

# Art Law



## What is Art Law?

Art law, also called cultural property law, is a body of law that protects the rights of artists and governs the art market, including regulating art dealers, consignments, commissions, and trading. Most law related to art law is international or federal law. However, some states with large art markets have their own state statutes ([Guha](#)). Art lawyers work with visual artists such as painters, illustrators, sculptors, and graphic designers.

Copyright is the most important right of an artist because it protects the artist from unauthorized reproductions of their work. The most significant copyright law in the United States is the [1976 Copyright Act](#). Art law also regulates the international art market, including distributing and registering art tiles. There are two ways to purchase fine art: direct purchase and consignment. Art purchases can be made directly from the artist or at an auction; consignments are purchases made for specific short-term exhibits. Art law also governs public and private art commissions, including issues related to ownership and client satisfaction ([Prowda](#)). Art case law in the United States is related to the [Commerce Clause](#).

Art law is closely related to entertainment law, which protects the rights of musicians, actors, filmmakers, writers, publishers, and producers. Art law encompasses intellectual property law, contracts law, torts, tax law, commercial law, and international law ([Guha](#)).

Art law has changed significantly in the twenty-first century as art dealing and art creation have increasingly become digital pursuits ([Prowda](#)).

## Where Do Art Lawyers Work?

### Private Sector

Large firms with international law, intellectual property, or art law divisions

Boutique firms in large art cities including New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Santa Fe, London, Paris, and Rome

Museums and art galleries

Auction houses

### Public Sector

Public museums and art galleries

National Endowment for the Humanities—[Careers](#)

General Services Administration—[Fine Arts](#)

[Other Public Art Commissions](#)

## What Classes Should I Take?

ADR-Mediation

Commercial Law

Constitutional Law

Copyright

Decedents' Estates

Intellectual Property Survey

International Business Transactions

Non-Profit Organization

Public International Law Seminar

Sales

U.S. Taxation of International Income

# Art Law Resources



## Resume Boosters for Art Law

Consider pursuing an [Art Law LLM or certificate program](#)

Pursue your *pro bono* hours at the [Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts](#)

Study a foreign language

Intern or extern with an art lawyer, or an entertainment lawyer to get experience working with artists

Work in an art museum, gallery, or auction house to gain related experience

## Professional Associations

### American Bar Association

All University of Memphis law students have free membership to the [American Bar Association](#). Their website provides routinely updated information and interest-specific career advice. Join different sections to find out what they offer. Check out the [Art and Cultural Heritage Law Committee of the International Law Section](#).

### American Society of International Law

The [Cultural Heritage and the Arts](#) section of the American Society of International Law provides resources for international lawyers. [Students can join for a reduced rate while in law school.](#)

### International Bar Association

The [Art, Cultural Institutions and Heritage Law Committee](#) of the International Bar Association provides support for art lawyers around the world. [Students can join for a reduced rate while in law school.](#)

## Art Law Links

### [“What Is Art? Answers from the Copyright Office”](#)

This article explores the intersection of art and copyright law. January 22, 2019, Federal Bar Association.

### [“10 Tips on Becoming an Art Lawyer”](#)

This article by Martin Wilson, the Chief General Counsel for Philips (a British art auction house), outlines ten tips for getting into the field of art law. June 20, 2019, LinkedIn.