

# SHOOTING FLAT ART IN MUSEUMS

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# Museum or Gallery?

- ▣ Museums:
  - own their works, often past copyright expiration date
  - will permit photography, but get permission to publish
- ▣ Galleries:
  - exhibit others' works, generally contemporary artists
  - will seldom permit photography
- ▣ Museums may have temporary galleries
  - permit photography anywhere except in gallery room
- ▣ Ask permission at entrance; no tripod, no flash

# Lens choice

- ▣ Lens performance is important
  - Use your sharpest lens to get finest details and text
  - To set it to sharpest aperture ( $\sim f/5.6$ ) use “A” mode
- ▣ Always strive to minimize editing actions
  - If a zoom, start by setting to minimum-distortion focal length; move in or out to match picture frame
  - Barrel/pincushion distortions can be corrected in editing

# Camera settings

- ▣ Low light and required hand-holding may require using raised ISO to keep your shutter speed up
- ▣ This may lead to raising exposure later in editing
- ▣ May have color and luminance noise in dark areas
- ▣ To minimize noise for greatest details:
  - Raw mode is strongly preferred
  - Gets widest dynamic range from black to white, and
  - When adjusting brightness in editing, helps get least noise in dark areas

# Light considerations

- ▣ Be ready for low light:
  - try Auto ISO, set it to your choice of noise limit
  - look for good window light (but its color will be different)
- ▣ Expect yellowish lighting; either:
  - set up custom white balance (bring a neutral card)
  - set camera for incandescent WB, perfect it in editing
- ▣ Must avoid reflections! – will ruin results
  - cannot be fixed later in editing
  - wear dark clothing
  - shoot at a shallow angle, observing improvements

# Avoiding glass reflections

ORIGINAL BEHIND GLASS,  
ANGLED SHOT



CORRECTED PERSPECTIVE



# Avoiding flash reflections

ORIGINAL ON-CAMERA FLASH



OFF-CAMERA FLASH, ANGLED SHOT



# Minimize distortions

- ▣ Perspective distortion will occur easily
- ▣ It shows up as trapezoidal frames, not acceptable
- ▣ Stand straight-on (90 deg)
- ▣ Aim at picture's exact center
- ▣ Use in-camera level if available
- ▣ Still, getting it perfect will take some editing
- ▣ Lightroom has automated the straightening process:
  - In Develop/Lens Corrections/Enable Lens Profile
  - In Develop/Transform panel use "Upright" and Auto
  - You can also adjust the frame with Vert and Hor sliders



# The old way – it works

Use an easel to lean the picture back a bit

Use a cord or tape to place a small mirror on the picture close to the center

Set up tripod to see your lens in center of the mirror

Camera is now 90 deg to the picture surface

Remove the mirror and shoot

You have made a very good rectangular photo



# Ready to shoot?

- ▣ Autofocus works well; not a worry
- ▣ Minimize camera shake while using slow shutter
- ▣ Hold camera steady, squeeze the shutter
- ▣ Decide what to shoot in the frame:
  - Should you include the picture frame? Small paintings often will have an elaborate frame, your choice
  - Either: include the nearby descriptive text, take the next photo of it closer, or have a friend take notes and associate your photo's filename - suggest being consistent
- ▣ Consider taking closeups of details as well

- ▣ Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum,
- ▣ Vermeer,
- ▣ **Young Woman with a Water Pitcher**

