

Art and Artefact Photography Tips

Artefact

- When handling the objects always wear gloves. The exception to this is for glass or ceramic objects when extra grip is required.
- Fill the frame.
- Always use the tripod.
- Photograph the object straight on if 2-dimensional, and at a 45° angle if 3-dimensional.
- Take close-up shots of any significant marks or features.
- Prop up the object if needed, but the prop should never show in the photograph.

Background

- Use a contrasting background fabric to highlight the characteristics of the object.
- Make sure that the fabric is smooth and that no creases or wrinkles will be visible in the photos. (Hint: Rolled storage of the fabric will prevent this.)
- Between photos remove any dust from the cloth with a lint brush.
- If you are dealing with shiny or glass-framed objects, you may get some reflection from lights or windows. Try holding a dark sheet up behind the camera when taking the photograph to block some of the direct glare. Experiment to find the correct height and angle to hold the sheet.

Scale

- Place the measuring scale next to the object without obscuring any part of the object. This is not required for close-up shots.
- Be consistent with the placement of the scale. I.e: always place it in the lower left corner.
- Prop up the scale if needed, but never attach the scale to the object.

Lighting & Camera Settings

- Natural light is best; avoid any lighting that may affect the colouring of the object.
- Avoid shadows.
- Lighting should highlight shape & detail without adding glare & reflections.

- If you don't have experience with exposure, make sure the camera is on the "Automatic" setting. This setting should adjust the exposure for you.
 - If the room is dark – let more light into the camera. Try a Plus Exposure of +.07 or +1.0
 - If you want to trust the camera and feel the light in the room is a good brightness, try a Balanced Exposure of 0.0 (this is typically the right exposure).
 - If the room is too bright – let less light into the camera (or if the artwork has really pale colours and is in a bright room). Try a Negative Exposure of -.07 or -1.0.
- Set the 2-second timer to reduce any blur caused by shaky hands.

Hint: This is not a race. One great photo is better than five below average photos.

Note: Photos are for documentary purposes only; if you do not hold copyright to the object you cannot display or sell the photos.