



Bruce's Studio News

Process • Concept • Evolution • Solution Vol. IV No. 12 Dec., 2014

Record Keeping and Archiving Artwork

One of the most daunting tasks for the artist who finds himself trying to document his life's work is deciding to do it at all! I believe it is a definite mistake not to do this! For the highly successful artist, the problem is easily solved by hiring assistants to do the research and organize the history, provenance, and cataloging of every piece of work that has been sold, loaned or still remains in the studio, gallery, or storage. This sometimes is a process that is handled by a gallery representing the artist, but not always. In the end, any serious artist would like to feel that his artwork is accounted for. This recorded information needs to include the owner of each purchased work, a photographic record of that work, and it's value at the time of sale. If it has not been sold, then his estate, eventually, will need to know the location of each piece of art and all the details about it.

Even lack of financial success by an artist in his lifetime, is still not a good reason to ignore the difficult record keeping of his legacy.

Fortunately, today, the artist can find some help using specialized computer software to document each piece of art that he values. This is essential to the future preservation of his work, and perhaps in the future, even his historical place in the art world. Think, for example, of Vincent van Gogh¹, Joseph Cornell², and Vivian Maier³... none of whom were particularly recognized during their lifetimes.

Van Gogh's early life failures and later life of mental illness, as well as his obsession with painting, did not conjoin with an organized or structured life. Vincent relied upon his brother Theo, to help him manage his life and his paintings. In the end, his tragic early death and artistic legacy fell to Theo and shortly thereafter to Theo's wife. What we do know about his genius and frailties come from the documented letters to his brother; letters that in themselves have become for us his unintended biography of his life and work.

Cornell was a reclusive self-trained artist who found time to follow his artistic impulses, while taking care of family responsibilities and working other jobs. His life was full and he created films as well as his famous "boxes" which he saw as visual poetry. Though recognized in later life, his work found further recognition only some years later.


Vivian Maier, known as the "Nanny Photographer", whose prodigious stash of over 100,000 street photographs only came to light after her death, would have never been recognized at all, were it not for the curiosity of John Maloof, who purchased a box of her unprinted negatives at a flea market. Maier's name and creative legacy, even more than Van Gogh and Cornell, found its way into the historical lexicon of great artists because Maloof and others sought out and organized her archive of prints and negatives.

Today, a webpage serves as a useful, though bothersome document for archiving or cataloging work, artist statements, concepts, or philosophy as well as a platform for sales. Maintaining it has technical constraints that require time and expense. It by no means offers a *living* artist much more than an "online presence" without tedious attention to detail that distracts from the need to be in the studio, which is the greatest priority, after all!

So... like many artists that I know— I have, by default, pushed off the problem of organizing and cataloging until later... or until I have figured out when I can plug some hours into my schedule on a regular basis... or, whether to hire someone to work with me on it. The following examples represent my documentation process for individual works of art that with or without help is too arduous a task to be left to my heirs. So, it is important to start now...!

Portfolio • Inventory • Catalogue • Artwork Archive

Bruce Blanchette



8 Prospect Hill Road / Studio Rear,
Walpole, NH 03608
603 756 3195
603 313 0359
bbblanchette@mac.com
www.bruceblanchette.com

Title: Improvisation VII


Completion Date: 1992

Media: Spray paint, Charcoal, Gouache on 100% Rag Drawing Paper

Last Value (\$): 900.

Provenance: In collection of [redacted]
Bellevue, Iowa 52031
(2010)

Dimensions:	Status:	File No.
Width: 30"	In Studio	0013_DR
Height: 43"	In Storage	
Depth:	Sold X On Loan	




Description: Large spontaneous drawing in mixed drawing media.

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Title: Glacial Drift / Open Water


Completion Date: 2012

Media: Carved Styrene, Acrylic paint & collage with Clear Epoxy mounted on MDO board.

Last Value (\$): \$1800.00

Provenance: Original Sale to [redacted]
Rye, NY 10580
[redacted]
Sold by Vermont Institute of Contemporary Arts

Dimensions:	Status:	File No.
Width: 24"	In Studio	0017_MM
Height: 24"	In Storage	
Depth: 2"	Sold X On Loan	



Description: Carved Styrene, Acrylic paint with embedded text from environmental studies on climate change, coated with matte urethane and clear epoxy. Mounted on MDO board with shadow frame.

Date: 10/15/13

ABOVE: Just two pages of my digital archive that I can only estimate will include in excess of 1000 pages, representing sculpture, drawings paintings, collages, composite poems, prints, and mixed media works. Whew!!

¹ <http://www.vincent-van-gogh-gallery.org/biography.html>

² <http://www.pem.org/sites/cornell/#>

³ <http://www.artlyst.com/articles/vivian-maier-the-secret-photographer-gets-a-retrospective-in-amsterdam>