

Guide to Photographing the Objects

The following information is taken from the guidelines of the ICOM Observatory Website. Modifications are made in order to fit with the DGA requirements.

Professional photos should be taken of the objects to be declared.

General recommendations

When taking pictures, it is important to keep in mind that a good image is not necessarily of the quality required for publication in an exhibition catalogue. The importance of the identity picture is to allow for the proper identification of the object, aesthetics are less important than "readability" in this case.

Technical details

- Ensure that the picture is not fuzzy.
- The shooting must be performed with digital techniques.
- When using digital photography, use the highest practical resolution and store images in an uncompressed format whenever possible. For digital photos, a minimal 300 dpi is recommended.
- The pictures should be in colour.
- Keep a log of all photographs made. It should contain the list of the objects photographed, the equipment used, technical details of the shooting and name of the photographer.
- Metadata should also be recorded in the digital image file, and if possible visible on the image itself.

The following should be visible on the image

- A ruler or scale to evaluate the size of the object. The ruler or scale should always be on the same plane as the object.
- A colour chart for reading the colour of the object, through a comparison to an objective colour reference. Light variations when taking the picture may alter the original object's colour and therefore mislead the observer reading the image.
- The file name of the digital photo should be the inventory number of the object "الرقم التسلسلي" (e.g. 000000009).

The Object and the Photo composition

- Avoid shadows from labels and other elements encroaching on the space of the object. Rulers and colour charts are allowed, but must be situated in such a way that they may be cropped out if necessary.
- The full shape and all the contours of each object should be clearly visible. The edge of prints, drawings and tables should be clearly visible.
- Wherever possible, two-dimensional objects, paintings, prints, coins, etc., should be photographed from a 90° angle, without distortions, and from the centre of the object.
- Three-dimensional objects, such as sculptures, must be taken in several shots at different angles (forward, profile, three quarters and top). Should the bottom of the object have specificities, it should also be photographed.

- Objects belonging to a set must be photographed both together and individually.
- Photography whenever possible details of inscriptions, repairs, damage, such as cracks, or any other distinctive features that will help to differentiate the object from similar items.
- Objects must be centred and occupy as much of the image space as possible
- The longer part of the object must be placed horizontally or vertically, but never diagonally.

Background

- If the object is made up of bright or dark colours: white or neutral-coloured background.
- If the object is made of glass or is light in colour: dark backgrounds.
- The background should be made up of a smooth surface. This will avoid misreading the object's contours.

Light

- Direct light is inadvisable. It is preferable to create an ambient light with artificial lighting placed around the object.
- When using a single source of light, it should come from the upper right.
- Do not use a flash as it creates glares and contrasting shadows on the objects.
- The light should be neutral in color. Avoid yellow light bulbs. It is preferable to favor "daylight" lamps.
- Crystal/Glass objects might prove the hardest to photograph. It is best to try different dark backgrounds and lights coming from one side or from the lower side.

Storage

- Store images in an appropriate environment, to ensure both preservation and accessibility.
- Make and store multiple copies in different locations. At least one copy should be stored off site, away from the object.

Things to avoid

- Shots of groups of objects, with the exception of sets of objects that belong together.
- Lighting effects that obscure the details of the object: reflections, shadows, light changes, etc. Lighting should be as neutral as possible.
- Avoid obscuring parts of objects.
- Avoid brightly coloured, textured or patterned backgrounds that can be distracting

What to Deliver to DGA

- **One copy of all the photos should be sent to the DGA on an adequate media type (DVD, External Hard Drive, etc.)**
- **Two standard photos should be uploaded to the file of each object during the online declaration procedures.**