

Assignments: Goals and Self-Evaluation Part II

Some men give up their designs when they have almost reached the goal; while others, on the contrary, obtain a victory by exerting, at the last moment, more vigorous efforts than ever before.

Herodotus

We must walk consciously only part way toward our goal and then leap in the dark to our success.

Henry David Thoreau

What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals.

Zig Ziglar

You have built your portfolio. NOW WHAT?!? Your assignment this week is to continue the assessment and work that is necessary to make your goals and understand your career path.

Assignment One

Complete the artistic contract again. (This is an ongoing process. You must assess, reassess and keep in touch with your goals and your progress.) Dream big. Make embarrassing prediction and brave wishes. If you could do anything, be anything, what would it be? Be truthful, despite the fact that I will read it!

Assignment Two

Make the first draft of your artist statement/biography. What do you need/want to tell people about you and your work.

Assignment Three

Participate in the hanging organization of the KCI show. Observe thoughtfully the process of sequencing and working together. Notice the gallery and the space. How does this affect the show. Pluses? Minuses? Write a one page reflection on this topic.

Assignment Four

Research venues and/or competitions for your and your colleagues artwork. Bring a minimum of 5 opportunities to class. Include all information needed to proceed (requirements, phone numbers, addresses, emails, etc.)

Due:

1. Artistic Contract II thoughtfully completed.
2. First draft of statement/bio
3. Hang KCI; One page reflection
4. Five (5) opportunities to exhibit or be published

Artistic Contract II

I, _____, once again committed to a life of creativity and a career in the visual arts, undertake this contract with myself as an important step in my life as an artist. During the twelve weeks of this class I will work intently and diligently and set the habits that will mark my future in Photography. As part of this process, I will answer the following questions bravely and completely:

1. What are my lifetime goal(s) as an artist? (Be specific. Be expansive. Be free to dream.) Has this changed in since my last contract?

2. What is my five-year goal as an artist? (Be specific. Set priorities.) Changes?

Photo 57
Kate Jordahl

Foothill College

3. What do I plan to accomplish in the next six months? (Be specific. Set some things that can be accomplished in this time line.)

4. What do I plan to accomplish in the next 12 weeks? (Be specific. What do you want out of this class?)

5. How much time do I plan to devote to my goals each week? (Be honest.)

Realizing that success in the arts is the ultimate mix of luck meeting preparation, I am committed to do the work necessary to make my goals a reality.

Name

Date

(Inspired by *Taking the Leap*, Cay Lang and *The Artist's Way*, Julia Cameron)

Informational Interview

What is an “Informational Interview?”

An informational interview is a question/answer session with a professional in the photographic field who does what you hope to do in your future career. It is **not** a job interview. The focus of your questions and your attention should be on your subject and their career!

You should plan the interview so it is convenient for your subject and gets you the information you need in one session. You must be organized in both your questions and in your thinking. You should be courteous and considerate of the subject’s time. An informational interview should be 10-20 minutes long and the interview can be in person or by telephone.

Choosing a professional to interview

Ideally, the subject should be someone who is doing what you would most like to be doing. They have the job of your dreams. Be prepared to ask a number of people before you find someone who has the time to work with you. Be persistent. Don’t expect a busy professional to return you phone call the first time or have time the day you call. Be prepared to call back and arranged an interview time even if you are telephone interviewing. On the other hand, if the subject says they do not have time, respect their wishes, and find another subject.

Sources of interview subjects including the telephone book, gallery spaces where you have seen work, a “black book” or publication that includes contact information, and professional organizations like the ASMP (American Society of Magazine Photographers) or PAPA (Peninsula Area Photography Association). Ask friends and instructors for people they might know would make good subjects.

Preparation

Before you even call your subject ask yourself the following questions:

1. What area(s) of photography do I want to pursue?
2. Who could I call that is doing this now?
3. Why do I want to pursue this area of photograph? Creative reasons? Financial reasons? Other reasons?
4. Before I talk to this person, what do I think will be the good parts and bad parts of a career in this area of photography? What preparation do I think I would need to succeed?

Questions

Make a list of questions to ask before the interview. The more specific and focused and organized the more you will get out of this experience. Sample questions include:

1. How did you get into this career?
2. What do you like best about your career? What do you like least?
3. What is a typical work day like for you?
4. What training and/or education did you have for your position?
5. If you were beginning now, as I am, what would you do to get into this field?
6. Do you know anyone else I could talk to or where else I can go for more information?

Evaluation

After the interview, spend some time “digesting” the information. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. What positive and negative information did I learn?
2. How does what I learned fit into my skills, values or interests?
3. What else do I need to know? How or where will I find this information?
4. How do I feel about this area of photography after getting this information? Do I want to continue to pursue this area? Do I want to change my focus? Why?
5. How do I incorporate this information into my career plan and my educational plan?

Follow up

Within 24 hours, send a thank you note to your subject. Tell them how appreciative you are of their time and their sharing.

Within a week, with the knowledge you have gained, fine-tune your plan for your career/ photography activities. If possible, interview another person in the same area. All that you learn is just one person’s opinion. The more contacts you have, the richer picture of the field of photography you will get.

Due:

Your project will be an “Informational Interview” with a professional in the field of photography. The final paper will be 2 pages typed. You will also share this information in class informally.

Expectations and Goals

Working in the creative areas can be difficult. The feedback is sometimes limited and often not enough. People will sometimes gush over your least favorite pieces and ignore the one you think is dynamite! The same portfolio that inspires cheers in one interview is met with polite silence at another. Here are a few helpful hints to sticking it out during the trying times.

1. Choose realistic rather than nonrealistic goals.

You can decide to enter 10 juried shows by June. You cannot decide to be accepted to 10 juried shows! Make your goals actions that you can take and control. You can decide to photograph every week, but not to make 10 out of 36 photographs winners.

2. Have a lot of irons in the fire and/or don't put all your eggs in one basket!

This is an important part of this process both because it increases your chances of success dramatically and lessens the blow of unexpected rejection.

3. There is no accounting for Taste.

Some people will always like your work; some people will never like your work. Recognize that everyone sees things differently and don't waste time taking it personally. Research the juror/decision maker if possible and use it to shape your applications. This doesn't mean don't apply if the decision maker is not sympathetic to your style of work; you should send work to all avenues possible—you never know what will happen. But, forewarning can lessen the blow of rejection and help you set priorities.

Project Worksheet

GOAL:

Background research

Necessary supplies & equipment

Skills needed

Deadlines

Outcome

Contacts made

Materials delivered or sent

Response

Future Plans/actions

Words to the Wise

Below is a series of quotes from gallery directors, editors, photographers and other professionals in the field of photography.

- Don't do anything until you see what your competition is doing.
- Although gallery owners, art directors, photo editors may tire of urban landscapes, the play of light through translucent bedroom curtains, or surrealistic flash effects, one thing is certain. A clean, concise, unified presentation of your best work in a knockout portfolio will never become passé. Your vision, after all, is your own, but the way you present it can make or break your future potential for exhibitions, commercial or editorial work, or whatever photographic endeavor you choose to pursue.
- Your portfolio or "book" is the ticket to success or failure, whether in advertising, corporate, editorial, or fine art photography. It's the first thing interviewers notice about your work and the last thing they forget.
- The majority of errors we see seem to be in the area of presentation. Inexperienced reviewers frequently show you too many pictures that aren't edited, or are dog-eared, beaten up, on soiled mats, or not recent.
- If you are able to begin with the assumption that your work is good, somehow distinctive in its own way, and worth showing to prospective exhibitors or employees, that's half the battle.
- What makes a good portfolio? Cohesiveness, consistency of quality, and a singularity of vision emerge as the most important characteristics of any successful portfolio.
- In a good portfolio, the quality of the images is outstanding. They are all well printed, spotted, and mounted. The sequencing is clearly deliberate and well done, and each picture is different and stand well on its own.
- Art Professionals search for two basic characteristics that good portfolios-and good photographers-share. These are a professional presentation and a 'singular vision'.
- Don't try to make it perfect—just powerful.
- The essence of most professional advice on the subject of portfolios and presentations is easy enough to summarize: impact counts; less is more; where excellence is required, pretty good is worthless.
- Art Directors caution against showing a hodgepodge of styles.
- Limit your presentation to whatever number of prints and slides you can show in a maximum of 10 minutes
- Succeeding in photography is much akin to building a credit rating. You have to get that first credit card in order to gain access to the system and be considered an acceptable risk.

The Rule of Twelve's

We all want something to “happen” in our artistic lives. Perhaps we want to publish our photographs; get a new photographic job; be chosen for a grant or some combination of the above. Think about what you want to “happen” in your artistic life. Whatever your goal, it will probably require you to take your creation and send it out into the world, to be accepted or, perhaps more often rejected.

Perseverance and more perseverance are your only friends in this situation. But how, in the face of **Rejection**, do we continue. My solution has been the Rule of twelve's. Today, using the “Rule of 12's”, you will each begin to construct your own list of actions for short-term artistic development goals.

If you always have twelve balls in the air, twelve eggs in your basket, or twelve seeds that you are cultivating, you will find that rejection is not so powerful and the goals you are pursuing are not so distant or difficult.

The two dangers in pursuing a goal are:

1. Getting a rejection and stopping
2. Getting an acceptance and stopping

We need to keep our momentum, and the rule of 12's is a key to creating and keeping momentum. If you wanted to have a flower for your table, would you plant one seed? Of course not.

Right now, I would like you to choose one goal, it doesn't have to be “the” goal, or a big goal, just a goal that you would like to achieve in your professional life.

My primary goal right now is to have a book of my work published. I would also like to promote my artwork and get museum shows. Perhaps you will pick goal such as to be published, to get a grant, be accepted at a school for transfer or have a one person show.

OK. Now there are different actions you can take to realize any goal. The rule of twelve means that you try and have twelve “actions” happening at any one time. Why twelve? I'm not sure—perhaps because it is a dozen or its more than ten or... whatever, but by having twelve eggs in my basket, I have been seeing results. I do my rule of twelve's about once a month; you could do it more or less often, although results seem to come from consistency.

Right now to write three actions you have taken or could take to reach your goal. The only limitation is that one of these actions, you should be able to do *today* or at the latest tomorrow. Remember, you must create momentum and action is the way to get momentum.

There is no “right” or “wrong” action—It could be research to make your goal possible, sending out a letter, talking to a mentor, getting published, whatever. This is a personal record for you of how hard you are working to make your goal become reality.

DO IT NOW!

.....yes, right now!

Rule of Twelves for _____

*	Date	Action
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		

Rule of Twelves for _____

*	Date	Action
1		
2		
3		
4		
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11		
12		

A Quality Package

Ask yourself before you send anything: “What would I think if I received this?” Pretend you do not know yourself. Pretend its not your work. Is there enough information for the receiver to respond? Quality & Clarity counts in every communication.

Sample package:

- Cover letter (neatly typed with return address & phone number in obvious place.)
- Slide list or enclosure list
- Slides, CD or other representative images
- Stamped Self-addressed return envelope large enough for items to be easily returned with cardboard to protect images
- Articles/promo pieces as appropriate
- Resume as appropriate (and it usually is!)

This package represents YOU. If you are not attentive to every detail, your receiver may be turned off. Make it easy to read, easy to understand, easy to return.

Cover letter

The Cover letter is perhaps the most difficult part for artists. It is very important that this letter is clear and to the point. It should quickly tell why you are writing, where you met or heard of the person you are contacting and what you want. It should conclude with an obvious indication of who will call/write/contact whom and when. Stationary adds professional touch. Pay careful attention to accuracy; a misspelled name can kill your chances.

The Slides/representative images

Send your best. This does not only mean the best photographs you have taken, but that the material you send, whether dupe slides, digital images, prints, or a printed piece must look great. Label all things carefully and clearly. All materials should look fresh and unused. Do not expect to get them back.

Slide List or enclosure list

This is helpful to your receiver. It can also be used to explain what they are looking at. That a photograph is a 16x20” black and white silver print is not obvious from a slide. This explanation could be done on a separate statement or on this list.

Return Envelope

Don’t make an enemy of your receiver! Enclose an appropriate envelope to return your materials if you want them returned. If you don’t, make that obvious in your cover letter.

Articles/promo pieces/resume as appropriate

Judge what to include in each package by the end goal. All verbal information must be conveyed in as clear, clean, and professional manner as possible. Resume, slide lists/photo captions, and cover letters should be considered vital collateral materials and given careful attention.

The Self Promotion Piece

The decision to make a self promotion piece is a serious commitment of time and energy. Consider the following in making your decisions:

1. Venue

what audience is to be addressed
what is message desired for that audience

2. Samples of similar pieces

what works/what doesn't

3. Aspects of self to be promoted

4. Vehicle

postcard
calendar
poster
ad
website
CD
etc.?

5. Cost

Materials
Supplies
Time
Postage
Mailers or Mailing tubes

6. Distribution

Mailing list
Publications
other?

7. Follow-up

referrals
contacts
feedback

8. Presentation

the book or portfolio

The Exhibition

1. Portfolio

A. Prints

- quality
- titles
- catalogued

B. Presentation

- mounts
- matts
- box
- shipping case

C. Organization

- cataloguing
- sequencing
- referencing
- pricing

D. Collateral Materials

- bio
- statement
- resume
- slide sets/CD

E. Backup and follow through

- slide sets/CD to leave
- multiple images or portfolios
- follow up plan

2. Approach

A. Venue

- Non-Profit
- Educational
- Commercial

B. Geography

- Local
- Regional
- National
- International

C. contacts

- personal recommendation
- publication
- solicitation

D. Requirements

- Ready to hang
- minimum number of pieces

E. Delivery

- mail (insurance, mode of transit)
- hand delivery
- return?

3. Results & Follow-up

A. Log rejections

- images delivered
- name of juror
- name of gallery/function
- name(s) of committee members

B. Acceptance

- length of show
- announcement
- commission on sales
- requirements for hanging
- publicity
- opening

C. Evaluation

- outcome of show
- sales
- publication
- addition venue
- success of event
- personal
- professional