

PICTURE PERFECT:

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD GLASS PHOTOGRAPHY

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAN KVITKA

As Professional craftsmen most of us are faced with the duality of both making and selling our work and in some cases the latter can prove to be the more difficult of the two. Many factors contribute to being able to successfully market your artwork and there are a million approaches to doing so. One thing however, that seems to be of universal importance in almost every artistic medium is the importance of good photography! This is something I have recently come to appreciate and I cannot overemphasize how truly important this can be. In the case of dealing with galleries and/or juried shows, it may prove to be one of your most important investments.

There is a definite difference between taking decent pictures that show what a piece looks like and taking fantastic pictures that truly compliment a piece, causing it to look as good or better than it does in real life. In many cases good pictures can be the difference between getting into a gallery, show, publication, etc. or not regardless of how good the work really is. Its very common for places to ask for slides or digital images of your work and in my mind good pictures can prove to be your best marketing tool. Its really important that the pictures you put out there are a good representation of yourself as an artist and the work you create. Good slides and digital images are something that you will be able to utilize throughout your career. On the other hand bad slides and digital images are likely to limit your options in the successful marketing of your artwork.

I think it is a good idea for artists at some point o invest in having their work pho-

tographed professionally although it is by no means essential. With a fair amount of research and minimal investment one can take relatively good pictures of work by themselves. Despite the costs involved I am finding that having my work photographed professionally is worth every penny and a wise investment. Initially it was a difficult expense for me to justify but after biting the bullet and getting my first slides I quickly started to realize that it can be the difference between night and day.

There is no doubt it would get very expensive and in my case unaffordable to have every piece I create photographed professionally. I chose to wait until I had a few pieces that I was comfortable with representing me and I chose to just have those pieces shot for the first time in order to keep costs down and get a feel for everything. Its really most important to get a few good slides that you are confident in to use for your portfolio, shows, etc. and then you can rely on these slides until chose and can afford to get new pictures taken.

Even though I have chosen to have my important pieces shot for me, I also photograph all my work on my own to maintain a visual record of everything.

If you decide to photograph your own work there are a few things to keep in mind that may help you along the way. It is important to avoid using wrinkled fabric as a background when shooting your work. A good alternative is a photo paper that is made designed especially for photography backgrounds. It comes in a big roll and a few color shades and can be found in most photography stores. A simple background with a light color gradient is preferred in most cases at least for juried slides. When photographing your work it also helps to light the piece from three directions.



To avoid shadows you can create a white reflective tent around your piece to bounce light. You can also try to avoid "hot spots" by placing white diffuser paper in front of your light bulbs that will block the glare but still let light through. All of these tips are things that may help you along the way if indeed you decide to photograph your own work.

Now, if you decide that you want to have your work shot professionally it is important to find someone who is suitable for your work and someone who you are comfortable working and sharing ideas with. Start by asking around and doing some pricing, talking with other artists and local photographers and start to get an idea of what's out there. You can even check with your local university photography department and see if there are any promising students interested in doing some free lance work. Much like anything it pays to get creative!! I think it is a good idea to find a photographer who has experience photographing your medium or type of work because this may be important. For instance I wouldn't recommend finding someone who's main focus is family portraits. Your photographer should know what it takes to compliment your work and make it look better. After all, a good photographer can make mediocre work look great and a bad photographer can make terrific work look terrible.

I was fortunate enough to meet a photographer in the Portland area who specializes in photography for craft artists named Dan Kvitka. Dan has been involved in juried craft shows for over 20 years as an artist and a juror.

I realized that as an experienced photographer and craft artist, he was in the unique position to photograph my work in a way that would enhance jury selection, advertising and sales. This proved to be a vital attribute when working together as I received an abundance of knowledge and information about photography, juried shows, dealing with galleries, etc. I cannot overemphasize the importance of working with a photographer who understands exactly what your objective is and has a good idea of what most juries are typically looking for. I definitely would recommend Dan Kvitka to any artist looking for excellent work and a valuable learning experience.

Overall I have found that regardless of what approach you want to take, excellent photography can be of utmost importance in any artistic endeavor. We are all out there doing our best to create beautiful works of art. It's important to make sure the photography of that work does it justice and ensures that some of that beauty isn't lost in translation.

*Crystal vision
Illustrating
the minds landscape
ecstatic flight
through worlds unnameable
Centrifugal beauty
Infinite wonder
Rivaling the real*

*Mark Lammi
Eugene, 2006*

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