



Artist's Portfolio 101

A Basic Checklist for a Working Portfolio

You've done some great work, but when asked for an example you scramble through files and piles and realize its time to set up a portfolio system once and for all. Keeping a digital database on your computer is a necessary and efficient way to contain the content you will transfer to your website portfolio, to respond to inquiries, and to print out your hard copy portfolio information. If you are strictly old-school, organize a paper file system with the information below.

Your Photos - The Basics

Great photos of your work are absolutely necessary to represent the wonderful work you are doing. If you can take the photos yourself, great. Otherwise hire a pro.

- Photo booth setup, if you are taking your own photos
 - Use indirect or diffused daylight
 - 3D may require multiple light sources to eliminate unwanted shadows
 - Use neutral, 50% grey background
- Tag/name all photos with Your Name, Title, size (H x W x D)
- At minimum, save photos in these three formats/resolutions...
 - Raw file: this is the original, taken at the highest resolution your camera allows
 - For Print: requires high resolution—save as jpg, at least 300 dpi
 - For Web: smaller format required—save at 72 dpi

Some Kind of Order - Also Basic

- Your database should include these basic fields for each piece
 - title
 - size
 - description
 - photo
 - price
 - show or display history
- Organize your portfolio with the following searchable fields, prioritized by how you will use and retrieve the files:
 - media, if you work in different media
 - date of completion
 - series if applicable
 - category (for example, a jeweler might have earrings, bracelets, necklaces, etc)
 - location (sold, private collection, studio, gallery—whatever makes sense for your work)

And Now, Where Do You Put It?

Your portfolio should be available in three formats:

- Digital Database, keep this current, update whenever you finish, move, or sell a piece
 - Cloud based options—the benefit is that your info available from any computer and/or mobile devices. Downside? You must have online connection, and you must trust the company with your information.
 - Examples: Google Sheets, Artwork Archive: an online database designed specifically for artists.
 - Computer based software:
 - Use spreadsheet programs (like Excel or Numbers) or database software (Access, FileMaker Pro)
- Hard Copy Portfolio
 - This is handy to have when you stop at galleries or when a request is made for printed copies of your work
 - Only include photos and info for current work, 5x7 or 8x10 professional photos (optional: on CDs or flash drives). This hard copy portfolio is for demonstrating your work, not to leave with the gallery
 - include postcards, brochures, your business card, and any other printed marketing material which you may want to leave with the gallery
- Website Portfolio
 - Label each photo with Title, Your Name, Media, Size, Price
 - Set up different photo pages for different media, series or by year if you have a lot of work