

PREPARE

Do not undertake art movement lightly. To reduce the risks of physical damage, handle objects as little as possible and avoid unnecessary movements.

Before moving an object, ask if the move is really necessary or if the object can stay where it is. Reduce the risks of handling by using a cart or a tray and eliminate extra movement by going straight to the destination location without detours or stops along the way.

GLOVES

Oils on your hands can be transferred to objects and cause permanent damage that is not immediately visible.

Materials that are particularly sensitive to finger oils include:

Metal, Glass, Gilded Wood, Plastic

It is good practice to wear gloves during object handling *by default* but you have greater control and sensitivity with bare fingertips and there are some situations in which bare hands are better.



Specifically, avoid cotton gloves when handling paper objects and objects with loose or friable components like basketry as they can be clumsy and could snag. Cotton gloves can easily slip on smooth materials and scratch highly polished surfaces. In these cases it is better to use latex or nitrile gloves, or clean, moisturizer-free hands.

Note: Change your gloves frequently! Dirty gloves are worse than clean hands.

OBJECT MOVING STEPS

1. Identify the destination location and make sure that there is space for the object. If the object is traveling to another room, your destination is a cart.
2. Clear a path. Remove all obstructions such as power cords or chairs.
3. Examine the object for weak or vulnerable areas. Identify these and communicate them to your team.
4. Determine if the object will need two or more people to lift. Remember that the goal is the safety of object. The weight of the object should be such that the handler/s can move it *easily* and with complete control.
5. If the object requires a team, communicate a



plan out loud – even if it seems obvious. Say who will be lifting where, make sure everyone knows where they are going, and discuss if the object will need to be turned or rotated while it is lifted. One person (and only one) should both describe the plan and also give the command to lift.

6. Examine the object to make sure it is stable in its new location.

Note: Be mindful of rings, zipper pulls, and other hard elements on your clothing. Keep these away from the art work.

TIPS AND TRICKS

PAINTINGS

Look out for insecure frames, loose frame details, degraded frame surfaces, cupping or flaking paint, or loose stretcher keys. Paintings with actively flaking paint film should be moved flat on a cart.

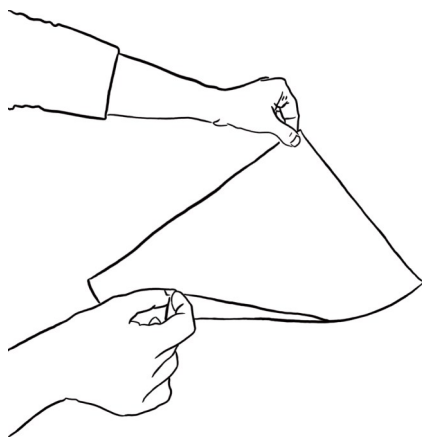
Move paintings on an A-frame when traveling a distance, and always move larger paintings with a partner.



PAPER

Carry horizontally and supported when possible. When you must move an unmatted piece of paper artwork, pick it up by the diagonal corners so as to form a soft curve in the paper.

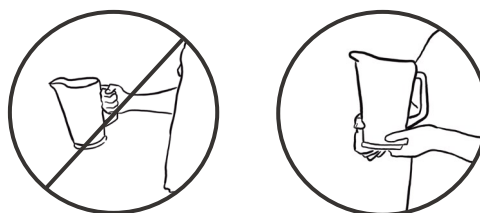
Avoid touching tears or abrasions, or creating friction across the surface of a paper object. Do not store in a drafty location.



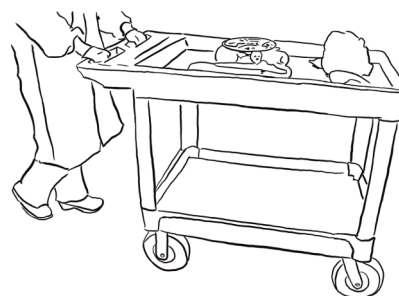
3-DIMENSIONAL OBJECTS

Identify old repairs, weak joins, cracks, friable surfaces, etc. prior to moving. Consider weight: some smaller objects may be surprising heavy.

Avoid handling by projecting parts, lids, rims, or handles. Lift objects with both hands.



If using a cart, make sure the object is stable on the cart before moving. If necessary, use ethafoam blocks, weight bags, blankets, or a free hand to keep it steady while in transit.

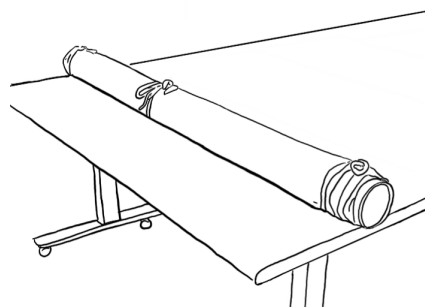


TEXTILES

Make sure that textiles are covered with tissue whenever they're not in use to protect them from dust and dirt.

Small flat textiles should always be supported on a piece of acid-free tissue. They can be lifted on the tissue or a rigid material such as acid-free corrugated board under the tissue.

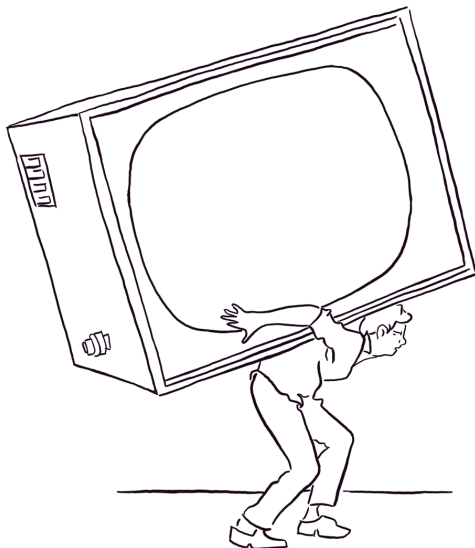
Larger flat textiles can be rolled on a tube. Always lift the tube by its ends, and not where the textile is rolled around it.



ACCIDENTS

What to do when something goes wrong:

- Stop moving, don't panic, and take a deep breath.
- Without moving anything, determine visually if there has been object damage.
- If there is damage to the object, call for a registrar and follow your institution's damage reporting protocols. If the object needs to be moved immediately, take digital photographs of the accident scene first, and then move the damaged object and any pieces to a secure location.
- While the accident is fresh in your mind, identify what went wrong and write it down. Say who was there, what happened, and who was holding the object when it was damaged. This is not about assigning blame; it is about preventing future mistakes and identifying involved personnel in case there are questions later. This information should be given to registration and kept as part of the object file.
- Remember that accidents happen and art is damaged when it is handled. Accept responsibility and take the event seriously, but it is important to be able to continue with your work.



FINAL POINTS

As an art handler, you are in an excellent position to identify condition issues. If you see something that looks unstable or questionable, call a registrar or a MACC conservator. We are always available to answer questions. If you see insects or signs of insect damage, such as fresh, light colored frass, bag the object to isolate the infestation and notify registration or a conservator.

The Midwest Art Conservation Center is a non-profit organization for the preservation and conservation of art and artifacts, providing treatment, education, and training for museums, historical societies, libraries, other cultural institutions, artists, and the public.

Copyright©2020
Midwest Art Conservation Center (MACC).
2400 Third Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55404
Web: <https://preserveart.org/>
Email: info@preserveart.org
Instagram: @preserve.art
Phone: (612) 870 - 3120

Updated November 2020