



## PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS (PROJECT HANDBOOK EXCERPTS) REVISED SPRING 2019

For more information about this document or the [Hill Archive](#), contact Michelle Johnson at [mjohnson@mfah.org](mailto:mjohnson@mfah.org) or [texasartisans@mfah.org](mailto:texasartisans@mfah.org)

### Quick list for checking images

For each object capture the following:

1. overall view
2. front/back/top/bottom/side views (as necessary)
3. close-up details of signatures & markings / construction details / interesting aspects
4. Notes, cards, or other accompanying information found with object
5. Separate parts that are removable or detachable

Check the images in playback mode on the camera *before* photographing the next object.

- Is the object in focus?
- Is the ENTIRE object in the picture?
- Are all the parts of the object straight do they appear level to the camera?
- Is the object centered?
- Are the ruler, color card's grey boxes, ID tag visible?
  - Are all the above spaced far away enough from the object to be cropped out?
- Is the object fully on the background?
- Is the background clean?
- Are there objects in the image that shouldn't be there? For example: a pencil, eyeglasses, cell phone, the tripod legs, *your* legs, etc.
- Are there shadows that make the edges of the object difficult to distinguish?
- Are the images too dark/light?
- Should the object be on a lighter/darker background?
- If the object shiny or reflective--
  - Is there a reflection of the camera or the surroundings?
  - Is there a light glare that obscures the details of object?
- If applicable, did you get a picture of the
  - Front, back, top, bottom, sides, and close-ups
  - Signature, stamp, or inscription, did you take a close-up of these, is it in focus?
  - Notes, cards, or other accompanying information found with object
  - Separate parts that are removable or detachable

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**Object photography tips/rules of thumb***For cups, pottery, and similar*

Begin photographing with the object head-on, with inscriptions, stamps, etc., in direct view. Move the object in a clockwise manner to capture the object from all sides, making sure to capture 3, 6, 9, and 12 o'clock angles, before photographing interior view, bottom, stamps, inscriptions, construction details, and/or other notable elements.



The camera is positioned just above this silver tumbler's lip, and angled slightly down, providing a depth of field while illustrating the slight flare in the body



The camera is positioned too high above this jar, resulting in a severe downward angle, distorting the jar's mouth to base proportions (it's a straight-sided jar)

*Objects with a handle*

If there is only one handle, position the handle to the **right**, then proceed as directed above

*Objects with multiple handles*

When there are two (or four) identical style handles, begin with handles directly to the sides, with any stamps or inscriptions on the side that is being photographed



For items with two different handle styles, position the larger handle to the right, even if any stamps or inscriptions would then be on the side not being photographed

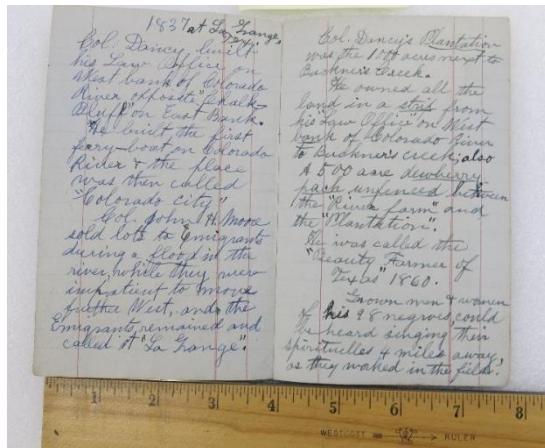
*Objects with multiple parts*

Photographs all the items together or assembled if applicable, then photograph each part separately.

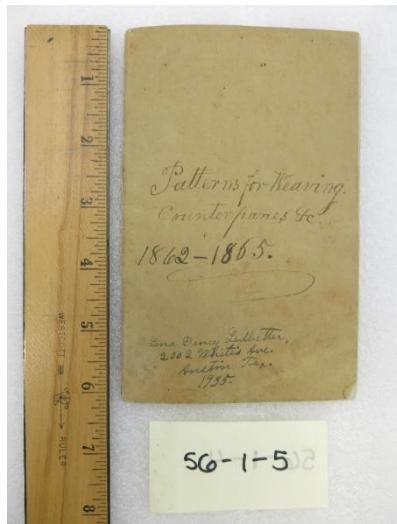


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Image composition examples**Bad composition:**

- Object edge is cut off at top
- Object ID number not visible
- No color card visible
- Ruler is too close to the object, not lined up to the object's edge, and cannot be cropped out
- Background is Styrofoam, and is not a flat color. Paper should have been used.
- Object and ruler are very crooked and too close to the edge of the frame, making it impossible to straighten without further cropping out the object

**Better composition**

- ✓ Object and ruler are square and straight
- ✓ Object ID is visible
- Color card is still not in view
- Ruler is too close, see the shadow between ruler and object
- Background is Styrofoam, and is not a flat/matte color, which makes color correction difficult. Paper should have been used as a background.

**Good composition:**

- ✓ All objects are visible and evenly spaced
- ✓ Ruler is lined up at edge of object
- ✓ Ruler, object ID tag, and color card are visible and can be cropped out of the photo
- ✓ The background is a flat color/textured, not Styrofoam