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## Photography Tips for Digital Exhibition Submissions

Good photography of work submitted is an absolute must for any digital application—at RAM, this includes entries for juried exhibitions like *Watercolor Wisconsin* as well as the museum's Artist Fellowship program. Applicants need to present their work in its best light to jurors who may not be familiar with it.

RAM's Wustum Museum is home to a photography studio that can be scheduled for a small fee if an artist wants to begin or develop their skills for documenting their own artwork. In addition to lighting and background paper, the photo studio offers access to a professional DSLR camera which may be helpful for artists who do not own one.

For any questions or concerns not addressed in this document, please contact RAM at 262.638.8300 or info@ramart.org.

Photographing Your Work

Photographs of two-dimensional work should be taken straight-on, not at an angle. You can often achieve the best results by hanging the framed work on a wall where the center of your piece is parallel to your camera—either on a tripod or sitting on a hard surface, such as a shelf or table.
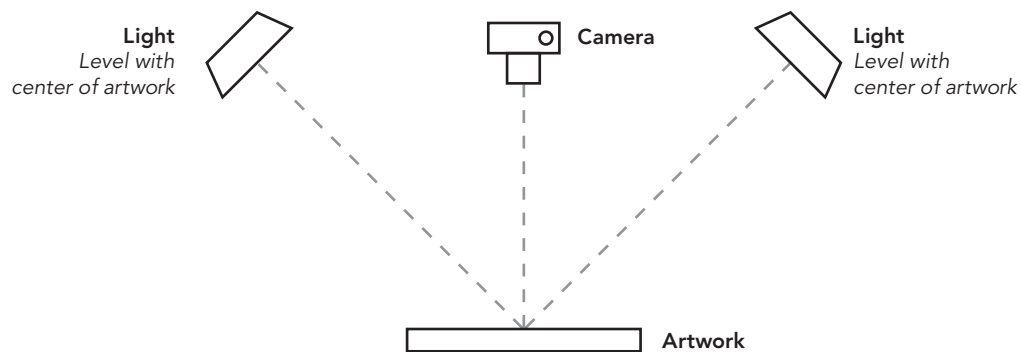
Three-dimensional work can be shot from a similar starting point, with the work propped up on a pedestal/hard surface and centered with the camera. You will need to move the lighting as necessary to diffuse shadows on your piece. Softer results are often be achieved by aiming your lights towards the ceiling and bouncing light off it towards the artwork below.

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RAM prefers photographs of work that do not include the frame or matting unless that is an integral part of the piece. Photographs taken at or cropped to the edges of two-dimensional work better highlight the work itself without any distractions.
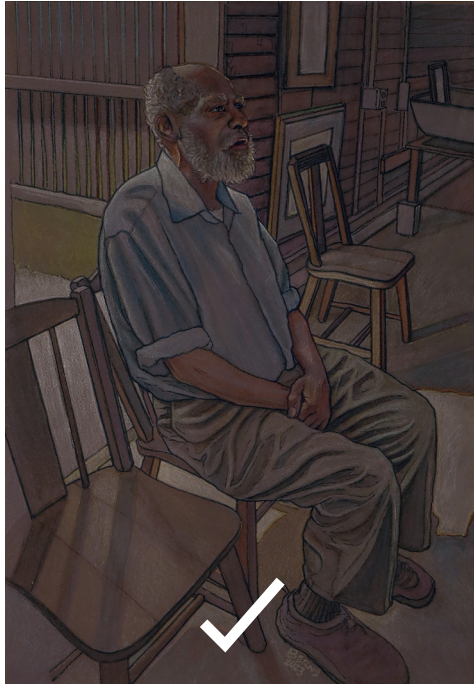
Richard Berns, *Robert of Washington Island,* 2023, Watercolor, Racine Art Museum, Dr. Charles H. Patton Memorial Purchase Award from *Watercolor Wisconsin 2023*

This is an example of a piece from RAM's collection where the frame is an integral part of the work.

Jack Earl, *The Story of Carrot Finger*, 1981, Ink, graphite, and color pencil on paper, and burned wood frame. 21 x 18 x 53 1/5 inches, Racine Art Museum, the Karen Johnson Boyd Collection in Honor William B. Boyd on the Occasion of Their 25th Wedding Anniversary, Photography: Jon Bolton

Please note that photography in this document, unless otherwise specified, was taken by RAM staff and is used solely for visual example purposes.

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Good lighting is extremely important. Photographs of work should include minimal shadows, as they obscure fine details. Works are easiest to photograph before glazing with glass, otherwise you will need to angle the light and camera more intently to minimize reflection and glare.

Carlotta Miller, *Soaring Renovation,* 2024, Watercolor, 34 1/4 x 23 1/4 inches, Racine Art Museum, Helen Rusk Memorial Purchase Award from *Watercolor Wisconsin 2024*

Photographing a dark piece, like the one above, can be challenging in regards to glare and lighting if you are capturing the work after glazing. If you look at the top and left sides of the work, you will see the room itself being reflected in the glass.

Photographs should not include any other elements besides the work. If documenting work in your living space, photograph the pieces away from other belongings that distract from the artwork itself. Digital mockups of your work are not acceptable.
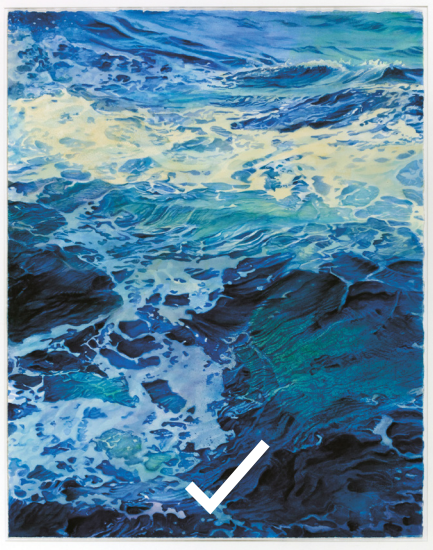
Amy E. Arntson, *Too Deep, III,* 2010, Watercolor on paper, 33 x 26 inches, Racine Art Museum, Godron "Corky" Christenson Memorial Purchase Award from *Watercolor Wisconsin 2011,* Photography: Jon Bolton

Please note that the primary image you submit for each work must depict the entire piece. There is an option to submit a secondary detail shot that zooms in on a smaller portion of your work to highlight the technique, or highlights an alternate angle if the work includes 3-D elements.

Primary photo example   Detail/alternate angle example

Verne J. Funk, *Swimming A-Head,* 2018, Glazed white earthenware and oil, 10 1/2 x 13 x 10 1/2 inches, Racine Art Museum, Gift of the Artist, Photography: Jon Bolton

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What if I don't have a professional camera? Is my phone camera acceptable?

Modern smartphones have powerful cameras and are the most accessible devices for photographing everyday situations. However, many of them lack the lighting and image control offered by DSLR cameras. You are also more likely to capture images at a higher resolution using a DSLR camera as opposed to a smartphone. This is incredibly beneficial for digital submission processes in which a photograph is a juror's only reference of your work. Jurors for *Watercolor Wisconsin* view images of each digital submission, along with optional detail shots, on a large projector screen. Since images will be projected at a large scale, it is in the artist's best interest to submit the highest quality photograph possible.

If you do not own a DSLR camera, you can schedule time in the photography studio at RAM's Wustum Museum and utilize the museum's equipment. For $10 per hour, artists can begin or improve skills for documenting their artwork. Besides the artwork itself, the only thing an artist needs to bring is an SD card to save their photographs. You are responsible for transferring files from the SD card to your computer/personal device.

Available studio equipment:

- Canon EOS Rebel T5 DSLR Camera with 18–55mm Lens
- DOLICA GX650B204 Tripod
- Four Lowel Tota-Light Tungsten Flood Lights (120–240VAC)
- Ushio EMD Lamp (750W/120V)
- Two Impact Air-cushioned Light Stand
- Savage Seamless Background Paper (107 inches x 50 yards, #1 Super White)
- Savage Seamless Background Paper (107 inches x 12 yards, #20 Super Black)
- Photoflex Litepanel 39 x 72 inches Plastic Frame
- Photoflex Litepanel 39 x 72 inches White Translucent Fabric
- Photoflex Litepanel Legs, Pack of Two
- Impact Super Clamp with Ratchet Handle

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**What are the image file requirements? How do I check this?**

In addition to a clear, accurate depiction of the work, photographs must also meet sizing requirements put forth by the organization. RAM requires all digital photograph submissions to be saved as .jpg, .png, or .tif files, which can be specified upon export in most computer programs.

The overall size of submitted files must not exceed 5 MB. This can often be adjusted upon image export in many computer programs. Additionally, many devices include built-in image resizing functions. Free online services can also compress images to reduce file size, but this often comes at the expense of reduced resolution.

If you have the capability to adjust image resolution, RAM recommends saving images at 300 dpi (dots per inch, the measure of digital printing density) or higher. You can adjust image resolution and sizing in software such as Photoshop or Affinity Photo.
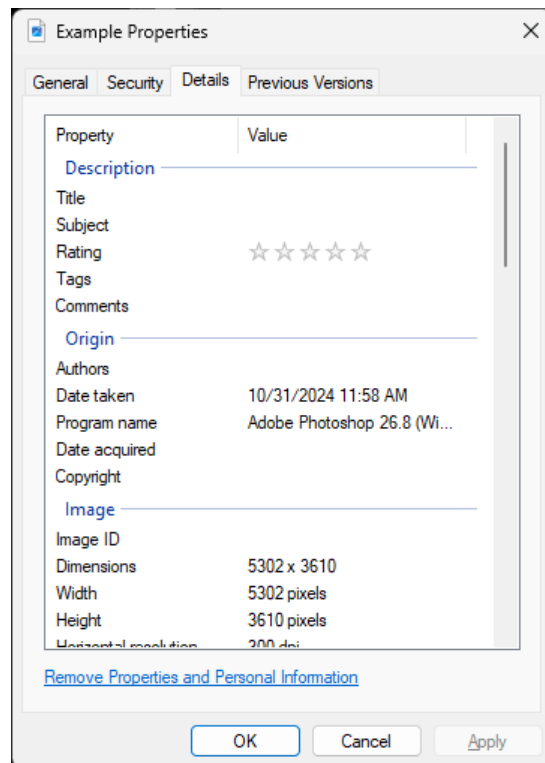

You can check an image's properties on a Windows device by right-clicking the file and selecting "Properties." Alternatively, you can select the file and use the keyboard shortcut Alt + Enter.
File dimensions and size will be listed under the "Details" tab.
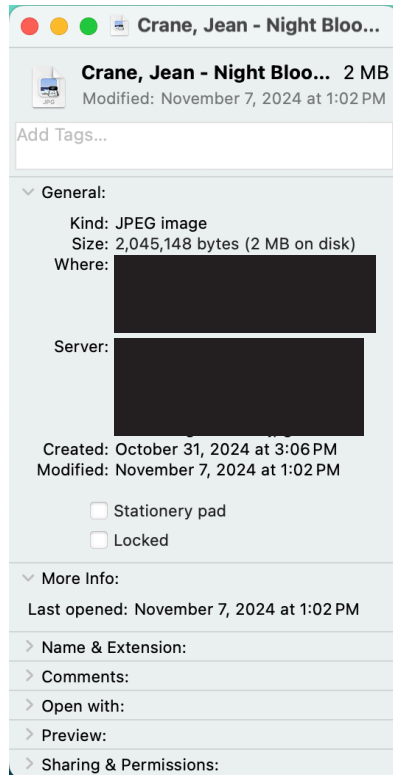
On MacOS, you can view this information by right-clicking the file then selecting "Get Info."

You can also view dimensions and resize your image by opening the file in Preview then going to Tools > Adjust Size.
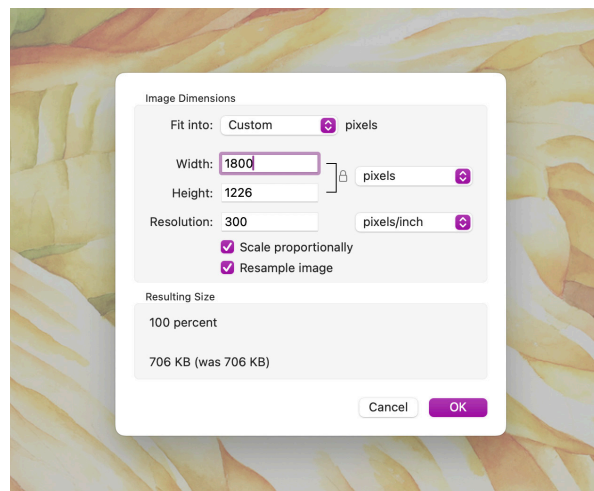
How much can I edit my photographs? Can I edit my work after submitting?

Artists are encouraged to use software to touch up and color correct photographs if it helps make the image appear truer to life. Colors should not be exaggerated and reflect the physical work as accurately as possible. Adjustments beyond color correction and minor touch-ups like dust removal are not allowed.

Accepted digital submissions will be inspected for quality and framing upon drop-off. Physical works must match what is represented in the digital entry form—no alterations can be made that would differentiate the physical piece from the submitted photograph. If an accepted work appears different from what was photographed, this could be understood as intentionally misleading to the jurors and may result in the piece being rejected from the exhibition.

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Is my file ready to submit?

To check if your file is ready to submit, please ensure the following criteria is met:

- The artwork can be clearly seen without blur, glare, or other visual distractions
- The image accurately represents the color and details of your artwork to the best of your ability
- The file is named "Artist Last Name - Title of Work." (Smith - Untitled #1.jpg)
- The image is 5 MB or less in size
- The image measures at least 1800 pixels on the longest side