

Ask the Artsperts by Kristine Meek and Juliana Meek Harmon-Meek Gallery, Naples, FL

Damages

Dear Artsperts:

I have a piece of art that I have owned for a long time and I just noticed it has gotten damaged. What should I do?

Signed,
Oops I Did It

Dear Oops,

Without more information on the work of art and the damage it is hard to give you specific advice, but we can share with you a few cases we have heard about and the solutions for those situations.

One client had a bronze sculpture that had its patina scratched during their house move. They called us since they bought the work from us and we represent the artist. We were able to find the foundry that already worked with the sculptor. The client was able to ship the work back to the foundry to have the work restored. If the artist is no longer living or is no longer working with an active foundry, there are many others you may call. There is a good foundry in Sarasota - Bronzart Foundry, Inc. They can repair damage to all types of metal sculpture.

With respect to works on paper, damage can range from tears in the paper to mold, mildew or foxing (acidic migration due to improper backing with cardboard or matting which is not acid free). To de-acidify paper which has been exposed to improper paper materials, look for someone who specializes in restoring paper.

Fading issues due to exposure to sunlight or florescent lighting are often damages which cannot be repaired. If the work is significant in value and the problems are very complex then the work should be sent unframed between very stiff boards to Joel Oppenheimer in Chicago on south Michigan Avenue. He bought the former Douglas Kenyon paper restoration company many years ago.

Damage to paintings can range from holes and tears in the canvas or panel to chipping, cracking, and flaking of the actual paint, to the more typical problem of years of layers of dust and varnish. Fortunately once again we have a conservator in Naples, by the name of Tom Wagner, who can take care of most of these problems. As is often the case with living artists it is sometimes better to have a conservator do minor repairs than the actual artist since in the latter case the artist may want to change what he or she painted instead of simply repairing the damage. So giving a work back to an artist may result in a slightly altered work and may not be to your liking. Major works of art and works with significant damage can also be sent to The Fine Arts Conservancy/Stoneledge, Inc. in Palm Beach.

Sincerely,
The Artsperts



Picture of Tom Wagner at work in his studio

“Wyverin II” by Balcomb Greene, 50” x 62”, 1968, before varnish was removed by conservator (left) and after (right)

