



## Revised Courier Guidelines Executive Summary

Following the European *Bizot Group* meeting in May 2008, Ute Collinet, on behalf of Dr. László Baán and Sir Nicholas Serota, asked the *International Exhibition Organizers (IEO)* to form a task force, working together with the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest (MFAB), to recommend revised guidelines related to courier practice.

Members of the *Bizot Group Courier Task Force* researched current courier practice and per diem rates in museums in their own countries, in consultation with registrars and other relevant staff within their own museums. A working group met at the MFA, Budapest 11-13 September 2008 to draft revisions to the courier section of the 1995/2002 *General Principles on the Administration of Loans and Exchange of Cultural Goods Between Institutions*.

The attached revised guidelines (approved by the *Bizot Group* in January 2009) seek to formalise the role and responsibilities of the courier and to promote a fair and reasonable approach to the use of couriers, whilst maintaining the best interests of the work of art, the Lender, and the Borrower. They recognize that while it is the Lender's right to require a courier, stronger consideration should be given by the Lender as to whether a courier is really necessary, particularly in view of rising costs and increased awareness of issues related to global climate change.

The working group recommended that the *Bizot Group* adopt the revised *Guidelines* as drafted. It further advised that successful implementation of these *Guidelines* will require active support on the part of the Museum Directors to ensure compliance throughout their own and other institutions. In summary, the key changes to the courier section of the *General Principles* are as follows:

- change of focus to reflect a fair and reasonable approach on the part of both the Lender and the Borrower;
- a fundamental change to the original assumption that a courier is always required;
- strong presumption against sending a courier unless a risk assessment is made to the contrary;
- encouraging sharing of couriers wherever possible;
- definition of the role and responsibilities of the courier, with emphasis on the importance of suitable training;
- fundamental change to the practice of couriers travelling business class; i.e. all short flights should be economy class even when accompanying works. “*Non-accompanying couriers*” should always travel economy class;
- agreement to provide courier names and details further in advance to result in a reduction of costs;
- discouraging the practice of “*hand carrying*” works of art;
- understanding that it is the responsibility of the Borrower to set a reasonable and fair per diem and the responsibility of the Lender to accept it;
- introduction of a new per diem range with the recommendation that it be monitored, adjusting if necessary to account for changes in *cost-of-living* expenses in borrowing cities;
- two new sections have been inserted into the guidelines: *Reducing Courier Costs* and *Lending Without Couriers*.

In light of the revisions, it was apparent that many institutions' own *Conditions for Loan*, other related international guidelines, and other sections of the *General Principles* will need revision. It was recommended that the *Bizot Group* consider formation of a task force to address revisions to the latter document.

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Revisions were drafted in Budapest by *International Exhibition Organizers (IEO)* members—Fionnuala Croke (NGI), Zsuzsa Hudák (MFAB), Karina Marotta (Prado), Irene Martin (LACMA), Kate Parsons (Tate), Ann Bigley Robertson (NGA), Martine Silie (Pompidou), Linda Thomas (SLAM)—together with Henrietta Galambos (MFAB) and Éva Fisli (Hungarian National Museum). The working group in Budapest was additionally advised by *IEO* members Maria DeMarco Beardsley (MoMA); Flaminia Bonino (Azienda Speciale Palexpo, Rome); and Karen Colby-Stothart (NG, Canada).

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## COURIERS

*(This version approved by the Bizot Group in January 2009 & supersedes all other versions.)*

The practice of international lending can include the requirement for couriers to ensure the safety of the work/s of art (“the work”) on loan. While it is the Lender’s right to require a courier, careful consideration should be given by the Lender as to whether a courier is really necessary, particularly in light of rising costs and increased awareness of issues related to climate change. The following guidelines seek to formalise the role and responsibilities of the courier and to promote a fair and reasonable approach to the use of couriers, whilst maintaining the best interests of the work, the Lender, and the Borrower.

### **1 Definition**

- 1.1 A courier is the representative of the Lender, who is responsible for ensuring safe handling of the work during packing, transit, unpacking, re-packing and, if necessary, during installation and de-installation, and to condition check loans for which the courier is responsible as required.
- 1.2 The Lender invests the courier with the authority to act in the protection and/or proper installation of the work. The Borrower accepts this authority and works under the direction of the courier.
- 1.3
  - a) A courier who is travelling with the work, either hand-carry or in cargo, is an “accompanying courier.”
  - b) A Lender’s representative sent specifically for installation and/or condition-checking is considered a “non-accompanying courier.” This should be considered a special requirement and only considered when the work requires expert knowledge and/or handling for installation.

### **2 General Principles**

- 2.1 It is the Lender’s right to require a courier to ensure the safe handling of the work. In some cases, however, the work may not need to be accompanied by the Lender. Careful consideration should be given by the Lender as to whether a courier is really necessary before insisting on one as a condition of the loan. The implications for exhibition costs and staff time should be taken into account when making this decision.
  - a) Generally, one institution should send no more than one courier.
  - b) Consideration should be given to sending a shared courier when loans are coming from two or more institutions from the same city or area, especially when shipments are consolidated.
  - c) Given increased airline and security restrictions, hand-carried works are deemed high risk and therefore should be discouraged.

- 2.2 A courier must be allowed to be present when the work is installed or de-installed. A courier may also insist on safe storage for the work if the exhibition space is not ready for installation.
- 2.3 The Borrower should be in agreement with the Lender, in advance, on the actual duties of the courier for particular loans.

### **3 Reasons for requiring a courier**

The following concerns may affect the lending museum's decision to require a courier:

#### **3.1 In preparation, transit and installation:**

- the fragility and condition of the work;
- the intrinsic value of the work;
- if the work is hand-carried;
- a difficult or long journey, possibly with trans-shipment, or a journey with unknown transport agencies;
- a new Borrower where procedures and standards of handling are not yet known;
- a known Borrower but one where the procedures and/or standards in the past have not been of sufficiently high standard, or there is a concern that the Borrower is inexperienced in installation;
- a work that is complicated to install without guidance, or which has special handling or installation requirements;
- it is a requirement of government indemnity and/or insurance.

#### **3.2 In transit between venues on a tour:**

- a Lender should be encouraged to share and/or assign courier responsibilities with/to designated staff of the organising institution and/or another lending institution during transfer between venues. However, when the Lender is particularly concerned for the same reasons as described above, then it may insist on sending its own courier, particularly when the organising institution is not sending its own couriers;
- it is a requirement of government indemnity and/or insurance.

### **4 Duties and Responsibilities on the Outbound Journey**

- 4.1 The courier should be appropriately experienced, qualified, and trained to undertake properly the duties and responsibilities of the role. The courier represents the institution on whose behalf the courier is acting and should behave responsibly at all times.
- 4.2 The courier should always act in the best interest of the work. Courier duties and the Borrower's installation schedule should take precedence over any other business. Courier trips should not be combined with any personal travel plans.

- 4.3 In preparation, the courier must receive full information about the work, the Borrower, and the transport agent. The courier must travel with all the necessary loan and travel documents and keys.
- 4.4 In addition, the courier must be supplied with complete information about the condition of the work and about any installation concerns and requirements. A courier must carry copies of current condition reports and record photographs, which register the state of the work immediately before packing.
- 4.5 The courier is expected to keep travel plans and all information about the loan confidential. The courier should secure signed receipts for the work.
- 4.6 Before and during transit the courier should:
- be present at the packing and understand the methods used;
  - check the suitability of vehicles used and supervise loading;
  - supervise handling wherever possible or instruct the transport agent to do this in areas into which the courier cannot enter for airport security reasons.
- 4.7 A courier should never leave the work unattended in a non-secure location.
- 4.8 On arrival at the Borrower's venue the courier should:
- check the readiness and security of the handling/unpacking area;
  - supervise unpacking and advise art handlers on any special requirements;
  - condition-check the work with the Borrower and leave with the Borrower the original and annotated condition report signed by both parties; the courier should retain a copy of the signed and annotated report;
  - leave work in a secure, climate-controlled storage space if the galleries are not ready;
  - install or supervise the installation of the work if this is part of the *Conditions of Loan*;
  - check that the work will be adequately protected whilst on display; and,
  - ensure that the agreed *Conditions of Loan* are met.

## 5 Re-packing and Return

- 5.1 In general, the above duties should be carried out in reverse order at the end of an exhibition as follows:
- supervise de-installation;
  - check and agree on the condition and sign the documents accordingly;
  - supervise re-packing and/or re-pack when the courier is specifically responsible for this task, in clean, uncluttered, and secure conditions;
  - supervise all handling;
  - never leave the work unattended, unless in a secure area; and,
  - finally, on return to the Lender's premises, check the condition against the initial condition report.

- 5.2 The courier should provide a report to the relevant parties in the lending institution upon return. This information may influence decisions on future loans, with or without a courier.

## **6 Travel**

- 6.1 In principle, short flights should be economy class for “accompanying couriers.” For other flights, business class may be considered.
- 6.2 When the “accompanying courier” is not escorting a work, economy class should be used.
- 6.3 “Non-accompanying couriers” should always travel economy class. The number of days and nights should be determined by the time needed for installation of the work.

## **7 Length of Stay**

- 7.1 The length of stay, defined as the number of days and nights on-site at the Borrower, should be the minimum necessary to fulfil the required duties.
- 7.2 The following guidelines are recommended for “accompanying couriers”:
- 2 nights and 3 days for most trips outside the courier’s own country or over 1000 miles/1700 km;
  - 3 nights and 4 days for intercontinental or longer trips;
  - 4 nights and 5 days for flights over 12 hours.
- 7.3 The Borrower should agree to meet the costs of a longer stay to compensate for delay, complicated travel, or truck transits. The Borrower will always be liable to do so whenever the display venue and/or show cases are not ready or otherwise in breach of the *Conditions of Loan* agreed in advance.

## **8 Per Diem Allowances & Accommodations**

- 8.1 It is the responsibility of the Borrower to set a reasonable and fair per diem and the responsibility of the Lender to accept it. The same level of per diem should be offered to and accepted by all couriers.
- 8.2 A per diem should be provided for all days (including travel days), either by the Borrower or by the shipping agent.
- 8.3 The shipping agent should be instructed to provide travel expenses (hotel, meals, and incidentals) to the courier when transit by truck is required. Transit travel should not be included in the total number of on-site days/nights, unless agreed by both Lender and Borrower.
- 8.4 It is the responsibility of the Borrower to make sure that the per diem allowance is immediately available in cash for the courier and to inform the Lender in advance where and when it can be collected.

- 8.5 The Borrower should pay for a room for the courier in a reasonable business-standard hotel located in a convenient and safe location.
- 8.6 In addition, the Borrower should provide a per diem allowance, to cover all expenses, including funds sufficient to cover the cost of breakfast, lunch and dinner, ground transportation within the city, plus public transport to and from the airport. In some cases, when loans are coming from or going to institutions some distance from a major airport, there may be extra costs for shuttle/train/bus services to and from airports.

The recommended range for per diems as of September 2008 is: €55-80/US\$ 75-110, or an equivalent currency, according to the living costs of the Borrower's city. These amounts should be monitored and adjusted as necessary.

## **9 Reducing courier costs**

Institutions should consider any initiatives that will reduce courier costs, particularly in light of rising costs associated with lending/borrowing. The following are considered to be some of the major ways costs savings can be realized:

- reduce number of couriers sent;
- share couriers with another institution;
- discourage the practice of hand-carrying works of art;
- minimize length of stay;
- assign courier and determine travel dates as early as possible, ideally one month ahead, but no less than two weeks before shipment date, to mitigate surcharges on last-minute ticket purchases;
- use economy tickets as much as possible;
- adhere to established per diem rates;
- check if courier has pre-existing travel/health insurance so as to avoid unnecessary/additional costs of purchasing such.

## **10 Lending Without Couriers**

There should be a strong presumption against sending a courier unless a risk assessment is made to the contrary. Some institutions are already committed to this principle. The following situations may warrant consideration for not sending a courier:

- when freight is supervised by Lender's and/or Borrower's representative at airports of origin, and at the destination airport on direct flights;
- when shipments are consolidated and/or accompanied by couriers shared with other lending institutions;
- where the presence of the courier is deemed not to mitigate the risk to the work;
- when reciprocal agreements not to send couriers exist between institutions;
- when there is direct point-to-point road shipment; and,
- when transporting between venues for touring exhibitions when the organizer is already providing a courier.