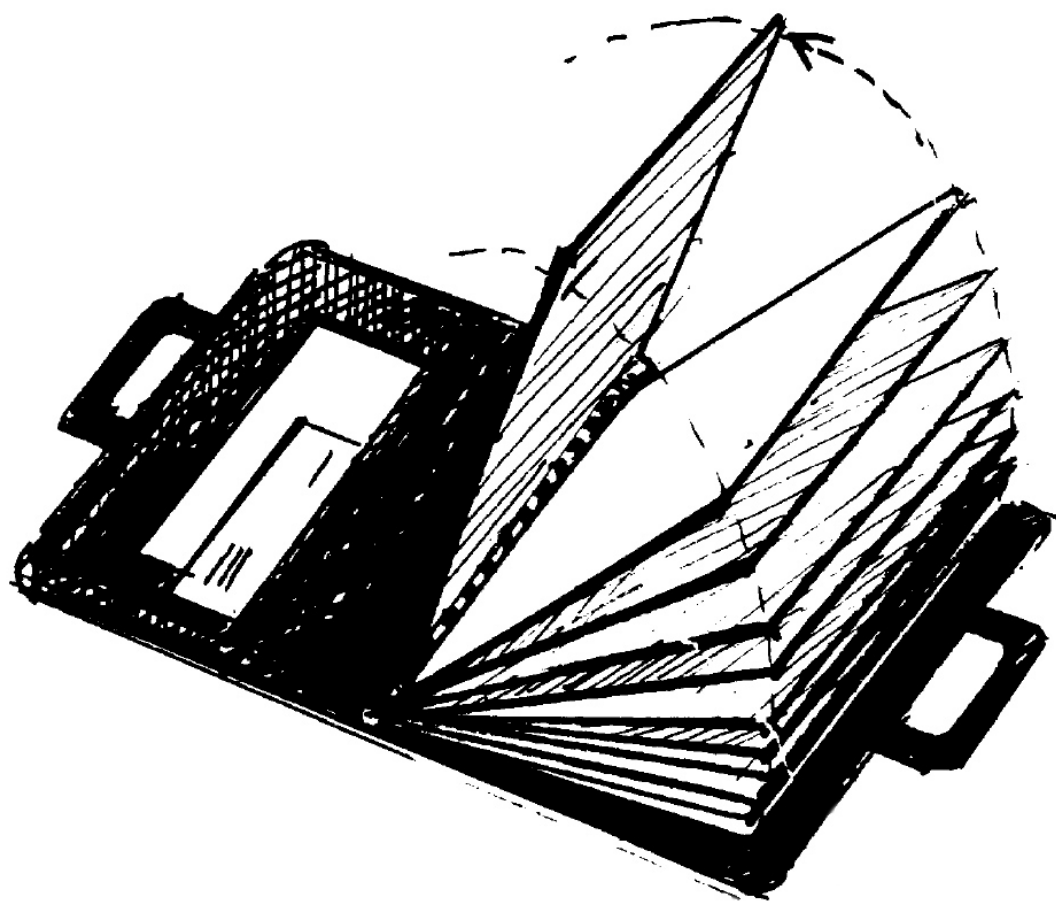


the First

PORTFOLIO MANUAL

**for Architecture and Design
Students**



Barbara Carr, SIAD / David Michael Lieb, RA, NCARB, FRSA

Carr, Barbara, 1931 - 2009; Lieb, David Michael, 1967 -
The First Portfolio Manual for Architecture and Design Students

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Forward

I met Professor Barbara Carr in the Fall of 1986 at Pratt Institute School of Architecture. Taking her portfolio class as an undergraduate student in architecture, I was immediately drawn to her unique qualities. Many would describe her as eccentric, but I came to know her as my movie star, artist, illustrator, professor, then as a mentor, friend and colleague.

I have fond memories of her dynamic teaching ability and caring for her students, qualities I admired and learned from. Whether on the streets of New York City on-site sketching, or giving her students demonstrations on portfolios at her studio in mid-town Manhattan, or our lunches at the Society of Illustrators I always benefited from what she brought to the place and the experience.

During the 1990's, years after graduating, Barbara entrusted me with the start of a "book" she had started to finally assemble, representing the many parts she taught in her portfolio course. We continued to correspond and meet when I was in NYC, but in 2009 I received word of her death from Alzheimer's.

This manual represents the decades that Professor Barbara Carr instructed students of architecture and design, as well as my own, on the fine art of developing the first professional portfolio. This manual contains the best of Barbara's original draft along with necessary updates to reflect the changing technology and competitive markets in all design fields. My hope, is that past, current and future students of design find The First Portfolio Manual an essential professional tool as they transition from the academy to the various disciplines of design and beyond.

David Michael Lieb, RA, RID, FRSA

I INTRODUCTION

Whether you believe you are ready or not ready to start a portfolio...begin now! Everyone who wants to work in architecture, industrial and interior design, graphic disciplines, copy writing, public relations, TV Video production, or in any field of communication must have a visual presentation.

Major design firms also undertake the development of a portfolio by producing the "firm brochure" and collateral documents.

ADVICE TO STUDENTS

1. Maintain and store a safe collection of your school projects - all project work. The worst mistake you can make is to not maintain the work in a safe, dry location, covered from dust or they are accidentally discarded.

2. Protect your stored work properly. Do not allow the soiled back of one piece or board to rub or press against the front of another. This can result in works cross-soiling and media can also blend if pressed for long periods of time. Treat everything as though it is your best work.

3. Photograph all models immediately after constructing or presenting in your classes (even the sketch and study models) as models are very susceptible to damage, dust, and fading from sun-exposure.

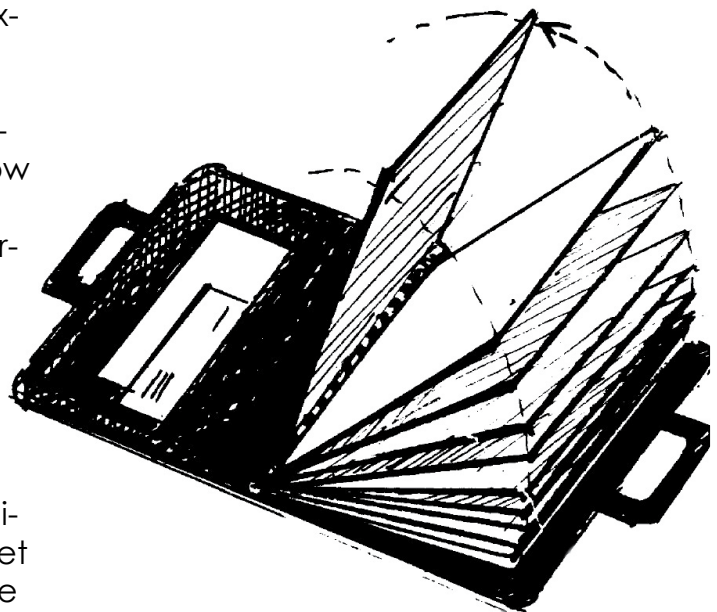
4. Purchase a digital SLR camera, minimum 12 MP and a tripod and learn how to use the camera in different lighting settings and different exposures (experiment with different lighting types and camera lighting settings e.g. fluorescent, natural / outdoors, incandescent).

5. Purchase a portfolio first (book or binding in case). Itoya makes The Original Profolio Case line of economical yet professional portfolio cases. They come in different orientation formats and sizes allowing great flexibility for the first portfolio or the seasoned professional. For comparison, in 2013 a Profolio case may

range \$10-\$25 for the case and integral pages versus a more substantial portfolio case with black rings in the binder (special order item typically), portfolio leafs and leather or faux leather exterior that can be expensive for a student investment.

For comparison the cost of developing an entire first portfolio in the digital age should not exceed \$100, whereas specialized portfolio cases can far exceed that cost by themselves.

6. Your portfolio is one of several devices (e.g. website, primer / teaser sheet, resume, business card / calling card, etc.) you will use to present yourself and your student and professional work.



2 YOUR PORTFOLIO

The following guidelines refer to the “book style” portfolio. The book-style portfolio has proven to be the most workable format for students and young professionals. While individual portfolio preferences and formats may change as your career progresses, these 13 points are basic principles for making effective presentations of your academic and early professional projects.

1. SELECT ONLY YOUR BEST WORK!

Ruthlessly edit your project work. One inferior piece will detract from the narrative you are presenting of your work. Pin up or spread out all your work as a first step and see what catches your eye first.

2. EMPHASIZE YOUR STRENGTHS!

Minimize or eliminate examples of project work or exercises of tasks you dislike doing. If you have strong computer rendering skills and poor hand rendering skills, play to your strengths.

3. OPEN STRONG!

“Knock their socks off” with your first portfolio page. When it comes to highlighting your skills or passions for design, do not wait until you are pages into the book for the interviewer to see it. Do not fall into the “table of contents” trap or name, logo, contents trap. Does your educational and professional narrative start with bullet points or a visually exciting image that sets the tone for the story you are about to tell?

4. UTILIZE DOUBLE PAGE SPREADS!

Maximize your visual mark even if it means slicing project content across the portfolio seam (cutting an image in half). Consider the larger canvas and greater creative and graphic possibilities that two pages when viewed as “one” present.

5. ASPECT WORK IN THE SAME DIRECTION!

Your portfolio is a book that tells a story - it is a narrative of your educational and professional pursuits. Ensure the portfolio does not require the interviewer to turn the portfolio book to properly engage it.

6. CHOOSE A PAGE-SIZE GOOD FOR YOUR WORK!

We recommend 8.5” x 11” as an industry standard for design portfolios allowing for ease in both carrying and updating. For the student considering graduate studies, this format will also be applicable for most graduate design program submission requirements.

14x17 can also support larger graphic work, and 11x17 can also support design portfolios but depends on a larger format laser printer or a reprographic house for “on the run” updates before an interview or presentation.

7. TEN (10) IS GENERALLY THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF PAGES (LEAVES) TO USE!

Your book is a narrative and if you have selected your strongest work, 10 pages should be easy to fill and maintain. When you begin to accumulate too many portfolio pages then it is a good indicator that it is time to re-evaluate the book content and refine the book and narrative.

Store odd-sized materials (eg. Samples of CAD drafting skills; half-sized sets of design or contract documents from internships or professional experience) in portfolio or carrying case pockets, access them as they are requested during an interview or presentation.

8. USE ONLY QUALITY BACKGROUND PAPERS BETWEEN CONTENT SHEETS!

Upon purchasing a portfolio book with integral or loose leaves, immediately discard the matte finish black or off-white / green filler sheets. Replacement sheets should consist of a minimum 52lb, 93 brightness white paper.

The weight and brightness of the paper will prevent what is called telescoping. Telescoping results when you place two project sheets back to back with a thin, 24lb or less filler page of black or non-white color resulting in the darker color telescoping through your project sheet and muting the vibrancy of colors and graphics in your presentation.

9. USE ONLY QUALITY REPRODUCTIONS

Given the often subtle color differences from printer to printer as you print digitally based content, it is critical to maximize your resolution and clarity, and color correctness of images in your book. We recommend minimum laser printer standards for printing content and discourage the use of ink-jet printers.

The paper you select for your final reproductions should maximize brightness (96 brightness minimum recommended) and be printed on a high quality paper (weight greater than 32lb recommended).

As mentioned in point 8 filler sheets will also play an important role in the quality of your finished work.

Test different papers and laser printers for the best results.

10. AIM FOR VARIETY IN SUBJECT MATTER

If you tell the same part of your narrative 8 times, the interviewer and audience will lose interest in the story. Sequence and pace your book as if you are constructing a screenplay. If the narrative is good, viewers will respond favorably.

11. THE CARTOON SET

A valuable tool in this process of developing the portfolio is utilizing a “cartoon set” of your entire book. The cartoon set accomplishes what a storyboard would for a filmmaker, allowing them to visualize storyline, scene, and content and details.

By developing your cartoon set, you are able to identify the sequence of pages, projects, and your overall narrative. The cartoon set also allows you to easily transition from the cartoon set into the rough layout in CS-6 In-Design or other cloud softwares you may use for your portfolio layout.

12. CUSTOM TAILOR EACH PRESENTATION!

Be sensitive to your audience and carefully tailor the presentation content as needed.

13. ALWAYS KEEP YOUR PORTFOLIO UP TO DATE!

Be ready to present or respond to a request for an interview on a moment's notice. Do not fall into the “I will get to it” trap. Immediately update your portfolio work as soon as you have completed part or all of a project. In an ever changing industry it is important to be prepared for employment changes or new opportunities when you receive the call.

And update your resume too!



Selecting your work can be the most important and cause of the most anxiety. The following 4 steps, when completed in entirety, will maximize the success of the exercise, serve as a shared exercise, and result in a major accomplishment towards assembling your book.

1. Spread everything out on the floor, on chairs, and pinned to the wall.

Unroll drawings, unfold prints, separate project boards. Do whatever is necessary to be able to see everything at once including but not limited to: study models; finished models; photographs; paintings; sculpture; diagrams; jewelry; woodworking; sketchbooks; concepts on tracing paper; published works; graphics; media projects; et al.

2. Arrange your project work into categories and place a simple sign adjacent to the work. The following are suggested groupings:

- a. Concept sketches / programming / diagrams / analysis documents.
- b. Free-Hand: on-site sketches, vignette perspectives, free-hand drafting.
- c. Design Projects.
- d. Models: sketch / study / finished.
- e. Technical Drawings (CAD/other).
- f. Media: rendering samples by hand and computer.
- g. Allied interests: sculpture, painting, photography, anything visual.

3. "OPEN STRONG"!

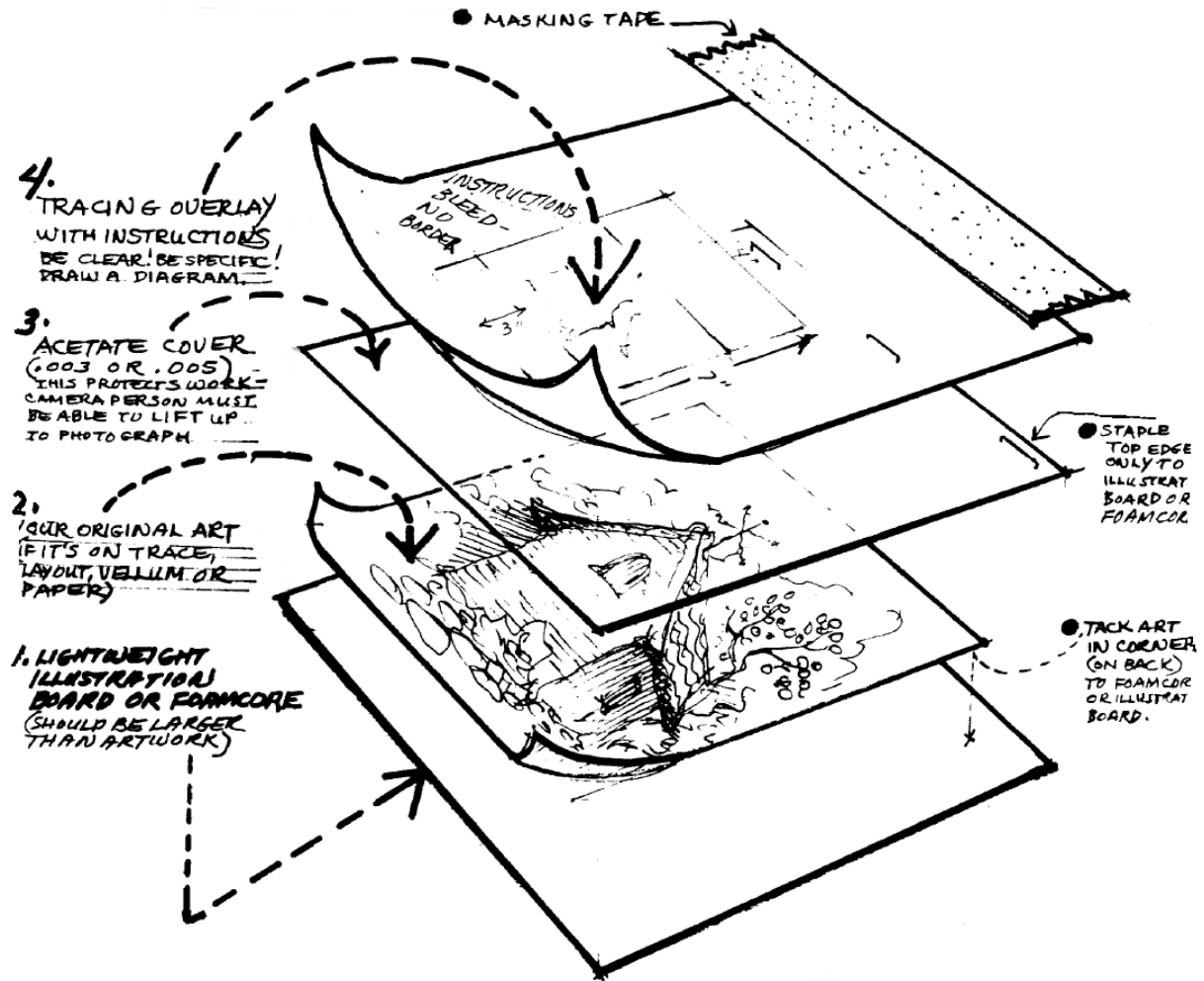
Identify the one piece that is visually strong and that is where you begin. Let your intuition guide you on this step for your first pass through the work. Be objective in this step and engage the opinions of your faculty and colleagues. What is an appropriate starting image for your book, your narrative?

4. PROCESS!

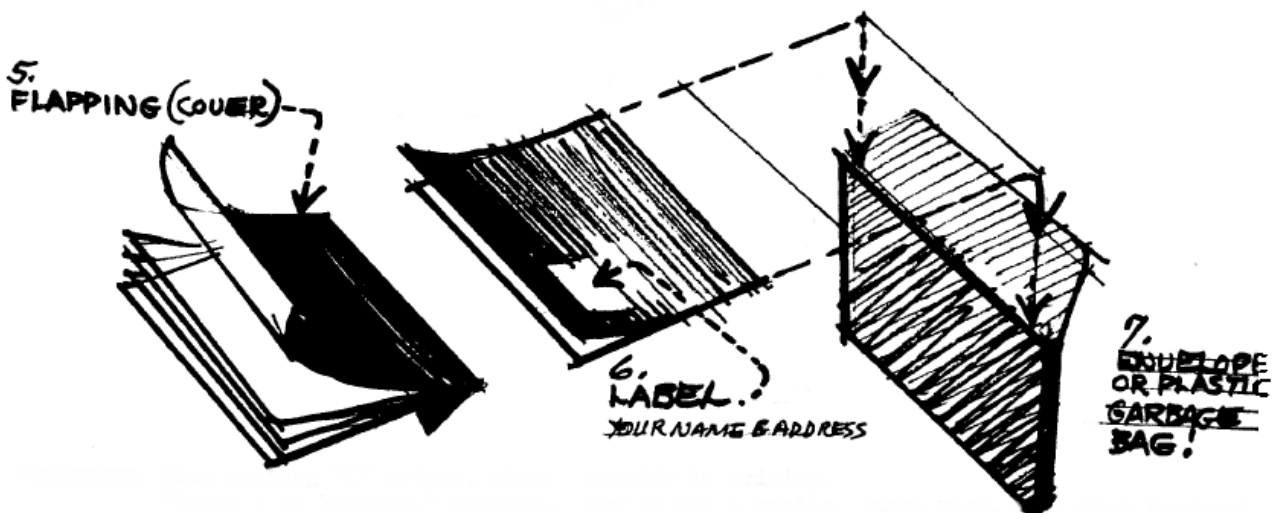
Developing your design portfolio is an ongoing process like design itself. As you mature and evolve as a designer incorporate your latest and best representational work in your book, re-order, and re-define the narrative-it does not have to be chronological. Always keep your most current work up to date in the book.

HOW TO PREPARE AND PROTECT YOUR ORIGINAL ART FOR COLOR REPRODUCTIONS

(or: How to Protect Your Valuable Work from Someone's Pizza Lunch)



These illustrations present a good method for maintaining your project work for long-term storage or in preparation for individual or professional photography. In many instances you may already have your work mounted to boards making the method that much easier saving time and cost.



COLOR REPRODUCTIONS

There are 5 considerations which may help you determine what kind of color reproduction to get for your portfolio and other presentation uses.

1. Size of Your Art

This is the first consideration in that architects and designers tend to work in finished formats larger than 18"x24" (approximate measure). Be aware that costs for large format work increase quickly with color reproductions.

2. Tonal Quality of Your Art

If your original is basically line-work and flat colors (eg. Colored pencils and / or marker on yellow tracing) color copy formats and large scale scanning services will serve you.

Sensitive, fine work with half-tones will require custom scanning services for best quality which will give you digital files to work with in other softwares and formats.

Personal scanners. Though the quality of personal home-office type scanners and all-in-one machines provide good, solid scanning options, depending on the original artwork size and tonal qualities, professional services may be recommended or high mega-pixel photography work (refer to Photography on the next pages).

3. Print Quality / Digital Quality

For portfolios, exhibitions and presentation boards always get the best quality reproductions within your individual or project / client budget.

The digital printing industry is constantly changing from "digital press" quality machines (eg. IGEN and INDIGO) at large reprographic specialty houses to good quality personal and business printing on Epson printers (used for quality basis only). The following are good basic guidelines to follow when scanning, photographing, and developing portfolio books for print, web, and email uses:

Scanning

Image quality should be 200-300 DPI. Making the image resolution higher will not necessarily improve the quality of the image, but will increase the file size.

Digital Photography

We recommend using "fine" settings, 10-12 mega-pixel minimum. (refer to Photography on the next pages).

Print

Image quality should be 200-300 DPI. Making the image resolution higher will not improve the quality of final prints (for small scale to medium scaled work).

Use a good quality laser printer for all portfolio work. Ensure you use the same paper for all printing as various reprographic and commercial repro centers MAY use different weight and brightness papers for the "standard" color laser machines. If you print from your own laser printer, purchase enough paper for your portfolio book and set aside the remainder in a safe place for updates.

Web

Image quality should be 300 DPI maximum. Image and file size will be a determining factor.

PDFs

Assembling PDFs of portfolios, primer / teaser pages from CS6 platform softwares should be created with images that are no larger than 150 DPI otherwise your final documents may exceed maximum file sizes for emailing to prospective employers.

5. Limited Budget

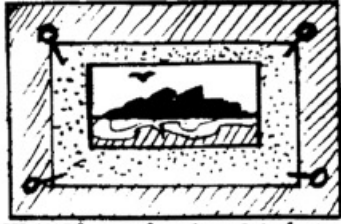
With the good quality home and home-office technology available today, any student should be able to assemble an economical, good quality portfolio and presentation. Research and trial and error are still the best options to familiarize yourself with new printing technology.

PHOTOGRAPHY

A few basic tips for photographing your own 2D and 3D work (flat art and models).

FLAT ART:

Photograph outdoors in the shade for even lighting whenever possible.



WRONG! Don't do this! Art image is too small, mats & push-pins are distracting.

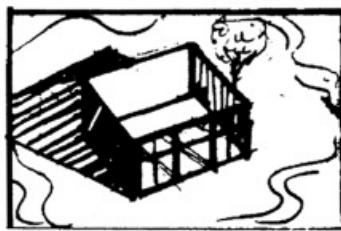


RIGHT! Art image fills the frame. Bracket several times for different exposures.

ARCHITECTURAL MODELS:



WRONG! Model image is too small, items in background are distracting and out of scale.



RIGHT! Model image fills the frame. Do not let edges of model show. These hard edges often detract from effect.



EVEN BETTER THAN RIGHT! Use a close-up lens and make your model look real by taking several perspective points-of-view! Almost no one ever does this for their portfolios.

2D Photography

You should find a suitable studio or other area where your work can be mounted level to a wall surface. Essential equipment are: digital SLR camera with 18-55 lens w/ clear filter (you may want to try various lenses to ensure you can zoom in on work properly), 10-12 mega-pixels min. (set to "fine" setting); tripod; properly charged battery.

Lighting will be essential to the quality of your self-photography. If shooting under fluorescent lighting (not recommended), ensure your camera settings can be adjusted for different lighting types and settings (this will prevent hot range or cool range photos). Whenever possible we recommend shooting your work outdoors or in a location with uninterrupted natural sunlight (not necessarily direct for 2D work).

3D Photography

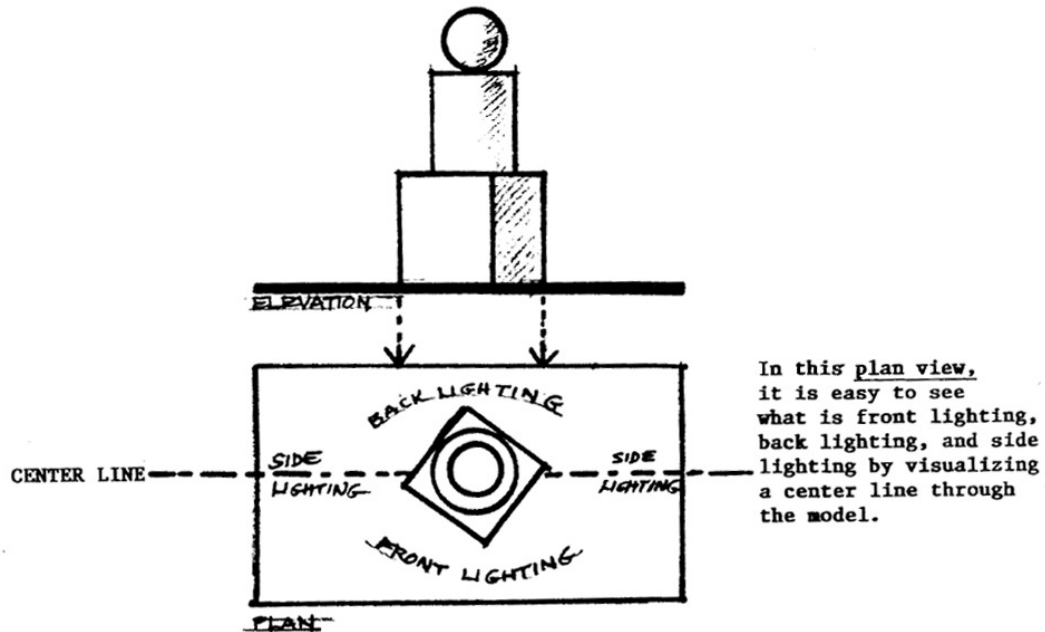
Natural light outdoors always provide the best results. Purchase a black scrim of matte-black fabric or black velvet, attach to a vertical surface and drape so you have a complete "back-drop" to shoot against.

When taking photographs of 2D and 3D images, bracket 3-4 settings for exposures so you have ample images to review and select from once downloaded to your computer. If you are careful with your photography settings it will reduce any "adjusting" or "modifications" required in image softwares.

Using "fine" image quality settings will also allow greater flexibility in adjusting image sizes in graphic softwares and ensures higher resolution printing. Though image sizes will be larger, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. Image sized can always be reduced for digital / web based applications and needs.

LIGHT

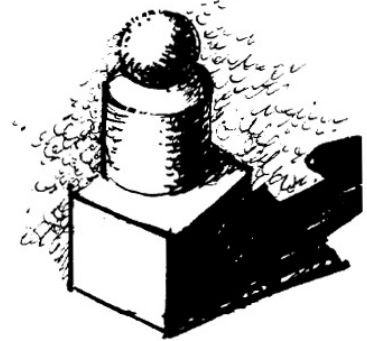
Lighting Design Models for Dramatic Effects and /or Form



DIRECT FRONT LIGHTING
Flattens out forms & creates light silhouettes against background.



DIRECT BACK LIGHTING
Flattens out forms & creates dark silhouettes against background.



FRONT ANGLE LIGHTING
Shows forms because contrasts are on the forms, within the shapes themselves. This 45 degree angle is called "The Artist Light"

The most useful and important kind of lighting to know how to handle well is front angle lighting because it always shows forms. Begin with your major light source and play with various angles. Once you find an angle you like, take a large piece of white matte-board to "bounce" the light the opposite direction. Play with positioning the matte-board at an arm's length from the model, close-up, angled. This "bounced"

or "reflective" light (think of moonlight which is reflected light from the sun) will open up shades and shadows on the dark side to any degree you wish.

Utilize a black fabric scrim, pinned to a vertical surface and draped that the model can be placed upon for positioning. Scrolled black photography paper-scrims can also be utilized.

EXPLANATORY TEXT AND GRAPHICS

Explanatory text is critical to the presentation and understanding of your portfolio body of work. By providing an understandable, detailed explanation of your project content and concept the portfolio and presentation can stand on its own if you cannot be present to provide verbal explanation.

The process of developing explanatory text allows your architecture and design portfolio to be understood without having to talk unnecessarily during an interview. In some cases, firms may have "drop-off" or "email" policies so the ability of your portfolio to "speak for itself" is crucial.

The term "explanatory text" can be applied to a wide range of situations from the most elementary (project title, site, graphic scales, north arrows, elevation designations, graphic keys, color coding and legends for plans, sections, elevations, et al); and including concept statements to technical information and instructions. Whatever the intent of explanatory text and graphics it must be presented in a graphically legible format.

Design presentations usually have minimal explanatory text (depending on the requirements of the project). Students often need to add explanatory text and graphics to their portfolios before finalizing digital and print portfolio formats.

Sooner or later even the most creative and engaging design work will benefit from explanation for the viewer / interviewer when taken out of the educational context and placed in a portfolio book. Previous students of ours have told us that explanatory text and graphics have proven useful in stimulating conversations, easing tensions during

interviews, and provided the necessary ability of the portfolio to be viewed on its own.

One fine architect who had worked on the Louvre project in Paris, France for I.M. Pei & Partners, felt there should be a half-page devoted to describing the person's design approach and thinking processes before presenting each project shown in the portfolio. This idea appeals to us because of the artistic and poetic potential for enriching and personalizing the design presentation itself, especially in the digital age where often content is overlooked for the surface visual graphics.

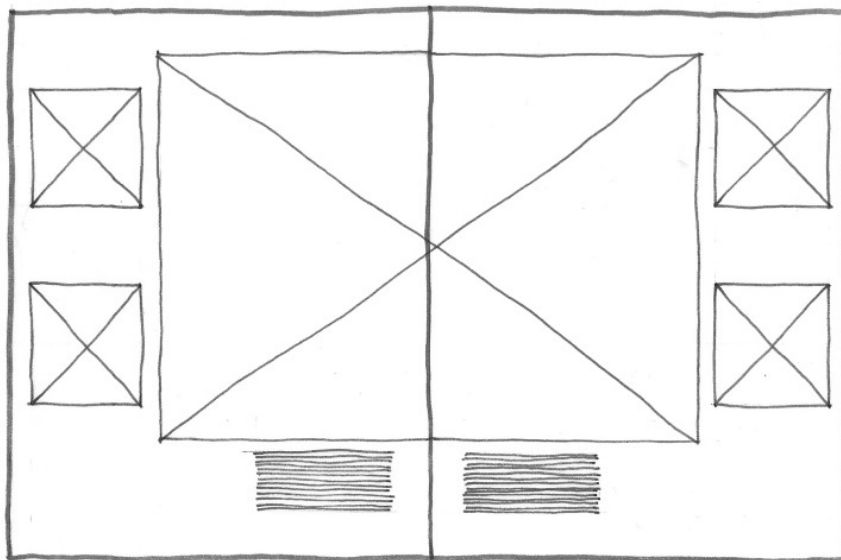
Key plans are a useful tool when using explanatory graphics to identify a location of a plan in relation to the entire project; where a section is cut through a plan; the point of view (cone of vision) for perspective and axonometric views.

Graphic scales are recommended in lieu of designating the scale of an image as adjusting image sizes can change "scaled" dimensions of a orthogonal drawing. A graphic scale will adjust appropriately with re-sizing of a graphic orthogonal drawing (plan, section, elevation, et al).

LAYOUT TIPS

The following layout tips are presented as starting points for any first portfolio. Once you have selected and started photographing and scanning your work, the next step is to develop a "cartoon set" that carefully outlines your entire portfolio book.

The most critical of the decision making is determining which orientation or aspect to use to best present your work. The following layouts and tips will help guide you:



1. Hierarchy.

Hierarchy is the most important feature of a portfolio book. Hierarchy between images and explanatory text is crucial to a successfully presented book. The portrait example (above) presents a large image as a "double page spread" that takes advantage of two pages as a single "canvas." Smaller, supporting images balance the presentation. Blocks of explanatory text can be provided as a third layer of information.

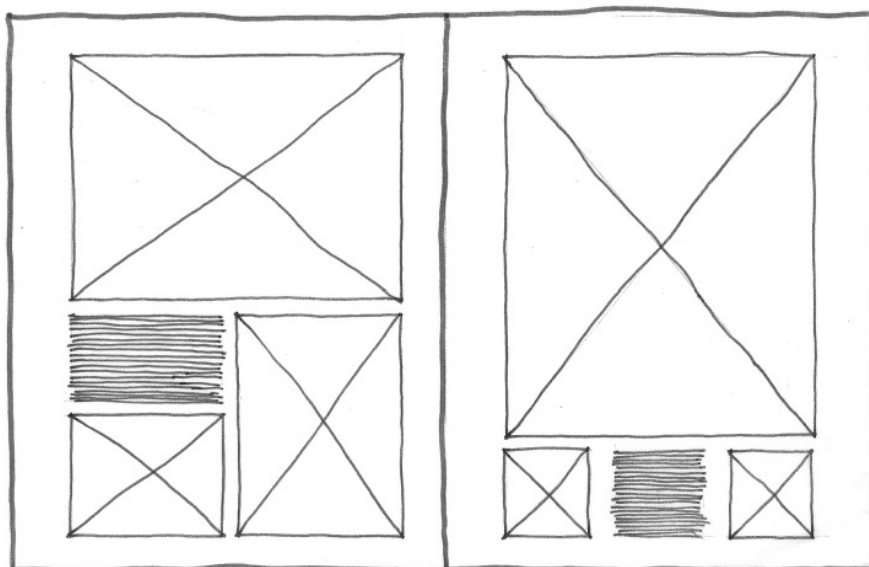
The portrait example (below) presents two different compositions that reinforce the hierarchy of the images and text on each page.

2. Margins. Use consistent margins and spacing between image and text.

3. Blank Pages. Blank pages can be used to separate projects and allow the viewer a rest before continuing on.

4. Color. Color can be an integral part of your book used for "blank" pages, or even as strong backgrounds.

5. Fonts / Graphics. Use the same font as used in your resume. Keep graphics simple, clean, supporting the work, not detracting from it.

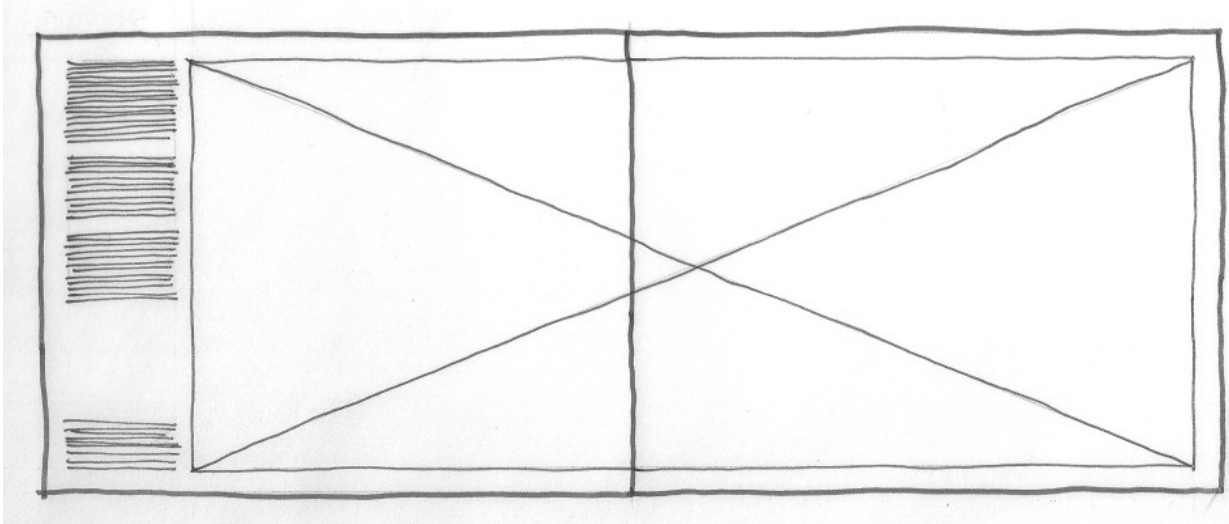


6. Bleeds.

The term "bleed" refers to an image bleeding to the outside edge of the paper area. Full or partial bleeds can be effective tools to maximize your presentation area and image size eliminating borders or margins.

If you choose to include images with full bleed in your portfolios remember that most home office / office laser printers cannot print full bleed to the edges due to limitations in printable area.

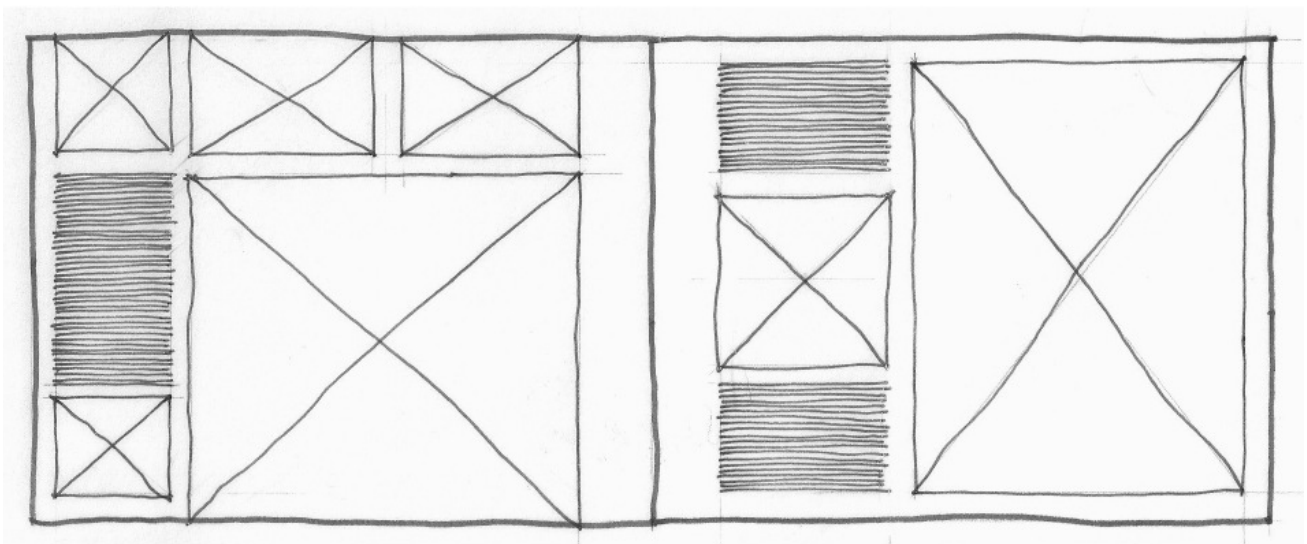
If choosing full bleed or partial bleed, it may be necessary for you to print and format for larger paper and hand trim to size for your portfolio. If electing for digital format only, full bleeds can be accomplished easily in most graphic programs including the Adobe Creative Suite (CS6) and Cloud.



1. Hierarchy.

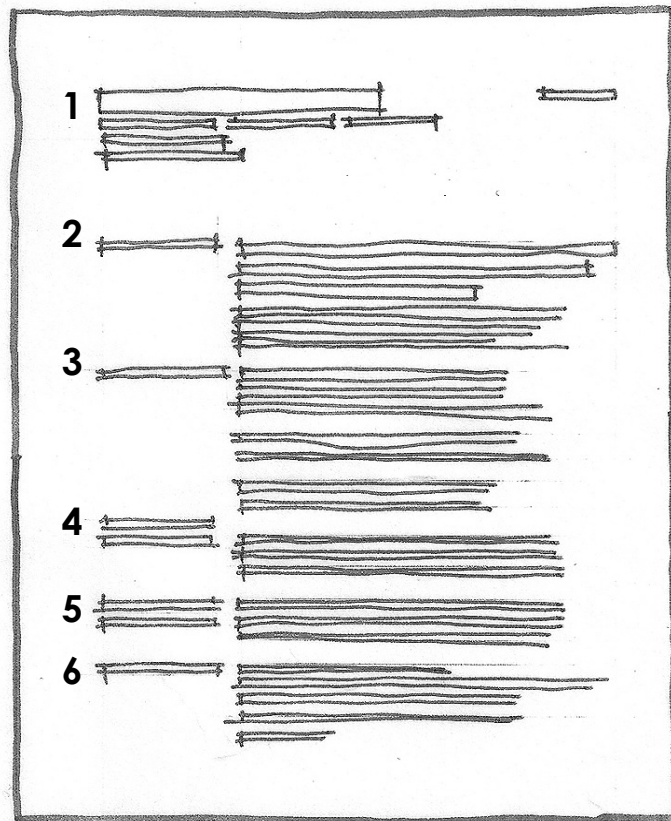
Hierarchy is the most important feature of a portfolio book. Hierarchy between images and explanatory text is crucial to a successfully presented book. The landscape example (above) presents a large image as a "double page spread" that takes advantage of two pages as a single "canvas." Blocks of explanatory text support the two pages with full attention on the presented image.

The landscape example (below) presents two different compositions that reinforce the hierarchy of the images and text on each page.



3 YOUR FIRST RESUME

The resume is a working document tracking your professional and allied activities. Your resume should be updated every 3-6 months. Even if you are not currently searching for an internship or professional position in a firm, keeping your resume current is especially important to young and change of career professionals who have mobility and who increase their skills, credentials and experience rapidly. The following resume diagram has been a staple format of architecture and design professionals. You will find the format clear and concise and also that it does not conform to the often hard-to-read, impersonal samples often shown on websites and "how-to-do-it" sources.



1. Name and contact information

Your name and contact information should be clearly presented. We often encourage students and young professionals to present their complete name. When providing a telephone contact you should provide the best number to be reached and where you have a professional voice-mail message. Email addresses should be simple and professional. Avoid email addresses that are not professional and that do not contain personal information (year, date of birth, etc.) for example, bigdave12289@hotmail.com.

2. Education

List your most recent education and indicating the following:

Complete School Name -
Department Name
Degree (spell out degree)
Graduation: provide year

You do not have to indicate the year you started only the year you graduated.

3. Professional Experience / Experience

Do not use the terms "job, work, or employment," you may use these in speaking with colleagues but not in the text of your resume. Only use professional terminology.

For professional experience gained in firms or allied within the industry, provide the name of the firm first then your role / title and corresponding dates. Be specific when describing projects (brownstone renovation, restaurant planning, on-site construction, etc.).

For other experience, for example, waiting tables, salesperson, etc. Use only the heading "experience". In time non-professional experience will be replaced with only your professional experiences.

4. Skills and Computer Literacy

As computers and softwares evolve, it is ever important to indicate, with specificity, the drawing, drafting, rendering, graphic skills, and computer literacy that

you have attained.

Examples of hand skills: free-hand perspectives, drafting, lettering, free-hand drafting, rendering (specific media, for example, colored pencil, graphite, water colors, etc.), model building, photography.

Examples of computer literacy: Auto-cad R.XX; Auto-desk Revit, 3DsMax 2013, Adobe CS6 (be specific about softwares you are fluent with), MS Office (year), etc.

Note: do not oversell your computer literacy as many firms require that candidates demonstrate their proficiency prior to hire or as a condition of hiring.

Special Skills. The following are examples of special skills that you may have developed, are developing and use on an ongoing basis: public speaking, writing, multi-lingual fluency (list out), supervisory and management skills, etc.

Important Points To Remember About a Resume

1. *What it looks like! The resume must be presented on quality paper, use an easy to read font (eg. Sans serif fonts such as: Helvetica, Arial, Gothic). Use bold, italics and other graphic tools to enhance not detract from your resume.*
2. *People do not Read Resumes. Reviewers tend to "scan" the resumes for interest to determine if they want to read and consider it further.*
3. *Misspelling is "professional suicide". use appropriate spell checks and have at least one person "proofread" your resume.*

5. Honors, Awards, Service

This category could also be titled "Competitions & Exhibitions" or "Honors & Competitions", "Service" or others. This category is key to presenting achievements both as a student and young professional and includes recognitions of achievement, service, both in and outside the profession. Also include volunteer and community service activities as they speak to your interests, civic engagement and character.

6. Background

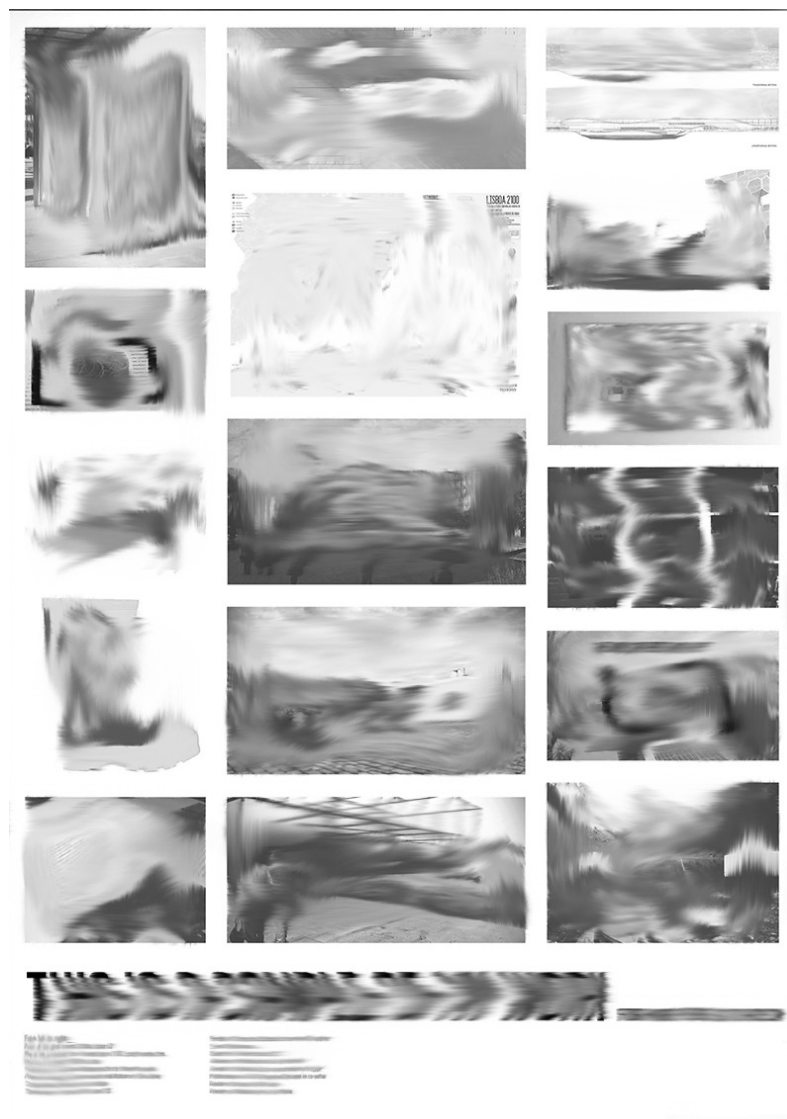
This category is your opportunity to present yourself. Where were you born? Where have you traveled and when? Are you bi-lingual? When people scan your resume, they read the last line right away, so make it interesting, even memorable. For this reason, the final line of your resume should never read, "References Upon Request." If you would like to offer references as part of your resume, provide a second page with the heading "Selected References" and provide 3-5 solid professional references with appropriate contact information.

4 CREATING YOUR PRIMER SHEET (TEASER)

As technology has changed so too has the methodology to get resume and collateral materials in the hands of prospective employers in a format that is easy to use and allows a snapshot of a candidate without requiring extensive review of a complete curriculum vita-es and portfolio books.

In the past few years, “primer” or “teaser” sheets have emerged as a visual device to summarize and sample creative work for easy viewing by the prospective employer. The “primer” or “teaser” sheets are typically one page and contain identifying information (name, address, telephone, email) with the remaining space given to arrange visual examples of project and design work.

As a take-away from a portfolio show or event, personal interview or chance meeting on the street, the “primer / teaser” can be combined with a one page resume. In digital format, the “primer / teaser” can be combined as a second sheet of the resume to provide a ready reference for the interviewer or HR professional.





Quick tips for Primer / Teaser Sheets:

1. SIMPLE

Use a simple graphic format applying the same principles you use for the portfolio. Be consistent with font styles between resume, portfolio book and primer / teaser sheets. Remember, all collateral documents function as a single representation of you and your experience. Adobe CS-6 In-Design is a good resource for executing a primer / teaser sheet.

2. HIERARCHY

Ensure there is visual hierarchy and composition on the sheet. Resist trying to simply grid off a page with equal sized spaces for images.

3. COLOR

Utilize color as possible to support and strengthen the impact of your work, considering monotone use of color, gray-scale, etc.

4. READABILITY AND ASPECT

Ensure you select the correct aspect that works in harmony with your resume and portfolio book. Ensure font size is appropriate for the sheet and image size with 10-12pt as a good size for readability, 14pt for titles, larger for headings as appropriate. If the font size is too large it will start to look out of proportion to the images and readable font sizes.

5. PRINTING / CARD STOCK

When printing "primer/teaser" sheets ensure you print onto min. 52lb, 93 brightness presentation matte or soft-gloss card stock. This will ensure proper color clarity, decrease "telescoping" of resume or second side images or information.

5 21 POINTS OF BEING A PROFESSIONAL

1. Enjoy what you do and be passionate about your discipline. If you are not passionate about your craft, select another.
2. Sharpen your skills. Be the best you can be. If you are mediocre, you will be treated that way. Learn the skills you need to be competitive in the 21st Century and continually changing design professions, but leave time to acquire the skills that make you a creative being (drawing, sketching, imaging).
3. Deal from your strengths and recognize your limitations. Avoid spreading yourself too thin. Be honest with yourself.
4. Know that there will always be guidelines and limitations to even the most creative projects. Listen, look, ask, and search for them. Keep current on emerging and changing trends and technology. If you do not have an expertise in an area, find a colleague who is and discuss a collaborative effort on projects.

The following guidelines were written for my students at Pratt Institute School of Architecture in 1983. These observations are based on my own experiences as well as those of professionals from all of the design disciplines and the business world. To be lacking in even one point may seriously hinder a promising career. I would like to encourage everyone to add their own observations and experiences as their careers evolve.

Barbara Carr, 1983

5. Listen to others 80% of the time and talk only 20% of the time. Develop the ability to “listen” and “see” what others’ points of view are. Be open to different approaches and ways to solve the same problem. Look for ways to collaborate and celebrate the strengths of a team of diverse disciplines. Also, understand cultural differences and customs when meeting and conversing with others in the global community.
6. Be aware of how much time you need to do the job. Plan the fastest way to do it. Increase your speed. Learn how to prioritize project and task components and develop efficient systems and processes to execute the tasks. But always remember your priorities (eg. family, work, friends, etc.) and be willing to make difficult choices before, during, and after a project.
7. Recognize that you are in business. Realistically assess your financial needs. Find out what others at your level are being paid. Have the courage to say “no” rather than suffer resentment. Decide what kind of designer / architect you want to be in your professional life. What is important to you? Having lots of money? Changing the world or your local community in profound ways, or helping people through your craft? Make a commitment to others and community early in your career and be willing to sacrifice for the good of the many.
8. Discuss money up-front. Be flexible in negotiations. Learn as much as possible about negotiation skills. Do your research! Remember, the greedy professional tends to be the one first to lose their job in a down economy. Decide what is more important, instant gratification through a high salary, or quality working environment, fringe benefits, and most importantly a learning environment where you can grow and acquire skills for the next professional chapter.

9. If you do not know how to do a job, do not pretend that you do. Do research, ask experts, or turn it over to someone more qualified. (Refer to no. 4)

10. Look successful. Your posture (standing or sitting), clothing, grooming, and body language express your confidence, capabilities, and respect for others. Do not concern yourself with how your peers and clients conduct themselves, concern yourself with your own professional power. It is better to have everyone talking about how professional you were instead of talking about how unprofessional you appeared to be.

11. Treat clients as if they are pure gold! However, do not endure mistreatment and unprofessional treatment just to hold onto a client. Treat your clients the way you prefer them to treat you.

12. Be commanding when presenting your work. Know presentation skills. If your presentation skills are weak you will have difficulty selling the best design. Seek out clubs and organizations, and situations that will require you to present in front of a large group of people. Also, observe others and what their effective ways of communicating are – acquire and learn new skills.

13. Concentrate on the positive qualities in yourself and in others. Do not dwell on your shortcomings or those of others. Avoid the gossip trap. Careless speech and negative attitudes will back-fire. Do know your weaknesses and limitations and seek ways to improve in those areas. Remember you are an evolving professional and not a reporter for a tabloid or reality TV show. Do not succumb to the temptations of the masses; rise above the fray and emit your professional qualities.

Now 30 years after Prof. Carr assembled this important professional guideline, I have expanded upon points she defined. Many of the items may seem to be professional common sense, but taken as a whole should give you moments to reflect on why you are following the creative path you have chosen.

David Michael Lieb, 2012

14. Keep your word. Be reliable, be punctual, meet deadlines. A good reputation takes years to earn. A bad one you can get overnight. This point has not changed in 25 years – heed Prof. Carr's warning and take it seriously (what kind of person and professional do you want to be remembered as?).

15. Accept responsibility when something doesn't turn out as planned. Do not blame others no matter what the circumstances. Excuses are unacceptable. Keep moving forward. Be professional and take your lumps and take the accountability if you lead a team of people. It's not about being right or wrong, it's about respecting yourself and the people who work for and with you.

16. Keep your personal life "personal" and your professional life professional. Unless you're Paris Hilton or some movie star, don't bring pets, lovers, spouses, parents, friends, physical clutter or disruptive emotional garbage into the business environment. Refrain from the text messaging and IM on company computers – invest that time and energy into your craft. Avoid drinking at professional functions and industry events (refer to No. 14).

17. Respect other people's time. Avoid irrelevant topics and fascinating digressions during business sessions. Control interruptions, especially phone calls. Do not be distracted by emails, text messaging and other disruptions of smart phones and tablets – make it your policy to focus on the business at hand and turn the technology off.

18. Communicate! Confirm appointments. Return calls. Put business matters in writing. Always say “thank you”. Developing great communication skills can define you as a leader. But do not hide behind the 21st Century technology, afraid to talk to someone on the phone or more importantly in person. Work on building relationships with those you would like to work with, try to understand more those you prefer not to work with, and learn to respect yourself through the process. Craft emails and electronic correspondence with proper salutation and closings avoiding “hi, hey, folks, etc.”. Use “Dear Mr. Smith; Dear John; Dear Sally” and avoid “thanks, thanx, etc.” instead closing with “sincerely, thank you, etc.” Ensure a specific subject in all electronic correspondence.

19. Continue to be informed about your profession and related professions. Information is essential for growth. Read trade publications; subscribe to professional journals; get on selected mailing lists; join at least one professional organization; attend lectures, workshops, and / or seminars; take additional studies; exchange information, ideas, and points-of-view with other professionals.

20. Publish, exhibit, or lecture where you will be seen by peers and other professionals. Make a “splash” once a year.

21. Make people glad they hired you. Continue to make people glad they work with you. Maintain your professional relationships from one career opportunity to the next-you never know where professional paths will cross, so never burn bridges. Always leave a bad situation with dignity and grace. Enjoy the path you have chosen and cherish the craft you are apart of.

About the authors:

Barbara A. Carr, SAID,

Prof. Carr graduated from the Pratt Institute in 1952 with a degree in Illustration. Her distinguished career as an educator spanned four decades teaching at the Pratt Institute - School of Architecture. In addition to instructing courses in media and portfolio, she was best known for her on-site sketching classes on Friday mornings where her students would sketch in various locales throughout Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Jersey City. She also developed and instructed a traveling on-site sketching course to Brazil.

Prof. Carr's professional illustration studio, Barbara Carr Communications, worked extensively on illustrated works for books and novels.

She is remembered by her students, colleagues and friends for her true love of the creative soul, and her unique gift to nurture and celebrate the best in her students work and her own.

The Pratt Onion, illustrated by Professor Carr, (pictured at right) became a symbol of the multi-layered education and evolution of an architect.

Prof. Carr died in 2009 of Alzheimer's Disease.

David Michael Lieb, RA, NCARB, FRSA,

Prof. Lieb graduated from Pratt Institute School of Architecture and the Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

He is principal and founder of LIEBSTUDIOS: architecture, art, and education in Salem, MA specializing in person-centered design; and evidence-based research for Universal Design. He is an exhibited fine artist and Associate Professor of Design at the NEIA Boston.

