

Work # 957: Notes on Artist Estate Planning
KofflerArts Panel February 8, 2026, with Bruce Eves,
Vera Frenkel, Katherine Harvey, and Kal Mansur.
Moderator: J. Anthony Baker

1) Let's talk about death. My name is Bruce Eves and I'm 73 years old. My dad dropped dead from a heart attack two months shy of his 66th birthday, and my Mum faded away from Alzheimer's at 91; so, I'm susceptible to both and am probably departing halfway between 66 and 91. I'd escaped the dropping dead part and have a stent, but I have prostate cancer; and what remains of the mind is up for you to decide . . .

2) It's important to have two executors with clearly defined objectives. The principal executor is tasked with taking charge of liquidating house and contents, and prior to death act as power-of-attorney and primary caregiver if necessary. The other (and perhaps with more challenging tasks) is entrusted with placing the body of artworks and archives in reputable institutions (both cultural and academic) locally, nationally and internationally.

3) The first is I think clearcut; the second is not – and as of this writing, I have an up-to-date will and have appointed both executors (as there is not a principal art dealer to handle the task of work placement). I think it goes without saying that trust and intimate knowledge of one's interests, background, and desires should be top of mind when choosing to engage executors.

4) A question arises: If much of what I've done as an artist is archival in nature; by which I mean my own life events are the kernels leading to visual art and spoken word projects; it seems to me that my executor has a bit of a problem – how to separate life from art?

5) There has never been a separate, off-site, studio space. I've commandeered a small room in my house for storage and rough Ikea shelving serves the purpose. Everything that's printed is stored in acid-free boxes (face-to-face and back-to-back), and everything that has not been printed (the majority) is stored on DVDs. I could use some large format flat files, but they're *tres* expensive! Everything is numbered and dated. I stick to standard sizes to avoid the horror of custom work allowing for frames to be recycled.

6) What would be sort of nice is to outlive all of my beneficiaries so I could use my vast eye-watering wealth to set up a little foundation to support (rather narrowly defined) queer expression. But I know nothing about how one goes about any of that, but it's something I'm giving serious thought to . . .

7) There are known fake Basquiat's, Rothko's, Herrings, in all likelihood fake General Idea's. The list goes on. Given AI's ability to replicate anyone's work that is at all formulaic (like the above mentioned), anyone who does not have a catalogue raisonné increasingly is being looked at with suspicion. This makes an estate's executor job all the more difficult. If you don't have a catalogue raisonné, now is as good a time as any to start compiling one while your faculties are more or less intact.

8) When compiling your catalogue, it's also helpful to remember (and I realize this is going to be difficult to hear) but your every fart was not a work of unparalleled genius – so it's also a good time to put on your “What Was *She Thinking?*” hat and start culling. Last year I culled approximately a third from my catalogue. Nothing has been physically destroyed, just segregated. I truly believe it's not counter-productive to beat up on yourself once in awhile.

9) Another handy tool, used by Cindy Sherman, Martin Creed, and (I think) Gerhard Richter for those awful vomity-looking paintings of his – is to number everything.

10) In 1973 I received a Project Grant from the Canada Council, when I was still an art student. At that time the application was a single page, both sides, and the info required was scant by today's standards plus the standard twenty slides. The project was meant as a spoof – mostly to make fun of the CCs pomposity – but the project would have been impossible to even begin: Break Every Record in the Guinness Book of World Records, and the application was written with a crayon . . . I got the money! The point of this is years later when I began keeping careful records of my work, I wrote to the council asking for a copy of the application to see what I'd submitted. All the records had been destroyed. Because it was student work (worthless in my opinion) my record keeping began with the earliest thing I could find, so my catalogue raisonné begins with Work # 29. I'm now up to Work # 962.

11) When compiling a catalogue raisonné never, ever, back-date, not because it's cheating (it is), but eventually you're going to get caught – and that throws everything else you've done into question. I know first-hand of a Canadian artist (they shall remain unnamed) who were notorious for this in order to remain on or ahead of trend (sad and desperate, I think). They eventually got found out and they were left not undamaged.

12) Rather than back-dating and as a compromise from a cull (if the work is salvageable through reworking) keep the same catalogue number but add "revisited" as part of the title and assign along with the original date a second new completion date. This also works when the work was just a written idea but only completed years later.

February 2, 2026