

Building a Crate for Shipping Artwork

QUESTION:

I need to build a crate to ship a piece of artwork across the country. What do I need to consider when building a crate that will stand up to the rigors of shipping?

ANSWER:

Three basic rules when shipping works of art are:

- Have a strong waterproof container
- Protect the object in the crate from movement, vibration and shock
- Take precautions against damage by condensation

Plywood is a good material to use when making a crate. It is recommended that all joints be screwed and glued together and external corners should be reinforced. In addition, screwing on the last panel of the crate eliminates any harmful hammering on the packing case once the artwork is inside. It also allows for easy removal of the object.

The crate and the artwork should be placed in the same climatic conditions for a few days prior to packing. This allows both to adjust to the same temperature and humidity.

The inside of the crate should be lined with a waterproof material. The interior is then covered with 2-inch-thick pieces of hard foam. A second layer is added to whichever side is designated as the bottom of the crate. Additional foam triangular pads are cut and attached, for more protection, at the four corners on the two largest surface areas of the crate.

These questions and answers are compiled by PPFA Technical Coordinator Diane Day, CPE, from HelpLine questions. If you have a technical or source question, send an e-mail message to helpline@ppfa.com, or call the PPFA HelpLine at (888) 542-4844. Please have your PPFA member number ready when you call.