



Factsheet: Top tips on photographing your work

An image can say more than a 1,000 words, so it is essential that your photographs give out the right message.

These tips show you what to look out for when photographing your creative work, products or services.

Select a professional photographer

Using a professional photographer might cost more initially but is a worthwhile investment. You can ask friends and colleague for recommendations or look through publications or photo libraries where photographers are often credited by other artists. Before making the selection, have a look through a number of different portfolios to identify whom you want to work with.

Brief your photographer

After you have selected a photographer you need to brief them on exactly what it is you are looking for. State the purpose of your images, the format that you would prefer, your proposed time scale, and your budget. Make sure that you agree your brief in writing, to avoid any miscommunication.

Check out the competition

Start collecting images that you like so that you can clearly brief your photographer. Check out the trade magazines, exhibition brochures and lifestyle press to see what is being selected and how the photographs have been taken. See if you can access an (online) image library to check out your competition and learn from their mistakes.

Select the right format

Images can come in a range of formats so you should check with your client beforehand to make sure that you provide the most suitable format for their needs. For example, most press media prefer the large format slides as they have a better colour and texture quality whilst most awards selection committees still prefer the old fashioned 35mm, as they are quicker to load than digital format. However, digital images are increasingly popular and easy to use with good quality results.

Decide what to include in your images

It's always important to show your work in the best light. Therefore, if the scale of your work is important then include something in your image that shows the right scale. Have a combination of factual and more atmospheric images of your work or show your work in use or with props to provide a context, as this can also be very effective. Also, if you are photographing a product, have general overview images and detail images - e.g. an image of a range of dresses in your shop as well as the button detail and quality of stitching and fabrics.

Use a neutral background

Make sure that your work is photographed against a neutral (such as black or white) background. Colourful artwork will become more vibrant against these neutral colours.

Use relevant captions

Make sure you provide appropriate captions with all images you distribute. You need to include the title of your work, year of production, name of the artist, and name of the photographer. In addition you can include materials, dimensions, current owner of the piece (if relevant) or commissioner. You can provide the captions on a separate piece of paper or on a label on the back of the image. If you provide more than one image make sure you number the images and captions accordingly.

Know your copyright

If you have created the product you will own the copyright. However, the photographer owns the copyright of the images of your products so try to get the copyright of these images from the photographer (for which you might have to pay more), and agree when and how the images can be used. Make sure that you always get their name published as well as your own name, in the case of publication, if you do not own the image's copyright.

Keep the memory

Make sure that you document your main work over the years and that you photograph work before you sell it. It will provide you with documentation and development of your work, which might be really useful for creative and promotional purposes.

Use your images creatively

You can use your images much more creatively by sending them to potential and current clients via an email newsletter to keep them posted of your activities and events. An image of fabric in different colours can really liven up your price list and make it much easier for your clients to understand. On your CV or artist statement include one or two images of recent work and postcards are also a good alternative to business cards for those starting a creative business.

This factsheet was produced in conjunction with the Cultural Industries Development Agency (CIDA). Find out more at: www.cida.co.uk

Further information

The Association of Photographers – a good place to identify potential photographers
www.the-aop.org