



A Step-by-Step Guide to Portfolio Layout and follow-up

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General Aspects of Good Portfolios

1. Your portfolio should be comprised of both textual and visual documentation of your career as an artist. This includes a CV, artist's statement, and biography, as well as prints and digital images of your work. If possible, you should also include a "supporting documents" section that is comprised of third-party reviews or articles published about you as an artist.
2. Although you may wish to convey your creativity through the design of your portfolio, it is important to strike a balance between eye-catching design, and design that takes attention away from the work itself. It is extremely important that your portfolio should never be designed at the expense of complying with the requirements outlined by the recipient.
3. Your portfolio should be free of spelling and grammatical errors, be easy to navigate, and well-written. It should be professional. This includes being free of damage, looking neat and well-organized, and fulfilling *all* the requirements the recipient has asked for.
4. Your portfolio should include your best work. It is better to include fewer stronger pieces, than a plethora of weaker pieces.
5. Even a good portfolio can benefit from the critique of a knowledgeable person. Regardless of your level of experience, a second (or even third) opinion is an invaluable portfolio-proofing tool.

Choosing and Organizing Visuals and Text

Displaying an understanding of who you are submitting your portfolio to, and for what purpose, is one of the most important things you can do to make your portfolio stand out. Your portfolio should reflect you as an artist, but it is equally important that it reflect the recipient through content and organization. It is important to understand the business perspective of the portfolio *recipient*. This knowledge will provide some much needed guidance when choosing the visual and textual components of your portfolio. For example, if you are hoping to establish a long term relationship with a *gallery*, a portfolio conveying a sense of consistency and gradual thematic progression would enable a gallery to more confidently take a chance on you, knowing the kind of work they will be investing in over the long-term, than a portfolio comprised of radically disjointed work.

When you are organizing the information in your portfolio it is important to make sure that you are following any and all available guidelines. If you have been asked to submit five images, submit five and no more. In the absence of specific guidelines, take care to create a dynamic package that keeps the recipients interested and does not become repetitive—avoid filler images! The visual component of your portfolio should always be comprised of technically strong images (see our “documenting your work” section if you are unsure of what a technically strong image should look like), but beyond that a simple tool for creating a strong visual component to your portfolio is organization. A portfolio that conveys a sense of order and connection between the images—chronological, thematic, technical and/or aesthetic—can often provide the recipient with a straightforward and valuable indication of your artistic strengths, potential for growth, and level of professionalism. Finally, be sure to label each image clearly. This should indicate how the work should be viewed, its size, title, and medium.

The written component of your portfolio should (again) be tailored to the recipient, but will most likely include a CV, biography, and artist statement (see our “Writing a CV” and “Publicizing your Work” sections if you are unsure of how to craft these documents). You do not necessarily need to write a new artists statement and CV every time you submit your portfolio, but you should take care that what you have written is relevant to the submission at hand. It is often useful to write down (in point form) the information you *need* to include with respect to the *particular* business or organization you are submitting a portfolio to. From there you can make a point form list of all *relevant* information, including a short sentence about *why* and *how* this information relates. By doing this you have created an organized framework that includes all the information necessary to the submission, and you can fill it in from there. Don’t worry if you have to go through a number of drafts before you are able to say what you want to in the way

you want to, all writers do! If you are not a confident writer, try to get someone knowledgeable in the field of art who is confident to edit your writing. A useful method for speeding up the draft process is to read what you have written aloud. Don't let this replace an external editor though, especially if you are crafting your portfolio under a tight deadline.

As a final note, you may find it helpful to create a portfolio "master archive". This is an organized digital database of all portfolio-relevant information that you can draw from when creating a new portfolio.

Follow-up

If you have sent a portfolio to a call for submission, you may likely have to wait for quite a while before hearing back. Patience, in these cases, is a virtue. An unsolicited portfolio submission should be followed up with a phone call about a week later in order to make sure the portfolio has been received. During this follow up call it is acceptable to ask when you might hear back from the establishment, or even if you could set up a meeting to discuss the portfolio, but make sure that you are polite and accommodating. Taking initiative is important to the development of an artist's career, so don't be too discouraged by rejection. If the opportunity for feedback is available, be sure to take it. Finally, if you wish to have your portfolio returned to you, be sure to include a self-addressed, stamped envelope with your submission.