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# Where Art Goes When the Gallery Lights Go Out

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The exhibition closes, the last guest leaves, and the curator is no longer thinking about criticism but about dimensions. A painting or sculpture needs to travel further, to another gallery, to an auction, and sometimes across the ocean. In this article, we explain how the modern art market solves a task that rarely appears on posters: transporting the art itself.

## When a Masterpiece Becomes Cargo

For an art historian, a canvas remains a work of art until the very last second of discussing it. For a carrier, it becomes cargo the moment it reaches the studio door: weight, volume, tilt angle, and temperature in the truck. Being both valuable and fragile, such work requires solutions that are rarely discussed at openings, even though they determine whether the canvas arrives without a single scratch. This is why the handover act in the artist's studio means as much to a logistics specialist as a curator's caption does to an exhibition catalog.

Art Basel in Miami or Frieze in Los Angeles gathers hundreds of galleries within a few days, and almost every one of them transports something larger than carry?on luggage. Previously, the choice came down to a familiar dealer with a van and a couple of assistants. Today, galleries more often turn to the **freight marketplace GetTransport**, where they can compare offers from thousands of carriers and choose an option tailored to a specific object without wasting time on calls. At the same time, responsibility for the fragile cargo is distributed differently: insurance, route, and timing are fixed in advance rather than agreed upon verbally afterward.

Even a small regional gallery now regularly ships objects that used to appear only in museum catalogs. And the list of what usually hides behind the word "delivery" in the art world has long gone far beyond a single framed painting:

- A bronze sculpture weighing half a ton that cannot be tilted more than fifteen degrees;
- A concert grand piano traveling with a musician's tour and requiring climate control in the truck;
- Theatrical scenery the size of a bus, assembled and disassembled between cities;
- A vintage collectible guitar, valued at the price of an apartment in Brooklyn.

Each of these cases requires its own transportation solution, and guessing it by eye is nearly impossible. Moreover, a mistake in choosing a carrier results not in a fine but in a damaged exhibit that cannot be restored. This is why choosing a delivery method has become a separate stage of exhibition preparation rather than a formality at the end of the process.

## A Marketplace Instead of One Guy With a Truck

The delivery method is chosen by calculation, not intuition, and it depends on several parameters at once. Speed, climate control, cost, and availability on a specific route form an equation that is unique for each piece. Below is a reference point from which the conversation with a carrier usually begins:

| Transport mode | Typical use case | Avg transit time (US) | Climate control |
|---|---|---|---|
| Road freight | Gallery-to-gallery domestic moves | 2-5 days | Available on request |
| Air freight | Time-sensitive single pieces | 1-2 days | Standard |
| Sea freight | Oversized sculptures, container loads | 20-35 days | Limited |
| Rail freight | Bulk crates, regional hauls | 4-7 days | Rare |

Despite the difference in timing and price, the final decision is rarely made manually. Platforms like GetTransport combine all these variables into a single request form and send several offers from carriers at once. One way or another, the choice remains with the gallery or the artist, but the search process itself is no longer a multi?day marathon of phone calls.

## The Final Touch Before Departure

Art is rarely created with logistics in mind, but logistics determines whether the piece will reach the viewer in the condition the author intended. Thus, choosing the route and the carrier has become just as much a part of the creative process as the frame of a painting or the lighting in the hall.

*Photo: Darya Sannikova via Pexels*

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