

# MATERIALS

- Well-lit room with neutral colored walls OR a flat neutral background
- Smartphone OR camera
- Optional: phone tripod, easel, picture hanging hardware

## What Is the Best Camera To Photograph Artwork?

You don't need a professional camera (though it would help)! A smartphone or mirrorless camera works great.



## Is It Better To Scan or Photograph Artwork?

It depends. In general, scanners work best for documenting small, flat works of art. Another option is to scan a large painting in sections and then “stitch” them together using photo editing software in post-production, which can be labor-intensive and time-consuming. If you don't have access to an advanced scanner, a photo can capture your artwork more accurately, especially if there are a lot of textural details that you want to showcase.

# JUSTICE ARTS COALITION

# HOW TO

# PHOTOGRAPH YOUR INCARCERATED LOVED ONE'S ART



Thank you for submitting your loved one's artwork to Justice Arts Coalition! Most people's first introduction to your loved one's work as an artist will be online. High quality photos of their artwork make a good impression in their online portfolio to art enthusiasts, art galleries, and potential buyers. We know hiring a professional photographer is out of most people's budgets; that's why we've condensed a guide from Format Magazine on photographing your loved one's artwork.

## DIRECTIONS

### 1. Plan and Prepare Your Background.

The best setup for photographing a painting is on a neutral colored wall, as bright colors may distract from your artwork or even alter the color balance of your final photo. If you don't have a wall with good lighting, lay it flat on a neutral colored surface.

### 2. Hang Artwork on the Wall.

Avoid having the work at an angle. Make sure that the middle of the artwork is centered/parallel to your camera.

## TIPS + TRICKS

- Use a level to ensure that the work will hang straight. You can even download a level app for free on most smartphones.
- Use a tripod or another sturdy surface like a table.
- Use your camera's timer setting, so that when you press the shutter release button, your hand doesn't cause blurry photos.

### 3. Use Proper Lighting.

Use indirect lighting. In an ideal situation, your lighting setup will include two identical light sources. Position them both at a 45-degree angle to the artwork in order to evenly light it up. This will provide you with an even distribution of light without creating shadows. If your light is still stronger than you would like, you can diffuse your lights by bouncing them off a wall or placing a sheet or plastic bag over the light source for a softer look.

### 3. Use Proper Lighting continued

If you have access to a room with natural window light, you can position the window behind your camera for even lighting. If that isn't possible, you can set up your photoshoot so that one side of the painting is lit by the window.

Then set up a large white piece of foam core opposite the window to balance out the lighting on the other side of the painting. Both the window and the foam core should be at 45-degree angles to the painting, the same as with artificial light sources.

By using even lighting from both sides of the work, you'll reduce the amount of texture that comes through in the image. If the work is very textured and you want to show that in your images, you may actually prefer to use lighting that is brighter on one side than the other.

You can even photograph the work outside if you don't have the right lighting setup available in your home. The light on a cloudy, overcast day can be perfect for photographing large paintings because the light will be even across the piece, no matter the size.

## Resources

- Article with Pictures  
[How to Photograph Artwork with Your Iphone](#)
- YouTube Video  
[How To Photograph Your 2D ART with a Phone](#) (8 mins)
- YouTube Video  
[How to photograph your art](#) (8 mins)

### 4. Use the default settings on your camera.

If you want a more in-depth guide on camera settings, [click here](#).

### 5. Check Focus and Shoot Fine Details. Don't zoom in!

If you're using a camera and not a smartphone, you tether your camera to your computer while shooting, so that you can check photo quality on your computer in the moment to ensure the quality is up to your standards.

This is the time to look at small details to ensure that the image perspective is correct, the art is in focus, and there's no light glare on the art. For the best quality images, set your camera to as up as close as it can get to the art while still fitting the entire painting in the frame.

### 6. Share the Artwork with JAC.

For smaller image files, attach them to an email and send to [info@thejusticeartscoalition.org](mailto:info@thejusticeartscoalition.org).

For larger image files, upload the images to a free cloud storage such as dropbox or Google Drive then share the links in an email to [info@thejusticeartscoalition.org](mailto:info@thejusticeartscoalition.org).



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**Need help? Just contact us.**

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