One Method to Photograph a Pastel Painting
By Cecile C.Ramirez

1. Prepare your art. You should photograph the painting without the frame, matting and glass.

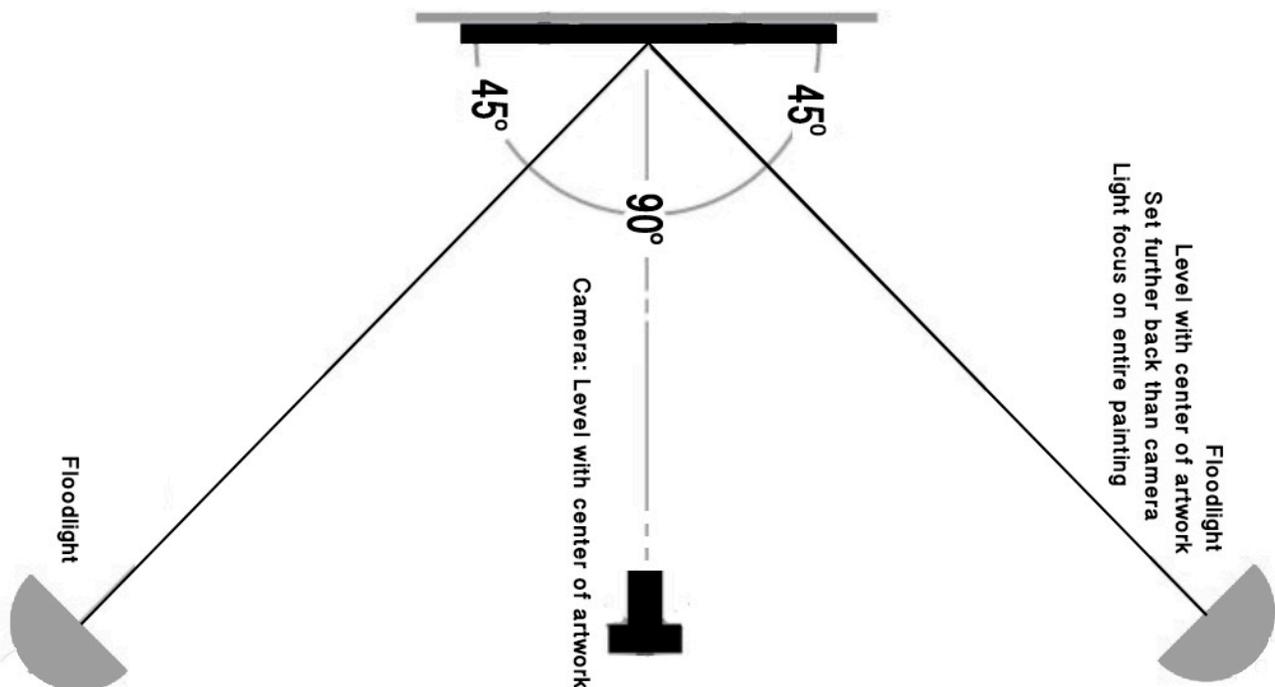**2. Position the painting on a wall.**
- Preferably, hang your art on a neutral colored wall.
- Use clear pushpins to secure your work on the wall – pin the wall, not the painting.
- Center the artwork at eye level; use a carpenter's level to position the artwork.
- For ease in positioning your art, draw the bottom line on the wall or use tape on the wall to level properly.
- Tape or pin a photographer's color guide, if available, along the edge of the art.

Note: Another option is to set your art on an easel, as upright as possible. Lean the color guide, if available, along the edge of the artwork. Tilt the camera to match the tilt of the easel.

Tip: For a large painting, place the long edge along the leveled tape or line, or tilt the camera.

3. Set up your lights. Position two 500-watt floodlights on either side of the artwork.
- Halogen 500 watt 5,000 K, daylight balanced bulbs work well.
- The lights should be the same height as the center height of the artwork.
- Place the two lights *the same distance* from the artwork, at a 45° angle to the painting, so each light is broadcast across the artwork.

45°   45°

90°

Camera: Level with center of artwork

Floodlight
Level with center of artwork
Set further back than camera
Light focus on entire painting

Floodlight

4. Select the camera settings.
- **Color mode**: Adobe RGB
- **Image size**: Set to the largest size your camera can produce.
- **Image format**: Use RAW or TIFF (or JPEG format if only choice)

- **ISO** (film speed): 100
- **White balance**: If the camera has this option, set white balance to match the floodlight bulb type (i.e., halogen daylight-balanced 5,000 K).
- **Exposure control**: Manual mode
- **Flash**: Disable the camera-mounted flash
- **Aperture and f-stops**: Aperture is the opening through which light passes into a camera. For most lenses, f8 is a good setting.
- **Shutter speed**: With your camera on a tripod, set at 60.
- **Lens**: Use a 50-mm macro lens, or a variable lens at 50 mm. (A fixed lens has less glass inside that can cause distortion.)

5. Mount the camera on a tripod and place it in front of the artwork.
- Point the camera straight ahead to the center of the artwork.
- The camera lens and the center of the artwork must be the same height – use a tape measure for accuracy.
- Place the tripod and camera so the artwork (and color guide, if using one) fill as much of the viewfinder as possible, without cropping the image. For tall art, hang the art sideways on the wall so it can fill the frame.

    Note: Only tilt the camera if the artwork is tilted, such as on an easel.

6. Adjust the floodlights. Estimate the distance from the camera to the artwork, then:
- Preferably, place one floodlight twice that distance to the left of the artwork and the other one the same distance to the right.
- Aim them at a 45° angle to the art.
- The lights should be at least as far back as your camera. If they are too far forward, light can strike the camera lens and cause glare in the image.

7. Check the lighting.
a. Turn on the floodlights and turn off the room lights; extra light will upset the color balance of your picture.
b. Adjust the floodlights so the light is evenly distributed on the art. If there is a glare on the artwork, decrease the angle of the lights from 45°to 35° or no less than 15° until the glare is eliminated.
c. Allow 10 minutes after turning your lights on for the bulbs to warm up fully.

8. Take three shots of your artwork. Make sure the art is aligned in the viewfinder. Use a timer or cable release to press the shutter, for best results.
a. Set the aperture to **f8**. Focus and take the picture.
b. Change the aperture to **f5.6**. Recheck the alignment, focus, and shoot.
c. Now change the aperture to **f11**. Recheck the alignment, focus, and shoot.

Note: These three shots provide light, middle and dark versions of the image. F8 is often best.

9. Edit your image. Use photo editing software to resize, align and perfect your best image. There are several editors to choose from, but a few suggestions are:
- Adobe Lightroom, Photoshop or Elements
- Picasa
- iPhoto (Mac computers).