Photographing Artist Books Checklist

How to Shoot and Edit Your Artist Book Photographs: Step-by-Step

Before Shooting: Set Up Your Photos

1. Shoot your photos indoors with a neutral gray or white **background**. Avoid black, wrinkled or patterned backgrounds. You can shoot outdoors, but only on cloudy days. Consider using a tripod. Get down low and shoot your books straight on to avoid strange angles.

2. Set your camera's **white balance** setting for whatever kind of light bulbs you will be using. Use the *tungsten* or *incandescent* setting if you are using regular household incandescent, filament-type bulbs. Use the fluorescent setting if you are using fluorescent bulbs.

3. Set your camera to the highest image quality setting possible. You'll need a camera that is at least **8 megapixels** or more to shoot high-resolution images.

4. Older cameras can have a lot of **noise**. If you see a grainy look in solid color areas of your photos you have a noise problem. Choose either a higher quality setting or choose a better quality camera.

5. Check to see if your computer monitor has a neutral **color balance**. Do the white areas in your photos look white on your monitor? If not, there are ways to correct or compensate for your monitor color. Research this depending on your monitor type and operating system.

After Shooting: Edit Your Photos

1. **Save a copy** of your original photograph before editing.
   You may not like the changes you have made and want to go back to the original. Use the *Save As* or *Duplicate* command, usually under the *File* menu in your image editing software to create a copy before you begin editing.

2. **Rotate** your image to the correct vertical or horizontal format.
   Use the *Image Rotation* or *Rotate* command, usually under the *Edit* menu.

3. **Straighten** the book in the image frame if necessary.
Use the *Perspective* or *Skew* command in the *Edit* menu under *Transform* to straighten and align edges. Pull down G*uides* if necessary to help determine right angles. Use *Lens Correction* under the *Filter* menu if the edges of your square book appear curved instead of straight.

4. **Crop** your photo to get rid of excess background.
But, leave enough background to give your book some room to breathe. Don't crop too tightly.

5. **Color Correct** the overall color of your photo.
Try your software's automatic correction options and see how things look. Most of the time *Auto Tone, Auto Contrast* and *Auto Color* commands will do wonders. If these don't do the trick, try to find your software's individual options to correct color cast, brightness, saturation, etc. until the image most closely resembles the actual book.

6. **Neutralize the whites.** If you make only one color correction to your image do whatever you can to achieve a neutral "white balance." This means that the white areas of your image look white on your monitor or in print.
- Check to see if your image is neutral using the *Info* command under the *Window* menu. A neutral image will have almost the same numbers for the R, G and B, (red, green and blue). Move your cursor around the image. When it lands on a part of your image that should be white the numbers should be very close to each other. For example, 242, 243 and 242 for R, G and B, respectively. You many not be able to get them exactly the same, but closer means less cast.
- Even if you have set your camera's white balance setting you may still find that your image may not have exactly white whites or neutral grays. Some adjustment may still be necessary.
- Remember, tungsten or incandescent light leaves an orangish-yellow cast across the entire image. Fluorescent lights may leave a green-ish cast. Usually the auto color commands discussed above will correct these casts. If not, research your software's E*ye Dropper* tools to set the *White Point* or *Gray Point* in your image.

7. **Size images** exactly as requested by the show you are submitting to.
How many inches or pixels are required for the height or width? What should your resolution be? For images that will print, the resolution will need to be 300 ppi (sometimes synonymous with dpi); for the web, 72 ppi. To change size or resolution, use the *Image Size* command under the *Image* menu. When keeping the size the same, but changing the resolution, uncheck *Resample*. When changing the size, but want to keep the resolution the same, check *Resample*.

8. **Sharpen**. Almost all digital images benefit from some sharpening in your photo editing software. Don't try to sharpen an image that is out of focus. That never works. Reshoot instead. Play with the *Sharpen* commands under the *Filter* menu to achieve your desired level of sharpening. Look for sharp words or letters or pages edges. Over-sharpened edges will have a white "halo" around a high-contrast edge (for example, type or letters).

9. **Name Your Files** as requested.
Here at 23 Sandy we always need your images to be named as, "yourlastname-1-a.jpg" etc. Your last name is followed by the artwork number, which corresponds with the entry number on the online entry form. The a, b, or c letter are the additional views of that work. Follow the requirements for each different show exactly. Otherwise, you images might get lost.

For best results the steps to editing a photo are best followed in the order listed above. These steps should apply to most software packages. Reference the software's manual for more details.

There are three in-depth articles about photographing your artist books on the 23 Sandy Blog. See the Popular Posts sidebar at the top right side of our blog page at www.23sandy.com/works/blog.