

Photographing Your Work

Dougherty Arts Center

Artist Resource Center Professional Development Workshop Series



Why do I need to photograph my work?

- Documentation and Archiving
- Portfolio
- Applications
- Print Publications
- Non-permanent work such as a performance or site specific piece

How to photograph your artwork

<https://youtu.be/Vpj28dao3JQ>

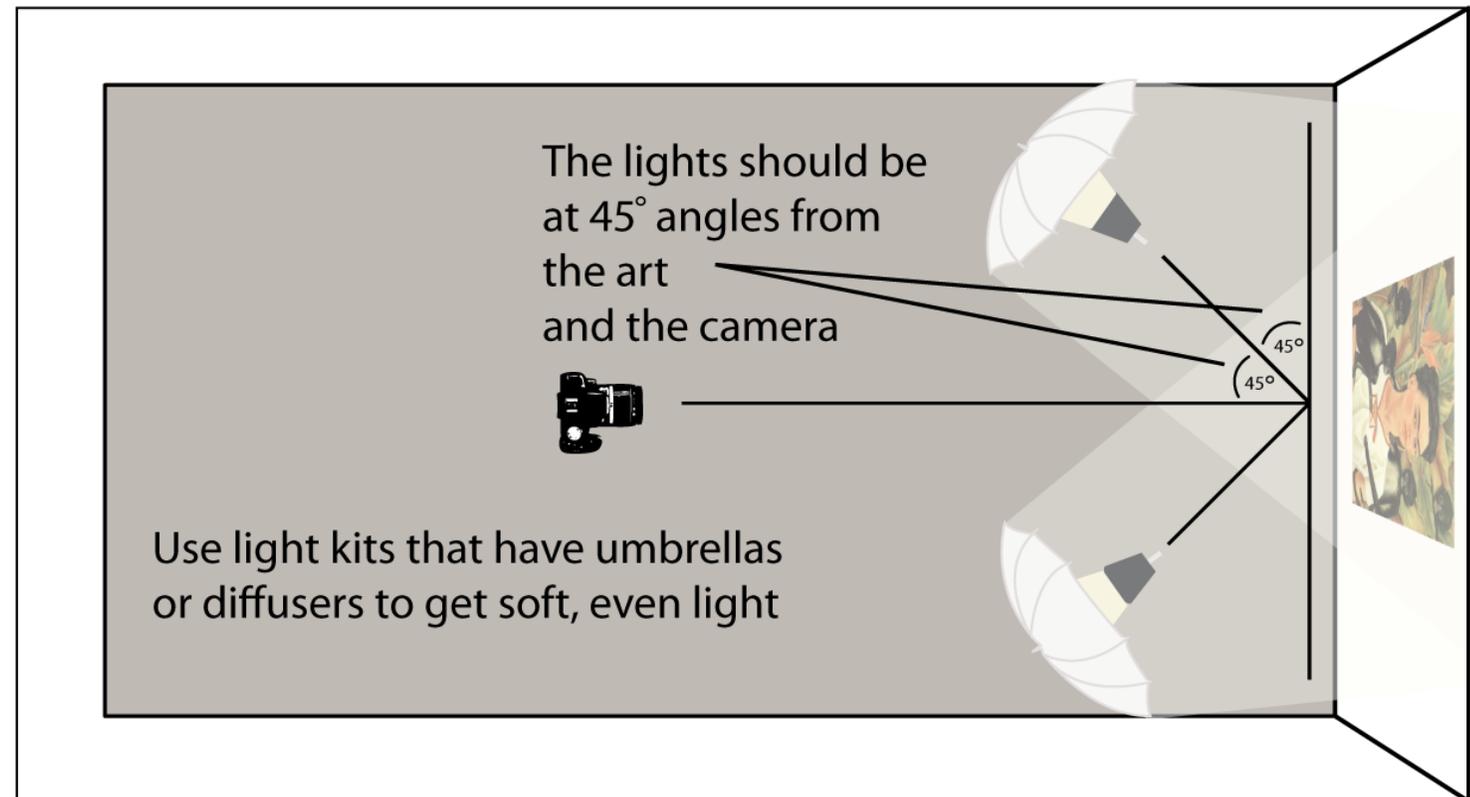
Setting the Scene

- Pay attention when positioning. Make sure the camera is level with the artwork to avoid keystoneing.
- Fill the frame as much as possible with the artwork. Background can be edited out later.
- 3D work should be on a plain/simple background.
- Avoid shadows.



Lighting

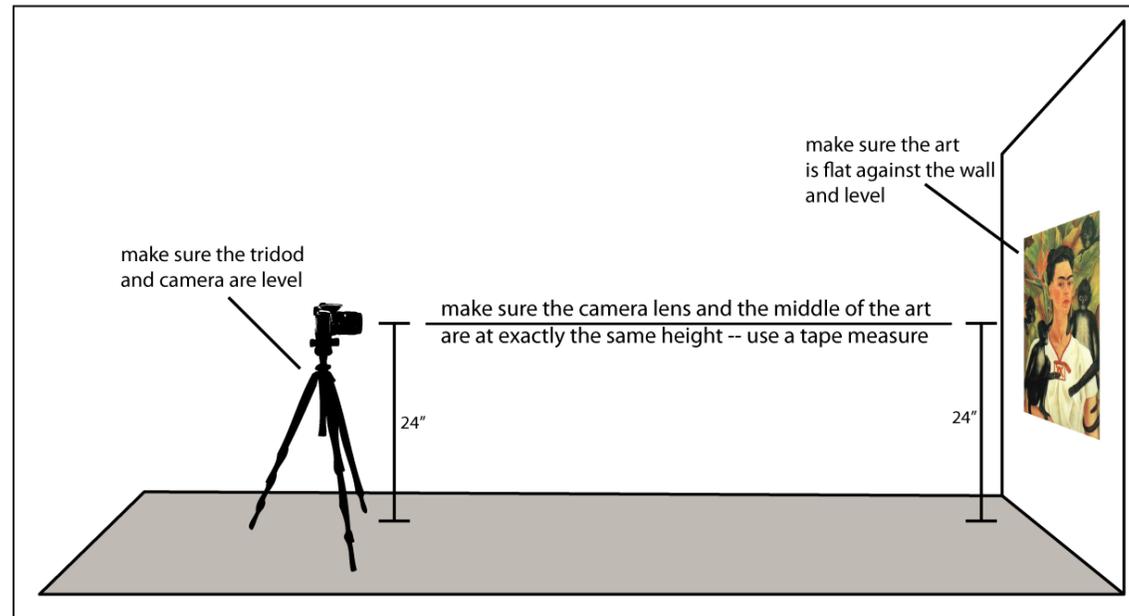
- Use a tripod
- Use bright, indirect light. This can be from natural light or a light kit.
- Adjust the white balance
- Position the light/artwork to make sure there are no shadows or glares.
- Do NOT use a flash.
- Do not mix light sources, as different style bulbs give off different color light.



Setting Up Your Camera

- Be sure your lens is clean.
- Your tripod should be set at the same height as your artwork.
- If your work needs to be on a slant to stand up against the wall, tilt your camera to match the angle.
- Position the camera at some distance from the object and then zoom in as necessary, avoiding distortion.
- Set ISO to lowest setting.
- Start with an aperture of f/8 for an average focal length. You can adjust from there to bring more or less into focus.
- Make sure your camera is set to take RAW images, or set to the highest resolution JPEG.

Proper setup of camera and lights for shooting 2-D work



How to photograph your artwork

- Make sure the camera is firmly attached to the tripod.
- Use the timer so that pressing the button doesn't shake the camera.
- If your camera display has a grid, make sure to turn it on to help you center and level your artwork in the frame.
- To ensure consistency throughout your portfolio, take all your photographs in the same photo-shoot.
- Take lots of shots and choose the best. Take detail images as well.
- Don't pack up your set up until you have reviewed your images on a larger computer screen.



Other Lighting Setups



Photographing 3D Artwork

- Place your artwork on a flat surface with a neutral background.
- Start by placing your lights at 45 degree angles from the art and then move them around to create the desired amount of shadows.
- The number of lights can be decreased to remove shadows or increased to create dimensionality.
- If the piece is small enough, you can use a tabletop soft box to help evenly diffuse the light.
- Be aware of glare and move lights accordingly.
- Rotate your piece and capture images from multiple angles.



Photographing Installations or Public Art

- Capture full views as well as detail shots.
- Try using a wide-angle lens, but be careful of distortion.
- A small aperture (f/16) will give you a deeper focal length to keep a larger piece in focus.
- Get shots for a variety of angles and positions.
- Be aware of what is in the background and that it is not distracting from the piece.
- If the artwork is kinetic or interactive, be sure photograph it in action with a person interacting with it.
- Best to shoot at dawn or dusk.
- Use a tripod.



Preparing your images

- Photoshop is the best all-around program for editing your images, but can be expensive. You can also use free programs such as GIMP, Picasa, or iPhoto.
- You may need to adjust the levels, color, saturation, and size, or crop your image or use a selection tool to cut out your artwork to place in different environments.
- Images for print should be saved at 300dpi.
- Images for the web should be saved at 72dpi.
- Applications may have specific file requirements. Be sure to check these before shooting and formatting your images.

Archiving Your Images

- Save your RAW or high resolution JPEG original files to their own folder.
- Be sure to save whatever changes you make as a separate file. That way you still have your original image to work from in the future.