

Seminar 5: How to build a kick-ass portfolio

Transcript

[00:00] Speaker 1

Good evening, everybody, thank you so much for joining today's seminar. If you've been here for the previous seminars, you may notice that today there's a different lecturer, there's actually two of us. My name is Surya, and I am the curator assistant at Victory Art and today I'll be hosting this seminar with my colleague who will also introduce herself.

[00:29] Speaker 2

Hello everyone, I'm Juliette. I work in the marketing department at Victory Art, and I will also be giving you this seminar about portfolios today.

[00:39] Speaker 1

Before we begin, we would like to remind you to please be mindful of others during this seminar. We also kindly ask you to keep your microphone off until the Q & A session. Be respectful to one another and, of course, have a good time.

[00:53] Speaker 1

Today we will be teaching you guys how to build a kickass portfolio. As I mentioned previously, I am the curator assistant, so I handle everything regarding the artists. I handle communication with them, I go over the artworks, I make sure everything is in place, and that also includes working through the portfolios. In my time that I've worked looking through the artist portfolios, I noticed that sometimes artists don't know how to make a proper portfolio that allows us to see what they're actually capable of. So that's why we decided to teach you guys and share some tips on how to make your portfolio stand out, and what the essential elements are that you need to include.

So today we will discuss how to make a professional portfolio, and how to make your portfolio stand out. A portfolio is based on your experience and background. So, building a portfolio can really present who you are as an artist and showcase what you can do. A good portfolio can also help others (viewers/collectors) get to know you more.

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For galleries the portfolio helps them make an evaluation of your artwork based on your background and experience. So, when they go to your portfolio they get to know who you are as an artist and what you stand for. So that's why it's very important to showcase your work whether it's for galleries or potential customers.

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For art buyers your portfolio basically means that they have to refresh their minds about you. You have to leave a long-lasting impression with your portfolio and make sure that you WOW them from the moment they open it till they close it. Make sure that you grab their attention.

[02:32] Speaker 1

Building a portfolio is actually not that hard, there are only a few things you need to do to turn your portfolio into a really good one. Having a powerful portfolio not only shows who you are as an artist, but it also helps you get the exposure you need to move your art career forward. As an artist, you guys

all know that you have to properly market yourself. It's not easy to find customers or get offers from galleries. You have to put yourself out there and make sure people know who you are.

[03:03] Speaker 1

Building a portfolio is part of this. You have to market yourself as an artist and showcase what you have in order to attract the right people for you. So, the quality and effectiveness of your portfolio can make a huge difference in whether you succeed or fail. A portfolio has to represent your work but also what kind of artist you are. If you use a cheap portfolio with paper that easily rips apart or pictures that are of low quality, or pictures that aren't cut properly. If you use bad lighting for pictures of your artworks, then it doesn't matter how good of an artist you are people will discard your portfolio and forget you. So that's why you have to make sure you stand out.

[03:51] Speaker 1

A portfolio is helpful for when you're trying to secure a spot at an Art school, when you're seeking an art related job, when you're trying to get a show at an art gallery, or if you're seeking gallery representation. This is why you need to make sure you build a good one. A portfolio is the best opportunity and sometimes it's your only chance to make a lasting impression on gallery owners and potential investors. That's when you're building your portfolio you need to make sure you're using high quality paper, high quality pictures, and make sure it shows what you stand for and how much of a dedicated artist you are. It needs to portray the utmost professionalism whilst also being accessible and presenting all the relevant information in a convenient way. So don't make your portfolio too complicated. Just make it a simple book people can use to see who you are and flip through your work, and easily read your work and see all the artworks you've created. Everything needs to be clear and detailed and accessible for every target group.

[04:56] Speaker 1

There are 3 primary focuses of a portfolio. There's format, content, and convenience. Due to the technological developments, the format has changed drastically in the last 20 years. Artists now have an opportunity to showcase their works for sale and as a portfolio. So, when you post on social media platforms it's not just to sell but to also make a name for yourself as an artist. You get more exposure and get to put your work out there.

[05:30] Speaker 1

Artists have the option to choose between a digital and physical portfolio nowadays, which is great because they both have benefits. A physical portfolio gives the viewer the chance to really experience your art. Digital portfolio is more convenient to carry around such as a compact disk, a pen drive, or hard disk. Even online platforms such as Behance or DeviantArt. These are all great ways to show your work.

[06:01] Speaker 1

The most crucial aspect of your work no matter what format you choose is your work. It doesn't matter if you go digital or have a hardcopy of your portfolio, the artwork you choose to present is the most important. So, when you're creating a professional portfolio, please make sure that the artworks are of the highest quality possible. Or, as I mentioned before, that you didn't cut them and everyone can properly see them, and it's on high quality paper for a physical portfolio. Regardless of your format, the pictures must be in pristine condition to reflect that essence of your work. To reiterate, a high-quality portfolio communicates a dedicated artist.

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So, if you choose a professional binder, which is a more traditional format, please make sure to keep all your portfolio contents tidy. Make sure your paper isn't ripped, pictures aren't faded and still clearly

visible. That makes it easy for galleries to go through your content and none of your materials get lost. If you choose a digital format you have to make sure the images are burned onto your disk or uploaded online and that they're in a universal format. So, make sure you choose something like JPEG, which can open on any device.

[07:32] Speaker 1

Also make sure to run regular tests on your storage devices to make sure your photos open up and none of the files are cryptic. If you send photos, which are cryptic, files to galleries that shows unprofessionalism. So please make sure to run regular tests. If you choose to have an online portfolio, you need to make sure it's professionally done. If you make your own website, you need to avoid any glitches and unwanted advertisements because if you have pictures, it'll make the website seem sketchy and people won't use it again. Unwanted advertisements can also draw away attention from the things you want people to notice. So, make sure to avoid any distractions that can be off-putting to viewers.

[08:25] Speaker 1

Next, we have content. So, you can't just add pictures, you also have to add plenty of information about yourself and your creative process. So, what you should include is a cover letter, an artistic statement, an artist biography, and an artist resume or CV.

[08:44] Speaker 1

The cover letter is to introduce you and your artwork to the gallery or customer. It has to be written in a way, which captures their attention since this is the first thing they see when they open your portfolio. You have to make sure it stands out and catches their attention; it doesn't even need to be long. It has to serve as a strong representative of who you are, what you do, and why you're contacting them. We also advise you to always personalise these letters for every person you reach out to, don't generalize it by using one letter for everyone. Find the names of the people you need to contact and personalize it; this will have a bigger impact.

[09:30] Speaker 1

Next, we have the artist statement. The trend nowadays is to write the statement in the first statement. You have to keep it personal, explain the meaning behind your artwork, and your artistic process, why you create, and what it represents. Keep your statement concise, 500 words or less. Since you've captured their attention through the cover letter you now want to maintain it.

[10:02] Speaker 1

Next, we have the artist biography. This should be more formal than the statement, and written in the third person and you have to address your art background in a succinct way. This means you'll include where you went to school, formal exhibitions and other pertinent details.

[10:23] Speaker 1

Next, we have the artist resume or CV. This has a similar style as a traditional CV but will focus primarily on your artistic accomplishments. These include your awards, publications, major exhibitions which can mean individual or group exhibits, and any past gallery representation. So, include all of that in there and show the progress you've made as an artist.

[10:51] Speaker 1

Then next we have convenience. A small gesture such as putting people's names in the cover letter will never go unappreciated no matter how small the gesture is. Some other things you can do which will give your portfolio a personalized touch is including a price list and a self-addressed stamp and matching stationary. A price list is a page listing the title, mediums, dimensions, and price. When doing this page in your portfolio, use a font, which you can clearly read. Fancy fonts may be tempting to use to show

how fancy or professional you are, but it can be difficult to read. So, for the entire portfolio we advise you to use a clearly readable font.

[11:44] Speaker 1

Next, we have a self-addressed stamp and matching stationary. These are nice touches to include at the back of your portfolio which makes it easy and convenient to get back in touch with you after going through your portfolio. So now that we know the essentials of how to make a portfolio, my colleague will now tell you how to make it stand out. So, I will hand over to Juliette now.

[12:13] Speaker 1

Thank you, Surya. So now that we know which parts needs to be included, what's important, what's less important. Now, it's important to know how to make it stand out. So mostly now with the digital world we're in, it's very easy to showcase your art and be out there. But, at the same time it is now even harder to stand out. So, if your portfolio only includes the things Surya has told you it may be one out of many. To make it stand out and impressive here are a few tips.

[12:56] Speaker 2

The first would be to only choose your best artworks to showcase and target them accordingly. By this I mean choose artworks specifically target towards who you are sending them to, a galleries or institution, and make sure these artworks demonstrate your mastery of specific techniques, your highest quality works. Choose the pieces that show your entire creative vision as well. To have the maximum impact you should also focus on what is relevant. Sometimes only a few of your artworks will be enough so don't fall into the trap of putting everything in your portfolio. By putting too much and things that are not relevant you can easily lose the interest of the viewer.

[14:00] Speaker 2

So, place your best artworks first and last to maximize visibility so that they start your portfolio with the WOW effect and finish it with a second WOW effect. The first and last impression needs to be great for the overall impression to be more than great. Regarding the organization, it's important to group your artworks according to subject or content that you may have, this can be different collections you have. Categorizing the portfolio will make it easy to walk through.

[14:31] Speaker 2

If we continue with our tips, we also have the images. Surya already mentioned having high quality pictures is essential and here we really want to emphasize that. So, avoid any type of fuzzy images, poor lighting, images out of focus, weirdly cropped images. This will make you appear unprofessional and make your art look bad, which is not what you want to achieve. If photography is not your medium, we strongly advise you to invest in hiring a professional photographer to shoot your artworks for your portfolio. It will truly give you portfolio a higher quality and a better result.

[15:23] Speaker 2

Our third tip would be to also find and determine the proper presentation format for your artworks. So, depending on the medium or media, of course they will not be presented the same way. So, our advice would be for 2 dimensional pieces that aren't too large rather include original samples instead of colour prints. If you have larger artworks or 3D works, we recommend you use slides or display transparencies in your portfolio.

[15:54] Speaker 2

So, our next tip to stand out is to organize your portfolio. This is more related to the professionalism of it and really be seen as someone who is dedicated to your craft as a profession and not a hobby. So, all your work needs to be presented cleanly and simply for the viewer. It needs to be easy for the reviewer

to read and follow and find information they might need. Every piece shown needs to be labelled with different information. So, this includes the title, media, name, any notes to help understand the artwork, and contact information too. It is also always better to place written documents strategically in your portfolio so it can be easily found. This will increase your chances of being contacted.

[16:56] Speaker 2

So, our next tip would be to take into consideration accessibility. It needs to be understandable for anyone who might come into contact with your portfolio. So, make sure all the components are in place and clear to read. For example, an art dealer may be interested in the visuals pricing and resume, whereas Art writers will be interested in your accomplishments and maybe want to write about it. Collectors, on the other hand, will be primarily interested in purchasing. Nevertheless, make sure everything included is personal and markets you as an Artist.

[17:50] Speaker 2

So, the next tip is to pay attention to specific requirements. So, we mentioned some tips about your resume but it's important to also know that every institution has different requirements. SO please comply with those requirements because you can miss out on opportunities because of this. Make sure to comply so they will open and engage with your portfolio.

[18:26] Speaker 2

As we already mentioned it needs to be accessible, but it also needs to be unique, professional, and representative of you. Finding that balance between professionalism and creativity can be challenging but this is why we strongly advise against using distracting colours or patterns in your portfolio backgrounds. Background needs to enhance and not distract from your artworks. Any types of formats you use need to be easily digestible so no crazy colours, fonts, etc. Keep the creativity for your artworks and keep your portfolio simple because in this case less is more.

[19:28] Speaker 2

As an artist you want to be seen by anyone who is interested in you. In order to achieve that it's important to prepare a dual portfolio. A hardcopy is important but creating an additional digital one is good too. We already mentioned images should be in a universal format like JPEG, but they should also be compatible with PC and Mac. The images should be around 600 pixels for them to be clear and not too heavy. They must also be named in a logical and consistent manner. For example, your art title and your name as an artist, or maybe even the date it was created. Either way it all needs to be consistent for the person to find their way through these images.

[20:30] Speaker 2

Our last tip to make you stand out is to keep your portfolio updated. Your portfolio showcases your career, what you do on a day-to-day basis, what you want and have achieved. So, any time you do anything new in your career it's very important to update that in your portfolio. This will show professionalism because it shows dedicated and that you're active and continue to work.

[21:32] Speaker 2

So if we continue to the next slide, this was pretty much the conclusion of our seminar today. Overall, a professional portfolio can really open doors for you and make your career. It is the way to get noticed, get exposure and attract the attention of institutions and collectors. This is why it's very important for you to dedicate time to really perfecting your portfolio.

[22:22] Speaker 2

As you've already seen we have weekly seminars on different topics. Today was about portfolios and next week we'll move onto discuss different topics such as working across borders, advice, and

recommendations, and how diversity can be the key to success. So, we will be glad to see you all here again in the next weeks. Now we arrive at our Q & A session so if you have any questions, you can unmute yourself or type it in the chat. While doing so I would like to thank you for participating I hope it will help you in your future career. You can always join every week with the same link.

[23:24] Speaker 2

Next year we will be having free consultancy sessions and you can register by contacting us at our email address at victory@victoryart.eu. I don't see any questions in the chat.

[23:48] Speaker 3

I want to ask a question. My question is specific to getting admission into an Art college. For example, I'm looking for an MFA. So does my portfolio need to be very diverse in all the mediums. Do I need to explore all the mediums in Art like charcoal, oil, acrylic, or can I be specific in one medium?

[24:24] Speaker 1

Well, you can actually be specific. It's always good to explore different styles but if you have a style that is unique to you or a style you prefer, it's also good to stick with what you know. As long as you show that what you do you can do well. You don't have to be overly diverse or do many different things. Just be consistent and create a brand for yourself so people can know this is your work.

[24:58] Speaker 3

Ok, thank you.

[25:00] Speaker 1

You don't have to do all the different styles; you can do whatever you feel like doing and just make it your own.

[25:10] Speaker 3

Thank you for the suggestion.

[25:13] Speaker 1

You're welcome. Do you have any other questions perhaps? Thank you so much for joining us today. I hope to see you again next week and have a wonderful night.