

February 1, 2016

Ruth Asawa's iconic, large looped wire sculptures require special handling. Only qualified art handlers should do this work.

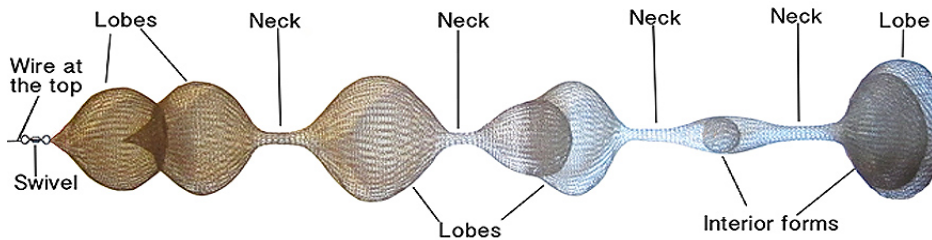
Sculpture Facts

- They are fragile even though they are made of flexible wire.
- They **are not** collapsible. Once the wire loops bend, they stay bent until they are conserved to their original form (and rebending wire can affect patina).
- They **are not** heavy. Small sculptures can weigh only a few pounds. Longer, bulkier pieces can weigh between 20-35 lbs. The largest pieces may be only 50 lbs.
- The **safest position is vertical**, suspended by a hanging wire and swivel at the top of the sculpture.



The Best Art Handlers We've Observed

- Have good flexibility and physical agility. These two traits are more important than strength since the sculptures are reasonably lightweight.
- Work as a team and are willing to take the time to read these instructions.
- Rehearse how they will move the sculpture in advance, with ladders (or lifts) in position to reduce the amount of time a sculpture must be carried.



WARNING to ART HANDLERS

- Never rest a sculpture on the floor. This may cause the larger, round lobes to become deformed.
- Never pick up a sculpture without knowing exactly where it will hang and exactly how it will get to the hanging hook.
- Always wrap the narrow necks with tissue paper and bubble wrap before attempting to move the sculpture.
- Do not squeeze the necks, cradle them securely, but gently.
- Never move an Asawa sculpture by holding the larger, round lobes.
- Take particular care to protect lobes with interior forms, as these are so much more difficult, if not impossible, to conserve.
- When moving the sculpture either vertically or horizontally, never allow the lobes to collapse into each other (or jam up). The suspension should be maintained so that the lobes do not collapse up or down into one another.



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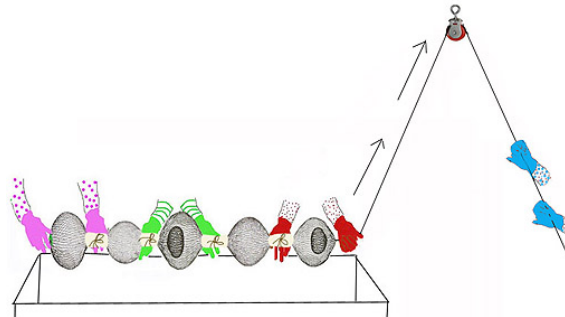
Installation from the crate in vertical position (preferred)

- Move the packing crate as close as possible to where the sculpture will hang.
- Attach a rope and pulley to the hanging hook in the ceiling to raise the sculpture from the crate up to the desired position.
- Attach one end of the rope temporarily to a hanging wire at the top of the sculpture's swivel.
- Have one handler raise the sculpture, with other handlers gently guiding the sculpture out of the crate.
- By using a rope and pulley, the sculpture is lifted from the top hanging mechanism, which maintains the sculpture's tension and lessens the chance of damage to the lobes by mishandling.
- Finalize the hanging mechanism with the sculpture securely tied off.

Installation from the crate in a horizontal position (if necessary)

- 3-4 handlers should rehearse how the sculpture will be moved from its horizontal crate to its final installation spot, including
 - insuring that any pulleys, installation S-hooks, or other hanging aids are prepared in advance
 - knowing the path the handlers will take (doors, steps, corners)
 - proper placement of ladders or lifts, and the ability to move up and down them even if both hands are supporting the sculpture
 - making any required tools readily available
 - understanding that **whoever controls the top of the sculpture, does the lifting.** The other handlers simply guide and assist, but never lift upward.

In the diagram right, there are four handlers. Blue is controlling the pulley and does the lifting. Red holds the hanging wire and first neck; green cradles the 2nd and 3rd necks, and pink cradles the last neck and the bottom lobe. The ***narrow necks*** are protected by tissue paper and bubble wrap which is removed only after the sculpture is in its vertical position.

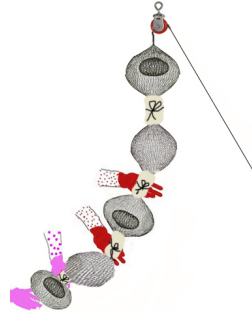


When moving the sculpture, keep the looped sculpture ***as straight as possible***. Prevent the necks from bending by having the handlers move in tandem (baby steps) while maintaining the tension of the overall sculpture. The necks are the most flexible parts of the sculpture, but over-bending them (or allowing them to jam up or collapse into the adjacent lobes) can damage the wire looping.



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In the diagram right, the handler controlling the pulley easily raises the sculpture into its vertical position. The other handlers cradle the necks gently and guide the sculpture as it becomes vertical. **Let the handler pulling the rope do the lifting.** Once the sculpture is raised into position, you can tie off the rope and finalize the installation.

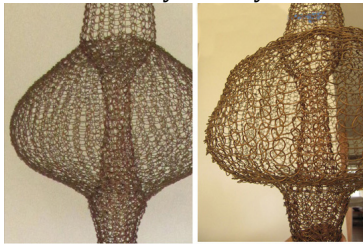


Examples of Improper Handling

Below, the lobe above the neck has been damaged. Most likely the handler held onto the neck and lifted upward, jamming and crushing the wire into the upper lobe.



The handler held the sculpture by the exterior lobe, denting the looping and deforming its symmetry.



The handler did not lift the sculpture by the hanging wire. Instead she grabbed the top of the sculpture crushing the looping.



Securing the sculpture in position

Once you have raised the sculpture to the desired position, use a woven leader wire/cable that is attached to the top loop of the swivel found at the top of the sculpture. We recommend using a heavy cable with 2 metal sleeves tightly crimped at each end of the cable. Once the cable and sleeves have been attached to the sculpture and ceiling hook, you can remove any additional installation aids (pulley and rope, S-hooks, etc.)

Sculptures are packed differently for various reasons. Please make sure you have photographed the packing method prior to unpacking them so that you can put them back. Your ability to repack these safely may not be intuitive. Protecting the patina is important.

In the example right,

- The narrow necks were protected with bubble wrap and tissue paper prior to moving it into the crate.
- This sculpture was then attached to the top of the crate.
- Five two-part collars made of Etha Foam 220 hold the sculpture in place during transit. This 85" tall sculpture can safely travel upright, vertically, or horizontally.
- In addition, tissue paper was crumpled and placed around the top and bottom lobes to immobilize them (not shown) prior to closing the crate.



When in doubt, please contact the Estate.
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