

Oil and Water

A very successful mini hands-on workshop was held at our September 3rd meeting and we were able to capture some amazing photos. Here are the details on setting up a similar workspace at home.

Equipment Needed:

- Camera with macro lens OR any lens you want to work with.
- Tripod with mounting to enable camera to shoot straight down at subject.
- Glass bowl or tray large enough to hold the water and oil.
- Pane of glass such as an empty picture frame.
- Some form of color source – wrapping paper, fabric, holographic vinyl, vibrant “wallpaper” on ipad or tablet. The brighter the better.
- Light source – small goose neck lamp.
- Some sort of blocks to elevate the pane of glass above your color backdrop. Try books, cd cases, shoe boxes etc.
- Oil – canola, olive or whatever you have on hand.
- Dish soap.
- Small stir stick – to break apart oil droplets if you want to.
- Table to set up workstation – if you are using your tripod a coffee table works best so you can set up and use your camera easily.

Set Up:

- Place your color backdrop on the table.
- Stack your blocks up around the backdrop to create the structure to hold the pane of glass
- Place pane of glass on top of blocks making sure it is sturdy!
- Next comes the bowl for the water.
- Place your light source so it shines underneath the pane of glass.
- Pour water into the bowl to the level you want.
- Add 1Tbsp of oil at a time until you are happy with the amount of oil floating on top of the water. 2 Tbsp is usually enough.
- Now add a drop or two of dish soap.
- You’re ready to start shooting!

Tips and Tricks:

- Use glass bowls that do not have any writing or scratches on the bottom – look for large vases or flat casserole dish lids.
- Use bigger water container if you are NOT using a macro lens. This gives you more area to photograph. You will most likely be cropping your image.

- Do not put too much soap in and do not stir your oil & soap mixture too much as this creates too many bubbles – unless that is the effect you are looking for.
- The further away your water and oil droplets are from the color source the better. This helps you and your camera to focus on the droplets and not on the color source. Add more water and/or a deeper bowl or build your structure higher.
- Give yourself enough room underneath your pane of glass to move your color source around.
- I found the light source helps to create the 3d effect on the oil droplets.
- A really good quick read is “11 Tips for Creating Abstract Oil and Water Images” with Dan Power on Photocrowd.com