



presents:

***'How to Photograph Your Art'
with David Simonton***

A BIT ABOUT DIGITAL CAMERAS...

Let's say you want to take a picture and e-mail it somewhere, or burn it onto a CD. To do this, you'll need the picture to be represented in the language computers recognize.

A *digital image* is a long string of 1's and 0's that represent the colored dots, or *pixels*, that collectively make up an image.

Like a conventional camera, a *digital camera* uses a lens to focus light to produce an image. But instead of focusing light onto a piece of film, it focuses it onto a *sensor*, which then converts the light into electrical charges. (A simple way to think of this sensor is to think of a 2-D array of thousands or millions of tiny solar cells.)

The total number of "cells" / or *pixels* / or light-sensing dots on a camera's electronic sensor is referred to as the camera's *resolution*.

A *megapixel* is an expression of how many pixels are on a camera's sensor, *in millions*. Thus, a *2-megapixel camera* has about 2 million pixels on the sensor.

A digital image is *composed* of pixels; the term "pixel" is shorthand for "picture element." The more *elements* your camera can gather to collectively make up your *picture*, the better.

But only up to a point... A 6- to 8-megapixel camera is more than enough of a camera, megapixel-wise, for photographing your artwork.

PHOTOGRAPHING YOUR ARTWORK

SEE THE LIGHT - OUTSIDE: Indirect Lighting Is Best; Overcast Days Are *Good*
- INSIDE: Avoid MIXED Lighting

USE A TRIPOD! - "Camera movement is the number one killer of image clarity."

- Familiarize Yourself With All Your Tripod's ADJUSTMENTS
- Make Sure Your Tripod Legs Have a FIRM FOOTING Before You Shoot
- AVOID Full Extension of the Tripod Legs and/or the Center Post

"FRAME" YOUR 2D WORK CAREFULLY-

- Shoot your piece STRAIGHT ON (and not from an angle) to prevent perspective distortion. The camera back and the surface of your piece should be parallel.
- First, square up your piece in the camera's viewfinder (yes, the *viewfinder*). Then, tweak the results on the rear viewing screen. **Take. Your. Time.**

UTILIZE YOUR CAMERA'S FEATURES. If Your Camera Has These Capabilities... -

- Use the Camera's PROGRAM ("P") MODE
- Use a Low ISO NUMBER ("100 ISO" or Lower)
- Use the Highest RESOLUTION Possible

- Set the Camera's WHITE BALANCE
- Set Your Camera's *Optical* ZOOM LENS to A Moderate TELEPHOTO Setting
- Set the Flash Mode to "OFF." Turn OFF the Flash. Do NOT Use the Flash.
- Use the Camera's SELF-TIMER to Take the Picture

If Your Pictures Are Consistently TOO LIGHT or TOO DARK:

- Investigate Your Camera's METERING MODES
- Explore Your Camera's "EV COMPENSATION" Settings
- Research *GREY CARD* Use

TIPS & TIME-SAVERS -

- Place a plain piece of white foamcore or matboard in the exact position your piece is going to be in. SQUINT your eyes. Carefully check the light for *shadows*. Make sure that the light is *even*.
- If necessary, use reflector(s) - foamcore, etc. - to fill in, and even out, the light.
- Whenever possible, REMOVE GLASS from 2D pieces.
- Use a small hand-mirror to assure precise camera alignment. Place the mirror where the center of the piece is going to be. If you can see the center of the camera lens in the center of the mirror when you look through your camera's viewfinder, the camera & the piece are parallel!
- If you're photographing several pieces, first arrange them by SIZE.
- If the piece you're photographing is *large*, it's probably best to take it outside.
- Take more than one shot of each piece! Vary your camera's settings, especially when you're first attempting this. Take notes for future reference.
- For *precise* color reproduction, place a Kodak "Color Control Patch" along the edge of your piece. Be sure to include it in the picture you take for reference.

FILM? -

- Match your SLIDE FILM to your LIGHT SOURCE, i.e. "Daylight" film for natural light, "Tungsten" film for photo flood lamps. A good camera store can help you get this right.
- BRACKET your exposures to help assure the best exposure. Read the camera's Owner's Manual to learn how to perform this CRITICAL PROCEDURE using your specific camera.
- If you have trouble focusing the lens on a manual film camera, ADD LIGHT (side light is usually the most helpful) to assist you. Remove the extra light before actually photographing the work.

PHOTOGRAPHING YOUR ARTWORK, HOW-TO (A Few Tried-and-True Sites)

- www.rickleephoto.com/rlartcopying.htm // • www.slowart.com/limner/htm/slides.htm
- www.dallasartsrevue.com/resources/How-to-Photo-Art.shtml
- www.cjmorgan.com/articles-for-artists/taking-slides-of-3-d-art-sculpture-crafts.pdf
- shutterbug.com/techniques/pro_techniques/0407artwork/
- digital-photography-school.com/iso-settings
- www.digitalartsphotography.com/instructions.htm
- bermangraphics.com/digital-jury-resources/digital-cameras.htm

DIGITAL, HOW-TO

- *THE BEST SITE* for Understanding Digital Images - www.scantips.com/
- Glossary of Scanning & Digital Terms - webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=12944
- Image Size/Resolution - www.peachpit.com/articles/article.aspx?p=30070&seqNum=4
- Basic *Photoshop* Use - graphicssoft.about.com/od/photoshop/l/blps5out.htm
- General Photo Tips - www.kenrockwell.com

MATERIALS, SUPPLIES, and SERVICES

- Professional Photo Lab (Raleigh) - **J.W. Photo Lab**, 620 North West Street 832.8525
- Art Supplies (Raleigh) - **Askew-Taylor**, 110 Glenwood Ave 834-4497
- Photo Supplies (Raleigh) - **Peace Camera**, 421 West Peace Street 836-2222
- **Southeastern Camera**, 2123 Atlantic Avenue 890-4484
- Photographic Supplies (Best Online Sources)
 - www.adorama.com/
 - www.calumetphoto.com/
 - www.bhphotovideo.com/
 - www.freestylephoto.biz/

IN THE MARKET FOR A DIGITAL CAMERA?

- "*Digital Camera HQ* offers unbiased, informative reviews from camera experts and everyday users looking to share their own experiences. We are not a store, but we will help you find a great camera at the best price." - www.digitalcamera-hq.com/digital-cameras/

TRIPOD?

- SLIK and BOGEN are two brands of inexpensive, high-quality tripods.

FLATBED SCANNER?

- Epson "Perfection Series" Scanners Are Excellent! *Model 4490* [the one I use] comes packaged with *Photoshop Elements!* - www.epson.com/cgi-bin/Store/jsp/index.do

IMAGE-MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE?

- Adobe Photoshop Elements: *Photoshop CS* = \$\$\$\$\$\$, *Photoshop Elements* = \$ (and Worth It!) - www.adobe.com
- *pixlr*: Limited in what it can do, and a bit slow... but it works, and it's FREE! (and legit) - www.pixlr.com/
- *GIMP*: "GIMP is the Open Source answer to Adobe Photoshop." I haven't tried it myself, but it might be worth looking into - www.gimp.org