



AXA Art Insurance Collection Management Series: Caring for Glass Collections

Glass art holds pride of place in the home of many collectors. Its allure lies in the sensual shapes, glorious colors, and underlying technical virtuosity of each object.

Some collectors focus on rare examples of ancient Roman glass or medieval stained glass. Others may turn to the twentieth century, resting on such giants of Art Nouveau as Lalique, Galle, Daum, or Tiffany. Still others are drawn to the inventions of contemporary mainstream Americans such as Dale Chihuly, Josiah McElheny, William Morris, and Toots Zynsky, or to European masters such as Jaroslava Brychtova and Stanislav Libensky, Lino Tagliapietra, and Sam Herman, to name a few.

Most art glass objects are fairly durable and chemically stable. Damages—accidental breaking or cracking—usually result from improper handling, shipping, storage or display. To best protect your collection for yourself and future generations, we suggest the following:

Display

- Display glass on sturdy, level surfaces and, if possible, in vitrines or glass-fronted wood display cases to protect against dirt and dust. Glass is typically not sensitive to vapors or off-gassing of wood or other case materials.
- Glass can be sensitive to fluctuations in temperature. Avoid hot-spot lighting, which can cause fractures and flaking.
- Dust works using soft brushes or cloths. If the work has no cracks or glaze, a slightly damp cloth can help clean the work. Do not wash repaired glass, antique glass or glass with painted surfaces.
- Museum wax can be used to help secure glass and ceramics to shelves and cases. This is especially important in regions prone to seismic activity. Soft wax can also mitigate against the gradual, incremental movement of objects on surfaces due to underground vibrations from subways, trains, underground equipment or normal building vibration. However, always consult with a conservator before using wax on archeological glass, glass with delicate surface textures, glazed works, or repaired works. Seek expert help to decide which wax can be safely removed from objects.

Handling

- Avoid unnecessary handling. When necessary, handle glass with clean, bare hands for the best grip. Latex gloves, which afford a better grip than cloth gloves, are also acceptable.
- Always use both hands when handling glass and never hold an object by a handle or a spout.

Maintenance

- Regularly examine the condition of each piece: check for flaking, cracks or abrasions to the surface.
- Have any damages or weaknesses repaired by a professional specializing in glass art. Highly valued pieces should also be professionally cleaned.
- Archeological glass is extremely delicate and prone to flaking. Have a professional clean and handle these works whenever possible.
- Never apply stickers or adhesive tape to a glass work as its removal can damage the surface.

Value & Insurance

- Keep all of your purchase invoices together in one file. Should you have a claim, this information will help your insurance company adjust the claim rapidly. Consider keeping duplicates in a separate storage place.
- Keep a record of articles and publications on the artist or works.
- Have your collection re-appraised on a regular basis and make sure your insurance policy reflects the new values.
- Keep images of each object in a safe place.

For more information on insuring your collection, please contact 888-873-6931.

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