

# Handling and Packing Artwork with Care

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## Packing

- 2-D
  - Unframed WOP (works on paper)
    - Rolled
      - Works such as Digital prints, lithography, serigraphs, etc. on low enough paperweight, can be transported, rolled up, in a tube
    - Flat
      - Works of smaller scale, heavy paper weight, or print/drawn media that are susceptible to distortion of paper substrate, should be packed flat.
      - Using glassine framing corners, art can be secured to backing board, and then plastic wrapped.
      - This can lend well to sending many prints, on backing boards, in a singular box.
  - Multiple
- Framed WOP
  - Hinged
    - If artwork is hinged, or IF YOUR UNSURE, it is best practice to pack artwork, face up and make sure that the art travels in an upright, correct orientation, or flat.
  - Charcoal/unfixed dry media
    - Charcoal, and similar dry media is susceptible to vibration, causing the media to “fall” to the bottom of the frame or onto the glazing, requiring the unframing of work, or delicate conservation (by yourself or others) to not mar the art surface.
  - Matted

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- Matted works, that are not hinged, can be manipulated, packed and traveled in any orientation. NOTE: Artwork is best traveled in its displayed orientation, although there are always exceptions.
- Paintings
  - Unframed
    - Wet/Delicate
      - Is the painting, and oil painting and still wet, impasto, or possibly Tempura painting? if so, you likely have a surface that can be damaged on contact with poly. This situation is remedied by either shadow boxing\* the work of using specialty packing like silicone release paper.
      - It is best to ensure that your paintings are properly dried, and sealed before shipping, however it is understandable that deadlines make this difficult. Don't ship your work, only to have it arrive ruined!
    - Dry/stable
      - You have a properly sealed painting, or dried acrylic. These can be packed as is. Your material choice is always a case by case basis, but reliably, usually wrapping in plastic, and then bubble wrap will suffice. If the work is traveling via shipping company, then a cardboard slipcase\* at minimum will help insure a safe journey.
  - Framed
    - Is the artwork glazed (has glass on the frame)? This is important, as glass breaking in transit could damage the art. This shouldn't stress you out, just ensure that the art travels upright, and not flat (Charcoal being an exception to this rule).
    - Frames come in all shapes and sizes, so we will diverge here.
      - Standard/smooth
        - Standard frames, glazed or unglazed, are great! they make packing a breeze! Just make sure the frame is proud of the painting surface, and then proceed to plastic wrap, and pack as you wish!
      - Ornate/gilded

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- This is a loaded category. essentially, the process is the same, unless the frame is extra ornate, or delicate. If you are unsure, then packing face up is a better option, and do not make the wrap too tight, to avoid damaging delicate/thin areas. Ornate frames are something that i've seen damaged, and damaged myself more than any other art. Extra consideration to padding out areas of the frame, for travel are recommended.
- 3-D
  - Fragile (scary, the item is fragile and you don't want it to break)
    - glass
      - My go-to for most fragile glass (not heavy) us to use tissue to make little pillows, and protect the surface, before loosely sealing in bubble wrap.
      - If the object has many delicate protrusions, then there are other ways, but the possibility of requiring a proper crate increases.
    - ceramic
      - Ceramics are much the same as packing with glass. Tissue, bubble, and then padded/packed into a box/tote.
      - Delicate elements like glass? Same applies, assess, and possibly crate. If there are protrusions, make sure that NO PRESSURE can be applied while packing, shipping, and unpacking.
  - Heavy
    - cast metal/Fabricated steel
      - You can pack the art and box it like other objects, but with extra steps. Is the object over 100 lbs? If yes, then a slat crate (a basic, 2x4 framed, open box wrapped in plastic, and possible build on a skid (pallet)) is going to be your simplest bet, otherwise a proper crate will have to be made or commissioned.
      - If the object is under that weight or around that weight, an appropriately sized cardboard box, rated for that weight, may suffice. There are many, commercially available options, that are actually double or triple wall corrugated cardboard.
        - Creating a false bottom, helps ensure droppage/transport keeps the outer box intact. This is achieved by layering the bottom of packing box with packing paper balled up, packing peanuts, scraps of foam, packing blankets,

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or any other dunnage (basically packing fill of misc.). You need a minimum of 2" and no more than 6" or so (don't want to make the center of gravity too high). You then place a "false bottom" on top of whatever dunnage, usually a fitted-to-box sheet of cardboard, foam-core board, or even thin plywood to create your new bottom. This helps weight distribution, and keeping your art from falling out the bottom of the box.

- Stone/plaster
  - Same rules as above, however tyvek is a good material choice. Tyvek allows the stone to breathe and is rugged enough to handle wear and tear. This material lends itself, also to being properly crated.
  - Grease, oils, and abrasion are big risks with stone, so make sure materials are clean and oil free. Wear latex or nitrile gloves when handling. Also, make sure that your stone is packed with even support, as "hot spots" or point loading can rub the finish or bruise the stone (alabaster and marble can be quite susceptible to this)
- Furniture
  - lacquered
    - Use unbleached muslin. Secure with stretch wrap, and then tape end of stretch wrap to ensure it does not come undone
    - Pad out with Chempack or packing blankets, and tape band to secure.
    - use or attach any cardboard to protect delicate areas.
  - fragile/delicate
    - Same as above, but if there is a delicate element, like knobs, or filigree, use cardboard to isolate, so that the area is not handled.
    - may need to construct a support, to take weight off of the legs.
    - if the furniture can come apart, especially mid-century spindle legs or cabriole legs, then, detach and pack separately as if they were their own objects.
  - Stone top
    - Stone should NEVER travel flat, always on edge upright. If the top can be removed safely, do so, with help, and pack.
    - If the stone cannot be removed, then proceed to pack whole item as one.

- Multi-part
  - Large chifferobes and similar furniture items, come apart in sections. With help, take apart, and pack as separate pieces. Keep an eye out for connecting hardware, such as wooden dowels that could become lost, or need to be packed around so that the object is not sitting on those weak points.
- Long Term storage
  - Too large a topic to go into every possibility, but here are some basic guidelines
    - Where is the artwork stored? Is it climate stable, or subject to large temperature and humidity swings? Are there bugs, mice, mold or other factors in the environment to be stored? How about the packing materials?
      - These questions play a big role in how to prepare to “deep 6” your art.
    - For packing for long term storage, archival materials will help. They will not off-gas fumes that could darken, discolor, or breakdown the art work.
    - Making sure that there is a hydro-barrier (i.e. plastic wrapped layer) that protects your work from water damage. There is always a puddle or leaky roof that could threaten countless hours of hard work.
    - Perhaps a Plastic tub to store your works in is a good option. While cardboard is a great material, long term storage in cardboard invites a host of pests, such as silverfish, mold/mildew, or other insects.
    - Does your artwork have a medium moisture content? Sealing moist items in plastic, over time can be a breeding ground for mold, condensation, or damage to surface (i.e wood veneered furniture, parqueting, or even steel, bronze). If this is the case, then tyvek would be your friend, as it allows the moisture out.
    - If you have silver jewelry, that is subject to tarnish, then sourcing out silver cloth, purchasing oxygen scavengers (which limit, not remove, the possibility of tarnish), or desiccants (designed to keep climate at a stable humidity) is a good choice. This applies also to certain woods (too dry is also a problem), and semi-porous materials like plaster/fresco.