

CIRCLING BACK

Rethinking fine art packaging for museum loan programmes



Art Bridges Foundation is a pioneering nonprofit that helps US museums, large or small, bring art out of storage and onto gallery walls by helping overcome the financial and logistical challenges of loaning, borrowing and exhibiting art.

In 2025 Art Bridges acquired a fleet of ROKBOX fine art shipping crates to facilitate more cost effective and sustainable shipments between loaning organisations.

This case study explores Art Bridges' approach and process, and the benefits experienced along the way.

Art Bridges Foundation, based in Arkansas, has an extensive lending programme with multiple partner institutions across the United States.

The programme regularly ships works for loans lasting up to two years. Historically, this meant commissioning bespoke wooden crates for almost every loan.

While these crates were well made, they created operational inefficiencies and sustainability concerns.

“Our mission is to share art and make it more accessible and ROKBOX helps us do that.

We have an extensive loan program and it’s not efficient, sustainable or cost effective to make wooden crates each time; it’s just not a good use of funds.

We’re responsible for safeguarding works from other collections, and that trust is something we value deeply. We also take on an educational role, supporting partners who are less familiar and act as stewards in that sense too.

We work with so many partners and overall, the feedback has been that the ROKBOXs are really easy to use.

Flexibility is key, along with security and trust in the product, and our team is really happy with ROKBOX.”

- Andi Phillips, Director, Collection Loans and Exhibitions, Art Bridges

The crate dilemma

Using one-off wooden crates created several challenges for Art Bridges:

- High fabrication costs for each loan shipment
- Long-term storage costs and storage challenges for empty crates while artworks were on display
- Disposal costs
- Environmental impact of crates being destroyed after limited use.

“For the amount of loans we do, wooden crates, beautiful as they are, were not sustainable and not a good use of funds.”

“We were paying for fabrication, paying for storage while the artwork was on display, and then paying again for disposal at the end of the loan.”

- Andi Phillips, Director, Collection Loans and Exhibitions, Art Bridges

A considered solution

Andi and the team carefully researched different crating options and chose ROKBOX reusable fine art crates, for several reasons:

- ROKBOX offer a wide range of crate sizes, allowing flexibility to for packing a wide range of works
- The ability to purchase crates outright, for Art Bridges to build its own reusable inventory
- The additional option of using ROKBOX LOOP, the rental reuse network to expand capacity when needed.

“The importance of being able to have our own stock on hand that we bring in and out of rotation when we need them has been very beneficial to us.”

“And the cost savings we’re starting to see are great.”

- Andi Phillips, Director, Collection Loans and Exhibitions, Art Bridges

Having a stock of ROKBOXs allows the Art Bridges team to rotate crates in and out of use as loans require, reducing the need to make new crates.

Getting a handle on a new system

As with any new system, there was an initial learning curve. Art Bridges quickly and easily addressed this through education; making use of ROKBOX's online resources and instructional videos.

These materials helped staff and partner institutions understand how to customise packaging for each different artwork using ROKBOX's internal hardware systems.

The ROKBOX team are available to all institutions to delivery online and in person (location-dependent) training sessions too.

"All of the instructional videos have been very helpful in understanding the different boxes and equipment."

- Max Strauss, Assistant Registrar, Partner Loan Network, Art Bridges

Advice for other museums and institutions

The Art Bridges team recommends:

- Trying ROKBOX for a percentage of shipments to start with
- Using ROKBOX resources to educate and onboard
- Considering ROKBOX LOOP as an accessible way to try reusable crates without committing to a large purchase.

"They're not going to be a solution for every single artwork - but if they work for even 5% or 10% of the works you're shipping, that's still a meaningful impact."

- Andi Phillips, Director, Collection Loans and Exhibitions, Art Bridges

Additional benefits

Improved safety for staff

ROKBOX crates are lighter than wooden counterparts which not only reduces the carbon footprint of each journey, but also makes them easier and safer to handle.

“At the end of a long install day, moving really heavy wooden crates increases the risk of accidents. The lighter crates make a real difference.”

Cost savings

By reusing crates instead of fabricating new ones for each loan, they have eliminated fabrication and disposal expenses and reduced storage costs.

Operational flexibility

The organisation is also exploring broader use of ROKBOX LOOP, which allows institutions to access reusable crates without committing to a full purchase upfront

Support for new working methods

Using ROKBOX encouraged the team to embrace other new, lower impact ways of working, including virtual couriering.

Reduced environmental impact

ROKBOX crates significantly reduce waste and the carbon footprint of each trip by up to 90% compared to other crates (see LifeCycle Analysis).

“It feels good knowing we’re not shipping something and then leaving a crate in storage somewhere only to destroy it at the end of the loan.”

With many thanks to the Art Bridges Foundation team for their pragmatic and enthusiastic approach, and for their help with this case study: Andi Phillips, Max Strauss, Amy Zavec, Megan Valentine.

Thanks also to all the loan partners who are integrating reusable and circular crating into their practices.



ROKBOX was founded to solve the issues of waste, risks and cost associated with expensive single-use fine art packaging.

ROKBOX award-winning, insurance-approved reusable crates are made with carefully sourced materials to be resilient and protective, yet lightweight and recyclable.

A 2025 independent LifeCycle Analysis by Northeastern University has shown ROKBOX crates can reduce carbon emissions by up to 92% of a shipment, compared to other fine art shipping crates.

For more information visit: rok-box.com

Please send questions to info@rok-box.com

