

PHOTOGRAPHING YOUR WORK

It is really important to get the best quality images of your work that you can, as it is from these, not from the originals, that your work will be selected, and then these images will be used to show your work in the catalogue, which will be in full colour.

The best thing is to get your work photographed professionally. A professional knows about lighting, how to bring out the best in your work especially if it includes gold or embossing, or any textured background. This does not need to be expensive. A group of six people could get together and hire a photographer for two hours to produce any number of digital images. If your work is already out of the frame, setting 36 pieces up and taking three shots of each piece (which the photographer will choose to do, altering the exposure for each) will not take more than that two hours – however, you do need to work quickly.

If you think that you can take slides of your work yourself, then please note the following pointers:

1 Take your work out of the frame before you start. The frame may well add to the piece, but it usually reflects light along one or two sides, and this creates glare which has to be cut off when used in a printed publication.

Of course your work must not be photographed behind glass. Something taken in the frame behind glass which may be acceptable to show students or use for a Powerpoint show to give examples of your work simply won't work because of the difficulties of balance of glare and dark shades in printing.

2 Place your work flat on the floor, or attach it to a flat wall. Don't prop it up on a flat surface and lean it against a wall. The lower part will be wider than the upper part which creates terrific distortion and will have to be cropped (which might include part of your design).

3 Line the edge of the viewfinder up against a straight edge in your piece. Images which are taken wonkily can be dealt with but are more tricky and there is not time to fiddle around when preparing the catalogue. It's much better to make sure that your images are straight so that you are not rejected!

4 Focus on your work as that is what most people want to see. The mount may be lovely and add a great deal, but may well be cropped in the catalogue, so do get up close to your work. Use manual focus if possible. Arty photographs which are blurred in the foreground or in part of the picture, and then well focused elsewhere are frustrating for those who want to see all the calligraphy.

5 Take the photographs in the best possible light. Take the photographs outside, or when it is a really sunny day and in a room which gets all the sun possible. However, be warned here from the sad voice of experience – shadows of windowframes which are on your work (even in the corner) will show up on the images, so too will your feet if your work is on the floor and you stand too close. (yes, I have done it!)

6 Make sure that everything that you want to show of your work is on the image. The background for a flat piece doesn't matter as this will be cropped, but if your piece is three-dimensional, then the background will be part of the piece and will show, so think about colour and texture – something which will enhance your work rather than detract from it.

7 Now check what the image is like. If the paper you have been using is white, then your photograph should not show it as grey. Re-take it if it is not a good image. This is the advantage of digital photography.