Portfolios tell a story about your experiences and are a great way of showcasing your skills. The first step is to choose work based on the needs and wants of your portfolio’s audience or market. Ask your self who are you applying to? What are their needs?

UP TO PAR PHOTOGRAPHY

If you aren’t sure, talk to your professors or photography faculty. You can also make an appointment to have your work photographed by our photography department. Please allow at least two weeks notice.

• Make sure your work is in focus
• Check the output quality of your images? Are you creating images for web, print or will they be projected?
• Compare original work to photograph to ensure that values and colors are exact.
• Take care not to ‘over-photoshop’ or ‘fix’ your work
• Reduce warping
• 2D work: even lighting without glare or hotspots
• 3D: reduce dark shadows
• Stick to the requirements of each application. Format your images so they aren’t too big to open quickly or too small so they might appear pixilated.

WANT TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT?

Email careerservices@nhia.edu with your available days and times and we will respond with a meeting invite!

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

CAN I INCLUDE OLDER WORK IN MY PORTFOLIO?
“The portfolio should represent work that has been completed within the last five years and demonstrate a sustained, focused studio practice that suggests common threads, content and processes in addition to showing technical skill.”
Anonymous Survey Respondent

CAN I PUT IN FEWER OR A COUPLE MORE IMAGES THAN REQUIRED INTO MY PORTFOLIO?
Defer to the instructions of each individual institution, business or organization, but admissions committees for instance, would overwhelmingly rather see a few more images and discourages fewer images.

SHOULD I SHOW DETAILS/MULTIPLE ANGLES OF MY WORK?
• The use of details should be used very sparingly and only if the extra image can significantly add to the understanding of an artwork.
• Not as padding for your portfolio.

SHOULD MY ARTWORK BE CHRONOLOGICAL?
• Not necessarily. In a survey of graduate admissions officers, 100% of our respondents said that ‘visual and aesthetic flow’ was important or very important to the portfolio.
• Pay attention to each organizations or school’s directions, because some schools require it.

HOW DO I INCORPORATE MULTIPLE MEDIA IN MY PORTFOLIO?
• Breadth isn’t a bad thing. Many places like to see that you are taking chances and moving between media is a positive.
• Try to create visual connections between work through formal elements and subject matter.

WHAT IF MY WORK IS ‘ALL OVER THE PLACE’?
• Work on sorting individual pieces into groups and find subject or formal aspects to connect them.

CAN I INCLUDE SKETCHES OR UNFINISHED WORK?
• While sketches or unfinished work might give a wonderful impression of your process, those viewing your work may prefer primarily finished work.
• Interviews are a wonderful time to bring your sketchbook or in-process images.

WHERE DO I PUT MY STRONGEST/WEAKEST WORK?
• In general, you want a strong piece for your very first pieces and your very last pieces.
• If you do have weaker pieces (we all do), use them as transition pieces. They can serve to give the viewer more information about your process or your willingness to explore.
PORTFOLIOS STEP-BY-STEP: (YOU'VE GOT THIS!!)

1. COLLECT
The first step is to create a folder on your desktop and the next is to start to fill it with images.

Don’t edit just start dumping them in. You are now in acquisition mode. Even include poor quality images or take quick pics of work just get the pieces into the conversation. You can take better quality photos later, when you narrow the pool. At this point, it is okay to even have 50 plus pieces of work in your folder. Add in drawings, sketches, one offs, and details. If you need to, increase the icon size a bit.

2. CHUNK
Begin by chunking your work into categories such as subject, color, canvas orientation, medium, etc.

3. CLEAR, CONCISE, AND COMPELLING
You may have way too many pieces in your piles now. For any application material, think clear, concise and compelling. Remove any duplicates. Pile together work that you might feel is less interesting or strong. You may even create a pile of work that may be really interesting, unfinished, but a kernel of an idea that you are interested in perusing.

4. EDITING MODE
As you work with the pieces, you may find yourself shifting to a more objective editing mode. You want a strong beginning and end. Pull out a few pieces that you think might be your strongest or ones you are interested in. Editing mode is a really helpful side benefit of working on a portfolio, which will get stronger over time. Making portfolios has made me a stronger artist, because I can look at my work more objectively and non-judgmental way.

5. CREATING CONNECTIONS
Next think about how you might connect these groups. Look at the ones you have left over, the outliers. They may serve as connections between the groups in a variety of ways. Play around with the order, which may evolve during the process.

6. REVEALING AND ADDING TO YOUR STORY
You may still feel as though you have too many or need additional images fill in a transition or to document a skill you’d like to include in your application. Now that you know what you are looking for, go back to your files and pick out a few more. You may find you see your work differently. Conversely if you have too many, pick the strongest, less is more. Also, ask what purpose this piece serves in my story? For instance, a very academic drawing of skeleton might not be an ‘interesting’ route for you to pursue, but you did a great job getting its proportions, so it is serving the purpose of displaying your rendering skills.

7. RUN THROUGH
Lastly, run through the images in a slide show. Any super jarring transitions will pop out and you can then make adjustments.

8. PRESS SEND
Send it off!

HOW TO THINK ABOUT THE PROCESS:

Portfolios can be a struggle for many artists. Nervousness can come from both putting yourself out there and also because it is an opportunity you really want. It does get easier, and there are some really clear and useful methods for creating a portfolio to the left!

The most important piece of advice I received, is to collect your best now and apply with what you have. We always know that our work will be better in the future, every creative goes through this, you are absolutely in very good and big company.

Once I internalized and thought about this a bit, it took a lot of the weight off and I looked at my work through a new and more positive lens:)