Packing and Crating Basics

C2C Care Webinar
To begin with...

- Determine the needs of your object
  - What is your object made out of?
  - How will your crate be used?
    - Storage?
    - Traveling?
  - How many times will the crate travel?
    - Single venue vs. multi-venue
Storage vs. Traveling Crates

- There is a difference between crates for storage and crates for transit
- Different materials will be used for storage vs. transit
- Types of foam:
  - Thermal insulating foams for transit
    - U-foam
    - Esterfoam
    - Polystyrene Extruded foam
  - Shock absorbing foams for transit and storage
    - Ethafoam (various densities)
    - Volara
Storage Concerns

● Off-gassing inside the storage crate
  ○ Avoid using Esterfoam, U-foam, and Polystyrene foams.
    ■ Objects should not be stored in closed crates with these foams for more than 90 days.
  ○ Be aware of the materials the object will be contact with.
  ○ Be aware of the composition of the object itself.

● Object should be easy to access and identify
Transit Concerns

- **Vibration and shock**
  - Use an appropriate amount and type of foam

- **Changes in temperature and climate**
  - Line crates with thermal insulating foam such as U-foam, Esterfoam, or Polystyrene Extruded foam

- **Handling**
  - Crate should have clear stencils, skids, and handles to encourage safe handling

- **Ease of packing/unpacking**
  - Clear packing/unpacking instructions/diagrams
Flatworks

Common packing solutions for flatworks:

- **Trays**
  - Usually for framed works
  - Allows multiple objects to be packed in the same crate

- **Travel frames**
  - For unframed canvases, or objects that have surface dimensions
  - Allows object to be attached to the travel frame by Oz Clips

- **Shadow boxes**
  - Provides some of the protection of a travel frame
  - Does not require Oz Clips

- **Object in crate on its own**
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
Objects can be packed without trays if they are the only object in the crate.

Object can ride directly against the thermal insulating foam, or can ride in an inner box with Ethafoam pads.

- Inner box provides extra protection from shock and temperature fluctuations.

Object shown packed alone in a crate that is fully lined in U-foam, and has an inner box with Ethafoam pads.
Hand Space!

- Always make sure that there is hand space around the object.
- Adequate hand space encourages safe handling.
- Hand space is also important on trays, especially top-loading trays.
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
Oz Clips and Cleats
Shadow Boxes

- Can be made from cardboard or archival cardboard
- Provide some of the protection of a travel frame, but do not require the use of Oz Clips or cleats
- Shadow boxes can be wrapped in plastic for transit
- Shadow boxes can be packed onto trays or into crates for transit
Three Dimensional Objects (Sculptures)

Three dimensional objects, usually sculptures, are objects that cannot be packed into trays or travel frames, and require more complex packing solutions.
Types of Sculpture Packing

- Simple pad packing
- Cavity pack
- Brace pack
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
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 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.
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!
Soft Packing

- Make sure your object does not get “lost” in loose material
- Do not thread material, such as tissue, through voids in your object
- Make sure tape and other adhesives do not touch the surface of your object
- Bubble wrap should only be used “bubbles-out”
- Make sure that the orientation of your object is clearly marked
Overview of an Exterior Crate

- Rain cap protects crate from water (i.e. rain) pooling on the surface
- End blocks provide structure and protect the crate against impact
- Skids allow the crate to be lifted more easily using a forklift, pallet jack, or J-bar
- Handles encourage safe handling
- Gasket provides a seal for the lid and prevents moisture from entering the crate
Issues to Consider

- Will your crate fit through the door/into the elevator/etc. of the venue it is travelling to?

- Is your crate a “tip risk”?
  - Crates that are very narrow or that are tall with a small footprint may be at risk for tipping over

- How heavy is your crate?
  - Will it require the use of a forklift or other such tool?
Recommendations

- 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.
- Ask questions... every object is unique.