

# Sound Advice



## Pablo Picasso's Estate Legacy or The Great Procrastinator

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The name **Pablo Picasso** is one of, if not the most recognized, names in the Western art world. Anyone who has had even a casual introduction to art history can cite his most famous works of art, two of which appear in this article. In this brief look at one of the most iconic artists of the 20th century, we will examine just how long a shadow Picasso still casts over the art world. We will also witness why Picasso's life has become a perfect example of "what not to do" about your estate plan and what happens if you choose to ignore what happens to your family when you die.

**P**icasso was one of the most prolific artists of the 20th century. When he died in 1973 at age 91, he left behind a legacy of some 45,000 artworks, and all the complications of licensing the use of his artwork, authenticating his work, protecting it from countless forgers. He also died intestate, never taking the time to write his will.

Perhaps it was a deliberate choice. Perhaps it was the inevitable, given his life story. While Picasso was a prolific artist, he was equally adept as a lady's man. He was renowned for his multiple relationships, which include three marriages, several mistresses and ultimately fathered 4 children with three separate women. The family, writer Deborah Trustman noted at the time, "resembles one of Picasso's constructions – wives, mistresses, legitimate and illegitimate children, (his youngest born 28 years after his oldest) and grandchildren, all strung on an axis, like the backbone of a figure with unmatched parts."

At the time of his passing in 1973, his works included 1885 paintings, 1228 sculptures, 7089 drawings, 30,000 prints, 150 sketchbooks and 3222 ceramic works. There were also a vast number of illustrated books, copper plates, and tapestries. His accumulated wealth allowed him to own 2 chateaus and

three other homes. Picasso was also an itinerant artist. He lived and worked in 20 different places from 1900 to 1973. His estate included \$1.3 million in gold, as well as stocks and bonds, although the total value was never disclosed. In 1980 his estate was appraised at \$250 million, but experts indicated that the true value was more likely in the billions. Picasso had kept many of his paintings off the art market since he had no need to sell the work. He also collected and exchanged the work of many other famous artists, such as Henri Matisse. Picasso, a Spaniard by birth, had lived and worked in France for most of his life. At the time of his death, the taxes and duties owing to the French state were paid, not by cash, but by an arrangement in the form of a portion of his artworks and collection. As we will discover, this turned out very well for the French government. These same works now form the basis of the art collection of the Musee Picasso in Paris.

In 2003 his relatives inaugurated a museum dedicated to his birthplace of Malaga, Spain known as Museo Picasso Malaga. Also, Museo Picasso in Barcelona Spain features many of his early works produced while living and studying in Spain. It seems that the French and Spanish were quick



Old Guitarist, Pablo Picasso, 1904



La Reve, Pablo Picasso, 1932

to realize the immense value of the artistic icon that Picasso had become. In 2015, one of Picasso's paintings, **Les Femmes d'Algers**, or The Women of Algiers, who his daughter Maya watched him paint, sold at auction for \$179 million US or about \$233 million Canadian. In other words, almost the same value as his original estate. Imagine the true value of all the tourism dollars generated in France and Spain by Picasso in the past 50 years. Now imagine how much more will flow through the public coffers in the years to come.

Not to be excluded, art thieves have not missed out on this bonanza. More of Picasso's paintings have been stolen than the paintings of any other artist, with the official Art Loss Register listing 550 Picasso works as missing.

On a personal note, if you happen to be in Vancouver between now and

Oct 2nd this year and would like to see Picasso's art, be sure to see the Picasso exhibition at The Vancouver Art Gallery.

So what, may you ask, is my point? Really, what has been lost? It seems that the art world is doing fine selling, collecting, reselling and recovering Picasso's works. The French government and Paris tourism will benefit for many, many years to come. The initial cost of resolving the six-year quarrel over the estate cost \$30 million, so it seems the legal profession has also benefited. The remaining heirs will almost certainly continue to benefit from the various licensing's fees and the sale proceeds of Picasso's works. So again I ask, what's the problem?

Perhaps we should ask that question of his former wives, children and grandchildren and perhaps even some of his long-time mistresses.

How do they feel? What if Picasso had left instructions that left all of them some portion of his estate? Would the families be better off emotionally? Would they have been closer? We will never know.

Technically, it is often said that if you don't leave a will, you die intestate. But what that doesn't say is, that despite the fact that there is no will, there is still a process to decide on who gets what. In each province in Canada, legislation exists that divides a deceased person's estate into portions, all determined by a prearranged formula. In other words, there is a kind of will, just not the one you want. It will almost always disappoint or leave out certain family or loved ones, or reduce their inheritance to a fraction of what you might have intended. That sounds like such a heavy price to pay for procrastination or neglect.

By contrast, if you are interested in how a well-crafted estate plan can benefit you and your family, you may wish to read a couple of examples of prior issues of *Sound Advice*.

- [Ada Staples story](#)


- [Warren Buffett/Bill and Melinda Gates story](#)

**Not convinced?** You may want to read these other examples of *Great Estate Planning Failures*:

[Harold Ballard](#) and [Babe Ruth](#) stories

If you or someone in your family would like to discuss your estate planning wishes, please call us. The financial planners in our office are trained to help you identify many of the issues or opportunities in a well-crafted estate plan. If you don't currently have a trusted legal advisor, we can provide you with referrals to lawyers who specialize in this area of legal counsel. We look forward to hearing from you.

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