

PORTFOLIOWORKS

FALL 2021



Collage by a Swiss senior

UPDATES

Hello and happy fall!

We are off and running with a fantastic group of students, some of whom have been working with us for a year already and many new students who continue to join us.

We hope that you are also off to a great start and want to share with you some of the work and thinking that we have been doing

Take good care,

Maggie and Allison



Drawing on a self-portrait / installation by a French student applying to European fashion programs.

PORTFOLIO PROCESS #4



Art training: 1 year of IB Higher Level

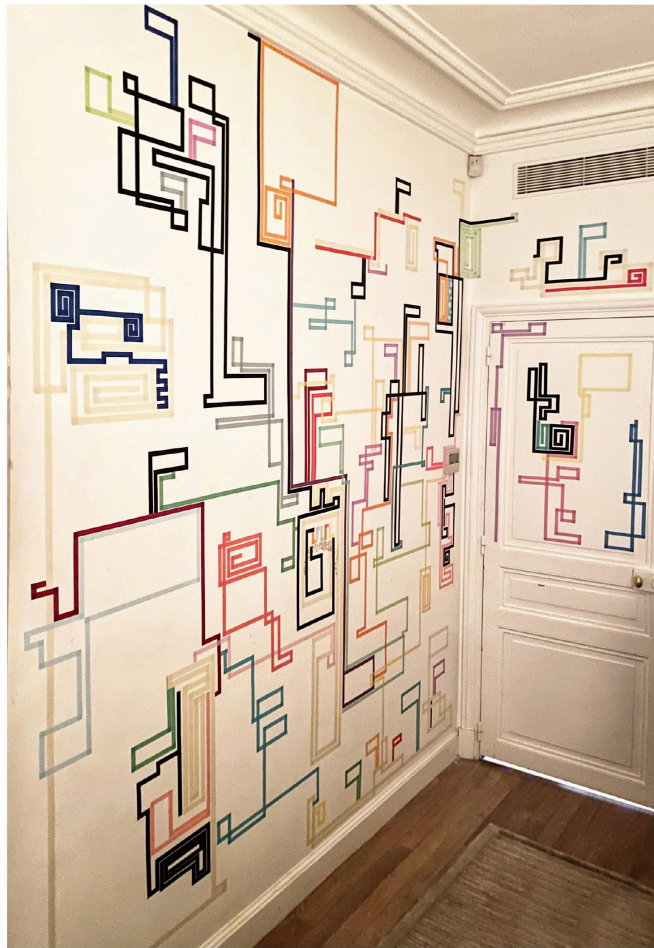
University goals: Design or Foundation in Europe or the U.K.

Communication mode: Zoom

Hours of advising/instruction: 20

Jean (not his real name) was a senior at an international school in France who came to us in the fall hoping to pursue studies in design, or possibly complete a Foundation year in the UK. He came to us with very little portfolio-worthy work other than a large sculpture he had in progress for his high school art class. His project was an elaborate, time-consuming, foam core model that recreated a scene from Fritz Lang's 1927 film *Metropolis*. The peculiarity and ambition of this project helped us understand the student's personality as well as identify a number of themes that he would carry on into a series of projects over the following months.

It was clear to us that one of our challenges would be to keep this student interested and excited about doing his work. While he was able to lose himself endlessly for hours in the minutiae of his large, foam core sculpture, he would put little or no effort into other, foundational tasks that did not immediately interest him. The projects that were able to capture his attention were demanding and complex, and he would jump head first into them without much preparation. We understood that his success would depend on focusing the work on design centric projects that he could tackle and finish successfully without the usual lead-up work.



As a consequence, this student's portfolio had ambitious work, but had few sketches, iterations, failures, and fewer images than most. All the same, his portfolio was strong and he did gain admittance to every school he applied to, among them his dream school, ECAL (Ecole cantonale d'art de Lausanne). He was also admitted to Eindhoven, HEAD Geneva, and Foundations at Kingston and City and Guilds. Unfortunately he was not able to apply to Central Saint Martins with fewer than 30 slides.



The BA Art Supplement_ "Do I or don't I?"

Should students submit a visual supplement when applying to a BA program?

Our answer? Not unless it is excellent, and only if the student intends to be an Arts major. Here's why: if it is not excellent it will count against them.

Schools warn against submitting supplements on their websites. Yale begins their Supplemental Materials website page with, "You should think carefully before submitting supplementary material with your Yale College application."

If a student submits a supplement it really must "excel"—that is, be in the top 20% of received supplements— and it has to be appropriate for the school. Students are not in the position to evaluate the excellence of their own supplement, or its appropriateness for a particular school. They need expert advice from a professional in the field.

If a portfolio is deemed excellent by a qualified professional, then that student should submit it with their application only if they plan on majoring in one of the Arts.

The process by which portfolios are evaluated and scored in each school is different. In some, the score is given by professional artists and severe critics, in which case, unless it is excellent, it will negatively affect their chances of admission. There are also schools where the portfolios may be evaluated by the admissions officers, if it is evaluated at all. Barnard's website, for example, says, "Please note that supplementary material will not be reviewed by Barnard faculty and during high volume periods, we cannot guarantee it will be reviewed by the Admissions Committee..."

It is important to read the college application instructions carefully.

Your portfolio must also be college-appropriate. For example, one admissions officer describes how her highly academic and selective school will not even consider a supplement that is not heavily theoretical, because it has to match the "school DNA." A theoretically weak portfolio would be damaging to them. The theoretical strength of a portfolio emerges most clearly in the texts or captions that accompany the work, so it is crucial that they be thoughtfully considered and well-crafted. And, as with all portfolios, the sophistication of a portfolio is visible, too, in how the work is photographed, selected, and curated.

There is one way a creative supplement can be slipped into an application without risking a low score for quality, and that is to use the supplement as a

way to illustrate or enhance the application essay. If there is a story to tell in the essay that includes a passion for art that does not hinge on the high quality of the artwork, then images of the work in question would help officers piece together a more vivid portrait of the student.

Though the process is daunting, we think it is possible for a supplement to help a student's application. We can't, of course, really know what role a supplement plays in a school acceptance, but we have helped many students submit supplemental portfolios and be successful. Even students with little significant work to start with can reach the desired excellence if they have passion, are willing to work hard, and receive the proper guidance.

We hope that this has been helpful to you in your considerations about how to help your students think about supplements. We would be happy to help any student make a good decision about their portfolio, and, should you have a student who decides to embark on the adventure of submitting a supplement, happy to guide and assist them.

National Portfolio Day

Any student submitting a portfolio should absolutely take advantage of the free portfolio reviews offered at National Portfolio Day. They will receive a quick nitty gritty assessment of their portfolio by art faculty, as well as concrete advice about how to improve it for the particular school they are reviewing with. In addition, if the reviewers see a stellar portfolio, they will definitely ask the student to apply, and keep special note of the quality of their work.

Students can register and find more information [here](#).

