

Tips for Taking Photographs of Artwork from Home

As artists, we must realize that our work is not finished when the piece is finished. Since artists are required to submit photographs of their work for exhibitions, grad school applications, grants, digital portfolios, etc., knowing how to photograph artwork is vital. We don't want to have to put in all that work creating to then have sloppy photos negate this. Here are some easy tips to photograph artwork well from home using any camera or smartphone you have.

1) Lighting:

- a. If photographing indoors, choose a room with multiple windows giving you plenty of natural light. Turn off the lights in the room, warm indoor light will not mix well with the cool, natural window light.
- b. If photographing outdoors, choose an overcast day with indirect sunlight. The soft, bright light of an overcast day is preferable to the harsh, direct light of a sunny day.

2) Positioning your artwork:

- a. 2D artwork:
 - i. If possible, hang your art on a wall to avoid taking a downward angled photo of your art leaning against a wall. Hang art on a neutral background (white, grey, black) and photograph directly in front of/parallel to it.
 - ii. If you are not able to hang your work on a wall, lean it against a neutral background and tilt the camera angle to match the tilt of the art.
 - iii. Or, lay the artwork on the floor and photograph directly over it, being careful not to cause a shadow on your piece. If photographing on the floor, try placing your piece beside an open door to get the best natural light.
- b. 3D artwork:
 - i. Place your piece on a neutral platform, such as a table covered in a neutral (white, grey) sheet.
 - ii. Make sure the background space around the object is also neutral.
 - iii. Photograph your piece from different angles, choosing the one you like best.
 1. Unlike with 2D art, you can play with the angles a little when photographing 3D art.
 2. Make sure the piece takes up most of the frame.

3) Photographing your piece:

- a. Adjust your camera/phone so the lens lines up with the middle of the artwork, so that you are looking at the piece straight on, not from a higher or lower angle (again, there is leeway here when photographing 3D pieces).
- b. Fill the frame with the piece with just a bit of background around it. Be sure not to crop off any edges of your artwork in the photo.
- c. Position the camera/phone horizontally or vertically to match the layout of the artwork.
- d. It is important that the camera doesn't shake when the photo is taken, so use a tripod if you have one or rest your camera/phone on a flat surface.
- e. Turn OFF the flash.
- f. Try zooming in a little. Lenses aren't at their best zoomed all the way out or in, so somewhere in the middle is best. Make sure the photo is in focus.
- g. Take several shots of each piece, even if you think you got it right the first time. You may notice things later in editing that you didn't see when taking the photo.

4) Editing your photograph:

- a. If you have access to Adobe Photoshop or Lightroom, those work great to edit photos, but if you do not have access, you will be just fine. There are several photo editing apps (for iPhone or Android) available for free, such as VSCO, Snapseed, and Fotor. Or you can use the editing tools on your phone.
- b. Use the cropping tool.
 - i. For 2D work, crop the photo so that you only see the artwork, itself, without any background around it. Double check for clean borders.
 - ii. For 3D work, crop the photo so that the artwork is fully intact and taking up the frame with little background around it.
- c. Zoom into the image at 100% and carefully look it over for anything that wasn't on the original artwork. Use the retouch tool to remove any problem areas.
- d. Sometimes adjusting the contrast can make the image look more true to life, but don't overdo it!
- e. Save the image as a jpeg at maximum image quality

<https://fixthephoto.com/free-photo-editing-apps.html>

<https://www.callforentry.org/how-to-photograph-3d-artwork-with-dimension-and-detail/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vpj28da03JQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKgWizvm3Hs>

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