

## A BASIC GUIDE TO DIGITAL IMAGING FOR VWS MEMBERS

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This is meant to be an introduction to getting your paintings onto a CD for such purposes as juried shows, postcards or printing. It is mainly for people who have little knowledge of computers, computer imaging or terminology.

Let's take the example of PREPARING A CD of your work for SUBMISSION TO A JURIED SHOW and you want to create DIGITAL IMAGES of your work.

### **Q. What are digital images?**

**A.** Digital images are created using a digital camera or a scanner, which translates your painting into "computer-ese"- a format, unlike slides, that can easily be transferred from computers and cameras to other computers, CDs and images suitable for publishing on the internet. They can also be used to generate prints, cards, and postcards of your work.

### **Q. How do I get my paintings "digitized"?**

**A.** Take your UNFRAMED paintings to a PROFESSIONAL who can create a digital image of you painting. They will do this by taking a photo of your painting with either a scanner or with a digital camera. (A scanner is a type of copier that can "look" at your painting and translate it into something similar to a digital photograph.)

(Note- if you already have slides of your work, they CAN be scanned to create digital images. This requires a special "slide scanner".)

### **Q. How do I FIND SOMEONE to do this?**

**A.** You can usually find someone to do this work by checking in your yellow pages under "copying and Duplicating Services" or "Digital Imaging Services". Copy centers (such as Gnomon Copy around here) can often provide these services. They need, however, very specific instructions from you so that the results are what you need. Best of all would be to ask someone from VWS or another artist in your area who has found a good service. For instance, in my area you can get high quality work done at "Slide Specialists" in Lebanon N.H. (603-448-1300). "Artful Things" in Lebanon, N.H. (603-448-5100) or "Northlight Digital" in White River Junction, Vt. (802-280-1888). These people also make fine reproductions of artwork but they are not listed in the Yellow pages in the above categories- I found them through references. You might also do a web search for local business that do "art reproductions", "digital imaging", or simply "copy centers".

### **Q. Why can't I take my own digital photo and use that?**

**A.** You can also take your own digital photos, but I DO NOT recommend this unless you really know what you are doing. I've seen, typically, images out of focus, distorted, frames included, and terrible colors at poor resolution. Photographing artwork to produce an accurate copy generally requires a studio set-up with specialized equipment, especially for a large painting. Once the photo is taken, it also has to be processed to look reasonably good on any computer screen).

**Q. Exactly what will I need the professional to do?**

**A.** When you take your paintings to a professional, ask to have a CD made with your work on it. The CD should be a UNIVERSAL TYPE, suitable for reading on any PC or Macintosh (Apple) computer. Be sure to LABEL EACH of your paintings with it's title and size. Ask to have the titles and your last name, at least, put on your images if possible. (When an image is created, it has to be given a name, but sometimes, unless you ask, all you will get is a number). (A typical title, for instance, might be ("Smith.blue.flowers.tif). If all you can get is numbers, you will have to be sure you know which number corresponds to which image. In any case, YOU will have to be sure, when you send your work to a juror, that it is identified properly on the CD. There are SEVERAL WAYS to ask to get your work on a CD:

1. One CD for each painting- (probably costly but at least clearly defined.)
2. Several paintings on one CD that are specifically meant for an entry.
3. Several paintings on a CD (perhaps 4-5, depending on size) that can be kept for future use. This is the method I would suggest. This CD will be your "Master Copy". When you want to get images from this master, bring it to your professional and ask to have copies of specific paintings transferred (burned) onto a new CD. You will have to specify size, etc. as indicated below. WHATEVER YOU DO, ask for a copy of the original in whatever form you need it for a specific purpose (such as one image for a postcard or two for a juried show- whatever is required for that particular show), and keep ALL ORIGINALS as your MASTER COPIES.

**Q. How do I know WHAT QUALITY to ask for?**

**A.** Ask for three digital photo sizes:

1. Full size 300dpi tiff (.tiff) image (useful for reproductions of your painting and to have a good record of it.)
  2. Smaller 300dpi tiff image dimensions (approx. 4" x 5" or 5"x 7"). This size is what you will want to send for a JURIED SHOW or a POSTCARD unless a juror asks specifically for something different.)
  3. Smaller 72dpi JPG (.jpg) image (approx.4" x 5" or 5" x7"). This size works if you want to put pictures on a web site or send them via email.
- Your professional should be familiar with these formats. They may say they can only give you .jpg. If so, ask for high quality images.

As stated above, ask for a second CD to be made with a copy of what you need for your particular purpose. In our example, this would be #2 -this size will generally be the one you submit to be juried.

(NOTE: It would be helpful to call your professional and ask how many paintings will fit on a CD with these requirements in mind, given the sizes of your paintings. You may not care to make full size images/prints of your work, in which case, you would not need size #1. I prefer and recommend having a record of my/your work that can be reproduced at full size if desired.)

**Q. Help! I don't know what all these things are like "tiff" , "dpi" , and "jpg".**

**A. IF YOU ARE UNSURE ABOUT WHAT THIS ALL MEANS, TAKE THIS INFORMATION SHEET WITH YOU TO YOUR PROFESSIONAL. They should understand what you are asking for by reading this section.**

**TERMS ARE ALSO DEFINED AT THE END OF THIS TUTORIAL.**

**Q. What do I do with my CDs?**

**A. LABEL EVERYTHING !**

On the NEW CD for the jury, label it with your name and the title(s) of your image(s) with a permanent marker. It is a good idea to get markers made for writing on CDs as some will smear or rub off. You might also be asked to include size and/or price. DO NOT put paper labels or stickers on the CD- they can get jammed in someone's computer, including your own! Be sure to also include in the CD case, a list of your images with the above info and your name, address, phone # and email address. AND, be sure to indicate WHICH TITLE (OR NUMBER) GOES WITH WHICH IMAGE). You might have to look at the images on your computer to see how they are labeled to do this unless there is only one image per CD.

On your master, put a general title, (like "Paintings 4/09-6/09 and your name), and on a paper that can go in the case, carefully list the titles in the order they are seen on the CD.

You are now ready to send off your work- Put the CD in a case or paper folder and wrap it in stiff cardboard. The post office has nice CD mailers for this purpose which will protect the CD. Send the juror postage and a labeled container if you want your CD returned. (SASE).

**END OF BASIC TUTORIAL!**

**Q. BUT....What if I want to MAKE MY OWN COPIES from the master?**

**A. IF YOU KNOW A LITTLE ABOUT COMPUTERS AND HAVE IMAGE SOFTWARE SUCH AS PHOTOSHOP, YOU MIGHT WANT TO DO THE FOLLOWING:**

When you get your CD, put it into your computer, open it up and drag or copy the images into a new folder on your desktop or wherever you like to keep copies of your work. This will not remove them from the CD- it will simply make copies to work from and you will have a duplicate of your CD material. Eject the CD and put it away some place safe. This is your master copy, and should not be sent anywhere.

From the file or folder where you put your images, you can now prepare a CD for whatever purpose you like. Insert a Blank CD in your computer, open it, and drag or copy and paste the images you want onto the blank CD dialogue/image. For a juried show or postcard image, this would be the 300dpi smaller tiff (4" x5" or so.) Give the CD a computer name, like "Joe Doe's Artwork". Burn the CD, CHECK it to be sure the images are there, and eject. If your original CD only comes with one LARGE size image, you might need to learn how to re-size your images.

Follow the steps above for labeling your CD for a juror.

**Terminology:**

**CD or CD-ROM-** portable disc with image information.

**DPI (dpi)-** dots per inch- a RESOLUTION" term- how finely tuned your image is. 300DPI is fine for excellent viewing and reproduction. 70DPI is standard for viewing on web sites or email.

**FORMATS:** TIFF or TIF- a means of saving an image without any loss of quality. JPG or JPEG- a "compressed" image- some quality is lost, but it is not very noticeable on a computer screen unless it is badly done.

**IMAGING SOFTWARE:** a program, such as Photoshop on your computer which can process digital images-it is usually set up so you can change sizes, resolution, color, sharpness, etc.

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