

Buying art online can be both exciting and challenging. Buying from websites like eBay, Etsy, etc. can bring you genuine treasures or, unfortunately, fraudulent art. We always recommend partnering with an established gallery – even if you don't always purchase with them. Our gallery, like many others, is here to help you over the lifetime of your collecting. We're always happy to offer advice, help you find pieces and even evaluate other art you've purchased.

We also suggest you educate yourself about your collecting category, or any area of collecting you'd like to begin exploring. Animation art, like many collectible categories, is a complex category. Small details can greatly affect value and desirability. We'll try to cover some basics here.

Many pieces of animation art are truly unique – that is the joy of collecting in this area. But “Animation Art” comes from many sources, covers many types of art and may include significantly different authenticating material depending on the source. So, you should always try to have some awareness of what, exactly you are purchasing. “Animation Art”, for example could mean the 4-color transparencies used to print album covers: not hand-made, though slightly rare. Or, it could mean a hand-painted, screen-used Beauty and the Beast original production background sold by Sotheby's – they came with “presentation” cels that were create specifically for that sale – so the cels were not used in production, but are limited editions of one that were created from the original drawings (since cels were not used in the production): extremely expensive since Disney rarely releases feature production background art. Or, it could mean a rough storyboard taken home by an animator from a Hanna Barbera cartoon in the 1960's: this will have no studio COA, but excellent provenance if purchased from the animator's estate.

As you can tell from that last paragraph, research and a knowledge of the industry is extremely valuable. This is where partnering with an established, reputable gallery comes in. They (or we) will be able to identify that production code used on a Samurai Jack drawing or a Hanna Barbera cel. They will often be able to look at a piece of art and tell you if it is suspect or from the TV show versus the feature film, etc. They will be able to look at that Bill Watterson “original” for sale on eBay for \$100 and tell you that it's highly unlikely that it is legitimate. A good way to start on your own is to read books about the process of animating, biographies of animators or even books about the making of your favorite films. There are also some good books about animation art specifically. Feel free to contact us to ask about them.

It's also valuable to remember that original Animation Art is NOT created to be sold. It is created to be used in the making of animation. Therefore, some final drawings will have erased lines, some may lack uniform production notes and some cels may have large chunks of paint missing but may be valuable because they are all that exists of that feature. Remember, many studios used to wash the cels and reuse them - animators used to put them on the floor and play “slip and slide” on them and Warner Brothers purposefully burned many of theirs when they closed their warehouse.

COA's (Certificate's of Authenticity), letters of authenticity and studio seals are a complicated arena to navigate. The truth is that with modern technology anyone can make or fake any of these. Once you've been purchasing for a while, you'll come to recognize certain characteristics of both the art and any associated authenticating material and you can become comfortable looking at an item and determining whether you think it is legitimate or not. Until then, feel free to ask us questions. We know, for example, that Hanna Barbera has had a complicated life in the late 20th/early 21st century, much of it going through Ted Turner's hands, Cartoon Network and Warner Brothers. So, we know what the authenticating materials from those periods should look like. We know (as will other galleries) what characteristics an ASIFA-sold cel COA generally has.

Finally, there's the problem of authenticating the art itself. Since art can come from many sources (studios, animators and even storage units filled with company detritus), industry knowledge and experience winds up being the most valuable tools you can possess to authenticate art. Folks at galleries spend years gathering this knowledge. And you can too! It just takes a little time and effort. Pick a particular show or studio that you love. Study their production numbers, techniques. Learn some of the animator's names, some of their particular styles. Jot down the years of production, go out on the internet and create a folder on your computer with examples so you can compare art you see elsewhere. Pretty soon, patterns emerge. And you begin to recognize commonalities. We use all of these to authenticate items. In addition, when we DON'T see these, we become extremely cautious. Actually, as a matter of course, when we're skeptical, we don't buy. It's important to us to be able to point to a piece of art we sell and say, "these are the 15 reasons this art IS authentic."

This is why we are comfortable providing Charles Scott Gallery COA's with any piece we sell that does not have a Studio COA. We've vetted the art with all that experience and all that knowledge. Knowledge we're happy to share. We've spent many an hour chatting on the phone or emailing folks and no question is too small or too big. So, feel free to contact us at any time about any piece of art. If we don't know something we'll be happy to refer you to someone who does!