Image Preparation for NMPCA Websites

Participation in the NMPCA's online virtual studio tour, www.claystudiotour.com, requires taking digital pictures of your work and preparation of up to 9 images: 8 of ceramic works and one artist portrait.

Celebration of Clay participants can be included in the "People's Choice" voting if they provide appropriate digital images of their entries.

This article is about preparing images for inclusion in NMPCA web-based programs.

Let's divide this up into two parts: Taking of the pictures and preparation of the images

For the first part, taking of the pictures, there is lots of information available. There are books, friends, on-line resources…they can all get you some digital images. For example, go into a search engine, like google.com, and put in "how to take pictures of sculptures" or "how to take pictures of pottery" and you will find lots of links. Just make sure the images are staged professional looking photos of your work…not snapshots like you would post on facebook or send to friends.

The 2nd task, **preparing the images** to send to the NMPCA webmaster, can be overwhelming to artists who are not used to working with image manipulation programs. **This set of tasks is the subject of this article**. Unfortunately, I have to assume that you are somewhat familiar with using your computer, finding things on the internet, locating and saving files on your computer's drive, moving the mouse and selecting options. If you need help with these basics, I recommend you get a computer-savvy friend to help you or take a basic computer skills class.

Most of you realize that sending people the image direct from your camera does not give the recipient what they need. Usually, the image from modern cameras is too large for use on a website, the image may need to be cropped, color corrected, or otherwise adjusted to show the work to advantage, and the file name must be changed to allow proper identification of your work. The process of transferring the camera image into something that can be emailed as an attachment is called preparing the images.

Many people use Photoshop Elements or Photoshop to prepare images, but this requires buying (and updating) software on your computer. Most digital cameras come with some image editing software, but this must be installed and learned. I have recently been using a free on-line tool that costs nothing and only requires a computer (or a tablet) and an internet connection to use with your digital images. It does a great job of preparation and is easy to use. This article describes the steps to use Pixlr.com Express to prepare images for claystudiotour.com. See the note at the end of this article for other editors you might try.

Before we start, the goal that you are working toward is described on the NMPCA website at www.nmpotters.org/studiotourinstructions. Read the section "Prepare Studio Tour Materials" to understand the context. Below is the section about images from that page. I have highlighted the part that will be covered by this article. When preparing images for Celebration of Clay People's Choice voting, you can follow these same guidelines.

| Images	Prepare up to **8** digital images of your work. You can also send an additional image of yourself in your studio. Knowing what you look like gives people a more personalized view in the virtual studio tour. The images must be digital and professional quality. We reserve the right to reject images that are not high quality.
	Work should be shot against a plain background. The images should reflect RGB color balance to accurately portray your work and should be clear and sharp. Size each image about 600 pixels tall and up to 900 pixels wide. It works best if all your images are all the same pixel height. Too small an image is as bad as too large an image.
	Please name the image files you send us: Name the jpg files with your LastName+FirstName, underline, and a SHORT tag of the description or title of the piece: Example, NelsonJudy_Bowl1.jpg. Do not put spaces or punctuation in the file name; use proper case.

Here is step-by-step information on how to prepare your images.

I. *Organize the Images on your computer*

   a. Transfer the images from the camera into a folder on your computer where you can find them. I put mine in an "Images" folder and then into folder for each date that the images are taken. I recommend that you keep the original images (the ones that are good…discard the ones that don't turn out).

   b. Create a folder that will hold the prepared images that you will send to the claystudiotour.com webmaster. Call this folder something like claystudiotour or celebrationofclay. You may want to prepare the same images in some other way for other websites or for print, so by creating this folder, you keep the NMPCA website images in one place.

   c. You can put a link to the "Images" folder on your desktop, but I don't recommend you put all the images on your desktop. That may seem easy at first, but it becomes way too busy and complicated.

II. *Start Pixlr and Prepare the Image(s)*

   a. Open your computer's internet browser and go to the address, http://pixlr.com. It looks something like this:
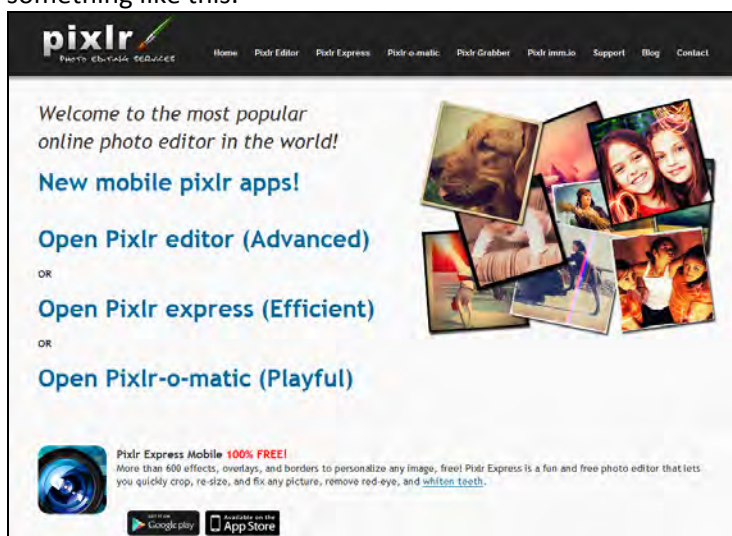
b. For what we want to do, use the Pixlr express (efficient). When you click on that option, it looks like this:
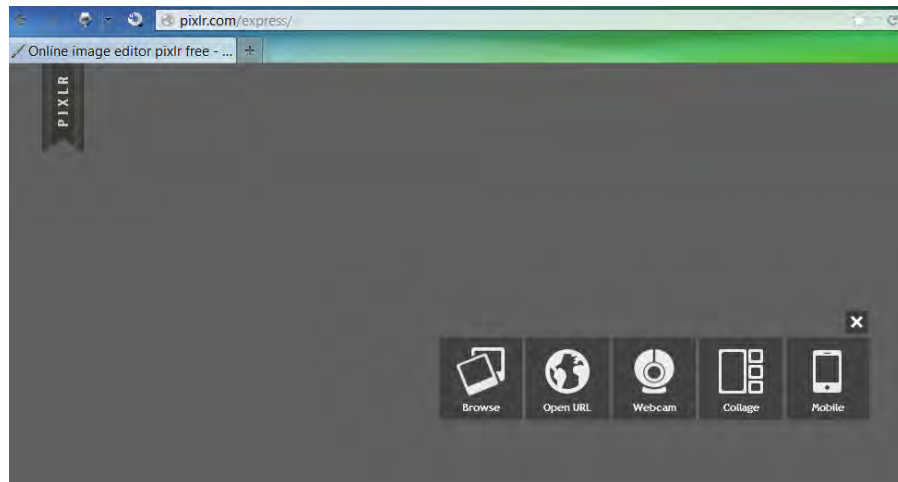
c. Load into Pixlr the image that you want to prepare. Click the "Browse" option. Find the file on your computer in the folder where you stored the originals in Step I described above. When you click "open" you will see the image loaded into the pixlr.com page. It will look something like this (only with your image, of course):


d. Now, first some basic instructions about the things on the screen: Starting from the upper left and going across and then down.

The "**Save**" button is what you will press after you get the image prepared. The "**Close**" button is what you can press if you don't want to save and want to reopen the image or open another one. The "**Undo**" button is for use if you take an action in the other buttons and decide you didn't like the result. You can keep hitting undo to go back more than one action. The "**Redo**" button is for use when you hit undo and you change your mind and want to redo the action you just undid. The "**Fullscreen**" button allows you to make the image fill your screen. You may have to confirm the allow… message that comes up.

Main screen button review continued: The buttons below Undo/Redo/Fullscreen allow you to **zoom** in or out on the image so that you can see the details. The % shows how close the zoom is, with 100% showing as full-size as it would appear on a web page. After you do crop and resize actions, you should zoom to 100% to verify the image looks right for a web page. To start with, just set the zoom so that you can see the entire image.

On the bottom row are the action buttons. "**Adjustment**" is the main action that you will be using. This allows you to crop, resize, and make adjustments to the appearance of the image. The other actions: Effect, Overlay, Border, Sticker, and Text are not used for preparing images for NMPCA.
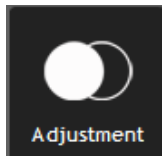
e. **Adjustments**: These are the adjustment steps to prepare your image. Not all may be necessary. Choose the ones you need for the image you are preparing. To access these actions, just click the adjustment icon and then the individual action icon for the action you need to take. With all these actions, select the action from the icon and this will make buttons appear at the bottom. Use the buttons to make the adjustment, and click "Apply" to make the change. If you decide not to do the action, click "Cancel" and choose a different adjustment action.

The following paragraphs describe the adjustments you may need for preparing your image, and are listed in the order you should use them.
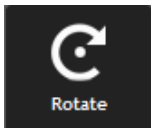
f. **Rotate**: The most frequent use of the Rotate is to correct the image if it is not upright. You can flip left or right with the arrows or make minor adjustments to straighten out a crooked image with the slider. Below is a sideways image that can be corrected by clicking on the left circle button just to the lower right of the "Rotate" icon. Then click the "Apply" button.
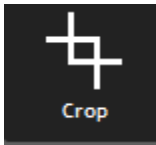
g. **Crop**: Use the crop function to adjust the amount of space around the pieces in your image. For internet images, you want a moderate amount of space…not too much space. The image should take up the majority of the space with lesser space below, more above, equal space to the left and right. When you click on the crop icon, you will see a grid with little squares in the corners appear over your image. Click on one of the squares with the mouse and hold down the mouse button…drag the mouse to move the grid to place it where you want to crop the image. The cropped portion will be grayed out. You can move the corner squares around as much as you need to. Notice the information that displays below to show you the dimensions. If you want a specific ratio of width to height, you can click on one of the x:y buttons, such as 1:1 to get a square image. When you have the window in the position you want, click "Apply". To right is an example showing the crop function.
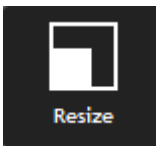
h. **Resize**: Once you have the image cropped the way you want it, you should resize it to the specifications that are requested.

For the claystudiotour.com, you are asked to resize the image to **600 pixels tall**. That is the size that will fit the website for the best display. It doesn't matter what the width is (as long as it is not wider than 900 pixels). To resize the image, click on the "Resize" icon in adjustments. Make sure the "Keep proportions" is set to "0"…the right hand position. Click in the height number box and change the height that was there to 600. You will see the width change in proportion. Check the width to make sure it is not wider than 900. Click Apply. To right is an example.

After you apply the resize, change the zoom in the upper right to 100% by moving the zoom slider.
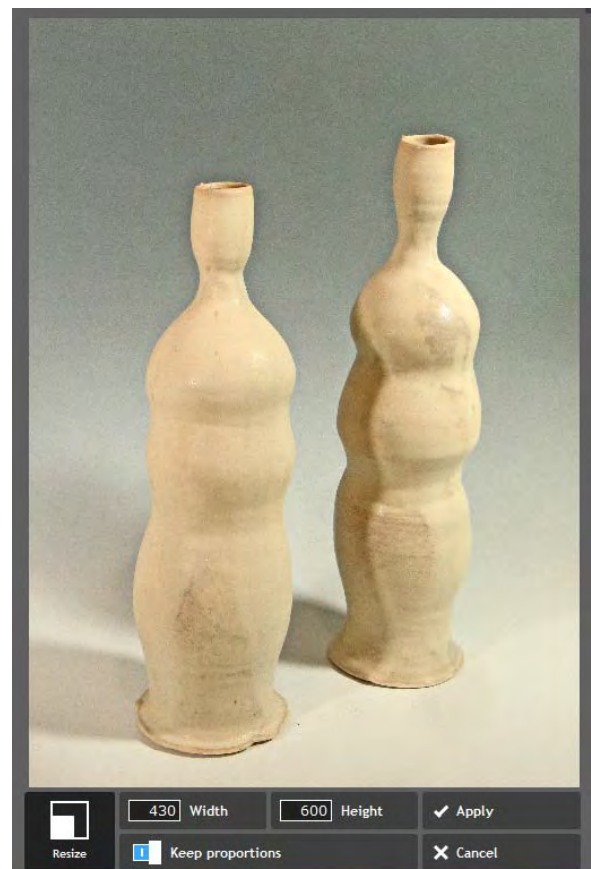
i.   **Sharpen**: If the image appears blurred, you may want to try the sharpen function. You will see the effect immediately on the image in the display.

Radius**:** Determines the overall area that will ultimately become sharpened. A high radius means a bigger area will be sharpened and a low radius is just the opposite. Try starting with a radius of 10 and adjust up or down according to the image appearance.

Amount**:** Determines how much sharpening is applied. Generally 50 or less.

An example is shown at right. Once you have the image the way you want, click apply
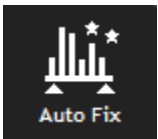
j.   **Autofix** or **Color**, **Vibrance** and **Contrast**: If you feel the image is too pale or dark, the contrast between dark and light needs to be adjusted, use Contrast.

If the color needs to be corrected, use Color.

If the colors need to be made more or less intense, use Vibrance.

Apply all of these at once using the "Auto Fix" function.

At right is an example of applying the contrast function to increase contrast and decrease brightness on an over-exposed image.

When using these functions, adjust the sliders until you have the appearance you want and then click "Apply."
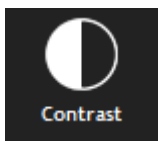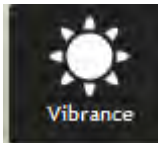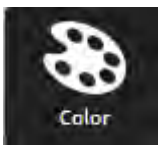
k. All done adjusting? Now it is time to save the image. Click the "Save" icon in the upper left of the screen. The name will default to the same name you started with. Set the file name in this format: **LastNameFirstName_TitleWords** This means you start out with your last name, no space, your first name, then an underline, then the title of the piece. No spaces. Do not use special characters in the name, such as if you have a quote in the title such as Billy's Hat, just skip the quote and show it as BillysHat. Be sure to use initial capitals on the name and title words.
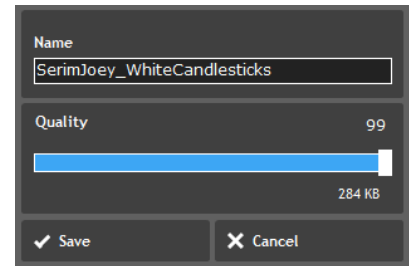
Set the quality slider to something between 80 and 100. Notice the effect on the file size below. Try to get a size of about 300kb. If you have properly set the image size, you should achieve this with a quality well above 80. At right is an example:

Click "Save" and you will be asked where you want to save it. Put the file in the location you defined for the files to be sent in Step I.

III. *Prepare and Send Images*

a. Write a complete description of the image. The description should include
   title (matches the file name)
   size (stated as height x width x depth in inches, such as 24"h x 8"w x 6"d)
   method (such as firing method, cone, glaze treatment, mixed media additions, etc.)
   description or story (optional)
   price (optional)

   Put the descriptions in a document or in the body of an email.

b. Attach the image(s) to an email. If you have prepared the images properly, they should be no larger than 300kb per image and you can attach several to one email. If you have a limit on the size of email that you can send, it is safest to send multiple emails, one for each image.

   Important information for those of you who use an Apple computer: MAC Mail program tends to imbed the images in the body of the email by default. It needs to be sent as an **ATTACHMENT**, not imbedded. If you see the image in the email, then it won't work. You should see it as a file attached to the email. There are several methods of insuring it is attached. Here's an article about it: http://www.macworld.com/article/1137214/attachemailphotos.html.   If that doesn't help, research in on-line search engines, like google.com, for these keywords: "apple mail attach image not embed" You will find lots of information about it.

   Send the email to the address specified for the activity. For the claystudiotour.com, this is jnm@nmpotters.org. For full specifications see http://nmpca.onefireplace.org/studiotourinstructions

Judy Nelson-Moore
NMPCA webmaster, June, 2013

Most Frequent Mistakes When Preparing and Sending Images

These mistakes take extra time and could delay your page update or cause us to ask you to correct the problem before we can update your page.

- **Leaving too much space around the image.**
  Don't waste valuable web "real estate" with background so that the image is too small to see.

- **Not naming the file correctly**.
  Name as LastNameFirstName_TitleOfThePiece.jpg. Use no punctuation except the underline in the title.

- **Not sizing the image properly.**
  Make sure the image is 600 pixels tall and no wider than 900 pixels.

- **Forgetting to send the description**
  or incomplete description.

This article describes using a free on-line editor call Pixlr Express. There are several free editors available on the internet. They can be used on any computer attached to the internet or from your ipad or IOS device. While the use of these tools may be different than described above, you can perform the same functions: rotate, crop, resize, and adjust the appearance.

Here are two other on-line editors that are free:

Google+ Creative Kit: https://plus.google.com/100432630524345907101   (you must sign up for a free google plus account). Uses google albums.

Photoshop Express: http://www.photoshop.com/tools/expresseditor.

Check your ipad or IOS device for free photo editing tools. Pixlr has a free app for ipad and IOS devices that works the same as described in this article.

Of course, none of this is to prevent you from using Photoshop Elements, full Photoshop, or any other software on your computer. Even when you do use these software programs, these instructions will help you prepare your images.