Flaunt: Designing effective, compelling and memorable portfolios of creative work.

A BOOK BY **Bryony Gomez-Palacio** AND **Armin Vit**

A PUBLICATION OF
UNDERCONSIDERATION

FACTS AND FIGURES
ASSOCIATED WITH
THE PRODUCTION
OF *Flaunt*

41
CASE STUDIES

823
SURVEY RESPONSES

2,856
PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN

570
PHOTOGRAPHS USED

17
PROFESSIONALS INTERVIEWED

$1,000+
SPENT ON SHIPPING PORTFOLIOS ACROSS THE U.S.

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Acknowledgments

Above all, we want to thank the brave designers featured in the case studies. They trusted us with their portfolios (they were briefly in our possession), and offered their time generously by answering our questions and detailing the production of their portfolios.

We extend our gratitude to the seventeen designers—their profiles are on page 134—who shared their time by providing us with some very helpful insight on their experiences reviewing portfolios and conducting interviews. This display of generosity in answering our questions is only a small demonstration of their larger commitment to helping the next generation grow.

Many thanks to Edwin Wilson Rivera for proof-reading and editing the multiple voices in the interviews, as well as our own words.

We are continually surprised and humbled by the support of the community that has grown around our UnderConsideration projects. A heartfelt thank you.

Lastly, we thank everyone that has purchased a copy of this book. Your patronage allows us to keep making ideas like *Flaunt* possible.

Buy,
don't Swipe.
(Please).

As a PDF, *Flaunt* is a very vulnerable product: it can be easily e-mailed and printed multiple times—a single purchase can satisfy endless users. While we expect this to a certain and understandable extent we wholeheartedly urge you to purchase your own copy. We have kept the price point as low as possible to encourage the purchases that support the development of not only this book but of future projects.

This PDF could have been heavily secured with Digital Rights Management, limiting the times it could be printed, the number of computers it could be seen on, and requiring password protection tied to an online database of registered users. In other words: not fun. Please help us keep it fun.

Flaunt is also available as a printed book, at underconsideration.com/flaunt

You should never consider your portfolio finished, and you should always be dissatisfied with it. The day you sit back and say, "My portfolio is great," is the day you are dead in the water. Your portfolio requires endless work, and few things are more important than it. This never changes no matter how successful you have become. That's really the only thing I've learned about portfolios. *Adrian Shaughnessy*

Case Studies

Introduction

When we told our friends and peers about our latest project—a book that discussed the mechanics, passions, and disappointments concerning the proverbial portfolio—there were two reactions, on the whole. The first, and most encouraging, was a generous approval of the endeavor, joined with a warm smile and a sigh of relief, that a topic so rarely broached in design literature was to be our point of departure. The second, and least encouraging, was a hostile questioning, usually accompanied by a pained expression and arched brow, as if we had taken an egregious misstep and trod into unfashionable territory, placing our efforts into an ancient practice that bears no relevance to today's web-enabled marketplace. To the first set of respondents, we further confirmed that the book would be full of practical, technical, philosophical and even emotional advice that would allow others to create the best and most appropriate portfolio possible. The second group—typically seasoned designers who don't have a pressing need to produce a portfolio, and possibly benefit from trusted employees who review incoming portfolios for them—was harder to convince.

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT

One of the strongest reasons we had for doing this book was that we have been in your position before. We know what it's like to be stumped by the question of where to begin a portfolio. Still, one way or another, we managed to create a handful of portfolios that served their intended purpose. Below are some highlights (and some not so high).

BRYONY'S GRADUATION PORTFOLIO

When I graduated from Portfolio Center in December of 2000, I left armed with the Big Box portfolio the school is famous for: a custom-made wood box covered in a dark blue textured fabric, with stacked trays that held a single item in each compartment, and an oversized screw-post book.

I also produced ten small versions of the main book to use as leave-behinds.

This portfolio helped me secure my first job in Chicago, Illinois at Bagby & Co. in 2001.

We assured this latter group that there were hundreds of anxious graduating students and young designers that were still dependent upon this decades-old tradition to secure them full-time employment and/or freelance assignments. In fact, any doubts we may have had about this book's relevance were recently assuaged: out of the 1,500 designers in attendance at *Make/Think*—the 2009 AIGA Design Conference—150 of them signed up for the Student Portfolio Review, and all of them had a physical portfolio (complemented, of course, with business cards pointing to their web site). We both participated as reviewers and, even though we saw only a small fraction of them, we were once again amazed by the breadth of quality, style and approaches possible in portfolio presentations. *Flaunt* is an effort to showcase a variety of alternatives within this very intimidating range of options, through painstaking case studies, various points of view, and nonscientific surveys, each of which will hopefully ease the anxiety and burden of creating a portfolio— perhaps, even help demystify the process of putting it together, and the expectations of presenting it.

In the last ten years, both of us have been in the position you are in right now. We labored over various portfolios (see "been there, done that") at different stages of our professional life: as naïve graduates looking for our first job; as not-so-junior designers in search of the next step; as brooding senior designers-in-the-making hungry for bigger responsibilities; and, most recently, as principals of our own design firm aiming to secure clientele. At all these junctures, the challenge and objective of the portfolio has remained the same—to act as a delivery mechanism that not only showcases our work and accrued experience in the most accessible, effective, and attractive manner, but also manages to communicate the subjective subtleties of who we are as both designers and individuals. The portfolio irrevocably becomes an object brimming with potential, yet burdened with hope; it acts as intermediary between our work, personality, and the possible, always uncertain, future.

"It's all about the work" is a common response to the portfolio conundrum, implying that if you have good work, you never need to worry about how it is presented— a Survival of the Fittest design theory. For a few extra-talented designers, this might hold true; but for the rest of us, we still need to find a way to cohesively,

ARMIN'S GRADUATION PORTFOLIO

When I graduated in 1999 from Anahuac University in Mexico City, no one told me what a portfolio was supposed to be. I wrapped a badly constructed cardboard box and poorly glued envelopes (which held items by categories, like identity and packaging) with alarmingly weird three-dimensional renderings.

Strange as it was, it did help me get a job in Atlanta, Georgia at USWebCKS in 1999.

PLUS HIS SECOND PORTFOLIO

It was clear I needed a new, more mature portfolio in order to search for my second job. I decided on a book that Bryony helped me bind with a complicated Japanese 4-hole binding method that I would carry in a Pina Zangaro metallic case.

succinctly, and creatively display our work. This work is so typically disparate in medium and scope that it challenges us to develop a visual and editorial strategy that can accommodate any given combination of logos, identity systems, music and video packaging, book covers, magazine covers and spreads, environmental design and signage, web sites, and more. Presenting this medley of work can take on a number of forms, from groovy bags to sophisticated cases with loose samples of the work; perfect-bound books of flawlessly photographed work; custom-made boxes with work mounted on neatly-trimmed boards; off-the-shelf ring binders with the work stuffed in them; and more. To make matters more complicated, there is no right or wrong, nor better or worse, solution. The only way to discover what works for each of us is to assess the work we want to show, define the logistics of how we want to show it, and acknowledge the abilities and resources we have to make it happen.

At the core of *Flaunt* is a collection of 41 case studies of diverse portfolios. Through concise interviews they reveal the need, motivation, process, and eventual solution that each of their owners discovered. The detailed breakdowns of price, materials, and resources provide numerous ideas that can be adapted to any kind of portfolio. Generously illustrated with photographs of the portfolios, the case studies bring to life the lessons learned, and demonstrate a bevy of possible visual strategies that best showcase and explain the work. The selected portfolios aim to represent both the most common approaches as well as some offbeat executions that may strike sparks of inspiration for you.

Complementing the case studies are interviews we conducted by e-mail with seventeen professional designers and educators. All of them have been in the industry for a decade or more, and have had plenty of experience reviewing portfolios and conducting interviews. We posited various useful questions, about their expectations of students' and young designers' portfolios; common mistakes made; the most memorable portfolios they've seen; and even thoughts about their own first portfolios. The results of these interviews have been grouped by question, so that you may see what different designers, in different industries and parts of the world, think of the same issue—they are spread throughout the book under the title of "SPEAKING FROM EXPERIENCE."

I liked the idea of Bryony's leave-behind and created ten small versions of the book to be sent in trendy metallic bags.

The hard work took its toll on Bryony's finger but it helped me get a job in Chicago, Illinois at Norman Design in 2001.

A JOINT EFFORT

In 2004, when we set out to move to New York, we decided to make the structure of our next portfolio identical—a perfect-bound, cloth-covered book with heavy, cream-colored paper, vellum and inkjet prints—each with its own visual language.

Both portfolios performed as desired, getting us jobs in New York at Addison (for Bryony) and Decker Design, followed by Pentagram (for Armin).
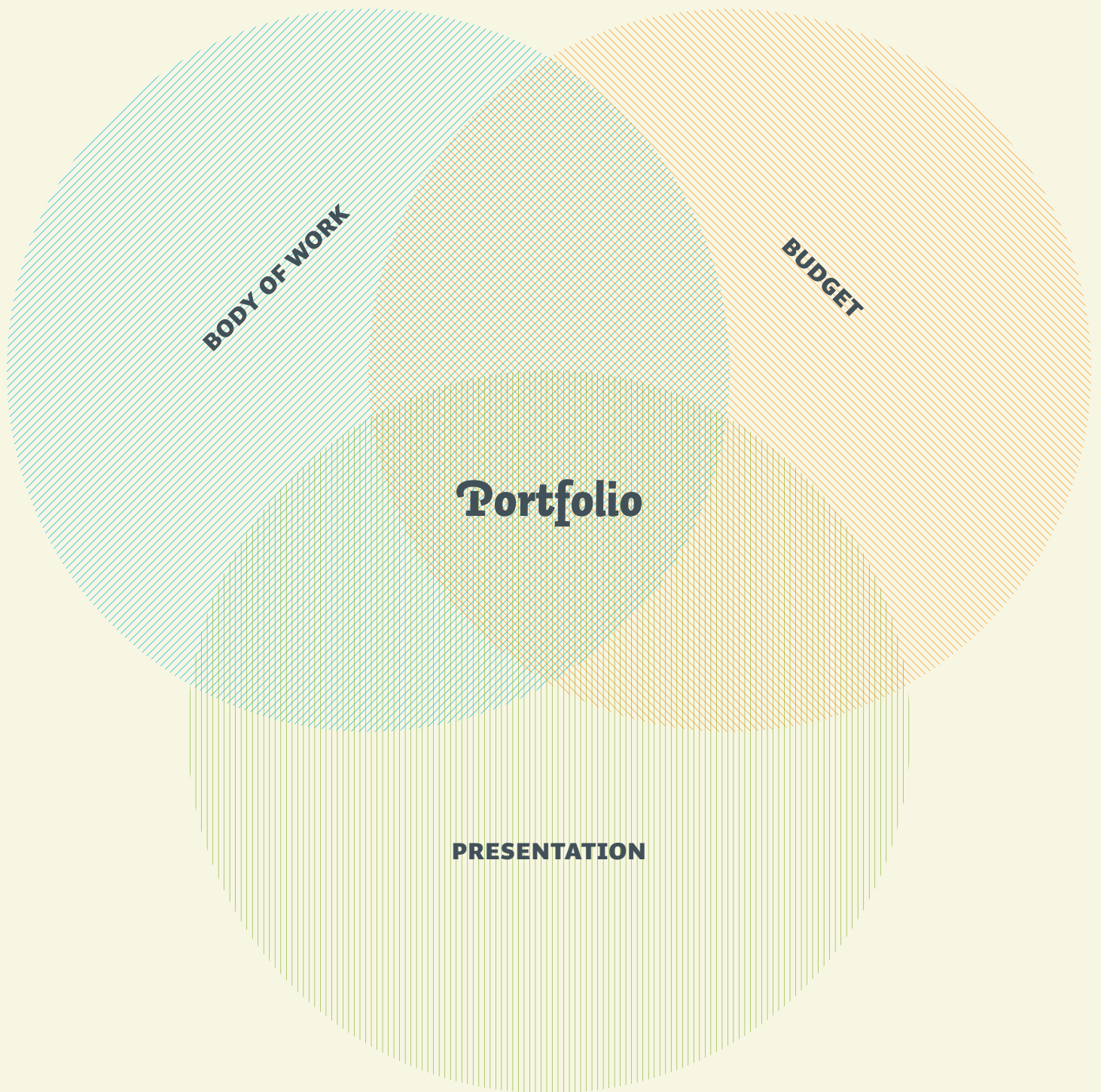
No further portfolios have been created since.

Additionally, over the course of two weeks, we conducted two parallel surveys online: one targeted at designers showing their portfolios in interviews, and the other at designers who are reviewing the portfolios of prospective employees. We asked the same questions of each group, slightly modified to fit each of their roles, so that we could compare what an *interviewee* thinks are the best practices against what an *interviewer* does. For example, a modest amount of interviewees think it's appropriate to make first contact with a potential interviewer in person, but responses from interviewers demonstrate that only a *very* small amount of them think this is appropriate. The surveys are far from what would be considered rigorous research but, with 637 interviewee and 186 interviewer responses, we feel this is moderately representative of the larger constituency of the design profession. The results of the interviews are charted throughout the book under the title of "CENSUS OF PORTFOLIO ETIQUETTE."

We hope that the book's components provide a useful resource, and will serve as a springboard to as many designers as possible, from students on the brink of graduation, to young designers questing toward their first or second jobs, to more experienced designers on their way up the title ranks, to freelance and independent designers in their search for clients, and to any other creative individuals—photographers, illustrators, product designers, architects, and more—as they strive for the best possible way to present their work. To make it as accessible and affordable as possible, *Flaunt* is self-published and delivered mainly as a PDF, keeping production costs down and pricing options low. Without any monetary advance, or any assurance on the return on investment of our time and expenses (shipping portfolios back and forth around the U.S. alone cost us more than one thousand dollars), we are delighted to be able to offer a product that fills a small void in our profession, and are eager to see if this semi-calculated gamble pays off... Not just for us, but for you as well.

Best of luck,

Bryony Gomez-Palacio + Armin Vit
PRINCIPALS, UNDERCONSIDERATION

BODY OF WORK

BUDGET

Portfolio

PRESENTATION

OBJECTIVE NECESSITIES *of a* PORTFOLIO

AMBITION

Portfolio

EXPERIENCE

CONFIDENCE
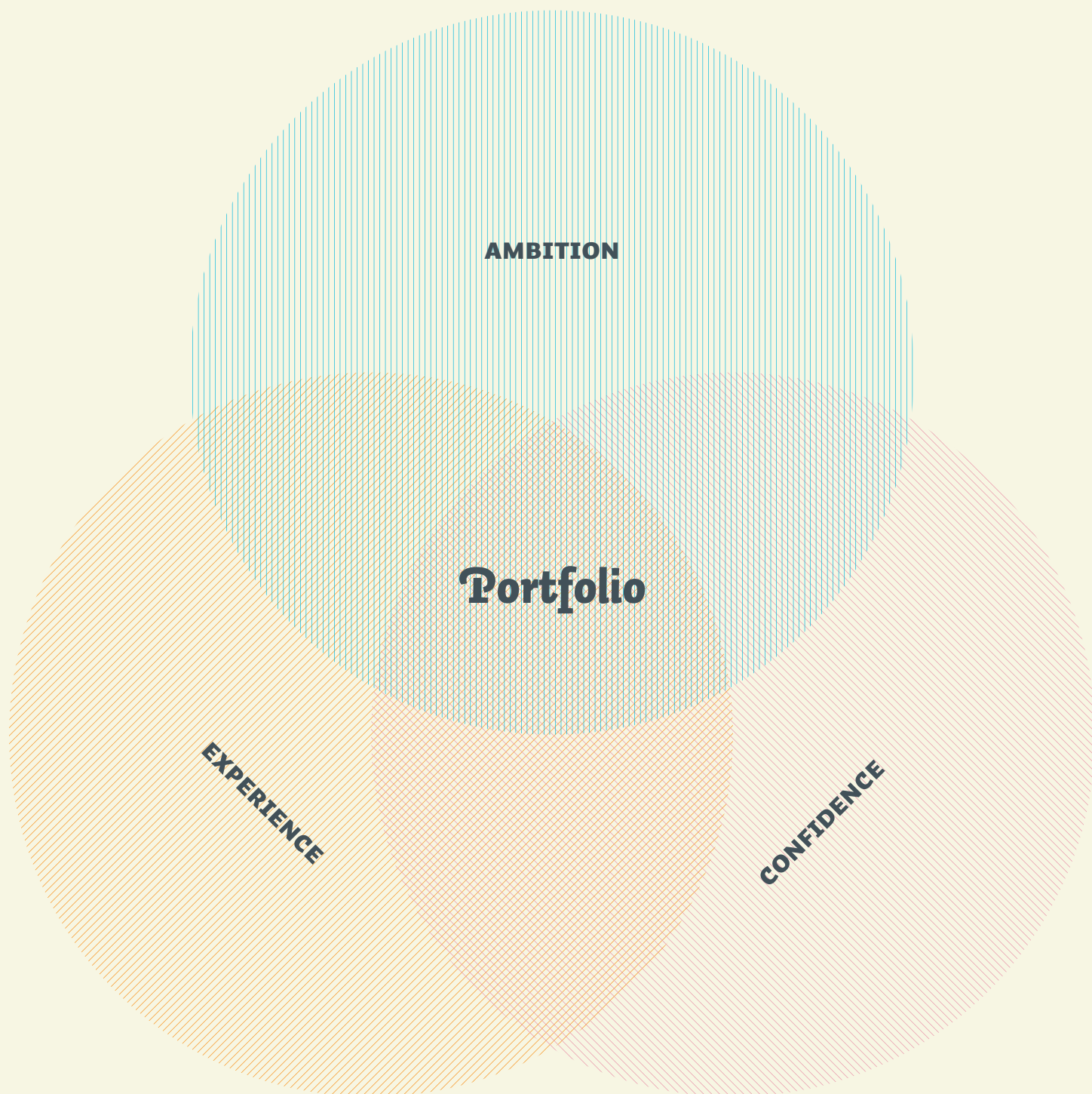
SUBJECTIVE NECESSITIES *of a* PORTFOLIO

STRUCTURE
Wire-O-bound book

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
12.5 × 20

TYPEFACES
FF DIN

FF DIN Text Pro

MATERIALS
Matte board

PVA glue

PAPER
Mohawk, Superfine, 100 lb

VENDORS
Limited Papers

RETAIL STORES
Office Depot
Pearl Art Supply

PRINTER
EPSON R1800

TIP A portfolio's design should not overshadow the work itself. Takach's expressive numbering system anchors project descriptions without being distracting.

PRODUCTION TIME
25 hours

PRODUCTION COST
$125

Matthew Takach

IN 2007, DURING MY SENIOR YEAR AT THE KANSAS CITY ART INSTITUTE, I TOOK AN INDEPENDENT STUDY COURSE CALLED PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE. WE WERE ASKED TO DESIGN A STYLE IN WHICH TO PRESENT OUR WORK AND OUR SELVES, AND WERE REQUIRED TO ENGAGE IN AT LEAST THREE INTERVIEWS, OR PORTFOLIO REVIEWS, WITH WORKING PROFESSIONALS.

status I first used this portfolio for three interviews in the fall/winter of 2007. By Thanksgiving, I had landed a summer internship, and my book was dormant for several months. In the summer of 2008, I reworked my portfolio and constructed a brand new book. Come autumn, I began interviewing for my first job.

approach After I created an all-encompassing identity, I settled on a horizontal Wire-O-bound format that would allow for a large and luxurious presentation. I felt that my body of work should be presented as a single holistic product with an intentional progression, with built-in flexibility that allowed me to edit the content if necessary. For every project in this book, there are two spreads: the first shows the final piece, and the second is for the process work. I included examples of my initial stages, ideation, half-baked concepts, prototypes, and semi-final designs. I believe this helped others understand how I worked through a project, and to determine whether or not my process was similar, or compatible, to theirs. I made the covers with black matte board and Fabriano paper. I used a laser-cutter to carve the logo out of the board I adhered to the front. The interior pages were printed, french-folded, trimmed and collated, and the book was Wire-O-bound with a wrapping technique that hid the spine.

flexibility Because my book was bound with a Wire-O, it was possible to cut the wire and replace pages whenever necessary.

display In my experience, when designers are interviewing potential employees they want candidates to actively present their work—so this is what I always do. I've heard stories about interviewers who just flipped through portfolios in five minutes and made snap judgments, but I haven't had that experience. Those whom I have met cared about the body of work and how it was presented, both visually and verbally. They also took the time to learn about me personally, which was smart, since co-workers sometimes spend just as much time together as families.

memories Interviewers seemed intrigued, and they appreciated the visceral quality of the material—they touched the die-cut materials and asked technical questions about my production solutions. I wasn't always sure if they liked it or not, but at least it wasn't something they just wrote off. Although I intended to have a large book, I went overboard—when the book was open on a table, it spanned well over 3 feet. One time, I had an interview at a small, but very reputable firm, where they didn't have a large surface in which to present. I spent the whole time trying to balance this huge portfolio on a small plastic chair while holding my laptop on my knees, in order to show examples of my screen-based work.

online I currently have an online portfolio, which complements my printed book. However, my web site is very systematic and consistent, in contrast to the more dynamic printed portfolio. I also do not show any process work, because that imagery really needs to be explained in person in order to be properly understood.

lastly In some interviews, people were surprised by two things in particular: a) that I was presenting this large, old-school book; and b) that I included process work. I always thought it odd to *not* do these things.

STRUCTURE
Box with boards

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
9.125 × 11.5 × 2.5

MATERIALS

1/8" Birch plywood covers

Birch veneer sheets

Plexiglass

Black foamcore

8 × 10-inch 4-ply rag mounting boards

PAPER
EPSON, semi-gloss photo paper

RETAIL STORES
Light Impressions

PRINTER
EPSON Photo 1400

SPECIAL TECHNIQUES
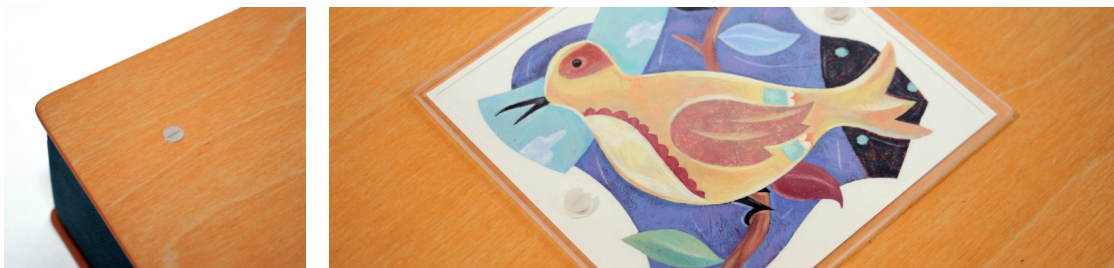
Cutting, sanding, staining, drilling and gluing

PRODUCTION TIME
3 Days

PRODUCTION COST
$35 Per book (×2)

Sean Kane

BACK IN 2003 MY PORTFOLIO BOXES WERE LOOKING DATED, SO A NEW APPROACH WAS NEEDED TO REFLECT THE FREELANCE WORK I'D DONE IN ILLUSTRATION AND DESIGN. I NEEDED A PORTFOLIO THAT COULD BE USED FOR FREELANCE ASSIGNMENTS AND LICENSING PARTNERSHIPS.

status

I continue to use this portfolio, but now primarily for in-person meetings.

approach

I wanted an unbound, sample format book with a handmade quality that would allow for easy editing and effortless arrangement of content. I also wanted something that would have a gift-like quality—like a holiday present for the recipient—so I used an off-the-shelf archival clamshell photo box from Light Impressions that held 8 × 10-inch prints. I screwed paint-stained birch plywood using plastic nuts and bolts, and sprayed it with Crystal Clear to protect against fingerprints and the like. I also screwed a small Plexiglass frame to the front cover, where I showcased a small painting. For the inside, the same acrylic paint was used to stain the birch veneer, which was cut and adhered to black foamcore panels, and placed on each side of the box interior to cover the bolts of the plastic screws.

Making a mock-up out of cardboard, in order to get all of the details worked out, was helpful. The nice thing is that none of the materials were expensive.

I mounted printed illustration and design samples on white 4-ply archival 8 × 10-inch boards—the box accommodated about sixteen of these mounted samples. All of it was designed to fit into a padded laptop bag, onto which I affixed a small logo/address label made from the orange birch laminate. The laptop bag fit snugly inside a large FedEx box.

flexibility

The portfolio is very updatable. The samples are often swapped out and rearranged as the presentation dictates, or when the samples become worn or damaged. Updating the cover art is a bit more involved, but this is done by removing the inside left panel and unscrewing the Plexiglass.

display

Nowadays, this portfolio is mostly shown in person. I have a duplicate as backup. Also, the 6-pound shipping weight can be a bit of a factor in budget-minded circumstances, which is partially why it stays grounded most of the time.

memories

When presenting my work in this portfolio, the box would elicit the delighted response I'd been hoping for. This happened repeatedly. However, discussions concerning the box's creation tended to overshadow the presented materials.

A magazine's creative director once stated that they preferred the box over the illustrations it carried and asked if I could make them one. This was flattering, but not the outcome I'd intended!

previously

I've created others using off-the-shelf photo boxes for the base structure. I also had a book artist create three books in which she used a metal printing plate with my name and logo raised on the cover, with portfolio samples mounted on sheets of aluminum, intended for aircraft parts.

lastly
———

Sadly, in my experience, agencies, design firms, and manufacturers are not as likely to request mailed portfolios. The ease and speed (and maybe the anonymity) of web site portfolio viewing, along with reduced shipping budgets, is likely part of the reason why my portfolio doesn't get sent out as often as I'd like.

On a positive note, new opportunities are presented every day with the advent of print-on-demand technologies (including consumer printers such as Shutterfly, iPhoto, Lulu, etc.). This allows designers to create representative samples of work that can function in ways similar to those of traditional portfolios, while remaining affordable enough to create custom books that could be used in targeted promo campaigns. Personally, I don't think these new avenues for presenting work can live up to the pleasure of viewing (and presenting) a one-of-a-kind portfolio.

SEAN KANE is an independent illustrator in Vancouver, British Columbia. Since 1993, he has been creating illustrations for clients like Amazon.com, Target, Volkswagen, The Wall Street Journal, and Habitat for Humanity, among others. **WWW.SEANKANE.COM**

Making Contact

Preference of medium for first contact

KEY INTERVIEWEE INTERVIEWER

75% **78%**

13% **18%**

12% **4%**

E-MAIL

POST

IN PERSON
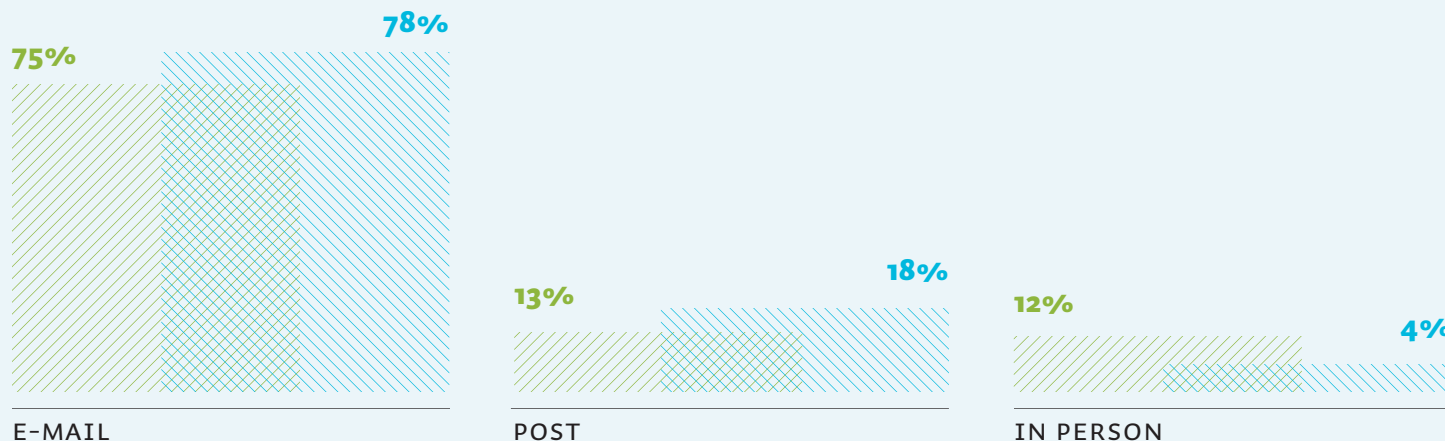
LESSON A) Do not show up unannounced. **B)** Interviewers still like to receive things in the mail.

And how should one follow up?

KEY INTERVIEWEE INTERVIEWER

33% **46%**

20% **10%**

32% **22%**

15% **22%**

E-MAIL

PHONE

BOTH

WAIT FOR
INTERVIEWER TO CALL
INTERVIEWEE TO CALL
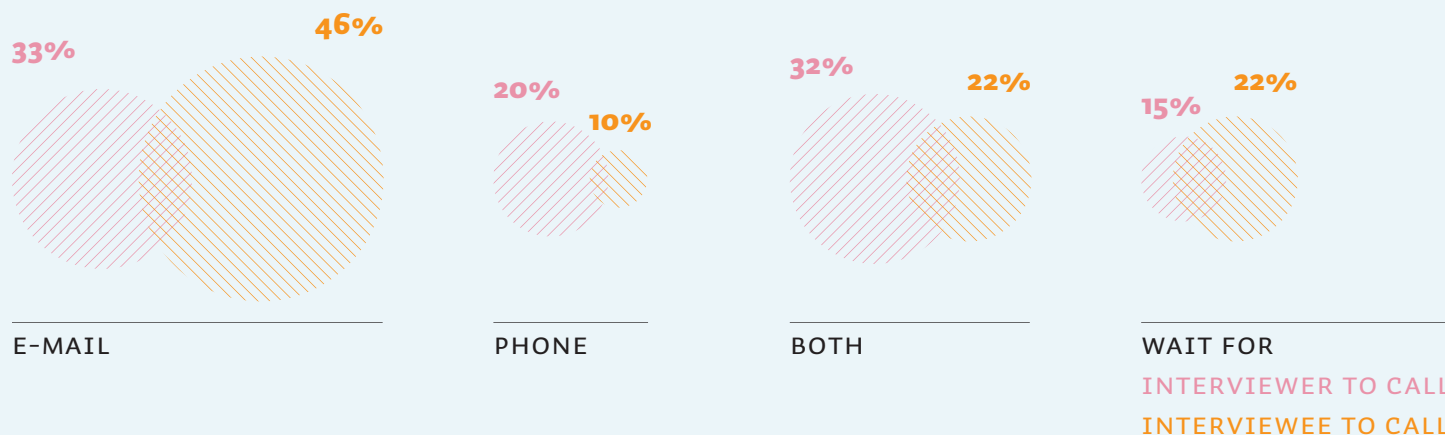
LESSON E-mail first, call second and, the unlikely third: wait for someone to call you.

STRUCTURE
Wire-O-bound book

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
Logo book: 6 × 6
Print book: 8.5 × 11
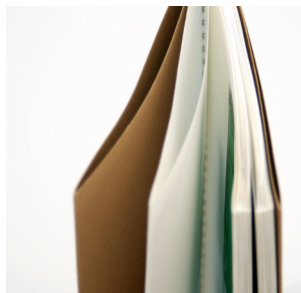
TYPEFACES
Scala Sans

PAPER
Cover: Gilbert Esse
Interior pages: Strathmore, Writing, white

RETAIL STORES
Paper store
Sam Flax

PRINTER
Canon color laser printer

SPECIAL TECHNIQUES
Hand block-printed cover
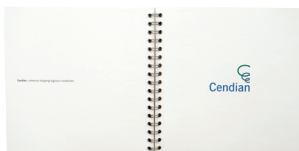
PRODUCTION TIME
A few days

PRODUCTION COST
Minimal… maybe $30 in paper

Jonathan Selikoff

I CREATED THIS PORTFOLIO IN MID-2002, WHEN I DECIDED TO LEAVE MY JOB AT LANDOR. IT WAS MEANT TO BE SHOWN TO POTENTIAL FREELANCE CLIENTS, AS I WASN'T LOOKING FOR A FULL-TIME JOB.

status I used it for at least two or three years. Occasionally, I'll still show it, but I haven't updated it since it was first made.

approach I had very few real print samples, so a box with scattered samples wasn't really an option. I've always appreciated the small leave-behind books that design graduates tend to put together, and wanted something that felt a little personal. Also, I didn't want to lug something big around. I developed two books—one for logos, and one for packaging and print-based projects.

It was made as cheaply as possible. I got some free Esse paper samples from Gilbert to use for the covers, and the interior pages were all done on a Canon laser copier with tabloid-sized paper. To avoid the difficulty of printing on both sides of the page, the entire book was french-folded, and bound with a silver Wire-O. For the covers, I printed up little name tags, hand-debossed the covers, then glued them in place. The final touch involved block-printing a large red capital "S" from my wood type collection.

flexibility Not really flexible. In order to re-do it, I would have had to cut off the binding. That is the negative aspect; there's just a limited lifespan to it. However, I could print new pages, cut the binding off, and reuse the covers.

display Since it is mostly used towards winning potential clients, I always present it in person.

online I had a PDF mini-book that I could e-mail as needed, where the red "S" from the cover was carried through. I've since developed a web site for my business, and the letterpress "S" is at the heart of my identity.

previously My student portfolio, which I kept very simple, was made out of 11 × 14-inch boards with photographic prints. I eschewed transparencies, which were popular at the time. Logos were presented as white rub-down transfers on the boards. These got a pretty good reaction from interviewers, although I nearly had a heart attack when one interviewer, intrigued by the process, rubbed her fingernail over the transfer. Thankfully, no damage was done.

lastly My ideal portfolio is practical. My student portfolio was a reaction to the overproduced books I had seen done at the time; books with precious shelves and drawers for each sample, and big boxes requiring custom backpacks or luggage strollers. Too much! One student even had a small light table built into the case to view transparencies. I appreciate attention to detail and the desire to create something special to showcase one's work, but there's a point where it becomes more about the case than the work. Besides, you sweat enough when looking for a job. Why work up extra perspiration carrying around something gigantic?

JONATHAN SELIKOFF is a creative director and designer in West Orange, New Jersey, where he founded Selikoff+Company in 2002. He has a degree in history from Emory University and his design training comes from Portfolio Center in Atlanta, Georgia. He worked for five years at Landor Associates in New York City and Hamburg and had previously worked for Cornerstone Branding, Spring Design Associates, and Wages Design. WWW.SELIKOFFCO.COM

TYPEFACES
Helvetica

Univers

MATERIALS
Aluminum

Felt

Presentation board

Velcro

Eyelets

Envelopes

SPECIAL TECHNIQUES
Silkscreen
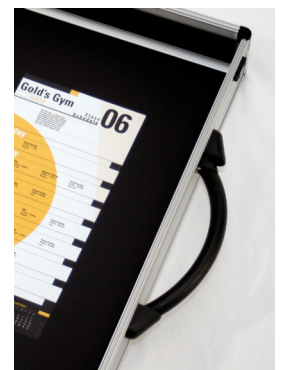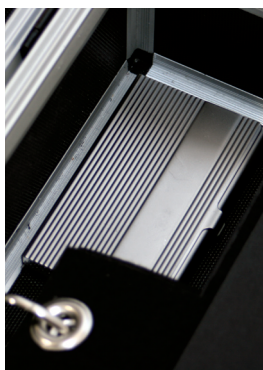
VENDORS
Helipac Portfolios

RETAIL STORES
Michaels

PRODUCTION TIME
1 Week

PRODUCTION COST
$300

Daniel Kent

ALTHOUGH THE PRIMARY GOAL OF THIS PORTFOLIO WAS TO HELP ME FIND A FULL-TIME POSITION WHILE STILL IN DESIGN SCHOOL IN 2006, I ENDED UP USING IT FOR MANY FREELANCE OPPORTUNITIES.

status   Still in active duty.

approach   I wanted versatility, longevity, durability, and personality—anything that didn't require using acetate sleeves. After locating a great aluminum case and a three-ring binder that had the look and dimensions that matched my style, I went to a local arts and crafts store. While there, I figured out the interior according to what they had on stock. This included thick black presentation board, rigid felt sheets, bookbinding glue, eyelets, eyelet punch/setter, matte spray, and Velcro strips. I also ordered black 9 × 12-inch envelopes, which I used to create pockets. I sandwiched the board between felt strips that had eyelets matching the three-ring binder, and the bottom of the portfolio had felt glued to the corners to ensure that there would be no embarrassing scratches left behind. Finally, I sprayed a matte strip on the exterior, where I silk-screened my mark.

flexibility   Pages could be added, subtracted, rearranged, and laid out according to the work. By using Velcro, I could attach whatever I wished to the interior.

display   I have always shown it in person. I would have felt strange about leaving it somewhere.

lastly   If your portfolio is hefty, you should do some upper-body work before taking it on a fairly long foot-journey. During the hotter months, I try to get to an interview ahead of the scheduled time so I can freshen up.

DANIEL KENT is a graphic designer in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He has Associate degrees from Bradley Academy for the Visual Arts and Penn State University. He has done work for large corporations and small start-ups. He occasionally designs rock posters. WWW.IKHOOR.COM

How many portfolios do you see on average per month, or per year?

I see about six to eight portfolios a year. They come from recent graduates looking for an entry-level design position at my studio, or with other L.A. design offices.

Petrula Vrontikis

I look at maybe two online portfolios a month.

Hillman Curtis

I probably see thirty or more portfolios a year, most of them PDFs.

Marc English

Thirty to forty a year.

John Foster

If we are hiring we may see ten in a month, but generally we see two to three.

Steve Liska

Forty to fifty a year.

Jakob Trollbäck

About ten a month, if I'm feeling particularly generous. On a regular month, about three or four.

Patric King

Three to five a month.

Peter Buchanan-Smith

When I had my own studio, I saw many. Now that I am consultant and creative director for This is Real Art, I see fewer students. But I make a point of trying to see two or three per month.

Adrian Shaughnessy

I only look at portfolios when I need to hire somebody, or when someone whose opinion I value suggests I check someone out. All in all, it probably comes out to around forty a year.

Petter Ringbom

Eight to ten a month, including online.

Michael Bierut

Fifteen per month.

Noreen Morioka

About fifty a year. And an additional one hundred PDF portfolios. Less so now, since I am absolutely, positively, not hiring.

Stefan Sagmeister

STRUCTURE
Perfect-bound book

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
11 × 9

TYPEFACE
Helvetica Neue

PAPER
Glossy

PRINTER
Apple

Alex Liberato | Marketing Communications Specialist

Contents
Television Post-Production | 04
Scripting | 08
Marketing Collateral | 11
Advertising Copy | 25

Alex Liberato | Marketing Communications Specialist

Marketing Collateral
I write collateral designed to help clients communicate in a distinct and customized way. I design tools to support and supplement—not replace—the relationships clients create with their customer base.

PRODUCTION COST
$60 Per book

News Correspondence
In 2006 I was a correspondent for a weekly news magazine broadcast throughout Utah on KBYU-TV and globally through DirecTV, D... Comcast Cable.
© KBYU-TV, BYU Broadcasting
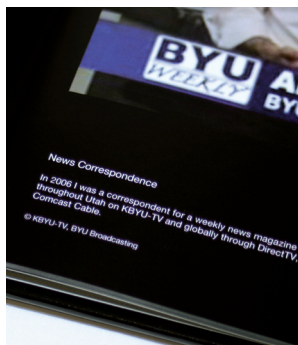
Alex Liberato

I CREATED THIS PORTFOLIO AS SOON AS I GRADUATED FROM COLLEGE. I DIDN'T HAVE A LARGE AMOUNT OF COPYWRITING EXPERIENCE UNDER MY BELT, AND I HAD TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF DISPLAYING LARGE BLOCKS OF TEXT IN AN ATTRACTIVE, EASY-TO-BROWSE FASHION.

status I first created this portfolio in late 2006, and have updated it periodically in order to acquire freelance opportunities.

approach My area of expertise is primarily on copywriting and advertising. I've noticed that most interviewers merely want to breeze through my portfolio, since I'd already submitted a writing sample beforehand, so I've learned how to conjure a review succinct enough to give interviewers a sense of my style and accomplishments.

In order to create my portfolio, I simply used the Keepsake feature of Apple's iPhoto, which allows you to print photos, calendars, and memory books. I merely selected a template, and plugged in my images.

flexibility At any given time I can expand on what I'd already developed and print a new version. However, each iteration can cost me upwards of $60 (including shipping). Though it isn't the most cost-effective version of a portfolio out there, I consider it a worthy investment to make two or three times a year, as it increases the wow factor during interviews.

display Unlike graphic designers or web designers, my work is not necessarily graphic or visual in nature. This acts as a showcase of my work experience.

memories My Mac-generated portfolio was praiseworthy enough for me to land a good contract gig with a communications firm in Bellevue, Washington. However, chuckles ensued once they glimpsed "Made on a Mac" on the back cover. To my chagrin, I did not know how to turn this particular item off, and this was doubly embarrassing, as the firm catered almost exclusively to Microsoft.

lastly A word of advice: do not leave the plastic wrapping on your Mac-created book when you go in for an interview. I made this mistake once, leaving the interviewer with the impression that I was obsessive-compulsive or, worse, a germaphobe.

ALEX LIBERATO works within the marketing department of the Seattle, Washington offices of Davis Wright Tremaine LLP, a national business and litigation law firm. He provides content support for advertisements, practice and industry content, and has spearheaded the firm's social media. Previously, he had contracted with Microsoft, American Express, Centurion Bank, and Best Western Hotels. @ALEXLIBERATO

STRUCTURE
Box with screw-post book

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
11.5 × 14 × 2.75

TYPEFACES
Caecillia

Trade Gothic
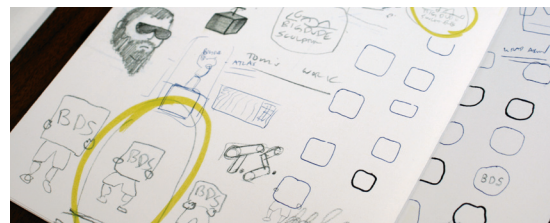
MATERIALS
Walnut wood

Aluminum screw-post spine

PAPER
Cougar, 80 lb cover
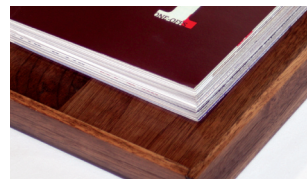
VENDORS
Shrapnel Design

PRINTER
FedEx Office

PRODUCTION TIME
2 Weeks

PRODUCTION COST
$275

Isaac Arthur

MY PORTFOLIO WAS CREATED TO GAIN FREELANCE OPPORTUNITIES. I HAVE A LONG LIST OF SMALL BUSINESSES AND NON-PROFITS I'D LOVE TO WORK WITH: PLACES LIKE MICROBREWERIES, HUMANE SOCIETIES, AND FLY-FISHING SHOPS.

status I presented my portfolio to dozens of people in New York at the 2009 Art Directors Club National Student Portfolio Review, and to twice as many potential freelance clients here in Indianapolis. It is still in use, although I am currently reworking some details. An updated version will soon make the rounds.

approach I began my Capstone Portfolio Class at Herron School of Art and Design in January 2009. We began the semester by determining what we wanted out of life, how design fit into that plan, and how our portfolio and presentation helped to articulate and achieve such goals. I wanted a standard portfolio "book" to showcase my work, but also wanted to include process books, printed pieces, and assorted swag. I hated the idea of carrying everything loose in a case and wanted an excuse to get in the wood shop. So I started sketching and prototyping a hybrid book/box to meet my specific needs.

Rather stupidly, I had decided on a final size and format for my portfolio before knowing whether or not I could acquire the necessary materials. Luckily, I was able to get a screw-post hinge from Shrapnel Design, and some beautiful walnut wood from my local lumber store.

flexibility I'm dealing with this now. I hate plastic sleeves that cover my work, so I designed my portfolio to have a raw texture that included uncoated, exposed paper. I wanted people to be able to touch the paper when viewing my work. While great in theory, the book is not as modular as it needs to be. For example, last week I showed my portfolio to a local nightclub, and I had to reprint several pages because a project I didn't want to show them was on the backside of a project I was including.

display I only show my portfolio in person because I like to drive the discussion. If I want to work with someone in another state or country, I'll send them an introductory letter via post, with an invitation to check out my web site, and take it from there. I actually landed a cool freelance gig in Florida using this method.

memories Before my first interview, I was waiting outside the studio, trying to get up my nerve. A bird flew overhead and shit on the messenger bag I used as a portfolio case—a disgusting smear down the front corner. Incredulous, all I could do was wipe the bag off in the grass and go inside to present.

online My web site doesn't necessarily complement my portfolio. If I was looking for a job at a design firm, I might only show enough work to get them interested in an interview. However, thanks to my web site, I get a lot of work from people I've never met before.

previously During my college years, I had a blog, and a goofy bundle of boards I used for my freelance adventures. Looking back, it's amazing that I managed to get any work, let alone the cool projects I was fortunate enough to be involved with.

lastly I use every opportunity and bit of feedback I get to craft a better portfolio presentation. I'm amazed at how many young designers will get negative feedback on their portfolio and take it to their next interview without even considering what they'd heard—that's crazy.

ISAAC ARTHUR is a graphic designer in Indianapolis, Indiana, where he is co-founder of CODO Design, a research-driven brand consultancy. He is a graduate of the Herron School of Art and Design in Indianapolis. WWW.CODODESIGN.COM

STRUCTURE
Bag with three-ring binder

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
11.625 × 10 × 1.5

TYPEFACES
Myriad Pro

PAPER
Laid, white, 32 lb

Strathmore, Ridge, New Black and Greenbrier, 80 lb

Wausau, Royal Metallics, Chalice Silver

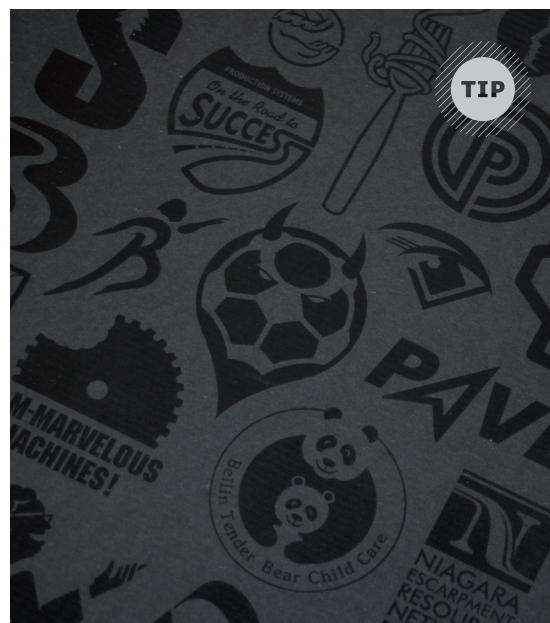RETAIL STORES
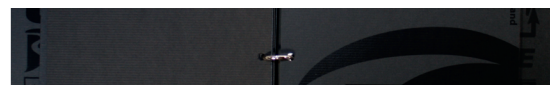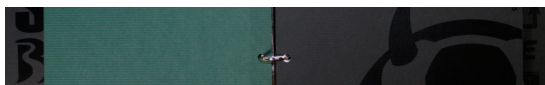**Michaels**

Office Depot

Office Max

Target

TIP

PRINTER
Xerox Phaser 7400

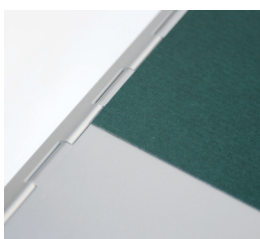SPECIAL TECHNIQUES
Black laser printing on black paper

PRODUCTION TIME
July 2008 to May 2009

PRODUCTION COST
$100

Daniel Green

THIS PORTFOLIO, COMPLETED IN MAY 2009, DEFINES MY WORK. IT IS MEANT TO ENHANCE FUTURE EMPLOYMENT SEARCHES AND POTENTIAL FREELANCE PURSUITS.

status — I haven't pursued any interviews after completing it, so I guess you could say it's a virgin portfolio.

approach — I wanted a format that could work seamlessly across print and digital presentations. I wanted to be sure that the print version retained a tactile, craft-oriented appeal. I selected a range of papers: a laid finish (laser compatible) for the portfolio pages, and a ridged cover stock for spray-mounting on the back of each page, which included the custom end-papers and divider pages. This combination was carried through on my personal business cards. It could also be used for any future print applications such as CD packaging. The printing of black laser on black sheets for the end-papers and divider pages give it a look that is similar to a UV spot varnish... only it's a lot cheaper!

TIP Printing black ink on black paper with a regular laser printer gives the sophisticated effect of the much more expensive technique of spot varnishing.

flexibility — It is absolutely updatable, and designed for maximum flexibility. I can mix and match, add and delete pages for each presentation. As I design new projects, I can insert new pages or I can eliminate entire sections.

display — With the project descriptions it could act on its own, though I prefer to present in person.

memories — In 1984, during my first professional job interview, the guy who reviewed my old portfolio advised me not to bother entering the field. While he was off the mark in judging my potential, I've been much more mindful of the importance of presentation ever since.

previously — My move away from a large leather case and sleeves started in 1999, after reading Tom Peters' book *The Brand You 50*. I wanted to do something more personal and customized, rather than just shuffling stuff into a plastic sleeve. I began to explore more options. My current portfolio, which I started in July 2008, is actually the fourth iteration. Nevertheless, it's still a work-in-progress.

online — Three reasons why I have yet to develop an online version: 1) time, since I just finished the print version; 2) skill, since I need to do some research and training on web design; 3) lack of immediate need, as I am not currently looking for employment.

However, I do plan to explore that as a next step, since web-based portfolios are increasingly used to narrow down the interview pool.

lastly — I recall a discussion on UnderConsideration's blog Speak Up, in which author Tan Le bemoaned reviewing a metal portfolio that scratched up his table. I put felt tabs on the back of mine as a precaution.

DANIEL GREEN is a graphic designer in Green Bay, Wisconsin. For the last fourteen years he has worked for Foth, a consulting engineering, science, and construction services firm. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay with a degree in Communications and the Arts. Previously, he worked as a graphic designer for Bellin Health. He maintains a graphic identity practice on the side, Daniel Green Eye-D Design.
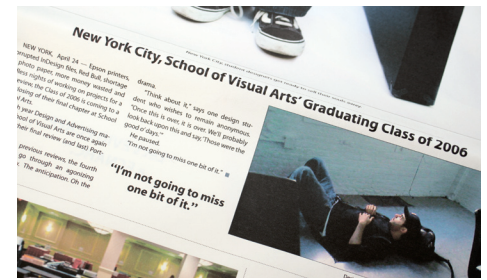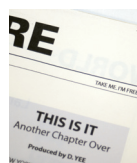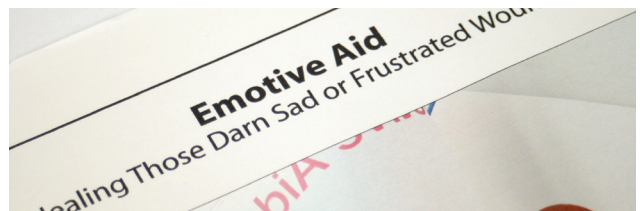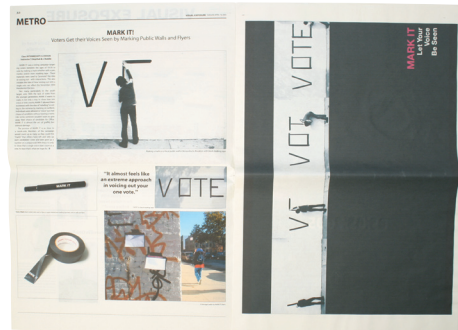
D. Yee

I CREATED MY FIRST NEWSPAPER PORTFOLIO IN 2005, WHEN I WAS A STUDENT AT THE SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS; THE SECOND ISSUE WAS DONE A MONTH LATER. THESE TWO PORTFOLIOS CIRCULATED AMONG VARIOUS DESIGN FIRMS SHORTLY AFTER GRADUATION.

status Long retired. The "newspapers" were active for about a year.

approach At the time, most students were binding some kind of book. I felt confident that my work could be presented in other ways, as I had more product design than print projects. I wanted to challenge myself and steer away from the expected. I designed a newspaper as a portfolio. It felt "economic" and, at the same time, it did not.

I made a lot of visits to New York Art & Paper Central. I experimented with several paper types that represented newsprint, yet still retained the necessary print quality of a portfolio. Eventually, I found some Mohawk Fine Paper samples that worked. A lot of testing ensued as I worked with printer spreads, and experimented with printing on both sides of the paper.

flexibility It is updatable, but very difficult to produce. It's a challenge that requires a lot of patience, similar to the process of bookbinding. If I were to edit it today, I would get rid of the self-portraits, for these were a school requirement, and I was never comfortable seeing my face plastered on the page.

display In person—sending it to UnderConsideration was its first delivery experience. [Ed.'s Note: It traveled and showed perfectly!]

online No, there wasn't an online version. At the time, newspapers were still mostly based offline!

lastly I've seen many beautifully designed books presented with props, such as bookshelves or flowers. They prompted me to question whether or not they were too much of a "gimmick," and I feared my newspapers fell into this trap. I find this to be the classic case of an artist embarrassed by older work—though I'm still proud of it.

*D. YEE is a graphic designer, as well as a photographer and painter, in New York City. Currently, she works at the heart of the crossroads of the world, Times Square, in both print and outdoor installation. She studied graphic design at the School of Visual Arts. **WWW.D-YEE.COM***

What advice would you offer to a designer when creating their portfolio? Or when presenting it?

Make sure that your craft is tight and clean. Pick a device that comfortably holds your work—be it a leather-bound box or a fur-covered suitcase—and reflects the type of work you hope to do. It makes a big difference, since it is usually resting on a table, in plain sight.

John Foster

Package your portfolio so the work is the star attraction—no pink, fur-covered portfolios.

Carin Goldberg

Show your best work, in a sequence that makes sense. Make sure your resume is flawless, and has excellent typography. Keep it simple: no gimmicks whatsoever—unless the gimmicks are abso-fucking-lutely amazing. But keep in mind that they're probably not.

Marc English

Don't include work just because it's real. The fact that something was actually printed and used doesn't make it more valuable.

Petter Ringbom

Do good ideas and execute them well. Do not spend an extraordinary amount of time mulling over the size and the form of the portfolio itself.

Stefan Sagmeister

The work should be current—ideally from the past year. It's not a retrospective of your time in school, or proof of all of the classes you attended. It's good to think of the collection of work in the portfolio as evidence of your skills and conceptual abilities.

Petrula Vrontikis

It strikes us that the digital form of the portfolio has now taken on paramount importance. We're much happier clicking through a straightforward PDF of greatest hits than having to waste time hearing about someone's issues with their typography tutor or how they passed their cycling proficiency test. By pre-vetting electronically, it speeds things up massively.

Michael Johnson

Think about presentation, flow of work, consistency, the mediums that are used, and the details, quality, and printing. Basically, look at a portfolio as you would a design project—it is one, after all—and design the hell out of it.

Steve Liska

Design is about taking information, and I am more interested in whether or not a potential designer can be articulate.

Noreen Morioka

Include only work you're proud of. The work should speak for itself. No spelling mistakes.

Michael Bierut

In web portfolios, I rarely gravitate toward the fancy stuff. I look for functionality, simplicity, beauty, and restraint. Make the site thoughtful.

Hillman Curtis

Less is more. Don't put anything in unless you believe in it. I hate unfinished work, or when people apologize for something incomplete or unresolved.

Jessica Helfand

Avoid having to over-explain your work to the viewer. Walk into a review, or interview, prepared with the best work possible. Let the work speak for itself.

Carin Goldberg

Show your work to the person you are presenting to, and not to yourself. Don't position your work in such a way that you have a clear view of it, but the interviewer has to crane his or her neck to see it. Unless you are sitting side by side with the person interviewing you, this is disastrous. Your work should be placed directly in front of the viewer, and not sideways. It's glaringly obvious, but the number of young designers who commit this error is staggering.

Adrian Shaughnessy

Good communication skills in the age of e-mail can't be overemphasized.

Gail Anderson

Be nice. Most people don't want to work with talented assholes.

Stefan Sagmeister

STRUCTURE
Perfect-bound book

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
8.5 × 11
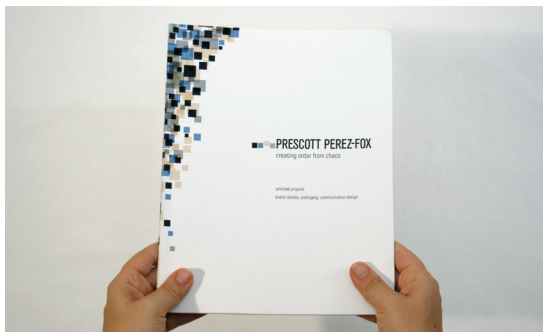
TYPEFACES
AC Akzidenz Grotesque

Univers Condensed

PAPER
Staples, double-sided matte, 230 gsm

RETAIL STORES
Staples

TekServe

PRINTER
EPSON R1900

TIP Showing select sketches helps pace the content of a portfolio. Perez-Fox's choice of light blue makes for a comforting rest from all the visuals.
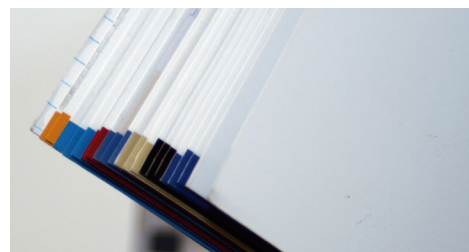
PRODUCTION TIME
3 Hours

PRODUCTION COST
$10 Per book

Prescott Perez-Fox

WHILE I RARELY SHOW MY PORTFOLIO TO POTENTIAL CLIENTS——THEY ARE USUALLY SATISFIED WITH THE SAMPLES I HAVE ON THE WEB——I DESIGNED ONE WHEN I WAS SEEKING EMPLOYMENT AND FREELANCE CONTRACTS. I CREATED THIS MOST RECENT VOLUME IN MAY 2009, FOR AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW/PORTFOLIO REVIEW AT A WELL-KNOWN AGENCY.

status Still in active duty, and constantly growing. This is the fourth volume, or what I would call Version 4.

approach I knew years ago that the typical black portfolio with plastic sleeves was a bad idea because it was so overdone. I wanted something portable yet interesting, with an element of hand-made production. So I used Staples double-sided matte paper, bound together with quarter-inch strips of Twin Tak, which I printed on my Epson. I printed each page full-bleed from a high resolution PDF, then flipped the stack and print on the back side, only to carefully stick each sheet of paper to the next, making sure to line up the spine.

**flexibility** In the past, I have removed the front or back page, but generally it's not updatable. It is, however, semi-disposable, and I can produce a new one with minimal drama by using basic materials. Assuming I have the InDesign files ready to go, I can produce a new book in under three hours.

display I always show it in person. I don't think I've ever been asked to drop off my book, or even to leave it behind—this is, perhaps, part of a larger conversation about how I market myself.

memories I've been in situations where the person was clearly unimpressed. The trouble was, they never specified what they didn't like. It's simply as if they were looking for something that wasn't there.

online I have sample images on my web site, where I feature more projects with fewer images. The strategy is to provide a tease on the web, then a little more in an e-mailed PDF, and finally the full picture in print, via a face-to-face interview. Lately, people are more impatient, and I'm thinking of revising that strategy. I worry that having too much work online will lead people to be disappointed when they meet me in person—I don't want potential employers to say "I've seen this already on your site. What's next?"

PRESCOTT PEREZ-FOX is an independent graphic designer and brand consultant based in Jersey City, New Jersey. He graduated from Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania before attending the Surrey Institute of Art & Design (now University for the Creative Arts) in the UK. WWW.PEREZFOX.COM

STRUCTURE
Case with boards

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
Case: 19 × 25 × 5

Boards: 18 × 24

MATERIALS
Wood

Leather

Foamcore

Black matte board

PAPER
EPSON, matte and semi-gloss

Uncoated stock
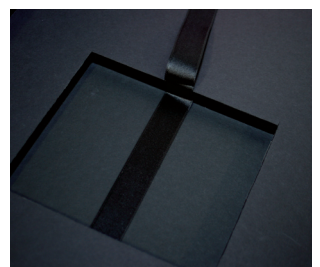
Newsprint

VENDORS
A2A Graphics

PRINTER
EPSON 1520

PRODUCTION COST
$1,000

Shigeto Akiyama

I DESIGNED THIS PORTFOLIO WITH INSTRUCTOR CARIN GOLDBERG IN 2001 FOR MY SENIOR REVIEW AT THE SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS. I ALSO USED IT FOR POST-GRADUATION JOB-HUNTING.

status I used it to get my first and second jobs.

approach At that time, Goldberg had specific instructions as to how students should present their work. The case was custom-ordered at 18 × 24-inches, and wrapped in black leather. The large portfolio format allowed us to present the work at full scale, especially for poster, newspaper and magazine design—in this particular class, we spent hours refining details.

I inkjet-printed my posters, newspapers, and stationery sets, and mounted them on foamcore boards while I fully comped magazines and CD packaging. Dimensional projects such as book covers, wine labels, pencil packaging, and shopping bags were photographed in 4 × 5-inch transparency format mounted on black matte boards.

flexibility It's updatable, as each board can be replaced. However, I decided not to use it as my ongoing professional portfolio, since it's rather bulky to carry.

display Because it was large and heavy, I had to transport it manually. Also, the portfolio was a bit too intricate, which made it difficult for some people to put it back together—good reason to present it in person and check the work environment.

memories Due to the size, one of the reviewers informed me that it looked like a student portfolio. This motivated me to downsize my next portfolio.

online At the time, I didn't think an online portfolio was common for students. Also, I wasn't capable of building a web site by myself.

evolution My current portfolio includes 11 × 14-inch loose sheets in a black clamshell case. It's easy to carry, and I normally complement it with actual samples, so that the reviewers can have a tactile experience and see the details in full size.

SHIGETO AKIYAMA is a graphic designer in New York City. He currently works at Pentagram, with partner Luke Hayman. He received a degree in architecture from Tohoku University in Sendai, Japan, and later graduated from the School of Visual Arts in New York City. He previously worked at Time Inc. Custom Publishing and Art + Commerce in New York City.

STRUCTURE
Case with screw-post book

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
11 × 14

TYPEFACE
Archer

MATERIALS
Screw-post masonite book

Custom jean bag

Zipper

PAPER
Moab Entrada, double-sided matte inkjet, 300 gsm

VENDORS
Case Envy

RETAIL STORES
Paper Haus

PRINTER
EPSON 4900
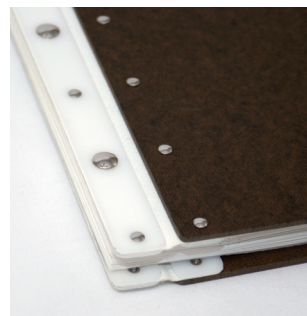
PRODUCTION TIME
2 Weeks

PRODUCTION COST
$2 Case

$200 Total

Julia-Anne Endicott Bork

THIS PORTFOLIO WAS CREATED IN THE SPRING OF 2008 FOR MY GRADUATION FROM THE SEATTLE CENTRAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE GRAPHIC DESIGN PROGRAM (NOW CALLED THE SEATTLE CENTRAL CREATIVE ACADEMY). I WAS PLANNING ON PURSUING MY FIRST FULL-TIME JOB AS A GRAPHIC DESIGNER.

status I used it for a period of two months, where I presented the portfolio at five interviews and a couple of talent pools.

approach Circumstances, resources, and my own quirkiness dictated my choice of materials. I wanted the portfolio to act like a storybook—to speak in my voice, and to convey the stories I'd accrued concerning projects, and the circumstances under which I was creating each piece. CaseEnvy, a Seattle-based company, manufactured the screw-post binding. I filled it with pages printed on Moab Entrada double-sided inkjet paper, and printed on the large format Epson in Seattle Central's production studio. The herringbone jean bag with red zipper was custom-made by a friend of mine to fit the portfolio. I found the red briefcase at a Goodwill store.

I was so exhausted that I drilled holes on the wrong side of the paper twice in a row, so in a nervous fit I had to print the entire thing three times.

flexibility I suppose that it is. I could use the exact same format and add newer work to it, but I feel that I have outgrown this portfolio. My skill set has expanded since leaving school, and I would probably want to do something a little different next time around—though I'd maintain the storybook style.

display I have done both in-person and delivery, but my web site was enough to generate a first-round interview.

memories I usually bring a set of drawings and tiny paintings along with me when I present. I use them to tell the story of how I became acquainted with graphic design—people enjoy sifting through my briefcase of strangely-printed treasures.

JULIA-ANNE ENDICOTT BORK is a designer and printmaker in Seattle, Washington where she works at Urban Influence. She received a BA from The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington and later attended the design program at Seattle Central Creative Academy. WWW.1000PENCILS.COM

E-mail Contents

Expected contents of a first-contact E-mail

KEY INTERVIEWEE INTERVIEWER

33% **34%**

22% **13%**

PDF WITH WORK SAMPLES

LINK TO WEB SITE

52%

42%

3% **1%**

BOTH

NONE

LESSON Don't send an empty e-mail. Give potential interviewers options to see your work.

Are recommendation letters expected at this point?

KEY INTERVIEWEE INTERVIEWER

9% **91%**

14% **86%**

YES

NO
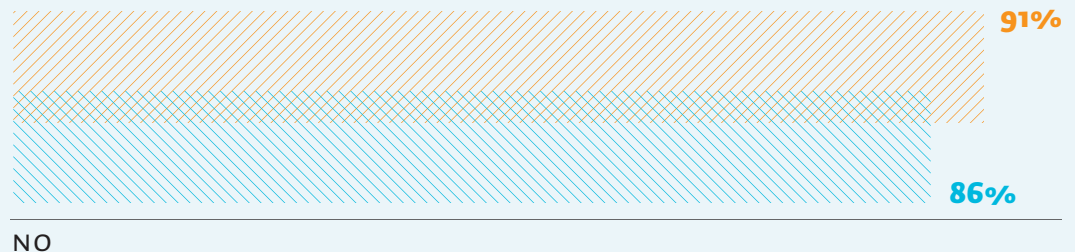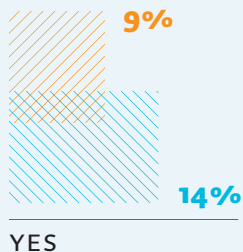
LESSON It's agreed: they are not.

Appropriate amount of samples in a PDF

44%

33%

35%

22%

27%

14%

18%

7%

2–3   3–4   5–7   8–10
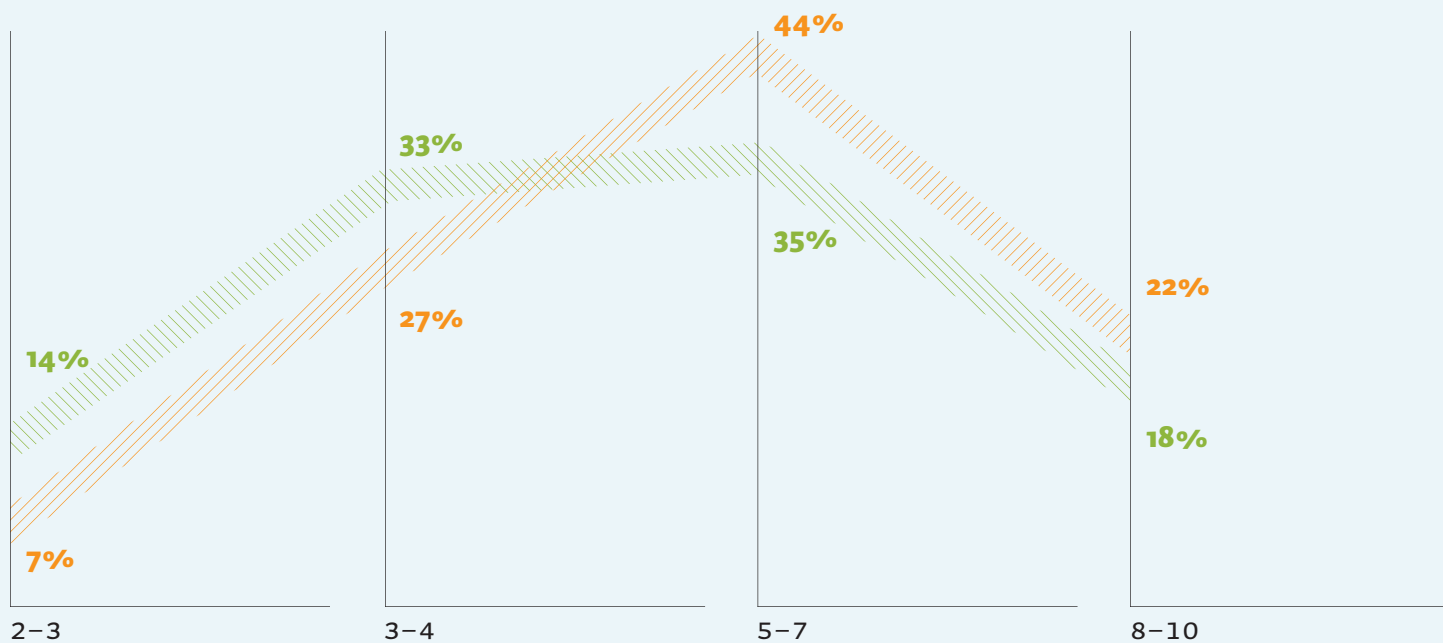
LESSON Interviewers want to see more work than you would have thought. That's a good thing!

Point at which an attachment is considered too big

48%

36%

41%

31%

21%

23%

2 MB   5 MB   10 MB
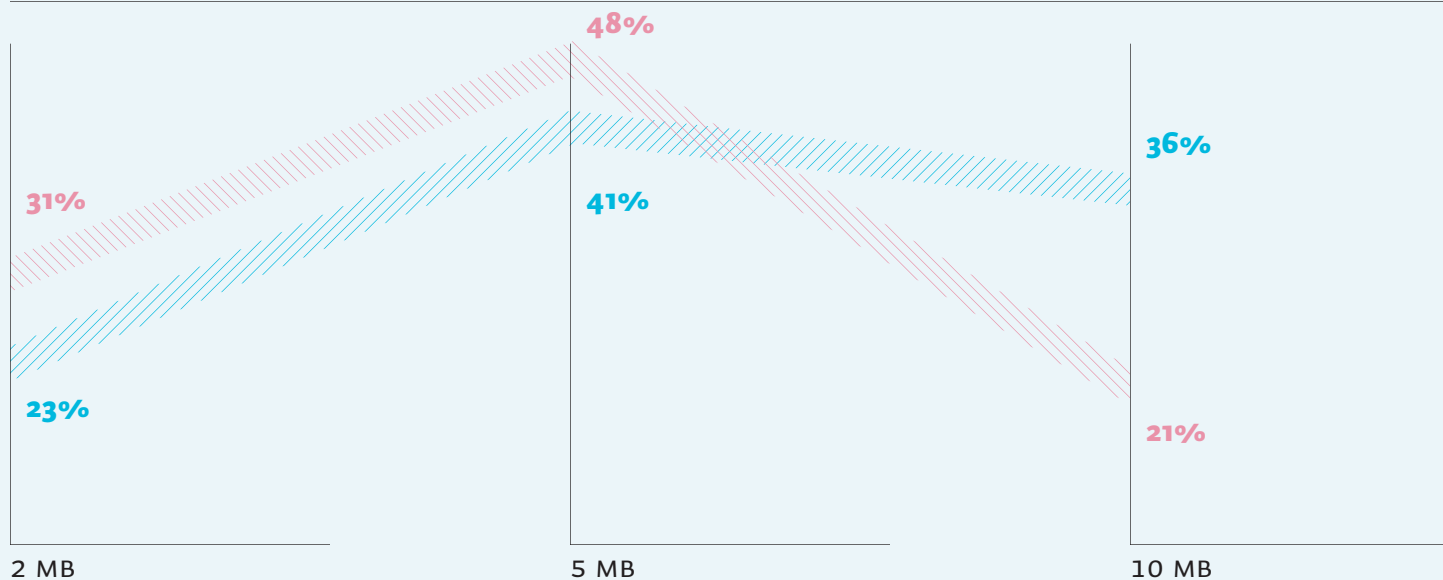
LESSON Clearly, their bandwidth is bigger than yours. Just don't exceed 10 MB.

STRUCTURE
Box with booklets

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
5.5 × 8.5

TYPEFACES
Akkurat Mono

MATERIALS
Cardboard box

PAPER
Mohawk, Strathmore, 25% Cotton
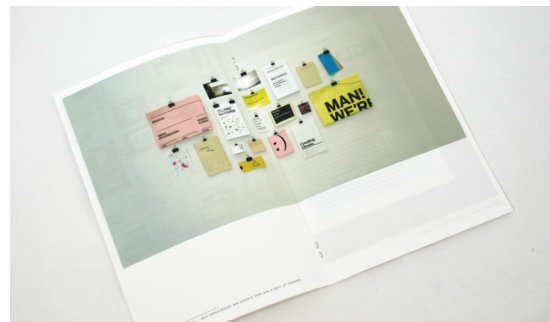
PRINTER
Xerox Phaser 6120

PRODUCTION TIME
6 Days (for multiple editions)

PRODUCTION COST
$115
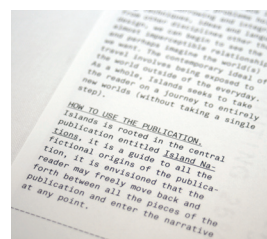
Abi Huynh

I FELT IT WAS TIME FOR AN UPDATED AND EXPANDED PORTFOLIO, SINCE I WAS APPLYING FOR POSITIONS WITH SEVERAL POTENTIAL STUDIOS. ALSO, I WAS GEARING TOWARD A MASTER'S DEGREE, SO IT WOULD COME IN HANDY.

status This portfolio is still active, primarily because the format is flexible and not dependent on context.

approach Since I was applying to more than one studio, I chose to develop separate booklets. This made it easier to adjust the content according to the interview. Moreover, I wanted an economical solution that could be laser-printed and readily accessible. With these parameters in mind, I chose to create small individual booklets that allowed for wider flexibility. The booklets were mailed in small, cheap, and sturdy cardboard boxes that retained enough space for samples of my work. This simple production method is analogous to my work in general: economical, reserved, and strengthened by a no-nonsense attitude.

flexibility The booklet template design is so simple that I can add or subtract projects with absolute ease.

display I am mostly hands-on, but on a few occasions I have mailed the portfolio for review. This is convenient, because the client is not under any obligation to send it back to me, as it is easily replaceable. When I am showing a portfolio in person, separate booklets come in handy when there are multiple people conducting an interview. It is then that I can show a broader range of my work, which can be pored over with greater attention, as opposed to many sets of eyes jostling in order to peer upon a single book.

ABI HUYNH is a graphic designer in Vancouver, British Columbia. He pursued his undergraduate studies in the Communication Design program at Emily Carr University in Vancouver. He graduated from the Type and Media MA program at the Koninklijke Academie van Beeldende Kunsten in The Hague, Netherlands. WWW.ABIABIABI.COM

STRUCTURE
Box with screw-post book

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
16 × 13 × 3
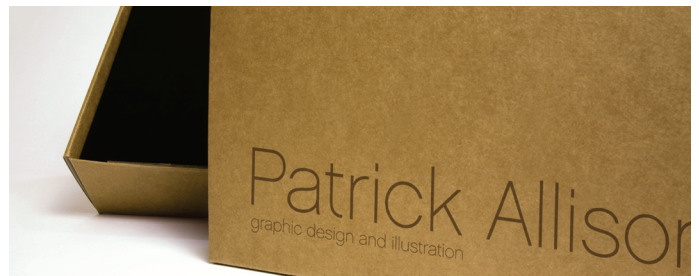
TYPEFACES
Chalet

MATERIALS
Salvaged C-Flute corrugated cardboard

PAPER
Moab Entrada, double-sided matte inkjet, 300 gsm

VENDORS
eBay and, indirectly, Pina Zangaro

PRINTER
Laser printer

SPECIAL TECHNIQUES
Winter green oil transfers for graphic applications
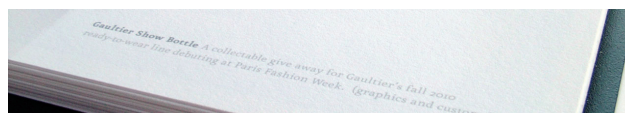
PRODUCTION TIME
9 Hours

PRODUCTION COST
$0 Box

$25 Book

Patrick Allison

I CREATED THIS PORTFOLIO TO MEET GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PORTFOLIO CENTER IN THE SUMMER OF 2009, AND TO HELP ME FIND MY FIRST REAL GRAPHIC DESIGN JOB AFTER GRADUATION.

status

I'm still using the portfolio, though I've been adding and subtracting from it as I go along.

approach

When I started the process, I was against spending a lot of money on a case with loads of bells and whistles. I scheduled a lunch with my mentor, to discuss what was actually important when showing student work, and it was one of the most enlightening portfolio conversations I'd ever had. I learned that the portfolio was about the work, and only about the work.

I vowed that I would spend no more than $20 on the whole book, and that I'd work extra hard to make it as interesting and as beautiful as the custom cases. After experimenting with tons of materials, I settled on constructing it out of raw, corrugated cardboard. I found a beautiful, black screw-post book by Pina Zangaro online that I purchased for $10. A production instructor at Portfolio Center helped me with the dieline, which took about thirty minutes to complete. If a prospective employer happen to drop it, or leaves a coffee ring on it—as they have been known to do—I don't have to stress. There are three extras in my closet, with resumes and business cards to match, ready to go at a moment's notice.

flexibility

I designed the portfolio to be an organic book. It can grow or shrink, depending on the circumstance, and any advancements or new projects that I complete.

display

I prefer to show it in person.

PATRICK ALLISON is a designer and illustrator based in Columbus, Ohio. He received a BA from Berry College in Rome, Georgia and later attended Portfolio Center in Atlanta. He has done design work for Coca-Cola and United Way and illustration work on children's books for Jackson Fish Market. He currently works at Abercrombie & Fitch. WWW. PATRICKALLISON.COM

STRUCTURE
Screw-post book

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
11 × 17

TYPEFACES
Minion
Plantin

PAPER
Linen, natural white
Stardream, silver
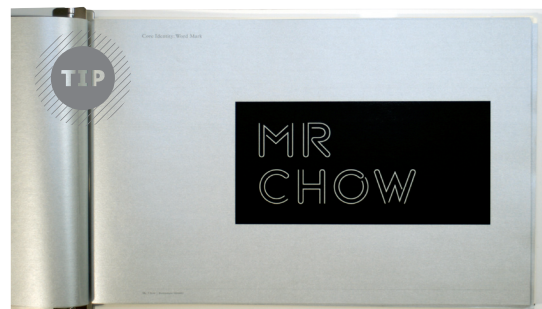
RETAIL
Sam Flax
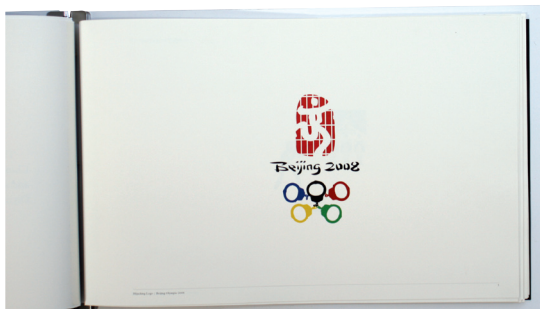
PRINTER
Laser Printer

TIP If your printer can handle them, differently textured and colored papers add variety and interest. Kusui's silver paper leaves an impression.
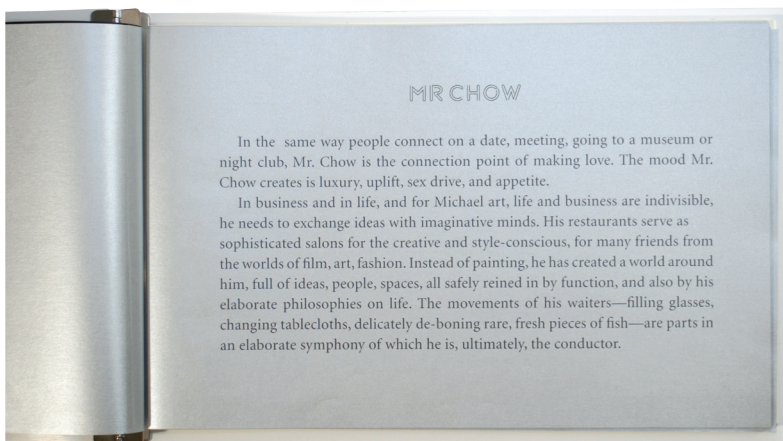
PRODUCTION TIME
5 Days

PRODUCTION COST
$150

MR CHOW

In the same way people connect on a date, meeting, going to a museum or night club, Mr. Chow is the connection point of making love. The mood Mr. Chow creates is luxury, uplift, sex drive, and appetite.

In business and in life, and for Michael art, life and business are indivisible, he needs to exchange ideas with imaginative minds. His restaurants serve as sophisticated salons for the creative and style-conscious, for many friends from the worlds of film, art, fashion. Instead of painting, he has created a world around him, full of ideas, people, spaces, all safely reined in by function, and also by his elaborate philosophies on life. The movements of his waiters—filling glasses, changing tablecloths, delicately de-boning rare, fresh pieces of fish—are parts in an elaborate symphony of which he is, ultimately, the conductor.

Takashi Kusui

I CREATED THIS PORTFOLIO IN THE SPRING OF 2008, BOTH AS A GRADUATION REQUIREMENT FOR MY BFA FROM THE SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS, AND TO PROMOTE MY TALENT TO POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS AND THE CREATIVE COMMUNITY.

status I used it actively for six months. These days, I rely on showing my work through my web site.

approach I am originally from Japan, and am very influenced by the Japanese aesthetic. I wanted my portfolio to be precise, spare, user-friendly, simple, and, most importantly, project-focused. In other words, I didn't want any decoration or clutter to distract from the work. I chose an oversized white sleeve screw-post book that allowed for large images and editable pacing.

flexibility I could add or remove pages at will, due to the screw-post binding.

display I mostly showed it in person. Ultimately, I began working for one of my portfolio instructors, Michael Ian Kaye, at Mother Design in New York.

memories Interestingly, when I showed my portfolio to advertising agencies, their curiosity was piqued by my personal projects. But when I showed my portfolio to design and branding agencies, they reacted more to my corporate projects.

previously I created my thesis book through lulu.com—I wanted to have multiple copies, and building them by hand would have taken forever. Besides, it wouldn't have been very cost-effective.

lastly In my opinion, a portfolio has to be something you are proud of, and something you can speak about with passion and conviction.

TAKASHI KUSUI is a graphic designer in New York City. He currently works at Mother Design, a branch of Mother New York, where he works on branding and strategic design. He graduated from the School of Visual Arts in New York City. He also works as a web designer for Ji Lee, the creator of the Bubble Project.
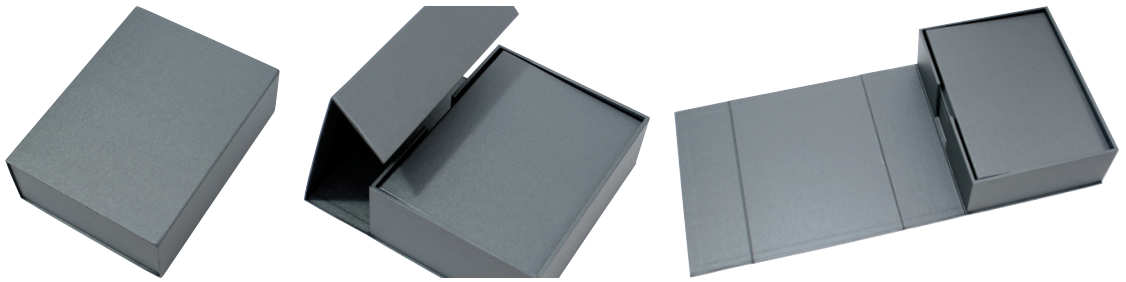**WWW.TAKASHIKUSUI.COM**

Box with screw-post book and trays

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
12 × 19 × 7

TYPEFACES
The Sans

MATERIALS
Wood

Fabric

PAPER
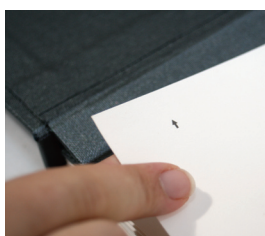**Various samples finagled from paper reps**

PRINTER
EPSON

PRODUCTION TIME
5-9 Weeks

PRODUCTION COST
$1,200

Christian Helms

THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE PORTFOLIO WAS TO SECURE MY EXIT FROM PORTFOLIO CENTER IN 2002, AND CONVINCE AN UNWITTING DESIGN STUDIO TO PAY ME MONEY TO DO SOMETHING I WOULD HAVE DONE FOR FREE.

status I used it until I got a job. Shortly after, I caught wind of a great secret: once employed, your big box of student work is essentially useless.

approach My choice was handed down to me by via divine proclamation. At the Portfolio Center, no box equaled no graduation. Although I hated this orthodoxy, I have to admit that it is a clean and professional form of presentation. I chose the simplest, least flashy box I could order. I saw other people binding theirs in pink cowhide and realized that even after all the anticipation, the work could still prove to be a disappointment. You never want the package to oversell the contents.

I had the box built, but all of the contents were meticulously hand-made by me. In school, we all spent countless hours perfecting the craft of the hand-held parts, and they were beautiful. I remember the terror I experienced during interviews, watching as an art director strolled into the room with a sloppy sandwich, and thinking of my poor, defenseless portfolio, sitting helplessly by.

Even more important than the work itself was the opportunity to tell my story, to talk about what I loved and what I hoped to do as a designer.

flexibility Had I needed to update it, I'd be in trouble.

display Always shown in person. It's a one-off, so the thought of shipping that thing to a studio was unbearable. Plus, you lose the chance to talk about the work and connect with your audience.

memories In true Portfolio Center fashion, it weighed at least 30 pounds. I am not a large man, and dragging it through New York City in 3 inches of snow wasn't much fun. I'd show up at interviews looking as if I'd just finished a triathlon.

online My class may have been the last year of design grads not to have a web site. Hard to imagine now.

lastly Despite all of my complaints, this book got the ball rolling for me professionally, and Portfolio Center played a huge part in helping to make it happen. These days, it's rare to see strong craft and good production in student books. When I do, I'm immediately impressed, and more predisposed to taking the time to talk through the work.

CHRISTIAN HELMS is a graphic designer in Austin, Texas, where he co-founded The Decoder Ring Design Concern in 2004. He has a BA in journalism from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Subsequently, he attended Portfolio Center in Atlanta, Georgia. He previously worked at Pentagram in New York City and was one of the participants in the inaugural Project M by John Bielenberg. WWW.THEDECODERRING.COM

What do you look for in a designer's portfolio?

A portfolio should tell you a little bit about the person who created it. It's helpful to get a sense of someone's interests, whether it's politics, fashion, pop culture or Satanism. A sense of humor in the work is always a plus, too. Stay away from hot button or sensitive issues, since you never know who you're potentially offending. Making people think, or stirring them up, is a good thing—but just be careful not to let your passions overshadow your better judgment.

Gail Anderson

The cold hard truth is that I am usually looking "through" their work for a deeper insight into how they would work as potential employees. I expect a level of competency, and craft in particular, but I am also closely listening to them in order to form an assessment.

John foster

We look for thoughtful ideas and problem-solving abilities. Then we look for breadth of visual styles, project types, mediums, and good typography.

Steve Liska

The basics have to be there: solid typography, color sensibility, and composition. If those elements are not there, I lose interest right away. If they are there, I then look at concepts, personality, and style.

Petter Ringbom

Intelligence, storytelling, and typography.

Jakob Trollbäck

Simplicity, wit, and good typography.

Michael Bierut

Ideas, followed by great ideas, and yet more great ideas hot on their heels. We can teach people how to use design software—it seems much harder to teach people how to have ideas.

Michael Johnson

I look for a genuine spirit behind the work, a commitment to design, and a desire and skill to speak convincingly and compellingly to the world. I appreciate designers who take risks (for better or worse). I love to see the process, and how someone got from point A to point B.

Peter Buchanan-Smith

Neatness. Attention to detail. Lack of waffling. Good ideas. Good execution. Personality. Really, when I think about it, I'm often more interested in the designer sitting in front of me than their work.

Adrian Shaughnessy

At its core, a portfolio is a packaging assignment. You need to "craft" the experience the reviewer will have with your work. I assess a designer's ability to choreograph a strong narrative, I find their level of discernment, and the love they have for their craft, by noting the choices they make.

Petrula Vrontikis

Typographic skills are important. Also, knowing how to crop a photograph, bookbinding, and so forth. Editorial sensibilities are a must—how to sequence images, a sense of what to leave in and what to take out. Ingenuity. Computer skills and software knowledge should be listed on resumes, not demonstrated in overworked Photoshop pieces.

Jessica Helfand

I look for four things. **1) THINKING:** Are you eager to explore, to be curious, to know more? Have you been able to play with the rules, but still find ways to instill the work with a spirit of your own? **2) A POINT OF VIEW:** Have you figured out your place in the world, or are you still searching? **3) HUMOR:** Do you have genuine wit, or are you merely vulgar? **4) DESIGN:** Do you possess the courage and the skills to fail in your attempts? Do you have a foundation in the core design principles? Are you a student of history?

Marc English

STRUCTURE
Box with booklet and CD

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
5.5 × 5 × 0.25

TYPEFACES
Century Gothic

Military Serif

Southern Brush
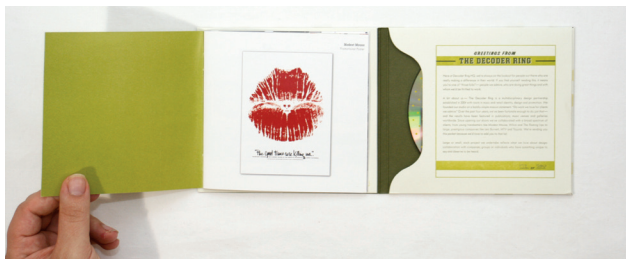
MATERIALS
Chipboard

CD

PAPER
French Paper, Construction

VENDORS
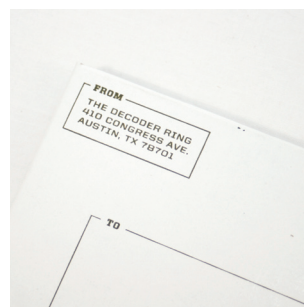**Stumptown Press**

SPECIAL TECHNIQUES
Letterpress

PRODUCTION TIME
2 Weeks

PRODUCTION COST
$3.50 Per piece

$700 Total

The Decoder Ring Design Concern

UNTIL 2006, ALL OF OUR CLIENTELE HAD COME THROUGH WORD OF MOUTH. RATHER THAN WAITING FOR OUR CLIENTS TO COME TO US, WE DECIDED TO TARGET CLIENTS IN SPECIFIC INDUSTRIES, SUCH AS BREWERIES (WE LOVE BEER) AND RETAIL BRANDS.

status Instead of printing a zillion of these things and blanketing the country, we printed a limited, numbered run of 200. We wanted the pieces to have special value, and for clients to savor this unique quality that catered just to them.

approach Economy was our principal driving force. We wanted to burn digital portfolios on demand, knowing that the minute we printed a portfolio we'd inevitably have some new project we wanted to add. And so we set out to assemble a letterpress Digipak with an attached highlight book and CD—all put together with intern power.

flexibility Absolutely. It's updatable and customizable.

display We would send out an e-mail a few days before the portfolio showed up via FedEx, often accompanied by posters, studio tees, and other swag.

memories The mailer sleeves were tighter than expected, and we lost two interns to paper cuts stuffing these things. Those brave and beautiful bastards never saw it coming.

online The promo was meant mostly as a teaser, to drive traffic to our web site, which functions as our primary portfolio these days.

lastly We got a lot of great responses, and they directly or indirectly lead to a lot of fun, high-visibility projects for clients like *The New York Times* and *Men's Health*. However, at the end of the day, our best clients still come from word-of-mouth referrals.

STRUCTURE
Case with screw-post book and boards

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
Case: 13 × 18 × 6.75

Book and trays: 16.5 × 11.5

TYPEFACES
Trade Gothic Condensed

MATERIALS
Vanguard camera case
Foamcore
Book board
Book cloth
Elastic cord
Thread

PAPER
EPSON, matte, heavyweight

RETAIL STORES
Michaels
Sam Flax

PRINTER
EPSON 1280

PRODUCTION TIME
4 Months
Updates require 8-12 hours

PRODUCTION COST
$450

Josh Berta

I CREATED THIS PORTFOLIO IN THE SPRING OF 2005, IN MY FINAL QUARTER AT PORTFOLIO CENTER. IT WAS ORIGINALLY CREATED TO ATTRACT ATTENTION IN THE JOB MARKET, BUT I WON A FULL-TIME POSITION AT PENTAGRAM THAT BLOSSOMED FROM AN INTERNSHIP WITHOUT EVEN SHOWING IT.

status I did not use the portfolio immediately after school, but in the fall of 2007, when I began job hunting. I updated it with some professional work and used it in interviews. It is now inactive, and would require more updates were I to take it out again.

approach Portfolio Center has a seemingly rigid formula on how to make a portfolio: custom-made, with a custom book, and trays that retain handhelds. Many students follow this prescription blindly, but I sensed the shortcomings and rethought my approach based on my economic limitations.

So, instead of a custom-made, expensive portfolio box, I purchased a camera case and modified it to fit my purpose.

TIP Showcasing loose samples shouldn't feel messy. Berta used elastic loops to secure the samples against black boards.

I made the book myself, devising a front and back cover with book board and cloth, using post-screws to sandwich the Epson-printed pages. I also made pocket pages to hold letterhead suites and other printed samples, and simple accordion folded pages to show larger poster series. Instead of special trays, I used sheets of foamcore with elastic loops to secure my handhelds.

flexibility I can swap out or rearrange pages and boards as I see fit. The lid of the carrying case used to have eggshell foam in it, but I pulled this out and filled the case with sheets of foamcore instead. I can remove layers of foamcore to make room for more work if required.

display Always in person.

online I do have a web portfolio. The layout is very simple. The primary commonality, other than the work, is the use of Trade Gothic Condensed, and the black and white palette.

lastly One of the most crucial bits of guidance I got was to make my book as diverse as possible. That means I show a variety of pieces in my book, geared toward a wide audience, without limiting myself to one apparent area. I try to share this advice with anyone whose book I'm reviewing.

I also strongly feel that student work should look like professional work. That is to say, the work should suggest knowledge of how to make things in a professional, real-world setting. I have no interest in seeing Type 01 exercises in a student portfolio.

I think the case can be a bit intimidating for some people. After all, most people just have a book, and no handhelds. But, in the end, showing fully-realized comps and/or actual printed pieces makes for a more complete overview of the work, and I think interviewers appreciate that. Of course, if need be, I can always leave the case and handhelds at home, and take my book solo.

JOSH BERTA is a graphic designer in New York City who currently works at Piscatello Design Centre. He received a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and later attended Portfolio Center in Atlanta, Georgia. He previously worked for Pentagram, with partner Michael Bierut. He runs the blog Pr*tty Sh*tty. **WWW.JOSHBERTA.COM**

STRUCTURE
Gatefold brochure with DVDS

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
8.5 × 8 × 0.375

TYPEFACES
Bembo
Clarendon
Myriad Pro
Scala Sans

MATERIALS
Case 1/16" museum chipboard
PVA bookbinding glue
Bookbinding tape

PAPER
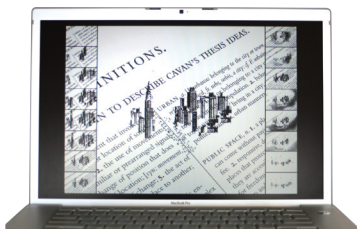**Gatefold: Oce Alternative, matte photo, 7.6 mil**
DVD labels: Memorex

VENDORS
Concept Link LTD

PRINTER
Gatefold: HP 3500 plotter
DVD labels: Color laser print

PRODUCTION TIME
3 Weeks

TOTAL COST
$40 Per copy

Cavan Huang

MY PORTFOLIO, TITLED *MEMEOPOLIS*, WAS CREATED AS MY GRADUATE THESIS IN MAY 2005. IT DOCUMENTED MY DESIGN INSIGHTS AND EXPLORATIONS DURING MY THREE-YEAR MFA STUDIES IN GRAPHIC DESIGN AT RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN.

status I used it for a couple of years after graduation, in interviews and presentations. Today, only excerpts from it continue to be featured on my online professional portfolio.

approach Since my graduate thesis focused on motion narratives in the urban environment, a majority of my projects were short films, motion-based studies, or interactive installations. One of the main objectives of my thesis was to break traditional boundaries of print design and use them to inform the way we design in third and fourth dimensions. Although I was expected to provide documentation of my explorations, a simple written document with supporting images would not do justice to many of my graduate projects.

I developed a two-disc DVD package entitled *Memeopolis*, which reflects my unique non-linear approach to design. The document explained my thesis ideas through the metaphorical

TIP Huang used a Chartpak Colorless Blender pen to transfer artwork from a printout to chipboard. Search "blender pen transfer" on the web for more.

lens of an urban planner, or architect, of *Memeopolis*. These ideas wrapped the package in paragraphs of typography and abstract graphic forms that can be read in many ways. The DVDs featured over twenty graduate projects, as well as a full audio commentary explaining the evolution of my thesis ideas, from exploring analog mediums like print, to letterpress type, collage, and staged photography.

The document was a digital inkjet print on a single sheet of Oce Alternative matte photo paper. It was hand-cut and folded into a four-panel gatefold package. Clear adhesive plastic disc mounts were placed onto the two middle panels. Disc labels were designed and printed on adhesive DVD labels. The outer slipcase was made from 1/16″ grey museum chipboard panels, and fastened with PVA bookbinding glue and bookbinding tape. Text and graphics were imprinted on the outside, using a colorless Chartpak AD Art Marker Blender Pen. The content within the DVDs was designed with various programs in the Adobe Creative Suite and authored using Apple DVD Studio Pro.

flexibility Theoretically, the DVDs found in my graduate portfolio could be easily updated by modifying their content. However, since the whole package is a representation of graduate work I completed at RISD, it would be disingenuous to update the contents of this portfolio for any reasons outside of restoration or archiving.

display I often present it in person, in order to guide people through the vast amount of content. But when I present it, I try to minimize commentary to allow the viewer to discover the portfolio on his or her own.

memories I produced eight editions of my portfolio: one for each of my thesis advisors, a couple for the RISD library, and a couple for myself. Still, my graduate portfolio was far from a shining specimen of bookbinding craft. It was stronger as a conceptual object than a physical one. I went through many failed iterations before producing a version that even held together. Not surprisingly, of the eight editions, the best were the last two that I produced—by then, I had developed production processes to avoid the craft errors that plagued my previous editions: glue smudges, unevenly cut lines, and crooked folding, to name a few. Both on the inside and out, my portfolio remains a work in progress.

online Although my online portfolio primarily features professional work, I consider it a collection of works in progress and an extension of my design direction since graduate school. The online portfolio not only features several excerpts from the DVDs, but also employs similar graphic forms and textures repurposed from graduate projects. In addition, each project featured online is accompanied by a short explanation reflective of the many design objectives I first put forward in the graduate portfolio.
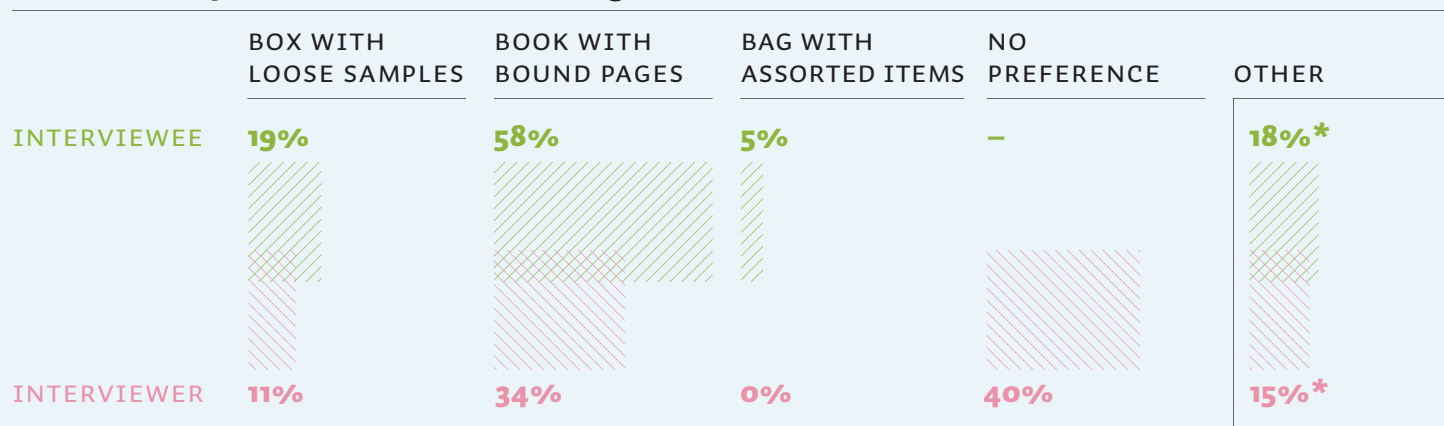
lastly The creation of my portfolio struck a fine balance between documenting my process of design and actually making a designed document which showcased the final product. Unfortunately, many of today's portfolios are geared towards the end result, often overlooking the process that went into making the project.

Designers should emphasize their best work, since they don't have much time to make a lasting impression on portfolio reviewers. But having reviewed and presented many portfolios myself, I found that the most compelling presentations are ones where designers are unafraid to share their process—even if it means including work that is incomplete or unpolished.

CAVAN HUANG *is an art director and multimedia designer in the Time Warner Global Media Group in New York City. He earned his* BA *in History and Urban Planning at McGill University and, his* MFA *at Rhode Island School of Design. He occasionally lectures on design at Rhode Island School of Design, New York University, and Brown University.* **WWW.ICAV.CA**

Portfolio Basics

Preference of portfolio structure according to…

|	BOX WITH LOOSE SAMPLES	BOOK WITH BOUND PAGES	BAG WITH ASSORTED ITEMS	NO PREFERENCE	OTHER
INTERVIEWEE	19%	58%	5%	–	18%*
INTERVIEWER	11%	34%	0%	40%	15%*

A sampling of "other" responses

* WEB SITE / PDF / LAPTOP / BOX WITH MOUNTED BOARDS / BOOK OR BINDER WITH SLEEVES / FILES ON USB DRIVE

* WEB SITE / PDF / ORIGINAL OBJECTS PREFERRED

LESSON A) Above all, keep things organized. A book seems to be the most common way to do so. **B)** Your portfolio should not feel like opening the overhead bin after the plane has landed.

Does size—big or small—matter?

KEY INTERVIEWEE INTERVIEWER

YES — 70% (INTERVIEWEE) / 51% (INTERVIEWER)
NO — 30% (INTERVIEWEE) / 49% (INTERVIEWER)
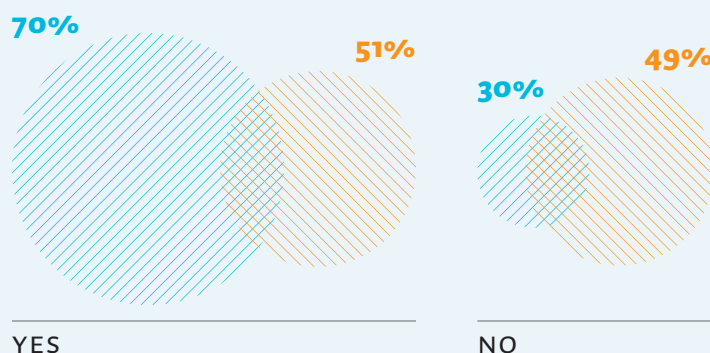
A sampling of elaborate responses

SHOULD BE COMFORTABLE TO CARRY / NOT TOO BIG (20 × 30 IN.), NOT TOO SMALL (5 × 7 IN.) / YOU'D NEED A GOOD REASON TO GO LARGER THAN 11 × 17 IN. / LARGE IMAGES GOOD, HUGE PORTFOLIO BAD

NEED TO BE ABLE TO READ THE COPY AND SEE DETAILS / TOO BIG IS CUMBERSOME, TOO SMALL IS SILLY / SHOW PROJECT AT ACTUAL SIZE

LESSON This is a matter of measurements that must be applied by you: big, but not too big; small, but not excessively so. Also applicable: the unspoken rule that the younger the designer, the bigger the portfolio, and the more experienced the designer, the smaller the portfolio.

STRUCTURE
Keynote presentation

TYPEFACES
Lucida Grande

SOFTWARE
Keynote

PRODUCTION COST
$79 Keynote

Mig Reyes

AFTER CARRYING AROUND A SOLID 18 × 24-INCH STEEL-CASED PORTFOLIO BOOK, I DECIDED THAT I WANTED TO CONVERT MY ENTIRE EXPERIENCE INTO A LAPTOP PRESENTATION. THAT SAID, I MADE MY FIRST KEYNOTE PRESENTATION IN MAY OF 2008, IN ORDER TO ACQUIRE A FULL-TIME POSITION. THIS ITERATION IS FROM MAY OF 2009.

status
It's still in active duty—the digital nature of Keynote has allowed me to tailor the content as time and meetings evolve.

approach
Once I realized that the work I enjoyed the most related to motion and interactive design, it was a no-brainer to pursue a digital presentation that kept my work in its best context.

flexibility
My portfolio is incredibly updatable. I've tailored each presentation toward whichever studio and agency I was interviewing with. It was almost as easy as drag-n-drop was for my Keynote, and I wouldn't have had it any other way.

display
I mostly show it in person, as I have a story to tell for each item. I like to show "before" and "after" situations, since it demonstrates my problem-solving abilities.

memories
My favorite part about presenting my portfolio involved showing the "before" screens. The interviewers initially seemed to have "You've got to be kidding me" scrawled all over their faces. After showing the newly designed work, it was great to see the scowls drop and the faces light up.

online
I have a more comprehensive set of work available online. In fact, most of my leads and interview opportunities have sprung from my web site. It's up to me to leave them with a good story and a taste of what my personality is like. This is where the animated Keynote helps me put on more of an engaging show, rather than the standard look-and-see.

lastly
If you are going to do a physical book, keep the spreads within your portfolio to a single project at a time. It's harder to focus on each individual project if several items are competing for attention on a single page.

MIG REYES is a designer in Chicago, Illinois, where he is currently the interactive designer at skinnyCorp, the parent company of t-shirt community Threadless. He received a BFA from The Illinois Institute of Art – Schaumburg, where he was the AIGA student chapter president. He has worked full-time, freelance, and on contract with various firms in Chicago. He collaborates with the national board of AIGA as its social media liaison. WWW.MIGREYES.COM

How many pieces would you say make the perfect portfolio?

I have no magic number. It just needs to feel right, and making a book feel right is a magical skill that all good designers possess. Even if it kills you, be concise and sparing. Self-indulgence is the most fatal (and popular) trap.

Peter Buchanan-Smith

Eight to ten.

Hillman Curtis

Ten.

Michael Bierut

Ten to twelve. That would include two to three larger, more complex, multi-faceted projects.

Carin Goldberg

Twelve to fifteen.

Steve Liska

Depends on the depth of the work. If the pieces are really evolved, such as full corporate identities, you can put less in there; if you have mostly one-offs, you need to put more in there.

Petter Ringbom

Fifteen to twenty. If we're talking, I feel like I have about an hour of attention to give. Anything more than that brings us into the long-meeting zone, and I start to wonder if my clients are calling.

Patric King

Ten to twenty.

Stefan Sagmeister

I suggest ten to twelve projects, maximum. If projects include multiple components, or fully designed books, eight to ten projects will be enough. One of the main parameters for a portfolio review is limited time. Presenting the work should take a maximum of thirty to thirty-five minutes. Many designers show, and say, far too much, leaving little time for an authentic conversation to develop.

Petrula Vrontikis

It is important not to have too much. As a general rule, don't show more than one or two examples of the same sort of work—if you've designed three logos for three bars, only show one or two.

Adrian Shaughnessy

Few designers have a consistently stellar book. I begin to wonder when a portfolio has less than eight pieces, and there is a good chance I might get bored if it has more than twelve. Ten might be the sweet spot. However, don't include pieces just to make numbers! A weak project does more harm than good, even if it means only having seven to present.

John Foster

I'll tell you what I don't want to see: a logo that is applied to nothing; a letterhead that has no further applications; a magazine cover, with nothing else; and a magazine spread, with no table of contents or cover. I don't want to see one poster, one ad—I don't want to see one of anything, unless it is so good that it knocks me silly.

Marc English

In the digital realm, once we've been persuaded to open the PDF or visit the URL, a dozen or so pieces works best for us. Generally, students rarely have more than ten killer ideas. In fact, if we're honest, it's quite rare to see anyone with more than four or five. Trouble is, we're suspicious if people only show us six projects. We start thinking "where's all the other stuff?"

Michael Johnson

Three great ones in order to get me interested, and ten more to seal the deal.

Noreen Morioka

Don't overwhelm the interviewer with too much work. If you're good, it'll be evident in ten to fifteen pieces.

Gail Anderson

STRUCTURE
Screw-post book

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
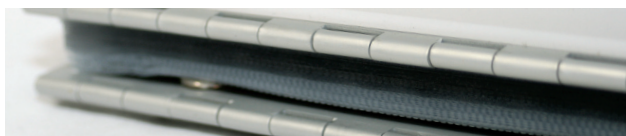**10.125 × 11.75**

TYPEFACES
Gotham

MATERIALS
**Acid-free
sheet protectors**

VENDORS
Pina Zangaro

RETAIL STORES
A.I. Friedman

PRINTER
**EPSON Stylus
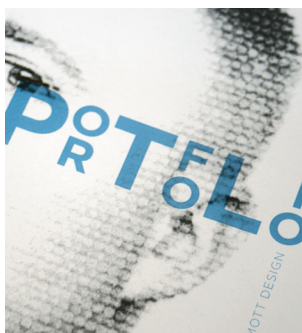Photo 1280**

TIP

TIP Consider a "mini-book"
of your portfolio as a leave-
behind. McDermott printed
his on a Xerox iGen3™ digital
press at $22 per copy.

PRODUCTION COST
$300.00

Brian McDermott

MY PORTFOLIO BEGAN AS A STUDENT BOOK PROJECT IN THE SPRING OF 2008, A SEMESTER BEFORE I GRADUATED FROM PARSONS THE NEW SCHOOL FOR DESIGN. IT MADE SENSE THAT THE BOOK ACTED AS MY PORTFOLIO TO DRAW CLIENTS AND COMMISSIONS.

status It is currently active and has been in use for about six months.

approach I chose a Pina Zangaro screw-post book, since I wanted a clean and simple presentation with nothing superfluous to distract from the work inside. It consists of two translucent, frosted acrylic panels for the front and back cover pieces, and a hinged aluminum binding. Content pages are inserted into acid-free sheet protectors and are held in place with screw-posts.

For me, the flair is in the leave-behind booklet, for it is intended to serve as the dealmaker. I imbued more of my personality into it by including a personal statement, as well as inspiring quotes. The leave-behind booklet is a softcover, perfect-bound version of the screw-post book.

flexibility The main book can be edited and updated simply by removing pages and shuffling their order. The leave-behind booklet is not so easy to edit, since it is a finished, perfect-bound piece. However, in some cases, the booklet was augmented with single sheets (as a spread) that were manually inserted when I wished to show a piece that was not available at the time of printing.

display I prefer to show it in person so I can get a reaction and feedback in real-time. The body language of the interviewer is very revealing. When sending it via post or dropping it off, there is no way to tell whether or not someone reviewed the work. It is wasted money, time, and effort if you cannot receive confirmation concerning whether or not they got it.

online The online layout is identical to that of the books, so there is consistency across the board. Once you are at the site, you are in the portfolio—it is that simple.

previously There was the inaugural portfolio, which is a right of passage for any budding designer. In hindsight, it was pretty bad. It was a work-in-progress that contained only a few pieces. With the advice and suggestions of a few design instructors, fellow students, design enthusiasts, and laypeople alike, it helped me rethink the whole process and start anew.

lastly Because it is such a personal project, it could be challenging to decide what remains and what must go. Sometimes you have work that you would love to include, but it isn't appropriate, or is misaligned, and this is something that is essential to recognize. I need to remind myself that, as with all design, a piece is more successful when you extract so as to reveal the message, as opposed to hiding it.

As I have a passion for book cover and jacket design, the idea was to design the leave-behind itself as if it were an actual book that one would potentially see in a bookstore—hopefully wowing an art director at a publishing house in the process.

BRIAN MCDERMOTT *is a graphic designer in New York City. He attended Parsons The New School for Design. He has worked in the music industry, with a concentration in artist management and music production. He taught himself design software and undertook small design assignments for in-house clients.*
WWW.BMDNY.COM

STRUCTURE
**Case with
Wire-O-bound book**

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
13 × 13

TYPOGRAPHY
Bureau Eagle

Futura Condensed

MATERIALS
Two red serving trays

Assorted hardware

PAPER
EPSON, inkjet
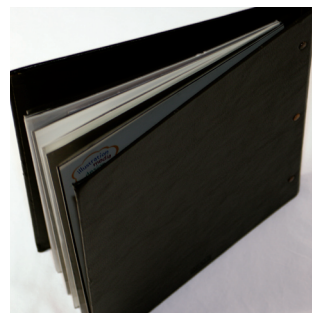
PRINTER
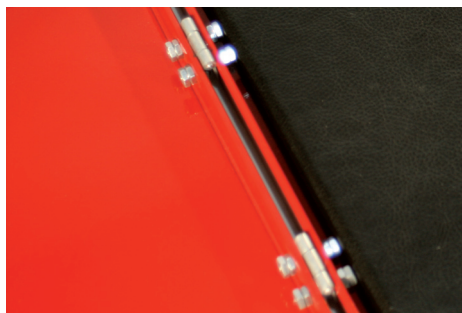**EPSON Photo printer,
circa 2004**

PRODUCTION TIME
1 Day

PRODUCTION COST
Less than $100

Joshua Keay

IN 2004, I WAS PREPARING TO MOVE TO NEW YORK. I HAD SENT APPLICATIONS TO TOY COMPANIES AND VIDEO GAME STUDIOS. THE AESTHETIC OF MY WORK IS VERY PLAYFUL AND BOLD, AND I WANTED SOMETHING MEMORABLE—— THE SHINY RED CASE HELPED ME LEAVE A LASTING IMPRESSION.

status I don't do much freelance work nowadays, so the portfolio could be considered retired.

approach I knew I needed something to carry the leather book with—if only for protection from the rain— though I wasn't particularly satisfied with the other portfolio cases I was seeing on the market. I was also shocked by how expensive many of the standard cases could be. I have a background in industrial design, so I figured I could probably make something nicer for far less money.

The case itself was modeled after a traditional red tool chest. It looks like metal, with red enamel on it, though in actuality it is made of high-density plastic. The top and bottom of the case are serving trays that I spotted in a home-goods store. The metal hardware I purchased from a variety of sources, mostly by hunting around in little stores—including the cabinet handle on top.

flexibility The leather book inside is a standard portfolio book, which makes the overall package very updatable—the pages slide in and out of the cellophane. I can put almost any kind of flat art, or book, in the box itself.

display Usually it's shown in person, although I've left it behind once or twice.

memories As soon as I told people that I made it myself, the reactions varied. Most people began to treat it gingerly, as if they thought the clasp would snap at their touch. Then there was the one guy who decided to stress-test it, particularly the hinges... I had to politely ask him to refrain.

lastly As two-dimensional artists, it's really easy to get stuck in flatland. But at the end of the day, human beings live in a three-dimensional world with a sense of weight and touch and texture. Emphasizing the tactile experience of a portfolio, and improving the narrative process, will enhance the experience of the viewer. There are tons of interesting treatments for a portfolio, particularly if you're willing to experiment and get your hands dirty.

JOSHUA KEAY is a product designer based in New York City. He graduated from Massachusetts College of Art, majoring in Design, with a focus on new media and industrial design. He founded Magnetism Studios in 2005, a small product design firm specializing in new media. He is the creator and illustrator of a series of picture books for children. WWW.JOSHUAKEAY.COM + WWW.MAGNETISMSTUDIOS.COM
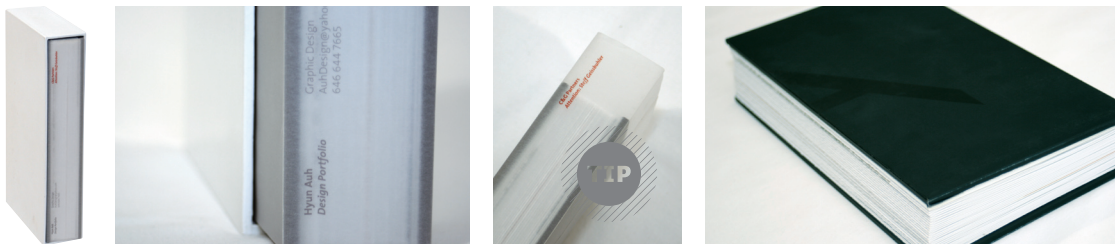
STRUCTURE
Accordion-fold book with slipcase

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
5.875 × 11.375 × 2.25

TYPEFACES
The Sans

MATERIALS
Binding board
White spray paint

PAPER
Inkpress, 2-sided matte, heavyweight, 13-inch-wide roll
Touche paper
Translucent vellum
Yupo synthetic paper

RETAIL STORES
B&H Photo
Talas

PRINTER
EPSON 2200
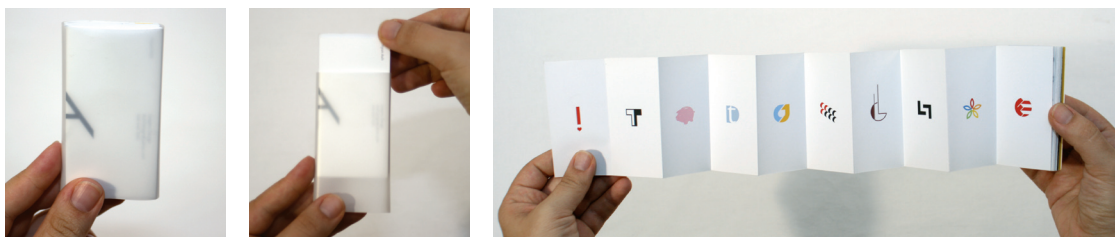
SPECIAL TECHNIQUES
Black laser print on black paper

PRODUCTION TIME
3 Months

PRODUCTION COST
$150

Hyun Auh

I DEVELOPED THIS PORTFOLIO IN 2005, DURING MY SENIOR YEAR AT THE FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY IN NEW YORK CITY. I NEEDED A PROFESSIONAL-LOOKING PORTFOLIO FOR A REVIEW AT THE ART DIRECTORS CLUB AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, TO SNARE ME A JOB UPON GRADUATION.

status Now retired, I used it for about four months after graduating.

approach I wanted to create a hand-made book that didn't look and feel as if it was hand-made. I chose the accordion style because it's minimal in design and materials, much like my work. I loved the fact that the whole book could be a single sheet that unfolded, creating a unique effect. It also made sense on a personal level: I was born in Korea, and the binding style originated in eastern Asia.

TIP Personalization always impresses. Auh wraps his portfolio in a disposable vellum printed with the name of the person reviewing it.

I created the accordion fold using a heavyweight, inkjet paper roll. The biggest trick was figuring out how to print the entire book on one continuous sheet. It took countless nights of experimenting to figure it out. I used binding boards for the cover and case, then wrapped them in Touche paper. The book was inserted into a personalized vellum sleeve, then a case I built with binding boards and glue.

I also created several copies of a miniature version that I carried with me, which could be easily handed out to anyone I might come across.

flexibility It was not built with the intention of getting updated, but if it was absolutely necessary, extra pages can be slip-sheeted into the book. Unfortunately, this would decrease the value, since the inherent quality of the book is that it is composed on one continuous piece of paper. The one aspect of the portfolio that can be updated is the translucent sleeve, which I personalized, depending upon whom I was going to send it to.

display I dropped it off in many cases. It was hands-on only when I was called in.

memories This portfolio is actually the second version. The first one was sort of a test run that I rushed because I needed it for an interview. I wasn't satisfied with the result and decided to improve upon it. That test run really helped fine-tune many things that I missed the first time around.

online My technical skills in web design weren't up to par, so no online version was created. I wasn't very interested in web design anyway, and wanted to focus solely on print.

lastly It was truly a labor of love. I hardly slept for weeks during production. There were numberless hurdles and unexpected mistakes along the way, no matter how many times I measured twice in order to cut only once…

A unique feature of this portfolio is the integration of the resume into the book itself. The portfolio was based on the design of the resume, as the dimensions and grid were developed in cohesion. The business card, resume, and book all have identical proportions.

HYUN AUH is a graphic designer in New York City. He currently works with C&G Partners (thanks in large part to this portfolio). He received his BFA from the Fashion Institute of Technology. **WWW.AUHDESIGN.COM**

STRUCTURE
Folder with loose samples and boards

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
9 × 12 × 2

TYPEFACES
DIN 1451
Mrs Eaves

MATERIALS
2-ply chipboard
Raw canvas
Canson paper
Spray paint
Embroidery thread

PAPER
Cardstock, white

PRINTER
Canon inkjet

TIP Don't hesitate to use tactile and textured surfaces that are hard to print on—spray paint can be applied to anything with a well-executed stencil.

PRODUCTION TIME
2 Days

PRODUCTION COST
$20 Folder
$30 Cards
$50 Total

Caryn Audenried

I CREATED THE PORTFOLIO IN FEBRUARY 2009. I DID THIS IN PREPARATION FOR *CONFLUENCE*, CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY'S DESIGN JOB FAIR, WITH THE HOPE OF FINDING A SUMMER INTERNSHIP.

status   Just starting to use it.

approach   The work I do tends to take many different forms. I had a book, a set of cards, a magazine, and small boards to show during interviews. I wanted to find a way to keep all these pieces together, and a large folder made the most sense. The folder is made out of chipboard covered in raw canvas. For the typography on the cover I cut out the stencil and used spray paint to apply it.

flexibility   I would say it is purposely updatable. I left all of the interior pieces loose, so I could rearrange them to suit the purpose. I'm always free to add or subtract pieces depending on whom I'm talking to. As a student, my work is constantly changing, and it's nice not to have to make a new portfolio every time I want to show new work.

display   I only use this portfolio in person—it's quite heavy and I'd rather have people look at my web site if I'm not there to show it.

memories   None so far, but I can say it is a vast improvement over the look-alike pizza box that held my work last year!

CARYN AUDENRIED is currently a fourth-year Communication Design student at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where she focuses on hand-made design processes and illustration. Previously, she studied fine art at the Barnstone Studios. WWW.CARYNAUDENRIED.NET

What kind of projects should be included in, or excluded from, the portfolio?

A portfolio represents how a designer visually and verbally approaches a problem, and how this relates to the intended audience. Anything that helps me to understand that process is great. Personal photography, illustration, and paintings are usually not worth including.

Steve Liska

I don't mind seeing one or two examples of personal work; though I'd much rather see how a young designer tackles an identity for a local dentist, or something equally mundane. How designers design the everyday is a good measure of their ability. Anyone can make a gig poster look good.

Adrian Shaughnessy

You should include the projects that best represent you. If you've done a lot of gig posters and CD packaging, you're probably not looking to work for a firm that engages in corporate communication. Be honest.

Petter Ringbom

They should be as varied as possible. We are a small company, so we all have a great amount of differing tasks to attend to. I am looking for the same varied qualities in the people I hire.

Stefan Sagmeister

I am fine with whatever you think best showcases your potential as a designer. If your portfolio is composed of all posters or personal projects, then so be it. I'd love to see some real experience, only this usually comes in the form of a dentist's web site or brochure for a landscaper.

John Foster

One personal project, and the rest composed of real-life scenarios.

Noreen Morioka

Students should use their time in school to push the boundaries of what's possible in graphic design—we're not terribly interested in the dodgy logo for the local hairdresser, or tacky gig flyers (unless they are brilliant). The placement/intern system works well for us, because we can see how someone whose mind is open can handle the day-to-day realities of graphic design. The colleges that stuff vocational, "real world" projects down their students' throats don't get much support from us because the students seem to have closed themselves too early. They develop an inability to think outside the box and that is a real pain. We have to undo all their preconceptions before they begin to work properly.

Michael Johnson

I hate "create an identity for a fake company" projects. I also don't want to see exploratory pages, wherein you examine how you put a single page of type together in black and white. I want to see projects that tell me who you are as a designer, and I want you to reinforce it again and again.

Patric King

Anything that represents your passion. I like to see projects in their true form—full-size posters, editorial projects that require thumbing through, or CD cases that have removable booklets. Touching the work makes me appreciate it on a deeper emotional level.

Petrula Vrontikis

I have had it up to *here* with gig posters. So many of them today are so subjective that it becomes all about style. Now, if there is an idea that must be expressed, I'm willing to take a look. But more often than not, that whole angle becomes a dead-end if they fail to develop a truly unique style.

Marc English

It's less about the type of project and more about the thought and care that went into each project.

Hillman Curtis

I prefer projects that solve real problems. Maybe one fantastic personal project is all right, but generally those don't address whether or not the student knows how to solve problems.

Carin Goldberg

Personal projects are fine, but they can't be too esoteric.

Gail Anderson

STRUCTURE
Wire-O-bound book

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
10 × 12

TYPEFACES
Gotham

MATERIALS
Matte board cover

Acetate

Metal spirals

Double-sided tape

PAPER
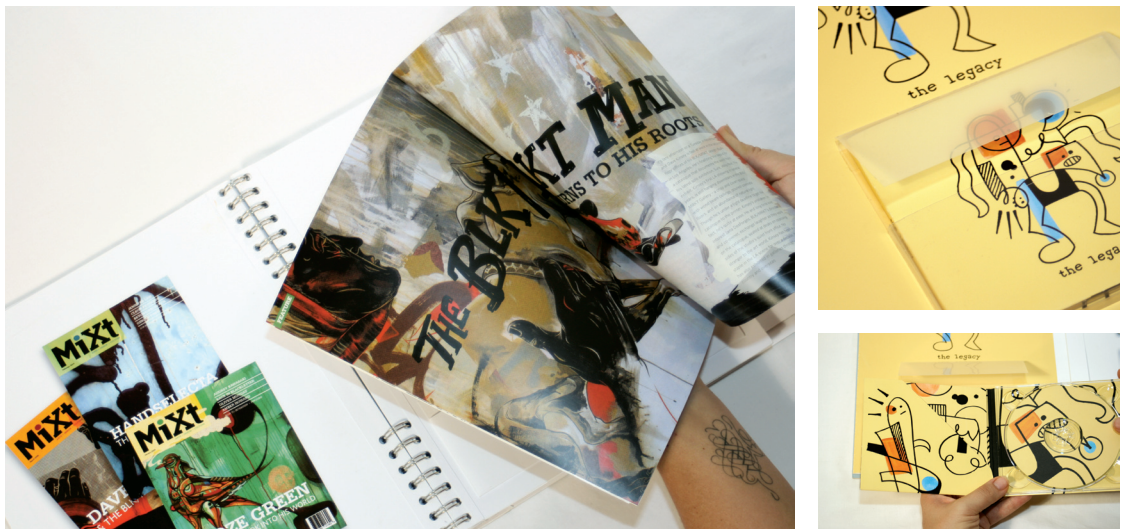**Staples, photo supreme, double-sided matte paper, 61 lb**

PRINTER
EPSON Stylus Photo 1400

SPECIAL TECHNIQUES
Hand-punched holes for the spiral binding

Custom-made pockets on each page

PRODUCTION TIME
35 Hours

PRODUCTION COST
$100

Aubrey Klein

I CREATED THIS PORTFOLIO IN APRIL 2009 FOR THE DALLAS SOCIETY OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION STUDENT SHOW AND CONFERENCE, LATER UPDATED FOR MY SENIOR SHOW IN MAY. ITS PRIMARY PURPOSE IS TO SNATCH ME A JOB AFTER GRADUATION.

status This portfolio is still active and has been updated twice.

approach I wanted to make this portfolio as personal and memorable as possible by including the actual pieces in a contained and structured format. I got the idea for the pockets from paper sample books, and I used some of them as templates for creating my own pages. The materials are relatively simple: 13 × 19-inch photo paper, an inkjet printer, a piece of matte board, two spirals (pulled from mini-sketchbooks), double-sided tape, a hand-held hole puncher, and an X-Acto/cutting board combo. Once I determined the order of the content, I printed the pages, folded them in half (french-fold) for added strength, and created folders/pockets in which to store the pieces of work. The cover folds in on itself, giving the impression of a hardbound book, and it can slip out of the spiral binding if the inner pages need to be modified.

flexibility It is updatable, but takes a lot of time to do so. The pages are double-sided, so if I add or rearrange a piece, I have to make new pages for the pieces on either side of it (and cut new pockets and folders for those pages).

memories My senior studio professor hated portfolios in the form of books and discouraged students who wanted to pursue this method—she advocated the use of boards over everything else. When I handed her my newly finished book and sought her critique, she didn't have much to say at first. After eyeing the construction, pulling out all the pieces, and flipping through it a couple of times, she finally said, "Well... This solves every problem I've ever had with books. It's not boring, the type is visible at full size, and it says a lot about you. I can tell you spent some time on this." It was hard to believe, but she actually liked it.

online Since I usually show my portfolio in person, and have a penchant for verbally explaining my work as opposed to standing by as the reviewer quietly reads, I have a complementary online version wherein each project is accompanied by the relevant information. This allows potential employers to refresh themselves on the details of each piece, while new visitors can glean all the information they need without myself, or the book, in front of them.

previously My original portfolio was a perfect-bound book with plain, letter-sized pages, but no matter how many times I redesigned the layout, it never resonated with me like this one does.

lastly I don't think my portfolio is perfect, but I do think it's perfect for me. I've heard countless times: "Make boards," "Make books," "Use sleeves," "Just bring a box full of samples." There is no single approach that will suit you as a designer, but there are approaches that suit particular types of work. Poster designers should probably avoid books altogether, while people who do magazine layouts should bring the real thing. I think if a portfolio shows off a person's strengths, their personality, and has something unique and memorable about it, then it is a successful one—no matter the form of the presentation.

AUBREY KLEIN is a graphic designer in Olathe, Kansas, where she works as an art director and designer for Crossover Graphics. She graduated from Kansas State with a BFA in Graphic Design. WWW.AUBREYKLEIN.COM

Daniel Koppich
b. 1983
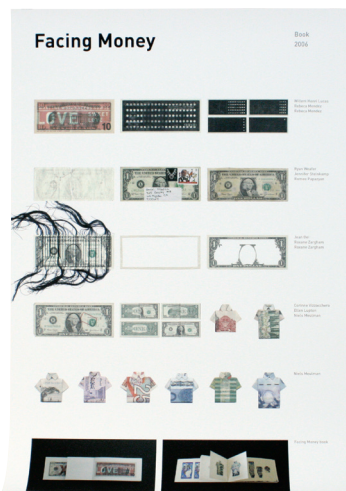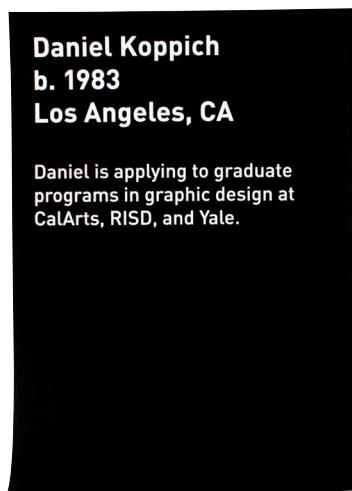Los Angeles, CA

Daniel is applying to graduate programs in graphic design at CalArts, RISD, and Yale.

Facing Money
Book
2006

The Getty Museum
Exhibitions
2007-2008

Timescape
Website
2005

Futureast
Poster
2005

Videos
2005-2006

Futureast
Process

Notes

U HEEFT MISSCHIEN
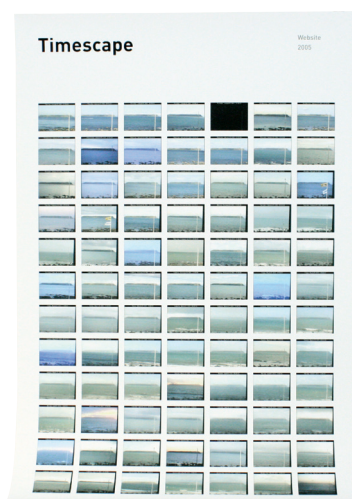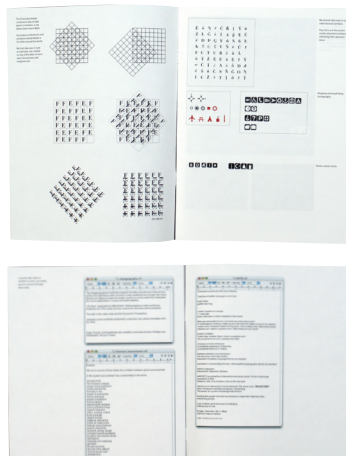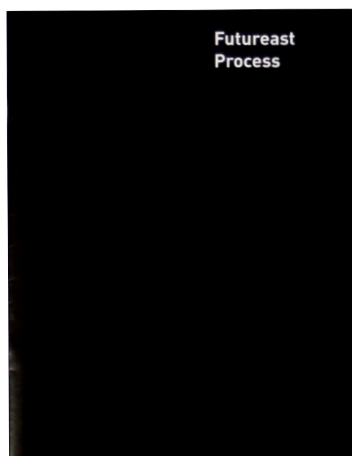
Daniel Koppich

I CREATED THIS PORTFOLIO FOR MY 2008 INTERVIEW AT THE YALE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF ART GRADUATE PROGRAM, THE ONLY INSTITUTION THAT REQUIRED INTERVIEWEES TO BRING WORK SAMPLES.

status Having served its purpose, that was the first and only time I used it—it's far too unwieldy to bring to job interviews.

approach I wanted to make something large that could be seen by several people at once. I also wanted a format that was flexible, and whose sequence could be changed at the eleventh hour. I created a series of posters, one for each featured project, which were arranged on the wall. I set up a row of tables beneath the posters for corresponding process books, and any actual work samples that were small enough to bring along. The nice thing about the presentation was that everything was visible at once. In my discussion with the interviewers I could cross-reference other projects as needed.

flexibility This portfolio is easily updatable as it is not bound in any way—I can easily add or remove projects as necessary. Since it was created for a specific use, I'm not sure when I would use it again.

memories After getting initial estimates back from the printers, I thought this would be out of my financial reach. Luckily, I remembered that an old classmate of mine had purchased a large format Epson for his studio, and he printed everything for me at a great price.

online There were a few interactive works that I chose to show online, and I designed screen versions of the posters for these projects.

evolution I've had so many portfolios over the years. As soon as I've created one, it automatically dates itself in my eyes. As my work evolves, so too does the format of my portfolio.

DANIEL KOPPICH is a graphic designer currently enrolled in the graduate program at the Yale School of Art. He holds a BA from UCLA. Prior to enrolling at Yale, he worked in the exhibition design department at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, California, and has held internship positions at 2x4, C-Lab, and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. WWW.DANIELKOPPICH.COM

STRUCTURE
Perfect-bound book

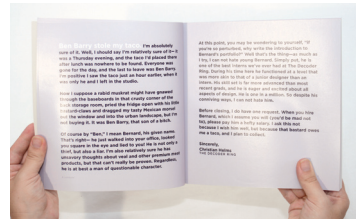**DIMENSIONS (IN.)**
8.5 × 8.5
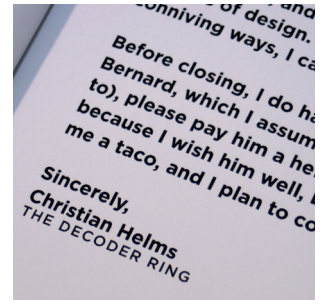
TYPEFACES
Gotham
United

PAPER
Cover: French Paper, 140 lb
Interior: Red River, double-sided semi-gloss, 45 lb

VENDORS
University of North Texas Press

PRINTER
Canon i9900

SPECIAL TECHNIQUES
Eight spot ink silkscreen print

TIP An animated introduction from a friend or colleague can break the serious nature of a portfolio, like Christian Helms did for Barry, his former employee.

PRODUCTION COST
$150 Per book

Ben Barry

A PORTFOLIO WAS REQUIRED IN ORDER TO GRADUATE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS COMMUNICATION DESIGN PROGRAM. I ALSO USED THE PORTFOLIO TO ACQUIRE MY FIRST FULL-TIME JOB.

status Retired after three months of use.

approach I originally wanted to have a larger hand-bound book for interviews, and a smaller book to send out to places where I wanted to work—the large book proved too ambitious, so I only produced the small book. I chose the size based on lulu.com options, a square that fit perfectly within a small pizza box from ULINE. I had planned on silk-screening this. Ultimately, my web site was enough to earn interviews, and the small book was enough to impress the people I met.

I never sent the book out, so lulu.com was not involved in the first set of copies. I silkscreened the cover using eight inks on French Paper. The inside is printed on semi-gloss paper, and was perfect-bound by a friend who ran the university press.

flexibility Nil. I consciously wanted my portfolio to feel like a finished piece. I like the permanence and absoluteness of something that can't be added to, or subtracted from.

memories It was generally well-received, though I did get into a drunken argument with a certain esteemed designer from San Francisco (who shall remain nameless, and with whom I now stand on good terms). This person objected to the overall length of my book, saying that I was wasting people's time. My response was, if they didn't have time to look at my work, then I didn't want to bother working for them. I strongly believe that your portfolio should reflect the kind of work you wish to be involved in, and that it should appeal to the kind of people you want to work with.

online The online version had a much broader range, and spanned a longer period of time. In almost all cases, the online version was sent out as a link in an e-mail that then turned into an interview. While there was overlap in the content, storytelling, and the type choices, the two pieces functioned quite differently—to me the web site was an opportunity to do things you couldn't do in book form.

lastly I think smaller portfolios are easier to carry, especially when interviewing in a large city, where you are often forced to ride public transit. I also believe that having an online presence these days is a must.

I only showed it in person—if people didn't have time to see me, I didn't have time to work for them.

BEN BARRY is a graphic designer in Palo Alto, California, where he works at Facebook. He graduated from the University of North Texas in 2007. While a student, he interned for The Decoder Ring in Austin, Texas, and Newhouse Design in Denton, Texas. He is the founder of TheRoot42.org, an online global design community. WWW.DESIGNFORFUN.COM

STRUCTURE
Case with boards

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
11.5 × 17 × 3

TYPEFACES
Caslon 224

News Gothic

MATERIALS
Black matte board

RETAIL STORE
eBay

PRINTER
FedEx Office

PRODUCTION COST
$17 eBay briefcase

$40 FedEx Office

$24 Black matte boards

$81 Total

Monica Katzenell

THIS PORTFOLIO WAS CREATED IN 2005, DURING MY FINAL SEMESTER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, AS PART OF MY DESIGN COURSE CURRICULUM. WE WERE PREPARING TO GO OUT INTO THE WORLD WITH PHYSICAL AND ONLINE PORTFOLIOS.

status   This portfolio was used on many interviews, and having scored three different jobs over the course of four years—throughout the state of Florida, and then in California—it is now lovingly retired. But, based on the feedback I have received, I would consider using it again in the future.

approach   Many colleagues were taking the approach of some sort of carrying case, with work mounted on flat presentation boards. I liked this idea, but wanted to challenge myself by putting a personal spin on it, so I established some rules: no black casing, and no off-the-shelf solution. Having always appreciated vintage items and found objects, it was a natural choice to scour thrift stores, swap meets, and online sites. After relentless searching, I found this vintage 1970s briefcase, with its original paisley-print cloth lining, on the ever-fabulous eBay. I then cut black matte boards to size and mounted my work with ever-useful rubber cement.

The one problem I encountered when putting it all together was that the boards fit a little too snugly, and short of turning the case upside down and shaking it to get them out, I had to create a solution with my already printed and mounted boards. After careful consideration, I added a little pull-tab on the bottom board—when used, it easily angles all of the boards so that they can be pulled out of the case with ease.

flexibility   Since it involves adding or changing the presentation boards, this makes it easily customizable and updatable. Also, there is a great pocket for loose examples of finished pieces.

display   I've only shown it in person because I have never been in a circumstance that called for delivery.

memories   I had my first interview before I developed that handy pull-tab on the last board. It was hardly a smooth presentation, since I had to turn the case upside down in order to pry the boards out. Luckily, I was familiar with the interviewer, having had an internship with the company before. While this helped, it still didn't reinforce the cool-under-pressure persona I wanted to present. The lesson learned: test everything before walking into a conference room.

Creating resumes, cover letters, and debating potential interview questions with classmates was a great experience.

online   I shudder when I think of my first portfolio experiment with HTML and the first one with Flash... When I put together this physical portfolio, I created a complementary web site, not only because it was part of the required coursework, but because it was unquestionably a necessary element to finding a job. The shades of green from the case, and a simplified version of the decorative fabric, complemented my online portfolio, as well as my business cards. By now, my web site has gone through several iterations, and is no longer tied to this particular portfolio.

MONICA KATZENELL is an independent graphic designer in Los Angeles, California. She received a BFA in graphic design, with a minor in art history from the University of Florida. She previously worked at National Forest Design and Gel Communications in Glendale, California. **WWW.MONICAKATZENELL.COM**

Which has been the most memorable portfolio, or presentation (good or bad), you have seen?

I have only had one portfolio that totally knocked me out. The student, taking great initiative, had managed to produce several print publications, as well as packaging and identity projects, for local merchants. He also had killer solutions at every turn.

John Foster

It was someone who created enormous printouts on thin paper: they folded them up and put them in a beautiful slipcase.

Steve Liska

The portfolio of Matthias Ernstberger, a former intern of mine, was incredible. When he showed me his student portfolio five years ago, I hired him right away. His most memorable piece was a fake visual history of a band that never existed, which included elaborate photo shoots, all their album covers, live footage, studio happenings, etc. The piece proved that he could make complex, difficult things happen—in my mind, the most important trait of a good designer. It was also meticulously photographed and designed, with a lot of attention to detail. On top of that, it was well written.

Stefan Sagmeister

The worst experience I had was with a young guy who had just graduated from a school in Texas. He started his review by standing up from the conference table and saying, "You see, in Texas, we have 'concept'..." His work was good, but that first comment was so off-putting. Honestly, it was the only thing I remembered about him. Another guy showed up at the studio with a pack of cigarettes rolled up in the sleeve of his dirty t-shirt. And one woman's breasts were bursting out of her blouse. The "twins" were always there—fighting for visual prominence with her work.

Petrula Vrontikis

About a year into my first job, a new graduate, one year younger than myself, dropped off his portfolio. My boss had all of us look at it. It was the best portfolio I'd ever seen, absolutely perfect in terms of design, craft, and stylistic and technical virtuosity. It made me want to give up the game. It belonged to a kid named Clement Mok, who went on to become design director of Apple Computer, founder of Studio Archetype and Sapient, and a president of the AIGA.

Michael Bierut

While I have seen a lot of good work from students over the years, the ones that have made me rethink what we do here at the studio are those of the Academy of Art University, in San Francisco, and those of the Portfolio Center, in Atlanta. Students from the former are required to design an actual hardcover book that has their best schoolwork in it, along with a resume and some aspect of process. The books present a unity to their work, and are quite manageable, particularly to book lovers. The school also makes sure that each designer knows how to photograph their work for presentation. The students from the latter create very elaborate constructions that house several of their projects. Portfolio Center and its students take pride in their hands-on skills, which are sorely lacking in most schools.

An illustrator/designer once made twelve exquisite boxes—like miniature installations, really—and sent them to a dozen people with whom she wanted to work. I was one of those fortunate enough to receive this treasure, and was so stunned and touched that I contacted her immediately. This isn't the right thing to do for most young designers seeking work, but I was truly moved by it—to this day, it sits on the shelf next to where I work. The designer and I became friends instantly. I mention this not to suggest that students try to make their prospective employers their new best friends, but because the effort that went into personalizing the portfolio was simply fantastic.

Jessica Helfand

There have been portfolios with forgotten wallets and journals inside, and books that seemed way too intimate for public display. But I think that the best one was the book that a live cockroach crawled out of.

Gail Anderson

A thesis project on body piercing. Great topic, but horribly done.

Noreen Morioka

I hired a recent graduate from Penn State. His site was a wonderful combination of smart interactivity, beautiful design, and he had a section where it was all about his Polaroids… so he had everything my studio values: functionality, beautiful design, and art.

Hillman Curtis

What stands out in my mind are the people that I actually offered jobs to. It's the people, not the portfolios, who are memorable.
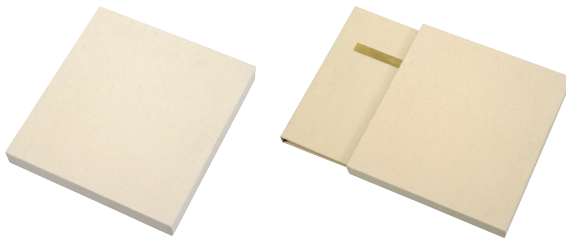
Adrian Shaughnessy

STRUCTURE

Screw-post book with slipcase

DIMENSIONS (IN.)

12.5 × 13.5 × 1.75

TYPEFACES

Caslon 224

News Gothic

MATERIALS

Brass screws

Engraved brass nameplate

PAPER

Neenah, Classic Crest, Natural White, 65 lb cover

VENDORS

Talas

PRINTER

Canon C1 color proofing press
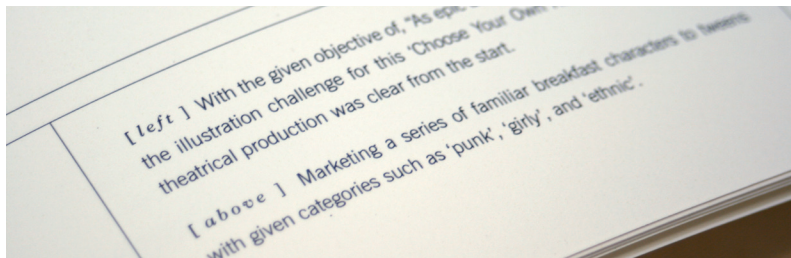
PRODUCTION COST

$50 Case

$25 Paper

$25 Nameplate

$6 Screws

$106 Total

[*left*] With the given objective of, "As epi... the illustration challenge for this 'Choose Your Own... theatrical production was clear from the start.

[*above*] Marketing a series of familiar breakfast characters to tweens with given categories such as 'punk', 'girly', and 'ethnic'.

Monica Katzenell

IN FEBRUARY OF 2009, AFTER TWO YEARS OF FREELANCE WORK, I REALIZED I MISSED WORKING AMONG——AND LEARNING FROM——A GROUP OF TALENTED INDIVIDUALS IN A STEADY POSITION. I DECIDED THAT I NEEDED TO START FRESH, SO I TOOK THIS OPPORTUNITY TO RE-IMAGINE MY PRESENTATION.

status This portfolio was recently taken to a handful of interviews and client meetings. The original goal for this portfolio was to find a full-time position at a studio, but that hasn't happened yet. In the meantime, I am using it to meet new clients for freelance work—I find it useful for this purpose as well.

Previously, I would only bring relevant work samples to my first meeting with a client, or relied on the notion that the client had viewed my online portfolio beforehand. I have found that bringing a full portfolio—one that includes work beyond the scope of the project being discussed—can spark ideas for future projects, help to develop a certain amount of respect or trust, and lead to an interesting conversation that might not have taken place.

approach I knew I wanted a screw-post book, since I found presentation boards to be clumsy and bulky. After researching my options, I could not bring myself to choose the ubiquitous and expected Pina Zangaro binders. Yet, after relentless online searching, I found a wonderful shop named Talas that specialized in bookbinding. Among their options, they had a limited selection of "extras" catalogued online, which were custom-made for other purposes and available at a very reasonable rate. The drawback was the need to cover up a pre-existing blind-debossed name, and the unique dimensions for sheet size and printing. I matched the solution to the brass screw-posts by engraving my name on a thin plate of brass. Finally, I sampled different papers and found that the warmer tones of natural white were a perfect complement for the natural cloth.

flexibility Absolutely, as the screw-post book allows for all necessary changes and substitutions, so long as you have the right paper.

online The online version of my portfolio and the physical book are loosely related. They share the same clean aesthetic and typography, and both presentations are in the "no frills" category.

MONICA KATZENELL is an independent graphic designer in Los Angeles, California. She received a BFA in graphic design, with a minor in art history from the University of Florida. She previously worked at National Forest Design and Gel Communications in Glendale, California. WWW.MONICAKATZENELL.COM

STRUCTURE
One-of-a-kind bag with loose samples

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
19 × 14 × 7

MATERIALS
My grandfather's jib sail

Marine-grade vinyl

PAPER
Red River, Polar matte, 60 lb

VENDORS
Technical Drawings: Jason Drew

Production/seam-stress: Sylvia Cadle

PRINTER
EPSON Stylus Photo 2200

PRODUCTION TIME
3 Months

PRODUCTION COST
N/A Jib sail

$260 Labor and materials

Rachel Tranello

I CREATED MY PORTFOLIO IN APRIL OF 2009, JUST WHEN I WAS GRADUATING FROM PORTFOLIO CENTER. I WANTED TO HAVE A VESSEL FOR MY WORK, BUT I ALSO WANTED IT TO BE MEANINGFUL.

status Active.

approach I looked for a shoulder bag but couldn't find anything that worked or had any significance. In my search I stumbled upon items made out of sails, a material close to my heart and my roots. My grandfather bought a boat the year I was born. Twelve years later—complaining that no one wanted to go out on the boat anymore—he rigged the 25-foot boat to sail solo. I saw that kind of stubborn determination in myself, so I grabbed at this inspirational history and went to work.

I used the jib sail from my grandfather's sailboat—he'd replaced it with a motorized one—and marine-grade vinyl with brass hardware, including the original jib hanks from the sail. I was able to get technical drawings made from my design. After talking with a range of people—from seamstresses and tailors, to industrial luggage manufacturers—I found a woman who was able to make it for me.

flexibility I designed it with removable dividers, so I could use it as a regular messenger bag if I wanted to. At this time, I don't see the need to update it—I don't want to change a thing about it.

display I only show it in person. It's unique and irreplaceable.

memories I love people's reactions after they've seen it and I tell the story behind it. The best reaction was from my grandfather—he was thrilled with the result. I asked if it was what he'd expected, and he replied that he didn't know what to expect.

online I have a web site that shows my work but makes no mention of my portfolio. I wanted to save something unique for the interview; I didn't want to give away all my secrets in one place.

RACHEL TRANELLO is an independent writer, art director and photographer in Atlanta, Georgia. She has an Associate degree in applied science in business marketing from Alfred State College, and a bachelors degree of science in communications from College at Brockport, SUNY in addition to a degree in copywriting, art direction, and photography from Portfolio Center. She previously worked at Jay Advertising in Rochester, New York. WWW.RNELLO.COM

Case with loose samples

DIMENSIONS (IN.)

16 × 12 × 4.5

MATERIALS

Fabric

Hemming tape

Double stick tape

Staples

PAPER

Bright white photo inkjet paper of some kind, 100 lb

VENDORS

Etsy

PRINTER

Inkjet

PRODUCTION COST

$50 Suitcase

$15 Each project booklet

I HAD BEEN USING A BOX-STYLE PORTFOLIO SINCE MAY 2009, WHILE A SOPHOMORE AT CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY. EVENTUALLY, I DECIDED TO GO WITH A MORE PERMANENT SOLUTION THAT TRAVELED BETTER THAN A SELF-BOUND BOX. I HOPE THIS WILL HELP ME ACQUIRE AN AWESOME, POST-UNDERGRADUATE POSITION.

status Still active.

approach Having a box gives me great flexibility. Not only can I save time by plucking out pertinent material and discarding the less-relevant pieces with greater facility, I can also maintain a keen awareness of the interviewer's body language, making it easier for me to switch gears if I detect weariness or boredom. Also, since I am crazy about tactility and am in possession of a fair amount of small-dimensional work, it makes more sense to provide a first-hand display.

I purchased this suitcase on Etsy. It came with a quilted, puke-brown lining, complete with frills and a mirror. Using fabric, hemming tape, double stick tape and staples, I relined it in a more neutral tone. Usually, I print and bind mini-books for my unwieldy, digital projects.

flexibility This is probably the easiest portfolio to update. I can put the project in or remove it, even create a new little book, without breaking a sweat.

display I always show my portfolio in person. It's very important to me that someone sees not only my work, but hears my explanations and comprehends my world-view. If your plan is to drop off your portfolio as much as possible, this method wouldn't be the most practical.

memories When I arrive at an interview, my portfolio immediately attracts attention. It's interesting to note how interviewers look through my portfolio—some of them sit calmly and allow me to do all the directing, while others pry open the suitcase themselves and pull whatever catches their eye. Both are fun in their own ways, but watching as reviewers pull my work usually tells me a lot about their company that can't be answered through direct questions.

online Through the grid, layout, and presentation of the projects in my online portfolio, I tried to mirror the interaction of the box-full-of-things effect by letting the user dig though the projects.

previously I strayed from the box approach for a few months and tried making a book instead. While a book allowed me to dictate the order of the projects under discussion, I found that, after a few runs, it killed the joy of improvisation I'd experienced during interviews. Although I thought I'd have more control with a book, I found it awkward or impossible to maintain a flow. The interviewer would often take the book, flip through it, and stop talking to me.

lastly Students: be faithful to your work. Many of us have gone overboard in production, which is a miscalculation, because the work can stand on its own. If you're going to spend eight grueling weeks and $400 on your physical portfolio, then perhaps you should invest the bulk of that time and money on a great new project instead. Remember that your portfolio is a tool that not only flaunts your stuff, but also helps you to talk intelligently about it. What works for someone else might not work for you!

ASH HUANG *is a graphic designer in San Francisco, California, where he works as a junior designer for Code and Theory. He graduated from Carnegie Mellon University's School of Design, where he was also the president of its* AIGA *student chapter. Previously, he was an intern at Atari and frog design.*
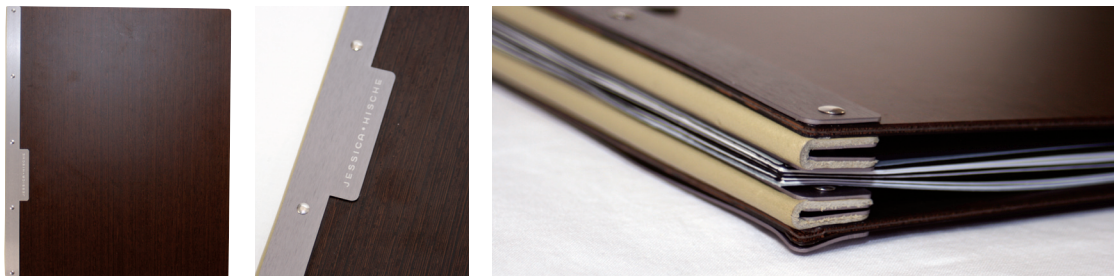**WWW.ASHSMASH.COM**

STRUCTURE
Screw-post book

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
11 × 14

TYPEFACES
Archer

PAPER
Moab Entrada, double-sided matte inkjet, 300 gsm

RETAIL STORES
Lost Luggage

TIP

PRINTER
EPSON 1280

SPECIAL TECHNIQUES
Tipped-on artwork on black paper

PRODUCTION TIME
24 Hours

PRODUCTION COST
$500

Jessica Hische

THIS PARTICULAR VERSION OF MY PORTFOLIO WAS CREATED IN LATE 2008, FOR *PRINT* MAGAZINE'S NEW VISUAL ARTISTS COMPETITION. I NOW USE IT TO PURSUE FREELANCE WORK, AS WELL AS POTENTIAL CLIENTS.

status Still in active duty.

approach I wanted a portfolio that I could easily edit and change depending upon who it was going to. A friend recommended Lost Luggage, a company that made really beautiful book portfolios for photographers and other businesses. The general look and feel that they provided complements my design and illustration work—they feel hand-crafted, yet are still very polished and sophisticated.

The actual book is made of wenge wood, aluminum, and leather, with a screw-post bind, wherein the screws are flush with the cover. I purchased pre-drilled Mohawk paper that prints excellently through Epson printers, which I alternated with black paper. They also offer customizable features, like silkscreening and engraving. The one I ordered has a metal tab engraved with my name in a typeface that I designed.

TIP Alternating between white and dark paper breaks the monotony of white and showcases the versatility of colorful work.

flexibility Very flexible. The way it is bound makes it easy to swap out projects, which I often do, depending on who the portfolio is sent to.

display I use this portfolio for send-outs more than anything else. I actually have two identical books, this way, I'll always have one on hand for an in-person review.

online My printed portfolio is definitely more succinct than my online portfolio. Because I do design, illustration, and typography, it would be impossible to show a wide range of work in a book portfolio. For that reason, the printed portfolio tends to be tailored to specific clients. For example, if I'm submitting a portfolio for a holiday ad campaign, I have to be selective about the work that I send. The online portfolio is far more extensive, but I tried to give both the same general feel.

previously After graduation, I had a large box portfolio that was really impractical. Even though it demonstrated my range of work beautifully, to ship it would have cost me hundreds of dollars. Lugging it around town was such a pain that I'd end up trying to schedule geographically-convenient interviews. I also created a few small hand-bound portfolios after that, which elicited "ooohs" and "aaahs." Yet, they were impractical, because I couldn't tailor the content.

lastly I'm a huge believer in a portfolio that's easy to change and edit. Like a web site, if it's not easy to update, in the long run, you never will. You'd wind up starting over again in six months, when you have newer, and better, work. I always try to include a few actual pieces, along with the portfolio—seeing and holding books or packaging in person is different from seeing it printed out on paper.

I've seen some amazing and intricate portfolios with crazy die-cut covers or hand-bound edges, but in the end you should try to create a portfolio that makes your work look best. It's not always the flashiest one that is best suited for the job.

JESSICA HISCHE is a typographer and illustrator working in Brooklyn, New York. She graduated from Tyler School of Art with a degree in Graphic Design. Previously, she worked in Philadelphia, at Headcase Design and as senior designer at Louise Fili Ltd., in New York City. She has been selected to STEP magazine's Fresh Talent, Print magazine's New Visual Artists and the The Art Directors Club's Young Guns. *WWW.JHISCHE.COM*

What would you say are the most common mistakes in portfolios and presentations?

I don't like it when people give a prepared lecture about every piece I'm examining. Slow down, silence is okay. I don't like sales pitches. I also don't like it when people put on a suit and tie when they come in to interview with us. I know you're supposed to do that at certain places, but we're not that kind of firm. I like to see what you wear on a regular basis, because your style says a lot about you, and I can't get a sense of that if you're wearing formal attire.

Petter Ringbom

1. To include a letter starting with "Dear Madam/Sir." In my studio, those go right into the trash can. If somebody does not take the time to find out my name, I don't feel obliged to read the letter.

2. To only include posters and book covers. Most design studios make a living organizing large amounts of information. Posters and book covers are not strong enough mediums to demonstrate that ability.

3. To include pieces in which a found piece of art with itsy-bitsy type on it is prominent. It is easy to make a magazine spread look good when it features a bleeding Richard Avedon photograph, and it says absolutely nothing about the talent of the designer.

Stefan Sagmeister

Not putting your strongest piece first. You may only get the one-minute chance to open your book before the interviewer is pulled away, so be sure to make the right impression!

John Foster

Confusing "its" and "it's."

Michael Bierut

Lack of charisma. If I'm going to put you on the phone, you have to be comfortable in your own skin. And if you miscomprehend your position within the design world, due to an inflated sense of self, then you're in trouble. The notion of "superstar designer" is horseshit when you're young, inexperienced, *and* asking someone for a job.

Patric King

Thinking that an interview is only about the skill and design work. It really is about finding an individual we can collaborate with, and who can feel vulnerable enough to make mistakes.

Noreen Morioka

Taking the wrong approach when explaining the work is a big problem. The second is lack of self-editing—you have to remember that you will always be judged by the weakest piece. The third is feeling the need to show a "real" project, usually some relative's business card or a band poster—work that is essentially unimportant.

Steve Liska

A resume that is poorly designed. This tells us that you are not detail conscious, or that you are incapable of making sound judgments about something as marketing-specific as a resume when left to your own devices. It is easy to overlook, and impossible to dismiss, since your resume, left on the interviewer's desk, is the sole reflection of you once the interview is over and you have gone home.

Jessica Helfand

Continued...

People who talk too much and think you have unlimited time to spend. Having said that, I'm very sympathetic to job seekers. It's not easy, and a certain amount of pushiness is required. I like folks who are determined, and it's a good sign when they happen to know something about my studio—it appeals to my vanity. Anyone who has plucked your name out of a list without having done any research is committing a grave, and common, mistake.

Adrian Shaughnessy

Not doing enough research about your reviewers. Knowing more about the person looking at your work will help stimulate and guide the conversation. And when you haven't asked enough questions after the person has looked at the work—this is a missed opportunity to gain valuable insights.

You should never make excuses about anything. Doing this tells the reviewer more about personality issues than anything about the work. Also, make sure you proofread. Typos in the work say one of two things: either you didn't see the error, or you saw it and decided it was okay to leave it in. Both of these are unacceptable and will eliminate you as a candidate.

Petrula Vrontikis

Self-indulgence; messiness; apathy towards the work, education and design itself; no sense of history; passivity; boredom; tardiness; and, above all, bad breath (seriously!).

Peter Buchanan-Smith

We are turned off immediately when our names are spelled incorrectly. I mean, for heaven's sake, MICHAEL JOHNSON is pretty easy to spell. And a resume littered with spelling mistakes: one is forgivable, and any more than that is just plain lazy. We're really not fans of unjustified over-confidence. Huge, unwieldy, server-smashing PDFs are a bit of a drag, too, as are overly complex and over-engineered web sites (we're judging you on your ideas, not your Flash Rollover coding skills). We'll very rarely put a student CD-ROM in our machines, as we've experienced horrendous crashes caused by dodgy ones before.

Michael Johnson

A poorly written or designed cover letter—you need to make sure that *all* your work is tight and focused. Packaging or CDs that don't have a nice printed label on them will wind up in the garbage immediately. Even after those caveats, you don't have to be intimidated by us. We are actually nice people who have been in your position once before.

Jakob Trollbäck

Poor typography, not knowing a single thing about your interviewer, and not even bothering to check out our work to see if you are the least bit compatible with our sensibilities.

Marc English

Sloppiness and bad editing—editing is difficult for everybody (I'm still a lousy editor of my own work). Another common mistake is showing everything the same size (usually too small), digitally printed on glossy paper. It makes body copy impossible to see, and it pretends to present the work as "real."

Carin Goldberg

Editing. That goes for the design and content. You see a lot of typos and careless visual choices. The most common error is evident in the introduction letters. Many of these sound very entitled. I'm never impressed by arrogance.

Hillman Curtis

STRUCTURE
Three-ring binder

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
18.75 × 11.75

TYPEFACES
Interstate

Univers Extended

PAPER
Pages: LOE, dull, 80 lb cover

Tabs: Gilbert Esse

RETAIL STORES
Pina Zangaro

PRINTER
Digital NexPress at Landmark Print. "We upload pages to their server, they print, trim, punch and deliver via UPS."

PRODUCTION COST
$70 Binder

$2 Per printed page

Ellen Shapiro

THIS PORTFOLIO TOOK SHAPE IN 2001. THE GOAL WAS TO CREATE A PERMANENT AND ONGOING DIGITAL ARCHIVE OF MY FIRM'S WORK FOR USE IN PRESENTATIONS TO POTENTIAL CLIENTS.

status Still using it.

approach Its creation began a few weeks after September 11, 2001, when work in the office nearly came to a standstill. After the initial shock of 9/11 subsided, there were hours to fill, and I knew that if my business was to survive, we needed new clients. So we created digital files for every major project, scanned flat artwork and transparencies, did silhouetting, re-drew logos in Illustrator that had been created in the pre-computer age, and so on. Since then, it's been easy to create pages when new projects are completed.

flexibility It was all about flexibility. Clients are generally interested in work that is related to their particular industry. The loose-leaf, three-ring binder allows us to rearrange pages when necessary. In the end, the physical binder itself is used the least.

Here are four ways in which we use the portfolio pages:

1. Printed out in 17 × 11-inch pages, 3-hole-punched, organized in the binder, and used for in-person presentations.

2. Printed out in 11 × 8.5-inch Wire-O-bound booklets that we send or give to potential clients.

3. Incorporated into proposals.

4. E-mailed as PDFs.

5. Currently, we are in the process of making a mini-version to fit into an A7 envelope for mailing, which will be digitally printed and perfect-bound.

I designed a template for the pages, and ordered samples of Gilbert Esse cover stock in various shades of gray. We cut these into a set of five square tabs: identity, corporate, nonprofit, editorial, and educational. The tabs aren't marked, so pages can be rearranged depending on whom we are meeting. Generally, we only need to talk about two or three projects from the portfolio before launching into the project discussion.

I also bring along printed samples. The portfolio allows us to display twenty-five years of work. I want clients to hold them in their hands and experience the quality of the photography and printing. I bring three to six samples of projects similar to the kind of thing I think they're looking for. If it's a brochure I've written and designed, I want them to see how the project was structured, and how the story unfolds.

memories A few years ago, while I was on vacation, an assistant of mine was supposed to spend his time working on our portfolio. When I got back, it was clear that he hadn't made much headway, though I noticed a file on his desktop called "Joe's Portfolio." Apparently, he'd copied every project he'd touched in the past year, and was planning on presenting all of them as his own. Note to young designers: your portfolio is supposed to represent you, and no one else. Cheating will only get you into trouble later on.

online The company name is Visual Language LLC. The typography, colors, and images on our web site mirror those in the portfolio. The interface on the home page is the same basic design as the cover page of the portfolio. The pages in the "graphic design" section of the web site are simplified versions of the portfolio pages—there are fewer elements and less verbiage. The online version is more comprehensive, with sections on magazine writing, personal photo essays, and fine arts projects.

previously   Somewhere in my mother's closet, along with my elementary school report cards and class pictures, is my first portfolio: a large black leatherette binder with clear plastic-covered pages. This contained my UCLA class projects and all the freelance work I did as a student. Up to the creation of my current portfolio, I usually placed printed samples in a briefcase. For years—during the 1980s and 90s—we had everything archived on 35-milimeter slides, and had a carousel projector built into the conference room at the office. I still have a file drawer filled with slides, which I can't bear to throw away, and there is a box somewhere with those carousel trays.

lastly   A famous quote from David Ogilvy says: "You can't bore people into buying your product." The same applies when presenting to prospective employers or clients. You can't ramble on about everything in the portfolio: "This is the project I did for so-and-so, this is the project...." Remember that the design has to speak for itself.

I taught the portfolio class at Purchase College, SUNY for three years. The final project was to design and make a book no larger than 8.5 × 11-inches about themselves and their work. The books that let the work itself shine through—not in competition with too many other design elements on the page—were definitely the most successful.

Important advice to remember: "When in doubt, leave it out." The first rule of graphic design is to *never* show a client a design that you don't want them to buy. The same goes for portfolios.

ELLEN SHAPIRO is a designer and writer in New York City. She heads the design firm Visual Language LLC, founded in 1978. She is a graduate of UCLA's College of Fine Arts. She has taught at Parsons School of Design, Pratt Institute, the School of Visual Arts, and Purchase College, SUNY. She is the author of more than 100 articles and three books. WWW.VISUALLANGUAGE.NET

Project Aids

Amount of information accompanying each project   **KEY** INTERVIEWEE   INTERVIEWER

58%

45%

BASIC INFORMATION

4%   **6%**

AS MUCH INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE

36%   **43%**

2%   **6%**

…AND CREDITS

…AND CREDITS
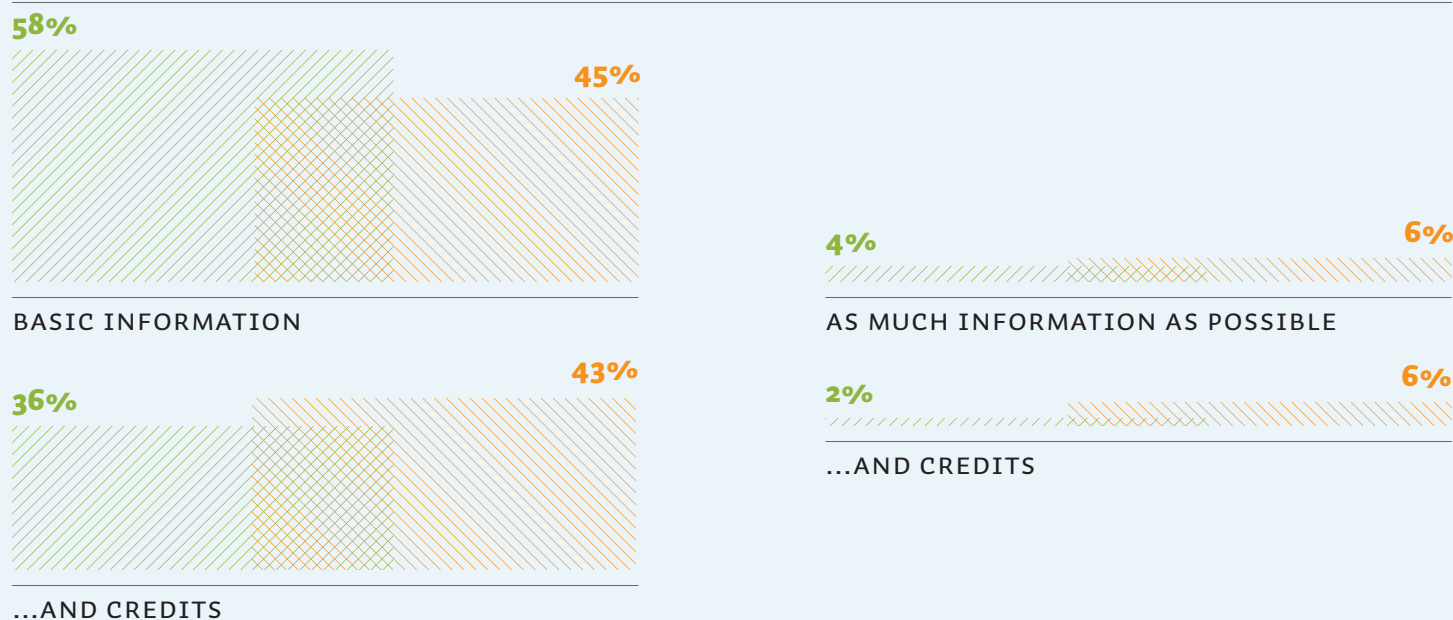
LESSON A) Keep it short and sweet. **B)** Give credit where credit is due.

Are sketches and process images a welcome addition?   **KEY** INTERVIEWEE   INTERVIEWER

42%   **59%**   **58%**

13%   **28%**

YES   NO   NO PREFERENCE
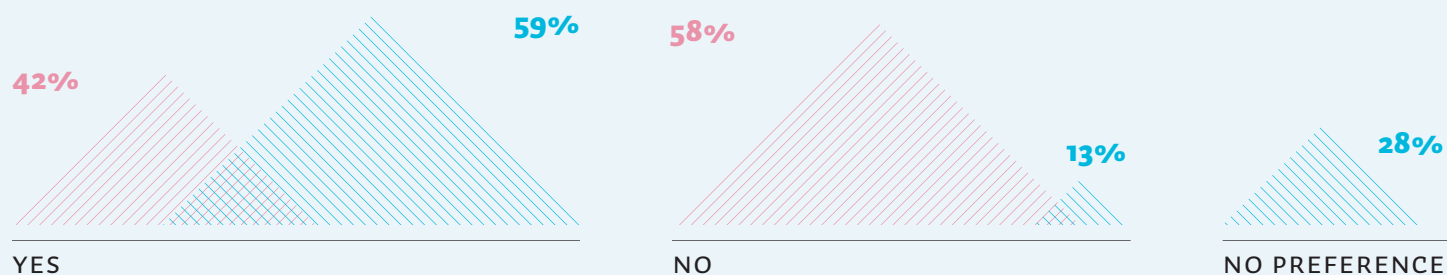
LESSON Potential interviewers like to see how you arrive at finished solutions, so save those sketches.

STRUCTURE
Box with loose samples

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
13.75 × 9.825 × 10.25

MATERIALS
Cardboard

RETAIL STORE
IKEA
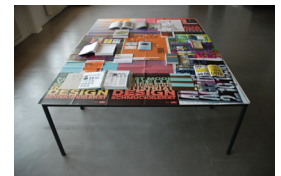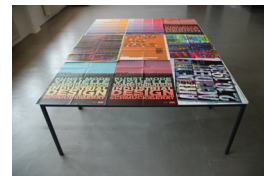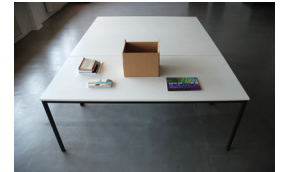
SPECIAL TECHNIQUES
Not really a technique but a large table or surface is required for best impact
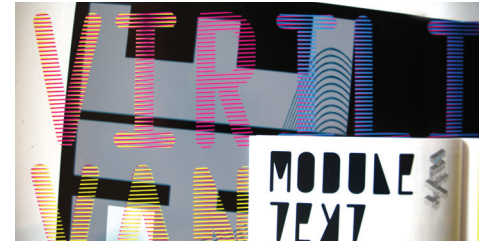
TOTAL COST
€2 ($2.87)
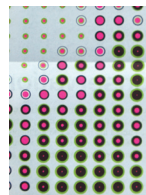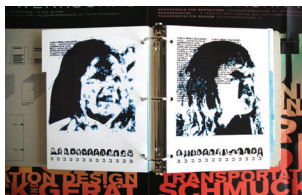
Dirk Wachowiak

status The portfolio is still in progress. As long as the box is roomy enough to hold the objects, I can always change the content and arrangement.

approach When I show my work, it is collected in a simple box that I can carry with me and set up on a table. It is a mélange of professional work I have done for several design studios and experimental/personal output—I decided to mix both areas, as I realized I could never predict what the reviewer expects.

I wanted to offer the reviewer a non-linear structure. People can walk around the body of work and become an active participant. It's similar to an analog appropriation of a web site: you click on the link that appeals to you most. If I see that people need direction concerning what is visually important, I am there to provide some guidance.

flexibility The whole idea of not having my work in a fixed, bounded, and printed media expresses my idea of modularity. This flexibility allows for all sorts of updating—the only limitation being that the reviewer needs a large table or surface. The arrangement on the table is also flexible, although I usually place posters as the first layer, followed by books and invitations, then other pieces on top. This collage gives the reviewer a quick impression of the whole work, and it is especially easy to note the typographic qualities that are so important to me.

display I show the portfolio in person. When this is not possible, I refer people to my web site. The structure gives you a sense of my design approach, and the content communicates the area of my graphic design work.

online The non-linear structure of my web site proves to be a search-and-discover process. As I am not a web designer—and working within my limitations—I devised a system that functions with grid-based pop-up windows. The user will discover new windows as he or she navigates through the site, and the option to have many windows open simultaneously allows for project comparison. The web site is not necessarily user-friendly, but it communicates my unique approach to design.

previously In 1998, I created a portfolio for an internship during my studies at Pforzheim University, School of Design. I prepared a multimedia portfolio that allowed one to navigate through my work, and a printed piece, which I used as backup. The first design studio was not impressed by the printed matter and advised me to show only the multimedia portfolio in the future. The second design studio I visited, MetaDesign, was more interested in the printed matter than the multimedia CD. Still, despite initial bumps, I got the internship at MetaDesign.

DIRK WACHOWIAK is a graphic designer and type designer based in Stuttgart, Germany. He studied graphic design at Pforzheim University, School of Design, and earned his MFA from the Yale School of Art. While there, he was employed as a teaching assistant to Tobias Frere-Jones. He teaches typography at Pforzheim University, School of Design. WWW.DIRKWACHOWIAK.DE
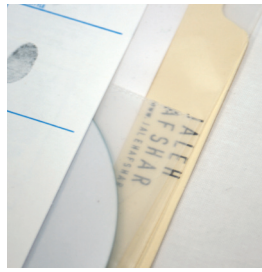
STRUCTURE
Folder with loose pages and CD

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
9 × 12

TYPEFACES
Resume: Consolas

Card: Univers and Calisto

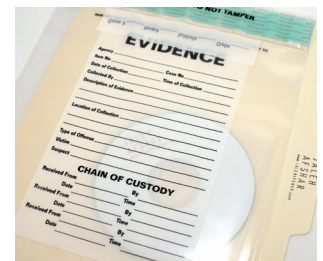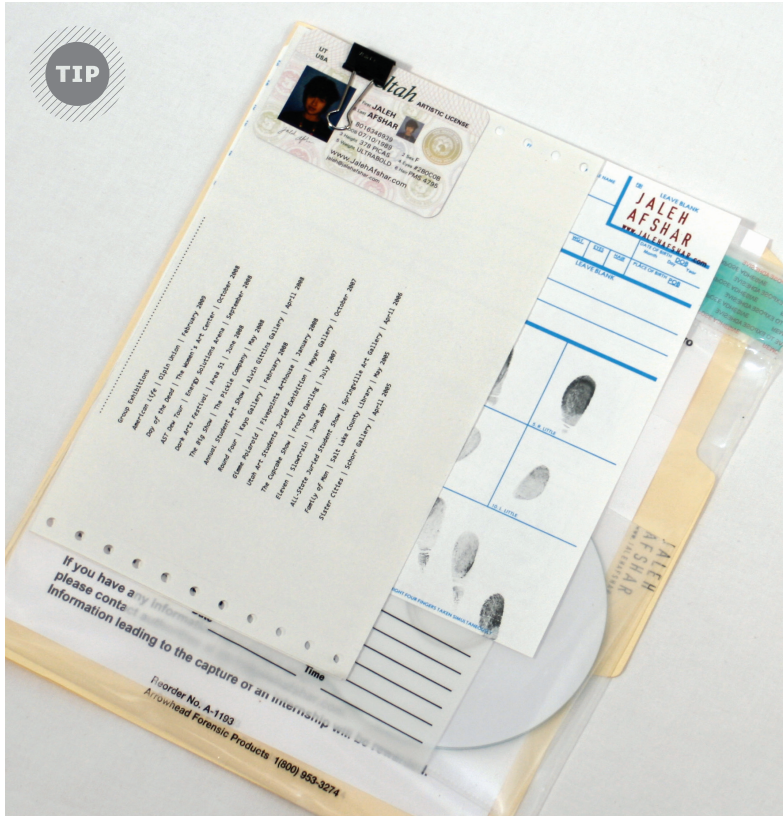**Poster: Arial**

MATERIALS
Manila folder
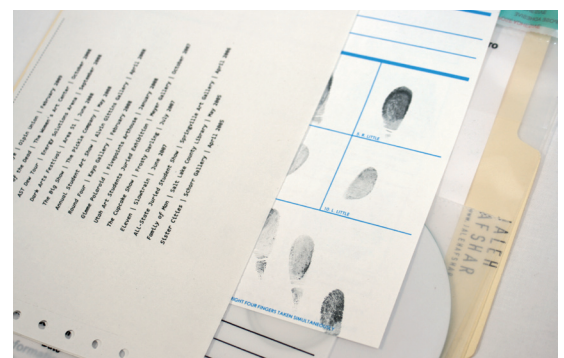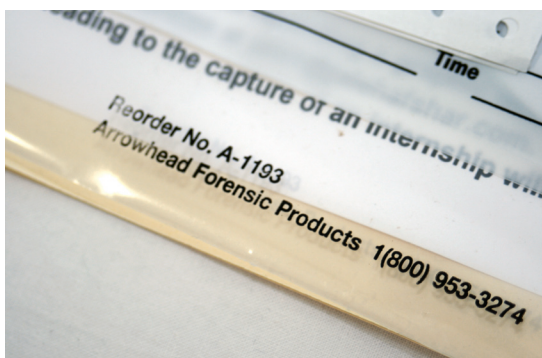
Evidence bag

FBI Form NO. FD-258

Bond paper

VENDORS
Crimescene

Sandy City Police Department

TIP Gimmicks and themes are not always well-received. But if you are going to do it, you must commit to it, as Afshar does in her criminal-studies promotion.

PRODUCTION TIME
10 Minutes per portfolio

PRODUCTION COST
$3 Per portfolio (×100)

Jaleh Afshar

THIS PORTFOLIO WAS BORN IN 2008, DURING MY SOPHOMORE YEAR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH. EVERY GRAPHIC DESIGN STUDENT WAS REQUIRED TO COMPLETE AN INTERNSHIP BEFORE GRADUATION, SO I USED IT TO CONTACT PROSPECTIVE DESIGN STUDIOS. I BROUGHT IT OUT SUBSEQUENTLY, TO LOOK FOR FREELANCE WORK.

status Slowly fading into retirement but it's still in use. I am now working on an entirely new portfolio for 2010.

approach When the time came to design my portfolio, I checked my growing list of ideas, and double-checked around campus to see if anything similar had already been developed. The crime file portfolio concept was the only one that couldn't be traced, so I went with it.

I purchased official policy evidence bags, and the standard FBI Form No. FD-258, which is used for fingerprinting . I had a custom stamp made for the folder, card, and CD. The other materials were created using basic office supplies.

flexibility I haven't done much to update this portfolio, as the work on the CD differs based on who the recipient is—nothing drastic has changed in the look of the kit itself.

display A key aspect of this portfolio was that it needed to be cheap and easy to mail, in addition to being affordable to reproduce. Usually, I send this out before meeting in person. This way, who I meet with has an idea of my personality and aesthetic approach.

memories I've left my business cards at shops and restaurants. Occasionally, I receive phone calls or e-mails from people telling me they've found my driver's license. Although my card is similar to the Utah license, I can't imagine how someone could overlook the obvious differences. I mean, who has their web site address on their driver's license? I've also gotten a couple texts from people, wanting to know if I could make them a fake ID. The answer has always been NO.

alternately For face-to-face meetings, I have a separate portfolio that includes physical copies of my design work. When approaching galleries for art exhibitions, I use a hardcover book of my paintings.

JALEH AFSHAR is a freelance graphic designer in Salt Lake City, Utah. She is currently working toward her BFA in Graphic Design, with a minor in Economics, at the University of Utah. WWW.JALEHAFSHAR.COM

What is your process for reviewing portfolios?

We sit, we talk, you show, I ask. It lasts about an hour. The portfolio is much less important to me than the portfolio owner. The portfolio is an embodiment of how you relate to the ideas you work with, as well as the people around you. I feel like the two coexist, so when we see each other, it's a bit of a test, to determine what sort of person you are.

Patric King

If the designer is there, I normally look through it quickly, saying little and getting an overall impression. And then I repeat the whole process with comments.

Stefan Sagmeister

I usually have an informal approach. I like to chat about different things with the interviewee, not just about design. Personality is really important when running a fairly small design studio. One of the first things I think about is, "Can I imagine sitting next to this person every day?"

Petter Ringbom

I don't have a specific process. I always prefer meeting with someone in person, and I spend more time talking about their dog, their commute, or their favorite restaurant, than I do about their work. The thing to remember is that I not only want to hire a good designer, I also want someone that I can work with, whose company I enjoy.

Peter Buchanan-Smith

Ninety-five percent of the people who come through my door are students who have little interview experience. So I usually take far too much time—an hour or more—trying to set them on the straight and narrow, as one particular guy did for me many years ago. This is what I learned:

1. Ask how much time you have. This lets the interviewer know you appreciate the value of time, and allows you to then take control as much as possible.

2. Divide your interview into thirds.

FIRST THIRD: get personally professional. Ask about things you quickly observe in the environment. For example, "Did you climb Machu Picchu? I see that photo... I noticed you love art deco and modernist posters... I see that you collect shrunken heads and Victorian dildos..." Or you can ask about the interviewer's path to the business, etc.

SECOND THIRD: show your portfolio. Never say anything negative about it. And be sure you don't explain each piece, because the work should speak for itself. Also, if there is a relevant way to bring some of the information gleaned from the first third of the meeting into play, do so, because it shows the ability to connect ideas. When you ask for feedback, make sure to take it professionally, not personally.

FINAL THIRD: build your network. If the company you are applying to isn't hiring, ask for referrals, ask for directions, ask for advice, but make sure not to overcompensate with heaping portions of prattle.

Marc English

I basically just look at it and let the designer take me through it. Presentation skills are needed to sell any idea or design, so the designer should be adept at selling their talent.

Jakob Trollbäck

It's very simple. I get a URL in an e-mail and click on it. Then it's immediately clear in the first ten seconds.

Hillman Curtis

Continued...

I try very hard to make sure I have adequate time to meet with someone. I spend a few minutes just talking and going over their resume. I usually let them "drive," or flip the pages, as they explain each piece. I am more interested in hearing "how" they explain the process, rather than "what" they explain. It lets me know how they will interact with clients and staff.

John foster

We prefer an e-mail with a link to a web site, or sample printed materials. If we like either, we put you on the list of people we will see, so long as you bother to call and follow up. If we are not looking for help, we will try to give a half hour informational interview, followed by referrals. We are generally honest and straightforward, and will try to help you with the process of finding a first job.

Steve Liska

I don't have a process. I am a quick read and have looked at hundreds of my students' portfolios over the years. But I will say that excellent typography is a priority. If a student doesn't have a decent handle on type, then they are often unemployable.

Carin Goldberg

I look at portfolios more quickly than their owners would like. I can usually—almost right away—tell whether or not someone's work appeals to me. If I'm reviewing in person, I try to say something constructive. If it's a drop-off, or something e-mailed to me, I almost always write a note. I remember dropping my portfolio off at a place I admired back in 1979, and the immense disappointment I experienced when I'd realized, after picking it up, that they hadn't even bothered to look through it.

Michael Bierut

I begin by telling people how much time I have: usually about twenty minutes. Then I proceed through the work at my own speed and volition. I like when people offer brief descriptions, and I like to be able to ask questions.

Adrian Shaughnessy

For me, setting context before I comment is very important, so I begin in silence— sometimes, the nervous chatter of the job-hunter interrupts the intuitive relationship I am seeking with the work. I am more effective once I've gathered a comprehensive view. When I'm ready, I go back to most of the pieces individually, ask for details, and feel more confident in giving considered feedback. In the dialogue we have during or after the review, I expect the person to know something about what's going on in the design field, and in the world at large.

Petrula Vrontikis

Two of us handle the inquiries. We sieve them with PDFs and web sites: the people we think are possibilities get an interview, the good ones come on placement. We'd never employ now without a placement/intern period first. It also gives them the chance to form their opinion of us.

Michael Johnson

We sit and chat in a conference room. I usually ask how familiar you are with what my office does. I'm curious to see what your interest level is (and how prepared you are). I prefer not to listen to you talk each piece through; I'd rather ask questions. I try to give a quick tour of the office, and I even go so far as to dig up other designers' e-mail addresses if I'm impressed by the work. And I really do appreciate a follow-up thank-you note. I think it's a classy gesture.

Gail Anderson

STRUCTURE
Perfect-bound book

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
4.25 × 6
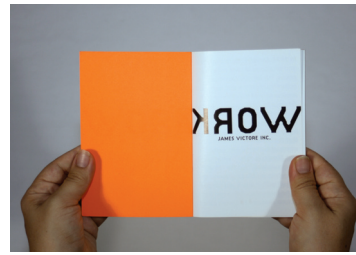
TYPEFACES
Citizen

PAPER
Cover: Uncoated

Interior: Gloss

PRINTING
CMYK + Fluorescent orange
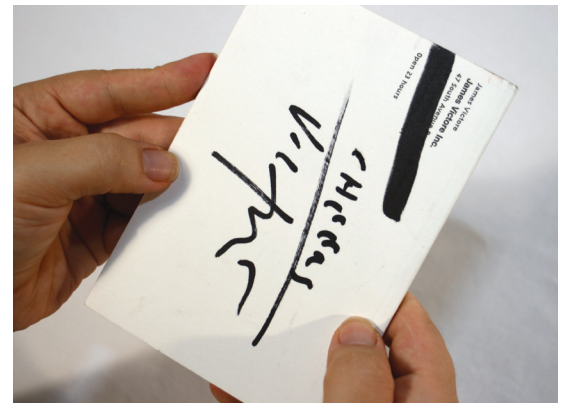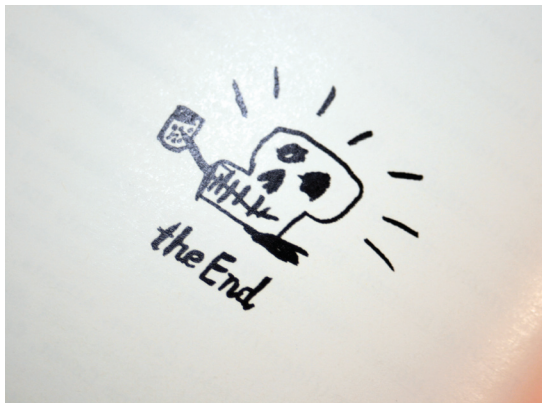
PRODUCTION TIME
1 Month

PRODUCTION COST
$8,000

James Victore

status — I had 1,000 of these little books printed, as well as a lovely matching envelope, all at a significant cost to me. I then sent out ten because there were only ten people I wanted to work with. I am more of a single shot-sniper, rather than a strafe, carpet-bomb, blitzkrieg type of guy.

approach — I love little books. I would print one every six months, if I could find someone insane enough to give me $20,000 a year to do it.

flexibility — Absolutely no updates, which was a bummer. I kept making changes on press, substituting work, moving things around. That's why I would need to make one of these every six months—to me, my best work is the stuff from tomorrow, not what I did today.

display — I found the contact info for ten cold calls and mailed the book out. Then I sat back with fingers crossed. Luckily, the phone rang, and I am still working with the guy who was at the other end of the line. I won't develop a promotional book or portfolio like this again—there are better ways to get your work out to the folks you want to work with, and I bet some smart people know those ways.

memories — One of the potential "clients" called me when he received it and left a message saying my work was "Really trippy." I thought that was a great compliment.

online — My web site was a version of this little book. My latest web site is also a little "book."

STRUCTURE
Box with boards

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
21 × 17 × 3

MATERIALS
Photobox
Canson paper
Brown denim
Cotton straps
Quilting fabric

PAPER
EPSON
Red River, inkjet

VENDORS
Cenveo

PRINTER
EPSON 1280

RETAIL STORES
Jo-Ann Fabrics
Michaels
Pearl Paint
The Quilters Barn

PRODUCTION TIME
75 Hours

PRODUCTION COST
$400.00

I CREATED MY PORTFOLIO IN 2006, A YEAR AFTER EARNING MY BFA. I WAS UNHAPPILY WORKING AS AN ENTRY-LEVEL DESKTOP PUBLISHER FOR A MEDICAL DEVICE COMPANY. THERE WERE NO OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT, SO I HAD TO LOOK ELSEWHERE FOR WORK.

status

I used this portfolio for a year. I took it with me on nearly thirty-five interviews. Toward the end, the boards were starting to show signs of wear, and now it's the perfect storage box for posters and other large samples.

approach

I made a box portfolio instead of a bound book because I thought my work looked better mounted. I also liked the fact that I could add or take out work without having to completely rebind a book. I found brown Canson paper, mounted on white board, and a photo box that was just the right size. Since the box was black, I decided to wrap it in matching brown paper—it took many sheets, in addition to Twin Tak, but it was worth it. I also used Twin Tak to wrap the backs of all my boards with my custom logo pattern. Finally, I sewed a bag to put the box in, making it easier to carry.

flexibility

If I wanted to, I could still update the portfolio and use it. The boards show less fingerprints than paper. If someone gets a huge fingerprint on one, you don't have to worry about replacing the whole portfolio. You simply replace the board.

display

Mostly in person, except for one time, when I dropped it off for a review.

memories

Though I accomplished my goal of creating a unique portfolio, it was bulky and heavy—especially when I was on the subway, and walking around Manhattan. There were a few awkward moments in tiny offices. I often had to place the box on the floor, which kept the interviewer from seeing it.

online

I've always had an online version. I could never understand why so many designers don't (especially these days). So many places ask to see a web site, and sometimes, it could prove to be the deciding factor.

previously

I constantly update my online portfolio, especially since my out-of-state clientele has increased. If I do show my work in person, I now show samples kept in a small binder that I have customized in the same fashion as my box portfolio.

lastly

If you are looking for work in New York—or any major city with a public transportation system—do not go for the gargantuan box.

The most memorable students and designers I have come across are either those who have given me their well-designed business cards, or those with amazing online portfolios. If someone were to leave something behind, I'd want it to be useful, or so beautiful that I would want to save it.

As much as I want to leave a little something for my potential clients, I'm not a big fan of the leave-behind. The idea of giving people things they might not want, need, or appreciate—especially these days when many studios and companies are very waste conscious—simply does not work for me.

LILA SYMONS is an independent designer in Princeton, New Jersey. She attended the Savannah College of Art and Design and previously worked at Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia. **WWW.LILASYMONS.COM**

STRUCTURE
Wire-O-bound book
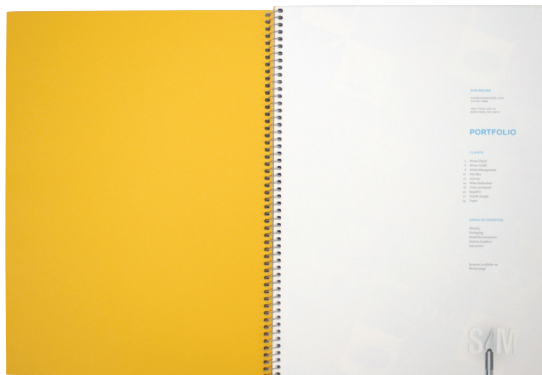
DIMENSIONS (IN.)
9.5 × 13

TYPEFACES
Apex Sans

Dolly

MATERIALS
Aluminum covers

PAPER
**Moab Entrada,
double-sided matte
inkjet, 300 gsm**

PRINTER
**EPSON Stylus
Photo 1400**

VENDOR
Unique Copy Center

**Advanced Laser and
Waterjet Cutting**

PRODUCTION COST
$750

Sam Becker

I CREATED THIS PORTFOLIO IN THE SPRING 2008, WHILE WORKING AT CBX IN NEW YORK CITY. MATCHING MY GRADUATING PORTFOLIO FROM SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY, I SET OUT TO FIND MY NEXT JOB, AND TO DEVELOP A TANGIBLE ARCHIVE OF MY WORK.

status
I used it for three or four months. It is currently retired... Why do you ask? Are you hiring?

approach
Since I can remember, I have used this system of logos: the "A" in my name is a different design tool for each touchpoint. My favorite one has always been the X-Acto knife, which was my inspiration for the metal book covers that are composed of laser-cut, bead-blasted, anodized aluminum. The previous portfolio covers were brushed stainless steel, which turned out to be very heavy and picked up too many fingerprints—not to mention it looked dated!

Because of the unconventional dimensions (9.5 × 13 inches), a completely arbitrary size seeking uniqueness, I could not find any stock binding solution. I found an oversize artist's paper book, from which I stripped the coil off every time I modified the portfolio—a $19.99 binding fee, plus the burden of using one hundred loose sheets of bright white drawing paper.

flexibility
In theory it is updateable. The covers are permanent, and the pages can be punched at very specific office stores and copy centers. Unfortunately, I use page numbers in my design, so any new work requires complete repagination. It is impractical, but I love it. I won't have it any other way.

display
Mostly in person. My web site should suffice when a personal interview is not possible.

memories
After I graduated from college, I flooded New York City with little employee care packages. I spent over an hour on each, and most firms received several. I went to an interview at Interbrand and they asked me to wait in their cafeteria. While I was sitting there, I overheard two people talking about this cool mailer that someone received with a "Sam" logo. One said to the other, "Oh, neat. We should really bring this person in for an interview one day."

online
The physical portfolio is a labor of love. The web site, on the other hand, is a functional necessity. Most places I applied to required a web site, in order to be considered for an interview. My portfolio and web site share the SAM brand look and feel. The similarities, however, end there. I approached each medium differently, but with a similar goal: to provide an effortless way for someone to see the breadth of my work and the seriousness of my application.

lastly
The best portfolios can be consumed quickly; they allow the work to speak for itself. In my opinion, it is the best way to gauge a designer's type and layout skills, because, presumably, they created their portfolio without the benefit of a design director.

SAM BECKER is a designer in New York City. He currently works on identity, packaging and interactive assignments at The Brand Union. He attended Syracuse University. He got his start at Crate & Barrel's graphics department, and later worked at CBX in New York City. He writes for UnderConsideration's Brand New. **WWW.SAMBECKERDESIGN.COM**

Interview Protocol

Moment when resume is presented

KEY INTERVIEWEE INTERVIEWER

54%
65%

BEGINNING OF INTERVIEW

16%
13%

END OF INTERVIEW

30%
22%

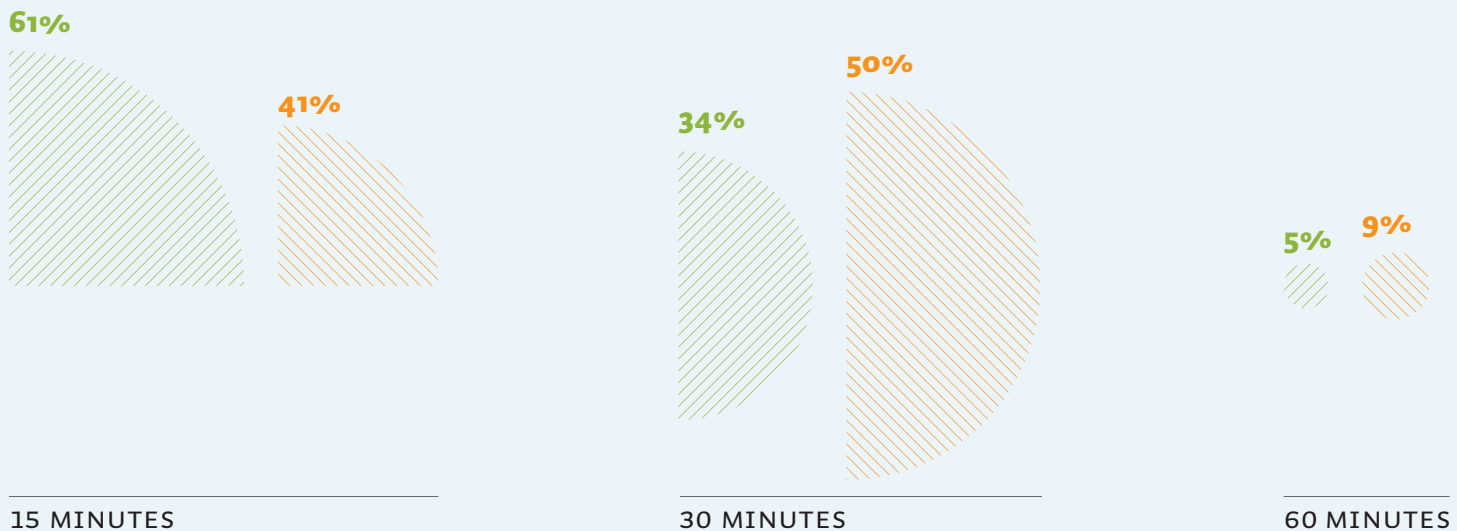**WHEN REQUESTED**
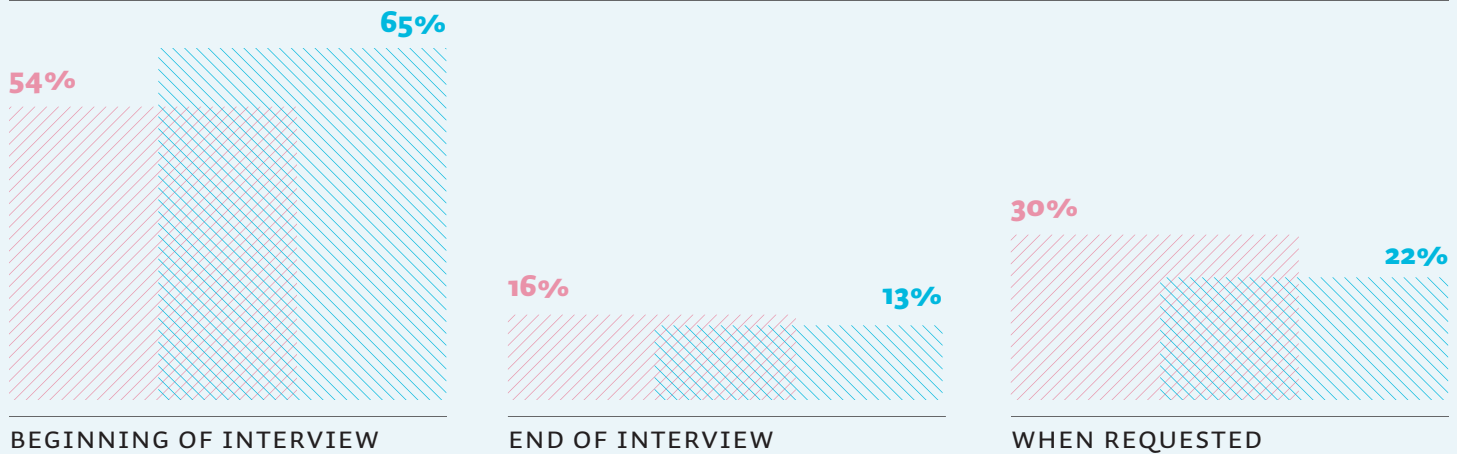
LESSON A) At the beginning. It helps break the ice. **B)** Don't wait for interviewer to ask you for it.

Expected length of interview
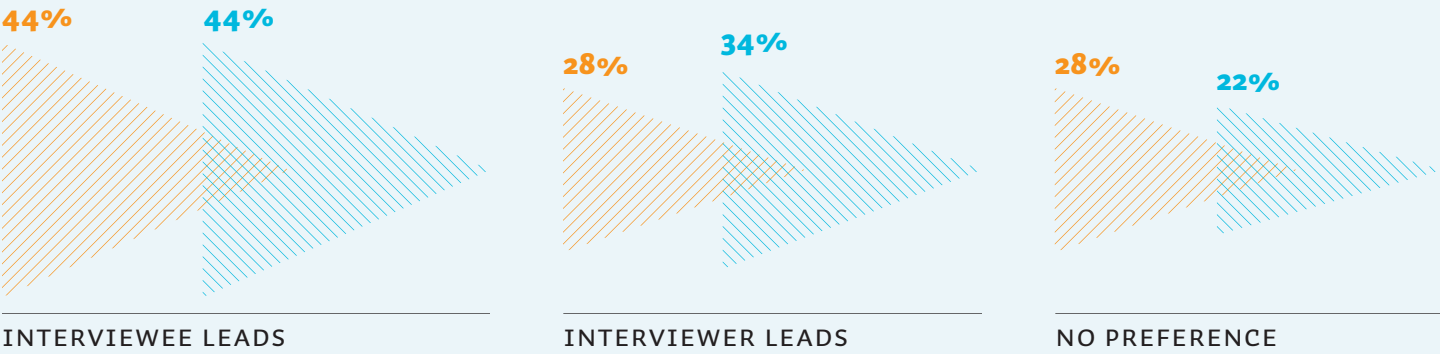
KEY INTERVIEWEE INTERVIEWER

61%
41%

15 MINUTES

34%
50%

30 MINUTES

5%
9%

60 MINUTES

LESSON Prepare for a 30-minute interview, but keep in mind that it might end in fifteen.

Preferred dynamic of portfolio presentation

44% **44%**

28% **34%**

28% **22%**

INTERVIEWEE LEADS

INTERVIEWER LEADS

NO PREFERENCE

LESSON Your best bet is to ask the interviewer what he or she prefers.

On the subject of leave-behinds

KEY — INTERVIEWEE — INTERVIEWER

As interviewee, do you leave something behind after the interview is over?
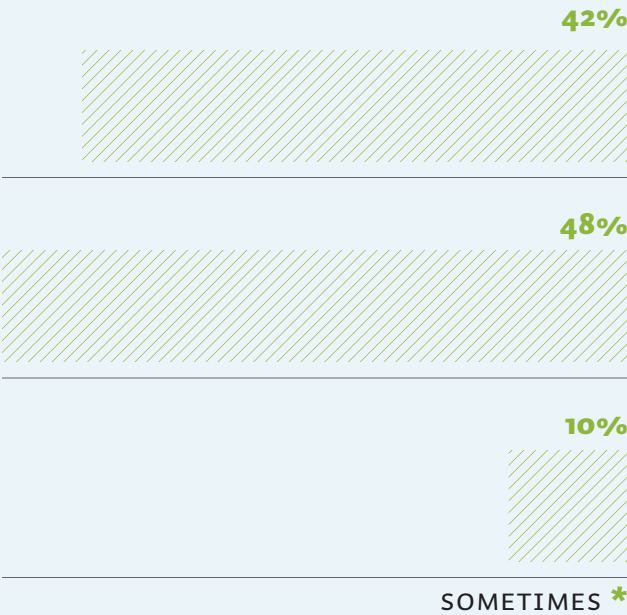
As interviewer, do you expect something to be left behind?

42% **30%**

YES

48% **24%**

NO

10% **46%**

SOMETIMES ***** NO PREFERENCE
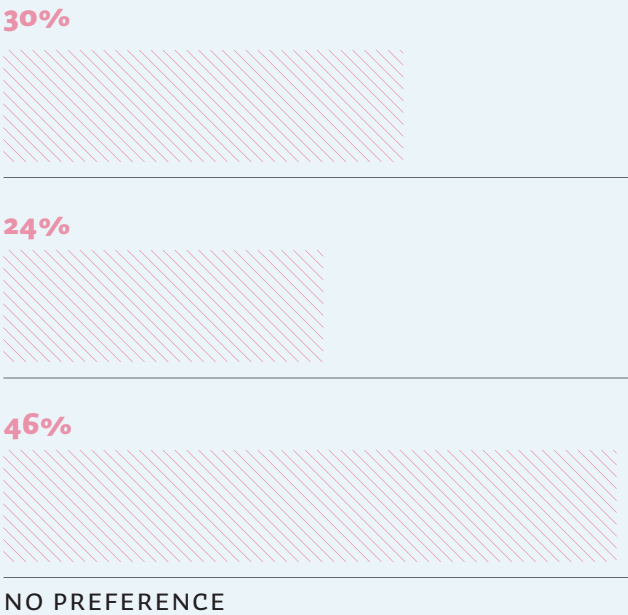
A sampling of elaborate responses ***** YES, IF I HAVE A GOOD FEELING ABOUT THE INTERVIEW / IF PERSON INTERVIEWING IS NOT FINAL DECISION MAKER / ONLY IF REQUESTED / SOMETIMES PEOPLE ASK TO KEEP A PIECE TO REFER TO / IF THEY HAVEN'T RECEIVED ONE FROM ME ALREADY

LESSON It won't kill your chances if you don't, but it sure won't hurt them.

STRUCTURE
Case with boards and transparencies

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
19 × 25

MATERIALS
Wood
Paper
Foamcore
Black board

VENDORS
A2A Graphics

RETAIL STORES
Pearl Paint

PRINTER
Cannon laser color printer
Iris inkjet printer

SPECIAL TECHNIQUES
Bookbinding

PRODUCTION COST
$125 Box
$500 Printing
$300 Photography
$75 Boards and ribbon
$1,000 Total

Daisuke Endo

THIS WAS THE RESULT OF MY 1999 SENIOR PORTFOLIO COURSE AT THE SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS, WITH INSTRUCTOR CARIN GOLDBERG. ITS MAIN PURPOSE WAS TO ATTRACT EMPLOYMENT, BUT IT WAS ALSO FUN AND EXCITING TO CREATE A PORTFOLIO AS A FINAL PROJECT IN SCHOOL.

status Retired. I used the portfolio for a few weeks after graduating, before I snagged a position with Pentagram. As I started adding professional work, the student projects began to disappear—ten years later, I still have one or two student projects mixed in.

approach It was Goldberg's suggestion. The big black wooden box wrapped in black paper was popular among students at the time. I printed posters and magazine covers with an inkjet printer and mounted them on black foamcore boards. For the magazines, I laser-printed spreads and saddle-stitched them. I had my 3D pieces professionally photographed (6 × 4-inch chrome), and framed them with black board.

> My portfolio is like my alter ego.

flexibility In theory, it is updatable—I could add and subtract pieces. In reality, I don't use the box anymore. It's too big to handle (lugging it around New York was a nightmare), and appears outdated. These days, I use a smaller box with pieces that I select according to circumstance, complemented by a simple online portfolio.

display I showed it in person. I rarely delivered it for review, even though I did drop it off a few times—that's how I got the first job.

memories Since I got my first real job with this portfolio, it's like a big trophy for me.

online At the time, I didn't have an online version. Online portfolios weren't as common ten years ago. Also, I didn't have any web design projects, or motion graphics, in my portfolio. Now I have a simple online portfolio, since it's so much easier to show it to people.

evolution Smaller versions of the same format—case with boards or loose items—and a complimentary online portfolio.

DAISUKE ENDO is a graphic designer and educator based in Tokyo, Japan. He graduated from the School of Visual Arts in New York City. Previously, he worked at Pentagram, and taught at Pratt Institute. He is a design director at Flying Machine, and an instructor at Musashino Art University in Japan.

STRUCTURE
Screw-post book with slipcase

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
12 × 15

TYPEFACES
Agency FB

Frutiger LT Std

MATERIALS
Bookbinding board

Book cloth

PAPER
EPSON, matte

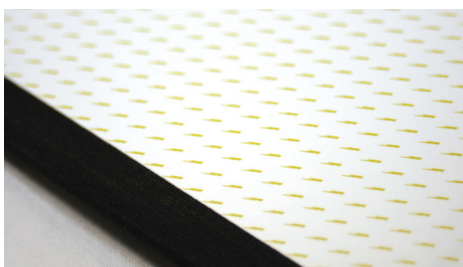RETAIL STORES
National Art Supplies

PRINTER
Canon Pro 9000

PRODUCTION TIME
12 Hours

PRODUCTION COST
$100

Jeremy Wisecup

I DESIGNED AND BUILT THIS PORTFOLIO FOR MY SENIOR PRACTICUM DESIGN COURSE IN 2009, WHILE ATTENDING MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY. I HAD HOPED THAT IT WOULD HELP ME FIND WORK AND FREELANCE ASSIGNMENTS.

status Currently, it is still active. It has seen battle a few times now.

approach I wanted something that I could create from scratch. Once I had decided on a course of action, I bought all the supplies at a local arts shop, and constructed the entire book in my kitchen. I created the framing structure with standard bookbinding board, which I then covered with Hollander's Black Japanese book cloth. With a set of screw-posts, and the necessary amount of pages in place, I was ready to go.

A lot of people have decent work, but the presentation of their work lacks interest or attention to detail—details are what differentiate good design from great design.

flexibility While the pages are easily interchangeable, it is somewhat limited to 14 pages—an inch in thickness. The inside can be updated by alternating the pieces of work, but the overall appearance is permanent.

display Always in person.

memories It took a very long night and an early morning to create, but I am very satisfied with the end result—a one-of-a kind item I built with my own hands—and it lets me showcase my craftsmanship, creativity, and individuality.

online My online portfolio has a direct correlation to this book. The work showcased at any given time may be different but, ultimately, they are cohesively connected.

lastly Create something for yourself, by yourself. It shows craftsmanship—an ability to create something from a blueprint. If well-executed, it will land you a job. After all, it worked for me.

STRUCTURE
Wire-O-bound book

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
11.5 × 11.5

TYPEFACES
Bell Gothic

Trade Gothic Condensed

MATERIALS
Illustration Board

Wire-O

PAPER
Silk, 110 lb

VENDORS INVOLVED
Soho Reproductions
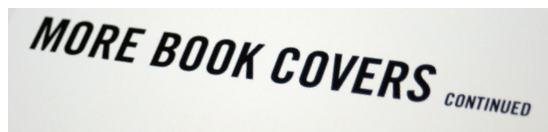
PRINTER
Xerox DocuColor 7000

PRODUCTION TIME
1 Day

PRODUCTION COST
$100
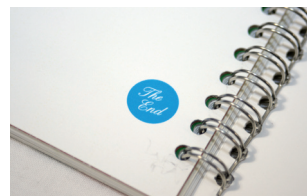
Frank Gargiulo

I CREATED MY PORTFOLIO IN JULY 2007. AFTER YEARS OF HAVING A PORTFOLIO THAT CONSISTED OF 4 × 5-INCH TRANSPARENCIES, I NEEDED TO FIND AN EASIER WAY TO SHOW MY WORK TO FREELANCE CLIENTS AND POTENTIAL, FULL-TIME EMPLOYERS.

status   While the portfolio is still in use, my web site is the primary vehicle for my work.

approach   I wanted a creative portfolio with the feel of a magazine or book. Once printed and bound together with a Wire-O, the double-sided printouts were held in between two illustration boards that acted as covers.

flexibility   In some ways, yes, in other ways, no. Taking out the Wire-O binding and adding pages was fairly easy. The main difficulty was in the presentation of the music section. Every time a new cover was required, this meant an entirely new photo shoot. I was aware of this going into the project, but it wasn't an idea that I was willing to sacrifice.

display   It can be presented with our without my presence, I think the portfolio and work speak for themselves. It's a clear representation of who I am as an art director and designer.

memories   The music section was shot three times before it was successful. The first time, the photographer forgot his camera and my friends/models became grumpy during the wait for his return. So the photos didn't turn out as well as I would have liked, due to the circumstances. The second time, I tried to piggyback the work on a fashion shoot, and felt so rushed that I didn't get what I needed. The third time was a charm—my friend, Marcelo, handled the shoot with professional acumen.

online   Online and offline are somewhat related to each other. It's my goal to update the site in the near future, so that it will be comparable to the printed portfolio. I want to use more common elements, rather than the images of my friends holding the CDs. I'm not web tech savvy enough yet to create it, but I'll get there.

lastly   I went to see a leading headhunter in New York before creating this portfolio, since I wanted to get an idea of what they thought was au courant. I was shown dreadful portfolios, both in look and content—mostly heavy, leather-bound traditional portfolio monsters that screamed boring and serious. When I explained my concept to the headhunter, she sought to discourage me. I'm glad I didn't listen. A week after finishing my portfolio, I was offered two positions—one that I accepted.

FRANK GARGIULO is a graphic designer based in New York City and Portland, Oregon. He graduated from the School of Visual Arts, and has worked with various New York designers, including Alexander Isley, Tibor Kalman, and Helene Silverman. Previously, he worked at SpotCo and MTV, and has worked internationally in countries such as Denmark and Japan. He is creative director for Art Dictator. **WWW.THEARTDICTATOR.COM**

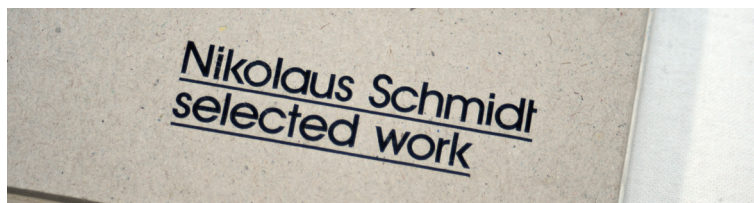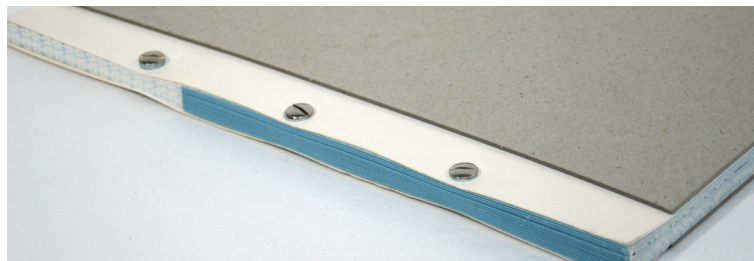**STRUCTURE**
Screw-post book

DIMENSIONS (IN.)
8.2 × 11.6

TIP Isolating project information on smaller, separate sheets ensures it is not missed and maximizes the display area for the work.

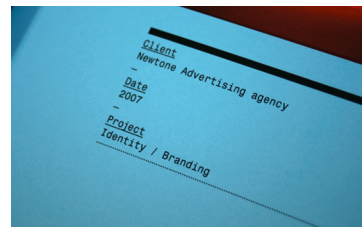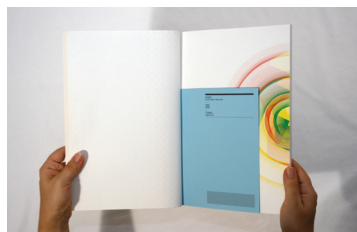**TYPEFACES**
Avant Garde Gothic
Monospace 821

MATERIALS
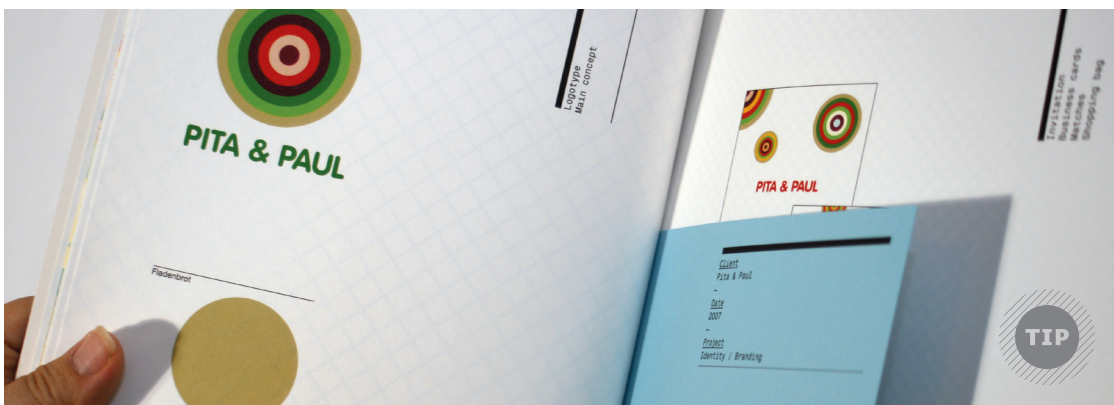## Alterna
Grey board
FIZZ

PRINTER
HP Indigo

SPECIAL TECHNIQUES
Laminating
Letraset

PRODUCTION TIME
2 Weeks

PRODUCTION COST
$1,500
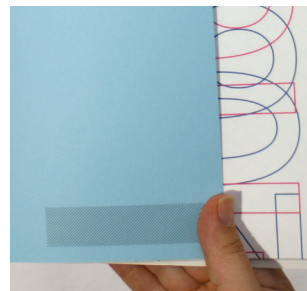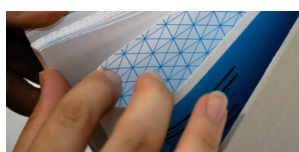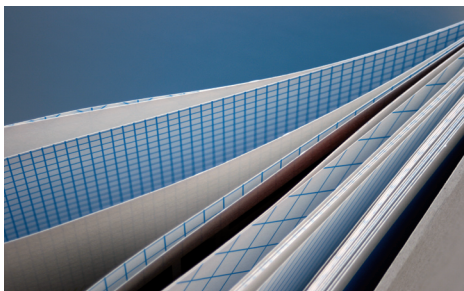
Nikolaus Schmidt

I CREATED THIS PORTFOLIO DURING TWO WEEKS IN APRIL 2008, AS A RESPONSE TO A CHALLENGE POSED BY AN INTERVIEWER WHO WAS LOOKING THROUGH MY WORK.

status It is still in use.

approach I had a meeting with a potential client, and came up with a simple presentation of my work. When I was finished, he said, "Nice work, but it would have been much better if you'd presented it in a more compact way that showed your approach to graphic design. Come back in two weeks and show me something extraordinary enough to share with other companies." Although this person wasn't able to offer me a job, I was grateful that he pushed me to do better.

I considered a lot of different formats and production techniques. In the back of my mind, there was always the issue of keeping the costs as low as possible, even though I wanted to create something special.

I wasn't sure whether to produce something flashy to attract new clients, or to stick to my tried-and-true approach, which was definitely more content-driven. In the end, I stuck to my principles, and took this chance to experiment and create something that reflected my personality, as well as my approach to graphic design. It was carefully crafted, keen on details, made good use of typography, and, of course, maintained tactility. Finally, I wanted to design a portfolio with

In my opinion, working on a project for yourself is always more difficult than working on commissioned projects, especially when you have to put together the most interesting pieces of your work. With that said, you also need to think about how the work is placed within the book: the balance between experimental and commercial, and the overall first impression.

the ability to grow over a period of time, while incorporating as many different production techniques as my budget allowed. Thinking more about a rough and tactile sketchbook, as opposed to a glossy sales brochure, I used grey board for the cover, in order to contrast the very high, surface-uncoated paper from the interior pages.

flexibility As designers, we are all in a constant process of change and personal development. I used screw-post binding, which allows for maximum flexibility.

display Always in person. I think it's quite hard for someone else to sell something if he or she is not personally involved.

memories I have to say that most "commercial clients" (lawyers, tax consultants, etc.) prefer a glossy brochure to a hand-bound book... at least that has been my personal experience. I guess that's a common problem—some people seem to be more attracted to eye candy than content-driven work.

eventually I definitely would like to develop a new portfolio in the future. For the next format, I will probably play with a more glossy and flashy version, just to scope the different reactions.

NIKOLAUS SCHMIDT is a graphic designer in Vienna, Austria, where he has run his own studio since 2007. He studied marketing at the Advertising Academy of the Vienna Economics Institute, and later received a bachelor's degree from the London College of Printing. He previously worked for the Education Congress Research GmbH, where he coordinated all visual communication projects. WWW.NIKOLAUSSCHMIDT.COM

What was your first portfolio like? Is it still with you?

It was a mess. I have no idea where it lurks today. I have constructed numerous portfolios since, each one slightly better than the last. If you are lucky, you will have grown so much in ten years time that looking back at your student portfolio induces fatigue.

Peter Buchanan-Smith

My first portfolio didn't come close to the creative, or finish level, that graduate portfolios demonstrate today. I enjoyed doing the work, so it honestly reflected my passion for graphic design. However, it didn't display the skills that I rely on today, such as logo design, conceptual thinking, and art direction. Reviewers of old said it looked retro 1950s, a time that I thought was visually cool—only, they thought it looked old. I guess it's kind of like when I see retro '80s in student portfolios today. I think parts of it are still in my garage, but I know I'd toss it out if I rummaged through them. It really is "evidence."

Petrula Vrontikis

Oh my god, it was horrifying. It was filled with fairly strong typography—a combination of Neville Brody and other cutting-edge designers, some neoclassical stuff, and student exercises. I was so completely insecure I felt as if I had to get a ball in every pocket. It didn't work at all. At worst, it taught me that in order to sell myself to other designers, I needed to have a consistent world-view. At best, it taught me that I really had no business asking other people what they thought of me.

Patric King

My first portfolio was appalling. I'd completed a marketing and visual art degree that left me with half a portfolio, consisting of dodgy two-color posters for the local theatre group and the college art gallery. Absolutely awful. Not surprising that I couldn't get a job anywhere. Soon after, I traveled the world looking for work and kept my projects on 35-millimeter slides—again a nightmare, because no one could ever be bothered to project them. So my early career was based on people trying to judge my work by peering at tiny glass slides. On the bright side, I noticed that I started to design projects that would work well "small"—a good rule when you think about it, and I still catch myself wondering, "What would it look like on a slide?"

Michael Johnson

Whew! I was a washed out musician trying to break into a real career. I was probably older than the individual I was meeting with, and my work was nowhere near good enough to really present. But I thought I could snow my way into the job. No dice.

Hillman Curtis

It was all 4 × 5-inch transparencies, beautifully matted and mounted. You have to make sure you pick the right pieces, practice what you are going to say, and remember that it is all a performance.

Noreen Morioka

It was very professional looking, of course. I'm a perfectionist. I have it somewhere but I don't really like the work in it. I was young. There's no crime in that.

Jakob Trollbäck

Continued...

My first portfolio was strange, inconsistent, and clumsy. It was, and still is, a work in progress.

Steve Liska

Oh no, that one is long, long gone. It was a gigantic 30 × 40-inch piece of shit. I had lots of printed posters that I couldn't bear to fold in half. It quickly proved to be an incredible schlep up and down subway steps. I think I took it out twice, and then gave it up and moved onto something more portable.

Stefan Sagmeister

It was amateurish, sloppy, and poorly conceived. Despite that, a lot of what I do today derives from those projects—from illustrative solutions to hand-drawn type and deconstructed forms. What strikes me as hilarious now is that the work that has been successful for me as a designer startled my old professors back in the clean days of 1992. Looking back on the poor folded husk of leather-bound work, I suppose that the only thing I learned was to stay true to myself.

John Foster

Utterly dismal, and thoroughly embarrassing. My instructor at Cooper Union, Seymour Chwast, still makes fun of me for it to this day. Fortunately, there were fewer graphic designers back then. I learned on the job. And no, I don't still have it. God help me.

Carin Goldberg

My first portfolio committed many of the sins I often warn against: too much work, and too many things included merely because they were printed. It was my first and last portfolio, because I never looked for another job after I got my first one. So right now it sits, slowly deteriorating in my basement.

Michael Bierut

I still have my first portfolio, as well as subsequent iterations. It was a 20 × 24-inch leather portfolio that had a removable metal spiral. It had cool vinyl pockets, not the crap acetate ones. I had attached smaller vinyl pockets to the larger pages, so I could present brochures and small pieces in an easy-to-access manner. It definitely looked "designed," and the pocket in back held resumes.

Marc English

My view on portfolios is the same as a poet with her poetry: you should never consider them finished, and you should always be dissatisfied with them. The day you sit back and say, "My portfolio is great," is the day you are dead in the water. It requires endless work. This never changes, no matter how successful you become. That's really the only thing I've learned about portfolios.

Adrian Shaughnessy

Ugh. My first book was poorly put together, since this was during the pre-computer days. My mechanicals were sloppy, and the final pieces were not as neatly assembled as they should have been. While the work was good enough to get me my first job, I cringe when I think of what was in that book.

Gail Anderson

The Experienced

GAIL ANDERSON is a creative director at SpotCo in New York City since 2002, which has been developing posters and identities for the theater and entertainment industry. Prior to that, she was the art director at *Rolling Stone* magazine for fifteen years. Having worked with hundreds of illustrators, photographers, and designers over the years, Anderson has seen her share of portfolios.
SPOTNYC.COM

MICHAEL BIERUT is a partner at Pentagram in New York City, where he has been producing a diverse range of work in identity, editorial, and environmental design since 1990. He is a co-founder of Design Observer and author of *79 Short Essays on Design*. As an employer of dozens of aspiring designers over the years, Bierut knows exactly what to look for in a potential hire.
PENTAGRAM.COM

PETER BUCHANAN-SMITH is the founder of Buchanan-Smith in New York City, which he established in 2006. He has created identity and editorial work for clients like Isaac Mizrahi, Brian Eno, David Byrne, Philip Glass and Wilco. He is a former art director of *Paper* magazine and of the *New York Times* Op-Ed page. A teacher at the School of Visual Arts in New York and an avid employer of interns, Buchanan-Smith has a knack for forging and hiring talented designers.
BUCHANANSMITH.COM

HILLMAN CURTIS is the founder of hillmancurtis in New York City, a film and web design firm he established in 1998. He has designed highly visible web sites for clients such as Yahoo and Adobe, and he has done commercial film work for Sprint and BMW. He has written three books on design and film and directed the popular "Artist Series" documentaries. As a former art director of Macromedia in the mid-1990s, Curtis has seen the evolution of digital and online portfolios firsthand.
HILLMANCURTIS.COM

MARC ENGLISH is the man behind Marc English Design in Austin, Texas, which he founded in 1995. He has produced identity and editorial work, as well as audio and video packaging. He is the former president of the AIGA Boston Chapter, and founder (and former president) of the Austin chapter. A dedicated teacher and lecturer, English rarely hesitates spending his hours sharing his experiences and dispensing much-needed advice.
MARCENGLISHDESIGN.COM

JOHN FOSTER is the founder of Bad People Good Things in the Washington D.C. Metro Area, a small design firm he founded in 2009. He has created identities, posters, and collateral for a variety of clients. Prior to that, he was a partner at Fuszion Collaborative. Foster is the author and designer of four graphic design books. His passion and enthusiasm concerning all things design is contagious.
BADPEOPLEGOODTHINGS.COM

CARIN GOLDBERG is the founder of Carin Goldberg Design in New York City, which she established in 1982. She has produced hundreds of book jackets and album covers for some of the most prominent publishing houses and record labels in the United States. As of late, her work has expanded into editorial and publication design. An indefatigable teacher, Goldberg has been priming design students (and their portfolios) at the School of Visual Arts since 1983.
CARINGOLDBERG.COM

JESSICA HELFAND is the co-founder of Winterhouse in Falls Village, Connecticut, a design firm established in 1997 that focuses on publishing and editorial development, as well as new media for cultural, educational, and literary institutions. She is a co-founder of Design Observer and author of several books on design and cultural criticism. Helfand has been

teaching at the graduate program in Graphic Design at Yale University, where she is also a member of the committee on graduate admissions in the School of Art—which means that she sees portfolios of aspiring students, and their transformation as they graduate from the program.
WINTERHOUSE.COM

MICHAEL JOHNSON is the founder of johnson banks in London, England, a design firm he established in 1992 that specializes in comprehensive identity programs, editorial design and, oddly enough, postage stamp design. With a solid internship program in place at his office, Johnson has refined his own skills for detecting talent in young designers.
JOHNSONBANKS.CO.UK

PATRIC KING is the co-founder of House of Pretty in Chicago, Illinois, a small design consultancy established in 2003 that develops web sites, identity, and typography. He previously worked with Rick Valicenti at 3st. Perpetually inquisitive and challenging, King has a keen eye for portfolios that truly represent not just someone's talent but their personality as well.
HOUSEOFPRETTY.COM

STEVE LISKA is the founder of Liska + Associates in Chicago, Illinois, a design firm established in 1980 that produces identity, print, packaging, interactive, book, and environmental work for a multitude of clients. With a constant stream of designers in a large team, Liska has reviewed a large share of portfolios.
LISKA.COM

NOREEN MORIOKA is the co-founder of AdamsMorioka in Los Angeles, California, a design and strategy firm established in 1994 that has produced work in various mediums for clients like ABC, Gap, Nickelodeon, Sundance and The Walt Disney Company. At AdamsMorioka she leads the team in client interface and business development, giving her what most call "people skills," which makes her a great interviewer.
ADAMSMORIOKA.COM

PETTER RINGBOM is a partner at Flat in New York City, a design firm he co-founded in 1996 that designs and produces web sites, films, videos, trademarks and identity systems, marketing campaigns, and printed matter. He has taught at Parsons School of Design and New York University, and has

been a guest critic at Yale, School of Visual Arts and Hunter College. Ringbom's firm attracts a lot of young talent, which translates into numerous portfolio reviews.
FLAT.COM

STEFAN SAGMEISTER is the founder of Sagmeister, Inc. in New York City, a very small design firm he established in 1993. He has created a dizzying array of projects, from album covers to books, identities, posters, and a slew of self-initiated endeavors. He teaches in the graduate department of the School of Visual Arts in New York and lectures extensively throughout the world. With only one or two internship positions up for grabs, Sagmeister reviews hundreds of portfolio submissions.
SAGMEISTER.COM

ADRIAN SHAUGHNESSY is a graphic designer and writer based in London, England, where he is currently a consultant on design and editorial direction through ShaughnessyWorks. He was the co-founder of Intro in 1988 and was its creative director until 2003. Shaughnessy is the author of *How to Be a Graphic Designer Without Losing Your Soul*. Throughout his career, he has spent many soulful hours reviewing portfolios and fostering design talent.

JAKOB TROLLBÄCK is the co-founder and creative director of Trollbäck + Company in New York City, a motion graphics firm established in 1999 that produces content across broadcast, print, and interactive mediums for clients like HBO, ESPN and Nickelodeon. Constantly at the forefront of film title design, and animation and on-air packages for television, Trollbäck scouts the best designers in this fledgling industry.
TROLLBACK.COM

PETRULA VRONTIKIS is the founder of Vrontikis Design Office in Los Angeles, California, which was established in 1989. She has created an array of branding, web, packaging, poster, and corporate collateral projects. She has been teaching at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California since 1989. In her dual role as employer and educator, she ensures that young designers receive the attention their portfolios deserve.
35K.COM

Resources

A brief selection of vendors, services, stores, materials and suppliers. The list includes some of the larger and well-known entities in each category but we acknowledge that hundreds of smaller, local versions exist and benefit from everyone's support, so we encourage you to use this as a jumping-off point to find the one that best suits your needs.

CUSTOM PORTFOLIO CASES AND BOOKS

Audrey Grossman Handmade	BOOKSANDBOXES.NET
Portfolio Box	PORTFOLIOBOX.COM
Talas	TALASONLINE.COM
The House of Portfolios	HOUSEOFPORTFOLIOS.COM

READY-MADE PORTFOLIOS, CASES AND BAGS

Book works	BOOKWORKS.ORG.UK
Booksmart Studio	BOOKSMARTSTUDIO.COM
Brewer-Cantelmo	BREWER-CANTELMO.COM
Lost Luggage	LOST-LUGGAGE.COM
Moab Chinle	
	MOABPAPER.COM/CHINLE-PHOTO-PRESENTATION
Monochrom	MONOCHROM.COM
PaperHaus	PAPERHAUS.COM
Pina Zangaro	PINAZANGARO.COM
University Products	ARCHIVALSUPPLIERS.COM
Veer	VEER.COM/PRODUCTS/MERCH/BAGS
Zetta Florence	ZETTAFLORENCE.COM.AU

COMMERCIAL, SHORT-RUN OR ONE-OFF PRINTERS

Adorama	ADORAMAPIX.COM/PHOTOBOOKS.ASPX
Apple	APPLE.COM/ILIFE/IPHOTO/PRINT-PRODUCTS.HTML
Blurb	BLURB.COM
CafePress	CAFEPRESS.COM
Fastback Creative Books	FASTBACKBOOKS.COM
FedEx Office	FEDEX.COM/US/OFFICE
Lulu	LULU.COM
MagCloud	MAGCLOUD.COM
Viovio	VIOVIO.COM

COMPS AND PROTOTYPES

A2A Graphics	A2A.COM
Comp24	COMP24.COM
Concept Link LTD	CONCEPT-LINK.COM

FOR HUNTERS

eBay	EBAY.COM
Etsy	ETSY.COM

OFFICE SUPPLIES

Office Depot	OFFICEDEPOT.COM
Office Max	OFFICEMAX.COM
Staples	STAPLES.COM
Target	TARGET.COM

OFFICE PRINTERS

Canon	USA.CANON.COM
Epson	EPSON.COM
HP	HP.COM
Xerox	OFFICE.XEROX.COM

PHOTOGRAPHY EQUIPMENT

Adorama	ADORAMA.COM
B&H Photo	BHPHOTOVIDEO.COM
Calumet	CALUMETPHOTO.COM

ART AND CRAFT SUPPLIES

A.I. Friedman	AIFRIEDMAN.COM
Kate's Paperie	KATESPAPERIE.COM
Michaels	MICHAELS.COM
Pearl Art Supply	PEARLPAINT.COM
Sam Flax	SAMFLAXNY.COM

PAPER

Domtar	DOMTAR.COM
Epson	EPSON.COM
French Paper	FRENCHPAPER.COM
Moab	MOABPAPER.COM
Mohawk	MOHAWKPAPERSTORE.COM
Neenah	NEENAHPAPER.COM
Red River Paper	REDRIVERCATALOG.COM
Strathmore	STRATHMOREARTIST.COM

FABRIC AND BOOKBINDING SUPPLIES

Gane Brothers & Lane	GANEBROTHERS.COM
Hancock Fabrics	HANCOCKFABRICS.COM
Hollander's	HOLLANDERS.COM
Jo-Ann Fabrics	JOANN.COM

Index

Through more than forty case studies, nearly twenty interviews with experienced professionals, and a series of (nonscientific) surveys, *Flaunt* is a resource for design students as well as young, experienced, freelance, and independent designers. It explains how one can find a way to cohesively, succinctly and creatively showcase their work through an accessible, effective, and creative portfolio. *Flaunt* showcases a variety of alternatives through a selection of portfolios that represent both the most common approaches as well as some offbeat executions. Hopefully, this book will help ease the anxiety and burden of creating a portfolio—and, perhaps, even help demystify the process of putting it together, along with the expectations of presenting it.

About the Authors

Born and raised in Mexico City, Bryony Gomez-Palacio and Armin Vit are graphic designers and co-founders of UnderConsideration, a growing network and enterprise dedicated to the progress of the graphic design profession and its practitioners, students and enthusiasts. Since 2002 they have published and edited some of the most widely read design blogs, including Speak Up, Brand New, Quipsologies, Word It and FPO (For Print Only). In 2007, they established the Department of Design to produce client-driven work. Bryony and Armin each have a decade of experience in various disciplines including corporate and brand identity, annual reports, business collateral, web design and programming, packaging, and magazine and book design. They are the authors of *The Word It Book* (HOW Books 2007), *Women of Design* (HOW Books, 2008), and *Graphic Design, Referenced* (Rockport Publishers, 2009). They reside in Austin, Texas.

The **portfolio case studies** feature generous quantities of broad and close-up photographs; deeply detailed breakdowns of the materials, techniques, and resources it took to create them; and interviews with each designer.

Interviewed professionals include Michael Bierut, Carin Goldberg, Stefan Sagmeister, Petrula Vrontikis, Adrian Shaughnessy, and others. They share the most common mistakes people make in their portfolios, and offer their best advice.

Surveys answer common concerns like how many pieces should be included in the portfolio, how should first contact be made with potential interviewers, and how should the work be presented in an interview.

Flaunt is available as a book or PDF at underconsideration.com/flaunt

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