

Master of Architecture Portfolio Tips

The portfolio of work you submit with your application is the best way you have of demonstrating your capabilities as a designer. The admissions committee looks very carefully at your portfolio because it contains a tremendous amount of subtle information. Keep in mind, however, that yours will be one of hundreds of portfolios the admission committee examines, so it must be both concise and informative.

Applicants to the one+ and two+year M.Arch. program should include architectural design work as well as other evidence of graphic skill and creative design potential. Applicants to the three+year M.Arch. program should demonstrate their interest and skill in the visual or design arts by including sketching, drawing, printing, sculpture, painting, woodworking, photography, etc.

Layout

Think of your portfolio as a design project. All of its parts should work together to make a complete and satisfying whole. It is therefore a good idea to plan the layout of each page so that it contributes to a graphic sensibility that is consistent from the beginning of the portfolio to the end.

Your portfolio must be a single bound volume no larger than 1.5 in. x 10.5 in. x 11.5 in. It should be no more than 20 pages. Do not include any slides or loose, rolled, or folded material. Do not include any other application materials in the portfolio. It is also best not to include computer discs. (If, in the judgment of the Graduate Program Coordinator, a portfolio does not meet these criteria, it may not be evaluated with your file.)

Images

Choose your images wisely. Do not include original work; instead, use sharp, well-lighted, well-composed reproductions.

Your images should show breadth of skill and ability. The best work in a given medium or subject area is preferable to a whole range or sequence of works.

If you include more than one image of a single project or artwork make sure it contributes something to the presentation that cannot be perceived in other images. Usually a one- or two-page spread is enough to describe a project fully, if you choose the images carefully.

Text

Limit the amount of text in the portfolio. The images should do most of the work, but some explanatory text can be helpful. This might include a title, brief project description, an indication of your intentions, and an explanation of your involvement in the project (where this is not otherwise clear). Remember that text can be a powerful graphic device in its own right, so make sure it also contributes to the graphic sensibility of the portfolio.

In some cases it is appropriate to submit written work as part of the portfolio. This sort of work should be brief. Do not submit lengthy papers or reports; instead, select a page or two, or an abstract of the report, together with an explanation or summary.