

THE CLARION LIST

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Interview of the Month with Fortress

The Clarion List continues our series of interviews with leading art companies. Whether you are learning about these companies for the first time or are already familiar with their services, we hope this series helps shed insight into each's distinct niche and makes the art services market in general more transparent.

This month we discussed art storage and collection protection with Kimberly Jones, Vice President at Fortress Miami, a museum quality art storage and services company. Learn about how to prepare your collection for hurricane season, why "after the storm" events can be more dangerous than "during the storm" events, and why this art storage company decided to open in hurricane-prone Florida over three decades ago.



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The Clarion List: After the recent catastrophic hurricanes around the US and Puerto Rico in 2017, the country, especially Floridians, have to get ready for 2018's hurricane season which starts in June. How can art collectors protect their collection?

Kimberly Jones: The absolute key is planning in advance of the season. I cannot stress this enough. I have seen it all in the 35 hurricane seasons that I have been doing this! There are so many things to think about and deal with prior to a storm, and trying to make last minute arrangements for your art collection is not only stressful, but risky. This is why Fortress'

Hurricane Preparedness Program, developed 35 years ago, is so popular and advantageous with collectors and their insurance carriers. It's important to establish a relationship with an art service and storage vendor such as Fortress in advance to secure space and to put a plan in place for the packing and removal of objects. Believe it or not, many collectors don't even have an inventory list of their collection. An inventory is helpful to the collector, the art service vendor, the house manager who might be tasked with making the preparations for the incoming storm, and of course, the insurance carrier. And, finally, plan ahead! Did I already mention that?!

CL: What steps can be taken at home?

KJ: Again, first and foremost, an inventory list is very important and should include photos or video. If for some reason the items cannot be removed from the home, then they should be off the ground and away from windows and doors if they can be moved safely. Many insurance carriers have art specialist departments that can assist with advice and recommendations like these.

Many homeowners think about the "during the storm" events such as wind and storm surge; however, it's the "after the storm" events that can actually cause more damage with lengthy power outages that leave homes without proper temperature and humidity control. As you know, Hurricane Season is during our hottest months. Make sure you have a plan for after the storm if you aren't able to activate your pre-storm removal of objects. Telecommunication and wifi outages can leave many home alarm systems with no connection, so security is at risk. Check with your alarm company about battery back-ups and various methods of communicating with the alarm system. Investigate the feasibility of a generator.

CL: When is it wise to consider professional art storage for an art collection? Is art insurance enough of a precaution for those who live outside of hurricane areas? How long should the collection be stored for?

KJ: When a collection has outgrown its wall space, professional art storage is a must. Storing works in a spare room or closet at the residence is never a good idea. A collector may be outside of hurricane areas, but there are other local exposures such as fire and flooding. There are even concerns about the safety of artworks within a home or apartment. I can't tell you how many times I've gotten a phone call from a collector because the unit above them had a water leak that came into their unit. This is more common than you think. Art insurance is a must for every collector in my opinion; it protects the art during all phases of movement and provides worldwide coverage.

A collection can be stored for as long as the need exists to protect it. Storage can be short-term for a few months or long-term, in some cases numerous years. It all depends on the collector's unique situation. Our business is preserving objects of all kinds for many years – removing stress and worry from collectors' minds.

CL: What should one look for when choosing an art storage facility?

KJ: A stand-alone, purpose-built facility is imperative. Working with a reputable, well-managed company is also just as important. You need a facility with proven history and a building that is approved and vetted by your insurance carrier. Honestly, the staff at the facility is a huge factor

and you want your vendor to have experience, consistency, and longevity with their employees and in this business.

Next, there are the obvious things such as proper climate control, fire protection, security, above ground level space, back-up generators, UV light protection, managed and controlled access, and full services including an on-site viewing gallery. In Florida, the facility must be hurricane construction compliant and proven.

What I can't stress enough is the importance of being aware of the "pop-ups." Art storage has become very popular, so you will see many new vendors coming onto the scene. Those of us who know what we are doing have been doing this a long time, are collectors and lovers of art ourselves, and are very involved with the local arts community.

CL: Tell us about Fortress and the services you offer. Why do you think your company is unique?

KJ: Fortress is unique because we are the pioneer of this industry. While we are a national vendor with locations in Miami, New York, and Boston, we remain a boutique-style provider that is laser focused on providing excellent client service. We have longevity in our staff that is unheard of in this day and age: a combined 150+ years of at-Fortress service and experience.

Although we are celebrating our 35th anniversary this summer, we still treat every client with hand-held care as if they were our first client. We are experts in our field, often asked to speak at seminars and other informational events. We provide real and feasible solutions drawn from our years of experience. Our facilities provide the safest environment for preservation because of their unique design and features. There is a reason why all of the major art insurance companies recommend Fortress as the best choice for storing their clients' collections.

CL: Why did you choose to open an art storage facility in hurricane-prone Florida several decades ago?

KJ: Our founders are collectors and saw a real need for art storage 35 years ago. Air-conditioned storage facilities didn't even exist at the time. Miami and South Florida have always held large and important collecting communities where valuable and significant artworks are faced with various environmental concerns. They chose Miami for their first facility so that they could literally build a "FORTRESS" to withstand the toughest weather and climate issues. They were true visionaries and they succeeded. We were providing art storage before anyone even knew what art storage was!

CL: How is/will tech affect the art storage & logistics industry?

KJ: Tech is affecting our lives in many ways, and the access to resources and information is beneficial to the art collecting community. There are numerous cloud-based art collection management software platforms that are easy to use and important for today's collector. From a logistics standpoint, having access to real time information on routes and traffic delays is key to providing safe and effective transit.

Plus, collectors have access to sites like The Clarion List – what is better than that?

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For more information about Fortress, check out one of their three office listings on The Clarion List at www.clarionlist.com or visit their website thefortress.com