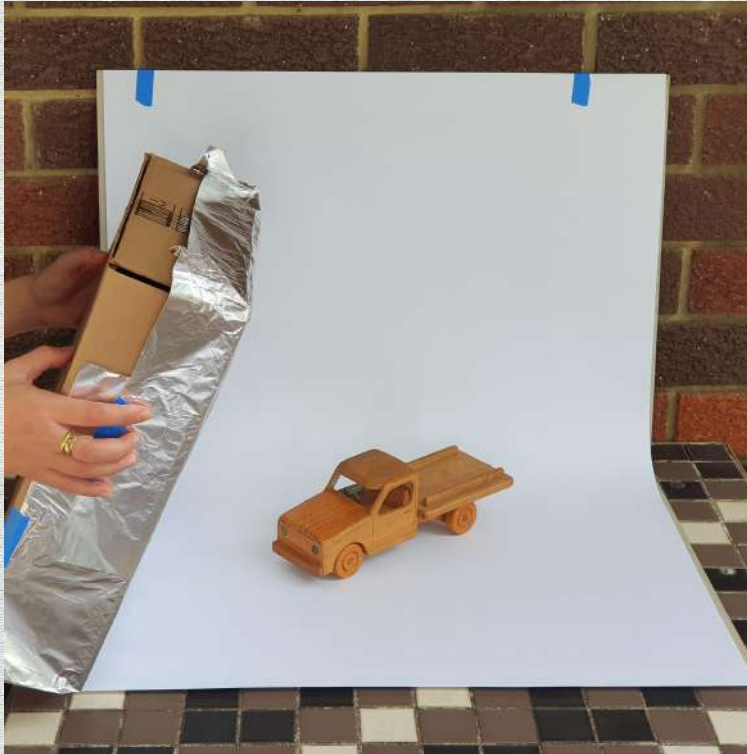


The image is a close-up detail of a painting. It features a complex, organic pattern of overlapping circles and irregular shapes. The colors are primarily various shades of green, from light lime to deep forest green, with accents of bright yellow and a dark, almost black, blue. The brushwork is visible, creating a textured, layered effect. The overall composition is dense and rhythmic, resembling a microscopic view of cells or a dense forest canopy.

# Documenting Artwork at Home

Detail - Lisa Wolfgramm Painting #165

Home based art documentation can be of a very high standard if you take time to consider what you have available and what you can construct to create the conditions for near professional results. All images in this presentation were taken using a Samsung S10 Phone Camera, readily available materials and edited using the Snapseed App (free on phone)



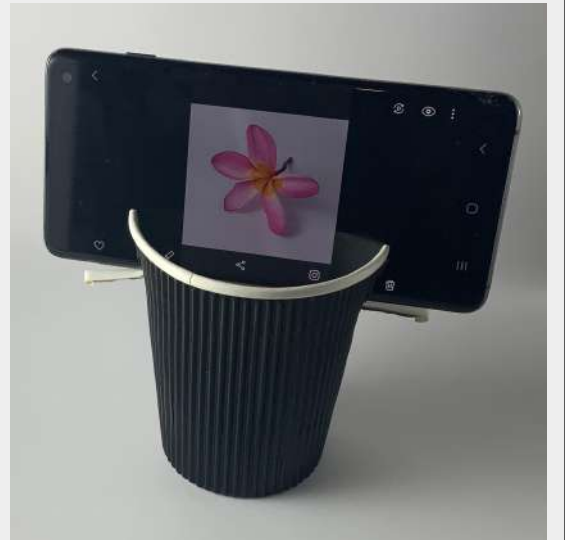
Artisan Unknown - Toy Truck, 2005, Timber 10cm x 20cm x 8cm



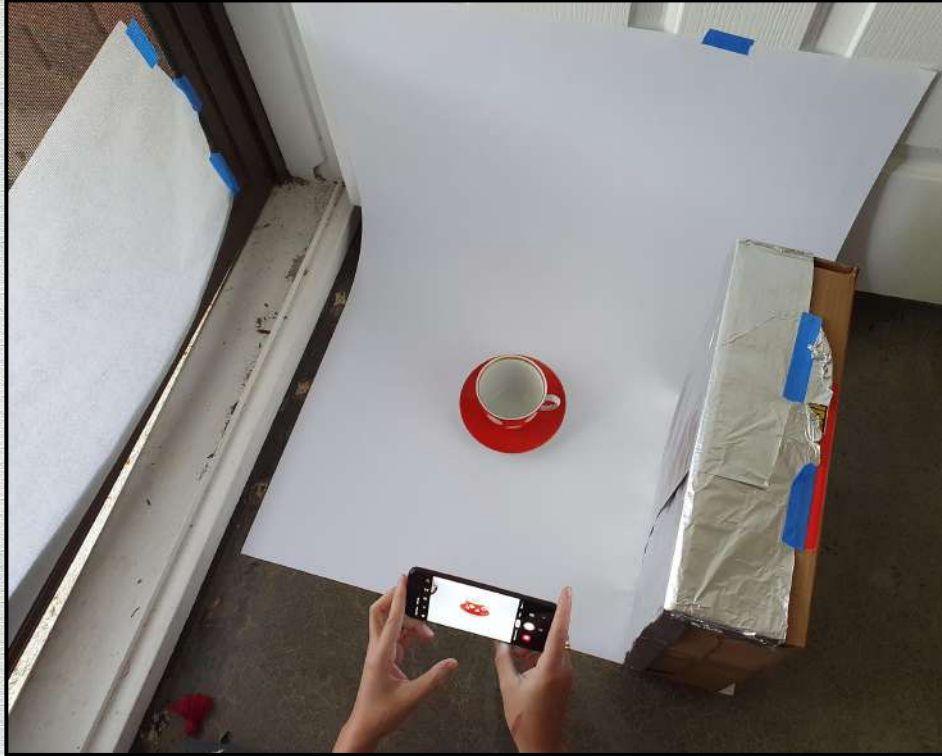
## Equipment

Use the best quality equipment you have access to.

- **Camera** - A DSLR is best but a phone camera with high megapixel, optical zoom and manual control is also very good. Shoot with the highest resolution and best file format (e.g. RAW) available on your camera
- **Tripod** - professional tripod, small selfie tripod, DIY tripod selfie stick with bricks, coffee cup tripod. Use the delay timer at 2 secs to reduce shake when pushing the button



- **Light diffuser** to even out the light **source** - baking paper, tracing paper, thin note paper or light white cloth can be used as a homemade light diffuser ( Caution - do not use with lights that get hot)



Russian Cup and Saucer - 1950s

Photo taken near open door. Baking paper taped across door to diffuse light produces softer shadows under saucer



- **Reflector or bounce card** to reflect back the diffused light source and reduce shadows and lighting gradient - polystyrene foam, white paper or aluminium kitchen foil (Use the less shiny side of the foil for an even reflectivity)



Photos taken near open window on tabletop. Second photo using a DIY aluminium foil reflector removes lighting gradient. No diffuser on window so you can see an obvious shadow line in the top left and bottom right.



## Lighting

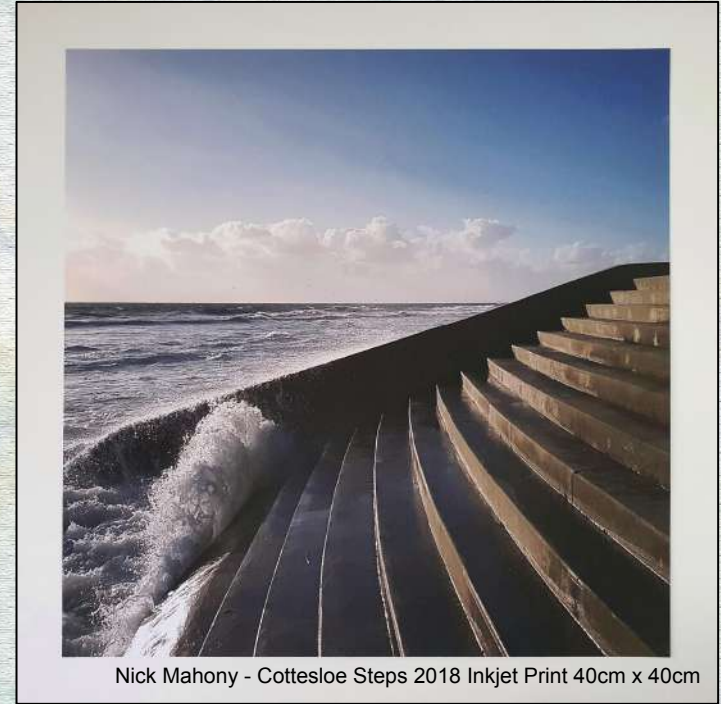
Soft diffused light is best. Take some time to consider the best light source, best lit area, time of day and location inside or outside your house. You need an even consistent diffused light.

- **Professional dual lights** with softbox diffusers from either side at 45°
- **Outside in non dappled shade** (not direct sunlight) e.g. under eaves, on the south side of building (southern hemisphere) or under shady tree or patio
- **Inside on a tabletop** near window with reflector to even out the lighting gradient and infill shadows
- **Outside on a cloudy day** - clouds act as light diffusers



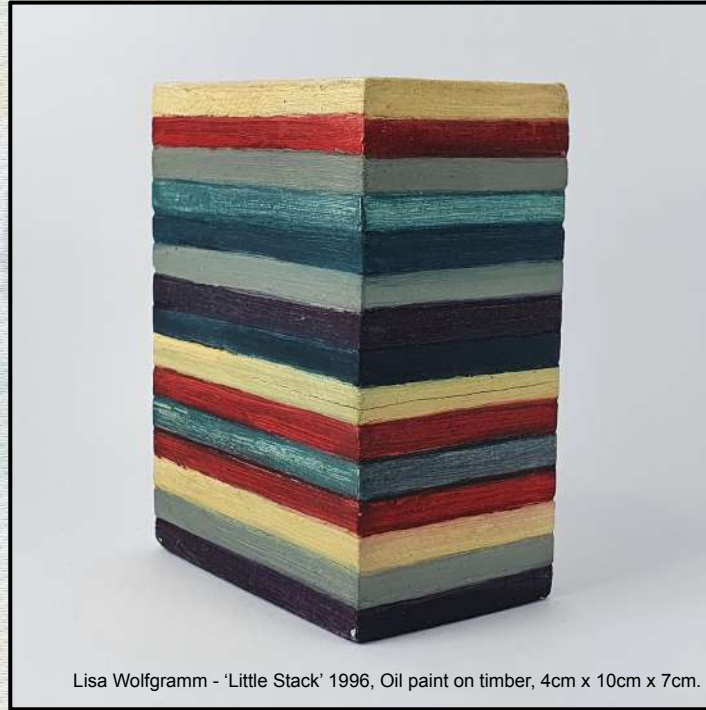


- **Inside on the floor or wall** near an open door with reflector and diffuser



A photographic print with a drawing paper background, baking paper diffuser taped to the door. Works on paper such as drawings or photographic prints are easier to deal with if laid flat instead of having to worry about pins, tape or blu-tack getting in the frame. (In retrospect there is a gradient of warm light coming from the top of the final image which is the light reflected off the door. Taking this image outside in the shade or using another reflector at the top would fix this)

- **Desk lamp** light source(s) with diffuser and reflector (Daylight LED or fluorescent light is better than incandescent light - too warm). Turn off other interior lights as they will change the white balance (warmth or coolness of your image)

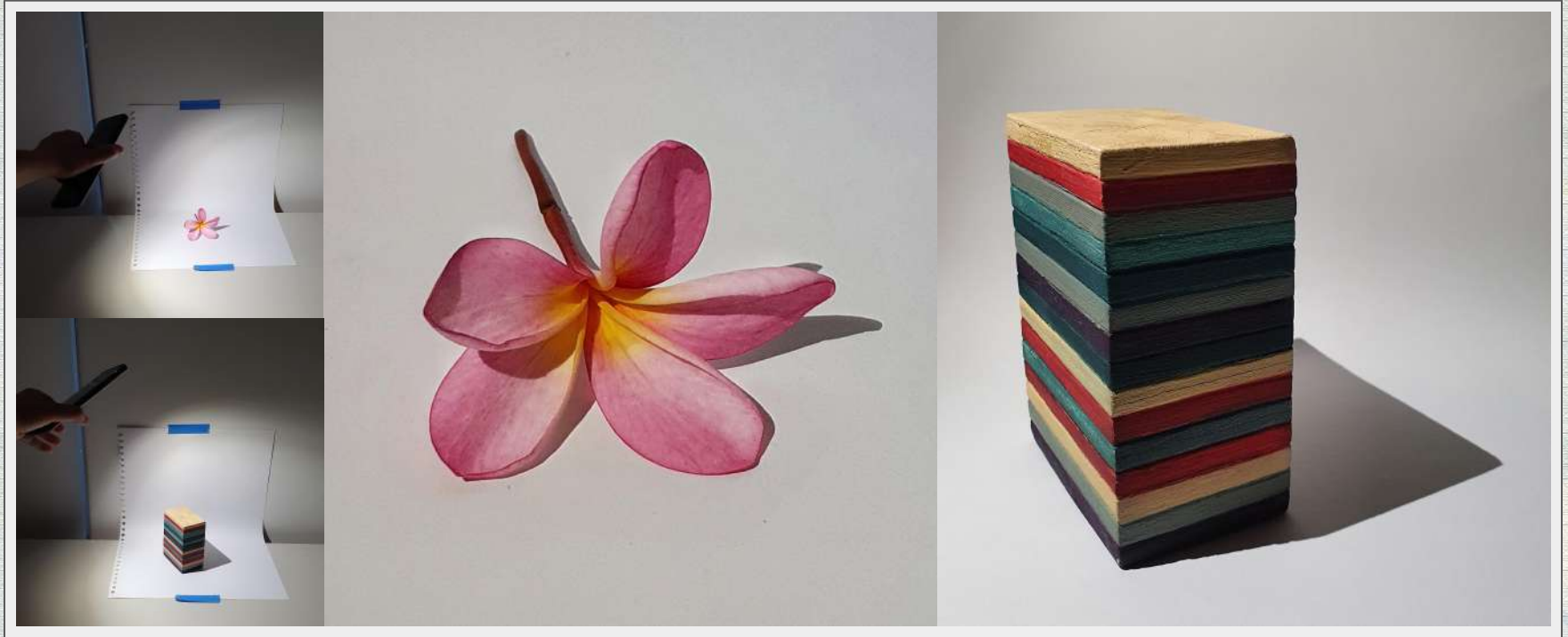


Lisa Wolfram - 'Little Stack' 1996, Oil paint on timber, 4cm x 10cm x 7cm.

Desk lamp light source with 1590 Lumen (15W) LED Daylight globe, DIY baking paper & cardboard diffuser, DIY kitchen foil reflector and A3 diary paper infinity wall



- **Contrast lighting** - For 3D artwork experiment with a single light source for dramatic effect. A second phone using the flashlight gives a strong crisp contrast shadow and accentuates surface texture.



## Background

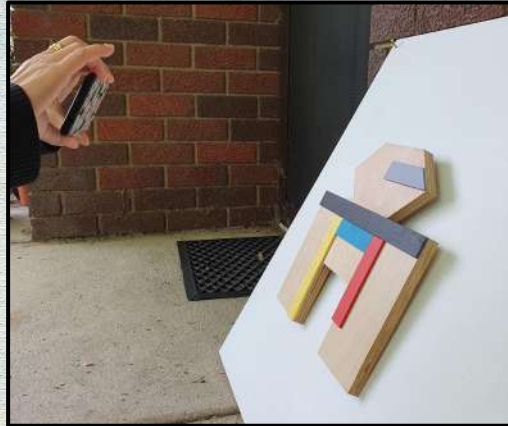
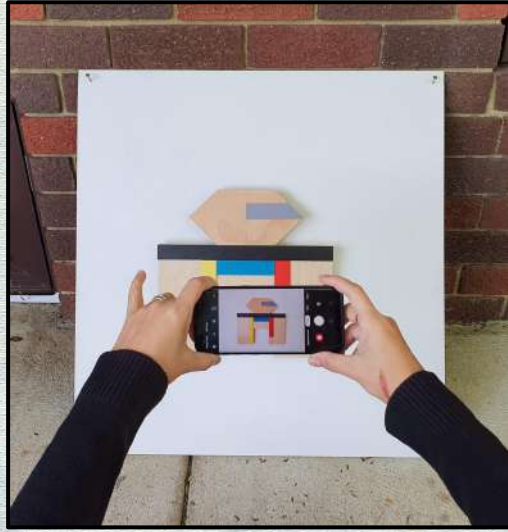
Look for or construct a well lit neutral background

- **Neutral flat surface** - for 2D artworks use a white or neutral wall (tape paper to the wall if not neutral), floor, tabletop, board, or grey art folio cardboard



A piece of MDF painted a neutral color can be hung from or leaned against an outside wall. Works on paper can be adhered to this or nails hammered in for hanging paintings. (thanks to Monty my trusty assistant)





Paul Moncrieff - 'M#ZING1', 2016, Acrylic on Plywood, 30cm x 30cm

- **Infinity Wall** - for 3D artwork create a neutral infinity wall using materials such as paper, card, cloth or a window roller blind attached to the vertical and horizontal surface



Taken on a cloudy day, outside, in the shade under the eaves. Light mostly coming from the right hand side. Try different angles of the reflector to see what infills the shadow best. A3 cartridge paper taped to cardboard folio as a neutral infinity wall on a tabletop.



- **Tabletop and wall** - An alternative to the infinity wall is to use separate vertical and horizontal backdrops.

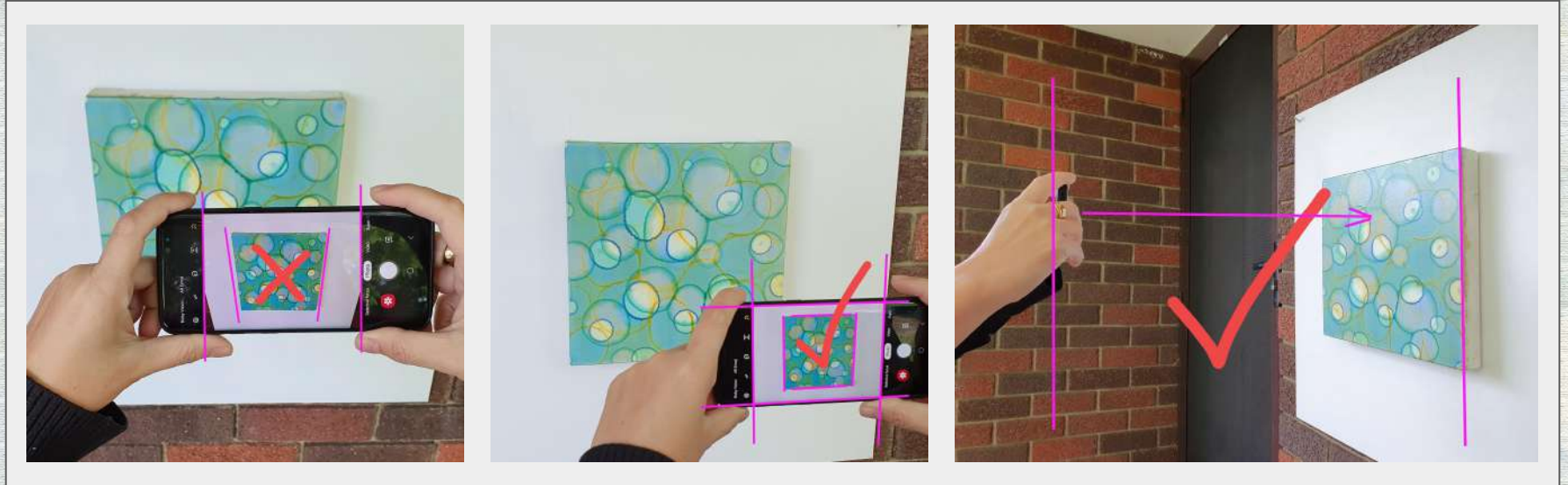


Some objects will look better with a darker background. Black will tend to look grey in most photos where the light hits it and more editing is needed to get the required contrast and not saturate the colors or underexpose the object. The second image uses a visual diary cover for the ground plane. The reflection off the glossy surface adds an extra dimension.

## Composition

Take time to consider the best composition within the camera frame to minimise later editing.

- **Alignment** - align all four edges of 2D artwork parallel to the edges of the camera frame to minimise perspective distortion - turn on the grid feature in your viewfinder and hold phone parallel to artwork



Lisa Wolfgramm Painting #165 2002 Oil on canvas 30cm x 30cm



- **Rotation** - rotate camera to maximise artwork resolution within the image area i.e landscape format for landscape format artwork
- **Edges** - Include all edges i.e. leave space around the artwork for later editing depending on academic requirements



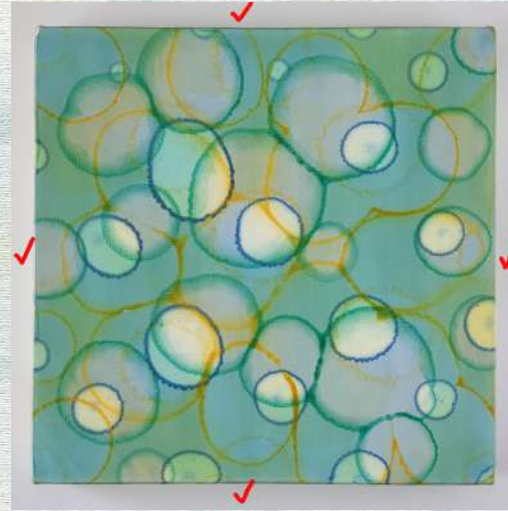
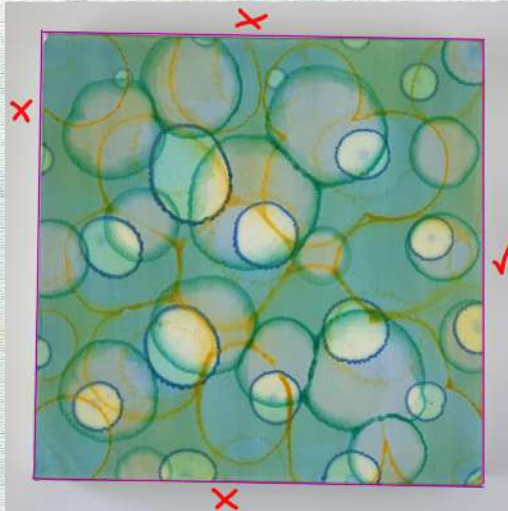
- **Variety** - For 3D artworks adjust your camera position up and down and rotate object for a variety of viewpoints
- **Details** - Take detail and close up shots to enable a better understanding of the surface texture, depth and types of materials. Use optical zoom and moving closer not digital zoom



## Editing

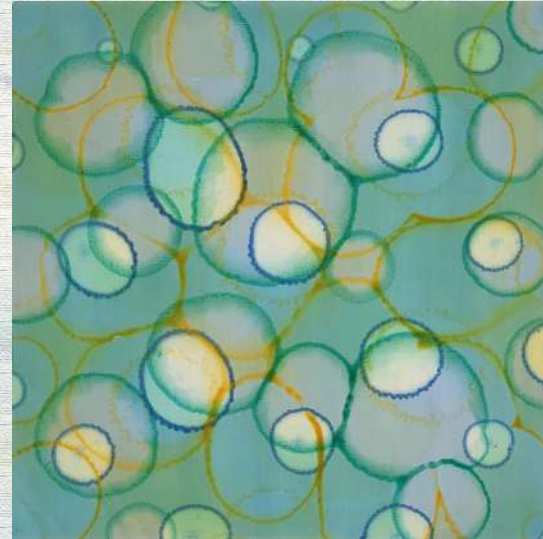
Keep editing simple - remember the point is to accurately represent what you have created, not make a new digital work.

- **Software** - Use camera apps (e.g. Snapseed - *free*) or desktop programs (e.g. Photoshop - paid or Gimp - free).
- **Perspective Distortion** - Correct any perspective distortion in 2D artworks - using Snapseed = Tools → Perspective → Free → ✓ or using Photoshop = Edit → Transform → Distort → Enter





- **Crop** to outside of the artwork edges so some of the background is visible - for archiving purposes visible edges are important. Check with your academic or website as some may want you to crop to or inside the edges for 2D works.



- **Contrast and white balance** adjusted minimally to correct for lighting variation
- **Archiving** - Save your unedited original file and save the edited highest resolution file and save the edited file using the required resolution, dimensions, maximum file size, file type and naming convention.



## Other

- Always refer to your lecturer, gallery or website specific instructions as they may differ from these general points
- Take at least 4 shots and choose the best one
- Keep lighting, viewpoint, background, orientation, camera, editing etc consistent when documenting a series of works
- Document whole rooms from various viewpoints to represent exhibitions and contextualise artworks
- Do not use camera flash
- Clean your lens!
- Always best to forward images for assessment via your official institution email
- Consider documenting 3D objects, installations and performances with video as well as still photography
- Keep notes about each photograph / artwork e.g. Artist Name, Date of Work, Dimensions of Work and Materials



## Useful External Links

1. [Artwork photography basics \(ignore videos at bottom\)](#)
2. [Documenting work on paper using window light and editing with Snapseed](#)
3. [Photographing 2D works](#)
4. [Setting up an at home infinity wall, home lighting diffuser and reflector](#)
5. [Photographing 3D objects](#)
6. [DIY phone camera tripod ideas](#)
7. [Erin O'Keefe photographic artworks using objects and color backdrops](#)



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