Tips for capturing good photos of your artwork

- If you do not have access to a professional photographer or even a camera, this guide will help you take quality photos off the camera on your phone.
- Always preview your images to make sure they are the best representation of your work.
- Be aware of any image specifications before uploading images to any site.

PHOTOS, general tips

- Present the work on a neutral background—**white, black, grey**, depending on the needs of your work.

- Aim for natural light to get a proper exposure. The whites should be white, not dingy grey, and the blacks should be fully black. It should accurately represent the intensity or subtly of the colors, textures and details of the art. If you will be taking your own images, opt for **natural light** that would most balance the different tones.

- Place work so that lighting is even over the entire image—no hot spots of intense light, dark corners or shiny patches of glare.

- If you crop the image it needs to fill the camera frame, but make sure that all the edges are shown so the entire work can be viewed. Then details can be shot to show specifics.

Consider the Perspective

Taking a photo from the wrong point of view or perspective can distort your painting. Make sure to shoot from the right angle before you photograph artwork with an iPhone.

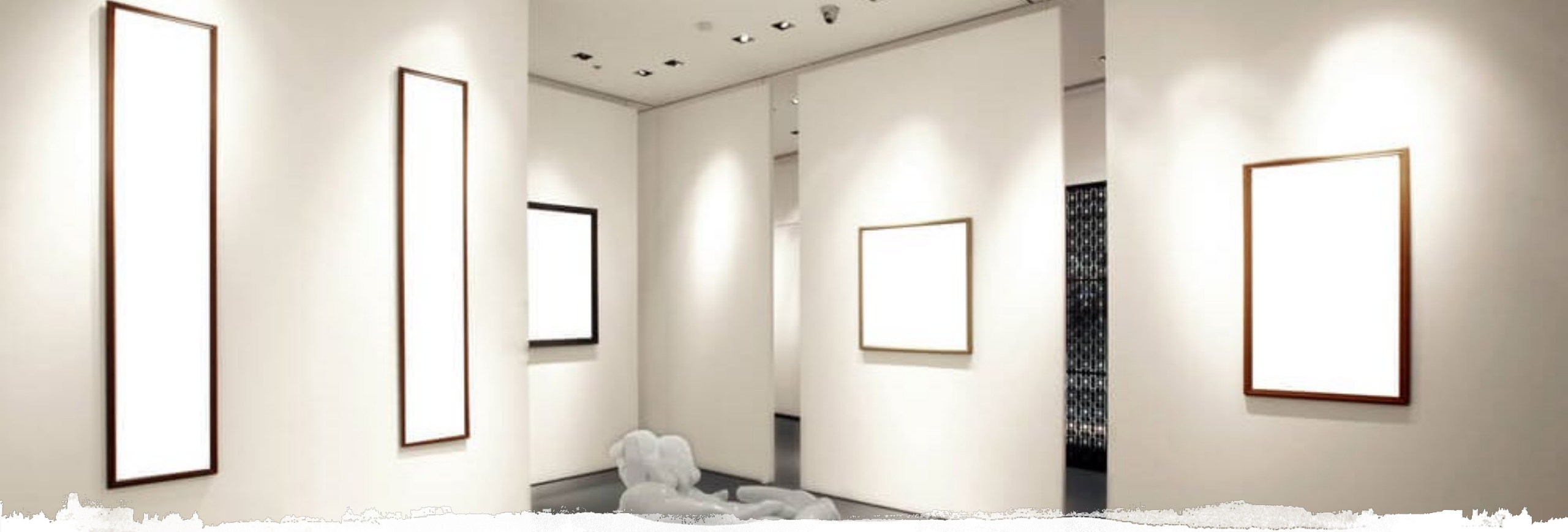
Using a tripod – or holding your camera at a 90-degree angle will prevent distortion from odd angles.

The Frame

When photographing your own artwork, remove the frame for photos.

If you’re taking photos of your framed 2D art, take it out of the frame. Otherwise, it will make a glare appear on your photo because of the light reflecting on the plastic or glass cover.

The only reason to include a frame when documenting your work, is if the frame is a part of the piece.



Lighting

Natural light trumps artificial lights when taking photos of a painting. It’s always better to use natural light. Artificial light will make your artwork’s colors look muted.

And remember not to take photos with the sun behind you—you will cast a shadow on your artwork. Instead, take a picture with the light coming from either your left or right side.

The step-by-step to documenting with your iPhone

1. Prepare the room or studio.

1.First, turn off any artificial lights such as an indoor lamp or a ceiling light.

2. Open all the windows. Draw your curtains and blinds. Make sure the natural light spreads evenly all over your bare wall.

3. Get rid of the clutter as well. Clear the stuff that might block your way.

4. During the photo-taking session, you might have to move further or closer to the painting or try different angles. So, you have to make sure the area is clear.

5. Meanwhile, if you don't have a bare wall, then set up a grey cloth.

- If you're taking a photo indoors, make sure that there's more than enough natural light in the place.

- On the other hand, if you're taking photos outdoors, pick an area where there's enough light but not too much of it. Otherwise, you'll have to deal with glare.

- So, to avoid it, position your camera and artwork in a shady area.

- If you're taking a picture indoors, follow these steps in preparing the room.

2. Set up your iPhone camera.

- **First, clean your iPhone camera's lenses.**

- A good wipe of your camera lenses using a soft microfiber cloth will make a huge difference.

- **Prep the camera settings.**

- You also have to ensure that your settings are ready and fine-tuned. Turning on the Grid feature, for instance, will help you ensure the lines aren't crooked.

Activating the grid feature on your iPhone:

1. Launch your Settings.

2. Go to the Camera.

3. Switch on the Grid option.

4. Close the Settings and open your iPhone camera app. If you have a tripod, then place your iPhone on the tripod with an iPhone adapter.

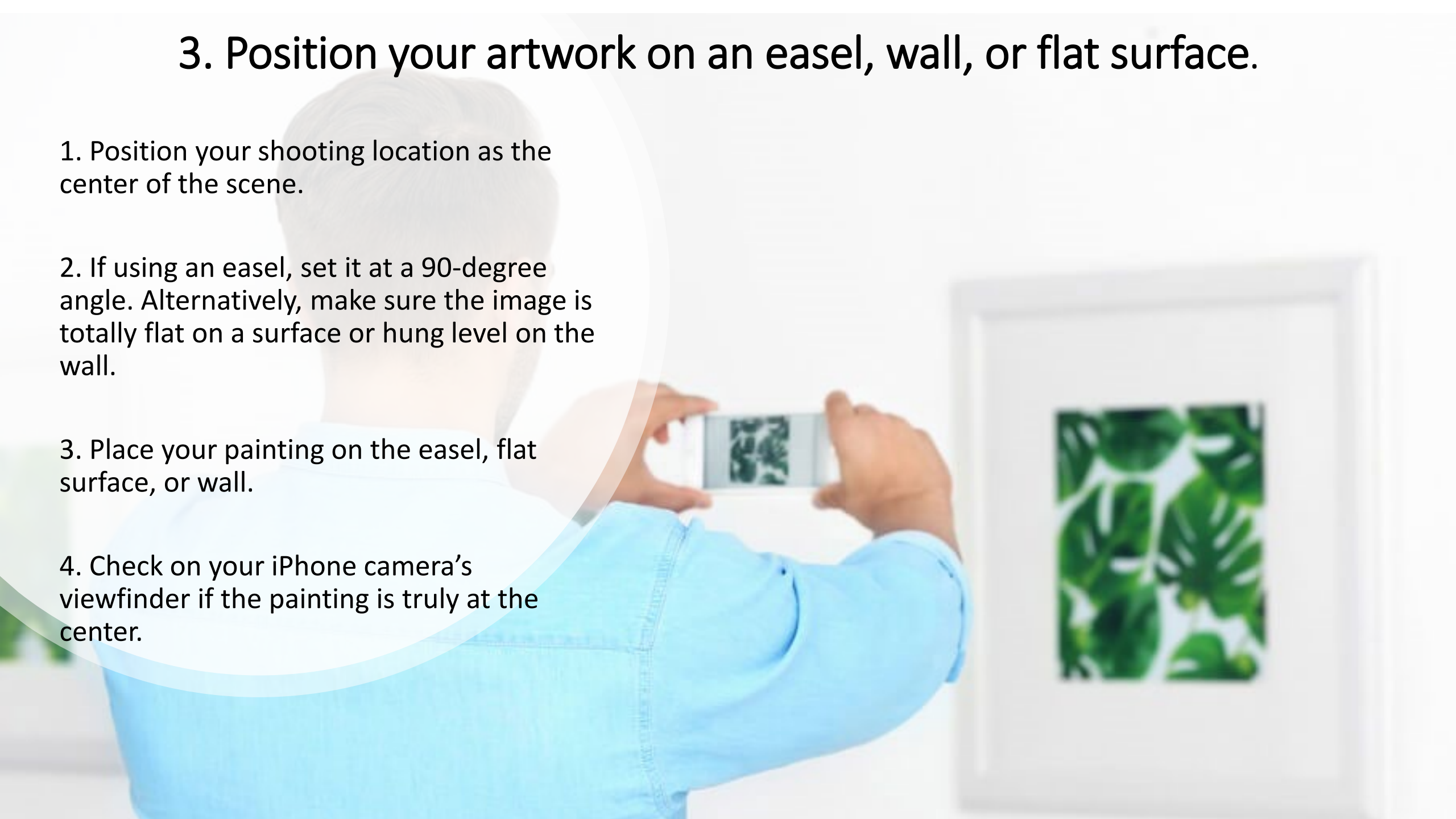
3. Position your artwork on an easel, wall, or flat surface.

1. Position your shooting location as the center of the scene.

2. If using an easel, set it at a 90-degree angle. Alternatively, make sure the image is totally flat on a surface or hung level on the wall.

3. Place your painting on the easel, flat surface, or wall.

4. Check on your iPhone camera’s viewfinder if the painting is truly at the center.

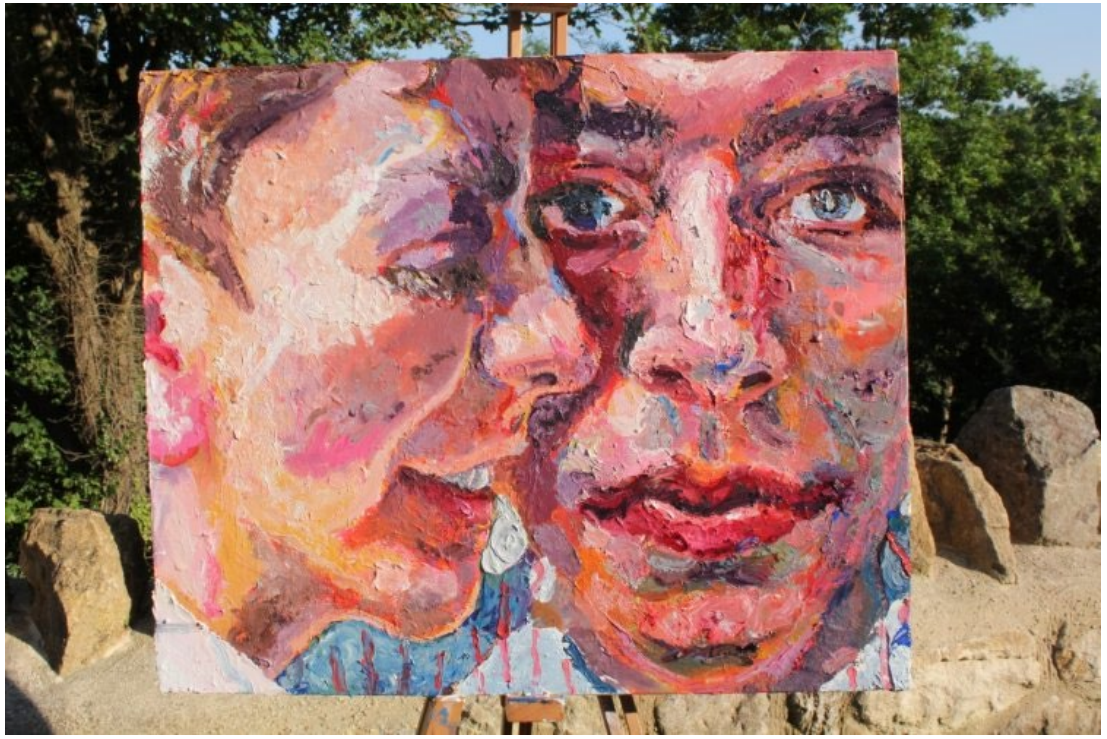


4. Crop your photo

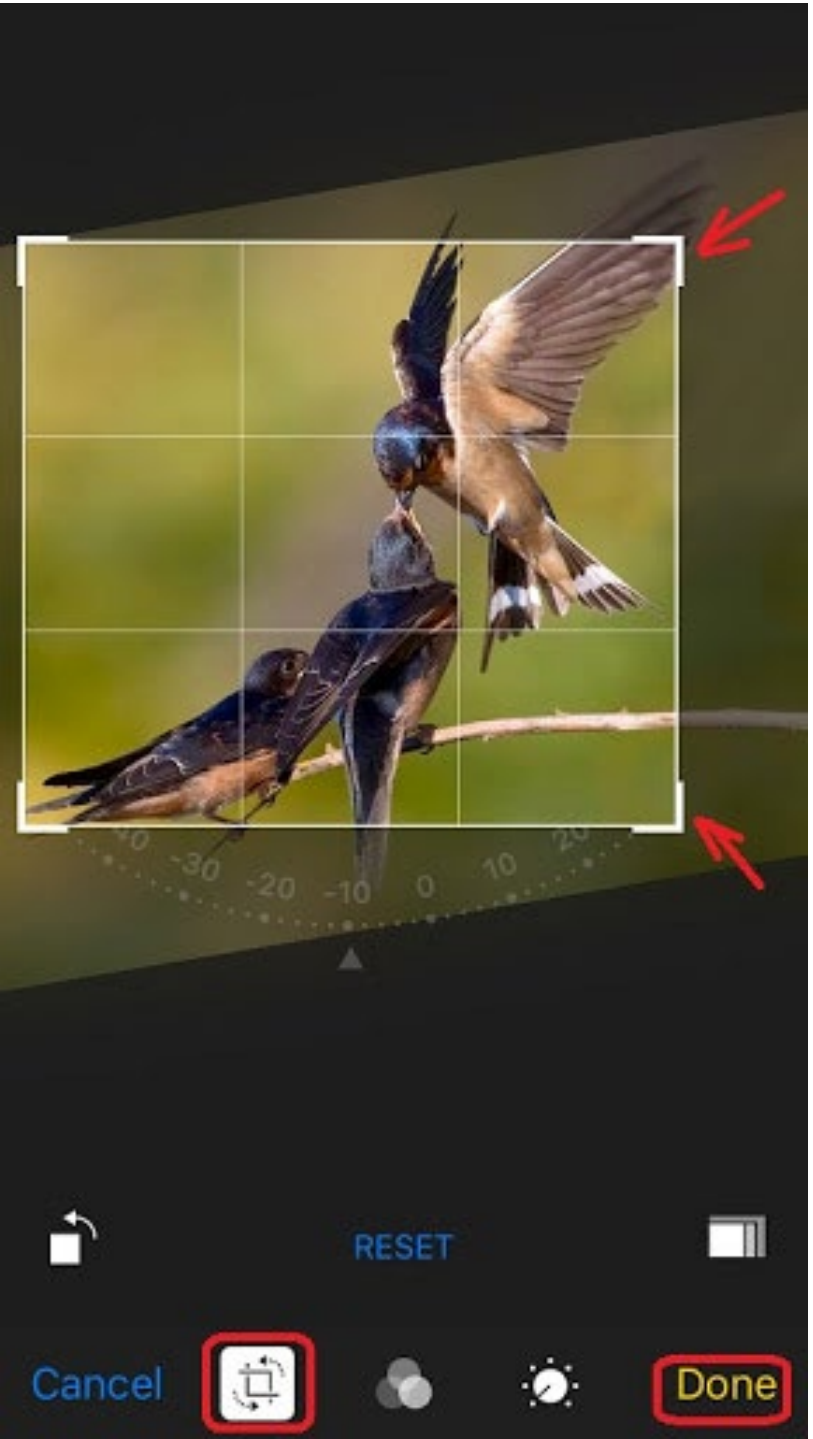
The only image that should appear in photographs of your artwork, is the artwork itself.

Crop your image closely to remove any visual distractions. There should be no reference to the background or surface, there should not be people in the photo; i.e. hands, a selfie with the artwork, the artwork leaning on a wall.

Close cropped photo



Uncropped photo on easel, slightly distorted angle and distracting background



How to crop images on iPhone

- Tap Edit.
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- 2. Select the Crop icon.
- 3. Dial to an angle until the edges straighten.
- 4. Pull the corners until you’re happy with its new size.
- 5. Tap Done.

For more info: https://photovideolounge.com/718/photograph-artwork-with-iphone/

GOOD PHOTO OR BAD PHOTO?

Good photo or bad photo exercise

Go through the next slides to determine if they are a good documentation of artwork or a not so good documentation of the artwork and why.

Next:

Advance the slide to learn if the documentation is well done or could use improvement.

Good photo or bad?

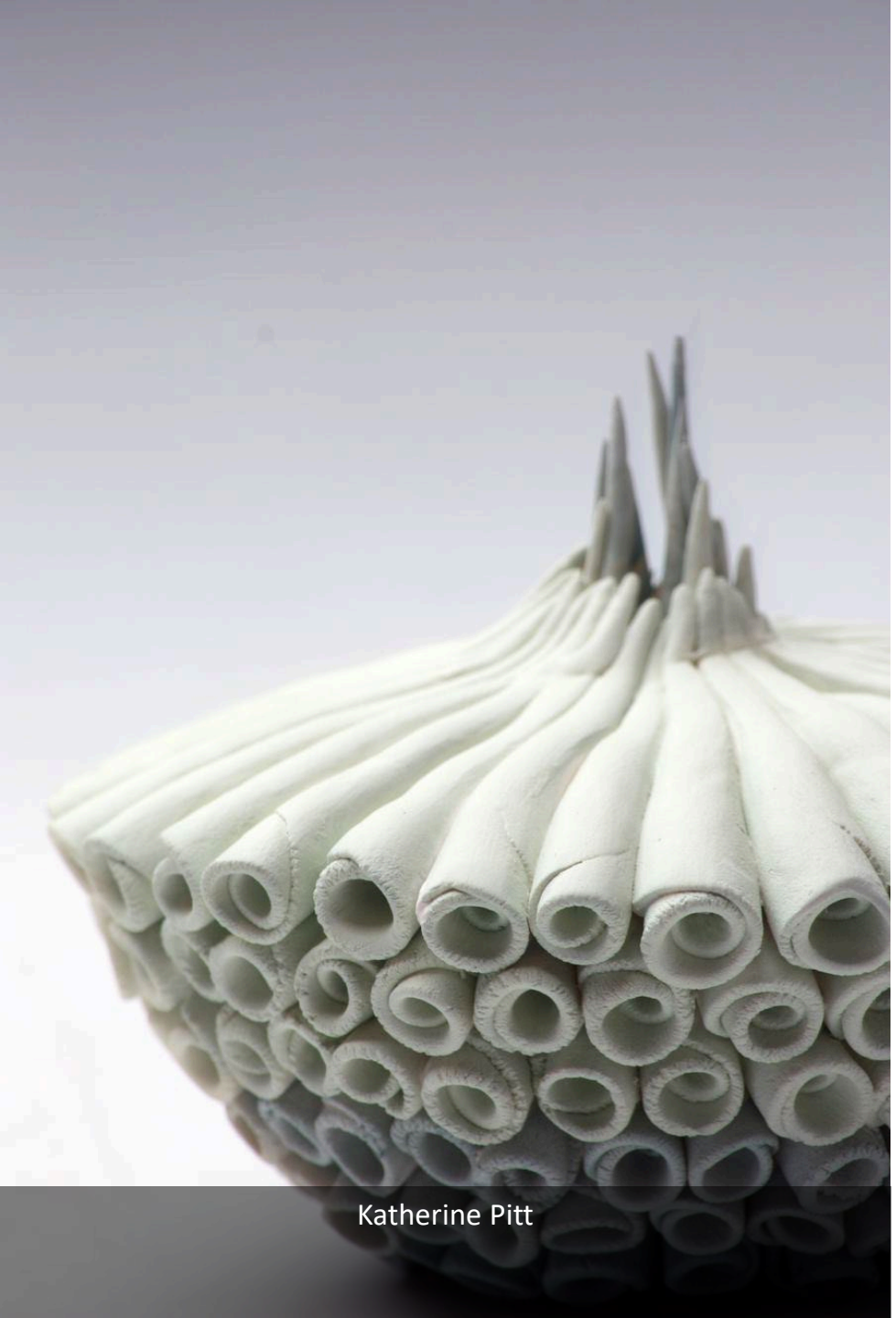
Answer:

Not good.

- This photo shows multiple images in the frame making the focal point confusing.

- The papers have wrinkles and still have the spiral ring edges attached which looks sloppy.

- Finally, the perspective is off and distorts the image.



Good photo or bad?

Answer:

Good.

- This is a good example of a detail photograph, but not the full image. (It would be important to also present a full image shot)

- The lighting is even, and the background is neutral grey which emphasizes the artwork.

- As a closeup, we are able to see the intricate details, and texture of this work.

Good photo or bad?

Answer:

Not good.

- This photo shows a cluttered background and uneven angle.
- It is unclear if this work is finished or still in progress.
- Finally, the perspective is off and distorts the image.
- Would benefit from cropping.

Clark Goolsgy

Good photo or bad?

Answer:

Good.

- This is a good example of a photograph showing an image in its installed space. (It would be important to also present a full image shot)

- The lighting is even, and the background is neutral which emphasizes the artwork. Even though this is a photo after installation, it is clean and clear.

- As a closeup, we can see the intricate details, and texture of this work.

Good photo or bad?

Answer:

Not good.

- This photo shows an artwork with other objects in the frame. It takes away from the painting and shifts the focus elsewhere.

- The perspective is good, but the photo would benefit from cropping.

- The lighting is ok but does appear to create some shadows suggesting uneven lighting.

Good photo or bad?

- Answer:
- Good.

- This is a good detail photo of a sculptural artwork. The artist will want to show another angle of the work to better present it completely.

- The lighting is even, and the background is neutral grey which emphasizes the artwork.

- The image is clear and demonstrates the dimensionality of the work.

Good photo or bad?

Answer:

Not good.

- The perspective of this photo is significantly off which distorts the image.
- The lighting is dim and appears to be uneven.
- The images should be closer cropped.

Good photo or bad?

Answer:

Not good.

- There is too much going on in this photo. It is unclear what object we should be looking at.
- The lighting is uneven.
- Showing multiple images would work if the specific artwork is of an installation or the artist wanted to show a collection of their works together.

Good photo or bad?

- Answer:
- Good.

- This is a good example of showing the full image of the object.

- The lighting is mostly even, and the background is neutral grey which emphasizes the artwork. There are some slight shadows, but not enough that it is distracting to the viewer.

- The image is clear and demonstrates the dimensionality of the work.

Good photo or bad?

Answer:

Not good.

- This photo shows a framed image leaning against the wall. The perspective distorts the image.
- The surface is messy and makes the artwork appear sloppy.
- The frame is distracting from the image and should be removed or cropped out.
- The lighting is dark and dulls the image.

Good photo or bad?

Answer:

Not good.

- This image is confusing. It is unclear what we are looking at. Are we looking at the portrait of the artist or the painting?

- The lighting does appear even.

- When showing an image of your artwork, the artist should only appear in the work if it is crucial to the meaning/intent of the work.

Good photo or bad?

Holly Nordlum

Answer:

Good.

- This is a good example of a well captured 2D image with dimensional components.
- The lighting is perfectly even, there are no hotspots or low spots.
- The image is perfectly cropped showing only the artwork and nothing else in the background.

Susan Joy Share

Good photo or bad?

Answer:

Good.

- This is a good example of when it is good to include the figure/person in the image. This is a still capture of a performance work which required a person to perform the work.

- The lighting is even, and the background is neutral grey which emphasizes the artwork.

- The image is clear and in the center of the frame emphasizing the artwork and direction of focus.

To show you the difference between hiring a photographer and photographing your images yourself.
The image on the left is a sculptural work by Keren Lowell, photographed by a professional artist. The image on the right is the same artwork photographed by the artist herself. You can see the benefit of investing in professional documentation of your work when seeking exhibition, funding, support, display, etc.