

HOW TO PREPARE FOR ONLINE PORTFOLIO REVIEWS

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As the public health pandemic has limited our ability to gather together in person, portfolio reviews have moved to online platforms. Fortunately, this has increased our opportunities to connect with our global community and expand our reach.

Strategies for meeting your goals when investing in attending online and in-person portfolio views are similar, yet there are distinct differences. Deep research on those industry professionals with whom you are scheduled to meet is essential in advance of any portfolio review. But as you prepare to introduce yourself and your work to Reviewers, meeting online offers an exciting new range of opportunities through which to connect.

When considering attending a portfolio review event, consider these steps in advance:

- **BEFORE REGISTERING:**
Why this review? (who, when, cost)
Why share your work now? (early/mid/end stage of project)
Study the list of participating reviewers: right individuals for you at this time?
- **BEFORE ATTENDING:**
Conduct deep research on Reviewers, wisely rank your preferences
- **REVIEW SCHEDULE IS SET!**
Now do more research in advance of your individual assigned Reviewers.
- **TIGHTLY EDIT and SEQUENCE YOUR WORK** for presentation to Reviewers.

NEW for online reviews:

- **CREATE A PDF OF YOUR WORK TO SHARE WITH REVIEWERS IN ADVANCE**
Organizers of review events will encourage participating photographers to create an introductory PDF which they will make available to Reviewers in advance. Consider offering this PDF to your Reviewers as your 'leave-behind.'
- **PRACTICE YOUR PRESENTATION, and TIMING**
There will be no verbal announcements of time remaining in your session
- **DURING THE REVIEW:**
Determine what you want to share with them at this time, and how?
You have many options when presenting online: on screen, in studio, etc...

- **WRAP UP THE MEETING:**
Assess their interest in your work and next steps.
Plan for what materials to provide as 'leave behinds' via email / snail mail.

WHEN PLANNING FOR YOUR VIRTUAL MEETINGS, CONSIDER:

THE SETTING: You control what can be seen in the background
Research/maps in background? Framed pieces on the wall? Camera?

THE PDF as INTRODUCTION / OVERVIEW OF YOUR PRACTICE
Visualize your research, process, final works, presentation style.

In addition to building and sharing an introductory PDF, consider producing individual PDF's for each specific project that you plan on sharing with Reviewers.

Be sure that each of the PDFs has a consistent content structure (about the project, craft, edition structure, presentation style, about the artist) and consistent design style, with branded header/footer on each page of each PDF.

This will ensure that you have current materials about your work at your fingertips in order to serve every possible outcome from your meetings with Reviewers.

OFFER A "STUDIO VISIT" EXPERIENCE

After sharing your PDF (or learning that they have viewed it in advance of your meeting), consider stepping away from the desk and bring your computer with you to physically share specific pieces, your preferred installation style, and even depict your process of making work.

We rarely have curators, gallerists, publishers, photo editors and other industry professionals in our work space! Consider the benefits and prepare your space and presentation time accordingly.

WHEN ATTENDING THE ONLINE PORTFOLIO REVIEW

- Turn off notifications in your computer /phone to avoid distractions.
- Be mindful of the time during your meeting.
- Ask Reviewers if you are presenting your work too fast or too slow
- Let the Reviewers talk! ("*You never learn anything while you are talking*" – Larry King)
- Caution: plan a path to easily keep track of the time; when the meeting time is up, the online meeting will abruptly stop.

CONCLUDING THE MEETING

Assess the reviewer's interest in your work and consider desired 'next steps.'

Ask if the reviewer feels their audience would appreciate your work. If so, ask if they would like you to stay in touch as the project develops. If so, ask what is their preferred point of contact: via email, a phone call or by sending a note via US Mail?

If your work is not a match, ask the reviewer to consider suggesting colleagues who might be interested in your subject(s) introduced, the concepts explored, and/or the process utilized in the making of your work.

HOW TO PROVIDE THE REVIEWERS A LEAVE BEHIND

Offer to email or physically mail your PDF/more to the Reviewers with anything else they have asked for during your meeting.

If appropriate, ask for the reviewer's contact information. I suggest looking on their websites first to see if these details are publicly available.

AFTER EACH MEETING:

Utilize the chat function (open in public & private mode all day) to privately communicate with the Reviewer post-meeting if time ran short.

AFTER THE EVENT:

If you contact Reviewers with updates, or meet with them in the future: please remind them where they met you and what work you shared with them at that time.

In closing, I strongly encourage you to explore the opportunities that online portfolio review events afford to bring your work to a broader audience. It may require some adjustments for participation in foreign time zones, but well work your engagement.

This handout was prepared from Mary Virginia's presentation at FotoFEST's Professional Development Seminar "Preparing for Online Portfolio Reviews" that was broadcast live on January 27th, 2021.

NOTE: Read "[How to Prepare for In-Person Portfolio Review Events](#)" located in the Free Downloads section of [mvswanson.com](#) for additional insights into meeting with industry professionals to discuss your work.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MARY VIRGINIA SWANSON is an educator, author and entrepreneur in the field of photography and a respected advisor to artists and arts organizations. Unique in our field, her broad background includes exhibiting, collecting, licensing and marketing photographs, and affords her broad perspectives on making and marketing art. Swanson counts among her consulting clients a range of emerging as well as internationally respected artists and arts institutions.

Swanson co-authored with Darius Himes the acclaimed *Publish Your Photography Book: Revised & Updated* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2014) and continues to stay current on the growing market for photobooks, reflecting both the relative ease of self-publishing and the rise of the collectible photographic artists book.

Swanson frequently serves as a judge on contemporary photography and photobook competitions as well as offering her expertise as a portfolio reviewer at industry events, presents public lectures at Festivals and meets with college classes.

Swanson hosts a range of public programs, private workshops and retreats each year; in-person events will resume when safe to gather (anticipated August 2021).

Upcoming public events are listed at [mvswanson.com/calendar](#) and there is a form to sign up for her Newsletter on the footer of each page on her website. Upcoming events are also listed in calendar order on her Instagram feed's Linktr.ee entries; her Instagram feed can be found at [@maryvirginiaswanson](#).

Born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Mary Virginia Swanson is based in Tucson, Arizona.