

Modern Day Monuments Women Share Tips For Saving Your Art Collection From Natural Disasters

Brienne Walsh, Contributor



Courtesy ARTA and DPR Art Rescue

An artwork damaged by fire

evacuations caused by Hurricane Irma. In the process of helping them move their artwork to safe areas, often with very little time, and even fewer resources, Pang has become the equivalent of the Indiana Jones of art shipment.

"It's sort of an adrenaline rush," she says of her job.



Courtesy ARTA and DPR Art Rescue

A fine art shipper braves flooding.

When Alexandria Pang began her position as the Director of Business Development at ARTA, a company that focuses on providing clients with the best possible shipping options for high-end products, including artwork, she had no idea how much of her time would be spent retrieving objects from natural disaster areas.

She thought that she'd be merely organizing fairly straightforward shipments from private homes to museums to galleries, and back again. But many of ARTA's top clients have been affected by the wildfires in California, the flooding after Hurricane Harvey in Houston, and the

For example, the day before Hurricane Irma was set to strike southern Florida, Pang was approached by a number of panicked art collectors in Miami who wanted to move their priceless collections to safe warehouses. The roads were essentially parking lots due to mandatory evacuation orders. Many people had left; those who stayed were not concerned with finding work. Even still, Pang was successfully able to secure, pack, and move dozens of works of art to Category 5-safe warehouses around Florida.

She attributes her ability to accomplish the impossible to the shipping, insurance, and conservation companies she has built relationships with. "We do whatever it takes," she says. "We exhaust all resources."

One person Pang frequently collaborates with is April Hann Lanford, the Vice President of DPR Art Rescue, a company based in Chicago that specializes in fine art disaster recovery. If Pang is Indiana Jones, then Lanford is a Monuments Women.

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1



Courtesy ARTA and DPR Art Rescue
The interior of a home damaged by fire.

Eighty-percent of Lanford's business, she says, is recovering artwork after a disaster has already taken place. But there are ways to prevent art collections from having to be rescued from natural disasters, even if they strike. One of Lanford's goals is educating the public on how they can protect their most precious possessions in the case of catastrophe.

In advance of the Armory Show, which opens on Thursday, March 8, and offers a dazzling array of treasures to art lovers, it seemed appropriate to share some of Lanford's tips on how collectors can protect their collections from increasingly vicious and commonplace natural disasters.

Below are her tips for preparing your art collection for the worst.

Have a collection inventory on hand.

The inventory should include the artist's name, the title of the work, the medium, the dimension, its location in your home, and a selection of images. It should be saved in the cloud so it can be easily shared.

Make a priority list. Even though it may be impossible to choose, select your top

ten items you would have removed so that conservators know what to look for first in the case of a rescue.

Have crates and packing materials set aside. Many artworks, and especially large-scale sculptures, require custom packaging. In the case that you need to move pieces quickly, have the packing materials you need set aside. They don't necessarily need to be kept in your home – they can be stored with an art handling firm.

Create an emergency contact list. The names on it should include:

1. A local person who can go check on the status of things when you're out of town – for example, a friend, a family member, or a caretaker. Their task could be as simple as going to check to make sure that the pipes in your house aren't frozen, causing temperatures to drop to inhospitable levels for delicate artworks.
2. Your insurance broker, who can reach out to ARTA to begin moving artworks.
3. A conservator who can be tasked with safely rescuing artwork. Lanford recommends calling your local museum for a referral, or searching for a conservator using the website for the American Institute For Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC)

www.conservation-us.org/membership/find-a-conservator#.Wqfwk-ch1Pa

Be aware of where your items are displayed, and what their potential for exposure may be. You don't want to store your collection in a basement, for example, because of flooding. You also don't want to display a painting above a fireplace, where it will be subjected to heat damage.

Hang your artwork in museum quality frames. Years ago, Lanford worked with a client whose collection sustained water damage after their home was flooded. The clients had the artworks restored, and then hung in museum quality frames. When the home was flooded again, the museum quality frames were damaged – but the artworks were entirely saved.

For more information about ARTA (shiparta.com) and DPR Art Rescue (dprartrescue.com), visit their websites. And follow the tips above to protect your collections from unnecessary damage.