

Interviews & Portfolios

**From the tutors of Cambridge School of Art
at Anglia Ruskin University**



What does a portfolio look like?

MODEL BUILDING

Florence Cityscape

What does a portfolio look like?

- A portfolio can take **different forms** depending on your subject area and the kind of work you've made.
- We generally don't mind what form your portfolio takes, as long as it **clearly communicates** what you've achieved so far in your subject area.
- Think about the best way to present your work.
Your portfolio says a lot about you.

What does a portfolio look like?

Portfolio cases



Generally good for: Flat things.

- printouts of Graphic Design outcomes
- photography
- photographs of Interior Design, Fashion or Fine Art works (including installations, models, and sculptures etc.)
- sketches and finished pieces of Illustration;
- developmental work and screengrabs for Computer Games Art
- all types of drawings and prints

Generally bad for: Lumpy or moving things.

- Film and TV, Animation and Computer Games Art showreels
- websites and apps for Graphic Design and Digital Media
- models and artefacts

What does a portfolio look like?

Tablets and Laptops



Generally good for: Moving or screen-based things.

- Animation and Computer Games Art showreels
- websites and apps for Graphic Design and Digital Media
- photos of Interior Design, Fashion and Fine Art artefacts and installations
- Photography and contact sheets / lightboxes
- all kinds of websites

Generally bad for: Artefacts and material things.

- fabrics and textiles for Fashion
- textured images for Fine Art, Graphic Design, Illustration and Interior Design
- books and bindings for Graphic Design, Illustration and Fine Art

What does a portfolio look like?

Archival Boxes



Generally good for: Flat things, small artefacts.

- printouts / photos in individual plastic leaves for all subjects
- fabrics for Fashion
- textured images
- books / materials for Fine Art, Graphic Design, Illustration and Interior Design
- sketchbooks.

Also a good place to keep a tablet for Animation and Computer Games Art showreels; apps for Graphic Design and Digital Media; etc.

Generally bad for: Not much. If your portfolio contains a variety of objects, they're great - and they come in lots of sizes and finishes.

What does a portfolio look like?

PDFs



Generally good for: Long distances — anything that you need to send via email if you can't attend in person. If it can be captured as an image, it can be included in a PDF. This includes sketchbook pages, final outcomes, photographs of artefacts etc. for all courses. Pages can be designed to include supporting texts and captions. (Try to keep them under 20mb though!)

Generally bad for: Communicating materiality — books, fabrics, artefacts with integral textures and finishes etc.

What does a portfolio look like?

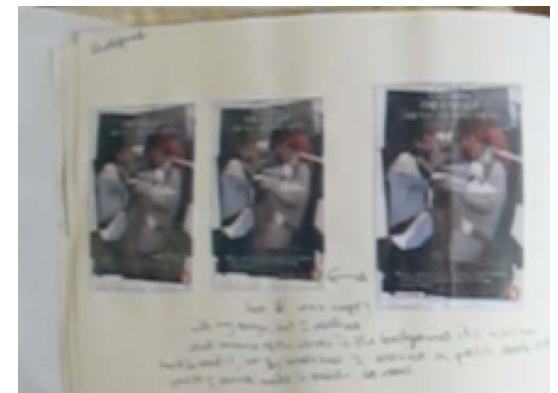
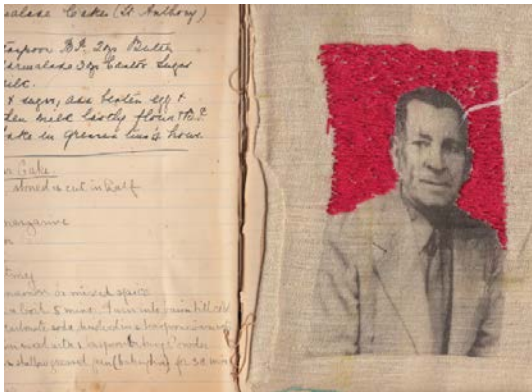
Carrier bags



Generally good for: Nothing, unless you're an eccentric genius. (We do get them from time to time.)

Generally bad for: Keeping things flat. Or dry. Or safe.

And don't forget your sketchbooks!



What we're looking for in you and your portfolio...

- **Appetite:** that you have a keen personal interest in the subject, and a hunger to learn more
- **An open mind:** that you are happy experimenting with different ideas and processes
- **Appreciation** of your discipline as an effective medium of communication & expression

What we're looking for in you and your portfolio...

- **Awareness** of artists and designers, historical and contemporary, in your particular field of study
- **Engagement:** that you have applied yourself to your studies, and wish to take them to the next level
- **Curiosity:** an interest in exhibitions, books, films, activities, ideas etc. that have inspired you



You & your interview

What happens in the interview?

- You **present** your portfolio to a member of the teaching team
- We will **discuss** your work, your interests, and your goals
- You can **ask us anything** you like about the course, including how it's structured, and how teaching and learning works

What do we want to know?

- We want to understand your **passion for your subject** and what drives you as a creative
- We want to discover your **current knowledge** of your chosen field, and hear about your career goals
- We want to know why you have chosen **Cambridge School of Art**

Course-Specific Interview Tips

All tutors want to see the same things in an interview:

- evidence of an **open mind**
- a **keen interest in your subject area**
- evidence of **curiosity** and **engagement**.

But there may also be some **specific portfolio requirements** for each course. So we **asked all our course tutors** what they want to see in their applicants' portfolios...

What our Computer Games Art tutors said:

“Your work should demonstrate your drawing skills, and include initial **visualisations** of your ideas. Any sketchbooks that you keep are always helpful and revealing to look at.”

“It’s also useful to see some evidence of observational drawing, any animations or films that you have produced (computer generated or stop-motion), story boards or other ways of visually representing movement, renders of 3D models and environments, and **any work that creates atmosphere and mood through lighting.**”

What our Digital Media tutors said:

“Projects from school or college are great but we also want to see what else you’ve been up to! **Include work you have initiated yourself, and are passionate about**”.

“We love seeing sketchbooks or notebooks that are **jam-packed with ideas** and observations about your life and experiences.”

“Lots of what we do is team-based, so be prepared to answer a few questions about **how well you work in teams.**”



What our Fashion Design tutors said:

“Observational drawing, from life and still-life. This is very important! Also, some evidence that you can translate initial ideas and research into finished outcomes. This doesn’t always have to be fashion-specific, however.”

“We love applicants with **big ideas** about who they are and what they want to be. What changes do you want to see in the world?”

“Being inspired by Vogue magazine is fine. But what else inspires you? We want to hear about the exhibitions, pop culture, politics, history, and architecture (or whatever) that **interest and inform you.**”



What our Fine Art tutors said:

“A **varied approach** to drawing and technique is important, including observational drawing or printmaking. So always **include sketchbooks**, notebooks and preparatory studies.”

“Where possible, **original** artwork should be presented. But if you’re presenting photographs or plans of artwork, please try to make sure they are of a good quality and well-presented.”

“**Experiments** in process or technique are always helpful, as is any other **research material** that will help present your ideas about fine art, such as artists who have inspired you, and exhibitions you have visited.”



What our Film & Television Production tutors said:

“When it comes to interviews we do things a bit **differently!**”

“Instead of a conventional interview, first we ask applicants to send a sequence of ten still images that tell a story. Then we invite successful applicants to attend a workshop, to get to know one another, and to see how you work in a team.”

“We don’t mind whether your ten stills are taken on a phone or a high-end camera. The only question is: can you tell a story visually? After all, it’s not about what access to equipment you’ve had — it’s about **you**, your imagination, and your eye for a story.”

What our Graphic Design tutors said:

“Both final design outcomes and development books, with sketches, research, and annotations where relevant.”

“Any other supporting material that you feel might provide a good talking point. What graphic design / books / films / exhibitions are you looking at?”

“Evidence of an interest in using type.”

“Evidence of basic familiarity with Adobe design software. This is not always essential, but it is helpful!”



What our Illustration tutors said:

“Please bring all your sketchbooks. This will give us a clearer idea of **how you approach visual problems.**”

“Also include any life drawing or observational drawing that you have. There is a **strong emphasis on drawing** in the first year of the course so this is really important.”

“Anything that gives us an **insight into your passions, interests or sense of curiosity**, even if this is not strictly 'illustration', is really helpful.”



What our Illustration & Animation tutors said:

“We want to see a **keen** interest in visual storytelling and narrative, and evidence of observational skills (drawing from life). Also, a sense of playfulness is always important: that you are keen to try working with a variety of materials to achieve different effects.”

“About copied drawings of manga characters or superheroes: if you really must include them, don’t include too many! Show us your **own** characters.”

“No animation skills are necessary — as long as your drawings look like they **want** to come to life!”



What our Interior Design tutors said:

“We like to see **all kinds of art, design and drawing**. These could include freehand drawings, conceptual sketches, technical drawings, photographs, movies, paintings, collages, etc.”

“The most important thing is your **creativity** — how you think about the world, and about its 3D spaces.”

“Photos of models or large pieces of work are fine — you don’t need to bring the actual models unless there’s **something you really want to show us.**”



What our Photography tutors said:

“We like to see not just final prints, but **test prints and contact sheets**. Digital is fine; traditional (analogue) photography is also great, if you have done some.”

“Any **other supporting material** that you feel is relevant and appropriate, and might make a good talking point.”

“Development books, with **sketches, research, and annotations** where relevant.”



A few more tips...

- Read the **entry requirements** sections on the ARU website course pages. They're full of loads of helpful information
- **Read the emails** sent to you before the interview carefully
- **Select what you want to show** (we can't always look at everything in detail in the time available)

And...

- **Write down any questions** you would like to ask
(you might forget them in an interview setting)
- **Make time to tour** the campus and the city before
or after the interview
- and **most importantly...**

Don't worry!

We're very friendly, and interviews take place in a relaxed environment. Meeting young creative people is one of our favourite things to do!