**How to Exhibit Your Photos and Get Them Ready**

**6 articles by Dan Ford, Exhibit Chairperson, UECPC**

**1. Selecting Pictures for Exhibit.**

I am frequently asked for input on member’s picture (images) for appropriateness of exhibits. I will attempt to give some advice and guidelines and a few resources to determine if, and which pictures would be advised for an exhibit.

Frequently I see images of club member’s trips or vacations. ‘Snapshots’ are seldom good choices of exhibit images. While may pictures from trips/vacations possess photographic qualities which make good exhibit pictures, the criteria of any ‘good’ image applies.

So what are the criteria for good images? This is a very subjective area of photography.

Frequently, many of the criteria are talked about at UECPC Meetings, and there are a few thousand on-line resources. But to mention a few:

Have you utilized the composition suggestions, ie. Rule of Thirds, etc.?

Are your horizontal and vertical components straight?

Is the subject clearly defined?

Is the ‘cropping’ appropriate?

Here is a brief on-line evaluation form, and description, from Iowa State University, to give you some idea;

<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/4hfiles/projects/hotsheets/PhotographyEvaluation.pdf>

Social Media Networking, ie. Facebook, has become a source of having others evaluate your images. Post a few images and ask for feedback. Family and friends are also a good source of opinions.

I am including an additional on-line selection, from envatotuts+, which is broader in its scope for photos exhibitions.

<http://photography.tutsplus.com/articles/a-guide-to-preparing-your-first-gallery-exhibition--photo-4036>

In conclusion, you are the ultimate judge regarding your images; do you like your selection?

**2. Printing pictures for exhibit.**

There are a number of options in printing photographic images. The initial option is printing-at-home versus outsourcing your printing. Of these two options, printing-at-home requires an appropriate quality printer, which has ‘paper size’ capabilities and produces ‘exhibit quality’ prints.

I could devote an entire article to printing-at-home printers. But, in order to keep the article brief, I will state that inexpensive (2) cartridge inkjet printers do not print appropriate ‘exhibit quality’ prints and are typically limited to 8-1/2”x 11” maximum prints. Large print size and multiple cartridge printers are considerably more expensive. And, the cost of quality photographic paper must be factored in. There are a number of reviews on the Internet rating printing-at-home printers. Be aware of the cost of replacement ink cartridges!

With that said, outsourcing your prints is a viable option. There are (2) options to consider. 1.) A local business with printing capabilities and 2.) An on-line printing business.

Local businesses include chain-stores like Walgreen’s, Wal-Mart, Costco, Sam’s Club and local businesses like Art’s Cameras Plus and Mike Crivello’s Camera and Imaging Center. Size capabilities, paper selection(s), cost and service will vary from one to another. An advantage of local business printing is you can see the results while at the business and have immediate feedback on the quality of the printing. (NOTE: I will discuss paper selection later in this article.)

On-line printing businesses require you to utilize an Internet method of submitting your image file, usually a jpeg file, in the business’s method. Size, paper selection and shipping of your prints are variables to consider. A disadvantage of on-line businesses is the time it takes for your prints to arrive, due to weekends, holidays, etc.

Here is a recent review of on-line printing businesses from Printaholic.com (2016).

<http://www.printaholic.com/our-reviews/photos/>

Let me say, not all on-line printing businesses are the same. One of the major differences is the brand of photographic paper which they use, ie. Fuji versus other brands. Paper brands can make a difference on how your image is re-produced.

Speaking of paper; what about the ‘type’ of paper? What’s the best for exhibition? These are simple questions with complex answers. There are many theories about what is the best paper for a style of image. However, I feel that it is the photographer’s personal choice. I do not think there are any hard and fast rules about paper types.

Here is an article about paper ‘types’ from AdoramaPix.com, which may shed some light on the subject (no pun intended).

<http://www.adoramapix.com/blog/2016/09/09/printing-basics-how-to-choose-the-best-paper-for-your-photos/>

Lastly, I’d like to discuss ‘size’ of an exhibit appropriate print. As a minimum, an 8”x 10” print may be a workable size, especially for smaller venues. However, in larger venues, a minimum print size of 11”x 14” ‘shows’ much better. Larger print sizes, ie. 16:x 20, tend to increase costs especially with mattes and framing.

Be aware that the print of your image is the final step, which prepares it for matte and framing. I will be discussing these items in the following months.

**3. Mating pictures for exhibit.**

A mat is a cardboard (or mat material), which outlines your printed image and is enclosed in the frame. In some artistic mating several mats are used.

But, a question is why ‘mat’? The answer is one of esthetics and focus. The esthetics is that a mat can enhance your photograph by providing a border around your photograph. And, the focus factor of a mat is that it draws the eye to your photograph.

In addition, a mat enlarges the total size of your framed picture.

Mats can be purchased in standard sizes and to fit standard frames. Mats can be custom made as well. You can purchase a ‘mat cutter’ and mat material and make your own mats. It requires some special instruction to make a centered opening for your picture. I am not going to discuss making mats in this article.

Mats can come in a variety of colors and styles and can be used together, double mat. Artistically many people use colored mats or multiple mats to accentuate their pictures.

I have been instructed that for exhibit purpose, a plain white is mat is best. The white mat eliminates any ‘color bias’ that may affect a viewer’s perception of your picture.

Your printed picture is attached to the backside of the mat with mat tape or a good quality masking tape. There is no need to tape all the way around since the picture may be removed at some time in the future. If your frame selection allows, your picture may be ‘dry mounted’ to an appropriate material. (Not discussed in the article.)

Here’s a link to a number of the topics discussed in this article:

http://www.reframingphotography.com/content/mounting-matting-and-framing

**4. Framing pictures for exhibit.**

A frame is a wood, plastic or metal edging which holds your image, and has a clear protective element, either glass or acrylic plastic. The frame also provides the means by which your picture is hung at an exhibit.

Frames come in an infinite variety of styles, from very decorative to plain. The esthetics of a frame can enhance your photograph.

In addition, a frame enlarges the total size of your framed picture and weight. The weight of your picture may be a consideration when hanging your picture at an exhibit.

Frames can be purchased in standard sizes, made in custom sizes and components purchased for assembly. A consideration may be whether to use glass or plastic. Of course, glass is fragile, breaks, and weighs more; while plastic may scratch.

Like mats, I have been instructed that for exhibit purpose, a plain frame, usually black in color, is best. The plain frame eliminates any bias that may affect a viewer’s perception of your picture.

Your framed picture has attached to the backside the hanging devise. It most preferred for exhibit that that be a wire firmly attached and from side to side. The very small ‘saw-tooth’ devices which are frequently attached to the backing material of the frame are not suitable for exhibits due to a lack of durability and difficulty to use with gallery hanging systems.

The hanging wire should be attached 1/3 of the distance of frame from the top to provide a proper hanging angle when your picture is exhibited. See UECPC document below.

I should mention that some people use a ‘frameless’ system of exhibiting their pictures. (Not discussed in this article.)

Here’s a link to a number of the topics discussed in this article:

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**5. Artist Statement for exhibit.**

An Artist Statement is a brief biography and/or introduction of you, the maker (artist), and your art (picture). There may also be contact information in your Artist Statement.

Your Artist Statement does not have to be anything elaborate or sophisticated. It merely serves as a few statements of introduction or purpose of your pictures.

Here are some links to give you some information about Artist Statements:

http://www.artbusiness.com/artstate.html

**6. Packaging for exhibit.**

It has been my experience that no two exhibits are the same; or have the same logistics; or delivery requirements, etc. Therefore. protecting your picture during transportation is important. Sometimes, your picture may be briefly stored prior to hanging in the exhibit. In addition, exhibition staff may be handling, hanging and storing your picture and packaging materials. Finally, after the exhibit ends, your picture goes through a reverse order of packaging and transportation.

As a minimum, cardboard or bubble-wrap should be utilized to protect the glass from breaking, or plastic from scratching. Often blue masking tape can be used to secure the packaging material, and to write on.

Many frames use glass, or plastic as a protection of the printed image, glass can easily break if struck, dropped or some other misfortune. Frames can be damaged as well. Broken glass may damage your printed image, as well. Your picture must be protected during transportation!

Having your name on the outside of the packaging materials is helpful, not only for identification but for the return of your packaging material (and picture) after the exhibit ends.

I can name numerous examples of poor or inappropriate packaging materials, but remember your picture may be handled several times to, during installation and from the exhibit.