

**HOW TO PHOTOGRAPH ART FOR ENTERING A
WSA NATIONAL EXHIBITION**

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After you have completed your artwork and removed it from your painting board, but before you add mats or put it into a frame, you must record its image in a photograph. This photograph image must represent the original so remember your efforts at this time may make the difference between your art being accepted or rejected by the selection juror. Below are some tips that might help you prepare a suitable image for entry to the WSA 70th National Exhibition.

1. It is essential that the digital image of your artwork be of the highest professional quality. Many of you may hire a professional to accomplish the photography portion of preparing your art; however, if you hire someone, make sure that they understand all of the Prospectus criteria. Your submissions will be rejected if they do not meet those requirements.

2. For the best quality photo I advise using a good 5 - 10 mega pixel digital camera with a good lens. Do not use a camera below 4.0 mega pixels. Use a camera that will allow you to save the images in a loss-less format such as TIFF or RAW. This will give you the best opportunity to resize your image without losing detail. (See your camera instructions on how to format your images or set the camera's resolution to the highest setting.)

3. Set your white balance on your camera against a neutral white source to give you a pure white color. Follow the instructions that came with your camera to set your white balance correctly.

4. Set you camera to " manual".

5. Always use a tripod to steady your shot. No one can hold a camera steady enough for the speeds at which you will be shooting. If you are shooting your painting on an easel and it is tilted, you must correct for level. Use a protractor or level to measure the angle of the

tilt with respect to vertical. Tilt your camera in the same direction and ensure that the angle of the tilt of your camera matches the tilt of your painting.

6. Place your art on a piece of black material/mat board mounted to foam core; secure it with thumbtacks or pins. Make sure the art, when mounted, is secured so that it is parallel to the ground. Raise the art/foam core so the center of the art is at your eye level and secure it to a wall. (First, measure the distance from the floor to your eye level. Then, measure the height of your painting. Divide the height of your painting by 2 to determine the center of your painting. If your painting height is 16 inches, its center will be 8 inches; add the 8 inches to the measurement of your eye level. The result will be the height at which you should try hanging the top of your painting.) Be sure to photograph your art face on, not at an angle. When you are looking at your painting through the lens of your camera, its corners should look square, not angular.

7. The best results occur when you photograph your work in natural lighting. It is best to take your photograph on an overcast day between 10 AM and 2 PM. If it is a sunny day, take the photograph in the shade or in the shadow side of a building. This will eliminate possible glare. Avoid background colors that distract from the art. Avoid harsh shadows.

8. If you need to photograph indoors the best way to take pictures is to block out all other sources of light (overhead lighting, sunlight, etc.) and use 250-500 watt (3200 K) tungsten bulk floodlights. These are inexpensive and worth the cost. They may also be rented. By placing one light on each side at a 45-degree angle to your piece, you should obtain good results.

9. Isolating the artwork within the camera frame is the most desirable and effective means of presentation. Move in close enough with your camera to let the art occupy as much of the viewfinder as possible. Do not use the zoom, as you will lose sharpness and focus.

Then move the tripod another step forward because most cameras produce images that fill 92 % of the actual viewfinder space. Practice will make perfect.

10. Do not crop out any of the artwork.

11. Do not float the artwork in too much blank space or allow non-art surroundings show in the photograph, although this can be digitally corrected.

12. Aim for true color representation and proper exposure.

13. Recheck to make sure your artwork and camera are still vertical and the surface of the painting and the camera lens are // to each other.

14. Turn off the flash and set the camera time delay for 10 seconds. Depressing the shutter button actually shakes the camera. The delay gives the camera the time it needs to stabilize thereby avoiding any blurring. The manual setting will allow you to take several shots, each at a different exposure. Now you are ready to upload the images to your computer.

Remember, your digital images will have to represent your originals. Take more than one shot of your artwork at different exposures; bracket the images if your camera will allow this. "Auto" is not always the best when shooting art. Learn what your camera can and cannot do. Talk with photographers or camera-shop owners if you are having problems. That may be all that you need to produce a great image of your artwork.

NOTE: Many have asked how to convert slides (which are not accepted by WSA any longer) into digital images. There are a couple of ways.

a. Traditional slides can be scanned and converted to digital format at most full-service photo labs. It is better to have the original slide scanned because the color and detail has not been diminished from duplication.

b. You can also purchase a 35mm scanner designed for scanning slides and digitize the image on your home computer. Several of the scanners have this capability. I use the Nikon Super Cool Scanner 5000.