

WE SHIP WORLDWIDE!

By Bob Hamon, CPF

Nothing causes more anxiety for a shop owner than shipping framed art. Once the package leaves your hands, it enters into a realm that is unknown to most mortals. The physical strain the package must endure encompasses dragging, tossing, rolling (even though the package may not be round) dropping, and stacking. Not only does the package encounter such handling, but it is also subject to constant movement in the truck cargo bay. All this takes its toll on your valuable package. Human nature in package handling boils down to the basics—whatever is the easiest way to handle a package is what gets done. That's when the old adage, "the best offense is a good defense," should be the rule of the day.

Avoiding the Pitfalls in Shipping

Factors to consider for safe transport begin with proper packing methods and end with choosing the best shipper for your needs. Your plan of attack should be to pack in a manner that will avoid damage from three critical problem areas:

- 1) being dropped
- 2) being crushed
- 3) being punctured

Damage to package contents from dropping are the result of too little packing material and not enough space between the article and box wall. Space, space, space, and more space! Remember the shipper is charging by weight, not by size. The more space between your art and the edge of the box, the less likely you will have damage when the box is dropped—and it *will* be dropped!

To avoid damage to boxes and contents due to crushing, use a highly rated structural cardboard. Stronger cardboard makes a stronger box. Double up on your cardboard if you are in doubt of its strength.

Do not leave unfilled spaces in your box. A box with large voids will collapse from the weight of other boxes that are stacked on top. Keep the box solid and sturdy.

A puncture may cause the worst damage to your art because it could be the hardest to repair. At no point in transit will your package be in danger of puncture until human intervention. Most causes of puncture are the result of something being driven, thrown, pushed, or



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4

dropped into your package. The only way you can try to stop this is to layer wood, plastic, or metal in your packing scheme. Question all damage to a punctured container. Expect reimbursement from this human error.

PACKAGE TYPES

The Wooden Crate

When shipping large and/or valuable works of art, the construction of a wooden crate becomes necessary. A crate is the strongest defense to damage but at the same time adds to the shipping weight. To make a crate, begin by measuring the total size of the framed art. Add several inches of space on all sides to allow for the packing of cushioning material. For example, a painting with a total framed dimension of 30" X 40" X 2" will require an inside crate dimension of 34" X 44" X 6" if a 2" buffer is added to all sides. For this painting you would cut 1" X 8" pine boards to form the perimeter edges of the crate, and use $\frac{1}{8}$ " or $\frac{1}{4}$ " masonite for the large sides of the crate. All corners are braced with 1" X 8" wood corners (gusset plates), and a brace is cut to support the center span of each side thus dividing the longest section in half for better support.

After the perimeter lumber has been cut and assembled, the first masonite side is laid on top and screwed to the edge. The remaining excess is trimmed flush to the outside with a jig saw. Now add the bracing that the crate will require at the corners and center (see Photo 1).

The crate is now ready to pack. Wrap your art in paper or plastic for protection. I pack Styrofoam sheeting around the art to fill any voids and act as cushioning (see Photo 2). Then add the bracing and masonite for the second side. This needs to be screwed in place to facilitate easy opening by the receiver. Mark the crate as to how and where to open (see Photo 3). If the size and/or weight require, screw wooden hand holds to the sides to ensure steady carrying.

The Cardboard Box

You can make a cardboard box to ship lighter weight and less delicate frames. All that is needed is your glass and board cutter, sheet cardboard, 3" packing tape, a box knife, and a burnishing bone. To make a box 11" X 11" X 5", for example, feed the cardboard into the cutter towards the measuring guide. The bar is clamped down when the cardboard is at 5", and using the burnishing bone, you score the cardboard along the bar. Then feed the cardboard to 16", and again clamp and score. Now bring the cardboard to 21", and cut. Rotate the cardboard to the side 90° and



Photo 5



Photo 6



Photo 7



Photo 8

repeat the same steps. The product will be a square with scored squares at the corners. Cut along one score at each of the four corners (see Photo 4). The box takes shape as you fold and tape the sides together to form the bottom half of your box (see Photo 5). The lid to your box will be slightly larger so measure the bottom and make your allowances before cutting the cardboard. Remember to pre-plan your box to avoid untimely mistakes, and allow several inches for additional packing (see Photo 6).

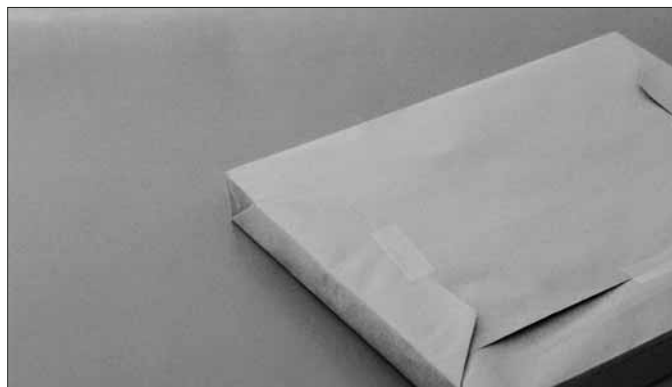


Photo 9

Cutting Down an Existing Box

Another approach to box making is to use an existing box and alter its size to fit your needs. The best candidate for this approach is a foamboard box. Measure the box and determine where you will need to shorten it. You may only need to cut down one side. After your planning, score and cut the box by hand. Begin on the bottom half of the box first. Score a line across the flat side and then continue up the two walls (see Photo 7). To fold the box, you will need to cut both side walls at the score line. With one hand centered in the box bottom, grab the outer edge and fold up the box (see Photo 8). Trim all excess cardboard above the wall height and tape. If the box needs to be shortened in the other direction, just repeat the process. With the bottom half of the box completed, nestle it in the lid to determine where to score and cut to make the lid alterations. Cutting down a box is an easy task, so remember to hang on to a few of your empty foamboard boxes.

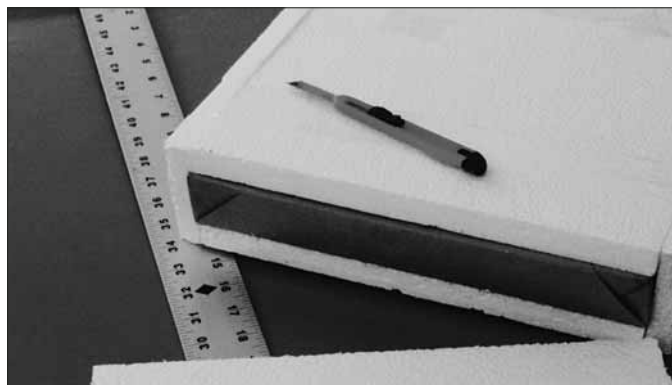


Photo 10

Packed Cardboard Package

This type of package is built around the article it will contain. This center-outward process is quick and effective. First sandwich the frame between two pieces of cardboard equal in size to the frame, and wrap all this in paper to avoid dirt and dust (see Photo 9). Now layer that between two Styrofoam sheets. Complete the packing by measuring and cutting Styrofoam for the four edge sides (see Photo 10). Secure all this together with 3" packing tape. Add another layer of Styrofoam if more cushioning is desired. The outer skin is made by assembling six cardboard pieces cut to the dimensions of each side of the package (see Photo 11). The edges are taped to enclose the contents and bands of tape finally secure the package (see Photo 12).



Photo 11

The Freehand Cardboard Package

This freehand cardboard package is really simple. Wrap the frame and two pieces of equal sized cardboard in paper. Center that on a full-sized sheet of cardboard. The



Photo 12

cardboard is trimmed to overhang the frame 2" on two opposing sides only (see Photo 13). Score and fold the longer remaining cardboard to wrap the frame. You may need to trim, or fill cardboard, to give a solid and smooth surface for taping the seam. To prevent any slippage of the frame at this point, cut the cardboard on the center of each 2" overhang, fold in to make tabs and tape (see Photo 14). Now wrap what you have done so far with cardboard again, creating a 2" overhang on the other two sides (see Photo 15). The package is completed by folding in the overhang and taping the seam to seal (see Photo 16). The frame now has three layers of cardboard on the front and back and a 2" buffer around the edges—a formidable defense to the parcel service.

The Cardboard Bundle

Sometimes the art is not large, heavy, or fragile and there is no need for elaborate packing. The cardboard bundle starts with the framed art sandwiched between two cardboard sheets and wrapped in paper. This is then wrapped in bubble wrap (see Photo 17). The entire wrapped bundle is then sealed between two cardboard sheets large enough to cover the bundle and meet at the edges, which are then



Photo 13



Photo 14

carefully sealed with tape (see Photo 18). The finished bundle will resemble a ravioli (see Photo 19). This shape prevents other parcels from being stacked on top of it due to the instability of the arched shape (see Photo 20). The bundle must travel upright between other parcels or on top of the stack. Both options ensure a safer delivery.

Manufactured Boxes

There are several cardboard box packaging options on the market. Airfloat offers a triple protection cardboard box system called Strongbox. The heart of the system is two layers of convoluted foam rubber with a center layer customized to the framed art. The art and foam are contained in a double strength cardboard box. Puncture resistance is equaled to plywood when the plastic liner option is added. Another shipping box option is from Package Depot, called Picture Shipper. This box system layers the art between two boards covered with convoluted foam rubber pads. The art is held in place by anchors and corner blocks. All this slips into a cardboard container for shipping. Both boxes offer protection from the dangers of crushing, dropping, and puncture.

SHIPPING

Carriers

Package delivery options range from door-to-door service like trucking companies, parcel services and the U.S. Mail, to counter-to-counter services like that offered by airlines, bus lines, and rail service. Counter-to-counter may save you a lot in costs over door-to-door, but you and the receiver have to go to your local terminal to ship and receive.

Generally, overnight and second day packages receive less handling and better care than standard freight. That is because packages traveling by air change vehicles less. If your package is sent second Day, it will be delivered on the second day even though it may have arrived at the

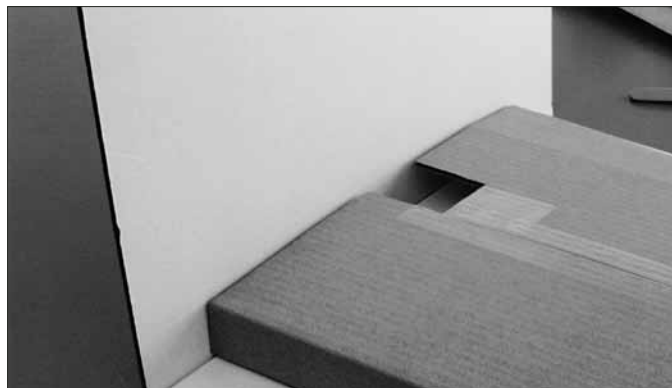


Photo 15

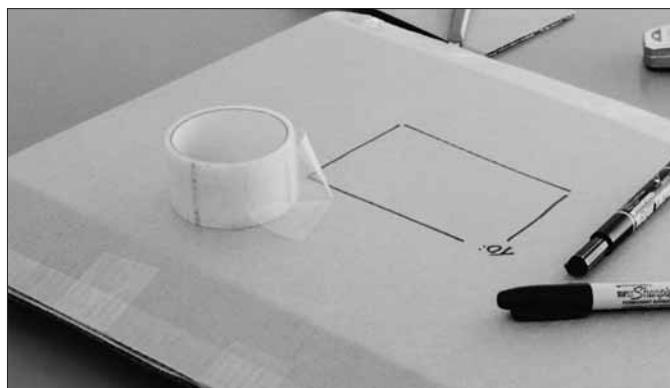


Photo 16



Photo 17

receiving terminal in one day. Packages shipped via air with a guaranteed delivery date may travel by truck if delivery can be made on time using scheduled truck transport. Do not pay for air freight service you may not get.

Shipping Tips to Consider

A few tips here for the road. Remember to insert an address card in the package. If the address on the package should be obliterated, the shipper, upon inspection of the contents, will find the address card. When it comes to address placement, most shippers handle the package with the address label up. This means a package labeled on the wide, flat side will usually travel flat so sorters and handlers can see the label. Framed art is most vulnerable when traveling flat. Your defense is to place the label so it's visible when the package rests upright.

Mark the package "Fragile" and "Top" in the hopes someone will heed the warning and take a few extra precautions in handling. While you are at it, mark the package as to where it should be opened. This information is helpful and appreciated by the receiver. Definitely insure your shipment not only for replacement cost, but also for packing and shipping costs, as these are not insignificant and will not otherwise be reimbursed.

And finally, call your local shipping supply company for the latest packing goods. If shipping glazed art check out Airfloat's Glass Skin, a 12" wide roll of low tact masking tape. The tape helps prevent broken glass from damaging art by keeping it in place. We know that glass breaks when flexed, so add extra cardboard fitted snugly to the glass for support. Shippers prefer you use acrylic glazing. Do not underestimate the value of foam peanuts in packing, especially for objets d'art. They do compact and shift so plan for that in packing. Now you are armed with a few good packing and shipping ideas, so don't let that sale get away, just say, "We ship worldwide!" ■



Photo 18



Photo 19



Photo 20