

Alameda County Arts Commission Exhibitions Program

Quilt Photography Tip Sheet

African American Quilt Guild of Oakland (AAQGO) Online Exhibition



The Alameda County Arts Commission will coordinate with AAQGO to present an online exhibition of the “Telling Our Story through Our Quilts: African American Quilt Guild of Oakland Celebrates 20 Years” on the Arts Commission’s website. The exhibition will be presented online as a slideshow.

Quilt Photography Tip Sheet Overview

The goal of this tip sheet is to share helpful examples (below) and how-to tips (see next page) for taking quilt photos.

Examples of Quilt Photos

These examples generously shared by artist Jane Voytek are wonderful examples of what to keep in mind when taking a photo of a quilt: camera angle, lighting, framing, focus, and file size. See next pages for helpful tips for these items.

	1st Photo as a first try	2nd Photo with improvements
		
Camera Angle	Camera was pointed at an angle to the quilt (slightly down and to the side). This created an image of the quilt as a trapezoid with a distorted effect.	Camera was pointed straight at the quilt creating an image of the quilt as a rectangle with square corners and straight, parallel lines on the two sides and top & bottom.
Lighting	This photo was taken at night with indoor lighting. This created darker, shadowed areas on the quilt and darker colors with a yellow tint.	This photo was taken during the day with natural light from large windows. This created more even lighting and brighter colors more true to the colors of the quilt.
Framing	The framing cuts off the quilt on the right edge.	The framing includes a little bit of background on all sides. This is ideal.
Focus	Image is in focus.	Image is in focus.
File Size	File size is 3MB.	File size is 3MB.

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Quilt Photography Tip Sheet

1. Camera Lens:

- First things first! Clean your camera lens for the sharpest picture. 😊
- For cameras, follow manual directions for cleaning the lens.
- For phone cameras:
 - i. Lightly breathe on the lens for a bit of moisture. Avoid using soap or household cleaners.
 - ii. Use a microfiber, lint free or eyeglass cloth. Clean the lens by making small circles on the lens with the cloth. Avoid using tissues or toilet paper or tissues which can scratch the lens or add lint and dust.

2. Camera Angle:

- It is important to aim the camera straight at the quilt to create an image of the quilt as a rectangle with straight, parallel lines and square, 90-degree angle corners. See 2nd example on page 1.
- If the camera is at an angle to the quilt (looking down, up or to the side at an angle to the quilt), it will create a picture of the quilt in the shape of a trapezoid, and the quilt will appear distorted. See 1st example on page 1.
- It is helpful to either:
 - i. Hang the quilt on the wall and line up your camera directly facing the quilt straight on. Check in your camera viewfinder that opposite sides of the quilt--such as the top and bottom--are straight and parallel to each other.
 - ii. Put the quilt on a table or floor and take a picture directly from above looking straight down. Check in your camera viewfinder that opposite sides of the quilt--such as the top and bottom--are straight and parallel to each other.

3. Lighting:

- Even lighting is very important. "Even lighting" means no part of the quilt appears to be in shadow in comparison to another part of the quilt.
 - i. If there is a shadow, experiment with how you can remove it:
 - 1. Move the quilt to a different location.
 - 2. Move objects or turn off lights that may be throwing shadows.
 - 3. Double check if your body or camera is throwing a shadow on the quilt.
- Natural lighting is best, if possible. It will create a photo with colors more true to your quilt.
 - i. Use light from a window or sliding glass door.
 - ii. Turn off indoor lighting.
 - iii. Turn off the flash on your phone camera or camera.
- If natural lighting is not possible, use two lamps with one on either side of the quilt at 45 degree angles.
 - i. Two lamps will create even lighting. In contrast, one lamp on one side will create a shadow or darker area on the opposite side of the quilt.
 - ii. Turn off other indoor lighting.
 - iii. Turn off the flash on your phone camera or camera.

4. Framing and Background:

- Frame the quilt so that a little bit of the background shows on all sides. Arts Commission staff will crop the photo to the edges of your quilt.
- Avoid including a lot of background, as this will reduce the overall resolution of the quilt image when it is cropped out of the photo.

- A light colored or neutral background is helpful. Colorful walls or large colored furniture nearby can reflect color onto the quilt. However, the background is not critical as it will be cropped out of the photo.

5. Image Focus:

- Use a tripod if you have one or prop your camera on something solid. Or use your body as a tripod. Plant your feet in a stable position, stand still, and hold your elbows into your body.
- Take a breath and release it before taking the picture.
- To avoid movement when taking the picture, try using the self-timer feature on your camera.

6. File Size:

- A photo with a file size of 1-3 MB or 1,000 - 3,000 kb is ideal for the online exhibition. 500-1,000 kb is workable.
- If you have a choice when taking the photo or when emailing the photo, please choose the file size and/or resolution option that will create a photo of this size.

7. Take Multiple Photos:

- As shown in the examples, take a photo and then make adjustments and improvements for the next photo. Try different options and take your time.
- Use the examples and the tip sheet as a checklist, as you take your photo.
- You can do it! Simply do the best you can with what you have. The photo does not need to be perfect. Please don't let taking a photo of your quilt, deter you from submitting your quilt. We want to see it! 😊

8. Questions:

- Email your questions to Dolores Presley, the designated AAQGO representative for this exhibition. They will contact the Arts Commission with any questions.