

## Portfolio Project

Our August meeting is scheduled for members to present the portfolio they have been working on throughout the year. Here's a brief overview on portfolios that I hope helps everyone.

### What is a portfolio?

*A portfolio is a visual first impression. It is an opportunity to present your photography in a context you have chosen. A portfolio is a collection of work with a distinct style or voice.*

On a professional level, portfolios center around one theme, photographic endeavor, or target audience. You may want to develop a portfolio to show galleries your nature work or create a portfolio of portraiture or still-life images to get a job in a studio as a wedding or commercial photographer. These portfolios should be very focused. If you are trying to pitch your skills as a general photographer, it is better to create different portfolios that will allow you to show only images relevant to the job.

On an artistic level, a portfolio could contain your black & white images, images from a single camera format (35mm, large format, 6x17), or photographs created over a specific period of time or at a specific location. ***There should be some kind of thread that ties all the images in the portfolio together.***

### What's in a portfolio?

A portfolio contains:

- 10-20 prints (15-17 is optimal). 10 is too few, more than 20 overwhelms the viewer)
- An artist statement that defines the theme of the portfolio, what you want to do with your photographs and what you want people to take with them after viewing your work.
- Title list of images in the portfolio
- A cover image that is representational of the portfolio as a whole
- A decent, practical & respectable case

## Getting Started:

### A. Artist Statement

The Artist Statement states the goal and purpose of the portfolio. It should address and answer the questions:

- Why do you photograph?
- What do you want to do with your photographs?
- Who do you want to show your photographs to?
- Why did you take the photographs?

An artist statement could be as simple as *“I photograph for a purpose. Currently this purpose is to show the beauty and positive aspects of nature. My purpose is also to create photographs that will be exhibited and used to decorate homes and offices.”*

A more elaborate statement might be: *“I photograph to deconstruct idealized visions of farm and rural life. By documenting small family farms, I hope to show viewers both the struggles and the beauty of modern American farming.”*

Write your statement first, as this will help you edit your work and ensure that all the images in the portfolio meet your theme. If you don't currently have a cohesive body of work, you will need an artist statement to help you keep focused on developing a unified group of images by next August.

## **B. Editing**

1. Review and select photographs based on your artist statement. For the editing process, gather all of your images that fit your goal/purpose (the more you start with, the pickier you can be; 100 is a good starting point) and put them in one place (physical or computer file).
2. Step away for a day.
3. Review the images you've selected and delete half. (Down to 50 now).
4. Wait 24 hours and delete half again. (Now you're down to 25).
5. Make 8x10's of the remaining images. Do not depend on the computer screen for accurate editing at this point. Portfolio prints should never be printed on glossy paper. Use matte, semi-gloss or luster paper.
6. Narrow your images to 15-20. Get a second opinion if needed, preferably from another photographer.
7. Do not include any image that is of lesser quality than the others.

*Printing yourself is important. In many contexts, printing the image yourself gives your work more weight and gains you respect as a photographer. The idea is that the photograph is totally yours from conception to presentation.*

## **C. Assembly**

1. Organize by subject.
2. Organize by photographic style.
3. Horizontal and vertical images should be grouped together.
4. All prints should be the same size.
5. Black & White images should be grouped separately from color. Ideally, separate portfolios should be made.
6. Make sure your images are in some order – either chronological, or through mood development.

## **D. Titles**

1. Titles should give the viewer a message about the image. A good title is not a description of the photograph.
2. As much time should be spent on the title as in the editing process.
3. Titles should be on the back of the photograph or mat as well as on the title list.

## **E. Presentation**

There is no hard and fast answer for presenting a portfolio in the best manner. A nice leather folder with high-quality plastic inlays offers a good initial impact, but it may not be ideal for viewing, as the plastic may cause glare or sheen. Loose, mounted prints are excellent for viewing, but may be difficult to handle.

1. Ideally, prints should be as large as possible, with 8x10 or letter size the minimum. 11x14 offers a good compromise between portability and viewing.
2. Prints and/or mat sizes should be the same size.
3. To repeat, prints should be of the highest quality. If matted, mat corners should not be frayed or bent.

Most important to remember:

- Keep it simple
- Keep it consistent
- Keep it professional
- Make it easy to hold and view

There's lots of information in the above section, but please don't be overwhelmed by it. This portfolio project is about picking a theme that is of interest to you, creating images that meet that theme, and putting them together in a way that presents them in the best possible manner. **HAVE FUN WITH IT, AND GROW AS PHOTOGRAPHER BECAUSE OF IT.**