

# Achieving high quality photographs of your paintings for giclée printing

Ani Eastwood Giclée Printing 2018

## Preparing your painting for digital photos

Make sure your painting is fully dry (wet areas will show up as white glare)

**\*VERY IMPORTANT!** If you use any sort of varnish or gloss to finish your piece, plan on photographing prior to application (This causes considerable glare on your final digital work, which will show up with the ultra-fine printheads of giclee)

If your piece is already varnished, outdoor photography will be your best option to decrease glare.

## Hanging Your Paintings or drawings

Hang completely flat on the wall. Do not lean the piece against a wall. Make sure the painting is level from side to side with a level if possible (if you are trying to shoot a drawing that you can't hang by a wire, consider rolling small bits of a removeable masking tape evenly onto the back of the piece so you don't destroy the back of the drawing. Press lightly onto drawing back, so they are easily removeable later.)

Consider measuring the length from the ground to the middle of the painting, so you can make sure your camera is positioned at the same height. You can do this by eye, but be accurate. If camera is not pointing directly at the center of the image, it will make the piece look trapezoid and you will lose part of your painting to cropping later. Make sure the camera is level as well.

If frame casts a shadow on the painting, remove frame. Consider putting a white or black background behind it.

Set up a tripod centered in the middle of width of the painting. Set the height of the camera to be centered in the middle of the painting. Try to get the camera close enough to the painting where it fills a good majority of the view by leaves a border around the piece you can crop later.

## Camera Settings:

Raw file size: Set camera to largest file size available (NEF Raw preferred over jpg.)

ISO 100- This will reduce Noise (or blur) in the final image

No Zoom- This can be achieved by using a fixed lense or placing the camera as close as possible so zoom is used as little as possible. This will increase the clarity/sharpness in the final image. When zoom is used the sharpness will decrease and it will result in an image that has 300 dpi only at a smaller size (for example: 300dpi at 7"x10" achieved with too much zoom is not the same as 300dpi at 11"x17" or 18x24". The latter has more file information for printing. Don't worry if the dimensions are as large as you want to print it later. If the dpi is there, enlarging will be easy.

F8- Aperture of f8 helps put more of the image in focus

Timer: use at least 5 second timer to decrease movement from taking the picture. Push the button and then completely let go of camera.

White Balance: I suggest shooting in RAW rather than using white balance settings. They can decide on coloring for your image through their settings which are not always useful (although there are conflicting opinions about this...).

AF-Area- Try to find a setting that has multiple focal points. If you use a single focal point, it will focus on that and blur the rest of the piece. You want to set your camera to have as many focal points as possible.

## **Lighting:**

You do not want direct light right on your piece- This means if you are using fluorescent or ultraviolet indoor lighting, you must use umbrellas (traditional light kit) to refract the light. In this set up, the bulbs face away from your image. The light bounces off the umbrellas and you get consistent diffuse light on your piece. If you don't do this and you shine a bulb directly on your piece, you will overexpose/wash out the part of your image. The painting will have a section that looks like it's been washed with white and other parts will be darker. Direct light will also cause glare, which will result in a fine layer of white dots over a portion of your painting. Try not to use a combination of lighting. In other words, if you choose fluorescent, just go that route and black out windows. Mixing light sources will result in uneven color on your painting surface.

## **Shooting Outside:**

After trying different expensive lighting, myself, I truly believe the best lighting is achieved by nature. If you find the right day, the photo of your painting will need almost no color editing. Look for a completely overcast day. (this does not refer to just a cloud blocking the sun, but a day where the whole sky is gray). This will refract and disperse the light perfectly. If you have the right lighting, your camera's aperture will actually read f8 without setting it to this. Try to set the image up on a wall somewhere that there are no shadows cast on the image from an eave or porch and the sun is either directly overhead or would be shining directly on the piece if the clouds weren't present. If you see any shadow on things, it's not cloudy enough to shoot.

## **Scanners/ Pros and Cons**

Pros- generally scanners will get a very sharp image (up to 600 dpi) These images are very easily enlarged  
Very inexpensive: A scan from a local copy shop is generally under \$5.00 (just ask for highest dpi)  
Scans work very well for bold color pieces or black and white where color matching isn't as much of an issue.

Cons: Scanners utilize very bright light to take their digital image. This light can overexpose an image. If you have a subtle piece, such as watercolor or light pencil, you will probably lose some of the milder detail in these pieces. Because of the overexposure, you can also have colors migrate. A printer will have to turn down exposure and then turn up saturation on your piece, which can result in more neon colors.