

Basic Handling Guidelines for the Baranov Museum Collection

Objects in the museum may look stable, but sometimes damaged and weakened areas are invisible. Despite the best of intentions, mistakes happen; the most frequent way an object is damaged is through handling. The best practice to avoid harming the museum collection is by conscientious handling.

****Only move an object if it is absolutely necessary that it be moved.****

Before Handling the Object:

- *Plan* how you will carry the object and where it will go. Open doors, remove ropes, and turn on lights along your path. Ask another person to help for large or cumbersome objects. Clear off/clean the space where you will place the object. You don't want to risk dropping a collection piece because you needed to clear a table or turn on a light.
- *Gather any extra materials needed*, like carrying boxes and gloves.
 - If there are several smaller, lighter objects, they can be placed in a padded carrying container and moved together.
 - The oils and salts in our hands (even clean hands) can be deposited onto objects. Wearing gloves protects the objects from us, as well as us from the objects, like natural history specimens that may contain arsenic. It is *imperative to wear gloves when touching metal objects*. The oils and salts stay on the surface of the metal and etch our fingerprints into the object over a short time period. This can be polished out, but polishing is the removal of layers of metal, so an over-polished artifact loses design and material.



Wear latex or nitrile gloves instead of cotton when handling slick objects (like metals and ceramics) or fibrous objects (like baskets).



The gray lines are fingerprints etched into the metal that occurred when the samovar was touched with bare hands. Fingerprints can only be removed by polishing.

- *Remove* items you are wearing that could accidentally damage the object, like dangling or large jewelry, belt buckles, ID badges, walkie-talkies, etc.
- Study the object to *find the best/strongest place to hold*. Handles, straps, and other protrusions may be weak, even if they look intact. For example, carry a teapot by holding the base, not the handle. Lift a chair by the seat base, not the back. Carefully lift fragile materials into a rigid carrying container for transport.

Handling the Object:

- *Focus* attention on moving the object. Don't move the object if you're in a hurry or distracted.
- Wear gloves, *especially if touching metal*. If an emergency arises and metal must be touched without gloves, wipe the surface afterwards with a clean cotton rag.
- Handle the object, or the carrying container, *using both hands*.
- *Lift heavy objects with your legs*, not back, to prevent strain.
- *Carry framed artwork vertically*, one hand on either side of the frame, or one hand holding the hanging wire and one hand holding a side.



Carrying the slick metal samovar by gripping the base, not the handles, and wearing nitrile gloves to prevent oils and salts from getting onto the surface.

Recap:

Plan the move. Study the object to find the best place to support it. Wear clean gloves, especially if there are metal components. Use both hands. Concentrate on the task.

*If interested in more information, especially about handling or packaging a specific material/type of object, refer to Appendix I in the Collections Assessment performed and compiled for the Baranov Museum by DKS Conservation Services, LLC, 2007.