

Dream Portfolio Guidelines

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Introduction

Your portfolio's purpose is to engage people and get them excited about your work. This document lays out what we look for in a portfolio, who is actually going to be looking at your portfolio, and how we, RISD - Brown MADE, manage the review process. We cover general rules first and then specify how these rules apply when MADE is your portfolio audience.

Formats:

There is no model format that makes portfolios compelling. However, one of the most common mistakes we see is talking about your process first and the project idea after. By doing this, you poorly navigate your audience by taking them on a journey without giving any indication of where you're going first. Suspense is not an asset in composing a portfolio and people do not have time to guess what your project intention is nor is it their responsibility. It's yours.

Audiences:

In your career, you will encounter a huge variety of audiences. You need to consider each audience carefully and respond specifically to them. In our experience, answering the following questions about your audience helps in composing compelling portfolios for specific audiences:

- + **Problem:** What problem is your audience trying to answer?
- + **Context:** What context are they situated in? What is the process that you are able to connect with them? Consider logistical parameters (language, preferred file formats, time constraints, etc.)
- + **Experience:** What do they like to see? What are they used to seeing? How do they usually consume information?
- + **Response:** What questions will they ask in response to your presentation?

RISD - Brown MADE Portfolio Criteria

Our Process

So what do we do with the folios when we get them? We look at each submitted portfolio, and can take less than 20 people every year. We are driven to build the best cohort we can, a diverse group of energetic, empathetic, and talented collaborators. This takes time - several months - and it is not just about selecting individuals but also considering how individuals contribute to the makeup of the cohort.

How we look at a your portfolio:

First, we get excited about your project ideas (usually, in the form of a finished product or experience). Then, we are interested in how you managed your process to make the project. Writing and talking about yourself personally comes last, if at all. It's amazing how much your process and project can tell us about you as an individual, how you think, and how you work. In addition to submitting your portfolio, there is an opportunity in the application to add a link to your website (should you have one). We do not consider your website a suitable alternative to your portfolio.

Your Audience = MADE. If you're applying to MADE, we are your audience. Specifically, the Panel consists of:

Students, Faculty, Program Directors and Admissions Assistants

To successfully engage the MADE panel, try to understand us as your specific audience:

- + **Problem:** What problem is MADE trying to answer?
- + **Context:** What context is MADE situated in? What is the MADE process that you are able to connect with them?
- + **Experience:** What do we like to see? What are we used to seeing? How do we usually consume information?
- + **Response:** What questions will we ask in response to your presentation?

Here we provide how we'd answer those questions. We hope they will help you to frame your materials appropriately.

What problem are we trying to answer?

We are looking to build a community that will support and enrich our program and each other, moving towards success by producing projects (and people) that engage, challenge, and improve the constantly evolving world that we all share. We want our students to be amazing so we can sustain the cycle of attracting more amazing talent and minds.

What context are we situated in? What is the process that you are able to connect with us?

We have to look at A LOT of portfolios. Our process entails faculty and in the future the MADE student community looking at each portfolio. Be considerate of how much time your portfolio requires to get you and your work across. Careful, compelling storytelling through still images and the written word works well for us. If video or movies is your medium that's great, however be mindful of length. We do not appreciate being held captive by a 5 minute movie about a bike basket design. Unless it is a truly incredible bike basket of course

Through what kind of experience can you engage us with?

We're people. We actually exist. Take time to get to know us (see where we are on the Internet) and see how you can relate to us not just as an institution but as a community of people. Look at other Masters programs for context. How are they different? What are we and/or they good at? What do we/they need to get better at? We want to know that you're applying to MADE for a reason - your portfolio and letter should reflect this.

What do we do in response after considering your portfolio?

After reviewing your portfolio with your letter, we will ask:

- + Does your work look relevant to the aims of the MADE program?
- + Does your journey make sense? (You are focused on returning to school by entering a Masters program. Why do you want to go back to college?)
- + Have you given serious thought about coming to MADE?
- + Do you look like you'll be successful in our program?
- + Will you contribute to our community's culture (expertise and group player)?
- + Do you stand out in the crowd; how will we remember you?

If we really like the portfolio, we will set it aside for further investigation and push it forward in the application process. We will probably try to find your website* and any other information about you available on the Internet.

*Notes on personal websites:

- + Your website should work in support of your folio.
- + Your website isn't really your folio. The audience is different for your website as - it's geared more towards a general audience.
- + Allow people to see what they want to see (if someone is really into marker renderings you should make it easy for them to find them).

MADE Portfolio Template

This is our 10-page template to guide you in making your portfolio.

Structure

The first 2-3 pages should introduce your projects.

The remaining 7-8 pages should give further details about those projects.

The introduction should be broad and show your range of skills and understanding.

You don't need to show extensive use of the same research method in every single project.

The Rules of Assessment

They're not there to make your life difficult, they are there to help us build the best possible MADE group.

The rules also apply to us. We are obsessed about being fair and making sure that everyone is treated the same way and are given the same opportunities. If our process promises to do something and we don't you should write to the MADE Program Coordinator and they will try and work out what went wrong and what we can do about it.

During the assessment part of the application process the MADE panel will NOT:

- + Look at physical folios or books or letters or objects or bags of money that you send in the post or drop off after cycling from Bogotá.
- + Read emails statements sent directly to us even if you mention your cat or grandma or first encounter with a flower garden.
- + Return physical folios (or anything that you send or drop off).
- + Accept additional material after the deadline even if you ask nicely or point out that it is actually better than the other stuff you sent in by mistake.
- + Discuss money or sponsorship . Not your money or our money or other people's money. We talk about sponsorship only after assessing everyone.
- + Be interested in your business connections or your Aunt's position on a multinational corporation or your brother's hotel chain - unless your work engaged it, of course. (We love connections of course but not during the application process)
- + Rely on English as a Second Language certificates. At some point we will talk to every single person on the phone or on Zoom / Hangout / Skype.