

# Tips on Photographing Your Artwork

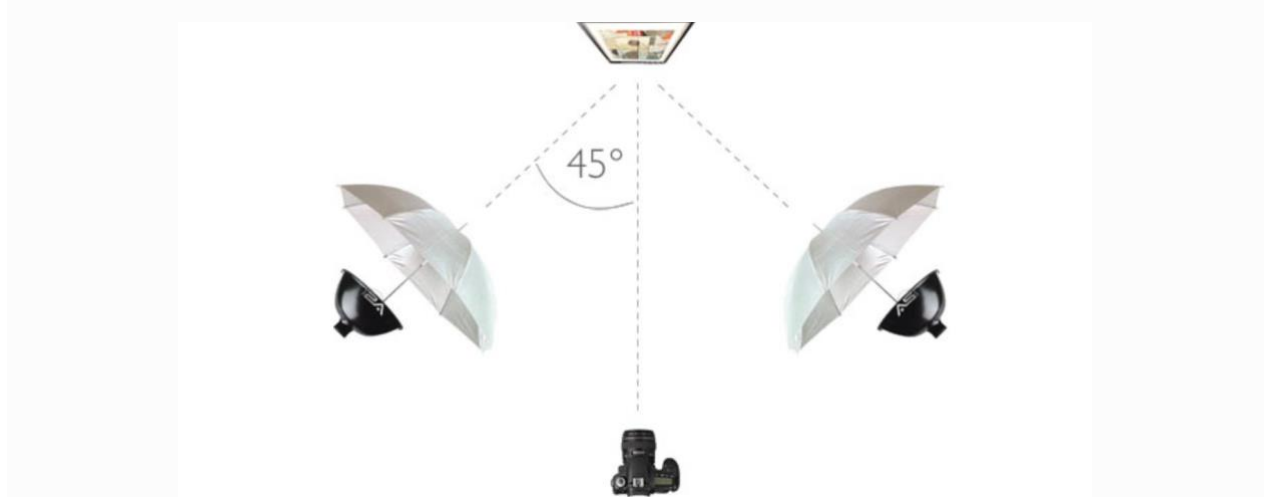
Knowing how to document your artwork well is an essential skill for any artistic career. In this day and age artists are required to submit work digitally for exhibitions, competitions, grants, and more. Good documentation of your work affects the first impressions of your work and professionalism.

Knowing how to properly photograph your work can make a huge difference on being accepted to an exhibition or capturing the attention of potential clients online.

We will briefly explain how to photograph your work using both a digital camera or your smartphone.

## DIGITAL CAMERA PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS:

1. **Hang your work on the wall.** Find a neutral colored wall (white or gray) and hang your work at the height where the middle of your piece will be parallel to where your camera is pointing – either on a tripod or sitting on a hard surface, such as a shelf or table.
2. **Light your work.** If shooting indoors, make sure you shoot in a room with plenty of windows and natural light. Avoid direct sunlight on your artwork as this may create glare and affect the colors of your photograph. You can light your work with lamps. For 2D works, all you need is two lights. (Preferably using Daylight bulbs). Clamp lights work great for this. You want to place the lights halfway between the camera and your work on the wall at a 45-degree angle pointing towards the wall (this angle will help eliminate any glare you might get from the lights). If you are still experiencing glares from the lights – you can diffuse the lights with white sheets in front of them. See image below for camera placement



3. **Double check your camera.** Once your artwork is hung on the wall and lit with lamps, double check that the camera is set to where the lens lines up with the middle of the painting – with little to no background showing. The artwork should take up the majority of the frame in your picture. The ISO and aperture of your camera are very important to get clear, crisp and bright images of your artwork. ISO references what film speed used to measure. The higher the number, the more sensitive the film was to light and the coarser the image. In this case, since we want very crisp images, we want a low ISO. Studio shots will generally be shot at ISO 100. The f-stop of the aperture of your camera adjusts how much light is let through the lens by making the opening bigger or smaller. The higher the number, the less light is being passed through. With a DSLR the ideal range for shooting artworks is between f-8 and f-11. Set your camera's timer to four or five seconds so that pressing the shutter button doesn't create a shake in your image.

#### 4. **Take the picture!**

### PHOTOGRAPHING SCULPTURAL WORK:

1. **Place your artwork in front of a neutral background.** You can achieve this by placing your artwork on a table pushed up against a wall or creating your own backdrop with a large piece of white paper/cardboard. The paper can be stuck on the wall with tape and the paper curved down to avoid a harsh horizontal line in the background. The aim is create a background with minimal distractions. This can be done on the floor if your artwork is too large to photograph on a table. See image below.



Example of a creating a neutral background

**Tip:** Be aware of the lighting/shadows your artwork creates. Use lighting/shadow to your benefit. Some shadow may be helpful in giving a sense of depth to your artwork while lighting can also highlight the materials and texture of your work.

## PHOTOGRAPHING ARTWORK WITH A SMARTPHONE:

1. **If photographing 2D work, hang on the wall. If photographing 3D work place on a neutral seamless background (see above).** Find a place in your home/studio that gets the most natural light. We want to use natural light because it helps prevent images from taking on a yellow or blue tint, which can happen with fluorescent lighting, and provides much more even lighting.
2. **Set up your iPhone camera:** Using a tripod will work best, but you can hold it if you don't have one.
3. **Prep the camera settings:** You also have to ensure that your settings are ready and fine-tuned. Turning on the Grid feature, for instance, will help you ensure the lines aren't crooked. Here's how to do it.
  - a. Launch your Settings.
  - b. Go to the Camera.
  - c. Switch on the Grid option.
  - d. Close the Settings and open your iPhone camera app
4. **Double check that you are holding your smartphone camera so that the middle of the artwork is parallel with the camera lens.** Let the grid on the viewfinder of your camera guide you. On your viewfinder, you will see two crosshairs—a yellow one and a white one—if you're not level with the easel's angle. Adjust it until you only see one yellow crosshair. If you notice the edges are still curved, you must move further away from the artwork. Satisfied with the angle? Tap on the shutter button.
5. **Don't settle on one shot.** Capture multiple photos and choose your best ones. The more options you have, the better you will feel after choosing your best photo since you've considered other similarly good picture
6. **Edit your photo:** If you're not satisfied with the background of your artwork, then you should crop it. Just use the cropping tool on your iPhone. Here's how to crop the artwork:
  - a. Tap Edit.
  - b. Select the Crop icon.
  - c. Dial to an angle until the edges straighten.
  - d. Pull the corners until you're happy with its new size.
  - e. Tap Done.

Do you want more contrast? Exposure? Bolder colors? The following editing apps for the iPhone will help you improve your photo. [Adobe Lightroom](#), [SnapSeed](#), [Moment app](#).

## ADDITIONAL ARTWORK PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS:

**Lighting:**

Lighting is extremely important when taking a high quality photograph of your artwork. It can have an enormous impact on almost all aspects of the resulting image.

- Use bright, indirect natural lighting.
- Natural light fluorescent bulbs can also be a good choice
- Avoid deep shadows and dappling effects.
- Position the lights and the artwork carefully before taking the photo. Make sure there are no shadows concealing parts of the piece, and that there are no problems with high contrast, which will give you an image with very dark or very light patches that will detract from the impression of the work itself.
- Soften the glare and intensity by diffusing the light source. For example: by bouncing it off a white surface such as paper.
- Avoid direct sunlight; aside from the fact that it's probably not good for your artwork, direct sunlight can create what are known as 'hot spots' on reflective surfaces.
- Do not use a Flash – Flash can also create a reflective "Hot Spot". It is extremely difficult to predict the full impact of using a flash, and you don't want to risk highlighting the wrong areas of your images.
- Avoid mixing light sources, as different style bulbs give off different colors.
- If the work you are photographing is behind glass, it is best to take out of the glass. If you can't, you will need to angle the light and camera to minimize reflection and glare.

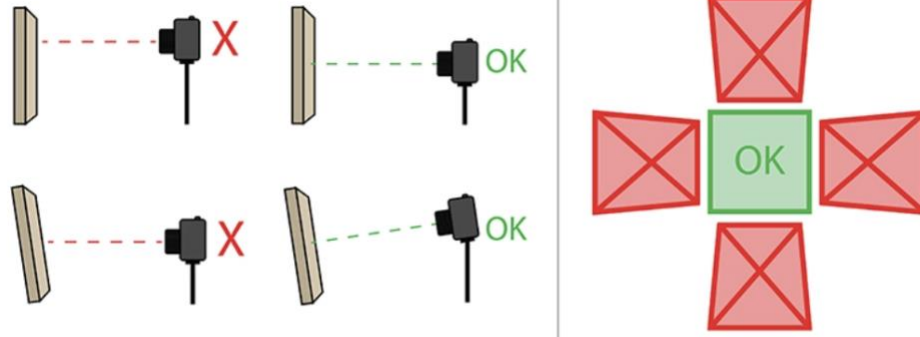
**Crisp Photos:**

Avoid blurry photos by using a tripod, or makeshift tripod by simple placing the camera on a steady surface. Tip: you'll have a much better chance of avoiding blur and camera shake if you lock down your lighting.

**Composition and Sizing:**

Capture the art parallel with the lens of the camera.

- Crop excessive blank space, artwork borders, mattes and padding. This makes a clean and focused image without any distracting background
- See image below for avoiding keystone angles



## Avoiding “Keystoning” or Image Skew

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

[Tips for Photographing Your Portfolio](#)

[4 Steps to photograph your artwork like a professional](#)

[How to photograph ceramics and 3-dimensional products with one light](#)

[9 Common Mistakes when Photographing your Artwork with an iPhone \(and how to fix them\)](#)