

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 slides 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. Load the slide film in the camera. If you have kept the film in a cold location such as the refrigerator, make sure that the film has been out of the refrigerator for at least an hour. Set the film speed on the camera to the speed of the film you are using and set the shutter speed of the camera to $1/60^{\text{th}}$ of a second.
- Step 4. 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. This will allow room for the slide mount. You do not want the slide mount to cover up any portion of your artwork.
- Step 5. Take a light reading with your camera by gently pressing on the shutter release button (the button you press to take the picture). If you look in the viewfinder you will see a series of numbers representing the aperture size of the shutter and a red light. Your goal is to change the aperture setting on your camera until the red light rests at the setting for $1/60^{\text{th}}$ of a second. Once you have this reading you are ready to start taking slides. Make sure everything is in focus and take a picture. In addition, take a picture at one f-stop below and one f-stop above what the camera is telling you to. This is called bracketing and this way you will be sure to have at least one good exposure.
- Step 6. Clean up everything. Be sure to turn your camera off. Bring your film to a photo shop to be developed. Daylight slide film can be processed anywhere, but I would trust a reputable camera shop.