

S hippity Doo Dah, S hippity Ay! hip Happens

by Rick Streitfeld

Editor's Intro: There comes a moment in every stained glass commission when the product is out of your hands, out of your studio and out of your control. That period of transit from studio to installation site can be a few blocks or inter-continental. Either way, this is when accidents can happen. Rick Streitfeld shares a story and some hints to make sure all arrives well and whole.



Rick Streitfeld

[\[click photo for author biography\]](#)

The crate was marked **FRAGILE** and **GLASS** in red, and clearly was meant to be kept upright via the A-framed wooden crate. Seemingly, those big red words became translated into,

"TAKE APART, KICK AROUND and STOMP HERE."

"Hello, Rick? It's broken! *[sniffle sniffle]*..." were the first sounds I heard when I picked up the phone. It was 5:30 PM California time and I was just starting to feed the felines and relax after a hard day's work. "Who is this?" I asked softly, and a somber voice replied, "It's me, Janis in Georgia. The window is all cracked. I'm so depressed!" SHE was depressed? What about me? I was the one who had to fix or replace it.

After telling her not to worry, that I would take care of it for her and offering a refund until it was replaced, I said to myself, "THIS IS IT! I'VE HAD IT." Now I was on a mission. As my dad always said, "Now it's me against them, and darn it, I'm going to win!" I then set out to find a new method of shipping a stained glass window. I figured it would have to be *foolproof* to get the windows to their final destination in one piece.

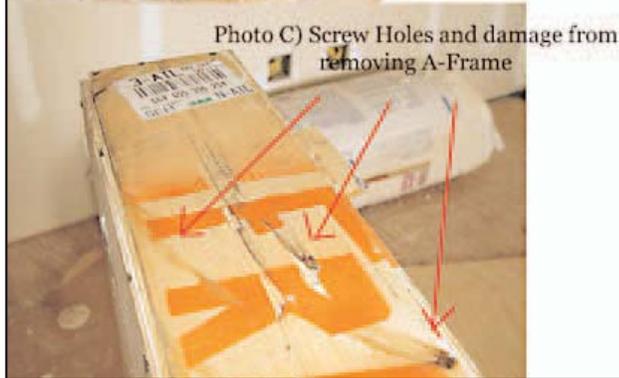
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This is the only photo I had of Janis's window in the crate before it left the shop. It clearly shows the A-Frame mounted on the sides, with Fragile and Glass marked in large red letters. This photo was one of the key pieces of evidence used to collect on the insurance.



This photo of the crate containing Janis's window lying on the floor with no A-Frame was taken after it arrived.



The collage photo of Janis's crate, taken the day it arrived clearly shows where the A-Frame was disassembled. These pictures were the documentation that made it possible to claim the insurance.

With Janis's window, I paid to have a beautiful crate made, an A-frame style to keep the window upright and safe for the journey despite the hellish hands it would meet on the way from California to Georgia. It was marked FRAGILE and GLASS in red, and clearly was meant to be kept upright via the A-framed wooden crate. Somehow or another, those big red words became translated into, "TAKE APART, KICK AROUND and STOMP HERE." The next day, after discussing more of the details with Janis on how the crate arrived, we determined what had happened.

The shipping company removed the A-Frame, tore off all of the 2x4's that were holding it upright and tossed them out, leaving just a flat box with a 9 square foot custom beveled window inside it. Footprints were all over the box, and chips on the plywood sides where it was bumped and banged up nicely. This was all in the course of making more room in the truck, to fit more cargo. It obviously hadn't mattered to them that I paid for the delivery of an 18" wide crate, which they trimmed down to 6".

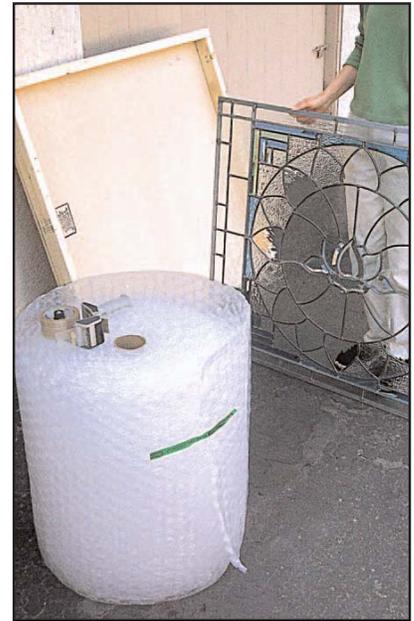
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Long story short, after weeks of denying that they mishandled the cargo, they relented. It seemed the four certified letters documenting the damage during shipping made the difference. Having begun with the CEO and working my way down, it finally landed me a phone call saying, "We see your point, the check has been approved."

This brings me back to my point; *how in the world do you pack a window for safe shipping?* The experience prompted me to action. After investigating different options and speaking with colleagues in the field who have "been there, done that" with shipping, here is the technique that is currently the state of the art.

I've always believed in 'overkill' when you want something done right. That's how I looked at this, and 'overkill' is a very strong word for a vegetarian! I started by assuming that my crate was going to fall off every truck from L.A. to Atlanta. With the input of several other glass people, I found it was of major importance to begin by wrapping the window

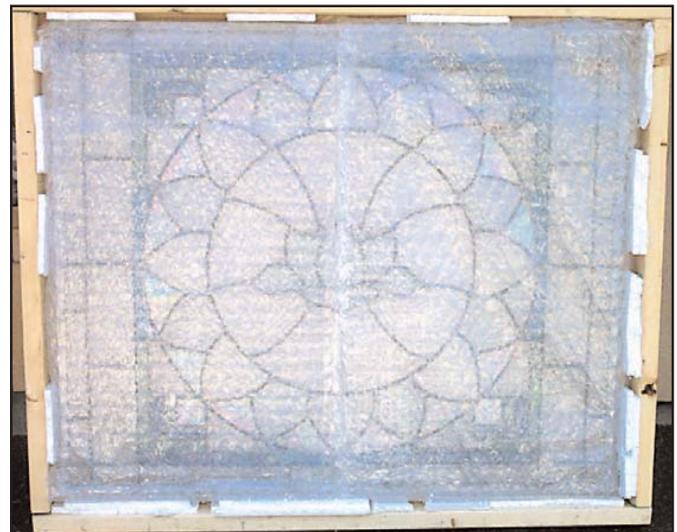
Preparing to insert a Lotus Mandala window inside the first (interior) crate. This window will be going to a home in New Hampshire.



tightly and evenly with medium or large bubble-wrap. The flat side of the bubble-wrap faces away from the window, and the side with the divided bubbles, goes against the glass and the lead. The bubble-wrap needs to be wrapped all around at least twice and taped to hold it in place. It also needs to be wrapped evenly with no high or low spots. I was told to put two pieces of cardboard taped over this, one on each side, to keep it very firm.



Lotus Mandala window being set into place as the bubble-wrap is checked for an even fit.



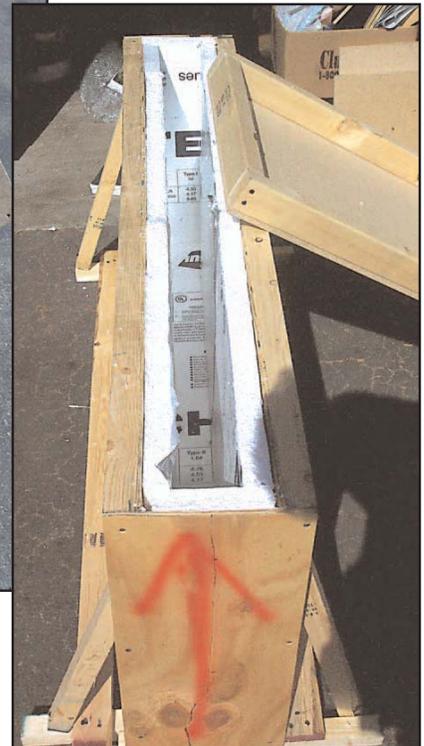
The window is now completely secured in place with additional hard foam around sides of crate as shown. This is optional and is good to use if there is any play after the bubble-wrap is in place.

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Lotus Mandala window being set into place as the bubble-wrap is checked for an even fit.



Top view of what the main crate looks like inside with the hard foam surrounding the interior. The right side of the photo shows the open inner crate where the window will be encased with bubble-wrap.

This is where I started to think, *why not make an inner crate?* I took the size of the window, let's say 36" x 36", and purchased 3/8" particleboard for each side. I figured in for 2"x3" lumber stock to hold it together. 2x3's actually measure 1 1/2" x 2" or so. Don't ask me why, but I just figured the people who handled the loading of crates in trucks, are the same geniuses that decided a 2x3 should really measure 1 1/2" x 2." It makes sense to you, right? Anyway, 36" plus 1 1/2" plus 1 1/2" plus 1 1/2" plus 1" would be the correct size for this inner box, which would allow for the 2x3's on each end, and 1" of space on each side, top and bottom. After doing the math, the particleboard was cut to 41" x 41". The 2x3's were cut to size and screwed on all around, and this section would hold the window with the bubble wrap.

After it is very snugly put into place, the top is securely screwed in place. An electric drill with a Phillips head driver is all it takes to do this in a few minutes.

Then I thought, *Ok, so, what if I made believe that this inner crate was the window and prepared to ship it now?* This would mean building the A-Frame at this point, with approximately 1 1/2" hard foam all around it, bottom and top and sides. The first inner crate would then slip into that. Before putting it in, it is first marked OPEN THIS SIDE in red,

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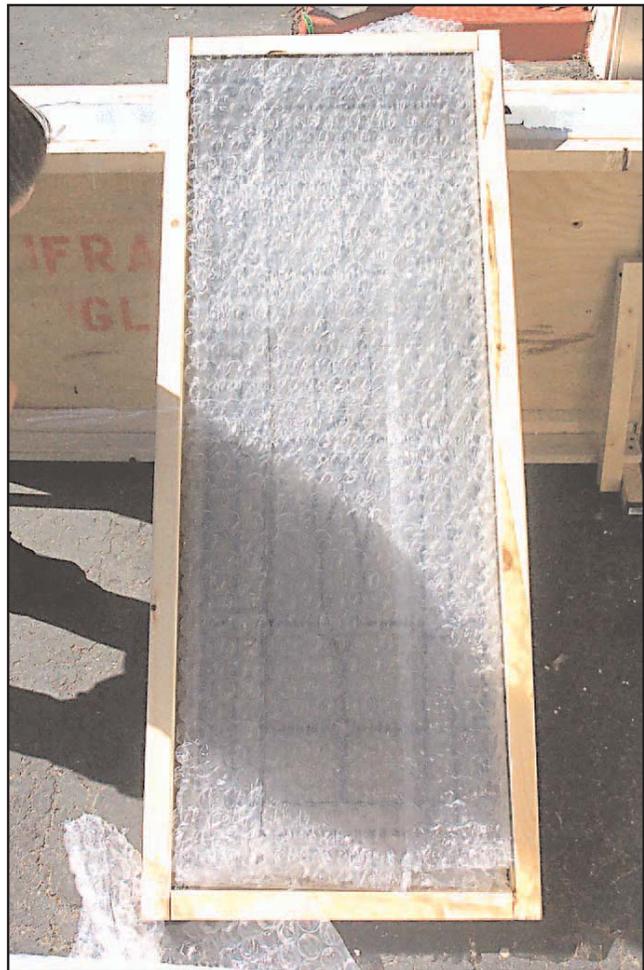
and KEEP UPRIGHT, so the recipient would know how to get it out easily and carefully. Once this inner crate is inserted into the A-frame made of cheaper plywood and 2x3 supports and a 2x4 base to keep it upright, another spraying of FRAGILE, GLASS, KEEP UPRIGHT or Arrows pointing up is essential. Also, it would appear to be wise to add, DO NOT DISASSEMBLE CRATE.

By the time I put this all together, it was really one heck of a crate, heavy, but worth it. I told Janis in Georgia that if the window didn't make it there this time, I'm going to put a motor and a seat on the next one and drive it there myself! It was that solid and secure. I still didn't want it to fall over, but if it did, I thought there was a good chance it would survive the fall.

One other thing; I changed shipping companies. I am currently using ABF.com and it has been a pleasure dealing with them.

As of this writing, I have shipped several large windows with this method and this carrier, and all have arrived safely. It is also important to give good instructions to your client on how to handle the window safely once they open the crate.

By the time I was finished, it was really one heck of a crate. Heavy, but worth it . . . if the window didn't make it there this time, I'm going to put a motor and a seat on the next one and drive it there myself!



The window is now securely and evenly wrapped, twice around, with bubble-wrap. Furthermore, the bubble-wrap is taped to keep it from slipping off.

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Inner crate is clearly marked as to which side to open for the window's safe removal once it arrives.

Summing up my procedure and hints:

- 1) Plan on double crating as described above. It's worth the extra effort.
- 2) Choose a reliable shipping company. Try www.abf.com (their representative, Joyce Miller, in the Jacksonville office is a good place to start.)
- 3) Take photos of the crate while packing and before it leaves your shop.
- 4) Insure your windows for shipment, always.
- 5) Send instructions to the recipient on how to handle the window once it is removed from the crate.
- 6) Be sure that the recipient observes and notates any marks or damage to the crate on the delivery slip before they sign for the delivery, or it will be hard to collect on an insurance claim in the event of damage to a window.

I hope this information is helpful to all of you and good luck. Shipping has become fascinating to me, as it means getting orders that you normally wouldn't have due to distance. One way or another, I'm going to guarantee the safe delivery of my windows. In fact, if you are ever driving down your local interstate, and see a tall guy with dark hair and glasses driving a 6-foot crate on wheels, honk and yell "Hi Rick!", because it will probably be me! Shippity Do Dah, Shippity Ay!

Visit my website, www.ArtWindows.com for more photos of shipping crates and processes. ● ● ●



Here is another example of the hard foam that is prepared around the interior of the main crate. This crate held multiple cabinet panels that were individually secured with bubble-wrap. They were safely shipped from Los Angeles to Northern California.

BIO Rick Streitfeld founded Art Windows, a custom stained glass studio, in 1997 after 30 years in the optical business. Originally from New Jersey, Rick has been a resident of Huntington Beach, CA for the past 23 years. His artwork can be viewed online at www.ArtWindows.com.