

Photographing Your Work

Excerpts from “Photographing Your Work” by Neil Addy

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Notes from the San Diego Woodturners meeting – November 2009 by Phil Stivers

10 Elements to improving your photographs of your turnings - Simple, effective, and inexpensive

Whether you have a point and shoot camera or an expensive studio outfit following these simple 10 steps can and will improve the pictures that you take. The “film” of today is only electrons. They are cheap. Shoot lots of pictures; experiment, explore, and have fun.

Your goal is to present your turnings in their best possible form.

- 1) Eliminate the clutter
 - a. Avoid “busy” backgrounds
 - b. Attention should be on your piece not on the picture on the wall behind
 - c. This can eliminate the problem of the camera focusing on the wrong thing
- 2) Go MACRO
 - a. In photography this means get close
 - b. Fill the frame with the piece
 - c. On many cameras this is the “flower” symbol
- 3) Pick Your View
 - a. Use the “Top Down” approach
 - b. Don’t shoot platters and bowls from straight-on view
 - c. Compose your shots so it presents your subject “just-over-the-top” perspective
 - d. Angle your shot so it peeks over the top or just into the bowl
- 4) Eliminates The Shakes
 - a. ALWAYS use a tripod.
 - b. Even a cheap tripod will yield better results than hand held
 - c. Even if you have VR (Vibration Reduction) or Steady Shot technology you will get better results from using a tripod
 - d. Any zoom lens or zoom setting will magnify the shakes
- 5) Fingers Off
 - a. Anything that jiggles the camera or the tripod (even a tiny amount) should be avoided
 - i. This includes your fingers on the button
 - b. How can you make the shot without touching anything?
 - i. Even the least expensive point-and-shoot will have self timer
 - ii. Set it for a two second delay or longer.
 - iii. Use a remote release or time delay any time you use the tripod

- 6) Don't Overdo The Color
 - a. Background color can have a dramatic effect on the color perspective of your piece
 - b. White is a safe color – look at photos of AAW gallery for example
 - c. Light grey (18%) also works well in most situations
 - d. Reds, Greens, Blues, etc should be avoided
- 7) Get it Straight
 - a. Don't make the viewer tilt their head
 - b. Always be aware of the horizontal alignment of your image.
 - c. Make sure your subject is level
 - d. Many cameras have a grid on their view screen to aid in composition
- 8) It's Only Electrons
 - a. Always use the highest resolution your camera is capable of
 - b. Shoot lots of pictures – this film is cheap (free)
 - i. Experiment and make note of your changes
 - ii. Look for what is affected in the photo by your change in setup or composition
 - c. If you are going to “tweak” the pictures shoot in camera RAW
 - i. If using jpg's immediately before editing, save in a loss-less format
- 9) Train Your Eye
 - a. Learn from each photo you shoot
 - b. Take a critical look at each photo and evaluate what you did well and what needs improvement.
- 10) Spice It Up
 - a. Learn basic photo editing techniques and tricks
 - b. Most digital cameras come with basic editing software
 - i. Learn to use what came with the camera
 - ii. Commit to more powerful software when you need it

Look in the “Tips and Techniques” section of the website for this article as well as Neil Addy's full article (which contains many more tips and trick on software and lighting). Also you will find articles on making inexpensive lighting boxes for macro and product photography.