

EQUIPMENT FOR MUSEUM PHOTOGRAPHY

7d Twatling Road, Barnt Green,

Birmingham, B45 8HX

Telephone: 07792 408154

website: <http://www.SHphoto.co.uk/>

e-mail: info@shphoto.co.uk

Example equipment selections for museum photography

The following examples are intended to demonstrate how a variety of different kits for museum photography can be assembled at a number of different price points. Obviously, more money will buy better, more capable equipment, but in all cases an attempt has been made to avoid adding unnecessary items. Some collections may require other pieces of equipment, but this can only be ascertained after examining the particular requirements of individual museums.

Bare-bones kit

Designed for very occasional photography or where there are extreme budget constraints.

Manufacturer refurbished "bridge" style camera <i>For example Fuji Finepix S1000fd</i>	£ 95
2Gb memory card for above	£ 8
Velbon DF-50 tripod – extends to 152cm height	£ 35
Total	£ 138

This kit lacks any form of external "studio" lighting equipment. Therefore, sources of light will be restricted to available (daylight), or the camera's built in flash unit. The camera will deliver good results, but will not offer so much fine control as more advanced models. The choice of a refurbished unit reduces the cost but means that a warranty is still available.

Basic kit

Manufacturer refurbished "bridge" style camera <i>For example Fuji Finepix S1000fd</i>	£ 95
2Gb memory card for above	£ 8
Velbon DF-50 tripod – extends to 152cm height	£ 35
Interfit INT117 Super Cool-lite 5 Twin Head Kit <i>or substitute Elinchrom Minilite 2-head kit at £318 (+ £ 49)</i>	£ 269
Total	£ 407

This kit adds continuous studio lighting to the bare bones kit. Continuous lighting means work can be carried out regardless of the amount or quality of available light, and the learning curve is quite shallow as it is a case of "what-you-see-is-what-you-get".

Intermediate kit

Entry level digital SLR camera	£ 349
<i>For example Canon EOS1000D plus 18-55 mm lens</i>	
2-off 2Gb memory card for above	£ 16
Velbon DF-50 tripod – extends to 152cm height	£ 35
Elinchrom D-Lite it 2 Studio 2 Go Set	£ 500
<i>D-Lite 4 units are also available, offering more power – add £60</i>	
Total	£ 900

In this kit, the continuous lighting from the basic kit is replaced by flash (or strobe) lighting, and the camera is upgraded to an entry level digital SLR, which brings with it more control over the final picture as well as the ability to add specialist lenses in the future. The lights specified, whilst quite expensive, are extremely capable units. Strobe flash offers more power in a shorter duration, which means that problems with camera shake are eliminated and some tasks can be completed without the need to support the camera on the tripod.

Advanced kit

Entry level digital SLR camera	£ 349
<i>For example Canon EOS1000D plus 18-55 mm lens</i>	
2-off 2Gb memory card for above	£ 16
Canon EF 50mm f2.5 Macro lens	£ 225
Manfrotto 055 XPROB tripod – extends to 179cm height	£ 118
<i>Can also double as a copy stand by removing the centre column and re-inserting it horizontally.</i>	
Manfrotto 391RC2 Head – for above.	£ 57
<i>Pan and tilt head for accurate positioning of the camera</i>	
Elinchrom D-Lite it 2 Studio 2 Go Set	£ 500
<i>D-Lite 4 units are also available, offering more power – add £60</i>	
Total	£ 1265

This kit contains the equipment from the intermediate kit, but upgrades the tripod to a sturdier model and adds a macro lens for the camera to allow close-up photography of small objects. Some training may be required to understand how to use the flash heads.

Extras and accessories

Firstcall Copy Stand 920	£ 149
<i>Allows the camera to be placed directly above the object – for flat work, small archaeological finds, miniatures etc.</i>	
Background paper stand set – Interfit INT755C	£ 80
<i>Quite expensive for what it does. If one room is to be set aside to use as a photographic studio, it is entirely possible that suitable wall mounted supports could be constructed from wood, piping etc from the local hardware store.</i>	
Colorama Background paper rolls. 1.35m wide x 11m long	£ 35 each

Individual sheets of coloured paper from an art shop may be cheaper in the short term, but longer rolls allow a floor-to-ceiling "sweep" to be set-up. Various colours are available, but black, neutral greys and white are a good place to start.

Computer Software and Hardware

Google Picasa	free!
<i>Probably the most versatile freely available image management software available at the present time. Some limitations, but at least give it a try.</i>	
Adobe Photoshop Elements 9.0	£ 72
<i>A cut down version of the "industry standard" image editing package, with more than enough features. The full version of Photoshop, besides being nearly ten times the price, has many features that will only be used by a graphics professional.</i>	
Lacie Neil Poulton 1Tb external hard disc drive	£71
<i>Vital for providing backup copies of images in case of computer failure</i>	

Prices were correct at time of writing – last updated 28.01.2011. Prices rounded to the nearest pound for convenience. Prices sourced from Fujifilm refurbished store, Jessops, Warehouse Express, Robert White, Firstcall photographic.

Exact combinations of equipment listed have not been tested, although believed to be fully compatible; please check with the manufacturer if in doubt.

Simon Ham

Manufacturer links – check these links for more information about the individual products listed above.

Fuji Finepix S1000fd	http://fujifilm.co.uk/consumer/digital/digital-cameras/d-slr-long-zoom/finepix-s1000fd-119757
Canon EOS1000d	http://www.canon.co.uk/for_home/product_finder/cameras/digital_slr/EOS_1000D/
Canon 50mm f2.5 EF macro	http://www.canon.co.uk/For%5FHome/Product%5FFinder/Cameras/EF%5FLenses/Macro%5FLenses/EF%5F50mm%5Ff25%5FMacro/
Velbon DF-50 tripod	http://www.velbon.co.uk/newvelbon/pages/DF-50.html
Manfrotto 055XPROB tripod	http://www.manfrotto.com/product/055XPROB
Elinchrom Minilites	http://www.robertwhite.co.uk/product.asp?P_ID=1513&P=Minilite
Elinchrom D-Lites	http://www.elinchrom.com/products.php?cat=112
Interfit Super Cool-Lite	http://www.interfitphotographic.com/Lightng/Product%20Pages/Super%20Cool-lite%205.php
Firstcall Copy Stand 920	http://www.firstcall-photographic.co.uk/products/2965/firstcall-copystand-920
Interfit background supports	http://www.interfitphotographic.com/Accessories/Product%20Pages/backsupportsystems.php
Colorama backgrounds	http://www.colorama-photo.com/backgrounds.php
Lacie external drives	http://www.lacie.com/products/product.htm?pid=11016