

## **Suggestions for Taking and Adjusting Quality Digital Photos of Artwork: For VAEA's Electronic Gallery, Juried Show Entries, Portfolios, etc.**

1. The best light for taking photos of artwork is indirect sunlight, either outdoors or right next to a window because the colors will be closer to the original colors and the light will be even. Another option, if you can access it, is photography studio lighting set up by a professional. (Although, if you have a program like Photoshop you can adjust the color later, to a degree.)

2.. Choose a digital camera with at least 4 megapixels. Choose a white balance setting of "sunlight" if you are shooting outdoors or by a window, otherwise choose the setting appropriate for your lighting. Turn the flash off. Make sure the quality setting is at its highest (largest pixel dimensions). Choose an ISO of 200, or at the most, 400. Any higher might create "noise" (spotty texture). Make sure your lens is clean. (If you have a digital SLR, I suggest choosing the RAW setting so that you can use the wonderful RAW adjustments in the newer versions of Photoshop or other professional software.)

3. Do not use a flash when photographing artwork, because it creates uneven light and often glare.

4. Make sure your camera lines up exactly in front of the center of the artwork, not at an angle, in order to avoid skewing the rectangle edge of your work (although this can be fixed in Photoshop). This means you might need to have an assistant hold the artwork up straight (make sure their fingers don't show) or you can put it on the ground and straddle the artwork. Make sure you are not casting a shadow it. Use a tripod or a camera with shake control (like the Sony Alpha series) if you have a shaky hand.

5. The automatic focus of a camera looks for an area of contrast when focusing. Occasionally, a piece of artwork that has a lot of soft edges causes the camera to be unable to focus. The camera lens will either go in and out over and over, or the camera will lock its shutter button. If that is the case find an area of high contrast, maybe the edge the paper, focus on that and press the shutter half-way down, then return to the correct composition position and press the shutter. This should work.

6. For 3D work, the best backdrop is a professional graduated grey backdrop that bends from back to base so there is no seam. These are available from photography supply companies. Use studio lighting or set it up outdoors in indirect light. If you do not have a photo backdrop, then a roll of large white paper (without creases) will work if you have a method of hanging it. Avoid using a sheet unless it is starched, ironed and stiff. Another option is to have a white poster board on a wall and one perpendicular to it on the floor. Although this does create a seam, it is still better than a photo without a backdrop. Three-dimensional

work with a busy background (like your classroom, studio, garden or deck) looks very unprofessional and is distracting. Often judges cannot appreciate the detail and craftsmanship of your work when the background is distracting.

### **Adjusting the Photos**

1. Download your photos to a computer that has photo adjustment software on it, like Photoshop or Lightroom.
2. If you are opening a RAW file in Photoshop, first adjust the temperature and exposure. For jpegs: fix any skewing problems. (In Photoshop, go to Edit>transform>skew). Crop out any excess background. Adjust the value tone balance. (In Photoshop, go to Image>Adjustment>Levels). Adjust the color balance, also called “temperature” in some programs, to match the actual color of the artwork (unless you already did that in RAW).
3. Save your original as a .tiff (uncompressed) and you can make .jpg (compressed) copies of this when necessary. Most juried shows will request a .jpg, but if you ever want to make a print of your work you should have a .tiff. Every time you open and save a .jpg file, it compresses it even more and you lose quality each time.
4. Sometimes you will be asked to label your work in the Exif data (XMP data). (That is found in Photoshop under File>File Info).