

**TH221**

The Architect's Portfolio: A Guide to Effective Self-Presentation in the Marketplace

Thursday, 5/17/2012, 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM

**Program Description**

This seminar is for architecture students and young professionals who wish to develop and produce a portfolio and resume tailored to specific requirements. The seminar provides the setting necessary for concentrated review, analysis and creative development of portfolios, resumes and promotional materials.

This seminar provides the design of portfolios and resumes as a combination of structural, visual, and conceptual exploration. The ability to communicate one's self succinctly in the professional environment is particularly important for designers whether presenting skills to a design firm, or expertise to a client. The professional standard for this performance is the portfolio, and so, it's currency, it's brilliance, it's 'script' is essential in the world of "Design Connects."

This seminar will be an opportunity for rehearsal and fine-tuning of visual communication skills demonstrated within the totality of design presentation.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Participants will be able to define a six steps process of making successful portfolio and resume.
2. Participants will be provided hands-on strategies for self-evaluation allowing participants to design intelligently and directly from their own sources.
3. Participants will learn new way of gauging the "success" of an architecture portfolio and resume.
4. Participants will be exposed to examples of professional portfolios and resumes from around the globe with retrospective summaries of the conceptual and development process by the architect(s).

**PROVIDER:** Bowling Green State University, Ohio and Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group

**SPEAKER:** Andreas Luescher, Associate AIA, Ph.D.





**Role: Speaker**

**Andreas Luescher, PhD, Assoc. AIA.**

Professor of Architecture and Environmental Design  
Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH

Andreas Luescher is a Swiss architect, artist, writer, and Professor of architecture and environmental design at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. His scholarship is widely published and he is a frequent presenter at national and regional American Institute of Architects and Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture conferences. Dr. Luescher (Pennsylvania State University, Ph.D., 1998) published thirty-refereed articles, (twenty-five as sole author) and recent highlights include a chapter in the anthology *Space, Travel, and Architecture* (2009, Ashgate), and the book *The Architect's Portfolio* (2010, Routledge).

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### Seminar Program

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 2:00-2:10 | Welcome and Pop-Quiz                                  |
| 2:10-2:20 | Introduction:<br>Planning, Design and Promotion       |
| 2:20-2:40 | Lecture: 6 Major Panning Stages                       |
| 2:40-2:55 | Exercise: Editor-in-Chief                             |
| 2:55-3:10 | Showcase of print and electronic portfolios & resumes |
| 3:10-3:20 | Discussion on strategies                              |
| 3:20-3:30 | Conclusion, question and answer period                |
| After     | Seminar evaluation                                    |

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Pop-Quiz

1. What is the purpose of a resume and a portfolio?

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2. How long should a resume be?

- a. One page?
  - b. Two pages?
  - c. As many pages as it takes to cover all of your work.
- 

3. How long should a portfolio be?

- a. Fifteen page or less?
  - b. Twenty pages or less?
  - c. As many pages as it takes to cover all of your work.
- 

4. What do you imagine are the four things most frequently looked by resume recruiters?

- a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
- 

5. What do you imagine are the four things most frequently looked by portfolio reviewers?

- a.
- b.

c.

d.

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6. What are two formats for portfolio presentation besides slides, or CD-ROMs?

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7. If someone has asking to send you a portfolio what follow-up step you need to take to assure to accomplish your goal.

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6. Employers will frequently ask you to send a portfolio containing examples of your work BEFORE they decide whether or not to invite you for an in-person interview. If a job listing doesn't specify a portfolio presentation medium (for instance, CD-ROM) what format would you be prepared to send for the job of your dreams TOMORROW?

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## Introduction

Designing a portfolio often requires lots of creative production in a short time schedule. Having a process methodology - a set of steps to refer to - helps you manage the simultaneous integration of all necessary considerations. Process methods are as varied as each individual. They range from those based on intuition and experience to those based on formal and inflexible logic, but all procedural methodologies include the following actions in one form or another:

- 1) Recognition and definition of the problem and objectives
- 2) Observation and collection of data relevant to the problem.
- 3) Development of alternative ideas and solutions suitable for the specific problem.
- 4) Synthesis, or the putting together of ideas to form complete designs.
- 5) Evaluation, or the testing of alternative designs against requirements, and optimization.

Procedural methods allow you to be consistent in your creative process and generate a document of what you've given thought to and how your ideas have developed. Process documents are invaluable for providing colleagues, and clients a platform for understanding your ideas.

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The sequence presented here is my recommended best practice, but is by no means the only approach.

1

Plan it

2

Research it

3

Write it

4

Design it

5

Promote it

6

Interview it

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## 1 Plan it

Whether you are making your first portfolio or your twentieth, what persists is your job of displaying, in a style appropriate to a particular audience, certain material and ideas.

The starting point is always the same: analysis and description of the nature and purpose of the project. Analysis means making a critical diagnosis of the nature and overall requirements of the project; in other words establishing enough information about the your aims and the overall requirements of your audience to allow the feasibility of the project to be assessed. Description means establishing a framework within which to work. It is the process of setting boundaries, and determining limits. Setting up limitations and parameters give you something to grab, something to oppose, something to help you define what it is you're searching for. Your analysis and description will be summarized in a program or statement of intention.

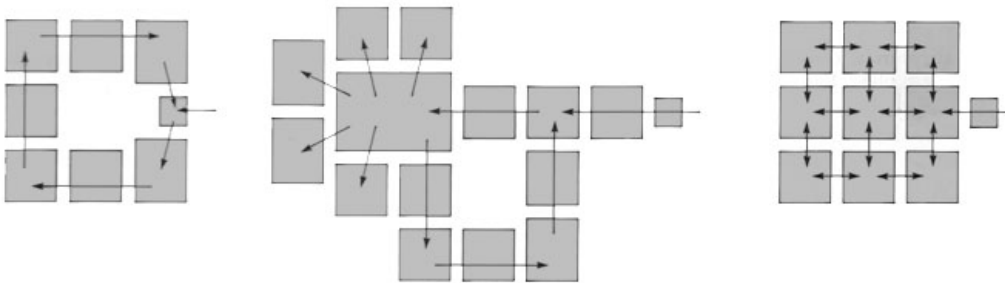


Figure 1: Process of visual editing

## 2 Research it

### 2.1 Understanding yourself

- what are your skills?
  - what are your aspirations?
  - where would you like to live?
  - where would you like to work?
  -
- 

### 2.2 Identifying your audience

- general or targeted?
  - Academic, Business, Government, Non-profit
  - networking
  - informational interviewing
  -
-

3

**Write it**

3.1 Building a Theme

- yes, no, maybe (potential for improvement)
- visual editing
- clustering
- begin to express your idea or theme
- 

- 
- ⇒ Whose attention do you want and why do you want it?
  - ⇒ What do you want to say and what do have to say it with?
  - ⇒ Summarize your aim
  - ⇒ State your theme
  - ⇒ Describe the purpose and nature of your portfolio
  - ⇒ What initial ideas do you have about your portfolio?
  - ⇒ What medium will you use? (print or digital)
  - ⇒ Who is the audience at whom the portfolio will be aimed?
  - ⇒ What are the aims and effects on the audience which you hope to achiev

## 4 Design it

We use portfolios to make our ideas apparent. The design brief encapsulates that initial idea. It is, among other things, a recorded statement of intent and a set of criteria and instructions. On a single sheet of paper answer the following questions. Even if you can only state the answers in general terms go ahead and write them down.

Don't get hung up on this. Don't let your project get bogged down for the lack of a set-in-stone objective. You're better off declaring an aim that you can live with for now. It is in the nature of the design process that you will develop and refine this aim as the project continues.

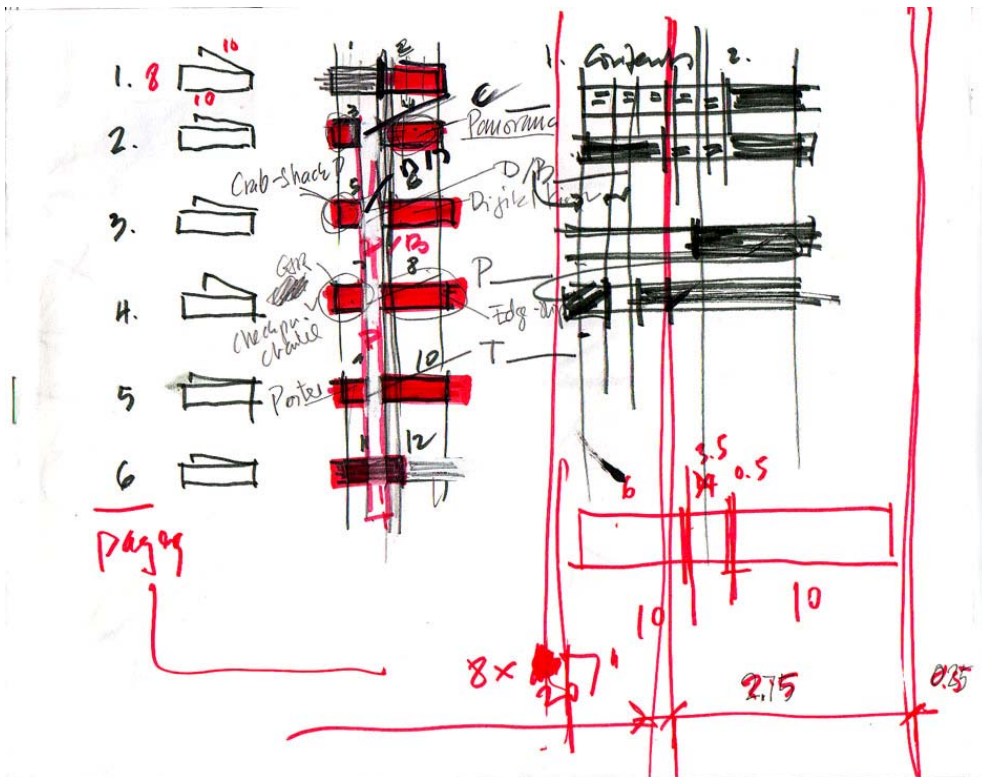


Figure 2: Sketch of design brief

### Print-to-Web Portfolios

Web-based portfolios offer a uniquely fluid and sustainable vehicle for the presentation of your work. Wide-ranging versatility comes however with a host of requirements including writing for the Web, cross-platform design, response time considerations, multimedia implementation, navigation strategies, search boxes, international considerations, just to name a few. And then there are all those attractive nuisances and meaningless distractions . . . the ‘bells and whistles’ which are fun to play with but which often detract more than they add. It is essential to stay focused on whether your web design actually accomplishes its goal, which is usually to sell, teach, or entertain.

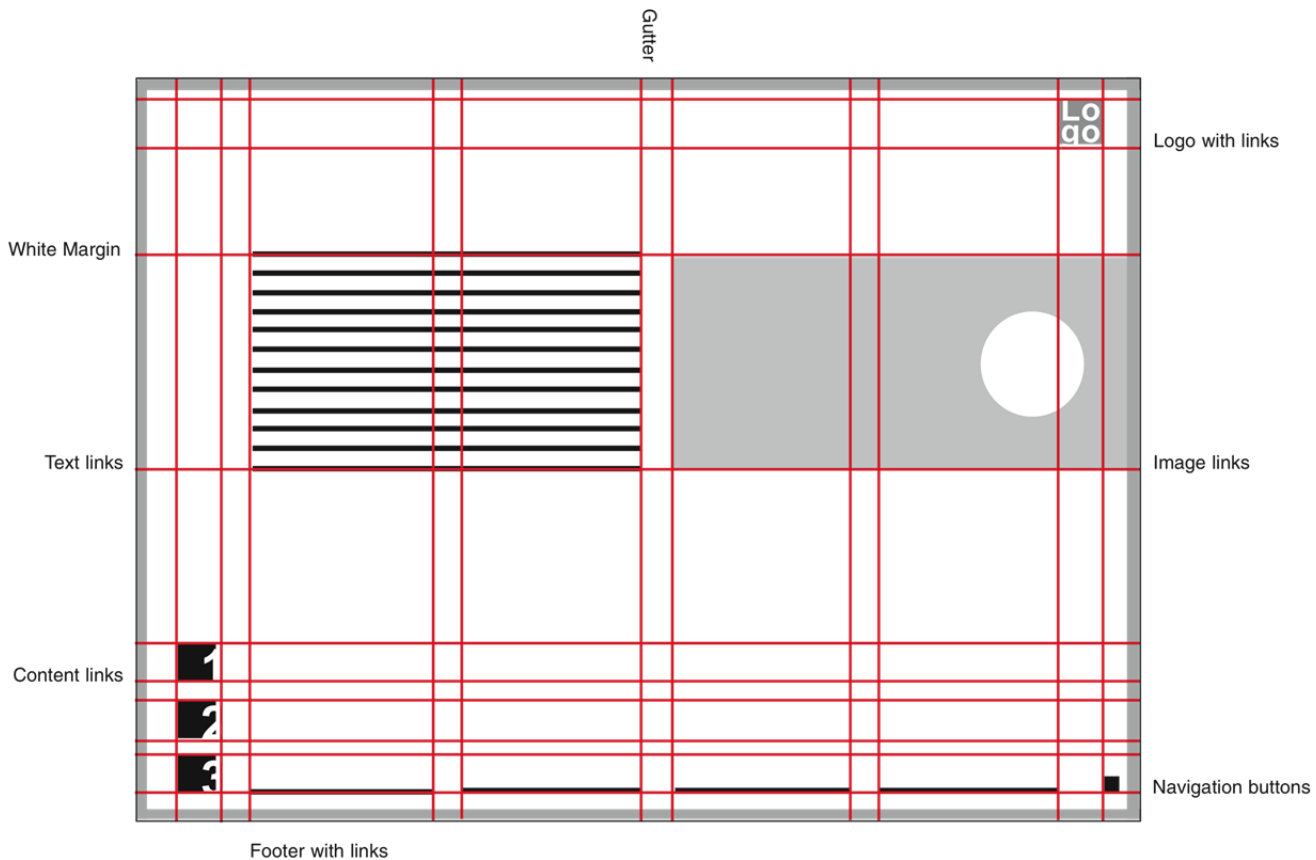


Figure 3: A web page layout including the grid

### **Design Style vs. Usability Design**

Everyone wants to design 'cool' web sites but if your web users can't figure out how to use your website in a minute or so, they will leave, or they will bring a very bad disposition about you - - your design sensitivities and technical competencies - - to the task of continuing.

Just as with a print portfolio, your audience must be your central concern. From content and page design to designing for ease of navigation and users with disabilities, you need to remain focused how to connect with your web users hope that he or she can

a.) find what they're after quickly; and

b.) browse quickly and access information they come across in a logical manner.

With literally tens of millions of web sites currently competing for attention, usability and design for usability is the subject of intense commercial interest. Research into works and what doesn't work in interactive media has produced a number of books and web sites about web usability, page design, content design, site design, and intranet design.

Noteworthy concept is based on things users most want described by Jakob Nielsen (he also has an excellent website on usability : [www.useit.com](http://www.useit.com).) in his book *Designing Web Usability: The Practice of Simplicity* are four criteria for the foundation of a good Web design:

- ⇒ H high-quality content
- ⇒ O often updated
- ⇒ M minimal download time
- ⇒ E Ease of use

According to Jakob Nielsen but you need to go beyond the four basics to have a truly stellar site. To move from HOME design to a HOME RUN design and add three extras:

- ⇒ R relevant to users' needs
- ⇒ U unique to the on-line medium
- ⇒ N net-centric corporate culture

### **Linear vs. Random Access**

Important criteria for designing navigation systems for Web sites have to be kept as simple as possible. It's important to always give the user a clear way back to the start of the page. It is wrong to assume that a user can learn a navigation system and remember it unless the site is designed as a game and is intended to take users on a hunt.

The navigation systems hold be used as consistently as possible throughout the site. The navigation system should be thought of not only as functional means to get around the site, but also as part of the site's identity.

The simplest of all website structures is a linear design vs. random access. The homepage leads to page two. From there you can go BACK to the homepage or FORWARD to the third page. And on the third page, you have the choice of going BACK to the second page or FORWARD to the fourth.

You start adding complexities if you add a direct link back to the homepage from any of these pages. Still more complexity is added if the viewer can jump off the second page in six different directions: to a photo gallery, a link page, an email, etc. These in turn lead to other pages, and so on. It's easy to see how the complexities of navigation start adding up. The point of this is to have a plan, and the various paths make sense to your audience, including an easy way to get back to the homepage on every other page. If the visitor doesn't find it easy and obvious to access the parts of your site they're interested, they just might not bother.

### **Design an interface**

You can use logos, symbols, icons, menu bars, buttons, etc. to deliver the context. Those interface are the mechanism through which visitors understand and interact with site. A good interface gives visitors assurance that they will be able to find the information they need when they need it. You want to give visitors a sense of control; they are making the choices about where to go and what to see. Using flowcharting conventions for the development of the navigational aid to specified for each section of your design.

When you design interface elements, tailor them to your expected audience. These links would enable the user to move effortlessly through all the portfolio entries, following up an interesting lead in one entry simply by clicking on a key graphic and going to the linked entry; then perhaps returning to the original item, or following a link to another item. It is safe to assume readers are familiar with screen-based icon systems. Do not lose this familiarity by creating a series of new symbols for them to learn.

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## Promote it

The next to last step isn't complete until your portfolio reaches its final destination without mishap or damages. Consider the steps on the following page to ensure that the portfolio arrives on time and in perfect condition without getting lost in the mail either.

Remember, everything means something. For example: yellow string-and-button envelopes are used for internal post and carries with it the implicit message of work-related papers/bulk items/ and other "undesirables"(!).

Once your portfolio either in print or online is available you should make sure to promote your work. By submitting especially your webpage to search engines, design websites, magazines and applying for awards can make a difference in enhancing your value in the market. Using the Internet as its message is quite easy formula for success because it is less time-consuming to produce in comparison to print media. A portfolio webpage can be access easily and anonymously by visitors. For starters small projects and undeveloped ideas can be presented in such a way as to appear complex because you can bluff and usually visitors don't expect in depth content.

At the same time maintaining your portfolio homepage it is a important task though can be done easily and quickly at any time. Obviously the Internet has the reputation of being of the for front of new digital technology that function alone requires that your design and animations of your portfolio website keep up the evolution of the medium. If you create CD-ROM or web-based portfolio it still important to collect as much feedback as possible by using pre-addressed formats to you such as asking the viewers to fill out a small questionnaire, or leave comments by having a EMAIL button which will open up an email letter to you or including reply postcard which additional materials can be request.

- self-initiated events & exhibitions
- cultivate media contacts, peers, clients, etc.
- exchange links with friends, distributors, blogs, etc.
- submit your website to search engines and website directories
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## Interview it

In any case getting the immediate attention of your audience is essential to a successful submission of your resume and portfolio. That's mean follow-up with your audience by simply providing self-addressed envelope or contact the receiver by making a telephone call asking for interview or presentation time.

### Lesson 1: Be yourself

You hope that I will give you answers that you can repeat it as such in interviews? You are mistaken. The difficulty lies precisely in the fact that we must avoid any formatted output. The goal is to keep yourself and your way to meet with your vocabulary and your own ideas.

### Lesson 2: Learn to improvise

The difficulty of an interview is that you can imagine the kinds of questions that recruiters are going to ask you but you can never be sure what they will asked. That is why it is important to improvise. Never answer you do not know.

### Lesson 3: Know to whom you speak

Never go to interview without to be informed in advance of the company for which you apply. Refer to any website can be a good start. Find someone who works or worked there is even better. The important thing is to understand the "philosophy" of the company, what services or products it offers.

### Lesson 4: Transform your weaknesses

A good way to address your potential weaknesses is to talk and turning them into positives. Think in advance of your weaknesses and your strengths because these are aspects that are regularly discussed at meetings.

### Lesson 5: Give a good impression

This may seem contradictory to you staying with oneself. Being yourself does not mean not making efforts, quite the contrary. Recruiters need to see that you are motivated, you've really wanted to work in this business, you understand the issues related to business.

### Lesson 6: Does not seem stressed

It's hard not to have the voice that trembles and peace of mind before one or more recruiters that you are just trying to destabilize. This can help you control your stress: adopt a comfortable position with both feet on the ground and breathe calmly.

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### **Exercise 1: Editor-in-Chief**

To tell a story requires a sequence of impressions that will form a proper exposition of the subject. A portfolio usually includes a diverse collection of representations. The job of arranging together, and designed into one cohesive composition is, as much as anything, a matter of editorial skill.

As editor of your own portfolio you must be active in three areas of decision-making:

1. Encapsulating the initial idea
2. Identifying the objects chosen to tell the story
3. Clustering related objects and beginning to express your ideas or build your theme

This exercise calls attention to this important idea of design as an editorial process. Based on the page layouts next pages, determine a sequence of ideas and their placement in it.

Determine the order in which they can be made to tell a story, and what chunks of information have to be interpolated or attached to make sense to the intended audience.

You will be both visual and verbal editor in this process. You may add titles and brief explanatory or interpretive text or captions to direct the presentation for your reader/audience. Keep in mind that the most effective portfolios have a singleness of purpose best achieved by brief captions or headlines, not by long compositions.

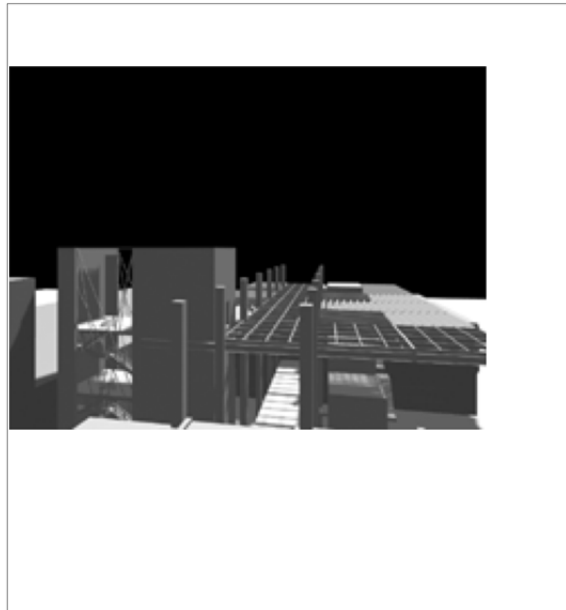
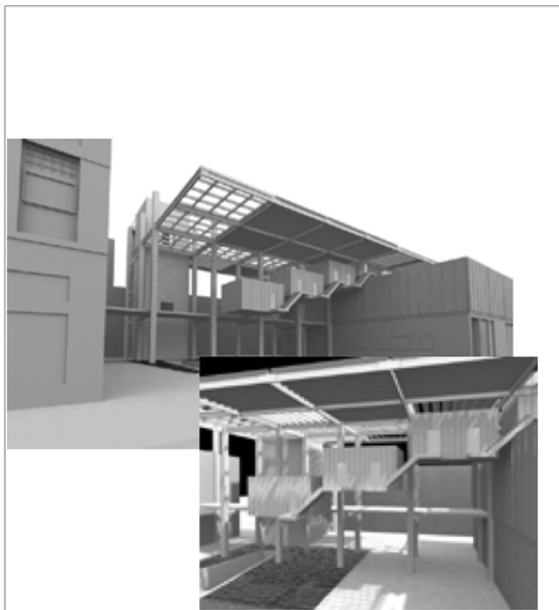
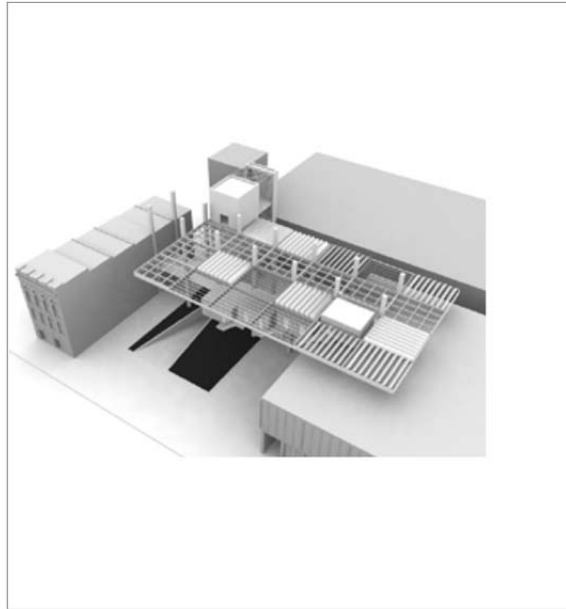
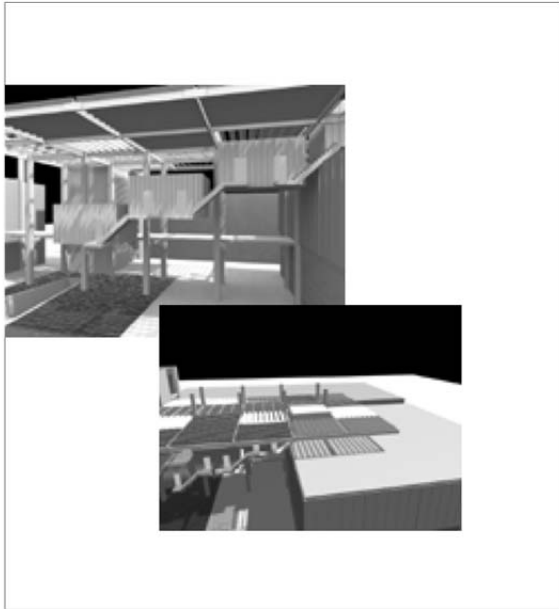
Objective: design to move the reader forward.

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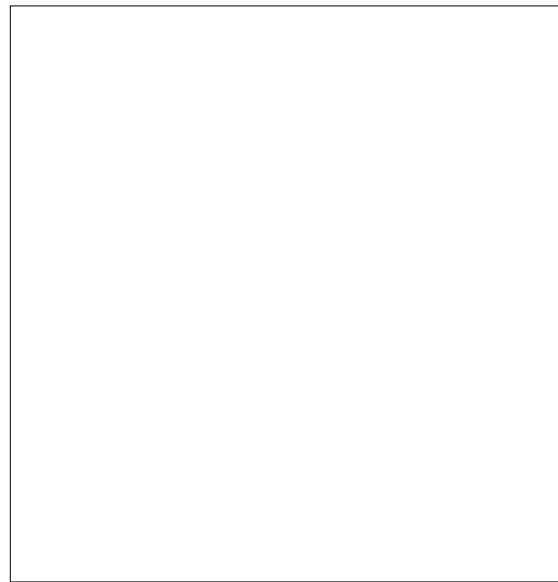
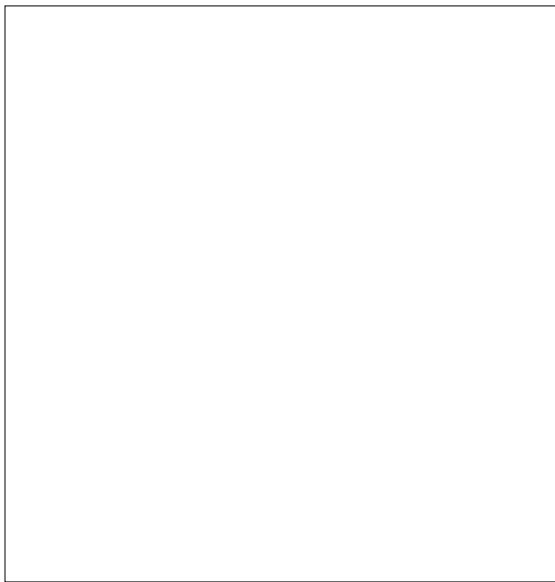
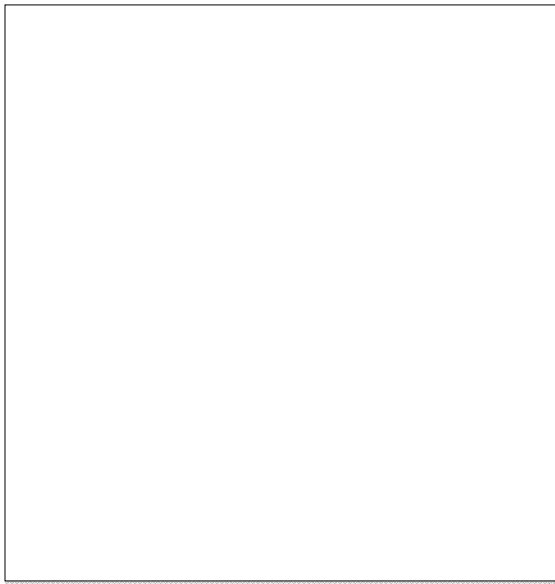


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### AIAD Formula

AIDA is an acronym used in marketing that describes a common list of events that are very often undergone when a person is selling a product or service but here we apply it for job search:

**A - Attention (Awareness):** attract the attention of the future employer.

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**I - Interest:** raise future employer interest by demonstrating his/her abilities and skills.

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**D - Desire:** convince future employer that they want and desire his/her abilities and skills that it will satisfy their needs.

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**A - Action:** lead future employer towards taking action to be hired.

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### Portfolio Checklist

#### Design

1. Does the portfolio show your best work only, even though it may be only a few pieces?
2. Does your portfolio amplify and compliment the work it is displaying?
3. Does your text support your portfolio design?

#### Sequence

4. Is your portfolio work set-up in logical sequences?
5. Does your portfolio work provide a smooth flow from cover to cover?
6. Has your portfolio sequence been tested and refined?

#### Research and Process

7. Are your conceptual thinking apparent?
8. Have you included samples to demonstrate your analytical capability?
9. Does the portfolio include evidence of your design process?

#### Craft and Skill

10. Is your craft impeccable and uncompromising?
11. Are your computer skills clearly demonstrated?
12. Do you show expertise in technical areas?

#### Communication

13. Will your creative samples communicate a theme?
14. Does your portfolio communicate that you will grow on the job?
15. Is your portfolio format flexible enough to target a variety of employers?

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### References

#### **The Architect's Portfolio: Planning, Design, Production**

**Andreas Luescher**

ISBN: 978-0-415-77901-2

Published by: **Routledge, 2010**

<http://www.routledgearchitecture.com/books/The-Architects-Portfolio-isbn9780415779012>

#### **Architectural Record**

The Architectural Record has section titled Project Portfolio where innovative architecture are been featured.

<http://archrecord.construction.com/projects/portfolio/>

#### **Fabrica**

Fabrica is the Benetton Research and Development Communication Centre. Portfolio of young Fabrica artists can be found under FAB NEWS.

<http://www.fabrica.it/fabnews/>

#### **Metropolis Magazine Portfolio**

Metropolis present showcases work by emerging designers and artists. Submissions of 12 to 15 images, in portfolio presentation or on CD, should be addressed to Sara Barrett, Metropolis, 61 West 23rd Street, 4th Floor, New York, NY10010.

<http://www.metropolismag.com/portfolio>

## SOM Foundation

The SOM Foundation has a website with the portfolios of past fellows.

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