**Photographing 2D Artwork from Home (non-photographers)**

## Positioning Artwork: One of the biggest mistakes is photographing artwork is debris or unrelated objects captured in the background of the photograph. This distracts from the artwork and is considered unprofessional presentation. Please remove all clutter and place the artwork against a clean white wall or surface. The artwork should be hung or leaned against a white wall. The bottom of the artwork should be parallel with the floor as much as possible.

Setting Up Lighting: When photography 2D artwork the light must be balanced, and the shadows eliminated as much as possible. Day light or artificial day light is recommended. This is often achieved by two lights at 45-degrees. (Both are available at the VML Hub Equipment Bureau.)

1. **Natural Light**: For interior natural light use a large window (north window or east window in the afternoon). Alternatively, outside light during an overcast day is best. Avoid direct sunlight because it tends to cast shadows.
2. **Reflection & Glare:**  Be aware of window or mirror reflections as well as reflective light caused by the materials in the artwork, like metals, high gloss surfaces, etc. In those cases, other solutions may need to be explored. (Contact the VML Hub for guidance.)
3. **Two Photo Lights:** Use day light bulbs that do not cast an orange or green hue. Take the two lights and reflected umbrellas and position them at equal heights and above the artwork. Place each light at 45 degrees angle a foot or more from the artwork; one on the right side and the other on the left. The lights must be balanced.
4. **Eliminate Camera Flash:** Be sure that camera flash is turned off. Otherwise the light from the flash will bounce off the artwork and leave a white hotspot on the photograph.

Setting Up Camera: Depending on your comfort level, you can place the camera on Auto or Program mode. Auto mode means the camera does everything including the flash. While Program Mode “P” only controls the exposure (shutter speed & aperture) but not the flash. We recommend Program Mode.

In very basic terms, ISO is simply a camera setting that will brighten or darken a photo. The higher the ISO number the brighter the photography. This is helpful if you are in a dark environment. However, the higher the ISO the grainier (called noise) the photograph making it unusable. A good ISO range for photographing artworks is 100-200.

Attach the camera to a tripod and place it slightly behind the lights and centered with the artwork. Be sure the angle of camera matches the angle of the artwork even if it is hanging on the wall. Both the camera and the artwork should be at parallel angles of each other. With the camera viewer crop-out the surrounding wall or area as much as possible but leave a slight boarder.

Clean the camera lens. To avoid movement, activate the camera’s timer to 20-30 seconds. It will ensure you the time to click the camera and step back for a clear and steady image.

Take a number of different exposures with the camera.

Upload Photographs to the Computer: To upload photographs to the computer you will need a USB cable that connects the camera to computer. This cable should be with the camera. Once the camera and computer are plugged together then turn on the camera. For an Apple computer, the camera icon should appear on the desktop. Click on the icon and a list of image files should appear. Drag and drop the images on desktop. On a PCs, open “thisPC” directory and locate the camera drive. Double-click on the camera icon and open the image folder. Copy and paste files to the computer.

#### Photo Editing (Photoshop):

* Using Corsair Desktop launch Adobe Photoshop.
* Go to Photoshop file tab from the top navigation bar and select open file.
* Select your image file(s) and click to open
* To crop or to make adjustments to the image, simply click the “image” tab from the top navigation bar. A dropdown list of adjustment features is available including image size, color, levels, contrast, light, crop, saturation among others. (Need help with Photoshop features please contact the VML Hub. <https://www.umassd.edu/cvpa/vml-hub/>. We are happy to train or help.)
* All changes are permanent so be sure to save the file as a copy using the “SAVE AS” function. Be sure to save the new image as a .jpg file and maximum 12.

#### Quick Step-by-Step Guide:

1. Use a room with lots of windows or bright lighting or take your 2d artwork outside to shoot on a sunny day. Be sure sunlight doesn’t cause harsh shadows or excessive brightness by placing in a slightly shaded area.
2. If you are using artificial lighting, it is best to avoid fluorescents and to position 2 lights, one on each side at 45 degree angles.
3. Find a wall, or any place without a distracting background, where you can prop up your artwork so that it stands almost perfectly upright.
4. A tripod is best, but if you don’t have access to a tripod, place your camera or phone a box or small table. Just make sure to steady your phone or camera on something to keep it from shaking.
5. When you take the photo, remember to tilt the camera (if necessary) to match the angle that the artwork is leaning—this will help minimize distortion of the original image.
6. Be sure to fill the viewfinder of the camera as much as possible and then check to see that all the edges of your work are parallel with the edges of the viewfinder. You’ll want to especially avoid photographs that are distorted rectangles.
7. If the distortion is minimal, Photoshop can be used later to adjust the image by selecting it, then choosing Edit/Transform/Distort to adjust the edges or crop slightly within the edges of the image.
8. Take several pictures because it won’t always be as easy to tell on the viewfinder whether or not there’s any distortion. Once your images are on your computer, you’ll be able to see for sure which photo is best.
9. Use basic Photoshop features like Image/Auto Contrast or Color, or any other adjustments as needed.
10. Save your photograph as .jpg, Maximum or 12.

### Resources:

* Daric Gill Photographing Your Artwork: Beginner’s Tips That Anyone Can Do – April 5, 2017 [**https://dgillart.wordpress.com/2017/04/05/photographing-artwork**](https://dgillart.wordpress.com/2017/04/05/photographing-artwork)
* The Slanted Lens 6 Tips for Setting Up a Home or Office Studio - Photography & Lighting Tutorial - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHfBd\_Y\_Vmg#](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHfBd_Y_Vmg)
* Photography Studio Equipment for Beginners - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p13MFjuXVBY>

### Questions please contact Allison Cywin [acywin@umassd.edu](mailto:acywin@umassd.edu)

November 2, 2020