

Museums & Galleries NSW

General Tips on Good Handling Techniques

Areas of Vulnerability

- Handles which may be loose or previously repaired
- Protrusions which can catch or be knocked
- Areas of previous repair
- Soft/powdery surfaces
- Loose components such as drawers, lids, doors, etc.
- Unwieldy shapes
- Large, floppy items
- Heavy items
- Brittle paper
- Ornate or gilded frames
- Paintings which do not have backing boards
- Metal surfaces which are sensitive to tarnishing
- Sensitive surfaces such as photographs
- Gooney/sticky areas
- Lifting/buckling veneers
- Heavy items attached to light weight items (such as heavy beads on a fine silk piece)

Equipment and Materials that can help when handling objects

- Boards
- Trays- shallow plastic trays to fit smaller items in
- Trolleys
- Gloves- cotton or disposable (use disposable with slippery material)
- Copsafe or Mylar sleeves- can be useful for handling single paper items
- Ziplock bags- for smaller, durable items
- Small cushions/tubes filled with bean bag beans- can be used as cushioning between items in trays
- Foam block- can be used as cushioning or to lift framed works off the floor if stored temporarily against a wall
- Felt covered blocks- lift framed works off the floor if stored temporarily against a wall
- Acid free tissue- used for padding or separating items

Fact Sheet

- Protectafoam/Cellaire- thin foam used to line trays/boxes or as cushioning around items
- Cotton tape- used to tie loose areas during a move

Plan the Move

- Examine the item
- Remove Jewellery- rings can scratch, necklaces can swing around
- Look at the space you moving to- is it clear?
- Have you got a clear pathway to the new location?
- How many people do you need?
- Do you need a trolley?
- Do you need a tray?
- Have you got padding between objects?

Handling Paper Objects

- Acidic paper can be brittle
- Provide support under paper items such as archival card
- Sandwich between card if carrying outside
- Separate items with acid free tissue
- Mylar sleeves, Copysafe sleeves, ziplock bags can all be used to carry paper items. Always carry items horizontally
- Solander boxes can be used to store or carry larger numbers of items
- BEWARE chalky materials such as pastels, chalks or pencil which can be smudged and are affected by static electricity which can build up in Mylar or Perspex

Handling Paintings and other framed works

- Before moving a painting check for areas of flaking paint, if there are areas where the paint is loose, carry horizontally
- Check that the painting is secure in its frame
- Check that the stretcher wedges are secure
- Carry with one hand supporting the underside and one hand supporting the side NEVER carry from the top
- If resting against a wall use foam or padded wooden blocks to raise off floor
- Place down evenly across the bottom edge
- Don't place you fingers around stretcher bars as you can dent/damage paintwork

Handling Textiles

- Examine for areas of fragility
- Support evenly across the length of the item, using a tray where possible
- DO NOT pick up costume items by the shoulders
- If carrying items on a hanger, support the length by draping over arms
- If carrying a rolled textile, carry via the areas of the roller which extend beyond the length of the textile

Fact Sheet

Handling Furniture

- DO NOT lift via protrusions, chair arms or backs, table tops
- Tie down or remove drawers
- Secure doors
- Remove any loose fittings such as finials or glass tops
- Lift chairs via the seat rail
- Lift tables from the legs

Handling Metals

- Use gloves to prevent tarnishing/corrosion from the oils in your hands

Handling Ceramics and Glass

- Use disposable gloves (such as surgical gloves), cotton gloves will be too slippery

Handling Material with soft painted surfaces (such as painted Aboriginal spears and clubs)

- Handle these as little as possible. The pigments are not well adhered to the surface and will easily rub off.