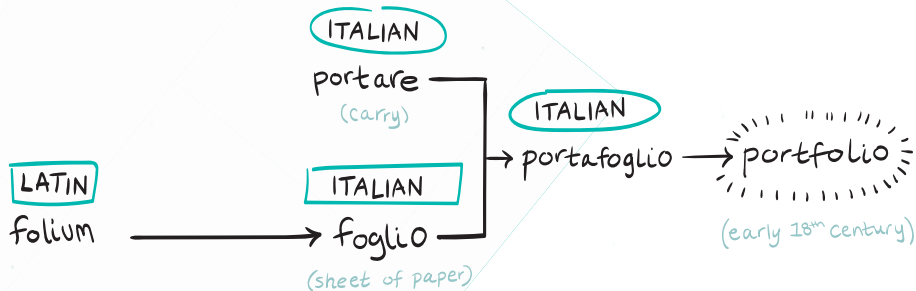


SO YOU WANT
TO GO TO
ART
SCHOOL

You're gonna need an awesome **portfolio** for that.

PORT- FOLIO



port·fo·li·o [noun]

A selection of work compiled over a period of time and used for assessing performance or progress, usually bound in book form or loose in a folder*

*THESE DAYS, IT'S ALL
DIGITAL THOUGH.



THE REAL YOU

The work you choose
says a lot about you:

WHAT'S IMPORTANT,

WHAT INTERESTS YOU,



HOW YOU SEE
THE WORLD.



WHAT PORTFOLIO
REVIEWERS ARE

REALLY THINKING

Sometimes it's not how well you **CREATE**,
but what you choose to create
that reveals the most about you.

Your portfolio should represent your best
work, but it should also give insight into
YOUR PERSONAL JOURNEY – YOUR MOTIVATIONS,
YOUR INSPIRATIONS, and your willingness
to challenge yourself.

EACH SCHOOL IS DIFFERENT



Some schools are more formal; some (LIKE CCA) have a broad definition of what makes a successful portfolio.



PRO TIP >

Read each school's requirements and follow their guidelines carefully. Make sure you're delivering an amazingly **COMPLETE** portfolio.



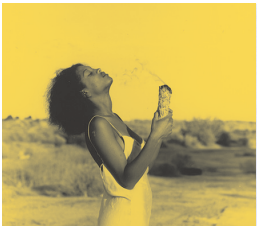
WHAT TO INCLUDE

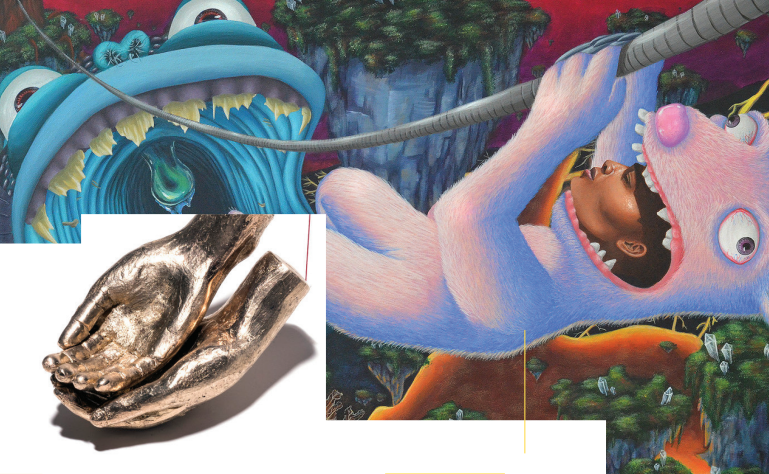
[1] A MIX OF WORK

Your portfolio is about more than flexing your talent; reviewers also want to see the range of your interests.

There are many methods of self-expression. Don't limit yourself to showing only what you think you're "best" at.

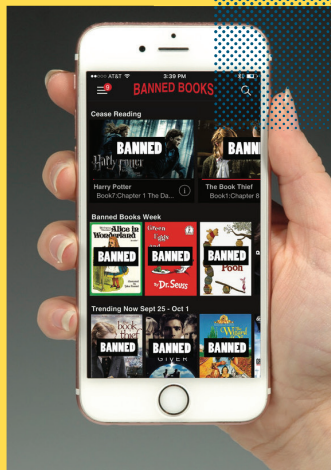
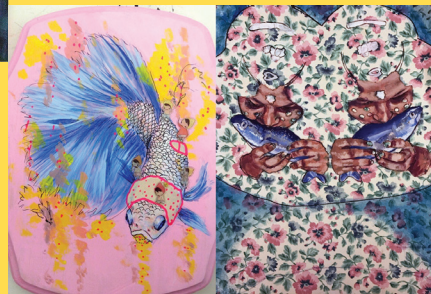






[2] SPECIALIZATION

Always include a hefty dose of your "WOW" pieces. You have a talent and a passion (maybe more than one). Show us where you really shine!



[3] CORE SKILLS

Drawing is fundamental. Reviewers want to see how you translate the weight, shape, and movement of three-dimensional objects into two-dimensional space.

LIFE DRAWING

Observational (or life) drawings are the results of live, in-person looking and interpreting.



PRO TIP

Reviewers can tell the difference between drawing from photographs vs. life.

Get out into the world!





GESTURE DRAWING

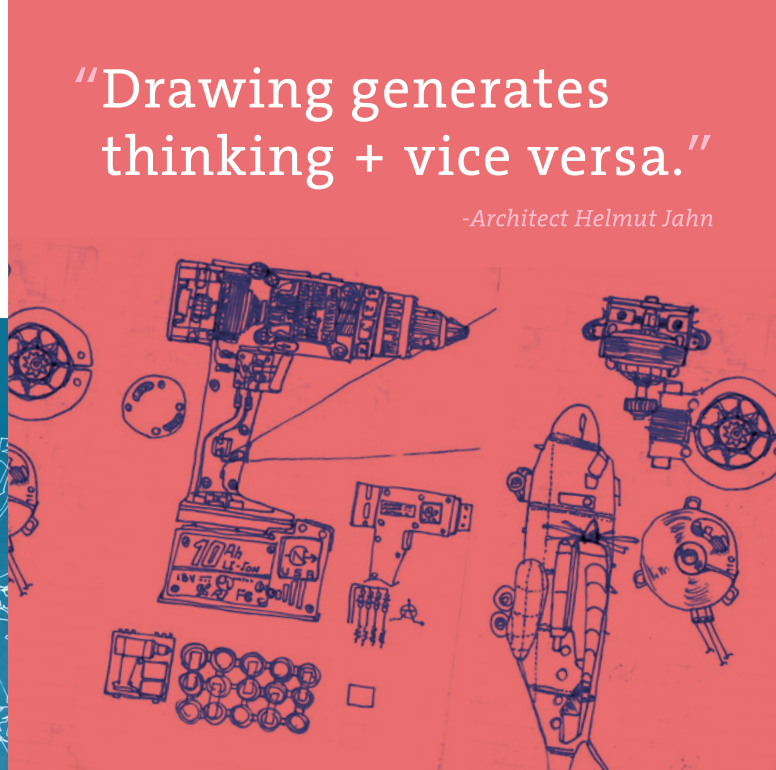
Fast and loose, meant to capture form and movement, rather than detail.

“Drawing generates thinking + vice versa.”

-Architect Helmut Jahn

CONTOUR DRAWING

An exercise in seeing, focusing on form, shape, and abstraction, rendering only the outlines of your subject.





Q: How much should my portfolio focus on core skills?

A: Usually not a ton, but depends on the school.

Get their vibe, use your best judgment.

[4] PROCESS

“The journey,
not the destination,
is what matters.”

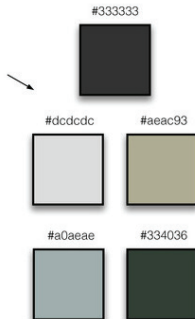
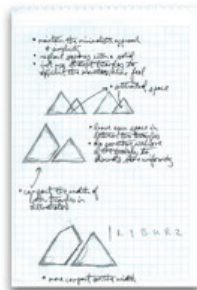
-Super-Smart Person*

Remember those "wow" pieces you included before? Maybe also include some early sketches or alternate versions.

Seeing where you ended up in the context of where you started can reveal a lot about your artistic process. Portfolio reviewers love that kind of stuff!

*it was T.S. Eliot**

**hi poets! does your art school accept poems in portfolio submissions? not all do - [find out!](#)



PRO TIP >

Analyze and write about your piece while you're creating it and consider sharing that concept alongside your work.



TAKE RISKS

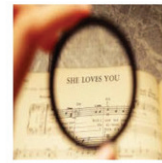
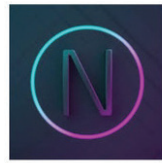


There's plenty of time for normal.

[5] EXPERIMENTATION

You could submit a portfolio packed only with obsessively detailed, breathtaking masterpieces and some reviewers might be really impressed. That's great!

Just remember, other reviewers might see the same thing and think "Is this person afraid to step out of their comfort zone?"





TAKING IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

> TAKE GREAT PHOTOGRAPHS

Your pictures should be crisp and clear, but they don't have to be fancy. With good lighting and the proper composition, you could even take them with your phone.

> EDIT, REPEAT

A mix of forms and styles is great, but omit anything that doesn't show you off in the best possible light, or that doesn't contribute to the story you're trying to tell.

If you are a writer, proofread your work.

> CONSIDER MEDIA

You'll approach the same subject differently with a pen in your hand vs. a paintbrush. See how changing your approach changes the results.

> TELL YOUR STORY

Don't be afraid to infuse your work with your culture, your ideas, and your community.

> EXPLORE A THEME

Try focusing on one idea or subject matter and exploring it deeply from many different perspectives. How many ways can it be expressed?

> QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

You only get a few slides to submit - make them special!

"Start strong, end strong."

> MAKE IT NICE

If you want schools to take you seriously, you have to set the tone. When photographing your work, make sure it's clean, unobscured, well-lit, and properly oriented.



> GET FEEDBACK

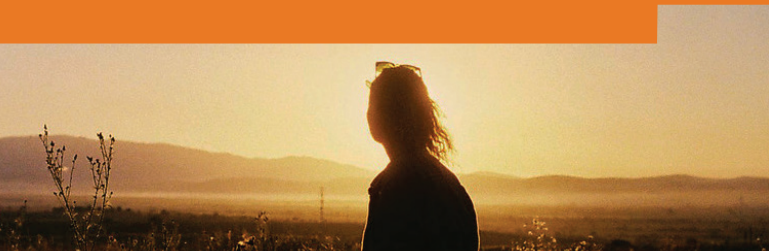
Cons It's rough hearing criticism

Pros Hear how others perceive your work
Learn how to better communicate your intentions
Uncover unseen connections
Reveal new inspiration
Get input on solving challenges
Practice the art of listening
Develop a thick skin (*something every creative needs*)
...We could go on

> ATTEND A PORTFOLIO REVIEW

Reviews are held all across North America (portfolioday.net).

Admissions counselors will look at your work and give you suggestions. It's a great trial run as you prepare to officially submit your portfolio as part of your application.



COLLECT YOUR THOUGHTS

Get comfortable speaking about your work by answering:

What motivated me to create this piece?

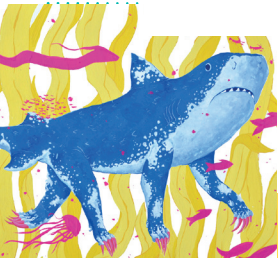
What tools did I use? Why?

Am I satisfied with how well I captured my original intent?

How did the piece evolve as I worked on it?

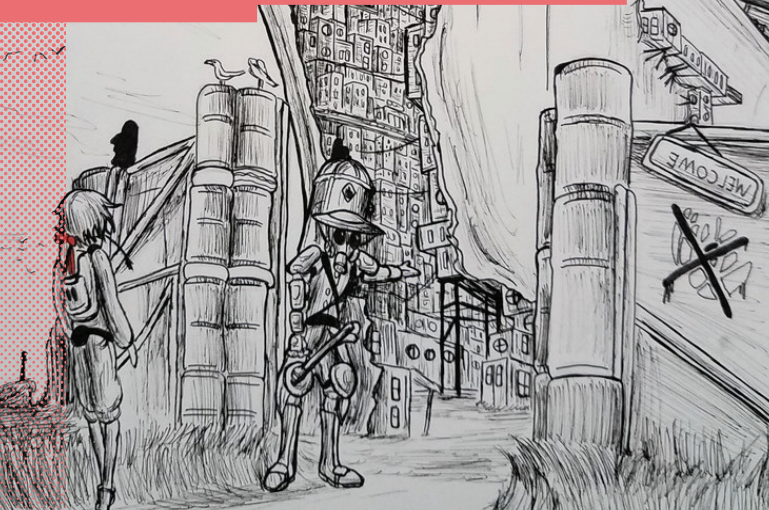
What lesson(s) did I learn creating this piece?

What was I trying to capture/portray?



CARRY A SKETCHBOOK

Everywhere. Jot down your ideas, and observations, draw what's around you or what's in your head. Fill it up, experiment, and enjoy yourself!



ATTEND PRE-COLLEGE

The best way to know if art school is really right for you is to try it out.


CCA offers an outstanding Pre-College Program for high school students.

Find out more at cca.edu/precollege

SEEK OUT OTHER ARTISTS

Join a club at your school
or like CCA on Facebook.

 [\[facebook.com/CaliforniaCollegeoftheArts\]](https://facebook.com/CaliforniaCollegeoftheArts)



**Supporters, collaborators,
& mentors are everywhere!**

CONSUME ART

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