



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Grimwade Centre for
Cultural Materials
Conservation

PACKING FOR TRANSPORT

Objects are most vulnerable to damage when they are being moved. Careful and considered packing will reduce potential for damage to an object in transit.

If you are preparing an object to travel and need to pack it, there are some basic principles you can apply. The most important things to protect against are:

- vibrations
- movement
- breakages
- surface scratches

(see *SAFE HANDLING* Fact Sheet before handling items for packing).

Packaging for short-term transportation does not require the use of archival materials. When possible, utilise reusable materials. Make sure reusable materials are clean. Remove any old tape, labels or adhesive which may scratch or stick to your object.

Assess the object before packing, to make sure it is clean and in stable condition. Consider the surface of an object and choose a packing material appropriate for the object (i.e., a towel will not be appropriate for a rough, textured surface).



Packing a painting with bubble wrap

PACKING MATERIALS

If you are transporting something a short distance, you can pack it with towels or recycled packing material.

When packaging items that require greater consideration and care, consider the following:

- Soft packaging of framed artworks with bubble wrap (double-sided bubble wrap is preferable, as impressions can form on the surface of an object).
- Use a crate or box - modified to accommodate the size of the object. You can pad out the interior or soft pack the object to reduce movement of the object within crate/box.
- Use a custom-made folder to support and protect flat items (paper and textiles).
- Cardboard corners can protect vulnerable framed artworks. These are attached to the outside of the soft packaging.

SECURING FOR TRANSPORT

The term 'glazing' refers to the glass or Perspex (clear acrylic sheeting, sometimes called Plexiglass) sometimes used in framing systems for paintings and works on paper or photographs.

If you are transporting paintings glazed with glass, tape the front of the glass with masking tape. Tape small paintings in a Union Jack pattern. Tape larger works in a grid at about 20cm spacing. This will hold the pieces of the glass together should it break, lessening the risk of damage to the work. The tape should be on the glass only and should not extend onto the frame as it can remove paint or other finishes when it is removed.

Do not to tape Perspex or Plexiglass as it is unnecessary, and the tape can be very difficult to remove.

Support and secure the object to limit vibration during transit. Bubble wrap, foam or towels can be shaped or folded to cushion vibration and protect against damaged caused by straps or ties. Be cautious to not pack your item too tightly, as any pressure on an object can cause permanent damage.

UNPACKING AN ITEM

When unpacking items, avoid using a blade as this can cause damage to the object inside.

If damage should still occur during transportation, carefully collect all pieces, place in Ziplock bag (or similar) and save for later conservation. Small pieces, even small ceramic flakes, can be re-adhered. Document the damage.

SUMMARY

Select packaging material that will protect the object from vibration and impact damage, as well as any damage to the surface.

Always consider the environment when selecting and discarding packing materials. Recycle clean packaging and modify existing materials to suit the purpose whenever possible.

Clearly label all packages to ensure correct, safe handling and tracking of items, e.g.: fragile, glass, this way up, heavy, lay flat

RESOURCES



reCollections
Caring for Collections
Across Australia – Handling,
Transportation, Storage and
Display, Heritage Collections
Council, available online:
<http://go.unimelb.edu.au/36wi>



Marcon, P. Features of Effective
Packaging and Transport for
Artworks,
Canadian Conservation Institute
– Technical Bulletin 34, available
online:
<http://go.unimelb.edu.au/24wi>



- Art in Transit
Handbook for Packing and
Transporting Paintings, M.
Richard, M. Mecklenburg, R. Merrill
(Eds.), National Gallery of Art,
Washington, available online:
<http://go.unimelb.edu.au/h4wi>