

The Art of shipping Art: best practice and other fiascos

THE PANEL

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Behind the scenes, in five parts

RUN OF SHOW

- 1

Who are we? The world of shipping art from nail to nail
Head registrar, shipping manager, customs expert, art-logistics founder
- 2

AI and us: from beginners to experts
Where AI is already changing the work — and how far automation should go
- 3

When things go wrong
Anecdotes from the road
- 4

Training the next generation?
What an AI-native registrar or shipper will need to know & how this will impact mentoring
- End

Conclusion: for better or worse?
What gets automated, what should never be delegated

NAIL TO NAIL SHIPPING



BUDGET
Agreed up front
Quotes, insurance, service

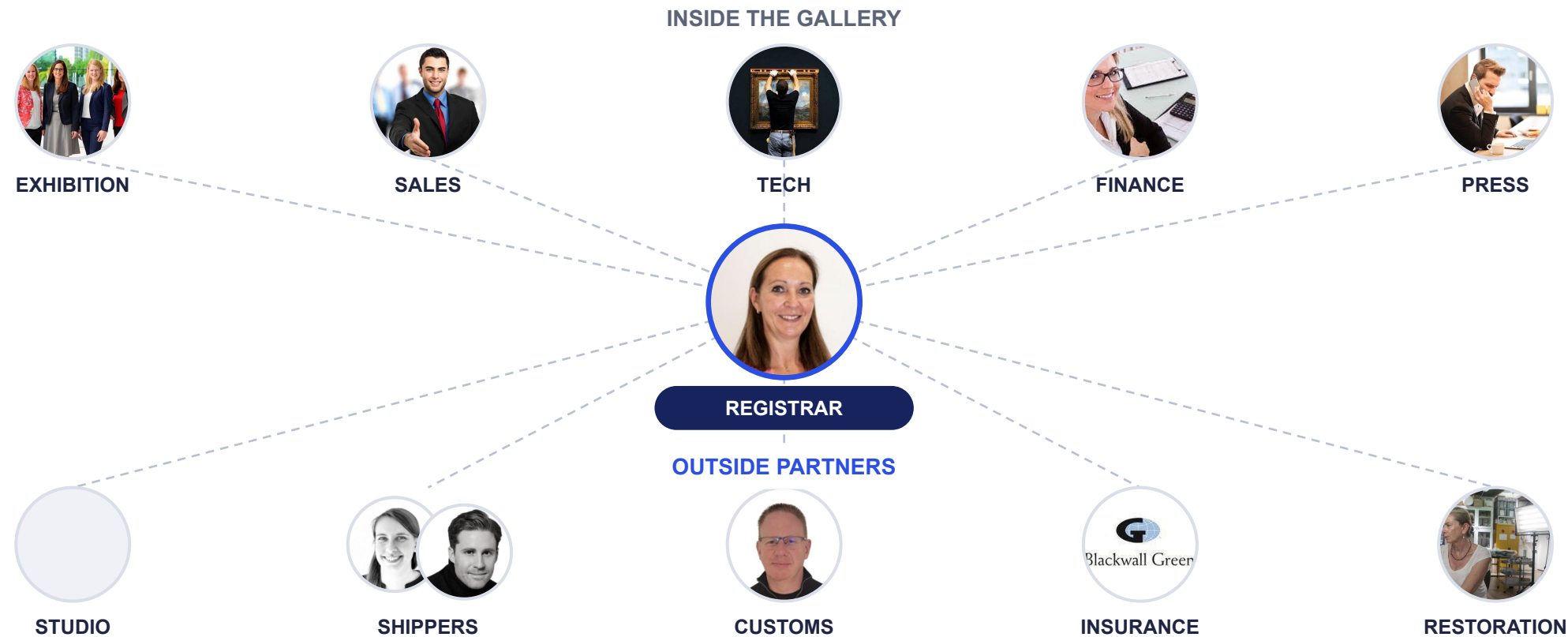


DEADLINE
Booked to the day
Collection to installation



My world: ten relationships, one registrar

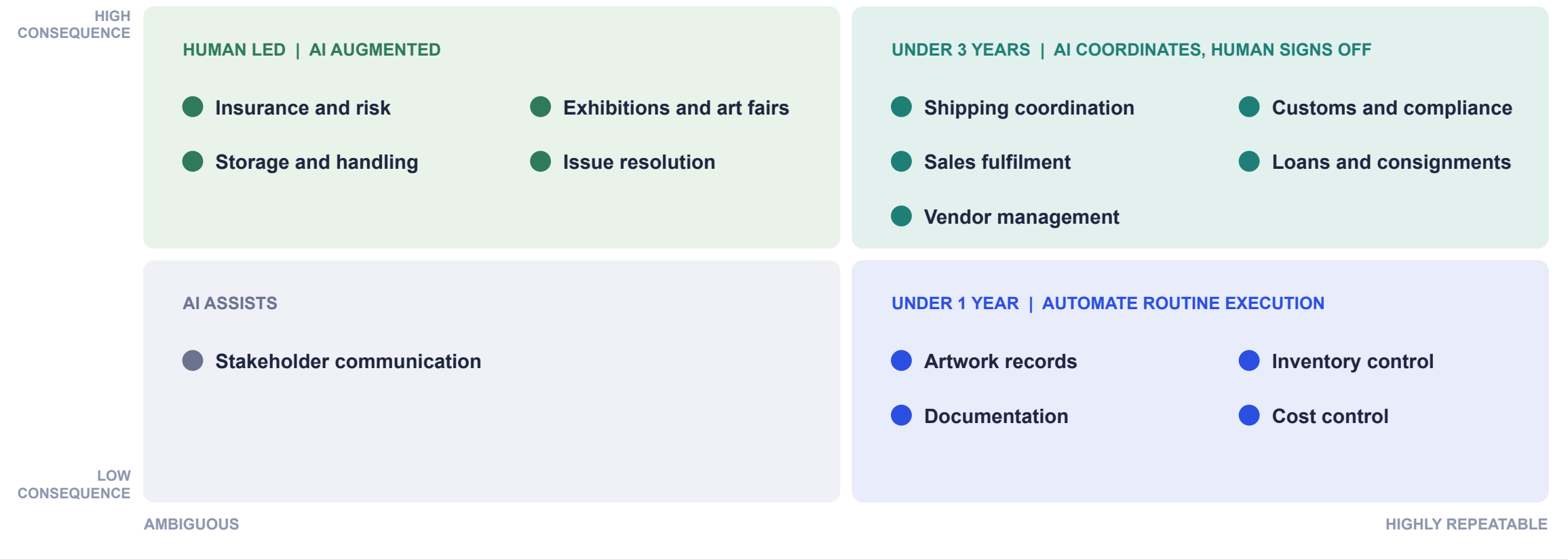
Inside the gallery and outside it, everything that moves an artwork passes across the registrar's desk.



Ten relationships, inside the gallery and out — all of them run through the registrar.

Risk and repeatability set the automation boundary

Routine execution gets automated first. Consequence and ambiguity keep the registrar accountable.



AI takes routine execution. Registrars gain time for clients, issue resolution, risk and artwork care.

Automation moves the registrar up the value chain

The same responsibilities remain, but the registrar spends less time processing and more time owning outcomes.

TODAY

AI-ENABLED ROLE · 2029



→
AI absorbs routine execution
≈ 2 days a week move from processing to judgement, care, clients and mentoring



More client-facing time | Faster issue resolution | Proactive risk management | Better artwork care

The Bayeux Tapestry

Approximately 90 people for the initial lifting and handling alone — before counting the teams in London and at the British Museum.

WHAT IT TOOK

The scale

Approximately 90 people were required for the delicate initial lifting and handling operation in France, alongside a specialised team of art transport professionals, engineers and police escorts for the journey to the British Museum in London — plus the staff in London and at the Museum.

The people

- Packing
- Police
- Technicians
- Warehouse staff
- Registrars — of course
- Shipping
- Eurotunnel LeShuttle
- Planners
- Security experts
- Insurance
- Drivers
- Estimators
- Customs agents

How it worked

Working effectively as a team, using a range of communication methods and skills, and drawing on relationships and trust built through years of working together — understanding what is required, supporting one another, and knowing how to respond when things don't go according to plan.

BAYEUX → LONDON



≈ 90

PEOPLE FOR THE INITIAL LIFT ALONE

Relationships and trust built through years of working together.

Could AI play a part in this — and would anyone trust AI to be involved in any part of this process?

The transatlantic move project

Twelve important shipments from the US to the UK via Luxembourg — six fine-art businesses across three countries, working as one team.

WHAT IT TOOK

The project

Gerlach were involved in the movement of 12 important shipments from the US to the UK via Luxembourg. Six fine-art businesses split over three countries all worked together to ensure each shipment moved without delay or issues.

How it worked

Drawing on many years of experience completing the same process, while trusting each art business involved to bring its own expertise and knowledge to the project. By working together and relying on each organisation's specialist skills, we could confidently work towards a successful outcome.

How the team communicated

- Emails
- Teams calls
- Phone calls
- Face-to-face meetings
- WhatsApp groups

All used to ensure the project was planned and executed to the client's requirements and expectations.

NEW YORK → LUXEMBOURG → LONDON



12

SHIPMENTS

6

BUSINESSES

3

COUNTRIES

0

MAJOR ERRORS

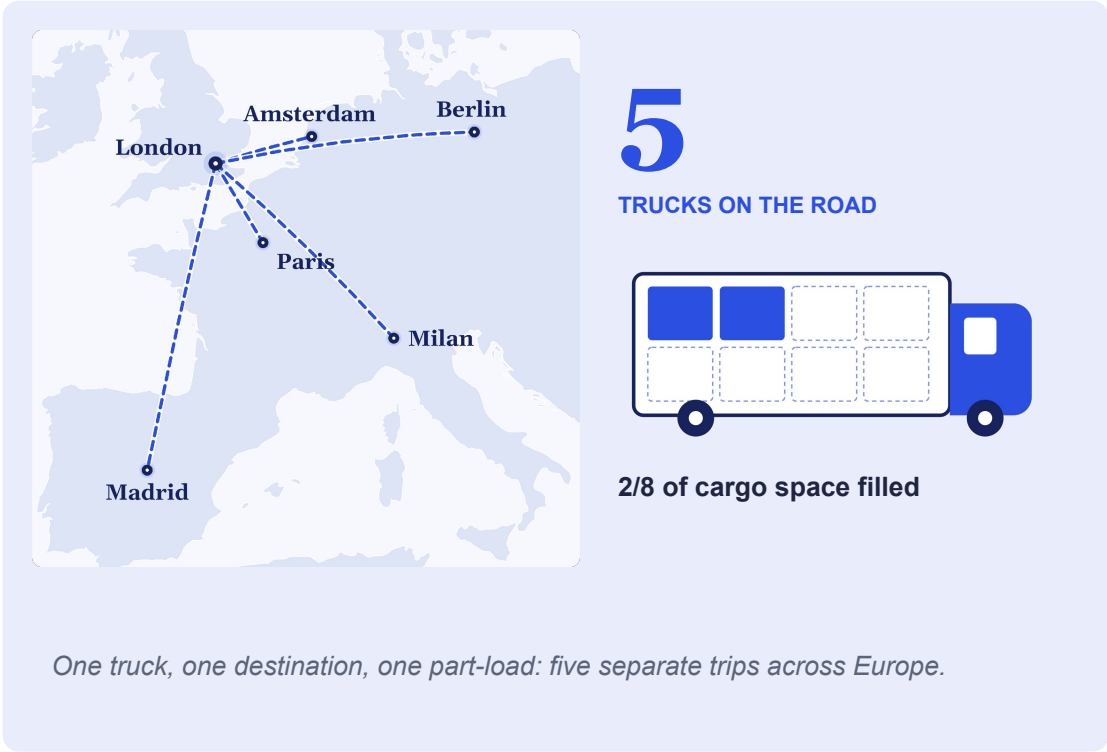
...and an end client completely satisfied with the result.

Could AI play a part in this — and would anyone trust AI to be involved in any part of this process?

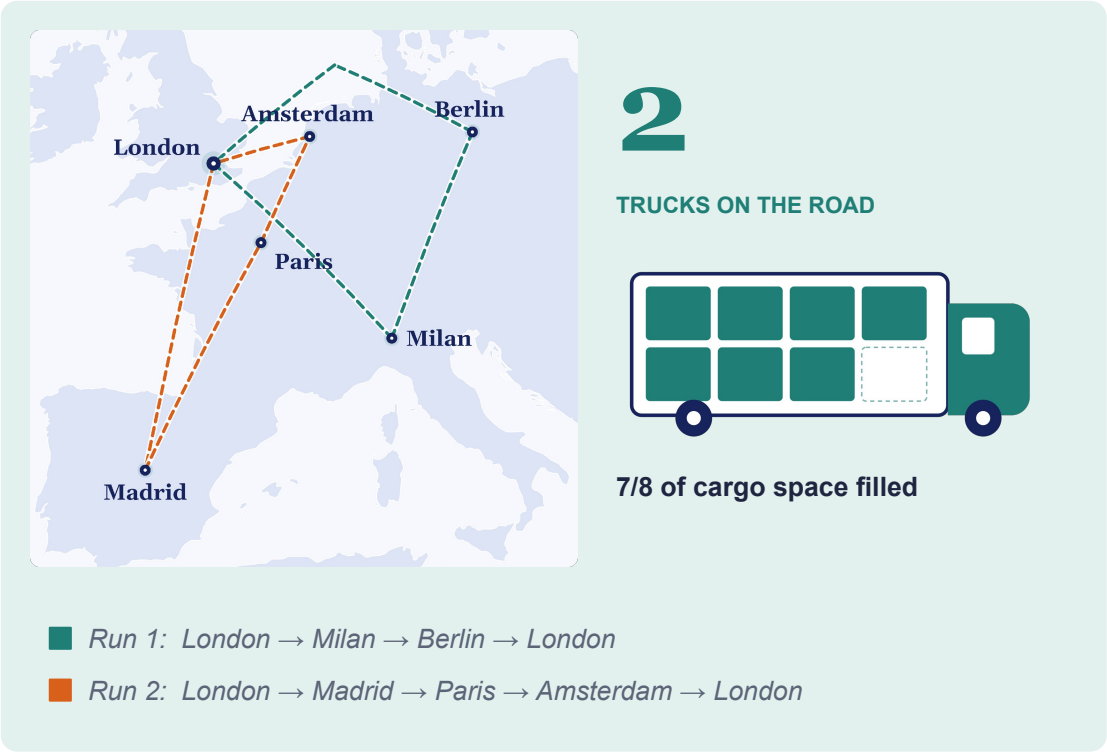
Consolidation beats convoy: fewer trucks, fuller loads

The same five European destinations, two very different fleets on the road.

TODAY · MANY SMALL TRUCKS, MOSTLY EMPTY



OPTIMISED · FEWER TRUCKS, NEARLY FULL



Five part-loads become two full runs: the same cities served with 60% fewer trucks on the road.