

Submitting Your Own Doll Photographs

Q & A with Johanna Love, Stampington & Company's Director of Photography

Stampington & Company's publications are known for their beautiful presentation of artwork and amazing photographs. Our Director of Photography, Johanna Love, is a spectacular photographer whose skills only further enhance your great artwork. She flawlessly leads our photography department ensuring that each and every image shown in our publications is top notch.

Sometimes — particularly with delicate dolls — it's easier to have artists send in their own good quality hi-res photos that we can use rather than risk damage during shipping. But many times, artists are intimidated by the thought of taking their own photos. It's really not that hard. Here, Johanna answers any questions you may have.

Art Doll Quarterly: Why would it be to my advantage to take a photograph of my doll myself?

Johanna Love: There are several advantages to taking your own photos: A) when you see your own doll through the lens of a camera as others will see it, you can catch alterations still needed to your doll you may not have otherwise noticed. B) You have your own record of your doll in the event that you end up shipping your doll to us, end up selling your doll,

or need a photo for your own website/blog. C) If the photo is high-quality enough for us to publish in our magazine, then you save yourself the cost of shipping as well as the risk of damage to your doll during shipping. D) It reduces your carbon footprint to mail a disk of photos rather than have your large and heavy doll shipped back and forth!

ADQ: Do I need to hire a professional photographer?

JL: No. Simply follow these guidelines/suggestions for using your everyday household setup.

ADQ: What's the best kind of camera to use?

JL: Any camera can work. The best/easiest kind of camera is one that lets you manually select which point on the doll you are focusing on. Since dolls are usually 3-dimensional, sometimes autofocus on your camera will focus on an arm or leg of your doll rather than the eyes, causing the eyes and face to be out of focus. If you can get your autofocus-only camera to get the eyes in focus when taking a full-length photo of your doll, then you're in good shape. If your camera has a face-recognition focusing feature, try turning it on if you cannot manually select your focal point. ➔



Sample daytime
setup with window.

Artwork by Jo Ann Massey



lighting unless your doll is looking up at the light and you want a dramatic photo. See my example setup on the facing page. Since there are many more choices to be made when using these work lights, I advise taking several photos with the lights at different angles, and then if you're not sure which is best, you can send all your options to us to choose from. However, unless you have experience using artificial lighting, I recommend sticking with the window light to quickly achieve successful photos. This is because the artificial light can be very harsh, which can easily wash out the beautiful delicate details of your doll.

ADQ: What kind of background should I use?

JL: A smooth, blank, monochromatic background is preferred for our magazine. If you use fabric or paper, please be sure it is wrinkle-free, that it drapes from wall to table smoothly, and that it completely covers the space behind the doll in your photo. The color of the background depends on the doll. Play with different colors in the background to see what you think works best. If no colors are working, your doll will most likely look very good against white, grey, or black.

ADQ: What kind of shots should I take, and how many?

JL: Take a full-length photo straight on at the entire doll so that the whole doll is in focus, take a photo where the doll's face is looking at the camera (if different from the first full-length photo), take a profile photo, take a photo from the back if there are any interesting details or techniques), and then take any additional close-up photos to reveal more about the

ADQ: How do I know what resolution to take it at?

JL: Set your camera to its maximum resolution. With digital cameras made within the last several years (smartphones being the only possible exception), chances are the photos will be large enough.

ADQ: Is the camera on my iPhone (or other smartphone) good enough?

JL: Possibly, depending on how new and high quality your phone's camera is and what lighting you use. Take some test photos and open them on your computer. If the photos can be enlarged to life-size while appearing in sharp focus (i.e. not blurry), especially at the face of your doll, then your answer may be "yes."

ADQ: What about lighting?

JL: Natural daylight is easiest to light your doll. If using daylight, I recommend setting up your doll next to a window with indirect daylight (NOT direct sunlight) coming at it diagonally from the front, either left or right. This depends on how you've designed your doll — it is usually better to have your doll looking a bit toward the light source. Shooting indoors with window light is preferable to outdoors because the window light will be soft but still dramatic, revealing the interesting textures and details you've included in your doll. See my example setup on the previous page. If you choose to use artificial light, I recommend two or three inexpensive work lights. These lights can come from any direction (i.e. the back, sides, or front of your doll), but please avoid direct overhead



Sample nighttime setup using 2 work lamps.



construction and design of your doll. The number of photos depends on how large and detailed your doll may be. To shoot your close-ups, rotate your doll so the detail faces your light source.

ADQ: Should I add props?

JL: Only add props if they are part of the design of your doll or necessary to make your doll stand up or hold position. If they are simply to support the doll and are not an intended part of your artwork, please make them a similar color to the background so they do not visually interfere with your doll.

ADQ: Should I edit my photos before sending them to you?

JL: NO! Please leave them as they are, since we will make our own edits as needed to have your photo blend as smoothly as possible with other photos and with our magazine design. This means: no cropping, no resizing, no color-editing, and no sharpening. You are more than welcome to do any of the above for your personal use, but it is much easier for us to work with your photos if you send them to us in their original states.

ADQ: What's the best way to get my images to you?

JL: Please burn your photos and your write-up regarding your doll onto a CD or DVD, write your name, email and phone number on the disk, and mail that to us before the artwork submission deadline. This is a quarterly ongoing deadline.

ADQ: What if my photos are not publishable?

JL: If your doll is selected for publication but the photos are not usable for whatever reason, our editor will contact you with your options at that point. ❖

