# DESIGNING YOUR PORTFOLIO:
CONSIDERATIONS ON MEDIUM, FORM AND ORGANIZATION

Jordan Bonney

After having ventured to find a singular solution for compiling a portfolio—one that would hold true for all designers under all circumstances in today's market—I have concluded that no such solution exists. Rather, based upon opinions from my employers and research from several reputable sources, I have come to the conclusion that there is a good and a bad side to every medium and that it can be reduced to a matter of design area. Certain mediums, I learned, are more appropriate for certain jobs than others.

PRINT
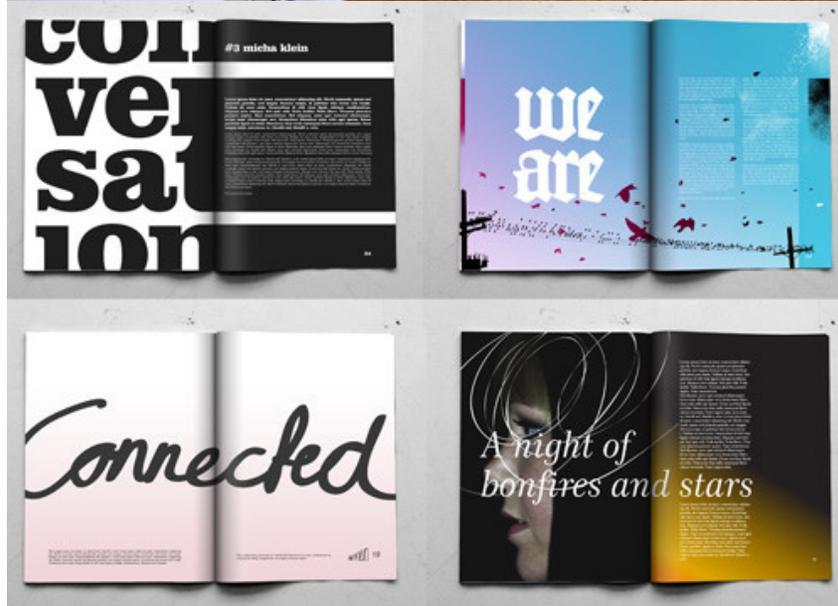
While print portfolios, or "books" might seem outdated, they are ideal for jobs that will be print-oriented like the magazine industry, and many branding firms.

The Pros
> Books are a great opportunity to ex press your personal point of view.
> You can tell a linear story
> They allow interviewers to interact with your print pieces—in print. You can be specific about paper types, and the way it is mounted.

The Cons
> It is easy to make books feel crafty
> It expensive and hard to update a book, and some are permanently made.
> A book is something physical that you have lug around—in a car, or a plane, or the subway.

The best advice that I heard was to make the book stand out, in a personal way. This might be in the way that it's bound, or the paper, or the ink.

WEBSITE

Websites are an essential component to any designer's personal branding system. Every resource I consulted—my mentor, the AIGA website, and my employers—said that the website is the first impression for any designer. It is the first time any one sees you, whether you know they are looking for you or not. If you have a good website, people will seek you out.

However, while the website is essential and should be significantly thought through, it should not be the medium through which work is shown in an interview. If the website is the first "hello," you need something to support it, to further your conversation and deepen someone's experience with your work. An iPad or a book is necessary in the interview process to complement the website. This is especially because you cannot structure as linear of a story with the website. You cannot control what people see in the right order.

iPAD

The iPad is a great way for designers to seem relevant in an interview. Because it was created only several years ago, the use and mastery of this new device can be a good impression to make on people. Furthermore, it is a step beyond the web but still has features of a print book—in many ways, it is a synthesis of both.

The Pros
> iPads can display both digital and print work.
> You will seem relevant and useful by putting your work on it
> You can zoom in on the iPad screen, allowing interviewers to see your work up close.

The Cons
> The iPad is pretty small, making works that are large in size seem minimal and less impressive
> It removes viewers from your print work. There is no paper texture, no smell, no shiny ink. It takes some of the romanticism out of your work.

ORGANIZATION

The organization of your portfolio is as important as what you actually put into it. The order of your work is the story that you tell about yourself. Some thoughts from Steff Geissbuhler from the AIGA website:

> Sketches can be as important in showing who you are as the final works; however, it is good to present them in a separate section of your book so that they don't also distract.

> "A well structured portfolio has a be ginning, a middle, and an end. Samples should be clean and remov able. The sequence doesn't have to be chronological, but I wouldn't put early school work at the end. Don't forget that the final im age leaves a more lasting impression than the first" (Geissbuhler)

> Labels are very important for estab lishing your narrative. Especially if you have to drop off your portfolio and will not be there to guide the story.

CONCLUSIONS

After having thought about this is-sue for a while, I have come to the conclusion that the most successful designers are those who success-fully communicate who they are in an original way that is tailored to the type of jobs. This might result in a combina-tion of a book, a website, or an iPad. Each of these offers something that the other two do not. In the end, it can not hurt you to have all three prepared and ready to for a last minute interview.

I have also learned to tailor a portfolio to a job. For example, while it is im-portant to show breadth of knowledge and work it is important to bring mainly print-oriented material to, say, an interview at a magazine. It would be inappropriate to show websites and movies when you would be doing no such thing. The same methodology can be applied to any job.

Finally, I have learned the value in social media. That is where people make connections and are discovered. Linkedin, Twitter, Tumblr and Facebook are no longer tools that you use for fun.