



NATIONAL  
MARITIME MUSEUM  
GREENWICH

# First Protection of Art at Sea Symposium

National Maritime Museum, London,  
2018



*"The content, clear and very professional preparation, delivery and feel of the day was really excellent and Symposium was exactly the right framing as a significant gathering of many diverse and learned folk to debate and discuss the important topic. Very impressed!"*

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## **Introduction**

The Protection of Art at Sea Symposium, the first event of its kind, took place at the National Maritime Museum on 2nd May 2018. The event was organised by Pandora Mather-Lees of Pandora Art Services and ex-superyacht chief stewardess Helen Robertson, the museum's Senior Organic & Preventive Conservator. The symposium attracted some 60 delegates from as far afield as the US and Europe supported by a broad spectrum of industry sponsors and twelve presenters.

Damage and loss to our cultural heritage in the marine environment is real and significant. Yacht management, captains and owners can no longer ignore the threats which have stretched to an entire superyacht being impounded because of a piece of contemporary art displayed in the interior. Paintings worth many millions of Euros have been confiscated, never to be seen again and disputes arise over value and title to artworks to the extent that it hinders the sale of a vessel. Others, occasionally more valuable than the yacht itself, have been irreparably damaged by the environment or improper handling.

The purpose of the symposium was therefore to start a dialogue around fine art on superyachts and to show how even fundamental education and training can preserve the value of the owner's assets. It presented solutions through the launch of unique training and conservation initiatives from the two organisers.

With the purpose of educating the market, both in the classroom and on the yacht, a six-fold mission was developed, destined to protect fine art and other valuable objects at sea. Essential to the mission is the sustainability and integrity of materials on board alongside compliance, ethics and better support for captains and crew.



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## MISSION

### **PREVENTION:**

Offering bespoke support to reduce risk and avert costly accidents or deterioration

### **CONSERVATION:**

When it goes wrong, putting it right using trusted resources

### **SUSTAINABILITY:**

Practical & ethical build, design and material sourcing from Deck to Canvas

### **TRAINING:**

The burden on crew handling priceless objects

Art appreciation and career development for crew

The risks of onboarding art and design objects for captains

### **BEST PRACTICE:**

On-shore and off-shore: Guidelines for movement, care, training and art management

### **DATA GATHERING:**

Mapping the scale of art at risk, to inform continued debate, feedback and solutions

It is with this mission in mind that the organisers invited some of the industry's most celebrated and experienced figures to speak and share their knowledge across a broad spectrum of issues concerning the carriage of fine art in international waters. Topics ranged from the factors which cause deterioration of materials; how conservation can restore value; previously unapprised aspects of legal contracts in build and refit; various forms of tax liability; customs' seizure; shipping; security and training.

It was the harnessing of these various disciplines from two distinct industries that made it possible to explore the complexities, to shape a dialogue and crystallise the issues.

The purpose of this report is to share the lessons learned, to draw industry attention to the considerable risks concerning fine art which at their worst have led to criminal convictions and to show how yacht management should be supported with expert advice, education and training.

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## Guidelines from lessons learned:

Those responsible for management of superyacht interiors should now adopt very specific best practice measures for handling valuable fine art on board.

Vessels over 40m are particularly at risk of having valuable design objects on board.

To reduce risk, superyachts should appoint an external art management expert to work with a dedicated member of senior crew, trained in aspects of art on board.

Responsibility should be assigned for integrating art collections management into the Standard Operating Procedures.

This includes records and paperwork pertaining to possessions, overseeing cleaning, record keeping, conservation, preservation and logistics. The responsibility for art and design needs to start with design and build to ensure safe onboarding and management during sea trials and maiden voyage. Art handlers must be aware in good time of travel arrangements so as to advise the necessary parties and support the captain with supporting documentation and logistics planning.

Particular care needs to be taken at the following times: New Build, Sea Trials, Refit, Crew Turnover, annual compliance checks, change of domicile or tax status of owner or owning structure, refresh of interior design or new objects arriving on board.

**Never assume – always check**

*"I found it really interesting and a bit of an eye opener in relation to some issues, particularly CITES and potential damage resulting from vibration and interaction with other materials on board (we always think of RH, temp and sunlight but not much else to be honest). It was also great to meet some new faces..!"*



By the close of the symposium, it became clear that there was consensus from delegates on four key issues:

### **1. Stakeholder Involvement:**

It goes without saying that legislative requirements place the stakeholders focus on human safety. Ensuring a vessel remains in class and adheres to all flag state requirements is essential. Consequently, this often means that interior considerations are marginalised. Build and management priorities are focused on the technical aspects, less so on interior operations.

Although some yacht management companies have ventured into bespoke interior services these tend to be geared towards excellence in hospitality, for example Fraser Yachts Diamond Collection. Little is offered in the way of interior asset management especially relating to high value art and interior materials.

A key question raised was that as an interior is an integral part of a yacht, why would it not be serviced as part of a management portfolio, especially considering art is potentially the only appreciating asset to be found on board?

Stakeholders from the art perspective are: Yacht Management, Build & Refit Shipyards, The Captain, Senior Interior Crew; The Owner and EA/PA; Legal professionals, Accountancy and tax professionals, Logistics providers, Security Company and Interior Designers. These stakeholders should be aware of the value of a comprehensive integrated art protection and collections management programme.



## 2. Material Selection:

During the course of the symposium on board environmental data was shared highlighting the effect of temperature, relative humidity, vibration and light on traditional materials and finishes used to furnish yacht interiors. This led to the realisation that understanding how materials react to their environment, and their inherent vulnerabilities, is pivotal in making sound material choices to promote longevity of appearance and environmental sustainability of materials.

Issues relating to CITES, (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), were also discussed. This related to both the selection of interior build materials as well as items carried on board by owner and guests. Examples of issues relating to the lack of export documentation for items, containing CITES listed materials, and their subsequent seizure proved an eye opener for all.

Further information relating to clarification of CITES listed materials, required documentation and training in material identification was requested.





### **3. Art & Collections Management:**

Bringing all aspects of the symposium together was the consensus that collections management was key to ensuring the protection of on board art and objects from both potential damage to seizure.

Due to issues relating to crew turnover and the existing Captain/Interior workload, it was agreed that the use of external professional expertise would be advisable.

The following points were considered integral to successful on board asset management:

#### **Environmental Audit:**

Art in a marine environment constantly responds to changes in humidity and temperature as well as being exposed to high light levels, pollutants and vibration. Understanding how to monitor and manage the environment is essential to safeguarding vulnerable art and objects.

#### **Housekeeping Manual** (Interior Operating Procedures):

Creating a bespoke housekeeping manual for susceptible objects and materials ensures continuity of care through crew turnover and reduced interior refit and repair costs. It is important that this is regularly revised and kept up to date with material changes., especially following refit periods.

#### **Inventory:**

KNOW what you have: a full description of items, media/ materials, importance & ownership

KNOW where it is: location during cruising season, refit, crossings

KNOW the condition: regularly monitor objects and conduct condition checks, with photographic history, to identify any change or deterioration

#### **Documentation:**

The movement of art and artefacts is complicated and increasingly scrutinised. Ensure all the facts and records are accessible and current, from ownership, provenance, import/export licenses and CITES to material information and condition and location history.

#### **4. Training Needs:**

Both the experience and contributions from panellists highlighted that training in managing care of interiors is required throughout the crew. For instance, incidents of damage by hapless deck hands, art subjected to extremes of temperature during sea trials by engineers and captains unaware of both their full liabilities with objects or how to respond to requests from customs apropos masterpiece paintings on board were just a few examples. Even basic, albeit carefully structured training in art appreciation could be valuable in averting costly errors.

Training must be taken seriously to the point that there is continuity within the vessel from build, trials, delivery, refit and during the life of the vessel in and out of guest mode. Crew turnover was seen to be a major factor in falling standards. Training should take place at the outset at the yard with new crew and training requirements and plans put in place as part of an ongoing plan.

This extends beyond crew to the entire build ecosystem including logistics suppliers, luxury design, art dealers and interior designers. With design shifting from the yards to external designers who now capture 60% of the market there needs to be enhanced communication between all functions. Stories of environmental damage to the gold patina on an Anish Kapoor sculpture to attempts to onboard a prestige 2500kg resin table (rejected by the captain due to its weight) show the need to think before acting.

Training should also extend to security awareness where discretion is required in respect of what lies on board.

Art appreciation, awareness of types of art, materials and value, together with the understanding of the owner as art collector, is more than just desirable, it is essential. Art appreciation can also enhance life on board for crew, provide a little confidence in responding to guest questions and may even be the start of a new career opportunity after life at sea. To make this point, the story of a Christo and Jean-Claude work shipped on board and unwittingly unwrapped by the captain to the horror of the guest on arrival is a case in point.



Christo artworks are valued in the millions and the wrapping with paper and string is the concept!

Another myth dispelled was that art appreciation is for senior crew. However, the most junior, or new crew members have unwittingly interfered with multi million dollar works as in the case of the Basquiat from which cornflakes (integral to the work) were scraped off by a young staff member.

Depending on the size of the vessel, crew have been deployed to purchase, move or import paintings and sculpture on the request of the owner. In these cases, they may have no idea as to shipping requirements, the type of questions to ask as regards insurance cover, packing, crating and delivery. All carry potential hazards and need some knowledge to carry out the task.

Finally, training should be ongoing.





## Conclusion

In conclusion the symposium highlighted that the risks to art at sea are serious, yet have not been addressed by yacht management, crew or owners, probably because so much goes unreported and is often dealt with discretely. For legal and tax compliance owners need to be sure that their advisers are aware of what exists, what is a fixture, what will be moved before it happens and to account for all considerations in contracts such as title, damage through vibration, fitting, poor care and ignorance of materials in cleaning. From a tax perspective it will be vital for owners to tell their advisors what will be moved so as to be compliant at all times in all territories that the art and owner move through to avoid irrevocable seizure and confiscation. Interior design objects are now as valuable and vulnerable as some of the most desirable paintings and crew need to understand how to protect, clean and care for them with best practice in mind.

The conference was valuable in that feedback from delegates is that everybody learned something new and appreciated the richness and scope of the content. The networking opportunities were seen to be invaluable and some parties have already established new commercial relationships.

To address these issues the organisers have developed complimentary training packages:

Foundation level crew training from Pandora Art Services covering a range of art handling and appreciation aspects with 9 modules and on-board consultancy.

The National Maritime Museum offers NVQ level training at the Prince Philip Maritime Collections Centre in conservation where there is a facility to study materials in depth and see restoration techniques first hand with on board collections management and conservation packages available.

*"From (sic) perspective, it was great to meet and discuss so many interesting angles and I have a raft of people I'm following up with today so always good to widen the network and also to gauge reciprocal partnerships. Thank you for a really informative day and with best wishes"*

Other issues connected with art at sea where recommendations were discussed include various types of insurance, risk, alternatives to carrying originals on board, cultural heritage, unexplained wealth orders, sanctions lists.

For more information about courses and the conservation training packages available from the museum and training from:

Pandora Mather-Lees, Pandora Art Services, [pandora@rdg.global](mailto:pandora@rdg.global), 0044 7967 753372

Helen Robertson, [HRobertson@rmg.co.uk](mailto:HRobertson@rmg.co.uk) 0044 7970 480789

Report prepared from data gathered by Pandora Mather-Lees a member of the Art Due Diligence Group, art historian and art professional based in London and Helen Robertson, Senior Organic & Preventive Conservator, National Maritime Museum, ex-Chief Stewardess with research experience in adopting collections management for working marine interiors. May 2018.



Helen Robertson, Pandora Mather-Lees with Marine Guard CEO, Richard Webb





## Further reading:

<http://www.superyachtnews.com/crew/crew-conserving-art>

<http://www.superyachtnews.com/owner/art-at-sea-symposium>

<https://www.antiquetrade gazette.com/news/2018/symposium-about-the-care-of-art-at-sea-launches-targeting-superyacht-owners/>

[www.rmg.co.uk/superyachts](http://www.rmg.co.uk/superyachts)



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