

Recovering Cultural Heritage

A Case Study

We were retained to assist with the recovery of a WWII-era bronze sculpture believed to be displaced. The ownership history was fragmented and obscured by decades of incomplete records and jurisdictional changes, requiring meticulous research to reconstruct the chain of custody.

Objectives

Create a defensible chain of custody

Research and produce audit-ready documentation

Establish USPAP-compliant FMV

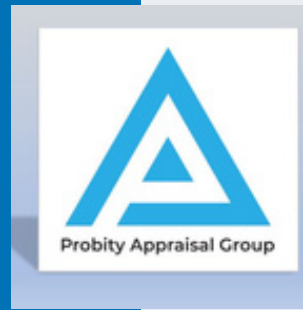
Provide essential support for legal repatriation.

Coordinate with counsel and agencies

Work across jurisdictions for resolution

Minimize litigation risk

Employ strategies for a confidential, evidence-based resolution



“An evidence-based valuation and clear provenance narrative made resolution straightforward.” - Probity CEO Jessica I. Marschall

Solutions

Chronological provenance timeline

Meticulous archival research, multilingual document review, and photographic evidence analysis.

USPAP appraisal

FMV with relevant comparables and clear effective date

Cross-border collaboration

Communication with attorneys and international authorities

Confidential negotiations

A diplomatic resolution and a successful return of item

RESULTS

Provenance Verified

Probity provided the documentation to the evidentiary standards required for repatriation.

Property Returned

Our work enabled the successful return of the piece to the heirs of its pre-war owner.

Client Satisfaction

The heirs valued our evidence-driven approach and the respectful return of the sculpture.

What Sets Us Apart

- Global expert network and multilingual research capability.
- Track record in multi-jurisdiction recoveries.
- Deep understanding of cultural property norms.

Conclusion

By pairing rigorous provenance research with a USPAP-compliant appraisal, Probity delivered a clear path to lawful repatriation and a swift, low-friction resolution. Our coordinated, documentation-first process reduced risk for all parties and preserved stakeholder relationships. This playbook now guides similar recoveries across jurisdictions and timelines.

Delivering Defensible Valuations

A Case Study

We were engaged to appraise a rare Asian ceramic collection for donation to a cultural institution. The collection contained historically significant pieces spanning multiple dynasties.

Objectives

Verify provenance and authenticity

Support museum-grade documentation with scholarly/archival support across multiple dynasties

Document condition factors

Apply market-accurate comparables and document factors that materially affect value

Establish USPAP-compliant FMV

Support a qualified appraisal and institutional acceptance

Deliver an audit-ready IRS package

Minimize review time and avoid adjustments

Solutions

Conduct archival and scholarly research

Completed verification using archival records, scholarship, and prior exhibition/ownership research.

Item-level condition assessments

Conducted condition assessments documenting restorations, wear, and other value-affecting factors.

Define scope and effective dates

Analyzed market value using top-tier auction comparables.

Complete Form 8283

Aligned to IRS and USPAP requirements and coordinated with the donor and the museum

“When the record is clear and the valuation is defensible, IRS review becomes straightforward.” - Probity CEO Jessica I. Marschall

RESULTS

FMV Established

Probity concluded a \$1.2 million Fair Market Value for the collection.

Audit-ready Documentation

Our fully compliant documentation was accepted by the IRS without adjustment.

Smooth Donation Process

Our system enabled a facile process for both the cultural institution and the donor.

Why Clients Trust Us

- 100 percent IRS acceptance rate on high-value donations
- USPAP compliance and adherence to IRS requirements for qualified appraisals
- Experience with multi-million dollar collections.

Conclusion

Combining provenance scholarship, comparables, and condition analysis, Probity produced a defensible FMV accepted by the IRS without adjustment. This methodology was repeated successfully on a second high-value collection, demonstrating consistency and reliability. This framework scales to complex, multi-object donations where accuracy and audit-readiness are essential.

Preventing Costly Mistakes

A Case Study

A prominent collector approached us regarding the potential acquisition of a \$500,000 artwork with a compelling backstory. The seller provided limited provenance records and a certificate of authenticity, but certain inconsistencies raised concerns for our client. The collector requested our expertise to verify the piece before finalizing the transaction.

Objectives

Verify authenticity

Use documentary and scientific evidence to verify authenticity before purchase.

Reconstruct provenance

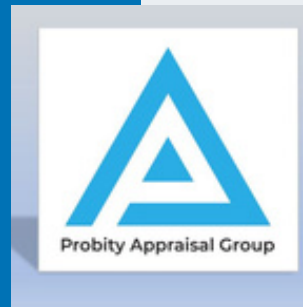
Identify gaps inconsistent with the claimed creation date.

Assess market risk

Analyze pricing liquidity, reputational exposure tied to authenticity.

Prevent financial loss

Provide impartial acquisition advice to prevent client from financial loss



“Our job is to turn uncertainty into a clear, defensible yes or no.”
- Probity CEO Jessica I. Marshall

Solutions

Provenance analysis

Researched ownership and auction history and documented gaps and anomalies.

Scientific testing

Operated forensic ink analysis and pigment testing to confirm period consistency.

Market risk review

Analyzed pricing, red-flag indicators, and resale implications.

Acquisition advisory

Recommended a clear no-go supported by evidence packet.

RESULTS

Forgery Confirmed

Ink chemistry did not match the purported period.

Financial Loss Avoided

Client halted the \$500,000 purchase, avoiding financial loss and reputational risk.

Defensible Documentation

Future collecting decisions and dealer negotiations supported by evidence

Client Benefits

- Avoidance of high-value acquisition losses.
- Access to specialized forensic and market expertise.
- Confidential, impartial evaluations that stand up to scrutiny.

Conclusion

Combining provenance scholarship, targeted forensic testing, and market analysis, Probity prevented costly acquisitions before money changed hands. Our impartial, documentation-forward process reduced client risk and delivered clear, defensible recommendations. The same framework was later successfully used in a similar case in which certainty was critical.