

How to Photograph a Painting

A photo of your art is all a potential buyer can use to judge whether or not to purchase your art in an online exhibition. It is therefore crucial that you spend some time taking photos that will do justice to your paintings. Taking decent photos of painting can be quite tricky. Its best to spend a bit of time to take several photos and then to choose the one that best represents your painting. You have probably spent several hours painting the picture so it makes sense to spend a few more minutes to get a good photograph. The camera in a modern smart phone or tablet is quite capable of producing a decent photograph; you do not need an expensive camera.

Image Resolution

The final jpeg image of your painting will be cropped to exclude the frame and any background. Please make sure that the painting itself (not the frame) fills most of the area displayed on your camera or smartphone. This will mean that you will need to take the photo at quite a close range. A nice sharp image where the viewer can see the brushwork when they zoom in is much more likely to impress.

No Glass!

If the painting is in a glazed frame it **must** be removed from its frame before you photograph it. As a general rule glazed paintings should be photographed before they are framed. If you try to photograph a painting behind glass you will get reflections, probably of the photographer.

Natural Light



Artificial Light



Flash Light

Only photograph a painting using natural light; artificial light will always distort the colours. Photographs can be taken outside on a slightly overcast day, not in direct sunlight (you will get glare). Alternatively, they can be successfully taken in a bright room indoors, but out of direct sun light. The light level will be lower than outside and you will need to make sure that the camera is supported to avoid blur. Disable the flash if you are photographing indoors.

Distorted Perspective



Natural light but distorted

Ideally mount the painting on an easel so that it is vertical and horizontal. Failing this, hang the painting on a wall but remember that you will need to adjust for the fact it is not quite vertical. If your camera has a grid setting then turn this on. It will make it much easier to check that both sides of the painting are vertical in the camera frame and that the top and bottom and the two sides are of equal length. This is quite tricky to achieve especially if the camera is hand held so take several pictures and then choose the one that has least distortion.

Blurry Picture



Camera Shake

If you are taking the picture in relatively low light then use a tripod or some other sort of support to minimise any movement of the camera. If you don't have a tripod you could try placing the picture vertically on a table using a table easel or other support and then use a selection of books placed on the table to position and steady the camera. If you are not sure whether your picture is blurred or not then just zoom in and you will soon find out. Please remember that viewers will be able to enlarge the image of your painting when it is displayed on the RAS website so they will quickly see if the image is blurred or of low resolution.

How to Crop and Resize your Image

Your image will need to be cropped to remove the frame and mount; then scaled so that the longest side is 1700 pixels. There are many image editing software tools that you can use to crop and scale.

If you are unsure which to use then we would suggest Pixlr X. This is a free tool that runs in your web browser. We have tried it on a number of systems including various browsers running on Windows and MacBook machines. It also works on Android and Apple smartphones and tablets; although it's a bit more fiddly to use.

Since this is free software you may get some adverts asking you to buy the premium version (or something else). Simply close these by clicking on the X in the top right hand corner of the advert's window.

Please follow the instructions below if you wish to use Pixlr X. These apply to a Windows based PC but they are very similar on other devices. It is easier to use than might appear from these instructions!

1. Click here to start the software - <https://pixlr.com/x>

2. Click on **OPEN IMAGE** towards the bottom left; you may need to scroll down to find it. This opens a File Upload window.

3. Find the image file on your computer or smartphone that you wish to edit, and click **OPEN**. It will appear in the window. You might be invited to reduce the image size to speed things up; click on **ORIGINAL**.

4. Move the mouse down the tools in the left-hand column and click **CROP & ROTATE** (it's the sixth down, excluding the Home tool at the top of the page).

5. If your image is already perfectly horizontal and vertical, go to step 6 below. If it needs adjusting, use the **Straighten** slide bar on the left to adjust it, then click **APPLY**.

6. Now crop the image to eliminate any trace of a frame or mount around the edge. Click on **CROP & ROTATE** again, place the cursor on a corner of the white box that surrounds the image. Hold down the left mouse button and slide the white outline to crop to the painting, then repeat from the opposite corner to crop the remaining two sides. Click **APPLY**.

7. You now need to scale the image and save it.

8. Click **SAVE**. This opens the Save Image window. The dimensions of the image (in Pixels) are displayed in the bottom right corner. At least one of these lengths should be greater than 1700 pixels. Select the larger length and reset this to 1700; the other length will be adjusted automatically to preserve the aspect ratio. If the size of your image is significantly smaller than 1700 pixels then you should consider re-photographing the painting!

9. In the **File name box** at the top right of the window enter the filename of your image. This **MUST** be in the correct format, consisting of your surname then a number that indicates the order in which you would like your paintings to be displayed plus the title of the painting; for example **morgan1beachhuts**. PLEASE USE ONLY LOWER-CASE CHARACTERS AND NUMBERS – NO OTHER CHARACTERS PLEASE! Do not add the .jpg suffix; this will be added automatically. If the file name is more than 30 characters then please abbreviate it; but make sure that it can be easily related to the text for your image.

10. Leave the file type as jpg and do not adjust the quality.

11. Now click **DOWNLOAD**. Depending on how your system is set up:

- You will see a new window asking you to choose a folder where you will save your image file. Select the preferred folder and click **Save; OR**
- The jpg file will be automatically downloaded to your downloads folder.

12. Then click on **CLOSE** to go back to the home page. You can now select your next jpeg file to repeat the process.

13. Please **attach**, not insert, your jpg files to your entry email that includes the information regarding each painting.