

## Advanced Student Portfolio

*To become successful in today's art market, an artist must have a vision, they must master the technical skills required in their art medium, and they must present this in a complete and understandable form: The artist's portfolio.*

*When presenting a portfolio, not only the artist's work is being judged, the artist is also being judged. Is this artist serious? Will he or she succeed in the art world? Are they worthy of being represented?*

*Your artist portfolio should impress viewers with your vision and with how well you have mastered the technical aspects of your work. In your portfolio, you should provide good artist support materials.*

*Remember, no matter what you've heard or read, your work doesn't stand alone. Whenever a gallery owner, museum curator, or art consultant reviews your portfolio, the memory of your artwork will be only part of what they know of you. Just as packaging plays an increasingly important role in product marketing, your portfolio is an integral part of your career in the visual arts.*

### Your artist's portfolio should include:

#### **1. Artist's Statement (Draft Due:\_\_\_\_\_)**

**Final Due:\_\_\_\_\_)**

***-Rough draft must contain at least three full paragraphs completely explaining the list below:***

- Who you are as an artist
- Why you create
- Why your work is important/interesting

- Saved in .RTF format on a CD or other media.

#### **2. Artist's Resume (Draft Due:\_\_\_\_\_)**

**Final Due:\_\_\_\_\_)**

- All information listed the section "The Artist's Resume."
- The resume will be typed and double spaced with no greater than 12pt. text.
- Saved in .RTF format on a CD or other media.

#### **3. Slides/Digital portfolio on CD**

**(Draft Due:\_\_\_\_\_)**

**Final Due :\_\_\_\_\_)**

- Photos Taken (Photo shoot consisting of 10 pictures of your best works of art *FROM THIS YEAR.*)-Saved in a separate folder
- Web album developed- All pictures assembled in a web album with Titles and Comments. -Saved in a separate folder

#### **4. Final Portfolio (Final Due:\_\_\_\_\_)**

- All the above
- Six examples of your best work.
  - i. Work must be in good condition (no damage.)

## **The Artist's Statement**

Unless you have skills as a writer, you probably would rather not write an artist's statement. You are probably hoping that you can get away with saying that the work stands for itself. In the 1950s an artist was expected to say things like that, but now it just won't fly. Not because it isn't true—a work of art is still, and always will be, a unique experience that defies description. But describing the work is not the point of the artist statement; the purpose of the statement is to make the viewer want to know more about the work.

The artist's statement will be used in a number of ways, including to point the viewer to the concerns you consider to be important in the work, to set a tone for viewing the work, and to help publicists, curators, and critics write about the work. The value of this last cannot be underestimated. A magazine will often decide to write an article simply because the artist's statement arouses their interest. If astounding artwork reaches them that just happens to be accompanied by an interesting statement, particularly if the statement doesn't need much rewriting, it is a combination too good to resist.

The artist's statement should be short. One page is the standard length, but you could go as long as two. For your first draft, plan to write more than you intend to keep so that later you can edit out the parts that feel embarrassing. The easiest course of action is to think of someone specific in

your life and pretend that you are speaking to them about your art. Speak as honestly and straightforwardly as you can. No one expects you to be a brilliant writer. You simply need to convey the thoughts and concerns underlying your art that interest you the most, to give the reader insight for looking at the work.

Keep the information as specific as possible. There are certain experiences common to almost every artist that, although they may be powerful and profound for each individual, comes across as ordinary to the viewer. For example, almost every artist I know, particularly painters, describe the creative experience as one in which they never know what will happen before they do it, as a series of surprises becoming manifest. You can write this if you want, but then edit it out. It may be true, but it is not specific enough to generate interest in your art.

Be wary of overblown phrases and big ideas, loftily expressed. If your work is about the big issues, and most art is - after all, who wants to devote their life to small ideas? -you need to find a way to speak of these things with feeling, but without pomposity. Be especially careful of using the royal *We*, which speaks for other people. The minute you say, "We all need love," there will be someone who says, "What does this guy mean? I don't need love. How dare he say I need love?!"

Another pitfall in statement writing is to turn the statement into a statement of the things you like. "I like to paint flowers." Who cares? We can be looking at the painting that you like to paint

flowers. (Unless, of course, the painting is of an ambulance. In that case you might be able to get away with it.) What we want to know is why. Did you have a profound childhood experience with a flower, were you impressed by another flower-painting artist, did you read about painting flowers book, did a flower save your life? These are things that could grab our interest.

Some artists work intuitively; others work analytically. If you are one of those who think of a project ahead of time, work out the logistics, and then create the art, you will have a fairly easy time writing your statement. All you have to do is describe the whys and the hows of the project. If you are an artist who goes into the studio and works until you like what you see, however, it may be more difficult to put the experience into words.

I suggest keeping a visual diary with you in the studio as you work. As ideas and phrases come to you, write them down, in part or in whole. Don't worry about your writing style, just get the thoughts down. Your work wants you to understand it; spend time with it, and it will speak to you. Later you can use the ideas as sources for your statement.

One other important use of your statement is to assist you in crystallizing your thoughts about the work. Clarifying your ideas will accelerate your growth as an artist, and you will find yourself grateful when the time comes to discuss your work with curators and critics. You will be able to tell them decisively and intelligently what your work is about. -Cay Lang, *Taking the Leap: building a career as a visual artist*, 1998

## The Artist's Resume

The specific purpose of an artist's resume is to impress gallery dealers, curators, collectors, grant agencies, juries, and anyone else in a position to give an artist's career upward mobility. However, since an artist's resume has purposes other than seeking employment, it requires its own special structure.

A resume should reflect your achievements in the arts field. It should not be a thesis about what you hope to achieve or an explanation of the meaning of your work. Keep resumes pure - free of narratives that justify or describe your work's inner meanings.

Keep in mind that the *intrinsic purpose of a fine-arts resume is to impress people with your credentials*. Therefore, if your achievements amount to more than can be listed on one sheet of paper, use another sheet or several sheets. Who said *that our lives have to be limited to one page*? One-page resumes were created for the purpose of obtaining employment, giving a potential employer an overview of one's employment history prior to a personal interview. However, obtaining employment is not the purpose of a fine-arts resume.

On the other hand, if you have substantial achievements, consider a resume as a tool that highlights your accomplishments and eliminates minor credits. Use such phrases as *exhibition highlights* or *selected exhibitions, selected*

*collections, and selected bibliography* to convey that this is only a sampling.

If you use the format of exhibition highlights or selected exhibitions, make sure that you keep for your own use a complete resume that lists *all of your accomplishments*. This documentation is important to a curator, for example, who is preparing a catalog to accompany a retrospective exhibition.

If you are applying for a teaching job in the art field, a fine-arts resume should accompany your teaching resume

-Carol Michels, *How to survive and prosper as an artist: Fifth Edition*, 2001

NAME- (Your Name)

ADDRESS- (Your address- or a fake one for this class)

PHONE NUMBER.- (Your phone number- or a fake one for this class)

PLACE OF BIRTH. *WHY*-Your place of birth can be a good icebreaker. You might: share a regional or local background with the reader.

BIRTH YEAR. *Some artists object to putting their birth year on a resume' in fear of the stigma of being considered too old or too young. If a person is negatively influenced by your age, it is a strong indication that his or her judgment is poor, and you wouldn't want to be associated with that person under any circumstances.*

EXHIBITIONS /PERFORMANCES. List the most recent exhibitions/performances first. *These are most likely the shows you were a part of in this class*. List the year, exhibition/performance title, name of the sponsor (gallery, museum, or organization -*Temescal Canyon High School*), city, and state. In addition, list the name of the curator and whether it was an invitational or a juried show. (If you won an award, mention it in the "Awards and Honors" category described below.) For advanced art the curator is "Jamison Rieger" and the show is "invitational."

If you have had three or more one-person shows, make a special category for "Solo Shows" and begin the "Exhibitions/Performances" section of the resume with this category. Make another category for "Group Exhibitions." If you have had fewer than four one-person shows, include the shows under the general heading "Exhibitions/ Performances," but code the one-person shows with an asterisk (\*) so they stand out, and note the code on the resume. For example:

EXHIBITIONS. (\*Solo Shows)

2002 *Objects and Images*, Alternative Space Museum, New York City. Curated by Charlie Critic. Invitational.

\*Smith Wheeler Gallery, Chicago, Illinois.

*Spring Annual*, Hogan Gallery, Detroit, Michigan. Juried by Peggy Panelist and Joe Jurist.

COMMISSIONS. List projects or works for which you have been commissioned, including the name of the project or medium, the sponsor (institution, company, or person), and the date. Be creative, list a commission a friend asked you to do or a drawing your mom asked for will work.

**COLLECTIONS.** List the names of institutions that have purchased your work, as well as corporations and well-known collectors. If you haven't been "collected" by any of the above, omit the category (unless you need to pad the resume with the names of relatives and friends-*\*HINT\** for advanced art, you will need to pad this resume.)

**BIBLIOGRAPHY.** List all publications in which you have been mentioned or reviewed and any articles that you have written related to art. Include the name of the author, article title, name of the publication, and publication date. If you have been published in an exhibition catalog, include the name of the exhibition and the sponsor. If something was written about you in the catalog, credit the author. *\*HINT\** List those people who may have chosen your work for a written critique in class.

**AWARDS AND HONORS.** Include grants or fellowships you have received. List any prizes or awards you have won in exhibitions or competitions. Include artist-in-residence programs or any other programs that involved a selection process. If you won an award that was associated with an exhibition, repeat the same information that was listed in the "Exhibitions/Performances" category, but begin with the award. For example:

First Prize, *Spring Annual*, Hogan Gallery, Detroit, Michigan. Juried by Peggy Panelist and Joe Jurist, 2002.

**LECTURES/PUBLIC-SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS.** Use this category to list any lectures you have given and/or radio and television appearances. *\*HINT\** List the critiques you've given in this class over the past year.

**EDUCATION.** This should be the last category. Many artists make the mistake of listing it first. This suggests that the biggest accomplishment in your life was your formal education!

## The Slide Sheet

A sheet of slides should contain up to twenty images of your strongest work. If you have any doubts about the quality of a particular image, leave it out. An art professional who holds up your sheet of slides and likes the first image thinks, "This is great. What else can this artist do?" If the next slide is not so good, is the response, "The second one must have been a mistake"? No. It is, "With one good piece, and then a bad one, this artist must not be able to tell the difference." If you don't have twenty pieces you feel strongly about, just send ten. It is also a good idea not to send more than one sheet of slides, even if you have lots of work. The point of sending slides is to get the gallery's attention, so cull the slides carefully until every one of them is a killer. Anyone who wants to see more will ask.

If you are an artist who works in several mediums or in more than one style, you have an additional dilemma. Each slide sheet should

contain images from only one type of work, and you will have to decide which body of work to send to each recipient. Mixing different kinds of work is one of the first marks of the dilettante and is the kiss of death to your proposal. A gallery wants to know what it is getting when it gives an artist a show. It wants to have a sense of who the artist is and what the work is about, and, being concerned about the bottom line, it wants to have something consistent to market.

When in doubt, send your most recent work; it is probably your strongest anyway. Never send slides of very old work. Gallery owners are interested in what you are doing now, not what you did five years ago. If all you have is old work, I would suggest getting into the studio and working, setting a goal of having enough strong new pieces to fill a slide sheet in six months or a year.

-Cay Lang, *Taking the Leap:  
building a career as a visual artist*,  
1998