

# Watercolor Painting Newsletter

## Digital Photography for Shows

After juroring an international watermedia exhibition from both slides and digital images, it occurred to me that it might helpful to offer some advice on photographing paintings. Juried exhibitions are very competitive and artists need to make every effort to submit good quality images of their work. Digital entries are fast becoming the norm for entry into juried exhibitions, so here are some of my thoughts on the subject....

The top six areas of digital photography that I'll address here are: keystoning, lighting, color, resolution, cropping and focus. In the photo to the right, I purposely took this shot to illustrate several of the problem areas named above.

### First, here are the problems:

1. This image is skewed (keystoned) and bowed on the left side.
2. The painting was photographed through glass and with a flash. (You can see the reflections of the studio lights and the camera flash in the glass.)
3. The lighting gives the image a bluish tinge that doesn't accurately reflect the painting's colors.
4. The image was photographed at low resolution and is grainy and pixilated when blown up to the proper resolution.
5. The image is not cropped correctly.
6. The image is blurry. There are probably more problems, but these are a good starting point.



### Now, the solutions:

1. Align the lens at a 90° angle to the center of the painting. Shoot from 5' away or more with the zoom.
2. If possible, remove the glass. If you must shoot through glass, wrap the tripod with black cloth and shoot through a hole in a black mat. Bounce lighting off the ceiling. Don't use the flash!
3. Use full-spectrum lights or photograph outdoors on a sunny day in the shade.
4. Set the image resolution on the camera to be greater than the

show's prospectus requires. Leave room for cropping.

5. Don't leave the mat or frame in the image – crop it with photo processing software. (I've seen entries juried out just for this problem.)

6. Mount the camera on a tripod and use the self-timer (set to 2 seconds) to prevent shaking.

Good digital photographs don't require expensive cameras – I recently paid \$60 for a small 7.0 Megapixel camera that takes excellent photos.

When you think about all of the time and effort that goes into a show-quality painting, it's a good idea to make the effort and produce strong images that increase your chances of getting accepted into an exhibition.

My thanks to [Randy Ford](#) for his helpful suggestions and a great PPWS presentation.

## TIPS

- I use a higher F/stop for greater depth of field (and less fuzziness).
- Higher ISO settings can result in grainy images.
- Check that the white balance matches the lighting source.
- Know your camera's capabilities.
- Use photo processing software (like Photoshop) for editing raw images.

*Click [here](#) to see a 1200x902 pixel image of Tom's painting photographed and processed according to his guidelines.*

## Painting Classes & Workshops

I offer workshops around the country and regularly teach classes in the Colorado Springs area

(check my 2009 schedule online). My DVD videos are available by contacting the studio.

If you or your group is interested in hosting a workshop, please contact my studio via [Email](#)