ARTWORK SUBMISSION INFORMATION

When you want to submit a digital copy of your artwork, you either have to take a digital picture with a camera of it or, if it is small enough, you can use a digital scanner and take a scan of it. Using either method, this means you will slice the picture both vertically and horizontally into a collection of tiny squares called pixels.   If you visualize a checker board in your mind, then each square could be considered a pixel.

To create a good quality digital image, you must have sufficient resolution which is measured in pixels-per-inch or dots-per-inch (DPI). A common resolution used to submit entries is 300 dots-per-inch or 300 DPI. This means that one square inch of the picture has 300 rows and each row would have 300 pixels in it for a total of 9000 pixels.
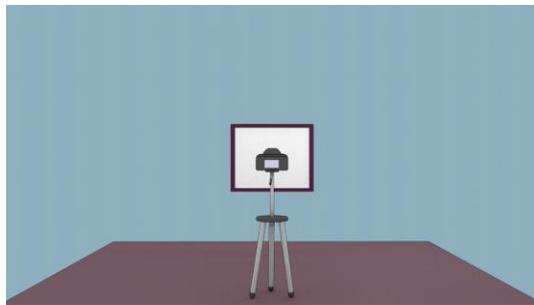
Let's say you need to submit a digital copy where the longest side is specified to be no longer than 1920 pixels.   This means that after you have created the digital image and cropped out the undesired areas you will want to convert the resolution of the image so that longest side of the image will be at 1920 pixels or less.   We will cover this more when we talk about the software.   First let's get that digital picture.
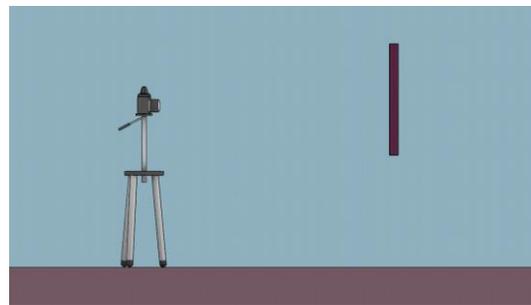

THE DIGITAL CAMERA IMAGE

If you are going to use a digital camera, here are some tips.   You want to avoid any light reflecting off the artwork or the glass covering the artwork as any light reflecting off of the glass will create a hotspot which is an area which will be overexposed.   With lighting, your goal is to have as much even and natural lighting as possible.

You want to have the proper exposure.   I would start with setting the lights you want to have properly positioned first and then find the exposure that works best.   Many cameras have automatic exposure adjustments which will work well here.   If you find that there are still areas of the picture which still have light or dark areas showing up then you may have to set the camera to use manual exposure adjustments.   The user manual can help if you are not familiar with using this feature of your camera.   What you are looking for is called the aperture, or f-stop, adjustment and you may want to take a series of images with different aperture settings in sequence.   Then use the best one.

Place your camera on a tripod and make sure that it is located so that it is centered on your artwork and that it is perpendicular to the plane the artwork creates.

Front View   Side View

Place the camera close enough to get a good shot which fills most of the image, clearly focused and at a fairly high resolution.   You will be able to crop out the edges you do not want later when you use the software to process the final submission image.

IMPORTANT: It is very important to shoot the image at a higher resolution than the 300 DPI mentioned above and convert it down later with the software.   Never try to convert from a lower resolution to a higher resolution; always convert from a higher resolution to a lower resolution to preserve the best image quality possible.   Your digital camera will most likely have a setting within it to change the resolution at which it will take the image.   Take the picture and then transfer it to the computer.

THE DIGITAL SCANNER

While using the scanner can be an easier way to get the image into the computer in a digital format, many images are too big to fit on the scanner bed, and using it will not be a possibility.   If your artwork is of a size that will fit on the scanner bed, you will also have fewer options available to you with which to adjust the image.   However, you will be able to adjust the resolution.   Keep in mind the guideline above about converting from a higher resolution to a lower resolution.

I would make a make a suggestion about which resolution setting to use.   Use the highest resolution you can to keep the process as simple as possible.   You will have to convert it with the software anyway to get the final image you need and starting with a high resolution will preserve the best quality for your submitted item.

Scan the item and save it with a name and location on your computer you can find later when you need it.   Use the software which came with the scanner to complete this.

CHANGING DIGITAL IMAGE TO SUBMISSION FORMAT

The digital copy of your artwork is now in digital format but it needs to be changed to the format required to submit.   You may want to submit it more than once perhaps to several groups, and each time you submit, the show or competition's requirements could change.   It is important to understand what is required and follow them for your best chance of success.   There is a good internet article covering this at https://www.lightspacetime.com/newsletter/top-8-mistakes-when-entering-art-competitio

ns/.

There are some good software programs available to help you crop and convert your image to the required resolution.   One I have used in the past is Adobe Photoshop.   It is a professional level digital imaging processing software program with many, many features available.   They have a 'Creative Cloud' subscription version now which you can lease for under $10 a month.   If you're interested go to https://creative.adobe.com/plans?promoid=P3KMQZ9Y&mv=other.

There is also an open source software program I am currently using which is available for free.   The name of this program is called Gimp and it is available for you to see all of its features and download at http://www.gimp.org/downloads.   It will run on Windows, Apple's OS X (mac) and on linux platforms.   It is a graphics image processing program used by a very large group of enthusiasts and it is very capable.   I have written a separate article, called 'Using Gimp' which show how you can perform the cropping and resolution conversion.

NAMING DIGITAL FILE IN PROPER FORMAT

In addition to submitting your work in the right dimension and density (DPI), you will be asked to name your digital file in the proper format.   This will be part of the requirements specification and will something like LASTNAME_ITEM_TITLE and there will also be the file format specifier on the end such as .jpg or .png.

These are pretty straight forward to follow but it is important that you do to have your work accepted.   If you have any questions about what is required please ask and find out from the competition contact for your best chance of success.