

Gimpel Fils

Mr. Purdy,
Gondrand Brothers,
Shed 2,
L.I.F.T.,
Temple Mill Lane,
LONDON, E.15.

January 16, 1974.

Dear Mr. Purdy,

I would like you to show this letter to your director and to the staff, so that they are informed of the poor service you gave us for the transport of the recent consignment of marble sculptures coming from Italy.

On November 22 Alfredo Soldani, remitted to Gondrand in Florence, eight crates. We were informed by cable on that date.

On November 23 I telephoned you and you informed me that your clearing agent in U.K. would be Invicta Airlines Ltd., Manston Airport, Kent.

My first letter to Invicta was dated November 23. In that letter we enclosed shippers invoices in duplicate and informed them that Form C. 919. had already been sent to the Tate Gallery. We instructed that the consignment be forwarded to James Bourlet & Sons, London for the usual Tate examination of sculpture.

Invicta Airlines failed twice to send us the proper papers essential for clearance of WORKS OF ART: in the end we were obliged to ask Pitt & Scott to clear customs for Invicta and for us.

Mr. Bourne from Pitt & Scott in London went to Dover and to Manston on December 21 and cleared the consignment with the customs officers. He asked Invicta if his firm could collect the consignment, but was told that Gondrand would do the Manston-London transport.

On December 27 Invicta Airlines sent you a telex informing you that the consignment was cleared.

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Gondrand Brothers (contind.)

On January 3, in the afternoon, I rang Bourlet to check the delivery arrangements of these sculptures to the gallery unpacked, on Monday January 7. They informed me that nothing had been delivered to them by Gondrand.

On January 4, I rang Mr. Dawson at Invicta and he told me that the goods had been removed on your behalf by GJR in Sandwich. I rang Mr. Cairns in Sandwich and he told me that it was on their schedule for Saturday January 5.

On Monday January 7, I rang Mr. Cairns again to ask him where were the goods, were they in London with Gondrand. He told me that they would arrive in London only Monday evening late or on Tuesday morning, the 8th.

We were so appalled at yet more delay and inefficiency that we sought and got permission from the Tate to waive the usual Tate examination at Bourlet's and permission to receive them direct at the Gallery, as the show was opening on the 8th, with a reception planned for over a hundred people.

The goods arrived in Davies Street at 9 am. We were there, although our normal opening hour is 9.30 am. The lorry had these enormous crates, total weight 3,000 kg and nothing to unload them with. I rang your office, but could not speak to you until 10 o'clock.

In the meantime we telephoned Pitt & Scott who sent a team of four men, but had no fork lift available then: it was only late morning that they provided the gear to enable GJR and the team to finish the unloading of the largest crates.

Mr. Camargo, the artist who had come to London for the opening, helped by the men we had provided, started the uncrating: all crates were mildewed inside; (the smell was horrible); the wood had swollen so that it was almost impossible to remove them; the marble itself was sweating, not merely damp. I telephoned you and complained of the state of the crates, asking you if you did not wish to come and inspect them for yourself; you said the crates had been under shelter. I found this hard to believe and checked with Mr. Bourne of Pitt & Scott who explained to me that your depots are old aircraft shelters with enormous doors open all day; of course

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Gondrand Brothers (contind.)

then the rain can come in specifically, if the consignment is stored near the doors. In any case Mr. Camargo, the GJR men and all our team can testify the shocking condition; some of the wood was so rotten that it crumbled in your hand.

Such crates, when in good condition and when uncrated at Bourlet's are always kept for forward shipping for some pieces at the end of the exhibition: in this case they were all a total write-off.

I would like your comments on the following specific points:

The consignment was with you since early December: you knew it was a valuable shipment of works of art, why the negligence in handling?

Between December 27 (the telex date) and Friday January 4, there were five working days - why the delay in carrying out specific instructions re: delivery to Bourlet?

Yours faithfully,

GIMPEL FILS

Copies to: Monsieur Sergio de CAMARGO, Paris
Invicta Airlines Ltd. Manston
Soldani
James Bourlet & Sons Ltd., London
Gimpel & Hanover, Zurich.

