



Couriering Intensive:
Essential Packing, Crating, and Courier Skills

Presented by:
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Courier? But why?

Winona Packer, Registrar, The Morgan Library &
Museum

Why a courier?

- A courier is representative that accompanies a shipment of art and/or an exhibition from one institution to another. Usually the lending party assigns a courier to a shipment
- Couriers are needed for many reasons: The fragility of the loan, its monetary or cultural value, per the lending museum's policy, and/or the loan(s) installation/de-installation requirements
- Trips can range from a 30 minute ride to more complex shipping arrangements, traversing states, international borders, and via multiple conveyances

Who is the courier:

- The industry standard is: registrars, conservators, curators, and/or senior preparators
- Must have the following skills: knowledge of packing requirements and methods, condition reporting and associated terminology, the ability to maintain a calm demeanor and professionalism, and be able to problem solve when needed
- Familiarity with airlines, brokers, customs procedures, and various modes of transportation is a plus
- Being multi-lingual is too!

Role of the Courier:

- Complete or review condition report before the loan(s) are packed. Include report in the crate/packing, in the space provided.
- Witness packing of object(s), mounting apparatus if required, and/or supplies that may be needed for installation.
- Travel with art and/or exhibition from one institution to another via truck, air freight, boat, or combination of some or all. Courier will be accompanied by a shipping agent, or supervisor, for travel via air.
- Confirm delivery and witness secure storage of the crate(s) at borrowing institution. Crate(s) must acclimatize for at least 24 hours.



Role of the Courier:

- Installation: Oversee unpacking, condition reporting, installation, and confirm security requirements if applicable (alarm, leash, bell plates, specific hardware).
- De-install: Witness de-installation, condition report, pack and confirm secure storage of packed crate until its release from borrowing institution.
- Travel with crates and/or exhibition for the return: via truck, air freight, boat or combination or some or all. Courier will be accompanied by a shipping agent, or supervisor, for travel via air.
- Some situations may require two couriers: large exhibition and/or hand carries are examples. Others may require armed security. Always fun.

The courier should have:

- Identification (passport or other form of state issued ID)
- Copy of condition report and a copy of the packing instructions
- SNACKS. Warm Clothes. Comfortable shoes. Open mind.
- Trip sheet with:
 - Contact information of registrar and associated staff at borrowing institution
 - Schedule of installation or de-installation
 - Timing for pick up or release
 - Hotel address and reservation number
 - Flight details and confirmation number if applicable

Packing and Crating Objects for Transit: Basic Approaches

Meg Colbert, Director of Production, Boxart, Inc.



Packing Objects for Transit: Main Concerns

- Communication
 - Have the needs of the object been clearly defined?
 - Are all parties using the same vocabulary?
 - Is the packing plan recorded and available to the relevant parties?
- Ease of packing and unpacking
 - Always imagine the least experienced user
 - Keep the packing solution as simple as possible
 - Minimize the number of “loose” parts in the packing solution(s)
- Appropriate materials and methods for the object
 - Make sure the packing solution is specific to the object

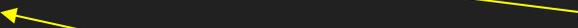
Packing Objects for Transit: Risks and Solutions

Risks:

- Vibration and shock
- Environmental exposure
- Bad handling
- Loss or theft

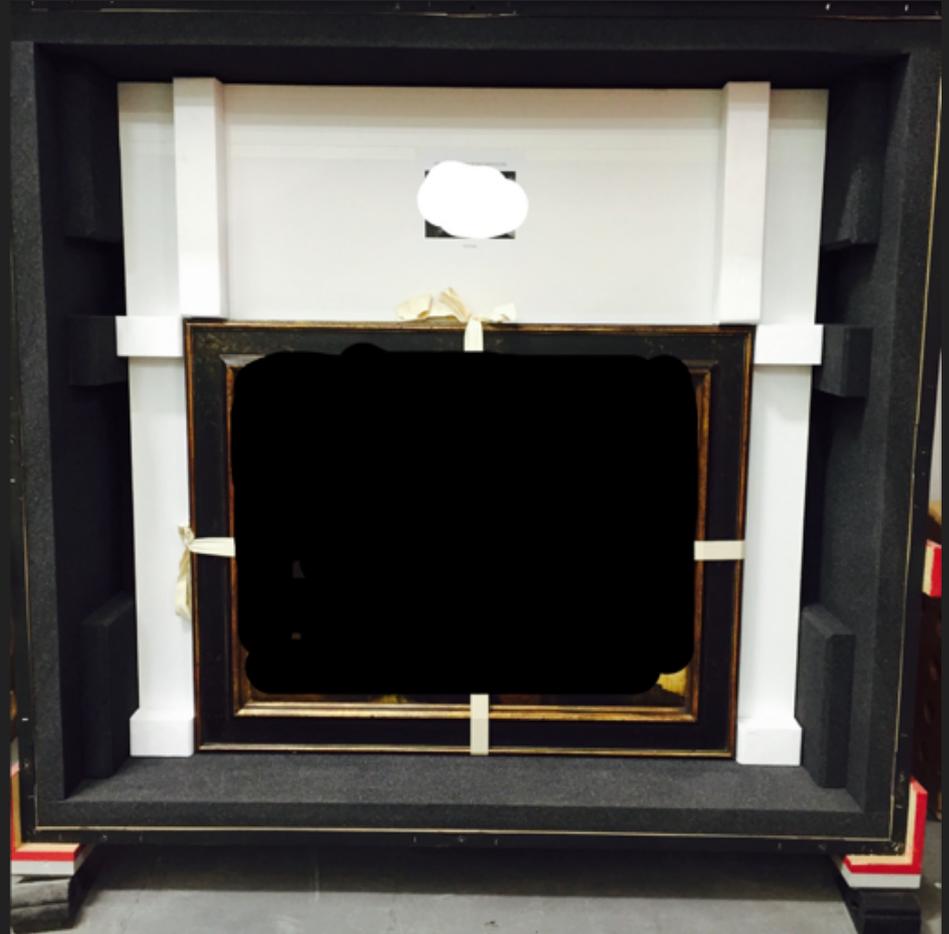
Solutions:

- Appropriate foam/cushioning
- Well-constructed crates, oversight
- Clear packing, instructions, and oversight
- Highly visible crates, clear marks, oversight

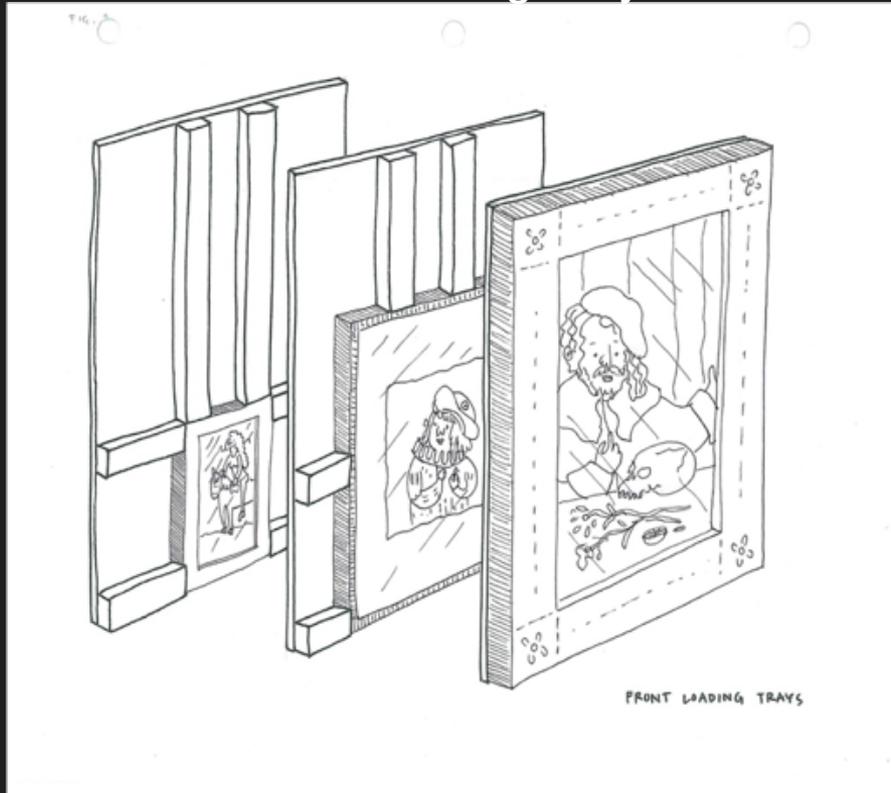


Packing Solutions: Trays

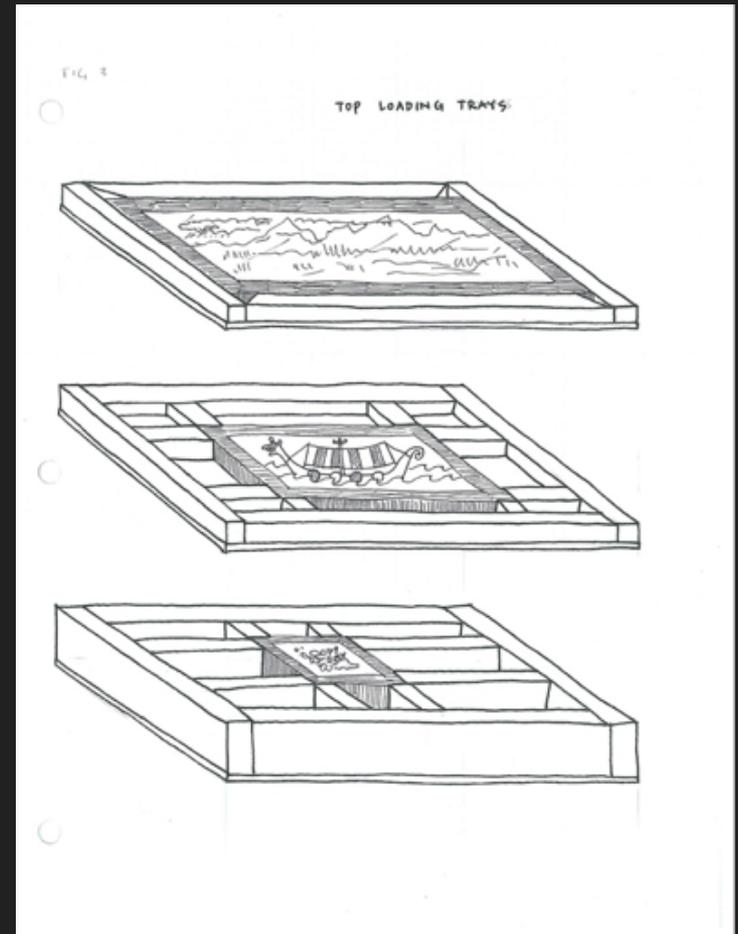
- Allows multiple objects of different sizes to be packed into the same crate
- Objects can ride in their hanging orientation (front-loading), or they can ride flat (top-loading)
 - Objects that ride flat are generally:
 - Unframed works on paper
 - Pastel, charcoal, and graphite artworks
 - Books
 - Portfolios
- Trays can be made from foam-core, cardboard, or archival cardboard
- Pads on trays are usually made from Ethafoam



Front-loading Trays

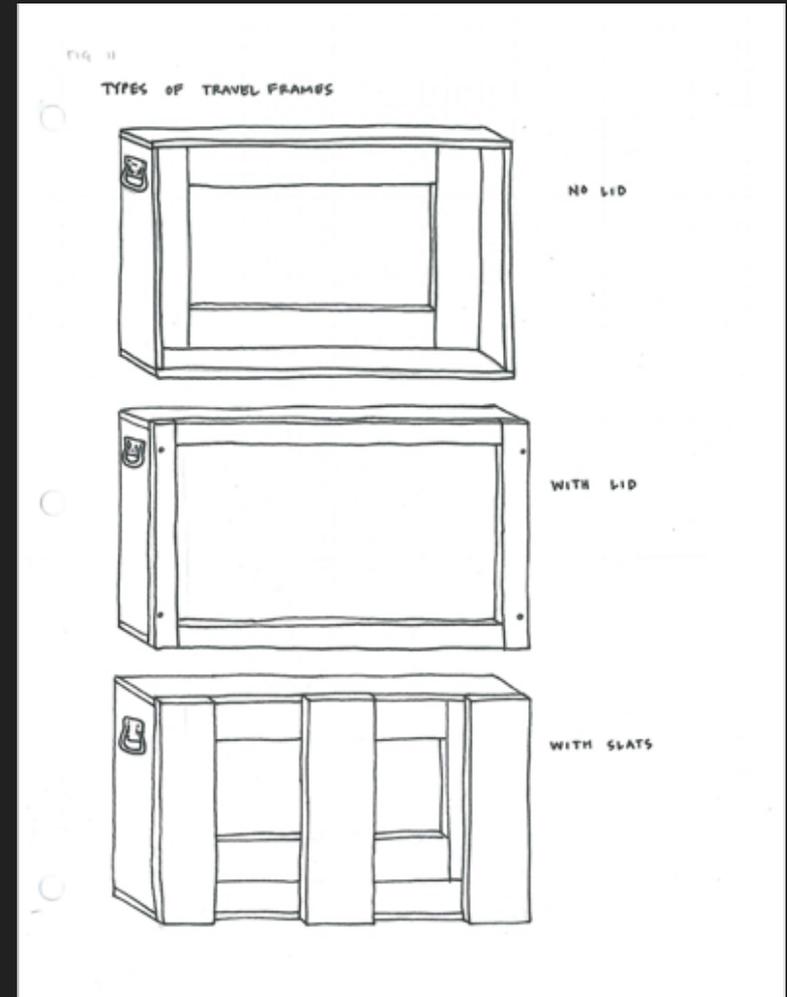


Top-loading Trays



Packing Solutions: Travel Frames

- Travel frames can have lids, slats, or no lid treatment at all
- Allow artwork to be moved around without direct handling
- Object can be mounted into travel frame using Oz Clips or cleats
- Travel frame can be wrapped in plastic for transit



Packing Solutions: Types of Sculpture Packing

Simple Pad Packing



Cavity Packing



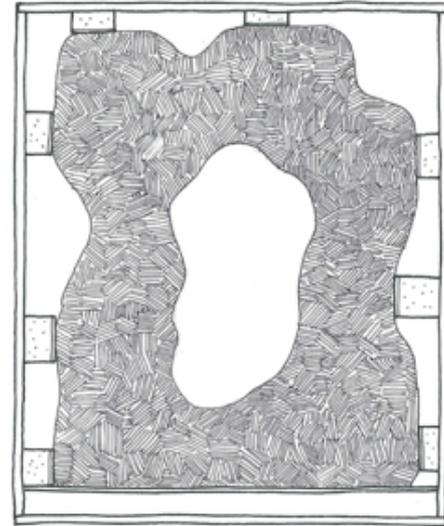
Brace Packing



Simple Pad Packing for Sculpture

- Sculptures with relatively regular surfaces can be held in place in the crate using only pads
- Generally, pads will be made of Ethafoam and will have some interleaving material applied to their surface, such as Tyvek or Volara

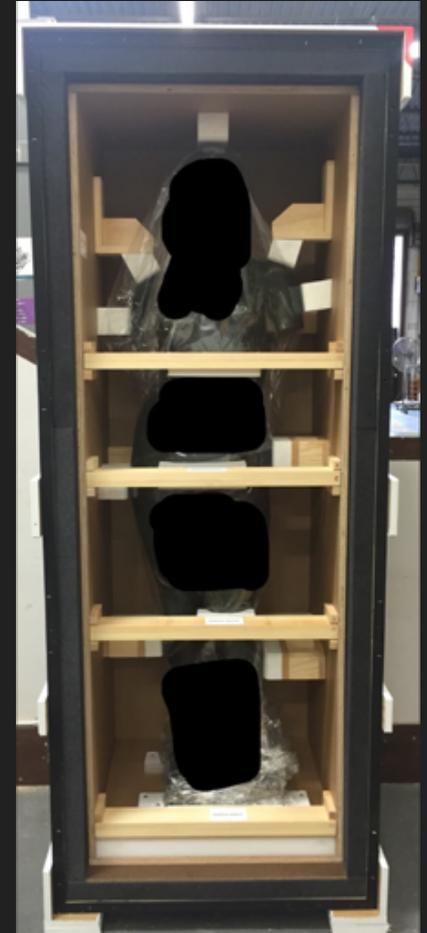
FIG. 20



SCULPTURE PACK WITH NO BRACES

Brace Packing

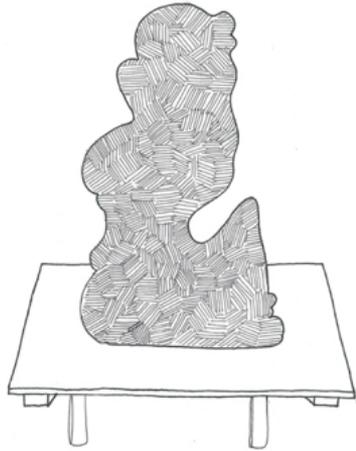
- If an object has an irregular shape or delicate surface, brace packing using wood braces faced with pads are a good packing solution
- The object should never directly contact the wood of the braces
- Using the artwork's existing mounting hardware is a good way to help hold the object in place while minimizing the number of places the object has to be touched
- It should always be a goal to “touch the object as little as possible”
- Choose areas that are safest to contact with pads
- Drape the artwork and wrap the pads to provide protection against burnishing



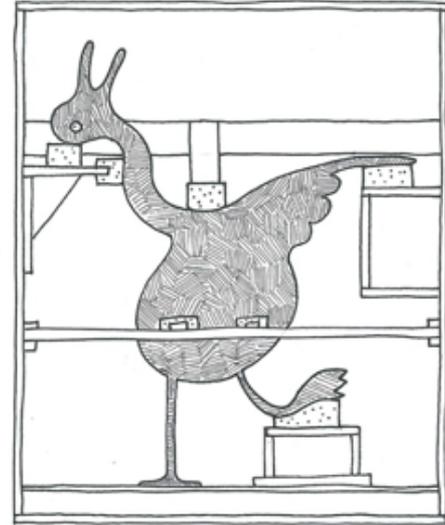
Brace Packing

A sculpture tray allows a heavy or fragile object to be moved without handling it directly

- Braces can be screwed in or tracked in.
- Tracked braces are ideal for an object travelling to multiple venues
- Pads are generally made from Ethafoam, and can be wrapped or faced with a variety of materials depending on the object's needs



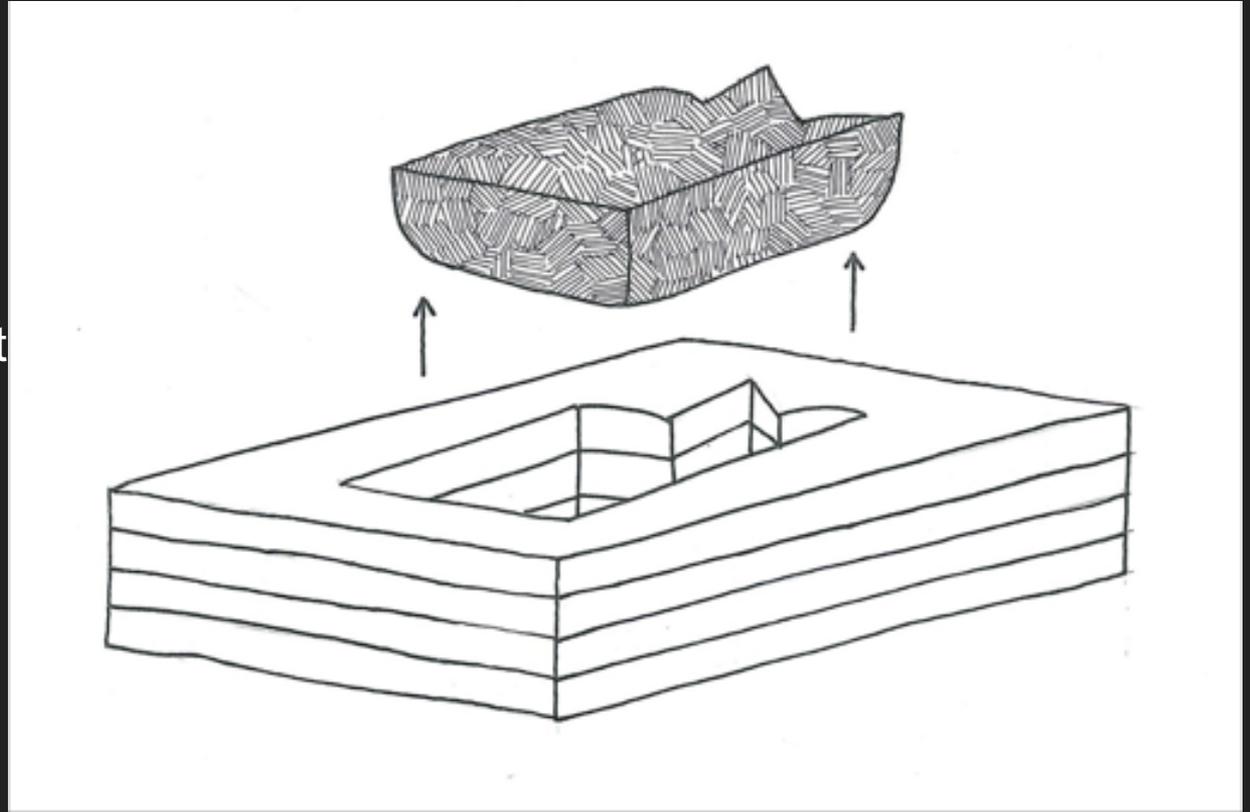
SCULPTURE TRAY



SCULPTURE PACK WITH BRACES

Cavity Packing

- Cavity packing is a good solution for very fragile objects such as ceramic and glass
- Usually, the cavity is cut from U-foam or Esterfoam
- The foam is cut to contour to the shape of the object
- A more general shape can be cut, and excess space can be filled using archival tissue



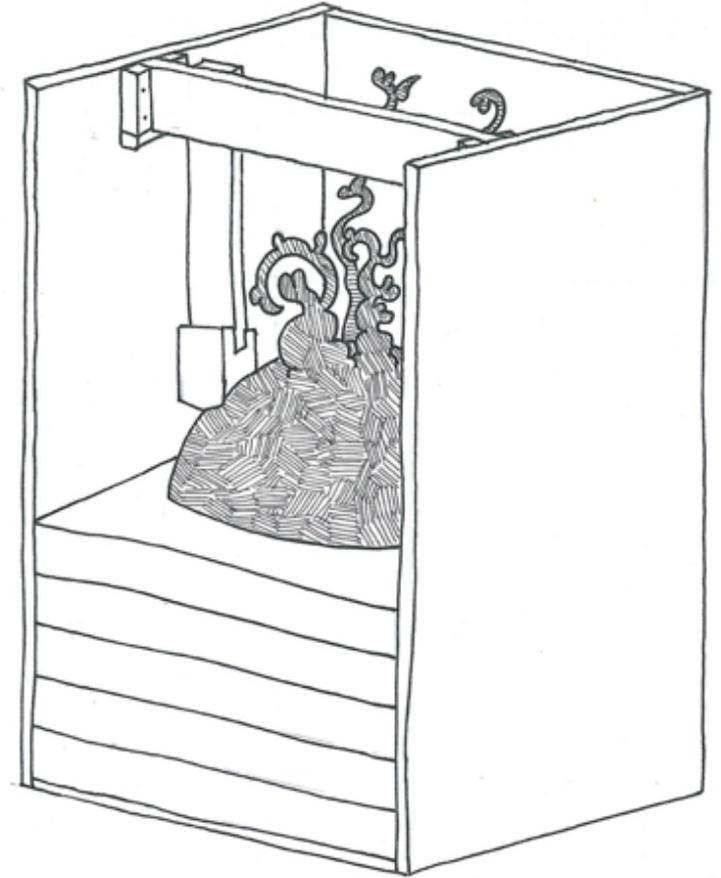
Cavity Packing

- It is ideal to provide hand space around the cavity to encourage safe handling of the object
- Cavity packs can be lined with an interleaving material, such as soft Tyvek or muslin



Hybrid Packing Methods

- Be aware that your object may have multiple needs for transport or storage
- Be open to mixing packing solutions!
- There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to packing
- Think outside the box!



HALF CAVITY PACK

Packing Objects for Transit: Take-aways

- Record successful packing solutions...and unsuccessful ones!
- Focus on clear communication in the form of clear packing instructions or diagrams.
 - Imagine the least experienced user!
- Be open to new approaches to packing your object...
- ...But always put the safety of your object as the most important concern!
- Do not store your objects in crates that are fully lined with thermal insulating foam.
- Collaborate with all the parties involved in a crating project and share information



Couriering: What Could Go Wrong When Traveling with Artwork?

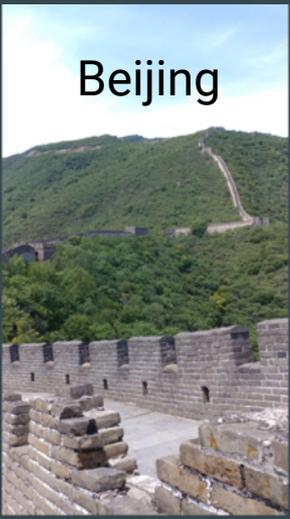
Case Study and
Tips from the Road

Sara C. Smith

The Leiden Collection



Shanghai



Beijing



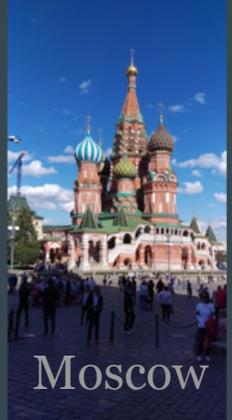
Tokyo



Istanbul



St. Petersburg



Moscow

AMSTERDAM



Budapest

Los Angeles

London

Paris

Sometimes there can be interesting and unusual ways of getting artwork into museums or palaces,
...particularly with older institutions
and “unique” venues.



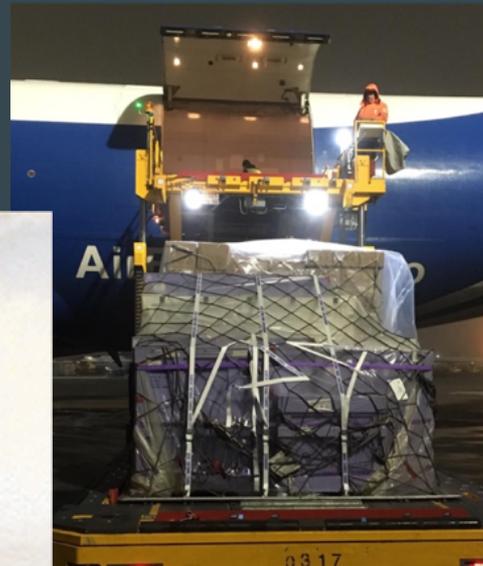
Photo Courtesy of George Bisacca.



Photo Courtesy of George Bisacca.



Photo Courtesy of George Bisacca.



Case Study: By Hook or by Crook

An oversize crate is traveling across Europe and has to travel by freighter to Frankfurt and then trucked for 12 hours.

You arrive to the museum at 9:00 PM after driving all day.



You are naturally tired, hungry, and jetlagged.

Case Study: By Hook or by Crook

But wait...The crate doesn't fit!

The normal means of getting to the exhibition space where the crate will rest and acclimate is to reach an elevator through the basement and then travel up to the exhibition space.

Unfortunately there was a mismeasurement and your crate will not fit through an interior doorway and can't leave the basement.



...Let's stay calm and weigh our options.

Considerations

Safety

What is the safest way to get from point A to point B with this crate without tipping and tilting?
Consider orientation and the medium.

Climate

How can we do this in an expeditious way so that exposure is limited and we can allow the artwork to properly acclimatize?

Distance

What is the best solution that limits unnecessary travel and handling?

Security

What is the most discreet and secure way to move this crate? Will you have to move through public spaces?

Case Study: By Hook or by Crook (cont'd)

Options:

1. Uncrate the painting and carefully carry it through basement to the exhibition space.

2. Keep the crate in the basement storage area for 24 hrs until it has acclimatized and then uncrate the artwork and carry into exhibition space.

3. The registrar suggests we use a separate entrance that is not accessible directly by truck. We would have to use a scissor lift and gently hoist the crate onto the portico of the museum. This location would give direct access to the exhibition gallery through that entrance.

Solution

Because the crate would travel the shortest distance and this method is similar to using a lift gate on a truck. We transport the crate across the liftgate of the truck onto a scissor lift, slowly lifting the crate up to the portico. It then slides off the lift and is wheeled in.

This is the way this museum moves all oversize art.

Reaction

NERVOUS!!! Naturally! But you must keep your cool and think clearly.

In this instance, you must trust the museum and of course discuss every single movement before you give consent to this course of action.



We made it happen!



Photo Courtesy of George Bisacca.



Photo Courtesy of George Bisacca.

This is another example but on a much grander scale!!!

What to do when damage occurs on a courier trip:

Stop all movement unless the piece is in eminent danger. Remove any immediate danger.

Document any damage as best you can with photos.

Include your photos and notes with the condition report when you report the incident to the borrowing and/or lending institution.



Write some brief notes about the incident, who was present, the circumstances, conditions, and the next steps that you have discussed and decided to take with whoever is with you.

You will have time because when something is damaged everyone freezes.

Examples:

- ★ If a forklift chips a corner on the bottom of the crate or signs of rough handling.
- ★ If you receive your pallet in the airport warehouse and straps are broken and crates are turned over, stop everything and document. Proceed with caution and report the situation to the Borrower or Lender when you arrive.
- ★ If you open the back of the truck and the straps are broken and crates have shifted or fallen over.
- ★ A crate falls or is dropped while being handled.
- ★ A foreign substance is on your crate.
- ★ Your crate looks tampered with in ANY WAY. (Security tape or metal straps are broken, bolts look worn or stripped, bolts or screws are missing.)

It is important for you to see your crates packed so you can tell the difference.

Pro Tips!

- ★ In some countries there is no cargo screening process, all cargo must be x-rayed unless it is oversize.
- ★ Wear comfortable shoes. This seems like common sense but sometimes you may be standing around for hours waiting to build your pallet or, on the other side, waiting for customs to clear your shipment so you can get your pallet and move on.
- ★ Bring a snack if you know you can get “hangry.” This is an often overlooked detail and it is super important for long hours.



This is a crate going through an x-ray machine in Shanghai airport.

Pro Tips!

- ★ When in the airport warehouse, always speak through your agent. If you have a question or a request, first speak to your agent/representative. They will advocate for you with the airline supervisors. They use their relationships to expedite your shipment, stay on schedule, and manage any specific wishes or concerns you have.



Photo Courtesy of George Bisacca.

Pro Tips!

- ★ Make sure you know if security will stay with your packed pallet or if it will be transported to an area to be monitored until time to move plane-side. You should have everyone's phone number. Photos may be prohibited so ask before you take any.
- ★ In the cargo warehouses at Schiphol in Amsterdam, you are required to wear safety shoes the agent provides. **Make sure you have socks!** 🧦 😄
- ★ At some museums, there is no dock. If you have to unload on the street, it's always nice to know that before you get there.



Pro Tips!

- ★ You might consider bringing an extra phone, particularly if you are going on a long trip abroad. Certainly an external charging battery is recommended: Anker PowerCore Speed 10000 QC, Qualcomm Quick Charge 3.0 Portable Charger (this is not a promotion for this product.)



- ★ Always have all of the contact info for your POC at the airport, at the institution, and from your own institution: names, phone #, email, address etc WRITTEN DOWN. Do not %100 rely on your phone, anything could happen.

& MOST
IMPORTANTLY...

HAVE FUN!!!!!!



Photo Courtesy of Katy Spurrell.

Me with my new friend in Abu Dhabi.