

Stockton Camera Club

The Shutter Tripper

September 2026

Our August Special Subject
is Public Art



Check out our new Website!

Thank you Ken Cawley!

stockton-cameraclub.com

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Stockton Camera Club

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Home

The Stockton Camera Club in Stockton, CA is for anyone who loves photography, wants to learn more about photography, and wants to improve their skills. The club welcomes photographers of all skill levels from beginners to professionals. Most months we have image competition meetings. Other months the club provides learning workshops revolving around photography and image editing tools such as Photoshop and Lightroom. The club also regularly schedules photography field trips to picturesque places.

Recent Monthly Competition Images



3rd Place Digital: Dean Taylor - House on Fire - Bears Ears Natl. Monument

Click to learn more about the [Stockton Camera Club](#), the monthly [Meetings and Competitions](#).
Click here for [How to Join](#).
Stockton Camera Club meets at [West Lane Bowl](#) on the 3rd Thursday of the month.
Please use our [Contact](#) form if you would like further information.

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Stockton Camera Club

Home Club Meetings Competition Members Newsletter Contact

Meetings



We meet most months on the 3rd Thursday of the month in the Banquet room at West Lane Bowl at 8:30 pm.

[West Lane Bowl](#) is located at
3900 West Lane, Stockton, CA 95210.

Our next meeting is Thursday March 23rd. It will be a [competition](#) meeting with the Special Subject: Abandoned.



All meetings members are encouraged to share their favorite printed photos or digital images for a monthly competition. Guests are always welcome to attend meetings. However, you must be a dues-paying member to enter the competitions. There are Beginner (B), Intermediate (IM), and Advanced (AA) member divisions. New members start out in the Beginner division.

For each meeting, members submit up to 14 four photos for judging - 13 in the Open category and 1 in the Special Subject category. The Special Subject changes each month and might be: Trees, Portraits, Transportation, Pets, Flowers, etc.

There is a refund just judge for each competition month. Judges critique what they like and what they feel can be improved upon in each of the images submitted. This kind of feedback is immensely helpful in the growth of an artist. For more information on the monthly competition visit the [Competition](#) page.

Images receiving top scores will be added to the Club's newsletter - [The Shutter Tripper](#) that is posted on the [Newsletter](#) page. Images receiving a score of 43 at the last meeting are featured on the [Image](#) page.

Membership Dues

Yearly dues are as follows:

- \$10 for a couple
- \$5 for an individual
- \$5 for printer order 48

Dues are paid at the December meeting, February meeting, or at time of joining.

Download the [Membership Form](#) or on the [Forms](#) page.

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SCC Officers 2026

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President's Message

September, 2026

By Heide Stover

Our zoom meeting went very well. There were good images to view and the comments made were constructive and friendly. It was nice to have that interaction between members. Everyone seemed to enjoy it. We will plan on doing this again.

I will miss the September meeting as I'll be at the PSA Photo Festival. See y'all in October.

Heide

A Big Thank You to Our Sponsors!

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2026 Calendar of Events

Thursday September 17	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	September General Meeting Special Subject - Public Art
Wednesday October 7	Woodbridge Ecological Reserve, North	Annual Sandhill Crane Fly-in 5:00pm - 7:30pm
Thursday October 15	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	March General Meeting Special Subject - Monochrome
Thursday November 19	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	November General Meeting Special Subject - Prints
Thursday December 15	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	May General Meeting Special Subject - Food
January 2026	TBA	End of the Year
Thursday February 18	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	March General Meeting Special Subject - Holiday Lights
Thursday March 18	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	March General Meeting Special Subject - Rust/Peeling Paint
April 2026	TBA	Educational Opportunity
Thursday May20	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	May General Meeting Special Subject - Face to Face
Thursday June 17	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	June General Meeting Special Subject - Repetition

Stockton Camera Club

2026 Competition Standings

The 2025 SCC Competition Standing and the 2026 Competition Classes

Please check out the website <http://www.stockton-cameraclub.com>

Class AA Standings	Total	Open	SS	Feb	Mar	May	Jun	Jul	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Karen Randall	194	155	39	38	39	40	40	37	0	0	0	0
Ken Cawley	190	149	37	39	37	39	39	36	0	0	0	0
Em McLaren	189	151	38	39	39	39	36	36	0	0	0	0
Doug Ridgway	147	119	28	40	39	33	35	0	0	0	0	0
Amy Solensky	116	86	30	39	39	38	0	0	0	0	0	0
David Ethier	111	84	27	38	37	36	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nicole Kerres	78	58	20	0	0	38	0	40	0	0	0	0
Paul Engeleman	21	11	10	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Christine Blue	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Denise Hahstead	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Phyllis Brandt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Suzanna Emry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Peter Sust	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Joan Erreca	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Heide Stover	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trey Steinhart	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Doug Gilham	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	Open	SS	Feb	Mar	May	Jun	Jul	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dean Taylor	189	151	38	40	35	36	38	40	0	0	0	0
Craig Smith	187	148	39	37	40	36	37	37	0	0	0	0
Wayne Carlson	187	150	37	39	37	35	38	38	0	0	0	0
Sharon McLemore	146	111	35	40	37	33	0	36	0	0	0	0
Ron Wetherell	99	81	18	0	36	26	0	37	0	0	0	0
Joanne Sogsti	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

2026 Competition Policy

A. GENERAL RULES

1. Only paid-up members may enter club competition.
2. Regular print and digital image competition period: Once each month except January. A competition year is February through December. Current regular meetings are February, March, May, July, September, October and December. The number of meetings may change from time to time at the discretion of the Board of Directors and approval of the general membership as facilities permit. The Annual Awards Dinner will be held in January.
3. A total of four (4) images (all prints, all digital or a combination of both) may be entered each competition month. A total of three (3) images may be entered in the Open Division and a total of one (1) in the Special Subject Division. The number of entries may change from time to time at the discretion of the Board of Directors and the approval of the general membership.
4. Each image will be scored from 6 to 10 points. All prints or digital images receiving 9 or 10 points will be classed as an honor image. The title of each print or digital image entered will be read before being evaluated. The name of the maker will be read for 9-point honor winners. Maker's names will be announced for the 10 point images after the Print & Digital Image-of-the-Month winners are chosen.
5. A print or digital image that does not receive an honor score, may be re-entered one more time in the same division.
6. A print or digital image may be entered in all divisions for which it qualifies; i.e., an honor image in Open may also be entered in the Special Subject Division at another competition. A print or digital image that receives an honor score may not be re-entered in the same division.
7. Any print or digital image that appears to be ineligible for competition or not qualified for a specific division could expect to be challenged. The Competition Vice-President shall decide whether or not the image is acceptable.
8. The exhibitor must have exposed each negative, slide or digital image entered. All images submitted for judging must be the work of the photographer/maker including the taking of the images and any digital enhancements and/or manipulation of the image. This does not apply to the processing of film or printing by a commercial processor.
9. The same image should not be entered both as a print and a projected digital image in the same competition.
10. In the event of absence or barring unforeseen circumstances, a member may submit make-up prints or digital images for one competition night per competition year; and whenever possible must submit all make-up prints or digital images at the meeting immediately following the month a member failed or was unable to submit the prints or digital images. Make-ups in the Special Subject Division must be the same subject as the month missed. Also, in case of absence a member may assign the responsibility of submitting his or her prints and/or digital images for competition to another member.
11. A club member who serves as judge cannot enter his or her own prints or digital images in the same competition. The judge's make-up prints or digital images can then be entered in another competition during that competition year. This is in

addition to the once-a-year make-up provision already allowed. 12. Prints or digital images may be projected/viewed briefly before the judging of each division if the judge indicates he/she would like a preview.

B. PRINT ENTRY RULES

1. Each print entered must have a completed label attached to the back of the print including; name of maker, title, date entered and Division (Open or Special Subject). The writing or printing on the form must be legible. Labels must be attached on the back of the print in the upper left-hand corner for correct viewing of the print.
2. All prints must be matted or mounted with a total size (including mat board) of no larger than 18" X 24" and no smaller than 8" X 10". Exception: One side of a Panorama Print may be no larger than 36". Prints that are smaller than 5" X 7" will not be accepted. The maker's name must not appear on the viewing surface of the image. Framed prints shall not be entered.
3. Prints accompanied by entry forms should be submitted no later than 15 minutes prior to the start of the regular monthly meeting.
4. Prints receiving a score of 10 points, in each class, will be regrouped and judged for selection for the Print-of-the-Month honors. Print-of-the-Month honors will be given in Class A, AA & AAA.

C. DIGITAL IMAGE ENTRY RULES

1. Digital images must be submitted in a format and by the deadline specified by the Competition Vice-President. Digital images may be submitted by email, mailed (CD) or delivered (CD) to the Competition Vice-President. Definition of Digital Image: An image taken with a digital camera, a negative, slide or print scanned into the computer and processed digitally.
2. Images must be in a format compatible with the projector. The key thing to keep in mind when formatting photos for submission is that the projector we use in the competition has a (maximum) resolution of 1400 x 1050 pixels. This means that any photo that exceeds this size in either dimension, could end-up being cropped by the projector. In other words: the image width cannot be more than 1400 pixels and the image height cannot be more than 1050 pixels. If your image is horizontal, only change the width to 1400, if your image is vertical, only change the height to 1050. Do not change both. Down-sizing the image from the "native" resolution coming out of your camera also significantly reduces the file size. This helps when emailing the files and takes-up less space on our hard-drives.
3. The maker's name, title of image, date entered and division (Open or Special Subject) must be included as the title of the image. When you have finished re-sizing your image save your image with a new title. For example do a Save as: Smith Sunrise Splendor 05-15 O.jpeg. (O-Open or SS-Special Subject). Specify whether you're Beginner, Advanced or Very Advanced.
4. Digital Images receiving a score of 10 points, in each class, will be regrouped and judged for selection for the Digital Image-of-the-Month honors. Digital Image-of-the-Month honors will be given in Class A, AA & AAA.



Street Art Cities

Street Art Cities

The unwritten rules of Street Art photography.
Street art may live in public,
but photographing it comes with its own code of respect.



Martha Cooper is the matriarch of all street art photographers

Street art photography is more than capturing walls. It is documentation, preservation, storytelling, and sometimes even cultural archaeology. Every mural, stencil, throw-up, paste-up, or tag exists within a larger urban ecosystem, and photographing it comes with its own code of conduct.

Unlike traditional gallery photography, street art photography lives in a space shaped by respect: respect for artists, neighborhoods, local scenes, and the temporary nature of public art itself. While there are no official guidelines, over the years a series of unwritten rules has emerged within the global street art community. if you're enjoying what we're doing, consider [becoming a supporter](#) by subscribing in the Street Art Cities app.

Your support helps keep the platform running, and allows us to keep developing new features.

Respect the artwork first!

The artwork always comes before the photograph.

That means no touching fresh paint, climbing onto installations, moving objects around the piece, or interfering with the wall to create a "better shot." Street art is often fragile and temporary already. Photographers who understand the culture know their role is to document, not alter.

The same applies to public interaction. Blocking sidewalks for long photo sessions or treating murals like private photo studios often creates tension between photographers, artists, and local residents.

Credit matters.

Street art culture thrives on visibility and recognition. Whenever possible, photographers should credit the artist behind the work.

For muralists and legal productions, tagging artists and festivals helps strengthen the ecosystem around public art. It creates opportunities, archives careers, and allows audiences to discover more work.

Graffiti culture, however, operates differently. Some writers prefer anonymity, especially when works were created illegally. In these cases, photographers are expected to understand the balance between visibility and exposure.

Think before you geotag.

Not every artwork needs an exact location attached to it.

Sharing the precise coordinates of abandoned spots, hidden alleys, rooftops, or trainyard pieces can unintentionally attract vandalism, over-tourism, or legal attention. Some works are meant to be discovered organically.

Many experienced street art photographers intentionally keep locations vague when dealing with sensitive or underground works. Silence is golden!

The city is part of the artwork

A wall never exists in isolation.

The strongest street art photography often captures the relationship between the artwork and its surroundings: the architecture, weather, traffic, decay, passersby, and daily urban life surrounding the piece.

A mural reflected in puddle of water. A stencil partially hidden behind scaffolding. A giant portrait towering above commuters. These moments reveal how public art interacts with the city itself.



Street art is not simply placed in the urban environment, it becomes part of it.

Avoid over-editing

Editing is part of photography, but excessive manipulation can misrepresent the original artwork.

Heavy filters, altered colors, artificial textures, or AI-generated modifications may create visually striking images, but they can also distort the artist's original intention. Most respected documentarians aim to stay relatively faithful to the real atmosphere, colors, and scale of the piece.

In many cases, these photographs become historical records long after the artwork disappears. And artists are very meticulous when it comes to photographs of their work.

Timing changes everything

Street art photographers quickly learn that timing is part of the craft.

Early morning light can soften a wall completely. Night photography can emphasize atmosphere and contrast. Rain creates reflections that transform murals into cinematic scenes. Sometimes an empty street highlights the artwork itself; other times, the interaction between people and the wall becomes the real subject.

A mural is never exactly the same twice because the city around it constantly changes.



Hannah Judah shooting portraits of Shoe for NuArt Aberdeen 2024

Ask before photographing artists at work

Watching artists paint can feel exciting, but process moments deserve respect too. Some artists enjoy being photographed while working. Others prefer concentration, privacy, or discretion, especially during illegal actions or unfinished productions. Hovering over painters for content without permission is generally frowned upon.

A simple conversation often creates better opportunities, better photographs, and genuine connections.

Never post a finished artwork before the artist

One of the strongest unwritten rules in street art photography is simple: never publish a finished mural before the artist does.

For many artists, the reveal is part of the process. After days, sometimes weeks, of painting, they want to control how and when the artwork first appears online. Posting the finished piece prematurely can take away that moment entirely.

This is especially important during festivals, large-scale productions, or commissioned murals where official announcements, media coverage, or sponsored campaigns may already be planned. An early post can unintentionally spoil the launch, disrupt communication strategies, or create tension with organizers and artists alike.

Within graffiti culture, the rule carries even more weight. Sharing fresh productions too quickly can attract unwanted attention, expose locations, or bring heat to artists before they have safely left the spot.

Most experienced street art photographers follow a simple etiquette:

- ask before posting work in progress,
- wait for the artist's own reveal,
- or at minimum check whether the piece is public yet.

Being first is never more important than being respectful.

Ironically, photographers who understand this often build stronger relationships with artists over time. Trust opens doors: access to behind-the-scenes moments, process documentation, interviews, and deeper stories that go far beyond a single image.

Street art has always been rooted in community, and good documentation follows the same principle.

Buy a coffee or a beer

Street art may be free to enjoy, but creating it rarely is. Behind every mural are hours of planning, painting, and physical work, often under challenging conditions.

If you meet an artist while they're painting, a simple gesture, a coffee, tea, water, or beer, can go a long way. Supporting artists doesn't always require buying artwork; sometimes genuine appreciation and small acts of kindness are just as meaningful.

After all, every great street art photograph starts with an artist who put something extraordinary on the wall.
Photography as preservation

One of the most important roles of street art photography is preservation.

Murals disappear. Graffiti gets buffed. Buildings are demolished. Entire neighborhoods change. In many cases, photographs become the only surviving trace of an artwork.

Street art photographers unintentionally become archivists of urban culture. Their images preserve moments that cities themselves may erase weeks later.

This is part of why accurate documentation matters so much within the scene.

Don't let the photograph become bigger than the culture

In the social media era, one of the biggest criticisms inside street art communities revolves around performative photography, images focused more on personal branding than the artwork itself.

The culture has increasingly pushed back against influencer-style content where murals become little more than decorative backdrops.

The photographers who earn long-term respect are usually the ones who amplify the artists, the stories, and the city rather than placing themselves at the center of every frame.

More than just taking pictures

Street art photography exists somewhere between journalism, art history, and urban exploration. It documents movements, preserves disappearing works, and helps public art travel far beyond the streets where it was created.

At its best, it becomes part of the culture itself.

Because in the end, street art photography is not only about capturing walls.

It is about understanding the life around them.

if you're enjoying what we're doing, consider [*becoming a supporter*](#) by subscribing in the Street Art Cities app. Your support helps keep the platform running, and allows us to keep developing new features.

How to Photograph Your Public Art and Large-Scale Installations

By [*Elysian Koglmeier*](#)



Fireflies by Cai Guo-Qiang. Photo credit: Jeff Fusco Photography

Take impressive photos of your public art and installations with these helpful tips from accomplished public artists and public art administrators.

Taking photographs of monumental works doesn't have to be a daunting feat.

We collected recommendations from public artists and administrators on how to create impressive and memorable images of public art projects without breaking the bank.

Here are 11 helpful tips:

Your photograph is an interpretation of the artwork (context is key).

Caitlin Martin, Media & Communications Manager for the [*Association for Public Art \(aPA\)*](#) councils suggests, "we must remember that when we photograph an artwork, we are in a way interpreting that work."

Remember that your image may be a viewer's first experience of the work. Martin recommends sharing the context and site of the work.

"Show how the space is used where the sculpture is sited—which usually involves people, light, architectural elements, etc."

These elements also portray the scale of your piece, which isn't always obvious when the work is photographed alone.



Symbiosis by Roxy Paine. Photo credit: James Ewing Photography

Capture interactions.

Take photographs of the public interacting with the artwork. Interaction can be both observing the work or engaging with the space in which the work is sited (walking a dog, playing frisbee, etc.). These images will also showcase how your work enlivens a public space. The images of [*Firmament*](#), a vibrant canopy of 21,600 LED lights by Burning Man artist Christopher Schardt, is a wonderful example of using public interaction to highlight the awe that the work invokes in viewers. Visitors gather under the structure on Houston's Discovery Green and watch a display of celestial, psychedelic, abstract images in the night sky.

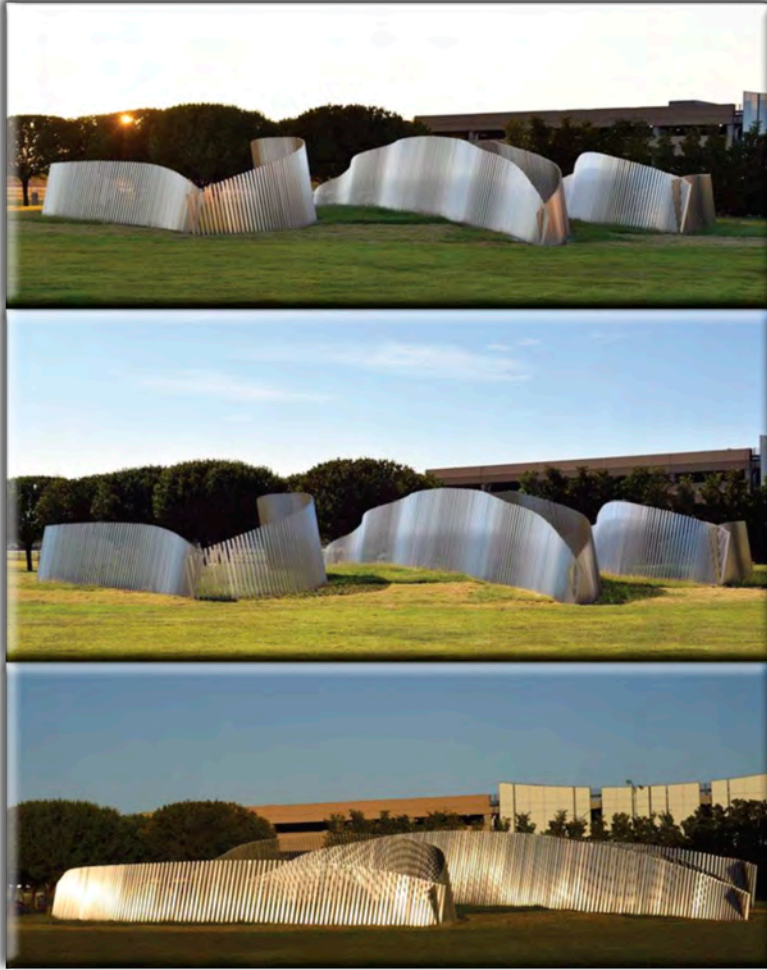
Avoid distracting backgrounds.

This is the time to celebrate the artwork and show it in its best light. Avoid distracting or competing elements like a billboard. Just shuffling your feet a few steps can make a huge difference. Similarly, significant parts of the environment that contribute to the work. Tell a bigger story with a wide-angle lens and panoramas.

Using a wide-angle lens will allow you to get much more in the frame—meaning you don't have to walk hundreds of yards away from your subject to capture it fully. If you have a DSLR, consider using a wide-angle lens. If you're not ready to purchase one, you can rent a lens from your local camera store.

Caution: distortions occur at the edges of a wide-angle lens so zoom in a bit.

We have incredible photographic power in our pockets with our smartphones. Download a panorama app like Google Street View and capture ALL of the work, and then some, with a cohesive panorama.



Contrails by Patrick Marold. Photo credit: Patrick Marold

Offer a variety of perspectives.

The magic of photographing your art is that you give the viewer the feeling of being in its presence—without being there in person. Capture the work from a variety of angles and positions, allowing the viewer to visually “walk around the piece”. Try to make the photography of the work as accessible as the work itself.

Martin recommends capturing perspectives that the public may not necessarily see. The Association of Public Art has been working with drone videographers and photographers to capture different views.



Showcase the work at different times of the day.

Sunrise and dusk are typically the best times of day to take photos since the light is softer and the wind is lighter (so you don’t have to worry about adjusting shutter speeds for rustling trees unless motion blur is a look you want). People are usually not out and about at these times, so if you want to focus on just your artwork and the environment, now is the time.

If you want dramatic shadows, shoot in the middle of the day when shadows are the most prominent from the sun being high in the sky.

Take a lesson from Patrick Marold who showcases his work [Contrails](#) at different times of the day to demonstrate how the light changes the experience for the viewer.

If your work utilizes light as a primary material, borrow or rent a camera that will give you excellent low-light images and allow you to show off the wonder of your work at night—like [Fireflies](#) by artist [Cai Guo-Qiang](#), commissioned by Association of Public Art.

Invest in a tripod.

Avoid the camera shake and get crisp photos of your work with a tripod. A tripod will also let you take impressive shots in low light or with a high aperture (which means longer shutter speeds). If you don’t have a tripod, find a secure object or platform, or even hold the camera against a wall to secure it.

Go beyond the snapshot.

We just mentioned drone photography, which is a modern way to present your artwork. You can also consider taking a time-lapse video.

[The Rose F. Kennedy Greenway Conservancy](#) captures the monumental process of painting a mural on a multi-story air-intake structure in downtown Boston. [Here is a time-lapse video](#) of Mehdi Ghadyanloo's Spaces of Hope on The Greenway Wall at Dewey Square Park.

Conceptual artist Matthew Mazzotta speaks to how he perceives the use of video in a [Mass Cultural Council article](#): “When I make a video I try to hit three different types of ways people perceive the world—experiential, mass culture, academic. I want to make sure that if



Fireflies by Cai Guo-Qiang. Photo credit: Jeff Fusco Photography

someone is seeing the work with no understanding of art that they can still find something intriguing and captivating about it.” View [Matthew Mazzotta's video of Open House](#).

Don't forget the details.

Public art and large-scale installations are usually impressive in their sheer scale, but the details behind the work are worth highlighting. Make sure to showcase the texture, color, and other unique qualities of your work in your photography.

Get those details sharp (depth of field is your friend).

If you want the environment or a building part of the shot, use f/16 or higher to get a deep depth of field so that all details are sharp. If you'd like to focus on just the artwork, set the aperture to something like f/5.6 and focus on the work so that the background is blurry.



Symbiosis by Roxy Paine. Photo credit: James Ewing Photography

Hire a photographer.

We're not saying you can't take a great shot. But, public art administrators like [Liz Keithline](#) recommend you get a professional to photograph your work. Why? They will bring fresh eyes. Chances are, you are too close to your work. A photographer serves as a curator of sorts; they provide a new perspective.

Make the photos viewable by the public.

Don't let all of the hard work you've put into capturing these works go to waste. You can upload high-res images to your [Artwork Archive account](#) so that they are saved for posterity, easily accessible to share, and read to be included on your website. If you have an [Artwork Archive Public Profile](#), then people can view your public art installations and their photos by artist name, collection or [map view](#). For more photography tips and public art news, [subscribe to the Artwork Archive newsletter](#).



Elysian McNiff Koglmeier is Head of Growth for Artwork Archive, an online art inventory management system for artists, collectors and organizations. She leads marketing efforts, partnerships and writes content for the company's blog—<http://www.artworkarchive.com/blog>.



Sculpture set up for photography at the J. Paul Getty Trust.

If you've ever attempted to take a photo of a work of art inside a museum, you'll know that it isn't always easy. How do you avoid the glare of a glazed painting? Will the power of an installation translate in your Instagram feed? And should you attempt to edit out the crowds standing around the object in question?

For the casual viewer, photographing art can be a challenge. Imagine, then, the complexity that surrounds the professional photography of works of art—the creation of images to be used for a museum's latest exhibition publication, an auction house's catalogue, or a gallery or artist's marketing website.

Photographing artwork is an art form in itself. Whether capturing the intricate details of a two-dimensional painting or the dynamic presence of a three-dimensional sculpture, professional art photography requires both technical expertise and aesthetic sensitivity.

Each artwork presents unique challenges, and a successful art photographer must navigate these intricacies while simultaneously ensuring that their images represent the original works as closely as possible.

“Balancing the faithful reproduction of artwork with the desire to create aesthetically pleasing images can be challenging,” says Victoria Martens, director of photography, US, at Bonhams in New York. “Our primary responsibility is to accurately capture the true essence of the art we photograph, and while creativity is a part of our daily work, it's essential to approach the process as technicians first—ensuring precision in color, texture, and details.”



Photographing an art object in the studio at the North Carolina Museum of Art.

Courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of Art.

Photo: Christopher Ciccone

One of the biggest technical hurdles in photographing artwork is managing lighting, particularly when dealing with reflections and glare. Glass-covered paintings, glossy surfaces, and metallic sculptures can reflect light in unpredictable ways, creating distracting highlights that might obscure details. To counteract this problem, photographers often use a number of tools and techniques, beginning with the angling of light. For two-dimensional pieces, positioning lights at approximately 45 degrees from either side of a flat artwork provides even illumination while minimizing reflections.

Sculpture, installations, and other three-dimensional work require a bit more finesse. “Cross-polarization is a cultural-heritage photographer's magic trick when working with reflective objects and high-gloss materials, such as marble, bronze, and pottery,” says Tahnee Louise Cracchiola, digital imaging manager at the J. Paul Getty Trust's Villa Imaging Studios in Malibu, CA. Polarizing filters—often simply called polarizers—are lens attachments that cut through glare and reflections, allowing true colors to shine through. Taming polarized

light—like that reflected off water, glass, or shiny surfaces—ensures that photographs burst with contrast and clarity. Imagine a polarizer as a pair of sunglasses for a camera: by fitting custom polarizers on both the lens of the camera and the studio lights,

“the photographer can command the reflections and customize highlights for maximum detail visibility and beauty,” Cracchiola explains.

Not that polarization always provides a straightforward, seamless result. “With any process,” Cracchiola warns, “you need to be aware of enhanced color saturation and contrast.” So while photographers often use a ColorChecker chart—a reference card to help achieve accurate and consistent colors across different lighting conditions, and even different cameras and equipment—to gauge how the color or tone of a work is altered during the photographic process, the best tool for accuracy is human sight. “We must stay true to the quality of the objects as they look to the naked eye,” she asserts. If the object in the photo looks as it does to our own eyes, the photographer has succeeded.

Different types of artwork require different lighting strategies. Paintings demand soft and even lighting in order to preserve color accuracy and reveal intricate brushwork. Sculptures, on the other hand, benefit from directional lighting that enhances texture and depth. Mixed-media pieces, with their combination of materials, often require customized lighting setups to bring out the nuances of each element. Once again, balance is key. For example, if lighting across a sculpture produces too much shadow, details can be obscured, but with too much light, the final product might appear flat or dimensionless. To control shadows, photographers often work with diffusers—a tool used to soften and spread light to create a more even, flattering illumination on their subjects. Cracchiola also harnesses multiple light sources when working with three-dimensional objects. “I like to use different light shapers as accent sources to bring light from angles at 10 o’clock and 2 o’clock in the 3-D space,” she says.

Post-processing plays a crucial role in fine art photography, as it helps to further refine and perfect images. In many cases, photographers will finish color-correcting at this stage or will sharpen an image to enhance textures or fine details that are difficult to see in a flat image but are legible to the human eye, which is often more accurate than a camera’s lens. Finally, retouching might be necessary to remove distracting elements, such as unexpected glare or dust spots. With any corrective action, the goal is the same: to preserve the integrity of the artwork while presenting it in the best possible light, literally and metaphorically.

What do photographers want in an image? Accuracy, for certain—but they also want to create a photograph that provides visual impact. “Currently, I work in an auction house, where accuracy remains a top priority,” says Martens. “But there is also a commercial aspect to consider. The goal is not only to document the artwork faithfully but also to present it in a way that is visually compelling to potential buyers. This balance requires a nuanced approach—maintaining fidelity while ensuring the images are engaging and market-ready.”

To create the most appealing image, photographers often work with other experts—like curators, researchers, or historians—to confer upon the “story” to be shared with the viewer. “Every object has a ‘main view’ which essentially encompasses the moment of action or power of the narrative,” says Cracchiola. “When an object arrives on set, I invite the head curator into my studio to discuss the position of each view [of the object].” Together, the photographer and curator determine the image’s composition: everything from the angling of the object to the height of the camera, for the purpose of “revealing the story behind the object and the mood of the scene,” explains Cracchiola.

When photographing Greco-Roman sculptures, for example, she frequently positions her camera lower than the figure’s eye level, giving the piece—regardless of its actual size—a larger-than-life appearance that accurately reveals its grandeur. This and similar approaches inform sculpture photography, a genre within the art world in which photographers’ images of three-dimensional objects come to be seen as artworks in their own right. The way a photographer chooses to represent a sculpture, including angle, lighting, and composition, can elevate the image beyond mere documentation.

A three-dimensional object’s presence could easily be blurred without the right background. “Generally, it is preferred to have a contrasting, neutral background of white, gray, or black, depending on the color of the object,” notes Chris Ciccone, photographer and manager of digital imaging at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, NC. Such a background prevents distractions and allows the viewer’s attention to dwell on the details of the artwork rather than on extraneous elements.

The question of copyright is an important one in fine art photography, and “ownership” of the photographs—who controls the final image and access to it?—depends on several factors. If a photographer is commissioned by a museum, gallery, or artist, the commissioning entity may own the rights to the images. However, if photographers capture artwork on their own behalf, they typically retain the copyright, unless an agreement states otherwise. Yet even in cases in which the photographer owns the image, the artist or artist’s estate may still hold rights over the artwork, which can limit how the photograph is used. It can even determine how the work is photographed in the first place. Ciccone notes, “We are guided by any restrictions that may be in place in an artist agreement. Some artists or representatives, for example, prohibit any cropping of an artwork or placing any text over an artwork.”

Cropping or otherwise altering the appearance of a work of art via photography, of course, raises the question, at what point does a modification change the intention or meaning of an [artwork](#)? Such changes can further muddy the legal or ethical implications of photography. Has the photographer produced a new work that happens to feature another work of art? In an era of image proliferation amid an explosion of new media, there is plenty of material here for debate and, in some cases, litigation.

Professional art photography is a delicate balance of [technical skill](#) and artistic vision—much like the creation of the art object being photographed. “It requires the photographer to see beyond the surface and reveal something true about form, meaning, and presence,” Cracchiola says, “capturing not just what the subject looks like, but what it feels like to stand before it.”

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About the Author

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