

Digitally Photographing Two-Dimensional Artwork with Natural Light

- Step 1. Find a location to photograph your artwork. Make sure there is sufficient room for all of the equipment that is needed and that the ground is level (you do not want your tripod to fall over). Make sure you have plenty of tape, film, and fabric or paper to use as a backdrop. The best time for shooting digital images outdoors in natural light is mid-morning to mid-afternoon. Be careful not to cast your shadow from the sun onto your artwork.
- Step 2. Set up background if needed. Hang artwork as flatly as possible on the wall. Do not lean artwork against a wall or place on an easel to be photographed. Do not photograph artwork in frames or behind Plexiglas or glass. Plexiglas and glass will cause a glare when photographing your work. Works on paper can be pinned, or better yet, taped from the backside to the wall. It is difficult to tape artwork to fabric, so you may use pins. Make sure the pins are small and hidden from sight.
- Step 3. Mount the camera to the tripod and center the lens to the center of the artwork. Try to get as close as possible to the artwork and center the image within the viewfinder of the camera. Make sure the sides of the artwork are parallel to the sides of the viewfinder. Allow some of the background behind the artwork in the composition.
- Step 4. Clean up everything. Be sure to turn your camera off.
- Step 5. Transfer the files from the memory card to a computer. Save the files at a minimum resolution of 300dpi. You also need to think about the actual size of the image that will show up on the screen. Try to save your images around 5x7" with a 300dpi resolution. This will prevent distortion when viewing on the computer screen. If you are using your digital images on a website save them at a lower resolution. Do not place 300dpi images on a website. This is to prevent others from copying your images and using them for their own purposes. You may be tempted to 'fix' your images through Photoshop. Be careful when doing this!! Do not over sharpen your image or change the color too much. The result will be an image that appears as though it were digitally manipulated. The goal is to have an image that is a realistic and accurate representation of your work. Save your images not only on your computer, but make back-up CD's as well. CD's have a self-life of about a year before the information on them begins to deteriorate. It is advisable that you re-save your information on a yearly basis to new discs. When saving your files, be aware of how you label them. Make sure that they are easily identifiable by title.