



CAMBRIDGE
SCHOOL OF
VISUAL &
PERFORMING
ARTS

What we look for in a portfolio



An overview

When students apply to any of our courses, we are often asked “what should I include in my portfolio?” and “how many pieces do you want to see?” For us it is less about the number of pieces and more about the ideas that you show us. Quality is more important than quantity; show us your best work.

At CSVPA, we are looking for students to demonstrate originality commitment and motivation. You need to show us that you are interested in the subject area you are applying for. If you are passionate about something, show us. The portfolio can include personal pieces that demonstrate this.

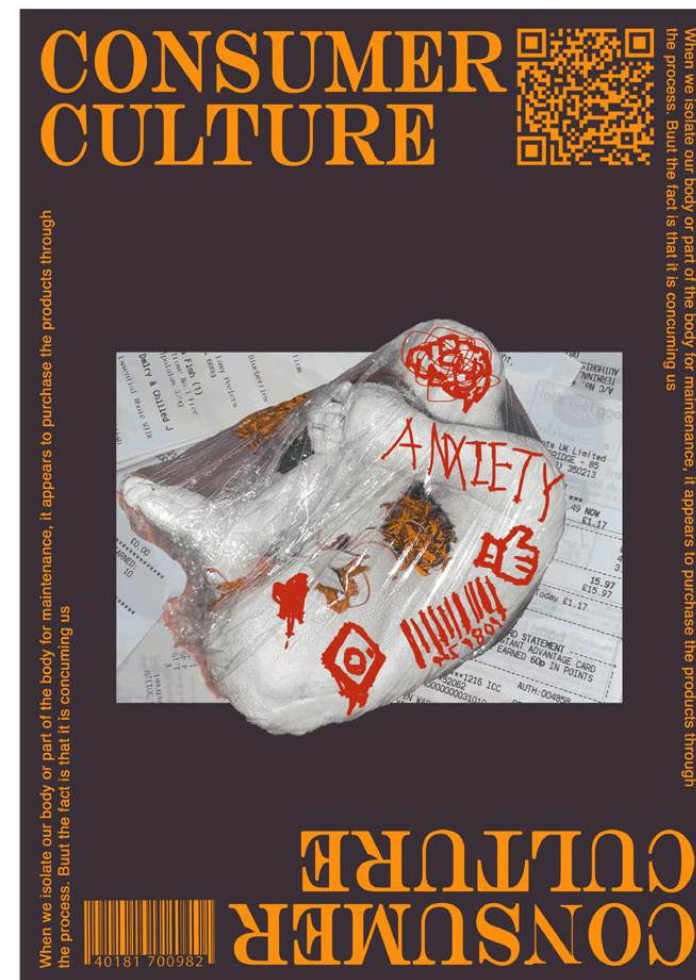
Impressive and ambitious artworks are always interesting, but it is vital that we see these in context of the project undertaken. We need to understand your creative process and what has led you to develop and create. Including preparatory works and rough ideas, extracts from sketchbooks or notebooks, research and experimentation, written proposals, concepts and explanations enables us to better understand the variety of ideas, skills and experience you have. Remember, we are looking for potential to learn and develop as a student towards professional standards; we don't expect polished and perfect.

PORTFOLIO GUIDANCE

Your portfolio is your chance to show us your experience and skills to date. Whilst good presentation and layout is helpful to communicate your work clearly, we do not expect a professionally produced portfolio. We prefer to see something that you have put together and annotated yourself.

Use the following points as a guide for preparing your portfolio:

- evidence 10–20 slides or pages.
- include both taught (formal) and personal work where possible.
- include a wide variety of skills and media appropriate to your chosen course/pathway. Add links to external media such as films if you have them.
- present preparatory work, as well as final outcomes. We want to see relevant research and analysis, experimentation and testing, idea development and problem solving. This shows us the potential you have to produce a learning journal which is an essential part of the course.
- ensure slides are labelled and ideas are explained.
- only use work you have made in the last 2 years.
- submit it electronically as a compressed PDF.



Portfolio Structure

FRONT COVER:

- Include a colourful and impactful front page with your name presented clearly.
- Your portfolio needs to demonstrate your whole creative process so include multiple images on one slide.
- Use labels and subheadings to clearly communicate what each slide is about.
- Ensure everything on one slide belongs to the same project.

LAYOUT:

- Experiment with layout. Have patience, it is not likely that laying out a portfolio slide will be perfect the first time!
- Select a variety of images that complement each other.
- Experiment with composition - where the images will go, where the text and labels will go.
- Remember, we tend to read slides from top to bottom, left to right, however our eyes will always be drawn to bigger text first and smaller text second.
- Using a grid template can help align and space images and text.
- Vary the layout and visual language of the slides. Some slides can be simpler with one or two key images, whilst other slides can include a range of different visual elements. This helps to provide focus and vary the pace at which it is viewed.
- Include projects that demonstrate the breadth of your skills and experience. Start with your best work and finish with something memorable.

LABELLING & LANGUAGE:

- Label your work clearly.
- You may have the opportunity to talk about your work further in interview.
- Be ready to explain your ideas, what worked well and how you overcame challenges. Demonstrate your passion and enthusiasm by explaining your interests and ability to experiment.
- If your work is emailed and looked at separately, this information may need to be written concisely to help explain the work in context.

DRAWING:

- Drawings come in variety of shapes, sizes and media. We want to see a varied approach.
- Quick expressive line drawings can be as exciting as longer, more sustained and detailed drawings. Each shows us you can observe and record the world around you in different ways.
- Drawings have different purposes too. Some drawings are there to visually think and plan, other drawings are to develop an understanding of visual language (line, shape, form, tone, texture, space, colour).

AUTHENTICATION:

- Including photographs showing you working, your work in development, sketchbook pages and rough ideas, as well as finished artworks, proves that artwork is your own and not just copied from the Internet.
- Ensure your written annotations are done by you.
- Professionally produced portfolios are easy for us to spot. We prefer to see portfolios made by students. We do not expect your work to be of a professional standard. It should be age appropriate. Producing your own portfolio demonstrates your passion, commitment and work ethic.





CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL OF VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

FOR OVER 30 YEARS, WE HAVE CONTINUED TO DEVELOP THE SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE OF MANY ASPIRING ARTISTS.

Our school provides a unique and highly personalised method of learning, creating an environment in which to nurture, educate and encourage these creative individuals.

As a student, you are actively supported through a hands-on approach, extensive contact time with lecturers, and all the equipment and materials you need to ensure you meet your full potential.

By studying at CSVPA, we will support you to develop an individual portfolio. As well as providing you with 1:1 guidance and frequently reviewing your progress, we will help you to identify the right university and course for you to apply to, as you prepare to take the next step in achieving your creative aspirations.

When building your portfolio you will need to tailor it to the university courses you are applying to. Our tutors are all experts in their chosen fields and will provide you with up to date guidance when compiling your personal portfolio. We work closely with universities and their admissions teams and have developed an accurate understanding of what different programs are looking for.

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