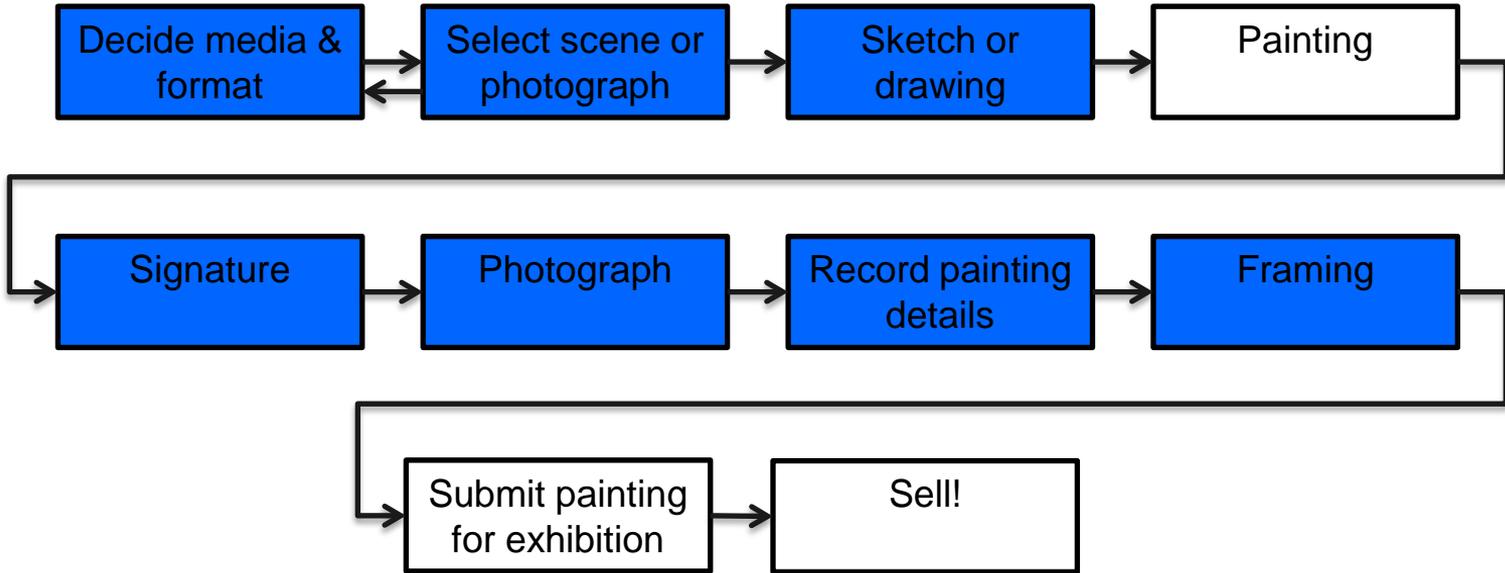# Photographing and Framing your paintings

Jim Coggins
22 February 2018
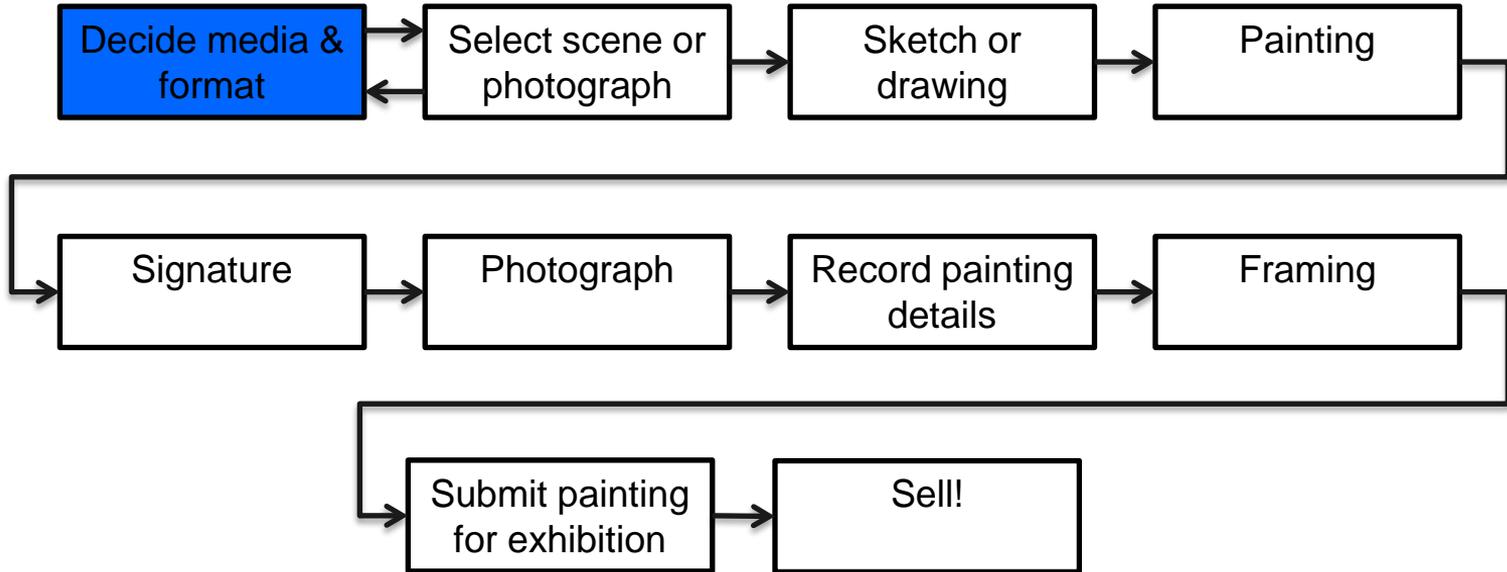
Preparation for painting

Using photographs

Work flow for a painting

Decide Media & Format

Decide Media & Format (1)

- Watercolour
- Oils
- Acrylics
- Pastels
- Inks
- Chalk
- Charcoal
- Crayon
- Gouache
- Graphite
- Tempera
- Mixed Media

- Size
- Shape
- Aspect ratio

- Paper
- Canvas
- Board
- Glass
- Fabric
- Wood
- Plaster
- Ivory
- Yupo

Media and format (2)

Stop! Think about the framing now!

If you want to save money on the most expensive element of your painting (the framing), chose a size and shape which will be compatible with a reasonably priced frame.

If you want to use expensive non-reflective glass it can add up to £50 extra to the frame!

Typical cost of a Quarter Imperial watercolour painting (35 x 25 cm):

Frame (+ glass, double mount, backing board) average	£30.00
300 lbs watercolour paper (QTR IMP)	£1.80
½ tube of watercolour paint (SAA artists)	£2.40
2 m 50 mm SAA framing tape	£0.20
2 D-rings + screws	£0.30
2 m framing cord	£0.48
2 felt bumpers	£0.20
Total	£35.38

Paper next

Standard sizes

Watercolour paper - Imperial Sheet 30" X 22" > 76 X 56 cm

Half Imperial - 56 X 38 cm. Quarter Imperial - 38 X 28 cm

Allowance for holding down tape - 1.2 to 1.5 cm all round

Allowance for mount overlap - 0.4 cm

Painting size – 35.4 x 25.4 cm

Actual size of mount aperture: QTR IMP 35 X 25 cm

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Other painting sizes I use:

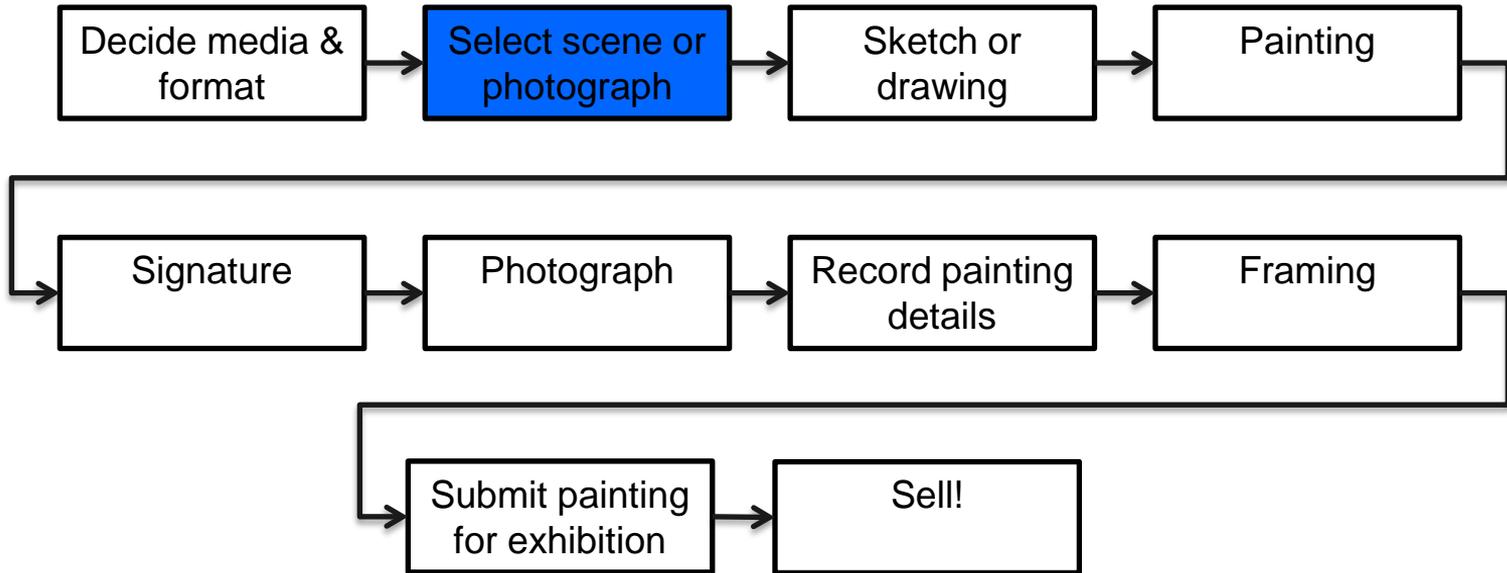HALF IMP   50.0 X 34.0 cm

Letterbox (16:9)   39.4 x 22.4 cm

"A4"   22.4 x 13.5 cm

Square   29.2 x 29.2 cm

Select scene or photograph

Select scene or photograph (1)

- En Plein Air
- Interiors
- Still Life
- Art Class
- Life Class
- My photographs
- Other's photographs
- Internet
- Magazines
- Newspapers
- My imagination
- Commission

Select scene or photograph (2)

- If you base your painting on generic subject matters, scenes or images that have been taken by numerous photographers over the years, you would probably not be violating copyright laws. But if a particular photographer is known for portraying images in certain unique ways that are readily identifiable with that photographer, and you copy one of their photographic compositions or incorporate it liberally and literally into your art, then you may be liable for copyright infringement. Again, this is assuming that you did not request permission from the photographer in advance to use the imagery in question. Using other people's compositions or images to make money for yourself without first asking their permission and agreeing in advance about how you intend to use those images puts you at risk for infringement.

The best solution is to use your own photographs – you will remember the scene and the atmosphere and this will be incorporated into your painting.

Select scene or photograph (3)

- If you have a digital image and an image manipulation program like Photoshop, you can take the opportunity to modify the image in several ways:

- You can experiment with the aspect ratio – landscape or portrait
- You can experiment with the cropping of the image to position the focal point(s) at the "rule of thirds" positions within the composition. (Use the PS grid)
- You can add additional detail from other pictures using "cut and paste"
- You can experiment with changing the light and shade values or even change the hues.

- See the final slide for free alternatives to Photoshop

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Examples of different formats

Original photo

QTR IMP
Portrait

QTR IMP Landscape

Letterbox Landscape

Square

Sketch or drawing

```
Decide media &     →     Select scene or     →     Sketch or     →     Painting
format                   photograph                drawing
```

```
Signature     →     Photograph     →     Record painting     →     Framing
                                         details
```

```
Submit painting     →     Sell!
for exhibition
```
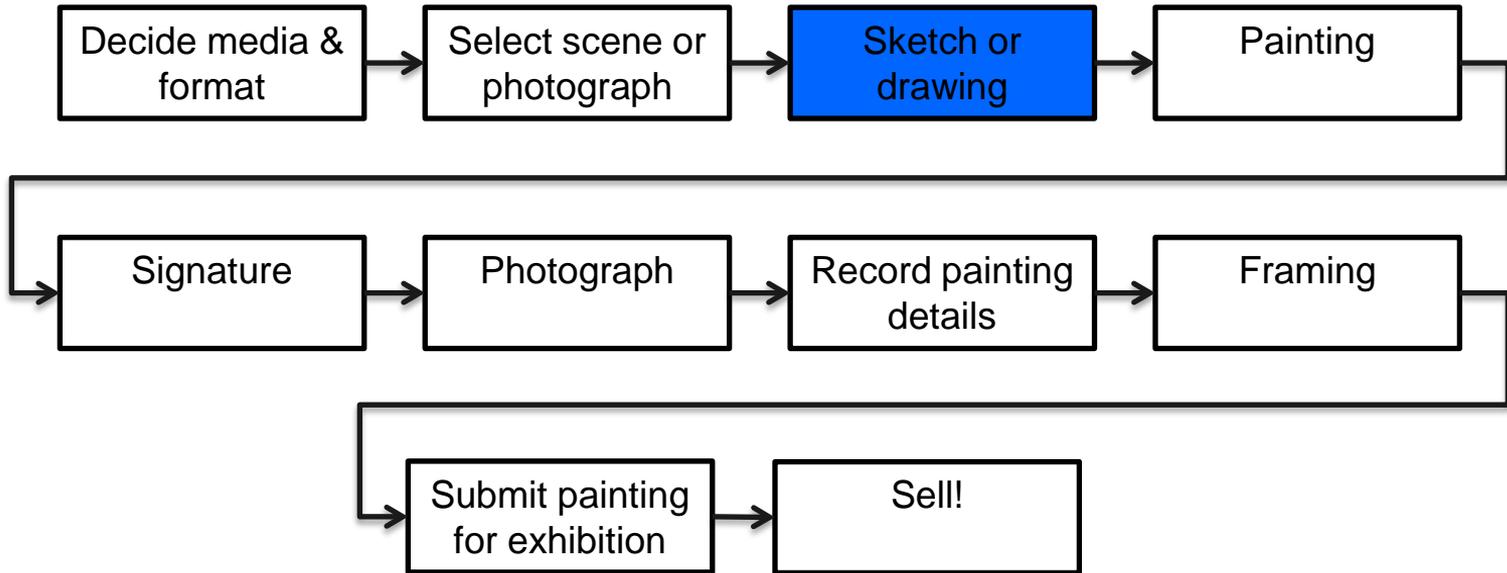
Sketch or drawing

- Study
- Rough sketch
- Guidelines
- Perspectives
- Tracing
- Transfer by projection
- No sketch!

Signature

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┌─────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────┐
│ Decide media &  │──▶│ Select scene or │──▶│ Sketch or       │──▶│    Painting     │──┐
│ format          │   │ photograph      │   │ drawing         │   │                 │  │
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└▶│   Signature     │──▶│   Photograph    │──▶│ Record painting │──▶│    Framing      │──┐
  │                 │   │                 │   │ details         │   │                 │  │
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│ ┌─────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────┐
└▶│ Submit painting │──▶│     Sell!       │
  │ for exhibition  │   │                 │
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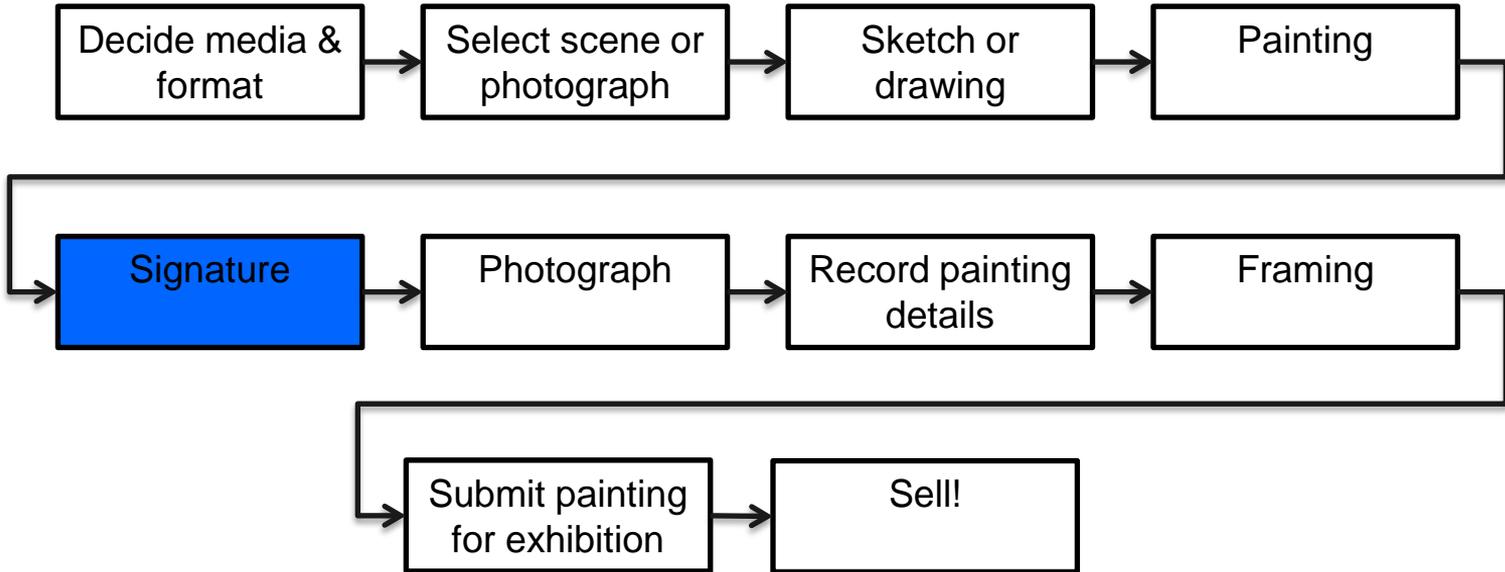
Signature (1)

- The primary reason for signing your painting is to affirm that you created it.
- There is only one hard and fast rule concerning your signature: sign only an original.
- Some artists reference the original artist when they sign the piece. They simply sign their name and then under their name they write "after (the artist's name)." This acknowledgment is sometimes placed on the back of the painting. Other artists give credit for their inspiration in the title of the piece.

- Should I use my full name, first initial and last name, last name only, first name only, initials only, maiden name or married name, a pseudonym, a personal mark, a geometrical design, a stamp or chop, a monogram, or a symbol? All of these have been used by artists in the past.
- If Picasso had signed his full name, it would have been Pablo Diego José Francisco de Paula Juan Nepomuceno María de los Remedios Cipriano de la Santísima Trinidad Ruiz y Picasso. At first, he signed his name P. Ruiz Picasso, then he changed his signature to Ruiz Picasso, and finally to just Picasso.

Signature (2)

- Salvador Dali's signature changed so many times that one of his assistants wrote a book showing 678 variations.
- Georgia O'Keeffe didn't sign her paintings at all; she didn't think she had to. She thought people would be able to tell they were hers because of what she painted and how she painted it.
- Where should I sign the painting? If you want the signature to be visible, allow enough room for the mount. When a signature is visible on the painting, it has traditionally been placed towards one of the bottom corners.

- Artists have signed their paintings with a variety of tools including a detail, script or rigger brush, a graphite pencil, a marker pen, a brush pen, a quill pen, or a pen filled with ink or watercolour. Some sign their name with a watercolour pencil then lightly stroke over it with a damp brush to activate the paint.
- Others have used a stylus. Before starting to paint, they sign their name where they'd like it to appear, pressing down into the watercolour paper so their name is indented into the paper. When they paint over it, the paint settles into the indentation causing the signature to be the same colour but darker than the surrounding area.

Signature (3)

- You can use a stylus after a painting has dried. Simply paint over the area where you want the signature to appear, sign your name with a stylus, and then quickly blot up the fresh paint. (The paint will remain in the indentation). Some artists make three guide lines (top of uppercase, top of lowercase, and bottom) in very light pencil and then pencil in the signature. They paint over the pencil letters, let it dry, and then erase the pencil marks that are still visible.

- What colour should my signature be?
- Some artists want the signature to blend with the rest of the painting. They will choose one of the colours already used in the painting.
- Others want the signature to stand out. Judy Morris, Joseph Zbukvic and Bob Ross always sign their paintings in red, regardless of the colours used in the painting.

Photograph

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┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐
│ Decide media &  │─────▶│ Select scene or │─────▶│   Sketch or     │─────▶│    Painting     │──┐
│     format      │      │   photograph    │      │    drawing      │      │                 │  │
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  │  ┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐
  └─▶│    Signature    │─────▶│   Photograph    │─────▶│ Record painting │─────▶│     Framing     │──┐
     │                 │      │                 │      │     details     │      │                 │  │
     └─────────────────┘      └─────────────────┘      └─────────────────┘      └─────────────────┘  │
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       ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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       │  ┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐
       └─▶│ Submit painting │─────▶│      Sell!      │
          │  for exhibition │      │                 │
          └─────────────────┘      └─────────────────┘
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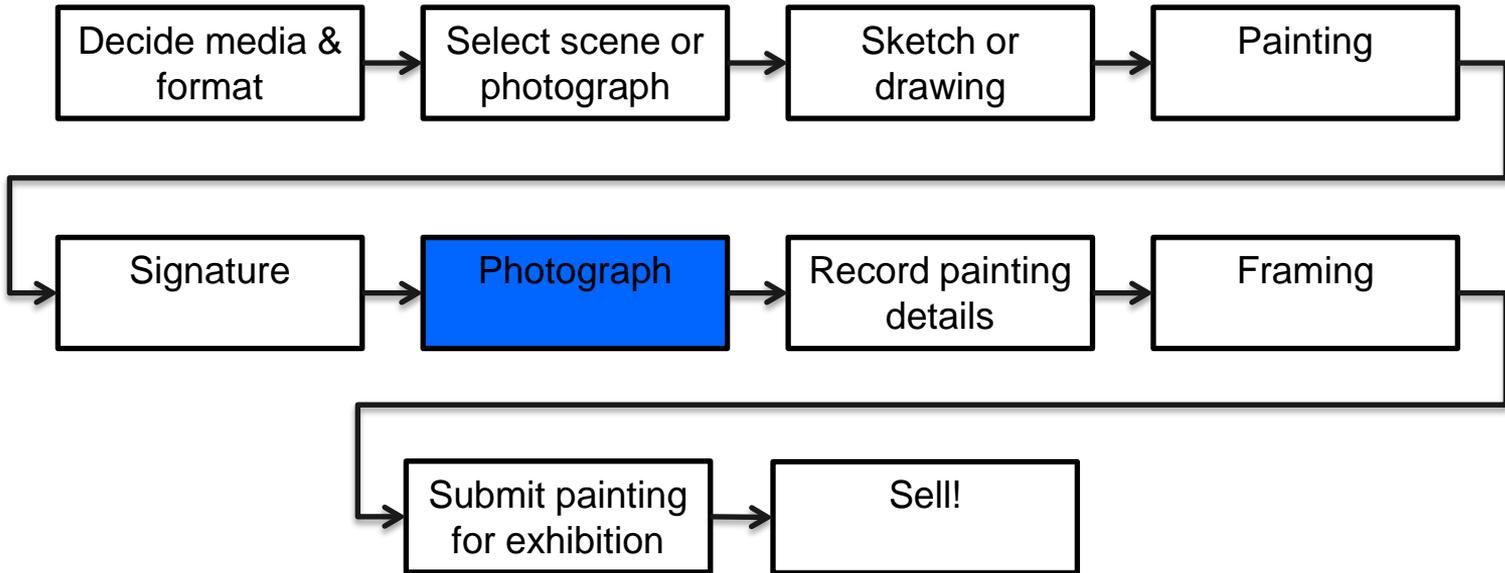
Photographing a painting

- Entering an art contest or submitting a portfolio?
- Whether you want to make prints of your paintings, share your work online or simply keep a record of a picture before you sell it, it is important to know how to take a professional photograph of a painting.
- If the photo is too small or out of focus, or if there are problems with colour, lighting or shadows, then you are not showing a true representation of your work. Your piece will appear poorly constructed, the colours will be misrepresented – you may as well be showing a picture of somebody else's artwork.
- This may be the first example of your work that people will see. If the images are not good enough it may be the last!

Is your photo:
- too small?
- out of focus?
- colour/lighting issues?
- shadows?
- reflections?
- distorted?

What competition entry rules require

- The Artist's Magazine's Annual Art Competition

Image requirements for entries: JPG files (Please try to keep the file size under 5 MB to ensure proper uploading). The viewing screen & thumbnail which you will see during the entry process is for general reference only and does not reflect the image quality that will be viewed by jurors. The file that you attach is exactly as it will appear to the jurors.

- RSA Summer Exhibition

Images must be in one of the following formats: GIF, JPG, JPEG, PNG. Each image must not exceed 3MB. If your image is in portrait format, the height of your image must be at least 1080 pixels. If your image is in landscape format, the width must be at least 1920 pixels (it can be less only if the height is at least 1080 pixels).

- National Open Art Competition

All ages should ideally be about 2MB and a high resolution image should be 300dpi. Images must not be smaller than 250KB. Smaller images and low resolution images will not display well for the judging process. Take advice before submitting if you need to. The judges do need good images to view. To allow your work to be shown to its best advantage in the electronic judging. Fill as much as possible of the image with the work; Try to avoid any distortion in the image, e.g. take the photo from in front of the work; Do not include watermarks or copyright on the work.

- SAA Artist of the Year 2018

E-mail entries, are only open to SAA members and are acceptable in JPEG format no larger than 3MB per image. With only one picture per email.

What to avoid!

Some genuine pictures from the SAA's Gallery Website

Not straight, reflections

Not straight,
Busy background

Reflections,
this picture
priced at
£1,500!

Not straight,
Perspective Distortion,
Background,
Mobile phone!

Zoom lens distortion

Photographing a painting

- Photograph as soon as the picture is finished!!
- Use a decent camera
- ISO –use the lowest setting
- Good Auto Focus
- Ability of adjust white balance – use auto white balance
- Use a tripod for sharpest image
- Carefully position artwork - parallel to camera (avoid perspective distortion)
- No shadows or reflections
- Neutral background if it's going to be included in the image
- Lighting - use bright indirect natural lighting
- Do not use flash
- Avoid mixing light sources
- Avoid photographing pictures behind glass
- Set the zoom lens for minimum distortion. Use middle of range. (I use 50mm focal length if possible and adjust the distance from the camera to the picture to frame the image).
- Avoid digital zoom (poor definition).
- Use the timer or remote shutter to avoid camera shake
- Take several shots at different settings. Choose the best.
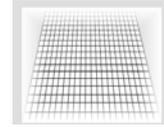
Perspective Distortion (Keystoning)
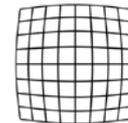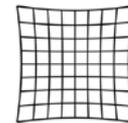
Barrel Distortion   Pincushion Distortion

Processing the image – basic process

- Transform the image to be a perfect rectangle
- Crop the image to the exact size of the painting
- Correct any colour cast (Auto colour correction)
- Adjust lighting to the full range using levels
- Resize the image to the exact size of the painting
- Save the image
  - this is now the master image
- Resize the image for other uses:
  - competitions
  - your website
  - MKSA website

DEMONSTRATION

Processing the image – Photoshop step by step

- Open the photograph of your painting in Photoshop
- Make a copy of the Background Layer (Layer Duplicate Layer)
- Apply the Photoshop Grid (CTRL ')
- Prepare to transform (Image Transform Distort)
- Reduce image size to give more room (CTRL -)
- Pull the corners to make the sides parallel to the grid, click on green tick
- Select the Crop tool (C), if necessary change Ratio to No Restriction and Resolution to 300 PPI
- Move each side of the crop tool to closely match each side of the image
- Magnify the image by (CTRL +) 3 times
- Look up and down each side to check that the crop is precisely aligned. Commit by clicking on green tick.
- Flatten the image (CTRL E)
- (CTRL 0) to fill the screen and (CTRL ') to get rid of the grid
- (CTRL L) to show the Levels screen. Adjust to the full spectrum as necessary.
- (Image Resize Image Size), uncheck Constrain Proportions, chose Bicubic and Resolution = 300 PPI
- Set Width and Height to actual size of the painting
- Save file as *.JPG

DEMONSTRATION

Record Painting Details

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┌──────────────┐     ┌──────────────┐     ┌──────────────┐     ┌──────────────┐
│ Decide media &│ →  │ Select scene or│ → │  Sketch or   │ →  │   Painting   │
│    format     │     │  photograph   │     │   drawing    │     │              │
└──────────────┘     └──────────────┘     └──────────────┘     └──────────────┘

┌──────────────┐     ┌──────────────┐     ┌──────────────┐     ┌──────────────┐
│  Signature    │ →  │  Photograph   │ →  │Record painting│ → │   Framing    │
│               │     │               │     │   details    │     │              │
└──────────────┘     └──────────────┘     └──────────────┘     └──────────────┘

                     ┌──────────────┐     ┌──────────────┐
                     │Submit painting│ →  │    Sell!     │
                     │for exhibition │     │              │
                     └──────────────┘     └──────────────┘
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Record the Painting Details

	Subject/Title	Medium	Size	Format	Date Painted
286	Cadiz	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Jul-17
287	Shuttered	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Jul-17
288	The end of the tunnel	Watercolour	254 x 354	Portrait	Aug-17
289	Sheep at Tombs Meadow	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Aug-17
290	Honeysuckle	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Aug-17
291	Grey Heron	Watercolour	147 x 147	Square	Aug-17
292	Cattle at Watermill Lane	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Aug-17
293	Holly in the rain	Watercolour	147 x 147	Square	Aug-17
294	St Mary's, Woburn	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Sep-17
295	Oh I do like beside the seaside	Watercolour	345 x 505	Portrait	Sep-17
296	Autumn sunshine through the trees	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Oct-17
297	Pine trees by the shore	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Oct-17
298	Tulips by the redway	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Oct-17
299	The Angler	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Oct-17

DEMONSTRATION

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X
		Subject/Title	Medium	Size	Format	Date Painted														Other				
286		French Doors	Watercolour	254 x 345	Landscape	Jun-17																		
287		Feeding the pigeons	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Jun-17																		
288		Elizabeth's Garden	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Jun-17														£0		Sold to Elizabeth		
289		A Winter Morning, Weston Maudit	Watercolour	500 x 345	Landscape	Jul-17																		
290		Cadiz	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Jul-17																		
291		Shuttered	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Jul-17																		
292		The end of the tunnel	Watercolour	254 x 354	Portrait	Aug-17																		
293		Sheep at Tombs Meadow	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Aug-17																		
294		Honeysuckle	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Aug-17																		
295		Grey Heron	Watercolour	147 x 147	Square	Aug-17																		
296		Cattle at Watermill Lane	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Aug-17																		
297		Holly in the rain	Watercolour	147 x 147	Square	Aug-17																		
298		St Mary's, Woburn	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Sep-17														£75		Sold to St Mary's Church		
299		Autumn sunshine through the trees	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Oct-17																		
300		Pine trees by the shore	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Oct-17																		
301		Tulips by the redway	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Oct-17																		
302		The Angler	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Oct-17																		
303		"I can make next Tuesday..."	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Nov-17																		
304		March of the oystercatchers	Watercolour	224 x 394	Portrait	Nov-17																		
305		The Artist	Watercolour	395 x 225	Landscape	Nov-17																		
306		Winter at Tongwell Lake	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Nov-17																		
307		Diane, Milo & Eddie	Watercolour	354 x 530	Portrait	Nov-17														£140		Commission from Richard McArthur		
308		Snow Flakes	Watercolour on	255 x 200	Portrait	Dec-17																		
309		Stormy skies at Rye Harbour	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Dec-17																		
310		Canal Reflections	Watercolour	395 x 225	Landscape	Jan-18																		
311		Another Fiddler on the Beach	Watercolour	395 x 225	Landscape	Jan-18																		
312		Winter Tree at Stony Stratford	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Jan-18																		
313		The Bridge at Stony Stratford	Watercolour	354 x 254	Landscape	Feb-18																		
314																								

Framing

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┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐
│ Decide media &   │──▶│ Select scene or  │──▶│   Sketch or      │──▶│    Painting      │──
│     format       │   │   photograph     │   │    drawing       │   │                  │  │
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┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐
│    Signature     │──▶│   Photograph     │──▶│ Record painting  │──▶│    Framing       │──
│                  │   │                  │   │    details       │   │                  │  │
└──────────────────┘   └──────────────────┘   └──────────────────┘   └──────────────────┘  │

                       ┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐
                       │ Submit painting  │──▶│     Sell!        │
                       │  for exhibition  │   │                  │
                       └──────────────────┘   └──────────────────┘
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Framing (1) - Preparation

Materials for framing
- Frame
- Glass
- Mounts
- Backing board
- Double-sided adhesive tape
- Framing Tape
- Hardware
- String/wire
- Bumpers
- Identification/labelling

Equipment for framing
- Table cloth
- Ruler
- Pencil
- Bradawl (Gimlet)
- Screwdriver
- Gloves
- Microfibre glass cloth
- Printer labels
- Source photograph
- Selotape

Glass (16" x20")
- Standard Float Glass — £5
- Clear Acrylic — £5
- Non-reflective (etched) — £9
- Low UV Plain — £9
- Low UV Coated — £20
- Clarity — £62

DEMONSTRATION

Framing (2) – step by step

- Carefully remove the painting from the painting board – pull tape away from the painting
- Dismantle the frame into its component parts
- Check that the mount fits the frame
- Check that the mount covers the whole surface of the painting
- Place double sided tape strips to secure the painting
- Carefully place the mount over the sticky tape and press down
- Reverse the picture & mount and press down again
- If necessary clean the glass (both sides) – use gloves
- Place the glass, picture and mount and backing board into the frame
- Bend a few flexipoints to temporarily secure the picture.
- IMPORTANT – check from the glass side that there are no speck or other marks
- Bend the remaining flexipoints
- Place the framing tape over all four sides of the picture/frame
- Check which way up the picture is
- On the back, measure one third of the way from the top of the frame and make a pencil mark on each side
- Use the bradawl to make pilot holes for the D-ring screws
- Attach the 2 D-rings using the screws
- Attach the hanging cord between the D-rings
- Attach picture information label, artist's details, reference photo & MKSA exhibition label

DEMONSTRATION

Other framing situations

Portfolio materials
- Self Seal Polythene Plastic Bag
- A2 Cartridge paper backing (optional)
- Label

DEMONSTRATION

Watercolour canvas
- Can be framed "as is"
- All painted surfaces must be sprayed with fixative to avoid damage
- Schmincke Aquarell-Fixative for water-colours £14.90 from Jacksons
- Two coats, allow to dry between coats

Yupo
- Yupo is an interesting surface to paint on and produces novel effects.
- However it comes on a roll and is difficult to stay flat in a frame
- My suggestion is to glue the Yupo onto watercolour paper and flatten the Yupo/paper combination with a heavy weight until it is completely flat
- Then paint and frame

Free photo manipulation alternatives to Photoshop

GIMP

https://www.gimp.org/

GIMP - GNU Image Manipulation Program

paint.net

https://www.getpaint.net/

Paint.NET - Free Software for Digital Photo Editing

www.photoscape.org/

PhotoPad Photo Editing Software

PIXLR EDITOR

https://pixlr.com/editor/

Pixlr.com: Photo editor online