



Guidelines and Tips for Working with Photographers

The shared and common goal of photographer and artist is to capture, through the synthesis of lighting, staging, positioning both camera and artwork, compelling imagery that communicates the essence of the piece being photographed.

**My Philosophy: A Bad Image Helps No-One
Prima-donnas belong only onstage.
Present your work as you want it to be received.
Communication is a Collaborative Effort with a Common Language.
Oh, and: Give Credit where it is due.
*(Always include Credit to the Photographer)***

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Some guidelines. . .

Keep it clean. Both your artwork and whatever 'set' you've decided to use. Dust, animal hairs, glue stings, fingerprints or other distracting elements will show up in the photograph. Digital photography allows us a little more latitude in dealing with these unfortunates but then adds time and effort. If these things are not noticed they may interfere with the viewer's ability to not get sidetracked when seeing your work presented in 2D form.

Keep it simple. Avoid the desire to editorialize and add elements to the picture that are not a part of the work itself. This rule should be followed for all uses except advertising postcards, ads or mailers when a very specific message is meant to be relayed. Your work itself is the strongest message. Having your work be the only thing in the image also keeps the eye more likely to stay within the frame of the image.

Keep it consistent. By keeping your backgrounds, or 'set', within a family of values or styles, you help codify your body of work and establish some cohesion and flexibility to your work over all. This is good when you want to mix and match different photographs for different submission requirements or displays. I don't mean to say that you should stick to only one 'look' because ultimately **the work should drive the choice** of how it gets photographed.

Keep it neutral. That is, avoid using colors in the background that will age the image. We've all looked at an old family picture and nailed the era by the style of clothes, haircut, fabric or patterns evident in the image. Color and material choice can give clues to time. Try to make an image timeless.

Tips for doing it yourself for Record Keeping

Keep the background clear of stuff. Either angle a piece of paper into a sweep or have something that makes the background neutral.

While **shadows** can be evocative in the right situations they may be distracting in the wrong.

Use a **tripod** to hold the camera still.

Be able to recreate the 'set-up' consistently.

Use a **good photo program** like "Photoshop Elements" or "Adobe Photoshop"

Establish a **filing (data base) system** for easy retrieval and viewing of these images.

Save full size files of images for future use.

While amazingly clear images are attained from a flatbed scanner, without perspective the images appear distorted to the eye. I would not use these for submission purposes.

Hierarchy of Need

This I have borrowed from our psycho-analytical brethren of some time ago. The idea is to come up with your own priority of needs list to help the decision process of how best to achieve the images you want of your work.

Record of creation -reminders should you want to replicate or repair an already sold piece made previously, insurance, proof of copyright of copyright

Website -generally simple images to keep from competing unnecessarily with each other or causing repetitive and distracting elements

Gallery submission -clear, descriptive, easily read

Grant Application -there is money out there

Juried art shows or fairs -cohesion among the shots to show an overall theme or association within the body of work

Postcards, direct sales tools -catchy, details work well

Publications - magazines, books -all of the above

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NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE ARTS

MJSA

PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE
IN JEWELRY MAKING & DESIGN

If you Work with a Photographer

Bring your work cleaned. The camera will see everything. No finger prints. Free of pet hair, cotton fibers from gloves or padding. Best to bring work wrapped in plastic or tissue if small or has a high polished surface. Tarnish spots removed if they are not supposed to be there.

Have ideas of what angles you like best.

Know ahead of time what you want accentuated, de-accentuated.

Bring examples of other work photographed in a way you like. This may be especially useful if this is your 1st time. This helps start the talk about how to show your work to its best advantage as well as give the photographer a good beginning to understand what you like or are looking for.

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Knowing the primary purpose will guide the way something is shot. Maybe even you need it to be done two ways. Know that ahead of time. Have

an open mind. Expect the photographer to listen to you, but extend the courtesy, he/she may have a few ideas too.

What the Photographer brings to the party.

-Objective and fresh eyes. You have looked at this creation of yours for a while and sometimes can overlook obvious strengths of the piece.

-Our experience and strength in understanding the process of creating a 2 dimensional image of a 3 dimensional object. There are obvious limitations inherent in this endeavor and we know how best to play off or use them.

-Knowing how to use light to communicate texture, shape and scale; experience with the decision making that goes with the process.

-Balancing values between subject and background.

-Awareness of trends in the field as well as will work best for print (publishing).

-Post production prep to turn the 'raw image' information into a useful file for a variety of uses. This would include color correction, cleaning up image anomalies like dust or hairs on the set or in camera, and cropping or sizing of the final image and file formatting.

-Knowledge about archiving and file retention for long term storage (as much as anyone knows at this point.)

Choosing a Photographer

Talk to friends, get references

Look for bi-lines or photo-credits (if given, missing credits are the bane of our profession) in magazines, books, etc.

Ask galleries

Consider reputations.

Google search names, etc.

When Interviewing

Communication – can you get your ideas across to them. Can they communicate with you, do they listen to you, are they open to ideas, do they seem to have an understanding of your needs? In essence can you both arrive at a common language to use? We may use the same terms but in different ways.

Attention to detail – Do they seem like they will give the attention needed.

Experience - Have they worked with this scale of subject matter – it matters.

Ask -Look at their work, a variety of it and talk about any elements of it that you want

How will the work be delivered.

Will the work be Archived?

What other services does the photographer offer?

What if, you know, something is not quite what you wanted? Is there room for a conversation?

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