

SOME TIPS FOR PHOTOGRAPHING ARTWORK

LIGHT

The last thing you want is your camera's automatic flash making a major glare ball in the center of your image. Turn it off.

Take your painting outside to photograph if possible. The north side of a building (assuming you're in the northern hemisphere) is a good choice. Wherever you set up, avoid harsh direct light and make sure that the painting is evenly lit. There is better light when you place your work in "open" shade (sunny day, but in the shade). The light will be more even, glare problems are minimized and colors more saturated. I have had my best successes in bright shade. Put the painting on an easel and be sure it isn't leaning back or forward. Watch out for a body shadow from yourself. Be sure your lens is parallel to the painting's surface.

Natural light is best. If the sun is too bright directly, bring your piece to a slightly shady area that's still quite bright.

If you're forced to use artificial lights, get them as bright as possible, and reflect the light off of a white wall, poster board or another light surface to avoid over exposed parts in your photo.

TRIPOD

The use of a tripod is essential to getting a sharp image. The second element in avoiding camera shake is to eliminate movement induced by your fingers in pressing the shutter release button. Use a cable release if you have one, or just use the camera's self-timer. With a tripod you don't have to worry about hand shake or instability, and you can take time to frame your shot perfectly.

CROPPING

It also helps sometimes if you take your art off the wall and put it flat on the ground, and then shoot straight down on top of it. If your shot isn't exactly straight, when you crop your image you can also rotate it so that it's straight.

Nobody wants to see your studio, the house, your car or your carpet in the background of the photo. Crop into the piece so the art is all we see.

Take it out of the frame. Unless the frame is an integral part of your work, leave it out. If your frame has glass, it helps to completely remove the art from the frame, to avoid reflections. The frame distracts from what people want to see - the art itself.

Make sure your camera is focused directly on the art! It should look as sharp in the photo as it does to your eye.

When you're taking your photo, look at it directly from the front, so that the edges of the piece are parallel with the edges of the viewfinder. This keeps everything correctly proportioned. Make sure you are aiming to the dead-center of the painting, with the lens glass parallel to the artwork. Try to fill up the entire frame with the artwork.