Tips and tricks for photographing an artwork:

We hope this information will help you photograph your artwork so that it looks professional when presented online. As you continue your journey as an artist there will be many opportunities and needs for you to showcase your artwork in the digital realm. This might include a portfolio submission for colleges, grants, or exhibitions. These tips will even help you make better Instagram posts! These examples and tips are for photographing an artwork without studio, professional light pack or fancy camera. All of the photos below were taken with an iPhone with lighting in a domestic setting.

Links to YouTube videos:

Photographing a painting:
Saatchi Art – This video gives some good tips for how to set up an easy in-home shoot for your 2D work.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SrsKycVp-bA&t=101s

Photographing a small sculpture:
Maryland Institute College of Art – This video is a good tutorial for photographing a 3D artwork. Keep in mind this is in a photography studio, but you can hack these tips in your own home.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6G6FHgWLlkI

Photographing and using iPhone editing:
aftrART – This video gives some good tips for editing your photos in your iPhone/smartphone. I know that some of you might not have Photoshop or more sophisticated software so these are some good tips for simple photo editing in your device. This YouTube channel has a number of helpful videos you might want to explore.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0g4a1Ge-Ds&t=466s

Photo editing software:
Photoshop is the classic photo editing software, but you might have to purchase it. Students may get it for free or discounted. There are also free softwares like GIMP, Pixlr, or PhotoScape. Your computer might come preloaded with photo editing software. YouTube is a great place to look for tutorials on how to use it.
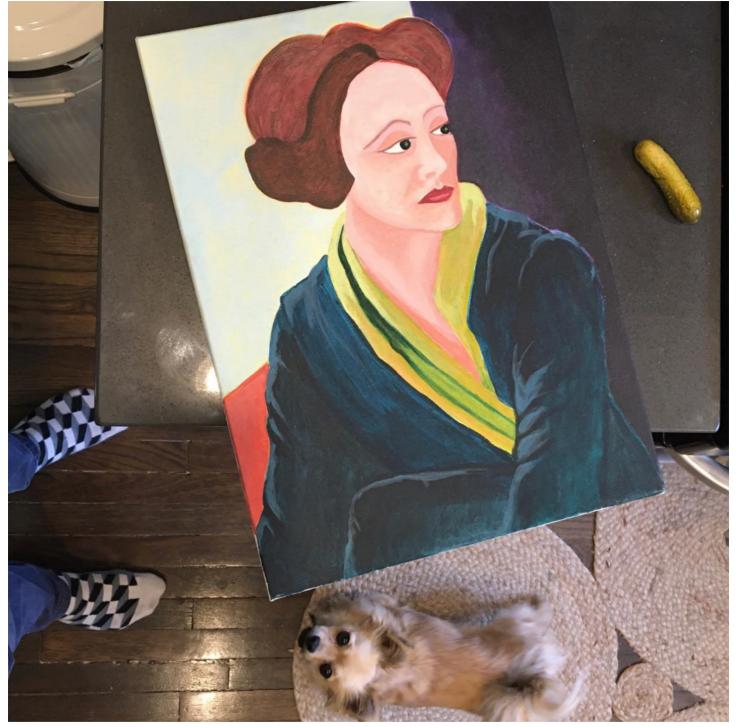
Types of files:
Now that you have your images, the question is – in what format do you want to save them? 95% of the time **.jpg** files will be the preferred file type. There are other photo files like .tif, .psd, or .pdf but these files can be too large and not universally recognized, so .jpg is recommended. Another thing to keep in mind is file size. Most smartphone files are a good size to work with and to email. You might run into a call for submissions or publications that request a certain file size or format but you can deal with those on an individual basis.

Naming images:
When saving and naming images it is important to indicate your name and what the image is and probably the year of the artwork. You will come up with your own system for this as you continue as an artist. One example is to save the image as name.title.2020.jpg or davinci.monalisa.1503.jpg

Photographing a 2D artwork, drawing, painting, mixed media, or print:

Let's start with the **WHAT NOT TO DO!**

This might be a funny picture, but it certainly doesn't highlight the painting in a nice way. It doesn't show off your hard work and beautiful brushwork. There are distractions all over the place in this photograph! A portion of the painting is cropped out of the picture. There is a cute dog distracting us from what we really want the viewer to see. And why would the artist ever leave a pickle in the picture?!

Now let's look at an example of **WHAT WE WANT TO DO:**

- The painting is presented without distraction.
- It looks like a painting hanging on a white gallery wall.
- You can see the edges of the painting. It is not cropped edge to edge. We left some white border around the painting.
- The color is a good representation of the original painting.

*This cropping and color correction was all done in simple photo editor on a cell phone.

Where to shoot your painting if you don't have a professional studio to document the work:

I found this spot in my kitchen with nicely diffused, even light. There was plenty of white wall around the painting. * One thing to note in an interior like this is that you might have issues with different color light playing with your camera sensor. You have outside light from the window as well as light from your overhead fixtures. This is something that you can experiment with by turning on or off the overhead lights. You might get better results under different lighting conditions.

For this shoot, I put the painting on a piece of white board that I had. I placed the photo outside in the shade. Sometimes the light of the direct sun can be too bright to take a good picture. Depending on your camera/phone you might have better results in the shade or partial sun. *Note that shooting in the shade might give your photo a blue hue. You can use your photo editing software to correct the color.

Photographing a 3D artwork, sculpture, ceramic, or objects:

Let's start with the **WHAT NOT TO DO!**

Marcel Duchamp might have presented a urinal as a sculpture but please don't use a toilet as a pedestal!

Now let's look at an example of **WHAT WE WANT TO DO:**

- The sculpture is presented without distractions.
- You can get an idea of the texture and details of the piece from the photograph.
- There is a slight directional light to cast some shadows to help define the details but not a harsh directional light to blow out the image.
- This ceramic piece is glazed with white glaze and it was photographed against a light grey wall. This gives contrast to the photo, helping to highlight the sculpture.
- The photo is cropped from the original photo so there is not too much area around the artwork, but the photo is not cropped extremely close so that the sculpture feels cramped.
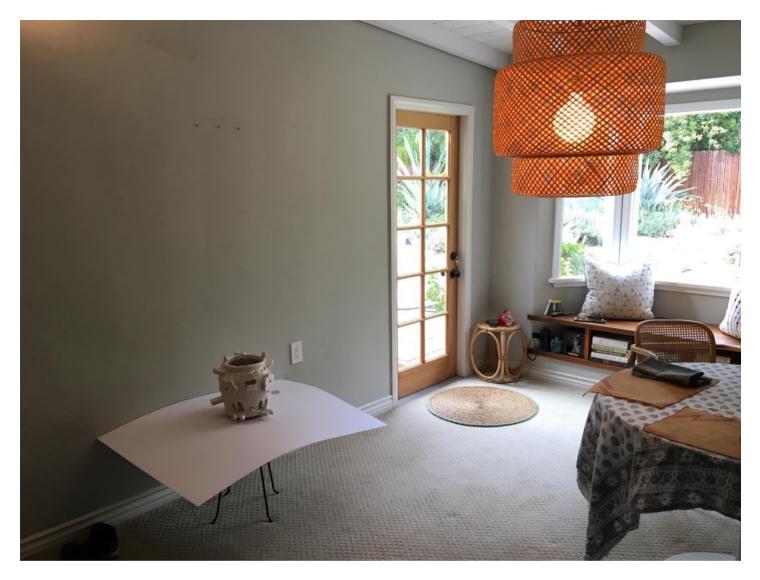
Shooting a sculpture from multiple angles:

This artwork is meant to be viewed from all sides. You might want to take pictures of your artwork from multiple angles.

Where to shoot your painting if you don't have professional studio to document the work:

I used this room in my house for the photograph. I found that the hanging lamp combined with the light from the window gave a nice diffuse light on the sculpture. It was also somewhat directional giving the sculpture some highlight and shadow.

I used a small table with a piece of white matte board on top as my clean ground to set the sculpture on. If you don't have a large piece of board like this, you can try experimenting with a bedsheet. Or maybe you can push a table against the wall to make a clean look.