

Design Sheet & Portfolio Advice

Design Sheets

The design sheet is intended to be visually appealing and to provide employers with an example of your best work. It can be included every time you send out a resume and cover letter.

We encourage you to create a few design sheets well before you are facing any application deadlines. The right design sheet can inspire you to speak enthusiastically about your work.

Choose something representative of your best work, which will reproduce well. It is often best to use one project, rather than several unrelated ones. Copies of black and white photos, color prints and computer graphics are all suitable. Your name should appear on each design sheet, ideally in the same typeface as is used on your resume.

Consider integrating text and images on a total of two pages. We encourage you to prepare an extra page or two. Many participating employers at the annual GSD Career Fair want to see design sheets as well as resumes. In fact, many Career Fair employers prefer to view a few design sheets during this busy event. Bring your portfolio to the follow up interview after the Career Fair.

Three or four sheets are probably the maximum that you want to send to employers. Each sheet can include single or multiple images.

Portfolio

Architecture is a visual discipline. As such, samples of your work are your professional calling card. The best first impression is made with a good, well-organized, well presented portfolio that exhibits creative work. (Jack Kremers, AIA, Professor at Judson College)

We encourage you to provide images that demonstrate a wide range of your architectural skills. Be sure to include evidence of your drafting, model building, drawing and design skills. It is extremely helpful to employers when you provide drawings which cover a design project from beginning to end. Sequential drawings demonstrate your thought process in solving a design problem.

The portfolio is a creative act, showing your skills and imagination, but it is also an act of communication and a tool for self-promotion. Demonstrate your originality and inventiveness. A word of caution here: remember that this is your opportunity to present yourself as a design professional. (Harold Linton, Chair, Department of Art and Visual Technology, College of Visual and Performing Arts, George Mason University)

Practical tips from a workshop given by Harold Linton:

Think of the organization of your portfolio in a similar manner to building a bridge or a fence. *Select your very best work as main supports or fence posts.* The number of strong projects you have will determine the length of your portfolio. The remaining work will serve as the rails that join the supports.

Select the three best projects you have. Place them in order: first, second and third. Open the portfolio with project number one, close the portfolio with number two and use number three in the middle.

It is best to open with something that subliminally shows approval. It is a vote of confidence about your work and gives the rest of your work the same sense of validation.

While it is absolutely mandatory to open with a superb project, it is equally important to close with a great piece. The final impression is almost as important as the first impression. Many design managers first thumb through your work from back to front. This is another reason why first and last images are the two most important.

You are choosing a series of works that represent a comprehensive design program. The number of programs to showcase depends on the range of work you have done. The work selected for a middle piece can give the viewer a reason to pause. This can further control the pace at which your work is reviewed.

Use the opportunity to explain this "story piece" to your advantage: show greater 3-D development, graphic thinking, model study, plans and details, etc. This example can highlight the broadest range of work that you do so that the employer can appreciate the scope of your experiences.

Now look at the remainder of the pieces you pulled to include in the portfolio, the projects we think of as "rails". Think of them in terms of horizontal or vertical, black and white versus color, or any other physical dissimilarities. If the portfolio format allows facing pages, you must consider the juxtaposition of your works. If there is no subject theme you need to edit, then judge layout based on visual flow. Connecting one image to the next, from rail to post, is the basic editing technique.

Portfolio Suggestions:

1. Craftsmanship is essential in the final product. Cleanliness is also a must.
2. Be sure to include your name near the beginning, if not on the cover, of your portfolio.
3. Include an index if at all appropriate, stating all the details of materials, sizes and courses on one convenient page.
4. All detailed aspects of page numbers, running heads, and titles should be considered.
5. Title pages for projects can have greater contrast and impact. Be careful to maintain a clear relationship between them and the invisible grid that runs throughout the portfolio.
6. Rehearse the sequence of projects so that you are completely comfortable with their order, subject matter, and relative chronology in the portfolio.
7. Remember that the 'invisible grid' carries the entire organization throughout the presentation and may even be evidenced on the enclosing system in a subtle way such as position/ orientation.
8. Coordinate the resume and cover letter with the portfolio design.
9. Typically portfolios average between 20 - 40 faces (a page has two faces).

Digital vs. Print Portfolio

Traditional print portfolios are still an essential element of an architecture job search and are preferred in interviews. Web portfolios are an accepted method of introduction, especially when conducting a long-distance job search.

In a way, web pages function like the samples of print work you might send with your cover letter and resume to pique a firm's interest. The digital portfolio can be most effective in the early and less formal stages of the job search.

There are two basic approaches to the planning and production of digital portfolios. The first consists of a choreographed, preset presentation, which the viewer experiences from beginning to end without opportunity for interaction. The second choice, interactive and viewer directed, requires the viewer to make choices that determine the order in which information is presented.

It is important to realize that the digital medium is dictating new organization methods for how you present your work — the screen pages are no longer equivalent to each other the way those in a physical portfolio are, but they need to remain graphically consistent to work.

A unique aspect of publishing on the Web is the ability to enrich and expand content with no concerns for print costs. The only limitation is time itself. You may choose to have most of your portfolio, including photos, images, plans, sketches, construction photos, writings, and additional VRML (Virtual Reality Modeling Language), on the web.

Digital portfolios can have several formats- they can be on a CD, a website or simply emailed as a document. Whatever format you choose, make sure your portfolio is a single document. In general, make your files as small as possible, so they can be viewed easily on various platforms. Remember that viewing images on the screen is not the same thing as printing them.

Do not let the digital technology overcome your design work. Make your portfolio as user-friendly as possible. The user should be able to navigate back and forth through your portfolio easily and quickly.

Whether you are preparing a traditional or digital portfolio, give yourself plenty of time to select and organize your best work. You'll be very glad that you are well prepared when an exciting opportunity comes your way.

Adapted from

Lee W. Waldrep, Ph.D., *"Becoming an Architect"*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006

Marjanovic, Ray and Lokko, *"The Portfolio: An Architecture Student's Handbook"*, Architectural Press, 2005

Harold Linton and Laura Clary, *"Designing a Digital Portfolio"*, Architecture Week, April 2004.

Print Resources

Check the following books and magazine articles in the GSD Career Services Office for more information.

"The Portfolio: An Architecture Student's Handbook" by Igor Marjanovic, Katerina Ruedi Ray and Lesley Naa Norle Lokko, Architectural Press, 2005

"Designing a Digital Portfolio" by Cynthia L. Baron, New Riders Publishing, 2004

"Portfolio Design" by Harold Linton, W.W. Norton & Company, 2003

"Developing Entry-Level Design Portfolios: Strategies for Graduating Students" by Janet Lee Coleman, Landscape Architecture, December 2004