

Large technology object handling, storage, transport and exhibition installation

Gordon Klebba - Question and answer session

Chris Knapp: The aircraft you were suspending or mounting on poles – two questions. One – who designs and certifies your suspension system and two - have you had any criticism over the practice?

Gordon Klebba: Firstly I'm not aware of any criticism of the practice. The original designs came up with our exhibition designers and then engineers are also involved. Contract engineers and civil engineering, or mechanical and civil engineering and also aeronautical engineers are involved, just to confirm the points we intend to suspend the object from are structurally sound, and then also as I said the mechanical engineers to ensure that the actual structure that we're using to support the object is going to support it during earth tremors and that sort of thing. So as far as I'm aware we haven't had any criticism of that practice – we've spent a lot of time in planning those particular installations.

Alison Wain: Just to add to that – we actually only have I think it's one aircraft suspended and that's our Zero in Aircraft Hall. All the rest are actually on poles and that's a recognition that aircraft are structurally designed to be supported from beneath with the air rather than from above, so although they look like they're up in the air they're actually up in the air from underneath if you like.

Davina Bonner: I'm just wondering if your multifit trolleys are made in-house or if you outsource to make those?

Gordon Klebba: We outsource to do those.

Davina Bonner: So that each one's custom or you just get a whole lot of generic ones made and fit them out?

Gordon Klebba: A whole lot of generic ones – that's generally been the case.

Davina Bonner: And you fit them out in-house?

Gordon Klebba: The actual contractor that designs and fabricates the support or trolley - the multifit system - will actually fit the trolley up to the object, so that whole process is followed through. We've had an experience - I remember one of our early exhibitions where a number of elements of the support structure were made by a number of different companies and some of the basic things were left out, so we've found if one contractor can follow that whole process through and they have their own engineers, that seems to work best for us.

Dave Lee: If it doesn't fit what do you do then? Do you alter it or send it back?

Gordon Klebba: The contractor will usually be on site to ensure the object will actually fit that support system or trolley, and any necessary modifications that will need to be made can be made there and then, on site.

Alison Wain: We've also found trial fitting really, really important, and so spending the time and having the space to do those trial fits just saves us spending the time on the installation day.

Gordon Klebba: One of the big installations that we did that I showed before – the Messerschmitt 109 on a column – the entire process was practiced out here at Mitchell. We did the whole thing – bolted the column to the floor, hoisted the aircraft, sat it on the column. Because when you're working to some of these very tight installation schedules and deadlines, you do not have the time to go to a Plan B. You gear up for the Plan A and unless there's a major disaster that's what we'll stick with. It's a tried method. Most of the installation methods we used are already trialed if we have done them in the past, and if we haven't, as I said, we do a full trial run out here if that's possible.

Barbara Reeve: Gordon should actually point out that every single one of the moves of LTO objects is a media opportunity, and Gordon and his team work very very closely with our Public Affairs people, and they have developed guidelines for media attendance at LTO moves. Because it's a great way to get the name of the Memorial into the newspapers, onto the evening news, and promote the next series of exhibitions. His guidelines are available if you are interested.

Gordon Klebba: That's right Barbara – we actually discuss possible media opportunities with our Marketing and Public Affairs people before the event. So we look at opportunities that may be of interest and they might select – we'll describe what's going on at a number of different stages of an operation – and arrive at an agreement of what's of interest to media and then actually schedule that in to our installation program or schedule.