

Safeguarding Your Art Collection Ahead of the Storm

When hurricanes loom, it's not just homes and buildings at risk — valuable art collections are also vulnerable. For museums, galleries, and private collectors alike, a strong storm-readiness plan is essential to protect prized pieces from the threat of tropical storms and hurricanes.

Best Practices for Protecting Your Collection:

- **Fortify Your Property:** Strengthen your home's defenses by installing hurricane shutters, impact-resistant glass and roof clips. For added security, consider a waterproof storm closet to safely store delicate items.
- **Assemble an Emergency Kit:** Stock up on essentials like flashlights, hurricane lamps, battery-operated radios and extra batteries. These supplies will be invaluable during power outages.
- **Document Your Collection:** Create a detailed inventory of each piece, including photos, artist or maker information, title, dimensions, medium, year and invoices for each item. Store these records in waterproof, fireproof safes and back them up in the cloud or an offsite location.
- **Compile Critical Contacts:** Keep a list of key contacts, such as your insurance provider, art conservators, storage facilities and local emergency repair teams. Make sure you have both digital and hard copies of this list, and ensure your insurance broker also receives a copy.
- **Plan for Art Evacuation:** Reach out to local art storage facilities to explore secured storage options for high-value pieces that may need to be moved before a storm hits.

When the Storm is Approaching:

- **Relocate and Elevate:** Move art, furniture and collectibles from vulnerable spots like basements or attics to an interior room with climate control. Elevate items at least six inches off the ground and use crates or cardboard dividers to protect them.
- **Reinforce Emergency Supplies:** Double-check your emergency kit, stock up on essentials such as bottled water and food, and ensure your generator is above potential flood levels and set up safely outside. Include fans and dehumidifiers to help dry spaces once power is restored.
- **Prepare for Evacuation:** Pack essentials for each household member, including water, non-perishable food, medications and key contact details. Make sure everyone knows where to meet in case of separation.
- **Secure Outdoor and Fragile Pieces:** Bring outdoor sculptures inside if possible, or cover and secure them with burlap or blankets. For indoor art, tape glass on framed works to reduce shattering risk, but avoid taping plexiglass.

After the Storm Has Passed:

- **Document and Inspect:** Photograph rooms and inspect each piece for damage, especially those with wood elements that may have been exposed to moisture.
- **Report Damages:** Contact your insurance provider promptly to report any losses or damage. Reach out to a conservator for any urgent restoration needs, as early intervention can minimize further deterioration.
- **Dry and Clean Affected Pieces:** For water-damaged items, blot gently with towels, remove wet backings or frames, and relocate them to a climate-controlled area to prevent mold. Rinse outdoor sculptures with clean water and dry carefully.
- **Remove Salt and Sediment:** If a layer of salt or residue has accumulated, gently brush or wipe the surfaces of affected pieces with a soft brush or cloth.

Taking these steps can help protect your art collection from the unpredictable wrath of a storm and ensure its preservation for years to come.