

# JEN'S 10 PORTFOLIO

**1 There is no 'silver bullet' to the development and presentation of the perfect portfolio.** Some audiences will prefer a link to a site; some like to click through a PDF of curated images; some will prefer to review a physical version to evaluate your work (and see the craft of the vessel from which it emerges). There are those who would rather review your work before deciding to meet you; to others, your presentation of your work is every bit as important as the content and packaging. To some, conceptual and technical skills and overall competency reign supreme; to others, it's the elusive 'wow' factor of your work, package and presentation as a whole. So, what to do? Be nimble and have work at the ready so that you can respond optimally to anyone's quirks and preferences.

**2 Diversify the delivery.** From *Flaunt*, the only way to discover what works for each of you is to assess the work you want to show, define the logistics of how you want to show it, and acknowledge the abilities and resources you have to make it happen. Consider a multipage PDF, website, online profile, boards, book, box, multimedia presentation, iPad, process book, sketchbook, reel, leave behind, photo documentation, finished products.

**3 Let the sunshine in.** Smile. Be friendly. Enthusiastic. People like to hire nice, fun and engaging people. Don't be too casual in tone or appearance – you will send a strong message to the reviewer that you are irreverent, entitled and disrespectful. *Be nice. Most people don't want to work with talented assholes* says Stefan Sagmeister.

**4 Should not require a freight elevator to deliver to the studio.** Eight to ten pieces of your best work seem to be the most commonly accepted number for a portfolio review. The ability to self-edit is a terrific but tough skill to develop – no matter how attached you are to the memory of making this or that – if it's not great as a finished piece, it doesn't fly. Also, be mindful of the physical size of your case; firms in larger cities tend to have small conference room tables. *Less is more, don't include anything you don't believe in* say our friends at *Flaunt*. Besides, if you are schlepping around to a few places, a humongous portfolio case could be a danger to you or others if met by a strong wind during your commute.

**5 Start strong, finish strong. Take one risk.** When considering sequence, try to jump in the shoes of the creative director or designer you're about to meet. Based on what you know about what they do, select your best work and consider various arrangements. Overall, your portfolio should both exhibit cohesion but demonstrate that you can work in various media successfully. What you don't want to do is demonstrate conceptual and technical range by including work that's all over the place.

**6 Be a Swiss Army Knife.** As we heard over and over again at the AIGA conference, great utility players get the nod. For example, if you show documentation of your work on your site or as part of your portfolio contents, the photographs must be fabulous. If the portfolio case/book/package is presented on the review table, it will be considered part of your work so it needs to be finely and thoughtfully crafted. Professionals appreciate when students demonstrate a strong sense of finish.

**7 It's not all about looks.** It's a smart idea to have sketch and process books handy to share with reviewers to provide more insight into a particular project's development and how you approach a project, generally. Don't just bust it out unless there's an obvious, relevant opening in the conversation. This would be like showing pictures of your kids without being asked.

**8 Orientation.** Make sure that portfolio pages / boards / books / pieces are facing the reviewer (i.e., upside down to you). Resist the temptation to look lovingly at each page or linger over pieces, smoothing pieces with your hand as you present your work.

**9 Forget me not.** It's common practice for you to offer a 'leave behind' – a small version of your book, a promotional postcard, a business card, your resume. Some studios may in fact ask for you to leave your big portfolio behind if they like what they see, for further consideration and consultation with colleagues. So be sure to label everything with your contact information.

**10 Don't throw yourself in front of a bus.** Be open to dialogue about your work, no matter if the reviewer's comments lean towards compliments or criticism. You will absolutely learn something from every review you have. Don't get defensive, but don't beat yourself up, either. It's good to be self-critical, but one can go too far.