

Burrige Workshop

PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS – Digital Facts you should Know

We continue to be in the middle of cross over technology--- from traditional photography and cameras to the fast growing internet and digital cameras. Digital reproduction of your artwork is becoming popular for everyone with a home color printer. Artists who have the time are hooking up their digital cameras to their computers and printing out very impressive prints of high quality reproduction. Good digital cameras continue to be more affordable and I recommend that you not wait to buy one. It's like buying a computer... as soon as you buy it, the next day a newer, better and cheaper one comes out. So don't wait. Just get one. The advantage, of course, is that digital images are stored on your computer's hard drive or downloaded on your compact disk (CDs). From there, the images can be printed at home or quickly transmitted by email anywhere in the world in seconds. It's a great tool and technique to quickly communicate your ideas, sketches, artwork to anyone with internet access. I use my digital camera mostly to send painting images to my galleries so they can see what's coming. Also my galleries forward the images to prospective buyers. Many times the paintings are presold prior to delivery to the gallery.

But now, having said all that, let me address the issues that continue to come up between artists with these digital cameras and "technos" that swear by these cameras.

Fact: In spite of this great new technology with digital cameras, you still need to also shoot 35mm slides for color accuracy.

Fact: Computer monitors and printers are anything but standard. An image on your computer screen may look perfect to you, but can look completely different on someone else's computer and printer. In addition, people usually blame their bad looking image on their photographic technique; but in fact, the capture may be perfect and the monitor or printer results are very poor. If you're serious about this, calibration and correct printer settings are crucial! All this of course equal more time, more knowledge and more money!

There are basically two settings on your digital camera for two types of needs. The "size" of your digital file will either be

low resolution (800 x 600 or less) for low quality so you can email quickly, or **high resolution** (1600 x 1200 or greater) for high quality reproduction. Low resolution is okay for sending family photos but not for artwork reproduction.

Fact: To send or utilize a reproducible quality image you will use up at least 7.5MB on your computer's hard drive plus you and your recipient will need high speed internet access to send and receive emails of that size. Also, once you have stored or saved this image at a certain size (measured in computer talk called "pixels") it should be reproduced at that size. A larger size will lose the image quality.

If you invest in a digital camera get a more expensive one; Most cameras now start in the 5.0 - 7.1 megapixels range (point and shoot, fixed zoom lens) you can get a great image. Anything less will not. So if you want high resolution and a very sharp picture, get a camera that has a higher megapixel range. I have a Single Lens Reflex Digital and if I am going to reproduce or print a high quality image, I shoot at the highest quality setting, save and download immediately to my hard drive, thereby freeing up the camera's memory in order to shoot more high quality pictures. SLR Digitals generally start in at 7 megapixels and go up to 20 mp. 8-10 megapixel is about the norm for consumer cameras. Same lens requirements - 70-210mm and a 50-110mm macro lens for close-up photography (jewelry, textiles or details).

There is another "tech" thing to consider --- compression to store lots of images on a CD. You can "compress" the electronic information and save it as a JPEG (.jpg). However, the more you compress the image, the more you compromise the original quality. Save master files as TIFF (.tif). Make JPEG copies to use at will for email, website, etc. Print only from TIFF files. Never convert inferior JPEGs to larger files or make them TIFFs. You can go big to small, but never the opposite.

Digital images are the new way for submissions to juried shows and festivals. Digital submission requires image setup based on strict guidelines set by the clearing house responsible for handling the images for jurying. Juried Art Services is such a contractor. Go to juriedartservices.com and check it out. The bigger festivals and organizations use contractors like Juried Art Services to view hundreds of submissions using consistent, calibrated color. When in

doubt, ask for help or hire a pro!

Using digital skills, we artists really have great tools to prepare images for the web, print, portfolio and to email. But to reproduce my paintings for giclée prints or posters, I use my 4 x 5 transparencies shot by a professional. They are sharper and match the original artwork more accurately.

Personally if I need really high quality digital images, I take my paintings to a professional studio photographer who has the latest equipment. Since I'm paying for a "setup fee," the photographer will also shoot my 35mm slides, 4 x 5 transparencies and tiffs at the same time.

You can do all this. Remember to photograph your art correctly in the first place.

Since this article was first published, new and improved films have been introduced to the market. Try them to see which best suits your needs.