

GLOSSARY OF PHOTOGRAPHIC TERMS RYMAN ARTS PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP, 2006

AE: Automatic exposure. The “exposure” the camera sets when you press the shutter button halfway down. The AE lock is a feature that allows you to set an exposure for a specific tone (the gray card), and then lock it, so that if the next thing you put in front of your camera has a different tone, such as white or black, the exposure will not be changed.

Aperture: All cameras have a hole that let the light in. The hole can be adjusted smaller or larger to let different amounts of light in. The aperture is also referred to as an “f-stop”, and looks like this: f/2.8, f/4, f/5.6, f/8, f/11, etc. This is the first number seen in the exposure: f/8 at 1/15. The larger the aperture number, the less light that is let in the camera, and the more focus you will get.

Exposure: The amount (intensity and duration) of light the camera takes in to take a picture. Example: f/8 (intensity) at 1/15 (duration). You will see the exposure light up in the viewfinder (when you look through the camera lens) when you push the shutter button halfway down.

Extended digital zoom: Many compact digital cameras have the ability to zoom in farther than the actual lens allows. It basically crops into the image and magnifies it, making it appear to be zoomed in further. This gives you a lower quality image, and is therefore not recommended for use when photographing your artwork.

F/8: This is the “aperture” that is recommended when shooting your artwork. It should give you enough focus throughout your image.

Gray card: A card (or poster) that is “middle” gray. If you don’t have a professional gray card, you can either use a poster board or cloth that is a medium tone, such as gray, green or blue. Cameras always try to balance out the exposure to give you a medium tone, which is why a gray card will be used to set the correct exposure.

Histogram: This is a chart that shows the balance of tones in the picture from dark to light. If the chart is too heavy on the dark or light end, but the picture you’re taking is not especially dark or light, then the exposure is wrong.

ISO: This is the term used to rate the camera’s sensitivity to light. The higher the number, the less light you need to take the picture. But also, the higher the number, the more “noise” you will get in the picture—meaning the quality will be lower. When shooting your artwork, always use the lowest ISO setting on your camera. This will make your exposure longer, but you can steady the camera with a tripod.

LCD screen: The screen on the back of your digital camera. Here you can view your images, and also access the menu for various camera features.

Optical zoom: Most digital cameras have a zoom lens. Optical zoom refers to this feature.

Resolution: The file size. Cameras have different file sizes to choose from, and you want to select the largest size when photographing your art. It may be listed as Large, Medium, and Small, or High and Low, or something similar. The file size dimensions may also be listed—choose the largest.

Shutter Speed: The length of the exposure. This is the amount of time the camera’s digital chip is exposed to the light. For instance, 1/15 means “1/15th of a second”. This is the second part of the exposure in f/8 at 1/15. Note: I am using 1/15 as an example—this is not necessarily the shutter speed you need to use. Please follow instructions on setting the correct exposure.