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PHOTO TIPS

Do Your Pictures Do Your Designs Justice?

By Jennifer Jacob

It's that time of year again ... when my inbox here at *Window Fashions* is flooded with hundreds of Design Competition entries, each complete with photos of gorgeous window fashions that readers have artistically designed for their clients. And while we would love to consider each of these photos for the competition, and also for publication in *Window Fashions*, unfortunately aspects such as size and photo quality can prevent us from doing just that. The good news is that by learning a few photography guidelines, you can be on your way to getting photos of your designs published, while sprucing up your portfolio and website.

WHY HIGH-QUALITY PHOTOGRAPHY
They say a picture is worth a thousand words. Take a look at your portfolio and your website. Would you consider your photos top-notch? Do they do your designs justice? While you can tell your clients about the ingenious designs you've created, if your photos don't do them justice, you may just be out of luck. Quality photos could mean the difference between making or breaking a sale—and, if you want to further promote your work, you'll need high-quality photos in order to get published. So where do you go from here?

HIRE A PROFESSIONAL
If you're not comfortable taking photos, hire a professional photographer. While this may cost you more, you're pretty much guaranteed to receive high-quality photos that you can use in your portfolio and on your website—or even get published.

First, conduct an online query for commercial photographers. Once you narrow down your search by location, cost or other criteria, research those photographers. Most photographers will have websites showcasing their work. If their online portfolio looks sloppy, be cautious. Remember, businesses showcase their best work when advertising, and if you're not impressed by their portfolio, they probably aren't the best fit.

However, explains Michael Slaughter, a professional photographer with 35 years experience: If the photographer's portfolio impresses you—even if most of the photos are of something other than interior shots—it's safe to assume he or she knows how to work with lighting. "If they can light well, they can probably do anything you want," says Slaughter. Talk to the photographer about his or her background, the type of photographs you're looking for and the fee. Let the photographer know exactly how you plan to use the images so he or she can charge accordingly, and be sure to ask about the photographer's policy regarding usage and copyright.

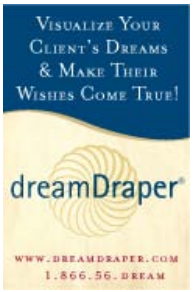
Once you've hired a photographer, communication is key. "One of the biggest problems is lack of communication," says Slaughter. "If you don't tell the photographer the details, how can they do a good job?"

Talk to the photographer about what is important to you, and make it a point to be onsite during the photography session to point out exactly what you're looking for. You know your craft better than anyone else, and only you have inside information on what aspects of your window fashions you want to be photographed, whether it's taking a wide shot of the entire room, or closing in on the details of the trim, or both.

2008 *WF* Ingenuity Workroom Competition, Workroom of the Year: Warren Steven Window Fashions, Minneapolis, Minn.

Credits
Workroom: Warren Steven Window Fashions Drapery Workroom, Minneapolis, MN. Installer: Rick Mysliwiec and Kelly Dupont, Warren Steven Window Fashions, Minneapolis, MN. Designer: Jeanne Johnson, Home Staging by Jeanne, Stillwater, MN. Photographer: Mark Ehlen, Ehlen Creative Communications, Champlin, MN.

Sources
Fabric: "Pagoda" from Manual Canovas. Shades: Silhouette® window shadings from Hunter Douglas®.



2008 *WF* Envision Design Competition, Curtains and Draperies, First Place Tie.

Credits
Designer: JoAnn Quickel, Village Art and Design, Gainesville, FL. Workroom: Carol Israel, Carol's Custom Draperies, Gainesville, FL. Installer: Cory Molyneux, Ron's Windows, Gainesville, FL. Photographer: Aaron Bailey, Aaron Bailey Photography, Gainesville, FL. Other Contributors: Kasmir Fabrics Custom Workroom (draperies), Judy Davis Interiors.

Sources
Cornices/Draperies: Kasmir Fabrics. Cornice lipcord: RM Coco. Pillow Fabric: Kay & L Draperies.

TAKE PHOTOS YOURSELF
The second option is to shoot the photos yourself. If you decide to go this route, here are some guidelines that will ensure you produce higher-quality photos.

1. Invest in a digital camera that will at least shoot a 4 megapixel image. The amount of megapixels equals the resolution of the images your camera will take, and will determine how large your photo can be published when utilizing your camera's highest quality setting.

2. When taking digital photos of your designs, be sure your camera is set to the "highest quality setting." This will ensure your camera is producing the highest-quality photo it can. (Keep in mind this also means you will not be able to fit as many photos on your memory card as you could if your camera was set to lower photo quality settings. So transfer those high-quality images to your computer frequently, or invest in a few memory cards.) Read the camera's manual.

3. When submitting photos for publication, email the original version. The photo quality is highest when the photo has remained untouched—meaning you have not cropped, color corrected or reduced the file size.

Keep in mind, the size of the photo that appears on your computer screen is not an accurate portrayal of how large the photo can be printed. Most publications, like *Window Fashions*, publish photos at 300 dots per inch (DPI). While lower resolution photos (72 DPI) are great for the web, they are much too small for publication. As a reference, in order to print a full-page photo in *WF*, photos must be at least 9x12 inches at 300 dpi (2700 x 3450 pixels).

4. Lighting is critical. When photographing window fashions, as with anything else, lighting will determine your photo quality. "When you're shooting photos in homes, sometimes you need to wait until a certain time of day, depending on the direction in which the window is facing and the type of window fashion," says Slaughter. "If something is special or unique about the window treatment, think about how the lighting will show that." Also, if you don't have adequate interior lighting, you'll need the external lighting to produce a quality photo.

5. As the photographer, you're in control. Remove anything that's blocking your view. You're responsible for what is visible in the shot, says Slaughter, so make your work look good. Remove furniture if it's blocking the view of your window fashions, or reposition it to highlight the coordination between the window fashions and their surroundings. Take photos from different angles, such as directly in front of the window treatments, off to the side slightly, or even a shot from above if an open stairway is accessible. Take close-up photos to highlight the details in the window fashions. And watch out for glare. While photos may look great when displayed on a 2-inch digital camera screen, only when viewed close-up on a larger computer monitor can you determine if the photo is of high-quality.

6. Learning to take high-quality photos involves trial and error. You may not get it right the first time. Slaughter recommends looking at other high-quality images of window fashions. What makes them great? How can you use that knowledge in your own photography? Teach yourself. Remember, the photos you take of your designs are reflections of your work as a window-fashions professional. If your photos aren't high-quality, your designs won't appear high-quality. As Slaughter says, "Creativity takes work."

Jennifer Jacob is assistant editor of Window Fashions*. Send your high-quality window fashions photos to Jennifer for consideration in* Window Fashions *magazine or visit window-fashions.com to enroll in this year's* Window Fashions*' Design Competition.*

LEARN MORE
Michael Slaughter Photo
michaelslaughterphoto.com

Window Fashions' Envision Design and Ingenuity Workroom Competition window-fashions.com

DPI VS. PPI

When working with photos, you'll often hear the term "resolution." Resolution refers to the level of clarity, or detail, in an image. The greater the resolution, the greater the amount of detail in the image and the larger the file size. In discussing resolution, the terms DPI (dots per inch) and PPI (pixels per inch) are sometimes used interchangeably,

but there is a difference.

DPI refers to how many dots per inch a printer is capable of printing. The industry standard is 300 DPI. You'll want images that are capable of being produced at a minimum of 9x12 inches at 300 dpi (in other words, a full-page photo in *Window Fashions*).

PPI refers to how many pixels per inch a digital image actually contains. If you are taking your own digital photos or scanning prints, this is the number you'll need to be aware of. For instance, in order to publish a full-page vertical photo in *Window Fashions*, the photo would need to be at least 2700 x 3450 pixels.

Printable Size (inches)=Minimum PPI Required to Produce 300 DPI Photo

4" x 6"= 1200px x 1800px

5" x 7" =1500px x 2100px

9" x 12"=2700px x 3450px

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