Preparing your digital photographs of your artwork is intimidating.   Here is a brief tutorial on getting the best image from any digital camera.

Photographing the Painting

File Format:
Check your camera's settings, and try to find the highest quality possible.   Many high end cameras offer a RAW format option. RAW format allows you to alter your exposure/color settings *after* you shoot the image.   If you cannot shoot RAW shoot JPEG at the highest quality setting (most MPs).   This is usually adjusted in the MENU on the camera.

Lens:

Place the camera far enough away from the painting so you have to zoom into the painting to fill the entire film viewfinder.   If you shoot too close to the painting and the lens has not been zoomed, you will be shooting at a wide angle and will cause distortion.

ISO:
Always shoot at the lowest ISO/ASA ("film speed") possible. I typically shoot at 100 ISO. If you go above 400, you are likely going to get a lot of noise in the dark areas. It's better to have a really slow shutter speed because there will be less pixilation in the digital photograph. However, with a slow shutter speed, you will need a tripod.

Tripod:
Do not hand hold a camera when photographing your work. Even the slightest vibration will ruin the detail. Use a tripod and self-timer.   If your camera lens has a Vibration Reduction feature, turn it off- this feature is meant for hand held shots.

For vertical art, rotate the tripod head, or simply hang the art vertically on the wall so it fills the frame.

To ensure that the artwork isn't distorted in the photo, the camera's line of sight needs to be

perfectly perpendicular to the art. If your painting is attached to a vertical wall, the camera should be vertical. If the artwork is leaning against a wall or on an easel, the camera must be tilted as well. Make sure the edges of the painting are perfectly square in the viewfinder, otherwise your art will look like a trapezoid in the photo rather than a rectangle.
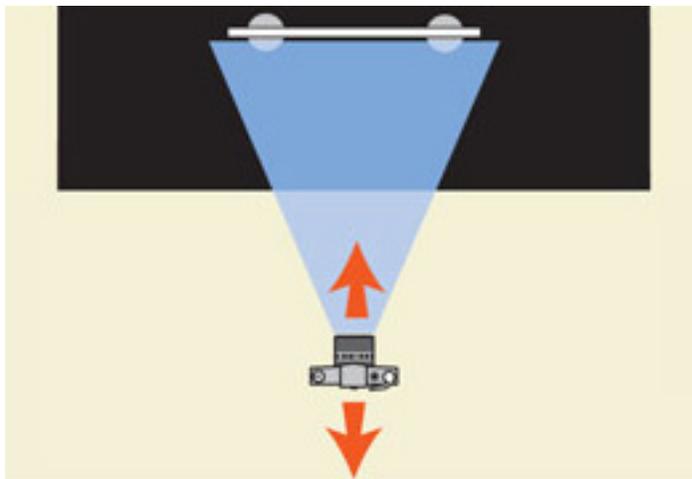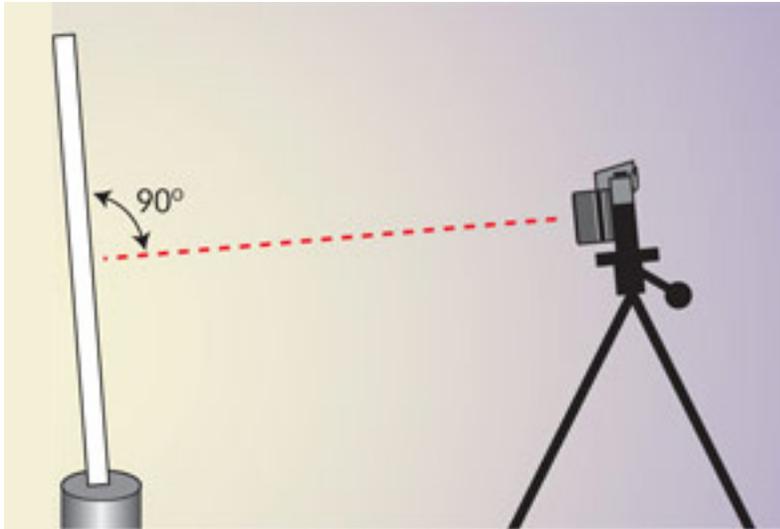
Lighting:

The best light for photographing artwork is overcast or indirect natural light. Photograph your paintings with only one light source- this makes it easier to color correct later. Avoid sunlight striking your object directly, as this will cause glare and increase contrast. Digital cameras cannot handle contrast as well as film.

Photograph your paintings with only one light source- this makes it easier to color correct later.

Make sure the lighting is even across your entire painting.

Resist the urge to resort to flash. You do not need a flash when your camera is on a tripod.

Most cameras have an auto white balance (AWB) setting- use it.   You can find this in the MENU on your camera.   If the AWB setting on your camera does not automatically color correct, you can manually adjust your color settings to match your lights (consult your manual, or search the internet).

Shooting:

The aperture should be set at F8 or F11 to maximize sharpness (some digital cameras do not allow you to select an aperture).

Take several shots at different shutter speeds (maintain f8 or f11 aperture) to get a good exposure. Use a cable release or self timer to maintain focus for long exposures.

If your camera does not let you select an aperture in either Manual (M) mode or Program (P), I recommend taking several pictures at different exposures via the EV menu.   This stands for Exposure Value.   In your camera MENU, you should find something with 0, -1, +1, etc.   Take several photographs at different settings (-1, 0, +1 for example) and choose the best image later.

Post-Correction:

If the colors in your photograph are not accurate, you need to make corrections based on the photographic color wheel, which is very different from the traditional color wheel:

Photographs are based on three color channels: Red, Green, and Blue (RGB):
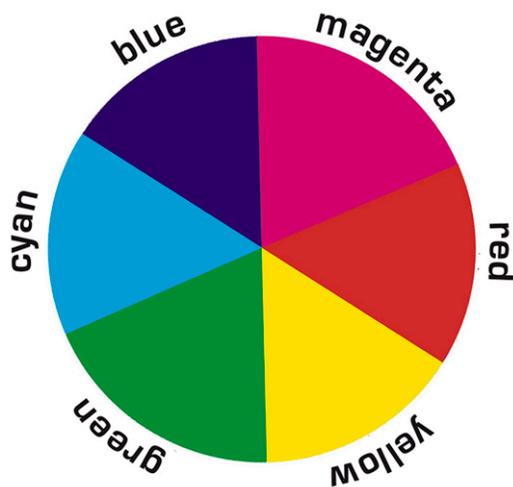
Digital cameras come with photo editing software.   Most software has a color correction feature. If not, you can correct the photographs in Adobe Photoshop, Lightroom, or online programs such as Picasa and Gimp:

http://www.gimp.org/
http://picasa.google.com/

To color correct tungsten (yellow/orange color cast) I recommend adjusting the **B**lue Channel

(add blue to reduce yellow).   This will work equally well if the images were shot on overcast days (add yellow to reduce blue).
Fluorescent lights (blue/green color cast) require subtracting Cyan/or Green to add red/magenta.

Resizing Images:
Entries for the WSNC Annual Exhibitions need to be 1800 pixels on the longest side and 300 dpi.   Most proprietary software including Canon's Digital Photo Professional & Nikon's ViewNX2, allow images to be sized when editing is finished.   You can select BATCH PROCESS (Canon), or CONVERT FILES (Nikon) to resize and rename your output files.
If you cannot find the option in your computer software to change the size of your photograph, there are several free online programs that will help.   Upload the photograph, resize, and save. The programs I recommend:
www.picresize.com
www.rsizr.com
You can always downsize your images later without affecting the quality.   Resist the temptation to increase the filesize.   Upsizing does not produce quality images.   If you original photograph is too small for the WSNC specifications (1800 pixels on the longest side), reshoot the painting at a higher quality setting.

How do you rename your files?
Entries for the WSNC Annual exhibition need to labeled in this format:
lastname-firstinitial-entry#.jpg
For example: an image by me, Ryan Fox, would be labeled FoxRentry1.jpg.
To change filenames in Vista and Windows 7:
1. Click the file to select it, then click once more. Windows automatically selects the filename so that anything you type will replace the existing name.

2. Type the new filename and press Enter.

    On previous versions of Windows you have to manually select the filename before editing.

To change filenames on Macs:
1. In Finder, open the folder with your file in it.
2.   Find the icon for your file. Click once on that icon then click and hold the mouse button down on the filename below it.
3.   After about a second of holding down the mouse button the text will become editable and you can type over the filename.