750K for the seller, and the buyer will pay an average of \$ 1.25 million. In conclusion, the auction

house makes an average of \$ 500,000 on an item sold at the hammer price of \$ 1 M.

An auction house is not a free public service!

An auction house will not do in-depth research and will certainly not file authenticity research with the solely recognized expert authentication for an artist if the value of the item you offer is not of a value in the millions of \$. They will do the necessary steps for very important paintings because the return for them is very important. But for artworks under the \$ 1 million you will have to provide an authenticity certificate. If the auction house understands you will not consign your art with them and just want to know the value of your painting, they will not spend time. Why would they waste time if they have nothing to gain? Besides, you have to know they will appraise a value of what they think it will sell in their auction house. But in another auction house the value may be completely different. Indeed, California artists, for example, will have a higher estimated value in a Los Angeles auction house like Moran auction in Monrovia, than an auction house in Florida or Alabama. In reality, the free appraisals given by auction houses are not real art appraisals at all. They are only quick estimations of what they think your art will fetch at the hammer. Except for the few major world auction houses with good trained art appraisals, most auctions houses will have little experienced experts. This is of course, a major negative point if you want to have an accurate appraisal. To finalize the aspect of the free appraisal in auction houses, one word of the reserve price when an auction house appraises your art. If the item doesn't obtain the reserve price on the auction day, the seller will have no costs to pay. It's logical that the auctioneer will have the lowest estimate possible for your artwork and reserve price in consequence, because the auctioneer needs to amortize the costs of his catalog, publicity etc. Lower the reserve price, more chance the auctioneer has to sell the artwork.

2/ Free art appraisal given by galleries and antique dealers Obvious conflict of interests

An antique dealer or a gallery owner, if your item has any interest for him, it is unthinkable he will give you a fair value for your item. This is a natural temptation if they covet your artwork. They will appraise the artwork at a low value and try to buy at an even lower value. Dealers and galleries are to be avoided if you want to know the real value of your item. Having your artwork appraised for free, in both situations, by auction houses or antique dealers, could cost you in final a lot of money. The only valuable solution is to choose an independent art expert, specialized in the artwork you want to have appraised; read more on another page of this blog:

<https://www.vwart.com/art-appraiser>

or the qualifications an art expert needs to have to be credible.